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SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Sussex Bird Report

Number Sixty-seven, 2014



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Editorial Team: MJ Chattaway, NL Bond, Dr HM Crabtree,
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Sussex Bird Report 2013 amendments and corrections

Very few errors in the 2013 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.



Short-toed Eagle, Ashdown Forest, June 2014 (Robert Pask)

Photographs

Cover photograph: *Black-winged Stilt, Sidlesham Ferry Pool, July 2014 (Dorian Mason)*

I would like to say a massive thankyou to all the photographers who took time to submit their photographs of birds taken in Sussex in 2014 for use in this report; again the quality is outstanding. Sussex yet again produced the goods for photographers in 2014; the Grey Phalarope at Hove Lagoon was very popular during its stay, as was the Long-tailed Skua at Church Norton. The Black-winged Stilts were also making headlines at Medmerry especially when the chicks arrived and 2014 will also be remembered for the number of white-winged gulls that the winter storms turned up on our coastline, in particular the Kumlien's Gull at Littlehampton. Let's not forget a 'Sussex first' with Ashdown Forest's Short-toed-Eagle.

Over the years, the report has been blessed with some fantastic photos from Derek Washington who sadly passed away earlier this year; his contributions will be missed and the reports will be a lasting tribute to his work.

I look forward to receiving more outstanding photos for the 2015 report. [Nick Bond]

Editorial

Joanne Chattaway

Having served as the Sussex Bird Report editor for five years, this, the 2014 Sussex Bird Report, is my last. It has been a rewarding task, has taken a lot of time and even after five years I am still amazed at the amount of good will on offer by the members of the editorial team, the proof readers, species accounts writers and other contributors.

The year 2014 saw the Sussex list grow to 400 species with the appearance of a Short-toed Eagle on Ashdown Forest in June; we couldn't have hoped for a more exciting 400th species! Not to be outdone, a pair of Black-winged Stilts chose to breed at the newly created Medmerry, another first for Sussex. There is an article by Andy McLevy, the eagle finder, on pages 216-218 and another by Peter Hughes, warden of RSPB Medmerry, on pages 211-215, about the unfolding dramas of these events; thanks to both Andy and Peter for these articles. New to the Sussex Bird Report this year is a Photographers' Gallery on pages 265-272.

Readers will notice that the systematic list order has changed and that the new British Ornithological Union order has been adopted. The greatest change is that the falcons have been moved away from the other raptors and now appear after the woodpeckers. The number of records submitted in 2014 is a record high, surpassing all of the atlas years, of over 240,000 records of 264 species, from 1362 observers. There were 50 birders who submitted over 1000 records each; acknowledgements appear at the end of this report. May I remind observers to include breeding codes during the breeding season when submitting records; it makes for a more complete database and more accurate species accounts.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
No. submitting records	952	986	948	894	1146	1362
No. of records received	176,388	170,113	183,732	148,727	160,856	240,843
No. of species recorded	257	269	260	271	263	264

Observers are reminded that for those species requiring descriptions: they will only be included in the Sussex Bird Report after approval by the society's Honorary Recorder and Records Committee. A description species list appears at the end of this report on page 273.

The species accounts were written by a large team of writers; thanks go to SP Baines, CJR Barfield, VP Bentley, RA Black, SJ Biddle, D Boddington, C Brooks, MJ Chattaway, JR Cowser, J Curson, LD Curson, C Davis, P Denyer, RJ Eastwood, GD Evans, D Green, AC Gutteridge, JA Hobson, WG Harvey, A House, DH Howey, P James, ME Kalaher, JA Newnham, G Osborne, TW Parmenter, PJ Plant, AH Podmore, A Rowe, T Seabrook, A Thomas, AB Watson and JH Whitman. The initials at the end of each account identify the author.

Thanks also go to the excellent team of proof readers: Val Bentley, Jacob Everitt, Dick Gilmore, John Hobson, David Howey, Peter Hughes, Paul James, Phil Jones, Owen Mitchell, John Newnham, Peter Plant and Barry Yates. They have conscientiously read through versions of the species accounts and made recommendations for improvements, additions and amendments, to include late records and to present the accounts in a uniform style for future researchers. I hope this action has not offended any of the authors but if it has done so, I offer my apologies.

In addition I would like to thank: Helen Crabtree, Christine George, John Newnham and Alan Perry for compiling the survey tables; Helen again for editing the scientific articles, writing one of

them and typesetting this report; Richard Black, Clare Buckle, David Howey and Martin Kalaher for writing the further scientific articles; David again for writing the Review of the Year; Sue Walsh for the Ringing Report; Nick Bond for selecting and processing the photographs; and Rob Yarham for designing the cover. John Newnham wrote the database report, and compiled the maps, the first and last migrant tables and the acknowledgements section. Peter Plant and John Hobson are the primary proof readers and checkers of numbers. Thanks to you all.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used as standard practice:

BBRC	British Birds Records Committee	Res	Reservoir
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	RSPB	Royal Society for the
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology		Protection of Birds
BOU	British Ornithologists Union	RBRG	Rye Bay Ringing Group
CP	Country park	R	River
Fm	Farm	SF	Sewage farm or works
GP	Gravel pit	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
GC	Golf course	SWBS	Sussex Winter Bird Survey
Hbr	Harbour	WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
IUCN	The World Conservation Union	WBBS	Waterways Breeding Bird Survey
LNR	Local Nature Reserve	WWT	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
MP	Mill pond	nc	No count
mo	Many observers	ha	Hectare(s)
NR	Nature Reserve	hr	Hour(s)
NNR	National Nature Reserve	km	Kilometre(s)
o/s	Offshore	m	Metre(s)
PH	Public house	N,E,S,W	As cardinal compass points

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

Review of 2014

David H. Howey

As in previous years, this review of 2014 is a chronological summary of the year's weather and the highlights of interesting and unusual bird sightings. In total, 264 species were recorded during 2014 compared with 263 in 2013.

One of the two major highlights of the year was the county's first **Short-toed Eagle** which remained on Ashdown Forest long enough for it to be seen by many observers. The second major highlight involved the pair of **Black-winged Stilts** which successfully raised three young at Medmerry representing the first such breeding in Sussex.

Much less welcome was the discovery of a total of 380 dead birds found on Sussex beaches as a result of a major seabird wreck following a series of intense storms.

Ten scarce species which remained long enough to be seen by many observers including a **Cattle Egret** in the Pagham Hbr area throughout much of August with another in the Pett area during October and November, **Rough-legged Buzzard** at Jevington from early November until the year's end, **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Pulborough Brooks for four days in August, **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Pett (and then Rye Hbr) from Christmas Day and into the New Year, **Grey Phalarope** at Hove Lagoon for almost two weeks in January, **Long-tailed Skua** for over ten days in the Church Norton area in August, **Kumlein's Gull** at Littlehampton in February/March, **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Beachy Head for a week in October, a sometimes elusive **Richard's Pipit** at Horse Eye Levels from November until the year's end, **Tawny Pipit** at Newhaven Tidemills for five days in October and **Parrot Crossbills** lingering from 2013 on Ashdown Forest.

Less obliging were short-staying birds seen by only one or two birders although the use of mobile phones helped to increase the numbers of observers in some instances: a **Red-breasted Goose** migrating eastwards with Brent Geese which was tracked along the coast from Selsey Bill to Birling Gap in April, **White-billed Diver** off Birling Gap also in April, **Black Stork** in the Cuckmere Valley in May, **Little Bustard** at East Guldeford in late December, **American Golden Plover** at Scotney GP in October, five **Bee-eaters** at Beachy Head in May, a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Steyning in April, single **Hooded Crows** at Rye Hbr and Selsey Bill in May, **Barred Warblers** at Seaford Head on two dates in September, two separate **Melodious Warblers** at Beachy Head in August, a **Marsh Warbler** at Seaford Head in May, a **Red-flanked Bluetail** at Hastings in November, a **Common Rosefinch** at Pett Level in August and single **Lapland Buntings** at Beachy Head and Rye Hbr in September and October respectively.

January to March

January and February will be remembered for the series of severe storms coming in from the Atlantic with mountainous seas causing major coastal damage and resulting in the wettest winter for 250 years. The weather had calmed down by late February and some high pressure at times during March gave several warm days.

Several species which historically would have been considered purely summer visitors over-wintered in Sussex. These included up to six **Common Sandpipers**, several **Sandwich Terns**, at least 25 **Blackcaps** with similar numbers of **Chiffchaffs** and the first ever confirmed over-wintering **Barn Swallow**. A **Lesser Whitethroat** which spent two weeks in February in a Bognor Regis garden must surely also have over-wintered.

More typical winter visitors occurred in large numbers particularly in coastal locations and the flooded river valleys: 11,000 **Brent Geese**, 1500 **Oystercatchers**, 14,000 **Dunlins** and 1000 **Knots** in Chichester Hbr; 4000 **Lapwings** in Pagham Hbr with a further 2000 in Rye Bay where there were also over 2000 **Golden Plovers**; 430 **Sanderlings** at Goring Gap and 511 **Turnstones** at Climping. There were also some impressive gathering of ducks with over 1000 **Mallards** in Rye Bay and a further 500 in the Arun Valley, 800 **Pintails** at Pulborough Brooks and 400 at Beeding Brooks and 362 **Shovelers** at Rye and 222 in the Arun Valley.



Grey Phalarope, Hove, January 2014 (Luke Dray)



Iceland Gull, Pagham Hbr, March 2014 (John Cooper)

A confiding **Grey Phalarope** at Hove Lagoon for two weeks in January was a much-photographed bird as was the **Kumlien's Gull** at Littlehampton from February until 30 Apr. Up to ten of last year's **Parrot Crossbills** remained on Ashdown Forest until 12 Jan where there were also 100 **Bramblings**. Other scarce visitors included a **Leach's Petrel** at Hastings for just one day in February, two **Glossy Ibis** at Lidsey in February and March and a long staying **Iceland Gull** at Pagham Hbr from March through to early May.

February, however, was also the month in which the worst seabird wreck in living memory occurred. Although the vast majority of corpses (over 30,000) were found along the west coast of France, 380 beached birds were found in Sussex of which 307 were auks, including significant numbers of **Puffins**.

Improved weather conditions in March saw the arrival of the first summer visitors starting with **Barn Swallow** and **Northern Wheatear** on the 9th followed by **Sand Martin** on the 11th, **Garganey** on the 13th, **Willow Warbler** on the 16th, **Little Ringed Plover** on the 18th, **House Martin** on the 24th and **Common Tern** on the 28th.

April to June

Although April started and finished in unsettled fashion with some heavy downpours, overall it was a warm month, particularly when high pressure took hold mid-month. High pressure and warm days were also the theme for the first fortnight of May but the weather then deteriorated becoming mixed and with some thunderstorms. The mixed weather continued during the first half of June with warm but muggy conditions at times which then gave way to dry, settled conditions and some high temperatures.

April and May are typically the months in which many summer visitors arrive, the last of the winter visitors depart and passage migrants move through. The first five days of April saw the arrival of a further ten summer visitors: **Yellow Wagtail**, **Sedge Warbler** and **Common Redstart** on the 1st, **Ring Ouzel**, **Tree Pipit** and **Common Whitethroat** (2nd), **Garden Warbler** (3rd), **Lesser Whitethroat** (4th) and **Grasshopper Warbler** and **Nightingale** on the 5th. Further arrivals occurred during April with the first sightings of **Little Tern** (8th), **Common Cuckoo** and **Reed Warbler** (9th), **Quail** (13th), **Wood Warbler** and **Whinchat** (14th), **Nightjar** (15th), **Common Swift** (17th) and finally **Turtle Dove** on the 22nd, over two weeks later than normal.

Sea-watching was not as rewarding as in some previous spring migration periods although a **Red-breasted Goose** migrating eastwards with **Brent Geese** on 3 Apr and tracked passing Selsey Bill, Splash Point and Birling Gap was a notable event. **Brent Geese** featured again with over 2000 passing Splash Point on 5 Apr and observers there also recorded totals of 109 **Arctic Skuas** in April and 166 **Pomarine Skuas** in May, including a record breaking movement on the 5th.

During the April-June period there was also a scattering of scarcer birds. In April these included three records of a single **Crane** in the Arundel area in the latter part of the month, a **White-billed Diver** off Birling Gap on the 21st and a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Steyning on the 27th plus four **Hoopoes**. May's rarities included a **Montagu's Harrier** at Rodmell on the 11th, five **Bee-eaters** at Birling Gap (20th) and a **Black Stork** in the Cuckmere Valley plus a **Black Kite** over Eastbourne both on the 27th with a further **Black Kite** at Rodmell on 8 May.

The real stars during this period were the pair of **Black-winged Stilts** which arrived at Medmerry on 17 May and then settled down to breed and the **Short-toed Eagle** which frequented Ashdown Forest through the second part of June and became the 400th species on the Sussex list.



Pomarine Skuas, Selsey Bill, May 2014 (Paul Matson)

July to September

July was another month which started with a mixture of some hot days interspersed by wet and windy conditions. The high temperatures continued throughout the second half of the month triggering yet more thunderstorms. The tail-end of hurricane Bertha passed through in August leaving behind cool conditions with some unseasonable overnight ground frosts. In contrast, high pressure dominated throughout September resulting in it being the driest September for over 100 years.

At Medmerry the **Black-winged Stilts** successfully raised three young after which the family party moved to Sidlesham Ferry and then Pulborough Brooks. **Avocets** bred at several sites with a total of 54 pairs raising some 80 young but not all ground-nesting birds were so successful. At Rye Hbr, 90 pairs of **Common Terns** raised 40-50 young but the **Little Terns** suffered from predation and no young were raised. Fortunately, the **Little Terns** at Pagham Hbr raised a dozen young. Despite there being over 500 **Mediterranean Gulls** at Pett Level and over 300 at Rye Hbr in the spring, breeding was extremely poor with just one (failed) breeding attempt at Rye Hbr and only ten young being raised at Pett Level.

It was a quiet period for scarce birds until the end of July when one fortunate observer saw a **Black-winged Pratincole** at Cuckmere Haven. This was followed in August by three much more obliging birds: an adult **Long-tailed Skua** in the Church Norton area for eleven days, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Pulborough Brooks for four days and a **Cattle Egret** in the Pagham area for much of the month. Also in August there were two **Melodious Warblers**, a total of six **Wrynecks** and four migrant **Honey-buzzards** with a further five in September. In September there were a further 14 **Wrynecks** recorded and also two **Barred Warblers**.

Summer migrants starting their southward journey were seen in impressive numbers in late August and in September. The number of **Chiffchaffs** exceeded 200 on two dates at Seaford Head and on three dates at Beachy Head where there was a peak count of 300 on the 29th. Even larger numbers of **Blackcaps** passed through Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) with estimates of over 1000 on 1, 7 and 20 Sep. There were also large movements of other species: 1000 **Sand Martins** at Selsey on 28 Aug and at Chichester GP the following day; 2000 **Barn Swallows** at Beachy Head and 1200 at Hastings on 31 Aug followed by 6000 moving east at Selsey Bill on 3 Sep, 5000 at Rye also on 3 Sep and 3450 east at Worthing on the 15th. Over 5000 **House Martins** moved

east at Selsey Bill on five dates between 3 and 16 Sep with a peak of 8000 on the 3rd and a total of about 82,000 passing through the county! Although often overlooked as a migrant, there were some large movements of **Meadow Pipits** including over 1000 east at Hastings on 15 Sep and double that number on the 18th and also over 1000 east at Selsey Bill on the 27th.

This late summer/early autumn period saw the last sighting of **Common Cuckoo** on 27 Aug with September departures including **Nightingale** (3rd), **Little Tern** (5th), **Common Swift** (13rd), **Little Ringed Plover** and **Common Redstart** (25th) **Wood Warbler** (26th), **Nightjar** (27th) and **Common Whitethroat** on the 29th on which date the first **Redwings** and **Bramblings** of the autumn were recorded.

October to December

Although the weather conditions were unsettled and wet during October, the mainly southerly winds resulted in above average temperatures for the time of year. November's weather was virtually a repeat of that in the previous month with unsettled conditions throughout, twice the normal amount of rain but above average temperatures. Typically, the weather in December was from the west giving mild but wet spells with a few brighter days.

The fourth quarter of the year continued the theme of departing summer visitors, arriving winter visitors, scarce migrants and large movements of commoner species. The last recorded dates for summer visitors in October included **Garganey** (1st), **Grasshopper Warbler** (3rd), **Turtle Dove** (19th), **Lesser Whitethroat** (22nd), **Willow Warbler** (26th), **Whinchat** (27th) **Common Tern** and **Yellow Wagtail** (28th) and **Reed & Garden Warblers** (31st). The last **House Martin** was seen on 6 Nov, the last **Ring Ouzel** on the 12th, **Northern Wheatear** on the 22nd and the last **Barn Swallow** on 12 Dec. The first **Fieldfares** of the winter were recorded on 1 Oct with **Goosander** on the 20th and **Goldeneye** on the 29th but the first **Jack Snipe** was not seen until 18 Nov.

October saw the arrival of a good selection of scarce birds: an **American Golden Plover** at Scotney GP, single **Stone-curlews** at Pett Level and Climping, two **Grey Phalaropes** at Pulborough Brooks, **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Beachy Head, a **Tawny Pipit** at Newhaven Tidemills, another **Barred Warbler** at Seaford Head, a **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** at Pagham Hbr and at least ten **Yellow-browed Warblers** at various coastal locations between Rye and Selsey. November's list was no less impressive with a **Cattle Egret** at Pett Level, a **Rough-legged Buzzard** at Jevington (which remained into 2015), single **Grey Phalaropes** at both Henfield and Lewes, a total of nine **Little Auks** and a **Red-flanked Bluetail** at Hastings. A **Tundra Bean Goose** in the Adur Valley was a popular attraction in the early part of December and during the month there was also a sometimes elusive **Richard's Pipit** at Horse Eye Level, a much more co-operative **Lesser Yellowlegs** in the Pett Level/Rye Hbr area (remaining into 2015) and a **Little Bustard** seen and photographed by one lucky observer at East Guldeford Levels on the penultimate day of the year.

Wood Pigeons were involved in some large-scale movements with over 3-4000 moving SW at Beachy Head and Selsey Bill on 22 Oct, 8000 heading south at Seaford Head on 28 Oct, 8400 moving southwest at Hastings on 1 Nov, 5900 heading west at Selsey Bill on 6 Nov and 4200 flying eastwards at Beachy Head on 16 Nov. Rather more unusual was the number of **Stock Doves** involved in the movements with 1140 heading west at Hastings on 22 Oct and 1000 present at Beachy Head two days later. Other notable concentrations of birds involved 3000 **Golden Plovers** at Rye Hbr in mid-November and 1500 **Fieldfares** at Pevensy Levels at the beginning of December. The year ended as it had started with some 25 each of **Blackcaps** and **Chiffchaffs** over-wintering.



Rough-legged Buzzard, Jevington, December 2014 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)

Classified Records for 2014

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 and C species included in the Systematic List is given on pages 285-288.

The Category A and C species are again listed in the order announced by the BOU in October 2002 and include the further minor adjustments made by the BOU since that date.

Status descriptions

Preceding each species account, there is a brief description of its status in the county. These are regularly reviewed and amended to account for recent changes in status. The terms and their corresponding numerical ranges are as follows:

	Breeding pairs	Winter / Passage
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	2001-2000
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 and at five sites daily logs were maintained. The following table lists the hours watched in each month at the five locations for which this information was available:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Selsey Bill	37	41	98	206	169	32	48	93	69	77	61	29	959
Worthing	23	13	27	46	61	25	17	21	19	32	20	16	320
Telscombe Cliffs	8	5	20	22	11	0	0	0	1	2	4	2	74
Splash Point (Seaford)	15	3	69	120	86	10	0	7	0	17	15	0	340
Beachy Head	12	6	42	54	42	1	11	12	0	0	0	0	179

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 2014 the priority core count dates were: 19 Jan, 16 Feb, 16 Mar, 20 Apr, 18 May, 15 Jun, 13 Jul, 10 Aug, 7 Sep, 12 Oct, 9 Nov and 7 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 on pages 200–203 as the numbers of 1-km squares in which each species was recorded at least once during the year. 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. The BBS is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), and jointly funded by the BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) 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 CoBRA (County Bird Recording Application) database. As usual the dataset is a complex mixture of records received from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), from a miscellany of recording systems used by various groups and nature reserves and from individual observers.

The total of just over 240,000 records for 2014 is the largest number of records admitted to the database for a single year and is approximately 63% more than the average for the previous 10 years and 22% higher than the previous top years recorded during the atlas fieldwork. This increase is, in part, due to more recording but also related to a different way which the records from Birdtrack were processed before uploading into the database.

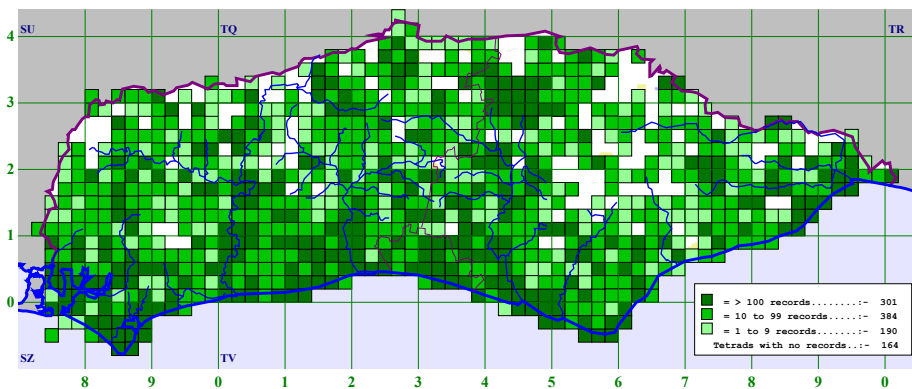
The trend of increasing online recording continued and the following table shows three quarters of the records in 2014 originated from the BTO online systems. Most of these derived from BirdTrack, an excellent recording system which the society encourages members to use. BirdTrack is organised by the BTO in partnership with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Birdwatch Ireland, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and the Welsh Ornithological Society and continued to develop during the year. Only a small number of records were submitted on paper and the society is grateful to the volunteers who transfer these into a suitable electronic format for importing into CoBRA.

Record source	2011	2012	2013	2014
BTO online surveys (BirdTrack, WeBS and BBS)	46%	67%	67%	75%
Reserve databases, other recording groups, seawatch datasets	25%	28%	28%	21%
Individual observer record submissions	13%	5%	5%	4%

About 1360 observers contributed to the observations which form the basis for this report. As usual, the number of submissions varied considerably with the range from just one to nearly 8000 records. Twenty five observers recorded over 2000 records during 2014 and a further 25 birders provided over 1000 records. The records during the year came from 1750 sites with most, as expected, coming from the well-watched locations such as Chichester Hbr (6873), Pagham

Hbr (19,527), Pulborough Brooks (12,169), Ashdown Forest (21,272), Pett Level (13,874) and Rye Hbr (10,471). Clearly some sites not renowned for excellent bird watching were recorded regularly; observers at West Tarring (Worthing) and Canadia (Battle) generated 4118 and 6868 records respectively.

The widespread recording is clearly shown in the following map which has been drawn using the same scale as in previous years. In keeping with recording in recent years about 84% of the Sussex tetrads received some recording attention in 2014. The pattern is similar to most years with the traditional “hole” in central East Sussex and, as usual, the recording hotspots, some of which are mentioned above, shown clearly. Throughout the systematic list reference is made to the number of tetrads in which some of the more widespread species have been recorded; the fact that only 84% of the county’s tetrads have been visited, and not all these for detailed recording, needs to be considered whilst reading these statements.



The number of records received for 2014 in each tetrad in Sussex.

Dark green symbol, >100 records; mid-green symbol, 10-99 records; and pale green symbol, 1-9 records.

With records from county-wide studies such as the Breeding Bird Survey and the Sussex Winter Bird Survey, coupled with the encouragement to record full lists in BirdTrack it is not surprising that the common and widespread species have again been the most recorded. The table shows the numbers of records generated in 2014 for thirty species; consider this mass of information has been distilled into a short summary for publishing in this report.

Woodpigeon	6894	Chiffchaff	4268	Moorhen	2851
Blackbird	6499	Dunnock	4080	Greenfinch	2724
Robin	6382	Common Starling	3977	Common Pheasant	2722
Carriion Crow	6012	Mallard	3906	Great Spotted Woodpecker	2638
Blue Tit	5818	Jackdaw	3877	Mute Swan	2534
Wren	5293	Goldfinch	3870	Linnet	2525
Chaffinch	5090	Common Buzzard	3560	Barn Swallow	2476
Magpie	4982	Black-headed Gull	3449	Coot	2440
Great Tit	4800	House Sparrow	3430	Cormorant	2397
Herring Gull	4653	Song Thrush	2935	Blackcap	2390

The recording concerns raised previously continue. Sadly records are lost each year as additional notes describing rare and scarce species or unusual “out of season” sightings are not always forthcoming. Additional details in records are useful: some text notes, an age or flight direction or pin-pointed grid reference add to the observation. Perhaps the most useful information is the inclusion of any evidence of breeding particularly for observations between April and July. Throughout this report authors have made statements about breeding based on poor information and readers need to consider this when studying this aspect in the systematic list. The following table shows a halving of this recording during the breeding season over the past years.

Year	No. of records (April–July)	Confirmed (%)	Probable (%)	Possible (%)	Total with breeding status (%)
2010	84,862	8.0	15.5	8.0	44.4
2011	87,600	9.5	14.1	16.3	39.9
2012	59,835	3.0	6.8	9.7	19.4
2013	62,771	2.4	5.4	10.8	18.5
2014	85,600	2.7	5.7	9.9	18.3

As mentioned previously the proliferation of birding websites and personal blogs has revolutionised the dissemination of news, sightings, photographs and opinions. Although efforts have been made in 2014 to capture observations from the society’s website and some blogs it is not possible to capture information into the database from most and therefore some interesting and important observations may be lost to the county avifauna. A new database (CoBRA2), to replace the ageing CoBRA1, continues to develop but all the records for 2014 were processed using CoBRA1. All details have been transferred into the new application and it is planned that CoBRA2 will form the basis for work on the 2015 Sussex Bird Report. [John Newnham, Database Manager, September 2015]

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 grid references.



Curlews, Pagham Hbr, January 2014 (Gareth Hughes)

Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

Fairly common resident.

Mute Swans were recorded in 183 tetrads. The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	544	545	482	293	438	428	248	371	626	681	470	529
Chichester Hbr	219	129	42	87	135	161	4	11	278	280	146	213
Pagham Hbr	26	36	73	28	37	42	24	28	41	11	2	-
Chichester GP	30	10	9	22	24	nc	nc	nc	21	16	13	14
Sefter Fm (Rose Green)	11	47	10	10	7	1	2	2	1	3	2	2
Climping	15	8	28	14	9	14	16	24	36	26	4	2
Arun Valley	40	72	43	33	66	65	48	28	37	56	56	46
Upper Adur Levels	15	10	24	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	72	61	68
Ouse Valley	9	51	24	4	4	2	-	-	5	22	17	6
Eastbourne Lakes	45	38	43	9	10	14	15	17	43	24	38	30
Pevensey Levels	47	57	66	20	62	16	25	27	40	81	65	61
Rye Bay	37	31	62	49	62	94	86	211	81	44	12	43

In the first winter period the only significant count additional to the WeBS was of 71 at Lidsey Rife (Barnham) on 8 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 30 tetrads and was probable in at least another seven. The first report of nest building was from Waltham Brooks on 22 Mar. The first cygnets seen were six at Dell Quay (Chichester Hbr) on 13 Apr.

During the summer months, the largest aggregations were of 150 at Winchelsea Beach on 12 Jul and another 150 at Apuldrum (Chichester Hbr) on 4 Aug. In the autumn the highest non-WeBS counts were of 204 at Fishbourne on 10 Sep and 82 at Apuldrum on 31 Oct (both Chichester Hbr). The year's highest single count during a WeBS count on 27 Sep was 207 at Fishbourne.

In the second winter period, the highest non-WeBS counts away from Chichester Hbr were of 55 at Flansham (Bognor) on 20 Dec and 52 at Barnham on 15 Dec. [LDC]

Bewick's Swan

Cygnus columbianus

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

Bewick's Swans were recorded in 20 tetrads. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
County total	16	14	-		-	8
Sefter Fm (Rose Green)	-	2	-		-	-
Arun Valley	16	12	-		-	8

Numbers were somewhat down on last years, particularly in February. There were no counts greater than the WeBS counts in the first winter period, and the only records away from the traditional stronghold, the Arun Valley, were five at Lewes Brooks on 15 Jan and five at Beeding Brooks on 9 Feb, presumably from the Arun Valley gathering. The count of 11 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 24 Feb was the last record of the first winter period, a week earlier than the 10-year average date. Of the Arun Valley flock six were juveniles, indicating reasonable breeding success.

The first returning birds were two at Burpham on 29 Nov, two weeks later than the 10-year average date. Numbers had increased to ten on 5 Dec and 12 the following day, including two juveniles. Numbers in the Arun Valley then remained fairly constant until 26 Dec when an obvious influx raised numbers to 33 at Burpham. Thereafter a peak of 42 roosted at Arundel WWT on 30 Dec, departing at 07:55 hr that morning. After a disappointing first winter period this was a welcome return to more regular numbers for the Arun Valley flock. Records away from the Arun Valley were six at Rye Hbr on 6 Dec, four at Hoe Fm (Flansham) on 15 Dec (presumably wanderers from the Arun Valley) and two at Pett Level on 28 Dec. There were no records from the Adur Valley in the second winter period. [LDC]



Whooper Swans, Honor Farm (Pagham Hbr), March 2014 (Dorian Mason)

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

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

Two adults first reported at Chichester GP on 2 Jan (CRJ *et al.*) were recorded there on three subsequent dates during the month. What were presumably the same two birds, associated with

Mute Swans and ranged between Pagham Hbr, Lagness (Bognor Regis) and South Mundham before settling at Pagham Hbr on 23 Feb where they remained until 21 Mar.

In the second winter period an adult and three juveniles were at Lidsey Lodge on 2 Nov (ACS) and then with Mute Swans at Barnham from 14 Dec into 2015 (BI *et al.*). Six adults seen briefly on the meanders in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 24 Nov (JWK) flew off eastwards. A total of 12 seen in 2014 seems likely. [JAH]



Tundra Bean Goose, Adur Valley, December 2014 (John Cooper)

Bean Goose

Anser fabalis

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

All records were of the Tundra form *A.f. rossicus*. The only records from the first winter period were from Scotney GP, where two were recorded regularly among the goose flock from 10 to 25 Jan (mo).

In December there were plenty of records, but most probably referred to a single bird that was present in the lower Adur Valley from the 5th to the 13th (BDJ, PJ *et al.*), then with Brent Geese at Climping on the 14th to the 15th (ALB), before relocating to Pagham Hbr from the 18th (AH *et al.*) until the year's end and into 2015. The only other reports came from Scotney GP, with six there on the 26th, two on the 29th and three on the 31st (mo). [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.

There were just two reports of this species, both of birds in flight over Beachy Head, namely a flock of 25 over east on 18 Nov, and another flock of 15 following the same route three days later (both RHC). [AH]

White-fronted Goose*Anser albifrons*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. European race (A.a. albifrons) is red listed species of high conservation concern.

Most records during the first winter period came from East Sussex. A flock of 26 at Pett Level on 5 Jan had reduced to seven by the 11th and to six on the 19th when last seen. At Scotney GP there were nine present on 12 Jan, rising to the two largest counts of the year, of 63 on the 20th and 50 on the 25th. The three birds which turned up on 19 Jan at Cuckmere Haven and remained right through until 12 Mar were the only long-stayers. The only other records were of two on Beeding Brooks on 15 and 16 Feb and two on Lewes Brooks on 16 Mar.

There were seawatching records from Splash Point (Seaford) of 3 E on both on 10 and 26 Feb, and a flock of 7 E past Worthing on 24 Feb.

The first report of the autumn was of two adults and one juvenile at Charleston Reedbed on 22 Nov. A flock of nine dropped in at Lidsey Rife (Barnham) on 3 Dec, but only remained for four hours. On the 6th a single bird was seen at Cuckmere Haven, and another was reported from Medmerry on the same day. The latter was a first winter bird, and was reported with Brent Geese from Pagham Hbr on the 12th, at Climping Gap from the 13th to the 15th, and again around Pagham Hbr and Medmerry from the 20th to the 30th. Elsewhere two were at Scotney GP on 26 Dec with eight there on the 29th, whilst a small party was seen on Pett Level between 28 and 30 Dec with the highest count of seven on the 30th. [AH]

Greylag Goose*Anser anser*

Increasingly common introduced resident and winter visitor, scarce passage migrant. (Native population in UK is amber listed species of medium conservation concern).

Greylag Goose was recorded in 139 tetrads, an increase on the 120 in 2013. The monthly WeBS counts at sites where at least 5% of the county total occur in any of the core month counts (Jan-Mar and Sep-Dec) were as shown in the following table. The population of this species has stabilised in recent years after rapid expansion, with the WeBS counts being broadly consistent with the preceding two years. The biggest counts of the year, outside the WeBS counts were of 300 at Scotney GP on 12 and 20 Jan, and the same number was recorded at Brighthams Fm (Partridge Green) on 16 Jan.

This remains a scarce bird at seawatching sites, with spring totals of just 1 E at Selsey Bill, 3 E at Worthing, 4 E at Telscombe Cliffs and 10 E at Splash Point (Seaford).

Breeding activity was noted from a range of sites across the county, including Chichester GP, Arundel WWT, Small Dole, Tottington, Ashdown Forest, Pevensey Levels and Rye Hbr, though

other pairs must go unreported in the wider countryside as in only nine tetrads was breeding confirmed, though it was probable in a further four.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	946	287	457	220	187	367	390	1754	1276	1403	875	691
Petworth Park	2	7	-	23	nc	61	nc	1	nc	210	1	1
Arun Valley	52	18	31	45	26	10	102	182	119	108	426	31
Upper Adur Levels	-	32	57	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	346	2	-
Falmer Pond	25	20	10	12	7	39	29	17	11	nc	1	1
Ardingly Res	150	nc	25	1	nc	nc	nc	80	200	190	-	190
Wakehurst Place Lakes	5	15	18	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	-	-	6	-
Weir Wood Res	130	-	3	1	nc	48	67	183	287	33	130	91
Ouse Valley	20	35	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	36	-
Plashett Park Lakes	12	nc	29	nc	9	nc	-	-	-	nc	-	nc
Eastbourne Lakes	16	-	10	11	3	33	5	-	65	1	-	-
Pevensey Levels	94	35	11	4	38	1	3	-	89	69	19	32
Bewl Water	3	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	18	133	-	2	12
Rye Bay	401	117	196	93	64	144	159	1194	312	355	252	290

There were only three large post-breeding counts noted in August, 1050 at Scotney GP on the 14th, 500 at Weir Wood Res on the 17th and 400 at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th, but these were eclipsed by a count of 1500 birds at Rye Hbr on 5 Sep. The only other sites to produce big counts were Ardingly Res, with a peak of 200 on 8 Sep, Petworth Park with a peak of 274 on 19 Sep and Henfield Levels with a peak of 210 on 14 Oct.

The largest groups in late autumn and winter were in West Sussex where 300-400 birds were regularly recorded at Pulborough Brooks, a peak of 350 on 7 Nov at Petworth Park and 200 at both Henfield Levels and Arundel WWT whilst the only comparable figures from East Sussex were totals of 200 at Rye Hbr on 14 Dec and 400 at Scotney GP on 27 Dec. [AH]

Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Common and increasing introduced resident and partial migrant.

Canada Goose was recorded in 211 tetrads, slightly more than in 2013. The monthly WeBS counts at sites where at least 5% of the county total occur in any of the core month counts (Jan-Mar and Sep-Dec) were as shown in the following table.

The WeBS counts in the first half of the year were consistent with the preceding year, but they were higher in the autumn, with the December count of 3537 being a new county record. The biggest numbers in the first winter period were from Amberley Wild Brooks, with a peak of 418 on 21 Jan, and at Cuckmere Haven where the highest total was 400 on 1 Feb. Sightings were typically few from seawatching sites, with totals of just 2 E at Worthing and 31 E and 3 W past Splash Point though watchers at Birling Gap did slightly better with 13 E and 44 W recorded there, including 26 W on 8 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads and probable in a further eight, from the usual wide range of sites across the county. The male of a pair on Ashdown Forest was killed by a fox just after the eggs had hatched, but the female persevered and successfully fledged five young.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1845	1011	674	347	324	436	305	2027	2564	2314	2282	3537
Chichester Hbr	21	87	12	1	4	24	20	160	3	75	118	101
Medmerry	128	-	2	2	-	-	-	14	117	70	130	7
Petworth Park	1	40	38	57	nc	149	nc	146	nc	113	-	-
Arun Valley	557	162	73	121	130	25	36	208	630	326	828	1698
Ouse Valley	45	72	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	217	63
Arlington Res	10	27	23	4	18	30	39	485	168	332	59	32
Cuckmere Haven	55	220	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	506	326	26	586
Eastbourne Lakes	25	57	57	31	42	119	126	8	-	337	-	8
Pevensey Levels	199	22	38	11	5	-	-	-	96	56	242	151
Bowl Water	192	80	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	470	280	188	315	336
Rye Bay	281	54	87	15	7	49	19	216	283	151	232	277

There was a very early post-breeding build-up on Bowl Water, with 562 birds recorded on 30 Jun, with the next big count of 417 birds on Arlington Res not until the much more typical date of 4 Aug. Numbers built up thereafter at traditional sites, with Pulborough Brooks holding the biggest flocks, though not really reflected in the WeBS counts, with peaks of 1500 on 30 Aug and a year's highest of 1860 on 27 Oct. The only other counts of 500 or more were from Arlington Res, with 500 on 24 Aug and Cuckmere Haven with 506 recorded on 18 Sep. The Arun Valley continued to hold the most birds, with regular counts of 500-1000, culminating in the biggest total of the winter of 1500 birds on Waltham Brooks on 10 Dec. [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.

There were two unusual records of large flocks in West Sussex, namely 47 birds in Pagham Hbr on 17 Jan, and a flock of 33 that dropped in briefly off East Head (West Wittering), before continuing east on 3 Feb. Both these records have the potential to relate to wild birds, as does the single bird seen from five different locations between Worthing and Beachy Head on 29 Mar, heading east with migrating Brent Geese. The only other conceivably wild flock was a group of five birds that turned up at Cuckmere Haven on 5 Dec and remained until the year's end.

One or two birds were recorded at a variety of sites in West Sussex and undoubtedly refer to long-staying birds of suspect origin, whilst the feral flock at Barcombe Res peaked at 70 on 13 Oct, a marked increase over recent years. The flock at Scotney GP topped out at 110 on 12 Oct and 7 Dec. [AH]

Brent Goose

Branta bernicla bernicla

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

The monthly WeBS counts at sites where at least 5% of the county total occur in any of the core month counts (Jan-Mar and Sep-Dec) were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	11,734	13,428	11,127	18	6	2	14	13	1769	7088	7447	14,499
Chichester Hbr	8288	11,206	11,007	11	4	2	14	13	1769	6878	5131	11,315
Medmerry	1025	55	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1850	1983
Pagham Hbr	2164	2135	102	5	-	-	-	-	-	152	321	100
Climping	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	110	1100

The monthly totals of seawatching from regular sites are shown below.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Peak counts
Selsey Bill	E	45	115	1742	1463		40	22	29	32	886 on 4 Apr in 6hr
	W	155	6	5	-		46	1499	573	34	
Worthing	E	109	254	1363	235		13	6	4	36	716 on 31 Mar in 3 hr
	W	31	3	3	-		25	1147	167	15	
Telscombe Cliffs	E	121	315	361	996		-	-	-	-	923 on 4 Apr in 2hr
	W	-	-	-	-		-	-	135	-	
Splash Point	E	209	-	3377	3432		nc	55	-	nc	2115 on 4 Apr in 4hr
	W	1	-	5	2		nc	82	135	nc	
Birling Gap	E	783	59	3256	2370		nc	nc	nc	nc	1537 on 4 Apr in 2hr
	W	19	-	1	1		nc	nc	nc	nc	

This species continues to prosper in the county, with the December WeBS count of 14,499 being the highest since January 2008 and one of the highest ever. Also the species is increasingly recorded as a regular wintering species in East Sussex. The Pett Level and Rye Hbr areas are the most reliable sites, and the WeBS count of 19 Jan produced counts of 150 and 24 respectively. As ever the species is unusual inland, with just a scattering of reports, including one at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Jan and it, or another at Southwater CP (Horsham) on 11 Jan, six at Arundel WWT the following day, 12 at Weir Wood Res on 3 Feb, one on Henfield Levels on the following day and another at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Feb.

It was back to normal this year at seawatching sites after the previous year's spectacle, though movement was again slow to start, with the first big day being 28 Mar when 861 E were recorded at Splash Point (Seaford). On the 31st counts of 890 at Birling Gap and 761 at Worthing were logged. There was a very big day of movement on 4 Apr when all sites (bar Worthing) recorded their highest counts of the spring as shown in the table, after which only one day, 17 Apr, produced reasonable counts of 440 past Birling Gap and 563 past Splash Point.

As is typical, small numbers summered in Chichester Hbr, with ten recorded on 16 Jul with a peak of 13 on 15 Aug, whilst one was seen in Pagham Hbr on 15 and 16 Jul and, unusually, two took up residence at Rye Hbr from 13 May to 13 Jul at least.

Return passage started quite early again in 2014, mirroring the previous year, with 14 seen at Rye Hbr on 11 Sep and a few birds seen almost daily moving west past Selsey Bill from the following day onwards. By the WeBS count of 27 Sep a total of 1769 birds were counted around Chichester Hbr compared to a typical count of under 100 for that month. Quite why they returned so early is uncertain, though it would appear that it had been a good breeding season, with large numbers of juveniles in many of the flocks. After the early start, the wintering flocks built up rapidly in Chichester Hbr during October, though somewhat slower in Pagham Hbr, but 700 were recorded at the latter site on 1 Nov, and numbers remained high until the end of the year.

Relatively few birds were seen away from the western harbours, but counts of 80 at Pett Level on 5 Nov and a peak of 50 at Rye Hbr on 12 Nov were notable, as were the inland records of birds ‘on the ground’ from Pulborough Brooks, with nine on 9 Nov and Arundel WWT with 16 on 4 Dec. There were several reports of birds seen or heard on migration from well inland during October and November, including Cissbury Ring, Burgess Hill, Ashdown Forest, Hurst Green and Bewl Water, which is consistent with the much lower numbers recorded from seawatching sites in the autumn.

There were very few reports of the Pale-bellied Brent Goose *B.b. hrota* during the first winter period, with a single bird at Cuckmere Haven from 20 Jan to 2 Feb being the only one to linger. There were two reports of singles in Pagham Hbr, on 4 Feb and 26 Mar, and at Rye Hbr on the late date of 18 Apr. The first autumn record was of two on a WeBS count at Cuckmere Haven on 17 Oct, followed by one at Widewater (Lancing) on 7 Nov, with a ‘probable’ among a Dark-bellied Brent Goose flock at Cuckmere Haven on 15 Nov. Reports of a single bird, first seen at Pagham Hbr on 19 Nov and again on 2 and 5 Dec and at East Head (West Wittering) on the 7th and 9th, and at Climping on the 14th and 15th probably refer to the same individual, though four were reported at Pagham Hbr on the 20th.

In the first winter period there were three reports of a single Black Brant *B.b. nigricans* among the Dark-bellied Brent Geese in the Fishbourne Creek area of Chichester Hbr on 8 and 30 Jan and 3 Feb (AH *et al.*). What was probably the same individual was at Sidlesham Ferry on 17 Jan (DM *et al.*). There was also just one bird present in the second winter period, this time it was reported on seven occasions around Pagham Hbr and Medmerry from 2 to 10 Dec and at Climping on 15 Dec (AH, OM *et al.*). [AH]



Red-breasted Goose, Splash Point, April 2014 (Matt Eade)

Red-breasted Goose*Branta ruficollis**Very rare vagrant.*

One was tracked along the coast among migrating Dark-bellied Brent Geese on the morning of 3 Apr, and was seen at Selsey Bill (CF, PDM, DIS), Splash Point (Seaford) (MRE) and Birling Gap (MEC, RHC). The record was accepted by BBRC and was presumed to be the bird that had wintered in Hampshire and was probably the seventh individual seen in the county since the first record in 1958, though birds have been recorded in the county in seven of the last eight years. Another bird that continued to frequent the Henfield Levels/Beeding Brooks area up until 10 Mar, and present at Pulborough Brooks from 18 Oct to 10 Nov, before returning to the Henfield Levels on 18 Nov (mo) was considered to be an escape. [AH]

Egyptian Goose*Alopochen aegyptiaca**Very scarce introduced resident; bred for the first time in 2000.*

During the year birds were seen in 40 widespread tetrads (cf. 33 in 2013), representing a further expansion of range across the county. Many of the sightings continue to be in areas where initial colonisation of the county occurred, notably around Petworth, in the Arun Valley and in the Rye Hbr area. However, with records in several months at each of the Knepp Estate, Warnham LNR, the R Adur between Henfield and Partridge Green, the Tilgate Park area, the lower Cuckmere, Arlington Res and Bewl Water, this is a bird that is now scattered across the county, albeit in very small numbers.

The peak count in the spring was 13 on 23 Apr at the Petworth Park stronghold. There were perhaps six or seven successful records of breeding in the county. Three or four well-grown young were at Pulborough Brooks on 7 May; three goslings were on the Knepp Estate on 31 May; a pair bred at Rye Hbr; a pair had the help of a large farmyard goose in raising a brood of six at Benbow Pond (Cowdray Park); there were two fledged young with an adult in the lower Cuckmere valley at Charleston Reedbed on 7 Jul, which were considered to have probably been raised locally; and a family was reported at Sidlesham Ferry on 20 Aug.

In the second half of the year, five on the R Adur near Shoreham Airport on 29 Nov was a notable count and location, but the year's peak count was at Scotney GP, where there were 18 on 31 Dec. [AT]

Common Shelduck*Tadorna tadorna*

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

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as shown in the following table.

The January-March WeBS totals were all lower than the 10-year average, with the February and March totals being the lowest on record for those months.

The counts from seawatching sites were typically unpredictable, with small numbers seen in almost any month of the year flying in both directions. For example, in 375 hours of watching at Selsey Bill in April and May, there were totals of just 14 E and 39 W.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	785	700	617	474	322	174	71	38	38	31	226	550
Chichester Hbr	309	363	255	155	56	25	35	19	6	12	121	288
Medmerry	14	24	15	25	40	19	-	-	2	-	18	19
Pagham Hbr	290	177	166	167	121	60	22	16	30	5	62	172
Arun Valley	35	32	47	43	42	34	10	1	-	-	13	37
Rye Bay	132	73	104	78	61	36	3	2	-	14	11	30

The number of reports of successful breeding continues to be low. The first record was of four ducklings at Arundel WWT on the very early date of 29 Mar. The next brood seen was at Sidlesham Ferry on 30 Apr. Across the county breeding records were received from Thorney Island (17 ducklings on 22 Jun), Pagham Hbr (probably the most important site in the county, where 24 juveniles were reported in the 'crèche' at Sidlesham Ferry on 17 Jun and 42 birds there on the 27th included 'many juveniles'), Arundel WWT (where the peak duckling count was 25 on 25 May, although few probably fledged), Pulborough Brooks (at least two pairs with at least ten young), the Ouse Valley (a maximum of three broods but possible just one in the Iford/Rodmell/Glynde Reach area), the lower Cuckmere (one pair with four young), Pett Level (one pair with two young), Rye Hbr (at least two pairs with eight young) and the River Rother/Rye Saltings area (one to two pairs).

The WeBS counts from July through to the end of the year were all lower than the 10-year average, with numbers in October and November especially low. When you consider that the 1993 December county total WeBS count was 1788, compared with 550 in 2014, you get a sense of the declining fortunes of this species in the county. [AT]

Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Scarce introduced resident.

There were records from 64 tetrads, a slight increase on 2013, but this species is under-recorded on an annual basis given that its stronghold is in the woodlands and hammer ponds of the Weald, away from the main birdwatching sites.

The highest count in the first winter period was 23 at Arundel WWT on 12 Feb.

During the breeding season, there were records of successful breeding at Arundel WWT, Strood Green, Waltham Brooks, Pulborough Brooks, Leonardslee Furnace Pond, Buchan Park, Balcombe, Wadhurst Park Estate, Mountfield and Troutbeck. However, Weir Wood Res continues to be the best monitored site, with ten boxes occupied in the nestbox scheme there on 22 Apr, with eight of those nests containing 152 eggs. One box on 6 May had 20 ducklings ready to jump and another two eggs yet to hatch, showing how prolific this species can be in the right circumstances.

In the second half of the year, there were 52 at Weir Wood Res in October (the highest count in the county in 2014), 30 at Burton MP on 16 Dec, 28 at Wadhurst Park Estate on 2 Dec, 23 at Bewl Water on 20 Nov and 20 at Warnham LNR on 19 Oct.

The only coastal records were singles which flew east at Splash Point (Seaford) on 28 Apr and 5 May. [AT]

Eurasian Wigeon*Anas penelope*

Common winter visitor, scarce on observed passage. Very scarce in summer; does not breed. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	10,889	6443	1666	16	-	-	-	43	1328	3752	5409	9193
Chichester Hbr	1792	1162	998	8	-	-	-	42	1166	1359	1569	2062
Pagham Hbr	877	1150	82	4	-	-	-	-	82	287	1020	1030
Arun Valley	3811	1335	132	3	-	-	-	1	20	1005	1591	3993
Ouse Valley	530	600	120	-	-	-	-	-	2	28	94	310
Rye Bay	2576	1566	195	1	-	-	-	-	25	739	483	1128

The five-figure total in January almost exactly matched the 10-year average, with 2714 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 20 Jan the highest single-site count of the year. On the same day, there were 1155 at Scotney GP. However, there was then a large movement out of the county such that numbers had dropped by over 40% by the February WeBS count, the lowest count that month since 2002. The March total was even poorer, the lowest since 1995. Estimates of 1379 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Mar and 1000 there on 9th and 1000 at Rye Hbr on the 12th were the only four-figure counts that month.

Birds on the move were occasionally recorded at seawatching sites through the winter and passage periods, but typically in very low numbers. The day-count of 35 E on 1 Jan at Birling Gap was the highest count in the first half of the year. The highest in West Sussex was of 24 W on 5 Jan at Selsey Bill.

There were just three records in the county in May, three in June and none in July, with no suspicion of breeding.

The first returning birds, bar one at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Aug, were 42 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 13 Aug. The first three-figure count was 100 at Thorney Island on 4 Sep, with 400 at Sidlesham Ferry on 17 Sep and 1060 at Thorney Deepes on 25 Sep. The best seawatching counts came from Selsey Bill, with totals of 30 E and 147 W in September.

In the second winter period, WeBS counts were all very close to the 10-year average, with the highest single-site count of 2391 at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Dec. [AT]

Gadwall*Anas strepera*

Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder; fairly common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as shown in the following table.

Following on from high WeBS totals in Dec 2013, the January count was the highest ever for that month. The count of 440 at Castle Pit (Rye Hbr) on 18 Jan was one of the highest single-site counts ever in the county and indeed most of the largest counts throughout the year were from Rye Hbr.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1021	620	261	101	32	96	72	63	278	253	277	737
Chichester Hbr	66	48	19	2	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	30
Chichester GP	50	2	6	4	2	nc	nc	nc	44	32	22	63
Burton & Chingford Ponds	10	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	24	nc	10
Arun Valley	153	167	46	38	15	31	15	15	62	63	72	96
Barcombe Res	38	74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8	26
Eastbourne Lakes	53	40	16	1	-	-	-	-	16	8	20	48
Bewl Water	19	7	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	6	-	32	85
Powdermill Res	89	27	nc	-	-	nc	-	-	nc	2	12	10
Rye Bay	497	214	150	46	6	63	53	43	129	115	88	314

By the time of the February WeBS count, however, there had been a drop in numbers in the county of almost 40% (cf. Eurasian Wigeon and Eurasian Teal). The highest count of the year from Chichester GP was on 2 Feb, when there were 110, much lower than the usual maximum at that site.



Gadwall, Arundel WWT, April 2014 (Nick Bond)

Very small numbers passed seawatching sites on spring migration, with a day maximum of 7 E on 31 Mar at Worthing and 11 E at Selsey Bill on 16 Apr. Two flying east at Selsey Bill on 6 Jun was an unusually late date.

In the breeding season, the most important site by far was Pett Level, where 28 pairs produced 13 broods. Most were predated when very young, the likely culprits being mink and pike.

Other records of breeding came from Arundel WWT, where there were an exceptional 45 ducklings on 18 May but predation levels here were also very high. Small numbers of ducklings from single broods were also produced at Medmerry, Waltham Brooks, Glynde Reach, and possibly at Pagham Hbr and Amberley Wild Brooks. There was no evidence of breeding at Rye Hbr.

In the autumn, there were 92 at Rye Hbr by 7 Sep but it took a long time for numbers at any other site to build appreciably. The WeBS counts during the second winter period were all close to the 10-year average, with a peak single-site count of 274 at Rye Hbr on 7 Dec. The highest counts elsewhere were 85 at Bewl Water on 6 Dec and 71 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 8 Dec. [AT]

Eurasian Teal

Anas crecca

Rare breeder and scarce summering non-breeder; common winter visitor and fairly common on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	6358	3415	2595	95	-	34	79	164	1281	2751	4149	4752
Chichester Hbr	529	760	516	-	-	-	-	6	505	424	205	1407
Medmerry	505	247	77	17	-	8	30	59	83	310	396	236
Pagham Hbr	569	412	272	30	-	-	11	16	123	182	616	997
Arun Valley	3049	672	1046	16	-	17	6	35	240	1269	2330	802
Ouse Valley	160	280	152	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	25	184
Rye Bay	1013	694	152	32	-	3	17	25	192	416	382	656

The high WeBS counts in the second winter period of 2013 carried over into Jan 2014, which had the third highest total for that month on record. The highest single-site count in the first winter period was 2414 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 20 Jan. Numbers then dropped away sharply by the time of the February count and again into March. The last three-figure flock was at Pagham Hbr, with 102 on 27 Mar. By April very few birds were left, with the WeBS count that month the lowest on record.

Small numbers were recorded passing seawatching sites in winter and during migration periods, with a clear peak in March. Observers at Birling Gap recorded the highest total that month, with 310 E, including 109 on 8 Mar and 151 on 31 Mar. However, note how only two were recorded in April at Splash Point (Seaford), in 119 hours of observation, reinforcing that the exodus is pretty much complete by the end of March.

In the breeding season, there were small numbers seen sporadically at regular locations such as Pulborough Brooks (maximum of ten on 16 Jun), Pett Level (maximum of 14 on 25 Jun), Pagham Hbr (maximum of 30 on 9 Jul) and Medmerry (maximum of 20 on 24 Jul). However, the only breeding record was of two pairs raising no broods at Pett Level. Despite the species' secretive nature, it is possible that no pairs bred successfully in the county.

Numbers began to pick up in late August, with 60 at Thorney Deeps on 22 Aug and 120 there by 27 Aug. On 1 Sep, 303 were counted at Pulborough Brooks.

Numbers recorded during WeBS counts in the second winter period were around the 10-year average. The highest single-site count was 2200 at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Nov. [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
County total	3643	2502	1589	1183	1153	1570	1751	2833	3216	4638	3351	3632
Chichester Hbr	555	292	185	62	13	37	48	40	377	457	385	374
Pagham Hbr	123	52	39	43	97	112	124	75	238	138	166	151
Arun Valley	529	556	641	554	525	861	480	882	809	1379	740	775
Angmering Decoy Ponds	117	29	39	31	28	11	428	300	266	331	216	62
Arlington Res	103	37	83	52	31	37	64	112	155	130	104	182
Bewl Water	258	218	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	418	380	213	266	314
Rye Bay	1006	475	147	99	58	261	197	366	277	563	285	483

The peak county total of 4638 birds occurred in October, encouragingly maintaining the upturn in wintering numbers seen over recent years after the declines around the turn of this century. As always, the Arun Valley held the largest resident population (of over 500 birds). The concentration of eclipse birds was particularly evident at Angmering Decoy Ponds, where 428 were recorded in July. On the same date there were also another 50 eclipse birds at the nearby Poling Fishing Ponds.

Mallard were widely distributed, being recorded in 366 tetrads (about a third). During the SWBS, they were recorded in 29 of the 95 1-km squares during the early winter survey and in 35 of 136 1-km squares during the late winter survey. During the two BBS they were recorded in 96 of the 164 1-km squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in at least 44 tetrads, ca. 59 sites, both large and small. The first record of ducklings was at Arundel WWT on 21 Feb. At Duncton Common a nest with five eggs was recorded on 27 Feb as having been predated. Records of successful breeding continued through to mid-July. A nest with 16 eggs was found at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 16 Mar, a female with 11 ducklings (at least ten days old) was at Tanyard Pond (Henfield) on 6 May and broods of ten ducklings were recorded at Apuldram on 10 Apr, Pulborough Brooks on 15 Apr, Pett Level on 22 Apr and Mewsbrook Park (Littlehampton) on 8 Jun. At Rye Hbr 21 nests or broods were recorded.

At Troutbeck, the year's last breeding was recorded on 19 Dec when eight ducklings were seen, although "none survived for more than a few days". This is the latest date that a brood of Mallard ducklings has been recorded in Sussex.

Seawatching records were typically low with a total of only 34 birds recorded across the whole year (29 E and 5 W), with 16 E in March being the peak month when the peak day-count 9 E past Birling Gap on the 8th. [JRC]

Pintail*Anas acuta*

Fairly common winter visitor and scarce on observed passage; 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
County total	732	373	30	-	-	-	1	-	22	149	246	569
Chichester Hbr	16	3	7	-	-	-	1	-	20	16	14	109
Medmerry	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	13	-
Pagham Hbr	237	44	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	60	82	283
Arun Valley	467	306	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	137	165
Ouse Valley	-	10	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The peak winter count was 732 in January, up on the 490 and 531 peaks in 2012 and 2013, but still well below the 1000 plus averages seen at the end of the last century. With the wettest winter in 250 years in the first winter period numbers were high in the flooded Arun Valley with both the January and February WeBS counts exceeding the 290 threshold for this site to remain nationally important for this species. In contrast the relatively dry and mild second winter period saw much lower numbers there. The only sizable count at Chichester Hbr was in December, and numbers there were otherwise particularly low over the rest of the year.

Significant counts not reflected in the WeBS table were no less than 800 at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Jan and an equally impressive 400 at Beeding Brooks, in the flooded Adur Valley, on 17 Feb, 335 at Pulborough Brooks on the 3rd and 200 at Amberley Brooks on the 12th (which was also the last three-figure count in the county). The movement to the flooded inland valleys from the western harbours was particularly evident in the first winter period.

Whilst numbers were, as always, concentrated in West Sussex, there were also the two highest-ever records in East Sussex when 50 were recorded at Scotney GP on 2 Jan (the previous high was 16 on 13 Mar 2005) and 49 were on the seashore at Rye Hbr on 20 Feb (the previous high was 44 loafing offshore on 23 Mar 2004).

Substantial numbers stayed on into March but numbers declined rapidly thereafter and the last bird, a single at Rye Hbr, was recorded on 7 May. On 10 Jul a drake was recorded at Thorney Deeps for one day only.

At Pett Level at least one was recorded on 24 Aug whilst the first returning birds at Pagham Hbr were not recorded until 3 Sep, when five were present. The build-up of returning birds was slow with only 34 at Pagham Hbr by the end of the month and the first birds at Pulborough Brooks were four on 4 Oct. Thereafter, numbers increased slowly across the county during the mild second winter period until December, when larger numbers appeared, particularly in the western harbours.

Although 21 W were noted at Selsey Bill on 19 Jan movements during the first winter period were in only very small numbers. Spring passage occurred mainly in March when 112 E were recorded, the highest daily count being 41 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 8th. Westward autumn passage was much lighter and involved a total of ten at Selsey Bill in October and 36 W there on 28 Dec. [JRC]

Garganey*Anas querquedula*

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

The first birds of the year was one recorded at Charleston Reedbed on 13 Mar, five days later than the 10-year average arrival date, and probably 2 E flew past Seaford Head the same day. Four were then recorded at Rye Hbr on 22 Mar, and three at Pett Level on the 30th, when 1 E was noted passing Worthing, making a total of nine (possibly 11) birds for March, quite a slow start to the year.

During April, possibly as many as 21 were recorded, an unremarkable number. One was at Widney Brooks (Arun Valley) on the 4th, singles were at Pulborough Brooks on the 7th and the 13th, a male was at Arlington Res on the 10th and two males were at Steyning Levels on the 13th. Two flew past Splash Point (Seaford) and Beachy Head on the 16th with another two past Splash Point on the 17th. The first bird at Pagham Hbr was recorded at Sidlesham on the 18th and one at Pett Level on the 20th was joined by another on the 21st. Also on the 21st there were three at Waltham Brooks and two at Pulborough Brooks. One, a male, at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 27th was followed by one at Sidlesham on the 29th and another, presumably different, at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th.

In May, the one at Pagham was joined by another on the 3rd and both remained until the 14th when another was recorded there on the 25th. On the 4th a drake flew past Ferring. One at Rye Hbr also on the 4th was followed by a pair on the 18th. On the 13th and 15th a single was at Scotney GP, on the 17th two were at Lewes Brooks, on the 18th two were at Pevensey Levels and three flew east past Beachy Head and, finally, one was at Pett Level on the 24th, making the month's total a possible 17.

In the Arun Valley during April, May and early June there were regular reports of up to three at Pulborough and nearby Waltham Brooks. They were usually described as two males and a female but two females were also recorded so it appears that two pairs were present. However, although courtship and display was observed on the 4th at Pulborough Brooks and mating on the 17th, no evidence confirming breeding was recorded at either site. On 4 Jun a male was seen at Waltham Brooks. From 18 Jul to 4 Sep there were almost daily records of up to four birds at Pulborough Brooks or Waltham Brooks. These records included three immatures at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Aug and two "females/juveniles" at Waltham Brooks on 27 Jul and 4 Sep. The record of the male in June and the regularity of sightings of two to four birds later in the summer suggest that two pairs summered in the Arun valley; just possibly one of the pairs may have successfully bred.

At Pett Level, two birds were recorded on the 21 Apr and they were joined by a second pair, one of which successfully bred, but the brood was predated (probably by mink or pike). On 5 Jun the two males there were recorded going into eclipse. At Rye Hbr the first bird seen was a drake on 4 May, and a pair successfully bred. A second pair was at Rye Hbr on 18 May, but did not stay.

In August, in the Arun Valley, there were two to four birds through the month. Elsewhere, autumn passage was confined to up to five birds at Rodmell (Ouse Valley) between 3 and 9 Aug, one at Arundel WWT on 20 Aug, two at Rye Hbr on 23 Aug (the only record at Rye Hbr for that month) and the year's last bird was seen at West Rise Marsh on 1 Oct, one day earlier than the 10-year average departure date.

In summary, it therefore appears that 29 to 32 birds passed through on spring passage, five pairs summered and nine passed through on autumn passage, overall an average year for migrating numbers but a reasonable one for summering birds. [JRC]

Shoveler*Anas clypeata*

Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder; common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1031	874	446	72	11	27	22	11	91	308	612	933
Pagham Hbr	40	91	58	13	2	1	-	-	-	11	32	12
Chichester GP	126	-	34	-	-	nc	nc	nc	5	54	30	111
Arun Valley	222	143	74	13	3	4	6	6	18	56	234	270
Ouse Valley	-	114	45	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	26
Barcombe Res	90	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	7	49	39
Eastbourne Lakes	156	206	46	-	-	-	-	-	12	47	152	206
Wadhurst Park	-	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc	nc	13	-	nc	-
Rye Bay	362	292	186	46	6	16	12	5	37	123	82	25

After all-time highs of 844 in February 2011, and 897 in February 2013, overwintering numbers attained a new county high in 2014 with the 1031 WeBS count in January, whilst the second winter peak of 933 in December was the second highest. The January counts of 362 at Rye Bay and 90 at Barcombe Res were also the highest ever for these sites. A significant count not included in the WeBS table above was 120 on the flooded Breeding Brooks (Adur Valley) on 4 Jan and again on 16 Feb, which were the largest numbers ever recorded there.

Numbers in the first winter period started to decline rapidly after the mid-February WeBS count although 186 were still in Rye Bay for the mid-March count. From May through mid-August counts were mainly in single figures with the exception of Pett Level where there were 34 pairs which had 14 broods, however these were mostly predated by mink and pike. Breeding was confirmed at Arundel WWT and the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) but at Rye Hbr, despite the presence of six adults (four drakes) in mid-May, breeding was not proven.

Small numbers also summered at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Arundel WWT, Pulborough Brooks, Warnham LNR (where an eclipse male was seen on 22 Jun) and Rye Hbr.

Birds returning for the second winter period appeared in Rye Bay in September but it was October before numbers really started to build up across the rest of the county and November before sizable numbers were present, ahead of the very high numbers in December.

Some good numbers passed seawatching sites during the year, 302 in total (35 W and 267 E). Spring passage occurred primarily in March (161 E) and Apr (85 E) with the peak count being 71 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 8 Mar. [JRC]

Common Pochard*Aythya farina*

Very scarce breeder: scarce summer non-breeder and fairly common winter visitor. Very scarce on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as shown in the following table. The January peak of 417 was the lowest this century and reflects the continuing steep decline in

wintering numbers whose peak, as recently as 1999-2004, averaged 1300 (*The Birds of Sussex*, Thomas 2014). Wintering numbers nationally are also in sharp decline.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	417	114	30	38	14	14	10	227	78	91	220	383
Chichester GP	111	-	2	8	3	nc	nc	nc	52	12	97	134
Burton & Chingford Ponds	6	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	nc	8
Wicks Fm Res	-	5	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	28
Arun Valley	29	30	6	17	5	7	4	-	-	10	11	28
Weir Wood Res	10	6	-	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Novington SP	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barcombe Res	27	4	1	-	-	-	1	3	1	4	13	23
Eastbourne Lakes	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
Bewl Water	13	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	5	29
Rye Bay	200	42	12	12	2	7	5	223	25	59	84	107

As usual, Chichester GP, Rye Hbr and Scotney GP, were the main wintering sites in the county. From the last week of January numbers started to decline rapidly and the February WeBS total was less than a third of the January one, possibly reflecting the mild winter. Indeed, the totals of 20 birds at Rye Hbr on 16 Feb and at Warnham LNR on 10 Mar (a one-off record) were not exceeded anywhere until the second winter period birds started arriving at the end of August.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites. At Arundel WWT, ducklings were first noted on 9 May and a female and six ducklings were seen on the 18th. At Chichester GP two females, each with a brood of five young were seen on 3 Aug. At Pett Level ten pairs summered and three broods were produced but were predated by mink or pike. At Rye Hbr at least two pairs bred and two broods were seen. A total of eight broods at four sites suggests it was another good breeding year for this species.

WeBS counts of 29 birds at Rye Hbr on 10 Aug and 194 at Scotney GP on 14 Aug heralded the arrival of birds for the second winter period. A female at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 31 Aug was the first summer record there. At Chichester GP 20 were at Ivy Lake on 29 Aug increasing to 52 on 7 Sep. However, most of these birds moved on and it was not until November that the numbers of resident wintering birds built up. On 30 Dec 24 were at Burton MP. Few Pochard are recorded at seawatching sites; only 2 W were recorded at Worthing on 23 Oct. [JRC]

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Fairly common resident although scarce breeder: fairly common winter visitor and scarce on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as shown in the table below. The January peak of 1305 continued the small upward trend in wintering numbers seen over recent years, bringing the average 5-year maximum for 2010-14 to 1228. During February and March numbers across the county fell by about a third from the January peak and after mid-March fell steadily until mid-May. Notable numbers additional to the WeBS table were 91 at Southwater CP on 2 Jan, 53 at Warnham LNR on 29 Jan, 105 at Chichester GP on 5 Jul, 100 at Darwell Res on 28 Dec and 90 at Southwater CP on 31 Dec.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1305	791	743	511	239	286	179	462	370	516	759	1015
Chichester Hbr	47	57	27	23	3	4	6	6	27	34	38	33
Pagham Hbr	30	37	41	39	36	16	12	8	32	20	25	32
Chichester GP	290	59	156	37	39	nc	nc	nc	21	59	131	182
Burton & Chingford Ponds	35	1	16	5	2	3	3	7	17	26	nc	35
Arun Valley	171	138	95	109	71	67	23	27	53	42	89	115
Southwater	54	48	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	33	45	68
Barcombe Res	38	25	29	24	13	41	85	93	22	71	64	35
Eastbourne Lakes	96	65	24	8	-	-	-	-	32	17	50	26
Bewl Water	55	45	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	64	43	2	15	17
Rye Bay	340	222	222	209	63	128	24	200	99	139	186	336

The main summering populations were at Chichester GP, Arun Valley (particularly Arundel WWT), Pett Level and Rye Hbr, but smaller numbers occurred elsewhere. Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads, with at least 50 pairs or broods, and was probable at a further ten sites. The first ducklings were noted at Arundel WWT on 29 Mar and on 11 Jun there were at least five broods of 18 ducklings there, including a brood of ten. At Pagham Hbr breeding was also confirmed at the Breech Pool, Pagham Lagoon and The Severals (Church Norton). On 10 Jul a pair with ten young was seen in Thorney Deep. Three days later two young were amongst 85 adults at Barcombe Res. At Pett Level, observers recorded 67 pairs and 21 broods, although predation by mink and pike was high. At Rye Hbr in mid-May nine broods were counted, including one of ten ducklings and, on 10 Aug a pair with four ducklings was noted. At Chichester GP there were four females, each with a brood of young on 3 Aug. There were no records of breeding at Bewl Water, but this may have been due to lack of breeding records at this site.

The August WeBS counts showed an influx of birds to the county with 115 at Scotney GP on the 14th, but it was November before wintering numbers built up noticeably across the county.

During the year 25 birds (23 E, 2 W) were recorded passing seawatching sites, a typical annual total. The peak count was 16 E at Selsey Bill on 30 Jan. [JRC]

Greater Scaup

Aythya marila

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

Greater Scaup were reported at more predictable times of the year, following the summer birds recorded in 2013. There were also more records than the previous year, though spread over fewer months. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
No. of birds	3	8	6		2	2

The earliest report was of a male present at Long Pit (Rye Hbr) on 11-12 and 19-20 Jan. It or a different bird was joined by a second on the reserve on 21 Feb. Two were at Chichester GP on 19 Jan. A female was present on floodwater near Greatham Bridge from 21 Feb to 11 Mar. Four were at Scotney GP on 7 Mar with three still there on the following day.

Early spring passage was marked by 5 E at Birling Gap on 23 Feb which was the only record from seawatching sites.

The first record of the second winter period was at Scotney GP on 10 Nov and it or another bird remained at Scotney for the rest of the year. A first winter drake was at Arlington Res on 22 Nov and at Barcombe Res a first winter drake was present on 7 Dec, perhaps the same one. [PD]

Common Eider

Somateria mollissima

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

The year 2014 continued the improving trend for Common Eiders in Sussex with birds recorded in every month of the year. An immature male and a female summering off Pilsey Island were noted from 29 Apr to 13 Aug. The highest numbers were recorded by seawatchers and the following table, based on an analysis of the counts from the main seawatching sites, shows the numbers of this species seen passing the county. A small spring eastward movement is evident from this with peak counts at the end of March of 48 E at Selsey Bill on the 30th, and on the following day 38 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 19 E at Birling Gap.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
East	7	20	96	54	33	3		-	-	5	2
West	5	2	12	25	6	-		1	6	15	



Common Eider, Selsey Bill, April 2014 (Andrew House)

Although small numbers were recorded offshore from several locations the highest numbers were seen between Church Norton and Selsey Bill, the maxima recorded there in each month is shown in the table.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
7	2	1	18	10	10	11	9	11	3	3	1

Small numbers, possibly involving the same birds, were also seen in Chichester Hbr throughout the year with a maximum of four on 16 Feb. Elsewhere the only notable record was also of four in Newhaven Hbr on 3 Jan. [PD, JAN]

Long-tailed Duck

Clangula hyemalis

Very scarce to scarce passage migrant and winter visitor; rare non-breeder in summer. Schedule 1 species.

A very conservative analysis of the records suggests the minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Nov	Dec	Total
No. of birds	7	6	7	2		1	2	11

During the first winter period Long-tailed Ducks were recorded from the Selsey peninsula and Rye Bay. At the former site up to four were seen on 31 dates between 2 Jan and 25 Apr with the maxima of four offshore at Church Norton on 2 Jan and at Selsey Bill on the 4th. Three remained, either at or passing these locations, or in Chichester Hbr until 30 Mar. Thereafter only one was seen until 25 Apr. At Rye Bay there were at least three individuals seen on 41 dates between 1 Jan and 17 Apr. Up to two were regularly seen at Rye Hbr between 1 Jan and 17 Mar whilst one was at Scotney GP between 5 Jan and 17 Apr. Elsewhere the only record was one at Climping on 30 Mar.

Later in the year the only records were 1 W at Ferring on 9 Nov, one offshore at Selsey Bill to days later and 2 W at Worthing on 28 Dec. [JAN]

Common Scoter

Melanitta nigra

Common spring passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor to the coast: usually scarce in summer and autumn. Very scarce inland. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The monthly WeBS counts are not representative of the true numbers in the county as many birds were well offshore and not included. In the first winter period the main wintering site was again Rye Bay with a peak of 250 on 30 Jan. With smaller numbers at other coastal sites, e.g. Selsey Bill, the wintering population was probably over 350 and most of the flying birds were probably moving between local feeding sites. Most Common Scoters were recorded from regular seawatching sites, particularly in spring, where the monthly totals, computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at a single site was the maximum in the county that day and that birds seen on subsequent days were different, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
East	45	61	4479	4263	3754	1013	219	158	83	143	27	101	14,346
West	105	-	-	-	-	25	9	44	9	70	213	58	533

Although the March-May eastwards total of 12,496 was close to last year's record of 13,682, the pattern was different. A summary of the eastbound passage, as recorded at four of the principal sites, was as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Totals
Selsey Bill	1221	1830	2533	5584
Worthing	1158	349	2029	3536
Splash Point	3729	4097	3028	10,854
Birling Gap	2915	3500	2930	9345

Two major peaks in eastwards passage were noted, 28-31 Mar and 5 May with a further minor peak on the 19th, as shown below:

	28 Mar	29 Mar	30 Mar	31 Mar	5 May	19 May
Selsey Bill	236	195	333	290	675	238
Worthing	150	108	437	557	866	114
Splash Point	685	882	683	1051	977	539
Birling Gap	-	604	1042	902	990	590

As the above tables indicate, fewer birds were recorded at Selsey Bill and Worthing than at Birling Gap and particularly Splash Point, where the recorded total was a remarkable 10,317. The other big difference was that April did not dominate in terms of numbers.

While there was a continuing passage in early June (e.g. 206 E at Splash Point on the 2nd and 161 E at Selsey Bill on the 3rd), accompanied by loafing flocks offshore there early in the month, it was not until July that summering flocks built up there with 100-150 between 1 Jul and 8 Aug. In Rye Bay the only significant count during this period was of 100 on 27 Jul.

Through the summer months small parties were noted flying both east and west, presumably from summering/feeding flocks, and this pattern continued through the autumn with, perhaps surprisingly, the dominant direction being eastbound. There were peak counts of feeding or resting flocks of 48 in Rye Bay on 11 Oct, 41 off Selsey Bill on the 23rd, 28 off Medmerry on 27 Nov, 40 there on 16 Dec, 100 off Worthing on 28 Dec but the only substantial flocks were in Rye Bay with 150 on the 9th and 360 on the 13th. There were no records from inland sites. [WGH, JAH]

Velvet Scoter

Melanitta fusca

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor along the coast: rare inland. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Offshore movements recorded at the principal seawatching sites computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at any site was the maximum for the county and that birds seen on subsequent days were different, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Nov	Dec	Totals
East	10	-	6	31	2		3	-	52
West	2	-	-	2	3		1	-	8

In the first winter period the largest movement was 6 E at Selsey Bill on 4 Jan. Up to three were noted offshore between Selsey Bill and Church Norton on several dates. These are much lower numbers than usual with only one report (of two on 26 Jan) from Rye Bay which is usually the most frequented wintering site. The moving birds in January were almost certainly on local feeding flights.

Spring easterly passage began on 2 Mar when two passed Splash Point (Seaford) and three from both Selsey Bill and Worthing on the 31st. The peak movement occurred on 17 Apr with 10 E at Selsey Bill and 12 E at Splash Point. Other notable records included eight offshore at Pett on 21 Apr and 12 at Climping on 26 Apr. The last spring record was of 3 W on 7 May at Worthing. There were no reports of over-summering birds.

The first returning birds were two off both Hastings and Worthing on 1 Nov which were recorded on four dates until 11 Nov. There was also one off Church Norton between 10 and 12 Nov. Three were recorded at Selsey Bill on 6 Nov and on the 8th three flew east and one west at Splash Point. One was at Pagham Hbr on 10 and 12 Nov and there were no December records, presaging another quiet winter for this species in Sussex. [WGH]

Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

Scarce winter visitor: rare non-breeder in summer. Amber listed species of medium 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
County total	25	38	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6
Chichester Hbr	11	23	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Pagham Hbr	7	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chichester GP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Rye Bay	7	10	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3

The first winter period totals are generally representative for the principal sites however there were nine at Rye Hbr on 9 Jan and eight on Pagham Lagoon on 18 Feb and up to five there in early March. In addition at Scotney GP there was one on 12 Jan and three on 16 Feb. At Pulborough Brooks there was one on 31 Jan and two on 7 Feb, and at Bewl Water one on 14 Feb. One was at Drayton Pond (Chichester GP) on 20 Mar, an unusual species for this site. The last of the spring at Pagham Hbr was on 2 Apr and one was recorded inland at Warnham LNR the next day.

The first returning birds were two at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Oct. The next arrivals occurred in the last week of November with up to three at Pagham Hbr from 23-28 Nov, five at Cobnor (Chichester Hbr) on 28 Nov and 10 in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on the 29th. At Pagham Hbr numbers gradually increased to reach five on 21 Dec while at Rye Hbr there were three on 7 Dec and six on 21 Dec with a peak of ten on the 25th. This marked the start of the

second main influx with five at Darwell Res on 28 Dec, seven at both West Itchenor and Birdham (which were probably the same birds) in Chichester Hbr on 29 Dec and nine at Pagham Hbr on 31 Dec. [WGH]

Smew

Mergellus albellus

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

It was an even sparser year than 2013 with just three birds recorded, all in East Sussex. The immature male that arrived at West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) in December 2013 was recorded on four dates between 8 and 21 Jan and on 16 Feb at this site.

In the second winter period the only records were of a redhead recorded from Rye Hbr on four dates between 22 and 31 Dec which was joined by an adult male on 26 Dec. [WGH]

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant along the coast: rare non-breeder in summer. Rare inland.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	236	229	284		8	91	111
Chichester Hbr	189	214	267		8	84	102
Pagham Hbr	39	12	17		-	7	9

As usual Chichester Hbr was by far the most important site. In addition, small groups were frequently seen offshore at Selsey Bill including 27 on 5 Jan and 12 on 26 Feb and 31 Mar. Elsewhere, the most regular other site was off Worthing with counts of up to 45 in January, 38 in February, 39 in March, 23 in April, 30 in November and 22 in December but otherwise numbers mainly in West Sussex were in single figures. Interestingly, the bulk of the Chichester Hbr wintering population left before the main spring passage began with the last on 9 Apr. Most Pagham Hbr birds had left by early April with the last on 3 May.

