

# SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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# SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## The Sussex Bird Report

Number Sixty-nine, 2016



Recorder: M Mallalieu

Editorial Team: Dr PJ Plant, MJ Chattaway, Dr HM Crabtree  
L Dray, JA Hobson, P James, M Mallalieu, Dr JA Newnham

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### Sussex Bird Report 2015 amendments and corrections

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Very few errors in the 2015 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. The report of the Short-toed Treecreeper should have noted the scientific name *Certhia brachydactyla*.



*Red-breasted Mergansers, Pagham Hbr, January 2016 (Trevor Guy)*

### Photographs

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Cover photograph: *Grasshopper Warbler, April 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

Just under six hundred images were submitted for this year's report, and I would like to thank every one of the over fifty photographers who sent them in for consideration. The quality of the images is as outstanding as ever and I managed to submit well over one hundred to the Editor.

The highlight for many photographers was the incredibly obliging Red-backed Shrike at Newhaven present from 21 September to 2 October. It even dived between tripod legs on occasion! The Desert Wheatear near Bexhill, the Glossy Ibis at Pett and several Serin records were also popular submissions.

The selection policy with images has been to select as wide a range of species as possible (not just scarcities) and as representative of as many photographers as space constraints allow. As in previous years we have included a photographers' gallery to display a greater selection of work from our talented contributors. [Luke Dray]

# Editorial

Peter Plant

The year 2016 may be remembered as that of the Red-footed Booby (a first for the UK and moving the Sussex list up to a total of 403 species). An account of the bird's finding and its subsequent fate is given by Gail Cohen and David Howey on pages 210-211 of this report.

The year was also a record breaker in that the number of records submitted nearly exceeded 300,000 even though this total does not include the Garden BirdWatch dataset which had not been received from the BTO at the time of writing. Particular thanks are due to Mark Mallalieu and John Newnham for investigating unusual observations and potential errors in the records; 99.9% accuracy still means some 300 oddities to be pursued! The table below shows the trends in the numbers of records, species and observers over recent years although changes in species status and the treatment of escapes means that year-on-year comparison of the species totals must be made with caution. Further interesting analysis is given in John Newnham's database report on pages 14-18.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>No. submitting records</b>	948	894	1146	1362	1285	1074
<b>No. of records received</b>	183,732	148,727	160,856	240,843	280,000	295,221
<b>No. of species recorded</b>	260	271	263	264	252	264

Again, it is appropriate to remind observers that species requiring descriptions are only included in the Sussex Bird Report after approval by the Honorary Recorder and the SOS Records Committee. An updated description species list is given at the end of this report on page 275. It is also noted that many writers have commented that more accurate species accounts would result from observers being diligent about including breeding codes in their submissions in the breeding season.

The systematic list order is unchanged from last year but the designations of Birds of Conservation Concern have been updated with a few alterations. We have continued to use essentially vernacular species names as used in previous Sussex Bird Reports and The Birds of Sussex (Thomas 2014) and have not yet bitten the bullet of also including IOC names which will be adopted by the BOU in 2018. Our divers are not yet loons!

The production of the Sussex Bird Report is only possible as a team effort relying on the generosity and expertise of a large number of volunteers. The observers who supplied the very large number of records including survey results (BBS, WeBS and BirdTrack records) are acknowledged at the end of this report. The database team digested these in our CoBRA2 database, removing duplicate records and checking exceptional records. A stalwart team of species account writers extracted the relevant data and produced draft accounts. Thanks are due to CJR Barfield, VP Bentley, RA Black, D Boddington, C Brooks, C Buckle, D Burges, MJ Chattaway, J Curson, C Davis, D Green, GD Evans, J Franklin, AC Gutteridge, JA Hobson, WG Harvey, A House, DH Howey, P James, ME Kalaher, M Mallalieu, JA Newnham, M Orchard-Webb, GA Osborne, TW Parmenter, PJ Plant, AH Podmore, CJ Reay, A Rowe, T Seabrook, K Smith, A Thomas, AB Watson and JH Whitman. The initials at the end of each account identify the author.

Primary proofreading and checking of numbers was shared between Joanne Chattaway and John Hobson. Many thanks for their diligence. All of the editorial team then conscientiously read

through the accounts and made corrections and recommendations for improvements, additions and amendments, to include late records and to present the accounts in a uniform style for future researchers. In addition further expert comment was sought as appropriate from Val Bentley, Jacob Everitt, Dick Gilmore, David Howey, Peter Hughes, Owen Mitchell, Phil Jones and Barry Yates. All the above should get the credit for the report; the Editor apologises for all errors and omissions and is happy to receive comments and suggestions.

As a parallel activity Luke Dray sifted through a large number of examples of the stunning work of the county's many photographers to allow selection of suitable images to add interest to the Systematic List accounts and fill the available space of the Photographers' Gallery. Thanks go to Robert Yarham for designing the cover.

In addition I would like to thank: Helen Crabtree, Christine George, John Newnham and Alan Perry for compiling survey tables, and Helen again for editing the scientific articles, writing one concerning the Stonechat survey and typesetting this report. Christine provided a paper on the Sussex Winter Bird Survey and Matt Kirk on Redstarts on the Ashdown Forest. Thanks are due too to Val Bentley for the Ringing Report. Finally I must acknowledge the help and professionalism of Neil Pennells of our printers Cliffe Enterprise of Eastbourne.

Please do not forget our loyal advertiser Swarovski Optik.

I hope you will enjoy and be informed by this report; if you would like to participate in the analysis of the data and contribute to the production of the 2017 Sussex Bird Report we are looking for further volunteers to write draft species accounts. Please contact: [breditor@sos.org](mailto:breditor@sos.org).

## Abbreviations

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The following abbreviations are used as standard practice:

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

# Review of 2016

Mark Mallalieu

This review of 2016 is a summary of the year's weather and highlights of interesting and unusual records. In total, 264 species were recorded during 2016, compared with 252 in 2015.

A **Red-footed Booby** found on the beach at St Leonards on 4 Sep and taken into care was the first for Britain. An account of this remarkable occurrence is on pages 210-211 of this report. Other highlights included the county's second **Blyth's Reed Warbler**, singing at Winchelsea Beach on 17 to 19 Jun, and third **Red-flanked Bluetail**, at Beachy Head on 8 Oct. An **Aquatic Warbler** photographed at Pagham Hbr on 16 Aug was the first since 2011, whilst a **Booted Warbler** at Seaford Head on 12 Oct was the sixth ever. A **Northern Long-tailed Tit** on garden bird feeders at Birling Gap on 29 Feb was another excellent result of local patch work. Few people other than the finders were able to see these birds, but several other extreme Sussex rarities were enjoyed by many observers. These included the county's second **American Wigeon**, at Pulborough Brooks from 29 Mar until 19 Apr and a very popular **Desert Wheatear** at Cooden Beach and Norman's Bay on 28 Nov to 9 Dec, the eighth for Sussex. A **Laughing Gull** on Hastings beach on 25 May, the county's seventh, did not linger there for long, but could be seen subsequently at Dungeness in Kent until 2 Jun. A splendid summer-plumaged **American Golden Plover**, the fourth for the county, was a popular attraction at Rye Hbr during 3 to 5 Jun. Also noteworthy was the largest ever influx of **Yellow-browed Warblers** that took place between 11 Sep and 19 Nov, with at least 35 being found across the county at both inland and coastal locations.

## January to March

*January started very unsettled and generally mild, but turned colder for a few days mid-month. The last third of the month was mild and wet with some strong winds. February started wet and unsettled with often strong west to south-westerly winds. The middle of the month was colder, followed by a milder period, before dry, sunny and cold conditions dominated throughout the rest of the month. The first half of March was wet and rather cold. High pressure mid-month brought dry and more settled weather, with the end of the period seeing stormy conditions, especially on the 28<sup>th</sup>.*

In the mild winter, numbers of **Bewick's Swans** peaked at only 28, on the East Guldeford Levels on 11 Jan. However, there were some good numbers of other wintering waterbirds. The January WeBS count of **Brent Geese** totalled 17,357, of which 14,260 were in Chichester Hbr. **Eurasian Wigeon** numbers reached 10,858 in January, almost half of which were in the Arun Valley, with 3705 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The count of 1126 **Shovelers** during WeBS surveys in January was the highest this century. There were 14 **Great Northern Divers** off Medmerry on 10 Mar. At Rye Hbr, **Golden Plovers** reached 3000 on four days of counts from 26 Jan until 5 Mar. Pulborough Brooks held 3000 **Lapwings** on 1 Feb. There were 1200 **Black-tailed Godwits** in Pagham Hbr on 12 Jan and the same number at Pulborough Brooks on the 29<sup>th</sup>. **Bar-tailed Godwits** reached 760 in Chichester Hbr on 23 Jan. There were 150 **Common Snipe** at Newhaven Tide Mills on 17 Feb, the highest count of the year. The second highest ever count of **Common Gulls** was made at Bewl Water on 8 Feb, when 85,800 joined the nocturnal gull roost.

At Scotney GP, a **Bean Goose** of the tundra race *Anser fabalis rossicus* remained from 2015 until 22 Jan. A long-staying first-winter male **American Wigeon** at Pulborough Brooks was enjoyed by many observers from 27 Mar to 19 Apr. A **Glossy Ibis** that had arrived at Pett Level

in November the previous year was still present in January and remained in the area until at least 17 May. It may have wandered to Northiam, where one was present on 27 Feb. Another was found at Iford Brooks on 24 Jan. A **Black Brant** in Chichester Hbr from 1 Jan until at least 5 Mar was one of the two individuals seen there during December 2015. Two excellent finds in January were a **Grey Phalarope** at Ferring on the 15<sup>th</sup> and a **Little Auk** observed flying past Splash Point on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. A number of scarcer gulls were found in the period, including single **Iceland Gulls** at Newhaven on 6 Jan and 6 Mar. A **Glaucous Gull** settled in West Sussex, being seen at several locations in the Goring and Littlehampton area from 11 Jan to at least 8 Feb, then at Shoreham from 17 Feb to 13 Mar. One offshore at Church Norton on 28 Jan was probably the same individual. **Caspian Gulls** started to appear a little later, with two in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 20 Feb and two on 9 Mar.



*Glossy Ibis, Pett Level, February 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

The rarest bird found in February was a **Northern Long-tailed Tit** at Birling Gap on 29 Feb. Scarcer species in March included a **Balearic Shearwater** off Worthing on the 26<sup>th</sup>, with two at Selsey Bill the next day; and a **Crane** over Cobnor on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Three **Continental Coal Tits** appeared at Seaford Head on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

There were two exceptionally early records of **Quails**, at Widewater (Lancing) on 19 Mar and near Seaford on 22 Mar. **Great White Egrets** are losing their former extreme rarity status: in the early winter period there were 1-2 in the Rye Hbr area until 24 Mar, one at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Jan and one at Arundel WWT on 31 Jan. **Eastern race Chiffchaffs** are also being found more frequently, with 1-2 present at five sites between January and March, mostly at water treatment works. Careful searching in late winter can reveal **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** at favoured locations, the lower Cuckmere Valley being a reliable site. One was seen on 27 Feb, followed by up to 10 between 3 and 23 Mar. On 7 to 19 Feb, the same valley held a **Water Pipit**,



a species also recorded from three other coastal sites in the east of the county in this period, with West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) hosting three on 23 Feb. There was just one **Snow Bunting**, on Pevensey Levels on 7 Feb.

The first summer migrants included a **Willow Warbler** at Rye Hbr on 11 Mar, a **Barn Swallow** at Brighton on 14 Mar, a **Little Ringed Plover** at Sidlesham Ferry Pool and a **Northern Wheatear** at Seaford Head, both on 19 Mar, followed by **Sand Martins** on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, with 11 at Selsey and a single at Pagham Hbr. The first **House Martin** was at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Mar, then an **Osprey** at Weir Wood Res on the 26<sup>th</sup>, a **Hobby** at High and Over (Seaford) on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the first *flavissima* **Yellow Wagtail** at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on the 29<sup>th</sup>, though a male “**Channel**” **Wagtail** (a hybrid between *M.f. flavissima* and *M.f. flava*) had been photographed in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 21 Mar. The first **Common Tern** was at Selsey Bill on 26 Mar. No **Garganeys** were observed until the late date of 27 Mar, when one flew east off Worthing. On 30 Mar, a **Common Cuckoo** was noted at Battle and a **Tree Pipit** at Selsey Bill. Three **Stone-curlews** were also found in late March.

## April to June

*At the start of April the weather was unsettled and dominated by low pressure and frequent rain, with often easterly winds. The second half of the month was mostly cold, bright and showery, with frequent northerly winds. After unsettled and windy conditions at the start of May, a high pressure area brought easterly winds and warm, sunny weather, though this was interrupted by colder and more unsettled periods. June was the duller in record in south-east England, with above average rainfall, though there was a hot and sunny period early in the month.*

From the beginning of April more summer visitors started to arrive. On the 1<sup>st</sup>, there were two **Sedge Warblers** at Rye Hbr and a **Garden Warbler** at Steyning. A **Pied Flycatcher**, also at Steyning, was seen on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, when the first **Common Redstart** was at Selsey Bill. The next day a **Little Tern** flew east off Littlehampton, there were five **Arctic Terns** at Splash Point (Seaford), a **Common Whitethroat** at Seaford Head, a **Ring Ouzel** at Church Norton and another two at Coombes (Shoreham), as well as **Nightingales** at Amberley and Pulborough Brooks. The first **Reed Warbler** was at Pagham Hbr on the 7<sup>th</sup>, the first **Grasshopper Warbler** at Waltham Brooks on the 11<sup>th</sup>, followed by a **Lesser Whitethroat** at Pagham Hbr the next day. New arrivals continued with a **Whinchat** at Newhaven on the 13<sup>th</sup>, a **Turtle Dove** at Flimwell the next day, two **Common Swifts** over Henfield on the 15<sup>th</sup> and the first **Spotted Flycatcher** at the Knepp Estate on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The first **Nightjar** was at Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on 3 May.

April brought a range of scarcer species, mainly at coastal sites. Eight **Balearic Shearwaters** flew east past Selsey Bill on the 21<sup>st</sup>, an unusually high spring count; a **Cattle Egret** found at Pagham Hbr on the 14<sup>th</sup> stayed until 5 May; a **Great White Egret** flew east off Seaford Head on the 25<sup>th</sup>; single **White Storks** were at West Wittering on the 17<sup>th</sup> and Bexhill on the 26<sup>th</sup>; a **Black Guillemot** flew east at Selsey Bill on the 1<sup>st</sup> as did a **Roseate Tern** on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Three **Glaucous Gulls** brought a reminder of winter: one was at Pett Level on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, one flew east at Birling Gap on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and another flew slowly west at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A **Hooded Crow** was at Church Norton on the 10<sup>th</sup> and then Selsey Bill on the 12<sup>th</sup>, this site also hosting an elusive **Serín** from 13 Apr to at least 19 May. Several scarce birds were also found further inland, Pulborough Brooks hosting a **White Stork** on 27 Apr and a **Great White Egret** on 18 Apr, with a **Stone-curlew** nearby on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. A **Crane** flew over Steyning on the 12<sup>th</sup>, the same day as a **Black-winged Stilt** graced Weir Wood Res. A **Hoopoe** was at Adversane on the 13<sup>th</sup> and another at Horsham on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Single **Wrynecks** were present at Saltdean on the 4<sup>th</sup>, at Salehurst on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and at Pulborough Brooks on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. In another poor year for **Wood Warblers**,

the first was not seen until 4 May, when one was at Pulborough Brooks, followed by singles at Newhaven on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Coates Common on the 16<sup>th</sup> and The Ridge (Ashdown Forest) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Two **eastern race Chiffchaffs** were found in April: one at Beeding Brooks on the 7<sup>th</sup> and one at Beachy Head on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A single **Water Pipit** was seen along the R Ouse at Rodmell on 1 Apr.



*Black-winged Stilts, Pulborough Brooks, May 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

During late April and May, seawatching continued to produce a number of sightings of scarce, rare or otherwise sought-after species. The highlight at Selsey Bill was a **Cory's Shearwater** flying east on 1 May, observers at this site also recording two **Storm Petrels** on the 9<sup>th</sup>. A minimum of 134 **Pomarine Skuas** flew east along the coast on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. An excellent spring total of 201 **Black Terns** was recorded between 20 Apr and 11 May, nearly all flying east past Selsey Bill and Splash Point. Also at Splash Point, a **Roseate Tern** flew east on 6 May, with another the next day. Individuals of this species were also seen at Rye Hbr on three dates in June. **Great White Egrets** flew east offshore at Shoreham on 6 May and at Birling Gap on 7 May. Exciting birds of prey in May included **Honey-buzzards** at Southwick on the 15<sup>th</sup> and Lidsey (Bognor) on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, a **Black Kite** at Rye Hbr on the 17<sup>th</sup> and **Montagu's Harriers** at Friston Forest on the 7<sup>th</sup> and Hastings on the 26<sup>th</sup>. On 2 May, Pulborough Brooks hosted a splendid flock of 10 **Black-winged Stilts**, with other scarce waders including a **Kentish Plover** at Pagham Hbr between 30 May and 1 Jun and a **Temminck's Stint** at Rye Hbr on 6 May. The rarest species in May was a confiding adult **Laughing Gull** at Hastings on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A **Hooded Crow** lingered at Beachy Head from 4 until 12 May. Spring "overshoots" included an **Alpine Swift** at Portobello on 7 May, a **Serin** at Beachy Head on 9 May; and on 12 May a **Golden Oriole** at Climping, a **Red-backed Shrike** at Filsham, a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Selsey Bill, with at least two more at Beachy Head. In a very poor year for **Quails**, there was one in Ashdown Forest on 12 May and 1-2 at Beachy Head on 18 Jun.



*Blyth's Reed Warbler, Rye Hbr, June 2016 (Barry Yates)*

June produced more overshooting migrants, including a **Cattle Egret** at Sidlesham Ferry Pool between the 18th and 22<sup>th</sup>; another **Black Kite**, this time at Pett Level on the 5<sup>th</sup>; the only **Bee-eater** of the year in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 16<sup>th</sup>; a **Golden Oriole** at Seaford Head on the 4<sup>th</sup>; a **Red-backed Shrike** in Ashdown Forest on the 6<sup>th</sup>; a male **Common Rosefinch** in Brighton on the 9<sup>th</sup>; and perhaps as many as five **Serins** at Beachy Head between 16 and 18 Jun, including two adults with a juvenile. However, the highlight of the spring period was a much rarer overshooting migrant: a singing male **Blyth's Reed Warbler** at Winchelsea Beach from 17 until 19 Jun. An **American Golden Plover** was another excellent find, at Rye Hbr between 3 and 5 Jun. Offshore, a **Balearic Shearwater** flew east at Portobello on 23 Jun.

## July to September

*July started changeable with temperatures not high for the time of year. In the middle of the month there was a short period of very hot weather with clear skies, before cooler conditions returned. The start of August was unsettled, wet and windy at times in the first week. It was more settled in the second half of the month. Southerly winds brought a spell of high temperatures during 23 to 25 August. At the start of September, the weather was changeable with high pressure to the south and a west to south-westerly airflow. On the 7th and 13th to 15th there was hot and humid weather, separated by a wet spell. The 13th saw the highest September temperatures in UK since 1911. The second half of the month was changeable but temperatures were generally above the seasonal average.*



Noteworthy breeding records included 72 **Little Egret** nests at eight sites; **Marsh Harriers** at a minimum of three sites; three pairs of **Honey-buzzards**, all of which bred successfully; seven **Goshawk** territories, with juveniles seen at three of these; one pair of **Stone-curlews**; and a county record of about 113 pairs of **Avocets**, at Rye Hbr, Pett Level and Medmerry. At Rye Hbr, 17 pairs of **Little Terns** were present, but few young, if any, fledged. By contrast, at Pagham Hbr 13 pairs fledged 11 young. **Sandwich Terns** fared badly at Rye, with 450 pairs producing up to 10 fledged young. The three pairs at Pagham Hbr that fledged three young represent the first confirmed breeding success for the species at this site. The picture for **Common Terns** was also mixed, with 130 pairs at Rye Hbr fledging 15 young; up to 34 pairs at Pett Level with unknown breeding success but heavy predation; 15 pairs at Pagham Hbr producing 15 fledged young; three pairs at Weir Wood Res producing eight young; and three fledged young at Warnham LNR. At Rye Hbr, 52 pairs of **Mediterranean Gulls** nested, fledging 16 young, with up to a further nine pairs at Pett Level, though the nests here were heavily predated. There was a confirmed minimum of 33 pairs of **Peregrines**, 17 of these producing 50 young. Eight pairs of **Bearded Tits** were present in the breeding season at Pett Level with at least that number at Rye Hbr, whilst fledged young were seen at Thorney Deep. Field work produced some good numbers of breeding **Woodlarks**, with 11 pairs at Broadwater Warren and 42 pairs on the West Sussex heaths. **Dartford Warblers** are continuing to recover, with 17 territories on the West Sussex heaths and probably well over 20 on Ashdown Forest. Six pairs of **Tree Sparrows** bred in nest boxes on Pevensy Levels. The poor showing of **Quail** continued, with one calling at Amberley Wild Brooks on 3 and 5 Jul.

In July and August, several fortunate observers saw wandering storks soaring over the county. A **Black Stork** above the Knepp Estate on 14 Jul was relocated over Pulborough Brooks the same day. A **White Stork** was recorded at the latter site on 31 Jul and again on 6 and 7 Aug. A **White Stork** was also seen over Worthing on 23 Jul. The third **Cattle Egret** of the year was in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 25 Jul and the third **Glossy Ibis** at Pagham Hbr and Sidlesham Ferry Field on 31 Aug and 1 Sep. A Great White Egret remained at Rye Hbr from 1 Aug to 30 Sep. **Balearic Shearwaters** appeared in small numbers in August, with one flying west at Selsey Bill on the 7<sup>th</sup> and four flying east at Splash Point on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

In early August, the first **Honey-buzzard** was observed at the coast, over Eastbourne on the 5<sup>th</sup>, though it was not until 25 Aug that two were seen at Beachy Head. The scarcest bird of prey found in August was a juvenile **Montagu's Harrier**, well-photographed at Seaford Head on the 26<sup>th</sup>. From 3 Aug through to 24 Sep, there was a total of about 17 **Wrynecks** at mainly coastal sites from Pagham Hbr and Climping to Beachy Head and Pett Level, the only inland record being from Cissbury on 8 Sep. There were two rare warblers in August, a **Melodious Warbler** at Birling Gap on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and an **Aquatic Warbler** along the east side of Pagham Hbr on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the latter identified from photographs and eluding subsequent searchers. Single **Wood Warblers** were found at Pulborough Brooks on 29 Jul, Pett Level on 1 Aug, Seaford Head on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Beachy Head on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Arundel WWT on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Pulborough Brooks on the 14<sup>th</sup> and at Arundel Park on the 17<sup>th</sup>. An **Ortolan Bunting** was a good find at Seaford Head on 24 Aug.

**Balearic Shearwaters** were recorded moving west along the coast at St Leonards in September, with three on 4 Sep and a single on the 10<sup>th</sup>, whilst a **Sooty Shearwater** flew west at Selsey Bill on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On 4 Sep, a seabird rescued on the beach at St Leonards was correctly identified by the finder as a **Red-footed Booby**, the first for Britain (see pages 210-211 of this report).

The second **Black Stork** of the year flew west over Springhead Hill (Storrington) on 4 Sep. On 12 Sep, a **Corncrake** was photographed at the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr). At least seven **Honey-buzzards** appeared at the coast from 4 Sep to 28 Sep, mostly at Beachy Head. In a year not notable for rare waders, there was a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Shripney from 8 to 13 Sep and

a much-enjoyed **Red-necked Phalarope** at Thorney Deeps during 5 until 15 Sep. Among less scarce wader species, there was a good showing of **Little Stints**, with at least 22 being found in September, mainly in Chichester, Pagham and Rye Harbours, but with 1-2 noted inland. Also impressive were the 600 **Ringed Plovers** at Pilsey Island on 6 Sep and the 84 **Greenshanks** at Thorney Deeps on 17 and 18 Aug followed by 32 in the Lower Arun valley on 12 Sep. There was a record total of 1000 **Mediterranean Gulls** at Chichester Hbr and Medmerry on 2 and 29 Sep.

Scarce passerines in September included two further **Ortolan Buntings**, the first an excellent inland find at Springhead Hill on 2 and 3 Sep and the next again at Seaford Head on the 6<sup>th</sup>. There were two first-year **Red-backed Shrikes**, at Pagham Hbr on 15 Sep and a very popular, confiding and long-staying bird at Newhaven Tide Mills on 21 Sep until 2 Oct. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was at Beachy Head on 14 Sep, when there was also a **Grey-headed Wagtail** at Bewl Water. A **Barred Warbler** was seen with about 40 **Chiffchaffs** at Bishopstone (Seaford) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. September also saw the start of the best ever showing of **Yellow-browed Warblers** in the county, the first being trapped at Pett Level on the 11<sup>th</sup> and further birds being found at Beachy Head on the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup>, with another at Arundel WWT on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Summer visitors started to depart in this period, with the last **Cuckoo** (23 Aug), **Nightjars** (6 Sep), **Nightingales** (11 Sep), **Little Ringed Plover** (14 Sep), **Little Terns** (16 Sep), **Pied Flycatcher** (18 Sep) and **Lesser Whitethroat** (27 Sep).

## October to December

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*October was mainly dry with easterly winds and plenty of sunshine. The last four days of the month were notably mild. November started mild, but colder and bright weather spread from the north. After an unsettled period with some strong winds, high pressure brought generally dry, settled and cold weather from the 23rd onwards, with frequent sunny spells. December was generally mild, but with some colder periods later in the month. The year ended with very dull, misty conditions.*

October saw the final records of the year for most other summer visitors, including **Common** and **Arctic Terns** (4<sup>th</sup>), **Common Swift** (5<sup>th</sup>), **Tree Pipit** (7<sup>th</sup>), **Grasshopper** and **Reed Warblers** (9<sup>th</sup>), **Spotted Flycatcher** (17<sup>th</sup>), **Sand Martin** (20<sup>th</sup>), **Willow Warbler** (21<sup>st</sup>), **Yellow Wagtail** and **Common Redstart** (23<sup>rd</sup>), **Common Whitethroat** (24<sup>th</sup>) and **Garden Warbler** (30<sup>th</sup>). A few species lingered into November, including the last **Sedge Warbler** (1<sup>st</sup>), **Hobby** (5<sup>th</sup>), **Osprey** (8<sup>th</sup>), an unusually late **Turtle Dove** (9<sup>th</sup>), **Northern Wheatear** (11<sup>th</sup>), **Ring Ouzel** (16<sup>th</sup>) and **House Martins** (19<sup>th</sup>). A very late **Barn Swallow** was at Pagham Hbr on 10 Dec.

With the persistently east winds, the arrival of **Yellow-browed Warblers** continued, with at least another 31 birds being documented at both coastal and several inland locations from 2 Oct to 19 Nov, giving a county total for the autumn of about 35, by far the highest ever annual figure. The true total is likely to have been greater due to birds remaining undetected and records not being submitted. Perhaps surprisingly, there were no confirmed records of **Pallas's Warbler**.

Up to 11 **Tundra Bean Geese** settled at Pulborough Brooks from 7 until 10 Oct, a very early date for the county. Offshore, two more **Sooty Shearwaters** were logged, one flying west at Pett Level on the 4<sup>th</sup> and another flying west at Lancing on the 16<sup>th</sup>. There were 13 **Great White Egrets** between 4 Oct and the end of the year, including 1-2 at Rye Hbr from 26 Oct and two well-watched birds at Weir Wood Res between 6 and 25 Oct. An interesting record concerned three **Great White Egrets** flying in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 26 Nov with a **Little Egret**, the flock first being observed about two miles offshore and later seen over Hayling Island in Hampshire with two additional **Little Egrets**. Twelve **Spoonbills** flew west over Climping on 1 Oct, the

largest flock in the county for over 50 years. There were two more **Wrynecks**, at Beachy Head on 2 Oct and Cuckmere Haven on the following day. **Shorelarks** are very scarce in Sussex, so three October records are noteworthy: at Hastings on 8 Oct, at Bulverhythe the next day; and at East Head (Wittering) on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The two rarest species in October were a **Booted Warbler** at Seaford Head on the 12<sup>th</sup> and a **Red-flanked Bluetail** trapped and ringed at Beachy Head on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Three **Common Redpolls** were trapped at Pett Level, two on the 26<sup>th</sup> and one on the 30<sup>th</sup> and the fourth **Ortolan Bunting** of the year was found inland south of Arundel on the 6<sup>th</sup>, giving a well above average showing for this species. Among less scarce passerine migrants, **Ring Ouzels** passed through in excellent numbers in early October, with counts of 18-85 at several mainly coastal sites during the 5<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>. Following the first **Great Grey Shrike** at Blackdown on 9 Oct, there were many sightings on Ashdown Forest from 18 Oct to the end of the year, involving perhaps 2-3 individuals, as well as singles at five other sites, including frequent records from Waltham Brooks.

A **Black Brant** was photographed at Pagham Hbr on 8 Nov, but not seen subsequently. A scattering of unusual sightings in early November included the last **Balearic Shearwater** of the year flying east at Selsey Bill on the 4<sup>th</sup>, a **Crane** over the Cuckmere Valley on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and a **Pomarine Skua** at Funtington and then Chichester Hbr on the 6<sup>th</sup>. There were five **Little Auks** between 3 and 20 Nov, at Selsey Bill, Splash Point and Winchelsea Beach. A **Cattle Egret** frequented fields at Yapton on 15-21 Nov.

In November and December, there was a modest reversal in the declining trend in records of **Red-necked Grebes**, with up to 10 being found, including a total of about seven at Selsey Bill and one inland at Weir Wood Res during 7 to 20 Dec.

Four **Waxwings** were at Bewbush (Crawley) and two at Arundel WWT on 29 Nov. From 5 Nov, and probably several weeks before then, into 2017, a **Rose-coloured Starling** frequented bird feeders in a garden at Broadfield (Crawley), enabling many people to see it and track its transition from juvenile into adult plumage. A rarer long-stayer was the delightfully confiding **Desert Wheatear** that graced Cooden Beach and Norman's Bay from 28 Nov until 9 Dec, attracting many observers. A **Richard's Pipit** at West Rise Marsh on 23 Nov was another good find, as was a **Lapland Bunting** on East Guldeford Levels on 13 Nov. **Snow Buntings** were scarce, with 1-2 at five sites from East Head (Chichester Hbr) in the west to Pett Level in the east, all between 28 Oct and 14 Nov. A singing male **Serin** at Newhaven Tide Mills from 24 Dec into 2017 was another popular attraction.

A **Pink-footed Goose** was on Horse Eye Level (Pevensy) on 27 Dec. A surprise find in the month was a **Stone-curlew** at West Wittering on the 4<sup>th</sup>. More predictable was the reappearance of up to three eastern race **Chiffchaffs** at Coldwaltham WTW from 11 Dec. Keen gull-watchers started to find scarcer species and subspecies towards the close of the year, starting with a **Caspian Gull** at Arlington Res on 17 Nov, followed by at least five and perhaps 10 in the lower Cuckmere Valley in December, a site that is becoming a hotspot for this increasing visitor. There was also a northern race **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus argentatus* there on 3 Dec and two further examples of this subspecies in the lower Adur valley on 10 Dec.

The roost of **Red Kites** at The Burgh reached a record 57 on 30 Dec. Among the commoner species, the period produced a good count of 500 **Gannets** feeding off Selsey Bill on 28 Nov, 4000 **Grey Plovers** at Pilsey Island on 17 Dec, 322 **Sanderlings** at Pilsey Island on 26 October and 12,601 **Dunlins** during the December WeBS counts, including 11,342 in Chichester Hbr. The nocturnal gull roost at Bewl Water held 40,000 **Black-headed Gulls** on 23 Dec.

## Classified Records for 2016

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 listed in the order published in the eighth edition of the British List announced by the BOU in June 2013 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	201-2000
Common	1001-5000	2001-10,000
Very common	5001-30,000	10,001-60,000
Abundant	30,000+	60,000+

### Seawatching records

Seawatching records were received from several sites 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	66	35	142	206	208	67	52	65	91	86	90	62	1171
Worthing	8	3	30	39	38	9	14	5	10	16	13	17	201
Telscombe Cliffs	18	21	37	58	25	17	24	17	14	24	23	34	311
Splash Point (Seaford)	8	2	16	61	75	0	0	2	0	0	5	3	170
Beachy Head	4	4	7	21	35	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	37

### 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 2016 the priority core count dates were: 17 Jan, 21 Feb, 13 Mar, 10 Apr, 8 May, 5 Jun, 24 Jul, 21 Aug, 18 Sep, 16 Oct, 13 Nov and 18 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 presented in the reports between 2004 and 2015 show only sites where this figure was reached during any of the core (Sep-Mar) monthly counts. From 2016 the sites shown are those where the sum of the core season counts is 5% or more of the sum of the county total for the same January to March and September to December counts. For the first year the tables also show a 10-year average county total for each month to allow readers to place the current year counts in context.

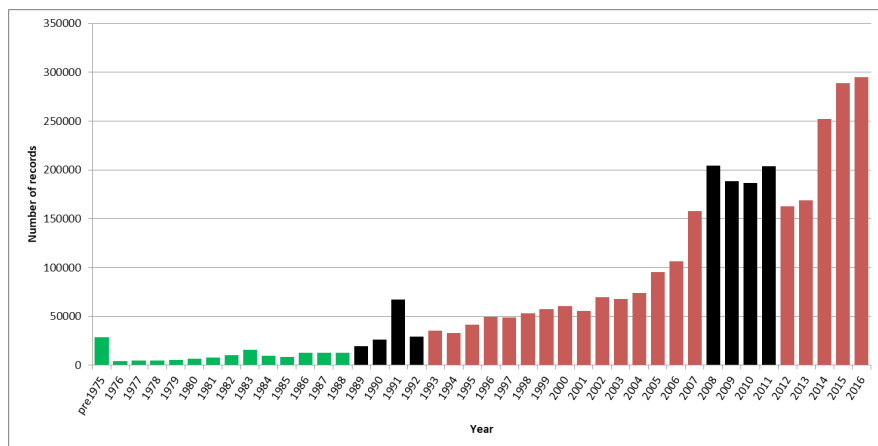
### Breeding Bird Survey data

Results from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) are presented on pages 201-203 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 CoBRA (County Bird Recording Application) database. The new web-based database (CoBRA2, known as C2) has developed further during the year and has met all the challenges placed on it. 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.

For the third successive year a record number of observations have been entered into the database with the total for 2016 being 295,221. Since the SOS started computing records in 1989 there has almost been a year by year increase in the amount of data as shown in the graph below.



*The numbers of records in the SOS database for each year; black columns indicate years of atlas fieldwork and green columns indicate archived records.*

Online recording continues to provide most records accounting for over 78% in 2016 and records from other databases comprised 15%. The number of records from each of the main online recording systems and largest contributing county databases are shown in the table below.

Source	Records	Source	Records
BTO BirdTrack data	187,604	Horsham D.C. reserves	12,814
WeBS	12,641	Ashdown Forest Bird Group	10,698
Breeding Bird Survey (BTO)	8890	RSPB reserves	9606
Cornell University eBird	7410	Weir Wood Group	4722
Sussex Winter Bird Survey (via BirdTrack)	6393	Rye Hbr LNR records	4078
iRecord	6318	Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre	1279

As before the greatest number of records, by a large margin, came from BirdTrack. This is an excellent system 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. As nearly 66% of the records come via BirdTrack it is interesting to examine when these data are entered into the system and therefore become available for national and county research. The table below shows that over 80% of these records were entered within a week of the observation with less than 2% being entered after more than 6 months (these figures include some records from counties bordering Sussex so do not exactly match those given in the previous table). This gives encouragement to capture records into C2 more expeditiously to facilitate the review of unusual records and to have some current records available for any enquiry.

	No. of records	Percentage
Same day entry	92069	45.3%
Next day	42293	20.8%
Same week	168801	83.1%
Within 4 weeks	186092	91.6%
Within 3 months	197502	97.2%
Within 6 months	200393	98.7%
Within more than 1 year	183	0.1%

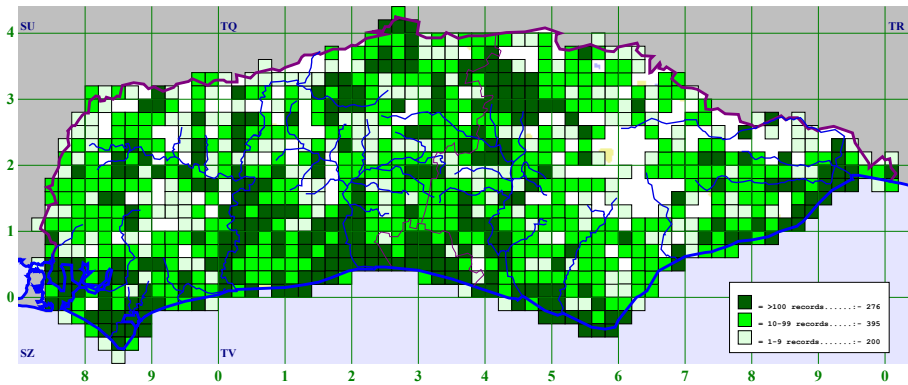
For the first year the species accounts include records gathered by the Cornell University eBird system. The 2016 dataset recognises 1074 observers, a reduction of about 16% from 2015, and as usual the number of submissions varied considerably with the range from one to just under 10,000 records. Whilst 67 observers each contributed more than 1000 records, 250 each supplied between 101 and 999 records and 358 birders each added between 10 and 99 observations.

The records during the year came from 1769 sites with most from the well watched locations such as Chichester Hbr (8178), Pagham Hbr (22,390), Pulborough Brooks (24,801), Ashdown Forest (18,406), Pett Level (12,734) and Rye Hbr (13,201). Approximately 85% of records had an associated grid reference at tetrad level or finer and the map below plots the numbers of records for each of the 871 tetrads in which some recording was undertaken. The pattern is remarkably similar to that in most years with the traditional "hole" in central East Sussex and recording hotspots of the coastal plain, estuaries, river valleys and Ashdown Forest. Throughout the systematic list reference is made to the numbers of tetrads in which some of the more widespread species have been recorded; the fact that not all of the county tetrads have been visited, and not all these for detailed recording, needs to be considered whilst reading these statements.





*Red-backed Shrike, Tidemills (Newhaven), September 2016 (Luke Dray)*



*The number of records received for 2016 in each tetrad in Sussex. Dark green symbol, >100 records; mid-green symbol, 10-99 records; pale green symbol, 1-9 records.*

Detailed grid references are of particular value when preparing reports to support or challenge planning applications and invariably six- or eight-character grid references are the most useful. The table below shows approximately 63% of the records reach this standard but contributors are reminded that BirdTrack has a facility for pin-pointing a more detailed grid reference for an observation and C2 will find a more detailed grid reference entered into the text field from any recording system.

	No. of records	Percentage
Records with blank grid reference	22,178	7.5%
Records with 10-km grid reference	23,684	8.0%
Records with tetrad grid reference	64,237	21.8%
Records with 1-km grid reference	145,973	49.4%
Records with 100-m grid reference	39,149	13.3%

In keeping with recent years and 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 below shows the numbers of records generated in 2016 for the top thirty species and is very similar to that for 2015 except Blackcap and Barn Swallow have been replaced by Long-tailed Tit and Collared Dove. This plethora of information needs to be condensed into a short summary for publishing in this report.

Woodpigeon	8220	Chaffinch	5347	Song Thrush	3823
Robin	8076	Duncock	5107	Coot	3621
Blackbird	7842	Jackdaw	5012	Grey Heron	3492
Carrion Crow	7230	Goldfinch	4988	Cormorant	3462
Blue Tit	6762	Black-headed Gull	4680	Mute Swan	3246
Magpie	6266	Chiffchaff	4664	Common Pheasant	3187
Wren	6232	Common Buzzard	4588	Long-tailed Tit	3127
Herring Gull	6015	Common Starling	4365	Great Spotted Woodpecker	3085
Great Tit	5897	House Sparrow	4244	Greenfinch	2978
Mallard	5450	Moorhen	4227	Collared Dove	2901



Recording throughout the year was not constant and, as the following table shows, 2016 broadly replicated the pattern from previous years with most recording done in the spring and with July being the quietest month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Percentage of records in 2016	9.9	8.5	9.4	12.8	11.0	7.5	6.0	6.8	7.1	7.3	6.4	7.2
Average percentage 1988-2015	8.2	7.5	8.5	11.9	11.7	12.1	5.3	6.2	7.5	7.2	7.0	6.9

Additional details in records are very 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. Although the society has made pleas to encourage observers to record breeding status the following table shows very little change from the low level reached in 2015.

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
2015	105,871	2.6	5.4	8.3	16.3
2016	110,039	2.2	5.7	8.8	16.7

As always some records have been lost as supporting notes describing rare and scarce species or unusual “out of season” sightings have not been forthcoming. Furthermore for 2016 there was no systematic capture of postings on the SOS website and only limited capture of details from blogs therefore some interesting and important observations may be lost to the county avifauna. [John Newnham, Database Manager, July 2017]

## Distribution maps

The distribution maps for certain species include a range of symbols which are defined in the map keys. Broadly, red colours are used for breeding season records, blue colours for winter records and green colours for all-year records. Square symbols represent levels of abundance whilst the large red circle represents confirmed breeding, the medium red circle represents probable breeding, the small red circle indicates that a species was seen in suitable breeding habitat, and small open circles represent all other records with grid references.

## Mute Swan

## *Cygnus olor*

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

Mute Swans were recorded in 170 tetrads this year, 11 fewer than last year. 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	491	397	396	244	400	324	481	343	384	468	565	514
Chichester Hbr	56	58	42	25	128	138	253	99	33	116	204	217
Arun Valley (S of Arundel)	82	77	44	45	23	nc	nc	nc	14	12	48	32
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	82	32	42	39	61	48	41	26	58	52	36	47
Upper Adur Levels	57	67	77	6	26	8	12	18	14	34	47	34
Eastbourne Lakes	37	48	54	26	16	1	2	11	59	44	51	25
Rye Bay	77	9	22	26	28	54	90	40	48	54	55	29
Average county total 2006-2015	612	544	513	393	460	472	424	453	608	624	673	664

In all months except July the county total was well below the average for the past ten years. Notable first winter period counts, additional to the WeBS counts, included 95 at Jury's Gap on 20 Jan, 93 at East Guldeford Level on 31 Jan and 62 there on 16 Feb, and 76 at Barnham on 30 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 34 tetrads, one more than last year. In addition, breeding was recorded as probable in a further 13 tetrads and possible in seven. Courtship was noted at Horsted Keynes Lakes on 14 Feb and the first occupied nest was recorded at Ifield MP on 14 Mar.

Post-breeding aggregations in summer were, as usual, generally largest in Chichester Hbr, with non-WeBS counts of 148 at Fishbourne on 6 Jun, and 180 at Dell Quay on 6 Jul. Elsewhere, the highest counts were 54 at Rye Hbr on 24 Jul and 37 on the Steyning Levels on 4 Jul.

In the second winter period the only non-WeBS three-figure count was 115 at Apuldram (Chichester Hbr) on 16 Nov. The highest non-WeBS count at other locations was 42 at Rye Hbr on 28 Nov. [JC]

## Bewick's Swan

## *Cygnus columbianus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	8	11	-		-	-	-
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	8	7	-		-	-	-
Upper Adur Levels	-	4	-		-	-	-
Average county total 2006-2015	18	15	0		0	0	13

Numbers at the main sites in the first winter period were significantly lower than last year. The highest count in West Sussex in the traditional area of the Arun Valley was 11, recorded at

both Arundel on 19 Feb and at Pulborough Brooks the following day. A total of eight were seen at various sites within the Arun Valley between Arundel and Pulborough Brooks on various dates between 18 Jan and 4 Feb and the last seven were recorded on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Elsewhere, four were seen at Henfield on 21 Feb, but more significantly, 28 were seen in East Sussex on the East Guldeford Levels on 11 Jan which was the highest count of the year. The last birds of the first winter period were two at Arundel WWT on 27 Feb.

The first returning birds on 11 Nov were four at Arlington Res and three at Rye Hbr. Three were at Amberley Wildbrooks on 24 Nov and thereafter a flock of five were seen regularly in the Arun Valley at various localities between 29 Nov and the year's end. Ones and twos were occasionally seen elsewhere in the Arun Valley, which may have been part of the flock of five, but none was seen away from this area during the second winter period. [JC]

## Bean Goose

*Anser fabalis*

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

The individual of the tundra race *A.f. rossicus* remained in the goose flock at Scotney GP from December 2015 until 22 Jan (mo). A flock of 11 birds, also of the tundra race *A.f. rossicus*, lingered at Pulborough Brooks from 7 to 10 Oct (RJF, ARK *et al.*). [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 was only one record, of a single bird with White-fronted Geese on Pevensy Levels on 27 Dec (CFB). [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.*

The bulk of the records for the early part of the year were from the Rye Hbr/Pett Level area where numbers rose from seven on 1 Jan to a peak of 36 on the 25<sup>th</sup>, though after a record of 27 three days later there were no more reports from there until mid-March. A flock of 36 birds at Scotney GP on 5 Feb may have been the same birds but counts of 46 on the 19 Mar and 50 the following day presumably included different birds on migration. Further west, the family of four that arrived on Lewes Brooks in the preceding December remained together until 23 Feb, with three remaining there until 15 Mar. A lone bird that was at Medmerly in late 2015 relocated to Pagham Hbr from 5 to 13 Jan, reappeared at Chichester GP on 29 Feb where it remained until 24 Apr.

Early October saw an influx to Pulborough Brooks, with one on the 7<sup>th</sup> rising to four on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 17 a day later and to a peak of 20 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, mirroring the arrival of Tundra Bean Geese (see above). At least 13 birds remained in the Pulborough Brooks/Amberley Wildbrooks area into 2017. Elsewhere during October there were 30 over Pett Level on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 20 seen flying around

in foggy conditions at Flimwell on the 16<sup>th</sup>, three at Barcombe Res the following day and 13 behind the North Wall (Pagham Harbour) on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The only other records were of up to five in late October at Pett Level, with one seen there on 27 Nov and two on 4 Dec, and a single bird at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Dec. [AH]

## Greylag Goose

## *Anser anser*

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

The monthly WeBS counts at sites where at least 5% of county total occur in 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	1117	345	406	265	314	264	1211	746	771	1368	1952	973
Arun Valley	87	2	43	47	56	7	268	191	56	268	199	6
Upper Adur Levels	262	157	71	-	4	-	60	-	-	-	131	150
Ardingly Res	120	45	50	6	4	35	nc	230	-	280	440	-
Weir Wood Res	106	2	5	6	5	24	9	50	46	10	177	157
Lower Ouse Valley	75	18	49	3	5	-	34	nc	80	2	90	83
Pevensey Levels	88	-	1	5	2	8	-	-	-	98	151	12
Rye Bay	302	64	73	105	146	72	640	225	560	595	653	457
Average county total 2006-2015	621	528	345	170	202	349	418	1330	935	860	841	706

The species is a familiar one these days, with reports from around 200 locations in 138 tetrads across the county during the year, though it remains more numerous in East Sussex, particularly in the Rye Bay area where the highest WeBS counts usually occur. The biggest first winter counts came from Scotney GP, with 300 birds on 5 and 10 Jan, and at Henfield Levels, where numbers peaked at 262 on 17 Jan. There were just three seawatching records, a typical total, with 2 E past Worthing on 29 Mar, 3 E past Birling Gap on 1 Apr and a further 8 E past there on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed in only 15 widely spread tetrads and probable or possible in another 11. Goslings were first recorded on 15 Apr at Arundel WWT.

Post-breeding flocks began to assemble in late July with a count of 331 at Rye Hbr on the 24<sup>th</sup> being the most notable and not surpassed until 354 were at Pulborough Brooks on 31 Aug. Peak autumn counts included 500 at this latter site on 17 Oct, 374 at Pett Level on 25 Oct, 370 at Scotney GP on 13 Nov, 440 at Ardingly Res on 17 Nov and 312 at Rye Hbr on 18 Dec. [AH]

## Canada Goose

## *Branta canadensis*

*Common and increasing introduced resident and partial migrant.*

The monthly WeBS counts at sites where at least 5% of the county total occur in the core month counts (Jan-Mar and Sep-Dec) were as shown in the table below. Numbers received from WeBS counts were slightly down on the preceding year although, in most months, higher than the 10-year average, and this remains a common and conspicuous bird in the county.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3183	1324	742	475	320	218	770	1382	1955	2661	3643	2059
Medmerry	9	2	-	2	4	10	28	239	552	413	61	-
Arun Valley	789	106	81	94	90	41	58	429	382	837	1808	711
Cuckmere Haven	489	260	62	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	69	144	44
Wadhurst Park Estate	200	107	50	nc	25	nc	nc	nc	nc	580	408	-
Bewl Water	788	225	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	267	411
Rye Bay	181	2	12	11	36	32	111	22	166	98	168	205
Average county total 2006-2015	2248	1315	707	347	297	411	620	1551	1531	2026	2177	2776

Pulborough Brooks held the highest numbers in the first winter period, peaking at 802 on 18 Jan, though Bewl Water, with a peak of 788 the day before was a close second. As is usual, seawatching records were very few, with spring totals of just 1 E and 2 W at Selsey Bill, 6 W at Splash Point (Seaford) and 1 E and 4 W at Birling Gap.

Recorded in 218 tetrads breeding was confirmed in 25 and probable or possible in a further 24 across the county, with a slight westerly bias. The first confirmed breeding date with birds on nests was 3 Apr at Ifield MP and Pett Level and the first goslings were seen on 17 Apr at Upper Wellingham (Ringmer).



*Canada Goose x Greylag Goose hybrid, Arundel, March 2016 (Jan Charteris)*

The post-breeding flocks were slower than usual to build up, with no big counts in July but by 22 Aug there were 687 at Pulborough Brooks, rising to 920 by 29 Sep. Elsewhere large September totals included 400 at Arlington Res on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 450 at Lewes Brooks on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 700 at

Medmerry on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Even larger numbers were recorded later in the autumn with counts at Pulborough Brooks topping 1000 birds on three occasions, including a peak of 1400 on 24 Oct. Other notable peaks included 800 on Iford Brooks on 2 Oct, 600 at Medmerry on 8 Oct, 580 at the Wadhurst Park Estate on 17 Oct and 520 at Cuckmere Haven on the same day. The highest count in the second winter period was 1281 at Pulborough Brooks during the WeBS on 14 Nov. [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 few records of possible wild birds in the first part of the year, though the four on Thorney Deepes that remained from November 2015 to 13 Feb and one at Pulborough Brooks that arrived on 6 Jan and remained until 2 Feb did not outstay their welcome. Elsewhere an individual was seen on just one date at a further seven sites.

The only possibly wild birds in the autumn were a group of up to eight birds recorded in the Rye Bay area from 19 to 28 Dec but most other records refer to presumed feral birds, possibly originating from Scotney GP or Barcombe Res, where the respective peaks were of 150 on 5 Jan and 64 on 3 Sep. It is interesting that there are no records of birds throughout the summer. The highest count from each month at these two sites is shown in the table below. [AH]

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Barcombe Res	-	-	40	-	-	-	58	25	64	60	-	-
Scotney GP	150	25	116	-	-	-	-	21	110	133	133	145

## Brent Goose

## *Branta bernicla bernicla*

*Very common winter visitor and passage migrant; a few oversummer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The monthly WeBS counts at sites where at least 5% of the county total occur in 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	17,357	16,393	13,966	133	13	12	-	11	70	3984	7523	12,914
Chichester Hbr	14,260	12,627	12,289	23	13	11	-	11	-	3899	6593	11,976
Pagham Hbr	2904	3701	1557	9	-	-	-	-	63	70	794	716
Average total 2006-2015	11,820	12,570	7945	63	14	10	8	8	289	4241	8952	9969

The WeBS counts totals for the early months were almost identical to those in 2015 and well above the 10-year average, with the January total of 14,260 for Chichester Hbr being the highest of the year. Away from the two western harbours, Pett Level and Rye Hbr were the most reliable sites to see this species in the early months of the year; maxima were 93 at the former site on 17 Jan, and 575, presumably passage birds, at the latter site on 18 Mar. Inland the only records were singles on Lewes Brooks on 9 Jan, at Barcombe Res on 15 Feb and at Arundel WWT from 28 Feb until 5 Mar.

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

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	59	82	2040	740	151	1	-	-	1	43	78	160
	W	121	41	78	2	-	-	-	-	132	712	516	91
Worthing	E	30	71	1516	351	49	-	-	-	-	16	14	166
	W	33	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	1	125	393	25
Telscombe Cliffs	E	95	124	3736	599	22	-	-	-	-	44	31	1918
	W	5	3	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	47	1
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	32	4	1281	1842	116	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	2	253
	W	1	1	-	21	25	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	-	-
Beachy Head	E	24	27	392	1387	55	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	1	-	1	0	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

The first indication of spring migration was on 22 Feb, when there were 73 E at Telscombe Cliffs, but there was no more than a hint of movement after that date until 21 Mar, when the observer at the same site recorded 2803 E. Fewer were seen at other sites on the 21<sup>st</sup> with 537 E at Selsey Bill, 231 E at Worthing and 530 E at Splash Point (Seaford). After that date eastward movement continued at a steady pace for the next fortnight, but with no 'big days' and by mid-April passage appeared to have largely ceased with numbers well down at Splash Point in particular, where barely a third of the previous year's total was recorded. The only report of an inland migrant was of one at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Apr.

The first week of June saw stray single birds pop up at Selsey Bill, Pulborough Brooks and Rye Hbr, but thereafter the only summer records were from Chichester Hbr, where a flock of 11 were present throughout the summer.

The first returning bird was at Rye Hbr on 10 Sep with nine seen in Pagham Hbr seven days later and 60 headed west past Selsey Bill on the following day. There were 82 at Rye Hbr on 22 Sep and by the 26<sup>th</sup> 150 were back in Chichester Hbr.

Numbers were slow to build up during the autumn, with both the October and November WeBS totals well below those for last year, before the last count of the year was 25% higher than the preceding December and well above the 10-year average for the month.

Away from the western harbours very few birds settled in for the winter, though Pett Level (with a peak of 64 on 30 Oct) and Cuckmere Haven (with a peak of 28 on 7 Nov), for instance, both held passage birds for short periods, and up to 100 birds did settle at Climping in November before persistent use of bird-scarers chased them away.

Inland records were few though a nocturnal flock was heard over Ticehurst on 19 Oct; Pulborough Brooks held a couple of birds on 26 and 27 Oct; Arundel WWT likewise two days later and flocks of 20 on 31 Oct and 150 on 9 Nov were seen over Chichester GPs. One other series of records of note involved a small eastward passage at the year's end, mostly noted at Telscombe Cliffs, with 59 recorded on 28 Dec and 854 the following day. During the same period smaller numbers were seen at Splash Point, Newhaven Tide Mills, Worthing and Goring Gap.

Five Pale-bellied Brent Geese *B.b.hrota*, seen in the preceding December, remained on the east side of Pagham Hbr until 12 Jan, after which there were reports of just one at Church Norton on 24 Jan, seen two days later at Sidlesham Ferry, two at Nutbourne (Chichester Hbr) on 2 Mar and, finally, another in Chichester Hbr on 11 Dec.



The Black Brant *B.b. nigricans* present from 3 Dec 2015 was reported intermittently around Chichester Marina and adjacent harbour until 5 Mar (OM) whilst the only autumn record was of one seen and photographed on the foreshore at Church Norton on 8 Nov, but not seen subsequently (BFF, AH, CRJ). [AH]

## Egyptian Goose

## *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

*Very scarce resident; bred for the first time in 2000.*

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	26	4	4	25	17	5	24	13	10	7	10	16
Petworth Park	6	nc	-	17	nc	nc	9	nc	1	nc	nc	nc
Kneppmill Pond	2	2	2	2	1	-	-	-	nc	-	2	2
Warnham LNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Ifield MP	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	2	6
Crawley Milton Mount Park	3	2	2	2	10	nc	3	2	2	2	2	2
Rye Bay	7	-	-	-	2	5	12	11	5	2	-	2
Average county total 2006-2015	10	8	5	9	6	11	13	11	15	9	7	8

Birds were seen in 44 tetrads, down eight on the previous year. However, breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads and was probable in a further four, compared with five and zero tetrads respectively in 2015, so it appears that the colonisation of the county continues.

The earliest record of successful breeding was a pair with seven goslings at the now-traditional site at Petworth Park on 14 Mar. Successful breeding was also recorded at Benbow Pond (Cowdray Park), Chichester GP, Black Pond (Burton), Parham Estate, Worth Park (Crawley), Iford Brooks and two broods at Rye Hbr. The core of the breeding population therefore remains in West Sussex, and the population would appear to be continuing to grow, albeit slowly.

The highest count of the year was 23 at Petworth Park on 5 Jul, with 13 notable at East Guldeford Level on 13 Nov, while ten at Bewl Water on 23 Oct was a site record. [AT]

## Common Shelduck

## *Tadorna tadorna*

*Faily 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 follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	700	629	623	389	320	240	54	45	42	52	474	561
Chichester Hbr	340	339	263	120	95	2	16	15	20	25	323	304
Pagham Hbr	206	161	190	150	66	88	14	6	13	10	56	122
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	52	55	54	33	37	50	-	3	-	-	27	19
Rye Bay	59	40	72	59	79	61	24	20	9	8	42	74
Average county total 2006-2015	904	902	770	445	314	233	100	54	57	87	332	666



The January WeBS count was the lowest on record for that month, continuing the worrying declining trend in winter, with the monthly counts through to and including April all being under the 10-year average.

The first record of ducklings was of seven at Arundel WWT on 24 May. Breeding was then confirmed in 13 tetrads, and was possible in a further ten. In West Sussex, three pairs are known to have produced young in Chichester Hbr, there were up to nine pairs at Medmerry (although breeding success appears to have been low) and four at Pagham Hbr, four broods were raised at Arundel WWT, and one pair was on the new Shripney flood relief pool. In East Sussex, one pair raised young at Rodmell Brooks and two did likewise in the lower Cuckmere Valley, there was a maximum of eight pairs on Pett Level, and three broods were seen at Rye Hbr and one at East Guldeford Level.

The November WeBS counts were the highest since 2006, but numbers had hardly increased by December which was again less than the 10-year average.

Small numbers were seen passing seawatching sites during most months of the year, most heading east in spring and west in autumn, but day counts were almost all in single figures except 21 E on 23 Apr at Splash Point (Seaford), 10 W on 15 Aug at Selsey Bill, and 15 W on 12 Nov, again at Splash Point. [AT]

## Mandarin

*Aix galericulata*

*Scarce introduced resident.*

There were records from 66 tetrads during the year. While the majority of records were from the well-watched sites at Arundel WWT/Swanbourne Lake, Pulborough Brooks, Warnham MP and Weir Wood Res, this is an under-recorded species in large areas of the Weald.

The highest count in the first winter period was 27 at Arundel Waterwoods on 7 Feb, but the year's peak was of 42 at Cocking on 16 Dec, with a notable 21 at Powdermill Res on 16 Nov.

The earliest record of ducklings was on 8 May at Weir Wood Res. Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads, but probable in a further 17. A brood of up to 13 was seen at Warnham MP and 17 at Pulborough Brooks, with fledglings also seen at Bayham and Troutbeck (Eridge), but this presumably vastly underestimates the true breeding population.

Away from the usual sites, one was at Ferring on 18 Feb and one in Chichester Hbr on 30 Aug. [AT]

## Eurasian Wigeon

*Anas penelope*

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

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as shown in the table below. The WeBS counts in the first winter period were unexceptional, but the highest count of the year for a single site was in January when there were 3705 birds at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The speed of the spring exodus can be gauged by the fact that there were still 3011 birds at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Mar, yet only 23 there two days later.

Single non-breeding birds were seen intermittently at seven sites during May, June and July; at Pulborough Brooks up to three were seen until 11 May, two until the 23<sup>rd</sup> and thereafter just one.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	10,858	7023	4375	60	6	1	2	4	2321	6786	10,499	10,758
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1641	1597	955	34	2	-	-	2	650	3387	1762	3133
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	698	706	432	-	-	-	-	-	707	843	954	1383
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	5048	1929	1971	7	3	-	1	-	160	924	3195	1958
<b>Rye Bay</b>	2249	1635	406	8	-	-	-	1	658	1922	3052	2991
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	10,811	9946	3914	81	8	4	3	30	1229	4409	6009	9062

In the autumn, the first returning birds were 20 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Aug, and the first three figure count was 450 at Pagham Hbr on 11 Sep. WeBS counts in the second winter period were above average from September to the end of the year, with the count for November being the record for that month.



*Eurasian Wigeon, Rye Hbr, December 2016 (Barry Yates)*

For a bird seen only infrequently at seawatching sites, there were higher than usual counts at Selsey Bill in the autumn, with 192 E and 499 W between September and November. [AT]

American Wigeon

Anas americana

*Very rare vagrant.*

A first-winter male was at Pulborough Brooks from 27 Mar to 19 Apr (GB, CC *et al.*). It was only the second for Sussex and was a welcome county tick for many observers during its extended stay. The only other county record was of a first-winter male at Pagham Hbr from 13 Oct 1996 to 15 Feb 1997. [PJ]

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 follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	749	557	302	99	124	94	63	188	376	238	582	826
Chichester GP	7	22	-	3	5	nc	nc	nc	12	40	80	116
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	115	123	82	47	37	33	6	44	56	29	65	43
Bewl Water	117	148	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	135	80
Rye Bay	392	195	144	29	70	57	57	130	227	108	148	325
Average county total 2006-2015	764	649	226	117	80	65	52	94	228	273	358	723

The WeBS counts in the first winter period were close to average for each of the months from January to April. The highest count of the year at a single site was 345 at Rye Hbr on 17 Jan.

As expected, numbers fell sharply in March and April as the winter visitors departed, but unusually then increased again in May to a record count for that month. This was the prelude for an excellent breeding season, with confirmed breeding in seven tetrads and probable in six. The sites with proven breeding were Medmerry (2 pairs), Pagham Hbr (3), Chichester GPs (2), Arundel WWT (1), Pevensey Level (1) and Pett Level (2), with 30 pairs present at the latter site in summer.

The WeBS counts for August, September and November were all the highest on record for those months. However, numbers in October had actually dropped from those a month before, which is unusual, and numbers in December's end-of-year peak were only just above average.

This is a scarce species past seawatching sites; 8 E past Selsey Bill in May was the highest monthly total from any site. [AT]

Eurasian Teal

Anas crecca

*Rare breeder and scarce summering non-breeder; common winter visitor; fairly common 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 WeBS counts in the first winter period were close to average. The highest single-site count of the year was in January, with 1441 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	6071	3828	2671	240	3	15	33	319	1619	2625	3773	3948
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	867	779	502	24	-	-	-	20	216	816	853	1082
<b>Medmerry</b>	378	307	230	4	-	-	-	28	471	303	660	206
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	608	349	174	28	-	5	4	41	320	297	299	199
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	2349	833	728	110	2	10	6	124	238	668	769	743
<b>Rye Bay</b>	1185	542	318	23	1	-	21	103	293	307	710	1091
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	5622	4148	2247	358	13	34	32	366	1481	2299	3658	5143

Although most birds had left by April, relatively large flocks continued to use Pulborough Brooks late into the month, with a count of 209 there on 25 April. However, during late spring and summer, despite small numbers of birds continuing to linger at the main freshwater grazing marsh sites, there was yet again no record of confirmed breeding.

Numbers built up again from late summer, with WeBS counts for September to November all a little above average. However, the December count was the lowest for that month since 1997, some 23% less than the 10-year average.

Very small numbers were seen passing seawatching sites in spring, with for example just ten in 206 hours of watching at Selsey Bill in April. However, there were some better figures there in autumn, with 106 W on 18 Sep and 54 W on 8 Nov revealing some of the immigration back into the county. [AT]

## Mallard

## *Anas platyrhynchos*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	3853	2678	1712	1333	1351	1745	2724	3157	4109	3256	3272	4009
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	373	256	192	46	38	14	20	26	283	365	298	404
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	717	683	403	472	578	765	578	668	836	908	923	847
<b>Rye Bay</b>	735	100	163	67	138	144	222	343	710	343	271	352
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	3478	2784	1939	1143	1163	1543	1803	2896	3434	3683	3652	4014

Mallard numbers peaked in September with a count of 4109 birds. The highest resident populations were again in the Arun Valley with c.500 birds, similar to last year.

Mallards were widely distributed, having been recorded in 381 tetrads two more than last year. During the early year SWBS they were recorded in 31 of the 117 squares surveyed and in 44 of the 136 during the late year SWBS. In the BBS Mallards were recorded in 98 1-km squares of the 166 surveyed (59%, the same as last year).

Breeding was confirmed in 47 tetrads and was probable in a further 54. The first record of confirmed breeding, of recently fledged young, came from Arundel WWT on 5 Mar, followed by several similar reports from 31 Mar into early April. During breeding surveys, 20 pairs were recorded at Pagham Hbr, 18 at Medmerry and 26 nests/broods were recorded at Rye Hbr.

Seawatching records were typically sparse. At Selsey Bill the year's total was no more than 55 birds, 47 of which were loafing offshore in roughly equal numbers in March, April and May. Elsewhere, they were noted only at Telscombe Cliffs with 2 E on 13 Mar and 2 W on 30 Oct. [JAH]

# 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	485	294	251	5	-	-	-	-	76	153	438	411
Chichester Hbr	50	89	117	3	-	-	-	-	6	50	17	113
Medmerry	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	57	38	209	-
Pagham Hbr	71	81	43	-	-	-	-	-	11	40	123	209
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	273	90	41	2	-	-	-	-	-	23	51	61
Rye Bay	68	13	4	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	38	28
Average county total 2006-2015	702	589	193	11	1	1	1	1	111	182	334	507

The WeBS count in Pagham Hbr in December met the national 1% threshold of 209 and that in the Arun Valley in January exceeded it. (Note that it is the mean of the maxima over five years which determines sites of national or international importance.) However, the county totals for the three mid-winter months were all well below the 10-year averages.

The fortunes of Pintail seem to have stabilised somewhat since 2009. During the ten years 2000-2009 numbers for the four months Jan-Feb and Nov-Dec averaged 718 (range 946-520), but following the decline to 2009 (520), which mirrored the national decline in numbers, they have averaged 418 (range 373-480), as shown below (average numbers for the four months Jan-Feb and Nov-Dec):

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
716	941	754	543	686	730	946	712	633	520	373	473	443	368	480	381	407

Pintails were recorded in only 46 of the 946 tetrads wholly within the county. During January the largest aggregations were at Pulborough Brooks, but there was some dispersal soon after 10 Feb to Chichester Hbr and other sites both within and without the county and numbers were then in single figures through April to the end of August. There were no breeding records.

The first returning individual was noted at Pagham Hbr on 24 Aug but it remained lonely until 18 were counted there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Numbers thereafter slowly increased with 120 noted in Pagham Hbr on 30 Oct. Medmerry was obviously the favoured site in November although they too moved elsewhere before the month's end.

Seawatching counts were unremarkable. The highest monthly total was 33 at Selsey Bill involving 25 E and 8 W during January. The highest count during spring passage was 14 E at Telscombe Cliffs on 9 Mar but otherwise counts were in single figures. [JAH]

**Garganey***Anas querquedula*

*Scarce passage migrant; very scarce summer non-breeder and rare breeder. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

The first spring migrant was noted flying eastwards past Worthing on 27 Mar; this is 17 days later than the 10-year average first arrival date and the latest arrival since 1980 (5 Apr). The next were 3 E passed Goring on 1 Apr. Elsewhere in April, an observer at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) was surprised to see a pair flying low across the reserve on 13 Apr in good light, there were four at Rye Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup> and two on the 16<sup>th</sup>, one at Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and two at Pagham Hbr North Wall the same day, while one at Chichester GPs on the 24<sup>th</sup> and one at Rye Hbr on the 25<sup>th</sup> brought the month's total to at least 15.

Further arrivals in early May included a pair at Rye Hbr on the 1<sup>st</sup>, one in Rye Bay on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, another at Pulborough Brooks the same day and one at Pett Level on the 4<sup>th</sup>. At Pagham Hbr a male was noted on 5 May, of two past Selsey Bill on the 6<sup>th</sup> one was probably that seen at nearby Climping that day and on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> one was at Pett Level. At Worthing 1 E was noted on the 10<sup>th</sup> while at Pett Level another was noted on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. Two at Pulborough Brooks on 22 May apparently stayed until the 28<sup>th</sup> while there were two at Rye Hbr on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and at Pett Level again on the 31<sup>st</sup>. A possible 20 birds were recorded during May.

Spring passage continued during June with a male at Rye Hbr on the 5<sup>th</sup>, a pair at Weir Wood Res the same day, one at Arundel WWT on the 11<sup>th</sup>, a single bird at Pulborough Brooks from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> and a male coming into eclipse plumage on the 9<sup>th</sup> was noted at Pett Level where there was another bird on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Breeding was not confirmed anywhere.

The only record during July was of a female at Medmerry on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Return migration in August probably involved 12 birds: 1 W at Selsey Bill on the 7<sup>th</sup>; up to three at Pett Level between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> followed by other singles there on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>; up to two at Pulborough Brooks between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>; two at Rye Hbr on the 31<sup>st</sup>; and three at Waltham Brooks from the 29<sup>th</sup> to 4 Sep with one hanging on until the 8<sup>th</sup>. The final records were of singles at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Sep, on a small pond on Ashdown Forest on the 18<sup>th</sup> and at Rye Hbr on the 25<sup>th</sup>. [JAH]

**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	1126	822	580	172	27	24	20	15	127	131	362	440
Chichester GP	80	55	54	10	-	nc	nc	nc	4	20	41	52
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	404	301	197	43	8	11	2	-	9	31	18	48
Barcombe Res	80	78	14	5	-	-	3	-	43	6	74	4
Eastbourne Lakes		154	142	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	7	27	36
Rye Bay	509	171	98	81	16	12	13	15	54	28	140	225
Average county total 2006-2015	668	709	449	154	23	21	15	37	138	265	503	677



The January WeBS peak count of 1126 was the highest peak count this century and considerably exceeds the 5-year peak average of 845 (as shown below) and confirms the upwards trend in wintering numbers.

Winter	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Average
WeBS peak count	670	693	897	1031	933	845

Following the first winter peak in January numbers declined, as usual, as birds dispersed and returned to breeding grounds. However, a small number remained to summer, particularly at sites in the Rye Bay area although numbers fluctuated through the period.

Breeding was confirmed at only two sites; at Arundel WWT a brood of four was noted on 4 Jun while at two separate locations on Pett Level fledged young were noted on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. At Petworth Park six pairs were courtship dancing on 14 Mar and at Pett Level the maximum number of pairs present during the season was 35. Breeding was not suspected at Rye Hbr.

The first sizeable increase in autumn numbers involved a count of 50 at Rye Hbr on 18 Sep followed by 43 at Barcombe Res on the 19<sup>th</sup> but it was not until 28 Oct that the next sizeable group of 55 arrived at Chichester GPs following which numbers increased but slowly.

Seawatching records of spring migration were few: the highest count in March was 18 E past Selsey Bill on the 15<sup>th</sup>. In April, of seven records the highest was 18 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11<sup>th</sup> while numbers elsewhere were all in single figures. Returning autumn migrants were also scarce, with only four records, the highest count being 15 at Selsey Bill on 15 Oct. [JAH]

Red-crested Pochard

Netta rufo

*Native to southern Europe and Central Asia wintering in the Indian subcontinent and Africa. A large population exists in Spain and smaller numbers in France, the Netherlands and Germany. Possibly a rare winter visitor from the continent and passage migrant although most records probably relate to escaped or feral birds.*

A pair of birds was recorded at Chichester GP on various dates between 28 Feb and 24 Apr. At Rye Hbr two (one male) were noted on 7 and 30 Nov. [PJ]

Common Pochard

Aythya ferina

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

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as shown in the table below. An analysis of the sum of the peak WeBS seasonal counts for the three major sites, Chichester GP, the Arun Valley and Rye Bay, indicates that numbers have fallen during the past seven seasons from a peak in 2009-10 by some 58%. This decline is also evident by comparing the county totals with the averages for the past ten years. Pochards were recorded in 41 tetrads of the 964 wholly within the county. As shown in the table below, the main concentrations in the first winter were at Barcombe Res and the Rye Bay area, but reduced significantly through February. Counts additional to the WeBS included 58 at Southwater CP on 22 Jan, 55 at Barcombe Res on 21 Feb and, at Chichester GPs, 40 on 9 Nov and 50 on 20 and 22 Dec.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	447	195	73	18	35	25	16	27	34	99	225	383
<b>Chichester GP</b>	71	44	7	9	11	nc	nc	nc	3	25	37	39
<b>Burton &amp; Chingford Ponds</b>	16	18	9	-	-	nc	-	-	-	2	24	7
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	29	20	19	7	5	9	2	-	-	5	35	7
<b>Barcombe Res</b>	100	55	17	-	-	-	1	5	2	4	27	23
<b>Rye Bay</b>	185	44	11	1	18	16	13	22	26	56	80	272
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	618	481	144	29	20	25	53	116	100	128	257	448

Breeding was confirmed at three sites; at Arundel WWT, the first four ducklings were noted on 5 May from the Peter Scott hide, three ducklings were seen by Ramsar Island on the 18<sup>th</sup>, two ducklings were seen on both the Swan Lake and from the Reedbed hide on 22 Jun, a duckling was at the Arun Discovery site on 2 Jul and probably a second brood was on Swan Lake on the 10<sup>th</sup>. At Chichester GPs a female with four ducklings was seen on one pit on 26 Jun, a female with five young and another with two young were seen on a second pit on 5 Jul and three ducklings were noted on 9 Jul on a third pit. At Pett Level a nest with young was noted also on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Small numbers summered, particularly at Pett level where there were 22 on 26 Jun, a peak count of 33 on 24 Jul and still 25 on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Summering birds makes it difficult to identify first returning migrants but ten at Chichester GPs on 9 Sep look likely. Numbers were, however, slow to build up but there were 25 at Scotney GP on 30 Oct and 40 at Chichester GPs on 9 Nov. There were no records from seawatching sites of birds on passage. [JAH]



*Tufted Ducks, Woods Mill, May 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*



**Tufted Duck***Aythya fuligula*

*Fairly common resident although scarce breeder; fairly common winter visitor and scarce on observed passage.*

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1055	744	662	457	401	193	315	313	643	568	665	884
<b>Chichester GP</b>	134	188	131	100	61	nc	nc	nc	65	56	139	213
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	141	101	91	69	75	45	33	24	61	50	34	77
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	35	21	63	4	nc	nc	nc	nc	47	39	46	53
<b>Powdermill Res</b>	109	18	10	10	nc	nc	28	49	5	35	41	48
<b>Rye Bay</b>	251	137	100	97	154	85	160	63	312	169	216	265
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	1155	1067	852	517	359	283	295	389	463	546	745	962

The January WeBS peak count of 1055 was somewhat below the 5-year average peak count of 1189 but within the 5-year range. Although fairly widely distributed, Tufted Ducks were recorded in 96 tetrads of the 964 wholly within the county, the largest concentrations were at Chichester GPs (167 on 19 Dec), Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) (117 on 18 Jan), Barcombe Res (113 on 22 Aug), Rye Hbr (147 on 17 Jan) and Scotney GP (206 on 18 Sep). In addition to the WeBS counts above, Southwater CP held over 50 birds throughout January until 9 Feb and again from 5 Nov to the year's end. At Bewl Water 50 were counted on 25 Aug. After numbers reduced through to May the main summering areas were Arundel WWT and the Rye Bay area with maxima of 30 and 55 respectively.

Breeding was confirmed in 10 tetrads and was probable in a further 13. The first fledged young were recorded on 4 Jun at Arundel WWT and at Church Norton and Pett Level, both on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Five families were present on New Lake (Chichester GPs) on 5 Jul. Breeding surveys recorded probable breeding at Medmerry by ten pairs and at Pagham Hbr by four pairs and there were five broods at Rye Hbr. The first influx was noted at Scotney GP where 115 were counted on 24 Jul and 61 at Barcombe Res on the 25<sup>th</sup>, but it was not until mid-September that numbers began to increase significantly.

Observers at the principal seawatching sites recorded few Tufted Ducks and then only during spring. At Selsey Bill, 4 E was the count for April and 1 E and 7 W in May while at Splash Point (Seaford) the total count for May was 5 E. [JAH]

**Greater Scaup***Aythya marila*

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

Another quiet year, particularly in the first winter period when the only records were of single birds at Chichester GP from 2 to 10 Jan (a first winter female), Cuckmere Haven on 17 Jan and inland at Warnham LNR on 12 Jan. There were then no records until November.

In the second winter period, November was the peak month with possibly 31 birds. The first record, perhaps surprisingly inland at Weir Wood Res, was of a female on 6 Nov. This was

followed by three immature males at Rye Hbr between 7 and 10 Nov and again on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. However, on the 10<sup>th</sup> another 14 had joined the three and all 17 were watched fly off out to sea. At the other regular site, Chichester GP, there was a first winter drake on 14 and 15 Nov and again from the 20<sup>th</sup> until the 29<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere in November, other records were of one (unsexed) at Ford (Arun Valley) on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 2 W past Selsey Bill on the 18<sup>th</sup> and a single (unsexed) bird at Marsh Fm (Yapton) on the 19<sup>th</sup> and six off Church Norton spit on the 30<sup>th</sup>.



*Greater Scaup, Rye Hbr, November 2016 (Bob Eade)*

In December up to two were at Rye Hbr on five dates between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> whilst in West Sussex single birds were at Pagham Hbr on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, at Medmerry between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> and at Chichester GP on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> and again between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and year end. Whether these observations relate to the same bird is unclear from the records. [WGH]

## Common Eider

## *Somateria mollissima*

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

Single Common Eiders were recorded during the first winter period on 29 dates offshore between Church Norton and Selsey Bill (a favoured area) but also occasionally in Chichester Hbr. Three were offshore at Selsey on 27 and 28 Mar. Elsewhere, only a single bird was recorded in Rye Bay on 9 Jan.

Likewise few were seen passing seawatching sites and the following figures, calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver, show this clearly.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
East	1	-	22	3	6		5	7	1
West	3	-	2	1	1		1	15	3

Spring passage was light and occurred mainly in March, as shown above with the highest count of 6 E off Worthing on 18 Mar. The last spring birds were 5 E off Selsey Bill on 8 May and none was recorded thereafter until 5 Oct when there were 5 E at Selsey Bill followed by five, possibly the same, off Goring Beach on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

During the second winter period, of 30 records only four came from east of Lancing. These included two off Pett Level on the 30 Oct, an immature male off Fairlight on 23 Nov, 2 W there on the 25<sup>th</sup> and a single bird off Pett Level on 18 Dec. Eleven flying west at Selsey Bill on 26 Nov was the highest day total in the year. There were up to four birds in Chichester Hbr on eight dates between 14 Oct and 29 Dec, including four during the October WeBS, which compares unfavourably with six records of ten or more and a peak count of 29 in the period 2007-2015 from 60 records. There were no inland records. [WGH, JAH]

## Long-tailed Duck

## *Clangula hyemalis*

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

There was only one record in the first winter period, a single (unsexed) bird off Climping on 9 Feb. One flew west past Selsey Bill on 11 Jun; an unusual record but not unprecedented as other June observations at the Bill include 1 E on 5 Jun 2002 and 1 W on 3 Jun 2008.

