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Sussex Ornithological Society

The Sussex Bird Report

Number Seventy-one, 2018



Editor: Dr PJ Plant

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

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Sussex Bird Report 2017 - amendments and corrections

A number of errors in the 2017 Report were brought to the Editor's attention. In general, 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. However, the list of Contributors and Acknowledgements 2017 appeared with some of the names jumbled from alphabetical order. The Editor apologises for this error – all the names were in there somewhere!



Coots at Rye Harbour (Barry Yates)

Photographs

I would like to say a massive thank you to the over fifty photographers who submitted around seven hundred images for the 2018 Sussex Bird Report. It was quite a challenge to shortlist them; the quality of the submissions gets better year-on-year and this year was no exception!

I don't think there were any 'stand out' birds for photographers in 2018. However, the Tawny Owl family at Pulbrough Brooks RSPB showed well throughout May and June to the delight of many. The famous Black Guillemot in Sovereign Harbour, Eastbourne that appeared in late 2017 was also very accessible well into the New Year. They are a hard bird to see in Sussex and are usually only seen miles offshore, so this was a real treat!

As in previous years, the selection policy has been to feature as wide a range of species as possible (not just scarcities) and to represent as many photographers that space allows. We have included a photographers' gallery (pages 268 - 272) to display a greater selection of work from our talented and generous contributors.

I would like to be able to say that I am looking forward to receiving more outstanding photos for the 2019 Report, however I am standing down as photo editor as I am no longer living in the UK and find myself working in ever more remote regions. The editorial team are looking for a new Photographic Editor to take over for the 2019 Report, so please contact the Editor (breditor@sos.org.uk) if you feel up to this incredibly rewarding role. (Luke Dray)

Cover photo: Wryneck, Newhaven Tidemills, 1 September (Gary Faulkner)

Welcome to the 71st edition of the Sussex Bird Report!

The purposes of the Bird Report are to present an informed and accurate digest of the year's ornithological events in a format that is useful for future researchers, to publish scientific papers including those reporting on the Society's survey work in Sussex, and to provide an opportunity to display a selection of the outstanding photographs taken during the year. To achieve this the Report must be entirely consistent with the database, a formidable task considering that over 330,000 records were added in 2018. More details of the origins of these records is given in John Newnham's Database Report on pages 16 -18. One consequence of the requirement for accuracy is that unusual records are only included if they have been considered and accepted by the relevant Records Committee. Note this applies not only to the description species or races given in the updated list on page 273, but also that the editorial team exclude some records from eBird, BirdGuides etc because the location, date or count is very unusual and we often have no way of contacting the observers, so an addition to the text note of the sighting, a quick email to the Recorder or a mention on the SOS sightings page will in future help to ensure that such valid records are not excluded. Observers are welcome to contact the Recorder if they notice that a record of theirs has been omitted.

Sightings reported on the Society's web page are not at present automatically captured in the database so an additional entry on BirdTrack will help to achieve this. All records, especially those with a full 6-figure grid reference or of breeding status, are of importance for the Society's conservation work.

The bulk of the report consists of the systematic list of the 262 species recorded in 2018, which includes two new species for Sussex, Royal Tern and Pallid Swift, and finders' accounts for these are pages 212-214. The year may also be viewed chronologically in Mark Mallalieu's "Review of the Year", illustrated with Stephen Message's superb paintings of the Broad-billed Sandpiper at Rye Harbour in May (see also www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk).

Scientific papers comprise accounts of the recent influx of Hawfinches, winter Starling roosts in Brighton, and survey results of breeding Firecrests, Rock Pipits and the outcome of the Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey (NEWS). We also include the Ringing Report, tables of the Breeding Bird and Sussex Winter Bird Surveys and tables of First and Last Migrant Dates.

Acknowledgements

Production of the 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, are acknowledged at the end of this report. The Database Team led by John Newnham digested these, removed duplicates, checked exceptional records and chased answers to numerous queries. Draft accounts were provided by the key team of species account writers. I am extremely grateful to WDJ Arrowsmith, CJR Barfield, VP Bentley, D Boddington, C Brooks, C Buckle, D Burgess, 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 Osborne, TW Parmenter, PJ Plant, AH Podmore, A Rowe, T Seabrook, K Smith, L Smith, A Thomas, G Turvey, AB Watson and JH Whitman. The initials at the end of each account identify the author.

Primary proofreading and checking the numbers was shared between Joanne Chattaway and John Hobson. Many thanks for their diligence. Owen Mitchell provided additional useful 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. Further clarification came from the many people promptly responding to enquiries about surprising or ambiguous records. I am particularly grateful to John Newnham for his perceptive final reviews of all the accounts. All 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 2018 and suggested a selection to be included in the Report to enhance the Systematic List and other available space. Thanks go to all those providing images, to Mya Bambrick and Rob Yarham for their comments and to Rob for designing the cover.

Special thanks go to Helen Crabtree for the total organisation of the scientific papers; her own with Clare Buckle on the survey of Rock Pipits and with John Newnham on NEWS, those of Mark Mallalieu on Hawfinches and of breeding Firecrests and Chris Barfield on Starling Roosts. Christine George, John Newnham and Alan Perry provided survey tables, John Newnham produced the maps and Val Bentley the Ringing Report.

Chris Barfield again undertook the daunting task of typesetting the report.

Finally I must acknowledge the help and professionalism of Neil Pennels 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 2019 Sussex Bird Report please contact breditor@sos.org.uk.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used

| | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|---|
| 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 Breeding Bird Survey |
| 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 |

Review of 2018

Mark Mallalieu

A total of 262 species was recorded in 2018, compared to 256 during 2017. There were two exciting 'firsts' for the county, a **Royal Tern** of the American subspecies at Pagham Hbr on 19 and 20 Jun and a **Pallid Swift** at Church Norton on 13 Oct. A **Daurian** or **Turkestan Shrike** at Birling Gap on 2 Nov was only the third ever. Rare waders were a highlight, with Rye Hbr hosting a **Terek Sandpiper** on 18 and 19 May followed by a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** on 24 May. In the autumn, a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Sep, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** at The Midrips on 3 and 4 Nov and a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at Pulborough Brooks from 8 to 13 Dec. Seawatching was rewarded for a lucky few by a **Surf Scoter** at Splash Point (Seaford) on 22 Apr and a **Cory's Shearwater** at Selsey Bill on 16 Jun. Rare passerines in the spring included a **Savi's Warbler** at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) between 8 and 11 Apr and a **Little Bunting** at Beachy Head on 22 Apr. In the autumn there was a **Tawny Pipit** at Beachy Head on 17 Sep and later on a **Hume's Warbler** delighted many observers during its long stay at Newhaven from 27 Dec into 2019. Other highlights included a county record of 400 **Hawfinches** at Kingley Vale in March.

January to March

January was rather wet and mild, though with occasional overnight frosts in the second half of the month. There were gale force westerly winds on the 2nd and 3rd associated with Storm Eleanor, on the 14th and 15th and again on the 17th and 18th. February was colder than average, with some deep frosts early in the month and then an icy spell with much snow at the end of the month until 2 Mar, caused by easterly winds and nicknamed "the beast from the east". The rest of March was milder, unsettled and wet, apart from another very cold spell on the 17th and 18th.

The two **Whooper Swans** on Pevensey Levels on 28 Dec 2017 were seen again up to 1 Jan, with at least one still present on 5 Jan. Three or more **Red-necked Grebes** had been present off Lancing and Worthing, at Pagham Hbr and off Selsey Bill in December 2017, so singles seen in Pagham Hbr and Selsey Bill in January perhaps related to one of the same individuals. Two more were at Scotney GP on 10 Jan, one off Goring on 14 Feb and two on the sea there on 30 Mar.

The **Black Guillemot** first seen at Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on 28 Nov 2017 was still present in January and clearly found the harbour very productive as it stayed until 10 Apr. Another long-stayer was the **Temminck's Stint** at Pulborough Brooks, which had appeared on 9 Dec 2017 and remained until 25 Feb.

Totals of wintering wildfowl in the period were mostly below average, but included 18,000 **Brent Geese** in February, of which 16,354 were in Chichester Hbr, and 986 **Shovelers** in January, with 297 at Chichester GP and 248 in Rye Bay; there were also up to 300 at West Rise Marsh on 3 Mar.

The first winter period produced only a few scarce swans and geese. **Bewick's Swans** peaked at just 13 in the Arun valley, on 14 Jan, whilst the only other **Whooper Swan** in the period was at Pulborough Brooks on 1 and 4 Jan. Two **Tundra Bean Geese** were at Scotney GP between 10 Jan and 1 Feb. Ten **Pink-footed Geese** flew east past Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 4 Mar.

Notable concentrations of wintering waders included 4000 **Lapwings** at Pagham Hbr on 25 Jan, 41 **Avocets** at Thorney Island on 3 Jan and an impressive 75 in Pagham Hbr on 30 Jan. The January WeBS counts found 15,576 **Dunlins**, of which 12,960 were in Chichester Hbr.

At Bawl Water large counts of roosting gulls included 17,500 **Common Gulls** on 3 Jan and 29,000 **Black-headed Gulls** on 29 Jan. "White-winged" gulls were found at a number of coastal sites

across the county: **Glaucous Gulls** at Pagham Hbr on 19 Jan, 16 and 17 Feb, East Guldeford Level between 7 and 11 Feb and offshore at Fairlight on 9 Feb. **Iceland Gulls** were at Birling Gap on 27 Jan, irregularly at Shoreham Hbr from 14 Feb into April, with perhaps the same individual at Selsey on 5 Mar, and one at Climping and nearby locations from 14 Mar until 27 Apr. A **Caspian Gull** was at Climping at 2 Mar, with one at Goring on that day perhaps the same individual.

A **Black Guillemot** off Climping on 9 Mar proved to be a very long-stayer and lingered into June. Offshore movements included 118 **Red-throated Divers** east at Selsey Bill on 4 Mar. The peak count of **Great Northern Divers** offshore at Selsey Bill was 12 on 9 Mar.

About 11 **Great White Egrets** were present in the period, most in the area from Pett Level and Rye Hbr to Scotney GP, with a maximum of seven at Rye Hbr on 11 Feb, though with one or two in the Arun valley, Pulborough Brooks and at the Knepp Estate. Notable scarcer species in the period were a **Glossy Ibis** at West Rise Marsh on 30 Jan but not thereafter, and a rather more obliging **White-spotted Bluethroat** at the same location from 4 to 26 Feb, the first winter record. **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** were at Fishbourne Creek from 30 Jan to 3 Mar and by the R Adur at Shoreham on 21 Mar. Following records in late 2017, **Lapland Buntings** were again at East Guldeford Level, with up to three between 26 Jan and 4 Feb, then one or two from 16 Feb to 4 Mar.



Blackcap, Aldwick, 20 March (Trevor Guy)

A **Great Grey Shrike** was on Ashdown Forest on at least 14 and 17 Jan and again on 2 Feb. Wintering **Chiffchaffs** were found at 39 locations in January, with a maximum of 15 at Swanborough Fishing Lakes and WTW on the 3rd. Wintering **Blackcaps** were widespread, with a maximum in February of six in a Worthing garden on the 28th. The single **Lesser Whitethroats** in gardens at Ringmer and West Tarring (Worthing) in late 2017 remained until 31 and 9 Mar respectively. Up to four **Water Pipits** wintered at West Rise Marsh from January to March; singles were at Horse Eye Level (Pevensy) from 14 Jan to 9 Mar and Brede Level and Crowhurst, both on 21 Jan. Notable finch flocks included 1240 **Linnets** at Medmerry on 2 Mar. The early winter period was remarkable for the continued presence of extraordinary numbers of **Hawfinches**, with many counts of 50 plus

and roost counts peaking at 163 near Worth on 25 Mar. However, these totals were eclipsed by the 400 at Kingley Vale between 12 and 16 Mar.

The severe “beast from the east” freeze brought some unusual sightings, including 183 **Lapwings** flying east over Brighton on 1 Mar and, as the weather improved, 298 E over Weir Wood Res on the 4th. On 3 Mar, 80 **Golden Plovers** flew north-east over Lindfield and 69 were at Lymminster. A **Common Redpoll** was photographed with **Lesser Redpolls** feeding on sunflower hearts in a Haywards Heath garden on 27 Feb.

Signs of the approaching breeding season included a male **Goshawk** doing its “switchback” display flight on 1 Feb at a mid-Sussex site. First records of spring migrants included two **House Martins** at Partridge Green on 8 Mar, **Osprey** at Bewl Water on 9 Mar, **Little Ringed Plover** at Pett Level on the 11th, when there were also **Northern Wheatears** at six sites, including three at Selsey Bill; **Common Tern** at Splash Point on the 15th, **Sand Martins** at Cuckmere Haven and Beachy Head on the 18th, **Garganey** at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on the 20th, then **Barn Swallow** at Selham and **Willow Warbler** at Pulborough Brooks on the 21st.

April to June

April was noteworthy for a brief heatwave from the 18th to 21st. Cooler weather followed before high temperatures returned in the first week of May, a month of exceptionally hot weather, the equal second warmest May on record in the UK, although there were some cooler and rainy days as well as thunderstorms on the 29th. June was one of the driest on record, with hot and sunny conditions from the last week into July.

First records of arriving summer visitors in April included two **Ring Ouzels** at Wilmington on the 3rd, **Little Tern** at Selsey Bill on the 5th, 42 **Arctic Terns** past Splash Point, **Lesser Whitethroat** at Pagham Hbr and **Tree Pipit** at two sites on Ashdown Forest, all on the 6th, followed the next day by **Common Cuckoos** at Stanley Common (Liphook) and the Knepp Estate, **Common Redstart** at Beachy Head and **Yellow Wagtail** at Goring Gap. On the 8th there were two **Sedge Warblers** at Rye Hbr and singles at Pagham Hbr and Arundel WWT, **Common Whitethroat** at Rye Hbr and **Nightingale** at Pulborough Brooks. The first **Hobby** was at Widewater (Lancing) on the 9th, **Garden Warbler** at Uckfield on the 10th, then on the 14th **Reed Warbler** at Hooe Level (Pevensey Levels), **Grasshopper Warblers** at Selsey Bill and Rye Hbr and **Whinchat** at Pagham Hbr. A **Pied Flycatcher** was at Beachy Head on the 15th, then on the 19th two **Common Swifts** at Uckfield and another at Bexhill. Towards the end of April, the first **Turtle Doves** were at Northchapel and Henfield on the 22nd and **Spotted Flycatcher** at Wisborough Green on the 23rd. On 13 May, the first **Nightjars** were three at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and one at Wiggonholt Common.

Scarcer species in the first half of April included an **Iceland Gull** that flew over Pulborough Brooks on 2 Apr and another at Selsey Bill the following day, perhaps the same as that at Goring and adjacent sites that was last seen on 7 May; the individual at Shoreham stayed until 11 Apr. The **Black Guillemot** at Sovereign Hbr was last seen on 10 Apr, though the Elmer Rocks individual was last noted on 14 Jun. **Great White Egrets** were found from Medmerry to Rye Hbr at mainly coastal sites, but also inland in the Arun Valley, at the Knepp Estate and at Weir Wood Res, with the largest flock of four again at Rye Hbr on 12 April and 5 May.

A **Hoopoe** appeared in North Lancing gardens on the 6th and 8th and another was at Whatlington (Battle) on the 6th. A singing **Serin** was in Ashdown Forest on 6 Apr and another in Eastbourne on the 12th. A **Water Pipit** at Pulborough Brooks on the 6th was a good inland find. A **Red-necked Grebe** flew east at Selsey Bill on the 6th and one landed offshore on the 7th. The following day and up to the 10th, there were two **Black-winged Stilts** at Rye Hbr. Also on the 8th one of the birds of the

spring, a singing **Savi's Warbler**, was found at West Rise Marsh; it remained until the 11th. In the second half of April a series of excellent records from coastal sites started with a **Night-heron** at Filsham LNR on the 20th and a **Black Kite** at Beachy Head the next day. A **Water Pipit** at Climping on the 21st stayed until the next day, when the action was back at Beachy Head, where the same observer found a **Little Bunting** and then shortly afterwards an **Alpine Swift**. On the same day a **Surf Scoter** flew east with **Common Scoters** at Splash Point and a **Wryneck** was found at Uckfield. Another **Hoopoe** appeared at Ditchling on the 23rd and one more at Lower Horsebridge (Hailsham) on the 27th and 29th. A **Black-winged Stilt** was at Pulborough Brooks from 25 to 28 Apr and on the latter date two **Cattle Egrets** were at Iford Brooks and another **Iceland Gull** was soaring over The Trundle (Goodwood).

Seawatching at Splash Point in April included an easterly passage of 155 **Red-throated Divers** on the 2nd and 110 on the 7th, with a peak spring count of 55 **Arctic Skuas** on the 15th. Other notable totals from seawatchers included 12,093 **Common Scoters** past Splash Point in April.

The first week in May started with four good finds on the 1st: **Bee-eater** over Hastings CP, **Golden Oriole** at Itchenor, **Stone-curlew** at Medmerry and **Wood Warbler** at Arundel. On the same day there was a good count of 37 **Northern Wheatears** at Medmerry. On 3 May there was another **Wood Warbler**, at Pagham Hbr, and the third **Serin** of the spring was at Selsey Bill, the same or another being seen at Sidlesham on the 4th, where the observers also saw an **Iceland Gull** overhead. The first week ended with a **Red-backed Shrike** at Seaford on the 6th. May continued to be a splendid month for rarities, not least waders. Four **Temminck's Stints** included one at Rye Hbr on the 11th, singles at Pulborough Brooks and Sidlesham Ferry Pool on the 23rd (the Pulborough individual being last recorded on the 25th), followed by one at Cuckmere Haven from the 25th to the 27th. Rye Harbour hosted more **Black-winged Stilts**, with three on the 25th, but by then had also produced two extremely rare species: a **Terek Sandpiper** from 18 to 19 May and a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** on the 24th. Among less rare waders, 15 **Little Stints** at Church Norton on 31 May was a good count.

A **White Stork** at Arlington Res on 14 May was noteworthy in that it had a Dutch ring and was therefore not from the UK reintroduction project. The second **Red-backed Shrike** of the spring was in Ashdown Forest on 15 May and the third **Wood Warbler** at Broadwater Warren on the 17th. The only **Roseate Tern** of the period flew east at Selsey Bill on 20 May. There was a **Hoopoe** at Fairlight and a **Bee-eater** at Church Norton on the 23rd. Two days later, on the 25th, Church Norton also hosted a **Golden Oriole**. On the same day there was a **Quail** at Blackdown (Fernhurst); others sang at Plumpton on 8 Jun, Pagham Hbr on 11 Jun and West Firle on 30 Jun.

Seabird passage in May included a peak count of 34 **Pomarine Skuas** east at Splash Point on the 7th. There was also a **Puffin** off Splash Point on 26 May and a **Cory's Shearwater** at Selsey Bill on 16 Jun, one of the finds of the year. Movements of **Manx Shearwaters** included a peak count of 61 east off Selsey Bill on 21 May. Other seawatching counts in May included 280 **Whimbrel** and 458 **Bar-tailed Godwits** past Splash Point on the 6th.

In an influx year to the UK, there were three **Rose-coloured Starlings**, the first at Horse Eye Level on 28 May, followed by singles at Goring on 3 Jun and Hailsham on the 18th. A late migrant **Honey-buzzard** flew over Hastings on 30 May; on 2 Jun another **Bee-eater** was found, this time at Medmerry, and one more **Black-winged Stilt** arrived, at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 3 Jun. A **Marsh Warbler** in East Sussex on 8 Jun was one of only two in the year. A **Hooded Crow** that appeared at Earnley on 7 Jun was a surprise as was the length of its stay, as noted at the end of this review. Pride of place in this period must however go to the **Royal Tern** of the American subspecies in Pagham Hbr on 19 Jun that enthralled the finder and many other observers that evening and at first light the next morning.

July to September

July continued very hot and dry, with temperatures exceeding 30°C on some days. There were occasional thunderstorms, mainly in the last week. The heatwave ended after the first week of August, the rest of the month being variable with some rain, a few hot days and generally less sunny weather. After fine and warm weather at the beginning of September, the rest of the month saw mild and variable conditions with some very strong winds after mid-month; the last week was sunny and pleasant.

Four pairs of **Honey-buzzards**, at least seven pairs of **Goshawks** and three pairs of **Marsh Harriers** bred successfully. Three pairs of **Stone-curlews** were found and at least one young fledged. The 96 pairs of **Avocets** had mixed success, with 36 pairs at Medmerry producing 30 young whilst no young were thought to have survived from the 35 pairs at Rye Hbr. At the latter site, **Sandwich Terns** did much better, with about 320 pairs raising c.200 young. At Pagham Hbr, 18 young **Sandwich Terns** fledged successfully from 29 pairs and **Little Terns** also did well at this site, with 20 pairs fledging 13 young. There were about 156 pairs of **Common Terns**, with up to 110 of these at Rye Hbr where possibly only one young fledged and breeding success was also poor at the other main sites of Pagham Hbr and Pett Level.



Sandwich Terns, Rye Harbour, 2 April (Barry Yates)

A **Honey-buzzard** over Ringmer on 7 Jul was some distance from known breeding areas. Southbound **Wood Warblers** were at Seaford Head on 1 Aug, Ladywell (Coombes) on 8 Aug, Pett Level on 13 Aug and Beachy Head on 25 Aug. Other scarce or rare warblers included a **Marsh Warbler** in the east of the county on 20 Aug and a **Melodious Warbler** at Beachy Head from 20 to 25 Aug. The only scarce seabird in early August was a **Balearic Shearwater** flying east at Selsey Bill

on the 9th, though **Caspian Gulls** started to appear later in the month, with one at Goring on the 26th, one at Beachy Head on 8 Sep and one in Newhaven Hbr on 18 Sep. The period was notable for the influx of **Cattle Egrets**. After singles in Pagham Hbr on 24 Aug and Thorney Deepes from 25 to 29 Aug, four were at Pett Level on 30 Aug, two at Medmerry from 1 to 4 Sep, up to 13 in Pagham Hbr from 2 Sep into October and 19 in the Combe Valley from 4 to 5 Sep. After singles at Pett Level on 7 Sep and in the Lower Cuckmere Valley on 21 Sep, up to 11 were at Pett Level from 23 Sep into October. One was on East Guldeford Level on 24 Sep, another in the Combe Valley the following day and two at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Sep.

Departing **Honey-buzzards** were noted from 28 Aug, when there was one at Bentley Rough (Halland), with further individuals at Beachy Head on 30 Aug, Waterhall GC (Hove) on 4 Sep, Chanctonbury Ring on 7 Sep and a juvenile at Beachy Head on 17 Sep. After the excellent spring run of rare waders, the autumn produced yet more, with a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Sep being the outstanding find, but with a fine supporting cast of **Grey Phalarope** at Normans Bay on 22 Sep and a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Scotney GP from 24 Sep to 1 Oct, whilst Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) hosted a **Kentish Plover** on 24 Sep and a **Grey Phalarope** the next day. Unusual passerines included a **Tawny Pipit** at Beachy Head on 17 Sep and a **Richard's Pipit** found by the same observer there on 25 Sep; a **Rose-coloured Starling** at Patcham from 21 until 24 Sep and a **Red-backed Shrike** on Thorney Island from 30 Sep to 7 Oct. A remarkable 80 **Tree Sparrows** were counted at East Guldeford Level on 24 Sep. The use of nocturnal sound recordings is revealing that **Ortolan Buntings** may occur in autumn in Britain more frequently than was thought, but the series of September sightings in the county were no less exciting for that: the first was at Beachy Head on 24 Aug, then one was trapped at Charleston Reedbed on 28 Aug, followed by one seen at Seaford Head on 13 Sep and a remarkable flock of three at Hastings CP the next day.

This period saw an arrival of **Great White Egrets**, with about 18 in September at both coastal and inland sites; the largest count of seven on 9 Sep was again at Rye Hbr. There were very high counts of **Mediterranean Gulls**, with 1500 on Thorney Island on 3 Aug and 1112 at Medmerry on 9 Sep.

Large counts of commoner passerines during autumn migration included a fall of 145 **Willow Warblers** at Beachy Head on 17 Aug and another 70 nearby at Seaford Head, 403 **Blackcaps** at Beachy Head on 22 Sep, 160 **Common Whitethroats** at Beachy Head on 26 Aug; and about 100 **Northern Wheatears** near Saltdean on 27 Aug. At Hastings, 84 **Yellow Wagtails** were counted on 7 Sep and 544 between 17 Aug and 7 Oct. On 22 Sep, a record 3698 **Meadow Pipits** were logged flying west at Hastings and 2000 were recorded at Splash Point. Last dates for departing summer visitors in September included **Nightjar** at Pett Level on the 7th, **Nightingale** at Withdean Park (Brighton) on the 9th, **Garganey** at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on the 13th, **Common Swift** at the Knepp Estate and **Garden Warbler** at Pett Level on the 16th, **Turtle Dove** at Bramber and Beachy Head on the 22nd, **Little Tern** at Winchelsea Beach on the 27th and **Grasshopper Warbler** at Pett Level on the 28th.

October to December

October was unseasonably warm apart from a cold spell at the end of the month with northerly winds. November was rather wet and windy, with milder periods interspersed with colder periods with occasional frosts overnight. December was generally mild, but with occasional frosts as well as stormy weather on the 7th and 15th, the latter day being also very cold.

Final records in the year for departing summer visitors included in October, **Cuckoo** at Old Lodge LNR on the 1st, four **Little Ringed Plovers** at Rye Hbr on the 6th, **Tree Pipit** at North Stoke on the 9th, **Common Tern** at Pagham Hbr on the 10th, **Spotted Flycatcher** at Pagham Hbr on the 16th, **Common Whitethroat** at Marsh Fm (Sidlesham) and two **Hobbies** at Pett Level on the 17th,

five **Sand Martins** at Portobello and **Reed Warbler** in the lower Arun Valley on the 19th and **Sedge Warbler** at Beachy Head on the 20th. The last **Pied Flycatcher** was at Beachy Head and the last **Willow Warbler** at Seaford Head on the 22nd, **Northern Wheatear** at Pilsey Island and Telscombe on the 23rd, **Osprey** at Pagham Hbr on the 24th, and **Whinchat** in the lower Arun Valley on the 27th.

November saw the last **Lesser Whitethroat** at Pett Level on the 5th, **House Martin** at East Dean on the 10th, **Yellow Wagtail** at Chichester GP and three **Common Redstarts** at Pett Level on the 13th, and a very late **Arctic Tern** at Selsey Bill on the 17th. A **Ring Ouzel** was at Birling Gap on 4 Dec and a **Barn Swallow** at Medmerry on 10 Dec.

Cattle Egrets continued to be reported in good numbers during the late autumn, with between one and nine at Pett Level on several dates up to 21 Oct, 12 at East Guldeford Level on 11 Oct, singles around Arundel from 24 Oct into 2019, up to seven at Pagham Hbr until 19 Oct, singles at Littlehampton on 20 Oct and two at Rye Hbr on 31 Oct. On 3 Dec, there was another arrival, with 21 at Pagham Hbr on 3 Dec, rising to a county record of 26 on 30 Dec. In December there were also singles on Pevensey Levels on the 9th and the 29th and at Lyminster on the 30th. About 16 **Great White Egrets** were present across the county in October and about 18 in November; there was a good inland count of five at the Knepp Estate on 30 and 31 Oct, but Rye Hbr continued to host the largest numbers, with seven on 11 Nov.

The first **Red-necked Grebe** of the period was off Selsey Bill on 11 Oct; one flew east there on the 14th and one was offshore on the 24th. The next was on 7 Nov at the same site; another was off Goring on 9 Nov and again on 30 Nov.



Red-necked Grebe, Pagham Harbour, 25 January (Trevor Guy)

The late autumn and early winter provided opportunities to see two more Nearctic wader species, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** at The Midrips on 3 and 4 Nov and then a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at Pullborough Brooks from 8 to 13 Dec. A **Grey Phalarope** was at Selsey Bill on 18 Nov and off Church Norton on the 20th. From 10 Nov, **Caspian Gulls** were being detected in the flocks of large gulls in the lower Cuckmere Valley, with the largest count being four on 9 Nov, five on 10 and 25 Nov and four on 12 Dec. There were also singles at Goring on 13 and 16 Dec. Other scarce waterbirds included two **Whooper Swans** on Scotney GP from 13 Nov to the end of the year and an unusual record of one of uncertain origin on a lake in East Grinstead on 14 Nov.

A highlight of the period was the **Pallid Swift** photographed at Church Norton on 13 Oct and seen by just two lucky observers. A **Great Grey Shrike** on Ashdown Forest from 22 Oct into 2019 proved a popular long-stayer. On 2 Nov, one of the other finds of the year was a splendid **Daurian** or **Turkestan Shrike** at Birling Gap, which unfortunately stayed only a few hours and could not be found later in the afternoon.

For the third year in a row, **Yellow-browed Warblers** arrived in impressive numbers from mid-autumn. The first were at Beachy Head and Pulborough on 8 Oct, followed by another at Beachy Head on 14 Oct, singles at Selsey Bill and Climping the next day and one at Goring on the 16th. The next were at Holywell (Eastbourne) on the 18th, at Newhaven on the 19th and 20th, at Bexhill on the 21st and at Beachy Head from the 22nd to the 24th; then singles at Birling Gap on 29 Oct, at Seaford from 31 Oct until 2 Nov. The last two were both found on 4 Nov, at Denton and Beachy Head. The cast of scarcer warblers also included delightful **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** at Beachy Head on 5 and 6 Nov and at Brooklands (Worthing) from 10 until 13 Nov; a **Siberian Chiffchaff** at Beachy Head on 4 Nov, up to two at Burpham WTW from 17 Dec into 2019 and at Oving on 19 and 20 Dec; a **Barred Warbler** at Pett Level on 15 Nov; and finally a **Hume's Warbler** at Newhaven from 27 Dec into 2019. Falls of commoner warblers in October included 200 **Chiffchaffs** at Beachy Head on 3 Oct, and 290 there on the 17th.



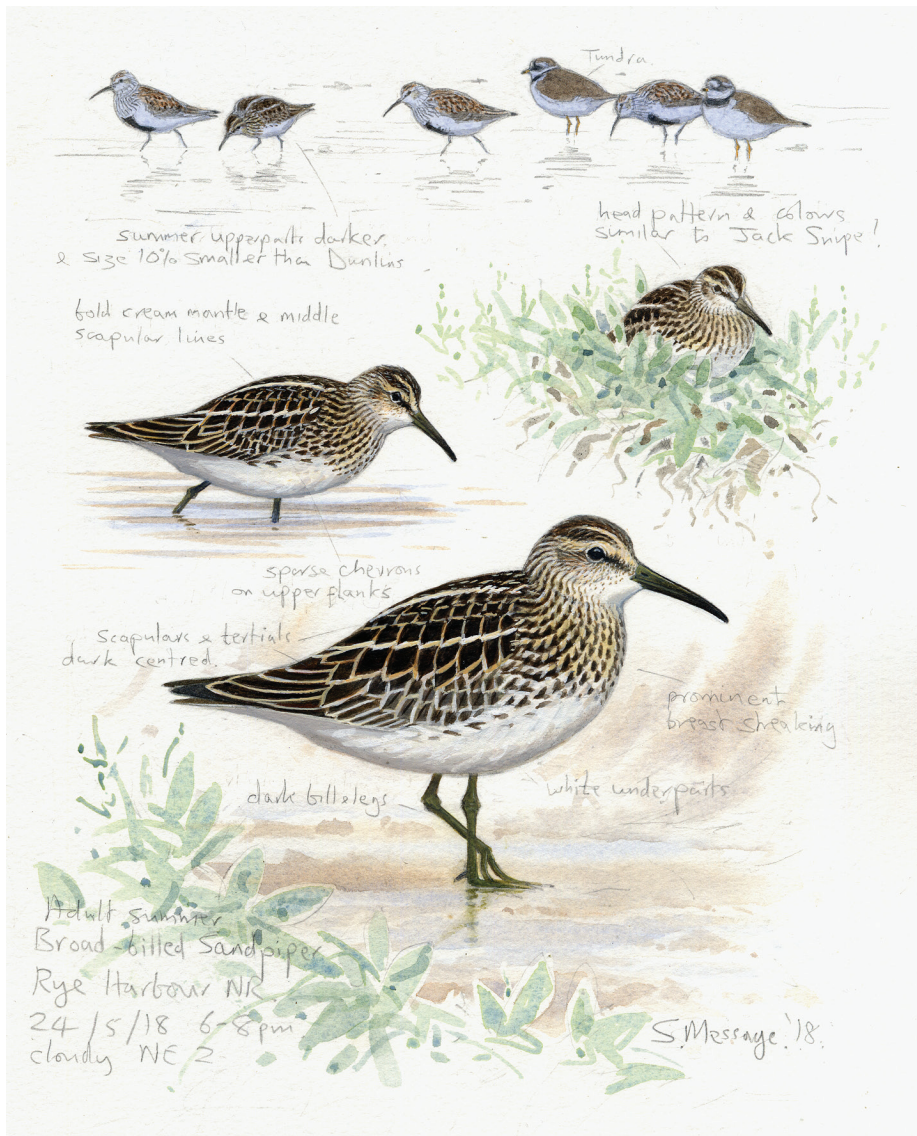
Hume's Warbler, Newhaven, 10 January (Laurence Pitcher)

Following the September sighting, **Richard's Pipits** were at Beachy Head or Birling Gap on 14, 17 and 29 Oct, with another photographed at Thorney Island on the 21st. Up to three **Water Pipits** were at Combe Haven from 10 Oct to 3 Nov and singles were at West Rise Marsh on 20 Oct and 10 Nov, Cadborough (Rye) on 25 Oct and Horse Eye Level on 11 and 30 Nov. Other scarce passerines in the late autumn included a **Common Rosefinch** trapped at Charleston Reedbed on 6 Nov, another **Rose-coloured Starling**, at Seaford from 28 Dec into 2019, and three much-admired **Twite** at Rye Hbr, also from 28 Dec into 2019.

At the year ended, scarce species included a **Red-necked Grebe** off Pett on 24 Dec, a **Pomarine Skua** at Widewater (Lancing) on 25 Dec and two **Pink-footed Geese** in the Ouse Valley from 26 Dec into 2019. Remarkably, the **Hooded Crow** first seen on 7 Jun was still in the Pagham Hbr area up to the end of the year and into 2019. Notable large counts included 528 **Red-throated Divers** in Rye Bay on 27 Dec, a record 70 **Red Kites** at West Dean on 12 Dec, 10,000 **Dunlins** at Pilsey Island

on 10 Dec and a record 2000 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at Cuckmere Haven on 12 Dec.

A flock of 300 **Lesser Redpolls** was on Ashdown Forest on 2 Nov and an impressive 100 **Tree Sparrows** at East Guldeford Level on the 29th. **Hawfinch** numbers peaked at 23 at Penhurst Lane (Netherfield) on 30 Nov. Finally, a **Lesser Whitethroat** reappeared at Ringmer in late December.



Broad-billed Sandpiper, Rye Harbour, 24 May 2018 by
Stephen Message (www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk)

Classified Records for 2018

This list covers all species in Categories A and C of the BOU checklist with records of Category D species listed separately. An index to all the Category A and C species included in the Systematic List is given on pages 285 - 288.

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

Species 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 | 43 | 25 | 103 | 215 | 227 | 45 | 28 | 62 | 86 | 98 | 65 | 45 | 1041 |
| Worthing & Goring | 13 | 11 | 32 | 64 | 40 | 9 | 50 | 26 | 14 | 30 | 26 | 14 | 327 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 18 | 14 | 50 | 54 | 28 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 21 | 23 | 15 | 236 |
| Splash Point (Seaford) | 5 | 2 | 33 | 101 | 63 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 206 |
| Birling Gap | 9 | 2 | 28 | 59 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 122 |

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 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 2018 the priority core count dates were 21 Jan, 18 Feb, 18 Mar, 15 Apr, 20 May, 17 Jun, 15 Jul, 12 Aug, 9 Sep, 14 Oct, 11 Nov and 9 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.

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 2018 records were received from a total of 934 (90%) of the county's 1039 tetrads. There were reports from 230 different gardens participating in the BTO Garden BirdWatch; 174 1-km squares were surveyed for the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and in the Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) 156 1-km squares were surveyed in the January/February period and 129 in November/December. A total of 121 1-km squares were surveyed for the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI) of which 80 were in Sussex and 41 in Hampshire. Where a number of encounters is quoted in the texts for the BBS the figure is the sum of the maximum count in each of the surveyed 1-km squares. Where tetrad counts and percentages are quoted from previous years these are calculated from the current dataset and may therefore differ from those published in earlier Sussex Bird Reports.

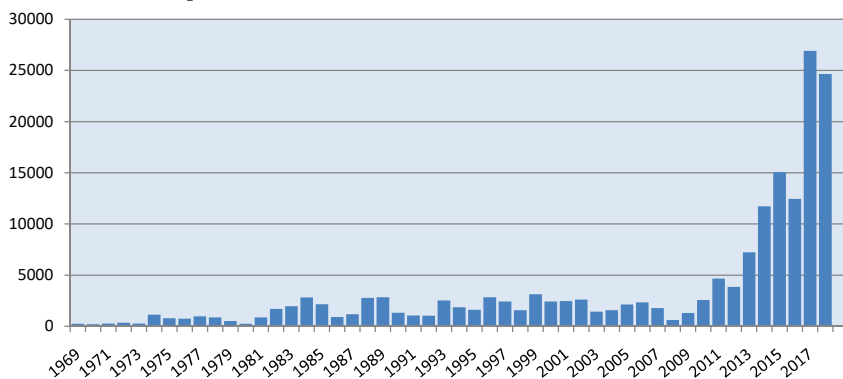
Database report

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 2018 being 338,471 records; this being a rise of 5.6% on the total for 2017 and continuing the upward trend shown graphically in the 2016 Sussex Bird Report. Nearly 82% of the records come from on-line recording; a similar portion to recent years. The number of records from each of the main on-line recording systems and largest contributing county databases are shown below.

| Online recording source | Records | Other database source | Records |
|---|---------|------------------------------------|---------|
| BTO Birdtrack data | 201,830 | Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre | 11,023 |
| Cornell University eBird | 23,507 | Ashdown Forest Bird Group | 7995 |
| BTO Garden Bird Watch | 16,818 | RSPB Reserves | 5792 |
| WeBS on-line | 13,389 | WWT Arundel Reserve | 4760 |
| BTO Breeding Bird Survey Data | 9453 | Weir Wood Res Group | 4031 |
| Sussex Winter Bird Survey (via Birdtrack) | 7206 | Rye Harbour LNR Records | 3381 |
| iRecord Records | 4734 | Selsey Bill Seawatch Log | 3053 |

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. Once again the observations from the BTO's Garden BirdWatch (GBW), Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) and the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) have been made available to be included in the species summaries in this report. The other major contributor, in terms of on-line recording, are the records from eBird provided by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (Ithaca, New York). This system has rapidly attracted support in the county as shown in the chart below, and has encouraged users to transfer their past records from notebooks into the database.

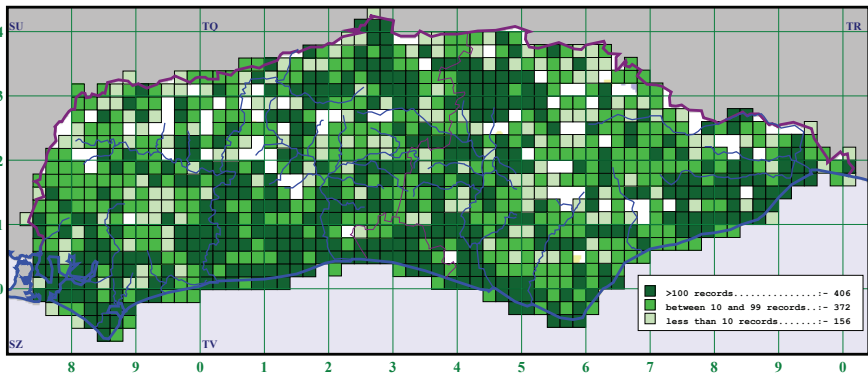


The number of records in the Society's database from eBird in each year (1969-2018)

The 2018 dataset recognises 1388 observers, a decrease of just seven from 2017, but the number of recorders is considerably greater as those contributors to GBW (230 participants), iNaturalist (32 observers) and eBird (65 new contributors in 2018) are only recognised by a code rather than

by name and therefore can only be acknowledged in the appropriate section if they have submitted records through another source. Nearly 70 observers contributed between 1000 and 12,000 records whilst, at the other end of the spectrum 218 observers supplied a single record.

The records were assigned to 1889 sites in 2018 with the largest numbers coming from the well watched locations such as Chichester Hbr (8514), Medmerry (5378), Pagham Hbr (19,474), Pulborough Brooks (30,414), Goring Gap (7907), Weir Wood Res (7670), Ashdown Forest (15,794), Pett Level (11,941) and Rye Hbr (15,057). On a grander scale approximately 31% of the records came from sites within the South Downs National Park. The coverage of the county was again excellent with 934 (just under 90%) tetrads with at least one record and, as the following map shows, most have more than ten records, with the coastal plain, river valleys and Ashdown Forest being the most intensively worked.



The number of records received for 2018 in each tetrad in Sussex. Dark green symbol, >100 records; mid-green symbol, 10-99 records; and pale green symbol, 1-9 records.

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.

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 90% 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 | No. of recs | % |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------|
| Records with blank grid reference | 15,390 | 4.5 |
| Records with 10K grid reference | 17,833 | 5.3 |
| Records with tetrad grid reference | 36,599 | 10.8 |
| Records with 1K grid reference | 234,860 | 69.4 |
| Records with 100m grid reference | 33,789 | 10.0 |

The recording of breeding status, however, was the lowest in recent years as revealed in the table below. These low figures may be 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.

| Year | No. of records (April-July) | 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 |
| 2018 | 140,144 | 2.3 | 3.6 | 7.3 | 13.2 |

With encouragement to submit full species lists when using BirdTrack or eBird it is not surprising that the widespread, numerous and easily detected species were the most frequently recorded, with the top 40 shown in the table below. Clearly some authors of this report will rely heavily on the account writer's summaries produced by the society's database.

| Species | Records | Species | Records | Species | Records | Species | Records |
|--------------|---------|---------------|---------|-----------------|---------|--------------|---------|
| Woodpigeon | 9706 | Mallard | 5879 | Moorhen | 4292 | Kestrel | 3390 |
| Blackbird | 9008 | Dunnock | 5875 | GS Woodpecker | 4257 | Greenfinch | 3258 |
| Carrion Crow | 8675 | Jackdaw | 5859 | Cormorant | 4189 | Linnet | 3218 |
| Robin | 8660 | Chaffinch | 5839 | Pheasant | 4014 | Lapwing | 3201 |
| Blue Tit | 7951 | House Sparrow | 5664 | Grey Heron | 3944 | G Woodpecker | 3169 |
| Magpie | 7239 | BH Gull | 5454 | Blackcap | 3748 | Coal Tit | 3148 |
| Herring Gull | 7135 | Starling | 5441 | Long-tailed Tit | 3745 | Barn Swallow | 3145 |
| Great Tit | 7131 | Buzzard | 5141 | Mute Swan | 3691 | Canada Goose | 3013 |
| Wren | 7105 | Chiffchaff | 4837 | Coot | 3656 | Little Egret | 2940 |
| Goldfinch | 6483 | Song Thrush | 4544 | Collared Dove | 3526 | Nuthatch | 2929 |

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 2018 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.

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 |



Chiffchaff, Burpham WTW, 24 December (Richard Allan)

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 were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-------|
| County total | 8662 | 18055 | 10742 | 45 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 14 | 19 | 4061 | 8035 | 10469 |
| Chichester Hbr | 8562 | 16354 | 9089 | 43 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 13 | 19 | 4040 | 7596 | 8225 |
| Pagham Hbr | 56 | 1506 | 781 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | 20 | 435 | 2225 |
| Average County Total 2008-17 | 13023 | 13360 | 8668 | 67 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 8 | 299 | 4599 | 8923 | 10364 |

The WeBS counts in January were almost 2000 lower than in the previous month but recovered significantly in February with over 18,000 birds in the county, 16,354 of them in Chichester Hbr.

Prior to the onset of eastwards spring migration, only small numbers were recorded in East Sussex with peaks of 50 at Pett Level on 5 Feb and 16 at Rye Hbr on the 22nd and five at Cuckmere Haven on 18 Jan. The only inland records were of single birds at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Jan and Arundel on 3 Feb, with an unknown number sound recorded at night at Pulborough on 10 Jan.

The first notable eastwards movement occurred on 14 Feb when 103 were recorded at Birling Gap, followed on the 26th by 47 at Goring Gap. The main movement started on 5 Mar when 174 passed Goring and 110 passed Birling Gap. From then until 26 Mar there were three-figure counts on most days and several counts in excess of 1000, the biggest of which was 1900 at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 24th. There were further pulses between 2 and 4 Apr, with a peak of 1097 passing Selsey Bill on the 3rd, and again between 13 and 15 Apr, with a peak of 840 at Splash Point on the 15th. Thereafter there were only two more three-figure counts and strong movements effectively ended on the 22nd with 119 passing Splash Point.

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

| | Jan | | Feb | | Mar | | Apr/May | | Sep/Oct | | Nov | | Dec | |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----|------|-----|---------|----|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W |
| Selsey Bill | 74 | 499 | 1 | 65 | 1741 | 102 | 2359 | 11 | 126 | 1102 | 64 | 180 | 36 | 54 |
| Worthing & Goring | 88 | 17 | 47 | 16 | 1777 | - | 889 | - | 15 | 79 | 3 | 29 | 3 | 1 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 357 | 27 | 3 | - | 2669 | 5 | 1150 | - | 43 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 3 |
| Splash Point | 134 | - | - | - | 5239 | 9 | 2683 | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | 17 | - |
| Birling Gap | 86 | 1 | - | - | 2325 | - | 2739 | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |

The small summering flock was again in Chichester Hbr, peaking at 15 on 10 Jul, whilst a lone bird spent the summer in Pagham Hbr, where three others were seen heading east offshore on 8 Jul.

Two west past Selsey Bill on 20 Sep were probably the first returners. Numbers rose to 90 in Chichester Hbr five days later, to 600 by 7 Oct and 2000 by the 19th. A count of 510 W at Selsey Bill on 28 Oct was the only large offshore movement recorded. The only inland records came from Pulborough Brooks of two on 18 Oct and one on the 28th.

Typically, there were a few scattered records from East Sussex, including peaks of five at Cuckmere Haven on 23 Nov, 14 on Pett Level and one at Barcombe Res on 10 Dec and nine at Rye Hbr on the 26th.

Notable counts in West Sussex in the second winter period involved 1100 at Medmerry on 20 Dec, 340 at Climping Gap on the 27th and 2800 at Pagham Village on 30 Dec feeding on winter wheat, on a site for which a planning application has been submitted. [AH]

Pale-bellied Brent Goose

Branta bernicla hrota

It was a good year for this subspecies with 23 individuals, including an unprecedented mid-summer arrival. The year started with three at Pett Level on 1 Jan and five at Rye Hbr on 24 Feb but, more typically, with two among the Dark-bellied Brent Geese at Church Norton on 29 Mar, followed by 1 E at Selsey Bill on 3 Apr and 1 W at Goring Gap on the 16th. Then, on 2 Jul, in one of the more unusual events of the year, a flock of seven appeared in Pagham Hbr, remaining until 27 Aug; this was the first summer record of this subspecies in the county. In the autumn there were three in Pagham Hbr on 10 Nov, one in Chichester Hbr on the 22nd and, presumably the same bird, subsequently around Medmerry and Pagham Hbr to the year's end.

There were no records of Black Brant *B.b.nigricans* in 2018 [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 | 3023 | 2175 | 1088 | 571 | 475 | 355 | 346 | 1450 | 2875 | 1759 | 2817 | 3129 |
| Arun valley | 475 | 349 | 105 | 131 | 63 | 32 | 30 | 88 | 106 | 258 | 945 | 845 |
| Cuckmere Haven | 648 | 258 | 171 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 45 | 300 | 44 | 300 |
| Bewl Water | 368 | 445 | 79 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 961 | 121 | 426 | 478 |
| Rye Bay | 203 | 94 | 13 | 16 | 8 | 10 | 41 | 185 | 98 | 164 | 209 | 73 |
| Average County Total 2008-17 | 2400 | 1366 | 717 | 399 | 328 | 417 | 676 | 1809 | 1907 | 2346 | 2574 | 2915 |

Canada Geese were recorded in 266 (28%) tetrads which is comparable to the 10-year average of 247 tetrads.

With the exception of June, July, August and October all the WeBS counts were greater than the 10-year average. The biggest first-winter counts included 1000 at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Jan, 648 in Cuckmere Haven on 18 Jan and 445 at Bewl Water on 16 Feb. As ever, reports from sea-watching sites were few; a total of just 20 E and 10 W, all in March and April and split between Selsey Bill, Beachy Head and Splash Point (Seaford).

Breeding was confirmed from in excess of 20 sites, almost all of one to three pairs, though six broods at Petworth Park was exceptional. There was an unusual report on 13 May from Chichester GPs of a pair with 24 goslings of varying sizes, suggesting they had somehow 'adopted' a few from at least one other brood.

Post-breeding flocks began to assemble quite early, with counts on 18 Jun of 155 birds at Ifield MP and 200 at Petworth Park. More usual aggregations began to appear in August at Medmerry, a site that has only been regularly used fairly recently, with 150 on the 5th and a peak of 750 on the 17th. The only sites to produce larger counts were Bewl Water, with 961 on 7 Sep, and Pulborough Brooks with a peak of 1000 on the 20th. This latter site produced the highest count later in the year, peaking at 850 on 19 Nov, with 779 at Cuckmere Haven on 12 Dec the next highest count, although ten further sites had counts of at least 200 birds. [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.

As ever with this species, it is impossible to separate individuals from the naturalised population from those having bred either in Greenland or Svalbard. The sizeable naturalised flocks at Scotney GP (peaking at 255 on 26 Jan) and Barcombe Res. (peaking at 78 on 12 Dec) were not recorded between 14 Apr and 13 Aug at the former and between 19 Mar and 7 Sep at the latter site. Those recorded away from these flocks have some potential to be from the northern populations, such as the group of six at Medmerry that remained from the previous December until 4 Jan, and possibly the same six that were on Pett Level on 8 Jan, along with a lone bird among the Dark-bellied Brent Geese in Pagham Hbr on 6 Jan and until 13 Mar around Chichester Hbr. A flock of 75 which initially flew south before returning north over the Henfield Levels on Jan 6 was the largest party away from the regular sites. Later in the year there was a party of eight at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Nov, but most of the autumn birds, with the possible exception of 6 E past Telscombe Cliffs on 20 Nov, were likely to be from the naturalised flocks. [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 the key sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| County total | 753 | 950 | 573 | 280 | 247 | 314 | 496 | 1906 | 1305 | 1038 | 1997 | 1897 |
| Arun Valley | 127 | 10 | 57 | 61 | 24 | 9 | 13 | 161 | 65 | 175 | 226 | 78 |
| Upper Adur Levels | 90 | 226 | 216 | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | 80 | - | 264 |
| Ardingly Res | 20 | 70 | 4 | nc | - | nc | nc | nc | 200 | nc | 350 | nc |
| Weir Wood Res | 2 | 2 | - | - | 4 | 38 | nc | 106 | 84 | 260 | 236 | 251 |
| Lower Ouse Valley | 97 | 48 | 60 | 4 | - | - | 14 | - | - | 110 | 100 | 125 |
| Rye Bay | 243 | 462 | 77 | 96 | 91 | 24 | 189 | 1151 | 504 | 206 | 1029 | 1132 |
| Average County Total 2008-17 | 824 | 597 | 340 | 206 | 238 | 406 | 590 | 1470 | 1042 | 1036 | 1080 | 777 |

The county total fell below the 10-year average in only three months, and was notably higher in both November and December. Peak first winter period counts in East Sussex were at Pett Level with 300 on 14 Jan and 280 on 18 Feb, whilst in West Sussex there were 170 on Henfield Levels on 19 Feb and 166 there on 14 Mar; figures below last year's totals. The only seawatching records were of six west past Worthing on 7 Mar and a further two west there on the 18th.

Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and considered probable in a further 11, although at most sites this involved just one or two pairs. However, exceptions were eight broods at Arundel WWT, five broods at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted), 20 broods at Pett Level and 13 broods at Rye Hbr.

The first big post-breeding flock was at Rye Hbr on 15 Jul, when 153 birds were present, with numbers rising there to 260 on 15 Aug and 426 on 9 Sep. Other peak counts included 870 at Scotney GP on 13 Aug, 220 on Weir Wood Res on 19 Aug, 255 on the Knepp Estate on 9 Sep and 300 at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Sep.

Counts in the last part of the year were well up on the ten-year average at many sites; examples being 395 at Weir Wood Res on 29 Oct, 380 at Pett Level on 4 Nov, 350 at Ardingly Res on 17 Nov, 300 on the upper Adur Levels on 2 Dec and 1000 at Scotney GP on 10 Dec. [AH]

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

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

A flock of ten was tracked flying east about 100 m offshore during a seawatch on 4 Mar at Telscombe Cliffs (DHH). The only other record was from Iford Brooks, where two dropped in on 26 Dec, remaining into the New Year (LRB, MRE). [AH]

Tundra Bean Goose

Anser serrirostris

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

The only record was of two at Scotney GP from 10 Jan until 1 Feb (CJRB, NB, MCC, DAP *et al.*), the county's most regular location for this species. [P]

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.

A flock at Pett Level between 8 Jan and 4 Mar reached a peak of 27 on 21 Jan, with 14 regularly through February, and was the only long staying flock during the first winter period. The other records were three at Rye Hbr on 14 Jan, eight at Scotney GP on the same day, and at Pevensey Levels, where two were recorded on 26 Jan and again between 11 and 19 Mar. One flying east at Selsey Bill on Apr 7 was the last in the spring.

A lone bird at Pulborough Brooks from 31 Aug through the autumn to 21 Nov was wearing a red ring thus likely to have escaped from a wildfowl collection. In a much better autumn, the first returning birds were two adults flying eastwards past Beachy Head on 17 Nov. The next were four in Cuckmere Haven on the 26th which possibly were the same four seen over Pagham Hbr four days later. Further arrivals included six at Scotney GP on 4 Dec, two at Pulborough Brooks on the 14th and 40 on Pett Level on the 17th of which at least nine remained until the year's end. The biggest count of the year, exactly 100 birds, was at Scotney GP on 24 Dec. [AH]

Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

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

Mute Swans were recorded in 175 (19%) tetrads, eight more than last year, compared with a 10-year average of 185 which was boosted by higher counts during the 2007-11 Atlas period. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations were as below.

The total number counted was overall similar to last year but with some local differences, e.g. in Chichester Hbr 65 in February (cf. 139 in 2017), in Rye Bay 128 in May (cf. 26) and 26 in October (cf. 102). Notable first winter period counts additional to the WeBS included 150 at East Guldeford

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 414 | 415 | 319 | 369 | 453 | 306 | 340 | 368 | 438 | 542 | 525 | 662 |
| Chichester Hbr | 113 | 65 | 35 | 32 | 121 | 121 | 102 | 72 | 150 | 193 | 245 | 219 |
| Arun Valley (Arunel-L'hampton) | 28 | 33 | 32 | 28 | 24 | 12 | 33 | 39 | 16 | 19 | 32 | 55 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 62 | 27 | 34 | 55 | 54 | 27 | 24 | 29 | 29 | 42 | 37 | 56 |
| Upper Adur Levels | 24 | 61 | 46 | 5 | 2 | nc | nc | nc | nc | 8 | 14 | 55 |
| Eastbourne Lakes | 36 | 32 | 31 | 4 | nc | nc | nc | 4 | 39 | 32 | 31 | 27 |
| Pevensey Levels | 47 | 49 | 37 | 52 | 26 | 7 | 8 | 52 | 24 | 45 | 29 | 48 |
| Rye Bay | 34 | 43 | 18 | 81 | 128 | 49 | 99 | 87 | 52 | 26 | 40 | 100 |
| Average County Total 2008-2017 | 576 | 515 | 481 | 384 | 463 | 467 | 429 | 446 | 575 | 587 | 612 | 607 |

Level on 9 Jan and 136 there on 4 Feb, and at Barnham 86 on 20 Jan and 85 on 4 Feb. During the January and February SWBS, 80 were counted in 14 (9% of the squares surveyed) with a maximum of 20 on 30 Jan at Barcombe.

