

Sussex Ornithological Society

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Sussex Ornithological Society

The Sussex Bird Report

Number Seventy, 2017



Editor: Dr PJ Plant

Editorial Team: C Barfield, MJ Chattaway, L Dray, JA Hobson, P James,
M Mallalieu (Hon Recorder), Dr JA Newnham

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Sussex Bird Report 2016 - amendments and corrections

Very few errors in the 2016 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.



Great Black-backed Gull, Brighton Marina, November 2017 (Tim Squire)

Photographs

I would like to say a massive thank you to the over fifty photographers who provided what must have been a record number of over eight hundred image submissions to the Sussex Bird Report. It was quite a challenge to shortlist the images, as the quality again this year was absolutely outstanding!

There were two stand out birds for photographers during 2017. The Rose-coloured Starling in Crawley showed well long into March and I received many beautiful submissions of it starting to come into breeding plumage. The Black Guillemot in Sovereign Harbour, Eastbourne, was also very accessible to the end of the year and beyond. It would quite often show down to a few feet to the delight of both photographers and birders alike. A hard bird to see in Sussex, and a real treat to have one showing so well!

As in previous years, the selection policy with images has been to select as wide a range of species as possible (not just scarcities) and to represent as many photographers that space constraints allow. We have included a photographers' gallery to display a greater selection of work from our talented and generous contributors. I look forward to receiving more outstanding photos for the 2018 Report. [Luke Dray, Photographic Editor]

Cover photo: Blue Rock Thrush, Beachy Head, 6 April 2017 (George Kinnard)

Editorial

Peter Plant

In the 2017 Sussex Bird Report we have made appropriate changes to accommodate the decision of the British Ornithologists' Union to adopt the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) World Bird List with effect from 1 January 2018. The Sussex List changes, and is reproduced on pages 288-300 of this report. We lose some species being relegated to subspecies such as Hudsonian Whimbrel, but others like former Bean Goose subspecies are promoted. Two historical records (White-winged Lark and Blyth's Pipit) have been reviewed by the BBRC and are now withdrawn. Two new species for Sussex were recorded in the year, and finders' accounts of Elegant Tern by Alan Kitson and Blue Rock Thrush by Allsworth Redman are to be found on pages 215-217. We end up after all this with 403 species on the Sussex List. Readers will note some slight changes in species order, such as Swans now following Geese, and there are changes to scientific names. However, as in previous years, we have kept faithfully to vernacular names for species, qualified only in cases where there could be confusion with others on the Sussex List.

This year, unusually, we have received data from the BTO's Garden Bird Watch in time to analyse and include in the species accounts. This should be noted if comparisons are drawn with earlier years. The influx of these records has helped to boost the total to an unprecedented 320,289. Further interesting analysis is given in Dr John Newnham's report on pages 17 - 20. It should also be noted that unusual records are only included in this Report if they have been considered and accepted by the Records Committee; an updated list of the species or races involved is given on page 277.

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, Birdtrack and GBW records) are acknowledged at the end of this report. The database team digested these in our CoBRA 2 database, removing duplicate records, checking exceptional records and chasing answers to numerous queries. 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, MC Daniel, C Davis, M Eade, GD Evans, J Franklin, D Green, AC Gutteridge, WG Harvey, JA Hobson, PK Holland, A House, DH Howey, BGR Ives, P James, ME Kalaher, M McManus, M Mallalieu, JA Newnham, M Orchard-Webb, GA Osbourne, TW Parmenter, PJ Plant, AH Podmore, CJ Reay, T Seabrook, K Smith, L Smith, A Thomas, AB Watson and JH Whitman. The initials at the end of each section identify the author.

Primary proofreading and checking of numbers was shared between Joanne Chattaway and John Hobson. Many thanks for their diligence. John Newnham provided answers to outstanding questions and added wise suggestions. 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. Further clarification came from the many people promptly responding to enquiries about surprising or ambiguous records. All of the above deserve 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 assembled an impressive number of magnificent photographs taken in Sussex in 2017, and suggested a selection to be included in the Report to enhance the systematic list and any available space in the Photographers' Gallery. Thanks go to all those providing images and to Rob Yarham for designing the cover.

Special thanks go to Helen Crabtree for the total organisation of the scientific papers; her own on the surveys of Cetti's Warbler, and of Woodlark/Dartford Warbler, and those of James McCulloch on the Waxwing invasion, Cliff Dean and Alan Parker on the investigations of nesting Yellow Wagtails in East Sussex, and David Howey on the fortunes of the Kittiwake colony. Helen, together with Christine George, John Newnham and Alan Perry provided survey tables, and Val Bentley provided the Ringing Report.

Chris Barfield undertook the daunting task of typesetting of the 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 join the many splendid volunteers listed above and contribute in any way to the 2018 Sussex Bird Report, please contact breditor@sos.org.uk.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used as standard practice

AON	Apparently occupied nests	PH	Public House
BBRC	British Birds Records Committee	Res	Reservoir
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
BGBW	Big Garden Bird Watch (RSPB)	RBRG	Rye Bay Ringing Group
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology	R	River
BOU	British Ornithologists Union	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
CP	Country Park	SWBS	Sussex Winter Bird Survey
Fm	Farm	WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
GBW	Garden Bird Watch (BTO)	WBBS	Waterways Breeding Bird Survey
GP	Gravel Pit	WHBBS	Wealden Heaths BBS
GC	Golf Course	WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Hbr	Harbour	WTW	Water Treatment Works
IOC	International Ornithological Congress	nc	no count
LNR	Local Nature Reserve	ha	hectares
MP	Mill pond	hr	hours
mo	many observers	km	kilometres
NR	Nature Reserve	m	miles
o/s	offshore	N,E,S,W	As cardinal compass points

Colour Codes

In the systematic list the titles for Birds of Conservation Concern included in BoCC(4) are shown with appropriate highlights for Red Listed and Amber Listed species.

Review of 2017

Mark Mallalieu

A total of 256 species was recorded in 2017 compared to 264 during 2016. There were two exciting 'firsts' for the county, a Blue Rock Thrush at Beachy Head on 6 Apr and an Elegant Tern at Pagham Hbr from 10 to 20 Jun. Other outstanding finds included an Aquatic Warbler at Charleston Reedbed on 16 Aug, a Baird's Sandpiper at Cuckmere Haven from 3 to 6 Sep and a Daurian or Turkestan Shrike in East Sussex from 25 to 27 Oct. There were about 19 Cattle Egrets, a county record, and perhaps as many as 43 Great White Egrets in the last year that this was a 'description species' in the county. Among breeding birds, Avocets had another record year and a survey of Yellow Wagtails in part of East Sussex suggested an encouraging total of 50-60 pairs. The year was also memorable for the influx of Waxwings in the early months and then the unprecedented invasion of Hawfinches from October onwards.

January to March

January started mild with a few colder days, some rain and a westerly airstream. Towards the middle of the month, colder north-westerly air brought strong winds and some snow with temperatures below freezing at night. After a milder spell, cold air saw temperatures fall to around -7°C at night in the third week. Milder conditions then predominated into February, with light winds and drizzle and some bright days. A westerly to south-westerly airstream brought exceptionally windy conditions in the last week of the month, sometimes of gale or storm force. March was one of the warmest on record. There was rather little rain and winds were variable, but sometimes very strong from the north to west.

Two popular rarities from the previous year were still present at the start of 2017. The **Rose-coloured Starling** stayed at Broadfield, Crawley until 21 Mar, moulting into adult plumage; and the singing male **Serin** at Newhaven Tide Mills remained until 26 Feb.



Serin, Newhaven Tide Mills, January 2017 (Leigh Prevost)

Brent Geese numbers reached 15,484 in January, slightly down on 2016, with 13,058 of these in Chichester Hbr. A few **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were found, including three in Pagham Hbr on 1 Jan, one at Bosham (Chichester Hbr) on 3 Feb and two at Medmerry on 19 Mar; later on, seven flew east with flocks of the dark-bellied form at Birling Gap on 28 Mar. On 3 Jan, several rarer geese were found in the east of the county: five **Taiga Bean Geese** and four **Pink-footed Geese** at Pett Level and four **Tundra Bean Geese** at Scotney GP. All stayed beyond the middle of the month and with flocks of up to 60 **White-fronted Geese** also in the area, this spectacle was a draw for many observers early in the New Year. The five **Taiga Bean Geese** were also seen on Brede Levels on 15 Jan and up to six **Pink-footed Geese** were at Scotney GP from 17 to 24 Jan. Pulborough Brooks also hosted five **Tundra Bean Geese** from 27 Jan to 4 Feb, a single was on Horse Eye Level from 19 Feb to 4 Mar and finally three more were at Scotney GP on 6 Mar.

Numbers of commoner wildfowl were mostly at or below 10-year average totals, though the 31 **Bewick's Swans** in the Arun Valley in January represented a welcome increase over the previous year. The January WeBS count of 979 **Common Shelduck** was the highest for that month since 2011. **Eurasian Wigeon** peaked in January, when 11,730 were present, with over 3000 in the Rye Bay area; the highest site count of the period was of 3352 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 13 Feb, when there were also 1690 **Eurasian Teal** there, the highest site count of the year.

Offshore, there were large eastwards movements of **Red-throated Divers** in January and February, the highest counts being 385 at Splash Point (Seaford) on 2 Feb and 403 at Birling Gap on 14 Feb. Also noteworthy were the 1183 **Gannets** flying west at Selsey Bill in 29 Jan.

Lapwing numbers were low in January, but increased in February, when WeBS counts totalled 14,465 with 6326 in the Arun Valley, north of Arundel. There were fewer **Golden Plovers** than in the same period of 2016, the highest numbers being 1500 at Rye Hbr in February. Chichester Hbr hosted 12,830 of the 15,091 **Dunlin** found in the January WeBS counts, whilst in February there were 2806 **Knot**, mainly in Chichester Hbr. Some impressive counts of **Common Snipe** included 153 at Rye Hbr on 10 Feb, 120 at Arundel WWT on 9 Feb and 75 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 10 Mar.

A bonus for birders going to see the geese at Pett Level in January was a much-photographed **Red-necked Grebe** found on a small lake near Camber on the 3rd, which stayed until 4 Feb. On 4 Jan, another **Red-necked Grebe** was found, this time off Pagham, then a third individual was seen off Worthing seafront on 25 Jan and perhaps a fourth at Brooklands (Worthing), from 19 to 24 Feb that was clearly unwell.

A further attraction at the start of the year was on offer at Tarring Neville, where two **Cattle Egrets** stayed from 2 to 5 Jan. Another was in a field with sheep at Down Level (Pevensy) on 19 Mar, with up to two more in the Cuckmere Valley from 27 Mar to 15 Apr. There were three **Great White Egrets** at Scotney GP on 22 Jan, with singles regularly noted in the Rye area and in the Arun Valley between Arundel and Pulborough, as well as at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Mar. Two full-winged **White Storks** were at the Knepp Estate (Shipley) on 22 Jan and one on 21 and 22 Feb, though their origin was uncertain.

Among scarcer birds of prey, a male **Goshawk** was already displaying at one site on 11 Jan, though territorial behaviour was noted more often here and elsewhere during February and March. **Red Kites** continue to increase, with a county record of 60 roosting at The Burgh in January.

With a growing UK population, helped by reintroduction programmes, **Cranes** are likely to become more frequent, but are no less thrilling sights for that. In March, one flew high SE over Hardham on the 6th and another flew over Broadwater (Worthing) on the 25th. The only rare wader in the period was a **Black-winged Stilt**, another increasing species, in the lower Cuckmere Valley

on 29 Mar. By contrast, there were good numbers of scarcer gulls. **Glaucous Gulls** were noted at Rye Hbr on 11 Jan; in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 12 Jan, with two there on 25th, which were also seen at Arlington Res on the 24th to 25th, and one on 29 Mar. Elsewhere, one flew east along the shore at St Leonards on 12 Feb, whilst in the west one was at Medmerry on 25 Jan and one flew past Selsey Bill on 6 Feb. **Iceland Gulls** were found in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 29 Jan, at Goring Gap on 5 Feb and at Selsey Bill on 11 Feb. There were four accepted records of a total of six **Caspian Gulls**: one at Newhaven Hbr on 6 Jan; two in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 12 Jan; another at Newhaven Hbr on 18 Jan; and two more in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 27 Jan. However, the true number present in the county in this period was probably much higher, with for example an estimate of nine additional individuals present in the lower Cuckmere Valley up to 21 Feb.

The only other scarce non-passerines recorded in the period were **Puffins**, with singles off Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 16 Jan and two there on the 18th. Large roosts of gulls included 45,000 **Black-headed** and 34,000 **Common Gulls** at Bewl Water on 3 Feb. A movement of 3000 **Guillemots** east at Splash Point on 15 Feb was quite exceptional. Also in February, there were a remarkable 500-2000 **Razorbills** off Selsey Bill each day from the 5th to the 11th.



Great Grey Shrike, Waltham Brooks, January 2017 (Gary Faulkner)

Great Grey Shrikes were found in Ashdown Forest on a number of dates between 4 Jan and 31 Mar, with three there on 8 and 21 Feb. One was at Waltham Brooks until 26 Feb and two on 2 Mar, with one nearby at Bury on 22 Feb; one was at Amberley Wild Brooks on 10 Jan and 7 Feb, although some duplication is likely here. Elsewhere, there was one at Southerham (Lewes) on 13 Mar. An influx of **Waxwings** in January was one of the highlights of the period, with flocks of up to 40 being present both along the coast and inland; numbers declined in February and March, with the last two seen on 24 Mar. Many **Chiffchaffs** wintered in the county, with 50 at Coldwaltham WTW on 6 Jan. The only **Siberian Chiffchaffs** were 1-2 at this site on several dates from 4 Jan to 6 Mar. Wintering **Blackcaps** were present in at least 90 sites in the period. Many observers enjoyed the **Water Pipit** at Fishbourne Creek, Chichester Hbr, from 5 to 29 Jan; West Rise Marsh held one or two from 3 Jan to 17 Feb and there were two at Crowhurst on 22 Jan. A splendid summer-plumaged individual was at Horse Eye Level from 24 until 26 Mar. **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** were found at Peacehaven on 16 Feb, West Rise Marsh on 12 Mar and Rye Hbr on 15 Mar. A flock of 35

Tree Sparrows at Broomhill Level on 20th Jan was noteworthy. **Twite** have also become very scarce in Sussex, so one at Cuckmere Haven from 5 to 24 Feb was a very welcome attraction. Diligent observations in fields near Scotney GP revealed two **Lapland Buntings** from 20 to 24 Jan and five more nearby on the 24th. Less rare, but also noteworthy, were the 150 **Corn Buntings** at Newhaven Heights on 23 Jan. A **Snow Bunting** was at West Wittering on 5 Jan, followed by several sightings of one or two at nearby East Head between 14 Jan and 26 Feb.

The approach of spring was heralded by some early arrivals (of single birds unless otherwise stated) from early March including **Barn Swallow** at Rye Hbr on the 4th; **Northern Wheatear** at Rye Hbr on the 6th; **Ring Ouzel** at Shoreham on the 7th; **Garganey** at Rye Hbr on the 10th; **Little Ringed Plover** at Thorney Island and **Sand Martin** at Lancing on the 11th; **Willow Warbler** at Camber GC on the 12th; two **Common Redstarts** on Ashdown Forest on the 15th; **Osprey** at Selsey Bill on the 21st; a very early **Arctic Tern** past Splash Point on the 24th; **Yellow Wagtail** at Newick WTW and **Sedge Warbler** at Rye Hbr on the 25th; five **House Martins** at Weir Wood Res on the 27th and at least one at Worthing on the same day; and finally in March five **Common Terns** past Selsey Bill and one at Chichester GP on the 28th.

April to June

April started with a continuation of mild and often sunny weather. The month was remarkable for the very low rainfall and it was the 10th driest April in UK since 1910. Temperatures turned cooler towards the middle of the month, with several days of northerly winds and occasional frost overnight in the last week. The winds turned south-easterly at the end of April. Temperatures increased in May, especially in the last week, with rain on several days and mainly light winds, often north-easterly, early in the month and south-westerly later on. Early June saw a short period of strong south-westerly winds with some heavy rainfall. There was a heatwave on the 18th to the 21st, with temperatures exceeding 30°C, followed by some further heavy rain in the last week.

The influx of summer visitors continued in April with the first records of **Common Whitethroat** at Rye Hbr on 1 Apr; **Common Cuckoo** at Iping Common on the 3rd; **Garden Warbler** in Slindon Woods and two on the Knepp Estate (Shipley) on the same day; **Tree Pipit** at Beachy Head also on the 3rd; three **Reed Warblers** at Rye Hbr on the 4th; **Hobby** at Pagham Hbr and **Pied Flycatcher** at Beachy Head on the 5th; **Nightingale** at Plumpton on the 6th; **Whinchat** at Rye Hbr on the 7th; **Grasshopper Warbler** at Hope Gap (Seaford) on the 8th; several **Little Terns** at coastal sites and **Lesser Whitethroat** at Pulborough Brooks and Rye Hbr on the 9th; **Common Swifts** at Worthing and Crowborough on the 16th; **Turtle Dove** at the University of Sussex on the 21st, when the first **Pomarine Skua** was recorded at Splash Point; finally in April, the first **Spotted Flycatcher** was near Arundel on the 27th, whilst the first **European Nightjar** was at Selsey Bill on 10 May.

Few scarcer species were found early in the first half of April: a **Cattle Egret** at Pett Level on the 2nd, a **Great White Egret** at Rye Hbr on the 7th and an **Alpine Swift** at West Beach (Littlehampton) on the 12th. There was, however, a completely unexpected rarity in the form of a male **Blue Rock Thrush** found at Belle Tout, Beachy Head, on the 6th, the individual that had spent the winter in Gloucestershire.

In the second half of April there were many more scarce birds. Another **Tundra Bean Goose** was found at Combe Haven on the 21st, although it may not have been a wild bird; there was a splendid summer-plumaged **Red-necked Grebe** at Arlington Res on the 17th and a **Cattle Egret** was at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 16th and 17th. Medmerry had a “purple patch” when a **Purple Heron** was found on the 20th, followed by two more that came in off the sea there in the company of a **Grey Heron** on the 22nd. A **Purple Heron** was then seen flying over Pulborough Brooks on the

23rd, this time with three **Grey Herons**. Three **Great White Egrets** were recorded: singles flying east offshore at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 23rd and at Portobello on the 27th, with another found at Pagham on 22nd. The third **Crane** of the year flew west over Bewl Water on 27 April, a **Stone-curlew** was a good find south of Arundel on the 30th; and two more **Black-winged Stilts** were found, this time on the margins of the River Adur near Lancing on the 24th.



Pomarine Skua, Splash Point, April 2017 (Mark Mallalieu)

Seawatching from the main sites in April produced rewards including an estimated 111 **Great Skuas**, as well as at least 76 **Pomarine** and 133 **Arctic Skuas**. A **Roseate Tern** flew east at Selsey Bill on the 17th and a **Balearic Shearwater** flew east with a **Manx Shearwater** off Splash Point on the 30th.

A **Hoopoe** was at Pagham Hbr on 21 and 22 Apr, whilst the only two **Wrynecks** of the spring were at Bexhill on 27 Apr and at Eastbourne on the 30th. Arlington Res hosted a **Red-rumped Swallow** on 27 and 28 April, giving many observers a chance to see it. **Wood Warblers** were found at six sites in April. The first was singing in the grounds of a hotel in Eastbourne on the 18th; the next was singing at Cuckmere Haven on the 21st; one was present briefly at Church Norton on the 22nd; the following day one was singing at Pulborough Brooks; two were seen and heard singing at Beachy Head on the 26th; and then another singing individual was at Woodingdean on the 29th. A most surprising discovery, certainly in terms of location, was a male **White-spotted Bluethroat** seen and photographed near Woods Mill (Small Dole) on the 19th. At Pagham Hbr, another good find was a “**Channel**” **Wagtail** (a hybrid between Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima* and Blue-headed Wagtail *M.f.flava*) on 17 Apr.

On 1 May, two **Red-necked Grebes** landed briefly on the sea off Selsey Bill before continuing eastwards. At this site a **Roseate Tern** flew east the same day, whilst on the 11th a **Long-tailed Skua** that had been seen off the Hampshire coast flew east and was then recorded at Splash Point two hours later. Another 94 **Pomarine Skuas** in May gave a spring total of 170. A **Puffin** flew east at Birling Gap on the 12th. Another **Purple Heron** was found at Pett Level on the 25th, whilst **Great White Egrets** flew east past Portobello on the 9th and again on the 26th, when there was one in the Seven Sisters CP, probably the same individual. Another **Crane** was tracked flying over Slinfold and then Small Dole on 2 May, with one more, the fifth for the year, flying east over Pevensey Levels on the 7th.

The rarest bird of prey in May was a **Red-footed Falcon** at Coldwaltham on the 16th. Migrant **Honey-buzzards** were at Offham Hanger (Arundel) on 21 May and at Patching the next day, with a third individual at Pett Level on the 25th and a fourth over East Dean on 2 Jun. Scarce waders included two **Temminck's Stints**, at Rye Hbr on the 1st and 7th and a **Kentish Plover** at Pagham Hbr on the 26th.

The second **Hoopoe** of the spring was at Icklesham between 1 and 3 May. A **Golden Oriole** was at Barcombe on 2 May and a flock of eight **Bee-eaters** flew west over Birling Gap on the 29th. A **Red-rumped Swallow** flew east at Hastings on the 22nd. A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was at Beachy Head on the late date of 9 May and another singing **Wood Warbler** was found, at Old Lodge (Ashdown Forest) on 23 May; it remained until 21 Jun, enabling many observers to enjoy this now very scarce species. A **Serin** was at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on the 8th, with another seen flying towards East Head from Hampshire on 1 Jun.

Quails were seen or heard at Oving on 22 May, Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 25 May, Bosham on 26 May, Steep Down (Lancing) on 29 May and 2 Jun, with another at The Burgh on 7 Jun.

Strong south-westerly winds from 6 to 8 Jun brought **Storm Petrels** to coastal sites, with accepted records from Selsey Bill on the 6th (one) and 8th (at least five); and from Splash Point (one) also on the 8th; at least two **Balearic Shearwaters** were recorded off Selsey Bill in these windy conditions, also on the 8th. Seawatching at Splash Point produced two **Great White Egrets** flying west offshore on the 8th. Three **Cattle Egrets** were in East Sussex on 13 Jun, and another **Great White Egret** was at Arundel WWT on the 1st. Not unexpectedly, more **Black-winged Stilts** were found, with one at Rye Hbr and two at The Midrips on 8 Jun. There was great excitement on 10 Jun when an **Elegant Tern** found earlier in Hampshire was relocated at Pagham Hbr. It remained until 20 Jun. Observers searching for it also found a **Roseate Tern** that remained in the area from 12 to 18 June.

July to September

The first half of July was often hot with generally light winds, but from the 20th there was frequent and sometimes heavy rainfall, accompanied by stronger winds. August was often cool, cloudy and wet, though with some warmer spells, including fine, hot weather during 27th to 29th. September was unsettled with frequent rain in the first half of the month. On the 13th there were very strong SW winds.

Little Egrets bred at nine sites, one more than in 2016, but 62 nests were counted, compared to 72 in 2016. It was a good year for **Honey-buzzards**, with five confirmed breeding pairs. Five pairs of **Goshawks** bred, continuing this species' spread across the county. **Marsh Harriers** definitely bred at one site and breeding was possible or probable at a further four. Two juvenile **Water Rails** were found at Steyning and Arundel WWT, welcome confirmation of breeding for a species now monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. One pair of **Stone-curlews** bred successfully; at least one other pair attempted to breed but was not successful. An impressive total of about 122 pairs of **Avocets** nested, another county record, with 68 pairs at Rye Hbr, 29 pairs at Medmerry and 25 pairs at Pett Level, though few, if any, young fledged at the latter site. At Rye Hbr, 240 pairs of **Sandwich Terns** fledged 79 young; at Pagham Hbr, up to 67 pairs had poor success due to predation. Also at Pagham Hbr, 21 pairs of **Little Terns** produced 17 young, whilst at Rye Hbr 15 pairs fledged at least six young. More than 200 pairs of **Common Terns** bred with mixed success, mainly at Rye and Pagham Harbours. Many breeding **Peregrines** were again successful, with at least 44 young fledging from 17 pairs. **Bearded Tits** bred at Rye Hbr, where at least eight pairs were seen with fledged young, as well as at Thorney Deepes and Pett Level. Surveys produced estimates of 88 **Woodlark** territories; between 222 and 282 singing **Cetti's Warblers**; and 39 **Dartford Warbler** territories, suggesting a gradual recovery in numbers. A survey of **Yellow Wagtails** in the low-lying areas in

the east of the county indicated a total of 50-60 pairs, very welcome news on this Red-listed species.

There were few records of scarcer species in July. **Quails** were at Falmer on the 2nd, Jury's Gap on the 13th and No Man's Land (Findon) on the 29th. A **Great White Egret** was in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 10th; a **Bee-eater** at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on the 11th; and a **Red-backed Shrike** at the Knepp Estate (Shipley) from 9-24 July. **White Storks** were noted at four sites from 13 Jul to 27 Aug and several wandering individuals or pairs were found in September (and October); none of these were considered likely to be wild birds.

More **Cattle Egrets** were found in August, with up to two at Pagham Hbr from the 1st to 20th, one at Thorney Deepes on the 6th; and up to three in the lower Cuckmere Valley from 14 Aug until 2 Sep. Evidence of return migration included two **Honey-buzzards** at Beachy Head on 26 Aug and one at Steyning on 29 Aug. An adult male **Montagu's Harrier** was at Cuckmere Haven on 25 Aug. A **White-winged Black Tern** initially found at Hayling Island in Hampshire was at East Head and then Medmerry from 14 until 17 Aug. A **Hoopoe** was at Cuckmere Haven between 24 and 26 Aug and there were **Wrynecks** at Rye Hbr on 5 Aug and at Seaford Head on 25 until 28 Aug. A **Red-backed Shrike** was found in one lucky observer's garden in Bognor Regis on 12 Aug. A **Wood Warbler** was trapped at Beachy Head on 13 Aug followed by an **Aquatic Warbler** trapped at Charleston Reedbed on 16 Aug. A **Melodious Warbler** at Beachy Head on the 24th was taken by a **Sparrowhawk** the next day. The last **Quail** of the year was at The Burgh on 24 Aug. There was a strong passage of **Yellow Wagtails** from late August that included 250 at Rye Hbr on the 25th and an exceptional count of 600 moving east at Climping Gap on the 29th.

A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** was at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 20 Sep (and again on 17 Oct). Seawatchers at Selsey Bill on 3 Sep recorded a **Balearic Shearwater** and two **Long-tailed Skuas**. Other scarce seabirds in September included a **Roseate Tern** at Pilsey Island on the 4th and a **Puffin** found dead on the shoreline at Brighton on the 15th. The largest flocks of **Spoonbills** appeared in September, with up to five at Pagham Hbr from the 26th and seven at Rye Hbr from 28 Sep until 3 Oct. Another **Cattle Egret** appeared, this time at Widewater (Lancing) on 18 Sep. **Great White Egrets** in the east of the county during September included two at Hastings on the 15th and at Rye Hbr two on 25th had increased to three by the next day. Elsewhere, one was at Pagham Hbr on 29 and 30 Sep. Departing **Honey-buzzards** continued to appear at Beachy Head in September, with singles on the 15th and 29th. September was a good month for scarce and rare waders. The highlight was a **Baird's Sandpiper** at Cuckmere Haven found on the 3rd and staying until the 6th. The supporting cast included up to two **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Pulborough Brooks from the 19th to 30th, a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Rye Hbr on the 19th and no less than four **Grey Phalaropes**, at Arlington Res on the 9th, Cuckmere Haven on the 11th, Medmerry on the 18th and again at Cuckmere Haven on the 23rd. A **Bee-eater** flew over Eastbourne on the 12th. Eight more **Wrynecks** were noted from the 2 Sep to 23 Sep from Brighton racecourse east to Rye Hbr.

A **Willow Warbler** at Cissbury on 30 Sep showed characteristics of the subspecies *Phylloscopus trochilus acredula*. The last **Wood Warbler** of the year was at Hodcombe on 16 Sep. There were three **Yellow-browed Warblers** in September, at Beachy Head on the 19th, at Chidham on the 28th and 29th and at Cuckmere Haven on the 30th. Among the commoner warblers, some large counts of **Blackcaps** included 750 on 9 Sep at Beachy Head.

Departing summer visitors included the last **Garganey** at Cuckmere Haven on the very early date of 11 Aug and the last **Nightjar** at Fletching on 3 Sep. Also in September, final records for the year included **Nightingale** at Pagham Hbr on the 9th; **Little Ringed Plover** at Bewl Water on the 14th; **Little Tern** at Pagham Hbr on the 18th; **Common Swifts** at Hastings and Rye Hbr on the 19th; **Turtle Dove** at Gatwick Airport on the 27th; and **Common Cuckoo** at Newhaven on the 28th.

October to December

October was dominated by south-westerly winds, bringing mild and often overcast conditions with little rain. There was a warmer period in the middle of the month and a much colder spell at the end, which brought ground frost in places. November was mainly mild but colder with some overnight frosts in the last week. There was a south-westerly gale on 22nd and 23rd. December started mild followed by a cold wintry spell mid-month, another milder period before Christmas and some colder days thereafter, before the month ended mild again. There were very strong SW winds on 7th and several days of strong southerly or SW winds later in the month.

The last reports of most remaining summer visitors were in October. These included **Pied Flycatchers** at Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks and Brooklands (Worthing) on the 2nd; **Tree Pipit** at Ladywell (Coombes) on the 4th; **Spotted Flycatcher** at Arundel on the 8th; **Sedge Warbler** at Pett Level on the 10th; **Garden Warbler** at The Mumbles (Steyning) on the 14th, when the last **Yellow Wagtail** was at Winchelsea Beach; **Grasshopper Warbler** at Pett Level on the 16th; **Reed Warbler** at Beachy Head and Pett Level on the 19th; **Lesser Whitethroat** at Pett Level on the 23rd; **Common Whitethroat** at Seaford Head on the 24th; **Sand Martin** at Beachy Head on the 26th; **Arctic Tern** at Chichester Hbr on the 27th, when there were also the last **Common Redstart** and **Willow Warbler**, both at Cuckmere Haven; and four **Common Terns** at Pett Level on the 29th, when the last **Hobby** was at Pulborough Brooks. A few species lingered into November, with the final records of **Osprey** over the University of Sussex and **Whinchat** at Flansham (Bognor Regis) on the 1st; **Northern Wheatear** at Goring Gap on the 4th; **House Martin** at Selsey Bill on the 6th; **Ring Ouzel** at Beachy Head on the 12th; and three **Barn Swallows** at Pulborough Brooks on the 25th.

A **Whooper Swan** was at Rye Hbr on 6 Oct followed by two on East Guldeford Level on the 18th. **Cattle Egrets** were found again in October, with one at Pagham Hbr on the 11th and one on Lewes Brooks from 27th until 28th. A county record of 19 **Great White Egrets** were within the Rye Hbr SSSI on 14 Nov. Other records in the period included singles at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 17 Oct and 15 Dec, Lewes Brooks on 1 Nov and Hastings on 2 Nov; up to three were at Darwell Res from 28 Oct to 26 Dec, one at nearby Netherfield on 11 Dec; and three at Medmerry on 28 Nov.

The last departing juvenile **Honey-buzzards** flew out to sea at Birling Gap on 3 Oct and at Seaford on 6 Oct. Another **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Pulborough Brooks from 25 Oct until 5 Nov. The last **Wryneck** of the year was at Peacehaven on 3 Oct. The rarest passerine of the autumn was a shrike in East Sussex from 25 to 27 Oct, accepted by BBRC as either a **Daurian** or **Turkestan Shrike**. Scarce passerines in the period included **Continental Coal Tits** at Peacehaven on 3 Oct and at Seaford Head on 23 Nov; a **Rose-coloured Starling** at Selsey East Beach from 12 Oct to 27 Oct; and a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 14 and 15 Oct. Another nine **Yellow-browed Warblers** were recorded in October with further individuals at Beachy Head on the 6th, 17th, 18th and 27th and another nearby at Birling Gap on the 31st. Elsewhere, there were singles at Sullington Warren on the 9th; Ladywell on the 14th to 17th (trapped); at Arundel WWT from the 15th to 17th; at Brighton on the 16th; and trapped at Streat on the 23rd. A **Water Pipit** was at Pagham Hbr on 31 Oct with up to eight at Crowhurst on five dates between 22 Oct and 10 Nov. Two **Lapland Buntings** at Rye Hbr on 6 Oct were followed by one at East Guldeford Level on 26 Nov and two there on 22 Dec.

The most remarkable ornithological event of the autumn was the invasion into Britain of **Hawfinches**. Unprecedented numbers were seen in Sussex. The first were at Rewell Wood (Arundel), where 26 were seen on 13 Oct and thereafter there were over 300 records across the county, mostly inland, up to the end of the year. The largest counts were of 150 near Netherfield on 12 Nov, 120 at Heyshott Down on 30 Dec, 60 at Rewell Wood on 19 Nov, plus many further reports of flocks of up to 55.



Red-breasted Flycatcher, Beachy Head, October 2017 (Roger & Liz Charlwood)

Among commoner species, there was a spectacular autumn passage of **Woodpegeons**, with 18,000 W at Plummers Plain on 28 Oct, 19,000 W at Barcombe Cross in 45 minutes on 4 Nov and 18,500 SE at Pett Level on 6 Nov. There was also a huge passage of **Goldfinches**, mainly moving east in October, with over 22,000 being recorded. Peaks counts were 1969 at Hastings on 8 Oct and 1958 at Beachy Head in 2½ hrs on 19 Oct.

During November and December scarcer species were mainly those that could be predicted at this season. Much less expected was a long-staying **Temminck's Stint** at Pulborough Brooks from 25 Nov into 2018. A **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** was in Pagham Hbr from 6 to 14 Nov and singles flew east at Selsey Bill on 3 Dec and west at Goring Gap on 8 Dec. **Whooper Swans** appeared again: one at Kneppmill Pond on 13 Dec and then two more at Horse Eye Level on 28 Dec. The only **Glossy Ibis** of the year was at Medmerry from 14 until 26 Nov. There were **Red-necked Grebes** at Worthing on 15 Nov and off Goring Gap from 2 until 8 Dec; one at Selsey Bill on 23 Nov that was seen on later dates to the end of the year; at East Head on 5 Dec; and at Widewater on 20 Dec. A juvenile **Crane** was at Horse Eye Level on 8 and 9 Nov. Two **Glaucous Gulls** were found, at Eastbourne on 29 Nov and 1 Dec; and in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 16 Dec, whilst on 17 Dec **Iceland Gulls** were at Warnham LNR, Newhaven Hbr and Arlington Res. An impressive effort was made to document **Caspian Gulls**, especially in the Lower Cuckmere valley in November and December, with up to 20 or more individuals of all age classes being found at this site and in Newhaven Hbr.

A **Little Auk** flew west at Selsey Bill on 2 Dec, though the star auk attraction was a **Black Guillemot** found in Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on 28 Nov that was still present at the end of the year. Another **Black Guillemot** was at Elmer Rocks on 1 Dec. A count of 3000 **Knot** at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 6 Nov was the highest of the year. Most unexpected were records of wintering **Lesser Whitethroats** in December: in Worthing from the 21st and Ringmer from the 22nd, both birds remaining into 2018. A spectacular sight at the end of the year was the flock of 700 **Linnets** at Medmerry on 19 Dec, whilst the roost of **Reed Buntings** at Weir Wood Res reached 235 on the 29th.



Wood Warbler, Beachy Head, September 2017 (Roger & Liz Charlwood)

Classified Records for 2017

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 301 - 304.

The Category A and C species are listed in the order published in the ninth edition of the British List announced by the BOU in December 2017 follows the International Ornithological Union's (IOU) IOC World Bird List (version 7.3).

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 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	49	69	135	194	191	72	39	55	83	91	66	62	1106
Worthing	13	10	16	44	30	3	3	3	11	16	13	29	190
Telscombe Cliffs	43	21	24	35	32	11	24	14	18	26	18	25	290
Splash Point (Seaford)	8	11	30	62	56	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	173
Birling Gap	8	13	25	44	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	106

Wetland Bird Survey records

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, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and 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 2017 the priority core count dates were 15 Jan, 12 Feb, 12 Mar, 9 Apr, 14 May, 11 Jun, 23 Jul, 13 Aug, 10 Sep, 8 Oct, 19 Nov and 10 Dec.

In the WeBS' tables, "nc" signifies that the site was not visited or the species was not counted 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 are 5% or more of the sum of the county totals for the same January to March and September to December counts. The tables also show a 10-year average county total for each month to allow readers to place the current year's counts in context.

Breeding Bird Survey data

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

Garden BirdWatch records

Garden BirdWatch (GBW) is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and funded through the annual subscription paid by its participants. The aim is to monitor the changing fortunes of birds and other garden wildlife through its network of 'citizen scientists'. BTO Garden BirdWatch was launched in autumn 1994 in readiness for recording to begin in January 1995. Participants are asked to record the birds and other wildlife using their gardens, at similar times each week, recording only species actively using the garden and not birds seen from the garden in flight. Participants record the maximum number of individuals of each species seen together at one point in time during the recording period.

RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch

This survey RSPB has been running since 1979 and across the country involves nearly half a million participants. Observers are asked to record the maximum number of each species seen using the garden during a one hour period on a set weekend usually at the end of January. The results are expressed as a mean number of birds seen in each garden and the percentage of gardens in which each species is recorded. Only the common garden species are reported in this report.

Database report

Each species account in the systematic list is written by an individual using the records abstracted from the society's CoBRA2 (County Bird Recording Application) on-line database. As usual the dataset is a complex mixture of records received from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), from a miscellany of recording systems used by various groups and nature reserves and from individual observers.

Once again a record number of observations have been entered into the database with the total for 2017 being 320,289 records; this being a rise of just 0.9% on the total for 2016 after including late arriving records. The upward trend, shown graphically in the 2016 Sussex Bird Report therefore continues.

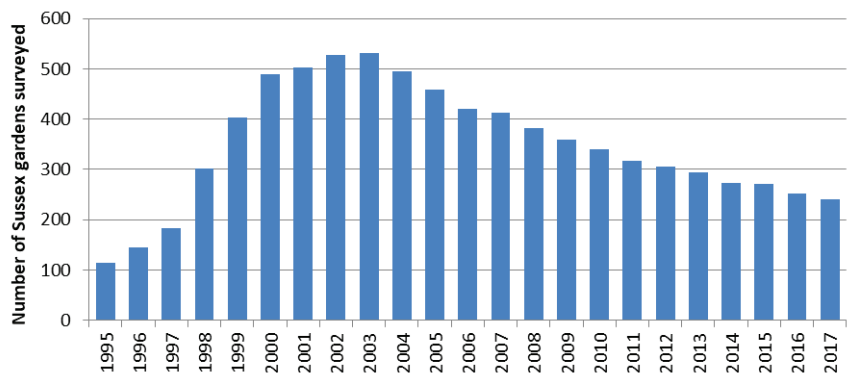
On-line recording continues to provide most records accounting for nearly 79% in 2017, a similar portion to 2016, and records from other databases comprised 9%. The number of records from each of the main on-line recording systems and largest contributing county databases are shown in the table below.

Online source	Records	Other source	Records
BTO BirdTrack data	184,184	Horsham District Council Reserves	15,838
BTO Garden Bird Watch	17,901	Ashdown Forest Bird Group	10,315
Cornell University eBird	16,019	RSPB Reserves	7419
WeBS on-line	12,563	Weir Wood Reservoir Group	4498
Breeding Bird Survey Data	9315	Rye Harbour LNR Records	3787
Sussex Winter Bird Survey (via Birdtrack)	7363	Selsey Bill Seawatch Log	3489
iRecord	5433	WWT Arundel Reserve	2426

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. For only the second year the observations from the BTO's Garden Bird Watch (GBW) have been made available in time to be included in the species summaries in this report and the addition of these records has clearly augmented the information for many common and widespread species which frequent gardens. Perhaps the most obvious difference is in the number of tetrads from which various species are recorded; a few examples are shown in the table below.

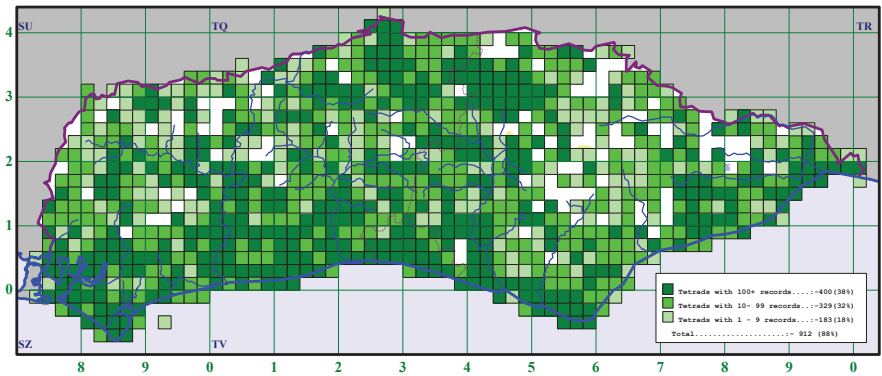
	Without GBW	All records	Difference	Percentage of total
Common Pheasant	446	470	24	5%
Great Spotted Woodpecker	460	533	73	14%
Blue Tit	572	631	59	9%
Blackcap	440	487	47	10%
Blackbird	591	645	54	8%
Robin	597	655	58	9%
Greenfinch	375	451	76	17%
Goldfinch	542	606	64	11%

With 240 gardens surveyed in 2017 the GBW was the organised survey with the greatest number of participants but coverage in the county during the year, in line with the national trend, had declined to about half the number of surveyed gardens since the peak during the early years of this century. This is clearly shown in the figure below.



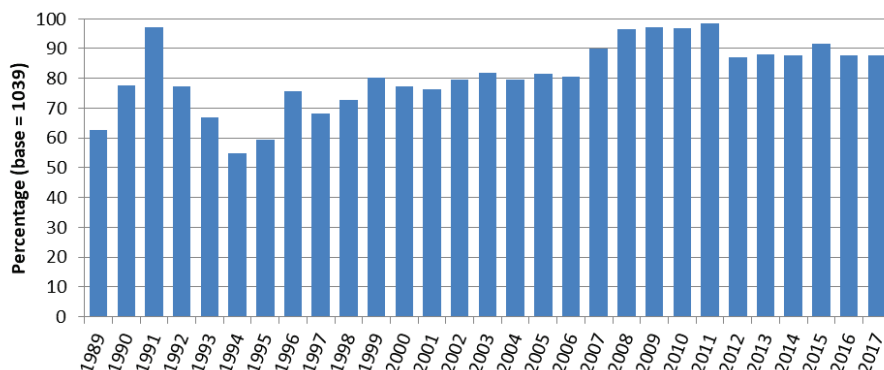
Once again the species accounts include records gathered by Cornell University's eBird system, a world-wide recording system which appears to be gaining in popularity in Sussex. The 2017 dataset recognises 1395 observers, an increase of nearly 30% from 2016, and this excludes contributors to GBW who have not submitted records through another source. Nearly 60 observers contributed between 1000 and 8000 records whilst, at the other end of the spectrum 246 observers supplied a single record. As usual all observers are acknowledged in the appropriate section of this report.

The records during the year came from 1824 sites with most, as expected, coming from the well watched locations such as Chichester Hbr (8498), Pagham Hbr (21,373), Pulborough Brooks (21,974), Ashdown Forest (19,509), Pett Level (13,737) and Rye Hbr (16,914). Once again there was excellent coverage of the county with 912 (87.7%) tetrads with at least one record with a grid reference at tetrad or finer resolution. The distribution map below, drawn with the same scales as previous years, shows the usual patterns of superb coverage in coastal areas, river valleys and levels and Ashdown Forest. Throughout the systematic list reference is made to the number of tetrads in which some of the more widespread species have been recorded; the fact that not all of the county's tetrads have been visited, and not all these for detailed recording, needs to be considered whilst reading these statements.



The number of records received for 2017 in each tetrad in Sussex. Dark green symbol, >100 records; mid-green symbol, 10-99 records; and pale green symbol, 1-9 records.

Several historic datasets have recently been added to the database and it is revealing to see if the 'coverage' of recording in the county has changed much over the years since the society started computerising current records in 1989. The chart below shows this, and clearly the years with 'Atlas' fieldwork exceeded 90%. A steady rise occurred from 1994 until the 2008 -11 Atlas since which, despite an increase in the number of records, the county coverage has reached a plateau. Other taxa groups, and even some other county ornithological societies, would envy such annual coverage.



Over the decades the society has promoted and encouraged observers to record in more detail the precise grid reference for a record and complete a field of breeding status, particularly during the breeding season. These aspects of recording are of great 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 65% 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 CoBRA2 will find a more detailed grid reference entered into the text field from any recording system.

Analysis by grid reference format	Records	Percentage
Records with blank grid reference	22713	7.1
Records with 10K grid reference	22376	7.0
Records with tetrad grid reference	66761	20.8
Records with 1K grid reference	172790	53.9
Records with 100m grid reference	35647	11.1

The recording of breeding status remains low as revealed in the table below. However, these low figures are compounded by the fact that several recording systems and surveys do not have the appropriate field for recording breeding status but with Birdtrack this is an easy aspect to log. The table below shows only a small increase in the recording of breeding status when only Birdtrack sourced records are reviewed.

Like recent years the common, widespread and easily detected species were most recorded and once again the top five species were Woodpigeon, Robin, Blackbird, Carrion Crow and Blue Tit each with more than 8,000 records. The species summary and analysis produced by CoBRA2 undoubtedly assists the authors to distil this mass of data into a short account for publishing in this report.

20 Classified records for 2017

Year	No. of records (Apr–Jul)	Confirmed (%)	Probable (%)	Possible (%)	% with breeding status
2010	96,476	7.1	13.8	18.4	39.3
2011	102,704	8.2	12.4	14.0	34.6
2012	73,531	2.6	6.3	7.8	16.7
2013	76,189	2.0	4.4	8.9	15.2
2014	102,446	2.3	5.0	8.3	15.6
2015	120,216	2.3	4.8	7.2	14.3
2016	120,686	2.1	5.2	8.1	15.4
2017	121,647	2.5	5.2	8.2	15.9
2017 BirdTrack only	66,320	3.4	6.0	8.9	18.2

As usual recording throughout the year was not constant, as shown in the table below. The picture is somewhat distorted by the inclusion of GBW records most of which are quarterly figures.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of records	33014	23701	26631	42440	30925	25989	22293	22547	22614	27113	21153	21868
% of records	10.3	7.4	8.3	13.3	9.7	8.1	7.0	7.0	7.1	8.5	6.6	6.8

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. Once again for 2017 there was no systematic capture of postings on the society’s 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, June 2018]

Survey coverage.

Throughout this report there are references to the number of surveyed areas in which a species was recorded and the percentage shown is based on the following. In 2017 records were received from a total of 912 (88%) of the county’s 1039 tetrads. There were reports from 240 different gardens participating in the BTO Garden BirdWatch; 172 1-km squares were surveyed for the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and in the Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) 131 1-km squares were surveyed in the January/February period and 161 in November/December. A total of 127 1-km squares were surveyed for the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI) of which 87 were in Sussex and 40 in Hampshire.

Distribution maps

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

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



Green Woodpecker, Ashburnham, August 2017 (Chris Hobden)

Brent Goose*Branta bernicla*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	15484	13010	8828	36	14	8	10	14	71	2308	11179	10480
Chichester Hbr	13058	10521	7599	17	14	8	10	14	71	2242	9491	7730
Pagham Hbr	2032	2306	1174	12	-	-	-	-	-	42	1387	2506
Average county total 2007-2016	12516	13369	8175	67	14	10	7	8	294	4594	8907	10020

The WeBS counts were slightly down on the last couple of years, but generally in line with the ten-year average, with the January total of 13,058 in Chichester Hbr being the highest for this area for the year. Significant counts additional to the WeBS were 2500 in Pagham Hbr on 11 Jan, 2560 there on 28 Feb and, in the second half year, 1000 in Chichester Hbr on 25 Sep, 2000 at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 15 Oct, 1000 in Pagham Hbr on the 31st and 2620 in Pagham Hbr on 24 Nov. Up to 20 birds were around Pett Level and Rye Hbr and a further six birds were at Scotney GP during January.

Spring passage began quite early this year; on 15 Feb observers at Splash Point (Seaford) recorded 395 E and smaller numbers were recorded further west. Coastal passage continued through the month and two inland records involved a nocturnal flock heard moving north over Troutbeck (Eridge) on the 18th and one at Pulborough Brooks two days later. There was a steady eastwards movement during March; the 28th was the peak day with 2045 E past Beachy Head, 1878 E past Splash Point and 644 E past Selsey Bill. The last day of significant migration was 9 Apr, when 878 E passed Splash Point; thereafter numbers were very low. Further inland lone birds were seen at Arundel on 20 Apr and on the R Adur at Coombes on 26 Apr.

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

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr/May		Sept/Oct		Nov		Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	114	98	189	88	2839	139	994	13	12	2220	51	104	27	86
Worthing	38	12	270	1	200	1	556	-	2	236	14	49	8	82
Telscombe Cliffs	73	9	256	-	1116	2	387	-	-	171	12	46	6	22
Splash Point	123	-	604	-	3836	-	1174	-	nc	nc	-	-	nc	nc
Beachy Head	31	-	575	-	3154	-	1096	-	nc	nc	nc-	nc	-	-

The first returning birds, four of them, were seen at Pilsey Sands on 12 Sep, followed by 15 in Pagham Hbr on the 18th. Numbers then built up quickly to the extent that 1000 were counted in Chichester Hbr on the 25th. Inland, birds were heard, but not seen, over Ashdown Forest on 25 Sep.

There were a few wintering birds away from the western harbours; these included regular flocks at Medmerry and Climping, with a peaks of 172 on 17 Dec and 260 on 25 Nov respectively, one to three birds at Cuckmere Haven during November and December and up to 29 in the Rye Bay area

There were several records of Pale-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. hrota*. During the first winter period there were three in Pagham Hbr on 1 Jan, one at Bosham (Chichester Hbr) on 3 Feb and two at Medmerry on 19 Mar. Seven flew east with flocks of the dark-bellied form at Birling Gap on 28 Mar and at Selsey Bill on 1 Apr, 9 Apr, 1 May (2) and 10 May (2). An adult was at Pilsey Sands on 20

Sep and 17 Oct, one was in Pagham Hbr from 6 to 14 Nov, 1 flew E past Selsey Bill on 3 Dec and one flew W past Goring Gap on 8 Dec. There were no records of Black Brant *B. b. nigricans*. [AH]

Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Common introduced resident and partial migrant.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1724	1592	797	516	371	457	672	1576	3544	1984	3043	3399
Arun Valley	636	432	107	55	109	28	28	48	963	219	827	863
Cuckmere Haven	222	110	110	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	163	300	358	1280
Wadhurst Park Estate	54	100	69	30	nc	8	178	109	293	60	160	128
Pevensey Levels	138	182	40	44	27	4	-	27	13	13	397	28
Bewl Water	91	46	74	nc	nc	nc	nc	228	nc	228	320	350
Average county total 2007-2016	2409	1351	706	360	304	397	568	1616	1581	2175	2321	2659

The WeBS during the year produced counts that were just below the ten-year average, but still suggested a widespread and fairly stable population. The highest non-WeBS counts in the first winter period were 1010 at Cuckmere Haven on 13 Mar, and 350 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Jan, the only other site where 200 was exceeded. There were reports from all the main seawatching sites in March and April, but the total still only equated to 15 birds heading east and 14 west. During the early year SWBS, they were encountered in only 13 (10%) of 1-km squares surveyed.

During the BBS, Canada Geese were encountered in 71 (21%) of the 338 surveys and in 58 (34%) of the 172 squares studied. Breeding was confirmed from 35 tetrads and was probable in a further 12. Multiple pairs were recorded only at Medmerry, Arundel WWT and Rye Hbr.

Large post-breeding flocks were recorded at a number of locations, with Medmerry, Arundel WWT, Pulborough Brooks, Arlington Res and Cuckmere Haven all holding counts in excess of 500 birds, with the peak being 1150 at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Sep. Observers at this latter site recorded 1200 on 20 Dec, the highest count of the year, whilst at least ten other sites held at least 200 birds on various dates. During the later year SWBS, they were encountered in only 12 (7.5%) of 161 1-km squares surveyed. [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.

During both winter periods the largest numbers were recorded in the feral flocks at Barcombe Res and Scotney GP. At Barcombe Res the records were between 2 Jan and 13 Feb with a maximum of 60 on the last date and again from 14 Aug until 11 Dec with a peak of 75 on the first date, whilst at Scotney GP the flock was observed until 28 Mar and after 16 Aug with peaks of 180 on 12 Feb and 175 on 14 Sep. Elsewhere during the first winter period there were six on Pett Level from 5 to 10 Jan, up to 18 at Cuckmere Haven on 23 dates between 7 Jan and 13 Mar, nine at Bewl Water on 25 Jan and 55 at Rye Hbr on 25 Feb. At least some of these probably involved birds from previously mentioned flocks. On 1 Feb two circled Birling Gap in the fog; this was only the 6th record for Beachy Head since 1960.

Fifty one at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) on 31 Jul were considered to be the Barcombe Res

birds. There were several potentially wild birds in West Sussex in the autumn, including one that appeared at the same time as a Pale-bellied Brent Goose among the Brent Geese in Pagham Hbr on 7 Nov, with possibly the same bird in Chichester Hbr on 27 and 28 Dec, and a group of six that remained unobtrusively at Medmerry from 12 Dec into the early New Year. Three or four birds were seen on a number of occasions in Cuckmere Haven from 15 Nov until the year's end, but their proximity to the feral flocks does not help their credentials. [AH]

Greylag Goose

Anser anser

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

The monthly WeBS counts at principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1659	1144	361	358	285	550	1013	2022	1230	1637	1152	523
Arun Valley	20	65	67	47	27	16	16	140	364	476	222	38
Upper Adur Levels	14	322	55	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	5	-
Ardingly Res	150	70	45	-	2	40	60	nc	150	130	320	20
Weir Wood Res	144	10	-	1	-	67	72	39	62	3	156	170
Rye Bay	1116	433	87	156	187	169	548	1256	38	514	254	193
Average county total 2007-16	693	525	336	186	225	364	521	1326	998	944	1003	745

The WeBS counts show that this species continues to consolidate in the county, with the totals for every month, bar December, exceeding the 10-year average. The biggest first winter period count in East Sussex was 800 birds at Scotney GP on 16 Jan, whilst in West Sussex the largest count was of 350 at Brighthams Fm (Partridge Green) on 4 Feb. The only records from seawatching sites this year were 1 E and 3 W at Selsey Bill on 19 and 24 Apr respectively.

During the BBS, Greylag Geese were encountered in 31 (9.1%) of the 338 surveys and in 27 (16%) of the 172 squares studied. Breeding was confirmed from 22 tetrads across the breadth of the county, and was probable in a further two; all were of single pairs except at Arundel WWT where there were five pairs, Petworth Park and Henfield Levels with three each and Rye Hbr with a total of 16 pairs.

As is typical, post-breeding flocks began to assemble at traditional sites from late July onwards; significant gatherings included c.1000 at Scotney GP on 16 Aug, c.500 at Pulborough Brooks on 2 and 3 Sep and 350 at Rye Hbr on 7 Sep. These three sites held the biggest flocks later in the autumn, the largest of which was 458 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Oct. Elsewhere 300 were seen at Pett Level on several dates and at Ardingly Res 320 were counted on 15 Nov. [AH]

Taiga Bean Goose

Anser fabalis

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

A flock of five birds lingered at Pett Level from 3-21 Jan (KH, RKH, RS, *et al*), with four remaining until the 22nd. Five at nearby Brede Levels on 15 Jan (AP) were presumably the same.

In 2016, the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) reviewed the taxonomic authority it uses, and adopted the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) taxonomy with effect from 1 January

2018. One of the consequences of this change is the 'splitting' of Bean Goose into two full species: Tundra and Taiga Bean Goose.

There are two populations of Taiga Bean Geese wintering in the UK, one in SW Scotland and the other in the Yare Valley in Norfolk. In Sussex, Taiga Bean Goose has always been the rarer of the two species with just eight records totalling 46 individuals and none since 2011. [PJ]

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

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

The only records for the year comprised two parties in January; four on Pett Level from the 3rd to the 22nd (MRE, AJK, *et al*), and another four (possibly up to six) at Scotney GP from the 17th to the 24th (MJCa, *et al.*). [AH]

Tundra Bean Goose

Anser serrirostris

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

2017 was a good year for this species, with five accepted records during the first winter period totalling 14 birds. In January there were four at Scotney GP from the 3rd to 24th (AP *et al*) and five at Pulborough Brooks from the 27th to 4 Feb (ARK *et al*). One at Horse Eye Level from 19 Feb to 4 Mar (CFB) was followed by three with feral Greylag Geese at Scotney GP on 6 Mar (MJCa) and a late bird of possibly dubious origin, also with Greylag Geese, at Combe Haven on 21 Apr (ASG). [PJ]

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

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

The year started well, with the previous December's flock of 13 on Amberley Wild Brooks remaining until 4 Jan. Regular double figure counts were recorded in the Rye Bay area throughout the first winter period, with peaks of 60 at Pett Level on 8 Jan, 36 on 16 Jan, 48 on 24 Feb and 50 on 4 Mar.

Observers at Cuckmere Haven were also well rewarded; after one on 18 Jan there were regular double-figure counts in February with up to 32 on the 15th and a last report (of 16) on the 26th.

Away from these sites, records were more typically few, with two birds in Pagham Hbr on 5 and 6 Jan, one at Pulborough Brooks between 27 and 29 Jan, three on Beeding Brooks on 28 and 29 Jan, two first winters at Brighthams Fm (Partridge Green) on 4 Feb, five on Lewes Brooks on 13 Feb and three records from Pevensey Levels of three birds on 15 Jan, 15 on 3 Feb and 20 on the 22nd.

The few remaining reports for the period came from Pett Level, including 50 on 4 Mar, two birds on the 12th and single individuals on the 13th and, finally, the 15th.

The only birds in the second half of the year were two at Pett Level on 10, 12 and 28 Dec. [AH]

Mute Swan*Cygnus olor*

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

Mute Swans are one of our most resident species and were recorded in 166 tetrads (18%) this year, which is just six 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	501	503	415	304	317	381	384	333	498	528	531	489
Chichester Hbr	142	139	86	54	133	126	134	97	220	157	284	222
Arun Valley (S of Arundel)	59	72	54	62	15	18	25	26	28	12	8	9
Arun Valley (N of Arundel)	38	22	41	41	45	41	41	32	49	50	51	37
Upper Adur Levels	16	49	46	6	20	9	17	13	18	55	33	11
Eastbourne Lakes	36	39	43	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	23	28	20	35
Pevensey Levels	29	51	40	44	24	23	24	21	42	30	32	24
Rye Bay	56	36	32	43	25	79	55	35	22	102	29	45
Average county total 2007-2016	592	541	503	393	470	472	439	461	587	607	661	639

County totals, as in 2016, were lower in all months than the 10-year averages. However, while totals overall were broadly similar to 2016, the distribution was notably different with numbers in Chichester Hbr in particular in the first quarter and in September notably higher with comparable reductions elsewhere at West Sussex sites.

Notable first winter period counts in addition to the WeBS included 70 at Jury's Gap (Rye Bay) on 7 Jan, 92 at East Guldeford Level on 14 Jan and 93 there on the 31st and 42 at Princes Park (Eastbourne) on 9 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 48 tetrads, which is 14 more than last year, and was probable in a further five tetrads. Nesting was first noted on 19 Mar and fledged young on 18 May. Post-breeding aggregations in summer were, as usual, generally largest in Fishbourne Channel, with non-WeBS counts of 142 there on 4 Jun and 124 on 17 Jul.

In the second winter period the only notable count additional to the WeBS was 50 at Scotney GP on 5 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	45	11	-	-	-	-
Arun Valley (Arundel-Lhampton)		11	-	-	-	-
Arun Valley N of Arundel	31	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	14	-	-	-	-	-
Average county total 2007-2016	16	12	0	0	0	9

Numbers in January were higher than last year, but it is likely that this was due to the colder than average weather conditions during this time rather than to an increase in the population.

The highest count in the Arun Valley was 22 seen at various sites on five dates. Bewick's Swans were recorded on 40 days in January and February in the Arun Valley. Conversely, this species was recorded on only four dates in East Sussex; three at Pett Level on 5 Jan, 14 during the WeBS at Scotney GP on 16 Jan, two at Camber on 22 Jan and four at Pevensy Levels on 15 Feb. The last record from the Arun Valley was of 14 on 26 Feb and the last of the first winter period were five at Henfield Levels on 2 and 3 Mar.

Numbers in the second winter period were very low and there were very few records. The first returning birds were three at Cedar Fm (Flimwell) on 12 Nov and the only others were three at Offham (Arun Valley) on 5 Dec, five at Henfield on 30 Dec and one at the Knepp Estate (Shipley) the same day. [JC]

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

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

After a blank year in 2016, there were four records totalling six birds, all in the second winter period. The first was at Rye Hbr on 6 Oct (BJY) followed by two at East Guldeford Level on 18 Oct (AP), one at Kneppmill Pond on 13 Dec (CM, JM) and two on Horse Eye Level on 28 Dec (CFB, JJE, MP *et al.*). All were adults. [PJ]

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiaca

Scarce introduced resident; bred for 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	27	14	24	27	14	48	40	71	25	60	51	19
Burton & Chingford Pond	3	1	nc	2	1	-	-	-	-	4	3	2
Arun Valley N of Arundel	-	-	-	4	4	10	10	9	7	5	-	-
Kneppmill Pond	4	2	5	2	2	4	-	8	9	22	10	4
Ifield MP	2	nc	4	4	4	5	-	3	-	3	3	5
Rye Bay	16	-	2	2	2	-	13	15	7	14	31	-
Average county total 2007-2016	8	7	5	8	8	9	12	13	15	8	9	9

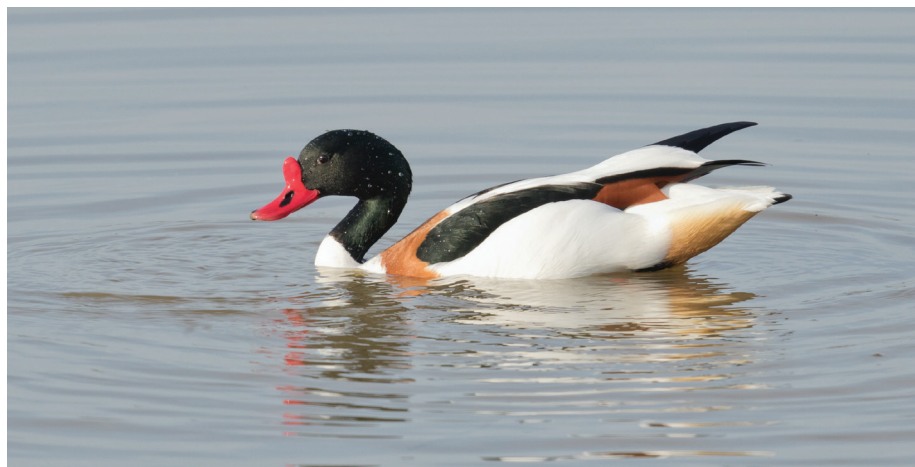
Birds were seen in 60 (6.6%) tetrads, a record, as is shown in the following table:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of tetrads	17	22	38	35	30	33	40	52	44	60

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads and was probable in a further two, the best breeding season in the county to date which, with the record number of tetrads, suggests that this species is expanding both range and numbers in the county. Two birds seen passing east at Birling Gap on 11 Mar was only the third record for Beachy Head.

During the BBS (in which this species is not often encountered) a total of 20 was recorded from seven (2.0%) of the 338 surveys, with a maximum count of seven on 11 Apr at Petworth Park. The earliest record of successful breeding was a pair with 11 goslings at Worth Park (Crawley) on 27 Mar. Successful breeding was also recorded at Benbow Pond (Cowdray Park), Petworth Park, Pulborough Brooks, Knepp Estate (two broods), Iford Brooks and Rye Hbr.

In the summer, 35 at Petworth Park on 8 Aug was the year's highest count at a single site, contributing to a very high August WeBS total of 71. A total of 15 at Weir Wood Res on 26 Sep was a site record, and 30 at Scotney GP on 1 Nov was exceptional, emphasising the growing numbers to be found across the county. [AT]



Shelduck, Pulborough Brooks, March 2017 (Gary Faulkner)

Common Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	979	1083	804	486	296	240	138	38	32	118	634	871
Chichester Hbr	499	453	316	148	63	74	8	4	21	22	275	520
Medmerry	34	48	67	37	26	54	28	9	3	47	132	65
Pagham Hbr	361	451	275	145	73	11	13	10	1	8	145	216
Rye Bay	70	58	87	116	90	72	62	15	7	39	60	50
Average county total 2007-2016	882	857	735	437	314	230	89	48	53	84	328	635

It was an encouraging year for the species, with the WeBS count in January the highest for that month since 2011, and the count in February the first over 1000 in any month since 2013. The year's highest count from a single site was 448 at Pagham Hbr on 12 Feb. Numbers then remained high throughout the first half of the year.

Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads and was probable in a further five. The first broods of ducklings were noted at East Guldeford on 14 May; other broods were noted at Chichester Hbr, Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, the Arun Valley (including Offham, Arundel and Pulborough Brooks), Pett Level and Rye Hbr. There were no breeding records from the lower Cuckmere Valley.

In the second winter period, the November WeBS count of 634 was the highest since 1999, and numbers increased further in December when they were a third higher than the average for the previous ten years.

As usual, small numbers were logged passing seawatching sites, mainly in spring, with double figure counts of 26 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on 30 Apr, and 37 W at Worthing on 2 Dec. [AT]

Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Scarce introduced resident.

There were records from 61 (6.7%) tetrads during the year, slightly down on the 67 in 2016. However, establishing if there is any population trend is very difficult for what is an elusive duck found mainly in under-watched parts of the county. The highest counts of the year were 61 at Cocking on 8 Feb and, at Weir Wood Res, 34 on 25 Jun, which remains the most reliable place in the county to see this species in any numbers.

During the BBS, Mandarins were recorded in seven (2%) of the 338 surveys. Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads and was probable in a further six.

Mandarin Ducks were most often encountered at Pulborough Brooks, Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res. Away from these Arun Valley and Wealden heartlands, a count of 30 at Poling Fishing Lake on 23 Jul was notable as was 30 at Powdermill Res on 15 Dec. Elsewhere, one was at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 18 Feb, up to three were seen at Birdham Pool (Chichester Hbr) in April, November and December, three were noted at Beckley in April, two at Binsted in May and one was seen on 13 Apr, 1 May and 18 Nov in the Pagham Hbr and Medmerry area. [AT]

Garganey

Spatula querquedula

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

The species was recorded in only 18 (2.0%) tetrads, most of which were coastal or near coastal, the exceptions being at Pulborough Brooks, Arundel WWT, Streat (Plumpton) and Crowhurst. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Monthly minima	14	15	7	1	-	3
No. of sites	8	10	3	1	-	2

The first spring migrant (unsexed) was noted at Rye Hbr on 10 Mar (one day earlier than the 10-year average date and 17 days earlier than in 2016), followed by a male at Pulborough Brooks and 2 E at Splash Point (Seaford) the next day. Also in March a drake was seen at Pett Level from the 12th to 16th, a drake at Arundel WWT on the 25th (which was there until at least 1 Apr) and three (two ducks and one drake) at Crowhurst on the 26th. A male and two females were seen at Bexhill on the 28th and, finally, a single bird was at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th. This latter was joined by another on 4 Apr, presumably a female, as a pair was recorded there on the 12th. Other records in April involved birds at Medmerry on the 7th (2), Streat on the 12th (2), a drake at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 16th and at nearby Shinewater Lake on the 17th, 2 E (a pair) past Selsey Bill on the 19th which may have been the same as the pair plus a female at Pagham Hbr on the 19th, Fairlight on the 23rd (1) and, finally, two males and a female at Pett Level on the 24th.

In May, a single male was seen at Cuckmere Haven on the 4th to 7th, one was at Pett Level on the 10th with two males there on the 14th and 3 E passed Selsey Bill on the 11th. The only June record was of one at Pett Level on the 3rd, 5th and 18th. The final records for the year were two at Rye Hbr on 4

Aug and one at Cuckmere Haven on the 11th, rather earlier than the 10-year average departure date (2 Oct). There were no records of actual or attempted breeding. [JAH]

Shoveler

Spatula clypeata

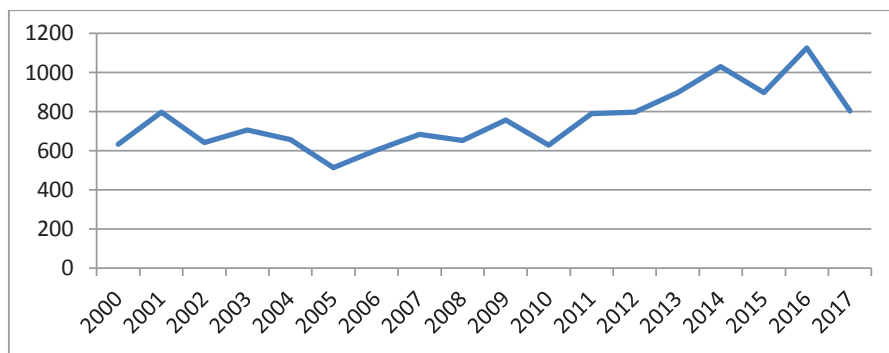
Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder, common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Shovelers were recorded in 71 (7.8%) tetrads, with slightly more tetrads in West Sussex than in East Sussex. 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	711	803	453	131	18	2	2	34	39	285	403	573
Medmerry	11	9	8	1	-	-	-	-	-	74	50	30
Chichester GP	34	152	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	Nc	124	82	237
Arun Valley N of Arundel	84	67	157	23	9	2	2	12	7	18	80	51
Barcombe Res	13	3	53	27	-	-	-	4	9	-	46	75
Eastbourne Lakes	141	112	20	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	9	2	81
Rye Bay	365	413	210	61	4	-	-	18	3	31	98	72
Average county total 2007-2016	738	732	461	152	24	20	16	35	129	263	504	661

The totals at Rye Bay in January, February and March exceeded the 1% national threshold number of 180.

Unlike some other waterfowl species (which have declined in abundance this century), peak annual counts of Shovelers have shown, overall, a steady (if fluctuating) increase, as shown below.



Peak annual counts of Shoveler, 2000 - 2017

Monthly totals were generally similar to the 10-year averages with the exception of a smaller number in September. Significant counts additional to the WeBS table were as follows: in January, 200 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 26th, 160 at Pett Level on the 22th, 125 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on the 20th and 122 at Rye Hbr on the 23rd. On 19 Feb 200 were at Pulborough Brooks and 100 were still there on 19 Mar.

Numbers declined through April, particularly in West Sussex. Numbers summering were generally very low; sites in the Arun Valley were particularly favoured although numbers here generally did not exceed eight.

Breeding was confirmed or probable at only two sites: at Arundel WWT a female with five ducklings was seen on 30 Apr and at Pett Level there were about 30 pairs, although the breeding season was described as disastrous there, so it is unlikely many young were produced. Breeding was not suspected at either Chichester GP or Rye Hbr despite there being 11 individuals present at the latter site in early May.

The first noticeable increase in numbers occurred in early August when 14 were noted at Rye Hbr while at Pulborough Brooks ten on the 11th had increased to 18 by the 24th and 30 by 2 Sep. The next significant count was of 39 at Rye Hbr on 21 Sep. But in October numbers increased significantly, from the 8th when 74 were noted at Medmerry followed by 123 at Chichester GP on 10th.

Only occasional birds were noted at the principal seawatching sites in the first two months of the year, but a small spring migration was noted at Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford) in March. At the former site a total of 54 E was recorded on five dates in the month with a peak count of 29 on the 26th. At Splash Point a total of 33 E was recorded in March with a peak passage on the 3rd, demonstrating yet again how migration can be recorded so differently between the two sites. [JAH]



Gadwall, Rye Harbour, April 2017 (Barry Yates)

Gadwall

Mareca 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	575	536	197	114	89	53	64	139	176	316	431	559
Chichester Hbr	32	36	11	3	1	-	-	4	8	8	16	48
Chichester GP	78	53	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	16	43	144
Arun Valley N of Arundel	94	96	51	35	35	22	22	45	51	77	61	37
Rye Bay	190	228	93	55	39	31	40	88	60	171	130	190
Average county total 2007-2016	776	664	234	117	87	70	56	111	251	274	378	765

It was a poor first quarter to the year, the mild conditions perhaps impacting on numbers, with the lowest January count since 2009. Significant numbers additional to the WeBS involved 100 at Marsh Fm (Yapton) on 10 Jan, 80 at Chichester GP on the 21st and, later in the year, 58 at Darwell Res on 19 Nov.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and was probable in a further eight. Numbers, however, were low, with two pairs producing ducklings at Pagham Hbr, one at Arundel WWT, two broods at Waltham Brooks, while at Pett Level there were 35 pairs, but low water levels led to predation and a poor breeding season.

In the second winter period, total numbers were above average by October, but they failed to build substantially in the generally mild conditions, with the December WeBS count the lowest for that month since 2008.

As usual, only very small numbers were seen from seawatching sites: at Selsey Bill just five passed east in 194 hr of watching in April, and there were 1 E and 3 W in 191 hr in May. [AT]

Eurasian Wigeon

Mareca penelope

Very 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 follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	11730	10400	4373	89	2	2	1	1	588	2622	4754	6806
Chichester Hbr	2951	2574	1657	8	-	-	-	-	518	1215	1607	2356
Pagham Hbr	1542	594	236	24	-	-	-	-	13	457	701	747
Arun Valley N of Arundel	2515	4582	1984	13	1	-	-	-	25	262	983	1909
Rye Bay	3110	1929	245	35	-	-	-	-	-	601	1015	1209
Average county total 2007-2016	10787	9772	3812	82	8	4	3	20	1319	4809	6431	9208

WeBS counts were just above the 10-year average in the first quarter of the year, with 86% of the county total at the four principal sites in January and 93% in February. The year's highest count at a single site was 3352 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 13 Feb. Significant numbers additional to the WeBS above included: 400 at Pagham Hbr on 28 Sep; 150 at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Sep, 410 there on 16 Oct increasing to 700 on the 23rd and 30th and 1100 on 29 Nov; 3000 at Rye Hbr on 5 Jan and 120 on 1 Oct. Wigeon were also recorded at a number of other suitable sites across the county including, at Cuckmere Haven, 420 on 18 Jan and 400 on 13 Feb and, at Lewes Brooks, 500 on 18 Jan and 350 on 13 Feb. Numbers rapidly dwindled in March. As usual, numbers were very low in summer, with barely a handful of birds remaining across the county and no indication of breeding.

The first definite sign of birds returning were 20 at Thorney Deepes on 9 Sep, with the first three-figure count being 122 at Pagham Hbr on the 19th, but following 500 at Thorney Deepes on the 23rd numbers increased fairly rapidly

Few tend to be seen on seawatches, despite the thousands of birds moving into and out of the county in autumn and spring, no doubt due to their nocturnal migrations. The only sizable movements noted were at Selsey Bill, with 35 W on 25 Jan, 59 W and 3 E on 9 Oct, 27 W on 1 Dec, and 37 W and 22 E on 2 Dec. [AT]

Mallard*Anas platyrhynchos*

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

Mallards were recorded in 375 (41%) tetrads demonstrating the widespread distribution of this familiar species compared with other wildfowl. The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	3538	2606	1850	1274	1242	1595	1789	2529	2462	2911	3285	3360
Chichester Hbr	321	253	197	80	105	65	105	165	184	224	375	257
Arun Valley N of Arundel	856	733	548	460	472	629	629	577	714	648	664	590
Rye Bay	503	292	109	116	109	191	251	257	158	265	276	305
Average county total 2007-2016	3546	2815	1923	1204	1231	1613	1922	2980	3493	3672	3664	4111

The monthly county totals were, by and large, comparable with the 10-year averages although the peak count of 3538 in January was much lower than the 4109 of 2016. Significant counts additional to the WeBS counts in January included 141 at Ifield MP on 1 Jan; 141 at Ardingly Res on the 14th, 134 at Horsted Keynes on the 17th and 100 at Waltham Brooks on the 2nd; in February, similarly, there were 122 at Horsted Keynes on the 14th. Later in the year, in September, 200 were counted at Arlington Res on the 8th, 105 at Ifield MP on the 11th and 100 at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 4th; in October, 350 were at Paddockhurst (Worth) on the 23rd, 188 at Ardingly Res on the 31st and 100 at Nymans (Handcross) on the 25th; in November, 156 were at Horsted Keynes on the 14th and 105 at Ifield MP on the 19th. During the early year SWBS Mallards were recorded in 54 (41%) 1-km squares surveyed and in the late year 53 (33%) of the 161 squares studied.

Breeding was confirmed in 40 tetrads and was probable in a further 31. The earliest sighting of birds nesting was on 13 Mar at Falmer Pond and of downy young on 26 Mar at Arundel WWT, some three weeks later than in 2016. A female with a brood of 11 was the largest brood recorded.

Passage at the principal seawatching sites was unremarkable. Mallards were recorded only during spring; the largest count flying east was five at Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 May and flying west was six at Selsey Bill on 30 Jun. [JAH]

Pintail*Anas acuta*

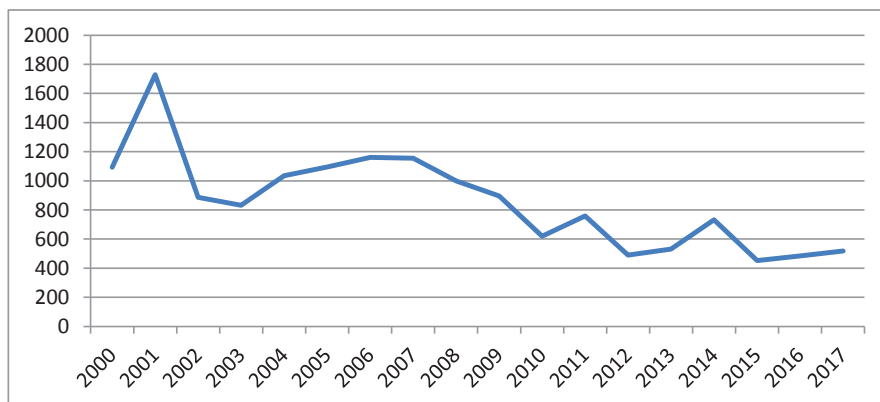
Fairly common winter visitor and scarce on observed passage; occasionally summers and has bred. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Pintails were recorded in 50 tetrads (5.5%), more often at sites in West Sussex (58:32). 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	311	280	285	11	-	-	-	-	22	100	173	518
Chichester Hbr	104	91	128	8	-	-	-	-	22	42	27	246
Medmerry	106	-	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-
Pagham Hbr	28	97	90	1	-	-	-	-	-	56	96	204
Arun Valley N of Arundel	47	48	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	53
Rye Bay	25	32	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	18	15
Average county total 2007-2016	634	547	177	9	1	1	1	1	71	179	304	432

Totals in January, February, October and November were significantly lower than the 10-year averages but noticeably higher in March and December. The 1% national threshold number of 290 was not exceeded at any site. Significant counts additional to the above table in the first three months included 40 at Pagham Hbr on 1 Jan, 50 at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Jan with 56 there on 6 Feb, and 36 at Rye Hbr on 17 Feb. Similarly, later in the year, there were 40 at Pagham Hbr on 28 Sep, 30 at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Oct and 200 at Pagham Hbr on 28 Nov.

Pintails have declined significantly this century as shown clearly in the figure below:



Peak annual counts of Pintail, 2000-2017

Numbers reduced significantly from mid-March as migrants returned to breeding grounds until by April only eight remained at Thorney Island on the 1st and ones or twos elsewhere. There were no breeding records.

The first returning migrants were probably the 15 seen at Pagham Hbr on 17 Sep (which increased to 40 on the 28th) followed by 22 at Thorney Island on the 23rd. Numbers remained relatively low in October, with double-figure counts at only four sites, the highest being 56 at Pagham Hbr on the 8th. The only three-figure counts recorded were 200 at Pagham Hbr on 28 Nov and 239 at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Dec.

Spring migration, as recorded at the principal seawatching sites, produced a noteworthy passage of 296 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 3 Mar in 6½ hr; previous large movements were 420 E at St Leonards, 275 E at Birling Gap on 13 Mar 2006 and 279 E at Worthing on 31 Mar 1990. Elsewhere spring passage was unremarkable with the highest counts of 16 E at Selsey Bill 10 Feb, 14 E there on 27 Mar and 16 E at Worthing on 3 Mar. [JAH]

Eurasian Teal

Anas crecca

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

WeBS counts were around average in the first two months of the year, with 1690 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 13 Feb the highest count of the year at a single site. Numbers then dropped sharply in March, with the lowest count for that month since 2009. Significant counts additional to the WeBS were 469 at Pagham Hbr on 29 Sep and, in the Arun Valley, 550 at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Oct and 480 there on 13 Nov. The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	5678	4994	1499	367	-	3	30	117	722	1154	2515	4242
Chichester Hbr	1209	1325	522	70	-	-	-	32	199	369	422	1066
Pagham Hbr	412	561	127	47	-	-	-	4	61	236	1006	706
Arun Valley N of Arundel	2083	1930	409	183	-	3	3	40	268	143	469	1054
Rye Bay	824	636	264	50	-	-	24	21	6	201	333	505
Average county total 2007-2016	5608	4135	2249	334	12	34	33	369	1440	2306	3673	4989

Records from seawatching sites were typically few and far between, with 26 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 3 Mar and 23 E there on 9 Apr, the highest day counts by far.

Sightings were, as usual, generally sparse in summer. Breeding was not confirmed anywhere and was probable in only three tetrads; copulation was observed at Arundel WWT. As usual, however, there were sporadic records of small flocks at the key wetlands, such as 32 at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Jun and 12 there on the 26th.

The first likely sign of returning birds was possibly the 24 recorded at Rye Hbr on 23 Jul although they did not stay. The next sign of returning birds was an increase in numbers at Pulborough Brooks when 12 were recorded on 7 Aug, with 25 there the next day and 50 on the 10th.

Numbers in the second winter period were very poor, with the WeBS counts from August to November inclusive being the lowest since at least 1996. Only in December was there a rally, although still only up to about 85% of the 10-year average. [AT]

Red-crested Pochard

Netta rufina

Possibly a rare winter visitor from the continent and passage migrant although most records probably relate to escaped or feral birds.

One at Scotney GP on 13 Apr was the only record. [JAH]

Common Pochard

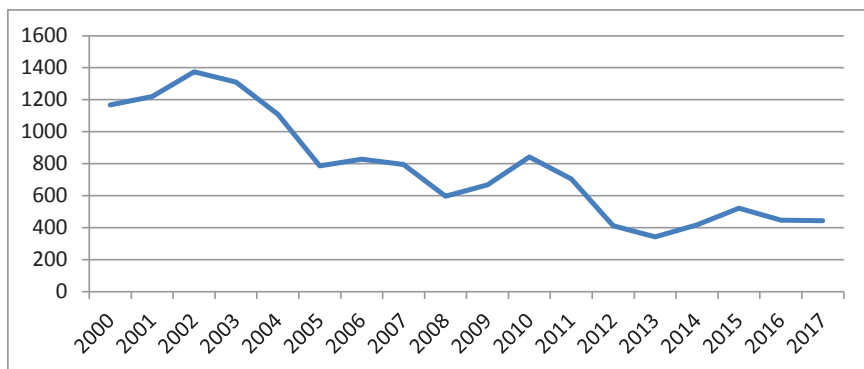
Aythya ferina

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

Pochards were recorded in 46 tetrads (5.0%), some 12 of which were inland water bodies away from the western and eastern harbours showing the preference of this species for freshwater habitats. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	443	345	58	10	7	19	42	78	45	74	168	240
Chichester GP	32	53	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	10	51	65
Barcombe Res	43	39	13	-	-	1	2	1	1	12	27	29
Rye Bay	299	178	12	5	3	16	38	75	35	50	51	96
Average county total 2007-2016	580	432	116	27	22	26	52	116	96	121	245	432

Monthly totals in the five winter months were noticeably lower than the 10-year averages. An analysis of the peak winter counts this century reveals that that numbers of recorded Pochards has declined by some 67% from a its peak of 1375 in 2002 as shown below:



Peak annual counts of Common Pochard, 2000-2017.

Significant counts additional to the WeBS in the first half of the year were: 100 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 20 Jan, 24 there on 4 Mar (and 20 on the 28th), 20 at Arundel WWT on the 6th and 26 at Pett Level on the 26th. In April, 13 remained at Ivy Lake on the 5th and ten at Pett Level on the 2nd and up to ten remained at Arundel WWT during May.

Numbers remained low generally throughout June and July with double-figure counts recorded at only two sites in June (17 at Chichester GP on the 17th, 13 at Pett Level on the 11th and ten there mid-month), and it was at only these two sites that double-figure counts were recorded in July (32 at Pett Level on the 23rd and ten at Chichester GP on 25th).

Breeding was confirmed at three sites: at least two pairs were at Arundel WWT where one pair had four downy ducklings in May; four pairs bred at Chichester GP and approximately 15 pairs were at Pett Level where a female with five ducklings were seen on 22 Jun.

Numbers began to pick up in August in East Sussex with 40 at Pett Level on the 5th and 51 at Scotney GP on the 16th. In September, the first sign of an increase in West Sussex was of 17 on Ivy Lake on the 5th. Numbers in October showed further increases but almost entirely at Pett Level and Rye Hbr; the only West Sussex site with more than ten was Chichester GP with 18 on the 10th. However, there was a noticeable increase in numbers in the west in November with maxima of 80 at Chichester GP on the 30th, 20 at Pulborough Brooks on the 25th and 11 at Burton MP on the 20th. In December there were some 18 double-figure counts with a peak count of 137 at Chichester GP on the 5th. [JAH]

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

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

The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	884	830	550	483	266	182	351	346	509	495	675	921
Chichester Hbr	16	43	52	21	22	27	18	30	26	38	31	74
Chichester GP	166	193	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	62	147	208
Arun Valley N of Arundel	73	84	64	65	45	33	33	9	35	28	62	68
Rye Bay	319	254	135	207	149	71	153	109	213	129	95	120
Average county total 2007-2016	1154	1014	826	521	373	279	302	398	483	556	746	950

Notable counts from Chichester GP additional to the above were 169 on 17 Jan; 39 on 5 Apr, 30 on both 31 May and 25 Jun; 60 on 10 Jul and 25 on 4 Sep. Peak counts from sites not included in the WeBS table were as follows: Honer Fm (Pagham) 41 on 3 Oct; Pagham Lagoon 42 on 18 Dec; Burton MP 50 on 29 Dec; Southwater CP 70 on 5 Jan and 92 on 5 Dec; Warnham LNR 45 on 12 Mar; Barcombe Res 76 on 24 Jul and 78 on 14 Aug; West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) 100 on 22 Jan; Darwell Res 86 on both 19 Nov and 12 Dec and Powdermill Res 42 on 24 Nov. The January peak count of 884 (the same as in December 2016) was significantly lower than the 10-year average for the month of 1154 and also the peak count over the past ten years of 1318 on February 2012.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and probable in ten with the first ducklings noted on 2 Jun at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP). At Chichester GPs two broods of five ducklings were noted and one pair produced a second brood. At Chingford Pond (Duncton) a male was seen with three downy young. At Medmerry four females were noted with ducklings (3,7,5,3). At Arundel WWT a brood of five was seen. Fifty five breeding pairs were at Pett Level; eight, possibly nine, pairs bred at Rye Hbr and at Scotney GP one pair produced three ducklings.

The first significant influx was 60 at Chichester GPs on 10 July, a fortnight earlier than last year, but it was not until the 23rd that another double-figure count was made, of 25 at Rye Hbr and 22 at Medmerry and 18 at Pett Level followed by no less than 76 at Barcombe Res on the 24th and 25 at Arundel WWT. The highest count for the month was 108 at Scotney GP on the 25th. Thereafter there were many double-figure counts of 20 or more in August as migrants returned to winter here.