The first bird of the second winter period was one that arrived from the east off Climping on 4 Nov and settled, but then flew off west, to be followed by 1 W past Goring on the 6<sup>th</sup>. A single juvenile bird was seen at Church Norton on the 8<sup>th</sup> and a presumed long staying single bird was seen on a further 30 dates in the Church Norton/Selsey Bill area until the 31 Dec with two in the area on the 18 Nov, 30 Nov and 27 Dec. One arrived at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 9 Nov and was seen on 23 dates until 19 Dec. At Chichester GP a first winter female stayed from 19 Dec to the 28<sup>th</sup>. Assuming the same individuals were involved at each of these three main sites then a minimum of four birds were wintering. [WGH]

## 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.*

Wintering flocks were seen in Rye Bay where 30 or more were counted on seven dates between 3 Jan and 21 Feb with a peak of 200 on 10 Jan. The only other notable flocks offshore were also in East Sussex with 100 at Normans' Bay on 25 Feb and 80 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 19 Feb. However, 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
<b>East</b>	38	60	1147	4037	1472	239	128	47	19	97	220	82
<b>West</b>	22	12	69	100	15	58	68	14	21	81	282	183

The March to May eastward total of 6656 was remarkably similar to that in 2015 (6557) but was approximately half of that recorded for 2013 and 2014. The more detailed figures from five locations are shown below and demonstrate clearly that most were seen in spring. Although the numbers seen passing Selsey Bill were comparable to those totals from East Sussex sites this was due to the Bill being watched far more consistently and for longer hours; the average number of eastbound birds seen in each hour watched between March and May from each of the tabulated sites from west to east are 7, 10, 19, 26 and 55.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	E	27	31	655	2038	1318	234	112	47	16	68	179	38
	W	21	9	66	53	12	56	63	14	21	78	280	178
<b>Worthing</b>	E	0	2	118	748	233	0	6	0	0	11	13	4
	W	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	9	1
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	E	15	15	205	1845	205	57	12	0	4	29	25	35
	W	3	3	1	16	0	2	5	0	0	0	3	34
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	E	5	19	508	2769	742	nc	nc	0	nc	nc	18	13
	W	0	0	0	32	3	nc	nc	0	nc	nc	0	3
<b>Beachy Head</b>	E	17	6	154	2513	771	50	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	0	1	0	0	2	0	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

The tables show that the peak spring passage occurred in April and the details of the eight days when over 300 were recorded at any site, with the hours of observations, are shown below.

	21 Mar	2 Apr	3 Apr	4 Apr	10 Apr	11 Apr	12 Apr	6 May
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	40 (5)	231 (10)	126 (10)	47 (9)	520 (11)	244 (3)	102 (9)	311 (14)
<b>Worthing</b>	0 (1)	87 (4)	75 (3)	11 (2)	163 (3)	254 (3)	21 (1)	92 (5)
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	28 (5)	51 (3)	94 (4)	50 (4)	345 (5)	1006 (6)	138 (4)	45 (2)
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	322 (2)	245 (4)	361 (6)	115 (3)	800 (7)	663 (6)	359 (6)	276 (14)
<b>Beachy Head</b>	nc	347 (4)	191 (3)	316 (3)	805 (4)	767 (2)	nc	285 (6)

Throughout the year a variable sized flock was regularly seen in Rye Bay with the peak counts in the last half of the year being 120 on 24 Jul, 350 on 11 Nov and 200 on 14 Nov. Elsewhere the largest offshore flocks were recorded towards the end of the year; 120 were at Normans' Bay on 2 Dec with 100 still there on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. In late November a flock formed offshore at the coastguard station at Selsey, this built through December reaching a peak of 150 on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Two males and a female were at Weir Wood Res on 20 Mar and one male remained on the 21<sup>st</sup>; there were no other inland records. [JAN]

**Velvet Scoter**

*Melanitta fusca*

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor along the coast; rare inland. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

There were very few reports from the first winter period. Records in January involved a single (unsexed) bird off Church Norton on 2 Jan, 3 W past Selsey Bill on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 2 W there the next day. In February, the only records were of three in Rye Bay on the 14<sup>th</sup> and two there on the 26<sup>th</sup>. None was recorded in March.

In contrast, birds were recorded on ten days in April when most of the spring passage occurred. Apart from 1 E at Selsey Bill on the 2<sup>nd</sup> all other records came from East Sussex sites where 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap (Beachy Head) the same day was possibly the bird also seen at Selsey Bill. The next record was of 2 E at Splash Point on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 4 E there the next day, and 7 E on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Eleven days later two were recorded on six dates in Rye Bay between 23 and 29 Apr. The last birds of a small spring passage were an adult male in Rye Bay on 1 May and, finally, 1 E at Worthing on the 7<sup>th</sup>, nine days earlier than the 10-year average date. There were no inland or summering records.

Minimum offshore movements derived from the maximum numbers recorded from the five principal seawatching sites are as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
East	-	-	-	9	1		1	11	1
West	5	-	-	-	-		-	5	11

The first returning birds were 1 E off Selsey Bill on 15 Oct (four days later than the 10-year average date) and 2 W off Goring Gap on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Two weeks later, there were further sightings with four (unsexed) in Rye Bay on 11 and 12 Nov, 7 E off Selsey Bill on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 3 E off Splash Point the same day which might have been from those recorded at Selsey Bill. The next records were four at Medmerry on 27 Nov, 2 W off Selsey Bill on 28 Nov followed by 3 W in that area on 30 Nov.

Sightings increased throughout December with most birds recorded in West Sussex. Two off Church Norton on the 2<sup>nd</sup> were followed by 3 W at Selsey Bill on the 3<sup>rd</sup> then from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> up to eight birds were again recorded in the Church Norton-Selsey Bill area and also from the 25<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>. In East Sussex, six were recorded at Normans' Bay on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, one on the 4<sup>th</sup>, two on the 5<sup>th</sup> and one on the 8<sup>th</sup> while in Rye Bay there was one on the 5<sup>th</sup> and at Fairlight single birds were noted on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, there was 1 E off Telscombe Cliffs (Portobello) on the 12<sup>th</sup> and three at Climping on the 14<sup>th</sup>, while one at Felpham on the 25<sup>th</sup> was probably also recorded at Selsey Bill. [WGH]

**Goldeneye**

*Bucephala clangula*

*Scarce winter visitor; rare non-breeder in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below, and counts that were higher than the WeBS counts at the three principal sites, and the dates of these counts, were as shown in the second table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
County total	12	18	7		2	11
Chichester Hbr	3	11	-		1	7
Pagham Hbr	1	3	2		-	3
Barcombe Res	-	2	1		-	-
Rye Bay	8	1	3		-	1

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	15 (11 <sup>th</sup> )	12 (4 <sup>th</sup> )	5 (5 <sup>th</sup> )		4 (25 <sup>th</sup> )	12 (15 <sup>th</sup> )
Pagham Hbr	6 (24 <sup>th</sup> )	5 (18 <sup>th</sup> )	3 (8 <sup>th</sup> )		4 (18 <sup>th</sup> )	4 (27 <sup>th</sup> )
Rye Bay	-	6 (9 <sup>th</sup> )	-		1 (30 <sup>th</sup> )	7 (10 <sup>th</sup> )

In the first winter period most reports came from the three sites shown in the above table but three were at Darwell Res on 16 Jan with two there on the following day, single birds were recorded at Weir Wood Res on five dates between 31 Jan and 13 Mar and one was seen off Selsey Bill on 23 Jan. The only sign of eastwards migration was 1 E at Telscombe Cliffs on 4 Mar. The final record was of two (unsexed) at Pagham Hbr on 31 Mar (21 days earlier than the 10-year average date). There were no summering birds.

The first returning bird was 1 W off Selsey Bill on 4 Nov, rather later than usual (cf. 10-year average date of 9 Oct) and may have been one of the two in Pagham Hbr the next day. The main influx commenced mid-month and included singles at Ardingly Res on 17 Nov, an adult female at Bewl Water on 23 Nov and an unsexed bird at Scotney GP on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

In December most records were from the three principal sites but there were again singles at Scotney GP on 4 Dec, on Bewl Water on the 12<sup>th</sup>, on Weir Wood Res from 27 Nov until 14 Dec and near Salehurst on the 17<sup>th</sup>. [WGH]

## Smew

## *Mergellus albellus*

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

In the first winter period, 2016 was marginally better than the two previous years with records of five birds, including two which had probably overwintered in the Rye Bay area, compared with only ones in both 2014 and 2015. There were two at Scotney GP on 6 Jan in the favoured Rye Bay area and another (a redhead) at Southease on 16 Jan. The other records were of one at Ifield MP (Crawley) on 14 Mar, presumably a passage bird, and 1 E (a redhead) past Beachy Head on 4 Apr (WGH).

An analysis of records for the past ten years shows that the minimum numbers in both winter periods were as shown in the table below.

This analysis has assumed that the highest number at any one site was the minimum at that site during the relevant winter period. For this purpose, sites within the Rye Bay area were considered generally to be one site. This demonstrates that numbers in the county are subject to the influence of cold winters on the continent but have fallen markedly in the past three years, presumably due to warmer winters. [JAH]



	1 <sup>st</sup> winter period	2 <sup>nd</sup> winter period	County total
2007	3	6	9
2008	5	5	10
2009	7	3	10
2010	21	5	26
2011	11	3	14
2012	18	4	22
2013	13	1	14
2014	1	2	3
2015	1	2	3
2016	5	0	5

## 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 principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	84	74	68	8	-	-		-	57	112
Chichester Hbr	70	64	57	5	--	-		-	45	87
Pagham Hbr	9	6	7	3	-	-		-	4	18
Average county total 2006-2015	169	172	182	8	1	1		16	111	143

Chichester Hbr remains the dominant wintering site but the numbers recorded by the WeBS were significantly lower than the average for the past ten years. This survey does not include those flocks seen offshore where the peak counts during the first winter period occurred in March and included 44 at Goring on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 35 off Pagham spit on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 32 at Climping Gap on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 30 at Worthing also on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 18 at Selsey Bill on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

The lagoon at Widewater (Lancing) usually held two pairs with a maximum of six on 6 Feb in the first winter period and up to three in the second. In East Sussex, apart from birds seen moving offshore at seawatch sites, one was at Rye Hbr on 6 Jan, two at Cuckmere Haven on 7 and 8 Jan and an immature bird at Rye Hbr on 13 dates between 31 Oct and 25 Dec.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	145	6	339	97	9		-	96	61
	W	112	65	141	35	8		1	144	77
Worthing	E	-	-	1	17	6		-	6	6
	W	14	-	-	2	2		-	8	7
Telscombe Cliffs	E	-	5	7	6	-		-	-	4
	W	-	-	-	-	-		1	-	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	-	-	6	46	12		-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Beachy Head	E	-	-	-	42	2		nc	nc	nc
	W	-	1	-	-	-		nc	nc	nc

Offshore movements recorded at the principal seawatching sites, as shown in the table above, show few were recorded from East Sussex locations during the winter periods but a clear, albeit small, eastward passage occurred in the spring. It is likely that birds passing Selsey Bill and Worthing during the winter were local, feeding movements.

The presence of flocks offshore made it difficult to identify the true start of the spring migration in March. However, the peak period appeared to be from 19 to 24 Mar, as shown below, but this also coincided with the period when the largest numbers were recorded offshore:

March date	8	19	11	12	14	15	19	20	22	24
Numbers east	15	13	21	14	18	16	22	32	28	22

The only notable day in April was the 11<sup>th</sup> with 26 E recorded past Splash Point and 24 E at Birling Gap. Thereafter, only small numbers were seen with the last records being 4 E past Selsey Bill on 14 May and 5 W at Church Norton on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Return migration was slightly later than usual with the first, a redhead, in Pagham Hbr on 18 Oct and then only single figures for the rest of the month. A count of 30 at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Nov marked the start of the mostly westwards passage which extended into December, birds being recorded on 57 of the 61 dates from 1 Nov to the year's end. There were no records from inland sites. [WGH, JAH]

## Goosander

## *Mergus merganser*

### *Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.*

A fairly typical year; nowhere did birds linger for more than a few days. In the first winter period there was a single redhead at Church Norton on 5 and 7 Jan and a male at Widewater (Lancing) from 6 to 13 Jan with a presumed new bird on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Three inland sites included Petworth Park, which hosted six redheads on 5 Jan (the peak count in the year) and a pair there on the 17<sup>th</sup>, singles at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 10<sup>th</sup> and at Arlington Res on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The only record for February was of a single (unsexed) bird on the R Arun between Arundel and Littlehampton on 21 Feb, the last bird of the first winter period.

The first returning (unsexed) bird was seen at Southease on 19 Oct (a week earlier than the 10-year average date) followed by one on the R Adur at Shoreham-by-Sea on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> with two there on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. There were two at Pulborough Brooks on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

November was the peak month for arrivals with regular reports of redheads from the Church Norton/Pagham Hbr area from 11 Nov (when there were five) until the 19<sup>th</sup> (when there were four). Other coastal records came from Cuckmere Haven (one on 7 Nov and another on the 16<sup>th</sup>) and Pett Level (two on the 27<sup>th</sup>). Inland, there were four at Barcombe Res (including a male) on 14 Nov and one at Pulborough Brooks on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Numbers were fewer in December with all records being from inland sites. The peak year count was equalled by six in the lower Arun valley on 17 Dec, and there were single birds at Pulborough Brooks on the 12<sup>th</sup>, at Petworth Park (a male) on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> and at Southease on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>.

The estimated minimum numbers were as shown in the table below.

The only offshore records were from Selsey Bill with 2 W and 1 E on 12 Nov and 1 W on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [WGH]

	Jan	Feb		Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	13	1		5	18	9
Coastal	3	-		3	13	-
Inland	10	1		2	5	9

Ruddy Duck

Oxyura jamaicensis

Rare and declining visitor that has been subject to a national culling campaign to reduce numbers.

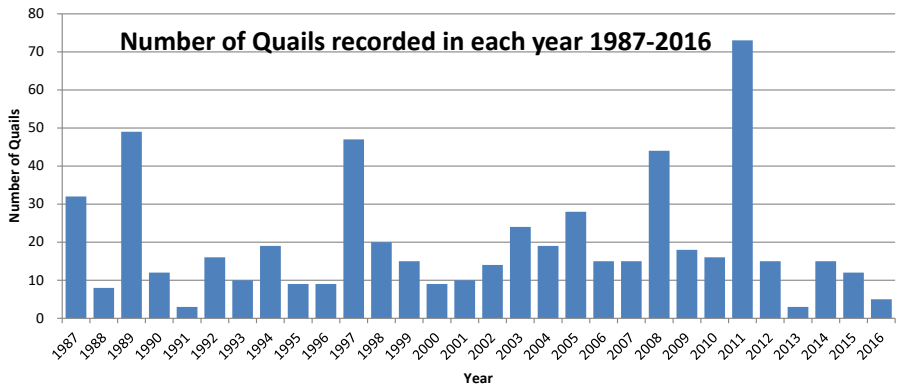
The only records concerned single birds (unsexed) in the extreme south east of the county: at Pett Level on 1 and 3 Jan, 12 and 17 Jul, possibly all involving the same individual. [WGH]

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.

Quail were recorded on only six dates at five sites in 2016, involving the smallest total number of birds for many years.



However, the first two records were the earliest for 40 years (see the table below). One was flushed by a dog at Widewater (Lancing) on 19 Mar and one was recorded at the Ouse Estuary Project on 22 Mar. Although Quail are mainly trans-Saharan migrants a few winter in the Mediterranean and as far north as Britain and Germany. Possibly it is early movements of such northerly winterers that are noted here.

Other records were one on Ashdown Forest on 12 May, one or possibly two at Beachy Head on 18 Jun and one heard on Amberley Wild Brooks on 3 and 5 Jul. [PJP]

	Arrival date	Number
St Leonards-on-Sea	21/3/1921	1
Winchelsea	13/1/1966	1
Sidlesham	06/02/1966	1
Shoreham-by-Sea	08/03/1967	1
Earnley	31/01/1968	1
Lancing	21/03/1973	1
Southease (River Ouse)	08/02/1976	1
Lancing	19/03/2016	1
Seaford	22/03/2016	1

## Red-legged Partridge

*Alectoris rufa*

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

Red-legged Partridges were recorded in 130 tetrads, slightly more than the previous year. In the early winter SWBS 55 were recorded in six of the 117 squares surveyed with a maximum of 18 on 11 Jan at Pagham Hbr. There were ten other records of ten or more birds.

In the BBS 91 birds were recorded from 23 squares out of 166 surveyed with a maximum count of 15 on 19 Apr at West Dean. Throughout the summer months, most records related to West Sussex and counts rarely exceeded single figures.



*Red-legged Partridge, Hodcombe, June 2016 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)*

Breeding was confirmed in just two tetrads and was probable in nine more and possible in a further six. An adult with eight tiny chicks was seen at Canada Bottom (Cissbury) on 21 Jun and an adult with four chicks was seen at Plumpton on 21 Jul. One pair was noted in breeding surveys at each of Pagham Hbr and Medmerry but breeding was not confirmed at Rye Hbr.

In the autumn the highest counts of 70 at Compton on 9 Oct, 45 at Chantry Hill on 15 Sep, and 32 at Rodmell on 14 Nov presumably involve captive bred stock. There were 15 other counts in excess of ten. [PJP]

## Grey Partridge

## *Perdix perdix*

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

Grey Partridges were recorded in only 41 tetrads (54 in 2015) predominantly in West Sussex with numbers dominated by the outcome of conservation efforts on the three tetrads of the Norfolk Estate. By contrast most East Sussex sightings were at Rye Hbr but the highest count there was ten on 8 Sep.

In the first winter period there were eight double figure counts all but one on the Norfolk Estate with a maximum of 50 on 13 Jan. The exception was 20 at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Mar. In the spring, counts were in single figures with nine at Amberley Mount on 30 May being the highest, but increased in the autumn with the highest of 32 registered at The Burgh (Burpham) on 23 Aug. In the second winter period the highest counts were at The Burgh with 36 on 1 Nov and 50 on 31 Dec.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites and was probable in a further two. The breeding summary at Rye Hbr indicated at least five pairs at two sites, three young fledged from one nest at Medmerry and recently fledged young were reported from Kithurst Hill (Storrington) and from Cissbury. [PJP]

## Common Pheasant

## *Phasianus colchicus*

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

Common Pheasants were recorded in 437 tetrads, just four more than the previous year. Records were spread equally between sites in West and East Sussex.

The highest counts recorded in the first quarter were: 70 at Cross Bush (Arundel) on 16 Jan, 35 at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Feb and eleven further counts there of over 25 birds, and 31 at Offham (Arun Valley) on 30 Jan. In the late winter SWBS 199 birds were recorded between 1 Jan and 29 Feb. Fifty-seven were at Binderton (West Dean) on 19 Apr and 38 at Nywood (Rogate) on 16 Apr. In the autumn numbers increased with the post-breeding additions and release for the shooting season, and there were 139 at Slindon on 29 Sep, 50 at West Dean on 12 Aug. In the BBS there were 1124 encounters between 27 Mar and 29 Jun during 231 surveys out of 323 conducted. In the late winter SWBS there were 680 encounters from 85 of the 136 squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable in 24 and possible in a further 46. A nest with eggs was found at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 9 Apr and the first fledged young were noted at The Burgh on 15 May. Five pairs were recorded from breeding surveys at both Pagham Hbr and Fore Wood (Crowhurst). There was widespread breeding reported at Rye Hbr.

Pheasants seen at Weir Wood on 20 Nov were described as mainly *tenebrosus*, the very dark form, whereas one at Cocking on 16 Dec was of pure white plumage. Birds were recorded in gardens in both West and East Sussex during Big Garden Birdwatch. [PJP]

## Red-throated Diver

## *Gavia stellata*

*Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.*

In line with previous reports 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 together with the highest 'offshore' count during the month plus any inland records. Using this method, the estimated total for the year was 1388 which is the lowest since 2008 and well below the 10-year average of 2028. The table shows that in the first winter period numbers were below average and that it was not until the end of the year that numbers increased significantly.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
<b>Monthly total</b>	202	141	124	214	15	1	-	-	3	5	218	465	1388
<b>10-year average</b>	760	336	261	202	24	-	-	-	3	10	85	348	2028

In the first three months of the year the highest daily movements were 24 W and 25 E at Selsey Bill on 17 Jan and 47 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 18 Jan. Traditionally the area between Bexhill and Rye holds 100 birds during this period but this year the peak was 43 off Bexhill on 19 Feb. It was also noticeable that there were fifteen days in February when there were no recorded sightings anywhere in the county. Easterly passage in April started well with a total of 118 and 144 passing Selsey Bill and Beachy Head in the period 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> but only a further 60 were recorded during the remainder of the month. Numbers were then typically low with the last being singles offshore at Worthing on 26 May and Selsey Bill on 9 Jun. There were no further records until September.

The first returning birds were 2 E at Selsey Bill on 15 Sep. It was not until November that numbers increased including a peak of 64 E past Telscombe Cliffs on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The largest movement in December involved 41 W and 11 E at Selsey Bill on the 27<sup>th</sup> but the largest count of the year was on 25 Dec when 100 were feeding and moving west offshore at Fairlight.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total*</b>	172	98	83	213	14		3	4	186	364
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	144	62	55	147	8		3	-	176	292
<b>Worthing</b>	5	16	28	45	3		-	1	22	25
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	47	39	20	29	-		-	2	88	124
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	63	-	23	103	5		-		12	7
<b>Beachy Head</b>	8	27	21	164	-		-	-	-	-

\*adjusted to compensate for duplication

There were two records of birds away from the open sea and tidal estuaries all involving single birds: Arlington Res from 3 to 31 Mar and Cuckmere Meanders on 4 Dec. [DHH]





*Red-throated Diver, Arlington Res, March 2016 (Martin Peacock)*

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

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

The estimated annual total was 83. Although this was an increase over the 2015 total of just 49 it was still below the 10-year average of 118. The estimated monthly totals, calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Nov	Dec
6	9	7	19	14		7	21

During the first winter period the largest movement of birds was just 3 E on 26 Mar at both Selsey Bill and Beachy Head. The maximum number of offshore birds at that time was two at Goring on 18 Feb and Glyne Gap (Bexhill) the following day. Spring passage was light with maximum monthly totals of 13 E at Splash Point (Seaford) in April and 9 E at Beachy Head in May. The last spring record was of 1 W at Splash Point on 8 May which is 16 days earlier than the 10-year average.

The first returning bird was 1 W at Worthing on 5 Nov which is almost a month later than the 10-year average. Numbers were low for the remainder of the year with the majority of sightings referring to single birds. The exception was 15 E at Worthing on 15 Dec which brought a welcome boost to the annual total.

The estimated totals for coastal passage at five seawatching sites together with the estimated totals for all seawatching records are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Nov	Dec
Monthly total*	4	7	5	18	14		5	20
Selsey Bill	1	3	4	4	-		4	-
Worthing	1	1	-	4	-		1	15
Telscombe Cliffs	-	5	1	4	-		1	2
Splash Point (Seaford)	1	-	-	13	8		-	3
Beachy Head	1	-	3	4	9		-	-

\*adjusted to compensate for duplication

The only record away from the open sea or tidal estuaries was a long-stayer at Scotney GP from 26 Nov to 12 Dec. [DHH]



*Great Northern Diver, Chichester Marina, February 2016 (Andrew House)*

## Great Northern Diver

*Gavia immer*

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

The Selsey area once again proved to be an important wintering area for this species although this year the major numbers were often concentrated further west between Selsey Bill and Medmerry. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	6	10	14	11	8		4	7	6
Max. off Selsey area	5	8	14	10	6		4	5	5

Numbers in January and February were lower than those of last year with monthly maxima of five on 12 Jan and eight on 27 Feb. Observers in March saw a major increase in numbers with a peak of 14 off Medmerry on the 10<sup>th</sup>. In April the peak count was ten on the 12<sup>th</sup> after which numbers declined with a May maximum of six on the 5<sup>th</sup> and the last bird seen on 27 May, three days earlier than the 10-year average.

The first returning birds were two offshore at Selsey Bill on 20 Oct – four days earlier than the 10-year average. Numbers increased to four by the end of October with five then present from mid-November until the end of the year.

It is assumed that all birds recorded between Pagham and Chichester Hbr emanated from the birds wintering in the Selsey area. Elsewhere there were records of 1 W at Lancing on 30 Jan, singles offshore at Goring on 26 Feb, Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 28 Feb and Fairlight on 23 Apr, two off Seaford on 6 May, 1 W at Shoreham on 15 Nov and singles offshore at Fairlight on 22 Nov and Goring on 11 Dec. The only records away from the sea or tidal harbours were the juvenile at Weir Wood Res which arrived on 27 Nov 2015 and remained until 16 Feb 2016 and one at Chichester GP on 20 Nov. [DHH]

Diver species

The difficulties of specific identification of distant divers in flight are well known. As a result one in eight of all divers seen in flight during 2016 were reported as ‘Diver sp’.

The numbers of all divers recorded at five seawatching sites during the periods January to May and October to December are shown in the table below. The totals for each site have been calculated by adding the monthly totals of birds recorded moving both east and west plus the numbers seen on the sea. No allowance has been made for duplication at sites so the columns should not be totalled. [DHH]

	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	120	44	427	476	14	5	561	525	0.9	2.2
Worthing	-	13	100	51	5	16	105	80	0.9	1.7
Telscombe Cliffs	-	-	136	211	10	3	146	214	0.9	2.6
Splash Point (Seaford)	104	-	197	19	23	3	324	22	2.6	2.8
Beachy Head	-	nc	220	-	17	-	237	-	7	-

Fulmar

Fulmarus glacialis

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

During the early part of the year counts of birds present at the sea cliffs included seven near Rottingdean, 20 at Telscombe Cliffs, 21 at Newhaven, ten at Seaford and a total of 56 in the Hastings CP and Cliff End (Pett) area. Later counts of AON included nine at Telscombe Cliffs, 20

at Newhaven, three at Seaford, eight at Cliff End and 13 at Hastings CP. Although up to 14 birds were recorded regularly on the sea off Beachy Head there was no evidence that breeding took place in that area.

Feeding movements were recorded regularly in the first half of the year. In January the largest movement was of 42 E at Telscombe Cliffs on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. In March there were 77 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 30 W at Selsey Bill on 26<sup>th</sup> with up to 35 feeding offshore at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on two dates during the month. Reduced numbers were recorded after March with the only significant counts being 19 W at Selsey Bill on 9 Apr and 46 W at Telscombe Cliffs on 2 Jun.

The last bird left the cliffs at Portobello on 14 Sep and the first returning bird was 1 W at Beachy Head on the early date of 18 Oct.

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

## Cory's Shearwater

## *Calonectris borealis*

*Scarce vagrant.*

The only record was of a single bird flying east past Selsey Bill on 1 May (JA). This was the first record since one was at the same site in April 2012. The county total now stands at 22. [DHH]

## Sooty Shearwater

## *Puffinus griseus*

*Very scarce autumn visitor.*

Following a blank year in 2015 there were three records of single birds in 2016: flying west at Selsey Bill on 24 Sep (JA, PSB), initially flying west and then east off Cliff End (Pett) on 4 Oct (PFB) and flying west at Lancing on 16 Oct (RJF).

It is now seven years since the annual total reached double figures and the 10-year annual average is just over six. [DHH]

## Manx Shearwater

## *Puffinus puffinus*

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

The estimated annual total (using the same method as for Red-throated Diver) was 209. This was above the 2015 total of 171 but still below the 10-year average of 239. The monthly totals at four sites are given in the table below and show that the vast majority of the records came from Selsey Bill.

The first records of the year were on 10 Apr when single birds moved east past both Splash Point (Seaford) and Beachy Head. The following day there were 12 W at Telscombe Cliffs, but the major counts of the year came from Selsey Bill with 57 E on 21 Apr and 68 W on 29 April. There were further counts of 8 E, 13 W and 7 E at Selsey Bill and 8 E at Splash Point during the first week of May. Numbers in June were typically low as were those in July which is often a good month for this species. The last record of the year was of 5 W at Selsey Bill on 20 Aug. [DHH]

	Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug	
County totals*	154		31		15		3		6	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	67	73	16	16	3	11	-	3	-	5
Telscombe Cliffs	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	6	-	8	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-
Beachy Head	1	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc
Rye Bay	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-

\*adjusted to compensate for duplication

## Balearic Shearwater

## *Puffinus mauretanicus*

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

The annual total of 22 was less than half of last year's figure (52-54) but not far below the 10-year average of 29.

The first bird of the year was 1 E off Worthing on 26 Mar (DIS) followed by 2 E off Selsey Bill the next day (PSB, SH). A total of 8 E passing Selsey Bill on 21 Apr was the highest day count during the year (JA, OM). There were no further records until 1 E past Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 23 Jun (DHH) and no sightings in July. In August there was 1 W off Selsey Bill on 7<sup>th</sup> (JA) and 4 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 20<sup>th</sup> (MRE). Off St Leonards there were 3 W on 4 Sep and 1 W on 10 Sep (both ASG) and finally 1 E at Selsey Bill on 4 Nov (JA). [DHH]

## Storm Petrel

## *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

The only record of the year was of two birds which lingered offshore at Selsey Bill for 35 minutes on 9 May (CRJ, IML, OM). It is now nine years since the annual total for this species reached double figures but the 10-year average is 15. [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.*

The overall figures were not dissimilar to those in 2015 with slightly lower totals in the periods January-February and August-October compensated for by higher totals particularly in the period March-May. The movements recorded at five seawatching sites are shown in the table below.

There were no three-figure counts in either January or February and there was no significant movement until the latter part of March. An easterly movement on 26 Mar was noted along the coast with 163 at Selsey Bill, 80 at Worthing, 204 at Telscombe Cliffs and 163 at Beachy Head. The major daily counts in April all came from Selsey Bill where there were totals of 669 E and 321 W between 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> with a peak of 298 E on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. There was a similar pattern in May

	Jan-Feb		Mar-May		Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	91	151	4066	1831	1113	1170	913	1542	701	1883
<b>Worthing</b>	4	6	900	148	32	19	16	170	16	105
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	56	33	717	116	320	92	881	710	261	526
<b>Splash Point (Seaford)</b>	55	1	819	6	nc	nc	-	-	105	1
<b>Beachy Head</b>	33	5	671	5	30	-	nc	nc	nc	nc

with observers at Selsey Bill recording over 100 birds on 14 dates including three days with over 200 birds recorded. The peak day was 5 May when there were 290 E at Selsey Bill, 205 E off Worthing and 144 E at Beachy Head. Numbers in June and July were generally lower although observers at Selsey Bill recorded peak day counts of 201 E on 3 Jun and 350 W on 27 Jul.

There were no significant movements in either August or September while those in October showed no obvious pattern with birds moving both east and west. At Selsey Bill this resulted in 171 W on 16 Oct, 113 E on 21 Oct and 173 W on 28 Oct. The contrast was even more noticeable at Telscombe Cliffs with 138 W on 9 Oct followed by a further 137 W the next day and then 160 E on 15 Oct and 272 E on 16 Oct. It is assumed that these movements involved birds which had dispersed from their breeding colonies and were foraging in the Channel prior to their southward migration. At the end of the year westerly movements predominated with a total of 1109 W at Selsey Bill in the period 23 to 26 Dec.

There were some impressive gatherings of birds feeding offshore during the latter part of the year notably 300 off Beachy Head on 26 Oct, 250 off Worthing on 29 Oct, 200 in Rye Bay on 1 Nov, 240 off Fairlight on 4 Nov and 500 at Selsey Bill on 28 Nov. In addition there was an interesting record of 70 following a fishing vessel off Goring on 6 May. [DHH]

## Red-footed Booby

*Sula sula*

*Very rare vagrant.*

On 4 Sep, one was seen landing on the sea just offshore at St Leonards and then moving onto the beach (GC). It was taken into care and proved to be a juvenile female of the white-tailed brown morph *S.s. sula*. An account of this and subsequent events is on pages 210-211 of this report. The record has been accepted by both BBRC and BOURC as the first for Britain. [MM]

## Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

*Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.*

Cormorants were recorded in 228 tetrads across the county (a slight reduction on last year's 259) but more frequently in West Sussex. The monthly WeBS counts were as shown in the table below. During the first winter period, there were no treble-figure counts; but there were c.20 counts of 30 or more birds including 71 at Castle Pit Field and 33 at Carters Pit (both Rye Hbr) on 22 Mar, all sitting on nests. Elsewhere the highest counts were 59 at Chichester GP on 15 Mar and 55 at Steyning Levels on 31 Jan. The only roosts recorded during this period were ten on an offshore structure at Brooklands (Worthing) on 26 Feb and at Weir Wood Res where there were ten birds in trees on the 15<sup>th</sup>.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	446	313	321	316	692	420	625	543	680	676	749	706
<b>Medmerry</b>	6	4	29	16	44	42	48	23	70	32	36	47
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	45	28	42	23	23	27	43	63	40	51	82	16
<b>Chichester GP</b>	8	19	56	162	145	nc	nc	nc	45	32	84	28
<b>Rye Bay</b>	126	16	16	44	425	309	462	314	342	276	191	152
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	551	555	566	432	457	513	547	658	665	680	653	543

Nests were recorded at the three usual sites. Birds were reported on nests at Iford Brooks on 11 Mar but the nests on the island were reported as destroyed on 18 Apr probably by Hurricane Katie at the end of March. It was reported that the nests were still in disarray with no sign of occupancy on 15 May. New Lake (Chichester) escaped the destruction and had a minimum of 104 active nests on 11 Apr. At Rye Hbr 181 nests were counted at Castle Water on 10 Apr.



*Cormorant, Rye Hbr, April 2016 (Barry Yates)*

During the year, seawatchers at Selsey Bill and Worthing recorded small numbers of Cormorants either moving along the coast or loafing offshore; the highest numbers were at Selsey Bill with 74 E on 12 Nov, 17 W and 60 offshore on 27 Dec and 24 W and 37 offshore the next day.

During the summer and autumn months, the largest concentrations were invariably found in Rye Bay, as last year, where there were 12 counts of 100 or more with a maximum of 428 on 24 Jul. The highest count at Bewl Water was 78 on 25 Aug but, in West Sussex, the highest were 58 at Medmerry and 56 in Pagham Hbr on 18 Sep. Smaller numbers were also recorded at other suitable wetland sites mostly near the coast or along the major river valleys. The only significant inland sites were Warnham LNR, where the highest count of the year was eight on 31 Oct, Kneppmill Pond with ten on 17 Oct, Weir Wood Res with 36 on 8 Sep and Arlington Res with 20 on 12 Aug, 21 Aug and 26 Sep.

During the second winter period, the highest counts were again from East Sussex with 155 at Rye Hbr on 28 Nov, 95 there on 13 Nov and 92 at Scotney GP on 18 Dec. In West Sussex the highest counts were 87 at Ardingly Res on 8 Dec, 79 at Chichester GP on 15 Nov and the same number in Pagham Hbr on 2 Dec. There were 15 other counts exceeding 50 birds across the entire county during this period. The largest roosts recorded during this period were 25 at a newly established roost at Birdham (Chichester) on 15 Nov, 26 at Steyning Levels on pylons on 29 Nov and 18 on cliffs at Saldean on 13 Dec. [JAH]

## Shag

## *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

*Scarce winter visitor; rare away from the coast. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Shags were recorded from 12 coastal sites. From January through April there were 21 records, which is more than last year. Most records were of one or two. The highest count was 6 E on 4 Jan at Selsey Bill and three at Rye Hbr on 20 Apr, which, incidentally, was the last record of the spring.

The approximate minimum monthly totals are shown in the following table:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	4	3	5		2	5	3	2

There were no records between 20 Apr and 12 Sep when the first sighting of the autumn was 1 E at Selsey Bill. Thereafter, until the end of the year, records were of only one or two from five locations between Selsey Bill and Newhaven, with most recorded at Selsey Bill. Numbers recorded were low compared to 2015. [MJC]

## Eurasian Bittern

## *Botaurus stellaris*

*Scarce but increasing winter visitor; rare outside the winter months. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

The minimum monthly numbers of Bitterns and the sites where they were recorded are shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3	3	3	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	2	3
Burton MP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Waltham Brooks	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne)	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Rye Hbr	2	1	3	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1

The mild winter weather at both ends of the year made it a poor one for records of this species, with Rye Hbr the only site to reliably generate sightings. There were regular reports of a single bird in the area early in the year, though two were reported on 19 Jan and three (possibly on passage) were reported on 17 Mar, with records from West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 28 Jan and 18 Feb and Waltham Brooks on 21 Feb being the only ones elsewhere.

A single bird was heard booming regularly in April and more sporadically until 9 Jun at Rye Hbr, but breeding was not suspected, though this was possibly the same one reported there on 24 Sep. Late autumn records of one were received consistently from this site from 11 Nov onwards, but Bitterns were seen from only three other locations, namely Pevensey Levels on 26 Nov, Pett Level on 4 Dec and Burton MP on 13 and 29 Dec. [AH]

## Cattle Egret

*Bubulcus ibis*

*Very scarce but increasing visitor.*

A total of four was recorded: an adult in breeding plumage in the North Wall area of Pagham Hbr from 14 Apr to 5 May (BFF, MR *et al.*) (and possibly 13 Apr to 6 May), one at Sidlesham Ferry Pool from 18 to 22 Jun (AH, BGRI *et al.*), one in the Lower Cuckmere Valley on 25 Jul before departing west (MRE) and one at Marsh Fm (Yapton) from 15 to 21 Nov (BA). These records, which continue the upward trend of recent years, take the county total this century to at least 59. [PJ]

## 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.*

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	89	67	93	84	42	64	155	166	308	262	144	98
Chichester Hbr	41	22	34	34	7	-	68	50	146	146	38	47
Medmerry	12	11	15	15	9	13	14	22	25	9	13	11
Pagham Hbr	1	5	1	9	5	22	38	41	33	33	24	3
Lower Ouse Valley	3	7	11	4	1	2	3	1	21	15	10	1
Rye Bay	9	2	5	2	10	7	14	31	44	29	27	12
Average county total 2006-2015	76	68	108	64	59	76	135	180	327	277	156	90

The only monthly counts to exceed the WeBS figures during the first winter period were 11 at Pagham Hbr on 10 Jan and 24 at Rye Hbr on 16 Feb. There were also some good counts from sites not in the above table, with 11 at Rodmell on 7 Jan and the same number at Cuckmere Haven on the 8<sup>th</sup>. However, many of the highest counts during this time came from sites well inland, with 15 at Sutton on 19 Jan, 12 at nearby Burton MP on 15 Feb and ten at Woodmancote on 7 Jan.

A minimum total of 72 occupied nests was recorded as shown below; all located in heronries or rookeries. This is a big increase from the previous maximum of 53 in 2013, and is due to significant increases at the Pagham Hbr, Warningcamp and Friston Forest colonies.

Old Park Wood, Fishbourne	3	Badgerhole Shaw, Coombes	12
Owl Copse, Pagham	25	Rodmell	2
Hoe Fm, Flansham	2	Friston Forest	17
Warningcamp	6	Lusteds near Glynleigh	5

The autumn migration peak produced some high counts along the coast with 48 at Pagham on 14 Sep, up to 30 at Cuckmere Haven and a maximum at Ferring of 36 on 23 Aug. At Pulborough Brooks, the highest counts were in June, with a peak of 24 on the 13<sup>th</sup>. At Saltdean a group of 12 was observed on 7 Oct roosting at the foot of the cliffs at high tide. In the last two months of the year the highest count was 20 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 23 Dec, and at Cuckmere Haven the peak count was 17 on the 7<sup>th</sup>. [CJRB]



*Great White Egret, Hodcombe, November 2016 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)*

# Great White Egret

*Ardea alba*

*Very scarce but increasing visitor.*

A total of about 21 birds was recorded during the year, continuing the increase in records during recent years. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
4	1	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	6	4	6

One or two were recorded regularly in the Rye Hbr area from 1 Jan until 24 Mar, and single birds were reported at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Jan and Arundel WWT on the 31<sup>st</sup>. During the spring, single birds were seen offshore at Splash Point (Seaford) on 25 Apr, at Pulborough Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>, at Shoreham on 6 May and flying east at Birling Gap on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

After a long gap, one was seen at Rye Hbr from 1 Aug to 30 Sep, and there was another at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Oct. Two were reported almost daily at Weir Wood Res from 6 to 25 Oct, and there were single birds at Bewl Water on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Waltham Brooks on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

At the end of the year, there were again one or two at Rye Hbr from 26 Oct to 29 Dec. Three arrived from the sea at Selsey Bill on 26 Nov with a Little Egret, the flock first being observed about two miles offshore and later seen over Hayling Island in Hampshire with two additional Little Egrets. One was seen at Pulborough Brooks from 7 to 11 Dec, and single birds were also spotted at Worthing on 28 Dec and at Arundel WWT on the 31<sup>st</sup>. [CJRB]

# Grey Heron

*Ardea cinerea*

*Fairly common resident.*

Grey Herons were recorded from 312 tetrads across the county (compared with 317 in 2015). 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	112	119	106	90	119	72	92	76	138	124	146	115
Chichester Hbr	9	7	15	7	3	1	12	6	22	16	9	18
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	14	9	10	8	11	15	12	14	12	16	13	9
Weir Wood Res	5	35	30	31	49	12	8	6	14	10	6	5
Lower Ouse Valley	6	3	4	2	3	4	2	-	8	15	19	4
Rye Bay	11	7	2	1	1	4	11	5	15	10	17	10
Average county total 2006-2015	85	85	105	68	52	70	84	99	144	129	118	92

During the breeding season, 254 nests at 30 sites (compared with 241 nests at 28 sites in 2015) were recorded. Counts for individual heronries with occupied nests, listed from west to east, were as follows: Thorney Island Little Deep (Chichester Hbr) 1, Forest Mere (Liphook) 3, Old Park Wood, Fishbourne (Chichester Hbr) 2, Norton Priory 3, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 13, Hoe Farm (Flansham) 11, Warningcamp (Arundel) 5, Northpark Wood (Parham) 21, Ham Manor (Angmering) 1, Kneppmill Pond 6, Warnham LNR 16, Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) 4, Hammond's Mill (Burgess Hill) 3, Ardingly Res 10, Weir Wood Res 35, Rodmell 5, Decoy Pond (Firle) 4, Hempstead Wood (Uckfield) 2, Friston Forest 5, Hadlow Down 11, Eridge Old Park 16,

Hampden Park (Eastbourne) 3, Glynleigh Manor (Hailsham) 22, Wadhurst Park Lake 4, Great Coppice Wood (Bayham) 1, Horsebridge Road (Wartling) 7, Burwash 15, Alder Shaw (Brede Level) 6, Winchelsea 18, Houghton Green (Playden) 1. Readers should note that for 2016 some of the heronry sites have been given revised names to match with those used by the BTO.

Away from the heronries, large reservoirs and harbours, most reports during the rest of the year were of single birds or two or three birds at ponds, streams and marshy areas. [GO]

## Black Stork

*Ciconia nigra*

*Rare vagrant.*

An adult that flew south over the Knepp Estate around midday on 14 Jul (JH, JR, MR *et al.*) was relocated shortly afterwards on the same day flying over Pulborough Brooks (CJG, CAS), the individual being photographed on both occasions. Another adult flew west over the Downs at Kithurst and Springhead Hills (Storrington) on 4 Sep (JT, GT). These records, which bring the county total to seventeen, have been accepted by BBRC. This is the sixth consecutive year in which the species has been recorded in Sussex. [MM]

## White Stork

*Ciconia ciconia*

*Rare vagrant, mainly in spring.*

There were six records following a blank year in 2015. In April, one flew north over West Wittering towards Itchenor on the 17<sup>th</sup> (GM), one was mobbed by Jackdaws as it flew west over Little Common (Bexhill) on the 26<sup>th</sup> (PR) and one flew over Pulborough Brooks on the 27<sup>th</sup> (RT). The next was observed flying north over Hill Barn GC (Worthing) on 23 Jul (GSP). There were then two further records from Pulborough Brooks involving one flying west on 31 Jul (JWU) and one, perhaps the same individual, on 6-7 Aug (KJ, ARK), which was also seen reported at West Chiltington earlier on the 6<sup>th</sup> flying towards Pulborough Brooks (TF). Assuming five individuals were present, the county total moves to 41. [MM]

## Glossy Ibis

*Plegadis falcinellus*

*Rare but increasing vagrant.*

A total of four was recorded: the bird at Pett Level from 26 Nov 2015 stayed to at least 17 May (mo) and singles at Iford Brooks on 24 Jan (LC), Northiam on 27 Feb (KC) and in the Pagham Hbr/Sidlesham Ferry area on 31 Aug to 1 Sep (AH, TGP). These records, which continue the upward trend of recent years, take the county total to c.70 with 28 this century. [PJ]

## Spoonbill

*Platalea leucorodia*

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

The approximate monthly numbers of Spoonbills and sites where they were recorded are shown in the following table (monthly totals are not necessarily the sum of location totals as some birds may have been seen in more than one location):



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	4	2	10	11	1	9	3	2	5	18	1	-
Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area	3	2	2	3	-	-	1	-	2	2	1	-
Chichester Hbr	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Climping	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-
Telscombe Cliffs	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cuckmere Haven/Beachy Head	-	-	4	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Eastbourne	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	1	5	-	7	2	1	1	4	-	-
Scotney GP	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-

The Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area was once again the best place in the county for wintering records of this species, with three birds recorded between 6 and 10 Jan and regular reports of two until 6 Mar. Thereafter numbers dropped to one, though three on 3 Apr and two on 17 Apr, in the harbour (the last spring report), may well have been migrants. One seen in Chichester Hbr on four dates were the only other winter records.



*Spoonbill, Cuckmere Haven, May 2016 (Matt Eade)*

There was a notable influx of migrating birds from 21 Mar onwards, with two past Telscombe Cliffs and another arriving at Rye Hbr (remaining until 1 Apr) on that day, four at Cuckmere Haven two days later, a single at Pulborough Brooks from 26 Mar until 2 Apr and then four at Eastbourne on 4 Apr, with, presumably the same birds at Rye Hbr on the following day. One seen

at Bosham (Chichester Hbr) on 16 Apr may have been the same as one seen at Pagham Hbr that day, though two were present there the following day and another was seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

A sub-adult took up residence at Cuckmere Haven from 27 to 31 May, with it or another seen there on 21 Jun. At Scotney GP there was one from 27 to 29 Jun and one at Rye Hbr, also on the 29<sup>th</sup>. A flock of seven appeared at this latter site on the 30<sup>th</sup> and two were present there from 7 to 9 Jul. There were further summer records from Pagham Hbr on 18 Jul, Rye Hbr from 8 to 18 Aug and from Cuckmere Haven on 23 Aug.

In the early autumn Rye Hbr held one from 1 Sep to 1 Oct, with four there on 4 Oct. One flew past East Wittering on 10 Sep and there were two at Medmerry the following day. There were then regular reports of a single bird from the latter site and Pagham Hbr until 1 Oct, with two again at Medmerry three days later. Two were at Scotney GP from 13 to 20 Sep. Twelve which flew west over Poole Place (Climping) in poor weather on 1 Oct was the largest flock recorded in the county since c.20 were seen from Langney Point (Eastbourne) on 1 Sep 1964. The last record of the year was of one in Pagham Hbr on 9 Nov, with none remaining to over-winter this year. [AH]

## Little Grebe

## *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

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

Little Grebes were recorded from 107 tetrads across the county. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	184	161	102	64	35	30	46	72	151	120	204	220
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	43	43	21	4	4	5	7	6	14	37	40	32
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	18	12	8	7	4	4	9	9	19	5	21	47
<b>Chichester GP</b>	7	10	11	17	4	nc	nc	nc	13	7	8	7
<b>Widewater (Lancing)</b>	19	4	8	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	12	16
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	12	20	6	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	15	5	36
<b>Rye Bay</b>	42	22	6	5	7	12	10	27	64	34	68	41
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	170	162	101	39	26	29	44	86	154	195	187	186

Peak counts in the first winter period not included in the WeBS count were 39 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 28 Jan, 35 at Chichester Hbr on 16 Feb, 30 at Pagham Hbr on 3 Feb, 27 at Rye Hbr on the 17 Feb and 21 at Widewater (Lancing) on 28 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads and was recorded as probable in four and possible in seven more. Display behaviour was first observed on 7 Mar at Woods Mill (Henfield) and was also seen at Pagham Hbr on the 21 Mar and the 2 Apr. Display was also seen at Lindfield on 23 Mar where one was on a nest by 16 Apr. An occupied nest was also recorded at Warnham LNR on 11 Jul. A pair at Knepp Estate fledged three young and an adult with three young was observed at Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on 28 May. Two adults with a chick were observed at Pagham Hbr on 21 June and young were observed at Pett Level and Novington (near Plumpton). At Bewl Water there were five broods of Little Grebe with a total of 13 juveniles seen during the WeBS count on 25 Aug. In September chicks were observed at Chichester Hbr and on the 26<sup>th</sup> at Brooklands

(Worthing), a site where there is often late breeding, at least two parties of small young were being fed by adults.

The largest count of the year was 50 at Bewl Water on 25 Aug which was 17 fewer than last year's record count at the same location. Into the autumn numbers at Pett Level peaked at 35 on 18 Sep and gradually dwindled with 16 the high count in December. There were 20 or more present at Rye Hbr throughout autumn and the second winter period. At Cuckmere Haven numbers built from single figures in September to 25 on 10 Nov and to a peak of 36 on 22 Dec. At Widewater (Lancing) the monthly peaks were 22 on 23 Nov and 21 on 14 Dec. Other large counts were 32 at Pagham Lagoon on 21 Sep and 30 at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on 15 Dec. [RAB]

Great Crested Grebe

*Podiceps cristatus*

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

Great Crested Grebe was recorded from 121 tetrads across the county. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	189	497	187	148	173	118	149	185	274	232	377	487
Chichester Hbr	20	33	37	9	29	9	1	2	11	11	19	27
Chichester GP	5	12	9	21	10	nc	nc	nc	23	24	20	29
Weir Wood Res	12	34	40	28	48	44	55	83	95	72	76	45
Arlington Res	12	6	12	10	10	12	23	30	26	25	44	46
Bewl Water	29	55	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	91	51
Bexhill Glyne Gap	24	307	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Rye Bay	52	4	11	11	21	19	19	8	36	28	59	171
Average county total 2006-2015	390	544	302	159	114	132	249	397	475	391	338	354

Counts in the first winter period were lower than last year and the 10-year averages with the highest being 307 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) during the WeBS count on 19 Feb. During the NEWS 250 were found between Cliff End (Pett) and Rye Hbr on 17 Jan, a similar number was offshore at Pett Level on 23 Jan and 100 offshore at Rye Hbr on 25 Feb. Elsewhere there were several counts in excess of 100 between Goring and Worthing in March with the peak of 125 on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads, was recorded as probable in six more. Display was first observed on 20 Jan at Ardingly Res and was noted in March at Weir Wood Res, in April at Aldwick (Bognor), Arlington Res and Bayham and in May at Rye Hbr. A bird was sitting on a nest at Ifield MP by 2 Mar and at Milton Mount Park in Crawley on 14 Mar. In April there were further sitting birds recorded at Wicks Fm (Yapton), Worth Park (Crawley) and Ardingly Res and in May at Warnham LNR. In June late sitting birds were present at the Knepp Estate, Weir Wood Res and Rye Hbr. Three chicks were observed at Milton Mount Park on 5 Apr and at Worth Park at least three chicks fledged. Chicks were also observed at the Knepp Estate, Weir Wood Res, Arlington Res, Bewl Water and Pett Level.

Post breeding flocks gathered on inland lakes as usual. As is often the case the highest count was at Bewl Water where the WeBS count on 25 Aug recorded 229, a higher count than last year's August peak of 190. Numbers dwindled as the year progressed but there were still 51 birds on the 16 Dec. Numbers at Arlington Res were relatively low this year with a high count of 46 on 18 Dec, less than half of last year's peak count. At Weir Wood Res the peak count was 95 on 18 Sep

and numbers remained relatively high until late in the year with a count of 76 on 13 Nov and 45 still present on 27 Dec.

Counts in the favoured coastal wintering areas peaked at 150 offshore at Pett Level on 30 Oct and 146 there on 18 Dec. Fewer were seen elsewhere with 37 off Goring on 18 Dec and just 18 birds at Selsey Bill on 26 Nov. Other sites with counts of over 20 during the second winter period were Chichester GP, Climping, Worthing, 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	April		Nov	Dec
No. of birds	1	2	3		4	6
No. of sites	1	2	3		3	2

There was an increase in records compared to the previous two years. The first sighting of the year was at Chichester Hbr on 13 Jan. On 19 Feb one was seen at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) and on the 29<sup>th</sup> 1 W passed Worthing. Records in April, probably spring migrants, were of 1 E past Worthing on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 1 E on the 10<sup>th</sup> at Telscombe Cliffs (Portobello).

The first autumn sighting was of 1 E on 4 Nov at Selsey Bill, repeated on the 9<sup>th</sup> and possibly a different bird at Church Norton on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Also in November one was recorded at Weir Wood Res on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. In December one was at Scotney GP on the 15<sup>th</sup> while at Selsey Bill the month's total of five included 1 W on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2 E on the 4<sup>th</sup> and single birds offshore on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. [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 shown in the table below.

As usual, most records for the winter periods were from West Sussex. Numbers in the main wintering area, from Selsey Bill to Church Norton, peaked at 16 on 8 Mar, less than half of last year's peak. The peak at Chichester Hbr was just seven birds on 28 Jan. One was seen at Rye Hbr on 14 Jan and two were on the sea off Pett Level with Great Crested Grebes on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There was a sighting at Climping Gap on 17 Feb; two at Scotney GP on the 18<sup>th</sup> and three at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

One flew east at Splash Point (Seaford) on 27 Mar, there were two offshore there on 2 Apr and six on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The last sighting in the main wintering area was a single bird off-shore at Church Norton on 9 Apr but the final spring record was of two offshore at Worthing on the 15<sup>th</sup>, drifting west.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	7	3	1	-		1	1
Selsey Bill – Church Norton	12	10	16	1		10	17
Littlehampton – Worthing	-	1	-	2		2	-
Splash Point	-	-	1	6		-	-
Arlington Res	-	-	-	-		2	
Eastbourne	-	-	-	-		1	2
Glyne Gap (Bexhill)	-	3	-	-		-	-
Rye Bay	2	1	-	-		-	-
Scotney GP	-	2	-	-		-	-

The first sighting of the second winter period was of two birds at Climping Gap on 1 Nov. There were also two at Arlington Res on the 3<sup>rd</sup> but the vast majority of sightings came from the main wintering area, where numbers peaked at 17 on 17 Dec. Singles were also seen at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) between 18 Nov and 5 Dec and Chichester Hbr after 22 Nov. [RAB]



*Slavonian Grebe, West Rise Marsh, December 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

**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		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	6	5	7	3	3		2	3	5	4
No. of sites	3	3	4	2	2		2	2	3	2

The first sighting of the year was on 1 Jan when one was seen at Scotney GP. There were two birds there on the 17<sup>th</sup> and sightings continued through February and March (with a highest count of 5 on the 18<sup>th</sup>) until the 29<sup>th</sup> when a single bird was present. Up to two birds were recorded in the Rye Bay area between 6 Jan and 8 May. The first sighting at Church Norton was of two birds on 20 Jan and one or two continued to be seen until 22 Mar. One was offshore at Splash Point (Seaford) on 26 and 27 Mar and two were there on 8 May. Two birds were also sighted at Telscombe Cliffs (Portobello) on 11 Apr.

The first autumn sightings were of a bird at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 7 Sep and another at Scotney GP on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Single birds continued to be seen in the Church Norton/Pagham Hbr area until 18 Nov. Sightings in October were at Church Norton/Pagham Hbr Lagoon and two birds at Climping on the 29<sup>th</sup>. One was in Rye Bay on 2 Nov and sightings thereafter continued at Rye Hbr until 30 Dec; the highest count of three on the 27<sup>th</sup> of that month. Three were also seen at Weir Wood Res on 21 Nov. A single bird appeared at Scotney GP in December and was seen on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. [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 their summary for all Sussex breeding pairs known to them. Three nest sites were found. One pair nested in a Douglas Fir, for the third consecutive year, and raised two young. Elsewhere in the UK, it is not at all unusual for nests to be re-occupied year-on-year but in Sussex the proportion of re-occupied nests is about one nest in four. Using the same nest for three consecutive years has never previously been recorded. A second pair nested in a Beech and raised two young. At a third location, the adults were regularly seen taking food into a well-known nesting wood but the fledged young were not observed. At a fourth regular nesting site the male returned in May and stayed most of the summer, but the female failed to appear. At a fifth regular nesting site the female was seen on 22 May but the male failed to return. There was a series of sightings by other observers at a site on several dates from 26 May to 23 Aug (BFF, DM). A pair was present at this site and juveniles were seen on the final date with two adults. In addition, there were a number of sightings from at least four other inland locations during the breeding season, though with no further evidence of breeding.

There were many records of birds on passage. Mobbing gulls chased a coastal migrant as it flew north over Southwick on 15 May (BDJ, PJ). Another coastal migrant flew purposefully north-east over Lidsey (Barnham) on 22 May (BGRI). On 5 Aug, a male flying north over Eastbourne (LP) may have been an early migrant. Records definitely relating to autumn migration began on 25 Aug, when an adult female was seen mid-morning at Beachy Head, heading north (MEC, RHC, DRC, JFC *et al.*). In the early afternoon at the same location, there was an adult male and a second bird which was probably a female, which may have been the same individual seen earlier (MS-H). On 26 Aug, a bird flying south near Weir Wood Res was considered a probable migrant (MM). On 4 Sep, the first juvenile migrant was recorded at Beachy Head (BRC, GCS). On 6 Sep,



a single bird glided over Hove pursued by Herring Gulls (RY). At Beachy Head, a pale-morph juvenile flew out to sea on 12 Sep (SHL, NJNP), a single flew west on 17 Sep (MEC, RHC) and a probable juvenile flew west on 21 Sep (MEC, RHC, SHL). The final records for the year were at Hastings CP on 28 Sep when a juvenile flew west, followed by an adult male that came from the north and flew out to sea (ASG). [MEK]

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Rare vagrant.

There were two accepted records in 2016 of single birds seen and photographed circling over Rye Hbr before departing east on 17 May (SHL) and at Pett Level on 5 Jun (MSH). The county total moves on to 40 of which 21 have been this century and 20 in May. [PJ]

Red Kite

Milvus milvus

Scarce breeding resident (first bred in 2004) and fairly common and increasing visitor.

The estimated minimum monthly totals, excluding the resident pairs, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	82	60	84	84	142	51	44	25	34	26	58	99
West Dean	34	16	13	7	14	3	3	2	-	2	40	35
The Burgh	33	22	16	14	14	10	10	11	18	16	12	57
Other sites	15	22	55	63	114	38	31	12	16	8	6	7

There has been an exponential rise in records for Red Kites in this millennium but in 2016 there were fewer records compared to the previous year and this is reflected in the slightly reduced monthly totals. Despite these reduced figures there are solid grounds for optimism that this species is doing extremely well in Sussex. With social species such as Red Kites that habitually use winter roosts it is relatively straightforward monitoring numbers from one year to the next. The two downland roosts at West Dean and The Burgh have been counted for many years (CBC, MEK) and between these two roosts the numbers continue to rise. The peak winter count for the West Dean roost has remained steady at around 35-40 but in 2016 there was a dramatic increase in the count at The Burgh from the previous record of 37 to a new record count of 57 on 30 Dec. Interestingly the composition of the roost at The Burgh has changed in just one year. Previously it has been mentioned that more-or-less all the occupants of this roost were first year birds. In 2016, approximately one in three was an adult. In the past, all the fieldwork evidence in Sussex (CBC, MEK) pointed to breeding adults remaining in their nesting woods all-year-round. These 20-odd adults in the roost were either wandering birds yet to settle down or more likely local breeding adults that have changed their habits. In the Chilterns, it is not unusual for adults to leave their breeding woods for the winter but interestingly adults and young birds form separate roosts and do not tend to mix (P. Stevens *pers. comm.*). Although this is pure speculation, it seems likely that for the first time some breeding adults within a few miles of The Burgh are now joining this roost.

The figures for “other sites” mostly relate to casual observations of birds moving around in fine weather. Multiple sightings are no longer uncommon with the downland between The Burgh and Wepham Down the best location in Sussex to watch Red Kites. There were many records

for this area but with significant counts of 21 on 28 Jan, 12 on 13 Sep and 16 on 14 October. Elsewhere, there were multiple sightings of 13 at Westdean Woods on 25 Jan, eight at Monkton (Chilgrove) on 16 Feb, five at Beachy Head on 13 May, four at Burwash on 14 May, four at Lancing on 19 May and seven at Upperton (Petworth) on 17 July.

The latest estimate for the breeding population is around 40 pairs but this almost certainly under-estimates the true total. There were no reports of successful breeding but a handful of juveniles were noted. There was an interesting record of a juvenile heading west at Birling Gap on 25 Jul, which is a very early date for juvenile dispersal. [MEK]

## 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.*

Records for the species came from 60 tetrads with the most in January and the fewest in July; other months had a fairly even spread of records. Records were received in every month of the year from Pulborough Brooks, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. The approximate monthly totals, which are up overall, on 2015, are shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	21	16	15	12	14	12	13	15	25	16	22	22

Most birds recorded in the first winter period came from three sites named above. Peak counts recorded were five at Rye Hbr on 1 and 23 Jan, four at Pett Level on 8 Jan and two at Pulborough Brooks on several dates in January and February. A notable count during this time was three at Amberley Wild Brooks on 14 Jan.

During the spring Pagham Hbr joined the list of sites where the species was recorded with two on 13 Mar and singles on several other dates through this time. On 22 Mar a Short-eared Owl was seen to be attacked by a Marsh Harrier at Rye Hbr.

Breeding was confirmed in three sites, one more than in 2015 with probable or possible breeding from a further four. A male was observed with nesting material on 5 Apr, whilst birds were on nests at two separate locations on 1 Jun. One successful pair fledged two young; it is unknown how the others fared.

Beachy Head was the most reported coastal migration site for the species in the autumn, with individuals noted on seven dates between 9 Aug and 16 Sep. At Seaford Head birds were recorded on three dates during the autumn, with three on 12 Sep (a juv/female and two males). In addition to the regular sites other records came from Weir Wood Res on 11 Sep, Chantry Hill on the 15<sup>th</sup>, Thorney Island on 14<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, Medmerry on the 19<sup>th</sup>, two at The Burgh on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> and one at Arundel WWT on the 27<sup>th</sup>. In October observers in the lower Arun valley saw birds on four dates and at Pagham Hbr on two dates. A female/immature with a white tag on the left wing was observed at Rye Hbr on 15 Sep.

Higher numbers were recorded from more locations during the second winter period. A maximum of five roosted at Arundel WWT on 26 Dec, whilst peak counts at Pett Level were seven on 18 Dec and 6 on 13 Nov. At Rye Hbr the maximum of four occurred on 18 Dec, at Pulborough Brooks there were three on 5 Nov and there was at least two at four other sites on at least one date. [DB, MJC]

## Hen Harrier

## *Circus cyaneus*

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

Hen Harriers were recorded in only 33 tetrads. The sum of the monthly totals was 39, a slight increase on the 33 in 2015 and the 35 in 2014 but still a poor showing, reflecting the Hen Harrier's continuing declining fortunes in England due to illegal persecution. The highest monthly total was ten in November. Minimum monthly totals, which may include some duplication as birds roam widely, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total*	3	1	2	4	3		2	-	7	10	7
Medmerry, Chichester & Pagham Hbrs	1	-	1	2	-		-	-	1	1	-
West Sussex Downs	-	-	-	-	1		-	-	3	3	3
West Sussex Commons	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	1
Arun Valley	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	1	1	1
East Sussex Downs	1	-	-	-	-		2	-	-	1	-
Ashdown Forest	-	-	-	-	1		-	-	1	-	1
Pevensey Levels	1	-	-	-	-		-	-	1	1	1
Rye Bay	-	-	-	2	1		-	-	-	1	1
Scotney GP/Camber	-	1	-	-	-		-	-	-	1	-
Other sites	-	-	1	1	-		-	-	-	2	-

\*Monthly totals are not necessarily the sum of locations totals as some birds may have been seen in more than one location

Hen Harriers were seen at most of the usual locations during the first winter period but were absent from the West Sussex commons and the Arun and Ouse Valleys. The only location where two were seen on the same day was Pagham Hbr on 21 Apr when both a male and female were recorded. In January, one was reported on Pevensey Levels on the 1<sup>st</sup> and one on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, which may have been the same bird. A first winter bird was at Seaford on the 21<sup>st</sup> and a male at Thorney Island on the 29<sup>th</sup>. One at Scotney GP on 5 and 16 Feb were the only records in the month whilst in March one was seen at the unusual location of Battle on the 13<sup>th</sup> and a male was in Chichester Hbr on the 31<sup>st</sup>. There were probably two in the Rye Bay area in April including one in the Brede Valley on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and at Rye Hbr on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Records from Pagham Hbr between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> included at least two, mentioned above. On 6 May birds were recorded from opposite sides of the county, one at Steyning and one at Rye Hbr. Disappointingly the first Hen Harrier of the year on Ashdown Forest was not seen until the end of May when a ringtail was at two different locations on the 24<sup>th</sup>, the last spring record.

The first returning bird arrived on 6 Aug at Lewes, followed by another at Beachy Head on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There were no September records but sightings picked up in October with one at Washington on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and a male on Ashdown Forest on the 10<sup>th</sup>. On the 12<sup>th</sup> one was reported in the Arundel-Littlehampton area and a ringtail was at Thorney Island on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Between the 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> at least two, a male and a ringtail, were roaming the West Sussex Downs with both seen near Steyning on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and a female was at Pevensey Levels on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

November was the month with the most records but it is difficult to determine the number of individuals. On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, one was at Falmer and a ringtail was at Medmerry on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Throughout

the month there were at least three on downland in West Sussex with two ringtails on the 30<sup>th</sup> and probably two in the Rye Bay area. Observers at Pevensey Levels and Pulborough Brooks saw one each on the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> respectively. A ringtail flew over Worthing on the 24<sup>th</sup> and another ringtail was seen from a train in the Arun Valley on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Observers at The Burgh (Burpham) submitted the most records throughout December with two seen on the 1<sup>st</sup>. A ringtail was at Arundel WWT on the 3<sup>rd</sup> which may have been one of The Burgh birds. One was also at Pevensey Levels the same day and possibly the same one on Ashdown Forest the next day. There were records from Rye Hbr on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and the only record for the year for the commons of West Sussex was one at Heyshott on the 28<sup>th</sup>. There were no records from the Ouse Valley this year. [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.*

There were three records in 2016 following a blank year in 2015. The first, a ringtail, flew east over Friston Forest, pursued by a crow, on 7 May (PJ). One was at Hastings CP on 26 May (ASG) and a ringtail was seen and photographed at Seaford Head on 26 Aug (PAE). With the recent downturn in the UK breeding population, it seems likely that the number of records in Sussex will also decrease. The annual average of 176 records during 1962-99 was 4.8 whereas the 49 records this century have averaged only 2.9 per year. [PJ]

## Goshawk

## *Accipiter gentilis*

*Very scarce but increasing resident. Schedule 1 species.*

As for 2015, a small number of observers provided the bulk of the records for 2016. It is clear that Goshawks are consolidating their numbers in Sussex, and 2016 saw an increase from up to six territories in 2015 to ten to eleven territory holding pairs or single birds in the current year. Typically for this species, these territories were loosely clustered in two, widely separated, areas of Sussex.

In the first area, at least three territories were definitely or apparently occupied, with three young fledging from a nest in a larch tree at one site, a juvenile female seen at the second location in August following sightings of an adult female in June and July, and territorial behaviour observed at the third site in March and April. It is unclear whether the site that has been occupied since 2009 held a pair in 2016.

The study area in West Sussex described in 2015 was watched again in 2016. Territory-holding pairs increased from at least three in 2015 to at least four in the current year. It is thought that one pair may have failed (and if so the cause was not clear), although the use of an unknown alternative nest cannot be ruled out. At least one juvenile was heard calling at a second site, and another juvenile male was seen close to a third. Two juvenile males seen together in August bore no obvious relationship to any known territory, but may have already moved from a successful nest site.

As previously, a number of apparently non-breeding birds were seen interacting with established pairs, especially during the main display season in early spring, but as the population increases, so do sightings of more than one bird together at other times of year.

Away from these known sites, there is much suitable habitat in Sussex, and observers prepared to spend time looking for displaying birds between mid-February and the first week of April could well be rewarded with spectacular views of this enigmatic raptor. [DBu, MM]

## Sparrowhawk

*Accipiter nisus*

*Common resident and passage migrant.*

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 296 tetrads, slightly down on the 312 in 2015; although there were 17 records of twos the majority of records were of single birds. The highest counts during the first quarter were of threes at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Jan, Kneppmill Pond on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Warnham LNR on 27 Mar. Four at Ardingly Res on 30 Apr was the highest count of the spring. There were no reports of birds flying in off the sea.



*Sparrowhawk, Hodcombe, August 2016 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)*

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and was probable in a further 16 tetrads. The earliest record of display was on 27 Feb at Wakehurst Place and the first confirmed breeding was of a bird with food on 28 Apr on the Knepp Estate. Fledged young were first seen at Angmering on 1 Jul where at least one remained for most of the month. Family groups were reported from Worthing, Hurstpierpoint and Uckfield.

The highest autumn/second winter period counts were of five at Pagham Hbr on 11 Sep (and four there on the 28<sup>th</sup>), five at Warnham LNR on 8 Nov and four interacting together over woods at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 28 Oct. There were three further counts of threes and 40 of twos

although the vast majority of records were of single birds. There were no records of birds flying out to sea.

Prey species recorded were Blue Tit, Blackbird, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Jay and, at Pett Level on 17 Nov, a female was seen with two Collared Doves, one in each talon! There is an unfortunate record of a Sparrowhawk reported dead after crashing into a barn while hunting at Southerham (Lewes) in August. [MJC]

## Common Buzzard

*Buteo buteo*

*Fairly common and increasing resident; probably scarce passage migrant.*

Common Buzzards were distributed across the county and recorded in 598 tetrads, an increase on the 584 in 2015. There were 47 counts of ten or more (34 in West Sussex and 13 in East Sussex) during the year. The highest counts during the first winter period were 27 at Westdean Woods on 23 Feb, 16 at Worth on 29 Feb and 14 each at The Burgh (Burpham) and Monkton, both on 16 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 17 tetrads and probable in a further 71 (16 and 74 in 2015). There were many reports of display and pairings from mid-January onwards but few details of breeding were recorded. The first nest building was observed at Medmerry on 15 Mar and the first confirmed breeding was at Crutches Fm (Winchelsea) on 31 Mar. The first fledged young were at Ladywell (Coombes) on 18 Jun. Two pairs bred within close proximity to each other south of Uckfield with at least two fledged young for each pair. Family groups were recorded at Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks, Henfield Levels, Beacon Hill (Rottingdean), Weir Wood Res and Friston Forest.

The highest summer counts were 14 at Beachy Head on 24 Aug, 13 at Handcross on 8 Aug and 12 at Lye Green (Crowborough) on 13 Aug. Most records during the autumn were of fewer than five but there were some high counts: 20 at The Burgh on 22 Sep (with 15+ there on 13 Oct), 18 at Pagham Hbr and 15 at Beachy Head, both on 11 Sep. There were two double figure counts during the second winter period; 14 at Barnham on 19 Nov and ten at Singleton Forest on 28 Dec. Prey species reported were Woodpigeon, a large rat, a slowworm or snake and rabbits. [MJC]

## Osprey

*Pandion haliaetus*

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

The first Osprey for the year was seen at Weir Wood Res on 26 Mar, close to the 10-year average arrival date of 22 Mar, although considerably later than last year's 7 Mar. Two (possibly three) birds were present there the following day, further sightings on the 31<sup>st</sup> and then daily from 2 to 7 Apr (which may have related to the same individual) and again on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, observations of single birds came from some ten sites between 3 and 23 Apr.

Through the remaining spring months only four more birds were recorded: Church Norton on 3 May, Splash Point (Seaford) on the 8<sup>th</sup> being harassed by gulls as it flew in over the sea, Church Norton on the 15<sup>th</sup> and, finally, Weir Wood Res on 5 Jun, the only sighting for the month.

One at Weir Wood Res on 24 Jul, which lingered until the 27<sup>th</sup>, was the start of the return migration. The only other July record was of one at Bewl Water on the 26<sup>th</sup>. The next records were



of single birds at Horsted Keynes and Forest Row on 4 Aug but it was from the 15<sup>th</sup> that main passage commenced. Subsequently, through to mid-October, birds were noted mainly at coastal or near coastal sites, most regularly at Chichester Hbr, Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Arundel WWT/ Arun Valley, Beachy Head and, of course, Weir Wood Res. Although most sightings were of single birds there were twos on 20 dates during the period and three were seen at Thorney Island on 1, 2, 4, 14 and 26 Sep and 2 Oct and at Pagham Hbr on 1 Oct. Fours were seen at Medmerry on 24 Aug and at Thorney Island on 3, 6 and 19 Sep. Observers at Beachy Head recorded three birds setting out southwards across the channel, two on 30 Aug and one on 7 Sep.

In October, Ospreys were recorded from 11 locations on 13 days to the 15<sup>th</sup>, involving possibly 17 different birds with three at Pagham Hbr on the 1<sup>st</sup> and Thorney Island on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and two at Bewl Water on the 11<sup>th</sup>. In Chichester Hbr, Ospreys were recorded on nine different days with the last on 19 Oct. This was followed 20 days later by a late bird at Arlington Res on 8 Nov, the same last date as 2015 and almost two weeks later than the 10-year average date of 26 Oct. [DB]



*Water Rail, Arundel WWT, March 2016 (Luke Dray)*

## Water Rail

## *Rallus aquaticus*

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

Water Rails were found in 67 tetrads, a reduction on the 76 tetrads of 2015. During the early SWBS, the only birds found in 117 1-km squares surveyed were two at the west side of Pagham Hbr. During the first quarter of the year, while the majority of records were typically of single birds, maxima of four were recorded at Thorney Deepes, Mill Pond Marsh (Pagham Hbr), Arundel WWT, Waltham Brooks, Pulborough Brooks, Doleham and Pett Level. Single birds at Clear Water (North Chailey) on 27 Mar and Gravetye Woods (skulking in an overgrown pond) on the 29<sup>th</sup> may have been migrants.

There were no records of either confirmed or probable breeding but it was considered 'likely' at Rye Hbr, given how frequently calls were heard. A single bird found on Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 1 May was the only record during the BBS.

During the autumn and second winter period, the highest counts were of at least seven at the Severals (Church Norton), on 20 Sep and eight on Beeding Brooks on 4 Nov. Elsewhere, five was the highest count at Arundel WWT while counts of four were recorded at Warnham LNR from late October to late November and there were numerous records of ones, twos and threes from suitable sites. Just one bird was found in the late year SWBS, near Chichester Marina on 16 Dec.

Most years bring at least one record from an unexpected site: in 2016 one was under the scarp of the Downs at Crypt Farm (Cocking) on 17 Dec. [CB]

## Corncrake

*Crex crex*

*Rare passage migrant; formerly bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

One was seen and photographed at the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on 12 Sep (AG, JG). This was the first county record since the remarkably showy bird seen by many observers at Beachy Head from 15-18 Apr 2013 and the eleventh to be recorded this century. September is the main month with 31 (39%) county records, followed by October with 22 (28%), since 1962. [PJ]

## Moorhen

*Gallinula chloropus*

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

Moorhens were recorded in 290 tetrads in 2016 (cf. 315 in 2015 and 271 in 2014). Monthly counts at the principal WeBS sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	604	502	457	307	220	173	269	312	469	522	660	601
Chichester Hbr	35	41	38	4	-	-	2	-	34	35	31	57
Chichester Canal	95	89	89	70	40	38	45	37	71	112	96	85
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	120	108	83	67	59	48	94	112	103	140	170	136
Average county total 2006-2015	627	629	546	250	196	187	306	376	621	634	658	666

As with Coot (and unlike the position for Moorhen in 2015 compared with 2014), an increase in numbers over those for 2015 occurred in the last two months of the year. Significant counts not included in the WeBS table came from Alexandra Park (Hastings) (53 on 16 Jan and 43 on 20 Feb) and Rustington where three groups totalled 38 on 28 Jan. In the early year SWBS, 99 birds were recorded in 27 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed; the Rustington count (above) being the highest. One watched crossing the East Dean to Birling Gap road on 26 Mar was the first noted in the Beachy Head area since 2005.

Breeding was confirmed in 46 tetrads and probable in 13 (cf. 39 and 13 in 2015 and 35 and 13 in 2014). During the BBS, Moorhens were recorded in 53 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed (slightly lower figures than the 65 of 176 in 2015). The first indications of successful breeding were of young on the Knepp Estate on 24 Mar (cf. 6 Apr in 2015 at Seaford) and an occupied nest

at Aldwick (Bognor) on the 25<sup>th</sup>. There were 25 nests/broods in Rye Hbr (31 in 2015; 22 in 2014). At Arundel WWT, birds were still occupying a nest on 21 Jun. Breeding was again successful on a tiny pond surrounded by low rise blocks of flats in Peacehaven but at Bodiam Castle it was thought that numbers had been reduced by human disturbance. At Blatchington Pond (Seaford) a pair raised three broods, with eight chicks in the third brood. On Steyning Levels, a first brood chick assisted its parents in feeding young from the second brood.

During the late year SWBS, 110 birds were recorded in 36 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. The highest count came again from Rustington with 17 birds on 6 Nov. During the final three months, significant numbers not in the above WeBS table included 51 on 8 Nov and 50 on 6 Dec at (Brooklands) Worthing, 35 on 18 Dec at Ifield MP and 24 on 31 Dec at Mewsbrook (Rustington). Although 18 were counted at Falmer Pond on 20 Nov surrounding vegetation made counting difficult and numbers recorded here and also elsewhere tended to be variable for such reasons. [CB]

Coot

Fulica atra

*Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.*

Coots were recorded in 169 tetrads, a slight reduction from the 180 of 2015 but still greater than the 132 recorded in 2013, the nadir level of the last seven years. Monthly counts from the principal WeBS sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2631	2032	999	776	626	559	937	1206	2110	2597	3207	3385
Chichester Hbr	273	163	58	28	5	4	16	20	134	142	143	186
Chichester GP	454	390	121	59	110	nc	nc	nc	365	509	915	1182
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	145	208	103	92	93	66	110	158	149	89	143	91
Worthing Brooklands	83	46	26	48	34	51	44	62	182	167	195	333
Rye Bay	764	449	204	220	139	198	361	453	735	952	830	679
Average county total 2006-2015	3521	2826	1636	650	524	771	1179	1710	2608	3127	3319	3650

Compared with the 10-year average the county totals were lower in ten months of the year and numbers continued to fall at Rye Bay compared with the average counts for the previous six years. Elsewhere, there were some significant counts higher than the WeBS. Counts at Brooklands (Worthing), where there was plenty of algae and weed in the lagoon, involved 220 on 26 Sep, 296 on 27 Oct, 295 on 16 Nov and 350 on 6 Dec. Similarly, Kneppmill Pond proved to be particularly attractive to Coots during the last three months, with WeBS counts (not shown above) of 131 on 17 Oct, 160 on 13 Nov and 257 on 18 Dec. During the early year SWBS, 58 birds were found in 11 of the 117 surveyed squares, with a maximum of 22 in Petworth Park on 3 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 40 tetrads and probable in a further seven, totals substantially below the numbers in the Atlas years 2008-2011 (176 and 43 respectively). The number of nests at Rye Hbr rose to 37 from the 33 in 2015 while there were 15 pairs at Pagham Hbr and nine at Medmerry. A pair bred successfully at Troutbridge (Eridge), a ‘welcome return’ as last year only a single bird was present. A nest was found at a new site on the marsh at Cadborough (Rye). The first nest was noted at Pagham Hbr on 31 Mar and the first chicks on 11 Apr on Henfield Levels. Unfledged young were noted on Poling Fishing Lake on 24 Jul and two were raised by a pair at

a small pond on Rustington GC. Nest building was noted at Arundel WWT on the late date of 22 Jun. Two dead birds were found at Selsey East Beach on 24 Apr near an abandoned nest. During the BBS, a total of 73 birds was recorded from 20 1-km squares of the 166 surveyed with a highest count of 17 at Rye Hbr on 7 May.

In the late year SWBS, 83 birds were found in just seven of the 136 squares surveyed, with a highest count of 32 between Oving and Aldingbourne on 11 Dec. [CB]

## Crane

## *Grus grus*

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

**2015:** The bird at Weir Wood on 4 May was seen circling over the reservoir at 13:30 before heading east.

**2016:** There were three records this year: singles flying south over Cobnor on 25 Mar (NSB), southeast over Steyning on 12 Apr and circling high over Exceat Bridge on 2 Nov (NRP, RJP). The county total this century moves on to 63. [PJ]

## Stone-curlew

## *Burhinus oedicnemus*

*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. Schedule 1 species.*

**During 2016 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 the spring the project received reports of three passage migrants in late March and an individual was recorded in sheep pasture with starlings at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Apr (CC). A single bird was photographed in a suitable breeding area on 25 Apr but was not seen subsequently.

During 2016 the RSPB Sussex Stone-curlew Project team located one pair where habitat management and regular monitoring were possible. Through working closely with landowners, management of the breeding site and surrounding area was adjusted to best suit the species' needs.