Breeding was confirmed in 36 tetrads, 12 less than last year but similar to the 34 in 2016, and was probable in a further nine. Adults were first seen nesting on 24 Mar at Brighton Marina and on 3 Apr at Widewater (Lancing); the first cygnets were seen on 3 May at Southwater CP. During the BBS 89 were recorded in 18 (10 %) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 27 on 9 Jun at Rye Hbr.

Post-breeding aggregations in summer which evaded WeBS counters were largest in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr), with high counts of 126 on 28 May, 176 on 18 Jun, 120 on 14 Jul and 123 on 27 Aug.

In the second winter period there were few significant counts; the peak count at Fishbourne Channel was 133 on 2 Nov, eclipsed by 140 at Scotney GP on the 13th. During the late year SWBS 53 were recorded in nine (7.1%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 16 on 30 Dec at Lyminster. [JC]

Bewick's Swan

Cygnus columbianus

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

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

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 8 | - | - | | - | - | - |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 8 | - | - | | - | - | - |
| Average county total 2008-2017 | 26 | 18 | - | | - | - | 10 |

The WeBS counts were worrying, with just eight being seen in the January count in the Arun Valley and none recorded later in the year, but this was not the whole picture. Numbers generally were lower than last year overall, possibly reflecting the milder winter, but this species is obviously becoming very scarce in Sussex.

The year started with five adults on the Henfield Levels and two at Pulborough Brooks between 3 and 7 Jan, but numbers in the Arun Valley then increased to ten on the 10th, 12 on the 12th and then, on the 14th, 13 flew in to roost at Offham, the highest number for the year. Thereafter numbers declined, but fluctuated through eight on the 20th to 24th and finally four on 7 Feb. The only later record was of two at Arundel WWT on 9 Mar.

The first returning birds were five seen at Arundel WWT on 4 Nov. No more were seen until 12 Dec when there were four (an adult and three juveniles) at Amberley Wild Brooks. The following day two more adults had joined them, making six (three adults and three juveniles) at Burpham, these remaining in the Arun Valley until 27 Dec at least.

Bewick's Swans have been in decline since the 1960s and this species is now classified as Endangered on the European Red List of Birds. [JC]

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

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

There were three records totalling four birds in 2018, comprising an adult at Pulborough Brooks on 1 and 4 Jan (DB, JJE *et al.*), two adults with Mute Swans at Scotney GP and on nearby fields from 13 Nov into 2019 (AP *et al.*) and an adult possibly not of wild origin on the lake at Saint Hill Manor (East Grinstead) on 14 Nov (SS). [PJ]



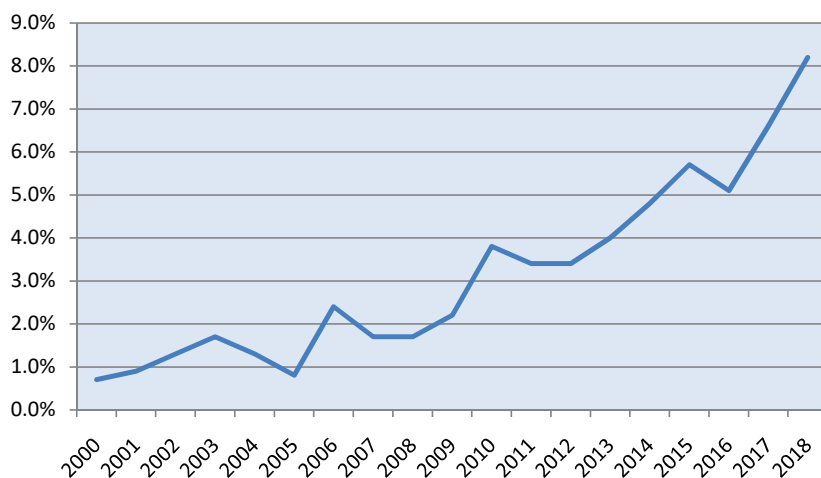
Whooper, Mute and Black Swans, Scotney GP, 13 November (Alan Parker)

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiaca

Scarce introduced resident; bred for the first time in 2000.

This species was recorded in 77 (8.2%) tetrads, a marked increase on the 60 of 2017. The numbers present in the county and the geographical spread of records have been growing year by year, the latter as demonstrated in the following figure.



Percentage of tetrads holding Egyptian Geese 2000-2018 (based on tetrads with any records.)

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 | 25 | 26 | 19 | 48 | 35 | 13 | 38 | 30 | 58 | 58 | 45 | 79 |
| Petworth Park | - | 3 | 12 | 6 | 7 | nc | 6 | nc | nc | 2 | nc | 2 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 2 | 8 | - | 12 | 9 | 2 | 11 | - | - | 3 | - | 8 |
| Kneppmill Pond | 4 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Bewl Water | - | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 8 | 16 | - | - |
| Rye Bay | 8 | 4 | 3 | 16 | - | 3 | 17 | 27 | 35 | 32 | 26 | 52 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 11 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 14 | 11 | 10 |

The highest count in the first winter period was 26 at Winchelsea Beach on 27 Jan.

During the BBS, this species was recorded in six (3.4%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 15 on 18 Apr at Petworth Park. Breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and was probable in a further two. As can be the case with this species, the first brood of goslings was very early, first seen on 12 Feb at Worth Park (Crawley), and another pair was with young at Rye Hbr on 20 Mar, where at least three pairs bred. Successful breeding was also recorded at Harting Combe (Rake) where a pair bred in an old oak tree, at Burton MP, Petworth Park, Pulborough Brooks, Sheffield Park and Pett Level. Of the 12 goslings hatched at Worth Park, ten were still present on 4 May and almost as large as their parents, showing that survival rates can be good. Although two pairs had been seen at Benbow Pond (Cowdray) there were none there on 28 Apr, the first year the observer had not seen a breeding pair there for many years.

During the second half of the year, there were some high counts, with a peak of 50 at Petworth Park on 12 Aug and 42 at Scotney GP on 8 Nov. This latter, with a WeBS count of 48 there on 10 Dec, possibly indicates the strength of the breeding population in Kent. The only seawatching record was of 2 W at Splash Point on 7 Apr. [AT]

Common Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

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

Common Shelducks were recorded in 87 (9.3%) tetrads, comparable with the 89 of 2017 and the 10-year average of 90. 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 | 875 | 819 | 936 | 569 | 419 | 219 | 54 | 56 | 61 | 159 | 419 | 845 |
| Chichester Hbr | 542 | 457 | 656 | 187 | 93 | 26 | 14 | - | 12 | 103 | 325 | 472 |
| Medmerry | 62 | 53 | 18 | 75 | 107 | 49 | 1 | 15 | 5 | 14 | 51 | 162 |
| Pagham Hbr | 145 | 133 | 114 | 190 | 82 | 68 | - | 36 | 41 | 38 | 27 | 131 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 54 | 100 | 39 | 35 | 31 | 7 | - | - | - | - | 4 | 31 |
| Rye Bay | 55 | 63 | 72 | 80 | 97 | 69 | 39 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 49 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 899 | 852 | 743 | 445 | 314 | 226 | 88 | 48 | 50 | 79 | 354 | 662 |

As in 2017, it was an encouraging year for the species. After WeBS counts for January and February that were around the 10-year average, the March count was the highest for that month since 2006 and the April count likewise since 2002. The highest single-site count of the year was a non-WeBS count of 335 at Thorney Deeps on 2 Feb. Other high counts additional to the WeBS involved 200 at Pagham Hbr on 12 Jan, 150 there on 11 Feb and 300 on the 27th, and 128 at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Mar.

Successful breeding was recorded in 11 tetrads and was probable in a further six. Display was first seen at Arundel WWT on 24 Mar and the first ducklings noted at Sidlesham Ferry on 19 May. Breeding was also confirmed at Thorney Deeps, Pagham Hbr (up to 23 ducklings), Pulborough Brooks, Cuckmere Haven, Pett Level (at least eight pairs), and East Guldeford, where 66 ducklings were recorded from five pairs on 19 Jun. The year's most unusual breeding records were a pair that bred successfully in gardens at Selsey Bill, and a pair that hatched five ducklings at Steyning Bowl. Prospecting pairs were also seen at Birling Gap (Beachy Head), but breeding was not proven at Rye Hbr. In the WeBS, numbers were above average from August to the end of the year; although still way short of the totals in the 1990s, this gives some cause for optimism for the species in the county.

At seawatching sites, small numbers were seen in every month except June and September, with small peaks in March (11 E on the 11th at Worthing), April (23 E on the 19th at Birling Gap) and May (12 E on the 7th at Worthing). [AT]

Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Scarce introduced resident.

This rather skulking species was nevertheless recorded in 73 (7.8%) tetrads, an increase on the 62 of 2017 but comparable to the 10-year average of 77. In 2001 this count was less than 40, so the indications are that this species has been steadily increasing its range in the county. The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as below.

Peak WeBS counts were generally low throughout the year compared with the 10-year average. But there were some notable additional counts: 16 males in breeding plumage on Ashdown Forest on 6 Feb was described as an unusual gathering as previously no more than one or a pair had been seen at that particular location; 18 at Fernhurst on 24 Feb; 26 at Arundel Park on 2 Dec (the

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 21 | 21 | 13 | 20 | 24 | 12 | 32 | 52 | 42 | 22 | 18 | 26 |
| Shillinglee Estate | 12 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 1 | 9 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| Barns Green | 2 | 2 | - | - | 3 | nc | 1 | nc | 1 | 6 | - | - |
| Warnham LNR | - | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | nc | - | - | 5 | 1 | - | - |
| Ardingly Res | - | 5 | - | nc | - | nc | nc | nc | 14 | nc | 9 | nc |
| Weir Wood Res | 3 | - | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | nc | 22 | 6 | - | 7 | - |
| Powdermill Res | 3 | nc | 3 | 1 | - | nc | 8 | 14 | 1 | 5 | - | 21 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 51 | 36 | 28 | 24 | 20 | 29 | 41 | 38 | 37 | 33 | 38 | 44 |

highest count of the year) and 23 at Warnham LNR on the 23rd. Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads and was probable in a further 16. The first ducklings were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 5 May. Other sites included Arundel Watermeadows, Barns Green, Knepp Estate, Warnham LNR, Tilgate Forest, Balcombe, Weir Wood Res, Ashdown Forest and Troutbeck (Eridge). The highest count of ducklings was ten at Weir Wood Res but it was not clear if any site achieved more than one successful brood.

One drake at Rye Hbr on 1 Jun was the only coastal record of the year. [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.

Garganeys were recorded in 24 tetrads (2.6 %), comparable to both the 10-year and 21st century average. Records were almost equally divided between sites in West and East Sussex. In West Sussex over half the records were from inland sites, including the Arundel WWT area, Pulborough Brooks and Henfield Levels, whilst in East Sussex most were seen at Pett Level and Rye Hbr.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Monthly minima | 3 | 40 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| No. of sites | 2 | 13 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 |

The first spring migrant, a drake, was seen at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on 20 Mar (nine days later than the 10-year average date) followed by 2 E past Rye Hbr on the 29th. Spring passage lasted through April from the 2nd when five and two passed east at Birling Gap and Splash Point (Seaford) respectively. Another drake flew east past Selsey Bill the next day, followed on the 6th by 2 E at Selsey Bill and 2 E at Splash Point. On the 7th one passed east at Birling Gap, 6 W at Goring Gap and a pair dropped into Medmerry Stilt Pool and remained until the 10th. A single individual was recorded on a wetland site south of Arundel on the 9th and 13th. Further east, a pair seen on Henfield Levels on the 17th did not stay, and a drake appeared at Pett Level for a couple of days. Inland, seven were noted at Ardingly Res on the 21st.

With passage effectively over, apart from occasional stragglers such as 1 E at Splash Point on the 5th, numbers in May were much lower. A pair was on the Cuckmere meanders on the 9th and two were at Pulborough Brooks on the 17th with one still there on the 21st. At Pett Level two on the 5th were presumably the two drakes recorded on the 7th; eventually two pairs were recorded there but without proof of breeding. On the 20th and 21st a drake was seen at Rye Hbr and was present

through the rest of May into June; it was recorded that nesting was likely to have occurred but was not proved. A single individual was recorded at Arundel WWT on the 29th.

In June, a single male was at Pulborough Brooks during the first week and twos were at Medmerry on the 19th and Rye Hbr on the 29th while one at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) was present from the 17th to 26th. A likely pair was at Rye Hbr on 3 Aug (including an eclipse male); two were there on the 21st (probably different) and also at Arundel WWT on the 25th. In September, single birds were at Weir Wood Res on the 7th and 8th, Rye Hbr on the 10th and Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on the 13th; this was the last for the year and some ten days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [JAH]

Shoveler

Spatula clypeata

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

Shovelers were recorded in 76 tetrads, comparable with the 10-year average of 73.9 but higher than the average for the 21st century of 65.2.

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 | 986 | 749 | 646 | 135 | 20 | 22 | 6 | 15 | 164 | 225 | 424 | 815 |
| Medmerry | 79 | 21 | 7 | 16 | 4 | 4 | - | - | 42 | 62 | 20 | 59 |
| Chichester GP | 297 | 190 | 123 | 5 | - | - | - | 3 | 38 | 33 | 56 | 215 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 186 | 136 | 92 | 26 | 5 | - | 3 | - | 12 | 27 | 51 | 107 |
| Barcombe Res | 49 | 85 | 25 | 20 | - | - | - | - | 6 | 22 | 28 | 71 |
| Eastbourne Lakes | 74 | 55 | 84 | - | nc | nc | nc | 5 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 90 |
| Rye Bay | 248 | 188 | 187 | 50 | 11 | 18 | 1 | 7 | 45 | 18 | 195 | 201 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 742 | 758 | 459 | 152 | 24 | 17 | 13 | 36 | 117 | 263 | 510 | 664 |

Monthly totals in January, March and December were significantly higher than the county average for 2008-2017. The 1% national threshold figure of 180 was exceeded at Chichester GPs in January, February and December, in the Arun Valley in January and in Rye Bay in all five winter months. Significant counts additional to the WeBS above involved 200 at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Jan, 200 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 21 Feb, 250 at Chichester GPs on 1 Mar, up to 300 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 3 Mar and 200 at Pulborough Brooks on 31 Dec.

Numbers recorded at the principal seawatching sites during spring migration were small, as follows:

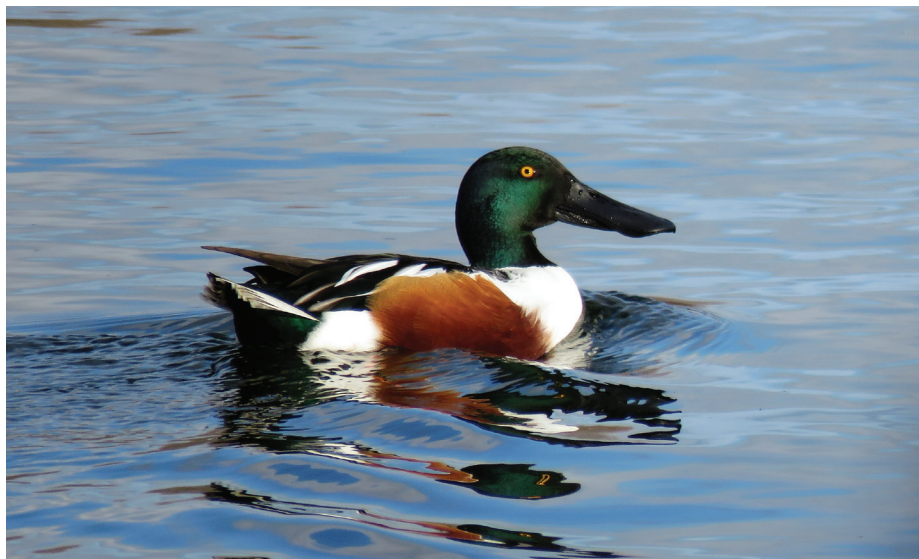
| | | Mar | Apr |
|------------------------------|---|-----|-----|
| Selsey Bill | E | 22 | 39 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 29 | 37 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | 32 | 8 |
| Splash Point | E | 154 | 111 |
| Birling Gap | E | 15 | 56 |

The peak counts, both at Splash Point (Seaford), were 47 E on 11 Mar and 40 E on 7 Apr.

Only small numbers remained during the summer months. Breeding was confirmed at only Arundel WWT where a female with ducklings was seen on 28 May, although four pairs had been noted on 24 Mar. Elsewhere, 30 pairs were recorded at Pett Level during the breeding season but without proof of breeding. At Rye Hbr 11 individuals were present on Castle Water in late May and

a visitor reported adults with chicks there in early June. One pair was recorded during the breeding survey at Medmerry.

During July and August small numbers were recorded at several sites, with maxima of eight at West Rise Marsh on 26 Jul and up to six at Pett Level and five at Pulborough Brooks on several days. However, the first double figure count was not until 9 Sep when 39 were noted at Medmerry, ten at West Rise Marsh and 40 at Rye Hbr. The only other double figure count that month was of 38 at Chichester GP on the 13th. Numbers increased slowly during October during which there were 11 counts of 20 or more, with a maximum of 62 at Medmerry on the 14th. Similarly in November there were 22 counts of 20 or more with a maximum of 194 at Rye Hbr on the 11th, and in December some 40 such counts with a maximum of 200 at Pulborough Brooks on the 31st. [JAH]



Shoveler, Chichester GP, 17 January (Andrew House)

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.

Gadwalls were recorded in 85 (9.1%) tetrads, comparable to both the 10-year and 21st century average, suggesting a fairly stable distribution this decade.

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 | 533 | 605 | 317 | 109 | 85 | 76 | 44 | 197 | 310 | 337 | 673 | 698 |
| Chichester GP | 107 | 18 | 22 | 11 | 2 | 19 | 1 | 8 | 16 | 30 | 36 | 50 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 100 | 94 | 109 | 42 | 48 | 19 | 3 | 62 | 81 | 13 | 74 | 138 |
| Bewl Water | 98 | 152 | 25 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 25 | 19 | 46 | 83 |
| Rye Bay | 145 | 173 | 92 | 36 | 28 | 13 | 34 | 107 | 90 | 161 | 386 | 245 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 777 | 681 | 239 | 119 | 86 | 70 | 59 | 118 | 252 | 273 | 386 | 770 |

The WeBS count for January was the lowest since 2009; the count of just 107 at Chichester GP that month was in stark contrast to the peak of 569 there in January 2002. County numbers built a little in February but were still below average; 152 at Bewl Water on 16 Feb was the highest of the first winter period for any single site. An additional notable count was of 74 at Crowhurst on 21 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable in a further eight. Pairs bred successfully at Chichester GP, Pagham Hbr, Arundel Park (three broods), Pulborough Brooks and Pett Level, but there was no evidence of successful breeding at Rye Hbr despite the presence of up to 24 birds during the season. The first ducklings were noted at Pagham Hbr on 11 May.

The August WeBS count was the second highest ever for that month (eclipsed by 198 in 2015), and above average numbers continued into the second winter period, leading to the highest ever November count. However, although numbers barely grew into December, ending the year below average, there were some notable non-WeBS counts involving 103 at Arundel Park on 2 Dec, 68 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 9th, 60 at Bexhill on the 14th, 92 at Pett Level on the 20th and 220 at Bewl Water on the 31st, the highest from any site during the year.

At the principal seawatching sites, there was a smattering of single-figure records with an easterly bias in spring and westerly in autumn, e.g. 6 E at Splash Point (Seaford) in April and 5 E at Selsey Bill in May while 11 W there on 20 Oct was the highest day count of any site. [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.

This species was recorded in 85 (9.1%) tetrads, somewhat lower than the 10-year average of 94 tetrads. 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 | 8224 | 7293 | 6072 | 70 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 233 | 2809 | 5732 | 6944 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1841 | 1914 | 1865 | 18 | 2 | - | - | 4 | 90 | 1967 | 2821 | 1549 |
| Pagham Hbr | 629 | 831 | 1210 | 14 | 2 | 2 | - | - | 61 | 234 | 601 | 585 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 2888 | 1512 | 1405 | 8 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 274 | 974 | 2224 |
| Rye Bay | 1441 | 1915 | 766 | 16 | 1 | - | - | - | 37 | 179 | 687 | 1434 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 11061 | 9986 | 3945 | 86 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 19 | 1277 | 4626 | 6271 | 9099 |

The WeBS count for January, usually the peak month in the year, was the lowest since 1995, some 26% below the average for the previous 10 years. The highest single-site count of the year was 4000 at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Jan. Numbers remained well below average in February and yet held up well in March, the highest count for that month since 2005. Away from the core sites of Chichester and Pagham Harbours and the Arun Valley, respectable counts in the first winter period were 860 at Arlington Res on 16 Feb and 600 at Pett Level on 14 Jan.

The last three-figure count was 120 at Pett Level on 27 Mar; 43 at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Apr was a large count so late into spring, but following a final double-figure count of ten there on 29 Apr only single-figure counts remained in summer, with no evidence of breeding. Three at the Knepp Estate on 27 Jun was unusual there.

The first multi-figure count of the autumn was 130 at Rye Hbr on 18 Aug, an early date for such a flock; the WeBS count for September was the lowest for that month since at least 1995, and counts remained below average through to the end of the year. A total of 800 at Rye Hbr on 11 Nov was notable. The December county total was just 76% of the average for the previous ten years. Birds

were seen at seawatching sites from January to April and between September and December. The highest counts in the first winter period were 55 E and 35 W at Selsey Bill during January. There was an unusual record of 5 E past Worthing on 14 Jun. Later, observers at Selsey Bill recorded by far the highest counts, with a peak passage of 69 E and 118 W on 28 Oct. [AT]

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

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

Mallards were recorded in 414 tetrads (44%) compared with the 10-year average of 419 and a reduction from the peak of 600 in 2008 during the Atlas period.

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 | 3536 | 2703 | 1691 | 1192 | 1257 | 1523 | 2153 | 3222 | 3576 | 3793 | 3748 | 3447 |
| Chichester Hbr | 369 | 267 | 229 | 105 | 104 | 81 | 173 | 208 | 233 | 256 | 350 | 462 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 739 | 563 | 468 | 396 | 533 | 616 | 456 | 814 | 542 | 1104 | 818 | 549 |
| Bewl Water | 483 | 267 | 110 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 458 | 321 | 275 | 264 |
| Rye Bay | 377 | 290 | 177 | 90 | 89 | 80 | 180 | 747 | 497 | 250 | 499 | 511 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 3580 | 2848 | 1935 | 1252 | 1255 | 1656 | 1949 | 3072 | 3470 | 3543 | 3600 | 4045 |

During the SWBS in the first winter period 598 Mallards were recorded in 57 (37%) of 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 124 on 14 Jan at Horsted Keynes.

As usual, very few Mallards were recorded at the principal seawatching sites and only in spring. At Birling Gap they were recorded on four dates between 12 Mar and 17 Apr with a total of 18 E and a high count of 12 on 12 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 50 tetrads, 10 more than in 2017, and was probable in a further 24. The first ducklings were recorded at Lewes on 5 Apr but late broods were also seen at Troutbeck on 1 Aug, at Burgess Hill on 1 Sep and one duckling was seen at Lewes on 8 Nov. During the BBS Mallards were encountered in 95 1-km squares (55%) surveyed, with a maximum of 60 on 29 Jun at Northchapel. Twenty-six nests were recorded at Rye Hbr.

During the SWBS in the second winter period 833 Mallards were recorded in 42 (33%) of 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 150 on 9 Dec at Northend Fm (Wardley). [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 54 tetrads (5.8%), comparable with the 10-year average of 52 (maximum 60 in 2015) but higher than the average for the 21st century of 48.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as below.

Monthly county totals in the five winter months were markedly lower than the average for 2008-2017 in all months except March. Significant counts additional to the WeBS were recorded at Pulborough Brooks with 400 on 12 Jan, 110 on 11 Nov and 150 on 31 Dec. The peak annual count of 291 in January served to continue the decline in the fortunes of this species as was shown in last year's report (page 34). The 1% national threshold number of 290 was not met at any site.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 291 | 280 | 342 | 9 | - | 1 | - | - | 23 | 39 | 168 | 288 |
| Chichester Hbr | 16 | 66 | 136 | - | - | - | - | - | 9 | 18 | 31 | 20 |
| Pagham Hbr | 108 | 84 | 56 | 2 | - | - | - | - | 12 | 13 | 1 | 60 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 113 | 53 | 35 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 72 | 175 |
| Upper Adur Levels | 4 | 45 | 49 | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | - | - | 3 |
| Rye Bay | 49 | 31 | 24 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 8 | 10 | 9 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 576 | 458 | 199 | 9 | | | | | 63 | 169 | 284 | 481 |

Eastwards spring migration recorded at the principal seawatching sites was light, as follows:

| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr |
|------------------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Selsey Bill | E | 2 | 15 | 25 | - |
| Worthing & Goring | E | - | - | 12 | 4 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | - | - | 2 | - |
| Splash Point | E | - | - | 42 | 27 |
| Birling Gap | E | 7 | - | 2 | 11 |

Although 31 E were recorded at Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Mar, peak passage occurred between 29 Mar, when 12 E passed Selsey Bill, and 2 Apr when 27 passed east at Splash Point and 11 at Birling Gap.

There were no breeding records. The first returning birds were one at Rye Hbr on 21 Aug and three at Thorney Deeps on the 31st. The first double figure counts were 30 at Pagham Hbr on 5 and 8 Sep. Observers at the principal seawatching sites noted only 20 W past Selsey Bill on 25 Sep and 12 W there on 30 Oct, while three other westwards movements up to 18 Nov were in single figures. During October there were ten double figure counts but the first three-figure count was not recorded until 11 Nov when 110 were at Pulborough Brooks, where a similar number were counted a month later, and 100 were at Pagham Hbr on 22 Dec and 150 at Pulborough Brooks on the last day of the year. [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.

This species was recorded in 117 (13%) tetrads, slightly lower than the 10-year average of 125. 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 | 4973 | 4848 | 2906 | 416 | 3 | 43 | 46 | 189 | 1067 | 1068 | 5047 | 4964 |
| Chichester Hbr | 748 | 1083 | 912 | 16 | - | - | - | 29 | 254 | 306 | 580 | 1005 |
| Medmerry | 191 | 45 | 121 | 4 | - | 2 | 6 | 65 | 214 | 184 | 2136 | 725 |
| Pagham Hbr | 651 | 504 | 281 | 30 | - | 4 | 12 | 4 | 170 | 111 | 298 | 449 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 1526 | 1302 | 362 | 270 | 3 | 18 | 14 | 33 | 126 | 237 | 1273 | 1886 |
| Rye Bay | 1073 | 1084 | 410 | 45 | - | 13 | 7 | 53 | 194 | 69 | 489 | 502 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 5806 | 4188 | 2234 | 343 | 10 | 31 | 33 | 345 | 1397 | 2247 | 3643 | 5006 |

The January WeBS count was the lowest for that month since 2013, although the highest day-count for any site for the whole year was 4000 at Pulborough Brooks on the 12th. Also notable were counts of 1000 at Brede Levels on the 10th and at Church Norton on the 12th. Numbers then held up well in February and were considerably higher than the 10-year average in March. The last three-figure count of the spring was 120 on 20 April at Pulborough Brooks

In a very welcome record of proven breeding, a female and eight very young ducklings were seen at Pett Level on 18 Jun, where five pairs were present during the summer. Also three or four juveniles in a flock of 26 at Pulborough Brooks on 29 Jun were thought likely to have bred there.

Numbers began to increase in August with 52 at Earnley on the 12th and 45 at Pulborough Brooks on the 16th, but the first three-figure count was 125 at Paghham Hbr on the 31st. Numbers were below par from August to October, but there was a big jump in November, the WeBS count for that month being the highest since 2005. The WeBS count of 2136 at Medmerry on 11 Nov was exceptional. Unusually, numbers then dropped in December.

Small numbers were seen intermittently from seawatching sites, unsurprising for a nocturnal migrant. Peak counts were 22 W at Selsey Bill on 7 Jan, 22 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 8th and, in March, 31 E on the 11th at Splash Point and 64 W and 2 E at Selsey Bill on 28 Oct. [AT]

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 42 tetrads (4.5%), lower than the 10-year average of 49 and a continuing reduction from the 10-year high of 60 in 2010; perhaps reflecting a continuing decline in the national wintering population.

The monthly WeBS counts at principal sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 230 | 321 | 241 | 49 | 29 | 61 | 55 | 43 | 81 | 195 | 322 | 605 |
| Chichester GP | 97 | 137 | 104 | 38 | 23 | 9 | 14 | 23 | 37 | 34 | 126 | 337 |
| Barcombe Res | 33 | 61 | 46 | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | - | 17 | 29 | 32 |
| Rye Bay | 65 | 64 | 43 | 7 | - | 48 | 34 | 12 | 42 | 138 | 131 | 169 |
| Average County Total 2008 to 2017 | 544 | 399 | 111 | 26 | 21 | 25 | 55 | 122 | 90 | 116 | 243 | 403 |

Contrary to last year, it was only in January and February of the five winter months that the county total was lower than the 10-year average for 2008-2017. The December total of 605, however, was the highest peak count since 2011 and was a welcome upwards blip to the peak counts curve presented in last year's report. None of the above sites reached the 1% national threshold level of 380. The only significant counts additional to the WeBS above were at Chichester GPs with 110 on 16 Jan and 138 on 25 Nov. Some 16 sites not included in the above WeBS table also hosted Pochards for at least five dates but the largest number anywhere was only 20 at Arundel WWT on 22 Feb and at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 7 Mar; five sites held up to 14 during the year.

Return spring migration normally occurs during March and April but was not recorded at the principal seawatching sites, probably due to the birds migrating at night. Following 46 at Barcombe Res on 19 Mar numbers declined markedly, with most counts thereafter being in single figures; 15 at Chichester GPs on 15 Apr was the highest count that month. However, some stayed to breed and there were other non-breeders which summered; birds were recorded on 24 days in May and 22 in June at some six sites.

Breeding was confirmed at three broad sites with a total of at least 11 pairs. At Chichester GPs six pairs bred: a female with seven ducklings was seen at Ivy Lake on 19 Jun and a female with one small duckling, considered to be different from the former, was seen there on 17 Jul; at Drayton House North Pit a female with five young was seen on 15 Jun and another on 4 Jul made it two pairs there; on the South Pit two pairs bred, one being seen on 12 Jul with four young and another on 4 Aug with young. At Arundel WWT two pairs bred: a female with two ducklings was seen on 20 May and a different female with five ducklings on 16 Jun. However, at Pett Level at least three broods were recorded; on 16 Jun no less than 37 males were counted, a substantial increase on recent years, and there may have been as many as 30 breeding pairs, but because the females were so secretive accurate counting was difficult.

Numbers began to increase from about 22 Sep when 20, presumably returning migrants, were noted at Rye Hbr with 68 there on 14 Oct. There were two three-figure counts in November and seven in December, the highest being 177 at New Lake (Chichester GPs) on 20 Dec. [JAH]

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

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

Tufted Ducks were recorded in 89 tetrads (10%) compared with the 10-year average of 105; this was the lowest count since the peak of 124 tetrads in 2011 during the Atlas period.

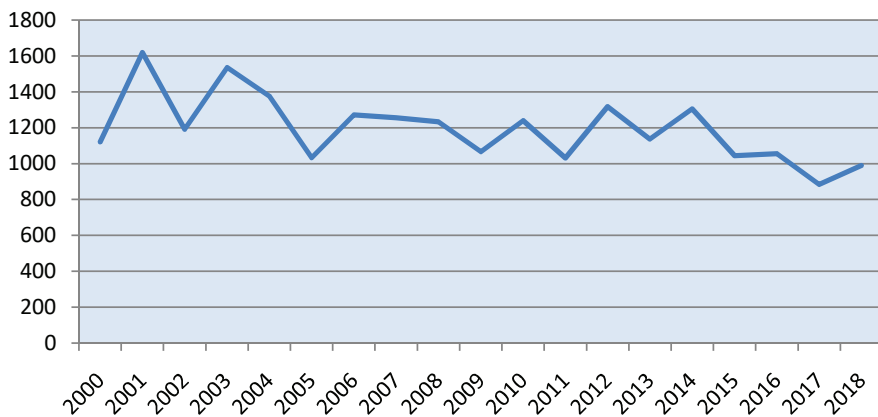


Tufted Ducks, Rye Harbour, 23 June (Barry Yates)

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

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 989 | 931 | 861 | 722 | 290 | 294 | 287 | 358 | 434 | 476 | 775 | 869 |
| Chichester Hbr | 75 | 49 | 32 | 43 | 34 | 37 | 24 | 23 | 15 | 34 | 57 | 47 |
| Chichester GP | 249 | 188 | 205 | 209 | 75 | 16 | 33 | 98 | 64 | 64 | 214 | 152 |
| Burton & Chingford Ponds | 55 | 68 | 68 | 46 | 12 | 27 | 22 | 26 | 49 | 88 | 73 | 61 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 71 | 80 | 72 | 77 | 43 | 58 | 14 | 38 | 27 | 22 | 32 | 78 |
| Barcombe Res | 27 | 34 | 29 | 41 | 3 | 30 | 73 | 54 | 30 | 62 | 42 | 47 |
| Rye Bay | 189 | 192 | 158 | 147 | 70 | 95 | 31 | 60 | 152 | 60 | 140 | 183 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 1118 | 1004 | 802 | 520 | 363 | 270 | 311 | 405 | 490 | 548 | 739 | 933 |

Out of the seven core WeBS months, the totals for March and November were the only counts above the 10-year averages. The graph below of peak counts for the first winter period this century shows that numbers of Tufted Ducks have been steadily, if erratically, declining from a peak count of 1619 in January 2001.



Tufted Duck - peak winter counts 2000 - 2018

Notable counts additional to the above WeBS counts included 65 at Burton MP on 2 Apr, 67 at Kneppmill Pond on 4 Nov, 100 at Westhampnett on 13 Dec and 93 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 29 Dec. At Southwater Quarry 54 were counted on 9 Jan, 55 on 15 Dec and during November and December the average of 61 counts was 41. The 1% national threshold number of 1100 was not met at any site.

Numbers recorded at seawatching sites during spring were small as presumably most birds migrated at night: the highest count was 7 E at both Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford) on 18 Apr, presumably the same group. Numbers tailed off through April. While there had been 128 double figure counts in March there were only 111 in April followed by 61 in May, 41 in June and only 17 in July.

Breeding was confirmed at eight sites (in 12 tetrads) by at least 115 pairs; two at Thorney Deeps, one at West Ashling, four at Medmerry, eight at Pagham Hbr, five at Chichester GPs, seven at Arundel WWT, 55 at Pett Level and between 20 and 30 at Rye Hbr, where both monitoring and survival was considered to be poor. The earliest record of recently fledged young was on 2 Jun at Arundel WWT where ducklings were also noted on 15 Aug.

During the summer, the highest count anywhere in June was 54 at Pett Level but in July numbers at Barcombe Res had increased from 30 on 18 Jun to 73 on 16 Jul and at Powdermill Res from three on 29 May to 52 on 18 Jul, suggesting that return migration was underway. Numbers then increased slowly through August with 20 double-figure counts and a high of 87 at Chichester GPs on the 11th. During September there were 34 double-figure counts with a high of 96 at Rye Hbr on the 27th, and in October the highest count was 88 at Chingford Pond (Duncton) on the 13th and double-figure counts had increased to 69. In the second winter period there were three three-figure counts: 115 at Rye Hbr on 11 Nov, 100 at Westhampnett on 13 Dec and 125 at Drayton House North Pit (Chichester GPs) on the 19th. [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.

All records were for the period from 28 Feb to 7 Apr and involved just eight birds. The first was an immature male in Rock Channel and the R Rother at Rye on four dates to 9 Mar. A smart drake appeared on a pool at Selsey East Beach early on 18th Mar but only remained for a short period before flying off out to sea. A female stayed at Medmerry from 22 Mar to 2 Apr. Offshore spring passage comprised 4 E at Selsey Bill on 25 Mar and 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 7 Apr; the latter was the last for the year. [WGH]

Common Eider

Somateria mollissima

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

As usual the Pagham Hbr/Church Norton area was the most regular wintering site, with one or two recorded on 18 dates in January, nine in February and 12 in March. Elsewhere there were 2 W off Selsey Bill on 9 Jan and 2 E off Birling Gap on the 27th and one offshore at Widewater (Lancing) on 17 Feb. The first signs of easterly return migration were four off Goring Gap on 4 Mar and eight there the next day. Movements, as recorded at the principal seawatching sites, were almost exclusively eastwards, as shown below.

| | | Mar | Apr | Peak Movement |
|------------------------------|---|-----|-----|-------------------------------|
| Selsey Bill | E | 10 | 15 | 10 E on 30 Mar; 11 E on 2 Apr |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 25 | 11 | 13 E on 30 Mar |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | 10 | 4 | 8 E on 5 Mar |
| Splash Point | E | 22 | 18 | 9 E on 4 Mar; 9 E on 17 Apr |
| Birling Gap | E | 8 | 27 | 4 E on 14 Mar; 9 E on 17 Apr |

There were two small passage peaks, 30 Mar and 7 Apr, unlike in 2017 when peak passage occurred in May. The only westwards passage was noted at Selsey Bill involving totals of 3 W in March and 15 W in April. Thereafter, most records for May to August were from Selsey Bill involving single birds seen offshore on seven dates in May, five in June and July and nine in August. Elsewhere, single birds were seen offshore at Medmerry on 25 May and 3 Jun, at Cliff End (Pett) on 15 May and 9 E off Fairlight on 4 May.

Later in the year single birds were noted at Medmerry on 26 Sep, Pett Level on 7 Oct and at Cuckmere Haven on five dates between 1 and 26 Nov, up to three off Goring Gap on seven dates

between 8 and 26 Nov and three in Seaford Bay on 24 Nov. The total for November at Selsey Bill was 8 E and 5 W. In December there were one offshore at Widewater (Lancing) on 9 Dec, four off Pett Level on the 25th, two off Saltdean on the 28th and one off Rottingdean on the 31st. [WGH]

Surf Scoter

Melanitta perspicillata

Very rare vagrant.

An adult male flew east with a flock of c.40 Common Scoters at Splash Point (Seaford) at 08:50 hr on 22 Apr (ASC, MO'S) although it was missed by the majority of observers seawatching at the time. The county total moves on to nine, of which three have been this century, the most recent off Ovingdean in March to April 2008. Perhaps surprisingly, all have been in East Sussex. [PJ]

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.

It was a fairly typical year with a scattering of small offshore feeding groups in the first winter period, the largest being five off Church Norton on 20 and 22 Jan and 17 to 19 Feb. Otherwise the largest group recorded was 12 NE past Rye Hbr on 2 Jan and seven at Climping Gap on 14 Mar. The majority of records were from western sites; the only ones from East Sussex non seawatching sites were of three at Scotney GP on 14 Jan and an uncounted number offshore at Pett Level on 13 Feb.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | Peak movements |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----------------|
| Selsey Bill | | 5 | 9 | 5 | 5 on 2 Mar |
| Worthing & Goring | 1 | - | 1 | 11 | 8 on 7 Apr |
| Telscombe Cliffs | - | - | 3 | 1 | 2 on 10 Mar |
| Splash Point | -- | - | 2 | 22 | 8 on 7 Apr |
| Birling Gap | - | - | 2 | 20 | 6 on 6 Apr |

The latest spring sighting was 1 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 29 Apr. There were no inland or summering records. The first autumn report was of 2 E at Selsey Bill on 21 Oct followed by an uncounted record from Splash Point on the 30th. Three weeks later eight flew east at Goring Gap and on the 27th there were five offshore at Selsey Bill. During December, this species was recorded on 11 dates between the 2nd and 28th. The highest count in West Sussex was five (3 W and two offshore) at Selsey Bill on the 24th but in East Sussex there were up to 15 offshore with Common Scoters between the 4th and 10th; their numbers dwindled to only two by the 27th. [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 highest numbers seen were in April, November and December as shown in the following table showing the maximum monthly counts from these two locations.

Smaller numbers were seen from 12 other coastal sites with the largest being 60 off Seaford Head on 6 Apr, 40 at Cuckmere Haven on 29 Dec, 30 at Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on 20 Jan and 25 at Glyne Gap on 16 Apr.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Selsey area | 50 (11 th) | 75 (25 th) | 120 (14 th) | 320 (6 th) | 30 (16 th) | - | - | 1 (12 th) | 1 (18 th) | 3 (14 th) | 62 (25 th) | 40 (12 th) |
| Rye Bay | 120 (2 nd) | P (13 th) | 120 (4 th) | 50 (15 th) | 12 (27 th) | 2 (17 th) | 60 (22 nd) | - | 41 (29 th) | 5 (17 th) | 350 (29 th) | 500 (10 th) |

As usual most were recorded from 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 | 63 | 29 | 1903 | 13,657 | 1994 | 650 | 61 | 51 | 110 | 164 | 117 | 68 |
| West | 287 | 32 | 182 | 297 | 139 | 37 | 21 | 30 | 46 | 109 | 78 | 123 |

The March to May eastward total of 17,554 was greater than 2017 (12,526) and one of the best years recorded. At Splash Point (Seaford) the spring total of 13,838 E was the highest recorded whilst at Birling Gap the 12,872 E was the second best spring movement and was only surpassed by the total of 19,319 E in 1979 which included an unprecedented peak of 13,293 on 8 Apr. The more detailed month figures from five locations are shown below. As in other years higher numbers were seen in East Sussex during the early spring but in May most were seen at Selsey Bill where the peak of 276 E occurred on the 7th.

| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|------|--------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Selsey Bill | E | 21 | 20 | 510 | 4704 | 1927 | 611 | 9 | 44 | 110 | 120 | 90 | 26 |
| | W | 225 | 31 | 164 | 244 | 117 | 37 | 10 | 30 | 46 | 96 | 76 | 123 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 7 | 5 | 256 | 2942 | 368 | 132 | 54 | 18 | 0 | 27 | 11 | 1 |
| | W | 3 | 1 | 16 | 35 | 2 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 13 | 2 | 3 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | 0 | 1 | 679 | 5236 | 171 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 48 | 36 |
| | W | 68 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Splash Point | E | 33 | 9 | 1208 | 12,093 | 537 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 7 |
| | W | 0 | 0 | 2 | 25 | 0 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 0 |
| Birling Gap | E | 11 | 0 | 1142 | 11,526 | 204 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | 61 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |

The tables show the peak spring passage occurred in April, and the details of the seven days when over 500 were recorded at any site, with the hours of observations, are shown below. Clearly the heaviest passage occurred in the first half of the month.

| | 2 Apr | 3 Apr | 4 Apr | 6 Apr | 7 Apr | 15 Apr | 17 Apr |
|------------------------------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|---------|
| Selsey Bill | 170 (7) | 208 (6) | 645 (8) | 854 (9) | 402 (7) | 601 (12) | 284 (9) |
| Worthing & Goring | 577 (6) | 3 (4) | 125 (1) | 940 (3) | 287 (4) | 393 (4) | 182 (5) |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 923 (4) | 148 (4) | 1069 (3) | 1514 (4) | 263 (3) | 800 (4) | 23 (2) |
| Splash Point | 1950 (9) | 750 (2) | 1742 (5) | 2025 (11) | 939 (7) | 3020 (9) | 508 (8) |
| Birling Gap | 1442 (6) | 865 (4) | 1800 (5) | 2002 (7) | 574 (4) | 3017 (4) | 315 (5) |

Two calls from at least one passing bird were heard by nocturnal recording on 25 Mar at Pulborough. The only other inland records were one at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Apr, 12 Apr and 21 Sep and two at Arlington Res on 5 Aug. [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.

A very quiet year, with possibly only five recorded. Notably, the well watched and photographed individual, thought to be an immature female, wintering on a small reservoir at Honer Fm (Pagham Hbr) in late 2017 was again recorded between 10 Jan and at least 19 Mar and possibly until 10 Apr. Offshore passage in April was light and singles were recorded flying east at Splash Point (Seaford) on four dates between the 4th and 18th. The bird recorded on the 18th was accompanying a small flock of Common Scoters and was also seen passing Roedean. [WGH]



Long-tailed Duck, Honer Reservoir, 2 February (Andrew House)

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 three principal sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 20 | 14 | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 5 | 10 |
| Chichester Hbr | 6 | 7 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 | 6 |
| Pagham Hbr | 4 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Rye Bay | 5 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Average county total 2008 - 2017 | 26 | 30 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 18 |

It was a rather disappointing year for this charismatic species, with county totals in the first two months being significantly lower than 2017 and the 10-year averages. The most frequented site was Pagham Hbr where Goldeneyes were recorded on 43 dates during the first winter period to 21 Mar, with a maximum of eight on 27 Feb. In the Chichester Hbr area they were recorded on 14

dates, mostly up to seven but with three higher counts in Thorney Deepes of 14 on 3 Jan, 17 on the 21st and 13 on the 31st. In Rye Bay they were noted on 17 dates but with a maximum of five on 21 Jan and 6 Mar. Elsewhere, single birds were recorded at Barcombe Res on 22 Jan, 19 Feb and 19 Mar, Shinewater Lake (Eastbourne) on 21 Jan, and Darwell Res on 19 Jan. The only sightings in April were of small numbers migrating past Splash Point (Seaford) on four dates from 11 to 29 Apr with a maximum of three on the 29th. The last spring records were of one at Ardingly Res on 6 May followed by another at Rye Hbr on the 15th, the last of spring.

There were only two sightings in October: the first returning birds were three some 4 km inland at Broadoak (Bexhill) on the 20th and one at Powdermill Res on the 28th. There was then a gap of over three weeks to the next arrival, a drake at Rye Hbr on 21 Nov, joined by another the next day. Numbers were rather low in November with only five in Chichester Hbr (four at Thorney Island on the 23rd and one at Pilsey Island on the 24th) while in Pagham Hbr there were four on the 22nd but only two drakes on the 29th. Numbers increased somewhat in December with records on 17 dates. In Chichester Hbr there were between four and six from the 10th until the 31st; at Pagham Hbr the maximum was six on the 23rd; in Rye Bay the maximum was four on the 26th. Elsewhere, 1 E passed Worthing on the 24th and another was at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 29th. [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 individuals this year, all in March and all in East Sussex. These were an adult male at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 6th and 8th, a female at Rye Hbr on the 6th and a drake at Arlington Res on the 14th. [WGH]



Smew, Arlington Reservoir, 14 March (John Cooper)

Goosander

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

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 16 | 8 | 10 | 3 | | 1 | | 28 | 16 | 14 |
| Coastal | 6 | 5 | 6 | 3 | | 1 | - | 11 | 14 | 9 |
| Inland | 10 | 3 | 4 | - | | - | - | 17 | 2 | 5 |

2018 was another good year, with records from some ten coastal sites during the first winter period on 67 dates to 31 Mar. Widewater (Lancing) held single birds on 24 dates with two (a pair) on 24 Jan and the last on 25 Mar. At Church Norton, where Goosanders are often seen offshore or within Pagham Hbr mouth, single birds were recorded on ten dates, with two on 2, 6, 28 and 29 Jan and three on the 31st. At Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) one was noted on 3 and 4 Feb while in Rye Bay singles were seen on three dates between 11 and 24 Feb. Elsewhere, there were singles at Climping Gap on 3 Jan, in the lower Adur Valley on 5 and 27 Jan and 12 Feb and offshore at Goring Gap on 5 and 10 Mar. The last coastal bird was one at Church Norton on 6 Apr.

Inland, most records were from Petworth Park where a single bird was noted on 6 Jan, two on 14 and 16 Jan and three on the 19th but five on 8 Feb and the last two on 26 Mar. There were also single birds at Ditchling Common on 11 Jan, Wadhurst Park on 22 Jan, Ashburton Place on 24 Jan, Troutbeck (Eridge) on 25 Jan and 3 Feb and two at Newenden on 3 Mar.

A redhead on Thorney Deepes on 1 and 10 Sep was the earliest ever returning bird, 11 days earlier than the previous earliest record of 12 Sep 1997. There were no records for October but in November there was a series of records from the Arundel area. The first was of seven at the water meadows on the 1st but on the 4th, an observer walking beside the R Arun from Amberley to Arundel saw 13 (immatures and females) flying south over North Stoke, with four further down the river, making a total of 17; smaller numbers were noted in the area on several dates to the 18th. At other inland sites there were single birds at Warnham LNR on 11 Nov, Ardingly Res on the 17th and Weir Wood Res from 30 Nov to 1 Dec. Along the coast there were two or three at Thorney Deepes between 21 and 24 Nov, up to three in Pagham Hbr between 1 and 17 Nov and two on 24 Dec, while at Pett Level there were single birds on 13 dates between 4 Nov and 28 Dec with four on 14 Dec. [WGH]

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 44 tetrads (4.6%), slightly more than last year, comparable with the 10-year average of 42. The majority of records, with the single exception of a sighting at Pulborough Brooks, were at the coast or in the western harbours.

The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 126 | 125 | 49 | 7 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 3 | 136 | 96 |
| Chichester Hbr | 103 | 98 | 46 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | 136 | 82 |
| Pagham Hbr | 19 | 20 | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 6 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 158 | 148 | 162 | 9 | - | - | - | - | - | 14 | 100 | 135 |

For at least the third year in succession, numbers in all months except November were lower than the 10-year average. However, the WeBS counts in Chichester Hbr in January, February and November exceeded the 1% national threshold of 84 for this species. While the WeBS counts suggest that Chichester Hbr is the dominant site for this species, significant numbers were recorded elsewhere at sites not covered by WeBS, particularly at Selsey Bill and the Worthing/Goring area as shown in the seawatching table below. Contrastingly, numbers in the east in the Rye Bay area were almost insignificant; the highest count there was of just one bird between 1 Jan and 10 Aug! Obviously feeding and sheltering conditions in West Sussex are much better for this species.

Month totals of passing birds from the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|
| Selsey Bill | E | 78 | 30 | 198 | 110 | 3 | | 2 | 91 | 174 |
| | W | 97 | 24 | 114 | 24 | 6 | | 26 | 108 | 58 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | - | - | 126 | 32 | - | | 1 | 18 | 6 |
| | W | - | - | - | 1 | - | | 1 | - | 22 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | - | - | 9 | 5 | - | | - | - | - |
| | W | - | - | 5 | - | - | | - | - | - |
| Splash Point | E | - | - | 15 | 47 | - | | nc | nc | 1 |
| | W | - | - | - | - | - | | nc | nc | - |
| Birling Gap | E | - | - | 4 | 32 | - | | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | 1 | - | - | - | - | | nc | nc | nc |

During the winter months movements were predominantly local, presumably between feeding and/or sheltering sites. Relatively high numbers were recorded offshore at both Selsey Bill and between Worthing and Ferring during both winter periods, suggesting good feeding opportunities at these sites. The highest offshore day counts at Selsey Bill were 17 on 13 Jan, 16 on 6 Mar, 17 on 25 Nov and 20 on 19 Dec. Contrastingly, at Worthing there were 32 on 12 Jan, 28 on 28 Feb, 54 on 20 Mar, 27 on 1 Apr, 34 on 23 Nov and 90 on 31 Dec.

Numbers in April declined significantly during the first week, such that the highest count thereafter was eight at Church Norton on the 8th and at Worthing on the 13th and in May and June the majority of records were of single birds. One flew east at Seaford Head on 28 Jun, one was noted in Rye Bay on several dates in July and August and five were seen at Pagham Hbr on 17 July.

Numbers remained low during October and the highest day count was only seven in Thorney Channel (Chichester Hbr) on the 22nd, but numbers began to pick up during November with counts of 17 at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on the 8th, ten in Pagham Hbr on the 11th and the same number offshore at Selsey Bill on the 17th. Thereafter numbers increased noticeably, with a peak count of 49 at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on the 24th. The only inland record was of one (unsexed) at Pulborough Brooks on 16 & 17 Nov. There were 24 double figure counts in December with a maximum of 90 offshore at Goring on the 31st. [JAH]

Ruddy Duck

Oxyura jamaicensis

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

The only record was of one at Pett Level on 15 Apr. [WGH]

Red-legged Partridge*Alectoris rufa****Common introduced resident; population augmented annually by captive bred stock.***

Red-legged Partridges were recorded in 143 tetrads compared with 128 in 2017, 133 in 2016 and a 10-year average of 132 (range 89-173). A total of 46 was recorded during the first winter period SWBS in nine (5.8%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 12 on 21 Feb at Balcombe. Counts of 30 were recorded at both Pagham Hbr on 14 Jan and Hunston (Chichester) on 23 Feb, and there were a further ten double figure counts in the first winter period.

In the BBS the sum of the maximum counts in each 1-km square was 63 and they were found in 23 1-km squares (13%) with a maximum of ten on 20 Apr, also at Balcombe. Apart from this and a count of 18 at Patching on 22 Apr all counts to the end of August were of single figures.

There was one record of confirmed breeding; at Park Fm (Selsey) on 22 Jul an adult was seen with two young. Breeding was probable in 11 tetrads and possible in a further four. However, discrimination between “wild” and captive bred stock presents problems. The impact of the release of captive bred stock is apparent from the surge in numbers in the autumn. (See also Cocks A, Game Bird Releases, Sussex Bird Report 1998). At Chantry Hill 189 were counted on 4 Oct, 160 on 5 Nov and there were six other counts of over 50. The observer noted that “they were feeding in the ploughed fields seemingly oblivious to the sounds of their brethren being shot a couple of paddocks away”. In the second winter SWBS 89 were recorded in eight (6.3%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 30 on Stedham Common on 17 Nov. [PJP]

Grey Partridge*Perdix perdix****Scarce resident; much declined but benefitting locally through conservation effort. Red listed species of high conservation concern.***

Grey Partridge was recorded in 41 (4.4%) tetrads (cf. 47 in 2017, 45 in 2016 and a 10-year average of 53). Of these 41, no less than 34 were in West Sussex. The sites in East Sussex included Ditchling Beacon, Plumpton Plain, Beddingham Hill, Barcombe Cross (at all of which no more than three were noted) and Rye Hbr. In the first winter period there were highs of 30 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 7 Feb, 21 nearby on 14 Jan and ten between Kithurst Hill and Amberley Mount on 25 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads and was probable in a further five. At Rye Hbr perhaps four pairs bred and at least three broods were seen, one had six chicks on 20 Jul. At Lidsey Rife (Barnham) an adult and four chicks were seen on 22 Jul. At Bognor Lec Airfield two adults with two young seen on 30 Sep might have bred elsewhere. A post breeding flock of 27 was seen at Rye Hbr and another 13 at Lancing Clump on 4 Aug.

In the late autumn and second winter, double-figure counts included 12 at Nutbourne on 22 Nov, 11 in the lower Arun Valley on 28 Dec, ten at both Medmerry on 3 Oct and Climping on 4 Oct. [GT]

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 was recorded at just three sites in 2018, the lowest number this century. Following below average spring temperatures with above average rainfall in the south, the usual peak in June nationally was well below the norm. Despite this, the first encounter was during a Bird Race in

the Blackdown (Fernhurst) area on 25 May. This was followed by another heard near Plumpton on 8 Jun. Finally one was heard calling in a crop field on downland north of Newhaven on 30 Jun. [GT]

Common Pheasant

Phasianus colchicus

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

Common Pheasants were recorded in 513 tetrads (55%) compared with 474 (52%) in 2017. However, the major factor influencing the population of the species must be the survival rate and dispersal of the very large numbers of captive bred birds after the shooting season and heavy losses to predation (*Birds of Sussex*, Thomas 2014). In the GBW, Pheasants were recorded in 59 (26%) of the 230 participating gardens in Sussex.