Observers at the principal seawatching sites recorded only small numbers. In spring the highest counts were 11 E at Selsey Bill on 26 Mar and 15 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 9 Apr. Return passage was unremarkable. [JAH]

Greater Scaup

Aythya marila

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

There was a better showing in the first winter quarter this year. At Ivy Lake (Chichester GP), a favoured site in recent years, a first winter male was present from 2016 until 10 Mar. The other favoured site was Kneppmill Pond where two females were recorded on 11 dates between 9 Jan and 12 Mar. Elsewhere, observers at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) recorded a single female on six dates between 17 Jan and 26 Feb. Surprisingly, the only record from Rye Hbr was of three (unsexed) on 12 Feb. The only spring offshore movement was a group of 8 E in a flock of Common Scoters past Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on 28 Mar.

There were no further sightings until 5 Oct when two flew west past Selsey Bill. In the second winter period, the only other records were of a female at Rye Hbr on 22 Oct and 1 Nov. [WGH]

Common Eider

Somateria mollissima

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

2017 was a rather better year than recently with records of single birds on five dates in January and February from the coastal stretch between Medmerry and Middleton-on-Sea with peaks of three on 15 to 16 Jan and 15 to 17 Feb. Further east, single birds were noted at Southwick Canal on 7 Jan and at Pett Level on the 1st and 11th with five there on the 29th. Elsewhere in February, single

birds were noted at Brighton on the 14th, Shoreham Hbr on the 15th and 16th, four at Birling Gap on the 24th and two at Worthing on the 28th. The next record was of four at Splash Point (Seaford) on 3 Mar followed by 10 E at Birling Gap on the 14th and 7 E there on the 29th while a total of 18 was recorded offshore at Selsey Bill during the month (probably including two at Medmerry on the 26th).

Eastwards passage began in earnest in mid-April with records on 23 dates from Selsey Bill with a maximum of five on the 14th and a total of 29 on the sea during the month; the highest count passing Splash Point was eight on the 3rd. Elsewhere, single birds were recorded at Medmerry, Ferring, Goring Gap and Birling Gap. Spring passage peaked on 1 May with 29 E off Selsey Bill, 11 E at Worthing and 18 E off Telscombe Cliffs, Splash Point and Birling Gap, all probably the same. Spring records from the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Mar	Apr	May	Peak movements
Selsey Bill	E	2	9	40	29 on 1 May
	W	3	-	5	
Worthing	E	-	-	6	6 on 1 May
	W	-	-	-	
Telscombe Cliffs	E	2	-	18	18 on 1 May
	W	-	-	2	
Splash Point	E	6	13	22	18 in 1 May
	W	-	-	-	
Birling Gap	E	17	-	18	19 on 1 May
	W	-	-	-	

There was a marked increase in summering records with observers in the Selsey Bill/Church Norton area recording one to three on 14 dates between 10 Jun and 29 Aug but with 8 E there on 2 Jul. During the last four months of the year all records (with only three exceptions) were from the same area where one to three birds were recorded on 26 dates between 10 Sep and 26 Dec; the exceptions were one at Climping on 8 Oct, 3 W off Widewater (Lancing) on the 26th and eight (three males and five females) off Pilsey Island on 13 Nov. There were no inland records. [WGH]



Eider, Selsey Bill, May 2017 (Andrew House)

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.

In the first two months the majority of records were from West Sussex, in particular from the usual coastal stretch between Selsey Bill and Church Norton where one or two were seen on 18 dates until the end of February with maxima from Selsey Bill of 4 W on 10 Jan and 4 E on 4 Feb. In East Sussex, the only records were of up to three birds in Rye Bay on five dates during January and 1 E at both Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on 15 Feb. There were no records for the three weeks between 28 Feb and 21 Mar when single birds were seen at Medmerry followed by 1 E at Selsey Bill the next day.

Spring migration eastwards began in earnest on 28 Mar with 56 E past Birling Gap, 22 E past Splash Point on the 30th and 7 E past Selsey Bill on the 31st. There was a significant increase in numbers during April as migration continued with another notable passage on the 9th, as shown in the table below:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Peak movements
Selsey Bill	E	1	4	16	50	-	8 E on 30 Mar & 17 E on 30 Apr
	W	4	8	-	4	-	
Worthing	E	-	-	-	20	-	14 E on 30 Apr
	W	-	-	-	-	-	
Splash Point	E	-	1	44	73	7	22 E on 28 Mar & 26 E on 9 Apr
	W	-	-	-	-	-	
Birling Gap	E	-	1	56	72	4	56 E on 28 Mar & 27 E on 9 Apr
	W	-	-	-	-	-	

Overall during the year, minimum offshore movements, derived from maximum numbers recorded from the above principal sea-watching sites, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
East	1	5	86	112	7	-	-	2	213
West	4	8	-	4	-	-	1	4	21

Passage was much lighter in May with 4 E off Splash Point and Birling Gap on the 12th and 3 E off Splash Point on the 22nd. The last late spring record was 1 E (with Common Scoters) off Pett Level on 5 Jun. There were no summering or inland records.

The first of the autumn was off Selsey Bill on 8 Oct followed, three weeks later, by two off Pett Level on the 29th. On 5 Nov a first winter bird took up residence in Pagham Hbr where it was recorded until at least 24 Dec. Movement during the second winter months was very light; 1 W at Selsey Bill on 21 Nov and no more than a total of 4 W and 1 E there in December. A pair on the sea off Pett Level on 28 Nov was the only record from East Sussex that month. In December, the biggest group was eight off Cuckmere Haven on the 16th. Other records in the month were of three by Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 8th, one there on the 19th Dec, 3 W past Church Norton and Fairlight on the 24th (possibly the same) and 2 W past Selsey Bill on 3rd and 16th Dec and 1 W there on the 23rd. [WGH]

Common Scoter*Melanitta nigra*

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

Offshore flocks were recorded throughout the year, most regularly off the Selsey peninsula and in Rye Bay, mainly from Pett Level. The maximum monthly counts from these two locations are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey area	150 (2nd)	120 (5th)	120 (12th)	220 (23rd)	120 (14th)	123 (18th)	180 (4th)	120 (13th)	20 (10th)	10 (29th)	60 (19th)	45 (10th)
Rye Bay	150 (5th)	85 (17th)	40 (6th)	58 (22nd)	64 (7th)	-	8 (6th)	8 (8th)	23 (19th)	1 (26th)	75 (27th)	40 (17th)

Small numbers were seen from other coastal sites but a flock of up to 80 was seen off Middleton-on-Sea between 2 Jan and 9 Feb. Thirty were seen off Cuckmere Haven on 3 Jan and offshore at Bexhill 35 were noted on 7 Feb, 150 on 19 Nov and 80 on 5 Dec.

Most Common Scoters were recorded from the principal 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
East	200	249	2982	5754	3790	528	400	95	217	112	139	132
West	54	44	82	189	62	12	108	42	101	149	140	221

The March to May eastward total of 12,526 is nearly twice that seen in 2016 (6656) and 2015 (6557) but similar to the totals during the springs of 2013 (14,711) and 2014 (12,778). The more detailed figures from five locations are shown below; higher numbers were seen in East Sussex during the early spring but in May most were seen at Selsey Bill where there were 15 days with three-figure counts and a peak of 385 E on the 26th. Notably few were seen flying westward except at Selsey Bill.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	163	95	654	3214	3178	493	265	82	207	93	119	59
	W	37	42	69	189	50	12	108	37	93	148	134	145
Worthing	E	1	5	41	1040	193	35	33	0	17	14	17	38
	W	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	17	42
Telscombe Cliffs	E	1	58	575	1054	417	40	165	25	5	20	17	47
	W	17	2	1	0	0	0	0	5	7	9	2	78
Splash Point	E	36	100	2157	3667	1592	6	10	nc	nc	nc	1	nc
	W	0	0	13	0	12	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	E	12	88	2239	3856	915	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	0
	W	3	0	1	0	0	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	4

Peak spring passage occurred in April and the details of the seven days when over 400 were recorded at any site, with the hours of observations, are shown below. These dates are unusually well spaced with the last two days in April being the only consecutive days.

	28 Mar	1 Apr	9 Apr	24 Apr	29 Apr	30 Apr	27 May
Selsey Bill	140 (9)	14 (3)	211 (6)	266 (8)	480 (14)	721 (13)	163 (6)
Worthing	5 (1)	0 (1)	90 (3)	60 (2)	80 (6)	600 (5)	nc
Telscombe Cliffs	499 (4)	6 (2)	259 (4)	0 (1)	113 (1)	592 (5)	26 (1)
Splash Point	1596 (5)	510 (5)	831 (5)	nc	937 (13)	941 (14)	423 (5)
Birling Gap	2019 (4)	21 (2)	1072 (5)	400 (5)	1052 (10)	931 (7)	376 (3)

A male and two females at the dam end of Weir Wood Res on 14 Aug was the sole inland record. [JAN]

Long-tailed Duck

Clangula hyemalis

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

In the first quarter, one was recorded frequently at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) from 1 Jan to 11 Mar. At West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) one was noted on numerous dates between 3 Jan and 12 Feb, again from 1 to 25 Mar and from 4 Apr to 9 May, the latest spring record for 2017. Up to three birds were seen at various coastal sites from Medmerry to Worthing on 13 dates in January with three offshore at Church Norton on the 7th, offshore at Rustington on the 8th and west past Selsey Bill on the 14th. Numbers declined in February; one was noted in Chichester Hbr on the 6th, one flew west at Selsey Bill on the 2nd and 1 flew east there on the 12th. Just three eastbound birds were seen in spring; at Widewater (Lancing) on 30 Mar and at Splash Point (Seaford) on 19 and 22 Apr.

The first returning bird was 1 W off Selsey Bill on 7 Oct and there was a single bird at Pett Level between 25 Oct and 12 Nov. At Pagham Hbr one was noted on Honer Fm Res, on 14 and 15 Nov. There were few records of single birds in December; these were at Pagham Lagoon on the 17th and 18th, off Goring Gap on the 17th and at East Head (Chichester Hbr) and Widewater (Lancing) on the 21st. [WGH]



Long-tailed Duck, Pett Level, October 2017 (David Gardiner)

Goldeneye*Bucephala clangula*

Scarce winter visitor: rare non-breeder in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	32	21	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	9
Chichester Hbr	26	13	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		3
Pagham Hbr	2	3		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
Rye Bay	4	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Average county total 2007-2016	26	32	10	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	6	21

In the first winter period in Chichester Hbr, the most favoured site, most records were from Fishbourne and Birdham, with records for 13 dates between 3 Jan and 11 Mar with peaks of 14 at Birdham on 14 Jan and 13 at Fishbourne on 11 Feb. At Pagham Hbr Goldeneyes were recorded on 11 dates between 1 Jan and 4 Mar, mostly as ones and twos but with five on 1 Jan. In Rye Bay, birds were recorded on 22 dates between 4 Jan and 12 Mar with a peak of six on 4 Jan. Elsewhere, a female was noted at Tinkers Marsh (Bewl Water) on 31 Jan and, at Weir Wood Res, single birds were recorded only in March on the 4th, 19th, 26th and 27th. The last spring report was of a male east off Birling Gap on 9 Apr, only the 18th seen there since regular recording commenced in 1960.

The second winter period began with single birds at Rye Hbr on 14 Oct, Three Bridges on the 27th and Pagham Hbr and Pett Level on the 31st. More birds arrived from 14 Nov but the highest count that month was three at Nutbourne (Chichester Hbr) on the 19th. During the second winter period, Goldeneyes were recorded in the Pagham Hbr area on 16 dates between 31 Oct and 26 Dec (but with a maximum of only three) and, in Rye Bay, on ten dates between 14 Oct and 25 Dec with a maximum of six on 24 Dec. Inland, there were single birds on Weir Wood Res on 1 Dec and Barcombe Res on the 11th. [WGH]

Smew*Mergellus albellus*

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

There were only three records, both in the first winter period. Two unsexed birds were at Scotney GP on 18 Jan with a single redhead there on the 22nd. The other record was of an adult male at Arlington Res on 17 Mar. [WGH]

Goosander*Mergus merganser*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

The estimated minimum numbers were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	19	5	1	2	-	1		4	33	14
Coastal	14	-	-	2	-	-		2	27	9
Inland	5	5	1	-	-	1		2	6	5

2017 was a good year; during the first winter period this species was recorded from six inland and four coastal sites. Inland records were of single birds on four dates at Petworth Park from 3 Jan (two on this date) to 13 Feb, at Pulborough Park on 20 Jan (presumably on the R Arun), at Ditchling Common pond on 4 Feb, on the R Ouse at Lewes on six dates between 1 and 24 Jan, and at Wadhurst Park on four dates between 16 Jan and 13 Mar (with two on 13 Feb). At Pagham Lagoon there were two on 5 Jan and an adult male in the harbour on the 26th and, further east, the only record from Rye Hbr was an impressive nine (including five adult males) on 22 Jan.

Following the one at Wadhurst Park on 13 Mar there was then a gap of some six weeks to the last two of the spring on 24 Apr offshore at Pagham Spit. An unusually late (or early?) bird at Rodmell Brooks on 14 Jun may have been over-summering somewhere.

The first records for the second winter period were of single birds at Southease (R Ouse) on 27 Oct, Fishbourne (Chichester Hbr) on the 28th and at Fernhurst on the 29th. The most frequented sites were Pagham Hbr/Church Norton, where up to two were present between 5 Nov and 26 Dec, and Widewater (Lancing), with records of single females on 15 dates between 16 Nov and 28 Dec and Chichester Hbr with singles on eight dates from 12 Nov to 23 Dec but two on 3 Dec increasing to four by the 9th. Elsewhere, there were three reported from the R Adur on 12 Nov, seven on Pett Level the same day and singles at Shoreham on 10 and 25 Nov.

Sightings on inland waterbodies involved a single female at Weir Wood Res on 5 Nov, two at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 16 Nov, one at Chichester GP on 20 and 21 Nov, a drake at Arundel on 9 and 11 Dec and, at the favoured site of Petworth Park, singles on four dates between 28 Nov and 19 Dec.

The only passage record during the period was of a drake and two redheads flying west at Church Norton on 5 Nov. [WGH, JAH]

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

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

This species was recorded in 42 tetrads (4.6%), the majority (82%) being in West Sussex and, with only one exception, at the coast or the western harbours. The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites are shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	125	116	95	27	-	-	-	-	1	1	33	106
Chichester Hbr	97	95	78	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	97
Pagham Hbr	15	9	7	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	5
Goring	11	9	1	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	3	-
Average county total 2007-2016	165	161	167	8	1	1	0	0	0	14	106	136

Once again, the numbers recorded were lower than the 10-year average, particular in November. However, the WeBS counts at Chichester Hbr in January, February and December exceeded the 1% national threshold of 84 for this species. While the WeBS counts suggest that Chichester Hbr is the dominant wintering site for this species that is only true of sites counted during the WeBS; significant numbers were also observed at two other sites. Contrastingly, relatively few birds were recorded in East Sussex.

An analysis of the monthly totals reveals the relatively high numbers seen offshore at Worthing/Goring during the five winter months. The highest day count of offshore birds at Selsey Bill was 24

on 4 Mar but averaged only six. At Worthing/Goring, however, the highest day counts were 50 on 17 Jan and 16 Feb and 60 on 2 Dec with an overall average day count of 30. The peak and average numbers recorded offshore at Worthing/Goring were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Nov	Dec	Overall
Monthly total	270	163	63		95	338	929
Peak day count	50	50	30		45	60	60
Average day count	30	34	21		24	34	30
No. of days	9	4	3		4	10	31

Records from the principal seawatching sites were as follows, but it is likely that winter movements recorded at Selsey Bill involved local birds:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	179	163	130	54	15		12	29	90
	W	118	131	133	29	4		43	107	158
Worthing	E	-	8	12	5	2		-	8	16
	W	-	-	3	-	-		7	15	29
Splash Point	E	-	-	18	55	-		nc	-	nc
	W	-	-	-	-	-		nc	-	nc
Birling Gap	E	-	3	9	4	-		nc	nc	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-		nc	nc	-

There did not appear to be a peak spring passage day; the highest day counts at Selsey Bill were 34 E on 22 Jan, 23 W on 24 Feb, 20 W on 18 and 22 Mar and 18 E on 4 Apr. The last spring record was of 7 E at Selsey Bill on 25 May. From 3 Jun to 24 Sep the only record was of the long-staying individual at Rye Hbr.

Return migration was first noted on 25 Sep when two birds were recorded at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr), followed by ones or twos flying west until 7 W were seen at Worthing on 20 Oct. The next significant sighting was of 18 W at Selsey Bill on 26 Oct. Only small numbers (<10) were noted thereafter until 16 at Pilsey Island on 6 Nov; from the 12th double-figure counts were noted more often with 46 at Worthing/Goring on the 15th being the highest count for the month. The highest day count in December was 60 at Worthing/Goring on 2 Dec. Up to 32 were noted at Elmer Rocks in December.

The only inland record was one (unsexed) bird near Arundel on 7 Mar. [JAH]

Ruddy Duck

Oxyura jamaicensis

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

The only records were, with one exception, from Pett Level with a male on 15 Apr and 21 May, a female on 18 Jun and two unsexed individuals on 23 Apr. The only other record was of a male on Brede Levels on 20 Jun, probably involving a Pett Level bird.

In the autumn, single (unsexed) birds were noted, again at Pett Level, on 14 and 24 Sep and 8 Oct. There were no reports of breeding. [WGH]

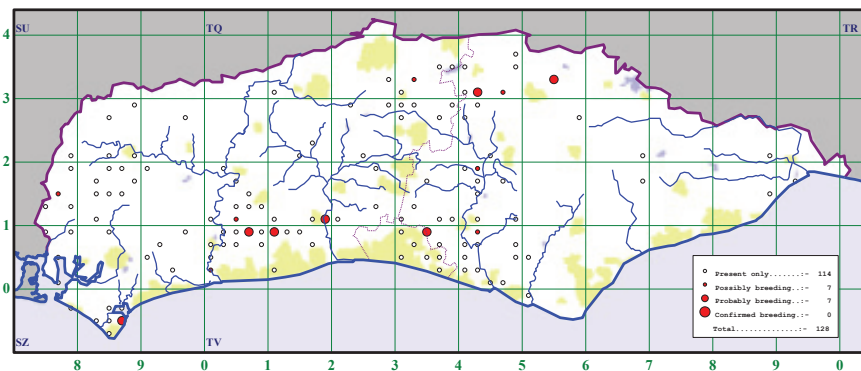
Red-legged Partridge

Alectoris rufa

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

Red-legged Partridges were recorded in 128 tetrads (14%) compared with 133 in 2016 and 130 in 2015. In the early winter SWBS 41 were recorded in seven (5.3%) 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 19 at Balcombe on 24 Feb. On 13 Feb 20 were at Iford and there were 14 other double figure records in the first winter period.

In the BBS there were 82 birds recorded from 27 (16%) of surveyed 1-km squares with a maximum of 23 on 11 Apr at West Dean. Throughout the summer months most records related to West Sussex and counts rarely exceeded single figures. The distribution of this species is shown in the following map :



There was no record of confirmed breeding but seven tetrads with probable and seven with possible breeding. However discrimination between "wild" and captive bred stock presents problems.

In the autumn the count of a monthly maximum of 120 at Torberry Hill (Harting) and counts of 83 and 80 on 29 Sep and 29 Oct respectively at Pagham Hbr were notable. There were 27 other counts in excess of ten. In the late year SWBS 118 were found in ten (6.2%) of the 161 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 25 near Balcombe on 6 Dec. [PJP]

Grey Partridge

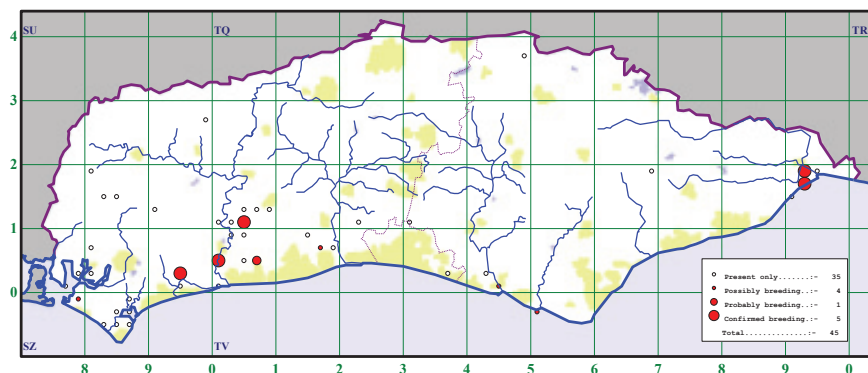
Perdix perdix

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

Grey Partridges were recorded in 45 tetrads (5.0%) (45 in 2016, 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. The distribution of this species is shown in the map overleaf.

In the first winter period there were seven double figure counts with five on The Burgh (Burpham) and high counts of 30 in January on the 20th and 22nd and on 7 Feb. Counts of ten came from Selsey GC on 2 Jan and from Hartfield on 11 Feb.

In the spring, counts were in single figures with the exception of 12 at Amberley Mount on 16



Apr. Numbers increased after the breeding season with high counts of 28 at Rye Hbr on 8 Aug and 40 at The Burgh on 17 Sep.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads and was probable in a further two. At Rye Hbr, three or four pairs bred and broods of ten, nine and two of eight were recorded over June and July. At Medmerry, five young fledged from one pair. An occupied nest was recorded in the Arun Valley on 17 Jun and recently fledged young at Barnham on 7 Jul. [PJP]

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 ten dates at nine sites in 2017, marginally more than the previous year. The first record was at Oving on 22 May and the next, four days later, was of a bird heard at Bosham giving the alternative call (not the usual wet-my-lips). Other spring records were for single birds at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 25 May, Steep Down (Lancing) on 29 May and 2 Jun, and at The Burgh (Burpham) on 7 Jun. Further records were from Falmer on 2 Jul, Jury's Gap on 13 Jul, No-Mans Land (Findon) on 29 Jul and, finally, at The Burgh on 24 Aug. [PJP]

Common Pheasant

Phasianus colchicus

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

Common Pheasants were recorded in 469 tetrads (51%), comparable to recent years (471 in 2016, 465 in 2015) although the past figures differ from those published with the late inclusion of GBW information. Indeed the species visited 58 (24%) of participating gardens in 46 different tetrads at least once during the year.

The highest counts recorded in the first quarter were 75 at Balcombe on 24 Feb, 42 at Steyning Bowl on 25 Feb and 30 at Weir Wood on 13 Feb. There were six further counts of 20 or more. In the early year SWBS there were 357 encounters in 70 (53%) 1-km squares surveyed. During the BBS there were 1439 encounters in 73% of the 338 surveys in 143 (83%) of 1-km squares with a maximum of 48 at West Lavington (Midhurst).

Breeding was confirmed at five sites and was probable in 25 and possible in a further 38. A nest containing eggs was at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 4 Apr, occupied nests were found at Barcombe on 5

May and at North Stoke on 7 Jun, and recently fledged young were at Ladywell (Coombes) on 1 Jul and on Ashdown Forest on 12 Jul.

Numbers increased in the autumn with post breeding additions and release for the shooting season and there were two counts of 150 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 24 and 29 Oct, and 11 other counts over 50. The species was recorded in 95 (59%) 1-km squares during the late year surveys for the SWBS with a maximum of 110 near Balcombe on 6 Dec. [PJP]

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

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

As in previous years the estimated monthly totals have been arrived at by taking the highest daily counts of birds moving either east or west along the coast together with the highest 'offshore' count during the month plus any inland records. Using this method the estimated total for the year was 3980 which was well above the 2016 figure of 1388 and also above the 10-year average of 2029. The estimated figures are shown in the table below.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
918	1900	203	90	11	-	-	-	2	9	50	797	3980

In January, four large-scale movements accounted for nearly half of the monthly total: 81 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 3rd, 86 E at Selsey Bill on the 20th, 113 E past Fairlight on the 21st and 138 E at Splash Point on the 27th. Peak day counts in February were even higher with 385 E at Splash Point on the 2nd while observers at Selsey Bill recorded 101 E on the 3rd and 192 E the following day. The largest counts came during the three days of 14 to 16 Feb when observers at Birling Gap recorded daily counts of 403 E, 130 E and 153 E. During this three-day period there were also counts of 122 E at Telscombe Cliffs (Portobello) on 15 Feb and 240 E and 129 E at Splash Point on 15 Feb and 16 Feb respectively. Numbers dropped dramatically after mid-February with the highest March count being 68 E at Birling Gap on the 28th.

Spring passage during April was unusually light with no double-figure counts at any seawatching site. This pattern continued in May with no more than two birds being seen on any one day; the last record was 1 E at Telscombe Cliffs on the early date of the 14th after which there were no records until September. The month totals for coastal passage at five seawatching sites were as follows:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	223	577	95	71	6	-	2	17	100
	W	306	280	4	4	2	1	5	26	414
Worthing	E	32	107	5	4	3	-	-	-	80
	W	86	24	-	1	0	-	-	7	253
Telscombe Cliffs	E	134	211	3	4	1	-	1	3	32
	W	74	8	-	-	-	-	1	2	45
Splash Point	E	238	788	89	32	4	nc	nc	-	nc
	W	117	-	-	1	-	nc	nc	-	nc
Birling Gap	E	136	775	82	32	1	nc	nc	nc	3
	W	2	3	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	-

The first returning birds were 1 W at Selsey Bill on the typical date of 16 Sep with one offshore at Church Norton the following day. In October, the figures were predictably low with no more than two birds seen on any one day while November was also quiet with no double-figure counts

recorded. The December total of 797 was double the 10-year average for the month. The largest numbers were confined to two short periods: the 2nd to the 4th and the 15th to the 18th. In the first of those periods there were 77 W and 18 E at Goring on 2 Dec with 68 W there on the 4th, on which day a total of 165 feeding birds moved west off Fairlight. In the period 15 to 18 Dec observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 240 birds all moving west. On 17 Dec a count of 67 birds in Rye Bay was the highest figure for that site during the year.

There were no inland records of Red-throated Divers during the year. [DHH]

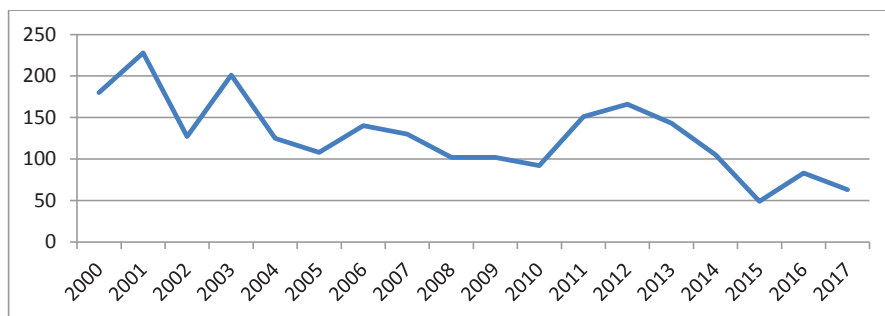
Black-throated Diver

Gavia arctica

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

The estimated annual total of 63 was calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver. The total of 63 is the second lowest this century and the third consecutive year where the total was less than one hundred.

Although annual totals are variable the steady decline in numbers this century can be seen from the following graph.



The estimated monthly totals for 2017 were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
11	12	3	12	10	2	2	11	63

In January the only movements involving more than a single bird was 2 E at Telscombe Cliffs (Portobello) on the 6th. Two were offshore in Rye Bay on 5 Jan and off Church Norton on the 15th and single birds were noted off Church Norton, Selsey Bill and in Chichester Hbr on several dates during January. This theme continued in February with four at Splash Point (Seaford) being the highest daily figure but with three offshore at Worthing and Church Norton, two in Normans Bay and Telscombe Cliffs plus single birds at Chichester Hbr, Selsey Bill, Climping, Newhaven and Birling Gap. In March, the only three records were 1 E at Roedean on the 4th followed by 2 E at Selsey Bill and 1 E at Birling Gap on the 22nd. There were very few signs of spring passage during April and May with peak daily counts of 3 E at Splash Point on both 29 Apr and 9 May. During these months the maximum offshore counts both came from Fairlight with two on both 30 Apr and 7 May. The last spring record was of a single bird off Fairlight on 14 May, some seven days earlier than the 10-year average date.

The first returning bird was one offshore at Selsey Bill on 20 Oct, 12 days later than the 10-year average date. For the remainder of the year the only movements involving more than one bird were at Selsey Bill where there were 2 E and 1 W on 11 Dec and 2 W on both 15 and 16 Dec. During this second winter period single birds were also seen offshore in Chichester Hbr, off Church Norton, Goring and Worthing.

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

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

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

As in previous years, the Selsey Bill area proved to be an important wintering area for this species. Birds tended to feed over a wide area and those recorded between Chichester Hbr to the west and Bognor Regis to the east were considered to emanate from Selsey Bill. The approximate monthly figures were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	6	9	12	10	6	3	8	8
Max. off Selsey Bill area	6	9	10	8	5	3	7	5

The maximum numbers recorded for the Selsey Bill area were consistent with the 10-year averages. During January and February all records were from the Selsey Bill area with peak monthly counts of six on 16 Jan and nine on 17 Feb. In March, numbers in the Selsey Bill area rose to ten on the 29th and there were two records away from the core area: 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 3rd and a single bird off Hastings CP the following day. Eight birds were recorded off Selsey Bill on 7 and 22 Apr with one flying east off Rustington on 11 Apr and 1 E at Telscombe Cliffs (Portobello) on the last day of April. The number of birds off Selsey Bill had reduced to five by 3 May and the last record in that area was of a single bird on 29 May, was just two days earlier than the 10-year average date. The only other record in May was of 1 E off Worthing on the 22nd.



Great Northern Diver, Newhaven, December 2017 (Isabelle & Simon Linington)

The first returning birds were two off Selsey Bill on 22 Oct, three days later than 10-year average date, but there were no records away from this core area during October. In November the number recorded off Selsey Bill rose from four on the 6th to peaks of seven on both the 23rd and 24th. Also in November, a juvenile was at Newhaven on the 26th and remained in the area until 29 Jan 2018. Five was the maximum number of birds seen at Selsey Bill during December. There were two additional records of single birds away from the core area during December: 1 W at Worthing on the 2nd and a popular bird at Arlington Res from the 17th until 5 Jan 2018. [DHH]

Diver species

The problems associated with the specific identification of distant divers in flight are well documented. As a result one in every fifteen reports of divers in flight in 2017 were recorded as 'Diver sp'.

The numbers of all divers recorded at the five principal seawatching sites during the periods January to May and October to December are shown in the table below. The totals for each site were calculated by adding the monthly totals of birds recorded flying both east and west plus those recorded as offshore. No allowance has been made for duplication at or between sites so no attempt should be made to total the columns. [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	154	32	1580	462	13	10	1747	504	2.7	2.3
Worthing	70	17	343	364	6	2	419	383	3.7	6.6
Telscombe Cliffs	25	5	443	85	10	2	478	92	3.1	1.3
Splash Point (Seaford)	97	-	1272	-	15	-	1384	-	8.3	-
Birling Gap	-	-	1074	10	9	-	1083	-	10.3	-

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 total for this year was just six or possibly seven and it is not since 2008 that there has been a double-figure count. The 10-year average has now dropped to seven.

At Selsey Bill there was 1 E on 6 Jun (OM). Two days later on 8 Jun at least four moved west during a four hour period of seawatching at Selsey Bill; one moving east may have been one of these or could have been a fifth individual (BFF, AH, CRJ *et al*). There was a further 1W there later in the day (BGRI). Also on 8 Jun there was 1E at Splash Point (Seaford) (MRE). [DHH]

Fulmar

Fulmarus glacialis

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

Counts of birds present near sea cliffs in January and February included 14 in the Brighton-Saltdean area, 17 at Newhaven, eight at Seaford, four at Beachy Head and 20 at Cliff End (Pett). It should be noted, however, that several sections of the coastline were not surveyed due to problems of accessibility and safety concerns. Those constraints also limited the ability to obtain data on nesting birds but where this was possible the minimum numbers of nesting pairs were: Brighton-

Saltdean six, Newhaven eight and Cliff End (Pett) six. There were only six double-figure movements during the year with 46 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 27 Jan, 20 E at Splash Point on 14 Feb, 55 W at Fairlight on 2 Mar, 24W at Selsey Bill on 8 Jun, 23 W at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 10 Dec and 38 E also at Portobello on 29 Dec.

The last record was of two at Beachy Head on the late date of 30 Sep with the first returning birds seen on 5 Nov also at Beachy Head. [DHH]

Cory's Shearwater

Calonectris borealis

Rare vagrant.

2016: The entry in SxBR 69: 49 should be amended to include additional observers to read 'The only record was of a single bird flying east past Selsey Bill on 1 May (JA, SH, CN)'. [PJ]

Manx Shearwater

Puffinus puffinus

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

Using the same method of estimation as used for Red-throated Diver the annual total was 133. This is not only below the 2016 figure of 209 but also below the 10-year average of 252. The monthly totals from four of the principal seawatching sites, from which it is noticeable that the vast majority of records were again from Selsey Bill, were as follows:

	Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct	
County totals *	7		11		4		106		1		3		-		1	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	-	7	10	-	4	-	46	97	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1
Worthing	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Telscombe Cliffs	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	-	-	3	-	-	-	10	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* adjusted to compensate for duplication

The first record of the year was of 7 W at Selsey Bill on 22 Mar. Numbers in April were particularly low with just 11 compared to the 154 seen in April 2016. May figures were even lower with just 3 E at Selsey Bill on the 6th and 1 E there on the 8th. It was only in the period from 5 to 8 Jun that any significant numbers were recorded. At Selsey Bill there were 43 W on 5 Jun, 5 E on the 7th with 37 E and 54 W on the 8th when there were also 10 E at Splash Point (Seaford). The only record in July was 1 E at Splash Point on the 30th while the sole August record was of 3 W at Selsey Bill on the 3rd. The final record of the year was 1 W at Selsey Bill on 7 Oct. [DHH]

Balearic Shearwater

Puffinus mauretanicus

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

The annual total of just five was the lowest figure since 2010 and well below the 10-year average (2007-2016) of 28.

On 30 Apr there was 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) (MRE, JJE, RJF, *et al*). At Selsey Bill on 8 Jun, 2 W and 1 E involved three different birds based on the times of the observations (AG, AH, CRJ, *et al*). The only other record was also at Selsey Bill with 1 E on 3 Sep (JA, SH). [DHH]

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Little Grebes were recorded in 97 tetrads (11%), similar to Great Crested Grebes. 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	227	170	99	53	32	37	70	102	88	205	212	254
Chichester Hbr	70	53	19	8	6	9	17	13	23	50	58	108
Pagham Hbr	40	35	31	10	-	-	4	10	7	14	32	27
Rye Bay	50	32	17	5	9	6	26	41	26	95	68	53
Average county total 2007-2016	172	161	99	41	27	29	42	87	151	189	188	190

County totals in January, July and December were respectively 32%, 67% and 34% higher than the 10-year average for those months but were otherwise comparable. Significant counts at sites within the above comprehensive sites, either not shown individually or additional to the above table, included 40 at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on 5 Jan, 14 at Chichester GP on 25 Apr, 21 at Pett Level (Rye Bay) on 30 Jul, 38 there on 14 Sep, 67 at Rye Hbr on 19 Nov and 52 at Apuldram (Chichester Hbr) on 28 Dec.

However, there were several sites in the county not shown in the above WeBS table where Little Grebes were encountered regularly. The maximum monthly count at each of these, where the maximum in any one month was not less than ten, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burton MP area	2	4	1	10	6	8	4	6	7	8	3	4
Brooklands (Worthing)	8	5	3	1	3	6	3	10	11	4	1	1
Widewater (Lancing)	16	9	12	-	-	-	-	-	8	10	20	21
Cuckmere Haven	20	20	10	1	-	-	-	3	10	18	25	35

During the BBS, Little Grebes were encountered in six (3.4%) of 172 1-km squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads and was probable in a further eight. Birds were seen visiting a probable nest site at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 21 Apr and the first record of successful breeding was the sight of a pair with two young at Chichester GP on 25 Apr, a site where at least five other pairs were nesting. Three pairs were present at Thorney Deepes throughout the breeding season but breeding was not confirmed and at Medmerry there were five pairs. At Pagham Hbr one of the two nests identified was within 1 m of a swan's nest. At Weir Wood Res at least 12 young fledged and at Pett Level and Rye Hbr several adults with young were observed.

During the autumn, there were 14 counts of 20 or more birds, eight of which were at Pett Level. Similarly, in the second winter period there were 22 such counts with a year's highest of 67 at Rye Hbr during the WeBS on 19 Nov. [JAH]

Red-necked Grebe

Podiceps grisegena

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	April	May		Nov	Dec
No. of birds	3	2	1	2		2	5
No. of sites	3	2	1	1		2	4

Records of this species have been increasing over the last few years and this trend continued. One on a small lake just west of Camber on 3 Jan remained until 4 Feb (MCC, *et al*). Singles were also seen with other grebes offshore at Pagham on 4 Jan (IML) and Worthing on the 25th (NB). Between 19 and 24 Feb a possibly sick individual remained on the lake at Brooklands (Worthing) (SB, *et al*). During the spring a summer plumaged male was seen displaying to a Great Crested Grebe at Arlington Res on 17 Apr (JJE) and two were recorded flying east, pausing briefly offshore, at Selsey Bill on 1 May (JAF, OM, SAR).

The next sighting was on 15 Nov when one was seen offshore at Worthing Sailing Club (DKC) with potentially the same bird seen offshore at Goring Gap on 2, 4, and 8 Dec. One was seen at Selsey Bill, either offshore or flying past on 23 and 24 Nov and then in December on the 4th, 26th and the 29th (mo). One at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on 5 Dec (BFF, DM) was probably the one from Selsey Bill the day before. Likewise one at Church Norton on 31 Dec (BGRI) was likely to be the same as seen at Selsey Bill. The only other record for this period was one swimming offshore at Widewater (Lancing) before flying west on Dec 20 (ARK, JW). Although it might appear that up to five birds were involved, being a highly mobile species at this time of year, it is possible that there were no more than three. [RAB, JAH]



Red-necked Grebe, Camber lakes, February 2017 (Mick Temple)

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Great Crested Grebe were recorded in 101 tetrads (11%) across the county, very similar to Little Grebe. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal site were as follows;

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	657	268	299	146	135	124	152	328	265	405	388	395
Chichester Hbr	20	7	25	13	9	1	2	1	36	11	14	54
Weir Wood Res	56	18	42	39	47	55	79	81	70	53	82	70
Arlington res	6	1	6	14	10	14	19	22	34	39	42	35
Bewl Water	43	43	113	nc	nc	nc	nc	135	nc	135	95	77
Rye Bay	481	81	49	14	49	18	15	27	45	59	56	71
Average county total 2007-2016	376	495	277	165	123	134	226	383	454	366	328	341

The county total in January was c.65% higher than the 10-year average but in February was c.46% lower while for the remainder of the year they were roughly comparable. As the above table shows, the prime inland sites in the county for this species were the fresh water reservoirs of Weir Wood, Arlington and Bewl Water. The count of 481 for Rye Bay in January (of which 425 were recorded offshore at Pett Level) was notable as it represented 73% of the county total and was the only month for which the count there was at all exceptional. Significant counts additional to the WeBS included 100 at Pett Level (Rye Bay) on 6 Feb, 11 Mar and 16 Dec while at Weir Wood Res similar higher counts involved 49 on 15 Apr, 75 on 26 Jun, 98 on 30 Jul and 66 on 15 Oct.

Coastal passage recorded at the principal seawatching sites was generally in low numbers; the only double-figure counts were 14 W at Selsey Bill on 24 Feb, 29 W there on 23 Nov and, at Worthing, 18 W on 8 Dec. However, numbers offshore at the favoured area between Goring Gap and Worthing included monthly maxima of 145 on 14 Jan, 115 on 6 Feb and 90 on 2 Dec. Elsewhere, 90 were counted offshore from Telscombe Cliffs on 22 Jan and, further east, 280 at Bexhill on 18 Feb.

During the BBS, Great Crested Grebes were found in only 7 (2.3%) of the 172 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of ten at Weir Wood Res on 25 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in a further six. Display was first noted at Burton MP on 24 Feb, nest building at Ifield MP on 13 Mar and birds were using the nest by 1 Apr; recently fledged young were noted at Worth Park (Crawley) on 14 Apr. A nest with eggs was noted as late as 12 Jun at Weir Wood Res and a pair at Burton MP appeared to be building another nest on 29 Aug. At Medmerry only one pair was recorded and at Pagham Hbr, four pairs. At Weir Wood Res 16 nests were counted on 18 Jul while at Rye Hbr at least three pairs bred successfully. At Chichester GP birds were sitting on the nest, presumably still brooding, on 25 Jul.

Post-breeding gatherings of 30 or more occurred in August particularly at Weir Wood Res, where they were recorded regularly, and Bewl Water with 30 were counted in Pagham Hbr on the 28th. In the autumn and second winter periods, records from inland fresh water sites, more noticeably in West Sussex, increased. [JAH]

Slavonian Grebe*Podiceps auritus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	1	-	-		-	-	1
Selsey Bill/Church Norton	34	28	15		-	17	22
Littlehampton – Worthing	1	-	-		-	-	-
Telscombe Cliffs	-	1	-		-	-	-
Newhaven	1	-	-		-	-	-
Eastbourne	-	-	-		-	-	1
Scotney GP	1	-	-		-	-	-



Slavonian Grebe, Princes Park, Eastbourne, December 2017 (Roger & Liz Charlwood)

As usual, most records and the highest counts of this species came from West Sussex, particularly the favoured offshore area from Selsey Bill to Church Norton spit. The first records were on 1 Jan when six were offshore at Church Norton, one was in Chichester Hbr and another was at Scotney GP. Numbers in the main wintering area peaked at 34 on 4 Jan, which was more than twice the peak from last year, and varied widely during the first winter period. Elsewhere, single birds were seen at Climping on 7 Jan, Rustington on the 8th, Newhaven on the 19th and Telscombe Cliffs on 16 Feb. The last sighting of the period was of four offshore at Selsey Bill on 28 Mar.

The first sighting of the second winter period was of 17 offshore at Church Norton on 5 Nov and, again, the vast majority of sightings were from this main wintering area. Numbers varied

throughout the period but peaked at 22 on 5 Dec. Elsewhere during December single birds were also seen at Elmer Rocks on the 4th, in Chichester Hbr on the 5th and 12th and at Princes Park (Eastbourne) on the 14th and 20th. [RAB]

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

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

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	3	4	3	1	2	6	5
No. of sites	3	4	3	1	1	3	1

One was seen intermittently at Rye Hbr on 18 dates between 2 Jan and 16 Mar and at Scotney GP on 22 dates between 3 Jan and 14 Feb, being recorded at both sites on eight dates.

Single birds were also seen at Newhaven on 11 Jan, Rottingdean on 6 Feb, Seaford Head on 21 Feb, Worthing on 13 Mar and Arlington Res on 17 Mar, which was the last sighting of the first winter period.

The first autumn sighting was of one at Rye Hbr on 19 Sep and up to two birds were seen there occasionally thereafter until the end of the year with higher counts of four on 19 Nov and five on 5 Dec. Elsewhere one was seen at Pagham Hbr on 3 Nov and at Arlington Res on 19 Nov. [RAB]

White Stork

Ciconia ciconia

Rare vagrant; mainly in the spring. Most records from 2017 onwards likely to relate to deliberate releases or escapes.

There is currently a White Stork re-introduction programme taking place on the Knepp Estate (Shipley), see <https://knepp.co.uk/white-storks>. This is likely to result in more sightings of White Storks in Sussex as the birds are allowed to fly freely on reaching maturity. It will also make it increasingly difficult to distinguish truly wild birds from those originating from Knepp.

The only records for the first half of the year were of two at the Knepp Estate on 22 Jan and one on 21 and 22 Feb which, although fully-winged and reported not to have originated from the re-introduction programme, were not submitted to or assessed by SOSRC as potentially wild birds.

In the second half of the year, a very ragged bird was seen over Woods Mill (Henfield) on 13 Jul, followed by further singles over Billingshurst on 20 Jul, Oving on 1 Aug and Barnham and Littlehampton on 27 Aug. Two circling over Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 2 Sep were relocated later that day on the roof of Asda at Ferring, remaining in the area until the 7th. On 9 Sep they were re-located at Pagham Hbr, staying until the 15th when there were also seen at Pulborough Brooks. Both were colour-ringed with one bird having originated from Knepp. Further sightings up until the end of the year were of singles at Sidlesham on 19 Sep, at Arundel WWT on 22 and 23 Sept, over Old Duford (Warnham) on 26 Sep and 8 Oct and at Pagham Hbr/Sidlesham on 2, 4 and 5 Oct. None of these birds has been accepted as wild and it seems very likely that all were of captive origin. [PJ]

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Very scarce but increasing visitor.

The sole record for 2017 was of one at West Beach (Selsey) from 14 to 26 Nov (AH, SAR, *et al.*). During its stay, it frequented a fenced off compound at the western end of the Bunn Leisure Caravan Park, just outside the boundary of RSPB Medmerry. The county total moves on to c.71, of which 29 have been this century. [PJ]

Spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia

Very 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 but it is possible there is some duplication as birds may have been seen in more than one location.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1	-	2	5	1	1	2	6	13	12	2	1
Pagham Hbr/Medmerry	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	5	5	1	1
Rustington	-	--	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shoreham	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Telscombe Cliffs	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cuckmere Haven	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	-	2	-	1	1	1	2	7	7	-	-

It was a very slow start to the year, with one at Pagham Hbr on 18 Jan and two at Rye Hbr on 26 Mar, the only reports in the first quarter. In April a lone bird flew past Telscombe Cliffs on the 2nd, the only sea-watching record for the year. It was followed by another at Medmerry on the 18th, with three there from the 22nd to the 24th, one at Cuckmere Haven on the 30th and one at Rustington on the same day. The only other spring records all related to a long-staying bird at Rye Hbr, present from 16 May to 3 Jun.

The first returning birds were one at Rye Hbr on 22 Jul, another at Cuckmere Haven five days later and two at Pett Level on 6 Aug. Thereafter, two were recorded regularly throughout August from Rye Hbr, with one in Pagham Hbr from the 12th to the 19th, three at Medmerry on the 21st, two at the former site the following day and one in the Cuckmere Haven on the 24th and 25th.

There was an influx in late September, with a single bird in Shoreham Hbr on the 25th followed by five together in Pagham Hbr on the 26th and then seven together in Rye Hbr on the 28th, with the latter flock departing on 3 Oct and the former slowly diminishing by mid-month, leaving one that remained in the area to the year's end. The only other autumn record was of one at Cuckmere Haven on 25 Nov. [AH]

Eurasian Bittern*Botaurus stellaris*

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

The maximum 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	4	5	4	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	2
Chichester GPs	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chichester Marina	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Burton MP	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
West Langney Lake	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pevensy Levels	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rotherfield	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1

Unusually, most were seen in West Sussex during the early part of the year, with regular sightings of two different birds at Chichester GPs from 3 Jan until 18 Feb and others at Burton MP on 19 and 20 Jan and Chichester Marina on 15 and 17 Feb. Apart from singles at Pevensy Levels on 12 Feb and 12 Mar, Rotherfield Mills on 6 Mar and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 10 Mar, most of the records from East Sussex were from Rye Hbr, where one bird was recorded regularly from the start of the year until 10 May and two were there on 8 Jan. Booming was heard frequently from 10 Mar until 27 Apr, though breeding was not suspected. There was one summer record of one at Pett Level on 18 Jul.

There were just four reports in the autumn and second winter period, from Rye Hbr on 29 Oct and 26 Dec, Chichester Marina on 6 Nov and on 1 Dec one was captured by a remote camera set to monitor mink activity in the rifes behind the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) but never actually seen! [AH]

Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Very scarce but increasing visitor.

2017 was an exceptional year for this southern heron with a probable total of 19 (a county record, exceeding the 18 minimum of 2008) although some duplication is possible. The monthly totals were as follows:

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

In January there were two in fields beside the A26 at Tarring Neville (Newhaven) from the 2nd to the 5th (LB, DC, JFC, PC, et al.). There were no further records until 19 Mar when there was one at Down Level (Pevensy) (CFB) followed by two in the lower Cuckmere Valley at Litlington from 27 Mar to 15 Apr (BT, LJT, et al.) and single birds at Pett Level on 2 Apr (CHD) and at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 16 and 17 Apr (KGB). There was an intriguing record of an apparent family party comprising two adults and an immature at an undisclosed location on 13 Jul (GL, SHL

et al) although from where they had originated is unknown. In August there were up to two at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) from the 1st to the 20th (BGRI, KJ et al), one at Thorney Deeps on the 6th (CBC, MAC) and up to three at Litlington from the 14th to at least 2 Sep (mo). Three further records comprised single birds at Widewater (Lancing) on 18 Sep (JH), Pagham Hbr on 11 Oct (RH) and Lewes Brooks on 27 and 28th (RG, ARK). The upward trend of recent years continues with the county total this century moving on to at least 78. [PJ]



Cattle Egret, Widewater, September 2017 (Karen Weston)

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Fairly common resident.

Grey Herons were recorded from 305 tetrads (33%) across the county (compared with 342 in 2016). 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	92	126	105	98	89	84	102	125	135	171	146	103
Chichester Hbr	16	7	9	12	12	17	12	21	25	22	20	14
Arun Valley N of Arundel	13	17	11	16	6	16	16	17	23	19	14	9
Kneppmill Pond	3	9	3	3	5	-	1	1	3	5	3	18
Weir Wood Res	3	14	30	24	28	13	13	23	20	12	3	4
Lower Ouse Valley	6	5	4	2	2	1	-	-	12	7	16	2
Pevensey Levels	5	11	11	11	10	4	6	7	7	10	10	4
Rye Bay	11	15	5	9	5	11	14	9	5	17	24	9
Average county total 2007-2016	85	88	108	73	61	73	84	97	137	123	119	92

The monthly totals were higher than the ten-year average in all months except for March and September.

During the breeding season 280 nests were counted at 32 sites as part of the BTO Heronries Survey. This is a slight increase on the 254 nests at 30 sites in 2016. Counts for individual heronries with occupied nests were Thorney Little Deeps (Chichester Hbr) 3, Forest Mere (Liphook) 3, Old Park Wood (Fishbourne) 4, Norton Priory 4, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 13, Hoe Farm (Flansham)

14, Warningcamp (Arundel) 6, Northpark Wood (Parham) 21, Kneppmill Pond 15, Warnham LNR 18, Stretham Manor (Henfield) 2, Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) 4, Hammonds Mill Fm (Burgess Hill) 2, Ardingly Res 8, Weir Wood Res 42, Rodmell 6, Decoy Pond (Firle) 4, Hempstead Wood (Uckfield) 2, Friston Forest 6, Hadlow Down 11, Eridge Old Park 17, Hampden Park (Eastbourne) 4, Glyndley Manor (Hailsham) 20, Wadhurst Park Lake 4, Great Coppice Wood (Bayham) 2, Wartling 5, Burwash 17, Alder Shaw (Brede Level) 4, Winchelsea 6, Houghton Green (Playden) 1.

Former heronries at New Lake (Chichester GP), Ham Manor GC (Angmering), Wyckham Wood (Henfield), Iford Brooks (Lewes), Lusteds (Glynleigh) and Castle Pit (Rye Hbr) were checked but no nests found.

Away from the heronries, large reservoirs and harbours, most reports were of one, two or three birds at ponds streams and marshy areas. Double figure counts were reported from the Parham Estate (11 on 28 Mar), the lower Cuckmere Valley (11 on 31 Aug and 14 on 25 Sep) and Pulborough Brooks (12 on 15 Oct and 10 on 6 Nov). [LS]

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.

2017 was an exceptional year for this often secretive heron with five different birds recorded, the highest annual total for the county. On 20 Apr, one at Medmerry flew in and landed in a ditch before flying off again soon afterwards, heading east (DK, JK, BO'D) whilst on 22 Apr, two flew in off the sea there with a Grey Heron (CAH, JH). The remaining two records were of one seen in flight with three Grey Herons at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Apr (PP), before departing northwards, and one in flight at Pett Level on 25 May (DGB). These are the first records since 2013 taking the county total to 66, of which 18 have been this century. [PJ]

Great White Egret

Ardea alba

Scarce but increasing visitor.

A total of approximately 43 birds was recorded during the year, continuing the upward trend of recent years. The approximate monthly totals (which may include some duplication) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
4	2	4	4	2	3	2	-	6	6	21	9

In the far east of the county, where the species is now regular in the winter months, there were numerous records of single birds up until 19 Mar but three at Scotney GP on 22 Jan. Elsewhere, the bird first seen at Arundel WWT on 31 Dec 2016 remained in the Arundel/Burpham area until 23 Mar whilst other sightings for the first winter period were of single birds (perhaps from Arundel) at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Jan and 16 Feb and Waltham Brooks on 12 Jan; there were two at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Mar.

During spring, there was one at Rye Hbr on 7 Apr, another at Pagham Hbr on the 22nd followed by single birds flying east past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 23rd and Telscombe Cliffs (Portobello) on 27 Apr, 9 May and 26 May. One which flew east past Portobello on 26 May was presumably that seen at Seven Sisters CP the same day. In June, one was at Arundel WWT on the 1st and two flew west past Splash Point on the 8th.

There was then a gap until 10 Jul when there was one at Cuckmere Haven. There was then a further gap until 15 Sep when there were two at Hastings. In the far east of the county at Rye Hbr, there were two on 25 Sep, three on the 26th, and then regular sightings until the end of the year including an exceptional 14 within the Rye Hbr SSSI on 19 Nov, a county record.

Elsewhere in East Sussex, there were single birds at Pevensey Levels on 17 Oct and 15 Dec, Lewes Brooks on 1 Nov, Hastings on the 2nd, in a garden at Netherfield Hill on 11 Dec and up to three at Darwell Res between 28 Oct and 26 Dec. In West Sussex, there were single birds at Pagham Hbr on 29 and 30 Sep and 5 Nov and three at Medmerry on 28 Nov. [PJ]

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Scarce and increasing resident and probably scarce autumn visitor; status as winter visitor uncertain.

Little Egrets were recorded from 184 tetrads (20%), concentrated mainly in river valleys and estuaries. 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	69	69	132	66	50	97	198	278	278	387	225	110
Chichester Hbr	26	21	57	22	20	51	63	99	152	216	107	45
Medmerry	5	2	7	8	4	7	13	20	16	26	9	6
Pagham Hbr	4	1	10	9	13	3	28	78	58	65	19	8
Rye Bay	12	21	15	12	6	14	40	40	21	27	52	10
Average county total 2007-2016	75	66	112	67	59	76	142	182	322	274	151	90

Breeding was confirmed from 11 tetrads, with total of 62 occupied nests recorded from nine heronries, fewer than the 72 nests found in 2016. Nest counts were: Thorney Little Deepes (Chichester Hbr) 4, Old Park Wood (Bosham) 7, Hoe Farm (Flansham) 2, Warningcamp (Arundel) 4, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 21, Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) 8, Rodmell 4, Winchelsea 3 and Friston Forest 9. Heronries at New Lake (Chichester GP), Weir Wood Res, Iford Brooks, Lusteds (Glynleigh) and Castle Pit (Rye Hbr) were checked but no nests found.

The highest counts were recorded during post breeding dispersal. Away from the WeBS sites shown above, there were 40 at Weir Wood Res on 20 Jun, 34 in the lower Arun Valley on 12 Jul, 45 left the roost at Ferring Rife on 16 Aug, 30 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 21 Aug and 41 at Worthing on 30 Sep. The highest counts in the second winter period not mentioned above were 15 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 6 Nov and 20 Dec and 12 at Arundel WWT on 9 Dec. [LS]

Gannet

Morus bassanus

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

Movements at five principal seawatching sites are shown in the table below. The figures illustrate that, as in previous years, numbers recorded at Selsey Bill make up a substantial proportion of the totals. At Selsey Bill the annual totals (those recorded moving both east and west but excluding those recorded feeding offshore) have exceeded 10,000 in five of the last six years but 2017 was exceptional with a total of 23,563 which is far above the previous record of 14,021 in 2015.

	Jan-Feb		Mar-May		Jun-Jul		Aug-Oct		Nov-Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	1491	4682	6246	2133	1624	663	710	3727	1624	663
Worthing	86	347	589	27	39	24	40	189	39	24
Telscombe Cliffs	659	320	872	46	577	153	970	1614	577	153
Splash Point	789	56	1408	4	20	-	-	-	20	-
Birling Gap	500	-	945	-	60	-	-	-	60	-

In total contrast to last year, when there were no three-figure counts in either January or February, this year there were seventeen such counts. At Selsey Bill there were five counts of over one hundred birds in January and four in February with peaks of 726 W on 1 Jan and 1183 W on 29 Jan. At other sites, three-figure counts were recorded at Worthing (one) with 184 W on 9 Jan, Telscombe Cliffs (three) including 136 E on 25 Jan, Splash Point (Seaford) (two) with 425 E on 2 Feb and Birling Gap (two) including 153 E on 28 Jan. During this period there were also impressive offshore concentrations of feeding birds. In January there were 600 off Selsey Bill on the 4th and 400 there on the 10th; smaller numbers elsewhere included 100 of Middleton-on-Sea, 80 at Climping, 100 at Worthing, 40 at Brighton Marina, but only 20 in Rye Bay.

Large numbers continued to feed offshore at Selsey Bill in February with 100 to 500 recorded on nine dates during the month. March was a much quieter month with no three-figure counts and the next really significant movement was of 959 E at Selsey Bill on 30 Apr when there were also 202 E off Worthing. The predominantly easterly movements, which were probably feeding trips, continued off Selsey Bill throughout the first half of May with totals of 1251 E and 185 W between the 1st and the 13th.

May, June and July were typically quiet with the exceptions being 300 E at Selsey Bill and 240 E at Splash Point on 14 May and 339 E past Selsey Bill on 7 Jun. August was another quiet month, with the peak movement being 315 W at Selsey Bill on the 17th, and it was not until the last ten days of September that numbers increased with peak counts of 300 W at Selsey Bill on the 23rd plus 184 W at Goring and 228 W at Telscombe Cliffs on the 30th. Rye Bay attracted 200 feeding birds on 3 Sep with a further 120 there on 24 Sep. The main highlights during October were the feeding parties in East Sussex with peak counts of 460 off Fairlight on the 8th and 200 in Rye Bay on the 15th. Numbers in November were surprisingly low with little evidence of westerly dispersal and it was not until the last week of December that this occurred with a total of 2296 W off Selsey Bill between the 24th and the 31st. [DHH]

Shag

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant: rare away from the coast. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Shags were recorded from 12 coastal tetrads with the majority from Selsey Bill. The aggregate monthly totals from Selsey Bill seawatch are shown in the following table.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
4	24	12	16	5	1	3	2	16	13	35	27

Elsewhere individuals were seen in the first winter period from Medmerry (16 Jan), Pagham Hbr (1 Mar), Lancing (11 Jan), West Beach (Newhaven) (19 Jan) and Splash Point (Seaford) (16 Jan). In April and May Shags were seen from Worthing (two on 24 Apr, one on 4 and 12 May), Splash Point

(27 May) and Cuckmere Haven (7 May) with one from Beachy Head on 20 Apr, eight there on the 22nd and one on the 29th.

In the period August to December individuals were seen from Lancing (3 Aug), Brighton Marina (16 Aug and 4 Dec) and Beachy Head (30 Sep). Numbers recorded were generally higher than in 2016 but lower than 2015. [LS]

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.

Cormorants were recorded from 237 (26%) tetrads, a slight increase on 2016. The records are clustered along the coast, water bodies and river valleys. 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	596	658	656	508	611	507	741	793	530	1014	701	731
Chichester Hbr	29	38	22	3	8	10	8	11	50	35	80	68
Medmerry	19	12	35	24	37	38	45	43	69	104	44	30
Pagham Hbr	99	95	68	38	30	2	46	110	30	109	54	140
Chichester GP	12	64	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	66	59	78
Weir Wood Res	56	31	25	18	15	13	23	30	22	27	29	73
Rye Bay	152	246	353	377	476	402	548	479	169	367	204	93
Average county total 2007-2016	519	514	518	422	484	511	558	625	651	657	639	565

The numbers in Rye Bay in the first winter period returned to those seen in 2015 and numbers at Weir Wood Res have steadily increased. In addition to the counts in the table above there were 240 at Scotney GP on 22 Jan, 150 at Arlington Res on 22 Jan and 52 at Ardingly Res on 14 Jan.

Seawatchers at Selsey Bill reported 39 offshore and 42 flying east in 2 hr 40 min on 27 Jan and noted that traditionally birds roosted at Pagham Hbr and flew out west past the Bill to feed offshore or in the Solent but are now coming east from the Medmerry roost to feed offshore. There were 150 offshore on 12 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed from five sites with a minimum of 341 nests, a 20% increase over 2016. At the sites used in recent years, New Lake (Chichester GPs) had c.120 nests, similar to previous years, and Rye Hbr 215 nests, a significant increase, but there was no breeding at Iford Brooks (Lewes) where the nests had been destroyed by Hurricane Katie in 2016. Birds were reported on nests from 23 Mar at Rye Hbr. Breeding was reported for the first time at Medmerry with four apparently occupied nests, and there were four nests at Weir Wood Res and at Kneppmill Pond where an adult with two fledged young was seen on 20 May.

During the summer and the autumn the largest concentrations were in the Rye Bay and Pett Level areas, where counts between 100 and 200 were regular, with 413 at Rye Hbr on 13 Aug, 400 at Pett Level on 29 Oct and 106 roosting in Hastings CP on 9 Sep. Inland there were 60 at Wadhurst Park on 1 Oct and 56 at Bewl Water on 11 Aug. In the second winter period, additional to the WeBS counts in the table above, observers at Pett Level and Rye Hbr continued to record counts over 100 and there were 80 roosting on the island in Burton MP on 14 Dec. [LS]

Osprey*Pandion haliaetus*

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

The first Osprey of 2017 was one seen coming in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 21 Mar, only two days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date of 23 Mar, and was subsequently recorded heading north over Sidlesham. The first sighting at Weir Wood Res was of one on 23 Mar followed by two on the 25th seen from Whilleys Bridge, one of which stayed to the 27th. Other sightings in March involved individuals at Pagham Hbr on the 26th and 27th, at Angmering and Rusper on the 28th and Bognor Regis on the 30th.

During the first two weeks of April a further 12 birds were recorded, mostly at West Sussex coastal or near-coastal sites, the exceptions being one at Lewes on the 6th and another at Weir Wood Res on the 7th. It was then another week before one was at Kingston (Lewes) on the 23rd followed by another at Arlington Res on the 24th which is presumed to have stayed to the 30th.

At least seven more Ospreys were recorded in May; one at Weir Wood Res on the 1st is presumed to have stayed to the 10th, one at Ardingly Res on 9th and laggards were seen at Littlehampton on the 20th, Pevensey Levels on the 26th and at Weir Wood Res on the 31st. Two rather late migrants were seen at Rye Hbr on 16 Jun and, finally, the 29th.

The approximate numbers, after allowing for possible duplication and for those which lingered, were as follows:

Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
9	15	7	2	-	6	13	4	1

The first return passage bird, seen unsuccessfully fishing at Cuckmere Haven on 7 Aug, was followed by another at Pagham Hbr on the 11th and another over Amberley Wild Brooks on the 16th. Others followed: an adult at Thorney Island on the 20th to 24th seen fishing, and single birds at Pagham Hbr on the 22nd and Bexhill on the 27th (recorded by a GBW participant).

There was a small flurry of records in early September including one individual at Pagham Hbr from the 4th to 6th, Weir Wood Res on the 4th, a juvenile at Thorney Deeps on the 9th, one at Bewl Water on the 21st, two juveniles at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on the 24th with one there on the 25th and one sitting in a large tree at Coultershaw Bridge (Petworth) on the 28th. Four Ospreys were recorded in early October at Ardingly Res, Weir Wood Res and Sidlesham; the last record for 2017 was of one recorded over the University of Sussex on 1 Nov, five days later than the 10-year average last date of 27 Oct. [BGRI]

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. It was a more productive year compared to 2016 with confirmed breeding at five locations. One pair re-occupied a nest in a Douglas Fir for the fourth consecutive year and raised two young. A second pair re-occupied a nest in a Beech and raised one young. At a third regular breeding site the adults were regularly seen going in and out of the nesting wood,

but with restrictive access the nest was not located. Two new nesting sites were found by the study group, in the first of which an Oak tree was chosen, and it had two young, and at the second site the nest was in a Douglas Fir and it contained just one youngster.

Several migrants were seen in late May and early June. A probable female was seen over Offham Hanger on 21 May (MCD), a male was soaring over Patching with a Red Kite and Common Buzzard on 22 May (APB) and another male flew close by the observer at Pett Level on 25 May (MJC). There was a male bird at Broadwater Warren RSPB on 28 May (GR) and another male over East Dean (East Sussex) on 2 Jun (RCS). During the summer months there were numerous reports of inland sightings, most of which are likely to relate to breeding pairs and therefore given a large measure of protection.

The autumn migration began on 26 Aug with an adult male heading SE at Went Hill (Beachy Head) at 1050hr and then a second bird seen flying east at Michel Dean at 1245hr (JP, LP). The latter was thought to be either a female or a juvenile but bearing in mind the early date it was more likely to be an adult, as juveniles do not usually migrate before the second half of September/October. On 29 Aug an adult male bird was observed for 15 minutes as it flew south over Steyning (CAH). At and near Beachy Head there were four more autumn records, with a dark juvenile flying out to sea on 15 Sep (GWG,SHL) and another migrant flying south on 29 Sep (MEC,RHC). There was a brown juvenile heading south out to sea at Birling Gap on 3 Oct (RDME,MM) and another juvenile heading south across the sea at Seaford Head on 6 October (RCS). [MEK]

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

Common resident and passage migrant.

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 364 tetrads (40%), the highest number in recent years. Most records during the year were of single birds but there were 124 records of two, an increase on previous years, and 16 of three. The highest counts during the first quarter were threes at East Grinstead on 19 Jan, Handcross on 6 Feb and Warnham LNR on 5 Mar. On 11 Apr five were seen to come in off the sea at Beachy Head. Threes were at Medmerry on 19 May and Fernhurst on the 28th.

Breeding was confirmed in only 12 tetrads and probable in ten. Sparrowhawks are secretive when nesting and this represents under recording of breeding evidence for this species. The earliest record of display was 13 Feb at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) and the first record of confirmed breeding was an occupied nest on 3 Jun at Scaynes Hill. Fledglings were first recorded on 18 Jul at Angmering.

The highest autumn counts were fives at Burnt Oak (Crowborough) on 24 Aug and Seaford Head on 27 Aug and four at Edburton on 29 Oct. Of the five at Seaford Head one flew south out to sea. There were nine records of three during the autumn but second winter period counts did not exceed two.

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 139 (60%) gardens during the GBW, no doubt attracted to birds coming to feeding stations. Prey species recorded were Common Redshank, Feral Pigeon, Woodpigeon, Green Woodpecker, Great Tit, Common Starling, Song Thrush, Redwing, Meadow Pipit and Greenfinch. [MJC]

Goshawk*Accipiter gentilis*

Scarce but increasing resident. Schedule 1 species.

The population and distribution of this charismatic raptor continue to expand in Sussex, meriting the change in status from “very scarce” to “scarce”. The number of occupied territories rose from ten to eleven in 2016 to between 17 and 19 in 2017. Of these, breeding was proved at five sites, probable at two and possible at a further eight. Dispersal and territory establishment away from the core areas is relatively slow (although low observer coverage or reporting in the extensive suitable habitat may play a part), but increases in density within these areas have been striking.

In one area of West Sussex, at least eight territories were occupied by either pairs or apparently single birds. These territories were broadly contiguous, often leading to protracted boundary disputes between females in February and March. Breeding was proved at three sites, with at least two young fledged at two locations, and at least one at a third. It is quite likely that other pairs did breed however, as evidenced by the increasing autumn records of juveniles. Second calendar year birds were also a feature of the display period in early spring.

In another part of West Sussex, there were five adjacent territories. Breeding was confirmed at two of these, with three juveniles fledging successfully in one and at least two in the other. At the first site, up to eight Goshawks were observed during the year, including two second calendar year individuals that may have been from the 2016 nest, one of which, a male, was still present on 9 Sep. A juvenile was present with an adult pair on 25 Oct at a third site where there had been several sightings earlier in the year, including of a displaying male, indicating probable breeding. Breeding was possible at the two other sites. Elsewhere in West Sussex, breeding probably occurred at another site, where territorial behaviour by an adult female was noted in March, and nearby a second calendar year female may also have held territory.

There were records from four areas of East Sussex. At one, an adult male and second calendar year female were present in the breeding season, but no juveniles were seen and it was thought that the breeding attempt failed. At the second site, singles were seen on three dates, including in April, but there was no further evidence of breeding. At a third location, an adult male and adult female were seen on different dates in May and at the fourth location, a second calendar year female was photographed on 9 Mar.

Although Goshawks can be seen at any time of year flying over their home ranges, the best time to search for them is in late winter and early spring, especially the period from mid-February to the first week of April when females in particular establish or reclaim their territories and males may also be observed displaying. In addition, well grown and fledged young are very noisy around nest sites in late June and early July and can sometimes be heard from public rights of way without approaching nest sites, which does of course require a Schedule 1 licence. Juveniles can also be conspicuous in late summer and autumn flying above their natal areas. [DBu, MM]

Marsh Harrier*Circus aeruginosus*

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

Marsh Harriers were recorded in 66 (7.2%) tetrads, an increase on the 60 in 2016. Records were received in every month of the year from the Arun Valley (including Pulborough Brooks), Pevensy

Levels, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. As birds roam widely, estimating the approximate minimum monthly totals can be problematical; conservative estimates are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	22	18	15	12	11	11	14	16	19	20	22	25

Most records during the first winter period came from the above named sites. High counts were fives at Rye Hbr on 5 Jan and 8 Feb and at Pett Level on 19 Feb and four at Arundel WWT on 2 Jan and 4 Feb. At Selsey Bill on 24 Mar a female flew north and a male was seen to fly in off the sea.

Breeding was confirmed at only one site, where two young fledged, but was probable or possible at a further four sites. Food passing was observed at one of these sites and a pair held territory at another.

In addition to the usual sites birds were recorded from more varied locations during the autumn. The first sign of migration may have been one in the Cuckmere Valley on 29 Jul, with it or another at Beachy Head and Charleston Reedbed on 1 Aug. At Pulborough Brooks birds were recorded on 16 dates in August, beginning on the 1st. On the 5th, one was seen at Seaford, one at Telscombe Cliffs and one at Folkington (Polegate), possibly the same. Up to three were at Chantry Hill (Storrington) between 23 and 25 Aug and one to three on further dates during the autumn. Singles were seen at Fishbourne and at Pagham Hbr on the 19th, Thorney Deeps on the 22nd and Barnham on the 27th. In September there was one each at Steyning and Seaford Head on the 9th, at Arlington Res the next day, at Warnham LNR on the 14th and one or two at The Burgh (Burpham) on three dates (6th, 17th and 24th). One was at Thorney Deeps on the 14th and others on the 23rd and 26th. Beachy Head observers recorded one on the 15th and the 16th and one was in the Medmerry/Pagham area between the 17th and the 20th and another there on 2 Oct. From mid-October birds seemed to be settling into their wintering locations with a high count of five at Pett Level on the 22nd.

In the second winter period there were some high counts. In November five were at Pett Level on the 5th, six at Arundel WWT on the 17th, three at Pulborough Brooks on the 13th and three at Pevensey Levels on 24 and 28 Dec, but all of these were surpassed by ten roosting in reedbeds at Pett Level on 17 Dec, some of which surely came to roost from the nearby Romney Marsh. [MJC]

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Circus cyaneus

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

Hen Harriers were recorded in only 30 (3.3%) tetrads and sadly there were no records from Ashdown Forest during the whole year. The sum of the monthly totals was 46, an increase on the past three years but still a poor showing, reflecting the Hen Harrier's declining fortunes due to continued illegal persecution. Minimum monthly totals are shown in the following table.

[illegible]

Pevensey Levels	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3
Rye Bay	1	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other sites	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

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

In January, there were probably three birds on the West Sussex Downs, including The Burgh (Burpham), where they were recorded on eight dates with two on the 20th, one at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 6th; and one at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 21st. Where noted, all were ringtails. There were records from Pevensey Levels on two dates and at Scotney GP on three dates.

In February, all sightings were of one bird except for two at The Burgh on the 26th, where there were records on ten dates. A ringtail on the 3rd and a male on the 15th were reported at Rye Hbr and a ringtail seen at Scotney GP on the 5th may have been the same as the individual at Rye Hbr two days earlier. On the 21st one was at Graffham Down and one at Devils Dyke (Brighton). Most records during March were from The Burgh with two seen there on the 4th and 6th. A ringtail was present at Applesham Fm (Coombes) for a week in the middle of the month and another ringtail was seen at Pevensey Levels from the 10th to the 12th.

Records in April suggest at least eight individuals were seen: at The Burgh on the 1st, 5th and 14th; near Steyning on the 2nd, 3rd and 19th; a ringtail at both the University of Sussex and Woolbeding Common on the 7th; a male arrived in off the sea at Beachy Head on the 17th. A ringtail flew south over Haywards Heath on 18 Apr and was possibly the same individual seen at Balmer Down (Lewes) the next day. Singles were at Seaford on the 29th and Pevensey Levels the next day. There were three records in May: a male at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) and one at Rye Hbr, both on the 4th and a ringtail flying SW over Bognor Regis on the 23rd.

Summer records of this species are rare, but a male was seen flying low south at Winchelsea on 5 Jul.

The four August birds were one at The Burgh on the 16th, two at Pagham Hbr on the 28th and one at Denton (Newhaven) the same day. A male at Chantry Hill on 16 Sep was followed by probably three but possibly four individuals in October; one was in the Medmerry and Pagham areas on the 4th and 5th and at The Burgh on the 14th. Two were seen at Pevensey Levels, a ringtail on the 15th and a male on the 19th. Most November records were from Pulborough Brooks where a ringtail was present from the 19th and stayed until the end of the year. In December, observers at Pevensey Levels saw birds on at least five dates involving three or four individuals; two males on the 6th, a female on the 24th, two unspecified on the 28th and one ringtail and one male on the 30th. [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.

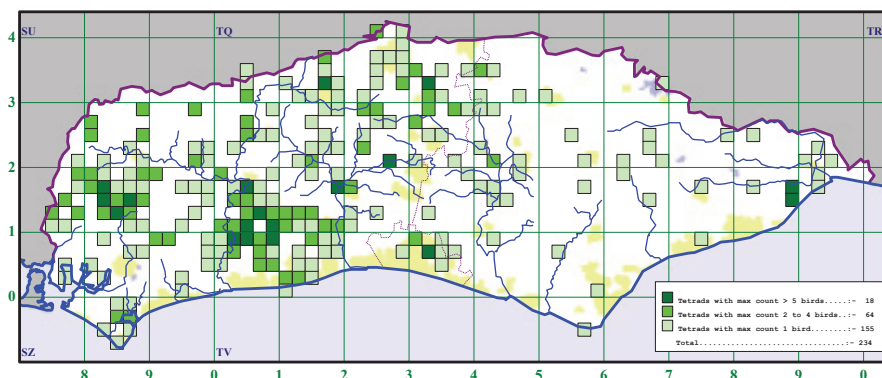
There was just one record in 2017 of an adult male at Cuckmere Haven on 25 Aug (AG, SS). The county total this century moves on to 50. [PJ]

Red Kite

Milvus milvus

Scarce breeding resident (first bred in 2004) and fairly common and increasing visitor.
Schedule 1 species

Red Kites were recorded in 234 (26%) tetrads; the following map showing clearly that most are seen in West Sussex.



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	117	80	103	93	122	106	58	25	26	55	80	40
West Dean	40	25	15	12	10	10	1	0	4	13	15	15
The Burgh	60	30	20	15	15	15	10	10	15	12	49	5
Other sites	17	25	68	66	97	81	47	15	7	30	25	20

In 2017, more than a thousand records were submitted, providing a great deal of very interesting data, much of which is encapsulated in the table above. The two downland roosts have been counted for many years and between these two roosts the numbers continue to rise. In January there was a new county record when 60 birds went into roost at The Burgh (Burpham), with a further 40 at the West Dean roost. Peak numbers are usually recorded between mid-December and mid-January, but an early winter count was done at The Burgh on 6 Nov, when there was a minimum of 40. As there was no follow-up roost count for December there is the anomalous figure of just five for the downland area between Amberley and Storrington, as this was the highest casual figure recorded. This is one of those species where the numbers for any given area can be grossly underestimated.

Adult Red Kites that have already bred successfully are unlikely to stray far from their nesting woods, but immature birds (and adults that have yet to breed) are likely to wander far and wide. This "fine-weather movement" of Red Kites takes place between March and June every year, often peaking in May. Red Kites may be seen anywhere in Sussex and increasingly quite sizeable flocks are being recorded. A flock of 12 was at Partridge Green on 23 May, where they were attracted to some fields where the grass was being cut for silage. Another six were seen drifting east over the hillfort at Brighton Wild Park on the same date. Two days later, a flock of five passed through Pett Level and an astonishing 20 were seen following balers at Winchelsea on 3 Jun. Eight were seen at Hickstead on 18 Jun and once again it was a silage cut which had apparently brought them together.

In late summer there were nine together at Michelgrove (Patching) on 29 Aug and in the autumn there were six at Burpham on 4 Oct and ten in the Chantry Hill area on 12 Oct. In a two-hour period, there were 13 at West Dean Woods on 16 Oct and on 30 Oct there was a flock of 11 at Pulborough Brooks with 12 seen at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on the same day.

Without very intensive fieldwork it is impossible to estimate the breeding population with any accuracy but based on 16 years of study a reasonable best-guess would be around 40 to 50 pairs. There was just one report of successful breeding with three juveniles and two adults seen up together on 5 Jul. [MEK]



Red Kite, The Burgh, January 2017 (Ian Redman)

Common Buzzard

Buteo buteo

Fairly common and increasing resident; probably scarce passage migrant.

Common Buzzards were distributed across the county and recorded in 559 tetrads (61%), fewer than the previous three years. There were 70 counts of ten or more, 57 in West Sussex and 13 in East Sussex; whether this is due to there being more individuals in West Sussex or more observers recording birds in West Sussex is difficult to determine but more high counts were submitted than in any previous year. The highest first winter counts were 21 at The Burgh (Burpham) on the 16 Feb, 21 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 20 Feb, 20 at St Leonards Forest on the 5 Feb and 20 at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Mar. During the SWBS there were 154 encounters from 75 (57%) 1-km squares surveyed during January and February.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and probable in a further 70. There were many records of display, beginning in early January, but few details of breeding. The first record of nest building was from Ditchling Common on 7 Mar, the earliest record of confirmed breeding was of one carrying

food at Twyford (Ashdown Forest) on 18 Apr and the first fledged young were seen at Danehill on 13 Jul. During the BBS, Common Buzzards were recorded in 55% of 1-km squares surveyed with a high of seven at Nutley on 8 Apr.

The highest summer counts were 20 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 23 Aug, 17 at The Burgh on 16 Aug and 15 around The Horder Centre (Ashdown Forest) on 13 Aug. Most records during the autumn were of fewer than five but there were some high counts: in September 24 were at Pagham Hbr on the 15th and 18 at Patching on the 9th. At Paddockhurst there were around 15 through September and October and 15 were at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on 30 Oct. There were four double figure counts during the second winter period with a high of 16 at South Chailey on 17 Nov. The late year SWBS produced comparable figures to those earlier in the year with 143 encounters from 85 (53%) of surveyed 1-km squares.

The only prey species reported were a snake or slowworm and a rabbit. [MJC]

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

Very scarce resident; scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were 690 records from 63 (6.9%) tetrads (back to the level of 2014 after the peak of 79 in 2015, and 68 in 2016). Birds were reported from Pett Level in each month of the year and from Arundel WWT in eleven months. An approximate number recorded in each month is shown in the following table:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
54	42	33	11	9	5	6	13	25	49	51	71

Alongside regular sites e.g. the stream running down from Rodmell village to the Ouse – other less familiar locations featured, albeit just once, among them the Lurgashall MP; the Wiston Estate; Broadmare Common (Henfield); the River Mole at the west end of Gatwick Airport; Princes Park (Eastbourne); and Ashburnham Furnace.

Breeding was confirmed at The Mumbles, Steyning, where two juveniles were seen in May, and at Arundel WWT, where one juvenile with traces of black down was seen in July. Breeding probably occurred at another five sites. One at Glynde Level on 25 Apr was the only one found in the BBS.

At the well watched Southwater CP there were 26 records up to 12 Mar and then almost daily records from 1 Nov to the end of the year; all were of single birds.

The first returning birds to be noted at Thorney Deeps were heard on 14 Sep. A migrant loitered at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) from 26 Oct to 3 Nov. Good numbers were again in the county at the end of the year, with five at Arundel WWT and Ferring Rife; six at Warnham LNR, King's Barn WTW (Steyning), West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) and Thorney Deeps; and seven at the North Wall of Pagham Hbr. By contrast, numbers at The Severals (Church Norton) were well down. [CB]

Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

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

Moorhens were recorded in 288 (32%) tetrads (cf. 298 in 2016). Monthly counts at the principal WeBS sites were as in the table below:

In the early year SWBS birds were noted in 26 (20%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 14 at Rustington on 26 Jan. On 9 Jan 21 were at Ditchling Common and 24 were

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	518	481	422	252	138	182	210	228	304	428	531	480
Chichester Harbour	70	96	37	16	6	7	13	11	16	26	66	85
Chichester Canal	65	64	57	33	17	15	35	nc	68	74	103	66
Arun N of Arundel	137	102	113	56	38	59	59	89	90	105	102	101
Brooklands (Worthing)	37	40	25	29	11	12	2	4	10	18	43	34
Average county total 2007-2016	603	593	514	251	203	188	293	361	592	617	646	642

at Falmer Pond on the 15th. Early year counts are often higher than those from after the breeding season: Mewsbrook Park (Rustington) held 12 to 15 between January and April but only single figure numbers thereafter. GBW returns told a similar story: there were records from 4.5% of sites in the first three months of the year, from 3.2% in the second, 2.4% in the third and only 0.5% in the fourth quarter.

Birds were mating at Arundel WWT on 26 Mar. Breeding was confirmed in 40 tetrads and probable in eight (a reduction from the 46 and 13 in 2016). A pair managed to nest in the much diminished reedbed at Selsey's East Beach and, again, in a tiny housing-encircled pond in Peacehaven. Moorhens were adjudged to be 'widespread breeders' at Rye Hbr; there were 12 pairs at Pagham Hbr and seven at Medmerry. At Arundel WWT on 20 May one of a nesting pair went for a Redshank intruding into its territory but Moorhens were unable to protect their young from predatory Herring Gulls at the same site.

During the BBS 102 were found on 41 (24%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, similar to 2015 and 2016. The maximum count was six, at Rustington. Young were first noted at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 7 Apr and at Arundel WWT the next day. A pair at Saddlescombe Fm (Poynings) had five chicks on 19 May. Second brood chicks mingled with elder siblings at Ecclesbourne Glen (Hastings) on 15 Jul. An encouraging sign was the presence of a bird at the recently restored Lychpole dewpond (Sompting) on 13 Jun.

In the late year SWBS birds were found in 36 (22%) of the surveyed 1-km squares with a maximum of 18, again at Rustington on 9 Dec. Other high counts in the second winter period, not mentioned in the table above, were 62 at Arundel WWT on 20 Nov and 57 there on 11 Dec, 21 around Newhaven on 15 Dec and 20 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Nov. [CB]

Coot

Fulica atra

Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.

Coots were recorded from 167 (18%) tetrads in 2017 (cf. 172 in 2016, 184 in 2015, 168 in 2014 but only 136 in 2013).

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2780	2023	1173	604	541	699	1018	1359	1366	2309	2311	2784
Chichester Hbr	244	197	108	37	37	39	57	112	135	156	220	380
Chichester GP	570	340	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	583	621	814
Arun Valley N of Arundel	105	130	127	81	91	102	102	111	134	116	53	136
Rye Bay	946	689	299	142	134	238	365	429	380	704	454	615
Average county total 2007-2016	3485	2747	1550	678	553	782	1150	1653	2542	3054	3326	3716

Numbers in the Chichester Hbr area maintained, or improved on recent levels, with strikingly higher numbers in the summer months, but the decline around Rye Bay continues. Other substantial counts included 167 on Bewl Water on 10 Mar, 98 in Pagham Hbr in September and between 60 and 98 at Pagham Lagoon from August to November. Regular counts elsewhere and not included in the WeBS table were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Burton MP	15	8	24	18	6	6	5	22	30	78	41	100
Kneppmill Pond	214	55	76	26	18	51	139	92	130	33	23	4
Southwater CP	28	21	27	3	20	6	6	2	3	31	36	37
Warnham LNR	7	10	12	13	24	25	39	49	10	5	4	6
Brooklands (Worthing)	165	57	77	23	48	50	78	83	93	52	3	5
Barcombe Res	58	47	8	11	8	19	48	23	9	2	36	44

The varying fortunes of these, and other sites, across the year, remains striking: it is occasionally clearly explicable, for example at Brooklands, by the draining, dredging and refashioning of the site from mid-October.

Breeding was confirmed in 34 tetrads, probable in three and possible in a further 12: this represents a continuing decline (cf. 2016 confirmed in 40, probable in seven). The first young were at The Waterwoods (Arundel) on 11 Apr. There were 19 pairs around Pagham Hbr, some ten at Chichester GPs, nine at Medmerry, at least five at Arundel WWT and breeding was described as “widespread” at Rye Hbr. Coots were noted in 21 (12%) of the 172 surveyed BBS squares.

High numbers not mentioned in the above tables included 114 in Petworth Park on 25 Aug and at the end of the year 136 were at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) in November, with 143 there in December. Darwell Res was another favoured wintering location, holding around 140 birds in both months. In the late year SWBS, 66 birds were found in 11 (6.8%) of 161 squares surveyed (cf 83 in seven of 136 in 2016).

At Pett Level a bird attacked and killed a very young Canada Goose on 12 May. At Arundel WWT on 20 May, a Coot began to take slices of apple dropped by a visitor but was trumped by a Carrion Crow. [CB]

Crane

Grus grus

Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

There were seven accepted records in 2017 involving seven individuals, although two of these related to the same birds. The first flew high southeast over Hardham on 6 Mar (MPL) followed by single birds over Broadwater (Worthing) on 25 Mar (LP) and west over Bewl Water on 27 Apr (PD). On 2 May there were two over Slinfold at 08:00 (RL) and then over Small Dole at 09:30 (GFH) heading towards the South Downs. One flew east over Pevensey Levels on 7 May (NK). The final record for the year was of one at Horse Eye Level on 8 and 9 Nov (CFB et al.). The county total this century moves on 70.

With various re-introduction projects taking place in the UK, an increase in records in Sussex over the next few years seems likely. [PJ]

Stone-curlew

Burhinus oedicnemus

A very scarce passage migrant and very scarce breeder. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

During 2017, 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 a migrant bird was seen in the Arun Valley on 30 Apr and the Project received a report of a bird calling at night on the Downs on 19 May although subsequent tape-luring did not locate birds in this area. During 2017 the RSPB Sussex Project team located two pairs where habitat management and regular monitoring were possible. Through working closely with landowners, management of the breeding sites and surrounding area was adjusted to best suit the species' needs.

A pair returned to the same area as they nested in during 2015 in early April and appeared to have a nest down by 5 May. The pair consisted of one un-ringed bird and one which had been ringed as a nestling in the area in 2011 and which attempted to breed in the same area in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016. A detailed programme of monitoring started at this site but unfortunately on 19 May it was confirmed that the nest had failed, possibly due to a two day period of torrential rain. By 2 Jun the pair had put down another nest which contained two eggs, however by 21 Jun this had also failed. This pair apparently then relocated a short distance to another site and a pair had a nest down at this site by 20 Jul. On 11 Aug no bird was seen incubating the eggs and the nest was inspected. A single unringed bird flew from the plot but the two eggs were found to be cold, and there were a lot of Stone-curlew feathers on the plot including down and wing feathers which had been plucked, suggesting the other adult had been predated. On 16 Aug the nest was again inspected and the eggs were found to have been predated with spilt yolk and fragments of shell located. While leaving the nest site three adult Stone-curlew were encountered with two unringed birds accompanying the bird that had been ringed as a nestling in the area in 2011.