Passage, as recorded at four of the principal seawatching sites, computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at a single site was the maximum in the county that day and that birds seen on subsequent days were different, was as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
East	77	-	115	21	10		-	10	1
West	-	28	42	-	9		62	84	-

Apart from a small but noticeable eastwards migration in late March which continued to 11 May and a light return passage westwards in the autumn from 12 Oct, most other movements were probably between feeding locations. Birds were recorded frequently at Widewater (Lancing)

between 1 Jan and 12 May, with a peak of 10 on 12 Jan, and again in December with up to five present. There were few records from East Sussex but there were four passing along the beach at Rye Hbr on 5 Nov and 10 W at Rock-a-Nore (Hastings) on 9 Nov. The only inland record was of eight at Arlington Res on 22 Nov. [WGH]



Red-breasted Merganser, Widewater, February 2014 (Luke Dray)

Goosander

Mergus merganser

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Another rather ordinary year is demonstrated in the table below giving minimum monthly totals divided between offshore and inland (fresh and brackish) sites. The majority were, as usual, reported from freshwater sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	3	17	7	1		2	4	19
Offshore sites	1	2	2	-		-	-	-
Inland sites	2	13	5	1		2	4	19

There were records on 26 dates in the first winter period with up to four at Widewater (Lancing) between 8-23 Feb and one on 17 Mar. There were sightings on five dates in March, notably one in Wadhurst Park on 23 Mar, and two males north over Beachy Head on 30 Mar (only the 14th record there in 54 years!), were suggestive of return passage. The last was at Rye Hbr on 13 Apr, exactly a week later than the recent average of 6 Apr.

The first two of the autumn flew along the R Arun near Arundel on 20 Oct, over a fortnight earlier than the recent average of 4 Nov. More widespread arrivals were not until late in November with two at Cuckmere Haven on the 24th and singles at Weir Wood Res on the 25th and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 29th. There were records on 12 dates in December from 13 sites. The most significant arrivals occurred between 27 and 31 Dec with two to three birds appearing at several traditional sites such as Petworth Park and Pagham Hbr. The degree of duplication is not known but up to three drakes and several pairs were reported. [WGH]

Ruddy Duck

Oxyura jamaicensis

Very scarce and declining resident and visitor; subject to culling to reduce numbers.

The only regular site this year was the traditional one in East Sussex where a single female was recorded on 11 dates between 5 Jan and 12 May and five dates between 13 Jun and 24 Aug. There was no evidence of breeding. There were two at the same site on 7 Sep and a single on 27 Dec.

The only other record was of two at Pagham Hbr on 5 Jan. [WGH]

Red-legged Partridge

Alectoris rufa

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

Records were received from 121 tetrads.

During the first winter, the sum of site maximum counts totalled not less than 236, with maxima of 55 at Cradle Hill (Seaford) and 10-20 at six other sites. In spring, the sum of maxima was at least 168 but with individual maxima of only 11 and 12; at 66 sites only 1-4 were counted.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads: at a site between Hastings and Pett Level and at Rye Hbr; was probable in 13 others and possible in seven.

Inevitably, numbers rose in the autumn. The sum of maxima rose to 480 with 11 counts of 10-85 and a maximum of 85 at Keymer on 2 Sep. In the second winter, the sum of maxima dropped to 432. The highest count was 100 at a professional shooting site with feeding bins west of Pagham Hbr; otherwise there were seven counts of 10-36 birds. [JAH]

Grey Partridge

Perdix perdix

Scarce resident, much declined but benefiting locally through conservation effort. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The fortunes of this species in the county are dramatically illustrated by a comparison between events on that part of the Norfolk Estate in West Sussex, where the land is managed specifically to encourage this species, and the rest of the county. Excluding the Norfolk Estate records were received for 49 1-km squares in the west and 14 in the east of the county. A survey of the Norfolk Estate over several days in September by estate staff counted no less than 2250 birds. For the rest of the county the total of the maximum counts for each 1-km square during the year was only 338, 283 in the west and 55 in the east. While in the west there were seven maximum site (1-km square) counts of 10 to 20 birds the only similar count in the east was of 18 at Rye Hbr. Many counts did not exceed four birds.

A survey on the Norfolk Estate between 14 May and 26 Jun recorded 297 pairs (presumably probable breeders). A breeding survey at Rye Hbr counted six pairs. Elsewhere breeding was confirmed in five 1-km squares and was probable in four. [JAH]

Quail

Coturnix coturnix

Scarce summer visitor; recorded in variable numbers from year to year. Formerly occasional in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The year 2014 was a rather better year for this secretive summer visitor, usually located only by the male's loud staccato song. Some 15, presumably all calling males, were recorded from 11 downland sites divided 5:6 between West and East Sussex. One was actually seen during a survey of the Norfolk Estate between 14 May and 26 Jun and one, possibly the same, was heard singing at The Burgh (Burpham) on 16 Aug. Single birds were also recorded near Cissbury on 24 Jun, heard and seen at the usually reliable site at Steep Down (Lancing) on 9-11 Jul and heard at Southwick Hill on the 21st with two heard near Edburton Hill on the 25th. The earliest record in East Sussex was of a singing bird at Cornish Fm (Beachy Head) in the evenings of 7-8 Jun and another at Pea Down (East Dean) on the 13th. Elsewhere, single singing birds were heard at Ditchling Beacon on several dates between 2 and 24 Jul, at Ashcombe Bottom (Lewes) on the 16th and near Bopeep (Alciston) on the 22nd. Three were recorded at Five Lords Burgh (Denton) on 23 Jul. [JAH]

Common Pheasant

Phasianus colchicus

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

Birds were recorded in 431 tetrads, a slight increase in recording compared with last year. Of the 2722 records received, 729 (26.8%) were for 'present only'.

The highest counts recorded were: in the first winter period, 120 at Cocking on 25 Jan; in the spring, 44 at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 7 Mar; in the autumn, considerably more than 100 at Compton on 6 Sep where 'enormous numbers of young birds (were seen) in this and surrounding 1-km squares', presumably after release before the shooting season. In the second winter period there were 95 at Cocking on 27 Nov. The total count during the SWBS in the second winter period was 678 from 84 of 136 1-km squares surveyed. The variability in numbers counted during the seasons (after eliminating repeat counts at the same 1-km site) was as follows:

	First winter	Spring	Autumn	Second winter
Highest count	120	44	100++	95
No. records 10 to highest	20	54	24	34
No. records 1-4	106	817	165	226

Wild breeding was confirmed in five sites, was probable in a further 24 and birds were seen in 53 additional sites of suitable nesting habitat. Breeding at Rye Hbr was reported only as 'widespread'. At Pagham Hbr a total of four pairs was recorded breeding.

The fields surrounding the west side of Pagham Hbr were reported as being used as a professional shoot and included feeding bins. The only unusual behaviour noted was of one seen running for cover beyond the shoreline of West Beach (Littlehampton) on 12 Nov. [JAH]

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

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

The estimated annual total of 1517 was less than half the 2013 total and also below the 10-year rolling average of 1957.

In line with previous years the estimated monthly totals have been arrived at by taking the highest daily counts of birds moving either east or west along the coast during the month plus the largest ‘offshore’ count during the month together with any inland records.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
400	44	663	199	33	1	-	-	1	9	33	134

The estimated totals for coastal passage at four seawatching sites and the estimated totals for all seawatching records were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total*	275	42	613	197	33	1		1	9	31	127
Selsey Bill	71	14	79	72	7	-		1	9	27	93
Worthing	110	14	101	30	4	-		-	5	8	90
Splash Point	144	-	490	134	15	-		-	1	2	-
Birling Gap	118	18	334	124	22	-		-	-	-	-

*adjusted to compensate for duplication

Numbers during the first two months of the year were particularly low with the only significant movements being 93 W off Splash Point on 24 Jan and 67 E past Birling Gap the following day. The Jan total of 400 was boosted by 125 in Rye Bay on 20th. Spring passage was light with 168 E past Birling Gap on 30 Mar the only three-figure count. Although easterly passage continued until 25 May (when there was 1 E off Worthing), overall numbers were low with a peak count of 59 E passing Birling Gap on 5 Apr. The largest offshore gathering during this period was 50 in Rye Bay on 24 Mar.

An unusual record involved a bird in non-breeding plumage offshore at Felpham on 14 Jun. The first returning bird was 1 W off Selsey Bill on 18 Sep but it wasn’t until the last few days of the year when the first double-figure counts were recorded with 48 W off Worthing on 28 Dec and 10E off Selsey Bill on both 30 and 31 Dec.

There were no records during the year of birds away from the open sea or tidal harbours. [DHH]

Black-throated Diver*Gavia arctica*

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

The estimated 2014 total of 105 was not only lower than last year's figure of 143 but also below the 10-year rolling average of 124. This reduced annual total was largely the result of unusually low numbers at both the beginning and the end of the year. The estimated monthly totals are shown below and have been calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Nov	Dec
6	4	11	53	24		3	4

The monthly totals for coastal passage at four seawatching sites together with the estimated total of all seawatching records were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Nov	Dec
Monthly total*	4	2	9	50	23		3	3
Selsey Bill	1	1	4	13	2		1	2
Worthing	3	1	2	3	2		1	-
Splash Point	-	-	3	26	16		-	1
Birling Gap	-	-	1	21	20		-	-

**adjusted to compensate for duplication*

During the first three months of the year no more than two birds were recorded on any day. Spring passage was generally light although the figures were boosted by two easterly movements past Birling Gap involving 18 birds on 26 Apr and 17 on 5 May. The last spring record was of 1 E at Selsey Bill on 26 May which is in line with the 10-year average.

The first returning bird was 1 W off Selsey Bill on the late date of 12 Nov which is over a month later than the 10-year average. The species then remained unusually scarce for the rest of the year.

The only record away from the open sea or tidal harbours was at Scotney GP on 5 Jan. [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	Jun		Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	3	5	17	19	9	1		2	8	10
Max. off Selsey Bill	3	5	15	16	8	1		2	7	8

Selsey Bill is becoming an increasingly important wintering area for this species with the maximum day counts continuing to rise each year. In January the maximum count was three but this had risen to five by mid-February. However it was in March and April that numbers rose dramatically from nine on 2 Mar to 15 by the end of that month rising to a new maximum of 16 on 12 Apr. Numbers declined only slowly to 10 on 29 Apr, nine on 11 May with eight still present on 17 May. The last spring record was of one on 3 Jun which was seven days earlier than in 2013. Away from the Selsey area evidence of spring passage involved singles offshore at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 29 Mar and Climping on 16 Apr together with 1W at Splash Point on 25 Mar, 1E at Birling Gap on 10 Apr and a further 1W at Splash Point on 5 May.

The first returning bird was recorded at Selsey Bill on 24 Oct (five days earlier than in 2013) and numbers rose in that area to seven on 9 Nov and eight by the end of the year. Birds recorded in the Church Norton and Chichester Hbr areas are all assumed to emanate from the Selsey Bill. Apart from birds entering Chichester Hbr on a regular basis, single birds also visited Medmerry on 30 Apr and again from 5 Nov to 4 Dec. Away from the Selsey area the only record in the latter half of the year was of one in Rye Bay on 2 Dec. [DHH]

Diver species

The difficulties involved in the specific identification of distant divers in flight are well documented and as a result, one in six of all divers seen in flight during 2014 were reported as ‘Diver sp’.

The number of divers recorded at four seawatching sites during the periods January to May and October to December are shown in the table below.

	Diver sp		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
Selsey Bill	78	45	254	136	24	4	356	185	0.65	1.11
Worthing	31	14	261	104	11	1	303	119	1.85	1.72
Splash Point	212	2	790	3	45	1	1047	6	3.61	-
Birling Gap	30	-	622	-	42	-	694	-	4.44	-

The totals for each site have been calculated by adding the monthly totals of birds recorded moving both east and west to the numbers seen on the sea. No allowance has been made for duplication either at or between sites so the columns should not be totalled. [DHH]

White-billed Diver

Gavia adamsii

Very rare vagrant.

A first summer bird was photographed on the sea off Birling Gap on 21 Apr (DC, JFC, BK, PJN). The bird remained offshore for 20 minutes before flying off eastwards. This is the fifth county record and the first since 2007. [DHH]

Fulmar*Fulmaris glacialis*

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

No complete surveys of breeding birds were undertaken but the number of birds recorded at sea cliffs during the breeding season included 11 at Rottingdean, 26 at Newhaven and 30 at Cliff End (Pett).

Although feeding movements were recorded fairly regularly between March and August there were no three-figure counts. A typical movement occurred on 26 Apr when there were 26 W and 11E at Selsey Bill, 13 E and 7 W at Worthing, 39 E and 1 W at Telscombe Cliffs and 27 E and 2 W at Birling Gap. Peak counts in other months included 20 E at Splash Point on 7 Mar, 31 W at Selsey Bill on 10 May, 20 E off Selsey Bill on 5 Jul and 50 E off Birling Gap on 10 Aug.

The last birds were seen at Telscombe Cliffs on 6 Sep, Beachy Head on 13 Sep and Seaford Head on 6 Oct with the first returning bird at Hastings CP on 1 Nov.

There were no inland records of Fulmars during the year. [DHH]

Sooty Shearwater*Puffinus griseus*

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

Following a blank year in 2013, the species was recorded on just two dates with a total of three or possibly four birds. On 6 Oct there were 2 E off Worthing (DIS) and at least one off Splash Point, Seaford (RCS *et al.*) which may have been one of the Worthing birds. The following day a single bird was seen off Splash Point (RCS). The 10-year average is 14 but it is seven years since a significant movement occurred off the Sussex coast. [DHH]

Manx Shearwater*Puffinus puffinus*

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

The estimated total (calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver) of just 46 was extremely disappointing. This is the lowest annual total this century and barely a fifth of the 10-year rolling average of 236. The monthly totals at four sites are shown in the table below.

	Mar		Apr		May		Jun		July		Aug	
County totals *	2		6		26		-		5		7	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	-	2	-	2	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	1
Worthing	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	1
Splash Point	-	-	5	-	22	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Birling Gap	-	-	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	3
Other sites	-	-	-	-	3*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*adjusted to compensate for duplication; #1 E off Climping and 2 E off Newhaven

The first record of the year was of 1 W off Selsey Bill on 3 Mar. Over 50% of the total sightings occurred during the periods of 7-11 May and 23-25 May but with no daily counts of more than six birds. There were no records at all in June which in the past has been a good month for sightings. The last record of the year was of 3 W past Birling Gap on 30 Aug whereas historically there have regularly been sightings in both Sep and Oct. [DHH]

Balearic Shearwater

Puffinus mauretanicus

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

The total of 12 or 13 birds during the year was disappointing compared to a minimum of 52 in 2013 but more in line with the 12 recorded in 2012. The first sighting was 1 W past Selsey Bill on the unusual date of 3 Jan (JA, AH). On 24 Jun a party of four birds moved east, also off Selsey Bill (CRJ, OM *et al.*). The remaining records were all in August: on the 10th there were 2 E off Birling Gap (DC, BK) and also 2 E off Splash Point (MRE, RCS), at least one of which was thought to have been seen at Birling Gap. On 25 Aug a total of four flew east off Worthing (RAI, DIS) and the final record of the year was 1 W past Birling Gap on 30 Aug (DC). The 10-year average is 26 but annual numbers have fluctuated during that period from 75 (in 2008) to just six in 2010. [DHH]

Storm Petrel

Hydrobates pelagicus

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

Five Storm Petrels were seen in 2014 bringing the total in the past five years to 14. All the records came in May as have over 80% of the sightings in the past twenty years. The first was off Splash Point on 10 May (BRG, SHL *et al.*). The remaining records were all from Selsey Bill with one on 26 May (JA), followed by two on the 27th (OM *et al.*) and one the next day (MRE). The annual total of just five continues a run of six years with totals failing to reach double figures. [DHH]

Leach's Petrel

Oceanodroma leucorhoa

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

One lingered off the breakwater at Rock-a-Nore (Hastings) for quarter of an hour on 7 Feb before flying off westwards (AK). This is the first record since 2012. [DHH]

Gannet

Morus bassanus

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

Overall numbers were generally lower than those in 2013 with the decrease most noticeable in West Sussex. The movements recorded at four seawatching sites are shown in the following table.

	Jan-Feb		Mar-May		Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	19	72	2095	1196	400	179	694	1458	286	1380
Worthing	3	19	922	420	333	97	302	751	4	340
Splash Point	41	3	1948	50	254	2	1446	-	118	91
Birling Gap	138	129	1399	20	108	283	500 *	-	-	140 *

**single day counts*

In the January/February period there were no three-figure counts with peaks of 60 E on 12 Jan and 82 W on 23 Feb both at Birling Gap. The peak count in March was again in East Sussex with 113 E at Splash Point on 25th. Easterly movements in late April were recorded at all four seawatching sites with combined two-day totals for the 26th-27th of 306 at Selsey Bill, 194 at Worthing, 487 at Splash Point and 340 at Birling Gap. As in previous years, the focus switched to West Sussex in May with birds moving both east and west off Selsey Bill giving totals of 494 E and 307 W in the first six days of the month.

Numbers were low in both June and July but did include two movements of note: 135 E at Splash Point on 11 Jun and 100 E and 250 W on 5 Jul at Birling Gap. In the first half of August there was a notable easterly movement on the 10th with 366 passing Splash Point and 500 off Birling Gap. During the latter part of August the largest movements were at Selsey Bill where there were four counts of over 100 (one of birds moving east and three west). Following a quiet month in September, there was a rather confusing movement on 6 Oct with 133 E at Selsey Bill, 138 W off Worthing and 750 E off Splash Point. The normal late autumn westerly movements occurred in early November with Selsey Bill recording 286 on the 2nd and 742 on the 8th. By the end of the year birds were beginning to move eastwards again with 135 passing Selsey Bill on 27 Dec.

No sizeable offshore feeding parties were recorded until April when there were 37 following a fishing boat off Lancing on the 22nd. Off Worthing there were 40 on 28 Apr and 45 on 29 May. In the east there were 30 feeding off Hastings CP on 14 Sep with 220 in Rye Bay on 18 Oct, the largest gathering of the year. In the last two months of the year the largest feeding parties were of 200 off Selsey Bill on 2 Nov and 100 off Worthing on 31 Dec. [DHH]

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.

2013: There was no breeding at Arundel WWT.

2014: The monthly WeBS counts for the principal sites were as shown in the following table. During the first winter period the largest concentrations were recorded in Chichester and Pagham Harbours and at Steyning Levels, Weir Wood Res and Rye Bay.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites: Chichester GP, Iford Brooks and Rye Hbr. At Chichester GP, 104 nests were counted on 28 Apr; at Iford Brooks, 20 nests included ten in trees and ten on the ground; and at Rye Hbr 167 nests were counted.

Throughout the rest of the year large concentrations remained at Pagham Hbr and in the Rye Bay area while small numbers were seen widely across Sussex. During the second winter period, counts at Steyning Levels included 73 on 19 Oct, 64 on 29 Nov and 60 on 16 and 24 Dec. At Burton MP there were 70 on 6 Nov and 93 on 29 Dec. At Bewl Water 49 were recorded on 14 Oct.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	418	499	497	308	433	477	491	733	908	727	512	590
Chichester Hbr	40	22	26	6	8	6	9	8	39	96	73	74
Medmerry	5	3	4	5	12	23	22	27	42	44	11	20
Pagham Hbr	39	34	51	19	36	40	39	107	72	87	44	83
Chichester GP	27	16	145	86	86	nc	nc	nc	45	48	50	27
Weir Wood Res	48	14	30	4	nc	9	13	23	22	20	25	26
Barcombe Res	11	6	5	-	4	-	3	16	67	7	4	11
Arlington Res	5	25	10	4	-	4	6	10	8	-	2	3
Bewl Water	12	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	71	73	52	59	30
Wadhurst Park	21	nc	1	nc	1	nc	nc	nc	23	69	nc	3
Rye Bay	91	267	155	170	277	382	359	392	440	134	105	157

During the year population numbers exceeded the 1% national threshold level of 350 at Rye Bay in July, August and September. [RJE]

Shag

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; rare away from the coast. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Shags were recorded from some 13 coastal sites from Selsey Bill to Birling Gap but not regularly at any of the principal seawatching sites. Too many records did not state either flight direction or activity for a sensible analysis of movements to be made but the following table shows the approximate monthly totals.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
4	3	2	8	7		1	1	2	6	10

Sightings were of small numbers with 29 of 35 records (82%) being of single birds with only four counts of twos. The highest count was of seven at Brighton Marina on 4 Dec. A freshly dead adult in breeding plumage with crest was picked up at West Beach (Littlehampton) on 2 Mar. [RJE]

Eurasian Bittern

Botaurus stellaris

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

The table below shows the sites and numbers where Eurasian Bitterns were recorded.

The numbers at the start of the year were consistent with the end of 2013, but overall it was a poor year for the species in the county, particularly in West Sussex. In the first winter period only records from Rye Hbr and Pett Level were consistently returned, with just four records from Burton MP between 11 and 19 Jan, and there were three records in the Eastbourne area between 16 Jan and 16 Feb, adding to these.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	5	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	4
Arundel WWT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Burton MP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eastbourne	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Rye Hbr	2	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	2

At Rye Hbr a booming male was heard regularly between early March and mid-June, but there was no confirmation of breeding.

The mild autumn did not encourage many birds back to the county and most records came from Rye Hbr and Pett Level and all of single birds bar two on 29 Dec at Rye Hbr. The only record from West Sussex was one at Arundel WWT on 31 Dec. [AH]

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Very scarce vagrant.

Three records for four birds were accepted: one in the Sidlesham/Pagham Hbr area from 4 Aug to 29 Sep (JH, CRJ *et al.*), another at Pett Level from 25-31 Oct (CHD, PR) and two at Pett Level again on 23 Nov (CHD). The county total moves on to a minimum of 62 since the first accredited record in 1962, with 55 this century at an average of 3.7 per annum. Birds have arrived in all months except July with monthly totals as follows: Jan 17, Feb 2, Mar 2, Apr 18, May 8, Jun 1, Aug 2, Sep 1, Oct 5, Nov 2 and Dec 4. [JAH]

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Formerly rare but has bred since 2001 and is a scarce and increasing resident and probably scarce autumn visitor; status as winter visitor uncertain. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations are shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	99	68	192	52	51	89	145	188	431	322	219	180
Chichester Hbr	39	33	43	19	20	29	38	72	259	184	110	85
Medmerry	3	2	7	5	7	16	14	12	22	12	9	19
Pagham Hbr	13	5	27	10	4	10	51	55	63	45	28	20
Arun Valley	5	-	28	7	6	5	7	1	-	3	2	15
Upper Adur Levels	-	-	27	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	2	2
Ouse Valley	5	1	4	2	2	2	-	1	2	3	2	2
Cuckmere Haven	3	9	33	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	14	12	8	6
Pevensey Levels	3	4	11	-	8	8	6	4	-	2	7	7
Rye Bay	21	13	7	7	2	11	12	19	48	34	35	9

In general, the county WeBS totals were higher than last year in most months, and March, September and December produced record counts. In contrast, numbers during the summer have been more or less stable in the last few years. The only counts significantly higher than the WeBS in the first winter period were 15 at Rodmell on 30 Jan and 13 there on 10 Feb, but 21 at Henfield and 15 at Pulborough Brooks both on 10 Mar were good inland totals, and six at Woods Mill on 20 Jan was a site record. At Widewater (Lancing), 20 on 11 Feb was a high concentration in a small area, and at Rye Hbr, 28 left the roost at dawn on 28 Jan.

At least 35 pairs bred as follows: Old Park Wood (Bosham) 4, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 9, Hoe Fm (Flansham) 2, Applesham (Coombes) 6, Rodmell 2, Friston Forest 3, near Glynleigh 2 and Winchelsea 7, plus a probable nest at Warningcamp. This is fewer than in 2013 when there was a minimum of 53 occupied nests.

There was the usual post-breeding influx, and in addition to the WeBS counts there were 40 at Medmerry on 20 Jul, and numbers at Cuckmere Haven reached a maximum of 30 on 5 Aug. Possible evidence of migration included 19 on Worthing Beach on 3 Aug and 17 on East Beach (Selsey) on the 12th. However, mostly only ones and twos were reported from seawatching sites, the largest day count being 12 E at Beachy Head on 20 Aug. Regular counts at Pilsey Island produced a peak of 45 on 11 Sep, and 34 left the Rye Hbr roost on 30 Sep.

In the second winter period there were ten at Rodmell on 25 Oct and 11 on 4 Nov rather than the low numbers in the WeBS table. The highest seawatch counts were 12 W off Worthing on 12 Oct and 10 W on the 14th, and the only roost counts were 48 going to roost at Thorney Deepes on 14 Nov and 42 leaving the Rye Hbr roost on 26 Dec. [CJRB]



Great White Egret, Weir Wood Res, September 2014 (Gareth Hughes)

Great White Egret*Ardea alba**Rare vagrant.*

With over 150 sightings reported it is impossible to make an accurate assessment of the number of birds involved. During the first three months of the year there were at least two birds present in the Scotney GP to Rye Hbr area. During that period there were also records of singles at Flansham and Pagham Hbr. There were fewer records during the April-July period but these included singles at Thorney Island, Medmerry and Amberley Wild Brooks together with fly-past birds at Selsey Bill, Splash Point and over the Knepp Estate. In August there were reports (all of single birds) at Ford, Arundel WWT and Splash Point. September saw numerous sightings from both Weir Wood Res and Bewl Water. In the final quarter of the year there were further sightings at Rye Hbr LNR, Hastings, Bewl Water and Weir Wood Res. [CJRB, DHH]

Grey Heron*Ardea cineria**Fairly common resident.*

Grey Herons were recorded from 295 tetrads across the county (compared with 260 in 2013). 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	87	85	122	58	43	70	74	97	155	143	113	105
Chichester Hbr	13	12	8	5	3	4	3	7	21	23	14	19
Pagham Hbr	9	14	6	-	2	5	7	7	10	8	4	2
Arun Valley	14	6	13	8	10	17	6	11	10	17	13	11
Upper Adur Levels	4	-	22	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	1	9
Weir Wood Res	4	21	28	24	nc	15	20	27	18	8	2	1
Ouse Valley	2	5	4	4	2	3	2	-	4	4	6	4
Cuckmere Haven	2	3	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	5	5	3
Pevensey Levels	8	9	13	3	10	5	4	10	10	10	14	10
Bewl Water	2	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	11	10	4	3
Rye Bay	4	3	5	4	3	5	8	6	18	14	18	6

During the breeding season 214 nests were counted at 32 sites (212 nests at 26 sites in 2013) and another three previously occupied sites held no nests in 2014. Counts for individual heronries with occupied nests, listed from west to east, were as follows: Forest Mere 4, Old Park Wood (Fishbourne) 1, Norton Priory 3, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 7, Flansham 4, Littlehampton 1, Warningcamp 2, Northpark Wood (Parham) 4, Angmering 3, Knepp MP 6, Warnham LNR 20, Henfield 3, Coombes 3, Hammonds Mill (Burgess Hill) 2, Ardingly Res 5, Weir Wood Res 24, Rodmell 5, Firlie 8, Hempstead (Uckfield) 2, Charleston 9, Hadlow Down 11, Eridge Park 17, Hampden Park (Eastbourne) 3, Glynleigh (Pevensey) 19, Wadhurst Park 4, Bayham 1, Wallers Haven (Pevensey) 5, Burwash 12, Winchelsea 15, Leasam (Rye) 6.

Away from the heronries, large reservoirs and harbours, most gatherings were in single figures but there were a small number of larger gatherings with 18 records of five or more. The most notable of these were 12 at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 26 Aug, 26 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Sep and 19 at Rye Fm (Henfield) on 3 Oct. [GO]

Black Stork

Ciconia nigra

Very rare vagrant. Breeds in central Iberia and eastern France through central and southeast Europe to Siberia. Winters in tropical Africa.

One that flew north along the river at Frog Firle in the Cuckmere Valley mobbed by corvids on 27 May (RCS *et al.*) was the fourteenth record for the county and has been accepted by BBRC. This is the fourth consecutive year in which the species has been recorded in Sussex. [DHH]

White Stork

Ciconia ciconia

Rare vagrant, mainly in spring.

The only record was of one that flew E over Amberley Wild Brooks (but observed from Waltham Brooks) at 15:05 on 2 May (RAI). It was then seen at Pulborough Brooks before departing north early evening (mo). The total number recorded this century moves on to 36 including an exceptional 13 or more in 2012 but none in 2013. [PJ]

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Rare but increasing vagrant.

Following the 6-8 recorded in 2013, there were just three this year. At Lidsey SF there were two on 16 Feb and again intermittently from 2-19 Mar (BI, JK). One was at Lewes Brooks from 6-13 Apr (mo). The county total moves on to approximately 62. [PJ]

Spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia

Scarce visitor, most frequent in spring and autumn. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The monthly minimum number of birds is shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total*	1	1	7	3	6	6	-	3	5	1	7	6
Pagham Hbr/Medmerry	-	-	4	2	4	-	-	3	-	1	3	3
Chichester Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Climping/lower Arun Valley	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Cuckmere Haven/Beachy Head	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	5	-	1	-

*The county total is not necessarily the sum of the locations total as some birds may have been seen in more than one location.

In 2014 there were more records than in recent years possibly relating to fewer birds than last year, but with a number of long-stayers bucking the trend for the species being an occasional

wanderer through the county, with an unprecedented minimum of six over-wintering in the western harbours at the end of the year. The year started quietly, however, with the wintering bird at Cuckmere Haven being the only one reported during January and February and remaining faithful to the site until 24 Apr. The first new birds appeared at Pagham Hbr on 5 Mar, with another at Pulborough Brooks on the 9th, then 2 E past Selsey Bill the following day, whilst three dropped into Medmerry on the 13th. On 29 Mar one was seen at Climping, with another one at Pagham Hbr on 4 Apr, which was joined by another the following day and both remained until the 14th. One was also seen at Selsey Bill on the 9th.



Spoonbills, Snowhill Creek, December 2014 (Mary Roterman)

After that only one was then seen in the area until 12 May, with Pulborough Brooks hosting one from to 11 May, and another was seen passing Beachy Head on the 11th and (possibly) the same bird stopped off at Rye Hbr on the 13th. Three birds appeared at Medmerry on 18 May, and were then seen heading east past Selsey Bill the following morning, and the final spring records were of four seen in flight over Rye Hbr on 10 Jun. Two birds flew off east at dawn from the same location on the 30th.

The first three returning birds were seen in Pagham Hbr on 1 Aug, but there were no more reports until 27 Sep, when five were seen at Rye Hbr. A bird reported from Goring on 5 Oct was possibly the same one that turned up at Pagham Hbr on the same day and stayed for the winter. On 5 Nov it was joined by another that also settled in for the winter, whilst on the 14th a group of four (including three juveniles) appeared on Thorney Island and stayed until the 20th, when presumably the same four were seen at Snowhill Creek (Chichester Hbr). From then until the years end there were multiple sightings of up to three birds in the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area and separately from the Thorney Island/Snowhill Creek area and it would seem that a minimum

of six birds were wintering in the western harbours. The only other reports for the year were of three over Lidsey Rife (Barnham) on 4 Nov, which possibly ties in with the above reports. A single bird was reported regularly from Rye Hbr from 3 to 24 Nov. [AH]

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

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

Little Grebes were recorded from 95 tetrads across the county in suitable habitats. 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	162	182	92	34	26	30	26	80	208	245	193	299
Chichester Hbr	44	50	32	7	-	2	4	6	38	75	50	123
Pagham Hbr	25	20	6	4	-	5	-	25	27	53	48	26
Chichester GP	4	-	5	4	9	nc	nc	nc	10	13	6	7
Arun Valley	7	9	7	1	-	1	1	-	6	6	9	9
Brooklands (Worthing)	5	7	4	4	4	5	5	6	13	21	3	5
Widewater (Lancing)	20	16	13	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	13	28
Cuckmere Haven	4	16	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4	-	14	24
Bowl Water	8	7	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	37	66	17	8	11
Rye Bay	32	32	14	8	4	9	5	2	38	37	33	51

Peak counts in the first winter period not included in the WeBS counts were 40 at Pagham Hbr on 22 and 29 Jan, 27 at Widewater (Lancing) on 19 and 26 Jan and 21 at Cuckmere Haven on 11 Jan.

The approximate monthly minimum numbers, taking the largest count at a site as the minimum, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	233	210	124	92	61	62	68	131	270	242	274	333
No. of sites	32	35	29	26	25	18	16	19	28	31	35	40

Note: all subsites at Chichester, Pagham and Rye Harbours were included in the single sites.

Breeding was confirmed in 10 tetrads, was probable in another six and possible in four more.

At Woods Mill (Henfield) a pair had built a nest by 8 Apr and subsequently hatched five chicks, at least three of which probably fledged. Pairs were seen with two chicks at Park Corner Heath (East Hoathly) on 18 Apr and at Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on 27 Apr. An adult with a single chick was seen at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 21 Apr. Three pairs were present both at Medmerry and at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) during the breeding season. At the latter site one pair had two young on 4 Jul and nearby at Thorney Island three young were present on 16 May. At least seven pairs with young were at Chichester GP on 22 Aug and breeding was also confirmed at Ardingly College and Lidsey SF. At Brooklands (Worthing) two pairs produced at least four chicks. As last year there was relatively little evidence of this species during the

breeding season at Rye Hbr although small numbers of birds were present on Castle Water, Harbour Fm and Long Pit in mid-June. Probably at least one pair was present on the ditches north of Castle Fm and two pairs at the western end of Nook Drain.

The largest count in the autumn was 66 at Bewl Water on 7 Sep, the highest ever count there. Pagham Lagoon regularly contained 40-50 birds during the autumn and second winter period with a peak of 53. Large non-WeBS counts were 18 at Widewater (Lancing) on 22 Oct, 33 there on 21 Nov and 35 on 3 Dec, 32 on the R Cuckmere on 18 Nov and 40 in Pagham Hbr on 28 Dec. [RAB]

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Great Crested Grebe was recorded from 106 tetrads across the county. 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	194	141	175	126	82	110	115	527	570	373	308	234
Chichester Hbr	17	24	50	25	5	6	3	13	11	20	44	18
Pagham Hbr	9	2	12	8	11	14	10	17	34	12	19	21
Chichester GP	23	11	17	13	21	nc	nc	nc	54	73	45	34
Ardingly Res	8	nc	12	13	nc	nc	nc	8	10	6	5	12
Weir Wood Res	14	14	21	33	nc	50	59	63	63	64	59	32
Arlington Res	10	13	8	7	8	16	20	22	26	24	17	-
Bewl Water	87	37	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	357	288	97	64	58
Rye Bay	15	27	28	4	17	14	4	28	37	47	16	28

Last year WeBS counts numbers were low during the first winter period compared to previous years and in 2014 this trend continued with even smaller flocks than in 2013. Overall, far fewer birds than usual were recorded on the sea during the winter periods. The only high non-WeBS counts during this part of the year were mostly from Pett Level where 310 were counted offshore on 20 Jan, 42 on 16 Feb and 60 on 4 Mar. Elsewhere, 46 were counted offshore at Worthing on 5 Mar and 45 (22 offshore and 23 E) from Birling Gap on the 8th. Monthly totals from the principal seawatching sites are shown in the following table.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads (15 sites) and was probable in another two. The first evidence of breeding was a pair displaying at Burton MP on 16 Feb where, on 18 May, a bird was on a nest and a pair with two young was seen on 21 Jun. At Weir Wood Res there were at least five nests and a number of young birds were included in a flock of 61 seen there on 23 Aug. At Barcombe Res, a pair was seen in courtship display on 18 May and six adults with two juveniles were present on 10 Aug. At Pett Level young were first seen on 12 May and three pairs, each with young, were on the sea on 8 Jun. At Tilgate Lake (Crawley) three young were present on 11 May. At Rye Hbr there were at least two pairs at Castle Water and on Long Pit, at least one on Narrow Pit, one on Ternery Pool and two young were seen at Saunders Pit. Birds were seen during breeding bird surveys at Pagham Hbr and a juvenile was seen there with an adult on 27 Jun. At Warnham LNR seven juveniles were present on 23 Jun. At Chichester GP there were at least two pairs on the 14 Sep; one pair had an almost full grown juvenile and the second pair with four half-grown young.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	18	1	8	4	16	-	-	-	2	-	12	12
	W	28	4	8	1	21	4	-	1	-	6	82	46
	o/s	4	3	13	1	2	-	5	5	-	3	22	10
Worthing	E	14	-	11	3	3	1	-	-	3	-	17	-
	W	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	4
	o/s	24	-	66	49	17	2	-	-	-	2	78	108
Telscombe Cliffs	E	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	o/s	-	-	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Splash Point	E	1	-	56	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
	W	1	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	o/s	-	-	29	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Birling Gap	E	14	4	35	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	4	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	o/s	3	-	39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: o/s figures show the sum of all recorded o/s during the month.

Breeding behaviour was also observed late in the year. At Burton MP an adult appeared to be on a nest on 10 Aug and courtship displays were observed on 7 Sep and 12 Oct while at Weir Wood Res birds were displaying with weed and head shaking on 17 Sep.

Post breeding flocks gathered, in particular, on reservoirs, as shown by the WeBS counts above, but numbers at Bewl Water dwindled during the rest of the year to a count of 58 by the 6 Dec. At Weir Wood Res numbers peaked at 75 on 21 Sep before declining to 32 on 8 Dec. Elsewhere there were 45 at Chichester GP on 14 Oct and 27 on 18 Nov.

During the second winter period counts at the favoured area off Worthing, peaked at 25 on 24 Nov and 1 Dec. Other sites with winter counts of over 20 were Chichester Hbr, Chichester GP, Selsey Bill, offshore at Pett Level and Rye Hbr. [RAB]

Red-necked Grebe

Podiceps grisegena

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

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April		Dec
No. of birds	1	-	2	1		2
No. of sites	1	-	2	1		2

There were even fewer records for this scarce species than usual this year, continuing the recent downward trend. The first of the year was seen at Pagham Hbr on 22 Jan but the next record was not until 16 Mar when another one was seen there followed on 25 Mar by 1 E past Splash Point (Seaford). The last spring record was 1 E from Splash Point on 15 Apr.

There were no further records until December when a single bird flew west past Selsey Bill on the 22nd and the final sighting of the year was a single bird at Scotney GP on 30 Dec. [RAB]

Slavonian Grebe*Podiceps auritus*

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

The approximate minimum monthly numbers, taking the largest counts at a site as the minimum, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Nov	Dec
County total	18	32	14	6		5	19
Chichester Hbr	5	15	6	-		-	-
Selsey Bill – Church Norton	10	13	4	-		5	15
Littlehampton – Worthing	-	-	-	-		-	3
Southwick	-	1	-	-		-	-
Splash Point	-	-	1	5		-	-
Birling Gap	-	-	-	-		-	-
Eastbourne	1	1	-	-		-	-
Rye Bay	2	2	1	1		-	-
Other sites	-	-	2	-		-	1

As usual most of the records in the first winter period were in West Sussex. In this main wintering area, from Selsey Bill to Church Norton, numbers peaked on 30 Jan at ten, matching last year but lower than usual. The last first winter sighting there was of three birds on 23 Mar. The peak was higher at Chichester Hbr with 15 on 19 Feb but these had dwindled to six by the time of the last sighting there on 5 Mar. Elsewhere in the county the highest counts were of twos at Rye Hbr, where there were regular sightings between 11 Jan and 19 Mar, and at Climping on 16 Mar. A single bird was at Southwick Canal on 22 and 23 Feb and another at Princes Park (Eastbourne) from 29 Jan to 2 Feb. Spring migration was light; the only records were 1 W past Splash Point (Seaford) on 25 Mar, 1 E there 2 Apr and four there on the 4th with the last at Rye Hbr on the 17th.

The first bird of the second winter period was seen from Selsey Bill on 15 Nov where numbers had increased to five by the end of the month. In December numbers peaked at 15 off Church Norton on the 6th. A bird was seen at Ferring on the 4th and two were at Goring on the 30th. [RAB]

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 were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		July	Aug		Dec
No. of birds	2	2	19	10	2		2	1		2
No. of sites	2	2	9	5	1		2	1		1

The first sighting of the year was on 20 Jan when one was seen offshore at Church Norton followed by another on 30 Jan at Rye Hbr.

In February there were further records at both ends of the county with an individual seen offshore at Church Norton on 15 Feb and another seen frequently at Scotney GP between the 7th and the 21st and, presumably the same bird, on 7-9 Mar. Birds were also seen at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 4 Mar, Arlington Res on the 8th, Climping on the 11th and between Hastings and Pett on the 18th. One seen regularly in the Waltham Brooks area from the 9th to the 22nd was joined by a second bird from the 9th to the 11th. At the end of the month 5 E were seen flying past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 29th and these may have been included in 8 E in partial summer plumage seen from Birling Gap on the same day. On the 31st two in summer plumage were offshore at Selsey Bill and possibly the same two offshore at Worthing.

In April 1 E passed Birling Gap on the 2nd. Then on the 4th four were seen in summer plumage off Selsey Bill and 3 E from Splash Point. Another was again seen between Hastings and Pett on the 9th and another at Rye Hbr between the 19th and 24th.

A bird in summer plumage was at Rye Hbr between 7 and 8 Jul and at Scotney GP on the 20th. One was at Rye Hbr on 10 Aug but no further Black-necked Grebes were recorded in the county until two were at Scotney GP from 9-31 Dec. [RAB]

Honey-buzzard

Pernis apivorus

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

The group that monitors Honey-buzzards in the southeast provided the records for all known breeding pairs. There were three successful pairs with a fourth pair (but with no clear evidence of breeding) monitored throughout the summer. Regarding the three successful pairs; one pair nested in a Beech and raised two young, a second pair nested in a Douglas Fir and raised one young and the third pair nested in an Oak but this nest was not found until after the two youngsters had fledged. Several historic breeding locations were checked carefully for the presence of Honey-buzzards but either there were none present or if present, no indication of any breeding activity. In Sussex this is a fickle species with regular sites apparently abandoned after several years of successful breeding activity. One can only speculate why this happens? Perhaps the most likely explanation is that one of the pair fails to return but in that event one might suppose that a non-attached bird would take its place. Another possibility is lack of available food for this is a species that in the early part of the season seems to be very dependent on frogs and it is quite possible that in some years there just isn't enough of their staple food to encourage them to remain on location. Whatever the explanation it is apparent to the study group that a breeding location may be found one year only for there to be an absence of birds the following year. A challenging species, indeed!

In the spring and early summer there were just four records. An un-sexed bird was photographed at an inland location on 22 May (DM, DIS), a male appeared on 23 May at a location where previously there has been a breeding pair, but there was no documented follow up (MS-H), a female was seen at Winchelsea Beach on 31 May (CHD, SB) and another female was recorded inland on 29 Jun (DC, JFC, BK). Later on in the summer, a single was recorded on 20 Jul (CRP) and on 16 and 31 Aug two adults were seen at the same undisclosed location (SHL).

There were seven records of autumn migrants with an adult and a juvenile at Climping Gap on 31 Aug (BA, RG,RNP, ES), an adult male at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 7 Sep (MJC, PDC), a juvenile at Shooters' Bottom (Beachy Head) on 14 Sep (DC, JFC, BK), two over the observer's house at Seaford on 16 Sep, the second of which was mobbed by a Hobby and driven out to sea

(RCS, KH), two adult females at Southease on 19 Sep (MJC, PDC), a dark-morph juvenile on 22 Sep (MRE, RCS) at Seaford Head and finally a juvenile at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Oct (SHL, KBG, DCW). [MEK]

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Rare vagrant.

There were two accepted records, both typically, for one day only: one flew NE over Eastbourne on 27 May (LP) and another was watched and photographed at Mount Caburn (Lewes) in the late evening of 3 Jun (DC, DRC, JFC) before disappearing towards Beddingham. These records raise the county total (since the first accredited record in 1970) to 37 of which 18 are this century. Black Kites are predominantly spring vagrants. Monthly totals have been: April, 9; May, 18; June, 4; and July, August and November, two each. The earliest was 12 Apr 1970 and the two latest 13 Nov 1976 and 2013. [JAH]

Red Kite

Milvus milvus

Scarce breeding resident (first bred in 2004) and fairly common and increasing visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The Red Kite study team undertook winter roost counts and recorded a minimum of 34 in The Burgh (Burpham) area on 20 Dec and a minimum of 33 in the West Sussex study area on the 28th. Roosts in the West Sussex study area have been monitored since the winter of 2004/2005 and there has been a steady increase in numbers over the years. The roost in The Burgh area was not discovered until the winter of 2011/12 when ten Red Kites were counted. Since then there has been a considerable increase in numbers with peak winter counts of 25 in the winter of 2012/13, 31 in 2013/2014 and 37-39 in 2014/2015. The Red Kite study team attempt to assess the composition of the roosts by ageing the birds but this is not always possible given the light conditions when the counts are taking place. On 20 Dec at The Burgh roost conditions were especially favourable and 25 of the 34 Red Kites were assessed with all 25 aged as juveniles. This roost was monitored several times over the course of the winter and it would seem that this roost was made up entirely of first year birds. At the West Sussex study area roost there were perhaps 4-5 older birds but otherwise the rest were first year birds. Whilst speculative, it seems likely that almost all the West Sussex youngsters that fledged in 2014 ended up in one or other of these two roosts. Since the county breeding pool is currently estimated at 25 pairs and not every pair will be successful every year it is highly probable that many of the occupants of these roosts will have come from further afield. Doubtless some of these itinerants will remain in Sussex, further boosting the county population. Finally, regarding The Burgh roost, on 20 Dec not only were there 34 Red Kites but also 25 Ravens and 12 Carrion Crows all sharing the same roost. A documented shared roost of Red Kites and Ravens would appear to be a British first. Further details of this can be obtained in the Raven article on pages 229-242 of this report.

Of the 600+ records submitted to the recorder only two indicated probable breeding. Despite the lack of nesting data for 2014 the study team estimated the breeding population to be approximately 25 pairs but with no knowledge of fledging success.

The estimated minimum monthly totals were as shown in the following table. The table shows the usual fine weather movement between March and July with peak activity occurring

in March. The figures for the study area and The Burgh are self-explanatory although the figures are inevitably distorted by observer activity, especially with winter roost counts in December and January. As an example, there was no roost count at The Burgh in November so there is a low figure of seven. Most of the records for the category ‘Elsewhere’ are casual observations for birds moving through. Some will relate to resident Red Kites but in the main they are second calendar year birds wandering around. The county total of 135 for March is a Sussex record. If one also includes the resident breeding pairs then there were probably in excess of 160 Red Kites in Sussex in March 2014. How times have changed in just a few years.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	38	58	135	78	91	90	44	31	36	41	34	75
Study area	6	19	10	11	7	7	5	3	9	6	14	34
The Burgh	25	13	7	3	7	7	7	7	10	18	7	34
Elsewhere	7	26	118	64	77	76	32	21	17	17	13	7

Cross-channel migrants were reported in unprecedented numbers. At Climping Beach a total of 12 was seen to come in off the sea on 16 Mar; firstly a group of five, then two with a further five some thirty minutes later. At Beachy Head on 17 Mar five birds came in off the sea with a further five flying west over the top fields. On the same date at Seaford a single bird probably came in off the sea. Historically there have been many spring records of birds migrating cross-channel but usually in ones and twos, not in these numbers. Whilst purely speculative, it would not be at all surprising if a few birds from mainland Britain cross the channel in the autumn, possibly overwinter in the Iberian Peninsula and then make the return journey in the spring.



Short-toed Eagle, Ashdown Forest, June 2014 (Matt Eade)

Other multiple sightings of note were 17 at Hooksway (North Marden) on 24 Feb, 12 at The Burgh on 25 Feb, 14 at Tower Hill (Horsham) on 31 May at 12.50 with a further 16 at Eastbourne drifting east at 14.30 on the same date. Given the distance involved between the two locations and the specific times provided it would seem that these were separate flocks. There were eight at Edburton flying overhead on 1 Jun, 13 following a tractor (cutting grass for silage) at Rowhook on 22 Jun, eight at Chantry Hill on 16 Aug and 18 at the Burgh on 31 October.

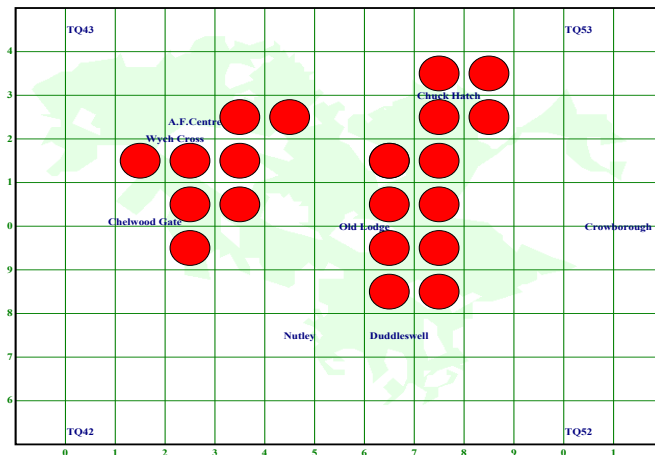
Two tagged birds were recorded; the first was a Sussex-tagged bird with yellow tag, G left wing, purple tag, G right wing and was reported from the West Dean Woods area on 20 July. The second was the East Midlands bird seen at West Dean Woods in December last year, white tag, 33 left wing, red tag, 33 right wing. It was reported from the same general area on 29 Dec. As a third calendar year bird it would seem likely that this East Midlands bird is now resident in Sussex. [MEK & CBC]

Short-toed Eagle

Circaetus gallicus

Very rare vagrant. Western population breeds northwest Africa north to northern France and east through central Europe to Estonia and south to the Balkans. Winters in Africa south of the Sahara.

One which spent the summer in the south of England was discovered on Ashdown Forest on 10 Jun (ADMCL). After moving to Hampshire the bird returned to Ashdown Forest on 15 Jun and remained there until 29 Jun during which time it was seen and photographed by many observers from many parts of the country. The eagle then departed to Hampshire and Surrey before making a final appearance on Ashdown Forest on 12 Jul. This is the first time that the species has been recorded in Sussex and only the third time in the UK. With the record being accepted by BBRC it raises the county list to 400. An account of the finding of the bird appears on pages 216-218 of this report.



Although only four records of this national rarity were accompanied by a description the society received over 160 other records. The map shows the distribution of these records revealing that two large areas of the forest were particularly favoured by the eagle. [DHH]

Marsh Harrier

Circus aeruginosus

Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor; very scarce breeder since 2004. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	11	15	15	12	6	8	8	16	22	17	16	15

There was a more even distribution of records received across 2014 than the previous year, with records in every month. The highest counts in the year were eight at Pett Level on 14 Mar and seven there on 16 Feb. The same site also held four to five birds on various dates between 2 Feb and 26 Mar. At Rye Hbr four were recorded on 22 Feb reaching a maximum of five on 28 Mar. During the first winter period up to two were recorded at three locations and single birds at a further nine

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads although probable breeding occurred in a further three. At one site two fledged young were observed in the first week of July, whilst a productive four young fledged from another site on 21 Jul. Two juveniles with a male seen on 2 Aug may have wandered from their nest site.

One of the three birds observed at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Sep wore a white wing tag applied in the Swale/Sheppey area of the north Kent.

With a suggested population of between 80 and 100 pairs in neighbouring Kent (British Birds 108: 391), it would seem likely that the species is both under-recorded in Sussex and capable of expanding the population in the county.

The highest counts in the second winter period were again recorded at Pett Level, with six on 7 Dec and four on 16 Dec. Good counts also came from several other locations though, with five at Pevensy Levels on 1 Dec, four on the 9th and three on 12 Oct, 30 Nov, 2 and 29 Dec. There were a maximum of four at Rye Hbr on 29 Dec, with three on two dates in October and two in December; and at Scotney GP there were four on 9 Dec.

There were records from four other sites with counts of two birds and a further 13 locations with records of one, several on more than one date. [DB]

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

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

Records were received from only 37 tetrads, down from 59 in 2013 and as usual a high percentage came from Ashdown Forest (30%). The sum of the monthly totals was only 35, by far the lowest in recent years (2013: 55, 2012: 56, 2011: 88, 2010: 68, 2009: 78) perhaps reflecting the species' declining fortunes in England in recent years. The highest monthly totals were in January and December with only seven birds seen. Minimum monthly totals are shown in the following table but as birds roam widely some double counting may have occurred.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total*	7	5	2	2	1		3	4	4	7
Medmerry, Chichester and Pagham Hbrs	1	-	-	-	-		-	1	1	1
West Sussex Downs	1	1	1	1	-		1	1	-	-
West Sussex Commons	-	-	-	-	-		1	-	-	-
Arun Valley	-	1	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
East Sussex Downs	1	-	-	-	1		1	1	1	-
Ouse Valley	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	1
Ashdown Forest	2	1	1	-	-		-	-	1	-
Pevensey Levels	1	1	-	-	-		-	-	1	2
Rye Bay	1	1	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
Scotney GP/Camber	-	-	-	1	-		-	-	-	1
Other sites	1	1	-	-	-		1	1	1	5

**Monthly totals are not necessarily the sum of locations totals as some 'other sites' birds may be the same as birds seen elsewhere.*

Hen Harriers were seen at most of the usual sites during the first winter period but were absent from the West Sussex commons and the Ouse Valley. The only location where two were recorded was Ashdown Forest; two males were seen on 16 and 18 Jan with one or the other seen on five other dates in January, two dates in February and nine in March. A male, probably one from Ashdown Forest, was seen in fields south of Uckfield on three dates in January, where it caught and ate something small on 13 Jan, and on two further dates in February. There was a male in the Rye area on 5 Jan, one at Medmerry on 12 Jan, one at Pevensey Levels on 14 and 19 Jan and one in the Cradle Valley (Seaford) on the 20th. February records were very few but one was seen at Mile Oak (Portslade) and near Upper Beeding on the 16th and a ringtail was at Rye Hbr on the 22th. There were only two birds in the county in March, a ringtail in the Steyning/Cissbury area on the 14th and 15th and a male seen throughout the month roaming Ashdown Forest. There were only two records for April, one at Patching on the 9th and one in the Scotney area on the 20th. The last record of the spring was of a female at Beachy Head on 21 May.

The first returning birds were seen on 3 Sep, one at Cocking and a ringtail from the dam end of Weir Wood Res. A ringtail was seen at Beachy Head on the 9th and another ringtail in the Lancing/Cissbury/Steyning area between the 18th and 24th. October sightings included a ringtail at Golden Cross on the 3rd, one at Pagham Hbr on the 14th, one near Upper Beeding on the 19th, and one in the Lewes/Falmer area between the 28th and 30th. The first to return to Ashdown Forest was also on the 30th.

In November a ringtail was seen throughout on Ashdown Forest. On the 5th a ringtail flew west near Uckfield, one was at Denton Hill (Seaford) on the 9th and a ringtail on the Pevensey Levels on the same day. A ringtail was at Jevington on the 10th and there were records from Burpham on the 20th, Falmer on the 24th and again at Pevensey on the 30th. It is difficult to determine how many birds were involved this month. December records include nine dates on the Pevensey Levels of up to two birds, which is the only location with more than one. There was one at Medmerry between the 3rd and the 13th, a male at South Chailey on the 3rd, Lewes Brooks on the 10th, Plumpton on 16th, Iford Brooks on the 29th, and a male at East Guldeford Level on 29th-30th. Unusually there was only one record for December from Ashdown Forest, one on the 12th. [MJC]

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.

The only record this year was of a first summer female watched for 15 minutes and photographed at Rodmell on 11 May before it departed NW (DC, BK). [PJ]



Montagu's Harrier, Rodmell, May 2014 (Dave Cooper)

Goshawk*Accipiter gentilis*

Very scarce resident. Schedule 1 species.

The pair recorded as successfully breeding in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 at an undisclosed site built a new nest in a Larch but when the nest was revisited later in the breeding season it was found to be abandoned. The study team that monitors this species in the county observed displaying birds at three other locations but there was no proven breeding. At two of these locations, but outside of the breeding season, two Goshawks nests were found. It is apparent that this species is very gradually colonising some parts of the Sussex countryside. There is certainly no shortage of suitable habitat to support a large number of breeding pairs in the county.

Otherwise, there were five authenticated records at three different locations. There was both an adult male and an adult female at one location on 5 Mar (SJCC). At a second location a male was present on 12 Oct and 1 Nov with a female also present on 6 Dec (DJB), 13 Dec (DJB, GKM) and on 20 Dec (DJB). At a third location there was an adult bird present on 11 Dec (BFF, OM). [MEK]

Sparrowhawk*Accipiter nisus*

Common resident and passage migrant.

As usual records were received from across the county with the majority relating to single birds from 274 tetrads (26%). The highest counts for the first half of the year were of four each at Waltham Brooks on 19 Jan and at Warnham LNR on 9 Apr. Three pairs were recorded on the Norfolk Estate during spring.

The earliest record of display was of two at Warnham LNR on 17 Jan, followed by displays on 6 Mar at Angmering and on the 9th at Goring. The earliest record of confirmed breeding was of a nest with five young at Northgate (Crawley) on 2 Jul and on 7 Aug a family party of six was seen there. There were only three tetrads with confirmed breeding and ten with probable breeding but as this is a species for which breeding is secretive and difficult to prove this is not a true indication of breeding success. One was reported bathing in a garden pond at Climping on 17 Apr.

The highest autumn/second winter period count was seven at Church Norton (Pagham Hbr) on 11 Oct, with five there the next day. Other high counts were five at Beachy Head, which included three together over the cliffs on 31 Aug and five there again on 7 Sep and four on several further dates. There were no records of birds flying out to sea. Inland high counts were four at The Burgh (Burpham) on 5 Oct and at Weir Wood Res on several dates during October and November. Prey species recorded were Feral Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, Green Woodpecker, Starling, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Goldfinch and a Snipe which the Sparrowhawk was unable to carry and dropped. [MJC]

Common Buzzard*Buteo buteo*

Fairly common and increasing resident, and probably scarce passage migrant.

Common Buzzards were distributed right across the county and recorded in 561 tetrads (54%), an increase on the 493 in 2013 and 451 in 2012 but fewer than during the latter atlas survey years, which was probably a reflection of the observer effort then. An indication of how numerous this species has become is that there were 52 records of ten or more, 37 from West Sussex and 15 from East Sussex during the year. By far the highest count was of 30 seen at Hooksway (North Marden) on 24 Feb. Other high counts during the first winter period and spring were 18 each at Glyndebourne Lakes on 15 Feb and probable migrants at Beachy Head on 1 Apr and 16 at Stanstead Forest on 9 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in a further 57, which is an increase on 2013. The true size of the breeding population is uncertain as there are few breeding details recorded. There were many records of territorial and displaying birds but the first record of nest building was at Medmerry on 17 Feb where a bird was seen carrying nesting material. The first record of birds on a nest was at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 18 May (with fledged young there on 4 Aug). The first record of fledged young was on 29 Jun both at Mayfield and Wadhurst. The highest summer counts were 15 at Climping Gap on 31 Aug, 14 each at Lodge Hill Fm (West Dean) on 20 Jul and Church Norton (Pagham Hbr) on 31 Aug.

During the autumn most records were of fewer than three but there were some high counts: 14 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 27 Sep, 12 at Lodge Hill Fm on 21 Sep and 12 at The Burgh on 7 Oct. During the second winter period the highest count was of 18 at Barlavington Down (Duncton) on 28 Dec with other high counts being 12 each at The Burgh on 4 Nov and at Pagham Hbr on the 9th. The highest East Sussex count during this period was six at Uckfield on 28 Nov.

Prey items recorded were few but included several rabbits, a slow worm, earthworms and a pair feeding on a freshly run-over fox which the observer managed to move out of the road. [MJC]

Rough-legged Buzzard

Buteo lagopus

Rare winter visitor.

A long-staying individual at Jevington from 9 Nov (CJB) and into 2015 was the only record and was part of a late autumn influx into the UK. Throughout its stay it could usually be found hunting the game cover strips to the south of the village and was much appreciated by many observers. It was recorded only once away from its preferred area being seen at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) briefly around midday on 5 Dec (RHC) before departing west towards Jevington. Nine individuals of this species have now occurred in six years this century. [JAH]

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

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

The minimum monthly totals are shown in the following table.

	Mar	Apr	May		Aug	Sep	Oct
No. of birds	1	6	8		14	23	5

The first returning bird of the year was recorded from Gravetye Woods (East Grinstead) on 27 Mar, exactly a week later than the 10-year average but nine days earlier than the first bird recorded in 2013. The second record came from Weir Wood Res on 2 Apr with a single observed on various dates through April, but with two birds reported there on both the 8th and 9th.

Spring accounted for fewer than 20% of the year’s records, these coming during April and May. There were probably 14 individuals recorded from seven different sites, of which Weir Wood Res accounted for the majority with six. The last spring migrants were seen on 25 May with one at Burpham and one observed to come in off the sea at Ferring at 19:25 hr.

Around 20% of the year’s records came in August and almost 60% during September, making these easily the two best months of the year to see the species. The first departing migrant was observed from Billingshurst on 16 Aug. During the autumn there was a minimum of 42 different individuals recorded from 24 sites. A minimum of nine was recorded at Chichester Hbr with a maximum of three on 29 Aug and two on three separate dates; Pagham Hbr hosted at least five but possibly more than this. Three records came from Beachy Head, whilst two each were recorded at Rye Hbr, Weir Wood Res and Medmerry. Single birds were present at another 16 sites, whilst two were observed at both Steyning on 2 Sep and Arlington Res on 6 Sep.

The last bird recorded in 2014 was on the comparatively early date of 19 Oct from Beachy Head; nine days earlier than the corresponding date for 2013 and eight days earlier than the 10-year average. [DB]

Water Rail*Rallus aquaticus*

Probably very scarce resident; scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The widened distribution of records, noted in 2013, was maintained in 2014, with birds being found in 63 tetrads (*cf.* 60 in 2013 and 40 in 2012).

Early in the year there were six around Pett Level on 2 Jan and five there on 19 Jan, and four at Newhaven on 8 Jan and 16 Feb.

Present throughout the year at Pett Level, with a remarkable count of 23-25 territories undoubtedly helped by the control of some 30 mink each year. Breeding was confirmed at just that one site but was also considered probable at Rye Hbr. Other sites with records in high summer included Pagham Hbr, Waltham Brooks, Warnham LNR, Woods Mill, Mill Stream (Plumpton) (where one on 28 Jun was the only record of the year), Cuckmere Haven, Pevensey Levels and Brede Bridge (Westfield).

Careful observation can reveal several birds to be present at favoured sites: thus eight were at Warnham LNR on 20 Jul, at Thorney Deepes on 19 Nov and at Arundel WWT on 21 Dec, with seven at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 6 Dec. In 2014, there were some records from totally unexpected sites; one or two were seen at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on five dates between 16 Oct and 12 Dec and there were single records of four at Ferring on 27 Nov and three at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 13 Dec. [CB]

Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

Very common resident; possibly fairly common winter visitor but status uncertain.

Moorhens were recorded in 272 tetrads, a wider distribution than in the past few years but well below that of the atlas years.

Monthly counts at the principal WeBS sites are shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	494	452	419	212	187	218	287	314	582	670	702	572
Chichester Hbr	74	39	53	10	-	2	-	6	24	45	37	36
Chichester Canal	78	74	103	35	41	34	57	60	116	119	99	106
Pagham Hbr	26	25	11	8	3	4	9	11	31	20	14	29
Chichester GP	7	11	7	6	2	nc	nc	nc	16	14	78	17
Arun Valley	94	83	94	66	62	84	115	76	134	167	189	176
Brooklands Worthing	41	15	15	13	12	16	10	7	28	29	24	37
Bewl Water	9	9	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	44	56	40	17	6
Alexandra Park	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	44	nc
Rye Bay	45	26	9	14	10	34	24	17	45	11	14	16

Other substantial counts included 50 at Chichester GP on 22 Jan, 30 at Henfield Levels on 27 Feb and 49 at Brooklands on 29 Dec and 50 at Chichester GP on 22 Jan.

In the early SWBS, 69 were found in 26 of 95 squares surveyed (*cf.* 43 in 18 of 100 in 2013); the maximum was 11 in, perhaps surprisingly, a square just north of Westbourne.

Breeding was confirmed in 35 tetrads and probable in a further 13. In the BBS, 105 birds were found in 51 of 164 squares (with a maximum of seven at Rustington), a similar result to that in 2013. There was an occupied nest at Butchers Cross (Five Ashes) on 11 Mar (and a third brood there on 26 Jun). The first young to hatch were at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 30 Mar. Twenty two nests and broods were recorded at Rye Hbr. Recently fledged birds were reported right through to 21 Aug. Breeding birds appear not to have been put off by anglers at Poling Fishing Lakes (where there were 20 on 17 Mar) but were again disturbed by reed cutting late in the year. Counts at Hammonds Mill Fm (Burgess Hill) exceeded 20 in Jan, Feb and Nov but dropped to five or fewer over the summer and autumn.

A most unusual record was of one heard calling while flying over King’s Standing (Ashdown Forest) at 01.15 on 21 Jun; another was of a bird on the Downs at No Man’s Land (Findon) on 13 Oct.

In the late SWBS, 93 were recorded in 29 of 136 squares, with a maximum of 16 at Rustington on 6 Nov (*cf.* 81 in 25 of 114 squares in 2013). [CB]

Coot

Fulica atra

Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.

Coots were recorded in 157 tetrads, up from last year’s 132 and back to the 2012 level of distribution. Nevertheless, overall numbers as suggested by WeBS counts were down:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3254	2180	993	560	662	706	1114	1631	2373	2811	2409	3011
Chichester Hbr	168	185	89	44	16	25	32	86	140	226	148	292
Chichester Canal	75	78	78	61	57	52	73	92	132	158	182	181
Pagham Hbr	129	92	53	36	38	30	71	52	63	97	57	66
Chichester GP	785	75	158	120	244	nc	nc	nc	635	800	737	762
Arun Valley	237	179	101	68	69	92	150	139	145	116	157	133
Bewl Water	397	337	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	298	214	292	272	244
Rye Bay	1031	925	224	90	105	357	534	701	728	653	473	850

The county totals in 2012 and 2013 were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2013	3715	3388	1451	923	585	891	816	1353	2120	3897	3861	3979
2012	4200	4683	2116	886	674	1194	800	1535	2915	3380	3856	4363

The year 2014 presented a strange pattern, with significantly lower counts at both ends of the year, but comparable counts in May and higher counts in July to September. It will be interesting to see if this pattern is maintained in future years. Counts at Chichester GP were much reduced from 2013 and 2012. The high summer increase in 2014 was clear in Rye Bay. Birds were seen in every month of the year at 21 sites (including smaller waters such as Novington SP and Yew Tree Fishing Lakes, Rotherfield).

Breeding was confirmed in 41 tetrads and probable in a further four (*cf.* 24 and eight in 2013). A pair was on a nest at Ifield Mill Pond on 2 Mar; the first young were seen at Arundel WWT and

at Troutbeck (Eridge), on 16 Apr. At the latter site, seven hatched, six fledged, and birds left the area on 30 Jun. A pair bred in a woodland pond near Small Dole; other less familiar sites included the museum at Singleton, Patching Pond and Michelham Priory. There were at least 29 nests and broods at Rye Hbr. [CB]

Crane

Grus grus

Rare vagrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

What was believed to be the same individual bird roamed around various sites in the south of the county during the latter part of April. On 19 Apr one flew down the Arun Valley between Amberley and Burpham (MCD).

What was presumably the same bird was seen at Lidsey on 22-23 Apr (BI) and at Rodmell on 27-28 Apr where it was seen to depart westwards (DC, JFC *et al.*). On 29 Apr it was seen flying down the Arun Valley south of Arundel (MCD) and then at Lidsey where it remained until the following day (ARK *et al.*). [PJ]

Little Bustard

Tetrax tetrax

Very rare vagrant. The species' western European stronghold is in Spain and Portugal with smaller populations in France and Italy. The northerly populations migrate southwards in winter.

One was seen and photographed on East Guldeford Levels on the morning of 30 Dec (AP). Despite searches by other observers later in the day the bird could not be relocated.

This is the thirteenth Sussex record but the last one was one hundred years ago at Goring on 12 Jan 1914. There were others recorded in Dorset in Nov 2014 and at Fraisthorpe (E Yorkshire) on 31 Dec 2014 and 1 January 2015 but these (and the Sussex bird) were the first in the UK since 2002. The record has been accepted by BBRC. [DHH]

Stone-curlew

Burhinus oediconemus

A rare passage migrant. Formerly a scarce breeding summer visitor, which since 2006 has tentatively started to recolonise the county. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

During 2014, the RSPB Sussex Stone-curlew Project continued to work with a small team of licensed volunteers to survey as much suitable habitat as possible, and to work intensively with local landowners, farmers and gamekeepers to create the conditions needed to assist returning and passage birds to stay and breed.

During 2014, the RSPB Sussex project team located one pair in an area 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.

The pair was initially seen in early April at a site a few kilometres away from the eventual nesting location, but by early May they had settled at the eventual nesting site. The pair consisted of one unringed bird and one which had been ringed as a nestling in the area in 2011 and which

bred at the same site in 2013. The pair nested in May and a detailed programme of monitoring established two eggs had been laid and one chick was seen from shortly after the expected hatching date. This chick was later ringed but fledging was not able to be confirmed; the last sighting of the adult pair and chick was in late June.

Elsewhere at a site that has seen regular nesting attempts since 2006, but has also suffered significant disturbance from birders, a single bird was present during April and May.

Records of two migrant birds were received for October with one at Pett Level on the 16th, seen and photographed sitting on one of the shingle islands (PEJ, RTP, JW) and another at Climping Gap on the 18th, seen at various times in the morning and once in the afternoon (DB, MB, HR *et al.*).

The RSPB Sussex Stone-curlew Project, actively supported by the Sussex Ornithological Society, remains indebted to the support of the landowners, farmers and gamekeepers whose efforts have allowed the breeding success we have seen so far.

There is a long way to go to 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 or tape-lure them without a licence. At this stage it is recommended that birdwatchers do not go out purposely attempting to find Stone-curlews in Sussex. However, if birds are stumbled upon by accident it would be greatly appreciated if records could be passed onto the project team at RSPB Brighton and the Hon. Recorder so that efforts can be made to ensure the maximum success of any breeding attempt. [DG]



Black-winged Stilt, Sidlesham Ferry Pool, July 2014 (Adam Bowley)

Black-winged Stilt*Himantopus himantopus*

Rare vagrant.

One of the undoubted highlights of the year was the successful breeding of a pair of Black-winged Stilts at the newly-created RSPB Medmerry reserve. The pair arrived as part of an influx in southern Britain which resulted in at least five being recorded in Sussex. The first bird was seen at Medmerry on 29 Apr (CRJ, PS) followed by two at Scotney GP on 14 May (AP) and then a pair at Medmerry on 17 May (CRJ, PS), which may have included the bird seen the previous month, with a further single bird at Barnham Brooks on 6 Jun (ARK). All the records have been accepted by BBRC.

The pair which arrived at Medmerry in May proceeded to breed and raised three young. When the young were fully fledged the family party of five moved to Sidlesham Ferry where they remained from 31 Jul to 3 Aug (IL *et al.*) before transferring to Pulborough Brooks from 3-10 Aug (JW *et al.*). The final sighting of the family party of five birds was at Sidlesham Ferry on 11 Aug (AH *et al.*).

This is the first occasion on which the species has bred in Sussex and further details can be found in the article on pages 211-215 of this report. During 2014 pairs also bred at Cliffe Pools (Kent) and Cavenham (Suffolk) where both pairs hatched four chicks but none of the Kent youngsters survived. The only previous records of the species successfully breeding in Britain were in Nottinghamshire in 1945 and in Norfolk in 1987. [DHH]

Avocet*Recurvirostra avosetta*

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

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
48	70	106	60	74	64	80	36	16	31	109	101

Overwintering flocks remained in Chichester and Pagham Harbours from 2013. The Chichester flock peaked at 47 on 2 Feb and at Pagham Hbr the highest count was 22 on 10 Feb but there was probably some movement between sites. The only other records for the first winter period were from Rye Hbr, with four on 16 Feb rising to ten on the 27th. Birds started to move onto breeding sites from the end of February, with 50 seen in the Rye area on the 15 Mar. As usual, few were seen passing offshore, with a minimum of 24 logged from seawatching points from 11 Mar, the largest group being 6 E off Worthing on the 28th. Away from the main areas, a single bird was seen at Cuckmere Haven on 24 Apr and two on 15 May, and further inland two arrived at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Mar and two called in at Warnham LNR on 5 Apr. Birds were present at Sidlesham Ferry continuously from 8 Mar to 20 Dec.

A total of 54 pairs bred at three sites. At Rye Hbr 28 pairs raised 40-50 young, and at Pett Level 18 pairs fledged 20. At the other end of the county eight pairs fledged 13 young at Medmerry, a welcome population increase in West Sussex. At Pulborough Brooks up to four were seen from 12 Mar to 19 Apr and up to five between 1-12 Aug.

Birds returned to their wintering sites in November. In Chichester Hbr, the flock roosting off Thorney Island peaked at 80 from 29 Nov to 1 Dec (a new site record for the third year running), falling to 57 on 6 Dec and 46 on the 24th. The Pagham Hbr flock was more or less stable at around 15, although 27 were counted on 13 Nov. The only other site record was of one on the lower Adur on 28 Nov. [CJRB]



Avocet, Medmerry, May 2014 (Jan-Paul Charteris)

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
County total	2237	2219	1188	724	536	327	440	1282	458	1722	2236	1914
Chichester Hbr	1608	1460	844	407	230	78	363	875	97	1322	1283	1713
Pagham Hbr	170	235	107	85	112	51	55	99	165	175	166	136
Cuckmere Haven	2	121	7	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	3	1
Rye Bay	391	313	224	226	187	186	19	302	180	219	764	36

In the first three months of the year the only counts to exceed WeBS counts were at Rye Hbr, where there were 600 on 9 Jan and 450 on 13 Feb. Elsewhere the only site to hold significant

numbers was Climping, with a maximum of 160 on 16 Feb and the high tide roost at Telscombe Cliffs held a maximum of only 34 on 31 Mar. Small numbers were seen passing seawatching sites all year and were probably local movements, the highest day total being 100 E in half an hour at Splash Point (Seaford) on 8 Feb. During the spring, other significant non WeBS counts were 300 at Pagham Hbr on 26 Apr and 200 on 4 May and 327 at Rye Hbr on 16 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads with a total of 72 breeding pairs, the most ever recorded in the county. There were 28 pairs at Rye Hbr, 18 at Pagham Hbr and ten pairs nested at Pett Level. Medmerry and West Wittering both had three pairs, whilst two pairs were at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr), three pairs at Arundel WWT and one at North Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr). Success at Rye Hbr was relatively low, but at some other sites results were generally more positive, with several reports of fledged young. The Shoreham warehouse roof pair returned for its fifth year, and the Rye Tennis Club roof pair was also back. A pair was seen twice along the river at Lewes Brooks during April, and what was probably the same pair was reported at Glynde Reach on 2 Jun. A single bird was recorded at Bewl Water on 18 Jun.

During the autumn migration peak, in addition to the WeBS counts there were 200 at Pett Level on 27 Jul and 550 at Rye Hbr. Into the second winter period, 230 were counted at Pagham Hbr on 15 Dec and 300 at Pett Level on the 28th. A count of 740 at Rye Hbr on 9 Nov was one of the highest ever at this site, but numbers plummeted in December to a maximum of only 40. The story was similar at Climping, where in contrast to the earlier part of the year there was a maximum of only 24 on 12 Dec. A high tide roost at Cuckmere Haven held 122 on 14 Nov, and one at Weir Wood Res on 13 Nov was the only inland sighting outside the breeding season. [CJRB]

American Golden Plover

Pluvialis dominica

Very rare vagrant.

A bird, moulting from breeding into winter plumage was watched and videoed at Scotney GP in a flock of 300 European Golden Plovers on 11 Oct (SJM). After the flock took flight the bird was not relocated until the following day but this time in Kent. This is the fourth accepted record for this Arctic breeding, long distance migrant species in Sussex, following the one recorded at Cuckmere Haven in June 2013. [JAH]

Golden Plover

Pluvialis apricaria

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare non-breeder 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	2473	1031	533	-	-	-	-	-	295	1362	1828	1795
Chichester Hbr	23	46	51	-	-	-	-	-	143	387	321	1059
Medmerry	225	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	85	75
Pagham Hbr	200	516	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	17	384
Rye Bay	2025	462	482	-	-	-	-	-	152	912	1393	277

At Rye Hbr, Pagham Hbr and Medmerry, counts made in between WeBS often produced much higher numbers, as shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pagham Hbr	500	430	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	100	400	384
Medmerry	225	100	150	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	110	154
Rye Hbr	2000	2400	482	100	2	-	47	280	210	300	3000	2500

This year's figures show the continuing shift towards higher numbers in East Sussex; November's count of 3000 at Rye Hbr on the 18th equalling the 2011 site record. The largest flock in the western harbours was 500 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Jan. In the first winter period the only records away from the tabulated sites were 40 at Scotney GP on 12 Jan, four at Newhaven on 16 Feb and three at Pevensey Levels on the same date.

The only May records were two at Rye Hbr on the 6th and one on the 28th and there were no sightings in June. The first returning birds were three at Rye Hbr on 12 Jul, but the first record from West Sussex was not until 11 Sep, when there were three at Thorney Deepes. During the autumn there were occasional records indicating movement, with regular reports of up to three at Beachy Head, with 20 there on 28 Oct, 12 past Hastings on 3 Oct, two at Seaford Head on 22 Sep, two over Cissbury on the 14th and one at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 21 Nov.

During the second winter period, numbers higher than the WeBS were as in the table above. The only significant numbers at any other site was at Scotney GP, where there were 700 on 16 Oct. The highest count at Pevensey Levels was 12 on 9 Nov. [CJRB]

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

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
County total	1425	1351	904	105	60	47	76	243	428	1055	1423	1117
Chichester Hbr	476	225	710	103	20	-	1	176	282	860	713	637
Medmerry	15	120	-	-	-	46	75	57	28	55	43	11
Pagham Hbr	845	926	187	2	39	1	-	10	117	136	649	441
Rye Bay	87	64	7	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	22

The only count to exceed WeBS in the first winter period was 250 at Pagham Hbr on 18 Mar. The highest count within Chichester Hbr was 300 at Pilsey Island on 4 Jan, and the largest groups elsewhere along the West Sussex coast were 120 at Goring Gap on 12 Feb, 30 at Littlehampton on 13 Mar and the same number at Ferring on 21 Feb. At the other end of the county there were 92 at Rye Hbr on 24 Jan and 40 at Pett Level on 22 Feb.

Small numbers were logged at seawatching points during the year. By far the highest counts came from Selsey Bill, with westerly movements in January of 80 on the 2nd, 95 on the 5th and 115 on the 18th, with another 90 W on 24 Oct.