A pair returned to the same area as they nested in during 2015 and appeared to have a nest down by 19 Apr. The pair consisted of one un-ringed bird and one which had been ringed as a nestling in the area in 2011 and which bred in the same area in 2013, 2014 and 2015. A detailed programme of monitoring established that two eggs were laid, both of which successfully hatched with two chicks being seen in the company of both adults from 18 May to 2 Jun. On 7 Jun only one chick and two adults could be found and all three birds were again seen on 10 Jun, but not thereafter, and it is assumed that the chick was predated. On 15 Jun the pair was discovered to have moved roughly 3 km and although they were present at this site until 29 Jul there was no evidence of nesting.

No birds were seen at the site where breeding was first recorded in 2006 and a pair successfully fledged one young in 2015.

A very late migrant was at West Wittering on 4 Dec in a ploughed field (AD, JK, KJ *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 so that efforts can be made to ensure the maximum success of any breeding attempt. Please contact Bruce Fowkes on 01273 775333 or by email to [bruce.fowkes@rspb.org.uk](mailto:bruce.fowkes@rspb.org.uk). [DG]**

**Black-winged Stilt**

*Himantopus himantopus*

*Rare vagrant.*

A second calendar year individual remained at Weir Wood Res throughout the day on 12 Apr (GB, JJE, AG *et al.*). This was followed by a remarkable flock of ten at Pulborough Brooks on 2 May (PH *et al.*), which was still present in the late afternoon, but had also departed by the following day. The flock was seen feeding on the North Brooks. Both records have been accepted by BBRC. [MM]

**Avocet**

*Recurvirostra avosetta*

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

**2015:** The total number of breeding pairs should read 81.

**2016:** Avocets were recorded in 30 tetrads during the year; the minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	64	93	184	193	290	196	54	8	28	18	69	69
<b>10-year averages</b>	44	50	102	119	119	110	78	28	16	17	52	57

A comparison of monthly numbers with the 10-year averages shows that in all months, except July and August, totals for 2016 were higher. This reflects the gradual but irregular increase in numbers that has occurred in most months during the past ten years.

The wintering flock at Pagham Hbr from 2015 remained throughout the first two months of the year, with a maximum of 40 on several dates, twice as many as in recent years. At the other traditional wintering site in Chichester Hbr there were very few sightings, with a maximum of 20 at Thorney Island on 24 Jan, half as many as usual. The only other winter records were occasional sightings at Rye Hbr, but towards the end of February numbers began to build up in the east of the county. Offshore passage began abruptly on 13 Mar, with seven past Beachy Head and smaller groups at other seawatching sites, but only a few were recorded subsequently. Also during March, single birds were on the R Adur at Shoreham on the 1<sup>st</sup> and at Cuckmere Haven on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

A total of about 113 pairs bred, a county record for the second year running and a doubling of the breeding population in two years. At Rye Hbr a record 62 nests were counted but less than 20 birds fledged. At Pett Level 28 pairs bred but suffered from predation by Herring Gulls and a mink but at Medmerry 23 pairs fledged 16 young.

Autumn records were low as usual, as birds departed. The second winter period once again saw a regular flock of up to 38 at Pagham Hbr, and a maximum count of 30 at Thorney Island. The only record away from these areas was one at Rye Hbr on 9 Dec.

The only inland records came from Pulborough Brooks, with one on 9 Mar, three on 13 Jul and one on 22 Aug (also seen at Waltham Brooks). [CJRB]



*Avocets, Rye Hbr, April 2016 (Glenn Welch)*

## 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	1167	1276	1194	945	438	222	893	842	1909	1414	1488	1535
Chichester Hbr	775	592	576	431	250	-	457	507	1567	791	1182	1144
Pagham Hbr	118	111	114	123	45	68	147	79	20	146	134	235
Rye Bay	254	511	452	348	125	124	285	227	302	391	128	110
Average county total 2006-2015	1940	1974	1328	808	573	540	730	1142	1363	1492	1793	1761



In addition to the WeBS counts there were 330 at Rye Hbr on 26 Jan and 450 there on 9 Feb. The highest counts elsewhere in the first winter period were 78 at Cuckmere Haven on 23 Feb and 55 at Climping on 21 Jan.

At least 70 breeding pairs were recorded, similar to recent years. Rye Hbr hosted 33 pairs, with many chicks fledging, but at Pagham Hbr productivity was much lower as 17 pairs raised only two young. There were 12 pairs at Pett Level, three at Medmerry, one at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr), one at Arundel WWT and a pair was successful at Cuckmere Haven. Roof-nesting pairs were reported again from Shoreham and on the tennis club roof at Rye for its eighth year.

During the autumn there were 1000 at Pilsey Island on 23 Aug, and 1500 at Rookwood (West Wittering) on 17 Sep, the year's highest count at any site. In the last two months of the year, in addition to the counts in the WeBS table, there were 115 at Cuckmere Haven on 27 Dec, 110 there on 29 Nov, and 60 at Telscombe Cliffs on 15 Dec. The only inland records were one at Weir Wood Res on 12 May, one at Arlington Res on 7 Aug and up to three at Pulborough Brooks during April and May. [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
<b>County total</b>	2485	1533	805	43	77	11	26	166	276	771	2027	1007
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1667	884	410	5	30	-	-	79	89	433	1443	686
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	651	467	323	11	44	1	1	62	133	251	464	175
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	1799	1646	1524	217	92	62	91	339	651	970	1422	1581

Monthly numbers seen to be keeping up with the 10-year averages, with January still the peak month. In addition to the above figures there were regular flocks along the West Sussex beaches in the early part of the year, with maximum counts of 200 at Medmerry on 10 Feb, 75 at Goring Gap on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 73 at Climping on 26 Jan while the highest count within Chichester Hbr was 910 at West Chidham on 23 Jan. One or two were occasionally recorded at Shoreham. In East Sussex the maxima were 33 at Rye Hbr on 8 Jan and 36 there 11 Feb. A flock of 200 W past Selsey Bill on 31 Jan was most likely a local movement but otherwise seawatchers recorded only small numbers with the peak spring counts being 86 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 5 May and 47 E at Selsey Bill on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Numbers in general decreased markedly from the end of March, the only significant counts being 45 in Pagham Hbr on 19 Apr and 40 at Medmerry on 4 May. Up to 14 remained in Pagham Hbr during early June with the final two seen on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

The first returning autumn migrant was noted at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 24 Jun and numbers built up there to an autumn peak of 309 on 15 Oct. The first autumn record at Pagham Hbr was of eight on 3 Jul but there were no sightings at Rye Hbr until one on 8 Aug. Two at Cuckmere Haven on the 22<sup>nd</sup> was unusual there.

During the last two months of the year, the only record in excess of the WeBS counts was 200 at Pagham Hbr on 16 Dec, but there were 300 at Medmerry on the same date and 917 at West Chidham on 12 Nov. The highest count at Goring Gap during the period was 35 on 3 Dec and

in Rye Bay was 49 on 13 Nov. One or two were recorded on the R Adur at Shoreham. The only inland record for the year was of one at Pulborough Brooks on 18 May. [CJRB]

## 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
<b>County total</b>	500	1520	713	-	8	-	-	3	224	1091	617	1531
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	412	120	200	-	-	-	-	3	1	13	60	237
<b>Medmerry</b>	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	280	-
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	15	550	-	-	8	-	-	-	23	78	270	250
<b>Rye Bay</b>	73	820	506	-	-	-	-	-	200	1000	6	1041
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	1841	1307	522	51	1	0	1	169	321	1491	2523	1858

Rye Hbr is now the county's main site for this species and monthly maxima for this site (within the Rye Bay complex) give a more accurate picture of numbers there than the WeBS counts, as shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	3000	3000	3000	3	9	1	11	95	135	280	400	1600

In addition to the WeBS and the figures in the above table there were 3000 at East Guldeford Level on 16 Feb and 800 at Pett Level on both 7 and 20 Feb. There were also some good counts in January in the west of the county, with 2000 at Thorney Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 400 at Medmerry on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 300 at Pagham Hbr on the 9<sup>th</sup>. A count of 112 at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Mar was the largest in the Arun Valley all year, highlighting a continuing decline at inland sites. Only a handful of birds was reported in April and May while six at Pagham Hbr on 3 Jun were the last spring records.

There were no records then until 12 Jul when three were seen at Pagham Hbr followed by the first arrivals at Rye Hbr were two on the 18<sup>th</sup>, following which numbers there quickly built up as shown above. One was at Medmerry on 11 Aug followed by three at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) and Thorney Island from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> but thereafter only single birds were seen at Pagham Hbr/Sidlesham to the month's end and there were no significant numbers in West Sussex until October, which now seems to be the pattern.

In the last two months the highest count in West Sussex was 600 at Medmerry on 21 Dec while 200 at Lidsey on 7 Dec was a good count from a site additional to the WeBS table.

Birds are often seen and heard on migration over downland and the coast, especially in autumn, and this year there were records from The Burgh (Burpham), Chantry Hill (Storrington) and Beachy Head, between 15 Sep and 5 Nov. [CJRB].

American Golden Plover

*Pluvialis dominica*

*Very rare vagrant.*

An adult male in summer plumage was seen by many observers and photographed at Flat Beach, Rye Hbr from 3 to 5 Jun (AF, JAJ, EP *et al.*). It was the fifth Sussex record of this species, the previous ones having been at Pagham Hbr from 14 to 17 Sep 1988, at Chichester Hbr on 16 Sep 2010, at Cuckmere Haven from 11 to 14 Jun 2013 and Scotney GP from 11 to 12 Oct 2014 although it was only seen in Sussex on the 11<sup>th</sup>. [PJ]

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	384	166	154	84	262	44	29	265	202	173	245	341
Chichester Hbr	254	74	83	29	127	-	16	132	115	126	209	184
Medmerry	42	30	21	1	15	23	-	115	26	47	14	43
Pagham Hbr	58	31	27	30	12	3	6	3	-	-	13	16
Goring	28	14	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	42	-	9	93
Average county total 2006-2015	314	236	133	97	171	59	53	476	285	173	204	186

In addition to the counts in the above table, there were consistently high numbers at Goring Gap in the first winter period, with maximum counts of 153 on 25 Jan and 60 on 1 Feb. Away from the usual sites 25 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 13 Jan was notable. During the spring there were 152 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 17 May and still 80 at Pagham Hbr on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 68 at Rye Hbr on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A total of about 53 breeding pairs was reported, almost all on managed reserves. At Rye Hbr at least 30 pairs bred, and productivity was reported as good. At Pagham Hbr 14 pairs fledged 10 young, and there were five pairs at Medmerry and three at Pilsey Island. A pair nested at Southwick Beach, but there were no breeding records from any of the other traditional sites along the coast.

During the autumn migration period there were 200 at Pagham on 11 Aug, 82 at Goring on 3 Sep, 600 at Pilsey Island on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 89 at Rye Hbr on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 73 at Shoreham on 11 Oct. Regular monthly counts at Pilsey Island illustrate how the population in this part of Chichester Hbr fluctuates during the year:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pilsey Island	126	40	32	39	152	58	8	300	600	130	60	45

In the second winter period, numbers along the West Sussex beaches, which exceeded those from the WeBS, were 55 at Goring on 25 Nov, 112 there on 16 Dec and 80 roosting on the beach at Brooklands (Worthing) on 26 Nov.

The only inland records came from Weir Wood Res (one on 9 May), Arlington Res (up to three from 21 Aug to 26 Sep) and Pulborough Brooks (one on 6 and 22 Feb, three on 15 May, two on 6 and 13 Jul and one on 2 Nov). [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 birds	10	24	34	33	38	18	6
No. of sites	5	9	10	5	5	5	2

Once again, nearly all records came from just a handful of sites, mostly on managed reserves. The first spring arrival was one at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 19 Mar (three days later than the 10-year average date), a typical date and location, followed by one at Rye Hbr on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. By the 29<sup>th</sup> there were already four at Medmerry, which rose quickly to 11 on 4 Apr. At Weir Wood Res single birds were noted on 31 Mar and 22 Apr with two there on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 5 May, presumably on passage as there were no signs of breeding. One flew north over Worthing beach on 20 Apr.

A total of about 14 pairs was on suitable breeding territories, very similar to recent years. A record eight pairs were counted at Medmerry, at least three pairs at Rye Hbr and two pairs at Pett Level. The only site to report details of productivity was Pulborough Brooks, where one pair raised three young.

There were many records from Pulborough Brooks throughout June, July and August, with peaks of 12 on 27 Jun and 13 on 25 Jul and the last sighting on 19 Aug. The picture was very similar at Sidlesham Ferry Pool, where, although there was no evidence of breeding, there were almost daily records from mid-June to 12 Sep, with a maximum of ten on 12 Jul. Three at Cuckmere Haven on 9 Jul was more unusual, and the last record of the year was two at Shripney flood relief pool on 14 Sep (11 days earlier than the 10-year average date). [CJRB]

## 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 follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	9455	10,252	1624	196	169	143	601	239	708	4717	5057	15,192
Chichester Hbr	2186	1386	79	16	14	-	101	45	115	272	413	1292
Pagham Hbr	1544	1066	-	3	6	9	22	65	120	232	590	574
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	1536	2217	646	72	45	48	48	-	34	427	1727	4622
Lower Ouse Valley	758	675	296	6	8	14	-	-	50	52	99	457
Rye Bay	1473	3430	78	19	34	24	407	50	228	3542	1386	5979
Average county total 2006-2015	12,366	9323	1019	249	219	500	880	1530	1611	3300	7054	9246

Lapwings were recorded in 168 tetrads, about 19% of the 871 tetrads from which records were received. In the first two months there were consistently good numbers in the Arun Valley with a maximum at Pulborough Brooks of 3000 on 1 Feb, and 2000 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 28 Jan. The maximum counts at Pagham Hbr were 2000 on 28 Jan and 18 Feb. There were good numbers at Henfield Levels with a maximum of 1500 on 14 Feb and in the lower Ouse valley there were regular counts of 1000 between Lewes and Rodmell. Further east, the highest count was 1800 at Pett Level on 24 Jan.

Display was first noted at Arundel WWT on 29 Feb, and breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and probable in 31, very similar to recent years. At Pett Level 22 pairs bred but predation took a heavy toll; it was a similar story at both Rye Hbr, where 16 pairs fledged less than five young, and at Medmerry, where 16 pairs raised only two. Breeding birds were more successful at Pulborough Brooks, where 18 pairs raised 14 young, and on the Norfolk Estate, where 13 pairs produced 18 young.

Numbers in the second winter period were amongst the highest recorded in recent years and December considerably exceeded the 10-year average for that month. There were again high numbers in the Arun Valley, and Pagham Hbr attracted more birds than the WeBS table indicates, with 1000 on 15 Nov and 1500 on 16 Dec. Good counts elsewhere included 800 on Pevensy Levels on 18 Dec, 500 at Medmerry the same day, and 300 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. [CJRB]

Kentish Plover

*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*

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

The only record was of one on the mudflats in Pagham Hbr from 30 May to 1 Jun viewable distantly from Church Norton (CRJ *et al.*). It was noted that the bird was a male and was ringed on the right tarsus. It was the first county record since 2014 when there was one at Rye Hbr on 26 Apr and takes the total this century to 29. [PJ]

Eurasian Whimbrel

*Numenius phaeopus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2	6	3	7	266	3	72	61	23	6	2	2
Chichester Hbr	1	5	3	-	115	-	46	47	23	5	1	1
Pagham Hbr	1	1	-	7	113	3	23	6	-	1	1	1
Average county total 2006-2015	2	2	3	55	45	8	60	67	13	6	3	2

Three overwintering birds from 2015 were recorded. One was at Fishbourne until 12 Mar, another was at Church Norton until early April, and one at Bosham on 23 Jan was also considered to have overwintered. This last bird was joined by four more on 13 Feb, all standing on adjacent posts during high tide, and on 12 Mar there were still three present, also on the same posts! The

first likely migrant was one at Rye Hbr on 3 Apr but offshore passage began abruptly on the 10<sup>th</sup>, with most birds passing through in only two days on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. The totals recorded at the main seawatching sites were as follows:

		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Total	Peak movement	
Selsey Bill	E	303	144	1	1	-	449	129 in 12.25 hr	21 Apr
	W	37	21	8	5	-	71		
Worthing	E	234	51	-	-	-	286	132 in 4.5 hr	22 Apr
	W	4	1	1	1		7		
Splash Point	E	236	129	-	-	-	365	150 in 7.0 hr	21 Apr
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Beachy Head	E	42	49	-	-	-	91	37 in 2.5 hr	22 Apr
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-		

There was an influx of 120 at Pagham Hbr on 7 May and 66 were counted at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 6<sup>th</sup>. In East Sussex, the highest total at Rye Hbr was 39 on 22 Apr, although 90 were recorded at Scotney GP on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was a flurry of inland sightings during the spring, with four over Balcombe on 2 May, single birds at Pulborough Brooks and Eridge on the 9<sup>th</sup> and two at Weir Wood Res on 24 Apr, with one there on 15 May. From mid-May to mid-July only ten were recorded on the ground. There was a notable increase in numbers on 14 Jul as birds began to return, the most as suggested by the WeBS seen in the western harbours where the highest non-WeBS counts were 25 at Pagham Hbr on 24 Aug and 14 at Pilsey Island on 19 Jul. After 17 Sep only single figures were recorded.

The last count of more than one bird was of eight at Pagham Hbr on 6 Nov, followed by single birds at Church Norton, West Chidham and the Fishbourne Channel until the end of the year. [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	1902	1350	1233	533	52	34	1609	1214	1304	1312	923	1002
Chichester Hbr	1125	913	909	382	11	-	1372	852	867	955	561	676
Pagham Hbr	474	251	166	141	37	26	168	347	274	214	235	170
Rye Bay	223	158	86	3	-	-	67	2	139	61	56	146
Average county total 2006-2015	1895	1775	1586	382	101	341	1348	1484	1661	1517	1585	1437

During the first two months, there were several counts higher than the above totals. At Rye Hbr there were 500 on 16 Jan and 370 on 19 Feb, and at Pagham Hbr there were 340 on 19 Feb. Cuckmere Haven held a maximum of 56 on 8 Jan and the highest count at Newhaven Tide Mills, another traditional site, was 51 on 17 Jan.





*Curlew, Pett Level, February 2016 (Chris Hobden)*

During the summer there were still 34 on Pilsey Island on 3 Jun, a maxima of 52 in Pagham Hbr on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 64 at Pett Level on the 24<sup>th</sup>, rather than the lower numbers suggested by the WeBS. In July, numbers increased dramatically but mainly in Chichester Hbr but non-WeBS counts at Rye Hbr included 155 on 13 Jul and 195 on 8 Aug.

During the autumn, numbers at Rye Hbr were also significantly higher than in the WeBS table, with 245 on 23 Sep. In the second winter period, there were 330 at Rye Hbr on both 19 Nov and 24 Dec, and 200 at Pagham Hbr on 30 Dec. A count of 60 at Cuckmere Haven on 27 Dec was the maximum for the year there, and at Newhaven Tide Mills there were 39 on 15 Nov.

During the year, only the occasional few birds were observed from the principal seawatching sites. By far the highest day count of the spring was 16 E at Selsey Bill on 11 Mar. During the summer, the highest day count was 27 W at Worthing on 5 Jul.

Single birds were noted at various inland locations: Pulborough Brooks on 8 Jan and 11 Nov, Barcombe on 27 Apr, Heathfield on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Warningcamp on 10 May, Wiston Estate on 12 Jun, Knepp Estate on 13 Jun and 8 Aug and Patching on 30 Dec. The leucistic bird reported in Pagham Hbr over the previous six years was not recorded this year. [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. Schedule 1 species.*

The monthly WeBS counts were as shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1182	387	228	233	35	27	64	440	186	743	759	777
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	169	52	203	175	33	-	45	301	59	632	698	698
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	62	291	13	58	2	15	14	104	126	110	43	59
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	950	43	1	-	-	1	5	-	-	1	8	7
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	970	598	465	232	43	56	82	216	330	491	865	804

Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks continue to be recognised as internationally important wintering sites for Black-tailed Godwits. The 1% international threshold (610) was exceeded at both Pagham Hbr, with 1200 on 12 Jan, and at Pulborough Brooks, also with 1200 on 29 Jan. Four other non-WeBS counts at the latter site also exceeded this threshold between 8 Jan and 8 Feb, varying between 650 (8 Jan) and 900 (17 Jan). The lower 1% national threshold (430) was also exceeded at Pagham Hbr (500 on 4 Jan), and three times during January at Pulborough Brooks, with 600 on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. Similarly, the counts in Chichester Hbr in October, November and December exceeded the 1% international threshold.

In Chichester Hbr the maximum (non-WeBS) count was 170 on 12 Mar. Throughout March and April, counts remained relatively high at Pagham Hbr with a maximum 250 on 19 Mar but still 150 on 19 Apr, after which numbers tailed off markedly although there were up to 33 birds at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 19 May. There were 14 at Rye Hbr on the 30<sup>th</sup> and ten at Pett Level on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Summering birds were noted through June at several locations although usually in small numbers but with maxima of 24 at the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on 5 Jun and six at Rye Hbr on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Numbers began to increase through July; 39 at Sidlesham on 4 Jul had increased to 58 by the 15<sup>th</sup> and 74 at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) on the 31<sup>st</sup> (both non-WeBS counts).

Numbers increased further through August, peaking at 300 in Chichester Hbr on 17 Aug, and at 73 in Pagham Hbr on the 30<sup>th</sup> while observers at Rye Hbr recorded 33 on 21 Aug. There was then, in September, a dip in numbers presumably due to the earlier arrivals moving on to winter quarters further south; numbers in Pagham Hbr peaked at 117 on the 18<sup>th</sup> but to only 48 in Chichester Hbr on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

The only three-figured non-WeBS count during the second winter period was at Pagham Hbr where 133 were recorded on 16 Dec. Other counts of interest were 100 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 25 Nov, 80 at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Nov and 45 at Shripney flood relief pool on 16 Nov.

Four colour-ringed birds were noted during the year: one at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Jan which had first been ringed on The Wash on 8 Aug 1998, so was at least 17 years old, and, in Pagham Hbr, on 26 Jul, 15 Sep and 25 Oct. [DB]

## 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 follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County Total</b>	777	361	27	33	23	-	-	2	17	4	342	725
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	760	360	12	30	6	-	-	-	1	1	333	721
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	727	761	386	62	49	15	32	51	111	195	373	470

During the first winter period the 1% national threshold (380) was exceeded (doubled in fact, at 760) during the January WeBS count at Chichester Hbr and almost reached in the February count there (360). However, the February count was well below the 10-year average; a feature for all the following months until November. Other significant non-WeBS counts in Chichester Hbr were of 200 on 4 Feb and 320 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Away from Chichester this species was recorded at very few other locations and then only in small numbers; 15 at Pagham Hbr on 24 Jan was the highest of these counts, with two being observed at Pulborough Brooks, Medmerry and Rye Hbr on various dates through this period.

It was another relatively poor year for spring passage as recorded at the principal seawatching sites, as follows:

	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	82	35
Worthing	9	22
Telscombe Cliffs	-	11
Splash Point	418	131
Beachy Head	-	33

The combined total of birds migrating eastwards in April and May, 596, was even fewer than 2015's poor showing of 671. The first record was of 30 E at Selsey Bill on 14 Apr but the best day occurred on 21 Apr with 414 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 45 E at Selsey Bill; on 5 May 69 were recorded passing Splash Point and 30 at Birling Gap.

During the spring, away from the principal sites in Chichester and Pagham Harbours and the sea-watching sites, small numbers were seen at several coastal sites, e.g. Newhaven (ten on 14 Mar), Roedean (Brighton) (18 on 8 May) and Cuckmere Haven (six on 2 May) but between 10 Apr and 14 May the species was recorded on some 23 days at Rye Hbr area with 20 on 15 Apr and 31 on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 17 on 3 May.

Autumn passage was quiet. The first returning bird was noted at Pagham Hbr on 15 Aug but the maximum there was 40 at Pagham Hbr on 7 Sep and then smaller numbers on various dates until the 16<sup>th</sup>. Observers at Rye Hbr recorded 14 on 17 Sep and a peak count of 18 on 1 Oct; 12 W passed Hastings on 7 Sep.

The WeBS counts for the second winter period at Chichester Hbr exceeded the 1% national threshold in December with 721, whilst 353 the previous month was still significant but there were no significant non-WeBS counts during the period. As usual the prime sites were the western harbours but there were regular records of ones or twos in Rye Bay and the only other coastal site where this species was seen was at Goring Gap where a single bird was noted on 31 Dec. [DB]

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 shown in the table below. In the first two months, counts along the West Sussex beaches were much higher than the above table suggests. The roost at Goring Gap held a maximum of 51 on 2 Jan, and at Climping a count of 350 on the 10<sup>th</sup> showed a continuing trend towards increasing numbers at this site although somewhat short of the 511 recorded in the area on 19 Jan 2014.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	640	438	546	266	47	9	43	118	347	363	553	633
Chichester Hbr	172	150	91	12	-	-	1	20	76	78	246	279
Pagham Hbr	350	164	337	88	16	9	42	39	51	101	112	177
Climping Gap	77	88	107	37	19	nc	nc	54	57	27	59	170
Goring	11	13	-	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	81	39	1
Rye Bay	18	10	10	111	-	-	-	-	48	33	58	4
Average county total 2006-2015	805	619	614	219	79	26	49	231	299	436	429	480

During the spring, the emphasis shifted to East Sussex, with 60 at Pett Level on 13 Mar and numbers in Rye Bay during April exceeding those in the west. Local movements make it difficult to assess offshore passage, but the largest day count from the seawatching sites was 44 E at Selsey Bill on 25 Apr. During June there were fewer than 50 birds in the county.



*Turnstone, Shoreham Hbr, February 2016 (Richard Wren)*

During the autumn, the West Sussex beaches held considerably higher numbers than recorded during the WeBS, with 53 at Climping on 21 Jul, 93 at Goring on 27 Aug, 83 there on 17 Sep and 114 on 22 Oct. Good numbers were counted on the beach at Selsey Bill during this time too, with 59 on 16 Sep and 55 on 17 Oct.

In the last two months there was an influx at Goring in November, with counts of 123 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, decreasing to 30 on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and there were 50 at Middleton on 5 Dec and the same at Littlehampton on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Inland records are unusual; the only sighting this year was of one at Weir Wood Res on 21 Aug which was picked up exhausted on the reservoir shore. [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 and, with the exception of December, were lower than the 10-year averages:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	987	507	131	2	1	2	-	4	62	7	219	4164
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	740	195	40	-	-	-	-	4	31	-	209	4006
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	171	312	91	-	1	-	-	-	10	-	10	139
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	1625	2240	919	78	18	2	2	9	61	42	412	872

The only counts higher than the WeBS in the early part of the year were 350 at Pagham Hbr on 26 Jan, 1000 at Pilsey Island on 25 Feb and 500 at Pagham on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The maxima at Rye Hbr were 150 on 11 Jan and 90 on 11 Feb. Sightings away from these main areas are unusual, but there were single birds at Cuckmere Haven on 30 Mar and inland at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Feb. Offshore passage during the spring was light with just 98 recorded moving eastward during April and May with the peak of 38 E at Telscombe Cliffs on 10 May. Eleven at Rye Hbr on 13 May and 14 at Church Norton the next day were the last double figure counts, but there was one at Pagham Hbr on 3 Jun and up to four at Rye Hbr until the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Five birds at Pagham Hbr on 23 Jun were most probably early autumn migrants. There were ten at Medmerry on 6 Jul but, as usual with this species, numbers were slow to build up, with no significant counts until mid-November. During the autumn, several were reported away from the usual areas, with single birds on the R Adur at Shoreham on 31 Aug and 22 Sep, two at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Sep and one or two at Cuckmere Haven from 9 Sep through to 29 Nov. In addition to the WeBS counts, at Pagham Hbr there were maximum monthly totals of 80 on 6 Nov and 250 on 13 Dec, with 150 at Medmerry on 21 Dec and 44 at Rye Hbr on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Numbers showed a distinct peak in the second half of December, including a count of 4000 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 17<sup>th</sup>, equaling the previous second highest record at this site in 2010 and 2011 (the highest was 5000 on 21 Feb 2015). [CJRB].

**Ruff***Philomachus pugnax*

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

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as shown below and can be compared with the monthly averages for the previous 10-year period:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	10	19	-	-	-	-	-	5	2	-	3	15
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	8	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-
<b>Rye Bay</b>	2	9	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	2	15
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	12	12	9	2	-	-	1	5	6	5	9	11

With the exception of single birds recorded at Pagham Hbr on 13 Jan and 26 Feb all the records from the first three months were from the two locations noted in the above table. In the Arun valley the species was recorded on 46 dates at Pulborough Brooks with the highest counts of 12 on 4 and 17 Mar, 13 on 20 Feb and 14 on 16 Mar. During the same period Ruff were recorded on 47 dates in Rye Bay with the highest counts of 30 at Pett Level on both 30 Jan and 14 Feb and at Rye Hbr the peak count of 28 occurred on 24 Mar. Later in the spring most were again seen in East Sussex with seven at Pett Level on 1 Apr, six there on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 16 at Rye Hbr on 5 May. Three at Pevensey Levels on 21 Apr was the next highest count with few seen elsewhere.

Single birds were seen in Rye Bay on 8, 9, and 21 Jun but after 17 Jul, the effective commencement of post-breeding migration, records were more regular with observations on nine dates at four different sites; three at Pagham Hbr between 27 and 29 Jul being noteworthy. During August and September migrants were seen on 47 dates mainly from Pagham Hbr and Rye Bay but the largest flock was seen on the flood relief pool at Shripney (Bognor) with records between 8 and 19 Sep including 12 on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 14 on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 11 on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Ruff were recorded on just five days in October, three of these at Shripney with four on the 4<sup>th</sup>. From 13 Nov the pattern of records was similar to that in the first winter period with one at Pagham Hbr on 20 Nov and otherwise only recorded from the Arun valley and Rye Bay. Peak counts at these locations were four at Amberley Wild Brooks on 25 Nov and 14 at Pett Level on 18 Dec. [JAN]

## Curlew Sandpiper

## *Calidris ferruginea*

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

Total numbers of Curlew Sandpipers can vary greatly from year to year, and the approximate number in each month for 2016 was close to the average for the last ten years as shown below:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
<b>2016</b>	-	-	-	-	20	28	4	1
<b>10-year average</b>	1	4	1	4	12	27	5	0

There was no spring record so the first of the year was not until the autumn arrival of one on 8 Aug at Rye Hbr. The peak time for Curlew Sandpiper sightings is usually mid-late August and September when the passage of juveniles reaches its maximum and this year was no exception.

Total sightings in August and September were above average, with most recorded around Pagham Hbr, peaking at 12 on two occasions; 27 Aug and 23 Sep. Other areas with August records were Medmerry (21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>), West Itchenor (Chichester Hbr) (23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>), Rye Hbr (8<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 28 to 30<sup>th</sup>) and Pulborough Brooks (20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>). In September, further sightings were recorded at Pagham Hbr on most days from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, Rye Hbr (4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>), Shripney flood relief pool (8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>), the lower Chichester Canal (10<sup>th</sup>) and R Adur (Shoreham) (14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>). The last record from Pagham Hbr was two on 9 Oct and one was seen at Cuckmere Haven from 8 to 10 Oct. The last bird recorded in 2016 was an unusually late sighting of a single bird at Thorney Deepes on 13 Nov. [CD]





*Curlew Sandpiper, Cuckmere Haven, October 2016 (Matt Eade)*

**Temminck's Stint**

*Calidris temminckii*

*Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

One was at Rye Hbr on 6 May (SS), a typical date. It was the first county record since 2013 when there was one also at Rye Hbr on 26 May. The total for this century moves on to 44 at an annual average of 2.6 compared with an annual average of 2.8 for 1962-1999. [PJ]

**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	117	337	42	148	44	2	-	2	1	-	43	225
Chichester Hbr	81	110	37	148	32	-	-	1	-	-	10	106
Climping Gap	20	111	5		12	nc	nc	-	-	-	28	102
Goring	15	86	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-	4	-
Rye Bay	1	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
Average county total 2006-2015	225	162	134	68	119	20	31	68	26	74	108	110

Maximum monthly counts at the main sites give a more accurate picture of numbers during the year than the WeBS, as shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr)	100	200	226	176	320	16	300	176	-	322	150	114
Pagham Hbr	30	1	13	-	6	-	3	1	-	50	3	32
Goring/Ferring	300	130	24	5	21	-	-	6	1	74	55	100
Rye Hbr	130	30	18	3	25	-	-	11	7	-	25	17

Spring passage was recorded during April and May when the seawatching logs recorded a total of 553 flying eastward (and 82 W) with site peaks of 65 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 5 May, 155 E at Selsey on 9 May and 39 E at Worthing on 10 May. The final record of movement eastwards was six at Worthing on the 26<sup>th</sup> although the latest spring record was of two at Medmerry on 5 Jun. A series of records from Cuckmere Haven during May was unusual, with four on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, five on the 11<sup>th</sup> and seven on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

The first autumn arrivals were seven at Climping on 21 Jul followed by 300 at Pilsey Island on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The only inland record of the year was one at Arlington Res on 12 Aug. During the second winter period the highest numbers were as shown above. The only record away from the main areas was of ten at Rottingdean on 1 Dec. [CJRB]

## Dunlin

## *Calidris alpina*

*Very common passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce away from estuaries; scarce non-breeder in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as shown in the table below. The 1% national threshold of 3500 was exceeded in Chichester Hbr in January, February, March, November and December but only in March and December did the county total exceed the average for each month over the 10 years 2006-2015. The December count was the highest county total since 14,467 were recorded on 16 Feb 2014.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	11,515	7090	6679	83	536	26	77	162	421	1687	10,376	12,601
Chichester Hbr	8490	4689	6242	61	515	-	68	94	251	1530	9556	11,342
Pagham Hbr	1860	1850	131	16	5	5	5	-	57	76	532	576
Average county total 2006-2015	13,217	11,914	6318	382	666	43	180	660	730	4155	10,537	12,256

The WeBS often does not coincide with the highest counts in each month and this is clearly demonstrated, for the month May to October, by the following table of the maxima in each month at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr).

6 Jan	10 Feb	12 Mar	8 Apr	3 May	3 Jun	29 Jul	29 Aug	6 Sep	26 Oct	28 Nov	17 Dec
6500	2500	5000	16	2000	86	1200	450	800	2500	1500	5000

Although the species was recorded in smaller numbers at several coastal locations, only at three other sites did counts reach three figures; the monthly maxima from these sites are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Medmerry</b>	140	350	220	40	100	14	2	100	54	40	80	124
<b>Ferring to Worthing</b>	700	335	123	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	390	586
<b>Rye Hbr</b>	624	350	250	220	250	100	16	28	130	115	54	93

Low numbers were seen passing the seawatching points as shown in the following table. The figures have been calculated as described in the Red-throated Diver account. The peak movements, all westbound birds seen at Selsey Bill, were 100 on 7 Jan, 325 on 31 Jan, 102 on 26 Feb, 100 on 25 Apr and 350 on 15 Nov.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Flying East</b>	3	2	98	48	173	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
<b>Flying West</b>	485	102	1	103	60	-	65	45	4	36	458	21

Dunlin were recorded from 12 sites away from the coast or estuaries, mostly in the river valleys or at reservoirs. At Pulborough Brooks the species was recorded on 49 dates with peak counts of 14 on 2 May and 10 on 14 Nov. The only other double figure counts from inland sites were 27 on the flood relief pool at Shripney on 18 Sep and 17 there on 2 Oct. [JAN]

## Purple Sandpiper

*Calidris maritima*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	19	15	4	15	16		1	11	15
<b>Shoreham Hbr</b>	3	5	3	3	-			3	3
<b>Brighton Marina</b>	-	-	-	5	-			2	-
<b>Newhaven</b>	16	10	1	7	16			5	12
<b>Others</b>							1	1	
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	30	26	23	11	6		4	21	24

Total numbers recorded were generally lower than the county total averages for the last ten years as shown in the table. Only at Shoreham Hbr and Newhaven were regular winter counts submitted. None was recorded at Rye Hbr this year with only two counts submitted from Brighton Marina; these were five on 16 Apr and two on 9 Nov.

The highest counts in the winter period were 16 at Newhaven on 7 Jan and 16 were also seen on 4 May. The last record of the spring was on 9 May at Newhaven with two birds described as being in full summer plumage and others nearly there. Numbers at Shoreham peaked with five on 9 and 10 Feb, and the final record there was three on 11 Apr.

Birds were late returning, with the first reported at Pett Level on 30 Oct, well after the 10-year average of 6 Sep. The next record was of two at Brighton Marina on 9 Nov followed by one at Ovingdean on the 12<sup>th</sup> and then a scattering of records from between Shoreham and Newhaven Tide Mills where numbers peaked at 12 on 29 Dec. [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	-	-	1	4	4	1	3	12	22	2	-	-
10-year average	1	1	1	1	5	-	2	10	14	9	2	-

For the third year running there were no records suggesting overwintering, and the first sighting of the year was of one at Rye Hbr on 5 Mar. A minimum of eight was recorded at Rye during the spring, including three on 19 Apr and two on 17 May, with just three single birds at Pagham Hbr and one at Medmerry. None stayed longer than two days, and the last record was of one at Church Norton on 2 Jun. With the exceptions of September and October, monthly numbers were similar to the 10-year averages.

In contrast to the spring, early autumn passage focused on Pagham Hbr, where the first arrivals were three at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 31 Jul, followed by many reports of up to six at the Breech Pool throughout August and the first half of September. There were up to four at Rye Hbr from 31 Aug to 28 Sep, the same number at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr), up to three at Shripney flood relief pool, one or two at Pulborough Brooks and single birds at Medmerry. The only October records were of one at Pagham Hbr on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. [CJRB]

**Pectoral Sandpiper***Calidris melanotos*

*Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn.*

The only record for the year was of one with other waders on a newly created flood relief pool at Shripney (Bognor Regis) from 8 to 13 Sep (OM *et al.*), a typical date for this mainly autumn visitor. The county total moves on to 94 of which 29 have been recorded this century at an annual average of 1.7. The favoured month is September with 50% of all dated records. [PJ]

**Red-necked Phalarope***Phalaropus lobatus*

*Rare spring and autumn passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

**2015:** An adult female was seen and photographed at Widewater (Lancing) on 3 June (mo).

**2016:** The only record for the year was of a juvenile on the Little Deep, Thorney Island from 5 to 15 September (DC *et al.*). It was typically confiding and showed very well at times to a steady stream of observers during its extended stay.

A total of 34 has been recorded since 1962 of which seven have been this century, including two in 2015. [PJ]



*Red-necked Phalarope, Thorney Deep, September 2016 (Leigh Prevost)*

## Grey Phalarope

*Phalaropus fulicarius*

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

**2015:** The bird at Sidlesham Ferry Pool from 15 to 18 Sep was on occasions seen feeding side by side with the Pectoral Sandpiper present there from 8 to 19 Sep. A photograph is available at <https://selseybirder.blogspot.co.uk/2015/09/16th-september-2015.html>.

**2016:** The only record was of one at Ferring on 15 Jan (MS) bringing the county total this century to 58. [PJ]

## 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
<b>County total</b>	7	5	4	8	18	-	71	54	43	11	8	5
<b>Medmerry</b>	1	1	1	1	-	-	2	6	4	2	-	-
<b>Arun Valley (S of Arundel)</b>	3	1	-	3	3	nc	nc	nc	17	2	5	4
<b>Lower Ouse Valley</b>	2	1	3	2	-	nc	-	nc	12	1	3	1
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	1	1	1	2	11	2	47	70	20	4	4	2

Common Sandpipers were recorded in 59 tetrads during the year. The minimum monthly totals and the 10-year averages, which were similar, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	8	11	9	31	91	18	119	115	80	22	13	10
<b>10-year average</b>	9	7	7	35	57	13	116	141	67	15	12	9

In January, all records came from the five sites where birds had presumably overwintered from 2015: Medmerry (the only site where birds were recorded in every month of the year), Arlington Res (where a single bird probably overwintered) and the lower reaches of the rivers Arun, Adur and Ouse. During February single birds were recorded from four other sites: at Pagham Hbr on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, Poling fishing lakes on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Bewl Water on the 19<sup>th</sup> and Warnham LNR on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Spring migrants began arriving in earnest from mid-April. The largest groups were 16 at Weir Wood Res on 5 May, 11 at Patching Pond on the 10<sup>th</sup> and ten at Medmerry on 1 Jun. The lower Arun was still popular, with a maximum of 8 on 24 Apr. There were a few stragglers in June, the last on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

After a gap of little more than a week, the first presumed returning bird was recorded at Shoreham on 20 Jun following which numbers quickly built up through July. The highest autumn counts were 40 at the Union Canal (E Guldeford) on 24 Jul, 17 there on 21 Aug and 17 on the lower Arun on 14 Sep.

In the second winter period, the highest counts came again from the lower Arun, with a maximum of five on 13 Nov. but apart from three at Southease on the 19<sup>th</sup>, all other records were of ones and twos from the coast, river valleys and inland reservoirs. The last record was of one at Widewater (Lancing) on 25 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 are shown in the table below. The 1% national threshold of nine birds was exceeded with ten at Waltham Brooks and at Pulborough Brooks in July and 11 at Medmerry in August.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	8	3	6	1	1	1	24	21	4	4	8	5
<b>Medmerry</b>	1	-	2	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Rose Green Seftor Fm</b>	4	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	-
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	8	2	nc	-	-
<b>Upper Adur Levels</b>	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
<b>Weir Wood Res</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	2
<b>Wadhurst Park Estate</b>	2	2	2	nc	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	1	2
<b>Bewl Water</b>	1	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	-
<b>Powdermill Reservoir</b>	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	7	1	-	3	-
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	3	4	4	5	0	5	19	36	13	10	6	5



In the first winter period there were 120 records from some 16 broad sites, mostly of ones and twos, although four were recorded at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) on 18 Jan. The four observed at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 2 Apr possibly indicated the start of spring migration. There were almost 50 records of usually one or two birds at this site or in the Pagham Hbr area throughout April, and single birds at Medmerry, Tangmere, Pulborough Brooks, Woods Mill (Henfield), Arlington Res and Pevensay. The only records in May were singles at the Shripney flood relief pool on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Wadhurst Park on the 13<sup>th</sup> and Pagham Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Single birds at Rye Hbr on 2 Jun and Medmerry on the 5<sup>th</sup> were possibly early returning failed breeders. There were many more records in June with Pulborough Brooks (five on 15 Jun) and Rye Hbr (six on 30 Jun) being favoured sites. Numbers increased in July and August to peaks of ten at Waltham Brooks on 20 Jul, ten at Pulborough Brooks on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, eight at Rye Hbr on 12 Aug, and 11 at Medmerry on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Numbers declined in September but there were still seven at the Shripney flood relief pool on 11 Sep and six at Sidlesham Ferry on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

During the second winter period the highest counts were three at Sidlesham Ferry on 13 Nov and also at Powdermill Res on 16 Nov. [PJP]

# Spotted Redshank

*Tringa erythropus*

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

The approximate minimum monthly totals, including WeBS, assuming that the highest day-count at any one broad site was the minimum for the month, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
12	8	12	5	1	2	5	11	13	9	8	3

As usual, most birds were in the Chichester Hbr area in the first winter period. Here there were up to six regularly seen in either Fishbourne Channel or at East Chidham, with one or two at East Head and in the Emsworth Channel. Elsewhere there were up to four regularly in Pagham Hbr, plus single birds at Medmerry, Pulborough Brooks, Newhaven Tide Mills and the Rye Bay area.

The start of spring migration was masked by lingering wintering birds with numbers in Pagham Hbr fluctuating during March and April. Only one bird was recorded in May, in Pagham Hbr on the 5<sup>th</sup>. There was then a gap of over a month before the first returning bird was seen at Pagham Hbr on 10 Jun, joined by a second bird on the 11<sup>th</sup> but these constituted all the June records. One on 8 Jul in Pagham Hbr was the next arrival and the majority of July records were at this site with singles (possibly the same bird) there from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>, then two on the 26<sup>th</sup> and three on the 28<sup>th</sup>, which remained to the month's end.

As with last year, Pagham Hbr again provided the majority of August records, with up to four recorded regularly and higher counts of seven on the 15<sup>th</sup> and eight on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. The only birds reported elsewhere in August were single birds at West Wittering, Medmerry, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. Good numbers continued to be seen in Pagham Hbr throughout September with a maximum of nine there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, one was seen at Thorney Island on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and there were two at Climping on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Similar numbers continued throughout October and into November, with six still in Pagham Hbr on 2 Nov. Numbers then dropped as birds departed, although there were still four on the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on the 16<sup>th</sup>. During December one was at Pagham Hbr on the 10<sup>th</sup>, two at Thorney Deepes on the 15<sup>th</sup> and one in the Fishbourne Channel on the 20<sup>th</sup>. [JC]

**Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

*Fairly common passage migrant; very scarce in winter, except at Chichester Harbour.*

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	19	16	20	9	10	1	48	94	65	53	36	24
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	18	15	19	8	7	-	46	84	57	40	35	22
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	21	21	21	20	6	2	40	107	93	68	31	21

As is usual, the majority of the birds during the first winter period were concentrated in Chichester Hbr with the largest numbers at Thorney Deepes with a peak count of 15 there on 13 Jan, a slightly lower maximum count there than last year. There were also ten in nearby Fishbourne Channel on the 18<sup>th</sup> but away from Chichester Hbr there were singles at Medmerry, on the R Adur at Shoreham and at Cuckmere Haven. It is always difficult to determine exactly when spring migration begins, with wintering birds both leaving and arriving through the spring months. Greenshanks were present right through April and May to the 25<sup>th</sup> but at a wider range of mainly coastal sites. The maximum spring count was 20 in the Fishbourne Channel on 28 Apr; other double figure counts included 12 at Pagham Hbr on 26 Apr, 13 there on 5 May and 12 at Rye Hbr on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere there was the usual trickle of small numbers of spring migrants at the usual coastal locations, plus single birds inland at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Apr, Barcombe Res on the 10<sup>th</sup> and Weir Wood Res on 5 May. The last spring migrant was probably a single bird at Pagham Hbr on 23 Jun.

The first returning autumn birds were two in Pagham Hbr and at least one at Dell Quay (Chichester Hbr) on 6 Jul. Birds were seen virtually daily thereafter with numbers at Thorney Deepes reaching 46 on 21 Jul, an impressive 84 on 17 and 18 Aug, 72 on 1 Sep but only 23 there on 15 Oct as birds moved onwards or dispersed. Elsewhere, significant counts included an impressive 32 in the lower Arun Valley on 12 Sep, regular double figures in Pagham Hbr, with a maximum there of 20 at the Breech Pool on 16 Sep. The only inland site where Greenshanks were recorded regularly was at Pulborough Brooks but occasionally at the Knepp Estate (8 to 21 Sep), Henfield Levels (5 Sep), Weir Wood Res (17 and 22 Aug), Barcombe Res (22 Aug) and Bewl Water (25 Aug).

In the second winter period the wintering flock at Thorney Deepes peaked at 27 on 13 Nov, but with only 18 there on 15 Dec, some of the November birds could have been late migrants. Only smaller single figure numbers were seen elsewhere in Chichester Hbr and a scattering of other coastal localities. [JC]

**Wood Sandpiper***Tringa glareola*

*Very scarce spring migrant 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 shown in the table below. The first of the year was one at Pulborough Brooks on 3 May followed by singles at Down Level (Pevensy) on the 8<sup>th</sup> and Rye Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup>. In June another was reported at Pulborough Brooks on the 9<sup>th</sup> and four at Rye Hbr on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. These two sites featured again in July with single birds at Rye Hbr on the 2<sup>nd</sup>

and Pulborough Brooks on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Singles were at Rye Hbr on 1 Aug and at Pulborough Brooks on 9 dates between 6 Aug and 1 Sep.

May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
3	5	2	4	5

One was on the Shripney flood relief pool on the 29 Aug, again from 8 to 13 Sep and at Sidlesham Ferry on 13 Sep. Finally, two at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Sep were earlier than the 10-year average date of 3 Oct. [PJP]

# Common Redshank

*Tringa totanus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	1508	1610	1323	468	92	28	983	1704	1483	1962	2115	1745
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	1077	1324	968	238	33	-	714	1184	1148	1317	1465	1485
<b>Pagham Hbr</b>	193	70	142	75	6	5	129	275	266	344	295	100
<b>Rye Bay</b>	111	108	115	124	33	9	124	202	10	153	214	69
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	1878	1843	1538	343	72	124	758	1362	1926	2196	2020	1778

As usual, the highest counts by far were in Chichester Hbr, where numbers exceeded the 1% national threshold number of 1200 in February, October, November and December but in all the core months the county totals were lower than the 10-year average.

During the first winter period, there were few significant counts away from the WeBS sites listed above. Significant non-WeBS counts included 450 at Thorney Deeps on 28 Jan and 510 there on 11 Feb and 150 in Pagham Hbr on 4 Feb and 75 at Sidlesham 9 Feb. Elsewhere there were 56 on the lower R Adur on 10 Feb. Spring passage was, as is usual with this species, unremarkable and best indicated by the departure of wintering birds from the main sites, which can be gauged from the WeBS table above.

Breeding performance was either poorly recorded or was particularly poor in 2016. At Pett Level a maximum of six pairs was present whilst at Rye Hbr, 11 pairs bred on Harbour Fm and four on the Beach Reserve, several broods were seen but very few fledged. Elsewhere, five young fledged from three pairs at Pulborough Brooks, none fledged from nine pairs at Medmerry, there were three pairs at Pagham Hbr and one at Lewes Brooks but there were no records of success. Breeding was also probable at Waltham Brooks and Down Level (Pevensay).

Birds started returning in early July with 360 at Thorney Island on the 6<sup>th</sup> ( up from ten on 3 Jun, the previous record from there), 650 there on the 21<sup>st</sup> and, at Sidlesham Ferry, 100 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Notable counts during the autumn and late winter period, additional to the WeBS above, included 1000 at Thorney Deeps on 1 Sep, 43 roosting on Widewater (Lancing) on 16 Oct, 60 in the lower Adur Valley on 15 Nov and 65 there on 14 Dec, and 49 at Newhaven on 14 Nov. [JC]

**Jack Snipe***Lymnocryptes minimus*

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

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	30	14	2	1		1	0	8	9	2
<b>No. of sites</b>	10	11	2	1		1	0	3	7	2

The highest numbers came in the first two months of the year, a typical pattern for this species. There was a distinct peak in the second half of January, with 11 at Rye Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup>, eight at Thorney Deepes on the 24<sup>th</sup> and five at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Twos were noted at Arundel WWT on 27 Jan and at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 9 Feb. Otherwise single birds were recorded at 13 sites on 19 dates from 6 Jan until the last, at Sidlesham, on 17 Mar.

The first autumn arrival was at Rye Hbr, where one was recorded on 11 Aug. This is the earliest autumn date by 11 days and only the fifth August record. There were four there on 10 Oct and three at Pevensey Levels on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Otherwise, single birds were recorded on 11 dates between 7 Oct and 26 Dec (with a noticeable peak in the first half of November) at 11 other sites between Westergate and Ashdown Forest; the only records in December were at Gatwick Airport on 8 Dec and West Chase (Ashdown Forest) on the 26<sup>th</sup>. [CJRB]

**Woodcock***Scolopax rusticola*

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

The minimum numbers of birds and sites for the two winter periods are shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	11	14	20		26	16
<b>No. of sites</b>	11	13	16		10	15

Numbers for the first winter period were again low for the third year running, with very few records from coastal areas, suggesting less immigration from the continent. In the first two months, nearly all reports were of single birds, but there was a noticeable increase from mid-March including three at Leechpool Woods (Horsham) on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Three at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 16 Apr was the only record for the month.

Roding was first recorded on 5 May on Ashdown Forest, and at least 48 territorial birds were reported. There were 26 on Ashdown Forest (the lowest total for ten years), but in contrast there were 15 on the West Sussex heaths, one of the highest totals in recent years. Three were counted at Broadwater Warren but the only other records suggesting breeding came from Westdean Woods and Pulborough Brooks. There were only two records during August and September, but there was a flurry of sightings in late October, including one bird at Beachy Head which narrowly escaped pursuit by a Peregrine. There was another noticeable influx in late November, including 15, flushed from vegetation by dogs, on the Knepp Estate on the 18<sup>th</sup> (by far the highest count of the year at any one site), but all other records were of one or two. [CJRB]

**Common Snipe***Gallinago gallinago*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	262	145	155	28	3	-	-	2	68	78	130	232
<b>Chichester Hbr</b>	69	13	72	1	-	-	-	-	1	5	2	96
<b>Arun Valley (N of Arundel)</b>	9	-	34	4	-	-	-	2	23	13	32	30
<b>Lower Adur Valley</b>	98	37	8	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	48	50
<b>Lower Ouse Valley</b>	32	38	4	-	2	nc	-	nc	7	2	6	8
<b>Eastbourne Lakes</b>	13	35	17	5	nc	nc	nc	nc	8	24	9	12
<b>Rye Bay</b>	23	8	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	8	10	15
<b>Average county total 2006-2015</b>	378	383	265	42	2	-	4	23	58	177	295	382

Throughout the year Common Snipe were recorded from 110 tetrads; about 13% of the 871 tetrads from which records were received. Although numbers have declined significantly in recent years, there were still good counts at some coastal sites. There were 89 at Thorney Island on 24 Jan, 80 at Birdham on 16 Feb, 79 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 13 Jan and 150 there on 17 Feb (the highest count anywhere for the whole year). Observers at Rye Hbr recorded 133 on 15 Jan and 48 on 26 Jan and, unusually, 47 were counted in arable fields at Hastings CP on 17 Feb, with 52 still there on 12 Mar. In contrast, numbers in the Arun Valley have been in decline, and the highest count at Pulborough Brooks in the first winter period was 29 on 20 Jan.

During the spring, 12 at Kneppmill Pond on 9 Apr and 35 at Pett Level on the 16<sup>th</sup> were notable counts. Birds were reported displaying at Waltham Brooks on 12 and 16 Apr, but breeding surveys at Pulborough Brooks, Amberley Wild Brooks, Lewes Brooks and Rye Hbr all drew a blank. A total of only ten birds was recorded during May, June and July.

Numbers were very low until mid-October, apart from an unusual record of 19 on Ashdown Forest on 15 Aug and the same number at Rye Hbr the following day. The highest counts during the autumn were 50 at Pevensey Levels on 31 Oct and 25 at the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on the 25<sup>th</sup>. In the last two months, 91 at Thorney Deepes on 15 Dec accounted for almost the whole Chichester Hbr WeBS count for that month, and 81 at Rye Hbr on 10 Nov was the best count during the second winter period while at Pulborough Brooks the highest total for the period was 37 on the 15<sup>th</sup>. [CJRB]

**Pomarine Skua***Stercorarius pomarinus*

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

After last year's all-time low of just 20 birds it was a relief to have a total of 190 in 2016 which raised the 10-year average to 134. The estimated numbers of skuas occurring have been calculated using a similar method as for Red-throated Diver. Where skuas are recorded lingering offshore they are included only where it is apparent that they were not part of a movement on that day. Birds which linger offshore for several days are included in the totals only once.

The monthly totals and peak day counts for easterly spring passage at four seawatching sites are shown in the table below.

	Apr	May	Total	Peaks
<b>Monthly minima</b>	17	172	189	
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	17	64	81	33 on 5 May; 18 on 6 May
<b>Worthing</b>	2	25	27	14 on 6 May
<b>Splash Point</b>	9	165	174	58 on 5 May; 76 on 6 May; 21 on 8 May
<b>Beachy Head</b>	-	99	99	22 on 5 May; 62 on 6 May

Spring passage started on the fairly typical date of 21 Apr with 10 E at Selsey Bill and 9 E at both Shoreham and Splash Point (Seaford). However, the main passage was confined to just the two days of 5 and 6 May when a minimum total of 134 birds passed eastwards along the coast. Numbers dropped sharply after 8 May and the last spring migrants were 1 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 20 May and one lingering offshore at Selsey Bill the following day. The only other record during the year was of an apparently sick or injured bird initially found near Funtington but seen later in Chichester Hbr on 6 Nov (JA, CDF, PMP). [DHH]

## 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 worrying trend of reduced numbers continued with an estimated total of 193 which is just over half of the 10-year average of 349. The 2016 total was even lower than last year's figure of 198 which, at the time, was the lowest this century. The approximate monthly totals of records are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>No. of birds</b>	5	-	4	55	88	9	5	7	8	7	3	2
<b>No. of days</b>	5	-	3	16	16	7	3	2	4	5	3	1
<b>Peak no.</b>	1	-	2	8	17	2	2	5	5	3	1	2

The first records of the year were of single birds recorded at Selsey Bill on four dates at the beginning of January. The only other record during January was 1 W at Telscombe Cliffs on the 21<sup>st</sup> and it seems likely that all five records refer to a single bird wintering off the Sussex coast. There were no records in February and it was not until 26 Mar that there was any sign of spring migration with one or at various sites along the coast from Selsey Bill to Beachy Head.

	Apr	May
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	36	59
<b>Worthing</b>	3	11
<b>Telscombe Cliffs</b>	7	8
<b>Splash Point</b>	43	66
<b>Beachy Head</b>	20	22

Numbers increased in April but there were no dates with double-figure counts at any site. There was further improvement in May and on the 5<sup>th</sup> there were 14 E at Selsey Bill, 6 E at



Worthing, 17 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 9 E at Beachy Head. Totals for five seawatching sites during spring migration in April and May are shown in the table above.

Very low numbers were recorded in June and July which was typical for the time of year. Once again, late summer and autumn movements did not materialize with a peak day counts of 5 E at Splash Point on 19 Aug, five in Rye Bay on 22 Sep and 3 W at Selsey Bill on 16 Oct. The last record of the year was of 2 W at Worthing on 23 Dec. [DHH]

## Great Skua

## *Stercorarius skua*

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

Although the annual total of 109 was an improvement on last year's record low of 75, the 2016 figure was still less than half of the 10-year average of 226. The minimum numbers shown in the table have been calculated using the same method as for Pomarine Skua.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	4	1	3	49	36	-	-	-	1	6	7	2
<b>No. of days</b>	4	1	3	24	13	-	-	-	1	4	5	2
<b>Peak no.</b>	1	1	1	11	15	-	-	-	1	2	3	1
<b>Peak day</b>	-	22 <sup>nd</sup>	-	24 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	-	-	-	30 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	-

The first three months of the year produced just eight records all of single birds. Spring passage was prolonged with birds being recorded off Selsey Bill on 29 dates between mid-April and mid-May but with never more than four on any one day. The only double-figure counts were at Splash Point (Seaford) with 11 E on 24 Apr and 15 E on 2 May.

There were no records in the months of June to August and the first autumn record was of one in Rye Bay on 30 Sep. Birds which lingered offshore at Selsey Bill and in Rye Bay are included in the October total of six while the November total of seven birds included 3W at Selsey Bill on the 9<sup>th</sup>. The last record of the year was of 1 W at Fairlight on 31 Dec. [DHH]

## Black Guillemot

## *Cephus grille*

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

One in partial summer plumage flew east past Selsey Bill at 07:05 on 1 Apr (JA *et al.*). This is the seventeenth record for the county of which two previously this century have been at Selsey Bill on 13 May 2010 and at Goring on 16 and 25 Apr 2015. [PJ]

## Razorbill

## *Alca torda*

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

The estimated annual total (using the same method of calculation as for Red-throated Diver) was 507. Although the 2016 total was an improvement over last year's total of 311 it is still only

one third of the 10-year rolling average of 1598. The monthly figures are given in the table below and show that for the second consecutive year there were no three-figure counts recorded.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	74	8	12	10	21	17	-	-	6	52	118	189
<b>Peak no.</b>	25	4	5	5	4	7	-	-	2	10	46	81
<b>Peak day</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>	29 <sup>th</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>	31 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	-	-	25 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>

Razorbills were recorded on 13 dates in January but on only four days in February and six in March. The only double-figure counts were in January with 14 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 15 in Rye Bay the following day, a further 12 E at Splash Point on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 25 E at Beachy Head on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. During the period April to June there were records on a total of 24 dates but with no double-figure counts. The last record for the first half of the year was of 2 W at Selsey Bill on 16 Jun.

There were no sightings in either July or August and the first record in the second half of the year was of 2 W at Selsey Bill on 17 Sep. A further four were seen in September and a total of 52 in October all of which were at Selsey Bill where the peak count was of 10 E on 28 Oct. Numbers increased during the last two months of the year and once again the vast majority of records were from Selsey Bill with peak day counts of 25 E on 5 Nov, 46 E on 9 Nov, 81 W on 21 Dec and 44 W on 23 Dec. A party of 20 at Church Norton on 26 Dec was the largest offshore gathering of the year. Over three quarters of all Razorbill records during the year came from Selsey Bill as shown in the table below. There were no records of Razorbills away from the open sea. [DHH]

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	3	4	9	12	6	21	5	-	13	40	4	21	109	28	172
<b>Other sites</b>	54	20	2	10	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	22	11	7

## Little Auk

*Alle alle*

*Very scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.*

There was a total of seven birds recorded during the year (two in 2015) bringing the total for the century to approximately 156.

The only record at the beginning of the year was of 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 2 Jan (LC). The other sightings were all in November as follows: one off Winchelsea Beach on 3 Nov (DPB); 1 W at Selsey Bill on 4 Nov (JA) and 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) the same day (RCS); 1 W at Selsey Bill on 7 Nov (AH, CRJ) with another 1 W at the same site on 20 Nov (JA). [DHH]

## Common Guillemot

*Uria aalge*

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

The estimated annual total (using the same method of calculation as for Red-throated Diver) was 185. This was the lowest annual total on record and the first time that the figure has fallen

below 200. As a result the 10-year rolling average was reduced to 622. The estimated monthly totals are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	19	1	-	8	12	7	1	-	2	6	19	110
<b>Peak no.</b>	12	1	-	3	6	2	1	-	1	3	4	50
<b>Peak day</b>	18 <sup>th</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>	-	28 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	-	-	30 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>

Numbers at the beginning of the year were particularly low with the majority of the January total being made up of 12 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 18<sup>th</sup> while the sole February record was of a single bird offshore at Selsey Bill on the 27<sup>th</sup>. There was virtually no spring passage of birds returning to their breeding colonies and numbers were then typically low in the summer period. Following a blank month in August there were just two single birds in September while three in Rye Bay on 30 Oct doubled the number for that month. Although Guillemots were recorded off Selsey Bill on nine dates in November the monthly total for the site was just 12. The last two weeks of the year did finally produce some numbers with 14 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 15 Dec, 50 E at Fairlight on 21 Dec and 32 W at Selsey Bill on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Just over half of all the Guillemot records for the year came from Selsey Bill as shown in the following 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
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	2	4	-	8	-	10	-	1	6	2	-	1	20	6	51
<b>Other sites</b>	14	4	-	2	1	-	-	1	-	1	4	1	69	5	-

The only record of a bird away from the open sea was of one on the R Ouse which ventured as far upstream as Newhaven swing-bridge on 20 Nov. [DHH]

## Auk species

The approximate annual total of 4255 was only marginally above the 4108 recorded in 2015 and still a long way below the 10-year rolling average of 18,970. There have been considerable fluctuations in the annual totals during the last ten years but it is worrying that in the last three years the totals have all been below ten thousand. The table below shows the monthly totals of Razorbills, Common Guillemots and auks not identified to species. These figures should not be taken as an accurate assessment as no account has taken of any duplication of sightings.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Monthly total</b>	344	206	61	181	249	51	6	3	14	162	1115	1863
<b>Peak no.</b>	118 E	116 W	12 W	29 W	20 W	11 W	2 W	3 W	2 W	53 W	277 E	414 W
<b>Peak day</b>	21 <sup>st</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	29 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	23 <sup>rd</sup>

Three quarters of all auk records were from Selsey Bill as shown in the table below. There was little evidence of birds involved in feeding movements and no significant offshore feeding parties during the year. It is possible that birds were feeding and moving further offshore than normal or that there has been a decline in food availability off the Sussex coast.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	27	8	155	134	6	270	9	1	47	81	4	88	998	34	1448
<b>Other sites</b>	266	4	79	52	5	3	-	-	-	7	-	3	303	19	97

Where auks were seen in flight it was only possible for one in five to be identified to species. Where specific identification was possible Razorbills outnumbered Common Guillemots by a ratio of 2.7:1. [DHH]

## Little Tern

## *Sternula albifrons*

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

Records from the four seawatching sites of spring eastwards movement were as follows:

	Apr	May	Total	Peak movement
<b>Selsey Bill</b>	52	137	189	26E on 5 May
<b>Worthing</b>	-	58	58	19E on 5 May
<b>Birling Gap</b>	-	10	10	10E on 5 May
<b>Splash Point</b>	1	91	91	48E on 2 May

The first bird of the year was recorded at West Beach (Littlehampton) on the early date of 3 Apr, four days ahead of the ten-year average, though the next was not seen until 14 Apr, when one passed Splash Point (Seaford) and two were recorded at Rye Hbr, after which single-figure counts were noted daily, particularly from Selsey Bill, until the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The period from 23 Apr until 6 May saw almost all the migration activity, with 5 May seeing the peak counts at three of the four seawatching sites listed above.

Spring numbers were ostensibly down at Selsey Bill compared to previous years, as opposed to up for the other three sites but the consistent presence of feeding flocks of 20-40 birds seen regularly during this period, including an impressive peak of 48 on 27 Apr, mean that it is quite probable that true number of passage birds are being under-recorded.

Reports from the three main breeding sites were mixed, with a promising start of 17 pairs at Rye Hbr ending with only one or two 'possible' fledglings. A lack of reports from Chichester Hbr beyond the confirmation that birds were present in June and July and another fairly successful season at Pagham Harbour, with 13 pairs fledging 11 young, despite having had to decamp from their newly re-established home on Church Norton spit to the island in the harbour.

From late June until the end of July there was a continued presence of 20-50 in the Pagham Hbr/Selsey Bill area, including a peak of 65 on 27 Jul, before numbers rapidly declined in early August. The last double figure count, of 12 birds, was on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and the last two (juveniles) departed on the 28<sup>th</sup>, with the last one seen passing Selsey Bill was on 10 Sep. By comparison, there were no records from Rye Hbr after the seven seen on 14 Jul until the last record of the year, of two on 16 Sep one week ahead of the ten-year average. [AH]

**Black Tern***Chlidonias niger*

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

Approximate monthly totals within the county were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
33	168	-	1	7	2	2

The numbers of this species recorded in the county is always erratic, particularly in spring, and so it was unsurprising that after last year's poor showing, the spring of 2016 should be an altogether better one, and the best since the 217 of May 2008, though autumn numbers were well down.

The first two of the year were inland at Bewl Water on 20 Apr, followed by one at Selsey Bill the following day and 28 heading east there on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. On 2 May a remarkable 54 passed Splash Point (Seaford) early in the morning and there was a further big movement on the 5<sup>th</sup> which included 39 past Selsey Bill and 16 past Worthing though at Splash Point only 4 E were recorded. The following day at the last location was better, with a count of 12. The other double-figure counts were 19 E at Selsey Bill on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10 E there on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12 at Rustington on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the last date in the spring. The spring total passing Selsey Bill was an impressive 117 and 71 were recorded passing Splash Point. A flock of seven seen on the Shripney flood relief pool on 5 May was the only other inland spring record.

Records from sea-watching sites were as follows:

	Apr	May	Jun	Aug	Sep	Total	Peak movement
Selsey Bill	31	86	-	2	1	120	39 E on 5 May
Worthing	-	22	-	-	-	22	16 E on 5 May
Splash Point	-	71	-	-	-	71	54 E on 2 May
Beachy Head	-	-	-	-	-	4	3 E on 5 May

One past Selsey Bill on 24 Jul was possibly the same juvenile recorded daily thereafter at Pagham Hbr until 2 Aug when it was joined by an adult; both were seen later off Selsey Bill, but not subsequently. The only other records were of three at Rye Hbr on 11 Aug, with another there on 22 Sep, one at Weir Wood Res on 17 Aug, one on the Shripney flood relief pools on 21 Aug, one at Chichester GPs on 4 Sep, one off Eastbourne on 9 Oct and the last of the year flew north up the Union Canal (East Guldeford Level) on the late date of 16 Oct, six days beyond the ten year average. [AH]

**Sandwich Tern***Sterna sandvicensis*

*Scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; winters in very small numbers. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The monthly totals at the principal seawatching sites were as shown in the table below. There was only a maximum two birds recorded during January and February, on a number of dates from

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Selsey Bill	E	89	1984	608	41	92	41	52	43
	W	47	39	58	28	152	296	87	15
Worthing	E	16	515	234	24	13	1	-	2
	W	4	39	28	42	38	4	11	9
Telscombe Cliffs	E	39	583	33	29	9	-	1	1
	W	-	15	20	6	-	2	2	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	8	1610	345	nc	nc	7	nc	nc
	W	-	10	18	nc	nc	-	nc	nc
Beachy Head	E	-	1236	-	1	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc

both Chichester Hbr and Selsey Bill, though a minimum of three were recorded on three occasions from the latter site during the first half of March. Numbers rose rapidly at Rye Hbr from the first report on 12 Mar to 12 on 15 Mar, with 45 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 110 on the 25<sup>th</sup> and up to 500 by mid-April. Elsewhere there were no noteworthy counts until 26 Mar when 52 flew east past Selsey Bill. The biggest day of the spring was 10 Apr, the same date as last year, with 385 E at Birling Gap and 365 E at Splash Point (Seaford). The peak day at Selsey Bill was 21 Apr when 322 E, a day when relatively few were seen elsewhere. The last obvious passage was seen on 5 May, when 167 passed Selsey Bill and 103 passed Birling Gap. Thereafter there were just small counts from seawatching sites. There was just one inland record during the spring, of one seen on the R Arun at Arundel on 12 Apr.



*Sandwich Tern, Rye Hbr, April 2016 (Bob Eade)*



Sadly, after last year's encouraging results, there was an almost total failure of the breeding colony at Rye Hbr, with an estimated 450 pairs producing no more than ten fledged young, largely due to an apparent lack of food. More positively, albeit on a modest scale, three pairs fledged three chicks in Pagham Hbr, the first confirmed successful breeding attempt at this site.

There was a big build-up of birds, including many juveniles, in Pagham Hbr during the last week of July and the first week of August, peaking at around 200 on 24 and 25 Jul, before they began to disperse, as evidenced by a count of 79 W past Selsey Bill on 10 Aug.

Numbers declined quickly in West Sussex but somewhat paradoxically, given the poor breeding season, Rye Hbr continued to host several hundred birds during September, peaking at 500 on the 25<sup>th</sup>, though they had all departed by 9 Oct. The last double-digit count of the year was of 11 in Chichester Hbr on 15 Oct, though thereafter until the year's end there were regular reports of between one and four from Pagham Hbr, Selsey Bill and Chichester Hbr. Elsewhere the only record was one sitting on the beach at East Worthing on 6 Dec. [AH]

## Common Tern

## *Sterna hirundo*

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

The first of the year was seen at Selsey Bill on 26 Mar, two days behind the ten-year average with birds seen almost daily thereafter, at seawatching sites. A more comprehensive review of reports from these locations can be found under Common/Arctic Tern.

Inland records were received from a dozen sites during spring migration, the highest numbers were seen at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) where there was an impressive 75 birds on 22 Apr. Weir Wood Res was the only other inland site where regular sightings were recorded.

There was a variable level of breeding success this year with, sadly, the biggest colony, at Rye Hbr, only producing 15 fledged young from over 130 pairs. At Pett Level the maximum number of pairs was 34 but these suffered heavy predation and productivity was not known. Conversely 15 pairs at Pagham Hbr reared 15 young, at Weir Wood Res the three raft-nesting pairs produced eight fledged young and at Warnham LNR three young fledged.

A very large concentration of birds built up at Pagham Hbr in late July, with a minimum of 500 birds counted on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> and 250 were still present on 8 Aug, a date when 500 were also recorded on Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr). Numbers declined rapidly thereafter, with maxima of 50 at the former site on 16 Aug and at the latter on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was just a scattering of September records including the last inland one of two at Bewl Water on the 17<sup>th</sup> and the last was one off Selsey Bill on 4 Oct, 22 days ahead of the ten-year average. [AH]

## Roseate Tern

## *Sterna dougallii*

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

There were just three records of this very scarce species this year, a just-below-average showing, and all seen on seawatches. The first passed Selsey Bill on 24<sup>th</sup> Apr (JA), the second passed Splash Point, Seaford on 6<sup>th</sup> May (SHL), and (presumably) another passed the same site on the following day (MRE/DB). [AH]

**Arctic Tern***Sterna paradisaea*

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

Once again there were relatively few reports of this species, particularly from seawatching sites, due to the difficulty in separating it from Common Tern in sub-optimal conditions. However, eastward totals of 25 at Selsey Bill and 129 at Splash Point (Seaford) were recorded. The first of the year was five at the latter site on the early date of 3 Apr, a week ahead of the 10-year average, followed the next day by one past Telscombe Cliffs and two at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP). Counts of 27 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on both 10 and 11 Apr and 34 on 5 May were the biggest counts, though a flock of 25 moving through Weir Wood Res early on 24 Apr was notable.

There were very few records of returning birds. After the first at Pagham Hbr on 24 Jul there was one at this site on 21 Aug. One flew west at Selsey Bill on 20 Sep and 2 W there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Two juveniles were seen on a groyne in Shoreham Hbr on 3 Oct, and four juveniles together off Selsey Bill the following day were the last of the year, 22 days ahead of the 10-year average. [AH]

**Common/Arctic Tern***Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*

Due to the difficulties in separating Common and Arctic Terns passing seawatching sites, primarily due to the brevity of view and distance, the majority of birds are recorded as 'Commic' Terns. Below is a summary of the combined totals of Common, Arctic and 'Commic' Terns from the principal seawatching sites for the year:

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Selsey Bill	E	2	1662	3355	23	6	59	-	-
	W	-	17	51	69	212	233	11	1
Worthing	E	-	71	1283	3	-	-	1	-
	W	-	-	1	14	3	2	-	8
Telscombe Cliffs	E	-	269	88	23	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	E	-	380	3658	nc	nc	50	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	nc	nc
Beachy Head	E	-	102	467	-	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc

It was a better year for spring passage with over 5000 birds recorded passing Selsey Bill alone but it was also a late one, with the vast majority of movement not occurring until early May. The biggest April day was the 23<sup>rd</sup> when 404 birds passed Selsey Bill and the biggest May days were at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> when 2210 birds, over half the spring's total for the site, passed eastwards, and for Selsey Bill and Worthing on the later date of the 10<sup>th</sup>, when 846 and 794 birds respectively flew east.

Away from the spring seawatches, relatively few birds are classified as 'Commic' Tern, as birds tend to linger in summer and early autumn, and are thus more readily separated into Common and Arctic. The last 'Commic' Terns of the year were eight heading west past Worthing on 4 Oct, 10 days 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. It should be noted that Kittiwake is not counted at Splash Point (Seaford) once breeding pairs have settled on the cliffs (after 8 Mar in 2016), as birds are ever present and constantly flying to and from the cliffs.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	65	2	3	19	18	2	-	2	1	3	89	170
	W	192	25	2	6	22	11	-	4	12	7	11	540
Worthing	E	4	2	3	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	W	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37
Telscombe Cliffs	E	13	2	-	-	-	-	97	-	-	-	-	65
	W	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	E	24	6	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	30	
	W	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	-	-
Beachy Head	E	100	14	70	1380	672	60	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	-		14	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

The species was recorded from Selsey Bill in eleven months during 2016, and was the only seawatch site where Kittiwakes were recorded in August, September and October. During the first winter period, the only large movements were 102 E in 3 hr at Selsey Bill on 3 Jan, and 100 E in 1½ hr at Beachy Head on 25 Jan. One other report of note was a first year bird on the floods at Arundel on 3 Jan. Larger movements were noted in the spring at Beachy Head with 390 E on 2 Apr, 650 E on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 280 E on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 650 E on 5 May.

Seaford Head cliffs remains a major nesting site, and a count of 1120 apparently occupied nests (AONs) was made on 6 Jun. Birds were reported visiting probable nest sites on the cliffs from early March, and continued to be reported well into August.

In the second winter period most were recorded at Selsey Bill where the peak day was 23 Dec when 412 passed west and an additional 800 were seen offshore. There were no other movements involving more than 100 birds, although 105 seen offshore at Fairlight on 4 Nov and 150 offshore at Hastings were considered as exceptional. The only other offshore count of note was 30 at Worthing on 20 Dec. There were no records away from the sea in the last part of the year. [CD]

**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 species was recorded in 348 tetrads during the year which amounted to 40% of the 871 tetrads from which records were received. As usual most records were from the well watched coastal and river valley locations but like recent years the largest counts in the early part of the year were from inland, nocturnal roosts with the highest at Bewl Water where 31,555 roosted on 27 Jan, 27,940 on 29 Jan, 28,330 on 2 Feb and 33,600 on 8 Feb. At Weir Wood Res the roost was

much smaller with 1500 on 17 Jan and 3000 on 9 Feb. There were no counts at evening coastal roost sites. A large congregation of 2500 were following the plough on downland near Steyning on 27 Feb, 1800 were at Pett Level on 29 Jan and the other four figure counts during the first winter period were of between 1200 and 2000 in the Ouse valley in late January. Elsewhere there were counts of 858 in the lower Arun valley on 21 Feb, 600 roosting at Barcombe Res on 15 Feb, 600 at Minstead on 21 Feb, 500 at West Itchenor (Chichester Hbr) on 6 Jan and the same number at Goring Gap on both 12 Jan and 5 Feb.



*Black-headed Gulls, Pett Level, October 2016 (Chris Hobden)*

A total of 1238 were recorded passing eastward at the regular seawatching locations during the spring with a peak count of 260 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 18 Mar. This was a notable increase from the past two years but still considerably fewer than the average of 5064 E recorded during the 15 springs between 1986 and 2000. The highest spring counts away from breeding sites were 925 at Southease on 11 Mar and 750 at Weir Wood Res on 15 Mar whilst at breeding locations there were 2000 at Rye Hbr on 15 Apr, 1500 at Pett Level on 8 Mar and 960 at Arundel WWT on 19 Mar.

The largest breeding colonies were, as usual, in East Sussex. At Rye Hbr a count on 3 May found 2002 apparently occupied nests on the Beach Reserve and Harbour Fm but overall it was estimated that at least 2150 pairs nested with good fledging success; probably averaging around two per pair. At Pett Level the maximum number of pairs present was 525 and although there was plenty of water in the scrape there was considerable predation from both Herring Gulls and mink. At Pagham Hbr 58 fledged from 59 pairs, at Medmerry just one fledged from 26 pairs and at Arundel WWT a count on 24 May revealed 130 adults on nests and 123 chicks were counted on 21 Jun.

Throughout July the numbers counted at the breeding colonies decreased and more were encountered at other locations. However, throughout the autumn numbers were generally low with only six records involving more than 500 birds: 800 hawking for flying ants over Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 14 Aug, 600 in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 21 Aug with 875 there on 12 Sep, 787 in the lower Arun valley on 14 Sep, 700 at Shripney flood relief pool on 15 Sep and 675 at Medmerry on 18 Sep. Although recorded from over 260 locations during the last two months the numbers seen were generally fairly low with the highest count away from the roosting sites being 394 in the lower Arun Valley on 17 Dec. At Weir Wood Res the estimated roost counts were 1100 on 13 Nov and 1000 on 15 Dec but at Bewl Water a nocturnal roost of 40,000 on 23 Dec was the 96<sup>th</sup> five figure count at this site and the largest since 50,000 on 25 Nov 2012. [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 340 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 spring, an unusually high number in January and with few seen during other months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of days recorded	24	1	6	23	8	2	3	1	2	1	2	1
Coastal	65	1	15	150	48	2	7	1	-	-	9	1
Inland	28	-	4	8	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
Total	93	1	19	158	49	2	7	1	2	1	9	1

The January records suggest that birds lingered at a large number of sites, particularly during the first ten days of the month, thus the figures in the table are a sum of the largest counts at each location. Clearly some birds may have moved from one place to another during this period. The peak counts in January were 11 offshore at Lancing on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, ten at Arlington Res on the 12<sup>th</sup>, eight at both Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and seven between Littlehampton and Climping on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.

Ten passing east at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 27 Mar was the first notable movement in the spring and thereafter a total of 187 passed seawatching points until 13 May. As usual most were seen from East Sussex watch points as the table of month totals of eastbound birds from each of the regularly logged sites shows.