At a new site a farmworker encountered a pair of birds on 23 May and by 7 Jun two unringed adults and their nest containing two eggs had been located. On 20 Jun it was confirmed that two young had hatched and on 4 July all four birds were confirmed as still present. Only one chick could be located on 20 Jul and this was then ringed, and on 3 Aug this bird was seen in the company of the two adults and confirmed as fledged.

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

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 Richard Black by email at richard.black@rspb.org.uk [RAB]

Oystercatcher*Haematopus ostralegus*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	1325	1592	1150	923	500	432	629	1061	926	1881	2067	1183
Chichester Hbr	848	934	589	511	221	213	403	812	382	1474	1657	962
Pagham Hbr	230	222	211	100	61	22	6	108	176	182	96	116
Rye Bay	239	406	327	295	192	177	201	125	302	218	44	94
Average county total 2007-2016	1815	1920	1287	835	534	512	744	1112	1425	1513	1746	1725

The only counts higher than the WeBS in the first winter period were 400 at Pagham Hbr on 8 Jan and 250 at Pett Level on the 1st. As usual there were small numbers spread along the entire coast; the only counts of over 20 were 65 at Middleton-on-Sea on 2 Jan and 35 at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on the 19th. A spring migration peak in March was noticeable at Rye Hbr with 360 on the 17th.

The first record of display was at Shoreham on 25 Feb, but at Arundel WWT, where they are not seen earlier in the winter, birds had already arrived back on the 8th. A total of about 64 pairs bred, a little lower than in recent years. There were 34 nests at Rye Hbr, where success was moderate, but at Pagham Hbr 13 pairs raised only three young. At Pett Level, nine pairs nested but success was probably very low due to predation. Two pairs at Medmerry fledged two young, and single pairs nested at Shoreham, Arundel WWT, Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) and Cuckmere Haven. The regular pair on the roof of the tennis club in Rye returned for its ninth successive year, and one or two birds were noted occasionally in the Lewes and Rodmell areas between 20 Apr and 14 Jun, as they have been in previous years.

During the autumn peak, in addition to the WeBS, there were 125 at Pagham Hbr on 24 Jul and 800 at Pilsey Island on 1 Sep. Post-breeding gatherings were also noted at Cuckmere Haven, with 45 on 24 Jun and 76 on 4 Sep and there were 60 at Climping on the 10th.

In the second winter period, maximum counts higher than the WeBS were 150 at Pagham Hbr on 18 Nov, 300 at Pett Level on 29 Oct and 12 Nov, and 300 at Rye Hbr on 27 Oct and 100 on 24 Dec. Elsewhere, 260 at Cuckmere Haven on 22 Nov was a very high count for this site, and regular counts at Goring produced a maximum of 57 on 21 Nov.

Apart from those at Arundel WWT and in the Lewes area, the only other inland sightings were single birds at Weir Wood Res on 14 Apr and 27 Jul. [CJRB]

Black-winged Stilt*Himantopus himantopus*

Very scarce spring migrant. Bred in 2014. Schedule 1 species

2017 was another good year for this species with four records totalling six birds. The first at Exceat in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 29 Mar (JDV, AS et al.) was the earliest ever to be recorded in the county. It was followed by two on the R Adur at Cuckoo's Corner (Lancing) on 24 Apr (JC) and, on 2 Jun, by one at Rye Hbr (MJR, BJY) and two at The Midrips (MJCa). The county total moves on to approximately 51, of which 33 have been this century. [PJ]

Avocet*Recurvirostra avosetta*

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

Avocets were recorded in 33 (3.6%) tetrads during the year all, except for sightings at Arundel WWT on 20 Feb, at Arlington Res on 17 Mar, and at Pulborough Brooks on 27 Mar and mid-June, being coastal or estuarine sites. The monthly WeBS totals at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	55	76	137	112	148	126	18	23	-	19	38	32
Chichester Hbr	25	4	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Medmerry	-	-	34	41	57	40	18	21	-	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	30	70	30	-	-	2	-	2	-	9	38	30
Rye Bay	-	2	64	71	91	84	-	-	-	10	-	-
Average county total 2007-2016	25	38	40	71	86	78	35	12	7	9	15	28

Approximate monthly totals based on all counts are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2017	71	129	265	232	198	138	81	37	10	60	80	80
Average 2007-16	44	50	102	119	119	110	78	28	16	17	52	57

In January, wintering flocks of up to 35 in Pagham Hbr and up to 25 in Thorney Channel remained from 2016. The only other records were two at Scotney GP, the same at Rye Hbr on the 5th, and presumably a different two at Cuckmere Haven on the 28th. Numbers built up quickly in February as migrants passed through, with 27 at Rye Hbr on the 24th and a total of 90 at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on the 28th, a new county record for a single flock. Despite these large numbers, only nine were recorded in seawatching logs during the whole year, all singles except for four past Splash Point (Seaford) on 3 Mar.

A total of about 122 pairs nested, a county record for the third year running. At Rye Hbr, 68 pairs raised at least one chick each, and at Medmerry 29 pairs had very similar success, fledging 30. At Pett Level there were 25 pairs, but low water levels led to predation by badgers and foxes and few, if any young were fledged. Two lingered at Pulborough Brooks for a week in mid-June and, as usual, numbers plummeted after July as birds departed to moult on North Sea coasts, building up again from October as they returned to winter.

At Pagham Hbr, there were up to 80 in November as birds passed through, settling down to a regular flock of up to 30 in December. At Thorney Island, there was again a regular flock of up to 48 in December, and single birds were seen at Goring on the 2nd and Rye Hbr on the 5th. [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 individual sites were as in the table below:

In the first two months, overall numbers were not too dissimilar from those for the previous year; the December 2016 count had been 15,192 so the fall to 7850 in January was probably caused

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	7850	14465	370	255	151	250	595	910	339	1990	4227	4888
Chichester Hbr	1060	658	36	26	10	25	12	49	54	109	410	761
Pagham Hbr	673	1310	3	6	1	2	30	14	38	260	1005	1251
Arun Valley N of Arundel	2614	6326	69	70	33	10	10	86	71	296	1126	727
Pevensey Levels	985	282	100	65	50	40	8	10	1	63	489	192
Rye Bay	1148	3605	52	42	31	72	409	587	34	863	606	665
Average county total 2007-2016	11231	9244	993	244	211	482	839	1261	1439	3325	6780	9829



Lapwing, Pett Pools, February 2017 (Roger & Liz Charlwood)

by weather movements in January as the February total rose to 14,465, the highest count for that month since 2008. This kind of fluctuation in numbers between December, January and February has been typically experienced over the past ten years. However, by March they had mostly departed and a count of 320 (additional to the WeBS) at Pett Level on the 2nd was the highest that month and was followed by double or single figures recorded widely. During the early year SWBS 643 birds were recorded in ten (7.6%) squares from 131 surveyed with a maximum count of 300 at Pett Level on 24 Feb.

Counts during the first winter period higher than the WeBS involved 1500 in Pagham Hbr on 11 Jan, 2000 there on 15 Feb and 80 at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Mar. Similarly, 200 were counted at Sidlesham on 25 Apr and 40 at Pulborough Brooks on 4 May.

During the BBS Lapwings were recorded in 20 (12%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads, seven of which were in nature reserves with habitat management and appropriate predator deterrence, to which the species is largely confined, and was probable in a further 26 tetrads. At Rye Hbr 13 pairs nested but fledging success was low and at Pett Level breeding was described as pretty disastrous due to low water levels and mammalian predation.

Nests or chicks were also recorded from Thorney Island, Medmerry (where productivity was poor due to mammal predation and only six chicks fledged from 14 pairs), Pagham Hbr (where only one fledged from four pairs), Arundel WWT and Pulborough Brooks (where 20 fledged from 18 pairs). It is doubtful whether the total number reaching fledging was enough to drive population growth in the county.

Post-breeding gatherings, which started in May, were more in evidence in June but the first three-figure count noted was 120 at Rye Hbr on 8 Jul building to 560 on 7 Aug. Small flocks in July and August were recorded from many places. High non-WeBS counts during the summer months included 80 at Winchelsea on 3 Jun, 125 at Sidlesham on 31 Jul, 95 at Pulborough Brooks the same day, 150 at Sidlesham on 1 Aug, 600 at Rye Hbr on 10 Aug and 100 Pagham Hbr on 12 Aug.

The small summer flocks were swamped by the numbers which arrived from September onwards. Counts during the autumn and final quarter, additional to the WeBS, included 250 at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Sep, 179 at Sidlesham on the 27th and 330 at Rye Hbr on 30 Sep. Later there were 492 at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Oct, 800 at Pett Level on 19 Nov, 900 there on 3 Dec, 2000 there on 26 Dec and 1500 at Pulborough Brooks the same day. The December WeBS count of 4888 was much lower than the average for the last 10 years probably due to mild weather with generally south-westerlies. During the late year SWBS 1644 were recorded in 14 (8.7%) squares from 161 surveyed with a maximum count of 673 at New Bridge (Pevensey) on 24 Dec. [PKH]

Golden Plover

Pluvialis apricaria

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	988	1429	77	1	-	-	-	7	1	122	3623	266
Chichester Hbr	470	214	42	-	-	-	-	-	1	38	8	97
Medmerry	400	200	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1257	140
Pagham Hbr	-	421	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28	108	-
Rye Bay	118	594	35	1	-	-	-	7	-	56	2250	21
Average county total 2007-2016	1428	1320	499	50	2	0	1	141	331	1533	2219	1920

The monthly maximum counts at Rye Hbr, giving a better picture of the true numbers at this key site, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rye Hbr	450	1500	104	3	1	-	3	31	30	800	1000	3000

In the early part of the year the only counts additional to the WeBS table above were 200 at Pagham Hbr on 11 Jan and 500 there on 17 Feb. Numbers in the Arun Valley in 2017 were not exceptional. Over the past five years numbers of days and numbers of birds recorded have fluctuated widely. Between January and April they were recorded in only four years and peak counts have varied from five to 112. Similarly, between October and December peak counts have varied from three to 70. This highest counts in 2017 in the Arun Valley were five at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Feb and later, 40 on 10 Nov. Six at Newhaven Tide Mills on 28 Jan was unusual, and a flock of 100 at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Feb (with 44 still there on the 7th) was also a high count away from the eastern and western harbours. The one only movement noted from seawatch points was 19 W at Selsey Bill on 13 Apr. The last spring bird was one at Rye Hbr on 16 May.

The first autumn record was of two at Pett Level on 23 Jul and numbers at Rye Hbr were in double figures by the end of August, with the main influx in mid-October. In contrast, the first record in West Sussex was not until 23 Aug, with only a few single birds before October. As usual there were a number of records of birds passing over the coast and the downs during the autumn, mostly singles, but by far the largest group was a flock of 30 which landed in a field at Beachy Head on 3 Oct.

In the last two months of the year the only count higher than in the above tables was 100 at Pagham Hbr on 18 Dec. The highest total at Pulborough Brooks was 40 on 10 Nov, but 30 at Petworth on 20 Dec during the SWBS was a good count this far inland. [CJRB].



Grey Plover, Goring Gap, November 2017 (Gary Faulkner)

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	1301	1325	1579	355	96	121	173	74	230	614	1183	1739
Chichester Hbr	779	864	1104	1	8	2	116	72	99	458	655	1354
Pagham Hbr	269	330	443	350	65	2	30	2	130	156	484	300
Average county total 2007-2016	1882	1599	1431	200	79	60	91	345	577	922	1438	1478

In addition to the above table, there were the usual winter flocks along the western coastline, with peak counts of 95 at Climping on 14 Jan, the same at Worthing on 2 Feb and 70 at Goring on the 15th. A few were reported from the lower Adur Valley, with a maximum of nine on 8 Jan. In East Sussex, the highest numbers recorded were 56 at Rye Hbr on 12 Feb and 25 at Pett Level on 29 Jan.

Offshore movements in winter are likely to be local, but small numbers of spring migrants passed the principal seawatching sites, with maximum day totals of 49 E at Selsey Bill on 22 Apr, 51 E at Worthing and 102 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 30th. Birds also stopped off at Rye Hbr, where there was a noticeable peak in early May, with a maximum of 51 on the 6th. Despite the low WeBS figures at Pagham Hbr in May, there were still 150 there on the 3rd, 80 at Medmerry on the 22nd and 117 there on 11 Jun. Thirty at Pagham Hbr on 27 and 29 Jun may have been late spring migrants or early returning birds. Two were at Medmerry on 12 Jul, 40 at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on the 15th and 116 at Pilsey Island on the 21st. The highest autumn counts were also at Pilsey Sands with 250 on both 15 Aug and 6 Sep and 200 on 8 Oct.

In the last two months, the maximum count at Climping was 28 on 25 Nov, but at Goring the peaks were 83 on 30 Dec, and 69 on 21 Nov. There were up to three on the lower Adur, and the highest count in East Sussex was 13 at Rye Hbr on 18 Dec. A count of 982 at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on 2 Dec (included in the WeBS) was by far the highest count all year at an individual site.

Grey Plovers are uncommon inland; all records came from Pulborough Brooks where there was one on 12 Mar, four on 4 Apr, one from 2 until 6 May and one on 14 Dec. [CJRB]

Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

Scarce breeder; fairly common passage migrant and 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	156	166	89	57	128	42	87	450	92	68	119	245
Chichester Hbr	82	87	27	20	91	17	37	271	41	25	68	106
Medmerry	1	4	22	3	4	-	6	107	4	-	40	44
Pagham Hbr	-	31	11	5	8	4	10	45	11	20	-	50
Goring	41	12	-	3	nc	nc	nc	nc	32	22	11	36
Rye Bay	22	26	22	21	24	17	30	15	1	1	-	9
Average county total 2007-2016	312	233	129	95	190	58	53	492	280	159	208	172

The highest counts in the first winter period from sites not in the WeBS table were 18 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Jan and 16 on the R Adur (Shoreham) on the 5th. Regular counts at Goring Gap produced totals significantly higher than the WeBS for most of the year, and are shown in the table below. This table also shows the maximum monthly counts from the wader roost at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr), which give a more accurate picture than the WeBS of how numbers fluctuate during the year, particularly during the spring and autumn migration peaks.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Goring	91	50	-	10	3	-	-	53	80	80	51	59
Pilsey Island	76	24	24	6	196	11	28	350	80	89	86	64

At least 48 breeding pairs were reported, similar to recent years. At Rye Hbr, 30 pairs nested with good success, at Pagham Hbr nine pairs raised four young, and there were five pairs at Medmerry and three at Pilsey Island. Once again there was very little evidence of breeding along the coast outside these protected areas; the only other records came from Climping Gap, where a pair was seen with two chicks on 30 Jun, and Cuckmere Haven, where there was an agitated pair on 12 Jul.

During the autumn migration peak, in addition to the WeBS, there were 103 at Pagham Hbr on 8 Aug and 54 at Rye Hbr on the 28th, and 94 were counted at Worthing on 16 Oct. In the second winter period the only significant count higher than in the tables was 60 on the R Adur (Shoreham) on 30 Nov, the highest count from this site for two years.

The only inland records came from Bewl Water, where there were six on 8 May, and Pulborough Brooks, where there were up to five in early May, one on 12 Jul and up to seven from 19 Aug to 25 Sep. [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	20	32	22	22	34	14	2
No. of sites	9	11	9	5	7	4	2
10-yr average totals	8	17	15	14	18	10	4

The twenty in March was the highest since 2004. As usual, over 95% of the year's records came from only a handful of sites. The first spring arrival was one at Thorney Island on 11 Mar, and by the end of the month birds were well-established at the regular breeding locations.

Breeding was confirmed at only three sites and was probable at three more. A total of nine territorial pairs was recorded, down from a regular 14 or 15 in the last few years. Only two pairs nested at Rye Hbr, one of which failed in two attempts, but at Medmerry four pairs fledged five young. The records suggest that birds probably also bred at Pulborough Brooks, Pett Level and Pagham Hbr, and there were up to three at Weir Wood Res from late March until mid-May.

Birds lingered on the breeding sites until late August, when sightings stopped abruptly on the 23rd, no doubt as a suitable weather window for departure came up. There were almost no records away from the breeding areas at this time, so a series of reports of up to three in the lower Cuckmere Valley between 4 and 25 July was notable, and another was seen there on 9 Sep. The last record of the year was one at Bewl Water on 14 Sep. [CJRB]

Kentish Plover

Charadrius alexandrinus

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

The only record for 2017 was of a male on the mudflats on the east side of Pagham Hbr with Ringed Plover and Dunlin on 26 May (AH). Interestingly, a male was also seen in Pagham Hbr from 30 May to 1 Jun 2016 but unlike the 2017 bird, it was ringed on the right tarsus. The county total this century moves on to 30. [PJ]

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

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

Whimbrels were recorded in 61 (6.7%) tetrads, almost exclusively coastal or near coastal. 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	3	1	2	12	38	9	89	139	16	2	5	4
Chichester Hbr	3	-	1	-	2	7	43	100	14	1	4	3
Pagham Hbr	-	1	1	1	4	2	10	26	2	1	1	1
Average county total 2007-2016	2	3	3	56	70	8	65	69	15	6	3	2

Up to six birds apparently over-wintered. In Chichester Hbr one or two were seen on four dates between 7 Jan and 9 Feb; in Pagham Hbr a single bird was present from 1 Jan to 28 Feb; at Cuckmere Haven another one was seen on five dates between 5 and 24 Feb and at Camber three were noted on 20 Jan. County totals were significantly lower than the 10-year average WeBS counts in April and May but higher in July and August, particularly the latter month.

The 1% national threshold number for Whimbrel is one bird. This is calculated as the average of the peak annual WeBS counts over a continuous five-year period. In Sussex, the average annual peak counts for the five winters (November to February) from 2012/2013 to 2016/2017 for Chichester Hbr and Pagham Hbr have been as follows:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	5-yr average
Chichester Hbr	5	2	3	5	3	3.6
Pagham Hbr	1	1	1	1	1	1

On this basis, both Chichester Hbr and Pagham Hbr would qualify as sites of national importance for wintering Whimbrels.

The totals recorded at the principal seawatching sites during spring migration were as follows:

		Apr	May	Peak movements	
Selsey Bill	E	412	148	94 in 14 hr	29 Apr
	W	63	6	49 in 8 hr	9 May
Worthing	E	131	68	54 in 5 hr	30 Apr
	W	5	1	37 in 2 hr	4 May
Telscombe Cliffs	E	63	8	27 in 5 hr	30 Apr
	W	-	-		
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	436	100	156 in 5 hr	22 Apr
	W	2	-	40 in 7 hr	9 May
Birling Gap	E	100	4	41 in 8 hr	23 Apr
	W	-	-		

The main spring migration period, as observed at Selsey Bill, was from 15 Apr to 17 May, peaked on 29 Apr (but on the 30th at Worthing) and again on 9 May. However, it is noteworthy that further east, at both Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap, spring migration both started earlier (from 9 Apr), ended earlier (on 14 May) and peaked earlier on 22 Apr, although significant numbers were also noted at Splash Point on the 29th and 30th (53 E & 99 E respectively).

Unlike in 2016, there were no significant influxes in spring to the western coastal harbours. The highest count in Pagham Hbr was only 37 on 26 Apr and at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) 64 on the 29th, both counts coincident with the peak passage noted at Selsey Bill. The highest count further east was 100 at Scotney GP on 24 Apr. Probably the last spring record was at Rye Hbr on 17 May although one or two summering birds were still being noted from 24 May into June, making it difficult to identify the first returning migrant. These were possibly either the five at Pagham Hbr on 10 Jun or four there on the 21st.

Thereafter, numbers increased slowly; 14 at Pilsey Island on 21 Jul increased to 26 on the 24th but elsewhere during the month numbers rarely exceeded ten. A similar pattern of small numbers was evident during August with isolated counts of 15 at Pagham Hbr on the 4th and at Rye Hbr next day, 12 at Pilsey Island on the 6th and 26 in Pagham Hbr on the 13th. The highest count in September was only five in Chichester Hbr on the 23rd while in October most records were of single birds but at Pagham Hbr there were four on the 22nd. The highest second winter period count was of six at Pagham Hbr on 26 Nov; otherwise only ones or occasionally two, were recorded at the favoured coastal sites exclusively in West Sussex.

Inland records were very scarce; single birds were at Pulborough Brooks on several dates between 21 Apr and 7 May, one was at Arlington Res between 27 Apr and 3 May, two flew east near Millbrook (Ashdown Forest) on 30 Apr and one was at Mayfield on 13 May. [JAH]

Curlew

Numenius arquata

Common passage migrant and winter visitor; formerly a very scarce breeder. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Curlews were recorded in 78 (8.5%) tetrads. 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	1124	1082	906	442	40	157	505	743	1296	1063	1923	966
Chichester Hbr	876	712	747	379	25	152	343	383	975	742	1595	820
Pagham Hbr	102	190	90	50	6	4	131	210	167	228	231	93
Rye Bay	100	164	36	10	9	1	30	149	154	88	40	24
Average county total 2007-2016	1946	1798	1467	413	86	321	1363	1487	1622	1380	1453	1318

County totals in all months were noticeably lower than the 10-year average and only at Chichester Hbr in November did numbers exceed the 1% national threshold level of 1400.

Significant counts additional to the above table during the first two months included 94 at Crablands (Selsey) and 40 at Cuckmere Haven on 18 Jan, 310 at Rye Hbr on the 24th, 287 at Rye Hbr on 7 Feb (leaving the roost area at dawn), 200 at Pett Level on the 5th and 104 at Pagham Hbr on the 12th. In March, there were 112 at Thorney Island on the 11th, 65 at Selsey (behind the Old Coastguard Cottages) on the 7th, 75 at Pett Level on the 11th and 115 at Rye Hbr on the 2nd.

In spring, numbers tailed off significantly from mid April; the latest double-figure count was 42 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 29th. During May and June only small numbers (usually less than ten) remained at some eight coastal sites; the highest count was 12 at Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on 16 Jun. However, numbers began to increase as early as 18 Jun when 20 were noted at Pett Level followed by 24 at Pagham Hbr on the 23rd, presumably early returning non-breeders. Thereafter numbers increased notably, as shown in the above table.

The first three-figure count in July was 100 at Thorney Deeps on the 9th followed by 250 there on the 24th. The highest non-WeBS counts in August were 120 at Pett Level on the 6th and 111 at Pagham Hbr on the 8th. In the autumn and first winter period, significant non-WeBS counts involved 400 at Pilsey Island on 8 Oct and 100 at Pett Level on the 15th, while 80 at Pett Level on 12 Nov and 165 on 24 Dec were the highest counts in Rye Bay.

The only inland sites where Curlews were noted were Pulborough Brooks on 29 Mar (2), 11 May (3) and 30 Oct (1) and nearby Amberley Wild Brooks on 26 Jul (1).

Numbers recorded at the principal seawatching sites, despite many days and hours of watching, were unremarkable. The highest monthly counts occurred, not unexpectedly, during the spring migration. In March, observers noted totals of eight (6 E, 2 W) at Selsey Bill and 32 (17 E, 15 W) at Birling Gap; in April the total at Selsey Bill was 28 (9 E, 19 W). The only other month during which more than ten were recorded was at Selsey Bill with 11 (1 E, 10 W) in October. [JAH]

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

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

This species was recorded in 36 (3.9%) tetrads, but the great majority (excluding passage migrants) were recorded at Chichester Hbr, as indicated by the monthly WeBS counts, as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	76	595	342	36	48	25	44	32	7	26	129	332
Chichester Hbr	71	590	283	35	38	25	44	28	5	18	125	322
Pagham Hbr	3	-	57	-	10	-	-	-	-	7	3	9
Average county total 2007-2016	734	742	268	64	50	15	32	51	108	146	368	501

The national 1% threshold of 380 was exceeded in Chichester Hbr in February. The maximum count of 500 at Pilsey Sands on 9 Jan was missed by the WeBS in Chichester Hbr in January. Pagham Hbr was the only other site where double-figure counts were recorded in the first winter period, and then only twice, with ten on 26 Feb and 57 on 12 Mar. A further seven coastal sites held one to eight birds during the period.

In April the focus shifted to seawatching sites for eastwards spring passage. The total spring passage, computed on the basis that the minimum recorded on any one day was the highest count at any one site on that day, was 1288 E, significantly higher than the totals for 2015 (683) and 2016 (596) but lower than the 10- year average of 2339. Monthly totals for eastwards spring passage recorded at five seawatching sites were as follows::

	Mar	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	5	459	85
Worthing	-	168	79
Telscombe Cliffs	-	4	7
Splash Point (Seaford)	-	1065	36
Birling Gap	-	187	-

Notable eastbound movements were only observed on seven dates and the details, with hours watching to the nearest whole number, are shown in the following table.

	19 Apr	22 Apr	24 Apr	29 Apr	30 Apr	5 May	9 May
Selsey Bill	12 (10)	33 (8)	51 (8)	243 (14)	80 (13)	62 (9)	1 (8)
Worthing	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (2)	144 (6)	20 (5)	63 (3)	0 (1)
Splash Point	52 (5)	34 (5)	nc	857 (13)	82 (14)	nc	31 (7)
Birling Gap	nc	0 (1)	0 (5)	119 (10)	60 (7)	nc	nc

Compared with 2016, many more birds were recorded apparently summering and presumably non-breeders. Some 12 double-figure counts were recorded at suitable wetland sites away from the principal seawatching sites in April and 11 in May. In April there were seven counts of 20 or

more with a maximum of 32 on the beach at Ferring and, in May, six similar counts with a notable maximum of 94 at Rye Hbr on 1 May and 40 at Pagham Hbr on the 6th. During June and July there were only five records; the notable non-WeBS counts were 45 at Pagham Hbr on 7 Jun and 46 there on 5 Jul. There was an increase in records in August and September; the only double-figure counts were 48 at Rye Hbr on 17 Aug, 20 there on the 20th, 28 at West Wittering on the 25th and ten at Rye Hbr on 19 Sep, reflecting a modest autumn passage. Small numbers were also recorded at another five sites including Pulborough Brooks, the only inland site, where five birds were noted on 14 Aug and four on 6 Nov.

In the autumn and second winter period numbers grew slowly; non-WeBS counts at Pilsey Sands (a favoured site) involved 26 on 8 Oct (the highest for that month), 464 on 13 Nov and 500 on 24 Dec. [MCD]

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.

This species was recorded in 55 (6.0%) tetrads, with the great majority of birds being recorded at Chichester and Pagham Harbours and at Pulborough Brooks. This dominance is reflected in the monthly WeBS counts, as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	313	613	348	138	61	44	25	320	306	592	381	702
Chichester Hbr	218	218	51	-	-	6	-	261	234	437	225	512
Pagham Hbr	52	181	296	138	36	37	16	32	38	98	125	129
Arun Valley N of Arundel	43	212	-	-	-	-	-	20	7	12	31	55
Average county total 2007-2016	1020	602	423	189	42	57	82	248	342	549	837	785

In the first winter period maximum counts at Chichester Hbr in January and February held steady at 218 before slipping to 169 on 11 Mar. By contrast numbers at Pagham Hbr increased from 30 at the start of the year through 80 on 14 Jan, 243 on 6 Feb (both counts additional to the WeBS) to a peak of 296 on 12 Mar. Numbers at Pulborough Brooks rose from 48 on 16 Jan (non-WeBS) to a peak of 243 on 6 Feb but dropped to only four on 2 Mar. Other records during this period came from Shripney flood relief pool (Bognor Regis), Arundel WWT, Rye Fm (Henfield), Cuckmere Haven, West Langley Lake (Eastbourne) and Rye Hbr.

Numbers remained high at Pagham Hbr in April and May, with 251 recorded on 18 Apr and 135 on 19 May, while the site still held 106 on 30 Jun. Numbers elsewhere were lower, with the maximum count at Pulborough Brooks in this period being 22 on 30 May. There were also 20 at Splash Point (Seaford) on 18 Apr while 29 were counted at Pett Level on 26 May and 21 at Rye Hbr on 28 Jun.

Double figure counts of summering birds were made in July at Pagham Hbr (85 on the 7th), Pulborough Brooks (14 on the 3rd) and Rye Hbr (15 on the 10th), but numbers picked up in early August with 140 at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) on the 4th, and, later in the month, 260 there on the 28th and 120 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Sep. Single birds or small groups were also recorded on passage at locations including Ford, Widney Brooks and Waltham Brooks (Arun Valley) and at Weir Wood Res, Arlington Res, Winchelsea Beach and Scotney GP.

As the autumn and second winter period got under way, numbers in Chichester Hbr became increasingly dominant, with maximum monthly counts of 437 on 7 Oct, a non-WeBS count of 230

on 19 Nov and 512 on 2 Dec. Numbers increased more slowly at Pagham Hbr, with non-WeBS counts of 124 on 29 Nov and a peak of 135 on 18 Dec. At Pulborough Brooks the period's peak count was 120 (non-WeBS) on 28 Dec. [MCD]

Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce non-breeder in summer. Rare away from the coast. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	475	621	621	165	18	36	44	114	181	319	182	362
Chichester Hbr	272	324	130	19	2	16	7	32	33	90	137	287
Pagham Hbr	13	70	26	38	-	10	-	-	22	42	6	13
Climping Gap	137	143	416	12	-	8	9	22	40	57	1	8
Rye Bay	24	61	17	22	9	-	19	19	28	34	6	3
Average county total 2007-2016	763	611	607	214	71	26	42	231	308	358	423	490

In winter Turnstones may be seen anywhere along our seaside where there is some seaweed and stones. They have bred in the far north and reach Britain's coast and spread steadily down and round our shores. Numbers usually peak in January but this year the peak was in February and March (but similar to the January and December 2016 counts). The 416 roosting on the West Pier at Littlehampton on 13 Mar was noteworthy. Counts additional to the WeBS in the first winter period included: 70 in Pagham Hbr on 8 Jan and 79 the same day along the coast from Bexhill to Hastings and 60 at Pett Level on 27 Mar.

Movement back north starts in April but because most first-year birds do not return to the breeding areas there are birds dotted along the coast all summer. Interesting counts included: 140 at Kingston Gorse (just west of Goring Gap) on 9 Apr, 50 at Pett Level on 7 May and 25 at Climping Gap next day, 25 at Rye Hbr on 22 Jun, 30 at Pagham Hbr on 31 Jul and 50 there on 6 Aug.

The increase of numbers in the autumn was a little below the 10-year average, but counts additional to the WeBS were 98 at Goring Gap on 1 Sep and 48 at Pagham Hbr on the 22nd. The highest count in September was 126 at Pilesey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 24 Oct. In the second winter period, similar non-WeBS counts included 104 on 19 Nov at St Leonards-on-Sea and 90 on Worthing beach on the 21st where there were 129 on 14 Dec.

In most months seawatchers recorded small movements but also significant numbers on nearby beaches. Records from two of the principal seawatching sites show that spring migration peaked during April when 154 E were recorded at Selsey Bill with a maximum of 75 on the 1st, as shown below:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	-	-	7	154	28	-	9	-	-	-	-	-
	W	44	3	9	41	-	7	9	7	-	7	22	-
Worthing	E	-	-	-	-	47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	W	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

As usual, none was reported from inland sites although single birds at East Guldeford on 6 Jan and Scotney GP on 31 Jan were not far from normal seaside haunts. [PKH]



Knot, Widewater, January 2017 (Ian Redman)

Knot

Calidris canutus

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	589	2806	79	6	1	-	-	-	-	3	114	1330
Chichester Hbr	219	2501	67	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	95	773
Pagham Hbr	370	305	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	556
Average county total 2007-2016	1652	2206	869	74	18	2	2	9	66	40	423	1263

The main site is Chichester Hbr in winter, particularly the roost on Pilsey Island or feeding nearby at low tides. Although the January WeBS count was relatively low, 2500 were counted at Pilsey Sands on 14 Jan and, as the December 2016 count in Chichester Hbr had been 4000, a first winter period population of around 3000 for the county was well above average. The highest counts at Rye Hbr were 102 on 5 Jan, 22 on 28 Feb and 33 on 18 Mar.

Easterly movement along the coast was seen as usual in spring; 213 E were counted passing Splash Point (Seaford) on 30 Apr (the day of peak passage) and 45 E at Telscombe Cliffs and 28 E

at Splash Point on 9 May (a second peak day). The final spring record was at Rye Hbr on 21 May.

Single individuals or small groups were recorded at various coastal sites throughout the year. In June, 15 were present in Pagham Hbr (with six there on the 29th) and in July one was noted on Pilsey Sands on the 24th and two were at Rye Hbr on the 26th. In August, Pagham and Rye Harbours were the only places where Knots were seen but with no more than two on the 11th and 28th respectively.

From 1 Sep to 7 Oct most records were in single figures until 50 were recorded in Chichester Hbr on 8 Oct; the first big count in the second winter period was 2000 at Pilsey Sands on 12 Nov. The build up of WeBS numbers in the autumn was slightly later than the 10-year average. The WeBS count in Pagham Hbr (559) was the highest count for the past ten years. Conversely, numbers in Rye Hbr were only 15 on 19 Nov and one on 10 Dec.

There were no inland records this year. [PKH]



Ruff, Sidlesham Ferry Pool, May 2017 (Andrew House)

Ruff

Calidris 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 follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	-	20	8	-	-	-	2	2	2	39	4	2
Arun Valley N of Arundel	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	12	3	-
Rye Bay	-	18	7	-	-	-	2	2	1	26	-	2
Average county total 2007-2016	13	13	8	2	0	0	1	5	6	5	8	12

Records indicate that the preferred sites in the county for Ruff are Pulborough Brooks (Arun Valley) and both Pett Level and Rye Hbr; very few birds were recorded elsewhere. Surprisingly, although there had been a county WeBS total of 15 in December 2016, there were no WeBS records for January, principally because the date of the WeBS counts (15 Jan) did not coincide with the presence of any birds at the above principal sites. However, one or two were at Pulborough Brooks from 2 to 17 Jan, with five there on the 28th. Further east, no less than ten were noted at Rye Hbr on 1 Jan and there were between one and four at Pett Level from 5 to 14 Jan, but eight on the 20th declined to three on the 29th. In February, the highest counts at Pulborough Brooks were four on the 6th and 13th and five on the 21st; in Rye Bay numbers fluctuated through the month but peaked at 27 on the 18th, presumably as early migrants were passing through. Migrants were very much in evidence in March, principally in Rye Bay where, following a count of 56 on the 2nd (for one day only) numbers fluctuated but declined to seven on the 27th.

Numbers continued to decline in April with mostly ones being seen at the principal sites but with two or three in Pagham Hbr on the 21st and 22nd. Events in May were similar and the final spring record was of one at Pulborough Brooks on the 23rd.

The first returning migrants arrived at Rye Hbr on 8 Jul when four were recorded but again, only ones or twos were noted at Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks or Rye Bay until five were seen at the last site on the 20th. Numbers in August and September were similarly very low (with maxima in August of only three at Rye Hbr on the 5th and Pulborough Brooks on the 31st) until 25 Sep when 26 juveniles were recorded at Pulborough Brooks followed by ten on the 28th and 15 on the 30th on which date ten were also counted at Rye Hbr. It was noticed that such double-figure numbers were recorded on one day only, as migrants passed through quickly. Numbers in the first half of October included a maximum of 20 at Pulborough Brooks on the 2nd and 5th and 17 at Pett Level on the 8th, but thereafter numbers declined noticeably, except for 25 at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Nov. Records in December were generally fewer than five with only four double-figure counts, the highest being 18 at Pett Level on the 24th, but this declined to eight there on the 28th and only one remained at Pulborough Brooks on the 31st to welcome in the New Year. [JAH]

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

Passage migrant, scarce in autumn and very scarce in spring; rare in winter. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern

Numbers of Curlew Sandpiper can vary greatly from year to year, and the monthly totals for 2017, shown below, were below average for the last five years.

May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
3	-	2	16	11	6	1

The only three spring records were single birds at Rye Hbr on 9 May, Pagham Hbr from 13 to 15 May and Jury's Gap on 19 May.

The first returning birds were two at Rye Hbr on 30 Jul. The peak time for Curlew Sandpiper sightings is usually mid to late August and September, when juvenile passage reaches its maximum, and this year was no exception. However, the totals in these months were below average but did produce one high count of 12 at Rye Hbr on 24 Aug. One at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Aug was the only inland record and the only other records away from Chichester, Pagham and Rye Harbours were singles at Medmerry on 23 Sep and at Cuckmere Haven from 27 to 29 Sep. The late records included a group of three at Rye Hbr on 19 Oct and one at Church Norton on 3 and 6 Nov. [CD]

Temminck's Stint*Calidris temminckii****Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.***

There were three records in 2017: single birds at Rye Hbr on 1 May (SS) and 7 May (SJM) and a long-staying individual at Pulborough Brooks from 25 Nov into 2018 (PD, BGRI, MP et al.). The last bird spent much of its time on the North Brooks where the views obtained were often very distant making the salient features difficult to see. Winter records in the UK are exceptional, the only previous one for Sussex being at Thorney Island from 19 Mar to 9 Apr 1975. The county total this century moves on to 47. [PJ]

Sanderling*Calidris alba****Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare away from coast. 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	122	8	175	19	43	-	73	-	5	5	-	110
Chichester Hbr	61	-	77	-	43	-	65	-	-	-	-	110
Climping Gap	34	-	33	1	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-
Goring	16	-	40	17	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	5	-	-
Rye Bay	11	7	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Average county total 2007-2016	207	185	127	75	116	19	31	68	24	73	97	117

The usual two concentrations of Sanderling in winter were recorded: those on Pilesey Island (Chichester Hbr) which roost there and may be seen feeding thereabouts with a maximum counts of 172 on 17 Jan and 180 on 9 Mar and 84 still on 1 Apr; those using the beach between Worthing and Climping where peak counts were of 71 at Goring on 1 Jan, 55 at Climping on the 9th and 100 at Goring on 25 Feb.

During seawatching in April and May, at three of the principal sites, movements were recorded as follows:

		Apr	May	Peak count (hours watched)
Selsey Bill	E	126	286	83 E on 30 Apr (13)
	W	7	59	70 E on 22 May (6.5)
Worthing	E	60	73	32 E on 30 Apr (4.5)
	W	-	-	35 E on 5 May (3)
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	122	91	110 E on 30 Apr (13.5)
	W	-	-	30 E on 22 May (2.5)

Later, 32 remained on Pilesey Sands on 8 Jun and four in Pagham Hbr on the 13th.

Migrants returned in numbers in late July, 228 being counted at Pilesey Sands on the 23rd, but the largest count of the year was 320 there on 16 Aug. The highest counts in the autumn were at Pilesey Sands of 180 on 1 Sep and 172 on 17 Oct while the maximum count in the second winter period, 244 at Pilesey Sands on 6 Nov, may be either the same summering/autumn individuals or those augmented by migrants passing through. By 15 Dec counts of up to 170 between Worthing and

Goring were being recorded. They are the subject of an international colour-ringing project so it is worth looking carefully at them.

Few Sanderlings were recorded at sites east of Worthing and even at Rye Hbr, the only other likely place for an encounter. Thomas (2014) noted that Rye Hbr had become as important for Sanderling as Chichester Hbr but that has been negated in the last few years. They were seen in most months (except April and June) but only in small numbers with the highest count being 45 on 2 Mar; all other records were of less than 25 and in the second winter period no count was in double figures. No Sanderlings were recorded inland. [PKH]



Sanderling, Goring-by-Sea, November 2017 (Leigh Prevost)

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 follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	15091	7482	4841	83	147	14	923	739	320	633	3967	10856
Chichester Hbr	12830	5320	4574	20	20	4	749	568	205	199	2187	8837
Pagham Hbr	1509	1963	193	60	92	-	54	71	8	409	1624	1723
Average county total 2007-2016	12995	11812	6124	369	694	41	179	671	717	4179	10329	12180

The 1% national threshold of 3500 was exceeded in Chichester Hbr in January, February, March and December. January was the only month of these in which the county total exceeded the 10-year average; the total for February was only 63% of this average while that for November was as low as 38% and for October it was a paltry 15%. Conversely, the total for July was 515% higher than this average and for August it was 110% higher, suggesting that migrants had returned particularly

early, perhaps because of a failed breeding season in the Arctic. Numbers were slow to recover in November but had attained a respectable total by December.

Frequently the WeBS counts do not coincide with the highest counts in each month. Thus, significant additional counts at WeBS sites shown in the table later in the year were 2000 at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 24 Oct and 3000 there on 6 Nov.

The species was often recorded in smaller numbers at several coastal locations, but only at three sites did counts reach three figures; the monthly maxima at these sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Medmerry	116	-	4	30	34	7	12	60	12	25	1000	97
Ferring to Worthing	330	152	10	20	6	-	-	8	10	14	203	467
Rye Hbr & Pett Level	272	260	350	34	113	2	315	196	150	20	56	100

It was only at Selsey Bill that movements of any magnitude were recorded and almost all these were westwards and involved single large flocks probably displaced from Pagham Hbr by a rising tide. In the first winter period the highest counts were of 250 W on 4 Jan, 400 W on 19 Feb and 100 W on 2 Mar whilst later in the year 745 W on 16 Nov and 800 W on the 24th. Spring eastbound observed passage was very light with a county total of only 149 and a peak of just 27 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 30 Apr.

Dunlins were also recorded during the year at some 11 sites not immediately adjacent to the major estuaries or harbours, mostly in the river valleys or reservoirs. Most records were from Pulborough Brooks where, in the first half of the year, the highest count was only four on 10 Mar. From 31 Jul onwards records were more frequent but mostly in single figures; the exceptions were 21 on 14 Aug, ten on 23 Sep, 12 on 1 Dec, 17 on the 6th and 14 on the 20th. The highest count elsewhere was eight at Stonegate on 30 Dec. [JAH]

Purple Sandpiper

Calidris maritima

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Nov	Dec
County Total	19	13	8	5		24	26
Shoreham Hbr	2	3	4	1		3	2
Brighton Marina	3	1	-	2		2	15
Newhaven	14	9	-	2		16	8

Total numbers recorded were generally slightly lower than county total averages for the last five years, although November and December counts were higher than average. There were no records received from either Pett Level shore or Rye Hbr.

The highest counts in the first winter period totalled 14 at Newhaven on 30 Jan, and 9 on 19 Feb. There were no May records, with the last record of the season being at Brighton Marina on 16 Apr. Four at Prinsted on 31 Mar was an unusual location for the species.

Birds were very late returning with no September or October records, the first being one at Selsey Bill on 8 Nov, which is well after the ten-year average arrival date of 24 Sep. A single bird was recorded at Hastings on 19 and 20 Nov. The highest counts were 16 at Newhaven on 25 Nov, and 15 at Brighton on 4 Dec. [CD]

Baird's Sandpiper*Calidris bairdii****Very rare vagrant***

A juvenile was present along the meanders at Cuckmere Haven from 3 to 6 Sep (ADW et al). The record is the eighth for the county and has been accepted by BBRC. Many observers travelled to see this elegant and confiding wader, the previous record being as long ago as 1 Oct 1996, at Sidlesham Ferry Pool. Of the earlier records, four were in September, with singles in July, August and October. [MM]



Baird's Sandpiper, Cuckmere Haven, September 2017 (Les Bird)

Little Stint*Calidris minuta****Scarce passage migrant; very scarce in winter.***

Little Stints were recorded in 15 (1.6%) tetrads; most were coastal or near coastal. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	-	-	-	-	4	1	4	10	19	14	3	1
10-year average	1	1	1	1	5	0	2	10	13	8	2	1

Prior to 2014, Little Stints had wintered every year this century, but for the fourth year in succession, there were no records suggestive of over-wintering. The first migrant was noted at Medmerry on 2 May, two months later than in 2016 and probably the latest date this century (an approximate average date is 6 Mar but estimating this is complicated by birds which over-wintered prior to 2014). This was followed by two at Rye Hbr on the 19th and another at Pagham Hbr on the 27th. None stayed for more than two days. A bird at Pagham Hbr on 12 Jun stayed until the 16th, the final spring record.

The first three returning migrants were seen at Rye Hbr on 26 Jul, followed by one at Sidlesham Ferry on the 30th. Four were noted at Rye Hbr on 3 Aug and another four were seen at Pagham Hbr the same day. Numbers in September (19) were higher than the 10-year average (13) as they were also in October (17, cf.8). Between 26 Jul and 2 Dec Little Stints were recorded on 46 different dates with 108 bird days of which 40 (37%) were from Rye Hbr, 26 (24%) were from Pulborough Brooks and 23 (21%) from Pagham Hbr. The highest count was eight at Rye Hbr on 2 Oct and, apart from Pulborough Brooks, inland records were three at Arlington Res on 22 Sep, two of which remained until the 24th. The last record of the year was one at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Dec. [JAH]

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Calidris subruficollis

Rare autumn vagrant.

One feeding with Dunlin and Ruff at Flat Beach (Rye Hbr) on 19 Sep (PC, RD, JP) was the first county record since 2011 when there was one also at Rye Hbr from 8 to 12 Sep. The county total moves on to 18, including five at Rye Hbr and ten this century. Records have occurred between 21 Aug (1934) and 14 Oct (1989) with 12 in September. [PJ]

Pectoral Sandpiper

Calidris melanotos

Rare vagrant, mainly in autumn.

Three were recorded in 2017 with up to two at Pulborough Brooks from 19 to 30 Sep (mo) and a further bird there from 25 Oct to 5 Nov (CL, PNP et al.), exceeding the previous latest in Sussex (2 Nov 1963) by three days. The county total moves on to 97 of which 32 have been recorded this century. Pulborough Brooks is something of a 'hotspot' for this Nearctic wader with 13 seen there since 2002. [PJ]

Woodcock

Scolopax rusticola

Probably fairly common resident and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The minimum numbers of birds and sites for the two winter periods were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
No of birds	19	20	13		1	6	27
No of sites	16	13	11		1	6	18

As in the past few years, winter numbers were low, with no hard weather influxes. In the early part of the year most records came from the interior, and all were ones and twos except for three at both Pett Level on the 19 Jan and at Pulborough Brooks on the 28th. However, there were several sightings of single birds at coastal sites in January: at Beachy Head on the 2nd and 28th, at Worthing on the 24th and at Climping on the 27th.

Display (roding) was first noted on the late date of 10 May, and a total of 43 territorial birds was reported, a gradual decline from a high of 62 in 2011. On Ashdown Forest there were 20 (down from 44 in 2011), but numbers on the West Sussex heaths continued to hold up, with a total of 14, and there were three at Broadwater Warren. It was also good to see several reports of displaying birds at sites outside these traditional recorded areas, with one each at Rewell Wood (Arundel), St Leonard's Forest, Fernhurst and Fore Wood (Crowhurst) and two at Petworth and Worth Forest.

Sightings declined to five in July, one in August and none in September, and the only October record was one at Seaford Head on the 30th. In the last two months of the year most reports again came from the interior, the only coastal birds were one at Fishbourne and one found dead at Brighton, curiously both on 2 Dec. All records were of one or two except for four at Ashdown Ridge on 11 Dec and seven flushed by a shoot at Coombes on 1 Dec, an indication of how many go unrecorded. [CJRB]

Jack Snipe

Lymnocryptes minimus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

This species was recorded in 19 (2.1%) tetrads. The minimum monthly totals similar to the 10-year averages, as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Birds	12	12	10	1		1	4	5	4
No. of Sites	5	5	5	1		1	2	4	4

Prior to late January all records were of one bird, mostly from established or well-watched locations such as Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) and Pagham Hbr. The period from 26 Jan to 12 Feb saw a jump in numbers typical of that time of year, with possibly 17 birds being involved. Counts of two or more in this period included two at Fishbourne Channel on 26 Jan, four at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 30th, five and six at Rye Hbr on 2 and 10 Feb respectively and three at Waltham Brooks on the 12th. Thereafter all records were of singles, apart from at Rye Hbr where two were seen on two occasions in March. Following one at North Stoke (Arun Valley) on 29 Mar there was then a gap of over three weeks to the final record for the first half of the year, one at Medmerry on 21 Apr.

The first returning bird was recorded on 15 Sep at Rye Hbr, eight days earlier than the 10-year average date, followed by a gap of over three weeks to the next one at Rye Hbr on 9 Oct where three were noted on the 12th. Otherwise all records from 31 Oct to 24 Dec were of singles, mostly at traditional wetland sites spread across the county but including one on Ashdown Forest on 21 Nov. [MCD]

Common Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

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

The species was recorded from 89 (8.8%) tetrads compared with 110 in 2016. 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	215	95	110	13	1	-	-	26	10	90	212	277
Chichester Hbr	46	4	2	-	-	-	-	1	5	3	11	10
Pagham Hbr	7	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	27	1
Arun Valley N of Arundel	20	34	17	5	-	-	-	16	1	17	8	77
Upper Adur Levels	3	7	14	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	53
Lower Adur Valley	54	10	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	60	35

Lower Ouse Valley	46	5	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	33
Eastbourne Lakes	10	6	30	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	10	-	23
Pevensey Levels	8	3	2	-	-	-	-	6	4	18	69	10
Rye Bay	21	4	28	1	1	-	-	3	-	1	3	-
Average county total 2007-2016	366	371	250	38	2	0	3	22	57	154	258	347

These WeBS counts for both winter periods were significantly lower than the averages for the ten years 2007 to 2016. However, either because Snipe frequent habitats not covered by the WeBS, WeBS dates do not coincide with peak numbers, or numbers have fallen, there were some significant counts additional to the above table, as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Crablands Marsh	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	-	21	16	-		-	-	18	-	-
Arun Valley N of Arundel	-	120	-	-		34	46	30	50	-
Weir Wood Res	4	-	6	2		-	6	16	16	12
Eastbourne Lakes	46	15	75	-		-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	32	153	73	19		11	28	-	20	-

In the first winter period, only seven sites held 40 or more birds. The highest non-WeBS counts were a total of 153 at Rye Hbr (from two separate locations) on 10 Feb and 120 flushed from the reedbed area during habitat management works at Arundel WWT on 9 Feb. Observers at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) recorded 75 on 10 Mar and 40 at Crablands Marsh (Selsey) on 18 Jan.

Numbers tailed off rapidly in April; the highest count was 19 at Rye Hbr on the 6th. From 7 Apr to 11 Aug most records were of one or two transient or summering birds. Breeding was not confirmed but birds were recorded vocalizing at five sites during the season; displaying males were noted at Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks and one or two birds were present at Rye Hbr but with no evidence of breeding.

The first returning migrant was either one seen at Pagham Hbr on 21 Jun or one at Rye Hbr on 26 Jul, the only record that month. Records increased noticeably from mid-August but numbers remained generally low until the start of November. Most records during this period came from Pulborough Brooks and Rye Hbr, although the highest count was 46 at Waltham Brooks on 26 Sep.

During the second winter period, five sites held more than 40 Common Snipes, which were recorded on an almost daily basis with an increase in numbers. In November, the highest (non-WeBS) count was 50 at Pulborough Brooks on the 26th; in December, the largest counts were 55 at Pulborough Brooks on the 14th. [MCD]

Grey Phalarope

Phalaropus fulicarius

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

Following a blank year in 2016, a total of four was recorded. The first was inland at Arlington Res on 9 Sep (mo) followed by coastal singles at Cuckmere Haven on 11 Sep (MRE) and 23 Sep (TS) and at Medmerry on 18 Sep (TGP). The county total this century moves on to 60. [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.

This species was recorded in 72 (8.5%) tetrads, an increase on last year's 59. The minimum monthly totals, based on the highest number recorded at a site during the month, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	5	6	6	30	59	13	168	131	78	30	22	10
10-year average	9	6	7	35	57	13	116	141	67	15	12	9

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	3	3	3	4	8	1	104	82	29	18	6	1
Arun Valley (Arundel-Lhampton)	1	2	1	2	6	-	38	16	12	4	4	-
Ardingly Res	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	nc	2	1	1	-
Lower Ouse Valley	1	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	4	4	1	1
Bowl Water Common Sandpiper	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	5	nc	5	-	-
Rye Bay	-	-	-	1	1	-	51	30	4	3	-	-
Average county total 2007-2016	2	1	1	3	13	1	50	68	24	4	4	3

In the first quarter, there were a minimum of six reported (single birds at Medmerry, Colworth (Bognor), Ardingly, one or two on the R Arun south of Arundel and up to three in the Ouse valley between Lewes and Piddinghoe; much in line with previous years though with none reported from the Adur or Cuckmere.

From early April, observers at other sites began reporting them, starting with one at Warnham on 4 Apr followed by another at Medmerry on the 6th. The highest spring passage count was eight at Weir Wood Res on 8 May. Birds were recorded on a daily basis through the first three weeks of May but the pace slowed from the 22nd. There were records every week in June and whether they were late northbound, early southbound or pioneering birds checking out Weir Wood Res (11 to 27 Jun and into early July) and other potential breeding sites is not known.

Passage started in earnest on 12 July with 38 being seen in the Arun Valley and records came in nearly every day from then into September. The biggest count was 43 from the East Guldeford and Camber WeBS on 23 Jul. Migration slowed into October and early November with six on the R Ouse between Lewes and Rodmell on 6 Nov and six at Bosham on 16 Nov being the last.

Single birds at Ardingly (15 Nov), Medmerry (27 Dec), and two each in the Arun Valley (6 Dec) and at Henfield (18 Dec) were mostly at the same sites as the previous winter, suggesting a total of six potentially wintering birds. Whether the six along the R Ouse or the six at Bosham in the first half of November stayed for winter is doubtful as the southbound passage period seems to be getting more protracted and they were not reported again.

Overall the yearly profile of records was much the same as previous years. [PKH]

Green Sandpiper

Tringa ochropus

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3	4	2	1	-	1	13	18	9	6	5	2
Arun Valley N of Arundel	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	10	1	-	-	-
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	4	4	3	-
Wadhurst Park Estate	2	1	1	1	nc	1	6	4	4	2	-	1
Rye Bay	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-
Average county total 2007-2016	4	4	3	5	0	5	19	37	12	10	7	6

The 1% national threshold of nine birds was exceeded in the Arun Valley in August, but the county total was lower than the 10-year average in all months except February, not a good sign!

In the first winter period, records additional to the WeBS included four in Pagham Hbr on 24 Jan and three at Burpham (Arun Valley) on the 25th. There were some 82 records (120 in 2016) from some 25 broad sites, mostly associated with a water feature. Most records (38%) were from the well watched Sidlesham Ferry/Pagham Hbr area and 79% were of single individuals. There were four at Beeding Brooks on 11 Apr and the last spring record was one at Arundel WWT on 30 Apr, some ten days earlier than the average date since 2008.

Single birds at Waltham Brooks on 11 Jun and Church Norton on the 13th were probably early returning failed breeders, some four days later than average. They were followed by further individuals during the second half of June but with twos at Pett Level on the 26th and at Pulborough Brooks the next day and three there on the 29th. During the next four months Green Sandpipers were recorded virtually daily (118 of 121 days). The maxima in July were eight at Pulborough Brooks (31st), six at Flattenden Lake (Wadhurst Park) (24th) and five at Weir Wood Res (27th). There were daily sightings at Pulborough Brooks in August with a maximum of ten on the 24th while at Weir Wood Res there were sightings on 14 days with four on six dates. Six were at Rye Hbr on the 1st.

In September, there were mostly single individuals at some 13 sites but at the favoured sites of Pulborough Brooks and Weir Wood Res they were more numerous. At the former, they were recorded daily until the 11th with a maximum of seven on the 6th; at the latter, four were recorded on 18 days. In October, they appeared at Sidlesham Ferry through the month, having apparently deserted Pulborough Brooks, with peak counts of four on the 20th and 25th. They continued to be recorded at Weir Wood Res right through the month with counts of four on 10 days.

Records in November were similar: at Weir Wood Res they were frequently recorded with a maximum of four on 8 and 9 Nov; at Sidlesham Ferry up to three between 15 and 20 Nov and elsewhere only single individuals at some ten sites. There were fewer records in December, three being the highest count at Weir Wood Res on the 10th. [JAH]

Common Redshank

Tringa totanus

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	2031	1598	1560	420	55	163	368	1081	1294	1801	2644	1511
Chichester Hbr	1595	1223	1054	324	18	130	81	890	1046	1326	1728	1226
Pagham Hbr	157	142	252	8	2	9	68	16	93	224	567	154
Rye Bay	159	141	199	46	15	8	184	136	102	202	187	12
Average county total 2007-2016	1867	1868	1502	350	69	112	767	1413	1876	2083	1990	1722

As usual, the highest counts by far were in Chichester Hbr, where numbers exceeded the 1% national threshold number of 1200 in January, February, October, November and December; overall, numbers were fairly similar to last year. There were no significant counts additional to the WeBS at the sites in the above table during the first winter period, but large counts at other sites included 30 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 30 Jan and 59 on the Adur Saltings on 13 Jan.

Both spring and autumn passages were, as is usual with this species, unremarkable and are best indicated by the departure and arrival of wintering birds at the main sites in the WeBS table above.

This species has long been a scarce breeding bird in Sussex. As usual, Rye Hbr held the most pairs with a total of 14 recorded; but a total of only seven chicks were seen at three nests. Elsewhere at least one pair (probably two) bred at Sidlesham Ferry, where four chicks were seen on 4 Jun and at least two fledged successfully. A pair with one chick was also seen at Church Norton. At Pulborough Brooks, probably three pairs bred, but there were no further details. A juvenile was seen at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Jul but there was no evidence of breeding there.

The first birds started returning in July with 60 at Pagham Hbr on the 10th, increasing to 75 on the 12th and 150 on the 21st. There were 152 on the Rye Saltings and 164 on the East Guldeford Level on 13 Jul. At Thorney Island there were 350 on 24 Jul, increasing to 700 on 8 Aug.

Significant counts during the second winter period, additional to the WeBS counts above, included 40 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 30 Oct, 68 on the Adur Saltings on 4 Nov and 49 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 19th Nov. [JC]

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

Very scarce spring and 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.

May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
6	1	9	3	2

The first of the year was one at Climping on 2 May, which is one day earlier than in 2016 and one day later than the 10 year average, followed by three at Pulborough Brooks on the 9th and two there on the 10th. These were followed by singles at Rye Hbr on the 11th and at Pulborough Brooks between the 11th and 13th. One at Rye Hbr on the 30 Jun was followed by singles at Medmerry on

1 Jul, Pett Level on the 2nd and 3rd, Rye Hbr between the 3rd and the 6th and Pulborough Brooks on the 6th. Later in the same month singles were seen at Sidlesham Ferry between the 13th and the 19th, a party of four seen at both Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks on the 25th, one at Weir Wood Res on the 27th, and further sightings at Pulborough Brooks between the 30th and 2 Aug. Other August individuals were at Rye Hbr between the 4th and the 9th and again at Pulborough Brooks between the 10th and the 26th. In September the final records were of one at Pulborough Brooks on the 7th and the 11th and the last record of the year was one at Rye Hbr on the 20th, which is one day later than the last record in 2016 and ten days earlier than the 10-year average departure date of 30 Sep. [MMcM]

Spotted Redshank

Tringa erythropus

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	2	-	5
Chichester Hbr	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	1	-	4
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Average county total 2007-2016	4	4	4	1	0	0	1	3	3	4	3	3

The approximate minimum monthly totals, including the WeBS, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	7	6	4	2	4	5	8	31	16	8	7

As usual, most birds were in the Chichester Hbr area in the first winter period; in January there were up to five in the Fishbourne Channel, two at Pilsey Island and others at West Wittering and Pagham Hbr. During February, threes were in Chichester and Pagham Harbours and one in Rye Hbr while in March two remained in Chichester Hbr and up to four in Pagham Hbr.

As is often the case, recording the start of spring migration was complicated by lingering wintering birds; one such individual reported at Pagham Hbr was joined by a second from 14 to 20 Apr and so this could reasonably be regarded as the start of spring migration which, as usual, involved only a few birds. There was one at Rye Hbr on 21 Apr, a possibly different bird on the 26th, another on 4 May and one at Sidlesham Ferry on the 6th.

The first returning bird was one at Sidlesham Ferry on the 11th. This was followed by at least two more at Pagham Hbr on the 18th and one at Pett Level on the 22nd. In July, singles were at Cobnor Marsh (Chichester Hbr) (in breeding plumage) and Medmerry on the 2nd, followed by another on the 4th at Pagham Hbr, two on the 8th and a third there on the 19th with one remaining to the 29th. August was a quiet month, with just ones and twos seen regularly throughout at Pagham Hbr, one at Thorney Island on the 20th and two at Rye Hbr on the 26th.

September started with six at Pagham Hbr on the 1st, increasing to a remarkable ten on the 3rd followed by seven on the 12th and nine there on the 24th. Elsewhere, there were singles in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 4th, Medmerry on the 7th, East Guldeford on the 10th, Playden (Rye) on the 11th and six at East Head on the 23rd. In October there was one at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 1st, one at Winchelsea Beach on the 6th, one at East Chidham the following day and singles at Rye Hbr and Thorney Island on the 31st.

Three in the Fishbourne Channel on the 9 Nov and three in Pagham Harbour on the 18 Nov were probably the last autumn migrants as after this the usual low numbers were recorded during the second winter period, with ones and twos at the usual sites of Pagham and Chichester Harbours. One briefly at Medmerry on 16 Dec was probably one of the Pagham Hbr birds. [JC]

Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Fairly common passage migrant; scarce in winter. Amber listed species of medium 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	27	20	19	17	4	-	36	84	82	56	38	22
Chichester Hbr	26	19	16	16	-	-	30	70	58	45	36	21
Rye Bay	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	9	7	-	-
Average county total 2007-2016	21	21	21	20	6	2	42	109	85	62	32	21

As is usual, the largest numbers during the first winter period were at Thorney Deep/Thorney Island in Chichester Hbr with a peak count of 18 there on 14 Jan. This is a slightly higher figure than the high count of 15 recorded there last year and the numbers here seem to be consistently in the mid-teens. Low numbers were reported elsewhere in Chichester Hbr with up to four in the Fishbourne Channel being the highest count. Away from Chichester Hbr there were just single birds reported from the lower Cuckmere Valley, the lower Adur Valley, Rye Hbr and Pett Level.

With wintering birds lingering well into March or later it is always difficult to tell when spring passage begins. Single birds at Pevensey Levels and Medmerry on 12 Mar were probably the first spring migrants as none were reported from these sites during the winter. A total of 16 at Thorney Deep/Island on 31 Mar and 1 Apr probably included at least some spring migrants as the wintering flock had reduced to 13 by 12 Mar. Spring migration also involved small numbers at a variety of coastal and inland locations, and included five at Arlington Res on 20 Apr. Mostly small numbers were regularly seen at Pulborough Brooks from late April through to mid-May although there were an exceptional 26 there in a single flock on 30 Apr. Apart from this the spring high count was seven at Rye Hbr on 1 May. The last spring migrants were one at Sidlesham Ferry on 6 Jun and at Pagham Hbr on 11 Jun.

Autumn migration proper seemed to get going on 21 Jun when one was at Pagham Hbr; it could have been the same as that on the 11th but this seems unlikely as singles were recorded there daily from then through to the end of June with two present through early July. The species was then seen at the usual places almost daily through the autumn period. At Thorney Island numbers built to 30 on 21 Jul, 44 three days later and a very impressive 79 on 22 Aug, with 70 still there on the 25th. Elsewhere numbers were in single figures except at Pagham Hbr where the maximum recorded was 11 on 18 Sep.

In the second winter period the wintering flock at Thorney Deep/Island peaked at 22 on 4 Nov but some of these were probably late migrants as between 13 and 15 were seen there after that date. Smaller numbers were seen elsewhere in Chichester Hbr and a few were recorded at other localities, including two in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 16 Dec. [JC]

Kittiwake*Rissa tridactyla*

Common but very localised breeding species: fairly common or common winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare away from coast. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Recorded during each month of the year mainly from seawatching locations and the monthly figures are shown in the table. It should be noted that Kittiwake is not countable at Splash Point (Seaford) once breeding pairs have settled on the cliffs, as birds are ever present and constantly flying to and fro.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	449	216	12	26	105	8	-	-	3	3	7	54
	W	639	120	40	26	59	66	2	2	4	10	59	434
Worthing	E	5	-	-	10	10	-	-	-	-	-	1	10
	W	5	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	8	70
Telscombe Cliffs	E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
	W	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Splash Point	E	50	150	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	20	nc
	W	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc
Birling Gap	E	120	235	170	1204	295	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2
	W	-	60	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-

Only at Selsey Bill were Kittiwakes recorded in each month. During the first winter period, several large movements were recorded here; 150 W and 100 E in 2 hr on 4 Jan, 274 W and 80 E in 4 hr on 11 Jan, 69 W and 113 E in 3¼ hr on 29 Jan, and 85 W and 42 E in 3¼ hr on 3 Feb. Two large movements were recorded from Birling Gap; 120 E in 3¼ hr on 28 Jan, and 130 E in 1½ hr on 3 Feb, and one from Splash Point of 100 E in 2 hr on 2 Feb. The total recorded feeding offshore at Selsey Bill during February was 689 which included 300 on both the 7th and 8th.

There were several large eastward movements in April at Birling Gap, the largest of which was 473 on the 9th and 180 on the 22nd. Seaford Head cliffs remains a major nesting site, and a count of 773 nesting birds was made on 11 Jun, which is considerably lower than 2016, but above that recorded in 2014 and 2015. Productivity figures were estimated at 0.69 young per AON which is below the accepted figure of 0.8 necessary for a colony to maintain the population. Further details can be read in article on page 234.

In the second winter period, the only large movement was recorded at Selsey Bill with 183 W in 4½ hr on 29 Dec. There were no large offshore counts in this period. One other record of note was two oiled birds recorded at Selsey Bill on 25 Dec. [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.

2016: On 13 May 45 AONs were counted on Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) but following high tides no nests were found on 3 Jun and there were no further nesting attempts.

2017: This species was recorded in 381 (42%) tetrads during the year. As usual the largest counts

in the first quarter of the year were from inland, nocturnal roosts with the highest at Bewl Water where 45,000 roosted on 3 Feb, 16,060 on 23 Feb, 17,800 on 27 Feb and 23,490 on 2 Mar. Fewer roosted at Weir Wood Res where the peak counts were 450 on 22 Jan and 850 on both 14 and 16 Feb. During this period there were six other counts between 500 and 1000; 520 and 700 at Warnham LNR on 14 and 19 Jan respectively, 700 at West Dean on 15 Feb, 550 and 583 at Arundel WWT on 21 Feb and 13 Mar and 1000 at Rye Hbr on 10 Mar.

The March counts probably included birds arriving at breeding sites and, as usual, the largest colonies were in East Sussex. A count at Rye Hbr on 8 May found 1105 AON on the Beach Reserve and Harbour Fm but overall it was estimated that at least 1400 pairs nested on the reserve this year and fledging success was high. At Pett Level there were 550 breeding pairs but low water levels enabled predation from foxes and badgers resulting in widespread breeding failure. At Pagham Hbr 338 fledged from 305 pairs, at Medmerry none fledged from the 2 pairs and at Arundel WWT a count on 16 May revealed 204 AONs. At New Lake (Chichester GP) between 18 and 20 occupied nests containing at least 11 chicks were on a raft on 5 Jun; however, by the 17th the raft held only Cormorants. Also at Chichester GP at least three nests containing chicks were at the base of a pylon at West Trout Lake and it appears at least three fledged from this site. Twenty four pairs nested on Stakes Island but only five young were raised as most nests were destroyed by flooding.

Few significant offshore movements were recorded; the total passing eastward at the principal seawatching locations during the spring was a mere 496 and there were no notable counts during the spring and early summer away from the nesting colonies. However, numbers at non-breeding sites slowly increased after the breeding season with 115 and 200 in the lower Adur valley on 28 Jun and 24 Jul. The highest August counts were towards the end of the month with 910 in the lower Arun valley on the 27th and 740 at Thorney Island on the 25th. The WeBS count of 8161 in Chichester Hbr on 23 Sep was the highest count in the latter part of the year otherwise the only counts of 500 or more were 500 at Thorney Island on 31 Oct, 1550 roosting at West Itchenor (Chichester Hbr) on 10 Nov and 1200 and 500 roosting at Weir Wood Res on 12 and 20 Dec. [JAN]

Little Gull

Hydrocoloeus minutus

Fairly common passage migrant; most numerous in spring. Very scarce non-breeder in summer and scarce in winter. Schedule 1 species.

Approximately 350 birds were recorded during the year; a similar number to 2016. The following table of monthly totals at both coastal and inland sites, and the number of days recorded, demonstrates that, as usual, most were recorded passing coastal locations during spring.

Unlike 2016, few were seen in the first winter period; 1 W at Telscombe Cliffs on 7 Jan, 1 E and

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
No. of days recorded	1	3	6	16	9	13	4	6	7	9	3	1	
Coastal	1	4	63	216	15	5	3	9	16	6	2	4	
Inland	-	-	4	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	
Total	1	4	67	216	15	6	4	9	16	6	3	4	

1 W at Selsey Bill on 4 and 5 Feb respectively and 2 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 15 Feb were the sole records.

The first notable movement in the spring occurred on 28 Mar when 61 flew east at Splash Point and 33 E at Birling Gap; thereafter a total of 281 passed seawatching points until 12 May. As usual

most were seen from East Sussex watch points as the table of monthly totals of eastbound birds from each of the regularly logged sites shows.

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak count (hours watched)
Selsey Bill	6	47	1	21 on 9 Apr (6)
Worthing	-	3	-	3 on 30 Apr (3)
Telscombe Cliffs	-	8	10	10 on 1 May (3)
Splash Point	61	155	2	80 on 9 Apr (5)
Birling Gap	33	82	2	53 on 23 Apr (8)

During the summer immatures were seen on several days at both Pagham and Rye Harbours and as the above table shows there were few seen on autumn passage. Indeed, the only observations involving more than three birds were four at Rye Hbr on 22 Aug, 8 W at Selsey Bill on 4 Sep and finally 4 W at Telscombe Cliffs on 10 Dec. Throughout the year only seven were recorded from inland sites, these being at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Mar and 25 Nov, at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) between 12 and 14 Mar, two at Chichester GP on 28 Mar and one at Arundel WWT on both 12 Jun and 24 Jul. [JAN]

Mediterranean Gull

Ichthyaetus 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 114 tetrads (13%) during 2017 and, like previous years, the majority of observations were from sites on or near the coast. An indication of the 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. Apart from lower numbers in West Sussex in both winter periods this pattern is remarkably similar to recent years with notable scarcity in East Sussex outside the spring.

West Sussex				East Sussex		
	Number	Site	Day	Number	Site	Day
Jan	24	Pagham Hbr	15 th	4	Splash Point (Seaford)	3 rd
Feb	40	Hermitage (Emsworth)	26 th	73	Pett Level	28 nd
Mar	500	West Dean	23 rd	287	Pett Level	15 th
Apr	500	Medmerry	21 st	528	Splash Point (Seaford)	23 rd
May	58	Worthing	1 st	16	Splash Point (Seaford)	1 st
Jun	300	Pagham Hbr	15 th	6	Rye Hbr	14 th
Jul	500	Thorney Island	25 th	5	Beachy Head	10 th
Aug	500	Church Norton	21 st	2	Telscombe Cliffs	5 th
Sep	200	Chichester Hbr	20 th	1	Telscombe Cliffs	7 th
Oct	30	Fishbourne Channel	7 th	4	Pett Level	27 th
Nov	11	Goring Gap	21 st	2	Telscombe Cliffs	4 th
Dec	60	Elmer	28 th	1	Pett Level	3 rd

Breeding was confirmed at three sites; at Rye Hbr just three pairs nested on Ternery Pool, fledging at least two young, and at Pagham Hbr one pair fledged no young. An occupied nest was noted with Black-headed Gulls on a raft at New Lake (Chichester GP). Although up to three pairs were seen during early spring at Arundel WWT with display and copulation noted, none remained to nest.

There were additional, notable, inland counts from the West Dean (West Sussex) area with 30 on 17 Mar, 300 on 25 Mar and 93 on 11 Apr whilst near Stansted 50 were recorded on 10 Apr.

This species is now regularly recorded at seawatching sites; the following table of month totals derived from the sum of the highest daily count flying in each direction from the principal sites shows, like many species, a predominantly eastward movement in spring and mainly westward movement in autumn.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	25	36	64	980	95	1	8	80	25	20	17	3
West	23	21	9	55	11	6	22	20	105	147	34	21

On 23 Apr 528 flew east at Splash Point (Seaford) and 500 were recorded at Birling Gap; fewer were seen in West Sussex with counts of 31 E at Selsey Bill, 84 E at Goring Gap, 76 E at Worthing and 77 E at Widewater (Lancing). Clearly many were moving on this day as a flock of c.40 flew south over Frant. The largest movements later in the year were at Selsey Bill where 71 E on 26 Aug and 22 W on 20 Sep. [JAN]



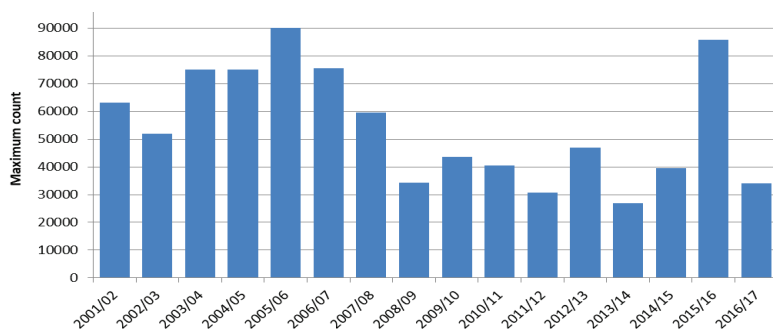
Mediterranean Gull, West Wittering, March 2017 (Adam Bowley)

Common Gull

Larus canus

Very common, sometimes abundant winter visitor and very common 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 (22%) 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 where counts in February were 34,000 on the 3rd, 18,870 on the 23rd and 26,880 on the 27th. The method of counting the huge roost at Bewl Water was described by Bance (Sussex Bird Report 2002 55:199-203); the peak winter counts since are shown in the following figure.



Elsewhere the highest counts were of 645 and 340 on downland north of Cissbury on 24 Feb and 19 Feb respectively and 310 at Cuckmere Haven on 24 Feb. During March, 750 were at Pett Level on the 10th, 650 at Cuckmere Haven on the 14th and 501 at Goring Gap on the 6th. Additionally, there were three figure counts from seven other sites during March. The number in the county declined into April when most were recorded moving east by seawatchers. A total of 670 were recorded flying east between March and May with the peak movement being on 1 Apr with when 200 E were recorded at Splash Point (Seaford) and 100 E at Birling Gap.

During the breeding season two pairs nested on Ternery Pool (Rye Hbr); one pair failed, the other produced one chick (first seen on 19 Jun) which did not survive. As usual, post breeding numbers were slow to build with peak counts in each month being 12 at Pagham Hbr on 28 May, ten at Church Norton on 14 and 19 Jun, 40 at Thorney Island on 23 Jul, 150 at Mid-Lavant on 10 Aug and 100 in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 17 Sep. During the last quarter the top counts were from Goring Gap where 500 roosted on the fields on 22 Nov and 540 on 30 Dec. Lower three-figure counts were recorded here or at nine other sites on 13 dates between 6 Oct and 30 Dec. There were no significant nocturnal roost counts at inland reservoirs at the end of the year. [JAN]

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 129 tetrads (14%), mostly 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
Selsey Peninsula	100	350	31	20	40	41	22	59	70	25	22	26
Cuckmere Haven	1000	380	170	2	1	-	2	-	40	40	263	250
Bexhill / Hastings	-	-	-	35	2	-	90	60	-	-	270	-
Rye Bay	150	183	248	94	37	87	23	89	245	200	3	80

The largest flocks in the first winter period were approximately 1000 roosting on the south-west side of the Cuckmere valley on 26 Jan, 380 there on 13 Feb and 350 at both Arlington Res and Pagham Hbr on 24 Jan and 12 Feb respectively. As usual numbers declined during March and April. A pair raised three young on a roof top in Shoreham-by-Sea, two pairs were noted on roof tops in Brighton, but there was no evidence of breeding, and at Rye Hbr one pair successfully raised young on the Martello Tower and another pair nested on Bourne's Warehouse. Thus just three pairs were confirmed to have bred in the county.

After a storm, 150 were at Ford on 6 Jun but the first substantial autumn counts were at Rye Hbr with 245 on 12 Sep, 210 on 30 Sep and 200 on 27 Oct. At Hastings, the peak numbers were 270 on 18 Nov and 200 on the 26th and this coincided with the increase in the roost size in the Cuckmere valley where there were 263 on 27 Nov, 250 on both 16 and 28 Dec and 150 on the 30th. One hundred and fifteen at Birling Gap on 6 Dec was the highest count at the year end from sites not in the table. The species was recorded in small numbers at just five sites away from the coast and river valleys with eight at Warnham LNR being the highest count. [JAN]

Glaucous Gull

Larus hyperboreus

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

A minimum total of seven (but possibly as many as ten) was recorded in 2017. In January, there was a first winter (2cy) on Flat Beach (Rye Hbr) on 11 Jan (MJR) and presumably a different bird in the gull roost at Cuckmere Haven and then briefly at Arlington Res the following day (MRE, ADW). Two first or second winters (2/3cy) were seen at Arlington Res on 24 Jan (CJRB, AG, ADW) and at Cuckmere Haven on the 25th (MRE); one of these stayed at Cuckmere Haven until 29 Jan (DGB, RJF) and it or another, identified as a first winter, had returned on 9 Feb and remained until at least 12 Feb (AG, MRE). On 25 Jan there was also a first winter at Medmerry (TG-P). A first winter at Selsey Bill on 6 Feb (AH, OM) was possibly the Medmerry bird. The remaining records for the early part of the year were of a first winter flying east along the beach at St Leonards Marina on 12 Feb (ASG) and another first winter at Cuckmere Haven on 29 Mar (CFB, ME, AH, MP, RCS).

In the latter half of the year, there was a first winter (1cy) offshore at Sovereign Harbour (Eastbourne) on 29 Nov (MRE) and 1 Dec (BRC) and possibly the same bird in the gull roost at Cuckmere Haven on 16 Dec (RJF). [PJ]

Iceland Gull

Larus glaucoideus

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

2017 was a very good year for this species with a total of six recorded. Early in the year, there was a first winter (2cy) in the gull roost at Cuckmere Haven on 29 Jan (SHL) followed by another first winter on the beach at Goring Gap on 5 Feb (SPS) and an immature at Selsey Bill on 11 Feb (CJH) that flew in from the west, landed on the sea and drifted off east.

The remaining three records were remarkably all on 17 Dec, a juvenile (1cy) on the frozen Warnham MP (MA, JJE, BGRI) before flying off north-west at 12:45, another juvenile at Newhaven Hbr up until dusk (LGB, MRE, NMG) and a third winter (3cy) at Arlington Res (MRE, ADW) that flew off south at 13:15. The county total this century moves on to 37. [PJ]

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus argentatus

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 477 tetrads (52%), this was again the most frequently recorded and widespread of all the gulls. The largest gatherings during the first two

months were 750 at Cuckmere Haven on 13 Feb, 500 at Warnham LNR on 28 Jan and the same number roosting at Bewl Water on 27 Feb. Lower three figure counts were recorded from 13 additional sites during this period. The species was recorded in 60 (46%) squares surveyed in the early year SWBS demonstrating its widespread winter distribution.

During the spring there were 65 3-figure counts from approximately 30 locations with the largest flocks being 450 in the lower Adur valley on 21 Mar, 447 offshore at Selsey Bill on 31 Mar, 390 and 380 at Cuckmere Haven on 15 and 13 Mar respectively and 380 at Weir Wood Res on 20 Apr.

During the BBS Herring Gulls were found in 118 (69%) of the 1-km squares surveyed; confirmed breeding was recorded from just 24 tetrads and the species was considered as probably breeding in a further five tetrads. Nesting was considered as widespread on the rooftops of the University of Sussex, at least 16 AON were counted in Hollingbury (Brighton) and 39 pairs nested at Rye Hbr but few were recorded from most coastal towns. A pair at both Arundel WWT and Barcombe Cross were the furthest from the coast.

The largest counts during the summer were 875 in the lower Arun Valley on 27 Aug, 600 feeding offshore at Telscombe Cliffs on 10 Jun and 480 at Hollingbury on 17 Jul. On 12 Sep 1000 roosted at Rye Hbr with 2500 roosting there three days later, a flock of 1200 were on a ploughed field at Iford on 12 Oct, 700 and 730 at Aldwick (Bognor) on 20 Oct and 21 Nov respectively and 1000 were at Warnham LNR on 17 Dec. During this period a further 70 counts between 100 and 500 were noted from 30 different widespread localities and again the late year SWBS found Herring Gulls to be well distributed in 93 (58%) of 1-km squares surveyed.

There were no records of the nominate race *L.a. argentatus*. [JAN]

Caspian Gull

Larus cachinnans

Scarce but regular winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Early in the year, there was a first winter (2cy) at Newhaven Hbr on 6 Jan, the same bird or another there on 18 Jan (both MRE), a first winter and a second winter (3cy) in the gull roost at Cuckmere Haven on 12 Jan (MRE), and a first winter and an adult there on 27 Jan (RJF). An additional nine birds were reported from Cuckmere Haven up until 21 Feb although these were not fully documented (per MRE).

There were no further records until 23 Nov when there was a juvenile (1cy) at Cuckmere Haven (MRE) followed by a spate of records at this site in December with three (a second winter (2cy), 3rd winter (3cy) and an adult) on the 7th (MRE), two (3rd winters) on the 11th (MRE), a third or fourth winter (4cy) on the 15th (BGRI), three (a first winter and two adults) on the 16th (RJF), four (a first winter, a second winter and two 3rd winters) on the 17th (MRE), two (a second winter and an adult) on the 18th (ARK, SHL), a third winter on the 24th (MRE) and a second winter on the 31st (MRE). At Newhaven Hbr, there was a juvenile on 17 Dec (MRE), an adult on the 20th (GM), and a different juvenile on the 24th (MRE).

Although regular in East Sussex, Caspian Gull remains a surprisingly rare bird in West Sussex, with no records for the vice-county in either 2016 or 2017. [PJ]

Yellow-legged Gull*Larus michahellis*

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

This species was recorded in each month, except June, in small numbers and mainly from coastal sites. The table shows, as usual, most were seen on or near the Selsey peninsula during the late summer and early autumn.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Approx. county total	4	1	2	1	2	-	8	10	9	7	2	1
Max no. Selsey peninsula	1	1	-	-	-	-	5	5	7	5	-	-
Days recorded	3	4	2	3	1	-	11	12	8	6	2	1

The highest counts at Pagham Hbr were seven on 26 Sep, six on 28 Sep and five on both 23 Aug and 4 Oct. Elsewhere, most records involved single birds except two were seen at the gull roost in the Cuckmere valley on 29 Jan, at Cliff End (Pett) on 16 May, at Beachy Head on 10 Jul and in the lower Arun valley on 27 Aug. Inland one was at Warnham LNR on both 13 Jan and 29 Oct and at Arundel Park on 1 Aug.

A detailed analysis of the records, assuming the same birds remain in the Pagham Hbr area between July and October, suggests possibly fewer than 30 individuals were involved during the year; a similar number to the previous two low years in 2016 and 1990. [JAN]

Lesser Black-backed Gull*Larus fuscus*

Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce (mainly immatures) in summer and scarce breeder. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 151(17%) tetrads during the year, marginally fewer than in recent years. With the exception of 150 at Ford after a storm on 6 Jun all the three-figure counts were recorded during the winter months and associated with the Cuckmere valley. In January 200 were in the lower Cuckmere valley on the 7th and 120 were at Arlington Res on the 24th whilst later in the year counts from the lower valley included 344 on 27 Nov, 340 on 20 Dec and 250 on 30 Dec. There were several lower counts from the same area but elsewhere there were 30 at Pagham Hbr on 8 Jan, 22 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 13 Feb, 17 roosting at Bewl Water on 2 Mar and 18 at Shoreham Hbr on 30 Mar. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were recorded on 97 different dates at Warnham LNR but all the highest counts occurred in April and May with 34 on 12 Apr and 33 on 5 May being the peaks. Likewise the highest count at Weir Wood Res was of 35 on 30 Apr.

Very little spring movement was noted and the breeding was again poorly recorded with nesting pairs noted on the Selsey peninsula, in Worthing, Brighton, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. During the autumn 50 were seen at Hastings on 5 Aug, 35 at Rye Hbr on 12 Sep and 44 flew W at Selsey Bill on 23 Oct; this being the only significant offshore movement all year. Thereafter, apart from 20 in the lower Ouse valley on 2 Dec, all the notable counts were from the Cuckmere valley. [JAN]

Sandwich Tern*Thalasseus sandvicensis*

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

The wintering population in West Sussex seems quite well established, with regular sightings from both Chichester Hbr and the Selsey Bill/Church Norton areas peaking at eight on 17 Jan. However, the next record was not until 8 Feb with similar numbers through the month and a maximum of 8 W at Selsey Bill on the 14th.

As is often the case, numbers began to build up at Rye Hbr, from 4 Mar, before there was evidence of coastal passage at seawatching sites. Numbers there increased through several double and treble-figure counts to 150 by the 19th, by which date no more than a dozen birds had been recorded heading east elsewhere. Passage numbers remained low until 28 Mar, when treble-figure counts were recorded at four of the principal seawatching sites with a maximum of 164 at Birling Gap. The peak passage day of the spring was 9 Apr, when 603 E were recorded at Splash Point (Seaford); another big movement occurred over 29 and 30 April, with combined totals for the two days of 516 E past Selsey Bill and 398 past Splash Point. Numbers were much higher at Selsey Bill than other sites in May, but this might be a consequence of the expanding colony in nearby Pagham Hbr rather than genuine passage.

It was a reasonably good breeding season at Rye Hbr, with 240 pairs fledging 79 youngsters, with probably another ten chicks fledging very late, whilst at Pagham Hbr a significant increase to the breeding colony, up to 67 pairs, sadly only produced 12 chicks after a raid by a fox. Reports from away from the breeding sites are few in summer, so 195 birds fishing off Fairlight on 4 Jun was notable.

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

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Selsey Bill	E	381	1865	1102	15	39	41	121	12
	W	34	48	2	128	193	242	200	33
Worthing	E	55	583	177	5	2	2	27	49
	W	4	54	36	3	1	12	49	-
Telscombe Cliffs	E	145	237	38	1	16	11	15	-
	W	-	4	9	1	-	1	15	-
Splash Point	E	187	1356	209	13	-	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	2	4	-	-	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	E	183	1071	209	13	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	2	4	-	nc	nc	nc	nc

A post-breeding build-up at Rye Hbr in August rose from 100 on the 5th to a peak of 450 on the 26th, before numbers declined swiftly. Conversely, numbers remained low in Pagham Hbr; from 35 on the 3rd they peaked at 80 on the 6th and then declined into single figures for the rest of the month; there were only three double-figure counts there to 7 Nov, the last record from that site. Double-figure counts, mostly of passage birds, were recorded fairly often at Selsey Bill throughout August, September, with the last of these (12 birds) on 7 Oct.

The last bird seen at Rye Hbr was on 30 Sep, and the last in East Sussex was 1 W past Telscombe Cliffs on 20 Oct; all later records were from Selsey Bill and the western harbours where small numbers were recorded to 20 Dec but with, finally, 19 at Mengham Rythe Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 22 Dec. [AH]

Elegant Tern

*Thalasseus elegans***Very rare vagrant**

One was present in Pagham Hbr from 10 to 20 Jun (ARK et al.). It had been seen just over the county border in Hampshire on 7 and 9 Jun before flying into Sussex, to the delight of its finder, who had hoped to track it down. Hundreds of observers were able to enjoy this unexpected first for Sussex during its extended stay. The record has been accepted by BBRC. An account of the occurrence and the fascinating history of the individual, which had been ringed in France, is on page 215 of this report. [MM]

Little Tern

Sternula albifrons

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

2016: In Chichester Hbr 15 nests were observed on North Stakes Island on 3 Jun after which eight were artificially raised onto boxes with nests recreated. Despite this all nests were still flooded and all failed. One pair re-laid on Ella Nore on 7 Jun and raised one chick.