During the spring, one overhead at Waterhall (Brighton) was the only inland record all year, and two called in at Cuckmere Haven on 15 May, departing the following day. There were still 120 at Pilsey Sands on 15 Apr and 53 at Pagham Hbr on the 17th, rather than the numbers suggested by the WeBS. But the largest numbers during the summer were found at Medmerry, where there were 85 on 14 Jun and 105 on 24 Jul. In contrast, Pagham Hbr only produced a single bird throughout these two months, and the maximum at any other site was two at Rye Hbr on 12 Jul.

Numbers built up during the autumn to a peak in October, when there were 450 at Pilsey Island on the 25th. At Cuckmere Haven, one was seen on 18 Sep and up to two were recorded from 12 to 29 Nov.

In the second winter period the only count to exceed WeBS was 60 at Medmerry on 23 Dec, and there were ten at Pett Level on 23 Nov. [CJRB]



Grey Plovers, Church Norton, February 2014 (Andrew House)

Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

Scarce or fairly common but declining resident and very common winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the following table. The high numbers of December 2013 continued into this year. In addition to the WeBS figures 4000 were recorded at Pagham Hbr on 15 Jan, at Pulborough Brooks there were peaks of 2000 on 6 Jan and 2215 on 7 Feb, and it was a similar story at Beeding Brooks, where 1000 were counted on both 26 Jan and 16 Feb. There were 500 at Medmerry on 3 Feb and 600 at Doleham on the 13th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	15,953	11,100	563	141	148	308	706	486	1425	2856	5664	8795
Chichester Hbr	1928	1172	72	11	5	-	69	39	113	424	791	1650
Medmerry	1555	105	-	27	19	30	20	66	22	173	216	150
Pagham Hbr	3420	2908	13	9	3	3	63	36	100	34	686	1511
Arun Valley	1184	880	73	38	36	33	33	72	140	498	952	1865
Upper Adur Levels	-	-	48	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	3	6
Ouse Valley	120	951	218	8	7	3	-	-	40	23	-	1011
Pevensey Levels	15	371	73	18	42	111	15	1	4	18	706	130
Bewl Water	-	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	76	95	49	29	50
Rye Bay	7309	4586	66	30	33	125	455	114	790	1442	2065	2077

Numbers dropped sharply in March, when there were 387 at Pulborough Brooks on the 3rd, 210 at Lewes Brooks on the 16th and 250 at Medmerry on the 17th, after which there were no counts of over 55 (at Pett Level on 7 Mar) until mid-June.

Display was first reported on 3 Feb at Pett Level, although there were no further reports until the 22nd. Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and probable in another 25. The highest counts of pairs reported were 24 on the Norfolk Estate, 22 at Rye Hbr (where productivity was low), 18 at Pett Level and 16 at Medmerry. There were seven pairs at Pagham Hbr, five at Thorney Island and the same number at Arundel WWT, where a total of 11 chicks was seen.

Post-breeding numbers built up in East Sussex, with influxes of 600 at Rye Hbr on 31 Jul and 28 Aug. At Pagham Hbr the first significant count was 200 on 7 Sep, and there were 200 on 19 Oct and 2000 on 30 Nov, higher than the totals shown in the WeBS. Numbers at Medmerry were also higher than the WeBS suggests, with 500 on 18 Nov and 1000 on 20 Dec. [CJRB]

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	5	10	10	5	11	8	3
No. of birds	9	24	17	28	58	21	6

The first record was of one at Greatham Bridge on 18 Mar, followed by arrivals at the traditional breeding sites over the following two weeks. The only sightings at less usual locations were three at Scotney GP on 28 Mar and single birds at Lidsey SF on the 3rd, Barcombe Res on the 20th and between Arundel and Ford on 2 May.

At least 15 pairs bred, though there was little information on success. Six or more pairs bred at Rye Hbr and three pairs at another regular East Sussex site. In West Sussex there were five pairs at Medmerry (including one seen with three chicks) and a single pair at Pulborough Brooks. There were no indications of likely breeding anywhere else, although birds were reported regularly at Weir Wood Res from 21 Mar until 19 May, with two there on 18-19 Apr.

Numbers built up from the beginning of July as family groups congregated, perhaps joined by migrants passing through. At Sidlesham Ferry birds were present almost continuously from 1 Jul

to 31 Aug, with a maximum of 12 on 7 Jul and there were 14 at Pulborough Brooks the following day and 15 at Medmerry on the 29th. Ones and twos were recorded passing through on one day only at various other reservoir and river valley sites, and the last sighting was of two at Sidlesham Ferry on 24 Sep. [CJRB]

Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

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
County total	251	383	59	54	119	53	73	892	382	242	179	77
Chichester Hbr	73	158	39	27	22	16	2	751	220	196	81	48
Medmerry	5	2	4	5	2	2	43	36	42	29	18	24
Pagham Hbr	118	196	10	4	39	6	24	11	52	2	27	1
Climping	10	-	2	5	-	1	4	42	11	-	19	1
Rye Bay	43	26	4	12	46	26	-	48	51	5	34	-

Unusually, numbers at Pagham Hbr in the first winter period were consistently higher than in Chichester Hbr, with counts of 200 on 14 Jan and 60 on 4 Mar. The only other count to exceed the WeBS was 40 at Rye Hbr on 31 Mar. Elsewhere, Goring Gap regularly held good numbers, with a maximum of 100 on 18 Jan, and on the following day there were high counts of 50 on the beach near Brooklands (Worthing) and 40 at Rottingdean.

Breeding was confirmed at nine sites and was probable at two others. A total of at least 54 breeding pairs was recorded, a welcome increase for the second year running. There were 25 pairs at Rye Hbr, 15 pairs at Pagham Hbr, five at Medmerry, three at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr), two at Southwick Beach and single pairs at Littlehampton, Shoreham Beach, Brighton Marina and Newhaven Tide Mills. Probable breeding was also reported from West Beach (Littlehampton) and Iford Brooks and possibly at Brooklands (Worthing).

Autumn migration brought the usual peak, when counts higher than the WeBS were 170 at Pagham Hbr on 29 Aug, 100 there on 21 Sep, 94 at Climping on 28 Aug, and at Rye Hbr 30 on 16 Jul and 160 on 23 Aug. The best counts at sites not shown in the WeBS table were 82 at Goring Beach on 15 Sep and 64 on the R Adur (Shoreham). The roost at Pilsey Island reached a peak of 700 on 13 Aug.

In the second winter period numbers at Pagham Hbr returned to normal, with 45 on 15 Dec. The only other count to exceed the WeBS was 100 on the R Adur at Shoreham on 15 Oct. There were again some good counts at other beach sites, with 100 at Brooklands on 29 Nov, 73 at Ferring on 18 Oct and 50 at Goring on 19 Dec.

There were a number of inland records. Two were reported at West Chiltington on 6 Mar and one at Greatham Bridge on the 19th. At Pulborough Brooks there was one on 6 Apr, an unusual influx of 27 on 12 May, one on the 17th and one on 12 Aug. Two were seen at Iford Brooks on 20 Jul and one flew over Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) the next day. Three at Lidsey on 27 May were considered to be of the arctic race *tundrae*. [CJRB].

Kentish Plover*Charadrius alexandrinus*

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

One was seen and videoed on the Flat Beach (Rye Hbr) from 11:30 to 12:15hr on 26 Apr (SJM). This species has been recorded in all years this century except in 2010. Since 1948 birds have arrived in all months of the year except January, but since 2000 in only five months, but always predominantly in spring:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1948-2014	-	1	10	46	47	7	10	11	17	6	2	1	158
2000-2014	-	-	2	10	10	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	26

The county total this century rises to 28 at an annual average of 1.9 per annum. [JAH]

Dotterel*Charadrius morinellus*

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; one winter record. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

2013: Two juveniles were present near Balsdean on 1-4 Sep (JG).

2014: There were two records, both from Seaford Head. One flew NW over the golf course calling constantly at 07:10 on 31 Jul and a juvenile flew west calling over Hope Gap at 08:22 on 10 Sep (both MRE). The July record is the first for that month preceding the previous earliest in autumn (10 Aug 1978, Rye Hbr) by ten days. The county total this century moves on to 83. [PJ]

Whimbrel*Numenius phaeopus*

Common passage migrant, scarce non-breeding 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
County total	-	4	2	46	25	1	51	39	11	5	7	1
Chichester Hbr	-	4	1	40	18	-	37	21	5	4	5	1
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	11	5	1	1	-
Newhaven	-	-	1	nc	-	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-

One at Pagham Hbr on 19 Jan was the only record for the month but on 1 Feb four were recorded from several points in Chichester Hbr and, in early March, there were further occasional sightings in Chichester Hbr presumably involving the same birds. One flew west off Worthing on 2 Mar and one flew east at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 8th, another on the 27th with 17 E there

on the 30th, but offshore passage did not start in earnest until mid April. The totals from four main seawatching sites are shown below:

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total	Peak movement	
Selsey Bill	E	-	141	74	-	-	-	215	38 in 10 hrs	19 Apr
	W	-	19	22	-	5	11	57		
Worthing	E	2	146	107	1	1	-	257	64 in 12 hrs	5 May
	W	1	-	-	1	-	9	11		
Splash Point	E	19	361	98	-	nc	2	480	85 in 9.5 hrs	26 Apr
	W	-	-	1	-	nc	-	1		
Birling Gap	E	-	211	64	-	-	10	285	78 in 6 hrs	21 Apr
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		

Numbers at Rye Hbr in April varied from one on the 4th to 51 on the 29th, the highest count of the year other than from seawatching, and a count of 46 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the same day was also the maximum for that site. There were still 30 in Pagham Hbr on 22 Apr and the same number at Cuckmere Haven on 5 May, but numbers dwindled after mid-month and fewer than ten were reported in the county during June.

There were already 16 returning migrants at Pilsey Island on 10 Jul, rising to a peak of 42 on 15 Aug, but the maximum at Rye Hbr was only 20 on the 9th. There were only single figures after 15 Aug, when 25 flew off high to the south at Pilsey Island.

In the last three months of the year one was regularly recorded at Pagham Hbr from 4 Oct to 23 Dec. In Chichester Hbr there were two on 25 Oct, rising to at least three and possibly up to five on 8 Nov, but these were likely to have been late migrants as there were no further reports until one was seen at West Wittering on 7 Dec and Apuldram on the 13th.

Inland records, all of single birds, came from Kingston (Lewes) on 4 May, Warnham LNR on 21 Jul, and Weir Wood Res on 26 Apr, 1 and 21 May. [CJRB]

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
County total	2221	2245	1553	296	163	190	1397	1666	1626	1303	1556	1460
Chichester Hbr	1007	1347	1227	173	117	42	1165	1381	1363	1100	1065	918
Pagham Hbr	465	449	235	118	46	106	197	258	161	157	280	271
Rye Bay	737	414	70	5	-	41	35	21	85	31	158	199

At Rye Hbr and Pett Level, counts in between the WeBS were as usual often considerably higher than the aggregated WeBS totals for Rye Bay, particularly those of the roosting birds at Rye Hbr in the autumn. The table below shows the maximum counts at Rye Hbr and Pett Level throughout the year, giving a better picture of the importance of this area for Curlews. The Pett

Level birds are mostly the same as the Rye Hbr ones. They feed at Pett Level (and elsewhere) and roost at Rye Hbr.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rye Hbr	500	430	50	33	8	5	120	218	290	280	130	400
Pett Level	400	400	250	9	8	60	150	120	86	100	25	85

As usual, Newhaven and the lower Cuckmere Valley held the only significant numbers away from the eastern and western harbours. A total of 120 at Newhaven on 21 Jan was a record for this site, but the highest count in the lower Cuckmere was a low 25 on the 5th. Small numbers were logged from seawatching points during the year, the highest monthly totals were 102 E at Selsey Bill in January and 152 E at Splash Point (Seaford) in April.

The only counts to exceed WeBS in the second half of the year were 230 at Pilsey Island on 29 Jun and 340 at Pagham Hbr on 12 Jul, with 190 there on 11 Sep. During the autumn peak, the roost at Pilsey built up to a monthly maximum of 350 on 29 Jul and then to a second peak of 320 there and 520 at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on 27 Sep. Once again this year, no counts exceeded the 1% threshold number of 1500 for a site of national importance.

A bird was seen in flight over Ashdown Forest, a former breeding site, on 15 Jun, and during the spring and autumn there were four other reports of single birds overflying the Downs and the Weald. The leucistic bird recorded at Pagham Hbr for the previous five years returned for its sixth year, being noted on 23 Feb and 6 Mar and then between 29 Jul and 5 Sep. [CJRB]

Black-tailed Godwit

Limosa limosa

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

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	1017	208	634	275	101	62	106	246	625	735	565	908
Chichester Hbr	1	-	595	45	-	-	42	242	541	523	367	594
Pagham Hbr	1000	206	16	229	101	40	41	1	60	191	72	158
Arun Valley	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	3	1	2	109	146

The table shows that, as usual, most were seen in the western harbours but with significant counts in the Arun Valley in November and December. The 1% international threshold (610) was exceeded at Pagham Hbr in January and the 1% national threshold (430) was surpassed in Chichester Hbr in September, October and December showing that both locations are valuable wintering grounds for the species in a wider context.

During the first winter period the only sizeable count outside the WeBS came from Amberley Wild Brooks, with 320 on 16 Jan. There was probably some local movement between Chichester and Pagham Harbours (and other nearby sites, e.g. Medmerry) with one containing higher numbers when the other had fewer and vice versa. Elsewhere, Rye Hbr held a maximum of three on 16 Feb.

Spring passage was represented by 4 E past Worthing on 8 Mar and one on the middle of Seaford Head GC on 30 Apr, presumably resting during migration. At Rye Hbr, 12 were recorded on 16 and 30 Mar and 47 on 14 May. At Pett Level counts involved 12 on 25 Apr and 26 on 2 May while 25 were present on 15 May. Through June and July, Rye Hbr held 13 on 30 Jun and eight on 7 Jul on which date two were present at Arlington Res. Apart from the WeBS count of 41 from Pagham Hbr in July, there was also a count of 73 on 29 Jul.

During the second winter period, away from Pagham and Chichester Harbours, the highest non-WeBS counts were at Pulborough Brooks where 360 on 25 Nov rose to a peak of 400 on 1 Dec with 371 remaining on 22 Dec. At Pagham Hbr, counts additional to the WeBS were of 100 on 9 Nov and 170 on 21 Dec.

On 2 Jan at Pagham Hbr, 35 colour ringed (undefined) birds were observed, several of which had been seen earlier in the winter in Portsmouth, Langstone and Chichester Harbours. [DB]



Spotted Redshanks and Black-tailed Godwits, Pagham North Wall, September 2014
(Jan-Paul Charteris)

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

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

The monthly WeBS counts were as shown in the following table. This table indicates that Chichester Hbr continues to be the principal site for the species in Sussex. The January and February counts fell a little short of the 1% international threshold of 1200 but exceeded the 1% national threshold of 380.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1088	1126	159	80	74	45	84	74	161	255	339	214
Chichester Hbr	1072	1100	154	57	68	42	84	71	155	248	333	213

Spring passage, as observed from the principal seawatching sites, was again poor with a season total of just 1268 (calculated by summing the highest daily count from each site) compared to just over 1500 in both the preceding two years, themselves considered to be poor. The monthly eastbound totals at four sites are shown in the following table.

		Mar	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	E	-	175	127
Worthing	E	2	77	94
Splash Point	E	54	958	138
Birling Gap	E	-	87	65

The few notable records were from Splash Point (Seaford); 51 E on 28 Mar was the first movement in the spring and maxima were 586 E on 26 Apr and 80 E on 5 May.

The WeBS table shows that during mid-summer the species was still present in the county and counts from Pagham Hbr, not shown in the table, included 12 on 1 Jun, 21 on 27 Jul and 124 on 17 Aug. Few were seen elsewhere with the only notable counts being seven at Rye Hbr on 28 Jul, six at Climping on 16 Sep and 14 at Medmerry on 24 Sep. The only autumn movement observed was 2 E past Worthing on 15 Sep.

A count of 500 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 24 Nov was additional to the WeBS and during the second winter period most were seen in Chichester Hbr but there were counts of 25 from Pagham Hbr on 19 Dec and 12 at Medmerry on 15 Nov. Aside from these Rye Hbr held a maximum of four on 9 Nov, Camber Sands two on 16 Nov, while a single bird was seen at the slightly unusual location of Arlington Res on 23 Nov. [DB, JAN]

Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce non-breeder in summer. Rare away from coast. 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
County total	894	769	327	148	166	4	10	159	261	368	358	321
Chichester Hbr	150	41	120	25	16	-	-	10	8	155	156	136
Pagham Hbr	201	510	92	5	130	-	4	34	97	96	133	49
Climping	511	206	26	75	8	-	-	74	51	67	28	117
Lower Adur Estuary	4	-	21	3	4	-	-	33	72	33	19	4
Rye Bay	28	9	68	2	8	-	-	8	27	8	16	13

The count of 511 at Climping on 19 Jan was the highest ever recorded at this site, the birds roosting at high tide on the breakwater at Littlehampton. In addition to the WeBS figures in the

first winter period, there were 285 at Pagham Hbr on 30 Jan, 310 at West Beach (Littlehampton) on 16 Feb, 270 at Goring Gap on the 12th (with 60 there on 7 Mar) and 70 at Rye Hbr on the 27th. Elsewhere, there were 200 at Hastings on 3 Mar, a high number for East Sussex and 80 at Pett Level on the 7th.

The count of 130 at Pagham Hbr on 18 May was by far the highest of the spring, and there were 80 still at Pett Level on 4 Apr and 60 there on 2 May, rather than the low numbers suggested by the WeBS. At Brighton Marina, a count of 44 on 20 Apr was the highest count of the year there. Small numbers were reported from seawatching sites, most probably local rather than wider movements, with the highest day total being 40 E at Selsey Bill on 23 Mar. Only about 43 birds, presumably summering, were reported in the county during June, including 15 at both Church Norton on the 1st and Rye Hbr on the 8th.

Numbers began to build up again from mid-July, with 40 at Pagham Hbr on the 22nd and 36 at Rye Hbr on the 31st. Thereafter in the autumn four of the six three figure counts were from the beach at Goring and Ferring where the maximum was of 151 roosting on 10 Sep. Elsewhere there were 100 on the beach at Selsey on 13 Aug and 140 at Hastings on 29 Sep.

The last three months of the year brought counts higher than the WeBS of 50 at Pett Level on 20 Oct and 62 on the R Adur on the 18th, and high December counts not shown in the WeBS table sites of 120 at Goring on the 19th, 50 at Worthing on the 4th and 86 there on the 31st. [CJRB]

Knot

Calidris canutus

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

The WeBS counts for the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1780	1396	934	1	6	1	-	1	19	3	56	205
Chichester Hbr	1013	481	839	1	-	-	-	1	5	1	55	46
Pagham Hbr	648	834	65	-	-	-	-	-	10	1	-	155
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	1	-	-
Rye Bay	119	81	30	-	6	1	-	-	4	-	-	4

At Pagham Hbr, counts of 815 on 6 Jan and 100 on 4 Mar were the only ones to exceed the WeBS figures in the early part of the year, but at the Pilsey Island roost there were 1000 on 4 Jan, and at Rye Hbr a good count of 300 on the 19th. Offshore spring passage was as usual light, by far the highest monthly totals were 25 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) in March, 30 E at Worthing in April and 29 E at Splash Point (Seaford) during May.

In June there was one at Pagham Hbr on the 9th, two at Medmerry the same day and one there on the 19th and in East Sussex there was one at Rye Hbr on the 15th. The first returning migrants were three at Rye Hbr on 23 Jul. A count of 40 at Medmerry on 2 Aug was the first significant one of the autumn, but numbers were mostly in single figures, with no other counts of over 20 until November. During the autumn, wandering birds turned up at a few unusual locations with single birds at Cuckmere Haven on 9 Sep, 17 Oct and 24-27 Nov, Widewater (Lancing) on 5 Nov, and on the lower Adur from 13-21 Sep, with three there on the 19th.

In addition to the WeBS counts in the second winter period there were 2000 at Pilsey Island on 24 Nov and 100 at Pagham Hbr on 23-24 Nov, 198 on 12 Dec and 200 on the 27th. The highest count at Rye Hbr was 25 on 18 Nov. There were 2000 at Pilsey Island on 24 Nov. [CJRB]

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
County total	5	19	11	-	-	-	-	2	6	15	15	16
Chichester Hbr	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arun Valley	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	-	-
Rye Bay	3	19	11	-	-	-	-	2	5	12	15	16

The above counts represent a reduction in numbers in the months of January, August and September compared with the previous year, while being much higher than those for 2012 which, perhaps, was a particularly poor year for this species.

The 1% national threshold for Ruff is eight, so numbers in Rye Bay exceeded the threshold in the February, March, October, November and December.

The minimum monthly totals, taking the largest count at a site as the minimum, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	32	55	41	4	1	3	5	12	26	38	33	59
No. of sites	7	4	6	2	1	2	2	5	7	7	5	4

During the first winter period observations came from eleven mostly coastal or near coastal wetland sites but including five at Amberley Wildbrooks on 24 Jan. Otherwise counts were usually of one to ten except for 18 at Winchelsea Beach on 12 Jan and a peak count of 37 at Rye Hbr on 27 Feb.

Spring migration ended effectively on 6 Apr when one was noted at Rye Hbr, although a late straggler was recorded flying east at Worthing on 19 May. Early returning migrants were noted from 24 Jun when one was at Sidlesham Ferry until the 26th and another was at Medmerry on the 28th. There was a slow trickle of migrants during July which increased slightly in August.

However, in September, numbers increased significantly, although the number of sites did not exceed 11. The highest counts during this period were tens at Rye Hbr on 5 Sep and Pulborough Brooks on the 21st and 11 on the fields east of the pools at Pett Level on 23 Oct.

During the second winter period groups of one to nine were recorded regularly at the main coastal sites but the highest count was in the Rye Bay area with 27 at Rye Hbr on 10 Dec, a considerably lower number than the 2013 count of 72 birds there. [RJE]

Curlew Sandpiper*Calidris ferruginea*

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

The minimum monthly totals are as shown below.

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
5	5	3	6	18	21	3

The first spring record was at Pagham Hbr on 22 Apr and thereafter at Rye Hbr small numbers were recorded on five dates between 27 Apr and 19 May with three on 29 Apr, the peak count. One summer plumaged female was at Medmerry on 20 May and one at Rodmell also on 20 and 21 May. During June there were singles at Pagham Hbr on the 1st, at Medmerry between the 12th and 15th and on the Selsey Peninsula on the 29th.

As expected, the peak time for Curlew Sandpiper sightings was late August and September when the passage of juveniles reaches its maximum. The highlights included a maximum of nine at Pagham Hbr on 11 Sep, and five at Rye Hbr on 4 Sep, with birds being recorded at Pagham Hbr throughout the month. One remained at Pagham Hbr into early October and finally one was seen at both Medmerry and Rye Hbr on 14 and 16 Oct. [CD]

Sanderling*Calidris alba*

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Very rare away from coast.

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	141	290	89	-	185	23	4	180	3	194	3	95
Chichester Hbr	54	26	70	-	132	22	-	150	2	193	2	68
Pagham Hbr	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Climping	-	-	-	-	48	1	4	24	1	-	-	19
Goring Gap	2	200	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	7
Rye Bay	84	61	19	-	5	-	-	6	-	1	-	1

The WeBS counts, taking place on a fixed day each month, often miss the largest flocks of this mobile wader. The table below gives a better picture, showing the monthly maxima from all sources at three key sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pilsey Island	80	100	300	52	200	24	150	360	404	120	140	20
Goring Gap	100	430	43	20	19	-	-	10	25	28	-	7
Rye Hbr	100	240	-	5	5	-	42	26	2	4	-	22

Other notably high first winter counts included: 430 at Goring Gap on 13 Feb, a record total away from Chichester Hbr and for the observer who noted that it was his highest in 40 years at this

site; 200 at Ferring on 10 Jan and 100 at Pagham Hbr on 4 Feb and West Beach (Littlehampton) on the 23rd. During the spring, there were 50 at Climping on 2 Apr and 80 still at Pagham Hbr on 25 May and 35 on 1 Jun. Seawatching produced the usual trickle of migrants, the highest numbers being in May, with monthly totals of 176 E at Splash Point (Seaford), 129 E and 46 W at Selsey Bill, and 122 E and 38 W at Worthing. The largest group in June was 35 at Pagham Hbr on the 1st.

Return passage began sharply with 42 at Rye Hbr on 28 Jul, followed the next day by 75 at Climping and 150 at Pilsey Sands then 260 at East Head (both Chichester Hbr) on 12 Aug. In the second winter period, notable counts, additional to the above WeBS counts, included 160 at both Ferring on 4 Dec, 120 at East Head on 20 Nov, 68 on the beach at Widewater (Lancing) on 10 Nov and 20 on the R Adur at Shoreham on 15 Oct. There were no inland records in 2014. [CJRB]

Dunlin

Calidris alpina

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	17,212	14,467	6755	378	54	17	295	1146	428	2143	4430	7631
Chichester Hbr	14,666	12,141	6561	305	44	5	202	741	183	1762	3460	6800
RSPB Medmerry	12	-	-	11	-	12	68	48	47	42	46	101
Pagham Hbr	1883	1318	50	45	-	-	15	200	71	297	788	597
Rye Bay	587	674	144	17	10	-	-	119	122	31	121	126

WeBS counts at Chichester Hbr exceeded the 1% national threshold of 3500 during January to March and December. The totals from just two of the principal seawatching sites are shown below:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	-	-	2	96	16		1	1	-	-	18	-
	W	47	-	1	77	33		2	84	-	28	98	24
Worthing	E	-	-	1	2	42		10	3	11	-	10	-
	W	-	-	-	12	34		-	10	-	49	12	-

In the first winter period significant counts additional to the WeBS involved 350 on the beach at Worthing on 11 Jan and 446 roosting in a field at Goring Gap on 13 Jan and 400 there on 12 Feb. Flocks of 100-150 were seen at Climping Gap, Ferring, Newhaven and Pett Level.

Numbers reduced significantly during April and May, as usual, so that by 31 May only 25 remained in Pagham Hbr. The highest counts in June, presumably of summering non-breeders, were ten at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 11th and 24 at Medmerry on the 30th. It was notable that the WeBS county total in August was nearly three times higher than in September, presumably reflecting the different migration strategies of different age groups and populations.

In the autumn, counts at Pilsey Sands of 2000 on 9 Aug and 3000 on 31 Oct exceeded those month's WeBS counts by a large margin as did 400 at Rye Hbr on 26 Aug. In the second winter

period there were no significant counts away from the favoured area of Chichester Hbr but there were many records of small numbers along the coast.

Inland records came from the Arun Valley below Arundel, with one or two in May and August, Amberley Wild Brooks, where there were seven on 14 Jul, Pulborough Brooks, with six on 3 Mar and one or two in the late summer/autumn period, Weir Wood Res, with one on 12 Apr, Arlington Res, with a peak of three on 20 Aug, and Bewl Water, where there was one on 9 Aug. [RJE]

Purple Sandpiper

Calidris maritima

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, very rare in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The highest monthly counts at sites where the species was recorded are as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	28	25	19	22	17		3	5	16	21
Shoreham Hbr and R Adur	9	10	7	4	-		-	-	3	4
Brighton Marina	-	-	-	8	4		3	4	8	5
Newhaven	19	15	12	10	13		-	1	5	17
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	1	1

The highest count in January was 19 at Newhaven on the 17th, and the final sighting at Newhaven for the first winter period and spring was a high count for May, with 13 birds recorded on 7 May. Numbers at Shoreham Hbr peaked with ten on 28 Feb, and the final record was of four on 9 Apr. The first birds at Brighton Marina were not recorded until eight were noted on 20 Apr, and a final record showed four on 5 May.

The first returning birds were earlier than in 2013 with three recorded on 3 Sep at Brighton Marina. There were no records elsewhere in this month. The first returning bird at Newhaven was recorded on 21 Oct. At Brighton Marina a maximum of eight was recorded on 21 Nov, and at Newhaven a maximum of 17 on 20 Dec. Four returning birds were recorded at Shoreham on 4 Nov, which increased to a maximum of five on 7 Nov. [CD]

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

Scarce passage migrant; very scarce in winter.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	0	0	1	1	8	0	2	5	11	9	2	1

For the first time since 1998 no overwintering birds from 2013 were reported and the first sighting of the year was not until 19 Mar at Rye Hbr. One or two were reported there regularly throughout the spring until seven were counted on 23 May, the largest group of the year. The only records from anywhere else were of one at Pagham Hbr on 8, 12 and 13 May.



Little Stint, Widewater, September 2014 (Leigh Prevost)

There was a long gap until 12 Jul, when one paid a two day visit to Sidlesham Ferry, the only other July record being one at Pett Level on the 24th. During the autumn birds were regular at Rye and Pagham Harbours and occasional at Medmerry, with maxima of four, two and four respectively. One called in briefly at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Aug and another delighted many observers at Widewater (Lancing) with close views from 6 to 8 Sep, and was presumably the one seen in the lower Adur on the 8th. Oddly, one was seen again at both Widewater and Shoreham on 7 Oct. Later in the autumn there was one in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 31 Oct and one in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 18 Nov and one well into the second winter period at Scotney GP from 20 Nov to 1 Dec and Pagham Hbr on 9 Dec. [CJRB]

Pectoral Sandpiper

Calidris melanotos

Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn.

The only record was of an adult at Pulborough Brooks from 9-14 Aug (JW *et al.*). A typical autumn occurrence, this being the third year running that this species has been recorded at Pulborough Brooks. The county total moves on to 90 with 25 having been seen this century. [PJ]

Grey Phalarope

Phalaropus fulicarius

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

There were four records this year totalling five birds. The first was a remarkably confiding individual that frequented the children's paddling pool by Hove Lagoon from 5-14 Jan (mo)

where it attracted many admirers during its 10-day stay and was extensively photographed. Unusually all three autumn records were of inland birds with two at Pulborough Brooks from 13-19 Oct (mo), an adult on a flooded borrow pit beside the R Adur near Ashurst from 10-13 Nov (VPB, NP *et al.*) and one on Lewes Brooks on 15 Nov (PB, NPH). [PJ]



Grey Phalarope, Hove, January and February 2014
(left, Jacob Everitt; right, Roger and Liz Charlwood)

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

Fairly common passage migrant; very scarce in winter. Has bred at least once. 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
<i>County total</i>	-	1	-	-	24	-	41	58	39	1	-	-
<i>Ardingly Res</i>	-	nc	-	-	nc	nc	nc	1	-	1	-	-
<i>Weir Wood Res</i>	-	-	-	-	nc	-	2	3	4	-	-	-
<i>Ouse Valley</i>	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	-
<i>Arlington Res</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	-	-	-
<i>Bewl Water</i>	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	8	3	-	-	-
<i>Rye Bay</i>	-	-	-	-	4	-	21	23	25	-	-	-

The approximate monthly county totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
6	3	2	24	87	4	136	152	99	18	15	6

Between January and March up to two overwintering birds from 2013 were regularly seen along the R Ouse south of Lewes, but the only other records were of two at Warnham LNR on 17 Jan and singles on the lower Adur on 7 Jan and at Rye Hbr on the 16th. From the beginning of April birds were reported more widely, although most were ones or twos. The highest counts were a monthly total of 11 at Weir Wood Res in May, seven at both Sidlesham Ferry on 1 May and Newhaven Hbr on the 19th and four on the beach at Church Norton on the 22nd. Seawatching produced a sprinkling of records, with three at Climping on 22 Apr and a May total of 7 E at Splash Point (Seaford).

There were no reports from 25 May until 23 Jun, when three were seen at Southwater CP. The only other June records were one at Piddinghoe on the 24th and one at Sidlesham Ferry on the 30th, but birds were reported almost daily from 1 Jul through to mid-October. The Union Canal (East Guldeford) produced consistently high numbers as usual, with monthly maxima of 15 on 13 Jul, 22 on 10 Aug and 25 on 7 Sep, and there were 20 along just 70yds of riverbank on the R Adur at Upper Beeding on 26 Jul. At Weir Wood Res there was also a run of good counts, with 21 on 12 Jul, 15 on 1 Aug and nine on 2 Sep. Medmerry hosted ten on 29 Jul and 14 on 24 Sep, there were 11 between Arundel and Littlehampton on 1 Aug and ten at Piddinghoe on the 4th.

Up to four lingered at Medmerry until 9 Nov, but the following day six were seen on the R Ouse just below Lewes. One was ringed on 10 Nov and was seen there again on the 26th, and there were three there on 18 Dec, with one at Piddinghoe the next day. The only other records after 9 Nov were of single birds on the lower Arun on the 18th, the lower Adur on 7 Dec and the lower Cuckmere on 30 Dec. [CJRB]

Green Sandpiper

Tringa ochropus

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1	3	3	2	-	6	23	17	21	6	3	1
Chichester Hbr	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medmerry	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	-	-
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	2	-	-	-
Arun Valley	1	-	-	-	-	3	13	5	3	-	2	-
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	-	nc	-	4	6	6	1	-	-
Barcombe Res	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
Wadhurst Park	-	nc	2	nc	-	nc	nc	nc	4	-	nc	1

The only site where numbers exceeded the 1% national threshold of nine was the Arun Valley in July. The minimum monthly totals, taking the largest count at a site as the minimum, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	8	6	17	11	3	24	67	70	41	19	20	8
10-year average	20	15	16	23	4	21	70	98	47	32	19	18

From the first winter period until 7 May sightings were predominantly of single birds, but occasionally twos with a maximum of four at Lidsey SF on 18 Jan, widely across the county in suitable wet habitats both coastal and inland, e.g. Buchan, Firle and Wadhurst Parks. The last spring migrants were noted at Sidlesham Ferry and Buchan Park on 7 May.

Return passage was first noticed at Sidlesham Ferry on 15 Jun following which there was a steady increase in numbers. In July the highest counts were ten at Pulborough Brooks on the 21st and 16 at Rye Hbr on the 18th but counts otherwise were generally of one to five. A similar pattern prevailed in both August and September with high counts of nine at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Aug (and eight there on the 4th and 26th), seven at Weir Wood Res on the 20th, and in September there were eight at Sidlesham Ferry on the 8th. The highest count in October was of only four at Sidlesham Ferry on the 3rd and 31st.

The majority of sightings in the second winter period were of one to three birds but notably six were recorded at Pagham Hbr on 9 Nov. [RJE]

Spotted Redshank

Tringa erythropus

Scarce passage migrant and very scarce 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
County total	1	5	5	4	-	-	2	1	2	8	1	4
Chichester Hbr	1	4	4	2	-	-	-	1	1	5	-	3
Pagham Hbr	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	3	1	1

The approximate minimum monthly totals, including WeBS and other records, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
12	12	10	11	1	3	7	7	11	17	5	14

As is usually the case, in the first winter period most were in the western harbours, where there were up to four at various sites in Chichester Hbr and up to three in Pagham Hbr.

Most remained at the wintering sites into April. A presumed early migrant was at Lewes Brooks on 4 Apr and five at Pagham Hbr the next day presumably included at least three migrants as only two had been present there during the winter. The last presumed wintering bird was at Sidlesham Ferry on 22 Apr and there was then a gap of nearly a month before the next was seen there on 17 May, the only May record in what was an unusually lean month for this species.

One at Sidlesham Ferry on 14 Jun was an anomaly; it could have been either a late spring migrant or an early returning bird. The next one was not seen until 21 Jun, also at Sidlesham Ferry. A single bird (possibly the same individual) was then seen regularly in the Pagham Hbr

area right through to late July, finally being joined by a second there on the 20th. Elsewhere in June there were just singles at Rye Hbr on the 26th and 28th and in July, in addition to the two at Pagham Hbr, there were single birds at East Guldeford and Rye Saltings on the 13th, another at Pulborough Brooks on the 19th and two at Rye Hbr on the 24th, one of which remained there to the month's end.

August was also a quiet month compared with last year, with no more seen until the 12th and, at most, eight birds in the county, in the Chichester, Pagham and Rye Hbr areas; all were singles apart from two at Pagham Hbr on the 20th and 22nd. By way of contrast, there was a remarkable influx of birds to Pagham Hbr in September. It started on the 1st when six arrived at the North Wall area, with numbers increasing to ten on the 9th and being seen regularly up to the 21st. Nine were still present in the North Wall area on the 26th, dropping to six at the month's end.

Smaller numbers were seen elsewhere in the Pagham Hbr area during this period, including up to four at Sidlesham Ferry; it is not known whether these were some of the same birds but there were at least ten, and possibly up to 14, present at Pagham Hbr during most of September. Elsewhere in the county, only a single was seen during September, at Thorney Deepes on the 25th and 27th.

Up to nine remained at Pagham Hbr until 14 Oct; numbers then dropped off but, interestingly, 11 were noted there on 23 Oct but not subsequently. Elsewhere during October there was a single bird at Rye Hbr on the 14th and two there on the 31st, while at Chichester Hbr five at East Head on the 25th were probably returning wintering birds although only two were seen there during November.

During the second winter period there were up to two at Pagham Hbr and East Head through much of November, plus singles at Rye Hbr on the 22nd and 30th, presumably involving the same bird. In December there were up to five at both East Head and at Pagham Hbr, and singles at Rye Hbr on the 8th, Apuldrum (Chichester Hbr) on the 13th, Amberley Wild Brooks on the 29th and West Itchenor (Chichester Hbr) on the 31st and the year ended with six at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on the 31st. [JC]

Greenshank
Tringa nebularia

Fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

The WeBS counts from the principal locations were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	23	36	33	28	1	-	70	86	114	75	53	41
Chichester Hbr	22	36	32	23	1	-	52	83	96	55	52	38
Pagham Hbr	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	2	2	1	-	1
Arun Valley	-	-	-	1	-	-	6	1	1	6	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	-	3	-	-	9	-	4	10	-	-

During the first winter period, the highest (non-WeBS) counts were from Thorney Deepes, with 19 on 2 Jan, 24 on 2 Feb and 26 on 3 Mar. Other records were mainly from other locations in Chichester Hbr, with one regularly reported at Rye Hbr, and singles at Pagham Hbr on 9 and 11 Jan. One at Medmerry on 19 Mar may have been either a migrant or a wandering winter bird. Several migrants were seen in April, including two at Rodmell on 16 Apr, one each at Weir Wood

Res on 19 Apr, Pulborough Brooks and Novington SP on 21 Apr, two at Cuckmere Haven on 24 Apr and three at Pagham Hbr on 26 Apr.



Greenshank, Church Norton, September 2014 (Andrew House)

Numbers dropped off sharply in May, but singles at Clayton Windmills on the 19th and Poling Fishing Lakes on the 21st were among the more unusual locations for migrants trickling through. As with many wader species, identifying the first spring and last autumn migrants can be fraught with difficulty, but perhaps the last spring migrants were ones at Rye Hbr on 6 Jun and one at Medmerry on the 6th and 7th. While one at Pagham Hbr on 12 and 13 Jun could have been coming or going, singles at Pett Level on 27 Jun and Rye Hbr on the 28th were probably returning migrants. Small numbers trickled through in early July, until 51 were counted at Thorney Deeps on the 10th during the WeBS. There were then 64 there on 31 Jul and a peak of 100 on 24 Aug. Numbers then dropped down to 40 on 6 Sep, but were back at 90 on 10 Sep and 83 on the 25th, 51 on 22 Oct which was the last high count of the autumn. Migrants were also seen regularly at several coastal sites and at Pulborough Brooks. More notable was one at Durfold (Warnham) on 12 Jul, three at Arlington Res on 18 Aug, six at Westfield on 31 Aug, 2 E at Hastings CP on 9 Sep and two at Widewater (Lancing) on 7 Oct, with a single there on the 23rd.

By November, most records were from wintering sites around Chichester, Pagham and Rye Harbours. Thorney Deeps continued to attract good numbers, including 44 on 6 Nov and 34 on 6 Dec during WeBS counts. A single bird also overwintered in the lower Cuckmere Valley, one was at Medmerry on 16 and 27 Dec, and one was seen at Amberley on 29 Dec. [LDC]

Lesser Yellowlegs

Tringa flavipes

Very rare vagrant. Breeds in sub-Arctic Alaska and Canada and winters in central and southern South America.

One at Pett Level Pools on 25 Dec remained in the Pett Level/Rye Harbour area well into 2015 (GS *et al.*). It has been accepted by BBRC and is the eleventh county record but only the second this century when there was one at Sidlesham Ferry from 18 to 22 Apr 2008. [DHH]

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

Very scarce spring and scarce autumn passage 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
4	5	11	6	-	1

The first sighting was of one on 5 May at Newhaven. Other May sightings were one at Sidlesham Ferry from the 18th to the 20th, one at Pulborough Brooks on the 18th and one at Rye Hbr on the 21st. In June one was on floodwater at Lidsey Rife (Barnham) on the 9th, two at Pett Level from the 15th to the 17th, dropping to one by the 25th and one at Sidlesham Ferry on the 28th.

Autumn passage seems to have begun on 9 Aug with one at Rye Hbr which was joined by another the next day. Counts of between one and four birds were recorded throughout July and August at seven locations with four at Rye Hbr on 28 Jul and three on the 31st. The only other location with more than one was Pulborough Brooks with two on 19 and 21 Jul and 26 Aug, the last of the summer records. Locations with one were Medmerry, Church Norton, Arundel WWT, Cuckmere Haven and Weir Wood Res. There were no records for September and only one in October, seen at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on the 18th. [RJE, MJC]

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
County total	2298	2334	1864	146	36	57	685	1820	2429	2328	3090	2232
Chichester Hbr	1653	1709	1488	87	9	16	481	1555	1987	1730	2349	1777
Pagham Hbr	252	136	133	29	2	8	137	187	194	159	374	249
Rye Hbr	232	336	144	23	10	10	29	20	192	286	174	82

As usual, Chichester Hbr had the highest numbers, with the 1% national threshold level of 1200 surpassed in the months January to March and August to December inclusive. Notable

counts from elsewhere in the first winter period included 78 in the lower Adur Valley on 4 Jan and 100 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 7 Jan. There was a small scattering of migrant birds, including one at Weir Wood Res on 2 Apr, one heard calling over Chichester during the night of 17 May and one at Arlington Res on 22 May. The only notable seawatching count was 4 E past Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on 29 Mar.

Breeding surveys on RSPB reserves located three pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks, nine at Medmerry and four at Pagham Hbr. Elsewhere, four at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr), four pairs and ten fledged young were recorded at Pett Level and, at Rye Hbr, ca.20 pairs bred and fledging success appeared to be good. One was heard singing at Greatham Bridge on 16 Mar, display was noted near Arundel on 24 Apr and pairs in suitable habitat were at Kingston (Lewes) on 4 May and at Lewes Brooks on 17 May.

Post-breeding flocks started to build up from late June onwards, with 44 at Sidlesham Ferry on 21 Jun building up to 60 by 12 Jul, 88 at Rye Hbr on 7 Jul and 316 at Thorney Deeps on the 10th, gradually building up to a peak of 1100 on 15 Aug. Following 1000 there on 10 Sep numbers fell back, with 700 on 6 Nov the highest count. Other notable counts, not included in the above WeBS table, included 107 in the lower Adur Valley on 6 Nov, 120 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 7 Nov, and 434 at Church Norton on 15 Dec.

Records away from their usual haunts included the aforementioned spring migrants, as well as three at Balmer Down (Lewes) on 21 Jan, one at Chesworth Farm (Horsham) on 3 Feb and one at Arlington Res on 20 Aug. [LDC]

Jack Snipe

Lymnocyrtes 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
County total	14	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Chichester Hbr	14	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medmerry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Upper Adur Levels	-	-	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	28	10	4	6	9
No. of sites	7	7	4	4	8

The high numbers in January were due to an influx of birds at two sites. Fourteen at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 4 Jan was the highest total for some years away from the traditional Thorney Deeps site, but the only other record was of two on the 14th. Seven were found at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 9 Jan, but these were more obliging, with further reports of three or four up to the 19th. Two were on Lavington Common on 9 Jan and there were up to

two at Rye Hbr from 4 to 28 Feb. Single birds were seen at Thorney Island, Fishbourne Creek, Chichester GPs, Sidlesham Ferry, Ferring Rife, Henfield, Edburton, Ashdown Forest, Charleston Reedbed and Filsham Reedbed, mostly on one day only. The last of the spring were seen on 16 Mar at both Henfield Levels and Chichester GP.

There were no records between April and October; the first sighting in the second winter period being one at Medmerry on 18 Nov, with two there on the 26th. There were three at Rye Hbr on 8 Dec, two at Ferring Rife on 27 Nov, and single birds at Waltham Brooks, Earnley, East Head and Newhaven Tide Mills. There were records of one at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) between 30 Nov and 9 Dec and regular monitoring on flooded land on the outskirts of Selsey recorded one from 11 to 30 Dec. [CJRB]

Woodcock

Scolopax rusticola

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

An article on the results of the BTO/GWCT survey of breeding Woodcock in 2013 appears on pages 243-250 of this report. The minimum numbers of birds and sites for the two winter periods are shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	17	16	19		2	9	16
No. of sites	13	13	8		2	9	12

Most sightings were in the first winter period with a maximum of eight at Pett Level on 2 Mar; this was also the highest count of the year. There were four at Wisborough Green on 6 Mar, but otherwise only ones and twos. One at Beachy Head on 1 Feb was indicative of movement, and one was found dead in central Brighton on 16 Mar. Roding was first reported at Wisborough Green on the early date of 10 Feb, and there was a long gap in sightings from 25 Mar to 12 May.

A minimum of 56 territories were recorded in the breeding season. There were about 37 roding males on Ashdown Forest and 12 on the West Sussex commons, plus ones and twos from six other sites. There were three records in August and one in September.

In the second winter period the highest tally was three at Wisborough Green on 29 Dec, and nearly all records came from the interior. Regular counts revealed one in an area of flooded land on the outskirts of Selsey from 24 Nov to 30 Dec. [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 shown in the following table. County totals throughout the year were amongst the lowest ever recorded. In the first winter period, maximum counts significantly higher than the WeBS were 21 at Pagham Hbr on 9 Jan, 38 at Newhaven on the 21st and 40 at Arundel WWT on the 31st. At Rye Hbr there were also several high totals, with 33 on 2 Jan, increasing to 70 on 13 Feb and 50 on the 28th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	106	203	177	7	-	-	8	4	23	149	182	179
Chichester Hbr	19	65	19	-	-	-	-	-	3	18	18	71
Medmerry	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	5	7
Pagham Hbr	3	36	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	4	3
Arun Valley	-	15	35	1	-	-	8	-	11	11	45	43
Lower Adur Estuary	8	67	47	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	51	10
Upper Adur Levels	-	-	18	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	5	8
Weir Wood Res	4	3	5	-	nc	-	-	-	-	14	2	-
Novington Sand Pit	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	4
Ouse Valley	24	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	7	29	7
Eastbourne Lakes	9	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Pevensey Levels	2	-	4	3	-	-	-	-	4	49	13	15
Rye Bay	9	10	6	-	-	-	-	4	-	27	3	7

Good counts at other sites were 46 at Steyning Levels on 3 Mar and 28 at Beeding Brooks on 16 Feb, but Pulborough Brooks, a more traditional site, the maximum count was only six on 17 Mar. Small numbers were found scattered around the Weald, by far the largest groups were ten at Mountfield on 1 Jan and 16 at Knepp on 9 Mar.

In April numbers were mostly in single figures, but 27 at Brede Levels on the 2nd was notable. After two years of very little breeding evidence in the county there was some improvement this year, with five displaying birds at Pulborough Brooks and three at Amberley Wild Brooks. One was seen on Chailey Common on 18 Apr, two were recorded on Lewes Brooks on the 19th and three were on Pevensey Levels on the 20th. The only May record was of two at Pulborough Brooks on the 4th, and there were no records thereafter until birds were present at Medmerry on 28 Jun, the first returning migrants.

From July through to September there were higher numbers at some sites than the WeBS table suggests as migrants began to filter back. In July there were ten at Pulborough Brooks on the 29th and 33 there on 29 Sep, and at Rye Hbr 18 on 31 Sep, 12 on 16 Aug and 27 on 12 Oct. At Weir Wood Res there were 12 on 12 Sep, 18 on 1 Oct and 16 on 7 Nov. At all other sites there were only single figures.

Counts higher than the WeBS from October to December included 13 at Pagham Hbr on 1 Oct, with 30 on 27 Nov and 20 on 6 Dec, and 86 at Rye Hbr on 8 Dec, with 65 still there on the 16th. At other sites, 12 at Cuckmere Haven on 8 Dec was notable, and a regularly monitored small area of flooded land on the outskirts of Selsey yielded a maximum of 22 on the 2nd. However, the largest count of the year came from Medmerry, with 105 on 22 Dec. [CJRB]

Black-winged Pratincole

Glareola nordmanni

Very rare vagrant. Breeds on the steppes of central Asia and winters in south and west Africa.

The record of one seen and photographed in Cuckmere Haven on 30 Jul (KG) has been accepted by BBRC. It flew up from the river bank and departed strongly northwest not to be seen again. This is only the second confirmed sighting of the species in Sussex with the only previous record being of one at Sidlesham Ferry on 14 Oct 1981. [DHH]

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

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

It was a much improved year for this species with an estimated spring total of 182 which is over three times that in 2013. Some unusual autumn movements boosted the annual total to 233. The monthly totals for easterly spring passage at four seawatching sites are shown in the table below.

	Apr	May	Jun	Total	Peak
Monthly minima	15	166	1	182	
Selsey Bill	1	78	-	79	74 on 5 May
Worthing	-	51	-	51	43 on 5 May
Splash Point	11	159	1	171	131 on 5 May
Birling Gap	3	123	-	126	117 on 5 May

The first record for the year was of 1 E at Selsey Bill on 19 Apr just one day later than the 10-year average. Passage was recorded on ten dates in May with a major peak on the 5th as shown in the table above. On 5 May light south easterly winds resulted in a total of 131 birds passing Splash Point. Passage occurred throughout the day from 07:50 to 19:28. Although many single birds were recorded during the day there were also three parties of ten birds and several others involving 4-9 birds. The last spring record was of 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 9 Jun.

This species is normally scarce in autumn so the movements which occurred in October and November were unusual. The first autumn record involved 11 E off Splash Point on 6 Oct followed by a total of 13 W off Selsey Bill in the period 23-27 Oct. Even more unusual was a westerly movement on 8 Nov involving 24 at Selsey Bill, four at Worthing, two along Southwick Canal and two at Birling Gap. These movements are summarised in the table below. The final record of the year was 1W off Selsey Bill on the late date of 12 Dec. [DHH]

	Oct		Nov		Monthly peaks
Monthly minima	25		25		
	E	W	E	W	
Selsey Bill	-	13	1	24	6W on 24 Oct; 24W on 8 Nov
Worthing	-	-	-	4	4W on 8 Nov
Splash Point	12	-	-	-	11E on 6 Oct
Birling Gap	-	-	-	2	2W on 8Nov

Arctic Skua

Stercorarius parasiticus

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

The year 2014 was another relatively poor year for this species with an annual total of 289 which is 34 more than in 2013. Two consecutive rather poor years have resulted in the 10-year rolling average dropping to 385.

The approximate monthly totals are shown in the first table below. The tables have, as in previous years, been compiled on the assumption that the highest count at any coastal site on any day was the minimum in the county on that date. It has also been assumed that birds recorded on subsequent dates were different. Only those birds for which a flight direction was recorded are included in the tables.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	1	-	12	109	98	5	4	15	6	31	8	-
No. of days	1	-	4	19	21	4	3	10	5	9	7	-
Peak no.	1	-	5	23	34	2	2	2	2	11	2	-
Peak day	4th	-	29th	26th	5th	7th	5th	25th	8th	6th	8th	-

The first record of the year was of one off Telscombe Cliffs on 4 Jan. There were no further records until 15 Mar when one was off Church Norton after which small numbers were recorded moving east during the remainder of the month. Although easterly spring passage was recorded on 19 dates in April and 21 dates in May there were no 'big days' with the peak day being 5 May when there were 20 E at Selsey Bill, 21 E off Worthing, 34 E past Splash Point and 26 E off Birling Gap.

As usual, numbers in June and July were low with no daily counts of more than two birds. Numbers in August and September were equally low but in addition to those passing seawatching sites there were two in the Rye Bay/Hastings area on 21 Aug and on 9 and 18 Sep.

The monthly totals of passage birds at four seawatching sites are shown in the table below.

	Apr		May		Oct	
	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	33	1	44	-	13	22
Worthing	10	-	36	-	4	3
Splash Point	109	-	75	2	13	-
Birling Gap	66	-	48	-	nc	nc

Autumn movements occurred slightly later than normal and included 10 E off Selsey Bill and 11 E past Splash Point on 6 Oct followed by 10 W past Selsey Bill on 24 Oct. The final record of the year was of 1 W at Selsey Bill on 19 Nov. [DHH]

Long-tailed Skua

Stercorarius longicaudus

Rare vagrant.

An adult first seen off Church Norton on 4 Aug (AH *et al.*) remained in the area until the 14th during which time it ventured as far as Medmerry. This was the first bird this century to linger for more than a day enabling it to be enjoyed by many observers particularly as it was very confiding at times allowing an approach to within a few metres. This brings the total since 2000 to 16. [DHH]



Long-tailed Skua, Church Norton, August 2014 (Jacob Everitt)

Great Skua

Stercorarius skua

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

The total for the year was a disappointing 195 which is 41 below the 10-year rolling average. The minimum numbers of passage birds are shown in the table below and have been calculated using the same method as for Arctic Skuas. The numbers include only those records for which a direction of travel was given and not records of birds lingering offshore.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	8	3	3	123	25	1	-	4	-	12	14	2
No. of days	4	2	3	19	15	1	-	4	-	4	6	2
Peak no.	5	2	1	29	3	1	-	1	-	8	9	1
Peak date	4th	15th	28th	26th	11th	15th	-	17th	-	6th	8th	27th

The first record of the year was of 1 E past both Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on 1 Jan with the latter site recording 5 E three days later. Numbers remained low and it wasn't until 22 Apr that the first double-figure count was recorded with 18 E off Splash Point. Peak easterly spring migration occurred on 26 Apr with 17 off Selsey Bill, 10 at Worthing, 29 past Splash Point and 21 off Birling Gap. Although easterly passage was recorded on 15 days in May, the total

was only 25 with no more than three on any day. The numbers over the next four months were typically low but it was unusual for there to be no records in either July or September. Eight E off Splash Point on 6 Oct and 9 W off Selsey Bill on 8 Nov were the maximum counts during the last three months of the year and the final record was of 1 W at Selsey Bill on 27 Dec.

Monthly figures for four seawatching sites are shown in the table below.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	-	3	-	51	13	-	-	-	-	3	2	1
	W	1	-	-	4	1	-	-	3	-	-	11	1
Worthing	E	-	-	-	18	4	1	-	-	-	2	-	-
	W	-	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
Splash Point	E	2	-	1	102	13	-	nc	1	nc	8	3	-
	W	-	-	-	-	3	-	nc	-	nc	-	-	-
Birling Gap	E	6	-	1	75	6	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

As in previous years very few Great Skuas were recorded in the east although there were five lingering offshore in Rye Bay on 25 Apr with one or two offshore in the Hastings/Rye Bay area on four dates in October and one in November. Evidence that more birds may be wintering in the Channel came from a report of ten seen from a fishing boat off Selsey on 10 Feb. [DHH]

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

Very scarce visitor; most frequently recorded in spring. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Following two blank years there were three records of live birds in 2014. The first record was of one flying east (and seen briefly on the sea) at Splash Point (Seaford) on 7 Jan (MRE). On 9 Feb one was seen on the sea at Shoreham Hbr (BDJ, PJ). The third record was of one flying east off Splash Point on 11 Mar (RCS). There have now been 16 records of live Puffins this century.

Sadly, 37 dead Puffins were found on the Sussex beaches following the storms in February. An account of the February 2014 seabird wreck can be found on pages 251-256 of this report. [DHH]

Razorbill

Alca torda

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

Following last year's above average figure, the 2014 minimum annual total of 981 was only a quarter of the 2013 figure and well below the 10-year rolling average of 2385. This difference was due almost entirely to the exceptionally low total of just 14 in February compared to 2721 in the same month last year. February was, of course, the month of severe storms resulting in a seabird wreck with 163 dead Razorbills found along the Sussex coast (see pages 251-256 of this report). The minimum monthly totals (excluding dead birds) are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	293	14	475	35	49	3	1	-	1	26	29	55
Peak no.	197	4	458	12	15	1	1	-	-	9	15	22
Peak day	12th	23rd	11th	22nd	10th	8th	8th	-	-	23rd	1st	

In January the only significant movement involved 197 E past Birling Gap on the 12th although few were seen at other sites on that date suggesting a localized feeding movement. As already mentioned, numbers in February were exceptionally low while in March almost the entire estimated monthly total was the result of 458 E off Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11th. There was little evidence of any spring migration in April, May or June. Following 1 W at Selsey Bill on 8 Jul there were no further records until 30 Sep when there was one off Littlehampton. Numbers remained low for the rest of the year with the only double-figure counts being 15 W at Selsey Bill on 1 Nov and 22 W at the same site on 31 Dec.

The table below shows the totals at four seawatching sites which highlights the low numbers in West Sussex. With inevitable duplication as birds moved along the coast, no attempt should be made to total either rows or columns.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
Selsey Bill	4	4	7	12	8	46	-	-	2	2	5	21	14	2	65
Worthing	5	-	8	5	1	2	-	2	-	-	1	1	3	6	-
Splash Point	36	-	-	502	6	52	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Birling Gap	256	-	-	2	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Although there were no records of birds away from the open sea or tidal harbours, up to seven in Sovereign Hbr during the last ten days of the year was unusual. [DHH]

Little Auk

Alle alle

Very scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

Following a blank year in 2013 there were four records in 2014 involving at least eight birds, all within a four day period. On 6 Nov there were 2 W off Lancing (JAN) seen later off Worthing (DIS). The following day one flew west past Selsey Bill with presumably the same bird then flying east before departing westwards (JA, GAH). A party of four followed by a single bird moved west off Selsey Bill on 10 Nov (AH, OM). These records bring the total this century to approximately 129 although occurrences have been sporadic with double figure counts in four years but none at all in three others. [DHH]

Common Guillemot

Uria aalge

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; formerly bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Although the estimated total for the year was only 737 (261 lower than in 2013) it was virtually identical to the 10-year rolling average of 736. The pattern of occurrence differed from

that in 2013 with greater numbers in March but much lower numbers in December. The minimum monthly totals shown in the table below have been compiled using the same method as for Red-throated Divers.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	190	23	415	10	43	1	-	-	1	9	10	35
Peak no.	94	3	377	4	13	-	-	-	1	4	8	23
Peak day	12th		11th	28th	10th	-	-	-	28th	19th	8th	31st

Numbers in January were similar to those in 2013 with peak counts of 52 E off Splash Point (Seaford) on the 7th and 94 E at Birling Gap on the 12th. January numbers were boosted by a raft of 60 in Rye Bay on the 20th. February numbers were typically low with only 23 live birds recorded of which 15 were in Rye Bay on 22nd. Sadly, 101 corpses were found along the Sussex coast as a result of the February seabird wreck, details of which can be found on pages 251-256 of the report. A count of 377 E and 47 W off Splash Point on 11 Mar resulted in higher than normal figures for that month but numbers remained low for the rest of the year. This reduction in numbers was particularly noticeable in December with a total of just 35 compared to 684 in the same month in 2013.

The totals for three seawatching sites are shown below. No attempt should be made to total the rows or columns as there will doubtless have been duplication between sites as birds moved along the coast. It is noticeable and quite extraordinary that not a single Guillemot was recorded off Worthing during the year so that site does not appear in the table.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
Selsey Bill	5	1	23	1	-	22	-	-	-	1	-	7	-	8	28
Splash Point	82	-	1	418	2	51	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Birling Gap	109	-	-	9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8

There were two records of single birds away from the open sea or in tidal harbours: on the R Ouse at Rodmell on 22 Jan and in Southwick Canal from 5-15 Nov. [DHH]

Auk species

The annual total of only 5862 was the lowest since 2007 and only a fifth of the 10-year rolling average of 27,426. The table below shows the monthly totals which include those for Guillemots, Razorbills plus those for auks not identified to species. The figures shown should not be taken as an accurate assessment due to the inevitable duplication of sightings. It should also be noted that the figures do not include the 163 Razorbill and 101 Guillemot corpses recovered in February as a result of the seabird wreck (see article on pages 251-256).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	1859	173	1823	287	470	12	19	2	6	87	188	936
Peak no.	450E	52E	1487E	18E	111W	2W	15E	2W	2W	9W	41W	448W
Peak day	12th	13th	11th	26th	10th	7th	5th	10th	21st	23rd	1st	31st

In terms of both numbers and the pattern of occurrence 2014 was an unusual year for auks. There can be little doubt that the storms of January and February were a major influence in the lower numbers of auks during the early part of the year. In January there were only four days with three-figure counts (4th, 7th, 12th and 24th) which accounted for over 50% of the monthly total. Although the table above shows that numbers did improve in March it should also be noted that 80% of the month's total occurred on just one day with 1487 E (458 Razorbill, 377 Guillemot and 652 Auk sp.) off Splash Point on the 11th. The almost total lack of easterly movements in April and May rather set the tone for the remainder of the year which ended with 448 W past Selsey Bill on 31 Dec which represented almost 50% of that month's total.

The approximate totals recorded at four seawatching sites are shown in the table below.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
Selsey Bill	61	6	79	77	8	276	1	-	9	6	8	52	63	10	857
Worthing	48	-	306	38	1	27	-	2	-	3	1	20	15	8	119
Splash Point	474	-	103	1790	8	151	4	1	-	7	-	-	47	-	1
Birling Gap	801	-	36	290	10	1	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8

The difficulties involved in the specific identification of distant auks in flight are well documented. As a result, only a third of all auks were identified to species. Where specific identification was possible the unusual pattern of occurrence continued with a ratio of Razorbills to Guillemots of 1.3:1 compared to the 10-year average of 3.2:1. This reduced ratio was also evident in the beached birds with a ratio of Razorbills to Guillemots of 1.6:1. [DHH]

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 bird of the year was seen passing Worthing on 8 Apr, two days ahead of the ten-year average, with another past Selsey Bill on the following day. Numbers built up slowly around the Pagham Hbr/Selsey Bill area to a peak of 15 on 17 Apr, whilst seven were seen displaying in Chichester Hbr on the 15th, but it was not until the 17th that birds appeared at other sites, including six at Rye Hbr. There were two inland records, both at Arlington Res on 17 and 23 Apr. Passage continued throughout April and into early May, with the biggest numbers being seen at Selsey Bill, but clearly involving some local movement in the totals. Similarly to last year, 5 May was the peak day of movement, with all the main seawatching sites recording their biggest day of the spring; see table below for details. Numbers tailed off rapidly after that date. Overall, numbers were down slightly at Selsey Bill, but well up at Splash Point (Seaford).

	Apr	May	Total	Peak movement
Selsey Bill	180	194	374	58 E on 5 May
Worthing	2	119	121	66 E on 5 May
Splash Point	16	93	109	85 E on 5 May
Birling Gap	-	-	41	39 E on 5 May

In Chichester Hbr, there were eight pairs off West Wittering and a couple of pairs on Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr), though only the latter was known to have been successful, with two juveniles seen there on 11 Jul. At Rye Hbr the main colony failed early on due to badger predation, and a second attempt, with five pairs on nests in late June also failed, but one outlying pair successfully reared one chick.

The success story of the year, though, was at Pagham Hbr where at least a dozen pairs nested on the newly formed spit rearing similar numbers of young. Up to four juveniles were seen at Medmerry on 18 Jul, and a high count of ten was seen there on 8 Aug, along with six adults.

Between five and ten birds were noted regularly through the second half of August from the Pagham Hbr/Selsey Bill/Medmerry area and similar numbers were in Chichester Hbr, though at Rye Hbr there were reports on only four dates, the last of which was of two, including a juvenile with a green ring on its leg, on the 31st. The last record of the year was of five birds heading west out of Pagham Hbr on 5 Sep, a full 20 days ahead of the ten-year average. [AH]

Black Tern

Chlidonias niger

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

It was another poor year for this species, particularly in the autumn, though the spring was a little better than last year. Approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
17	42	1	-	6

The first records of the year were on 20 Apr, three days later than the ten-year average, with one past Climping and Worthing, with it, or another, at Weir Wood Res on the same day. On 26 Apr, ten were seen passing Splash Point (Seaford) and the following day two were recorded past Selsey Bill, Telscombe Cliffs and Splash Point, quite possibly the same two. Passage remained light through May, with peak counts of six past Selsey Bill on the 5th, eight past Birling Gap on 18th and the highest count of the spring, 13 past Splash Point, on the late date of the 20th. The only inland record was of two on Chichester GP on 5 May.

Records from seawatching sites were as follows:

	Apr	May	Total	Peak movement
Selsey Bill	2	8	10	6 E on 5 May
Worthing	1	4	5	3 E on 1 May
Telscombe Cliffs	2	-	2	2 E on 27 Apr
Splash Point	14	20	34	13 E on 20 May
Birling Gap	-	15	15	8 E on 18 May

Return passage was very poor, with a maximum of six birds noted as follows: one was at Medmerry on 9 Aug, with another there on the 27th, two were at Rye Hr on the 14th, and one was at Weir Wood Res on the 25th, with it, or possibly another, recorded again on the 30th, which was the last of the year and a full 40 days earlier than the 10-year average; this is the earliest date on record by 16 days and thus the first year this species has not been recorded in September. [AH]

White-winged Black Tern*Chlidonias leucopterus**Rare vagrant.*

An adult moulting out of breeding plumage seen and photographed at Rye Hbr regularly between 12 Oct and 3 Nov (RB, BT, DW *et al.*) was the first record since 2011.



White-winged Black Tern, Rye Hbr, October 2014 (Barry Yates)

The total now stands at 49 but only four of those have been this century. Of the 46 dated records, 18 have been in the period Apr–Jun and 28 in the period Jul–Nov with this year's bird being the latest ever recorded in the county and the first to linger into November. [DHH]

Sandwich Tern

Sterna sandvicensis

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

At least three birds wintered in Chichester Hbr, though they were reported infrequently, and presumably it was the same birds that were encountered off Selsey Bill during the same period. The first definitively 'new' birds were the four seen in Rye Hbr on 1 Mar. Counts at this location in March increased rapidly, from 12 on the 9th, to 80 on the 15th, 300 on the 22nd and 500 on the 27th, yet surprisingly few had been seen at seawatching sites by that date; the first notable passage of 25 E at Selsey Bill on the 28th.



Sandwich Tern, Rye Hbr, May 2014 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)

Passage throughout April remained relatively poor compared with most years and the peak day occurred on 5 May in association with good passage of many species. The numbers involved however were modest with 212 E at Selsey Bill, 132 E at Worthing, 181 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 276 E at Birling Gap. By contrast the peak day in 2013 saw 1500 birds passing this latter site. Seawatching totals from all the main sites were well below the previous spring, with a total of 3098 recorded passing east, down a third from the 25-year average, and the 2013 year's total.

Worryingly, the only significant breeding colony in the county, at Rye Hbr, failed to produce any fledged young for the second year running. A big colony of c280 nests in mid-June had fizzled out to nothing by early July, with a lack of suitable small fish to feed the young chicks, rather than predation, seeming to be the primary cause. Once again there was a lot of activity around Pagham

Hbr, but no evidence that they bred in the vicinity beyond one possible pair, though quite a few juvenile birds appeared among totals in excess of 100 birds in late July, peaking at 110 birds on the 22nd, and in early August.

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Selsey Bill	E	231	1137	827	149	14	63	81	10
	W	7	37	54	47	18	285	36	6
Worthing	E	111	285	441	96	28	39	55	-
	W	1	94	107	45	73	92	32	-
Telscombe Cliffs	E	13	46	81	nc	nc	nc	-	-
	W	-	1	10	nc	nc	nc	-	-
Splash Point	E	264	807	820	64	12	3	nc	-
	W	2	18	23	6	-	-	nc	-
Birling Gap	E	135	599	644	12	25	4	nc	nc
	W	-	-	3	-	-	10	nc	nc

Surprisingly, given the breeding failure, Rye Hbr was still holding 100 birds on 1 Sep, though numbers dropped away quickly everywhere thereafter, with the last double-figure count being 31 off Bulverhythe (St Leonards) on 29 Sep. Up to four birds were regularly recorded from Chichester Hbr (and infrequently off Selsey Bill) until the years end, with the only late record from elsewhere being of three at Rye Hbr on 8 Nov.

One at Arundel WWT on 18 Jul was the only inland record. [AH]

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

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

One passing Splash Point (Seaford) on 28 Mar was the first of the year, three days later than the ten-year average. The only other March records were one at Pagham Hbr on the 29th and 2 E at Selsey Bill on the 31st. Small numbers were reported throughout April from seawatching sites, until around the 22nd, when numbers started to increase. A fuller account of the spring seawatching records appear under 'Commic' Tern below.

As is usual, there were small numbers recorded from inland sites, though only at Chichester GP were birds regularly recorded in double-digit counts, with a peak of 50 on 5 May. The other inland count of note was from Offham (Lewes), where 20 were seen on 20 May.

At Rye Hbr, around 90 pairs managed to fledge 40-50 young, an improvement on the previous couple of years, and a considerably better success rate than the Little and Sandwich Terns colonies at the site because Commons Terns are able to feed on freshwater fish. Other reports of breeding came from Pett Level, though with poor fledging success, Weir Wood Res, where one pair, at least, raised a chick, Warnham LNR, where five juveniles were seen with adults on 23 Jun, Chichester Hbr, where one pair was known to fail, and Pagham Hbr, where around a dozen pairs took up residence, but with only limited success.

Numbers started to decrease by the end of July, though there were still 200 birds present at Rye Hbr at the month's end, and there was a big movement past Selsey Bill between 8 and 10

Aug, including a combined Common/'Commic' Tern total of 786 birds on the 9th. The last big count from this site was of 100 birds offshore on 14 Aug, and the same number was counted at Rye Hbr on the 23rd, though by early September double-digit counts were few, and all from West Sussex, most notably 20 feeding off Medmerry on the 17th. The last inland record was of one at Weir Wood Res on 12 Oct, and the last record of the year was of a single at Brighton Marina on 28 Oct, four days beyond the ten-year average. [AH]

Roseate Tern

Sterna dougalli

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

There were only four records of this increasingly scarce species this year: 1 E one past Birling Gap on 22 May (DRC, JFC, NT), one that lingered for the duration of the high tide in Pagham Hbr on 11 June (AH), one at Rye Hbr on the same day and another there on 11 Jul (both CB, BJY). Four records for the year is just above the average annual occurrence in recent years. [AH]

Arctic Tern

Sterna paradisaea

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

Due to the difficulty in separating this species from Common Tern, most records from seawatching sites are recorded as 'Commic Terns' and consequently few records are received. Some lingering birds are safely assigned to this species, but generally it is under-reported and its true status not fully known.

The first report of the year was on the late date of 15 Apr, five days behind the ten-year average, and over the following weeks, until 6 Jun, small numbers of birds were confidently identified among the passing 'Commic' Terns. The only exception was 26 Apr, when 300 birds were confirmed at Splash Point (Seaford) during a big day of 'Commic' Tern movement.

There were just two inland reports of two at Weir Wood Res on 22 Apr and a single bird at Chichester GP on 4 and 5 May.

Between 7 Jul and 30 Aug, one to three birds were recorded on eight occasions among the terns in Pagham Hbr and at Selsey Bill, with the only other records being of two juveniles at West Beach (Newhaven) on 19 Sep, three reports in September from Worthing, totalling seven birds, and the last record of the year was of an adult off Medmerry on 4 Oct, 22 days ahead of the ten-year average. [AH]

Common/Arctic Tern

Sterna hirundo/paradisaea

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

In the following table is a summary of the combined totals of Common, Arctic and 'Commic' Terns from the principal seawatching sites for the year.

After last year's very large spring passage the March to May total of eastbound birds of 8256 was back to a figure much more in line with the 25-year average and with a much more even

split of April and May. With the wider spread of migration, there were only a couple of big days at Splash Point (Seaford), namely 26 Apr when at total of 2300 birds went east, and 1 May, with 1024 birds east, whilst at Selsey Bill, the biggest day was 5 May, with a modest count of 526.

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Selsey Bill	E	2	1486	1945	44	12	256	59	-
	W	-	16	49	13	26	1500	29	1
Worthing	E	-	110	971	6	10	-	4	-
	W	-	7	33	2	9	8	7	-
Telscombe Cliffs	E	1	102	25	nc	nc	nc	-	-
	W	-	1	-	nc	nc	nc	-	-
Splash Point	E	1	3708	2703	11	nc	6	nc	-
	W	-	-	17	-	nc	-	nc	-
Birling Gap	E	-	77	947	-	-	-	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	-	-	16	nc	nc

There was a much higher than usual return passage seen from Selsey Bill, with a peak of 786 birds seen heading west on 9 Aug. The last report of a 'Commic' Tern was 1 W past this site on 8 Oct, two weeks ahead of the ten-year average. [AH]

Kittiwake

Rissa tridactyla

Common but very localised breeding species; fairly common or common winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare away from coast. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Birds were recorded during every month of the year as shown in the table below. It should be noted that Kittiwakes are not counted at Splash Point once breeding pairs have settled on the cliffs (after 7 Mar in 2014) as birds are ever present and constantly flying to and fro.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	20	20	5	25	12	3	-	3	-	70	1	97
	W	159	71	23	50	36	-	2	10	-	393	522	169
Worthing	E	2	1	5	4	14	-	1	6	-	-	-	-
	W	71	33	23	-	11	-	5	4	-	11	90	25
Telscombe Cliffs	E	6	5	19	9	5	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	E	119	26	31	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	30	-
	W	3	4	21	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	8	-
Birling Gap	E	72	32	1081	1007	250	-	-	350	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	37	26	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc

Additionally, there were 12 feeding offshore at Selsey Bill in February and 50 at Worthing in December. During the first winter period, the largest movement counted was 413 E in 2.5 hours from Birling Gap on 2 Mar. There were three other individual counts of greater than 100 birds, all from Birling Gap, with the passage of 620 E there on 16 Apr being notable.

Precise data on the number of occupied nests and breeding success were not available this year from Seaford Head and there were no records supporting any evidence of breeding from other cliff locations.

In the second winter period, the largest movements were recorded at Selsey Bill. There were two movements of greater than 100 birds in October, the largest of which was 220 W in 6.5 hrs on the 24th; and further movements of 475 W on 8 Nov in 9 hours, and 114 W in 1.8 hours on 20 Dec. The only inland records were in early January when one was seen at Arundel WWT on the 4th and at Burpham on the 6th whilst two were at Weir Wood Res also on the 6th. [CD]



Kittiwake, Southwick Canal, February 2014 (Nick Bond)

Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus

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

This numerous and widespread species was recorded in 316 tetrads during the year which amounted to 37% of the 852 tetrads from which records were received. Most records were from coastal locations but the largest counts in the early part of the year were from inland roosts with, as usual, the highest at Bewl Water where 49,500 roosted on 2 Jan, 54,830 on 6 Jan, 10,765 on 3 Feb, 17,270 on 12 Feb and 25,650 on 15 Feb. At Weir Wood Res the roost held 1300 on 19 Jan and 1820 on 3 Feb. The only other four figure counts during the first winter period were 1260 in the Arun Valley on 20 Jan and 1000 at Pett Level on 17 Feb.

Despite this being a highly migratory species very few are recorded passing the regularly watched seawatching locations but at Beachy Head observers made a concerted effort to record

spring passage. Eastward movement at Birling Gap was recorded on 25 dates between 12 Jan (59) and 25 May (14) with a total of 1382 and daily maximum of 263 on 5 May

There were 1500 at Pett Level on 11 Mar and 2000 at Rye Hbr on 3 Apr but at other sites away from the breeding colonies the numbers fell during these months. In keeping with recent years the largest breeding colonies were in East Sussex. At Rye Hbr nesting was at five locations and the colony size was estimated to be at least 1200 pairs after taking into account vegetation cover. Fledging success was good and probably averaged around one bird per nest. There were 1700 pairs breeding at Pett Level but poor fledging success. On 16 May 147 nests were counted on three lagoons at Arundel WWT and 58 chicks were counted on 11 Jun. At Pagham Hbr there were 44 pairs and six apparently occupied nests were on Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) on 19 May.

Birds started to return in earnest to non-breeding locations in early July but notable counts were not recorded until the end of August. The largest autumn figures were 1550 at Pagham Hbr on 29 Aug, 2000 hawking for flying ants over Thorney Deepes on 31 Aug, 1200 in the lower Arun Valley on 18 Sep, 1140 at Southease on 16 Oct and 1000 at Apuldrum (Chichester Hbr) on 31 Oct.

All the highest counts during the second winter period again came from counts at roost sites with Bewl Water holding massive numbers; the peak of four December counts being 30,236 on the 11th. Considerably fewer roosted at Weir Wood Res with 1500 on 8 Dec and the only coastal roost count was of 2500 at Bexhill on the 19th. [JAN]

Little Gull

Hydrocoloeus minutus

Fairly common passage migrant; most numerous in spring. Very scarce non-breeder in summer and scarce in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Approximately 900 birds were recorded during the year. The following table of monthly totals at both coastal and inland sites, and the number of days recorded, demonstrates that most were recorded at coastal locations during the spring.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of days recorded	10	22	22	23	14	3	0	0	3	10	7	5
Coastal	15	33	134	579	48	2	-	-	3	26	19	5
Inland	1	30	3	1	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Total	16	63	137	580	51	2	-	-	3	27	20	5

Small numbers were recorded at the beginning of the year but in mid-February there were some unusual gatherings over flooded fields with maxima of 12 at Hoe Fm (Flansham) on the 18th, nine at Rodmell Brooks on the 18th and five at Steyning Levels on the 23rd. Additionally there were seven at Littlehampton also on 18 Feb; whether these lingered here is unclear but several were recorded just west of Littlehampton in early March with a maximum of 12 on the 5th. From mid-March until early May most were recorded by sea-watchers; the following table shows the monthly totals which clearly reveal the main timing and direction of coastal passage.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	4	2	110	561	35	1	-	-	-	4	17	-
West	2	2	4	2	2	-	-	-	-	5	-	1

As usual many more were seen from East Sussex watch points as the table of month totals of eastbound birds from each site shows.

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak count (hours watched)
Selsey Bill	28	37	6	12 on 31 Mar (8)
Worthing	13	35	-	28 on 16 Apr (4)
Telscombe Cliffs	2	-	-	Singles on two dates
Splash Point	77	491	34	166 on 16 Apr (9)
Birling Gap	47	257	8	96 on 16 Apr (5)



Little Gull, Brooklands Park, March 2014 (Dorian Mason)

Peak passage was on 16 and 17 Apr; the former day is shown in the above table whilst on the 17th there were 129 E at Splash Point (3 hr) and 62 E at Birling Gap (3 hr). The passage finished fairly abruptly in early May with 30 E at Splash Point on 5 May being the last notable count for the month. From mid-May until 26 Jun one or two birds were recorded on eight dates from Selsey Bill, Pagham Hbr, Chichester GP or Rye Hbr and thereafter none until one at Worthing on 6 Sep.