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak count (hours watched)
Selsey Bill	-	53	10	19 on 3 Apr (10)
Worthing	-	15	7	7 on 5 May (4)
Telscombe Cliffs	10	4	18	16 on 6 May (2)
Splash Point	2	104	30	44 on 2 Apr (4)
Beachy Head	-	49	14	27 on 2 Apr (4)



After mid-May there were only 13 records involving just 23 individuals as shown in the above table. Most were single birds apart from 5 W at Portobello on 13 Jul, five at St Leonards-on-Sea on 12 Nov and 3 W at Splash Point (Seaford) on the same day. [JAN]

## Laughing Gull

*Larus atricilla*

*Very rare vagrant.*

A confiding adult in summer plumage was found at Hastings Old Town beach on 25 May (AJK, DR *et al.*). By the following day it had relocated to Dungeness (Kent), where it remained until 2 Jun. The record is the first since 2006 and has been accepted by BBRC. The county total moves to seven. [MM]



*Laughing Gull, Hastings, May 2016 (Alan Parker)*

## Mediterranean Gull

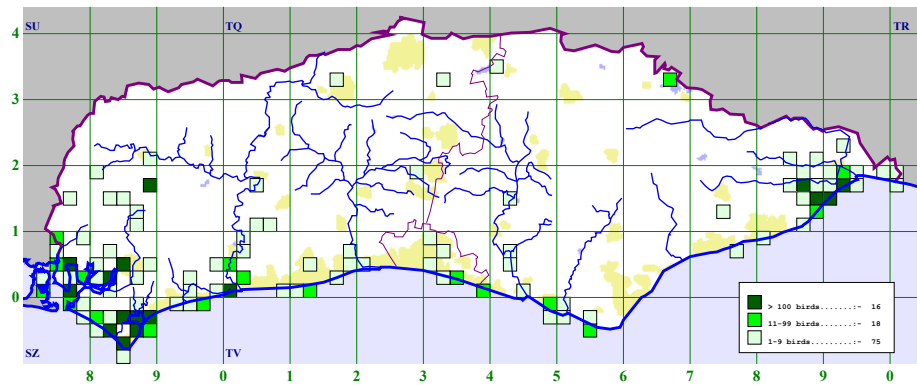
*Larus melanocephalus*

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

Mediterranean Gulls were recorded in 109 tetrads during 2016 and the map below shows the distribution of these records and gives some indication of abundance by plotting the highest number recorded in each tetrad in three broad categories.

As in previous years, the majority of observations were from sites on or near the coast with the highest numbers recorded at the far western and eastern ends of the county. The mobility of the species makes it impossible to estimate the numbers involved but, as before, many of the high





counts were from a few favoured locations. 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. This pattern is remarkably similar to recent years with notable scarcity in East Sussex outside the spring and the 1000 seen in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) and Medmerry in September create a new county record.

	West Sussex			East Sussex		
	Number	Site	Day	Number	Site	Day
Jan	120	Pagham Hbr	5 <sup>th</sup>	15	Bewl Water	29 <sup>th</sup>
Feb	300	Sidlesham Ferry	16 <sup>th</sup>	35	Pett Level	22 <sup>nd</sup>
Mar	70	Climping Gap	3 <sup>rd</sup>	354	Pett Level	25 <sup>th</sup>
Apr	50	Sidlesham Ferry	8 <sup>th</sup>	287	Pett Level	1 <sup>st</sup>
May	400	Thorney Island	17 <sup>th</sup>	62	Rye Hbr	11 <sup>th</sup>
Jun	8	Hurstpierpoint	5 <sup>th</sup>	30	Rye Hbr	11 <sup>th</sup>
Jul	850	Pagham Hbr	24 <sup>th</sup>	7	Rye Hbr	13 <sup>th</sup>
Aug	900	Chichester Hbr	5 <sup>th</sup>	2	Rye Hbr	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Sep	1000	Chichester Hbr & Medmerry	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 29 <sup>th</sup>	1	Telscombe Cliffs	15 <sup>th</sup>
Oct	300	Medmerry	8 <sup>th</sup>	2	Telscombe Cliffs	15 <sup>th</sup>
Nov	200	Pagham Hbr	24 <sup>th</sup> & 26 <sup>th</sup>	18	Splash Point (Seaford)	12 <sup>th</sup>
Dec	175	Climping Gap	13 <sup>th</sup>	Present	Rye Hbr	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Breeding was confirmed at two sites; at Rye Hbr at least 52 pairs nested on Ternery Pool (the highest number since 2012 when 55 pairs bred) fledging at least 16 young and at Pett Level a maximum of nine pairs attempted to breed but were heavily predated.

The largest counts well inland were 15 and 16 roosting at Bewl Water on 29 Jan and 8 Feb respectively and 150 at Heyshott Down on 30 May.

This species is now regularly recorded at seawatching sites; the following table of monthly 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 also a clear westward post-breeding movement. The latter was most evident at Selsey Bill where 135 W in 1½ hr on 27 Jul and 245 W in 2 hr on the following day. Some of the high autumn figures from Selsey Bill probably involved local movements.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	12	7	25	128	56	3	10	19	126	162	34	9
West	10	7	12	18	2	3	412	11	58	111	54	15

The peak spring movements were 24 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 19 Apr and 27 E at Splash Point on 7 May. [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.*

Like last year Common Gulls were recorded from just over 200 tetrads with most records coming from the coast, coastal plain and downland. Also in keeping with recent years the highest numbers, by a large margin, were seen at the nocturnal roost at Bewl Water with counts of 49,600 on 27 Jan, 56,350 on 29 Jan, 60,430 on 2 Feb and 85,800 on 8 Feb. Huge roosts at this site tend to occur during periods of strong winds on the coast; conditions which prevailed on 15 Feb 2006 when 90,000 were recorded, the only count to surpass that of 8 Feb. These records emphasize the importance of this site. Elsewhere between 500 and 2200 (on 28 Jan) regularly gathered at Goring Gap from mid-January until early February and at Pett Level there were 1000 on 24 Jan and 920 on 12 Feb. Additionally there were three figure counts from 19 other sites during January and February. During the early spring there were 800 on downland near Cissbury on 11 Mar and 300 there on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 608 and 360 at Pett Level on 13 and 25 Mar respectively and 350 on the R Adur (Shoreham-by-Sea) on 13 Mar. Most had left by April when the largest numbers were recorded moving east by seawatchers; the peak movement being 304 E at Worthing on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

During the breeding season there were two pairs on the Ternery Pool at Rye Hbr but nesting was not suspected and none was recorded from other sites. Post breeding numbers were slow to build with peak counts in each month being 12 at Hickstead on 21 Jun, 45 at Medmerry on 24 Jul, 12 at West Dean on 12 Aug and 83, also at West Dean, on 23 Sep. No three figure counts were noted until October when 135 were at Fairlight on the 12<sup>th</sup> and, on the 26<sup>th</sup>, 200 and 110 on downland at The Burgh (Burpham) and near Cissbury respectively. Similarly in November there were just two notable counts of 262 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 100 at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Even into December counts were mediocre with 170 at Swanbourne Lake on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 150 at Cuckoo's Corner (Coombes) on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 150 at The Burgh on the 31<sup>st</sup>. The nocturnal roosts at inland reservoirs were also small with 1800 at Bewl Water on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 50 at Weir Wood Res on the 15<sup>th</sup>. [JAN]

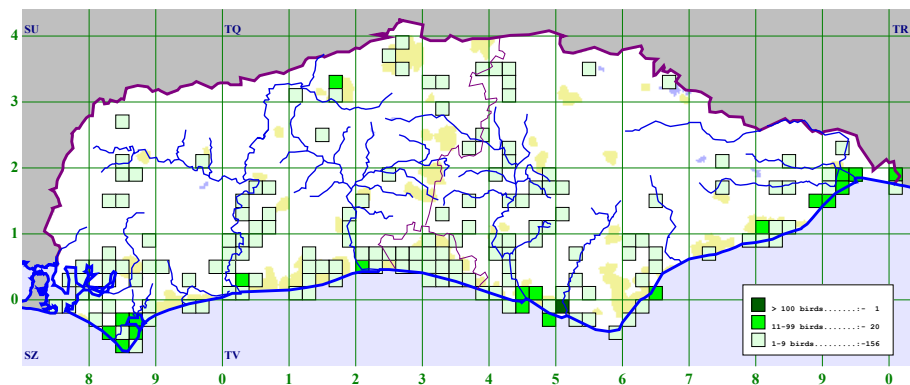
## Lesser Black-backed Gull

## *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 177 tetrads during the year, a similar figure to 2015, and, like most years, generally in fairly low numbers as over 95% of the records involved fewer than ten birds. This is clearly shown in the map demonstrating the distribution of these records and displaying some indication of abundance by plotting the highest number recorded in each tetrad in three

broad categories. Whether the predominance of sightings on the coastal plain, particularly in urban areas, and the river valleys reflects the true distribution or is related to observer activity is unclear. Although recorded throughout the year the species was recorded on fewer days in October and November than other months.



During the first quarter the highest counts were from coastal sites in East Sussex and include 61 at Rye Hbr on 2 Feb, 30 at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on 24 Feb, 66 at Pett Level on 9 Mar and 40 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Mar. During April there were several double figure counts at Warnham LNR with 33 on the 20<sup>th</sup> being the highest. Very little spring movement was noted and breeding was again poorly recorded with nesting pairs noted at Rustington, Shoreham-by-Sea, Brighton, Falmer, Seaford and Rye Hbr. Autumn counts of 20 or more included 21 at Rye Hbr on 28 Aug, 20 at Scotney GP on 18 Sep, 32 at Cuckmere Haven on 17 Oct and 30 at Pagham Hbr on 23 Oct. Throughout the last two months most were seen mixing with other gulls in the Cuckmere Haven with counts of 30 on 15 Nov, 25 on 6 Dec, 37 on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 80 on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 400 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 75 on the 28<sup>th</sup>. [JAN]

## Herring Gull

## *Larus argentatus argentus*

*Very common resident; status uncertain as passage migrant; and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Noted on every day of the year and recorded in 462 tetrads, this was again the most frequently recorded and widespread of all the gulls. During the first two months there were five counts of 1000 or more birds. At the Bewl Water nocturnal roost there were 1000 on 27 Jan and 1560 on 8 Feb, 1200 were counted roosting at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 11 Jan and 1000 were recorded at Warnham LNR on both 15 and 19 Jan. Additionally during January and February, there were three figure counts of up to 500 from 30 different sites. During spring the largest flocks were encountered at coastal sites with most being seen on sand bars during low tide at Selsey Bill; examples being 622 on 12 Mar and 586 the following day, 486 on 10 Apr and 457, 508 and 641 on 6, 7 and 8 May. Elsewhere there were smaller, three figure counts from 36 localities.

Confirmed breeding was recorded from 21 tetrads and the species was considered as probably breeding in a further six tetrads, all at locations near to the coast and most involved records of single pairs. However, 27 pairs nested at Rye Hbr LNR and around 15 pairs nested in Rye Hbr

Village. On 10 Jun at least 21 chicks were counted on roof tops at Holllingbury (Brighton) and despite some being seen taken by Great Black-backed Gulls this number had risen to 33 chicks by 24 Jun.

There was no clear pattern from the records after the breeding season and although there were over 70 observations from 30 sites with between 100 and 400 birds the numbers were mostly fairly low. The exceptions were of c.3000 following the plough at Applesham Fm (Coombes) on 20 Sep, 1644 at Medmerry on 18 Sep, 1000 offshore at Selsey Bill on 23 Dec and 493 offshore at Pagham Hbr on 18 Dec. The maximum recorded roosting at Bewl Water in the later portion of the year was 280 on 23 Dec.

The three records of the nominate race *L.a. argentatus* comprised one in the lower Cuckmere valley on 3 Dec (RJF) and two at different locations in Shoreham-by-Sea on 10 Dec (RJF). [JAN]



*Herring Gull, Rye Hbr, May 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

## Yellow-legged Gull

*Larus michahellis*

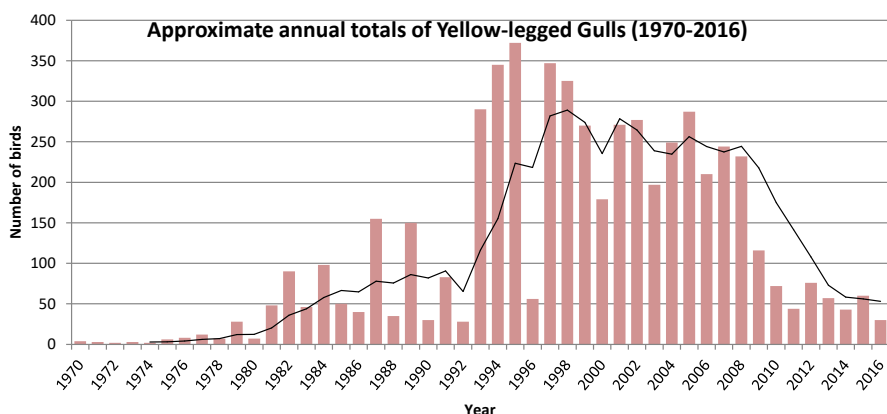
*Scarce localised visitor; mainly in the late summer and autumn. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

This remains a scarce and rather localised visitor and although recorded in just 14 coastal tetrads most were seen, as usual, on or near the Selsey Peninsula during the late summer and early autumn. The following table shows the approximate numbers in the county and the highest monthly count from the vicinity of Pagham Hbr, Medmerry or Chichester Hbr.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Approx. county total</b>	2	1	-	Present	2	1	12	16	9	2	1	5
<b>Max no. Selsey Peninsula</b>	2	1	-	-	2	1	8	13	9	2	-	1
<b>Days recorded</b>	3	1	-	1	1	1	7	21	5	1	1	6

Peak counts at Pagham Hbr were 13 on 28 Aug, nine on both 21 Aug and 4 Sep, eight on 23 Jul and seven on 24 Jul. Up to three were seen amongst the roosting gulls in the lower Cuckmere valley on six dates between 11 Nov and 23 Dec and two juveniles were at Birling Gap on 26 Jul otherwise sightings away from the Selsey Peninsula involved single birds.

Clearly this species has become scarcer and a detailed analysis of the records, assuming birds remain in the same areas, suggest less than 30 individuals were involved during the year. This decline is demonstrated in the following figure which includes a 5-year moving average as a trendline. [JAN]



## Caspian Gull

*Larus cachinnans*

*Very scarce but probably regular winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

There were nine accepted records in 2016, totalling 15 individuals. In the lower Cuckmere Valley there were two second winters on 20 Feb (MRE), a first winter (MRE) and a second winter (LP) on 9 Mar, a fourth winter or adult on 1 Dec (ARK), a first winter on 3 Dec (RJF), an adult on 17 Dec (RJF), a first winter and a third winter on 18 Dec (JE), and total of five (a first winter, a third winter, a fourth winter and two adults) on 21 and 22 Dec (RJF). The only other record was of a second winter at Arlington Res on 17 Nov (MRE). All were roosting with other large gulls and most were photographed.

The Cuckmere Valley remains the place to see Caspian Gull in Sussex (45 of the 59 records having been there) although would-be observers should be prepared to search through large numbers of gulls. High tide and windy conditions offer the best chance of success when gull numbers are at their highest. Assuming that all 15 individuals were different, the county total moves on to 59 since the first on 12 Jan 2001. [PJ]

**Iceland Gull***Larus glaucoides*

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

There were two records this year, both of first winter birds, at Newhaven Harbour on 6 Jan (BRG, SHL) and on 6 Mar (MRE). The county total this century moves on to 35, assuming that these two birds were different. [PJ]

**Glaucous Gull***Larus hyperboreus*

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

A first winter that flew east at West Beach (Littlehampton) on 11 Jan (BA) was very likely the same bird as that at Goring Gap from 12 Jan to 8 Feb (NB, JAN *et al.*), on the sea off Church Norton on 28 Jan (IML) and at Shoreham Hbr from 17 Feb to 13 Mar (DB, CC *et al.*). There were three other records, all in the first half of the year, of first winters at Pett on 2 Apr (MT), flying east at Birling Gap on 22 Apr (DC, JFC) and flying west at Portobello on 29 Apr (DHH). The county total this century moves on to a minimum of 43. [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 124 tetrads, most of which were close to the coast, estuaries or river valleys. The highest counts in each month at four key locations are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Selsey Peninsula</b>	200	60	25	45	15	53	55	40	42	12	28	262 E
<b>Cuckmere Haven</b>	160	400	50	nc	2	10	nc	2	nc	50	100	150
<b>Bexhill/Hastings</b>	400	100	40	65	nc	nc	2	nc	65	2	315	92
<b>Rye Bay</b>	34	450	74	8	28	52	49	41	80	81	20	50

The largest flocks in the first winter period were 450 at Rye Hbr on 2 Feb, 400 at both Glyne Gap (Bexhill) and the Cuckmere Haven on 11 Jan and 17 Feb respectively, 250 at Hastings on 24 Jan and 200 at Pagham Hbr on 18 Jan. Numbers declined during March. Although two pairs were noted on roof tops in Brighton there was no evidence of breeding there but at Rye Hbr one pair successfully raised young on the Martello Tower and another pair nested on Bourne's Warehouse. This therefore remains one of the county's rarest breeding species. As the table suggests there were no large flocks noted until November when 350 were seen at Hastings on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 100 at Cuckmere Haven on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. At the latter site there were several counts in December with a peak of 150 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The only significant coastal movement recorded was also in December when 262 E at Selsey Bill during a 3 hr watch on the 4<sup>th</sup>.



Although recorded from seven sites well inland the species was only seen regularly at Warnham LNR where the highest counts of 16 and 17 occurred on 3 and 8 Jan. [JAN]

## Feral Pigeon

*Columba livia*

*Common resident.*

Feral Pigeons were recorded in 204 tetrads. In the first winter period, there were just two records of three-figure counts with 100 at Newhaven on 2 Jan and 105 at Brighton on 29 Feb. Generally, counts averaged 15 with six of 50 birds or more, somewhat lower than previous years.

In the spring and summer periods, the only records of note were 137 at Seaford on 14 Mar and 90 at Brighton on 4 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in only five tetrads.

For the autumn and second winter period, there were 200 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 24 Sep, 100 at Goring Gap on 22 Oct and 125 at Portslade on 3 Nov. There were no other reports of 50 or more birds with counts averaging a dozen birds.

One bird was taken by a Peregrine at Falmer on 12 Oct while an adult was seen regurgitating food to a squab on 3 Dec at Arundel WWT. [AHP]

## Stock Dove

*Columba oenas*

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

The species was recorded in 320 tetrads, 37% of the tetrads from which records were received. In the first winter period, the highest counts were 100 at Doleham on 15 Jan and 60 at Thorney Island on 10 Feb. During the early year SWBS the species was encountered in 29 (25%) 1-km squares with a maximum count of 42 near Eridge on 3 Feb.

The first singing bird was heard at West Marden on 20 Jan while breeding was confirmed in just two tetrads but considered probable or possibly breeding in a further 98 tetrads. The BBS recorded Stock Doves in 69 1-km squares which, at nearly 42% of the squares surveyed was notably greater than in the winter surveys.

There were few large movements recorded in autumn; indeed the migration watchers at Hastings only recorded a total 14 during their extended watches. However, there were 100 at Thorney Island on 22 Oct and a further 100 on the downland at No-Mans Land (Steyning) on the 27<sup>th</sup>. On 15 Nov, 350 were moving west at Chichester GP while 200 were seen at Cocking Down on 26 Nov. During the late year SWBS the species was found in 26 (19%) of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 35 near Tangmere on 11 Dec. The only higher, late winter count was 50 at Rye Hbr on 14 Dec. [AHP]

## Woodpigeon

*Columba palumbus*

*Abundant resident and winter visitor.*

Woodpigeons were recorded in 618 tetrads compared to 599 in 2015. High counts for the first winter period included 1000 at Warnham LNR on 15 Jan, 2000 at Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 17 Feb, 1015 at Oving on 24 Feb and 1500 at Worth on 25 Feb. There were over

70 records involving over 100 birds (100 in 2015). During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in all except one of the 116 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 1015 on 24 Feb at Oving. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, this species was recorded in 87.2% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 81.4% in East Sussex.

A young bird was seen feeding on a lawn at Henfield on 4 Feb and on the same day another was seen at West Chiltington. Although clearly a widespread breeder, breeding was confirmed in only 17 tetrads but likely in a further 121. Woodpigeons were recorded in every square surveyed for the BBS with the maximum count of 168 near West Dean on 19 Apr.

The first signs of autumn movement were flocks of 700 at Barcombe Cross on 3 Nov and 1350 moving S/SW at Brighton Wild Park on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The only other noteworthy numbers were all reported from Warnham LNR with 1000 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 4809 heading NE on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 13,169 heading in the same direction on the 17<sup>th</sup>. A count of 1000 at Weir Wood Res on the 20<sup>th</sup> marked the end of any passage.

There were no large concentrations in the late winter period; the only record of note was 600 at Gatwick Airport on 8 Dec. The species was not recorded in just two of the 136 1-km squares surveyed for the late SWBS; the highest count was 455 on 27 Dec near Northchapel. [AHP]

## Collared Dove

## *Streptopelia decaocto*

*Very common resident.*

Collared Doves were recorded in 376 tetrads compared to 368 in 2015. In the first winter period, there were just four records of flocks of 20 or more with three of these for Battle, where high counts of 26 were recorded on the 6 and 8 Jan and 23 at Seaford on 14 Mar. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 57 (49%) of the 117 surveyed with a maximum of 18 near Westbourne on 19 Jan. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, Collared Doves were recorded in 39.7% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 43.9% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in only three tetrads but likely in a further 77 tetrads (70 in 2015). Nest building was first recorded on 5 May at Seaford and confirmed breeding of a nest with young was first observed on 1 Jun at the University of Sussex. The maximum count during a BBS was 23 on 10 Apr in Portslade and Collared Doves were found in 57% of the 166 1km-squares surveyed.

As for 2014 and 2015, there were no notable flocks for the autumn. However, counts in the second winter period were slightly better than previous years with 43 at Crowhurst on 10 Nov, 50 at Iford (Lewes) on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 58 at Rye Hbr on 8 Dec. During the late year SWBS Collared Doves were encountered in 53 (39%) of the 136 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 35 at Lidsey Lodge (Barnham) on 7 Dec. [AHP]

## Turtle Dove

## *Streptopelia turtur*

*Scarce but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Birds were recorded in 69 tetrads compared to 57 in 2015, 75 in 2014, 53 in 2013 and 76 in 2012. The first bird of the year was at Flimwell on 14 Apr, three days later than the ten-year average of 11 Apr. Two were at Pagham Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup> but it was a further nine days before recorded again at the Knepp Estate and in Henfield where two were seen feeding on chicken grain in a garden. Just three more were recorded by the end of April. As for previous years, sightings

were received on an almost daily basis during May and June, generally of ones and twos. Higher counts included, three on the Knepp Estate on 16 May, three at Small Dole on the 20<sup>th</sup>, a maximum of six singing males at Pett Level on 1 Jun and four at Henfield between 12 and 17 Jun.

There were two tetrads with confirmed breeding although breeding was probable in ten other tetrads and possible in a further 20. Fledged young were first seen on 26 May on the Knepp Estate. As in 2015, numerous sightings were received from the Knepp Estate. It does appear that the 're-wilding' project is clearly providing suitable feeding and breeding conditions for this species. Additionally, other sightings received for the year suggest that Turtle Doves do come to gardens and feeders where seed is provided, particularly poultry food.

There were ten records for August, all of single birds except for two on the 25<sup>th</sup> at Southease. There were three September records with birds seen at Flansham (Bognor Regis) on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Alciston on the 15<sup>th</sup> and Berwick on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Compared to the 10-year average of 23 Sep the last was one at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 9 Nov. This is only the third Sussex November record and the latest since two were seen at Rye Hbr on several December dates in 1990. [AHP]



*Common Cuckoo, Pagham Beach, May 2016 (Trevor Guy)*

## Common Cuckoo

*Cuculus canorus*

*Fairly common but declining summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Cuckoos were recorded in 181 tetrads in 2016, down on last year's figure of 210 but close to the 2013 figure of 182. The first recorded arrival this year was on 30 Mar at Battle. This was seven

days earlier than 2015 but near to the 10-year average of 1 Apr. The next was on 3 Apr in the Wych Cross area of Ashdown Forest and thereafter there were regular sightings throughout April, mainly single birds but occasionally two or three at various locations on Ashdown Forest and on 16 Apr three were recorded at Knepp Estate. Two were at Fishbourne on 19 Apr, Pulborough Brooks on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, Harting Down on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Church Norton on the 27<sup>th</sup> and Beeding Brooks and Rye Hbr on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

During May and June Cuckoos were recorded from over 200 sites but at none was breeding confirmed. However, probable breeding was recorded in 19 tetrads with possible breeding in a further 57. Six were thought to be at Rye Hbr throughout May and early June. On Thorney Island two males were reported as holding territories throughout May and an active pair was noted on 9 May at Sidlesham. A male and female were heard calling at Old Lodge LNR on 14 May and a pair was recorded at Rye Hbr on 19 May. A male and female were seen flying together on the Knepp Estate on 11 Jun and a male and female were recorded interacting at Old Lodge LNR on 19 Jun.

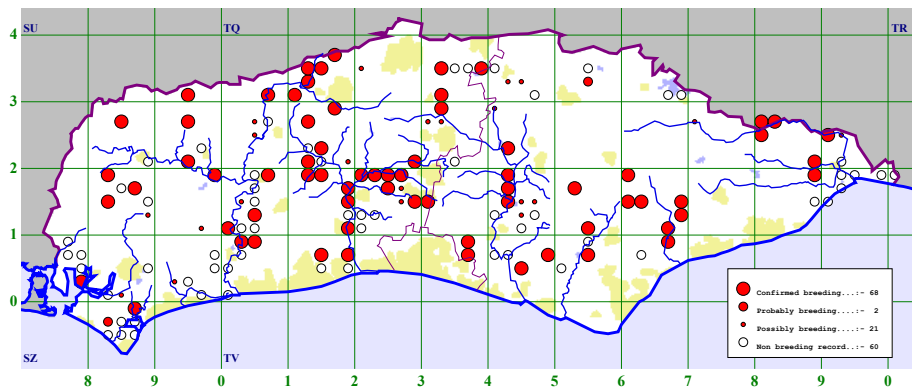
A juvenile was recorded at Beachy Head on 16 Jul, another at Pulborough Brooks on 5 Aug and one at Beachy Head on 11 Aug. A rufous female was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Jun and another at Beachy Head on 26 Jul. Cuckoos were only recorded on five dates in July and seven in August with the last at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Aug, much earlier than the 2015 date of 6 Sep and approximately three weeks earlier than the 10-year average. [TS]

## Barn Owl

*Tyto alba*

*Fairly common resident. Schedule 1 species.*

Barn owls were reported seen flying and hunting, usually singly, across Sussex particularly during the first two and the last two months of the year. Strong winds and heavy rain with flooding in some river valleys in January and February made hunting difficult and a starving owl allowed itself to be picked up at the end of February and died despite efforts to save it. Records for the year came from 151 tetrads as shown in the map below.



Breeding was confirmed in 68 tetrads, with a total of 90 known attempts of which 89 were in nest boxes on trees and in buildings and one in a hollow tree. Probable breeding was recorded in three further sites. Brood size at the time of recording was mostly of two or of three chicks but two broods of five chicks were ringed.

An 11 year old Barn owl near Billingshurst was found to have an opaque right eye but was nonetheless flying well. [ABW]

## Little Owl

*Athene noctua*

*Fairly common resident.*

Little Owl was recorded from 54 tetrads, slightly higher than the 49 in 2013, but significantly lower than for 2015 (66) and 2014 (74). There would not seem to be any reduction in suitable habitat for the species which was recorded from ten tetrads during the first winter period with two birds present in at least four (possibly five) of these.

During spring, the majority of records were of single birds from widely spread sites but twos were noted at Bramber Fm (Pagham), Beeding Brooks and Barcombe and three on the Knepp Estate. Calling birds were noted from several locations including Barcombe, Chailey and Troutbeck (Eridge), a former breeding site.

Breeding was confirmed from three sites (down from four in 2015 and five in 2014) and was probable in a further four. On the Knepp Estate, nestlings were recorded on 29 May with three young in a nest hole in an oak tree. At Barcombe Res a nest with at least one young bird was noted on 6 Jun and a fledgling was noted at Winchelsea on 14 Jul.

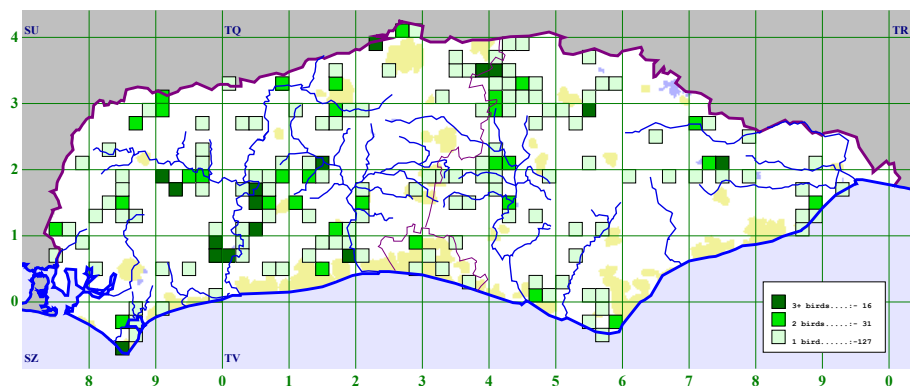
During the last half of the year records again were mostly of single birds. Twos were recorded at only four sites: Tortington (Arundel) on 14 Aug, the Knepp Estate on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Small Dole on 20 Nov and Balcombe on 27 Dec. The site from which the most records came was Pulborough Brooks, perhaps more a reflection of the presence of observers than of Little Owls. [DB]

## Tawny Owl

*Strix aluco*

*Fairly common or common resident.*

Tawny Owls were recorded from 174 tetrads, up from 153 last year and 137 in 2014; records were distributed fairly evenly throughout the year as shown in the following map showing the maximum number recorded in each tetrad. The greatest number of records was in May.







*Little Owl, Arundel, July 2016 (Jan Charteris)*



During the first winter period records came widely from across the county most often as single birds but with a highest count of three at The Burgh (Burpham) on 6 Jan. Birds heard calling were at least 33% of all records during this period.

Breeding was confirmed from ten tetrads (cf.3 in 2015 but comparable with 11 in 2014) and was probable in a further 13. At Pagham Hbr, a female incubating in a nest box on 8 Mar was still brooding on 18 Apr but two chicks were present one week later. Two chicks observed in a nest box at Weir Wood Res on 19 Apr had been predated when the nest was next inspected but in another nearby box three chicks were ringed on 7 May.

On the Knepp Estate there were four successful nests: one adult with one fledged chick was observed on 3 May; two other nests had fledged young on 12 May. At least another six sites fledged young were recorded up until 11 Jun. On 8 May a female with a brood patch was ringed at Ladywell (Coombes) and successful fledging was confirmed by the landowner on 3 Jun.

Summer records involving multiple birds were of five (two males, three females) at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Jun and three at Rusper on 15 Jul. There were sightings of four birds in late summer and autumn at five sites some of which probably refer to family groups. At both Castle Hill (Rotherfield) and Ladywell four separate birds were heard calling on 11 and 14 Sep respectively, and again on 26 Oct at the latter site. These may have been competing territorial birds. Observers at Graffham Down and Weir Wood Res both recorded three birds on 5 and 14 December respectively.

One corpse was found freshly dead on a railway line close to Bosham railway station on 7 Mar (sex and age unknown) and another was found dead near Ringmer on 13 Mar (a second calendar year male). [DB]

## Long-eared Owl

*Asio otus*

*Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Birds were recorded from six sites during the year. In the first winter period a potential migrant was seen on the coast in East Sussex on 16 Jan, and in the west a bird was recorded roosting at a coastal location from late January until mid-April. One other was recorded at an inland site in early March.

The only records in the breeding season came from two inland West Sussex sites where individuals were noted on single days in May.

A possible migrant was accidentally flushed on 29 Oct at a coastal location in East Sussex, although this may have been a resident, and early the following day one was seen inland in East Sussex. [DG]

## Short-eared Owl

*Asio flammeus*

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

The species was recorded from 75 tetrads, down from 86 in 2015; no records were received for July, August or, unusually, September. The approximate monthly totals, based on the highest count at each site in each month, are as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Oct	Nov	Dec
51	33	21	26	14	7		23	19	21

Some 50% of all records received were for the first winter period with January alone accounting for approximately 25% the year's records. Between two and four were recorded at 17 sites during this period, all being regular wintering locations for the species such as Pilsey and Thorney Islands, Waltham and Pulborough Brooks. Notably, there were 12 roosting in the dunes on Pilsey Island on 6 Jan (and ten still there on 11 Feb), nine foraging on Thorney Island on 24 Jan and six at Wepham Down on 20 Jan and Pilsey Island on 25 Feb.

In most years, these owls have vacated their Sussex wintering grounds by late April/early May. However, this year they were recorded through to 23 Jun but, unlike in 2012 and 2013, none summered. Observers at Selsey Bill and Beachy Head recorded birds flying in off the sea on 1 and 19 Apr at the former site and 19 Apr at the latter. One bird was found dead at Rye Hbr on 27 May, perhaps an exhausted migrant. At a site in West Sussex, two birds were recorded on 24 May and 3 Jun but there was no evidence of a breeding attempt.

The first returning bird were noted at Rye Hbr on 5 Oct, Littlehampton on the 6<sup>th</sup> and Medmerry on the 7<sup>th</sup>. During autumn migration, birds were recorded flying in off the sea: one at Seaford Head on 8 Oct; two at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 13 Oct and one at Selsey Bill on the 24<sup>th</sup>. An apparently late migrant was observed looking very tired on the ground at Beachy Head on 5 Nov.

Records were received from between 20 to 23 widespread locations during October comprising coastal and river valleys and some traditional downland sites. As the table suggests most involved single birds but two were seen at Medmerry on 21 and 24 Oct and at Barnham on 31 Oct. In the second winter period records came from 18 sites, notably Barnham (where two on 6 Nov and 22 Dec), Pagham Hbr, The Burgh (Burpham) (where three on 11 and 13 Nov), Pulborough Brooks, Beeding Brooks/Adur Valley (where three on 20 Nov but four on 11 Dec) and Pevensy Levels (where four on 30 Nov). One on Ashdown Forest on 15 Dec was the observer's first there for 27 years. [DB]

## 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 41 tetrads, a similar number to the last two years, but 12 fewer than in 2013. The first record for the year was of a male at Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on 3 May, one day earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. Single birds were then seen at Selsey Bill, Ambersham Common and at The Ridge (Ashdown Forest) on 7 May. The latest coastal sighting in May was one at Beachy Head on the 16<sup>th</sup>, although in June, one or two were seen at Selsey on the 4<sup>th</sup> and one at Newhaven Cliffs on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

In West Sussex during the rest of May, singles were reported at Iping Common on the 15<sup>th</sup>, in the Crawley area on the 17<sup>th</sup>, at St Leonard's Forest on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Ambersham Common on the 24<sup>th</sup> and Pulborough Brooks on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Three were seen at Lavington Common on 20 May and two at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. In East Sussex, there were records, mostly of ones, and occasionally of two or three, at 12 sites on Ashdown Forest during May. Three birds were also reported at Darwell Res on 17 May and two at Memorial Common (Chailey) on the 20<sup>th</sup>, with one there on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was not confirmed at any sites in Sussex this year but was probable in 23 tetrads. During the WHBBS, however, 40 pairs or territories were recorded, including 15 territories at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, six at Chapel Common (Liphook), and five each at Black Down (Fernhurst) and in the Lavington Common area (see page 209 for table).

On Ashdown Forest, there was evidence of probable breeding at nine locations, fewer than the 11 in 2015 and possible at a further ten. At least seven displaying males were recorded during the Broadwater Warren reserve breeding survey. Probable breeding was also reported at Pulborough Brooks, Redhouse Common (Chailey), Groombridge, and in the Polegate/Hailsham area. Additionally, churring males were reported at Bedham (Fittleworth) and Memorial Common.

Other than three observed roosting on Woolbeding Common on the 14<sup>th</sup>, all reports during August were from Ashdown Forest, where singles were seen at five locations, including at Wych Cross on eight dates between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. A male and a female were seen together at this site on the 21<sup>st</sup> and one was calling here on the 26<sup>th</sup> which was the last inland report of the year. The only sightings of birds apparently on autumn passage, and also the last records for the year, were singles at two different locations at Pett Level on 6 Sep, eleven days earlier than the long-term mean last date. [AR]

## Common Swift

*Apus apus*

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

Two over Henfield during rain on 15 Apr were the first, just two days later than the 10-year average arrival date but one whole week later than in 2015. There is comparatively little variation in first arrival dates for Swift; the earliest recorded between 1960-2015 being only eight days earlier than for 2016. At Pett Level one was recorded on 17 Apr before sightings from Weir Wood Res and Pulborough Brooks the following day. From 20 Apr there were daily sightings from around the county and the notable count of 30 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on the 21<sup>st</sup>. There were eight further two-figure counts by the end of April and a further 34 by mid-May including 50 around Chichester on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Ivy Lake on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 40 at Seaford on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Larger numbers were observed during the latter half of May with 200 at Barcombe Res on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 80 at Rye Hbr on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 76 N at Selsey Bill on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed in just seven tetrads (six in 2015, but 22 in 2014 and 34 in 2013) with probable breeding in a further 23. Fourteen confirmed nests were observed from the well watched site of Brighton General Hospital where a mixture of natural cavities within the fabric of the buildings combine with artificial specially constructed nest boxes to provide Swifts with suitable nest sites.

There were eight three-figure counts during June; half of these at Rye Hbr with a maximum of 300 on the 17<sup>th</sup> but 500 at Ivy Lake on the 1<sup>st</sup> the highest. Further notable counts before birds began their southward migration from mid-July included 400 at Rye Hbr on 2 Jul and 150 there on the 15<sup>th</sup>. At Beachy Head 174 W on 5 Aug was the last three-figure count of the year. During September 26 birds were recorded on nine days including 4 E at Beachy Head on the 7<sup>th</sup>, ten at Broadwater Warren on the 14<sup>th</sup> and four, with hirundines, at Rye Hbr on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The final record came on 5 Oct from Brighton, one week later than 2015 although only two days earlier than the 10-year average. [DB]

**Alpine Swift***Apus melba**Rare vagrant.*

The only record was of one at Portobello on 7 May (DHH), a typical date. The county total since 1962 moves on to 41 of which nine have been this century and 15 have been in May. [PJ]

**Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

*Very scarce spring and even scarcer summer passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.*

There were only two records of Hoopoes, both in April. One was in North Wood (Adversane) on the 13<sup>th</sup> (SJC) and one was seen on the 26<sup>th</sup> over the A281 at Doomsday Green (Horsham) (CJ). [PJP]

**Bee-eater***Merops apiaster*

*Rare vagrant; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.*

After the excesses of 2015 when a total of 23 was recorded in Sussex, there was only one record this year of one in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 16 Jun (JD). The total recorded this century moves on to 76 with records in 14 of the last 17 years. [PJ]

**Kingfisher***Alcedo atthis*

*Scarce to fairly common resident and possibly very scarce winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

Kingfisher was recorded in 172 tetrads during the year, down on last year's figure of 185.

Throughout the first winter period birds were regularly recorded, mainly in ones or twos but three were seen at Warnham LNR on 13 Jan and five at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on 16 Jan. Three were recorded at West Chidham on 13 Feb.

Confirmed breeding was recorded in only one East Sussex tetrad during the year with fledglings seen on 29 Jul. This followed an earlier nesting attempt that was thwarted when a fox or badger dug out the tunnel used in 2015. The observer describes, "amazingly a replacement tunnel was excavated just one metre from the raided one; lower down the steep bank and more vulnerable but breeding was successful as juveniles seen nearby." Probable breeding was recorded in six tetrads and possible breeding in eight others. A bird was seen visiting a probable West Sussex nest site on 5 Apr. A family of five was recorded at Warnham LNR on 31 Jul. A chasing pair was seen at Arundel on 7 Aug and a juvenile was recorded there on the same day.

There were several counts of four during the autumn: at Weir Wood Res on 18 Sep, at Thorney Deeps on 2 Oct, in the lower Cuckmere valley on 13 Oct and in the lower Adur valley the next day. There were a further 13 counts of three at seven locations. During the second winter period there was a WeBS count of eight between Southease and Piddinghoe on the R Ouse on 19 Nov, which was the high of the year. Four were at Weir Wood Res on 13 Nov and at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) on 20 Dec. There were reports of threes at Weir Wood Res on four dates, at

Warnham LNR on three dates, Ivy Lake (Chichester) on 9 Nov, Crowhurst on the 10<sup>th</sup>, the Knepp Estate on the 18<sup>th</sup>, the lower Cuckmere valley on 27 Dec and Dell Quay (Chichester Hbr) on 31 Dec. [TS]



*Kingfisher, Knepp Estate, April 2016 (Leigh Prevost)*

## Wryneck

*Jynx torquilla*

*Very scarce passage migrant, most in autumn; last bred in 1944. Schedule 1 species.*

There were four spring records in 2016, the same number as in 2015. A relatively early bird was at Saltdean on 4 Apr, 17 days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by one at Salehurst on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There were then two records of what could have been the same bird at Pulborough Brooks on 2 and 10 May.

The bulk of the autumn Wrynecks were in September but passage was first recorded on 3 Aug with one at Church Norton followed by records of single birds there from 31 Aug until 7 Sep. At Beachy Head, there was a good run of records with single birds on 18 Aug, 23 and 24 Aug, 30 Aug to 7 Sep, 11 Sep, 21 Sep and 2 Oct. Elsewhere there was a bird at Climping from 30 Aug to 9 Sep, one at Shepcote Valley (Brighton) on 1 Sep and one at Cissbury on the 8<sup>th</sup>. A bird was seen at Pett Level on 9 Sep with one trapped and ringed there on the 13<sup>th</sup>. These were followed by sightings at Hastings CP on 18 Sep, Cuckmere Haven on the 20<sup>th</sup> and Selsey Bill on the 24<sup>th</sup>. There was a bird at Sidlesham Ferry on 20 Sep and one at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The last record of the year was at Cuckmere Haven on 3 Oct, one day earlier than the 10-year average last date.

The autumn records constitute a total of 41 site-days. Although it is not possible to be sure without individually marked birds, this could have involved at least 18 different birds. [KS]



*Wryneck, Shooter's Bottom, September 2016 (Leigh Prevost)*

## Green Woodpecker

*Picus viridis*

*Common resident. Moved from the amber to the green list of species of conservation concern in 2015 because of increasing population.*

The species was recorded in 469 tetrads continuing the upward trend of the last few years (415 in 2012, 356 in 2013, 436 in 2014 and 449 in 2015).

In the first winter period, the highest count was seven at Pulborough Brooks in an all-day count on 21 Mar. In the early year SWBS, 66 were recorded in 47 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of four at Verdley Place (Fernhurst) on 11 Feb; overall a lower number than in 2015.

For such a numerous, large and vocal species the Green Woodpecker can be very inconspicuous when breeding and there was only one record of a nest in 2016, at Pett Village on 21 May. Breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads, largely because of the presence of recently fledged young, and probable in a further 41.

The first fledged young were recorded at Four Counties (Ashdown Forest) on 14 Jul. During the BBS, Green Woodpeckers were recorded in 105 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of seven on 8 Apr at Hempstead (Uckfield).

The highest late summer counts were nine at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Jul and eight there on 1 Aug while, in the autumn, six was the highest on 12 Sep, also at Pulborough Brooks but there were counts of five each at Chichester GP on 18 Oct and Winchelsea on 28 Oct. In the second



winter period there were five at Patching Hill on 13 Nov and at East Chidham (Chichester) on 4 Dec. During the late year SWBS, 50 were recorded in 40 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. [KS]

## Great Spotted Woodpecker

*Dendrocopos major*

*Common and increasing resident.*

The species was recorded in 461 tetrads, a similar total to 2015. During the SWBS count in the first winter period birds were recorded in 57 (49%) of the 117 1-km squares surveyed; the maximum was six on 28 Feb at Verdley Place (Fernhurst). In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, Great Spotted Woodpeckers were recorded in 18.1% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 20% in East Sussex. Elsewhere there were counts of ten at Pickham Fm (Pett) on 23 Mar and Pulborough Brooks on 18 Apr whilst on Ashdown Forest there were 11 at Broadstone Warren on 28 Apr and 12 at Pippingford Park on 15 May. At Fore Wood (Crowhurst) and Broadwater Warren there were breeding territory counts of 19 and 16 respectively.

Drumming was first heard on 16 Jan at Torberry Hill (Harting) with the last spring record on 1 May at Church Norton. Interestingly, drumming was again heard on 27 Dec at Old Lodge LNR, a portent of the new year to come. Breeding was greatly under recorded but was confirmed in 24 tetrads (there were eight nests at Broadwater Warren) and probable in a further 46. Nests with eggs or young were reported from 14 sites from 20 May and the first fledglings were recorded on 3 Jun on Ashdown Forest.

Of the species monitored by BBS the Great Spotted Woodpecker has shown one of the biggest increases both nationally and in Sussex. In Sussex, the BBS index stood at 176 in 2016 having been set at 100 in 1994. During the 2016 surveying the species was found in 63% of the 1-km squares surveyed.

On 8 Aug there was a count of eight at Pulborough Brooks and in the second winter period SWBS the species was found in 47% of the squares surveyed, the maximum was seven at Hornshurst Wood (Rotherfield) on 16 Nov. [KS]

## Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

*Dryobates minor*

*Very scarce and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The species was recorded in only 21 tetrads compared with 31 in 2012, 30 in 2013, 14 in 2014 and 34 in 2015. There was no confirmed breeding in 2016 although there was probable breeding in three tetrads and birds in suitable habitat in a further three.

In January and February there were four records of single birds: Waltham Brooks on 6 Jan, Warnham LNR on 13 Jan, Pulborough Brooks on 2 Feb and Westdean Woods on 23 Feb.

During the breeding season, from March to mid-June, there were records from 17 sites thinly spread over the whole county: Westdean Woods, Burton MP, Arundel Park, Waltham Brooks, Pulborough Brooks, near Storrington, Knepp Estate, Sayers Common, Broxmead (Bolney), Plashett Park (Isfield), Ashdown Forest (three sites), Broadwater Warren, Fore Wood (Crowhurst) and Udimore. Although no nests were found pairs and displaying birds were seen at four of these sites.

From mid-June until the end of the year there were only six records, all of single birds: Pulborough Brooks on 28 Jun, 19 Jul and 25 Jul, the Knepp Estate on 1 Sep, Powdermill Res on 29 Oct and Coldwaltham on 12 Dec. [KS]

**Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

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

Kestrels were recorded in 389 tetrads, a reduction on the 453 in 2015 (368 in 2014, 333 in 2013, 337 in 2012 and 467 in 2011). Kestrels were recorded in more tetrads than Sparrowhawk (296) but in fewer than Common Buzzard (598).

During the first winter period about 70% of records were of single birds. The highest count was six on Thorney Island on 25 Feb. There were four counts of four: Thorney Island on 6 Jan, Pulborough Brooks on 25 Jan, Wepham Down on 6 Mar and Pagham Hbr on 14 Mar and 16 counts of three. There were no records of birds flying in off the sea.

Breeding was confirmed in only 11 tetrads and probable in 25. Display was first recorded on 15 Mar at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) and the first report of confirmed breeding of an occupied nest was on 7 May at Ashburnham Place (Battle). Adults taking food to a nest were seen on 23 May on the Knepp Estate and the first fledged youngsters were at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 15 Jun. Three pairs were reported at Thorney Island throughout the breeding season.

Most records during the late spring and summer were of one bird with the highest count being six at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Jun. The highest autumn count was six at Wepham Down on 14 Sep and six at Pett Level on 25 Dec was the highest during the second winter period. Prey items reported included voles, unidentified small mammals, common lizard and one was seen hunting Reed Buntings at Rodmell Brooks. [MJC]

**Merlin***Falco columbarius*

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

Merlin was recorded in 42 tetrads in all months except June or July. The months for which the total number of birds recorded was in double figures were January, February, and September to December. Two birds were recorded at Rye Hbr on 20 Sep and Pett Level on 14 Nov; all other records were of single individuals. During the first winter period over 80% of records came from coastal locations and the lower river valleys. At Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr birds were recorded on five and nine separate days respectively during the first quarter, although this may relate to fewer birds than days recorded. At Medmerry Merlins were recorded on three days in January whilst they were also recorded at 15 other sites during this period. This indicates a maximum of c.27 birds but probably only 23 to 24.

The only observations of birds flying over the sea were at Selsey Bill: one on 28 Feb was thought to have been hunting offshore; 1 N on 25 Apr arrived off the sea (possibly a migrant); one appeared offshore and was chased by an Arctic Skua on 1 May; one flew west there on 4 May. Between 1 Apr and 4 May there were only 11 sightings, the last being one at Selsey Bill on 4 May.

The first returning bird was one at Beachy Head on 23 Aug, seen chasing hirundines over the top fields; this might have been the bird seen in the area on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>; the only other sighting in August was one at Medmerry on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The next record was not until 15 Sep at Fairlight. During September and October only single birds were recorded on 33 of the 61 days. The sites where Merlins were most frequently seen were Pulborough Brooks (six between 25 Sep and 24 Oct) and Beachy Head (six between 21 Sep and 25 Oct).

During the second winter period, single Merlins only were observed at some 18 broad sites; at only one location, Pett Level, were two recorded (on 14 Nov). Recorders at Pulborough Brooks provided the most records (13) followed by Pagham Hbr (7), Rye Hbr (5) and Selsey Bill (4). It is difficult to calculate how many birds were actually involved during this period from c.56 records, but a conservative estimate would be a maximum of c.40 birds.

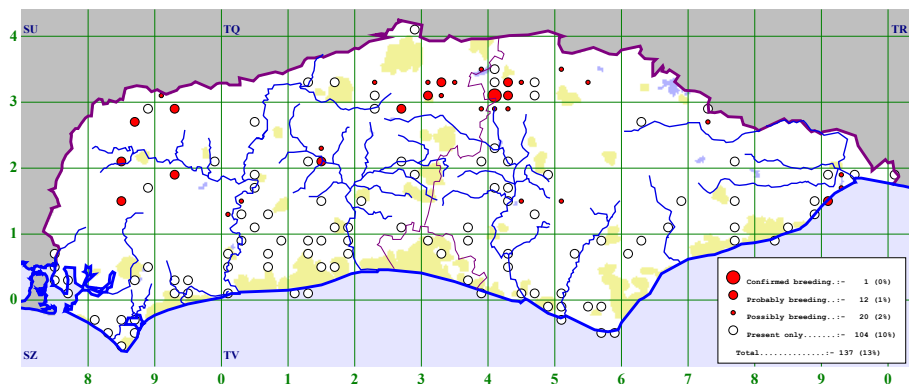
Birds observed hunting offshore at Selsey Bill were noted on five separate dates from 21 Oct to 3 Dec; the only successful hunt was of a Goldfinch taken on 29 Nov. At Pagham Hbr one made an unsuccessful attempt to catch a Dunlin on 13 Dec. [DB]

## Hobby

## *Falco subbuteo*

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

The species was recorded from 142 tetrads with records split almost equally between coastal sites when on migration and inland sites. Of the latter, c.40% were from Pulborough Brooks and 14% from Ashdown Forest. The distribution of records is illustrated by the following map:



Observers at High and Over (Litlington) saw the first returning Hobby on 28 Mar, one week earlier than the previous year and nine days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. Two further birds arrived in March, at Seaford Head on the 30<sup>th</sup> and Ashdown Forest on the 31<sup>st</sup>, however, it was not until 11 Apr that the next bird was observed. By the end of the month some 32 arriving birds had been recorded. The first observations of more than one bird were recorded on 30 Apr with twos at both Pulborough Brooks and Beachy Head and four at Seaford Head. Observers at Pulborough Brooks continued to record multiple numbers, with four on 3 May and on several subsequent dates reaching a maximum of five on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 4 N at Selsey Bill on 6 May during a 13½ hr seawatch, four at The Burgh on the 16<sup>th</sup> and three at Pett Level on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The highest spring count, however, was 14 at Pevensy Levels on 14 May; all the previous records of groups of this magnitude have occurred over water meadows during May in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2008.

Breeding was confirmed from just one tetrad and was probable from a further 14, similar to previous years. The one successful pair was using an old crow's nest and fledging was noted there on 18 Aug. Once again there was a paucity of breeding evidence and this aspect is severely under-recorded.

Encounters with other raptors included one bird harassing a Buzzard and on another occasion a pair were observed chasing a Buzzard. At Brighton Wild Park on 18 Jul the tables were turned when a Hobby was seen being chased by a Peregrine.

Two November records were the last of the year; Newhaven Tide Mills on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and finally at Beeding Brooks on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 12 days later than for 2015, 11 days later than the 10-year average departure date. [DB]



*Peregrine, East Sussex, April 2016 (Jacob Everitt)*

## Peregrine

*Falco peregrinus*

*Scarce breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.*

Peregrine numbers in East and West Sussex continue to rise and, following on from the estimate of 30 pairs in 2014, there were pairs confirmed at 33 sites in 2016. The total number of young known to have fledged in the county was a healthy 50 from 17 productive pairs, a further four sites where breeding pairs were present in spring were not checked for young. Another four known sites were not checked in 2016 and it is estimated the population is now in excess of 40 pairs. It is assumed that the population is probably at an unprecedented level and still expanding. There are several sites however where productivity is lower than expected, perhaps partly due to the pressure from intruding Peregrines during the breeding season. Sightings of a third adult intruding on a pair's territory is not uncommon. With all of the more traditional sites occupied, there has been an increase in the birds being reported attempting to nest on electricity pylons, substation structures, gas holders and buildings. As the Raven population continues to expand, several territorial disputes have been reported, although their unused nests provide further opportunities for the Peregrines to occupy these structures. The pylon attempts are usually

associated with an unused Raven or Carrion Crow nest with some successes. In line with this increase, reports from further inland away from the south coast continue to rise. The species is still being under-reported as a result of the difficulties observing their expansion on to pylons and into urban areas. Towns and cities along the coast are being regularly used by Peregrines even in the absence of cliff habitat. Three pairs have been reported in the Brighton and Hove area and birds continue along the coast with pairs in the Shoreham, Lancing, Worthing, Littlehampton and Bognor Regis areas. To the far east of Sussex, one site reported breeding success for the first time since before the first world war; this early Sussex record being documented in a manuscript by Beatrix Potter.

Also worth noting is that there are many reports of Peregrines hunting at Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks regularly throughout the year.

The two well-known nest boxes at Sussex Heights in Brighton and Chichester Cathedral continue to produce well. In Brighton, four eggs were laid between 20 and 27 Mar and hatched between 27 and 30 Apr. Three males and one female young were ringed on 19 May. The Chichester Cathedral pair also produced a clutch of four eggs, laying was completed by 24 March and all had hatched by 26 Apr. Three males and one female young were ringed on 17 May. [JF]

## Rose-ringed Parakeet

*Psittacula krameri*

*Very scarce introduced breeding resident.*

While birds were seen throughout the year, with the exception of September, sightings were all of ones and twos except for three at Gatwick Airport on the 25 Aug. Interestingly, half of the 20 sites from which records were received were from or near the coast, including one flying out to sea and then back again at Selsey Bill on 31 Mar and another flying east at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on 23 May. Two were seen on garden feeders at Ticehurst in December. [AHP]

## Golden Oriole

*Oriolus oriolus*

*Rare passage migrant and summer visitor; may have bred in 1965. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

There were two accepted records in 2016: a male briefly at Kent's Fm (Climping) on 12 May (BA) and a singing male for several hours at Hope Gap (Seaford Head) on 4 June (MRE), both typical dates for this mainly spring passage migrant. The county total this century moves on to 28. With the loss of Golden Oriole as a breeding species in the UK, it may well be that we see a decrease in the number of Sussex records in future years. [PJ]

## Red-backed Shrike

*Lanius collurio*

*Very scarce passage migrant; formerly a breeding summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

There were four records in 2016. The first was a female at Filsham LNR on 12 May (ASG) followed by a male at Millbrook Clump (Ashdown Forest) on 6 Jun (MM) and juveniles at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 15 Sep (GH, RH *et al.*) and Newhaven Tide Mills from 21 Sep to 2 Oct (JM *et al.*). The Newhaven bird, which frequented the wasteland south of Mill Creek, was

remarkably confiding throughout its 12 day stay and showed down to a few feet making it one of the most photographed Sussex birds of all time. The total this century moves on to 42. [PJ]



*Red-backed Shrike, Newhaven, September 2016 (Marc Read)*

## Great Grey Shrike

*Lanius excubitor*

*Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.*

Great Grey Shrikes were recorded in 23 tetrads in 2016, down on the 2015 figure of 31. Approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
2	5	4	4		3	5	5

A wintering bird on Ashdown Forest was first seen on 8 Jan and there were as many as 30 subsequent sightings in the first winter period from various locations on Ashdown Forest probably involving only one or two individuals. One was seen to catch an unidentified small bird at West Chase on 19 Jan. Additionally, birds were reported from Pulborough Brooks on 13, 14 and 25 Jan, Coldwaltham, Crawley and Worth on 24 Feb, Arundel WWT on 26 Feb, Balcombe on 17 Mar and Ambersham Common on 24 and 25 Mar.

Birds lingered into April at Standen Bottom on 1 Apr, Heyshott Common on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Ambersham Common on the 9<sup>th</sup> and there were reports from various locations on Ashdown Forest up to the 9<sup>th</sup> with the final sighting of the spring coming from The Isle of Thorns.



In the second winter period the first sighting was at Blackdown on 9 Oct, followed by one at The Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Thereafter there were as many as 40 reported sightings across Ashdown Forest up to the year-end but they probably all relate to only two, perhaps three birds. Two were together and chasing at Gills Lap on 28 Nov and one was seen trying to catch Reed Buntings at The Old Airstrip on 19 Oct. Other sightings in this period were at Pulborough Brooks, Beeding Brooks, Waltham Brooks (23 records), Kingston and Lewes (5 records). [TS, MJC]

## Jay

## *Garrulus glandarius*

*Very common resident.*

Jays were recorded in 391 tetrads (367 in 2015). During the first winter period the highest counts were 12 at Pickham Fm (Pett) on 23 Mar and 11 at Filsham LNR on 30 Mar. There was one further count of eight and one of seven. A total of 89 were recorded in 49 squares in the early year SWBS with a maximum count of six at St George's (Wivelsfield) on 4 Feb. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, the species was recorded in 9.5% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 10.6% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads, with probable or possible breeding identified in a further 50 tetrads. The first record of nest building was on 28 Apr at Slindon, fledglings were seen at Red House Common (North Chailey) on 14 Jun and at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 28 Jul. The lack of recorded breeding evidence is a feature of the under recording of this very common species. The highest post breeding counts in the summer months were fives at Northpark Woods (Parham) on 28 Jul and Pulborough Brooks on 1 Aug.

In the autumn and second winter period the highest counts were 12 at Ladywell (Coombes) on 30 Oct and ten at the same location on 13 Nov. Elsewhere the maxima were seven at Broadbridge Heath and Northpark Wood on 18 Sep and 22 Dec respectively and four further counts of six at various locations during this period. In the late year SWBS a total of 132 were recorded in 71 squares; a count of six was the highest, at Red House Common on 1 Nov.

A Jay was seen to take a fledgling Chaffinch from a garden at Rustington on 18 Jun. [MOW]

## Magpie

## *Pica pica*

*Very common resident.*

Magpies were recorded in 563 tetrads (548 in 2015). During the first winter period high counts at a roost in Warnham LNR were 51 on 2 Feb, 41 on 9 Feb, and 38 on 23 Feb. At Hastings CP counts of between 22 and 35 in February were recorded and 30 were at the Railwayland Reserve (Lewes) on 12 Jan. In the early year SWBS 598 were counted in 101 squares with a maximum of 25 at Hurstpierpoint on 24 Feb. At a further 15 locations there were counts of between 15 and 26. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, the species was recorded in 56.7% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 60.6% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in only 15 tetrads and probable or possible in 96; as in previous years this does indicate under reporting for this common species. Nest building was first recorded at Portslade on 6 Feb. An occupied nest was reported on 27 Mar at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and the first fledglings were seen at Seaford on 3 May. The species was recorded in 145 (87%) of the 166 1km squares surveyed for the BBS with the maximum of 18 in Rustington on 30 May.

During the latter half of the year a high count of 75 was recorded at a pre-roost gathering in Brighton Wild Park on 4 Dec. Other high counts were 47 at East Kingston (Ferring) on 28 Dec, 33 at Pett Village, on 27 Dec, 28 at Cliff End (Pett) on 25 Aug and 26 at Weir Wood Res on 17 Oct. During the late year SWBS 602 were recorded in 121 squares with a maximum count of 25 at Golden Cross (Hailsham) on 7 Dec. There was a report of a Magpie killing a slowworm in a Patcham garden in June. [MOW]

## Jackdaw

## *Corvus monedula*

*Very common resident.*

Jackdaws were recorded from 531 tetrads. During the first quarter there were 36 counts of 100 or more. The only four-figure count was 1000 at Greenway Bottom (Seaford) on 21 Jan. There were two counts of 350: at Henfield on 4 Feb and at Hastings CP on 20 Feb. On 23 Feb 261 Jackdaws were seen at Warnham LNR and 235 were recorded at Southease on 11 Mar. There were counts of 200 at three further sites. During the SWBS in January or February 1889 Jackdaws were recorded from 90 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, the species was recorded in 18.6% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 26.1% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 23 tetrads with evidence of probable breeding in a further 37 with confirmed breeding first recorded of a nest with young on the early date of 12 Mar at Sharpthorne. The first record of fledging came from Amberley Mount on 30 May. There was just a single report of Jackdaws nesting in an owl box during 2016. This was at Southease, where a pair was observed using a Barn Owl box on 3 May.

The highest counts of the summer period were 500 at Seaford on 20 Jul, 300 at Sharpthorne on 28 Aug and 214 at Rye Hbr on 12 Jul. There were two counts of 200: at Shermanbury on 1 Jul and at Sharpthorne on 23 Jul, plus a further nine records of 100 or more at six different locations.

During the autumn and second winter period there were thirty-seven counts of 100 or more Jackdaws. Five hundred were recorded at Birling Gap on 15 Oct and there were two counts of 450: at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 6 Dec and at Beeding Brooks on 26 Dec. There were five more records of 300 or more: four of these came from High Cross Fm on various dates, and a count of 300 was reported from Sharpthorne on 9 Sep. During the late year SWBS 2056 Jackdaws were recorded from 105 of the 136 squares surveyed. [GO]

## Rook

## *Corvus frugilegus*

*Very common resident.*

Rooks were recorded from 369 tetrads compared with 346 the previous year. During the first quarter the highest counts were 450 at Colgate (St Leonard's Forest) on 6 Feb, 300 at Winchelsea on 8 Jan, 200 at Rodmell on 7 Jan and 200 at Newhaven on 11 Mar. There were ten more counts of 100 or more birds at various locations. During the early year SWBS 1673 Rooks were found in 57 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed.

Nest building was first observed at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 11 Feb. Breeding was confirmed in 37 tetrads and was recorded as probable in a further 15. It is encouraging to note that there has been a significant increase in the recording of rookeries as compared to 2015. In a survey of rookeries in TQ00 (Arundel and Littlehampton area) a total of 476 apparently occupied nests were counted and at the opposite end of the county in TQ91D (Winchelsea area) 386 nests

were counted, both on 5 Apr. The largest rookery recorded held 59 nests and was at Angmering Park Estate. Fledged young were first noted on 29 Apr at Racton.

During the summer period the highest counts of Rooks were 364 at Racton on 18 Jun, followed by 145 at Balsdean on 7 Jun, 113 at Chalvington the next day, 90 at Summersdale (Chichester) on 26 Aug, 85 at West Chiltington on 28 Jun and 83 at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Aug. There were seven other counts of 50 or more, two of these again occurring at Pulborough Brooks.

During the autumn and second winter period the largest gathering of Rooks was at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) where there were 450 birds on 29 Nov. There were five more records of 200 or more, three of which were again at High Cross Fm, plus counts of 300 at Round Hill (West Firle) on 29 Nov and 200 at Racton on 6 Nov. During the late year SWBS 1828 Rooks were found in 56 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]

## Carrion Crow

*Corvus corone*

*Very common resident.*

Carrion Crows were recorded from 606 tetrads. During the first quarter there were three records of 100 or more birds: 200 at Colgate (St Leonard's Forest) on 6 Feb, 200 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Mar and 135 at Dell Quay (Chichester) on 4 Mar. Seventy five birds were at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Feb and there were a further nine records of 50 or more birds from various locations. During the early year SWBS 1178 Carrion Crows were found in 113 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, the species was recorded in 28% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 29.9% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 36 tetrads and recorded as probable in a further 42. Nest building was first observed on 8 Mar at the top of a tall deciduous tree near the gates of Hastings Cemetery. The first occupied nest was seen at Arlington Res on 2 Apr and a nest with young birds was seen at the University of Sussex on 11 May. The earliest report of fledged young was from High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 23 May. The largest gathering during the breeding season was of 100 birds at Broadwater Warren on 24 Apr.

There were two records of birds flying in off the sea: two each at Beachy Head on 13 Apr and at Selsey Bill on 17 Apr.

During the summer period there were two counts of more than 100 Carrion Crows at Pulborough Brooks; 112 were recorded there on 1 Aug and this increased to 114 on 14 Aug. The next highest count was of 75 seen at Bexhill on 31 Jul.

During the autumn and second winter period there were six counts of 100 or more: 200 at Crowhurst on 26 Oct, 150 at Brighton Wild Park on 29 Oct, 116 on the beach at Worthing on 26 Nov, 109 at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Oct, 100 at Medmerry on 18 Sep and 100 at Fishbourne (Chichester) on 1 Nov. There were twenty-three further counts of 50 or more at various locations. During the late year SWBS 1327 Carrion Crows were found in 134 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]

## Hooded Crow

*Corvus cornix*

*Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.*

There were four records in 2016 although these most likely related to two birds. One at Church Norton on 10 Apr (IML) was then seen and photographed on a shingle spit off Selsey Bill on the

12<sup>th</sup> (OM *et al.*). One was at Beachy Head on 4 May (KBG) and then presumably the same bird was seen flying east at Whitbread Hollow towards Eastbourne on 12 May (LP). The county total this century moves on to nine. Historically, since 1962, monthly totals by arrival date have been Jan (21), Feb (11), Mar (112), Apr (15), May (13), Oct (13), Nov (22) and Dec (8). [PJ]

## Raven

*Corvus corax*

*Scarce and increasing breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.*

Almost one thousand records were submitted from localities across the county, with numbers more-or-less evenly split between West and East Sussex. Whilst every record has intrinsic value, those records relating to breeding activity, multiple sightings and winter roosts are especially welcome.

A detailed analysis of the SOS database in 2014 revealed a minimum of 76 Raven territories. Given that Ravens have large broods and are very productive it is highly likely that the Sussex population now exceeds 90 pairs. In any given year only a proportion of known territories are likely to be monitored but in 2016 there was reasonable evidence of territorial/breeding activity at 40 different localities, with many observers reporting family parties. Nesting Ravens are generally intolerant of raptor species and there were reports of mobbing behaviour towards Common Buzzard, Red Kite, Peregrine and the long established escaped Red-tailed Hawk near Cocking.



*Raven, Pett Level, January 2016 (Howard Statham)*

The mixed winter roost discovered in December 2014 was visited on 14 Jan 2016, when there were 61 Ravens and 33 Red Kites. It was re-visited in December but the Ravens had moved and although the new roost site was found no accurate counts were undertaken.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of multiple sightings. Not including those obviously related to the known downland roost, there were eight at Burpham on 21 Jan with a further ten on 4 Feb. There were 15 at Patching on 28 Jan. Seven were counted during a BBS at Pevensey Levels on 11 Jun and at Beachy Head, there was a party of nine on 7 Jul and a party of ten on 22 Aug. At Cuckmere Haven, there was a flock of eight on 9 Jul. At Cissbury there was a flyover of six and then four more on 27 Aug. At Chantry Hill, there were 39 Ravens 'playing in the wind', gently calling to each other. The entire flock headed east, only to return 15 minutes later. Some 2-3 hours later there were still 14 Ravens cavorting in the wind. At The Burgh, there were flocks of 39 and five on 8 Sep and another flock of ten on 18 Oct. Finally, there was a flock of 23 on downland between the Adur and the A24 on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

There were many observations of interest but a few diverse records stood out for various reasons. At Selsey Bill, there were two Ravens on 26 Mar, which was only the second record ever for this well-watched location. However, this was followed up by two on 29 Mar, a single on 3 Apr and another single on 19 Oct. There was a garden tick at Shermanbury on 3 Jul when two birds flew over the house for the first time in 40 years. These records have been given special mention as evidence of the general dispersal of Ravens within the county, for this is a species that may be seen anywhere in Sussex. As with any large predatory species there is the inevitable 'downside' to a wonderful success story; unfortunately there was another report on 8 Mar of the Kittiwake colony at Seaford Head being raided. [MEK]

## Goldcrest

## *Regulus regulus*

*Very common breeding resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Goldcrests were recorded in 426 tetrads, an increase of 26 over 2015, and 101 more than in 2014, with confirmed breeding in eight and probable in another 38. In the first winter period a total of 96 Goldcrests was recorded in 52 of 117 1-km squares surveyed for the SWBS, a slightly lower percentage than in 2015, with a maximum count of six at West Lavington on 4 Feb. Also reported were eight at Cliff End (Pett) on 13 Jan, 20 at Pulborough Brooks and ten at Warnham LNR on the 16<sup>th</sup>, ten at Eridge on the 19<sup>th</sup> and ten at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. In February 17 were at Pulborough Brooks on the 26<sup>th</sup> and ten at The Mens (Petworth) the same day. In March birds were seen availing themselves of garden feeders containing sunflower hearts and suet balls.

During the BBS Goldcrests were found in 78 squares from 166 surveyed with a maximum count of 14 on 9 Jun again at West Lavington. There were 49 pairs at Broadwater Warren and 28 at Fore Wood (Crowhurst). The first record of successful fledging was at the University of Sussex on 1 Jun. Two adults with two fledglings were seen at Rustington on 9 Jun and more young birds were at West Tarring (Worthing) the next day.

The number of birds encountered during ringing activities was much lower than in 2015 when over 200 were found at three different sites; this year 76 new birds were ringed at Ladywell (Coombes), 114 at Charleston Reedbed and 72 at Pett Level. A bird ringed in October 2015 at Cissbury was retrapped there on 22 Oct.

Migration at coastal and downland sites was observed from early September with the first autumn birds at Beachy Head on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Cissbury on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at Seaford Head on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The Hastings migration watch team reported only 86 birds, compared with 435 in 2015. The lower figures of birds ringed and recorded were indicative of poor breeding success this year. However, there was some contradiction with the results of the second winter period SWBS when there were



162 encounters in 63 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed, similar to the numbers in 2015 with a maximum of 12 at Maplehurst Wood (Hastings) on 26 Nov. Also during the final two months of the year, 30 were seen at Exceat (Cuckmere Valley) on 1 Nov, 28 at Warnham LNR on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 15 at Amberley Wildbrooks on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and in December 20 was the highest count at St Leonard's Forest on the 15<sup>th</sup>, while ten at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) on the 20<sup>th</sup> was the highest number the observer had recorded there. [VPB]

## Firecrest

## *Regulus ignicapilla*

*Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.*

Firecrests were recorded in 173 tetrads, with confirmed breeding in just one, but probable or possible breeding in another 38. This is an increase on the 2015 figure of 165 tetrads, which it itself was 33 more than that in 2014. There were fluctuations in these totals between 2007 and 2013, with 2007 being the lowest at 72 tetrads, and 2011 being the highest at 120, but in the last three years the species has shown a consistent increase in range and its breeding status in the county has now been upgraded to “fairly common”.



*Firecrest, Arundel, February 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

Most reports during this period were of one but three were at Seaford on 4 Jan, three at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, four at Westdean Woods on the 25<sup>th</sup> and six at West Harting on 10 Feb. In March nine were at West Dean on the 7<sup>th</sup>, eight were singing at Darwell Wood on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, ten were recorded at Beachy Head on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 13 at Cuckmere Haven on the 27<sup>th</sup>. West Beach (Littlehampton) and Climping held ten and 12 respectively on the 30<sup>th</sup>.



During the BBS birds were found in four of the 166 1-km squares surveyed. The earliest report of nest building was from Fernhurst on 25 Mar. At Leggetts Wood (Brightling) there were ten singing males on the 14 Apr and some agitated behaviour was also seen; the observer estimated that the wood contained enough habitat to hold more than 30 pairs. The first fledged young were at Bells Yew Green on 9 Jun, and at least one juvenile was seen at Sheffield Park on 6 Jul.

There were no counts higher than two in the late summer and autumn but there were reports from across the county. A male and female were ringed in a garden in Henfield on 1 Nov, one at Pagham Hbr on the 6<sup>th</sup> was in a prolonged dispute with a Goldcrest, at least three were low down in holly bushes with Goldcrests and Long-tailed Tits at Waltham Brooks on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and six were reported from Westdean Woods on 6 Dec. [VPB]

## Blue Tit

## *Cyanistes caeruleus*

### *Abundant resident.*

Blue Tits were recorded in 590 tetrads, a similar number as in recent years. During the first winter period there were 11 counts of 40 or more; the highest were 80 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Mar and 50 there on 16 Feb, 60 at Roffey (Horsham) on 15 Jan and 50 at Broadbridge Heath on 19 Feb and 11 Mar. The highest early year SWBS count (during which birds were recorded in 110 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed) was 38 at Partridge Green on 15 Feb. During the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, this species was recorded in 76.5% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 78.3% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in only 43 tetrads, a reduction on 2015, and probable in a further 63 which, for this common species, is clearly under recording of breeding. The first record of nest building was at High Salvington on 11 Mar and the first confirmed breeding was at Patcham (Brighton) on 30 Mar. Fledglings were first recorded at Marstake Common (Chailey) on 5 Apr. There were 25 pairs at Pagham Hbr, 28 at both Selwyns Wood (Waldron) and Fore Wood (Crowhurst) and 34 at Broadwater Warren. During the BBS (when they were recorded in 162 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed) the highest early count was 47 at Cowfold on 10 Apr and the highest late count was 29, again at Cowfold on 19 May.

In the autumn, Broadbridge Heath was the only location with a count of 40. Southwater CP held 21 on 3 Sep and observers at Warnham LNR had counts of 20 on several dates. Other than these there were few double figure counts, suggesting a poor breeding season. During the second winter period the highest count was 63 at Broadbridge Heath on 20 Dec, followed by 50 there on 25 Nov and 41 at Partridge Green on 14 Dec, which was the highest late year SWBS count. Counts of over 30 came from only two other locations. [MJC]

## Great Tit

## *Parus major*

### *Abundant resident.*

Great Tits were recorded in 581 tetrads, somewhat more than the 548 in 2015. During the first winter period there were 15 counts of 25 or more with the highest being c.100 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Mar while at Warnham LNR there were consistent counts of 23 to 30 through the period. During the early year SWBS, this species was recorded in 109 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed; there were two high counts of 35 at Northbrook Fm (Worthing) on 6 Feb and 32 at Lyminster the next day. During the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, this species was recorded in 54.9% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 55.8% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 35 tetrads and probable in a further 51, a slight decrease on the previous year, which is clearly under recording this common species. Nest building was first observed at Batemans (Burwash) on 10 Apr, the first occupied nest was noticed at Rustington on the 13<sup>th</sup> and the first young in a nest observed on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The first recording of fledglings was on 15 May at Worthing. There were 11 pairs at Broadwater Warren, 15 at Selwyns Wood (Waldron), 20 around Pagham Hbr and 23 at Fore Wood (Crowhurst). During the BBS Great Tits were recorded in 162 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed with a highest early count of 32 at Slinfold on 30 Apr and the highest late count of 14 at Polegate on 7 Jun. Several counts of 30 were recorded at Warnham LNR in June.

During the autumn there were only two counts of 20 birds, at Warnham LNR on 1 Sep and Broadbridge Heath on the 18<sup>th</sup>, probably indicating a poor breeding season. In the second winter period there were c.45 double-figure counts but only five of 20 or more (rather fewer than in 2015), the highest being 36 at Broadbridge Heath on 20 Dec, 22 at East Kingston (Ferring) on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Warnham LNR on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Polegate on the 14<sup>th</sup> (the latter the highest during the late year SWBS). During the late year SWBS, this species was recorded in 112 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. [MJC]

## Coal Tit

## *Periparus ater*

*Very common resident.*

Coal tits were recorded in 296 tetrads distributed widely across the county, an increase from the previous year. During the first winter period there were just three counts of ten or more birds, with the highest count of 11 at Pulborough Brooks on 29 Feb. Eighty six per cent of the records for this period were of one or two. During the early year SWBS, 93 birds were recorded in 40 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed, with a high count of 10 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 4 Feb. The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch revealed Coal Tits in 26% of gardens surveyed in West Sussex and in 29% in East Sussex.

Territorial behaviour was observed from the middle of January. The first report of confirmed breeding was of a nest containing eggs on 29 Apr at Chelwood Gate (Ashdown Forest). Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads (14 in 2015). There was probable breeding in 20 tetrads (19 in 2015). In total 17 records referred to fledglings, and around half of these records were from Ashdown Forest. During the BBS, 160 birds were reported from 53 of the 1-km 166 squares surveyed with a maximum count of 16 in the Five Hundred Acre Wood (Ashdown Forest) on 19 Jun. At Broadwater Warren, the reserve breeding survey counted 16 pairs. Ten or more birds were recorded at four other locations during the breeding season.

The largest late summer concentrations were 27 at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 13 Jul (with 18 recorded at the same location on the 28<sup>th</sup>) and 22 at Pulborough Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

During the second winter period there was only one sizeable count: 20 at St Leonard's Forest on 15 Dec. Ninety three per cent of the records for this period were of one or two birds. During the late year SWBS, 65 were recorded in 27 of the 136 squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 9 also at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 1 Dec.

There was one accepted record for the continental race, *P.a. ater*, of three at Seaford Head on 16 Mar (MRE) [CJR]

**Marsh Tit***Poecile palustris**Scarce resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Marsh Tits were recorded in 185 tetrads, an increase on the 171 in 2015, mostly in ones and twos as usual. There were three coastal locations where this species was recorded including one at Selsey Bill on 30 Mar, the first record here in over 50 years. The others were Fairlight on 11 dates during the year, and Cliff End (Pett), with two on 5 Aug and 4 Oct. There were also three records from Mallydams Wood and several from the Pett Level area, so the Fairlight and Cliff End records were probably wanderers from an unrecorded breeding site. The highest count during the first winter period was nine at Westdean Woods on 25 Jan; other high counts were eight at Brede High Woods on 10 Jan, seven at Beech Fm (Cuckfield) on 12 Mar and six each at Chilgrove (near Westdean Woods) on 24 Feb and Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 15 Mar.



*Marsh Tit, Ashburnham, December 2016 (Chris Hobden)*

Breeding was confirmed in only five tetrads and probable in 21, which is fewer than in 2015 but more than in 2014. Records during the breeding season were received from 136 locations (80 in 2015). As Marsh Tit is a sedentary species records during this period are probably of potential breeders. The first songster was heard at West Harting on 10 Feb and nest building was first observed at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 18 Apr. Confirmed breeding was first noted on 3 May of a bird with food or faecal sac, also at Pippingford Park. Fledglings, three with both parents, were first seen at Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) on 31 May. Four pairs were recorded at Broadwater Warren and three at Fore Wood (Crowhurst).

A count of 14 was the highest during the autumn and second winter period, at Brede High Woods on 18 Nov. Ten were recorded at St Leonard's Forest on 15 Dec and six at Beckley on

8 Dec. Although these numbers are encouraging, there is evidence of a decline of this species in Southern England and observers are encouraged to submit all records, especially if breeding evidence is obtained. [MJC]

## Bearded Tit

## *Panurus biarmicus*

*Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.*

Bearded Tits were recorded in 12 tetrads with most records coming from the two core coastal areas, Chichester and Pagham Harbours in West Sussex and Pett Level and Rye Hbr in East Sussex. During the first winter period over 91% of records came from the eastern core area; the only other records were of four (including at least one male) at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 30 Jan and two at Thorney Deeps on 6 and 8 Mar.

The highest monthly counts, outside of the breeding season, from the six locations where the species was recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	16	7	9		16	32	58	25	13
Thorney Deeps	-	-	2		-	6	10	-	2
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-		-	3	4	3	-
Newhaven	-	-	-		-	-	-	3	-
Eastbourne	4	-	-		-	-	-	3	-
Pett Level	4	2	4		2	-	20	10	4
Rye Hbr	8	5	3		14	23	24	6	7

Breeding was confirmed at Thorney Deeps where fledged young were seen on 26 May and again in June and July. There were eight pairs at Pett Level and at least eight pairs at Rye Hbr; breeding undoubtedly occurred at both sites.