2017: There was a flurry of records on 9 Apr as the first migrants arrived, a day later than the 10-year average date, when between two and six birds were seen at various coastal sites but all probably relating to the same individuals. Numbers remained in single figures until 17 were noted offshore at Selsey Bill on 27 Apr and numbers increased significantly from the 29th. The biggest day of the spring was 30 Apr when 104 flew east at Selsey Bill. Peak counts at Worthing, Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap occurred on the same day and probably involved the same birds. Few were seen at seawatching locations away from Selsey Bill in May, although good numbers of eastbound birds continued to be recorded there throughout the month with a total of 241 and a maximum of 57 on 1 May. However, the situation was complicated by the presence of birds from the growing colony in nearby Pagham Hbr. The table of spring monthly eastbound totals at five sites clearly shows the differences referred to above:-

	Apr	May	Total	Peak Movement
Selsey Bill	171	164	335	104E on 30 Apr
Worthing	25	8	33	22E on 30 Apr
Telscombe Cliffs	2	-	2	2E on 19 Apr
Splash Point (Seaford)	66	2	68	59E on 30 Apr
Birling Gap	10	-	10	10E on 30 Apr

There was only one inland record; one spent five minutes at Arlington Res on the morning of 1 May.

Little Terns had another successful breeding season at Pagham Hbr; 21 pairs fledged 17 chicks with a productivity of 0.81 fledged per pair which appears to be adequate to maintain the population. This success was despite the depredations of a fox which caused much damage to the wider tern and gull colonies. There was also better news from Rye Hbr where 15 pairs fledged at least six young. In Chichester Hbr four pairs on South Stakes Island failed due to tidal flooding whilst the two or three pairs on Ella Nore failed due to fox predation.

Both breeding colonies departed early; at Pagham Hbr, the 25+ birds present on the morning of 23 Jul had all departed by the evening; at Rye Hbr, a count of 19 on 21 Jul was followed by just a few records of one and two birds.

In August, up to three birds remained in Pagham Hbr until the 7th, and two at Rye Hbr were recorded on three dates to the 7th. There was then an extraordinary count of 40 birds in Chichester Hbr on the 15th, presumably passing through, but thereafter there were just three further August sightings: two at Pagham Hbr on the 19th, one at Rye Hbr on the 22nd and two at Mengham Rythe (Chichester Hbr) on the 23rd. Over three weeks later the final record was of a late juvenile in Pagham Hbr on 18 Sep, one day earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [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 four accepted records in 2017, all of single adults: flying east past Selsey Bill on 17 Apr and 1 May (JA et al.), intermittently in Pagham Hbr from 12-18 Jun (AH et al.), and at Pilsey Island on 4 Sep (CBC). The first Selsey bird equalled the earliest arrival date for the county (17 Apr 1968 at Beachy Head). [PJ]

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

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

2016: The peak number of AON's in Chichester Hbr was 13 on 19 May but tidal flooding wiped out all nests by 3 Jun. Several pairs re-laid but no fledged young were observed, with the possibility that Lesser Black-backed Gulls preyed on the tern eggs.

2017: The first of the year were 5 E at Selsey Bill and one at Chichester GP on 28 Mar, just two days later than the 10-year average arrival date. Numbers remained relatively low until the last few days of April. A more comprehensive review of seawatching totals can be found under Common/ Arctic Tern, however, large parties of Common Terns were recorded regularly feeding offshore at Selsey Bill with notable counts of 70 on 28 Apr and 1 May, 120 on 2 May, 90 on 14 May and 65 on the 16th. During April and May there were several inland records from Chichester GP and Ardingly Res and particularly from Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res. At Warnham LNR there were six on 26 Apr and up to four almost daily through May; at Weir Wood Res they were recorded on 24 days from 16 Apr to 29 May with a sudden maximum of 22 on 7 May and ten the next day.

It was a reasonable breeding season following last year's relatively poor showing. This was particularly so at Rye Hbr, where productivity bounced back from last year's poor results to produce close to a chick per pair from the 170 pairs present. However, at Pett Level only five pairs bred; here it was a disastrous breeding season due to very low water levels and consequent predation by foxes and badgers. At Weir Wood Res, three pairs nesting on rafts produced eight young and at Warnham LNR, two pairs fledged three young. Sadly, the birds breeding at Pagham Hbr fared less well, after a fox breached the electric fencing; 35 pairs fledged just two chicks. In Chichester Hbr 12 pairs nested on Stakes Islands but all failed due to tidal flooding. Although up to two birds were recorded on Ardingly Res on three dates between 2 Jun and 2 Jul there were no signs of nesting.

There was no repeat of the big build-up in Pagham Hbr this year; there were only four double-figure counts, the highest of which was 45 on 24 Jul. The only other site where good numbers were recorded regularly was Rye Hbr; the July peak count was 108 on the 6th and the August peak was a roost of 380 on the 26th. At Weir Wood Res, Common Terns were recorded almost daily through

both July and August with peaks of 19 on 17 Jul, but only seven on 7 Aug. Numbers declined rapidly into September, with the only double-figure counts being 19 W past Selsey Bill on the 3rd, 14 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) the next day and 33 in Rye Hbr on the 7th. There were just three October records; one in Pagham Hbr on the 7th and 10th and four at Pett Level on 29th, six days later than the 10-year average last record date. [AH]

Arctic Tern

Sterna paradisaea

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

One past Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Mar (RCS) was the first ever March record of this species, and a full 17 days ahead of the ten-year average first date. The next on 17 Apr was in Shoreham Hbr, followed by small near-daily numbers seen from seawatching sites until the 29th when at least 500 were recorded at Splash Point during a big eastward movement of 'Commic' Terns and other species. The previous record day count was 350 E also at Splash Point on 12 May 2002. Another 100 were recorded flying east at Splash Point on 30 Apr. There were just a few more seen after that date along the coast with 10E at Selsey Bill on 1 May being the only double figure count. Two at Weir Wood Res on 7 May was the only inland record. None was recorded after 28 May.

One at Rye Hbr on 22 Aug was the first autumn record followed by a juvenile flying west at Fairlight on 5 Sep. Thereafter all the other records were from Pagham Hbr, Selsey Bill and Chichester Hbr, with one or two birds seen on eight dates between 15 and 27 Sep, with a juvenile recorded at the last location on 4 and 27 Oct, 13 days beyond the ten-year average departure date. [AH]

Common/Arctic Tern

Sterna hirundo/paradisaea

Due to difficulties in separately identifying Common and Arctic Terns when passing seawatching sites, primarily due to brevity of view and distance, the majority of these two species are recorded as 'Commic' Terns. The combined totals for Common, Arctic and 'Commic' Terns recorded at the principal sea-watching sites were as follows:

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Peak spring movement	Jul	Aug	Sep
Selsey Bill	E	8	1640	1075	15	863 E on 30 Apr	-	1	2
	W	-	21	18	38		39	99	44
Worthing	E	-	127	18	-	63 E on 30 Apr	-	-	-
	W	-	-	1	-		-	-	2
Telscombe Cliffs	E	3	137	13	-	75 E on 9 Apr	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-		-	-	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	6	3286	144	-	2310 E on 29 Apr	-	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	-		-	nc	nc
Birling Gap	E	-	460	25	-	337 E on 29 Apr	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	-		nc	nc	nc

Parties of Common Terns regularly feeding offshore were only recorded at Selsey Bill and their presence might have complicated the passage totals there. At Splash Point (Seaford), in a reversal of last year's experience, far more birds were recorded in April than in May; peak passage occurred on the 29th here whereas at Selsey Bill it was on the following day. There were only a handful of records of birds recorded as 'Commics' from sites not shown in the table.

It was quite a poor spring for passage at Selsey Bill; although the total for April almost equalled that for 2016, May's total was only 32% thereof. The table shows a minimal autumn passage at Selsey Bill and few elsewhere with the last being 2 W at the 'Bill' on 17 Sep, 22 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [AH]

White-winged Black Tern

Chlidonias leucopterus

Rare vagrant.

There was one record in 2017, of a moulting adult in the mouth of Chichester Hbr on 14 Aug and then either there or on the 'Stilt Pool' at Medmerry until the 17th (BGRI, BO'D et al.). Whilst in Chichester Hbr, it was seen from both Hayling Island (Hants) and East Head. The county total moves on to 52 although only five have been this century, the most recent of which were in May 2011 (Chichester GP) and Oct/Nov 2014 (Rye Hbr). [PJ]



White-winged Black Tern, Medmerry, August 2017 (Andrew House)

Black Tern

Chlidonias niger

Scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
12	11	1	-	3	12	1

The first records for what was a very poor year for this species were on the late date of 29 Apr, 12 days later than the 10-year average date, with presumably the same bird being seen at Splash Point (Seaford), Birling Gap and Pett Level. Eleven flew east at Selsey Bill the following day, the biggest count of a very meagre spring, with eight further birds recorded from there in May. Inland, a single individual on 8 May and two on the 12th at Weir Wood Res were the only other spring records. One rather late migrant was seen amongst other terns at Church Norton on 10 Jun.

Two at Rye Hbr (1 W and one on the Long Pit) on 17 Aug were the first in the autumn and a juvenile was still there on the 21st, followed by another juvenile on the 22nd. There were then only three more records; 8 W and two lingering offshore at Selsey Bill on 3 Sep, two at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) three days later and one at Rye Hbr on 3 Oct, five days later than the 10-year average departure date. [AH]

Great Skua

Stercorarius skua

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

The method of estimating the monthly totals is the same as that used for Red-throated Diver. The annual total of 189 was a major improvement on the 2016 figure of 109 but still below the 10-year average of 222. The estimated monthly figures together with the number of days recorded and the peak day figures are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	8	3	6	111	24	5	-	4	8	9	3	8
No. of days	8	3	6	18	10	4	-	3	5	8	3	8
Peak no.	1	1	1	39	7	2	-	2	4	2	1	1
Peak day	-	-	-	29th	1st	6th	-	17th	3rd	20th	-	-

During the first three months of the year there was further evidence of birds wintering off the Sussex coast. All records in this period related to single birds seen flying either east or west at the principal seawatching sites plus individuals lingering offshore at Church Norton, Goring and Fairlight. It was not until mid-April that there was any noticeable easterly passage with 5 E off Selsey Bill on the 17th, 18th and 19th. The two main movements occurred on 23 and 29 Apr. On the first of those two dates there were 11 E at Selsey Bill, 17 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 12 E at Birling Gap. On 29 Apr observers at Selsey Bill recorded 39 E and at Splash Point 33 E. In this period there were also one to eight recorded at Ferring, Goring, Worthing, Lancing, Brighton Marina, Ovingdean and Telscombe Cliffs. Numbers were disappointingly low in May with a peak of just 7 E at Worthing on the 1st. Five single birds were seen in June but there were no records in July. The table above shows that numbers remained low from August until the end of the year with 4 E and 1 W at Selsey Bill on 3 Sep being the highest count. [DHH]

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

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

Records in 2017 were confined to the months of April and May. The estimated numbers of skuas occurring have been calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver. Where birds were recorded lingering offshore they have been included but only when it is apparent that they were not part of a movement on that day. This method gives an annual total of 170 which is below the 2016 figure of 190 but above the 10-year average of 142. Annual totals this century have varied considerably from a peak of 369 in 2008 to just 20 in 2015. The monthly totals and peak day counts for easterly spring passage at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

	Apr	May	Total	Peaks
Monthly minima	76	94	170	
Selsey Bill	16	69	85	26 on 10 May
Worthing	20	23	43	19 on 29 April
Telscombe Cliffs	21	6	27	13 on 23 April
Splash Point (Seaford)	68	50	118	47 on 30 April
Birling Gap	72	23	95	53 on 30 April

Spring passage started on 21 Apr with 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford). On 23 Apr birds were recorded at several seawatching sites including 13 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) and 18 E at both Splash Point and Birling Gap. The largest movement of the year occurred on 30 Apr with 19 E at Worthing, 47 E at Splash Point and 53 E at Birling Gap with one to 14 recorded at Selsey Bill, Ferring, Goring, Lancing, Southwick, Ovingdean, Telscombe Cliffs and Fairlight. Birds were noted on eleven dates in May starting with 12 E at Selsey Bill, 13 E at Splash Point and 11 E at Birling Gap on the 1st. The next double-figure count was 18 E at Selsey Bill on 6 May while on 10 May observers at Selsey Bill recorded their highest total of the spring with 26 E when there were also 19 E at Splash Point. The only other double-figure count in May was of 12 E at Birling Gap on the 12th with the last record of the year being 1 E at both Selsey Bill and Splash Point on 26 May. [DHH]

Arctic Skua

Stercorarius parasiticus

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

Use of the same method of estimating numbers as used for Red-throated Diver produced a total of 259 for the year. Although this is an increase over the 2016 figure of 193 it is below the 10-year average of 347. The estimated monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	1	2	9	133	58	16	10	3	13	9	5	-
No. of days	1	2	4	14	20	9	8	3	9	6	4	-
Peak no.	1	1	5	44	11	4	2	1	3	3	2	-
Peak day	9th	-	28th	30th	1st	13th	23rd	-	3rd	1st	19th	-

Numbers were typically low during the first winter period; 1 W at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 9 Jan was the first of the year followed by single birds at Selsey Bill on both 7 and 8 Feb. There was a slight increase in numbers in March including 5 E at Birling Gap on the 28th. The main easterly spring passage occurred on the last two days of April. On 29 Apr there were 23 E at Selsey Bill, 29 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 20 E at Birling Gap. The following day passage was noted along the length of the Sussex coast with 36 E at Selsey Bill, 21 E at Ferring, 18 E at Goring, 21 E at Worthing, 7 E at Lancing, 7 E at Brighton Marina, 7 E at Ovingdean, 10 E at Telscombe Cliffs, 44 E at Splash Point, 18 E at Birling Gap and 6 E at Fairlight. These movements did not continue into May with a peak of just 11 E at Birling Gap on the 1st. The totals for April and May at the principal seawatching sites are shown below, but these take no account of duplication between sites so the columns should not be totalled.

	Selsey Bill	Worthing	Telscombe Cliffs	Splash Point	Birling Gap
Apr	84	25	19	108	68
May	29	9	8	33	19

Numbers throughout the remainder of the year were low with no double-figure counts. A noticeable feature was the number of occasions on which birds were recorded in Rye Bay with one or two present on 12 dates in the summer, obviously attracted by the terns feeding offshore. The last record of the year was of two off Church Norton on 19 Nov. [DHH]

Long-tailed Skua

Stercorarius longicaudus

Rare vagrant.

In spring, an adult flew east past Selsey Bill at 06:25 (OM, SR et al.) and then Splash Point (Seaford) at 13:00 (SHL, MM, RCS et al.) on 11 May. In autumn, there were two adults harassing Black-headed Gulls offshore at Selsey Bill on 3 Sep (JA, AH, SH, IP). These are the first Sussex records since the long staying adult at Church Norton in Aug 2014. The county total since 2000 moves on to 19 with monthly totals of Apr (1), May (10), Aug (2), Sep (4), Oct (1) and Dec (1). [PJ]

Little Auk

Alle alle

Very scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

The only record of the year was of one moving W at Selsey Bill on 2 Dec (JA, AH, SH). This brings the total this century to an approximate minimum of 157, but there has not been a double-figure total since 2007. [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 a record 4307. This figure exceeded the previous highest total of 2757 in 2000 and followed five years when the annual totals were under one thousand. The new record total raised the 10-year average from 622 to 1029. The estimated monthly totals, from which it can be seen that over three quarters of sightings were in February, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	239	3925	1	13	26	5	-	-	4	8	34	52
Peak no.	175	3000	1	4	8	4	-	-	1	4	10	11
Peak day	27th	16th	4th	24th	21st	9th	-	-	-	19th	7th	29th

Numbers in the early year were low and it was not until 27 Jan that there was any significant movement with 175 E and 69 W at Splash Point (Seaford). February's record total arose from two major movements and increased numbers of birds feeding offshore. On 2 Feb, Splash Point (Seaford) recorded 395 E with a remarkable movement of 3000 E there on 15 Feb. During this time the numbers in Rye Bay rose from 55 on 4 Feb to 450 on 13 Feb. In total contrast the sole record in March was of a single bird offshore at Selsey Bill on the 4th. Numbers throughout the spring, summer and autumn periods were typically low with no double-figure counts and no records at all in either July or August. The first autumn record was of one offshore at Selsey Bill on 3 Sep but the only double figure counts were 10 E at Splash Point on 7 Nov and 11 W at Selsey Bill on 29 Dec.

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



Razorbills and Guillemot, Selsey Bill, October 2017 (Andrew House)

Razorbill

Alca torda

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

Following three years in which the annual total was under 1000 the estimated 2017 figure (using the same method as for Red-throated Diver) was 6636. This was the highest annual total since 2005 and raised the 10-year average from 1598 to 1682. The monthly figures, in which the peak numbers are of movements and do not include birds feeding offshore, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	2034	4087	14	19	79	10	-	-	5	54	67	267
Peak no.	577	715	2	3	14	2			2	27	18	80
Peak day	11th	3rd	2nd	27th	13th	5th			30th	31st	14th	29th

In January, there were three-figure counts on four dates: 128 W at Selsey Bill on the 6th with 577 W there on the 11th, 180 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 100 E at Birling Gap on the 17th while on the 27th there were 555 E at Selsey Bill and 210 E at Splash Point. The largest offshore gathering during January was 65 off Lancing on the 8th but this was totally eclipsed by figures in February when there were 500-2000 off Selsey Bill each day from the 5th to the 11th. Movements during that month included 285 E at Splash Point on 2 Feb, 715 W and 199 E at Selsey Bill on 3 Feb, 144 E at Birling Gap on 14 Feb and 350 W at Selsey Bill on 19 Feb with a further 180 W there the following day. Numbers dropped dramatically after 21 Feb with no double-figure counts in March or April. Small numbers were recorded in both May and June with the last record being 1 W at Selsey Bill on 16 Jun. There were no records in July or August and the first autumn record was 1 E at Selsey Bill on 10 Sep. Numbers remained low for the rest of the year with the highest offshore count being just 30 at Telscombe Cliffs on 3 Dec and the largest movement being 80 W at Selsey Bill on 29 Dec.

Almost 85% of all records of Razorbills 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
Selsey Bill	1337	9241	2369	53	10	29	2	-	6	32	2	30	78	44	222
Other sites	1241	797	145	29	7	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	46	124	3

There were no records of birds away from tidal waters during the year. [DHH]

Black Guillemot

Cephus grylle

Rare vagrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

A popular bird, first seen at Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on 28 Nov, remained in the area until 24 Mar 2018 and attracted many birders (RB et al.). One offshore at Elmer Rocks (near Middleton-on-Sea) on 1 Dec (BFF, AH, OM) was the only other record and increased the county total to 19. [DHH]



Black Guillemot, Sovereign Harbour, December 2017 (Leigh Prevost)

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

Very scarce visitor; most frequently recorded in spring. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

After two years with no sightings there were records of live birds in 2017. At Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) there was 1 E on 16 Jan followed by two offshore which later flew off eastwards on 18 Jan (DHH). At Birling Gap there was 1 E on 12 May (RAB, JFC). These records bring the total of live birds seen this century to 20.

In addition, a freshly dead bird was found at Brighton Marina on 15 Sep (DB). [DHH]

Auk species

The approximate annual total of all auks reported was 52,089 which is the highest since 2011 and a welcome increase compared to the last three years when numbers were below 10,000. The 2017 total, which includes all records of Razorbills, Common Guillemots and auks not identified to species, raises the 10-year average from 18,970 to 23,708. The monthly figures in the table below take no account of any duplication of sightings so should not be taken as an accurate assessment.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly Total	16476	30866	57	220	505	48	-	-	23	522	926	2446
Peak no.	1531W	4395E	7W	29W	97W	18W	-	-	8W	312W	376E	310W
Peak day	6th	15th	23rd	23rd	5th	8th	-	-	19th	31st	14th	18th

The two major movements during the year both occurred in February with both Razorbills and Common Guillemots involved but it is interesting that the main movements of the two species did not coincide. It is also worth noting that while feeding parties of Razorbills off Selsey Bill exceeded 1000 on five dates in February, the vast majority of Common Guillemots simply passed through with a peak offshore count of 450 in Rye Bay for just one day.

Almost 70% of all records of auks came from Selsey Bill as shown in the table below.

	Jan-Feb			Mar-May			Jun-Jul			Aug-Oct			Nov-Dec		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
Selsey Bill	7527	14556	9662	311	15	249	12	-	34	92	5	379	823	51	1643
Other sites	11162	2044	2391	175	25	4	-	2	-	119	1	1	397	208	250

Many of the auks seen in flight were too distant for specific identification and as a result one in four of all auks seen in flight were reported as 'auk sp'. Where specific identification was possible Razorbills outnumbered Common Guillemots by a ratio of 3.4:1. [DHH]

Feral Pigeon

Columba livia

Common resident.

Feral Pigeons were recorded in 227 (25%) tetrads (242 in 2016). In the first winter period, there was only a single record of a three-figure count with 120 at Worthing on 3 Jan and only two records of flocks of 50 or more with 65 at Brighton on 5 Jan and 80 at Hove on 29 Jan. During the early year SWBS Feral Pigeons were noted in 16 (12%) surveyed 1-km squares with a maximum count of 40 on 21 Feb near Oving. Through the year 77 (32%) GBW participants recorded the species.

Breeding was clearly under reported with only six tetrads where it was confirmed. In the spring and summer periods, the only record of note was for 100 at Old Town (Eastbourne) on 25 Mar. The species was recorded in 35 (20%) of the studied BBS squares.

For the autumn and second winter period, there was a record of 400 in Beach House Park (Worthing) on 6 Oct. There were 100 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 29 Nov, with eight other records of counts of 50 birds or more, generally from the coast, particularly Newhaven and Portslade. A total of 230 were seen during the late year SWBS from 24 (15%) squares with a maximum count of 51 on 13 Nov at Balsaean. [AHP]

Stock Dove*Columba oenas*

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

The species was recorded in 350 (38%) tetrads (341 in 2016). In the first winter period, the highest counts were 100 at Scotney GP on 26 Jan and 42, in a single flock, at Ashfold (Handcross) on 6 Mar. Low numbers were recorded in the early year SWBS but the species was recorded in 34 (26%) surveyed squares.

Two birds were seen on an owl box at Fletching Mill Fm on 19 Feb with the first bird heard singing at Ashdown Forest on 24 Feb. Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads (two in 2016) but considered probable or possible in a further 84 tetrads (98 in 2016). During the BBS Stock Doves were found in 78 (45%) 1-km squares with a maximum count of 17 on 27 Jun at East Ashling.

Autumn passage was light, in the Hastings area a total of 254 were recorded on ten dates between 6 and 31 Oct with a peak of 79 on the 27th. Likewise at Selsey Bill the only notable movements were in late October with 143 W on the 28th and 110 W on the 30th. The only other high count was 120 at East Guldeford Levels on 29 Oct.

The only late winter count of any note was of 150 at Thorney Island on 3 Dec. In the late year SWBS Stock Doves were found in 30 (19%) 1-km square; fewer than other surveys. [AHP]



Stock Dove, Ashburnham, June 2017 (Chris Hobden)

Woodpigeon*Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Woodpigeons were recorded in 665 tetrads compared to 677 in 2016.

The two largest counts in the first winter period were both from the Chilgrove area, with c.700 at Yew Tree Cottage on 14 Feb and 1500 at Monkton on 19 Feb. There were 30 counts of over 100 birds (70 in 2016, 100 in 2015) including 500 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 3 Jan and at Sheepcote

Valley (Brighton) on 18 Jan. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 130 (99%) of the 1-km squares surveyed with a high of 400 at Northend Fm (Wardley) on 5 Feb. During the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch Woodpigeons were recorded in 87% of West Sussex gardens and 79% of East Sussex gardens whilst 236 (98%) of gardens surveyed for GBW recorded the species during the year.

Although clearly a widespread breeder, breeding was confirmed in only 13 tetrads (17 in 2016) but likely in a further 104 (121 in 2016). During the BBS the species was found in all of the 172 squares surveyed.

On 7 May, there was an interesting record of two birds flying out to sea at Splash Point (Seaford).

The first sign of autumn movement was a flock of 733 W at Weir Wood Res on 16 Oct with 839 W at Brantridge Forest (Balcombe) on 23 Oct. There were 1660 at Brighton Wild Park, 1500 at Seaford Head and 1000 W at Ladywell (Coombes) on 27 Oct. There was a good count of 18,000 W at Plummers Plain on the 28th with 1813 at nearby Warnham LNR on the same day. At Church Hill (Ashdown Forest) on the 29th, 4643 flew SE, 2000 were at Paddockhurst the same day and 2000 were at Barcombe Cross on the 31st. In one early morning 45 minute spell, flocks totalling 19,000 were seen over Barcombe Cross on 5 Nov. In a similar period, 18,500 were seen heading SE at Pett Level on the 6th with 2800 SE there on 9 Nov. A flock of 1000 E at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 23 Nov marked the end of any further autumn passage.

There were no large concentrations for the remaining winter period, the only record of note being a flock of 870 E at Crawley Industrial Estate on 16 Dec. The species was recorded in 154 (96%) of the 161 squares surveyed in the late winter SWBS with a high of 348 in Northchapel on 27 Dec. [AHP]

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Very common resident.

Collared Doves were recorded in 451 (49%) tetrads compared to 448 in 2016. In the first winter period, there was only one record of 20 or more birds; 23 at Shoreham on 18 Mar. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 55 (42%) of the 131 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 18 on 8 Jan in Portslade. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch Collared Doves were found in 44% of gardens in West Sussex and 47% in East Sussex which compares to being found in 215 (90%) of GBW gardens through the year.

Breeding was confirmed in only four tetrads (three in 2016) but likely in a further 66 tetrads (77 in 2016). Nest building was first recorded on the early date of 24 Feb at West Chiltington, birds were on a nest at Worthing on 17 Mar and fledglings first observed on 15 Jun at Portslade. During the BBS Collared Doves were found in 106 (62%) of the 172 squares surveyed with high count of 19 on 20 Apr at Upper Wellingham (Ringmer).

There were two large counts in the autumn with 50 at Iford Brooks (Lewes) on 17 Sep and 46 at Thorney Island on 12 Oct. During the late winter SWBS Collared Doves were encountered in 66 (41%) of the 161 squares surveyed with a high of 30 at West Wittering on 24 Dec, which was the highest count anywhere during the second winter period. [AHP]

Turtle Dove*Streptopelia turtur*

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

Birds were recorded in 60 tetrads compared to 65 in 2016, 60 in 2015, 77 in 2014, 97 in 2013 and 79 in 2012.

The first bird of the year was at the University of Sussex on 21 Apr, eight days later than the ten-year average of 13 Apr. There were another dozen records for April including two birds at Pagham Hbr on 25 Apr and three at Woods Mill LNR on the 28th. As in previous years, sightings were received on an almost daily basis during May and June, generally for ones and twos. Higher counts included three at Henfield on 1 May, four at Woods Mill LNR on 12 May, three under a feeder at Arlington on 5 Jun, six on the Knepp Estate on 13 Jun, three at Northchapel on 25 Jun and five at Woods Mill LNR on 29 Jun. In the Knepp southern block (473.17h) a structured survey was carried out and recorded a minimum of 16 Turtle Dove territories.

There were two tetrads with confirmed breeding (two in 2016) while breeding was probable in twelve and possible in twelve other tetrads (10 and 20 in 2016). Sightings of juveniles included one at Henfield on 27 Jun which stayed until 19 Sep, one at Woods Mill LNR on 29 Jun and one at Pagham Hbr from 13 to 20 Sep with the same or another at Sidlesham Ferry on 14 Sep. There were a dozen records for August, all for ones and twos except for three at Woods Mill LNR on 1 Aug.

Although 26 records were received for September, the majority of these were for the juvenile bird at Pagham Hbr seen from the 12th to the 20th although there was a good record of four at West Marden on 14 Sep. The last departing bird was seen at Gatwick Airport on 26 and 27 Sep, identical to the 10-year average last date. [AHP]



Turtle Dove, Pagham Harbour, September 2017 (Adam Bowley)

Common Cuckoo

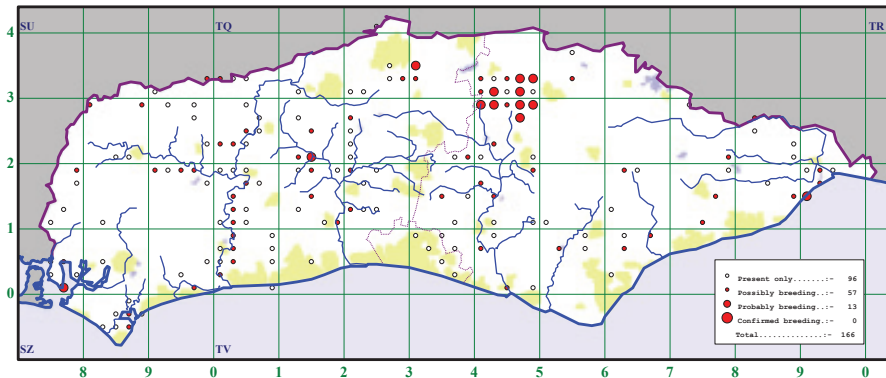
Cuculus canorus

Fairly common but declining summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Cuckoos were recorded in 166 tetrads (18%) in 2017; this is the lowest tetrad count in the past decade, and illustrates the continuing decline of this species, as shown below:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of tetrads	299	285	300	324	217	190	208	216	187	166

Cuckoos were distributed as shown in the following map:



The first recorded arrival was on 3 Apr at Iping Common, two days later than the 10-year average date. The next sighting was on 11 Apr at Loose Fm (Telham); thereafter Cuckoos were recorded on every day in April from the 11th, mostly as single birds. Twos were recorded at six sites during April, three at Ifold on the 22nd and five during survey work at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 28th and also at Rye Hbr on the 29th.

During the BBS Cuckoos were recorded in 36 (21%) of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of five previous noted at Rye Hbr. There were no confirmed breeding records but breeding was probable in seven tetrads and singing birds (presumably males) were recorded in a further 87 tetrads; a female was heard bubbling at the Old Lodge LNR on 25 and 31 May (the only such record) and the only other records of females came from Ellisons Pond (Ashdown Forest) on 26 May, the Knepp Estate on the 16th, Thorney Island on the 30th, Pett Level on 5 Jun and Balmer Down (Lewes) on the 14th. Grey phase females were noted at Arundel WWT on 6 and 28 May and Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on 4 Jul.

Most sightings (c.86%) were of single birds with c.9% of twos and threes at some ten sites between 3 May and 13 Jun by which time most of the adults would have started their migration back to Africa.

Ten birds were recorded in July, only five in August and the two September records were of an immature photographed at Rye Hbr on the 26th and one at Newhaven on the 28th, four weeks later than last year and 17 days later than the 10-year average date. [TS, JAH]



Cuckoo, Pagham Harbour, May 2017 (Trevor Guy)

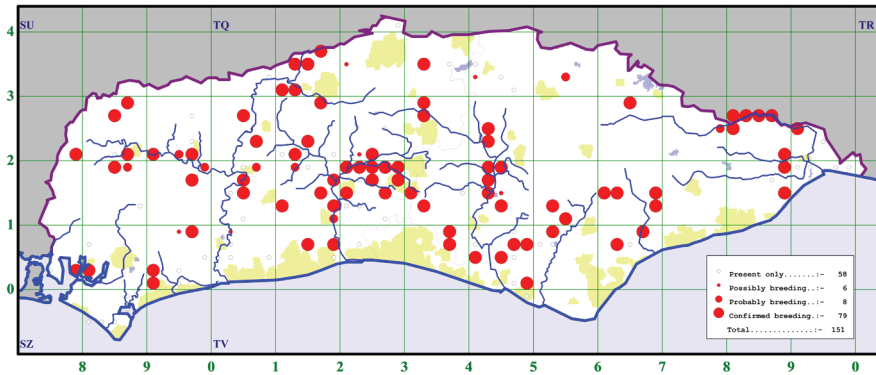
Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Fairly common resident. Schedule 1 species.

Single Barn Owls, occasionally two, were seen across Sussex throughout the year with more reports in the first two and the last two months of the year, following the usual annual pattern. The map below shows the combined distribution of sightings and breeding records for the year, coming from 151 (17%) tetrads.

Breeding was confirmed in 79 tetrads, with a total of 94 known attempts of which 93 were in nest boxes on trees and in buildings and one in a hollow tree. Use of nest boxes is, of course, more likely to be recorded. The commonest brood size was of three chicks, with four broods of five reported and, at one site, a clutch of six eggs. In the Adur Valley two pairs nested within 200m of each other, raising three chicks each. There was no evidence of second broods. Some areas usually searched



were not checked for breeding in 2017, so numbers are not strictly comparable from year to year.

A pellet from a nest site near lakes consisted entirely of the bones of frogs. Three dead Barn Owls were recorded; two apparent road casualties along the A27 and another on Pevensey Levels. [ABW]

Tawny Owl

Strix aluco

Common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Tawny Owls were recorded from 195 (21%) tetrads, a figure which is comparable to recent years but lower than during the Atlas period and the 10-year average for 2007 to 2016 of 228 tetrads.

During the year, the vast majority of records were of one or two birds; only rarely were more encountered or heard. During the first winter period, the woods around Arundel WWT held up to three birds on 26 Jan and three were also heard at Weir Wood Res on 8 Mar. Other sites where Tawny Owls were recorded fairly frequently were Horsham, Warnham LNR and Ashdown Forest.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads (up from 10 in 2016) and was probable in a further 12. A bird sitting on four eggs was noted in a nest box at Weir Wood Res on 28 Mar; at Pagham Hbr two owlets were seen in a box at the Discovery Centre on 24 May. Confirmed breeding was also highlighted by sightings of fledglings out in the open; this included 'a grey fluff ball' on a compost heap at the University of Sussex on 13 May, two chicks on the branch of a tree at Henfield, sightings of recently fledged birds at Bedham (Fittleworth) on 4 Jun, three juveniles at Eridge Rocks on 15 Jul and a begging juvenile at Arundel WWT on 6 Aug. During the GBW, Tawny Owls were recorded in 43 (18%) of 240 participating gardens during the year.

Multiple sightings during the summer and autumn periods included a single bird captured on a camera trap at Nutbourne using a raptor post, a peak count of up to three at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) that continued their presence into late autumn, and four at Pett Level on 15 Sep.

During the second winter period, Tawny Owls were recorded fairly often at a number of sites different from those of the first winter. Five were noted at Arundel on 7 Dec but the highest counts in Ashdown Forest were only twos. At Ladywell (Coombes) four were heard calling at dawn and at Newick a male bird was heard calling frequently through the period. At Pulborough Brooks three were recorded on several dates and heard calling at dusk on 4 Nov. Single birds were also recorded frequently at Uckfield. [MRE, JAH]

Little Owl

Athene noctua

Fairly common resident.

Little Owls were recorded in 56 tetrads (6.1%), comparable with 2016 (54) but a reduction on the 66 of 2015. When the average of these figures for the six post-Atlas years 2012 to 2017 (63) is compared with that for the five Atlas years 2007 to 2011 (106), it is clear that this species is significantly under-recorded or has declined.

During the first winter period, single birds were recorded fairly frequently at Westdean Woods, Pulborough Brooks and the Barcombe area, and irregularly from some 13 other sites across the county.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites: near Petworth (where three young were seen in a nest in a tree hole), in the Arun Valley (north of Arundel), on the Knepp Estate and at a farm near Beachy Head (where a fledgling was seen, but only once). Breeding was probable at two further sites. All sites bar one (Beachy Head) were in West Sussex. At Cold Coombes (Lewes) one was recorded close to a previously known nest site on 16 Apr, giving hope of this still being a potential breeding site.

In summer, four Little Owls were roosting together at the Knepp Estate, a site which provided the most records during this period. All other summer records were of single birds and, although widely scattered, were most frequently encountered in the Arun Valley (north of Arundel), and in an area around Rye Hbr.

During the autumn and second winter period, 42% of records were from Pulborough Brooks, probably reflecting the frequency with which this site is visited. While it appears that there are many areas within Sussex where this species is not being recorded there is hope that, with wider observer coverage, Little Owl records will increase in the future. [MRE]

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Birds were recorded from just three sites during the year. For the first time in many years there were no records of birds at roosts in the first winter period, and no spring migrants were recorded.

During the breeding season single birds were recorded from one downland location and one river valley in West Sussex. Breeding was confirmed at one inland site where young were heard calling during July from an area of mixed conifers.

No autumn migrants were recorded and there were no records of birds in the second winter period. Without concerted efforts this species is very rarely encountered therefore these records likely represent a significant underestimate of the species true numbers in the county. [DG]

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

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

There was a drastic decline in the number of tetrads in which Short-eared Owls were recorded in 2017 (36), but an analysis of records since 2008 shows that this figure was not the lowest recorded (27 in 2009), but was lower than the 10-year average for 2007 to 2016 (53) and less than half the highest (86 in 2015); there is, therefore, much annual variability, as shown below:

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of tetrads	45	34	27	34	70	64	40	52	86	75	36

This year's low figure may be due more to plenty of food available elsewhere, e.g. on the continent, than to a general population decline.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	23	12	19	7	5	-	1	7	4	13	7	11

During the first winter period, the majority of records were from Thorney and Pilsey Islands, The Burgh (Burpham) and the Beeding Brooks area, with maxima of five birds at the first site and four at the second and third. Other wintering populations were also found at Pevensy Levels (four on 5 and 10 Jan) and other more transient single individuals were recorded at Pulborough Brooks, Rye Hbr and elsewhere on single dates. One paid a brief visit to the runway at Gatwick Airport on 6 Mar and Ashdown Forest was the only other site away from the coast hosting a single bird.

Seawatchers had a quiet spring for this species, with observers at Selsey Bill recording only one 'in off' on 2 Apr. In late spring, numbers decreased significantly with presumed migrants being recorded at Rye Hbr on 5 May, at Cuckmere Haven on the 7th and the next day at Beachy Head; the last spring record was at Beeding Brooks on 20 May. It was interesting to note that one at Medmerry on 8 Jul was also present in May, and could well have stayed in the area, unlike all other sites where Short-eared Owls had departed their wintering grounds.

During the late-summer/autumn period the first record was of one at Pagham Hbr on 11 Aug; migrants were mostly recorded from Medmerry (3), Seaford Head (2) and Beachy Head (4) and as single individuals at a number of other coastal sites, e.g. Climping and Hastings.

During the second winter period no new wintering populations were found, but numbers at Pilsey Island had increased to seven roosting there on 12 Dec. [MRE]

Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Fairly common but localised summer visitor rarely seen on migration. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Nightjars were recorded in just 49 tetrads (5.3%).

The first bird of the year was one at Selsey Bill on 10 May, five days later than the 10-year average date, seen flying 'in off the sea from a long way out', just one of the few ever seen on migration. The species was then recorded on 13 further dates during May, mostly as ones, but three were seen on Ashdown Forest on both the 21st and 24th and at Iping Common on the 22nd. Churring was first recorded on Ashdown Forest on the 19th.

During the WHBBS (see page 210) 38 territories were recorded, a small reduction on the numbers for the previous four years (48, 35, 44, 40 (average 42). Elsewhere, seven displaying males were seen at Broadwater Warren during the season, five were noted near Petworth on 12 Jun, four were encountered at Wiggonholt Common (Pulborough Brooks) and the Parham Estate on 22 Jun, four at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 16 Jun, two were at Midhurst Common on 30 Jun and singles were recorded at West Heath Common and East Lavington during the summer.

On Ashdown Forest a female was seen on a nest with two eggs on 18 Jul and at least one chick

was being brooded on 3 Aug. The species was recorded in a further 21 1-km squares on Ashdown Forest with three birds recorded in five of these squares.

An adult female was trapped and ringed at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 22 Aug; this was the 11th record for this site and only the second this century. The last two records were of one at Rackham Hill on 1 Sep and another at Mill Fm (Fletching) on the 3rd which was heard churring in two bursts around 09:15 hr, some 13 days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [JAH]



Nightjar, Ashdown Forest, July 2017 (Tim Squire)

Alpine Swift

Tachymarptis melba

Rare vagrant.

The only record was of one at West Beach (Littlehampton) on 12 Apr (RP) which departed east pursued by a Peregrine. The county total since 1962 moves on to 42 of which seven have been in April and ten this century. [PJ]

Common Swift

Apus apus

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

Swifts were recorded in 353 (39%) tetrads across the county. There is usually remarkably little variation in the first arrival date for Common Swift and 2017 was no exception. One day later than the previous year, the first arrivals were noted on 16 Apr; one at East Worthing and two at Crowborough, just three days later than the 10-year average of 13 Apr and only nine days later than the earliest of 7 Apr 2000 and 2011. Regular sightings were noted from then onwards; 22 at Rye Hbr

on 29 Apr was the first double-figure count. In early May large influxes of Swifts are often seen and 443 N in 9¼ hr at Selsey Bill on 5 May was typical of this, along with five two-figure counts totalling 115 at five other sites the same day.

During the BBS, Swifts were encountered in 55 (16%) of the 338 surveys with a maximum count of 26 in Arundel Park on 25 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in a further 43, an increase on the figures for 2016 (7 and 23 respectively). This increase of 90% in the number of tetrads in which confirmed/probable breeding was recorded can be attributed in greatest measure to the work of the very active Swift study groups in Brighton (in particular) and Lewes where much effort was made to find active nests. Of the records with a breeding status 80% were from the Brighton Study Group which recorded 76 confirmed breeding sites, 34 of these being new for 2017.

By late May most birds were back at their nest sites; nest were being visited on 21 May at several sites in Brighton and young were recorded from nest sites in Chichester from 28 Jun up until 14 Jul. Two fledglings were found grounded in Henfield on 1 and 7 Jul from different nest sites; both were taken to a rescue service in Brighton but the outcome was not recorded.

Several quite sizeable flocks were recorded during the summer with 200 at Groombridge on 10 Jun and 300 at Barcombe Res on the 12th. By late July it was apparent that birds were beginning to depart; on 25 Jul a total of 1700 were recorded from four coastal sites, including the year's highest count of 1200 at Beachy Head. The following day 1000 were observed at Fairlight and another five three-figure counts were recorded between 3 and 14 Aug totalling just over 900 birds.

The majority of Swifts had left the county by the end of August; the last double-figure count was 20 at Beachy Head on 27 Aug. There were then only 12 days in September when Swifts were recorded, involving 14 birds (ten of them single individuals); in 2016 there were 11 days and 35 birds for comparison.

Last departure dates show a greater degree of variation than arrivals and 2017 was a case in point. Observers at both Hastings and Rye Hbr recorded single birds on 19 Sep, 16 days earlier than 2016, 11 days earlier than the 10-year average, and much earlier than the latest date of 24 Nov 2002. [DB]

Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis

Scarce to fairly common resident and possibly very scarce winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Kingfishers were found in 144 tetrads (16%) in 2017. While this is a decline from last year's figure of 172 it is better than the average of 133 for the years 2011 to 2016 as shown below:

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of tetrads	109	89	99	142	185	172

During the first winter period birds were usually seen singly but with twos at some ten sites and three at Weir Wood Res on 3 Jan. In the spring period three were recorded at Warnham LNR on 28 and 30 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads while a young bird trapped at Ladywell (Coombes) on 15 Jul and at Steyning may well have bred in these areas; breeding was probable in one further tetrad while two birds seen by an artificial nesting bank at Wakehurst Place on 8 Oct suggest they also might have bred there.

Four were noted at Weir Wood Res on 24 Jun and the same number at Eridge on 9 Jul. Ringing

sessions at Ladywell resulted in ten different young birds being trapped during the autumn with a maximum of three on 27 Aug and 17 Sep. Two young were trapped in a ringing sessions at Steyning on 2 Sep. In September, four were recorded in the Arun Valley south of Arundel on the 17th and three at four other sites: at Offham and nearby Arundel WWT between the 3rd and 19th, Warnham LNR between the 12th and 26th and at Southease on the 19th and again, on 5 Oct. Also in October, four were recorded at Weir Wood Res on the 27th. As usual, the majority of other records were of single birds with a few twos.

In the second winter period the only records of more than two birds involved threes at Thorney Deeps on 13 Nov, Arundel WWT on the 20th and Warnham LNR between the 2nd and 26th while in December the only record of three was from Arundel WWT on the 12th. At Bexhill on 2 Nov a bird was seen exiting from a previous nest hole in a bank. [TS, JAH]

Bee-eater

Merops apiaster

Very scarce visitor; mainly in spring; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.

There were three records in 2017 totalling ten birds. A party of eight flew west over Birling Gap at 12:18 on 29 May (KBG) followed by single birds flying east over Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 11 July (MEC, RHC) and over Hampden Park (Eastbourne) on 12 Sep (DC). The total recorded this century moves on to 86, at an annual average of 4.8, with records in all but two years since 2000. [PJ]

Hoopoe

Upupa epops

Very scarce spring and even scarcer autumn passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

There were three records: one was at Pagham Hbr on 21 and 22 Apr, another one in a private garden at Icklesham on 1 to 3 May and, finally, a widely twitched bird was at Cuckmere Haven on 24 and 25 Aug. [PJP]

Wryneck

Jynx torquilla

Very scarce passage migrant, most in autumn; last bred in 1944. Schedule 1 species.

There were two spring records in 2017. A bird at Bexhill on 27 Apr was followed by one at Eastbourne on the 30th, both of which were late compared with the 10-year average first arrival date of 14 Apr.

In August there was one at Rye Hbr on the 5th and one ranging between the Cuckmere Haven and Seaford Head from the 25th to the 28th. In September there were records of single birds on Brighton Racecourse and Newhaven Heights on the 2nd, at Beachy Head on the 4th, Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) and Rye Hbr on the 7th, Foxhole Bottom (lower Cuckmere Valley) on the 10th, Bexhill on the 12th and at Pagham Hbr on the 23rd. The last record of the year was at Peacehaven WTW on 3 Oct, two days earlier than the 10-year average last date of 5 Oct.

The autumn records constitute a total of only 14 site-days, considerably fewer than the 41 site-days reported in 2015. [KS]



Hoopoe, Icklesham, May 2017 (Patrick Bonham)

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

Dryobates minor

Scarce resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern

The species was recorded in 30 tetrads in 2017 compared with 34 in 2012, 31 in 2013, 17 in 2014, 32 in 2015 and 22 in 2016. Successful breeding was reported at two sites, with probable breeding in a further three tetrads and birds in suitable habitat in four more. There were more reports in 2017 than in recent years but this probably reflects the increased attention that this species has received this year.

In January and February there were seven records of single birds; Handcross on 10 Jan, Brede High Wood on the 21st, Habin (Rogate) on the 27th, Pulborough Brooks on 13 Feb, Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) on 24 Feb, Sheffield Forest (Nutley) also on the 24th and Rowfant (Crawley) on 25 Feb.

During the breeding season from March to mid-June there were records from 15 sites thinly spread over the county; Burton MP, Arundel WWT, Fittleworth, Pulborough Brooks, the Knepp Estate, Nymans Garden NT, Pease Pottage, Balcombe, Sheffield Forest, Cowdray Forest (Worth), Ashdown Forest (2 sites), Broadwater Warren, Wadhurst Park Lake and Fore Wood (Crowhurst). There were nests or nest excavations at four of these sites; a male was excavating a nest cavity at Lavender Platt on 18 Apr but no further data were available on the outcome, a pair was excavating a cavity on the Knepp Estate on 7 and 9 Apr but the cavity was not subsequently used, and pairs successfully raised three young each at Balcombe and Nymans Garden NT. A young bird was reported from West Chiltington on 4 Jun suggesting successful breeding somewhere in the area.

From mid-June until the end of the year there were 18 records, all of single birds except where indicated; Handcross on 18 Jun, Broadwater Warren on 7 Jul and 22 Aug, Newick WTW two on 6 Aug, Woods Mill LNR on 6 and 16 Aug, Wivelsfield Green on 10 Aug, Steyning on 15 Sep, Arundel Watermeadows on 18 Oct, Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) also on the 18th, Warnham LNR on

21 Oct and 20 Dec, Tilgate Forest on 17 Nov, Barcombe on 26 Nov and 2 Dec, Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 4 Dec, Guestling on 19 Dec and Rusper on 30 Dec.

Intriguingly there were four records of birds using garden feeders in 2017; Habin (Rogate), Wivelsfield Green, Steyning and Guestling. Will this be an increasing habit for this species? [KS]



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, West Sussex, May 2017 (John Hall)

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Dendrocopos major

Common resident.

The species was recorded in 533 tetrads (59%), an apparent increase from the published 461 in 2016. However, GBW records have been included in the SOS database for the first time in 2017. These resulted in the species being reported from an extra 73 tetrads, so the comparable total for 2017 was 460, almost the same number as in 2016. Through the year the species was reported from 177 (74%) of participating GBW sites.

In the first winter period the highest counts were eight in a SWBS at Hornhurst Wood (Rotherfield) on 14 Feb and eight on 27 Mar at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest). Overall, in the early year SWBS, 145 were recorded in 76 (58%) of the 131 1-km squares surveyed. Birds were more conspicuous in April and May with the maximum count of 13 during a BBS survey at Home Fm (Stansted) on 10 Apr.

Drumming was first heard on 5 Jan at the Hollies (Ashdown Forest) with the last spring record on 2 Jun at Elmer (Middleton). As usual drumming resumed late in the year with reports on 2 Dec at Barcombe, 22 Dec at Burgess Hill and 24 Dec at Crawley. Breeding is greatly under recorded but was confirmed in 18 tetrads and probable in a further 46. Breeding season counts for RSPB reserves were; Broadwater Warren eight territories, Pagham Hbr three and Medmerry one. No counts were

received this year from Fore Wood (Crowborough) or Pulborough Brooks. In The Mens LNR (Wisborough Green) nine nests with noisy young were found in 44 ha of the reserve. During the BBS the species was recorded in 118 (69%) of the 1-km squares surveyed and the Sussex BBS index for Great Spotted Woodpecker stood at 217 in 2017 having been set at 100 in 1994.

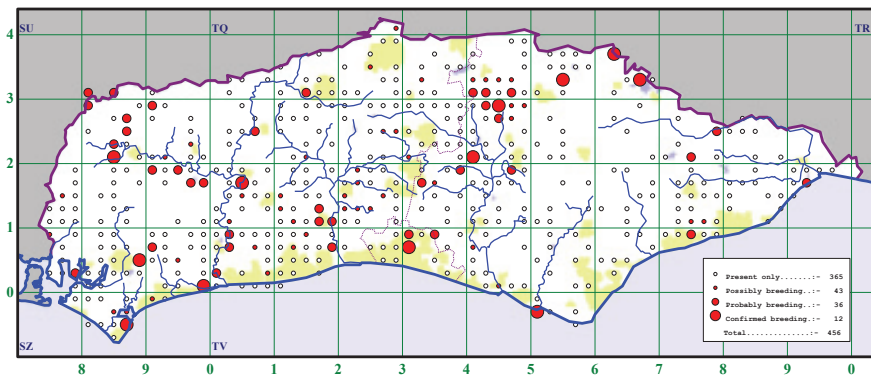
In the autumn there were notable counts of eight at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 26 Sep and nine at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 28th. In the second winter period the highest counts were eight at Old Lodge LNR on 21 Dec and six each during the SWBS at Slinfold on 6 Nov, Coles Hall (Hadlow Down) on 18 Nov and East Chiltington on 23 Dec. In the late year SWBS, 149 were recorded in 81(50%) of the 161 squares surveyed. [KS]

Green Woodpecker

Picus viridis

Common resident.

The species was recorded in 456 tetrads (50%) in 2017, continuing the wide distribution of recent years (2012-2016 mean 474 tetrads, range 444 to 503). The distribution of records, shown in the map below, suggests more records of occupied tetrads in the west and centre of Sussex.



In the first winter period, the highest counts were five in Petworth Park during the early year SWBS on 5 Feb and five at Cliff End (Pett) on 24 Feb. Overall, in the early year SWBS, 90 were recorded in 61 (47%) of the 131 squares surveyed. During the GBW Green Woodpeckers were found in 72 (30%) of participating gardens.

During the BBS the species was encountered in 112 (65%) of the 1-km squares surveyed and the Sussex BBS index stood at 102 in 2017 having been set at 100 in 1994. In spite of the large numbers of records during the breeding season there were only two records of adults feeding young in the nest, at Elmer (Middleton) on 2 Jun and Pulborough Brooks on 11 Jun. In addition, breeding was confirmed in a further ten tetrads, largely because of the presence of recently fledged young, and probable in a further 36.

The highest late summer counts were eight at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Jul and seven at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 27 Jul. In the second winter period, the only high count was six in Petworth Park on 28 Nov. In the late year SWBS, 75 were recorded in 55 (34%) of the 161 1-km squares surveyed. [KS]

Kestrel*Falco tinnunculus*

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

Kestrels were recorded in 406 tetrads (45%), a similar number to 2016. Kestrels were recorded in more tetrads than Sparrowhawks (364) and fewer than Common Buzzards (559).

During the first winter period the majority of records were of single birds but there were 11 counts of three. There were no records of birds flying in off the sea.

Breeding was confirmed in 17 tetrads and probable in a further 23. Display was first observed on 1 Mar on the Knepp Estate and the first confirmed breeding record was of an occupied nest and came from Woods Mill LNR on 21 Apr. Fledged young were first recorded on 27 Jun at Eridge Park where adults were seen catching prey and passing to two or three youngsters. Three pairs were at Thorney Island throughout the breeding season. The highest summer counts were 12 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 16 Aug followed by seven at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Aug and ten at The Burgh on 17 Sep, the highest autumn count. During the second winter period high counts were six there on 17 Nov and five in the lower Ouse Valley on 16 Nov.

Although Kestrels were only recorded in 7.1% of participating gardens in the GBW they were found more frequently in the other countywide surveys with the species found in 22% and 26% in the early and late year SWBS respectively and in 22% of 1-km squares surveyed in the BBS.

There were very few reports of prey species but one harvest mouse was recorded, an unidentified rodent and there was a report of a juvenile catching insects on the ground. [MJC]

Red-footed Falcon*Falco vespertinus*

Rare vagrant.

A second-year female was flushed from an ash tree on private land by the R Rother near Coldwaltham during a South Downs NP Farmland Bird Survey on 16 May (CJG, CAS). It flew south, perched for ten minutes and then flew off not to be re-located.

The county total since 1962 moves on to 28 of which eight have been this century. Most arrivals have been in May (13) or June (10). The previous county record was the well-watched female at Barcombe Mills in May-June 2015. [PJ]

Merlin*Falco columbarius*

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

Merlins were recorded in 49 tetrads (5.4%) during the year. In the first quarter of 2017, over half the 50 sightings (all singles) came from two broad areas: in West Sussex, the Arun Valley (from Arundel to Pulborough Brooks, including The Burgh on the adjacent Downs), accounted for 16 records while, in East Sussex, the Rye Bay area (Pett Level to East Guldeford Level) accounted for 12. Birds were also noted at Medmerry and at Beeding Brooks, both on three dates in the period.

At Selsey Bill on 20 Mar an incoming Merlin was seen chasing Meadow Pipits offshore. Numbers



Merlin, Beachy Head, October 2017 (Roger & Liz Charlwood)

tailed off from mid-March and the species was recorded on only five dates in April, the final individual being seen at North Stoke (Arun Valley) on the 29th.

The first autumn bird was found at Beachy Head on 24 Aug; observers there recorded single Merlins on nine dates between 24 Aug and 25 Oct and considered that these records may have related to one bird. Elsewhere, multiple sightings were recorded at Medmerry (five dates), Pulborough Brooks (four dates) and Rye Hbr (five dates). In the Cuckmere Valley on 13 Sep, (after an unsuccessful foray for a Wheatear) a female or immature bird, was chased by a Peregrine, an occurrence bizarrely replicated at Medmerry on 3 Oct, and one was seen to catch and eat a Meadow Pipit at Rye Hbr on both 26 and 29 Sep. Notable amongst the records for October was one in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 22 Oct and one recorded on several dates at Pulborough Brooks from 14 Oct through November, where it was seen preying on a Starling in flight on the 5th and at Rye Hbr on 5 Dec one was seen chasing a Skylark. Single individuals remained in the county to the year's end.

During the late year SWBS, there was just the one record of one on 2 Dec at Peacehaven. [BGRI]

Hobby

Falco subbuteo

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

The first Hobby records of the year were one at Pagham Hbr on 5 Apr, another at Pulborough Brooks on the 9th and others at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) and Pett Level on the 11th. From about the 17th, Hobbies were being recorded on an almost daily basis at mainly coastal sites and particularly on the 30th when there were sightings from 18 different sites. Observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of six birds heading north in off the sea between 12 and 30 Apr, all ones bar two on the last day of the month. Four more arrived there on 6 May, one carrying prey, with one of these birds being noted at 6 am suggesting that, as previously noted (SxBR 2014 p.136), there is a degree of nocturnal migration for Hobbies. During May the monthly total for the Selsey Bill log was 13 N, while at Splash Point (Seaford) the total was 4 N. The first sighting at Rye Hbr was on 27 Apr.

Hobbies continued to be recorded at coastal sites throughout May with five being seen at Pevensey Levels on the 26th hawking insects, but records from inland sites increased noticeably. There were records in May from Fernhurst, the West Sussex commons, Pulborough Brooks, Cissbury, the Knepp estate, Ardingly, Ditchling, Paddockhurst (Worth) (three on the 16th), Chailey and Weir Wood Res as they dispersed through the county. In early June three were seen together at Leechpool Wood (Horsham) on the 1st.

Overall the species was recorded in 136 tetrads (15%) but during the BBS, Hobbies were encountered in only two (1.1%) of surveyed 1-km squares. Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads and was probable in a further 11, an improvement in recording compared with 2016, but still far fewer than actually occurred. Notable amongst the breeding records was that of a family party of five in East Sussex with three fledglings being fed dragonflies on the wing by two adults on 25 Aug.

A very early autumn record of one over Seaford Head chasing Swallows on 17 Jul was unusual for the site whilst two adults were also noted there, again hunting, on 13 Aug. Migration got underway in earnest in September with an increase in records from coastal sites including Pagham Hbr/Church Norton, Cuckmere Haven (where three were seen on the 7th) Beachy Head and Rye Hbr. Only four single birds were recorded during the migration watches at Hastings between 18 Sep and 22 Oct. Almost all records in October were of single individuals and the last sighting of the year was at Pulborough Brooks, one of the premier Sussex sites for Hobbies, of one was on 29 Oct, five days later than the 10-year average date. [BGRI]

Peregrine*Falco peregrinus****Scarce breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.***

Another reasonably productive year for the Peregrines that were monitored, with one new nesting site reported. It is estimated that the population remains in excess of 40 pairs and although they are not all productive, the breeding population continues to produce healthy numbers of young. Thirty occupied sites were checked in 2017 and at least 44 young were fledged from 17 productive pairs. Several failures were documented where pairs that were incubating eggs did not hatch or the young did not reach fledging age. It is difficult to speculate in every situation but reasons including weather and human disturbance were observed. In most years a percentage of pre-fledge failures are observed.

Records submitted to SOS were slightly down on the previous year from 1304 to 1158 entries and all sightings of adults and young have provided useful data, especially records during the breeding season. Throughout the year the species was recorded from 155 tetrads (17%) which, like the number of records, was marginally fewer than the 171 tetrads in 2016.

The most interesting record of the year, and what turned out to be one of the worst kept secrets in Sussex ornithology, was the discovery of a pair of ground nesting Peregrines near Pagham Hbr. The nature reserve had intended to keep the nesting location secret, however the rare appearance of an Elegant Tern brought hundreds of observers to the area and inevitably the Peregrines were noticed. It is believed that this is the first time a ground nest has been recorded in Sussex, although ground nesting has occurred in Hampshire several times in the last few years. They reared two young from three eggs. It was observed that hunting outings were often very short, probably due to the abundance of species nesting on the intertidal saltmarsh and mudflats nearby. The male from the pair was ringed with a green Darvic and was born on Sussex Heights in Brighton, a distance of 28 miles. This is one of several breeding birds in Sussex which have been observed wearing Darvic rings, providing useful data on movement and natal philopatry. Seventeen Peregrines were ringed in Sussex this year.

Two regularly used nest boxes continue to succeed. The Chichester Cathedral pair produced a clutch of four eggs, with laying completed by 30 Mar. All four hatched between 1 and 3 May and were ringed on 22 May, three males and one female; the same ratio as in 2016. The Sussex Heights nest box produced three young. Four eggs were laid between 25 Mar and 3 Apr, three of them hatched between 2 and 7 May; one male and two females were ringed on 24 May. [JF]

Ring-necked Parakeet*Psittacula krameri****Very scarce introduced breeding resident.***

A similar number of records were received as in previous years with 20 sightings of one or two except for five at Broadfield (Crawley) on 5 Apr and four at Tilgate Forest 25 Jul. While favoured areas still appear to be the Crawley and Gatwick areas there were records from ten other towns or villages. There was only one site with possible breeding while the long awaited expansion still appears to be showing little sign of materialising. [AHP]

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 two records in 2017: an adult male on the Knepp Estate from 9 to 24 Jul (EJD, PG, et al.) and another adult male in the observer's garden at Bognor Regis on 12 Aug (TG-P). The Knepp bird was only the third July record for the county this century and the first since 2009 when there were two. The total this century moves on to 44. [PJ]

Daurian/Turkestan Shrike*Lanius isabellinus/phoenicuroides*

Very rare vagrant.

A first calendar year shrike present at a site in East Sussex from 25 to 27 Oct has been accepted by BBRC as being either a Daurian or Turkestan Shrike (observers' names withheld). On the basis of current knowledge, BBRC requires DNA evidence in order to confirm identification at species level of first year individuals of these similar "red-tailed" shrikes. It was not possible to allow general access to the private site (although permission was sought from the landowner) and the record was therefore not publicised at the time.

There is one previous county record of a "red-tailed" shrike: one at Sidlesham Ferry from 1 Mar to 20 Apr 1975. [MM]

Great Grey Shrike*Lanius excubitor*

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Great Grey Shrikes were recorded in 15 tetrads (1.6%) in 2017, down from the 22 of 2016 and 31 of 2015 and the worst showing since 2013.

Approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
4	5	5		2	1	-

A bird first seen on Ashdown Forest on 4 Jan had been there since late 2016 as had another recorded at Waltham Brooks on 5 Jan. Single birds were then recorded at various sites on Ashdown Forest to 22 Feb (with three there on 8 and 21 Feb) and then again from 14 Mar to the 31st with two on the 16th. Similarly, at Waltham Brooks one was seen regularly until 26 Feb and then two were seen there on 2 Mar, while the one at nearby Bury on 22 Feb was most probably the same. A single bird was seen at Amberley Wild Brooks on 10 Jan and again on 7 Feb. Other sightings in the first winter period involved singles at Mardens Hill (Ashdown Forest) on 14 Jan and Southerham (Lewes) on 13 Mar. The final first winter sighting was at Ashdown Forest on 31 Mar.

In the second winter period three single birds were recorded: at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Oct, Medmerry on the 27th and on Ashdown Forest on 14 and 19 Nov, a relatively poor showing to end the year. [TS, JAH]

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.

The only record in 2017 was of one heard singing and seen briefly in poplars at Barcombe Place at dawn on 2 May (NG, per SHL). The county total this century moves on to 29. [PJ]

Jay*Garrulus glandarius*

Very common resident.

Jays were recorded in 433 tetrads (47%) (443 in 2016). During the first winter period the highest count was 30, possibly going to roost, at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 29 Jan otherwise counts were of six or fewer. In the spring sixes were counted at Monkmead Wood (West Chiltington) on 10 Apr and at Pagham Hbr on the 19th. A total of 79 were recorded in 44 (34%) of the 1-km squares surveyed during the early year SWBS with a maximum count of six in West Lavington on 9 Feb.

During the BBS, Jays were encountered in 101 (30%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of four on 4 Jun at West Lavington, and during the GBW in 127 (53%) of participating gardens during the year. Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads and was probable in a further 20. The first evidence of nest building was on 11 Apr on Ashdown Forest and fledglings were seen at two locations, West Worthing on 14 Jun and Tilgate Forest on 25 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 eight at each of Pulborough Brooks on 17 Jul and Warnham LNR on 8 Aug

In the autumn and second winter period the highest counts were 15 at Ladywell (Coombes) on 27 Oct and nine at Goring Gap on 24 Nov. Elsewhere the maxima were six counts of eight at various locations in October and November. In the late year SWBS, a total of 166 Jays was recorded in 88 (55%) surveyed 1-km squares, with a count of eight at West Lavington again the highest. [MOW]

Magpie*Pica pica*

Very common resident.

Magpies were recorded in 599 tetrads (66%), similar to the 620 in 2016. During the first winter period there were 13 counts of 20 or more with the highest counts at Warnham LNR of 44 on 4 Mar, 37 on 8 Jan and 30 on 29 Jan. Observers at Bexhill recorded at least 30 on 10 Jan and 20 to 25 on two dates in early March. During the early year SWBS, 636 birds were recorded in 115 (88%) 1-km squares, with a maximum count of 20 at Burnt Oak (Crowborough) on 3 Feb. Magpies were in the top ten species recorded during the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch as they were recorded in 57% of West Sussex and 60% of East Sussex participating gardens. The highest spring counts were 42 at Ferring on 18 Apr and 34 at Peacehaven on 7 May counted during a walk around the observer's 'patch' within 1 mile of his home.

During the GBW, Magpies were recorded in 234 (98%) of participating gardens in Sussex. During the BBS, 1245 Magpies were encountered in 79% of the 338 surveys with a maximum count of 19 at Stone Cross (Pevensey) on 4 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in only 18 tetrads and probable in a further 31. Nest building was first recorded at Furnace Green (Crawley) on 15 Feb, Bexhill on

1 Mar, Horsham on the 4th and Northgate (Crawley) on the 14th. Adults were carrying either food or faecal sacs at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 12 Apr and an occupied nest was seen on 17 Apr at Patcham (Brighton). The first fledglings were recorded at Weir Wood Res on 21 May. At Pett Level, birds were seen nest building on 29 Dec, presumably in preparation for the 2018 season!

During the autumn months, there were only five counts of 20 or more: three of these were again from Warnham LNR with a maximum of 43 on 30 Oct and another 30 were counted at Bexhill. During the second winter period, high counts of 100 and 50 were recorded at Wild Park (Brighton) on 3 and 11 Nov respectively while 45 at Warnham LNR on 4 Nov was the highest of three counts in excess of 20 there during the period. During the late-year SWBS, 750 birds were recorded in 146 (91%) 1-km squares with a maximum count of 15 at Edburton on 26 Nov. [MOW, JAH]

Jackdaw

Coloeus monedula

Very common resident.

Jackdaws were recorded in 591 tetrads (65%), compared with a similar 594 in 2016. During the first winter period there were 18 records of 100 or more birds. The only four-figure count was of c.1200 at Tottington (Small Dole) on 11 Jan. Three-figure counts involved 350 at Lewes on 25 Mar, 300 at Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 5 Jan and at Hammer Pond (St Leonard's) on 5 Feb and 200 at Petworth Park on 14 Feb and Cissbury on 11 Mar. During the early year SWBS 1660 Jackdaws were recorded in 104 (79%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch the species was recorded in 19% of participating gardens in West Sussex compared with 28% in East Sussex whilst in the GBW Jackdaws were recorded in 65% of Sussex participating gardens.

During the BBS, 3558 Jackdaws were encountered in 79% of the 338 surveys with a maximum of 107 at Claverham Fm (Chalvington) on 11 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads and was probable in a further 36 tetrads. The first record of a nest with young was at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 22 Apr, and the earliest record of fledging came from Patcham (Brighton) on 4 Jun. There were no records of Jackdaws using an owl box for nesting during 2017.

The highest counts of the late spring/summer period were 500 at Sharpthorne on 15 and 23 Jun, 250 at Weir Wood Res on 14 Aug, seen flying to roost, and 200 at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) on 31 Jul. There were ten further records of 100 or more birds at seven different locations.

During the autumn and second winter period there were 39 records of 100 or more Jackdaws. A count of 608 was recorded at Warnham LNR on 30 Oct, and 600 were seen at Barcombe Cross on 11 Nov. There were four records of 500 birds: from High Cross Fm (Uckfield), on 18 Nov and again on 7 Dec, at Three Bridges also on 7 Dec and at Barcombe Cross on 30 Dec. There were seven more records of 300 or more, two of these coming from High Cross Fm, the remainder from various other locations. During the late year SWBS 2191 Jackdaws were recorded in 128 (78%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Very common resident.

Rooks were recorded in 397 tetrads (44%) compared with 407 the previous year. During the first winter period the highest counts were 200 at Compton on 5 Jan and two of 160, at Markwells Wood (West Marden) on 18 Jan and at Rodmell Brooks on 20 Feb. There were eight more counts of 100 or



Rook, Pett Pools, February 2017 (Roger & Liz Charlwood)

more birds at various locations. During the early year SWBS, 1491 Rooks were found in 58 (44%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch the species was recorded in 5.1% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 5.5% in East Sussex.

During the BBS, Rooks were encountered in 148 (44%) of 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 160 on 4 Jul at East Dean (West Sussex) and during the GBW, they were encountered in 55 (23%) of participating gardens. Breeding was confirmed in 32 tetrads and was probable in a further 11. Nest building was first observed on 24 Feb at Racton and West Dean at which latter place a rookery was spread across several trees in the college garden. Adults carrying food were first noted on 10 Apr and a nest with young on the 21st. The first fledged young were seen at Arundel on 6 May. A survey of rookeries in TQ00 (Arundel and Littlehampton area) in late March revealed a total of 482 AON, a similar figure to the previous year's total (476). In the rest of the county, 46 rookeries contained a total of 710 AON, an average of 15.4 per rookery (range 1 – 60). The largest rookeries were at Iford (Lewes), where c.60 nests were counted, at Angmering Park (56 AON) and at Northcommon Fm (Selsey) (54 AON).

During the summer period the highest counts of Rooks were 500 at West Dean on 1 Jul, 400 at Beachy Head on 26 Aug, 237 at West Burton on 29 Jun and 200 at Thorney Island on 12 Jul. There were fifteen other counts of 100 or more Rooks at thirteen different locations.

During the autumn and second winter period the largest gathering was at Beachy Head where there were 200 on 25 Nov. There were 170 at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 7 Dec and 163 at Racton on the 22nd, plus twelve further records of 100 or more birds at ten locations. During the late year SWBS, 1409 Rooks were found in 37% of the 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]

Carrion Crow

Corvus corone

Very common resident.

Carrion Crows were recorded in 633 tetrads (70%). During the first quarter there were two records of 100 or more birds: 320 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 6 Mar and 200 at Bexhill on 9 Mar. The next highest count was of 86 at Ashfold (Handcross) on 6 Mar, and there were a further seventeen counts of 50 or more at thirteen different locations. During the early year SWBS 1236 Carrion Crows were found in 95% of the 1-km squares surveyed. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch the species was recorded in 30% of West Sussex and 32% of East Sussex participating gardens whilst in the GBW it was recorded in 79% of participating gardens.

There were three records of birds seen flying in off the sea on consecutive days during the first quarter. On 25 Mar 13 birds were observed from Selsey Bill flying in from a long way out, followed by two more birds at the same location the next day (26 Mar). During the BBS, 3278 were recorded from (97%) of the 338 surveys of the 1-km squares surveyed with the highest count of 108 on 3 May at Albourne (Hurstpierpoint).

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and recorded as probable in a further 48. Possible nest building was first observed as early as 21 Feb when one was seen collecting twigs near Preston Park (Brighton). The first occupied nest was seen at Northgate (Crawley) on 14 Mar and a nest with young birds was seen at Arundel WWT on 6 May. The earliest report of fledged young was from Pulborough Brooks on 27 May. The largest gathering during the breeding season was of 250 birds at Bexhill on 14 Apr. There was a single record of birds flying in off the sea during the second quarter, when two birds were observed from Selsey Bill on 7 Apr. During the summer period the highest counts were of 71 at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Jul and at Cuckmere Haven, where 83 birds were seen on 11 Aug and 95 were observed on the 14th.

During the autumn and second winter period there were seven counts of 100 or more. The largest count was of 250 at East Guldeford Level on 3 Dec, but also 200 were recorded at Rushlake Green on 8 Dec, 150 at Cuckmere Haven on 16 Dec, 125 at Wild Park (Brighton) on 3 Nov and 124 at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Sep. There were two counts of 100, in the lower Adur Valley on 3 Nov and at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) on 9 Dec. A further 22 counts of 50 or more birds were recorded at various locations, six of these at Pulborough Brooks. During the late year SWBS Carrion Crows were encountered in every one of the 161 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]

Raven

Corvus corax

Scarce and increasing breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.

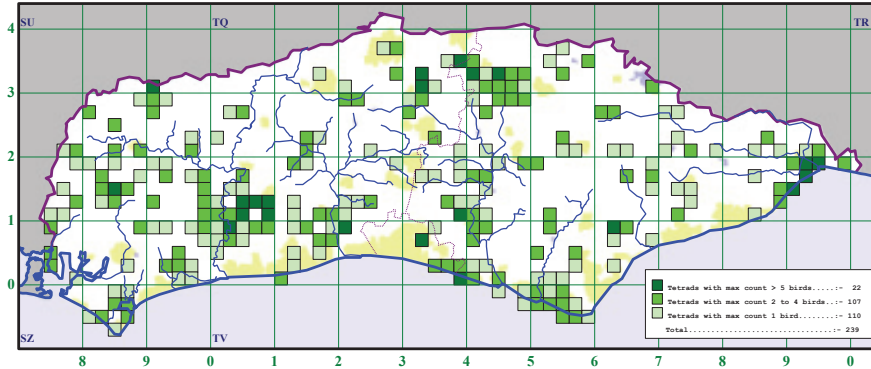
Over one thousand records were submitted from 239 tetrads (26%), with numbers very evenly split between West and East Sussex. Whilst every record has intrinsic value, those records relating to breeding activity, multiple sightings and winter roosts are especially welcome.

A detailed analysis of the SOS database in 2014 revealed a minimum of 76 Raven territories. Ravens have large broods with a high fledging success rate, and the Sussex population may well now exceed 100 pairs. It is unrealistic to expect every known territorial pair to be recorded annually but in 2017 there were a very large number of records where two or more birds were seen together. Of these 100 or so records approximately 60 related to localities where there is good evidence of territorial/breeding activity. Very few nests were actively monitored but there were 14 records of family parties - two of seven birds, two of six birds, six of five birds and four of four birds, which

equates to an average of three fledged young for each successful nest.

There were many records of multiple sightings, in date order as follows: there were 20 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 6 Jan, 14 at Brighton Wild Park on 17 Jan, ten on a carcass at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels) on 26 Jan, nine at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) and 12 at Pett Level on 20 Aug, 20 at Chantry Hill on 23 Aug, ten at Rye Hbr on 15 Sep, 11 at Rye Hbr on 8 Oct, 25 at Chantry Hill on 12 Oct and ten at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on 30 Oct.

There were no winter roost records but with the large flocks recorded in the Chantry Hill area on many dates throughout the year it is very likely that there is a downland roost somewhere close by.



With an ever-increasing number of records of territorial pairs and multiple sightings (see map above) there is every reason to believe that this species is doing well in Sussex and has a very bright future. [MEK]

Waxwing

Bombycilla garrulus

Irruptive winter visitor; very scarce or scarce, occasionally fairly common.

Sussex was graced with a mini-invasion of this species during the first winter period with most flocks being found in January. The largest flocks were 36 at Rye on 4 Jan and 40 at nearby Pett Level on 20 Jan. However, typically this species was most frequently recorded in the north of the county, where varying sized flocks were seen, mainly in East Grinstead, with a maximum of 35 on 14 Jan, Crowborough with a maximum of 20 on 5 Feb and Crawley with a maximum of 16 on 29 Jan. Waxwings were seen in a total of 32 tetrads (3.5%) across the county. Regular sites also included Upper Beeding (17 on 1 Jan), Shoreham (five from 12 to 15 Jan), Hove (five on 27 Feb and 2 Mar), Lewes (nine on 22 and 23 Jan), Wakehurst Place (five from 21 to 25 Feb) and Bexhill (up to seven on many dates from 3 until 26 Feb). Away from the hustle and bustle of the towns, a flock of 15 was recorded at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 11 Jan and the same number at both Southease on 27 Jan and Bramber on 6 Feb. Numbers fell dramatically into March with the last spring record being two at Hove on the 24th. A more detailed article can be read on page 226 of this report. [MRE]

Coal Tit

Periparus ater

Very common resident.

Coal Tits were recorded in 386 tetrads (42%) distributed widely across the county, a small increase from the previous year's 377 tetrads. During the first winter period there were seven counts

of ten or more with the highest count of 20 birds at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 5 Jan and 89% of the records for this period were of one or two. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 31% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed, with a high count of 16 at Tilgate Forest on 19 Jan. During the GBW, Coal Tits were recorded in 75% of 240 participating gardens during the year. The survey's highest weekly peak count for the species was seven in a Robertsbridge garden on 12 Nov. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, Coal Tits were seen in 23% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 24 % in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in only 12 tetrads (17 in 2016) and probable in 19 (20 in 2016), clearly under-recording for this species. The first nesting activity reported was of a bird entering a garden nest box with nesting material at High Salvington (Worthing) on 24 Mar and the first report of confirmed breeding was of a nest containing young at Beech Fm (Cuckfield) on 1 May. The first recording of fledglings was at Barnsden (Ashdown Forest) on 16 May. In total 15 records referred to fledglings; around half of these records were from Ashdown Forest. Ten or more birds were recorded at seven locations during the breeding season. During the BBS, birds were reported from 34% of the 172 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 16 in Tilgate Forest on 14 Apr. The largest autumn concentration was 21 at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 26 Sep. During the late autumn and second winter period there were 13 further counts of ten or more. The highest count, of 21 at Nutley on 30 Dec, was recorded during the late year SWBS, where birds were recorded in 31% of the 161 1-km squares surveyed; 73% of the records for this period were of one or two.

There were two accepted records of the continental race, *P. a. ater*: a single bird was at Peacehaven on 3 Oct (MRE) and another single at Seaford Head on 23 Nov (MRE). [CJR]



Coal Tit, Wakehurst Place, November 2017 (Ian Redman)

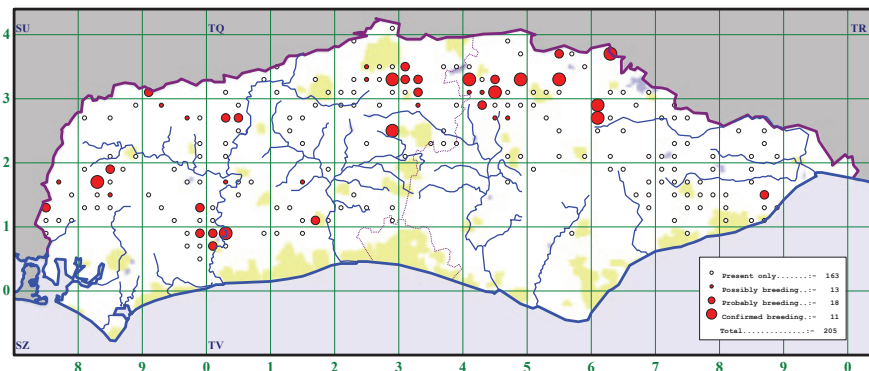
Marsh Tit

Poecile palustris

Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Marsh Tits were recorded in 205 (22%) tetrads (23%), which is a slight improvement on the 199 of 2016 but fewer than during the Atlas years of 2007-11. As there is continued evidence of a decline of this species observers are encouraged to submit all records, particularly if breeding

evidence is obtained. Most records were from the Wealden woods and were of one or two birds. Coastal records were few and from two locations: Cliff End (Pett) where two were seen on 3 Jan, one on 17 Mar, one on 30 Oct and two on 12 Dec, and unspecific records from Fairlight in January, March, August, October and December. Distribution is shown in the following map.



The highest count during the first winter period was eight at Bignor Hill on 12 Mar followed by six at Tilgate Wood (Balcombe) on 17 Feb and fives at four further locations. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in only 12% of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of four on 23 Jan at Battle.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads (six more than in 2016) and was probable in a further 18. Records during the breeding season were received from only 82 locations (136 in 2016 and 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 Paddockhurst Wood (Worthing) on 13 Feb and nest building was first observed on 20 Apr at Rewell Wood (Arundel). Confirmed breeding was noted on 23 Apr at Greentrees Fm (Balcombe) and the first fledglings (eight) were seen with parents at Warnham LNR on 10 May. A pair nested successfully in a dormouse box at Binsted. During the BBS, the species was encountered in only 15 (8.7%) of the 172 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of five on 4 Jun at West Lavington (Midhurst). GBW recorders noted this or unspecified Marsh/Willow Tits (all of which are likely to have been Marsh Tits) in 51 (21%) of the participating gardens in Sussex at some point during the year.

There were no double figure counts during the autumn or second winter period; the highest counts were seven each near Steyning on 29 Aug and at Westdean Woods on 21 Dec and fives at four further locations. During the late year SWBS, the species was encountered in 14% 1-km squares with a maximum count of five on 26 Dec at Horsham. [MJC]

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Abundant resident.

Blue Tits were recorded in 632 tetrads (69%), slightly more than in recent years (577, 580 and 590 in 2013/14/15 respectively) largely due to the inclusion of GBW records. There were five counts of 40 or more during the first winter period with the highest being 60 at Broadbridge Heath on 17 Jan and 50 at Rusper on 23 Mar. During the early year SWBS, Blue Tits were encountered in 128 (98%) of the 1-km squares surveyed; the highest count was 40 at Cocking on 8 Feb. During the RSPB Big

Garden Birdwatch the species was seen in 77% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 78% in East Sussex whilst the species was recorded in 99% of 240 participating Sussex gardens during the GBW year:-

Breeding was confirmed in 69 tetrads, up on 2016, and was probable in a further 35, figures which certainly represent under recording of this common species; breeding was recorded as only probable at Rye Hbr and no count was made at four RSPB reserves. The first record of nest building was at Aldwick (Bognor Regis) on 14 Mar and the first confirmed breeding was on 8 Apr at Arundel WWT and at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) the next day. Fledglings were first recorded on 22 May at Cadborough (Rye). Blue Tits were recorded nesting in dormouse boxes at Binsted and there were two nests at Barn Copse and five at Meadow Lodge. During the BBS, the species was found in 170 (99%) of the 172 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 39 on 29 May at Burwash.

In the autumn, the highest count was 47 at Edburton on 19 Sep and there were two counts of 40 from Warnham LNR and Hastings, both on 9 Oct, and 12 counts of between 20 and 39 during the month. In the second winter period, there were 16 counts of 30 or more with the highest being 50 at Warnham LNR on 16 and 19 Dec. The highest late year SWBS count was 37 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 20 Dec; the species was recorded in 94% of the 161 1-km squares surveyed. [MJC]

Great Tit

Parus major

Abundant resident.

Great Tits were recorded in 615 (67%) tetrads, slightly more than in recent years. During the first winter period there were only four counts of over 25; the highest being 50 at Rusper on 23 Mar. During the early year SWBS the species was encountered in 123 (94%) 1-km squares surveyed; the maximum count was 26 on 27 Feb at East Ashling. During the one hour watch for the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch the species was recorded in 53% of both West and East Sussex participating gardens whilst during the first quarter the different methodology for the GBW recorded Great Tits in 206 (92%) of gardens.

Breeding was confirmed in 59 tetrads, up on 2016, and was probable in a further 33, numbers which certainly represent under recording of this common species. Confirmed breeding, with distraction and display, was first recorded on the very early date of 2 Feb at Greenwood Gate (Ashdown Forest). By mid-April there were many records of adults entering or leaving nest sites. The first fledglings were observed on 13 May at Portslade. During the BBS, the species was found in 161 (94%) 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 21 on 3 Jun at Heath Fm (Wivelsfield Green). There were records of nest building in an owl box at Pulborough Brooks and in dormouse boxes at Paines Wood (Arundel) and Meadow Lodge (Binsted).

During the autumn, there were counts of 25 at Warnham LNR on 23 Aug, peaking at 40 on 10 Oct, but the only other high count was 21 at Cliff End (Pett) on 12 Sep. During the second winter period, regular counts of 40 were recorded at Warnham LNR, peaking at 50 on 19 Dec. The species was recorded in 136 (85%) of the 1-km squares surveyed during the late year SWBS with a highest count of 27 at Northbrook Fm (Worthing) on 14 Dec. Other notable counts were 26 at Golden Cross on 2 Dec and 23 at Slinfold on 6 Nov. [MJC]

Bearded Tit*Panurus biarmicus*

Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Bearded Tits were recorded in 13 tetrads (12 in 2015 and 2016) with most records as usual 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 83% of records came from the eastern core area and the remainder from Thorney Deeps, Pagham Hbr and two at Piddinghoe Pond (Newhaven) on 8 Jan.

The highest monthly counts outside the breeding season from the nine locations where the species was recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	8	10	25		16	32	32	19	7
Thorney Deeps	-	2	5		4	12	6	2	-
Fishbourne	-	-	-		-	-	1	-	-
Medmerry	-	-	-		-	-	-	2	-
Pagham Hbr	-	2	-		-	-	15	2	1
Newhaven	2	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
Eastbourne	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	2
Hastings & Combe Haven	-	-	-		-	-	-	6	-
Pett Level	4	2	12		6	6	6	6	2
Rye Hbr	2	4	8		6	14	4	1	2

Breeding was confirmed at Thorney Deeps on 25 May when a male was seen carrying food. At Pett Level, fledged young were seen on 13 Jun and at Rye Hbr, at least eight pairs were present with fledged young seen at Castle Water and Carters Pit on several dates in June.

Five birds "high flying" were recorded from Thorney Deeps on 30 Mar, and five at Pagham Lagoon on 25 Oct were described as "very active in reedsrestless, calling frequently and high-flying in manner of a dispersing flock." During the second winter period, away from the two core areas, the Hastings migration watch team noted four flying east on 2 Nov at Combe Haven, and two there on the 14th, two were at Medmerry on 8 Nov and two were at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 17 Dec. [MJC]

Woodlark*Lullula arborea*

Scarce resident and possibly very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

The species was recorded in 58 tetrads (6.4%) this year, similar to 59 last year and 54 the year before; in this context remaining fairly stable. A Woodlark survey was undertaken by SOS this year and an article appears on page 249 of this report.

Ashtdown Forest remains the core area for the species, with reports from around 25 different locations within it during the early part of the year, mostly of one to four birds, but with a peak of eight at Pippingford Park on 13 Feb. The highest count elsewhere was seven at Coates Common on 26 Jan, with small numbers recorded from most of the West Sussex heaths, along with other

sites such as Pulborough Brooks and Broxmead (Bolney). There was one coastal record, of one at Church Norton, on 15 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed from four tetrads, with probable breeding in a further 38, an improvement on last year. The WHBBS found a total of 37 territories spread over ten heathlands in West Sussex, with the nine pairs at Blackdown (Fernhurst) being the highest total. Ashdown Forest, with potentially 30 or more pairs and Broadwater Warren with 13 pairs were the most productive sites, but there were an increasing number of records away from pure heathland, particularly from the Downs and adjacent areas in West Sussex including as Rewell Wood (Arundel), Petworth Park, Up Marden, Kingley Vale and Chilgrove. Woodlarks were singing from late January, confirmed breeding of a bird with food or faecal sac was first noted at Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest) on 25 Apr and the first fledglings were seen at Blackdown on 1 Jun.

There were a few records from coastal sites in the autumn, including 2 W at Selsey Bill on 12 and 22 Oct, singles over Beachy Head on 18 Oct, 6 Nov and 15 Nov and a total of ten birds over the Hastings area on seven dates between 4 Oct and 25 Oct, including 3 W on 23 Oct. As usual, there were few reports in the late autumn and early winter, but again there were a number from sites in the west of the county not typically associated with the species, such as West Dean Woods, Stoughton and Up Marden. [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 373 tetrads (41%), compared with 395 in 2016 and 368 the year before. It was present in 29% of 131 1-km squares surveyed in the early year SWBS, slightly more than the previous year and in 16% of 161 in the late year SWBS, down from last year.

Despite their widespread occurrence, large winter gatherings were few, with the biggest being 250 at Newhaven Heights on 23 Jan, 200 at Beachy Head on 3 and 13 Jan and 150 there on 14 Feb, 100 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 21 Jan and at Kipson Bank Fm (Hunston) on the following day.

In the BBS the species was found in 47% of the 172 squares surveyed across the county, a similar percentage to 2016, though there were impressive breeding counts from some of the key sites, including 83 pairs at Medmerry, c.50 pairs around the top fields at Beachy Head, 30 pairs at both Amberley Wild Brooks and Rye Hbr and 17 pairs at Pulborough Brooks. Proof of breeding is difficult for this species, with confirmation received from only seven tetrads, but probable breeding was reported from a further 32, slightly down from last year.