The highest counts in the first quarter were 33 at Cocking on 16 Feb and 25 at Balcombe on 14 Mar. There were six other counts of 20 or more. There were 304 encounters during the early year SWBS from 92 (59%) of the 154 1-km squares surveyed. In the BBS 1017 Pheasants were found in 150 (86%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads and was probable in a further 28. A nest with young was recorded at Filsham on 22 Apr, a used nest was found at Cocking on 7 Jun, recently fledged young were at Pett Level on 12 Jun and in a garden in Punnett's Town (Heathfield) on 8 Jul.

Numbers increased in the autumn with post breeding additions and releases from shooting estates, with high counts of 106 at Warningcamp (Arundel) on 23 Oct, 80 at Cocking on 13 Dec and a further four counts of 50 or more. During the SWBS in November and December there were 485 encounters in 66 (52%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed. [PJP]

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

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

In line with previous years the estimated monthly totals in the table below have been calculated by taking the highest daily count of birds moving either east or west along the coast during the month together with the highest 'offshore' count in the month plus any inland records. Using this method the estimated total for 2018 was 3049, lower than the 2017 figure of 3980 but still above the 10-year rolling average of 2543.

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 354 | 127 | 922 | 749 | 16 | - | - | - | 1 | 10 | 85 | 785 | 3049 |

Numbers in the first two months of the year were considerably lower than those in 2017. In January the only notable movements were of 47 W at Birling Gap on the 12th and 41 W off Selsey Bill on the 14th. February's total was incredibly low with no double-figure movements. The total for January was boosted by a count of 80 in Rye Bay while February's total included 52 off Bexhill. Numbers increased dramatically in early March with 118 E at Selsey Bill on the 4th, 112 E past Birling Gap on the 5th and 107 E at Fairlight on the 6th. On 29 Mar an easterly movement was recorded at several sites along the coast with 46 E at both Selsey Bill and Worthing and 93 E at Birling Gap. Easterly movements continued until mid-April and were particularly noticeable at Splash Point (Seaford) where there were 155 E on the 2nd and 110 E on the 7th. Numbers then declined with mainly single-figure counts during the remainder of April and in May until the last spring record of 1 E at Selsey Bill on 18 May.

The first returning bird was recorded offshore at Goring on 22 Sep. Numbers in October were typically low with movement recorded on just five dates and no more than two on any one day. November was another quiet month with the only double-figure counts both at Worthing where there were 12 E on the 21st and 11 E on the 23rd. December's estimated total of 785 is deceptive as it was due largely to a record count of 528 in Rye Bay on the 27th. Elsewhere the highest counts in December were 30 E at Splash Point on the 12th and 39 W past Selsey Bill on the 24th.

The estimated totals for coastal passage at the principal seawatching sites together with the estimated county total from these sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Monthly total* | 273 | 75 | 876 | 748 | 15 | | 1 | 6 | 71 | 256 |
| Selsey Bill | 219 | 20 | 404 | 386 | 9 | | 1 | 6 | 75 | 270 |
| Worthing & Goring | 81 | 11 | 224 | 67 | - | | 1 | 2 | 45 | 46 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 45 | 53 | 172 | 148 | - | | - | 3 | 31 | 55 |
| Splash Point | 62 | 14 | 346 | 621 | 6 | | nc | nc | nc | 48 |
| Birling Gap | 103 | 5 | 483 | 426 | 4 | | nc | nc | nc | nc |

* Adjusted to compensate for duplication

During the year the only records of birds away from the sea or tidal harbours were single individuals at Scotney GP on 14 Jan and at Newhaven Tide Mills on 28 Dec. [DHH]

Black-throated Diver

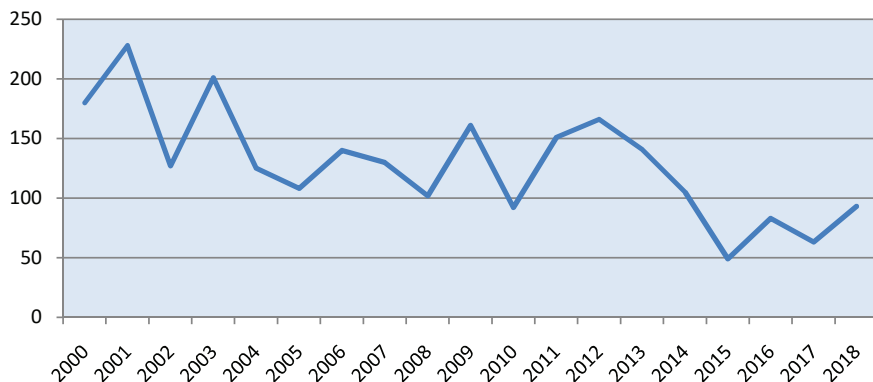
Gavia arctica

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

The estimated monthly totals for 2018 were as follows:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 8 | 1 | 14 | 37 | 23 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 93 |

The total of 93 was calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver; it was an improvement on the 2017 total of just 63 and although it reversed the downward trend seen since 2012 it may be only a 'blip' in the decline that has been evident this century, as illustrated below:



Annual totals of Black-throated Divers 2000 to 2018.

The first two months of the year did not augur well, with movements involving just two single birds, the very low numbers helped by five birds in Rye Bay on 2 Jan and one at Scotney GP on 14 Jan. There was a slight improvement in March, although the highest daily count was only 3 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 16th. Numbers increased in April and May with the peak daily counts involving 7 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 17 Apr and 12 E at the same site on 11 May. The last spring record was of 1 E past Selsey Bill on 20 May, just one day earlier than the 10-year average.

The first returning bird was one in Rye Bay on 13 Oct, some five days later than the 10-year average. There were no further records until 4 Nov when there was 1 E at Selsey Bill. From then until the end of the year coastal movements involved single birds on three dates, with the highest offshore count involving four in Rye Bay on 27 and 31 Dec. [DHH]

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

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

The Selsey Bill area continued to be an important wintering site. Birds from Selsey 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 come from Selsey. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Monthly total | 10 | 9 | 13 | 15 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Max. in Selsey area | 7 | 7 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 7 |

At the start of the year there were two long-staying birds from last year with the juvenile first seen in Newhaven Hbr on 26 Nov 2017 remaining until 29 Jan 2018, while the bird at Arlington Res first seen on 17 Dec 2017 remained until 5 Jan 2018. At Selsey the highest January count was seven offshore on the 1st with the only other records for the month away from the Selsey area being 1 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on the 21st and one at Pett Level on the 28th. Seven offshore was again the peak Selsey count in February (on the 18th) with two other records involving 1W at Goring on the 13th and one offshore there on the 27th. In March the Selsey numbers peaked at 12 offshore on the 9th before declining to nine on the 25th with a single bird offshore at Goring from the 29th to 31st. Spring passage was confined to five records in April with 1 E past Selsey Bill on the 6th, 15th, 29th and 21st and 3 E past Worthing on the 11th. At Selsey Bill the peak count in April was eight offshore on the 12th reducing to six on 5 May. Two offshore at Selsey on 28 May were the last of the spring.

The first returning bird was 1 E at Selsey Bill on 13 Oct, nine days earlier than the 10-year average. Two further sightings at Selsey in October both involved birds in flight with none recorded offshore. In November one was offshore at Selsey on the 4th and 5th with two there on the 30th. The only record away from Selsey was 1 W at Goring on 6 Nov. In December all records were from the Selsey area, with numbers increasing from three on the 14th to seven on the 24th. [DHH]

Diver species

The difficulties of specific identification of distant divers in flight are well documented. This resulted in one in sixteen reports of divers in flight in 2018 being recorded as 'Diver sp'.

The numbers of all divers recorded at the principal seawatching sites during the periods January-May and October-December are shown in the table below. The totals for each site have been derived by adding the monthly totals of birds flying both east and west together with 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 | 135 | 32 | 1038 | 352 | 24 | 3 | 1197 | 387 | 1.9 | 0.9 |
| Worthing | 35 | - | 383 | 94 | 15 | - | 433 | 94 | 2.7 | 0.6 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 14 | 8 | 418 | 89 | 12 | 1 | 444 | 98 | 2.7 | 1.1 |
| Splash Point | 101 | - | 1049 | 48 | 38 | - | 1188 | 48 | 5.8 | - |
| Birling Gap | - | nc | 1021 | nc | 17 | nc | 1038 | nc | 8.44 | - |

Fulmar

Fulmarus glacialis

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

During January and February birds recorded prospecting suitable sea cliffs included 14 between Brighton and Saltdean, four at Telscombe Cliffs, 14 at Newhaven, 12 at Seaford Head and 15 at Cliff End (Pett). Also in January there was a movement of 18 W at Fairlight on the 29th. There were a further eight double-figure counts of birds moving along the coast in the period March to May. At Selsey Bill there were 14 W on 29 Mar and 17 W on 24 Apr with 13 W off Goring on both 17 Apr and 2 May. In the same period there were 11 E at Telscombe Cliffs on 30 Mar while observers at Splash Point (Seaford) recorded three movements in April with 34 E on the 6th, 25 E on the 15th and 14 E the following day. It is interesting to note the different flight directions at the two western sites and those at the two more easterly sites.

Historically there has been a clearly defined gap between the last sighting in September and the first returning bird in November. This was not the case in 2018 when two at Seaford Head on 9 Sep were followed by single birds at Saltdean on 2 and 5 Oct, one at Beachy Head on 31 Oct and the first bird back at the breeding site at Cliff End on the typical date of 6 Nov. Numbers increased at the breeding cliffs in December, with 15 at Cliff End on the 17th and eight at Rottingdean on the 27th.

The only record of a bird away from the coast was of one near Arlington Res on 25 Dec. [DHH]

Cory's Shearwater

Calonectris borealis

Rare vagrant.

The only record was of a single bird flying east at c.1 mile range past Selsey Bill on 16 Jun (JA, SH). The county total now stands at 24, although there have only been four other records this century, in Apr 2000 (Birling Gap), Sep 2002 (Birling Gap), Apr 2012 (Selsey Bill) and May 2016 (Selsey Bill). [PJ]

Manx Shearwater

Puffinus puffinus

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

Using the same method of estimation used for Red-throated Diver the annual total of 446 was considerably above the 10-year average of 228. It was in fact the second highest annual total this century, exceeded only by the total of 487 recorded in 2012. The monthly totals from the principal seawatching sites, which show that 60% of all records came from Selsey Bill, were as follows:



Fulmar, Newhaven, 16 March (Bob Eade)

| | Mar | | Apr | | May | | Jun | | Jul | | Aug | | Sep | | Oct | | Nov | |
|-------------------|-----|---|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|
| County totals * | 7 | | 179 | | 207 | | 27 | | 5 | | - | | 18 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W |
| Selsey Bill | - | 7 | 51 | 94 | 164 | 27 | 22 | 7 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 18 | 2 | - | - | 1 |
| Worthing & Goring | - | - | - | 6 | - | 7 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Telscombe Cliffs | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Splash Point | - | - | 60 | 12 | 56 | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Birling Gap | - | - | 29 | 6 | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |

* adjusted to compensate for duplication

The first record of the year was of 7 W at Selsey Bill on 29 Mar, but it was the following two months in which the vast majority of sightings occurred. In April observers at Selsey Bill recorded double-figure numbers on five dates, with peak counts of 33 E on the 15th and 27 W on the 29th. Observers at Splash Point (Seaford) recorded counts of 15 to 19 birds on three dates in April while 15 E on the 16th was the peak count at Birling Gap. This pattern continued in May with the two largest daily counts both coming from Selsey Bill where there were 46 E on the 1st and 61 E on the 21st. It is interesting that the highest day count of 33 E at Splash Point on 17 May did not coincide with any notable movement off Selsey Bill, where 1 E was the only record. Also of note was 2 E at Fairlight which represented the only record from the east of the county.

Unlike 2017 numbers declined in June, with the highest count being 21 E past Selsey Bill on the 16th. The low total of just five in July was typical for that month. There were no records in August and all records in the following three months came from Selsey Bill, including the last of the year on the relatively late date of 10 Nov. [DHH]

Balearic Shearwater

Puffinus mauretanicus

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

The only record for the year was of 1 E at Selsey Bill on the evening of 9 Aug (AH). This was the lowest annual figure for 14 years and the second consecutive year in which the total failed to reach double figures. [DHH]

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Scarce resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Little Grebes were recorded in 110 tetrads (12%), an increase on the 97 (11%) in 2017 but comparable with the 10-year average of 108. The WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 216 | 163 | 128 | 63 | 43 | 41 | 80 | 140 | 202 | 222 | 230 | 241 |
| Chichester Hbr | 76 | 59 | 60 | 8 | 2 | 8 | 12 | 17 | 40 | 50 | 62 | 59 |
| Pagham Hbr | 20 | 22 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 14 | 2 | 16 | 17 |
| Burton & Chingford Pond | 9 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 15 | 19 | 23 | 9 | 13 | 17 |
| Cuckmere Haven | 21 | - | 2 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | - | 19 | 2 | 31 |
| Rye Bay | 41 | 39 | 20 | 18 | - | 2 | 9 | 42 | 67 | 95 | 69 | 57 |
| Average County Total 2008-2017 | 180 | 162 | 103 | 42 | 28 | 30 | 44 | 91 | 143 | 189 | 186 | 196 |

The county totals for all months except February were more than 17% higher than the average county totals, the months with the highest increases being July (81%), August (53%), April and May (both 50%). Significant counts additional to the WeBS included 20 at Chichester GP on 11 Aug, 20 at Widewater (Lancing) on 28 Feb and 21 there on 30 Nov. At Cuckmere Haven there were 31 on 16 Feb and 25 on 6 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads, and was probable in a further seven. The earliest occupied nest was one at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 10 Apr; a pair with five chicks was observed there on 10 May and adults with two small young were seen at Medmerry on the 25th, the earliest records of successful breeding. Breeding was also confirmed at Thorney Deeps and Fishbourne MP (both Chichester Hbr), Chichester GPs, Pagham Hbr, Brooklands (Worthing), Knepp Estate, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. During the autumn and second winter period, there were an impressive 35 records of 20 or more, including nine from Cuckmere Haven and Rye Hbr and ten from Pett Level. The highest count of the year was of 65 at Rye Hbr during the WeBS on 14 Oct; at Cuckmere Haven there were 30 on 26 Sep, 23 on 1 Oct, 25 on 23 Nov and 42 on 29 Dec. [WDJA]

Red-necked Grebe

Podiceps grisegena

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

One in Pagham Hbr stayed from 6 until 30 Jan and was presumably the same as that recorded there on 31 Dec 2017 (BGRI, AW *et al.*). Singles were also noted at Selsey Bill on four dates between 12 and 28 Jan (Selsey Bill seawatch log); these records may also relate to the same individual. Two were at Scotney GP on 10 Jan (BFF, DM, OM) and another was off Goring on 14 Feb, with two present there on 30 Mar (DKC). One flew east at Selsey Bill on 6 Apr (Selsey Bill seawatch log) and one landed offshore there on the 7th (JA, AB, PB *et al.*).

In the autumn one flew west at Selsey Bill on 11 Oct (CE, ME, GAH), one flew east there on the 14th and one was offshore on the 24th (Selsey Bill seawatch log). The next was on 7 Nov at the same site (GAH, AH), and another was off Goring on 9 Nov and again on 30 Nov (DKC). The last of the year was off Pett Level on 24 Dec (SJRR). It is possible that the year's records involved only about nine individuals. [MM]

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Great Crested Grebes were recorded in 116 (12%) tetrads across the county; comparable to the 10-year average of 111 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 | 155 | 462 | 324 | 211 | 166 | 110 | 101 | 243 | 559 | 369 | 349 | 230 |
| Chichester Hbr | 17 | 57 | 14 | 21 | 37 | 4 | 4 | - | 11 | 13 | 27 | 30 |
| Chichester GP | 16 | 15 | 14 | 28 | 20 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 50 | 39 | 38 | 19 |
| Weir Wood Res | 14 | 26 | 43 | 47 | 43 | 51 | nc | 99 | 106 | 61 | 80 | 20 |
| Arlington Res | 11 | 18 | 17 | 22 | 8 | 12 | 35 | 38 | 31 | 30 | 20 | 16 |
| Bewl Water | 36 | 61 | 73 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 240 | 88 | 76 | 50 |
| Glyne Gap (Bexhill) | nc | 130 | 89 | 3 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | - | - | 7 |
| Rye Bay | 18 | 7 | 9 | 27 | 12 | 7 | 28 | 47 | 59 | 71 | 34 | 32 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 372 | 478 | 275 | 167 | 128 | 135 | 231 | 419 | 452 | 372 | 325 | 324 |

The freshwater reservoirs, particularly Weir Wood Res and Bewl Water, continue to provide the prime inland sites in the county for this species. The absence of WeBS counts at these sites contributed to totals lower than the 10-year average during some summer months, but this factor was not responsible for the low counts in January and December. Offshore counts, not always covered by the WeBS, during the early winter period were significant in terms of county totals although relatively modest, the largest being 200 at Cliff End (Pett) on 12 Jan and 150 at nearby Fairlight Cove on the same date, 130 at Glynne Gap (Bexhill) on the 19th, 100 at Normans Bay on 12 Feb and 75 at Worthing on 7 Mar..

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and was recorded as probable in two more tetrads. Display was noted as early as 1 Jan at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP), although elsewhere not until 16 Feb, at Arlington Res. The earliest record of an occupied nest was of a pair at Eridge on 5 Apr. A nesting pair was recorded at Worth Park (Crawley) on 15 Apr, and two occupied nests were noted at Weir Wood Res on 6 May where six sitting birds were noted on 17 Jun. The earliest record of (three) young Great Crested Grebes came from Arlington Res on 4 Jun, and there was a late record of an occupied nest at Pett Level on 20 Jul. Post-breeding flocks gathered on inland waters as usual. During August no counts were received for Bewl Water but 119 birds were observed at Weir Wood Res on the 6th. During September 240 were at Bewl Water on the 7th and 106 at Weir Wood Res on the 9th (both WeBS counts).

Offshore numbers increased substantially during the last weeks of the year, with two careful counts from Pett Level on 27 and 31 Dec revealing 437 and 587 respectively. The last was the largest count since January 2011 when 1250 were recorded at the same location. Elsewhere 85 were on the sea at Goring Gap on 31 Dec. Although substantial numbers were recorded offshore, relatively little movement was recorded by seawatchers, with maxima of 14 E at Selsey Bill on 7 May, 13 W there on 30 Nov and 11 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 13 Dec. [GO]

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritus

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

The approximate minimum monthly totals, taking the highest day count as the minimum, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Chichester Hbr | 1 | - | 2 | - | - | 1 | - |
| Selsey Bill/Church Norton | 15 | 8 | 2 | 3 | - | 5 | 14 |
| Climping Gap/Middleton | - | 3 | 5 | - | - | - | - |
| Goring/Worthing | - | - | 3 | - | - | - | - |
| Splash Point | - | - | - | 7 | - | - | - |
| Birling Gap | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| Eastbourne | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| Rye Hbr | - | 1 | - | - | 8 | - | - |
| Scotney GP | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - |

As usual, the prime area for Slavonian Grebes was on the sea between Selsey Bill and Church Norton, where they were recorded regularly throughout the first quarter, both offshore and occasionally flying past in ones or twos in either direction. The maximum in January was 15 on the 28th, involving five offshore and 10 E in 1½ hr; one was also seen on five dates in Chichester Hbr. Peak counts later were eight offshore at Church Norton on 18 Feb but only three in March. The only records from East Sussex for this period were one at Rye Hbr on 16 Feb and another at Scotney GP

on 4 Mar. The last April record was as early as the 6th, with 7 E past Splash Point.

The first returning winter visitor was one in Chichester Hbr on 1 Nov but the species was noted in the usual Selsey Bill/Church Norton area from the 2nd through the month, peaking at five on the 4th. All December records were again from this stretch of coast, with a peak of 14 on 16 Dec involving three offshore and 11 E, with occasional fly-pasts. [JAH].



Black-necked Grebe, Arlington Reservoir, 3 April (Tim Squire)

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

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

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 3 | 5 | 4 | 22 | 1 | 6 | 6 |

Two were seen at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) on 6 Jan and one at Rye Hbr from the 1st to 17th. In March there was one at Pagham Hbr from the 1st to 3rd and three off Goring Gap on the 30th. Spring migration was notable in April: on the 2nd one was off Goring Gap and three offshore at Birling Gap. Two were at Arlington Res on the 2nd (but only one the next day), 2 E at Birling Gap had also been recorded at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 6th where 1 E was also noted on the 7th. A flurry of records on the 15th involved one at Arlington Res, six offshore at Birling Gap and three at Pett Level. The final spring record was three at Pett Level on the 29th.

The first autumn record, the only one in October, was of one at Rye Hbr on the 14th. The next was one there on 11 Nov and another off Goring Gap on the 16th, two (briefly offshore) at Splash Point and another two at Rye Hbr on the 21st. All December sightings were at Rye Hbr; two on the 8th, ones on the 17th and 20th and two on the 24th (all presumably different) with one remaining to the 29th. [JAH]

White Stork

Ciconia ciconia

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

The ongoing reintroduction programme on the Knepp Estate and elsewhere has resulted in birds being allowed to fly freely and roam widely, with a few others escaping, thus clouding the true status of this species in Sussex. However, a ringed bird (3E401) at Arlington Res for 10 mins on 14 May before departing northwest (JJE) has been accepted as wild. Subsequent enquiries revealed that it had been ringed as a nestling in Friesland (The Netherlands) on 22 Jun 2015.

All other birds recorded were assumed to have been wanderers, mainly from Knepp, comprising singles over Arundel WWT and Withdean (Brighton) on 7 May, three over Rogate on 4 Jun, singles at Pulborough Brooks on the 15th and 25th, one over Warnham LNR on 7 Jul, one in the Pagham Hbr area between 11 and 13 Aug, one in the Shermanbury/Henfield area from 2 until 11 Sep, seven over Salvington (Worthing) on the 4th, one at Gatwick Airport on the 12th, one at Bramber from the 21st to the 24th, one over Chantry Hill on the 24th, one over Chailey Common on the 30th, one at Newick WTW from 3 until 9 Oct, singles at Bishopstone and Lewes Brooks on the 7th, one at Weir Wood Res on the 11th, one in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 20th and 21st, one over Winchelsea on the 21st, one at Hamsey on the 22nd, one over Slindon Woods on the 27th and one at Windmill Hill (Herstmonceux) on the 30th. The Henfield, Bramber and Newick birds were all colour ringed (GB07, GB00 and GB21 respectively) confirming their origin as Knepp. [PJ]

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Very scarce but increasing visitor.

2017: The Glossy Ibis photograph on page 273 of the 2017 report was incorrectly dated as February 2017. It was of course the bird reported in November as described in the Systematic List.

2018: The only record was of one that flew in from great height and landed at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 30 Jan (DPR). The county total moves on to c.72, of which 30 have been this century. [PJ]

Spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia

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

The minimum monthly totals were as in the table below.

The only records of this species in the first winter period came from the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area, with one from 1 Jan to 11 Feb when a second bird joined it, both remaining until the 23rd. The only March sightings were one at Pett Level on the 7th and two at Rye Hbr on the 30th.

Spring passage was slight; April sightings were of ones at Pulborough Brooks from the 8th to 13th, in the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area from the 12th to 15th, at Pett Level also on the 15th and three at Rye Hbr on the 30th. Two of these latter remained (joined by a third for the 8th only) until 20 May with one remaining through June. The only other May records were on the 12th when one was seen in Pagham Hbr (and also on 1 Jun) and another was at Cuckmere Haven. The only other June record was of one at Pulborough Brooks on the 1st.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 37 | 8 | 3 | 4 |
| Chichester Hbr | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| Pagham Hbr/Medmerry | 1 | 2 | - | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | 28 | 5 | 1 | - |
| Selsey Bill | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - |
| Pulborough Brooks | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Hove | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Cuckmere Haven | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Pett Level | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Rye Bay & Scotney GP | - | - | 2 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 4 |

In July two were at Rye Hbr on 1 and 2 Jul with one remaining from the 4th to 18th. In the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area one was present between the 4th and 12th while at Hove on the 26th three flew west over the shoreline. One was at Rye Hbr from the Aug 7 to Sep 5 while at Pagham Hbr/Medmerry one was seen regularly from Aug 22 and was joined by another on the Sep 18 but only one stayed to the 26th. On 14 Sep seven flew west over Rye Hbr towards Pett Level, on the 24th a remarkable flock of 19 birds flew over Pagham Hbr and on the 29th five others flew westwards over Pagham Hbr at 07:35 hr. The only previous record to match the observation of the 24th was on 1 Sep 1964 when a flock of c.20 was seen in flight offshore at Langney Point (Eastbourne).

Almost all other later autumn records came from either the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area or Rye Hbr. At the former site there were one or two from 1 Oct to 7 Nov (but including five on 16 and 17 Oct and four on the 27th) and one flew west at nearby Selsey Bill on 7 Oct. At Rye Hbr one or two were regularly recorded from 9 Oct until 16 Dec with one at Scotney GP on 16 Oct. [AH]

Eurasian Bittern

Botaurus stellaris

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

The minimum monthly totals are shown in the table below.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | 2 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Chichester GP | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Eastbourne | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Pevensey Levels | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Pett Level | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - |
| Rye Hbr | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | - |

It was a poor year for this species with a maximum of nine. The only sightings during the first winter period were singles at Chichester GP on 19 Jan, Chichester Marina on the 30th (could this have been the same individual?) and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 11 and 22 Mar.

Summer records were from Rye Hbr, where one was heard booming on several occasions, Pevensey Level on 3 Jun and Pett Level on 1 Jul. Autumn records involved just one in each month: at Pett Level on 30 Oct, Rye Hbr on 21 Nov and Chichester GP on 11 Dec. [AH]

Night-heron

*Nycticorax nycticorax***Rare vagrant.**

An adult roosting in sallows and then seen in flight at Filsham Reedbed on 20 Apr (AP) was the first county record since May 2012 (at Pulborough Brooks). The county total moves on to 37 including nine this century. Spring arrival dates have spanned the period 8 Apr to 27 May with nine in April and 12 in May. [PJ]

Cattle Egret

*Bubulcus ibis***Scarce but increasing visitor.**

2018 was another exceptional year for this species with a minimum total of 53 recorded, far exceeding the previous highest total of 19 in 2017, and raising the likelihood of breeding in the county in the near future. The monthly totals were as follows:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| - | - | - | 2 | - | - | - | 5 | 49 | 16 | 1 | 27 |

The only record in the first half of the year was of two in breeding plumage at Iford Brooks (Lewes) on 28 Apr (AJW). In the second half of the year there was an unprecedented influx commencing with singles (perhaps the same) at Pagham Hbr on 24 Aug (BGRI) and at Thorney Deepes from 25 to 29 Aug (CBC, MAC), followed by four at Pett Level on 30 Aug (CHD), up to 13 in the Pagham Hbr area from 1 Sep until 19 Oct (AH, DM, HR, CRS *et al.*), 19 at Combe Haven on 4 and 5 Sep (DPR), singles at Pett Level on 7 Sep (AP *et al.*) and Exceat (Cuckmere Valley) on 21 Sep (GRFJ, MR), up to 11 at Pett Level from 23 Sep to 7 Oct (CHD, CMG, PEJ *et al.*), singles at E Guldeford Level on 24 Sep (AP) and Combe Haven on 25 Sep (CHD), and two at Pulborough Brooks on 30 Sep (PD). In addition to the Pett birds in October were 12 on E Guldeford Level on the 11th, one that flew east at West Beach (Littlehampton) on the 20th (RFAG), one at Lyminster from the 24th into 2019 (DKC, MCD *et al.*) and two at Rye Hbr on the 31st (CHD). What was presumably the Lyminster individual was seen on several dates in November at Arundel WWT and Offham. In December there were 21 at Chalder/Marsh Fm (Pagham Hbr) on the 3rd and 4th (TEG-P) increasing to 24 on the 28th and 26 on the 30th (mo). However, the only other December records were of singles (most likely the same) on Horse Eye Level on the 9th (CFB, CP) and Manxey Level on the 29th (CFB). [PJ]

Grey Heron

*Ardea cinerea***Fairly common resident.**

2017: New Lake (Chichester GP), Iford Brooks (Lewes) and Castle Pit (Rye Hbr) were included in error amongst the list of former heronries. They are Cormorant colonies.

2018: Grey Herons were recorded from 360 tetrads (35%) compared with 305 in 2017. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as below. The monthly totals were higher than the ten-year average in all months except for June, August and November.

A full national survey of all known heronries was carried out in 2018 to mark the 90th year of the BTO Heronries Census, Britain's longest running bird survey. A full survey is normal practice in Sussex. The 294 nests counted at 31 sites compared with 280 nests at 32 sites in 2017. Counts for individual heronries with occupied nests were: Thorney Island Little Deepes (Chichester Hbr) 1, Forest Mere (Liphook) 2, Old Park Wood (Fishbourne) 7, Norton Priory 4, Owl Copse (Pagham

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 149 | 148 | 128 | 136 | 74 | 65 | 99 | 97 | 145 | 155 | 115 | 120 |
| Chichester Hbr | 23 | 9 | 6 | 21 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 23 | 16 | 10 | 12 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 11 | 11 | 10 | 18 | 11 | 9 | 20 | 15 | 12 | 15 | 4 | 12 |
| Weir Wood Res | 18 | 27 | 38 | 40 | 16 | 7 | nc | 12 | 15 | 8 | 2 | 5 |
| Pevensey Levels | 7 | 14 | 11 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 6 | 3 |
| Rye Bay | 22 | 23 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 12 | 10 | 17 | 19 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 85 | 92 | 106 | 77 | 66 | 75 | 86 | 100 | 135 | 128 | 119 | 93 |

Hbr) 10, Hoe Farm (Flansham) 14, Warningcamp (Arundel) 5, Northpark Wood (Parham) 13, Ham Manor GC (Angmering) 1, Kneppmill Pond 32, Warnham LNR 21, Stretham Manor (Henfield) 3, Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) 4, Hammonds Mill Farm (Burgess Hill) 2, Ardingly Res 6, Weir Wood Res 44, Rodmell 5, Decoy Pond (Firle Park) 3, Hempstead Wood (Uckfield) 3, Friston Forest 4 in the traditional colony and 4 in a new sub-site, Hadlow Down 9, Old Park (Eridge) 18, Hampden Park (Eastbourne) 5, Glyndley Manor (Hailsham) 20, Wadhurst Park Lake 4, Great Coppice Wood (Bayham) 1, Wartling 12, Burwash 19, Alder Shaw (Brede Level) 7, Winchelsea 10 and Houghton Green (Playden) 1.

The 2017 heronry survey at Kneppmill Pond was done by boat and recorded 15 nests. In 2018 the lake had been drained for maintenance and the survey from ground level recorded only six nests. So, the Knepp Estate's drone was deployed. Flying at a height of 75m, it caused no disturbance and revealed 32 nests in two distinct colonies: 27 nests on the southeast arm of the mill pond and five nests on the northern end, a colony which does not appear to have been recorded before and perhaps is just establishing, see photograph below.



Part of the heronry at Kneppmill Pond as viewed by a drone (David and Penny Green)

Another aim of the 90th anniversary census was to visit historical sites on the BTO heronries sites list to find out whether there was any sign of current or recent activity. The following former heronries considered extinct were checked and confirmed to have no herons nesting: Didman's Copse (Westbourne), New Pond (Midhurst), First Wood (Littlehampton), Cophall Wood (Ifield), Sandfield Pond (Hurstpierpoint), Pebsham Wood, Powdermill Res (Sedlescombe), Palstre Court Fm (Potman's Heath) and Lower Snailham (Guestling).

Away from the heronries, large reservoirs and harbours, most reports were of one, two or three birds at ponds, streams and marshy areas. In the first winter period, double figure counts were reported from Lewes Brooks (ten on 27 Jan), Pulborough Brooks (ten on 11 Feb), Henfield (ten on 19 Feb), Arundel WWT (11 on 28 Feb) and Winchelsea (12 on 6 Mar). In the autumn and second winter period the highest count away from heronries, reservoirs and harbours was from Shinewater Lake (Eastbourne) with ten on 22 Dec. [LS]

Great White Egret

Ardea alba

Scarce but increasing visitor.

The propensity of this species to wander widely between suitable sites renders assessing numbers difficult. The approximate minimum monthly totals based on the assumption, as last year, that birds in the Arun Valley (Arundel, Amberley and Pulborough Brooks) and in the Rye Bay area (Pett Level, Rye Hbr, Camber and Scotney GP are the same), are as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2018 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 18 | 16 | 18 | 7 |
| 2017 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | - | 6 | 6 | 21 | 9 |

This shows the continuing upward trend of recent years, as does the conservative estimate of a total of approximately 62 individuals during the year (43 in 2017).

In the first quarter, the number of days on which this species was recorded was almost equal between West and East Sussex, viz. 30 days in the west and 34 in the east. The majority of the West Sussex records were from Pulborough Brooks (20 days) while in East Sussex they were recorded on 16 days on Pevensey Levels and 19 at sites around Rye Bay, where Great White Egrets are now regular. Here singles were seen from the beginning of the year and then two on 22 Jan but seven on 11 Feb. Similarly at Pevensey Levels singles were noted through the period but two on 21 Jan. The one at Cuckmere Haven on 10 Jan and one at Northiam on 24 Feb were most probably wanderers. In West Sussex one was seen up and down the Arun Valley, but more often at Pulborough Brooks, from 8 Jan but with two on 22 and 25 Mar. There were records from the Knepp Estate on nine dates, one on 12 Jan, one on 1 Feb but two between 13 and 19 Mar.

In the spring (April to June) the species was seen on 27 days in West Sussex and 40 in East Sussex, with maxima of four at Rye Hbr on 12 Apr and 5 May and two at Pulborough Brooks on several April dates. Also in April singles were seen on the Knepp Estate on the 5th, 19th and 22nd and on Pevensey Levels on the 6th, 10th, 15th and 18th. There were less frequent observations at Weir Wood Res (7th), West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) (11th and 13th), Medmerry (24th) and Pagham Hbr (29th). Numbers dropped in May and June; none were recorded in West Sussex after 2 May but two or three were noted in Rye Bay throughout May and June. One was observed flying east past Hove on 22 May. There were no records indicating possible breeding.

In July, up to three were at Rye Hbr and singles were at the Knepp Estate on the 6th and seen from Goring Gap the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 9th. At Weir Wood Res one was seen most days from



Great White Egret, Pulborough Brooks, 14 April (Gary Faulkner)

the 17th and then through August and September until 17 Oct. Singles were at West Rise Marsh on 3 and 4 Aug, Arundel WWT between 23 and 28 Aug and at Combe Haven on the 28th. In September birds were seen on most days at the regular sites with a maximum of seven at Rye Hbr on the 9th (and six the next day). Others were noted at Warnham LNR on the 3rd (and two on the 28th), Darwell Res and Bewl Water on the 7th, Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on the 12th and Climping Gap on the 18th. October was similar, with birds seen on 25 days, the highest counts being five on the Knepp Estate on the 30th and 31st and four at Pett Level on the 14th. Others were noted at the Adur Saltings on the 6th, passing north-west at Hastings on the 8th and two at Combe Haven on the 20th.

During the second winter period, the species was recorded in West Sussex on only 11 days compared with 27 in East Sussex. The vast majority of records were from Rye Bay sites with mostly one to four but a maximum of seven at Rye Hbr on 11 Nov. Elsewhere in November two were on the Knepp Estate on the 1st, with one there on the 11th and 13th and others were noted in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 6th, Weir Wood Res on the 9th, Warnham LNR on the 15th and 22nd, Pulborough Brooks on the 16th, a flyover at Cissbury on the 17th, at Chichester GP the same day, Pagham Hbr on the 22nd and Darwell Res on the 28th. Numbers in December fell with all but two records coming from the Rye Bay area, with a maximum of four at Rye Hbr on the 27th, one at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on the 17th and 23rd and one at Pevensey Levels on the 28th. [MJC, JAH]

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

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

2017: The note of a count of 40 at Weir Wood on 20 Jun was an error. The correct figure was four.

2018: Little Egrets were recorded from 178 tetrads (17%), 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 | 100 | 84 | 34 | 71 | 55 | 77 | 171 | 163 | 389 | 307 | 104 | 83 |
| Chichester Hbr | 49 | 35 | 10 | 28 | 16 | 40 | 50 | 63 | 209 | 167 | 42 | 34 |
| Pagham Hbr | - | 3 | 2 | 11 | 9 | 12 | 54 | 25 | 89 | 42 | 10 | 1 |
| Rye Bay | 16 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 18 | 39 | 43 | 37 | 18 | 4 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 65 | 59 | 104 | 64 | 53 | 72 | 136 | 185 | 304 | 281 | 159 | 91 |

The numbers were broadly similar to those in 2017. In the first winter period good numbers were seen in West Sussex, 11 were with cattle at Sutton End on 7 Jan and 18 at nearby Burton MP on 8 Mar, 23 at Fernhurst on 13 Jan, 12 at Hambrook (Chichester) on 15 Jan and 17 at Arundel WWT on 24 Jan. In East Sussex 14 were at Rye Hbr on 21 Jan, ten at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels) on 26 Jan and 12 at Southease (R Ouse) on 28 Jan.

A total of 54 occupied nests were recorded from nine heronries, a decrease on the 62 nests found in 2017 and 72 nests in 2016. Nest counts were: Thorney Little Deepes (Chichester Hbr) 2, Old Park Wood (Bosham) 4, Warningcamp (Arundel) 5, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 19, Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) 9, Rodmell 4, Winchelsea 1 and Friston Forest 10 (3 in the Charleston site and 7 in the newer site in Friston). There were no nests reported from Hoe Farm (Flansham) or from Lusteds (Glynleigh) this year.

In summer, away from the WeBS sites shown above, there were counts of 20 or more regularly in the lower Cuckmere Valley (maximum of 33 on 8 Sep) and seen from Goring Gap towards Ferring and Worthing (maximum of 64 on 29 Aug).

The highest counts in the autumn and second winter period, not mentioned above, were 33 at Goring Gap on 2 Sep, and in October 15 at Medmerry on the 7th, 27 at Ferring Rife on the 11th, 13 at Newhaven on the 16th, 24 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 24th and 14 at Arundel WWT on 20 Nov. [LS]

Gannet

Morus bassanus

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

The movements recorded at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

| | Jan-Feb | | Mar-May | | Jun-Jul | | Aug-Oct | | Nov-Dec | |
|------------------------------|---------|-----|---------|------|---------|-----|---------|------|---------|-----|
| | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W | E | W |
| Selsey Bill | 111 | 223 | 6862 | 2327 | 482 | 394 | 1159 | 2613 | 617 | 617 |
| Worthing & Goring | 67 | 45 | 1332 | 538 | 126 | 68 | 91 | 842 | 218 | 298 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 194 | 263 | 1137 | 116 | 153 | 21 | 458 | 1056 | 1137 | 793 |
| Splash Point | 113 | 91 | 1873 | 119 | nc | nc | nc | nc | - | - |
| Birling Gap | 123 | - | 1965 | 72 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |

At Selsey Bill the annual total (birds moving both east and west but not including those recorded as feeding offshore) was 15,405. Although this was considerably fewer than the record of 23,563 in 2017 it still resulted in the heavily watched Selsey Bill accounting for nearly 60% of all Sussex records in 2018. Elsewhere, the number recorded at Worthing was over double that of 2017 but at the three other sites numbers were broadly in line with those of the previous year.

The pattern of occurrence showed a considerable difference from that of 2017. During the first three months of the year the only three-figure counts were on 1 Jan, with 127 W at Selsey Bill and

104 W at Telscombe Cliffs. Numbers increased dramatically in April and May with three figure counts on eight dates in April and twelve dates in May recorded at all five principal seawatching sites. In April the movements were predominantly eastwards with peaks in mid-month and again at the end of the month. On 15 Apr there were 296 E at Selsey Bill and 295 E at Splash Point (Seaford) with 221 E off Birling Gap the following day. On 27 Apr there were 464 E at Selsey Bill and 356 E there the following day. The predominantly eastward movements continued in May; on the 11th particularly large numbers were noted of 823 E at Selsey Bill, 599 E off Worthing, 193 E at Telscombe Cliffs, 229 E at Splash Point and 353 E past Birling Gap. During May, feeding parties of between 100 and 150 occurred off Worthing on four dates.

In June to September numbers were lower than in 2017, and it was not until October when numbers increased, but this time involving birds moving mainly westwards. During October Selsey Bill saw three-figure numbers moving west on six dates but the highest counts came from Rye Bay, with 368 moving through on the 7th, and Worthing, with 425 W on the 25th. Numbers in the last two months were uncharacteristically low, boosted largely by a feeding party of 200 off Goring on 6 Nov, 448 E past Telscombe Cliffs on 19 Nov and 249 E at Fairlight on 25 Nov. [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 nine coastal sites with the majority of records from Selsey Bill. The aggregate monthly totals from Selsey Bill seawatch are shown in the following table:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 14 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 13 | - | - | - | 1 | 8 | 4 | 15 |

Elsewhere in the first winter period Shags were seen from Splash Point (Seaford) (one on 9 Jan and three on 11 Mar), Brighton Marina (one on 26 Jan) and Rye Hbr (one on 19 Mar). In April to May birds were seen from Beachy Head (16 Apr and 1 May), Worthing (6 Apr), Splash Point (27 Apr, 4 and 6 May with two on the 4th) and Cliff End (Pett) (15 May). In the period August to December the only records were from Telscombe Cliffs (one on 4 Nov), Worthing (10 Nov), Brighton (three on 24 Nov) and Brighton Marina (four on 25 Nov). Numbers recorded were generally lower than in 2017. [LS]

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.

2017: Although an adult and two fledged young were reported on 20 May there is no evidence of breeding at Kneppmill Pond. Breeding was reported from four sites not five as reported.

2018: Cormorants were recorded from 267 tetrads (26%), an expansion from the 237 in 2016. The records were clustered along the coast, water bodies and river valleys. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as below.

In addition to the counts in the table, in the first winter period there were 71 at the Burton MP roost on 11 Jan, 1000 at Cliff End (Pett) on 12 Jan, 300 at Pett Level on 14 Jan, 500 at Fairlight on 14 Feb and 54 at Weir Wood Res on 18 Feb. Seawatchers reported 140 E offshore at Selsey Bill on 13 Jan, 62 W at Telscombe Cliffs on 14 Jan and 85 W at Birling Gap on 18 Feb.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 739 | 1208 | 676 | 368 | 469 | 257 | 662 | 750 | 970 | 858 | 841 | 509 |
| Chichester Hbr | 44 | 33 | 17 | 18 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 12 | 41 | 52 | 83 | 25 |
| Medmerry | 17 | 20 | 38 | 41 | 44 | 27 | 68 | 98 | 74 | 82 | 49 | 39 |
| Pagham Hbr | 80 | 62 | 57 | 51 | 44 | 35 | 32 | 103 | 85 | 58 | 74 | 66 |
| Chichester GP | 17 | 58 | 106 | 74 | 151 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 44 | 24 | 96 | 45 |
| Rye Bay | 349 | 513 | 224 | 98 | 165 | 111 | 495 | 423 | 464 | 195 | 225 | 30 |
| Average County Total 2008 to 2017 | 543 | 534 | 538 | 450 | 519 | 516 | 583 | 652 | 653 | 709 | 636 | 589 |

Breeding was confirmed from four sites with 348 nests counted, compared with 341 in 2017. Rye Hbr had 180 nests, New Lake (Chichester GPs) 146, Weir Wood Res ten and the new colony at Medmerry had six nests. For the second year running there were no nests at Iford Brooks (Lewes).

During the summer and autumn, the largest concentrations were in the Rye Bay and Pett Level areas, with 200 offshore at Pett Level on 23 Sep and 250 there on 7 Oct. Inland there were 74 at Barcombe Res on 15 Oct, 80 at Wadhurst Park on 16 Oct and 57 at Weir Wood Res on 18 Oct. In the second winter period, in addition to the counts in the table above, 115 were noted offshore at Selsey Bill on 24 Dec and 200 moving through Climping Gap on 25 Dec. [LS]

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

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

The approximate numbers of Ospreys, after allowing for possible duplication and those that lingered, are shown in the following table.

| Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 4 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 5 |

It was Bewl Water that took the honours for the first Osprey sighted in 2018 with one there on 9 and 10 Mar, two weeks earlier than the 10-year average arrival date and the third earliest date recorded. Other March records were singles at Arundel WWT (15th), Sharpthorne (17th) and Ardingly Res (24th). One flew north at High and Over (Cuckmere Valley) on 1 Apr, perhaps the one seen at the regular haunt of Weir Wood Res the next day. On the same date the first of the year for the Selsey Peninsula was seen at Pagham Hbr. On the 14th one flew up the Ouse Valley at Lewes Brooks, one was over Newhaven on the 18th, one at Stone Cross (Eastbourne) the next day and one flew west over Worthing on the 20th.

At the end of the month one flew east over Beachy Head on the 28th and one was seen at Pagham Hbr and Burton MP the next day. May began with one at Weir Wood Res on the 1st, 1 W at Thorney Island on the 5th, one at Pulborough Brooks on the 5th and 6th and one over Lancing, also on the 6th. At the end of the month there were sightings at Eastbourne and Kneppmill Pond. In June one was at Pagham Hbr (1st), one was seen near Arlington Res with a fish (5th) and another was seen catching a fish in the R Cuckmere (10th). One or more was in the Pagham/Chichester Harbours area from the 17th into July. The first multiple sighting was at Thorney Island, with two together on 21 Jul and presumably the same birds were recorded from 24 to 30th at Pagham Hbr. There were further observations of a duo at Pilsey Island and Medmerry on 13 Aug and again at Thorney/Pilsey on the 27th. A trio were then seen successfully fishing in the same area at the end of August, joined by a fourth on 3 Sep. A juvenile was regularly noted here as well, with ten sightings of the same bird recorded between 8 and 30 Sep.

Elsewhere in July singles flew over Northpoint Beach (Rye) on the 6th and Hardham (Pulborough) on the 8th, and in August two were at Lewes Brooks (9th), one flew over Mountfield (14th), one was briefly seen at Pulborough Brooks (19th) and at Rye Hbr one caused havoc with the gulls, terns and waders before heading out to sea on the 29th.

There was further evidence of outward migration from 1 Sep with observers at Selsey recording one flying SE until lost from view, and at Beachy Head one was noted doing likewise on the 29th. There were, however, still multiple sightings of at least one juvenile, and possibly as many as three, at Thorney Island and Pilsey Island up until 16 Oct with these birds often seen actively fishing or perched on the landing lights or marker posts consuming their prey and with frequent forays to nearby Pagham Hbr. Elsewhere in September there were sightings for one day only at Weir Wood Res (4th), Arundel (3rd) and Goring Gap on the 24th and in October one was seen at Darwell Res on the 6th. The last of the year was of a departing bird seen over Pagham Hbr on 24 Oct, four days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [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. Seven pairs were found but only four pairs were proven to have bred successfully. Two pairs both raised two young and these were ringed at their nests. Two other pairs nested in locations with restricted access but were known to be successful as one or two juveniles were seen flying in and out of the breeding woods in late summer. At an eighth location there was a male seen carrying wasp comb on 11 Aug. This is generally a very good indication of an active nest but unfortunately there were no further sightings of this male. Many other Honey-buzzards were seen, with a total of seven males occupying territories, but all were apparently unpaired. Two females were also found in suitable breeding habitat, but they were also thought to be unpaired.

Sadly, one of the ringed juveniles was predated by a Goshawk. Heavily wooded areas favoured by Honey-buzzards are equally favoured by Goshawks and unfortunately the recently fledged young of Honey-buzzards are very vulnerable to these large accipiters. At one of the locations where there was a non-breeding pair, but which has had successful nests in previous years, a female Honey-buzzard was observed as she flew towards a male Goshawk and then proceeded to mob the accipiter, an event not previously witnessed and recorded in Sussex.

Only one spring migrant was recorded, a male flying west over Hastings on 30 May (ASG). During the summer months there were a few inland sightings, most of which were probably related to breeding pairs and therefore the records remain confidential.

The autumn migration began on 28 Aug when an adult was seen fairly low down near Halland, flying east-south-east (MJC, PDC). On 30 Aug a Honey-buzzard flew east over Beachy Head and then over the cliffs and presumably out to sea (RHC, MEC). A dark-phase juvenile flew west at Waterhall (Brighton) on 4 Sep (CAH) and there was an unaged bird at Chanctonbury Ring, in a thermal with Common Buzzards, on 7 Sep (DH). The final autumn record was on 17 Sep when a juvenile flew from the direction of East Dean over the Old Trapping area at Beachy Head and then south out to sea (LP). [MEK]



Honey-buzzard, Sussex, 14 August (Dorian Mason)

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

Common resident and passage migrant.

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 370 tetrads (39%), the same as the figure for 2017, but slightly lower than the 10-year average of 397 (range 350-502). The vast majority of records (91%) were of single birds but there were 114 (7%) records of twos and 23 of between three and five. During the first winter period there were no counts higher than two. During the SWBS the species was recorded in 15 1-km squares (9.6%).

Breeding was confirmed in only nine tetrads and probable in 17, under recording related to the secretiveness of this species when nesting. The first record of display was on the late date of 16 Mar at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) and the first confirmed breeding record was of an occupied nest at High Salvington (Worthing) on 15 May although their tree was felled on the 18th! The first fledgling record was of one with its female parent at Angmering on 16 Jul. The BBS found Sparrowhawks in 14 1-km squares (8.0%), a similar figure to the winter surveys.

The highest autumn count was five at Beachy Head on 1 Sep. Fours were seen at Birchen Wood

(Groombridge) on 5 Aug, Park Fm (Selsey) on 14 Aug and 15 Sep and at Beachy Head on 10 and 14 Sep and 10 Oct. There were four counts of three during the autumn but second winter period counts did not exceed two. There were no records of birds flying out to sea.

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 33% of participating gardens during the GBW and in ten (7.9%) of the 1-km squares surveyed in the November and December SWBS. Prey species recorded were Feral Pigeon, Collared Dove, Kingfisher, a Swallow taken from a nest, Common Starling, Blackbird and House Sparrow. There was also an unusual record of a Sparrowhawk hunting Pipistrelle bats leaving a maternity roost at Aldwick (Bognor Regis) on 25 Jul. [MJC]

Goshawk

Accipiter gentilis

Scarce but increasing resident. Schedule 1 species.

Survey work located between 15 and 19 territories, similar to the 17 to 19 in 2017, with at least 12 young fledged at these sites. However, Goshawks were seen in three new locations in the east of the county, suggesting continued expansion. The favoured breeding areas are extensive tracts of mixed woodland, typically with stands of mature conifers, and often located in landscape-scale habitat mosaics which also include farmland and/or heathland.

In the western Weald, at least seven territories were occupied, six by pairs and one by a single second calendar year female. No Goshawks were seen at two territories that had been occupied in 2017, but this may not necessarily mean that none was present. Breeding was only proved at two sites with two and up to three young recorded respectively, but it is likely that more pairs were successful.

Elsewhere in West Sussex, there were one or two territories in an extensive tract of mixed woodland popular with birdwatchers, with three seen in the air together on 15 Feb and a second calendar year female flushed off a recent Woodpigeon kill on 2 Jun. At another site, singles were observed on 22 Jun and 13 Sep.

In the interior of central Sussex, there were at least six territories, with confirmed breeding at four. At one nest in a Scots Pine, at least two young fledged successfully and a third juvenile was also present from July that fledged either from this nest or the one in an adjacent territory where the male was seen taking prey towards the nest on 8 Apr; at a third site, two juveniles were present in mid-July; and at a fourth an aerial food pass was observed in late March and a juvenile was present in early August. Breeding probably took place at a fifth site where an adult pair was seen on several occasions and mating observed on 16 Mar. A pair of immature Goshawks was seen displaying in March and flying together in April at a sixth site, but there was no subsequent evidence of breeding. A juvenile was flying over a seventh site on 25 Aug, where up to two Goshawks were present from September. A female, considered to be a juvenile, was behaving aggressively towards a Common Buzzard on 10 Jul at an eighth site, but there was no other evidence of an occupied territory there.

Further east, a juvenile male was present at a new site on 10 Jul and a female, probably an adult, on 23 Aug, indicating successful breeding; a first calendar year individual was at another new site on 26 Dec, and a first calendar year female was being mobbed by a Sparrowhawk over woodland at yet another new location on 20 Dec.

In the absence of persecution (of which there was no evidence) further expansion in the range and number of pairs is highly probable, creating more opportunities for birdwatchers to enjoy displaying and hunting Goshawks. Without detailed nest studies, it is not possible to establish the range of prey being taken, but the very high numbers of Woodpigeons around Black Down in the autumn attracted at least two Goshawks (and one or two Peregrines), which were seen regularly

over several weeks in September and October. In central Sussex, Wood pigeons are also probably a main prey item and flocks always scatter in panic when a Goshawk is nearby.

As Goshawks spread, other birds of prey may be subject to predation by them, as noted for example in Wales (Roberts, S.J. 2014. Honey-buzzards in Britain. *Brit. Birds* 107: 668-691). Indeed in 2018, a recently fledged Honey-buzzard was killed by a Goshawk in Sussex – see that species account.

As a result of the increasing numbers, Goshawk was taken off the list of Sussex description species in March 2019. However, given the potential for confusion with Sparrowhawks, the SOS may ask for details of Goshawks in locations with no recent records. [DBu, MM]



Goshawk, Sussex, 14 March (Mark Mallalieu)

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 64 tetrads (6.8%), comparable with the 10-year average of 62 (range 50-68). Records were received for every month of the year from Pett Level and Rye Hbr and for eleven months from Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) and the Arun Valley. Conservative estimates of the numbers of birds in Sussex by month were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of birds | 22 | 20 | 14 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 14 | 24 | 21 | 21 | 31 |

Most records during the first winter period were from the above named sites plus Pevensy Levels. The highest counts were nine going to roost at Pett Level on 22 Jan and seven on 18 Mar. The highest roost counts in the Arun Valley were six on 3 and 7 Feb; four were seen at Pevensy Levels on 5 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites in East Sussex; at one site two nests were likely and fledged young seen, at another at least one chick fledged and at a third two chicks fledged. At a fourth site in East Sussex a pair was present in the breeding season, but the nesting attempt was thought to have failed. An individual was observed carrying food at a West Sussex site, indicating probable breeding.

In addition to the usual sites, birds were recorded from more varied locations from late summer. The first indications of migration may have been a juvenile at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Aug, followed by one at Chantry Hill (Storrington) and one at Seaford Head the next day and then one at Beachy Head on the 4th. Birds were recorded at Pagham Hbr on six days during August and one was in the Ouse Valley on the 15th. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded the first of their eight on 26 Aug and the last on 21 Oct, whilst at Beachy Head the species was recorded on eight dates between 4 Aug and 29 Sep, the last of which flew out to sea from Birling Gap.

Also in September, the species was seen on 13 dates in the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area, on ten dates at Pulborough Brooks (three birds on the 28th) and on six dates on downland in The Burgh/Chantry Hill areas. Ones were at Weir Wood Res on the 3rd and in the Cuckmere Valley on the 6th. Four juveniles were at Thorney Deeps on the 15th and the same number at Pett Level on the 30th. During October, up to six were in the Arun Valley; two were at Combe Haven (Hastings) on the 21st, one of which was a second-year male with green wing tags, having been tagged as a nestling at Great Yarmouth in June 2017; finally one flew in off the sea at West Beach (Newhaven) on the 29th.