The tables show few were recorded in the autumn and early winter; the species was seen on just 25 dates until the end of the year with the highest counts being 14 at Rye Hbr on 30 Oct and 11 E at Splash Point on 7 Nov. Single birds at Warnham LNR on 6 Oct and near Henfield on 13 Nov were the only inland records later in the year. [JAN]

Mediterranean Gull*Larus melanocephalus*

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

Although the species was recorded in 91 tetrads during 2014 the majority of observations were from sites on or near the coast. Many of the high counts were from a few favoured locations and, as noted in recent years, the mobility of the species makes it impossible to estimate the numbers involved. However, an indication of these numbers and the pattern of occurrence can be seen from the following table showing the highest count in each month for sites in West and East Sussex. Noteworthy points are the absence of any records from East Sussex during August and September, the high March count at Pett Level comprised 95% adults and the 620 seen in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) in August creates a new county record.

	West Sussex			East Sussex		
	Number	Site	Day	Number	Site	Day
Jan	200	Pagham Hbr	9th	1	Hastings	6th
Feb	300	Pagham Hbr	7th	74	Pett Level	22nd
Mar	172	Pagham Hbr	4th	514	Pett Level	21st
Apr	22 E	Worthing	22nd	352	Pett Level	1st
May	25	Thorney Island	30th	47	Pett Level	2nd
Jun	60	Thorney Island	18th	6	Pett Level	1st
Jul	200	Climping	26th	1 W and 16 E	Birling Gap	5th
Aug	620	Chichester Hbr	17th	-	-	-
Sep	200	Medmerry	10th	-	-	-
Oct	104 W	Selsey Bill	5th	10 E	Splash Point Seaford	6th
Nov	12	Selsey Bill	8th	6 E	Splash Point Seaford	7th
Dec	14	Pagham Hbr	7th	11	Bexhill	19th

Breeding was rather disappointing; at Rye Hbr despite good numbers present early in the season with at least 300 on Ternery Pool in early April only eight birds were recorded in early May. One pair did attempt to nest and failed. At Pett Level 18 pairs produced at least ten young but this was also disappointing following the large numbers present in March and April. One pair was recorded during the breeding survey at Pagham Hbr and although up to ten birds were seen amongst Black-headed Gulls at Arundel WWT there was no record of attempted breeding.

With a larger number now occurring in the county the seawatch sites record this species regularly; the following table of month totals derived from the sum of the highest daily count flying in each direction from the main sites shows, like many species, a predominantly eastward movement in spring but the high figures for the autumn come from Selsey Bill where many observations probably involved local movements.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	21	28	148	153	16	2	19	2	423	28	17	2
West	13	12	21	17	7	10	26	27	61	197	33	11

Peak spring movements were 60 E at Birling Gap on 2 Mar and 40 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 21 Apr. The tables clearly show the numbers decline towards the end of the year. Throughout

the year the species was recorded from about 20 inland sites, mainly in small numbers but there were 115, mostly adults, at Funtington on 2 Jul and 12 and eight roosted at Bewl Water on 15 and 12 Feb respectively.[JAN]

Common Gull

Larus canus

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

This, the third most widely reported species of gull, was recorded from 185 tetrads. Like other gulls most records were from locations at or near the coast but the highest numbers were recorded from Bewl Water where the five nocturnal roost counts reported in January and February ranged from 7500 on 2 Jan to a staggering 91,350 on 15 Feb. This last count is the highest ever recorded in the county, which demonstrates that Bewl Water remains amongst the key sites for roosts of this species in the country and a site of international importance.

Elsewhere during the first winter period there were 19 records involving more than 500 birds with the highest counts being of 2500 at Goring Gap on 12 Jan and 1050 at Beeding Brooks on 19 Feb. There were 700 in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 21 Mar, 800 on the Brede Levels on the 24th and 300 on downland near Findon on 3 Apr but thereafter markedly fewer were seen. A small eastward passage was noted from sea watching sites as shown in the following table formed by summing the highest daily count at each site.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	307	40	242	236	13	-	1	-	-	15	40	-
West	36	5	1	15	-	-	-	2	-	61	13	231

The peak movement was on 26 Apr with 45 E at Selsey Bill, 57 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 70 E at Birling Gap.

At Rye Hbr single pairs nested at two locations but no chicks were seen and at Pett Level there was no nesting following recent successes. As usual there were few records between mid-May and the slow return of adults in early July, however 22 in Pagham Hbr on 15 Jun and 27 near Small Dole on the 22nd were noteworthy. At West Dean 350 on 18 Aug and 150 at Goring Gap on 30 Oct were the highest of the autumn counts but numbers seemed to increase during December with 350 near Cissbury on the 3rd, 200 near Icklesham on the 6th and 500 at Goring Gap on the 24th. However, these numbers were overshadowed as the nocturnal roost at Bewl Water developed during this month with 2060 on the 11th, 21,360 on the 18th and 29,320 on the 22nd. [JAN]

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus fuscus

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

The species was recorded in 135 tetrads during the year but generally in fairly low numbers as over 92% of the records involved fewer than ten birds. Observations were made on 268 days and as the following table shows with no clear pattern of occurrence.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of days recorded	20	20	31	28	24	20	20	24	19	22	20	20

The two largest counts during the first winter period were both from Cuckmere Haven where there were 50 on 2 Feb and 130 on 3 Mar. Very few were seen at the large nocturnal gull roost at Bewl Water with 17 on 15 Feb being the peak count. Any spring passage passed unnoticed as no more than 12 were recorded by seawatchers and the best spring counts were 30 at Pett Level on 22 Mar and 20 at Birling Gap on 15 Apr.

Breeding was poorly recorded with nesting pairs noted only from Littlehampton, Rustington, Shoreham-by-Sea, Brighton and Rye Hbr; this compares with the 36 tetrads where the species was confirmed or probably breeding during the recent atlas study. A clearer picture should emerge from a more detailed breeding survey planned in 2016.

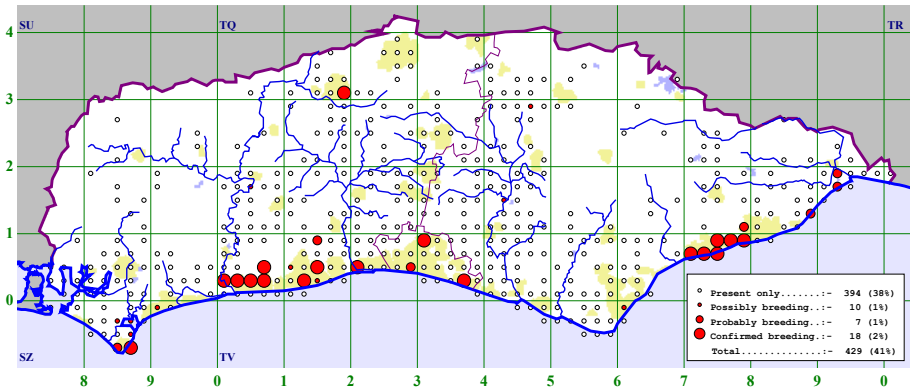
Twenty two adults in a field at Beachy Head was the largest gathering during the early autumn but later in the year 100 were recorded at Arlington Res on 22 Nov, 120 on the R Adur at Shoreham-by-Sea on 30 Nov and 60 near Burpham on 20 Dec. These counts, however, were eclipsed by 900 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 19 Dec. Records of 1500 at Scotney GP on 29 Sep 1989 and 1000 on Shoreham Airport on 28 Jan 1978 are the only historic records to surpass this number. [JAN]

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus argentus

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

This, the most frequently recorded and widespread of all the gulls, was recorded on every day of the year and noted in 429 tetrads. The distribution is clearly seen in the map.



There were 65 widespread counts exceeding 100 birds during the first winter period with the highest numbers recorded at the Bewl Water nocturnal roost where there were 985 on 2 Jan, 3035 on 6 Jan and 1450 on 15 Feb. Elsewhere the only other four figure gathering was 2000 roosting on Bishopstone GC (Seaford) on 16 Jan. Herring Gull movements are not usually systematically

recorded by seawatchers but 400 drifting east at Birling Gap on 8 Mar was notable. The same number was recorded at Newhaven on 5 Mar and following a plough at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 31st. Later in the spring 500 were seen feeding on starfish at Cow Gap (Beachy Head) on 3 May and a large flock gathered off Selsey Bill with a peak count of 912 on 16 May.

The map shows the patchy recording of breeding with most from coastal towns and a single inland record from Horsham. A planned survey in 2016 should provide a more accurate assessment of the current breeding status and distribution of this species.

The four highest counts of the autumn all occurred in September; these being 1500 at Rye Hbr on the 1st, 500 at Burnthouse Bostal (Keymer) on the 7th, 540 at Cold Coombes (Lewes) on the 17th and 500 in the lower Arun valley on the 18th. Into the second winter period there were 1000 at Warnham LNR on 27 Nov and 1500 there on 3 Dec. However, once again most were recorded at nocturnal roosts with 1740 at Bewl Water on 18 Dec and 10,500 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 19th [JAN].

Yellow-legged Gull

Larus michahellis

Scarce to fairly common but localised visitor; mainly in the late summer and autumn. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This remains a scarce and rather localised visitor and although recorded in 31 tetrads most were seen, as usual, on or near the Selsey Peninsula during the late summer and early autumn. The following table showing the approximate numbers in the county and the highest monthly count from the vicinity of Pagham Hbr, Medmerry or Chichester Hbr, is shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Approx. county total	3	3	3	1	-	-	27	12	7	4	5	7
Max no. Selsey Peninsula	1	1	1	-	-	-	21	8	5	3	2	1

During the early months single birds were seen in the Cuckmere Valley on 14 Jan, 1 Feb and 9 Mar, at Rye Hbr on 27 Feb and at Brooklands (Worthing) on 26 Mar. One at Beddingham on 13 Apr was the last record before an absence of 11 weeks.

One arrived in Pagham Hbr on 1 Jul with four by the 8th and eight by the 18th. Thereafter most were seen at nearby Medmerry where a peak of 21 was reached on 29 Jul but numbers then fell fairly quickly. This location remained a favoured area and small numbers were regularly recorded until mid-October but thereafter only on four dates until the year end. In the past the Adur Valley supported reasonable numbers of this species but singles on the R Adur on 12 Jul and at Widewater (Lancing) on 24 Aug were the sole observations. At Beachy Head juveniles were seen on ten dates between 12 Jul and 16 Sep with a maximum of three on 27 Jul and one at Warnham LNR on 25 Jul was the only inland record of the autumn.

Later in the autumn and into winter singles were seen at Rye Hbr on 23 Oct, Pett Pools on 7 Nov, Barcombe Res on 7 Dec, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 9 and 13 Dec and at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 19 Dec. Between 19 Nov and 16 Dec up to three were seen on six dates in or near Cuckmere Haven, the maximum on the last day. It is difficult to know how many individual birds were involved during the year but it is conceivable that the figure may be as low as 40. [JAN]

Caspian Gull*Larus cachinnans**Very scarce but probably regular winter visitor.*

There were fifteen records during the year which probably referred to eleven individual birds: a first winter at Newhaven Hbr on 12 Jan (DC, BK) when there was also an adult in the lower Cuckmere Valley (RJF), first winters also in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 16 Jan and 12 Feb (both MRE), a first winter on the R Adur (Shoreham) on 5 Oct (RJF, BDJ, PJ), a first winter in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 29 Nov (MRE) and adults there on 6 Dec (RJF), 15 Dec (SHL) and 20 Dec (RJF). At West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), there was an adult on 9 Dec and a first winter on the 21st (both SHL). The Shoreham bird was colour ringed (yellow XNEK on green) and had been ringed on 3 Jun at Reddern, Brandenburg (SE Germany) close to the Polish border. It had flown 1004 km W to reach Sussex. [PJ]

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

There were numerous records in the first part of the year though it is conceivable that all of them relate to one bird (in first winter plumage). The first was roosting with other gulls at Goring Gap on 17 Feb (NLB, CEH *et al.*) while it or another flew west over Brooklands Lagoon on 27 Feb (BDJ, PJ). The following day the same bird (identifiable by a gap between the flight feathers in the right wing) was at Pagham Lagoon where it remained throughout March and April appearing again on 9 and 13 May (BGRI *et al.*). Possibly the same bird was at Littlehampton on 16 Apr (BA) and Goring Gap on 7 May (RS). The county total this century moves on to 31. [PJ]

Kumlien's Gull*Larus glaucoides kumlieni**Very rare vagrant.*

A first winter bird was present at Littlehampton between 8 Feb and 30 Apr (DB, MB, PJ, HR *et al.*). At low tide it frequented the area round the mouth of the R Arun, roosting at high tide on the nearby golf course. Numerous photographs taken by a steady stream of admirers enabled its identification to be established beyond doubt. This is the second record of this race in the county, the previous one being in the Brighton area in Feb-Mar 2005. Kumlien's Gull has variably been considered a full species, a subspecies of Thayer's Gull, a subspecies of Iceland Gull, and a hybrid between the aforementioned species. It is currently considered a subspecies of Iceland Gull by the American Ornithologists' Union. [PJ]

Glaucous Gull*Larus hyperboreus**Very scarce but regular winter visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

In a good year for 'white-winged' gulls, the first of probably eight different birds, a first winter, was at Widewater (Lancing) on 7 Jan (DRC, JFC). It remained in the Shoreham Hbr/Southwick Canal area until 27 Mar (mo) and was probably the same bird as that seen at Brighton Marina



Kumlien's Gull, Littlehampton, February to April 2014 (main picture, Nick Bond; top-right, Jacob Everitt; middle-right, Jan-Paul Charteris; bottom-right, Nick Bond)



Glaucous Gull, Littlehampton, February 2014 (Jan-Paul Charteris)

on 19 Jan (JW). Elsewhere there was an adult at Climping Beach on 18-19 Jan (BA *et al.*) and probably the same in Pagham Hbr from 19-25 Jan (GGJ, IML, DM, DIS *et al.*). On the 25th it was taken into care at Brent Lodge where it died the next day. Subsequently there was an adult at Littlehampton from 7-9 Feb (BA, RNP *et al.*), a second winter there from 11 Feb to 17 Mar (RH, PJ *et al.*), adults at Birling Gap on 26 Feb (DC, JFC) and Pagham Beach on 1 Mar (CRJ, ARK), and a first winter flew west at Worthing on 7 Mar (DIS). [PJ]

Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce in summer; mostly non-breeders; but very scarce breeder since 2000. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The species was recorded from 111 tetrads, a 20% increase over the previous two years, however 93% of the records were from sites near the coast and all the largest gatherings were amongst these. Indeed the highest counts from the 16 inland locations were 17 at Warnham LNR on 8 Oct, ten there on 5 Jan and at the nocturnal gull roost at Bewl Water on 15 Feb. All, except one, of the large flocks seen in the early months were from Cuckmere Haven where three figure counts were made on seven dates with peaks of 800 on 15 Feb and 500 on both 18 Jan and 21 Feb. The exception was of 300 at Eastbourne on 1 Feb. The size of gatherings declined as spring approached as shown by maxima of 130 at Pett Level and 120 at Newhaven, both on 19 Mar and 120 at Rock-a-Nore (Hastings) on 8 Apr. The only outstanding count later in the spring was 100 at Pagham Hbr on 4 May. Seawatching records are inconsistently collected but 150 which drifted east passed Birling Gap on 8 Mar was noteworthy.

Although it is 14 years since breeding was first confirmed the evidence suggests that few still breed in Sussex, although a more detailed study planned for 2016 may show otherwise. During 2014 breeding was confirmed only in East Sussex where a pair raised two young on a flat roof building near Newhaven Hbr, a pair fledged three chicks on a rooftop in Hastings and a pair raised two young on the Martello Tower (Rye). However, the largest summer counts were in West Sussex; 52 and 45 were counted at Medmerry on 17 Jun and 13 Jul respectively. Counts of 80 in the Cuckmere Haven on 12 Aug, 85 at Rye Hbr on 1 Sep, 190 at Rock-a Nore on 5 Sep and 100 at Pagham Hbr preceded 800 at Crowlink on 18 Oct; this last being a local record. Once again Cuckmere Haven attracted this species with 300 on 19 Oct, 350 on 20 Oct, 1000 on 27 Nov and 300 on 19 Dec. Elsewhere three figure counts were of 175 at Pagham Hbr on 28 Nov, 117 at Rye Hbr on 15 Dec and 750 at the nocturnal roost at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 19 Dec.

Autumn and winter coastal movements included 50 E at Beachy Head on 20 Sep and 171 at Selsey Bill. [JAN]

Feral Pigeon

Columba livia

Common resident.

This species was recorded in 194 tetrads. In the first winter period there were only three records of three-figure flocks with 150 on 1 Jan and 125 on 7 Jan at Brighton and 100 at Seaford on the 15th. Flock size averaged fewer than 20 although there were 26 records of flocks of 50 birds or more. In the spring and summer period there were records of 111 at Hove on 21 Apr and 175 at Brighton on 12 Aug and ten records of 50 or more. There were no records of confirmed breeding and only two of probable which is clearly under-recorded.

For the autumn and second winter periods, apart from 243 at Pulborough Brooks on 5 Sep and records from Brighton of 190 on both 25 Oct and 11 Nov and 100 on 1 Dec, sizeable flocks were scarce. Flock size again averaged fewer than 20 birds with just ten records of 50 or more birds. [AHP]

Stock Dove

Columba oenas

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

This species was recorded in 297 tetrads. In the first quarter of the year, the only records of note were for 50 at Sidlesham on 2 Jan, 100 at Medmerry on 3 Feb and 230 at East Guldeford Level on 28 Mar.

The first cooing was heard at Bishopstone on 30 Jan while two young were located in a nest box at Weir Wood Res on 11 Mar. Breeding was confirmed in only six tetrads (seven sites) compared with 22 in 2013 but was probable in 31 (36 sites) compared to 18 tetrads the previous year.

Significant autumn movements began on 20 Oct with 154 W at Hastings and 500 W at Beachy Head followed by 1140 W at Hastings on the 22nd while an impressive flock of 1000 was present at Beachy Head on the 26th and 27th. Between 20 Oct and 16 Nov the Hastings Migration Watch team recorded a total of 1494 on 13 dates, including the impressive 1140 W above.

Late winter counts included 300 at Cornish Fm (Beachy Head) on 6 Nov, 270 at Jevington on the 20th, 130 at Chilgrove on 19 Dec and 120 at Medmerry on the 23rd while 200 were still present at Jevington on the 31st. [AHP]



Stock Dove, Ashburnham, June 2014 (Chris Hobden)

Wood Pigeon*Columba palumbus**Abundant resident and winter visitor.*

Wood Pigeons were recorded in 592 tetrads compared to 498 in 2013. However, the first winter period was unremarkable; the only significant high counts were 1300 at Weir Wood Res on 7 Jan and 800 at Pett Level on the 6th. There were 21 records of three figure flocks. At Beachy Head during the spring, none were recorded arriving in off the sea, but a party of 25 E, high over Shooters Bottom on 15 May, did appear to be on migration.

Although a widespread breeder, breeding was confirmed in only eight tetrads with probable breeding in 37 others.

The main autumn movement commenced slightly earlier than previous years with 4000 SW at Selsey Bill, 3600 at Beachy Head and 1600 W in one hour at Worthing on 22 Oct. These were followed by 8000 S at Seaford and 2300 at Brighton Wild Park on 28 Oct while 2046 moved through in a couple of hours heading south at Selsey Bill on the 31st. On 1 Nov, a flock of 8409 was seen flying south west at Hastings and 2650 at Pett Level initially headed south but then switched direction to north east. On 5 Nov there were 2500 W/SW at Climping with 5900 stretching out over 1km at Selsey Bill on the 6th. The final large counts of a more protracted than usual passage were for 4200 E at Beachy Head and 2000 at Arundel on 16 Nov. During the Hastings Migration Watch a total of 12,943 was recorded on 14 days between 20 Oct and 16 Nov with a peak, as previously noted, of 8409 on 1 Nov.

In the last winter period, the only other records of note were for 1316 at Graffham Down on the 6 Dec and 1000 SW at Aldwick on the 25th. [AHP]

Collared Dove*Streptopelia decaocto**Very common resident.*

Collared Doves were recorded in 347 tetrads compared to 296 in 2013. In the first winter period, there were eight records for flocks of 20 birds or more although four of these were at Battle with a peak count of 31 on 29 Jan. Cooing was heard at Seaford on 2 Jan while another bird was seen nest building on 20 Feb at Horsham. There was confirmed breeding in just two tetrads, fledged young being recorded at Selsey on 8 May and a juvenile was seen at St Leonards on 14 Jul. Breeding was probable in a further 40 tetrads.

As for 2013, there were no notable flocks for the autumn; the highest count was of 33 at Battle and there were 13 counts of 20 or more. Counts for the second winter period similarly were poor with the best being 43 near Uckfield on 9 Nov and 42 at Westbourne (Emsworth) on 20 Nov. For both winter periods, flock size was generally just under half a dozen birds for this under-recorded species. [AHP]

Turtle Dove*Streptopelia turtur**Scarce but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Birds were recorded in 75 tetrads compared to 53 tetrads for 2013 and 76 for 2012. The first arrival of the year was a bird at Pagham Hbr on 22 Apr, 16 days later than the 10-year average of 6

Apr; thereafter there were just seven recorded from five sites in April. Sightings were received on a regular basis during May and June, generally of ones and twos but there were also nine records of three birds with a high count of six at the Knepp Estate on 8 Jun and seven there on the 18th.

There were just two tetrads with confirmed breeding with a sighting of a young bird at Netherfield on 18 Jul and at Wrens Warren (Ashdown Forest) on the 20th. Breeding was probable in six other tetrads. Birds were seen or heard purring or were present in suitable breeding habitat in 25 other tetrads.

Birds do appear to be attracted to gardens with a pair feeding on grain put out by the owner of one garden in Henfield on 9 May, where the species has visited annually since 2010, while one bird fed under a bird table for a two week spell from 1 Jul at Lower Dicker.

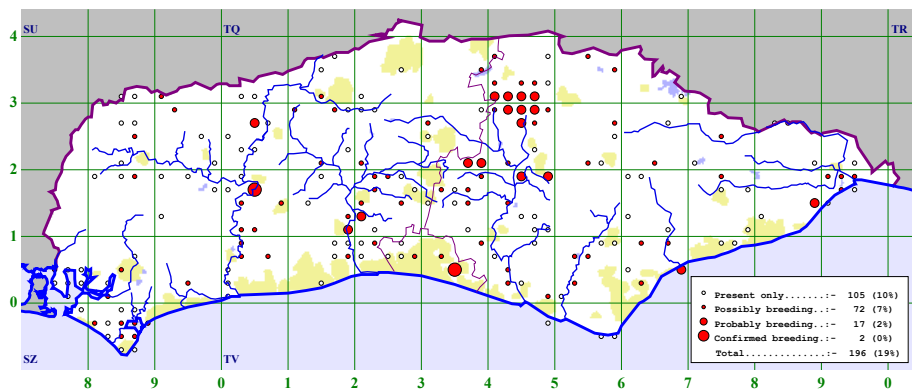
There were only six records for August, all for single birds except for two at Henfield on 7 Aug. Similarly, there were just four records for September, all for single birds. The last record of the year was of a bird seen at Medmerry on 18 Oct, 23 days later than the 10-year average date of 25 Sep. [AHP]

Common Cuckoo

Cuculus canorus

Fairly common but declining summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Cuckoos were recorded in 194 tetrads, up on the 182 in 2013 but down on the 210 of 2012. The first arrivals were heard on 9 Apr at Thorney Deepes, Medmerry, Selsey Bill and Blackdown (Fernhurst), considerably later than last year's date of 25 Mar and a week later than the 10-year average date of 1 Apr. From then on birds were recorded daily throughout April widely across the county and by the end of the month a conservative estimate of at least 170 had been recorded from 138 different sites (although some duplication is likely). During May birds were recorded from about 320 locations.



Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads and was probable in a further 17. Three males were recorded as holding territory at Thorney Island in mid-April and four, including a pair, were seen at Stretham Manor (Henfield) on 20 May and one was watched visiting a probable nest site there on 26 May.

At Rye Hbr singing males were present in several locations across the SSSI throughout the spring and early summer. On Ashdown Forest pairs were observed displaying on 22 Apr at Old Lodge LNR and at Pippingford Park on 17 May and at Ellison's Pond one was recorded visiting a probable nest site on 4 May. Birds were watched displaying at Normans Bay on 13 May and at Pett Level on the 21st. At Memorial Common (Chailey) a pair was seen together on 1 Jun. Recently fledged young were observed on 10 Aug at Sheepcote Valley and at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Aug.

Females were recorded in 16 1-km squares, including one non-rufous type at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest), while males were recorded (either as seen or heard) in 83 1-km squares indicating that females are either less vocal or more secretive, or both.

The last reported sighting was on 27 Aug at Portslade, considerably earlier than the 10-year average of 14 Sep and a month earlier than last year. Indeed this departure date is the earliest on record and in only two years has the last Cuckoo been recorded in August, 29 Aug 1990 and 31 Aug 2008.



Common Cuckoo, Selsey West Fields, May 2014 (Andrew House)

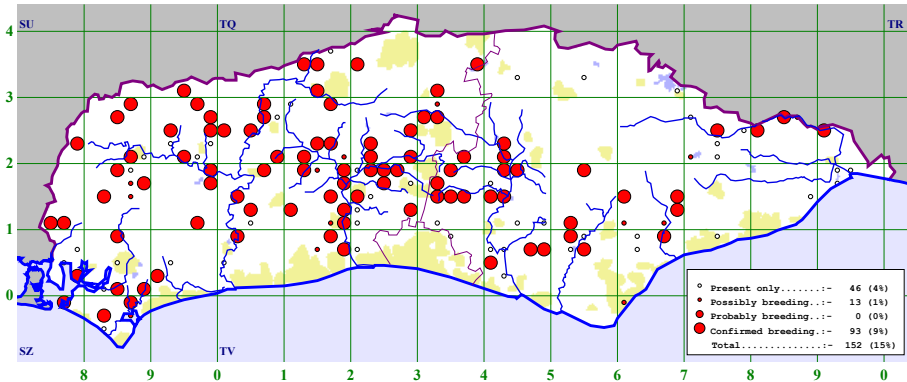
Funded by the SOS, two male Cuckoos were caught and tagged by the BTO as part of their ongoing research into the decline in Cuckoo numbers in England; “Ash” was caught at The Old Airstrip and “Chester” at Gills Lap (both Ashdown Forest). An update will appear in the 2015 Sussex Bird Report. [TS]

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Fairly common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Barn Owls were reported seen flying and sometimes hunting by day at a small number of places across Sussex throughout the year, with more regular reports from Pett Level, Rye Hbr and a few known breeding sites. Records came from 135 tetrads as shown in the map below.



In complete contrast to the poor breeding season in 2013, this year was a good one for Barn Owls. A mild early spring with some rain caused the grass to start growing early, vole numbers increased rapidly and the owls reacted by laying early and raising good broods of young. In West Sussex 71 breeding attempts were reported and in East Sussex 33, the difference being partly or largely explained by the availability of observers licensed to check nests. Overall there were 26 broods of three young, 35 of four and eight of six recorded at a stage at which most or all of them were likely to fledge, but a brood of four young was found dead shortly after an adult was reported dead on a nearby road. Three second broods were reported this year. At one of them three chicks fledged from a clutch of six eggs and then three more eggs were laid in another nest box 50m from the first resulting in a single chick which fledged in November. A pair bred on top of hay bales in a barn. All other reported nests were in nest boxes on trees or in barns and other buildings.

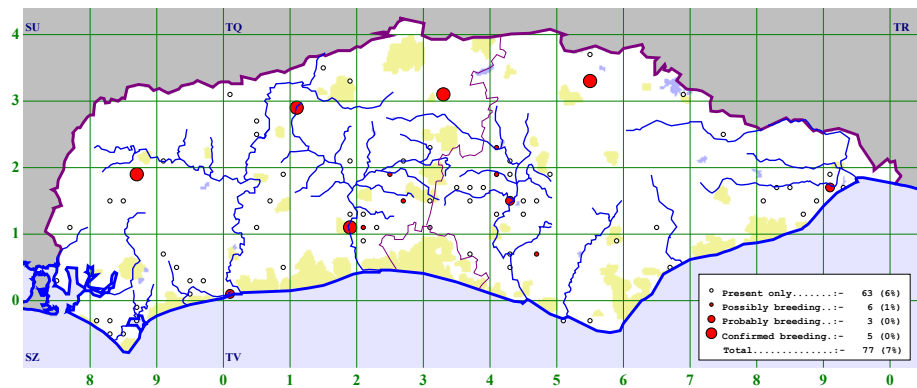
During the year four Barn Owls were found dead on roads in Sussex, and one was found drowned in a cattle trough. [ABW]

Little Owl

Athene noctua

Fairly common resident.

This introduced and sedentary resident was recorded from 74 tetrads during the year which was a welcome increase back to 2012 numbers, after a low point of only 49 tetrads in 2013. During the first winter period this species was recorded from a wide variety of sites throughout the county with downland, parkland, river valley and coastal locations favoured. Most records were of individuals although pairs were recorded at six sites. At Small Dole an observer reported that a pair had possibly been evicted from their nest hole by Jackdaws.



Only five pairs were confirmed as breeding: at Bepton where two juveniles were seen with an adult, Itchingfield where three young fledged and at Beeding Brooks, Wakehurst Place and Troutbeck (Eridge) where adults were observed at nest sites. Unfortunately two of the young that fledged at Itchingfield were subsequently found dead; one in a water trough and another at the bottom of a drainpipe. Breeding was thought probable or possible at a further eight sites. At Newick Park a bird perched on top of a telegraph pole was watched being chased off by a Blackbird and one was found dead by the road at Wakehurst Place.



Little Owl, Ringmer, July 2014 (Leigh Prevost)

Post-breeding dispersal proves hard to detect with the low number of records of this species, however 13 sites had their first record of birds for the year from September onwards, the majority of these being in the southern half of the county. During November and December the only records of multiple birds were pairs at The Burgh (Burpham) and Westdean Woods. No birds were recorded from a large section of central East Sussex and for the fourth year running, this species was not recorded at Beachy Head. [DG]

Tawny Owl

Strix aluco

Fairly common or common resident.

Tawny Owls were recorded from 137 tetrads spread throughout the county and birds appear to be present wherever suitable nesting habitat is available. During the first winter period the majority of records were of calling birds, mostly males but also some females. The highest number was four at Fairlight on 11 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in eleven tetrads, compared to the average of 15 over the last five years, and was probable in a further five. This species was also recorded from an additional 24 tetrads during the breeding season (cf. 27 in 2013). Confirmed breeding records included a very large chick sitting at the entrance to a Barn Owl box in Partridge Green on 3 May and two owlets were present in Horseshoe Plantation on 23 May. Recently fledged young were recorded at various sites from late May through to the end of July.

Around 35% of the records of birds heard calling occurred during the summer and autumn months (cf. 21% in 2013). Forty tetrads received their first record of this species for the year after the breeding season with many of these birds heard as they became more territorial from late September onwards. During the autumn and second winter period the highest counts were of five at West Dean and Horsham. The only record of a dead bird was of one found near Horseshoe Plantation after a severe storm in April and the only prey recorded was a young rabbit taken at Pett Level in May. [DG]

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Birds were recorded from only two sites during the year; no birds were recorded in the first winter period. On 3 Mar a likely migrant was seen at the hillfort at Brighton Wild Park when it was flushed by walkers. During the breeding season a pair fledged three young in an area of downland scrub in West Sussex with a number of observers recording them between 13 Jun and 2 Jul, by which time the three young had moved 150m away from the nest site. No autumn migrants or wintering birds were reported continuing the recent downward trend in the number of observations of this species. [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, were as shown in the following table.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
9	16	8	4		1	7	10	28	40

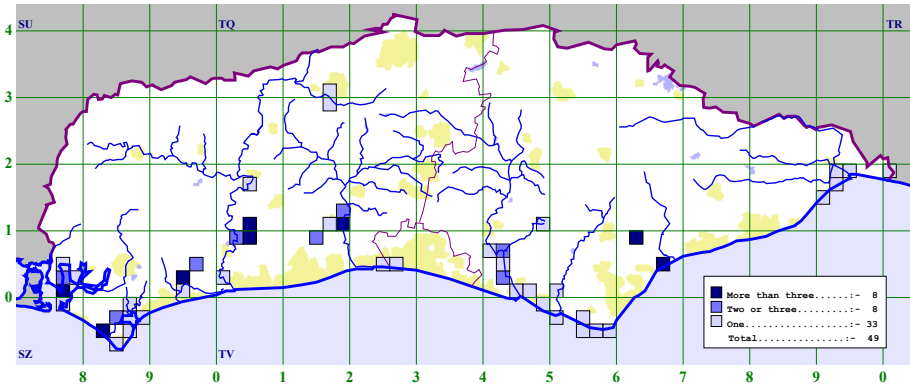
During the first four months of the year an estimated minimum of 30 individuals were noted in the county compared to a three year average of 28 birds.

There was only one record in early January with one at Pagham Hbr on the 11th but by the end of January at least seven birds were present on the coast and in the river valleys including three at Barnham. There was a notable influx in the first week of February however; birds were seen at just three sites, with maxima of eight at Beeding Brooks, seven at Burpham and one at Barnham. During March and April ones and twos were recorded from river valleys and along the coast elsewhere in Sussex. At least six passage migrants were seen including individuals at Southwick on 2 Apr, and in off the sea at Church Norton on the 9th and at Beachy Head on the 21st. The latter bird was observed flying back out to sea and was then seen at Seaford Head half an hour later! The last record of the spring was of one at Church Norton on the 23rd. One bird was found dead at Pagham Hbr on 6 Apr.

After two consecutive years of birds summering in the county there were no summer records in 2014.

The first autumn migrant was seen at Pett Level on 24 Aug and during September seven further migrants were seen at three sites along the coast, and also on the Downs at No Mans Land (Findon) and The Burgh (Burpham) with none remaining on site for more than a couple of days.

The first bird back on wintering territory was at Church Norton on 15 Oct, and during the month the only sites to host multiple individuals were Pagham Hbr with two on the 22nd and The Burgh where it was noted on 20th that numbers were unusually high, although the actual number was not recorded. These birds were part of a large influx into the county which consisted of a minimum of 60 individuals.



Numbers of wintering birds built up to very high levels during the last two months of the year and the largest concentrations of birds included 12 at The Burgh on 4 Nov and five at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on the 30th. In December counts included four at Barnham on the 1st, six at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) which were observed roosting in the sand dunes on the 5th, a minimum of 14 in the air at the same time at The Burgh on the 8th, four at Medmerry on the 13th

and five at Horse Eye Level on the 28th. An observer who works on the Norfolk Estate which includes The Burgh, was able to record the exceptionally high numbers there, but it is notable that the maximum count from other observers was of only six birds demonstrating the difficulty of estimating wintering populations if recording without full access to an area. [DG]

European Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Fairly common but localised summer visitor rarely seen on migration. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 39 tetrads, 14 fewer than in 2013, but seven more than in 2012. The first report for the year was of a single male at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 15 May, two weeks later than the 10-year average. The next record was of a male at Darwell Wood (Brightling) on the 16th, with two birds displaying at Ambersham Common and at West Dean Woods on the 17th. In the same week, two birds were recorded in West Sussex at Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough Brooks) (18th) and Stedham Common (a male on the 19th), whilst in East Sussex there were birds in five sites on Ashdown Forest, including a male and female at Hindleap Warren (18th), as well as three birds churring at Broadwater Warren on the 19th.



European Nightjar, Ashdown Forest, June 2014 (Matt Eade)

Breeding was confirmed at one site (Broadwater Warren), with fledged young reported on 5 Aug. During the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)*, 35 territories were recorded, 13 fewer than in 2013, and included 18 at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, five at Iping Common, and four in the Lavington Common area (see heathland table on page 210).

Evidence of probable breeding was recorded in a further nine 1-km squares at Rewell Wood (Arundel), Broadstone Fm (Chailey), Broadwater Warren, Darwell Hole and Ashdown Forest (in seven locations). On Ashdown Forest, most records were of churring males, which were present in at least 20 different locations. The number of territories on Ashdown Forest was not calculated this year.

Churring birds were recorded at six other sites in suitable habitat, including Wiggonholt Common, Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods, and around the Chailey area at Memorial and Pound Commons and Romany Ridge. In August, one bird was present at Wiggonholt Common on the 4th, an adult female and two juveniles were at Broadwater Warren on the 5th and a pair was roosting on Ashdown Forest on the 8th. The last record of the year was of a single bird at West Hill (Hastings) on 27 Sep which was the only autumn migration record. [AR]

Common Swift

Apus apus

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

The first Swift for 2014 was one at Medmerry on 17 Apr; this was only two days later than the comparable date for 2013, but five days later than the 10-year average. There has not, however, been a large variation in first dates for Swift in Sussex over the years, with the earliest between 1960-2012 being 7 Apr. After a single bird at Barcombe Res on the 20th and two at Rye on the 21st, there were eight more records to the month's end, with five at Pett Level on the 26th.

The first double-figure count of the year came on 1 May, with 30 at Chichester GP whilst at Selsey Bill 34 N were reported a day later. Fifty were recorded at Pulborough Brooks by 4 May and at Chichester GP the first 3-figure count, of 100, was reached a day later. The latter site received five more 3-figure counts through the spring and into summer reaching a peak of 400 on 28 Jun. There were eight more counts of 100 or more during this period, coming from a variety of locations including Rye Hbr with 200 on 10 May, Brooklands (Worthing) and Lidsey SF both with 150 on 28 May, and Cuckoo's Corner (Coombes) with 200 on 18 Jun.

The number of tetrads with confirmed breeding was 22, compared with 34 in 2013; whilst probable breeding was reported from 19 tetrads (33 the previous year). A colony at Brighton General Hospital was large by modern-day Sussex standards, with 13 confirmed breeding pairs, including two pairs in new nest boxes, an encouraging sign for the future conservation of the species.

The first bird noted to be back at a nest was on 5 May in Horsham; thereafter birds were reported at nest sites widely across the county. One of the most unusual sites observed was in the "boom of a boat" at Apuldrum in Chichester! Young were first noted in a nest in Henfield on 7 Jul, and then on a house in Chichester, two young from each of two boxes on 15 Aug. The last recorded bird to fledge was on 31 Aug at Brighton General Hospital.

Return migration started from around mid to late July, with the first notable record of 150 coming from Rye Hbr on 18 Jul. This was followed by two counts of 100, both on 21 Jul, from Hove and Selsey Bill, with 120 at the latter site on the 23rd. The highest count of the year, however, came from Beachy Head with 1400 on 27 Jul.

Typically, migration tailed off from August onwards, with just nine double-figure counts after 1 Aug, the last of these being 30 on the 31st from West Tarring (Worthing). Although there were 22 records in September, the last recorded date for Swift in 2014 was very early, a single bird flying

east on 13 Sep at Selsey Bill. This was one full month earlier than the last date for 2013 and 23 days earlier than the 10-year average of 6 Oct. It was also six days before the previously recorded earliest last departure date between 1960 and 2013, of 19 Sep in 2012. [DB]

Hoopoe

Upupa epops

Very scarce spring and even scarcer autumn passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

Nine were recorded with the earliest being a well watched bird in the horse paddocks at Climping Beach on 29 Mar which stayed until 1 Apr. Single birds were also observed in April; at Rye on the 5th, Bognor Regis GC and Pagham Hbr on the 10th and Pevensy Levels on the 29th. There were two records in May with one at Rye Hbr on the 18th whilst another spent the 19th and 20th in a very lucky observer's garden in Storrington. There were only two autumn observations: between Mountfield and Darwell Res on 6 Aug and in a Hove garden on the 23rd. Nine records compares favourably with the average of five per year in recent decades (*The Birds of Sussex*, Thomas 2014). [SPB]

European Bee-eater

Merops apiaster

Rare vagrant; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.

A group of five adults was seen and photographed near Belle Tout (Beachy Head) on the morning of 20 May (07:00-07:25 hr) (MEC, RHC, NTWT) before departing east. The total recorded this century is now 49; it has been recorded in 12 of the 15 years this century, averaging 3.3 per annum. Bee-eaters are predominantly spring visitors: of 61 dated records the month of arrivals is as follows: April 3, May 24, June 15, July 11, August 6 and September 2. The earliest arrival was on 22 Apr 2011 and the latest 19 Sep 1958. [JAH]

Kingfisher

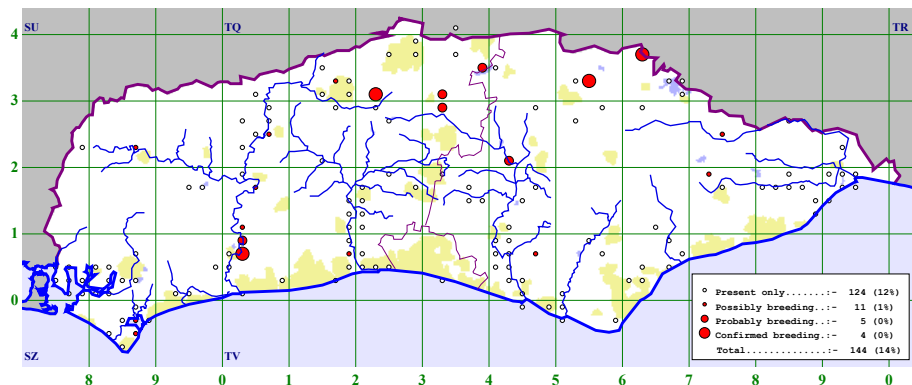
Alcedo atthis

Scarce to fairly common resident and possibly very scarce winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

This species was recorded in 142 tetrads across the county, well up on the 2013 figure of 99. Observations during the winter months, with the minimum number recorded, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb		Nov	Dec
No. of birds	31	46		88	82
No. of inland sites	16	27		36	39
No. of coastal sites	16	8		28	28

While the number of sites and birds recorded during January were roughly comparable with 2013, there was a marked increase in February of inland sites and bird numbers. But in the second winter there was a marked increase in all categories for reasons which are not entirely clear but suggestive of a good breeding season. The following map shows their widespread distribution.



Breeding was confirmed from four tetrads and was probable at five others. Courtship behaviour was noted on 29 Mar in the Loder Valley and a bird was seen visiting a probable nest site there on 31 Mar. An adult was watched visiting an old nest site at Troutbeck (Eridge) from 9 Mar until the end of April and subsequently there were various reports of two birds there. On 22 Apr a bird was observed carrying food at Arundel WWT and fully fledged young were reported from Bayham Lake on 14 May and at a hammer pond in St Leonard's Forest on 26 Jun. Territorial behaviour was noted at Weir Wood Res on 19 Jul.

During 25 ringing sessions at Ladywell (Coombes) eight birds were ringed, one adult and seven first calendar year birds and at The Mumbles (Steyping) two new birds were ringed. Observers at Yapton recorded two in September and commented that they had never been recorded there before. At Beachy Head one was seen on the 7th and the observer commented that it was the first since April 1985. At Firlie the first record for two years was the first since restoration of Stew Ponds. During August nine were counted at Weir Wood Res. [TS, JAH]

Wryneck

Jynx torquilla

Very scarce passage migrant, most in autumn; last bred in 1944. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

There were no spring records. In the autumn the first reports were one at Selsey Bill on 28 Aug, one trapped and ringed on the 29th at Pett Level and possibly a different one in Rye town the next day. One was at Beachy Head on the 30th, and there were reports of one (possibly two) at Seaford Head and one at Ovingdean on the 31st. September produced a flurry of records with birds at Queens Park (Brighton) on the 2nd, and at the University of Sussex (Falmer) on the 3rd (possibly the same bird). On the 5th three were recorded in the Beachy Head area: at Whitbread Hollow, Shooters' Bottom and Hodcombe. On the 6th, one was seen at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and another at Ovingdean while a second bird was noted at Shooter's Bottom. On the 7th four birds at Beachy Head included one at Cow Gap, one at Whitbread Hollow and the two from Shooter's Bottom, one of which was assumed to be a new bird. Another was recorded at Lancing on the 10th and over the next four days birds were recorded at Sheepcote Valley on the 11th, Pagham Hbr on the 12th, Cuckmere Haven on the 13th and Medmerry on the 14th. Records from Wick Bottom (Woodingdean) and Ovingdean on 20 Sep were probably the same bird, but there was

one at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 22 Sep. Estimating the total number of autumn passage wrynecks is fraught with difficulty with reports from close proximity on similar dates. Taking the most conservative view of duplication of reports this gives a minimum of 20 birds for the year comparable with the 28 in 2013. [PJP]



Wryneck, Selsey Bill, August 2014 (Andrew House)

Green Woodpecker

Picus viridis

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

The species was recorded from 436 tetrads distributed widely across the county (356 in 2013, 415 in 2012). This, taken together with the SWBS and BBS records (see tables on pages 200-207), suggest a continued improvement in numbers since the last severe snow covered winter.

During the first winter/early spring period the highest counts were eight at Pulborough Brooks and seven at Pickham Fm (Pett), both on 24 Mar. Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in a further 37, very similar figures to previous years. During the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)* (see page 210) a total of 33 pairs or territories were identified. Additionally a survey of breeding birds at RSPB sites revealed a pair at Medmerry, two pairs at Wiggonholt Common and four at Pulborough Brooks. Breeding was also confirmed at a further 12 1-km sites. These results are a slight increase on 2013.

A nest with eggs was noted on 14 May at Lee Place (Adversane) and a nest with young at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 17 May. The first record of a fledged juvenile was at Weir Wood Res on 3 Jun. Subsequently the highest totals were eight at Pyecombe on 28 Sep, seven at

Pulborough Brooks on 18 Jul, with six at the latter site on 4 Aug and also at Drungewick Manor (Loxwood) on 7 Aug. [PJP]

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Dendrocopos major

Common resident.

The species was reported from 417 tetrads (387 in 2013), widely distributed across the county. The apparently healthy population is again reflected in the BBS and SWBS survey results (see tables on pages 200-207). The highest site counts in the first winter period were nine at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Feb, and six at two more sites. Period totals of eight and seven birds were reported from ringing summaries at Ladywell (Coombes) and The Mumbles (Steyning) respectively.

A drumming male was heard first on Ashdown Forest on 2 Jan. Breeding was confirmed in 30 tetrads and was probable in a further 132. In the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)* (see page 210) 39 territories were recorded. A survey of breeding birds at RSPB sites recorded six pairs at Pulborough Brooks and four at Wiggonholt Common. The first nest with young was reported on 13 May at Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest), and the first fledged young were at Uckfield on 18 May. The high count of 14 birds seen over four hours at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 17 May was notable.

The maximum counts during the last three months of the year were seven at Weir Wood Res in December and at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 5 Dec. [PJP]

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

Dendrocopos minor

Scarce, possibly now very scarce, and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in a disappointing 14 tetrads (30 in 2013, 31 in 2012). There was no record of confirmed breeding, but there was probable breeding in five tetrads and, during the season, birds were present in apparently suitable habitat in six others. A male calling in close proximity to a female was noted in Rackham Woods on 13 Mar. There were sightings at Arundel Park on 15 Mar and Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 16 Mar. Drumming was heard at Buxted Park (Uckfield) on 17 Mar, and on a number of dates in that month at a site on Ashdown Forest. A pair was present in suitable breeding habitat at both of these sites and later at Haywards Heath on 15 Jun. Three birds were at Darwell Res on 23 Mar. A bird was recorded on two dates in November at a site in Steyning.

As this species is of high conservation concern, all sightings should be reported with a 4-figure or preferably 6-figure reference, especially if territorial behaviour or other evidence of breeding is observed. [PJP]

Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus

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

Kestrels were recorded in 368 tetrads (33%), a slight increase on 2013. Although recorded in more tetrads than Sparrowhawk (274) this species was recorded in fewer tetrads than Common

Buzzard (561). During the first winter period most records were of single birds. There were no counts higher than three; these being at Fishbourne Channel on 5 Jan, Burpham on 14 Jan, Pulborough Brooks on 17 Feb and Wepham Down on 8 Mar. There were no records of incoming migrants from the sea.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and probable in a further 20. Display was first observed at Burgess Hill on 4 Feb. The first downy young were recorded on 21 May in a pole nest box at Troutbeck (Eridge). A nest with young was recorded at Salehurst on the 23rd and at Cocking on the 30th. Other confirmed breeding locations were West Heath Common, Rowdell Holt (Washington), in a nestbox under the A27 Shoreham flyover, Devils Dyke, Great Bentley Fm (Balcombe), High Cross Fm (Uckfield), Cliff End (Pett) and at least one pair on the industrial estate in Rye Hbr.

The majority of records during late spring and summer were of one bird; the highest count was of six at The Burgh (Burpham) on 24 Aug. During the autumn and second winter period the highest count was of nine at The Burgh on 7 Oct. Other high counts were seven each at Steep Down (Lancing) on 11 Oct and Cold Coombs (Lewes) on 17 Oct and six each at Berwick on 5 Oct and at Pagham Hbr on 3 Dec. At Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 13 Dec a Kestrel loudly and aggressively chased a Short-eared Owl with a vole in its talons forcing it to drop it which the Kestrel then caught in mid-air. [MJC]

Merlin

Falco columbarius

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

The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	7	3	8	2	1		15	14	7	12

During the period, January to the end of March, records came from 13 broad sites, involving around 18 different birds. These came mainly from coastal sites, principally Pagham and Rye Harbours, with fewer sightings from the main river valleys and other locations across the county.

Spring migrants were recorded from three different sites involving up to six different birds. Two flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill, the first on 25 Mar and the second on 8 Apr. Other records came from Pagham Hbr, with one on 14 May and Rye Hbr with several sightings between 22 Mar and 9 Apr involving perhaps three different birds.

None was recorded in the county between singles at Pagham Hbr on 14 May and 31 Aug. This matches the pattern of occurrence in 2013 very closely indeed (with the last spring bird on 11 May and Cissbury hosting the first autumn record on 1 Sep).

One bird recorded in off the sea on 21 Sep at Selsey Bill echoes three sightings between 27 Oct and 17 Nov 2013, when at least one was possibly hunting over the sea. Perhaps this behaviour is regular at this site or maybe the sightings relate to local movements around the peninsula?

Throughout the autumn and second winter period, birds were reported from 25 separate locations. Most records involved single birds but there were two at Beachy Head on 25 Oct, Pagham Hbr on 9 Nov and Pevensey Levels on 1 Dec. It is difficult to estimate the total number of different birds involved but a maximum of around 40 may have been present. Most records

were from four sites during this period: noted on 12 dates at Pagham Hbr, on nine dates, at both Beachy Head and Rye Hbr and on seven dates at Medmerry.

Skylark and Linnet were observed being caught, the former at The Burgh (Burpham) on 28 Oct and the latter at Rye Hbr on 26 Sep. Other species hunted by Merlin included Fieldfare, Starling, Goldfinch, hirundines and waders. [DB]

Hobby

Falco subbuteo

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

One at Pulborough Brooks on 31 Mar was the first spring migrant, four days earlier than the 10-year average and ten days earlier than the first in 2013. Four more individuals were recorded up to the first half of April before two flew north together over Seaford Head on 17 Apr. The next multiple record came from Coldwaltham SF on 24 Apr with three birds observed and the maximum spring count came from Waltham Brooks with six together on 6 May. Only two further records involved more than two birds, three at Pulborough Brooks on 14 May and four at Arundel WWT on 19 May.

There were numerous records from coastal sites of birds arriving in off the sea. These included one at Widewater (Lancing) on 24 Apr and singles at Beachy Head on 26 Apr and 11 May. At Selsey Bill one arrived in off the sea on 27 Apr and during May arriving birds were recorded on seven dates with two on the 9th.

An interesting record of nocturnal migration was witnessed when a bird was recorded in off the sea at 05.50 at Selsey Bill on 27 Apr, indicating that it begun its flight over the English Channel whilst still dark. Nocturnal migration of Hobby has been documented using satellite tracking technology (*British Birds* 104:2-15).

An unusual record from a school in Barnham on 12 Jun concerned a bird that had flown into the science corridor; it was eventually caught and released at the sports field where it flew off.

Breeding was confirmed from just three sites with probable breeding from a further 17. This represents an increase over 2013 (two confirmed and eight probable breeding sites) but is far more likely to indicate an improvement in recording rather than a change in the Sussex population, which is still probably under-recorded. Fledging was recorded at three sites in East Sussex, two on 14 Aug (the same date as the only recorded fledging in 2013) and one on 22 Aug.

The first departing migrant was recorded flying out to sea at Beachy Head on 24 Aug; two other records of birds flying out to sea came from Seaford Head on 8 Sep and Beachy Head again on 18 Sep. Most autumn records were of singles, with only a few records of two birds. The last departing birds of the year were observed at Church Norton and from Beachy Head on 18 Oct, a few days earlier than the 10-year average of 23 Oct and the last of 2013, on 24 Oct. [DB]

Peregrine

Falco peregrinus

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

Breeding was confirmed from 12 tetrads with probable breeding from a further 12 sites; the true population in Sussex is probably now more than 30 pairs. The well-watched nest sites at Sussex Heights and Chichester Cathedral both had webcams set up, allowing for data to be

collected on the comparative egg-laying and fledgling dates from the two nests. The first egg laid by the Brighton pair was on 25 Mar and the fourth egg, completing the clutch, nine days later on 3 Apr. This was earlier than their Chichester counterparts, where the first egg was not laid until 9 Apr with the clutch also being completed nine days later on 18 Apr.

In Brighton the first and second chicks both hatched on 2 May, 38 days after the first egg was laid; the fourth chick hatched on 6 May. Meanwhile the first chick hatched by the Chichester pair was on 19 May, 40 days after the first egg was laid. The second egg hatched a day later but the remaining two failed to hatch. All four of the Brighton Peregrines had fledged by 16 Jun, whilst the female at Chichester fledged on 3 Jul. Both pairs raised an equal ratio of male to female young.

Very few details were recorded on the breeding success of other pairs around the county, so it is difficult to comment on the productivity of this year's breeding season for the species. The results of the 2014 national Peregrine survey, co-ordinated by the BTO, may be able to give a more accurate picture of the breeding population in Sussex.

Numerous observations recorded Peregrines chasing waders, especially at roost sites on the coast around Chichester and Pagham Harbours. Prey items observed included Feral Pigeons, a Magpie and a young Rook, a Lapwing at Pett Level, a Grey Partridge at The Burgh, where fortunately there is a reasonable population of this declining game bird and perhaps most interestingly, a Green Woodpecker at Seaford Head on 7 Aug. A Peregrine observed off Selsey Bill on 26 Dec appeared to be hunting at sea.

Altercations were noted with various other bird of prey species, including Buzzards, Sparrowhawks and a Kestrel. Most of these encounters involved the Peregrine being mobbed but on 23 Mar near Henfield a male was observed attacking a Buzzard, and on 10 Mar near Lewes, a pair was seen sparring with a pair of Buzzards. [DB]

Rose-ringed Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

Very scarce introduced breeding resident.

One at Wilbees Fm (Arlington) on 25 Feb, one at Rusper on 1 Mar and two at East Hoathly on 29 Mar were the only records in the early part of the year. Two flew over Hailsham on 25 Jun and on the following day five were recorded during a BBS near Northchapel. One was noted at various locations around Worthing on five dates between 8 Aug and 24 Dec and one flew over Misbourne (Ashdown Forest) on 13 Aug.

Most records were later in the year; the species was noted as present at Bexhill on 23 Oct and single birds were recorded at Beachy Head on 1 Nov, at Seaford on 11 Nov and 31 Dec, at Ifield MP on 16 Nov and Crawley on 9 Dec. A nervous pair visited garden seed and peanut feeders in Hurstpierpoint also on 9 Dec.

The most interesting observations occurred on 15 Nov when a party of ten were at Rusper and the same number recorded at Ardingly. The flock at Rusper had been seen in the area in the previous two weeks. Whether these involve the same birds at locations about 18 km apart is speculative.

A recent article in The Independent reported that while this species was a known prey item of the Peregrine, it seems that Hobbies and Tawny Owls are also now taking a liking to them. [AHP, JAN]

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

This species was recorded in 19 tetrads during 2014. Approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
1	2	1	1		5	5	5

The first sighting of the year was of one at Waltham Brooks on 2 Jan which had been there since mid November 2013; it was seen off and on until 1 Apr. Another individual was seen at on the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on 20 and 22 Feb.

In October five individuals were recorded: the first was one at Littlehampton on 16 Oct, another at Braberry Hatch (Ashdown Forest) on the 22nd, one at East Head (Chichester Hbr) and probably the same at Selsey Bill on 25 Oct, one at Amberley on the 27th and 28th and another at Iping Common also on 27 Oct which remained into 2015 and was joined by a second individual on 4, 5, 14 and 18 Nov and 30-31 Dec.

In November, a first winter bird was seen at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 1 Nov. On Ashdown Forest, presumably the same wandering adult bird was seen at several sites from 6 Nov to 10 Dec. Elsewhere, one was at Charleston Reedbed on 18 Nov; another in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 16 Dec and another at Lancing College on 11, 12 and 20 Dec. [TS, JAH]



Great Grey Shrike, Hodcombe (Beachy Head), November 2014 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)

Magpie*Pica pica**Very common resident.*

Magpies were recorded in 521 tetrads. In the first winter period there were exceptional counts of 86 at Warnham LNR on 7 Feb and 83 at Pett Village on 18 Feb; the latter was noted as a regular place for gatherings, described as “separate flocks of 48 and 22 plus more in a third field”. Other high counts were of 43 at Warnham LNR on 12 Jan, 33 at Bishopstone GC on 16 Jan and seven counts of 20 to 30 elsewhere.

Breeding was confirmed in only nine tetrads and was probable in a further 33. This suggests under recording for this very common species. Nest building was first recorded at Worthing on 30 Jan and at Portslade on 11 Feb. A nest with young was reported at Lullington Court on 25 May, and fledged young were noted on that date at both Quellwood Common (Blackdown) and Roffey (Horsham).

Counts increased over the summer with the highest in July being 20 at Canadia (Battle) on the 28th, and a similar number in Brighton on 5 and 8 Aug. In the second winter period there were counts of over 20 at six sites with the highest at Warnham LNR of 55 on 9 Nov and 60 on 27 Dec and 29 at Portslade-by-Sea on 16 Nov. [SJB]

Jay*Garrulus gladius**Very common resident.*

Jays were recorded in 396 tetrads (340 in 2013). The majority of the records (81%) were counts of one or two birds consistent with the solitary nature of the species.

During the first winter period notable high counts included 11 at Pulborough Brooks and ten at Pett Level both on 24 Mar, nine at The Ridge (Ashdown Forest) on 26 Mar, eight at Bewl Water on 24 Mar, seven each at Hammonds Mill Fm (Burgess Hill) on 2 Jan and at North Marden on 8 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed at only one site, at Misbourne (Ashdown Forest), where a noisy family group was observed on 28 Jul, was probable in a further 20 tetrads and was recorded as being in suitable habitat in a further 25. Clearly there is under recording of breeding activity of this very common species.

In the late autumn there was the first noticeable evidence of movement with double figure counts at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), Pett Level, Waltham Brooks and Beachy Head. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded a total of 107 birds at various locations between 14 Sep and 22 Oct, with notable counts of 25 moving north-west or west on 25 Sep and 57 passing east in small groups over St Helen's Park on 5 Oct. Elsewhere there were 11 counts on nine dates exceeding ten with 17 at both Warnham LNR on 15 Sep and at Beachy Head on 2 Oct being the highest. [SJB, PJP]

Jackdaw*Corvus monedula**Very common resident.*

Jackdaws were recorded from 519 tetrads. During the first winter period there were 36 counts of 100 or more. The four highest counts were all at the same site, Hammonds Mill Fm (Burgess

Hill), with 3000 on 2 and 9 Jan, followed by 2500 on 7 Feb and 3 Mar. Other high counts were 600 at Rodmell on 7 Feb, 500 at Piddinghoe Pond on 29 Jan, 500 at Beeding Brooks on 4 Feb and 400 at Burgess Hill on 13 Jan. During the early SWBS 1569 Jackdaws were recorded from 69 of the 95 1-km squares surveyed.

There were sporadic indications of probable breeding across the county during March and April, with the first record of actual nest building coming from Drungewick Manor on 26 Mar. This was followed on 30 Mar by a record of a pair seen at Horton Hall (Small Dole) using a nest hole following the suspected eviction of Little Owls. Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads with evidence of probable breeding from a further 40 tetrads. A nest with young was recorded at Wilbees Farm (Arlington) on 29 Apr and the first fledged young were recorded at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 8 May. Data on the use of nest boxes in 2014 were limited. Jackdaws attempted to breed in all of the boxes provided for Mandarins, owls and Kestrels at Troutbeck (Eridge) where there was an estimated four breeding pairs although these pairs used hollow trees rather than nest boxes. The only other nest box record was of a pair entering and exiting an owl nest box at Barcombe Res on 18 May.

The highest counts of the summer period were 250 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 11 Jul, followed by counts of 200 at Weir Wood Res on 19 Jul, Newick on 4 Aug and West Chiltington on 17 Aug. Counts of 100 or more were reported from only two other sites during this period.

During the autumn and second winter period there were 46 counts of 100 or more. Like earlier in the year the three highest counts were all at Hammonds Mill Fm, with 2200 on 24 Dec, 2000 on 14 Nov and 1800 on 26 Oct. Elsewhere, 600 were recorded at High Salvington (Worthing) on 31 Dec, 411 at Warnham LNR on 20 Nov and 400 at Oxendean (Jevington) on 31 Dec. Birds were seen to enter holes in the cliff face below Newhaven Fort on 28 Nov, presumably to roost, and in a hollow ash tree at Rye Hbr where c.25 pairs nested at Camber Castle. During the late SWBS 2561 Jackdaws were recorded from 108 of the 136 squares surveyed. [GO]

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Very common resident.

Rooks were recorded from 350 tetrads compared with 306 the previous year. During the first winter period the highest counts were 800 at Rodmell on 7 Feb, 300 at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Jan, 278 at Stoke Clump (Lavant) on 27 Jan and 270 again at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Feb. There were three counts of 200 birds and nineteen more records of 100 or more, from 12 different sites.

During the early SWBS Rooks 1118 were found in 41 of the 95 1-km squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in 36 tetrads and was probable in a further 15. The earliest indication of breeding was at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) where birds were seen on nests arranging sticks on 28 Jan. A total of at least 1091 Apparently Occupied Nests (AONs) was recorded. This total included 550 in the Arun Valley (Arundel to Littlehampton), averaging 16.7 AONs per site, representing a modest increase on the 542 of 2013 but lower than the 582 and 597 of 2012 and 2011 respectively. The two largest rookeries were at Beddingham Cement Works and Myrtle Grove Fm (Clapham) with counts of ca.200 and 102 AONs respectively, similar numbers to the previous year. Elsewhere, the remaining 341 AONs at 18 sites averaged 18.9 nests per rookery.

During the summer period the highest number of Rooks recorded was by far 1100 at Funtington on 20 Jul. There were two counts of 200 birds, at Chantry Hill on 25 Jul and at Steyning Round Hill on 26 Aug. There were six other records of 100 or more birds, four of which were at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), whilst the other two were at West Dean and Medmerry.



Rook (leucistic), Goodwood, September 2014 (Adam Bowley)

During the autumn and second winter period there were six records of 200 or more birds. The highest count was 500 at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 24 Oct. There were 300 at Jevington on 29 Dec, 250 at Medmerry on 13 Sep, 245 at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Dec, 221 at Racton on 20 Dec and 200 at Sidlesham on 15 Nov. There were also counts of 100-150 at seven other sites during the period. During the late SWBS 1944 Rooks were found in 63 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]

Carriion Crow

Corvus corone

Very common resident.

Carriion Crows were recorded from 593 tetrads. During the first winter period there were five counts of 100 or more birds involving 200 at West Chiltington on 1 Feb, and counts of 100 at Hammonds Mill Fm (Burgess Hill) on 2 Jan, Ferring on 10 Jan, Pulborough Brooks on 26 Jan and Pett Level on 9 Mar. Counts of from 50-80 were recorded at nine other sites during the period. During the early SWBS 881 Carriion Crows were found in 91 of the 95 1-km squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads and recorded as probable in a further 32. The first record of nest building was on 4 Mar at Brooklands (Worthing) and on 30 Mar two where seen stealing nesting material from a Rook's nest at Northcommon Fm (Selsey). The first occupied nest was seen on 2 Apr in a tree overhanging Patching Pond. The earliest reports of fledged young were from West Tarring (Worthing) and from Hove, both on 30 May. Only two counts of 100 or more birds were recorded during the breeding season and these were at the same site, Apuldrum Manor Fm (Chichester), where there were 150 on 5 Apr, increasing to 250 on the 24th.

During the summer period the highest counts were 150 at Chantry Hill on 25 Jul and 100 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Jul.

During the autumn and second winter period the highest counts were 263 at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Dec and 130 in the Arun Valley (Arundel to Littlehampton) on 8 Sep. Additionally between 50 and 61 were recorded at ten other sites during this period. During the late SWBS 1354 Carrion Crows were found in 134 of the 136 squares surveyed.

An interesting record was submitted from Aldwick (Bognor) where, on 19 Mar, a pair of Carrion Crows was observed attacking and attempting to drown a Magpie in a pond in private gardens. [GO]

Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

Single birds at Rye Hbr on 3 May (AP) and Selsey Bill on 15 May (AH, CRJ, OM *et al.*) are the first to be recorded in the county since 2006. The Rye Hbr bird, which was photographed, flew off from the river mouth over Camber Sands and was later seen at Dungeness (Kent). The Selsey bird, which also was photographed, was present for about an hour before being pushed off by the rising tide. Hooded Crow is a rare bird in Sussex, and a long-staying individual would seem overdue. [PJ]

Raven

Corvus corax

Scarce and increasing breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.

A detailed article on the distribution and prospects for Raven in Sussex is included on pages 229-242 of this report and should be read in conjunction with this account. There continues to be a slight west to east bias but such is its distribution one might expect to hear or see a Raven more-or-less anywhere in the county. The chalk cliffs are close to being fully colonised and most of the more suitable chalk quarries are also now occupied. Ravens readily nest in tall trees, especially Cedars, Douglas Firs and Scots Pines and already there are more tree-nesting pairs compared to pairs nesting on chalk cliffs and in quarries. Man-made structures such as pylons are also used but to date tall trees have been preferred. Provided this species is tolerated (in the same way as Common Buzzards have been over the past 20 years), then the future prospects for this species in the county are very bright indeed.

There are known to be a minimum of 76 Raven territories in Sussex but in any given year only a small fraction of these are likely to be monitored. Successful breeding was reported from seven localities with two family parties near known downland breeding sites and also several family parties noted at Beachy Head. The only unusual breeding site mentioned was an electricity substation.

Prior to 2014 only a couple of large flocks or gatherings of Ravens has ever been recorded in Sussex but that situation has now changed for in 2014 many medium-to-large flocks were seen. There were 16 recorded at Wadhurst Park Estate on 23 Jan, 12 at West Dean Woods on 24 Feb, seven at Seaford Head on 17 Mar, eight at Beachy Head on 25 May, 27 on downland near Storrington on 14 Jun, nine and 14 at Chantry Hill on 25 Jul and 18 Aug respectively, eight at The Burgh (Burpham) on 26 Sep, seven at Cold Coombes (Lewes) on 17 Sep, 17-20 in a flock that appeared to be moving through from west to east at The Burgh on 16 Dec, and finally 25 in a

downland roost on 20 Dec. This was the first ever Raven roost found in Sussex and quite possibly the first mixed Raven/Red Kite roost documented in Britain. On 20 Dec this roost held 25 Ravens, 34 Red Kites and 12 Carrion Crows. [MEK]

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Very common breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor.

The species was recorded in 325 tetrads (427 1-km squares). In the first winter period a total of 43 Goldcrests was recorded in 22 of 95 1-km squares surveyed for the SWBS, with a maximum count of seven near Bosham on 19 Feb. This is very similar to the figure of 41 from 100 squares in 2013, but considerably lower than the count of 115 in 2012, though 131 squares were surveyed that year. Among counts in excess of five birds were six at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 2 Jan, eight at Warnham LNR on the 8th, seven at Swanbourne Lake on the 10th, sixes at four widely spread sites and nine at Singleton Downland Museum on 26 Feb. A female which entered "The Feathers" wild bird care shop at Salehurst on 6 Feb was caught and released. A comment was made in the Beachy Head log that not a single Goldcrest was logged in the spring, as in 2013. In March at Weir Wood Res 11 were recorded, and 12 were counted in four 1-km squares at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 7th. At West Dean Woods, on 5 Mar an observer commented that there were "scores of Goldcrests in the pine woods, which were impossible to count".

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads and was probable in a further 26. During the BBS survey eight were found at Sutton End on 10 Apr, six at Polegate on the 15th, nine at West Lavington on the 17th and eight at Five Hundred Acre Wood (Ashdown Forest) on the 27th. There was a minimum of 45 territories on Ashdown Forest, compared with only 25 in 2013, and on 14 Apr at Old Lodge LNR one was seen at very close range collecting deer hair. At least four young were seen at West Dean Woods on 2 Jun and recently fledged young were at Misbourne (Ashdown Forest) on 27 Jul.

Beachy Head Ringing Station ringed 19 new birds between 16 Sep and 6 Nov. Steyning RG trapped 30 different birds at The Mumbles (Steyning), including juvenile birds on 21 Jun and 12 Jul, while at Cissbury 66 different birds were trapped between late September and late November, with both sites enjoying significantly higher figures than the totals of six and 12 respectively in 2013. At Ladywell (Coombes) 28 different individuals were trapped.

Among autumn counts in double figures were 13 recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team on 27 Sep and 26 at Ambersham Common on the 30th. In October there were 20 at Church Norton on the 20th, 30 at Broadbridge Heath on the 12th, 14 at East Hill (Hastings) on the 14th, 30 at Old Lodge LNR on the 17th, 17 at Beachy Head on the 20th and 20 at Pagham Hbr on the 28th. Eighteen were noted flying across Seaford Head on 1 Nov.

During the second winter period SWBS counts 110 were found in 48 of 136 squares surveyed, suggesting a better breeding season this year. [VPB]

Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla

Scarce or possibly fairly common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

This species was recorded in 132 tetrads (155 1-km squares). Two birds were recorded in just one of the 95 1-km squares surveyed for the SWBS during the first winter period. At the start

of January single birds were reported at Arundel, Henfield and Newhaven Fort, two at Church Norton and Cuckmere Haven, three at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) and four at West Dean Woods. Two were seen at both Woods Mill on 19 Jan and Rye Hbr on the 21st. A male was singing in a churchyard at Blatchington (Seaford) on 13 Feb and a pair was feeding on hazel at Wildham Wood (Stoughton) on the 13th and four were noted at Selhurst Park on the 22nd.

Recorders at Beachy Head reported an average spring, with an estimate of nine different birds seen, and maxima of three on 3 and 4 Mar. Although, in the records, breeding was confirmed in two tetrads and was probable in one other, such records do not adequately reflect actual or potential breeding; the numbers of singing males give a better estimate. During the period 13 Feb to 13 Jul, 26 singing males were recorded from 19 1-km squares, a total which assumes that two confirmed and two probable breeders also sang. There were 11 in March, four in April and May and three in June. At Star Copse (South Harting) a male trapped and ringed on the 15th was a first for the site. The following day three males and two females were seen in a 30 minute walk at Hill Lane, Harting Down. A minimum of four territories were reported at Duncton Common on 14 Apr and two at Fitzlea (Selham). A juvenile was being fed by a parent at Brandy Hole Copse (Chichester) on 13 May, and two juveniles were seen at Duncton Common on 1 Jun.

Nine different individuals were trapped at Cissbury; a female found in February had been ringed at the site the previous autumn, and another female caught on 22 Aug was the first August capture of the species there. The only other records between 25 Jun and 31 Aug were one at the Horder Centre (Ashdown Forest) on 13 Jul and two at Somerley (Birdham), on the 23rd.

From the start of September sightings of the species increased, although the only records of more than two were of three at Hove on the 10th and four at Harting Down on the 25th. Three were trapped and ringed at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) in October. In the second winter SWBS period single birds were found in three of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. Other records included two at Church Norton, two at West Dean Woods and four at Older Hill (Redford) in November, while in December two were seen at Rye Hbr on the 10th and at Arundel on the 18th, four with a tit flock at Staple Ash Fm (Chilgrove) on the 21st and five at West Dean Woods on the 21st. [VPB]

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Abundant resident.

Blue Tits were recorded in 577 tetrads in 2014 a significant increase from the previous year (483). There were 17 records of over 40 birds in the first winter period, with the highest counts being 88 at Warnham LNR on 12 Jan and 70 at Broadbridge Heath on 16 Feb. During the early SWBS Blue Tits were recorded from 94 of the 95 squares surveyed, with the previously mentioned total at Warnham LNR being the highest count.

Breeding was confirmed in 54 tetrads, and probable in a further 42, a significant increase over the previous year. The first report of nest building was filmed from a nest box camera in Crawley on 8 Mar with the first egg being laid in the same box on 13 Apr. The first report of adults feeding young at the nest came from Fairlight on 27 Apr, and the first fledgling was seen at Cross-in-Hand on 29 Apr.

During the autumn there were eight reports of 30 or more birds, with the highest counts being 70 at Broadbridge Heath on 24 Aug and 40 at Warnham LNR on 4 Sep.

In the second winter period there were 15 counts of over 30 birds, the highest being 84 in Burgess Hill on 16 Dec, 74 at Horsham on 31 Dec and 62 at Warnham LNR on 13 Dec. During the late SWBS 1278 Blue Tits were recorded in 130 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. [PD]

Great Tit*Parus major**Abundant resident.*

Great Tits were reported in 535 tetrads in 2014 compared with 462 in 2013. In the first winter period there were ten reports of over 25 birds with the highest being 40 at Broadbridge Heath on 14 Jan, 36 near Pett on 24 Feb and 34 at Warnham on 12 Jan. During the early SWBS 660 birds were encountered in 87 of the 95 squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 43 tetrads, an increase on 2013 and probable in a further 29. The first record of confirmed breeding was in Chelwood Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 4 Apr with a bird on a nest. The first fledglings of the year were reported from Worthing and Pagham Hbr, both on 16 May. There were 54 reports of fledged young during the breeding and summer periods.

During the summer and autumn periods there were 25 records of ten or more birds with the highest being 30 at Storrington on 31 Aug and at Warnham LNR on 4. Reported numbers generally dropped in the second winter period although there were seven records of over 20 birds, the highest of which was 40 at Warnham LNR on 24 Dec, 25 there on 26 Nov and 23 at Burgess Hill on 16 Dec. During the late SWBS 612 were reported, from 113 out of 136 1 km squares. [PD]

Coal Tit*Periparus ater**Very common resident.*

Coals Tits were reported from 225 tetrads in 2014, only one fewer than 2013. During the first winter period there were only two counts of more than ten, 14 at Kingley Vale on 14 Jan and 11 at Linch Down (Bepton) on 13 Mar. About three quarters of the 371 records for this period were of one or two birds. During the early SWBS 35 were encountered in 19 of 95 squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads (three in 2013), with probable breeding occurring in a further 11 (16 in 2013). The first record of breeding was a report of an adult feeding young in Worthing on 24 Apr. The first fledglings were reported on 19 May at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest). There were only 13 other reports of fledged young, the vast majority from Ashdown Forest. During the breeding and summer periods there were only three counts of more than ten birds: 20 in the Ashdown Forest Centre area on 7 Jul and 11 each at Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough Brooks) on 16 Jun and at Five Hundred Acre Wood (Ashdown Forest) on 22 Jun (both during BBS surveys).

During the autumn and late winter period numbers were still low, with only nine counts of over five birds: with 11 at Old Lodge LNR on 5 Dec, eight there on 29 Nov, and seven at Blackdown on 6 Nov being the highest. As with the first winter period, 74% of the total records were of one or two birds. Sixty two Coal Tits were reported from the late SWBS from 28 of 136 squares surveyed. [PD]

Willow Tit*Poecile montanus**Very scarce and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

With no confirmed sightings since March 2010 it was feared that this species had become extinct in Sussex. However, one trapped and ringed at Warnham LNR on 5 Sep this year (JJE, SC) gives some hope that the species does still exist in the county in small numbers. [DHH]

Marsh Tit*Poecile palustris*

Scarce resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Marsh Tits were recorded in 156 tetrads (15%) mostly in ones and twos from across the county where suitable habitat occurs, an increase on the 135 in 2013. The only coastal records came from Pett Level (20-21 Mar and 4 Nov), including Cliff End (21 Aug) and unusually a Marsh Tit was recorded at The Severals (Pagham Hbr) on 30 Aug and again on 25 Oct when it was photographed in the same location. High counts during the first winter period were eight at Weir Wood Res during January and five there during February. Six were at Arundel Waterwoods on 11 Feb and five at Burton Mill Pond on 7 Feb.

During the breeding season, records were received from 72 locations. Probable or confirmed breeding was recorded in only 16 tetrads but as Marsh Tit is a sedentary species, most records during this period are probably of potential breeders. The earliest report of confirmed breeding was of a nest with eggs on 13 Apr at Warnham LNR. A nest in a dormouse box with seven young was reported from Broadwater Warren on 16 May. The first fledged young were seen near the Ashdown Forest Centre on 17 Jun. The highest summer counts were six at Selhurst Park on 12 Jul and four at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 29 Aug.

There were no autumn counts above three but during the second winter period eight were recorded at Weir Wood Res during December and five were at The Mens (Wisborough Green) on 23 Dec and four at four further locations.

Although recorded more widely in 2014 than in 2013 there is evidence of a decline of Marsh Tit during recent years and observers are encouraged to submit all records, especially if breeding evidence is observed. [MJC]

Bearded Tit*Panarus biarmicus*

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 the two core coastal areas, Chichester and Pagham Harbours in the west and Pett Level and Rye Hbr in the east. During the first winter period, the only location apart from these two core areas where Bearded Tits were recorded was the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 8, 22 and 24 Jan and 5 Mar.

Counts outside of the breeding season from the six locations where the species was recorded are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>County total</i>	6	8	10		13	26	57	9	21
Thorney Deepes	-	2	3		1	12	20	2	1
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-		-	-	12	2	1
Newhaven	1	-	1		-	-	-	-	3
Eastbourne	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	10
Pett Level	4	2	-		-	4	16	2	-
Rye Hbr	1	4	6		12	10	9	3	6

Breeding was confirmed at Thorney Deepes where a party of juveniles was seen on 2 and 13 Jun, two broods of juveniles were seen at Pett Level on 4 Jul and at least six pairs were recorded at Rye Hbr during the breeding season where breeding undoubtedly occurred. Confirmed breeding also occurred at a third East Sussex site. Distinctive “high flying” was recorded at Thorney Deepes on 2 and 3 Oct.

During the second winter period, outside of the two core areas, three were at Newhaven on 14 Dec and at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) in December there were two on the 1st, five on the 9th, 10 on the 12th and at least two on the 21st. [MJC]

Woodlark

Lullula arborea

Scarce resident and possibly very scarce passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

This species was recorded in 48 tetrads, ten fewer than in 2013.

All records for January and February were from inland sites. Two birds were recorded at Coates Common on 2 Jan, with one present on the 10th and 24th and three in this area on the 12th (Broad Halfpenny) and the 19th (Lord's Piece). There were records from six sites on Ashdown Forest in January, including four at Old Lodge LNR on the 19th. Two birds were seen at Broadwater Warren and one at Sutton End on the 11th. In February, there were records of singles or small numbers, including some in song, at Ashdown Forest sites, with four at The Ridge on the 22nd. In West Sussex, single or small numbers were at Iping and Lavington Commons, Rake (Langley) and Up Marden during February; on the 17th there were four at Byworth (Petworth) and six at Broad Halfpenny (Coates).