The species tends to become quite elusive in August and September, with few records received, before dispersal occurs in October, with peak counts of 85 in Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 14 Oct and 80 at Medmerry on the 26th. Numbers recorded on migration at seawatching sites were low, for instance, just 24 W and 1 E during the autumn at Selsey Bill. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded 466 on 28 days between 23 Sep and 14 Nov with a maximum of 62 on 9 Oct. Few big counts were received during the second winter period, with 200 on 18 Nov and 150 on 25 Nov at Beachy Head being the biggest, as the mild end to the year allowed the species to remain widely but thinly distributed. [AH]

Sand Martin*Riparia riparia****Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.***

Sand Martins were recorded in 78 tetrads (8.6%) during the year. The first returning bird, on 11 Mar at Widewater (Lancing), arrived on a typical date, just one day later than the 10-year average and 12 days earlier than the late arrival of 2016. The next arrival, however, was eight days later on the 19th followed by a further 60 or more recorded to the end of the month including 12 at Chichester GP on the 22nd and 25 at Weir Wood Res on the 29th. Passage in April was initially slow and in low numbers but from the 10th birds were recorded daily until mid-May. The first double-figure count was ten at Crowhurst on the 10th followed by 15 counts of over 20 but the only three-figure counts were 100 at Pagham Hbr on 26 Apr and 200 at Chichester GP on the 28th. There were just five counts of 20 or more in May, the highest of which were 60 at Bewl Water on the 4th.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites and was probable at a further one. At Rock Common (Washington), a previous nesting site, no birds were recorded as present, and no nesting was recorded at Rye Hbr either, but at Rye GC birds on 20 May appeared to be prospecting a sand and gravel bank. Six to ten active nests were observed at Coates Castle (Fittleworth) on 25 May whilst there were two active nests on 1 Jul at Arundel WWT in the Sand Martin bank where birds had been seen inspecting nesting holes on 21 and 28 May. A new colony at Manor Fm (Sullington) was seen to have between 30 and 35 active nests on 7 Jul, a welcome addition indeed.

Autumn passage began in earnest by mid-July; the first significant count of returning birds was of 500 at Medmerry on the 17th followed by a further five three-figure counts over the next 12 days from Medmerry, Pagham Hbr (maximum of 400 on the 25th) and Chichester GP (maximum of 300 on the 26th). Of the 18 double-figure counts from mid-July, 90 at Weir Wood Res on the 28th and 80 at Rye Hbr on the 26th were notable.

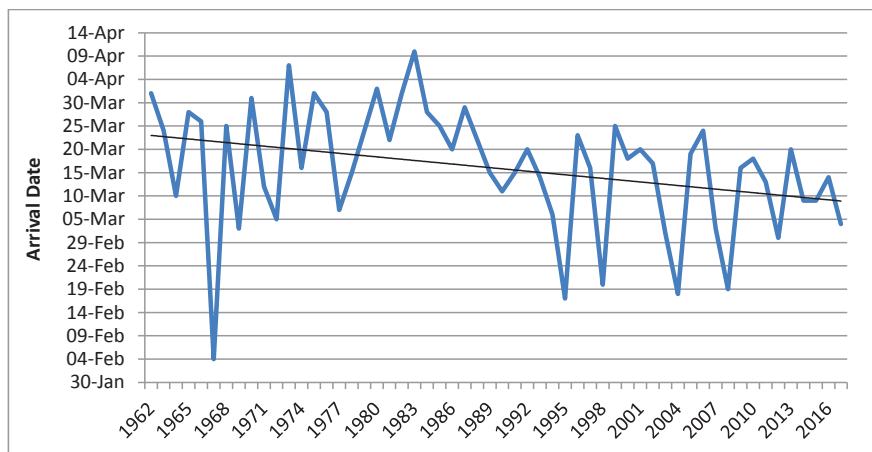
A total of 32 three-figure counts was recorded through August (28) and September (4) with seven of these being of 500 or more. Peak counts occurred during the last two weeks of August with 700 at Medmerry on the 25th, 800 at Rye Hbr on the 26th and 600 at Arundel WWT on the 30th; the latest such count of 200, was at Medmerry on 22 Sep.

There were only six records during October (17 in 2016); two at Pulborough Brooks on the 4th, a maximum of 12 at Berwick on the 15th followed by the last record of the year, a single bird at Beachy Head on 26 Oct, six days later than both the 10-year average and the last record in 2016. [DB]

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica****Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.***

Records came from 445 tetrads (50%), very similar to 2016 (446). The first arrival of the year was at Rye Hbr on 4 Mar (followed by one on the 11th at Southwick), ten days earlier than 2016 and five days earlier than the 10-year average date, adding weight to the broad trend for first arrivals becoming earlier (see figure below). Excluding one overwintering bird in the winter of 2013/14, the range of first dates between 1960 and 2015 is 66 days, the earliest being 4 Feb 1967 and latest 10 Apr 1984, although all subsequent February records have been since 1995 and all previous April first arrivals were prior to 1984.

Although 12 were seen at Arlington Res on 3 Apr, Swallows were recorded in small numbers until the 14th when 59 N were observed at Selsey Bill and 100 at Pagham Hbr. Over the next month



First arrival dates of Barn Swallow, 1962 - 2016, showing trend line.



Barn Swallow, Church Norton, September 2017 (Dorian Mason)

a further 17 three-figure counts were recorded with observers at Pagham Hbr seeing the highest numbers (500 on both 7 and 19 May). Other high counts in May came from Selsey Bill with 480 N on the 7th, 371 N a day earlier and 386 N on the 10th; and inland waterbodies such as Barcombe Res (250 on the 15th), Weir Wood Res (200 on the 8th) and Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) (200 on the 3rd).

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and probable in another 25, (18 and 21 respectively in 2016). The first record of birds at a nest site was on 11 Apr at Stubbermere (Emsworth) and at Arundel WWT where the reedbed hide was favoured again with birds back on the nest by 16 May, almost exactly the same date as 2016's successful nesting pair. A pair had hatched four young by 29 May at Wisborough Green, whilst the first fledgling was reported on 15 Jun at Mile Oak (Portslade). It seems bird hides are a popular choice of nest site for Swallows, with five young at a hide in

Pagham Hbr; four chicks were still being fed there on 14 Sep, this probably being a third brood.

From around mid-July onwards post-breeding flocks were being recorded with four counts of 100 or more between 13 and 25 Jul; the highest was 150 at Thorney Deepes on the 25th. In August there were 32 three-figure counts and a maximum of 1891 E at Selsey Bill on the 27th. On the same day, 1500 were observed at Beachy Head. Autumn migration slowed a little before reaching a peak during the second half of September. Eight four-figure counts between 16 Sep and 3 Oct totalled around 13,600 birds, with highs of 3423 at Selsey Bill on 24 Sep and 3200 at Uckfield on 21 Sep. The last three-figure count was 105 at Hastings on 15 Oct. A total of 10,127 were recorded on 60 dates between 8 Aug and 6 Nov in the Hastings area with a maximum of 2050, mostly flying south or west, on 21 Sep. (For comparison, in 2016 5808 were recorded on 54 dates.)

There were only nine records for November (20 in 2016) involving a total of 19 birds, five of which were observed at Hastings on the 2nd. The final record of the year was three at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Nov, three days earlier than the 10-year average departure date and 15 days earlier than the final record of 2016. [DB]

House Martin

Delichon urbicum

Common but declining summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

House Martins were recorded from 258 (29%) tetrads (260 in 2016). The first arrivals were recorded on 27 Mar, with five birds at Weir Wood Res and an uncounted number at Broadwater (Worthing), three days later than in 2016, and nine days later than the 10-year average date. Seven days later observers on the Knepp Estate recorded another five. Arriving birds were then recorded virtually daily throughout April, particularly from the 16th, generally in small numbers. The first significant count was of 50 on the 23rd at Sidlesham followed by 100 there on the 26th.

Breeding was confirmed from 24 tetrads and was probable in a further 12, up from 14 and 9 respectively in 2016. Birds were observed back on nests by 26 May at Hickstead and at least four nests with young were recorded at Arundel on 24 Jun. At a new housing estate in Henfield 22 occupied nests were recorded on 20 Jun, whilst 28 nests with at least 20 active were observed on a single large house in Eridge Park on 13 Jul. In Rye, ten to 15 pairs nested, mainly on a new estate. The only records of successful fledging were as late as September, at Chailey Common and Burgess Hill (19th and 21st respectively); surely, many youngsters must have fledged earlier than this?

The first significant signs of autumn migration were of 300 seen at Ladywell (Coombes) on 9 Aug, 100 at Selsey on the 13th and 450 at Selsey Bill on the 24th followed by 2244 W there on the 26th and a further 1000 W the following day. The main migration period for House Martins is between the end of August and early October; there were 66 three-figure and five four-figure counts between 24 Aug and 3 Oct. Some of the highest autumn counts came from inland locations; 2100 flew SE over Weir Wood Res on 21 Sep and 4500 at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 29 Sep. The Hastings migration watchers recorded a total 9561 on 44 dates between 19 Aug and 30 Oct with a maximum day count of 2295 W on 3 Oct.

With the number of breeding birds in the county considerably lower than in previous years [BBS], the autumn totals are dependent on birds migrating through the county from elsewhere; comparison of such totals may provide an indication of declining trends in other parts of the country.

Selsey Bill recorded the only November bird on the 6th which was the last of the year, almost two weeks earlier than in 2016 (19 Nov) and eleven days earlier than the 10-year average date. [DB]



House Martin, Selsey, May 2017 (Dorian Mason)

Red-rumped Swallow

Cecropis daurica

Rare but increasing vagrant.

There were two records in 2017: a well-watched bird at Arlington Res on 27 and 28 Apr (MRE, CAH et al.) and another at Hastings CP on 22 May (ASG). The county total since 1962 moves on to 49, of which 31 have been this century, 16 in April and 29 in May. [PJ]

Cetti's Warbler

Cettia cetti

Fairly common and increasing resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Cetti's Warblers were recorded in 110 tetrads (12%) in 2017, compared with 98 the previous year. This increase may be attributed to the efforts of those participating in the SOS Cetti's Warbler Survey which took place this year. A paper appears on page 241 of this report.

In the first winter period there were records from 22 broad locations, mostly ones or twos but there were four each at Pett Level on 16 Jan and Filsham Reedbed on 21 Feb and ten singing males at Thorney Island throughout March. There were just two encounters from 131 surveyed squares in the early year SWBS.

During the BBS the species was found in 6.4% of the 172 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of nine on 29 Apr at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels). Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable in a further 78. Nest building was observed at Arundel WWT on the notably early date of 8 Apr and there were eight singing males there on 6 May. Twelve singing males were at Rye Hbr during the breeding season and a minimum of ten at Thorney Island, where the first breeding success was noted on 3 Jun when a pair with four fledged young were seen. Pagham Hbr held 30 singing males, and Medmerry eight, broadly similar to the figures in 2016.

There were high autumn counts of 14 and 12 (all singing males) at Thorney Island on 16 Sep and

8 Oct. Seven were at Pagham Hbr on 15 Oct and sixes at Arundel WWT and Pett Level on several dates. In the second winter period a minimum of 58 birds were heard or seen at approximately 29 different locations, with four at Pagham Hbr and six at Pett Level on 3 Nov, three at Beeding Brooks on the 5th, four at Arundel WWT on the 9th and the same number at Chichester GP on the 21st and Crowhurst on 9 Dec. There was only one encounter during the late year SWBS. [VPB]

Long-tailed Tit

Aegithalos caudatus

Very common resident.

Long-tailed Tits were recorded in 524 tetrads (57%), spread widely across the county, a similar number to 2016. During the GBW Long-tailed Tits were recorded in 209 (87%) of 240 gardens surveyed during the year. The survey's highest weekly count for the species was 41 in a Lewes garden on 12 Mar. In the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, Long-tailed Tits were found in 26% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 23 % in East Sussex.

During the first winter period there were 58 records of ten or more birds, and the highest counts, all of 20, were at Eridge Rocks LNR on 29, 30 Jan and 2 Feb, Broadwater Warren on 2 Feb and Warnham LNR on 5 Mar. In the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 47% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 20 at Buchan Park on 30 Jan.

There was significant under-recording of breeding. Breeding was confirmed in 30 tetrads, compared with 27 in 2016 and probable in 37, compared with 40 in 2016. The earliest nest building was at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on 14 Feb and the first confirmed breeding record was of two occupied nests at Lavington Plantation on 8 Mar. The earliest record of fledged young was at Halnaker on 28 Apr and the next day a family of 12 was seen at The Mumbles (Steyning). During the BBS birds were found in 51% of the 172 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 14 at Verdley Place (Fernhurst) on 1 Jun. Twenty juveniles in a flock were recorded at Pagham Hbr on 21 May. A flock of at least 18, including 13 juveniles, seen at Patcham on 10 Jun, suggested that clans were already re-forming. The highest summer count was 42 at Weir Wood Res on 30 Jun and 40 were recorded at Church Norton on 4 Sep.

During the late autumn and second winter period there were 143 records of ten or more, with high counts of 48 over Selsey Bill on 30 Oct, 40 at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Oct and another 40 at Warnham LNR on 16 Dec. Four hundred and forty five were recorded during the late year SWBS, and the species was recorded in 42% of the 161 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 18 at Rotherfield on 13 Nov. [CJR]

Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Recorded from 268 tetrads (29%), a welcome increase after the woeful figure of 229 tetrads in 2016 and slightly better than the 265 of 2015. Considering the species is in decline in the south-east this figure is encouraging. March records were received from 18 sites involving some 33 birds, the earliest being at Camber GC on the 12th, one day later than 2016 and four days earlier than the county 10-year average date. Apart from three at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Mar these records were all of one bird. April started with a trickle of mainly ones and twos but twelve at Beachy Head on the 4th was the first double figure count. On the 8th this site held 30 with 40 also here on 10th. Ten at Crowhurst on the 10th was a good early inland count. The 12th brought 16 to Climping Gap, a nice

fall occurred at Beachy Head on the 14th with 65 there, then 25 on the 18th. Numbers on Ashdown Forest showed a steady increase and at Old Lodge LNR 14 were present on the 19th. Another good figure was of 14 at the University of Sussex on the 21st, but on that day 50 were recorded at Beachy Head, ten were at Seaford Head and 20 at Climping Gap. Obviously a real influx had occurred and this continued with 70 at Beachy Head on the 22nd. At Worth Forest 25 were singing on the 23rd. Numbers continued to be recorded during the month but no more large counts were made. The last falls of the spring were 20 at Beachy Head and ten at Selsey Bill on 8 May.

Despite the increase in the number of tetrads which this species was recorded, confirmed breeding was recorded in fewer than in 2016, only four instead of five, and probable breeding in a further 19. Breeding surveys revealed 21 pairs at Broadwater Warren, one pair at Medmerry, twelve pairs at Pagham Hbr and one pair at Pulborough Brooks. As in previous years Ashdown Forest held the largest concentration of breeding birds in the county.

The first obvious returning migrants were singles at Beachy Head and Ladywell (Coombes) on 15 Jul followed by three at Beachy Head on the 17th, ten on the 23rd, 32 on the 25th when there were also ten at Medmerry. August started well with 175 at Beachy Head, 100 of these being in Whitbread Hollow. On the 6th at Ladywell 50 were trapped and 39 were trapped at Cissbury. At Beachy Head good numbers continued to be recorded with 76 on the 7th, also 62 on the 9th when 40 were trapped at Ladywell. A further 125 at Beachy Head on the 11th and then on the 12th 26 at Cissbury were followed by 100 at Ladywell on the 13th. Beachy Head still attracted with 49 on the 16th 50 on the 20th and 22nd. Seaford Head got a look in with 90 on the 25th. The 27th produced 50 at Ladywell, 55 at Beachy Head and 36 at Seaford Head; these were followed by 40 at Ladywell, 27 at Beachy Head, 17 at Seaford Head and 25 at Hastings on the 31st and signalled almost the end of larger numbers. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded a total of 168 on 27 dates between 6 Aug and 4 Oct with a maximum of 25 on 25 and 31 Aug.

In September Pagham Hbr held a minimum of 15 on the 1st, Ladywell 20 on the 2nd and 7th with Beachy Head holding 15 on the 10th. Thereafter numbers were in single figures. Willow Warbler was last recorded at Cuckmere Haven on 27 Oct, three days later than the county 10-year average departure date.

A bird showing characteristics of the north European and west Siberian race '*acredula*' was trapped and ringed at Cissbury on 30 Sep (see photo in Ringing Report). [TWP]

Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

Recorded in 534 tetrads (59%), a lower figure than the 10-year average (2007 to 2016) of 569. There were 105 records in January showing just how common this species can be over the winter period. Single birds were noted in over 30 localities on 1 Jan including 30 at Coldwaltham WTW / Waltham Brooks. Further noteworthy counts at this site during the rest of the month were 40 on the 4th, 50 on the 6th and 30 on the 22nd. There were 12 at Kings Barn WTW (Steyning) on the 10th and 20 at Sidlesham WTW on the 22nd showing just how water treatment works are favoured. Similar numbers continued to be recorded during February.

In March Weir Wood Res hosted its first of the year on the 5th, and after this date obvious new migrants appeared at several sites, both inland and on the coast. At Beachy Head nine were counted on the 10th and on the 12th there were 14 at Pulborough Brooks and 20 at Church Norton. Cliff End (Pett) held 23 on the 17th and numbers continued to be seen throughout the county thereafter. April started with 25 on the Knepp Estate, 13 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest), 12 at Beachy

Head and 17 at Paddockhurst (Worth), all on the 2nd. The highest counts thereafter were 17 at Cadborough (Rye) on the 18th, 18 at Cliff End on the 21st and 21 at Pulborough Brooks on the 28th.

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and was probable in a further 31. During breeding surveys four pairs were recorded at Rye Hbr, 37 pairs at Pagham Hbr and 13 pairs at Pulborough Brooks. During the BBS Chiffchaffs were found in 92% of the 172 squares surveyed.

Return passage may have started as early as 23 Jul when 15 were noted at Beachy Head but the rest of the month was quiet. At Bexhill 30 were counted on 13 Aug and then there was another relatively quiet period until the 31st when 124 were counted by the Hastings migration watch team. In September counts here also included 58 on the 2nd and 66 on the 7th when there were also 60 at Ladywell (Coombes) and 100 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head). There were further high counts with 117 at Hastings on the 9th and another 100 at Whitbread Hollow on the 10th with 27 recorded at Cissbury, also on this date. Numbers then increased further with 167 on the 14th at Hastings and 137 there the next day. At Whitbread Hollow there were 125 on the 16th and 171 at Hastings which was the maximum day count by the Migration Watch team who recorded 2520 on 60 dates between 22 Aug and 14 Nov. On the 17th Ladywell held 100, Seaford Head 35 and Hastings 124. There were 100 at Whitbread Hollow on the 18th, 120 at Ladywell on the 20th, when there were also 150 at Whitbread Hollow. Numbers started to dwindle before another 100 were at Ladywell on the 23rd. Then 150 were recorded at Whitbread Hollow on 26th and both here and at Hastings further 100's were counted on the 27th. Numbers, although still respectable did drop off generally but in October observers at Whitbread Hollow, Hastings and Ladywell still logged counts of 100 or so on 3rd, 4th and 8th, but that was the end of the big numbers. Birds were, as usual, recorded throughout November and December with the only notable figure towards the year's end being ten at Waltham Brooks and nearby WTW.

Birds showing the characteristics of the eastern race *P.c. tristis* 'Siberian Chiffchaff' were recorded at Coldwaltham WTW/Waltham Brooks on nine dates between 4 Jan and 6 Mar, usually singles but two were present on two dates, 4 and 11 Jan (ARK). A single was also recorded at Beachy Head on the late date of 9 May (LP). [TWP]

Observers are reminded that they 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". *British Birds* 2010:320-338; Collinson, JM., Murcia, A., Ladeira, G., Dewars, K., Roberts, F. and Shannon, T. Siberian and Scandinavian Common Chiffchaffs in Britain and Ireland – a genetic study. *British Birds* 2018:384-394; and Lewis, M., Penn, A. and Collinson, JM. Subspecies identification of Common Chiffchaffs wintering at Nigg Bay, North-east Scotland, in 2016/17. *British Birds* 2018:395-401. [MM]

Wood Warbler

Phylloscopus sibilatrix

Very scarce passage migrant. Rare in summer with no confirmed breeding records since 2010. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

In spring, the first noted was a single bird at Hastings on 18 Apr (RB); then further individuals were observed at Cuckmere Haven on the 21st (MRE), Church Norton on the 22nd (PDM), Pulborough Brooks on the 23rd (HR, et al.), two at Beachy Head on the 26th (KBG, LP) and finally one at Woodingdean on the 29th (TS, et al.).

At Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) an unpaired male was observed on 23 May and then recorded, frequently singing, on several dates until 21 Jun (mo).

In autumn, returning birds were at Beachy Head on 13 Aug, when one was trapped at Whitbread Hollow (RDME), and on 16 Sep, when one was photographed at Hodcombe (MEC, RHC).

All records of this species need to be supported by a description for assessment by the SOSRC. [TWP]

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus

Scarce visitor, mainly in late autumn.

2016: One at Eastbourne on 12 Oct (NJNP).

2017: Despite a virtual absence of favourable easterly winds in the autumn, 2017 was another good year for this species with a total of 12 recorded, three in September and nine in October. The first, at Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 19 Sep (LP), was followed by two more later in the month at St Mary's Church (Chidham) on the 28th and 29th (DB, MAB, GK, HR, *et al.*) and in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 30th (NJNP). In October, there were single individuals in Horseshoe Plantation on the 6th (RDME, MM, PJW), at Sullington Warren (Storrington) on the 9th (SDSB), trapped at Ladywell (Coombes) on the 14th and again on the 17th (CB, MM, JAN, SFW), at Arundel WWT on the 15th and 17th (DGCH), in sycamores along Black Lion Street (central Brighton) on the 16th (TL, MR), at Long Down (Beachy Head) on the 17th and 18th (LP, BP *et al.*), trapped at Sreat on the 23rd (RJJ), at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on the 27th (MEC, RHC) and at Birling Gap on the 31st (GW). The county total this century moves on to at least 160 at an average of 8.9 per year. [PJ]

Aquatic Warbler

Acrocephalus paludicola

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

A juvenile was trapped and ringed at Charleston Reedbed on 16 Aug (JAGD, JJE, MRE, SP, TWP) (see photo in Ringing Report). The date is typical and indeed the 2016 record from Pagham Hbr, the first since 2011, was also on 16 Aug. The record has been accepted by BBRC. [MM]

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

The species was recorded in 87 tetrads (9.5%), a welcome rise after the decrease in 2016. One at Rye Hbr on 25 Mar was eight days earlier than in 2016 and seven days earlier than the county 10-year average arrival date. Numbers at Rye Hbr rose to six by the month's end. There were also singles at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) and Pulborough Brooks on the 30th and Pett Level on the 31st. At the beginning of April a trickle of arrivals was noted at many sites; Pagham Hbr held seven on the 7th with 12 there on the 17th and at Rye Hbr there were 16 on the 10th rising to 22 on the 26th. Elsewhere numbers were mainly in single figures. May was similar, records were widespread, mainly single figure counts but notable were 25 on Pevensey Levels on the 11th.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads with probable breeding in a further 11, a welcome increase over 2016. At Rye Hbr 40 pairs were mapped, there were 32 pairs at Pagham Hbr, Lewes Brooks held eight pairs and Medmerry seven pairs.

The first detectable returning migrants were three at Charleston Reedbed on 4 Jul; thereafter two were at Beachy Head on the 13th and another there on the 15th. By August migration was well under way; on the 1st 26 were recorded at Beachy Head but 154 ringed in Charleston Reedbed that day

was exceptional. This site ended up trapping 545 individuals in the autumn, the highest total since 1977. During the Hastings Migration Watch a total of 140 was recorded on 22 dates between 15 Aug and 4 Oct with a maximum of 22 at Combe Haven on 2 Sep. Apart from the migration counts here no records made double figures during September. Single lingering birds were present at four sites in October the last being at Pett Level on the 10th, just five days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [TWP]

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

The species was recorded in 131 tetrads (14%), a welcome increase after the decrease in 2016 and a return to the upward trend of previous years. Three at Rye Hbr on 4 Apr were three days earlier than in 2016 and also three days earlier than the 10-year average date. These were followed by singles at Sidlesham Ferry on the 6th, Charleston Reedbed on the 7th, then Ladywell (Coombes), Rodmell, Barnham and Climping Gap on the 9th. At many sites birds were recorded in single figures until the 20th when eleven were counted at Offham (Arun Valley), ten at Climping Gap on the 21st and eleven at Beeding Brooks on the 22nd. At the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) 25 were counted on the 25th and on the 29th there were ten at both Thorney Deepes and Arundel Watermeadows and 19 at New Bridge (Pevensey Levels). During May the species could be found throughout the county in suitable habitat but no really large numbers were recorded, the maxima were 23 at Newhaven on the 16th, at the Mumbles (Steyping) on the 20th and at Winchelsea on the 23rd and 26 at Newenden on the 26th.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads, more than double that of 2016, and was probable in a further nine. The survey at Rye Hbr mapped 150 plus pairs and it is thought, as usual, that the true figure was probably in excess of 200 pairs. Lewes Brooks held ten pairs, Medmerry 40 pairs and Pagham Hbr 52 pairs. As in previous years most records were just figures of birds, not pairs, so it is difficult to estimate the breeding population of the county. However record numbers were trapped for ringing in the county suggesting an excellent breeding year At Ladywell (Coombes) 28 were trapped on 8 Jul, a day record for the site.

Return passage was first noted at Beachy Head with one on 13 Jul, another there on the 24th and two on the 31st. During August notable concentrations were observed with 39 at Beachy Head on the 1st, 117 on the 11th, mostly in Whitbread Hollow where it was estimated at least 100 were present, another 30 at Beachy Head on the 16th and 56 on the 26th. Good numbers continued into early September with 87 trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 1st, part of the best ever yearly total there of 800 ringed. During the Hastings Migration Watch a total of 151 was recorded on 19 dates between 7 Aug and 3 Oct with a maximum of 44 at Combe Haven on 9 Sep, and then numbers decreased significantly with only two records reaching low double figures, both from Hastings. Stragglers continued into October with records from six sites, the last being singles at Pett Level and Beachy Head on the 19th, a comparatively early date: the county 10-year average date being 3 Nov. [TWP]

Melodious Warbler

Hippolais polyglotta

Very scarce visitor in spring and autumn.

There was just one record in 2017 of a single bird in the old trapping area at Beachy Head on 24 to 25 Aug (RKH *et al.*). It showed very well at times to an appreciative audience but had the misfortune to be taken by a Sparrowhawk during the afternoon of the 25th. The county total moves on to 71 of which 20 have been this century. It is the 15th to be recorded in the Beachy Head area. [VPB, PJ]

Grasshopper Warbler*Locustella naevia*

Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 31 tetrads (3.4%). The first record was of a single bird at Hope Gap (Seaford) on 8 Apr, the 10-year average arrival date and three days earlier than in 2016. During April there were records from Climping Gap, Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Billingshurst, Waltham Brooks, Rusper, Beachy Head (reeling in the hotel garden), Pevensy Levels and at two sites on Ashdown Forest. One of these at the last mentioned site was in a large garden where the bird was heard reeling on the 20th near a large pond surrounded by bamboo and thick bushes. Most of these records were of single birds, but two were heard at Waltham Brooks and at Church Norton. Two reeling males were heard again at Waltham Brooks on 21 May, and another at Rye Hbr was heard on four dates between 11 and 23 May.

Breeding was neither confirmed nor probable but was possible in eight tetrads. None was recorded after 23 May until an early returning migrant was heard singing in Hastings CP on 2 Jul. Thereafter the vast majority of records were of birds caught at ringing sites during August and into September; 491 by Rye Bay RG, 52 by the Cuckmere RG and 28 at Beachy Head Ringing Station. The total number of birds ringed in 2017 was 573, 60% higher than in 2016. This increase is encouraging. Three birds were recorded in October, all at Pett Level, of which the final one was on the 16th, six days later than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Blackcap*Sylvia atricapilla*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.

Blackcaps were recorded in 487 tetrads (53%) during the year. Three birds were encountered during the SWBS in two of the 131 1-km squares surveyed in the first winter period. During the GBW, the species was recorded in 118 (48%) of participating gardens during the year, with observers in West Tarring and Offington (both Worthing) and Battle Hill all recording a maximum of four birds. They were seen feeding on apples, around mahonia flowers and taking sunflower hearts from a feeder. A male in a Steyning garden defended a bird table for a week in February, chasing off other species, including Goldfinches and Great Tits. Casual records increased the number of sites in which wintering Blackcaps were observed to at least 90. A male in full song was heard in Brighton on 18 Feb, but the first returning migrant was possibly a bird seen at Rye Hbr on 23 Mar, or one heard at Worth Forest on the 27th.

During the BBS the species was recorded in 78% of the 338 surveys with a maximum of 18 on 19 Apr in a square near Chichester, the same day and number as the previous year but in a different square! Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and was probable in a further 42. Ten pairs were counted at Pulborough Brooks and forty at Pagham Hbr, a sustained increase at the latter site from 2016 and 2015, when there were 28 and 19 pairs respectively. The first fledged young were seen at Pett Level on 18 May, and two juveniles were ringed at The Mumbles (Steyning) two days later.

Numbers on autumn passage were much higher in 2017. Of 339 different birds trapped at Cissbury 90% were juveniles or first years, an improvement on 78% in 2016. Similarly, at Ladywell (Coombes) the percentage of young birds trapped increased from 83% to 91%. The total of 1184 birds ringed at Beachy Head in 2017 was almost double the 2016 figure of 625; 803 were ringed at Charleston Reedbed and 4756 at Pett Level. Monthly maxima at Seaford Head were 110 on 31 Aug

and 120 on 7 Sep and, at Beachy Head, where the “usual strong autumn passage” was noted, 200 on the 25 Aug and 750 on 9 Sep. In October, 48 were recorded at Hastings on the 3rd, and 60 were at Beachy Head on the 4th.

In December, the two Worthing gardens (see above) were again well frequented, with two females and one male seen feeding on spindle berries in West Tarring on 17 Dec, and a count of four in the garden at Offington in Christmas week being the maximum number seen in the month at a single site. [VPB]



Blackcap, Pulborough Brooks, April 2017 (Trevor Guy)

Garden Warbler

Sylvia borin

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

This species was recorded in 152 tetrads (17%) in 2017. The first records were on 3 Apr, of a single bird at Slindon Woods and two on the Knepp Estate, two days later than in 2016, and two days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. Others were heard at Pulborough Brooks and Ashdown Forest the following day and the highest count for the month was four at Beachy Head on the 24th.

During the BBS, the species was found in 11% of the 338 surveys, with the maximum count being four in a square near Blackham on the Sussex/Kent border on 3 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads and was probable in a further 13. During May four were heard singing at Weir Wood Res on the 1st, three were at Pulborough Brooks on the 3rd and at Warnham LNR on the 5th, five at Fernhurst on the 6th and four at Flexham Park (Fittleworth) on the 16th. The next day three males were heard singing from silver birch scrub on Ashdown Forest. Broadwater Warren held five

breeding pairs, while Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks held two apiece. The first evidence of breeding was when two adults and six juveniles were noted at Warnham LNR on 6 Jun, and fledged birds were reported at Wisborough Green on 6 Jul.

No Garden Warblers were noted at Beachy Head after 9 May until the first for the autumn appeared on 23 Jul; observers at the ringing station reported “quite a good passage” thereafter, with 81 birds ringed, an improvement on the previous two years, but still fewer than the 2014 total of 121. Between 9 and 26 Aug six double-figure counts were recorded at Beachy Head sites with a maximum of 26 on the 16th but numbers declined significantly after the 26th. Ringers at the Rye Bay RG ringed 305, more than twice the number in 2016.

Most birds had departed by mid-September, but one was recorded in a GBW garden in Langney (Eastbourne) in the last week of September and the first week of October. Otherwise the only October records were individuals at Pett Level on the 3rd and 9th, and one trapped and ringed at The Mumbles (Steyning) on the 14th. This bird weighed 29.6g, clearly well fuelled for its journey south, as average pre-migration weights are c.19g (BTO Birdfacts). This proved to be the final record, the two days earlier than the 10-year average departure date, but 17 days earlier than in 2016. [VPB]

Lesser Whitethroat

Sylvia curruca

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant

Lesser Whitethroats were recorded in 131 tetrads (14%), precisely the same as 2016. The first arrivals were on 9 Apr when individuals were recorded at Rye Hbr and Pulborough Brooks, three days earlier than in 2016 and one day earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. On 11 Apr two were heard at Rye Hbr, three were at Pulborough Brooks on the 16th and five at Woods Mill LNR (Henfield) on the 26th. At Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on 10 May, two males were fighting in scrub where a male had been heard singing previously. They were seen grappling with each other, pecking heads and only separated when the observer was within 1m.

During the BBS the species was found in 8.5% of the 338 surveys with a maximum count of six on 10 Apr at Rye Hbr. There were six pairs at Thorney Deepes, 11 pairs at Pagham Hbr (six fewer than in 2016), four pairs at Pulborough Brooks, at least 13 pairs on the Knepp Estate and nine pairs at Rye Hbr, the same as the previous year. Breeding was confirmed only at Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks and at Crowhurst where recently fledged young were noted at each site. Breeding was recorded as probable in five further tetrads and possible in c.54.

One or two were noted at Beachy Head in July, and return passage was underway there by early August; three were seen on the 5th and six on the 6th. The ringing station there recorded their “worst year since ringing began in 1960”, with only ten new birds ringed. Numbers at Cuckmere RG (44) and Rye Bay RG (61) showed an increase over 2016, but proportionally more birds were ringed overall at both sites. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded more this year, a total of 83 on 24 dates between 8 Aug and 27 Sep, with a maximum of 23 on 31 Aug. Ten were seen at Pagham Hbr on 15 Aug, and the same number at Beachy Head on the 25th and 26th. Just four were recorded in October and the last was seen at Pett Level on the 23rd, nine days later than the 10-year average date.

However, on 21 and 22 Dec one was observed feeding on spindle berries in a Tarring (Worthing) garden and on the 22nd another was seen in a garden in Ringmer. Both birds remained into 2018. There have been only four records of overwintering Lesser Whitethroats in the county, in 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2010, plus a very late November bird in 1957, though these “are unlikely to be British breeding birds and are more likely to be one of the races of ‘Eastern Lesser Whitethroat’ from C Asia” (*The Birds of Sussex* (Thomas 2014)). [VPB]

Common Whitethroat*Sylvia communis****Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

This species was recorded in 353 tetrads (39%) across the county. The first report was of a single bird at Rye Hbr on 1 Apr, two days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date, and one was on the Knepp Estate the following day. The main influx commenced from 9 Apr; on the 20th there were ten at Piddinghoe (Newhaven) and three days later 14 were noted at Pagham Hbr. Eleven were counted in less than an hour at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 26th.

During the BBS, Whitethroats were found in 46% of the 338 surveys, broadly similar to the numbers in the past three years, with a maximum count once again coming from Rye Hbr where there were 34 on 29 Apr. The Beachy Head log remarked that no real falls occurred in the spring and the breeding population at the main headland sites had reduced to around 15 pairs; but reasonable numbers were present in the autumn.

Breeding was confirmed in 32 tetrads and was probable in a further 40. There were more than 30 pairs at Thorney Island and 49 territories were mapped at Rye Hbr, an improvement on only 31 in 2016. At Pagham Hbr there were 55 pairs, similar to the numbers the previous year; however, at Medmerry the number of pairs counted had increased from 14 to 62. The first evidence of successful breeding was when fledged young were among ten birds seen at Ovingdean on 24 May. After low numbers in 2016, reflecting a poor breeding season, totals trapped for ringing at Beachy Head and Cissbury, 236 and 62 respectively, were encouragingly higher than the previous two years, and more than double the 2016 figures.

Return passage commenced towards the end of July and increased during August. At Beachy Head, where a total of 1893 bird-days were recorded over 44 days, counts topped a hundred on two days, with 160 on 11 Aug and 118 on the 16th. Birds were still passing through in reasonable numbers in early September; on the 9th 50 were at Beachy Head, 32 at Seaford Head and it was the best day for Hastings Migration Watch team when 91 were counted. There were records from seven sites in the first ten days of October, with the highest number of birds being five at Medmerry on the 3rd, then no more until the final sighting two weeks later, a single bird at Seaford Head on the 24th, 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.***

This species was recorded in 57 tetrads (6.2%). This is a welcome increase in the fortunes of this species following the decline caused by the cold winters of 2009-10 and 2010-11, and demonstrates its capacity for recovering from hard weather effects, as shown below:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of tetrads	49	42	37	18	14	19	36	41	38	57

In January, the highest counts were eight at Ambersham Common on the 18th and six at Blackdown on the 5th; otherwise records were almost entirely of single birds. A similar pattern was noted in February when the highest count was four at Iping Common on the 21st but in March the highest counts were only three at two sites on Ashdown Forest. During February 14 were counted at various locations on Ashdown Forest.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and was probable in a further eight. Song was first recorded on 18 Feb at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest). Birds were seen carrying food or faecal sacs on 2 May at Roman Road (Ashdown Forest) and the first fledglings were recorded on 2 Jun at Ambersham Common. During the WHBBS 26 territories were recorded (see page 214).

During the summer, the highest count was ten (five pairs) at Ambersham Common but for the remainder of the year records were most frequently of single birds with a maximum of four at Iping Common on 2 Oct and Ambersham Common on 16 Dec. During the Hastings area migration watch 14 were recorded on 11 dates between 15 Aug and 6 Nov.

Where the habitat was noted, birds were most frequently seen either in gorse or amongst heather with gorse but others were seen in marram grass at East Head (Chichester Hbr), in a hedgerow on Beachy Head and singing from a pine tree at Ambersham.

An article on the Dartford Warbler Survey can be found on page 249 of this report. [JAH]



Firecrest, Battle, December 2017 (David Gardiner)

Firecrest

Regulus ignicapillus

***Fairly common breeding resident and summer visitor; passage migrant and winter visitor.
Schedule 1 species.***

Firecrests were recorded in 159 (18%) tetrads in 2017, 17 fewer than in 2016, but still the third highest number since 2008 reflecting the continuing spread of this species and, presumably, an increasing population, as shown below: They were encountered in 25 (10%) of the 240 gardens

participating in the GBW during the year. There were three encounters in the early year SWBS in two of the 131 1-km squares surveyed, two of which were at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 9 Feb. During the first quarter, the majority of records were of single birds with occasional twos, but five were recorded at Alexandra Park (Hastings) on 19 Feb and at Climping Gap on 27 Mar and four at Sheffield Forest on the 7th and Westdean Woods on the 23rd.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of Tetrads	111	88	111	115	110	105	144	173	176	159

Targeted searches in suitable habitat in mid-Sussex located 92 singing males in 15 km², including 17 in Worth Forest during March to May, 25 in two neighbouring tetrads of nearby Cowdray Forest in April, and 22 in Holmbush Forest in May. Six singing males and a possible nest were found at Brightling on 10 May, and four were at Wakehurst Place at the end of the month. During the BBS, Firecrests were encountered in eight (2.3%) of the 338 surveys with a maximum of three on 13 Apr in a square at West Lavington. Confirmed breeding was noted in three tetrads, and was probable in a further 13. The first fledged young were recorded from Burton MP on 14 May and others were seen on Ashdown Forest in June and July.

Ringers at Ladywell (Coombes) and Cissbury both trapped Firecrests in August for only the second time; at Ladywell 15 different birds were ringed between then and the end of the year, with seven at Cissbury. An observer in Seaford commented that he now regularly sees Firecrests in this area, including males singing in spring and summer.

During the late year SWBS four were recorded in four (2.5%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. During the final quarter, numbers encountered were similar to the first quarter with five at Church Norton. A Midhurst resident recorded his first garden Firecrest in 43 years. [VPB]

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Very common breeding resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Goldcrests were recorded in 472 tetrads (52%), similar to the previous year. In the early year SWBS, a total of 107 birds was encountered in 49 (37%) of the 1-km squares surveyed; the maximum was seven on 9 Feb at West Lavington (Midhurst) where the maximum number in the same period was recorded in the 2016 survey. The species was also noted in 54 (24%) of gardens participating in the GBW during the year. Eight were recorded at Cliff End (Pett) on 3 Jan, an estimated 50 were present at Lavington Common on the 5th, and ten were at both Pulborough Brooks and Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) in the following few days.

During the BBS, Goldcrests were recorded in 49% of the 172 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 12 on 4 Jun at West Lavington. Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and was probable in a further 31. Habitat used, where recorded, was mostly coniferous, but birds were also found in holly and deciduous trees such as silver birch. The first fledged young were noted on 15 May at Patcham (Brighton) when a female with at least five fledglings was noted. A juvenile was ringed at Ladywell (Coombes) on 14 Jul and two more were ringed at Cissbury on the 30th.

The first autumn bird at Beachy Head was recorded on 11 Aug, but the main influx started on 23 Sep when 60 were recorded; 214 were ringed at the site before the end of October, by far the highest total there. Increased numbers were also reported from Ladywell (Coombes) where 266 birds were ringed, and also at Cissbury where 105 different birds were trapped. The figures from Rye Bay RG and Cuckmere RG were 247 and 240 respectively. All these sites returned considerably higher totals this year than in 2016. There were 24 records of 20 or more birds during October with a maximum

of 42 at Seaford Head on the 16th and 36 at Ladywell on the 8th, a site record. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 434 on 43 dates between 9 Sep and 14 Nov with a maximum of 33 on 26 Oct, similar to the 2015 figure and a welcome improvement over the low total of 85 in 2016.

In the late winter SWBS 176 birds were found in 69 (43%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 12 on 2 Nov at Bolney. It is to be hoped that these delicate birds manage to survive the prolonged cold spell of spring 2018 in reasonable numbers. [VPB]

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

Abundant resident.

There were records from 621 tetrads (68%), similar to recent years (cf. 633 in 2016 and 625 in 2015). Birds were noted in 95% of gardens participating in the GBW. In the early year SWBS, 336 Wrens were recorded in 101 (77%) of the 131 surveyed squares, with a maximum of 12 at Partridge Green. This represented a decline in numbers and distribution from the 412 birds found in 104 (89%) of 117 surveyed squares in 2016.

Nest building was noted at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on 4 Mar and low on an ivy covered tree trunk at the University of Sussex on the 6th. At South Chase (Ashdown Forest) a nest was in leaf litter under a fallen tree. Breeding was confirmed in 29 tetrads and probable in 24 (cf. 18 and 50 in 2016). There were 51 pairs at Pagham Hbr: numbers there are very variable; there had been 87 in 2016. As in 2016, 41 territories were mapped at Rye Hbr. There were about eight pairs around Beachy Head (and no noticeable arrival there at any stage of the year). On 12 Apr there were four singing males along the old railway track between Barcombe Cross and Knowlands Fm, with eight along that stretch on the 15th. Ten point counts in Worthlodge Forest (Crawley) on 23 Apr located 16 territories; a repeat exercise on 9 Jun found 31. A bird was carrying food at Ladies Mile LNR on 9 Apr. Fledged young were first recorded at Arundel WWT on 6 May and there were reports of recently fledged birds through to one at Withyham on 14 Aug.

In the BBS Wrens were noted in 169 (98%) of the 172 1-km squares surveyed. The maximum count, 38 in Tilgate Forest on 16 May, was similar to the maximum of 42 recorded in the same square in 2016. During this survey there were 156 double figure counts (cf 166 in 2016) and the sum of the maximum counts from the early and late visits was 1906 (cf. 2050 in 2016 and 1950 in 2015).

In the late year SWBS, 472 were logged in 132 (82%) of 161 squares surveyed. The maximum of 11 was on the Downs Link, at Slinfold. A total of 467 birds had been reported from 113 (83%) of 136 squares in 2016 so the apparent decline in the first few months of 2017 *may* have been checked by the end of the year. [CB]

Nuthatch

Sitta europaea

Common resident.

Nuthatches were recorded in 392 tetrads (43%), 13 more than in 2016. Most records were from The Weald with few from the coast. During the first winter period the highest count was 13 at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 28 Feb. There was a count of nine at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Feb and eight at Stanstead Forest on 20 Jan. During the early year SWBS Nuthatches were recorded in 37% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of seven at West Lavington on 9 Feb. The species was recorded in 124 (52%) of participating gardens in the GBW with a maximum of 13 in a garden at Fernhurst in late January.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in 20, similar to 2016. Singing was reported from early February and the first sign of nest building seen on 11 Mar at Fernhurst. The first confirmed breeding was at Buchan Park on 30 Mar and the first fledglings were seen at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 30 May. In the BBS Nuthatches were recorded in 37% of the 172 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 13 at West Lavington on 13 Apr.

The highest counts during the autumn were of sixes on the Parham Estate on 26 Sep, Horsted Keynes on 3 Oct, Warnham LNR on the 9th, Burton MP on the 17th and Verdley Place (Fernhurst) on the 30th. Slightly higher counts were recorded during the second winter period with eight at Warnham LNR on 16 Dec, sevens at Bolney on 2 Nov, West Lavington on 2 Dec, Stanstead Forest the next day and four further counts of six. During the late year SWBS Nuthatches were encountered in 41% of the 161 squares surveyed. [GDE, MJC]

Treecreeper

Certhia familiaris

Common resident.

Treecreepers were recorded in 267 tetrads (29%), an increase on the 253 in 2016. During the first winter period the highest count was seven at Warnham LNR on 23 Jan. There were two counts of five, seven of four and 12 of three. Otherwise some 79% of the total for which a count was recorded were of one or two. During the early year SWBS Treecreepers were observed in 30% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed and in the GBW the species occurred in 51 (21%) of participating gardens with no more than two being the peak weekly count.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and probable in another 12. The first sign of probable breeding was of nest building in an old woodpecker hole at West Itchenor on 16 Mar and the first record of confirmed breeding was of a nest with young at Sussex University on 28 Apr. The first fledged young were seen at Barnsden (Ashdown Forest) on 11 May. There were two high counts in June, ten at Harting Combe on the 24th and nine at Roundstreet Common (Loxwood) on the 30th, the latter during a BBS. During the BBS Treecreepers were recorded in 17% of the 172 squares.

During the autumn the highest counts were of five at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 26 Oct, four each at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 16 Sep and Weir Wood Res the next day and five counts of three. Second winter period high counts of five were recorded at Pickham Fm (Pett) on 1 Nov, West Lavington (Midhurst) on 2 Dec and Cliff End (Pett) on the 12th. During the late year SWBS Treecreepers were encountered in 20% of the 1-km squares surveyed. [GDE]

Rose-coloured Starling

Pastor roseus

Rare vagrant.

The first winter male which was present at the end of 2016 remained in Crawley until 21 Mar (mo), during which time it began to moult into 2nd calendar year plumage. It was heard to sing on 6 Mar. A juvenile appeared in a garden at Selsey on 12 Oct and remained in the area, consorting with Common Starlings and House Sparrows, until 27 Oct (SAR, *et al.*). This brings the county total to 41 with 16 this century. [ACG]



Rose-coloured Starling, Crawley, February 2017 (Gary Faulkner)

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 518 tetrads (57%) during the year. The largest flock recorded in the early year was 16,000 roosting at Palace Pier (Brighton) on 22 Jan. Other probable roosting movements were 150 NW at Weir Wood Res in the afternoon of 6 Jan and 750 SW at Rodmell Brooks on 17 Jan. Flocks of 100 and above were reported from a further 28 sites including 600 feeding with Fieldfares at the upper Adur Levels on 2 Jan, 500 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) two days later, 600 at Rye Fm (Henfield) on 16 Jan and 500 at Iford Brooks (Lewes) on 21 Jan. Migration was indicated by small parties totalling 500 flying east throughout the day on 7 Mar at Rye Hbr, 17 N at Selsey Bill on 14 Mar and 90 E at Gatwick on the last day of the month.

Starlings were reported from 83% of Sussex gardens participating in BTO Garden Birdwatch, whilst in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch Starlings were the second most frequently reported species, occurring in c.50% of gardens during the 1hr count compared with c.40% the previous year. During the early year SWBS there were 2961 encounters with the species from 60% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed and a maximum count of 406 on 5 Feb near Oving.

From early March birds were observed visiting potential nest sites with nest building first recorded on 4 Mar at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton). The first confirmed breeding of a bird with food or faecal sac was on 12 Apr at Ridgewood (Uckfield) and the first fledglings were seen on 8 May at Ladies Mile LNR. Breeding was confirmed in 43 tetrads and probable in a further 13. During the BBS Starlings were found in 55% of the 338 surveys with a maximum count of 102 at Wivelsfield Green on 3 Jun. At West Tarring (Worthing) a juvenile was killed and partly eaten by a Magpie on 11 May while on 28 Jun a Starling was seen eating a small slow worm, at Whitehawk (Brighton).

Flocks of 100 and over occurred at 57 sites during the autumn and early winter period. A flock at Thorney Island numbered 700 on 15 Jul rising to 1000 on 22 Aug and 4 Sep. Flocks of 1000 or more were seen in the Lancing and Shoreham areas throughout November with the largest flock of 10,000 flying southwest at Ladywell (Coombes) presumably leaving a roost at dawn on 16 and 19 Nov. There were two reports of a large flock at Palace Pier for this period, 1000 on 29 Oct and 7000 on 19 Nov. Elsewhere 1000 were at Pett Levels on 26 Dec and 2000 at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Dec. Other roosting movements were of 400 W at Brightling at dawn 30 Oct, 250 roosting at Worthing Pier on 16 Nov, 400 roosting in a reed bed at Rye Hbr on 19 Nov and 475 NW at dusk at Weir Wood Res on 29 Dec. At Pett Level 50 were seen to come in off the sea on 29 Oct and at Hastings over 1800 flew west the following day. Further evidence of migration was 53 N at Selsey Bill on 14 Nov. A total of 3868 were recorded from 66% of the 1-km squares surveyed in the late year SWBS with the highest count being 442 on 24 Dec at Pevensy Levels. [ACG]

Ring Ouzel

Turdus torquatus

Passage migrant, very scarce in spring, scarce to fairly common in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Ring Ouzels were recorded mostly at or near coastal sites or downland prominences, and were found in only 37 tetrads (4.1%). A relatively high spring total (the fourth highest this century) was followed by a mediocre total during autumn passage. The estimated minimum monthly totals, after adjusting for possible duplication and birds which stayed a day or two, were as follows:

Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov
-	3	21	3	3	110	4

One which flew over the A27 at Shoreham on 7 Mar was three weeks ahead of the 10-year average date (27th); the second bird did not arrive until the 20th, at Pett Level, followed by the third (and last for March) at Pagham Hbr on the 28th. While two were noted at Wilmington on 2 Apr, almost all the following records were of singles, seen daily from the 10th and rather towards the east of the county; twos were also noted at Cold Coombes (Lewes) on the 16th and Pagham Hbr on the 17th. The records suggest that several individuals stayed for two to three days before moving on. In May, there were singles at Beachy Head on the 3rd, at Cold Coombes on the 8th and, finally, at Waltham Brooks on the 20th, 18 days later than the 10-year average of 2 May but not unusually late. The minimum total of 28 birds compares well with the 10-year average count of 22 and the highest count of 32 in 2015.

The first returning bird landed at Church Norton on 10 Sep, just three days before the 10-year average, and apparently stayed until the 14th (and was possibly the bird seen at the Pagham Hbr Visitor Centre on the 12th). The only other September migrant noted was at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 27th. A lone bird found at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 1 Oct, three on the 3rd, another on the 7th and another at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 8th were the only inland records. Observers at Beachy Head recorded Ring Ouzels on a total of 49 bird days between 20 Sep and 12 Nov with a peak count of at least seven on 25 Oct, whilst the Hastings Migration Watch team recorded a total of 55 birds on 12 dates from 3 Oct with a maximum count of 14 on 26 Oct. Elsewhere, smaller October single figure counts (mostly ones) were observed at Rewell Wood (Arundel), Pagham Hbr, the lower Arun Valley (2), Chantry Hill (Storrington) (4), Ferring, Cissbury, Goring Gap, Steyning Round Hill, Wild Park (Brighton), Seaford Head, and the Pett area (3). Just four birds were seen in November: at Steyning Round Hill on the 2nd, Cissbury on the 3rd, Hastings on the 9th and, finally, at Beachy Head on the 12th, one day later than the 10-year average departure date. The autumn total was a minimum of 108; while one third of the 10-year average this must be considered in the context of 36 in 2008 and 1121 in 2013. [JHW]

Blackbird

Turdus merula

Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.

Blackbirds were recorded from 646 tetrads (71%), 22 fewer than in 2016. The first winter period featured 19 counts of 25 or more birds; highlights were 63 at Broadbridge Heath on 17 Jan (still 40 on 20 Feb), 33 at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Jan rising to 40 on 4 Feb, 34 at Streat on 20 Jan, 31 at both Walderton on 21 Jan and Boxgrove on 5 Feb, 30 at Ninfield on 16 Jan and at Battle on 23 Jan and 10 Mar. The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch revealed that the species was recorded in 92% and 89% of West and East Sussex gardens respectively. During the early year SWBS, 1290 birds were recorded from 128 (98%) 1-km squares with a maximum count of 34 at Streat on 20 Jan. Transects of 1-km during April also returned high counts with a peak of 40 at Catsfield on the 21st.

During the BBS the sum of the maximum counts was 2396 from 172 (99%) of the surveyed 1-km squares, with the highest count of 41 on 21 May at Uckfield. Breeding was confirmed in 67 tetrads, up from 52 last year, and was probable in another 39. Although nests were being built in February, food or faecal carrying was not reported until 28 Mar at Broadbridge Heath. The first fledglings were noted at Mountfield on 7 Apr and at Shoreham the next day; a third brood was suspected at Angmering on 2 Jul. While 57 records indicated fledglings a total of 123 young could be discerned from the data, 45 of them from ringing groups. Thirty four territories were counted in both Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr, and ten were estimated at Beachy Head but there were no numbers reported from other reserves this year. Blackbirds were recorded in 240 (100%) of gardens participating in the GBW.

Counts in the second winter period only rose above 25 from mid-November, with 30 at Pett Level and 35 at Hastings on the 9th and 40 at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th. In December, the highest count for the period was 48 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on the 2nd, when there were 45 at Pulborough Brooks while at four other sites between 30 and 34 were recorded involving Pett Level on 11 Nov and 12 Dec, Hailsham and Peacehaven on 2 Dec and Ripe on the 24th. However, during migration watching at Hastings a total of 282 birds were recorded on 16 days between 10 Oct and 9 Nov with a maximum of 36 on 19 Oct. During the late year SWBS, 1672 birds were recorded from 157 (98%) 1-km squares with a maximum count, previously noted, of 48 on 2 Dec at West Lavington (Midhurst). [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 263 tetrads (29%), slightly more than in 2016. A very poor first winter period was followed by another weak second period, the year's total being 54% of the 10-year average. Approximate monthly totals in the west and east sides of Sussex were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April		Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2046	2875	826	7		1	1066	1898	2438
West of TQ30	1087	1235	335	2		0	206	1322	475
East of TQ30	959	1640	491	5		1	860	576	1963

The first winter total was only 42% of the 10-year average yet there were 17 counts of 100 or more; 100 birds were seen at Pett Level on 10 Jan which swelled to 300 by the 16th but most of them had moved to Rye Hbr the next day, while at Hunston (Chichester) 200 were seen on the 22nd. In February, 100 were at the Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 3 Feb and another 100 at Pevensey the next day followed by 100 at Pulborough Brooks on the 8th, 200 at Barcombe Cross next day, 150 at Hunston on the 11th and 250 at Knepp MP on the 14th. February ended with 150 at Paddockhurst Worth) on the 20th and 130 at Chelwood Vachery (Ashdown Forest) on the 25th. The sole three-figure count in March was of 130 at Weir Wood Res on the 3rd, 70 at Uckfield, 60 at The Burgh and finally 55 at Upwaltham. There was but a trickle of records in April, just seven birds from six sites with the last being one at Beeding Brooks and two at Bexhill on the 22nd, just three days earlier than the 10-year average last date. Observers at Beachy Head remarked that none was recorded all year, the fourth spring running with no records. During the early year SWBS, 582 birds were recorded from 46 (35%) 1-km squares with a maximum of 83 on 6 Feb at Danehill.

One on Ashdown Forest on 27 Sep heralded the return migration, just one day earlier than the 10-year average date, followed by one at Pulborough Brooks on 4 Oct and two at Horsham on the 7th. However, the main influx was not noted until nearly two weeks later although numbers were small; the first significant count was of 87 at Fernhurst on 28 Oct. But then 604 birds flew west in 2½ hours on Ashdown Forest on 30 Oct as did 80 at Battle and 63 at Brightling Park. The largest counts in November were 136 at Fernhurst on the 18th, 100 at The Burgh (Burpham) on the 25th and 500 at Beeding Brooks on the 26th and there were five other counts between 50 and 76. In December, there was an increase in numbers with 15 counts of 50 or more, including 200 at Pevensey Levels on the 9th, 100 at Uckfield on the 22nd, 500 at Rye Foreign on the 22nd and 115 at Northiam on the 30th. The total second period count was only 77% of the 10-year average. During the late year SWBS a total of 1164 Fieldfares was recorded from 57 (35%) 1-km squares with a maximum count of 330 on 28 Dec at Rye Foreign. [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 367 tetrads (40%), biased to the west, during the year. Numbers in the first winter period were average due to a poor March. During the early year SWBS, 1266 birds were encountered in 59 (45%) of surveyed 1-km squares with a maximum count of 165 on 8 Feb at



Redwing, Battle, December 2017 (David Gardiner)

Cocking. During the GBW Redwings were recorded in 32 (14%) participating gardens during the first quarter whilst in the fourth quarter the species was recorded in 50 (24%) gardens. The second winter period count was 60% above average and was one of the best in the last twelve years. The approximate minimum monthly totals in the west and east sides of Sussex were as follows.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3800	3773	858	22	1		1	2771	2170	3166
West of TQ30	2164	2813	426	11	0		1	1250	1188	1593
East of TQ30	1636	960	432	11	1		0	1521	982	1573

In the first winter period, a typical 16 records of 100 or more birds were received from across the county, including peaks of 500 at Kneppmill Pond on 14 Feb, 350 at Cuckfield on the 10th, 250 at East Lavington on 13 Jan and 200 at The Burgh (Burpham), Pulborough Brooks and Ticehurst. The only excitement in March was 80 at Sidlesham on the 1st, thereafter numbers declined to a final record on the 26th with records from just three dates in April to the 10th. A solitary straggler was found at Bewl Water on 2 May, 19 days later than the 10-year average latest bird of 13 Apr and the latest since 3 May 2006 and 13 May 1989 (and contrasting with last year's latest on 31 Mar).

A solitary returning bird was seen at Pagham Hbr on 25 Sep, six days later than the 10-year average date. The next record was of one at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 1 Oct followed by four records on 7 Oct, included ten on Ashdown Forest, six at Owlbeech Wood Reserve (Horsham) and three at Pulborough Brooks. A steady flow followed with occasional dozens and 50s until the first 100 was reported from Paddockhurst (Worth) on 20 Oct, becoming 150 there and also at Fernhurst and Pulborough a week later before 286 were counted on Ashdown Forest on the 29th and 375 at Brightling Park on the 30th. As the month ended another 226 were recorded at Warnham LNR making eight counts of 100 birds. In November, the highest of five 100s was 130 at Pulborough Brooks on the 18th whilst in December observers witnessed 100s at four sites with a maximum of 150 at Catsfield on the 2nd. During the late year SWBS, 1429 birds were recorded in 51% of the 161 1-km squares surveyed with the maximum count being the 150 at Catsfield. [JHW]

Song Thrush*Turdus philomelos*

Very common but decreasing resident and partial migrant; common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red list species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 575 tetrads (63%) widely distributed across the county. GBW participants recorded the species in 188 (78%) gardens through the year. During the early year SWBS, 329 individuals were encountered in 81% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed. During the first quarter, there were 16 counts of ten birds or more, almost all in January (12 of 16) and on wetlands or heaths, with high counts of 21 at Beeding Brooks on the 3 Jan and 20 at Streat on the 20th while at Hastings CP the 15 recorded were described as a cold weather influx.

During the BBS, Song Thrushes were encountered in 149 (87%) of surveyed 1-km squares with a maximum count of 29 on 14 Apr at Balcombe. Breeding was confirmed in 31 tetrads and was probable in a further 21. Food carrying was observed on 8 Apr at Arundel WWT and also at Brighton Wild Park the next day, along with nest building there, and the last of 27 reports was on 22 Jul at Pulborough Brooks. The first fledgling was seen on 11 Apr at Mountfield and others were reported from 16 sites, late instances including a just-fledged bird on 10 Aug at Troutbridge (Eridge) and two juveniles begging food at West Chiltington on 18 Sep. Surveys of various reserves found the presence of 27 pairs.

Twelve birds recorded on 25 Sep on the Downs (R Adur to A24) possibly represented the start of an autumn migration. During the autumn, of 25 records of ten or more, 19 were from coastal sites; the highest count was of at least 50 amongst a flock of Redwings over Brighton Wild Park on 30 Oct while, during the migration watching at Hastings a total of 415 birds were recorded on 27 dates between 7 Sep and 9 Nov with a peak of 99 on 23 Oct and other counts of 43, 39 and 47 that month. Eight double-figure counts in November included 18 at Weir Wood Res on the 19th and the highest of five double figure counts in December (a noticeable reduction in larger numbers) was 25 on the water meadows at Arundel on the 12th. During the late year SWBS, 181 birds were encountered in 85 (53%) of 1-km squares surveyed, a marked drop in recorded frequency compared with results from other surveys.

Eight individuals, considered to be of the continental race, were ringed at Beachy Head on six dates between 10 Sep and 2 Nov. [JHW]

Mistle Thrush*Turdus viscivorus*

Common resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Mistle Thrushes were recorded from more than 341 tetrads (38%) spread across the county. While the first winter period count was average there was a significant increase in autumn sightings. During the early year SWBS, the species was encountered in 27 (21%) of surveyed 1-km squares with a maximum count of seven on 5 Feb at Petworth Park. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of Birds	168	162	147	247	129	115	93	72	117	252	149	133

March and April counts were higher than normal but those in May and June were correspondingly lower. Few counts exceeded five in the first period and only a report of 14 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 2 Apr is significant. During the BBS, Mistle Thrushes were encountered in 23% of the 338

surveys with a maximum of eight on 3 Jun at Petworth Park. Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and probable in a further 27. Territorial behaviour was reported 15 times from 19 Jan, and singing 62 times, while nest building was noted at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on 14 Feb followed by agitated adults at Selsey on 17 Mar and Sheffield Park on the 19th. Tangible evidence of breeding came with food carrying at Bewl Water on 10 Apr and on four other dates in April. A pair was feeding two young at the University of Sussex on 13 Apr and there were three young at Arundel WWT on the 15th and one being fed at Ladies Mile LNR on the 17th. During the GBW, the species was recorded in 44 (18%) of participating gardens during the year.

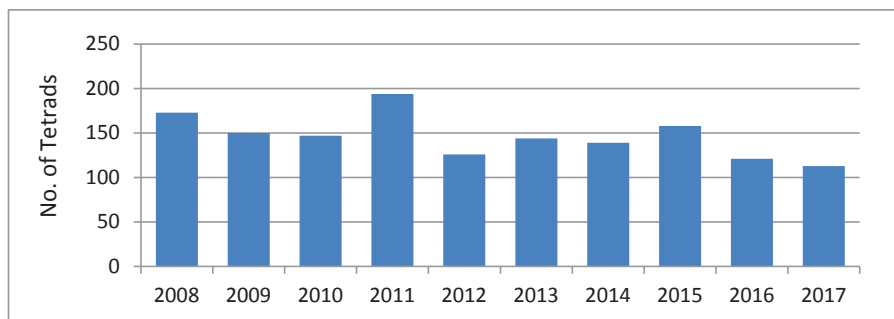
Autumn flocks built up from 14 (feeding on rowan berries) at St Leonards Forest on 10 Jul through 26 at Weir Wood Res on 27 Aug and 16 at the Kneppmill Pond on 10 Sep to 40 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 7 Oct on old yew, and 20 at both Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the 13th and Paddockhurst on the 20th. The second winter peak counts were, contrastingly, only 15 at Beckley on 16 Nov and ten at Faygate on 10 Dec. During the late year SWBS, the species was encountered in 19% of the 161 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of six on 2 Dec at West Lavington (Midhurst). [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 112 tetrads (12%) in 2017, down from last year's figure of 121, a decline of 29% on the 2015 figure and of 24% on the average for the past ten years of 147, suggesting a continuing decline in the fortunes of this species, as shown in the chart below.



The number of tetrads in which Spotted Flycatcher was recorded, 2008 - 2017

The first sighting of the year was on 27 Apr near Arundel, one day later than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by one on 2 May at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and at Rye Hbr on the 6th. Thereafter, sightings were recorded throughout May on an almost daily basis, mostly as ones but with highest counts of four at Beachy Head on the 8th and at Petworth Park on the 24th. Sightings continued throughout June with four again at Petworth Park on the 3rd and five at Ifold on the 13th.

During the BBS this species was recorded in only five (2.9%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable in a further four (including one site where seven birds were seen feeding on 20 Aug, suggestive of a family party, and two pairs in Petworth

Park). A pair was recorded on Ashdown Forest on 15 May with one bird entering a nest hole. A nest with eggs was recorded on 7 Jun at Ambersham Common and a nest in a silver birch held two young on 3 Jul on Ashdown Forest. On 10 Jul a pair was sighted at Handcross carrying food to a hidden nest where they had first been spotted on 4 Jun in an area of successful breeding in 2016. Two juveniles were recorded with an adult at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Jul.

Birds were observed throughout August. The highest counts recorded were c.25 at Kingley Vale on the 26th, 15 at Rackham Hill the same day, c.13 on downland between the R Adur and A24 on the 29th and the highest day count at Beachy Head of nine on the 31st while counts of between four and eight were recorded at several sites. Birds were recorded on a daily basis during September although frequency declined towards the 30th. Most records were of ones or twos but there were several of more with the highest count being eight at Church Norton on the 6th.

A total of 60 were recorded by the Hastings Migration Watch team between 8 Aug and 3 Oct with a maximum of 20 on 31 Aug. Sightings tailed off rapidly in October with the last record of the year being at Arundel on the 8th, three days earlier than the 10-year average date. [TS, JAH]

Robin

Erithacus rubecula

Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.

Robins were noted in 654 tetrads (72%) in 2017, although fewer than 2016 this continuing the upward trend of recording in the past few years, and approaching the 745 of 2011.

In the GBW Robins were found in nearly 100% of participating gardens and during the shorter watches for the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch they were recorded in 88% of participating West Sussex gardens and in 87% in East Sussex; ranking sixth species overall. During the early year SWBS, a total of 1406 birds were recorded (cf 1119 in 2016 and 1351 in 2015); as in 2016 Robins were present in 100% of the squares surveyed. The maximum count was of 29 in the Langley Green area of Crawley on 8 Jan. In all there were 224 double figure counts in the first three months of the year.

Breeding was confirmed in 55 tetrads and probable in 26 (cf 51 and 45 in 2016). A pair was nest building at Mewsbrook Park (Rustington) on 6 Feb, and a bird took time off from feeding on nyger seeds to investigate a nest box in urban Brighton on 11 Feb. On 22 Feb two males postured in front of a female at Angmering, and at least a dozen were singing in Patcham by 04.00 on 12 Mar. Successful breeding was suggested by birds carrying food at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 8 Apr and at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) and Cadborough (Rye) the next day. Fledged young were widely noted from 17 Apr (14 Apr in 2016). Post-juvenile moult displayed by a bird at Arundel WWT on 28 May suggested an early hatching date; the next such record was in Dyke Road Park (Brighton) on 10 Jun.

During the BBS birds were found in 96% of the 338 surveys and 99% of the 172 1-km squares, with Nutley again proving a fertile location for surveyors; 34 were counted in TQ4326, a largely wooded square south-west of the village, and the village itself yielded 30. Near Slinfold 32 were along the Downs Link. In all there were 110 double figure counts from 78 squares (cf 126 from 87 squares in 2016). There were 21 pairs recorded during the breeding season survey at Pagham Hbr (cf 26 in 2016). Ten point counts in Worthlodge Forest (Crawley) on 2 Apr suggested the presence of 33 territories; on 23 Apr only 18 were detected and 44 birds were counted in Southleigh Forest (Emsworth) on 2 May.

In the autumn, there were 58 double figure counts in September and October with a high of 63

found at Cliff End (Pett) on 12 Sep, outdoing the 2016 maximum there of 58. During the late year SWBS, Robins were logged in 95% of the 161 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 23 in Burgess Hill on 15 Nov. In the second winter period there were 67 double figure counts with a high of 25 around Beachy Head on 15 Nov. [CB]

Bluethroat

Luscinia svecica

Very scarce spring and autumn visitor; Schedule 1 species.

A male of the white-spotted race *L.s cyanecula* was photographed along the mill stream west of Woods Mill (Small Dole) on 19 Apr (PB). Despite an extensive search the following day, it could not be relocated.

The county total now stands at 141, of which only 13 have been this century including the last spring record in 2004 (4 Apr, Church Norton). The previous white-spotted male was in 1998 (29 Mar, Bexhill). [PJ]

Common Nightingale

Luscinia megarhynchos

Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

There were records from 97 tetrads (11%) in 2017 (91 in 2016, 123 in 2015, 117 in 2014 and 118 in 2013).

The first bird was found at Plumpton on 6 Apr, very close to the 10-year average arrival date of 5 Apr. As usual, while there were a few birds on or near the coast in the succeeding days (e.g. Pagham Hbr and Cuckmere Haven), most appeared at traditional sites: a bird was singing at Barcombe Cross on 11 Apr and three were singing nearby along an old railway track on the 15th. Seven were singing around Darwell Res on 14 Apr. Regular surveying confirmed the presence of good numbers on the Knepp Estate (12 singing on 13 May) and along the R Arun, south west of Billingshurst (where, on 14 May, there were at least five singing within 100m of Lordings Lock (Wey and Arun Canal). Four were singing in Brede High Wood on 7 May, four at Woods Mill LNR on the 12th and five at Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on the 13th, and four at Ebernoe Common on the 21st. Up to ten were recorded at Shortland Copse (Plaistow) on several dates between 24 Apr and 21 May.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads and probable in 16. Single birds were found at various sites across the county. Six were recorded singing around Gospel Green (Haslemere) early in May; such records may well represent regular breeding locations from which information is not available for every year, and this species has been recorded in this area in previous years. Regular surveys in the area between Henfield and the A23 suggested that some birds moved around; two heard near Twineham Church on 14 May had not been recorded during surveys there on 23 Apr or 7 May, and had very likely relocated locally. In the Knepp Estate Southern Block (473h) a structured survey was carried out and recorded 19 Nightingale territories. Although no structured survey was carried out in the other blocks, two territories were recorded in the Middle Block (280h) on other biological monitoring visits and none in the Northern Block (237h).

Records from 10-km squares TQ01, TQ02, TQ11 and TQ12 (all in West Sussex) continued to dominate, though this year saw a decrease in records from TQ01(which includes Pulborough Brooks) from 200 to 133. While this does not necessarily indicate a reduced presence, it is salutary to note that while the highest count for Pulborough Brooks was 12 in 2016, it was only four in 2017.

There were 50 records from June compared to 79 in 2016. One was croaking on the Knepp Estate on the 20th, but one (surely not paired) was still in song at Oreham Common (Henfield) on the 25th. There were only four records in July. Two migrants were trapped at Pett Level on 1 Aug and the first for the Beachy Head area was in Whitbread Hollow on the 5th. There were three September records, one at Whitbread Hollow and one at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), both on the 2nd. The last was at Pagham Hbr on the 9th close to the ten-year average last date of the 12 Sep). [CB]

Pied Flycatcher

Ficedula hypoleuca

Scarce passage migrant: more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Pied Flycatchers were recorded in 22 tetrads in 2017, down slightly on last year's figure and about two thirds the figures for 2013-2015 (32) suggesting a decline in the numbers of this species. Most of the sightings were from well watched coastal sites. The first record was of a male on 5 Apr at Beachy Head, six days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date of 13 Apr.

During spring this species was recorded on 11 dates between 5 Apr and 2 May and then on 25 May, four of which were at Beachy Head with single records from Selsey, Midhurst, Pulborough Brooks, Washington and the Cuckmere Valley.

Return migration began with a sighting at Beachy Head on 11 Aug. Most other sightings in August were coastal except for single birds at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Aug, Westmeston on the 25th and Ladywell (Coombes) on the 27th. In September, single birds were noted at Selsey, Pagham Hbr, Tortington (Arundel), Woods Mill LNR, Lewes and Beachy Head. In addition 15 were recorded at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) during the autumn period. The last sightings were all on 2 Oct at Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks and Brooklands (Worthing), slightly later than the 10-year average date of 27 Sep. [TS, JAH]

Red-breasted Flycatcher

Ficedula parva

Rare autumn vagrant.

For the second year running, the only record was of one at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 14-15 Oct (MEC, RHC). A typical record bringing the county total to 35, of which 11 have been this century. All but one (April 1948) have been in autumn. [PJ]

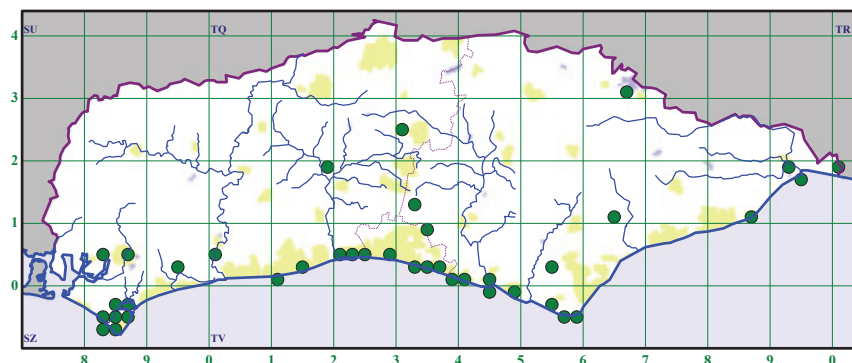
Black Redstart

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 39 tetrads as shown below, fewer than the 61 in 2016; the majority of records were from coastal sites, with only seven from inland. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly totals	11	12	30	10	2	2	2	1	-	8	11	1
10-year averages	14	11	28	21	3	1	2	1	3	49	28	12



For the first three months, totals were comparable with the 10-year averages, but were significantly lower for the last three months of the year; it had obviously been a poor autumn migration.

One at both Selsey Bill and Peacehaven on 2 Jan were birds which had been in the county since late 2016. Apart from two at Medmerry on 7 Jan and at Telscombe Cliffs and Brighton on 16 Feb all the January and February records involved one bird. Numbers increased in March as spring migrants passed through, the highest day count being four at Telscombe Cliffs on 13 Mar, otherwise most records were again of one. The records furthest from the coast were from Partridge Green on 14 Feb, the University of Sussex on 13 Mar, Ticehurst on 1 Apr and Cuckfield on the 5th.

At Beachy Head one was recorded singing on several dates in April whilst in May a male occupied one site for a week and a pair was recorded at another location; an occupied nest was found there on 14 Jun. Whether the juvenile seen on 26 Aug was hatched locally can only be conjecture. Elsewhere in late spring and summer singles were at Hastings CP on 23 May, Pagham Hbr on 17 Jun, Newhaven on 13 Jul and Lullington Heath on 17 Jul.

There were no sightings in September. The first autumn migrant was seen at Beachy Head on 14 Oct, followed by single birds at seven other coastal sites in the month. Numbers in October were much lower than the 10-year average and were the lowest this century, the previous low having been 11 in 2003, 06 and 07. A single inland sighting was at Ditchling Beacon on 17 Oct. Numbers in November were also low; the only inland record for the month was of one at Herstmonceux Castle on the 13th. The only record for December was one at West Beach (Newhaven) on the 24th. It had been an unusually poor late-year migration with almost no wintering birds. [JAH]

Common Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 87 tetrads (9.5%); although this was a reduction on the figures for the previous four years it was, nevertheless, almost equal to the 10-year average of 84 which does not confirm that records of this species are declining, as was intimated in last year's report.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	10-year average
No. of tetrads	65	82	68	79	76	82	97	90	105	97	84

The first birds of the year were two on Ashdown Forest on 15 Mar, rather earlier than the 10-year average date of 31 Mar. This was followed by one at Southerham (Lewes) on the 27th and another at

Iping Common on the 31st. Thereafter they were recorded at some 24 sites between Iping Common and Beachy Head (where it was recorded on 13 dates in April) and particularly at various sites within Ashdown Forest, where the highest count was eight at Old Lodge LNR on 12 Apr. In May, this species was recorded on an almost daily basis with 24 (47%) of records being from Ashdown Forest, the species' stronghold in Sussex, with a peak count at Pippingford Park of 23 on 13 May.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads (three on Ashdown Forest compared with five in 2016) and was probable in a further 11. The first nest with eggs was noted on 17 May and the first fledged young on 10 Jun. During the WHBBS only 12 pairs or territories were recorded (see page 210) compared with counts of 10, 8, 24 and 16 for the years 2013 – 2016 respectively, illustrating the fluctuating success of this breeding species.

During the Hastings Migration Watch 47 birds were recorded on 15 dates between 13 Aug and 15 Sep, with a maximum count of nine on 24 Aug. The other high counts during August were of 12 at Beachy Head on the 24th, 13 there on the 26th and 14 on the 27th. Most records in September were of single individuals but with six at Hastings on the 9th. The last two, and the only October records were of three at Steyning Round Hill on the 6th and one at Cuckmere Haven on the 27th, two days later than the 10-year average departure date. [JAH]

Blue Rock Thrush

Monticola solitarius

Very rare vagrant

A male found on the morning of 6 Apr on the stone walls at Belle Tout (Beachy Head) (AR, mo) quickly attracted many admirers, who were able to enjoy this first for Sussex throughout the day. It could not be relocated the next day. First found at Stow-on-the-Wold in Gloucestershire in December 2016, this individual left its wintering site on 4 Apr before, incredibly, being refound at Beachy Head. The record has been accepted by BBRC. An account by the finder is on page 215 of this report. [MM]

Whinchat

Saxicola rubetra

Fairly common passage migrant. Rare summer visitor, last bred in 1999. Very rare in winter. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Whinchats were recorded in 66 tetrads (7.2%) compared with 75 in 2016, 98 in 2015 and 98 in 2014 with, as usual, a strong bias towards the coast. The approximate monthly numbers compared with the 10-year average 2007 to 2016 and the number of days on which they were recorded this year are shown below.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
No of birds	-	16	9	1	8	211	237	21	1
10-year average	<1	16	22	1	5	205	315	26	<1
No of days	0	11	7	1	7	23	29	9	1

The first was at Rye Hbr on 7 Apr, one day later than the 10-year average arrival date and six days earlier than in 2016. The next two were ten days later at Rye Hbr and Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) thereafter birds were seen almost daily in April but only on seven days in May. The number seen in May was fewer than the 10-year average and apart from four at Medmerry on 23 Apr, three at Pagham Hbr on 24 Apr and two at Beachy Head on 22 Apr involved just single birds. Furthermore

all the records in April and May were from coastal or near coastal locations. The last spring record was one at Pevensey Levels on the 4 Jun, seen during a BBS. There were no breeding records.

The first returning bird was at Medmerry on the 9 Jul. The total count for September was lower than the 10-year averages but the other months were similar. The highest daily total for August was 20 at Beachy Head on the 27th (and 18 the day before). Tens were at Medmerry on the 25th and at Beachy Head on the 29th and 31st. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded 37 birds, with a peak of nine on 9 Sep, the highest count of the month. The highest count elsewhere was eight at Medmerry on the 13th. There were 11 inland locations where Whinchats were seen in August and September with a high count of seven at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Oct.

Numbers dropped in October but there were three at Oxtedde Bottom (Lewes) on the 9th and at Pagham Hbr on the 14th. The last record was one at Flansham (Bognor Regis) on 1 Nov, the first Nov record since 2013 and five days later than the 10-year average departure date of 27 Oct. [GDE]

Eurasian Stonechat

Saxicola rubicola

Fairly common resident and partial migrant.

The minimum monthly totals and the number of days on which Stonechats were recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No.of birds	291	186	312	267	332	264	288	459	580	909	407	308
No.of days	30	26	29	29	31	28	27	29	30	30	29	27

Birds were recorded in 195 tetrads (21%), a small reduction on the 205 in 2016, which is not surprising as there was a Stonechat survey undertaken that year and coverage was very good. There were only 20 days out of a possible 365 when no Stonechats were recorded. As in 2016 very high numbers were recorded in almost every month.

The highest counts in the first winter period were 15 at Beachy Head on 13 Mar (and 11 there the next day). There were two counts of ten, at Medmerry on 5 Jan and Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 27 Mar and one of eight at Thorney Island on 2 Jan. During the early year SWBS 17 were recorded in 8.4% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and was probable in 33. The first confirmed breeding was of parents carrying food on 5 Apr at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest), a month earlier than last year. Fledged young were first noted on 23 Apr at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) and continued to be recorded until 17 Sep, later than last year. There were many days during the breeding season when more than 20 birds were recorded from various Ashdown Forest locations but the highest numbers at specific sites were 18 at Ellisons Pond on 26 May, 16 at Gills Lap on 12 Jun and 14 at Ashdown Res on 21 Jul and on the West Sussex Commons the high was 13 at Iping Common on 25 Jun. The post breeding numbers in the table above indicate a good breeding season.

During the late summer period the highest daily counts were 20 at Beachy Head on 20 Aug and in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 27 Aug. Moving into later autumn there were still double figure counts on Ashdown Forest and Iping Common. The last big count on Ashdown Forest was 17 at Old Lodge LNR on 28 Sep.

The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded total of 323 birds, more than three times as many as in 2016, between 10 Sep and 5 Nov with a high of 37 on 12 Oct at various locations in the Hastings area. As well as further high counts from Hastings, double figure counts during the autumn came from Thorney Island, Medmerry, Pulborough Brooks, Beachy Head and Rye Hbr.

The highest counts in November were 14 at Hastings on 5 Nov and 12 were at Pagham Hbr on 1 Nov and Thorney Island on the 8th. In December six were recorded at six locations and only a few records from Ashdown Forest. In the late year SWBS 46 birds were recorded from 12% of the 161 1-km squares surveyed. [GDE, MJC]

Northern Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe

Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; very rare in mid- winter.

Northern Wheatears were recorded in 128 tetrads (14%) (just five fewer than in 2016), predominantly coastal or near coastal, along the river valleys and on downland. The minimum 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	212	484	105	74	20	851	725	139	1
No of days	20	28	20	11	13	29	28	24	1

Spring arrival of Wheatears started one day later than the 10-year average arrival date of 5 Mar, with a single bird at Rye Hbr on the 6th. This was followed by at least two at the same location the following day and at least two more on the 9th. The arrival of Wheatears at other sites commenced on 10 Mar when one was seen at Beachy Head. Individuals were recorded at a number of coastal sites on 12 Mar, when the first was also seen inland at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton). Wheatears were recorded on most of the remaining days in March, with two counts of eleven at Goring Gap on the 11th and again on the 17th, followed by a count of eight at Selsey Bill on the 30th. Passage continued strongly during April, with eight records in double figures including counts of ten at Beachy Head on the 10th and at Church Norton on the 14th, 15th and 21st. On 22 Apr there were 15 at Church Norton and 16 at Medmerly, although some of these could have involved the same birds. Twenty were recorded during a BBS at Beachy Head on 28 Apr and 11 were also at Beachy Head on the following day. In May the highest counts occurred at Ovingdean, where 13 were recorded the 4th and at Selsey Bill, where six were seen on the 7th.

At least ten breeding territories were identified at Rye Hbr, with fledged broods recorded from four locations within the reserve. Elsewhere the only June records involved a singing male on the cliff edge at Beachy Head on 13 Jun and one at Pagham Hbr, incidentally on the same date.

The first sign of autumn passage was at Beachy Head, where one was seen on 24 Jul. The peak autumn passage of 103 occurred on 1 Sep. The largest counts in the autumn were 30 at Medmerly on 13 Aug, 30 at Thorney Island on 27 Aug, 25 there on 1 Sep and 25 at Hastings on 2 Sep. Additionally there were 22 at Rye Hbr on 8 Aug, 22 at Beachy Head on 2 Sep and two counts of 20 at Thorney Island on 20 Aug and at Beachy Head on 26 Aug. As expected the highest counts in October occurred at the beginning of the month with six at Pagham Hbr on the 2nd and at Rye Hbr and Medmerly on the 3rd. The Hastings Migration Watch team recorded 105 Wheatears between 23 Aug and 23 Oct. Autumn migration was all but over by the end of October, with the only November record of one at Goring Gap on the 4th; this 10 days earlier than the 10-year average departure date.

2017 was a very good year for the Greenland Wheatear subspecies, *O.o.leucorhoa*, with four spring records, all from Beachy Head. One on 21 Apr was followed by three the next day. The peak date was 28 Apr when an estimate of no less than fifteen recorded, followed by six on 4 May. There have now been 65 spring records of this subspecies since 1949 (40 this century) and 28 autumn records (14 this century). [GO]

House Sparrow*Passer domesticus*

Very common but possibly declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

House Sparrows were recorded in 505 tetrads (55%) during the year. During the early year SWBS, 1086 were recorded in 83 (63%) of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 113 on 3 Jan at Westbourne Common. During the first quarter, there were 27 double-figure counts of 30 or more with a maximum of 70 on 20 Feb at Broadbridge Heath.

During the GBW House Sparrows were recorded in 199 (83%) of participating gardens. During the BBS, 234 House Sparrows were found in 69% of the 338 surveys, with a maximum of 106 on 2 Jun at Southwick. Breeding was confirmed in 42 tetrads and probable in a further 40. Although nest building activity was first noted on 24 Feb at Ridgewood (Uckfield) the first record of courtship and display was on 9 Mar at High Cross Fm (Uckfield). Adults were seen using a nest site on 2 Apr, a nest with young noted on the 15th at Portslade but the first fledglings were not recorded until 6 May at West Tarring (Worthing). At Broadwater (Worthing) on 23 Aug, begging young of a third brood were seen. The only foodstuffs noted was a recently harvested maize crop being used by a large flock on 29 Oct at Newick WTW.

Throughout April and May surveyors participating in the Brighton and Hove House Sparrows Project completed comprehensive surveys of 37 1-km squares in the city and recorded 2275 House Sparrows from 506 detailed locations with the highest count being 32 at a house in Woodingdean.

Good numbers were still in evidence during the late spring/summer months when 46 counts of 30 or more were recorded with highs of 106 at Southwick on 2 Jun and 100 at Broadbridge Heath and East Chidham on 14 Jun and 25 Aug respectively.

During the autumn there were 32 double-figure counts of 30 or more with a maximum of 100 at Medmerry. In the final two months of the year, there were 25 double-figure counts of 30 or more with a maximum of 76 at Ridgewood (Uckfield). During the late year SWBS, 1120 House Sparrows were encountered in 57% of the 161 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 143 on 9 Nov at Westbourne Common again.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, c.64% of the sites where the highest counts were recorded were urban or suburban. [ACG]

Tree Sparrow*Passer montanus*

Much declined and now very scarce resident; scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Tree Sparrows were recorded in only nine tetrads (1.0%) this year, down on 14 last year. The first sighting, on the first day of the year, was of a single Tree Sparrow amongst House Sparrows in a garden at Bodle Street Green (north of Herstmonceux). As usual most sightings were from either Pevensey Levels or the Sussex part of Romney Marsh which hold the majority of this species, now very scarce in the county.

The largest flock seen this year was of 35 birds at Broomhill Level on 20th January. Birds were also recorded at Scotney GP with a flock of thirty recorded on both 30 Jan and 24 Aug. Breeding was suspected, but not confirmed, at East Guldeford Level where the species 'is always around'.

There was a 'present only' record from Rye Hbr on 13 May and a particularly interesting record

from the Brede Valley on 21 Jun, where Tree Sparrows were once common, of an adult with three young, implying successful breeding. As last year, the species was recorded by the migration watchers at Hastings with two sighted on 15 Sep and ones on 6 and 15 Oct. The final record of 20 at East Guldeford Level on 3 Dec was described as a record count.