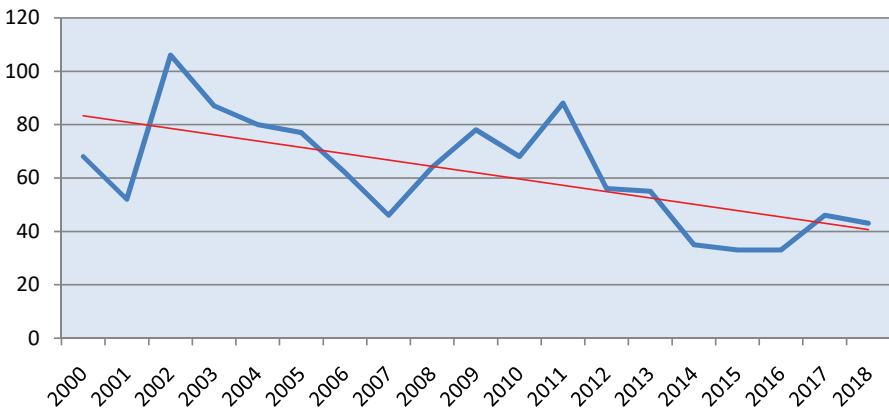
There were some high counts during the second winter period with ten roosting at Arundel WWT on 9 Dec and further counts in the Arun Valley of eight or nine. The highest count at Pett Level was nine at a reed bed roost on 16 Dec. Other notable counts were four at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Nov and three at The Burgh on 3, 14 and 19 Dec. [MJC]

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

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

Hen Harriers were recorded in 34 tetrads (3.6%), lower than the 10-year average of 46 (range 31-63). The sum of the monthly totals in 2018 was 43. The sum of the monthly totals for this century is shown in the following graph, with the trend line showing the decline of Hen Harrier as a wintering visitor in Sussex.



Hen Harrier - sum of monthly totals 2000 - 2018

Minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 1 | | 3 | 8 | 9 | 6 |
| Selsey Peninsula | - | - | - | - | - | | 1 | - | 1 | - |
| West Sussex Downs | - | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | | - | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Arun Valley | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| East Sussex Downs | - | - | - | - | - | | - | 1 | - | - |
| Ashdown Forest | - | - | - | - | - | | - | 1 | - | - |
| Pevensley Levels | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | | - | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Rye Bay | - | - | - | 2 | - | | 1 | 1 | 1 | - |
| Other sites | - | - | - | - | - | | - | 2 | 1 | - |

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

During January and early February most records were from Horse Eye Level (Pevensley Levels) where an adult female and a third calendar year male were frequently seen. At least one ringtail was seen at various locations in the Arun Valley from 1 Jan through to 4 Apr with a male there on 17 Feb. It was not until 22 Feb that the species was seen at The Burgh (Burpham) but thereafter one was seen until 4 Apr with two on 6 Mar. A high flying male was seen at Woodmancote (Henfield) on 27 Mar. There were only four records for April but two were at Rye Hbr on the 21st. The last spring sighting was of a female at Manxey Level (Pevensley Levels) on 23 May.

The first returning autumn bird was a ringtail at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Sep but there were no further sightings until the 24th when a female was seen at both Cliff End (Pett) and East Guldeford. Another was seen at Pagham Hbr on the 28th and 29th. It is hard to determine how many different birds were in Sussex in October; the figures in the table above are conservative. A ringtail was at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 9th, a male at Horse Eye Level on the 16th, a ringtail at Rackham Hill on the 21st and at Seven Sisters CP the following day. A ringtail flew in off the sea heading NW at Goring Gap on the 28th and the same day one was at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton).

The only records for Ashdown Forest during the year were of a ringtail on the 28th and 29th. Also on the 29th a ringtail was at the Knepp Estate; two were at The Burgh on the 30th and one each at Pulborough Brooks and East Guldeford the next day. Most records for November came from The Burgh area with three seen on the 2nd and two on five further dates, (some at least were ringtails). A ringtail was seen on four dates at Findon, one at Pagham Hbr on the 17th and 21st and a male at Beeding Brooks on the 26th. Hen Harriers were seen on two dates at Horse Eye Level, including two on the 29th and one at East Guldeford on the 21st. In December two were seen at the Burgh on the 13th and at Horse Eye Level on the 16th and 21st. All subsequent records were of single individuals including one at Edburton Hill on the 26th, one at Truleigh Hill (Shoreham) on the 27th and one at Cissbury Ring on the 28th, probably all the same individual. [MJC]

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 357 tetrads (34%), compared with 238 (26%) in 2017; most were seen in West Sussex.

The estimated minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 101 | 87 | 131 | 195 | 164 | 96 | 84 | 58 | 51 | 65 | 113 | 133 |
| West Dean | 15 | 10 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 55 | 70 |
| The Burgh | 45 | 13 | 10 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 10 | 25 | 35 | 46 |
| Elsewhere | 41 | 64 | 121 | 187 | 164 | 96 | 78 | 46 | 33 | 40 | 23 | 17 |

In 2018 more than 1300 records were submitted, providing us with a great deal of very interesting data, much of which is encapsulated in the table above. The two known downland roosts at West Dean and The Burgh have been monitored for many years with counts in November, December and January. Every year there is an increase in the combined counts and 2018 was no exception, with a new county record of 70 at West Dean on 12 Dec and a further 46 at the roost near The Burgh, on the following day. Whether these kites were mostly Sussex-fledged or visitors from elsewhere is open to speculation, but it is clear from these figures that this is a species that is doing very well.

Further evidence of an expanding population in Sussex comes from the movement of birds in fine weather. Whilst breeding Red Kites often remain in their nesting woods throughout the year, young birds are known to wander extensively, and this movement of birds is most pronounced between March and June. In 2018 the peak month was April, with 187 recorded away from the usual downland hotspots. The most notable date was 20 Apr when approximately 50 Red Kites were reported, with sizeable flocks as follows: 12 at Broadwater (Worthing), eight at Beachy Head, eight at Portslade and seven at Pagham Hbr. When several flocks of kites are seen at different coastal locations on the same day, it raises the possibility of trans-channel migration. The Iberian Peninsula is an over-wintering destination for many Red Kites from eastern and central Europe and there is no reason why some British kites might not do likewise, wintering in Spain and Portugal and then returning to their natal area the following spring.

There were just two records that alluded to breeding success, raising two and three juveniles, respectively. Without very intensive fieldwork it is impossible to estimate the breeding population with any accuracy but based on 17 years of study a reasonable best guess would be around 60 breeding pairs in Sussex. [MEK].

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Rare vagrant.

The only accepted record in 2018 was of one seen and photographed over Beachy Head on 21 Apr (JARP, LP), a typical date for this spring overshoot. The county total moves on to 41, of which 22 have been this century. [PJ]

Common Buzzard

Buteo buteo

Fairly common and increasing resident; probably scarce passage migrant.

Common Buzzards were recorded in 607 tetrads (65%), comparable with the 10-year average of 585 (range 476-636). There were 72 counts of ten or more, 50 in West Sussex and only 22 in East Sussex, slightly more than in 2017. The highest first winter period counts were 20 at Monkton (Chilgrove) on 21 Mar and also at Worth Forest on the 26th, 18 at Bawl Water on the 16th and 17 at Warnham LNR the same day. During the first winter SWBS they were recorded in 84 (54%) of 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of six at Petworth on 4 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads (up on 2017) and probable in a further 58. The earliest record of nest building was from the Knepp Estate on 12 Mar, the first record of confirmed breeding was of birds on a nest at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 30 Apr and the first fledglings were seen flying with their parents at Hunston on 18 Jun. During the BBS Buzzards were encountered in 103 (59%) of 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of ten at Binderton (West Dean) on 12 Apr.

The highest summer count by a long way was 25 on 2 Aug at Chantry Hill (Storrington) and there were nine counts between ten and 12 elsewhere. Most records in the autumn were of fewer than five but there were some high counts too: 30 at Chantry Hill on 4 Oct (and 25 there on the 9th), 20s at Patching on 8 Sep, Medmerry on 15 Sep, Westdean Woods on 21 Oct and 19 at Barnham on 25 Sep. There were five double-figure counts during the second winter period with 20 being the highest at The Burgh on 22 Nov. During the end of the year SWBS Common Buzzards were recorded in 72 (57%) of 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 11 on 4 Dec at Lidsey Lodge.

Prey species recorded were small rabbits, a weasel and worms. [MJC]

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

Scarce resident; scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Water Rails were recorded in 61 tetrads: almost the same as in 2017. There was no site with records for every month of the year, but records in 11 months came from Arundel WWT, Pulborough Brooks, Pett Level and Rye Hbr.

An approximate number recorded in each month, excluding the estimated breeding total at Pett Level, is shown in the following table:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 50 | 32 | 34 | 15 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 16 | 17 | 30 | 52 | 39 |

Only one bird was recorded in the early year SWBS, at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels), on 18 Feb. Four were on the Brede Levels on 21 Jan and one in Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 21 Feb may have overwintered. One south of Petworth on 5 Feb was an unusual location. One was at Ferring Rife in mid-January and then up to four on 2 Mar before the last two on 15 Mar. One in a garden at Selsey Bill from 26 Mar to 3 Apr was, remarkably, the first record for this species at this well watched site. A freshly dead bird was found in Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 15 April; spring records are very unusual here.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites: Arundel WWT, where an adult with two chicks was seen on 16 Jun; Pulborough Brooks where two adults with three chicks were seen from Nettle's Hide on 6 Jul; Chichester GP, where two adults with calling young were found on 12 Jul; and Pett Level, where there were "about 30 pairs as normal". Breeding was considered probable at one more location.

Six were at Thorney Island on 27 Oct and the Long Pool at Sidlesham Ferry held 11 on 3 Nov. As is the case in almost every year, the species was reported from surprising locations, where they may in fact be regular: examples were two at separate locations at Gatwick Airport on 14 Dec (where there had been singles on 31 Oct 2017 and on 21 Feb 2018) and one seems to have stayed at Sheepcote Valley from mid-October until the end of the year. On the other hand, Water Rails seem to have been strangely scarce in 2018 at some well-watched locations such as Southwater CP. There were no encounters in the late year SWBS. [CB]

Corncrake*Crex crex*

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

2016: One was found on 1 Sep at the Grand Hotel in Brighton, an unusual location to say the least. It was uninjured and was released the next day at Newhaven Tide Mills. [MM]

Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

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

Moorhens were recorded in 316 tetrads (34%) in 2018 (cf. 289 in 2017 and 299 in 2016). Monthly counts at the principal WeBS sites were as below, which also shows that the overall count was considerably lower in each month in 2018 than the average of the previous ten years.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 470 | 419 | 324 | 186 | 144 | 125 | 196 | 278 | 377 | 457 | 496 | 428 |
| Chichester Hbr | 44 | 49 | 48 | 17 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 21 | 45 | 39 | 62 | 51 |
| Chichester Canal | 70 | 66 | 41 | 27 | 25 | 12 | 20 | 34 | nc | 59 | 105 | 72 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 96 | 80 | 98 | 37 | 45 | 45 | 73 | 93 | 89 | 91 | 83 | 89 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 587 | 576 | 506 | 251 | 194 | 188 | 275 | 347 | 552 | 577 | 606 | 601 |

In the early year SWBS, birds were recorded in 32 (21%) of 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 21 at Rustington on 28 Jan. As is often the case, early year counts in a number of places were higher than those after the breeding season: 42 at Brooklands (Worthing) on 11 Jan did not mind the landscaping work being undertaken there; the November count was 30 and the December count 25. Ifield MP held 34 in early March; the late year maximum was 24. A similar pattern held at Mewsbrook Park (Rustington), as it had in 2017.

Moorhens are occasional visitors to downland: one was at a dew pond near Lychpole (Cissbury) on 5 Apr. Breeding was proved in 47 tetrads and probable in a further 13. The first family party found was on Arundel Castle moat on 1 Apr. The urban pairs in Queen's Park (Brighton), at Peacehaven and at Blatchington Pond (Seaford) were again successful, albeit that the first brood at Seaford was reduced from five to three in the last week of April. These three survived to live alongside two siblings from a second brood. Interestingly, one of the 2017 young had still been present there at the start of the year. At Ditchling Common, on 31 Jul a bird was nest building again, attended by two young from the first brood. There were 13 pairs at Medmerry and ten at Pagham Hbr. In the BBS, the sum of the maximum counts in each square was 72; birds were found in 49 (28%) of the 174 squares studied with a maximum of nine at Rustington on 2 Jun.

In the late year SWBS a total of 98 was recorded in 28 (22%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 17, again at Rustington, on 5 Nov. [CB]

Coot*Fulica atra*

Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.

Coots were recorded in 173 (18.5%) tetrads, comparable with the 10-year average of 172 suggesting that the species' range in the county has been reasonably steady since 2009. Numbers, however, may be a different matter.

Monthly counts from the principal WeBS sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| County Total | 2764 | 2188 | 1481 | 655 | 481 | 658 | 1067 | 1560 | 2436 | 2722 | 3002 | 3132 |
| Chichester Hbr | 345 | 253 | 220 | 56 | 24 | 26 | 81 | 138 | 175 | 246 | 442 | 453 |
| Chichester GPs | 648 | 358 | 184 | 107 | 89 | 116 | 170 | 199 | 475 | 518 | 595 | 632 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 155 | 189 | 200 | 83 | 81 | 65 | 80 | 111 | 118 | 93 | 92 | 124 |
| Eastbourne Lakes | 145 | 31 | 25 | 10 | nc | nc | nc | 15 | 216 | 348 | 290 | 386 |
| Bewl Water | 140 | 114 | 56 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 210 | 225 | 245 | 220 |
| Rye Bay | 827 | 740 | 381 | 112 | 59 | 102 | 333 | 554 | 713 | 776 | 867 | 868 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 3445 | 2727 | 1546 | 693 | 564 | 804 | 1132 | 1623 | 2420 | 3019 | 3294 | 3687 |

The table reveals that county totals were below the average for the past decade in almost all months of the year. Interestingly numbers in Rye Bay were significantly higher from August to the end of the year than they had been in 2017. The only significant counts additional to the WeBS were 435 at Chichester GPs on 14 Jan and 267 at Bewl Water on 31 Dec.

The wide monthly variation in counts at inland lakes, where surveys were regular, is striking, as shown below:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Chingford Pond (Duncton) | 73 | 43 | 66 | 40 | 32 | 42 | 48 | 61 | 109 | 86 | 98 | 45 |
| Petworth Park Lake | 50 | 50 | 16 | 10 | 16 | 10 | 25 | 27 | 40 | 105 | 130 | 95 |
| Warnham LNR | 12 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 27 | 35 | 56 | 145 | 43 | 8 | 7 | 6 |
| Kneppmill Pond | nc | 3 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 86 | 79 | 120 | 100 | 15 | 49 | 5 |

Birds left Warnham LNR after August and Knepp after September but, by contrast, numbers at Chingford Pond and Petworth Park Lake were high at both ends of the year.

In the early year SWBS, 73 Coots were found in 16 (10%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed. Five were “on a netted off area of open water” close to aircraft movements at Gatwick on 9 Mar.

In the BBS, Coots were noted in 23 (13%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed (21 of 172 in 2017). Breeding was confirmed in 37 tetrads and was probable in a further eight; this represents a halt to the decline apparent between 2016 and 2017. Nest building was first noted as early as 14 Jan at Newtimber Place (Poynings) and next on 8 Apr at Ifield MP. The first nest with eggs was seen on 15 Apr at Warnham LNR and the first fledged young were found the same day at Applesham Fm (Coombes) while the last such record was at Warnham LNR on 18 Aug. Breeding was judged to be “widespread” at Rye Hbr; there were 12 pairs at Medmerry and 24 at Pagham Hbr

In the late year SWBS, 107 birds were found in eight (6.3%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed (cf. 66 in 11 (6.8%) squares in 2017). [CB]

Stone-curlew

Burhinus oedicnemus

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

During the spring a well watched migrant bird was present from 1 to 4 May in stubble fields in the Sidlesham Ferry area.

During 2018 the RSPB Sussex Project team located three pairs where habitat management and regular monitoring were possible to support breeding attempts. Through working closely with

landowners, management of the breeding sites and surrounding area was adjusted to best suit the species' needs.

By 13 Apr a pair accompanied by a third bird had returned to the same general area as they nested in during 2017. On 10 May a nest was located and the pair consisted of one unringed bird and one which had been ringed as a nestling in the area in 2011, and which has attempted to breed there every year since 2013. Monitoring started at this site and on 4 May a nest was found with two eggs. Both hatched, but by 10 Jun only one chick remained. It was ringed on 13 Jun, and fledged on 3 Jul; it appears to have stayed in the area until mid-September. By 17 Aug the pair had another nest down with two eggs and it is likely that these successfully hatched, but that the young were predated.

At a site first used in 2017 a pair again attempted to breed and on 10 May their nest was found with two eggs, one of which hatched, but unfortunately the chick was predated on 19 Jun (probably by a fox). The pair put down another nest and on 26 Jul two chicks hatched, although monitoring of these proved difficult. On 29 Aug it is likely that the pair still had a chick or chicks but it was not possible to confirm fledging. An additional adult was also in this general area during the summer.

At a new site a single bird was present early in the season and by 2 Jul this had been joined by a second bird, and a nest with one egg was found on 10 Jul. This nest was abandoned by 26 Jul and there was evidence that the egg had been predated.

At one further downland site a single bird was present for at least a week in late May.

The RSPB Sussex Stone-curlew Project, actively supported by the SOS, 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 recolonisation 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

Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

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

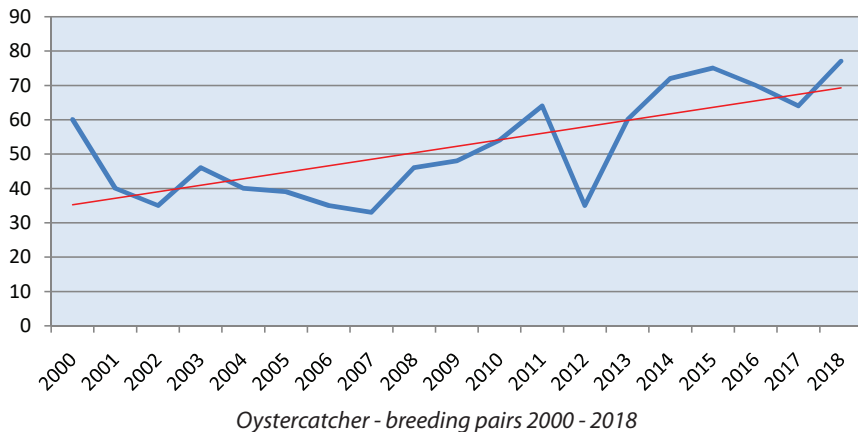
Oystercatchers were recorded in 89 tetrads, comparable with the 10-year average of 91. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

| County Total | 1746 | 1692 | 1491 | 714 | 545 | 496 | 341 | 1018 | 1277 | 1597 | 1867 | 1638 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Chichester Hbr | 1227 | 1092 | 1014 | 349 | 301 | 283 | 136 | 617 | 864 | 1049 | 1219 | 941 |
| Pagham Hbr | 125 | 235 | 215 | 134 | 78 | 65 | 32 | 184 | 218 | 76 | 220 | 232 |
| Rye Bay | 330 | 327 | 240 | 211 | 154 | 142 | 157 | 203 | 194 | 459 | 419 | 451 |
| Average County Total 2008 to 2017 | 1817 | 1874 | 1274 | 854 | 525 | 497 | 732 | 1125 | 1456 | 1475 | 1802 | 1655 |

In addition to the above figures there were some good counts in January at other coastal sites; 120 at Fairlight Cove on the 12th, 100 at Cuckmere Haven on the 18th, 64 at Goring Gap on the 12th (the highest of the year there), 60 at Telscombe Cliffs on the 9th and 42 at Seaford on the 15th. Spring

migration influxes were evident in East Sussex, with 250 at Pett Level on 25 Mar and 300 at Rye Hbr on 1 Apr, but offshore passage was as usual low, with 26 E at Splash Point (Seaford) the highest day count.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and was probable in one. This year's estimated total of at least 77 breeding pairs is a record and compares with the 10-year average of 52 (range 35-77) and continues the generally rising trend as shown below:



Breeding success, however, varied widely. There was moderate productivity from the 40 pairs at Rye Hbr but at Pagham Hbr only three young were raised from 14 pairs. Nine pairs nested at Pett Level where two broods were noted, whilst six pairs at Medmerry did poorly. Five pairs nested at Arundel WWT but records suggest no young resulted, a pair nested at Lyminster, and three pairs probably bred at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr). The pair nesting on the roof of Rye Tennis Club returned for their 10th year and were the first recorded sitting (on 15 Apr), and for the 9th year the Shoreham pair were also back on their flat roof.

During the autumn influx, the only counts higher than the WeBS were 300 at Pett Level on 5 Aug and 50 at Pagham Hbr on 25 Jul, but there were again some high counts at Cuckmere Haven, with 53 on 17 Jul and 120 on 22 Sep, and there were 44 at Climping on the 5th.

In the last two months there were no figures in excess of WeBS counts at the main sites, but elsewhere there were 30 at Elmer Rocks on 27 Dec and 28 at Saltdean on 7 Nov.

Additional to the Arundel WWT birds there were records from other sites well away from the coast. Single birds were at Arlington Res on 27 Feb, 5 Mar and 25 Dec, two were at Southease on 28 Jan and 18 Mar, one was at Lewes Brooks on 21 May and, at Pulborough Brooks, single birds were present on 14 Jan, 17 Feb and 22 Apr, with two on 16 Mar and 27 Sep. There were two records of birds heard overhead at night, two at Pulborough on 25 Aug and one at West Worthing on 30 Aug. [CJRB]

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

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

This once rare vagrant is now an annual visitor to the county with four records in 2018 totalling seven birds. Two at Harbour Fm (Rye Hbr) from 8 to 10 Apr (CB, CG, BJV *et al.*) were followed by one at Pulborough Brooks from 23 to 25 Apr (LH, MH *et al.*), three in flight over Rye Hbr on 25

May that departed strongly east (AP), two at the same location on 28 May (JB, DCW), perhaps two of the three seen on the 25th, and one at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 3 Jun (SH *et al.*). The county total moves on to c.58, of which 40 have been this century. The last blank year was in 2013. [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 37 tetrads during the year, comparable with the 10-year average of 36 (range 31-40). The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 119 | 100 | 249 | 211 | 170 | 174 | 34 | 18 | 52 | 85 | 85 | 100 |

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 | 50 | 65 | 224 | 117 | 111 | 121 | 13 | 6 | - | 7 | 65 | 42 |
| Chichester Hbr | 28 | 17 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 | 45 | 35 |
| Medmerry | - | - | 76 | 67 | 43 | 17 | 8 | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| Pagham Hbr | 20 | 48 | 36 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 3 | 4 | - | - | 20 | 7 |
| Rye Bay | - | - | 97 | 47 | 63 | 94 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 34 | 39 | 48 | 70 | 96 | 76 | 20 | 12 | 4 | 8 | 24 | 26 |

There were the usual flocks of wintering birds in the western harbours in the first two months. In Chichester Hbr, a high tide roost at Thorney Island held a maximum of 41 on 3 Jan, but numbers there fell rapidly through February. In contrast, Pagham Hbr attracted between 40 and 50 throughout January and February, rather more than in recent years, with counts reaching 75 on 30 Jan and 60 on 26 Feb. The only reports elsewhere at this time were singles at Pulborough Brooks between 13 and 23 Jan, the R Adur between 1 and 9 Jan and Cuckmere Haven on the 7th.

The first record at Rye Hbr was of four from 16 Feb to 4 Mar but numbers rose steadily to a peak of 94 on 18 Mar. At Medmerry, nine on 22 Feb increased to 17 on the 23rd, 38 on 9 Mar and to a maximum of 105 on 12 Apr. Six passing east off Goring, Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on 14 Mar were the first migrants logged at seawatching points, but only 13 were recorded thereafter. A few were noted at other coastal sites, with two at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Mar, five there on the 18th and up to six at Newhaven Tide Mills between 4 and 20 Mar.

Breeding was attempted by about 96 pairs at five sites, with widely varying success. At Medmerry 36 pairs produced 30 young; at Pett Level 22 pairs resulted in nine broods; at Rye Hbr, however, 35 pairs nested but no chicks were thought to have survived. Elsewhere, two pairs at Pagham Hbr raised a single chick, and a pair took up residence at Pulborough Brooks from 10 Apr to 11 Jun and were seen to mate, although there was no further evidence of breeding.

Numbers fell rapidly in July and only single figure counts were recorded from 3 Aug until 20 Oct when 18 were recorded at Pagham Hbr and 11 at Thorney Island on the 31st. An interesting autumn record was of one heard at night over Pulborough on 25 Aug. The last sighting at Rye Hbr was eight on 30 Oct; thereafter all records came from the western harbours, where numbers peaked at 50 in Thorney Channel on 14 Dec and the same number at Pagham Hbr on the 30th. [CJRB]

Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

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

Lapwings were recorded in 207 tetrads (22%), the highest count since 2010 (246) during the 2007-2011 Atlas period and an increase on both the 160 of 2017 and the 10-year average of 187.

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 | 11684 | 10316 | 784 | 159 | 113 | 219 | 414 | 1573 | 662 | 1650 | 7475 | 7571 |
| Chichester Hbr | 996 | 1397 | 309 | - | 3 | 11 | 35 | 55 | 100 | 363 | 840 | 1002 |
| Pagham Hbr | 1757 | 763 | 25 | 3 | 3 | 35 | 57 | 28 | 2 | 357 | 600 | 891 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 3512 | 2553 | 70 | 80 | 62 | 42 | 36 | 76 | 100 | 212 | 1698 | 1658 |
| Lower Ouse Valley | 835 | 1393 | 9 | 5 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | 390 | 355 |
| Pevensy Levels | 275 | 937 | 127 | 39 | 18 | 5 | 2 | 35 | - | 43 | 1281 | 66 |
| Rye Bay | 2634 | 1720 | 34 | 18 | 13 | 81 | 113 | 1241 | 214 | 423 | 1514 | 3298 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 10889 | 9111 | 984 | 241 | 203 | 463 | 792 | 1203 | 1387 | 3254 | 6781 | 9349 |

In the first two months overall numbers were similar to previous years, with the WeBS total being about 10% above the average for the last 10 years. Significant counts additional to the WeBS involved the largest count of the year of 4000 at Pagham Hbr on 25 Jan followed by 2000 there on 2 Feb and 8 Mar, while 2000 at Lewes Brooks on 27 Jan, 2000 at Rye Hbr on 2 Feb, 1500 at Pett Level on 21 Feb and 1500 at East Guldeford Level on 24 Feb were also noteworthy. With severe weather affecting the country at the end of February Lapwings were dispersing widely, including 183 seen flying over Brighton on 1 Mar. Improving weather in early March also produced records of movement, with 298 E over Weir Wood Res on the 4th, 900 at Pett Level (Rye Bay) the same day, 1000 on the 5th at Henfield Levels and 200 at Pulborough Brooks on the 8th. An interesting observation on 1 Mar was of 140 at Kingley Vale 'all following the plough'.

Display was first noted at Arundel WWT on 6 Mar, visiting a probable nest site at Filsham LNR on 10 Mar and nest building at Arundel WWT on the 13th, while agitated behaviour was noted on downland north of Worthing on 5 Apr. During the BBS Lapwings were recorded in 20 (11%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, similar to the previous four years (10, 14, 11, 12). Breeding was confirmed in 17 tetrads and was probable in a further 22, again similar to the previous four years, with the most successful being in nature reserves with habitat management and appropriate predator deterrence. The first three chicks with parents were recorded on 19 Apr at Pett Level. Elsewhere, chicks were noted at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Lyminster, Pulborough Brooks and Filsham LNR. Fledging successes were; five pairs at Medmerry produced three, two pairs at Pagham Hbr produced four, 20 pairs at Pulborough Brooks produced 42, 22 pairs at Pett Level produced 30 and 12 pairs at Rye Hbr produced between three and six. Overall these sites are probably producing enough to replace adult mortality. At another West Sussex site eight nesting pairs were found in a 1-km square where three territories were recorded in 1994, four pairs in 2007 and 11 pairs producing 24 'good size' chicks in 2014. The number of breeding pairs appears to have at least stabilized over the last few years and possibly is starting to increase, although the county total is only around 100 pairs.

Post-breeding gatherings started in late May and the first three-figure count was 120 at Pett Level on 9 Jul followed by 370 there on the 23rd. Small flocks of between ten and 35 birds were reported from Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks, Shoreham and the Knepp Estate in the last week of July. Numbers increased through the autumn; significant counts additional to the WeBS involved 300 at Rye Hbr on

5 Sep, 180 at Pulborough Brooks on the 24th and 209 at Pagham Hbr on the 25th. The first four-figure counts were of 1300 at Pagham Hbr and 1000 at Pulborough Brooks on the 12th and at Medmerry on the 30th. Numbers increased at the principal WeBS sites but the county total by the end of the year of 7571 was well below the 10-year average, itself on a downwards trend. The largest non-WeBS records were 2000 at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Dec and 1000 at Pagham Hbr on the 3rd. [PKH]

Golden Plover

Pluvialis apricaria

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer.

Golden Plovers were recorded in 61 tetrads, slightly higher than the 10-year average of 50 (range 32-69). 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 | 1084 | 2986 | 1403 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 303 | 953 | 342 |
| Chichester Hbr | 40 | 20 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 301 | 492 | 150 |
| Medmerry | 90 | 760 | 730 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 230 | - |
| Pagham Hbr | 251 | 250 | 430 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 20 | 60 |
| Rye Bay | 670 | 1953 | 28 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 201 | 132 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 1387 | 1148 | 466 | 38 | 2 | - | - | 138 | 315 | 1261 | 2445 | 1611 |

The monthly maximum counts at Pagham and Rye Harbours, which give a better picture of the true numbers at these key sites, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| Pagham Hbr | 402 | 250 | 430 | 18 | - | 1 | 1 | 14 | 25 | 60 | 300 | 300 |
| Rye Hbr | 2500 | 1500 | 600 | 250 | 7 | - | 2 | 30 | 40 | 60 | 2500 | 2000 |

The only count higher than the above WeBS figures in January was 100 at West Wittering (Chichester Hbr) on the 25th. At Pulborough Brooks, numbers built up from 18 on the 22nd to 120 on the 30th, the largest January count there since 1999, but all but two were gone the next day. The severe weather at the end of February and beginning of March brought further high counts and records of birds well away from traditional sites. On 21 Feb 700 were at West Wittering (a site which formerly held large numbers, but this was the highest count there since 2006), seven were at Arlington Res on the 24th, and on the 28th small groups were noted on downland at The Burgh (Burpham), Steyning and Lewes Racecourse. Eleven were at Broadwater (Worthing) and seven flew over Brighton on Mar 1; on the 3rd 80 flew north-east over Lindfield, another 18 went in the same direction over Ashdown Forest, 69 were at Lyminster and 41 were counted at Beeding Brooks. On the coast at Telscombe Cliffs, four flew north on the 1st and five went east on the 3rd. A further cold snap on 18 and 19 Mar brought 12 to Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), 23 E at Selsey Bill and 163 at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey), yet another high count at a former stronghold.

Numbers at Rye Hbr tailed off rapidly during April and there were no records from the 27th until one on 11 May, four on the 19th and seven on the 26th. Another long gap followed until the only June record, one at Pagham Hbr on the 21st. From then on, only ones and twos were recorded until 36 W at Selsey Bill on 12 Aug and 25 at Rye Hbr on the 15th marked the start of the main return migration. Thereafter arrivals were still very patchy with large peaks in mid to late September and mid October but few in between. As usual there were several reports of small groups from the Seaford and Beachy Head areas and on downland during October.

In the last two months, there were no counts exceeding those in the above tables, and none at any other sites apart from a maximum of six at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Dec. [CJRB].

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

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

Grey Plover was reported from a total of 47 tetrads, comparable with the 10-year average of 48. 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 | 1700 | 1491 | 523 | 313 | 71 | 22 | - | 31 | 267 | 496 | 565 | 720 |
| Chichester Hbr | 930 | 771 | 468 | 6 | 6 | 7 | - | 4 | 199 | 378 | 364 | 371 |
| Pagham Hbr | 680 | 564 | 33 | 306 | 61 | 15 | - | 27 | 68 | 115 | 167 | 234 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 1834 | 1550 | 1453 | 223 | 83 | 70 | 105 | 337 | 489 | 855 | 1321 | 1473 |

It is notable that in all months except April the county total was below the average for the previous decade. Additionally there were good numbers along the beaches between Worthing and Bognor in the early part of the year, with 120 at Littlehampton on 3 Jan, a regular roosting flock of between 50 and 60 at Goring Gap (peaking at 68 on 4 Mar), and a maximum of 75 at Climping on 4 Mar. In East Sussex the highest counts were 30 at Pett Level on 28 Jan and 69 at Rye Hbr on 18 Feb. Elsewhere the only records were of singles on the R Adur between 11 Jan and 3 Mar, at Iford Brooks on 13 Jan, and two at Sovereign Hbr on 3 Mar. There were still 150 at Pagham Hbr on 15 Mar, considerably more than that month's WeBS count.

Spring migration peaked in mid to late April with an influx of 306 at Pagham Hbr on the 15th and a high count of 170 E at Selsey Bill on the 22nd. However, on the four days from 23 to 26 Apr a total of 345 W were recorded at Selsey Bill, suggesting that these movements are probably as much local as migratory. At Splash Point (Seaford) the highest day count of spring migration was only 13 E on 2 Apr. In May Pagham and Rye Harbours were the only sites to hold more than single figures and there was one at Pulborough Brooks between 21 and 26 May, two at Cuckmere Haven on the 17th and three there on the 27th. In June, double-figure counts were noted only at Pagham Hbr, where following 12 on the 21st numbers declined to four on the 29th and, in July, to one on the 6th.

Return migration probably started with eight at Pagham Hbr on 22 Jul but picked up in mid-August, with 27 at Pagham Hbr on the 12th, 55 there on the 18th and 220 at Thorney Island on the 31st. Elsewhere, one was on the R Adur on 25 Oct and 2 Nov, one was at Pulborough Brooks on 3 and 16 Nov, and there was a long-staying bird at Cuckmere Haven from 13 Oct to 18 Dec.

In the last two months there were no counts at the main sites higher than the WeBS. Numbers at Worthing and Goring peaked at 38 on 21 Dec, the R Adur hosted four on the 16th and five on the 31st, and a count of 180 at Climping on the 25th was the highest of the year away from the main harbours. [C]JRB]

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 are shown below.

The highest numbers in January came from Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) and Goring Gap, where the peak monthly figures were often considerably higher than the WeBS and are also shown below.



Ringed Plover, Rye Harbour, 22 May (Barry Yates)

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 204 | 308 | 87 | 100 | 135 | 21 | 22 | 200 | 257 | 118 | 103 | 37 |
| Chichester Hbr | 105 | 181 | 34 | 49 | 14 | 6 | 6 | 47 | 119 | 6 | 70 | 31 |
| Pagham Hbr | 1 | 65 | 14 | 21 | 54 | 3 | 1 | 68 | - | 45 | 12 | 6 |
| Goring | 37 | 6 | 4 | - | nc | nc | nc | 25 | 38 | 3 | 21 | - |
| Rye Bay | 43 | 31 | 14 | 15 | 48 | 10 | 14 | 32 | 67 | 61 | - | - |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 258 | 202 | 121 | 92 | 189 | 56 | 57 | 506 | 258 | 145 | 207 | 172 |

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Goring | 73 | 20 | 26 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 60 | 72 | 70 | 24 | 4 |
| Pilsey Island | 68 | 34 | 16 | 45 | 112 | 76 | 6 | 1000 | 37 | 106 | 52 | 57 |

The only other figure significantly higher than the WeBS was 32 at Pagham Hbr on 22 Jan. The largest counts at sites not shown in the WeBS table were 50 at Medmerry on 5 Jan and 20 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 11th. The spring peak brought high counts of 110 near Barnham on 24 May and on the following day 112 at Pilsey Island and 80 at Rye Hbr. There were still 40 at Pagham Hbr and 76 at Pilsey Sands on 1 Jun.

Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads and probable in a further five involving c.51 pairs, an average total for recent years. At Rye Hbr there were at least 28 pairs, although success was low; at Pagham Hbr ten pairs fledged three young; at Medmerry there were four pairs; at Pilsey Island three pairs and one pair at Pett Level. The only successful breeding recorded outside managed reserves was at Elmer Beach and West Beach (Littlehampton); at both sites a pair fledged at least one chick, despite considerable human disturbance at the former site. Display was noted at East Head (Chichester Hbr).

High counts in the autumn additional to the WeBS involved 100 at Medmerry on 15 Aug and at Pagham Hbr on the 28th, 75 on the R Adur on 18 Sep, 106 at Pilsey Sands on 16 Oct and a maximum of 72 at Goring Gap on 14 Sep.

In the last two months, in addition to WeBS, there were 50 at Pagham Hbr on 4 Nov, 25 there on 29 Dec, 40 at Camber Sands on 8 Nov and 50 at Rye Hbr on 26 Dec.

There were several records of birds ascribed to the northern breeding form *tundrae*: a flock of c.60 at Rye Hbr on 25 May appeared darker and slightly smaller than the local breeding birds and up to 12 at Goring Gap on four dates between 10 Sep and 4 Oct were ascribed to this form. [CJRB]

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

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

Little Ringed Plovers were recorded in 22 tetrads, six fewer than in 2017 but comparable with the 10-year average of 24 (range 17-34). The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of birds | 10 | 23 | 23 | 34 | 43 | 24 | 11 | 4 |
| No. of sites | 6 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| 10-yr average totals | 8 | 18 | 16 | 15 | 21 | 12 | 5 | - |

As in recent years, most records came from the main breeding sites, all on managed reserves. The first spring arrival was one at Pett Level on 11 Mar, a typical date, but nearly all records that month came from Medmerry and Pulborough Brooks, with no more sightings in East Sussex until 5 Apr.

Breeding involved an estimated 11 pairs, and was confirmed at only two sites but was probable at a further six, reflecting the difficulty in confirming breeding for this species. At Pett Level, three pairs bred and several young were seen. Three pairs were counted at Medmerry, where 12 present on 15 Jul suggested success, and a chick was seen on the 18th. At Pulborough Brooks there were many reports from 14 Mar through to 21 Sep with a peak of 11 on 28 Jun, also indicating probable breeding. At Rye Hbr, two males were displaying during April, May and June but while breeding could not be proved an immature there with adults in early July might have fledged locally. At Sidlesham Ferry birds were seen from 7 Apr to 12 Sep, with five on 17 Jun. Up to three were also recorded regularly at another site near Bognor. The most unusual breeding record of the year came from the Knepp Estate where a pair nested in a field with some earth works, although they unfortunately failed.

Most autumn records came from breeding sites, the only reports of passage birds elsewhere were from Arlington Res, with an unusually high count of six on 22 Jul (four adults and two juveniles), two at Combe Haven on 28 Aug, one at Weir Wood Res on 9 Sep and a juvenile at Widewater (Lancing) on three dates from 6 to 21 Sep. The last record was of four at Rye Hbr on 6 Oct, two days before the last recorded dates of 8 Oct in 1983 (2) and 2004 (1) and two weeks later than the 10-year average date of 19 Sep. [CJRB]

Kentish Plover

Charadrius alexandrinus

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

The only record for 2018 was of a female on the shoreline on the east side of Pilsey Island on 24 Sep (CBC, MAC). Pilsey Island is the favoured location in the county for this species, with a total of 57 birds recorded here and in neighbouring areas of Chichester Hbr, although this is the first since 2011. The county total this century moves on to 31. [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 58 tetrads (6.3%), comparable with the average of 57 (range 48 – 66) this century, almost exclusively coastal or near coastal with records from the Pagham Hbr/ Sidlesham Ferry area predominating.

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

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 1 | 1 | 4 | 22 | 55 | 7 | 129 | 97 | 34 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Chichester Hbr | - | - | 3 | 9 | 47 | 4 | 109 | 70 | 29 | - | - | 1 |
| Pagham Hbr | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | - | 8 | 24 | 5 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 59 | 71 | 8 | 68 | 61 | 15 | 5 | 3 | 1 |

The 1% national threshold for wintering 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 2013/14 to 2017/18 for Chichester Hbr and Pagham Hbr have been as in the table below. On this basis, both Chichester Hbr and Pagham Hbr would qualify as sites of national importance for wintering Whimbrels.

| | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 5-yr average |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------|
| Chichester Hbr | 2 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3.2 |
| Pagham Hbr | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.0 |

A wintering bird from 2017 was present in Pagham Hbr throughout the first three months, joined by three others for 7 Feb, while on 3 Mar three were at Bosham (Chichester Hbr). Numbers remained low during the first half of April, rising to ten at Church Norton on the 14th and, at Rye Hbr, six on the 15th. Numbers picked up from the 17th when there were 66 E at Splash Point (Seaford) heralding a more concerted passage peaking at 120 E there on the 22nd. A second peak occurred two weeks later on 5 and 6 May when at least 280 E were noted at Splash Point.

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

| | | Apr | May | Peak movement (hrs watched) |
|------------------------------|---|-----|-----|-----------------------------|
| Selsey Bill | E | 182 | 211 | 68 on 5 May (14) |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 29 | 101 | 39 on 11 May (11) |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | - | 99 | 35 on 5 May (2) |
| Splash Point | E | 266 | 573 | 280 on 6 May (14) |
| Birling Gap | E | 138 | 41 | 50 on 22 Apr (4) |

Birds seen flying westwards, noted only at Selsey Bill, totalled 36 in April and ten in May.

There were no substantial numbers seen in the western harbours during spring. Peak counts in Chichester Hbr were 13 on 22 Apr, 12 on 9 May and 27 on 18 May and at Medmerry there were ten on 7 May. In Pagham Hbr the highest counts during April were ten on the 14th, 20 on the 20th and 21 on the 26th whilst in May there were 20 on the 1st and 2nd reducing to ten on the 12th and even fewer thereafter. There were 13 at Cuckmere Haven on 1 May.

From 1 Jun to 12 Jul several birds were summering; apart from 5 W at Selsey Bill on 20 Jun the highest count anywhere was four, but returning migration appeared to start on 13 Jul when 17 were noted at Pilsey Island, 35 at West Wittering and 51 at West Chidham (all Chichester Hbr). There

were six double figure counts in August from 32 at Pilsey Island on the 1st to 42 there on the 13th. Thereafter, apart from 15 at West Chidham on 8 Sep, all records to the year's end were in single figures, with a highest count of six in Pagham Hbr on 13 Oct. Two at Pett Level on 29 Dec and at Pagham Hbr on the 30th suggested wintering. [JAH]



Whimbrels, Sidlesham Tramway, 25 April (Andrew House)

Curlew

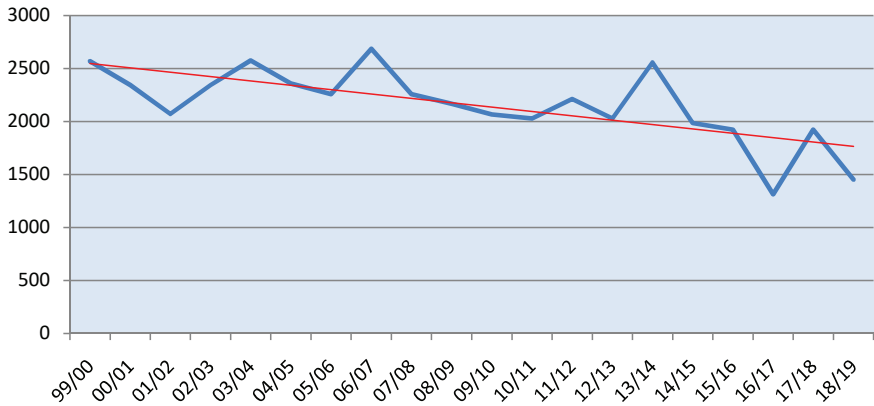
Numenius arquata

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

Curlews were recorded in 79 tetrads (9%) comparable with the 10-year average of 79 at coastal or near coastal sites. The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as follows, and show the county totals in each month were lower than the 10-year averages.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| County total | 1317 | 1487 | 1303 | 337 | 40 | 139 | 452 | 942 | 933 | 1009 | 1226 | 1051 |
| Chichester Hbr | 743 | 838 | 1116 | 156 | 16 | 102 | 210 | 724 | 684 | 757 | 1024 | 491 |
| Pagham Hbr | 155 | 183 | 125 | 172 | 22 | 30 | 175 | 174 | 236 | 53 | 128 | 264 |
| Rye Bay | 415 | 434 | 55 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 66 | 40 | 9 | 196 | 53 | 262 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 1838 | 1675 | 1397 | 431 | 86 | 309 | 1251 | 1358 | 1617 | 1370 | 1501 | 1395 |

Notable counts additional to the WeBS included: in Chichester Hbr, 100 at Thorny Deeps on 1 Apr and 200 there on 10 Oct; at Pilsey Island, 280 on 10 Sep; at Fishbourne Channel 109 on 27 Aug and 175 on 23 Dec; at Selsey Park Fm, 200 on 17 Feb and 120 on 2 Dec; at Pett Level 200 on 14 and 28 Jan, 500 on 22 Feb, 115 on 24 Oct and 200 on 18 Nov; at Rye Hbr, 225 on 2 Jan, 176 on 20 Feb, 182 on 15 Jul, 130 on 7 Aug and 110 on 14 Dec. There were no three-figure counts elsewhere. The 1% national threshold figure of 1400 was not met at any site. The figure below shows the fortunes of Curlews continued to decline from 2567 in January 2000, although somewhat erratically, with an intermediate peak of 2625 in January 2011.



Curlew - peak county WeBS totals, winter 1999/2000 to 2018/19

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

| | | Feb | Mar | Apr | May |
|------------------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Selsey Bill | E | 1 | 3 | 7 | 2 |
| | W | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 1 | 14 | - | 1 |
| | W | 1 | 2 | - | 1 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | - | - | - | - |
| | W | - | 5 | - | - |
| Splash Point | E | - | 44 | 22 | - |
| | W | - | 1 | - | - |
| Birling Gap | E | - | 9 | 6 | - |
| | W | - | - | - | - |

Spring eastwards passage was as usual fairly light; peak passage occurred on 14 Mar when 31 E were noted at Splash Point (Seaford) with a second small peak there of 11 E on 10 Apr when another 9 N there seemed to be tracking inland.

There were some sizeable counts in June; of eight double-figure counts the highest was 84 at Pilsley Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 15th followed by 35 at Pagham Hbr on the 29th and 20 at Pett Level on the 24th. Numbers increased noticeably in July from the 3rd when 119 were noted at Rye Hbr; there were 28 double-figure counts during the month, the highest being 182 at Rye Hbr and 156 at Pagham Hbr on the 15th. The highest counts in August of six three-figure counts were 220 at Pilsley Island on the 10th and 302 at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 11th. Numbers continued to increase in September at the favoured sites in the western harbours, the highest count being 500 at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on the 8th. However, October's highest was only 261 at West Chidham on the 27th, of only five three-figure counts, presumably reflecting that some birds had moved on elsewhere. The highest single site count in the second winter period was 273 at Pilsley Island on 24 Nov.

There were fewer records from inland sites, with most from Pulborough Brooks where up to three were seen on 14 different days. Other notable inland observations were six on the Steyning Levels on 4 Mar, seven near Washington on 3 Oct, five on the Henfield Levels on 30 Nov and 15 near Arlington on 25 Dec. [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 35 (3.7%) tetrads, the same as in 2015-2017 and comparable with the 10-year average of 38 (range 35-49). The great majority of birds (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 | 361 | 656 | 488 | 27 | 30 | - | - | 43 | 12 | 201 | 134 | 83 |
| Chichester Hbr | 323 | 609 | 434 | 17 | 20 | - | - | 43 | 12 | 200 | 133 | 60 |
| Pagham Hbr | 36 | 47 | 40 | - | 5 | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 23 |
| Average County Total 2008-2017 | 678 | 739 | 273 | 66 | 52 | 17 | 35 | 54 | 103 | 140 | 333 | 471 |

Counts in all months except March and October, were below the 10-year average. The 1% national threshold figure of 380 was exceeded at Chichester Hbr in February and March. The only other double-figure site during the first winter period was Pagham Hbr, where the average for the 39 days when the species was recorded was 12, with a peak of 47 on 18 Feb. Birds were seen at four other sites during the first winter period; between one and seven were at Rye Hbr on 15 days, three inland at Arlington Res on 7 Jan, two at Cuckmere Haven on 6 Mar and two at Pett Level on 18 Mar.

The coastal eastbound spring passage produced a total of 1410 during April and May, computed on the basis that the minimum recorded on any one day was the highest count at any one site on that day; this is higher than during any of the previous three years. The monthly totals at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

| | March | April | May |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|------|
| Selsey Bill | 2 | 331 | 270 |
| Worthing & Goring | - | 76 | 41 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | - | - | 16 |
| Splash Point | - | 237 | 1013 |
| Birling Gap | 4 | 31 | 2 |

Much of the passage was between 27 Apr and 7 May, with by far the largest number recorded at Splash Point (Seaford), as shown below (with hours watched in brackets).

| | 27 Apr | 29 Apr | 5 May | 6 May | 7 May |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| Selsey Bill | 40 (13) | 225 (8) | 50 (14) | 139 (11) | 39 (11) |
| Worthing & Goring | 20 (3) | 55 (2) | 3 (1) | 5 | - |
| Splash Point | 45 (10) | 145 (5) | 233 (12) | 458 (14) | 269 (15) |

Elsewhere the highest counts during the same period were 20 at Pett Level on 29 Apr, 45 at Rye Hbr on the 30th, 40 at Pagham Hbr on 1 May, and 80 at Rye Hbr and 14 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 6th.

The only June records came from Pagham Hbr, where the maximum was six on the 2nd and in July there were four there and at Pett Level on the 7th. There was a brief surge in early August when 43 were at Chichester Hbr on 10 Aug and 37 at Pagham Hbr on the 12th. The other August records comprised one to two at these sites and at Pett Level. The picture was similar in September with almost all records involving single birds at Chichester Hbr, Rye Hbr and Pett Level, although nine were at Cuckmere Haven on 9 Sep and 13 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Sep.

The second winter period was quiet until 27 Oct when 200 were counted at Chichester Hbr. This site continued to be the main focus of activity with a maximum count of 250 on 4 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 51 tetrads (5.5%) compared to 55 in 2017 and comparable with the 10-year average of 48 (range 39-55). The great majority of birds were recorded at the general sites of Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks. The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 861 | 741 | 861 | 434 | 115 | 66 | 66 | 237 | 368 | 259 | 762 | 650 |
| Chichester Hbr | 241 | 192 | 271 | 187 | - | 27 | 8 | 162 | 333 | 171 | 644 | 81 |
| Pagham Hbr | - | | 122 | 568 | 247 | 115 | 30 | 28 | 55 | 29 | 88 | 22 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 618 | 426 | 7 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 86 | 500 |
| Average County Total 2008-2017 | 957 | 606 | 398 | 186 | 46 | 60 | 73 | 255 | 311 | 556 | 791 | 718 |

The totals easily exceeded the 10-year average in every month during the first half of the year apart from January, when a nil return from Pagham Hbr depressed the total. Both the 1% international threshold figure of 610 and the 1% national threshold figure of 430 were exceeded at Chichester Hbr in November.

There were numerous occasions at both Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks, two intensively watched sites, when the WeBS counts were exceeded. This was rarely the case at Chichester Hbr, a very large area where the coordinated WeBS count comes into its own. The monthly maximum counts at Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks, additional to the WeBS, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Pagham Hbr | 1000 | 900 | - | 300 | 225 | 110 | 85 | 100 | 63 | - | 50 | 500 |
| Pulborough Brooks | 1000 | 900 | 175 | 16 | 17 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 200 | 750 |

In addition, there were 200 at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) on 27 Oct.

A detailed examination of the records reveals considerable mobility of this species, particularly between Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks, as shown in the following counts in January.

| January: | 2 | 4 | 6 | 7-12 | 13 | 14 | 15-21 | 22 | 23-29 | 30 | 31 |
|--------------------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-----|
| Pagham Hbr | 500 | 1000 | 400 | - | 450 | 501 | - | - | - | 200 | nc |
| Pulborough Brooks | 60 | 80 | 1 | 85 | 400 | 1000 | 1000 | 618 | 1000 | P | 800 |

This demonstrates that while there were good numbers at Pagham Hbr during the first half of January, numbers declined after the 14th to nil (until the 30th) whilst at Pulborough Brooks the numbers were high. Pulborough Brooks continued to host most until the second half of February, when numbers there fell but increased at Pagham Hbr and Chichester Hbr. At the latter two sites counts of 900 and 300, respectively, were recorded during the last week of February.

Numbers fluctuated markedly at all three sites in March, although there was a general downwards trend as the month progressed. At Pulborough Brooks, for instance, numbers fell from 175 on 10 Mar to 15 on Mar 31. However, in March there was also an increase in records elsewhere as the species was recorded from 16 sites other than those previously mentioned. Most were coastal locations with counts in double figures coming from Middleton-on-Sea, Lidsey, Splash Point (Seaford) and Rye Hbr. As spring tailed off the only site where significant numbers of birds were being recorded was Pagham Hbr, which remained the dominant site from April to July, with the summering flock reaching a peak of 110 on 7 Jun.

Return passage got under way from mid-July with 21 at Rye Hbr on the 13th and 27 at Earnley on the 15th. Thereafter, Chichester Hbr became the main location until early December, with the WeBS counts of 333 in September and 644 in November representing 90% and 85%, respectively, of the county totals. Only as December got under way did numbers build again at Pulborough Brooks and Pagham Hbr, with peaks of 500 at the latter site on 29 Dec and 750 at the former on 30 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.

Turnstones were recorded in 68 tetrads (7.2%, comparable with the 70 of 2017 and the 10-year average of 65). 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 | 283 | 616 | 288 | 220 | 43 | 2 | 41 | 189 | 236 | 227 | 345 | 420 |
| Chichester Hbr | 158 | 215 | 122 | 30 | 8 | - | 2 | 36 | 51 | 128 | 198 | 168 |
| Pagham Hbr | 64 | 143 | 66 | 4 | 27 | 2 | 16 | 21 | - | - | 85 | 134 |
| Climping Gap | 29 | 193 | 40 | - | nc | nc | nc | 58 | 23 | 10 | 14 | 39 |
| Goring | 15 | 1 | 1 | 34 | nc | nc | nc | 56 | 73 | 35 | 1 | 3 |
| Bexhill Glyne Gap | nc | 4 | 19 | 72 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | 21 | 16 | 71 |
| Rye Bay | 14 | 27 | 15 | 53 | 8 | - | 23 | - | 49 | 12 | 16 | 1 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 725 | 578 | 599 | 214 | 65 | 29 | 42 | 221 | 283 | 317 | 385 | 439 |

Turnstones may be seen anywhere along our coastline where there is some seaweed and stones. This year the WeBS peak was in February following well below average counts from November 2017 through to January 2018. However, WeBS counts unfortunately do not tell the whole story; the Non-estuarine Coastal Waterbird Survey (NEWS) gives a better indication for this species' numbers, and details of the latest survey are given on pages 253 - 260. During the first quarter of 2018 there were some significant non-WeBS counts. The peak of 81 recorded at Goring Gap on 12 Jan was low and there were 50 at the Arun Mouth (Littlehampton) on the 7th and at Rustington on the 17th. A count of 145 from Hastings to Bexhill on 3 Feb may have been indicative of a later movement along our coast than in previous years just prior to very cold weather which pushed in from the east. In March the biggest count was on the beach by Pett Level with 150 on the 9th, and 80 at Pagham Hbr on the 24th was another non-WeBS high count.

Coastal movement was noted only by observers at Selsey Bill as shown below:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | |
|--------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Selsey Bill | E | - | - | 100 | 111 | 32 | - | 35 | - | 1 | 3 |
| | W | 13 | 1 | 4 | 27 | 48 | 32 | - | 18 | - | 6 |

Eastwards movement of 23 E was first noted on 10 Mar followed by 50 E on the 14th; the next highest count was 47 E on 15 Apr but passage of large numbers ended following 30 E on the 17th. During May Turnstones were noted at Arlington Res, with four on the dam wall at noon on the 10th and another on the 21st at 16:30; these were the only inland records.

During June up to 12 summering non-breeders were noted in Pagham Hbr and up to 13 at Rye Hbr. In July, numbers of summering birds were inflated by the arrival of the first returning migrants; numbers at Pagham Hbr increased to 27 on the 26th and to 23 at Rye Hbr on the 15th.