There was confirmed breeding in 11 1-km squares (seven tetrads), 10 on Ashdown Forest and also at Broadwater Warren. Adults carrying food were reported at an Ashdown Forest site from 15 Apr to 29 Jun and at another on 19 May. Juveniles were observed at various Ashdown Forest sites from May to July. There were no reports of confirmed breeding elsewhere.

Breeding was probable at a further 18 1-km squares on Ashdown Forest. Thirty three Woodlark territories were recorded at heathland sites in West Sussex during the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)* (see page 210), a similar number to 2012 and 2013. Evidence of probable breeding was also noted at Coates Common and Legs Heath Fm (Weir Wood Res). Birds were also heard in song during the breeding season at Broxmead (Bolney), Henley and Selhurst Park.

Birds were recorded at heathland sites singularly and in small flocks from September to December, including up to 15 at Friends Clump and 15 at Old Lodge LNR (both Ashdown Forest) on 14 and 17 Sep, respectively. Inland sightings elsewhere included 14 at Broxmead (Bolney) on 20 Oct.

There were sightings at coastal or near-coastal locations from late September, with one each at Seaford Head and Pett Level on the 22nd and two at Fairlight on the 27th. Coastal high counts during October were four each at Selsey Bill and Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on the 15th and Seaford Head on the 20th with singles on various dates during the late autumn and second winter period at Selsey Bill, Pagham Hbr, Seaford, Beachy Head and Hastings. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded three between 1 Aug and 18 Nov.

The last coastal record for 2014 was of one at Pagham Hbr on 17 Dec and five at Old Lodge LNR on 31 Dec was the last inland record. [AR]

Skylark*Alauda arvensis*

Very common but declining resident, and probably common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 373 tetrads.

The largest flock in January was of 35 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 10th, with 25 present at Newick on the 14th. Flocks of 20 were reported on downland at Manorhall Down (Cocking) on 11 Jan, Steep Down (Lancing) on the 14th, and Stoke Clump (Lavant) on the 27th, with 18 there on the 14th. Elsewhere, there were 15 at Brede Levels on 18th and 12 each on the 19th at Newhaven Tidemills and at Pagham Hbr. In February, 100 were seen at Rodmell on the 19th and 50 on the 26th, as well as 40 at Medmerry on the 22nd. Thirty were recorded at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on the 25th and Beeding Brooks on the 28th.

The first reports of song were at Sheepcote Valley on 2 and 9 Jan and of courtship display at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 19 Feb. Breeding was confirmed in nine locations (in eight tetrads). Adults carrying food or faecal sacs were noted between late April and mid-August, at three sites on Ashdown Forest, at Black Ditch (Poling), The Burgh (Burpham), Plumpton, and Rottingdean. Five fledged young were reported at High Cross Fm on 17 Jul and three on Ashdown Forest on 30 Jul.

Breeding was probable in a further 33 tetrads; these included at least 40 territories on Ashdown Forest, 23 at Crutches Fm (Winchelsea) and Lullington Court, 22 at Cadborough (Rye), 19 at Southerham (Lewes), 17 at Thunders Barrow Hill (Shoreham) and 16 at Medmerry. On the Norfolk Estate 285 pairs were recorded, a small increase on 2013, but still considerably lower than the 372 present in 2012. These high counts suggest that there is considerable under-recording of Skylark breeding.

On 21 Aug 24 birds were reported flying west at Selsey Bill and reports of birds on the move then increased over the following weeks. Between 5 Oct and 31 Oct, 145 on passage were recorded at Selsey Bill, including 66 E on 12 Oct, whilst reports from the Hastings area included 94 W on 22 Oct and 66 on 27 Oct. Sightings at Beachy Head on 14 days during October included a flock of 115 on the 20th and 65 W on the 25th. On 15 and 25 Oct, 120 were recorded at Cissbury Ring and Rye Hbr, respectively.

During the SWBS, 329 birds were recorded in 28 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed between 4 Nov and 31 Dec (see pages 204-207). In November and December, flocks of 50 or more were counted in 16 locations in East and West Sussex. There were approximately 500 in a field at Beachy Head on 29 Dec, with 200 nearby at Cornish Fm on 21 Dec, whilst at East Guldeford Level, 190 were counted on 15 Dec and 150 on 20 Dec. [AR]

Shore Lark*Eremophila alpestris*

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

One watched coming in off the sea at head height at Splash Point (Seaford) on 21 Apr (MRE) continued northwards without landing. The county total rises to 108, ten of which have occurred in nine years this century. [JAH]

Sand Martin

Riparia riparia

Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The first returning spring migrants were singles recorded on 11 Mar at Selsey Bill, Chichester GP and Pagham Hbr, the same date as the 10-year average and just a day later than 2013. The next record came from Waltham Brooks on 20 Mar when 15 were observed, and a day later 50 were recorded at Chichester GP. Spring migration continued with only very small numbers being recorded; there were just 12 double-figure counts, 40 at Rye Hbr on 8 May being the highest apart from those at Chichester. Breeding was confirmed from just a single site, West Heath Common (West Harting), where an estimated 30 pairs were recorded during July. Sand Martin hangs on by a thread as a breeding species in the county, showing no signs of staging a recovery at present.



Sand Martin, Arundel WWT, September 2014 (Russ Tofts)

By early July, the first returning migrants started to move through the county, with six 3-figure counts as follows: 150 at Selsey on 2nd, 200 at Rye LNR on 10th; 100 each at Beachy Head on 12th, Medmerry on 21st, Rye Hbr on 25th and 400 at Pagham Hbr on 27th. There were 22 subsequent 3-figure counts through the autumn with 500 at Medmerry on 3 Aug, 400 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Sep and 383 from Selsey on 24 Aug being the highest counts; other counts varied between 100 and 300. Autumn migration peaked at the end of August, with the only four-figure counts of the year being 1000 at both Northcommon Fm (Selsey) on the 28th and Chichester GP on the 29th. This is a poor comparison with the autumn of 2013 when a total of 46,900 birds were counted at Pett Level as the sum of 16 evening roosts but no counts were made there in 2014.

Migration had tailed off by the latter half of September with a maximum count of five from Brighton Wild Park on 25 Sep. There were only three records during October; single birds at Pagham Hbr and Hastings on 2nd and 12th respectively. Only 223 were recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team with the final record of the year being two at White Rock Gardens (Hastings) on 28 Oct, six days later than the 10-year average and 14 days later than 2013. [DB]

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The first confirmed over-wintering by a Barn Swallow in Sussex came during the winter of 2013-14 when one was observed regularly around Newick SF area. The first sighting was on 2 Jan; it was subsequently seen throughout January and February until 2 Mar (JSG).

The first spring migrant was recorded on 9 Mar from Beachy Head, just two days later than the 10-year average but nine days earlier than the first for 2013. Eleven records to the end of March involved 17 birds; the highest count of six was at Pulborough Brooks on 31 Mar. From early April onwards a few double-figure counts were recorded but with very few of more than 20 all spring. Notable exceptions typically came from coastal locations including Selsey Bill, where 82 N on 12 Apr was the first large count, followed by 110 N on the 21st. There were just five subsequent 3-figure counts during the spring, all in May; the highest, 200, came from Bewl Water on 8 May.

Breeding was confirmed from 16 tetrads, a similar number to 2013 (17 tetrads) and with probable breeding in 27. Nest building was observed from Cross-in-Hand on 5 May and the first nest containing young was recorded at Streat on 29 May where a brood of five was ringed. The Arundel WWT reedbed hide was again favoured for nesting; three chicks were raised, making it a popular attraction for visitors. Five fledglings being fed on the late date of 21 Sep at Keymer, were presumably a second even a third brood.

By the latter half of August autumn migration had begun in earnest, with 15 3-figure counts during this time, reaching a maximum of 809 at Selsey Bill on the last day of the month. On the same day observers at Hastings returned a count of 1145 whilst 2000 flew past Beachy Head; these being the first 4-figure counts of the year. Twenty-five further 4-figure counts were recorded from 2 to 27 Sep; these alone totalled just over 20,000 birds. The three highest counts during this period were 6000 E past Selsey Bill on 3 Sep, 5000 at Rye Hbr on 6 Sep and 3450 E past Worthing in 2 hours on 15 Sep. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded 13,240 on 58 days between 16 Aug and 6 Nov with a maximum of 1510 on 5 Sep.

In December one was seen at White Rock Gardens (Hastings) on the 10th which may have been the same bird seen at Bexhill on the 11th and then one at Bewl Water the following day was the last bird recorded in 2014. [DB]

House Martin

Delichon urbicum

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

One at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Mar was the only record received during that month and, although five days earlier than in 2013, was ten days later than the 10-year average arrival date.

There followed a single bird in off the sea at Seaford Head on 1 Apr and then two at Arlington Res on the 4th. All records through the earlier part of April involved fewer than ten birds, with six at Upper Beeding on the 15th being the highest count. Towards the end of the month double figure counts were recorded (nine in total), with 20 at Barcombe Res on the 20th being the first and 70 at Steyning on the 27th being the highest. Despite numerous double-figure counts throughout the remaining spring migration, there was only one 3-figure count during this time: 200 at Bewl Water on 8 May.

Breeding was confirmed from 21 tetrads, with probable breeding in a further 12. The increase in breeding records from 2013 (just six confirmed and seven probable breeding) is probably due to increased observer effort rather than any change in the breeding population. The 2015 House Martin survey may help shed some light on the true status of the breeding population in Sussex.

Early signs of an occupied nest came from East Marden on 14 May, whilst young were first recorded in the nest on 6 Jul at Arundel. The last observation of young being fed in the nest came from Haywards Heath, on the comparatively late date of 17 Sep.

By early August numbers were starting to increase with 100 at both Medmerry on the 2nd and Pagham Hbr on the 7th. It wasn't until the end of that month that any more 3-figure counts were observed though, with 120 at Warnham LNR on 27th, 150 W at Beachy Head on the 31st and 450 W at Hastings, also on the 31st. The main thrust of autumn migration came between 2 Sep and 5 Oct, with 72 counts over 100 and 26 counts of 1000 or more. This resulted in approximately 82,000 birds passing through the county; even allowing for some duplication this is still a huge number. The highest day count was 8000 E at Selsey Bill on 3 Sep; in the same month 6000 on the 4th and 17th, 5800 on 27th and 5000 on 16th were recorded at the same location. A total of 42,146 was recorded as having passed there between 2 and 28 Sep. A total of 8552 was recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team on 43 days between 2 Aug and 27 Oct with a maximum of 2240 W on 25 Sep.

A notable autumn record concerned an all-white bird at Devil's Dyke (Brighton) on 11 Sep; this follows on from 2013 when another (or possibly the same) all-white bird was observed on 24 Sep at Coombes.

The final departing bird of 2014, at Pagham Hbr on 6 Nov, was slightly earlier than the 10-year average of 11 Nov, but considerably earlier than the 24 Nov recorded in 2013. There was only one other record in November, two birds at Kingston (Lewes) on the 3rd. [DB]

Red-rumped Swallow

Cecropis daurica

Rare vagrant.

One with large numbers of other hirundines and photographed at Steyning SF on 27 Apr (MRE, PJ *et al.*) was the only record. The first county record was in 1967 and since then there have been a further 38 records including 21 this century. [DHH]

Cetti's Warbler

Cettia cetti

Scarce but increasing resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

During January and February there were reports from 17 different sites, an increase of three from 2013 (21 in 2012 and 14 in 2011), and comprising approximately 50 individuals. Four were at Pett Level on 2 Jan, four were heard singing at Thorney Deeps (Chichester Hbr) on the 8th

and six were reported at Arundel WWT on the 10th. Rye Hbr held at least six birds, with five at Pagham Hbr. Other sites where birds were recorded were Emsworth, Chichester GP, Sefton Fm (Rose Green), Beeding Brooks, Iford, Rodmell, Southease, Shinewater (Eastbourne), Pevensy Levels and Filsham LNR.

During April and May there were ten singing males at Thorney Deeps, 26 at Pagham Hbr, nine at Chichester GP, six at Arundel WWT, eight at Lidsey, the same number at Pett Level, and six at Rye Hbr. The only confirmed breeding records were at Thorney Deeps where a pair with four fledged young were seen on 25 May, at Eames Fm (Thorney Island) where a male was seen feeding four young on the 27th, at Pett Level where the first fledged bird was ringed on 20 Jun and at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) where young were seen being fed. No doubt breeding occurred at other sites where the species was recorded, such as Pevensy Levels and Rye Hbr. A report of two birds at Burton MP on 8 Jul was more unusual as it was further away from the main concentrations along the coast or major river valleys, and one was also present there on both 11 Nov and 9 Dec.

During the second winter period records were received from a minimum of 42 different sites, more than double the number the previous year, with six at Thorney Deeps on 14 Nov, four at Beeding Brooks on the 30th, three at Chichester GPs on 9 Dec and the same number at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 13 Dec and seven at Arundel WWT on the 21st. [VPB]

Long-tailed Tit

Aegithalos caudatus

Very common resident.

Long-tailed Tits were reported from 373 tetrads in 2014, a similar number to the previous year. During the first winter period there were 20 records of ten or more birds, with the peak counts being 17 at Cliff End (Pett) on 3 Feb, 14 also at Cliff End on 20 Jan and at Rye Hbr on 23 Jan. Sixty per cent of the records involved only one or two birds. There were 120 encounters recorded on the early SWBS and the species was recorded in 30 of the 95 1-km squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 25 tetrads, a slight increase on the previous two years, and the species was probably breeding in a further 25, a very slight increase on 2013. The first record of probable breeding was a pair collecting lichen and spiders webs at The Mens LNR (Wisborough Green) on 30 Mar. The first confirmed breeding was a bird carrying food at Chelwood Vachery (Ashdown Forest) on 21 Apr.

There were 67 records of ten or more birds during the post breeding and autumn periods, with the highest counts being 30 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Oct, 30 at Warnham LNR on 26 Oct and 25 at Pett on 27 Oct.

Typically numbers increased in the second winter period with ten records of over 20 or more birds, though some 60% of the records still concerned groups of fewer than ten. The highest counts were 35 at Warnham LNR on 10 Dec and 30 at Markstake Common (Chailey) on 26 Dec. In the late SWBS 318 Long-tailed Tits were recorded from 50 out of 136 surveyed squares. [PD]

Pallas's Leaf Warbler

Phylloscopus proregulus

Very scarce visitor; mostly in late autumn.

One in Park Copse (Church Norton) on 28 Oct (CRJ *et al.*) raised the county total to 96, 35 of which have occurred in all but three years this century at an annual average of 2.3 per year. [JAH]

Yellow-browed Warbler*Phylloscopus inornatus*

Very scarce visitor; mostly in late autumn.

After a bumper year in 2013, records returned to something closer to the annual average with 11 accepted records. The season started with one at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 2 Oct with another there on the 10th (RHC). One photographed at Northcommon Fm (Selsey), on 13 Oct (AB, OM *et al.*) remained until the 18th with a second bird at Selsey East Beach Pond on 17 Oct (DM, OM *et al.*). Three were recorded on 18 Oct: St Leonards-on-Sea (ASG), Winchelsea Beach (AP) and Seaford Head (MRE, RCS). There were two more on 20 Oct: Cliff End (Pett) (CHD) and Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) where one remained until the following day (CAH). On 25 Oct one was trapped and ringed at The Mumbles, Steyning (PJC, HP) and the final bird of the year was at Horseshoe Plantation from the 1-9 Nov (DC, RDME *et al.*). At least 100 have been accepted since 2000 (inclusive) at an average of 6.7 per annum. [JAH]

Wood Warbler*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Very scarce and declining summer resident and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

As in 2013 this species was recorded in just 13 tetrads and again, there was no evidence of breeding.

First recorded with a single bird at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 14 Apr, three days earlier than the 10-year county average arrival date and two days earlier than in 2013. Another single was recorded at Cross-in-Hand on the 29th. In May the species was recorded at a further three locations, Kingston (Lewes), Rewell Wood (Arundel) and Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough Brooks).

In early autumn single birds were recorded from Steep Down (Lancing) on 23 Jul, Brighton Wild Park on 3 Aug, Bramber Fm (Pagham) and Kingston Gorse both on the 14th and Hodcombe (Beachy Head) and Pagham on the 23rd. Another single was recorded at Hodcombe briefly on 6 Sep and lastly a late single at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Sep, eleven days later than the 10-year county average. [TWP]

Chiffchaff*Phylloscopus collybita*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

There was a 15% increase in the number of tetrads this species was recorded in rising from 430 in 2013 to 495 in 2014. In January this species was recorded from the 2nd and records were received from 30 locations. Fourty seven records in total were received, mostly of single birds but eight at Lavant SF on the 19th and six at Lidsey SF on the 25th were noteworthy. In February records were received from 30 locations, again mainly single birds but seven at Steyning SF on 6th rose to ten there by the 24th. Apart from 16 at Lidsey SF on 3 Mar and ten near Petworth Park on the 5th the month was steady with no signs of any influx until the 17th when 21 were recorded at Cliff End (Pett). At Pulborough Brooks 15 were recorded on the 22nd and 16 on the 28th at Pett Level. At both Thorney Island and Plumpton, 19 were recorded on the 29th and a total of 18 were recorded at Weir Wood Res by the end of the month.

In April there was a rise in records as expected, many of single birds but early in the month 22 were counted along the north bank of Weir Wood Res on the 2nd and there were 23 at Hammonds Mill Fm (Burgess Hill) on the 4th. Evidence of a fall was noted at Beachy Head on the 10th with 36 counted there. Observers at Church Norton recorded 20 on the 10th and 11th and at Seaford Head 15 were recorded on the 11th and on the 12th 48 were counted on Henfield Levels. On the 17th at Cadborough (Rye) 19 were counted and 26 singing males were noted at Plumpton on the 29th. Breeding records were slightly improved on the paltry 2013 records but still the species was only confirmed as breeding in 12 tetrads and probable in a further 32.

In the autumn return passage appeared to start on 16 Aug when 21 were recorded at Seaford Head, 34 were there on the 18th, 35 on the 26th and 27 on the 31st. A notable count of 55 at Broadbridge Heath on the 24th was the highest August count elsewhere. September started with 34 at Seaford Head on the 3rd, 30 at Hastings on the 5th, 34 at Brighton Wild Park on the 6th and 50 at Cissbury Ring on the 7th. Back at Seaford Head 55 were present on the 9th, 67 on the 11th rising to 80 on 12th and over 200 on the 15th. Beachy Head finally caught up a bit with 150 estimated on the 20th, 200 on the 23rd and 215 on the 27th. Observers at Fairlight recorded its highest total for the autumn with 143 and observers in the Hastings Migration Watch team recorded their highest season total of 1274 with the peak count of 143 also on the 27th. Further coastal falls were 125 at Seaford Head on 28 Sep, 300 at Beachy Head and 200 at Seaford Head on the 29th, 225 at Beachy Head on 2 Oct and 120 there on the following day. Numbers then dwindled but another fall occurred on the 12th with 120 at Beachy Head, this being the last major count of the month. In November the highest number was 16 at Chichester GP on the 30th and in mid-December, at Steyning Levels, up to 15 were present at Steyning SF. The year ended with Chiffchaffs recorded at five sites on the 31st with a total of 15 birds. [TWP]

There were four records involving six birds showing the characteristics of one of the eastern races *P.c. tristis* or *P.c. abientinus*. In the first part of the year there was one at Steyning SF from 31 Jan to 5 Mar (ARK *et al.*) and two at Pagham Lagoon from 26 Feb to 13 Mar (AH *et al.*). In the latter part of the year there was one at Beachy Head on 12 Oct (RDME *et al.*) and two at Steyning SF from 16 Dec until the year's end (ARK *et al.*). [DHH]

Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Willow Warbler was recorded from 226 tetrads, four more than in 2013. The first record was one at Pagham Hbr on 16 (and 17) Mar, two days earlier than the 10-year average and five days earlier than in 2013. Another was recorded at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on the 21st, Hodcombe (Beachy Head) hosted one on the 28th, Chichester GP on the 29th, Pagham Hbr again on the 30th and West Dean on the 31st. The beginning of April was very quiet with just a smattering of records: ten were at Climping on the 9th and at Beachy Head 35 on the 10th rising to 45 on the 13th. Observers at Seaford Head and Church Norton recorded 25 and 20 respectively on the 10th and there seemed to be a further coastal fall on the 14th with 25 at Beachy Head, 50 at Church Norton and 40 at East Beach (Selsey). Thereafter numbers dwindled considerably with very few records above single figures.

In the breeding season breeding was confirmed in zero tetrads; it cannot get worse than that with probable breeding in only 15 tetrads. However, birds were seen in breeding territory in 69 tetrads with 146 records, whilst Ashdown Forest retained its status as the stronghold for numbers.



Willow Warbler, Old Lodge LNR, March 2014 (Gareth Hughes)

In the first half of July the only coastal records were singles at Beachy Head on the 9th and 12th and at both Seaford Head and at Selsey on the 16th. A definite movement was noted at Beachy Head on the 26th with 20 there and 33 on the 27th with 53 at Cissbury also on that day. At Beachy Head there were 67 and 41 at Seaford Head on the 30th. There was then a slight pause until the 7 Aug when 51 were recorded at Seaford Head and 53 at Beachy Head and 30 at Church Norton. Another fall occurred on the 14th with 80 at Beachy Head and 68 at Seaford Head. On the 16th 40 were at Brighton Wild Park, 60 at Beachy Head, 45 at Seaford Head and 38 at Hastings. There were similar falls on and off during the month but on the 31st there were slightly more significant numbers with 134 at Beachy Head, 62 at Seaford Head, 44 at Selsey Bill, 50 at Church Norton and 30 at Sidlesham Ferry.

In early September there were 33 at Beachy Head, 41 at Seaford Head and 15 at Selsey Bill on the 2nd, 38 at Seaford Head, with 24 there on the 5th and Beachy Head observers recorded 23 on the 6th. Another fall at Seaford Head produced 72 on the 8th, Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) held 30 on the 12th, 15 on the 15th and 20 on the 17th. The rest of the month mainly produced records in single figures. In October it was recorded from eight sites and the last recorded date was 26 Oct at Beachy Head. [TWP]

Separation in the field of the northern race *P.t. acredula* can be extremely difficult due to the fact that this race and the nominate race intergrade in parts of Scandinavia. Although there were a number of reports, there were only two records of birds which clearly showed the characteristics of *acredula*: one photographed at Seaford Head on 11 Apr (MRE) and one trapped at Beachy Head on the late date of 26 Oct (BHRG). [DHH]

Blackcap*Sylvia atricapilla*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.

During January and February there were records from 23 different sites, representing a minimum of 25 individuals, slightly fewer than in this period in 2013, although three were located in SWBS counts compared with just one the previous year. Most reports were of single birds taking advantage of food in gardens, and some were seen on numerous occasions in the same location, such as a male noted no less than 16 times between 1 Jan and 2 Feb, and again at the start of March, in Whitehawk (Brighton).

A scattering of singing males was reported from the beginning of March; the first songsters were at Hassocks and Crawley on the 13th and records started to increase towards the end of the month. Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads and probable in another 35, a very conservative figure as birds were recorded in a total of 436 tetrads. A female with a brood patch was trapped at Cissbury on 3 May, and fledged young were found there on 8 Jun. During the breeding season there were 28 pairs on the Norfolk Estate, only just over half the 2012 figure, and the same number at Pagham Hbr, an increase of 11 over 2013.

Autumn passage at Beachy Head was considerably greater than in 2014, and reported as the highest numbers consistently recorded there. An estimated 2000 birds moved through Whitbread Hollow on 1 Sep and 1200 on both the 7th and 20th, while the ringing group trapped a total of 1568 different individuals, almost twice that of 2013, and easily beating the previous highest total of 1079 in 2011 (*The Birds of Sussex*, Thomas 2014). Even at the end of September an estimated 750 passed through on the 29th, of which 93 were trapped. Higher than average numbers were also trapped by the Steyning RG, which handled 793 different birds, 50% more than in 2013, of which 90% were identified as juvenile or first year birds. Two birds ringed in 2009 were retrapped at Cissbury and the last bird of the year there was caught on 18 Nov.

During November and December reports which were unlikely to be of late departing migrants came from 19 sites, including two counts of three birds and four of two. [VPB]

Garden Warbler*Sylvia borin*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrival was at Pagham Hbr on the 10-year average date of 3 Apr, and 16 days earlier than 2013. The next reports came nine days later when there were single birds at Cuckoos Corner (Coombes) and Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham). The first report from Beachy Head was a single bird in Shooters Bottom on 28 Apr; the spring daily maximum there was five on 13 May.

Two were encountered in a BBS 1-km square at Tottington (Small Dole) on 27 Apr, four were at Pulborough Brooks on the 28th and three at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and Weir Wood Res on the same day. Other sites holding notable numbers were Ashcombe Bottom with five on 19 May, Marl pits (Ashdown Forest) with five on the 20th and Broadbridge Heath with six on the 25th. Sadly this last report emanated from TQ1530 which has been covered in 2015 by a large housing development.

Breeding was confirmed in five of the 121 tetrads in which the species was recorded and was probable in a further seven. It is likely that three pairs bred at Whitbread Hollow as singing males were present all summer; three were still in full song and apparently holding territory well

into August. Four were found on the Knepp Estate on 8 Jun and two males were singing at Iping Common on the 17th, both in areas of birch and mixed scrub including gorse.

The total of 35 different birds handled by the Steyning RG was an increase of five over 2013, but hid a marked decrease at Cissbury from 13 to eight, with just one adult, a male, ringed at the site on 14 Jun. It was a better season at Beachy Head, where 121 different individuals were trapped, compared with only 41 in 2013. At Pett Level 174 birds were ringed, the first autumn migrant was on the 25 Jul and the peak catch was 7 Aug when 15 were trapped.

Most migrants had departed by mid-September, and there were eleven records from five different sites in the latter half of the month. The only October records were of individuals ringed at Pett Level on both 20th and 31st, this final record being 20 days later than the 10-year average date, but still two weeks before the latest recorded date. [VPB]

Barred Warbler

Sylvia nisoria

Very scarce autumn visitor.

Records of two birds were accepted, both from Seaford Head: the first was found on 25 Sep (RCS) and relocated on the 28th; the second (a juvenile) was seen briefly on 18 Oct (PE, RCS). The county list moves on to 63, since the first authenticated record of 31 Aug 1959, with 18 of them this century. This is a typically autumn vagrant with 9 in August, 41 in September and 13 in October with dates ranging from 17 Aug to 31 Oct. [JAH]

Lesser Whitethroat

Sylvia curruca

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.

A single bird, reported in Bognor Regis between 16 Feb and 2 Mar (BB), was unlikely to have been an early migrant, and may have spent the winter in the area. There have been four or five previous examples of wintering Lesser Whitethroats in Sussex, in 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2010, with a possible earlier record from late November 1957 (*The Birds of Sussex*, Thomas 2014).

The first returning migrant of the year was at Beachy Head on 4 Apr, equalling the first recorded date and six days earlier than the 10-year average date. The next records, on 8 Apr, came from two inland sites, a single bird at Woods Mill and three at Bewl Water, and the main arrival commenced from the 10th. Four were at Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on the 16th, and three were at Newhaven Fort, Pett Level and Rye Hbr on the same day. Five were heard singing at Cadborough (Rye) on the 17th, four were also heard at both Waltham and Beeding Brooks on the 19th, and on the 22nd ten were reported at Seaford Head, several being males in song.

Breeding was confirmed from only one of the 144 tetrads in which the species was recorded but was probable in six more. During the breeding season there were six pairs at Pagham Hbr, one fewer than in 2013; however, nine pairs at Rye Hbr was a reduction of seven from the previous year. Seven pairs were at Thorney Island, and a single pair noted on the Norfolk Estate. Though 12 passed through Beachy Head on spring migration, none stayed to breed; there had been six singing males there in 2012. A female with a brood patch was trapped at Cissbury on 17 May, but only a total of four birds were ringed at the site during the year. Three juveniles trapped at The Mumbles (Steyning) on 12 Jul were likely to have come from nearby nests. At Beachy Head Ringing Station 21 different birds were trapped, sadly equalling their worst ever total which was

achieved in 2013. At Pett Level 92 were ringed with the first autumn migrant present on 27 Jul and the peak day being eight trapped on 31 Aug.

A total of 148 was recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team at various locations in the area between 2 Aug and 27 Sep, with a maximum count of 20 at Fairlight on 20 Aug. At Seaford Head the August maximum was 17 on the 18th and 15 on both the 7th and 16th, and 13 there on the 23rd. The final sightings were of single birds and were at Rye Hbr on 11 Oct and Seaford Head on the 22nd, which was 11 days later than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Common Whitethroat

Sylvia communis

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The first report was of three birds at Pagham Hbr on 2 Apr, 12 days earlier than the previous year and only one day later than the 10-year average arrival date; the first East Sussex bird was at Barcombe on the 4th, three were seen at Beachy Head on the 11th, and the same number at Seaford Head the following day. From mid-April birds were widely reported, with four at Oving on the 18th, six at both Pulborough Brooks and Medmerry on the 19th, five at Blackcap (Plumpton) the same day, and five at Waltham Brooks on the 22nd. Of 22 noted at Beachy Head on 3 May, most were males holding territory and also on the 3rd 18 were encountered in a BBS 1-km square at Pagham Hbr and 19 in a BBS square at Rye Hbr. One flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 30 May.

Numbers at the Norfolk Estate had recovered from the low figure of 96 pairs in 2013 and were up to 145. However 53 confirmed pairs at Pagham Hbr were five fewer than in 2013, while at Rye Hbr the number was the same as the previous year, at 34. Evidence of nesting was noted at The Burgh (Burpham) on 19 May and Thundersbarrow Hill (Shoreham) on the 21st, and the first fledglings were seen at Quellwood Common (Blackdown) on the 25th. Two adults with at least two young were noted at Lec Airfield (Bognor Regis) on 1 Jun, while a total of 34 found at Golf Fm (Devil's Dyke) on the 8th also included young birds. Three juveniles trapped at Cissbury on 8 Jun were the first of the year there, and the total of 62 different birds handled was a further improvement on the 2013 and 2012 figures of 49 and 42 respectively, with 89 % being juveniles or first year birds. Breeding continued into July, and parent birds with fledglings were seen in the Steyning Downland Scheme area on 13 Jul. The species was recorded in 340 tetrads and confirmed as breeding in 23 and was probable in a further 45.

Between 26 Jul and 20 Sep 268 different individuals were trapped at Beachy Head, both resident and passage birds, with a maximum of 54 on 14 Aug when a total of 325 were reported in the recording area. On 20 Aug there were 130 at Beachy Head; in early September numbers there varied between 90 on the 2nd and 60 on the 9th, before falling to 10 on the 21st. Just a single bird was seen there on the 29th, which was the final record of the year, eight days later than in 2013 but four days earlier than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Dartford Warbler

Sylvia undata

Scarce to fairly common but localised resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

This species was recorded in 36 tetrads, an increase on the 19 in 2013. The estimated maximum monthly counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	10	4	14	9	6	18	5	2	2	27	25	8
No. of sites	9	4	9	7	5	9	4	2	2	22	20	7

In January, totals of four were reported from three West Sussex commons and from three sites on Ashdown Forest. Single birds were recorded on three West Sussex commons in February and March increasing to four at one site and a pair in another area. Records from Ashdown Forest in this period were mostly of singles although at least two birds (male and female) were seen on 22 Mar. Away from the breeding areas, single birds were seen at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on 4 and 8 Jan, Twineham on 27 Jan and at Thorney Deeps (Chichester Hbr) on 26 Feb and 13 Mar.

During the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)* just seven pairs were recorded (see table on page 210). Confirmed breeding was reported at only one site on Ashdown Forest, where a nest with young was recorded on 17 Jun. Evidence of probable breeding was recorded at a further 13 locations on Ashdown Forest with possible breeding at another eight locations.

In the autumn there were few reports, all of single birds, in three heathland locations in West Sussex and five locations on Ashdown Forest. Throughout October there were frequent sightings of single birds in the Beachy Head area. Reports from this area of two adults and a juvenile on 20 Oct, four on 25 Oct and two adults plus two juveniles on 28 Oct probably referred to the same family party but where did they breed? Other coastal locations from which single birds were reported included West Wittering, Pagham Hbr, Newhaven, Cuckmere Haven and Fairlight.

Single birds continued to be reported from the Beachy Head area throughout November and December and also at other coastal or coastal plain sites including West Wittering, Rodmell, Horse Eye Level (Pevensy), Hastings CP and Rye Hbr. In the Hastings area there were three and two on 4 and 16 Nov respectively. Further inland, singles were recorded at five heathland sites in West Sussex and four sites on Ashdown Forest during November and December. The only multiple sightings were in West Sussex where one site held three birds on 4 Nov and two on 29 Dec with two at a second site on 4 Nov. [AR, DHH]

Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia

Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Single birds at Pulborough Brooks and Weir Wood Res on 5 Apr were the first of the year, four days later than the 10-year average date. Others were recorded at Ebernoe Common and Firle on the 10th, Small Dole and Pagham Hbr on the 21st and Climping Gap on 25th but did not stay at any of these sites. At Waltham Brooks reeling was heard from 21 Apr to 4 May but, disappointingly, there were no subsequent reports from there. There were only these eight records during April and May, few of which were in potential breeding habitat. There was no evidence of confirmed or probable breeding. None were reported in the spring at Beachy Head, where regular observers commented that there had been 12 pairs breeding in the recording area in 1970. On 4 Jun a male was heard reeling at Wineham from very long grass in an area where developers are trying to gain support for a new town. The only other June records were at Steep Down (Lancing) on 19th and Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 28th.

Beachy Head Ringing Station trapped the first autumn passage bird on 21 Jul, a day later than in 2013, and ringed nine between then and 25 Sep, two fewer than the previous year. Birds

were noted as present at Pett Level between 22 Jul and 22 Sep, with a maximum of fourteen on 4 Sep. Other reports were of two at Telham (Crowhurst) on 17 Aug which were singing and answering each other, and single birds at Thorney Deeps, Chichester GP, the Arun Valley, Ferring Rife, Patching Hill, The Mumbles (Steyping), Newhaven and Hope Gap. On 23 Sep one was photographed in a garden at Beckley (Rye). The final sighting was at Beachy Head on 3 Oct, 11 days earlier than in 2013 and 12 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Melodious Warbler

Hippolais polyglotta

Very scarce visitor.

There were two confirmed records this year, both at Beachy Head, and within a week of each other. The first was seen briefly and photographed at Cow Gap on 16 Aug (LP), and the second at Hodcombe on the 21st (RHC). This raises the number seen this century to 18, of which 13 have been at Beachy Head, and to 68 records in total. [VPB]



Sedge Warbler, Littlehampton Golf Course, August 2014 (Bola Akinola)

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Fairly common summer visitor and common passage migrant.

The species was recorded in 85 tetrads, a welcome increase over the 66 in 2013. First recorded at Rye Hbr, with three noted and a single at Sidlesham Ferry on 1 Apr, four days later than the 10-year average arrival date. These were followed by ones and twos at several sites including Pett

Level and Arundel WWT up until the 11th when ten were recorded at Rye Hbr, 19 at Pett Level on the 16th and ten at Pagham Hbr on the 21st. Along the first half-mile of the R Arun from Arundel eight were counted on the 24th.

Breeding was confirmed in only three tetrads, the same as in 2013. Probable breeding occurred in a further eight tetrads, an improvement of sorts. At Rye Hbr 23 territories were recorded, a big decrease from the 43 in 2013. At Pagham Hbr 23 pairs were counted and at Arundel WWT five singing birds were recorded. At Pett Level a number of pairs bred but were not counted, with the first fledged young being observed on 20 Jun. For the first time in decades no birds bred in Charleston Reedbed, a worrying sign.

The first autumn returning migrants were recorded at Pett Level on 18 Jul when 14 new birds were ringed. A single was at Beachy Head on 19 Jul with two there on the 21st and a single at Seaford Head on the 25th. On 5 Aug there was a minor fall with 18 at Beachy Head. Between Arundel and Littlehampton on the R Arun 29 were counted on the 6th. At The Severals (Church Norton) there were 20 on the 18th. These records show that August was clearly the main month of emigration and this is supported by a total of 1196 being ringed at Pett Level. Twenty were at Medmerry on 1 Sep. There were only single-figure counts after this date except at Pett Level where 572 were ringed in September. There were records from five sites in October, the latest being one ringed at Pett Level and another single at Pagham Hbr, both on the 15th. [TWP]

Marsh Warbler

Acrocephalus palustris

Rare summer visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Singing males were recorded near South Hill Barn (Seaford Head) on 29 May (MRE, RCS *et al.*) and at an undisclosed site in East Sussex from 8-20 Jun. The county total this century moves on to a minimum of 72. [PJ]

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

This species was recorded from 118 tetrads, a slight increase on the 107 in 2013. The first records of the year were of singles at Pagham Hbr on 9 Apr, Arundel WWT and Sidlesham on the 10th, Pett Level on the 11th and Rye Hbr and Pevensy Levels on the 12th. At Millpond Marsh (Pagham Hbr) six were recorded on the 13th and a further six were present at Climping Gap on the 22nd, at Apuldram Manor Fm (Chichester) 12 were counted on the 24th when ten were at Pett Level rising to 22 there on the 28th. During May there were 20 each at Church Norton on the 15th and the 18th and at Seftor Fm (Rose Green) on the 22nd, however, the largest numbers were at Pett Level where 34 were counted on the 17th and 29 on the 20th.

During the breeding season confirmed breeding was reported in 13 tetrads, a welcome increase, and probable breeding in a further eight. At Arundel WWT ten birds were counted singing on 16 May. At Rye Hbr 150-plus territories were mapped though, as in 2013, the total was probably in excess of 200 pairs whilst at Pagham Hbr a breeding survey produced 63. Eighteen pairs were recorded at Medmerry. Breeding occurred at Pett Level in large numbers but no count was made. At Seftor Farm 25 were recorded on 14 Jun and at Lewes Railwayland LNR 20 were counted on the 20th.

Return migration was first noted at Pett Level on 18 Jul when 25 new birds were ringed and at Beachy Head with a single on 21 Jul, then three there on the 26th, five on the 27th, ten on the 30th and ten at Seaford Head on the 31st. In September numbers dropped but daily ringing totals at Pett Level continued to be in double figures on most days between the 1st and 23rd. Recorded at five sites in October, the highest number being 12 on the 2nd, and the last was a single trapped and ringed at Pett Level on 31st. [TWP]

Waxwing

Bombycilla garrulous

Rare winter visitor.

After the bonanza of sightings in the winter of 2012/13, the following winter saw a return to 'normal levels of service' and just three records of five birds were reported in 2014, all in the second winter period. One was at Westham (Pevensey) on 17 Nov, three were seen at Crawley on 12 Dec and one at Brighton on 14 Dec. These were rather lean pickings, but with invasions in two of the previous five winters it will hopefully not be too long before the next such event. [JC]

Nuthatch

Sitta europaea

Common resident.

This species was recorded in 316 tetrads (30%). Most records were from the Weald with few from the coastal plain. During the first winter period there were no double-figure counts; the highest counts were of eight each at Drungewick Manor on the 13 Feb and Weir Wood Res on the 29 Mar and seven at Pulborough Brooks on the 6 Jan. There were five counts of six during this period.

During the breeding season the first apparently occupied nests were at Weir Wood Res on 29 Mar and at Broadbridge Heath on 1 Apr. The first fledglings were recorded on 13 May at Brandy Hole Copse (Chichester). Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads slightly up on 2013 but still less than half that of 2012 and was probable in 22, also up on 2013.

The highest counts of the year were of 13 and 12 respectively at West Lavington on 17 Apr and 5 Jun.

During the summer and autumn period the species was recorded from 111 sites, 19 fewer than in 2013. The highest count during the second winter period was eight, again at West Lavington on 18 Nov. There were counts of seven at Nutley also on 18 Nov and Graffham Down on 6 Dec. There were two further counts of more than four birds during this period. [GDE]

Treecreeper

Certhia familiaris

Common resident.

The species was recorded in 222 tetrads (21%). During the first winter period the highest count was five at Pickham Fm (Pett) on 24 Feb. In the first three months there were 17 records of more than two birds with seven at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Mar. Coastal records came from Cliff End (Pett) with two on 12 Jan, one on 20 Jan, two on 3 Feb and 2 on 17 Mar and one at Church Norton on 21 Jan.

During the breeding season nest building was first noted at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Mar, then at Drungewick Manor (Loxwood) on 26 Mar and the first fledged young were recorded at Winchelsea on 28 May. Breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads and was probable in a further 14, comparable with 2012 and 2013. During this period the highest counts were of ten recorded at Burwash Weald during a BBS on 14 May and nine at West Lavington on 5 Jun, also on a BBS. High counts in the summer period were six at the Knepp Estate on 4 Jul and four at Pullborough Brooks on the 21st.

During the autumn most records were of one or two but records of three came from Arundel and Pett Village and during the second winter period the highest count was of four at Kirdford on 5 Dec with five further counts of three. [GDE]

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

Abundant resident.

Wrens were recorded from 550 tetrads, an increase over the numbers for 2013 (451) and 2012 (471), but still well below the 651 of 2011. Nevertheless, most of the indicators of the population level suggested an improvement in 2014.

In the early SWBS, 283 were found in 71 of the 95 surveyed squares (75%); as with distribution across the year this suggests a strengthening of the position of the species compared with 2013 (when there were 197 in 62 of 100 squares, 62%). The maximum SWBS count was of 15 in Tilgate Forest; the maximum overall count was 34 in Guestling Wood on 24 Mar (there had been 32 there on 24 Feb).

Beachy Head observers reported that “after one of the mildest winters on record with no prolonged cold spells, the number of Wrens during the spring heard singing and also seen was encouraging on the headland”.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in 48 (16 and 22 in 2013). Birds were carrying food at Up Marden on 24 Apr but the first fledged young was not noted until 20 May at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest).

In the BBS, 1725 birds were found in 160 of 164 surveyed squares (98%), with a maximum of 40 in Tilgate Forest. Numbers recovered to their previous high level at Nutley (39 on 28 Apr, cf. 28 in 2013 and 38 in 2012). There were 27 counts of 20 or more in the BBS (cf. 11 in 2013 and 15 in 2012), including both early and late counts at Langley Green (Crawley), a largely urban area. Outside the BBS, there were 26 in Preston and Withdean Parks, Brighton, in March and April. Several songsters were noted at the end of June and high numbers were reported southwest of Rye throughout the period 21 Apr to 24 Oct. Six juveniles fledged in a Ringmer garden on 25 Jul.

The following table shows the number of territories held by Wrens during breeding season surveys at three large sites in the past six years. This shows varying rhythms of increase and decrease with wide fluctuations at both Pagham Hbr and the Norfolk Estate but more steady counts at Rye Hbr.

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Pagham Hbr	86	47	67	87	67	103
Norfolk Estate	35	25	18	31	42	33
Rye Hbr	44	34	48	34	40	46

In the late SWBS, 429 were found in 110 of 136 squares (81%), with a maximum of 18 at Densworth (Chichester). Outwith the SWBS, four of the seven late year counts in excess of 20 came from Cliff End (Pett), with a maximum there of 31 on 15 Oct. There was an increase in numbers around Beachy Head late in October. [CB]

Common Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Common but declining resident and very common to abundant winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

In the first winter period the highest number recorded was 21,500 at Palace Pier (Brighton) on 18 Jan. Flocks in the Ouse Valley reached four figures on five occasions in January and February, the largest being 2000 at Southease on 25 Feb. Other large flocks were 1000 at Beeding Brooks on 6 Jan and 1000 at Rye Hbr on 25 and 27 Feb. On 26 Jan 700 were on farmland in the upper Ouse Valley at Newick and on the Downs, 800 were at Steep Down (Lancing) on 9 Jan. The last significant flock was 400 at Pett Level on 19 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 38 tetrads and probable in a further 22. The first indication of breeding activity was of a pair 'coming in and out of a tree hole with twigs' at West Stoke (Lavant) on 18 Feb. Hatched young were recorded at Crawley on 11 Apr and the first fledged young were noted at Horsham on 29 Apr. From 17 May three-figure flocks were widely reported.



Starlings, Pagham North Wall, October 2014 (Andrew House)

On 23 Jul 500 flew over Selsey Bill and 1000 at Littlehampton were flying to roost. Large flocks were widely reported from coastal areas during the summer with 1000 at Rye Hbr on 22

Aug. Inland counts were lower; the highest being 100 at both West Chiltington on 18 Aug and Pulborough Brooks on the 25th. Indications of autumn movements were 500 at Selsey Bill on 17 Sep, 200 E at Hastings and 50 S at Selsey Bill on 12 Oct.

In the second winter period roosting flocks at Palace Pier reached 26,500 on 9 Dec with 12,800 there on 23 Dec.

Other three-figure flocks were 1000 at Thorney Island on 2 Oct and at Coldwaltham on 24 Nov when a flock of 1500 was feeding on undersown stubble at Steep Down (Lancing). On 28 Nov 1000 prepared to roost at Waltham Brooks and 3000 left Arundel WWT at dawn on 30 Dec. A leucistic individual was seen at Uckfield on 2 Jul. [ACG]



Ring Ouzel, Seaford Head, September 2014 (Matt Eade)

Ring Ouzel

Turdus torquatus

Passage migrant, very scarce in spring, scarce in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Ring Ouzels were recorded mostly at or near coastal sites or downland prominences. An average spring count was followed by an excellent autumn passage of three times the 10-year average. The estimated minimum monthly totals, after adjusting for possible duplication, were as follows:

Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov
-	21	-		22	410	26

The first bird of the year was a male at Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on 2 Apr, two days later than the 10-year average date, followed by one flying over Friends (Ashdown Forest) on the 10th and one or two at Beachy Head on the 11th. There were daily sightings of one or two birds at Selsey from the 13th until the 22nd with occasional birds at Pagham Hbr, Beachy Head, Seaford and The Ridge (Ashdown Forest). Finally, two females were seen at Seaford Head on the 25th, 12 days earlier than the 10-year average.

The first returning migrant was seen at Keymer on 2 Sep, two weeks earlier than the 10-year average date of 17 Sep, while the second was at Hastings on the 8th and the third at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 16th. From the 19th daily reports included two at Beachy Head, three at Blackdown and four at Seaford, with lone birds at Cissbury Ring, Hastings and Pyecombe.

The exceptional passage was in October though there were only small numbers until the 14th when seven appeared at Cissbury Ring followed by 26 at Beachy Head on the 15th and 38 at Hastings on the 16th. The highest count of many records from Beachy Head on 17 Oct was 42. On the same day 21 were at Hastings, 14 on Truleigh Hill (Shoreham) and 12 at Rye Hbr and high counts continued until the 23rd. During November the only notable counts were five at Seaford Head on the 1st and six at Beachy Head on the 9th after which there were just single birds at Cuckmere Haven on the 12th and at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 16th, the latter three days later than the 10-year average date. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded 99 on 14 dates between 8 Sep and 31 Oct. [JHW]

Blackbird

Turdus merula

Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.

Blackbirds were recorded from 585 tetrads, a rise from 508 in 2013. During the early SWBS, 720 birds were seen in 91 of the 95 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 24 at Warnham on 12 Jan.

In the first winter period there were six counts of 25 or more in both January and February with a peak of 43 at Slaughman on 5 Jan while March was quiet. Spring showed over 20 counts of 25 or more with a maximum of 59 at Nutley on 28 Apr in a BBS transect. Most of the high counts were away from the coast with only three of them west of the R Arun and migration was imperceptible even at Beachy Head.

A sighting of a "baby blackbird" in Kemp Town (Brighton) on 6 Feb preceded the normal breeding reports. Eggs were observed in a nest at Beauport Park (Hastings) on 14 Mar and food or faecal sac was carried at Fairlight on 1 Apr and also at Bolney and Patching on the 2nd. A fledgling was seen at Angmering on the 10th (where there were three broods) and the last chick was noted on 4 Sep. Newly fledged birds were indicated in 43 reports. On the Norfolk Estate 156 pairs were reported, at Pagham Hbr 32 pairs were recorded and at Rye Hbr at least 23 territories were held. Confirmed breeding was recorded in 67 tetrads and probable in a further 41.

The autumn and second winter periods were good with over 50 counts of at least 20, including 25 of 25 birds or more, with peaks of 66 at Streat on 9 Dec and 58 at Burgess Hill on the 16th. Possible migration was shown by 25 at Climping on 16 Oct and 30 at both Beachy Head on the 20th and Pett Level on the 15th, the latter two sites hosting some 50 birds each in the following months. During the late SWBS a total of 1605 was recorded from all 136 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 66 at Streat (as above), compared with 984 from 114 squares, maximum 28 birds, in 2013. [JHW]

Fieldfare*Turdus pilaris*

Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Fieldfares were recorded from 223 tetrads, 84 fewer than the previous year. A dismal first winter period was followed by an average second period, the year's total being just 60% of the 10-year average. Approximate monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April		Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1796	1715	1545	41		-	127	4132	3614
West of TQ30	1127	889	822	1		-	5	3068	1242
East of TQ30	669	826	723	40		-	122	1064	2372

The first period count was barely one third of the 10-year average, without any discernible pattern in the distribution of birds. Thirteen counts of 100 were made from Lidsey in the west to Pett Level in the east with highlights of 200s at Pett Level, Beeding Brooks and Ticehurst on consecutive months. The highest count in April was 21 at Four Counties (Ashdown Forest) on the 8th after which there was just one bird flying in off the sea at Selsey on the 25th, four days later than the 10-year average.

On the return passage, four birds at Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 1 Oct were three days later than the 10-year average arrival date and were followed by one at Southease on 10 Oct. There was then a very slow build up to 110 birds at Weir Wood Res at the end of the month. There were 15 records in November of 100 birds on ten dates, highlighted by 800 at Beeding Brooks, 500 at both Henfield and Findon and 220 at The Burgh (Burpham). An outstanding 1500 birds at Pevensey Levels on the 2nd heralded December, dwarfing the other high December counts of 275 at Wisborough Green on the 29th, 150 at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on the 2nd and 135 at Thorney Island on the 16th. [JHW]

Song Thrush*Turdus philomelos*

Very common but decreasing resident and partial migrant; common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 475 tetrads widely distributed across the county. The year's total count was similar to the 10-year average with a strong end-of-year movement.

Despite wet and windy conditions there were no signs of migration in the first winter period and the total count was rather low. The peaks were 22 at Cliff End (Pett), 19 at Cradle Hill (Seaford) and 16 at both the Knepp Estate and at Camp Hill (Seaford) with two other counts of ten. During the early SWBS 181 were seen (cf 196 in 2013) in 58 of the 95 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of ten at Ringmer.

Breeding was confirmed in 25 tetrads and was probable in a further 22. A nest with eggs was noted at Beauport Park (Hastings) on 22 Mar and young were confirmed there on 8 Apr. Other early records included food or faecal sac carrying at Angmering on 10 Apr, where three broods are believed to have been raised, and a fledgling at Petworth on the 14th. Twenty six pairs were

recorded on the Norfolk Estate (29 in 2013) and 11 pairs at Pagham Hbr. There were at least ten records of fledglings and 15 of food or faecal carrying.

The first indications of autumn migration were 11 birds at Pyecombe on 28 Sep and seven at Beachy Head on the 29th. There were 30 at Broadbridge Heath (Horsham) on 11 Oct and between 12 and 19 occupied Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) throughout October and November. Eighteen birds were seen at Cliff End on 15 Oct and 12 at Hastings the same day while 18 were seen along the lower R Arun, 21 at Burgess Hill and 20 at Beachy Head during a wet November. December was milder and saw 27 at Beeding Brooks on the 6th and 22 at Streat on the 9th while later there were 14 at East Ashling and 15 at Bepton before final peaks of 43 at Beeding Brooks on the 29th and 50 at Brede Level on the 31st. During the late SWBS a total of 188 was recorded from 59 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 22 at Streat, mentioned above. [JHW]



Redwing, Shoreham, December 2014 (Dave Sadler)

Redwing

Turdus iliacus

Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Redwings were recorded from 280 tetrads slightly biased to West Sussex. The first winter period was poor and the second too, apart from a late influx. The approximate minimum monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2591	1497	1039	4		3	989	1692	4490
West of TQ30	1895	1096	494	2			378	920	1488
East of TQ30	696	401	545	2		3	611	772	3002

In the first winter period there were 23 counts of more than 50 birds including ten of at least 100. The highest of these were 200 at both Beeding Brooks and Twineham and 270 at Burgess Hill in January and another 200 at Ticehurst at the end of March. The February count was rather low with only two-thirds of the average numbers and two sightings of 100 birds. Very few birds stayed into April and the last was recorded from Brabery Hatch (Ashdown Forest) on 17 Apr, just two days later than the 10-year average.

The first returning bird and the only one in September was at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on the 29th, ten days later than the 10-year average. The next birds, one at Hartfield and three at Seaford on 3 Oct, were well before the main influx, prompted by 120 at Arundel WWT on the 14th in a slow month. A moderate count followed in November with 106 seen at Weir Wood Res during the month, 100 at Coldwaltham on the 24th with slightly fewer, 89, at Warnham LNR on the 9th. December began with 150 at Pevensey Levels on the 1st and 1200 there on the 2nd leading to 234 at Eridge on the 17th and the year ended with 275 at Wisborough Green on the 29th and 300 at Friends (Ashdown Forest) on the 28th. The autumn count was a little above average but didn't compensate for the poor first period. [JHW]

Mistle Thrush

Turdus viscivorus

Common resident and partial migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Mistle Thrushes were recorded from 279 tetrads spread across the county and there was a continuing slight increase in sightings. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	104	111	88	115	92	90	49	130	165	133	112	135

The first few months were disappointing and similar to last year. The highlights were ten at Burgess Hill and six at Broad Halfpenny (Coates), Beeding Brooks and five at Preston Park (Brighton).

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads, the first report being of a female sitting on eggs at Henfield on 31 Mar. Adults were carrying food or faecal sacs at Pevensey on 12 Apr and were seen as late as 14 Jul at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) while fledglings were first observed at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 22 Apr. Three pairs were reported from the Norfolk Estate and breeding surveys on the RSPB monitored reserves revealed two pairs at both Medmerry and Pagham Hbr with one pair from each of Broadwater Warren and Amberley Wildbrooks. Again there were "probably a few pairs outside the SSSI" at Rye Hbr.

Although post breeding flocks were smaller than usual and rarely of ten birds, there were highlights of 20 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 19 Jul, 20 at Cissbury Ring on 3 Aug (and 16 on 1 Sep), 25 at Wakehurst Place on 19 Aug, 20 at Storrington on 14 Sep and 15 at

Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 30 Sep. There were no double figure counts in the second winter period; the highest counts being six at Chichester and five at Northchapel, both on 20 Dec. [JHW]

Spotted Flycatcher

Muscicapa striata

Fairly common but declining summer visitor; scarce passage migrant in spring and fairly common in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Spotted Flycatchers were recorded in 128 tetrads during the year. The first spring migrant was seen at Pagham Hbr on 3 May, three weeks later than in 2013 and a week later than the 10-year average date of 26 Apr. Subsequently birds were recorded on 5, 7 and 9 May and on the 10th no less than ten were recorded at Selsey and seven at Church Norton may have involved some of the former. Migrants were then recorded on a daily basis to the 22nd with notable counts at Seaford Head of eight on 13 May and 14 on the 14th. At Beachy Head, birds were recorded on 11 days between 9 May and 1 Jun for a total of 26 bird-days with daily maxima of seven on 13 May and five on the 14th.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and was probable in a further five. First breeding evidence came on 14 May when a bird was observed visiting a probable nest site at Singleton. Recently fledged young were recorded at Durfold (Warnham) on 10 Jun and at Stedham Common on 17 Jun. A nest with young was observed at Churlwood (Ashdown Forest) on 29 Jun, fledged young were seen at Shipley on 2 Jul, at Firlie Park on 7 Jul and at St. Leonards on 14 Jul. In August fledged young were recorded Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) on the 1st and at Broadwater Warren on the 5th. On the 17th young were noted at Wakehurst Place and also at Bewl Water on the 21st.

The number of records show this species was most obvious during its autumn emigration when it was recorded on 25 dates in August and 28 dates in September. The highest counts in August were 20 at Lavington Common on the 18th, seven at Church Norton on the 29th and six there on the following day. Between 1 and 19 Sep there were 32 records of five to 20 birds from 14 sites of which nine were coastal. Details of the larger counts included 20 near the visitor centre at Pagham Hbr on the 1st, 20 at Church Norton on the 16th, 15 at Pulborough Brooks on the 2nd and 14 near Hastings on both the 5th and the 12th. The last were the peaks from the extended migration watch at Hastings where a total of 56 was recorded on ten dates between 13 Aug and 14 Sep.

The last sighting was noted at Beachy Head on 29 Sep, one day earlier than in 2013 but at least two weeks earlier than the 10-year average date. [TS]

Robin

Erithacus rubecula

Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.

Robins were recorded in 592 tetrads, an increase on 2013 (481) and 2012 (503) but well below the 673 of 2011. That particular areas can hold (or attract?) large numbers is evident from six counts in excess of 30 at both ends of the year, with maximum counts from Pett Village (52 on 18 Feb and 74 on 3 Sep).

In the early SWBS, 931 birds were encountered in 94 of 95 surveyed squares (compared with 933 in 92 of 100 in 2013), with a maximum of 35 at Partridge Green. In only seven squares were

more than 20 birds detected (compared with nine in 2013; 40 in 2012). There were 33 singing birds in three square km of central Seaford on 12 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 53 tetrads and probable in 34 (37 and 31 in 2013). A nest in a garden shed at Fernhurst contained four eggs on 11 Feb; unfortunately there was no indication as to their fate. Birds were carrying food at Pett Level on 15 Apr and the first fledged bird was at Newick on 4 May. A second brood had appeared at West Tarring by 13 Jun. Thirty-five pairs were recorded on the Norfolk Estate and 31 around Pagham Hbr, while small numbers bred at Rye Hbr.

In the BBS, 1503 birds were found in 162 of 164 surveyed squares with a maximum of 44 at Nutley (compared with 1395 in 152 in 2013, 1343 in 146 in 2012 and 1093 in 144 in 2011). Numbers in a square between Loxwood and Newpound (which had held 35 birds in 2013 and 18 in 2012) were much reduced, to only nine in 2014. Nil counts came from central Hove and open downland behind Beachy Head.

It is extremely difficult to separate out residents, which become more vocal and visible in the autumn, from migrant birds. The Hastings Migration Watch team logged 470 between 16 Aug and 9 Nov. There were no specific reports on likely migration, but some of the total of 45 around Beachy Head on 9 Nov surely fall into that category.

In the late SWBS, 1006 birds were counted in 130 of the 136 surveyed squares, with a maximum of 40 at Nutley (compared with 741 in 107 of 114 in 2013). More than 20 were logged in eight squares.

A leucistic bird, all white but with an orange breast, was at South Malling (Lewes) in January. [CB]

Common Nightingale

Luscinia megarhynchos

Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

There were records from 109 tetrads (compared with 114 in 2013). Breeding was confirmed in three tetrads, probable in a further 13 and birds were recorded in suitable territory in another 42.

The first bird was at Wisborough Green on 6 Apr, a couple of days later than the ten-year average date. The next records were of one at Ebernoe and several at Pulborough Brooks on the 10th. There were sightings for each day thereafter until 25 May. The maximum counts were of ten singing males at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Apr, and ten there on 19 May. A late evening count around Wineham on 14 May found eight in song. Totals of six came from Shortland Copse (Plaistow) (13 Apr), Abbots Wood (Hailsham) (16 Apr) and Brede High Wood (21 Apr). Counts of five came from Plumpton Green (20 Apr), Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) (27 Apr), the Knepp Estate (1 May) and Shermanbury (4 May). Two thirds of total records came from west of the TQ30 line in the county. As usual, very few incoming migrants were found on the coast. As in 2013, no spring birds were recorded at Beachy Head nor from Seaford Head and just a couple recorded at Pagham and Rye Harbours, though as late as 12 May one (which managed to extricate itself from a fruit cage) was at Newhaven.

Breeding was confirmed near Steyning on 24 May, at Pett Level on 13 Jun and at Shortland Copse on 30 Jun. One, seen carrying food at Burgess Hill on 7 May had not previously been heard, despite repeated visits to the site.

An odd record was of a bird present on a new housing estate at North Barnham for most of July and a few days in early August. Autumn passage birds turned up at Beachy Head from 16 Jul

(a juvenile which was still present on the 21st) and at Seaford Head from the 25th. After mid-July virtually all records were from these coastal sites. Two were trapped at The Mumbles (Steyning), one each on 7 and 23 Aug. Other August records came from Mill Hill (Shoreham) on the 9th, Fairlight, on the 24th and Pett Level on the same day. There were two records in early September: one at Church Norton on the 2nd and the last at Pett Level on the 3rd, eleven days earlier than the ten-year average last date. [CB]

Red-flanked Bluetail

Tarsiger cyanurus

Very rare vagrant. Breeds from northeast Finland eastwards through northern Russia and Siberia to northern Japan and northeast China. Winters in southern China, southern Japan and southeast Asia.

A female or first winter male was watched for fifteen minutes at East Hill (Hastings) on the morning of 4 Nov (ASG). Despite extensive searching by other observers the bird was not relocated. The record has been accepted by BBRC and is the second for Sussex with the only other record being of one at Stanley Common, near Haslemere, on 7 Nov 2008. [DHH]



Red-breasted Flycatcher, Beachy Head, October 2014 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)

Red-breasted Flycatcher

Ficedula parva

Rare autumn vagrant.

An adult male was present in the old trapping area at Beachy Head from 22–28 Oct (ASC *et al.*). This delightful bird, which was the first adult male ever recorded in Sussex, was seen

and photographed by many observers during its seven day stay. The total number recorded this century moves on to nine and that since 1948 to 33. All but one (April 1948) have been in autumn. [PJ]

Pied Flycatcher

Ficedula hypoleuca

Scarce passage migrant; more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 32 tetrads of which all except four were coastal or near-coastal. The first spring migrant was seen on 10 Apr at Church Norton, close to the 10-year average arrival date of 12 Apr. During the next four days four more arrivals were recorded at sites along the coast involving Climping, Lancing and Beachy Head and one was also seen at Pulborough Brooks. No further spring birds were recorded after 14 Apr.

Return migration was signalled by a sighting at Beachy Head on 24 Jul and three more migrants were noted in early August: at The Mumbles (Steyning) on the 1st, at Seaford Head on the 7th and Lewes on the 8th. The main movement, however, began on 24 Aug and birds were recorded on 16 dates to 22 Sep. Peak movement appears to have occurred on 5 Sep when an exceptional 23 were recorded in the Beachy Head area and a further 14 at a further five coastal sites: Selsey (3), Worthing (1), Seaford Head/Cuckmere Haven (5) and Pett Level (1). Thereafter, numbers tailed off rapidly as only 12 new birds were recorded (predominantly single individuals) between 6 and 22 Sep from eight mainly coastal sites. The following table shows minimum monthly numbers and assumes some birds stayed for several days.

	Apr		Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of birds	5		1	8	49

The last sighting was on 22 Sep at Beachy Head, the same day as in 2013, nine days earlier than the 10-year average date. [TS]

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochruros

Rare resident; scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 74 tetrads compared with 62 in 2013.

The first record of the year was of a male at Newhaven Hbr on 2 Jan. Records in January and February were from about 15 coastal or near-coastal locations and mostly of one or two birds. In the Newhaven area, male and female birds were reported on 13 days from 11 Jan to 28 Feb, with four seen at Newhaven Tidemills on 23 Jan and 28 Feb. Inland, one was reported at Newick on 5 Jan and 6 Feb.

Spring passage began in early March with sightings at coastal sites on most days from the 4th. There were reports, mostly of single birds, from about 20 locations. At Pagham Hbr, individuals were seen on ten dates, and in the Beachy Head area on seven dates, with two there on 9 Mar and 4 Apr. At Medmerry a female was seen on 11-12 Mar, two were at Fairlight on 14 Mar and Rye Hbr on 28 Mar. Four were present at Newhaven Tidemills on 4 and 13 Mar, with five reported

there on the 27th. Inland, there were records from Mill Hill (Shoreham) on 9 Mar (2), Westfield on 12 Mar, Rodmell on 15 Mar and Whitesmith (Chiddingly) on 28 Mar. Coastal migration was drawing to a close by early April, with one at Pagham Hbr on the 5th.

One bird was seen at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 24 May and a male was present nearby at Birling Gap on 1 Jun. A male in song was noted at Shoreham Power Station on 20 and 23 Jun, a male at Rustington on 14 Jul and a female at Church Norton on 20 Aug. Breeding was however, confirmed at one location only, with a female seen feeding two fledged young at Beachy Head on 15 Aug.

The first autumn migrant was reported at Seaford on 29 Sep. From 22 Oct to 30 Nov there were reports almost daily, mostly of ones, twos or threes, in about 38 different coastal locations. There were sightings at Medmerry on 17 days during this period, including of six on 18 Nov. Five were reported at Selsey on 30 Oct, and four at Beachy Head on 18 Nov. A total of ten birds was recorded in the Hastings area between 30 Oct and 17 Nov. Inland, on 13 Nov an adult male and three females or juveniles were reported at Lewes; there were two adults at East Lavington on 31 Oct, as well as singles at Tillingham Valley (Rye) and Firle on 9 Nov, Henfield on 11 Nov, Stanmer Park (Brighton) on 14 Nov, Polegate on 17 Nov and Salehurst on 21 Nov.

There were reports from about ten coastal sites during December, mostly of single birds. There were two at Newhaven on the 1st and Medmerry on the 6th, and three at Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on the 17th. One bird was present at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) from 6 Dec to 30 Dec, the date of last sightings for the year, with one each also at Newhaven Hbr and Brighton on that date. [AR]

Common Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 90 tetrads. The first reports in coastal areas were at Barnham on 1 Apr and at Church Norton and Sidlesham Ferry on 5 Apr. Coastal sightings, including those at Beachy Head, Bognor, Climping, Cuckmere Haven, Ferring, Hastings, Medmerry, Newhaven, Pagham Hbr, Seaford, Selsey, and Sidlesham areas, were frequent during April. On the 14 Apr, there was an obvious fall of the species and four birds were reported at Beachy Head, five at Pagham Hbr, and seven at Selsey Bill. Arrivals continued into May, with the final spring coastal record at Beachy Head on 15 May.

Birds were seen regularly on Ashdown Forest from 1 Apr. These included numerous records from Old Lodge LNR, with 11 there on 18 Apr and eight on 22 Apr. In May, inland sightings continued to be mainly on Ashdown Forest, with eight birds noted at Pippingford Park on the 3rd and 27 there on the 17th. On the West Sussex commons, birds were reported from 27 Apr onwards, with five at Stanley Common on 17 May. Elsewhere, two birds were recorded at Warnham LNR on 8 Apr and single birds at other inland sites, including a female at Waltham Brooks on Apr 14, and one bird at Knepp Estate (Shipley) on 1 May.

During the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)*, eight territories were recorded on the West Sussex heaths (see page 210), fewer than the ten reported in 2013 and the 13 for 2012. Breeding was confirmed at various sites on Ashdown Forest only. Four adults were seen entering or leaving nest sites on 14 May, eight were seen carrying food or faecal sacs on 1 Jun, and fledged young were reported between 6 and 21 Jun.

Migration had commenced by mid-July, with single birds at Pagham Hbr on the 10th, 12th and 14th and at Beachy Head on the 14th. Almost every day between 13 Aug and 25 Sep, birds on passage were reported mostly in ones or twos, at coastal or inland sites and frequently on downland. The largest counts were of 13 at Beachy Head on 31 Aug, with five there on 19 Aug, 30 Aug and 3 Sep, and ten on 5 Sep; nine at Seaford Head on 3 Sep; eight at Cissbury Ring on 7 Sep. There were five at Climping on 20 Aug, Medmerry on 1 Sep, Cuckmere Haven on 3 Sep and Hastings on 20 Sep.

The last heathland sightings of the autumn were at Ashdown Forest on the 7 and 8 Sep. The final sighting for the year was at Brighton Wild Park on 25 Sep, considerably earlier than the 1962–2011 average of 30 Oct. The September departure date is the first year on record that the species has not been recorded in October with the previous earliest recorded last date as 7 Oct. [AR]

Whinchat

Saxicola rubetra

Fairly common passage migrant. Rare summer visitor, last bred in 1999. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Whinchats were recorded in 98 tetrads, once again with a bias towards the coast but up by 25% on last year. The approximate monthly numbers compared with the 5-year average 2010–2014 and the number of days on which they were recorded are shown below.

	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
No. of birds	-	33	85	-	15	423	593	51	-
Five-year average	1	14	31	1	7	339	362	31	1
No. of days	0	8	14	0	6	26	29	16	-

Singles at both Selsey and Pagham Hbr on 14 Apr were the first for the spring and two weeks later than the 10-year average arrival date. This was followed by one at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 17th and at Newhaven on the 18th. There were ten records of more than two birds in April and May. The total number of birds seen in these two months was well above the 5 year average and far higher than last year's sightings, particularly in May when the number of days recorded was twice last year's total.

There was no record of confirmed breeding but a pair was noted in suitable habitat in the Roman Road area of Ashdown Forest on 27 Aug.

The earliest returning birds were two at Beachy Head on 13 Jul, nearly a month earlier than last year. The monthly totals for August and September were again well above the 5-year averages with the total for September 60% higher. The highest counts for August were 18 on the 31st at Brede Bridge (Westfield), 15 at Beachy Head on the 29th and 12 at Medmerry on the 31st, all lower than in 2013. The highest counts for September were also low; 12 each at Medmerry on the 1st and at Lewes Brooks on the 7th.

The highest count for October was 4 at Lewes Brooks on the 12th but the total recorded was nearly 60% higher than the average. The last record of the year was one at Rye Hbr on 27 Oct; the 10-year average is 29 Oct. [GDE]

Stonechat*Saxicola rubicola*

Fairly common resident and partial migrant.

The minimum monthly totals and the number of days on which they were recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	90	108	264	258	268	370	321	268	734	1045	386	349
No. of days	20	21	28	26	26	26	24	25	29	30	30	30

Stonechats were recorded in 168 tetrads, 35 more than 2013. The number of days on which they were recorded increased from 270 last year to 305 in 2014. Perhaps reflecting these increases the numbers of birds recorded in each month except January were all considerably higher than in recent years. In September the total of 734, was more than three times higher than 2013 and the October total of 1045 was more than four times higher than 2013.

The highest counts in the first winter period were seven at Stocks Fm (Icklesham) on 13 Feb and four each at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 6 Feb and at Rodmell Brooks on 19 Feb. Two further counts of three were recorded at Cuckmere Haven on 2 and 16 Feb.

The year 2014 appears to have been a very good breeding year for Stonechats in Sussex as can be seen in the high figures in the table above. Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads (15 in 2013) and was probable in a further 12. Breeding records came principally from Ashdown Forest and the West Sussex heathlands.

The first confirmed breeding was on 12 Apr at Four Counties (Ashdown Forest), nearly a month earlier than 2013. Fledged young were first noted on 15 Apr at Ellison's Pond and Hindleap (both Ashdown Forest) and continued to be recorded throughout Ashdown Forest until 24 Sep. Elsewhere confirmed breeding came from Blackdown (Fernhurst), Iping Common, Ambersham Common, Stedham Common, Sheepcote Valley, the lower Cuckmere Valley, Beachy Head, Newhaven and Nook Meadows (Rye Hbr). In the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)* there were records of 15 territories (see page 210).

The highest numbers recorded during this period were 20 at Beachy Head on 9 Jul, 18 each at Roman Road and Airmans Grave (both Ashdown Forest) on 20 May and 27 Jul respectively. High numbers were consistently recorded at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) with 15 on 5 May and 14 on both 18 May and 27 Jul.

High counts for August were 15 each at Beachy Head on the 13th and Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest) on the 27th. In September between 15 and 20 were recorded on six dates between the 6th and 27th. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded 105 between 8 Sep and 15 Nov with notable counts of 18 on 27 Sep and 13 on the 23rd. The last double figure count on Ashdown Forest was ten at Kings Standing on the 24th. In October the highest counts were 24 at Sheepcote Valley on the 16th, 17 at Beachy Head on the 12th and 16 at Cissbury Ring on the 17th.

During the second winter period the highest daily counts were 11 at Thorney Island on 23 Nov and 10 at Medmerry on 5 and 23 Dec. There continued to be records on Ashdown Forest of ones and twos during this period. [GDE, MJC]

Northern Wheatear*Oenanthe oenanthe*

Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; very rare in mid-winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Northern Wheatears were recorded from 163 tetrads, predominantly coastal or near coastal and downland. The minimum monthly totals of the nominate race, which may include some duplication, were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
No. of birds	147	520	182	39	62	1077	880	279	15
No. of days	24	28	21	6	14	28	30	25	10

Spring arrival started on 9 Mar when at least three were seen at Pagham Hbr and six at Medmerry. For the remainder of March there were a handful of records every day, mostly of one or two birds with the highest count of seven being seen at Beachy Head on 20 Mar. Single figure records continued into April until the 11th when 23 were seen at Seaford Head and 10 at Cuckmere Haven. On 22 Apr there was a fall in West Sussex with counts of 52 at Church Norton (Pagham Hbr) and 36 at Climping Gap. At Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) 18 birds were seen on 24 Apr, and 10 were recorded during an early BBS visit to Crapham Down (Beachy Head) on 29 Apr. Modest numbers were observed on most days during May, with just two records of ten birds, at the Cuckmere Meanders on the 1st and at Church Norton on the 14th. Spring passage continued into early June.

Breeding was confirmed from Rye Hbr where four or five territories were identified and two broods of fledglings were observed at Flat Beach Level in late May and early June. The species also probably bred at Newhaven.

The first sign of autumn passage was at Pagham Spit where a single juvenile was observed on the 12 Jul. Wheatears were recorded on 28 days in August and on every day of September. Peak movement occurred on 31 Aug when a minimum total of 208 birds were seen including 40 at Medmerry and 30 at Climping Gap. Totals of more than 100 were recorded on two more dates in August, with minima of 106 on the 20th and 93 on the 24th. The peak date in September was the 21st when a minimum of 73 was recorded.

Recorded on 24 dates in October the highest counts were 18 at Medmerry on the 3rd and 15 at Chantry Hill on the 12th. There were 12 records of single birds in November, the last of which was observed at Medmerry on the 22nd.

The year 2014 was a reasonably good year for the Greenland Wheatear subspecies *O.o. leucorhoa*, with possibly as many as 26 recorded. There were five spring records involving at least 20 birds, all but one of which were observed at Beachy Head on four dates. The specific counts at this site were two on 19 Apr, four on the 26th, seven on the 27th and six on 2 May. The other spring record was of a single at Rodmell on 24 Apr.

There were five autumn records, all of single birds: Goring Beach on 17 Aug, Sidlesham on 17 Sep, Selsey on the 21st, East Guldeford on 14 Oct and Keymer on the 18th. There have now been 61 spring records of this subspecies since 1949 (36 this century) and 28 autumn records (14 this century). [GO]

Dunnock*Prunella modularis*

Very common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Dunnocks were recorded in 477 tetrads reflecting the widespread distribution of this very common species. This is an increase over the 2013 figure of 401 tetrads but well down on levels of the intensive Atlas fieldwork. In tetrads where there have been regular monthly counts for several years, e.g. at Sefton Fm (Rose Green), West Tarring, Warnham LNR, Canadia (Battle), numbers have not shown any dramatic variation.

In the early SWBS, 241 birds were logged in 65 of 95 squares, with a maximum of 16 just north of Ebernoe. The highest counts in the first three months of the year came from Pett Village (30 in a two hour survey on 20 Mar) and Cliff End (Pett) (27 in a two hour survey on 17 Mar).

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and probable in 35. In the BBS, 520 were logged in 142 of the 164 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 20 at Baldslow (Hastings). The first juvenile to be seen was at Chelwood Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 21 Apr.

On 9 Aug, ringers at Cissbury retrapped a bird ringed there as a first year on 1 Oct 2011; over the autumn they noted a couple of birds badly infested with lice. Reports suggestive of movement came from Beachy Head: small influxes were noted on 2 and 7 Sep and on 10 Oct (when there was a party of seven “very agitated” birds); 15 at Cuckmere Haven on 29 Dec was particularly noteworthy.

In the late SWBS, 243 were found in 90 of 136 squares, with a maximum of 12 between Ditchling and Streat. The highest count in the last three months of the year was of 29 on 15 Oct at Cliff End. In that well watched location, numbers subsequently fell to a November maximum of 14 on the 1st and to 13 on 8 Dec, perhaps suggesting some autumn movement through the area. By contrast, autumn numbers at Pulborough Brooks (where the peak for the year was 18 on 1 Apr) were consistently low (with a maximum of just six). [CB]

House Sparrow*Passer domesticus*

Very common but possibly declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

House Sparrows were recorded in 427 tetrads during the year. During the first winter period counts of 50 or more were made at eight locations with the highest counts of 75 at Pett Village on 20 Mar and 67 at Seaford on 8 Jan. In the first SWBS House Sparrows were found in 57 of the 95 squares surveyed with a maximum of 62 at Ridgewood (Uckfield).

The first record of breeding behaviour was of nest building at Steyning on 16 Feb. Breeding was confirmed in 23 tetrads and probable in a further 35. Fledged young were first reported at Upper Beeding on 26 Apr, and the latest at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) as part of a flock of 50 on 12 Aug. High breeding season counts were 104 at Pett Village on 23 Jun and 150 at Canadia (Battle) on 25 Jul.

Post-breeding numbers in gardens at Selsey Bill reached 300 on 4 Aug, which was by far the highest count of the year. Several observers commented that House Sparrow numbers had increased slightly in their areas, notably Pagham Village, Upper Beeding and Portslade. [ACG]

Tree Sparrow*Passer montanus*

Much declined and now very scarce resident and scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Tree sparrows were recorded in 11 tetrads. Although most sightings were from East Sussex, as is usual, there was a scattering of records in West Sussex. Two seen at Hunston (Chichester) on 10 Jan were birds that had been seen the month before.

North of Hastings a group of three was seen in garden in Westfield on 24 Feb. Birds were present throughout the year at East Guldeford Level, with a high count of 15 on 10 Jan, although breeding was not confirmed. Three birds were recorded at nearby Broomhill Level (Camber) on 14 Apr. At Pevensey Levels breeding was confirmed, as it has been for several years, but at the Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserve only three pairs bred compared to about a dozen pairs in the previous two years (for further details see the ringing report). Birds were present throughout the year with the largest flock being nine seen on 16 Mar. Four were recorded at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Jul.

At Hastings a total of 34 was recorded on four dates by the Hastings Migration Watch team; all the sightings were in October and were a flock of ten on the 12th, a flock of 22 on the 20th and two singles on the 25th and 30th. [RAB]

Yellow Wagtail*Motacilla flava flavissima*

Scarce and localised summer visitor; scarce passage migrant in spring and fairly common in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Birds were found in 93 tetrads, confirming the improvement in distribution noted in 2013.

The first were four at Rye Hbr on 1 Apr (against a ten year average arrival date of 24 Mar). Almost daily records followed from then to 21 May (with an odd gap from 6-12 May). None were recorded at Beachy Head. There were seven double figure counts in April and May, with a maximum of 40 at Scotney GP (which often produces the county's largest spring count) on 4 May. Most records, characteristically, were on or near the coast. Fourteen in total, over this period, flew over Selsey Bill; only two were logged at Worthing and one at Splash Point (Seaford).