There were no records of “high flying” this year. During the second winter period most records came from Pett Level and Rye Hbr. Away from the core areas three were recorded at West Rise Marsh on 11 Nov and three at Piddinghoe Pond (Newhaven) on the 13<sup>th</sup>. [MJC]

## Woodlark

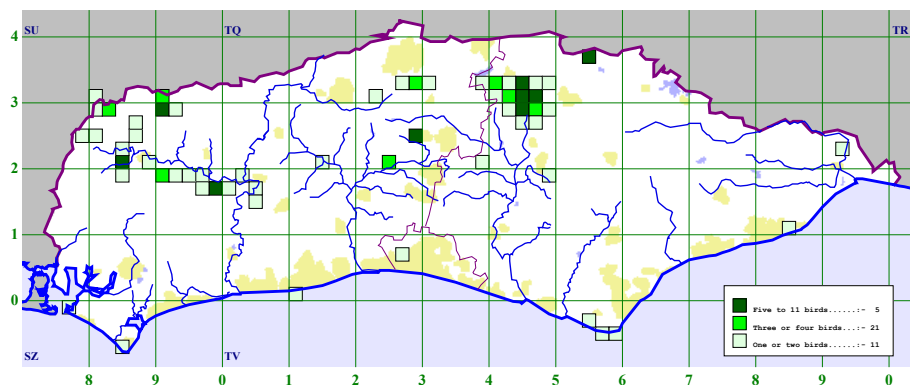
## *Lullula arborea*

*Scarce resident and possibly very scarce passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

The species was recorded in 59 tetrads, up from 54 last year and 48 the year before. Away from the species’ stronghold on Ashdown Forest, reports were received from around a dozen locations during the first winter period, mostly comprising one or two birds, though eight at Iping Common on 5 Jan was noteworthy, as were five at Broxmead (Bolney) on 25 Jan, and three at Twineham Grange on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed from five tetrads, with probable breeding in a further 21, broadly similar to last year. Observers doing the WHBBS found a total of 42 pairs on the heaths of West Sussex, whilst there were 11 pairs recorded at Broadwater Warren and birds were seen in at least

a dozen locations around Ashdown Forest during the breeding season. Woodlarks were singing from late January and the first fledglings noted on Ashdown Forest on 7 Jun. Away from these traditional sites, records were received during the breeding season from Bepton, Northpark Wood (Parham), Pulborough Brooks, St. Leonards Forest, Toad's Hole Valley (Hove), Tilgate Forest (Crawley) and Balcombe.



There were several records from coastal sites during the autumn, including singles at Beachy Head on 9, 10, 21 and 25 Oct and 3 Nov, Seaford Head on 9 Oct, two at Hastings on 10 Oct and one there on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Cuckmere Haven on the 16<sup>th</sup>, West Wittering on the 20<sup>th</sup>, Goring Gap on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and Selsey Bill the following day. The largest count of the autumn was ten at Broxmead on 31 Oct. Thereafter Woodlarks were recorded from just eight sites but there was an unusual mid-winter coastal record of one at Iden (Rye) on 28 Dec. [AH]

## Skylark

## *Alauda arvensis*

*Very common but declining resident, and probably common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

The species was recorded in 353 tetrads, up from 321 last year, and in 31 of 117 1-km squares surveyed in the first winter period during the SWBS and 31 from 136 in the second winter period.

Possibly due to the absence of severe weather, there were few big gatherings during the early part of the year with just two notable counts: 100 at Beachy Head on 1 Jan and 100 at Medmerry on 23 Feb. In April there were 200 at Birling Gap on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

During the BBS Skylarks were found in 75 of 166 squares surveyed across the county. Medmerry was host to 36 pairs and Rye Hbr to 26 pairs but evidence of breeding was received from a wide range of other sites, including the Knepp Estate, Plumpton Plain, Ashdown Forest and Newhaven Tide Mills. The earliest evidence of confirmed breeding was from the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 27 Apr and fledged young were first seen near Uckfield on 6 Jun. Confirmed breeding reports were received from only ten tetrads, but probable breeding was reported from a further 43, an improvement on last year.

From late September onwards, small numbers were recorded arriving at several seawatching and coastal sites, such as Selsey Bill, where 41 were seen coming in off the sea on 30 Oct and a

total of 99 were noted coasting east on 4 Dec. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a high count of 98 W on 20 Oct. There were some slightly larger counts in the autumn too, including 100 on East Guldeford Level on 26 Oct, 119 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 11 Nov, 200 at Medmerry on 19 Nov and in December there were 100 at Thorney Island on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 200 at Sharpsbridge (Newick) on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 180 at Balcombe on the 27<sup>th</sup>. [AH]

## Shore Lark

*Eremophila alpestris*

*Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.*

There were three records in 2016 probably relating to two birds. One at Hastings CP on 8 Oct (AP) seems very likely to have been the same bird seen at Bulverhythe the following day (ASG). The other record was of one briefly at the northern end of East Head on 31 Oct (AG) before flying off across Chichester Hbr. Presumably the same bird had been seen the previous day at Hayling Island (Hants). These were the first county records since 2014 taking the county total to 105 since 14 Nov 1948, 11 of which have occurred in ten years of this century. [PJ]

## Sand Martin

*Riparia riparia*

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

Sand Martins arrived later than usual with 11 N at Selsey Bill and one at Pagham Hbr on the Mar 23; 11 days later than the 10-year average arrival date. Recorded almost daily thereafter and within a few days numbers had built to include 50 at Pulborough Brooks on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Throughout April and May the species was recorded on 44 dates from 42 different sites but the highest counts were from just two sites. At Pulborough Brooks 100 were seen on 11 Apr and 2 May whilst at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) there were 100 on 6 Apr and 80 on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

The 2016 breeding season saw a more positive picture emerge compared with the last few years, with four colonies reported. At Rock Common (Washington) at least ten were prospecting old holes on 14 Apr, young were seen on 5 Aug and young were reported still in nests on 24 Aug. At nearby Storrington c.40 were seen on 11 Jun with four birds seen emerging from nest holes. Between 40 and 50 were at West Heath Sand Pit on 5 May and 29 were watched entering holes at Heath End (Burton) on 31 Jul.

The first returning migrants were observed at Medmerry on 11 Jun followed by 12 SW at St Leonards on 21 Jun and 10 S out to sea at Beachy Head on 4 Jul. Autumn migration stepped up on 6 Jul with 200 at Medmerry, 120 at Pulborough Brooks on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 150 there two days later. A further six three-figure counts were received by the end of July, including 254 (mainly west) at Beachy Head on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 500 at Medmerry on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1000 there on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 300 at Lidsey Lodge on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Between 1 Aug and 19 Sep there were 26 counts of 100 or more with the highest numbers being 1000 at Medmerry on both 18 and 23 Aug, 500 at Pagham Hbr on 16 Aug with 600 there on the next day and 500 at Rye Hbr on 24 Aug, 27 Aug and 5 Sep.

There were 17 records during October, with notable counts from Rye Hbr (40 on the 1<sup>st</sup>) and Telscombe Cliffs (25 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>). The last double-figure count of the year was ten on the 19<sup>th</sup> at Rye Hbr and finally one at Pagham Hbr on the following day. This was in line with recent dates, two days later than for 2015 and the 10-year average too. [DB]



**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

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

Barn Swallows were recorded from almost half (44%) of the tetrads wholly in Sussex during the year. The first was observed at Brighton on 14 Mar, five days later than the previous year although only three days later than the 10-year average arrival date. The next was at Cuckmere Haven on 16 Mar and subsequent records came daily from the 23<sup>rd</sup> onwards. The first double figure count was 50 at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Apr, followed by 12 N at Selsey Bill on 3 Apr and 50 at Yapton on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

There were ten three-figure counts through the spring, all in April, coming from five different locations with the highest being 300 at Weir Wood Res on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 200 there on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 200 at Sidlesham WTW on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 150 at Pulborough Brooks on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and probable in a further 22. Birds on nests were observed from 11 May, at Warnham and a nest containing young was observed on 26 May at Wisborough Green. Having already successfully fledged a first brood, a female was back on the same nest at the reedbed hide at Arundel WWT on 24 Jul, whilst a nest with young was found on 3 Sep, perhaps raising a third brood. Fledging was first noted on 10 Jun, at Birdham, through to 11 Sep. During the BBS Barn Swallows were found in 109 1-km squares from 166 surveyed with a maximum count of 27, probably mainly involving migrants, on 3 May at Beachy Head.

The first autumn movements began in mid-July with 63 W at Selsey Bill on the 17<sup>th</sup>; flocks of between 3 and 60 were common over the next month until migration really got underway in mid-August. From then until early October there were ten counts of 1000 birds or more from seven locations, with highs of 2101 E in 4 hr on 4 Oct at Selsey Bill and 2000 at Uckfield on 28 Sep. The migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 5808 birds on 54 dates between 14 Aug and 3 Nov, with a peak of 1205 on 19 Sep. During this period there were also 116 three-figure counts with maxima of 800 at Rye Hbr on 16 Sep and 750 from both Seaford Head and Ringmer on 13 and 14 Sep respectively.

About 20 were recorded in November which included six roosting in a reedbed at Pett Level on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The penultimate record was one at Widewater (Lancing) on 16 Nov and finally one at Pagham Hbr on 10 Dec was just three days earlier than in 2015 and 17 days later than the 10-year average. [DB]

**House Martin***Delichon urbicum*

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

Tetrads in which House Martins were recorded were markedly down on the previous year (263 cf. 439 in 2015). The first was at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Mar, 12 days later than in 2015 although only five days later than the 10-year average arrival date. One was at the same site two days later and at both Pagham Hbr and Selsey Bill on 29 Mar. The first of 70 double-figure counts during spring was 12 at Warnham LNR 6 Apr, 14 flew over Midhurst on the 12<sup>th</sup> and on the 16<sup>th</sup> there were 50 at Waltham Brooks and 100 at Weir Wood Res. There were eight three-figure counts during April and May, with the highest being 200 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 24 Apr; 300 at the same site on 1 Jun was the highest count of the spring.

During the BBS the species was found in 34 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed. The number of confirmed and probable breeding records returned to the more usual range following on from the BTO House Martin survey of 2015. Thus, confirmed breeding was recorded in 16 tetrads (132 in 2015, 21 in 2014) with probable from a further nine. Nest building was first observed on 12 May at Cocking, whilst the first record of birds on a nest was on 22 May at Rye Hbr. Fledglings were first observed on 12 Aug at Norton (Seaford). With young still being brought food to a nest on 21 Sep in Brighton, this was considered to be a second brood.

The first serious signs of autumn migration were observed towards the end of August, with 800 E at Beachy Head and 150 at Hastings both on 24 Aug. The following day 1000 were observed from Beachy Head and 600 from Seaford Head. Between 7 and 23 Sep there were 11 four-figure counts, the highest being 2500 at Beachy Head on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and 2000 at Seaford Head on the 13<sup>th</sup> and at both Seaford and Beachy Heads on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Throughout September and early October there were 59 three-figure counts, the last of these being 700 at Hastings on 9 Oct. The migration watch team at Hastings recorded a total of 6422 between 17 Aug and 31 Oct with a high of 1850 at West Hill (Hastings) on 18 Sep. During the autumn at Selsey Bill a total of 5550 were recorded with a peak of 1830 W on 17 Sep. The total number of House Martins moving through Sussex during the autumn was probably slightly lower than other recent years, but is still in excess of 30,000 birds.

There were only three records in November; two birds at Selsey Bill on the 4<sup>th</sup>, one at Worthing on the 11<sup>th</sup> and the final record of three on the 19<sup>th</sup> in Crawley. This was five days later than the 10-year average departure date. [DB]



*Red-rumped Swallow, Beachy Head, May 2016 (Laurence Pitcher)*

**Red-rumped Swallow***Cecropis daurica**Rare but increasing vagrant.*

A minimum of three was recorded, all on 12 May. At Selsey Bill one flew east over the gardens there just before 08:00 (AH, OM *et al.*) while at Beachy Head one was seen briefly at Cow Gap at 08:15 and was followed 30 minutes later by two feeding over the sports field in Whitbread Hollow where they remained until 10:20 (LP). At 14:00 what were presumably the same two birds were relocated at Hodcombe (MEC, RHC, LP). If these sightings relate to only three birds, the county total since 1962 moves on to 47, of which 29 have been this century. [PJ]

**Cetti's Warbler***Cettia cetti**Scarce but increasing resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.*

During January and February there were reports from 33 different sites, similar to the same period in 2015 and comprising at least 75 individuals, a 23% increase over the previous year, although there was only one encounter, at Pagham Hbr, during the early year SWBS. There were three at Beeding Brooks on 23 Jan, five at Combe Haven on the 17<sup>th</sup>, five at Thorney Deeps on the 24<sup>th</sup> and six at Rye Hbr on 6 Jan and Arundel WWT on 21 Feb. Eight were recorded on 24 Jan in a tetrad at Southease.

During the BBS the species was found in 13 1-km squares from 166 surveyed with a maximum count of seven on 7 May in a square at Rye Hbr. Seven singing males were heard in a 4-km stretch of Lidsey Rife (Barnham) on 20 Apr. At Thorney Deeps there were ten singing males throughout April and May and a pair with four fledged young were seen there on 24 May. During the breeding season there were 27 singing males at Pagham Hbr, 13 at Rye Hbr, and 19 at Filsham LNR; all three sites showing a slight increase in numbers.

Ten singing males were reported throughout April and May at Thorney Deeps with fledged young first noted there on 24 May. On a visit to Arundel WWT on 2 Jul an observer heard at least 11 singing males, saw birds carrying food at three widely separated sites and a total of five fledged young at two different sites. He also heard a very unusual song from a bird hidden in brambles, described as a slow, gentle, muted Cetti's but finishing with a soft decrescendo resembling a distant Willow Warbler. This elicited a loud response song from a nearby male.

Seventy different birds were trapped at Pett Level, fewer than in 2015, but numbers ringed at Charleston Reedbed increased by five to 18. A more unusual location for this species was at Beachy Head where a bird ringed at Charleston Reedbed on 3 Jul was controlled on 30 Jul, and retrapped a further six times between then and the end of August.

During the second winter period there were reports from 34 different locations, of a minimum of 66 different birds, with four singing at Thorney Deeps on 23 Nov, five at Bexhill on the 10<sup>th</sup>, nine ringed at Pett Level on the 11<sup>th</sup> and ten at Arundel WWT on 17 Dec.

Cetti's Warblers were recorded in 98 tetrads in 2016, confirmed as breeding in four, but with probable breeding in another 15. This indicates a slight decrease in distribution from 2015, but is still the second highest number of tetrads in which the species has been reported during the past ten years. Perhaps colonisation of the most suitable habitat has now occurred and consolidation is taking place? The 2017 SOS Cetti's Warbler survey should help clarify the position. [VPB]

**Long-tailed Tit***Aegithalos caudatus*

*Very common resident.*

Long-tailed tits were recorded in 455 tetrads spread widely across the county, an increase from 2015. During the first winter period there were 63 records of ten or more birds, and the highest counts were 25 at Eridge Rocks LNR on 15 Jan and 25 at Cliff End (Pett) on 19 Feb. Two hundred and fifty seven birds were recorded in the January/February SWBS, and the species was recorded in 50 (43%) of the 117 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 24 on 16 Jan at Petworth. During the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, the species was recorded in 23% of the gardens surveyed in West Sussex and 19% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 27 tetrads, a considerable decrease of 33% from the previous year, and considered as probable in 40 tetrads but there was little breeding detail reported this year. The earliest report of birds holding territory was at Willingdon on 9 Jan and nest building activity was first reported at Lewes Brooks on 26 Feb (compared with 4 Feb in 2015). Birds were reported on a nest at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 11 Apr and the earliest report of fledged young was at Pulborough Brooks on 4 May. A loose flock of 15 comprising adults and many young was seen at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 25 May. During the BBS, 293 birds were found in 76 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 17 at Verdley Place (Fernhurst) on 9 Jun. Late summer/early autumn high counts were 35 at Pagham Hbr on 20 Jul and 50 there on 19 Sep.

During the late autumn and second winter period there were 99 records of ten or more birds, with a high count of 50 at Ivy Lake on 18 Nov. Three hundred and ninety two birds were recorded during the late year SWBS, and the species was recorded in 58 (43%) of the 136 squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 30 on 8 Dec at Beckley. [CJR]

An individual of the northern race *A.c. caudatus* was found on 29 Feb at Birling Gap, where for 30 minutes it came repeatedly to bird feeders in the company of two Long-tailed Tits of the British race *A.c. rosaceus* (JP, LP). [MM]

**Yellow-browed Warbler***Phylloscopus inornatus*

*Scarce visitor; mostly in late autumn.*

Allowing for likely duplication, an unprecedented total of about 35 was recorded, continuing the upward trend of recent autumns. Of these, four were in September, 27 in October and four in November. The previous highest total was 20 in autumn 2013. The first trapped at Pett Level on 11 Sep (PEJ *et al.*) was the earliest ever autumn arrival exceeding the previous earliest (16 Sep 2011) by five days. It was followed by three more in September at Beachy Head on the 19<sup>th</sup> (LP) and 23<sup>rd</sup> (CAH) and at Arundel WWT on the 24<sup>th</sup> (DGCH). There were no further records until 2 Oct when there was one at Cissbury (BFF) followed by further singles at Birling Gap (RJF) and Pevensy Bay (AR) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, trapped at Charleston Reedbed (SP, TWP) and seen at Birling Gap (SHL) on the 6<sup>th</sup>, Thorney Island on the 7<sup>th</sup> (CBC), Cissbury on the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> (BGRI, CHM, JM *et al.*), Bewbush (Crawley) (ASC) and Goring (SPS) on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Beachy Head (CFB) and Selsey Bill (CRJ) on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Harry's Bush (Seaford Head) on the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> (with two there on the 10<sup>th</sup>) (MRE), Pulborough Brooks on the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> (GT *et al.*), trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 11<sup>th</sup> (SP, TWP), Highdown (Worthing) (BPO) and Partridge Green (DH) on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Durfold (Warnham) on the 13<sup>th</sup> (PNP), Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on the 15<sup>th</sup> (DGB, KBG,

SHL), 17<sup>th</sup> (RJF) and 19<sup>th</sup> (SW), Shoreham on the 20<sup>th</sup> (DLS), East Beach (Selsey) on the 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> (OM, SSR), Lancing on the 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> (BFF), Bewbush (Crawley) on the 25<sup>th</sup> (ASC), Glyne Gap Marsh on the 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> (ASG) and Hollingdean (Brighton) on the 28<sup>th</sup> (GK). There were also two at Charleston Reedbed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (JAGD, SP, TWP, NS). In November there was one trapped at Pett Level on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (PEJ *et al.*) while single birds at three different Arundel locations on the 9<sup>th</sup> (MCD), 19<sup>th</sup> (DGCH) and 22<sup>nd</sup> (MCD) may all have been different. The county total this century moves on to at least 148 at an average of 8.7 per year. [PJ]



*Yellow-browed Warbler, Beachy Head, September 2016 (Laurence Pitcher)*

## Wood Warbler

## *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

*Very scarce and declining summer resident and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

After a slight increase in the number of tetrads recorded in 2015 (from 13 to 15) a sad decrease occurred in 2016 with records from only eight tetrads and again, no evidence of breeding.

A very late start for the records in spring with the first not until 4 May when reported from Pulborough Brooks. Considering the 10-year county average arrival date of 16 Apr one wonders what the hold-up was? Others were reported from Newhaven on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Coates Common on the 16<sup>th</sup> and The Ridge (Ashdown Forest) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

All autumn passage records were of single birds starting at Pulborough Brooks on 29 Jul and then at Pett Level on 1 Aug, at Seaford Head on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Beachy Head on the 10<sup>th</sup>, Arundel WWT



on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Pulborough Brooks on the 14<sup>th</sup> and lastly, at Arundel Park on the 17<sup>th</sup>, much earlier than the 10-year county average departure date of 16 Sep.

From 2017 records of this species will need to be supported by a description for assessment by the SOSRC. [TWP]

## Chiffchaff

## *Phylloscopus collybita*

*Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.*

Chiffchaffs were recorded from 500 tetrads, more or less the average for this species. The number of records for January was slightly down on 2015 but not significantly. Recorded from the 1<sup>st</sup>, the maximum at given sites were five at New Lake (Chichester GP) on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, eight at the Railwayland LNR (Lewes) on the 12<sup>th</sup>, six at Burpham on the 21<sup>st</sup> and eight at Coldwaltham WTW on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There were no counts of double figures anywhere in the county during this month. It was much the same story for February but Lidsey WTW held 20 on the 7<sup>th</sup> and at Sidlesham WTW at least 12 were recorded on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Early March continued the theme; at Waltham Brooks there were ten on the 8<sup>th</sup> and at Steyning WTW 15 on the 18<sup>th</sup>. What seems to have been a small influx occurred with 12 at Pagham Hbr on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Records had been coming in throughout the county during the month but it was not until the end that numbers seem to take off with Pulborough Brooks hosting 13 on the 24<sup>th</sup> and then 27 there on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There were 15 at Pett Level, 14 at Weir Wood Res, 12 on the Knepp Estate, 12 at Arlington Res and 11 at Selsey Bill, all on the 31<sup>st</sup>. April started with 18 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on the 1<sup>st</sup>, then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> there were 19 at Ashcombe Bottom (Lewes), 29 at Pulborough Brooks and 22 on Thorney Island. Numbers then grew almost everywhere, most notably at Cliff End (Pett) with 28 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) with 15 also on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 21 at West Beach (Littlehampton) on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Counts of 20 plus were common throughout the county during April ending with 20 at Warnham LNR on the 30<sup>th</sup>, by which time Sussex was inundated with Chiffchaffs singing almost everywhere!

Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads with probable breeding in a further 45, a minimal increase in both these counts over 2015. During breeding surveys three pairs were recorded at Medmerry, 38 pairs at Pagham Hbr, four pairs at Graffham Common, three pairs at Waltham Brooks, 14 pairs at Pulborough Brooks, 16 pairs in Friston Forest, 34 singing males at Broadwater Warren, 15 pairs at Selwyns Wood (Waldron), 19 pairs at Filsham LNR and 28 singing males at Fore Wood (Crowhurst). The species was found in 144 (90%) of the 166 1-km squares surveyed for the BBS.

It was very difficult to ascertain when return passage began but it seems to have been in early August when birds were noted at Beachy Head and Seaford Head on the 9<sup>th</sup>, although odd birds may have trickled through sooner. August was relatively quiet but 20 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 31<sup>st</sup> indicated a solid movement especially as the number had increased to 30 by 1 Sep. Carrying on in September at Ladywell (Coombes) 50 were recorded on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 24 at Seaford Head on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 90 were observed at Hastings on the 19<sup>th</sup> by the migration watch team who recorded a total of 900 between 6 Sep and 14 Nov. At Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) another 40 were recorded on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 75 at Ladywell and 26 at Cissbury on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 50 at Church Norton on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 100 at Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 50 at Seaford Head also 23<sup>rd</sup> and 40 there on 24<sup>th</sup>. Brooklands (Worthing) held 40 on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 80 were at Ladywell on the 28<sup>th</sup>. On the 30<sup>th</sup> there were 40 at Brooklands again, 65 at Seaford Head and 80 at Cissbury. Passage continued into October with 171 at Seaford Head on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 80 in the Pagham Hbr area. The 2<sup>nd</sup> produced



another fall with 148 at Ladywell and 40 at Cissbury. Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) hosted 120 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 'birds were seemingly everywhere' at Belle Tout (Beachy Head) with 200 counted and there were 60 at Seaford Head on the 9<sup>th</sup>. These were the last of the bigger counts of the autumn although passage was still very noticeable until the month's end. November and December totals were mainly single figure counts but noteworthy were 22 at Waltham Brooks on 8 Dec and 30 at Coldwaltham WTW on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Chiffchaffs were recorded until the month's end with WTWs being the favoured areas. Singles were also at Selsey Bill and Broadwater (Worthing) on the 31<sup>st</sup>. [TWP]

Birds showing the characteristics of one of the eastern races *P.c. tristis* or *P.c. abietinus* were recorded at several sites, often in the company of Common Chiffchaffs and frequently associated with water treatment works. Up to two were seen regularly at Coldwaltham WTW between 1 Jan and 30 Mar (mo) but all other records in the early months were of single birds. These were at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 9 Jan (ARK), on three dates between 31 Jan and 5 Mar at Lidsey Canal (Barnham) (mo) at Lavant WTW between 11 Feb and 4 Mar (GAH), at Steyning WTW between 12 and 28 Mar (BFF), in a hedgerow on Beeding Brooks on 7 Apr (DB) and finally in the Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 15 Apr (JFC, RDME, LP). The last two are the only county records for April. During the second winter period up to three were at Coldwaltham WTW between 11 and 27 Dec (ARK).

From 2017 onwards observers are invited to submit descriptions of birds considered to be Siberian Chiffchaffs *P.c. tristis* as this form is separable from *P.c. abietinus* in the field. Useful references include: Dean, A., Bradshaw, C., Martin, J., Stoddart, A. and Wallbridge, G. The Status in Britain of "Siberian Chiffchaff". *Brit. Birds* 2010:320-338. [MM]

## Willow Warbler

## *Phylloscopus trochilus*

*Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

Recorded from a total of 204 tetrads, a substantial drop from the 2015 total of 242. During March records were received from ten sites, the earliest being one at Rye Hbr on 11<sup>th</sup>, eight days earlier than the 10-year county average arrival date. All other records during the month were of single birds except for two at Sidlesham Ferry on the 30<sup>th</sup>. April got off to a good start with ten at Pagham Hbr on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 26 at West Beach (Littlehampton) and 13 at Beachy Head on the 5<sup>th</sup> with 18 there on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Observers at West Beach scored again with a nice fall of 50 on the 19<sup>th</sup> but Beachy Head and Northcommon Fm (Selsey) did better with approximately 100 each on that day. All through the month there was a steady influx and in early May 60 were at Beachy Head on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the last major fall of the spring.

Breeding was confirmed in only five tetrads and probable in a further 12. A survey of Broadwater Warren revealed 22 singing males but the prime breeding area remains Ashdown Forest. During the BBS the species was encountered in 33 (20%) of the 166 1-km squares surveyed.

A bird recorded at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on the 4 Jul was surely a returning migrant as were single birds at Beachy Head on the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> and more certainly the seven there on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 44 on the 30<sup>th</sup>. A major movement was in progress in early August with high counts of 100 at Ladywell (Coombes) on the 1<sup>st</sup>; 80 at Beachy Head on the 5<sup>th</sup>; 120 at Beachy Head, another 100 at Ladywell and 60 at Seaford Head on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The passage continued with 120 at Beachy Head and 70 at Seaford Head on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 130 at Beachy Head on the 10<sup>th</sup> and on the 12<sup>th</sup> 40 at Ladywell and 45 at Seaford Head. Passage then quietened considerably but other smaller falls at

Beachy Head were 60 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 40 on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and 50 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Later in the month 32 were trapped at Cissbury and 30 were at Seaford Head on the 27<sup>th</sup> and August ended with 60 at Beachy Head and 72 at Seaford Head on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The largest count in September was 47 at Beachy Head on the 11<sup>th</sup>. There were 13 records in October, the last records for the year being singles at Pevensey Levels on the 14<sup>th</sup> and Pagham Hbr on the 21<sup>st</sup>, six days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [TWP]

## Blackcap

## *Sylvia atricapilla*

*Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.*

**2015:** During the BBS Blackcaps were found in 141 1-km squares from 176 surveyed.

**2016:** Though only a single bird was encountered in the 117 1-km squares during the SWBS in the first winter period, the species was recorded at 20 different sites, mostly gardens, representing at least 30 individuals, half the total reported in the first winter period of 2015, but similar to that from 2014. Note however that BTO Garden Birdwatch Survey data was not available for the preparation of this report. Two or three were seen at sites in Worthing, High Salvington, Broadbridge Heath, Brighton, Hassocks, Seaford and St. Leonards and on 11 Jan three females and a male were in a garden in West Tarring (Worthing). Birds were taking advantage of food sources such as fat balls, sunflower hearts, myrtle and ivy berries. An individual was heard singing at Hastings on 20 Feb, but one at Cuckmere Haven on 16 Mar may have been the first migrant. Reports, many of singing birds, increased from the first week in April; 14 were at Pulborough Brooks on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 11 at Cliff End (Pett) and 12 at Pagham Hbr on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 20 at Seaford Head on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 15 at Weir Wood Res on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

During the BBS Blackcaps were found in 141 1-km squares from 166 surveyed with a maximum count of 18 on 19 Apr in a square at West Lavington. There were 28 pairs at Pagham Hbr (nine more than 2015), 11 at Pulborough Brooks, 15 at Broadwater Warren, 18 at Fore Wood (Crowhurst), and six at Filsham LNR. A long-lived male, ringed as a juvenile on 20 Jun 2009, returned once again to the site at Cissbury and was retrapped on 17 May, and females with brood patches were caught at Cissbury on 17 May and at Ladywell (Coombes) on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The first fledgling was reported from Arundel WWT on 4 Jun, and a brood of fledglings was observed being fed there on 2 Jul. The species was recorded in 418 tetrads in 2016, confirmed as breeding in only nine, but with probable breeding in another 54.

Records of birds on passage this year were significantly lower in number than in 2015, with September maxima of only 68 recorded at Beachy Head on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 90 at Seaford Head on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Sidlesham Ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 40 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 22 by the Hastings migration watch team on the 19<sup>th</sup>. However, an estimated 1000 were at Pett Level on the morning of 23 Sep, when 350 were counted crossing a gap in a hedge in about ten minutes. Whilst still among the most abundant passage birds, totals were reduced at all the regular ringing sites this year. Three hundred different birds were trapped at Cissbury, 335 at Ladywell; 395 new birds were ringed at Charleston Reedbed, 625 at Beachy Head and 2131 at Pett Level.

During the second winter period SWBS, two were found in two of the 134 1-km squares surveyed. Twelve were ringed at Pett Level on 1 Nov, and one male at Cissbury on the 19<sup>th</sup>. These November birds could have been lingering migrants. December records came from 17 different sites, mainly of single birds, although two males were in a Steyning garden on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and a male and female at West Tarring on three dates. [VBP]

**Garden Warbler***Sylvia borin**Common summer visitor and passage migrant.*

The first report was of a one at Steyning on 1 Apr, three days earlier than the 10-year average date, and five days earlier than in 2015, though the next individual was not recorded until 7 Apr at Pagham Hbr. The first East Sussex bird was at Westmeston on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

During the BBS Garden Warblers were found in 26 1-km squares from 166 surveyed with a maximum count of three on 3 Jun in a square at the west end of Weir Wood Res. Most sightings in early May were of single birds, though five were found along the Wey and Arun Canal on 3 May and the same number on the Knepp Estate and at Weir Wood Res on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Later in May nine territories were located in two adjoining tetrads at Barcombe and ten individuals counted at the Knepp Estate. The species had been absent from the ringing site at Cissbury during 2015, but a male was singing there on 17 May, the same day that a female with a brood patch was retrapped. She had been ringed as an adult bird in July 2012, hence was in her fifth calendar year. Two more females with a brood patch were captured there on 26 May and 11 Jun but no juveniles were found at the site. Two pairs were at both Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks, and four singing males were present at Broadwater Warren. On 16 Jun a nest with young was reported at Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest) and the first fledged young were noted at Weir Wood Res on the same day. The species was recorded in 120 tetrads in 2016, confirmed breeding in only three, but with probable breeding in another ten.

Return passage started early in August and continued in strength until early September. However at two of the county's ringing sites, fewer birds were trapped; 138 at Pett Level compared with 210 in 2015, and at Beachy Head only 24, half the 2015 total and only one-fifth of the number in 2014. In the second half of September there were only two reports, of one at Patcham on the 17<sup>th</sup> and two at Pett Level on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The final record, 16 days later than the 10-year average date, was one ringed at Pett Level on 30 Oct. [VPB]

**Barred Warbler***Sylvia nisoria**Very scarce autumn visitor.*

A juvenile briefly at Bishopstone (Seaford) on 23 Sep (TH) takes the county total to 64, of which 19 have been this century. Dates have ranged from 17 Aug to 31 Oct with nine in August, 42 in September and 13 in October (mean arrival date 19 Sep). [PJ]

**Lesser Whitethroat***Sylvia curruca**Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.*

The first report was of a single bird at Pagham Hbr on 12 Apr, three days earlier than in 2015, but two days later than the 10-year average arrival date. The first East Sussex record was of three at Cliff End (Pett) one day later. On the 17<sup>th</sup> six were at Seaford Head, three were at Marsh Fm (Yapton) on the 18<sup>th</sup>, four at Cadborough (Rye) the following day and six at Rye Hbr on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

During the BBS the species was found in 19 1-km squares from 166 surveyed with a maximum count of three on 1 May in a square at Laughton. Nine males were heard singing at Thorney Island, there were 17 pairs at Pagham Hbr, an increase of eight over 2015, but only nine pairs

at Rye Hbr compared with 16 in 2015. The first fledged young were noted at Arundel WWT on 4 Jun, where an adult was also observed carrying food on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and three adults with three juveniles were seen at Castle Hill LNR (Newhaven) the next day. Lesser Whitethroats were recorded in 130 tetrads, a decrease of 11 over 2015, confirmed as breeding in five, with probable or possible breeding in a further 59.

During return passage ten at Seaford Head on 12 and 24 Aug and 11 at Beachy Head on the 23<sup>rd</sup> were the only counts in double figures. At Pett Level 49 new birds were ringed (55 in 2015), 29 at Charleston Reedbed (45 in 2015) and 12 (16 in 2015) at Beachy Head, the comparisons indicative of poor breeding success this year. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded only four at various locations in the area between 13 Aug and 17 Sep, dramatically low numbers compared with 34 reported by the group in 2015 and 148 in 2014. The final sighting in West Sussex was one in the lower Arun Valley on 23 Sep, and the last one was at Rye Hbr on the 27<sup>th</sup>. This departure date was 16 days earlier than the 10-year average; unusually there were no records in October. [VPB]

## Common Whitethroat

## *Sylvia communis*

*Very common summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

The earliest report was of a single bird at Seaford Head on 3 Apr, one day later than the 10-year average arrival date. One was seen at Pulborough Brooks the following day; the first arrival on Ashdown Forest was on the 5<sup>th</sup> and at Rye Hbr two days later. Numbers built up thereafter, with eight at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 13<sup>th</sup>, seven at Seaford Head on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and 14 at West Beach (Littlehampton) on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

During the BBS, Whitethroats were found in 102 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed, broadly similar to the numbers in 2015, with a maximum count again coming from a square at Rye Hbr where there were 31 on 7 May. On 27 Apr 25 were recorded in only 45 minutes at Sheepcote Valley, 20 were seen at Round Hill (Steyning) on 1 May, and 24 at Thorney Island and 40 at Pagham Hbr, both on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Fewer territories were mapped at Rye Hbr, 31 compared to 50 in 2015, but at Pagham Hbr the number of pairs increased from 32 in 2015 to 59 this year. Fourteen pairs were at Medmerry and there were 14 singing males at Broadwater Warren. Ten birds were seen at Beachy Head on 16 Jun but little song heard, as most were busy collecting food. The first evidence of successful breeding was from a pair with four newly fledged young at Pagham Hbr on 18 Jun. Two pairs with young were seen at Weir Wood Res on 20 Jun and parents with five young just fledging were at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Twenty recorded at Sidlesham Ferry (Pagham Hbr) on 9 Jul included three families of freshly fledged young. The species was recorded in 319 tetrads, confirmed as breeding in 20 with probable breeding in 58.

Sheepcote Valley continued to hold good numbers throughout the summer and autumn, with 40 counted in less than an hour on 13 Jul, increasing with the addition of passage birds to 50 on 31 Aug and 80 on 5 Sep. Passage appeared to peak in late August, with the only three figure count being of 120 at Beachy Head on 23 Aug. The following day there were 85 at Seaford Head. The September maxima were 55 at Beachy Head on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 40 at Seaford Head on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. The numbers of birds trapped for ringing at Beachy Head and Cissbury were fewer than in the previous two years, 72 at Beachy Head (206 in 2015, 256 in 2014) and 23 at Cissbury (53 in 2015, 62 in 2014). However the total at Pett Level increased slightly, with 295 this year compared to 243 in 2015. Ten at Pagham Hbr on 18 Sep was the last count in double figures, and in October there

were reports from only eight sites. The final record was one at Hastings CP on 24 Oct, three days later 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.

It is pleasing to report that Dartford Warblers, in the past two years, appear to be recovering from the two cold winters of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. They were recorded in 38 tetrads this year, almost four times as many as in 2012. The estimated maximum monthly counts and 1-km squares were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	22	10	15	26	21	22	19	10	12	28	30	28
No. of 1-km squares	18	12	11	15	12	17	10	10	7	19	13	15



Dartford Warbler, Ashdown Forest, March 2016 (Gary Faulkner)

In January, a minimum of three were reported at two West Sussex commons and a minimum of 11 at seven sites on Ashdown Forest. Reports from four West Sussex Commons in February and March were mainly of single birds. In February and March, there were reports of single males or females on Ashdown Forest, with records from seven sites and in March three were seen at one

site on the 4<sup>th</sup>. There were also records of individuals at sites around Pagham Hbr (two on 28 Feb), Medmerry, Shoreham-by-Sea, Pulborough Brooks and Beachy Head (four on 1 Jan), as well as at Hastings CP during February. One bird was recorded at Beachy Head on 3 Mar and two were seen at Holmbush Fm landfill (Faygate) on 6 Mar, with one also seen there on 11 Mar.

During the WHBBS 17 territories were recorded (see table on page 209) on the West Sussex heaths. There was evidence confirming breeding at one West Sussex common in June and at two sites on Ashdown Forest, with fledged young seen at one site in June and at another in July and August. Activity indicating probable breeding was recorded at another 11 sites on Ashdown Forest and possible breeding at another 16.

On the West Sussex commons, four were at one site on 11 Sep with three on 3 Oct, and four at another site on 20 Oct. Singles were seen at two other locations in the autumn. On Ashdown Forest, a juvenile was recorded on 5 Sep, with adults at more than ten sites during the autumn. Coastal activity increased in mid-September, with one reported on various dates from 17 Sep to 25 Oct at Selsey. From mid to late October, small numbers (ones, twos, or threes) were also seen at Thorney Island, Medmerry, and Pagham Hbr. Four were reported on 10 Oct at Beachy Head as well as one on 11 Oct and 13 Oct. At Hastings CP, three birds, including two males, were seen on 22 Oct, with further sightings there over the next few days.

There were reports of singles at Hastings CP in early November and at Pagham Hbr on 13 Nov and on four dates during December. Two were reported at Beachy Head on 13 Nov, with one seen here on 19 Nov and 22 Dec. Individuals were also seen at Thorney Island, Selsey, Medmerry, East Head (Chichester Hbr) and Rye Hbr during November and December. There were also reports from ten locations on Ashdown Forest during this time, mainly of ones, but occasionally of twos or threes. Eight, which was the highest count of the year, were recorded at one West Sussex common on 20 Dec and there were counts of up to four birds at three others. [AR]

## Grasshopper Warbler

## *Locustella naevia*

*Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

A singing male at Waltham Brooks on 11 Apr was the first record, two days later than the 10-year average arrival date. One was also heard there the following day, and two reported on both the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Throughout April records came from six other sites: Selsey Bill, Pagham Hbr, where there were three on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Pulborough Brooks, Amberley Wild Brooks, Warnham LNR and Seaford Head. Unlike 2015 when none was reported during the latter half of May or June, during an SWT survey at Waltham Brooks on 22 Jun two males were reeling approximately 100m apart. Both birds were clearly visible through binoculars and often the two birds reeled simultaneously giving a stereophonic effect, captured on the observer's smartphone.

There were no records between 25 Jun and 15 Jul but as return migration commenced, one was at Arundel WWT on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and single birds were at Beachy Head on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Climping Gap on 20<sup>th</sup>. There must have been breeding success elsewhere in Britain and Ireland however, as 312 were ringed at Pett Level between 26 Jul and 2 Oct, an increase of 10% over the site's 2015 total. Thirty-one were ringed at Charleston Reedbed, ten at Beachy Head RS, two at Cissbury, and one at Ladywell (Coombes) on 9 Oct, which proved to be the final record of the year, three days earlier than the 10-year average date. [VPB]



**Booted Warbler***Iduna caligata**Very rare vagrant.*

One was seen and photographed at close range at Hope Gap (Seaford Head) on 12 Oct (RCS). The record is the first since 2013, when one was found at the same site on 30 Sep, and has been accepted by BBRC. The county total moves to six. [MM]

**Melodious Warbler***Hippolais polyglotta**Very scarce visitor.*

After a blank year in 2015, there was just one record from 2016, of a single bird at Birling Gap on 23 Aug (JFC, DRC, RKH). It proved elusive, being seen just “three times in over an hour before being lost in gardens” (JFC’s Birding blog). This raises the number seen this century to 19, of which 14 have been in the Beachy Head area, and to 69 records in total. [VPB]



*Aquatic Warbler, Pagham North Wall, August 2016 (Trevor Guy)*

**Aquatic Warbler***Acrocephalus paludicola*

*Formerly very scarce autumn visitor; now rare vagrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

One was seen and photographed at close range at Pagham Hbr on 16 Aug (TJG). The record has been accepted by BBRC. Whilst this is a typical date, it is the first record since 2011 of a

species that returned to the BBRC list in 2015. There has been a steep decline in records nationwide, associated with the reduction in the breeding population in Europe. The photographs by TJG were perhaps the best ever taken of this species in the field in the county. [MM]

## Sedge Warbler

## *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

*Fairly common summer visitor and common passage migrant.*

This species was recorded in 74 tetrads, ten fewer than in 2015 and a worrying trend should it continue. First recorded at Rye Hbr with two there on 1 Apr, two days earlier than in 2015 but only a day later than the 10-year county average arrival date. These were quickly followed by birds at Beeding Brooks on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Pagham Hbr and Scotney GP, both on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The first of the larger counts was on the 12<sup>th</sup> with ten at Waltham Brooks and c.40 at Rye Hbr; on the 22<sup>nd</sup> 50+ were recorded at Amberley Wild Brooks. By early May the species was well ensconced in the county with a BBS count of 27 at Pevensy Levels, 15 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel), 12 at Waltham Brooks, 12 at Pagham Hbr and eight at Climping..

As in 2015 breeding was only confirmed in four tetrads and probable in a further six. Breeding surveys produced 36 territories mapped at Rye Hbr, the same as in the previous year, 31 pairs at Pagham Hbr, eight pairs at Medmerry, five pairs each at Waltham Brooks and Filsham LNR and four pairs at Pulborough Brooks. Elsewhere many records during the breeding season only referred to numbers, not pairs, so it is not possible to ascertain how many pairs are in the county.

The first obvious returning migrants were at Beachy Head and Charleston Reedbed on 17 Jul. Numbers in August, traditionally the main month for emigration of this species, were very disappointing with no significant counts made and none in double figures. Indeed six at Beachy Head on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> and five there and in Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 30<sup>th</sup> were the highest counts. During September there was a similar trickle of records with a high of ten at Sidlesham Ferry on the 15<sup>th</sup>. There were only two records in October, both at Pett Level on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and last recorded there with one ringed on 1 Nov. Not only was this 18 days later than the 10 year average departure date but is also the county's only November record being three days later than the previous latest date of 29 Oct 1961. [TWP]

## Blyth's Reed Warbler

## *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

*Very rare vagrant.*

A singing male seen and photographed at Winchelsea Beach from 17 to 19 Jun (CHD, MGR, BJJ *et al.*) was only the second county record, the first having been trapped at Pett Level on 10 Jun 2011. It would undoubtedly have attracted many more observers than the few who saw it had access constraints not prevented news of its presence from being released. A full account of the bird together with photographs and video clips are available at <http://www.birdguides.com>. [PJ]

## Reed Warbler

## *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.*

The species was recorded from 108 tetrads, a slightly worrying decrease from the 126 in 2015 and a reverse of the upward trend seen in previous years. First recorded with a single bird

at Pagham Hbr on 7 Apr, five days later than in 2015 but spot on for the 10-year county average arrival date. Singles were seen at Rodmell and Thorney Deeps on the 8<sup>th</sup>, then seven at Rye Hbr on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Thereafter seen daily at a multitude of sites in the county with the highest totals being 31 at Sefter Fm (Rose Green) on 3 May, 20 at Medmerry on the 8<sup>th</sup> and another count of 31 at Crutches Fm (Winchelsea) on the 9<sup>th</sup>, and finally for the larger counts: 24 at Filsham LNR on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 22 singing at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on the 26<sup>th</sup>. An interesting record involved one singing from a stand of thick bamboo away from water at Warningcamp on 15 May.

During the breeding season confirmed breeding was recorded from six tetrads, almost half the 2015 total and probable breeding in a further 14 which was one up from the previous year. As in recent past years most of the counts were of numbers of birds so it is not possible to ascertain actual pairs. However 24 pairs were accounted for at Medmerry, 48 pairs at Pagham Hbr, 34 pairs at Filsham LNR and 150 pairs were mapped at Rye Hbr though the actual total there was probably in excess of 200 pairs.

Return passage was first noted at Beachy Head with a single bird on 21 Jul, then another there on the 26<sup>th</sup>, a single at Seaford Head on the 28<sup>th</sup> and eight at the former site on the 30<sup>th</sup>. During August notable records were 15 at Beachy Head on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 11 there on 18<sup>th</sup>, a nice fall of an estimated 40 in Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) and 15 at Seaford Head on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Thereafter numbers dwindled with no counts above ten at any sites. Small numbers were noted in September and October with the last recorded being singles at Ladywell (Coombes), Beeding Brooks and Beachy Head, all on 9 Oct, a remarkably early date; the 10-year county average departure date is 7 Nov. [TWP]

## Waxwing

*Bombycilla garrulus*

*Very scarce winter visitor.*

Four were present in Bewbush (Crawley) and two at Arundel WWT on 29 Nov, part of a winter influx into Britain that otherwise did not reach Sussex until early in 2017. [MM]

## Nuthatch

*Sitta europaea*

*Common resident.*

Nuthatches were recorded in 324 tetrads, slightly more than in 2015. Most records were from inland with few near the coast. During the first winter period there were no double-figure counts; the highest were sevens at Verdley Place (Fernhurst) on 11 Feb, The Mens (Petworth) on 26 Feb, Pulborough Brooks on 29 Feb and Broadbridge Heath on 11 Mar. During the early year SWBS 113 birds were recorded from 45 squares with a maximum of seven at Verdley Place. During the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch Nuthatches were recorded in 8.0% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 8.7% in East Sussex.

During the BBS the species was encountered in 76 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 13 at West Lavington on 19 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads and probable in 24, broadly similar to 2015. The first sign of nest building was recorded in a garden nestbox at Chelwood Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 23 Mar and the first occupied nest was at the same location on 29 Apr. The first fledglings were recorded on 2 Jun at Warnham LNR and at Horsted Keynes the next day. During the summer period the highest count was ten on the 25 Jul, at Pulborough Brooks.

The highest count during the autumn and second winter period was eight at The Mens on 26 Nov followed by seven at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 22 Dec. There were two further counts of six and four counts of five, 12 counts of four and 15 counts of three birds during this period. In the late year SWBS a total of 101 birds were recorded from 47 squares with a maximum of five at Five Ashes on 29 Nov. [GDE]

## Treecreeper

## *Certhia familiaris*

### *Common resident.*

Treecreepers were recorded in 232 tetrads, only 24% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex. During the first winter period there were seven counts of four and eleven of three. Otherwise some 94% of the total for which a count was recorded were of ones and twos.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and was probable in another 21, exactly the same as 2015. Nest building was first recorded on 24 Mar on the Knepp Estate and the first sign of confirmed breeding was of an occupied nest there on 4 Apr. The first record of fledged young was at Pett Level on 2 Jun.

The highest post breeding counts were six at Pulborough Brooks on both 4 Jul and 1 Aug. Likewise, during the autumn and second winter period the highest count was at Pulborough Brooks of five on 19 Sep, followed by four at Lavington Common on 1 Dec. There were six further counts of three with all the other counts of ones or twos. [GDE]

## Wren

## *Troglodytes troglodytes*

### *Abundant resident.*

Wrens were recorded in 568 tetrads in 2016, a slight increase on the last few years. In the early year SWBS, 412 birds were found in 104 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed (cf. 370 in 109 of 136 in 2015); there were five double-figure counts, with a maximum of 15 at Denne Park (Horsham). The highest early year count was of 35 at Cliff End (Pett) in 2½ hr on 21 Mar. During the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch, birds were seen in 26.9% of West Sussex and 28.5% of East Sussex participating gardens. On 15 Jan a bird in Pavilion Gardens (Brighton) was observed climbing a tree trunk, Treecreeper-style. At Selsey Bill a bird came in off the sea on 20 Mar, a particularly unusual occurrence at that time of year.

Breeding was confirmed in 17 tetrads and probable in a further 48 (cf. the similar figures of 19 and 44 in 2015). During the BBS, Wrens were recorded in 161 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed with the sum of the maxima in each square from both early and late counts of 2050 (cf. 1950 in 2015 and 1725 in 2014). There were 84 double-figure counts in the early surveys and 82 in the later, with a maximum of 42 in Tilgate Forest (Crawley) on 19 May. There were 87 pairs at Pagham Hbr (a return to the 2014 level after the substantial drop in 2015); 41 territories were mapped at Rye Hbr (maintaining the increase from the 22 pairs in 2014 to the 37 in 2015); Graffham Common held 21 pairs; Selwyns Wood (Waldron) 39 pairs; Broadwater Warren 108 pairs; Fore Wood (Crowhurst) 62 pairs; and Filsham LNR 24 pairs. There were seven territories in about 1.5 km along the old railway track between Barcombe Cross and Knowlands Wood. Dog fur was used for a nest in Loxwood and at Sidlesham a bird was watched attempting to manipulate a dried leaf its own size.

The first signs of breeding were of courtship and display on 30 Mar at Cissbury, birds visiting a probable nest site on 3 Apr at Wisborough Green, an occupied nest on 15 May at Rustington

and fledged young on 23 May at Broadbridge Heath (cf. 10 May in 2015). Several very young birds were reported in the third week of July. Males were singing against each other at Ladies Mile (Patcham,) on 12 Jun.

In the late year SWBS, 467 birds were found in 113 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed (cf. 396 in 95 of 115 in 2015); the maximum count was 15 at Nutley. It is interesting that no Wrens, one of the most common and widespread species nationally, were found in some 17% of 1-km squares in these surveys. The highest late year count was 39 found around Crowhurst in 2½ hrs on 29 Oct. On 26 Oct, a bird entered a trap used to monitor Harvest Mice at Gatwick. [CB]

## Common Starling

*Sturnus vulgaris*

*Common but declining resident and very common to abundant winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Common Starlings were recorded in 425 tetrads in 2016 and their situation appeared little changed from the previous year. In the early year flocks exceeding 100 occurred at 48 sites. The largest count during this period was of 11,100 roosting at Brighton Palace Pier on 28 Jan. Other large counts included a murmuration of 3000 at Burgess Hill on 3 Jan, 1400 on 4 Jan and 6000 on 14 Jan at Pulborough Brooks, 2000 at Thorney Island on 28 Jan, 1000 at Rodmell Brooks on 2 Feb and 1200 at Cissbury on 3 Mar. Roosts were also reported from reed beds at Weir Wood Res and at the mouth of the R. Arun, West Tarring (Worthing), Henfield and West Blatchington (Hove). In the early year SWBS, Starlings were recorded in 78 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, they were seen in 42.1% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 39% in East Sussex with an average count of 3.3 and 2.7 respectively.

As early as 19 Feb a pair was seen to inspect a potential nest hole in a tree. The earliest records of parents bringing food to the nest were on 18 Apr and fledged juveniles appeared from 14 May. Breeding was confirmed in 47 tetrads and was probable in a further 16. During the BBS the species was found in 103 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed.

A murmuration of 500 birds was noted at Rustington on 26 May rising to 1000 on 12 Jul. Flocks of 100 and over occurred at some 54 sites during the autumn and second winter period; the largest being 2000 at Annington (Bramber) on 15 Oct, 1000 on Waltham Brooks on 24 Oct, 1000 at Rye Hbr on 24 Nov and 1500 at Weir Wood Res two days later. During the Hastings migration watch period the peak count was of 425 on 8 Nov. At Brighton Palace Pier, 11,700 were counted coming to roost on 27 Nov and 18,500 on the last day of the year. In the late year SWBS, Starlings were recorded in 80 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. During this period most flock movements appeared to be to and from roosts but on 24 Nov 150 came in off the sea at Fairlight. [ACG]

## Rose-coloured Starling

*Pastor roseus*

*Rare vagrant.*

Many observers had the opportunity to catch up with a first winter male Rose-coloured Starling in suburban gardens in Broadfield (Crawley). Although apparently seen from about mid-October, its presence was not confirmed until 5 Nov. It remained into the New Year, moulting into adult plumage. This brings the county total to 15 this century and 40 overall. The most recent previous record was of a juvenile which stayed for a week at Selsey in October 2013. [ACG]



**Ring Ouzel***Turdus torquatus*

*Passage migrant, very scarce in spring, fairly common in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Ring Ouzels were recorded mostly at or near coastal sites or downland prominences. A poor spring count was followed by a stunning autumn passage, second only to that of 2013. The estimated minimum monthly totals, after adjusting for possible duplication, were as follows:

Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov
-	-	14	2		5	1029	2

Two birds at Coombes and a male at Church Norton on 3 Apr were a week later than the 10-year average arrival date and were followed by one at Beachy Head on the 5<sup>th</sup>. A hiatus was broken by a single at Climping on 16 Apr followed by three at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on the 18<sup>th</sup> and another single at Climping/Littlehampton the next day. Observers at the end of April witnessed two more at Beachy Head and a single at Chailey before final singles at South Chase (Ashdown Forest) and Seaford on 1 May, near the 10-year average.



*Ring Ouzel, Old Lodge, October 2016 (Mark Tomlins)*

The first returning bird was a single at the Old Trapping area (Beachy Head) on 12 Sep which departed east and was two days earlier than the 10-year average date. Three at Cissbury Ring on



the 18<sup>th</sup> and a young female at Medmerry on the 20<sup>th</sup> completed the September tally. One in the lower Arun Valley and two at Blackdown on 2 Oct were followed by the first Hastings bird and two at Seaford on the 4<sup>th</sup> while 18 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 5<sup>th</sup> heralded an influx. The Hastings migration watch team recorded 57 birds on 7 Oct and next day 69 were recorded at Beachy Head, 67 from Blackdown, another 40 from Hastings, 35 from Seaford and 31 in 30 minutes from a garden in Fairlight. On the 13<sup>th</sup> there were 85 at Rye Hbr and a day later a loose flock of 22 passed over the Wild Park (Brighton) and there were 16 at Cissbury. The last high count was 23 by the Hastings migration watchers on 17 Oct who recorded 210 birds on 13 days from 4 to 20 Oct.

Small numbers continued to the last day of October and just two in November at Flimwell (Bewl Water) on the 10<sup>th</sup> and finally at Pulborough Brooks on the 16<sup>th</sup>; just four days later than the 10-year average. The autumn migration count was nearly four times the 10-year average which itself includes the 2013 record of 1200. [JHW]

## Blackbird

*Turdus merula*

*Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.*

Blackbirds were recorded from 609 tetrads, 19 more than in 2015. It was an average first half year, followed by an excellent second half, 50% above average.

The first winter period featured just a dozen counts of 25 or more birds; highlights were 43 at Streat on 19 Jan, 34 at Broadbridge Heath on both 19 Feb and 11 Mar, 50 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Mar and 42 at Cliff End (Pett) on the 21<sup>st</sup>. During the early year SWBS, Blackbirds were recorded in 116 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed. During the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch they were seen in 85.5% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 82.3% in East Sussex

Breeding was confirmed in 52 tetrads, similar to last year, and was probable in a further 56. During the BBS, Blackbirds were recorded in all the 166 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 33 at Nutley on 23 Apr. The earliest signs of breeding were birds carrying food or faecal sacs at Arundel WWT on Mar 5. Thereafter, active nests were noted on Apr 20 at Coldwaltham and nestling chicks on the 29<sup>th</sup> at Steyning WTW.

Fledglings were recorded at Burgess Hill on 30 Apr and Uckfield on 10 May, and during the following week around Littlehampton and at The Burgh (Burpham). Only 39 records indicated newly fledged birds, amounting to at least 100 individuals, but 50 more records confirmed nesting. Sixty six pairs were counted in Friston Forest, 35 pairs at Pagham Hbr (up from 25 last year), with six more at Medmerry, and 34 pairs were noted at Rye Hbr and another 24 at Fore Wood (Crowhurst).

While autumn was quiet again, with only eight counts of 25 or more birds and a peak count of 48 at Beachy Head on 30 Oct, while during the migration watch period at Hastings from 6 Oct to 1 Nov a total of 314 was recorded with a peak counts of 56 on 22 Oct and 57 two days later. In the second winter period there were 22 records of 25 or more birds, two thirds of them in December though the peaks were 58 at Warnham LNR on 23 Nov and 50 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 3 Nov. Others counts of 40 or more came from Beacon Hill (Harting), Pulborough Brooks, Broadbridge Heath and Cliff End. During the late year SWBS, Blackbirds were recorded in 132 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 35 at Battle on 4 Dec. [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 247 tetrads, similar to the previous year. A slightly improved first winter period was balanced by a poorer second period, the year's total remaining at 74% of the 10-year average. Approximate monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April		Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>County total</b>	2380	2529	2511	30		2421	2456	2904
<b>West of TQ30</b>	817	1416	703	2		798	1452	1235
<b>East of TQ30</b>	1563	1107	1808	28		1623	1004	1669

The first period count continued at its half average level though, unusually, in the first three months similar counts were recorded as in the last three months of the year. The slight increase over 2015 was shown by 20 counts of 100 in the period (cf. 15), though the bias was strongly to the east (3:17 records). Highlights included 200 at Pulborough on 27 Feb, up to 350 in two large flocks at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 14 Mar and c.250 at Troutbeck (Eridge) on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There were still 17 in the Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 13 Apr but the final sighting was at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 12 days earlier than the 10-year average. During the early year SWBS, Fieldfares were recorded in 30 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed with a high count of 162 at Streat on 19 Jan.

A first returning bird at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 6 Oct was seven days later than the 10-year average but was followed by small numbers every day until mid-month when hundreds were passing over Hastings and Ashdown Forest in sizeable flocks. Later in October, 300 were noted at Coates on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 200 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 31<sup>st</sup>. As last year, there were 20 counts of 100 or more in the second winter period including 500 at Beeding Brooks on 4 Nov, 250 at Burton MP on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 200s at West Chilmington, Iford Brooks and Pett Level in December. During the autumn migration watch at Hasting, a total of 410 was recorded with the highest count of 351 at East Hill on 13 Oct. During the late year SWBS, Fieldfares were recorded in 61 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed with a peak count of 126 at Bolney on 15 Dec. [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 513 tetrads widely distributed across the county. The year's total was about the 10-year average though rather weak in early months compared to last year.

First winter migration was much poorer than last year with just 18 counts of ten birds or more, peaking at only 15 at the Newhaven Tide Mills on 23 Jan, at Hastings CP on 17 Feb and Cliff End (Pett) on 21 Mar. During the early year SWBS Song Thrushes were recorded in 91 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 14 at Streat on 19 Jan. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch they were seen in just 4.4% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 4.9% in East Sussex.

Nest building was seen at Arundel WWT on 3 Mar and there were occupied nests at Marstakes Common (Chailey) and Troutbeck (Eridge) on 5 Apr although feeding was not observed until the 19<sup>th</sup> at Fairlight and on the Knepp Estate and a week later at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and Roman Road (Ashdown Forest). The first fledglings were recorded on 3 May at Southease (Ouse Valley) and at Pett Level two days later. During the BBS, Song Thrushes were recorded in 144 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 15 at Five Hundred Acre Wood (Ashdown Forest) on 4 May. Seventeen pairs were recorded at Pagham Hbr and 11 singing males at Fore Wood (Crowhurst) and 18 at Broadwater Warren.

A modest return passage was heralded by 20 birds in the Cliff End (Pett) area on both 21 Sep and 4 Oct. The Hastings migration watch team recorded 166 birds on 21 days between 22 Sep and 1 Nov with peak counts of 43 on 4 Oct and 32 two days later. On 7 Oct there were 30 at Pett Level and on the 9<sup>th</sup> another 20 at Rye Hbr. There were 15 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 28 at Beachy Head (including two continental migrants), spread over two days on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Numbers in West Sussex were lower with just a dozen at Fernhurst and in the lower Arun Valley. While there were 18 day counts of ten or more in October there were two in November, ten at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 15 at Pett Level on the 29<sup>th</sup>. In December ten counts of ten or more were made with a peak of 20 at Rodmell Brooks on the 26<sup>th</sup>. During late year SWBS Song Thrushes were recorded in 77 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum 12 on 1 Dec at Twineham Place. [JHW]

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 301 tetrads rather biased to West Sussex. The first winter count was 55% above average due to an outstanding March and the second winter a little above average. The approximate minimum monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows.

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3123	3658	4737		6	1350	1085	2905
West of TQ30	1616	2826	3078		4	514	687	1009
East of TQ30	1507	932	1659		2	836	398	1896

In the first winter period 33 records of 100 birds were received, twice the number of last year, including 11 of 200 or more. Highlights were 398 on the Knepp Estate on 28 Feb, 334 at Streat on 19 Jan and 250s at Rackham Wood (8 Mar), The Mens (Petworth) (18 Mar), Troutbeck (Eridge) (18 Mar) and Pulborough Brooks (19 Mar). Unlike last year, no flock movements could be discerned. The last high count was 200 at Marsh Fm (Yapton) on 21 Mar with 60s at Pulborough Brooks and Ashdown Forest and 40 at Warnham a few days later. The last were one at Seaford Head and six at Pett Level on 30 Mar, 17 days earlier than the 10-year average. During the early year SWBS, Redwings were recorded in 55 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 398 at Knepp.

A single returning bird was spotted at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Sep, six days earlier than the 10-year average, then three at Broadbridge Heath on the 18<sup>th</sup> and two more on Ashdown Forest next day. Serious movement started on 6 Oct when 34 were reported from eight sites between Chichester and Fernhurst followed by 70 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 120 at Iping

Common on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Numbers seemed low, though the total was average, with records of 120 at Iping Common on 20 Oct, 130 at Beeding Brooks on 4 Nov, 100 at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 10 Dec, and 200s at Flimwell on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Waltham Brooks on the 15<sup>th</sup> and The Burgh (Burpham) on the last day of the year. During the late year SWBS Redwings were recorded in 53 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 97 at Cocking on 16 Dec. [JHW]

## Mistle Thrush

## *Turdus viscivorus*

*Common resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Mistle Thrushes were recorded from 310 tetrads spread across the county. There was a slight decrease in autumn and overall sightings though they were still a little above average. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	146	168	138	205	154	154	82	66	71	151	109	153

First period counts, while average, were a little disappointing after last year's surge, peaking at eight at Chailey Common on 21 Mar with ten records of five or six birds spread across the county. During the early year SWBS, Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 29 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 4 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 4 Feb. Similar small numbers continued until June when there were three records of ten birds at Petworth Park, Parham House and Ashdown Forest.

Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads; a bird on a nest was noted at Pett Level on 2 Apr and food-carrying at Lee Fm (Patching) on the 13<sup>th</sup> while fledglings were seen at Shoreham on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Further fledglings were at Medmerry, Strood Green, Fairlight, Pett Level and five sites in Ashdown Forest. There were 32 suggestions of probable breeding and 72 reports of singing (starting 12 Jan) but the number of young could not be estimated from the records. During the BBS, Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 48 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 10 at Petworth Park on 6 Jun.

There were few large post-breeding flocks with a peak of 24 on 17 Jul at Balcombe and just over a dozen at Handcross and Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) in August. Later, 11 were seen at Arundel WWT on 29 Sep and 14 at Old Lodge LNR on 6 Oct, while 20 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 22 Dec stood out. During the late year SWBS, Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 32 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of six at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 1 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 114 tetrads in 2016, well down on the 152 figure of 2015 and the 128 of the previous year. The first sighting was on 24 Apr, on the Knepp Estate which also had the first record in 2015. This was one day earlier than both last year and the 10- year average. One was at Verdley Wood (Fernhurst) on 26 Apr and the only other April records were one at

Beachy Head and two at Seaford Head on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Thereafter small numbers were recorded on most days in May with high counts of six at Pulborough Brooks on the 5<sup>th</sup>, five at Twyford Fm (Ashdown Forest) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and four at Church Norton on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Breeding was confirmed in just nine tetrads and considered as probable in a further six. Pairs were recorded at Medmerry, Ambersham Common, Blackdown, Pulborough Brooks, Broadwater Warren, Crowhurst and several Ashdown Forest locations. A nest with three young was seen at Worth on 17 Jul. A family group was recorded at Handcross on 18 Jul and 8 Aug, two juveniles were seen at the University of Sussex on 22 Jul and another family group was seen on Ashdown Forest on 15 Aug. An adult with food was recorded feeding fledglings on 22 Aug at Barns Green.

Records continued throughout August and September with observations from about 100 sites and on 52 days in these months. High counts were 15 at Nepcote (Findon) on 13 Sep, 13 at Playden (Rye) on the 7 Sep, 11 in Hastings Cemetery on 26 Aug and ten at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Sep. Nine were recorded in October; apart from two at Upwaltham on the 2<sup>nd</sup> all were singles and most were in the first few days with the last seen on 17 Oct at Pulborough Brooks, four days later than the 10 year average departure date. [TS]

## Robin

## *Erithacus rubecula*

*Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.*

Robins were recorded in 623 tetrads in 2016, an increase on the 588 in 2015 but still below the 2011 figure of 673. During the early year SWBS, 1119 birds were recorded in all of the 117 1-km squares surveyed (cf. 1351 in 132 of 136 in 2015); there were 53 double-figure counts with a maximum of 38 at Nutley on 4 Feb. In the first quarter of the year, there were over 200 double-figure counts and a highest count of 57 found in tetrad TQ81R (Pett Village) in two hours on 24 Mar. In the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch, 82.9% of West Sussex and 82.1% of East Sussex participating gardens produced records.

Breeding was confirmed in 51 tetrads and probable in a further 45 (cf. 41 and 43 in 2015). During the BBS (both early and late counts) the sum of the maximum count from each square was 1843 and birds were recorded in 161 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed; there were double-figure counts in 126 squares, with a maximum of 37 at Hurstpierpoint on 11 May. There were 26 pairs at Pagham Hbr and 'small numbers' nested at Rye Hbr. Broadwater Warren Reserve held 80 pairs, and Fore Wood (Crowhurst) 53; there were about 25 pairs in Friston Forest and 34 pairs in Selwyns Wood (Waldron).

In Henfield, a bird was collecting moss for its nest from a pot of orchids on 7 Feb. The earliest signs of successful breeding included a pair with four young on 17 Mar that were using a nest box in Henfield; birds carrying food were noted at Cliff End (Pett) on 2 Apr; a nest with young was noted at Arundel WWT on 13 Apr; the first fledged young were seen at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 14 Apr. A pair built their nest on a shelf in a garden shed in Loxwood, obtaining access through the window; five young were present on 13 May. At Newhaven Cliffs on 10 Feb a bird was observed 'keeping an aggressive eye' on nearby Stonechats. Young were still being fed at Arundel WWT on 2 Jul. At Barcombe Cross, a bird which had flown into a window on 13 Aug was attacked by another.

'Half-hearted snatches of song from a moulting juvenile' were heard at Arundel WWT on 16 Jul. During the autumn, the first influx at Pett Level was noted on 23 Aug (but the next small arrival was not noted until 30 Oct); at Beachy Head 15 birds there on 12 Sep was a 'small



increase'; at Patcham (Brighton) birds were heard singing again on 17 Sep; a 'small influx' was noted at Ladywell (Coombes) on 21 Sep. During the autumn migration watch at Hastings between 11 Sep and 24 Oct a total of 367 Robins was recorded on 16 dates with a maximum count of 55 around Fairlight on 7 Oct (the peak there in 2015 had been on 4 Oct). One at Pilsey Island on 26 Oct was uncommon there. A Danish-ringed bird, 'very bright orange red', trapped at Beachy Head on 27 Oct was clearly a continental bird either passing through or coming to winter here.



*Robin, Worthing, May 2016 (Paul Loader)*

During the late year SWBS, 1087 birds were found in 132 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed (cf. 868 in 108 of 115 in 2015), there were 44 double figure counts with a maximum count of 35 at Nutley on 10 Nov. It is striking that Nutley has provided the SWBS maxima in both seasons, both in 2015 and 2016. The highest late year count was of 58 found in 2½ hr at Cliff End (Pett) on 17 Oct. [CB]





*Common Nightingale, Pulborough Brooks, April 2016 (Luke Dray)*

**Common Nightingale***Luscinia megarhynchos*

*Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

There were records from 89 tetrads in 2016, a decline from the levels of the last few years (121 in 2015, 109 in 2014 and 114 in 2013). The first arrival was heard singing at Amberley and Pulborough Brooks on 3 Apr, one day earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. As usual, a few birds were identified at coastal sites as they arrived in the country, e.g. at Seaford Head on 8 Apr, Selsey Bill on the 13<sup>th</sup> and Chichester GP on the 26<sup>th</sup>, but also inland as they passed through, e.g., at Barcombe and Wisborough Green on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Broadbridge Heath and the Knepp Estate on the 14<sup>th</sup> and, further inland, at Hazards Green on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Most birds, however, were first recorded on their breeding grounds. By 30 Apr at least 42 singing males had been heard at 21 sites, including 12 at Pulborough Brooks, while at Abbots Wood (Hailsham), five were singing by the 21<sup>st</sup>. During the whole of May, 112 birds were recorded at some 59 sites including nine on Pulborough Brooks on the 13<sup>th</sup> and eight on Ebernoe Common on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Observers in the Plaistow area recorded 12 with one in Hogs Wood on 23 Apr, six in Shortland Copse on the 30<sup>th</sup> and five in Kingspark Wood on 16 May.

Breeding was not confirmed anywhere in the county but it was probable in ten and possible in a further 34 tetrads (cf. 5, 12 and 60 in 2015).

Characteristically, over half of the 550 records submitted came from hectads TQ01, TQ02, TQ11 and TQ12 with Pulborough Brooks looming large in these records. It is unfortunate that so many sites which produced an April or May record were not revisited during the breeding season; the breeding notation 'T' for 'permanent territory' was recorded against only seven sites, all but one in West Sussex, viz. Pulborough Brooks, Wisborough Green, the Knepp Estate, Henfield, Wineham and, in East Sussex, Brede High Wood. Additionally birds were heard near Gatwick Airport on 3, 9 and 13 May, and up to four were on the old railway line between Barcombe and Knowlands Wood from 15 Apr to 4 Jun. Up to two were singing near Sidlesham Ferry from 15 Apr until 4 Jun and one at Cadborough Cliff (Rye) on 6 and 15 May, locations where birds bred in 2015. Three singing beside a stream west of Tortington (Arundel) on 2 Jun were unexpected. The Arun Valley between Pulborough and Loxwood and the Cuckmere Valley north of Arlington and the area between Etchingham and Brede in East Sussex would probably bear more sustained investigation.

Later in the year, two possible early migrants/failed breeders were noted at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the early date of 26 Jun and the next more obvious migrant was found in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 4 Jul. Not unexpectedly, the great majority of autumn records came from the migration watch points of Seaford Head and Beachy Head where, between 6 Jul and 11 Sep the totals recorded were 21 at Seaford Head and 25 at Beachy Head. The only coastal records from west of these promontories were single birds at Climping Gap on 8 Aug, Selsey Bill on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 7 Sep. The last were single birds on the Knepp Estate and Beachy Head on 11 Sep, three days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [CB]

**Red-flanked Bluetail***Tarsiger cyanurus*

*Very rare vagrant.*

One was trapped in Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 8 Oct (MB, AB, RDME, SEM). It was considered to be a first calendar year male. This was the third record for the county with the

first being as recent as 2010, and has been accepted by BBRC. Numbers occurring nationally have been increasing and the species was removed from the BBRC list with effect from 2017. [MM]

## Red-breasted Flycatcher

*Ficedula parva*

*Rare autumn vagrant.*

The only record was of one at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 18 Sep. Unlike the previous county record, a well watched male at Beachy Head from 22 to 28 Oct 2014, this bird was seen by only two observers (MEC, RHC). The county total this century moves on to ten and that since 1948 to 34. All but one (April 1948) have been in autumn with a peak from late September to mid October. The earliest autumn record was on 4 Sep 1982, also at Beachy Head. [PJ]

## Pied Flycatcher

*Ficedula hypoleuca*

*Scarce passage migrant; more numerous in autumn than spring; has bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

This species was recorded in 24 tetrads during 2016, down by approximately one third on the two previous years. Once again the majority of sightings were in or near coastal areas.



*Pied Flycatcher, Church Norton, August 2016 (Martin Peacock)*

The first, seen briefly near Steyning on 2 Apr, was ten days earlier than the ten year average and only one day later than the earliest recorded arrival date. During the rest of April there were approximately a dozen sightings at various sites along the coast: Felpham (Bognor Regis) on the

9<sup>th</sup>, Eastbourne on the 12<sup>th</sup>, Kingley Vale, Ivy Lake (Chichester GP), Beachy Head and Rye Hbr on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Sidlesham Ferry on the 25<sup>th</sup> and two birds at Beachy Head on 28 Apr. Inland a male was seen at Netherfield on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

During May birds were recorded at Rye Bay on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Kneppmill Pond also on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Selsey Bill on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

The following table shows minimum monthly numbers and assumes some birds stayed for several days:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
10	3	-	-	32	8

Return migration began with a sighting at Beachy Head on 9 Aug and another at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on the same day. Thereafter there were sightings of one or two birds at coastal sites throughout August including Church Norton 14 to 16 and 26 Aug, Cuckmere Haven on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Hastings on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, Friston Forest on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Thorney Deepes on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Seaford on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, Beachy Head on the 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> and Climping and Cissbury both on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Inland one was seen on Ashdown Forest on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, two in a Steyning garden on the 24<sup>th</sup> and one at Pulborough Brooks on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Sightings went on into September with birds seen at Beachy Head on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, Climping on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Hastings and Playden (Rye) both on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Pulborough Brooks on the 12<sup>th</sup> and finally Pett Level on the 18<sup>th</sup>. This last sighting was nine days earlier than last year and 11 days earlier than the 10-year average. [TS]

## Black Redstart

## *Phoenicurus ochruros*

*Rare resident; scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.*

This species was recorded in 58 tetrads. The first records of the year were of one each at Medmerry and Peacehaven Cliffs on 6 Jan. There were then frequent reports of one at Medmerry throughout January and February and at Newhaven Tide Mills from 8 Jan until 14 Feb, with two recorded here on 13 Jan. At Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs), one was recorded on five dates from 18 Jan to 28 Feb. In January and February, single males or females were seen at ten other locations at or near the coast. Inland, one bird was seen at Lancing College on 26 Jan and four at Upwaltham on 15 Feb.

In spring, reports from approximately 22 coastal locations were typically of one and occasionally of two, with sightings most frequent from early March to mid-April. Birds were reported at Medmerry or Selsey on 17 dates in March and April, with two, a male and a female, at Selsey Bill on 20 Mar. Three were recorded at Newhaven Tide Mills on 7 Mar. In the Beachy Head area, there were sightings on 13 dates during March and April (plus one on 4 May); all were of one, except for two on 19 and 20 Mar, and on 9 Apr, the latter a male and a female. There were records from four inland sites on single days during March and April, including a pair at Arundel on 5 Apr.

Two birds were reported at Selsey Bill on 12 May and one on 22 May. A female was recorded at an East Sussex site on 31 May and fledglings noted there between 22 and 26 Jun. There were no further reports until late July with one at Willingdon on the 28<sup>th</sup> and another at Beachy Head on the 30<sup>th</sup>. In August, single adults were seen at Fairlight on the 1<sup>st</sup> and Chichester on the 30<sup>th</sup>.



Individuals were seen at Rye Hbr on 14 Sep and Birling Gap on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Autumn migration was underway by 7 Oct with one each at Medmerry and on the downs near Lewes. There were then sightings at 14 different locations on or near the coast on 14 days during the rest of October, including multiple sightings at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Seaford Head, and Beachy Head. Movement was maximal during late October, the largest count being of nine around Beachy Head on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Inland, birds were reported at eight sites, mostly on single dates between 17 Oct (Lewes) and 30 Oct (Crowborough), all counts were of one.

There were sightings of one or two birds at approximately 22 sites on or near the coast throughout November and December. [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 97 tetrads, slightly fewer than in 2015.

The first record of the year was from Selsey Bill on 2 Apr, with further sightings at Selsey, Pagham Hbr, West Dean and Beachy Head on 3 Apr. There were frequent reports, mostly of ones, at coastal sites or elsewhere on passage throughout April, with six seen at Pagham Hbr on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The last coastal sighting of the spring was of one at Selsey Bill on 11 May.

During a detailed survey on Ashdown Forest a number of occupied territories were found (see the article about Common Redstart distribution and abundance in the Ashdown Forest SSSI on pages 221-234). Sixteen pairs or territories were recorded on the West Sussex heaths during the WHBBS (see page 209 for table), fewer than the 24 reported in 2015, but still more than in the preceding five years. Two pairs and territories were also reported at Greentrees Fm (Balcombe) on 26 Apr and in mid-May, suggesting probable breeding at this site. Seven singing males at Eridge Park on 6 May was reportedly the greatest number at this site for 30 years.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads, all on Ashdown Forest. Nest building was first observed at Eridge Park on 6 May and the first confirmed breeding was at Broadstone Warren on 19 May. Fledged young were first reported on 10 Jun at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and at four further locations in June or early July, with the highest counts being 17 at Old Lodge LNR on 15 and 24 Jun.

There were unusual summer sightings at Beachy Head on 18 Jun, a male and on 4 Jul, a male and a juvenile.

Autumn passage had begun by the end of July with reports of single birds at Crawley and Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton), both on 31 Jul and at other coastal locations in the following days. Birds were on the move across Sussex, primarily at coastal and downland sites, on most days during August and September. The highest count was of 15 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 1 Sep, with ten seen there on 5 Sep. Ten were at Springhead Hill (Rackham) on 2 Sep and 14 there on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and at Park Brow (Findon) on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Counts of ten were also reported for Beachy Head on 24 Aug and Nephcott (Findon) on 13 Sep. The migration watch team at Hastings recorded a total of 39 on 16 dates between 29 Aug and 6 Oct with a high of nine on 1 Sep.

The latest heathland sighting of the year was of two on Ashdown Forest on 1 Oct and the final report of the year was a first winter male at Beachy Head on 26 Oct, precisely on the 10-year average departure date. [AR]



*Whinchat, Kithurst Hill, September 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

## Whinchat

## *Saxicola rubetra*

*Fairly common passage migrant. Rare summer visitor, last bred in 1999. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Whinchats were recorded in 75 tetrads compared with 91 in 2015 and 98 in 2014 with, as usual, a strong bias towards the coast.

The approximate monthly numbers of birds compared with the 5-year average 2011-2015 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	-	21	21	3	10	227	317	37	-
5-year average	<1	24	34	<1	7	242	331	32	<1
No. of days	0	9	10	3	6	22	29	9	0

The number in April and May was close to the five year average. There were three records of more than two birds in April and May. The first spring arrival came on 13 Apr at Castle Hill LNR (Newhaven) a week later than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by one on Ashdown Forest and one at Wepham Down on the 18<sup>th</sup>. In the next four days they were recorded from coastal locations (Medmerry, Selsey, Pagham Hbr and Littlehampton) and two inland at Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks. Birds were recorded almost daily until mid-May with a high count of four at Southwick Hill on 6 May. There were a few records in late May and early June with the last of the spring on 9 Jun at Pagham Hbr. There were no breeding records.



The earliest returning bird was seen at Pagham Hbr on the 3 Jul, two weeks earlier than last year's first returnee. In July there were about seven recorded at Pagham Hbr and one at Medmerry, one at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) and one at Rye Hbr.