The increase in numbers in the autumn was close to the 10-year average. Non-WeBS records

included 100 at Goring Gap on 27 Aug and 14 W at Selsey Bill on the 11th. In September, a non-WeBS count of 87 was noted at Goring Gap while in October similar counts included 100 at Climping Gap on the 3rd and 50 in Pagham Hbr on the 13th. The highest non-WeBS count in November was 86 at Ferring on the 2nd and the largest single count was 250 at Climping on 25 Dec. The highest counts in East Sussex during December were ten at Pett Level on the 25th and 12 at Rye Hbr on the 26th. [PKH]

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 | 1789 | 1546 | 433 | - | 3 | - | - | - | - | 30 | 504 | 1546 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1411 | 1203 | 431 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 30 | 500 | 1456 |
| Pagham Hbr | 378 | 342 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 90 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 1565 | 2435 | 875 | 72 | 17 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 56 | 35 | 428 | 1304 |

The main site in winter is Chichester Hbr, particularly the roost on Pilsey Island and feeding areas nearby at low tides. The WeBS total for December 2017 had been 1330 and while the January 2018 counts was unremarkable the February count was distinctly lower than the 10-year average. Significant non-WeBS counts involved 600 at Pagham Hbr on 3 Jan and 150 at Rye Hbr on the 26th, but this had dropped to 30 by 2 Feb. During March, although 100 had been counted in Pagham Hbr on the 11th, numbers dropped generally and after the first week of April, when 80 had been noted at Sidlesham Ferry on the 4th, the biggest count was 20 at Pagham Hbr on the 20th.

An easterly movement of 504 past Splash Point (Seaford) on 7 May was the only sizeable spring movement, the one other seawatching record being 5 E at Worthing on the 29th. From 26 May, when 15 were recorded at Pagham Hbr, through to 25 Sep, when 11 were noted at Pagham Hbr, only single-figure counts were recorded from Pilsey Island, Pagham Hbr, Cuckmere Haven and Rye Hbr and single birds were seen at Pett Level on 24 Jun, Medmerry on 11 Aug, Fishbourne on 7 Sep and Goring Gap on 14 Sep. Autumn numbers remained generally low with 20 at Rye Hbr on 29 Sep the highest. Larger groups were not recorded until mid-November, with 60 at Pagham on the 17th and 500 at Pilsey Island on the 24th. The build-up of WeBS numbers in the autumn was slightly above the 10-year average. After two at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Nov there were no further records from sites east of Pagham Hbr for the rest of the year. There were no inland records. [PKH]

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 | 14 | 34 | 14 | - | - | - | 2 | 9 | 8 | - | - | 10 |
| Pagham Hbr | - | 10 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Rye Bay | 12 | 24 | 10 | - | - | - | 2 | 9 | 8 | - | - | 10 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 12 | 14 | 8 | 1 | | | | 4 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 11 |

However, the WeBS counts do not show the whole picture and, as last year, the sites preferred by Ruffs were Pulborough Brooks (in the winter months), and Pett Level and Rye Hbr. The peak monthly counts at these sites, most of which are additional to the WeBS counts (except where marked *) were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Sum of Peak Site Counts | 63 | 51 | 59 | 17 | 14 | - | 11 | 16 | 22 | 2 | 19 | 54 |
| Pulborough Brooks | 14 | 4 | 6 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 |
| Pett Level | 28 | 24 | 40 | 2 | 8 | - | 6 | 1 | 3 | - | 10 | 25 |
| Rye Hbr | 12 | 12 | - | - | 1 | - | 3 | 11 | 8* | 1 | 9 | 3 |

The wintering population was, therefore, larger than was shown by the WeBS counts. Numbers reduced noticeably in April as birds returned to their breeding grounds but stragglers or non-breeders were still recorded on eight days in May until the 24th. The only month when Ruffs were not found anywhere was June. The first returning bird was seen at Rye Hbr on 2 Jul followed by records on seven more days in the first half of the month and then, from the 22nd, a steady stream of records through August until 10 Sep. From then until late November the species was seen on just ten days, with ten at Broomhill Level on 25 Sep being noteworthy. From 29 Nov the wintering population became established, particularly at Pulborough Brooks from 13 Dec, and Ruffs were recorded on 23 of the next 33 days into the New Year. [JAH]

Broad-billed Sandpiper

Calidris falcinellus

Very rare vagrant.

One was found at Rye Hbr in the early evening of 24 May (SJM *et al.*). The finder, a renowned wildlife artist, alerted the warden, enabling several other observers to see this summer-plumaged individual, and was able to produce some superb artwork (see page 13). The record, which has been accepted by BBRC, is only the eighth for the county. The last two records, in 1988 and 1993, were also in May. [MM]

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

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

Total numbers of Curlew Sandpiper can vary greatly from year to year, and the total minimum sightings were well below the 10-year average in all months except July. The estimated minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 1 |

A scattering of spring records included single birds at Rye Hbr on 19 and 26 May and on 9 Jun. Elsewhere, singles were recorded at Pulborough from 22 to 23 May and at Pagham Hbr on 25 May. A further two were recorded at Pagham Hbr on 27 Jun. These were rather later than the 10-year average arrival date of 1 May.

During July singles were at Rye Hbr on the 15th, 16th, 25th and 29th; at Pagham Hbr daily between the 19th and 26th and at Medmerry on the 25th. The peak time for Curlew Sandpiper sightings is usually mid to late August and September, when the passage of juveniles reaches its maximum. However, the overall August and September totals were exceptionally low this year. Two summer

plumage birds were observed at Church Norton on 21 Jul, and the highest count recorded was four at Pagham Hbr on 8 Sep. Records away from Chichester, Pagham and Rye Harbours were singles at Medmerry on 8 Aug, the Midrips on 9 Aug, Winchelsea on 12 Aug, Cuckmere Haven on 1 Sep, and R Adur (Shoreham) from 17 to 23 Sep. There was just one later, at Rye Hbr on 26 Oct, two days later than the 10-year average last date. [CD]

Temminck's Stint

Calidris temminckii

Very scarce spring and autumn passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

There were five records in 2018. The overwintering bird at Pulborough Brooks from Nov 2017 was last seen on 25 Feb (mo). The remaining four birds were all in May (the peak month for this species in Sussex) on The Quarry (Rye Hbr) on the 11th (PEJ), Sidlesham Ferry Pool on the 23rd (AH *et al.*), at Pulborough Brooks from the 23rd to 25th (ARK, CRL, ET) and at Cuckmere Haven from the 25th to 27th (RWK, JW *et al.*). The county total this century moves on to 51. [PJ]



Temminck's Stint, Cuckmere Haven, 27 May (Tim Squire)

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 | 154 | 310 | 68 | 84 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 57 | 10 | 12 | 167 | 198 |
| Chichester Hbr | 89 | 95 | 32 | 84 | - | 1 | 2 | 49 | - | - | 47 | 176 |
| Climping Gap | 10 | 153 | 30 | - | nc | nc | nc | 2 | 4 | - | 110 | 20 |
| Goring | 55 | 1 | 4 | - | nc | nc | nc | 4 | 6 | 12 | - | - |
| Rye Bay | - | 61 | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 176 | 123 | 131 | 76 | 105 | 18 | 37 | 67 | 24 | 63 | 105 | 107 |

The WeBS counts do not, unfortunately, give a complete picture of numbers as there were many other counts recorded on non-WeBS dates. More Sanderling are often recorded during low tide counts and the results of the most recent Non-estuarine Coastal Waterbird Survey (NEWS 2015-2016) are on pages 253 - 260. The minimum monthly counts at four general sites were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Minimum total | 637 | 378 | 411 | 173 | 293 | | 480 | 152 | 105 | 240 | 371 |
| Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) | 160 | 144 | 120 | 75* | 214 | | 400 | 100 | 70 | 20 | 15 |
| L'hampton/Rustington/Climping | 90 | 153* | 155 | - | - | | - | - | - | 110* | 250 |
| Goring Gap/Worthing Beach | 210 | 20 | 66 | 98 | 20 | | 77 | 52 | 35 | 90 | 76 |
| Rye Bay | - | 61* | 70 | - | 59 | | 3 | - | - | 20 | 30 |

*WeBS count

The minimum totals these figures provide are all larger than the county totals from the WeBS. Thus the county total in winter appears to be in excess of 640.

One colour-ringed bird photographed at Climping on 25 Feb had been ringed in The Netherlands on 12 Sep 2010. Its full life history is in the SOS newsletter of summer 2018 including being seen in Iceland on 28 May 2013 and again on 8 Nov 2014 in The Netherlands and a week later in Littlehampton. This is possibly typical of all our wintering Sanderlings that after breeding in the arctic migrate to moult in the Waddensea before coming to Sussex.

Coastal spring passage was light and no more than 265 were seen passing east mainly at either Selsey Bill or Worthing, as shown below:

| | | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Peak movement |
|------------------------------|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----------------|
| Selsey Bill | E | 2 | 41 | 140 | - | 30 E on 4 Apr |
| | W | - | - | 22 | 28 | 25 E on 20 May |
| Worthing & Goring | E | - | 36 | 21 | 11 | 25 E on 1 Apr |
| | W | 15 | - | 8N | - | 8 E on 8 May |

Apart from 214 still at Pilsey Sands on 25 May and 88 there on 1 Jun only small numbers were recorded during the summer; the last notable count in June was ten at Pagham Hbr on the 23rd. The first returning birds were two at Pilsey Sands on 13 Jul, followed over three weeks later by 320 there on 8 Aug. Return passage gave the largest count of the year with 400 at Pilsey Sands on 22 Aug.

Through October, counts were generally less than 40 (the one exception being 70 at Pilsey Sands on the 7th) then increasing through November with a high count of 90 at Goring on the 30th. In December the highest counts were 250 at Littlehampton on the 9th and Climping Gap on the 25th.

Few Sanderlings were seen east of Worthing. The highest counts were 70 at Camber on 14 Mar, 61 at Rye Hbr on 18 Feb and 12 other double-figure counts during the year, but most counts were in single figures.

Inland records were all from Arlington Res, with one on 28 Apr and five on 24 May. [PKH]

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 1% national threshold level of 3500 was exceeded at Chichester Hbr in January, February, March and December and at Pagham Hbr (non-WeBS) in January. County totals in January and February exceeded the 10-year average figure by 28% and 42% respectively but conversely in October the total was only 54% of the average and in November only 39%. 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 | 15576 | 14288 | 5642 | 144 | 92 | 16 | 103 | 681 | 259 | 1822 | 3721 | 5605 |
| Chichester Hbr | 12960 | 11830 | 4733 | 91 | - | 1 | 32 | 196 | 180 | 1749 | 3143 | 4122 |
| Pagham Hbr | 2384 | 2142 | 558 | 30 | 86 | - | - | 316 | 43 | 58 | 481 | 1394 |
| Av. County Total 2008 - 2017 | 12135 | 10008 | 6341 | 356 | 641 | 39 | 264 | 716 | 670 | 3385 | 9556 | 10648 |

By comparison with the WeBS table, the peak monthly counts at three sites, mostly additional to the WeBS except where so marked, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|------|-------|
| Chichester Hbr | - | - | - | - | 60 | 30 | - | 2000 | - | - | - | 10000 |
| Pagham Hbr | 5000 | - | - | 60 | 45 | 50 | 200 | 800 | 390 | 110 | 1800 | 1500 |
| Rye Hbr | 66 | 80 | 167* | 20 | 40 | 15 | 125 | 130* | 60 | 25 | 54* | 200 |

Although in April Dunlins were recorded almost daily, numbers declined significantly as they returned to northern breeding grounds. The frequency of records in May was also high (24/31 days) but counts were low and the peak of 86 in Pagham Hbr on the 20th was the lowest peak May count since 1985. In June Dunlins were still being recorded frequently (19/30 days) but only in Chichester, Pagham and Rye Harbours, of which Pagham Hbr was the most favoured with 50 still on the 21st.

The first signs of returning migrants were an increase at Medmerry from two on 4 Jul to 33 on the 10th, and at Rye Hbr from four on 6 Jul to 20 on the 9th and 56 on the 15th. By the 20th numbers in Pagham Hbr had reached 200. On 6 Aug an exceptional 2000 were recorded in Chichester Hbr but they must have passed through quickly as four days later there were only 150 there; the next high count that month was 800 in Pagham Hbr on the 15th. The highest count in September was 390 in Pagham Hbr and the next four-figure count was not until 24 Nov when 1000 were at West Wittering and 1800 at Church Norton. The highest estimated count of the year was no less than 10,000 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 10 Dec, almost three times the 1% national threshold figure.

Inland sightings more than 10 km from the coast included Arlington Res, Henfield Levels and Weir Wood Res (all only twice), and Pulborough Brooks, where they were recorded every month except June, mostly in single figures but with nine double-figure counts and a peak of 38 on 15 Nov. [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 estimated minimum monthly totals, computed on the basis that the highest single day count at any site was the minimum, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 26 | 16 | 13 | 13 | 1 | | 2 | 9 | 12 |
| Selsey Bill | - | - | 2 | 3 | - | | 1 | 1 | - |
| Medmerry | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | | - | 1 | 1 |
| Shoreham Hbr | 5 | 5 | 6 | 2 | - | | - | 2 | 2 |
| Brighton Marina | 2 | - | - | 1 | - | | - | 5 | - |
| Newhaven | 17 | 9 | 5 | 7 | - | | - | - | 9 |
| Camber Sands | - | - | - | - | - | | 1 | - | - |
| 10-year county total averages | 27 | 22 | 18 | 10 | 4 | | 2 | 18 | 20 |

Total numbers recorded were slightly lower than 10-year averages particularly in February, March, November and December. There were no records from either Pett Level or Rye Hbr.

The highest counts in the first winter period were 17 at Newhaven on 3 Jan and 15 there on the 17th; elsewhere, five were at Shoreham Hbr on 20 Jan and 28 Feb. The last of the season was the only May record, on the beach at Splash Point on 11 May, ten days later than the 10-year average date.

Birds were late returning with no records for September, and just two records of single birds in October, the first at Selsey Bill on 12 Oct, 18 days later than the 10-year average date, and at Camber Sands on 27 Oct. The largest single count was nine at Newhaven on 12 Dec. [CD]

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

Scarce passage migrant; very scarce in winter.

Little Stints were recorded in 17 tetrads (1.8%), three more than in 2017 and 2016. All were at coastal or near-coastal sites except for one at Arlington Res on 3 Aug

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | - | - | - | - | 23 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 1 | - | - |
| 10-year average | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 12 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| No. of sites | - | - | - | - | 4 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 1 | - | - |

The minimum county monthly totals were as above. For the fifth year running there were no wintering birds at either end of the year. The earliest record was of one at Rye Hbr on 17 May, 15 days later than in 2017 and the latest first record for the past five years. Pagham Hbr was, as usual, the most favoured site and of the overall 63 bird-days in the year 60% were from this area.

Birds were noted on 12 of the 15 days between 17 May and 1 Jun, the last spring record. Although most records involved singles, twos were at Rye Hbr on the 21st and 23rd with five there on the 25th while the most significant single count was of 15 at Church Norton on 31 May, seen to fly off east as one flock as the tide flooded in; this being the highest spring count since 15 in Chichester Hbr on 1 Apr 2000. The first returning migrant was seen on 21 Jul at Pagham Hbr; there was then a gap of 13 days to the next two at Arlington Res on 3 Aug followed by another gap of 23 days to the next one at Rye Hbr on 26 Aug. Thereafter, during the following three weeks, single birds were recorded on 17 days to 16 Sep; the highest count during this period was only two at Medmerry on 12 Sep. The last four records were of singles at Broomhill Level (Camber) on 28 Sep, Pagham Hbr and Scotney GP on the 29th and Goring Gap on 4 Oct. [JAH]

White-rumped Sandpiper

Calidris fuscicollis

Very rare vagrant.

One found at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Dec remained until 13 Dec, a wonderful winter surprise for the finder and many visiting birdwatchers (MSP *et al.*). This was the first county record since 29 Aug 2010, when there was one at Rye Hbr, and only the thirteenth overall. It was also the first record in December; there are two previous occurrences from the first half of November, the remainder falling between August and October. [MM]

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Calidris subruficollis

Rare autumn vagrant.

A juvenile, at times elusive, was in fields to the north of Scotney GP from 24 Sep to 1 Oct (MJL *et al.*). The county total for this confiding North American wader moves on to 19, of which 11 have been this century. Records have occurred between 21 Aug (1934) and 14 Oct (1989) including 13 in September. [P]

Semipalmated Sandpiper

*Calidris pusilla***Very rare vagrant.**

One was found feeding with Dunlins along the R Cuckmere south of Exceat Bridge on 4 Sep (MRE *et al.*). The record, which is only the fourth for the county and the first since 2001, has been accepted by BBRC. All the previous records have been within the period July to September. [MM]



Semipalmated Sandpiper, Cuckmere Haven, 4 September (Laurence Pitcher)

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 | 26 | 18 | 17 | | 5 | 15 | 31 |
| No of sites | 15 | 12 | 11 | | 5 | 12 | 11 |

In the first three months records were spread fairly evenly across the county, including a few at coastal sites. Most reports were of one or two, but on 22 Jan, following snowfall across much of the country, four were recorded at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and three at Arundel WWT, with another three at Pulborough Brooks the next day. The only other report of more than two at this time was on the Knepp Estate, where three were ringed on 7 Jan. There was a long gap with no records from 20 Mar to 26 Apr.

Although a calling bird was first heard on 26 Apr at Hindleap (Ashdown Forest), roding was first reported on 6 May at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) and, although breeding was probable in 13 tetrads, a total of about 37 territories was located, the lowest since at least 2006. Ashdown Forest held about 19, much the same as in recent years, and there were four at Broadwater Warren, but during the WHBBS only nine were recorded on the West Sussex heaths, and there were only five records of single birds elsewhere during the breeding season.

There were only two records in July, and none in August or September. In the last three months there were no noticeable influxes and again most records were of one or two, except for three at Barcombe on 30 Dec, four at Arundel WWT on 11 Nov, and 16 flushed at Ladywell (Coombes) on 7 Dec during a shoot. At Beachy Head, birds were noted on 6 and 11 Nov, when one was seen being taken by a Peregrine. [C]RB]

Jack Snipe

Lymnocyptes minimus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

A total of 47 was recorded from 19 sites from Thorney Deepes to Pevensey Levels. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of Birds | 7 | 9 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 4 |
| No. of Sites | 6 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 |

Prior to late February records were scant and mostly involved singles, although two were recorded at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 7 Jan and at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 4 Feb. Most records came from established or well-watched sites, including Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Arundel WWT, Ferring Rife and Newhaven Tide Mills, but also included sightings at other sites such as West Chase (Ashdown Forest) and Fletching.

During the period from 25 Feb to 24 Mar there was an increase in numbers, with at least 18 being recorded at eight sites. Counts of two or more in this period included four at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Feb, five at Newhaven Tide Mills on 4 Mar, three at Lewes Brooks on 22 Mar, and two each at Ferring Rife and the Knepp Estate. Records tailed off thereafter, with the last in the first half of the year being four at West Rise Marsh on Apr 13.

The first returning bird was recorded on 26 Oct at the Knepp Estate, over a month later than the 10-year average date of 23 Sep. Apart from one record of two at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) on 5 Nov, all other records in November and December were of one, mostly at traditional coastal and wetland sites. However, an example of how the species can occur at a seemingly atypical site were three sightings of presumably the same bird by a pond near Fletching between 17 and 31 Dec. [MCD]

Common Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

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

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

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County total | 114 | 256 | 182 | 25 | 1 | - | 2 | 18 | 15 | 77 | 168 | 188 |
| Chichester Hbr | 17 | 59 | 9 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 29 | 21 |
| Chichester GP | 7 | 14 | 7 | 6 | - | - | - | - | - | 8 | 17 | 10 |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 12 | 39 | 35 | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | 4 | 6 | 57 | 23 |
| Upper Adur Levels | - | 25 | 23 | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | 1 | 1 | 50 |
| Lower Adur Valley | 6 | 49 | 9 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 11 | 20 | 55 |
| Lower Ouse Valley | 3 | 17 | 31 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 9 | - |
| Pevensey Levels | 22 | 12 | 19 | - | - | - | - | 11 | 5 | 12 | 27 | 6 |
| Rye Bay | 21 | 18 | 30 | 3 | - | - | 2 | - | 2 | 2 | 4 | - |
| Average County Total 2008-2017 | 330 | 352 | 236 | 34 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 22 | 52 | 141 | 248 | 344 |

The species was recorded from 112 tetrads (12%), up from 89 in 2017 but similar to the 110 in 2016 and comparable with the 10-year average of 114. The WeBS totals in every month but May and July were significantly lower than the 10-year average for 2008 to 2017. However, there were some significant counts additional to the WeBS, either made outside the areas covered in the above table or undertaken on different dates than the WeBS. These monthly maximum counts at sites with 20 or more, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Crablands Marsh (Selsey) | 12 | 40 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Pagham Hbr | 60 | 23 | 2 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 1 | 26 | 25 | 10 | 6 |
| Arundel WWT | 100 | 40 | 7 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | 19 | 25 | 35 | 90 |
| Pulborough Brooks | 6 | 27 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 33 | 21 | 35 | 40 |
| Lewes Brooks | 3 | 17 | 70 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 9 | |
| Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) | 23 | 45 | 16 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 13 | 14 | 10 |
| West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) | 50 | 21 | 6 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 8 |
| Pett Level | 8 | 34 | 34 | 23 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 17 | 12 |

The highest first winter counts were 100 at Arundel WWT on 18 Jan, 60 at Pagham Hbr on the 1st and 50 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 5th. Numbers fell generally throughout March, although there was a noteworthy count of 70 at Lewes Brooks on the 22nd.

By the beginning of April all counts were in single figures apart from 23 recorded at Pett Level on the 1st. While relatively few birds were recorded during April, the continued presence at four sites in May gave hope of breeding. This was especially so at Pulborough Brooks, where an individual was recorded on 6 Jun, but breeding was not proven there or elsewhere.

The first returning single birds were recorded on 4 Jul at Medmerry and Pagham Hbr. Thereafter most records came from Pulborough Brooks until the second half of September, when double-figure counts were recorded at Pagham Hbr and Arundel WWT as well as Pulborough Brooks.

Pagham Hbr, Arundel WWT and Pulborough Brooks accounted for most records in October, with the latter two sites holding the highest numbers in November. There was little build-up in numbers anywhere until the end of the year, when the highest count of 90 came from Arundel WWT on 24 Dec. [MCD]

Terek Sandpiper

Xenus cinereus

Very rare vagrant.

One at Rye Hbr in the evening of 18 May was still present the following day, allowing many observers to enjoy it (DB *et al.*). This was the seventh county record and has been accepted by BBRC. All the previous records have also been in May, apart from the most recent one, which was from Pagham Hbr in June 2015. [MM]

Grey Phalarope

Phalaropus fulicarius

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

A total of three was recorded in a good autumn for this species nationally, comprising singles on the sea off Norman's Bay on 22 Sep (CFB *et al.*), at Pilsey Island on 25 Sep (CBC) and on the sea off Selsey Bill on 18 Nov (DM *et al.*). Presumably the same bird was seen off Church Norton on 20 Nov (AH, IML). The county total this century moves on to 63. [PJ]

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

Fairly common passage migrant; very scarce in winter. Has bred at least once. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

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

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 6 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 26 | - | 63 | 75 | 43 | 9 | 4 | 5 |
| Chichester Harbour | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 4 | 6 | 2 | 3 | - | - |
| Arun Valley (Arundel-L'hampton) | 2 | 4 | - | 1 | 2 | - | 34 | 24 | 18 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Barcombe Res | - | - | - | - | 2 | - | 2 | 4 | 5 | 1 | - | - |
| Lower Ouse Valley | 4 | 1 | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Arlington Res | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 6 | 3 | 1 | - | - |
| Rye Bay | - | - | - | - | 6 | - | 15 | 25 | 5 | - | - | 1 |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 13 | 1 | 56 | 70 | 26 | 5 | 4 | 2 |

This species was recorded in 64 tetrads (6.8%); at similar places to previous years and comparable with the 10-year average of 68. The monthly numbers, derived as the sum of the highest number reported at each place that month were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of birds | 13 | 9 | 8 | 50 | 77 | 10 | 119 | 152 | 79 | 18 | 14 | 17 |
| 10- year average 2008-2017 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 35 | 61 | 12 | 126 | 145 | 68 | 17 | 11 | 8 |

The April WeBS date is too early for the main northwards migration of this species, so WeBS data do not show a significant increase until May. The general profile through the year with the peak in August is similar to that in the table of monthly totals.

In the first winter period there were reports from regular winter places; Medmerry, two south of Arundel, five between Lewes and Newhaven, five at Rye Hbr and two on the R Cuckmere. The total is higher than most previous years, although there were no reports from the R Adur.

Spring migration appears to have started on about 16 Apr with mostly single individuals recorded from five widely dispersed sites. Thereafter small numbers were seen on most days but the biggest April counts were eight at Weir Wood Res on the 27th, six on the Steyning Levels on the 29th and five at Lyminster on the 28th. An unusually high number was recorded on 24 May with eight at Church Norton, two at Lyminster and six at Cuckmere Haven. Breeding was not confirmed anywhere (the only proven breeding record in the county was near Horsham in 1978) but at Lyminster birds were seen displaying on 24 May.

Two were recorded on the R Arun at Lyminster on 19 Jun, where there were 14 by 11 Jul. The WeBS count on the R Arun between Arundel and Littlehampton on 17 Jul produced an exceptional 34; clearly this site is a hot spot for this species. There were still 24 there on 14 Aug and 18 on 4 Sep. Other big counts were 15 at Coombes (R Adur) on 1 Aug and 15 at the Union Canal (East Guldeford) on 12 Aug, both regular haunts for migrants. Elsewhere, there were peaks in August of six at Rye Hbr and five at Weir Wood Res (both on the 6th) and nine on the R Ouse near Lewes on the 12th. Numbers then gradually reduced through to October.

Six at Warnham LNR, reported on 25 Nov and again on 13 Dec, when added to five along the R Ouse between Lewes and Piddinghoe, two on the lower R Arun, one each at Selsey, Pagham Hbr, the lower R Adur and Scotney GP gave the largest December total since the 18 in 2006. [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 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 16 | 11 | 13 | 8 | 5 | 4 |
| Chichester Hbr | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 5 | - | - |
| Arun Valley N of Arundel | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - | 6 | 8 | 4 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Weir Wood Res | - | - | - | - | - | - | nc | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - |
| Wadhurst Park Estate | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | nc | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Rye Bay | - | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 2 | 2 | - | - | - |
| Average County Total 2008 - 2017 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | | 4 | 19 | 35 | 11 | 9 | 5 | 4 |

The 1% national threshold level (9) was neither met nor exceeded at any site, unlike last year. The only notable counts additional to the WeBS occurred in the second half of the year: 12 at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Jul, ten there on 5 Aug, four at Wadhurst Park on 10 Sep and 10 NE over Hastings on 7 Oct.

Wintering birds were in evidence through the first three months. In January they were recorded on ten dates at 11 sites; in February on ten dates at 12 sites; in March on 13 dates at ten sites. In April they were recorded regularly until the 18th but the last bird was seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 26th. During this period 84% of records were of single individuals with two fours and one three.

In May there were only four records, presumably either straggling migrants or summering non-breeders: one at Sidlesham Ferry on the 12th, another at Wadhurst on the 21st, two at the re-wilded Knepp Estate on the 24th and no less than five at Pulborough Brooks on the 26th.

There was a noticeable increase in records in June with birds recorded on 20/30 days, particularly from the 17th, mostly as ones, but with six at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th. Sightings in July, August and September were almost daily, again mostly as ones, but with a peak count of 12 at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Jul and ten on 5 Aug. The peak count in October was ten on the 7th and of 104 counts 82% were of ones or twos. Sightings were less frequent in November and there were no counts higher than two. A wintering population became established in the second half of December, principally at Sidlesham Ferry, with three there on the last few days of the month and into the New Year. [JAH]

Lesser Yellowlegs

Tringa flavipes

Very rare vagrant.

One was at The Midrips on 3 and 4 Nov, the 12th individual of this Nearctic species to be recorded in the county (DS *et al.*). This is only the second November record, though one overwintered in the Pett/Rye Hbr area from December 2014 to February 2015. The record has been accepted by BBRC. [MM]

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.

Redshanks were recorded in a disappointing 72 tetrads (7.7%), the lowest count since the 69 of 2012 (range 69 – 103) and much lower than the 10-year average of 81. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations were as follows:



Redshank, Rye Harbour, 3 June (Barry Yates)

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| County Total | 1400 | 1841 | 1323 | 450 | 54 | 92 | 843 | 1224 | 1630 | 2048 | 1796 | 1756 |
| Chichester Hbr | 1169 | 1222 | 984 | 218 | 18 | 40 | 661 | 752 | 1306 | 1686 | 1094 | 1324 |
| Pagham Hbr | 40 | 185 | 108 | 113 | 5 | 24 | 88 | 220 | 178 | 136 | 410 | 214 |
| Rye Bay | 71 | 305 | 121 | 107 | 16 | 16 | 80 | 211 | 69 | 151 | 24 | 125 |
| Average County Total 2008-2017 | 1903 | 1868 | 1531 | 363 | 67 | 117 | 707 | 1412 | 1811 | 1980 | 2095 | 1775 |

As usual, the highest counts by far were in Chichester Hbr, where numbers exceeded the 1% national threshold number of 1200 in February, September, October and December, though January only missed the threshold by 31 and overall numbers were similar to last year. The highest counts at Medmerry were 100 (WeBS) on 11 Nov and 80 on 22 Dec.

As in most years, there were few significant counts away from these sites during the first winter period, but there was a high non-WeBS count at Pagham Hbr of 290 on 12 Jan (cf. the 40 recorded on the WeBS). Elsewhere there was a high count of 45 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 20 Mar (with 30 recorded there regularly) and a count of 39 in the lower Adur Valley on 1 Feb.

Spring passage was unremarkable and single figures only were noted at Worthing.

This species has long been a scarce breeding bird in Sussex; breeding was confirmed at four sites and was probable at one more. As usual, Rye Hbr held the majority, with around 13 pairs breeding, mainly on Harbour Fm, but with two or three pairs on the Beach Reserve and perhaps an additional pair at Castle Water; however, fledging success was 'very low'. At Pett Level, six pairs produced about 20 chicks but the number successfully reared was not known. At Pagham Hbr five young were fledged from seven pairs and at Pulborough Brooks there were eight pairs but only one young was recorded. There were five pairs at Medmerry and three at Amberley Wild Brooks.

Numbers began to increase from mid-June with 32 at Thorney Deeps on the 13th, 22 juveniles at

Sidlesham on the 21st and 35 there on the 25th, but the first positively identified returning migrant for one observer was one at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 28th. The following day there were 40 at Pagham Hbr following which numbers increased to 50 on 2 Jul and 60 on 25 Jul. There was a remarkable 570 at Thorney Deeps on 12 Jul and 194 at East Guldeford Levels on 12 Aug.

Significant counts during the second winter period, other than the WeBS counts, included 200 at Sidlesham Ferry on 7 Nov, 65 on the lower R Adur on 8 Dec and 100 on the East Guldeford Levels on 9 Dec. [JC]

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

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

The minimum monthly totals were as shown in the table below.

| May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 6 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 2 |

Sightings were predominantly from West Sussex especially from Pulborough Brooks and from the Pagham Hbr area.

The first of the year was a single bird reported at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Apr (12 days earlier than the 10-year average) and on various dates between the 19th and 25th Apr. One at Sidlesham Ferry on 1 May was perhaps the same as one at neighbouring Medmerry on the 7th. Also on 7 May, six were at Pulborough Brooks. Later in May there were singles at Sidlesham Ferry on the 21st, at Pulborough Brooks on the 23rd to 25th and at Rye Hbr on 24 May. Singles were at Pulborough Brooks and Sidlesham Ferry in June (18th and 24th to 28th respectively). Late July records were shared between one at Sidlesham Ferry and up to two at Rye Hbr/Pett Level. Apart from two at Medmerry on the 1st the August records were mainly singles, at Rye Hbr, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), Pulborough Brooks, Sidlesham Ferry, Midrips, Church Norton, Arundel WWT and Cuckmere Haven.

The final record of the year was of two detected by nocturnal flight calls over Worthing on 30 Aug (a full month earlier than the 10-year average). The only two previous August last dates were 27 Aug 1978 and 29 Aug 1964 [PJP]

Spotted Redshank

Tringa erythropus

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

The approximate minimum monthly totals, including all records with a count and WeBS counts, were as follows:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 8 | 6 | 15 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 18 | 19 | 16 | 9 | 5 |

In the first winter period most birds were in Chichester Hbr with the majority in the East Chidham area, with four on 3 Feb and eight on 3 Mar. Elsewhere there were two at Pagham Hbr during January and February and four in March. As with last year one was recorded at Pagham Hbr through from mid-March to 1 May but it is not clear whether this was the same or a different individual. Elsewhere, there was one at Medmerry on 24 Apr, another at Pulborough Brooks on the 26th and another at a site north of Bognor on the 29th to 1 May. In May, one was at Pulborough Brooks on the 18th (with probably a different individual on the 21st to 22nd) and one at Rye Hbr on the 22nd.

During the summer months singles were at Pagham Hbr from 11 Jun, at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jun and at Rye on the 6th; a similar pattern was noted in July at Pagham Hbr until the last week. However, the first returning birds may have been three at Pagham Hbr and four at Pett Level on 7 Jul; numbers at Pagham Hbr then increased to five on the 26th and 12 on the 28th. However, these latter obviously moved on quickly as there were only single-figure counts anywhere throughout August. Most sightings were from Pagham Hbr where the maximum was seven on the 5th; two were at Medmerry on the 8th when one was at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), one inland at Arlington Res on the 9th, two at Rye Hbr on the 12th and 26th and three at Jury's Gap (Rye Bay) on the 31st. Significant sightings in September involved six at Sidlesham Ferry on the 7th and 12 at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 20th. In East Sussex singles were noted at Rye Hbr on the 9th and from the 22nd to 29th and two were at Broomhill Level on the 25th.

Numbers at Pagham Hbr continued to impress in October, with nine on the 2nd increasing to ten on the 3rd and 11 on the 4th, followed by eight on the 14th but nine on the 23rd, with smaller numbers seen there throughout the month. Elsewhere there was one at Rye Hbr on the 16th, one at Thorney Island on the 24th, one in the Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on the 27th, and another at Emsworth (Chichester Hbr) on the 29th to 30th.

Six at Sidlesham Ferry on 7 Nov were probably the last autumn migrants as thereafter only single birds were there. Other records during the second winter period were three in the Fishbourne Channel on 9 Nov which were seen regularly during November and December, and one at Pagham Hbr on 9 Dec and another at Thorney Island on the 11th. [JC]



Spotted Redshank, Sidlesham Ferry, 23 April (Andrew House)

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 | 28 | 22 | 12 | 7 | 1 | - | 28 | 59 | 96 | 52 | 23 | 20 |
| Chichester Hbr | 27 | 21 | 11 | 7 | - | - | 23 | 53 | 86 | 36 | 17 | 18 |
| Pagham Hbr | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 3 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 4 | - |
| Average county total 2008-2017 | 22 | 22 | 21 | 19 | 6 | 2 | 42 | 109 | 84 | 60 | 32 | 21 |

As usual, the highest number seen during both winter periods were at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr). In the first winter period there were 17 from early January through February reducing to 13 on 16 Mar. This is comparable with previous years and winter numbers in the mid-teens seem to be the norm at this site. Elsewhere in Chichester Hbr the highest first winter period count was five in the Bosham Channel on 6 Jan. Away from Chichester Hbr there were singles at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr/ Sidlesham Ferry, Pulborough Brooks and the R Adur at Shoreham.

Spring migration starts early and is often confused by lingering winter birds. Spring migration proper began in later March and continued through April into May. Three at Easton Fm (Earnley) on 26 Mar and two at Pagham Hbr the following day were most likely early migrants. Other birds were seen at mostly coastal locations but also inland at Pulborough Brooks, mainly as ones or twos. The highest day counts in April were sevens at Thorney Island on the 14th and at a site north of Bognor on the 21st. In early May the highest counts were six at Rodmell and seven at Rye Hbr on the 5th but the highest count was of 22 at Pulborough Brooks on 23 and 24 May in what was obviously a large arrival there, not replicated elsewhere.

In June, there is not much of a gap between late spring migrants and early returning birds; there was a single at Sidlesham Ferry until the 12th and one at Rye Hbr the same day which were probably the last spring migrants. There was then a gap of almost two weeks until the first returning bird was seen at Pagham Hbr on the 25th, followed on the 30th by four in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr). Thereafter, birds were seen at the usual coastal and inland sites virtually daily but numbers at most places were typically no more than five, except at Thorney Island with 23 on 12 Jul, 48 on 11 Aug, 54 on 8 Sep and 24 on 27 Oct, all of which stayed only a day or two. Elsewhere the only double-figure counts were ten at East Chidham on 8 Sep and 11 at Pagham Hbr on 4 Oct.

In the second winter period the wintering flock at Thorney Deepes peaked at 17 on 23 Nov, but some of these could have been late migrants as the number there fell to a consistent 12 in December. There were the typical small numbers elsewhere in Chichester Hbr, and away from here singles were seen at Medmerry, the lower Adur and the lower Cuckmere valleys. [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.

Birds were recorded in every month of the year. It should be noted that passing Kittiwakes are not counted at Splash Point (Seaford) once breeding pairs have settled on the cliffs, as birds are continually flying back and forth. The totals from the principal seawatching sites are shown below:

| | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------|---|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Selsey Bill | E | 33 | 12 | 18 | 44 | 128 | 3 | - | 1 | 1 | 28 | 45 | 11 |
| | W | 65 | 13 | 24 | 46 | 45 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 31 | 203 | 36 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 9 | - | - | 4 | - | - | 13 | 8 |
| | W | 35 | 5 | 24 | 1 | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | 65 | 1 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | - | - | 36 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | - |
| | W | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| Splash Point | E | 59 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | - |
| | W | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | - |
| Birling Gap | E | 16 | 8 | 1390 | 1180 | 500 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | - | - | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |

Observers at Selsey Bill provided monthly totals for all of 2018, including the only monthly counts from June to October. During the first winter period, the only significant large movements were recorded at Birling Gap, with 665 E in 3hr on 14 Mar, 520 E in 4 hr on 29 Mar, and 700 E in 3½ hr on 3 Apr. There were no large counts of feeding groups offshore.

Seaford Head Cliffs remains an important nesting site; the detailed survey conducted on 28 Jun revealed 431 AONs, which is considerably fewer than that counted in the previous two years. The highest number of Kittiwakes recorded at Seaford was 500 on 30 Jul, when there was a large gathering of adults but only 13 fledged juveniles counted. A small colony of Kittiwakes was noted in July on the sandstone cliffs at the west end of the beach at Pett Level.

In the second winter period, the only large movement was recorded at Selsey Bill with 112 W in 2½ hr on 9 Nov. [CD]

Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus

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

This species was recorded in 400 tetrads (43%) during the year. The two highest counts in the first quarter were from the nocturnal roost at Bewl Water where 29,000 roosted on 3 Jan and 24,200 on the 17th. Minimum counts of 500 at Weir Wood Res on 4 Jan and 1000 at Ardingly Res on 4 Mar were the only other inland roosts recorded. During this period there were just two other four-figure counts of 1000 between Ferring and Goring on 29 Jan and 3000 at Arundel WWT on 31 Mar. Additionally there were many counts greater than 100 on 59 different dates and from 85 sites.

Between March and May seawatchers recorded 1411 E and 89 W, with peak movements of 281 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 16 Mar, 188 E at Telscombe Cliffs on 26 Mar and 149 E at Selsey Bill on 19 Apr.

At Rye Hbr a count on 2 May found 887 AONs on the Beach Reserve and Harbour Fm, and overall it was estimated that at least 1100 pairs nested on the reserve with perhaps more than 1500 fledging. At Pett Level there were 330 AONs but no details of fledging. At Pagham Hbr, 584 fledged from 459 AONs and at Arundel WWT a count on 17 May revealed 68 AONs. There were no records suggesting breeding at Chichester GP, Chichester Hbr or Medmerry this year.

Notable post-breeding gatherings included 700 catching ants over Seaford on 26 Jul, 430 in the lower Adur Valley on the 13th and 417 in the lower Arun Valley on the 17th. The table of WeBS counts from Chichester Hbr shows the post breeding arrival and a clear peak for this species in September.

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| 1291 | 1244 | 1349 | 445 | 213 | 163 | 652 | 1341 | 7578 | 753 | 556 | 1390 |

Elsewhere the highest day time counts were 900 on the Henfield Levels on 16 Nov, 819 at Medmerry on 9 Sep, 775 at Climping Gap on 14 Oct, 750 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 15 Oct and 742 in the lower Arun Valley on 4 Sep. At the year end the roost counts were again notable, with at least 700 at Weir Wood Res on both 21 and 22 Nov, and at Bawl Water in December 21,645 on the 7th and 24,300 on the 21st. [JAN]



Little Gulls, Church Norton, 21 November (Andrew House)

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 836 birds were recorded during the year; a figure higher than the past three years and above the average of 608 for the years 2008-17. Over the past three decades annual numbers have fluctuated between 283 (2006) and 1630 (2003) depending on weather conditions mainly in late March and April when large numbers may be seen passing eastward along the coast. The following table of monthly totals at both coastal and inland sites, and the number of days recorded, demonstrates that most were recorded passing coastal locations during spring.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of days recorded | - | - | 9 | 17 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 1 |
| Coastal | - | - | 51 | 728 | 18 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | 3 | 18 | 1 |
| Inland | - | - | - | 6 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Total | - | - | 51 | 734 | 19 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 18 | 1 |

For the past 40 years varying numbers have been recorded early in the year but none was seen in 2018 during January or February, with the first one in Chichester Hbr on 2 Mar. The first notable

movement in the spring occurred on 24 Mar when 31 flew east at Splash Point (Seaford) and during the spring a total of 709 passed seawatching points until 11 May. The main passage occurred in the first half of April and as usual most were seen from East Sussex watch points. This is clearly shown in the table of month totals of eastbound birds from each of the regularly logged sites.

| | Mar | Apr | May | Peak Count (hours watched) |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------------------|
| Selsey Bill | 4 | 91 | - | 42 on 15 Apr (12) |
| Worthing & Goring | 4 | 23 | 1 | 13 on 19 Apr (8) |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 2 | 9 | 2 | 6 on 6 Apr (4) |
| Splash Point | 36 | 544 | 1 | 183 on 2 Apr (9) |
| Birling Gap | - | 392 | - | 131 on 15 Apr (4) |

Up to three were at Rye Hbr on nine dates between 15 May and 7 Jun, 1W at Worthing on 17 Jul and single birds at Saltdean on 7 Aug, Lancing on the 9th, Lewes on the 11th and at Arlington Res on 2 Sep were the only records until later in the autumn when most were seen in November. However, 5 W at Goring on the 6th and 4 W at Church Norton on the 21st were the highest counts. One on the beach at Worthing on 24 Dec was the last and only record for the month. [JAN]

Mediterranean Gull

Ichthyæetus 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 121 tetrads (13%) during 2018 with most observations from sites on or near the coast although there were, as in previous years, some large flocks recorded inland in West Sussex. The pattern of occurrence was similar to recent years, with lower numbers seen in East Sussex outside of the breeding season. This can be seen from the following table showing the highest count in each month for sites in West and East Sussex.

| West Sussex | | | | East Sussex | | |
|-------------|--------|--------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Number | Site | Day | Number | Site | Day |
| Jan | 19 | Selsey Bill | 1 st | 1 | Eight sites | |
| Feb | 170 | Church Norton | 15 th | 22 | Pett Level | 20 th |
| Mar | 400 | Thorney Island | 31 st | 177 | Pett Level | 11 th |
| Apr | 500 | West Dean | 15 th | 200 | Rye Hbr | 8 th & 22 nd |
| May | 100 | Pilsey Island | 15 th | 180 | Rye Hbr | 10 th |
| Jun | 100 | Lavington Common | 15 th | 30 | Rye Hbr | 23 rd |
| Jul | 275 | Fishbourne Channel | 31 st | 138 | Pett Level | 8 th |
| Aug | 1500 | Thorney Island | 3 rd | 2 | Pett Level | 4 th |
| Sep | 1112 | Medmerry | 9 th | 8 | Telscombe Cliffs | 24 th |
| Oct | 500 | Climping Gap | 13 th | 5 | Litlington | 8 th |
| Nov | 100 | Climping Gap | 25 th | 2 | Two sites | |
| Dec | 200 | Pagham Hbr | 20 th | 1 | Two sites | |

Both the August count at Thorney Island and the September count at Medmerry exceeded the previous county record. Other large counts not shown in the above table include 1000 at Climping Gap on 16 Sep, 910 in Chichester Hbr on 10 Aug and 600 at West Wittering on 8 Sep.

Breeding was confirmed at two sites; at Rye Hbr a nest count on 21 May found at least 70 AONs, but overall it was estimated that at least 90 pairs bred. The maximum fledgling count was 58 on Ternery Pool on 2 Jul with overall fledgling numbers estimated in excess of 100. At Pagham Hbr

eight fledged from six nests. Although over 100 were apparently occupying territories in pairs at Pett Level during mid-March none remained to nest.

Coastal movements were smaller than in 2017 and showed a predominantly eastward movement in spring. The following table of month totals, derived from the sum of the highest daily count flying in each direction at the main sites, shows the scale of movement.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| East | 18 | 9 | 146 | 542 | 28 | 4 | 43 | 98 | 60 | 41 | 72 | 32 |
| West | 34 | 6 | 28 | 62 | 21 | 4 | 75 | 85 | 68 | 150 | 27 | 23 |

The peak spring movements were in mid-April; at Splash Point (Seaford) 133 E on the 15th, 124 E on the 17th and 125 E on the 18th whilst at Birling Gap 120 E also on the 17th. The largest movements later in the year were at Selsey Bill where 68 E on 12 Aug and 32 W on 23 Oct. [JAN]

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.

Common Gulls were recorded from 209 tetrads (22%) with most records coming from the coast, coastal plain, river valleys and downland. Also in keeping with recent years the highest numbers, by a large margin, were seen at the nocturnal roost at Bewl Water with counts of 17,500 on 3 Jan, 13,200 on 17 Jan and 11,990 on 21 Dec. A series of observations at Goring Gap revealed 820 on 3 Jan, 2500 on the 11th, 2000 on the 29th, 1500 on 4 Feb and 700 on 18 Mar. Elsewhere during the first quarter there were 830 in Chichester Hbr on 30 Jan, 700 at Pett Level on 22 Jan and 600 near Cissbury on 20 Feb, at Newhaven Tide Mills on 18 Mar and on the R Adur at Shoreham on 19 Mar.

A flock of 350 in a paddock near Findon on the 1st was the highest April count and numbers thereafter declined. A total of 1517 was recorded flying east from seawatching sites during March and April with the peak movements from Splash Point (Seaford) being 335 E on 16 Mar and 242 E on 15 Apr.

Three pairs bred at Rye Hbr but all nests failed before or shortly after hatching. As usual post breeding numbers were low until 100 were seen near West Dean on 30 Jul with 200 there the following day and 500 on 8 Aug. On 5 Aug there were 120 at East Lavant and on the 6th 250 on Thorney Island but for the rest of the month and throughout September only small numbers were recorded. A large flock of 1500 flew south west at dusk over Mid Lavant on 8 Oct and may have been part of the 2000 which roosted in Thorney Channel (Chichester Hbr) that evening. Thereafter there were 34 counts of 100 or more on 24 different dates and from 22 different locations, the most notable being 2500 roosting in Thorney Channel on 14 Dec, 500 at Goring Gap on 21 Dec and the aforementioned roost at Bewl Water on the same day. [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 139 (15%) tetrads, most of which were close to the coast, estuaries or river valleys. The highest counts in each month at seven coastal locations are shown in the following table.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Selsey peninsula | 65 | 52 | 57 | 50 | 73 | 39 | 30 | 23 | 40 | 30 | 35 | 39 |
| Lower Adur Valley | 6 | 4 | 6 | 15 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 10 | 40 | 40 |
| Brighton area | 16 | 4 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 10 | - | 16 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Newhaven area | 36 | 20 | 8 | 12 | 12 | 4 | 13 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 44 | 13 |
| Seaford/ Cuckmere Haven | 680 | 800 | 155 | 20 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 30 | 19 | 250 | 4000 |
| Bexhill / Hastings | 1 | 130 | 1 | 3 | 6 | - | 5 | - | 82 | 3 | 3 | 12 |
| Rye Bay | 20 | 40 | 110 | 45 | 84 | 20 | 30 | 18 | 100 | 250 | 50 | 100 |

The table clearly shows most were seen during the winter months and in this season the Cuckmere Valley is currently the preferred location, where the highest counts were 4000 on 12 Dec, 800 on 2 Feb, 680 on 16 Jan, 650 on 18 Jan, and 400 on both 4 and 6 Dec. Elsewhere there were only five counts exceeding 100. Notably fewer were seen between April and September.

Eight breeding pairs were reported, mainly from traditional nest sites. At the Slipper Pond (near Emsworth), where a pair has nested since 2012, two young were produced this year. Two pairs in Chichester produced one and three young; two young were in the same nest site in Shoreham and three juveniles were produced from the usual nest in Hastings. At Rye Hbr one pair nested on the Martello Tower successfully raising two young whilst two other pairs attempted to nest at other nearby sites. [JAN]

Glaucous Gull

Larus hyperboreus

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

A total of four was recorded in 2018 comprising a second winter photographed at Church Norton on 19 Jan (PC), a first winter at East Guldeford Level on 7 and 11 Feb (RE, DG, PS), a first winter offshore at Fairlight on 9 Feb (AP) and a first winter at Church Norton on 16-18 Feb (HB, MW *et al.*). [PJ]

Iceland Gull

Larus glaucoides

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

2018 was another very good year for this species with a probable total of eight recorded, matching the county's previous best year (1984) when, coincidentally, all eight birds occurred early in the year. These comprised an adult flying east offshore at Birling Gap on 27 Jan (JFC), a second winter at Shoreham Hbr intermittently from 14 Feb to 17 Apr (CWM *et al.*), a second winter at Selsey Bill and East Beach on 5 Mar that was also present on 14 Mar (AH, GAH, OM, SAR *et al.*), a first winter at Climping Gap on 14 Mar (BA, RP) and then later roosting on fields at Goring Gap (DKC, GRFJ *et al.*) where it remained until at least 9 Apr, a first winter flying west with Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Apr (MSP), a first winter resting on a shingle bar off Selsey Bill on 3 Apr (BFE, AH, DM, OM), a first winter assumed to be the Goring Gap bird photographed at Brooklands Park (East Worthing) on 18 and 27 Apr (ARK, DLS) and again at Goring Gap on 2 and 7 May (DKC), a first winter soaring with Herring Gulls over The Trundle (Goodwood) on 28 Apr (MER, RJJ) and a first or second winter in flight at Sidlesham on 4 May (CRJ, CN). The county total this century moves on to c.45. [PJ]



Iceland Gull, Goring Gap, 19 March (John Cooper)

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus argenteus

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

Once again this was the most frequently recorded and widespread of all the gulls having been recorded on every day in the year and from 519 tetrads (55%). The highest counts in each month at ten coastal locations are shown in the following table.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Selsey peninsula | 111 | 135 | 298 | 407 | 630 | 500 | 200 | 571 | 334 | 284 | 80 | 98 |
| Lower Arun area | 68 | 105 | 80 | 92 | 56 | 73 | 351 | 228 | 549 | 410 | 231 | 177 |
| Goring/Worthing | 55 | 30 | 100 | 400 | 600 | 200 | 330 | 318 | 76 | 100 | 100 | 177 |
| Lower Adur Valley | 110 | 70 | 175 | 100 | 90 | 80 | 150 | 400 | 450 | 400 | 350 | 60 |
| Brighton/Hove | 220 | 60 | 175 | 205 | 275 | 160 | 300 | 100 | 440 | 157 | 120 | 190 |
| Newhaven area | 280 | 60 | 210 | 175 | 110 | 155 | 250 | 66 | 260 | 130 | 2000 | 200 |
| Cuckmere valley | 300 | 80 | 450 | 246 | 250 | 100 | 500 | 190 | 200 | 80 | 84 | 240 |
| Beachy Head | 11 | 5 | 600 | 400 | 100 | 50 | 31 | 50 | 40 | 12 | 70 | 11 |
| Bexhill/Hastings | 4 | 77 | 160 | 75 | 175 | 32 | 30 | - | 395 | 84 | 1100 | 148 |
| Rye Bay | 150 | 130 | 38 | 130 | 100 | 30 | 146 | 150 | 200 | 47 | 50 | 80 |

The table suggests large numbers can be encountered throughout the year and the highest counts were 2000 at Telscombe on 27 Aug, 2000 in the lower Ouse Valley on 25 Nov, 1310 at Aldwick (Bognor) on 5 Dec and 1100 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 12 Nov. Generally lower numbers were seen at inland locations but at Bewl Water there were 200 on 17 Jan, 394 on 7 Dec and 300 on 21 Dec whilst at Warnham LNR 200 were seen on 25 Mar. Overall there were 263 three figure counts on 176 different dates from 89 sites.

During the BBS Herring Gulls were found in 115 1-km squares (66%), a similar figure to 2017. Confirmed breeding was recorded from 40, mainly coastal, tetrads with nests in Haywards Heath and Lewes being the furthest from the coast. Forty pairs nested at Rye Hbr and approximately 12 nests with young were seen at Brighton Marina but most records of breeding involved fewer pairs.

Coastal movements are not methodically recorded but 250 and 350 flew east at Beachy Head on 10 and 14 Mar respectively and at least 400 passed east offshore at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 16th.

The records of the nominate race *L.a.argentatus* were all from East Sussex towards the end of the year, with one at Newhaven Tide Mills on 5 Nov and c.50 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 12 Dec, with 20 still there on the 16th and 18th. [JAN]

Caspian Gull

Larus cachinnans

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

On 2 Mar, first winter birds seen at Climping Gap (BA) and at Goring Gap (NB, DKC, GM *et al.*) were possibly the same. These are the first West Sussex records since 2015.

There were no further records until 26 Aug when there was a juvenile at Goring Gap (DB, MB, DKC, GM) followed by further juveniles at Beachy Head on 8 Sep (JARP) and at Newhaven Hbr on 18 Sep (GM), the latter bearing a German colour-ring. The now expected spate of records from Cuckmere Haven in November and December comprised four (a first winter, two second winters and a third winter) on 9 Nov (MRE), five (two first winters, a second or third winter and two adults) on the 10th (MRE, RJF), a first winter and an adult on the 12th (MRE), five (two first winters, a third winter and two adults) on the 25th (CJRB, MRE, RJF), three (a first winter, a third winter and a near adult) on the 28th (MRE), a second winter on 2-3 Dec (MRE), a first and second winter on the 5th (MRE), an adult on the 6th (MRE), two first winters on the 9th (MRE), a second winter on the 10th (MRE), a first winter and three adults on the 12th (MRE) and a first winter and two second winters on the 18th (MRE). The only other records for the latter part of the year were of a colour-ringed first winter at Goring Gap on 13 Dec (GRF, GM) and a different first winter there on the 16th (NB, GM). [PJ]



Caspian Gull, Climping, 2 March (Bola Akinola)

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 small numbers from mainly coastal sites in each month, except April and June. Traditionally the largest numbers were seen between July and October at various sites on the Selsey peninsula but, as shown in the following table, only a few individuals were seen there during the late summer and early autumn.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Approx. county total | 1 | 4 | 3 | - | 1 | - | 9 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 11 | 17 |
| Max no. Selsey peninsula | 1 | 2 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | 1 |
| Days recorded | 1 | 5 | 4 | - | 1 | - | 18 | 11 | 10 | 2 | 6 | 7 |

One or two were seen on just one or two days at seven well watched coastal sites and similar small numbers were seen on four dates at Shoreham and on 11 dates at Goring Gap. Inland one was at Weir Wood Res on 21 Aug and at Arlington Res on 18 Nov. However, most were seen in the large gull roost in the lower Cuckmere Valley during the last two months with three on 9 Nov, six on 26 Nov, nine on 28 Nov (comprising six adults, one third-winter and two second winter), four adults on 2 Dec, 14 adults and one second winter on 12 Dec and, finally, ten on 18 Dec. A minimum of 17 individuals was involved.