There were no reports of confirmed, and only three of probable breeding; in addition one or two pairs possibly bred at Rye Hbr. On East Guldeford Level on 17 Jun, 15 birds included at least three singing males. One at Wivelsfield on 21 Jun was an unusual location.

A premonition of return movement was provided by a single at Seaford Head on 16 Jul. The first substantial counts were from Rye Hbr: 23 on 8 Aug rose to 40 on the 12th and 150 on the 15th. Twenty were at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on the 31st. A few were seen at downland sites, four on Lullington Heath on 16 Aug and six on Chantry Hill on the 22nd, with eight there on the 24th. There were few other inland records: ten from Bewl Water on the 16th, one at Broadbridge Heath on the 23rd and five at Findon on the 30th. Downland records in September included ten at Michelgrove (Patching) on the 2nd, 30 at Cissbury on the 6th and 15 at Beacon Hill LNR (Rottingdean) on the 22nd. Birds were noted with some regularity in the Keymer/ Bostal/Ditchling Beacon area. In the Weald, seven were at Bewl Water on the 7th and four were in the Warnham/Broadbridge Heath area on the 3rd.

There were only 156 autumn counts in excess of 50 and 15 of between 100 and 300 (compared with 25 such counts in 2013). Peak counts clustered on 31 Aug and 1 Sep. On 31 Aug, 140 odd

were at Selsey Bill and Seaford Head and 200 were at Climping. On 1 Sep, 200 were at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr), and 120 at Medmerry, with 300 at Rye Hbr and there were 250 at Seaford Head on the 8th. At Selsey Bill passage was mainly to the west in August (115 W and 23 E) and to the east in September (52 W and 288 E). Between 3 Aug and 2 Oct a total of 374 was recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team.

By the second week of October fewer were seen: there were 12 at Sidlesham Ferry on the 13th and the last one at Rye Hbr was on the 18th. However, the last of the year was one over Church Norton on the 28th, four days later than the 10-year average last departure date. [CB]

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

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

Grey Wagtails were recorded in 193 tetrads (cf. 163 in 2013, 144 in 2012). In 2014, a slight majority of records came from East Sussex. Birds were noted in all months at Weir Wood Res and Warnham LNR.

In the first winter period there were records from around the county, mainly of single birds, but three were present on the Railwayland (Lewes) on 14 Jan and at Newick SF on 19 Jan. In the early SWBS a mere two birds were found in just one of the 95 squares surveyed. None were noted at Selsey Bill, Medmerry or Rye Hbr in the first quarter; at Pett Level just one was recorded, on 5 Jan. Birds were widely distributed through the early months. Spring passage birds are not easy to distinguish in the records. There was no obvious evidence of spring passage at coastal sites.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and probable in a further 16 (cf. 4 and 10 in 2013). In the BBS, nine were counted, in six of the 164 surveyed squares. A pair was visiting a probable nest site at Pickham Mill (Pett) on 24 Mar. Copulation was seen at Weir Wood Res on 1 Apr and a pair nested on the Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place, with a young bird being fed on 25 Apr, which was the first record of fledged young.

One in an Angmering garden on 1 Jun was unusual; perhaps the same bird reappeared for a fortnight after 24 Sep.

During the Hastings Migration Watch 166 were counted between 16 Aug and 27 Oct, with a maximum of 16 moving east on 13 Sep. The 83 recorded during September at Selsey Bill comprised 1 N, 2 S, 7 W and 73 E.

In the late SWBS three birds were found in three of the 136 squares surveyed. One was squabbling with an adult male Black Redstart at Sussex University on 14 Nov. Ones and twos were seen in Brighton and Hove from 23 Sep to 11 Nov, with a further sighting on 23 Dec; perhaps only two birds were involved. There were two single records in central Worthing and one was at nearby Brooklands from 28 Aug to 28 Nov, with two or three birds there on several days. [CB]

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba yarrellii

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Pied Wagtails were recorded in 384 tetrads in 2014 (cf. 332 in 2013). In the early SWBS, 62 were found in 32 of 95 squares surveyed, with a maximum of five at Funtington (cf. 79 birds in 28 of 100 squares in 2013).

Two large roosts were reported at the start of the year: about 595 went to roost in a small tree in the Old Steine (Brighton) on 4 Jan (*cf.* 585 there on 29 Dec 2013) and on the 8th, 100 were found in a tree in Worthing (a different tree to that used by 80 birds on the 12 Feb). There were no counts from last year's large roost sites at Gatwick Airport, Hickstead or the Princess Royal Hospital (Haywards Heath).

Frequent counts at Newick SF showed that numbers built up through Jan from 20 on the 3rd to 52 on the 26th. On 8 Feb, 15 were present but there were 77 the next day and 63 on the 18th, 22 were there on 2 Mar, falling to six by the 9th. There were 60 at Burton MP and 28 at Weir Wood Res early in February; it would be interesting to know the origin and destination of such birds. Fifty on downland pasture above Coldean on 28 Feb were likely to have been migrants, as were 55 in a pre-roost gathering at Shoreham Power Station on 19 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 26 tetrads and probable in 16 (*cf.* 11 and 6 in 2013). An unusual record was of a pair in Brighton Wild Park on 9 Mar. Nest building was seen at Salehurst on 7 Mar; young were being fed there on 30 Apr and they fledged the next day. In the BBS, 123 birds were found in 63 of 164 squares, with a maximum of eight in Ringmer.



White Wagtail, Climbing, March 2014 (Bola Akinola)

Small post-breeding parties were gathering by mid-July at Weir Wood Res and Pulborough Brooks but also at Butchers Cross (Five Ashes), whilst at Medmerry 200 were recorded on 3 Aug. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded 492 (with a day maximum of 63 on 29 Sep) between 12 Sep and 15 Nov and 186 over Selsey Bill (maximum of 96 on 27 Sep) were recorded in the autumn. The last few days of September were clearly a time of heavy passage. On 28 Sep 82 were recorded at Beachy Head, and on the 29th 182 were counted at daybreak at Rye Hbr. There were 11 reports of over 100 birds in the last third of the year. Arundel WWT had a roost of 100

in October and 200 in November. There was an intriguing record of 123 flying north at Rodmell between 17.30 and 18.10 on 16 Oct: where were they roosting? There were 150 roosting at the Old Steine on 12 Dec; was the January tree being used again?

In the late SWBS, 213 were found in 74 of the 136 squares visited with a maximum of 18 at Westbourne (166 in 57 of 114 in 2013).

There were 35 records of some 37 birds of White Wagtail, *M.a. alba*. The first record was of three at Bexhill on 6 Mar, followed, on the 8th, by one at High Cross Fm (Uckfield), an unusual location. There were seven further records of eight birds in March. In April, six were recorded on four dates at Beachy Head and there were a further seven records from typical locations (Selsey Bill, Climping and Weir Wood Res). May brought a final spring record and at another unusual site, Spithurst (Barcombe) on the 11th. One was present at Medmerry on 25 May and watched feeding a juvenile, presumed from a mixed alba x yarrelli pairing, on 15 Jun. This was perhaps the same bird seen on 22 Jul. Elsewhere there were just three singles recorded in autumn at Arlington Res on 15 Aug, at Beachy Head on 10 Oct and at Pagham Hbr on 27 Oct. [CB]

Richard's Pipit

Anthus richardi

Rare vagrant.

A single long-staying bird at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) from 29 Nov into 2015 (mo) was the only record for the year and the first since 2008. Although present for over a month, the bird proved elusive and often disappeared for several days at a time. The county total moves on to 81 of which only eight have been this century. This species has occurred in 30 of the 67 years since 1948 but in only five years this century. [JAH]

Tawny Pipit

Anthus campestris

Very scarce visitor; mostly in autumn.

A confiding juvenile was seen on wasteland at Newhaven Tide Mills from 7-11 Oct and was seen and photographed by many observers. Thirteen individuals have now been recorded in Sussex this century with 95% of all arrivals being in the autumn. [JAH]

Tree Pipit

Anthus trivialis

Fairly common but local summer visitor; fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Tree Pipits were recorded in 62 tetrads, an increase on the 49 in 2013. The earliest recorded were single singing males at Lavender Platt and Millbank West (both Ashdown Forest) on 2 and 3 Apr, and two birds at Pagham Hbr on 4 Apr. Thereafter birds were recorded on an almost daily basis on Ashdown Forest. During the spring passage only six were recorded from four different coastal sites.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads and was probable in a further 17, with most of these records coming from Ashdown Forest. The first records of food or faecal sac carrying were at Old Lodge LNR on 1 Jun and at Lumston Stone on the 3rd. A nest with young was recorded



Tawny Pipit, Newhaven Tide Mills, October 2014 (Malcolm Freeman)

at Ambersham Common on 10 Jul. The highest count during the summer months was ten at Old Lodge LNR on 11 Jun. Twenty three territories were identified during the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)*; see table on page 210.

Records from coastal sites provided evidence of migration with three at Beachy Head on 14 Aug, five at Pagham Hbr on the 19th, six at Beachy Head on 20th and ten at Seaford on 24th. September counts included ten at Beachy Head on the 5th and five at Hastings on the 18th and 23rd. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded a total of 70 between 13 Aug and 16 Oct with a peak of 9 W on 23 Aug. The final record of the year was of a single bird at Seaford on 20 Oct, five days later than the 10-year average last date. [SJB]

Meadow Pipit

Anthus pratensis

Common but declining resident; very common passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Meadow Pipits were recorded in 262 tetrads slightly up on the 235 in 2013.

Notable numbers in the first winter period were 60 and 80 at Lavington Common on 1 and 16 Feb respectively. Spring passage was best seen at Selsey Bill where the peak northward movements were in late March with 118 on the 25th and 335 on the 26th.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads, was probable in 16 and birds were seen in breeding territory in a further 23. A nest with young was recorded at Southerham (Lewes) on 3 May. Observations of faecal sac or food carrying were at Devils Dyke (Brighton) on 25 May, Chelwood

Vachery (Ashdown Forest) on 19 Jun, Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) on 22 Jun, the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 17 Jul and Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 12 Aug.

On 56 dates between 1 Sep and 16 Nov a remarkable total of 12,090 birds were recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team with notable movements of 2025 E on the 18 Sep, 1036 E on the 15th, 771 E on the 16th and 823 E on the 17th. Elsewhere in September there were 1260 E at Selsey Bill on the 27th, 580 at Rye Hbr on 20th and 500 at Winchelsea Beach the same day and 500 W at Cissbury Ring on the 25th. There were 11 further counts of 200 or more birds.

In the last quarter high counts included 1000 at Pagham Hbr on 12 Oct and 500 at Medmerry on the 10th and there were 21 further counts of 200 or more. [SJB]

Rock Pipit

Anthus petrosus

Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from coast.

Rock Pipits were recorded in 47 coastal tetrads spread across the length of the coastline (42 in 2013). The sum of the maximum month counts are as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	60	69	49	10	13	2	5	12	20	54	71	53

There seems to be a significant rise in 2014 numbers over the previous year. Notable counts in the first winter period were 20 at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 2 Jan, with 13 birds there on 28 Feb, and 12 along the river in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 20 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads and was probable in a further two with birds in suitable habitat in three more. Fledglings were seen at Rottingdean on 12 Jul and Holywell (Eastbourne) on 17 Aug. In the summer there were three counts in excess of three, all in East Sussex, four at Rottingdean on 12 Jul, and four at Seaford Head on 3 Sep and eight, including the fledglings mentioned above, at Holywell.

In the autumn there were six counts of six but the highest counts were in the second winter period with ten at Newhaven on both 16 Nov and 6 Dec, 12 there on 12 Dec and ten at Cuckmere Haven on 25 Nov. [SJB]

The only confirmed record of birds showing the characteristics of the Scandinavian race *A. p. littoralis* involved three birds photographed at Cuckmere Haven on 23 Feb (DC, BK). [DHH]

Water Pipit

Anthus spinoletta

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

The vast majority of records were from traditional sites in East Sussex. In the Pett Level area there were one to three birds recorded on nine dates between 5 Jan and 3 Apr (IH, PEJ) and three present on 23 Oct (CHD). At Brede Levels there were single birds on 29 Mar and 9 Nov (AP) with a further two at Crowhurst on 12 Nov (CHD). Away from the traditional sites there were two at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) 3 Apr (CRJ, DIS), one at Rodmell on 20 Oct (CAH) and one at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 13 Dec (JSG). [PJ]

Brambling*Fringilla montifringilla*

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

Bramblings were recorded in 52 tetrads. Approximate minimum monthly totals, taking the highest count at any one site as the minimum for that site, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	116	71	43	121		2	67	32	21
No. of sites	7	8	8	9		1	13	11	9

In the first winter period the highest counts were 100 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 5 Jan, 40 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 1 Feb and 40 at Cowdray Forest (Worth) on 23 Mar. More birds remained into April than in recent years; on the 1st there was a flock of 70 on Ashdown Forest, including singing males in full breeding plumage and 50 at Sheffield Forest (Sheffield Green). The latest spring record was a single male on the 16th at Worth Forest matching the latest date in 2013, earlier than the 10-year average date of 19 Apr.

The earliest returning birds were two recorded at Selsey Bill on 29 Sep, one day earlier than last year but equalling the 10-year average date.

During October the highest counts of migrating birds at coastal sites were 21 at Hastings on the 23rd and 33 at Beachy Head on the 25th. Between 2 Oct and 16 Nov the Hastings Migration Watch team recorded a total of 75 with a peak of 21 W on 23 Oct. Observations in November and December were all in single figures except for 12 at Friston Forest on 21 Nov. [SPB]

Chaffinch*Fringilla coelebs*

Abundant resident, and probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.

During the early SWBS 500 birds were recorded in 73 squares from 95 surveyed with a maximum of 37 on 25 Jan at Cocking, the same site with the largest count in the 2013 early SWBS. In the first winter period there were over 130 double-figure counts, with 40 of these being 20 or more. The most notable of these came from North Marden with 60 on 8 Jan, 42 at Pagham Hbr on 23 Feb, and 40 from Ashdown Forest and Warnham LNR on 2 and 25 Jan respectively. Three counts of 100 were returned; the first of these came from Monkton (Chilgrove) on 11 Jan with the birds feeding on maize game crop; the second was at Pett Level on 2 Feb; and lastly at Burton MP on 7 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed from just six tetrads with probable breeding from a further 51; this from a species that was recorded from over 50% of the tetrads in Sussex. On the Norfolk Estate between 14 May and 26 Jun, 65 pairs were recorded and at Rye Hbr the species is considered to be a common and widespread breeder. Nest building was observed from early March onwards on Ashdown Forest with the first fledged young recorded there on 13 May. A female with a brood patch was caught at Hastings on 8 Jul.

Small post-breeding flocks were recorded from June onwards, with most containing fewer than 20. An increase in flock sizes from late June was reflected by counts of 35 at Battle on the 27th with 30 there on 19 Jul and 10 on 25 Aug. There was also a count at Pett Level of 30 on 2 Aug. Autumn movements were recorded at three principal coastal locations as follows: the Hastings

Migration Watch team recorded a total of 913 on 36 dates between 31 Aug and 9 Nov with a maximum of 210 W on 25 Sep. At Beachy Head the total was 182 with a maximum of 50 on 22 Sep and at Selsey Bill a total of 242 and maximum of 80 E on 12 Oct.

There was just a single 3-figure count during the second winter period of 150 at Salehurst on 21 Nov. Of 64 double-figure counts during this time, 15 were of 20 or more; the largest of these was 50, recorded at both Pulborough Brooks on 6 Nov and Warnham LNR on 14 Dec. During the late SWBS 551 birds were recorded from 99 of the 136 squares surveyed.

A leucistic bird observed at Beckley on 9 May had first been recorded from there on 30 Dec 2013. Two instances were recorded of growths on the legs of birds; one from Bognor on 8 Nov with scabs on its legs was noted to have its movement impeded. The other recorded from Worthing on 3 Mar was observed to have growths on its legs and feet. [DB]



Chaffinch (leucistic), Beckley, May 2014 (Allan Roffey)

Hawfinch

Coccothraustes coccothraustes

Scarce or possibly very scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

There were just 53 records for Hawfinch in 2014 coming from eight tetrads. Almost 80% of the records were in January and December. During the first winter period all records bar one came from the West Dean Woods/Monkton area. The exception was a single bird at Kingley Vale on 14 Jan. A maximum of 25 was observed at West Dean Woods on 5 Jan, with 12 present on the 18th and 20th. Other than these, counts of four on 11 Jan and three on 19 Jan and 1 Feb were the only observations of more than two birds in the first winter period.

There were two spring records, one was at The Waterwoods (Arundel) on 10 Mar and one was observed at Hayes Fm (Udimore) on 11 Apr during a BBS visit. There were, however, no records of Hawfinch through the summer months.

There were only two autumn records, one at Hastings on 5 Oct and two at Rusper on 20 Oct. This is the third consecutive year that the species has been recorded in the Hastings area.

The second winter period was also dominated by records from the West Dean Woods/Chilgrove area, with none away from these sites. Four and two were recorded on 24 and 28 Nov. There were a maximum of nine observed on 31 Dec with six or seven recorded on other dates in December. [DB]

Common Rosefinch

Carpodacus erythrinus

Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.

The only record, the first since 2012, was of a female or juvenile seen briefly at Pett Level on the morning of 24 Aug (PR). The county total increases to 32 of which only six have occurred this century. Monthly arrivals have been: May 5, Jun 12, Jul 1, Aug 2, Sep 6 and Oct 6 with the earliest on 25 May 1992 and the latest 21 Oct 1976. [JAH]

Bullfinch

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

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

The species was recorded in 278 tetrads (215 in 2013, 273 in 2012). During the first winter period the highest counts were 14 at Kingley Vale on 14 Jan and ten at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Mar. The county summary of the early SWBS surveys was 35 birds found in 15 1-km squares from 95 surveyed with a maximum count of nine on 20 Jan, figures somewhat down on the equivalent the previous year.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads but was probable in another 33. On 31 May a bird was noted carrying a faecal sac at Ely Grange (Frant), recently fledged young were found at five sites in June and early July, and a bird was reported on nest at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 12 Jul.

In the second half of the year the highest count was ten at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Nov. In SWBS surveys between 9 Nov and 29 Dec, 93 birds were found in 34 out of 136 1-km squares, this time well up on the equivalent the previous year. [PJP]

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

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

In the early SWBS Greenfinch was recorded from 41 of the 95 squares surveyed; during the late survey, however, this proportion had dropped markedly to being recorded in only 35 of 136 squares surveyed. There were 51 double figure counts during the first winter period, although the majority of these were for fewer than 20 birds. Returns from Newhaven Tidemills included

several counts of larger flocks between 7 Jan and the 30th, peaking at 40 on the 8th. A flock of 40 on 14 Jan was recorded at Kingley Vale, whilst 47 at Oving was the largest count during this period.

Confirmed breeding was recorded from just six tetrads with probable breeding from a further 38. Given that the species was recorded across 400 tetrads and involved 2724 records, this surely is an under-recorded breeding bird in Sussex. Nest-building was observed from as early as 9 Mar in Worthing, whilst an incubation patch was observed on a bird in Hastings on 8 Apr. The first fledged birds of the year were at Chelwood Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 30 Apr; fledging continued to be recorded from various locations with Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) being the last on 5 Aug.

Post breeding flocks began to appear from late July with the largest being 20 at Pett Level on the 27th and at Medmerry on the 29th. Throughout August and September few counts reached double figures; 25 at Pagham Hbr on 21 Aug was the highest during these months. Flock sizes increased through October with 17 double figure counts, including 60 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 16 Oct. The second highest count of the year came during this time with 100 at Broadbridge Heath on 12 Oct.

There was some evidence of autumn movements during October, with the usual coastal locations recording small numbers. At Selsey Bill the maximum of 50 E was on 15 Oct with 40 E three days earlier. At other coastal sites between 14 and 36 were recorded between 12 and 28 Oct. The highest count of the year, of 200, came from the shingle spit at Pagham Hbr on 4 Nov. This dwarfed the 17 double-figure counts from this second winter period, with only six of these being over 20 birds. Notable amongst these were 65 from Up Marden on 27 Dec, 60 at Pagham Hbr on 7 Dec, 40 at West Beach (Littlehampton) on 12 Nov and 35 at both Pulborough Brooks and Newhaven Tide Mills on 3 Nov and 30 Dec respectively. [DB]

Linnet

Carduelis cannabina

Fairly common but decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Linnetts were recorded in 332 tetrads (208 in 2013). During the first quarter, there were counts of 50 or more from eight sites, the highest being 108 at Keymer on 14 Mar while at Pulborough Brooks counts varied from 50 to 74 between 3 Feb and 17 Mar. Elsewhere, 70 were noted at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 10 Jan, 60 each at The Burgh (Burpham) on 14 Jan and Brede Levels on 6 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and probable in a further 83. Nest building was first noted in Roffey (Horsham) on 18 Mar, while birds were seen carrying food to young or removing faecal sacs on Ashdown Forest on 23 Apr. The first fledged young were also observed on Ashdown Forest with parents feeding fledglings on 13 May. During the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)* 47 pairs were found compared to only 33 last year (see page 210).

During June and July the largest counts were 130 at Medmerry on 25 Jul, 100 at Pett Level on the 27th, 80 at Cadborough (Rye) on 19 Jun and 78 at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 9th. By 3 Aug the flock at Medmerry had grown to around 500 with similar counts regularly made there until 27 Oct when 200 remained. Other significant counts during autumn were of 400 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 18 Sep, 600 at Cissbury Ring on the 25th, 500 at Thorney Island on 17 Oct and 400 at Beachy Head the next day. Autumn migration counts involved birds flying both east and west. At Hastings, on 36 dates between 18 Sep and 15 Nov, no less than 3436 were recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team, predominantly flying west, with a peak of 475 W on 1

Oct. However, at Selsey Bill, 701 recorded during September included 574 E (peak 160 E on the 17th) and 33 W but, in October, a total count of 1412 included movements of 800 E (peak 600E on the 15th), 430 W (peak 240 W on the 10th) and 130 S). At Beachy Head the predominant flow was easterly with peaks of 120 E on 28 Sep and 205 E on 15 Oct. During the second winter period the only three-figure counts were of 100 at The Burgh on 16 Nov, 120 at Forest Row on 27 Dec and 120 at Bepton Down on the 28th. [SPB]



Lesser Redpoll and Common Redpoll, Warnham LNR, January 2014 (Dorian Mason)

Lesser Redpoll

Carduelis cabaret

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

Lesser Redpolls were reported from 65 tetrads in 2014, compared with 87 in the previous year. There were 12 records of 20 or more birds during the first quarter, with the highest being 62 at Weir Wood Res on 10 Feb, 50 in Sheffield Forest (Sheffield Green) on 28 Mar, 40 at Roman Road (Ashdown Forest) on 17 Mar and 34 at Greenwood Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 24 Mar. There were no records during the early SWBS surveys.

Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads (two in 2013) with probable breeding occurring in a further four, all on Ashdown Forest. The first indication of possible breeding was a singing male at Duddleswell on 28 Mar followed by a pair at Brabury Hatch on 9 Apr. The first fledged young were recorded at Ellison's Pond on 4 May, followed by a family group on 17 Jun at the Old Airstrip. Fledglings were also noted at Wych Cross and the Crow and Gate area. There were no records away from Ashdown Forest during the breeding season.

In the late summer and autumn periods numbers were significantly lower than earlier in the year, with only four records of over ten birds. The highest totals reported were again from Ashdown Forest with the peak being 32 at Old Lodge LNR on 19 Aug. There were only a few records of birds on migration with the highest number being ten at Beachy Head on 26 Oct. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded a total of 33 on nine dates between 20 Oct and 18 Nov with a maximum of nine at Fairlight on 6 Nov.

Numbers increased slightly in the later winter period, with six records of over ten birds, the highest being a total of 103 seen at Old Lodge LNR on 16 Nov, followed by significantly smaller totals of 22 at Poundgate (Ashdown Forest) on the 22nd and 20 at Broadwater Warren on the 20th. The highest count for December was 15 at Leechpool and Owlbeach Woods (Horsham) on the 27th. Lesser Redpolls were reported from two of the 136 SWBS squares surveyed in this period, with a maximum of four at Guestling on 30 Nov. [PD]

Common Redpoll

Carduelis flammea flammea

Rare vagrant.

Despite exceptional numbers in late 2013, only four were recorded in 2014: the first regularly coming to the feeders at Warnham LNR from 20 Jan to 6 Mar (SP *et al.*), a first year ringed at Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire on 13 Oct 2013 was found freshly dead at Nutley on 17 Feb, one ringed at Pett Level on 9 Nov 2013 was caught by a ringer near East Grinstead on 9 Mar and finally a female was seen at Beachy Head on 11 Apr (JFC). [PJ]

Common Crossbill

Loxia curvirostra

Irruptive species; usually scarce visitor but fairly common in some years. Very scarce breeder in some years.

Crossbills were recorded in 30 tetrads compared with 54 in 2013 and 91 in 2012. In the first three months numbers were modest with counts of 20 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 5 Jan and 23 there on 19 Mar. There were six other counts of between ten and 15. Reported numbers remained low over the next three months, with the highest count of ten at Buchan Park on 9 Apr, and 12 (two families of four adults and eight young) at Broadwater Warren on 16 May. There was one other record of confirmed breeding, an adult feeding three young at Leggets Wood (Brightling) on 23 May. There was probable breeding in six tetrads, birds were holding territory at Ambersham and Lavington Commons and pairs were in suitable nesting habitat or visiting a probable nest site at three sites on Ashdown Forest.

Numbers dropped off in the second half of the year with just 24 birds reported on eight dates from six sites with none seen during September and October. Most were recorded on Ashdown Forest with seven on 7 Jul and ten at Old Lodge LNR on 15 Dec. None was reported by the Hastings Migration Watch team during 90 mornings of watching in the autumn. [PJP]

Parrot Crossbill

Loxia pytyopsittacus

Very rare vagrant.

Ten, first found at Old Lodge LNR on 20 Dec 2013, remained until 18 Jan (mo) with two still there the following day. These birds, which were part of an exceptional influx into Britain in late

2013, gave observers who did not see the Blackdown bird in January and February 2012, their first opportunity to see this species in Sussex. With a gap of more than 140 years between the first in 1870 and the next in 2012, it will be interesting to see how long we have to wait for the next county record of this irruptive species. [PJ]



Parrot Crossbill, Old Lodge LNR, January 2014 (Gareth Hughes)

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Probably fairly common resident, common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

In the first winter period 105 double-figure counts were returned, mostly of between 10 and 30 birds, but with seven counts of between 50 and 80. The most notable of these came from Pagham Hbr with 50 on 15 Jan which increased to 80 by 9 Feb, Newhaven Tidemills with 70 on 5 Jan, Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) with 65 on 23 Jan and Hope Gap (Seaford Head) with 50 on 8 Feb.

During the early SWBS birds were recorded from 47 of the 95 squares surveyed, very similar to 2013 when they were recorded in 53 of 100 surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed from 18 tetrads and probable in a further 35. Evidence of nest building came from several locations through the spring, beginning on 10 Mar. The first fledged birds were observed from Horsham on 16 May, thereafter at Wisborough Green on 21 May. Fledging continued to be recorded from a variety of locations until the last observed at Worthing on 31 Aug.

Post-breeding flocks began to form from around mid-July with the first reported on 12 Jul at Rottingdean of 27. Peak counts through to mid-August came from Sheepcote Valley on 26 Jul, Medmerry on 3 Aug and Brighton Wild Park on 19 Aug, all with 50 birds; six other counts held

between 34 and 46 during this time. The first 3-figure count of the year was recorded on 20 Aug from Chantry Hill, of 100 birds. This marked the onset of the early autumn flocks, with 120 at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) and 200 at Findon Park both on 24 Aug, 100 at Pagham Hbr on 31 Aug, 200 at Medmerry on 1 Sep, 125 at Keymer on 2 Sep and the largest count of 500 near Cissbury on 6 Sep.

Between early September and mid-October there were seven further 3-figure counts, with a maximum of 220 on 26 Sep at The Burgh (Burpham). On 12 Oct 900 were recorded at Beachy Head, 400 E at Selsey Bill, 350 from Pagham Hbr and the same number flying east at Worthing, 300 E at Widewater (Lancing) and 100 from Newhaven Tide Mills. The peak movement through the autumn was mid to late October. During this time there were peaks of 1000 E at Beachy Head on 15 Oct with 755 E at Worthing on the same day. On the 22nd the main passage was westward with 750 at Selsey Bill, 620 at Hastings and 450 at Worthing. On the 25th movement was still westward with 1170 at Beachy Head and 480 at Selsey Bill, however, passage at Selsey Bill on the 27th, 28th and 30th was southward involving 450, 1200 and 550 respectively. On the 31st whilst 920 flew east at Selsey Bill there were 215 W at Hastings. A total of 5740 was recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team on 34 dates between 21 Aug and 18 Nov with a maximum of 1027, comprising 415 W and 612E, on 13 Nov.

Two counts from Horsham represented the highest of the second winter period away from the coastal movements. These peaked at 78 on 20 Dec and 64 on 29 Nov. During the second winter SWBS birds were recorded in 73 of a possible 136 1-km squares, a slightly higher proportion than in the first winter period. [DB]

Serin

Serinus serinus

Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The only record this year was of one trilling in Leylandii at Winchelsea Beach on 12 Jul (CHD, AP) before flying off towards Rye Harbour village. This species has occurred in all but one year (2009) this century, totalling 61 individuals at an average of four per annum. [JAH]

Siskin

Carduelis spinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Very scarce breeder.

Siskins were recorded from 113 tetrads (167 in 2013) with no records of more than 36 birds compared to counts of 100+ in previous years. During the first winter period, there were only ten records of flocks of 20 or more birds; the largest counts being 36 at Weir Wood Res on 7 Feb, 30 at Bolney on 22 Jan, Burton MP on the 30th and Mountfield on 19 Feb.

Breeding activity appears to have begun in late March and was confirmed in three tetrads (two in 2013) was probable in 13 others (nine in 2013). Birds were in suitable habitat in seven others. With a preference for dense coniferous woodland, Siskin nests are naturally hard to find so it is likely that breeding attempts were under recorded. Eight territories (one in 2013) were recorded during the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)*; see page 210. Fledged young were noted at Possingworth Park on 29 Apr, Salehurst on 1 May and Leggetts Wood (Brightling) on 23 May. Observers on Ashdown Forest recorded the largest breeding season flocks, with ten each at Braberry Hatch on 9 Apr, Old Lodge LNR on the 11th and Wych Cross on 16 Jun.

Autumn migration was first noted on 18 Sep with three at Fairlight followed by 12 E on the 19th past Beachy Head; this remained the highest count until 18 were recorded in flight at Rye Hbr on 17 Oct. Autumn passage appears to have been particularly unspectacular with the highest count being a flock of 36 W past Hastings on 26 Oct but between 18 Sep and 16 Nov 169 were counted during the Hastings Migration Watch. During the second winter period only three flocks of more than 20 birds were recorded: 34 at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 2 Nov, at least 30 at Tinkers Marsh (Bewl Water) on 14 Dec and on the final day of the year there were 25 at Worth Forest. [SPB]

Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

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

In the first winter period up to five Snow Buntings were seen at Camber Sands on many dates between 5 Jan and 21 Feb when the numbers were reduced to two. At East Head (Chichester Hbr) two were seen on 2 and 17 Jan and one was seen there on many dates between 1 Feb and 1 Mar.

In the second winter period sightings were more widespread. The first returning birds were one at Pett Level on 12 Oct which stayed for three days, one at Seaford on 13 Oct and one at Bexhill on the 30th. In West Sussex one was at Pagham Hbr from 25 Oct to 1 Nov, one at Rustington on 7 Nov and one at East Head the following day was possibly from Pagham Hbr. Back in East Sussex two were on the beach at Seaford on 20 Nov remaining until the 27th when a male and a female were at Seaford Head GC. One was at Rye Hbr on the 24th and one at Newhaven on the same date and again on 8 Dec. It is unlikely that more than three or four were in the county at any one time during this period. [ACG]

Lapland Bunting

Calcarius lapponicus

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

Only two birds were recorded this year both of which were seen and heard in flight: one at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on 21 Sep (RJF) and another at Rye Hbr on 18 Oct (AP). The county total for this century rises to 96 at an average of 6.4 per annum, including the exceptional influxes between 12 Sep and 16 Nov 2010 at Beachy Head (12) and Hastings (32).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1948-2014	64	12	5	1		45	75	92	54	348
Percentage						13	22	26	16	
2000-2014	2	1	3	-		35	11	34	10	96
Percentage						36	11	35	10	

Birds arrive predominantly in the autumn months, as shown above, but there is also evidence of the movement of wintering birds in the first months of the year. [JAH]

Yellowhammer*Emberiza citronella*

Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Yellowhammers were reported from 330 tetrads during the year with very few records from large parts of the eastern and northern parts of the county. During the first winter period double-figure flocks were only recorded at 21 sites, all from Brighton westwards. These included a flock of up to 40 taking seed from bird feeders in gardens at Aldwick (Bognor Regis) throughout the period, 30 at Apuldram on 19 Feb, 40 at Medmerry on 22 Feb and, on the Downs, 30 at Cockroost Hill (Portslade) on 16 Feb, 50 at Castle Hill (Falmer) on 1 Mar and up to 30 at The Burgh (Burpham) during March. Maize game crop was frequented by several flocks. In the first SWBS, as the large Albourne flock of 2013 was reduced to two, it is no surprise that numbers were down to 91 compared with 160 the previous year, yet Yellowhammers were found in 18 of the 91 1-km early SWBS squares surveyed, up from only 11 of the 100 surveyed the previous year.

One migrant stopped briefly at Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 10 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in only five tetrads and probable in a further 52 plus an additional 30-40 singing males recorded in a breeding survey between Birling Gap and the Beachy Head Hotel. Twelve pairs were counted on the Norfolk Estate, down from 18 the previous year, yet the *Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex)* mapped 57 territories, up from 51 the previous year (see page 210 for details). The first report of song came from High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 22 Jan and the first nest building was seen at Salehurst on 4 Apr. Iping Common observers reported the first fledged young on 10 Jul. The low numbers in parts of the Weald are demonstrated by the fact that only two Yellowhammers at Lodsworth were encountered on a 20 km walk on 25 May.

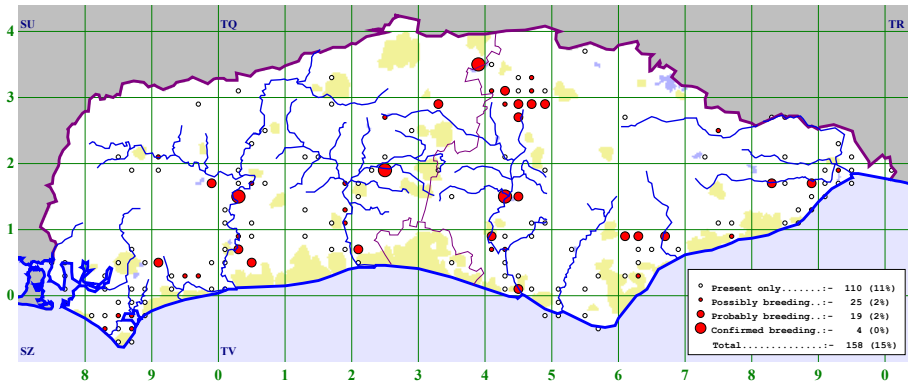
From September to the end of the year double-figure flocks were noted in 19 tetrads. The Aldwick flock contained up to 30 birds by the end of the year; there were 35 at Broxmead (Bolney) on 22 Oct, 37 at No Man's Land (Findon) on 19 Nov and at least 50 at Isfield on 28 Dec. [ACG]

Reed Bunting*Emberiza schoeniclus*

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

Reed Buntings were recorded in 157 tetrads during the year. In the first winter period the largest flock encountered was 42 on 8 Jan at Pett Level and double-figure flocks were seen in just 16 tetrads. Smaller numbers were however widely reported. Numbers at Weir Wood Res had dropped from 23 in early January to 11 by early February, an indication of the mobility of some flocks. Observers in Burgess Hill were fortunate enough to be able to watch Reed Buntings feeding at their bird table. There were several records of birds inland feeding on game cover crop, including 35 at Stopham (Fittleworth) on 10 Feb, and in winter wheat on the Wadhurst Park Estate on 31 Jan.

The first song was reported on 16 Feb at Pevensy Levels and three at Cliff End (Pett) the following day were regarded as returning breeding birds. Breeding was confirmed in only four tetrads and probable in 19. A Reed Bunting was found on a nest at Barcombe Res on 18 May. Food or faecal sac carrying was observed at Twineham Place on 7 Jul and fledged young were seen at Weir Wood Res on 1 Jul and Waltham Brooks on the 27th; the latter were believed to be from a second brood. A breeding survey in the Pagham Hbr area recorded a total of 38 birds.



The first notable flocks of the autumn were 33 at Lewes Brooks on 7 Sep and 40 at Cadborough (Rye) on 22 Sep.

In what appeared to be migratory movements observed at Selsey Bill one flew over on 29 Sep and very small numbers were logged on various days between 12 Oct and 5 Nov. Small numbers also passed through Beachy Head in the same period. The Hastings Migration Watch team noted a total of 247 birds at various locations on 29 dates between 7 Sep and 16 Nov with a maximum of 39 W on 20 Oct. A substantial winter roost at Weir Wood Res held 115 on 29 Nov and reached 232 on 28 Dec. Aside from this, double-figure flocks were only reported from ten tetrads during the second winter period. The Steyning Ringing Group handled 102 Reed Buntings during the year at The Mumbles (Steyning). [ACG]

Corn Bunting

Emberiza calandra

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

Corn Buntings were reported from 101 tetrads during the year. Numbers in the first winter period were low. The largest flocks were 30 on the Downs at Upper Beeding on 19 Feb and 41 at Steyning Round Hill on 11 Mar. Double-figure flocks were recorded in eight tetrads in the Sussex stronghold of this species, on the Downs between the rivers Arun and Ouse but it is pleasing to report that up to 10 were present at Medmerry throughout this period. Only two were seen at Beachy Head in January and February but a flock of six singing at Belle Tout on 5 Mar were deemed to be migrants and it is noticeable that numbers increased generally at Beachy Head and elsewhere after that date.

The only confirmed breeding was at Fulking, Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and Beachy Head, but evidence of probable breeding was noted in another 31 tetrads, with breeding season song noted in a further 32. The 2014 Corn Bunting survey located an estimated 173 territories in 23 tetrads (see page 257 for a full report of the survey). In addition, on the Norfolk Estate in the Arun Valley 41 territories were found between 14 May and 26 Jun compared with 36 the previous year and 46 in the two years before that and five territories were recorded at Beachy Head.

The largest post-breeding flock was 60 at Cissbury on 25 Sep. In the last three months of the year double-figure flocks were only reported from 12 tetrads. The largest was 40 at Steep Down (Lancing) feeding with many other birds on stubble on 24 Nov but it is pleasing to note other flocks were outside the core area at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr and East Guldeford Level. [ACG]

ESCAPES and FERAL BIRDS

All records of BOU Category D species, of apparently feral individuals of other species and of probable or certain escapes from captivity (but not those clearly in captivity) will be welcomed by the Hon. Recorder for this annual feature. 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. Such records should be submitted in the approved way.

The following escaped or feral birds, other than those Category C species in the main list, were recorded in the county in 2014 (unless stated otherwise). It should be noted that the identity of these birds is largely unchecked. A list of useful references can be found in SxBR **62**:210 (2009). This list is compiled by John Hobson unless indicated otherwise. Species names and order follow IOC World Bird Names (v 5.2) available online at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Bar-headed Goose

Anser indicus

Breeds in central Asia; migrates to northern India for winter. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections. Free flying individuals are liable to wander.

All records of this species, except one, were of single birds. In West Sussex, single birds were recorded at Chichester GP on 29 Mar and 25 May, on the Knepp Estate on 31 May, at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Sep and then variously between 18 Oct and 10 Nov, possibly all the same wandering individual and two were recorded at West Ashling on 1 Jun. In East Sussex single birds were recorded at eight disparate sites between 19 Jan and 29 Dec, probably the same wanderer.

Snow Goose

Anser caerulescens

Breeds in arctic North America, winters in southern USA and Mexico. Presumed vagrants may occur in the UK in winter, usually in association with other arctic breeding geese, but are greatly outnumbered by escapes and feral birds. There have been no accepted records of wild birds in Sussex.

The only record was of two birds at Scotney GP on 18 Dec. Observers should also be aware that there are Barnacle x Emperor Goose hybrids at Scotney GP which can resemble blue morph Snow Geese. [DHH]

Cackling Goose

Branta hutchinsii

Breeds in northern Canada and Alaska and winters mainly in western USA. B. hutchinsii includes the subspecies hutchinsii, leucopareia, minima and taverneri. It is currently not on the British List though a number of records have been accepted by BBRC and submitted to BOURC for admission to Category A.

Single birds were recorded in the Arun Valley (Widney Brooks, Pulborough Brooks) and Petworth Park on four dates between 6 and 23 Apr, at the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on 23 Aug, at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Nov and the Cukmere Meanders on 5 Dec; presumably the same wandering individual.

Black Swan***Cygnus atratus***

Breeds mainly in the SE and SW regions of Australia, where it is nomadic, and New Zealand, where it has been re-introduced. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections and on ornamental lakes. Full-winged birds are liable to wander. Has bred.

This species was recorded at some 17 sites (all except three in West Sussex), comparable with last year. In West Sussex a single bird was 'always there' at West Ashling (Chichester) and others were at several sites in Chichester Hbr between 13 Apr (sitting on 3-4 eggs but without visible signs of a mate which was reported as having been found dead 'a while ago') and 4 Aug. Up to four adults were noted at Chichester GP in May. Two were noted at Westerton on 3 Apr and Medmerry on 24 Nov but three were at White's Creek (Pagham Hbr) on 17 Aug. In the Arun Valley one or two were recorded on several dates between 2 Jan and 10 Mar but, later, two to three were noted between 25 Nov and 27 Dec. In East Sussex single birds were noted at Pett Level in January and February and at Combe Haven on 4 Mar.

Ruddy Shelduck***Tadorna ferruginea***

Rare vagrant or escape from captivity.

The two birds in the Pagham Harbour area from 2013 stayed until 5 Feb.

One bird was at Scotney GP from 16-17 Aug. Then one bird was at Medmerry and then Pagham Hbr from 12 Oct, joined by a second from 9 Nov through to the end of the year, which are likely to have been the birds returning from the previous winter. There was also a one-day record at Newhaven Tide Mills on 8 Nov, conceivably the second bird heading for Pagham Hbr. [AT]

Australian Shelduck***Tadorna tadornoides***

A native of S Australia and Tasmania where it breeds in fairly open country. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections.

A free-flying individual, not from the collection, was seen at Arundel WWT 'coming and going' in early January.

Muscovy Duck***Cairina moschata***

Native to Mexico, Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form.

Twenty birds at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 7 Jan had decreased to 14 on the 10th, to one on 29 Mar but increased to a final 11 on 4 Apr. Elsewhere there were single birds at Singleton on 26 Feb and Pagham Hbr on 29 Mar. In the autumn, nine at Swanbourne Lake on 8 Sep rose to 16 on the 16th but finally ten on 16 Dec. Elsewhere, two were at Ifield on 19 Oct and one at Pett Level on 27 Dec.

Wood Duck*Aix sponsa*

Breeds northern USA, winters southern USA. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections. Not recorded in the UK as a vagrant although some individuals might conceivably be of wild origin.

Records came from three sites: one (unsexed) at Weir Wood Res on 18 Apr, a pair at Stumblewood Common (Ashdown Forest) on the 30th and a drake at Strood Green on four dates between 30 Apr and 11 Dec.

Red-crested Pochard*Netta rufina*

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

A long-staying female was seen at Chichester GP from 3 Jan to 9 May (and briefly at Pagham Hbr on 11-12 Jan) and again at Chichester GP from 4 Oct into 2015. Elsewhere, unsexed individuals involved two in Brighton on 16 Feb.

Southern Pochard*Netta erythrophthalma*

The nominate form breeds in Amazonia; the sub-species, N.e. brunnea, breeds in Africa from Ethiopia to South Africa; it favours lakes, rivers, coastal lagoons and marshes.

An adult female was at Medmerry from 3 Dec into 2015.

White-cheeked Pintail*Anas bahamensis*

Known otherwise as the Bahama Pintail. Widespread in South America and the Caribbean. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections.

One was at Barcombe Res on 19 Jan.

Helmeted Guineafowl*Numida meleagris*

Breeds in Africa, mainly south of the Sahara. Kept domestically elsewhere.

Recorded at four sites; the highest count was seven at Newick on 10 Feb. Elsewhere there were four at Cocking on 2 Jun, three at Blackham on 8 Jun and two at Sutton End on 19 May.

Indian Peafowl*Pavo cristatus*

Wild birds are restricted to the Indian subcontinent. A traditional favourite of ornamental gardens.

This species was recorded at four sites, all new since 2013. Single birds (unsexed, but presumably males) were noted at Hurstpierpoint on 20 Jun, at Hempstead Wood (Uckfield) on 8 Apr and 25 May, at Cobbarn (Eridge) on 30 Apr, 17 Jun and 17 Dec and a pair was seen at Firle Beacon on 2 Feb.

Red-tailed Hawk*Buteo jamaicensis*

Breeds commonly throughout much of North America and the Caribbean; some move south to winter in Central America. Often kept in captivity.

Records came from only three sites in West Sussex (cf. six in 2013). At Cocking, again, one was seen on 25 Jan chasing off a Buzzard (probably the same bird was at Midhurst on 15 Mar), then two were seen there on 7 May and 2 Jun. One was at Dial Post on 2 May and another at Bury on 16 Aug.

Saker Falcon*Falco cherrug*

Widely but thinly spread from southwestern Russia across south central Siberia, Kazakhstan and central Turkey. Accidental western continental Europe; records from Britain probably relate to escapes.

One was at Birling Gap on 20 Sep.

Cockatiel*Nymphicus hollandicus*

Common Australian nomad. One of the commonest aviary birds.

A single bird was seen at Fairlight on 12 Mar and probably the same one at Willingdon (Eastbourne) on the 16th.

Common Myna*Acridotheres tristis*

A native of south central and southeast Asia, widely introduced throughout the world. It adapts well to urban environments and is among the world's 100 most invasive species to pest proportions in some countries.

Single birds were seen at four locations: at West Tarring (Worthing) on 16 Apr; St. Leonard's-on-Sea on 17 Jul; Selsey Bill on the 20th and Seaford on 9 Sep (where it was described as Jungle Myna *A. fuscus*).

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) results for Sussex 2010-2014

For each species recorded, the number (n) of BBS squares in which that species was recorded in Sussex, and the percentage (%) of the total number of BBS squares surveyed in which that species was recorded, for the period 2010-2014. Species which have only been recorded in single squares have been omitted from the list, but are included in the total numbers of species recorded. Red-listed and amber-listed species of conservation concern are shown in the relevant colours.

	Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
	2010 (138)		2011 (145)		2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mute Swan	16	12	18	12	17	11	15	10	21	13
Greylag Goose	11	8	16	11	15	10	16	10	22	13
Greylag Goose (domestic)			1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Canada Goose	28	20	41	28	40	27	37	24	45	27
Egyptian Goose	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Shelduck	7	5	4	3	7	5	11	7	12	7
Mandarin Duck	5	4	7	5	5	3	7	4	11	7
Gadwall	2	1	3	2	1	1	4	3	4	2
Mallard	80	58	81	56	88	59	87	56	99	59
Mallard (domestic)	2	1	1	1			1	1	3	2
Tufted Duck	6	4	8	6	9	6	9	6	5	3
Red-legged Partridge	23	17	17	12	16	11	19	12	20	12
Grey Partridge	2	1	7	5	3	2	1	1	4	2
Pheasant	110	80	121	83	118	79	123	79	135	81
Cormorant	14	10	12	8	18	12	10	6	19	11
Little Egret	7	5	7	5	5	3	7	4	11	7
Grey Heron	36	26	30	21	37	25	30	19	52	31
Little Grebe	4	3	2	1	3	2	1	1	4	2
Great Crested Grebe	2	1	3	2	3	2	4	3	4	2
Red Kite	1	1	4	3	1	1	4	3	7	4
Marsh Harrier	2	1			1	1			3	2
Sparrowhawk	13	9	16	11	13	9	18	12	15	9
Buzzard	47	34	60	41	74	50	79	51	80	48
Kestrel	36	26	42	29	41	28	34	22	30	18
Hobby	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	1
Peregrine			3	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
Moorhen	52	38	56	39	47	32	51	33	52	31
Coot	18	13	16	11	22	15	17	11	23	14
Oystercatcher	2	1	2	1	3	2	5	3	5	3
Lapwing	18	13	15	10	14	9	15	10	17	10
Whimbrel	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1
Curlew	2	1	2	1	4	3	5	3	5	3
Redshank	2	1	1	1	1	1	6	4	2	1
Black-headed Gull	16	12	19	13	20	13	22	14	28	17
Mediterranean Gull	2	1	5	3	6	4	4	3	6	4
Common Gull	6	4	2	1	6	4	6	4	4	2

	Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
	2010 (138)		2011 (145)		2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Lesser Black-backed Gull	14	10	12	8	12	8	18	12	13	8
Herring Gull	69	50	76	52	85	57	96	62	102	61
Great Black-backed Gull	6	4	5	3	3	2	5	3	7	4
Sandwich Tern	1	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Common Tern	6	4	4	3	2	1	3	2	5	3
Feral Pigeon	42	30	34	23	39	26	37	24	43	26
Stock Dove	40	29	55	38	49	33	59	38	68	41
Woodpigeon	137	99	144	99	148	99	154	99	166	99
Collared Dove	87	63	88	61	89	60	89	57	101	60
Turtle Dove	5	4	7	5	7	5	4	3	6	4
Cuckoo	45	33	55	38	39	26	41	26	38	23
Barn Owl	5	4	1	1	3	2	3	2	2	1
Little Owl	6	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	2
Tawny Owl	9	7	5	3	10	7	5	3	8	5
Swift	41	30	42	29	42	28	43	28	49	29
Kingfisher	1	1			1	1			1	1
Green Woodpecker	90	65	97	67	102	68	104	67	112	67
Great Spotted Woodpecker	92	67	93	64	100	67	110	71	99	59
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker			2	1	1	1	1	1		
Magpie	122	88	130	90	129	87	135	87	152	91
Jay	66	48	68	47	67	45	82	53	68	41
Jackdaw	109	79	121	83	120	81	130	83	141	84
Rook	76	55	80	55	85	57	88	56	90	54
Carriion Crow	134	97	139	96	143	96	153	98	164	98
Raven	1	1	4	3	4	3	7	4	5	3
Goldcrest	45	33	57	39	63	42	46	29	54	32
Firecrest	2	1	3	2	2	1			2	1
Blue Tit	132	96	142	98	145	97	153	98	162	97
Great Tit	128	93	139	96	137	92	150	96	161	96
Coal Tit	37	27	43	30	44	30	37	24	42	25
Marsh Tit	9	7	19	13	14	9	13	8	10	6
Woodlark	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1		
Skylark	73	53	74	51	78	52	75	48	90	54
Swallow	89	64	107	74	100	67	109	70	117	70
House Martin	32	23	36	25	29	19	29	19	37	22
Cetti's Warbler	5	4	6	4	5	3	6	4	12	7
Long-tailed Tit	71	51	61	42	65	44	53	34	59	35
Chiffchaff	122	88	123	85	123	83	120	77	147	88
Willow Warbler	25	18	33	23	31	21	41	26	34	20
Blackcap	110	80	123	85	127	85	130	83	145	87
Garden Warbler	29	21	33	23	36	24	30	19	22	13
Lesser Whitethroat	18	13	18	12	9	6	20	13	26	16

	Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
	2010 (138)		2011 (145)		2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Whitethroat	83	60	101	70	83	56	89	57	107	64
Sedge Warbler	7	5	9	6	5	3	8	5	13	8
Reed Warbler	12	9	14	10	13	9	16	10	25	15
Nuthatch	64	46	67	46	73	49	66	42	70	42
Treecreeper	29	21	35	24	42	28	27	17	36	22
Wren	131	95	138	95	142	95	146	94	163	98
Starling	91	66	93	64	105	70	101	65	107	64
Blackbird	138	100	144	99	147	99	155	99	166	99
Song Thrush	122	88	122	84	129	87	131	84	142	85
Mistle Thrush	45	33	44	30	39	26	50	32	51	31
Spotted Flycatcher	4	3	7	5	2	1	2	1	5	3
Robin	134	97	142	98	146	98	152	97	165	99
Nightingale	11	8	12	8	16	11	18	12	16	10
Stonechat	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	2	1
Wheatear	3	2	2	1	6	4	8	5	5	3
Duncock	113	82	110	76	117	79	121	78	145	87
House Sparrow	101	73	107	74	106	71	108	69	129	77
Yellow Wagtail			2	1			1	1	1	1
Grey Wagtail	7	5	4	3	3	2	5	3	6	4
Pied/White Wagtail	53	38	55	38	55	37	55	35	64	38
Tree Pipit	2	1	4	3	1	1	3	2	2	1
Meadow Pipit	10	7	11	8	16	11	14	9	20	12
Chaffinch	135	98	142	98	146	98	154	99	162	97
Greenfinch	110	80	111	77	107	72	108	69	118	71
Goldfinch	99	72	103	71	107	72	114	73	123	74
Siskin	3	2	3	2	3	2	7	4	6	4
Linnet	45	33	46	32	49	33	45	29	63	38
Lesser Redpoll	1	1	3	2	1	1			1	1
Common Crossbill	2	1	2	1	4	3			1	1
Bullfinch	25	18	38	26	43	29	25	16	36	22
Yellowhammer	65	47	61	42	61	41	58	37	64	38
Reed Bunting	10	7	15	10	16	11	18	12	19	11
Corn Bunting	6	4	7	5	7	5	6	4	3	2
Number of species	119		128		123		132		145	

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) population trends in Sussex 1994-2014

Sussex BBS population trends for 37 common species for the period 1994-2014 are presented in the table below, along with population trends for the period 2013-2014. Those trends that are considered statistically significant are indicated by asterisks. The size of the difference between the upper 95% confidence limit (UCL) and the lower 95% confidence limit (LCL) for each 1994-2014 trend gives an indication of the accuracy of the population trend. The sample size is the mean number of squares per year in which each species was recorded during 1994-2014, and trends are calculated only for species with a mean sample size of at least 30 squares.

	Change 1994-2014 (%)	UCL	LCL	Change 2013-2014 (%)	Sample size
Mallard	560*	803	383	125*	48
Pheasant	-2	13	-14	40*	69
Moorhen	-12	30	-40	-3	33
Woodpigeon	-5	4	-14	2	87
Collared Dove	105*	132	81	47*	54
Cuckoo	-89*	-82	-93	-85*	31
Green Woodpecker	-15	4	-30	32	60
Great Spotted Woodpecker	192*	292	118	-14	56
Magpie	22*	46	2	-16	77
Jay	-67*	-57	-74	-31	40
Jackdaw	109*	152	73	-57*	68
Rook	42*	65	22	-50*	48
Carriion Crow	185*	241	138	-3	84
Goldcrest	-19	8	-39	86*	32
Blue Tit	46*	64	31	-9	85
Great Tit	5	19	-7	-35*	82
Skylark	0	21	-17	70*	48
Swallow	125*	169	88	-13	59
Long-tailed Tit	-27*	-7	-43	1	38
Chiffchaff	-1	20	-18	-8	72
Blackcap	59*	88	34	24	69
Whitethroat	305*	427	211	29	52
Nuthatch	-61*	-46	-71	-55*	39
Wren	-1	8	-9	19	82
Starling	-44*	-31	-55	66*	63
Blackbird	43*	54	33	-1	86
Song Thrush	13*	27	1	-2	77
Mistle Thrush	-62*	-53	-69	311*	32
Robin	21*	34	9	13	84
Duncock	-46*	-37	-54	3	73
House Sparrow	97*	117	78	60*	65
Pied Wagtail	-28*	-10	-42	-21	37
Chaffinch	-38*	-33	-44	-31*	85
Greenfinch	-61*	-53	-68	-29	68
Goldfinch	176*	230	131	-13	56
Linnet	90*	157	40	30	32
Yellowhammer	-62*	-53	-70	-11	39

Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) results Nov 2012–Feb 2015

For each species recorded during a SWBS visit there are four columns per ‘winter’. The last three winters are included in the table below.

Column 1 gives the total number of 1-km squares surveyed in Sussex in which that species has been recorded (n) with the percentage for that winter (%). **Column 2** gives the total number of individuals of that species recorded during SWBS for that winter period. This represents the sum of the early survey plus the late survey and may include two recordings of the same bird. **Column 3** is derived by dividing the total number of individuals recorded by the number of completed surveys that winter period. This can produce a comparable figure from one year to another despite variation in the number of surveys undertaken. The average is to one decimal place. **Column 4** gives the position of that species amongst all the species recorded in that particular winter period. Red-listed and amber-listed species of conservation concern are shown in the relevant colours.

	Winter 2: Nov 2012–Feb 2013				Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014				Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015			
	114 1-km squares surveyed 210 surveys completed 99 species recorded				113 1-km squares surveyed 208 surveys completed 104 species recorded				143 1-km squares surveyed 269 surveys completed 118 species recorded			
	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank
Red-throated Diver									1 (1)	1	0.0	111
Fulmar									1 (1)	1	0.0	106
Little Grebe	1 (1)	1	0.0	77	3 (3)	24	0.1	69	2 (1)	2	0.0	90
Gt Crested Grebe	1 (1)	4	0.0	78	1 (1)	6	0.0	89	3 (2)	10	0.0	77
Cormorant	17 (15)	38	0.2	46	15 (13)	42	0.2	48	24 (17)	53	0.3	46
Little Egret	6 (5)	8	0.0	59	9 (8)	18	0.1	55	15 (10)	32	0.2	52
Grey Heron	23 (20)	43	0.2	42	16 (14)	28	0.1	47	31 (22)	47	0.2	45
Mute Swan	20 (18)	165	0.8	43	21 (19)	189	0.9	44	16 (11)	135	0.6	51
Gt W-fronted Goose									1 (1)	9	0.0	118
Greylag Goose	6 (5)	108	0.5	60	4 (4)	473	2.3	61	5 (3)	55	0.3	68
Domestic Goose	1 (1)	4	0.0	79	2 (2)	4	0.0	76	2 (1)	4	0.0	89
Canada Goose	16 (14)	107	0.5	47	14 (12)	239	1.1	50	13 (9)	320	1.5	55
Barnacle Goose									1 (1)	1	0.0	98
Brent Goose					3 (3)	707	3.4	70	5 (3)	3258	15.7	67
Egyptian Goose	1 (1)	4	0.0	80	1 (1)	10	0.0	90	1 (1)	3	0.0	105
Common Shelduck	1 (1)	1	0.0	81	2 (2)	20	0.1	77	4 (3)	15	0.1	70
Mandarin Duck	3 (3)	7	0.0	70	1 (1)	2	0.0	91	2 (1)	9	0.0	92
Eurasian Wigeon	4 (4)	35	0.2	62	4 (4)	23	0.1	62	4 (3)	310	1.5	71
Gadwall					2 (2)	84	0.4	78	2 (1)	16	0.1	84
Eurasian Teal	6 (5)	102	0.5	61	6 (5)	80	0.4	59	8 (6)	222	1.1	62
Mallard	40 (35)	761	3.6	32	40 (35)	831	4.0	32	56 (39)	969	4.7	33
Domestic Mallard	1 (1)	1	0.0	82	2 (2)	15	0.1	79	3 (2)	8	0.0	78
Pintail									1 (1)	60	0.3	108
Shoveler					1 (1)	7	0.0	92	2 (1)	14	0.1	94
Common Pochard	1 (1)	4	0.0	83	2 (2)	13	0.1	80	1 (1)	10	0.0	100
Tufted Duck	4 (4)	54	0.3	63	3 (3)	55	0.3	71	4 (3)	42	0.2	75
Common Scoter									1 (1)	2	0.0	101

	Winter 2: Nov 2012–Feb 2013				Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014				Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015			
	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank
Red-brst Merganser					1(1)	9	0.0	93	1 (1)	5	0.0	109
Goosander	1 (1)	2	0.0	84	1 (1)	5	0.0	94				
Red Kite	1 (1)	1	0.0	85	5 (4)	6	0.0	63	3 (2)	3	0.0	79
Marsh Harrier	2 (2)	2	0.0	73	1 (1)	1	0.0	95				
Sparrowhawk	16 (14)	19	0.1	48	17 (15)	17	0.1	46	23 (16)	26	0.1	47
Common Buzzard	60 (53)	128	0.6	22	76 (67)	181	0.9	15	90 (63)	236	1.1	18
Kestrel	39 (34)	60	0.3	34	29 (26)	38	0.2	37	45 (31)	65	0.3	36
Merlin	2 (2)	2	0.0	74	1 (1)	1	0.0	96	1 (1)	1	0.0	107
Peregrine	2 (2)	2	0.0	75	8 (7)	10	0.0	57	6 (4)	6	0.0	65
Red-legged Partridge	8 (7)	35	0.2	55	5 (4)	33	0.2	64	14 (10)	252	1.2	54
Grey Partridge					1 (1)	5	0.0	97	2 (1)	11	0.1	87
Common Pheasant	70 (61)	646	3.1	16	73 (65)	828	4.0	17	99 (69)	987	4.7	15
Water Rail									1 (1)	1	0.0	117
Moorhen	30 (26)	97	0.5	37	36 (32)	149	0.7	34	46 (32)	234	1.1	35
Coot	12 (11)	87	0.4	51	13 (12)	168	0.8	51	16 (11)	147	0.7	49
Oystercatcher	1 (1)	10	0.0	86					4 (3)	79	0.4	74
Golden Plover	1 (1)	1	0.0	87								
Grey Plover									2 (1)	7	0.0	88
Lapwing	13 (11)	1286	6.1	52	11 (10)	1283	6.2	52	12 (8)	1286	6.2	58
Dunlin	1 (1)	112	0.5	88					2 (1)	3	0.0	83
Ruff	1 (1)	1	0.0	89					1 (1)	1	0.0	113
Common Snipe	7 (6)	13	0.1	57	4 (4)	21	0.1	65	10 (7)	22	0.1	60
Woodcock	4 (4)	5	0.0	64	1 (1)	1	0.0	98	3 (2)	4	0.0	80
Black-tailed Godwit									2 (1)	58	0.3	81
Curlew	1 (1)	164	0.8	90	2 (2)	117	0.6	81	9 (6)	110	0.5	61
Spotted Redshank									1 (1)	1	0.0	115
Common Redshank	1 (1)	1	0.0	91	1 (1)	2	0.0	99	3 (2)	31	0.1	76
Green Sandpiper					2 (2)	2	0.0	82	2 (1)	2	0.0	86
Turnstone									2 (1)	77	0.4	96
Mediterranean Gull					1 (1)	3	0.0	100	2 (1)	10	0.0	93
Little Gull					1 (1)	6	0.0	101				
Black-headed Gull	59 (52)	3228	15.4	24	60 (53)	2582	12.4	24	82 (57)	3193	15.4	25
Common Gull	27 (24)	1158	5.5	41	19 (17)	1119	5.4	45	38 (27)	684	3.3	41
Lesser Black-bk Gull	5 (4)	10	0.0	65	3 (3)	6	0.0	72	6 (4)	12	0.1	64
Herring Gull	74 (65)	1910	9.1	15	69 (61)	2135	10.3	18	88 (62)	2471	11.9	21
Great Black-bk Gull	3 (3)	9	0.0	71	4 (4)	61	0.3	66	2 (1)	10	0.0	85
Feral Pigeon	21 (18)	834	4.0	44	25 (22)	353	1.7	42	36 (25)	624	3.0	43
Stock Dove	28 (25)	152	0.7	39	30 (27)	158	0.8	36	38 (27)	218	1.0	42
Woodpigeon	110 (96)	10893	51.9	3	111 (98)	9503	45.7	4	143 (100)	13310	64.0	1
Collared Dove	52 (46)	463	2.2	29	58 (51)	365	1.8	27	74 (52)	673	3.2	27
Barn Owl	1 (1)	1	0.0	92					1 (1)	1	0.0	97
Little Owl	1 (1)	2	0.0	93	2 (2)	2	0.0	83	2 (1)	2	0.0	91
Tawny Owl	1 (1)	1	0.0	94	2 (2)	2	0.0	84	1 (1)	2	0.0	116

	Winter 2: Nov 2012–Feb 2013				Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014				Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015			
	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank
Short-eared Owl									1 (1)	2	0.0	114
Kingfisher					4 (4)	5	0.0	67	5 (3)	6	0.0	69
G. Woodpecker	59 (52)	116	0.6	25	64 (57)	111	0.5	21	91 (64)	197	0.9	17
G. S. Woodpecker	65 (57)	175	0.8	20	59 (52)	124	0.6	26	88 (62)	237	1.1	20
Woodlark	1 (1)	2	0.0	95	1 (1)	2	0.0	102				
Skylark	31 (27)	208	1.0	36	40 (35)	205	1.0	33	43 (30)	561	2.7	38
Barn Swallow	1 (1)	1	0.0	96								
Meadow Pipit	21 (18)	253	1.2	45	24 (21)	240	1.2	43	39 (27)	423	2.0	40
Rock Pipit									1 (1)	1	0.0	112
Grey Wagtail	3 (3)	4	0.0	72	10 (9)	11	0.1	53	11 (8)	15	0.1	59
Pied Wagtail	59 (52)	241	1.1	26	67 (59)	227	1.1	19	83 (58)	328	1.6	24
Wren	89 (78)	501	2.4	10	96 (85)	543	2.6	8	131 (92)	818	3.9	8
Dunnock	87 (76)	415	2.0	12	79 (70)	394	1.9	12	114 (80)	590	2.8	12
Robin	108 (95)	1766	8.4	4	111 (98)	1636	7.9	5	141 (99)	2392	11.5	5
Eurasian Stonechat	5 (4)	12	0.1	66	6 (5)	14	0.1	60	13 (9)	36	0.2	56
Blackbird	113 (99)	2333	11.1	1	112 (99)	1629	7.8	2	143 (100)	3102	14.9	2
Fieldfare	57 (50)	2805	13.4	27	53 (47)	1494	7.2	29	72 (50)	1628	7.8	30
Song Thrush	88 (77)	317	1.5	11	75 (66)	273	1.3	16	118 (83)	563	2.7	11
Redwing	52 (46)	2012	9.6	30	60 (53)	1679	8.1	25	86 (60)	2492	12.0	23
Mistle Thrush	30 (26)	60	0.3	38	28 (25)	62	0.3	39	58 (41)	132	0.6	32
Cetti's Warbler					2 (2)	3	0.0	85	2 (1)	3	0.0	82
Dartford Warbler					1 (1)	1	0.0	103	1 (1)	1	0.0	104
Blackcap	1 (1)	1	0.0	97	3 (3)	4	0.0	73	1 (1)	1	0.0	99
Chiffchaff	5 (4)	6	0.0	67	2 (2)	2	0.0	86	12 (8)	19	0.1	57
Goldcrest	40 (35)	109	0.5	33	43 (38)	103	0.5	31	74 (52)	216	1.0	28
Firecrest	2 (2)	2	0.0	76	4 (4)	4	0.0	68	4 (3)	4	0.0	72
Long-tailed Tit	64 (56)	507	2.4	21	57 (50)	357	1.7	28	87 (61)	568	2.7	22
Marsh Tit	11 (10)	19	0.1	53	8 (7)	11	0.1	58	19 (13)	42	0.2	48
Coal Tit	37 (32)	132	0.6	35	29 (26)	62	0.3	38	44 (31)	157	0.8	37
Blue Tit	107 (94)	2668	12.7	5	113 (100)	2030	9.8	1	141 (99)	3177	15.3	4
Great Tit	100 (88)	1389	6.6	8	106 (94)	1109	5.3	6	134 (94)	1670	8.0	7
Nuthatch	56 (49)	206	1.0	28	46 (41)	127	0.6	30	72 (50)	272	1.3	31
Treecreeper	28 (25)	63	0.3	40	26 (23)	57	0.3	41	40 (28)	71	0.3	39
Jay	70 (61)	176	0.8	17	61 (54)	159	0.8	22	80 (56)	212	1.0	26
Magpie	107 (94)	1180	5.6	6	104 (92)	1014	4.9	7	135 (94)	1313	6.3	6
Jackdaw	97 (85)	4139	19.7	9	95 (84)	3866	18.6	10	127 (89)	4815	23.1	10
Rook	66 (58)	3817	18.2	19	67 (59)	2644	12.7	20	89 (62)	3934	18.9	19
Carriion Crow	112 (98)	2137	10.2	2	112 (99)	1881	9.0	3	142 (99)	2778	13.4	3
Raven	11 (10)	15	0.1	54	3 (3)	4	0.0	74	14 (10)	20	0.1	53
Common Starling	76 (67)	5158	24.6	14	82 (73)	4762	22.9	11	96 (67)	4105	19.7	16
House Sparrow	83 (73)	1678	8.0	13	79 (70)	1377	6.6	13	108 (76)	2227	10.7	13
Tree Sparrow									2 (1)	2	0.0	95
Chaffinch	104 (91)	1355	6.5	7	96 (85)	1011	4.9	9	129 (90)	1418	6.8	9

	Winter 2: Nov 2012–Feb 2013				Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014				Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015			
	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank	1 n (%)	2 Total	3 Mean	4 Rank
Brambling	1 (1)	3	0.0	98	2 (2)	12	0.1	87				
Greenfinch	60 (53)	435	2.1	23	61 (54)	399	1.9	23	74 (52)	352	1.7	29
Goldfinch	69 (61)	563	2.7	18	79 (70)	772	3.7	14	106 (74)	1107	5.3	14
Siskin	8 (7)	49	0.2	56	9 (8)	63	0.3	56	7 (5)	27	0.1	63
Linnet	15 (13)	340	1.6	50	10 (9)	84	0.4	54	16 (11)	179	0.9	50
Lesser Redpoll	7 (6)	13	0.1	58	2 (2)	4	0.0	88	4 (3)	29	0.1	73
Bullfinch	44 (39)	111	0.5	31	32 (28)	88	0.4	35	53 (37)	165	0.8	34
Yellowhammer	16 (14)	185	0.9	49	27 (24)	173	0.8	40	33 (23)	137	0.7	44
Reed Bunting	5 (4)	12	0.1	68	15 (13)	78	0.4	49	6 (4)	21	0.1	66
Corn Bunting	4 (4)	4	0.0	69	3 (3)	10	0.0	75	1 (1)	7	0.0	103
Red-tailed Hawk	1 (1)	1	0.0	99	1 (1)	1	0.0	104	1 (1)	1	0.0	110

Sussex Winter Bird Survey top 20 species based on presence in 1-km squares

Winter 2: Nov 2012–Feb 2013	Winter 3: Nov 2013–Feb 2014	Winter 4: Nov 2014–Feb 2015
1 st Blackbird	1 st Blue Tit	1 st Blackbird
2 nd Carrion Crow	2 nd Blackbird	2 nd Woodpigeon
3 rd Woodpigeon	3 rd Carrion Crow	3 rd Carrion Crow
4 th Robin	4 th Woodpigeon	4 th Blue Tit
5 th Blue Tit	5 th Robin	5 th Robin
6 th Magpie	6 th Great Tit	6 th Magpie
7 th Chaffinch	7 th Magpie	7 th Great Tit
8 th Great Tit	8 th Wren	8 th Wren
9 th Jackdaw	9 th Chaffinch	9 th Chaffinch
10 th Wren	10 th Jackdaw	10 th Jackdaw
11 th Song Thrush	11 th Common Starling	11 th Song Thrush
12 th Duncock	12 th Duncock	12 th Duncock
13 th House Sparrow	13 th House Sparrow	13 th House Sparrow
14 th Common Starling	14 th Goldfinch	14 th Goldfinch
15 th Herring Gull	15 th Common Buzzard	15 th Common Pheasant
16 th Common Pheasant	16 th Song Thrush	16 th Common Starling
17 th Jay	17 th Common Pheasant	17 th Green Woodpecker
18 th Goldfinch	18 th Herring Gull	18 th Common Buzzard
19 th Rook	19 th Pied Wagtail	19 th Rook
20 th Great Spotted Woodpecker	20 th Rook	20 th Great Spotted Woodpecker

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DATES OF SUMMER VISITORS, 2014

	First recorded date			Last recorded date		
	2014	1960 to 2013	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)	2014	1960 to 2013	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)
Garganey	13 Mar	2 Feb	11 Mar (\pm 10)	1 Oct	13 Dec	3 Oct (\pm 22)
Quail	7 Jun	6 Feb	16 May (\pm 19)	16 Aug	15 Nov ²	29 Aug (\pm 30)
Osprey	27 Mar	4 Mar	23 Mar (\pm 10)	19 Oct	9 Dec	26 Oct (\pm 7)
Little Ringed Plover	18 Mar	6 Mar	16 Mar (\pm 7)	24 Sep	8 Oct	26 Sep (\pm 10)
Wood Sandpiper	5 May	11 Feb	6 May (\pm 23)	18 Oct	16 Nov	30 Sep (\pm 14)
Pomarine Skua	19 Apr	10 Mar	18 Apr (\pm 4)	12 Dec	31 Dec	27 Sep (\pm 54)
Little Tern	8 Apr	1 Apr	8 Apr (\pm 4)	7 Sep ¹	4 Nov	29 Sep (\pm 14)
Black Tern	20 Apr	2 Apr	13 Apr (\pm 14)	30 Aug ¹	16 Nov ³	9 Oct (\pm 16)
Common Tern	28 Mar	14 Mar	25 Mar (\pm 7)	28 Oct	26 Nov	27 Oct (\pm 14)
Roseate Tern	22 May	17 Apr	8 May (\pm 17)	11 Jun	5 Oct	3 Aug (\pm 36)
Arctic Tern	15 Apr	2 Apr	10 Apr (\pm 5)	4 Oct	31 Dec	25 Oct (\pm 15)
Common/Arctic Tern	29 Mar	10 Mar	2 Apr (\pm 4)	8 Oct	31 Dec	15 Oct (\pm 11)
Turtle Dove	22 Apr	5 Feb	7 Apr (\pm 15)	18 Oct	18 Dec	23 Sep (\pm 11)
Common Cuckoo	9 Apr	21 Mar ⁴	1 Apr (\pm 5)	27 Aug ¹	23 Oct ⁵	15 Sep (\pm 9)
Nightjar	15 May	14 Apr ^{3,4}	3 May (\pm 8)	27 Sep	5 Nov	16 Sep (\pm 10)
Common Swift	17 Apr	7 Apr	12 Apr (\pm 4)	13 Sep ¹	24 Nov	8 Oct (\pm 17)
Wryneck	—	9 Mar	20 Apr (\pm 15)	22 Sep	2 Nov ⁶	7 Oct (\pm 11)
Hobby	31 Mar	21 Mar	5 Apr (\pm 7)	18 Oct	9 Nov	22 Oct (\pm 15)
Sand Martin	11 Mar	27 Feb	11 Mar (\pm 8)	28 Oct	1 Dec ⁷	21 Oct (\pm 17)
Barn Swallow	9 Mar ¹⁷	4 Feb	9 Mar (\pm 13)	12 Dec	28 Dec	22 Nov (\pm 10)
House Martin	24 Mar	1 Feb	14 Mar (\pm 14)	6 Nov	18 Dec ⁸	14 Nov (\pm 8)
Wood Warbler	14 Apr	7 Apr	17 Apr (\pm 7)	26 Sep	7 Oct	17 Sep (\pm 14)
Willow Warbler	16 Mar	4 Mar	19 Mar (\pm 6)	26 Oct	27 Nov ⁹	29 Oct (\pm 12)
Garden Warbler	3 Apr	28 Mar	5 Apr (\pm 6)	31 Oct	16 Nov	12 Oct (\pm 9)
Lesser Whitethroat	4 Apr ¹	4 Apr	11 Apr (\pm 4)	22 Oct	18 Nov ¹⁰	12 Oct (\pm 11)
Common Whitethroat	2 Apr	19 Mar	2 Apr (\pm 6)	29 Sep ¹	17 Dec	27 Oct (\pm 17)
Grasshopper Warbler	5 Apr	2 Apr	10 Apr (\pm 6)	3 Oct	1 Nov	14 Oct (\pm 7)
Sedge Warbler	1 Apr	23 Mar	30 Mar (\pm 6)	15 Oct	29 Oct	14 Oct (\pm 6)
Reed Warbler	9 Apr	2 Apr	7 Apr (\pm 4)	31 Oct	1 Dec	6 Nov (\pm 14)
Ring Ouzel	2 Apr	9 Feb ¹¹	31 Mar (\pm 6)	16 Nov	26 Dec	13 Nov (\pm 6)
Spotted Flycatcher	3 May	10 Apr ¹⁵	25 Apr (\pm 8)	29 Sep	18 Nov	14 Oct (\pm 10)
Common Nightingale	6 Apr	21 Mar	5 Apr (\pm 6)	3 Sep	1 Oct ¹²	14 Sep (\pm 10)
Pied Flycatcher	10 Apr	1 Apr	13 Apr (\pm 5)	22 Sep	1 Nov	1 Oct (\pm 8)
Common Redstart	1 Apr	5 Mar	28 Mar (\pm 11)	25 Sep ¹	26 Dec	29 Oct (\pm 22)
Whinchat	14 Apr	18 Feb	6 Apr (\pm 14)	27 Oct	2 Dec	30 Oct (\pm 10)
Northern Wheatear	9 Mar	13 Feb	5 Mar (\pm 10)	22 Nov	31 Dec	13 Nov (\pm 8)
Yellow Wagtail	1 Apr	12 Feb	25 Mar (\pm 9)	28 Oct	23 Nov ¹³	27 Oct (\pm 10)
Tree Pipit	2 Apr	24 Mar ¹⁶	31 Mar (\pm 6)	20 Oct	9 Nov	14 Oct (\pm 10)

Notes: ¹county record early or late date; ²excludes historic December records; ³excludes one in Cuckmere Valley 13-21 Nov 1954; ⁴excludes one at Fairlight Cove on 15 Mar 1936; ⁵excludes one at Goodwood on 11 Nov 1928; ⁶excludes one at The Crumbles on 5 Nov 1947; ⁷excludes record from unknown location on 5

Dec 1911; ⁸excludes three at Fishbourne on 22 Dec 1894; ⁹excludes two historic records on 26 Dec 1892 and 1949; ¹⁰excludes one at Burgess Hill on 21 Nov 1957 and known wintering birds; ¹¹excludes one at Mannings Heath on 2 Feb 1905; ¹²excludes one at North Bersted on 19 Oct 1943; ¹³excludes one at Sidlesham between 11 Dec 1960 and 14 Jan 1961; ¹⁴excludes one at Pulborough on 8 Apr 1912; ¹⁵excludes one at Hastings on 8 Apr 1909; ¹⁶excludes record from unknown location on 17 Mar 1922; ¹⁷excludes wintering bird at Newick.

DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL DATES OF WINTER VISITORS, 2014

	Last recorded date			First recorded date		
	2014	1960 to 2013	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)	2014	1960 to 2013	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)
Bewick's Swan	24 Feb	26 Apr	5 Mar (\pm 10)	29 Nov	6 Oct	11 Nov (\pm 16)
White-fronted Goose	16 Mar	25 May	23 Mar (\pm 30)	22 Nov	12 Sep	17 Oct (\pm 26)
Long-tailed Duck	25 Apr	14 Jun	28 Apr (\pm 43)	9 Nov	12 Aug	4 Nov (\pm 11)
Velvet Scoter	7 May	15 Jun	16 May (\pm 14)	1 Nov	2 Aug	24 Oct (\pm 17)
Goldeneye	3 Apr	31 May	24 Apr (\pm 14)	28 Oct	6 Aug	7 Oct (\pm 28)
Smew	16 Feb	24 Apr	5 Mar (\pm 13)	22 Dec	22 Oct	30 Nov (\pm 17)
Goosander	13 Apr	14 Jun	13 Apr (\pm 29)	20 Oct	12 Sep	28 Oct (\pm 14)
Black-throated Diver	26 May	21 Jun	24 May (\pm 6)	12 Nov	3 Aug	6 Oct (\pm 22)
Great Northern Diver	3 Jun	21 Jun	29 May (\pm 11)	24 Oct	16 Sep	21 Oct (\pm 17)
Red-necked Grebe	15 Apr	19 Jun	12 Apr (\pm 19)	22 Dec	13 Aug ²	27 Sep (\pm 29)
Hen Harrier	21 May	19 Jun	19 May (\pm 14)	3 Sep	4 Aug	25 Aug (\pm 14)
Purple Sandpiper	7 May	4 Jun	2 May (\pm 17)	1 Nov	1 Jul	26 Aug (\pm 36)
Jack Snipe	16 Mar	19 May	16 Apr (\pm 12)	18 Nov	24 Aug	20 Sep (\pm 14)
Great Grey Shrike	1 Apr	5 May ⁴	3 Apr (\pm 17)	16 Oct	26 Sep ³	12 Oct (\pm 8)
Fieldfare	25 Apr	5 Jun	26 Apr (\pm 11)	1 Oct	6 Aug	28 Oct (\pm 11)
Redwing	17 Apr	26 May ⁵	15 Apr (\pm 10)	29 Sep	6 Aug	20 Sep (\pm 16)
Water Pipit	3 Apr	28 May	23 Mar (\pm 15)	20 Oct	1 Sep	1 Nov (\pm 6)
Brambling	16 Apr	12 May	19 Apr (\pm 13)	29 Sep	3 Sep	30 Sep (\pm 6)
Snow Bunting	1 Mar	6 May	17 Feb (\pm 25)	12 Oct	17 Sep	22 Oct (\pm 8)

Notes: ¹earliest or latest county record; ²excludes one off Brighton on 3 Aug 1872; ³excludes one at The Crumbles on 7 Sep 1899; ⁴excludes one at Rye Hbr on 14 May 1950; ⁵excludes two undated historic records of birds found dead in June.

Arrival and Departure Dates

The tables include information from 1960 with earlier notable records in notes. To make a clear cut-off between arrival and departure dates all January records have been omitted from the table of summer visitors and from the calculation of mean dates and all July dates from the table of winter visitors with the exception of Purple Sandpipers, which regularly return to their winter grounds in July. Any January and July dates for the current year are to be found as footnotes. The large numbers of terns seen at seawatches to which a specific identification could not be ascribed have been included as Common/Arctic Tern. The early dates are most likely to refer to Common Tern and the later ones could be either Common or Arctic.

The 10-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

Wealden Heathlands Breeding Bird Survey 2014 (West Sussex)

	AC	BD	BH	CC	CL	IC	LC	LS	SC	WC	WD	WH
Woodcock	3	-	-	-	2	-	3	2	-	1	1	-
Stock Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	1	3	1
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nightjar	18	2	-	-	-	5	4	-	2	3	1	-
Green Woodpecker	4	-	2	1	5	1	3	5	1	4	5	2
Great Sp. Woodpecker	4	-	-	2	5	3	4	5	5	3	5	3
Hobby	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Woodlark	2	2	4	3	4	6	3	-	2	1	6	-
Skylark	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Common Whitethroat	3	-	1	-	8	3	5	3	1	3	6	1
Dartford Warbler	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-
Common Redstart	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	2	-
Eurasian Stonechat	3	2	-	-	-	5	4	-	1	-	-	-
Tree Pipit	4	3	-	-	-	6	4	1	2	2	1	-
Meadow Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linnet	10	2	-	2	5	9	10	-	3	2	2	2
Lesser Redpoll	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Crossbill	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Siskin	-	-	-	1	-	1	4	1	1	-	-	-
Yellowhammer	14	-	3	2	6	7	8	-	5	5	4	3
Reed Bunting	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Figures relate to pairs or territories. The hyphen (-) indicates that no territories were identified.

Key to sites:

AC: Ambersham and Heyshott Commons

BD: Blackdown (Fernhurst)

BH: Broad Halfpenny

CC: Chapel Common (Liphook)

CL: Coates Common and Lords Piece (Fittleworth)

IC: Iping Common

LC: Lavington and Duncton Commons and Lavington Plantation

LS: Linchmere and Stanley Commons

SC: Stedham Common

WC: Woolbeding Common

WD: Weavers Down (Liss)

WH: West Heath Common

The above heathland sites were the only ones surveyed this year.

Black-winged Stilts at RSPB Medmerry 2014

Although not a new species for Sussex (prior to 1995 there were about 20 records in Sussex for Black-winged Stilt and in more recent years there were two at Sidlesham Ferry in 2000, one near Bognor Regis in 2003, one at Pulborough Brooks and one at Cuckmere Haven in 2005, one at Pett Level in 2007 (*The Birds of Sussex*, Thomas 2014) and two at Medmerry in 2012), what is new is that this species bred for the first time in the county in 2014. There follows an account of the unfolding success story by the warden at RSPB Medmerry, **Peter Hughes**.

Introduction

Over the weekend of 12-13 July 2014, a few birders at RSPB Medmerry got the first distant glimpse of first one, then two, then finally three juvenile Black-winged Stilts in flight over the saltmarsh. This was confirmation that the first breeding attempt of Black-winged Stilts in Sussex, and only the ninth ever in the UK, had been successful.

The story had started back on 12 Apr, when an unprecedented group of 10 Black-winged Stilts had arrived at Brading Marshes on the Isle of Wight. In parallel to the Medmerry pair, Black-winged Stilts were also nesting in Kent and Suffolk; the Kent pair failed, whilst the Suffolk pair raised four young. During the spring and summer of 2014, Medmerry, a £28m project to realign the sea defence and create nearly 200 hectares of saltmarsh just to the west of Selsey, was still a construction site. Although the new seawall had been completed and the old sea defence had been breached in September 2013, there were still a number of ongoing work areas such as fencing, seeding of the seawall, laying access tracks and building viewpoints. Despite the unfinished nature of the access and car parks, and the presence of heavy machinery, local birders were familiarising themselves with the area and on the lookout for spring migrants.

Arrival and egg-laying

On 29 Apr, Paul Stent found a single Black-winged Stilt at Medmerry; it had moved on by the next day, but it seems likely that this was one of the pair that (re)appeared to breed. Then, on 17 May, Chris Janman went one better, finding two Black-winged Stilts in the same area as Paul's original bird on the western part of the site. It soon became clear that the two birds were a pair, as they were seen displaying and mating. They favoured an area of shallow, brackish lagoons known technically as the Earnley Flood Storage Area. That spring, birders had already dubbed them the 'Avocet Pools'. By mid-summer, they had been firmly renamed the 'Stilt Pools'.

Around 09.30 on 21 May, I received a call from local birdwatchers that one bird was sitting and with the aid of a telescope, at least one egg could be seen when the bird stood up. This news prompted a lot of activity during the next two days, as various RSPB staff members put in place measures designed to give the stilts the best chance of success. This included arranging licences to legally access the nest.

That evening, a temporary electric fence was put up by Ivan Lang and myself, to help protect the nest from foxes. Thankfully, the evening was warm and still, and as we finished the fencing we watched in the gathering gloom as the stilts returned to their nest. Two eggs were present on the evening of 21 May and three eggs were present by the following evening. It is assumed that the first egg was laid on 20 May, just three days after the pair arrived.

The stilt-watchers

Within two days, twenty-four-hour nest protection had been arranged to ensure that egg-collectors were not tempted to raid the site, and to help prevent accidental disturbance from



Black-winged Stilt nest at the “Stilt Pools”, Medmerry, May 2014 (Peter Hughes)

passing visitors or local residents. The main site contractors kindly moved one of their welfare cabins to the track overlooking the nest site and agreed to let 'the stilt-watchers' use it as their base. Around 55 people responded to the RSPB request for help in covering the daytime stilt-watch, many of them keen local birdwatchers wishing to play their part in protecting the birds and recording their activities. The daytime watch (6am-10pm) was covered exclusively by volunteers doing four hour shifts, whilst the night time watches (10pm-6am) were covered by a security company paid for by the RSPB.

Nest site and incubation

The flood storage area had been excavated as part of the Medmerry scheme primarily to relieve local communities from flooding after intense rainfall events, and was in effect, a small shallow flooded quarry, about 4.5 hectares in size. Bird-friendly features, such as spits and islands, had been designed into the area to mimic natural coastal lagoons, and the area was separated from the new saltmarsh by a public access track and seawall. Just 150 metres to the south was the open sea.

Interestingly, and it has to be said somewhat frustratingly, whilst several pairs of Avocets had sensibly chosen to breed on a small island in the southern-most pool, perched comfortably at least 15cm above the surrounding water level, the stilts chose to 'go it alone' and eschewed the extra security provided by the island. The nest site was a small, flat peninsula of mud, coarse shingle and shells, on the southern shore of the pool, barely above the water level. The nest itself was placed within 30cm of the water's edge and was made of a small amount of dead vegetation. This 'brinkmanship', often employed by nesting waders or terns much to the consternation of many an RSPB warden, meant that the next 26 days were a little tense. Just to add to the drama, the first predicted hatching date for the stilt eggs was Friday 13 Jun.

Both birds incubated the eggs, with the female (identified by the slightly brownish tint to her mantle) taking the bulk of the responsibility. Both birds, when not incubating, often flew over the new seawall to the intertidal marsh; this was also seen with the nesting Avocets and clearly indicated that there was better feeding in that area.

Hatching and chick-rearing

As it turned out, two eggs hatched on 13 Jun with one chick appearing in the morning and the second in the afternoon. The third egg hatched the following day. It appeared that the stilts were greatly aided by the close proximity of several pairs of Avocets; they are highly protective of both their nests and young. Carrion Crows, Buzzards, Kestrels and large gulls that flew over the breeding area were frequently mobbed with great persistence by both the Black-winged Stilts and the Avocets. Post-hatching, there was no need to protect the nest from egg-collectors and the volunteer stilt watchers were stood down and the security firm cancelled. However, information on the stilt family's progress was still very valuable and several volunteers kindly continued their watch during the daytime, keeping track of the chicks as they fed, with both adults usually in close attendance.

Six days after hatching, on 19 Jun, the adult stilts repeatedly flew over the track and seawall, calling persistently; the chicks followed, and the adults led the three chicks across the track, over the wall and out onto the saltmarsh in the central part of the reserve, about 800 metres away. There they spent the next four weeks, out of sight and keeping us all guessing.

During this period, they occupied an area of the grassland/saltmarsh known as the bombing range; its past use by the RAF as an air-to-surface munitions testing area had left it pock-marked with small, shallow craters, which were now intermittently flooded with seawater and full of invertebrate food. It is an intimate mosaic of grassland, developing saltmarsh, mud and shallow



The bombing range, Medmerry, May 2014 (Peter Hughes)



Black-winged Stilt chicks, Medmerry, June 2014 (Peter Hughes)

water, and clearly a superb area for young wader chicks to feed and avoid predators. As far as we know, the stilts utilised only this area (about 3.5 hectares) through to fledging. From a monitoring perspective, it was also both impossible to view from a distance and approach without being noticed by the ever-vigilant adult stilts. Evidence of continuing chick survival could only be ascertained by the presence of agitated and noisy adult stilts, prompted by a weekly walk across the bombing range. Finally, we got the good news that all three youngsters had survived.

Post-fledging

Over two more weeks passed with the stilts out on the hard-to-view bombing range until, obligingly, on 31 Jul the whole family de-camped to Pagham Harbour's famous Ferry Pool, about 3 km away, allowing many people to watch the adults and fledged young together at close quarters for the next three days. Then, to everyone's surprise and with a charming sense of loyalty to RSPB sites, they flew 30 km north to Pulborough Brooks, where they spent the next week wowing visitors to that site too. Another brief stop back at the Ferry Pool on 11 Aug followed, and then they were gone. The successful pair that bred in Suffolk was also last seen in the UK on 11 Aug.



Black-winged Stilts, Ferry Pool, August 2014 (Jacob Everitt)

The successful breeding of Black-winged Stilts in Sussex in 2014 was no fluke, and illustrates how the conservation of treasured places and species involves great commitment and effort from many organisations and individuals. The identification, monitoring and protection of the nest site was largely carried out by a brilliant and enthusiastic network of volunteers. The Medmerry site contractors, Team Van Oord, helpfully and happily worked around the volunteers and visitors and crucially provided the cabin for the stilt-watchers during the 26 days of incubation. Thank you to all of the individuals and organisations involved in helping Medmerry's Black-winged Stilts.

NEW SPECIES for SUSSEX in 2014

Another new species was added to the county list in 2014 finally bringing the total up to 400.

The species involved was a Short-toed Eagle which was first seen in Dorset and Hampshire before being discovered on Ashdown Forest on 10 Jun. After disappearing back to Hampshire for several days the eagle returned and remained in the Ashdown Forest area from 15 to 29 Jun. After apparently visiting Hampshire and Surrey, the bird made its final Ashdown Forest appearance on 12 Jul. This is only the third occasion that the species has been recorded in Britain with the previous sightings being on the Isles of Scilly in 1995 and in Devon in 2011.

Short-toed Eagle

Circaetus gallicus

A New Species for Sussex on Ashdown Forest

Andy McLevy

As a regular visitor to East Sussex, where I have family in Ridgewood, Uckfield, and being a keen birdwatcher, the first place I head for is the wonderful Ashdown Forest, a habitat we do not have back home in Northumberland. My target species here are both Dartford Warbler and Woodlark. Over the previous few days, in glorious weather, I had seen a few Woodlarks and a stunning, very close Honey Buzzard on the forest but had still not seen Dartford Warbler which has become more difficult to see recently and has eluded me for a couple of years.

On 10 Jun, after visiting Weir Wood Reservoir I decided to head out onto the heathland adjacent to the Old Airstrip, just south of Wych Cross on the A22. It was very warm and sunny as I made my way to an area of thick high gorse, where I hoped to see Dartford Warbler. After about ten minutes, and well out among the gorse and heather, while scanning to the south, I saw a seemingly large, very pale raptor, way off in the distance. Even at long range I could see it had long angled wings, thrust forward at the carpal with the body and the whole of the underwings being very pale. It was hanging in the wind, only making small adjustments to its position, with very little effort, and I thought to myself: "this is an eagle, I must get this right, I need to be closer."

After running and stumbling, with more than a hint of panic, along the paths and over the thick heather and gorse, and well out of breath I got fairly close to the bird. With the deep blue sky and very strong light, which was burning out much of the detail on the underparts, I could just discern a few spots and markings on the underwing and body with the hint of a breast band and slightly darker tips to the primaries. I was still not sure of the eagle's size as there were no other birds in sight for comparison and I kept thinking to myself: "I must be missing something; is this just a pale Common Buzzard?" The jizz of the bird discounted this, but seeing a bird out of context plays strange tricks with your mind, and I needed something more substantial to convince myself.

I soon got it when I heard a Common Buzzard calling and it came out of the sky from nowhere to mob the eagle, which took evasive action, flipping over onto its back, presenting its talons to the Buzzard. With these fabulous side by side views, the wingspan of the eagle was seen to be 25-33% longer than that of the Buzzard, or perhaps a little more, and having seen the unfeathered legs I knew I was watching a Short-toed Eagle! I am fairly familiar with this species, after seeing my first in the Spanish Pyrenees in 1990 and during many subsequent visits to Spain and elsewhere.

I was absolutely buzzing and reached for my phone to report the bird but was horrified to find I had come out without it! I pondered what to do for a few minutes and decided as a once in a lifetime experience I would stay and watch this amazing bird.

I watched the eagle for approximately one and a half hours, mostly over the heath to the south of the Old Airstrip from various distances and angles, at times directly overhead, when it gave superb views. I would lose it for short periods, but it would reappear usually way off in the distance in the opposite direction. No other birders were on the heath; where is one when you need one? I finally lost the bird, fairly high, heading towards the A22, north of the car park. Although I was on site for another 30 minutes, I failed to see it again and presumed it had moved off.

This is by far my most remarkable find and although being fired up, and on a huge high, my joy was slightly tempered by not being able to share this experience with other bird watchers. Later I tried unsuccessfully to contact a birding mate back at home, Alan Tilmouth, who works for Bird Guides and it was the next morning when I was able to speak to him and the exact details of the previous day's sighting were revealed.



Short-toed Eagle, Ashdown Forest, June 2014 (Robert Pask)

Fast forward to 15 June, and I was again on Ashdown Forest, this time at Old Lodge LNR, one of my favourite sites on the forest, and had enjoyed excellent close views of a pair of Woodlarks feeding on the ground with another single bird flying over carrying food. Other species seen included displaying Tree Pipits, a few Redstarts, recently fledged Great Spotted Woodpeckers and many Lesser Redpolls. I had been on the forest a few times since my sighting of the Short-toed Eagle and had seen a Dartford Warbler on two occasions collecting food.

This was my last day in East Sussex, and I decided to drive to Four Counties car park, crossed the road, and walked through the gorse to where the heathland stretched away below my high vantage point. Scanning around to get my bearings, I noticed a large pale raptor over the ridge to my right, probably five or six hundred metres away, and incredibly it was the Short-toed Eagle I had seen three miles or so to the west, last Tuesday! Running closer, and with the grey overcast

conditions, a great deal more plumage detail could be seen. Now happy it was the same bird, with a fully charged phone at hand, I passed on the news to Alan back at home, barely able to contain my excitement as I tried to explain the new location. This time the news was put straight out and within 30-40 minutes a large group of birders were assembled at the roadside, opposite Gills Lap car park. I was delighted and very relieved that the local birders were now enjoying the Short-toed Eagle, a first record for Sussex.



Short-toed Eagle, Ashdown Forest, June 2014 (Matt Eade)

Meanwhile I was well out on the heath, where the bird was performing absolutely brilliantly, and again, as last Tuesday, it was covering great distances and on occasions it would come very close, seemingly not bothered by my presence, hovering and hanging in the cool breeze. On many occasions it was seen to close its wings, with bare legs out-stretched, plunging down at great speed among the heather and gorse, re-appearing on three occasions with snakes in its bill and swallowing them whilst on the wing.

For more than an hour I had incredible views, at times down to less than 40 metres and at a height of only 40 feet. The yellow eye and grey bill with darker tip were clearly seen and due to the terrain, the upperparts of the eagle were seen very well as it flew past beneath me. At around 1.40 pm it soared up high, crossing the road, heading off west in the direction of the distant Old Airstrip where it was seen later in the afternoon. A few of the local birders I spoke to thanked me for getting the news out quickly adding I had made Sussex listers very happy.

The Short-toed Eagle was present for many weeks at various sites in the south and was enjoyed by many hundreds of observers both local and from afar. Many absolutely stunning photographs were taken and appeared on many bird sites and I hope everyone got as much pleasure from seeing this fantastic bird as I did. Ashdown Forest is a splendid birding spot; I will be back!

The Sussex Ringing Report for 2014

Sue Walsh

After two challenging seasons, the settled weather that most of Britain and Ireland experienced in 2014 was reflected in Sussex and a welcome change for the county's ringers. The year started with flooding, but by March it was drier and temperatures were a degree or two above the five-year average. The warm weather continued into late summer, and after a wet May, summer rainfall totals fell well below mean values. Ex-hurricane Bertha brought more rain and stormy weather towards the end of the season, but by this time the majority of species had finished breeding. (*N.B. All numbers, including those in the tables, have been adjusted to reflect numbers of birds ringed in previous years but only recently notified to the author. All observations on species and numbers ringed refer only to those reported to the author or the BTO. Details of annual totals can be found on the BTO website at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>.)*

Table 1 shows there is a further reduction in the number of birds ringed in Sussex in 2014 compared with previous years. In 2014 Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG) scaled down their ringing operation and ringed 45% fewer than the numbers of birds they ringed in 2013 and fewer than 20% of the numbers they ringed in 2011. Despite the decrease in the number of birds ringed by RBRG its contribution comprised 50% of all birds ringed in Sussex in 2014. Although the marked decline in ringing by RBRG accounted for most of the reduction in the county total the numbers ringed by others also showed a 20% fall compared to the previous four-year mean.

Twenty three individuals and groups reported a total of 31,270 birds of 99 different species ringed in Sussex in 2014.

Table 1. *A summary of ringing totals in Sussex 2010-2014.*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Change in 2014 (%) compared with previous 4-year mean
Sussex total	82,689	102,203	68,767	51,020	31,270	-59%
RBRG	59,199	79,870	53,439	34,752	15,883	-72%
Others	23,490	22,333	15,328	16,268	15,387	-20%

Rarities and notable records

There were a number of species ringed in 2014 which are not often ringed in the county including (with the Sussex total record since 1979 in brackets): five Mandarin Ducks (19); one Gadwall (54); one Pochard (15); one Oystercatcher (23); one Nightjar (63); two Wrynecks (57); one Willow Tit (463); one Yellow-browed Warbler (30); one Marsh Warbler (81); one Ring Ouzel (277); and six Pied Flycatchers (264).

Up until the mid-nineties Willow Tits were caught and ringed annually in double figures with a high of 40 in 1986. Numbers dwindled with single figures being ringed annually and just one being ringed in each of the years 2005 and 2006. None have been ringed at all until the one ringed at Warnham LNR this year. Thomas (2014) notes the general decline of this species in Sussex.

The Greenshank Project by Farlington Ringing Group (see project section below) has resulted in a higher than usual number of waders being ringed. This does not represent a change in the

numbers of waders in Sussex but reflects more the location of ringing sites and ringing techniques. Waders are most often caught by cannon netting, a complex and labour-intensive technique which requires a great deal of planning and extensive training to gain a licence and hence is not often deployed in Sussex. The numbers of waders ringed in 2014, all by the Farlington Ringing Group, (with the Sussex total record since 1979 in brackets) were: three Dunlins (475); one Spotted Redshank (6); 86 Redshanks (693); and 20 Greenshanks (286). The group also ringed a single Greylag Goose (32).

It was notable that certain species of conservation concern did not feature on this list at all in 2014, including Northern Lapwing, Turtle Dove, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark and Mistle Thrush.

Top 20 species ringed

Table 2 lists the 20 most ringed species in Sussex during 2014. These figures are more indicative of the habitat of the sites where ringing takes place than populations of birds in the county. The 20 most ringed species account for 85% of all the birds ringed during 2014, compared with 89% in 2013 and 2012, 92% in 2011 and 89% in 2010. The scaled-down operation of RBRG accounts for the fall in the total of most of the species shown in the table but a few species deserve special mention.

Table 2. *Sussex ringing totals for the 20 most ringed species in 2014. Red-listed and amber-listed species of conservation concern are shown in the relevant colours.*

Ranking	Species (with position in 2013)	2014		2013	
		Total	RBRG	Total	RBRG
1.	Blackcap (1)	7468	4154	6835	4850
2.	Chiffchaff (3)	3647	1697	5108	3299
3.	Sedge Warbler (4)	2502	2031	4797	4496
4.	Reed Warbler (5)	2357	1639	4653	3850
5.	Blue Tit (7)	1897	454	2730	628
6.	Willow Warbler (8)	1498	728	2672	1673
7.	Barn Swallow (6)	1059	924	3262	3053
8.	Common Whitethroat (10)	1026	458	1419	857
9.	Great Tit (12)	858	233	1061	275
10.	Robin (13)	775	226	869	359
11.	Goldfinch (11)	644	141	1099	237
12.	Greenfinch (16)	538	259	578	174
13.	Blackbird (14)	523	172	671	277
14.	Duncock (17)	462	105	562	169
15.	Wren (19)	443	125	541	223
16.	Jackdaw (26)	387	354	332	318
17.	Chaffinch (15)	358	184	631	183
19.	Garden Warbler (25)	350	172	413	299
20.	Barn Owl (42)	329	0	60	8

Blackcaps remain at the top of the list as they have for the last six years. The total number of Blackcaps ringed each year in Sussex reduced since the record year in 2011 but 2014 shows a reverse of this decline and a modest increase of 633. After the disastrous breeding year of 2013

the numbers of Barn Owls ringed (18 adult birds and 311 nestlings) brought the total up to a par with earlier years. Some species no longer featured in the top 20 ringed in Sussex (see below) allowing Barn Owl to enter the table for the first time. For more details see the projects section below.

Both Sand Martin and House Martin no longer feature in the top 20 species ringed and the number of Barn Swallows ringed has also fallen. This reflects the change in operation at RBRG rather than any decrease in numbers in Sussex. RBRG previously targeted hirundine roosts but did not do so in 2014. Sand Martin was second in the table in 2013 with 5509 birds ringed, all but two of them by RBRG, a level similar to previous years. In 2014 the total fell to 124, all but one of them ringed by RBRG, which is the lowest annual total of this species ringed since 1986. The year 2014 saw the lowest annual number of House Martins ringed since 1991 and the lowest number of Barn Swallows ringed since 1986.

On the other hand, the decrease in numbers of Lesser Redpolls ringed reflects a decrease in overall numbers over and above the change in operation at RBRG. The total of 84 Lesser Redpolls ringed in 2014 is the lowest since 1984. The species was ninth in the table in 2012 and 2013 with 1825 (1455) and 2290 (1814) birds ringed, respectively (RBRG totals in brackets), but fell to 35th in the table in 2014 with just four ringed by RBRG. Referring to Lesser Redpolls Thomas (2014) states that “*Historically, it has had mixed fortunes in the county.*” Following a crash in numbers during the latter part of the last century Thomas (2014) also suggests that “*numbers have been recovering since about 2004-5*” but the ringing results in 2014 suggest a reversal of this trend. It is possible it was not a good breeding year for this species or there was not sufficient winter food to sustain them further north so that they were not seen, as in past years, on autumn passage.

Highs and lows

The commentary in this section only refers to changes other than those caused by the reduction in operations by RBRG which skew the county totals in 2014. Blackcap remains at the top of the table of 20 most ringed species in Sussex (Table 2). It is the only species to show an increase in overall numbers ringed with 65% more than in 2013. The number of Goldcrests ringed returned to a level similar to previous years after a poor year in 2013; this may have been due to the milder winter. All other species in the top 20 showed a decrease in numbers ringed. Blue Tit and Great Tit totals, in particular, were both substantially lower than in 2013. There is evidence to show these species nested early in 2014 (see paragraph on nestlings below) so perhaps the young were ready too early for the appearance of the winter moth caterpillar.

Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Lesser Redpoll and Siskin all experienced a drop in numbers ringed in Sussex. Compared to 2013 the totals ringed in 2014 were lower by 61%, 41%, 78% and 91%, respectively. This may be related to the poor breeding success recorded in both 2012 and 2013 although there could be other factors involved. One potential candidate is disease, with the respiratory disease *Trichomonosis* still widespread in the Greenfinch and other finch populations. Another is the increasing problem of *Fringilla papillomavirus* which affects Chaffinches. It causes leg growths which may vary in size from small nodules to larger warts that can engulf the whole leg. Birds with this disease appear to be otherwise healthy. However, because a ring cannot be put on these birds, the extent to which it affects their survival is not known (Macdonald 1965).

Nestlings

A total of 1296 nestlings of 31 different species were ringed in 2014 comprising 4.1% of the annual ringing total. This is nearly double the proportion in 2013 (2.7%) and similar to that of previous years. This is mainly due to the Barn Owl pulli ringed returning to a more usual number

after the poor breeding year for the species in 2013. Four of the 31 species (Peregrine, Little Owl, Tawny Owl and Common Tern) were ringed solely as nestlings and for six species (Kestrel, Barn Owl, Stock Dove, Common Swift, Grey Wagtail and Tree Sparrow) 40% or more of the totals were ringed as nestlings.



Little owl nestlings (Paul Leader)

Several ringers in the county have a number of nest boxes for Blue Tits, Great Tits and Nuthatches which they monitor annually. These include John Newnham at Lancing College, Bob Edgar at Whitbread Hollow near Beachy Head and, more recently, Sarah McKenzie at Herstmonceux Castle. Occupancy rates of these nest boxes vary. At Herstmonceux Castle an occupancy rate of seven of ten boxes in 2012, their first year of installation, increased to 17 of 18 boxes in 2014. At Lancing College, occupancy rates increased from three of 11 boxes in 2008, the year they were installed, to 16 of 32 boxes in 2014. At Beachy Head six of 13 boxes were occupied in 2014. In 2014 some of these boxes had broods which were too large to ring in the second week of May which is a sign of early breeding. Although not relating to nestlings, another sign of early breeding was discovered by the Steyning Ringing Group which caught a juvenile Bullfinch at Cissbury on 14 Jun. This was the earliest juvenile Bullfinch ever ringed by them by 19 days; most of the juveniles of this species there are found in August and September.

Colour-ringing and tagging projects

Cuckoo tracking In 2014 the SOS again supported the BTO Cuckoo Tracking Project by sponsoring tags for two more Sussex Cuckoos. On 29 May and 5 Jun two males were caught and tagged on Ashdown Forest. The names of Ash and Chester were chosen by two local primary schools. After their tagging, both birds stayed on Ashdown Forest for a short time. Chester was the first to move south and by 19 Jun was in north-western France. Ash followed a few days

later and was also in northern France by 24 Jun. Their migration routes south proved to be quite different. After following similar routes to southern France their journeys diverged, and Ash flew eastwards round the Mediterranean via Italy, Croatia, Libya and Chad, whereas Chester took a westward route via Spain, Morocco, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Ash spent the winter in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chester in Cameroon and Gabon. Both birds survived the winter and their return migration to the UK in 2015. For details of their journeys see the SOS website <http://www.sos.org.uk/our-cuckoos.html> and for a full account of this UK project see the BTO website <http://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking>.



Woodcock “Knepp” being fitted with a satellite tag (Charlie Burrell)

Woodcock tracking Woodcock have been declining in both range and numbers since the 1960s in the UK (Balmer *et al.* 2013) and in Sussex where the breeding range has shrunk by half since the 1988-92 breeding atlas (Thomas 2014). The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust have established a nationwide project to better understand the conservation status of Woodcock and gain a more accurate estimate of their distribution and abundance. They particularly need to know what impacts, if any, shooting has on the conservation status of the bird. As part of that project a number of birds have had satellite tags fitted. Use of satellite transmitters is intended to provide information on migration routes and timings and site fidelity. One bird, named “Knepp”, was tagged in Sussex on 8 Mar 2014 on the Knepp Estate. By 17 Mar it had arrived in Germany and it then travelled across Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to arrive in Finland on 10 Apr. Accounts of its journey during the year to Finland and back, and the journeys of other birds within the project, can be found at <http://www.woodcockwatch.com/2014-bird-archive.php>.

Barn Owls The mild weather coincided with a peak year for small mammals making it a productive one also for breeding Barn Owls compared to the disastrous year of 2013. Nationally nesting occupancy in 2014 was 16% above the usual average and the overall UK brood size

increased by 35% to just over four fledglings per breeding attempt, the highest average in records which go back to 1966 (Leech and Barimore 2015). Similar increases were seen in Sussex in 2014 where 311 pulli and 18 adults were ringed, the highest annual total since 2007 and above the average for the ten years to 2014. The average number of young in the nest was 4.2 which reflects the national picture. See more at: www.barnowltrust.org.uk. Barn Owls were also breeding early in Sussex and across the UK this year, and 2014 saw the earliest average laying date recorded since the Barn Owl Conservation Network's inception in 1988. By July some females had already started or even finished second clutches, leaving the males with the overlapping task of feeding both first brood juveniles for another two weeks and incubating females for another six. Most of these second clutches were laid in nearby boxes, but some females sat on eggs alongside their first broods. For more information see <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/nrs/about/barn-owls-2015/2014-july>.

Peregrines The Peregrine colour-ringing project, studying dispersal and survival rates since 1998, continues to be run in Sussex by Graham Roberts, Jon Franklin and Phil Everitt. Despite fewer sightings reported in 2014, some useful records were received. "Black 03", ringed as a chick at Chichester Cathedral in 2002, continued to be seen at a confidential site in Sussex where she has bred since 2006. Another female, "Black 16", ringed at Chichester Cathedral in 2006, was confirmed breeding on a gasometer in London. "Green 37", ringed as a chick at Sussex Heights (Brighton) in 2009, was reported from near Dover. Details of all sightings of colour-ringed Peregrines should be sent to Graham Roberts at Graham.C.M.Roberts@btinternet.com.

Tree Sparrows The RSPB, in partnership with the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Kent Wildlife Trust and Natural England, continued a Tree Sparrow recovery project in Sussex described in the 2012 Sussex Bird Report. Initially it seemed 2014 would be a productive breeding year at Pevensey Levels with ten boxes showing evidence of nest building. However, only three nests actually progressed to the egg laying stage. Those nests that did contain eggs were successful. Three broods were raised in two of the boxes, resulting in 26 chicks, which were all ringed. Two broods, consisting of eight or nine chicks, fledged from the third box although these were not ringed. Clearly, it was a good year for raising chicks so why were there so few nests? The probable explanation was a shortage of females in the population this year. This would account for the initial nest building, which the males do to try and attract a female, but lack of subsequent breeding. This type of stochastic effect can have a big impact on small populations and emphasises the fragility of the Sussex Tree Sparrow population. Details of any sightings of ringed Tree Sparrows, especially those with blue colour rings with white letters on the right leg, should be sent to Richard Black at Richard.Black@rspb.org.uk.

Greenshanks The Greenshank colour-ringing and geolocator project continues to be run by the Farlington Ringing Group in partnership with Chichester Harbour Conservancy. The project studies the movements, site faithfulness and longevity of Greenshanks wintering on Thorney Island, Chichester Hbr. In January 2014 three geolocators affixed to birds in March 2013 were removed and replaced. Nine other birds received geolocators for the first time. In September 2014 three geolocators were retrieved. Results from the analysis of the geolocator data show that two of the birds summered in Scotland and four in Scandinavia (Norway and Sweden). A sighting of a bird ringed in September 2013 was received from Norway. Only three other Greenshanks ringed during the project have been seen in Norway, and none since 2005. Locally, over 400 sightings of colour rings on 60 of these birds were recorded by 20 observers. One regular bird had been ringed in Aberdeenshire. Sadly, one of the most familiar birds, GY-GY, first ringed in 2002 and seen by many people every year at Nutbourne, Chichester Hbr, failed to return there in the autumn of 2014. For more information on the project and how to report birds visit the website www.greenshank.info.



Stone-curlew chick being ringed on the South Downs (Nick Tomalin)

Stone-curlews The South Downs Stone-Curlew project has been running since 2007, and is working with farmers and landowners to create the conditions needed to assist returning and passage Stone-curlews to stay and breed. Site monitoring is conducted by a team of trained and licensed staff and volunteers, and aims to identify and, where necessary, help any breeding attempts. As part of the monitoring, any chicks hatched on the South Downs are ringed so that their progress and movements can be tracked in the future. In 2014, one successful pair produced one chick that was ringed. A bird ringed as a chick on the South Downs in 2009 bred twice in Norfolk in 2014.

Recoveries

Winter storms at the end of February brought an unusual number of dead sea birds to the shores of Sussex. These included the ringed birds listed below:

A **Great Skua** ringed as a nestling in 1987 on the Shetlands was recovered in Brighton on 25 Feb. This bird was 26 years old which is some way off the longevity record for this species of 36 years.

Three **Guillemots** ringed as nestlings in Scotland in 1994, 2003 and 2009 were found, respectively, at Hastings on 20 Feb and at Atherington and Littlehampton on 23 Feb. A fourth ringed as a nestling in Wexford in 1985 was found on 28 Feb at Selsey. At 28 years old this bird was almost ten years below the longevity record.

A **Razorbill** ringed on Bardsey Island in Wales in 1988 and caught by a ringer there in 2001 and 2004 was found at Hastings on 24 Feb. Another adult colour-ringed on Skomer Island in 2009 and seen there each year after ringing was found in Shoreham on 24 Feb. Two Razorbills ringed as adults on the outer Hebrides in 2009 and 2011 were found respectively at Littlehampton on 16 Feb and Shoreham on 19 Feb and another ringed in the North Highlands of Scotland in 1996 was found at Rye Bay on 23 Feb.

Listed below is a selection of the more interesting recoveries of other ringed birds which were reported in 2014.

A **Coot** was caught at Pett Level nearly 14 years after it was ringed as an adult at the same place. This is very near the longevity record of 15 years and three months established in 1978.

Several **Spoonbills** were seen in the county throughout the year. In Sussex, these birds are usually summer and autumn migrants with numbers increasing in more recent years to an average of over 18 per year (Thomas 2014). Most birds seen in the UK are thought to come from the Dutch population and nine birds ringed in The Netherlands have been recorded in Sussex in previous years (BTO online ringing report). Several ringed birds were seen in 2014 in Pagham and Rye Hbrs between October and December. One of these had been ringed in Denmark on 15 May 2014, was reported on 4 and 16 Oct in West Saxony, Germany and then seen at Pagham Hbr on 16 Dec.

A ringed female **Avocet** was recorded at RSPB Medmerry on 2 Jun. This bird had been ringed in June 2008 at the Dunkirk reserve in Cambridgeshire, moved to RSPB Snettisham in Norfolk later that year and over the next two years was reported at RSPB Marshside in Lancashire. She was seen in the Exe Estuary in October 2010 and then spent the breeding seasons of 2012 and 2013 at Titchfield Haven NNR before moving to Medmerry; quite a traveller with a liking for RSPB and other managed reserves. It was an unusual sighting as only three ringed Avocets have previously been recorded as seen or retrapped in Sussex; these had come from Rye Bay, Norfolk and France.

There have only been about 20 accepted records of **Caspian Gull** in Sussex since this species was split from Herring Gull but sightings of this species in the county now seem to be becoming an annual feature. One seen on the R Adur opposite Shoreham Airfield on 5 Oct had been colour-ringed before fledging on 3 Jun at Reddern, Brandenburg, in SE Germany (about 100 km SSE of Berlin and close to the Polish border). It had moved 1004 km west after fledging to reach Shoreham.

A **Great Black-backed Gull** colour-ringed in Denmark on 23 Jun 2012 was seen at Shoreham on 2 Nov. This is the first of this species ringed in Denmark to be recovered in Sussex. Most are from Norway, France or the Channel Isles.

Of nine **Barn Owls** recovered in 2014 five had been hatched during the year and subsequently found dead. The oldest was six years old. Of six birds found dead two were killed on roads, one drowned, one was predated and two were found with no recorded cause of death. Eleven ringed birds were found alive in nest boxes. Of these, one had been ringed in June 2006 in the Ouse valley and was retrapped in July 2014 in a different box but only 1 km away. It was already an adult at the time of ringing, so must have been at least nine years old. The longevity record for this species is just over 15 years.

Several ringers in Sussex travel to Gibraltar to the ringing station at Jews Gate. A ring put on a first-year **Nightjar** there on 10 Oct 2013 was recovered (the ring only) by one such ringer at Slindon on 13 Jul. Only three Nightjars have been ringed in Sussex and only two previously recovered in the county.

Migrant **Willow Warblers** begin to be recorded in Sussex by late July and relatively few are left in the county by early September. A few, however, continue to be seen into October perhaps including birds from Scandinavia. The mean last departure date since 1976 is 26 Oct, and one was trapped in Whitbread Hollow on that date in 2014. The bird showed the dull and pale plumage characteristic of the subspecies *acredula* of the Scandinavian and Finnish race (Thomas 2014).

On 26 Jul Beachy Head Ringing Station retrapped a **Lesser Whitethroat** ringed by them at the same site just short of eight years earlier on 6 Aug 2006. This is very close to the longevity record for this species of 9 years and 2 days set in 2008. This underlines the fact that adults of this species are highly site faithful, most returning to the site at which they bred the previous year (Boddy 1994).

Both **Sedge Warblers** and **Reed Warblers** are species which breed in Sussex and elsewhere in the British Isles. They leave for their wintering grounds in Africa between July and October. Birds which have bred further north pass through the county on their way south and then most of them head for France and Spain. A Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler ringed in Spain and retrapped in the Cuckmere valley in 2014 provide evidence for such movement. The Reed Warbler was ringed in Bilbao on 2 Aug 2011 presumably on its way south. In 2014 it was retrapped in Litlington on 14 Aug, later in the season than in 2011. The Sedge Warbler was ringed near Bilbao on 15 Aug 2013 and retrapped in Litlington on 24 Jul presumably moving south on a similar time scale as the journey in 2013. How long does it take these birds to travel through Europe? Some evidence of distances travelled was demonstrated by two Sedge Warblers ringed in Litlington in July 2014. One, ringed on 27 Jul, was recovered in France nine days later having travelled 459 km. The other was ringed on 30 Jul and was recovered in Belgium on 1 Aug having travelled 192 km in two days.

Ringing records show that **Pied Flycatchers** are typically ringed as nestlings in mid-June in their breeding grounds in Wales and the north and west of England in hilly areas where Sessile Oak is a dominant tree (Wernham *et al.* 2002). These birds usually leave Britain from early August (Thomas 2014) and are sometimes trapped in Sussex as they make their way south towards their wintering grounds in north and west Africa. One such bird was ringed on 1 Jun 2014 in Lees, Lancashire, and retrapped at The Mumbles (Steyning) 61 days later on 1 Aug.

The **Meadow Pipit** is a common but declining resident in Sussex and a very common passage migrant as birds head towards south-west France, Spain and Portugal (Thomas 2014 and Wernham *et al.* 2002). One such bird ringed at Litlington on 25 Sep 2013 was retrapped in Portugal on 1 Nov 2014. It had presumably returned to the UK for the 2014 breeding season and was moving south again for the winter.

Song Thrushes are mainly sedentary but there is evidence of some movement mostly south to France and Iberia in the autumn and winter (Flegg 2004). One bird, however, moved in the

opposite direction from France: it was ringed near Calais on 29 Sep 2014 and had moved to Cissbury by 29 Nov.

Reed Buntings are conspicuous in the breeding season when they sing from high in vegetation but are less easy to find in winter. As a result there has been some historical disagreement about their migratory status (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Ringing evidence indicates that most British breeding Reed Buntings remain within Britain although they may move around as shown by one first-year bird ringed in September 2013 in Suffolk and retrapped in Steyning in February 2014. They are joined in winter by a small number of birds predominantly from Scandinavia (Prys-Jones 1984). A few, however, come from France and a report was received in 2014 of one such bird ringed in Manche, France on 14 Oct 2009 which had been caught by a ringer in Litlington on 19 Mar 2013.

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The Raven in Sussex: past and current status, with special reference to a mixed winter roost of Ravens, Red Kites and Common Buzzards

Martin Kalaher

Introduction

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of Raven *Corvus corax* breeding pairs in Sussex over the past few years. The Raven's star is rising but it was not always thus and so now would seem to be a good time to reflect on the mixed fortunes of this species as it fully assumes its rightful place in the Sussex countryside. The largest of the crow family, and indeed the largest passerine in the world, this is a bird that demands to be noticed. Often heard long before it is seen it is not naturally fearful of man and will often provide near views as it flies low down, close to the observer. The female is the size of a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, but the male with a wing span of 1.3-1.5 m and weighing as much as 1.5 kg can appear appreciably larger. It possesses a fast, powerful, direct flight but is as agile as its smaller cousins, delighting us with its tumbles and acrobatics. The Raven possesses an astonishing variety of calls, possibly more than any other avian species, and is well known for its voice mimicry. By any reckoning this is a magnificent bird. So why in lowland Britain has it fared so badly in the past, just how good is its current position, and what does the future hold?

In this article there will be a brief look at the historical past, following the Raven's fortunes through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and then a much closer examination of the past 15-20 years. Three distribution maps will illustrate the dramatic expansion in the population of this species since 2001, when Ravens began to recolonise Sussex. A mixed winter roost of Raven, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Common Buzzard, discovered in the winter of 2014-2015, will be described in detail, using diary notes. A number of diverse subjects will be covered, to include juvenile dispersal, the movement of flocks of Ravens, and dietary habits. In conclusion there will be a discussion to expand on some of the points raised and then finally a brief summary.

Background and methodology

A thorough analysis was undertaken of all the records held in the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) database. Evidence was sought for nesting pairs but also territorial and prospecting pairs, with methodology used as described below. Many SOS members may not have had much opportunity to familiarise themselves with Ravens (and this includes the author before 2014), and therefore some brief background notes may prove helpful.

The Raven's nest provides the focal point within a pair's territory and the nesting area is aggressively defended, with intruding Ravens mobbed until they are driven away. The nests tend to be very substantial affairs, typically 0.5 m in height and 0.5-1.0 m across at the base (Ratcliffe 1997). The nests may be found in tall trees (especially in parkland), on chalk cliffs, in chalk quarries and on man-made structures such as pylons, electricity sub-stations and deserted buildings. The aggressive behaviour of nesting pairs leads to 'spacing' between neighbouring pairs, which are typically some 2.0-3.5 km apart, although these distances can vary enormously and where there are premium nesting sites, such as chalk quarries, neighbouring pairs may be as little as a few hundred metres apart. Since there were no known breeding Ravens in the county in the late 1990s a prospecting pair could settle anywhere without any spacing constraints.

This is a species that nests very early in the year and in lowland Britain where severe winters are rare most females will be incubating eggs in late February or early March. The young fledge

in late April or May and then can be seen in family parties when they leave the nesting area on their daily feeding excursions. Just how far these family parties travel is unknown. Ratcliffe (1997) states that "although the distance they cover each day may be quite small, they may be 10 km or more from the nest site". This statement was based on observations made in upland Britain and may reflect a dependence on large animal carcasses. Bearing in mind the catholic diet of the Raven and the greater variety and availability of food in lowland Britain, it would seem likely that in most instances suitable feeding would be found within a 5-6 kilometres of the nesting area. These family groups may remain intact for most of the summer but by August or early September, at the latest, the young are fully independent and disperse from the immediate nesting area. They form flocks with other young independent non-breeding birds and these flocks often feed and roost together. It is thought that pair-bonding occurs at these roosts; it would be surprising if this were not so.

Analysing the SOS records, two general patterns emerged. For some pairs it was abundantly clear that there was a nesting attempt, which was identified as such within a single season. More usually, however, a pair was seen once or twice during the course of one year, with greater regularity the following year, and finally, a year or two later still, either a nest was found or more often a family party recorded. This second pattern of records reflects the fact that Ravens are slow to sexually mature and do not breed until at least their third calendar year (Coombs 1978).

Ravens are very successful breeding birds and very productive. As an illustration of this high productivity, a study in Northern Ireland (Wells 1996) of 670 territorial pairs between 1984 and 1996 revealed the following data: 88% of the pairs laid eggs with an average clutch size of 4.73 eggs, and there were 3.53 fledged young per successful pair or 3.00 young per pair for all 670 territorial pairs. There is no doubt that this is a species that has the capacity to re-colonise an area very rapidly.

Qualifying criteria for a prospecting/territorial pair:

- A pair recorded in an area of suitable habitat between February and May, coinciding with the months when nesting occurs.
- Several such records, but not necessarily in the same year, e.g. a pair seen in February in consecutive years would be considered very promising.
- Other records such as a note of a pair having been seen in every month of the year.

Qualifying criteria for a nesting pair:

- Displaying birds seen in a suitable breeding locality.
- Birds repeatedly seen flying purposefully into the same area of woodland.
- Evidence of nest building, e.g. stick carrying (it should be noted that immature birds may sometimes partially build or even complete a nest 1-2 years before a full breeding attempt).
- Mobbing behaviour in apparent defence of a nesting area. When directed against an intruding Raven (or Ravens) or large raptor species, especially Common Buzzard, then there will usually be an active nest close by.
- A nest located with one or two Ravens in attendance.
- Fledged young seen, usually as a family party.

The SOS records were assessed twice over, firstly year by year and then by locality. Ultimately a judgement had to be made as to whether there was sufficient evidence to justify the label of a nesting pair. The author has studied the nesting habits of all the large raptors in Sussex for the past 20 years and this background experience proved very helpful.

Before returning to the modern era, a brief historical review of the Raven in Sussex provides some interesting background information.

Historical perspective

Ravens are essentially scavengers and will eat more or less anything. Together with other corvids and Red Kites, Ravens were welcome in medieval England, serving a very useful role in cleaning the towns of human detritus. Also partial to eggs and nestlings, Ravens may not have been quite so welcome in the countryside but as they were protected they were presumably a common sight in town and countryside alike. By the middle of the 17th century the benevolence shown towards Ravens had changed and so began their relentless persecution. By the mid-18th century the species was regarded as vermin and in many areas had a bounty on its head.

In the 19th century there was a determined and ultimately successful effort by gamekeepers and others to remove the Raven as a breeding species in Sussex. Here follows a sample of records which are of historical interest (Walpole-Bond 1938):

- In 1864 Dutton wrote that “a pair always build in the cliffs between Beachy Head and the lighthouse; I have the young brought to me most years”.
- In 1868 at Glynde: “up to and including 1868 there was a ravenage here in a tall tree”.
- Inland c.1880: “this year marks the demolition of our indigenous breed”.
- In 1894 at Beachy Head: “bred for the last time in oven-shaped recess halfway down a lofty steep west of lighthouse”.
- In 1895 at Peacehaven Heights, Cheyne Gap: “nested annually up to 1894 or 1895, the young nearly always captured”.

Although the early literature is rather vague it would seem that Ravens were still reasonably common in the early part of the 19th century but by the second half of the century there were just 18 known nesting pairs inland and 10 pairs on the chalk sea cliffs (Walpole-Bond 1938). The inland pairs were mostly found on large parkland estates and apart from one nest in a castle and one on a chalk face the rest were tree-nesting with the “Scotch fir” (Scots pine) the favoured tree species. The Sussex inland population was wiped out by about 1880 or 1881 and the coastal population by 1894 or 1895. By the turn of the century in 1900 there were no recorded breeding pairs in Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey or Kent.

It was not just gamekeepers and shepherds that led to the local extinction of the Raven. In the 19th century egg collectors played their part, the scarcity of the species just adding to the desire to collect the last remaining clutches available. As odd as it may seem nowadays the young were also collected and sold as pets. The Raven’s playful nature and its ability to mimic humans, even uttering short sentences, was presumably part of the appeal.

A small relic population on the Isle of Wight persisted and this was considered to be the origin of the few Ravens seen in Sussex in the last few years of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. In 1911, near Hastings, two birds that were probably nesting were shot. Between 1913 and 1936 there were just 13 records. Shrubb (1979) recorded that a pair bred at Seaford Head, and then at Beachy Head, between 1938 and 1945, but at least one of these birds had escaped from captivity.

The years between 1946 and 2000

In the period 1946 to 1963 there were just eight records of singles in the county: Brighton Borough on 15 Jun 1948; Beachy Head on 20 Mar and 20 Aug 1949; Cuckmere Valley on 1 Sep

1949; Beachy Head on 7 Jan 1950; Holywell (Eastbourne) on 9 Oct 1958, which flew in from the sea; Mount Caburn nr Lewes, a fly-over, heading east on 1 Aug 1959; and another fly-over at Chichester Hbr on 31 Mar 1963.

Astonishingly there were no further records for 13 years when a single bird was first seen at Beachy Head on 10 Apr 1976, staying until the end of the year. On 18 Sep 1976 a single bird at Beachy Head was recorded flying out to sea, heading east. A single Raven at Beachy Head was seen occasionally until 1 May 1977. There were no more records for 10 years when a single bird was seen at Coombe Haven, but there was some uncertainty as to whether this was a wild bird or an escape/release. Single birds were seen at Pagham Hbr on 9 Aug 1994 and Pilsey Sands on 23 Aug 1994. On 6 Apr 1997 there was a single bird at Beachy Head, and in the Rye area four single birds were recorded from 30 Sep until the end of the year.

It was the year 1999 that proved to be a tipping point with eight records for the Beachy Head area. There were several records for two birds (presumably a prospecting pair) and on 23 Mar 1999 three birds were seen together. The first inland record in the modern era was at Blackham on 3 Jun 2000, with another bird at Amberley Mount on 3 Sep 2000. There were two birds calling to each other in West Dean Woods on 27 Dec 2000, with nest building observed on 25 Feb 2001.

The years between 2001 and 2005

In 2001 there was a successful breeding pair at Beachy Head with two fledged young. The outcome for the West Dean Woods pair was unknown as the outbreak of foot and mouth disease that year prevented further access to the nesting area. In the Adur Valley in 2002 there was one successful pair with another nesting pair nearby for which the outcome was unknown. At Ditchling Beacon on 1 Sep 2003 there was a family party of two adults and three juveniles. No new nesting pairs were found in 2004 but in 2005 there were two pairs in the Lewes area, one of which had breeding confirmed, with the outcome for the other pair unknown. Also in 2005 there was confirmed breeding at Crowlink. The habitats chosen by the eight nesting pairs were as follows: chalk cliffs (2), chalk quarries (4), trees (1), and unknown (1). In addition to the eight known nesting pairs there were 12 “prospecting/territorial” pairs. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the nesting and prospecting/territorial pairs.

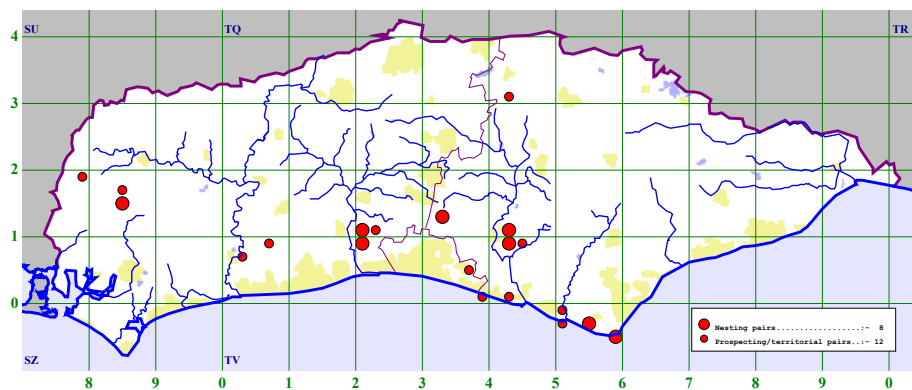


Figure 1. The distribution of nesting pairs (large red circles) and prospecting/territorial pairs (small red diamonds) of Ravens in Sussex in the years 2001 to 2005 inclusive. One tetrad may hold more than one nesting site or territorial pair.

The re-colonising Ravens appeared to be following two main routes: coastal and West Sussex downland. The 1999 prospecting pair at Beachy Head was presumably in the vanguard for others to follow, rediscovering the historic sites of the chalk cliffs between Beachy Head and Rottingdean. Birds following the coastal route evidently explored the major river valleys of the Arun, Adur and Ouse, finding plenty of highly suitable disused chalk quarries. Otherwise, there should be no surprise that downland in the far west of the county began to be colonised, as it was by Common Buzzards in the 1990s onwards and by Red Kites since 2004. The one isolated site not following any obvious route of entry into Sussex was at Ashdown Forest, although interestingly this was the location of one of the 18 tree-nesting haunts listed by Walpole-Bond, with Pippingford Park, Ashdown Forest the site of the last known surviving inland pair, with the latest date of nesting in 1881. It is rather fitting that one of the first re-colonising pairs of Ravens should return to that locality.

The years between 2006 and 2010

In the years between 2001 and 2005 some of the individual sites have been named. For the years between 2006 and 2010 localities will not be mentioned as long lists do not make very interesting reading but also to minimise possible disturbance during the nesting season. There were 14 new nesting pairs, making a cumulative total of 22 pairs. The nesting habitats of the 14 new pairs were as follows: chalk cliffs (4), chalk quarries (2), trees (5), man-made structures (2), and unknown (1). In addition there were 35 prospecting/territorial pairs.

To state that the cumulative total stands at 22 nesting pairs requires an explanation, for it could very reasonably be argued that known pairs in previous years may have perished or simply disappeared, as indeed could be the case. However, Ravens are known to be very sedentary and site-faithful and are highly unlikely to move unless driven away by man or killed. One can only report what is known and to date persecution has been very minimal with no reports of foul play in the past 10 years. In the event of the death of one of the pair it seems likely that the remaining bird would remain on territory and simply wait for a suitable replacement to find it. Given the very large number of casual records received for Ravens wandering across the whole of Sussex, it would be surprising if the wait was that long.

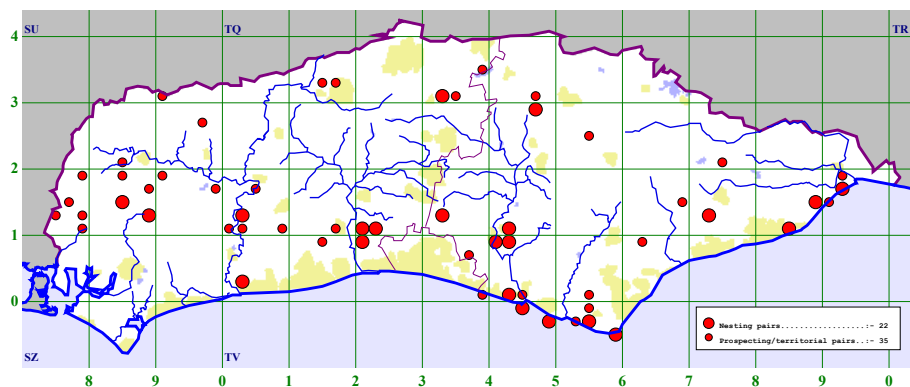


Figure 2. The distribution of nesting pairs (large red circles) and prospecting/territorial pairs (small red diamonds) of Ravens in Sussex in the years 2006 to 2010 inclusive. One tetrad may hold more than one nesting site or territorial pair.

This means that a very high percentage of all discovered nesting locations are likely to endure, although the actual nest site itself may change, some pairs alternating between two or three different nests within their territory, and of course not every pair will breed every year.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the nesting and prospecting/territorial pairs in the years 2006–2010, and this illustrates several points. The available spaces on the chalk cliffs were gradually filling up and there were many more pairs recorded in the river valleys of the Arun, Adur and Ouse. There was also a large cluster of nesting and territorial pairs on downland in the far west of the county. Two other changes were apparent, with a significant increase in the number of pairs in the Low and High Wealds of Sussex and the spread of the species to the extreme east of the county.

The years between 2011 and 2014

A further 30 nesting pairs were found and 13 additional territorial pairs. By 2014 there were 52 known nesting pairs and 26 territorial pairs, making a total of 78 pairs in the county, with no reports suggesting any loss to the breeding pool. The nesting habitats of the 30 new nesting pairs were as follows: chalk cliffs (3), chalk quarries (4), trees (18), man-made structures (2), and unknown (3).

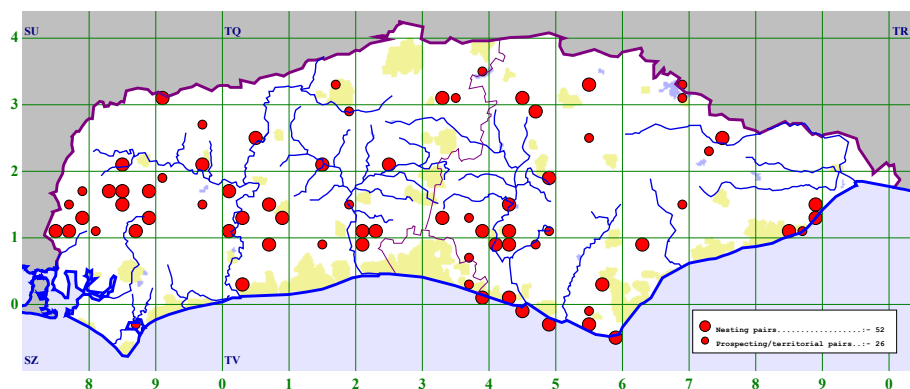


Figure 3. The distribution of nesting pairs (large red circles) and prospecting/territorial pairs (small red diamonds) of Ravens in Sussex in the years 2011 to 2014 inclusive. One tetrad may hold more than one nesting site or territorial pair.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the nesting and prospecting/territorial pairs in the years 2011–2014, and this shows that the chalk cliffs were close to being fully colonised and the river valley populations had also increased. There was now a very significant population on the South Downs in West Sussex and many more pairs in the Low and High Wealds.

The Raven population in Hampshire and south-east England

The Raven population in Hampshire and south-east England is undergoing a seismic change. By analysing the SOS database we have a very good idea about the situation in Sussex, but what is happening in our neighbouring counties? The re-colonisation of Hampshire and south-east England was the result of a steady, persistent influx of Ravens from further west. It is just possible that some Ravens may have originated from mainland Europe, but it is likely that the numbers involved have been very small. Ravens are disinclined to cross large expanses of water with no

ringed birds recovered in Britain from continental Europe and likewise no BTO recoveries found across the Channel (Ratcliffe). There have been two recoveries in Ireland originating from the British mainland and also two Irish-ringed birds recovered in Britain, so the Irish Sea has been crossed a few times (Ratcliffe). If cross-channel movement was a regular occurrence then one might expect a few to be seen most years. In the years 1946-2000 there were two periods of 13 years and 10 years when there were no Sussex records at all. Regular movement across the English Channel seems very unlikely.

The first confirmed breeding records in Hampshire were for two pairs in 2004 but just 11 years later in 2014 there were thought to be in the region of 80-100 pairs (K. Betton *pers. comm.*). No substantial roosts have yet been found but some very large gatherings have been documented. At Tidpit Down near the Wiltshire border there were 105 on 13 May 2013, feeding around a pig farm. This number was probably surpassed when 100-120 Ravens were feeding on meat left out for the Red Kites at Pilot Hill (Facombe) in January 2015. Otherwise there were two flocks of 52 at Martin Down on 28 Apr and 20 May 2012, and 12 other counts of between 20 and 35 (K. Betton *pers. comm.*).

In Surrey a pair first bred in 2010 but by 2014 there were three nesting pairs. It is thought that the current population, both nesting and territorial, is around 10 pairs (J. Gates *pers. comm.*). In Kent the first confirmed breeding was in 2009, when there were two pairs, and in 2013 there were three breeding pairs (M. McVail *pers. comm.*). The large gatherings recorded in Hampshire are likely to be replicated in Sussex over the next few years and doubtless both Surrey and Kent will experience major increases in their Raven populations in the very near future.

Raven and Red Kite roost in 2014-2015

The Red Kite roost in the far west of the county has been monitored since 2004 and the roost near The Burgh since November 2011. The roosts tend to be quite small in early autumn with numbers gradually increasing as the winter approaches. During this period of study peak counts have usually been obtained in the second half of December or very early January and so with these dates in mind a visit to The Burgh was scheduled for mid-December.

16 Dec 2014: Approaching a small copse on the way to the previous year's roost there was a cacophony of Raven babble coming from the depths of the spinney. No perched birds could be seen, but then a very large flock of Ravens exploded out of the copse just in front of the observer. The main flock gradually moved away leaving a few scattered single birds behind. Some of these joined the main flock whilst others flew over the copse and out of sight. After wheeling around for a couple of minutes this close-knit flock flew off to the east, and they too were soon out of sight as the copse obstructed the view. There were 17 Ravens in this main flock but adding the scattered single birds the overall figure was probably closer to 19-20. Continuing on towards the Red Kite roost there were at least another five Ravens but in ones and twos. So the total for the afternoon was probably 24 or 25, a very large number of Ravens for Sussex. Later on in the afternoon a total of 27 Red Kites went into roost. A few Ravens were heard close-by and at the time were thought to be the five or more Ravens mentioned above.

19 Dec 2014: Three days later a high viewing point was selected to try and follow the local Ravens in the late afternoon, hoping that their flight path might shed some light on where the Ravens were roosting. There followed a fascinating 2-3 hours of viewing as one small group after another flew to a nearby copse, which it later transpired was a pre-roost gathering. Just before dark the Ravens left this copse and in ones and twos flew a few hundred metres to join the Red Kite roost! A few late-arriving Ravens flew directly into the Red Kite roost, by-passing the pre-roost gathering. It was too dark and the distance too great to obtain an accurate count but there

were probably at least 20 Ravens. The first significant documented winter Raven roost found in Sussex and a mixed Raven and Red Kite roost to boot!

20 Dec 2014: There were at least 34 Red Kites, 25 Ravens and 12 or more Carrion Crows. Of the 34 Red Kites, 25 were seen well enough to assess maturity and all were identified as first-year birds. Similar numbers of Red Kites and Ravens were counted on 2 and 8 Jan 2015.

11 Jan 2015: On this visit the Ravens were the primary target species and the Red Kites largely ignored. In a stubble field close to the roost a feeding flock of 38 Ravens was found. With 11 others seen there were at least 49 Ravens in total but as dusk approached it was clear that the recent roosting copse had been abandoned as they were now flying off in a different direction.



Figure 5. *The Red Kite and Raven roost site photographed in the winter of 2014-2015.*

13 Jan 2015: The new roosting copse was located. There appeared to be just 20 Ravens and 10-12 Red Kites but at this new location counting was proving more difficult. Using a different viewing point 42 Ravens and 12 Red Kites were counted into the roost on 18 Jan 2015.

23 Jan 2015: At least 40 Ravens were feeding on the same stubble field previously mentioned. A minimum of 51 Ravens and 12 Red Kites went into the roost.

26 Jan 2015: The highest total yet was seen, with 85 Ravens, 28 Red Kites and six Common Buzzards all sharing the same roost. These numbers appeared to be well down on 16 Feb with 23 Ravens and 22 Red Kites going into the roost, but on 17 Mar there were surprisingly high numbers with 56 Ravens and 16 Red Kites seen.

The marked fluctuations in the numbers of Ravens and Red Kites counted into roost were surprising and slightly puzzling. Were these fluctuations genuine or spurious? Were birds joining the roost for a few days and then leaving? The counting process itself was far from straightforward.

The view to the north and west of the roost was uninterrupted, the view to the east was poor and the view to the south was very poor indeed and birds could easily slip into the copse without being seen. Interestingly, the two species adopted different behaviours when entering the roost. There were usually a few Red Kites pre-roosting in trees close to the roost and these birds flew into roost as dusk approached. However, most of the Red Kites came in quite late gliding towards the roosting copse at a height of 30-90 m, circled a couple of times and then went straight in and remained in. Some afternoons the Red Kites came in very late, flapping their way very low down across an arable field before swooping up and directly into the roosting copse. In the gloom and at considerable distance these birds could easily be missed. The Ravens behaved quite differently. Apart from a few stragglers that came in very late the majority were already present within 500-600 m of the roost an hour or so before dark. They could be very unobtrusive, perched in hedgerow trees with other corvids or just standing around on a patch of grass, just waiting to go in. Other afternoons they flew towards the roost, by-passed it and flew on to the south of the roosting copse to feed on a compost heap or in the adjacent stubble field. They sometimes carried on feeding until it was very dark and consequently were difficult to count as they flew into roost, and since they were flying in from the south and usually sub-canopy they were often out of sight from the viewing point. The entry point to the roost was therefore different for the two species with the Red Kites generally showing themselves very well and coming in from some height but with the Ravens sneaking in sub-canopy. Reflecting on the Raven counts, which did vary considerably, it was thought that there was a genuine increase from around 25 in late December to approximately 60 on 11 Jan with a peak of 85 on 26 Jan 2015.

No attempt was made to view these birds close up as there was no wish to disturb them. However, when the first roost was abandoned for a much more secluded second roost there was an opportunity to observe a dozen or so birds when they pre-roosted in the first roosting copse. Each species kept to themselves but small groups of Red Kites and Ravens were only a few metres away from each other. On no occasion was there the remotest indication of any aggression between the two species.

Juvenile dispersal

The author is not aware of any tagging studies of young Ravens in lowland Britain but in the absence of telemetry data what we do have is a substantial library of British ringing data. Recovery data from the BTO ringing scheme tell us that very young first-year Ravens (less than 75 days old) appear not to move very far from their nesting area, typically less than 10 km. For older first-year birds (76-365 days) around half of the recoveries have been found at less than 25 km, with the other half recovered at 25-100 km, with very few further than 100 km from their natal area (Ratcliffe 1997). Historical ringing data does provide us with a great deal of fascinating information but it has its limitations, and stating the obvious it does rely on the rings being recovered. If a ringed bird from Cumbria or Shropshire dispersed 150 km and was subsequently shot, trapped or poisoned, was it likely that the ring would be reported? Probably not.

Ravens thermal easily and also possess a very powerful direct flight. There is no logical reason why some Ravens might not disperse considerable distances and they are certainly very well equipped to do so. The literature does rather dwell on the sedentary nature of Ravens and regarding nesting pairs this is completely non-controversial but what about young Ravens? Are they so reluctant to disperse far from their natal area? An interesting situation arose in southern England in the early 2000s that added some indirect evidence regarding dispersal. In Sussex in the years between 2001 and 2005 there was a total of 20 pairs that obviously had to have come from somewhere but with all the nearest breeding populations some distance away just how far did they

come? The Isle of Wight was the nearest population in 2001 with just three pairs, Wiltshire had a total of 22 pairs (this included confirmed, probable and possible breeding pairs), and Dorset a total of 14 pairs. It was thought that the burgeoning populations of Gloucestershire and Somerset were responsible for the on-going rapid re-colonisation of Wiltshire, with Somerset and Devon birds contributing to the rapid growth of the inland population in Dorset (P. Castle *pers. comm.*).

The Beachy Head pair of Ravens was 136 km distant from the Isle of Wight and 166 km from a mid-point in Wiltshire and Dorset, the nearest three breeding populations. For the Ouse valley pair the distances were 120-150 km, and for the Adur valley pair 96-126 km. The West Dean pair was nearest at 66-96 km. The combined total for the Isle of Wight, Wiltshire and Dorset was less than 40 pairs and yet there were 20 new pairs in Sussex between 2001 and 2005. Is it realistic for a combined breeding population of 40 pairs to provision Sussex with 40 birds? If not then some of the Sussex Ravens must surely have originated from even further west with consequently much higher dispersal figures than those mentioned above. It would seem that in some circumstances dispersal may be much further than the literature tends to suggest. These were, of course, exceptional circumstances for without historic human persecution the whole of the UK would have had a saturated population with presumably every suitable territory occupied.

Now we move on to the winter of 2014-2015 when a roost of 85 Ravens appeared in The Burgh area seemingly out of nowhere. Ravens had been present in that area for several years, with a family party of two adults and four juveniles in 2009, a maximum count of two in 2010, six in 2011 and four in 2013. So where did the 85 birds in the Raven roost come from? Winter roosts are composed of young birds as the breeding pairs remain on territory all year round, therefore they are mostly first-year birds, with perhaps just a few second- or third-year birds. One possible clue came from a record on 14 Jun 2014 when there were 27 Ravens all feeding at a downland location within a few kilometres of the roost. The observers thought there were 4-6 family parties, all of which were feeding independently in their respective groups but presumably drawn together in a field where the feeding was especially rich (there are six known breeding pairs within 6 km of this feeding location). With 4-6 families this meant that there were 15-19 juveniles. By late summer these young birds were independent of their parents and unless they dispersed further afield could easily have formed both a local feeding and a roosting flock, thus providing a nucleus for others to join. There are approximately 20 known nesting/territorial pairs on West Sussex downland and allowing for a further 5-10 downland pairs that are not currently known then it is just about possible that all 85 Ravens were Sussex-born. An amazing thought! Perhaps more likely they were mostly Sussex-born with a few dispersed from Hampshire or even further afield?

Movement of flocks of Ravens

To date there have just been two records suggesting a large movement of Ravens from west to east. The first sighting was at Beachy Head on 11 Mar 2012 when there was a flock of 17 Ravens over the downs at Birling Gap. The observers noted: "they were very noisy and after several minutes of circling 15 departed high to the east and out of sight". Presumably the other two Ravens were a local pair, attempting to "see them off".

The second record was witnessed by the author on 16 Dec 2014 when 19-20 Ravens were unintentionally disturbed from their perched position in a small copse near The Burgh. The immediate thought of the observer was that this was a close-knit group of birds moving through, presumably from west to east. The only other possibility was that they were a feeding flock, but they were not feeding in a field but perched in a copse in the mid-afternoon. Also, on a further ten field trips to that area not once was this behaviour replicated, with many small feeding parties observed on pasture or stubble fields.

Dietary habits

Ratcliffe (1997) emphasises the close association of Ravens with sheep, seeming to suggest that in the absence of sheep or other large mammalian carcasses such as Red Deer then the species is unlikely to do very well. Since most of the studies have been carried out in upland Britain there has historically been a very close association between Ravens and sheep. In lowland Britain it is certainly true that sheep afterbirth will provide a bonanza in the lambing season but otherwise it is unlikely that many dead sheep will be left out in the open for too long. Of the many thousands of records in the SOS database there is just one record of Ravens feeding on a dead lamb. There has clearly been a very rapid increase in Raven numbers in Sussex without too many dead sheep lying about, so is the dependence that critical? There is no shortage of carrion in the Sussex countryside with dead rabbits, foxes, badgers and fallow and roe deer not uncommon, together with pheasants, red-legged partridges, rats, mice, voles, etc. Analysis of Raven pellets provides us with a good idea as to what they eat. Most of the studies in upland Britain do confirm that sheep form a very important part of the diet but in one very large study on mainland Orkney (Marquiss and Booth 1986) where few sheep carcasses were available, 80% of the pellets sampled contained lagomorphs, mainly rabbit but with some brown hare. Sussex has plenty of rabbits and on downland there are hares to be found.

Observing the Ravens on downland close to the roost the first point of interest was that most of them were feeding with other corvids on stubble fields or pasture with autumn-sown cereal fields completely ignored. The presumption was that they were feeding on earthworms, other invertebrates and also some vegetable matter, as they were particularly keen on the maize “game strips” that had been cut down. The second point of interest was that most if not all of the Ravens could be found feeding within 2 km of the roost. On 16 Feb 2015 some 23 Ravens were counted into the roost. On the following day there was little difficulty in finding a total of 20 Ravens in small groups, all feeding within 2 km of the roost and all associated with other corvids (Rooks, Carrion Crows and Jackdaws). Assuming that these other corvids were finding enough food to sustain them, then presumably so were the Ravens. In terms of energy conservation the fact that they were able to find food so close to the roost is clearly a major benefit.

Discussion

Man was so successful in his persecution of the Raven that by the end of the 19th century there were no breeding pairs left in the county of Sussex. More than 100 years were to pass before a truly wild pair of Ravens bred in the county; once again on the chalk cliffs of Beachy Head. Just 13 years after this first breeding pair in the modern era there is good evidence for a county population of at least 78 pairs. What a turnaround!

The Raven was relentlessly persecuted in the past, but except for the occasional incident this is no longer the case. This transformation took place a generation ago and the gaming estates should be congratulated for this change of attitude. Doubtless a few have not fully embraced this change but the Sussex skies are now full of Common Buzzards, Red Kites and Ravens and this tells us two things, firstly that they are a very successful trio of species, if left alone, and secondly that in recent times they have been left alone.

The nearest breeding Ravens in the late 1990s and early 2000s were some distance away with relatively small populations on the western edge of the Isle of Wight, and in Wiltshire and Dorset. These three counties had a combined breeding population of fewer than 40 pairs and whether these numbers were sufficiently high to provision Sussex with 40 young Ravens is open to question. Otherwise some of the new arrivals were presumably from south-west England and in those early years dispersal distances of 150-200 km were perhaps not uncommon. The circumstances were

exceptional in that one part of England (the south-west) had a large and expanding population whilst to the east in southern England many areas were more or less devoid of Ravens. As and when the whole of Britain has a saturated population, different dispersal behaviour may prevail and it may well be that most young Ravens will not disperse very far.

In the early years of re-colonisation the majority of the nest sites were found on the coastal chalk cliffs and the numerous chalk quarries to be found in the major river valleys. Over the years increasing numbers have settled on West Sussex downland joining the large population of Common Buzzards and good numbers of Red Kites to be found there. The Raven nesting habitats used so far are: chalk cliffs (9), chalk quarries (10), trees (24), man-made structures (4), and unknown (5, of which most were probably trees). Walpole-Bond (1938) mentions 10 known chalk cliff sites and so there is not much scope for expansion there and the same applies to the chalk quarries, the most suitable of which have already been occupied. It is apparent that tree-nesting and to a lesser extent pylon-nesting hold the key to the further expansion of the Raven population in Sussex.

There is insufficient information in the SOS database to comment knowledgeably on the type of woodland or the type of tree preferred in Sussex. Historically Scots pines were favoured in both Sussex and Hampshire but elsewhere information from the BTO Nest Record Scheme shows that other conifers such as Norway and Sitka spruce, larch and exotic conifers are all regularly used, as are deciduous trees such as oak and beech. Since Ravens forage in open countryside it is likely that copses would be favoured compared to larger woods, or if the latter are used then the nesting tree is likely to be close to open fields. There is currently a sizeable population on West Sussex downland and this will doubtless spread eastwards as there is plenty of suitable habitat in rural East Sussex.

The communal roost of Red Kites and Ravens is a very interesting development. In medieval times when these two scavenger species were common it is likely enough that they roosted together. In modern times they are known to roost together in the Chilterns and Wiltshire, and doubtless other counties too, but not (as far as is known) in the numbers counted in the Sussex roost in 2014-2015. In this respect it appears that this is a British first, with both species communally roosting in very large numbers.

Similarities can very readily be seen between the expansion of the Red Kite and Raven populations in southern England, with Sussex at the south-east leading edge of this expansion. For many years now the largest of the Red Kite roosts in southern England have not been situated within the core breeding area but on the periphery. The main breeding area was originally centred in the Chilterns but now encompasses a huge area to include large areas of Berkshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Hampshire. Adult breeding birds remain either in their breeding woods or in roosts in the core breeding area whilst the young Red Kites, principally first-year birds, occupy these peripheral roosts in very large numbers, a vanguard as it were for the next phase of expansion. These new roosts can suddenly appear from nowhere, with few Red Kites in an area one year and a sizeable roost the next. The Red Kite roost at The Burgh is a very good example of this, with just the occasional Red Kite seen in 2010, a roost of 10 in the 2011-2012 winter, and then 25 in 2012-2013, 31 in 2013-2014 and 37 in 2014-2015. There are very few breeding pairs within 10-15 km of this roost. Many of the 37 young Red Kites recorded in January 2015 were doubtless Sussex-born but many others must have come from much further afield. A very similar pattern seems to have emerged for Ravens but if anything it is even more pronounced with a maximum count of four Ravens at The Burgh in 2013 and a roost of 85 just a year later. How many of these 85 Ravens were Sussex-born and how many came from Hampshire or even further afield is open to speculation.

Given that Ravens have large broods it is quite possible that Sussex may have a saturated population in as little as 10-15 years. What is the ultimate population likely to be? There are three main factors that will determine the ultimate numbers: food supply, territorial spacing and persecution.

Looking at the issue of persecution first, one hopes this should not be a major issue. Ravens and Common Buzzards share a great deal in common, one characteristic of which is that neither is universally loved by country folk. However, if one examines just how well Common Buzzards have fared in Sussex in the past 20 years, with 8-10 pairs in 1995 (Kalahar 1998) and a current estimated population of 650-900 pairs (Thomas 2014), it is clear that they are doing very well. If Common Buzzards are more or less tolerated right across Sussex then Ravens have a fair chance of succeeding.