The counts for August and September were similar to the 5-year average. The highest daily total for August was 20 on the 25<sup>th</sup> at Climping. The next highest counts were ten at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 31<sup>st</sup> with nine at Beachy Head on the 24<sup>th</sup>, eight each at Thorney Island on the 29<sup>th</sup> and Medmerry the next day. The highest totals for September were 21 at Thorney Island on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 15 at Rye Hbr on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 12 at Pulborough Brooks on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

The highest counts for October were fours at Thorney Island on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and at Steyning Levels on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The last record was of one at Pagham Hbr on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, a week earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [GDE]

## Eurasian 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	269	237	248	408	365	c600	278	353	425	954	343	302
No. of days	31	28	30	29	30	28	28	24	27	31	28	29

Stonechats were recorded in 235 tetrads (more than 25% of the 964 tetrads wholly within Sussex), which improves upon last year's total, itself higher than in recent years. There were only 21 days out of a possible 366 when no birds were recorded. As in 2014 very high numbers were recorded in almost every month compared to 2015. During the spring a thorough breeding survey was undertaken (see 'Breeding Stonechat survey in 2016: numbers of pairs, distribution and habitat preferences in Sussex' on pages 235-246).

The highest counts in the first winter period were 12 at Medmerry on 14 Feb and at Beachy Head on 12 Mar. There were further counts of ten at Medmerry on 23 Jan and 19, 23-24 Feb. The breeding information is detailed elsewhere but the first confirmed breeding of a bird carrying food was on 3 May at Gill's Lap (Ashdown Forest). Fledged young were first noted on 15 May at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) and continued to be recorded until the end of August. The highest numbers recorded during the breeding period were 61 at various Ashdown Forest locations on 15 Jun and 44 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Elsewhere there were tens at Pulborough Brooks on 22 May and at Beachy Head on 25 Jun. The highest count from the West Sussex commons was eight at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 17 May.

During the summer period high counts in specific areas of Ashdown Forest included 17 at Stonehill on 16 Jul, 15 at Ellison's Pond on 4 Jul and ten at Roman Road on several dates in July and August. Elsewhere 12 were at Beachy Head on 4 Jul. In September, there were no counts of ten or more; the highest totals were nine at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 26<sup>th</sup>, eight each at Thorney Deepes on the 17<sup>th</sup> and Beachy Head on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the highest Ashdown Forest count was seven at Old Lodge LNR on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

During the late autumn and the second winter period, the highest daily records were 20 at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Oct, 16 at Fairlight on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 14 at Climping Gap on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12 at

Rye Hbr on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The migration watch team at Hastings recorded a total of 100 between 7 Sep and 1 Nov with a maximum of 16 on 11 Oct. There were no records of ten or more in November but there was a count of ten at Bexhill on 11 Dec with eight at Medmerry being the next highest on 29 Dec. There were only a few Ashdown Forest records in December. [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 128 tetrads, predominantly coastal or near coastal, along the river valleys and on downland. The approximate monthly totals, computed on the assumption that birds seen on different dates at the same site were different but which may therefore include some duplication, were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
No. of birds	85	325	72	13		838	1055	140	1
No. of days	11	27	17	98	9	30	29	23	1

Spring arrival of Wheatears in 2016 started 13 days later than the 10-year average arrival date of 6 Mar, with the first individual arriving at Seaford Head on 19 Mar, followed by another at Medmerry on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Three were recorded on 22 Mar, two at Goring Gap and one at Worthing. On 23 Mar one or two were recorded at six coastal sites. For the remainder of the month Wheatears were seen daily, other than on the 26<sup>th</sup>, with high counts of six at Medmerry on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 20 on the shingle spit at Church Norton on the 30<sup>th</sup>. During April the only double-figure counts were 15 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 13 at Seaford Head on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21 at Beachy Head on 23 Apr. The number of migrants tailed off in May, during which Wheatears were seen on just 17 dates. Most of these records were of one to three; the only counts of four being at Rye Hbr on 1 May and Crapham Down (Beachy Head) on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. One at Cuckmere Haven on 11 Jun was the only record during June away from the only known breeding site.

Five or six territories were identified at Rye Hbr. Three fledged juveniles were seen at Ternery Pool on 10 Jun, with additional broods recorded from West Beach and Flat Beach during the summer.

The first signs of autumn passage, away from the breeding site at Rye Hbr, were a juvenile at Twineham Place on 8 Jul, another juvenile at Birling Gap on the 14<sup>th</sup>, one at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on the 26<sup>th</sup>, two at Beachy Head on the 28<sup>th</sup> and one at Selsey Bill on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Wheatears were recorded on 30 days in August and on 29 days in September with the peak autumn passage occurring on 11 Sep with a total of 237. The largest counts in the autumn were 47 at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) on 6 Sep, 40 there on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 32 at Fairlight on 11 Sep, and 30 at Beachy Head and Church Norton on 24 Aug and 11 Sep respectively. During October, Wheatears were recorded on 23 dates with the highest count being two at Church Norton on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Autumn migration was all but over by the end of October, with just one record in November of one at Rye GC on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 114, with a maximum of 32 on 11 Sep between 23 Aug and 18 Oct.

This was a poor year for the Greenland Wheatear subspecies *O.o. leucorhoa*, with no records. There have been 61 spring records of this subspecies since 1949 (36 this century) and 28 autumn records (14 this century). [GO]

**Desert Wheatear***Oenanthe deserti**Very rare vagrant.*

A first calendar year male was present in the Cooden Beach and Normans' Bay areas from 28 Nov to 9 Dec (CFB *et al.*), enabling many observers to enjoy it. This was the eighth record for the county and has been accepted by BBRC. Cooden Beach also hosted a Desert Wheatear from 1 to 4 Nov 2006. [MM]

**Dunnock***Prunella modularis**Very common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.*

Dunnocks were recorded in 528 tetrads in 2016, an increase on the 486 in 2015. During the early year SWBS, 312 birds were found in 93 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed (cf. 336 in 96 of 136 in 2015). During the first winter period there were 32 double figure counts with a maximum of 32 found in 2½ hr at Cliff End (Pett) on both 19 Feb and 21 Mar. During the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch in January, birds were recorded in 41% of West Sussex and 42.3% of East Sussex participating gardens. Birds were singing at both Pagham Hbr and Newhaven Tide Mills on 16 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads and probable in a further 44 (cf. similar figures of 19 and 44 in 2015). During the BBS, birds were recorded in 142 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed (cf. 143 of 176 in 2015); there were double-figure counts in 13 squares with a highest count of 17 at Toads Hole Valley (Hove) on 8 Apr. There were 29 pairs at Pagham Hbr (a return to the 2014 level after the drop to 17 pairs in 2015); 36 territories were mapped in the Rye Hbr (maintaining the increase from the 22 pairs in 2014 to the 37 in 2015); ten pairs at Broadwater Warren and six at Fore Wood (Crowhurst).

The first evidences of breeding were of a nest with eggs at Icklesham on 3 Apr and an apparently occupied nest at Coldwaltham on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Adults carrying food or faecal sacs were noted on 28 Apr at Northlands Wood (Haywards Heath). The first fledged young were seen at West Chiltington on 3 May (about a fortnight later than in 2015). On 10 Oct a bird in Patcham was feeding on Holm Oak acorns which had been crushed by passing vehicles.

During the late year SWBS, 271 birds were found in 95 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed (an overall increase on the 197 in 72 of 115 in 2015). During the final quarter of the year, there were 13 double-figure counts with a maximum of 24 at Crowhurst in 2½ hr on 26 Oct12. A bird which had flown into a window in Sidlesham on 14 Dec was taken by a Magpie. [CB]

**House Sparrow***Passer domesticus**Very common but possibly declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

As in the previous year House Sparrows were recorded in over 450 tetrads in 2016. During the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch in late January they were reported from c.62% of participating gardens throughout the county and in the SWBS, 1174 were recorded from 81 of the 117 1-km squares surveyed with a highest count of 114 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 17 Feb. During the first winter period counts of 50 and above occurred in only eight 1-km squares, the highest other

count being 120 at Broadbridge Heath on 11 Mar. Potential nest sites were being visited from mid-February.

Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads and was probable in a further 45. At Acton Fm (Bexhill) a colony of c.50 birds nested in disused farm buildings. The first fledged birds were noted at West Tarring (Worthing) on 22 May and in Hove a nest was still in occupation on 8 Aug. During the BBS House Sparrows were found in 122 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 70 on 8 May in a square in Portslade-by-Sea.

During the second winter period, there were only six records of 50 or more birds, the largest being 90 at Pett Village on 27 Dec. During the late year SWBS, 899 were recorded from 82 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 63 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 2 Dec. It is difficult to detect any significant change in the fortunes of this under recorded species; in particular more breeding evidence and roost counts would be most valuable. [ACG]

## **Tree Sparrow**

## *Passer montanus*

*Much declined and now very scarce resident and scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

As usual most sightings were from East Sussex where Romney Marsh and Pevensey Levels hold the majority of this species remaining in the county. It is a very scarce bird in Sussex.

At Romney Marsh breeding was not confirmed but there were sightings from both Scotney GP and East Guldeford Level. At the latter site the year's highest count, a total of 15, was recorded on 10 Oct. A group of four was seen in reeds just west of the pools at Pett Level on 11 and 13 Sep.

Breeding was confirmed at Pevensey Levels. Six pairs bred in nest boxes at the SWT reserve, one fewer than last year, and fledged a total of 18 chicks (for further details see the ringing report). The largest flock seen was four birds on 18 Sep. The Pevensey Levels population is known to wander prior to the breeding season so the species may be encountered nearby. Interestingly two birds were recorded by the migration watch team at Hastings on 11 Oct, roughly mid-way between the two county breeding populations. [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.*

Yellow Wagtails were recorded in 76 tetrads (80 in 2015), representing another poor year for this species. The first spring migrant was seen at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on 29 Mar, slightly later than the 10-year average of 25 Mar. Two were reported at Scotney GP the following day, with an individual at Seaford Head on the last day of March. A trickle of migrants continued to arrive throughout April and early May. On 22 Apr ten were observed at Pulborough Brooks and nine at Selsey Bill (the latter site having a monthly count of 33 arrivals in April).

No confirmed breeding was recorded this year, but pairs were observed at Down Level (Pevensey) and at Cadborough (Rye), where up to 14 were recorded on 6 May, and one was observed visiting a probable nest site on 4 Jun.

Autumn passage was first noted on 4 Jul with a bird at Cliff End (Pett); between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at least nine were recorded at several locations in the Rye Bay area. This was followed by a short

gap until the 14<sup>th</sup> when six were seen at Rye Hbr. The first birds observed on return passage in West Sussex were at Pulborough Books on 20 Jul and then five were at Medmerry on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Numbers began to build from the second week of August with 30 at Rye Hbr on the 12<sup>th</sup>. In August there were high counts of 130 at Beachy Head and 170 at Cuckmere Haven, both on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 29<sup>th</sup> there was a count of 200 at Halsey's Fm (Sidlesham) and 100 at Sidlesham Ferry field on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Peak numbers in September were 250 at Wick Bottom (Woodingdean) on the 1<sup>st</sup> with 105 there on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 150 at Medmerry on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 100 at Seaford Head on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and 90 in the lower Arun Valley on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The Hastings migration watch team counted a total of 450 between 14 Aug and 6 Oct, with a peak count of 57 W on 25 Aug at Fairlight. Away from the coast there were 30 at Ferry Point (Bowl Water) on 14 Sep and 21 at Mill Fm (Fletching) on 19 Sep. Small numbers were also recorded from downland sites including Chantry Hill, Cissbury and Patching.

After September numbers began to drop with about 50 recorded in October until the last two were seen at Pett Level on the 23<sup>rd</sup>; four days earlier than the 10-year average. [CBu]

A male "Channel" Wagtail (a hybrid between *M.f. flavissima* and *M.f. flava*) was seen in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 21 Mar (MRE) and a male of the race *M.f. flava* (Blue-headed Wagtail) was at Bowl Water on 14 Sep (MGF). [MM]

## Grey Wagtail

## *Motacilla cinerea*

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

Grey Wagtails were recorded in 235 tetrads. This is fewer than the 247 that were recorded in 2015, but still represents an increase from previous years. As in 2015, birds were recorded in every month of the year at Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res but additionally in 2016 at Arundel WWT.

During the first winter period one or two were seen at about 100 sites but six were noted at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on 16 Jan (and five on 20 Feb), four at Rodmell on 24 Jan and at Warnham LNR on 22 and 23 Feb and three at Steyning WTW on 20 Jan and the Wey and Arun canal on 11 Feb. As has been previously noted, spring migration can be hard to detect but 1 E at Goring Gap on 28 Feb and 1 W at Selsey Bill on 5 Mar may have been on passage.

Breeding was confirmed in only eight tetrads (17 in 2015) with probable breeding in a further 20. Nest building was first observed on 1 Apr at Weir Wood Res and the first record of confirmed breeding was a sighting of an adult carrying food or a faecal sac at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 3 May, when nine birds were recorded at this location. Fledglings were first sighted on 15 May at Troutbeck (Eridge). This site also provided the first record of fledglings in 2015, but three weeks earlier on 23 Apr. The latest record of fledglings was from the Knepp Estate on 7 Jul.

Between 24 Aug and 28 Oct the migration watchers at Hastings recorded 131 birds over 32 dates, with the maxima of 12 W on 11 Sep and a notable 15 (14 W and 1E) on 12 Sep. On the latter date Selsey Bill seawatchers recorded a high of six out of a month total of 19. In the second winter period there were regular records of one or two throughout the county with a high of five at Worthing on 18 Dec. Three were seen at Arundel WWT on 15 Nov, Selsey Bill on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Ardingly Res on 8 Dec and on three dates in Worthing. [CBu]

## Pied Wagtail

## *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

*Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Pied Wagtails were found in 406 tetrads in 2016 (381 in 2015). On the first day of 2016 there were 35 at East Kingston (Ferring) and 30 at both Steyning Levels and at Newick WTW. Other large winter numbers were 200 on the filter beds of Sidlesham WTW on 19 Jan, 75 at Haywards Heath on 28 Jan and 62 at Marsh Fm (Yapton). The only roosts recorded were 80 in Worthing on 28 Jan and 25 at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Feb.

During the late winter (January/February) SWBS surveys the species was recorded in 38 1-km squares (32%) from the 117 surveyed with a maximum count of 43 on 10 Feb near Tangmere whilst in the BBS Pied Wagtails were found in 77 1-km squares, 46% of the 166 surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads (13 in 2015), with probable breeding recorded in a further 16 (22 in 2015). The first confirmed breeding was on 9 May at Crutches Fm (Winchelsea) where a bird was observed carrying food or a faecal sac. Fledglings were first reported from Parkfield Fm (Dallington) on 29 May. The latest report of confirmed breeding was recently fledged young seen at the Llama Fm (Ashdown Forest) on 16 Aug.

From mid-July larger congregations of birds again began to be reported, with 48 at the dam end of Weir Wood Res on the 14<sup>th</sup>. In September there were 30 along the sea wall at Pett Level on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 30 at Selsey Bill on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A strong overhead movement east of 100 was observed at Cliff End (Pett) on the 4 Oct. Later in the month there were 200 at Greenlease (Church Norton) on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 160 at The Severals (Pagham Hbr) on the 12<sup>th</sup>. The Hastings migration watch team counted a total of 836 between 12 Sep and 6 Nov, with the highest daily count being 153 E at Fairlight on 12 Oct. During October a total of 566 were seen at Selsey Bill with a high count of 60 E on the 4<sup>th</sup>. By 11 Nov 200 birds were roosting in a reedbed at Arundel WWT. In December 58 were roosting at the Asda superstore in Hollingbury (Brighton) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and there were 56 back at Newick WTW by the 24<sup>th</sup>. On 8 Dec 25 were seen flying to roost in a small tree near the Clock Tower (Brighton) by an observer waiting for a bus. During the late year SWBS Pied Wagtails were recorded in 76 squares (58%) of the 136 surveyed with a maximum count of 130 on 4 Dec in a square near Battle.

There were no roost records from Gatwick Airport or the Hickstead Service Station. It is not known whether these roosts were not reported or are no longer used. Reports of winter roost sites for this species would be welcome.

This was a better year for White Wagtail (*M.a. alba*) with 36 records (22 in 2015) of about 35 birds, recorded in a total of 18 tetrads (11 in 2015). The approximate monthly totals were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	1	3	14	7	-	1	1	7	-	-	-

The first record was one noted in the car park at Climping Beach on 14 Jan. Another was seen on 12 Feb at Ardingly College. Most spring records were of individuals, but in April there were two at Sidlesham on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> and six were noted at Medmerry on the 23<sup>rd</sup> (and four on the 26<sup>th</sup>). The last spring record was one at Warnham LNR on 22 May. There were no records of breeding in 2016.

The first autumn bird was at Sidlesham Ferry on 23 Jul. Another was at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Aug. Throughout September individuals were recorded intermittently but two were at Arlington Res on 7 Sep. [CBu]



Richard’s Pipit

Anthus richardi

Rare vagrant.

One at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 23 Nov (KBG, AR) takes the county total on to 83 of which 36 were from 1962-99 and ten have been this century. Of the 72 dated records for Sussex, 62 have fallen between 7 Sep and 28 Nov including 12 in September, 33 in October and 12 in November. [PJ]

Tree Pipit

Anthus trivialis

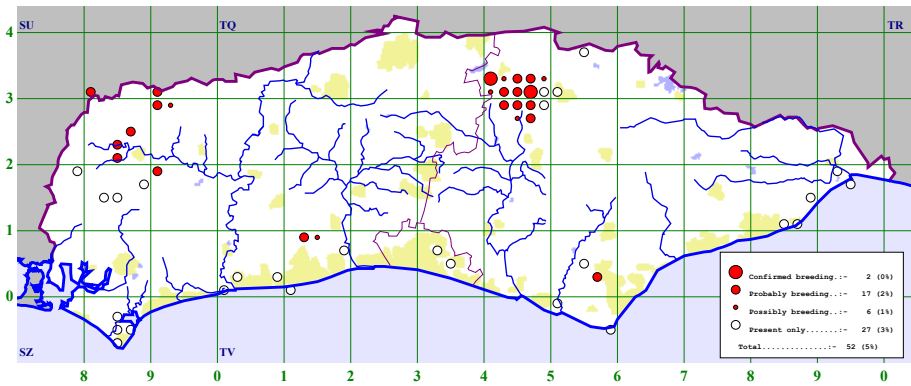
Fairly common but local summer visitor; fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Tree Pipits were recorded in 53 tetrads (compared with 64 in 2015) with over half the sightings being recorded in the stronghold of the species on Ashdown Forest.

The first migrant of the year was at Selsey Bill on 30 Mar a day earlier than the 10-year average date. Birds were recorded at Westdean Woods on 3 Apr and then virtually daily to the month’s end particularly on Ashdown Forest, with the peak count of six at Old Lodge LNR on 13 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed at two sites and was probable at a further 18, with six more with birds recorded in suitable habitat. The confirmed breeding records involved a bird feeding young on Ashdown Forest on 29 May and again there on 15 Jun and another carrying food elsewhere on Ashdown Forest on 29 Jun. Sixteen singing or displaying males were noted at Broadwater Warren.

The first autumn migrant to be recorded was at Beachy Head on 9 Aug, with one at Seaford Head on the 12<sup>th</sup> and one at Hastings on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The Hastings migration watch team recorded 23 birds on 17 dates between 14 Aug and 26 Sep, while 22 were recorded at Beachy Head on 24 Aug. Seven were noted at Seaford Head on 25 Aug but after that numbers tailed off to four at most at predominantly coastal or near coastal sites. The last record for the year was one at Roman Road (Ashdown Forest) on 7 Oct, six days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [PJP]



**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 264 tetrads compared with 253 in 2015 and an average of 235 for the previous five years. Notable numbers in the first winter period included counts of 60 at Thorney Island on 10 Feb, 50 each at Petworth on 16 Jan, Medmerry on 19 Jan and Birdham on 11 Feb. A total of 175 was recorded from 16 of the 177 squares surveyed during the SWBS between 11 Jan and 28 Feb.

In March, spring migration observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 1574 (1569 N) on 19 dates between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> with a peak count of 625 on the 18<sup>th</sup>. In April 97 were noted on 15 dates between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> including 34 on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere, 40 were noted at Amberley Wildbrooks on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The March figures were comparable with those of the previous year but the April figures were much reduced.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads, was probable in 19, and birds were observed in suitable habitat in at least a further 35. There were eight pairs at Medmerry and seven at Rye Hbr. Adults were first observed carrying food at Cuckmere Haven on 11 May and the first fledged young were at Littlehampton on 16 May.

In the late summer and autumn period, 30 were noted on 28 Jul at Beachy Head including many young birds, but between 13 Aug and 14 Nov migration watchers at Hastings recorded 3802 with a peak count of 580 on 19 Sep at Fairlight. Five hundred at Cliff End (Pett) and Rye Hbr the same day may have included the same birds. At Selsey monthly totals were 1304 in September and 1182 in October with peak counts of 445 on 30 Sep, 317 on 17 Sep and 218 on 1 Oct. Some 40 triple-figure counts were recorded right across coastal sites from Medmerry to Rye Hbr.

In the second winter period, the highest count in November was 200 at Medmerry on the 19<sup>th</sup>. In the late year SWBS 276 birds were recorded in 33 out of 136 squares surveyed. The highest count in December was 82 at Sefton Fm (Rose Green) on the 18<sup>th</sup> and there were 18 counts of 30 or more during November and December. [PJP]

**Rock Pipit***Anthus petrosus*

*Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.*

Rock Pipits were recorded in 50 tetrads (48 in 2015) spread along the coast; there were no inland records. The highest counts in the first winter period were 14 at the Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 14 Jan and 12 there on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of that month and ten at Cuckmere Haven on 8 Jan. Just four were encountered in the late winter SWBS, at Peacehaven on 12 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads, was probable in three and birds were recorded in suitable habitat in a further five. An adult was reported carrying food or a faecal sac on 7 May at Ovingdean and recently fledged young were noted at Peacehaven on 12 Jun.

Numbers were swelled by visitors in the autumn with highest counts reaching 15 at Newhaven on 19 Oct and 22 there on 20 Nov and 12 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 7 Dec.

Records of birds of the Scandinavian race *A.p. littoralis* came from Cuckmere Haven with one recorded on 27 Feb (DC, DRC, JFC) and up to ten reported between 3 and 23 Mar (MRE). [PJP]

**Water Pipit***Anthus spinoletta*

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

Three were seen at a traditional winter site on the Brede Levels on 13 Jan (AP) and two were at Combe Haven on 14 Jan (CHD) and 4 Feb (MRE). One was seen along the R Cuckmere north of Charleston reedbed from 7 to 19 Feb (JW *et al.*), two were at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 10 Feb (RKH *et al.*) with three there on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the last one for the first winter period was at Rodmell on 1 Apr (CAH). Five at West Rise Marsh on 19 Oct (RJF) were the first noted in the autumn. Up to three (on 10 Nov) were recorded on four dates at Crowhurst between 24 Oct and 27 Nov (CHD), singles at Pett Level on 4 and 11 Dec (CHD) and at least two at Doleham on Dec 12 (CHD). [PJ]

**Brambling***Fringilla montifringilla*

*Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.*

Bramblings were recorded in 46 tetrads (56 in 2015). During the first winter period, there were seven three-figure counts and 21 double-figure counts. By far the largest was 300 at Balcombe on 20 Jan. At Paddockhurst (Worth) there were five three-figure counts during January and February, the highest being 180 on 21 Jan. Elsewhere the main concentration was at Westdean Woods and Chilgrove where flock size increased from 30 on 5 Jan to a high count of 140 on 25 Jan.

Thirteen birds were recorded during April; the last record was on 18 Apr when a flock of seven was at Weir Wood Res, the same last date as in 2015 and the same as the 10-year average departure date.

The earliest returning bird was one at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 2 Oct (29 Sep in 2015), and three days later than the 10-year average arrival date. The highest count in October was 13 at Beachy Head on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Between the 4 Oct and 13 Nov the Hastings migration watch team counted a total 21 birds on 15 different days. The highest numbers in November and December were on Ashdown Forest with five double figure counts, the highest being 53 at Old Lodge LNR on 15 Nov. [MOW]

**Chaffinch***Fringilla coelebs*

*Abundant resident, and probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.*

The species was recorded from 554 tetrads representing 57% of those tetrads wholly within Sussex; the fewest records were received from July to September inclusive, with most coming in April, probably reflecting observer effort over actual presence.

During the first winter period 131 double-figure counts under 50 were received with another five between 50 and 99. Five counts of 100 or more were noted, three from Paddockhurst (Worth) with a maximum of 200 on 5 Jan, one from Newick of 100 on 1 Jan and another from Up Marden of 150 on 26 Feb. The SWBS through January and February recorded Chaffinch in 83% of the 117 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 34 on 28 Feb near Ringmer. During the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch they were seen in 28.2% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 34.5% in East Sussex.

Most counts through the spring were less than 20. Those few that exceeded this were 130 at Paddockhurst again on 18 Mar, 77 at Cliff End (Pett) on 21 Mar and 50 at Medmerry on 18 Mar. The 115 E at Seaford Head on 23 Mar were clearly on the move.

Breeding was confirmed from 13 tetrads with probable breeding in a further 57, comparable to 2015 when the corresponding figures were 10 and 51. Nests with young were recorded from several locations between 25 May and 16 Jul with the first being at Troutbeck (Eridge). First fledglings were also seen on this date at Frant. During the BBS the species was found in 159 squares from 166 surveyed with a max count of 27 on 16 Apr near Chalvington.

Post-breeding flocks were noted from a variety of locations from mid-July onwards, most consisting of up to 20. A flock of 25 to 40 birds was observed on many occasions at Battle between 18 Jun and 6 Sep. At Seaford, Hope Gap and Cuckmere Haven counts of 20 were recorded during August, whilst at Paddockhurst there were 22 on 17 Jul.

By late autumn higher numbers were recorded at a few sites, with 69 at both Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 9 Oct and Fairlight on 19 Oct which was the highest daily count made by migration watchers at Hastings. Eighty four double figure counts of fewer than 50 were received during the second winter period; a further six counts of 50 or above with a high of 80 at Old Lodge LNR on 27 Nov and 60 at Marden on 4 Dec. During the late year SWBS Chaffinches were recorded in 97 of the 136 squares surveyed with a maximum count of 36 on 27 Nov in the same square near Ringmer where the early year peak was recorded. [DB]

## Hawfinch

## *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

*Scarce or possibly very scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.*

Most of the Hawfinch records for the year related to the Westdean Woods area, although the species was recorded from 14 tetrads, higher than might be expected. The approximate monthly totals were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
14	13	2	2	1		7	8	16

At Westdean Woods there were observations on 17 dates between 5 Jan and 30 Mar with the highest counts being 11 on 24 Feb; ten on 24 Jan and seven on 25 Feb. Up to six, on 17 Jan, were recorded on five dates at Arundel Park between January and March. The only records outside this area were two at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Jan and one on the Knepp Estate on 16 Feb. Two were at Harting Down on 13 Apr and a late spring record from Gatwick Airport on 9 May was well away from the usual area from which records are received, indicating perhaps a migrant bird. There were no records between 10 May and 22 Oct; thus no indication of even possible breeding during 2016.

During the second winter period there were fewer counts but generally higher in number. All the higher counts came from Westdean Woods, with highs of 14 on 6 Dec, ten on 15 Dec and eight on 15 and 16 Nov. One was seen at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 23 Oct and one caught on a camera trap video at Ifold on 21 Dec presumably came as quite a pleasant surprise! [DB]

**Common Rosefinch***Carpodacus erythrinus**Rare vagrant.*

An adult male attracted to feeders at the University of Sussex (Falmer) on 9 Jun (SB) was the first county record since 2013 when three were recorded. The county total moves on to 33 of which only nine have been this century pointing to a noticeable decline in recent years. Over half (19) have been in May-June with dates ranging between 19 May (2013) and 27 Oct (2012). [PJ]

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

Bullfinches were recorded in 299 tetrads in 2016, very close to the total of 305 in 2015. In the early year SWBS, 76 birds were recorded in 29 of the 117 squares studied (cf. 71 birds in 32 of 136 squares in 2015) with a maximum count of seven on 16 Feb near Ardingly Res. Pulborough Brooks was the only site to hold over ten birds, with a maximum of 13 on 29 Feb. During the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch, Bullfinches were recorded in 2.6% of West Sussex and 4.1% of East Sussex participating gardens. At Chelwood Gate (Ashdown Forest), a sunflower seed holder was visited on a several occasions early in the year. On 7 Mar a total of 13 was seen in nine locations at Bow Hill (East Marden).

One bird at Warnham LNR on 2 Feb had 'large scaly growths' on both feet, but was feeding well; another with the same affliction was at Cissbury Ring on 11 Jun while on 11 Sep a juvenile female there had a growth by the right eye.

Breeding was confirmed in five and was probable in 50 tetrads (cf. seven and 41 respectively in 2015). During the BBS, a total of 86 birds was recorded in 40 of the 166 tetrads surveyed, with a maximum of six at Hempstead (Uckfield) on 8 Apr. Breeding was successful at Arundel WWT, University of Sussex, Weir Wood Res, Crowborough and Cliff End (Pett). Display, with the male bowing to the female and piping quietly, was watched near Barcombe on 13 Apr. The first fledged young were seen at Arundel WWT on 4 Jun and 12 recently fledged young were seen at Weir Wood Res on 28 Jun. Nestlings were still being fed in nests at Falmer on 9 Sep and at Arundel WWT the next day (where they were fed dock seeds).

In the late year SWBS, 106 birds were found in 39 of 136 1-km squares surveyed (cf. 70 in 29 of 115 squares in 2015), with a maximum of six in Great Wood (Battle) on 7 Dec. In the last months of the year, the highest count at any one site was 12 in St. Leonard's Forest on 15 Dec and at Pulborough Brooks on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A female at Church Norton on 16 Dec was the first to be seen there for several years. [CB]

**Greenfinch***Chloris chloris**Very common resident and possibly fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.*

The number of tetrads that the species was recorded in fell slightly from 413 in 2015 to 403 in 2016. The results from the early year SWBS gave an identical result to 2015, with presence shown in 44% of the 1-km squares surveyed. This contrasts markedly with the late year SWBS where the species was only present in 21% of the squares surveyed. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch Greenfinches were seen in 16.3% of participating gardens in both West and East Sussex.

At just two sites during the first winter period were sizeable flocks seen; at Pagham Hbr there were 120 on 12 Jan, 100 there on three other January days and 50 on 6 Feb; whilst 37 and 30 were at Newhaven Tide Mills on 5 and 23 Jan respectively.

During the BBS the species was recorded in 70% of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 24 on 27 Apr near Seaford. Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads and probable in a further 41, an improvement on 2015 (7 and 34 respectively). Nest building was first recorded on 17 Apr at Steyning WTW, with fledgings first seen on 24 May at Northlands Wood (Haywards Heath). The length of the breeding season for Greenfinch is shown by the fact that young were still observed being fed by a parent on 15 Sep at Pagham Hbr.

Post-breeding flocks seemed to be few in number; the largest being 24 at Beeding Brooks on 28 Jul, 20 at Norton (Seaford) on 12 Aug and 15 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 13 Jul.

The only high count of the autumn came from Newhaven Tide Mills with 100 on 24 Sep with the next being 30 at Pett Level 18 Sep. Visible migration was also light as observers at Hastings recorded a total of just 32 on seven October mornings whilst at Selsey Bill 26 W on 28 Oct was the only notable record. The second winter period was also sparse in numbers, with a mere 14 double-figure counts. At Newhaven Tide Mills the highest number recorded during this time was 65 on 27 Dec, whilst at Pagham Hbr there were 30 on 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Whilst there were no records received of any birds showing symptoms of Trichomonosis, the population trend for Greenfinch in SE England continues a downward trajectory which began around a decade ago. [DB]

## Linnet

## *Linaria cannabina*

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

Linnets were recorded in 314 tetrads (311 in 2015). During the first winter period, large flocks ranging from 200 to 400 were recorded at Pagham Hbr on six dates. At The Burgh (Burpham), Paddockhurst (Worth), Knowe Top Fm (West Chiltington), Barcombe Res and Darwell Res flocks of 100 to 180 were recorded. Smaller groups were recorded throughout and there were 32 records of between 30 and 90 at 20 sites throughout the county.

Breeding activity was confirmed in 11 tetrads (17 in 2016), and probable in a further 74 tetrads. The first singing male was recorded on 11 Mar at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) and the first evidence of nest building was on 18 Apr at Wepham Down. The first fledged young were observed at Cuckmere Haven on 11 May.

During June and July counts of between 30 and 70 were recorded at Houghton (Amberley), Castle Hill LNR (Newhaven), Beachy Head, Rye Hbr and Cadborough (Rye).

Between August and the end of October there were 32 three-figure counts from 19 sites, mainly coastal locations. At Climping there were 150 on 22 Aug, 300 on 15 Sep and a high of 350 on 5 Oct. Elsewhere Medmerry held flocks varying from 100 to 200, the Arun Valley between North Stoke and Littlehampton 120 to 200, The Burgh from 100 to 200, Beachy Head 100 to 150 and Rye Hbr 100 to 220.

Migration records included 80 E and 180 W at Telscombe Cliffs on three dates between 6 and 21 Oct, 382 E and 211 W on 15 dates in October at Selsey Bill and the Hastings migration watch team recorded an autumn total of 1334 between 2 Oct and 14 Nov with a maximum of 200 W on 2 Oct. There was no consistent direction of travel and birds were noted moving east and west.



During the second winter period, the highest counts were a conservative 500 at The Burgh on 6 Dec and 400 at Lodge Hill Fm (West Dean) on 22 Dec. Further flocks greater than 100 were also encountered again at Medmerry, The Burgh, and Three Leg Cross (Ticehurst). [MOW]

## Lesser Redpoll

*Acanthis cabaret*

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

Lesser Redpolls were recorded in 111 tetrads (103 in 2015).

During the first winter period there were eight records of 20 or more from seven locations. The highest counts were 60 on the Knepp Estate on 31 Mar, 50 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 11 Mar and 30 near Uckfield on 24 Feb.

Breeding was not confirmed at any site, but considered to be probable or possible in 19 tetrads, mostly on Ashdown Forest but also at Weavers Down (Liss) and Lavington Plantation. Singing males were first recorded on 8 Mar at Wych Cross (Ashdown Forest).

Autumn records were much lower than 2015. The Hasting migration watch team recorded 124 (1228 in 2015) over 18 days between 9 Oct and 14 Nov. The largest autumn flock was at Blackdown (Fernhurst) where a count of 100 was recorded on 31 Oct, followed closely by 98 at The Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

In the second winter period the largest counts were from Ashdown Forest with 150 on 8 Dec at Chelwood Gate, 140 on 14 Nov at Old Lodge LNR and 70 at Stonehill on 8 Nov. Elsewhere 80 at Pett Level on 4 Nov and 60 at Worth Forest on 15 Nov were the high counts. [MOW]

## Common Redpoll

*Acanthis flammea*

*Rare vagrant.*

There were two accepted records in 2016: an adult female and an unaged bird at Pett Level on 26 Oct (PEJ) and a first calendar year bird on 30 Oct (PEJ). All three were trapped. These are the first records since 2014 bringing the county total to 131, of which 121 have been recorded this century including an exceptional total of 62 birds in 2013.

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 the BOU will adopt the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) World Bird List for all its taxonomic needs, including the British List. As a result of this change, the Redpolls will come down from three species to two, with Lesser Redpoll once again being treated as a subspecies of Common Redpoll. [PJ]

## Common Crossbill

*Loxia curvirostra*

*Irruptive species; usually scarce visitor but fairly common in some years. Very scarce breeder in some years. Schedule 1 species.*

Common Crossbills were recorded in 38 tetrads (the same as in 2015; cf. 30 in 2014 but 54 in 2013 and 91 in 2012). The groups discovered early in the year were rather larger than they had been in 2015 (when the maximum was four) with ten on Iping Common on 15 Jan, 11 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 27 Feb and 15 at Westdean Woods on the 29<sup>th</sup>. In May, however, 20

were counted at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 14<sup>th</sup>, while at least 85 birds (including some juveniles) feeding in pines at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 30 at Iping Common on 5 Jun were suggestive of local breeding.

Several flyover groups were noted in June and July, especially on Ashdown Forest (where 11 at Gills Lap on 14 Jun included at least two juveniles). Two at Winchelsea on 14 Jul were the first seen away from either the West Sussex heaths or Ashdown Forest. Other birds seen at the coast included 1 S over Church Norton on 21 Aug and 1 W at Fairlight on 26 Oct.

During the last quarter, the species was recorded on 38 of the 92 days, usually in small numbers. The highest count on Ashdown Forest was only seven but elsewhere ten were noted at Worth Forest on 29 Oct, 20 at Graffham Common on 29 Nov and 20 also at Broadwater Warren on 13 Dec. A group of eight were agitated by the presence of a nearby Sparrowhawk in Barnes Wood (Watlington) on 29 Nov. A female was observed nest building at Old Lodge LNR on 5 Dec. [CB]



*Common Crossbill, Old Lodge, December 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

## Goldfinch

## *Carduelis carduelis*

*Probably fairly common resident, common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.*

Goldfinches were recorded from more tetrads, 526 compared to the 502 in 2015. Three counts of 100 were received during the first winter period, all in January; these came from Medmerry on the 8th, Pagham Hbr on the 16th and Newhaven Tide Mills on the 23rd. The highest of 162 double-figure counts received during the first quarter were also all in January; 80 at Pagham Hbr on the 30th, 54 at Arundel WWT on the 2nd and 50 at Beachy Head on the 1st. The early year

SWBS recorded the species in 57% of the 117 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 25 on 2 Feb near Ringmer. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch Goldfinches were seen in 25.6% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 24.9% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and was probable in a further 40; records for confirmed breeding were received between May and September. The first fledged birds were noted from Cliff End (Pett) on 16 May, whilst the last for the year were on 3 Sep at West Chiltington. During the BBS Goldfinches were encountered in 139 squares from 166 surveyed with a maximum count of 29 on 19 Jun at Steep Down (Lancing). Post-breeding flocks were evident by the end of July with 36 double-figure counts recorded with a maximum of 38 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 13 Jul. By the end of August seven flocks of between 40 and 120 had been recorded, the latter at the dam end of Weir Wood Res on 18 Aug.

During September and October there were nearly 50 three-figure counts, most in September from the Arun valley with maxima of 280 at Pulborough Brooks on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 400 at North Stoke on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. In October observations came from more coastal sites indicating movements across the county and further afield. A total of 4350 was recorded by migration watchers in the Hastings area on 33 dates between 23 Sep and 11 Nov; peak eastbound movements were 448 on 9 Oct, 596 on 12 Oct, 442 on 23 Oct and 440 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Elsewhere there were 500 at Beachy Head on Oct 23, 350 there, of which 250 were flying east, on 31 Oct and 320 W at Selsey Bill on 19 Oct. Approximately 300 were seen at The Burgh (Burpham) and Rye Hbr on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> respectively

During the late year SWBS Goldfinch was recorded from 65% of the 136 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum 69 on 5 Nov at Westbourne. There were just three three-figure counts during the second winter period: at Medmerly 200 were recorded on both 2 and 19 Nov, whilst at Crawley there were 105 also on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Of the 119 double-figure counts during this time, 14 were of between 50 and 99 birds and came from a wide variety of locations across the county. [DB]

## Serin

## *Serinus serinus*

*Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.*

There were five records in 2016: a male intermittently at Selsey Bill from 13 Apr to 19 May (OM *et al.*); a single bird at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 9 May; three (a juvenile and two adults) at Hodcombe from 16 to 17 Jun; two apparently different birds (both males) at Hodcombe on the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup>, one of which stayed to the 18<sup>th</sup> (MEC, RHC, LP); and finally a singing male at Newhaven Tide Mills from 24 Dec into 2017 (BT, LT *et al.*). The total this century moves on to 70 with records in all years bar 2009. [PJ]

## Siskin

## *Spinus spinus*

*Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce breeder.*

During 2016 Siskins were recorded in 179 tetrads (177 in 2015).

Over the first winter period there were 39 counts from nine sites (eight from six in 2015) where 20 or more were recorded. The highest totals were 62 at Crawley on 31 Jan and 42 at Warnham LNR on 1 Feb.

Although over 200 records were logged between April and July, recorded breeding activity was confirmed in just three tetrads (two in 2015), with possible or probable breeding identified in



*Serin, Hodcombe, June 2016 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)*

39 tetrads. Nest building was first observed on 7 Apr at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and fledging first recorded on 21 May at Ifold.

Autumn migration was later than 2015, with much lower counts. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 602 between 19 Sep and 13 Nov with a maximum of 80 E on 10 Oct. Sixty flew over Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 21 Oct whilst inland there were 100 at Worth Forest on 29 Oct and 60 at Blackdown on 8 Oct

During the second winter period high counts were 50 at Stanstead Forest on 19 Nov, 30 at St Leonard's Forest on 15 Dec and 21 at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 13 Nov. Smaller numbers were recorded around the county. [MOW]

## Snow Bunting

## *Plectrophenax nivalis*

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

The only record from the first winter period was of two which flew over Middle Bridge on Pevensey Levels on 7 Feb.

The first of the second winter period was one on the beach at Medmerry on 28 Oct. Possibly the same bird was then present on many dates at East Head (Chichester Hbr) from 6 Nov to 8 Dec. One was at Goring from 3 to 6 Dec and, in East Sussex, two were seen on the shore at Pett Level on 2 and 6 Nov and one flew over Fairlight on the 14<sup>th</sup>. An absolute maximum of seven birds marks another poor year for the species in Sussex. [ACG]

**Lapland Bunting***Calcarius lapponicus*

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

The only record was of one at East Guldeford Level on 13 Nov (AP). The county total this century moves on to a probable minimum of 95 although at least 43 of these were recorded during the exceptional influx in autumn 2010. The last blank year was 2007. [PJ]

**Corn Bunting***Emberiza calandra*

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

Corn Buntings were recorded in 68 tetrads during the year. The largest flock in the first winter period numbered 43 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 28 Jan. Throughout the county well over 100 birds were reported during the second half of January, with other flocks peaking at 22 at Lewes Brooks on 24 Jan and 25 at East Guldeford Levels on 31 Jan. The only double-figure count in February was again at The Burgh (14 on the 16<sup>th</sup>) but there were nine counts of 12 to 26 in March with peak numbers of 26 at Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 28 Mar and 15 to 25 at Winchelsea on 31 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed at Coombes, Plumpton Plain and Rye Hbr, where four pairs were counted, and breeding was probable in a further five tetrads. Seven pairs were established at Medmerry.

The first large post breeding flock was of 50 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 8 Aug. Over 20 birds were on downland at Keymer on several dates in the autumn and at Beachy Head flocks of up to 25 were seen regularly until the end of November. In the second winter period double-figure flocks were only recorded from eight tetrads but, by recent standards, 100 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 29 Nov and 100 just inside the county boundary at Broomhill Level (Camber) the following day were remarkable. [ACG]

**Ortolan Bunting***Emberiza hortulana*

*Very scarce migrant mainly in the autumn.*

This was an exceptional year for this species with a total of four recorded: at Seaford Head on 24 Aug (MRE, PJW) and 5 Sep (MRE), at Springhead Hill (Storrington) on 2 and 3 Sep (MH, ARK) and by the R Arun south of Arundel on 6 Oct (MCD). These are the first county records since 2013 when there was one at Pett Level on 29 Aug. To put the 2016 records into context, there were 17 recorded in Sussex before 1962, 46 between 1962-94 and 13 between 1995-2015, a county total of 76. Annual totals during 1962-94 averaged 1.4 birds per year but only 0.6 per year during 1995-2015. [PJ]

**Yellowhammer***Emberiza citrinella*

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

Yellowhammers were recorded in 301 tetrads during the year. During the first winter period the largest flock was 100 at Medmerry on 8 Jan but there were 60 double-figure counts including





*Ortolan Bunting, Hope Gap, August 2016 (Phillip Wells)*

one of 52 in a single bush at Medmerry. All but seven of these were in West Sussex, but away from the Selsey peninsula/Chichester Hbr fringes there were no flocks above 25. During the early year SWBS only 34 Yellowhammers were encountered in nine of the 117 1-km squares surveyed. The highest count in April was a flock of 25 at Barcombe on 17 Apr. Small numbers continued to visit a garden bird feeder at Uckfield from March to July.

Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable in a further 55. In the BBS, Yellowhammers were encountered in 71 of the 166 1-km squares surveyed. The WHBBS recorded 36 pairs including 11 at Ambersham Common, and 11 pairs were counted at both Medmerry and Broadwater Warren. Birds carrying either food or faecal sacs were noted at Ellisons Pond (Ashdown Forest) on 26 May and fledged young were first noted on 12 Jun at Uckfield.

In the second winter period 11 tetrads held 15 double-figure flocks of which only one was in East Sussex at Bexhill. The largest numbers were 40 at Halnaker on 10 Nov and 50 at Apuldram on Christmas Day. Indications of movement were 19 seen at Fairlight (Hastings) during this period, 12 E at Selsey Bill on 3 Oct and 1 E there on the 23rd, 1 W at Winchelsea on 28 Oct and 20 E on 16 Nov flying across the Fishbourne Channel towards Apuldram. During the late year SWBS 68 Yellowhammers were recorded in 19 of the 136 1-km squares surveyed. [ACG]

## Reed Bunting

## *Emberiza schoeniclus*

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

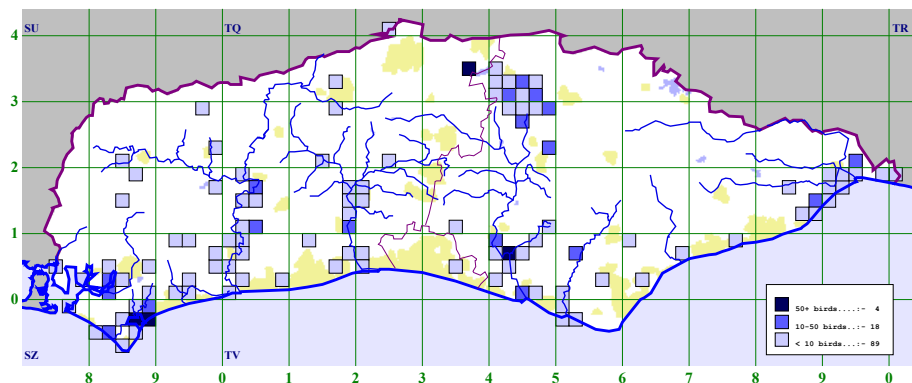
This species was recorded in 176 tetrads during the year and in over 100 in the first winter period, including widespread records from Ashdown Forest. However, while there were 40



records of double-figure counts they were from only c.16 tetrads. The only triple-figure counts were at Pagham Hbr where numbers reached 120 on 30 Jan and the only other site with over 50 birds was Rodmell Brooks where 80 were recorded on 2 Feb. A flock of 24 was on downland at the Burgh (Burpham) and 20 at nearby Wepham Down on 6 Mar. At Weir Wood Res 24 were counted going to a reed bed roost on 13 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable in a further 38. Counts of breeding pairs (2015 figures in brackets where available) included Medmerry 18 (14), Pagham Hbr 28 (21), Amberley Wild Brooks 12, Pulborough Brooks 15, Waltham Brooks 2, Filsham LNR 6 (12) and Rye Hbr 37 (33).

A total of 182 Reed Buntings was counted during the migration watch period at Hastings on 36 dates between 12 Sep and 4 Nov, the highest count being 23 W on 9 Oct. The only other indications of autumn movement were at Selsey Bill with 12 E on 3 Oct and 1 E on 23 Oct.



Records of Reed Buntings were received from well over 100 tetrads during the second winter period and there were some 33 records in double figures, 11 of which came from Weir Wood Res where the reed bed roost built up through November and December with a remarkable 159 going to roost on 29 Dec. Elsewhere, another 11 records were from Ashdown Forest where the highest count was 43 at Wrens Warren on 16 Dec. Small numbers on farmland sites were, in two cases, with Yellowhammer flocks.[ACG]

## ESCAPES and FERAL BIRDS

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All records of BOU Category D species, of apparently feral individuals of other species and of probable or certain escapes from captivity (but not those clearly in captivity) will be welcomed by the Hon. Recorder for this annual feature. 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 2016 (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 6.2) available online at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

### 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.*

A single bird was seen on 6 Jan at Thorney Deepes feeding with Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) and, probably the same individual, at Burton Black Pond on 8 May and at both Amberley Wild Brooks and Arundel WWT on the 9<sup>th</sup>. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, however, two with the appearance of Ridgway's Cackling Geese *B.h. minima* were seen at Arundel WWT behaving as a pair but moving independently of Canada Geese and WWT staff confirmed to the observer that they had been present for a week. While only single birds were seen at Arundel WWT on 22 Oct and the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 2 Dec, two were at Arundel WWT on the 12<sup>th</sup> at least one of them probably being from the WWT collection.

### 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.*

This species was seen in 13 tetrads. All records were of single birds except that two, probably the same two roving widely, were seen at Medmerry on various dates from 12 Aug to 28 Oct, the Arun Valley from Arundel to Littlehampton (including Arundel WWT) from 20 Aug to 4 Sep and in Pagham Hbr on 13 Aug and 23 Nov. Elsewhere a single bird inhabited Pulborough Brooks from 4 Jan to 8 Feb but returned from 14 Oct to 2 Nov and others were seen at various sites. It seems likely that no more than three birds were involved.

### Snow Goose

### *Anser caerulescens*

*Breeds in Arctic North America, winters in southern USA and Mexico. Presumed migrants 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 records were of two at Scotney GP on 10 Jan and another two at Pulborough Brooks on 23 May.

### Swan Goose (Chinese Goose)

*Anser cygnoides*

*Breeds naturally in Mongolia, northern China and south-eastern Russia and winters mainly in central and eastern China.*

Two birds, first seen on Amberley Wild Brooks on 25 Nov moved to Arundel WWT from 3 to 21 Dec.

### Black Swan

*Cygnus atratus*

*Breeds mainly in SE and SW regions of Australia, where it is nomadic, and New Zealand, where it has been introduced. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections and on ornamental lakes. Full-winged birds are liable to wander; has bred in Sussex.*

Black Swans were recorded in eight tetrads. Single birds were seen at Amberley Wild Brooks on 18 Jan and then at various sites within Chichester Hbr on several dates in February (driving off Mute Swans aggressively at Birdham) and again on five single dates between 3 May and 16 Dec. Most records of single birds, however, came from Chichester GP between 13 Jan and 26 Apr (although two were noted on 4 Apr). There were again two present at this site from 3 Jul, increasing to four on 20 Nov (including two juveniles suggesting late breeding locally) and occasionally to 23 Dec. Elsewhere, single birds were seen in Pagham Hbr in late August, in mid-September and on 19 Oct; at Bewl Water on 13 Apr and in the lower Arun Valley on single dates in October and November.

### Australian Shelduck

*Tadorna tadornoides*

*Also known as the Mountain Duck, it breeds mainly in southern Australia and Tasmania.*

One was recorded in Petworth Park on 5 Jan and 3-4 Apr.

### Muscovy Duck

*Cairina moschata*

*Native to Mexico, and Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form.*

This species was recorded at four broad sites. A surprised car driver saw one standing next to the A24 in Findon Valley on 2 Jan. One or two were at Ifield MP (Crawley) between 1 Jan and 18 Dec while at nearby Milton Mount Park (Crawley) there was one on several dates between 17 Jan and 25 Dec. At Horsted Keynes a single bird was seen on various dates between 12 Jan and 16 Dec.

**Ringed Teal***Callonetta leucophrys*

*Breeds in South American forests. Often kept in wildfowl collections.*

Two were seen at Shillinglee Lake (Northchapel) on 14 Mar and 4 Jun, but only a single male there on 8 May. Another was at Medmerry on 5 Dec.

**Helmeted Guineafowl***Numida meleagris*

*Breeds in Africa, mainly south of the Sahara. Kept domestically elsewhere.*

This species was noted at two sites: 14 were counted at Newick WTW on 1 Jan and four at Cocking on 6 May had remained from 2015.

**Indian Peafowl***Pavo cristatus*

*Wild birds are restricted to the Indian subcontinent. A traditional favourite in ornamental gardens.*

Single birds were recorded at Hurstpierpoint on 11 May and 24 Jun, Hempstead (Uckfield) on 20 May, and Stocks Fm (Icklesham) on 18 Jan and 1 Dec, while two were seen at Cobbarn (Eridge) on 8 Jun. Birds were also present at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 9 Jun.

**Sacred Ibis***Threskiornis aethiopicus*

*Breeds in Sub-Saharan Africa, SE Iraq and formerly in Egypt. Occurs in marshy wetlands and mud flats and visits rubbish dumps. Has been introduced to France, Italy and Spain where it predated on other smaller species. Is currently the subject of an eradication programme.*

One was seen at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) from 4 to 13 Mar.

**Harris's Hawk***Parabuteo unicinctus*

*Breeds from SW USA south to Chile and central Argentina; it is semi-migratory. Popular with falconers from whom it sometimes escapes.*

One, a female or immature, was seen at Weir Wood Res on 26 Oct.

**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.*

The individual seen in the Cocking area since 2008 was again recorded on several dates between 3 Feb and 16 Dec and one was seen at Horsham on 1 May.

**Eagle Owl***Bubo bubo*

*A widely distributed Eurasian breeding resident, scarcer or absent from areas of NW Europe, which prefers mountain regions, coniferous forests, steppes and other relatively remote places.*

One being mobbed by corvids was seen in a garden in Aldwick (Bognor) on 30 Oct.

**Budgerigar***Melopsitticus undulatus*

*Common Australian nomad. One of the most common aviary birds.*

The only record was of one at Lindfield on 23 Jun.

## Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) results for Sussex 2012-2016

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 2012-2016. 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)									
	2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)		2015 (179)		2016 (170)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mute Swan	17	11	15	10	21	13	29	16	21	12
Greylag Goose	15	10	16	10	22	13	22	12	24	14
Greylag Goose (domestic)	2	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	1
Canada Goose	40	27	37	24	45	27	55	31	47	28
Egyptian Goose	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1
Shelduck	7	5	11	7	12	7	5	3	14	8
Mandarin Duck	5	3	7	4	11	7	9	5	7	4
Gadwall	1	1	4	3	4	2	4	2	3	2
Mallard	88	59	87	56	99	59	108	60	102	60
Mallard (domestic)	-	-	1	1	3	2	-	-	1	1
Tufted Duck	9	6	9	6	5	3	6	3	5	3
Red-legged Partridge	16	11	19	12	20	12	16	9	24	14
Grey Partridge	3	2	1	1	4	2	2	1	2	1
Pheasant	118	79	123	79	135	81	142	79	142	84
Cormorant	18	12	10	6	19	11	25	14	21	12
Little Egret	5	3	7	4	11	7	14	8	14	8
Grey Heron	37	25	30	19	52	31	53	30	62	36
Little Grebe	3	2	1	1	4	2	7	4	5	3
Great Crested Grebe	3	2	4	3	4	2	3	2	4	2
Red Kite	1	1	4	3	7	4	8	4	6	4
Marsh Harrier	1	1	-	-	3	2	3	2	4	2
Sparrowhawk	13	9	18	12	15	9	24	13	28	16
Buzzard	74	50	79	51	80	48	96	54	95	56
Kestrel	41	28	34	22	30	18	51	28	47	28
Hobby	3	2	2	1	1	1	5	3	6	4
Peregrine	1	1	1	1	2	1	6	3	4	2
Moorhen	47	32	51	33	52	31	69	39	56	33
Coot	22	15	17	11	23	14	26	15	23	14
Oystercatcher	3	2	5	3	5	3	6	3	4	2
Lapwing	14	9	15	10	17	10	25	14	19	11
Whimbrel	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	2	4	2
Curlew	4	3	5	3	5	3	3	2	7	4
Redshank	1	1	6	4	2	1	3	2	4	2
Black-headed Gull	20	13	22	14	28	17	36	20	32	19



	Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
	2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)		2015 (179)		2016 (170)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mediterranean Gull	6	4	4	3	6	4	3	2	11	6
Common Gull	6	4	6	4	4	2	13	7	10	6
Lesser Black-backed Gull	12	8	18	12	13	8	20	11	22	13
Herring Gull	85	57	96	62	102	61	104	58	112	66
Great Black-backed Gull	3	2	5	3	7	4	8	4	6	4
Sandwich Tern	2	1	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	1
Common Tern	2	1	3	2	5	3	3	2	6	4
Feral Pigeon	39	26	37	24	43	26	40	22	34	20
Stock Dove	49	33	59	38	68	41	72	40	72	42
Woodpigeon	148	99	154	99	166	99	177	99	170	100
Collared Dove	89	60	89	57	101	60	111	62	99	58
Turtle Dove	7	5	4	3	6	4	2	1	3	2
Cuckoo	39	26	41	26	38	23	39	22	42	25
Barn Owl	3	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Little Owl	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	2	-	-
Tawny Owl	10	7	5	3	8	5	5	3	5	3
Swift	42	28	43	28	49	29	46	26	44	26
Kingfisher	1	1	-	-	1	1	3	2	5	3
Green Woodpecker	102	68	104	67	112	67	123	69	108	64
Great Spotted Woodpecker	100	67	110	71	99	59	119	66	107	63
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	2
Magpie	129	87	135	87	152	91	160	89	148	87
Jay	67	45	82	53	68	41	83	46	77	45
Jackdaw	120	81	130	83	141	84	159	89	138	81
Rook	85	57	88	56	90	54	98	55	97	57
Carrion Crow	143	96	153	98	164	98	175	98	168	99
Raven	4	3	7	4	5	3	5	3	12	7
Goldcrest	63	42	46	29	54	32	84	47	81	48
Firecrest	2	1	-	-	2	1	3	2	4	2
Blue Tit	145	97	153	98	162	97	174	97	166	98
Great Tit	137	92	150	96	161	96	169	94	166	98
Coal Tit	44	30	37	24	42	25	36	20	53	31
Marsh Tit	14	9	13	8	10	6	15	8	13	8
Woodlark	2	1	1	1	-	-	4	2	5	3
Skylark	78	52	75	48	90	54	87	49	79	46
Swallow	100	67	109	70	117	70	120	67	113	66
House Martin	29	19	29	19	37	22	33	18	35	21
Cetti's Warbler	5	3	6	4	12	7	15	8	15	9
Long-tailed Tit	65	44	53	34	59	35	93	52	78	46
Chiffchaff	123	83	120	77	147	88	160	89	153	90

	Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
	2012 (149)		2013 (156)		2014 (167)		2015 (179)		2016 (170)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Willow Warbler	31	21	41	26	34	20	41	23	34	20
Blackcap	127	85	130	83	145	87	144	80	144	85
Garden Warbler	36	24	30	19	22	13	30	17	27	16
Lesser Whitethroat	9	6	20	13	26	16	18	10	21	12
Whitethroat	83	56	89	57	107	64	105	59	106	62
Sedge Warbler	5	3	8	5	13	8	15	8	9	5
Reed Warbler	13	9	16	10	25	15	22	12	25	15
Nuthatch	73	49	66	42	70	42	87	49	77	45
Treecreeper	42	28	27	17	36	22	36	20	36	21
Wren	142	95	146	94	163	98	172	96	165	97
Starling	105	70	101	65	107	64	124	69	107	63
Blackbird	147	99	155	99	166	99	178	99	170	100
Song Thrush	129	87	131	84	142	85	157	88	148	87
Mistle Thrush	39	26	50	32	51	31	58	32	49	29
Spotted Flycatcher	2	1	2	1	5	3	8	4	4	2
Robin	146	98	152	97	165	99	176	98	165	97
Nightingale	16	11	18	12	16	10	16	9	7	4
Stonechat	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Wheatear	6	4	8	5	5	3	5	3	6	4
Dunnock	117	79	121	78	145	87	147	82	146	86
House Sparrow	106	71	108	69	129	77	136	76	126	74
Yellow Wagtail			1	1	1	1	2	1	-	-
Grey Wagtail	3	2	5	3	6	4	8	4	9	5
Pied/White Wagtail	55	37	55	35	64	38	78	44	79	46
Tree Pipit	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	1
Meadow Pipit	16	11	14	9	20	12	14	8	18	11
Chaffinch	146	98	154	99	162	97	172	96	163	96
Greenfinch	107	72	108	69	118	71	124	69	120	71
Goldfinch	107	72	114	73	123	74	140	78	143	84
Siskin	3	2	7	4	6	4	6	3	10	6
Linnet	49	33	45	29	63	38	64	36	62	36
Lesser Redpoll	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
Common Crossbill	4	3	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Bullfinch	43	29	25	16	36	22	43	24	40	24
Yellowhammer	61	41	58	37	64	38	65	36	74	44
Reed Bunting	16	11	18	12	19	11	23	13	22	13
Corn Bunting	7	5	6	4	3	2	5	3	3	2
Number of species	123		132		144		143		147	



*Jay, Worthing, May 2016 (Paul Loader)*

## Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) population trends in Sussex 1994-2016

Sussex BBS population trends for 38 common species for the period 1994-2016 are presented in the table below, along with population trends for the period 2015-2016. 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 1994-2016 trend gives an indication of the precision of the population trend. The sample size is the mean number of squares per year in which each species was recorded during 1994-2016.

	Change 1994-2016 (%)	UCL	LCL	Change 2015-2016 (%)	Sample size
<b>Mallard</b>	164*	267	90	-36	53
<b>Pheasant</b>	63*	85	44	21	75
<b>Moorhen</b>	-8	31	-36	-30	35
<b>Woodpigeon</b>	26*	38	15	34*	94
<b>Collared Dove</b>	97*	123	74	-31*	58
<b>Stock Dove</b>	165*	270	89	2	31
<b>Cuckoo</b>	-60*	-47	-71	13	32
<b>Green Woodpecker</b>	-14	4	-29	17	64
<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	312*	452	207	-35*	61
<b>Magpie</b>	47*	74	24	11	84
<b>Jay</b>	-25*	-7	-39	77*	44
<b>Jackdaw</b>	222*	281	172	0	75
<b>Rook</b>	-11	5	-24	-43*	52
<b>Carriion Crow</b>	441*	559	344	109*	92
<b>Goldcrest</b>	186*	275	118	72	37
<b>Blue Tit</b>	16*	31	4	-14	92
<b>Great Tit</b>	49*	67	33	31*	89
<b>Skylark</b>	-8	11	-23	10	51
<b>Swallow</b>	137*	181	100	66*	64
<b>Long-tailed Tit</b>	-2	22	-21	106*	42
<b>Chiffchaff</b>	63*	97	35	67*	80
<b>Blackcap</b>	67*	98	42	-20	76
<b>Whitethroat</b>	48*	97	11	-42	56
<b>Nuthatch</b>	91*	148	47	71*	43
<b>Wren</b>	24*	35	14	16	90
<b>Starling</b>	-72*	-64	-78	14	68
<b>Blackbird</b>	48*	60	38	28*	94
<b>Song Thrush</b>	28*	43	15	-3	83
<b>Mistle Thrush</b>	-80*	-75	-84	59	34
<b>Robin</b>	30*	44	18	3	92
<b>Duncock</b>	3	18	-10	25	79
<b>House Sparrow</b>	150*	176	127	50*	70
<b>Pied Wagtail</b>	-6	16	-24	73*	40
<b>Chaffinch</b>	-46*	-41	-50	14	92
<b>Greenfinch</b>	-53*	-44	-60	4	72
<b>Goldfinch</b>	145*	194	104	10	63
<b>Linnet</b>	198*	292	127	-47*	34
<b>Yellowhammer</b>	-78*	-71	-83	63	42



*Blackbird, Ashburnham, October 2016 (Chris Hobden)*



*Purple Sandpiper, Newhaven, January 2016 (Bob Eade)*



# ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DATES OF SUMMER VISITORS, 2016

	First recorded date			Last recorded date		
	2016	1960 to 2015	10-yr average ( $\pm$ SD in days)	2016	1960 to 2015	10-yr average ( $\pm$ SD in days)
Garganey	27 Mar	2 Feb	10 Mar ( $\pm$ 10)	25 Sep	13 Dec	4 Oct ( $\pm$ 21)
Quail	19 Mar	6 Feb	21 May ( $\pm$ 21)	5 Jul	15 Nov <sup>2</sup>	28 Aug ( $\pm$ 29)
Osprey	26 Mar	4 Mar	23 Mar ( $\pm$ 10)	8 Nov	9 Dec	26 Oct ( $\pm$ 8)
Little Ringed Plover	19 Mar	6 Mar	15 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	16 Sep	14 Sep	23 Sep ( $\pm$ 8)
Wood Sandpiper	3 May	11 Feb	1 May ( $\pm$ 11)	19 Sep	3 Nov	2 Oct ( $\pm$ 15)
Pomarine Skua	21 Apr	10 Mar	20 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	6 Nov	31 Dec	11 Oct ( $\pm$ 52)
Little Tern	3 Apr	1 Apr	8 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	16 Sep	4 Nov	21 Sep ( $\pm$ 10)
Black Tern	26 Apr	9 Mar	16 Apr ( $\pm$ 14)	4 Oct	16 Nov <sup>3</sup>	28 Sep ( $\pm$ 13)
Common Tern	26 Mar	14 Mar	26 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	25 Oct	26 Nov	25 Oct ( $\pm$ 13)
Roseate Tern	23 Apr	17 Apr	10 May ( $\pm$ 17)	-	5 Oct	11 Aug ( $\pm$ 33)
Arctic Tern	3 Apr	2 Apr	11 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	4 Oct	31 Dec	17 Oct ( $\pm$ 18)
Common/Arctic Tern	2 Apr	10 Mar	2 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	4 Oct	31 Dec	12 Oct ( $\pm$ 13)
Turtle Dove	14 Apr	5 Feb	11 Apr ( $\pm$ 10)	9 Nov	18 Dec	23 Sep ( $\pm$ 11)
Common Cuckoo	30 Mar	21 Mar <sup>4</sup>	1 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	23 Aug <sup>1</sup>	23 Oct <sup>5</sup>	11 Sep ( $\pm$ 10)
Nightjar	3 May	14 Apr <sup>14</sup>	5 May ( $\pm$ 8)	6 Sep	5 Nov	16 Sep ( $\pm$ 10)
Common Swift	15 Apr	7 Apr	12 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	5 Oct	24 Nov	5 Oct ( $\pm$ 18)
Wryneck	4 Apr	22 Mar <sup>18</sup>	16 Apr ( $\pm$ 8)	3 Oct	2 Nov <sup>6</sup>	5 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
Hobby	28 Mar	21 Mar	5 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	5 Nov	9 Nov	24 Oct ( $\pm$ 7)
Sand Martin	23 Mar	27 Feb	11 Mar ( $\pm$ 8)	20 Oct	1 Dec <sup>7</sup>	19 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
Barn Swallow	14 Mar	4 Feb <sup>17</sup>	10 Mar ( $\pm$ 10)	10 Dec	28 Dec <sup>17</sup>	25 Nov ( $\pm$ 13)
House Martin	24 Mar	1 Feb	18 Mar ( $\pm$ 7)	19 Nov	18 Dec <sup>8</sup>	16 Nov ( $\pm$ 11)
Wood Warbler	4 May	7 Apr	17 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	17 Aug	7 Oct	16 Sep ( $\pm$ 13)
Willow Warbler	11 Mar	4 Mar	18 Mar ( $\pm$ 6)	25 Oct	27 Nov <sup>9</sup>	25 Oct ( $\pm$ 8)
Garden Warbler	1 Apr	28 Mar	5 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	30 Oct	16 Nov	14 Oct ( $\pm$ 10)
Lesser Whitethroat	12 Apr	4 Apr	10 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	27 Sep <sup>1</sup>	18 Nov <sup>10</sup>	14 Oct ( $\pm$ 12)
Common Whitethroat	3 Apr	19 Mar	3 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	24 Oct	17 Dec	21 Oct ( $\pm$ 16)
Grasshopper Warbler	11 Apr	2 Apr	8 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	9 Oct	1 Nov	10 Oct ( $\pm$ 5)
Sedge Warbler	1 Apr	23 Mar	1 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	1 Nov <sup>1</sup>	29 Oct	14 Oct ( $\pm$ 6)
Reed Warbler	7 Apr	2 Apr	7 Apr ( $\pm$ 4)	9 Oct	1 Dec	15 Nov ( $\pm$ 13)
Ring Ouzel	3 Apr	9 Feb <sup>11</sup>	27 Mar ( $\pm$ 19)	16 Nov	26 Dec	12 Nov ( $\pm$ 7)
Spotted Flycatcher	24 Apr	10 Apr <sup>15</sup>	26 Apr ( $\pm$ 8)	17 Oct	18 Nov	11 Oct ( $\pm$ 10)
Common Nightingale	3 Apr	21 Mar	5 Apr ( $\pm$ 3)	11 Sep	1 Oct <sup>12</sup>	12 Sep ( $\pm$ 11)
Pied Flycatcher	2 Apr	1 Apr	13 Apr ( $\pm$ 5)	18 Sep	1 Nov	28 Sep ( $\pm$ 7)
Common Redstart	2 Apr	5 Mar	31 Mar ( $\pm$ 10)	26 Oct	26 Dec	25 Oct ( $\pm$ 24)
Whinchat	13 Apr	18 Feb	7 Apr ( $\pm$ 14)	23 Oct	2 Dec	28 Oct ( $\pm$ 11)
Northern Wheatear	19 Mar	13 Feb	5 Mar ( $\pm$ 9)	11 Nov	31 Dec	15 Nov ( $\pm$ 7)
Yellow Wagtail	29 Mar	12 Feb	26 Mar ( $\pm$ 9)	23 Oct	23 Nov <sup>13</sup>	29 Oct ( $\pm$ 9)
Tree Pipit	30 Mar	24 Mar <sup>16</sup>	1 Apr ( $\pm$ 6)	7 Oct	9 Nov	18 Oct ( $\pm$ 8)

Notes: <sup>1</sup>county record early or late date; <sup>2</sup>excludes historic December records; <sup>3</sup>excludes one in Cuckmere Valley 13-21 Nov 1954; <sup>4</sup>excludes one at Fairlight Cove on 15 Mar 1936; <sup>5</sup>excludes one at Goodwood on 11 Nov 1928; <sup>6</sup>excludes one at The Crumbles on 5 Nov 1947; <sup>7</sup>excludes record from unknown location on 5 Dec 1911; <sup>8</sup>excludes three at Fishbourne on 22 Dec 1894; <sup>9</sup>excludes two historic records on 26 Dec 1892 and 1949;



<sup>10</sup>excludes one at Burgess Hill on 21 Nov 1957 and known wintering birds; <sup>11</sup>excludes one at Mannings Heath on 2 Feb 1905; <sup>12</sup>excludes one at North Bersted on 19 Oct 1943; <sup>13</sup>excludes one at Sidlesham between 11 Dec 1960 and 14 Jan 1961; <sup>14</sup>excludes one at Pulborough on 8 Apr 1912; <sup>15</sup>excludes one at Hastings on 8 Apr 1909; <sup>16</sup>excludes record from unknown location on 17 Mar 1922; <sup>17</sup>excludes wintering bird at Newick; <sup>18</sup>excludes one on 9 Mar 1908 and one on 10 Mar 1918 both at Pulborough.

## DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL DATES OF WINTER VISITORS, 2016

	Last recorded date			First recorded date		
	2016	1960 to 2015	10-yr average ( $\pm$ SD in days)	2016	1960 to 2015	10-yr average ( $\pm$ SD in days)
Bewick's Swan	27 Feb	26 Apr	1 Mar ( $\pm 9$ )	11 Nov	6 Oct	14 Nov ( $\pm 16$ )
White-fronted Goose	24 Apr	25 May	27 Mar ( $\pm 36$ )	7 Oct	12 Sep	17 Oct ( $\pm 28$ )
Long-tailed Duck	11 Jun	14 Jun	21 Apr ( $\pm 38$ )	4 Nov	12 Aug	5 Nov ( $\pm 12$ )
Velvet Scoter	7 May	15 Jun	15 May ( $\pm 15$ )	15 Oct	2 Aug	25 Oct ( $\pm 16$ )
Goldeneye	31 Mar	31 May	18 Apr ( $\pm 16$ )	4 Nov	6 Aug	6 Oct ( $\pm 27$ )
Smew	4 Apr	24 Apr	29 Feb ( $\pm 14$ )	-	22 Oct	2 Dec ( $\pm 18$ )
Goosander	4 Feb	14 Jun	12 Apr ( $\pm 29$ )	19 Oct	12 Sep	26 Oct ( $\pm 13$ )
Black-throated Diver	8 May	21 Jun	22 May ( $\pm 9$ )	5 Nov	3 Aug	5 Oct ( $\pm 21$ )
Great Northern Diver	27 May	21 Jun	30 May ( $\pm 10$ )	20 Oct	16 Sep	22 Oct ( $\pm 14$ )
Red-necked Grebe	10 Apr	19 Jun	6 Apr ( $\pm 29$ )	4 Nov	13 Aug <sup>2</sup>	6 Oct ( $\pm 35$ )
Hen Harrier	24 May	19 Jun	26 May ( $\pm 11$ )	6 Aug	4 Aug	24 Aug ( $\pm 13$ )
Purple Sandpiper	9 May	4 Jun	2 May ( $\pm 17$ )	30 Oct	1 Jul	15 Sep ( $\pm 37$ )
Jack Snipe	17 Apr	19 May	16 Apr ( $\pm 15$ )	11 Aug <sup>1</sup>	24 Aug	27 Sep ( $\pm 22$ )
Great Grey Shrike	9 Apr	5 May <sup>4</sup>	2 Apr ( $\pm 16$ )	9 Oct	26 Sep <sup>3</sup>	12 Oct ( $\pm 8$ )
Fieldfare	14 Apr	5 Jun	25 Apr ( $\pm 10$ )	6 Oct	6 Aug	29 Sep ( $\pm 8$ )
Redwing	30 Mar	26 May <sup>5</sup>	16 Apr ( $\pm 9$ )	12 Sep	6 Aug	21 Sep ( $\pm 16$ )
Water Pipit	1 Apr	28 May	24 Mar ( $\pm 17$ )	19 Oct	1 Sep	31 Oct ( $\pm 7$ )
Brambling	18 Apr	12 May	19 Apr ( $\pm 13$ )	2 Oct	3 Sep	28 Sep ( $\pm 5$ )
Snow Bunting	7 Feb	6 May	16 Feb ( $\pm 24$ )	28 Oct	17 Sep	20 Oct ( $\pm 7$ )

Notes: <sup>1</sup>earliest or latest county record; <sup>2</sup>excludes one off Brighton on 3 Aug 1872; <sup>3</sup>excludes one at The Crumbles on 7 Sep 1899; <sup>4</sup>excludes one at Rye Hbr on 14 May 1950; <sup>5</sup>excludes 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  $\pm 7$  means that 64% of the dates fall within 7 days of that average.

## SUMMARY OF HEATHLAND BREEDING BIRD COUNTS

### Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey 2016 (West Sussex)

	AC	BD	BH	CC	CL	GC	IC	LC	LS	SC	WC	WD
Woodcock	2	3	-	5	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	1
Stock Dove	2	1	1	2	1	-	-	1	3	-	3	4
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nightjar	15	5	-	6	-	1	4	5	1	-	2	1
Green Woodpecker	5	3	1	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	6	5
Great Sp. Woodpecker	6	1	-	2	2	6	3	5	4	4	5	5
Hobby	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Woodlark	8	8	4	3	4	1	6	3	-	1	1	3
Skylark	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Whitethroat	-	4	2	2	6	-	5	7	-	-	4	5
Dartford Warbler	4	5	-	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	-	1
Common Redstart	1	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	6	1	1	2
Eurasian Stonechat	5	8	-	2	2	-	4	4	-	1	2	2
Tree Pipit	6	8	-	-	-	-	4	-	3	1	1	3
Meadow Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linnet	6	4	-	2	3	-	6	12	-	1	6	-
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Common Crossbill	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Siskin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Yellowhammer	11	-	2	-	4	-	7	5	-	2	5	-
Reed Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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)

GC: Graffham Common

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)

The above heathland sites were the only ones surveyed this year.

## NEW SPECIES for SUSSEX in 2016

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One new species was added to the Sussex list during 2016 bringing the total up to 403.

On 4 September 2016 Gail Cohen noticed a large bird land on the sea just offshore at St Leonards and then move on to the beach. When Gail approached the bird she noticed its large wingspan, blue bill and red feet and recognized it as a Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* which she remembered seeing on a trip to the Galapagos Islands.



After an hour the bird had made no attempt to move so Gail called the East Sussex Wildlife Rescue Ambulance Service who rescued the bird and took it to their centre. The bird was later transferred to the RSPCA's rehabilitation centre at Mallydams Wood. Initially the bird was extremely weak but under the expert care of Richard Thompson and his team the bird's health slowly improved.



Although Gail recognized the booby from her experience in the Galapagos Islands, this bird was actually a juvenile female white-tailed brown morph of the race *sula* which breeds on islands of the Caribbean rather than the race *websteri* which Gail had seen in the Galapagos Islands. At Mallydams the booby was fed on sprats and made steady progress towards a full recovery. The plan was to return the bird to the Cayman Islands once it was considered healthy enough. On 15 December the bird was taken to Heathrow and flown to Grand Cayman courtesy of British Airways. After the twelve hour flight the bird was placed in quarantine where it was due to stay for thirty days. Sadly, the bird did not survive and died ten days later. A post-mortem examination was undertaken but no abnormalities were found.

Details and photographs of the bird were sent to the BBRC. The identity of the bird was never in doubt and the record was accepted and forwarded to the BOURC as a potential first for Britain. The BOURC's task was to decide whether the booby had been storm-driven or whether it had been ship-assisted. A storm-driven bird would be placed in Category A and would be added to the British list but a ship-assisted bird would be placed in Category D or E and not appear on the British list.

The BOURC decided that the bird was storm-driven and as a result it has been placed in Category A and added to the British list which, in turn, means that it is a new bird for Sussex.

Photographs were provided by the RSPCA at Mallydams Wood [David Howey].

## The Sussex Ringing Report for 2016

*Val Bentley*

The year as a whole was warmer than average and above average temperatures during the first three months of the year, following a mild end to 2015, no doubt helped the winter survival of resident birds. Returning migrants encountered average temperatures and rainfall during April and May, but during June while temperatures were maintained, sunshine throughout the UK was well below the monthly norm, and rainfall significantly higher, impacting on the breeding success of many species, especially those which are single-brooded. The remainder of the summer however was often sunny and warm, giving some species a chance to bring off second broods, and the autumn and winter months were also relatively mild. (*N.B. The figures for the annual totals of birds ringed in Sussex are based on those published on the British Trust for Ornithology website at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>.*)

There were 28,170 birds ringed in Sussex in 2016, 7,897 in West Sussex and 20,273 in East Sussex. This figure was slightly lower than that from 2015, again due to fewer birds ringed at Pett Level by the Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG). At other sites more than 17,000 birds were ringed, the highest number since 2011 (see Table 1), and in Britain and Ireland the total again reached over one million, which was first reached in 2014.

**Table 1.** *Ringing totals in Sussex 2011-2016.*

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Total</b>	102,203	68,767	51,020	31,700	28,683	28,170
<b>Rye Bay</b>	79,870	53,439	34,752	15,883	12,847	11,124
<b>Others sites</b>	22,333	15,328	16,268	15,817	15,836	17,046

There were five ringing groups operating in Sussex in 2016; other ringers also kindly provided information on their individual activities.

### Notable records

Tufted Duck was the one species for which the Sussex total of 92 ringed, all by the RBRG, was more than 25% of the national total of 325. The county total of 357 Grasshopper Warblers represented just over 22% of the national figure; the RBRG contributed 312, with the Cuckmere RG adding another 31 and the Beachy Head RS ten. Both the combined British and Irish total and that for Sussex were higher than in the previous two years (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Grasshopper Warblers ringed 2011-2016.*

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Britain &amp; Ireland</b>	3661	1376	1388	1496	1183	1596
<b>Sussex</b>	1635	526	431	209	317	357

Two other species which feature strongly in the ringing efforts of the RBRG also contribute more than 10% of the overall numbers for Britain and Ireland, namely Sedge Warbler (10.8%) and Reed Warbler (11%).



There were several species of which five or fewer were ringed in 2016, including (with the Sussex total since 1979 in brackets) one Mute Swan (376), one Greylag Goose (33), four Gadwall (62), one Pintail (40), two Common Pochard (18), two Common Buzzards (37), four Coots (832), one Woodcock (46), one Lapwing (695), three Common Snipe (523), one Tawny Owl (376), four Little Owls (313), one Wryneck (61), one Black Redstart (59), four Whinchats (1709), five Stonechats (1679), one Northern Wheatear (232), two Ring Ouzels (280), four Yellow-browed Warblers (35), one Wood Warbler (154), three Pied Flycatchers (270) and one Brambling (893).