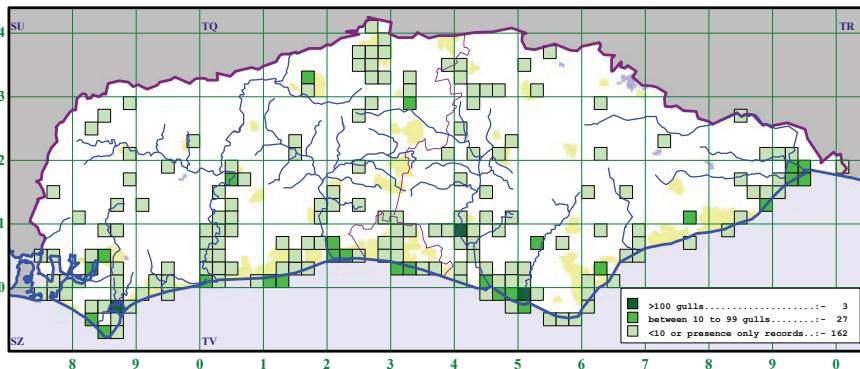
A detailed analysis of the records, assuming the same birds remain in the Pagham Hbr area between July and October and the Cuckmere roost involved returning birds suggests about 40 individuals were involved during the year. [JAN]

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 194 tetrads (21%) during the year; this is the highest number of tetrads with records for this species and well above the 10-year average of 133. Although more widespread, the numbers seen were generally small with 91% of the counts being less than ten, 8% being double figure counts and less than 1% involving more than 100 birds. Most of the higher counts were from the coast or river valleys as shown in the following figure.



The highest count during the first winter period was 360 at Lewes Brooks on 18 Feb but there were several records of up to 51 at Cuckmere Haven between 1 and 18 Jan. Apart from 140 at Pagham Hbr on 16 Dec and 50 on the R Adur at Shoreham on 18 Dec all the high counts in the late autumn and second winter period were from Cuckmere Haven. Chronologically these were 72 on 15 Oct, 100 on 24 Oct, 50 on 4 Nov, 220 on 2 Dec, 335 on the 6th, 2000 on the 12th and 276 on the 18th. The gathering of 2000 on 12 Dec, amongst an estimated 6000 individuals of many species, is the largest number recorded in the county. Thirty at Warnham LNR was the highest number recorded at an inland site.

Very little coastal passage was recorded although there were 40 at Selsey Bill on 18 Apr. Breeding was very poorly recorded, with one pair on a Selsey rooftop, two pairs on the Royal Mail Building roof in Crawley fledging at least three young between them. Recently fledged young were seen at Pett Level on 7 Jul and two pairs nested at Rye Hbr. As part of the national Seabirds Count census the urban breeding gulls are being surveyed during 2019 and 2020; this hopefully will provide a more comprehensive picture of the breeding status of this and other gull species in the county. [JAN]

Royal Tern

Thalasseus maximus

Very rare vagrant.

A Royal Tern of the American subspecies *T. m. maximus* was found with Sandwich Terns at Pagham Hbr on the afternoon of 19 Jun (CAH *et al.*). Although a number of observers were able to enjoy this first for the county later that day and at first light on 20 Jun, it then departed out to sea. The finder's account of his exciting discovery is on pages 212-214 of this report. The tern had been ringed in North Carolina and had a metal ring on its right leg. It was the same as the one seen in Guernsey, Alderney and France between February 2017 and May 2018. After leaving Sussex, it was reported on the Dorset coast on at least 20 Jun, before flying across the Channel to Normandy, where it was seen on 25 Jul. By August, it was reported back in Guernsey, then in December on Anglesey from the 10th to the 11th, Devon on the 18th, in Pembrokeshire on the 22nd and the Isles of Scilly on at least the 26th. The Sussex record has been accepted by BBRC. DNA evidence indicates that American Royal Tern should be elevated to species status, the African Royal Tern *T. m. albididorsalis* being more closely related to Lesser Crested Tern *T. bengalensis*. [MM]

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.

There were over 40 records during January and February from Chichester Hbr and the Selsey Bill/Pagham Hbr areas, with peaks of ten on 3 Jan at the former site and 12 at Selsey Bill on 4 Feb. Birds at both Shoreham Hbr and Rye Hbr on 4 Mar were probably the first migrants, with numbers building up to 100 at the latter site by 16 Mar. Modest numbers were recorded daily from coastal locations until 30 Mar, when 110 E passed Selsey Bill and 64 E passed Splash Point (Seaford), evidence of the first big movement. This was followed by a concerted eastward migration between 2 and 7 Apr, when observers at Selsey Bill recorded 1634, at Splash Point 1522 and 1529 at Birling Gap, including peaks of 760 at the first site on the 6th, 622 at the second on the 2nd and 702 at Birling Gap on the 6th.

Good eastward passage continued through April, with 362 E at Birling Gap on the 19th the highest day count since the 7th, but after 139 E at Selsey Bill on 5 May and 97 E at Worthing on the 11th numbers dropped off quickly away from the Rye Hbr and Selsey Bill/Pagham Hbr areas.

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

| | | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct |
|------------------------------|---|-----|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Selsey Bill | E | 207 | 3596 | 1044 | 18 | 38 | 38 | 157 | 14 |
| | W | 11 | 20 | 9 | - | 81 | 574 | 173 | 3 |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 40 | 850 | 300 | 12 | 49 | 4 | 8 | 10 |
| | W | 5 | 66 | 51 | - | 9 | 23 | 12 | 4 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | E | 7 | 678 | 87 | - | - | - | - | - |
| | W | - | 5 | 7 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Splash Point | E | 75 | 2448 | 242 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | 18 | 1 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Birling Gap | E | 47 | 2381 | 109 | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| | W | - | - | - | nc | nc | nc | nc | nc |

Good numbers continued to be recorded flying east at Selsey Bill in May but these, at least in part, may have been birds heading towards the relatively newly-established breeding colony in Pagham Hbr. This site had its most successful season yet with 29 pairs raising 18 fledged young (but another nine fledglings sadly were taken by a fox). At Rye Hbr the breeding season was also very successful; an estimated 320 pairs raised c.200 chicks to fledging.

Numbers at Rye Hbr dropped away very quickly, from 150 (including c.40 juveniles) on 6 Jul to 56 on 18 Aug, 39 on 7 Sep and only six on 29 Sep, with the last one there on 26 Oct. Conversely, the Selsey peninsula held good numbers throughout August and September, with peaks of 100 in Pagham Hbr on 19 Aug and 66 at Medmerry on 28 Sep; there were also a few days of obvious westerly movement at Selsey Bill, including 135 on 9 Aug.

Single-figure counts were received from a range of coastal sites during October, but by November the only remaining birds (except for 2 E at Splash Point on 12 and 13 Dec) were in Chichester Hbr and the Selsey Bill/Pagham Hbr areas, with peaks of 18 E past Selsey Bill on 17 Nov, eight offshore there on 25 and 27 Dec and finally two in Pagham Hbr on the 30th. There were no records from inland sites. [AH]

Little Tern

Sternula albifrons

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

The first record of the year was of three off Selsey Bill on 5 Apr, three days ahead of the 10-year average, with another 5 E there on the 7th. Small numbers were seen daily thereafter in the Selsey Bill/Pagham Hbr area until the 27th, when 85 birds flew east and another 25 lingered offshore at Selsey Bill. A continual presence at Selsey Bill makes exact totals of eastward migration difficult to assess, though 41 E on 5 May and 44 E on the 11th were the only other sizeable movements. By contrast, very few were recorded further east as is shown in the following table.

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

| | Apr | May | Total | Peak Movement |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|----------------|
| Selsey Bill | 150 | 157 | 307 | 85 E on 27 Apr |
| Worthing & Goring | 8 | 20 | 29 | 11 E on 7 May |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 2 | - | 2 | 2 E on 21 May |
| Splash Point | 8 | 17 | 25 | 8 E on 7 May |
| Birling Gap | 9 | - | 9 | 9 E on 19 Apr |

There were very contrasting fortunes for the two nesting colonies in the county. At Rye Hbr initially five or six pairs nested on Flat Beach Level and the first chick was seen there on 28 Jun, but most did not survive long there and the adults subsequently moved to Shore Ridges where at least 12 pairs nested; food was seen being carried in on 9 Jul, but thereafter activity tailed off and there was no evidence of fledging. Conversely, for the fifth year running, Pagham Hbr proved a propitious place to raise a brood, with 20 pairs fledging 13 young. Display had been noted on 26 Apr and the first nest on 11 May.

Peak counts of 44 in Pagham Hbr were achieved on 9 and 19 Jul, but the last double-figure count there was on the 27th and by early August there were just stragglers remaining; the last record from Rye Hbr was of 12 on 26 Jul. Despite the lack of summering records, 24 birds were recorded at Pilesey Island on 3 Aug, suggesting that migrants from elsewhere were dropping in, albeit briefly.

A total of 38 W was recorded at Selsey Bill in August, with a count of 25 on the 9th being the only significant movement. The only two September records were very late in the month, with individuals recorded at Selsey Bill on the 25th and at Winchelsea Beach on the 27th, a week after the 10-year average last 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 only two records for this very scarce visitor. One was seen among a flock of 'Commic' Terns flying east past Selsey Bill on 20 May (JA, JAF, AH, OM), another was seen briefly with Sandwich Terns at Rye Hbr on 2 Jul (CB); it had metal rings on both legs. [AH]

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

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

The first record of the year was 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 15 Mar, 11 days ahead of the 10-year average and one day later than the earliest, at Brighton Marina on 14 Mar 2011. The next was not until the 24th, flying east past Selsey Bill. From 30 Mar there were daily sightings at coastal locations; the first big day was 6 Apr, when 194 E passed Splash Point (Seaford) probably including many of the 121 E which passed Selsey Bill. A more comprehensive review of seawatching totals can be found under Common/Arctic Tern.

The first inland records were of single birds at Pulborough Brooks and Arlington Res on 3 Apr with two at Chichester GP the following day. Almost all subsequent inland records were from Chichester GP, Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res, though double-figure counts were recorded only at Chichester GP where the peak count was 20 on 18 Apr.

Breeding occurred at six sites with about 156 pairs nesting. At Pagham Hbr only five chicks were fledged from 15 pairs; at Warnham LNR there were two pairs on rafts, one failed at the egg stage, but the other fledged three juveniles; one pair at Ardingly Res had three chicks, and at Weir Wood Res five pairs on tern rafts hatched 14 chicks, four pairs had three and one had two. At Pett Level there were 23 nesting pairs without confirmed success whilst at Rye Hbr, where up to 110 pairs attempted to breed, only one chick was known to have fledged. There was no nesting recorded at either Arundel WWT or Chichester GP.

A count of 250 at Pilsley Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 3 Aug was the highest of the autumn, whilst a group of 40 that appeared in Pagham Hbr on 6 and 7 Aug containing 30 juveniles had clearly dropped in from further afield. The last significant counts of the year were 50 in Pagham Hbr on 26 Aug and 30 at Pilsley Sands three days later. Small numbers were also seen at various coastal sites through September and the last inland record was from Warnham LNR on the 17th. There were only three October records: two offshore at Selsey Bill on the 5th, one 1CY off Goring Gap on the 8th and one at Pagham Hbr on the 10th, 12 days ahead of the 10-year average last date. [AH]

Arctic Tern

Sterna paradisaea

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

A total of 42 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 6 Apr (two days ahead of the 10-year average date) was a good start to the spring there. Indeed, the majority of records of this species were from that site, totalling 199 E in April and 856 E in May, including maxima of 120 on 17 Apr, 228 on 5 May and 580 the following day. By contrast, only 45 and 35 were recorded by observers at Selsey Bill and Worthing during the same period. The last spring record was of 5 E at Selsey Bill on 24 May.

Inland records were from Chichester GP, where two birds were present on 14 Apr, with one on the following two days and another from 5 to 7 May; at Weir Wood Res, four were recorded on 26 Apr with two still present the following day.

The only records from the second half of the year were a very early returner in Pagham Hbr on 10 Jul, and a very late adult at Church Norton on 9 Nov, with possibly the same bird off Selsey Bill on the 17th, a full 35 days later than the 10-year average date. [AH]

Common/Arctic Tern

Sterna hirundo/paradisaea

Due to the difficulties in separately identifying Common and Arctic Terns when passing seawatching sites, primarily due to brevity of view and distance, the majority of the two species are recorded as 'Commic' Terns.

The combined totals for Common, Arctic and 'Commic' Terns for the two main months of spring migration recorded at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

| | April | | May | | Peak movements |
|------------------------------|-------|----|------|---|------------------------------|
| | E | W | E | W | |
| Selsey Bill | 1619 | 3 | 1864 | 5 | 164 on 19 Apr, 483 on 5 May |
| Worthing & Goring | 130 | 9 | 366 | 4 | 34 on 19 Apr; 238 on 11 May |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 130 | | 181 | | 77 on 6 Apr; 79 on 11 May |
| Splash Point | 2250 | 27 | 3443 | | 557 on 15 Apr, 1195 on 7 May |
| Birling Gap | 1983 | | 560 | | 1025 on 19 Apr; 259 on 4 May |

Total numbers recorded were slightly better than last spring. There were three minor peaks in April on the 6th (507), on the 15th and 16th (peak 557) and the 19th (1025) but the main movement was later with May's totals outstripping April's; two thirds of that total occurred between the 5th and the 7th, with the former date being the biggest day-count at both Splash Point (Seaford) with 1257 and Selsey Bill with 643.

There were almost no records of 'Commic' Terns beyond the end of May. [AH]

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 |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 5 | 51 | - | 5 | 27 | 3 | 2 |

The first bird of the year was one at Selsey Bill on 7 Apr, ten days earlier than the 10-year average; followed by another at Selsey Bill on the 19th and then 1 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 22nd.

May produced just 17 past Selsey Bill (with a peak of eight on the 24th) and nine past Splash Point, in what was another poor spring along the coast. But there were records from four other sites: two at Climping on the 12th, 4 E at Rottingdean on the 19th, six on the beach at Rye Hbr on the 21st and one on the 29th. Inland, ten were at Weir Wood Res on the 6th and singles were seen on the 21st and 25th.

Encouragingly, there were many more returning migrants from a range of coastal and inland sites. The first was one at Arlington Res on 19 Jul and four at Newhaven Hbr (including two juveniles) two days later. In August, an adult and a juvenile were in Chichester Hbr on the 6th and 13th and two juveniles on the 25th. One flew west at Selsey Bill on the 16th followed by five at Rye Hbr and one at Arlington Res on the 18th; these presaging a small movement between 26 Aug and 4 Sep. On the former date two were at Pagham Hbr, another two at Chichester GP and one at Weir Wood Res, with four at Arlington Res and two at Shoreham Hbr the following day (with three at the latter site on the next day). In September, further singles were at Pagham Hbr on the 1st and Weir Wood Res on the 4th. The only subsequent records were of one at Rye Hbr on the 22nd and what were two very late sightings of presumably the same bird off Selsey Bill on 12 Oct and at Pagham Hbr the following day, some 15 days later than the 10-year average date. [AH]



Black Tern, Shoreham Harbour, 29 August (Ray Baker)

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 for estimating monthly totals is that used for Red-throated Diver but with the addition of birds lingering offshore not considered to be part of that day's movement, although birds which linger offshore on successive days are included only once. This method gave an annual total of 217 which was a slight increase on the 2017 total of 188 and largely in line with the 10-year average of 213. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----------------|-----|-----|
| Monthly total | 9 | 1 | 5 | 136 | 36 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 3 | 1 |
| No. of days | 5 | 1 | 4 | 19 | 14 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| Peak no. | 3 | 1 | 2 | 53 | 13 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Peak day | 13 th | 26 th | 30 th | 18 th | 2 nd | 14 th | - | - | - | 7 th | - | - |

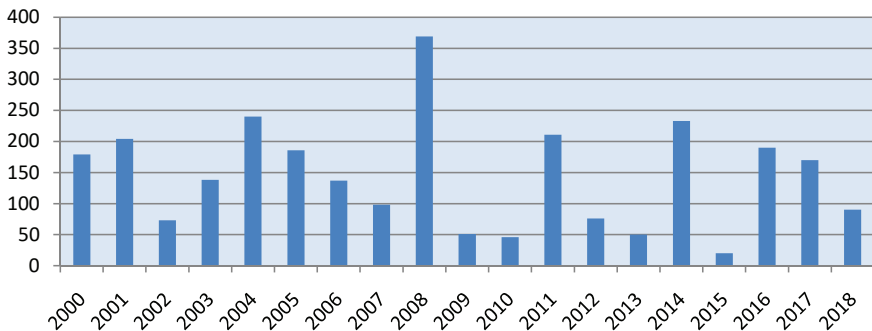
There was again evidence of birds wintering off the Sussex coast during both winter periods. The main spring passage was typically in April and May with the peak movements occurring on 15, 16 and 17 Apr. On the first of those dates there were 11 E at Splash Point (Seaford), on 16 Apr there were a further 17 E at Splash Point and 20 E at Birling Gap. The largest movement of the year was on 17 Apr and was recorded at various points along the coast, including 51 E at Selsey Bill, 46 E past Goring, 53 E at Splash Point and 25 E off Birling Gap. Small numbers continued to move east throughout the second half of April and first half of May with a peak of 13 E at Goring and 12 E past Birling Gap on 2 May. No more than two on any one day were seen during the remainder of the year. It is interesting to note that this species was seen in every month of the year. [DHH]

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

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

The estimated numbers of this species have been calculated using the same method as for Great Skua. This method gave a disappointing annual total of 90 compared to 170 in 2017 and a 10-year average of 114. The annual totals have varied considerably this century as shown below :



Pomarine Skua - annual totals 2000 - 2018

The first records of the year were 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Apr and 2 E there on the 27th. The remaining spring records all occurred in May, which is the normal pattern. Passage occurred between 1 and 25 May with the peak day on the 7th with 14 E at Selsey Bill, 12 E at Worthing, 34 E at Splash Point and 17 E at Birling Gap. During May there were also 4 E at Telscombe Cliffs on the 11th and the last spring record was of 1 E past Selsey Bill on the 25th.

The numbers on easterly spring passage at four of the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

| | Apr | May | Total | Peaks |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|
| Monthly minima | 3 | 86 | 89 | |
| Selsey Bill | 3 | 37 | 40 | 14 on 7 May |
| Worthing & Goring | - | 18 | 19 | 12 on 7 May |
| Splash Point | - | 72 | 72 | 34 on 7 May |
| Birling Gap | - | 27 | 27 | 17 on 7 May |

The only other record for the year was of an immature bird lingering offshore at Widewater (Lancing) on the unusual date of 25 Dec (RJF) . [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.

Using the same method of estimating numbers as used for Great Skua the annual total was 407. This was not only considerably higher than the 2017 total of 259 but also the highest annual total since 2012 and above the 10-year average of 318. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-----|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----|
| No. of birds | - | - | 4 | 222 | 146 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 12 | 7 | 1 | - |
| No. of days | - | - | 2 | 20 | 23 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 1 | - |
| Peak no. | - | - | 3 | 55 | 34 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | - |
| Peak day | - | - | 30 th | 15 th | 11 th | 2 nd | 28 th | 10 th | 18 th | 18 th | 29 th | - |



Arctic Skua, Seaford Head, 17 April (Simon Linington)

With no records in the first two months of the year it was not until 29 Mar that the first bird was seen, 1 E at Birling Gap. April proved a very successful month with daily totals of over 20 on five dates. The peak days in April were the 15th with 55 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 39 E at Birling Gap followed two days later by 18 E at Selsey Bill, 13 E off Worthing, 34 E at Splash Point and 24 E at Birling Gap. Numbers continued to be high during the first two weeks of May with 24 E at Splash

Point on the 7th then, on the 11th, 34 E at Selsey Bill, 23 E at Worthing and 28 E at Splash Point.

The easterly spring passage totals for April and May at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

| | Apr | May |
|-------------------|-----|-----|
| Selsey Bill | 108 | 93 |
| Worthing & Goring | 21 | 39 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 25 | 11 |
| Splash Point | 192 | 66 |
| Birling Gap | 153 | 40 |

After mid-May the numbers for the remainder of the year were typically low with no double-figure counts and maxima of 3 E and 3 W at Selsey Bill on 18 Sep and 9 Oct respectively. Unlike 2017 there were very few records of birds in Rye Bay during the summer although one was present there on the relatively late date of 29 Nov which was the last record for the year. [DHH]

Long-tailed Skua

Stercorarius longicaudus

Rare vagrant.

2017: The bird observed flying past Selsey Bill on 11 May was at 10:54 hrs not 06:25 hrs. [PJP]

Common Guillemot

Uria aalge

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

The estimated monthly and annual totals were derived using the same method as for Red-throated Diver. Following the record total of 4307 in 2017 this year's total was just 136; this was the lowest this century and well below the 10-year average of 1016. The monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----|------------------|
| Monthly total | 38 | 1 | 10 | 25 | 24 | 5 | - | - | - | 4 | 19 | 10 |
| Peak no. | 2 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 4 | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Peak day | 1 st | 13 th | 2 nd | 6 th | 8 th | 16 th | - | - | - | 28 th | - | 12 th |

The peak numbers relate only to movements and do not include birds feeding offshore, although these are included in the monthly totals.

There were no days on which passage numbers reached double figures. The only double-figure counts were of birds offshore with 30 in Rye Bay on 28 Jan and 15 off Goring on 6 Nov. [DHH]

Razorbill

Alca torda

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

After a high total of 6636 in 2017, using the same method of estimation as for Red-throated Diver, numbers in 2018 dropped dramatically to 641, which was considerably below the 10-year average of 2163. The monthly figures are shown in the table below in which the peak day numbers are of movements only and do not include birds feeding offshore, although these are included in the monthly totals.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Monthly total | 92 | 36 | 20 | 177 | 44 | 8 | 3 | - | - | 51 | 178 | 32 |
| Peak No. | 37 | 1 | 5 | 134 | 7 | 4 | 1 | - | - | 24 | 60 | 10 |
| Peak day | 8 th | - | 11 th | 6 th | 10 th | 26 th | - | - | - | 31 st | 7 th | 12 th |

During the first three months of the year there were only two movements involving double figures, both of which were off Splash Point (Seaford) and both in January, with 37 E on the 8th and 13 E on the 13th. The only double-figure offshore gathering in this period was of 33 in Rye Bay on 3 Feb. Spring passage was notable only for 134 E past Splash Point on 6 Apr; there were no other double-figure counts during this period and no offshore gatherings of note. Numbers in June and July were typically low and there were no records in August or September.

The totals of Razorbills logged from seawatching sites during the year are shown in the table below.

| | Jan-Feb | | | Mar-May | | | Jun-Jul | | | Aug-Oct | | | Nov-Dec | | |
|---------------------|---------|-----|----|---------|-----|----|---------|-----|---|---------|-----|----|---------|-----|-----|
| | E | o/s | W | E | o/s | W | E | o/s | W | E | o/s | W | E | o/s | W |
| Selsey Bill | 19 | 6 | 18 | 41 | - | 44 | 3 | - | 2 | 30 | - | 20 | 68 | 8 | 118 |
| Splash Point | 56 | - | - | 117 | 7 | 3 | 4 | - | - | - | - | - | 10 | - | - |
| Other sites | 9 | 52 | 2 | 3 | 17 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | 24 | 38 | 3 |

In the second winter period the vast majority of records came from Selsey Bill, with monthly maxima in October of 22 W on the 23rd and 24 E on the 31st while in November there were 60 W on the 7th and 33 E on the 16th. [DHH]

Black Guillemot

Cepphus grylle

Rare vagrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The popular bird first recorded in Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on 28 Nov 2017 remained until 10 Apr. The only other record was of a summer plumaged bird seen off Climping intermittently from 9 Mar to 14 Jun (BA, RG, OM). This record increases the county total to 20. [DHH]



Black Guillemot, Sovereign Harbour, 6 April (Laurence Pitcher)

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

Very scarce visitor; most frequently recorded in spring. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The only record during the year was of 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 26 May (NJNP). This species remains a scarce visitor to the county with a total of just 21 records this century and eight years with no records. [DHH]

Auk species

The approximate monthly totals of auks, which includes all records of Common Guillemots, Razorbills and auks not identified to species, were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Monthly total | 509 | 463 | 351 | 997 | 357 | 22 | 3 | 1 | - | 231 | 673 | 449 |
| Peak no. | 58 E | 258 W | 60 W | 297 E | 124 E | 4 W | 1 W | - | - | 149 E | 145 W | 138 E |
| Peak day | 27 th | 14 th | 17 th | 6 th | 11 th | 16 th | - | - | - | 31 st | 7 th | 31 st |

This resulted in a total of 4056 for all auks reported in 2018, which was the lowest total this century and in stark contrast to the 52,089 recorded in 2017. It was also a long way below the 10-year average of 22,940. No account of duplication has been taken in creating the figures shown in the table so these should not be taken as an accurate assessment.

Unlike 2017 when 70% of all records came from Selsey Bill, this year the records were much more evenly spread along the coast. In the first four months of the year the highest monthly totals were from the Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap (Beachy Head) areas. During this period the only significant movement was of 258 unidentified auks moving west past Fairlight. The pattern changed in May with the majority of records coming from Selsey Bill while in the second winter period the highest monthly totals were from Selsey Bill and Worthing.

Totals of auks logged from seawatching points during the year are shown in the table below.

| | Jan-Feb | | | Mar-May | | | Jun-Jul | | | Aug-Oct | | | Nov-Dec | | |
|-------------------------|---------|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|---------|-----|----|---------|-----|----|---------|-----|-----|
| | E | o/s | W | E | o/s | W | E | o/s | W | E | o/s | W | E | o/s | W |
| Selsey Bill | 90 | 6 | 164 | 205 | 4 | 214 | 7 | - | 2 | 181 | - | 39 | 230 | 9 | 334 |
| Worthing | 16 | 2 | 16 | 22 | 4 | 20 | - | - | 1 | 2 | - | 3 | 293 | 44 | 160 |
| Telscombe Cliffs | 23 | 33 | 52 | 96 | 28 | 12 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 24 | - | 1 |
| Splash Point | 107 | 1 | - | 600 | 14 | 61 | 4 | - | - | nc | - | nc | 15 | - | - |
| Birling Gap | 77 | 32 | 1 | 382 | 15 | - | nc | - | nc | nc | 1 | nc | nc | nc | nc |
| Other sites | 7 | 87 | 258 | 16 | 12 | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | 3 | 2 | - | 12 | 1 |

Many of the auks recorded were too distant for specific identification. In previous years some 25% of all auks reported were recorded as 'auk sp' but in 2018 over 75% of auks were not specifically identified. This suggests that birds were moving much further offshore than in previous years which, in turn, may go some way towards accounting for the low annual total. Where specific identification was possible the Razorbill to Common Guillemot ratio was 4.7:1. [DHH]

Feral Pigeon

*Columba livia***Common resident.**

Feral Pigeons were recorded in 266 tetrads (28%) (227 in 2017). In the first winter period there were two three-figure counts with 130 at Brighton on 12 Jan and 100 at Newhaven East Pier on 11 Feb, along with six records of flocks of 50 or more including 70 at Brighton on 3 Jan, 71 at Seaford on 11 Jan and 70 at Balsdean on 25 Jan, obviously under recording of this species. In the early year SWBS 341 were recorded in 25 (16%) of the 1-km squares surveyed.

In the spring and summer periods, the only records of note were of 80 at East Brighton Park on 19 May, 80 at Hastings on 31 May, 95 at Brighton on 4 Jul and 300 at Castle Hill (Falmer) on 1 Aug. A total of 476 were encountered in 37 (21%) of the 1-km squares surveyed for the BBS.

For the autumn and second winter period, records over 100 birds included 140 in a stubble field at Bexhill on 4 Sep, 120 at Castle Hill (Falmer) on 9 Sep and 220 at Telscombe on 23 Oct. There were eleven other sightings of flocks of 50 birds or more, with the majority at or near the coast.

Through the year, the species was recorded by 80 (35%) of the 230 GBW participants while in the late year SWBS 363 were found in 29 (23%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed. [AHP]

Stock Dove

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

The species was recorded in 372 tetrads (40%) compared with 350 in 2017 and a 10-year average of 378. In the first winter period, 80 at Thorney Island on 11 Feb was the only record of note, while the early year SWBS noted 167 in 49 (31%) of the 156 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 23 at Coles Fm (Church Norton) on 26 Feb. During the spring there were better counts of 250 at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 3 Mar, 250 at Hampshire Hill (Warninglid) on 18 Mar and 360 at Medmerry on 13 Apr.

First heard singing at Weir Wood Res on 8 Jan, pairs were on owl boxes at Mill Fm (Fletching) on 1 May and at Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on 5 Jun, while two chicks were seen in an owl box at Bosham on 3 Jul. Breeding was confirmed in only three tetrads (six in 2017) but considered probable or possible in a further 103 tetrads (84 in 2017), while in the BBS, 319 were encountered in 86 squares, just under half of all those surveyed with a maximum of 17 at West Dean on 11 May.

Autumn passage was light, with 51 at Bury Hill (Arundel) on 14 Sep, and in October 62 at Weir Wood Res on the 8th, 146 at Hastings on the 19th, 10 flying E with Woodpigeons at Beachy Head on the 20th, 75 at Selsey Bill, also on the 20th and 180 at East Guldeford Levels on the 31st.

The only late winter count of note was of 260 at Hucksholt (Compton) on 18 Nov comprising 60 feeding in a cereal crop and 200 flying west high over. In the late year SWBS 68 Stock Doves were encountered in only 29 (23%) of the 127 squares surveyed, with a maximum count of three at Almodington on 13 Nov. [AHP]

Woodpigeon

*Columba palumbus***Abundant resident and winter visitor.**

Woodpigeons were recorded in 708 (75%) tetrads compared to 665 in 2017 and the 10-year average of 712 tetrads.

There were only two counts of note for the first winter period, with 1000 at Kingley Vale on 9 Jan

and 1500 at Westdean Woods on 17 Feb. There were 28 records of flocks over 100 (30 in 2017, 70 in 2016). In the early year SWBS 5580 were recorded in all but one of the 156 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 507 at Plumpton Green on 6 Jan. In the BGBW they were recorded in 82% and 73% of participating gardens in West and East Sussex respectively. However, during the BTO's GBW survey over 98% of gardens recorded Woodpigeons. There were a further 2000 at Mount Pleasant Fm (Tilgate) on 31 Mar.

Although clearly a widespread breeder, breeding was confirmed in only 16 tetrads (13 in 2017) but likely in a further 119 (104 in 2017). A total of 5376 was found in all squares surveyed for the BBS with a maximum of 137 at West Dean on 12 Apr.

Autumn movement was light, commencing with 200 W at Selsey Bill on 17 Oct, 750 flying NE and NW at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 19th and 660 S at Selsey Bill on the 20th. There were 1000 W at Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest) on 23 Oct and 1800 SW at Pulborough Brooks on the 27th, while 3250 W at Worth on 4 Nov proved to be the last of an unremarkable passage.

Records of note for the remaining autumn/winter periods were of 500 on stubble at Great Bentley Fm (Balcombe) on 18 Nov, 540 at Eartham on 20 Dec, 1000 at Bramber Fm (Pagham) on 28 Dec and 700 at Charleston Reedbed on 31 Dec. In the late year SWBS a total of 4504 was recorded in all 127 squares surveyed with a maximum of 765 at Balcombe on 29 Dec. [AHP]

Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur

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

Turtle Doves were recorded in 65 (6.9%) tetrads compared to 60 in 2017, 69 in 2016, 57 in 2015, 75 in 2014, 53 in 2013 and 76 in 2012.

The first of the year were at Northchapel and Henfield on 22 Apr, eight days later than the 10-year average. There were another dozen records for April, all singles except for two at Dallington on the 26th. 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 Dallington on 1 May and five on the Knepp Estate on 23 May. On the Knepp southern block, 20 territories were estimated.

Interestingly, there were five records of birds seen in gardens and one sighting of a pair under feeders at Ashburnham (Battle) on 10 May.

There was just one tetrad with confirmed breeding (two in 2017) while breeding was probable in eleven and possible in twenty other tetrads (12 and 12 in 2017). The only sighting of juveniles was of two at Steyning Levels on 20 Jul. Allowing for duplication there were about 30 records for July followed by the usual dozen records for August which were all of single birds.

There were just five sightings in September, with the last departing birds seen at Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) and Bramber on 22 Sep, six days earlier than the ten-year average of 28 Sep. [AHP]

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Very common resident.

Collared Doves were recorded in 467 tetrads compared to 451 in 2017. In the first winter period, there were five records of 20 or more, with 28 at Alciston on 2 Jan, 28 at Seaford on 11 Jan, 28 at Burgess Hill on 7 Feb, 50 at Iford Brooks (Lewes) on 13 Jan and a high count of 80 at Iford on 30 Jan. During the early year SWBS, a total of 300 was recorded in 69 (44%) of the 1-km squares surveyed,

with a maximum of 28 at Burgess Hill, mentioned above. They were found in 46% of East Sussex and 43% of West Sussex gardens in the BGBW, and throughout the year 87% of participants for the GBW recorded Collared Doves, with the highest peak weekly count of 26 in Burgess Hill in the week commencing 18 Nov.

A male was seen displaying at Seaford on 8 Jan, while breeding was confirmed in only four tetrads (four in 2017) but likely in a further 74 tetrads (66 in 2017). There was a record of a nest with young predated by a Sparrowhawk at Troutbeck (Eridge). A total of 476 was recorded from 110 (63%) of the 174 squares surveyed for the BBS, with a maximum of 16 at Westergate (Fontwell) on 5 Jun.

There were only ten records for 20 or more during the autumn and second winter period, with 34 at Seaford on 28 Dec being the highest. In the late year SWBS, 181 Collared Doves were found in 40 (32%) of the 127 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 29 at Northchapel on 30 Dec. [AHP]

Common Cuckoo

Cuculus canorus

Fairly common but declining summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Cuckoos were recorded in 207 tetrads (20%) during 2018, a welcome increase on the 166 in 2017.

The first records of the year were from Stanley Common (Liphook) and the Knepp Estate, both on 7 Apr, five days later than the 10-year average arrival date. These were followed on 10 Apr by a sighting at Wiggonholt Common. Thereafter there were records on almost every day in April, mainly in ones and twos. Threes were noted at Newenden (Northiam) on the 19th, Rye Hbr on the 22nd and 23rd and Pagham Hbr on the 28th. Fours were at Ifold on the 21st and at Ripe on the 28th.

During the BBS Cuckoos were found in 42 (24%) of squares surveyed, with a maximum of four at Ifold, mentioned above. There were two confirmed breeding records: a fledgling seen at Brookhouse Fm (Knepp Estate) on 16 Jun and a juvenile being fed by a Dunnock at Pett Level on 12 Jul. Probable breeding occurred in 20 further tetrads. Three birds were caught, ringed and satellite tagged by the BTO on the Knepp Estate on 18 May. All three returned to Knepp in April 2019, and at the time of writing the satellite tags were still transmitting. Breeding surveys suggested that six singing males were present at Rye Hbr and four at Pagham Hbr. Most records were of singles but up to seven were recorded on several dates in May on the Knepp Estate. Also in May, fours were recorded at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on the 12th, Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 13th and Filsham LNR on the 19th. Most June records were of one, but four were at Knepp on the 1st, three at Filsham LNR on the 2nd and a male and female were together at Pett Level on the 12th.

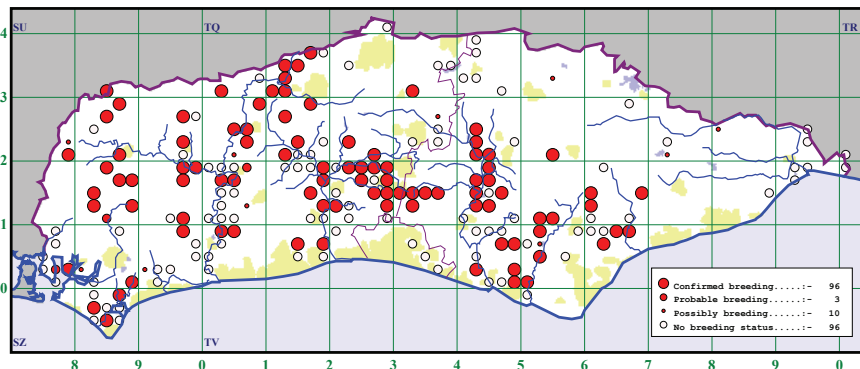
With most adults departed, all records after 24 Jun were singles from 19 locations. Twelve birds were seen in July, eleven in August and two in September. The last ones were at Old Lodge LNR on 29 Sep and on 1 Oct, three weeks later than the 10-year average departure date and the first October record since 2002. [TS, MJC]

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Fairly common resident. Schedule 1 species.

As is usual with this species, single birds were reported flying and hunting over suitable habitat at sites across Sussex, particularly in the first two and the last two months of the year. Sightings and breeding records came from 205 tetrads as shown in the map below.



Breeding was confirmed in 96 tetrads with a total of 121 reported attempts. No nests were reported in natural sites. One nest was in a deserted building and the position of another not recorded. The rest were in nest boxes provided on trees and in buildings. A clutch of seven eggs was reported and six broods of five young at the time of inspection. At other sites numbers of young ranged from one to four. During a spell of very hot and dry weather in June one or two young from four broods were found dead.

During the year there were three reports of adult Barn Owls found dead on roads and one of a dead bird below power lines. [ABW]

Tawny Owl

Strix aluco

Common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Tawny Owls were recorded from 241 tetrads (26%), an increase of 44 tetrads from the previous year, and significantly higher than the 10-year average for 2008 to 2017 of 227 tetrads.

The highest count for the first winter period was four at Pett Level on 12 Mar. The vast majority of records were of single birds or pairs, with most frequent encounters coming from various sites in the Arun Valley, Weir Wood Res and Ashdown Forest.

Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads, a significant decrease from the previous year (14), whilst probable breeding came from a further 57 tetrads, giving some hope of further successful breeding sites. The first confirmed breeding was at Pulborough Brooks on 27 Apr where two fledglings were on view, and at Wakehurst Place where a nest contained three chicks on 30 Apr. In June fledglings were seen regularly on the Knepp Estate. Also in June, broods were recorded at Troutbeck (Eridge) and The Mens LNR (Fittleworth) and at Pett Level in July. The largest concentration of Tawny Owls during the breeding season was five at Ambersham Common on 23 Jun.

Maximum counts during the summer period were of five 'hooting' at Withyham (Hartfield) on 31 Aug, while groups of three were recorded from East Grinstead, Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) and Pett Level. During September and October Tawny Owls became more vocal and records during this period increased by 20% from the mean average of sightings during the other months of the year. Up to five were recorded in 35 (46%) of the 76 tetrads studied during the BTO's point count survey conducted in the early autumn; this survey possibly accounting for the aforementioned increases. The last notable record was six at Robertsbridge on 14 Dec heard during a 45 minute night session. [ME]



Tawny Owl, Pulborough Brooks, 3 May (Trevor Guy)

Little Owl

Athene noctua

Fairly common resident.

Little Owls were recorded in 59 tetrads (6.3%), a slight increase from that in 2017 (56 tetrads). However, this is still far lower than the five Atlas years 2007-2011 (106 tetrads) and reflects the decline of this species in Sussex.

Most were seen in West Sussex, with Westdean Woods, Pulborough Brooks and Truleigh Hill being regular sites, whilst in East Sussex regular sites included Pevensy Levels, Fletching and Rye Hbr. Sightings never exceeded two birds at any time of the year, with the majority of records being individuals, especially during the first and second winter periods respectively.

At Udimore, in an area of Ash dieback, a nest box was erected and Little Owls from a population that have occupied this area for half a century instantly took up residence and were thought to have successfully bred.

Only three other tetrads were thought to hold probable breeders, one of which was at Funtington, whilst a further five tetrads held possible breeders, with one such being at Eridge where a bird was calling at a past breeding site, giving some hope that a pair still occupy this area.

Although a rather bleak assessment of Little Owls in Sussex, the number of records was consistent with recent years, and with plenty of private land having suitable habitat, there is still hope that breeding pairs are more frequent than the numbers suggest. [ME]

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

There was a welcome increase in sightings, with birds recorded from six sites during the year equally split between East and West Sussex. There were no specific records of birds at roosts in the first winter period, though the first record of the year was of two calling at a downland locality on 13 Feb, and they likely wintered in this area. No spring migrants were recorded.

In addition to the above downland site, during the protracted breeding season single birds were recorded from three sites in river valleys and one mixed woodland, where the bird was observed flying into a conifer plantation. Breeding was not confirmed at any sites.

No autumn migrants were recorded and there was one record of a bird in the second winter period from downland on 29 Dec. Without concerted efforts this species is very rarely encountered by chance therefore these records likely represent a significant understatement 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.

Short-eared Owls were recorded from 45 tetrads (4.8%), which was a welcome increase from 2017 (36 tetrads).

The traditional sites held their form during the first winter period, with peak counts coming from Pilsey Island (five), Thorney Island (three) and The Burgh (Burpham) (five), whilst individuals were frequently being seen at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr and Pevensy Levels. A single bird flew east

over Brighton on 8 Jan, this being the only unusual record during this period.

During the spring, there were only three presumed migrants, one flushed by a dog at Selsey on 21 Mar, another coming in over the sea at Selsey Bill on 4 May and one at Climping on 29 Apr.

There were no records during the summer months (unlike 2017 when an individual remained in the county), but autumn migration started early for this species; the first records coming from Beachy Head, with two present on 25 Aug and a further four birds recorded across this site throughout the autumn, whereas observers at Newhaven, Cuckmere Haven, Hasting CP and The Midrips had brief encounters with single birds, all very likely being passing migrants rather than winter residents. During September and October, birds had settled at their wintering quarters, with peak counts coming from Pilsley Island (five), Thorney Island (four) and Medmerry (two). One flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 28 Oct, constituting the last coastal migrant.

The second winter period produced totals of three at Thorney Island, Pulborough Brooks and Upper Beeding, whilst the largest congregation of Short-eared Owls for the year was at Pevensy Levels, with six present on 24 Dec.

Short-eared Owl numbers fluctuate from year to year, this being highly dependent on the weather conditions or food shortage/abundance on the continent. [ME]



Short-eared Owl, Pulborough Brooks, 21 November (Dorian Mason)

Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Fairly common but localised summer visitor; rarely seen on migration. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 40 tetrads (4.3%), two more than in 2017. The first of the year were three on 13 May at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and one at Wiggonholt Common, a week later than the 10-year average arrival date.

Coastal sightings during spring migration were one seen at Selsey Bill on 16 May hawking insects offshore, and one at the Newhaven Ferry Terminal on 25 May after dusk as it flew over cars waiting to board the ferry. In West Sussex, three were displaying at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 14 May. The first records for the Wealden Heaths were of two at Black Down (Fernhurst) and three at Lavington Common, both on 25 May, and five at Ambersham Common on 28 May. The first seen at Broadwater Warren were two on 16 May.

Breeding was not confirmed at any sites in Sussex this year. During the WHBBS (see page 211), 54 pairs or territories were recorded, a substantial increase on the mean of 41 for the previous five years. This total included 20 pairs or territories at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, nine at Black Down (Fernhurst) and seven at both Iping Common and the Lavington Commons complex. On Ashdown Forest there was evidence of probable breeding at seven sites and churring males were reported at ten further locations. Probable breeding was also reported at Flexham Park (Fittleworth), Rewell Wood (Arundel), Buchan CP (Crawley) and Abbots Wood (Hailsham), and churring males were reported at Darwell Woods and at Memorial Common (Chailey). RSPB breeding counts recorded eight displaying or calling males at Broadwater Warren and two at Wiggonholt Common.

The only sightings of birds apparently on autumn passage were of one at Arundel WWT on 25 Aug, one at Beachy Head on 1 Sep and the last of the year, one trapped and ringed at Pett Level on 7 Sep, five days earlier than the 10-year mean last date. [AR]

Alpine Swift

Tachymarptis melba

Rare vagrant.

2013: One flew north over the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) towards Honer Fm on 14 Apr (JB, MYB).

2018: One flew west over Shooters' Bottom (Beachy Head) on 22 Apr (RDME, LP) and was soon lost to view. The county total since 1962 moves on to 44, of which nine have been in April, 12 this century and 17 at Beachy Head. [PJ]

Common Swift

Apus apus

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

Swifts were recorded in 280 tetrads, a decline on the 353 in 2017. The first records were from Bexhill with one and Uckfield with two, both on 19 Apr, only three days later than the previous year and six days later than the 10-year average arrival date of 13 Apr. The first large count was of 60 at Chichester GP on 23 Apr; a further nine double-figure counts were made before the end of April, the next highest being 38 at Pulborough Brooks on the 28th with ten at both Weir Wood and Arlington Reservoirs.

As expected, most of the larger numbers were recorded over water bodies, 50 over Lewes on 7 May being an exception. There were just six counts over 100 in May and June: 100 at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on 11 and 16 May, 100 at Rye Hbr on 5 Jun, 200 at Pett Level on 17 Jun, 150 at Barcombe Res on 18 Jun and 101 E at Fairlight on 25 Jun.

The BBS population trend (1995-2017) reveals a significant decline of -57% for the South East region. During the late BBS visits made in Sussex, Swifts were encountered in 24% of the

174 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 15 at St George's (Wivelsfield) on 7 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and probable in a further 13, similar to the 14 confirmed in 2017 but much lower than the 43 probable. The RSPB Brighton Swift Group recorded 81 active nests across the city, compared with 76 in 2017. At Brighton General Hospital birds were back at their nest sites from 15 May, whilst in Chichester there were nests with young on 26 Jun and the first fledged birds were observed in Uckfield on 17 Jul.

The earliest signs of post-breeding movements came at the beginning of July; on the 2nd 90 E and 12 W were recorded at Goring Gap whilst the next day there were 129 E and 4 W with a further 425 W on 17 Jul. The same day 125 E and 4 W were observed from Worthing. At these same two sites 425 W were recorded on 17 Jul. There were only two further three-figure counts throughout the remainder of the year, both on 3 Aug, with 200 at Roedean (Brighton) and 550 at Beachy Head. There were only 13 counts over ten in August; the largest and last was 40 at Horsham on the 27th.

Fourteen records were received during September on 10 dates with a maximum of 6 E at Beachy Head on the 3rd. The last record of the year was of one on the Knepp Estate on 16 Sep, 13 days earlier than the 10-year average last date of 29 Sep. [DB].

Pallid Swift

Apus pallidus

Very rare vagrant.

One flew west over Church Norton on 13 Oct (DM, AW) in a period when there was an unprecedented influx of Pallid Swifts into Britain. The record has been accepted by BBRC and is the first for Sussex. An account of the discovery is given on p. 213-214 of this report. [MM]

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 recorded in 140 tetrads, similar to the figure for 2017 (144) and the average for the period 2008 -2017 (146). They were recorded in every month of the year at Arundel WWT and Weir Wood Res and in 11 months at Burton MP and Warnham LNR.

During the first winter period birds were regularly seen, predominantly in ones or twos, in coastal locations. The only count of three was at Weir Wood Res on 21 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads, with probable breeding in one more. Confirmed breeding was first noted on 29 Mar, an occupied nest on the Knepp Estate. Birds carrying food were seen at Chichester GP, a fishing lake in Burgess Hill and at Petworth, and fledged young were observed in Rustington and Troutbeck (Eridge). The highest count of the summer months was five between Bury and Houghton on 5 Jul. Eleven different birds were ringed at Ladywell (Coombes) between 25 Jul and 25 Nov. In the autumn the highest counts of four were between Arundel and Littlehampton on 4 Sep, at Birdham (Chichester) on the 8th, North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 30th and at Arundel WWT on 15 Oct. There were ten further counts of three from five locations. During the second winter period sightings were mainly in ones or twos, but four were recorded at Thorney Island on 23 Nov and threes at Warnham LNR on 3, 16 and 27 Nov, at Weir Wood Res on 9 Dec and Burton MP on 13 Dec. [TS, MJC]

Bee-eater

Merops apiaster

Very scarce visitor; mainly in spring; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.

There were three records in 2018, all of single birds. The first flew out to sea calling at Hastings CP on 1 May (AP) and was followed by one photographed in a dead tree in Church Norton churchyard on 23 May (AW) before it departed north. The final bird was seen hawking for insects at Great Ham Fm (Medmerry) for 15 minutes on 2 Jun (JCP). The total recorded this century moves on to 89 with records in all but two years since 2000. [PJ]



European Bee-eater, Church Norton, 23 May (Andy Wilkes)

Wryneck

Jynx torquilla

Very scarce passage migrant, most in autumn; last bred in 1944. Schedule 1 species.

A Wryneck in an Uckfield garden on 22 Apr was the only spring record.

In autumn the first was at Seaford Head on 25 and 26 Aug closely followed by one in a garden at Singleton and at Hastings, both on the 29th, and at Medmerry and Newhaven Tide Mills on the 31st, the latter present until 2 Sep. Early September was the peak arrival period, with singles at Normans Bay on the 1st, Badgers Wood Fm (Poynings) on the 2nd and at Church Norton one on the 2nd, two on the 3rd and one again on the 4th. One was on downland at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on the 5th and another, possibly the same individual, at nearby Chantry Hill from the 8th to 11th. Another at Nutbourne on the 11th was the last early September record, with the last birds for the year at Chantry Hill and North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 24 Sep.

The autumn records probably involved at least 14 different birds with most only seen for a day or two. [KS]

Hoopoe*Upupa epops****Very scarce spring and even scarcer autumn passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.***

Five Hoopoes were recorded in the spring. One photographed at North Lancing on 6 Apr was seen in a nearby garden on the 8th and another was at Whatlington (Battle) also on the 6th. Others involved one photographed at Ditchling on 23 Apr, another from two gardens at Lower Horsebridge (Hailsham) on the 27th and 29th, the latter seen from a kitchen window busily probing around and the last one was at Fairlight on 23 May. The year's total is fairly typical; an average of just under five a year has been recorded this century. [PJP]

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker*Dryobates minor****Very scarce and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.***

The species was recorded in 31 tetrads (3.3%) in 2018, the same number as 2017. Successful breeding was reported at one site with probable breeding in a further eight tetrads and birds in suitable habitat in two more. As usual for this species the majority of records (55%) were from March and April when birds are most detectable from their calling and drumming.

In January and February there were four records of singles; at the Knepp Estate on 8 Jan, Broadwater Warren on 9 Jan and 13 Feb and Weir Wood Res on 25 Feb.

During the breeding season from March to mid-June there were records from 21 sites thinly spread over the county; Ashdown Forest (four sites), Barns Green, Brede High Wood, Broadwater Warren, Buchan CP, Burgess Hill, Cowdray Forest (Worth), Fore Wood (Crowhurst), Knepp Estate, Little Strudgate (Balcombe), Mayfield, Pulborough Brooks, Rewell Wood (Arundel), Rowlands Castle (a bird flying into West Sussex), Tilgate Forest, Wadhurst Park Estate, Wakehurst Place and Weir Wood Res. Most of these records were of calling or drumming birds. No nests were found in 2018 although a family party with recently fledged young was found on 3 Jun near Mayfield proving breeding nearby.

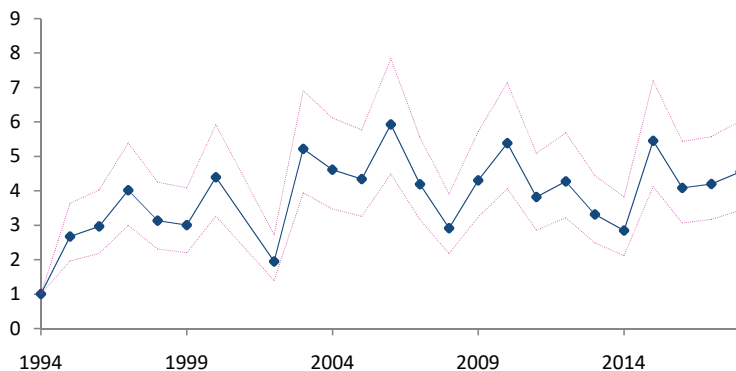
From mid-June until the end of the year there were eight records, all of one; at Bury on 24 Jun, Butcherland LNR on 10 Jul, Sheffield Forest on 20 Aug and 21 Sep, the Knepp Estate on 8 Oct, Arundel Park on 31 Oct, Coolham on 22 Nov, Wiggonholt Common on 28 Dec and The Mens LNR (Wisborough Green) on 29 Dec. [KS]

Great Spotted Woodpecker*Dendrocopos major****Common resident.***

The species was recorded in 587 tetrads (63%), the highest total in recent years and comparable to the 10-year average of 591 tetrads. The Sussex BBS index stood at 4.55 in 2018, maintaining the high level of recent years. Since 1994 the index increased from 1.00 to about 5.00 by 2005 but appears to have stabilised over the last decade, albeit at a high level as shown in the graph below.

In the first winter period the highest counts were eight on the Knepp Estate (Shipley) and seven in a SWBS square at Chelwood Common (Danehill), both on 17 Feb, with five at Pulborough Brooks on the 18th. Overall, in the first winter period SWBS, 159 were recorded in 93 (56%) of the 156 squares surveyed. Drumming was first heard at Ladies Mile LNR (Brighton) on 1 Jan and at Hurtis Hill (Crowborough) and Goldbridge WTW (Newick) on the 2nd.

During the BGBW the species was recorded in 11.5% and 11.9% of East and West Sussex gardens respectively, whilst in the GBW it was found in 161 (70%) of participating gardens during the year.



Sussex BBS index for Great Spotted Woodpecker 1994 to 2018

Likewise during the BBS Great Spotted Woodpeckers were found in 70% of squares surveyed, with the sum of the maxima of each of the 174 1-km squares studied being 360.

Birds were more conspicuous in April and May, with the maximum counts being nine at Blackham on 7 Apr and ten at West Lavington (Midhurst) on the 20th, both during BBS surveys. There were more breeding records in 2018 compared with 2017, with confirmed breeding in 34 tetrads and probable in a further 45. Breeding season counts for RSPB reserves were; Broadwater Warren eight territories, Fore Wood (Crowhurst) two, Pagham Hbr three and Medmerry one. No territory counts were received this year from Pulborough Brooks.

In the autumn the most notable count was ten at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 24 Oct and in the second winter period six at Hornhurst Wood (Rotherfield) on 5 Nov. In the second winter period SWBS, 111 were recorded in 65 (51%) of the 127 squares surveyed, with a maximum of six as above. As usual, drumming resumed late in the year with reports on 22 Dec at Coombes, 26 Dec at Cissbury and Brooklands (Worthing) and 31 Dec at East Kingston (Ferring). [KS]

Green Woodpecker

Picus viridis

Common resident.

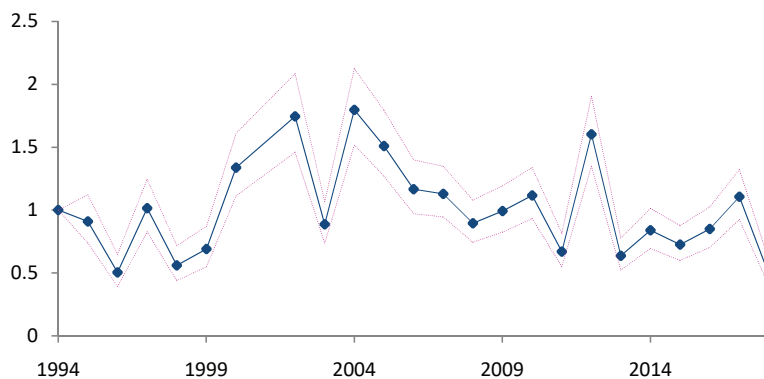
This species was recorded in 469 (50%) tetrads in 2018, notably down from the 10-year average of 554 tetrads.

In the first winter period the highest counts were eight in Petworth Park on 26 Jan, six at East Chiltoning on 3 Feb, both counted as part of the SWBS, and five at Pulborough Brooks on the 6th and 17th Feb. Overall, in the first winter period SWBS, 100 were recorded in 63 (40%) of the 156 squares surveyed. During the BGBW the species was recorded in 1.8% of gardens in West Sussex and 1.7% in East Sussex. By contrast, the more intensive GBW reported birds present in 43 (20%) of participating gardens in the first quarter of 2018.