Territorial spacing seems to have evolved as a means of ensuring that every pair of a given species has enough food to feed themselves and their brood. Many raptors have “adopted” this strategy and so have Ravens. The distance between neighbouring Raven pairs varies considerably but a fairly typical figure is 2.5-3.5 km. There was an old country saying that “you won’t find more than one pair of Ravens on an estate”. There is a lot of truth in that, although where there are highly suitable chalk quarry sites Ravens are not averse to nesting fairly close together.

Will there be enough food to support hundreds of pairs of Ravens? Judging by the numbers of Common Buzzards, Red Kites and Carrion Crows in Sussex these species do not appear to have a major problem in finding enough food, so there is no particular reason why Ravens should struggle. Most of the available data for breeding density comes from the rugged parts of Britain where the Raven has been largely unmolested. The highest density recorded is for central Wales in 1976-7 when 50 pairs of Ravens occupied 475 km² with a mean density of 15.9 pairs per 100 km² (Newton *et al.* 1982). The county of Devon is perhaps rather closer to the conditions found in Sussex and for the period 1983-89 there were 55 pairs in 520 km² with a mean density of 10.5 pairs per 100 km², and in 1988 there was an estimated county population of 350 pairs (Ratcliffe 1997). Sussex has a very good mixture of arable land and pasture with plenty of woodland to provide nest sites and so a county population of at least 300 pairs within the next 10-15 years would seem to be a conservative minimum.

Summary

The discovery of a major Raven and Red Kite roost in the winter of 2014-2015 prompted a great deal of reflective thought about the current position of the Raven in Sussex. Having resumed breeding in 2001 when there were just 1-2 pairs the county population has increased to at least 78 pairs in 2014. With 85 young Ravens roosting on West Sussex downland and quite possibly a similar number of young birds scattered throughout East Sussex there are a lot of Ravens set to join the breeding pool within the next few years.

Now was the time to tell the Raven’s story before these birds become commonplace and accepted as a natural part of the Sussex countryside. May it prove to be so for the Raven is part of our ancient heritage and with its lovely repertoire of calls and its majesty in the air it is every bit as interesting and delightful to listen to and watch as any other species we have in Sussex.

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The BTO/GWCT survey of breeding Woodcock in 2013: numbers and distribution in Sussex

Helen Crabtree

Introduction

In 2013 the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), funded by and in collaboration with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), conducted a national survey of breeding Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*. The main aim of the survey at a national level was to measure the change in the breeding population since the first baseline population estimate was calculated from the results of a survey conducted in 2003 by the BTO and the GWCT (Hoodless *et al.* 2009). The Bird Atlas 2007-11 results had indicated a significant reduction in breeding distribution since previous breeding atlas fieldwork in 1968-1972 and in 1988-92 (Balmer *et al.* 2013), so quantifying the reduction in the breeding population was a priority. Secondary aims of the 2013 survey were to obtain more detailed information about breeding distribution and abundance changes, and to investigate how these are related to woodland habitat characteristics and land use in habitats adjoining woodland.

The breeding distribution of Woodcock covers much of Britain and Ireland, but the nocturnal habits and cryptic nature of this species make it difficult to monitor the breeding population using traditional survey methods such as the BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). A special survey method was devised for the national survey in 2003, using counts of the territorial roding flights undertaken by males at dusk and dawn to estimate the numbers of males present at individual sites (Hoodless *et al.* 2008). The 2013 survey used the same method of counting territorial roding flights.

This article presents the results of the BTO survey in Sussex in 2013, in relation to numbers and distribution. These results are compared with those obtained from previous surveys in Sussex, including the results for Sussex obtained from the previous national survey in 2003 which have not previously been published, although unfortunately the 2003 results were not sufficient to allow the calculation of a baseline county population estimate. Bird Atlas 2007-11 fieldwork in Sussex (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Thomas 2014) revealed that the Woodcock breeding range had reduced significantly since the previous breeding atlas in 1988-1992 (James 1996), with the species largely having been lost from areas of the High Weald and the western South Downs and also from some areas of the West Sussex commons. In this context a county population estimate for 2013 is attempted and recommendations for future surveys are made.

Survey methods

The sites surveyed were 1x1-km squares which had mostly been randomly selected from within the known breeding range and which were known to contain some woodland. In Sussex, 108 squares were initially selected to be surveyed. Of these, 52 squares were designated as high-priority sites because they had been previously surveyed in 2003. Some of the remaining 56 squares had been randomly selected in 2003 but not surveyed, and some squares were newly selected in 2013. Significantly, none of the high-priority sites were within the Ashdown Forest area because unfortunately no surveys were undertaken there in 2003. The selected squares were allocated to volunteers where possible. Volunteers were also able to opt to conduct surveys in squares not on the original list but where Woodcock were likely to occur; nationally the results of these surveys at additional observer-chosen sites would not be used in calculating population estimates although information collected about habitat characteristics would be valuable.

All squares were surveyed from fixed points. Volunteers allocated high-priority sites were asked to use the same fixed points as were used in the 2003 survey and were provided with the 6-figure grid references of these points. Volunteers allocated low-priority sites or selecting sites themselves were asked to select their own count points. These volunteers were asked to locate the largest area of mature woodland within the survey square, and to then select a count point within this woodland (ideally at least 100 m from the woodland edge) but within a glade or ride or felled area such that roding Woodcock would be visible against the sky rather than obscured by a closed canopy. A count point could be located up to 400 m outside a selected square if no suitable count point could be found within the square.

Volunteers were first asked to make a reconnaissance visit to each of their allocated sites in April, to locate the count point in high-priority squares and to select a suitable count point in low-priority and additional squares. Volunteers were then asked to make three evening survey visits to each of their allocated sites during the period 1 May to 30 Jun, with at least one week between visits. On each visit, volunteers were required to observe from the selected fixed point for a total duration of 75 mins, beginning 15 mins before sunset (although subsequently only observations during the first 60 mins were used in the analysis). Each time that a roding Woodcock was seen or heard during this 75-min period, this was noted as an individual registration on the recording form, with the time noted to the nearest minute. If two or more birds were seen or heard passing the count point together, this was counted as one registration and the number of birds was noted. If no roding birds were recorded during two evening visits, it was essential that visit details were returned although subsequent visits were not required.

For any survey site the number of observations of roding birds can be used to estimate the number of individual males present, using the results of research by Hoodless *et al.* (2008) which sought to establish a reliable survey method for this species. Counts of roding males can be difficult to interpret because it is impossible for an observer to distinguish between different individual birds, and because a few dominant males may rode for long periods whilst other males may only rode for short periods. In order to enable the use of counts of roding males as measures of abundance, Hoodless *et al.* (2008) sought to establish the relationship between numbers of individual males and numbers of observations, and investigated differences between habitats. The calls of roding males at several different sites were recorded and analysed so that individual males at each site could be recognised by their sonograms. The number of different individuals at each site was then plotted against the number of roding observations at each site; this showed a logarithmic relationship which was not found to be affected by habitat or woodland type (see Figure 1).

Using this established relationship, the numbers of roding observations obtained in the current survey were used to estimate the numbers of individual males present. Allowance was made for the fact that in the current survey roding observations were counted during a 75-min period on each visit, while the observation period in 2003 was only 60 mins; only observations during the first 60 mins for each visit in 2013 were used in the analysis. For each site, the maximum number of roding observations during the first 60 mins of any visit was used to estimate the number of males present (Hoodless *et al.* 2008). The estimated number of individual males present at each survey point can be assumed to be equivalent to the number in the 1-km survey square because the mean roding area has been shown to be 88 hectares (Hirons 1980), sufficiently close for the purposes of the survey to the 1-km square area.

Volunteers were also asked to undertake habitat recording during the period 15 May to 15 Jun, to characterize the woodland surrounding each count point (within 200 m). This habitat recording involved selecting woodland types and dominant ground vegetation types from lists

provided, and also indicating the level of grazing activity at the site by deer and livestock. Habitat data collected in Sussex is complex and relates to an insufficient number of sites for any detailed analysis, so this aspect of the survey is only discussed very generally here.

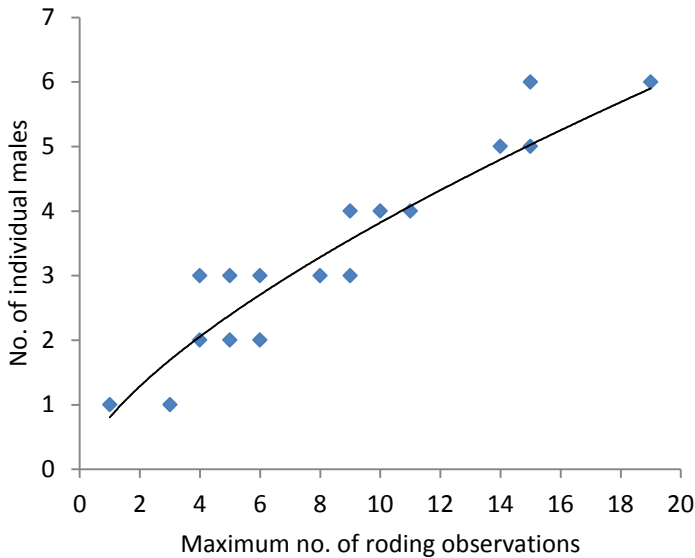


Figure 1. Relationship between the numbers of roding male Woodcock known to be present at each site from analysis of their calls and the maximum numbers of roding observations in a 60-min period (taken from Hoodless et al. 2008).

Survey results

The required surveys were conducted at a total of 99 sites in Sussex in 2013; these comprised 47 high-priority sites (which had also been surveyed in 2003), 32 low-priority randomly-selected sites and 20 additional sites selected by the observers. At 73 of the 99 surveyed sites, no roding Woodcock were seen or heard at all by the observers during at least two evening visits. For the 26 sites where roding Woodcock were encountered, the maximum numbers of observations were used to estimate the numbers of individual males present using the method described above, and the results are given in Figure 2.

Combining the estimated numbers at all of the sites, a total of 64 individual roding males were estimated to be present. Most of the sites where roding Woodcock were encountered were in heathland areas, either on the West Sussex commons or in the Ashdown Forest area. Of the 26 sites, six were on the West Sussex commons and nine were in the Ashdown Forest area, with the highest numbers of individual males recorded at Stanley Common, Ambersham Common, Lavington Common and Duncton Common in West Sussex and the Chelwood, Broadstone and Misbourne areas of the Ashdown Forest. Woodcock were also recorded at Broadwater Warren, a heathland site in the north-east of the county. The other ten sites where Woodcock were encountered were in large areas of woodland, with the highest numbers recorded in Westdean Woods and Rewell Wood.

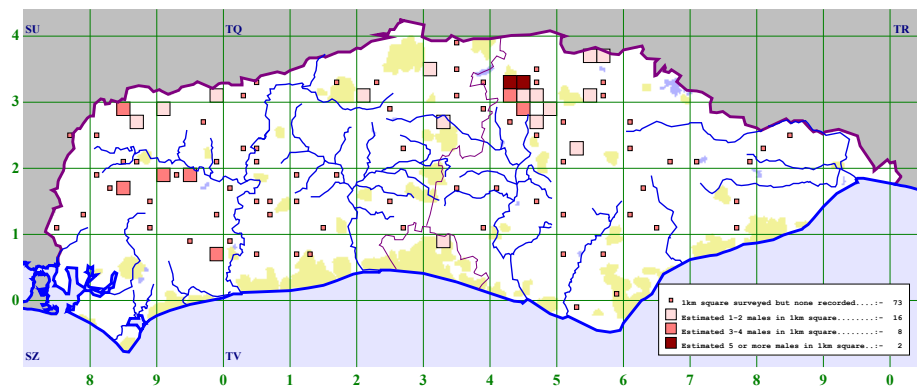


Figure 2. The numbers of individual male Woodcock estimated to be present at each of the sites surveyed in 2013, applying the relationship demonstrated by Hoodless et al. (2008) to the maximum numbers of observations of roding birds. Sites were 1-km squares but are mapped here for clarity at tetrad level and there may be more than one site within one tetrad.

Discussion

With a relatively small number of sites surveyed in Sussex in 2013 and with roding Woodcock recorded at only 26 sites, arriving at a population estimate for the county is difficult. An estimated 64 individual males were recorded across the 26 sites, but if at any site the number of individual males is considered to be possibly one more or less than the estimated number (although not zero), then the total number of males recorded in the county falls in the range 48-90 individuals. This is clearly a minimum limit for the estimated number of roding males actually present in the county.

Figure 3 shows the breeding distribution map for Woodcock resulting from the Bird Atlas 2007-11 fieldwork in Sussex (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Thomas 2014).

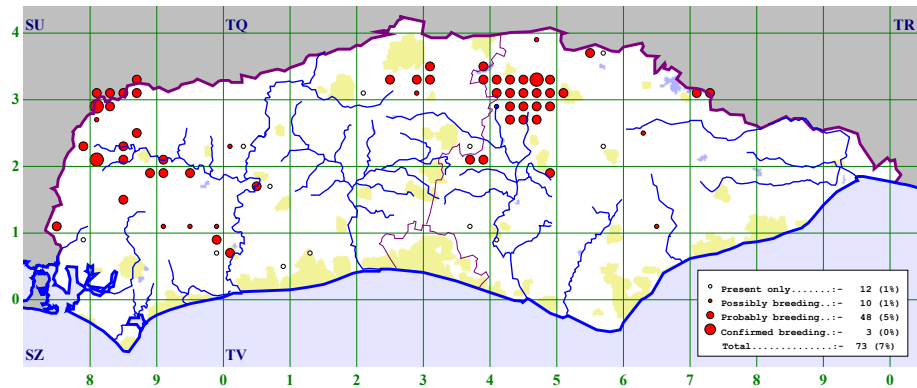


Figure 3. Woodcock breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008-2011 inclusive.

Direct comparison of this map with the distribution map resulting from the current survey (Figure 2) is difficult because of the relatively small number of sites surveyed in 2013 and because the atlas distribution map was plotted using records gathered during four breeding seasons (2008-2011 inclusive) and therefore possibly shows a wider distribution. Another factor which makes it difficult to compare the current distribution map with the atlas distribution map is that, although all tetrads in Sussex were surveyed at least once in the years 2008-2011 inclusive, atlas volunteers were not asked to make visits at dusk and therefore some sites would have been missed where in fact roding Woodcock were present. However, the two distribution maps are broadly similar, with the most important areas being the West Sussex commons and the Ashdown Forest. The atlas distribution map indicates that Woodcock were recorded in the breeding season in 73 tetrads in the years 2008-2011 (regardless of the level of breeding evidence established). If it is assumed that there is one 1-km square area of suitable breeding habitat within each tetrad, and that the suitability of this habitat has not changed significantly between 2008-2011 and 2013, then the results of the current survey can be extrapolated across the breeding range shown by the atlas distribution map. If between two and four individual males are assumed to have been present in each of the 38 tetrads on the West Sussex commons and in the Ashdown Forest area, which is a very conservative estimate based on the results of the current survey (see Figure 2), and if one roding male is assumed to have been present in each of the other 35 tetrads, then a county population estimate of about 110-180 roding males can be calculated. Actually there are larger areas of suitable habitat in some of these tetrads, particularly in the Ashdown Forest area and in some of the larger woodlands, and as explained above some suitable sites will be missing from the atlas distribution map, so a less conservative estimate might be 200-300 roding males in the county. On the other hand, the national population of this species has been shown to have decreased dramatically over recent decades (Fuller *et al.* 2005, Balmer *et al.* 2013), and the breeding range in Sussex reduced significantly between 1988-1992 and 2008-2011 (Thomas 2014), particularly on the West Sussex commons although less so in the Ashdown Forest area. The assumption that the breeding distribution in Sussex in 2013 was the same as that found in 2008-2011 may be justified, if Woodcock populations have stabilised in favoured areas, but equally this assumption may be optimistic and a population estimate of 150-220 roding males in 2013 may be more sensible.

Figure 4 shows the sites visited in Sussex for the national survey conducted in 2003 by the BTO and the GWCT (Hoodless *et al.* 2009). Sites were 1-km squares as in the current survey, and the maximum numbers of observations have again been used to estimate the numbers of individual males present at each site. It is unfortunate that no surveys at all were conducted in 2003 in the Ashdown Forest area, which as already discussed is one of the most important breeding areas for Woodcock in Sussex, and few surveys were conducted on the West Sussex commons. The reasons for this are unclear, but it means that it is difficult to compare the results of the 2003 survey in Sussex with the results of the current survey. Combining the estimated numbers at all of the 18 sites where Woodcock were encountered in 2003, a total of 50 individual roding males were estimated to be present.

With numbers missing for the Ashdown Forest this total is fairly meaningless although it can be compared with the 39 individual males estimated to be present at the 17 sites not in the Ashdown Forest area where Woodcock were encountered in 2013. The two sites where it is estimated that more than five individual males were present in 2003 both held fewer birds in 2013 and other sites with more than one or two males present in 2003 either held reduced numbers in 2013 or were not surveyed in 2013, but really the number of sites and the amount of data involved here are too small (with only 47 sites surveyed in both 2003 and 2013) to allow for any conclusions about population changes or any estimate of the county population of roding male Woodcock in 2003.

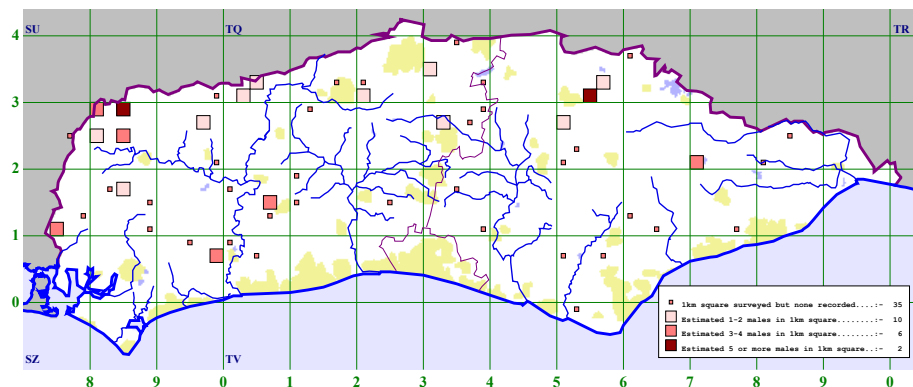


Figure 4. *The numbers of individual male Woodcock estimated to be present at each of the sites surveyed in 2013 (not previously published), applying the relationship demonstrated by Hoodless et al. (2008) to the maximum numbers of observations of roding birds. Sites were 1-km squares but are mapped here for clarity at tetrad level and there may be more than one site within one tetrad.*

As already stated, most of the sites where roding Woodcock were encountered in Sussex in 2013 were in heathland areas, either on the West Sussex commons or in the Ashdown Forest area. Some sites were in the larger wooded areas in the county such as Westdean Woods and Rewell Wood. Woodcock have specific habitat requirements, particularly during the breeding season. They are generally associated with woodland, and breed in both deciduous and coniferous woodlands, but need large areas of damp, undisturbed, open woodland with some dense ground vegetation (Hirons and Johnson 1987). There is some evidence to suggest that Woodcock do not breed in woods that are smaller in area than 10 hectares, and some studies have suggested that Woodcock prefer woodlands larger than 80 hectares in area (Fuller 1982). In 1988-1992 Woodcock were more widely distributed in many of the wooded areas of Sussex (James 1996) than has been found subsequently, and although roding males can still be found in some of the larger woods, it is in the heathland habitats that roding birds can now most easily and reliably be found.

The West Sussex commons and the Ashdown Forest area both comprise a patchwork of woodland and heathland areas that is unique to the south-east of England, and the overall habitat is very similar to that found in the much larger New Forest in Hampshire. Woodcock are undoubtedly using the woodland in these areas, but clearly the presence of the more open heathland habitats is important. The New Forest Woodcock Group found in an intensive survey of roding birds in the New Forest in 2013 and 2014 that Woodcock could be found in areas with comparatively small amounts of woodland coverage, that not all areas with high proportions of woodland had Woodcock present, and that really there was little correlation between the proportion of woodland in an area and the number of roding Woodcock observed (New Forest Woodcock Group 2014). This suggests that in these mixed heathland and woodland habitats the Woodcock can utilise smaller areas of woodland than in other parts of the UK, with the open heathland areas adjacent to the woodland perhaps providing favourable feeding conditions (New Forest Woodcock Group 2014). Elsewhere in the UK there may be less suitable agricultural and other types of habitat adjacent to woodlands, such that larger areas of woodland coverage are required.

Conclusions

A survey conducted in 2013 of breeding Woodcock at 99 potentially suitable sites in Sussex found roding males at 26 sites; most of these sites where roding Woodcock were encountered were in heathland areas, either on the West Sussex commons or in the Ashdown Forest area. The estimated total number of males recorded in the county was in the range 48-90 individuals, and using the breeding distribution found in 2008-2011 to extrapolate these results it is estimated very conservatively that the county breeding population in 2013 was 150-220 roding males.

This is the first time that Woodcock have been fully surveyed in Sussex using an established method that is repeatable, and the first time that a population estimate has been attempted from survey results. Although the survey in 2003 used the established method and yielded some useful information, no sites in the Ashdown Forest area were surveyed using the established method, and without data from this important area the results of this survey were fairly meaningless. Despite the more thorough coverage of the 2013 survey, the number of sites surveyed was still relatively small and the population estimate is therefore extremely tentative. However, having established this baseline, a future repeat survey of the sites surveyed in 2013, using exactly the same methods, will have a good chance of measuring any changes in the Woodcock breeding population in the county.

The results of this survey have also underlined the importance of heathland areas for breeding Woodcock in Sussex. A much more detailed survey of roding Woodcock in the Ashdown Forest area, using exactly the same methods as used in the current survey and similar to a detailed study conducted in Hampshire in 2013-2014 by the New Forest Woodcock Group, would better establish the breeding density of Woodcock in this area and could improve our understanding of the use of heathland by this species in the breeding season.

The results of this survey at a national level showed a decline in the breeding Woodcock population between 2003 and 2013 and are reported by Heward *et al.* (2015).

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all of the 80 observers who conducted the surveys in Sussex, who are identified in the list of contributors, as well as to landowners who kindly allowed volunteers to carry out surveys on their land. Sincere thanks are due to Greg Conway at the BTO for providing the results of surveys conducted in Sussex in 2003 and 2013, and to Dr John Newnham for providing the maps used in this article. Further thanks are due to Colin Brooks, Hew Prendergast, Glynne Evans and members of the Sussex Ornithological Society scientific committee for helpful comments.

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The seabird wreck in February 2014

David H. Howey

Introduction

During February 2014 tens of thousands of seabird corpses were washed up on the shores of the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Portugal. This article looks at the weather patterns which led to the wreck, and the numbers and species involved, and also puts the situation in Sussex into an overall context. By far the greatest numbers of beached birds were Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica*, Razorbills *Alca torda* and Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* and this article concentrates on those three species, hereafter referred to simply as Puffins, Razorbills and Guillemots.

Background

During the winter of 2013-14 the UK experienced an exceptional sequence of storms. The first storm occurred on 4-5 December 2013 and generated major North Sea wave surges resulting in coastal damage and flooding particularly in East Anglia. The second storm was on Christmas Eve 2013 bringing gusts of up to 120 km/h to the Sussex coast and causing some structural damage. Despite the strength of the wind this storm was not atypical for the time of year with a deep depression located off the northwest coast of Scotland.

A single storm can rarely be termed as exceptional. However, the December storms were followed by further storms in January and February and it is this pattern that can be considered exceptional.

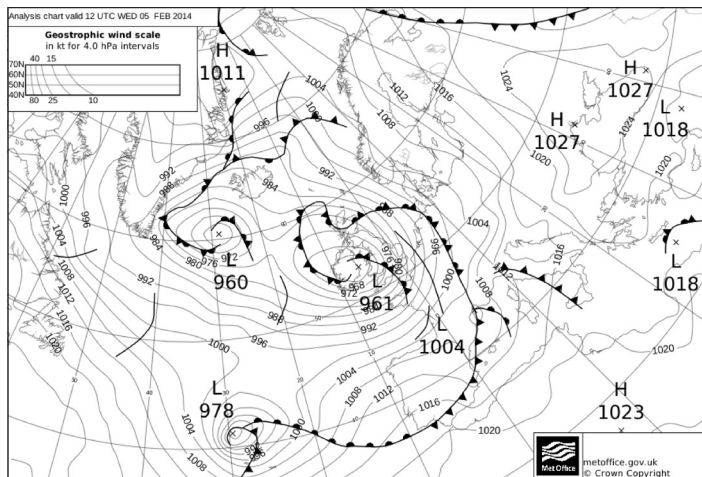


Figure 1. Weather chart for 1200 on 5 February 2014 showing a deep depression centred over southwest England (reproduced courtesy of the Meteorological Office).

The storms on 6-7 January and on 5-7 February differed significantly compared to the earlier storms. The jet stream was unusually strong which resulted in deep depressions at much lower latitudes than normal as shown in Figure 1. This resulted in storm surges with waves of up to 19 metres in the English Channel as far east as the Isle of Wight and in excess of 16 metres in

the North Atlantic. These surges caused extensive structural damage and were accompanied by record levels of rainfall resulting in extensive flooding (Slingo and Jenkins 2014). Although the Isle of Wight appears to have acted as a buffer, waves of up to 8 metres hit the Sussex coast causing a number of cliff falls and other damage. These were the worst storms for 100 years and resulted in the biggest North Atlantic seabird wreck in living memory.

The seabird wreck: overall picture

The first indications of the seabird wreck were noticed in January with reports of dead seabirds being found on British and European beaches. By mid-February the results of the RSPB Beached Bird Survey together with reports from individuals began to give an indication of the extent of the wreck. The highest density of beached birds in the UK was recorded in Orkney with Sussex very much on the periphery of the wreck. In fact, the whole of the UK was on the periphery which was very much centred on the Bay of Biscay, particularly the French coast but also the northern coast of Spain and as far south as northwest Portugal.

In the UK, 81% of all the corpses found were auk species. In Europe as a whole, auks accounted for 95% of the dead birds involving a staggering total of over 50,000 birds. By far the largest numbers were recovered along the west coast of France with a total of over 43,700 corpses compared to 7000 found in the UK. The figures for Puffins, Razorbills and Guillemots in Sussex, the whole of the UK, France and the whole of Europe are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Numbers of Puffin, Razorbill and Guillemot corpses found as a result of the seabird wreck based on ¹Schmitt (2014), ²Farque (2014), ³Jessop (2014) and ⁴van Nus (2015).*

	Puffin	Razorbill	Guillemot
Sussex	37	163	101
UK total ¹	90	1811	1204
France ²	28,758	1307	11,762
All Europe (including Spain and Portugal) ^{3,4}	>29,600	>5000	>16,200

The seabird wreck in Sussex

As mentioned, Sussex was very much on the periphery of the seabird wreck. Nevertheless, the numbers of beached birds located in February 2014 were unprecedented. Table 2 shows the species and numbers of dead birds recovered along the Sussex coast during February 2014. The table shows that a total of 380 corpses were located of which 83% were auks (10% Puffins, 45% Razorbills and 28% Guillemots). It is these three species which are discussed in detail below.

Razorbills and Guillemots

Auks are a fairly common sight off the Sussex coast both in winter and as passage migrants. The majority of auks are too distant to allow specific identification but where it is possible, Razorbills outnumber Guillemots by a ratio of 3:1. Further offshore, however, surveys have shown that it is Guillemots which are more numerous, outnumbering Razorbills by a ratio of 6:1 (Percival 2013). It has been suggested that this apparent anomaly is due to the differing depths at which the two species feed (Howey 2013).

Much of our knowledge of the wintering areas of Razorbills and Guillemots comes from ringing recoveries. In broad terms, the majority of Guillemots from the east coast colonies winter in the North Sea from the Norwegian coast to the English Channel. Those from the west coast colonies tend to move much further south reaching the Bay of Biscay and beyond although some

Table 2. Species and numbers of beached birds located on surveyed stretches of the Sussex coast during February 2014. The casual surveys were conducted on various dates along stretches of differing lengths by volunteers and there was no systematic survey of the entire coastline.

	Fulmar	Gannet	Cormorant	Shag	Great Skua	Puffin	Razorbill	Guillemot	Auk species	Kitwake	Black-headed Gull	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Herring Gull	Glaucous Gull	Great Black-backed Gull	Starling
West Wittering							1	1	1							
Bracklesham							3	2								
Selsey						1		1								
Pagham Harbour						1	5	4		2	1			2	1	
Bognor Regis							17	3			1					
Middleton-on-Sea		1					1	1					1		1	
Littlehampton				1		1	4	3								
East Preston						1										
Ferring							1									
West Worthing							1									
Worthing								2								
Lancing							2	1								
Shoreham		1				2	5									
Shoreham to Brighton		1		1		1	5	8								
Brighton Pier	3	2			4	2	36	14	6	8	1		2			5
Rottingdean	4					2	7	4								
Saltdean						14	11									
Telscombe Cliffs	1	1	2	1		1	33	15		3			1			1
Newhaven						4	15	9		1						
Newhaven Tidemills						2	7	1								
Seaford					1	1	1	4	1							
Hope Gap						2	2									
Cuckmere Haven								1								
Eastbourne to Bexhill						1	5	26	3	1	3	1	2			
Bexhill to Hastings							1	1								
Pett Level								3								
Winchelsea							1									
Rye							1	1								
Camber						1										
Total counts	8	6	2	3	5	37	165	105	11	15	6	1	6	2	2	6

do enter the English Channel. The wintering areas of Razorbills show a pattern very similar to that for Guillemots but range further south with some birds reaching the Mediterranean (Wernham *et al.* 2002). As a result of these dispersals, many of the birds recorded off the Sussex coast will be migrants although some do remain in the English Channel leading to large-scale feeding movements with flocks feeding offshore occasionally exceeding 1000 birds.

During February 2014 there were eight recoveries of auks which had been ringed in the British Isles and found dead along the Sussex coast. The four Razorbills and four Guillemots were all from west coast colonies suggesting that many birds were driven into the English Channel by the storms. Full details of these recoveries are contained in the ringing report on pages 219-228.

Puffins

Puffins are rare spring and winter migrants off the Sussex coast with a total of just 13 this century (to the end of 2013). The majority of sightings were in spring with 12 being in the period March to April and only a single record in January. This pattern was also noted in the offshore surveys when all the records were in May (Percival 2013). Consequently, the total of 37 corpses recovered in February plus two live birds seen (one each in January and February) involved not only unprecedented numbers but also occurred at an unusual time of year.

It is not only in Sussex that Puffins are rarely seen in winter but rather it is a situation that occurs throughout Europe. Puffins from both British and other colonies probably occur at very low densities over vast areas of the North Atlantic (Harris 1984). This wide dispersal far from land has resulted in a very low recovery rate of the large numbers of Puffins which have been ringed at British colonies. The data available suggest that Puffins from all the northern and western British colonies winter in the Bay of Biscay area. The recoveries show that the only birds not moving south to the Bay of Biscay are those from the colonies in southeast Scotland and northeast England which winter almost exclusively in the North Sea (Wernham *et al.* 2002). However, geolocators fitted to birds on the Isle of May (Fife) showed that some birds from that colony actually disperse northwards and winter off the southwest of Iceland (Harris 2010).

In February 2014, over 180 British ringed Puffins were recovered as beached birds. All recoveries related to birds ringed at western colonies with two thirds originating from the remote island of Sule Skerry some 60 km west of the Orkneys. The vast majority of the recoveries were from the beaches of western France as shown in Figure 2 below. No ringed Puffins were recovered in Sussex in February 2014 and it is presumed that the relatively large number found dead along our coast were storm driven from further west in the English Channel.

Puffins, Razorbills and Guillemots all undertake synchronous moulting of their primaries during which time they become flightless for 4-5 weeks. Razorbills and Guillemots undertake this moult at the end of the breeding season and it is complete before they disperse to their wintering areas. Consequently, neither Razorbills nor Guillemots would have been flightless in February. Puffins, however, disperse to their wintering areas before moulting their primaries and this does not occur until late winter or early spring. Clearly, if Puffins were flightless at the time of the 2014 storms they would have been less able to move away from the roughest seas and also be hindered in their feeding. However, this was not the case with only 2% of the Puffins examined having primary feathers still at the moult stage. Similarly, it might be considered that first-winter birds would be less well equipped to deal with the storm conditions, but again this was not the case with only 4% of those examined being immature birds (Mike P. Harris *pers. comm.*). The beached bird shown in Figure 3 is a demonstration of this. The bird has completed its primary moult so theoretically would not have been flightless immediately prior to its death other than through exhaustion. The distinct grooves on the outer beak indicate that the bird was at least five years of age (Harris 2014).

Conclusions and imponderables

Seabirds in general and auks in particular have evolved to cope with bad weather and rough seas. However, the severity and frequency of the storms in January and February 2014 gave rise

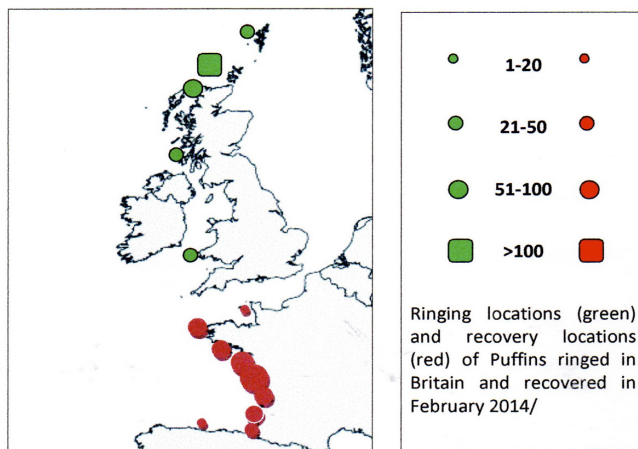


Figure 2. Ringing locations (green) of Puffins in Britain and locations of beached birds (red) recovered in February 2014.



Figure 3. Puffin, Selsky Bill, February 2014 (Justin Atkinson).

to long periods of extreme conditions. These in turn resulted in birds having to fly in severe gales and attempt to feed in constantly turbulent and turbid seas. In Europe over 50,000 auks are known to have succumbed due to a combination of starvation and exhaustion (Jessop 2014).

The fact that some 60% of the auk corpses found throughout Europe were Puffins is probably unsurprising as they make up almost 60% of the combined North Atlantic population of Razorbills, Guillemots and Puffins. However, it is also possible that Puffins are more susceptible to severe weather conditions than other auks. In March 2013 the death of almost 5000 Puffins in the North Sea was attributed to starvation (Duff *et al.* 2013). One of the factors considered was that Puffins feed in the top 20 metres of the sea where it is at its most turbulent and turbid whereas other auk species feed at greater depths and may, therefore, not be so severely hindered in their feeding.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all those who undertook beached bird surveys throughout Europe, to Mike Harris for providing a great deal of information and advice, to Jackie Clark of the BTO for providing ringing and recovery data*, to Sabine Schmitt of the RSPB for details of the Beached Bird Survey, to the Meteorological Office for supplying the weather analysis chart and for permission to reproduce it, and to Dr Helen Crabtree for her valuable comments on the original draft of this paper.

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Breeding Corn Bunting survey 2014

C. Buckle and R.A. Black

Overview

A sampling breeding survey was undertaken in 2014 of Corn Buntings in Sussex. The aim of the survey was to map singing males to determine the distribution and population density of the species. In this it followed an earlier survey undertaken in Sussex in 1993-94. A total of 173 singing males were recorded in 188 monads which were sampled from the set of squares where Corn Buntings had previously been reported. These included 158 territories in 100 downland squares and 15 territories in 88 lowland squares. Information on song post and habitat types was also recorded with Corn Buntings showing a strong preference for cereal crops but no particular preference for barley over wheat. Survey records were supplemented by casual records to improve the understanding of the distribution of the species. It was concluded that the downland population had declined by between 28% and 37% since 1993-94. Declines in lowland areas were more severe being between 75% and 89% since 1993-94. Since the earlier survey had concluded declines of 62% and 86% compared to 1979 estimates on downland and in lowland areas respectively it is clear that the status of Corn Buntings in Sussex remains precarious.

Introduction

The BTO Common Birds Census (CBC) indicated that between 1973 and 1993 there was a 75% reduction in the British Corn Bunting population to 20,000 territories (James 1996). The situation in Sussex, however, was less clear and in 1993-94 the SOS undertook a survey of breeding Corn Buntings, taking the opportunity to extend a BTO farmland bunting survey (Donald 1994). Most of the fieldwork was carried out in 1993 with some additional fieldwork completed in 1994. The results of this survey suggested a similar decline in Sussex to that of the national picture.

By the time of the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project (Balmer *et al.* 2013), the Corn Bunting's fortunes were seen to have declined further still. Curson (2014) noted that in Sussex the Corn Bunting's range had declined, as it was found in only 12% of the county's tetrads (2x2-km squares) in 2007-2011 compared with 19% in the previous breeding atlas of 1988-92 (James 1996).

In 2014 it was 20 years since the last targeted county survey of breeding Corn Buntings that gathered detailed information about numbers, habitats and song posts. The RSPB had approached the SOS about monitoring populations of the species in the county, and in particular across the South Downs. It was therefore felt to be timely to conduct another survey of Corn Buntings in Sussex. That a coordinated survey of Corn Buntings was planned for that year across the three counties of Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire was an additional incentive. A comparative study between the two datasets may be possible in the future.

Survey method

To allow comparison with the 1993-94 SOS survey it was decided that a similar methodology would be implemented. The original survey mapped singing males, with additional information collected on adjacent habitats, song posts and the total numbers of birds seen at each location.

Unfortunately the precise method used to select survey squares in the previous survey was not recorded, with the report simply stating that observers were "*requested to visit sites of earlier records and any other suitable locations*" (Manns 1995). Consequently, the method of selection of survey squares for 2014 differed from that used in 1993-94. An initial selection was made of

160 tetrads known to have been previously occupied by Corn Buntings. These were principally on the South Downs and on the coastal plain, and were identified from records from the Bird Atlas 2007-11, along with some records from the 1993-94 Corn Bunting survey and also 1988-92 breeding atlas records.

It was decided it was not feasible to survey all 160 tetrads and therefore a representative sample of 72 were selected. A gridded pattern was used to provide wide coverage of the area of interest. Tetrads (and also their constituent monads) were assigned as either downland or lowland based on their geology from Ordnance Survey maps. The starting tetrads for downland and lowland areas were randomly selected and the remaining squares set in a “checkerboard” pattern based on that starting square. A web page was set up with downloadable tetrad maps for each of the squares.

Volunteers were asked to visit their chosen tetrads between 15 April and the end of June. As Corn Buntings are known to be late breeders, it was recommended that two visits were made during April and May with a third visit in June, or if only two visits were possible, to make the second visit as late in the survey period as possible. It was also recommended that a reconnaissance visit be made to locate suitable habitat, and to obtain access permissions if necessary. Surveyors were asked to complete their surveys by 11 am, and to avoid wet or windy weather. When visiting each tetrad, surveyors were asked to plot any Corn Buntings onto the downloaded map, and to identify any singing males by ringing their positions using standard territory-mapping notation (Bibby *et al.* 1992). They then entered the details for any singing males in a results table, in order to identify the number of different singing males in the tetrad as a whole and within each separate monad within the tetrad. For each singing male identified in the results table, surveyors also included information about the song post being used and the habitat occupied.

In addition to the results from the surveyed tetrads, casual records sent directly to the survey organiser, and records submitted to the SOS from a number of sources, were collated. This captured information about additional birds and locations. Analysis of the data was conducted in the statistical programme ‘R’ (R Development Core Team 2008).

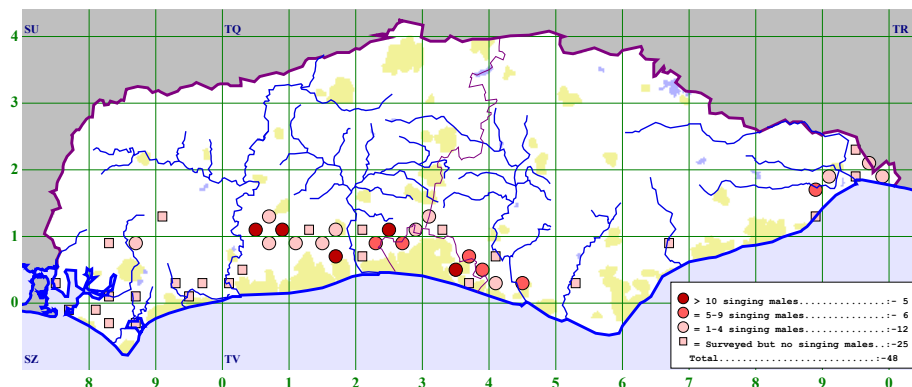


Figure 1. Tetrads surveyed as part of the 2014 Corn Bunting survey and the numbers of singing males recorded in each.

Survey results

Thirty-two volunteers were involved in the survey, but even with this number only 47 of the 72 selected tetrads were covered using the full survey protocol. The survey therefore covered 188 monads clumped in groups of four.

Corn Buntings were found in 23 of the 47 tetrads as shown in Figure 1. Of the 188 monads contained within these tetrads, 48 contained Corn Buntings. Altogether a total of 173 singing males were identified. These results were compared with the data from the 1993-94 Corn Bunting survey. For the comparative analysis the total numbers of monads surveyed during each survey, including those that returned nil results, were used. The original analysis of the earlier survey (Manns 1995) seems only to have used squares where Corn Buntings were found but negative results were important in the analytical method for the current survey. The data from the SOS database showed that a total of 334 monads had been covered in the earlier survey. It should be noted that because the exact selection criteria for the original survey squares is unknown there is uncertainty regarding the compatibility of the two sets of results. The conclusions should therefore be treated with a degree of caution.

Population estimates

A direct comparison could be drawn between the current and the previous surveys for those monads that were surveyed on both occasions (Table 1). This applies to 76 of the monads of which 45 were on the downs and 31 were classed as lowland. In 1993-94 190 singing Corn Buntings were recorded in these monads, whereas in the 2014 survey the number was 125. This suggests a population decline of about 34%. On the downs 166 singing males were found in 1993-94 and 119 in 2014 implying a 28% decline. In the lowland area 24 singing males were found in the 1993-94 survey and only six in 2014 suggesting a 75% decline. These figures represent a reasonably accurate estimate of the decline for these particular squares but do not necessarily translate to accurate estimates for the whole downland or lowland areas.

Table 1. *Comparison of numbers of singing birds in monads included in both surveys.*

	1993-94	2014	Decline
Downland	166	119	28%
Lowland	24	6	75%
Total	190	125	34%

The number of monads surveyed in 2014 was 188 and the number of singing Corn Buntings found was 173. This translates to a density of 0.92 per km² for the squares surveyed (Table 2) including unoccupied squares. Of the surveyed squares, 100 were on downland and returned a total of 158 singing Corn Buntings and 88 were classed as lowland and returned just 15 Corn Buntings. This equates (including unoccupied squares) to an average density of 1.58 per km² on the downland and only 0.17 per km² in the lowland area, 89% less than the downland average.

Table 2. *Numbers and densities of singing birds in the 2014 survey in monads classed as either downland or lowland (including unoccupied squares).*

	Monads surveyed	No. of singing birds	Density (birds per monad)
Downland	100	158	1.58
Lowland	88	15	0.17
Total	188	173	0.92

The comparable densities from the 1993-94 survey (again including unoccupied squares) were 2.0 per km² overall, 2.5 per km² for downland and 1.3 per km² for lowland areas. This implies a 54% decline overall which is composed of a 36.8% decline on the South Downs and an 86.9% decline in the lowland areas.

However, there is an important caveat to these estimates because not all of the 72 squares originally selected were actually surveyed. This reduces the replication and also introduces the possibility that those squares which were not completed were not surveyed for some non-random reason. For example, they may have been less attractive to potential volunteers because they were known not to have Corn Buntings. If this were the case it could introduce a bias into the dataset.

A population estimate for the whole survey area was calculated based on an extrapolation of densities and using the mean and the variance to calculate a confidence interval. This was calculated as 589 singing males (range: 536-647, 95% confidence interval) over the 160 tetrads identified as the core Corn Bunting range in Sussex. Approximately 90% of this population is on downland.



Corn Bunting, Medmerry, May 2014 (Jan-Paul Charteris)

Population estimates should also be treated with caution, however, because as shown in Figure 2 the number of singing males per monad varied considerably. In the majority of monads surveyed (140) no Corn Buntings were found. Of the 48 monads where Corn Buntings were located, a total of 27 had only one or two singing males. However, 19 of the monads had 3-10 singing males and two exceptional squares had 16 or 17 singing males (Figure 2). Although the sample size was good, with over 26% of the approximately 381 monads of suitable downland being surveyed, the high variance in Corn Bunting numbers and the relatively small number of occupied squares reduces the certainty of the population estimate. If, by chance or bias, an unrepresentative number of the highly-populated squares were surveyed, this could easily produce an underestimate or an overestimate of the population. As an example, the tetrad at Selsey Broad Rife was surveyed using the methodology described. It was an extra square, not included in the set of selected tetrads, but 10 singing Corn Buntings were recorded there. Had it been included this would have increased

the average density in lowland squares by over a third to 1.71 per km². This is particularly a concern because not all of the 72 survey squares originally selected were actually surveyed. It is not known why surveyors could not be secured for all of the squares. If, for example, “interesting” squares which were more likely to contain Corn Buntings were more likely to be surveyed this would result in an overestimate of Corn Bunting numbers.

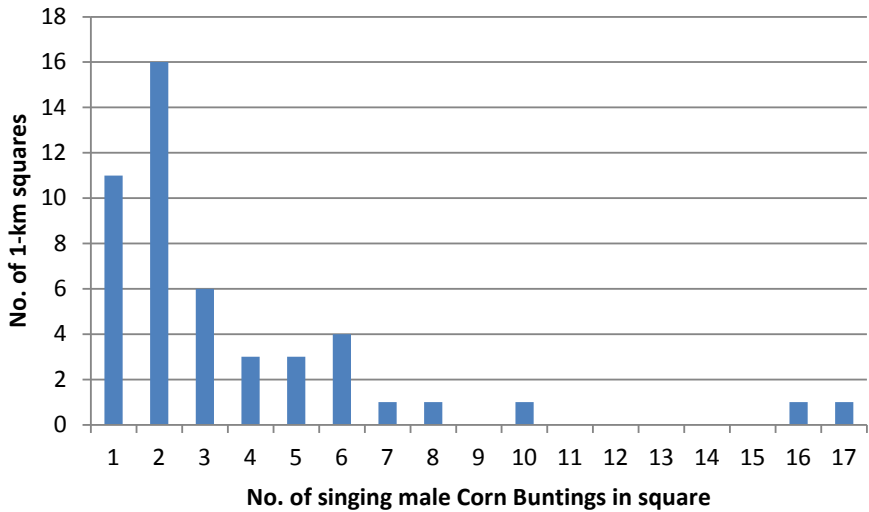


Figure 2. Numbers of singing males in occupied monads.

Distribution

Corn Bunting records of singing males in the breeding season were received from 85 tetrads in the county. Figure 3 shows that the stronghold of the species is on the South Downs with the distribution concentrated towards the eastern end of the downs. This is not surprising as the downs become more wooded and there is less suitable habitat towards the western end of the

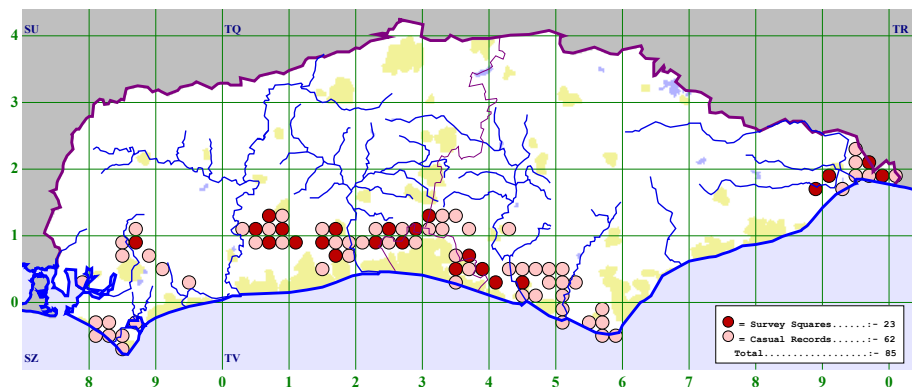


Figure 3. Corn Bunting distribution in Sussex including data taken from the Corn Bunting survey in 2014 and also casual records submitted in 2014.

county, although there is a pocket of distribution on the downs above Chichester. In the rest of the county the remaining population is mainly in two lowland coastal areas. One of these is around the Brede Valley and Romney Marsh and the other on the Selsey Peninsula.

Habitat types

Habitat information (Table 3) is taken only from the Corn Bunting survey and does not include data from the casual records. The preference for cereal crops which was noted in the 1993-94 survey was equally clear in the current survey with 54% of all territories described as having such crops as the primary habitat. In the 1993-94 survey it was noted that Corn Buntings appeared to have developed a stronger association with wheat than barley with 37.6% of records in the former crop and only 11.9% in the latter. That association has not been maintained in this study with the

Table 3. *Numbers of singing male Corn Buntings recorded in various habitat types in 2014.*

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	No. of territories	Percentage of total
Grassland	Chalk downland	Ungrazed	20	10.9%
		Grazed by cattle	4	2.2%
		Grazed by sheep	4	2.2%
		Not recorded	1	0.5%
	Chalk downland total		29	15.8%
	Improved grassland	Ungrazed	8	4.3%
		Grazed by cattle	2	1.1%
		Grazed by sheep	7	3.8%
	Improved grassland total		17	9.2%
	Unimproved grassland	Ungrazed	1	0.5%
		Grazed by sheep	8	4.3%
		Cut for hay	1	0.5%
Unimproved grassland total		10	5.4%	
Grassland total			56	30.4%
Tilled land	Bare earth		2	1.1%
	Oil seed rape		16	8.7%
	Other green crops		5	2.7%
	Autumn-sown wheat		33	17.9%
	Spring-sown wheat		3	1.6%
	Autumn-sown barley		22	12.0%
	Spring-sown barley		18	9.8%
	Not-known wheat		14	7.6%
	Not-known barley		10	5.4%
	Other crops		4	2.2%
Tilled land total			127	69.0%
Non-farmland total			1	0.5%
Total			184	100.0%

27.1% of records associated with wheat in 2014 marginally exceeded by the 27.2% of records associated with barley. Grassland was also well used, especially chalk grassland, with 15.8% of territories found in that habitat. Ungrazed chalk downland appeared to be preferred with 10.9% of the total number of singing males being on ungrazed downland.

Song post types

The different types of song posts used by male Corn Buntings (Table 4) probably reflect song post availability rather than any particular preferences. Most birds elected to sing from posts between two habitat types but this might reflect the suitability of fences and hedges as singing posts rather than a preference for singing from a habitat divide. However, it is worth noting that 64% of the song posts in the “other” category (about 15% of the total) consisted of vegetation either within fields or on the edges. This included things like wheat and oil seed rape stems and tall weeds, grasses and wild flowers so Corn Buntings are clearly capable of using smaller song posts within fields.

Table 4. *Song post types used by singing male Corn Buntings in 2014.*

Primary song post	Total	Percentage of total
Hedge	24	13.0%
Hedge with trees	11	6.0%
Tree line, no hedge	2	1.1%
Isolated bush	56	30.4%
Wire fence	39	21.2%
Wooden or other fence	6	3.3%
Other	44	23.9%
Not recorded	2	1.1%
Total	184	100.0%

Conclusions

The results of this survey suggest that Corn Bunting numbers have declined further in Sussex since the time of the last county survey in 1993-94. The decline also appears to have been more marked in lowland areas than on the South Downs. Despite some uncertainties in the numbers generated by the survey these two conclusions seem fairly robust.

Changes in farming practices in past decades are associated with the decline of Corn Buntings. In particular three things are thought to have had an impact in Sussex (Thomas 2014): the use of pesticides reducing the availability of insect food in the breeding season; the switch from spring to winter cereals reducing the availability of overwinter stubbles and the associated seeds; and the switch from arable to pasture, especially on the downs, reducing the availability of suitable nesting habitat.

However, there is hope for the future of the Corn Bunting in Sussex. Curson (2014), based on data collected during the 2008-11 atlas period, estimated that there were between 240 and 350 territories in the county. This current survey estimates almost double that number of territories. While there are wide margins of error associated with the current study there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that numbers in some parts of the downs have risen in recent years. This is especially true where farmers have been making good use of agri-environment schemes (B. Fowkes *pers.*

comm.). In some squares densities are very high showing that the carrying capacity of the county is still good if the habitat is right.

Additionally some recent work by the RSPB has provided insight into how agri-environment schemes can benefit Corn Buntings specifically which might further help a Corn Bunting recovery (Setchfield *et al.* 2012).

It would be useful to repeat the Corn Bunting survey in the relatively near future, using the same protocol, to see if this apparent upward trend is real and if it continues. Additionally, something that was noted by many surveyors was that Corn Buntings were often found singing on the interface between two habitat types. Unfortunately, the survey protocol only called for the recording of the dominant habitat type in a territory so it was not possible to test if this represented a real habitat preference or if it was simply an artefact created by fences making good song posts. Including more detailed habitat data in a future survey would be useful. Additionally, it would be interesting to record crop and habitat types in areas where Corn Buntings were not found to see if any patterns specific to Sussex emerged regarding habitat selection by the birds.

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PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY 2014



Lapwing, Weir Wood Res, October 2014 (Derek Washington)



Quail, Steep Down, July 2014 (Dave Sadler)



Glaucous Gull, Hove, February 2014 (Peter Wilson)



Kittiwake, Hove, February 2014 (Peter Wilson)



Avocet, Medmerry, June 2014 (Dorian Mason)



Siskin, Warnham LNR, January 2014 (Dorian Mason)



White-winged Black Tern, Rye Hbr LNR, October 2014 (Malcolm Freeman)



Little Gull, Brooklands Park, February 2014 (Dorian Mason)



Stonechat, Newhaven, December 2014 (Leigh Prevost)

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 Sussex Bird Report have been fully authenticated.

Whooper Swan	Dotterel	Red-rumped Swallow
Bean Goose (both races)	Temminck's Stint	Willow Tit
Pink-footed Goose	White-rumped Sandpiper	Greenish Warbler
American Wigeon	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Pallas's Leaf Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Pectoral Sandpiper	Yellow-browed Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Red-necked Phalarope	Radde's Warbler
Ferruginous Duck	Grey Phalarope	Dusky Warbler
Lesser Scaup	Pomarine Skua (not spring)	Barred Warbler
Surf Scoter	Long-tailed Skua	Subalpine Warbler
All pheasants (except Common)	Puffin	Icterine Warbler
White-billed Diver	Black Guillemot	Melodious Warbler
All shearwaters (except Manx)	Little Auk	Blyth's Reed Warbler
All petrels (except Fulmar)	White-winged Black Tern	Marsh Warbler
Night Heron	Roseate Tern	Rose-coloured Starling
Cattle Egret	Sabine's Gull	Dipper
Great White Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Bluethroat
Purple Heron	Caspian Gull	Red-breasted Flycatcher
White Stork	Iceland Gull	Citrine Wagtail
Glossy Ibis	Glaucous Gull	Richard's Pipit
Honey-buzzard	Alpine Swift	Olive-backed Pipit
Black Kite	Bee-eater	Water Pipit
White-tailed Eagle	Red-footed Falcon	Common Rosefinch
Montagu's Harrier	Golden Oriole	Twite
Goshawk	Red-backed Shrike	Common (Mealy) Redpoll
Rough-legged Buzzard	Woodchat Shrike	Parrot Crossbill
Spotted Crake	Chough	Serin
Common Crane	Hooded Crow	Lapland Bunting
Stone-curlew	Penduline Tit	Cirl Bunting
American Golden Plover	Shore Lark	Ortolan Bunting
Kentish Plover	Short-toed Lark	Little Bunting

In addition, descriptions are required for all races other than the normally occurring one including: Black Brant, 'Baltic' *fuscus* Lesser Black-backed Gull, 'Northern' *argentatus* Herring Gull (except Rye Bay), Kumlien's Gull, 'Scandinavian' *littoralis* Rock Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, 'Continental' *ater* Coal Tit, 'Siberian' Chiffchaff and 'Northern' Willow Warbler. However, descriptions are not required for the following sub-species/races: Pale-bellied Brent Goose, *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gull, White Wagtail and Greenland Wheatear.

It should also be noted that descriptions may be required for any species seen in unusual circumstances or on an unusual date.

Records of unusual species should be submitted on the forms available from the SOS website or from the Recorder. Completed forms should be sent to the Recorder, preferably by e-mail although postal submissions will also be accepted.

Reports of national rarities as defined by the British Birds Rarities Committee should be submitted to the Recorder either in the same format as above or on forms available from the Secretary of the BBRC.

Observers are encouraged to submit photographs in support of their records but these should accompany a Scarce Records Form and not be in place of a written description.

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NB: For an explanation of the superscripts, see the footnote below the table.

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J. Herrtage ^T	AC Howard ^W	M. Jenner	CP Kingwill ^T
M. Hibbard ^x	MA Howard ^T	S. Jennings ^T	G. Kinnard
AP Hibberd ^B	T. Howard	A. Jewels ^x	W. Kirby
MS Hickey ^T	T. Howard-Jones	DJ Jode ^{TW}	M. Kirk ^{KT}
R. Hicks ^T	DH Howey	A. Johnson ^W	J. Kirkman ^D
J High ^W	G. Hughes	JM Johnson	A. Kirkwood ^W
C. Hill	PH Hughes ^{xW}	PJ Johnson	AR Kitson
M. Hill	R. Hughes	RJ Johnson ^{HKW}	AR Knight ^T
S. Hill	R. Hughes	S Johnson	DC Knight ^T
K. Hillier-Palmer ^x	S. Hughes ^x	S. Johnson	L. Knight ^{BCT}
AC Hilton ^T	J. Hull	A. Johnston ^{B CRT}	R. Knight
SR Hilton	JD Hull	SC Johnstone	RM Knight ^T
G. Hinchon	N. Hulme	A. Jolliff	G. Knott ^x
R. Hirst ^B	A. Humphreys-Jones ^T	B. Jones ^T	DR Knowles ^{KR}
RS Hitchen	GF Hunt ^{KT}	C. Jones ^T	J. Knowlson ^x
RS Hoad ^{BCDT}	N. Hunt	CM Jones ^T	F. Koppschall ^{RT}
RN Hobbs ^x	ID Hunter ^{RT}	D. Jones ^T	DA Lake ^T
JA Hobson ^{BK}	S. Hunter ^B	DG Jones ^T	S. Lambert ^T
H. Hodson ^x	SA Hurry ^x	J. Jones ^T	MP Lanaway
C. Hoff	NL Huston	PE Jones ^{BCTW}	RJ Lanaway
P. Hogan ^{TX}	C. Hutcheon	R. Jones	S. Lanaway ^W
J. Hogg ^T	NP Hutchinson ^{RTWX}	R. Jones ^x	S. Lancaster ^x
AJ Holcombe	AM Hutson ^{CW}	RJ Jones ^T	W. Lander
BJ Holcombe	C. Hyde Wear	T. Jones	DC Lang ^{HW}
AM Holden ^T	DJ Hyland ^T	T. Jones	IM Lang ^{HW}
W. Holden	B. Inman	TD Jones ^T	P. Langdown
DLJ Holdstock	R. Iredale ^T	V. Jordan	B. Larkcom ^{EK}
PK Holland ^{BKRT}	P. Ireland	J. Joyce ^K	R. Lawrence ^x
B. Hollobone	R. Irelande	J. Jupp ^S	R. Lawrence
D. Hollow ^E	RJ Irvine ^T	ME Kalaher	MJ Lawson ^T
A. Holloway ^x	BGR Ives ^T	A. Kalejs	N. Layt ^x
LG Holloway ^x	RA Ives	B. Kay	NC Lear ^K
AL Holmes ^T	E. Ivil	A Kearsey ^W	A. Lee ^x
RG Holmes ^{BCW}	AG Jackson ^T	RS Kelly	BD Lee ^T
JC Holt	K. Jackson	M. Kemp	HJA Lee ^{BCW}

SR Lee	MJ Marchant ^H	M. Mercer ^T	JA Newnham ^{BCHKRTW}
PJ Lees ^W	S. Mariner	N. Merchant ^C	C. Newton
CL Leeves ^T	K. Markham	SJ Message ^T	SJ Newton ^{BCDKRT}
MP LeGrys	H. Marler	K. Mewett	C. Nicholson
K. Lerwill ^X	N. Marriner ^T	CM Michell ^X	RC Nixon ^T
D. Leverington ^T	G. Marriott	GA Michelmores ^{BCRT}	JL Nobbs ^{BCDEKT}
D. Leversedge ^{BC}	S. Marriott	B. Michie ^X	A. Norbury ^X
SM Lewis ^{HX}	G. Marshall ^X	P. Milinets-Raby	RK Norman ^W
T. Lifton ^{BCR}	SK Marshall ^T	J. Miller	D. Norris
TJ Lincoln	R. Marston ^X	B. Mills	D. North
C. Lindfield	AJ Martin ^X	GK Mitchell	C. Northwood
SH Linington	H. Martin ^D	N. Mitchell ^X	J. Norton ^T
S. Litchfield	J. Martin ^B	O. Mitchell ^T	J. Norton ^X
D. Livingstone	J. Martin ^X	G. Michelmores ^{SW}	A. Nottage ^{KT}
D. Livingstone	M. Martin ^{BC}	L. Monday ^X	D. Nussbaumer ^T
AH Lloyd	P. Martin	J. Monkhouse ^W	C. O donnell ^T
P. Loader	H. Maryson ^T	M. Monk-Terry ^X	M. O Shea
R. Lockyer ^W	JM Maskell ^T	P. Moon ^W	M. Offer
C. Lodge ^T	D. Mason	S. Moor ^X	M. Oldfield ^X
P. Lomas ^T	PH Massini	CH Moore ^T	A. Oliver ^X
E. Lough	W. Masters ^T	NJ Moran ^T	N. Oliver
M. Love ^{BR}	H. Matcham ^X	H. Morgan ^{KR}	P. Osborn ^T
C. Lowe	PD Matson	L. Morris	B. Osborne
G. Lower	NV McCanch ^T	NG Morris	G. Osborne ^{BKR}
P. Lower ^K	M. McCarthy ^T	P. Morris	N. Ostler
AR Loweth ^{RT}	SFH McCullagh ^{BCRT}	R. Morris ^W	RA Oswald
JC Luck ^X	JI McCulloch ^{TX}	T. Morris ^W	E. Outhwaite ^T
R. Ludman	PJ McCulloch	P. Morrison-Price ^X	P. Outhwaite ^D
PJ Luffingham ^H	D. McCutchan	A. Morriss	T. Outram ^X
DP Lupton	M. McGee	C. Mortimer ^{RT}	L. Overy ^{KT}
P. Lynch ^X	R. McIntyre ^T	SD Morton ^T	C. Owen
ME Lynn ^{OKR}	SE McKenzie	R. Moynihn	J. Owen ^K
G. Lyons ^X	PAF McKenzie Lloyd ^T	PL Mulcahy ^T	L. Owen ^{KRS}
J. MacCallum-Stewart	AD McLevy	MF Mullen ^{BC}	MP Owen ^{BC}
J. Mackie	M. McManus ^{ERTW}	MJ Mullis ^K	RC Owen ^{KRS}
DJ Madgin ^T	H. McMillan	M. Munday	S. Padget ^T
P. Mair ^T	S McMullagh ^W	S. Munn ^X	M. Padmore ^T
M. Mallalieu ^{CT}	DF McNair ^{BCDRT}	K. Murphy ^{BCKRT}	D. Page
MC Mallett	A. McNeill	AJ Musgrove ^T	S. Page
P. Malloy ^X	D. Meagher	D. Mutters ^{RT}	M. Painter
T. Mander ^X	JI Medford	J. Mycock ^{TX}	S. Palme
L. Mandry ^X	E. Medler ^X	T. Myerson	JC Palmer ^T
DC Manger ^T	G. Meech	C. Nason ^X	K. Palmer
AC Manley ^T	C. Meek	PJ Neatherway	KJ Palmer ^T
RC Mann	CW Melgar	P. Needham	M. Palmer ^T
MV Mansson ^X	CA Melhuish ^{BCX}	M. Netherwood ^T	DJ Pankhurst
J. Marchant ^C	R. Meller	H. New	PJ Papps ^T
JH Marchant ^{BT}	D. Melville ^T	M. Newbold ^X	A. Parfitt ^{KTWX}

N. Park ^T	CR Poole ^{BCT}	J. Reeve ^X	MJ Russell
A. Parker ^{DSX}	NJN Pope	JP Reeves ^{TX}	SA Russell ^{BCDST}
J. Parker ^T	EA Popham ^T	R. Reeves	ND Rutherford ^{BCRW}
J. Parkin ^W	NR Porter ^T	S. Reeves	NJ Rutter ^O
P. Parmenter ^T	D. Potter	RF Rettke-Grover ^T	L. Ryan ^T
TW Parmenter ^T	DA Potter	JP Richards ^T	Rye Bay RG ^T
C. Parrot	M. Potter	JE Richardson ^{KT}	C. Ryder
R. Parsons ^W	GR Potts	L. Richardson ^{BH}	D. Sadler
F. Partridge ^X	DG Powell ^T	N. Richardson	J. Salmon ^T
K. Partridge ^T	G. Powell ^T	D. Riddle ^T	R. Samways
R. Pascal	D. Powles ^X	S. Ridley	JF Sanderson ^{BC}
RA Pask	HDV Prendergast ^{KT}	Riverback Residents ^X	A. Saunders
S. Patmore ^T	L. Prevost	C. Roach ^T	N. Sawyer ^X
S. Paton ^T	A. Price	A. Roberts ^T	J. Scarfebeck
PN Paul ^T	R. Price ^{BW}	G. Roberts	R. Scarfield
H. Pavis	T. Priest	GCM Roberts ^{HT}	M. Scott-Ham ^{BHT}
A. Payne	C. Prince ^{HW}	H. Roberts ^W	T. Seabrook ^{CRW}
D. Payne ^T	MG Prince ^T	M. Roberts ^T	J. Searle ^{BD}
S. Payne ^X	R. Prince ^X	MD Roberts	R. Searle ^X
D. Pearson	D. Pritty	P. Roberts ^X	CM Seaton
A. Pedliham ^B	K. Pritty ^X	W. Roberts ^T	RC Self
C. Pedroza	RN Pulley	MC Robinson ^T	C. Sell ^T
RF Penticost ^{BCKW}	RHA Putnam ^T	PA Robinson ^T	J. Sellwood ^T
RT Pepper ^T	B. Puttock ^{RTW}	S. Robinson	RJ Senior ^W
L. Percival ^{KW}	RJ Pyrah ^T	A. Robjohns ^T	MV Sennitt ^X
A. Perry ^{CEKT}	E. Quinto-Ashman ^T	C Roche ^R	K. Sexton ^T
AS Perry ^T	AR Quinton ^T	SJ Roddis ^T	M. Shaft ^H
DM Perry	C. Rackham	R. Roebuck	E. Sharp ^X
R. Perry	B. Rainbow ^X	A. Roffey	PJ Sharp ^T
M. Perryman	C. Ralph ^T	BM Rogers	C. Shaw ^T
NR Peters	H. Ramm ^T	DP Rogers ^{BCRT}	E. Shaw ^T
CB Peverett ^T	B. Randall	J. Rogers ^B	M. Shaw
J. Philips	T. Randall	G. Roles	MD Shaw ^{BCTW}
D. Phillips	NM Ratcliffe ^T	MD Rolfe ^T	RJW Shaw
J. Phillips	J. Rawles ^T	S. Rooth	CR Shawyer
MJ Phillips ^W	S. Rayburn ^{RT}	C. Rose ^S	M. Shearer
R. Phillips	P. Raymond ^X	MM Roterman	AJ Shearman ^T
S. Phillips ^T	EM Raynor	H. Rouse	DR Shepherd
SM Phillips	PJ Raynor	P. Rouse ^T	EM Shilland ^T
M. Philpott	R. Raynor	A. Rowe	JRD Shillitoe ^T
L. Pitcher	T. Raynor	L. Rowley ^X	S. Shippam
I. Pitts	M. Read	L. Rowlinson	N. Shorten ^T
PJ Plant ^{BT}	C. Reay ^{CT}	C. Rowney	G. Siddle
R. Platt ^T	J. Redford	E. Rowsell ^{KRW}	K. Simon ^X
D. Plummer ^X	A. Redman	I Ruffles ^R	T. Simon ^{TX}
A. Podmore ^W	C. Reed ^T	SJR Rumsey	IM Simpson ^W
MJ Pollard	R. Rees	D. Russell ^T	RN Simpson ^T
S. Pont ^T	B. Reeve ^H	MG Russell ^X	SP Simpson ^{BCKRTW}

T. Simpson	A. Stocker ^T	G. Trew ^{KW}	D. Watkins ^B
A. Simpson ^{WX}	N. Stonestreet ^{DT}	S. Trice ^X	AB Watson ^H
A. Skerl ^T	PJ Strangeman ^{BT}	M. Tristram ^X	J. Watson ^X
PA Sketch ^T	S. Strudwick	CE Trollope ^{RT}	PJ Watts ^T
AJ Skinner ^B	S. Stuart ^T	D. Trott ^T	S. Watts
C. Skinner ^S	E. Stubbs	JE Trowell ^W	R. Webb ^T
GP Skinner	M. Sumner ^T	WH Truckle	AJ Webster ^T
R. Slater	C. Sutton	RM Tuck ^T	PJ Webster ^T
B. Slouthon	P. Sutton ^T	M. Turner ^{BHW}	P. Welch
J. Smallwood ^T	RG Sutton	D. Turrell	M. Welcome ^W
TC Smart	S. Sutton ^{HX}	MH Turton ^T	PJ Wells
A. Smith	JL Swallow ^T	B. Turve ^K	AJ Wende ^T
C. Smith	M. Sweeney ^X	WM Twitchett ^T	DR West ^{BCRT}
CA Smith	SxARG Conference ^X	HL Twizell ^{BT}	R. West ^T
D. Smith	WIE Tagg ^X	I. Twyford	JD Weston ^W
DI Smith	DR Taylor ^T	D. Tyler ^T	M. Weston
L. Smith ^X	K. Taylor ^T	P. Tyler ^T	AV Wheatcroft ^T
M. Smith ^W	KP Taylor	F. Tyson ^X	AD Whitcomb
PA Smith ^{KT}	L. Taylor	ST Underdown	PJ Whitcomb ^{TX}
S. Smith ^{SW}	M. Taylor	C. Upton	C. White ^T
S. Smith	MP Taylor ^T	R. Usher	G. White ^T
AC Smithen ^{BCRSTW}	NTW Taylor	T. van Breda ^X	K. White
D. Sneller ^K	R. Taylor ^K	P. Varkala ^X	G. Whitehead ^T
A. Snelling	SR Taylor ^{BRW}	P. Varnham	A. Whitehouse
MA Snelling ^T	Y. Taylor	H. Vaughan ^B	CA Whiteman ^K
TG Snow ^{BC}	CR Tazzyman	C Vince ^W	S. Whiting ^{KR}
T. Snyman ^T	G. Gardener ^X	C. Vine ^W	AM Whitman
S. Solly	RC Theobald ^T	N. Walford	J. Whitman ^S
E. Sopp ^W	A. Thomas ^T	D. Walker ^W	JH Whitman
A. Spiers ^K	A. Thomas	H. Walker ^{BT}	M. Wiggins ^T
P. Spiers ^W	AB Thomas	I. Walker	J. Wightman ^D
B. Spink ^X	D. Thomas ^X	J. Walker ^T	MW Wigley ^T
GC Spinks	S. Thomas ^X	J. Walker	J. Wilczur
P. Spruce	T. Thomas ^{BOKRTWX}	R. Walker	G. Wilkerson ^W
T. Stachnicki ^T	J. Thompson ^X	L. Wallace	J. Wilkes
C. Stanbridge	PS Thompson	SF Walsh ^T	J. Wilkinson ^T
M. Stanbridge	J. Thorpe ^T	LA Walther ^{TX}	J. Wilks
PA Standcliffe ^T	N. Timney ^X	E. Wang ^T	JD Willett ^T
E. Standing	J. Tite	F. Ward	DC Williams
I. Standivan ^W	GA Tocher	GC Ward ^T	G. Williams ^K
MP Stanyer ^T	M. Tomlins ^W	N. Ward	L. Williams ^X
AJ Steele ^T	A. Tomlinson ^T	HM Warne ^T	C. Williamson ^X
MJ Stenning ^B	MP Toms ^T	N. Wame ^B	RLC Williamson ^W
P. Stent	TJ Toohig	D. Warren	S F Williamson ^R
P. Stevens ^W	M. Toone	D. Washington	V. Willis
PR Stevens ^T	S. Topham	MD Washington	J. Willsheer
S. Stevens ^S	B. Tragett ^T	KP Watcham	AR Wilson
D. Stewart ^T	S. Trenerry ^T	T. Waters ^W	C. Wilson

KD Wilson	J. Wise	JA Worrall ^{BH}	M. Wright ^{BT}
PJ Wilson	A. Witts ^T	B. Worsfold	S. Wright ^X
TJ Wilson	J. Wolsey-Cooper	JM Worthington Wilde ^B	S. Wyers
D. Wiltshire ^T	J. Wood ^K	J. Wotton	BJ Yates
I. Wiltshire ^B	V. Wood ^B	L. Wren ^T	D. Yelland
M. Wiltshire ^T	J. Woolcock ^X	R. Wren	R. Young
JS Winder	I. Woolsey ^{HR}	N. Wretham	S. Young ^X
K. Winter ^X	L. Woolven	B. Wright ^T	
M. Wisby ^X	S. Wootton	CMV Wright ^{BCKRST}	

The superscripts in the above table indicate the particular survey(s) in which contributors participated, as follows:

- B Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)
- C Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS)
- D South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI)
- E Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS)
- H Heronries Census
- K Woodcock Survey
- R Winter Thrushes Survey
- S Sussex Ornithological Society species surveys (Corn Bunting)
- T Contributors via BirdTrack
- W Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)
- X Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (incl. iRecord and Living Records)

ASSISTANCE TO RECORDER

The society thanks all who enter their observations through the various online recording systems particularly those based with the BTO. The Recorder and Database Manager are especially grateful to the following team of helpers for coding and inputting the other records onto the computer: J Atkinson, CJR Barfield, C Buckle, M Cam, BR Clay, CB Collins, JR Cowser, HM Crabtree, RDM Edgar, J Everitt, BF Forbes, MG Freeman, BR Gilmore, Ms H Gordon, G Heath, JA Hobson, CE Hope, A House, T Howard-Jones, RA Ives, P Johnson, IM Lang, R Knight, S Linington, Mrs BM Mortlock, A Parker, A Perry, GR Potts, DI Smith, P Stevens, E Stubbs, Dr AB Watson, PJ Whitcomb, JH Whitman, I Woolsey and BJ Yates.

SURVEYS

Society members again gave a great deal of their time during the year to a wide range of national, county and local surveys. Their invaluable support and contributions are acknowledged with grateful thanks. Details of the surveys and the Sussex organisers follow.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS): This BTO annual national breeding survey, based on selected 1-km squares, is organised in Sussex by Dr Helen Crabtree, 3 Myrtle Cottages, Ardingly Road, Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5HD (hcrabtree@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 123 observers involved who are indicated by ^B in the above table.

Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS): This county survey based, like the BBS, on selected 1-km squares, was organised in Sussex for 2014 by Christine George (sussex.wbs@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 82 observers involved who are indicated by ^C in the above table.

South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative: This survey started in 2014 with the aim to monitor the farmland birds within the South Downs national park. This survey is organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details above) and involves a BBS-style survey of randomly-selected 1-km squares containing at least 50% farmland habitat. The BBS squares in the national park are included in this survey and the 38 observers undertaking additional squares in 2014 are marked with a ^D in the above table.

Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex): This continuing survey of heaths and heath woodlands is undertaken in collaboration with the RSPB and the bird clubs of Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey. The Sussex organiser is Alan Perry, Edgehill Barn, Byworth, near Petworth, West Sussex, GU28 0HR (alan@alanperry.uk.com). Thanks are due to the eight observers involved who are indicated by ^E in the list of contributors.

Heronries Census: This long-standing national census was organised in Sussex during 2014 by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above). Counts of known heronries are given in the systematic list. Thanks are due to the 27 contributors who are indicated by ^H in the above table.

Woodcock survey: This national 2013 survey organised by the BTO and funded by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) involved surveying randomly-selected 1-km squares by conducting a 75-minute dusk point count for Woodcocks. Participants provided their survey results online. This study was extended into 2014; thanks are due to the 81 contributors who are indicated by ^K in the above table.

Winter thrushes survey: This national online-only survey operating through the BTO website commenced in September 2012 and was extended to cover the 2013-14 winter. Observers were invited to set up routes, based loosely on 1-km squares, for repeated winter walks and record locations of all thrushes observed, with their habitat and activity. The excellent response in Sussex was promoted and coordinated by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above). Thanks are due to the 89 observers involved who are shown with an ^R in the above table.

Sussex Ornithological Society surveys: The breeding season survey of Corn Buntings was completed in 2014 and was organised by Clare Buckle (surveys@sos.org.uk) and the 34 participants are indicated by ^S in the list of contributors.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS): Monthly counts were carried out for this BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC survey and organised by Richard Bown. Coordinating the counts in large areas has been undertaken by local reserve wardens as shown below. Thanks are due to these and the 114 counters who are indicated by ^W in the list of contributors. The coordination of this survey from 2015 will be undertaken by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and Dave Boddington, 193, Hartington Road, Brighton BN2 3PA (davebodds@yahoo.co.uk).

Coordination of seawatching records: The annual coordination of these records for the society is carried out by Dr JA Newnham, 61 Grand Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 5BA (j.newnham1@ntlworld.com).

SUMMARIES OF OBSERVATIONS

We are grateful to the following for organising survey work and grateful for summaries of detailed observations at: Chichester Harbour from J Parkin; Thorney and Pilsey Islands from CB Collins; Medmerry from P Hughes; 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 D Andrews and P Spiers; Worthing from Dr JA Newnham; Shoreham District O.S. from CE Hope; Horsham District Council reserves from J Everitt; Weir Wood Reservoir from Mrs

BM Mortlock; Ashdown Forest from P Johnson; Telscombe Cliffs from DH Howey; Splash Point (Seaford) from BR Gilmore; Seaford Head from M Eade; Beachy Head from RDM Edgar and D and JF Cooper; Hastings area migration watches from A Parker; Bewl Water from MG Freeman; Pannel Valley NR from Rye Bay Ringing Group; and Rye Harbour from Dr BJ Yates. We also thank Mrs P Green at the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for providing ornithological records from the centre, iRecord and Living Records involving 172 observers (marked ^x in the above table). The online recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 471 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a ^T in the above table. The records from Birdguides for 2014 were channelled through BirdTrack. Thanks are due to the BTO for the county BirdTrack records, as well as county records for the Woodcock survey, the Breeding Bird Survey, the Wetland Bird Survey and a list of the observers involved in the Winter Thrushes Survey.

RINGING

Thanks are due to S Walsh for maintaining detailed records of ringing in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.



Yellow-browed Warbler, The Mumbles (Phil Clay)

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