Of the above, the RBRG ringed the Mute Swan, the Greylag Goose, all the duck species, and the Coots and Ring Ouzels. The Woodcock and Lapwing were both ringed at Knepp, and two Snipe by the RBRG and one at Glynegap. The Little Owls were all nestlings ringed by Barrie Watson and his team and the Wryneck was ringed by the RBRG. The Black Redstart was trapped at the Beachy Head RS, two of the Yellow-browed Warblers by the RBRG and two by the Cuckmere RG, while two of the Pied Flycatchers were ringed by the Cuckmere RG and the other at the Beachy Head RS.



*Red-flanked Bluetail, Whitbread Hollow, October 2016 (Sarah McKenzie)*

An exciting addition to the county list of species ringed was a Red-flanked Bluetail, trapped at the Beachy Head RS in October. This was one of seven ringed in the UK during 2016, at locations as far apart as Dorset and Orkney. There had only been two previous sightings of the species in Sussex, in 2008 and 2014. The BTO online ringing report gives a good indication of the increasing appearance of this species in the British Isles; 35 of the 55 Red-flanked Bluetails ringed in Britain and Ireland have been trapped from 2010 onwards.



### Top 20 species ringed

Blackcap and Chiffchaff are very successful breeders throughout most of the UK, and birds from elsewhere move through Sussex in large numbers during autumn migration. They are easily trapped in mist nets and once again were the most numerous species in terms of birds ringed, though both showed a reduction from 2015 figures. As a percentage of birds ringed, numbers of Blackcaps were down by between 3% and 14% at five of the county's regular ringing sites, namely Cissbury, Ladywell (Coombes), Charleston Reedbed, Whitbread Hollow and Pett Level, whereas at all but Pett Level the Chiffchaff percentage remained steady or increased. Long-term trends are revealed by Constant Effort Site (CES) data, received from 130 sites throughout Britain and Ireland where ringers operate the same number of nets in the same locations for the same time period at regular intervals during the breeding season. The data from 1983-2016 show that "there have been huge increases in the numbers of Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps recorded during CES visits in the past 34 years, rising by 248% and 179% respectively. It is possible that the short-distance migratory strategies of these species have resulted in them being able to respond better to changes in weather conditions on the breeding grounds, by timing their journeys more appropriately and therefore encountering fewer challenges on route" (BTO Lifecycle, Spring 2017).

**Table 2.** *Sussex ringing totals for the 20 most ringed species in 2016. Birds of conservation concern are marked as: (R), red-listed and (A), amber-listed. Note that Grasshopper Warbler should have appeared at position 20 in 2015 rather than Reed Bunting.*

Ranking	Species (with position in 2015)	2016		2015	
		Total	RBRG	Total	RBRG
1.	Blackcap (1)	4095	2131	5194	2611
2.	Chiffchaff (2)	3864	1086	4029	1684
3.	Reed Warbler (3)	2783	2035	2895	1835
4.	Sedge Warbler (5)	2108	1854	1987	1528
5.	(A) Willow Warbler (6)	1840	549	1869	593
6.	Blue Tit (4)	1826	381	2115	452
7.	Goldfinch (9)	1220	32	707	51
8.	Great Tit (10)	878	126	700	165
9.	Robin (11)	848	265	664	213
10.	Common Whitethroat (8)	659	295	711	248
11.	Goldcrest (7)	632	72	953	243
12.	Blackbird (14)	563	170	442	164
13.	Greenfinch (19)	492	79	321	111
14.	Wren (15)	452	115	428	135
15.	(A) Dunnock (16)	427	105	384	90
16.	Grasshopper Warbler (20)	357	312	317	284
17.	(R) Lesser Redpoll (13)	326	196	420	276
18.	Reed Bunting (-)	304	62	205	114
19.	Chaffinch (-)	299	56	199	41
20.	Barn Swallow (12)	285	35	610	410

The fortunes of one of the two main tit species ringed were at variance with those for Britain and Ireland as a whole. While overall both showed a 14% reduction in numbers ringed, and the Sussex figure for Blue Tit was similarly down, the total of 878 Great Tits ringed in Sussex this

year was 25% more than in 2015. Closer examination shows that the main reason for this anomaly was in the number of Great Tit nestlings ringed around Horsham, where approx. 150 nestboxes were checked, and numbers ringed rose from 30 in 2015 to 123 this year.

After two years in which there had been a trebling of numbers ringed, Goldcrests slipped down from seventh position to 11<sup>th</sup>, though 632 is still more than double the number ringed in 2014; Britain and Ireland saw a 16% reduction, but still returned the second highest annual total for the species. It was good to see Greenfinch numbers improve from 321 in 2015 to 492 this year. The decline in the population of this species has been well documented (Robinson *et al.* 2010). A glance through the historical data in the online ringing report for Britain and Ireland reveals that in 1965, 51 years ago, over 27,000 Greenfinches were ringed (5.3% of the total number of birds), and subsequently the totals increased, with fluctuations, until a high of over 63,000 was reached in 2003 (7.5% of the total birds ringed). In 2016 the species total of 25,915 represented only 2.4% of all birds ringed in Britain and Ireland.

Chaffinches and Bullfinches are both prone to suffer from “scaly feet”, caused either by *Fringilla papillomavirus* or mites of the genus *Knemidocoptes*, and birds captured which have this condition cannot be ringed, as their legs also become encrusted with warty growths. This does not however appear to have affected the numbers of Bullfinches ringed in the county over the past five years, which has remained fairly stable, with a maximum of 131 and minimum of 112, whereas Chaffinch numbers stood at 715 in 2012 and at only 199 in 2015, so it was encouraging that the species crept back into the top 20 in 2016.

### Colour ringing and tagging projects

**Honey-buzzards** In 2016 two Honey-buzzard chicks were colour-ringed at a site in Sussex on 24 Jul and another two at a different site on 7 Aug. Also of note, an adult Honey-buzzard breeding in Kent in 2016 had been ringed as a chick in Sussex in 2007. Since the project started in 1997 a total of 115 birds have been ringed in the county. Thanks are due to the project organisers for providing this information.

**Peregrines** Five broods of Peregrine chicks, totalling 17, were colour-ringed in Sussex in 2016. Birds previously ringed as chicks at Chichester Cathedral were reported breeding in Hull, London, Southampton, Surrey and West Sussex. A chick ringed at Chichester Cathedral in 2002 bred for her 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive year at a site in West Sussex. A female ringed as a chick in June 2009 at Sussex Heights (Brighton) was reported breeding on a cliff near Dover. All sightings of colour-ringed Peregrines should be sent to Graham Roberts at [Graham.C.M.Roberts@btinternet.com](mailto:Graham.C.M.Roberts@btinternet.com).

**Woodcock** A female Woodcock, given the name “Knepp”, was ringed and had a satellite tag fitted on the Knepp Estate in 8 Mar 2014, and in both 2014 and 2015 had made an almost identical return trip to breeding grounds in Finland. Tags are solar-powered and often contact can be lost for long periods. This occurred during the autumn of 2015, but signals were received again during the winter from the same site at Knepp. The bird departed on 20 or 21 Mar 2016, reaching the Netherlands by the 22<sup>nd</sup>. By 24 Mar she had reached western Latvia and by the 27<sup>th</sup> was at a site in southern Finland, not far from Helsinki. This route was consistent with those used in previous years. Following this, data transmission ceased for a period of a fortnight, but by the time it resumed on 10 Apr, “Knepp” was back at her usual Finnish breeding site near Kinnula. “Knepp” left Sussex nearly two weeks later than in 2015, but despite this delay, arrived at her breeding site at a similar time. The last transmission received was 9 May 2016. It is unclear from the data whether this was because of a fault with the tag or because “Knepp” had died. Generally though, the tag had been working well and immediately prior to its disappearance had been transmitting regularly, perhaps suggesting that sadly the latter outcome was more likely.

“Knepp” was caught and ringed as an adult, meaning that by spring 2016 she was at least four years old, the average lifespan of a Woodcock. More information on the project can be found at <http://www.woodcockwatch.com>.

**Tree Sparrows** The Tree Sparrow ringing project continued at the SWT Pevensey Levels reserve. This year six pairs attempted to nest in the boxes provided. This matched the number for 2015 but is only half the number recorded in 2012 and 2013. The population seems to be struggling to recover from the crash in numbers of pairs that occurred in 2014.

Breeding began late this year with the first egg not laid until 11 May and, since that earliest nest failed, the first chicks did not fledge until the second week of June. The first brood produced a total of 15 chicks of which 12 were ringed. However, perhaps because of the cold and rain in June, only two pairs attempted a second brood and one of these was almost certainly the pair that had failed at the first attempt. The second brood produced a total of only three chicks. No third broods were attempted. The average fledging rate was therefore three chicks per pair which is worryingly low as it is not likely to be enough to maintain the population in the long term. Details of any sightings of ringed Tree Sparrows should be sent to Richard Black at [richard.black@rspb.org.uk](mailto:richard.black@rspb.org.uk).

**Greenshanks and Redshanks** The Greenshank colour-ringing and geolocator and Redshank colour-ringing project is run by the Farlington Ringing Group in partnership with Chichester Harbour Conservancy. A flock of 15 Greenshanks caught on the Western Deepes, Thorney Island, on 3 Sep included two with geolocators and six other retrapped birds. The ringing group plan to publish further results from this study in 2017.

Three Greenshanks were retrapped at Thorney Island in 2016, the oldest of which had been ringed, as an adult, on 28 Oct 2007. One Redshank was also retrapped; it was already an adult when ringed on 4 Sep 2005, so was into at least its 13<sup>th</sup> year, though not yet challenging the longevity record of 20 years for this species. See also <http://www.greenshank.info>.

**Stone-curlews** No chicks were ringed by the South Downs Stone-curlew project this year (see also the species account).

## Recoveries and controls

In this section, where no year is stated, the record relates to 2016. The following is a selection from the BTO online ringing report of birds which have been found away from the site where they were ringed, and are not included in the project summaries above. Controls are those captured and subsequently released by another ringer, and recoveries are birds found, usually dead, by others. Recoveries and controls also provide more precise information on the known age of a bird and included below are details of some long-lived individuals, some of which were retrapped at the initial ringing site.

A **Mute Swan** ringed at Pett Level on 30 Aug 2008 was still living locally, and was seen at Winchelsea Beach on 27 Apr. A **Greylag Goose** ringed at Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve in 2006 has wandered to various locations in Sussex and Kent, being seen this year at Warnham LNR in May, and a **Canada Goose** shot at Shillinglee Park on 17 Jan had been ringed as an adult bird at Wimbledon Park (Greater London) on 9 Jul 2007. A **Gadwall** ringed by the RBRG on 29 Sep 2015 was shot in Suffolk in January, and a **Mallard** ringed at Abberton Res (near Colchester) in 2012 suffered the same fate at Sidlesham on 16 Jan. A **Teal** ringed by the RBRG in January 2015 was seen in the Netherlands on 11 Sep, and three RBRG **Tufted Ducks** proved to be of interest in 2016; one ringed in August 2008 had been retrapped in July 2010 at the same site, and was caught again on 25 Mar this year, while two birds ringed in February and March this year were shot abroad, the first bird in Denmark on 22 Oct and the second in the Russian Federation on 9 Sep. These recoveries further support the information given in the species account in *The Birds*

of Sussex: “Tufted Ducks breeding in Britain tend to be either resident or move short distances to wintering grounds. Our home-grown population is joined in winter by Tufted Ducks from further afield” (Thomas 2015).

In 2015 three **Gannets** ringed as nestlings on small islands off Alderney had been found in West Sussex; this year another from the same area was found dead at Camber on 7 Dec. It had hatched in a nest at Les Etacs in the summer of 1992, so was in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, though still 12 years short of the longevity record. Less venerable in age, but from further away was one found dead at Seaford after a storm on 3 Mar, which was ringed as a chick in eastern Iceland on 4 Jul 2003. The record of a Danish-ringed Cormorant in the 2015 report was incorrectly ascribed to 2014 rather than 2015.

There were only a handful of reports showing movement of raptors, in addition to the Honey-buzzard and Peregrines (see above). A **Marsh Harrier** from a nest at East Dereham (Norfolk) had a wing-tag attached on 2 Jun this year, and was reported at Beachy Head on 15 Sep. Compared to some British birds of prey, **Sparrowhawks** appear to be remarkably sedentary (Wernham *et al.* 2002) but a bird ringed by the RBRG on 26 Oct 2014 had moved 95 km to Hornsea (Great London) where it was found dead on 4 Aug. An **Osprey** fitted with colour rings as a nestling at Glencassley (Highland) on 2 Jul had arrived at the R Arun near Littlehampton by 29 Aug, but then moved east and was seen in the Hastings area on 7 and 20 Sep prior to continuing its migration.

Adding colour rings as well as the standard BTO metal rings provides more chances of reports of bird movements, as in the case of two **Avocets** seen in Sussex in 2016. A nestling from Hampshire, ringed in 2014, had been recorded at several different sites in that county during 2014 and 2015, and this year was at Pagham Hbr on 31 Mar. Another, seen in the Rye Bay area from 2010 to 2014, was there again on 13 Mar 2016, nearly nine years since it was ringed as a nestling on 20 Jun 2007, 470 km away in Loire-Atlantique (France). The “leg only” of a **Black-tailed Godwit** found at Chichester Cathedral on 20 Dec was from an adult male ringed at Kingsnorth Power Station (Medway) on 23 Nov 2011; one assumes the rest of the bird had been a meal for the resident Peregrines! No less than four **Dunlin**, colour-ringed as adults at Swibno, near Gdansk (Poland), between 2013 and 2015 were spotted in Chichester Hbr during 2016; another was seen at the same location in December 2015, though the information was not available until this year. A **Common Sandpiper** ringed at Weir Wood on 27 Apr was seen and photographed at its breeding site at Lochindorb near Grantown-on-Spey (Scotland) on 14 May.

The longevity record for **Razorbill** belongs to a bird ringed as a chick on Bardsey Island in June 1962, which was retrapped at the same site just a week short of 42 years later. Sadly, one found at Camber Sands after a storm on 10 Jan was less than half that age but over 16 years had elapsed since it was ringed on Great Saltee Island in June 1998. On 17 Jun 2010 a **Common Tern** chick was ringed on a nesting raft at Ardingly Res; this year its ring was read in the field at Cropston Res in Leicestershire.

Sussex has however claimed one species longevity record this year. Dr Barrie Watson and his team carried out many cannon-netting sessions for gulls at Sompting Refuse Tip in the 1970s and 1980s, and one **Black-headed Gull** ringed there on the last day of 1980 survived for another 35 years, being found dead at Southwater on 4 May 2016. Another individual ringed in Belgium on 28 Jan 1998 was found dead at Hastings in December, and other records of the species were of live birds ringed in both Poland and Denmark. Several colour-ringed **Mediterranean Gulls** were reported. Three birds from Belgium, one from Poland and another from The Netherlands were seen in the Rye Bay area during 2016. The Dutch bird, ringed in 2000, has been seen at Pett Level in late winter/early spring every year since 2010. The oldest **Herring Gull** reported was one ringed at Fairlight (Hastings) on 14 Jul 2000, found shot at Ringwood (Hampshire) in March. A

chick from a rooftop nest at the University of Sussex on 29 Jun 2007 was found dead in Worthing in April. A **Great Black-Backed Gull** colour-ringed as a nestling on the southern tip of Norway in June 2014 was seen at Pett Level on 17 Mar.

With most **Barn Owls** having a life span of probably “only 3-5 years” (Thomas 2014), one male ringed as a nestling at the Brinsbury Estate on 22 Jun 2005 must have faced some difficult times during the following 11 years and 4 months, but had survived and was retrapped 6 km away at Billingshurst on 27 Oct. The species is regarded as fairly sedentary within the UK, and only exceptionally do they wander much further (Thomas 2014). A female ringed as a nestling at Bratton (Wiltshire) in 2015 but hit and killed by a plane at Gatwick Airport this year was therefore somewhat unusual, though in a study in south-west Scotland the “natal dispersal distances of females were found to be significantly greater than those of males” (Taylor 1994).

Two more accident victims, casualties of collisions with cars, were a female **Kestrel** ringed in 2015 in Hampshire which died at South Harting on 3 Jan, and one ringed as a nestling in Gävleborg (Sweden) on 16 Jun 2015 killed at Darwell Hill on 24 Jan. This represents a south-westerly movement of some 1530 km, which appears to be virtually “one-way” according to BTO ringing data. A total of 61 Swedish-ringed Kestrels have been recovered in Britain and Ireland, but only one recorded movement in the opposite direction, in 1951. Electrocuted near Polegate on 8 Apr was a **Peregrine** ringed as a nestling in Sweden in 2015. For this species a total of 21 Swedish-ringed birds have been found in Britain and Ireland, but none of “our” birds has yet been recorded in Sweden.

Only the RBRG captured **Rooks**, and among some retrapped in 2016 were three ringed in 2003, and another which, having survived for 19 years 4 months since it was ringed on 13 Jan 1997, is approaching the longevity record of 22 years 11 months. A **Jackdaw** ringed by the group in July 2005 was killed by a cat 13 km away on 11 Jul.

There was one **Goldcrest** bearing a continental ring controlled in Sussex this year; a first-year female ringed at Dourbes, Pas de Calais (northern France) on 14 Oct 2015 was trapped at Warnham LNR on 14 Nov. Much greater distances were travelled by a female ringed by the Cuckmere RG on 3 Sep 2015 which was found dead 895 km away in Aude (France), very close to the Pyrenees, on 13 Mar, and a first-year male ringed in Norway on 7 Oct had flown 948 km in just 13 days before being found dead in Eastbourne on the 20<sup>th</sup>. These are amazing distances for a bird weighing only between 5g and 6g. A male retrapped at Ladywell (Coombes) on 28 Dec had done well to survive into its fourth winter since being ringed on 17 Oct 2012.

Of the various tit species there were four long-lived individuals retrapped at their place of ringing this year. A **Blue Tit** at Hardham had been ringed 7 years ago in 2009, a female **Great Tit** ringed as an adult in 2008 in Burgess Hill was retrapped on 13 Jul, and a **Marsh Tit** ringed at Warnham LNR on 2 Nov 2008 was found in a nestbox there on 11 May. The oldest **Long-tailed Tit** retrapped this year was ringed on 13 Jun 2009 by the RBRG, hence into its eighth year and closing in on the longevity record of 8 years 11 months.

Of two migrating **Sand Martins** controlled by the RBRG in July one had been ringed in North Yorkshire and the other in County Laois (Ireland), both earlier in the month, while two 2013 birds from Rye Bay were controlled, one in North Yorkshire on 28 Mar and the second at Teifi Marsh (Ceredigion) on 16 Jun. Only one Sussex **Barn Swallow** was controlled; a bird ringed in September 2011 by the RBRG was caught at East Knoyle (Wiltshire) on 27 May.

The first ever Sussex record of a **Cetti's Warbler** was in 1962, and was only the second for Britain (Thomas 2014), but the species is now firmly established in suitable habitat, and a female ringed as an adult in 2008 was still resident at Pett Level on 31 Mar this year, though had evaded capture from 2009 until then. Most of the **Chiffchaffs** controlled were either of birds ringed in

autumn in Sussex and found further north in the spring, or of those moving south in autumn. An exception was one ringed at Ladywell on 2 Nov this year, which flew north-west and was trapped at a sewage farm in Worcestershire on 29 Dec, so presumably was one of an increasing number wintering in the UK. There was just one foreign control, a bird ringed at Pett Level on 12 Sep 2014, trapped at Parque Nacional de Doñana (Spain) on 16 Oct.

As the most frequently ringed bird in Sussex, there are records each year of **Blackcaps** ringed in Sussex and controlled elsewhere in the UK or vice versa. In 2016 these included birds from Fife and West Yorkshire controlled in Sussex, and a Sussex-ringed bird caught at Bardsey Island. Two birds ringed at the Beachy Head RS, one in 2015 and one in 2016, were controlled in Gibraltar and The Netherlands respectively, while two birds from The Netherlands and one from Spain were controlled at different sites in East Sussex. A juvenile male ringed at Cissbury in June 2009 and retrapped each subsequent year except 2011, was back at the site again on 17 May. **Garden Warblers** winter south of the Sahara, so while the “movement” of an individual ringed by the RBRG in August 2011 and controlled at Milton Keynes on 7 May is recorded as 164 km, it is likely that the bird had in reality flown a minimum of 50,000 km. Not available until this year were details of a **Common Whitethroat** trapped at Beachy Head on 25 Aug 2015 which was controlled 710 km only six days later in Lot-et-Garonne (south-west France).

An adult male **Sedge Warbler** ringed at Pett Level on 31 Jul 2012 has now been found at Strathclyde CP (North Lanarkshire) in May of 2013, 2014 and 2016, presumably at a breeding site. Other controls were in Alderney, Jersey, The Netherlands and two in France, one of which was ringed on 24 Aug at Charleston Reedbed and had travelled 715 km in 8 days. As in 2015, **Reed Warblers** demonstrated remarkable site faithfulness; one ringed on 1 Aug 2009 at Steyning was retrapped at the site in 2010, 2011, 2014, 2015 and again this year on 9 Jul, and another ringed by the RBRG on 16 Jul 2009 has now been retrapped every year except 2014. Outdoing the aforementioned species for speed was a Reed Warbler which moved 923 km from Pett to Navarra (Spain) in three days from 8 to 11 Sep. Individuals ringed abroad and controlled by the RBRG included two from France, both ringed in 2015, and one each from The Netherlands and Sweden.

The typical life span of a **Wren** is 2 years, but one ringed at Ladywell on 4 Jul 2011 was retrapped for the 12<sup>th</sup> time on 7 Dec, 5 years 5 months later. There have only been five recoveries of Wrens in Britain and Ireland which have been ringed abroad, and none this century (Robinson *et al.* 2016). Hence it was remarkable indeed to receive information this year of an individual killed by a cat in Worthing on 5 Feb 2015 which had been ringed in Glabbeek (Belgium) at the start of November 2014.

The oldest **Blackbird** retrapped in 2016 was a male ringed as a juvenile at Cissbury on 19 Sep 2006, and, rather surprisingly, only retrapped four times in the years between then and 25 Feb 2016. There were two exchanges between Sussex and the continent; a male ringed at Lower Dicker on 12 Jan 2010 was found dead at Dongen (The Netherlands) on 17 Mar, and a Dutch bird ringed on 6 Oct was controlled by the RBRG 17 days later on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Also from The Netherlands was a **Robin** ringed on 12 Oct 2015 and found dead at Ditchling on 25 Oct. Another individual controlled at Beachy Head on 27 Oct had been ringed in Vestsjælland (Denmark) on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and there were two recoveries in Sweden of birds ringed in East Sussex in previous years. There were 1431 nestling **Common Redstarts** ringed in Great Britain in 2013; one of these, from Denbighshire, survived three return migrations to south of the Sahara and hopefully had the chance of three breeding seasons before being killed by a car in Brighton on 23 Aug this year.

Belgium and The Netherlands have the most exchanges of **Chaffinches** with Britain and Ireland; fewer move between here and Germany, but one ringed by the Cuckmere RG on 28 Jan was controlled in Helgoland on 6 Oct. One **Lesser Redpoll** from the north of England and



another from Scotland were controlled at different sites in East Sussex in October, while two Sussex-ringed birds moved to Northumberland and one to Cumbria. Five **Siskins** ringed in the winter months at different sites across Sussex were controlled in Scotland, one of which moved 673 km from Haywards Heath to Loch Tay (Perth and Kinross) in 9 days; another was trapped in Wales. The *Migration Atlas* suggests that “there has been much disagreement about the migratory status of the breeding population of **Reed Bunting** in Britain and Ireland, with opinions, even for the same county varying from resident to almost entirely migratory!” (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Both hypotheses could be supported by 2016 ringing records. Two birds trapped in November and December at Weir Wood Res had been ringed in Essex on 26 Oct and in Lancashire on 17 Jun, respectively, but individuals ringed at Steyning and Pett Level in 2011 were both retrapped at the same sites in 2016.

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# Common Redstarts in the Ashdown Forest: distribution, breeding densities and habitat preferences

Matt Kirk

## Introduction

What started out as an attempt by the author to quantify the numbers of Common Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* within the Pippingford Estate grew into a rather more ambitious attempt to record the distribution and abundance of the species across the whole of the Ashdown Forest SSSI, something that has not been done for nearly 35 years.

The project did not start out quite so simply. Initially, a lot of time was spent looking for Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *Dryobates minor*, but then Redstarts were seen while waiting for the woodpeckers to appear, and the author gradually became intrigued by Redstarts. These are birds that make only a brief appearance in the UK during the late spring and summer but their unpretentious song and discrete presence are as important a part of summer in our woodlands as is the song of the more vocal Skylark on the heaths, moors and meadows. The decision was made to concentrate primarily on Redstarts, not least because, in the words of John Buxton (1950) (who wrote the only major work on Redstarts whilst a prisoner of war in Germany from 1940 to 1945), “...it would be convenient to watch a bird that is easily recognised by both eye and ear, and one whose sexes are unlike enough to be distinguished.”

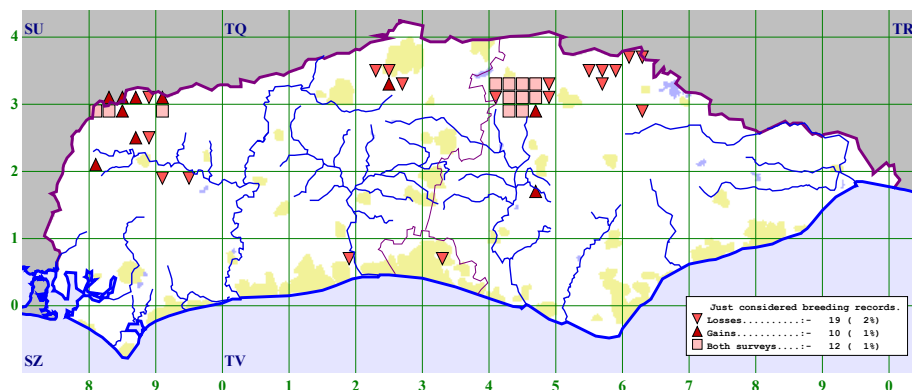
The author having started out very much as one of the “...mere naturalists who delighted in the birds and were content to note down what we saw or heard without any opinion about its significance” (Buxton 1950), the number of Buxton’s “unanswered whys” increased; only by recourse to good data, as Buxton showed, will answers emerge. This report attempts to do no more than establish a preliminary baseline for Redstarts in the Ashdown Forest SSSI but does so in the hope that good data on the species will continue to be gathered and shared in the future.

## Species overview

The Redstart is a summer visitor whose status in Sussex as a breeding species is described as scarce and declining; it is a fairly common passage migrant (Thomas 2014). The Redstart is an amber-listed species of medium conservation concern (Eaton *et al.* 2015) based on recent population declines between 1981 and 2007, winter population decline, breeding range decline and recent winter range decline. As shown in Figure 1, there was a loss of breeding sites in Sussex between 1988-92 and 2007-2011, especially in north-east Sussex; this distribution change map also emphasises the importance of the Ashdown Forest area to the species in Sussex (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Thomas 2014).

Redstarts arrive in the UK in late March and early April; the 10-year average arrival date for Sussex is 29 March (+/-11 days) and birds arrive on the Ashdown Forest in early April (Sussex Bird Report 2015). Redstarts build nests in crevices or holes in trees, usually at heights below 3 m, in a range between ground level and 8 m. The clutch size is 6-7 eggs which hatch within 12-14 days and the young fledge 14-15 days later. There is generally one brood but sometimes there can be two (Ferguson-Lees *et al.* 2011).

Only females build nests, although males, which arrive on the breeding grounds first, choose the nest sites and sing to advertise their presence to arriving females. Buxton, with the help of his fellow prisoners, painstakingly recorded the singing patterns of a male Redstart at Eichstätt (Bavaria) throughout every day during April, May and June 1943. Buxton’s observations (1950)



**Figure 1.** The change in breeding distribution (considered probably breeding or confirmed breeding) of Redstarts in Sussex between the 1988-1992 and 2007-2011 tetrad atlas surveys. Filled squares indicate areas where Redstarts were considered breeding in both the 1988-1992 and 2007-2011 surveys; the main area of continued breeding presence is the Ashdown Forest in East Sussex.

were that: “The cock Redstart sings well when he first takes up territory. He will continue to sing vigorously after the arrival of the hen, and especially so during the days when he is inviting her to start building the nest in the hole he has chosen. As soon as she starts building, and though he takes no part in this, he falls silent. But he begins to sing again when the nest is completed, and after singing rather little during the days when the eggs are being laid, he sings at his best during the next two weeks when the female is sitting. As soon as the chicks hatch he ceases to sing altogether and will not sing again during the rest of the season, unless a second brood is raised.”

The silent period for Buxton’s bird in Bavaria in 1943 was about a week in length and occurred at the end of April and the beginning of May. Another source notes that “although the male is silent when the female is building, males otherwise sing regularly from any of several prominent perches one of which is usually near the nest” and also that “males stop singing when the incubating female leaves the nest to feed” (Ferguson-Lees *et al.* 2011).

The significance of periods of silence in male Redstarts is that the song and other vocalisations are the primary means of detecting Redstarts in leafy woodland as physical sightings can be very difficult when the birds are hidden by the canopy. These periods of silence have to be taken into account when collecting and assessing records as territories that appear to be occupied at the middle or end of April might appear to be vacant by early May and this behaviour creates a need for repeat visits to be factored into the methodology to accurately identify occupancy.

## Distribution and habitat

Redstarts have a large latitudinal range in breeding distribution (Porket and Zajic 2005). In terms of general habitat requirements Buxton characterises the main habitat as Scots pine forest with a ground layer of heather and *Vaccinium* spp. (e.g. bilberry), but the open nature of the woodland and the availability of nest holes are also important (Buxton 1950). The right amount of canopy cover is also significant with Redstarts favouring a canopy cover greater than 27% (Sedláček *et al.* 2004), and stands with a low density of trees equating to a canopy cover of 45-52% were favoured in Scottish Scots pine woods (Taylor and Summers 2009).

The species occurs in a wide range of habitats across Europe but in the UK the breeding haunts of Redstarts range from mature broad-leaved woods and copses to hedgerows, wood-pasture landscapes and heathland. Small pockets of distribution remain in southern England, mostly associated with heathland (Balmer *et al.* 2013). The Ashdown Forest SSSI is one such pocket (see Figure 1) so the question that motivates this study is: what is the size of that pocket in terms of Redstart presence and distribution?

### The Ashdown Forest SSSI

The Ashdown Forest SSSI is located in the Weald, just south of East Grinstead. The full extent of the SSSI area covers 3,144.6 ha, of which two-thirds is classified as “dwarf shrub heath (lowland)” and one-third is classified as woodland. The area was designated an SSSI in the mid-1980s (Natural England 1986) with the following citation: “It is one of the largest single continuous blocks of heath, semi-natural woodland and valley bog in south-east England, and it supports several uncommon plants, a rich invertebrate fauna, and important populations of heath and woodland birds.” The Ashdown Forest area is also designated a Special Protection Area (SPA) under an EU Directive in 1993 and one of the designated species mentioned in the citation was the Redstart. The area was also given status as a Special Area of Conservation under an EU Directive in 2005 for its areas of European dry heaths and North Atlantic wet heaths.

The principal land holdings on the Ashdown Forest SSSI are:

- Land under the management of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest;
- Land in private ownership under management agreements: mainly Pippingford Park Estate including the MOD training area, Hindleap Warren Outdoor Activity Centre, Broadstone Warren Outdoor Activity Centre, Lewes Park Estate (most of which is not in the SSSI);
- Land owned and managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust at Old Lodge Nature Reserve;
- Land owned by Sussex Police at Kings Standing.

Land under the management of the **Conservators of Ashdown Forest** amounts to 2,500 ha, two-thirds of which is heathland and the rest woodland. The main management priorities are maintaining and improving the heathland which is designated an SPA for Woodlark, Dartford Warbler and Nightjar. The woodland is relatively lightly managed but heavily grazed by deer resulting in a depleted understorey and minimal ground flora in many woodland compartments.

**Pippingford Park** is made up of 212 ha of “broadleaved and yew mixed woodland (lowland)” and 103 ha of “dwarf shrub heath (lowland)” (Natural England 2016). The estate is an extensive area of woodland and heathland and forms a key part of the SSSI as it occupies much of the centre of an area of land surrounding it that is managed by the conservators. The estate manages the whole area but it is used extensively by the military as a training area and the estate itself hosts a number of sports and entertainment events during the year. There is an active pony grazing regime of a large area of heathland but the woodland areas are lightly managed although heavily grazed by deer and have sparse to non-existent understorey in many areas. In other areas rhododendron is present although much has been cleared in the last 10 years. There is no coppicing regime in place at present and over-standing chestnut coppice dominates several areas.

**Hindleap Warren** is 114 ha of woodland that is operated as an outdoor activity and education centre, but these activities, which involve groups of school-age children, take place in a relatively small part of the estate. There is believed to be almost no regular permitted public access. There has been some small-scale coppicing in several locations on the estate in recent years and although several areas of rhododendron have been cleared and other areas are being tackled, extensive areas remain smothered in dense rhododendron above which mature trees tower.

**Broadstone Warren** is 183 ha of privately-owned woodland which is run as an outdoor activities centre and used mainly by scout groups in the spring and summer. The site is crossed by a number of signed public footpaths but dog walkers from Forest Row habitually wander from these paths and have created a network of minor paths for their own convenience. There is no management of the estate for habitat purposes as such and large areas remain smothered by dense rhododendron even though large areas were cleared some years ago.

The **Lewes Park Estate** is largely outwith the SSSI but is included here for several reasons: it adjoins Pippingford Park and several known Redstart territories span the boundary; there has been coppicing work that has proved attractive to Redstarts; and it had not been visited since the 2007-2011 atlas fieldwork. Land managed by the **Sussex Wildlife Trust** at Old Lodge as a nature reserve occupies 99 ha of ground classified as “dwarf shrub heath (lowland)” (Natural England 2016) and includes a conifer plantation. There is an active management programme that includes livestock grazing to help control invasive species in the heathland. Land owned by **Sussex Police** at Kings Standing is 20 ha of mainly heathland with few trees.

### Monitoring methods and survey effort

The Pippingford Park training area has been the main area studied previously, with surveys for all species conducted annually in May since 1987 (lead recorder Mike Scott-Ham). The same 7-km single transect route has been walked on the middle weekend in May each year. The survey area was expanded by the author in 2009 to include the whole of the Pippingford Park Estate. The additional area included parkland, woodland and land surrounding private properties on the estate. This extension was driven by the needs of the Bird Atlas 2007-11 project and following on from this work a whole-estate survey of Redstarts and Tree Pipits was conducted in 2009 by visiting all areas to establish sustained occupancy and to plot territories.

In 2016 the study area was further expanded to include Hindleap Warren and Broadstone Warren, both in private ownership and neither of which had been surveyed recently, and part of the Lewes Park Estate that adjoins Pippingford Park as this had not been covered since the Bird Atlas 2007-11 fieldwork (all areas surveyed by the author and Shaun Taylor).

In 2016 a mapping approach was adopted based on the BTO Common Birds Census (Bibby *et al.* 1992), the intention being to use a series of visits to estimate locations and numbers of territories. Every effort was made to identify the locations of individuals that could be heard singing simultaneously on the “assumption that territory boundaries fall between such records” (Bibby *et al.* 1992). A minimum of two and a maximum of four visits were made to all areas spread at three- to four-week intervals between the middle of April and the end of June. Most visits were carried out in the morning between 06:00 and 12:00 and all areas were surveyed thoroughly. Hindleap Warren was visited three times and Broadstone Warren visited four times in this period. Due to its size, Pippingford Park was sub-divided into manageable areas for recording and most of the ground was visited four times although two peripheral areas were visited only twice. Lewes Park was visited three times but only in June.

The locations of males seen or heard singing/vocalising were plotted on a map to which records were added from subsequent visits. The intention was to pinpoint as accurately as possible territories that appeared to be regularly occupied. Territory areas were defined by a circular buffer with an approximate 150-m radius around the point where a bird was heard or seen. This method was derived from a study that took place in urban Switzerland (Droz *et al.* 2015). These researchers used a circular buffer of 100 m giving a notional territory size of 2.25 ha which was deemed to be fit for purpose and they referenced a study in which territories of 3.1 ha in similar habitat were the norm (Sedláček *et al.* 2004). The more generous radius used for the current study

was chosen on the basis that the habitat appeared to be less densely occupied. This radius is also consistent with Houghton's observation that "several birds hold territory within 200/300 yards [182/275 m] of one another and three-quarters of the East Sussex population is found in such groups" (Houghton 1982).

Droz *et al.* (2015) defined an Occupied Territory (OT) as being established when a singing Redstart was observed at least three times out of eight visits in the same place; that is on 37% of visits. Because fewer visits were made for this current study a higher threshold was deemed to be more appropriate. For sites visited twice, birds had to be present on both visits (100%); for sites visited three and four times birds had to be present twice (66% and 50%, respectively). This is effectively the same as the definition of a permanent territory used for the Bird Atlas 2007-11 project (Balmer *et al.* 2013). If a bird was recorded only once in a location it was classified as being in an Apparently Occupied Territory (AOT).

Land under the management of the conservators is surveyed by members of the Ashdown Forest Bird Group (AFBG) who each cover a specific area and submit records of species seen and heard during their visits although no surveys specific to Redstarts have ever been undertaken. The number of records and detail of the records from each patch vary as does the amount of recording effort by each observer. The SWT land at Old Lodge is monitored using a regular transect survey every month. The site is also frequently visited by birdwatchers, some of whom submit records using BirdTrack. Records are also submitted by AFBG members visiting the site. The land owned by Sussex Police at Kings Standing was not included in the survey area.

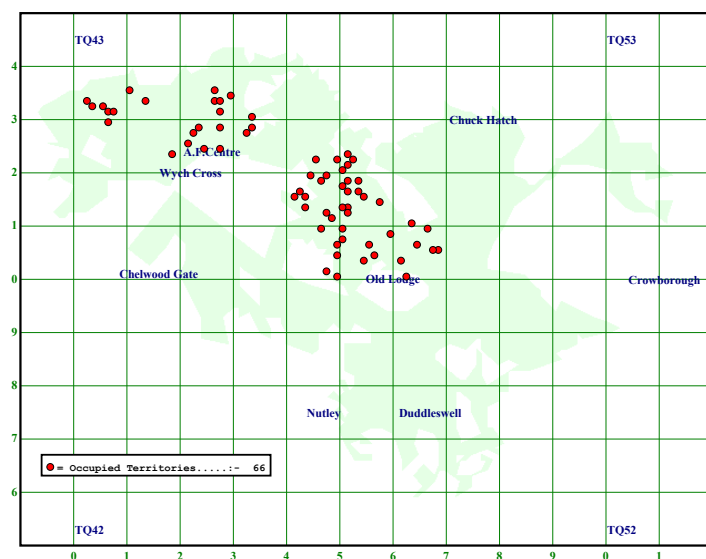
## Survey results

The numbers of AOTs and OTs in the various areas surveyed in 2016 are shown in Table 1. This brings together all available information from the main study area together with information provided by observers collecting and recording data across the whole Ashdown Forest SSSI. The numbers of Occupied Territories are included within, rather than being additional to, the numbers of Apparently Occupied Territories. The locations of the OTs are shown in Figure 1.

**Table 1.** Redstart territories identified in 2016 in the surveyed areas. AOTs, Apparently Occupied Territories with males seen or heard at least once; OTs, Occupied Territories with males seen or heard in the same area on two or more occasions. ID, insufficient data.

	AOTs	OTs
<b>Private woodland</b>		
Pippingford Park	32	30
MOD training area	25	25
Other areas of estate	7	5
Lewes Park	4	ID
Broadstone Warren	20	14
Hindleap Warren	5	4
<b>Land managed by the conservators</b>		
Lavender Platt	3	2
Lumsden's Stone/Priory Road East	3	3
The Park/Tabell Ghyll	4	4
Other locations	13	ID
<b>SWT Old Lodge</b>	12	9
<b>Total</b>	95	66





**Figure 1.** The locations of the Redstart Occupied Territories identified on the Ashdown Forest (the green shading indicates the Ashdown Forest SSSI).

With records for nearly 100 Apparently Occupied Territories, the abundance of Redstarts across the Ashdown Forest SSSI is apparently good. The number of Occupied Territories, at just under 70, is considerably lower, the result of there being insufficient data from all areas to be able to categorise many of the AOTs as actually being occupied. In terms of change since the last major survey of Redstarts in Sussex was conducted by Houghton in 1982 the situation looks positive, as a total of 48 pairs or males holding territory were then reported for the whole of East Sussex, although Houghton estimated a total of 80 pairs for East Sussex having taken into account “the Redstart’s catholic choice of breeding habitat” and the amount of woodland in north Sussex that was not surveyed at the time (Houghton 1982).

**Pippingford Park** Every effort was made during visits to make sure that all the identified AOTs were established to be actually occupied with a bird present on at least two visits. In almost all cases AOTs were established as OTs, the exceptions being two birds in habitat that looked less than ideal, in both cases on the fringes of over-standing sweet chestnut coppice. There were very few observations of physical interaction between neighbouring males. Brief skirmishes between males were rarely observed, which is perhaps a result of territories apparently being well spaced out, and adjoining territories not being closer than the 150-m radius used to define a territory.

The birds mainly occupied well-wooded areas containing maturing trees with an open understorey, habitat that accounted for around 75% of OTs. Wooded areas fringing the heathland accounted for the remaining territories. The finding that Redstarts occupy a variety of habitats is consistent with the finding by Houghton (1982) that East Sussex Redstart sites can be characterised as being “situated in old open deciduous woodland, the edge of conifer plantations and in damp river valleys with mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland”.

**Broadstone Warren** Nearly half the OTs in Broadstone Warren were in areas used by the scouts for camping. These areas consist of grassy clearings surrounded by maturing trees and are

obviously attractive to Redstarts. However, not all the camping areas on the site had territories and some territories in predominantly well-wooded areas were not far from camping areas so the attraction may not be a strong one. Broadstone Warren had the highest difference of all the surveyed areas between AOTs and OTs. This was due to five birds recorded in April that were not seen or heard again in the same places on subsequent visits. The sixth sighting that was not established as being occupied was located well away from the other territories, in what looked to be marginal habitat fringed by dense wet woodland.

The Broadstone Warren territories were the hardest to pin down for several reasons: the ground was not well known and a lot of time was spent eliminating large areas of what proved to be unfavourable habitat. Also, although the birds were cooperatively vocal they appeared to be a lot more mobile between the April and May visits than the Pippingford Park birds. One group of four AOTs identified in April within 500 m of each other was especially interesting as there was considerable physical interaction between three of the birds observed on the first visit with sparring between males intent on driving each other out of an area. Subsequent visits to this area produced observations of only two birds in occupation indicating that one male was unsuccessful in establishing a territory. One of these territories was notable in that it was the only one that was first recorded in April but not recorded in May but was recorded again in June; an instance of a silent male perhaps.

**Hindleap Warren** This area was notable for having two areas of fairly recently coppiced chestnut (within the last five years) which held three of the four OTs identified. One of these coppiced areas held one bird and was well away from the other coppiced area of the site where birds were also found.

**Lewes Park** Due to time pressures only three brief visits were made in June. Although the estate is huge, much of it is a commercial conifer plantation that is either too dense or, where it is thinner, has a dense ground layer of bracken. Redstarts only occupy a very small part of the estate, most of it close to, or in, areas where coppicing has been undertaken. A bird was also found in an area of deciduous woodland adjoining an area of thinned plantation conifers, even though the ground layer was mostly bracken.

**Land managed by the conservators** Two areas were surveyed as part of the main study area: ground adjoining Pippingford Park in an area known as The Park, and the area adjoining Hindleap Warren at Lumsden's Stone. The records for Lumsden's Stone have been checked with the AFBG to avoid double-counting (Alastair Gray *pers. comm.*). One other area, Lavender Platt, had a dataset detailed enough to deduce a population of two pairs, and male birds were seen or heard on eight out of ten visits between late April and late June (Richard Perry *pers. comm.*).

Reports and records from AFBG members from all other areas of the land managed by the conservators indicate occupancy in a number of locations although virtually all of these were single records from various locations. These have been classified as 13 AOTs as it is unknown whether birds were absent at other times or simply that no visits were made at other times. The only sites with more than one AOT were Churlwood (2) and Airstrip (3) (Alastair Gray *pers. comm.*). The areas with single records were: Twyford Lane woods; near to the grazing enclosure below the visitor centre (two locations); Kidds Hill area; Spring Garden area; Duddleswell area; near Wren's Warren; and near Greenwood Clump. Apart from Twyford Lane, all the other records are from woodland fringing heathland.

**SWT land at Old Lodge** Although the site is designated as heathland it has enough wooded areas around the heathland for Redstarts to find nest sites. Data has been provided for Old Lodge by SWT volunteers who conduct a transect survey each month. From a peak of 12 singing males in April, nine Occupied Territories were identified from repeat sightings at documented locations.

## Breeding densities

An analysis of the breeding densities of Redstarts across the SSSI has been made to assess the suitability for breeding Redstarts of the SSSI as a whole and to highlight any variations in densities across the different woodland blocks within the SSSI. This data is also compared with the results of studies from other UK regions. While this sounds like a simple enough piece of analysis there are obvious difficulties. The first is the area of land that should be used as the basis for calculation. The total amount of woodland in the SSSI is nearly 1,500 ha but much of this woodland is unoccupied by Redstarts. It is also the case that Redstarts occupy woodland fringed by heathland (and grassland) but to include all the area of the heathland in the calculation would also be imprecise as although Redstarts use the fringes of the heath they were not observed far from the woodland edge.

It is more meaningful to assess the land area actually occupied by Redstarts and to calculate densities based on the number of males attempting to hold or actually holding territory during the breeding season in those areas. Estimates for land area occupied are based on assessing the size of woodland compartments where any AOTs were recorded; this is estimated to be 355 ha in the areas with records robust enough to analyse. The results of calculations made on this basis are shown in Table 2. The average territory size was 4.3 ha with range 3.3 to 5.0 ha. Using the same method but making the calculations using numbers of OTs (Table 3) gives an average territory size of 5.2 ha with range 3.3 to 7.5 ha.

**Table 2.** *Average sizes of Apparently Occupied Territories (AOTs) in the surveyed areas.*

	Estimated occupied area (ha)	AOTs	Territory size (ha)
<b>Private woodland</b>			
Pippingford Park	150	32	4.7
Lewes Park	15	4	3.8
Broadstone Warren	75	20	3.8
Hindleap Warren	20	5	4.0
<b>Land managed by the conservators</b>			
Lavender Platt	15	3	5.0
Lumsden's Stone/Priory Road East	10	3	3.3
The Park/Tabell Ghyll	20	4	5.0
<b>SWT Old Lodge</b>	50	12	4.2
<b>Total</b>	355	83	4.3

**Table 3.** *Average sizes of Occupied Territories (OTs) in the surveyed areas.*

	Estimated occupied area (ha)	OTs	Territory size (ha)
<b>Private woodland</b>			
Pippingford Park	150	30	5.0
Broadstone Warren	75	14	5.4
Hindleap Warren	20	4	5.0
<b>Land managed by the conservators</b>			
The Park/Tabell Ghyll	20	4	5.0
Lumsden's Stone	10	3	3.3
Lavender Platt	15	2	7.5
<b>SWT Old Lodge</b>	50	9	5.6
<b>Total</b>	340	66	5.2

In order to give a comparable indicator with other types of habitat in the UK the average size of territory of 5.2 ha is expressed in terms of the number of males per km<sup>2</sup> which produces a figure of 18.5 males per km<sup>2</sup> of occupied woodland compartments. This is compared with the results of a number of other studies of breeding densities of Redstarts in Table 4.

**Table 4.** *Breeding densities (males or pairs per km<sup>2</sup>) of Redstarts found in different UK studies. Adapted from Taylor and Summers (2009).*

Location	Habitat type/main tree species	Density (n/km <sup>2</sup> )	Source
England (Ashdown Forest)	Broadleaved/yew	18.5	Current study
Scotland (all Abernethy)	Scots pine	7.6	Taylor and Summers 2009
Scotland (old growth within Abernethy)	Scots pine	15.1	Taylor and Summers 2009
Wales (mature wood)	Oak	12-64	Hope Jones 1972
Scotland (West Highlands)	Oak	46	Williamson 1969
Scotland (West Highlands)	Scots pine	20	Williamson 1969
Scotland (West Highlands)	Birch	35	Williamson 1969
Scotland (Argyll)	Oak	32-49	Williamson 1969

There is relatively little data available on which to base a comparison and no recent data for lowland woodland in southern Britain. The breeding density for the Ashdown Forest is in the lower middle range of all studies but given the changes in habitat and the condition of many woodlands in the 40 years since the early Scottish and Welsh studies of oak woodlands were conducted the basis of comparison is weak. The density for the Ashdown Forest is marginally higher than that found in the better areas of Scots pine in the Abernethy Forest (Taylor and Summers 2009).

### Habitat factors influencing breeding density

The woodland within the Ashdown Forest SSSI holds good numbers of Redstarts but the finding that Redstarts are not occupying all areas of woodland is indicative that the condition of that woodland varies across the SSSI. Of the 850 ha of woodland within the SSSI, 75% (635 ha) is described by Natural England (2016) as being in “unfavourable recovering” condition. This condition is defined: “units (blocks of land) are not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management mechanisms are in place; at least one of the designated feature(s) or mandatory attributes are not meeting their targets; provided that the recovery work is sustained, the unit will reach favourable condition in time.” However, the assessment by Natural England cannot be taken as an indication that the land is not suitable for or not used by Redstarts as over two-thirds (400 ha) of the land assessed as being in “unfavourable recovering” condition is in three blocks of privately owned woodland at Pippingford Park, Hindleap Warren and Broadstone Warren; all have populations of Redstarts. There may be a link between areas in “favourable condition” and Redstart occupancy as records of Redstarts came from four out of the five compartments of woodland with areas greater than 20 ha managed by the conservators and assessed as being in “favourable condition”. Further analysis of comparative densities of Redstarts by condition of woodland would be needed to make any meaningful observations about potential links.

Based on fieldwork observations for this study it can be stated that positive habitat attributes are an open understorey with areas beneath a maturing, but not too dense, canopy in mixed but mainly broadleaved woodland. Occupancy on the edges of areas with conifers was noted in Old Lodge, Lewes Park and Broadstone Warren. Occupancy of woodland adjoining heathland was also noted in Pippingford Park, in some areas managed by the conservators, and at Old Lodge.

Broadstone Warren has small stands of maturing Scots pine with a mixed understorey that includes bilberry, a similar habitat type to that found in the Highland woodlands that was found to be favourable for Redstart densities (Taylor and Summers 2009). There is only a limited amount of this habitat at Broadstone Warren but a Redstart territory was found near one such area.

Fieldwork observations of negative habitat attributes suggest that areas of woodland are not occupied due to any of the following factors:

- the understorey is too dense (rhododendron);
- it is wet woodland;
- it consists of over-standing sweet chestnut coppice;
- the canopy is too closed;
- the ground layer is dominated by bracken.

The state and composition of the ground layer is of critical importance. In most areas of Pippingford Park there is no ground layer at all and this appears to be favourable, except where the canopy is too dense. In contrast the camping clearings within Broadstone Warren feature relatively short grass which was found in a study in Switzerland conducted in moderately urban areas to be favourable for Redstarts to the extent that wooded short-cut lawn constituted the preferred land cover (Droz *et al.* 2015).



**Figure 2.** A female Redstart close to a nest in an old Great Spotted Woodpecker nest hole in an alder tree in Pippingford Park, Ashdown Forest.

Redstarts need older trees with plenty of holes and snags for nesting. One study found the relative importance of old Great Spotted Woodpecker nests as nest sites in Scots pine (Summers



2004). Only a limited number of observations of nest sites were made during this study (see Figures 2 and 3) with oak, beech, alder and birch emphasising a degree of flexibility in choice of host tree species; this does not reflect the bias to “very old beech” noted by Houghton (1982).



**Figure 3.** *A female Redstart at a nest hole in an oak tree at Broadstone Warren, Ashdown Forest.*

Both Broadstone and Hindleap Warrens have plenty of maturing trees, many of which obligingly drop their ancient limbs from time to time creating plenty of potential nest sites. Unfortunately, much of the ground is covered in rhododendron which prohibits ground foraging and this is reflected in fairly low numbers of birds recorded relative to the total sizes of the sites.

Redstarts appear to react favourably to recently coppiced areas of woodland, especially sweet chestnut, which, when allowed to over-stand, is highly unattractive to them (and almost all other bird species). Relatively recently coppiced areas at Lewes Park and Hindleap Warren held territories but birds seen in 2009 in coppiced areas in Lewes Park were not seen in the same areas in 2016. This gives the impression that while young coppice appears to be attractive to Redstarts, as it ages birds are less attracted to it. The Pippingford Park management are about to undertake coppicing of over-standing sweet chestnut, and this represents an opportunity to monitor use by Redstarts, and other species, of new coppice as it ages.

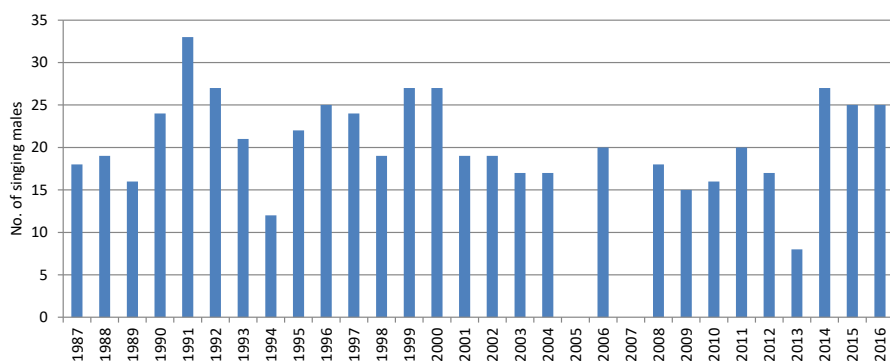
The analysis of the breeding habitat of Redstarts in East Sussex by Houghton (1982) found a strong bias for “very old scattered beech” which accounted for 27 out of the 48 territories found during the survey. Scots pine accounted for 14 of the other 15 with only one pair favouring oak.

### **Trend data from Pippingford Park**

No attempt has been made to analyse historical records of Redstarts from the whole of the Ashdown Forest but the dataset from the annual transect survey of the MOD training area at



Pippingford Park runs from 1987 and this gives some context as to whether 2016 was a “good” or “bad” year for the species in the area. The numbers of singing male Redstarts recorded annually in Pippingford Park are shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Numbers of singing male Redstarts recorded in the Pippingford Park training area during the annual transect surveys (no surveys were undertaken in 2005 or 2007).

These survey results from Pippingford Park show a relatively stable population over nearly 30 years of monitoring with a mainly positive trend in recent years. The count from the 2016 survey was 25 males seen or heard which compares favourably with an annual average of 20.6 for the 28 years in which the survey was conducted during 1987-2016. The highest count was 33 males in 1991 and the lowest count eight males in 2013 which is a considerable variation that possibly says more about the poor weather in 2013 than anything else (Mike Scott-Ham *pers. comm.*).

The only other occasion on which a whole-estate survey using territory mapping was conducted was in 2009. This produced a figure of 22 AOTs compared with 32 in 2016 suggesting an improving trend for the species in this area.

## Discussion

Within the main study area, the methodology chosen worked well for the purposes of the exercise. Using a slightly larger buffer zone of 150 m for the main study area than was used in the Swiss study (Droz *et al.* 2015) seemed right for the mix of wooded and open habitat being studied. However, this size of buffer zone assumes a territory size of approximately 4.0 ha which is actually about 20% smaller than the average territory size (5.2 ha) for the OTs recorded in this study. Although this could theoretically contribute to over-counting there were very few instances of males singing simultaneously or observed in close proximity to each other.

The finding that the number of AOTs in Broadstone Warren was a lot higher than the number of OTs implies a degree of competition to establish dominance of an adequate amount of good quality space. All observations of competition between males were made in April. The finding that there were no examples of two males holding territory in close proximity to each other once the breeding cycle was well under way suggests that most, if not all, territorial disputes are settled by early May. The absence of observations of male interaction after the end of April perhaps indicates that once the territories have been established the birds focus exclusively on breeding.

One reason for this may be that the birds do not forage far from the nest and so there are relatively few occasions when any interaction might take place. Buxton noted that the pair he

monitored “never moved much more than one hundred yards in any direction” (Buxton 1950). This may not hold true in the habitat of the Ashdown Forest but it points to highly localised feeding perhaps driven by the short breeding cycle of the birds; they neither have the need nor the time to forage further afield. Comparisons of the average territory sizes for those land areas with numbers for both AOTs and OTs could lead to the tempting conclusion that territories smaller in size than 5.2 ha might simply be too small to sustain a breeding attempt in the kind of habitat in these monitored areas. However, there are too many other factors influencing whether an AOT is established as being actually occupied other than size of territory, especially lack of females, nest predation, and possibly “silent male” behaviour at the time of a visit.

The latter point is something that did not seem to affect the number of records in the main study area. The observations made by Buxton (1950) were of one bird, albeit listened to and meticulously recorded all day every day from 18 April to 30 June. The Redstarts in the main study area seemed cooperatively vocal and usually revealed themselves in time either by sight or sound.

The relatively intense coverage of each area with two observers spending over four hours on each visit reduced reliance solely on vocalisations and, in fact, a good number of females were seen during the study period perhaps because of the amount of time spent on each visit trying to pin down territories. An added advantage of this was watching females back to the nests which enabled several nest sites to be located although no attempt was made to ascertain the breeding success of any pairs; fledged young were observed on several occasion at the end of June. No attempt was made to observe the behaviour and activity of the birds after the end of June and so no evidence of second broods was obtained. Quite how prevalent second broods are in populations in southern England is not known.

Another result of the time spent waiting for Redstarts to appear or start singing was that three pairs of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers were observed in three different areas.

## Conclusions

The Ashdown Forest SSSI holds what appears to be a sizeable breeding population of Redstarts. The data for 2016, although far from complete, either in terms of coverage or method, successfully establishes an indicative baseline of a regionally significant population of over 90 singing males. Redstarts are not found in these numbers elsewhere in Sussex; an average of seven pairs were recorded in the annual West Sussex Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey during the 17 years that the survey has been conducted in the period 1998-2015 although an unusually high number of 24 pairs were recorded in 2015. This disparity between West and East Sussex is similar to that found by Houghton (1982) who postulated that the population of East Sussex was about 80 pairs while the estimate for West Sussex was only about 20 pairs.

Breeding density data, although not complete, gives an indication of the carrying capacity of woodland that Redstarts favour with average territory sizes in the range 3.3 to 7.5 ha per territory. Birds were located in just over 300 ha out of 1,500 ha of land designated as woodland within the SSSI area. This suggests that large areas of woodland within the SSSI are unattractive to Redstarts. However, the Ashdown Forest SSSI is unique in that it has a combination of woodland and large areas of heathland which makes habitat assessment more complex. More detailed studies of feeding and breeding are required to produce a more definitive characterisation of favoured areas which will help inform management strategies.

The value of the findings across the whole of the SSSI is weakened by them not being based on a formal, standardised survey across the whole of the SSSI. The absence of certainty about records from large areas of the land managed by the conservators is undoubtedly a shortcoming but also an opportunity to collect better quality data in future.

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## Breeding Stonechat survey in 2016: numbers of pairs, distribution and habitat preferences in Sussex

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*Helen Crabtree*

### Introduction

In the 2016 breeding season the Sussex Ornithological Society conducted a county survey of Eurasian Stonechats *Saxicola rubicola* (hereafter referred to as Stonechats). The aims of the survey were to understand the current distribution of breeding Stonechats in Sussex, to obtain a county population estimate, and to provide information on habitat preferences.

Results from the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Thomas 2014) show that Stonechats are widely distributed in Sussex, mainly found on the heathland areas of the West Sussex commons and the Ashdown Forest, but also in areas with gorse and scrub on the eastern South Downs and in low-lying grassland areas such as the Pevensy Levels and the lower river valleys. These results also show an increase in distribution since the previous atlas project in 1988-1992 (James 1996). However, there has been no previous systematic survey of breeding Stonechat numbers in Sussex, and the species is not monitored in Sussex by the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) because very few BBS squares cover suitable habitat, so there is very little information available about population levels or trends. This situation is further complicated by the fact that Stonechat breeding populations fluctuate according to winter weather conditions. Nationally the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project showed a significant range expansion since the 1988-1991 breeding atlas (Balmer *et al.* 2013), thought to have been the consequence of a long series of mild winters. National BBS results also show a positive population trend for England until the severe winters of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 which caused a significant decline in numbers (Risely *et al.* 2011); these numbers have gradually recovered since then (Harris *et al.* 2015).

This article presents the results of the survey in Sussex in 2016 and discusses them in relation to other information available about Stonechat breeding distributions and numbers in Sussex, and also in relation to information about Stonechat habitat preferences from studies elsewhere.

### Survey methods

Visits to tetrads (2x2-km squares) known to have been recently occupied by breeding Stonechats or where there was thought to be potentially suitable breeding habitat formed the main part of the survey. A list of such tetrads was compiled, initially including all tetrads where breeding by Stonechats had been recorded as probable or confirmed during the Bird Atlas 2007-11 project (Newnham and Crabtree 2012), and then also including tetrads where there had been more recent casual records. The selected tetrads were allocated to volunteers where possible.

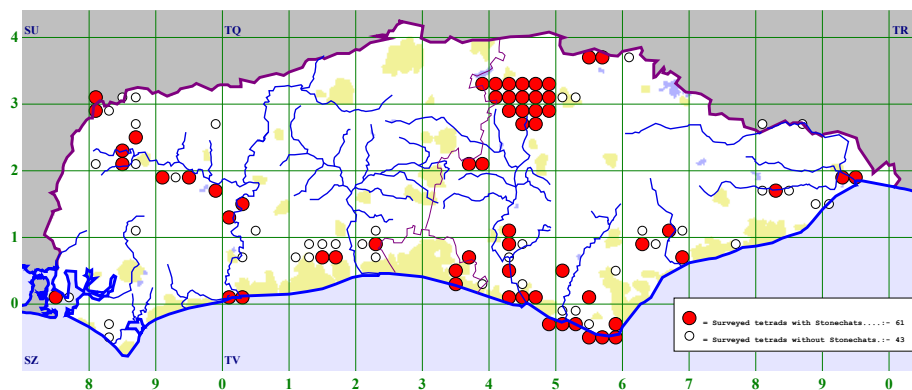
Volunteers were asked to visit each of their allocated tetrads at least twice (preferably three times) during the breeding season (between late March and the end of June). Ideally visits were to be made about three weeks apart with the first between late March and the end of April. It was required that each visit should cover all suitable Stonechat breeding habitat within the tetrad and should be made in the morning. Volunteers were asked to plot any observations of Stonechats onto pre-printed tetrad maps using standard territory-mapping notation (Bibby *et al.* 1992). Each observation of an individual, pair or family group within a small area was to be considered as a single observation. For each observation notes were to be made on the numbers and sexes of the adult birds, the numbers of dependent young, and any other activities observed such as a male bird singing, a bird visiting a probable nest site, an agitated adult bird, or an adult bird carrying

food. Volunteers were also asked to note habitat information for each observation; they were asked to consider the habitat within 25 m of the observed birds, and to select from a list the dominant habitat type and up to three other habitat types if applicable. The defined habitat types were: 1, heather; 2, bracken; 3, other non-woody plants >0.5 m high; 4, short grassland (grazed); 5, uneven tussocky grassland; 6, marshy grass/rushes; 7, gorse; 8, other shrubs <2 m high; 9, other shrubs >2 m high and/or trees; 10, arable crops; 11, hedgerows; 12, walls/fences; 13, rock outcrops; 14, other.

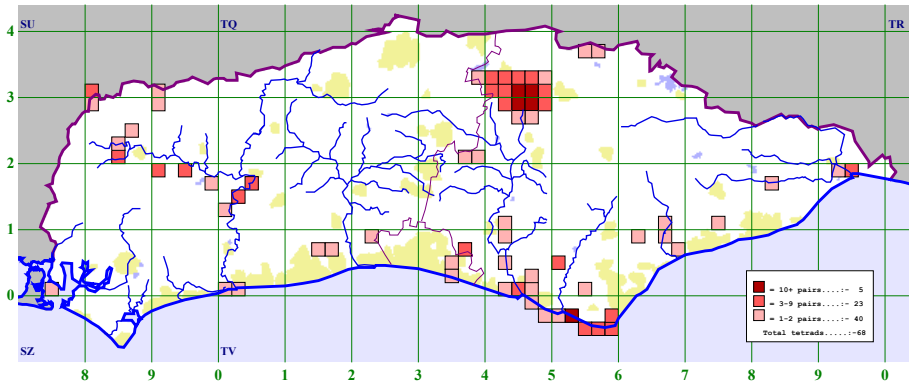
For each surveyed tetrad, records from all survey visits by the allocated observer were combined on one map, and all casual records from other observers were also added. Using all the available information, including visit dates, breeding evidence and activities observed, an assessment was made of the most likely number of Stonechat territories within the tetrad. Singing males, pairs together, and adults nest-building or feeding young, were all considered to represent territories, and observations were considered to represent different territories if they were separated by at least 200 m or made simultaneously by an observer (Gilbert *et al* 1998). Observations made later in the breeding season were considered carefully to avoid double-counting of second broods. The assessment of the number of pairs was reasonably conservative; all the available information for each tetrad was also separately assessed in a more conservative manner (in particular by assuming a larger distance separating adjacent territories) and in a less conservative manner, so as to achieve minimum and maximum likely numbers of territories within each tetrad.

## Survey results

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in a total of 104 tetrads in Sussex with breeding Stonechats being found in 61 of these as shown in Figure 1. Stonechat territories were identified in a further seven tetrads through casual records or partial surveys, meaning that breeding Stonechats were found in a total of 68 tetrads as shown in Figure 2. Using the results of the full tetrad surveys and also incorporating all casual records and the results of partial surveys, and using the assessment method described above, a total of 228 breeding pairs of Stonechats were identified with a range between 180 and 250 pairs. The numbers of pairs found in each of the occupied tetrads are indicated in Figure 2.

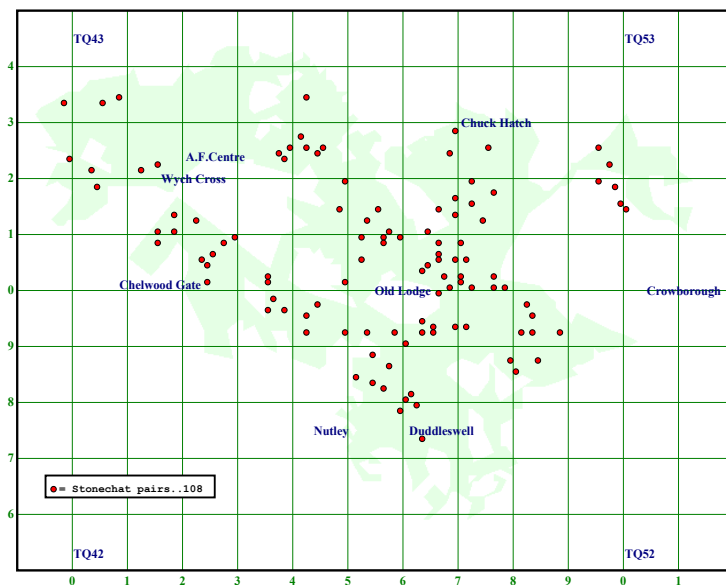


**Figure 1.** The locations of the tetrads fully surveyed for breeding Stonechats in 2016. Red circle, tetrad fully surveyed and at least one pair of breeding Stonechats found; empty circle, tetrad fully surveyed and no breeding Stonechats found despite potentially suitable breeding habitat.



**Figure 2.** The estimated numbers of Stonechat territories identified in each tetrad where birds were found by either full tetrad surveys or casual records and partial surveys.

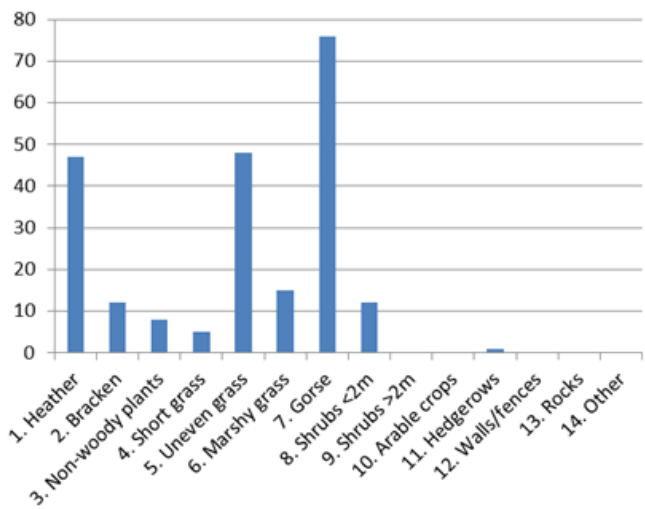
The Ashdown Forest is an important area for breeding Stonechats in Sussex and 108 pairs were found there (range 82 to 122) (see Figure 3). There were 25 pairs (range 19 to 28) on the West Sussex commons and 41 pairs (range 33 to 46) on the coast and the coastal South Downs between Newhaven and Eastbourne, with smaller numbers in a wide range of other locations including Thorney Island, the Littlehampton sand dunes, the South Downs above Worthing and Brighton, Chailey Commons, the Ouse valley, Broadwater Warren, the Pevensey Levels and Rye Harbour.



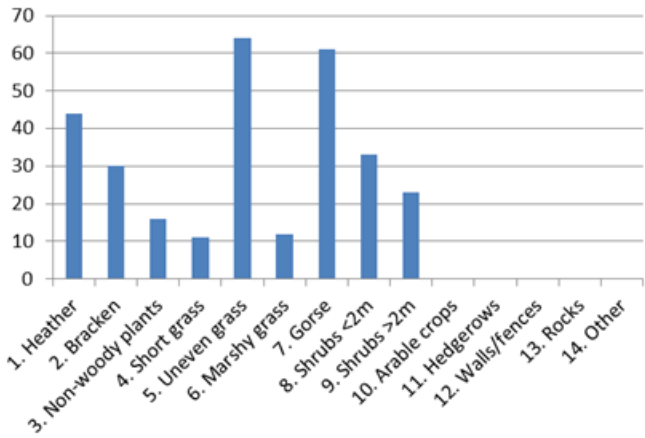
**Figure 3.** The locations of Stonechat territories identified on the Ashdown Forest (the green shading indicates the Ashdown Forest SSSI).



Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 224 of the 228 territories identified (habitat information was not collected in a standard manner for some casual records). Figure 4 shows the numbers of these territories in which each of the habitat categories was described as being the dominant habitat type. Figure 5 shows the percentages of the identified territories which were described as including each of the different habitat categories either as the dominant habitat type or as one of the other habitat types.



**Figure 4.** The numbers of territories (of 224 territories for which habitat information is available) in which each of the different habitat categories was described as being the dominant habitat type.

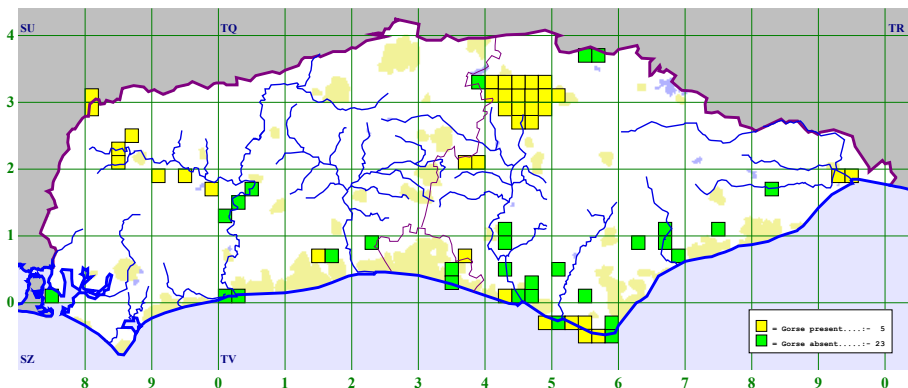


**Figure 5.** The percentages of the 224 territories for which habitat information is available which were described as including each of the habitat categories (either as the dominant habitat type or as one of up to three other habitat types selected for each territory).

As shown in Figure 4, gorse was the most common dominant habitat type, with this being selected for 76 (34%) of the 224 territories for which habitat information is available; uneven tussocky grass and heather were other common dominant habitat types with uneven tussocky grass selected for 48 territories (21%) and heather for 47 territories (21%). As shown in Figure 5, uneven tussocky grass was the habitat category associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the dominant or a subsidiary habitat type for 64% of the territories for which habitat information is available; gorse was associated with 61% of territories and heather with 44% of territories.

Considering only the 108 territories located on the Ashdown Forest, gorse was the most common dominant habitat type, being selected for 53 (49%) of the territories; heather was selected as the dominant habitat type in 29 territories (27%) and uneven tussocky grass in only 15 territories (14%). Gorse was also the habitat category associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the dominant or a subsidiary habitat type for 80% of the territories. With habitat information available for only 23 territories on the West Sussex commons, a similar analysis was considered inappropriate for this area although gorse and heather were common habitat types.

The tetrads where gorse was associated with breeding territories (as either the dominant or a subsidiary habitat type) are shown in Figure 6. This distribution clearly demonstrates the heathland (Ashdown Forest and the West Sussex Commons) and coastal downland habitats (the eastern South Downs; see Figure 7) where breeding Stonechats are found in Sussex. As expected, tetrads where gorse was not associated with any breeding territories are mainly along the river valleys and in the levels areas; one exception is RSPB Broadwater Warren in East Sussex where breeding Stonechats were found in areas of regenerating heathland dominated by heather and uneven tussocky grass (see Figure 8).



**Figure 6.** *The distribution of tetrads in which gorse was selected as one of the habitat types (either the dominant or a subsidiary habitat type) in at least one territory.*

The available habitat information is presented using a different method in Figure 9 which gives the numbers of Stonechat territories (of the 224 territories for which habitat information is available) with particular combinations of habitat types present. For each habitat type selected as the dominant habitat type, the numbers of territories with other habitat types selected as subsidiary habitat types are given; for each territory up to three subsidiary habitat types could be selected by

observers and all selections are included so the numbers do not add up to the total number of 224 territories. It is clear that gorse associated with uneven tussocky grass is the most common habitat combination being found in 48 territories. Other common combinations are heather associated with gorse, and gorse associated with heather, bracken and low shrubs.



**Figure 7.** *An area on the eastern South Downs (Seven Sisters) where breeding Stonechat territories were identified. Gorse, uneven tussocky grass and low shrubs (brambles) are present (surveys undertaken and photograph supplied by Colin Whiteman).*

In some areas more unusual habitat types were reported as being associated with breeding Stonechat territories. Examples of these are arable crops including oil seed rape, sand dunes with sea buckthorn scrub (at Littlehampton and at Camber Sands), vegetated shingle (at Newhaven Tidemills), wet ditches with reeds and brambles, and eroded rocky cliffs (at Newhaven). In the Brede valley at Doleham a breeding pair were observed using piles of vegetation emptied from an adjacent ditch (see Figure 10).

## Discussion

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in a total of 104 tetrads in Sussex; the selected tetrads that were not surveyed were considered by potential observers or by the author to cover areas of less suitable breeding habitat. Casual records were obtained for some areas not within the initially selected tetrads, and so given that suitable habitat for breeding Stonechats is relatively easily identified, the coverage by this survey of areas of potentially suitable habitat within Sussex is considered by the author to be excellent. The number of Stonechat territories identified by this survey (228 breeding pairs with a range between 180 and 250 pairs) is therefore considered to



**Figure 8.** An area at RSPB Broadwater Warren in East Sussex where breeding Stonechat territories were identified. Heather, bracken, uneven tussocky grass and low shrubs are present (surveys organised and photograph supplied by Alan Loweth).

		Dominant habitat type										
		Heather	Bracken	Non-woody plants	Short grass	Uneven grass	Marshy grass	Gorse	Shrubs <2m	Shrubs >2m	Arable crops	Hedgerows
All subsidiary habitat types	Heather		6	1	2	13	0	28	1	0	0	0
	Bracken	23		0	0	6	0	27	0	0	0	0
	Non-woody plants	3	1		0	11	2	9	1	0	0	0
	Short grass	0	0	1		3	2	9	5	0	0	0
	Uneven grass	19	9	3	2		6	48	7	0	0	1
	Marshy grass	1	1	2	0	6		2	1	0	0	0
	Gorse	29	8	2	2	15	0		4	0	0	0
	Shrubs <2m	11	1	2	2	14	6	25		0	0	0
	Shrubs >2m	14	3	0	0	16	1	11	6		0	0
	Arable crops	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0		1
	Hedgerows	0	0	1	0	6	7	4	0	0	0	
	Walls/fences	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Rocks	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Figure 9.** The numbers of Stonechat breeding territories in which particular combinations of habitat types were present. For each territory up to three subsidiary habitat types could be selected by observers and all selections are included so the numbers do not add up to the total number of 224 territories for which habitat information is available.



represent the entire population of Stonechats within the county, with the number of possibly missed territories being negligible considering the estimated range.

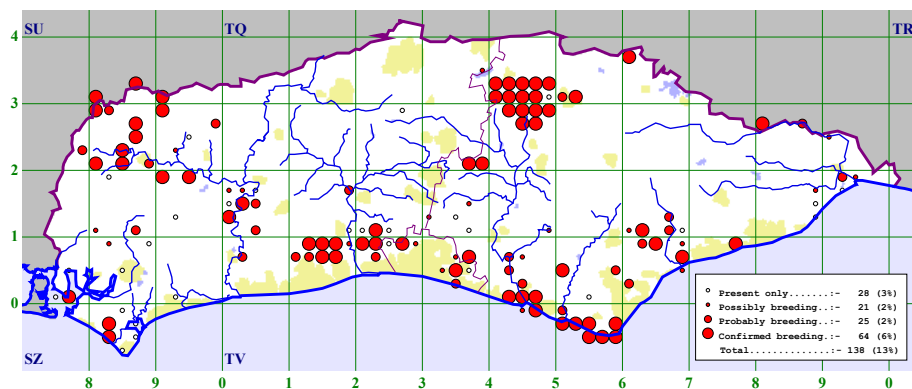
The only previous surveys of breeding Stonechats in Sussex have been the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project and the previous atlas project in 1988-1992, both considering mainly distribution and to some extent relative abundance, but not absolute numbers or habitat associations. Figure 11 shows the Stonechat breeding distribution in Sussex found during the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Thomas 2014). During the breeding seasons of 2008-2011 inclusive, Stonechats were found to be present in a total of 138 tetrads, considerably more than the 68 tetrads in which Stonechats were found to be breeding in the current survey (see Figure 2). It should be noted that the atlas distribution map includes records of birds not necessarily considered breeding and not even necessarily seen in suitable breeding habitat, and with the recording period for the atlas breeding season fieldwork finishing at the end of July, a significant number of these records could relate to juvenile birds which can disperse significant distances from their breeding sites from early June onwards; the map resulting from the current survey shows only the distribution of breeding territories. However, birds were confirmed breeding or recorded as probably breeding in 2008-2011 in 89 tetrads which is still a significantly wider distribution than that found in the current survey.