Breeding was again confirmed at the Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserve on Pevensey Levels although only two nest boxes were used this year and no large flocks were seen.

The only record from West Sussex was one photographed in Bread Lane horse paddock at Climping Gap on 21 Aug. [RAB]

Dunnock

Prunella modularis

Very common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

There were records from 572 tetrads (63%) in 2017, comparable to the 593 of 2016 and the 565 of 2015. In the GBW birds were present in 95% of participating gardens yet in the one hour period for the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch the species was only recorded in 44% and 46% of gardens in West and East Sussex respectively.

A bird was singing in Lewes on 3 Jan and a pair was characteristically active at Loxwood on the 22nd. In the first three months of the year, there were 21 double figure counts (cf. 32 in 2016) with a maximum of 31 at Cliff End (Pett) on 17 Mar. Interestingly, only 15 had been detected there on 24 Feb. During the early year SWBS, 388 Dunnocks were recorded in (83%) of 131 1-km squares with a maximum of 14 in Buxted, compared with the 312 in 79% of 117 squares in 2016.

A pair was nest building in a front garden in Patcham on 3 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads and probable in 43, very similar figures to those of recent years. Birds were seen carrying food at Arundel WWT on 8 Apr and at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) the next day and the first fledged young were at Patcham and at Haywards Heath on the 25th (3 May was the first date in 2016). There were 31 territories at Rye Hbr (cf 36 in 2016); 23 pairs at Pagham Hbr (cf 29, 17 and 29 in the preceding three years) and eight pairs at Medmerry.

During the BBS 598 Dunnocks were found in 74% of the 338 surveys and 146 (85%) of the 172 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 19 at Nutley on 24 Apr.

During the late year SWBS, 327 were encountered in 101 (63%) of the 161 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 21 on the southern slopes of Blackdown on 24 Nov compared with the 271 birds counted in 2016 and 197 in 2015. There were seven double figures counts in the last three months of the year (cf 14 in 2016). The SWBS counts at both ends of the year would seem to underline the currently flourishing state of the Dunnock population.

Several observers noted birds in insect-rich gorse and a number mentioned feeders; presumably these are birds on the ground snapping up unconsidered trifles, but it would be interesting to know if any Dunnocks have mastered the knack of holding on to feeders. [CB]

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 74 (8.1%) tetrads (78 in 2016 and 81 in 2015). The first spring migrant was seen at Newick WTW on 25 Mar, one day earlier than the 10-year average arrival date

of 26 Mar. Six days later three were reported at Scotney GP with further sightings over the next few days at Medmerry, Beachy Head and Rye Hbr. Migrants continued to arrive throughout April and early May. At Selsey Bill migrants were first seen arriving on 14 Apr. Sixteen flew north at Beachy Head on 17 Apr and a week later on the 24th eight were seen at East Guldeford Level, including singing males. On 17 May there were 17 at Jurys Gap, also including singing males, and on 24 May a total of 37 was counted at various locations on Broomhill Level, most in a field of oilseed rape. By 16 Jun there were 50 at Broomhill Level and these included fledged birds, providing the first of three confirmed breeding records, all in East Sussex. At Cadborough (Rye) on 20 Jun adult birds were observed carrying food or a faecal sac, and two fledglings were seen on 4 Jul at East Guldeford Level. There were two tetrads with probable breeding, also in East Sussex. A more detailed account of the species in East Sussex is given in the paper on pages 263-266.

Autumn movement was probably first noted by the presence of a bird at Sidlesham Ferry on 21 Jul. The following month Yellow Wagtails were noted at more locations along the coast, with 12 at Pett Level on the 5th, one at Medmerry on the 8th and ten at Seaford Head on the 14th. Numbers began to build through August and September, with a peak count in the east of 250 at Rye Hbr on the 25th. On the same day 110 E were noted at Seaford Head. On 30 dates between 14 Aug and 29 Sep migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 490 birds, with a high count of 149 on 9 Sep. At Goring Gap 155 were counted flying over on 26 Aug, with a number of birds landing on the beach to forage before continuing. On four dates between 19 and 28 Aug a total of 105 flew over Selsey Bill with a high count of 82 E on the 27th. On 13 Sep a large flock of 120 was observed around cattle in fields at Halsey's Fm (Sidlesham), but the highest count was 600 at Climping Gap on 29 Aug. when the observer noted an impressive passage of birds, all moving west to east at regular intervals through arable fields north of Long Wood, with some flying up to perch on the overhead power lines before moving off east in groups.



"Channel" Wagtail, Pagham Harbour, April 2017 (Adam Bowley)

Smaller numbers were recorded away from the coast. On 9 Sep 12 were counted at Arlington Res, and the next day there were six at Pulborough Brooks. Twenty were observed feeding in pasture at New Buildings Fm (Tilgate) on 12 Sep and on the 15th there were seven at Brantridge Forest (Balcombe). Small numbers were also recorded from downland sites in September including Chantry Hill (Storrington), Cissbury and Burnthouse Bostal (Keymer). After September numbers dropped with only five records in October. The last bird seen was at Winchelsea Beach on 14 Oct, 11 days earlier than in 2016, and two weeks earlier than the 10-year average. [CBu]

A male 'Channel' Wagtail (a hybrid between Blue-headed and Yellow Wagtail M.f. *flava* x *flavissima*) was at Pagham Hbr on 17 Apr feeding in the horse paddocks on the North Wall (OM, et al.). This would appear to be the fourth 'Channel' Wagtail recorded in Sussex following two at Beachy Head on 6 May 2012 and one in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 21 Mar 2016. It is possible that some past county records of Blue-headed Wagtail were this form. [PJ]

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Grey Wagtails were recorded in 244 tetrads (27%), a small decrease on the 251 in 2016. The only location where birds were recorded in every month was at Warnham LNR, but they were noted in 11 months of the year at Arundel WWT, Weir Wood Res and at Newick WTW. The highest congregation of birds in the early season was five at Bepton on 6 Feb. There were four at Dunford GP (Midhurst) on 7 Mar and Warnham LNR on 27 Mar and threes at four further locations.

Although Grey Wagtail is a passage migrant, spring migration can be difficult to detect and in 2017 there were no spring records that were suggestive of birds on migration.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads (eight in 2016), with probable breeding in a further 16. Nest building was first observed at Bedlands LNR (Burgess Hill) on 1 Apr and the first record of confirmed breeding was the sighting of an adult carrying food or a faecal sac at Broadstone Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 19 May, over two weeks later than the first confirmed breeding record in 2016. Fledglings were first seen at Bayham (Frant) on 31 May. The latest record of fledglings was from Arundel WWT on 28 Jun.

Between 24 Aug and 26 Oct the Hastings migration watch team recorded 89 birds over 23 dates, the maximum daily count being 14 W on 10 Sep. Seawatchers at Selsey Bill recorded a highest single count of 8 W on 9 Sep out of a monthly total of 31 (23 W and 8E), between 2 and 28 Sep.

In the late winter period there were regular records of one or two birds at sites throughout the county, with a high count of four at Pitsham (Midhurst) on 20 Dec. The species was recorded in small numbers in all the main surveys being found in 10% of 240 participating gardens in the GBW, 8 (6.1%) and 9 (5.6%) of the 1-km squares surveyed in the early and late year SWBS respectively and in 8 (4.6%) of surveyed BBS squares. [CBu]

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba yarrellii

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Pied Wagtails were found in 443 tetrads (49%) in 2017 (455 in 2016). On 2 Jan at Barcombe WTW there were 75, and 50 were seen on the settling beds at Newick WTW the same day. The largest gatherings were 500 at Sidlesham WTW on 22 Jan and the same number at nearby Porthole Fm on

19 Feb. Other large first winter period numbers were 80 at a reedbed roost in Offham (Arundel) on 10 Jan and during the SWBS 105 were counted at Battle on 23 Jan. Urban roosts included 75 near the Clock Tower (Brighton) on 20 Jan and 400 in the centre of Worthing on 8 Feb. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 36% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum count of 105 mentioned above. The species was recorded in 45% of the 240 participating GBW gardens throughout the year.

In the BBS Pied Wagtails were found in 70 (41%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads, the same as in 2016, with probable breeding in a further 8 (16 in 2016). Nest building was first observed on 15 Apr at Troutbeck (Eridge) and the first confirmed breeding was on 26 Apr at Hollingbury (Brighton) where a pair were observed carrying food near the Asda superstore. Fledglings were first reported from Barcombe Res on 15 May where two were seen with adults. The last report of confirmed breeding was two fledglings seen at Portslade on 6 Sep.

Larger congregations of birds began to be reported from early August with 30 at Rye Hbr on the 5th and 34 on the filter beds at Newick WTW the next day. A large flock of 60 was seen at Petworth on the 22nd. The Hastings Migration Watch team counted a total of 492 on 35 dates between 7 Sep and 6 Nov with the highest daily count being 80, mostly flying west, on 3 Oct. Through October a total of 747 were seen at Selsey Bill with a high count of 111 W on the 6th. On 14 Oct 149 birds were observed coming in to a heathland roost at Ashdown Ridge (Ashdown Forest) while a roost of 400 birds was counted in Brighton on the 22nd. Fifty were around the garage at Cross-In-Hand on 24 Oct.

During the late year SWBS Pied Wagtails were recorded in 39% of the 1611-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 42 on 25 Nov, once again in Battle. Late winter roosts included 90 in a reedbed at Arundel WWT on 4 Dec, and on the 14th at least 150 came in to roost at Burton MP before sundown. There were 50 back at Barcombe WTW by 28 Dec. No roost records were received from Gatwick Airport or the Hickstead Service Station for a second year so it may be that these roosts are no longer used.

There were approximately 21 White Wagtails (*M.a.alba*) recorded in 2017 from a total of 10 tetrads (17 in 2016). This was a reduction on the 35 birds from 2016 and 22 in 2015. The approximate monthly totals were:

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

The first recorded was one seen at Pulborough Brooks on 20 Feb. In March there were individuals at Widewater (Lancing) on the 13th and Newhaven on the 18th, and two were observed at Beachy Head on 17 Mar. A bird at Splash Point (Seaford) on 31 May was the last spring record. There were no breeding records in 2017. The first autumn bird was at Bells Yew Green (Frant) on 2 Sep. At Cuckmere Haven there were two on 3 Sep and four there on the 21st but all other autumn records were of single birds. [CBu]

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 271 tetrads (30%) (274 in 2016). During the first winter period the highest congregations were at Ashdown Ridge (Ashdown Forest) with a peak count of 123 seen going in to a heathland roost on 8 Jan. There were 80 at Bewl Water on 13 Jan and 50 at East Head

(Chichester) on 17 Jan. During the early year SWBS a total of 186 birds were recorded in 12% of the 131 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 31 at East Chiltington on 14 Jan.

Migration observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 2528 (2527 N) in March on 20 dates between the 2nd and 31st, with a peak count of 731 on the 24th. There were 135 at Pagham Spit on 26 Mar and 84 at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11th. In April numbers moving north at Selsey Bill were much lower, with 186 counted (185 N) on 13 dates between the 2nd and 22nd, however this was an increase on the 97 recorded there during April 2016.

During the BBS 75 were encountered, in 6.8% of the 338 surveys with a maximum of 11 on 22 May at Westmeston. Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable in a further 14. Nest building was first observed on 13 Apr at the University of Sussex and the first record of confirmed breeding was of adults carrying food or a faecal sac at Rye Hbr on 2 May. Adults were also seen carrying food or faecal sacs at Cuckmere Haven (6 May), Ashdown Forest (21 May and 14 Jun), Beeding Brooks (18 Jun) and Steep Down (Lancing) on 25 Jul, but the only record of fledglings seen was from Medmerry on 4 Jul when four were observed on the beach.

Larger groups began to be noted from 19 Jul when 40 were at Beachy Head. The following month there were 50 at Saltdean on 23 Aug and 100 at Beachy Head two days later on the 25th. Hastings Migration Watch team recorded a total of 5917 on 54 dates between 1 Sep and 6 Nov with a peak count of 700 W on 14 Sep. At Selsey Bill the monthly totals were 1342 in September and 1854 in October, with the largest single count being 223 W on 4 Oct. On the same date 800 were recorded at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), 500 were at Medmerry on 15 Sep and there were 400 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 23 Sep. There were 58 triple figure counts (40 in 2016) recorded from coastal sites in Sussex.

In the second winter period the highest count in November was 110 roosting in long grass at Poundgate (Ashdown Forest) on the 19th. In the late year SWBS 302 birds were recorded in 25% of 161 squares surveyed with a maximum count of 42 on 29 Nov at Chates Fm (Cowfold). The highest December count was 31 at Beeding Brooks on the 22nd, 30 were at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) the following day and 30 at Pulborough Brooks on the 17th. [CBu]

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 58 tetrads (6.4%) (compared with 54 in 2016) with well over half the sightings again being recorded on Ashdown Forest, the stronghold of the species in the county.

The first migrant of the year was a bird flushed from Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) on 3 Apr, three days later than the 10-year average arrival date for this species. At least two birds were seen the next day on Ashdown Forest, and then almost daily at various sites on Ashdown Forest up to the end of June, with a peak count of 13 at Old Lodge LNR on 25 May. In West Sussex the first record was one at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 15 Apr. Birds were also seen at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Apr and at Selsey and Medmerry on the 21st.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites, all on Ashdown Forest. Display was recorded from 15 Apr and the first confirmed breeding was of fledglings seen near Old Lodge LNR on 13 Jun. Birds probably bred in a further 20 tetrads in the county, primarily on Ashdown Forest but also five of the Wealden heaths, Ambersham Common, Blackdown (Fernhurst), Iping Common, Weavers Down (Liss) and Stedham Common. The incidental recording of this species during surveys for other

heathland species suggested a minimum of 45 pairs bred in the county (see page 249).

The first autumn migrant was a bird ringed at Ladywell (Coombes) on 6 Aug, followed a few days later by four at Beachy Head and one at Hastings. The Hastings migration watch team recorded 49 birds on 20 dates between 11 Aug and 3 Oct, with a peak count of seven on 25 Aug, while the day before at Beachy Head 19 had been counted, including a party of 12.

Numbers reduced from mid-September onwards and other than two birds at Hastings on 3 Oct all involved single birds. The final record of 2017 was one at Ladywell on 4 Oct, nearly two weeks earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [CBu]

Water Pipit

Anthus spinoletta

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

In the first winter period, there were single birds at Fishbourne Creek from 5 to 29 Jan (BGRI *et al.*) and Pett Level on 24 Feb (AP). At West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), a regular site for this species, there was one on 3, 22 and 24 Jan and 17 Feb (RK, SHL, JIM) and two on 30 Jan (AG) whilst at Crowhurst, another regular site, there were two on 22 Jan (DPR). Spring records were of a summer plumaged bird at Horse Eye Level from 24 to 26 Mar (CFB) and two at West Rise Marsh on 16 Apr, with one there the following day.

Up to eight were recorded at Crowhurst on five dates between 22 Oct and 10 Nov but the only other record for the latter part of the year was of one at Pagham Hbr on 31 Oct (AH). [PJ]



Water Pipit, Fishbourne Creek, January 2017 (Dorian Mason)

Rock Pipit*Anthus petrosus****Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.***

Rock Pipits were recorded in 48 (5.3%) tetrads (52 in 2016), all at coastal or near coastal locations. The highest count in the first winter period was 20 seen along the river in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 5 Jan with 18 there on 10 Feb; these were the only double figure counts. In West Sussex the highest first winter period counts were six at Fishbourne Creek on 6 and 21 Jan and six at East Head on 17 Jan. During the winters 2016/17 and 2017/18 this species was surveyed; the findings will be published in the 2018 Sussex Bird Report.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites (two in 2016) with probable breeding at a further three. A fledgling was seen at Rottingdean on 29 Jun and an adult carrying food was observed at Saltdean Cliffs the same day. Another bird carrying food was seen on 10 Jul at Beachy Head.

Autumn visitors added to the numbers with six seen moving west at Worthing on 26 Sep, and 11 recorded at Beachy Head on the 30th. The highest autumn counts were 16 at Newhaven on 13 Oct, 12 were seen there on the 21st and 12 also in the lower Ouse Valley on 5 Oct. Most second winter period records were from East Sussex.

Three records of the Scandinavian race *A.p. littoralis* were accepted. The first was a ringed bird seen on the cliffs at Peacehaven on 16 Feb (CJRB), then in March one was seen at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 12th (KBG) and another at Rye Hbr on the 15th (BJY). [CBu]

Chaffinch*Fringilla coelebs****Abundant resident; probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Chaffinches were recorded in 602 (66%) tetrads, slightly less than the 617 in 2016. They were recorded in 83% of participating gardens in the GBW during the year and in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch they were seen in 27% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 31% in East Sussex. In the early year SWBS they were encountered in 101 (77%) of the 131 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 25 at Cliff End (Pett) on 24 Feb. During the first winter period there were seven three-figure counts: 330 at Chilgrove on 14 Feb (and 200 there four days earlier), 300 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 6 Jan, 300 at Monkton on 19 Feb, 235 at Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) on 27 Jan, 220 at Handcross on 6 Feb and 100 at Lodge Hill Fm (West Dean) on 19 Feb. There were 103 double-figure counts from across the county.

Breeding was confirmed in only 14 tetrads and probable in another 39, comparable to recent years. It was recorded as a common and widespread breeder at Rye Hbr but there were no details of numbers or breeding success. Song was heard from late February and the first confirmed breeding was of a bird with food or faecal sac on the early date of 15 Mar at Bexhill and the first fledglings was a brood of five with their parents at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on 8 May. During the BBS the species was encountered in 163 (95%) of the 172 squares surveyed with a maximum of 16 at Bosham (Chichester) on 8 May.

Post breeding flocks did not appear until late-August with 17 at Edburton on the 22nd, 11 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 27th and 12 at Pagham Hbr on the 28th. In September there were only five double-figure counts, the largest being 20 at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on the 2nd, indicative of poor breeding success in Sussex perhaps? Numbers in October did increase though with birds moving through. The majority of the large counts came from the migration watchers at Hastings:

1671 on the 18th, 190 on the 27th and 112 on the 10th; their total on 34 dates between 1 Sep and 9 Nov was 2974. Elsewhere there were 150 at Bexhill on the 18th, 145 E at Beachy Head on the same day, 118 near Brantridge Forest (Crawley) on the 23rd and 100 at both Nymans (Handcross) on the 25th and Brightling on the 30th.

In the second winter period there were 70 counts of ten and above with the highest being 80, on sunflowers at Hastings CP on 18 Nov. Other notable counts were 70 at Cowbeech (Hailsham) on 28 Nov and 65 at Brownbread Street (Battle) on 5 Dec. During the SWBS birds were encountered in 105 (65%) of 161 squares surveyed with a maximum of 40 at Balsdean on 13 Nov. [MJJC]

Brambling

Fringilla montifringilla

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

Bramblings were recorded in 53 (5.8%) tetrads (60 in 2016). During the first four months, they were seen in only five participating GBW gardens; at both Fernhurst and Crowborough regularly from early January to early April, in both cases usually singly but occasionally as twos. There were nine double figure counts (compared to 32 in 2016), the largest count of which was 40 at Monkton (Chilgrove). This location and nearby Westdean Woods provided seven of the nine double figure counts. Elsewhere, most counts were of one to three birds from about 21 distinct sites across the county, the most frequent being Fernhurst, Ashdown Forest and Crowborough.

Only three single birds were recorded during April; the last was one at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 15 Apr (two days earlier than the 10-year average date).

The earliest returning bird was one in a GBW garden at Findon Valley (Worthing) during the week commencing 24 Sep in accordance with the 10-year average arrival date of 28 Sep. The highest counts in October were 26 at Fernhurst on the 28th and 28 W at Seaford Head on the 30th. Between 9 Oct and 10 Nov the Hastings migration team logged a total 72 birds with maximum counts of 15 on 26 Oct. During the autumn and second winter period, they were recorded in only six participating GBW gardens, mostly singly. During November and December the area around Monkton (Chilgrove) hosted the best numbers with seven (of the 12) double-figure counts and 60 on 28 Dec. Elsewhere 35 at Mayes Fm (Sharphorne) on 3 Dec was the highest count. [MOW]

Hawfinch

Coccothraustes coccothraustes

Scarce or possibly very scarce breeding resident and in most years very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor; occasionally more numerous. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

As in previous years, most records from the first winter period came from Westdean Woods with maxima of four on 10 Jan and ten on 5 Feb. Away from this location, eight were noted at Kingley Vale on 26 Feb and two in Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 19 Mar. Thirteen records was a not untypical total for this period.

On 2 May observers at Goring recorded two birds and two noted at Kingley Vale on 26 Aug were considered to be resident birds, although no evidence of breeding was provided. These were the only two records between 23 Mar and 13 Oct.

An unprecedented influx for Sussex and many other counties began during mid-October when 26 were observed at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the 13th. Over the next three months records came from a further 99 tetrads, compared to a total of 14 in 2016. This involved approximately

333 records (52 in 2016) from a very wide range of over 100 different locations across Sussex and with some very impressive numbers. A total of 45 double-figure and two three-figure counts were recorded in this autumn and second winter period. There has never been a better winter, in living memory at least, to see this distinctive, large finch species in Sussex.

Rewell Wood continued to host large numbers, by Hawfinch standards, with counts of 36, 55 and a maximum of 60 on 31 Oct, 5 and 19 Nov respectively, but following this date the birds obviously dispersed as there were only six seen there on 1 Dec. The highest count of the year, however, came from Creep Wood (Battle) where, following at least 40 on 30 Oct, 150 were observed apparently leaving a roost on 12 Nov. The second highest count of 120 was recorded at Heyshott Down on 30 Dec. Westdean Woods, normally the only Sussex site where double-figure counts are recorded, held 48 birds on 9 Nov, whilst 32 were near Buxted on 22 Dec.

There were several observations of Hawfinch associating with Redwing, at Plumpton, Chailey (18 and 24 Nov respectively) and Whatlington (3 Dec), and Hawfinches are known to follow Redwing flocks to feed on discarded seeds. Many observers took the opportunity to learn more about the feeding habits of the species, and whilst the traditional tree Hawfinch is associated with is Hornbeam there were observations of birds feeding on Field Maple and Yew as well as Hornbeam.

One lucky observer was able to watch at least four birds coming to drink daily from her garden pond during December. A review of the entire winter records will be published in the 2018 Sussex Bird Report. [DB]



Hawfinch, Penhurst, November 2017 (Mark Mallalieu)

Bullfinch*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

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

Bullfinches were recorded in 371 (41%) tetrads in 2017, a small increase over the 343 of 2016 and 362 in 2015. In the GBW birds were recorded in 91 (38%) of the 240 participating gardens.

In the early year SWBS, 74 birds were found in 26 (20%) of the 1-km squares surveyed; this total is very close to those of recent years. with a high count of ten at Twineham Grange on 24 Feb. Other larger counts during the first winter period included 12 at Ardingly Res on 5 Jan, ten at Marsh Fm (Yapton) on 10 Jan and nines alongside Castle Water at Rye Hbr on 22 Jan and at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 26 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and probable in 48 (*cf* five and 50 in 2016 and seven and 41 in 2015). Bullfinches were found in 58 (34%) of 1-km squares surveyed for the BBS; the sum of the maximum counts of early and late visits was 112 (*cf* 86 in 2016). Twelve were along the north bank of Weir Wood Res on 9 Apr. The first fledged young were seen at Harting Down on 9 May (*cf* 4 Jun in 2016). Parents accompanied young to garden feeders at Northlands Wood (Haywards Heath) on 31 Jul and at Chelwood Gate on 7 Aug. In Stansted Forest, a pair was watched courtship feeding on 25 May. A second brood were at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 21 Aug and newly fledged young were at the west end of Weir Wood Res on the 28th.

High counts during the summer included 20 on the Knepp Estate on 13 Jun, 12 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 1 Jun and counts of nine in a Runcton (Chichester) garden in mid-June and at Arundel WWT on 13 Aug.

'Exceptional' numbers were recorded at Beachy Head in the first half of November, with eight on the 2nd, four on the 3rd and 6th and six on the 12th. Singles appeared on Seaford Head on 27 and 30 Oct. One ringed at Cissbury on 1 Nov was still in post-juvenile moult. At Arundel on 2 Dec birds foraged hard on dried blackberries and docks. The Hastings migration watchers recorded a total of 41 on ten dates between 9 Oct and 13 Nov with a maximum of 15 on 22 Oct. In the late year SWBS, 124 were found in 54 (34%) of 131 squares studied: the 2016 and 2015 totals were 106 and 70. The maximum count was of 12 at Edburton on 26 Nov. In addition, 25 were at the Knepp Estate on 17 Nov and 18 at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Dec and 20 on the 22nd.

The flourishing state of the species in Sussex in 2017 was suggested by a number of observers' comments: three males together in a Coldwaltham garden on 17 Jan were 'most unusual'; as were singles in a Hurst Green garden on 9 Feb and flying north east from a back garden in Westdene (Brighton) on 25 June. A pair was watched in scanty hedges out on Loughton Levels on both 29 Apr and 29 May and a pair was nearby on 3 Dec. In 2016, a female at Church Norton on one day in December was the first to be noted there for several years; in 2017, one was often around Church Norton during the April to June period, with one or two there in November and December.

After a long-term decline from the mid-1970s to c.2000, Bullfinch numbers nationally have been gradually rising but the BTO warns that "there are large annual fluctuations around the overall long-term trend". [CB]

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Very common resident; and possibly fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Greenfinches were recorded in 450 (49%) tetrads, slightly down from the 469 in 2016. They were recorded in 76% of participating gardens in GBW during the year and in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch they were seen in only 15% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 14% in East Sussex. In the early year SWBS they were encountered in 47 (36%) of the 131 tetrads surveyed with a high of 11 in Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 24 Feb. There were no large counts during the first winter period and only 18 double-figure counts, the highest being 20 at Linch Fm (Bepton) on 26 Mar and 18 at Preston Park (Brighton) on 2 Jan. One was seen flying in from far offshore at Medmerry on 27 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads and probable in a further 27, fewer than the 12 and 41 of 2016. During the BBS Greenfinches were found in 105 (61%) of the 172 squares surveyed with a maximum of 16 at Plumpton Green on 23 Apr. Singing birds were heard from early-February, nest building was first noted on 18 Apr at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton), a nest with young was observed on 28 Apr at the University of Sussex and the earliest fledged young were recorded on 11 May at Northlands Wood (Haywards Heath). There were 18 pairs at Pagham Hbr and at Rye Hbr a "few pairs bred" but there were no details of breeding success.

Post breeding numbers were low and did not reach double figures until ten were seen at Pagham Hbr on 28 Aug. On 13 Sep, 18 were seen at Cuckmere Haven and then 20 at Warnham LNR on the 17th. The largest count of the autumn was 95 at Shoreham Hbr on 12 Oct followed by 40 at Church Norton on the 28th, with only five further counts in the 30s. Visible migration was light with the Hastings migration watch team recording a total of 80 between 6 Oct and 14 Nov with a high of 21 on 27 Oct and at Selsey Bill 30 W on 12 Oct was the only notable record.

Numbers improved during the second winter period; the flock on Shoreham beach was still present into November, peaking in this month at 90 on the 14th and, likewise, there were still 50 at Church Norton on the 24th and also double figure counts from five further locations. In December the highest counts were from Church Norton: 40 on the 10th and Goring Gap: 35 on the 21st and there were five further locations with double figure counts. During the late year SWBS Greenfinches were recorded in only 31 (19%) of 161 squares surveyed with a high of six at Thorney Island on the 30th. [MJC]

Twite

Linaria flavirostris

Rare winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

One in the lower Cuckmere Valley between Exceat and Cuckmere Haven from 5 to 24 Feb. (MT et al.) was the first county record since Oct 2010. Although often elusive, it did give good views at times feeding in the saltmarsh beside the footpath along the river. The county total this century moves on to 17. Only three have been recorded since 2005 (the previous record having been two at Bracklesham Bay in Oct 2010), a far cry from the 1960s and 1970s when flocks of 100 or more were possible at several coastal locations. [PJ]



Twite, Cuckmere Haven, February 2017 (Luke Dray)

Linnet

Linaria cannabina

Common but decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Linnets were recorded in 357 (39%) tetrads (347 in 2016). During the first winter period, the largest counts were of 400 Westdean Woods on 10 Jan and 200 at both East Head (Chichester Hbr) on 17 Jan and Bepton on 26 Mar and 180 at Netherfield on 4 Feb. There were 15 further records of between 100 and 150 birds of which eight were found at locations on the Selsey Peninsula. Smaller groups were noted across the county, and there were 48 records of between 30 and 93 at 14 sites throughout the county. During the early year SWBS, 286 Linnets were encountered in 13 (10%) of the 1-km squares surveyed.

During the BBS, Linnets were encountered in 96 (28%) of surveyed 1-km squares with a maximum of 54 on 11 Apr at Binderton (West Dean). Breeding activity was confirmed in 14 tetrads (11 in 2016), and probable breeding in 90 tetrads. The first evidence of nest building was on 14 Apr. The first fledged young were observed at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on 10 May.

During the summer months, there were 26 records of 50 or more birds, all (except three) from coastal sites, including five treble-figure counts the largest of which were 200 at Rye Hbr on 25 Aug, 110 at Medmerry on the 5th and 100 at Climping Gap on the 25th, indicating the commencement of autumn gatherings and coastal movement.

In the autumn, numbers increased significantly as birds gathered at coastal sites following dispersal and prior to migration. At Selsey Bill, recorders counted a total of 77 (17 E, 60 W) on four dates in September but in October the total was 1142 (including 70 E and 732 W) on 20 dates. Between 7 Sep and 6 Nov migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 3034 birds on 33 dates with a maximum of 530 W on 13 Oct. There were 30 other treble-figure counts during the period, all bar two, from some 11 coastal sites. Observers at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) counted 500 on 4 Oct and 350 on the 14th, and there were 400 at Medmerry on 7 Sep and 300 at Pett Level on 29

Oct. Elsewhere there were records of from 100 up to 290 from such other sites as Church Norton, Saltdean, and Beachy Head.

During the second winter period, the highest counts were 700 at Medmerry on 19 Dec, 350 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 29 Nov and 300 at Marsh Fm (Sidlesham). Further flocks greater than 100 were also recorded at Sheepcote Valley, Sharpthorne, Ashdown Forest, Sharpsbridge and Cowbeech. During the late year SWBS, 207 Linnets were encountered in 15 (9.3%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. [MOW]

Lesser Redpoll

Acanthis cabaret

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

Lesser Redpolls were recorded in 124 (14%) tetrads (120 in 2016). During the first winter period there were five records of 100 or more from four locations, three of them in East Sussex. The highest counts were 178 on Ashdown Ridge on 21 Feb, and 150 at Worth Forest on 25 Mar. Of the 23 other counts of 20 to 80 birds only five were in West Sussex, the remainder were recorded in mid-Sussex and further east. During the early year SWBS, this species was encountered in only three (2.3%) 1-km squares surveyed.

Breeding was not confirmed at any site but was probable in nine tetrads. Singing males were recorded in eight further tetrads and were heard particularly on Ashdown Forest, pairs were seen on territory at Weavers Down (Liss) and Lavington Common and were heard at Hesworth Common and Eridge Rocks.

Autumn numbers were improved over 2016. Observers at Hastings recorded 977 birds (124 in 2016) over 31 dates (18 in 2016) between 2 Oct and 13 Nov with a maximum count of 118 on 28 Oct. The largest number was recorded at Seaford Head where 318 flew west on 27 Oct; the next highest count was a large flock of c.150 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 17 Oct. Observers at Pett Level recorded 100 on the 17th; the only other site where a three-figure count was made. Sixty at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) and 34 E at Hastings on 6 Nov were the last notable autumn counts.

Thereafter and into the second winter period there were only 12 double-figure counts of which 36 at Weir Wood Res on the 19 Nov and 30 at Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on 28 Nov were the largest. During the late year SWBS, this species was encountered in only seven (4.3%) 1-km squares surveyed. [MOW]

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 34 (3.7%) tetrads in 2017: the decline in recorded range apparent since 2012 (when 91 tetrads were involved) seems at least to have slowed as the 2016 and 2015 records came from 38 tetrads. Although thinly spread and often with low numbers, the species has been recorded in each of the past 41 years with 1976 being the last blank year. Numbers noted were, however, considerably lower than in 2016. The only double figure gatherings were of ten at Broadwater Warren on 10 Jan, ten at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 15 Apr and on 28 May, and 14 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 17 May with 13 there on the 27th.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads; young were at Old Lodge LNR on 19 Feb and there was a family party of eight at Blackdown on 1 Jun and probable in four including nest building in Worth Forest on 13 Mar.

There were a mere 16 records in the second half of the year. Four migrants were seen at Hastings on 26 Oct. These apart, the only records from the coastal strip were of one to five birds at Fairlight between 27 May and 12 Jun and a sighting from Cliff End (Pett) on 22 Aug. [CB]

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Probably fairly common resident; common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

Goldfinches were recorded in 605 (68%) tetrads compared with 573 in 2014, 577 in 2015 and 590 in 2016. They were recorded in 90% of participating gardens in the GBW during the year and in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch in 29% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 27% in East Sussex. During the early year SWBS they were encountered in 85 (65%) of the 131 squares surveyed with a maximum count of 42 at Streat (Plumpton) on 20 Jan. During the first winter period the only three-figure counts were 230 at Stanstead Forest on 22 Jan, in two distinct flocks (180 and 50) in mature larch trees, and 100 there two days earlier. Of the 145 double-figure counts the highest were 80 at Beachy Head on 14 Feb (and 70 there on 3 Jan), 80 at Bepton on 18 Mar, 60 at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Jan and 52 at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 14 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and probable in 58. Birds were singing from early-February, nest building was first noticed on 4 Apr at Weir Wood Res and the first fledglings seen on 9 May at Northlands Wood (Haywards Heath). Fledglings were still being reported at the end of August. During the BBS Goldfinches were encountered in 142 (83%) of the 172 squares surveyed with a maximum of 40 on the Knepp Estate on 30 Jun.

Post breeding flocks were evident from mid-July with 36 double figure counts during the month, the highest being 90 at Beeding Brooks on the 27th and 80 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 19th. In August there were counts of 110 at the dam end of Weir Wood Res on the 14th, 100 at Thorney Island on the 16th and 100 at Troutbeck (Eridge) on the 31st. There were 20 further counts of between 40 and 99; evidently Goldfinches had a good breeding season in Sussex!

There were six three-figure counts in September: 160 at Beachy Head on the 30th, 120 at Widewater (Lancing) on the 26th, 115 at Telscombe Cliffs on the 30th, 111 at Perching Sands Fm (Edburton) on the 19th, 100 at Sheepcote Valley on the 1st and 100 at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on the 15th but it was in October that there were some extraordinary observations. The team of migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 10,679 on 35 dates between 7 Sep and 9 Nov with maxima of 1969 E on 8 Oct, 847 E on 30 Oct and 700 W on 15 Oct. At Beachy Head 1958 flew east in 2½ hr on 19 Oct and 700 on three further dates including 700 E in 1 hr on the 18th. At Selsey Bill, 1430 were recorded in October (155 E and 925 W). There were 42 three-figure counts in October including 800 at Pett Level on the 29th and 709 E there on the 8th. There were approximately 22,100 Goldfinches recorded in Sussex in October. In some years a larger than average autumnal passage occurs and 2017 was such a year. Previous high passage years, all October totals, have been in 2001 with at least 16,000, 2003 with 14,200, 2005 with 14,000 and 2011 with 10,500 (BoS, A Thomas, 2014). The peak movements were spread through the month, with high counts concentrated between the 3rd and 5th, 15th and 19th and then 26th and 30th.

Things calmed down in November with just three three-figure counts, two of 100 from Hastings on the 5th and 6th and at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) there were also 100 on the 24th. In the second

winter period there were 133 double-figure counts from across Sussex with the highest December totals being 74 at Three Bridges, around feeders in a garden, on Christmas day and 50 at Goring Gap on the 17th. Goldfinches were encountered in 104 (65%) of the 162 squares surveyed during the late year SWBS with a maximum of 34 at Racton (Chichester) on 22 Dec. [MJC]

Serin

Serinus serinus

Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

The well-watched singing male first seen at Newhaven Tide Mills on 24 Dec 2016 remained into 2017 and was last seen on 26 Feb (mo). Further single birds were recorded at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 8 May (MEC, RHC) and over the mouth of Chichester Hbr flying towards East Head on 2 Jun (AJ). The latter bird, a female, was first seen at Sandy Point (Hants) from where it departed east towards Sussex. The total this century moves on to a minimum of 72 with records in all years bar 2009. [PJ]

Siskin

Spinus spinus

Scarce breeder. Common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Siskins were recorded in 169 (19%) tetrads compared with 220 in 2016. During the first winter period there were 19 counts from 16 sites (39 from nine in 2016) where 20 or more were recorded. The highest counts were 100 at Balcombe on 12 Feb, 80 at Eridge Rocks on 29 Jan and 40 at Rotherfield on 14 Feb and also at Worth Forest on 13 Mar. Otherwise, birds were spread across the county in small numbers, often as single individuals. During the early-year SWBS, 120 Siskins were recorded in nine (6.8%) of surveyed squares with a maximum count of 40 at Rotherfield on 14 Feb.

During spring, there were five counts of ten or more including 20 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 2 Apr and 18 at West Chase (Ashdown Forest) on the 27th; otherwise records were mostly of single birds across the county.

During the BBS, Siskins were found in only six (1.7%) of surveyed squares. Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads (three in 2016) and was probable in a further 12. Singing was first heard amongst an active party of 20 at Brede High Woods on 21 Jan, at West Chase on the 25th and Worth Forest on 13 Mar. Nest building was first recorded on 26 Mar at Westdean Woods and the first fledged young were recorded at Broadwater Warren on 4 Jun. During the GBW, Siskins were recorded in 47 (20%) of participating gardens in Sussex.

Numbers during the summer months did not exceed six anywhere but increased noticeably during the autumn, with higher counts than in 2016. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 1408 on 37 dates between 1 Sep and 6 Nov with a maximum day count of 140 on 28 Oct and ten other counts of 50 or more; elsewhere the highest count was 40 E at Climping on 8 Oct while observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total for October of 69 W and 3 N with a maximum of 30 W on the 25th.

During the second winter period high counts were 50 at Fernhurst on 23 Dec, and 40 at each of Balcombe on 6 Dec, Troutbeck (Eridge) on the 19th, Darwell Res on 24 Nov and 12 Dec and, again, at Fernhurst on 19 Nov and 24 Dec. Smaller numbers were recorded elsewhere around the county. During the late-year SWBS, 23 Siskins were recorded in six (3.7%) of surveyed squares with a maximum count of 11 at Wardley on 9 Dec. [MOW, JAH]

Corn Bunting*Emberiza calandra*

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

Corn Buntings were recorded in only 66 (7.2%) tetrads in 2017 (70 in 2016). At Beachy Head flocks of up to 50 were present on set-aside on 3, 13 and 28 Jan but elsewhere the largest numbers of the first winter period first occurred in the cold spell in late January with c.50 at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 21st, an impressive 150 at Newhaven Heights on the 23rd, 44 at Court Fm (Scotney) on the 22nd and 55 at nearby Broomhill on the 24th. Thereafter numbers did not exceed 30 anywhere until 42 were located at Piddinghoe (Newhaven) on 29 Mar.

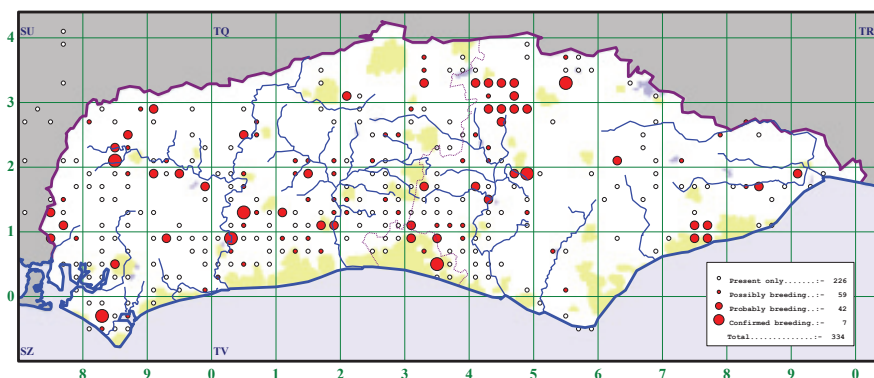
Breeding was confirmed in just two tetrads and probable in five but it is likely that breeding occurred in nearly all the 32 sites where singing was recorded. Estimated breeding numbers were seven pairs at Medmerry and 15 at Beachy Head. During the breeding season double-figures of Corn Buntings were recorded from five sites. Maximum numbers at these sites were 32 on 13 Jun at Steep Down, 24 on the downland between Washington and the R Adur on 22 May, 12 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 19 Jul, 14 at Castle Hill (Falmer) on 13 Apr and 10 to 12 at Beachy Head on many dates between 22 Apr and 24 Jul.

The first large post breeding count was 75 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 19 Sep. From October to the end of the year records were received from only 21 tetrads. The largest flocks during this period were 50 at Chantry Hill on 27 and 30 Oct, 35 at Beeding Brooks on 5 Nov and 41 there on 22 Dec, and an impressive 150 at East Guldeford Level on 3 Dec. [ACG]

Yellowhammer*Emberiza citrinella*

Common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Yellowhammers were recorded in 334 (37%) tetrads during the year, with sparse representation in the northwest and in parts of East Sussex as shown in the map below.



During the first winter period the largest flocks were at Apuldram (Chichester Hbr) with a maximum count of 100 on 21 Feb. Other notable flocks were at Aldwick (Bognor Regis) with a maximum of 50 on 2 Feb, on downland east of the R Arun with a maximum of 30 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 12 Mar, and at Billingshurst with 50 on 24 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and probable in a further 42. Nest building was first detected on 8 Apr at Arundel WWT and on the downs at Steyning the following day, and fledging was first reported on 21 May at High Cross Fm (Uckfield). The WHBBS recorded 33 pairs compared with 36 the previous year. Elsewhere 16 pairs were located at Medmerry and 11 at Broadwater Warren. At Beachy Head only one pair bred, the observer commenting that in the early 1970s the local population was estimated at 120 pairs. During the BBS Yellowhammers were found in 57 (33%) of the 172 squares surveyed with a maximum of 29 on 17 Apr at Bolney.

In the second winter period double-figure flocks were reported from 23 tetrads, the furthest east being 25 at Barcombe on 2 Nov. Medmerry held the largest flocks on a wild bird seed crop, reaching 80 on 15 Dec. Other notable counts were 40 nearby at Sidlesham on 29 and 30 Nov and 40 at Arundel Park on 8 Nov and 25 Nov. [ACG]

Reed Bunting

Emberiza schoeniclus

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

Reed Buntings were reported from 180 (20%) tetrads during the year. During the first winter period there were double-figure counts at 19 sites, the largest non-roosting flock being 110 feeding on weed seeds near Handcross on 6 Feb. Of 40 at Iping Common on 29 Jan only one was in adult male plumage. At a reedbed roost at Weir Wood Res up to 140 were counted on many dates in the first two months of the year.

Breeding was confirmed in 8 tetrads and probable in a further 23. Counts of breeding pairs (2016 figures in brackets where available) were Medmerry 21 (18), Pagham Hbr 16 (28), Amberley Wild Brooks 32 (12), Pulborough Brooks 10 (15), Waltham Brooks 3 (2), Lewes Brooks 9 and Rye Hbr 29 (37). The species was recorded in over 100 tetrads during the breeding season with small numbers widely distributed through the county. During the BBS the species was found in 19 (11%) of the 172 squares surveyed with a high of 14 at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels) on 4 Jun.

Migration watch counts in the Hastings area logged a total of 286 Reed Buntings on 28 dates between 10 Sep and 6 Nov with a maximum count of 46 on 23 Oct and many other double figure counts in October. The only other evidence of movement was 1W at Selsey Bill on 30 Oct.

In the second winter period double-figure flocks occurred in 20 tetrads and the roost at Weir Wood Res reached 109 on 30 Oct rising to 235 on 29 Dec, regaining the numbers last seen in 2014. [ACG]

Lapland Bunting

Calciarius lapponicus

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

2017 was a good year for this species with five records totalling 12 birds, all from the far east of Sussex. In fields adjacent to Scotney GP there were two from 20 to 24 Jan (AP *et al.*) with another five with Tree Sparrows on nearby Walland Marsh on 24 Jan (AP). In the second half of the year, two flew north-west at Rye Hbr on 6 Oct (SJM) followed by one with Skylarks at East Guldeford Level (Camber) on 26 Nov (AP) and two there on 22 Dec (AP). The county total this century moves on to approximately 107, of which approximately 70 were recorded during the exceptional influx in autumn 2010. [PJ]

Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

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

One was at West Wittering on 5 Jan and at East Head on 14 and 22 Jan, and two were seen at East Head frequently from 8 to 26 Feb. There was one at Pett Level on 10 and 11 Jan and it or another was there on 29 Jan. One (perhaps one of the East Head birds) was feeding on the shoreline on Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 9 Mar.

The first sighting of the second winter period was of one on the beach at Rye Hbr on 27 Oct followed by one at Cuckmere Haven on 3 Nov. Two were at Church Norton on 5 Nov and then seen again on 4 and 5 Dec. One was at Selsey on 28 and 29 Nov, and one was at East Head on 2 and 16 Dec. One flew east over the beach at Goring on 17 Dec and a longer staying bird was at Bognor Regis from 4 to 24 Dec. There were probably nine or ten Snow Buntings in Sussex in 2017. [ACG]



Snow Bunting, Bognor Regis, December 2017 (Luke Dray)

ESCAPES AND FERAL BIRDS

All records of BOU Category D species, of apparently feral individuals of other species and of probable or certain escapes from captivity (but not those clearly in captivity) will be welcomed by the Hon. Recorder for this annual feature. In order to track records, particularly those involving wildfowl which are prone to wander between sites, observers are reminded to include the age, sex and, where appropriate, colour morph of individuals when submitting records. Such records should be submitted in the approved way.

The following escaped or feral birds, other than those Category C species in the main list, were recorded in the county in 2017 (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). Species names and order follow IOC World Bird Names (V 8.1) 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* and *taverneri*.

Recorded at two sites. At Arundel WWT a single bird of apparently pure origin, reportedly around 'for several months', was noted from 30 Apr to 5 Jun (although two were recorded on 15 Feb) and was often seen amongst flocks of other goose species. On the latter date it was seen to be paired with a hybrid 'Barnacle' and had produced three offspring. At Cuckmere Haven four birds were regularly recorded between 1 Feb and 10 Mar. However, eight were recorded on 13 Feb and nine on the 24th (reportedly including five hybrids of Dutch origin) and seven on 7 Mar.

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 recorded at some 15 sites across the county from Thorney Island in the west to Scotney GP in the east. Most records were of ones (12) or twos (16). Two birds were seen between 25 Aug and 27 Dec in the general area Thorney/Medmerry/Chichester GP/Pagham Hbr. At Telscombe Cliffs 2 E on 30 Apr were also seen at Splash Point (Seaford) two minutes later. One at Weir Wood Res on 16 and 26 Sep; one or two at Wadhurst Park on 4 dates between 13 Feb and 20 Nov; one at Bewl Water on 9 Dec. In the east, one in the Rye Bay area on three dates between 16 Aug and 24 Sep.

Emperor Goose

Anser canagicus

Breeds mainly in Alaska. Present in many wildfowl collections.

There was only one record: three at Scotney GP on 5 Jan.

Swan Goose (Chinese Goose)

Anser cygnoides

Breeds naturally in Mongolia, northern China and south-eastern Russia and winters mainly in central and eastern China.

There were only two records, both from Arundel WWT: three on 25 Jan and two on 23 Feb.

Snow Goose*Anser careulescens*

Breeds in Arctic North America, winters in southern USA and Mexico. Presumed migrants may occur on 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.

A single bird was recorded at Cuckmere Haven on 7 Jan and 18 Feb; another was at Arlington Res on 23 Sep and another at Pagham Hbr on the 30th; the possibility that these might all be the same individual cannot be discounted. At Scotney GP (where two were seen in January 2016), five were noted on 5 Feb and again on 4 Sep but only one was seen on 5 Oct.

Black Swan*Cygnus atratus*

Breeds in Australia and New Zealand. Commonly kept in wildfowl collections and on ornamental lakes. Full-winged birds are liable to wander; has bred in Sussex.

This species was recorded at some nine sites across the county from Thorney Island in the west to Hurst Green in the east. Five were noted at Thorney Island on 25 Jan (but only one on 9 Sep); at Birdham (Chichester Hbr), an unmated female, first recorded nesting on 13 Mar, had deserted the eggs as infertile by the 21st (as she had done in 2016) and was still in the area on 8 Nov. At Chichester GPs, four were noted on 3 Jan and on several dates to 28 Mar; later in the year, two adults were seen with six recently fledged youngsters on 10 Oct of which six remained on 20 Nov but only five on 5 Dec. A single bird was noted at Pagham Hbr on 25 and 26 Apr but two on 17 Nov and 18 Dec while one was with Mute Swans offshore at Selsey Bill on 31 Oct. A single bird was in the Arun Valley south of Arundel on 11 and 18 Feb and two were at Arundel WWT on 10 Apr. Two were recorded at Billingshurst on 10 May while, in the east, single birds were at Princes Park (Eastbourne) on 17 Jan and 7 Feb and at Hurst Green on 10 Jun.

Ruddy Shelduck*Tadorna ferruginea*

Breeds in SE Europe and across central Asia. Rare vagrant or escape from captivity.

Two birds (unsexed) were recorded at Petworth Park on three dates between 16 and 25 Aug and, possibly the same individuals, at Pagham Hbr on 5 Nov and again for 30 mins on the 6th before flying off west. The species was also recorded at Arundel WWT on 29 Sep but abundance was not recorded. Four were seen at Rye Hbr on 15 Dec.

South African Shelduck (Cape Shelduck)*Tadorna cana*

Breeds in southern Africa, and is widespread in Cape Province, Orange Free State and southern Transvaal where it is mainly associated with lakes and rivers in fairly open country, breeding in disused mammal holes (e.g. aardvark). Pairs tend to be nomadic outside the breeding season. In the southern winter many move northeast to favoured moulting grounds where sizeable concentrations occur.

A single bird (unsexed) was recorded at Medmerry on 23 Sep and Pagham Hbr on 30 Oct and 15 Nov.

Australian Shelduck*Tadorna tadornoides*

A native of South Australia and Tasmania where it breeds in fairly open country. Commonly kept on wildfowl collections.

A single bird was at Petworth Park on 24 Dec.

Muscovy Duck*Cairina moschata*

Native to Mexico and Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form.

This species was recorded at seven sites across the county from Selsey Bill to Horsted Keynes. A single bird was observed at Selsey East Beach on three dates between 26 Jan and 26 Oct and may have been the same at Aldwick (Bognor) on 25 Dec and one of the birds seen at either Swanbourne Lake or the nearby Park (Arundel) between 5 Jan and 7 Mar of which only one remained on 24 Jun; a single bird was in the area between 20 Sep and 18 Dec. A single bird was seen at Ifield MP on several dates between 29 Jan and 2 Jun. Observers at Falmer Pond noted one on 13 Mar. Several birds were seen at Horsted Keynes on 11 in the year reducing from four on 17 Jan through three on 10 May and 14 Aug to two on 14 Dec.

Ringed Teal*Callonetta leucophrys*

Breeds in South American forests. Often kept in wildfowl collections.

A single bird (unsexed) was recorded at Medmerry on four dates between 11 Mar and 20 Apr.

Yellow-billed Teal (Chilean Teal)*Anas flavirostris*

A South American species occurring in Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Brazil and the Falkland Islands. It inhabits freshwater wetlands, preferring marshy habitats to rivers.

One was seen at Broomhill Level (Camber) on 14 Jun.

Helmeted Guineafowl*Numida meleagris*

Breeds in Africa, mainly south of the Sahara. Widely introduced and domesticated. Roosts in trees, like pheasants and takes 'siesta' in shade.

This species was recorded at only four sites. At Cocking, one was seen on 7 May but two on 14 Jun; at Ashington, there were three on 4 May; at Great Noven Fm (Chailey) no fewer than ten on 5 Dec; at Newick WTW, nine on 15 Apr but only six by 1 May; at Jarvis Brook nr Crowborough, two on 21 Sep.

Chukar Partridge*Alectoris chukar*

Native to the Middle East and southern Asia. Introduced widely as a game bird; it will readily interbreed with the Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*) and the practice of releasing captive bred Chukars and Chukar/Red-legged Partridge hybrids has been banned in the UK as a threat to wild populations.

One was recorded at Mayfield on 15 Oct.

Indian Peafowl*Pavo cristatus*

Wild birds are restricted to the India subcontinent. A traditional favourite in ornamental gardens.

One to three birds were recorded at nine sites. Threes were recorded at Stansted on 10 Apr (but two on 11 May) and at Patching on 13 Jul ('as usual') and 29 Oct; two were at West Firlie on 28 Apr. Single birds were noted at Burgess Hill on 15 Nov, at Old Lodge Reserve (Ashdown) on 27 Jul and 10 Jun, at Uckfield on 11 May, at Cobbarn nr Eridge on 9 May, at Telham nr Crowborough on 26 Apr and 9 Jun and one at Icklesham on 2 Dec.

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.

An escapee was seen at Church Norton on 7 Feb.

Red-tailed Hawk*Buteo jamaicensis*

Breeds commonly throughout much of North America and the Caribbean, some move south to winter in Central America. Frequently flown in falconry from which it may escape.

At Cocking, one was seen on 8 Feb but two on 7 May and 14 Jun.

Red-rumped Parrot*Psephotus haemotonomus*

Native to and common in south-eastern Australia. Often seen in parks and gardens and similar open country with access to water, avoids heavily wooded areas. Spends much time feeding on the ground where its green plumage is a good camouflage in deep grass.

One was recorded at Sharphorne on 18 Jun, presumably an escapee.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) results for Sussex 2013 - 2017

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)									
	2013 (156)		2014 (167)		2015 (179)		2016 (170)		2017 (172)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mute Swan	15	10	21	13	29	16	21	12	18	10
Greylag Goose	16	10	22	13	22	12	24	14	27	16
Greylag Goose (domestic)	1	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1
Canada Goose	37	24	45	27	55	31	47	28	58	34
Egyptian Goose	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	5	3
Shelduck	11	7	12	7	5	3	14	8	4	2
Mandarin Duck	7	4	11	7	9	5	7	4	6	3
Gadwall	4	3	4	2	4	2	3	2	6	3
Mallard	87	56	99	59	108	60	102	60	93	54
Mallard (domestic)	1	1	3	2	-	-	1	1	1	1
Tufted Duck	9	6	5	3	6	3	5	3	6	3
Red-legged Partridge	19	12	20	12	16	9	24	14	27	16
Grey Partridge	1	1	4	2	2	1	2	1	3	2
Pheasant	123	79	135	81	142	79	142	84	143	83
Cormorant	10	6	19	11	25	14	21	12	24	14
Little Egret	7	4	11	7	14	8	14	8	8	5
Grey Heron	30	19	52	31	53	30	62	36	44	26
Little Grebe	1	1	4	2	7	4	5	3	6	3
Great Crested Grebe	4	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	4	2
Marsh Harrier	-	-	3	2	3	2	4	2	2	1
Sparrowhawk	18	12	15	9	24	13	28	16	18	10
Buzzard	79	51	80	48	96	54	95	56	94	55
Kestrel	34	22	30	18	51	28	47	28	38	22
Hobby	2	1	1	1	5	3	6	4	2	1
Peregrine	1	1	2	1	6	3	4	2	7	4
Moorhen	51	33	52	31	69	39	56	33	41	24
Coot	17	11	23	14	26	15	23	14	21	3
Oystercatcher	5	3	5	3	6	3	4	2	5	3
Lapwing	15	10	17	10	25	14	19	11	20	12
Whimbrel	3	2	2	1	3	2	4	2	1	1
Curlew	5	3	5	3	3	2	7	4	6	3
Redshank	6	4	2	1	3	2	4	2	3	2

Black-headed Gull	22	14	28	17	36	20	32	19	31	18
Mediterranean Gull	4	3	6	4	3	2	11	6	12	7
Common Gull	6	4	4	2	13	7	10	6	8	5
Lesser Black-backed Gull	18	12	13	8	20	11	22	13	18	10
Herring Gull	96	62	102	61	104	58	112	66	118	69
Great Black-backed Gull	5	3	7	4	8	4	6	4	8	5
Sandwich Tern	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	1
Common Tern	3	2	5	3	3	2	6	4	4	2
Feral Pigeon	37	24	43	26	40	22	34	20	35	20
Stock Dove	59	38	68	41	72	40	72	42	78	45
Woodpigeon	154	99	166	99	177	99	170	100	172	100
Collared Dove	89	57	101	60	111	62	99	58	106	62
Turtle Dove	4	3	6	4	2	1	3	2	2	1
Cuckoo	41	26	38	23	39	22	42	25	36	21
Barn Owl	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	2
Little Owl	4	3	4	2	4	2	-	-	2	1
Tawny Owl	5	3	8	5	5	3	5	3	4	2
Swift	43	28	49	29	46	26	44	26	54	31
Kingfisher	-	-	1	1	3	2	5	3	2	1
Green Woodpecker	104	67	112	67	123	69	108	64	112	65
Great Spotted Woodpecker	110	71	99	59	119	66	107	63	118	69
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-
Magpie	135	87	152	91	160	89	148	87	156	91
Jay	82	53	68	41	83	46	77	45	82	48
Jackdaw	130	83	141	84	159	89	138	81	151	88
Rook	88	56	90	54	98	55	97	57	96	56
Carriion Crow	153	98	164	98	175	98	168	99	169	98
Raven	7	4	5	3	5	3	12	7	7	4
Goldcrest	46	29	54	32	84	47	81	48	85	49
Firecrest	-	-	2	1	3	2	4	2	5	3
Blue Tit	153	98	162	97	174	97	166	98	170	99
Great Tit	150	96	161	96	169	94	166	98	161	94
Coal Tit	37	24	42	25	36	20	53	31	59	34
Marsh Tit	13	8	10	6	15	8	13	8	15	9
Woodlark	1	1	-	-	4	2	5	3	3	2
Skylark	75	48	90	54	87	49	79	46	81	47
Swallow	109	70	117	70	120	67	113	66	117	68
House Martin	29	19	37	22	33	18	35	21	34	20
Cetti's Warbler	6	4	12	7	15	8	15	9	11	6
Long-tailed Tit	53	34	59	35	93	52	78	46	87	50
Chiffchaff	120	77	147	88	160	89	153	90	158	92
Willow Warbler	41	26	34	20	41	23	34	20	40	23
Blackcap	130	83	145	87	144	80	144	85	145	84
Garden Warbler	30	19	22	13	30	17	27	16	30	17

Lesser Whitethroat	20	13	26	16	18	10	21	12	22	13
Whitethroat	89	57	107	64	105	59	106	62	104	60
Sedge Warbler	8	5	13	8	15	8	9	5	10	6
Reed Warbler	16	10	25	15	22	12	25	15	20	12
Nuthatch	66	42	70	42	87	49	77	45	84	49
Treecreeper	27	17	36	22	36	20	36	21	47	27
Wren	146	94	163	98	172	96	165	97	169	98
Starling	101	65	107	64	124	69	107	63	116	67
Blackbird	155	99	166	99	178	99	170	100	171	99
Song Thrush	131	84	142	85	157	88	148	87	149	87
Mistle Thrush	50	32	51	31	58	32	49	29	55	32
Spotted Flycatcher	2	1	5	3	8	4	4	2	5	3
Robin	152	97	165	99	176	98	165	97	170	99
Nightingale	18	12	16	10	16	9	7	4	14	8
Stonechat	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	6	3
Wheatear	8	5	5	3	5	3	6	4	7	4
Duncock	121	78	145	87	147	82	146	86	146	85
House Sparrow	108	69	129	77	136	76	126	74	130	75
Yellow Wagtail	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	3	2
Grey Wagtail	5	3	6	4	8	4	9	5	8	5
Pied/White Wagtail	55	35	64	38	78	44	79	46	70	41
Tree Pipit	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	2	1
Meadow Pipit	14	9	20	12	14	8	18	11	15	9
Chaffinch	154	99	162	97	172	96	163	96	163	95
Greenfinch	108	69	118	71	124	69	120	71	105	61
Goldfinch	114	73	123	74	140	78	143	84	142	83
Siskin	7	4	6	4	6	3	10	6	5	3
Linnet	45	29	63	38	64	36	62	36	62	36
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Common Crossbill	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bullfinch	25	16	36	22	43	24	40	24	58	34
Yellowhammer	58	37	64	38	65	36	74	44	57	33
Reed Bunting	18	12	19	11	23	13	22	13	19	11
Corn Bunting	6	4	3	2	5	3	3	2	3	2
Number of species	132		144		143		147		127	

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) population trends in Sussex 1994 - 2017

Sussex BBS population trends for the period 1994-2017 are presented in the table below, along with population trends for the period 2016-2017. Those trends that are considered statistically significant are indicated by an asterisk in the 'sig' columns. The size of the difference between the upper 95% confidence limit (UCL) and the lower 95% confidence limit (LCL) for each 1994-2017 trend gives an indication of the precision of the trend. The sample size is the mean number of squares per year in which each species was recorded during 1994-2017.

	Change 1994-2017 (%)	sig	UCL	LCL	Change 2016-2017 (%)	sig	Sample size
Mallard	137	*	227	72	-8		55
Pheasant	52	*	71	35	-6		78
Moorhen	-9		28	-35	0		35
Woodpigeon	46	*	59	34	15		98
Collared Dove	52	*	73	34	-22	*	60
Stock Dove	151	*	249	81	-8		33
Cuckoo	-68	*	-57	-76	-18		32
Swift	-84	*	-77	-89	-73	*	30
Green Woodpecker	12		34	-6	30		66
Great Spotted Woodpecker	328	*	472	220	4		63
Magpie	26	*	48	7	-14		87
Jay	-56	*	-45	-65	-42	*	45
Jackdaw	206	*	260	159	-4		78
Rook	76	*	100	54	98	*	54
Carrion Crow	219	*	292	160	-44	*	95
Goldcrest	119	*	186	68	-23		39
Blue Tit	33	*	49	19	13		95
Great Tit	9		23	-3	-27	*	93
Skylark	-46	*	-33	-57	-39	*	52
Swallow	59	*	88	35	-32	*	66
Long-tailed Tit	-29	*	-11	-43	-27		44
Chiffchaff	102	*	143	68	20		83
Blackcap	74	*	104	48	3		78
Whitethroat	271	*	384	184	167	*	58
Nuthatch	-23		2	-42	-61	*	45
Wren	6		16	-2	-14		93
Starling	-72	*	-64	-77	4		70
Blackbird	55	*	66	44	4		97
Song Thrush	8		22	-3	-13		86
Mistle Thrush	-69	*	-62	-75	55		34
Robin	21	*	33	10	-9		95
Duncock	-2		12	-14	-6		82
House Sparrow	20	*	33	7	-52	*	73
Pied Wagtail	-23	*	-4	-37	-19		42
Chaffinch	-60	*	-55	-63	-26	*	95
Greenfinch	-79	*	-74	-83	-54	*	73
Goldfinch	162	*	213	118	12		66
Linnet	229	*	329	153	10		35
Yellowhammer	-62	*	-52	-69	69	*	42

Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) results Nov 2015 – Feb 2018

For each species recorded during a Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) there are three columns per 'winter'. The last 3 winters have been included in the table below.

Column 1 (Total squares) is the total number of 1km squares surveyed in Sussex in which that species has been recorded.

Column 2 (% of squares) is the % of 1km squares surveyed in Sussex in which that species was recorded. The percentage facilitates comparison from one year to the next.

Column 3 (Total) represents the total recordings of that species during SWBS for that winter period. In all cases this represents the sum of the early survey plus the late survey and may include two recordings of the same bird.

An empty cell indicates the species was not recorded during either survey period for that 'winter'

	Winter 5 (Nov 2015 - Feb 2016)			Winter 6 (Nov 2016 - Feb 2017)			Winter 7 (Nov 2017 - Feb 2018)		
1-km squares surveyed	125			137			167		
No. of observers	74			77			99		
No. of species recorded	111			113			126		
	Total squares	% of squares	Total	Total squares	% of squares	Total	Total squares	% of squares	Total
Red-throated Diver							1	>1	1
Little Grebe	5	4	17	4	3	19	4	2	13
Great Crested Grebe				1	1	6	3	2	8
Fulmar							1	>1	1
Gannet				1	1	1			
Cormorant	24	19	80	18	13	56	28	17	99
Little Egret	14	11	47	12	9	25	12	7	29
Great White Egret							1	>1	1
Grey Heron	18	14	34	27	20	42	30	18	58
Mute Swan	18	14	124	16	12	58	21	13	156
Greylag Goose	3	2	198	5	4	38	8	5	297
Greylag Goose (Dom)	1	1	3	1	1	3	3	2	38
Canada Goose	10	8	336	16	12	97	28	17	399
Barnacle Goose				1	1	1			
Brent Goose	5	4	1935	3	2	221	5	3	1488
Egyptian Goose	1	1	4	3	2	11	3	2	19
Common Shelduck	1	1	7	2	1	22	1	>1	61
Mandarin Duck				2	1	44	6	4	33
Eurasian Wigeon	7	6	138	2	1	55	4	2	157
Gadwall	2	2	14	3	2	59	3	2	29
Eurasian Teal	4	3	248	11	8	160	6	4	134
Mallard	43	34	943	66	48	1313	72	43	1475
Mallard (Domestic)	1	1	1	1	1	9	2	1	4

Pintail	1	1	1	1	1	10	1	>1	2
Shoveler	2	2	43	2	1	40	2	1	37
Common Pochard	1	1	2	1	1	4	2	1	11
Tufted Duck	4	3	34	2	1	59	5	3	60
R-b Merganser							1	>1	2
Goosander				2	1	2	1	>1	1
Red Kite	3	2	3	4	3	4	12	7	16
Marsh Harrier	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	4
Hen Harrier							1	>1	1
Sparrowhawk	22	18	22	21	15	22	28	17	30
Common Buzzard	78	62	213	92	67	255	111	66	316
Kestrel	44	35	65	42	31	65	59	35	97
Merlin							1	>1	1
Peregrine	2	2	2	5	4	5	2	1	2
Red-legged Partridge	9	7	97	14	10	128	14	8	164
Grey Partridge	2	2	12				1	>1	24
Common Pheasant	88	70	795	99	72	1022	126	75	1032
Water Rail	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	>1	2
Moorhen	34	27	115	42	31	183	48	29	192
Coot	14	11	120	10	7	136	20	12	141
Oystercatcher	3	2	50	2	1	4	2	1	29
Ringed Plover	1	1	1				1	>1	7
Golden Plover	2	2	121	1	1	200	4	2	501
Grey Plover	1	1	1				3	2	20
Lapwing	12	10	1213	16	12	1318	22	13	2929
Dunlin	2	2	76				2	1	64
Common Snipe	7	6	39	10	7	51	8	5	24
Woodcock	2	2	2	3	2	5	3	2	4
Black-tailed Godwit				1	1	72	2	1	138
Bar-tailed Godwit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	>1	6
Whimbrel							1	>1	1
Curlew	5	4	215	5	4	78	7	4	150
Common Redshank	4	3	41	3	2	13	3	2	77
Greenshank	1	1	10				1	>1	5
Green Sandpiper	4	3	6	4	3	6	3	2	5
Common Sandpiper				1	1	1			
Turnstone	1	1	47	2	1	20	1	>1	1
Pomarine Skua				1	1	1			
Mediterranean Gull				1	1	8	3	2	13
Black-headed Gull	75	60	3915	68	50	2276	96	57	3437
Common Gull	23	18	725	34	25	1553	37	22	926
LBB Gull	9	7	21	4	3	4	6	4	11
Herring Gull	82	66	2866	90	66	1678	113	68	2709
GBB Gull	10	8	27	5	4	8	4	2	17
Feral Pigeon	22	18	366	27	20	385	33	20	593

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Stock Dove	35	28	234	46	34	208	60	36	246
Woodpigeon	125	100	11276	137	100	9021	165	99	13364
Collared Dove	63	50	526	67	49	540	90	54	690
Barn Owl	1	1	1				1	>1	2
Little Owl				1	1	1	2	1	2
Tawny Owl	1	1	1	3	2	3	4	2	4
Short-eared Owl	2	2	4	2	2	4			
Kingfisher	4	3	6	5	4	6	3	2	4
Green Woodpecker	72	58	129	75	55	140	86	51	172
GS Woodpecker	79	63	182	95	69	251	117	70	308
Woodlark	4	3	6	1	1	1	1	>1	1
Skylark	36	29	301	49	36	631	47	28	376
Meadow Pipit	29	23	330	40	29	462	46	28	472
Grey Wagtail	14	11	16	17	12	21	18	11	28
Pied Wagtail	71	57	373	83	61	586	82	49	376
Wren	116	93	884	123	90	799	145	87	800
Duncock	105	84	571	123	90	659	137	82	757
Robin	124	99	2125	136	99	2495	165	99	2592
Eurasian Stonechat	17	14	48	18	13	38	24	14	77
Blackbird	125	100	2319	134	98	2800	166	99	3077
Fieldfare	59	47	1914	75	55	1566	77	46	2243
Song Thrush	108	86	472	121	88	532	130	78	557
Redwing	75	60	2686	83	61	1837	113	68	3007
Mistle Thrush	45	36	110	49	36	117	55	33	111
Cetti's Warbler	4	3	4	2	1	2	2	1	5
Dartford Warbler	1	1	2				1	>1	1
Blackcap	2	2	2	4	3	5	1	>1	1
Chiffchaff	14	11	20	10	7	14	4	2	6
Goldcrest	83	66	297	80	58	269	98	59	323
Firecrest	6	5	7	2	1	5	4	2	5
Long-tailed Tit	82	66	539	87	64	668	99	59	797
Marsh Tit	18	14	46	26	19	55	32	19	63
Coal Tit	50	40	168	49	36	171	73	44	280
Blue Tit	122	98	2616	136	99	2402	160	96	3369
Great Tit	117	94	1336	130	95	1301	162	97	1741
Nuthatch	57	46	223	64	47	208	87	52	295
Treecreeper	28	22	64	37	27	66	48	29	84
Jay	77	62	193	84	61	209	106	63	272
Magpie	121	97	1233	130	95	1234	159	95	1418
Jackdaw	106	85	4060	118	86	3701	139	83	4638
Rook	71	57	3247	71	52	3319	92	55	3041
Carrion Crow	124	99	2772	134	98	2559	167	100	3577
Raven	12	10	20	18	13	31	19	11	30
Common Starling	100	80	5458	99	72	5821	130	78	7081
House Sparrow	91	73	1905	98	72	1869	114	68	2321

Tree Sparrow				1	1	4			
Chaffinch	116	93	960	121	88	1038	135	81	1496
Brambling	3	2	36				2	1	2
Greenfinch	69	55	323	61	45	205	68	41	206
Hawfinch							10	6	14
Goldfinch	96	77	977	110	80	1122	129	77	1293
Siskin	24	19	154	14	10	168	14	8	71
Linnet	14	11	288	18	13	510	24	14	607
Lesser Redpoll	8	6	26	7	5	55	10	6	47
Common Crossbill				1	1	2	1	>1	1
Bullfinch	47	38	158	48	35	181	69	41	210
Yellowhammer	16	13	118	32	23	217	36	22	181
Reed Bunting	10	8	35	15	11	54	14	8	70
Corn Bunting	1	1	4	2	1	37	2	1	24
Red-tailed Hawk	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	>1	2
Com / Indian Peafowl							1	>1	1
Rock Pipit	1	1	4	1	1	2			
Black Swan	1	1	1	1	1	1			
Muscovy Duck				1	1	1	1	>1	4
Bar-headed Goose	1	1	2				1	>1	1
Helmeted Guineafowl							1	>1	10



Woodpigeon - by far the most common species recorded in the SWBS (Chris Hobden)

Arrival and departure dates of summer visitors, 2017

	First recorded date			Last recorded date		
	2017	1960 - 2016	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)	2017	1960 - 2016	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)
Garganey	10 Mar	2 Feb	11 Mar (± 11)	11 Aug	13 Dec	2 Oct (± 21)
Quail	22 May	6 Feb	16 May (± 29)	24 Aug	15 Nov ²	25 Aug (± 33)
Osprey	21 Mar	4 Mar	23 Mar (± 10)	1 Nov	9 Dec	27 Oct (± 8)
Little Ringed Plover	11 Mar	6 Mar	14 Mar (± 5)	14 Sep	8 Oct	21 Sep (± 9)
Wood Sandpiper	2 May	11 Feb	1 May (± 11)	20 Sep	3 Nov	30 Sep (± 15)
Little Tern	9 Apr	1 Apr	8 Apr (± 4)	18 Sep	4 Nov	19 Sep (± 9)
Roseate Tern	17 Apr ¹	17 Apr	10 May (± 17)	4 Sep	5 Oct	31 Jul (± 21)
Common Tern	28 Mar	14 Mar	26 Mar (± 7)	29 Oct	26 Nov	23 Oct (± 15)
Arctic Tern	24 Mar ¹	2 Apr	10 Apr (± 5)	27 Oct	31 Dec	14 Oct (± 17)
Common/Arctic Tern	27 Mar	10 Mar	2 Apr (± 4)	17 Sep	31 Dec	9 Oct (± 10)
Black Tern	29 Apr	9 Mar	8 Apr (± 4)	3 Oct	16 Nov ³	28 Sep (± 13)
Pomarine Skua	21 Apr	10 Mar	20 Apr (± 5)	-	31 Dec	25 Oct (± 36)
Turtle Dove	21 Apr	5 Feb	13 Apr (± 9)	27 Sep	18 Dec	27 Sep (± 18)
Common Cuckoo	3 Apr	21 Mar ⁴	2 Apr (± 5)	28 Sep	23 Oct ⁵	9 Sep (± 12)
Nightjar	10 May	14 Apr ¹⁴	5 May (± 8)	3 Sep	5 Nov	14 Sep (± 10)
Common Swift	16 Apr	7 Apr	13 Apr (± 4)	19 Sep	24 Nov	1 Oct (± 14)
Wryneck	27 Apr	22 Mar ¹⁸	14 Apr (± 9)	3 Oct	2 Nov ⁶	5 Oct (± 11)
Hobby	5 Apr	21 Mar	4 Apr (± 5)	29 Oct	9 Nov	24 Oct (± 8)
Sand Martin	11 Mar	27 Feb	10 Mar (± 8)	26 Oct	1 Dec ⁷	20 Oct (± 10)
Barn Swallow	4 Mar	4 Feb ¹⁷	9 Mar (± 9)	25 Nov	28 Dec ¹⁷	28 Nov (± 12)
House Martin	27 Mar	1 Feb	18 Mar (± 7)	6 Nov	18 Dec ⁸	17 Nov (± 11)
Willow Warbler	12 Mar	4 Mar	16 Mar (± 5)	27 Oct	27 Nov ⁹	24 Oct (± 8)
Wood Warbler	18 Apr	7 Apr	19 Apr (± 8)	16 Sep	7 Oct	15 Sep (± 14)
Sedge Warbler	25 Mar	23 Mar	1 Apr (± 5)	10 Oct	1 Nov	15 Oct (± 8)
Reed Warbler	4 Apr	2 Apr	7 Apr (± 4)	19 Oct	1 Dec	3 Nov (± 16)
Grasshopper Warbler	8 Apr	2 Apr	8 Apr (± 5)	16 Oct	1 Nov	9 Oct (± 5)
Garden Warbler	3 Apr	28 Mar	5 Apr (± 6)	14 Oct	16 Nov	16 Oct (± 11)
Lesser Whitethroat	9 Apr	4 Apr	9 Apr (± 4)	23 Oct	18 Nov ¹⁰	9 Oct (± 9)
Common Whitethroat	1 Apr	19 Mar	4 Apr (± 4)	24 Oct	17 Dec	23 Oct (± 16)
Ring Ouzel	7 Mar	9 Feb ¹¹	27 Mar (± 19)	12 Nov	26 Dec	11 Nov (± 6)
Spotted Flycatcher	27 Apr	10 Apr ¹⁵	25 Apr (± 8)	8 Oct	18 Nov	12 Oct (± 10)
Common Nightingale	6 Apr	21 Mar	5 Apr (± 3)	9 Sep	1 Oct ¹²	12 Sep (± 11)
Pied Flycatcher	5 Apr	1 Apr	11 Apr (± 6)	2 Oct	1 Nov	27 Sep (± 7)
Common Redstart	15 Mar	5 Mar	31 Mar (± 10)	27 Oct	26 Dec	25 Oct (± 24)
Whinchat	7 Apr	18 Feb	6 Apr (± 14)	1 Nov	2 Dec	27 Oct (± 11)
Northern Wheatear	6 Mar	13 Feb	5 Mar (± 10)	4 Nov	31 Dec	14 Nov (± 7)
Yellow Wagtail	25 Mar	12 Feb	26 Mar (± 9)	14 Oct	23 Nov ¹³	29 Oct (± 9)
Tree Pipit	3 Apr	24 Mar ¹⁶	31 Mar (± 6)	4 Oct	9 Nov	17 Oct (± 9)

Notes: ¹ county record early or late date; ² excludes historic December records; ³ excludes one in Cuckmere Valley 13-21 Nov 1954; ⁴ excludes one at Fairlight Cove on 15 Mar 1936; ⁵ excludes one at Goodwood on 11 Nov 1928; ⁶ excludes one at the Crumbles on 5 Nov 1947; ⁷ excludes record from

unknown location on 5 Dec 1911; ⁸ excludes three at Fishbourne on 22 Dec 1894; ⁹ excludes two historic records on 26 Dec 1892 and 1949; ¹⁰ excludes one at Burgess Hill on 21 Nov 1957 and known wintering birds; ¹¹ excludes one at Mannings Heath on 2 Feb 1905; ¹² excludes one at North Bersted on 19 Oct 1943; ¹³ excludes one at Sidlesham between 11 Dec 1960 and 14 Jan 1961; ¹⁴ excludes one at Pulborough on 8 Apr 1912; ¹⁵ excludes one at Hastings on 8 Apr 1909; ¹⁶ excludes record from unknown location on 17 Mar 1922; ¹⁷ excludes wintering one at Newick; ¹⁸ excludes one on 9 Mar 1908 and on 10 Mar 1918 both at Pulborough.

Departure and arrival dates of winter visitors, 2017

	Last recorded date			First recorded date		
	2017	1960 to 2016	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)	2017	1960 to 2016	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)
White-fronted Goose	15 Mar	25 May	3 Apr (\pm 33)	10 Dec	12 Sep	15 Oct (\pm 28)
Bewick's Swan	3 Mar	26 Apr	1 Mar (\pm 9)	12 Nov	6 Oct	12 Nov (\pm 15)
Velvet Scoter	5 Jun	15 Jun	14 May (\pm 15)	8 Oct	2 Aug	24 Oct (\pm 16)
Long-tailed Duck	22 Apr	14 Jun	25 Apr (\pm 42)	7 Oct	12 Aug	5 Nov (\pm 11)
Goldeneye	9 Apr	31 May	15 Apr (\pm 16)	14 Oct	6 Aug	12 Oct (\pm 26)
Smew	17 Mar	24 Apr	1 Mar (\pm 16)	-	22 Oct	2 Dec (\pm 19)
Goosander	14 Jun ¹	14 Jun	4 Apr (\pm 35)	27 Oct	12 Sep	24 Oct (\pm 13)
Black-throated Diver	14 May	21 Jun	21 May (\pm 10)	8 Oct	3 Aug	8 Oct (\pm 23)
Great Northern Diver	29 May	21 Jun	31 May (\pm 8)	22 Oct	16 Sep	19 Oct (\pm 11)
Red-necked Grebe	1 May	19 Jun	6 Apr (\pm 29)	15 Nov	13 Aug ²	15 Oct (\pm 29)
Hen Harrier	23 May	19 Jun	27 May (\pm 9)	16 Aug ⁶	4 Aug	24 Aug (\pm 14)
Purple Sandpiper	16 Apr	4 Jun	1 May (\pm 17)	8 Nov ¹	1 Jul	24 Sep (\pm 36)
Jack Snipe	21 Apr	19 May	14 Apr (\pm 14)	15 Sep	11 Aug	23 Sep (\pm 27)
Great Grey Shrike	31 Mar	5 May ⁴	30 Mar (\pm 9)	15 Oct	26 Sep ³	12 Oct (\pm 7)
Fieldfare	22 Apr	5 Jun	25 Apr (\pm 11)	27 Sep	6 Aug	28 Sep (\pm 8)
Redwing	2 May	26 May ⁵	19 Apr (\pm 9)	25 Sep	6 Aug	19 Sep (\pm 16)
Water Pipit	16 Apr	28 May	27 Mar (\pm 17)	22 Oct	1 Sep	30 Oct (\pm 8)
Brambling	15 Apr	12 May	17 Apr (\pm 11)	30 Sep	3 Sep	28 Sep (\pm 4)
Snow Bunting	9 Mar	6 May	13 Feb (\pm 23)	27 Oct	17 Sep	21 Oct (\pm 7)

Notes: ¹ earliest or latest county record; ² excludes one off Brighton on 3 Aug 1872; ³ excludes one at The Crumbles on 7 Sep 1899; ⁴ excludes one at Rye Hbr on 14 May 1950; ⁵ excludes two undated historic records of birds found dead in June; ⁶ one at Winchelsea on 5 Jul 2018.

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 ten-year average is included to indicate if the date quoted is unusual and is calculated from the 10 years prior to the current one. The standard deviation gives an indication of the reliability of the average (64% of values fall within one standard deviation). For example, a standard deviation of ± 7 means that 64% of the dates fall within 7 days of that average.

Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey 2017 - summary of counts in West Sussex

	AC	BD	BH	CL	GC	IC	LC	LS	SC	WC	WD
Woodcock	3	3	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	1	1
Stock Dove	1	1	-	1	-	-	2	3	-	3	7
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nightjar	16	6	-	-	2	7	7	-	1	4	1
Great Sp. Woodpecker	2	3	-	2	-	3	4	2	3	4	6
Green Woodpecker	2	1	1	2	5	3	5	3	5	5	5
Hobby	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Woodlark	4	9	2	4	1	6	2	-	2	2	5
Skylark	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Whitethroat	2	5	2	5	-	6	2	-	2	3	7
Dartford Warbler	8	7	-	-	-	6	3	-	1	-	1
Common Redstart	-	2	-	-	-	3	-	3	-	-	4
Eurasian Stonechat	5	9	-	2	-	6	4	-	1	1	4
Meadow Pipit	1	9	-	-	-	6	-	-	1	-	2
Tree Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linnet	6	4	-	2	-	3	13	-	2	3	3
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Common Crossbill	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Siskin	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	1
Yellowhammer	7	1	3	4	-	6	6	-	4	3	-
Reed Bunting	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

Figures relate to pairs or territories. The small hyphen (-) indicates that no territories were identified.

Key to sites	
AC	Ambersham & Heyshott Commons
BD	Black Down (Fernhurst)
BH	Broad Halfpenny
CL	Coates Common & Lords Piece (Fittleworth)
GC	Graffham Common
IC	Iping Common
LC	Lavington & Duncton Commons & Lavington Plantation
LS	Linchmere & Stanley Commons
SC	Stedham Common
WC	Woolbeding Common
WD	Weavers Down (Liss)
The above sites were the only ones surveyed this year	

New species for Sussex in 2017

Elegant Tern, Pagham Harbour, 10 June.

Alan Kitson

Miou (Muriel Helps) and I sat on the bench at Church Norton (SZ874957) facing east towards Tern Island in the harbour (say 300m away), the sun out to our right, a fresh W wind blowing. A few terns were resting on mudbars at say 200m – Sandwich, Common and Little Terns. We were watching them through x10 binoculars and a x32 Kowa 'scope. We had said that it would be handy if "it" appeared here and now, when suddenly out of nowhere, standing next to a Sandwich Tern, was a big tern with long black legs, massive shaggy black crest and long scimitar-shaped yellow-orange bill. "I've got it!" I shouted out loud, recognising it at once as the "sought-after one"!

Identified from rings (green over yellow on the left leg, white on the right with a metal ring above the knee) and DNA sampling, an adult male Elegant Tern from France had been seen on 7 June at Hayling Island, Hampshire, then yesterday afternoon had been seen to fly E towards Sussex, so this morning many observers were out looking for it in, for example, Chichester Harbour, but we had reckoned on Pagham Harbour, particularly Church Norton, where there were already plenty of terns, and our hunch had paid off.

We 'scoped it for five minutes (11:33 - 11:38am); it was preening a lot, which meant its bill was often hidden, but often too its bill was out in the open – all long and yellow-orange and scimitar-shaped, giving the game away that was for sure! Besides ourselves there was just John Lees sitting nearby, to whom we pointed it out, otherwise no-one with whom to share the great find. We set about Tweeting the news, which proved difficult and had to go via the phone to a friend in Cornwall. While we were thus distracted the Elegant Tern must have taken off, for now it was gone..... We had taken some pictures (Panasonic FZ72 Lumix) and soon set off back to Steyning to download, which we did and duly posted one or two on Twitter and then on the SOS website.

***Recorder's note:** this splendid and much admired bird was found by Andy Johnson at Fishery Creek, Hayling Island, Hampshire on 7 June. Two days later he saw it again. On this occasion it was fishing off Sandy Point, before departing ESE along the coast. It had been ringed as an adult male at the Banc d'Arguin, Gironde, on the Atlantic coast of France, where it was first seen in 2002. It has returned in several years since then, breeding with a Sandwich Tern on numerous occasions at both this site and in the Noirmoutier colony further north, producing hybrid young. It has been seen once in winter, close to Cape Town, South Africa, on 1 Jan 2007. Recent DNA analysis has confirmed that this bird and two other orange-billed terns breeding in France and Spain are all pure Elegant Terns. It was last reported at Pagham Harbour on 20 June 2017.*

Blue Rock Thrush, Beachy Head, 6 April.

Allsworth Redman

On a gloriously bright and breezeless early April morn, the 6th, I left home quite undecided as to which local area I should spend some spring birding time in. West Rise, Whitbread Hollow/Cow Gap or a visit to 'the headland', a location I had not been to in some months? Fortunately, I opted for the latter. What came with it was an encounter with a very special bird which had stopped off on route to mainland Europe after a long overwintering period in the Gloucestershire village of Stow-on-the-Wold.

My walk had been pretty quiet up until the old lighthouse, now turned B&B, with the best sighting being that of a lone Swallow over Shooter's Bottom. Mind you it was my first of the year so



Elegant Tern, Pagham Harbour, 16 June 2017 (Richard Wren)

I was happy and, what with the warming April sun on my skin and the singing of Skylarks, life was good. But it was about to get even better. What my eyes beheld on the stone walls of Belle Tout my brain could not comprehend. No, surely not! A Blue Rock Thrush. And a male at that!

I'd never been in this situation before with such a find. It was about 9am and no other birders were in the vicinity even though I had seen several distant locals earlier on. I don't use Twitter and at the time didn't have access to a birding alert site. I'm also still not believing what I have found and keep questioning myself trying to watch the bird and get word out at the same time.

I phone a good mate who is at work and he puts the sighting out on social media. Cheers lad. I can now relax and enjoy the find. Those moments before anyone else joined me will stay with me for a long, long time. I admired the bird's rich smoky blue-grey colour with vermiculation below highlighted in the bright spring sunshine and its long bill, which it was using with great proficiency, plucking from the air the flying insects that were all around. Just me and an amazing re-find of what had been a bit of a controversial bird. 'Wild or escapee?' That was the question on some birders' lips. I hadn't known at the time that I was looking at the Gloucestershire bird as I hadn't been following the unfolding tale. The bird had been found in a garden in Stow-on-the-Wold in late December 2016 and remained until 4 April. Many had questioned its origins.

The bird did give us a scare at one point having been disturbed and put to flight by the noise and appearance of a coach party of visiting teenagers marching up the hill just prior to the arrival of any other birders! But after a tense 15 minutes I was back on the bird as it sat atop a bush adjacent to the old lighthouse. Bingo!

It was nice to be joined by others watching and enjoying this rare visitor feeding up prior to its onward southerly journey. Good views were had throughout the day by many and it was just as well, as come the morning of the 7th the bird was nowhere to be found.