The distribution maps resulting from the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project and the current survey are difficult to compare directly because the atlas distribution map was plotted using records gathered during four breeding seasons and will therefore inevitably tend to show a wider distribution than the current map plotted using records gathered in a single year. In particular

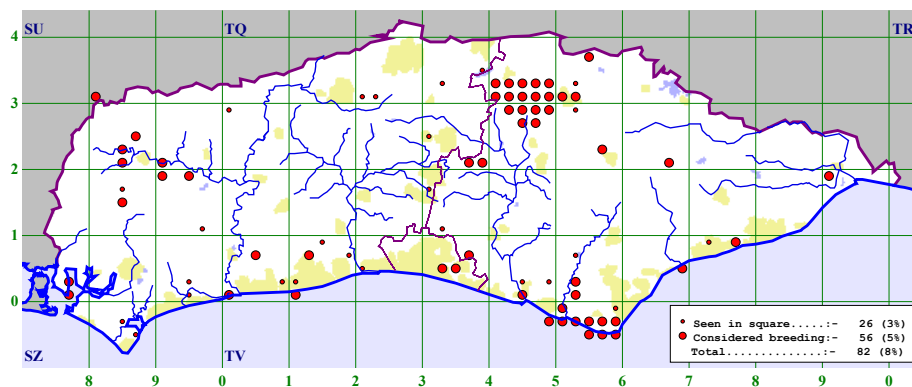


**Figure 10.** *An area in the Brede valley at Doleham where one Stonechat territory was identified. Uneven tussocky grass and marshy grass are present but also piles of dead vegetation emptied from a wet ditch amongst which the nest was located (surveys undertaken and photograph supplied by Christine George).*

in the current survey breeding Stonechats were found to be far more thinly distributed across the central South Downs (above Worthing and Brighton) and the Pevensy Levels than they appeared to be during the breeding seasons of 2008-2011 inclusive. This could potentially be due to the fact that the habitat in these areas is less suitable for breeding Stonechats, having minimal amounts of gorse and scrub in small areas that are unsuitable for cultivation. From year to year breeding pairs may use different locations, resulting in an atlas distribution map covering four breeding seasons that shows an artificially wide distribution in these areas. However, even taking these factors into consideration, there are some real changes in distribution between 2008-2011 and the current survey at the level of individual sites, presumably due to changes in habitats at these sites or simply differences in local observer effort. For example, breeding Stonechats were not recorded at the RSPB Medmerry reserve during the current survey, although birds had been confirmed as breeding in that area during 2008-2011 which was before the creation of the present reserve. Conversely, breeding Stonechats were recorded during the current survey at RSPB Broadwater Warren but not during 2008-2011; forestry felling and heathland recreation there in recent years has led to the development of suitable heathland habitat for breeding Stonechats.



**Figure 11.** Stonechat breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008-2011 inclusive.



**Figure 12.** Stonechat breeding distribution in Sussex during 1988-1992 inclusive.



The breeding distribution in Sussex found as a result of the 1988-1992 atlas project (Figure 12) is interestingly more similar to that found by the current survey, with Stonechats considered breeding in 56 tetrads and recorded during the breeding season in a further 26 tetrads; differences are that in 1988-1992 breeding Stonechats were not found at all on the Pevensy Levels and were even more thinly distributed across the central South Downs than found in the current survey. The distribution maps for 1988-1992, 2008-2011 and 2016 together would suggest that the West Sussex commons, the eastern South Downs and the Ashdown Forest are the reliably consistent areas for breeding Stonechats, covering as they do all the heathland habitat in Sussex and also areas with gorse (see Figure 6), whilst other areas are perhaps less suitable and used by breeding Stonechats only occasionally or when population levels in the county are relatively high.

The only previous estimate of the county breeding population was made using Bird Atlas 2007-2011 data and concluded 150-200 breeding pairs (Thomas 2014); this is consistent with the current estimate of 180-250 breeding pairs although it impossible to compare the two estimates directly because of the different methods and criteria used. The estimate made for 2007-2011 was based on breeding records in those years with only records with dates before the end of May being considered so as to avoid over-estimation due to late records of juveniles or pairs with second broods. However, although all suitable areas for breeding Stonechats would have been surveyed in those years, breeding territories were not mapped using the methods of the current survey. Thomas (2014) also suggested that the Ashdown Forest population during 2007-2011 was 50-70% of the county total, meaning between 75 and 140 pairs, which again is in line with the current estimate of 82 to 122 pairs but clearly a wider estimate and made using different criteria.

Further information about breeding numbers comes from the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (West Sussex) which has monitored the numbers of breeding pairs of all specialist heathland species on the West Sussex commons annually since 1998 (Perry 2015). With relatively consistent annual monitoring the fluctuations in numbers of breeding pairs of Stonechats from year to year are apparent. Some birds over-winter in the breeding areas, although some relocate to the coast or leave the county (Thomas 2014), and the over-wintering birds can be affected by severe winter weather conditions. The lowest number of breeding pairs recorded on the West Sussex commons since 1998 was only 14 in 2010 after the particularly cold winter of 2009-2010, but more normal numbers fluctuate between 20 and 40 breeding pairs. In the 2015 breeding season 30 breeding pairs were found, and the population estimate for the West Sussex commons based on the current survey is between 19 and 28 pairs, an apparently unexceptional number compared with other years since 1998. This would also suggest that the county population estimate of between 180 and 250 pairs is unexceptional, consistent with recent winters having been relatively mild.

Other studies have found similar habitat preferences of breeding Stonechats to those observed in the current survey. Urquhart (2002) states that Stonechats show a preference for either inland heath or open, rough coastal areas, with nest record data showing that 62% of nests are found in these types of habitats containing low shrubs including gorse as well as heather, bracken and rough grass, although the percentage of nests found in that study to be associated specifically with gorse is not provided. Lord (1994) found a close association with gorse in a study in Cornwall, with 76% of nesting pairs using habitats that included gorse; this is a somewhat higher percentage than the 61% found in the current survey although possibly the study area in Cornwall was less diverse in terms of habitats than Sussex. Interestingly, the current study found that 80% of breeding pairs found on the Ashdown Forest were using heathland habitat that included gorse. Another earlier study in Cornwall (Parrinder and Parrinder 1945) found an almost complete restriction of breeding Stonechats to areas containing gorse, and Magee (1965) in a national study observed a preference for areas where gorse is present even if only in minimal quantities.

Both Lord (1994) and Magee (1965), however, observed that areas with continuous, dense or tall gorse were not used by Stonechats, and this was also found in the current survey according to anecdotal reports from volunteers even though information about the extent of gorse cover was not requested. Stonechats require open areas of grass or other low vegetation for feeding combined with scattered bushes or other perches for use as song or look-out posts (Urquhart 2002). Whilst these requirements are provided by gorse bushes associated with uneven tussocky grass and heather, clearly the other more unusual habitats where Stonechats were found in Sussex in the current survey also have the same fundamental features, such as sea buckthorn scrub on sand dunes, scattered brambles on vegetated shingle, and reed fringes and scattered brambles in river valley and levels areas.

## Conclusions

The survey conducted in 2016 of breeding Stonechats in Sussex achieved effectively complete coverage and resulted in the identification of 228 breeding pairs and the estimation of a county population of between 180 and 250 breeding pairs (the range allowing for possible different interpretations of the observations made by volunteers). There were 108 pairs (range 82 to 122) on the Ashdown Forest, 25 pairs (range 19 to 28) on the West Sussex commons, and 41 pairs (range 33 to 46) on the coast and the coastal South Downs between Newhaven and Eastbourne. The distribution of breeding Stonechats across Sussex was found to be more restricted than had been recorded by the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project, with few breeding pairs found across the central South Downs and the Pevensy Levels. Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 224 breeding territories; gorse was the dominant habitat type in 34% of these territories. Uneven tussocky grass was associated (as either the dominant or a subsidiary habitat type) with 64% of the territories, gorse with 61% of the territories and heather with 44% of the territories.

The territories associated with gorse were all located as expected on the heathland of the West Sussex commons and the Ashdown Forest and the coastal downland of the eastern South Downs; these are considered to be the reliably consistent areas for breeding Stonechats in Sussex. Other areas are perhaps less suitable in terms of habitat and are used by breeding Stonechats only occasionally or when population levels in the county are relatively high; these areas include the central South Downs and the Pevensy Levels but also areas with habitat types less typically associated with breeding Stonechats along the coast and the river valleys. It will be useful to repeat this survey after a period of perhaps five years and to assess the results in relation to the severity of the winters in the intervening years as well as heathland and downland management practices and changes in habitats in the less consistently used areas.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all of the 83 observers who conducted the tetrad surveys and who are identified in the list of contributors, as well as to the landowners who kindly allowed volunteers to carry out surveys on their land. Many thanks are also due to the observers who submitted casual records, all of whom are also identified in the list of contributors, to the observers who provided photographs illustrating breeding habitats, to Dr John Newnham for providing the maps used in this article, and to Bob Edgar, Mike Scott-Ham and Chris Barfield for giving initial advice about the survey design. Further thanks are due to Rob Hukin, Matt Kirk and members of the Sussex Ornithological Society scientific committee for helpful comments.

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## Results from the first five years of the Sussex Winter Bird Survey

*Christine George*

### Introduction

The Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) was set up in 2011 and aims to monitor annual changes in winter populations of birds in Sussex. The survey is organised by the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) and uses standardised counts from randomly-distributed 1-km squares. Many of these squares are also surveyed annually in the breeding season for the national Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). However, the SWBS is a local initiative and is not organised or funded by the BTO, and the results are not used or analysed by the BTO. The data collected are analysed by the SOS and the results are published annually in the Sussex Bird Report. This paper presents an analysis of the results from the first five years (the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16 inclusive) of the Sussex Winter Bird Survey.

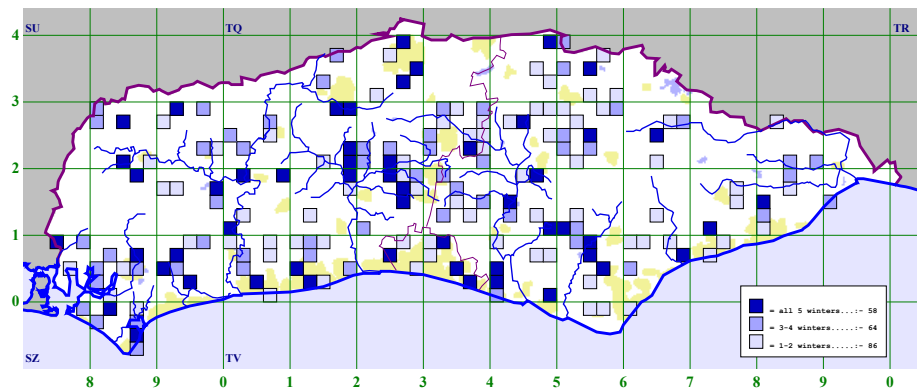
### Survey method and aims

All SWBS sites are 1-km squares. These are primarily sites surveyed in the breeding season for the national BBS, which are randomly selected by the BTO according to strict criteria; BBS participants are encouraged to survey their usual BBS squares in the winter for the SWBS. In addition, any SWBS participant who does not survey a BBS square, or who wishes to survey another 1-km square for the SWBS, can either be allocated a randomly-selected 1-km square within a 10-km square of their choice, or survey a square adjacent to their existing BBS square. Random selection helps to reduce the bias of squares being selected by habitat type or for their known species lists. Although the adjacent squares are not randomly selected they are not considered to introduce significant bias as the BBS squares themselves were randomly selected. Ideally, each square is surveyed by the same person in consecutive years. Of the total of 208 1-km squares in which at least one survey has been undertaken in the five-year period 2011-12 to 2015-16, 134 have been BBS squares and 74 have been randomly selected by the SWBS organiser or were adjacent squares.

The survey uses a line transect method, with recording undertaken along two 1-km transects approximately 500 m apart. BBS surveyors are asked to use the same routes as they would use for their BBS visits, and participants surveying non-BBS squares are asked to set up transects using BBS criteria. Two visits are made to each square each winter during daylight hours (avoiding dawn and dusk), one during November or December and the other during January or February. All birds seen or heard, including those in flight, are recorded using a simple tally system. Results are submitted through the BTO online recording tool BirdTrack. Each square being surveyed is registered within BirdTrack as a 1-km square site, and the results for each survey are entered as a species list along with a tally for each species. A 'marker' is added to each species in each list to allow the SWBS results to be extracted by the SOS from the BirdTrack database.

### Survey coverage 2011-12 to 2015-16

Over the course of the five winters of the survey, 1200 surveys have been undertaken in 208 different 1-km squares, with 136 different species (including feral species) recorded. Approximately one-quarter (58) of the 208 squares have been surveyed in each of the five winters. Just over one-quarter (64) of the squares have been surveyed in three or four winters, and the remainder (86) of the squares have been surveyed in just one or two winters (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Distribution of the 1-km squares (plotted at tetrad level for clarity) surveyed for the Sussex Winter Bird Survey in at least one of the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16 inclusive.

The number of surveyors involved has varied over the five winters as has the number of 1-km squares surveyed (see Table 1). The total number of species recorded and the total number of individual birds recorded have also varied over the five winters (see Table 1); the third winter (2013-14) appears to have been an anomalous year in which the number of birds recorded was much lower than in other years. Many factors including the weather affect bird populations from one winter to another and it is not possible to take into account all of these factors when presenting the results. The longer the survey runs the more statistically significant the results will become.

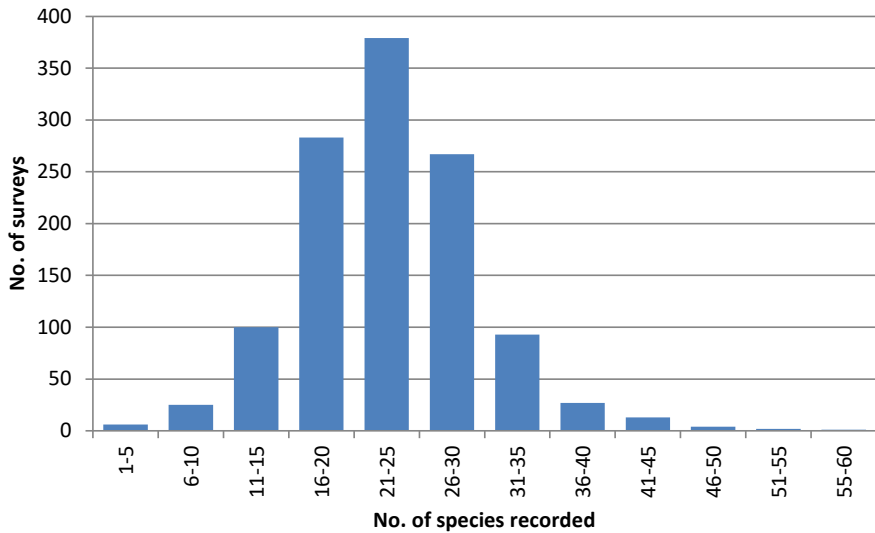
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
No. of volunteers	79	63	67	78	74
No. of 1-km squares surveyed	139	114	113	143	125
No. of species recorded	114	99	104	118	111
Total individual birds recorded	72,462	60,476	52,963	73,047	67,214

**Table 1.** The number of surveyors, the number of 1-km squares surveyed, the number of species recorded and the total number of individual birds recorded in each of the five winters.

**Results and discussion**

For each SWBS square, two surveys using the same route are completed each winter. The number of species recorded in any one survey varies greatly as would be expected due to the variety of habitats surveyed. Figure 2 below shows the numbers of species recorded during all the surveys over the five-winter period and demonstrates the mode as being 21-25 species recorded during one survey.

Table 2 presents the 30 most-recorded species in each of the five winter periods. The figures given for each winter are the percentages of the total number of squares surveyed in that winter in which each species was recorded. The 30 most-recorded species for each of the five winters have remained remarkably similar. Goldcrest (included in the table below) is the only exception; during the last two winters 2014-15 and 2015-16 this species has been recorded in a higher percentage of squares than has Nuthatch (therefore not included in the table below).



**Figure 2.** The number of species recorded in each survey throughout the whole five-winter period.

**Table 2.** The percentages of the total squares surveyed in which the 30 most-recorded species were found in each of the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16 inclusive.

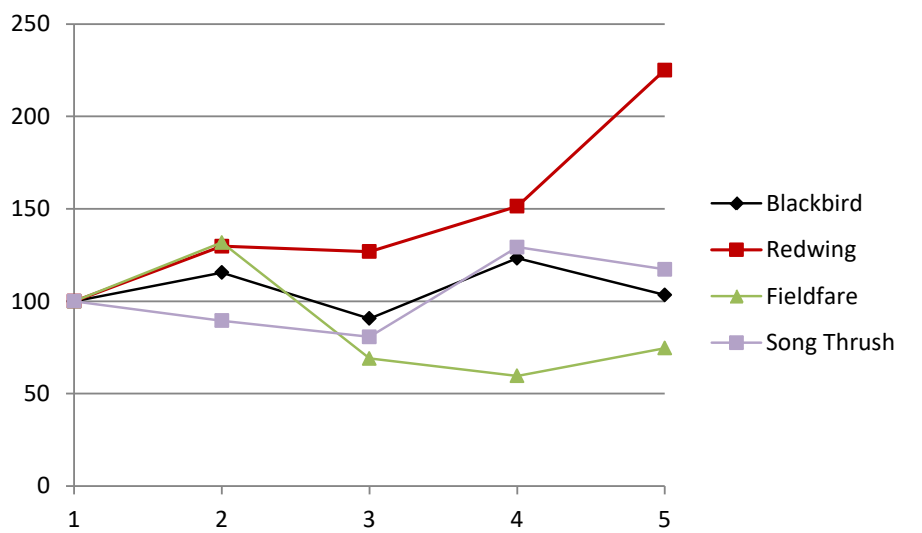
	No. of squares (percentage of total surveyed)				
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Common Buzzard	54	53	67	63	62
Common Pheasant	60	61	65	69	70
Black-headed Gull	53	52	53	57	60
Herring Gull	61	65	61	62	66
Woodpigeon	96	96	98	100	100
Collared Dove	47	46	51	52	50
Green Woodpecker	58	52	57	64	58
Great Spotted Woodpecker	66	57	52	62	63
Pied Wagtail	51	52	59	58	57
Wren	81	78	85	92	93
Dunnock	79	76	70	80	84
Robin	95	95	98	99	99
Blackbird	96	99	99	100	100
Fieldfare	57	50	47	50	47
Song Thrush	73	77	66	83	86
Redwing	47	46	53	60	60
Goldcrest	47	35	38	52	66
Long-tailed Tit	60	56	50	61	66
Blue Tit	95	94	100	99	98



	No. of squares (percentage of total surveyed)				
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Great Tit	94	88	94	94	94
Jay	58	61	54	56	62
Magpie	94	94	92	94	97
Jackdaw	80	85	84	89	85
Rook	53	58	59	62	57
Carrion Crow	96	98	99	99	99
Common Starling	73	67	73	67	80
House Sparrow	66	73	70	76	73
Chaffinch	94	91	85	90	93
Greenfinch	58	53	54	52	55
Goldfinch	65	61	70	74	77

To illustrate some of the changes over the five-winter period, the following figures compare the survey results for groups of similar species. For each species, the sum of the maximum counts (the maximums of the two surveys in each square) of that species in each winter is divided by the total number of squares surveyed in that winter, and these results are plotted relative to the result for the first winter (2011-12). The result for the first winter is therefore displayed as an arbitrary index value of 100 with results for subsequent years plotted relative to this. Although the survey is still in its infancy, some interesting trends are developing.

Figure 3 shows the survey results for the four species of winter thrushes. The Blackbird and Song Thrush relative counts (adjusted for the numbers of squares surveyed) have fluctuated slightly. Winter populations of these species will be made up of resident, short distance migrants (within the UK) and longer-distance migrants (mainly Northern European). The other two species,



**Figure 3.** The totals of the maximum counts of winter thrushes in the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16, adjusted for the numbers of squares and plotted relative to the counts in the first winter.

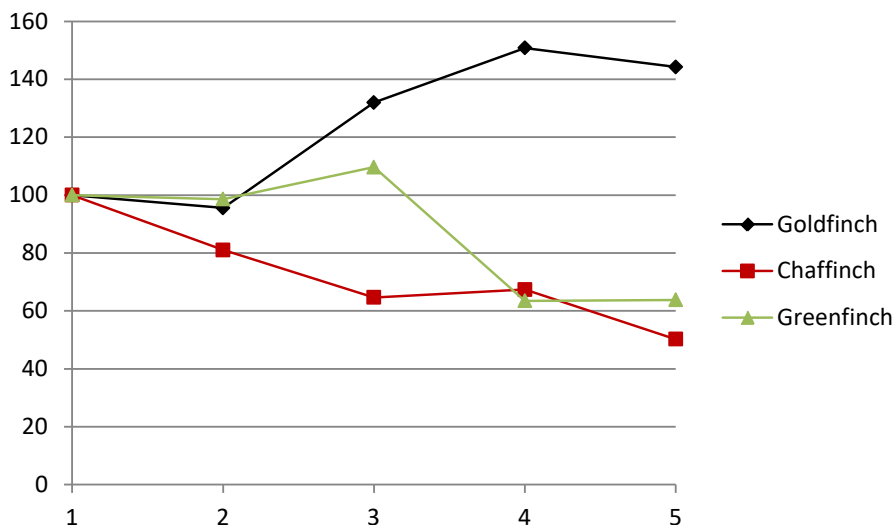
Fieldfare and Redwing, show markedly differing wintering populations over the five-winter period as they are almost entirely migrants and therefore numbers of these species are highly dependent upon weather conditions and food supplies elsewhere. It should also be noted that any large flocks of these species encountered in just a few squares would strongly affect the results. It is likely that all the wintering birds in Sussex of these two species will be from Iceland, northern Europe or further east, given the extremely low UK breeding numbers, but it is interesting to note that Fieldfare is now red-listed as of high conservation concern in the UK (Eaton *et al.* 2015).



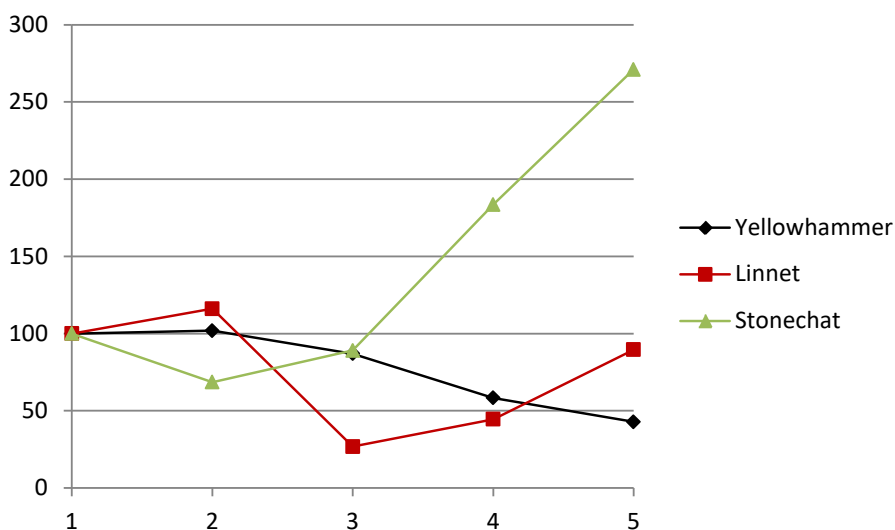
*Redwing, Hassocks, December 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*

Figure 4 shows the survey results for three common species of finch. National Common Birds Census (CBC)/BBS results have shown positive trends for Goldfinch since the mid 1980s (Musgrove *et al.* 2013). Over recent years in Sussex there has been a year-on-year increase in the percentage of BBS squares in which this species has been found, ranging from 71% in 2011 to 78% in 2015 (Sussex Bird Report 2015). SWBS results over the same period endorse this trend, as shown in Figure 4. Goldfinch is a partial short-distance migrant with some birds remaining to winter in Britain and others leaving Britain to winter in areas such as France and Spain. The increase in the Sussex winter population may be further evidence of the fact that the UK population of this species is expanding. Greenfinches are very susceptible to the disease trichomoniasis. Integrated population modelling has shown that changes in survival have been the strongest contributors to annual population changes (Robinson *et al.* 2014). SWBS data have shown a downward trend for this species over the five winters despite ringing data showing that the UK receives a few wintering migrants from northern Europe. Chaffinches have shown an even more marked decline in population in Sussex during the five winters of the SWBS. Ringing data shows that our resident population is boosted by wintering migrants from northern Europe, and the reasons for the decline during the period of this survey are likely to be complex with further

data from all sources required to understand whether this is a local short-term occurrence or an indicator of wider issues. Interestingly, BBS trends for Sussex have also shown a steady decline in recent years (Sussex Bird Report 2015).



**Figure 4.** The totals of the maximum counts of common finches in the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16, adjusted for the numbers of squares and plotted relative to the counts in the first winter.



**Figure 5.** The totals of the maximum counts of common farmland and heathland birds in the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16 inclusive, adjusted for the numbers of squares surveyed and plotted relative to the counts in the first winter.

Figure 5 shows the survey results for three species of farmland and heathland birds. These species are recorded in only relatively small numbers of SWBS squares, resulting in data which is not statistically significant. This data is, however, broadly in line with data from other surveys. SWBS results for Yellowhammer show a steady decline in numbers (maximum counts adjusted for the numbers of squares surveyed) over the five winters, although other measures show different patterns (see Table 3). Results from the Bird Atlas 2007-11 project show that although Yellowhammers still have a wide distribution in Sussex they are in decline (Thomas 2014). Nationally Yellowhammers have shown marked recent declines and the conservation status has changed from green (no concern) in 2002 to red (the highest level of conservation concern) in the latest review (Eaton *et al.* 2015). SWBS results for Stonechat appear to show an increase in numbers although the density per occupied square has remained fairly constant over the five-winter period (see Table 3). SWBS results for Linnet appear to show a similar pattern (Table 3).

**Table 3.** SWBS results for farmland and heathland birds in the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16.

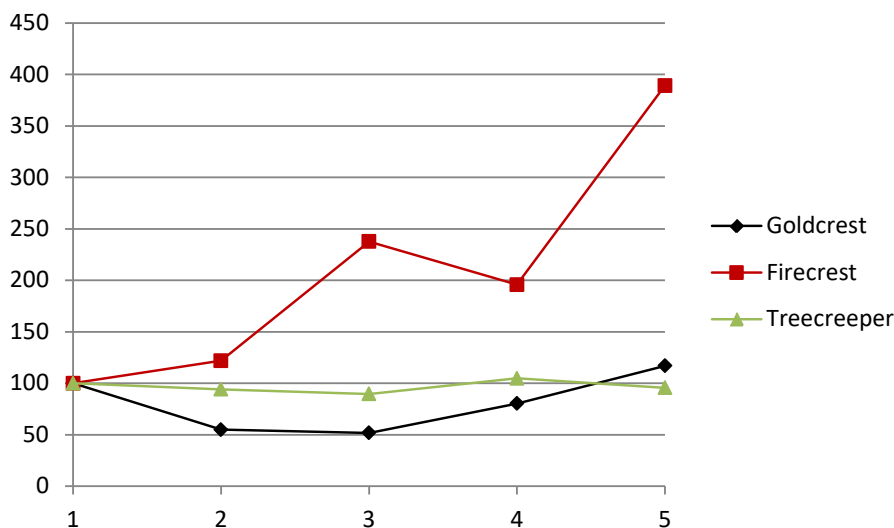
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
<b>Yellowhammer</b>					
Total individual birds recorded	242	185	173	137	118
No. of squares in which species recorded	32	16	27	33	16
Percentage of total 1-km squares	23	14	24	23	13
Average individuals per occupied square	7.6	11.6	6.4	4.2	7.4
<b>Stonechat</b>					
Total individual birds recorded	19	12	14	36	48
No. of squares in which species recorded	7	5	6	13	17
Percentage of total 1-km squares	5	4	5	9	14
Average individuals per occupied square	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.8	2.8
<b>Linnet</b>					
Total individual birds recorded	389	340	84	179	288
No. of squares in which species recorded	20	15	10	16	14
Percentage of total 1-km squares	14	13	9	11	11
Average individuals per occupied square	19.5	22.7	8.4	11.2	20.6

Figure 6 shows the survey results for some of the smallest bird species. It should be noted that these results are derived from very small amounts of data, so are not necessarily statistically significant. Numbers of Treecreeper records have remained fairly stable over the five-winter period (Table 4). There have, however, been gradual increases in the numbers of squares in which both Goldcrests and Firecrests have been recorded (see Table 4). This may suggest that the wintering populations of both these species are increasing, but there could be many other factors including weather and species detection affecting these results. It may be notable that as a breeding bird the Firecrest has been green-listed in the most recent review of birds of conservation concern (Eaton *et al.* 2015), having been previously red-listed as of high conservation concern.

The full SWBS results for all species for the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16 inclusive are listed in Appendix 1.

## Conclusions

The Sussex Winter Bird Survey has only been running for five winters (2011-12 to 2015-16) and this is the first time that the collated results have been presented. Early indications from this



**Figure 6.** The totals of the maximum counts of the smallest bird species in the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16 inclusive, adjusted for the numbers of squares surveyed and plotted relative to the counts in the first winter.

**Table 4.** SWBS results for the smallest bird species in the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
<b>Goldcrest</b>					
Total individual birds recorded	264	109	103	216	297
No. of squares in which species recorded	66	40	43	74	83
Percentage of total 1-km squares	47	35	38	52	66
Average individuals per occupied square	4.0	2.7	2.3	2.9	3.6
<b>Firecrest</b>					
Total individual birds recorded	2	2	4	4	7
No. of squares in which species recorded	2	2	4	4	6
Percentage of total 1-km squares	1%	2%	4%	3%	5%
Average individuals per occupied square	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2
<b>Treecreeper</b>					
Total individual birds recorded	64	63	57	71	64
No. of squares in which species recorded	34	28	26	40	28
Percentage of total 1-km squares	24	25	23	28	22
Average individuals per occupied square	1.9	2.3	2.2	1.8	2.3

survey are that the results will be very valuable in tracking the wintering populations of birds in Sussex. It will be interesting to discover whether the early trends presented here continue. Many factors such as breeding success, weather conditions both in the UK and abroad, and habitat change, will be reflected in the results for individual years. In order to obtain true indications

of long-term population changes in Sussex, survey coverage therefore needs to be maintained or increased for many years to come. New volunteers will be welcomed and should contact the author.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all the observers who take part in the Sussex Winter Bird Survey, often surveying in uncomfortable conditions. The author would like to thank landowners and farmers for allowing volunteers to gain access to their land in order to complete the surveys. Special thanks are due to John Newnham for his work on extracting the SWBS data from BirdTrack and for assisting with the analysis of the results, and to Helen Crabtree for setting up the survey initially and for ongoing help and support.

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**Appendix 1** *Sussex Winter Bird Survey results for all species for the five winters 2011-12 to 2015-16 inclusive. For each species in each winter, the percentage (%) of the total number of squares surveyed in which that species was recorded is given; also listed is the total number of individuals (N) of that species recorded in that winter period (the sum of the individuals recorded in the early and late winter periods and not adjusted for the number of squares surveyed).*

	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16	
	139 squares		114 squares		113 squares		143 squares		125 squares	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Red-throated Diver							1	1		
Little Grebe	2	22	1	1	3	24	1	2	4	17
Great Crested Grebe	1	13	1	4	1	6	2	10		
Fulmar							1	1		
Cormorant	17	152	15	38	13	42	17	53	19	80
Little Egret	4	20	5	8	8	18	10	32	11	47
Grey Heron	21	54	20	43	14	28	22	47	14	34
Mute Swan	14	92	18	165	19	189	11	135	14	124
White-fronted Goose							1	9		
Greylag Goose	6	457	5	108	4	473	3	55	2	198
Greylag Goose (domestic)	1	12	1	4	2	4	1	4	1	3
Canada Goose	14	252	14	107	12	239	9	320	8	336
Barnacle Goose							1	1		



[illegible]

	2011-12 139 squares		2012-13 114 squares		2013-14 113 squares		2014-15 143 squares		2015-16 125 squares	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Curlew	4	251	1	164	2	117	6	110	4	215
Spotted Redshank							1	1		
Common Redshank	3	26	1	1	1	2	2	31	3	41
Greenshank	1	1							1	10
Green Sandpiper	1	1			2	2	1	2	3	6
Turnstone	1	6					1	77	1	47
Mediterranean Gull	1	3			1	3	1	10		
Little Gull					1	6				
Black-headed Gull	53	2767	52	3228	53	2582	57	3193	60	3915
Common Gull	17	1450	24	1158	17	1119	27	684	18	725
Lesser Black-backed Gull	5	30	4	10	3	6	4	12	7	21
Herring Gull	61	2657	65	1910	61	2135	62	2471	66	2866
Great Black-backed Gull	5	22	3	9	4	61	1	10	8	27
Feral Pigeon	25	519	18	834	22	353	25	624	18	366
Stock Dove	24	171	25	152	27	158	27	218	28	234
Woodpigeon	96	12600	96	10893	98	9503	100	13310	100	11276
Collared Dove	47	484	46	463	51	365	52	673	50	526
Barn Owl	1	2	1	1			1	1	1	1
Little Owl	2	3	1	2	2	2	1	2		
Tawny Owl	2	3	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1
Short-eared Owl	1	2					1	2	2	4
Kingfisher	3	4			4	5	3	6	3	6
Green Woodpecker	58	153	52	116	57	111	64	197	58	129
Great Spotted Woodpecker	66	229	57	175	52	124	62	237	63	182
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1	1								
Woodlark	1	3	1	2	1	2			3	6
Skylark	36	322	27	208	35	205	30	561	29	301
Barn Swallow			1	1						
Meadow Pipit	20	147	18	253	21	240	27	423	23	330
Grey Wagtail	6	9	3	4	9	11	8	15	11	16
Pied Wagtail	51	233	52	241	59	227	58	328	57	373
Wren	81	620	78	501	85	543	92	818	93	884
Dunnock	79	523	76	415	70	394	80	590	84	571
Robin	95	1916	95	1766	98	1636	99	2392	99	2125
Eurasian Stonechat	5	19	4	12	5	14	9	36	14	48
Blackbird	96	2332	99	2333	99	1629	100	3102	100	2319
Fieldfare	57	2603	50	2805	47	1494	50	1628	47	1914
Song Thrush	73	404	77	317	66	273	83	563	86	472
Redwing	47	1474	46	2012	53	1679	60	2492	60	2686
Mistle Thrush	27	78	26	60	25	62	41	132	36	110
Cetti's Warbler	1	1			2	3	1	3	3	4
Dartford Warbler	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	2
Blackcap	1	1	1	1	3	4	1	1	2	2

[illegible]

PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY 2016

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*Blackcap, Arlington Reservoir, April 2016 (Jacob Everitt)*



*Common Tern, Pagham Hbr, June 2016 (Trevor Guy)*



*American Wigeon, Pulborough Brooks, April 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*



*Corn Bunting, Hodcombe, June 2016 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)*





*Curlews, Pett Level, September 2016 (Chris Hobden)*



*Northern Wheatear, Pett Level, September 2016 (Chris Hobden)*





*Desert Wheatear, Norman's Bay, December 2016 (Martin Peacock)*



*Glaucous Gull, Goring Gap, January 2016 (Nick Bond)*



*Goldcrest, Arundel WWT, February 2016 (Ian Turner)*



*Kestrel, The Burgh, January 2016 (Bob Eade)*





*Green Sandpiper, Pulborough Brooks, July 2016 (Martin Peacock)*



*Kittiwakes, Seaford Head, July 2016 (Leigh Prevost)*



*Grey Wagtails, Warnham LNR, August 2016 (Leigh Prevost)*



*Blue-headed Wagtail, Bewl Water, September 2016 (Malcolm Freeman)*





*Greylag Goose, Pett Level, March 2016 (Chris Hobden)*



*Turnstone, Pett Level, May 2016 (Chris Hobden)*



*Reed Bunting, Warnham LNR, March 2016 (Paul Loader)*





*Long-eared Owl, North Wall (Pagham Harbour), April 2016 (Ads Bowley)*



*Little Tern, Medmerry, April 2016 (Martin Peacock)*



*Oystercatchers, Pett Level, May 2016 (Chris Hobden)*





*Great Grey Shrike, Waltham Brooks, December 2016 (Gary Faulkner)*



*Mediterranean Gull, Rye Harbour, April 2016 (Linda Buckell)*



*Oystercatchers, Cuckmere Haven, July 2016 (Matt Eade)*



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*Rose-coloured Starling, Crawley (Harry Ramm)*





*Willow Warbler, Pulborough Brooks, April 2016 (Paul Loader)*



*Dunlin, Cuckmere Haven, August 2016 (Matt Eade)*



*Northern Wheatear, Chanctonbury Ring, October 2016 (Paul Loader)*



*Common Whitethroat, Hodcombe, September 2016 (Roger and Liz Charlwood)*





*Rook, Pett Level, November 2016 (Chris Hobden)*

## 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. The treatment of species and subspecies reflects the decision by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee to adopt the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) World Bird List with effect from January 2018.

Whooper Swan	Kentish Plover	Red-rumped Swallow
Taiga Bean Goose	Dotterel	Willow Tit
Pink-footed Goose	Temminck's Stint	Greenish Warbler
Tundra Bean Goose	White-rumped Sandpiper	Pallas' Leaf Warbler
American Wigeon	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Yellow-browed Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Pectoral Sandpiper	Radde's Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Red-necked Phalarope	Dusky Warbler
Lesser Scaup	Grey Phalarope	Wood Warbler
Surf Scoter	Pomarine Skua (not spring)	Barred Warbler
All pheasants (except Common)	Long-tailed Skua	Subalpine Warbler
White-billed Diver	Puffin	Icterine Warbler
All shearwaters (except Manx)	Black Guillemot	Melodious Warbler
All petrels (except Fulmar)	Little Auk	Blyth's Reed Warbler
Night-heron	White-winged Black Tern	Marsh Warbler
Cattle Egret	Roseate Tern	Rose-coloured Starling
Great White Egret	Sabine's Gull	Dipper
Purple Heron	Ring-billed Gull	Bluethroat
White Stork	Caspian Gull	Red-flanked Bluetail
Glossy Ibis	Iceland Gull	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Red-necked Grebe	Glaucous Gull	Citrine Wagtail
Honey-buzzard	Alpine Swift	Richard's Pipit
Black Kite	Bee-eater	Olive-backed Pipit
White-tailed Eagle	Red-footed Falcon	Water Pipit
Montagu's Harrier	Golden Oriole	Common Rosefinch
Goshawk	Red-backed Shrike	Twite
Rough-legged Buzzard	Woodchat Shrike	Parrot Crossbill
Spotted Crake	Chough	Serin
Common Crane	Hooded Crow	Lapland Bunting
Stone-curlew	Penduline Tit	Cirl Bunting
Black-winged Stilt	Shore Lark	Ortolan Bunting
American Golden 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, Kumlien's Gull, 'Continental' ater Coal Tit, Siberian Chiffchaff, 'Northern' Willow Warbler, 'Scandinavian' littoralis Rock Pipit, Yellow Wagtail and Common (Mealy) flammea Redpoll. However, descriptions are not required for the following sub-species: Pale-bellied Brent Goose, intermedius Lesser Black-backed Gull, Greenland Wheatear and White Wagtail.

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.

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## **THE SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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## CONTRIBUTORS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, 2016

We are grateful to the following observers for records for the 2016 *Sussex Bird Report*.

NB: For an explanation of the superscripts, see the footnote below the table.

C Abell <sup>T</sup>	D Asquith <sup>T</sup>	G Beck	G Boorman <sup>B</sup>
K Ahmed <sup>U</sup>	J Atkinson	J Beegan <sup>X</sup>	A Boothroyd
J Aidley <sup>T</sup>	K Attree	DJ Beer <sup>T</sup>	LD Bower <sup>B</sup>
B Akinola <sup>T</sup>	W Attridge	B Benatt	PS Bowley
H Alexander <sup>T</sup>	G Ault <sup>E</sup>	AC Bennett <sup>T</sup>	R Bown <sup>BCN</sup>
J Alexander	BP Austin <sup>T</sup>	C Bentley <sup>WX</sup>	C Boyes
M Alexander <sup>X</sup>	D Austin <sup>T</sup>	DP Bentley	S Boyes
J Alford	P Austin <sup>ST</sup>	VP Bentley <sup>BCHTW</sup>	RC Bradbury
DJ Allcock <sup>U</sup>	M Ayling <sup>BW</sup>	AJ Benton <sup>T</sup>	I Bradshaw <sup>B</sup>
J Allcock <sup>U</sup>	J Aylward <sup>T</sup>	J Berreen <sup>T</sup>	A Brennan <sup>HW</sup>
G Allen <sup>W</sup>	S Aylward <sup>T</sup>	M Berry <sup>X</sup>	E Brennan <sup>D</sup>
J Allen <sup>T</sup>	JA Baddams <sup>T</sup>	NW Beswick <sup>T</sup>	C Brewer <sup>X</sup>
M Allen <sup>W</sup>	H Baggaley <sup>W</sup>	L Beun <sup>D</sup>	A Briggs
R Allison	G Bain <sup>X</sup>	E Bew	J Brinkley <sup>X</sup>
JE Alloway <sup>W</sup>	S Baines <sup>TU</sup>	Z Bhatia <sup>T</sup>	J Brokenbrow
AE Almeida <sup>BW</sup>	D Baird <sup>U</sup>	R Bicker <sup>X</sup>	A Brookes
G Alt <sup>X</sup>	A Baker <sup>X</sup>	T Bickerton <sup>W</sup>	C Brooks <sup>BCNST</sup>
LEF Ambler <sup>T</sup>	F Baker <sup>X</sup>	N Biddulph <sup>BODT</sup>	T Brooks <sup>U</sup>
RF Amer <sup>T</sup>	J Baker <sup>X</sup>	SA Bigg	DR Brown <sup>T</sup>
T Amey <sup>B</sup>	R Baker <sup>T</sup>	SM Bignold <sup>T</sup>	J Brown <sup>CT</sup>
D Anderson <sup>X</sup>	N Baldwin <sup>U</sup>	JH Bingley <sup>T</sup>	J Brown <sup>BS</sup>
K Anderson <sup>U</sup>	N Baldwin <sup>U</sup>	D Binns <sup>X</sup>	PM Brown <sup>T</sup>
L Anderson <sup>U</sup>	CF Ball <sup>BW</sup>	E Birchall <sup>X</sup>	SA Brown <sup>T</sup>
ME Anderson <sup>T</sup>	S Ball <sup>T</sup>	C Bird <sup>T</sup>	S Browning <sup>X</sup>
R Ansell-White <sup>X</sup>	N Ballingal	M Bird <sup>T</sup>	JJ Bryant <sup>NW</sup>
F Antram <sup>U</sup>	M Bambrick <sup>T</sup>	RF Bird <sup>X</sup>	D Buckingham <sup>T</sup>
H Antram <sup>U</sup>	N Bamford <sup>B</sup>	J Birdsey <sup>T</sup>	S Buckland <sup>DWX</sup>
M Antram <sup>U</sup>	D Bangs	JM Birdsey <sup>S</sup>	T Buckland <sup>X</sup>
SR Appleby <sup>T</sup>	D Banks <sup>S</sup>	J Birkett <sup>T</sup>	A Buckle <sup>BDENS</sup>
J Appleton <sup>T</sup>	MI Banks	G Bishop <sup>T</sup>	C Buckle <sup>BCDTW</sup>
RJ Appleton <sup>C</sup>	DG Barber <sup>BH</sup>	RA Black <sup>BDES</sup>	NJ Buckthorpe <sup>W</sup>
K Archer <sup>X</sup>	E Barber <sup>T</sup>	R Blackburn <sup>T</sup>	KR Burch
J Argryou <sup>S</sup>	CJR Barfield <sup>BCHNSTW</sup>	S Blain <sup>T</sup>	DJ Burgess <sup>E</sup>
AC Armitage <sup>DT</sup>	A Barker <sup>X</sup>	A Blaise <sup>X</sup>	J Burgess <sup>DT</sup>
G Armstrong <sup>T</sup>	DJ Barnes <sup>T</sup>	C Blencowe <sup>X</sup>	SJ Burgess <sup>T</sup>
J Amott <sup>TWX</sup>	RG Barnett <sup>W</sup>	M Blencowe <sup>X</sup>	N Burgum <sup>T</sup>
D Arrowsmith <sup>S</sup>	P Bartley <sup>U</sup>	D Block <sup>X</sup>	R Burkmar <sup>X</sup>
W Arrowsmith <sup>T</sup>	J Bassett <sup>W</sup>	D Boddington <sup>BCDNSTW</sup>	ANM Burns <sup>BCHNT</sup>
C Ash <sup>C</sup>	SD Batchelor <sup>T</sup>	A Bolton <sup>T</sup>	T Burns <sup>X</sup>
G Ash <sup>X</sup>	GS Batho <sup>T</sup>	J Bolton <sup>X</sup>	C Burrell
D Asher <sup>BCS</sup>	G Baulcomb <sup>X</sup>	C Bond <sup>T</sup>	J Burston <sup>X</sup>
P Ashley	N Baxter <sup>X</sup>	N Bond <sup>T</sup>	D Burt <sup>U</sup>
J Ashworth <sup>T</sup>	S Baxter	PF Bonham <sup>NX</sup>	I Burton <sup>T</sup>
J Ashworth <sup>U</sup>	VR Beaney <sup>T</sup>	D Booker	H Butler

J Butler <sup>T</sup>	N Clark <sup>X</sup>	J Crix <sup>T</sup>	M Eames
J Butler	R Clark <sup>X</sup>	JK Cross <sup>H</sup>	JK Early <sup>T</sup>
RA Butler <sup>BNSW</sup>	BR Clay <sup>BCTW</sup>	FSC Cuckoo Survey <sup>X</sup>	J East <sup>X</sup>
C Byrne <sup>U</sup>	PJ Clay <sup>T</sup>	MJ Cuff <sup>T</sup>	I Ebbage <sup>T</sup>
S Cabrillana <sup>U</sup>	JC Cleal <sup>T</sup>	P Cureton <sup>X</sup>	C Eccleston <sup>T</sup>
NA Calbrade <sup>T</sup>	J Clements <sup>T</sup>	J Curson <sup>X</sup>	A Edden <sup>U</sup>
MB Caldwell <sup>INW</sup>	S Cocker <sup>W</sup>	L Curson <sup>BT</sup>	R Edden <sup>U</sup>
P Calladine <sup>N</sup>	G Cohen	J Curtin <sup>W</sup>	RDM Edgar <sup>S</sup>
T Callaway	J Coit <sup>W</sup>	RC Dalrymple <sup>T</sup>	J Edmonds <sup>X</sup>
P Callis	MA Cole <sup>T</sup>	M Daniel <sup>T</sup>	M Elliott
J Camp <sup>T</sup>	D Coleman	MC Daniel <sup>W</sup>	R Elston <sup>T</sup>
DK Campbell <sup>T</sup>	S Colenutt <sup>X</sup>	J Darley <sup>W</sup>	M Emberson <sup>BCT</sup>
J Campbell <sup>T</sup>	D Colledge <sup>T</sup>	A David	J Emrich
GW Candelin <sup>T</sup>	H Collings <sup>T</sup>	S Davidson <sup>U</sup>	M Ensor <sup>S</sup>
S Card <sup>X</sup>	CB Collins <sup>W</sup>	P Davies <sup>T</sup>	CJ Evans <sup>T</sup>
S Carey <sup>T</sup>	CF Collins <sup>W</sup>	S Davies <sup>X</sup>	GM Evans <sup>T</sup>
P Carr <sup>U</sup>	M Collins <sup>B</sup>	A Davis	I Evans <sup>T</sup>
J Carroll <sup>U</sup>	P Collins <sup>T</sup>	A Davis <sup>X</sup>	LGR Evans <sup>T</sup>
G Carter <sup>T</sup>	RF Collins <sup>T</sup>	C Davis <sup>BDCNSTW</sup>	MJ Evans <sup>BC</sup>
HM Carter <sup>T</sup>	SJ Collyer <sup>T</sup>	M Davis <sup>T</sup>	P Evans
L Carter <sup>X</sup>	R Comerford <sup>T</sup>	J Day <sup>T</sup>	JJ Everitt <sup>HTX</sup>
P Carter <sup>T</sup>	J Comford	AF de Potier <sup>W</sup>	RJ Fairbank <sup>DN</sup>
PD Carter <sup>T</sup>	R Comont <sup>X</sup>	CH Dean <sup>BCHSTW</sup>	JA Faithfull
SJ Carter <sup>B</sup>	S Conway <sup>T</sup>	S Delahunt	AR Farrar <sup>T</sup>
MGR Cattell <sup>T</sup>	AS Cook	MN Denness <sup>C</sup>	JA Feest
A Caulkett	J Cook <sup>D</sup>	JS Denton <sup>X</sup>	C Feger <sup>U</sup>
M Causer <sup>W</sup>	AR Cookney <sup>T</sup>	P Denyer <sup>CESTW</sup>	K Fekete <sup>X</sup>
J Cawte <sup>X</sup>	C Cooper <sup>T</sup>	T Dingwall <sup>T</sup>	T Felix <sup>T</sup>
KG Cawte <sup>BCST</sup>	D Cooper	G Dipple <sup>CS</sup>	P Fenwick <sup>H</sup>
S Chalmers	DR Cooper	RJ Discombe <sup>T</sup>	G Fewster <sup>X</sup>
A Chandler-Grevatt <sup>X</sup>	JF Cooper	J Divito	JE Fields <sup>B</sup>
CB Chapman <sup>T</sup>	K Cooper <sup>D</sup>	C Dixon <sup>T</sup>	MF Findlay <sup>T</sup>
J Chapman <sup>W</sup>	S Cooper <sup>T</sup>	K Dixon <sup>T</sup>	AV Fisher <sup>B</sup>
SE Chapman <sup>BCTW</sup>	S Cooper <sup>T</sup>	R Dobbins <sup>T</sup>	S Fisher <sup>U</sup>
WN Chapman <sup>TX</sup>	G Cornland <sup>U</sup>	TA Doherty <sup>T</sup>	SL Fisher <sup>T</sup>
PJ Charles <sup>T</sup>	C Corrigan <sup>BT</sup>	V Doussy <sup>X</sup>	F Fitzgerald <sup>X</sup>
ME Charlwood	M Cottingham <sup>T</sup>	EJ Dowding <sup>TW</sup>	AW Flannagan <sup>T</sup>
RH Charlwood	C Couldridge <sup>U</sup>	FT Downing <sup>X</sup>	K Fleming <sup>T</sup>
P Chase <sup>T</sup>	P Coulstock <sup>S</sup>	M Dron <sup>T</sup>	JD Fletcher <sup>T</sup>
SM Chastell <sup>T</sup>	M Court <sup>X</sup>	J Drummond <sup>U</sup>	G Flinn <sup>T</sup>
MJ Chattaway <sup>BCNSTW</sup>	JR Cowser <sup>BCHNSW</sup>	JAG Dunlop	L Flowers <sup>T</sup>
PD Chattaway	BR Cox	G Durey <sup>W</sup>	TD Folland <sup>T</sup>
PK Chown <sup>T</sup>	JM Cox <sup>T</sup>	A Dyer <sup>X</sup>	BF Forbes <sup>ST</sup>
C Chowne	T Crabb <sup>X</sup>	MR Eade <sup>STU</sup>	T Forbes <sup>T</sup>
N Churchill <sup>S</sup>	ES Crabtree <sup>W</sup>	R Eade <sup>T</sup>	A Ford
A Clancy <sup>U</sup>	HM Crabtree <sup>BCNSTW</sup>	M Eagles <sup>B</sup>	AE Ford <sup>T</sup>
P Clapham <sup>U</sup>	DE Crawley <sup>T</sup>	R Eagles <sup>T</sup>	L Foreman <sup>X</sup>
FC Clark <sup>T</sup>	NC Crighton <sup>T</sup>	C Eames	R Foreman <sup>X</sup>

TP Forster <sup>T</sup>	JS Gowers <sup>T</sup>	D Harris <sup>X</sup>	T Holter <sup>W</sup>
TJ Forward <sup>T</sup>	K Gowers <sup>X</sup>	NG Harris <sup>T</sup>	G Honey <sup>T</sup>
TM Forward <sup>X</sup>	GW Gowllett	RG Harris <sup>TW</sup>	CE Hope <sup>W</sup>
S Fosberry	AS Grace	S Harris <sup>U</sup>	JHM Home <sup>BCSTW</sup>
P Fosterjohn <sup>T</sup>	MR Grace	SM Harris <sup>T</sup>	ML Hortin
T Fowler <sup>TX</sup>	T Graham <sup>T</sup>	T Harris <sup>X</sup>	M Houari-Byrne <sup>T</sup>
TP Fox <sup>BCDHST</sup>	K Grand <sup>X</sup>	C Harrison <sup>T</sup>	T Houlton
EL Foyle <sup>T</sup>	JH Grant <sup>TU</sup>	D Hart <sup>E</sup>	A House
S Fran <sup>X</sup>	W Grant <sup>U</sup>	H Hart <sup>E</sup>	D Hovell
A Francis <sup>DT</sup>	A Gray <sup>T</sup>	R Hart <sup>T</sup>	AC Howard <sup>W</sup>
J Franklin	K Greaves <sup>X</sup>	WG Harvey <sup>BCST</sup>	M Howard <sup>X</sup>
C Fraser	R Greaves <sup>X</sup>	R Hastings	T Howard-Jones <sup>T</sup>
TJ Fraser <sup>CT</sup>	L Greble <sup>U</sup>	L Hatfield	DH Howey <sup>ST</sup>
MG Freeman <sup>W</sup>	MA Grech <sup>T</sup>	MJ Hawkins <sup>TX</sup>	R Howorth <sup>X</sup>
W Freeman <sup>X</sup>	B Green	JN Hawtree <sup>T</sup>	J Howse <sup>B</sup>
CD French <sup>BCT</sup>	D Green <sup>BX</sup>	RM Haydon <sup>T</sup>	DG Hughes
RI French <sup>W</sup>	P Green <sup>X</sup>	J Headon <sup>T</sup>	G Hughes <sup>BCT</sup>
D Fricker <sup>U</sup>	S Green <sup>T</sup>	GA Heath	G Hughes <sup>NSW</sup>
NF Fuller <sup>B</sup>	T Green	MDM Helps	PH Hughes <sup>S</sup>
RA Fuller <sup>U</sup>	NM Greenaway <sup>DNSW</sup>	N Henry	N Hulme
TP Fuller <sup>T</sup>	C Greenfield <sup>T</sup>	RF Hewitt <sup>T</sup>	P Hunter <sup>U</sup>
WW Fuller <sup>BCSTW</sup>	RR Greenhalf <sup>WX</sup>	MS Hickey <sup>T</sup>	NP Hutchinson <sup>BDNSTW</sup>
KM Galtry	G Griffin <sup>W</sup>	R Hicks <sup>T</sup>	AM Hutson <sup>CW</sup>
MA Galtry <sup>T</sup>	S Grimstead <sup>T</sup>	J High <sup>W</sup>	A Hyatt <sup>BCT</sup>
D Gardiner <sup>T</sup>	K Grove <sup>X</sup>	M Hill <sup>H</sup>	K Imms <sup>T</sup>
RDJ Gardner	L Groves <sup>X</sup>	S Hill <sup>T</sup>	JB Ingham <sup>T</sup>
D Garner <sup>U</sup>	AJ Guest <sup>BCT</sup>	RS Hoad <sup>BCDT</sup>	R Iredale <sup>T</sup>
SJ Gates <sup>T</sup>	J Guiver <sup>T</sup>	D Hoare <sup>T</sup>	BGR Ives <sup>T</sup>
A George	AC Gutteridge <sup>BCST</sup>	RN Hobbs <sup>SX</sup>	RA Ives
CM George <sup>BCNST</sup>	TJ Guy	JA Hobson <sup>BST</sup>	ED Jackson <sup>T</sup>
A Giacomelli <sup>CN</sup>	K Hackett <sup>T</sup>	J Hodges <sup>U</sup>	K Jackson
S Giacomelli	RK Haggart <sup>T</sup>	D Hodgkinson <sup>U</sup>	L Jackson <sup>BTX</sup>
I Gibb <sup>B</sup>	JA Hall	H Hodson <sup>X</sup>	RA Jackson <sup>T</sup>
K Gibb <sup>B</sup>	T Hall <sup>T</sup>	P Hogan <sup>TX</sup>	RJB Jackson <sup>T</sup>
TE Gibson-Poole <sup>T</sup>	TD Hallahan <sup>T</sup>	AJ Holcombe	SJ Jackson <sup>T</sup>
SA Gilbert <sup>BDNTW</sup>	RJ Hallett <sup>T</sup>	BJ Holcombe	BD James
KB Gillam	S Halpin	AM Holden <sup>T</sup>	C James
A Glossip	H Halstead <sup>T</sup>	D Holden <sup>U</sup>	G James
A Glossop	CH Hamilton <sup>T</sup>	DG Holland <sup>T</sup>	P James <sup>STX</sup>
J Glossop	J Hamilton	PK Holland <sup>T</sup>	CR Janman
J Glover <sup>D</sup>	JC Hannam <sup>T</sup>	K Hollidge <sup>T</sup>	M Jeffree
C Goble <sup>T</sup>	M Harbord <sup>X</sup>	D Hollingdale <sup>T</sup>	A Jeffrey <sup>U</sup>
N Godden <sup>T</sup>	AJ Hardie <sup>T</sup>	L Holloway <sup>X</sup>	P Jeganathan <sup>U</sup>
A Gomez <sup>T</sup>	D Harding <sup>X</sup>	AL Holmes <sup>T</sup>	M Jenkins <sup>X</sup>
D Goodge <sup>C</sup>	F Hargreaves <sup>W</sup>	RG Holmes <sup>BCTW</sup>	GG Jenner <sup>T</sup>
AH Gordon <sup>T</sup>	F Harmer <sup>T</sup>	CA Holt	K Jennings
W Gordon <sup>W</sup>	DGC Harper <sup>T</sup>	CA Holter <sup>CDST</sup>	S Jennings <sup>T</sup>
AN Gorsuch <sup>T</sup>	B Harrington <sup>X</sup>	J Holter <sup>TW</sup>	A Jewels <sup>X</sup>



J Jobling	R Knight	M Luscombe <sup>x</sup>	G Michelmores <sup>NW</sup>
DJ Jode <sup>STW</sup>	RM Knight <sup>T</sup>	P Lynch <sup>x</sup>	GA Michelmores <sup>BCT</sup>
A Johnson <sup>w</sup>	JP Knowles	G Lyons <sup>x</sup>	AM Miller <sup>T</sup>
C Johnson	J Knowlson <sup>x</sup>	J Macgregor <sup>x</sup>	G Miller <sup>w</sup>
D Johnson <sup>T</sup>	DA Lake <sup>T</sup>	DJ Madgin <sup>T</sup>	SP Milligan <sup>T</sup>
PJ Johnson	L Lambert <sup>BCT</sup>	L Magyar <sup>w</sup>	D Mitchell <sup>U</sup>
RJ Johnson <sup>TW</sup>	MP Lanaway	M Mallalieu <sup>CTW</sup>	NB Mitchell <sup>T</sup>
S Johnson <sup>x</sup>	S Lanaway <sup>w</sup>	D Mallard <sup>x</sup>	O Mitchell <sup>T</sup>
A Johnston <sup>BCT</sup>	DC Lang <sup>w</sup>	L Mandry <sup>x</sup>	L MM <sup>U</sup>
A Jones <sup>s</sup>	IM Lang <sup>HTW</sup>	RC Mann	P Moon <sup>w</sup>
B Jones <sup>T</sup>	P Langdown	MV Mansson <sup>x</sup>	A Moore <sup>U</sup>
C Jones <sup>T</sup>	D Langiewicz <sup>x</sup>	J Marchant <sup>B</sup>	CH Moore <sup>BCHTW</sup>
CM Jones <sup>T</sup>	JL Langiewicz <sup>x</sup>	JH Marchant <sup>T</sup>	J Moore <sup>HW</sup>
D Jones <sup>T</sup>	GB Langley <sup>U</sup>	MJ Marchant <sup>H</sup>	A Morris <sup>U</sup>
DG Jones <sup>T</sup>	L Langley <sup>T</sup>	E Marks <sup>ST</sup>	T Morris <sup>w</sup>
MGM Jones <sup>T</sup>	MR Lawn <sup>T</sup>	N Marriner <sup>T</sup>	T Morris <sup>U</sup>
PE Jones <sup>BCNTW</sup>	D Lawson <sup>x</sup>	SK Marshall <sup>T</sup>	D Morrison <sup>T</sup>
R Jones <sup>T</sup>	J Lawson <sup>BTW</sup>	J Martin <sup>x</sup>	C Mortimer <sup>BCT</sup>
RI Jones <sup>T</sup>	D Le Croisette <sup>U</sup>	JNR Martin <sup>BC</sup>	MF Mullen <sup>BC</sup>
RJ Jones <sup>T</sup>	A Le Gresley <sup>TX</sup>	JP Martin <sup>T</sup>	CA Mulley <sup>T</sup>
G Judd <sup>x</sup>	D Leadbetter <sup>x</sup>	JP Martin <sup>T</sup>	MJ Mullis <sup>x</sup>
D Julian <sup>T</sup>	BD Lee <sup>T</sup>	KM Martin <sup>T</sup>	C Murphy <sup>U</sup>
ME Kalaher	HJA Lee <sup>BCEsw</sup>	M Martin <sup>BC</sup>	K Murphy <sup>BCT</sup>
B Kay	M Lee <sup>U</sup>	P Martin <sup>T</sup>	D Mutters <sup>NST</sup>
M Kaye	T Lee <sup>x</sup>	R Martin <sup>T</sup>	J Mycock <sup>T</sup>
A Kearsey	CL Leeves <sup>T</sup>	R Martin <sup>U</sup>	M Nailard
J Kellett <sup>EST</sup>	MP LeGrys	R Martin <sup>U</sup>	R Nash <sup>x</sup>
JJ Kelsall	K Lerwill <sup>x</sup>	S Mash <sup>T</sup>	P Nason <sup>U</sup>
AA Kensett <sup>T</sup>	D Leversedge <sup>BC</sup>	JM Maskell <sup>T</sup>	SM Neal <sup>T</sup>
M Kenward <sup>s</sup>	P Lifton <sup>s</sup>	PH Massini <sup>w</sup>	M Netherwood <sup>T</sup>
M Kerry <sup>x</sup>	T Lifton <sup>BCT</sup>	W Masters <sup>T</sup>	L Newman <sup>x</sup>
MM Kettell <sup>T</sup>	MW Light <sup>B</sup>	H Matcham <sup>x</sup>	Y Newman
AJ Killick	C Lindsay <sup>T</sup>	PD Matson <sup>T</sup>	JA Newnham <sup>BCHNSTW</sup>
JE King <sup>T</sup>	C Line	P Matthews	SJ Newton <sup>BCDTX</sup>
MN King <sup>BCDT</sup>	SH Linington	C Mayhew <sup>T</sup>	C Nicholson <sup>T</sup>
P King	AH Lloyd <sup>SW</sup>	NV McCanch <sup>T</sup>	J Nilsson <sup>U</sup>
M Kingerlee	M Lloyd <sup>x</sup>	SFH McCullagh <sup>HT</sup>	JL Nobbs <sup>BDEs</sup>
AJ Kirby <sup>T</sup>	D Locke <sup>T</sup>	JI McCulloch <sup>T</sup>	K Noble <sup>T</sup>
W Kirby	C Lodge <sup>T</sup>	I McGregor <sup>T</sup>	K Noble <sup>U</sup>
M Kirk <sup>BSTW</sup>	P Lomas <sup>T</sup>	B McIntyre	SD Noble <sup>T</sup>
M Kirkland <sup>T</sup>	G Long <sup>U</sup>	PAF McKenzie <sup>T</sup>	C Noel <sup>x</sup>
J Kirkman <sup>DX</sup>	M Love <sup>B</sup>	SE Mckenzie	A Norbury <sup>x</sup>
A Kirkwood <sup>w</sup>	M Lovell <sup>T</sup>	M Mcmanus <sup>ESTWX</sup>	B Normark <sup>U</sup>
AR Kitson	RE Lowe <sup>s</sup>	DF McNair <sup>BCDTW</sup>	J Nortcliff <sup>T</sup>
DC Knight <sup>T</sup>	AR Loweth <sup>T</sup>	R Mcnamara <sup>x</sup>	C Northwood
G Knight	B Lucking <sup>U</sup>	D Melville <sup>T</sup>	J Nott <sup>C</sup>
J Knight <sup>x</sup>	PJ Luffingham <sup>H</sup>	N Merchant <sup>C</sup>	A Nottage <sup>ST</sup>
L Knight <sup>BCT</sup>	S Luker <sup>x</sup>	A Mews <sup>U</sup>	M O'Shea

B O'Dowd <sup>W</sup>	MJ Phillips <sup>W</sup>	JW Redhead <sup>T</sup>	T Ryder
SJ Oates <sup>T</sup>	SM Phillips	B Reeve <sup>H</sup>	CMP Ryland <sup>X</sup>
B October <sup>X</sup>	A Piccolo <sup>T</sup>	J Reeve <sup>X</sup>	D Sadler
M Oldfield <sup>X</sup>	M Pike <sup>S</sup>	JP Reeves <sup>TX</sup>	MJ Salmon <sup>T</sup>
M Oligario <sup>X</sup>	M Pinegar <sup>J</sup>	R Reeves	JF Sanderson <sup>B</sup>
F Olmos <sup>U</sup>	L Pitcher	S Reeves <sup>T</sup>	M Satchwell <sup>S</sup>
MA Orchard-Webb <sup>T</sup>	A Pitts <sup>DT</sup>	A Reid <sup>ST</sup>	G Sayer <sup>X</sup>
P Osborn <sup>T</sup>	I Pitts <sup>T</sup>	A Rice <sup>D</sup>	J Sayers <sup>B</sup>
BA Osborne <sup>T</sup>	J Pitts <sup>X</sup>	JP Richards <sup>T</sup>	A Scarlett <sup>T</sup>
BP Osborne <sup>DT</sup>	PJ Plant <sup>BT</sup>	W Richards <sup>U</sup>	E Scott <sup>T</sup>
G Osborne <sup>BC</sup>	R Platt <sup>T</sup>	I Richardson <sup>X</sup>	S Scott <sup>T</sup>
T Ottley <sup>X</sup>	D Plummer <sup>X</sup>	JE Richardson <sup>T</sup>	M Scott-ham <sup>BHT</sup>
T Outham <sup>X</sup>	J Plumstead <sup>X</sup>	L Richardson <sup>BHS</sup>	E Scovell <sup>X</sup>
L Overy <sup>T</sup>	AH Podmore <sup>S</sup>	J Riggle <sup>U</sup>	AM Seabrook <sup>T</sup>
L Owen <sup>S</sup>	H Poland <sup>S</sup>	JR Rivoire <sup>T</sup>	T Seabrook <sup>W</sup>
MP Owen <sup>BC</sup>	J Pollitt <sup>X</sup>	C Roach <sup>T</sup>	J Sears <sup>X</sup>
RC Owen <sup>S</sup>	CR Poole <sup>BCST</sup>	GCM Roberts <sup>T</sup>	CM Seaton <sup>B</sup>
JC Palmer <sup>T</sup>	NJN Pope	H Roberts <sup>W</sup>	RC Self
KJ Palmer <sup>T</sup>	GR Potts	M Roberts <sup>T</sup>	J Sellwood <sup>T</sup>
M Palmer <sup>T</sup>	PM Potts <sup>W</sup>	MD Roberts	RJ Senior <sup>W</sup>
PJ Papps <sup>T</sup>	DG Powell <sup>T</sup>	S Roberts <sup>X</sup>	MV Sennitt <sup>X</sup>
A Parfitt <sup>TWX</sup>	I Powell <sup>X</sup>	W Roberts <sup>T</sup>	M Shaft <sup>H</sup>
N Park <sup>BCST</sup>	R Powell <sup>T</sup>	M Robey <sup>X</sup>	M Sharp <sup>T</sup>
A Parker <sup>NS</sup>	D Powles <sup>X</sup>	D Robinson <sup>T</sup>	P Sharp <sup>T</sup>
K Parker	HDV Prendergast <sup>ST</sup>	L Robinson <sup>U</sup>	PJ Sharp <sup>T</sup>
J Parkin <sup>T</sup>	A Preston	PA Robinson <sup>T</sup>	MD Shaw <sup>BCNSTW</sup>
S Parmenter	J Price <sup>X</sup>	A Robjohns <sup>T</sup>	CR Shawyer
TW Parmenter <sup>S</sup>	L Price <sup>T</sup>	I Robson <sup>T</sup>	AJ Shearman <sup>T</sup>
R Parsons <sup>W</sup>	R Price <sup>W</sup>	C Roche <sup>B</sup>	P Shergold
F Partridge <sup>X</sup>	A Priest <sup>B</sup>	BM Rogers	R Sherrington <sup>CT</sup>
RA Pask	T Priest <sup>B</sup>	DP Rogers <sup>BCSTW</sup>	J Shortis <sup>U</sup>
NR Patching	C Prince <sup>W</sup>	C Rolfe	G Siddle <sup>WX</sup>
RJ Patching	P Prince <sup>X</sup>	AJ Roman <sup>T</sup>	T Simon <sup>T</sup>
J Patmore <sup>X</sup>	R Prince <sup>X</sup>	K Rome <sup>T</sup>	J Simpson
F Pattinson <sup>D</sup>	S Pryor <sup>X</sup>	C Roper <sup>X</sup>	RN Simpson <sup>T</sup>
PN Paul <sup>T</sup>	H Pude <sup>T</sup>	PP Roper <sup>X</sup>	SP Simpson <sup>BCNTW</sup>
J Paulios <sup>U</sup>	RHA Putnam <sup>T</sup>	C Rose <sup>T</sup>	T Simpson <sup>X</sup>
R Peck <sup>T</sup>	B Puttock <sup>TW</sup>	J Ross <sup>BTX</sup>	D Singer <sup>U</sup>
A Pedliham <sup>T</sup>	RJ Pyrah <sup>T</sup>	BN Rossiter <sup>T</sup>	D Skeels <sup>T</sup>
RF Penticost <sup>BC</sup>	K Quinlan <sup>X</sup>	VH Ross-Smith <sup>T</sup>	PA Sketch <sup>T</sup>
RT Pepper <sup>T</sup>	B Rainbow <sup>X</sup>	P Rouse <sup>T</sup>	N Skilbeck
L Percival <sup>SW</sup>	J Ramsey <sup>S</sup>	AM Rowe <sup>T</sup>	AJ Skinner <sup>BCSW</sup>
A Perry <sup>CES</sup>	M Ramsey <sup>S</sup>	E Rowsell <sup>N</sup>	C Skinner <sup>D</sup>
R Perry	NM Ratcliffe <sup>T</sup>	SJR Rumsey	DI Smith
G Peters	ND Rawlings <sup>T</sup>	MG Russel <sup>NS</sup>	J Smith <sup>S</sup>
RH Petley <sup>X</sup>	C Reay <sup>CST</sup>	MJ Russell <sup>CT</sup>	KW Smith <sup>BT</sup>
CB Peverett <sup>T</sup>	J Redford	SA Russell <sup>CDT</sup>	M Smith <sup>W</sup>
AP Phillips <sup>X</sup>	M Redford	ND Rutherford <sup>BCW</sup>	PA Smith <sup>T</sup>

S Smith <sup>W</sup>	SR Taylor <sup>SW</sup>	HL Twizell <sup>B</sup>	JD Weston <sup>W</sup>
AC Smithen <sup>BCNTW</sup>	S Teale <sup>X</sup>	D Tyler <sup>T</sup>	MJ Wheeler <sup>T</sup>
TG Snow <sup>BC</sup>	G Teig <sup>U</sup>	P Tyler <sup>T</sup>	L Whiston <sup>B</sup>
E Sopp <sup>W</sup>	C Temple <sup>U</sup>	C Tyrrell <sup>X</sup>	IJ Whitcomb
IM Spence <sup>T</sup>	M Temple <sup>W</sup>	J Underwood	PJ Whitcomb <sup>TX</sup>
PA Spencer <sup>T</sup>	A Terry <sup>B</sup>	A Upson <sup>X</sup>	G Whitehead <sup>T</sup>
D Spensley <sup>T</sup>	L Tester <sup>T</sup>	G Upton <sup>T</sup>	A Whitehouse <sup>T</sup>
M Spicer <sup>H</sup>	RC Theobald <sup>T</sup>	M Usher <sup>X</sup>	CA Whiteman <sup>S</sup>
P Spiers <sup>W</sup>	M Thomas	JC Vallas <sup>T</sup>	AM Whitman
GC Spinks <sup>TU</sup>	R Thomas <sup>U</sup>	J Van Breda <sup>X</sup>	J Whitman <sup>X</sup>
CD Spooner <sup>T</sup>	T Thomas <sup>BDTW</sup>	P Varkala	JH Whitman
G Springett <sup>T</sup>	C Thompson <sup>X</sup>	C Vince <sup>W</sup>	G Wilkerson <sup>W</sup>
T Squire <sup>DHS</sup>	J Thompson <sup>X</sup>	C Vine <sup>W</sup>	J Wilkes <sup>C</sup>
G Stacey <sup>T</sup>	PS Thompson	H Waddicor <sup>T</sup>	A Wilkie <sup>T</sup>
T Stachnicki <sup>T</sup>	W Thompson <sup>U</sup>	R Wake	J Wilkinson <sup>T</sup>
T Stack <sup>B</sup>	P Thornton <sup>W</sup>	N Walford <sup>X</sup>	M Wilkinson
I Standivan <sup>W</sup>	S Tillman <sup>X</sup>	BJ Walker <sup>T</sup>	J Wilks
A Staples <sup>T</sup>	PA Tinning <sup>X</sup>	D Walker <sup>W</sup>	JD Willett <sup>T</sup>
AJ Steele <sup>TU</sup>	PC Tinning <sup>X</sup>	H Walker <sup>B</sup>	C Williamson <sup>T</sup>
D Stenning <sup>T</sup>	P Tinsley-Marshall <sup>X</sup>	S Walker <sup>T</sup>	RLC Williamson <sup>W</sup>
L Steuart <sup>X</sup>	P Toe	J Wallington <sup>X</sup>	J Willmott <sup>X</sup>
L Stevens <sup>B</sup>	R Tofts	LA Walther <sup>X</sup>	G Wilson <sup>T</sup>
P Stevens <sup>WX</sup>	D Tombling <sup>X</sup>	GC Ward <sup>T</sup>	T Wilton <sup>T</sup>
S Stevens <sup>BCT</sup>	M Tomlins <sup>W</sup>	HM Warne <sup>T</sup>	I Wiltshire <sup>B</sup>
A Stewart <sup>T</sup>	A Tomlinson <sup>T</sup>	N Warne <sup>B</sup>	M Wiltshire <sup>T</sup>
F Stirling	M Tomlinson <sup>U</sup>	B Warren <sup>U</sup>	JS Winder <sup>T</sup>
N Stonestreet <sup>DT</sup>	G Townsend <sup>U</sup>	A Waterfield <sup>X</sup>	D Witts <sup>X</sup>
E Stradling <sup>X</sup>	P Townsend <sup>T</sup>	T Waters <sup>HW</sup>	J Wolsey-Cooper
PJ Strangeman <sup>B</sup>	I Tree	D Watkins <sup>B</sup>	V Wood <sup>BT</sup>
S Stuart <sup>T</sup>	Trektellen <sup>T</sup>	D Watkins <sup>X</sup>	S Woolfenden
E Stubbs	S Trenerry <sup>T</sup>	AB Watson	I Woolsey <sup>HS</sup>
Sussex Peregrine Study	G Treves <sup>X</sup>	R Watson <sup>X</sup>	S Wootton
JA Sutherland <sup>T</sup>	G Trew <sup>W</sup>	N Webb <sup>T</sup>	JA Worrall <sup>BH</sup>
P Sutton <sup>T</sup>	M Tristram <sup>X</sup>	R Webb <sup>T</sup>	R Wren <sup>T</sup>
R Sutton <sup>X</sup>	CE Trollope <sup>HT</sup>	PJ Webster <sup>T</sup>	CMV Wright <sup>BCNSTW</sup>
S Sutton <sup>HX</sup>	D Trott <sup>T</sup>	S Wedd <sup>X</sup>	D Wright
JL Swallow <sup>T</sup>	JE Trowell <sup>W</sup>	A Welch <sup>U</sup>	E Wright <sup>T</sup>
J Swann White <sup>T</sup>	S Tucker <sup>T</sup>	M Welcome <sup>W</sup>	G Wright <sup>U</sup>
WIE Tagg <sup>X</sup>	M Turner	PJ Wells	M Wright <sup>T</sup>
F Tai <sup>X</sup>	S Turner <sup>U</sup>	TJ Wells <sup>T</sup>	T Wright
G Tana <sup>X</sup>	G Turvey	AJ Wende <sup>T</sup>	BJ Yates <sup>HWX</sup>
S Tanner <sup>X</sup>	D Tutt <sup>T</sup>	P Wendler <sup>X</sup>	B Yeoman
B Taylor	G Twells <sup>T</sup>	A West <sup>T</sup>	C Young <sup>U</sup>
K Taylor <sup>T</sup>	C Twitchen <sup>T</sup>	DR West <sup>BCNST</sup>	R Young <sup>U</sup>
LJ Taylor <sup>T</sup>	WM Twitchett <sup>T</sup>	R West <sup>T</sup>	S Younger <sup>W</sup>

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

N: Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey

S: Stonechat Survey

T: Contributors via BirdTrack

W: Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

U: Contributors via Cornell University e-Bird

X: From the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (including iRecord and Living Records)

## ASSISTANCE TO RECORDER

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The recorder and database manager thank contributors for submitting their records through one of the online recording systems or providing the society with digitised records. Particular thanks to the following team of helpers for capturing records submitted on paper or preparing datasets for importing into the society database: CJR Barfield, CB Chapman, JR Cowser, JA Hobson, NP Hutchinson, T Howard-Jones, E Ludick and JH Whitman.

## SURVEYS

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Society members again gave a great deal of their time during the year to a wide range of national, county and local surveys. Their invaluable support and contributions are acknowledged with grateful thanks. Details of the surveys and the Sussex organisers follow:

**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 <sup>B</sup> 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 2016 by Christine George (sussex.wbs@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 85 observers involved who are indicated by <sup>C</sup> in the above table.

**South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative:** This survey started in 2014 with the aim of monitoring common farmland birds within the South Downs National Park. This survey is organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details above) and involves a BBS-like survey of randomly selected 1-km squares containing at least 50% farmland habitat. BBS squares in the national park are included in this survey and the 37 surveyors involved are shown by <sup>D</sup> in the above table.

**Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey:** This continuing survey of heaths and heath woodlands is undertaken in collaboration with the RSPB and the bird clubs of Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey. The Sussex organiser is A Perry, Edgehill Barn, Byworth, near Petworth, West Sussex, GU28 0HR (alan@alanperry.uk.com). Thanks are due to the 12 observers involved who are indicated by <sup>E</sup> in the list of contributors.

**Heronries Census:** This long-standing national census was organised in Sussex during 2016 by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above). Counts of breeding Grey Herons, Little Egrets and Cormorants are given in the systematic list. Thanks are due to the 32 contributors who are indicated by <sup>H</sup> in the above table.

**Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey (NEWS):** This survey of the coastline was carried out in conjunction with the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) between December 2015 and February 2016. The county WeBS coordinators organised the coverage of 63 sectors of the coastline, and the results will be published in a future bird report. Thanks are due to the 34 surveyors who are labelled with <sup>N</sup> in the list of contributors.

**Breeding Stonechat Survey:** This county survey was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and the 87 participants are indicated by <sup>S</sup> in the above table.

**Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS):** Monthly counts were carried out for this BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC survey and organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and Dave Boddington, 193, Hartington Road, Brighton BN2 3PA (davebodds@yahoo.co.uk). Coordinating the counts in large areas has been undertaken by local reserve wardens as shown below. Thanks are due to these and the 130 counters who are indicated by <sup>W</sup> in the list of contributors.

**Co-ordination of Seawatching Records:** The annual co-ordination of these records for the society is carried out by Dr JA Newnham, 61 Grand Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 5BA (j.newnham1@ntlworld.com).

## SUMMARIES OF OBSERVATIONS

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We are grateful for organisation of survey work and summaries of detailed observations at Chichester Harbour from PH Hughes; Thorney and Pilsey Islands from CB Collins; Medmerry and Pagham Hbr from IM Lang and B O'Dowd; Selsey Bill from J Atkinson; Arundel WWT from P Stevens; Pulborough Brooks and the Arun Valley from J Bassett, A Allum and P Moon; Worthing from Dr JA Newnham; Knepp Estate from P Green; Horsham District Council reserves from J Everitt; Weir Wood Reservoir from RJ Johnson; 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 JF Cooper; Hastings area migration watches from A Parker; Bewl Water from MG Freeman and MJ Phillips; and Rye Harbour from Dr BJ Yates. We also thank Mrs C Blencowe and R Foreman at the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for providing ornithological records from the centre, iRecord and Living Records involving 198 observers (marked <sup>X</sup> in the above table). For the first year records from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (eBird) have been included and involved observations from 88 recorders each labelled U in the contributors table. The online recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 485 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a <sup>T</sup> in the above table. The records from Birdguides for 2016 were channelled through BirdTrack. Thanks are due to the BTO for the county BirdTrack records, as well as county records for the Breeding Bird Survey, the Wetland Bird Survey and Garden BirdWatch records. The records from the 252 gardens involved in the last survey arrived too late to be included in the systematic list.

## RINGING

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Thanks are due to VP Bentley for maintaining detailed records of ringing in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.

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