Hopefully this UK avian rarity that had graced this beautiful chalk cliff downland, for one day only, made a safe journey back to its breeding grounds. And for me the experience of Thursday 6th April 2017 will surely take some beating. A truly remarkable bird in my eyes and a memorable experience that I shall always treasure.



Blue Rock Thrush, Beachy Head, 6 April 2017 (Bob Eade)

The Sussex Ringing Report 2017

Val Bentley

As many of the species ringed in the county are trapped during their autumn migration period, weather conditions throughout the UK as a whole will affect the total of birds ringed in Sussex. The first few weeks of 2017 were relatively settled, though late February brought a period of unsettled Atlantic weather, albeit still mild. March to May were generally warmer than average, though there was a cold snap in late April, and the latter half of May saw above average rainfall. Although summer temperatures were generally warm, July and August also saw above average rainfall. Autumn temperatures were mild with less rainfall than usual during October. Mid -December brought cold weather and snow to the north and the Midlands, but the south-east escaped the worst of this. Extreme weather events, such as Storm Doris in February, affected other parts of the UK more than the south-east (www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2017/annual).

That 2017 was a better breeding year in productivity terms for many resident species was demonstrated by results from Constant Effort Sites (CES) ringing revealed by the BTO (Lifecycle Issue 7 Spring 2018); Blue Tit, Great Tit, Chaffinch and Greenfinch all did well. However some migrants fared less well; productivity decreased for both Willow Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat, while Blackcaps did better this year. Adult abundance for Garden Warblers was down 20% compared with the average for 2012-2016, but productivity increased by 21% which hopefully helped to redress the balance.

There were 41,600 birds ringed in Sussex in 2017, 13,430 more than in 2016, (See Table 1) with increases apparent at all the main sites in the county. Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG) saw numbers at Pett Level increase by over 70%. Nationally, however, the total was slightly lower than in 2016, though again over one million birds were ringed in Britain & Ireland this year. The combined East and West Sussex contributions thus represent approximately 4% of the overall total.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total	68,767	51,020	31,700	28,683	28,170	41,600
Rye Bay RG	53,439	34,752	15,883	12,847	11,124	19,137
Other sites	15,328	16,268	15,817	15,836	17,046	22,463

Table 1 Ringing totals in Sussex 2012-2017

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>. Some species are not included in the online figures; where individual ringers have advised me of these I have added them, but there may be others of which I am unaware.

There were five ringing groups operating mainly in Sussex in 2017; other ringers also kindly provided information on their individual activities.

With several of the ringing sites situated on migration routes, it is not surprising that summer visitors, heading south through the county in autumn, make up a large proportion of the annual totals (See Table 2). Indeed, Sussex contributed 18% of the overall number of Sedge Warblers ringed in the UK, 16% of Reed Warblers, nearly 15% of Blackcaps and over 13% of Garden Warblers.

Position in 2017	Species (with position in 2016)	2017		2016	
		Total	RBRG	Total	RBRG
1	Blackcap (1)	8099	4756	4095	2611
2	Chiffchaff (2)	5774	2604	3864	1684
3	Reed Warbler (3)	4049	2817	2783	1835
4	Sedge Warbler (4)	3909	3305	2108	1528
5	Blue Tit (6)	3135	517	1826	452
6	(A) Willow Warbler (5)	2479	838	1840	593
7	Goldfinch (7)	2007	332	1220	51
8	Goldcrest (11)	1331	247	632	243
9	Great Tit (8)	1187	157	878	165
10	Common Whitethroat (10)	1055	388	659	248
11	(R) Lesser Redpoll (17)	821	205	326	276
12	Robin (9)	659	186	848	213
13	(R) Grasshopper Warbler (16)	573	491	357	284
14	Blackbird (12)	519	194	563	164
15	Garden Warbler (-)	478	305	226	138
16	Wren (14)	441	121	452	135
17	(A) Dunnock (15)	434	73	427	90
18	Long-tailed Tit (-)	431	66	271	45
19	Greenfinch (13)	396	83	492	111
20	Reed Bunting (18)	345	88	304	114

Table 2. Sussex ringing totals for the 20 most ringed species in 2017/2016. Birds of conservation concern are marked as: (R) Red Listed (A) Amber Listed

There may have been a slight increase in ringing effort in 2017 in comparison with the previous few years, but all bar one of the most common 20 species listed above were ringed in far greater numbers than in 2016, reflecting the better productivity noted above. Of the summer visitors, almost twice as many new Blackcaps were caught, 85% more Sedge Warblers, 60% more Whitethroats, 50% more Chiffchaffs, 45% more Reed Warblers and 35% more Willow Warblers. The number of Garden Warblers ringed was double that of 2016. Of species where the majority are trapped in the autumn and winter, there were more than twice as many Goldcrests and Lesser Redpolls. Wren and Dunnock numbers remained stable, while those for Blackbird, Robin and Greenfinch showed a decline. There were also fewer of these three latter species ringed nationally in 2017; 2,300 fewer Blackbirds were ringed, Robins numbered 25,550 compared with 33,835 in 2016, while the Greenfinch total fell from 26,030 to 20,918, now representing only 2.05% of the combined total for Britain & Ireland, and less than a third of the 63,197 ringed in 2003. BTO Bird Trends (<https://blx1.bto.org/birdtrends/species.jsp?&s=grefi>) states “Although Greenfinch is currently still green listed in the UK, based on the trend at the time of the last review (Eaton et al. 2015), the current decline would raise red listing and caused it to be rated as ‘Endangered’ in a recent assessment of UK species which followed IUCN criteria and categories (Stanbury et al. 2017). Integrated population modelling shows that changes in survival have indeed been the strongest contributor to annual population change (Robinson et al. 2014).”

There were two species where the total ringed in the county represented more than 25% of the national total. As well as the Greenshank ringed by Farlington Ringing Group (see under Colour-ringing & Tagging Projects) once again it was Sussex, and RBRG in particular, which was most

successful in catching Grasshopper Warblers, with a combined total of 573. This was not only an increase of 216 over 2016, but amounted to over 28% of the national total; RBRG contributed 491, Cuckmere RG 52, and Beachy Head Ringing Station 28.

There were several species where five or fewer were ringed in 2017, including (with the Sussex total since 1979 in brackets), four Mandarins (30) one Common Pochard (20), one Cormorant (30), one Little Grebe (20), two Common Buzzards (39), one Common Snipe (524), five Dunlins (491), one Sandwich Tern (7), one Turtle Dove (104), one Nightjar (64), one Wryneck (62), one Water Pipit (18), one Aquatic Warbler (114), two Yellow-browed Warblers (37) and one Wood Warbler (155). The red-listed Aquatic Warbler, ringed by Cuckmere RG on 14 Aug, was the only one of this species to be ringed in Britain & Ireland in 2017.



Aquatic Warbler ringed at Charleston Reedbed, 14 August 2017 (Jake Everitt)

Colour ringing and tagging projects

Cuckoo. An adult male was tagged on 29 May at Chichester Hbr with the help of the Farlington RG. He was named Samson, and signals showed he had reached Poitiers (France) by 17 Jun from where he travelled on the westerly route through Spain. He had completed the desert crossing by 17 Jul and was in Nigeria by 9 Aug. However, contact was then lost, as was the case with several of the 2017 cohort of Cuckoos which received new, smaller, tags so it is unclear whether the tag failed or whether Samson had died. Further information on the BTO Cuckoo Tracking Project can be found on <https://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking>.

Honey-buzzard. In 2017, six Honey-buzzard chicks were colour-ringed at four different sites in the county, making a total now of 121 birds ringed in Sussex since the project started in 1997.

Peregrine. Five broods of Peregrine chicks, totalling 15, were colour-ringed in Sussex in 2017, by Jon Franklin and Graham Roberts. Birds previously ringed as chicks at Chichester Cathedral were reported breeding in Hull, Morden (south London), Southampton and Surrey. All sightings of colour-ringed Peregrines are greatly appreciated. Please send to: Graham.C.M.Roberts@btinternet.com



Redshank, Chichester Harbour (Pete Hughes)

Tree Sparrow. Unfortunately no Tree Sparrows were ringed in 2017, but Richard Black would appreciate details of any sightings of Tree Sparrows colour-ringed in previous years. Please email richard.black@rspb.org.uk

Greenshank and Redshank. The Greenshank colour-ringing and geolocator and Redshank colour-ringing project is run by the Farlington RG in partnership with Chichester Harbour Conservancy. Only 26 Greenshanks were ringed in the UK & Ireland in 2017, of which 11 were at Chichester Hbr. Five were retrapped, including two with geolocators; these were the last two to be retrieved. This was the final fieldwork in a project which began in March 2013, though there is still work to be done on analysing the data the geolocators provide. Birds retrapped included two which had been ringed in 2007. A total of 34 Redshanks were colour-ringed. Two Redshanks, ringed in 2005 and 2008, were retrapped at Thorney Island; two others, colour ringed in 2014 and 2015, were seen over 1800 km north in Iceland during early July. Further information can be found on <http://www.greenshank.info>.

Stone-curlew. A single chick was colour-ringed by The South Downs Stone-curlew Project this year and subsequently fledged (see also species account). Please email richard.black@rspb.org.uk with details of any sightings of birds, colour-ringed or otherwise.

Recoveries & Controls

Please note that the location of a Sparrowhawk recovery in 2016 on (p217 of *The Sussex Bird Report 2016*) should have read Hornsey (Greater London)

In this section, where no year is stated, the record relates to 2017. The following is a selection from the BTO On-line 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** colour-ringed in its first year in Alperton (Greater London) in 2015, had moved 20 km to Staines in 2016, and a further 36 km in 2017 to Newells Pond (Monks Gate) by 9 Mar. Three **Mallards** ringed by RBRG fell foul of hunters, one just across the Channel in northern France, but the others over 2000 km away near St Petersburg (Russian Federation). Similar fates befell three **Tufted Ducks**, ringed between 2014 and 2016, also by RBRG; one was shot near Calais and two in the Russian Federation, though these had moved over 3200 km ENE.

Three **Gannets**, all ringed as nestlings, were found dead along the Sussex coast in 2017. Two were from Les Etacs, a small group of islets off the coast of Alderney (Channel Islands), one of which had hatched in 2002 and the other in 2007. The third, found at Cooden in December, was ringed at Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth only three months earlier. A **Shag** found dead at Ovingdean in January was from a nest on the Isle of May (Fife), and a ring found at Eastbourne had belonged to another, ringed on the Farne Islands (Northumberland) in 2007.

In December 2016 the Knepp Estate **White Stork** reintroduction project took delivery of a bird which had been ringed six months earlier as a nestling just south of Warsaw (Poland), but which was subsequently found sick. It had recovered prior to arrival in the UK, and was noted in several different locations between July to September in the south and east of England, including Norfolk, Dorset, West Sussex (Pagham Hbr and Rustington) and the Isle of Wight, often in company with another colour-ringed individual, presumably from the same project. On 20 Sep it had crossed the Channel and was seen in Brittany. A **Spoonbill** seen at Pagham Hbr at the end of September hatched in Texel (Netherlands) in June, while a **Little Egret** at Warnham LNR on 7 Aug had been ringed at a nest 75 km away in Hertfordshire on 22 Jun.

The typical lifespan of a **Sparrowhawk** is four years (BTO Birdfacts), so a freshly dead individual found at Felpham on 21 Mar, ringed as a first year female at Portsmouth in November 2004, had done well to survive to the age of 12, though the longevity record is 17 years.

Two colour-ringed **Avocets** were reported, both at Rye Hbr, though one seen in April had come from Hartlepool and the other, seen in June, from near Beaulieu (Hampshire). Both had been ringed as nestlings, the first in 2016 and the second in 2014. This individual had also been in Suffolk in May 2016 and was back in Hampshire, at Poole Hbr, in October. A **Dunlin** which was found, predated, at Thorney Island on 8 Mar had survived for 17½ years since being ringed in its first year at Langenwerder Reserve (Germany), less than two years short of the species' longevity record. Another, ringed as an adult in Sweden in June 2007, was controlled by the Farlington RG on 19 Nov.

Two **Black-headed Gulls** confirmed as coming from across the Channel were ringed as nestlings. One at Frederikshavn (Denmark) on 15 Jun 2014, and has now been reported from the same area of Eastbourne three times, in 2014, 2016 and on 2 Feb 2017. The second was ringed on 31 May 2011 in Poland and was seen at Swanbourne Lane on 26 Jan. Numerous foreign-ringed **Mediterranean Gulls** were reported: one ringed in Belgium in 2015 was found dead at Pagham in September, while

colour rings were read at Pett Level on ten different birds from Belgium, nine from The Netherlands (including one ringed in 2000 and seen at Pett Level each year since 2010), five from Germany, four from Poland, three from France (including one ringed in 2001) and one from the Czech Republic. A **Great Black-backed Gull** ringed at Dungeness in 1995 had lived for more than 21 years but was found dead near Rye on 3 Jun, a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** ringed in Guernsey in 2013 was seen on the R Adur at Shoreham on 25 Feb, and a **Herring Gull** seen at Herne Bay (Kent) on 4 October had been ringed at Fairlight over 17 years previously, on 16 Jul 2000. The oldest known **Great Skua** was a bird from Shetland found dead in the Netherlands in on 15 Jul 2017, 38 years to the day from when it was ringed, but another Shetland-ringed bird was over 31 years old when it was found dead at Bexhill-on-Sea on 1 Oct.

Two relatively long-lived **Barn Owls** were discovered in West Sussex, the first found dead in December was into its 9th year since being ringed as a nestling in 2009, while the second, retrapped on 22 Jan, had been ringed as an adult female in July 2010. An unusual recovery for Sussex was a **Raven**, killed in a collision with a car at Northchapel on 4 Dec, ringed in April 2016 in a nest 12 km away across the county border in Surrey.

Only 28 **Marsh Tits** were ringed in Sussex in 2016, but this figure increased to 72 in 2017, and one long-lived individual was retrapped at Sedlescombe on 8 Apr, over seven years since it was ringed in December 2009. Nine years had elapsed since a **Swallow**, trapped in its first year by RBRG on 20 Aug 2008, was controlled in Loir-et-Cher (France) on 19 Sep.

Cetti's Warblers are largely sedentary, though *The Birds of Sussex* mentions three occasions when birds ringed in Northern Europe have been found in Sussex. However, a southerly movement is more unusual, as in the case of a first year bird ringed 134 km NNE in Suffolk on 26 Aug, controlled at Pett Level on 16 Oct and 3 Nov. Two Sussex-ringed **Willow Warblers** were reported overseas. A bird ringed at Steyning on 15 Aug 2014 was trapped in Alderney on 14 Apr, and another ringed on 20 Aug by Cuckmere RG was found dead just six days later 872 km SSW at Santander in northern Spain. Eight different **Chiffchaffs** ringed further north in the UK in 2017 were controlled at different sites along the Sussex coast as they migrated south, and four ringed in autumn 2017 in Sussex were controlled abroad, in Belgium (two), Morocco and France; the last of these had moved 804 km SSW to Landes (France) in only five days. Another Chiffchaff, ringed in Spain on 22 Jan, may have preferred to winter in Southern England in 2017/18 as it was trapped at Ladywell (Coombes) on 25 Nov. An individual ringed as a first year at Pett Level on 2 Oct 2014 was killed by a cat in Gronigen (Netherlands) on 2 Apr.

Numerous **Sedge Warblers** were controlled during 2017. Two found at Pett Level had been ringed in August in Orkney and Northumberland, while a third was ringed as a nestling in June at Meikle Loch (Aberdeenshire). Two birds controlled on the Isle of Man had come from Pett Level, both first year birds when ringed in 2012 and 2015, while no less than 18 ringed by RBRG during late July and August were controlled on the continent within the following two or three weeks. Of these 16 were found in France, one in Belgium and one in Spain. Six **Reed Warblers** ringed further north earlier in the year were trapped at sites in Sussex as they moved south, two ringed at Pett Level were controlled in south-west France and another from the Knepp Estate was controlled in Navarra (Spain). A rather interesting report was of an individual ringed by Cuckmere RG on 8 Aug 2013 which was found in Mauritania on 4 Sep. This bird was an adult in 2013 so it could conceivably have passed through Mauretania 10 or more times and flown 36,000 km or more. It was caught inside someone's house and released. Among the more long-lived individuals encountered were two ringed in 2009 and one, retrapped at Pett Level on 21 Jul, ringed on 24 Jul 2007. Four foreign-ringed **Blackcaps** were trapped, from France (two), Belgium and Spain, while two Sussex-ringed individuals were controlled in Belgium, one in France, one in Gibraltar and two in Portugal.



Willow Warbler of the northern race *acredula*, ringed at Cissbury on 30 September 2017 (Val Bentley)

Goldcrests only weigh between five and six grams, yet it is known that they cross the North Sea (Wernham et al 2002). Though there were no foreign visitors to Sussex reported in 2017, birds controlled in the county had originated from Tyne & Wear, Warrington and Yorkshire.

There were 13 foreign-ringed **Starlings** discovered in Britain & Ireland in 2017 of which 10 had come from the Baltic states, including one ringed in Lithuania in July 2012, found dead at Upper Beeding on 22 Feb. An unusual find near Hastings was just a ring which had been put onto a nestling Starling 2 km away in 1984; as the longevity record for the species is only 17 years, it must have parted from its owner a long time earlier! Thrush movements from the continent comprised a **Blackbird** ringed in Denmark on 26 Mar 2016, trapped at Pett Level on 1 Nov, a **Redwing** ringed in autumn 2016 in Belgium which was at the Knepp Estate on 11 Feb and a **Song Thrush** ringed in Belgium on 8 Oct 2015 which was killed by a cat in Lewes on 20 Oct. Another Song Thrush moved in the opposite direction; ringed as a first-year bird at Beachy Head on 9 Oct 2010 and found dead 1221 km SSW in northern Portugal on 29 Jan.

The team at Ladywell (Coombes) ringed a first year male **Chaffinch** on 9 Dec 2015, which was controlled near Antwerp (Belgium) on 20 Oct. The longest distance travelled by **Lesser Redpolls** controlled in the county was 790 km, by a bird ringed in December 2014 in Ordiequish Forest (Moray) and trapped at Beachy Head on 30 Oct. Travelling a shorter distance but moving across the Channel was a bird ringed at Beachy Head on 16 Oct, controlled 393 km E at Noord-Brabant (Netherlands) ten days later. Two recently ringed **Goldfinches** controlled in East Sussex this year had moved a long way south, one from Durham and the other from South Lanarkshire, and another, trapped at Hardham on 20 Nov 2015 was killed by a French cat in the Sarthe department 336 km S on 19 Mar.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are given to all ringers and non-ringers who have provided the data which has contributed to this report. In particular, several people have provided further information and advice. They include Rye Bay Ringing Group, Bob Edgar, Mark Mallalieu, John Newnham, Tim Parmenter, and Barrie Watson. Richard Black, Mark Mallalieu, Peter Potts and Graham Roberts provided project details.

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The Sussex Waxwing invasion of the 2016 - 2017 winter

James Mc Culloch

The invasion of the Waxwing *Bombus garrulus* into Sussex and other parts of the UK during the winter of 2016-2017 was a treat enjoyed by many, both in Sussex and country-wide. In most years this species is restricted to the east coast of northern England and Scotland, but major invasions typically occur every 5-10 years. In these invasion years, Waxwings can be recorded across the country sometimes with large numbers reaching Sussex including approximately 1200 in the winter of 1995-1996 and 2000 in the winter of 2004-2005 (Thomas 2014).

In invasions such as these, counties further north and on the east coast invariably see the earliest and highest numbers of Waxwings, presumably due to their closer proximity to the more regular wintering areas in Scandinavia and northern continental Europe. This was the case in the most recent invasion as well, judging from the graphs shown on BirdTrack (www.birdtrack.net) with the first birds arriving in late October 2016 in Scotland and northern England, with more birds arriving further south in Norfolk in early November which may have crossed the North Sea from The Netherlands. Prior to 8 Nov 2016, there were already three-figure counts at some sites in the north-east yet it was not until 29 Nov 2016 that the first birds of the winter were recorded in Sussex.

Sussex records

The records received by the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) have been analysed and simplified into a table detailing the locations, sites and maximum counts recorded over the date ranges at those sites (Table 1).

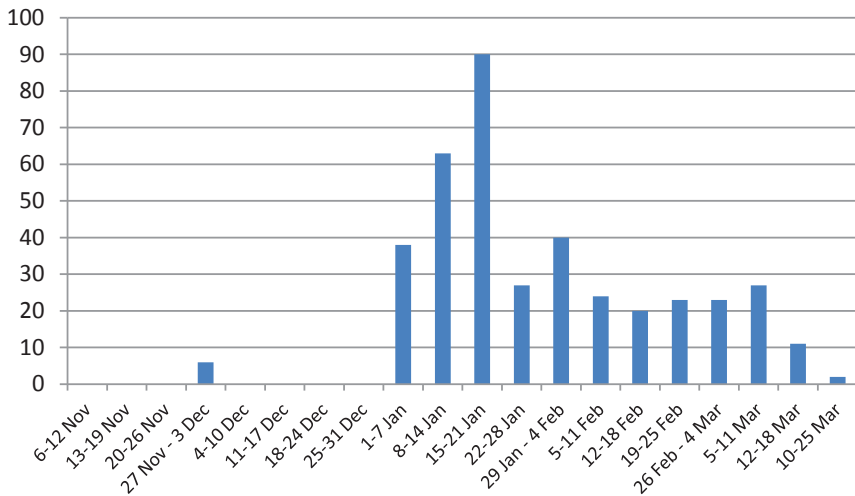
Table 1. A summary of the locations where Waxwing flocks were recorded.

Site	Grid ref.	Dates present	Max.count
Arundel WWT	TQ0207	29 Nov 2016	2
Bewbush Drive, Crawley	TQ2535	29-30 Nov 2016	4
Rye	TQ9120	4 Jan 2017	36
Burgess Hill	TQ3118	5 Jan 2017	2
Beachy Head	TV5895	11 Jan 2017	15
Crawley	TQ2636	12 Jan - 7 Mar 2017	16
Southgate, Crawley	TQ2735	12 Jan 2017	1
Angmering	TQ0604	13 Jan 2017	5
East Grinstead	TQ3739	14-19 Jan 2017	35
Waite's Barn, Fairlight Cove	TQ8711	14 Jan 2017	1
Ridge Road, Ashdown Forest	TQ4432	14 Jan 2017	5
Brighton	TQ3104	18-20 Jan 2017	12
Crowborough	TQ5030	18-29 Jan 2017	18
Groombridge	TQ5337	18 Jan 2017	2
Cliff End, Pett Level	TQ8813	20 Jan 2017	40
Aldingbourne	SU9204	22 Jan 2017	1
Lewes	TQ4110	22-23 Jan 2017	9
Hollingbury	TQ3008	28 Jan 2017	2
Bexhill	TQ7407	3-26 Feb 2017	7

Seaford	TV4899	5 Feb 2017	1
Chichester		6 Feb 2017	4
Marden's Hill, Ashdown Forest	TQ4332	7 Feb 2017	15
Fontwell	SU9507	8 Feb 2017	1
Shoreham-by-Sea	TQ2204	12-15 Feb 2017	5
Ardingly Reservoir	TQ3329	15 Feb 2017	5
Wakehurst Place	TQ3331	17 Feb - 18 Mar 2017	9
Hove	TQ2904	27 Feb - 24 Mar 2017	5
Burgess Hill	TQ3118	20 Feb 2017	5
Falmer	TQ3509	21 Feb 2017	6
Southborough	TQ5742	10 Mar 2017	15
Paddockhurst Park	TQ3233	17 Mar 2017	5

As the records show, Waxwings only started to arrive in Sussex in larger numbers in early January 2017 with very few records in late 2016. The increase in numbers during the first two months of 2017 shown in Figure 1 is possibly a result of the Waxwings arriving first in northern England and Scotland and exhausting food supplies there before moving further south later in the winter to find new food sources.

Figure 1. *The weekly maximum counts in Sussex from November 2016 to March 2017.*



Despite records from two sites in late November, which might have suggested that there would be further records to come in the final month of 2016, no records were received by the SOS in December. One reason for this might be that the November birds migrated directly into southern England rather than having arrived further north first before filtering down as food sources were depleted. This would therefore mean that arrivals from January onwards were more likely to be birds which had already moved through the north of the UK.

The EuroBirdPortal graphic provided online by the European Bird Census Council (eurobirdportal.org) shows that in most years Waxwings migrating to their wintering sites in Europe arrive in large numbers into Denmark a week or two prior to reaching the UK (European

Bird Census Council 2015) before then moving into the Netherlands and Belgium. Therefore, the birds that arrived in Sussex in November may have taken this route, which was perhaps accelerated due to a lower density of food compared to that available in the UK.

Records of Waxwings at five sites in March were received by the SOS. Three of these sites were the locations of small long-staying groups that had found a food source large enough to support the flock; these were in Hove, Crawley and Wakehurst Place. The Paddockhurst Park record presumably involves the Wakehurst Place birds, as the same number were recorded flying over Paddockhurst Park as were at seen Wakehurst Place that same day. As the sighting was during the afternoon it is possible that the birds were flying towards a roosting location north of Wakehurst Place. The Southborough record was the other one-day observation, and as there were no other flocks nearby at the time of the record it is possible that the group was just flying through, either back north to their breeding location or further south in search of new food sources.

There was no bias of records towards particular areas of Sussex, although there were very few records in the less populated areas of inland Sussex such as north-western West Sussex and central East Sussex where there may have been a lower concentration of favoured food plants which are often present in urban and suburban localities. Figure 2 shows the distribution of Waxwings in the county during the winter of 2016-2017 using records received by the SOS.

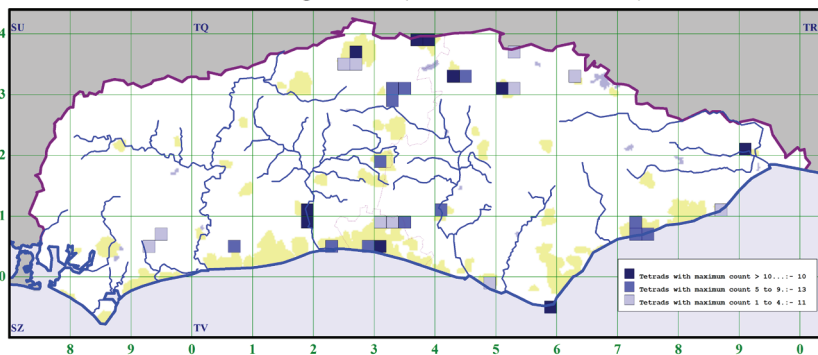


Figure 2. The distribution of Waxwing records in Sussex during the winter of 2016-2017.

There was one record of a colour-ringed bird during the winter in Sussex: a female in Bewbush, Crawley in January. Many of the colour-ringed Waxwings seen in the UK are birds ringed in and around Aberdeen by the Grampian Ringing Group. It was therefore not surprising, although nonetheless interesting, to find out that the bird, a first-year female, was ringed in Westhill in Aberdeenshire on 3 Dec 2016. This backs up the presumptions made that most Sussex Waxwings had first arrived in the UK further north before filtering southwards.

Likely causes of the invasion

Irruptions or invasions such as this of not only Waxwings but many species are usually caused by food shortage (Svårdson 1957). Svårdson (1957) cited a work by Lack (1954) that suggested that high bird density is also a factor in determining whether an invasion takes place. Breeding success seemed to have been excellent in species such as the Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* in the breeding season prior to an invasion of that species (Svårdson 1957). Both good breeding success and a subsequent food shortage often therefore come together to stimulate very large invasions, although invasions do still occur when only one of these factors is relevant.

The invasion of Waxwings into Britain and Europe during 1965-1966 is a perfect example of how these events arise (Cornwallis and Townsend 1968). The previous autumn/winter was mild and berries of rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* were abundant. Waxwings therefore wintered mainly within their breeding area rather than migrating further south to find food supplies. This improved the survival rate, presumably because the birds were not subjected to the risks associated with migration such as long flights causing exhaustion. By the winter of 1965-1966 when the invasion occurred, there was an above-average population of Waxwings and a poor berry crop as the plants were 'tired' after the bumper fruit production of the previous year. This led to high numbers of birds migrating south into Europe looking for food.

The diet of the Sussex Waxwings

Waxwings are not specialist feeders; they are able to feed on most fruits with efficiency, especially small berries such as those of Cotoneaster as well as apples. The diet of Cedar Waxwings *Bombicilla cedrorum* during the non-breeding season approaches 100% sugary fruits, and the other members of the family including the Waxwing are thought to share a very similar diet (del Hoyo, Elliott and Christie 2005). Waxwings also feed on invertebrates and are often observed 'fly-catching' in the spring prior to leaving the UK.

Several records received by the SOS included details of their feeding behaviour (Figure 3). Reports of the feeding behaviour of Waxwings during the winter were also taken from the SOS "recent sightings" website page (www.sos.org.uk). Records were received of birds feeding on the fruits of five plant genera: *Malus* (apple and crab-apple); *Rosa* (rose); *Cotoneaster*; *Sorbus* (rowan) and *Davidia* (paper handkerchief). There was also a record of birds feeding on the buds of *Carpinus* (hornbeam).

The most interesting feeding observation of Waxwings during the winter of 2016-2017 in Sussex was that of the flock at Wakehurst Place feeding on the fruits of the paper handkerchief tree *Davidia involucrata*. The paper handkerchief tree is a non-native species, common in larger gardens in the UK and North America. It has a fruit a little smaller than a kiwi *Actinidia deliciosa* (Figure 4) with average dimensions 4 cm long and 3 cm wide. The fruit consists of a central large, hard seed surrounded by a dry fruit and a coarse, firm skin, and is very unlike the more regular diet of Waxwings of small, soft and juicy berries.

The birds present (a flock which reached a maximum of nine birds although reducing to two before departure) were recorded to be feeding on the fruits of a *Sorbus* to begin with before moving on to the *Davidia* tree once the berries on the *Sorbus* had been depleted. What seems peculiar is why the Waxwings remained to feed on the *Davidia* fruits which are so unlike the more regular diet of the species, rather than moving to more standard food sources elsewhere. Several possible reasons for this are considered here, but the actual reason remains unclear.

The first possibility is that the fruits possess certain nutrients that are lacking in the standard berries consumed by Waxwings. The waxwing family is unusual in that they are one of the most frugivorous families in the world. As already mentioned, berries can make up nearly 100% of the Cedar Waxwing diet during the winter months; the family has evolved to survive on what are very sugary fruits low in nutrients (del Hoyo, Elliott and Christie 2005). Perhaps the birds at Wakehurst Place were feeding on *Davidia* fruits in order to supplement their diet with much-needed nutrients after spending much of the winter feeding on sugar-rich and nutrient-poor berries.

Cedar Waxwings in North America are known to balance their diet of certain berries with other non-berry foods such as *Populus* catkins (Witmer 2001). In this situation the catkins provide a supplement of protein. The simultaneous feeding on catkins and berries allows the Cedar Waxwings

to maintain a healthier body mass than is possible when they feed solely on berries. However, the Waxwings at Wakehurst Place were not seen to feed on sugary berries such as *Sorbus* after they began to feed on the *Davidia* fruits.

Another possibility could relate to the environment the site provides rather than the specific food that they were feeding on. Perhaps while feeding on the *Sorbus* berries the flock found Wakehurst Place to be a safe environment in which they could feed as there were few predators about. The *Davidia* tree is indeed close to the main visitor attractions of the gardens, and therefore there are a lot of human visitors passing close-by; this may discourage predators therefore reducing the risk of predation.

It was also interesting to read reports that the Waxwings at Wakehurst Place also fed on the buds of the adjacent *Carpinus* tree. Being the nearest tree to the *Davidia* tree, the flock was regularly seen using it for resting and preening. Buds of trees are occasionally eaten by Waxwings although usually during the breeding season when fruits are less common, rather than during periods when they would be in the UK. This could further suggest that the Waxwings remained at Wakehurst Place for the environment and fed on anything that was available there.

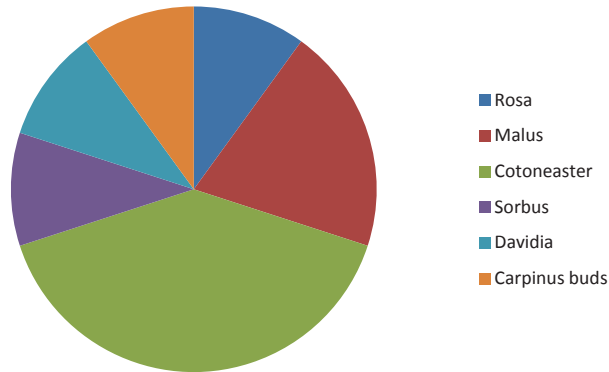


Figure 3. The proportions of all recorded Waxwing flocks (for which information on food plants was available) feeding on different plant genera.



Figure 4. A fruit from the *Davidia involucrata* tree at Wakehurst Place which may have been partially consumed by Waxwings.

Other behaviours observed

Some records received by the SOS included details of other behaviours observed in the Waxwings during the winter. Flocks were regularly seen using taller trees nearby to their chosen food sources as places to rest and look out for predators prior to descending. This was mainly observed in flocks which were exploiting a source such as a Cotoneaster bush which was low and would not give an elevated view of the surroundings.

The typical behaviour noted in flocks at several locations in Sussex during the winter was as follows: the flock would be seen commuting between a tall, bare tree and a food source with lower elevation such as a Rosa or Cotoneaster bush. The flock would cluster at the top of the bare tree, such as the Salix as observed in East Grinstead, before flying down at short intervals to eat as many berries as they could in a few minutes before returning to the tall tree. The Waxwings at Hove were seen to be perching in tall trees near to the berry source while descending at 15-minute intervals and eating approximately a dozen berries each time.

Another behaviour unrelated to feeding was observed in the Wakehurst Place flock. Although the flock peaked at nine birds, near to the end of their stay the number had decreased to just two birds. These two birds were noted to be staying very close together and the prospect of them being a pair seems likely. Indeed, courtship behaviour was seen by one observer in two Waxwings in the gardens, on a date when there were still other birds present. Although it is impossible to be certain there does seem to be a high likelihood that these two birds exhibiting courtship behaviour were the same two that remained at the site after the other birds in the flock had departed. The courtship behaviour observed at Wakehurst Place was very typical of that generally performed by Waxwings which comprises food exchanges between the two birds, with the bird holding the food hopping away and then hopping back to the other bird before passing over the item (del Hoyo, Elliott and Christie 2005).

Roosting is a behaviour that is seldom discussed in relation to Waxwings. Flocks were recorded to be roosting in bare trees near to food supplies. However, it is more likely that these were just daytime resting trees as they would be quite exposed. Waxwings are known to roost at night in trees with dense foliage including hedges and conifer plantations (del Hoyo, Elliott and Christie 2005). There is a chance that a flock recorded flying over Ashdown Forest in January were part of the large East Grinstead flock looking for pine trees in which to roost. The observer noted them as flying low over heathland, a habitat where it is uncommon for Waxwings to be found as their favourite berries are infrequent. Furthermore, the low-flying behaviour would seem to suggest that it is unlikely the birds were migrating. There are records of Waxwings roosting in pines in southern England, such as in Hampshire in the early 2000s when a flock was observed roosting in low pine scrub.

There were also a couple of reports of Waxwings observed alongside other bird species. The first record referred to the large flock of 30+ present at East Grinstead for a few days. This flock was joined by two to three Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* in their resting tree, yet the two species were not seen to feed together. The second record related to two that were present in Crawley; they were seen to be feeding in the same apple tree as a Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, although no specific interaction between the two species was noted.

Ages and sexes

Although only one of the records received by the SOS during the winter contained details of the ages or sexes of the birds involved – two first-year birds at Hollingbury Industrial Estate on 28 January which may have been a male and a female – analysis of photos and reports submitted to the website sightings page (www.sos.org.uk) have revealed a normal spread between adults and first-year birds and between both sexes. More first-year birds were observed than adults which would

be expected due to the short life-span of the species. There was a roughly even proportion of males and females.

The easiest method of determining the age and sex of a Waxwing is to look at the plumage on the wing. On the primaries, adults will have white tips which appear like hooks. Males can be separated from females by having more red waxy tips to the secondaries, and this separation is best done by comparing nearby birds. Adults will have more waxy tips than first-year birds so a combination with the presence of the white primary tips is the best way to age and sex a Waxwing.

Summary

In most winters there are very few or no Waxwings recorded in Sussex, and therefore it was special to be able to experience an irruption in the county. Sightings were spread widely over the county throughout the first-winter period of 2017 with several large flocks, such as the 35 in East Grinstead and 36 in Rye (both in January), as well as several long-staying flocks. Although no standardised survey took place in Sussex or elsewhere in the country, there were good numbers of records generated which allowed this article to be written. Some records also came with details of interesting behaviour, especially of the birds at Wakehurst Place.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to all the recorders who submitted their sightings to the SOS including through applications such as BirdTrack. Without these records, this report on this very interesting event could not have been written. The author would like to thank Mark Mallalieu for providing details of the Paddockhurst Park sighting, allowing a presumption to be made about what the birds were doing, Caz Robertson for details on the courtship behaviour observed in the Wakehurst Place birds, and Tony Davis for helpful comments regarding the writing of this article. Finally, the author is also thankful to Dr Helen Crabtree for support in writing this article, as well as to Dr John Newnham for providing all the Sussex Ornithological Society records and creating the map.

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Waxwing, Lewes, January 2017 (Bob Eade)

Kittiwakes at Seaford and beyond

David H Howey

Introduction

Black-legged Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* (hereafter simply Kittiwakes) are the world's most numerous species of gull. In 2000 the global population was approximately five million breeding pairs of which some four hundred thousand were in the British Isles. At that time there were 800–1000 apparently occupied nests (AONs) in Sussex. In global terms the Sussex numbers may appear insignificant but the colony which is now at Splash Point in Seaford is the largest on the south coast of England and also the only cliff-nesting seabird colony in Sussex.

This article traces the history of Kittiwakes breeding in Sussex and then explores trends, changes and the challenges facing Kittiwakes, both in Sussex and nationally.

History of Kittiwakes breeding in Sussex

The first confirmed record of Kittiwakes breeding in Sussex was in 1976 when two young were raised at four nests on the chalk cliffs at Newhaven. This small colony grew rapidly over the next four years and by 1980 there were 204 AONs and 135 young were counted (James 1981). This rapid growth continued with 573 AONs reported in 1983 (Prater 1985) and a peak of 1260 reported in 1990 by which time another colony had formed at Splash Point, Seaford. The Seaford colony grew from 1994 onwards while the Newhaven colony declined. It has been suggested that the decline of the Newhaven colony may have been a result of a combination of cliff falls and human disturbance in the form of paragliders launching from Castle Hill, Newhaven (Newnham *et al.* 2002). The Newhaven site was finally abandoned in 2011 at which time the Splash Point colony peaked at 1128 AONs. Since then the number of breeding pairs at Seaford has fluctuated widely between 413 and 1120.

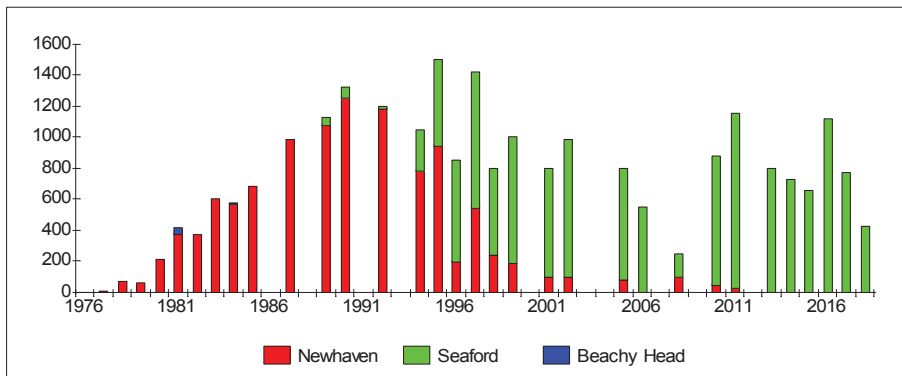


Figure 1. The number of apparently occupied nests (AONs) at Newhaven and Splash Point, Seaford 1976–2018.

It is generally accepted that a productivity level of 0.8 per nesting pair is required for a colony to be self-sustaining (Coulson 2011). With productivity at just 0.66 in 1980 the rapid increase in the numbers of breeding birds at Newhaven in the 1980s cannot be accounted for purely by high productivity. Instead it required major recruitment from elsewhere. This can occur for a variety of

reasons. It has been shown that when Kittiwakes leave their wintering areas to breed for the first time most male Kittiwakes return to their natal colony but only a small number of females do so, although most will nest relatively close to their birthplace (Coulson *et al.* 1992). If breeding is successful in a colony birds will return year after year but if for any reason breeding success is low, birds may move to other colonies (Aebischer *et al.* 1990).

Newly-formed colonies where there are available nesting ledges are clearly attractive. Recruitment may be from adjacent or distant colonies and colour-ringed recruits at Splash Point were shown to involve one from a colony in northern France and another from the urban colony on the River Tyne (Thomas 2014). Ringed birds found dead on the Sussex coast have originated from Finisterre, France (one), Dover (two) and Northumberland and Tyne and Wear (four) but there is no evidence that these birds had been nesting in Sussex (James 1996).

Status and trends

Over the past ten years there has been considerable fluctuation in the numbers of Kittiwakes breeding at Splash Point but until 2018 the colony has fared better than many others along the south coast. Table 1 (based on Hamilton *et al.* 2016 and updated) shows that the total number of breeding Kittiwakes in the region fell by 66% in just fifteen years between 1998 and 2013. Some areas suffered even larger declines with the Shetland breeding population dropping from 54,564 in 1981 to just 3856 in 2014 (Heubeck *et al.* 2015) and the St Kilda population declining from 11,485 in 1959 to only 448 in 2016 (Murray 2002, Miles *et al.* 2017); this is a decline of over 90% in both cases. The overall decline resulted in Kittiwakes being red-listed in 2016 as a species of high conservation concern (Hayhow *et al.* 2016).

There have been numerous papers published exploring the reasons for the catastrophic decline in Kittiwake numbers. Focus has primarily been on the reduction in the availability of sandeels and climate change. These and other factors are discussed below.

	Seabird Colony Register 1985	1998-2001		2007-2013		2016		2017	
		Colonies	AON	Colonies	AON	Colonies	AON	Colonies	AON
Kent	4	2	1938	2	38	0	0	0	0
Sussex	1	2	1002	1	1128	1	1120	1	773
Dorset	2	2	75	2	46	1	15		
Devon	8	5	968	4	304	3	302		
Lundy	1	1	237	1	127			1	238
Cornwall N	23	11	1429	4	406	3	465	3	670
Cornwall S	6	4	191	2	97	2	126	2	145
Scilly	14	5	281	1	59	1	5	1	30
Totals	53	28	6128	16	2108	10 colonies and 2173 AON			

Table 1. Numbers of colonies and AONs in south-coast counties. The AON figures for the years 1998-2001 are the maxima during that period. The AON figures for the years 2007-2013 are the latest in that period. The totals of colonies and AONs for 2016-2017 are based on the latest available data.

Requirements of breeding Kittiwakes

The two most obvious requirements for breeding Kittiwakes are suitable nesting sites with minimal disturbance and the availability of food within a reasonable distance of the nesting sites.

Although the Sussex chalk cliffs stretch almost continuously for over 25 km from Brighton marina to the western edge of Eastbourne they provide remarkably few sites suitable for a Kittiwake colony. Between Brighton marina and Saltdean and between Peacehaven and Friars Bay undercliff walkways have been constructed and the chalk cliffs 'trimmed' to minimize the risk of rock falls. Consequently there are very few suitable ledges remaining. The chalk cliffs at Seven Sisters and Beachy Head are sheer and again have insufficient ledges for a Kittiwake colony. The remaining sections are between Saltdean and Peacehaven, between Friars Bay and Newhaven, and at Seaford Head. The first section contains only some crevices used by nesting Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*. As mentioned earlier, the cliffs west of Newhaven were the site of the original Kittiwake colony which was abandoned, possibly due to a combination of cliff falls and human disturbance. This leaves Seaford Head but even here it is only the western end of the cliffs that provide sufficient suitable ledges for a viable Kittiwake colony.

Disturbance at a colony may be in the form of human activity or by potential predators. When disturbance does occur the Kittiwakes will undertake panic flights in which the birds leave their nests and swoop downwards *en masse* with the return to the nests occurring several minutes later. Although this provides an exciting spectacle it leaves the unattended eggs and chicks vulnerable to predation by large gulls *Laridae* or crows *Corvidae*. At Seaford, human activity is currently not an issue although helicopters flying too close or the use of drones in the vicinity would undoubtedly cause panic. A Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* near the colony would certainly produce a similar response.

In other parts of the country Kittiwakes may face competition from Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* for nesting ledges but this is not a problem for the Seaford birds. A much greater concern is the increasing frequency of cliff falls. The majority of recent falls have occurred along the Seven Sisters to Beachy Head stretch but three falls at Seaford Head to the east of the colony were ominously close.

A readily available food supply with which to feed nestlings is clearly essential if a Kittiwake colony is to survive. In many parts of Britain lesser sandeels *Ammodytes marinus* form a key prey species not only for Kittiwakes but also for other seabirds and for predatory marine fish. Lesser sandeels are fished commercially in vast quantities for the production of animal feed and fish oil. Towards the end of the last century sandeel fishing was carried out on an industrial scale with up to a million tonnes of lesser sandeels landed each year in the North Sea (Frederiksen 2004). This was considered to be a major contributory factor in the rapid decline in the number of Kittiwakes breeding in Shetland and resulted in restrictions and bans on sandeel fishing in critical areas. It has also been suggested that sea surface temperature influences the abundance of sandeels with increased temperatures in winter reducing availability during the next Kittiwake breeding season (Frederiksen 2007) with a consequent impact on Kittiwake productivity (Rindori *et al.* 2000). Rising sea temperatures may make reduced sandeel availability an increasing problem in the future.

There are no commercial sandeel fisheries in Sussex and in fact sandeels are scarce in the inshore waters. Surveys undertaken in the period 2010-2012 revealed that Kittiwakes favoured an area some 35 km south-west of Seaford (Howey 2013). There was no indication as to what the birds were feeding on. If sandeels were not present in the area then it is possible that sprats *S. sprattus*, juvenile herrings *Clupea harengus* or gobies *Aphia* were the prey species.

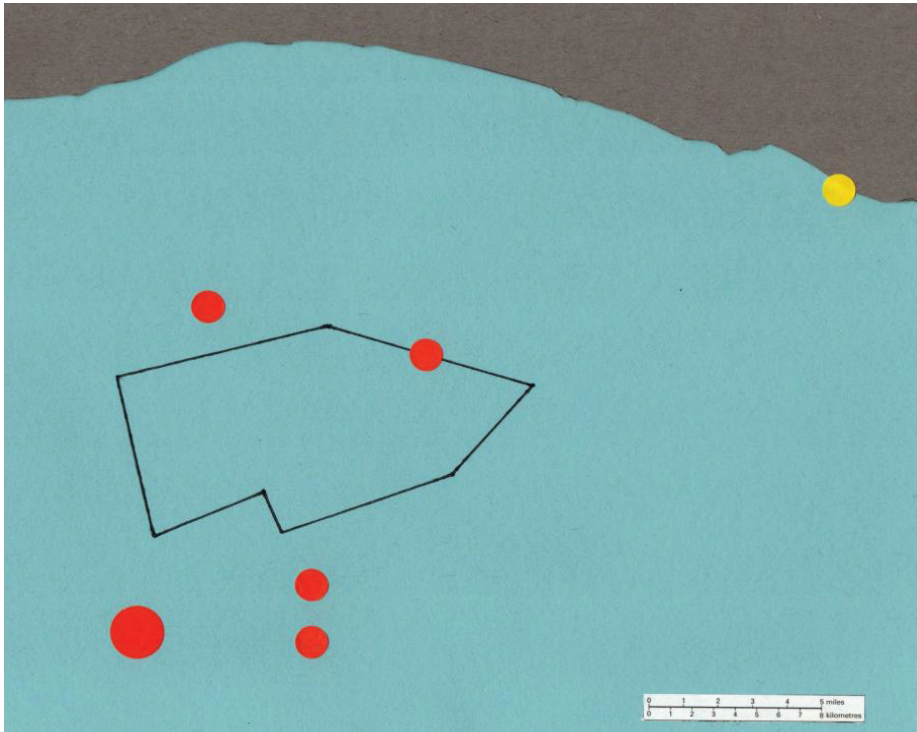


Figure 2: Feeding areas of Kittiwakes (orange) prior to the construction of the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm. The offshore wind farm is shown in black and the Seaford Kittiwake colony location in yellow.

Published guidelines for offshore wind farms (King *et al.* 2009) state that “a list of all SSSI species together with predicted impacts, including cumulative, should be included in the environmental statement”. The Kittiwake colony at Splash Point lies within the Seaford to Beachy Head SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Unfortunately, Kittiwakes are not listed in the SSSI designation as they were not nesting at Splash Point when the designation was made. Consequently, as the Seaford birds were not listed as being within an SSSI, they were not considered when the possible collision risk, displacement and barrier effects of the proposed Rampion Offshore Wind Farm were assessed in 2013. Instead, the nearest qualifying Kittiwake colony was at Bempton Cliffs, Yorkshire, which is 490 km from the Rampion area. With a mean feeding range of only 60 km (Thaxter *et al.* 2012) it was easy for the Rampion developers to demonstrate that the proposed wind farm would not represent any threat to Kittiwakes. This approach clearly does not reflect the full picture and the author believes that all regionally or nationally significant colonies should be included in the assessments whether or not they are within an SSSI or Special Protection Area.

Ornithological surveys carried out prior to the public inquiry for the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm showed that one of the major feeding areas for Kittiwakes lay close to the southern edge of the proposed wind farm. During the public inquiry the SOS and the RSPB raised serious concerns suggesting that the wind farm would produce a barrier between the Kittiwake colony and the feeding area. The view of the inquiry, however, was that for the Kittiwakes to fly around the wind farm would not add significantly to the energy budget. Further surveys will be required

to ascertain whether the Kittiwakes are still using their original feeding area or whether they have been displaced. If they have been displaced any survey will need to locate the current feeding area as increased distance from the colony could lead to fewer feeding trips which in turn would result in reduced productivity.

Productivity

It is generally accepted that in order for a Kittiwake colony to be self-sustaining there needs to be a productivity of 0.8 fledglings per breeding pair (Coulson 2011). However, Cook *et al.* (2010) estimated that an overall breeding success rate of 1.5 would be necessary to halt the current decline in numbers nationally. The breeding success rate at the Splash Point colony in 2017 was only 0.68 and in 2018 just 0.52 which gives cause for concern.

Challenges and the future

Apart from the danger of cliff falls and reduced productivity, Kittiwakes face numerous other challenges. Weather conditions can affect breeding success in several ways. At North Sea sites there have been instances when gales accompanied by heavy rain have devastated colonies. On some occasions these storms resulted in the colonies being abandoned until the following year. Storms later in the breeding season have resulted in nestlings being washed into the sea and perishing. Fortunately, Sussex has not experienced these conditions during the breeding season. However, rough seas have occurred in the English Channel during the breeding season in some years and these may limit the ability of the Kittiwakes to obtain food which can impact on fledgling survival.

Ringed recoveries and the use of geolocators have shown that at the end of the breeding season adult and fledged young disperse to one of several staging areas before crossing the Atlantic to where they winter in a vast area of the north-west Atlantic off Greenland and Labrador (Wernham *et al.* 2002, Ricca *et al.* 2016). Here the Kittiwakes are very much at the mercy of the weather as they are far from land and must rest and feed even in severe storms. It seems inevitable that many birds die due to starvation. Historically an additional threat came from the activities of hunters and fishermen off Greenland and Newfoundland who killed the Kittiwakes for food or bait, a practice which is now much reduced. A further threat is that of bycatch which is estimated to result in the deaths of some 200,000 seabirds each year in EU waters. Kittiwakes are one of the five species most affected by bycatch at longline fisheries at 'significant levels' (EU 2012).

The present situation and conclusions

Figure 1 shows that there has been a major decline in the number of Kittiwake nests at Splash Point in the past two years with numbers falling from 1120 in 2016 to 773 in 2017 and 431 in 2018, a decline of 61.5%. There are a number of possible reasons for this decline and it is probable it is due to a combination of factors rather than any single cause.

Severe winter storms in the wintering areas in the north-west Atlantic can result in mass mortality. Such an event goes unseen and only becomes evident when the number of returning birds is greatly reduced. Extreme weather conditions immediately prior to or early in the breeding season can also result in the birds not nesting that year. Although there were harsh conditions at the end of February and early March 2018, this may have been too early to have had any impact on the Seaford colony. However, it is unusual that there were 59 unoccupied new or refurbished nests in 2018 suggesting that some birds did return but then abandoned the colony without breeding.

The availability of an adequate and readily available food supply is an obvious requirement for a colony to be successful. It is not known where the Seaford Kittiwakes now feed during the breeding season. Important feeding areas were identified prior to the construction of the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm (Figure 2). Surveys will be required to ascertain if those areas are still in use or whether

the birds have been displaced to more distant areas. When Kittiwakes feed their young they do so by regurgitating food, so unlike with Puffins it is not possible to see what is being brought back to the nest. Small-fish surveys in the Kittiwake feeding areas would shed some light on this.

Low productivity will inevitably impact on the number of breeding pairs in future years and the low success rate at the Seaford colony in both 2017 and 2018 gives cause for concern.

Kittiwakes breed for the first time at the age of between three and five years. The Seaford colony has not been in existence for a sufficient length of time to show any long-term trends. However, Figure 1 does show that the numbers at Seaford fell from 1128 in 2011 to 660 in 2015. The following year numbers increased to 1120 and it is possible that this indicates a five-year cycle. Apart from considering why the numbers at Seaford fluctuate so much it is also worth considering whether there is interchange between the Sussex colony and other colonies either elsewhere in Britain or possibly northern France. There is still so much that we do not know about the Kittiwakes at Splash Point, Seaford and continued surveys will be required to help our understanding of the dynamics of the colony.

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Kittiwakes, Splash Point, Seaford, July 2017 (Tim Squire)

Breeding Cetti's Warbler survey in 2017: numbers, distribution and habitat preferences in Sussex

Helen Crabtree

Introduction

In the 2017 breeding season the Sussex Ornithological Society conducted a county survey of Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti*. The aims of the survey were to attempt to obtain a county population estimate, to understand the current distribution of breeding Cetti's Warblers in Sussex, and to provide information on habitat preferences.

This article presents the results of the survey and discusses them in relation to Cetti's Warbler breeding distributions in Sussex found during the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project and the previous atlas project in 1988-1992, and also in relation to the results of a national survey in 1996 conducted by the RSPB and English Nature.

Survey methods

Visits to tetrads (2x2-km squares) known to have been recently occupied by breeding Cetti's Warblers 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 Cetti's Warblers had been recorded as at least possible 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 Cetti's Warbler breeding habitat within the tetrad and should be made in the morning. Volunteers were asked to plot any observations of Cetti's Warblers (including male birds heard singing but not seen) onto pre-printed tetrad maps using standard territory-mapping notation (Bibby *et al.* 1992). For each observation notes were to be made on any activities observed such as an adult bird carrying food or nesting material, and particular attention was to be given to whether each singing male was heard singing simultaneously with one or more other birds (which could therefore definitely be considered different individuals), or whether two observations were considered to definitely relate to the same individual bird.

After all the survey visits had been completed, volunteers were asked to combine all observations on one tetrad map, and to group any observations that were considered to relate to the same territory. They were then asked to consider the habitat within the whole extent of each territory, and to select from a list the main habitat type and up to three other habitat types if applicable. The defined habitat types were primarily those used in a national survey in 1996 (Wotton *et al.* 1998): 1, reed-bed (*Phragmites*-dominated); 2, other reed-swamp (>0.6m tall with *Typha*); 3, fen/marsh (<0.6m tall with rushes/sedge); 4, dense/continuous scrub; 5, scattered scrub in reed-bed; 6, scattered scrub in reed-swamp; 7, scattered scrub in fen/marsh; 8, scattered scrub by open water; 9, carr/wet woodland. Considering the range of other potentially suitable habitat types present in Sussex currently, the following habitat types were also defined for the purposes of this survey: 10, wet ditch with reed margin; 11, scrub/hedge beside wet ditch; 12, scrub/hedge beside river; 13, hedgerow (not beside wet ditch); 14, other.

For each surveyed tetrad, the map provided by the allocated observer showing the likely territory locations was considered alongside all casual records from other observers, and an assessment was made of the most likely number of singing male Cetti's Warblers within the tetrad. Observations were considered definitely to represent different territories if birds were heard singing simultaneously by an observer (Gilbert *et al.* 1998). Cetti's Warbler territories can be quite large (linear territories along rivers and ditches can be >400m long) (Bibby 1982) so care was taken in establishing singing birds as being in different territories if they were not heard singing simultaneously; if two singing birds were recorded beside the same river or ditch they were considered as probably being in the same territory whilst two singing birds beside different rivers or ditches were considered more likely to be in different territories. The assessment of the number of singing birds 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 singing Cetti's Warblers within each tetrad. Cetti's Warblers are polygynous, with up to three females nesting within the territory of a single male (Bibby 1982), so the number of territories estimated cannot be considered to be the same as the number of pairs within an area; no attempt was made to assess or estimate the number of breeding females or any aspect of breeding success or productivity.

Survey results

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in a total of 100 tetrads in Sussex with singing male Cetti's Warblers being found in 65 of these as shown in Figure 1. Singing male Cetti's Warblers were identified as being present in a further 18 tetrads through casual records or partial surveys, meaning that singing male Cetti's Warblers were found in a total of 83 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 262 singing male were identified with a range between 222 and 282 singing males. The numbers of singing male Cetti's Warblers found in each of the occupied tetrads are indicated in Figure 2.

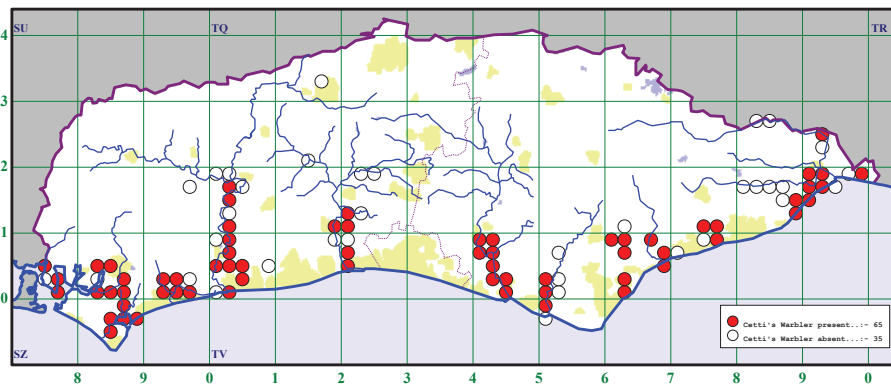


Figure 1. The locations of the tetrads fully surveyed for breeding Cetti's Warblers in 2017. Red circle, tetrad fully surveyed and at least one singing male Cetti's Warbler found; empty circle, tetrad fully surveyed and no singing male Cetti's Warblers found despite potentially suitable breeding habitat.

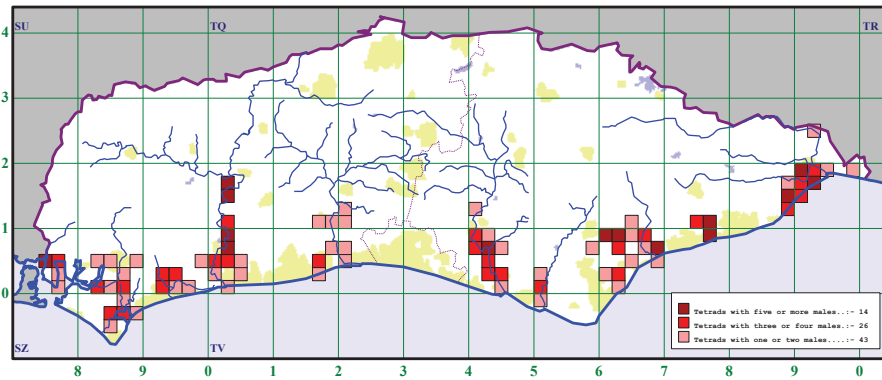


Figure 2. *The estimated numbers of singing male Cetti's Warblers found in each tetrad where birds were found by either full tetrad surveys or casual records and partial surveys.*

Breeding Cetti's Warblers were found in the lower sections of the main river valleys in Sussex (particularly the Arun, the Ouse and the Cuckmere), in levels areas including the Steyning Levels, Lewes Brooks and the Pevensey Levels, and at numerous sites around Chichester and Pagham Harbours including some of the adjoining farmland. Other significant sites include the Aldingbourne Rife, the Combe Valley, the Pannel Valley, Pett Level and Rye Harbour.

Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 248 of the 262 territories identified (habitat information was not collected in a standard manner for some casual records). Figure 3 shows the numbers of these territories in which each of the habitat categories was described as being the main habitat type. Figure 4 shows the numbers of the identified territories which were described as including each of the different habitat categories either as the main habitat type or as one of the other habitat types (note that these numbers of territories do not add to the total of 248 territories because there are up to four habitat types selected for each territory).



Typical Cetti's Warbler habitat, Littlehampton Golf Course (Helen Crabtree)

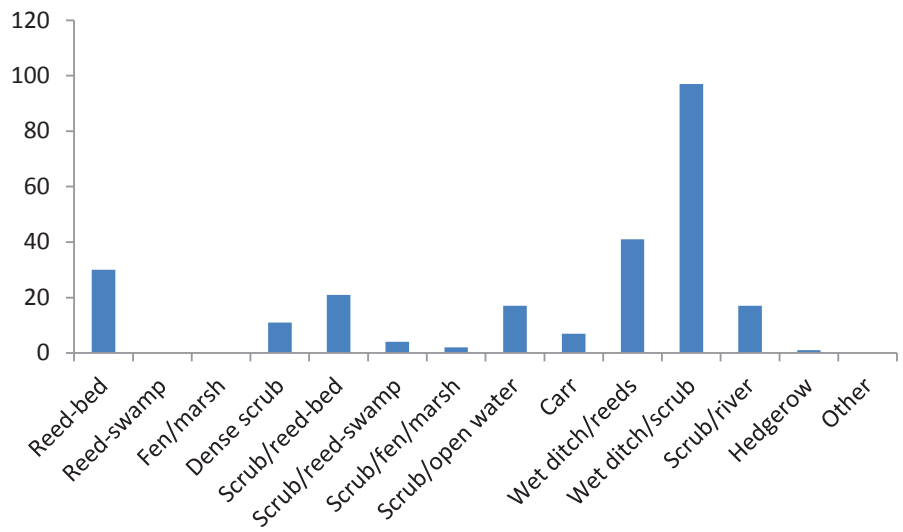


Figure 3. The numbers of territories (of 248 territories for which habitat information is available) in which each of the different habitat categories was described as being the main habitat type.

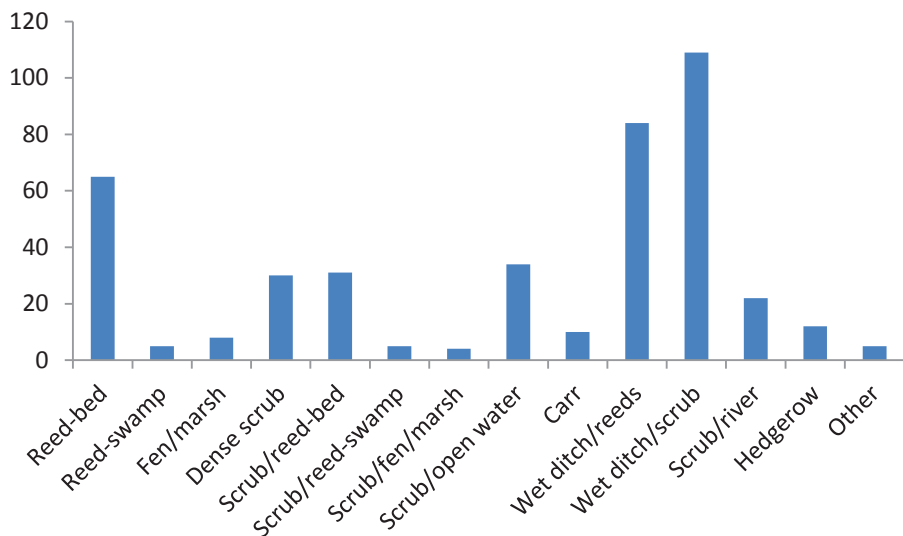


Figure 4. The numbers of territories (of 248 territories for which habitat information is available) which were described as including each of the habitat categories (either as the main habitat type or as one of up to three other habitat types selected for each territory).

As shown in Figure 3, scrub or hedgerow beside a wet ditch was the most common dominant habitat type, with this being selected for 97 (39%) of the 248 territories for which habitat information is available; wet ditch (with reed margin) and reed-bed were the most common of the other dominant habitat types with wet ditch (with reed margin) selected for 41 territories (17%) and reed-bed for 30 territories (12%). As shown in Figure 4, scrub or hedgerow beside a wet ditch was the habitat category associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the main or a subsidiary habitat type for 109 (44%) of the territories for which habitat information is available; wet ditch (with reed margin) was associated with 84 territories (34%) and reed-bed with 65 territories (26%).

Discussion

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in a total of 100 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 Cetti's Warblers 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 singing male Cetti's Warblers identified by this survey (262 singing males with a range between 222 and 282 singing males) is therefore considered to represent close to the actual population of male Cetti's Warblers within the county, with the number of possibly missed singing males being negligible considering the estimated range.

The only previous surveys of breeding Cetti's Warblers in Sussex have been the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project and the previous atlas project in 1988-1992, and also a national survey in 1996 conducted by the RSPB and English Nature (Wotton *et al.* 1998). Both atlas projects considered mainly distribution and to some extent relative abundance, but not absolute numbers or habitat associations. The 1996 national survey considered habitat associations in some detail but only a very small number of sites were surveyed in Sussex and these were selected on the basis of recent casual records (Wotton *et al.* 1998).

Figure 5 shows the Cetti's Warbler 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, Cetti's Warblers were found to be present in a total of 111 tetrads, considerably more than the 83 tetrads in which singing males were found in the current survey (see Figure 2). Although the atlas distribution map includes birds with no breeding status documented (recorded as present only), these are all in areas with potentially suitable breeding habitat and were therefore likely to have been singing males.

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, in the current survey singing Cetti's Warblers were found to be far more thinly distributed across the Pevensey Levels than they appeared to be during the breeding seasons of 2008-2011 inclusive, although comprehensive coverage of the Pevensey Levels in the current survey was minimal and many singing males were located by casual records only.

Taking these factors into consideration, there appear to be insignificant real changes in distribution between 2008-2011 and the current survey. There was a really significant increase in distribution, however, between 1988-1992 (see Figure 6) and 2008-2011; during 1988-1992 the Cetti's Warbler had not become established in Sussex as a breeding species and there were only a few isolated records (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, James 1996). Similarly, the national survey

in 1996, although covering a restricted number of sites in Sussex, found only a maximum of nine singing males at four sites (Wotton *et al.* 1998). Bentley (1996) reports breeding at Emsworth and Thorney Deepes (both adjacent to Chichester Hbr), and Arundel WWT and North Stoke (both in the Arun valley) in the 1996 Sussex Bird Report.

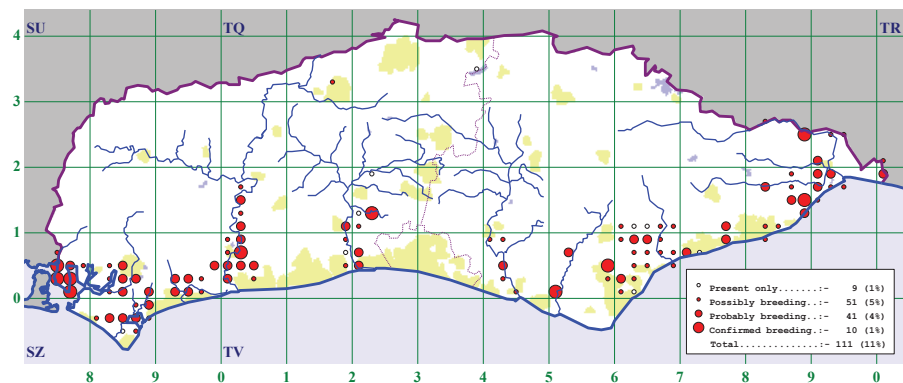


Figure 5. Cetti's Warbler breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008-2011 inclusive.

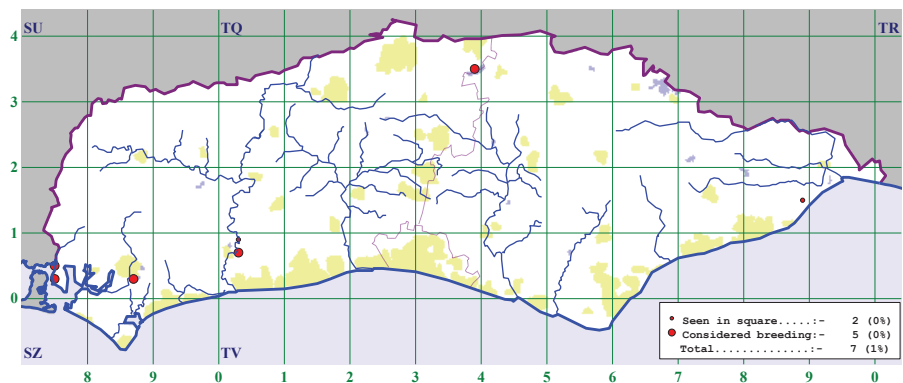


Figure 6. Cetti's Warbler breeding distribution in Sussex during 1988-1992 inclusive.

Although the national survey in 1996 (Wotton *et al.* 1998) found singing Cetti's Warblers at only four sites in Sussex, and the habitat data for these sites is unavailable, the habitat data obtained through the current survey in Sussex can be cautiously compared with the 1996 habitat data for the whole of the UK and the Channel Islands. All the habitat categories used in the 1996 survey were also available as options in the current survey, and in order to allow for the range of other potentially suitable habitat types present in Sussex currently, some additional habitat categories (wet ditch with reed margin, scrub/hedge beside wet ditch, scrub/hedge beside river, and hedgerow) were also included as options in the current survey. Figure 7 shows the 1996 habitat data, taken from Wotton *et al.* (1998), as percentages of all singing males found in each of the different habitat types. The habitat data obtained in the current survey is also presented as the percentages of all

territories (for which habitat information is available) for which each of the different habitat types (including the additional habitat types used in the current survey but not in 1996) was selected as the main habitat type. It is clear from this comparison that although scattered scrub in reed-bed was the most commonly-used habitat nationally in 1996, this habitat is much less significant in Sussex in the current survey; this probably simply reflects the limited amount of reed-bed in Sussex currently. Similarly, scattered scrub in reed-swamp and scattered scrub by open water were significant habitats in 1996 but much less significant in Sussex in the current survey due to the limited extents of these habitats in Sussex. Wet ditch (with reed margin) and scrub or hedgerow beside a wet ditch were the most significant habitat types used in the current survey, although it is not possible to conclude any change in habitat use between the two surveys because these latter habitat types were not considered in the 1996 national survey; areas with these habitats are extensive in Sussex currently, in all the main river valleys and in the levels areas.

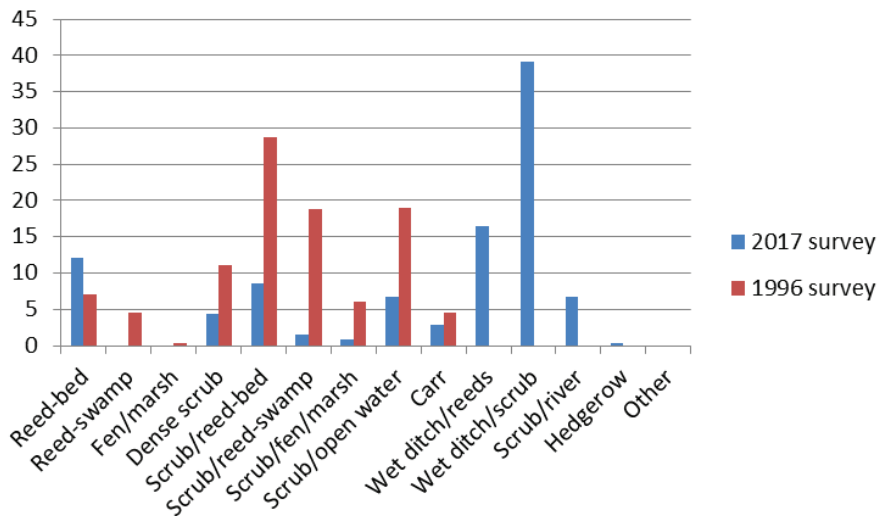


Figure 7. The percentages of all singing male Cetti's Warblers found in each different habitat type in the current survey in Sussex (blue bars) and in the national 1996 survey (red bars) (taken from Wotton *et al.* 1998). Note that the habitat categories without data for 1996 were not used in the 1996 survey.

Conclusions

The survey conducted in 2017 of breeding Cetti's Warblers in Sussex achieved nearly complete coverage and resulted in the identification of 262 singing males and the estimation of a county population of between 222 and 282 singing males (the range allowing for possible different interpretations of the observations made by volunteers). The distribution of breeding Cetti's Warblers across Sussex was found to be similar to the distribution recorded by the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project, with singing males found in the lower sections of the main river valleys, in the levels areas, and at various sites around Chichester and Pagham Harbours. Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 248 breeding territories; scrub or hedgerow beside a wet ditch was the dominant habitat type in 39% of these territories. Wet ditch (with reed margin) and reed-bed were the most common of the other dominant habitat types. Scrub or hedgerow beside a wet

ditch was the habitat category associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the main or a subsidiary habitat type for 44% of the territories for which habitat information is available. The distribution of Cetti's Warblers in Sussex would seem to be fairly stable, having remained largely unchanged since the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project, although future surveys will be useful to assess the effects of winter conditions and also possible expansion of the species into less traditional habitats.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all of the 55 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, and to Dr John Newnham for providing the maps used in this article. Further thanks are due to Rob Hukin and members of the Sussex Ornithological Society scientific committee for helpful comments.

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Breeding Dartford Warbler and Woodlark survey in 2017: numbers, distribution and habitat preferences in Sussex

Helen Crabtree

Introduction

In the 2017 breeding season the Sussex Ornithological Society conducted a county survey of Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* and Woodlarks *Lullula arborea*. The aims of the survey were to attempt to obtain county population estimates, to understand the current distributions of breeding Dartford Warblers and Woodlarks in Sussex, and to provide information on habitat preferences. The recording of Tree Pipits *Anthus trivialis* was a further optional element of this survey.

This article presents the results of the survey in Sussex in 2017 and discusses them in relation to other information available about Dartford Warbler and Woodlark breeding distributions and numbers in Sussex, and also in relation to information about Dartford Warbler and Woodlark habitat preferences available from earlier national surveys. Dedicated surveys for both species were conducted in Sussex in 2006 as part of a national survey organized by the BTO and the RSPB (Wotton *et al.* 2009, Conway *et al.* 2009, Perry 2006a, Perry 2006b), and results from the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Balmer *et al.* 2013, Thomas 2014) provide information about distributions. Since the 2007-2011 period numbers of Dartford Warblers are thought to have decreased dramatically due to some severe winters, whilst Woodlarks have been recorded using an increasingly wide variety of farmland habitats as well as the more traditional heathland habitats on the West Sussex commons and the Ashdown Forest.

Survey methods

Visits to tetrads (2x2-km squares) known to have been recently occupied by breeding Dartford Warblers or Woodlarks 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 Dartford Warblers or Woodlarks had been recorded as at least possible 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 three times during the breeding season (between mid-February and the end of June). Ideally visits were to be made about three weeks apart with the first between mid-February and the end of March which is the ideal time to find territorial singing Woodlarks. In tetrads with farmland or woodland only and therefore no heathland suitable for Dartford Warblers then two or three visits before the end of May were considered adequate. It was required that each visit should cover all suitable farmland or heathland habitat within the tetrad and should be made in the morning. Volunteers were asked to plot any observations of Dartford Warblers and Woodlarks (including male birds heard singing but not seen) onto pre-printed tetrad maps using standard territory-mapping notation (Bibby *et al.* 1992). For each observation notes were to be made on any activities observed such as an adult bird carrying food or nesting material, and particular attention was to be given to whether each singing male was heard singing simultaneously with one or more other birds (which could therefore definitely be considered different individuals), or whether two observations were considered to definitely relate to the same individual bird. Volunteers were also asked to note observations of Tree Pipits if this

could be done without compromising the accurate recording of Dartford Warblers and Woodlarks.

After all the survey visits had been completed, volunteers were asked to combine all observations on one tetrad map, and to group any observations that were considered to relate to the same territory (distinguishing clearly between Dartford Warbler and Woodlark and Tree Pipit observations or using a separate map for each species). They were then asked to consider the habitat within the whole extent of each territory (or within 50 m of a singing male), and to select from a list the main habitat type and up to three other habitat types if applicable. The defined habitat types were: 1, heather; 2, bracken; 3, gorse; 4, uneven tussocky grassland; 5, short/grazed grassland; 6, other plants/shrubs/scattered trees; 7, recently cleared ground/felled trees; 8, spring/winter cereal crops; 9, beans/peas; 10, vineyard; 11, other arable farmland; 12, bare earth; 13, set-aside/fallow farmland; 14, other.

For each surveyed tetrad, and for each species, the map provided by the allocated observer showing the likely territory locations was considered alongside all casual records from other observers, and an assessment was made of the most likely number of territories within the tetrad. Observations were considered definitely to represent different territories if birds were heard singing simultaneously by an observer (Gilbert *et al.* 1998). The assessment of the number of territories 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: Dartford Warbler

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in a total of 37 heathland tetrads in Sussex with Dartford Warbler territories being found in 13 of these as shown in Figure 1. Dartford Warbler territories were identified as being present in one further tetrad through casual records, meaning that Dartford Warbler territories were found in a total of 14 tetrads as shown in Figure 2. Using the results of the full tetrad surveys and also incorporating all casual records, and using the assessment method described above, 39 Dartford warbler territories were identified, with a very narrow range between 39 and 41 territories; all of these territories were found on either the Ashdown Forest or the West Sussex commons.

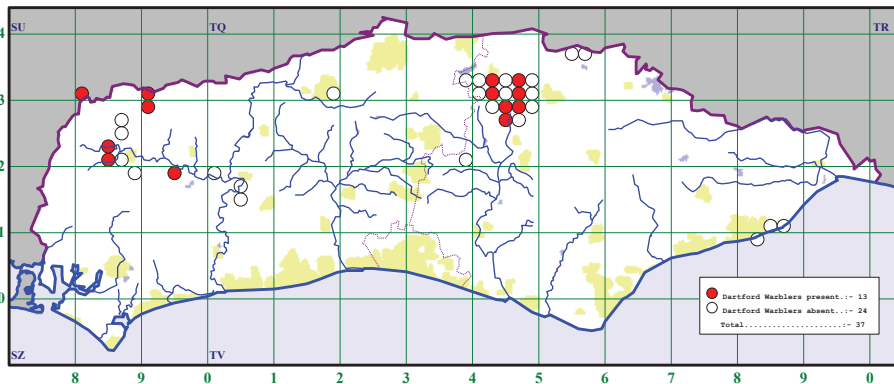


Figure 1. The locations of the tetrads fully surveyed for breeding Dartford Warblers in 2017. Red circle, tetrad fully surveyed and at least one Dartford Warbler territory found; empty circle, tetrad fully surveyed and no Dartford Warbler territories found despite potentially suitable breeding habitat.

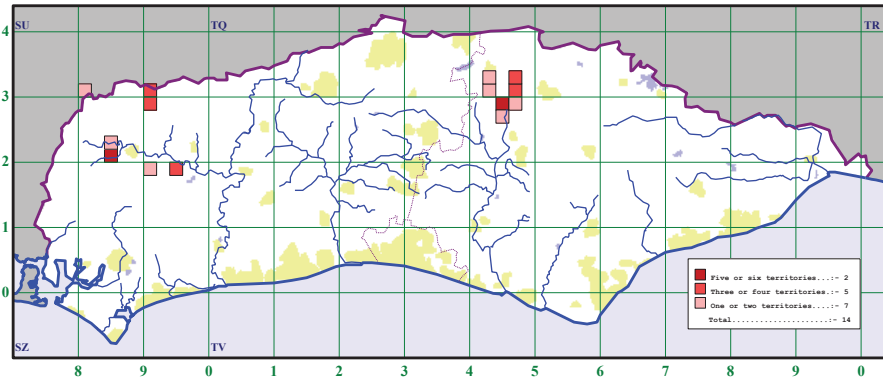


Figure 2. The estimated numbers of Dartford Warbler territories found in each tetrad where birds were found by either full tetrad surveys or casual records.

Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 32 of the 39 territories identified (habitat information was not collected in a standard manner for some casual records). Figure 3 shows the numbers of these territories in which each of the habitat categories was described as being the main habitat type, and also the numbers of the identified territories which were described as including each of the different habitat categories either as the main habitat type or as one of the other habitat types (note that these numbers of territories do not add to the total of 32 territories because there are up to four habitat types selected for each territory).

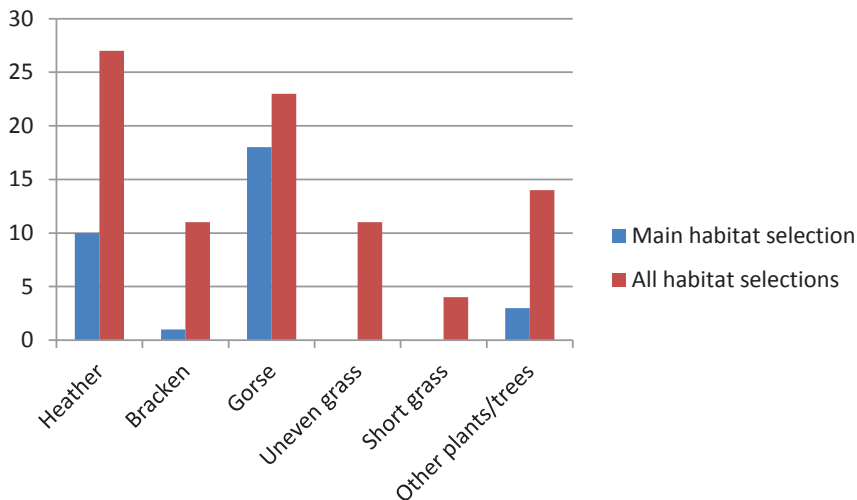


Figure 3. The numbers of Dartford Warbler territories (of 32 territories for which habitat information is available) in which each of the different habitat categories was selected as being the main habitat type (blue columns) or selected as being one of up to four habitat types for each territory (red columns).

As shown in Figure 3, gorse was the most common dominant habitat type, with this being selected for 18 (56%) of the 32 territories for which habitat information is available; heather was selected as the dominant habitat type for 10 territories (31%). Heather was the habitat type associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the main or a subsidiary habitat type for 27 (84%) of the territories for which habitat information is available; gorse was associated with 23 territories (72%) and other plants/shrubs/scattered trees with 14 territories (44%).

Survey results: Woodlark

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in 37 heathland tetrads and 20 farmland or woodland tetrads in Sussex with Woodlark territories being found in 23 of the heathland tetrads and six of the farmland or woodland tetrads as shown in Figure 4. Woodlarks territories were identified as being present in a further two heathland tetrads and seven farmland or woodland tetrads through casual records or partial surveys, meaning that Woodlark territories were found in a total of 38 tetrads (25 heathland tetrads and 13 farmland or woodland tetrads) as shown in Figure 5. 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 88 territories were identified with a range between 68 and 104 territories. Of these, 73 territories (range 54 to 86) were found in heathland tetrads, and 15 (range 14 to 18) were found in farmland or woodland tetrads. The territories found on heathland were on the Ashdown Forest, on the West Sussex Commons and at Broadwater Warren; territories were found on farmland at sites across West Sussex and mid-Sussex, and in woodland habitat at West Dean Woods and Rewell Wood.

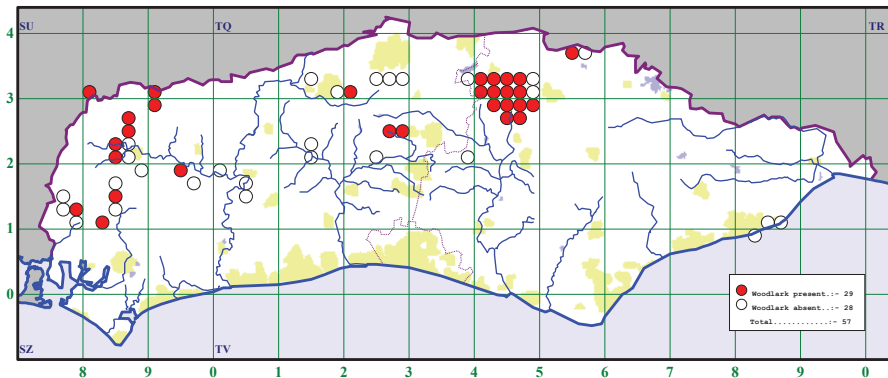


Figure 4. The locations of the tetrads fully surveyed for breeding Woodlarks in 2017. Red circle, tetrad fully surveyed and at least one Woodlark territory found; empty circle, tetrad fully surveyed and no Woodlark territories found despite potentially suitable breeding habitat.

Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 78 of the 88 territories identified (habitat information was not collected in a standard manner for some casual records). Figure 6 shows the numbers of these territories in which each of the habitat categories was described as being the main habitat type. Figure 7 shows the numbers of the identified territories which were described as including each of the different habitat categories either as the main habitat type or as one of the other habitat types (note that these numbers of territories do not add to the total of 78 territories because there are up to four habitat types selected for each territory).

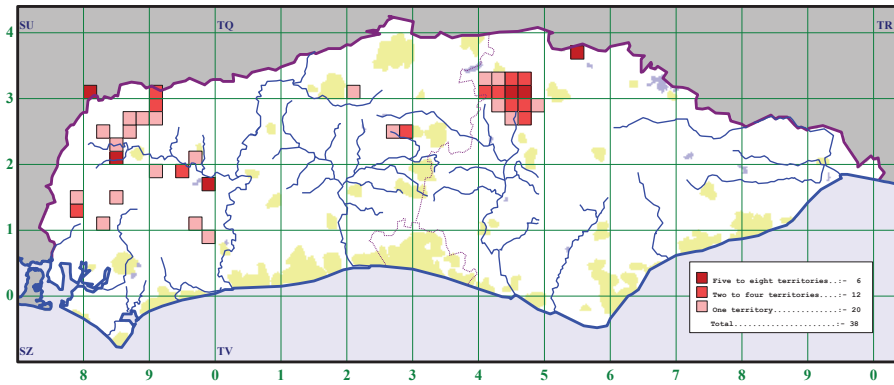


Figure 5. The estimated numbers of Woodlark territories found in each tetrad where birds were found by either full tetrad surveys or casual records and partial surveys.

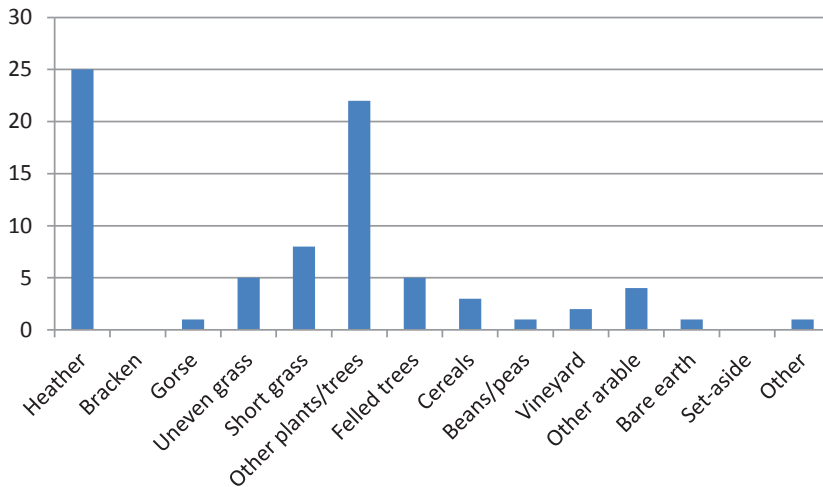


Figure 6. The numbers of Woodlark territories (of 78 territories for which habitat information is available) in which each of the different habitat categories was described as being the main habitat type.

As shown in Figure 6, heather was the most common dominant habitat type, with this being selected for 25 (32%) of the 78 territories for which habitat information is available; other plants/shrubs/scattered trees was selected as the dominant habitat type for 22 territories (28%). As shown in Figure 7, other plants/shrubs/scattered trees was the habitat category associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the main or a subsidiary habitat type for 54 (69%) of the territories for which habitat information is available; heather was associated with 48 territories (62%), gorse with 33 territories (42%), and uneven tussocky grass with 32 territories (41%). Although the total number of territories found in farmland and woodland was relatively small, a wide variety of habitat types were associated with these territories, including cereal crops and vineyards.

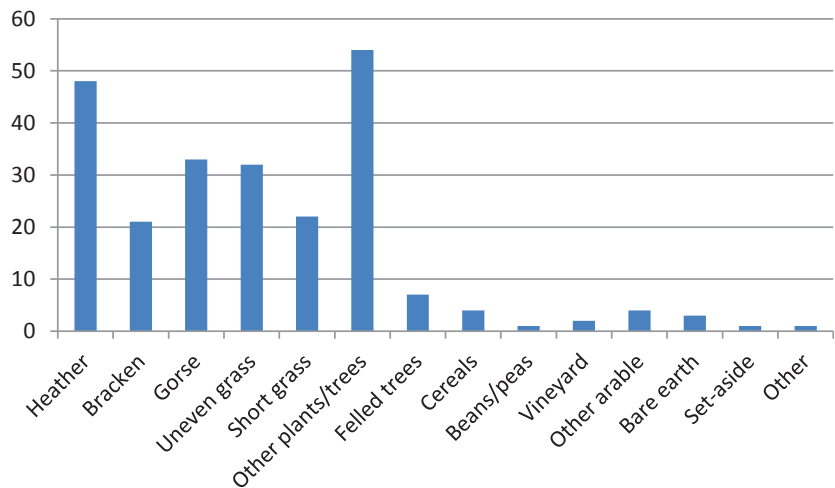


Figure 7. The numbers of Woodlark territories (of 78 territories for which habitat information is available) which were described as including each of the habitat categories (either as the main habitat type or as one of up to three other habitat types selected for each territory).

Survey results: Tree Pipit

Full tetrad surveys that included the recording of Tree Pipits were conducted in 28 heathland tetrads with Tree Pipit territories being found in 18 of these as shown in Figure 8; casual records of Tree Pipits were not considered (because of the already incomplete level of survey coverage) and so using the results of the full tetrad surveys and using the assessment method described above, a total of 51 territories were identified with a range between 44 and 52 territories. These territories were found on the Ashdown Forest, on the West Sussex Commons and at Broadwater Warren.

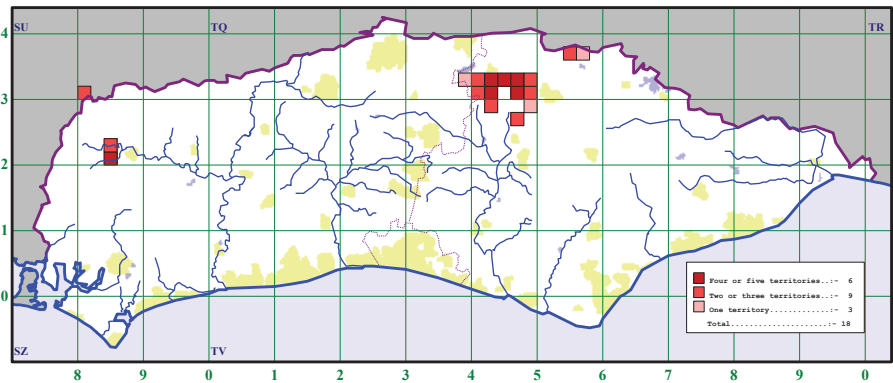


Figure 8. The estimated numbers of Tree Pipit territories found in each tetrad where full tetrad surveys that included the (optional) recording of Tree Pipits were conducted.

Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for the 51 territories identified. Figure 9 shows the numbers of these territories in which each of the habitat categories was described as being the main habitat type, and also the numbers of the identified territories which were described as including each of the different habitat categories either as the main habitat type or as one of the other habitat types (note that these numbers of territories do not add to the total of 51 territories because there are up to four habitat types selected for each territory).

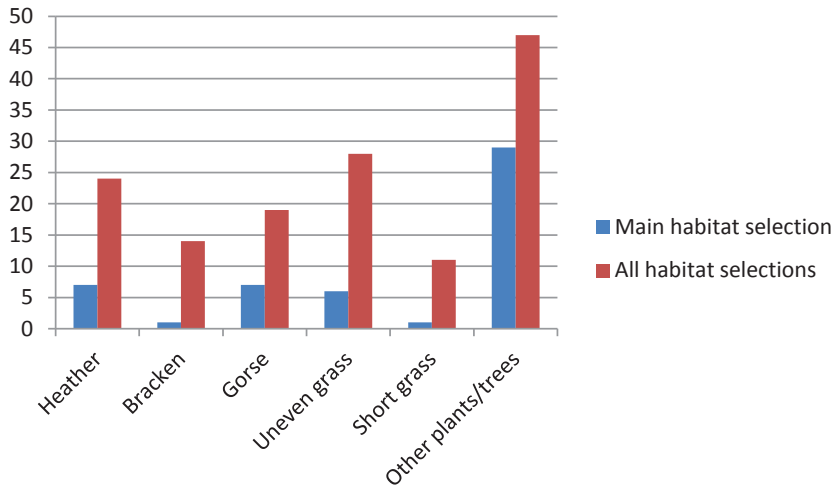


Figure 9. The numbers of Tree Pipit territories (of 51 territories for which habitat information is available) in which each of the different habitat categories was selected as being the main habitat type (blue columns) or selected as being one of up to four habitat types for each territory (red columns).

As shown in Figure 9, other plants/shrubs/scattered trees was the most common dominant habitat type, with this being selected for 29 (57%) of the 51 territories for which habitat information is available; heather and gorse were each selected as the dominant habitat type for seven territories (14%). Other plants/shrubs/scattered trees was the habitat type associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the main or a subsidiary habitat type for 47 (92%) of the territories for which habitat information is available; uneven tussocky grass was associated with 28 territories (55%) and heather with 24 territories (47%).

Discussion: Dartford Warbler

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in a total of 37 heathland tetrads, as well as three tetrads containing coastal gorse scrub, and this is considered to represent almost complete coverage of the habitat suitable for breeding Dartford Warblers in Sussex (with the exception of just a few heaths in West Sussex). However, the presence of Dartford Warblers in a tetrad can be difficult to establish using two or three visits, especially if these visits are timed imperfectly or coincide with less than ideal weather, and so the number of Dartford Warbler territories identified by this survey (39 territories with a range between 39 and 41 territories) is considered to represent the minimum population of Dartford Warblers within the county.

Previous surveys of breeding Dartford Warblers in Sussex have been the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project and the previous atlas project in 1988-1992, and also a national survey in 2006 conducted by

the RSPB and the BTO (Wotton *et al.* 2009) and another earlier national survey in 1994 (Gibbons and Wotton 1996). Both atlas projects considered mainly distribution and to some extent relative abundance, but not absolute numbers or habitat associations. The 2006 and 1994 national surveys considered absolute numbers and habitat associations, although for both of these surveys either the information was not collected in a standard manner in Sussex, or the detailed information collected in Sussex is not available, such that limited comparisons can be made with the results of the current survey (Perry 2006a, Burges 1997). Information about Dartford Warbler numbers in Sussex is also available from the annual results of the Wealden Heath Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS) (Perry 2015).

Figure 10 shows the Dartford Warbler 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, Dartford Warblers were found to be present in a total of 32 tetrads, considerably more than the 14 tetrads in which territories were found in the current survey (see Figure 2).

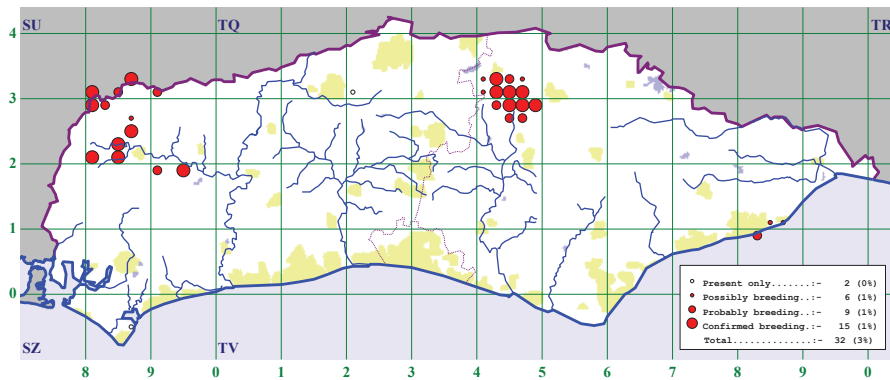


Figure 10. Dartford Warbler breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008-2011 inclusive.

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. However, in the current survey territories were found on significantly fewer of the West Sussex commons and in significantly fewer areas of the Ashdown Forest than were found during 2008-2011; also the territories found in the areas of coastal gorse scrub near Hastings during 2008-2011 were not found at all in the current survey. The current distribution is much more similar to that found during 1988-1992 when Dartford Warbler territories were found in only 14 tetrads on the West Sussex commons and the Ashdown Forest (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, James 1996). These changes in distribution almost certainly reflect the fluctuations in numbers of Dartford Warblers that have been demonstrated by the WHBBS and the 2006 and 1994 national surveys.

The national survey in 2006 (Wotton *et al.* 2009) found 87-101 pairs of Dartford Warblers in Sussex (Perry 2006), significantly more than the 39-41 territories found in the current survey; the national survey in 1994 (Gibbons and Wotton 1996) found only 35 pairs in Sussex. The results of the WHBBS between 1998 and 2015 show a steady increase in numbers of Dartford

Warblers on the West Sussex commons until 2008, attributed to a long period of mild winters and effective heathland restoration work (Perry 2015); this is in line with the significant increase in county numbers between the 1994 and 2006 surveys and the increase in distribution between the 1988-1992 and 2007-2011 atlas projects. However, the winters of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 were extremely cold and no Dartford Warblers were found at all on the West Sussex commons in 2010 (Perry 2015); a similar situation is likely to have existed on the Ashdown Forest. Since 2010 the numbers of Dartford Warblers recorded by the WHBBS have gradually recovered (Perry 2015), and the number of territories found in the current survey clearly represents a modest recovery of the species in the county after some cold winters (see Figure 11).

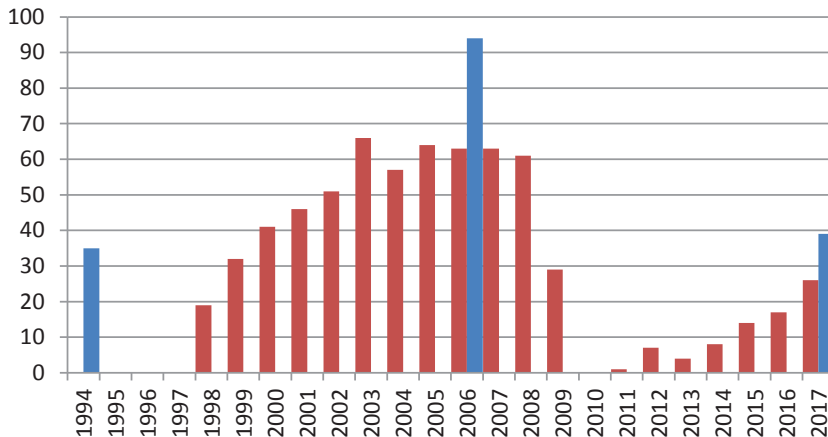


Figure 11. Numbers of Dartford Warbler territories recorded on the West Sussex commons by the WHBBS in each year between 1998 and 2017 inclusive (red bars) (Perry 2015 and Alan Perry pers. comm.), and estimated numbers of Dartford Warblers found in Sussex in the 1994 and 2006 national surveys and the current survey (blue bars).

Dartford Warblers have specific habitat requirements and the habitat information obtained in the current survey reflects these requirements; gorse- and heather-dominated lowland heath are preferred. The national survey in 2006 found that 88.6% of all Dartford Warbler territories in the UK were on lowland heath, and also noted that the species is not found where heath is overgrown with trees and shrubs or where heath is dominated by grassland (Wotton et al. 2009). Continued efforts to restore and improve the condition of heaths in Sussex will clearly help to provide more suitable habitat for breeding Dartford Warblers and will potentially enable the species to better withstand cold winter conditions and assist with the recovery of the breeding population.

Discussion: Woodlark

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in a total of 37 heathland tetrads; this is considered to represent almost complete coverage of the heathland in Sussex. However, the farmland and woodland tetrads surveyed for Woodlarks or where Woodlarks were casually recorded represent only a small proportion of the tetrads with potentially suitable breeding habitat for Woodlarks, and observers are considered by the author to be not sufficiently aware of the potential breeding of Woodlarks in certain types of farmland and woodland in Sussex, such that coverage in this

survey of these habitats is not considered to have been high. The number of Woodlark territories on heathland identified by this survey (73 territories with a range between 54 and 86 territories) is considered to represent a reasonable estimate of the heathland population, whilst the number of territories identified in farmland and woodland habitats (15 territories with a range between 14 and 18 territories) is considered to represent only the minimum population of Woodlarks using these habitats in Sussex.

Previous surveys of breeding Woodlarks in Sussex have been the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project and the previous atlas project in 1988-1992, and also a national survey in 2006 conducted by the RSPB and the BTO (Conway *et al.* 2009) and another earlier national survey in 1997 (Wotton and Gillings 2000). Both atlas projects considered mainly distribution and to some extent relative abundance, but not absolute numbers or habitat associations. The 2006 and 1997 national surveys considered absolute numbers and habitat associations, although for both of these surveys either the information was not collected in a standard manner in Sussex, or the detailed information collected in Sussex is not available, such that limited comparisons can be made with the results of the current survey (Perry 2006b, Burges 1997). Information about Woodlark numbers on the West Sussex commons is also available from the annual results of the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS) (Perry 2015).

Figure 12 shows the Woodlark 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, Woodlarks were found to be present in a total of 79 tetrads, considerably more than the 38 tetrads in which territories were found in the current survey (see Figure 5).

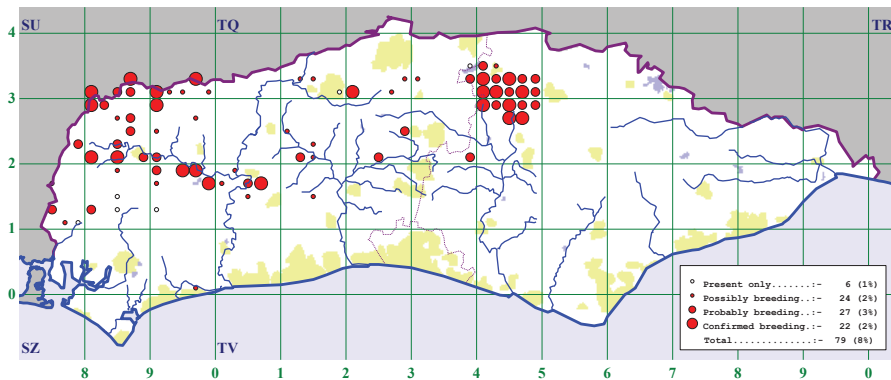


Figure 12. Woodlark breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008-2011 inclusive.

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 the current survey territories were found on fewer of the West Sussex commons and in fewer areas of the Ashdown Forest than were found during 2008-2011, although the differences in these areas are probably not significant. Woodlark territories were found during 2008-2011 in some small heathland areas from which they were absent in the current survey, notably Wiggoholt Common and Chailey Commons, but

were not found during 2008–2011 at Broadwater Warren where the species has recently become established due to heathland restoration. Woodlark territories were found during 2008–2011 in a number of farmland areas across West Sussex and mid-Sussex but these are largely different to the farmland areas where Woodlark territories were found in the current survey, probably reflecting the mainly casual recording of Woodlarks in these habitats but also reflecting changes in crop types and farming practices. Woodlarks were only found in 12 tetrads in Sussex during 1988–1992, mainly on the West Sussex commons (James 1996).

The national survey in 2006 (Conway *et al.* 2009) found 84–106 pairs of Woodlarks in Sussex (Perry 2006), very similar to the 68–104 territories found in the current survey. However, a higher proportion of these territories were found on heathland (on the West Sussex commons and the Ashdown Forest) than in the current survey, with only a few territories found in farmland in a small area of the South Downs near the Hampshire border (Perry 2006). For this survey in 2006 the number of territories on the Ashdown Forest was not derived using the same method as used in other areas due to information having been collected for that area in a non-standard manner, so this means that the numbers are difficult to compare directly with those found in the current survey. Similarly, it is likely that other areas of farmland were simply not surveyed in 2006, so the numbers of territories found in farmland are also difficult to compare with those found in the current survey. The national survey in 1997 (Wotton and Gillings 2000) found only 65–71 pairs in Sussex (Burgess 1997) with a significantly different distribution; territories were found on the West Sussex commons and in the St Leonard's Forest and Tilgate Forest areas in mid-Sussex, but no territories at all were found on the Ashdown Forest. The significant increase in numbers between 1997 and 2006 can therefore be attributed to the establishment of breeding on the Ashdown Forest during the intervening period. Numbers of Woodlark territories on the West Sussex commons have fluctuated only slightly during the period 1998 to 2015 as measured by the WHBBS (Perry 2015).

The national survey in 2006 found that the majority of Woodlark territories in the UK were associated with two main habitat types; heathland (66.7%) and forestry plantation (32.4%) (Conway *et al.* 2009). However, in some areas of the UK, farmland was found to be increasingly important (Conway *et al.* 2009) and this is reflected in the habitat information obtained in the current survey. Woodlarks are able to use a wide variety of types of farmland, and in Sussex these include arable farmland and fallow land but also vineyards which are rapidly becoming more numerous in the county (see photos overleaf). The differences in areas where Woodlark territories were found in farmland habitats in all the previous surveys and the current survey illustrate the ability of this species to take advantage of changes in crop types and farming practices, but also demonstrate the difficulty in surveying these habitats in any meaningful manner. Continued efforts to restore and improve the condition of heaths in Sussex will clearly help to maintain or improve the population of Woodlarks in the county, but an improved understanding of the precise requirements of this species in farmland would also potentially enable individual landowners and farmers to attract Woodlarks to breed in farmland; this could be particularly important in newly-established vineyards. Studies in France have shown that whilst general biodiversity in vineyards can be relatively low, Woodlarks respond positively to the creation of vineyards and actually select these vineyard habitats (Pithon *et al.* 2016). Increased awareness of the potential use of vineyards and other farmland habitats by Woodlarks will be beneficial in gathering more information in the future that is specific to Sussex.



Woodlark habitat in farmland - a vineyard in the High Weald (Helen Crabtree)

Discussion: Tree Pipit

Full tetrad surveys were conducted in a total of 37 heathland tetrads, and this is considered to represent almost complete coverage of the heathland in Sussex, but the recording of Tree Pipits was optional in this survey; full surveys for Tree pipits were only conducted in 28 heathland tetrads and casual records in other areas were not considered due to the otherwise incomplete survey effort. The number of Tree Pipit territories identified by this survey (51 territories with a range between 44 and 52 territories) is therefore considered to represent the minimum population of Tree Pipits within the county. The results of such an incomplete survey are clearly difficult to compare with the results of previous surveys. The only previous surveys are the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project and the previous atlas project in 1988-1992, and a county survey in 1967-1970 (Hughes 1972), and information about Tree Pipit numbers on the West Sussex commons is also available from the annual results of the Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS) (Perry 2015). The results of the 1967-1970 survey suggested a breeding population of 600 pairs (Hughes 1972). The results of the WHBBS show a steady decline in numbers during the period 2000 to 2015; in 2010 a county estimate of only 90 pairs was made using casual records and WHBBS results (Thomas 2014). This ongoing decline in numbers has been attributed to the increasing recreational use of heathlands in Sussex alongside the more general decline of many long-distance migrants, and the number of Tree Pipit territories identified in the current survey is in line with this decline.

Conclusions

The survey conducted in 2017 of breeding Dartford Warblers and Woodlarks in Sussex achieved nearly complete coverage of heathland and also some coverage of farmland and woodland habitats which were potentially suitable for breeding Woodlarks. Some observers also opted to record Tree Pipits. The survey resulted in the identification of 39 (39-41) Dartford Warbler territories, 88 (68-104) Woodlark territories and 51 (44-52) Tree Pipit territories (the ranges allowing for possible different interpretations of the observations made by volunteers). These were all considered to be minimum population estimates based on actual observations; no attempt was made to estimate the numbers of territories in areas not surveyed or the numbers of territories missed by incomplete surveys. The distributions of breeding Dartford Warblers and Woodlarks across Sussex were found to be as expected, with territories of both species found in heathland on the West Sussex commons and the Ashdown Forest, and with Woodlark territories also being found on farmland in West Sussex and mid-Sussex. Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 32 Dartford Warbler breeding territories; gorse was the dominant habitat type in 18 of these territories, and heather was the habitat category associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the main or a subsidiary habitat type for 27 of the territories for which habitat information is available. Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 78 Woodlark breeding territories; heather was the dominant habitat type in 25 of these territories, and other plants/shrubs/scattered trees was the habitat category associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the main or a subsidiary habitat type for 54 of the territories for which habitat information is available. Although the total number of Woodlark territories found in farmland and woodland was relatively small, a wide variety of habitat types were associated with these territories, including arable crops and vineyards. Habitat information was provided by survey volunteers for 51 Tree Pipit territories; other plants/shrubs/scattered trees was the dominant habitat type in 29 of these territories and was also the habitat category associated with the greatest number of territories, being selected as either the main or a subsidiary habitat type for 47 of the territories for which habitat information is available.

The number of Dartford Warbler territories found in the current survey would appear to represent a modest recovery of the species in Sussex since the very cold winters of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, although continued efforts to restore and improve the condition of heaths in Sussex are clearly needed. It could be useful to gain more insight into the habitat requirements of Dartford Warblers in Sussex heathland areas, by gathering more detailed information about gorse density and age and structure within occupied territories compared with unoccupied areas. Increasing recreational use of the heaths in Sussex is a concern, and consistent and regular monitoring of this species in a standard manner, particularly across the Ashdown Forest, would assist with measuring the effects of this increasing recreational use.

The Woodlark population in Sussex would appear to be relatively stable although again continued efforts to restore and improve the condition of heaths in Sussex will benefit this species. In addition to consistent and regular monitoring of this species in heathland areas, increased awareness of the breeding of this species in farmland habitats needs to be encouraged, and further more intensive surveys in some areas would be useful to better establish the pattern of use of farmland habitats and of vineyards in particular.

The current survey only considered Tree Pipits as an optional element and so whilst some information has been obtained the results do not provide a comprehensive distribution map or a reliable population estimate; certainly a full survey in the near future would be desirable.

Acknowledgements

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Breeding Yellow Wagtails in East Sussex, 2016 - 2017

Cliff Dean and Alan Parker

Introduction

A red-listed species of high conservation concern, the Yellow Wagtail declined by 67% across the UK between 1970 and 2013, with a 41% decline between 1995 and 2013. Although the species has been in decline since the early 19th century, this sharp decline is attributed to the loss of the traditional habitat of wet grassland, and also to land drainage, the switch from spring- to autumn-sown cereals, and a reduction in insect numbers.

The Yellow Wagtail is described by Thomas (2014) as “a breeding bird of wet grassland and flood meadows”, but arable land is now the main nesting habitat for this species in Britain, and this is certainly the case in the east of Sussex. Thomas (2014) also comments that “due to the long-term decline of breeding Yellow Wagtails in the UK the outlook is currently bleak even in supposedly favourable habitat managed as nature reserves.” Indeed, this slender and brilliantly colourful bird has vanished from many former nesting areas though some remain between Winchelsea and the Kent border. Figure 1 shows the breeding distribution recorded for the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project (Thomas 2014, Newnham and Crabtree 2012), with the population restricted almost entirely to the far east of the county, although the distribution in Kent during that period proves that the Sussex distribution represents the western edge of a more numerous and widespread population across the Romney Marshes as shown in Figure 2. KOS (2015) reports 1000-2000 pairs in Kent as a whole during the period 2008-2013.

The Dungeness Rye Bay and Romney Marsh SSSI covers 10,172.9 ha, including East Guldeford Levels (where arable areas are excluded), and Broomhill Levels in East Sussex where arable areas remain in the SSSI, and also adjacent areas in Kent beyond the county boundary. There is some original grazing marsh with surface features, and a lot more arable reversion fields which lack these. This article documents an investigation by the authors of these two areas.

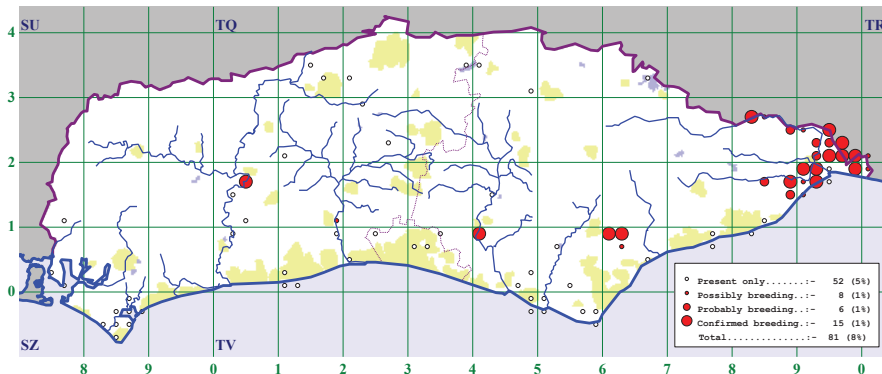


Figure 1. Yellow Wagtail breeding distribution in Sussex during 2008-2011 inclusive.

Observations in 2015 and 2016

One of the authors, Alan Parker, who regularly visits East Guldeford Levels, counted 19 singing males in a variety of crops in that area on 14 June 2015 and believed that this indicated a sizeable breeding population, but did not obtain any proof of breeding such as observing birds carrying

food to nests; the date and suitability of the habitat for breeding does suggest a breeding population.

On 8 June 2016 a few observers went on a walk from Broomhill towards Scotney, without the intention to survey Yellow Wagtails, and noticed in the arable crops at least 12 pairs of Yellow Wagtails, far more than would have been expected given the low numbers of probable breeding pairs that had been recorded for the whole county in recent years. Keen to understand the situation better, Cliff Dean and Peter Matthews returned to the area on 25 June 2016 and surveyed tetrad TQ91Z, which not only seemed to have held the most Yellow Wagtails on the previous visit but is also reasonably accessible, thanks to a couple of farm tracks and a mediaeval sea wall.

Looking across Broomhill Level from the road towards Dungeness the land seems to be flat and apparently lacking in birds, but this is wrong on both counts. The land actually undulates according to the former beaches, creeks and sand-banks that lie beneath the crops, wherein many birds are nesting, and from the car park behind the newly reinforced sea wall the songs of Yellow Wagtail, Corn Bunting, Reed Bunting and Skylark can easily be heard. Although there are rights of way beyond this area, they are poorly marked, and it can be hard to orientate oneself among the labyrinth of ditches, old seawalls and unexpected barbed-wire fences. As the season progresses, footpaths are sometimes hidden by crops, and even when a signpost helpfully recommends a route through the waxy tangle of chest-high, rain-soaked oilseed rape, anyone who has ever embarked on such a mission knows to seek an alternative route. Luckily, field beans do not pose such an obstacle, and in this area they harbour a lot of Yellow Wagtails. These birds have, in the past, been associated with grazing livestock on wet pastures but those seen during this survey were all on arable land, some perhaps flying over to grazing to feed when it was close.

In the course of the survey in tetrad TQ91Z the observers found 16 Yellow Wagtail territories (several pairs carrying food or with well-grown fledglings) and also 14 Skylark territories, eight Corn Bunting territories and three Meadow Pipit territories in addition to Tree Sparrows, a Marsh Harrier and a Barn Owl. Meanwhile, Alan Parker found no more than two singing males in a limited area at East Guldeford Level, suggesting the birds had moved elsewhere, the adjacent Broomhill Levels seeming likely.

Observations in 2017

In view of the small number of breeding records reported in recent years, the authors decided to set the record straight by visiting likely tetrads on Broomhill and East Guldeford Levels and obtaining proof of breeding. Table 1 gives a summary of the results. On 24 May 2017 the authors surveyed tetrad TQ91Z again, where, although not all the ideal habitat was accessible, 37 birds were found at 31 sites. There were six established pairs and many other individuals were almost certainly breeding; in bright sunlight some of the males were in truly dazzling plumage. The majority of the birds were crowded into oilseed rape fields in the SW corner of the tetrad while those in cereals were distributed more loosely. A pea field was not sufficiently grown to provide cover.

In addition to the Yellow Wagtails, the authors counted five singing Corn Buntings, but no attempt was made to count the many Skylarks, Reed Buntings, Linnets, Reed and Sedge Warblers.

On several subsequent dates (31 May, 4 Jun, 16 Jun, 20 Jun, 24 Jun and 29 Jun) the authors visited nine other tetrads containing suitable habitat between Winchelsea and Jury's Gap and, although pairs of Yellow Wagtails were found in most, none were so favoured as the easternmost which seemed to attract a lot of birds regardless of the fact that crops differed from year to year. The principal crops grown across this part of Walland Marsh were oilseed rape and spring wheat, with some field beans, peas, linseed and barley.

On 16 and 24 Jun recently-fledged young were seen at Broomhill Level from pairs nesting in wheat. On the latter date the authors had a fleeting glimpse of a male Blue-headed/Channel Wagtail dropping into the crops.

Alan Parker continued to visit East Guldeford Levels, and found at least six Yellow Wagtail pairs/singing males on 12 June, including an anxious pair carrying food, and on 4 Jul the same number were found and two fledged juveniles were seen. These birds were mostly in wheat, but one pair was in field beans.

Crops, reeds and ditchside plants grew up higher as the season progressed, making it more and more difficult to navigate some areas where paths, signposts, planks and even bridges were swallowed up in the lush vegetation. In addition, Yellow Wagtails are known to raise an early brood in one crop, such as cereals, and then move on to another, such as beans or potatoes (not grown in this part of Sussex), as the first becomes too enclosed, and while this is less likely to happen with spring-sown than autumn-sown wheat, there is clearly a risk of counting the same pair twice over a lengthy survey, so these large counts on single dates are useful.

Because of time constraints and difficulties of access this survey was casual rather than rigorous but it does show clearly that, with the presence of 50-60 pairs, the Yellow Wagtail remains well-established as a breeding bird at the eastern end of Sussex.

Tetrad	Location	No. of pairs	Males	Females
TQ81Y	Crutches Farm	1		
TQ91E	Rye Marsh	3	2	
TQ91P	Point Farm	0	0	0
TQ91U	Camber	3	2	1
TQ91Z	Broomhill Level	26	5	1
TQ92K	East Guldeford Level	3		
TQ92L	Guldeford Lane	4		
TQ92Q	Barn Farm	4	3	
TR01E	Jury's Gap Farm	4	1	
Total		48	13	2

Table 1. Summary of the results of the surveys for Yellow Wagtails in 2017.

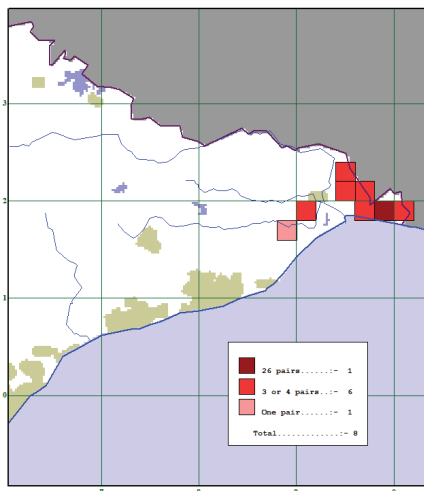


Figure 2. Numbers of Yellow Wagtail pairs found in the tetrads surveyed in 2017.

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Typical Yellow Wagtail habitat, Broomhill Levels. Top; oilseed rape, bottom; field beans (Cliff Dean)

Photographers' Gallery 2017



Little Stint, Cuckmere Haven, September 2017 (Bob Eade)



Rock Pipit, Ovingdean, December 2017 (Tim Squire)



Dunlin, Arlington Reservoir, September 2017 (Leigh Prevost)



Lesser Black-backed Gull, Warnham LNR, June 2017 (Chris Hobden)



Brambling, Warnham LNR, November 2017 (Ian Redman)



Curlew Sandpiper, Cuckmere Haven, September 2017 (Bob Eade)



Tree Pipit, Old Lodge, June 2017 (Ian Redman)



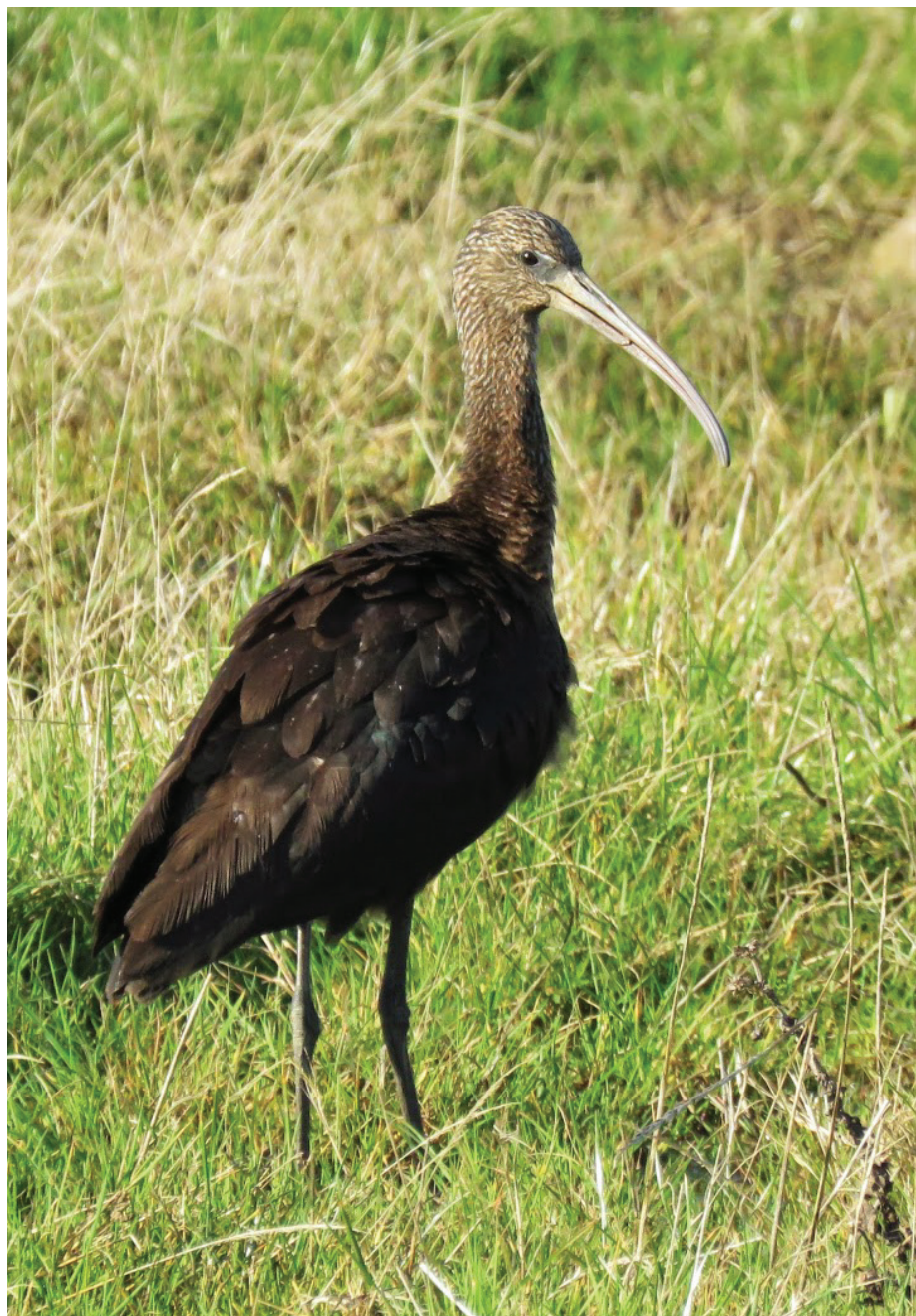
Long-tailed Tit, Ringmer, February 2017 (Bob Eade)



Great Spotted Woodpecker, Warnham LNR, October 2017 (Ian Redman)



Yellow-legged Gull, Medmerry, August 2017 (Andrew House)



Glossy Ibis, Medmerry, February 2017 (Andrew House)



Kentish Plover, Pagham Harbour, May 2017 (Andrew House)



Starling, Bishopstone, May 2017 (Peter Wilson)



Whitethroat, Rottingdean, June 2017 (Tim Squire)



Grey Phalarope, Cuckmere Haven, September 2017 (Tim Squire)

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	Dotterel	Willow Tit
Taiga Bean Goose	Temminck's Stint	Greenish Warbler
Pink-footed Goose	White-rumped Sandpiper	Pallas's Leaf Warbler
Tundra Bean Goose	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Yellow-browed Warbler
American Wigeon	Pectoral Sandpiper	Radde's Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Red-necked Phalarope	Dusky Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Grey Phalarope	Wood Warbler
Lesser Scaup	Pomarine Skua (not spring)	Barred Warbler
Surf Scoter	Long-tailed Skua	Subalpine Warbler
All pheasants (except Common)	Puffin	Icterine Warbler
White-billed Diver	Black Guillemot	Melodious Warbler
All shearwaters (except Manx)	Little Auk	Blyth's Reed Warbler
All petrels (except Fulmar)	White-winged Black Tern	Marsh Warbler
Night-heron	Roseate Tern	Rose-coloured Starling
Cattle Egret	Sabine's Gull	Dipper
Purple Heron	Ring-billed Gull	Bluethroat
White Stork (not released birds)	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	Common Redpoll
Spotted Crake	Chough	Parrot Crossbill
Crane	Hooded Crow	Serin
Stone-curlew	Penduline Tit	Lapland Bunting
Black-winged Stilt	Shore Lark	Cirl Bunting
American Golden Plover	Short-toed Lark	Ortolan Bunting
Kentish Plover	Red-rumped Swallow	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 and Yellow Wagtail. However, descriptions are not required for the following sub-species/races: 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 BBRC at <https://www.bbrc.org.uk/submit-a-sighting>.

The Sussex Ornithological Society

Who are we and what do we do?

The Society was formed in 1962 to promote the recording, study, conservation and enjoyment of birds in Sussex.

We encourage our members to keep records of birds seen in Sussex and to submit these to our county database. This has over two million records which are vitally important in helping us monitor our changing bird populations; they are also regularly used for conservation purposes.

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Membership of the SOS entitles you to receive four quarterly newsletters a year, plus a copy of the award-winning annual Sussex Bird Report, which has accounts of all the species recorded in Sussex during the previous year, as well as articles on recent Sussex bird surveys and on a variety of interesting Sussex ornithological matters. You can also attend the society's ever-popular conference each January and go on some 30 outings a year which are led by some of Sussex's best birders. Membership of the society is open to anyone and your membership fee contributes to our important conservation work to help Sussex's birds.



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Contributors and Acknowledgements, 2017

We are grateful to the following observers for records for the 2017 Sussex Bird Report. For an explanation of the superscripts, see the footnote below the table.

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J Adlam	J Atkinson	S Bedford ^T	G Boorman ^{BC}
D Agombar ^T	Y Attia ^U	J Beegan ^X	G Booth ^X
J Aidley ^T	K Attree	DJ Beer ^T	H Booth ^S
V Aitkenhead ^X	W Attridge	C Bell ^X	G Border ^B
B Akinola ^T	G Ault ^E	B Benatt	SDS Bosanquet
D Alder	P Austin ^{NT}	C Bentley ^W	SA Boswell ^T
J Alec	L Ayerst	VP Bentley ^{BCDNTW}	H Bourne ^S
H Alexander ^T	M Ayling ^{BCMNTW}	AJ Benton ^T	J Bowen ^S
J Alford	J Aylward ^T	A Berger	L Bower ^U
V Alford ^X	S Aylward ^T	R Best	LD Bower ^B
DJ Allcock ^U	O Baena ^U	NW Beswick ^T	AP Bowley
J Allcock ^U	H Baggaley ^W	L Beun ^{DS}	PS Bowley
AE Allen ^T	S Baines ^U	E Bew	R Bown ^{BCT}
E Allen ^X	P Baker ^X	R Bicker ^X	C Boxall ^X
G Allen ^X	R Baker ^T	T Bickerton ^W	J Boyce ^U
L Allen ^W	R Baker ^X	N Biddulph ^B	TK Boyd ^U
T Allen ^T	CF Ball ^{BCNW}	JH Bingley ^T	T Boyle ^X
L Allen-Williams ^X	H Ball ^S	E Birchall ^X	J Brackpool
R Allison	S Ball ^S	C Bird ^T	K Bradbury ^S
J Alloway ^W	S Ball ^T	LR Bird	I Bradley ^X
A Allum ^W	D Bangs	M Bird ^T	I Bradshaw ^B
AE Almeida ^{BNW}	WM Banks	B Birder ^U	S Bramwell ^X
K Andrews	R Bannister ^T	J Birdsey ^{BC}	K Brannan ^T
R Ansell-White ^X	DG Barber ^{BHX}	J Birkett ^T	C Brassey ^U
F Antram ^U	E Barber ^T	G Bishop ^T	A Brennan ^{HW}
H Antram ^U	CJR Barfield ^{BCDNTW}	P Bishop ^U	C Brewer ^X
F Antrum	A Barker ^X	R Black ^X	W Brewer ^X
R Appleyard ^X	P Barker	RA Black ^E	D Bridges
K Archer ^X	JDG Barnard ^T	J Blackadder ^X	J Brinkley ^X
AC Armitage ^{DNT}	C Barnes ^U	R Blackburn ^N	K Britten ^U
J Arnott ^W	DJ Barnes ^T	P Blake	I Broadbent ^T
G Aronson ^U	D Barnett ^U	D Blanks ^X	D Broadley ^U
D Arrowsmith	R Barnett ^W	C Blencowe ^X	P Broggio
W Arrowsmith ^T	RI Bashford ^T	M Blencowe ^X	R Brook ^T
C Ash ^{CM}	J Bassett ^{WX}	AC Blinston ^T	W Brooker
RF Ash ^M	P Bate ^T	D Block ^X	K Brookes ^U
M Ashdown ^S	B Bates ^S	J Boardman	C Brooks ^{BCNT}
D Asher ^{BC}	T Bates	D Boddington ^{BCDNTW}	T Brooks ^U
P Ashley	GS Batho ^T	CF Bollen ^T	W Brooks
M Ashton ^X	S Baynes ^T	J Bolton ^X	RA Brookwell
R Ashwood ^S	S Beale ^X	N Bond ^T	DR Brown ^{CT}
D Asquith ^T	VR Beaney ^T	PF Bonham ^X	GB Brown ^T
J Brown ^{CT}	PM Carter ^T	T Coles ^X	BR Cox
J Brown ^{BN}	S Carter	N Colgate ^{BCT}	JM Cox ^T

L Brown ^x	T Carter ^x	D Colledge ^T	P Cox ^c
P Brown ^x	M Cartwright ^x	H Collings ^T	S Cox ^T
PM Brown ^T	MC Casemore	C Collins ^W	P Coyston ^x
HE Bryett ^N	MGR Cattell ^T	C Collins ^x	T Crabb ^x
P Buchan ^x	A Caulkett	CB Collins ^W	HM Crabtree ^{BCMNTW}
D Buckingham ^{NT}	M Causer ^W	M Collins ^B	SJ Craft ^T
S Buckland ^{DWX}	J Cawte ^x	MA Collins	C Craig ^T
T Buckland ^x	KG Cawte ^{BCNT}	P Collins ^T	C Craig
A Buckle ^{BDEM}	M Chaffe ^x	REC Collins ^T	JK Cross ^H
C Buckle ^{BCDMTW}	M Chalcraft ^T	RF Collins ^T	FE Crowe
N Buckthorpe ^W	G Challenger ^S	S Collins	L Crowley ^x
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J Burchell-Collins ^x	B Chapman	R Comerford ^T	B Cumming ^U
J Burfield ^x	B Chapman ^x	J Comford	T Cummins ^T
DJ Burges ^{EM}	CB Chapman ^T	J Connor ^x	J Curson ^x
G Burgess ^T	J Chapman ^W	P Conroy ^T	L Curson ^T
G Burgess ^x	SE Chapman ^{BCMNTW}	I Consack ^U	J Curtin ^W
J Burgess ^{DT}	WN Chapman ^T	S Conway ^T	J Cuthbert ^S
L Burgess ^x	G Charles	DM Cook	L Dalglish
N Burgum ^T	PJ Charles ^T	GM Cook ^T	RC Dalrymple ^T
R Burkmar ^x	ME Charlwood	J Cook ^{DT}	M Dancy ^x
ANM Burns ^{BCHT}	RH Charlwood	A Cooper ^T	P Dangerfield ^x
T Burns ^x	P Chase ^{BT}	C Cooper ^T	M Daniel ^T
C Burrell	SM Chastell ^T	D Cooper	MC Daniel ^{MW}
S Burtenshaw	MJ Chattaway ^{BCMTW}	D Cooper	J Darley ^W
S Burton ^U	R Cheetham ^T	J Cooper ^x	DG Darrell-Lambert ^T
D Bushell ^{TX}	PK Chown ^T	JF Cooper	M Darsley ^U
RA Butler ^{BW}	D Clark ^x	JR Cooper ^T	S Davidson ^U
P Butson ^T	FC Clark ^T	K Cooper ^{DS}	P Davies
N Caldwell ^W	N Clark ^x	S Cooper ^x	S Davies ^x
L Callan ^U	P Clark ^M	S Cooper ^T	A Davis ^x
T Callaway	J Clarkson ^T	S Cooper ^{BS}	A Davis
C Campbell ^{IX}	BR Clay ^{BCDTW}	M Coote ^B	C Davis ^{BCDNTW}
DK Campbell ^T	PJ Clay ^{NT}	P Copleston ^T	M Davis ^W
J Campbell ^T	FA Clements ^T	I Corbin	P Davis ^T
S Card	J Clements ^T	GW Corfield ^T	S Davis ^x
S Cardy ^x	G Clewley ^U	W Cormack ^U	K Dawson ^x
S Carey ^T	S Cocker ^W	C Corrigan ^{BT}	S Dawson ^x
P Carr ^U	TD Codlin ^T	S Cossey ^T	T Dawson ^x
J Carrell ^W	DC Cogan	M Cottingham ^T	J Day ^T
G Carter ^x	C Cogley ^T	P Cotton	A de Potier ^W
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PD Carter ^T	S Colenutt ^x	JR Cowser ^{BCHNTW}	S Delahunt
MN Denness ^C	P Ellison ^x	EL Foyle ^T	E Godinho
A Dennig ^x	S Elphick ^x	S Fran ^x	NJ Godwin ^T
RR Dennis	M Emberson ^{BCDT}	J France ^T	J Gong ^U
P Denyer ^{CWU}	BC Embling ^T	A Francis ^{DT}	H Goodey ^S
S Dewdney	M Ensor ^N	G Franklin ^x	D Goodge ^C
RA Dewey ^T	A Ertolahti ^U	C Fraser	J Gooding ^T
J Dickinson	PMJ Espin ^T	TJ Fraser ^{CT}	LJ Gooding ^T

G Dipple ^N	GD Evans	MG Freeman ^W	JR Goodspeed ^{MT}
S Diserens ^T	GM Evans ^T	CD French ^{BCT}	AH Gordon ^T
J Divito	LGR Evans ^T	R French ^W	J Gordon ^T
PC Dixon ^X	MJ Evans ^{BC}	D Fricker ^U	W Gordon ^W
R Dobbins ^T	M Eveleigh ^{CT}	TP Fuller ^T	S Gorman
G Doherty ^T	JJ Everitt ^{HX}	WW Fuller ^{BCW}	S Gough ^T
TA Doherty ^T	I Exton	MA Galtry ^T	C Gouraud ^U
B Dold	RJ Fairbank ^D	CR Gannaway ^T	S Gove ^S
D Donaldson ^U	MW Fairley ^T	AH Gardiner ^T	JS Gowers ^T
L Dorward ^U	JA Faithfull	D Gardiner ^T	K Gowers ^{BC}
A Dove ^T	D Farley ^X	R Gardner ^U	R Gowing ^U
EJ Dowding ^{MTW}	AR Farrar ^T	RDJ Gardner	GW Gowlett
M Dowse ^D	C Farrell ^T	LA Gaskin ^T	AS Grace
C Drake ^X	JA Feest	NJF Gates ^T	JH Grant ^T
A Drauglis ^U	C Feger ^U	SJ Gates ^T	A Gray ^T
B Drolet ^U	K Fekete ^X	Gatwick Operatives ^X	K Gray
N Duggan ^T	P Fenwick ^H	C Geoghegan ^X	P Gray ^T
DP Dunk ^S	C Ferris ^S	CM George ^{BCNT}	K Greaves ^{SX}
JAG Dunlop	G Fewster ^X	R George ^C	R Greaves ^X
G Durey ^W	JE Fields ^{BM}	A Giacomelli ^X	J Grech ^X
A Dyer ^X	S Fisher ^U	S Giacomelli ^X	MA Grech ^T
K Dziubinska ^{DTWX}	SL Fisher ^T	I Gibb ^{BT}	D Green ^{BX}
MR Eade	F Fitzgerald ^X	K Gibb ^B	M Green ^S
R Eade	AW Flannagan ^T	B Gibbs	P Green ^X
M Eagles ^B	K Fleming ^T	C Gibbs ^X	NM Greenaway ^{DNW}
R Eagles ^T	R Flesher ^T	RP Gibbs ^T	A Greene ^U
C Eames	G Flinn ^T	T Gibson ^U	C Greenfield ^T
E Eames	L Flowers ^T	T Gibson-Poole	RR Greenhalf ^W
M Eames	BF Forbes ^T	TE Gibson-Poole ^T	D Greenwood ^X
R Earwaker ^X	C Forbes ^X	SA Gilbert ^{BW}	G Griffin ^W
M Easterbrook ^T	T Forbes ^{CT}	D Gill ^U	D Griffiths ^T
G Eastwood ^S	A Ford	KB Gillam ^T	P Grimmet ^X
N Eastwood ^X	AE Ford ^T	SP Ginnaw ^U	N Gromoff ^U
J Eaton-Brown ST	R Foreman ^X	R Givens ^U	K Grove ^X
A Edden ^U	TP Forster ^T	L Glanz ^X	L Groves ^X
RDM Edgar	TJ Forward ^T	A Glossop	AJ Guest ^{BCT}
PJ Edmonds ^X	TM Forward ^X	J Glossop	J Guiver ^T
M Edwards ^X	S Fosberry	C Glover ^X	M Gurney ^X
CT Ellis	T Fowler ^{TX}	J Glover ^{BDN}	C Gutjahr ^{BX}
NJ Ellis ^N	CJ Fox	P Goatly	AC Gutteridge ^{BCMT}
P Ellis ^X	TP Fox ^{BCDHT}	J Godbolt ^X	C Haberle ^X
K Hackett ^T	G Heath	S Hooper	K Jennings ^X
RK Haggard	GA Heath	B Hoover ^U	S Jennings ^T
B Haley ^U	EJ Hediger ^T	CE Hope ^W	DJ Jode ^{TWX}
JA Hall ^T	R Heelan ^X	JHM Horne ^{BCMTWX}	A Johnson
S Halpin	N Henry	A House	L Johnson ^X
SA Halsey ^T	G Henson ^T	A Howard ^W	RJ Johnson ^{HW}
C Halstead ^X	J Hewitt	M Howard ^X	S Johnson ^X
H Halstead ^T	K Hewitt ^S	T Howard-Jones ^{TX}	A Johnston ^{BCT}
R Hamblett ^X	J Heys ^X	R Howell	D Johnston ^X
CH Hamilton ^T	AP Hibberd ^B	DH Howey ^T	B Jones ^T
J Hamilton	MS Hickey ^T	R Howorth ^X	C Jones ^T
D Hamilton-Robson ^X	A Hiley ^U	J Howse ^B	D Jones ^T

P Hampsen	JR Hiley ^U	P Hubbard ^S	E Jones ^{TX}
C Hampshire ^X	M Hill ^H	S Hubbard ^S	G Jones ^T
JC Hannam ^T	S Hill	G Hughes ^{BCT}	MF Jones
M Hanson	AC Hilton ^T	G Hughes ^{MNW}	MGM Jones ^T
AJ Hardie ^T	J Hiscock	PH Hughes ^{MNX}	PD Jones ^{TU}
D Harding ^X	RS Hoad ^{BCDT}	S Hughes ^X	PE Jones ^{BCNTW}
C Hardware	D Hoare ^T	R Hunjan ^X	R Jones ^X
M Hare ^T	DJ Hoare ^{TX}	GF Hunt	RI Jones ^T
F Hargreaves ^W	R Hoare ^T	E Hunter	RJ Jones ^T
F Harmer ^T	A Hobbs	P Hunter ^U	SJ Jones ^S
DGC Harper ST	RN Hobbs ^X	NP Hutchinson ^{DMNTW}	T Jones ^{CT}
K Harper	JA Hobson ^{BNT}	AM Hutson ^{CW}	T Jones
JE Harrington ^T	A Hodges ^S	A Hyatt ^{BCST}	J Joyce
A Harris	J Hodges ^U	K Imms ^T	Juniper Hall Centre ^X
C Harris ^U	H Hodson ^X	JB Ingham ^T	ME Kalaher
C Harris ^X	P Hogan ^{TX}	R Iredale ^T	S Kaupe
JR Harris ^T	AJ Holcombe	BGR Ives ^T	B Keen ^U
NG Harris ^T	BJ Holcombe	RA Ives	J Kellett ^E
RG Harris ^{TW}	AM Holden ^T	E Ivil	F Kelly ^T
S Harris ^U	AP Holding	C Jackett ^U	RS Kelly
SM Harris ^T	S Holgate ^C	ED Jackson ^T	JJ Kelsall ^X
C Harrison ^T	B Holland ^T	K Jackson	N Kemp
T Harris-Ross ^{BCM^X}	PK Holland ^T	L Jackson ^X	P Kennedy ^X
D Hart ^{EX}	K Hollidge ^T	RA Jackson ^T	AD Kennelly ^T
H Hart ^E	D Hollingdale ^C	RS Jacobs ^T	J Kennerley ^U
R Hart ^T	F Hollis ^N	S Jacobs ^T	P Kennerley ^U
WG Harvey ^{BCM}	A Holloway ^X	B James	J Kett ^T
A Harwood	C Holloway ^X	BD James	MM Kettell ^T
P Haseltine ^T	LG Holloway ^X	G James	AJ Killick ^T
R Hastings	AL Holmes ^T	P James ^T	DE Killick
P Haupt ^S	RG Holmes ^{BC}	CR Janman	J Killick
MJ Hawkins ^X	CA Holter ^{CDMT}	D Jay ^S	J Kinchington ^{BT}
JN Hawtree ^T	J Holter ^{TW}	M Jeffree	DR King
AN Haycock ^T	T Holter ^W	A Jeffrey ^U	JE King ^{BCS}
J Headon ^T	G Honey ^T	M Jenkins ^X	JW King
S Healey ^T	J Hooker ^X	G Jenner ^W	MN King ^{BCDT}
P King ^X	N Lay	MV Mansson ^X	O Mitchell ^{INTW}
RJ King	A Le Gresley ^T	JH Marchant ^T	J Mochan ^X
M Kingerlee	CE Lebba	E Marks ^T	S Moffat ^U
D Kingston ^X	HJA Lee ^{BCM^{NW}}	N Marriner ^T	M Monk-Terry ^X
G Kinnard	A Lees ^U	SK Marshall ^T	P Moon ^W
W Kirby	CL Leeves ^T	JNR Martin ^{BC}	A Moore ^T
M Kirk ^{BMTW}	W Legge ^U	JP Martin ^T	A Moore ^U
J Kirkman ^{DX}	G Leite ^U	M Martin ^{BC}	CH Moore ^{BC^{TW}}
A Kirkwood ^W	K Lerwill ^X	P Martin ^T	J Moore ^{CH^{TW}}
AR Kitson	D Leversedge ^{BCT}	P Martin ^T	T Moore ^X
J Klein ^X	R Liddle	R Martin ^U	NJ Moran ^T
B Knight ^X	P Lifton ^N	JM Maskell ^T	A Morris ^U
D Knight	T Lifton ^{BCNT}	A Mason ^X	T Morris ^W
DC Knight ^T	MW Light ^{BC}	D Mason	A Morrison ^W
L Knight ^{BCT}	TJ Lincoln	A Mateos-Dipper ^S	C Mortimer ^{BCST}
M Knight ^X	C Lindsay ^T	PD Matson ^T	SD Morton ^T

R Knight	SH Linington	P Maughan-Brown ^U	A Muir ^S
RM Knight ^T	R Litchfield	C Mayer ^S	MF Mullen ^{BCM}
R Knott	D Livingstone	C Mayers ^X	CA Mullender ^T
JP Knowles	AH Lloyd ^{TW}	C Mayhew ^T	J Mulleneux ^T
L Korhonen ^S	L Lockyer	L Mayhew ^X	CA Mulley ^T
SJ Kuhn ^T	C Lodge ^T	S Mcavoy ^T	MJ Mullis ^N
AW Kydd ^T	E Lough ^S	NV McCanch ^T	M Munday
DA Lake ^T	S Loughran ^X	SFH McCullagh ^{HNT}	RP Mundy
L Lambert ^{BC}	C Lowe ^S	JI McCulloch ^{TX}	C Murphy ^X
MP Lambert ^B	RE Lowe ^M	L McElvany ^U	K Murphy ^{BCT}
T Lambert	JA Lowes ^{WU}	PAF McKenzie Lloyd ^T	S Murphy ^T
D Lambing	AR Loweth ^T	G McLaren ^X	DP Murray ^T
T Lamour ^S	M Lowford	M Mcmanus ^{ETW}	D Mutters ^T
MP Lanaway	D Luck ^X	DF McNair ^{BCDMTW}	I Nancarrow ^X
RJ Lanaway	J Luck ^X	N McPherson ^U	P Nason ^U
S Lanaway ^W	PJ Luffingham ^H	S Mears	National Trust Recorder ^X
CS Lane ^T	M Luscombe ^X	E Medler ^X	NE Recorder
S Lane ^U	G Lyons ^X	G Meech	SM Neal ^T
IM Lang ^{HTW}	J Maccallum-Stewart ^T	J Meeda ^S	C Need ^T
L Lang	L Mace ^X	D Melville ^T	D Nelson ^X
G Langford ^U	A Mackay	SJ Message ^T	M Netherwood ^T
D Langiewicz ^X	M Mackrill ^T	J Meyer ^U	PJ Newbound ^T
JL Langiewicz ^X	S MacLachlan ^U	GA Michelmores ^{BCTW}	. Newland ^X
GB Langley ^U	DJ Madgin ^T	B Middleton ^X	DA Newman ^T
J Lansdell ^S	L Magyar ^W	J Middleton ^X	Y Newman
B Larkcom ^M	D Maher ^T	A Millar ^T	JA Newnham ^{BCHNTW}
MJ Latham ^T	A Major ^X	A Millar ^X	R Newnham
FM Law ^T	SE Malcolm ^U	C Miller	A Newson ^X
D Lawson ^X	M Mallalieu ^{BCTW}	G Miller ^W	M Newton ^X
J Lawson ^{BTW}	L Mandry ^X	D Mills ^X	SJ Newton ^{BCDMTX}
K Lawson ^S	L Mann ^T	D Mitchell ^U	JP Nicholson ^T
MJ Lawson ^T	RC Mann	NB Mitchell ^T	I Nicol
JL Nobbs ^{BCDEM}	M Parker ^X	H Poland ^M	J Redford
K Noble ^T	G Parkes ^U	D Pontalti ^U	M Redford
K Noble ^U	S Parmenter ^T	CR Poole ^{BCMT}	JW Redhead ^T
SD Noble ^T	TW Parmenter ^{NT}	NJN Pope	A Redman
D Noe ^X	R Parsons ^W	P Porter ^X	I Redman
C Noel ^X	F Partridge ^X	RF Porter	C Reed ^T
A Norbury ^{TX}	J Partridge	BC Potter ^T	B Reeve ^H
E Norman ^U	RA Pask	DG Powell ^T	J Reeve ^X
D Norris ^U	H Passmore	H Powell ^U	JP Reeves ^{TX}
C Northwood	J Patmore ^S	I Powell ^X	R Reeves
J Nott ^{BCT}	F Pattinson ^D	J Powell ^{TX}	A Reid ^T
A Nottage ^{MT}	SJ Patton ^X	J Power ^X	GS Reid ^T
M Nurse	PN Paul ^T	AW Prendergast	G Reiss
R Nussbaumer ^U	E Pawley	HDV Prendergast ^{BCMTX}	G Reynolds ^T
B O' Dowd ^W	E Paxton ^U	G Prescott	A Rice ^D
L O' Halloran ^T	D Payne ^T	I Preston ^U	H Richards ^S
SJ Oates ^T	D Pearson	J Price ^{SX}	JP Richards ^T
T O'Donnell ^S	R Peck ^T	R Price ^W	JE Richardson ^T
M Oldfield ^{SX}	A Pedliham ^T	A Priest ^B	L Richardson ^{BH}
D Oldham ^X	R Penny	T Priest ^B	S Richer ^U

A Oliver	P Pentek ^T	S Priestnall ^U	E Rickson ^U
P Oprandi ST	RF Penticost ^{BCT}	MG Prince ^U	A Ridgway ^T
MA Orchard-Webb ^{MINT}	RT Pepper ^T	R Pringle	M Ridley ^U
P Ormerod ^C	L Percival ^{MNW}	R Pritchard ^U	G Riley ^U
P Osborn ^T	Y Perlman ^U	K Pritty ^X	C Roach ^T
BP Osborne ^{BONT}	A Perry ^{CEM}	L Provost	M Robards
G Osborne ^{CTW}	P Perry ^X	S Pryor ^X	M Robards
T Outham ^{SX}	R Perry	RN Pulley ^T	J Robbins
C Owen ^S	D Peters ^X	S Purvis ^X	G Roberts ^T
JC Owen ^{BC}	JN Peters ^T	RHA Putnam ^T	GCM Roberts ^T
L Owen ^{MN}	MS Phelps ^{TX}	B Puttock ^{TW}	J Roberts ^T
MP Owen ^{BC}	AP Phillips ^X	K Quinlan ^X	M Roberts ^T
RC Owen ^{BC}	I Phillips ^X	AR Quinton ^{DNT}	JA Robinson ^T
M Page	MJ Phillips ^{TW}	R Rackliffe ^U	PA Robinson ^T
C Painter ^S	SM Phillips	B Rainbow ^X	I Robson ^T
D Painter ^T	A Piccolo ^T	IL Ralphs ^T	C Roche ^B
A Paethorpe ^T	C Pickering ^X	H Ramm	A Rodgers
JC Palmer ^T	M Pike ^{MN}	J Ramsey ^B	A Rodgers
K Palmer ^X	P Pires ^T	M Ramsey ^B	a Rodgers ^U
KJ Palmer ^T	L Pitcher	B Randall	J Rodgers
M Palmer ^X	A Pitts ^{DT}	T Randall	A Roffey
N Panda ^U	I Pitts	NM Ratcliffe ^{TX}	BM Rogers
C Panter ^X	J Pitts ^X	F Rattenbury ^S	DP Rogers ^{BCNTW}
PJ Papps ^T	PJ Plant ^T	J Rawles ^T	D Rolfe
A Parfitt ^{TWX}	R Platt ^T	CJ Raymond ^T	MD Rolfe ^T
DP Parish ^{BC}	D Plummer ^X	M Read	AJ Roman ^T
N Park ^{BCMT}	J Plumstead ^X	A Reaney ^T	N Roodhouse
A Parker ^M	S Pocock ^S	C Reay ^{CT}	PP Roper ^X
C Rose ^S	CR Shawyer	D Spensley ^T	RA Taylor
C Rose-Smyth ^U	MO Shea	M Spicer ^T	RE Taylor ^T
F Roskrow ^S	AJ Shearman ^T	A Spiers ^X	SR Taylor ^{BW}
J Ross ^{BX}	C Sheer	P Spiers ^W	CR Tazzyman
H Rouse ^{HM}	P Sheer	GC Spinks ^{TU}	S Teale ^X
P Rouse ^T	P Shergold	CD Spooner ^T	C Temple ^U
M Routledge ^X	R Sherrington ^C	M Spriggs ^T	M Temple ^W
AM Rowe ^T	G Sherwin ^X	T Squire ^{DSX}	E Thomas ^N
H Rowe	EM Shilland ^T	G Stacey ^T	R Thomas ^U
E Rowsell ^W	J Shortis ^U	T Stack ^{BS}	RD Thomas ^{CNT}
H Rumble ^X	J Shuker	I Standivan ^W	T Thomas ^{BDMTW}
SJR Rumsey	H Sillver ^X	A Stanger ^T	J Thompson ^X
MG Russell ^N	OJ Simms ^U	A Staples ^T	J Thompson
MJ Russell ^{CT}	J Simon ^S	AJ Steele ^{TUX}	PS Thompson
SA Russell ^{BCDT}	K Simon ^X	MJ Stenning	A Thornhill ^U
D Russum ^U	T Simon ^{NTX}	D Stephens ^T	D Thorns ^U
S Russum ^U	RN Simpson ^T	L Stevens ^B	P Thornton ^W
ND Rutherford ^{BCNW}	SP Simpson ^{BCNTW}	P Stevens ^{MNWX}	J Tilby ^T
S Ryan ^B	AC Sims ^T	PR Stevens ^T	C Tilden-Smith ^X
T Ryder	D Singer ^U	S Stevens ^{BC}	S Tillman ^X
CMP Ryland ^X	D Skeels ^T	A Stewart ^{TX}	PA Tinning ^X
D Sadler ^X	PA Sketch ^T	F Stonedahl ^U	PC Tinning ^X
s Sainsbury ^U	AJ Skinner ^{BCMW}	S Stonedahl ^U	P Tinsley-Marshall ^X
D Salgud ^T	C Skinner ^{BD}	N Stonestreet ^{DT}	D Tombling ^X
D Sandle ^X	L Slattery	PJ Strangeman ^{BT}	A Tomlinson ^T

E Sandvig ^U	T Slattery	N Stuart ^U	M Townsend ^T
G Sayer ^M	T Slow ^X	S Stuart ^T	M Treanor
J Sayers ^B	C Smith ^X	M Sullivan ^X	S Trenerry ^T
A Scarlett ^T	CA Smith ^T	KH Suttle ^T	G Trew ^{MNW}
M Scott-ham ^{BHT}	J Smith	P Sutton ^T	S Trice
A Seabrook ^U	K Smith ^X	S Sutton ^{IX}	V Trinkwon ^X
AM Seabrook ^T	KW Smith ^{BMNT}	JL Swallow ^T	E Tristram ^X
J Sears ^X	L Smith	J Swann White ^T	M Tristram ^X
CM Seaton ^{BTU}	M Smith ^W	M Sweeney ^X	CE Trollope ^{HNT}
J Seaward ^T	PA Smith ^T	T Sweetland ^T	D Trott ^T
G Segelbacher ^U	R Smith	RW Swift ^T	JE Trowell ^W
RC Self ^X	R Smith ^X	D Szimuly ^U	M Turner ^W
J Sellwood ^T	RF Smith ^X	G Szimuly ^U	RM Turner ^T
R Senior ^W	S Smith ^W	T Sztypuljak ^U	S Turner ^U
MV Sennitt ^X	S Smith	WIE Tagg ^X	JTM Turner-Moss ^T
M Shaft ^H	S Smith ^X	A Tamblin ^X	G Turvey ^M
P Sharman	AC Smither ^{BCNTW}	IK Tamon	D Tutt ^T
M Sharp ^T	A Snelling ^T	K Tarrant ^U	C Twitchen ^T
PJ Sharp ^T	TG Snow ^{BC}	A Taylor ^X	WM Twitchett ^T
A Shaw ^U	D Spangenburg ^U	B Taylor	HL Twizell ^{BN}
E Shaw ^U	K Sparks ^U	CA Taylor	D Tyler ^T
MD Shaw ^{CHTW}	R SPB ^T	K Taylor ^T	P Tyler ^T
RJW Shaw ^T	IM Spence ^T	LJ Taylor ^T	A Tyndale ^S
C Tyrrell ^X	N Warwick ^T	G Whitehead ^{MT}	JD Wilson ^T
J Ullman ^N	A Wasik ^X	CA Whiteman ^{NX}	I Wiltshire ^B
N Upton ^U	T Waters ^{HW}	J Whiting ^X	M Wiltshire ^T
M Usher ^X	AB Watson	AM Whitman	J Wolsey-Cooper
A Utting	R Watson	J Whitman ^X	GP Womack ^T
B Van Doren ^U	RF Watson ^T	JH Whitman	T Wood ^T
M Varvill ^X	D Wearn ^U	M Why ^T	CD Woodcock ^T
D Verrall ^X	PJ Webster ^T	Wildcall Recorder ^X	V Wood-Mewton ^{BT}
DJ Viles ^T	S Webster	G Wilkerson ^W	SK Woolley ^T
C Vince ^W	S Weir ^W	A Wilkes ^T	I Woolsey ^H
C Vine ^W	M Welcome ^W	J Wilkes ^C	E Worling ^U
L Vint ^U	PJ Wells	D Wilkins ^X	JA Worrall ^H
B Vitler ^T	AJ Wende ^T	J Wilkinson ^T	J Wrattton ^X
K Wagland ^X	R Werran ^T	M Wilkinson	L Wren
R Walden ^T	A West ^{CNT}	S Wilkinson	R Wren ST
BJ Walker ^T	DR West ^{BCT}	J Wilks	A Wright ^X
D Walker ^W	R West ^T	JD Willett ^T	CMV Wright ^{BCDMNSTW}
J Walker ^T	S West ^X	DC Williams	M Wright ^T
S Walker ^{TX}	K Westlake ^S	G Williams ^X	BJ Yates ^{HW}
S Walker ^U	JD Weston ^{NW}	S Williams ^X	B Yeoman
D Wallace ^U	AV Wheatcroft ^T	T Williams ^U	C Young ^U
J Wallington ^X	D Wheeler ^T	D Williams-Jones ^T	J Young ^U
SF Walsh ^T	MJ Wheeler ^T	C Williamson ^T	P Young ^X
R Walton ^B	L Whiston ^B	J Williamson ^T	R Young ^U
F Ward	AD Whitcomb	RLC Williamson ^W	S Young ^X
M Wardman	PJ Whitcomb ^T	N Willis ^X	S Young ^X
D Ware ^N	J White ^U	J Willmott ^X	T Young ^U
N Warne ^B	M White	I Wilson ^U	S Younger ^W
RF Warren ^T	R White ^S	J Wilson ^T	J Zarins ^S

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	Heronry Census
M	Dartford Warbler, Woodlark & Tree Pipit Survey
N	Cetti's Warbler Survey
S	Brighton & Hove House Sparrow & Swift projects
T	Contributors via <i>BirdTrack</i>
W	Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)
U	Contributors via Cornell University's e-Bird
X	Contributors via Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (including iRecord)

Assistance to Recorder

The Recorder and Database Manager thank contributors for submitting their records through one of the on-line 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's database - CJR Barfield, JA Hobson, T Howard-Jones, and JH Whitman.

Surveys

Society members again gave a great deal of their time during the year to a wide range of national, county and local surveys. Their invaluable support and contributions are acknowledged with grateful thanks. Details of the surveys and the Sussex organisers follow.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS): This BTO annual national breeding survey, based on selected 1-km squares, was 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 132 observers involved who are indicated by ^B in the above table.

Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS): This county survey based, like the BBS, on selected 1-km squares, was organised in Sussex for 2017 by Christine George (sussex.wbs@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 106 observers involved who are indicated by ^C in the above table.

South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative: This survey started in 2014 with the aim to monitor the farmland birds within the South Downs National Park. This survey was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details above) and involved a BBS like survey of randomly selected 1-km squares containing at least 50% farmland habitat. The BBS squares in the national park were included in this survey and the 38 surveyors involved are shown with ^D 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 11 observers involved who are indicated by ^E in the list of contributors.

Heronry Census: This long-standing national census was organised in Sussex during 2017 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 30 contributors who are indicated by ^H in the above table.

Dartford Warbler, Woodlark and Tree Pipit Survey: This county survey was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above), the 51 participants are indicated by ^M in the above table.

Cetti's Warbler Survey: This county survey was also organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and the 68 contributors are indicated by ^N in the above table.

Brighton & Hove House Sparrow and Swift Project: Two detailed recording projects were undertaken in the city of Brighton and Hove. The coordination of recording for the House Sparrow project was done by Anne Hyatt (bhsparrrows@gmail.com) and for the Swifts by John Cuthbert (John.Cuthbert@rspb.org.uk) and the 67 contributors to either of these projects are shown by ^S 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, 58 Brading Road, Brighton BN2 3PD (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 126 counters who are indicated by ^W 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

We are grateful for organising 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 and with records via iRecord this involved 308 observers (marked ^X in the above table). For the second year records from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (eBird) have been included and involved observations from 149 recorders each labelled U in the contributors table. The on-line recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 521 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a ^T 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, and the RSPB for the records from their reserves in Sussex.

Ringling

Thanks are due to VP Bentley for maintaining detailed records of ringling in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.

The Sussex List

This is the current list of the 403 bird species recorded in Sussex as at October 2018. The status descriptions are updated regularly and terms such as “rare” or “fairly common” reflect the numerical ranges for breeding pairs and winter/passage numbers given on page 15 of this report. Species which are red or amber listed as being of conservation concern are highlighted in the appropriate colour, and where a species is on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, this is stated. The list excludes escapes and feral species that are not in Category A, B or C of the British List. The Recorder (recorder@sos.org.uk) welcomes any suggested amendments to the Sussex status descriptions.

Species Name	Taxon name	Species status
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	Very common winter visitor and passage migrant; very scarce non-breeder in summer.
Red-breasted Goose	<i>Branta ruficollis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Common introduced resident and partial migrant.
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Very scarce winter visitor; often in severe weather; and an increasingly common feral resident.
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Increasingly common introduced resident and winter visitor; scarce passage migrant. Native population in UK is amber listed.
Taiga Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>	Rare winter visitor
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; also recorded as a feral bird.
Tundra Bean Goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. European race (<i>A. a. albifrons</i>) is red listed.
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Fairly common resident.
Bewick's Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	Scarce winter visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	Scarce introduced resident; bred for first time in 2000.
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and scarce passage migrant; scarce breeding species.
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Formerly very rare vagrant. Records since 1940 considered to be of UK captive origin.
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	Scarce introduced resident.
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>	Scarce passage migrant; very scarce summer non-breeder and rare breeder. Schedule 1 species.
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder; common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage.
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	Very scarce breeder and scarce summer non-breeder; fairly common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage.

Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	Very common winter visitor; scarce on observed passage. Very scarce in summer; but does not breed.
American Wigeon	<i>Mareca americana</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Common resident and winter visitor.
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and scarce on observed passage; occasionally summers and has bred. Schedule 1 species.
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Rare breeder and and scarce summering non-breeder; common winter visitor and fairly common on observed passage.
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	Possibly a rare winter visitor and passage migrant although most records probably relate to escaped or feral birds.
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Very scarce breeder; scarce summer non-breeder and fairly common winter visitor. Very scarce on observed passage.
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Rare vagrant.
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	Rare vagrant.
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Fairly common resident although scarce breeder; fairly common winter visitor and scarce on observed passage.
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; rare non-breeder in summer. Schedule 1 species.
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	Very rare vagrant
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; very scarce non-breeder in summer.
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor along the coast; rare inland. Schedule 1 species.
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Common spring passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor; scarce in summer and autumn. Very scarce inland. Schedule 1 species.
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Very scarce to scarce passage migrant and winter visitor; rare non-breeder in summer. Schedule 1 species.
Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Scarce winter visitor; rare non-breeder in summer. Schedule 1 species.
Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	Very scarce winter visitor mainly to the east of the county.
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant along the coast; rare non-breeder in summer. Rare inland.
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	Very scarce and declining resident and winter visitor; subject to culling to reduce numbers.
Black Grouse	<i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>	Formerly resident but became extinct by mid 19th century.
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Common introduced resident. Population augmented annually by captive bred stock.
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Scarce resident; much declined but benefiting locally through conservation effort.

Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Scarce summer visitor; recorded in variable numbers from year to year. Formerly occasional in winter. Schedule 1 species.
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Very common introduced resident. Population augmented annually by captive bred stock.
Golden Pheasant	<i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>	Formerly very scarce introduced resident; probably now extinct in the county.
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
White-billed Diver	<i>Gavia adamsii</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Very scarce visitor; mainly in late spring and mid summer and after autumn gales.
Leach's Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Scarce breeding species and passage migrant.
Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris borealis</i>	Rare vagrant.
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Ardenna grisea</i>	Very scarce autumn visitor.
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	Fairly common spring to autumn passage migrant.
Balearic Shearwater	<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>	Very scarce spring to autumn visitor. .
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Scarce resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Very rare vagrant.
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Rare vagrant; mainly in the spring. Most records from 2017 onwards likely to relate to deliberate releases or escapes.
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Very scarce but increasing visitor.
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Very scarce visitor; most frequent in spring and autumn. Schedule 1 species.
Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Scarce winter visitor; rare outside the winter months. Schedule 1 species.
American Bittern	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Rare vagrant.
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Very scarce but increasing visitor.
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Fairly common resident.
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Scarce but increasing visitor.

Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Scarce and increasing resident; and probably scarce autumn visitor; status as winter visitor uncertain.
Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	Common passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor; fairly common to common in winter.
Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; rare away from coast.
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Very scarce breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circus gallicus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Common resident and passage migrant.
Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Scarce but increasing resident. Schedule 1 species.
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor; very scarce breeder since 2004. Schedule 1 species.
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Very scarce spring and autumn visitor; last bred successfully in 1962. Schedule 1 species.
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Scarce breeding resident (first bred in 2004) and fairly common and increasing visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Rare vagrant.
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	Formerly a rare vagrant (up to 50 old records) but only two recorded since 1929. Schedule 1 species.
Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Rare winter visitor.
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Fairly common and increasing resident; probably scarce passage migrant.
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>	Resident until about 1825; none since 1891.
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	Formerly rare; now very rare vagrant.
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Very scarce resident; scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	Rare passage migrant; formerly bred. Schedule 1 species.
Little Crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>	Rare vagrant.
Baillon's Crane	<i>Porzana pusilla</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Spotted Crane	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Sora	<i>Porzana carolina</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Very common resident; possibly fairly common winter visitor but status uncertain.
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.
Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Rare in summer.
Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedipnemus</i>	A very scarce passage migrant and very scarce breeder. Schedule 1 species.
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Scarce breeder; fairly common passage migrant and common winter visitor.

Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Very scarce spring migrant. Bred in 2014. Schedule 1 species.
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce and localised breeder. Schedule 1 species.
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Scarce or fairly common; but declining; resident and very common winter visitor.
Sociable Plover	<i>Vanellus gregarius</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer.
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	Very rare vagrant
American Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Common winter visitor and passage migrant.
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Scarce breeder and fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor.
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Scarce breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; formerly bred. Schedule 1 species.
Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; one winter record. Schedule 1 species.
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Common passage migrant; very scarce non-breeding summering and wintering species. Schedule 1 species.
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Common passage migrant and winter visitor; formerly a very scarce breeder.
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Fairly common but localised winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce non-breeder in summer. Schedule 1 species.
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce non-breeder in summer. Rare away from coast.
Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Common winter visitor and scarce to fairly common passage migrant.
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Calidris himantopus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Passage migrant; scarce in autumn and very scarce in spring; rare in winter.
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare away from coast.
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Very common passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce away from estuaries; scarce non-breeder in summer.

Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; very rare in summer. Schedule 1 species.
Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Scarce passage migrant; very scarce in winter.
Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>	Very rare vagrant.
White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Calidris subruficollis</i>	Rare autumn vagrant.
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	Rare vagrant; mainly in autumn.
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Probably fairly common resident and winter visitor.
Jack Snipe	<i>Limnocyrtus minimus</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Very scarce breeder and fairly common winter visitor.
Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Rare spring and autumn passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	Very scarce autumn and rare winter visitor; usually occurs after gales.
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Fairly common passage migrant; very scarce in winter. Has bred at least once.
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Scarce spring and autumn passage migrant; more frequent in autumn; scarce in winter. Schedule 1 species.
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Scarce resident and common winter visitor and autumn passage migrant; fairly common spring migrant.
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Rare vagrant.
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Very scarce spring and scarce autumn passage migrant; recorded once in winter. Schedule 1 species.
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor.
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Fairly common passage migrant; scarce in winter. Schedule 1 species.
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glaresola pratincola</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Oriental Pratincole	<i>Glaresola maldivarum</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Black-winged Pratincole	<i>Glaresola nordmanni</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Common but very localised breeding species; fairly common or common winter visitor and passage migrant. Rare away from coast.
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	Rare mainly autumn vagrant.
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Common breeding species and very common to abundant passage migrant and winter visitor.

Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	Fairly common passage migrant; most numerous in spring. Very scarce non-breeder in summer and scarce in winter. Schedule 1 species.
Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Franklin's Gull	<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeus melanocephalus</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce breeder. Schedule 1 species.
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	Very common; sometimes abundant winter visitor and very common passage migrant; scarce in summer; bred until 1963 and in 2006 and in some years since then.
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Common winter visitor and passage migrant; scarce in summer; mostly non-breeders; but very scarce breeder since 2000.
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucoides</i>	Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus argenteus</i>	Very common resident; status uncertain as passage migrant; and winter visitor.
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Scarce but regular winter visitor
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	Scarce but localised visitor; mainly in late summer and autumn.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor; scarce (mainly immature) in summer and scarce breeder.
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Rare vagrant.
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Rare vagrant.
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	Fairly common although localised breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; very scarce winter visitor.
Elegant Tern	<i>Thalasseus elegans</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	Scarce breeding summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Least Tern	<i>Sternula antillarum</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Bridled Tern	<i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Sooty Tern	<i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Very scarce passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Fairly common breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Uncertain; but probably a fairly common spring and autumn passage migrant.
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	Very rare vagrant.
White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	Rare vagrant.
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Fairly common spring and scarce autumn passage migrant; very scarce but increasing in winter.
Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	Passage migrant in variable numbers in spring; usually scarce; but very scarce in autumn; rare in winter.

Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Fairly common spring and scarce autumn passage migrant; very scarce in summer and rare in winter.
Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	Rare vagrant.
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	Very scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant; formerly bred.
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	Common winter visitor and fairly common passage migrant; formerly bred.
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	Rare vagrant.
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Very scarce visitor; most frequently recorded in spring.
Pallas's Sandgrouse	<i>Syrhaptes paradoxus</i>	Formerly a rare vagrant.
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Common resident.
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	Common resident and possible winter visitor.
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Abundant resident and winter visitor.
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Scarce and declining summer visitor and passage migrant.
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Very common resident.
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Fairly common but declining summer visitor.
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Fairly common resident. Schedule 1 species.
Snowy Owl	<i>Bubo scandiacus</i>	Very rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	Common resident.
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Fairly common resident.
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant; has bred.
Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Fairly common but localised summer visitor rarely seen on migration.
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	Rare vagrant.
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Common summer visitor and passage migrant.
Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	Rare vagrant.
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Scarce to fairly common resident and possibly very scarce winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Very scarce visitor; mainly in spring; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Very scarce spring and even scarcer autumn passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Very scarce passage migrant; most in autumn; last bred in 1944. Schedule 1 species.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	Scarce resident.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Common resident.
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	Common resident.

Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Fairly common or common resident and passage migrant.
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	Rare vagrant.
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Scarce breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	Very rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Scarce breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.
Ring-necked Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Very scarce introduced resident.
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Very scarce passage migrant; formerly a breeding summer visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Rare vagrant.
Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Very scarce passage migrant and rare summer visitor; may have bred in 1965. Schedule 1 species.
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Very common resident.
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Very common resident.
Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Formerly a breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	Very common resident.
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Very common resident.
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Very common resident.
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Scarce and increasing breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.
Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	Irruptive winter visitor; very scarce or scarce; occasionally fairly common.
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	Very common resident.
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	Fairly common resident.
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	Status uncertain. May still be very scarce resident.
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Abundant resident.
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Abundant resident.
Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	Rare vagrant.
Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	Scarce breeding resident; and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Scarce resident and possibly very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Very common but declining resident; and probably common passage migrant and winter visitor.
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Shore Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Rare autumn migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Rare vagrant.

Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.
Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Very rare vagrant.
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Common but declining summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	Rare but increasing vagrant.
Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Fairly common and increasing resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Very common resident.
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant.
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.
Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Very scarce passage migrant. Rare in summer with no confirmed breeding records since 2010.
Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Radde's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus schwarzi</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Pallas's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	Rare visitor; mostly in late autumn.
Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	Very scarce visitor; mostly in late autumn.
Hume's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	Rare vagrant.
Aquatic Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	Rare autumn passage migrant.
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.
Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	Very rare vagrant
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.
Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	Rare summer visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Booted Warbler	<i>Iduna caligata</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Sykes's Warbler	<i>Iduna rama</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	Very scarce visitor in spring and autumn.
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	Rare vagrant.
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.
River Warbler	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	Rare visitor; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	Common summer visitor and passage migrant.
Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	Very scarce autumn visitor.
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.
Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	Scarce to fairly common but localised resident. Schedule 1 species.
Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	Rare vagrant.
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	Fairly common breeding resident and summer visitor; passage migrant; and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Very common breeding resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Abundant resident.
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Common resident.
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	Common resident.
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	Very rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.
Rose-coloured Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>	Rare vagrant.
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common but declining resident; and very common to abundant winter visitor.
White's Thrush	<i>Zoothera aurea</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Passage migrant; very scarce in spring; scarce to fairly common in autumn.
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.
Black-throated Thrush	<i>Turdus atrogularis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Common; occasionally very common; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Common; occasionally very common; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Very common but decreasing resident and partial migrant; common passage migrant and winter visitor.
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Common resident and partial migrant.
Rufous Bush Chat	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Fairly common but declining summer visitor; scarce passage migrant in spring and fairly common in autumn.
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant; mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Very scarce spring and autumn visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant.
Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Scarce passage migrant; more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred.
Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	Very rare vagrant.

Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	Rare vagrant.
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Rare resident; scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant.
Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Fairly common passage migrant. Rare summer visitor; last bred in 1999. Very rare in winter.
Eurasian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	Fairly common resident and partial migrant.
Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; very rare in mid-winter.
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Very rare vagrant. .
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Very common but possibly declining resident.
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Much declined and now very scarce resident; and scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.
Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Very common resident. .
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flavissima</i>	Scarce and localised summer visitor; scarce passage migrant in spring and fairly common in autumn.
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	Common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	Rare vagrant.
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Rare visitor; mostly in autumn.
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Common but declining resident; very common passage migrant and winter visitor. .
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Fairly common but local summer visitor; fairly common passage migrant.
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Buff-bellied Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	Very rare vagrant
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Abundant resident; and probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Scarce or possibly very scarce breeding resident and in most years very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor; occasionally more numerous.

Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Fairly common or common resident.
Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	Very common resident; and possibly fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.
Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>	Rare winter visitor.
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Common but decreasing resident and partial migrant.
Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	Very scarce visitor.
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	Scarce breeder and common passage migrant and winter visitor.
Parrot Crossbill	<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>	Very rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.
Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Irruptive species; usually scarce visitor but fairly common in some years. Very scarce breeder in some years. Schedule 1 species.
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Probably fairly common resident; common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.
Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	Scarce breeder. Common winter visitor and passage migrant.
Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Setophaga striata</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Baltimore Oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Fairly common but decreasing resident.
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Common resident.
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	Very scarce visitor mainly in the autumn.
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	Formerly a scarce resident; now extinct as a breeding species and not recorded since 1988. Schedule 1 species.
Little Bunting	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	Rare vagrant.
Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Pallas's Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza pallasi</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.
White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	Very rare vagrant.
Lapland Bunting	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.
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