The Sussex BBS index has varied considerably since being set at 1.00 in 1994, but in 2018 showed a sharp fall from 1.02 in 2017 to 0.49, as shown in the graph below.

During the BBS birds were found in 103 (59%) of the 174 squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven at West Lavington on 20 Apr. There was only one report of an active nest, with adults feeding noisy young on the Knepp Estate on 28 Jun. In addition, breeding was confirmed in a further 13 tetrads, largely because of the presence of recently fledged young, and probable in a further 40.

The highest late summer/autumn counts were nine at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Jul and five at Northpark Wood (Parham) on the 24th. In the second winter period, there were counts of five at Northwood (Slindon) on 20 Dec and five at Cradle Hill (Seaford) on the 28th. In the second winter period SWBS, 57 were recorded in 40 (32%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of four at Edburton on 11 Dec. [KS]



Sussex BBS index for Green Woodpecker 1994 to 2018

Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus

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

Kestrels were recorded in 453 tetrads (48%), comparable with the 10-year average of 446 and an increase on the 413 in 2017. They were recorded in more tetrads than Sparrowhawks (370) and fewer than Common Buzzard (607). During the first winter period most records were of ones but there were some higher than usual counts; ten were seen at Wepham Down on 6 Mar and there were six counts of six: at Thorney Island on 16 Mar, at The Burgh (Burpham) on 22 Feb and 13 Mar, at Pulborough Brooks on 1 Jan and 3 Mar and at Pevensey Levels on 26 Jan. Kestrels were recorded in 21% of the early year SWBS 1-km squares with a maximum of five at New Bridge (Pevensey Levels) on 18 Feb. There were no records of birds flying in off the sea.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads and probable in 25, similar to 2017. Display was first noticed at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Feb, a nest with young heard calling at Binsted Wood (Arundel) on 3 May was the earliest confirmed breeding record, and fledged young were first observed at The Burgh on 2 Jun. During the BBS they were recorded in 25 of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of four at Balcombe on 24 Jun. The highest summer counts were of six: at Salehurst (Robertsbridge) on 17 Jun, The Burgh on 9 Jul and Ditchling on 13 Jul.

A remarkable 19 were seen at Thorney Island on 7 Sep and 12 at Rye Hbr the same day, by far the largest autumn counts and suggesting a possible influx. There were counts of eight at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Sep, Amberley Wild Brooks on 14 Sep. Thorney Island on 15 Sep and 8 Oct and at Medmerry on 1 Oct. Evidently Kestrels had a good breeding season; there were 13 further counts of five to seven. There were no records of birds flying out to sea, but one was found dead with its neck broken on the West Beach (Littlehampton) on 19 Oct.

Six was the highest number recorded during the second winter period, at The Burgh on 5 Nov

and at Chilver Bridge (Arlington) on 25 Dec, and there were three counts of five. During the late year SWBS the species was recorded in 31% of 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of three at Guestling on 17 Dec. [MJC]

Merlin

Falco columbarius

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

The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table.

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 12 | 7 | 7 | 4 | | | | 1 | 5 | 19 | 9 | 7 |

Merlins were recorded in 42 tetrads and in all months except May, June and July. Records came from both West and East Sussex with most of these coming from coastal areas.

The first Merlin seen in 2018 was at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Jan, then birds were recorded there between 11 and 14 Jan and also on the 22nd, with Winpenny and West Mead hides being the prime viewing sites. Other January sightings included one at Devils Dyke and one at Uckfield, both on the 3rd, singles at Partridge Green and Upper Beeding on the 7th, chasing a small passerine at Cuckmere Haven on the 9th, at Rye Hbr on the 14th, Pagham Hbr on the 17th, Pett Level on the 21st and Medmerry on the 26th. There were only a few sightings in February, mostly in West Sussex, and only at Arundel WWT was one seen on more than one day.

It was not until 11 Mar that one was seen at Beachy Head and on the same day one flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill. There were records from Pagham Hbr on three dates in March, and one flew along the cliffs at Birling Gap on the 26th. The last Merlin of the spring was at Beachy Head on 20 Apr.

A female or immature at Iford Brooks (Lewes) on 19 Aug was the first of the autumn, followed on 1 Sep by singles at Selsey and Seaford Head. By the end of the month Merlins had been reported from eight locations, all coastal except one at Pulborough Brooks on the 9th and at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 11th. In October records were received from eight coastal locations, with most being reported from Medmerry, Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr but also at Beachy Head, Pilsley Island (Chichester Hbr), Climping, Seaford Head, Pevensey Levels and Hastings. Inland locations included Chantry Hill, Pulborough Brooks and Robertsbridge. Most records involved single birds but two were at Pett Level on 18 Nov. Throughout November sightings were mostly from the above-named coastal sites but also The Burgh (Burpham) and East Guldeford Level. On the 25th one flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill with prey and this or another was seen offshore there on the 30th. During December more inland locations were represented, including one at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 12th. [BGRI, MJC]

Hobby

Falco subbuteo

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

Hobbys were found in 157 tetrads (17%) with confirmed breeding in five, probable in ten and possible in a further 14. In the past five years the number of tetrads with confirmed breeding was: four in 2017, one in 2016, two in 2015, three in 2014 and two in 2013.

The earliest arrival of the spring was noted at Widewater (Lancing) on 9 Apr, four days later than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by singles at Pagham Hbr on the 15th and at Pulborough Brooks and Petworth on the 18th. Thereafter the species was recorded daily from a further 14 sites

in April and a total of over 40 sites in May. Although most records involved one or two, three were seen on nine May dates, four at Rye Hbr on the 3rd and at Ashdown Forest on the 23rd, five hawking insects at Waltham Brooks on the 1st and seven and nine at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on the 4th and 1st respectively. At Selsey Bill a total of six were seen arriving from the sea between 24 Apr and 11 May.

Display was first recorded on Ashdown Forest on 6 Jun and a bird carrying food was seen on 26 Jun near Balcombe. Fledged young were noted at sites in both West and East Sussex. There were a number of multiple sightings later in the year, with two seen feasting on flying ants on the Knepp Estate on 13 Jul, five at Ashdown Forest on 6 Aug and several twos, threes and fours at Pulborough Brooks throughout August and September. A presumed family party of four, including a calling young bird, was over Fletching on 25 Sep and the next day another four were circling high over Ashdown Forest.

Outward migration seems to have started in mid September, with reports from more coastal locations. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of six between 6 and 26 Sep. Most records were of singles but twos were noted at Pulborough Brooks, Seaford Head, Hastings and Pett Level on several dates. The final record of the year was two together at Pett Level until 17 Oct, one week earlier than the 10-year average last date. [BGRI]

Peregrine

Falco peregrinus

Scarce breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.

Despite the fact that the number of records received was lower than in both 2017 and 2016, Peregrines were recorded in 177 tetrads (19%), an increase on the 164 of 2017 and 171 of 2016 and marginally higher than the 10-year average of 164 (range 143-187). Fewer sites were looked at in detail during 2018 than in 2017, but two new urban sites were recorded. Further observations of fighting between falcons in the breeding season were noted, and this would support the assumption that the breeding population remains stable. This is also indicated by the healthy number of young being produced again.

Breeding was confirmed at 14 sites and probable at a further 20. From the 16 sites monitored by Sussex Peregrine Study (SPS) at least 21 fledged. Disturbance at some nesting sites in both rural and urban areas was noted, including the disappearance of a chick near Amberley at the end of June.

A pair bred at the American Express Community Stadium at Falmer for the first time, having been resident for a couple of years. The clutch was laid in a Carrion Crow nest built under the roof structure. Using a crow's nest is often unsuccessful and it began to disintegrate as the young developed. With some assistance to rescue the nest site, the pair managed to successfully raise two young. It is remarkable how Peregrines are adapting to these urban environments: the parents were seen coming in and out of the stadium with food for the young, even during premiership matches with over 30,000 seated spectators.

The regularly used nest boxes had some problems this year. The Chichester Cathedral pair again produced a clutch of four eggs in the nest box. Laying took place between 23 and 28 Mar; all four hatched between 30 Apr and 1 May and were ringed on 22 May. There were, however, some fledging problems and two young were noted on the ground on 15 Jun. They were returned to the spire but following repeated failed attempts to fledge, one female was euthanised by a vet, being unable to fly properly due to the primary feathers not emerging from their sheaths correctly. The second nest box at Sussex Heights (Brighton) was, unusually, unsuccessful. Four eggs were laid between 28 Mar and 5 Apr but all failed to hatch. This was attributed to severe weather. The ground nesting Peregrines at Pagham Hbr laid eggs but also failed to produce young this year.

One at Pagham Hbr on 4 Feb took a Snipe. At Angmering on 15 Sep a male Peregrine was seen viciously mobbing a Buzzard which had prey; after several further attacks lasting over five minutes the Buzzard was driven off and the Peregrine ate the (unidentified) prey item. At Selsey Bill on 28 Sep and 22 Nov one was seen to fly in off the sea with prey.

The use of coloured Darvic rings, in addition to the standard BTO ring, continues to provide useful information. This is particularly so when an adult is replaced by another, or to identify the movements of individuals when they intrude on an established territory. There were several new Darvic sightings in 2018. In conclusion it was most likely a slightly below average year. [JF]



Peregrine, Beachy Head, 28 August (Laurence Pitcher)

Ring-necked Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

Very scarce introduced breeding resident.

A similar number of records as in previous years with 17 sightings, all of single birds except for four at Angmering on 25 Feb and four at Crawley on 8 Jun. Favoured locations still appear to be the Crawley (28 Jan, 20 Apr and 8 Jun) and Gatwick (21 Feb, 17 May, 23 Jun and 11 Dec) areas. There were two records from Weir Wood Res (28 Oct and 27 Nov), two from Brighton (22 Nov and 9 Dec), and single records from Pagham Hbr (26 Mar), Ferring (7 Jan), Ringmer (27 Mar), Eastbourne (23 Mar) and Hastings (3 Oct). [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 three records in 2018: a male photographed at Seaford GC on 6 May (PM), a female seen briefly at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 15 May (PEJ) and a first calendar year bird at Thorney Island from 30 Sep to 7 Oct (FM *et al.*). The county total moves on to 47 this century. [PJ]



Daurian/Turkestan Shrike, Beachy Head, 2 November (Laurence Pitcher)

Daurian/Turkestan Shrike

Lanius isabellinus/phoenicuroides

Very rare vagrant.

A first calendar year Daurian or Turkestan Shrike was at Birling Gap (Beachy Head) on 2 Nov (CFB *et al.*). Remarkably, although there are only two previous county records of a “red-tailed” shrike, the most recent was in 2017 after a wait of more than forty years since the first in 1975.

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 shrikes, and the record has therefore been accepted as referring to either a Daurian or Turkestan Shrike. [MM]

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Great Grey Shrike was recorded in nine tetrads, a decline from last year. It was a very poor year for this species, with probably only three individuals seen.

There were only three records in the first winter period, all from Ashdown Forest on 14 and 17 Jan and 2 Feb, probably involving the same bird, .

There were no sightings until 22 Oct when one was seen at Wrens Warren (Ashdown Forest). This bird was seen on many dates until 16 Dec ranging over the Wrens Warren, Gills Lap and Old Lodge LNR areas of Ashdown Forest. Another was seen on 28 Oct at Spithurst (Barcombe). [TS]

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 records in 2018 were of one heard singing at Itchenor (Chichester Hbr) in woodland adjacent to Chalkdock saltmarsh for 15 minutes on 1 May (PHH) and another heard calling and sound recorded at Church Norton on 25 May (AW). Neither bird was seen. The county total this century moves on to 31 with records in all but four years. [PJ]

Jay*Garrulus glandarius*

Very common resident.

Jays were recorded in 463 tetrads (49%) compared with 435 in 2017 and a much higher 10-year average of 495. During the first winter period the highest counts were 14 at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Feb and nine at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 20 Mar. Otherwise 60% of counts were of singles and only 11% were for three or more. During the January and February SWBS 106 were recorded in 62 (40%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of five on 17 Feb in Hastings

During the BBS 143 Jays were recorded in 77 (44%) of squares surveyed, with a maximum of five on 20 Apr at West Lavington (Midhurst). During the year participants in the GBW recorded Jays in 132 (57.3%) of the participating Sussex gardens with a maximum count of six in a garden in Henfield on 14 Oct.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads, with probable breeding in a further 17. The first singing male was on 26 Mar at Ashdown Forest. Fledglings were seen at three locations; Arundel WWT on 16 Jun, Pulborough Brooks on 22 Jun and Worth Forest on 27 Jun. A pair with young heard calling was noted at Chichester GPs on 4 Jul. Breeding surveys on RSPB reserves revealed three pairs at Pagham Hbr and two at Fore Wood (Crowhurst). 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 seven at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 24 Jul and six at St Leonard's Forest on 4 Aug.

In the autumn and second winter period the highest counts were 21 at Perching Sands Fm (Edburton) on 9 Oct and 12 at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Sep. Elsewhere the maxima were six counts between seven and ten at various locations from September to December. During migration watching at Hastings a total of 14 was recorded on four dates between 15 Sep and 1 Oct, with a peak of five on 15 Sep. During the late year SWBS a total of 132 was recorded in 67 (53%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed; a count of nine at Furnace Green (Crawley) on 10 Dec was the highest. [MOW]

Magpie*Pica pica*

Very common resident.

Magpies were recorded in 623 tetrads (67%) (600 in 2017). During the first winter period there were 12 counts of 20 or more; the highest was at Newhaven Tide Mills with 34 on 1 Feb. Counts of 25 were registered at Cuckmere Haven on 12 Jan and on downland near Lewes on 21 Feb. During the January and February SWBS there was a further high count of 25 on 14 Jan at Furnace Green (Crawley) from 663 total encounters in 135 (87%) of the squares surveyed.

During the GBW Magpies were recorded in 218 (95%) of the 230 participating gardens in Sussex, and in the BBS 862 were found in 153 (88%) of squares surveyed, with a maximum of 24 on 28 May at Southwick. Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads and was probable in a further 46. Nestbuilding was first recorded at Gatwick Airport on 14 Jan, at Loxwood on 27 Jan and at Aldwick (Bognor) on 1 Feb. The first fledglings were seen at Broadbridge Heath on 25 Apr.

During autumn there were five counts of 20 or more; these being 36 in gardens at Selsey Bill on 20 Oct, 27 at Piddinghoe (Newhaven) on 28 Sep and 20 at East Brighton Park on three dates between 26 and 9 Oct. Early winter saw 14 high counts of 20 or more from six locations; the highest was 78 at Warnham LNR on 28 Dec; observers there also recorded a further five counts ranging from 30 to 48 during December. During the late year SWBS 675 Magpies were recorded in 116 (91%) of surveyed squares, with a maximum count of 20 on 17 Dec at Catsfield. [MOW]

Jackdaw

Coloeus monedula

Very common resident.

Jackdaws were recorded in 622 tetrads (66%), a small increase over 2017 (594 tetrads). During the first winter period there was just one four-figure count of c.1000 at Crowborough on 17 Jan. Other large counts of 500 or more included c.860 in flight at Barcombe Cross on 26 Jan, c.700 at Cuckmere Haven on 16 Jan, 673 at Warnham LNR on 15 Mar, c.600 at Crowborough on 8 Feb and c.500 at Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on 1 Jan. During the early year SWBS 2447 were recorded in 119 (76%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 226 at Golden Cross (Hailsham). In the BGBW the species was recorded in 16% of participating gardens in West Sussex compared to 27% in East Sussex, whilst 53% of participating gardens in the GBW recorded Jackdaws.

During the BBS 2698 Jackdaws were encountered in 86% of the 174 squares studied, with a maximum of 199 at Lyminster on 30 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in 29 tetrads with evidence of probable breeding in a further 33. The first record of confirmed breeding was of an occupied nest in a Barn Owl box at Nymans (Handcross) and the earliest record of fledging came from Amberley on 2 Jun. There was another record of birds using a Barn Owl box on the Knepp Estate on 23 Apr. About 25 pairs nested on Camber Castle (Rye Hbr).

The two highest counts of the summer period were both of 200, at Cradle Hill (Seaford) on 4 Jul, and at Plashett Park (Isfield) on 12 Aug. There were seven further records of 100 or more birds at various locations.

During the autumn and second winter period there were 43 records of 100 or more. An estimated 1500 were observed at Glyndebourne (Ringmer) on 24 Oct, and c.1200 were seen at Beeding Brooks on 28 Oct. There were two records of c.1000, at Barcombe Cross on 19 Oct and at Henfield Levels on 28 Oct, and five more counts of 500 or more were observed at various sites. During the November and December SWBS 2219 were recorded in 97 (76%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 220 at Balcombe. [GO]

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Very common resident.

Rooks were recorded in 442 tetrads (47%) compared with 397 in 2017. During the first winter period the highest counts were 500 at Cuckmere Haven on 16 Jan, 300 at Westdean (Friston Forest) on 7 Jan and 300 at Winchelsea on 6 Mar. There were twelve more counts of 100 or more birds at

various locations. During the early year SWBS 1632 Rooks were found in 71 (45%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 150 at Ashcombe Bottom (Lewes) on 2 Feb.

Nest building was first observed at Patcham (Brighton) on 25 Feb and the first fledged young were seen at Lyminster on 10 May. Breeding was confirmed in 68 tetrads and was recorded as probable in a further eight. During the BBS, Rooks were encountered in 100 (58%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with the highest count of 215 at Racton on 19 May. In the GBW Rooks were encountered in 24% of participating Sussex gardens. Two extensive rookery surveys of 82 sites produced a minimum total of 2034 AONs. In addition, 300 AONs were reported from the Winchelsea area and there were a number of other individual records of rookeries at various locations, resulting in an overall total exceeding 2500 AONs. There were five individual rookeries where an estimated 100 AONs were counted; at Beddingham Cement Works, Tottington (Small Dole), Wick Bottom (Woodingdean), Edburton and Iford (Lewes).

During the summer period the highest counts were 300 at Cradle Hill (Seaford) on 4 Jul, 200 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 18 Jul, 150 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 8 Aug and 150 at Birling Gap on 20 Aug.

During the autumn and second winter period the two largest gatherings (both of 200) were at Bramber Fm (Pagham) on 28 Dec and at Charleston Reedbed on 31 Dec. There were 170 at Ashcombe Bottom on 30 Nov (during an SWBS survey), 150 at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 21 Nov and the same number there on 26 Nov. A further twelve counts of 100 or more were recorded at eleven different locations. During the late year SWBS, 1313 were found in 53 (42%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed. [GO]

Carrion Crow

Corvus corone

Very common resident.

Carrion Crows were recorded in 681 tetrads (73%) compared to 633 in 2017. During the first quarter there were six records of 100 or more, the highest counts were of 150 at Bexhill on 29 Mar, 116 at Ashfold (Handcross) on 25 Mar and 105 at Bosham (Chichester) on 20 Mar. Three counts of 100 were recorded, again at Bexhill on 28 Jan, at Round Hill (Hangleton) on 7 Feb and at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Mar. There were a further nine counts of 50 or more at eight different locations. During the early year SWBS 1616 Carrion Crows were found in 154 (99%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 100 at Hangleton mentioned above. In the BGBW the species was recorded in 30% of participating gardens in both West and East Sussex. In the GBW Carrion Crows were recorded in 79% of participating gardens.

There were three records of Carrion Crows seen flying in off the sea during the spring. On 21 Apr a single bird was observed at Beachy Head followed by two at the same site on the following day, and at Selsey Bill six were watched flying in from a long way out on 6 May. During the BBS, 2321 birds were recorded from 172 (99%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 85 at Annington (Bramber) on 29 Jun.

Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and recorded as probable in a further 48. Possible nest building was first observed on 6 Mar at Hove Park, whilst the first occupied nest was reported on the even earlier date of 3 Mar at Worlds End (Burgess Hill). There were no records of nests with young, but the earliest report of fledged Carrion Crows was from Bulverhythe (St Leonards) on 10 May. The largest gathering during the breeding season was of 90 at Medmerry on 29 Apr. During the summer period the highest counts were of 250 at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Jul, 200 at Ifield (Crawley) on 11 Aug and 150 at Medmerry on both 4 and 5 Aug.

There were 238 at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 16 Oct, 205 there on the 30th and 200 at Medmerry on the 16th. During the second winter period the largest count of 300 was at the North Wall on 13 Nov. Two counts of 250 were recorded, at Birling Gap on 8 Nov and at East Guldeford Level on 29 Nov. During the late year SWBS 1406 Carrion Crows were found in 125 (98%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 60 at Balcombe. [GO]

Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

One at Earnley on 7 Jun (JDW) reappeared at Medmerry on 18 Jul where it remained well into 2019 (BGRI, IML, OM, JCP *et al.*). Surprisingly elusive at times, it took some observers several attempts to finally add this species to their county lists. It constitutes the first June record of this species for Sussex since 1978 and the first instance of over-summering since 1948. The county total this century moves on to nine. [PJ]

Raven

Corvus corax

Scarce and increasing breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.

Almost 1200 records were submitted from 375 tetrads (28%), with numbers very evenly split between West and East Sussex. Whilst every record has intrinsic value, those 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. Since Ravens have large broods and a high fledging success rate, it is likely that the Sussex population is now around 100 to 120 pairs. Not every known pair will be reported annually but in 2018 there were records of two or more birds from 70 localities with suitable breeding habitat. Assessing



Raven, Amberley, 28 June (Tim Duffield)

annual breeding success is difficult as the nests are generally inaccessible and difficult to view from ground level. However, family parties of Ravens may be seen throughout the summer and these provide us with some limited evidence of breeding outcome. Nine family parties were recorded; three of six birds, one of five birds and five of four birds. The first fledglings were seen on 13 May at Ashburnham Place (Battle). During the BBS Ravens were found in 6.3% of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of six at Goodwood Park on 21 May.

There were many records of multiple sightings, those involving ten or more and in date order are as follows: 12 at Ambersham Common on 10 Jan, 20 at The Burgh on 13 Jan, 11 at Amberley Mount on 21 Apr, 15 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 2 Aug, 17 at Highbeeches Forest (Handcross) on 20 Aug, 40 at Chantry Hill on 11 Sep, ten there on 21 Oct, 40 at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on 30 Oct, 12 at The Burgh on 11 Nov, ten at East Guldeford Level on 12 Nov, 20 at The Burgh on 22 Nov and ten there on 30 Dec. It is apparent that this species has become both numerous and widespread.

No records for winter roosts were received, but with large flocks seen on downland near Storrington and Amberley, it seems very likely that there is a regular roost somewhere close by. [MEK]

Coal Tit

Periparus ater

Very common resident.

Coal Tits were recorded in 427 tetrads (46%) compared with a 10-year average of 413 and a maximum of 508 in 2009 during the Atlas period.

There were eight counts of ten or more during the first winter period, with the highest being 20 at Press Ridge Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 16 Jan and Ambersham Common on 1 Feb, but 81% of records with a count were of ones or twos. During the early year SWBS 137 were recorded in 54 (35%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 17 on 17 Feb at Nutley. During the BGBW, Coal Tits were recorded in 30% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 33% in East Sussex, whilst the species was recorded in 167 (73%) of gardens surveyed for the GBW.

Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and was probable in a further 23. The earliest records of breeding events were as follows: a nest with eggs on 20 Apr at Binsted (Arundel); adults carrying food or faecal sacs on 15 May at Crowborough; a nest with young on 19 May at Uckfield, and fledged young on 7 Jun at Goring Gap. During the BBS the species was encountered in 69 (40%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 15 at Tilgate Forest on 18 Apr.

During the period from 1 Aug to 31 Dec there were nine double figure counts, five from the Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest), the highest being 21 on 20 Nov. However, of the 752 records with a count, 89% were of ones or twos. During the late year SWBS, 87 were recorded in 35 (28%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 15 on 4 Nov at Nutley. [JAH]

Marsh Tit

Poecile palustris

Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Marsh Tits were recorded in 237 tetrads (25%), slightly more than the 223 in 2017 and comparable with the 10-year average of 239 (range 173-346). Most records were from the Wealden woods and were of one or two birds. There was one coastal record, of one at Cliff End (Pett) on 3 May. As there is continued evidence of decline of this species in South East England, observers are encouraged to submit all records, particularly if breeding evidence is obtained. Marsh Tit is a bird of mature or semi mature deciduous wood and their sedentary nature means most records are probably of

potential breeders. They were recorded in every month of the year at Warnham LNR, Weir Wood Res, Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) and Canadia (Battle).

The highest first winter period counts were nine at Westdean Woods on 29 Jan, eight at Steyning Round Hill on 25 Jan, six at Chingford Pond (Duncton) on 16 and 17 Feb, six at Worth Forest on 13 Mar and five further counts of five. During the early year SWBS 35 were encountered in 16 (10%) of 1-km squares surveyed, with the highest count being the eight at Steyning Round Hill mentioned above. In the GBW, the species was recorded in 47 (20%) of the 230 participating gardens.

Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and probable in a further 28, both improvements on 2017. Records during the breeding season were received from 131 locations, also an improvement on the previous year. The first songster was heard at Buchan Park on 15 Feb and confirmed breeding (a nest with eggs) was first noted at Beech Fm (Cuckfield) on 28 Apr. Fledglings were first seen on 13 May at Chantry Hill. During the BBS the species was encountered in 12% of the 174 1-km squares surveyed (8.7% in 2017) with a maximum of three at Golden Cross (Hailsham) on 7 Apr. Six pairs bred at Broadwater Warren and four at Fore Wood (Crowhurst).

Food caching was observed at Arundel WWT in September. There were no double figure counts in the autumn or second winter period, the highest being eight at Horseshoe Woods (Steyning) on 2 Dec and nine there on the 6th, with four further counts of five or six. During the late winter SWBS, Marsh Tits were encountered in 13% of the 127 1-km squares surveyed, with the highest being the nine aforementioned on 6 Dec. [MJC]

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Abundant resident.

Blue Tits were recorded in 676 tetrads (72%), slightly lower than the 10-year average of 696 (range 579 - 891). There were four counts of 40 or more during the first winter period; 46 at Holme Fm (Stansted) on 9 Jan, 54 at Broadbridge Heath on 29 Jan, 43 there on 16 Feb and 40 at Ifield (Crawley) on 9 Feb. There were 18 further counts of 30 or more. During the first winter SWBS the species was encountered in 152 (97%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 46 at Holme Fm, mentioned above. In the BGBW, they were seen in 79% of participating gardens in both West and East Sussex and in 99% of participating gardens in the GBW.

Breeding was confirmed in 79 tetrads, an increase on the 69 of 2017, and probable in a further 34, clearly representing under recording of this common species. The first record of confirmed breeding was a nest with young on 19 Mar at West Tarring (Worthing) and the first fledglings were seen on 30 Apr at Mountfield. During the BBS Blue Tits were encountered in 99% of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 48 on 16 Apr at St George's (Wivelsfield). Nesting was recorded in a dormouse box at Meadow Lodge (Binsted) for the second year running. Notable numbers on the RSPB reserves were 21 pairs at Paghams Hbr and 19 at Fore Wood (Crowhurst).

Flocks began to build up from mid-August with 20 at Ifield MP on the 11th, 25 at Southwater Quarry on the 18th and 24 at West Tarring on the 23rd all being notable, but at Broadbridge Heath there were 61 on the 24th, the largest count of the autumn. In September and October there were 18 counts of 20 or more, the highest being 45 at Broadbridge Heath on 24 Oct. In the second winter period there were 46 counts of 20 or more, the highest by a long way was 75 at Broadbridge Heath on 28 Dec, followed by 51 at St George's on 17 Dec. During the second winter SWBS the species was encountered in 96% of the 127 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 51 at St George's mentioned above. [MJC]

Great Tit

*Parus major***Abundant resident.**

Great Tits were recorded in 659 tetrads (70%), rather more than last year's 616 but less than the 10-year average of 680 (range 558 - 882). During the first winter period there were seven counts above 25, with a maximum of 31 at Rye Hbr on 12 Jan. During the first winter SWBS a total of 1038 were encountered from 98% of the 156 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 28 on 25 Jan at Slinfold. During the BGBW Great Tits were recorded in 57% of participating gardens in both West and East Sussex, and during the GBW they were recorded in 96% of participating gardens.

Breeding was confirmed in 64 tetrads, up on 2017, and probable in a further 21, clearly under recording of this common species. Confirmed breeding was first recorded on 20 Apr at Warnham LNR where a nest was noted with an egg, and the first fledglings were noted on 27 May at Pulborough Brooks. During the BBS Great Tits were found in 98% of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 29 on 18 Apr at Burwash Weald. Notable breeding numbers on the RSPB reserves were 21 pairs at Pagham Hbr and 18 at Fore Wood (Crowhurst).

In the late summer there was a count of 26 at Broadbridge Heath on 24 Aug and in September 28 were there on the 25th and 25 at Warnham LNR on the 27th. Other locations with counts over 15 were 19 at Pulborough Brooks on the 7th and 18 at Uckfield on the 29th. Counts at Warnham LNR and Broadbridge Heath were high throughout the second winter period, peaking at 36 on 19 Dec at the former site and 41 at the latter on 28 Dec. A notable count of 23 at Seaford was recorded on the 28th. The species was recorded in 86% of the 127 1-km squares surveyed during the late SWBS with a total of 599 encounters, the maximum was 18 at Crawley Down on 31 Dec. [MJC]

Bearded Tit

*Panurus biarmicus***Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.**

Bearded Tits were recorded in 11 tetrads (13 in 2017), lower than the 10-year average of 16 (range 12 - 19), with 85% of records coming from Pett Level and Rye Hbr in East Sussex. Records throughout the year were fewer and numbers lower than in recent years, perhaps due to the effects of "The Beast from the East" during late February. During the first winter period records were received for West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), Pett Level, Rye Hbr and Camber.

The highest monthly counts outside the breeding season from the six locations where the species was recorded were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| County Total | 10 | 7 | 3 | | 6 | 9 | 16 | 6 | 2 |
| Eastbourne | 1 | 4 | 1 | | - | - | - | - | - |
| Hastings and Combe Haven | - | - | - | | - | - | 3 | - | - |
| Pett Level | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 4 | 4 | 12 | 6 | 2 |
| Rye Hbr | 6 | 2 | - | | 2 | 5 | - | - | - |
| Rye Cadborough | - | - | - | | - | - | 1 | - | - |
| Camber | 2 | - | - | | - | - | - | - | - |

Breeding undoubtedly occurred at Rye Hbr, where there were at least four pairs at Castle Water and fledged young were seen on 23 Jun. Breeding was probable at Pett Level where 12 pairs were present. The only records from West Sussex were five at Chichester Marina on 5 Apr, two at Thorney Deep on 5 Jun, four there on 21 July and recorded as present at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 7 Sep.

Two left Combe Haven flying NW on 9 Oct, and the migration watchers at this site and Hastings recorded a total of 11 between 9 and 24 Oct with a maximum of three on the 20th and 21st. [MJC]

Woodlark

Lullula arborea

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

Woodlarks were reported from 48 tetrads (5.1%) in 2018, a decline from the 58 of 2017, 59 of 2016 and 54 of 2015. Nearly half of all records came from Ashdown Forest.

As was the case late in 2017, early in the year individuals were at Up Marden (where one was seen through to June) and at Stansted Forest, as well as on the western heaths and Ashdown Forest. One at Broxmead, (Bolney) on 3 Mar followed one there in the previous year. Song was first heard at Ambersham Common on 19 Jan, on Ashdown Forest on the 22nd and at Wiggonholt Common on the 30th (and perhaps the same at nearby Hurston Place in early April). Only one was found in the early year SWBS, at Danehill, south of Ashdown Forest, on 26 Feb. Neither that individual, nor one singing at Chailey on 17 Feb, were reported subsequently.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads; three on Ashdown Forest at (Misbourne, Old Lodge LNR, and Lumbston Stone) and at Iping and Lavington Commons, and was considered probable in a further 20, mainly again on Ashdown Forest and the western heaths. The first fledgling was seen at Misbourne on the early date of 16 Apr; the other confirmed records were between 10 and 23 Jun. Surveys of the 12 western heaths found 45 pairs/territories, with eight on Blackdown and nine at Iping Common (see WHBBS table on page 211). In 2017 the same survey found 37 territories/pairs on ten heaths. Broadwater Warren had 13 pairs, the same as in 2017. Only one was found outside the traditional breeding areas during the breeding season: near Balcombe on 4 Jun.

The sharp reduction in records after the breeding season is shown in the table of monthly sightings:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 16 | 36 | 55 | 64 | 49 | 74 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 20 | 3 | 4 |

In the autumn, migration watchers near Hastings counted 14 between 14 and 31 Oct, with a maximum of three on the 19th and 28th. Additionally, in mid-October there were two at Seaford Head on the 18th, three at Beachy Head on the 19th with a further three on the 20th; two at Selsey Bill on the 19th and a single at Church Norton on the 20th. Three came in off the sea at Selsey Bill on the 28th. There were only two records in November, while the four December records included a remarkable flock of c.20 seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 19th and the 22nd, and two singing at Wrens Warren (Ashdown Forest) on the latter date. [CB]

Skylark

Alauda arvensis

Very common but declining resident and probably common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

This species was recorded in 369 tetrads (39%), compared with 343 in 2017 and a 10-year average of 395. A total of 211 was recorded in 37 (24%) of the 156 1-km tetrads surveyed in the early year SWBS, down on last year. As with last year, Skylarks were widely distributed in the first winter

period, but there were again few large gatherings: the largest were of 80 at Steyning Round Hill on 28 Feb, 60 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 7 Feb, 50 at Beachy Head on 27 Jan and 15 Feb and two counts of 50 at Medmerry during the period. These were low compared to previous years.

During the BBS, 448 Skylarks were noted in 48% of the 174 squares, in line with the numbers from the past few years. Breeding was only proven in five tetrads, but was probable in a further 46, considerably up from last year. Breeding season surveys on some of the county's reserves revealed 88 pairs at Medmerry, 18 pairs at both Pagham Hbr and Amberley Wild Brooks, 31 pairs at Pulborough Brooks and at least 29 territories at Rye Hbr.

During the autumn period, the highest count was of 140 in the lower Arun Valley on 19 Oct; the next highest were 120 at Climping Gap on 16 Sep, with 100 there on 18 Oct, and 100 at Sheepcote Valley on 18 and 19 Oct.

There were five three-figure counts during the second winter period: the highest were 240 at Medmerry on 30 Nov, 200 at Ladyholt Park (west of Compton) on 14 Nov, a similar number in the Arun Valley on 26 Nov, and 150 at Medmerry on 23 Nov. During the late year SWBS, 252 were recorded in 24 (19%) of the 127 squares surveyed, slightly up from last year's 16%. [WDJA]

Sand Martin

Riparia riparia

Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

The first sightings were one each at Beachy Head and the lower Cuckmere Valley on 18 Mar, one week later than 2017 and eight days later than the 10-year average arrival date. It was a full 15 days before the next on 2 Apr, with 15 at Pulborough Brooks and six at Weir Wood Res. Throughout spring migration there were only 11 double-figure counts; four of over 25, four in the 50s (from Chichester GP, Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks), and one of 100 at Chichester GP on 30 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed at just one site, at Minsted on 23 Jun, when 15 to 20 birds were around 20 holes. No information was received on the success or otherwise of this colony, and Sand Martin continues to hang on as a breeding species in the county by a narrow margin.

Interestingly a juvenile amongst fledged Swallows was being attended by the latter's parents at Pagham Hbr on 3 Jul.

Autumn passage usually begins in early July for this species and this year was no exception, with 32 at Pagham Hbr on the 5th and 30 at Upper Beeding on the 7th. Numbers reached 50 by mid-month at both Pett Level and West Heath Common, and the first three-figure count of 150 was from Rye Hbr on the 19th. Between this date and 25 Sep there were a further 25 counts over 100 with 60% of these occurring in August. Five hundred were at Medmerry and Pagham Hbr on 22 and 28 Aug respectively but the highest count in September was of 790 E in one hour at Telscombe Cliffs on the 25th, which was the last big movement.

Sand Martins were recorded on six dates between 6 and 19 Oct, with a maximum of 7 E on the 10th at Telscombe Cliffs. The final five of the year flew east, also from this location, on the 19th, two days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [DB]

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

The first returning bird was not until 21 Mar, at Selham (Petworth), somewhat bucking the broad trend for first arrivals becoming earlier (Sussex Bird Report 2017). This was later than 2017 (4 Mar), and the 10-year average arrival date of 9 Mar, and was the latest arrival since 2006

(24 Mar). Furthermore, by the end of March only two more records were received, both from Pulborough Brooks, on the 30th and 31st. Thereafter migration returned to a more usual pattern, with the first double-figure count of ten coming from Weir Wood Res on 7 Apr. Eleven three-figure counts were recorded during spring migration, with 800 at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on 16 May (and 500 there on 11 May) being by far the highest, although 500 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) was a significant count.

The species was recorded in 451 tetrads (48%) with confirmed breeding in 21 and probable in a further 25. Birds typically return to traditional nest sites, and by 22 Apr a bird was noted back at one such site at Lodge Fm (Keymer). Bird hides appear to be favoured locations, being similar perhaps to farm buildings associated with the species' nesting preferences. Two such hides at Arundel WWT had young in the nest by 4 and 19 Jun respectively, with another hide on Thorney Island having young by 10 Jul. There was also a pair in the Church Norton hide but the outcome was not reported. An interesting situation at Balcombe arose when a pair of Swallows built a nest in a partially built house; work was halted until the successful fledging of the brood.

Apart from some smaller, perhaps local, movements during July and August, it was not until the end of August when migration began in earnest. On the 31st totals of 1180 at Goring Gap and 4000 at Beachy Head were all flying east. The following day 2039 S at Selsey Bill and 500 at Beachy Head (and a further 700 E on 3 Sep) were counted, whilst at Hastings 1465 E were recorded on the 6th. More than 60 three-figure counts under 500 were made in September, the peak month for migration. At Selsey Bill 11,107 were recorded during this month alone, and the Hastings migration watchers logged 6240 between 17 Aug and 19 Oct with the maximum noted above. Large movements towards the end of September included 2000 E at Beachy Head and 850 E at Goring Gap on the 25th, 5000 at Medmerry and 2600 E at Selsey Bill on the 26th, followed by 2150 E at Selsey Bill and 1000 at Medmerry on the 27th. After that, movements trailed off significantly; the last three-figure count was of 122 E at Beachy Head on 14 Oct.

Between 5 and 22 Nov a total of 15 was seen on six dates with a maximum of five at Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on the 14th. This compares with nine November observations in 2017 and 20 in 2016. Four were seen in December: at Pagham Hbr on the 3rd, in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 4th, in the Ouse Valley around Rodmell and Piddinghoe on the 8th and finally at Medmerry on the 10th, ten days later than the 10-year average. [DB]



Barn Swallow, Church Norton, 19 May (Andrew House)

House Martin

Delichon urbicum

Common but declining summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Two over Partridge Green during the afternoon of 8 Mar were the earliest arrivals since 2004 and 12 days before the 10-year average arrival date. Three weeks later a group of six was at Bexhill on 29 Mar and the next, on 2 Apr, was ten at Pulborough Brooks. Thereafter, birds were recorded on most days, with notable counts of 35 at Warnham LNR on 15 Apr and 40 over Pulborough Brooks and 50 at Sidlesham on the 25th. At Weir Wood Res 100 were recorded on the 27th and 29th. At Chichester GP there were also 100 on the 30th whilst at Sidlesham there were counts of 200 on 11 and 16 May and 150 on 15 Jun. The highest spring count at Rye Hbr was 200 on 6 Jun.

House Martins were recorded from 299 (32%) tetrads this year, more than either of the previous two years, (262 in 2017 and 282 in 2016). It should be noted though that this is not a measure of abundance or of breeding activity. The South East regional BBS population trend (1995-2017) for this species shows a significant decline of -58%, however, the 150 encounters from 29 (17%) of surveyed squares is too few to draw a trend at a county level.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads (24 and 14 in 2017 and 2016 respectively) and probable in a further 15. Birds were reported having completed their nest at a house at Selsey Bill by 17 May. A nest with young was observed at Chichester on 22 Jun and fledged young were first noted at Bewl Water on 12 Jul. A large house at Udimore had 48 active nests and one at Eridge Green had 20. New housing estates at both Henfield and Rye Hbr village both had occupied nest boxes, although reportedly fewer at Henfield than in the previous year.

The first significant sign of autumn migration was 280 at Rye Hbr on 18 Aug. There were over 60 three figure counts under 500, 17 between 500 and 999 and eleven over 1000. These observations alone accounted for over 35,000 birds, not an unusually large number to be passing through Sussex during this time. Between 22 and 27 Sep a broad migration front occurred, with the highest counts coming from Beachy Head (6000 on the 25th), Goring Gap with 4500 on the 25th and 4000 on 26th. Clearly September proved to be the main period for migration; in past years this has often continued at least into the early part of October. In 2018, however, only 15 double-figure counts were received in October, with the highest being 120 at Beachy Head on the 9th. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 10,138 between 25 Aug and 21 Oct with a maximum of 1720 on 15 Sep.

There were three records for November; three at Lewes on the 1st, one in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 5th and finally six at East Dean on the 10th, four days later than in 2017 and one week earlier than the 10-year average last date.

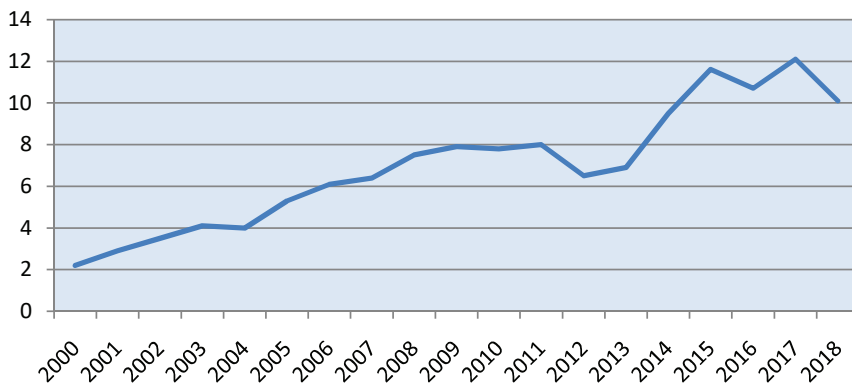
Occasionally leucistic birds are observed, with both this species and Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, noted in recent years. One such bird was recorded this year at Upper Dicker on 3 Aug. [DB]

Cetti's Warbler

Cettia cetti

Fairly common and increasing resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Cetti's Warblers were recorded in 95 (10%) tetrads, compared with 111 in 2017, when a dedicated survey was undertaken. The following figure shows clearly the increased distribution of this species in the county this century.



Percentage of tetrads holding Cetti's Warbler 2000-18 (based on tetrads with any records)

In the first winter period there were records from 24 broad locations. Four were at Crowhurst on 6 Jan and the same number at Bexhill on the 28th and Beeding Brooks on 18 Feb. In March fives were at Rye Hbr on the 16th and Crowhurst on the 21st. There were four encounters in two of the 156 surveyed squares in the early year SWBS, with three at Pevensey Levels. On 1 Mar one was seen creeping around in snow on a patio in a Pulborough garden.

During the BBS the species was found in 13 (7.4%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of nine on 29 Apr in a square at Pevensey Levels. Breeding was confirmed in only three tetrads, but was probable in 15 and possible in a further 42. Eleven males were singing throughout May at Thorney Island and 22 at Pagham Harbour with another seven at Medmerry, these last two totals being slightly lower than in 2017. There were four singing males at Lewes Brooks, 12 territories reported at Filsham LNR and 16 at Rye Hbr. Nationally, the BBS results from 2018 showed a decrease of 10% from 2017 (The Breeding Bird Survey 2018, BTO). However, the same publication indicates an increase in population of 124% in the past ten years, which is reflected in the above figure. Nest building was noted at Arundel WWT on 5 May, and an adult seen feeding a juvenile at Arundel WWT on 16 Jun was the first evidence of successful breeding. Later that month at Thorney Island a pair was seen with three fledged young on the 28th and a fledgling was noted at The Mumbles (Steyping) on the 30th.

In the late year SWBS there were single encounters in three of 127 1-km squares surveyed. However, in the second winter period a minimum of 51 birds were recorded in approximately 22 different locations, with nine at Thorney Island on 5 Nov, four at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 6th and the same number at Chichester GP on the 13th. Probably the individual furthest from the coast and major river valleys was one at Twineham on 16 Dec. [VPB]

Long-tailed Tit

Aegithalos caudatus

Very common resident.

Long-tailed Tits were recorded in 525 tetrads (56%) compared with a 10-year average of 569 and a maximum of 722 in 2008 during the Atlas period.

During the first quarter, there were 44 double-figure counts, the highest being 28 at Steyping Round Hill on 25 Jan, but of 725 records with a count 45% were of ones or twos. During the BGBW they were recorded in 30% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 28% in East Sussex,

but in the GBW the species was recorded in 80% of studied gardens in the first quarter and 84% throughout the year. During the early year SWBS 344 were recorded in 70 (45%) of 156 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 28 on 25 Jan at Steyning Round Hill.

Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads (compared with 30 in 2017 and 27 in 2016) and was probable in a further 39 (37 in 2017), figures which surely could be improved on with more attention to recording detail. The first nest with eggs was noted on 15 Apr at Binsted (Arundel), adults were seen carrying food or faecal sacs on 9 May at Bexhill and the first fledged young were seen on 15 May at Pulborough Brooks. During the BBS Long-tailed Tits were found in 49% of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 10 on 2 Jun at Lidsey Lodge.

There were 15 counts in double figures during June and July with maxima of 26 in Henfield on 8 Jul and 19 at Arlington Res on 23 Jun; a family group of two adults and 12 juveniles at West Stoke (Lavant) on 21 Jul was the largest family group so recorded. Between 1 Aug and 30 Sep there were 54 double-figure counts, the highest was of 26 at Thorney Island on 13 Sep. This was topped in the second winter period by a count of 31 at Warnham LNR on 2 Dec amongst 55 double figure counts. During the late year SWBS, 295 were recorded in 52 (41%) 1-km squares from 127 surveyed, with a maximum count of 20 on 4 Dec at Crowborough.

Although there were records of birds on garden feeders during the winter, the GBW suggested a reduction of garden use by the species compared to the first quarter. The average peak count of four was similar but only 60% of gardens were visited by Long-tailed Tits. [JAH]

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.

The first bird recorded was a single at Arundel water meadows on 1 May (MCD). Further individuals were observed in spring at Pagham Hbr on 3 May (BO'D *et al.*) then finally at Broadwater Warren on 17 May (AHP). Again, breeding did not occur at any sites in the county.

In the autumn there was one at Seaford Head on 1 Aug (MRE) followed by one trapped at Ladywell (Coombes) on the 8th (CB, MM, JAN), one at Pett Level on the 13th (JO'D, PEJ, JW) and one trapped at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 25th (MB, RDME). All records of this species need to be supported by a description for assessment by SOSRC. [TWP]

Hume's Warbler

Phylloscopus humei

Very rare vagrant.

One found in Riverside Park, Newhaven, on 27 Dec remained until 30 Jan 2019 (MFA, LRB *et al.*). The record has been accepted by BBRC. This is just the sixth county record and the first since 2012. Three of the previous county records were also in mid-winter. [MM]

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus

Very scarce visitor, mainly in late autumn.

2018 was another good year for this species with a total of 14 recorded. Unlike 2016 and 2017, there were none in September and the first recorded was not until 8 Oct, when there was one at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) (MEC, RHC) and one sound-recorded flying over Pulborough at night

(MSP). These were followed over the next month by further singles at Hodcombe on the 14th (MEC, RHC), Climping Gap (RHP) and in a garden at Selsey Bill on the 15th (OM *et al.*), Goring Gap on the 16th (NB, GRFJ, GM, DLS), Holywell (Eastbourne) on the 18th (ASR *et al.*), Riverside Park (Newhaven) on the 19th and 20th (MFA), Bexhill on the 21st (KH), Long Down (Beachy Head) on the 22nd and 24th (LP), Birling Gap on the 29th (JARP, LP), Seaford from the 31st to 2 Nov (JC, LC), and at Denton (JC) and Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) (LP) on 4 Nov. The county total this century moves on to at least 174. [PJ]

Pallas's Leaf Warbler

Phylloscopus proregulus

Rare visitor, mostly in late autumn.

There were two records of this endearing species in 2018, following blank years in 2016 and 2017. The first was in the 'old trapping area' at Beachy Head on 5 and 6 Nov (LP *et al.*) and the second with Goldcrests at the northern end of Brooklands Park (East Worthing) from 10 to 13 Nov (GRFJ, PJ *et al.*) where it attracted a steady stream of observers during its four day stay. The county total moves on to 101, of which 40 have been this century. Over half (51) have been at Beachy Head and there is also a previous record for Brooklands (Oct, 1999). [PJ]



Pallas's Leaf Warbler, Beachy Head, 5 November (Laurence Pitcher)

Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Willow Warblers were recorded from 227 tetrads (22%), a decline from the 268 in 2017 and worse than the 232 in the poor year of 2016. Recorded in March from only six sites, all involving single birds, the first was at Pulborough Brooks on the 21st, five days later than the county 10-year average. There was a steady trickle of records during the first half of April, very few of which were from the coast, indicating that the majority of birds flew straight inland. The only significant coastal 'falls' occurred

on the 20th with 25 recorded at Beachy Head and a further 18 there on the 23rd. On the 29th watchers at Selsey Bill counted 40, some coming in off the sea. Passage continued into May with 14 at Beachy Head and 24 at Selsey Bill on the 1st, but that was really it as far as numbers were concerned.

Just 34 were encountered during the BBS, with the species found in 23 (13%) of the squares surveyed. Although recorded in fewer tetrads than in 2017 the number recorded breeding in tetrads only dropped by one, from four to three, and probable breeding was down from 19 to 17, so not all is despair. The majority of breeding records by far came from Ashdown Forest as usual, keeping up the tradition of this favoured breeding area. At Old Lodge LNR a minimum of 15 singing males were heard on 13 May in this area alone, whilst at Broadwater Warren 19 pairs were counted, just down from the 21 in 2017. Other breeding counts resulted in nine pairs at Pagham Hbr and one pair each at Pulborough Brooks and at Fore Wood (Crowhurst).

A possible returning migrant was recorded at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Jul, but more certainly one at Beachy Head on the 18th was on its way out, as were a further two there on the 24th and 14 on the 26th. Things got going from 1 Aug with 40 at Ladywell (Coombes), 20 at Beachy Head, 12 at Arundel, 15 at Cissbury and 18 at Seaford Head. On the 4th Beachy Head held 72, Ladywell 30 and both Seaford Head and Rye Hbr Caravan Park held 20. Although reasonable numbers continued to be counted on the coast and inland with 50 at Cissbury on 11th, it wasn't until the 17th that a major fall occurred, with 145 at Beachy Head and 70 at Seaford Head, and another 100 were counted at Beachy Head on 22nd with 60 at Seaford Head on 24th. At Charleston Reedbed 35 were trapped on the 28th but this site recorded the lowest annual total for four years with just 375 birds trapped. Other sites' annual ringing figures of interest were 115 at Cissbury, 191 at Ladywell, 123 at Beachy Head and 497 at Pett Level. Numbers continued to trickle through well into September with 20 at Cissbury on the 3rd, 12 at Selsey Bill and 11 at Seaford Head on the 13th; these being the last notable figures. During the autumn passage migration watchers in the Hastings area recorded 235 between 11 Aug and 30 Sep with a maximum count of 42 on 25 Aug. Singles were counted at seven sites during October, the last being at Seaford Head on the 22nd, three days earlier than the county 10-year average departure date. [TWP]

Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

Chiffchaffs were recorded in 543 (58%) tetrads, a few more than 2017 but less than the 10-year average of 580 tetrads. There were 75 records in January, fewer than the 105 in the previous year but from 39 locations, more than the 30 in 2017. The highest count in January was 15 at Swanborough Fishing Lakes and WTW on the 3rd. During February the water treatment works at Coldwaltham, Steyning and Newick were also favoured spots, with some counts into double figures.

A migrant was recorded at Seaford on 9 Mar and three were at Beachy Head on the 12th, thereafter just a steady trickle continued through the month. April followed the theme of a very poor spring for numbers at coastal sites, with very few counts into double figures. At Selsey Bill 15 were recorded on the 9th and at Beachy Head 22 were counted on the 10th, whilst numbers inland climbed, with many counts into the teens and twenties by the middle of the month.

Breeding was confirmed in only 13 tetrads, down from 20 in 2017 and probable in a further 39, up from 31 in the previous year so probably not much change overall. Breeding counts at sites revealed at least six pairs at Rye Hbr, four at Medmerry, 39 at Pagham Hbr and six at Fore Wood (Crowhurst). On the Knepp Estate 27 birds were counted on 6 Jun during a Turtle Dove survey and a similar number were present there on the 29th. During the BBS a total of 709 Chiffchaffs were

encountered in 92% of the 174 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 18 at Nutley on 19 Apr.

It is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of return migration but five at Beachy Head on 4 Aug were probable migrants, as were four at Selsey Bill on the 11th. September is the true month for this species' movement, and 48 at Hastings on the 6th and 20 at Beachy Head on the 7th heralded the start of the mass exodus. On the 8th, 56 were at Beachy Head (and 70 on the 10th) and 47 at Hastings on the 9th. At Ladywell (Coombes) 40 were present on the 13th when Beachy Head held 60, Climping Gap held 40 on the 14th when 100 were at Beachy Head, followed by 70 there on 17th. A huge fall of over 500 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) occurred on the 22nd, and the same day 53 were trapped at Ladywell and 35 at Charleston Reedbed. On the 24th the following totals were recorded: Cissbury 100, Ladywell 100, Beachy Head 108 and Hastings 129, and another large fall of 450 occurred at Beachy Head on the 25th. There were two more records of 100 plus; at Hastings on the 27th and Beachy Head on the 29th, a day when 81 were trapped by ringers at Ladywell and 40 at Charleston Reedbed. The month finished with 80 at Beachy Head and more than 20 at four other sites on the 30th.

Passage continued with a noticeable and steady trickle of birds on 1 and 2 Oct, then another fall occurred with 200 at Beachy Head on the 3rd followed by 100 on the 6th, 150 on the 8th then dropping to a mere 40 on the 9th. Numbers then dwindled a bit but another 290 dropped in at Beachy Head on the 17th. This was to be the last of the major counts. During the year ringers did well with 748 trapped at Whitbread Hollow, their second best ever year; 619 at Pett Level, 517 at Ladywell, 506 at Charleston Reedbed and 98 at Cissbury. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded 1464 between 24 Aug & 5 Nov. Small numbers were recorded through the rest of October. At Selsey Bill a total of 73 was recorded in the month with a maximum of 13 on the 7th. In November ten were counted at Cissbury on the 4th and 12 at Drayton House North (Chichester GP) on the 12th, but otherwise it was single figure counts. In December a total of 81 records were received, again mainly of single figure counts, but 14 were trapped at Ladywell on the 16th, ten were at The Burgh on the 17th and ten at Offham (Arun Valley) on the 20th, the last double figure count of the year. [TWP]

Siberian Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita tristis

There was one at Beachy Head on 4 Nov, up to two at Burpham WTW from 17 Dec into 2019 and one at Oving on 19 and 20 Dec. [MM]

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

The species was recorded in 88 tetrads, precisely the same as in 2017. They were late arriving this year with the first birds not recorded until 8 Apr, when they were found at Arundel WWT, Pagham and Rye Harbours. Mostly singles were recorded daily from then on, but four at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 13th, four at Sidlesham Ferry on the 14th, five at Rye Hbr on the 15th and six at Arundel WWT on the 16th were notable. The trickle continued throughout the month with numbers rising to ten at Rye Hbr and at Sidlesham Ferry. Church Norton held 17 on the 25th whilst at New Bridge (Pevensey Levels) 24 were present on the 29th. Birds were widespread in the county in suitable habitat in May in generally low numbers, but 18 at Pagham Hbr were notable.

Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads, one up on 2017 but probable in ten, one fewer than in 2017. At Rye Hbr 35 pairs were mapped, down from 40 in the previous year, whilst breeding surveys at other reserves found eight pairs at Medmerry, 35 pairs at Pagham Hbr, two pairs at Filsham LNR and only one pair at Lewes Brooks.

Two obvious returning migrants were at Beachy Head on 18 Jul and another was there on the 23rd, followed by one at Seaford Head on the 24th. Movement was well underway by 2 Aug when 15 were counted at Beachy Head and then 42 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed on 5th. Hastings migration watchers recorded 220 in total on 27 dates between 11 Aug and 9 Oct with most being recorded at Combe Haven. Again at Charleston Reedbed a good total of 59 was trapped on 11 Aug, thereafter the only notable figures were at Combe Haven with 32 on the 14th, 35 on the 18th, 14 on the 25th and 32 on the 29th.

There were mainly just single figure counts throughout September from a variety of sites, and then into October birds were recorded from five sites, the last being one at Beachy Head on the late date of the 20th, five days later than the 10-year average departure date. [TWP]

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

This species was recorded in 136 (15%) tetrads, similar to 2017 (132) and the 10-year average of 134 tetrads. The first record was of a single at Hooe Level (Pevensey Levels) on 14 Apr. This was followed by a steady trickle of arrivals from many sites on a daily basis and consisted mainly of ones or twos, but four were at both Manxey Level (Pevensey Levels) and Newhaven Ouse Estuary Project on the 19th. The trickle continued throughout the month with maximum counts on the 25th of 18 at Church Norton and 13 at Winchelsea. The species was well entrenched throughout the county during May, notable numbers included 19 at Drayton Pit North (Chichester GP) on the 13th, at Newhaven Ouse Estuary Project the number had risen to 21 by the 22nd and there were 16 at Medmerry on the 25th.

Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads, one more than in 2017, and probable in another 12, again up from 2017. During the BBS 106 were found in 20 (11%) of the 1-km squares surveyed. Breeding counts of pairs were 50 at Medmerry, 56 at Pagham Hbr, 12 at Lewes Brooks, 25 at Filsham LNR and 50 to 200 at Rye Hbr. Overall the county seems to have a healthy breeding population again.

The first returning birds were a single at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 22 Jul followed by 11 at Seaford Head on the 24th. At Charleston Reedbed 63 were trapped on the 26th; the exodus was well and truly underway. At the beginning of August 30 were recorded at Ladywell (Coombes) on the 1st and 44 at Beachy Head on the 4th. A further 53 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 11th. Migration watchers in the Hastings area counted a total of 97 between 17 Aug and 17 Oct. There were several counts in the teens and twenties from Ladywell, Beachy Head and Seaford Head during the latter part of the month. September began with 19 at Beachy Head and eight at Seaford Head on the 1st; thereafter smaller numbers were recorded on most days in the month. Then in October six were present at Filsham LNR on the 4th. A total of 21 was counted during the month; the last being recorded in the lower Arun Valley on the 19th, over two weeks earlier than the county 10-year average departure date. [TWP]

Marsh Warbler

Acrocephalus palustris

Rare summer visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

There were two records in 2018, both at undisclosed locations, the first a singing male at a suitable breeding location on 8 Jun (CAH) and the second trapped and ringed on 20 Aug (TH, PEJ). These are the first county records since 2015. [PJ]

Melodious Warbler*Hippolais polyglotta****Very scarce visitor in spring and autumn.***

There was just one record in 2018, a first year bird seen at Beachy Head from 20 until 25 Aug (LP, JFC *et al*). It was initially located in bushes by the toilet block of the hotel, before moving to the hotel garden. The total seen this century now moves to 21, of which all but five have been in the Beachy Head area. [VPB]

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 only 23 (2.5%) tetrads this year, ten fewer than in 2017 and below the 10-year average of 26 tetrads. The first records were migrants: one was heard reeling in foggy conditions from a garden hedge at Selsey Bill on 14 Apr, and on the same day another was at Rye Hbr, six days later than the 10-year average arrival date. During April and May single birds were seen or heard at ten different locations, including Selsey Bill, Pagham Hbr, Poynings, Amberley Wild Brooks, the Knepp Estate, Brighton Wild Park, Seaford and Rye Hbr. One at Beeding Brooks, heard between 06:40 and 08:20 on 21 Apr, was possibly the same one that was reeling at Henfield at 09:20 that morning! There was a single report in June of one at Pagham Hbr on the 17th. The RSPB breeding summary for Amberley and Pulborough Brooks showed just one in the whole area.



Grasshopper Warbler, Sussex, 5 May (Bob Eade)

The first returning migrant was on 16 Jul at Pett Level. From July to September records were almost entirely from three ringing sites in East Sussex, where totals ringed were 488 at Pett Level, only three fewer than in 2017, 38 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) and 14 at Charleston Reedbed. All captures at the last of these sites were of first year birds. The final record of the year was of one at Pett Level on 28 Sep, 11 days earlier than the 10-year average date. [VPB]

Savi's Warbler

Locustella luscinioides

Rare visitor; has bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

A singing male at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) from 8 to 11 Apr (KGB *et al.*) was the first county record since 2013 and the first 'twitchable' individual since 2002 (Pagham Hbr). It was also the earliest ever record for Sussex, preceding the previous earliest (10 Apr 1962, Selsey Bill) by two days. The record has been accepted by the BBRC. [PJ]

Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.

Blackcaps were recorded in 522 tetrads (56%) during the year; comparable to the 10-year average of 538. There was a single encounter during the SWBS in the 156 1-km squares surveyed in the first winter period, at Steyning Round Hill. However, the species was recorded in 56 (26%) of the Sussex gardens participating in the GBW during January to March. A garden record of five at West Tarring (Worthing) on 27 Feb was broken the following day when three males and three females were seen, and surpassed again on 3 Mar with four of each sex. Birds were noted taking advantage of buggy nibbles, suet balls and apples, and feeding in ivy. Birds noted outside their usual garden haunts in this period were in water meadows at Arundel on 13 Jan and Steyning Round Hill on the 25th. A male was singing at Steyning from 20 Jan and on 12 Feb a male was in full song near Blatchington Pond (Seaford). The first returning migrant was likely to be a bird at Beachy Head on 12 Mar.

During the BBS the species was recorded in 88% of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 23 in West Lavington on 20 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and probable in a further 61. There were 42 pairs at Pulborough Brooks and 31 pairs at Pagham Hbr. The number of singing males at Rye Hbr was at least 11, an increase of five from 2017 numbers. The first report of fledged young came from Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 3 Jun and Pulborough Brooks on the 7th.

The percentage of first-year Blackcaps ringed at four of the county's ringing sites, Cissbury, The Mumbles (Steyning), Ladywell (Coombes) and Charleston Reedbed, averaged 92%, indicating that 2018 had generally been a productive breeding season. However, at Beachy Head the total of 874 ringed was relatively low, and down almost 50% on the excellent year in 2014. The same was true at Pett Level where the figure was 2305, roughly half that of 2017 and only five fewer than the poor year of 2016. Monthly maxima at Seaford Head were 35 on 24 Aug and 60 on 13 Sep, and at Beachy Head 150 on 26 Aug and 403 on 22 Sep. The maximum seen at Hastings by the migration watch team was 90 on 24 Sep. On 1 Oct one found in a docked ferry at Newhaven was safely caught and released; it flew to scrub nearby. The final bird of the year at Beachy Head was on 8 Nov.

December records were from 15 locations and were predominantly of birds in gardens, seen eating from feeders and on apples and berry-bearing shrubs, with a maximum of three at West Tarring on Boxing Day. In addition, two first year males were ringed at Cissbury on the 8th and a male and female at Ladywell on the 16th. [VPB]

Garden Warbler*Sylvia borin****Common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

Garden Warbler was recorded in 169 tetrads in 2018, down on the average of 192 tetrads for the previous ten years. The first reports were of one at Uckfield on 10 Apr, five days later than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by one the next day at Burgess Hill. From 15 Apr birds were reported from more than one location on the same day and the main influx commenced from the 18th.

During the BBS the species was found in 18% of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with the highest count of nine in a square near Blackham on the Sussex/Kent border on 9 Jun, the same square as the 2017 BBS maximum. There were three pairs at Pagham Hbr, six pairs at Pulborough Brooks and 11 territories at the SWT Butcherlands LNR. There was very little confirmed evidence of breeding; an adult was seen carrying food or a faecal sac at Weir Wood Res on 6 Jun and fledged young were reported at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the 22nd.

At Beachy Head birds were recorded on three days in spring, but not again until 24 Jul and a very poor autumn was noted, with only 32 ringed, less than half the figure of the previous year. The total trapped at Pett Level was also reduced, from 305 in 2017 to 217 this year. The only count in double figures was of ten at Rye Hbr on 4 Aug. Just 40 bird days were reported at Beachy Head, where the maximum number seen was eight on 28 Aug, very different from 'back in the 1960s and 70s when the average autumn bird day total was in the region of 700' (Beachy Head log). Some lingered along the coast in the first two weeks of September, but the final two records of the year were singles at Goring Gap on the 14th and two at Pett Level on the 16th, 30 days earlier than both the latest 2017 sighting and the 10-year average departure date. [VPB]

Barred Warbler*Sylvia nisorius****Very scarce autumn visitor.***

The only record was of one trapped and photographed at Pett Level on 15 Nov (PEJ, JW). This is the latest county record, exceeding the previous latest (29 to 31 Oct 1995, Pagham Hbr) by over two weeks. The county total moves on to 65, of which 20 have been this century. [PJ]

Lesser Whitethroat*Sylvia curruca****Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

Lesser Whitethroats were recorded in 138 (15%) tetrads, five more than in 2017 but fewer than the 10-year average of 158 tetrads. The two birds which had been frequenting gardens in West Tarring (Worthing) and Ringmer in the final two months of 2017 were also present at the start of the year. The West Tarring individual was feeding mainly on buggy nibbles during its stay, and was not recorded after 9 Mar. The final date for the Ringmer bird was 31 Mar. There were also records of an individual from a neighbouring 1-km square in Ringmer from 21 Jan to 12 Mar, which might have involved a different bird. However, one was in a garden in Hove, first noticed during the BGBW, from 29 Jan to 5 Feb. This is the fifth time that Lesser Whitethroats have been confirmed as over-wintering in Sussex; previous occurrences were in 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2010, though these only involved one bird at a single location.

The first migrant was at Pagham Hbr on 6 Apr, three days earlier than in 2017, and also three

days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. The first in East Sussex was at Cadborough (Rye) on the 13th.

During the BBS the species was found in 22 (13%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of three on 22 Apr on the Knepp Estate. On 21 Apr five were singing at Bepton and four were at Pagham Hbr and Beeding Brooks the same day and at Pulborough Brooks on the 22nd, with ten at Rye Hbr on the 24th. Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads, though probable in 11 and possible in a further 48. An adult was seen carrying food or faecal sac at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 10 Jun and fledged young were noted at Rye Hbr on 3 Aug. Breeding season counts comprised four pairs at Medmerry, 11 at Pagham Hbr, six at Pulborough Brooks, 18 on the Knepp Estate and nine at Rye Hbr, most sites showing an increase from 2017. Nationally, the BBS results from 2018 showed a decrease of 4% over 2017 (The Breeding Bird Survey 2018, BTO).

The first autumn migrant at Beachy Head was trapped on 23 Jul, but only four more were ringed there. However the maximum number seen there was 12 on 17 Aug, with 130 bird days recorded, a small increase over recent autumns, but still very poor compared with the 1970s when the number of bird days could be in excess of 800 per annum (Beachy Head log). At Charleston Reedbed the Cuckmere RG ringed 41, of which ten were adults and 31 first year birds. Migration watchers at Hastings logged 124 at various locations between 11 Aug and 8 Oct. with a maximum of 17 on 28 Aug. On 4 Aug 20 were at Rye Caravan Site and a total of 28 at Seaford Head on 24 Aug was assumed to be an underestimate. Birds were seen at various sites throughout September, the highest counts being 12 at Pagham Hbr on the 13th, 11 at Hastings on the 1st and seven at Beachy Head on the 4th. There were two records in October, of singles at Pagham Hbr on the 1st and Hastings on the 8th. The final departing migrant was at Pett Level on 5 Nov, 27 days later than the 10-year average date, unless this was an incoming bird, as one was seen at Ringmer in late December in the same 1-km square as the bird present from 21 Jan to 12 Mar. [VPB]

Common Whitethroat

Sylvia communis

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The species was recorded in 350 (37%) tetrads this year, very similar to the 2017 total but lower than the 10-year average of 415 tetrads. The first was at Rye Hbr on 8 Apr, a week later than in 2017 and four days later than the 10-year average arrival date. The first bird seen in West Sussex was at Medmerry on the 10th. Many more arrived before the end of the month, with 13 at Rye Hbr on the 21st and 26 at Medmerry on the 24th.

During the BBS, Whitethroats were found in 98 (56%) of the 174 squares surveyed, broadly similar to the previous four years, with a maximum count of 15 on 6 Jun in a square just north of Pagham Hbr. Breeding was confirmed in 25 tetrads and was probable in a further 55. There were 67 pairs at Medmerry, 35 at Pagham Hbr, 11 at Pulborough Brooks and 58 territories at Rye Hbr; of these sites only at Pagham Hbr was there a slight decrease. At Beachy Head very few migrants were recorded in the spring, though the breeding population remained stable at 15 pairs. The first fledged young were noted in the Cuckmere Valley on 19 May.

Return passage was underway by late July, but peaked in late August. At Beachy Head, where a total of 1407 bird days were recorded over 49 dates, counts in excess of a hundred were noted on three occasions in August; 120 on the 17th, 160 on the 26th and 110 on the 28th. The migration watchers at Hastings recorded 569 on 31 dates between 11 Aug and 22 Sep with a maximum of 49 on 25 Aug. At other sites, 40 were near the caravan park at Rye Hbr on 4 Aug, 80 at Seaford Head on the 17th, 40 at Sidlesham Ferry on the 20th, 40 at Climping Gap on the 25th and the same number

at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 3 Sep. After a good breeding season in 2017, the hot dry summer no doubt affected breeding success this year, as virtually all the different ringing sites which provide data to SOS saw a significant reduction in catch. At Rye Bay numbers were down from 388 to 273, at Beachy Head from 224 to 91 and at Charleston Reedbed from 222 to 154. The final double-figure counts of the year were on 13 Sep, when 50 were at Beachy Head, 13 at Seaford Head and 11 at Hastings. Nationally, the BBS results from 2018 showed a decrease of 18% over 2017 (The Breeding Bird Survey 2018, BTO). The increase in a bird's weight prior to migration can be quite remarkable; on 1 Sep at Cissbury of three birds trapped, the lightest was 12.4g and the heaviest 18.2g.

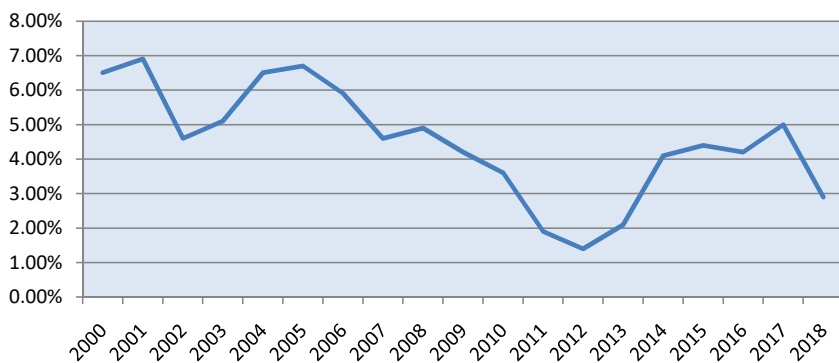
There were only four records in October, of singles in Brighton on the 6th, Pagham Hbr on the 14th, Cuckmere Haven on the 15th and one flushed from a trackside ditch at Marsh Fm (Sidlesham) on the 17th. This was the final sighting of 2018, six days earlier than the ten-year average date. [VPB]

Dartford Warbler

Sylvia undata

Scarce to fairly common but localised resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Dartford Warblers were recorded in 27 (2.9%) tetrads, a decline on the previous four years. The following figure shows clearly the fluctuating distribution of this species in the county this century.



Percentage of tetrads holding Dartford Warbler 2000-18, based on tetrads with any records

The graph not only demonstrates the effect the cold winters of 2009-10 and 2011-12 had on the distribution of Dartford Warblers, but also that they had made a significant, but not complete, recovery since the nadir of 13 tetrads in 2012. Perhaps the decline in 2018 was the result of the particularly harsh weather in February and March.

In January, birds were recorded at three sites on the West Sussex commons and at three sites on Ashdown Forest. An adult male was present at Beachy Head for three weeks from 2 to 22 Jan, and there were also records of single birds at Medmerry (two on the 26th), the Knepp Estate and Broadwater Warren. In February and March there were records of single birds or pairs on three West Sussex commons and at six sites on Ashdown Forest. Single birds were also seen at Hastings CP (in the snow), and at Medmerry in February, with two reported there on 15 Mar.

During the WHBBS 21 territories were recorded (see page 211). Breeding was confirmed at four sites: Lavington Common and three sites on Ashdown Forest. Adults carrying food or faecal

sacs were noted at Wrens Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 21 May and fledged young at Lavington Common on 15 Jun and at Misbourne and the Old Airstrip (both Ashdown Forest). Breeding was probable at a further six sites. Most sightings in the autumn months were of single birds but three were noted at Blackdown (Fernhurst) in both September and October. Juveniles were seen at two sites on Ashdown Forest in September (three at the Old Airstrip on 25 Sep) and at another two there in October. Adults were recorded at more than 15 sites during the autumn. Coastal sightings in the autumn were limited, comprising single birds at Church Norton on 15 Oct and at Medmerry on the 25th, whilst reports of a single bird in the Beachy Head area on five dates between 25 Oct and 17 Nov were probably all sightings of the same bird.

Single birds were again reported at Church Norton on 3 Nov and at Medmerry on the 5th and 23rd, with another seen at The Burgh (Burpham) on 4 and 10 Dec. One was recorded at Iping Common on 18 Nov and another at Blackdown on 12 Dec. There were also records, again mainly of single birds, from at least 12 locations on Ashdown Forest in December. [AR]



Dartford Warbler, Beachy Head, 12 Jan (Dorian Mason)

Firecrest

Fairly common breeding resident and summer visitor; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Firecrests were recorded in 207 tetrads in 2018, 48 more than in 2017, and the highest number to date. However this is no doubt a result of the SOS Firecrest Survey carried out this year, reflecting an increase in observer effort compared to previous years. A paper on the survey can be found on page 238 - 247 of this report.

Between January and March the species was seen in nine of the gardens taking part in the GBW; in a garden at Canadia (Battle) one was recorded each week from 1 Jan to 18 Feb. There was only a single encounter during the early year SWBS, at Steyning on 25 Jan.

During the BBS, Firecrests were recorded in four of the 174 1km-squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads. Song was first heard on 10 Mar at Fernhurst and the first evidence of a successful brood was of at least one fledgling seen at Wakehurst Place on 29 Jun.

Numbers trapped in the autumn at several ringing sites were lower than in the previous year (2017 figures in brackets): 14 (24) at Charleston Reedbed, four (seven) at Cissbury, seven (15) at Ladywell (Coombes), five (17) at Pett Level and three (16) at Beachy Head, where a “very poor autumn” was reported.

Seven were reported at Seaford Head on 5 Nov, and five were around the edge of a park at Hove on Christmas Day, the highest counts of the second winter period. Three were encountered in the late year SWBS. [VPB]

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Very common breeding resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Goldcrests were recorded in 460 tetrads, 12 fewer than the previous year, despite the increased observer coverage as Goldcrests were also counted during the 2018 Firecrest survey. In the early year SWBS, a total of 146 was recorded in 65 (42%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed, the maximum count being eight on 11 Jan at Telham (Crowhurst). The species was also reported in 40% of gardens participating in the GBW during January to March. Twelve were found in central Brighton on 12 Jan, the same number at Waltham Brooks on the 26th, and ten were around East Lavant WTW on the 30th. Two were seen coming in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 25 Mar, and on the 30th a bird stunned itself flying into a window at Hurstpierpoint but recovered after a few minutes and flew off.

During the BBS, Goldcrests were recorded in 38% of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of ten on 5 May at Verdley Place (Fernhurst). This figure is a decrease of roughly 22% over 2017, no doubt a result of higher mortality during the cold spell in early spring 2018. The Breeding Bird Survey 2018 (BTO) stated ‘The year-on-year trends suggest the spell of fierce winter weather nicknamed the ‘Beast from the East’ in late February and early March 2018 hit some of the UK’s smallest resident bird species hard. Goldcrest declined by 38%, Long-tailed Tit by 22% and Wren by 21% between 2017 and 2018. Goldcrest and Wren can be double-brooded and all three species have clutch sizes of between five and eight eggs: therefore it is possible for populations to recover fairly quickly providing this is a one-off harsh winter.’ Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads and probable in a further 27. Nest building was first noted at Duddleswell (Ashdown Forest) on 22 Apr and on 3 Jun a male was singing while gathering food at Goring Gap. The first fledged young were in a family party at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 7th.

Evidence of the species’ fortunes this year came from the ringing team at Ladywell (Coombes) who trapped 72 different individuals, compared with 266 in 2017. Figures from Rye Bay RG and Cuckmere RG were 39 and 154 respectively this year, compared with 247 and 240 last year. Despite the comment from ringers at Beachy Head RS that 2018 had been “a good autumn” numbers ringed were still down to 114 from 214 in 2017.

There were few counts in double figures during October, with the monthly maximum being 42 at Beachy Head on 21st. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of only 33 on eight dates between 9 Aug and 5 Nov, less than one-tenth the number in 2017. During the late year SWBS 205

birds were found in 66 (52%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 18 on 13 Nov at Telham, the same square as in the early year survey. There were some high counts in November: 55 at Beachy Head and 20 at Seaford Head on the 5th, 50 at Park Fm (Selsey) on the 9th, 30 at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 10th, 50 at Church Norton on the 11th, and 25 at Chichester GP on the 12th, but all were dwarfed by a large fall of 155 at Beachy Head on the 9th. In December the highest count was 18 at Old Lodge LNR on the 24th, followed by 17 at Catsfield on the 17th. These are encouraging figures in view of the adverse conditions faced during the spring. [VPB]

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

Abundant resident.

There were records from 657 tetrads, an increase over recent years. Over the year, Wrens were seen in 89% of the 230 gardens participating in the GBW, a decline from the 95% in 2017.

In the early year SWBS, 327 were encountered in 118 of the 156 surveyed squares (76%, very close to the 77% of 2017, but below the figures for 2016), with a maximum of nine just west of Lewes. High counts were 24 at Broadbridge Heath on 16 Feb, 20 at the University of Sussex on 5 Jan and 16 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Jan during the first winter period.



Wren, Battle, 16 March (David Gardiner)

Singing was noted from the beginning of the year and nesting activity was recorded from 19 Feb, when a bird at West Itchenor was watched gathering sodden leaves from the woodland floor and taking them to a hole at the base of a rotten stump, covered in ivy. The first evidence for the presence of young came from Arundel WWT on 5 May, but it was not until 21 May that the first young were actually seen at Loxwood. Breeding was confirmed in 24 squares and probable in a further 47 (cf 29 and 24 in 2017 and 18 and 50 in 2016).

During the BBS, the sum of the maximum counts in the 174 squares surveyed was 1930 (1906 in 2017, 2050 in 2016, 1950 in 2015), with a maximum of 34 in Tilgate Forest (which had also led the way in 2016 and 2017). Wrens were found in 169 (97%) of the squares. There were 159 double figure

counts (2017-156; 2016 -166). Sixteen birds were heard in a thorough survey of Nymans Gardens on 12 Apr, with 20 there on 10 May. Breeding surveys found 70 territories at Paghams Hbr, 19 at Filsham LNR and 31 at Rye Hbr. There were 32 individuals at Cliff End (Pett), on 3 May.

In the late year SWBS, 387 birds were encountered in 100 (79%) of the 127 squares surveyed. This represented a decline, especially for numbers but also for presence, from 2017, when 472 birds had been found in 132 (82%) of the 161 squares surveyed. The maximum count in 2018 was 15 at West Lavington (Midhurst). [CB]

Nuthatch

Sitta europaea

Common resident.

Nuthatches were recorded in 424 (45%) tetrads, more than the 384 in 2017 but fewer than the 10-year average of 451 tetrads. Most records were from The Weald, with few from the coast. During the first winter period the highest count was 12 at Hesworth Common on 20 Feb and at Nymans (Handcross) on 20 Mar. During the early year SWBS 146 were recorded in 71 (46%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of eight at West Lavington on 25 Jan. Although only recorded in 11% and 12% of locations in the BGBW in West and East Sussex respectively, the species was found by 116 (50%) of GBW participants.

Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads and was probable in 24. Singing was first reported on 14 Feb at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) and the first confirmed record of young being fed at the nest at the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on 30 Mar. The first fledged young were seen at Nymans on 1 Jun. During the BBS Nuthatches were found in 94 (54%) of the 174 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 12 at West Lavington on 8 Jun.

During the autumn the highest counts were seven at West Marden on 16 Oct and four counts of six; at Darwell Reservoir and Robertsbridge on the 15 Sep, Broadbridge Heath on 29 Sep and Guestling on 14 Oct. During the second winter period there were counts of 12 at Broadbridge Heath on 28 Dec, ten at Fernhurst on 10 Dec and two counts of eight at Parham on 20 Nov and Crowhurst on 30 Nov. During the late year SWBS birds were recorded in 61 (48%) of the 127 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 10 at Fernhurst mentioned above. [GDE]

Eurasian Treecreeper

Certhia familiaris

Common resident.

Treecreepers were recorded in 281 tetrads (27%), slightly more than in 2017 but lower than the 10-year average of 319 tetrads. During the first winter period there were two counts of five, at Petworth Park on 14 Jan and at Broadwater Forest on 31 Mar. There were five counts of four and 13 of three. All the remaining counts were of one or two. During the early year SWBS 45 Treecreepers were found in 30 (19%) of the 156 squares surveyed, with a maximum of three at Rushlake Green.

Breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads and was probable in another 23. Display with a pair chasing was observed on the early date of 17 Jan at Chichester GP, the first signs of nest building were at Stedham Common on 1 Apr and the first evidence of confirmed breeding was of an occupied nest on 10 Apr at Pulborough Brooks. The first fledged young were seen at Arundel WWT and at Dallington Forest on 16 Jun. During the BBS 75 Treecreepers were found in 24% of the 174 squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven on 8 Jun at West Lavington; this was one of two counts of seven during June, the other being at Roundstreet Common (Loxwood) on the 13th.

During the autumn the highest count was just three at Kneppmill Pond on 9 Sep, and in the second winter period the highest counts were of three at Pett Level on 20 Nov, Petworth Park the day after and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) on the 29th. In the late year SWBS, 29 Treecreepers were recorded in 23 (18%) of the 127 squares surveyed, with a maximum of three at Petworth Park, mentioned above. [GDE]

Rose-coloured Starling

Pastor roseus

Rare vagrant.

2018 was an excellent year for this species with a total of five recorded, exceeding the previous highest annual total of three in 2002. A first summer on Horse Eye Level on 28 May (CFB) and an adult in flight over the seafront at Goring-by-Sea on 3 Jun (DKC) were part of a national influx at the time and were followed by an adult in a Hailsham garden on 18 Jun (P JL), a juvenile visiting a feeder in a Patcham (Brighton) garden from 21 to 24 Sep (DGH) and a first winter in gardens at north Seaford from 28 Dec into 2019 (JC, LC *et al.*). The county total moves on to 46, with 21 this century. [ACG, PJ]

Common Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Common but declining resident and very common to abundant winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Starlings were encountered in 537 (57%) tetrads, lower than the 10-year average of 551 but an increase on the 522 of 2017 and 489 of 2016, and were strongly recorded along the coast and in other urban areas but relatively sparsely in much of the north of the county. During the GBW Starlings were encountered in 178 (77%) of the participating gardens but only recorded in just over 40% of those in the BGBW. During the early year SWBS a total of 3150 were encountered in 94 (60%) of the squares surveyed.

Roost flocks in Brighton involved 5000 preparing to roost on 12 Jan, 11,700 on 22 Jan at Palace Pier and 25,000 at West Pier on 17 Feb. Other large flocks were 1100 at Steyning Levels on 2 Jan, 1290 at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 5 Jan and 1000 at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Jan. A smaller roost of 400 was at Weir Wood Res in early February. The cold weather of late February/early March brought small numbers to feed at garden feeders while others fed with Lapwings on farmland. A pre-roost flock at Burgess Hill exceeded 860 on 2 Mar with up to 1000 there two days later. A more detailed discussion of Starling roosts in Brighton is given on page 248.

In the BBS, 1804 were recorded in 117 (67%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 266 on 28 May at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey). Breeding was confirmed in 57 tetrads and probable in a further ten. Prospecting of nest sites occurred from early January and on 29 Mar a pair was building in a Swift nest box at High Cross Fm (Uckfield), fledging four young by 13 May and a second brood on 26 Jun. Adults were seen carrying food on 8 Apr at Preston Park (Brighton) but the first fledglings were not recorded until 9 May at both Henfield and Haywards Heath. By 25 May a flock of 150 was at Medmerry. Three-figure post-breeding flocks occurred in 20 tetrads throughout the south of the county. In July the largest were 600 at Roedean on the 6th, 500 by the R Adur (Shoreham) and at Widewater (Lancing) on the 12th, and 800 at Ovingdean on the 21st. Over 1000 were seen to enter a roost under a metal walkway at Brighton Marina on 26 Jul and on 4 Aug 2000 were in the lower Arun Valley, and 1000 at both Seaford Head and Beachy Head.

During the migration watch in the Hastings area a total of 643 was recorded on 16 dates between

8 Oct and 18 Nov with a maximum of 119 on 28 Oct, when 457 N were also counted at Selsey Bill and 130 E at Worthing. In the late winter SWBS a total of 3440 were recorded in 68 (54%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 792 at Chalvington on 28 Dec. At Weir Wood Res 250 flew NW to roost on 13 Nov. Counts at the roost at Palace Pier (Brighton) were 5500 on 24 Nov and 7200 on 30 Dec. Flocks of 1000 were encountered at Brighton Marina on 2 Nov, Rye Hbr on 11 Nov, Steep Down (Lancing) on 11 Dec and Pett Level on 20 Dec. [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 in 37 (4%) tetrads (the same as in 2017), comparable with the 10-year average of 40 tetrads. Sites were mostly at or near the coast or downland prominences. A record high spring count was followed by another dull, though median, autumn passage. The estimated minimum monthly totals, after adjusting for possible duplication, were as follows:

| Mar | Apr | May | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| - | 44 | 1 | 1 | 28 | 55 | 4 | 1 |

Two birds at Wilmington on 3 Apr announced the spring migration, nine days later than the 10-year average, the passage becoming the largest since at least 1995. Those two became five the next day and were followed by dribbles of ones and twos but with eight at Cissbury on the 13th, four at Beachy Head on the 16th and another four at Wilmington on the 22nd. A single female on the Hill Fort at Wild Park (Brighton) on 6 May was the last for spring, two days later than the 10-year average. All sightings were within 10 km of the coast and included birds at Goring, Steyning, Castle Hill (Falmer), Itford Hill, Newhaven and Seaford.

A lone returning bird was at Pett Level on 26 Aug, 18 days earlier than the 10-year average of 13 Sep, and only the second August record this century. This was followed by single birds at Seaford on 13 Sep, at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 16th and at Beachy Head on the 17th. A week later the gates opened, with sightings ranging from Rewell Wood (Arundel) to Hastings, and on 26 Sep three birds were seen at Ashdown Forest and another was seen on Thorney Island on the 29th. In October four or more were reported from Blackdown, Beachy Head (eight) with smaller counts from Filsham LNR, Plumpton, Edburton Hill, Truleigh Hill, The Burgh (Burpham), the Arun Valley and Cuckmere as well as from sites previously mentioned. During the autumn migration watch at Hastings, Ring Ouzels were recorded on eight dates between 24 Sep and 21 Oct with a maximum count of four on 7 Oct. November birds included two at Beachy Head and ones at Lancing and Cissbury; the last bird departed on 4 Dec from Birling Gap, 22 days later than the 10-year average and the first December record this century. [JHW]

Blackbird

Turdus merula

Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.

Blackbirds were recorded from 694 (74%) tetrads, 41 more than the 649 of 2017 and equal to the 10-year average of 694. It was a disappointing year, with numbers lower by 10% compared to last year and the 10-year average.

The first winter period was particularly poor with just eight counts of 25 or more birds, compared to last year's 19. Chronologically these were 30 at Ifield MP on 1 Jan, 27 at the University of Sussex (Brighton) on the 6th, 30 at Holme Fm (Stansted) on the 9th, 34 and 36 at Broadbridge Heath on 29 Jan and 16 Feb, 27 at Cocking also on 16 Feb and 35 at Maplehurst Wood (Hastings) on the following day. Counts of 29 at the University of Sussex and 24 at Ifield MP in March complete the highlights. A total of 1401 were encountered in 154 (99%) of the squares surveyed for the early year SWBS. During the GBW were recorded in 226 (98%) of the 230 participating gardens, whilst the BGBW found the species in 82% and 85% of East and West Sussex gardens respectively.

During the BBS 2402 Blackbirds were found in every one of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 45 on 28 May at Emsworth. Breeding was confirmed in 61 tetrads and probable in another 61. Nest building was reported on 22 Feb in Brighton and six times in March, with fledglings being noted first at Bexhill on 30 Mar. Food carrying was recorded 54 times between 10 Apr (at Preston Park, Brighton) and 20 Jul at Worthing and Burgess Hill. Breeding surveys on reserves reported 40 pairs from Pagham Hbr, 24 from Rye Hbr, 21 from Fore Wood (Crowhurst) and a single pair at Lewes Brooks.

Autumn movement was apparent from early October, with 25 birds reported at Beachy Head on the 4th and twice more in the month, 45 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) the same day and also on the 19th, while 25 were seen at Bexhill mid-month and 30 at Pett Level late in the month. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 257 on 16 dates between 5 Oct and 5 Nov with a maximum of 35 on 29 Oct. November was quiet although 25 were recorded at both Arundel watermeadows on the 10th and Broadwater cemetery (Worthing) on the 24th, and counts at Broadbridge Heath peaked at 31 on the 26th. From mid-December a dozen large sightings were reported which peaked at 37 at Cocking with lower counts at Sutton End, The Burgh (Burpham), Burgess Hill, Sheepcote Valley, Steyning, Bexhill and Guestling, while the year ended with 34 at Telscombe, 52 at Broadbridge and 40 birds passing through Seaford. During the second winter period SWBS, a total of 1270 were encountered in 125 (98%) of the squares surveyed. [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 278 tetrads (30%), a few more than in 2017 but lower than the 10-year average of 312. Another very poor first winter period was followed by an average second period, the year's total being 73% of the 10-year average. Approximate monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | April | May | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|------|------|------|-------|-----|------|------|------|------|
| County total | 1948 | 2569 | 3466 | 154 | - | - | 1337 | 2958 | 2767 |
| West of TQ30 | 666 | 1223 | 1592 | 7 | - | - | 383 | 1260 | 1711 |
| East of TQ30 | 1282 | 1346 | 1874 | 147 | - | - | 954 | 1698 | 1056 |

The first winter count was only 60% of the 10-year average, yet 100 birds or more were recorded 16 times; 180 were at Paddockhurst (Worthing) on 28 Jan, 200 at Pevensey Levels on 1 Feb, 150 at both the Knepp Estate and Pevensey Levels on 4 Feb and the same number at Pett Level on the 27th. During March the high counts were 398 E at Weir Wood Res and 220 near Balcombe on the 4th, 300 at Paddockhurst and 200 at Earnley on the 5th and 530 at Handcross on the 25th. During the early year SWBS, 1079 were recorded in 43 (28%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 100 on 4 Feb at Crowborough. In early April, 40 were seen at both Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown) and

Crowborough and 32 birds at Wartling (Pevensy Levels) on the 13th were the last, 12 days earlier than the 10-year average. Again, there were no sightings at Beachy Head.

The first returning birds, 12 at Pulborough Brooks, were noted on 4 Oct, five days later than the 10-year average; then 52 passed west over Weir Wood Res on the 8th while a similar number were seen at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 21st and 160 at Paddockhurst on the 24th. The following week there were 200 at Balcombe, 250 at Fernhurst and 226 W at Weir Wood Res. A month later another movement included 135 at Patching Hill on 25 Nov, 150 at Truleigh Hill on the 26th, 200 at Iford (Lewes) on the 22nd, 150 at Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest) on the 21st, 200 at Hooe Level (Pevensy) on the 23rd and 120 at Rye Hbr on the 26th. In December there was a western swing, with 250 at Sidlesham on the 6th, 350 at Selham (Petworth) on the 10th, 200 in the lower Arun Valley on the 4th with a final gesture of 200 E at Balcombe on the 19th. During the later year SWBS, 640 were recorded in 44 (35%) of the surveyed squares, with a maximum of 85 on 19 Dec at Fernhurst. Fieldfares were recorded in 41 (18%) of 230 participating gardens during the year in the GBW. [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 381 tetrads, the same as the 10-year average of 384 and biased slightly to the west of TQ30. The first winter period was average but the second winter period continued to improve and was 60% above average and the highest since 2005. During the early year SWBS 1578 Redwings were encountered in 79 (51%) of the squares surveyed. The approximate minimum monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows.

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|--|-----|------|------|------|
| County total | 3236 | 2031 | 2843 | 106 | - | | 12 | 1721 | 3334 | 3729 |
| West of TQ30 | 2004 | 1302 | 1255 | 49 | | | 2 | 349 | 1812 | 2288 |
| East of TQ30 | 1232 | 729 | 1588 | 57 | | | 10 | 1372 | 1522 | 1441 |

In the first quarter a typical 20 reports of 100 birds were received, including 200s at North Mundham on 4 Jan, Ashburnham on the 13th, Twineham on the 19th and Barcombe on 18 Mar. Paddockhurst (Worth) hosted over 150 birds three times and Fittleworth once, while the last 100 were seen at Beeding Brooks on 31 Mar. A few singles followed in April until 40 were found at Crablans (Selsey) on the 12th and a final two at Cissbury the next day, one day earlier than the 10-year average date.

The autumn return opened with eight birds at Ashdown Ridge on 23 Sep, a week later than the 10-year average, followed by one at Pulborough on the 24th, two at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 26th and one at Paghham Hbr on the 29th. In October, 469 birds flew west at Weir Wood Res on the 8th and 310 on the 28th, and there were 11 other counts between 20 and 50 across the county. During November 656 were counted in a survey of Knepp Estate on the 27th, 380 roosted at Weir Wood Res on the 13th, 320 flew east over Creep Wood (Battle) on the 30th and there were 100s at Stanstead Forest on the 17th and at Arlington Res on the 30th. The largest gatherings in December were 350 at Cuckmere Haven on the 6th, 240 at Arundel on the 2nd, 213 at Fernhurst on the 10th and 200 at East Lavant on the 27th. During the November and December SWBS a total of 1120 were recorded from 61 (48%) of the surveyed 1-km squares. [JHW]

Song Thrush*Turdus philomelos*

Very common but decreasing resident and partial migrant; common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 587 (63%) tetrads, compared with 579 in 2017 and a 10-year average of 611, and was widely distributed across the county. The year's count was a little better than last year's, though well above the 10-year average in the second half of the year. During the January and February SWBS 376 were encountered in 110 (71%) of the squares surveyed, a 14% increase in numbers on a slightly smaller coverage on 2017.

During the BBS, 676 were found in 151 (87%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 19 on 13 May at Harting Down. Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads and was probable in a further 44. Several males were noted singing on 1 Jan but the first breeding activity was of nest building on 14 Apr at Pulborough Brooks and food carrying at Washington on the 23rd. Fledglings were recorded 15 times, from 3 May at Goring Gap to 15 Aug at Cissbury Ring. During the GBW birds were recorded in 175 (76%) of the 230 participating gardens in Sussex.

The first intimation of autumn migration was of a bird of continental origin ringed at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 30 Sep. Between then and 5 Nov a further nine continental birds were ringed there and at Ladywell (Coombes). On 4 Oct 30 were counted at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton), on the 7th 52 in small flocks were noted at Pulborough Brooks and 24 around Hastings on the same day. Between 17 Sep and 18 Nov the Hastings migration team recorded 482 on 35 dates with a maximum count of 66 on 31 Oct. The count at Sheepcote Valley peaked at 35 on 19 Oct. In November the highest count was 32 at Pulborough Brooks on the 14th, while December's highlight was 39 on Cradle Hill (Seaford). During the SWBS 149 individuals were encountered in 63 (50%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 11 on 4 Dec at Lidsey Lodge. [JHW]

Mistle Thrush*Turdus viscivorus*

Common resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Mistle Thrushes were recorded from 375 (40%) tetrads spread across the county, comparable with the 10-year average of 368. Every month's count equalled or exceeded the average and the second half-year was 43% above it. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of birds | 203 | 182 | 156 | 216 | 176 | 173 | 127 | 123 | 138 | 174 | 161 | 176 |

In the first half of the year counts were a little above average with ten at Kneppmill Pond on 22 Jan and at East Mascalls (Lindfield) on 31 May, eight at Greentrees Fm (Balcombe) on 4 Jun, sevens at Colgate on 20 Apr and West Lavington (Midhurst) on 8 Jun and just seven other counts of five. During the January and February SWBS 66 Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 34 (22%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of five on 7 Jan at Pallingham (Pulborough).

During the BBS, Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 56 (32%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven as previously mentioned at Colgate. Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and was probable in a further 33. A nest was being built in an oak at Troutbridge (Eridge) on 31 Mar and it was seen to be occupied on 25 Apr, as were nests in Rye Hbr on 21 Apr and at Beech Fm (Cuckfield) on the 28th. Food or faecal carrying was noted at Iford (Lewes) on 17 Apr and at Ashdown on 7 May, while fledglings were first seen at Arundel WWT on 5 May and at nine other

sites until 13 Jul totalling 12 young birds. Singing males were reported 100 times and territorial behaviour ten times while agitation was observed at four sites. Seven pairs were reported from RSPB sites with “probably a few just outside” Rye Hbr SSSI. During the year, Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 33 (13%) of the 230 participating gardens in the GBW.

Larger gatherings were found in July, including 15 at Arlington Res on the 7th, 20 at Kneppmill Pond on the 15th and 26 in cherry trees at Five Hundred Acre (Ashdown Forest) on the 22nd. Thereafter 23 were seen at Fernhurst on 17 Aug followed by 22 at Weir Wood Res on 2 Sep and 20 at Battle on the 29th. Only four counts reached ten birds in October, though they were spread across the county, and 15 birds at Salehurst on 23 Nov was the last account of any note. During the November and December SWBS 59 Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 35 (28%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of six on 4 Nov at Pallingham. [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 129 tetrads, up on the 2017 figure of 114, still lower than the 10-year average of 147 tetrads but hopefully slowing the decline of the last two years.

The first record of the year was on 23 Apr at Wisborough Green, two days earlier than the 10-year mean arrival date, followed by three at Selsey Bill and one at Beachy Head on the 29th. There were sightings throughout May, mainly in ones and twos, but four were recorded at Selsey Bill on the 14th and 15th and eight at Medmerry on the 26th.



Spotted Flycatcher, Beachy Head, 24 May (Roger Charlwood)

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads (five in 2017) and was probable in another seven. Nest building was observed at Snockhurst Manor (Burwash), Kneppmill Pond and Ambersham Common on 27th, 28th and 30th respectively. A pair was observed collecting food on 15 Jun at Sheffield Forest, a nest was recorded with a sitting bird at Dallington Forest on 19 Jun and on 7 Jul one at Buchan Park was observed with food. Fledged young were first recorded on 21 Jul at Paddockhurst (Worth) followed by two adults seen feeding fledglings at Kneppmill Pond the next day, and a juvenile was noted at Fletching on the 23rd. A family party of adults and juveniles was seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 24th and another at Iping Common on 3 Aug. Three pairs bred at Greentrees Fm (Balcombe) and RSPB breeding records indicate three pairs at Broadwater Warren. During the BBS the species was found in only five (2.8%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of four at Petworth Park on 3 Jun.

Birds were recorded throughout August; the highest counts were 12 on 25 Aug at Balcombe, 11 at Handcross on the 24th, eight at Petworth Park on the 3rd and seven at Beachy Head on the 20th. They were recorded on most days in September with numbers dropping towards the end of the month; the highest counts were 15 at Cissbury on the 3rd, ten at Upwaltham on the 2nd and seven at Nepcote (Findon) on the 1st. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 36 between 20 Aug and 27 Sep with a maximum of five on 1 Sep. There were two October records, one at Church Norton on the 2nd and the last at Pagham Hbr on the 16th, four days later than the 10-year average last date. [TS, MJC]

Robin

Erithacus rubecula

Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.

Robins were recorded in 694 (74%) tetrads, more than the 654 of 2017 and comparable with the 10-year average of 687.

Like last year, Robins were recorded in 99% of the 230 participating GBW gardens, whilst in the BGBW they were recorded in 81% of East Sussex gardens and 82% in West Sussex. In the early year SWBS 1621 Robins were recorded in 154 (99%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed; the maximum count was of 43 at Danehill on 17 Feb. There were 160 records of double figure counts during the first winter period, including 30 of more than 20.

Breeding was confirmed in 50 tetrads, and was probable in a further 50, similar to last year. A male showed signs of being paired with a female on 1 Jan at Patcham (Brighton). An adult was carrying food for young at Arundel WWT on 22 Apr, whilst a nest with young was recorded at Great Down (Madehurst) on 27 Apr. Interestingly, a Robin nested in a shed in Henfield where a juvenile was seen on 30 Apr. During the BBS a total of 1687 Robins were encountered in 171 (98%) of the squares surveyed, with the highest count of 49 at Southleigh Forest (Emsworth) on 28 May. Breeding surveys from some of the county's reserves revealed 31 pairs at Pagham Hbr, 16 pairs at Fore Wood (Crowhurst), five territories at Filsham LNR and one pair at Lewes Brooks.

In the autumn, there were 69 double figure counts, including six of more than 20, the highest being 35 at Knepp on 24 Sep. The team of migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 98 on 13 dates between 24 Aug and 19 Oct with a maximum of 20 on 19 Oct. During the late year SWBS, 926 Robins were recorded in 121 (95%) of the surveyed squares, the highest count being 28 at Fishbourne (Chichester) on 4 Dec. During the second winter period, there were 72 double figure counts, including 11 of more than 20 and a highest count of 45 at Seaford on 28 Dec. [WDJA]

Bluethroat*Luscinia svecica*

Very scarce spring and autumn visitor. Schedule 1 species.

One at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 4 Feb (MC-H) was subsequently identified from photographs and was the first winter record for the county. It remained until 26 Feb and, although often elusive in dense vegetation, showed well on occasions (mo). The individual was probably a first winter male of the white-spotted race *L.s. cyanecula*. The previous earliest record was on 23 Mar (1996, Cuckmere Haven). The county total moves on to 142, of which 14 have been this century. [PJ]



Bluethroat, West Rise Marsh, 10 February (Gary Faulkner)

Common Nightingale*Luscinia megarhynchos*

Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Records came from 111 (12%) tetrads, a welcome and continuing recovery from the recent lows of 93 in 2016 and 98 in 2017 but still below the 10-year average of 126, which was boosted by a very high count of 226 in the Nightingale survey year of 2012.

The first bird, already singing, was at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Apr, a couple of days behind the 10-year average arrival date. Nightingales were then recorded every day through to 16 Jun (excepting 7 Jun). Most records in April were of ones or twos, but seven were recorded in Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on the 22nd, six at Pipers Copse (Northchapel) the same day, six at Pulborough Brooks on the 25th and fives at Woods Mill (Henfield) and Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on the

29th and 21st respectively. Similar small numbers were noted in May, but the highest was eight at Shortland Copse (Plaistow) on the 5th.

Breeding was confirmed in just four tetrads and was probable in a further ten. The first proof of breeding came from a track near Woods Mill where one was seen carrying a Beautiful Demoiselle dragonfly on 29 May. Adults were watched feeding young at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Jun, at Shortland Copse (Plaistow) on the 13th and the Knepp Estate on the 29th. During the BBS, a total of 32 Nightingales were recorded in 12 (6.8%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of six, previously mentioned, on 22 Apr at Pipers Copse.

At the Knepp Estate a careful survey of the southern block (473 ha) revealed 19 territories; the middle block (281 ha) held a further two, but there were none in the northern block (237 ha): these results were identical to those in 2017. Ten territories were mapped at Butcherlands (Ebernoe). There were up to eight territories around Wisborough Green where one, having flown into a window, was found dead on 20 May; six at Pipers Copse (Northchapel), at Abbots Wood (Hailsham), and at Shoyswell Manor (Etchingham) (a newly discovered site); seven at Shortlands Copse and nine near Barcombe Cross. Few records were received from the Cowfold/Bolney corridor or from the Streat/Plumpton area, though one was singing near Elmgrove Fm on 13 May. Birds were present at other traditional sites, e.g. along the railway line just north of Clayton Tunnel and around the Darwell Res, with a few, as ever, in new localities e.g. near the long stay parking at Gatwick's South Terminal, at Piddinghoe and at Ripe.

At Beachy Head, where there had been no records in spring, there were 13 bird days between 6 Jul and 13 Aug; at Whitbread Hollow six were ringed between 2 and 21 Aug. In all there were eight records in July and about 25 in August. Single birds were recorded at Pett Level on five dates between 27 Jul and 17 Aug, and in late August there was a run of records of single birds from Seaford Head and Beachy Head. The last, at Withdean Park (Brighton) on 9 Sep, was five days earlier than the 10-year average last date of 14 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 38 tetrads in 2018, up on last year's 22, hopefully suggesting a halt in the recent decline.

The first sighting of the year was on 15 Apr at Beachy Head, four days later than the 10-year average arrival date, and birds were subsequently seen there on the 16th, 17th, 27th and 29th. There were further records during April at Worthing on the 23rd and Littlehampton on the 26th, and in May at Seaford (1st), Arundel WWT (2nd), Sidlesham Ferry (7th) and Northcommon Fm (Selsey) (15th).

Two at Pulborough Brooks on the 12th was the only July record, but Pied Flycatchers were seen on 20 days in August, mainly single birds along the coast, with high counts of six at Seaford Head on the 4th, five at Beachy Head the same day and five at Northcommon Fm on the 21st. Sightings continued in September, again mainly single birds, but there was a remarkable total of 22 at Seaford Head on the 13th. Similar sized 'falls' last occurred at Beachy Head on 5 Sep 2014 and 6 Sep 1984 but none approaching the 50 recorded there on 10 Aug 1967. There were two October records, both at Beachy Head, one on the 3rd and one in the Long Wood on the 22nd, more than three weeks later than the 10-year average departure day but several days earlier than the latest recorded date of 1 Nov 1968, also at Beachy Head. [TS]

Black Redstart*Phoenicurus ochruros*

Rare resident; scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

The species was recorded in 59 tetrads (6.3%), an improvement towards more typical levels compared with the very low figure of 39 tetrads in 2017 but still well down from the peak this century of 86 in 2010.

Estimated minimum monthly totals were as follows:

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Monthly totals | 15 | 14 | 27 | 36 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 43 | 22 |
| 10-year averages (2008-2017) | 15 | 11 | 30 | 24 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 48 | 30 | 14 |

Apart from two at Langney Point on 25 Jan and at Brighton Marina the next day, all January and February records involved singles. Numbers increased in March as spring migrants passed through but again no more than two were recorded together. In April there were four at Beachy Head on the 8th and three at Seaford Head on the 10th, including a singing male. There was no confirmed evidence of breeding although two very juvenile plumaged birds seen at Beachy Head on 31 Jul, one at Birling Gap on 4 Aug and at Telscombe Cliffs on 22 Aug may have involved local breeding. The total for October was significantly lower than the 10-year average but similar to 2017; numbers recovered noticeably in the next month to more normal levels and surpassed those for the previous year.

All early October records involved sightings at Beachy Head, but later in the month records from a range of coastal locations and inland from Truleigh Hill on the 9th and Midhurst on the 15th suggested autumn migration. The first autumn sighting at Selsey Bill was on 5 Nov and ten were recorded there on six dates between the 5th and 19th, with four at neighbouring Medmerry on the 19th. In December up to two were at Telscombe Cliffs on six days between the 4th and 27th, with three counts of three birds and seven of two from other coastal locations. [PJP]

Common Redstart*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

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

Common Redstarts were recorded in 81 tetrads, just below the 10-year average of 90 tetrads. The first bird to arrive was at Beachy Head on 7 Apr, later than the 10-year average arrival date of 28 Mar. Only five were recorded at Beachy Head during the spring, though observers there cautioned that coverage was low. A male was at Northcommon Fm (Selsey), on 11 Apr, followed by a sprinkle of singles along the coast through to 8 May; none were found to the east of Beachy Head.

The first arrival on Ashdown Forest was at Old Lodge LNR on 13 Apr, and 12 were there by the 23rd. Two were back at Pippingford Park on 16 Apr and 11 territorial males were found there on 12 May. There were only a few April records away from the coast and Ashdown Forest: one was at Greentrees Fm (Balcombe) on the 21st, one at Weir Wood Res on the 22nd and one at Ashburnham Place (Battle) on the 26th. By late May up to five were at the Balcombe site. One at Ambersham Common on 7 May was the first for the West Sussex commons. Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads (mainly from Ashdown Forest) and probable in a further eight. The first confirmation came from Ambersham Common on 1 Jun of a bird with food or faecal sac, and a nest with young was encountered on the 4th at Balcombe. Recently fledged birds were at Old Lodge LNR on 11 Jun and Greentrees Fm on the 24th. Nine pairs/territories were identified on the WHBBS (see page 211), underlining the short-term fluctuations in the fortunes of the species in Sussex (cf 12, 10, 8, 24 and

16 in the previous five years). There were few noted after early July from Ashdown Forest and the last record there, at Old Lodge LNR, was on 1 Sep.

The first returning bird was at Beachy Head on 4 Aug. Thereafter a trickle of birds passed through (with fewer high counts noted than in 2017) and there were inland as well as coastal sightings. There were 98 September records and 11 in October (cf only two in 2017). The team studying migration near Hastings logged 34 between 28 Aug and 3 Oct with a maximum of six on 31 Aug. The last records were of one at Rye Hbr on 26 Oct and three at Pett Level on 13 Nov, more than two weeks later than the 10-year average last date of 26 Oct. [CB]

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 76 (8.1%) tetrads compared with 66 in 2017 and 75 in 2016, with as usual a strong bias towards the coast.

The approximate monthly number of birds compared with the 10-year average 2008-2017 and the number of days on which they were recorded are shown below.

| | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No of birds | 0 | 12 | 11 | - | 6 | 260 | 340 | 13 | 0 |
| 10 year average | <1 | 16 | 21 | <1 | 6 | 211 | 329 | 27 | <1 |
| No of days | 0 | 10 | 11 | 0 | 8 | 29 | 27 | 9 | 0 |

The first was seen Pagham Hbr on 14 Apr, six days later than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by singles at Barnham and the lower Adur Valley on the 18th. Birds were seen on only ten days in April compared to 27 in 2017. Two were seen at Medmerry on 1 May, otherwise all spring records were of one, the last being at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 29 May. All the records in April and May were from coastal or near coastal locations, apart from one each at Pulborough Brooks, Henfield, Lewes and Uckfield. There were no breeding records.

The earliest returning bird was seen at Cissbury on 9 Jul with four there on the 13th. The highest daily count for August and September was 21 at Beachy Head on 10 Sep. A comment by the Beachy Head log keeper states, "our best ever day occurred on 21/9/1980 when an estimate of 500 to 1000 birds were present in SE winds, but only 25 were present the following day. They were the good old days", placing recent numbers into a historical context. Other notable counts were 17 at Hastings on 29 Aug, 15 at Thorney Island on 2 Sep, and 13 each at Climping also on the 2nd and Newhaven Tide Mills on the 8th. The team monitoring migration around Hastings recorded 109 birds between 11 Aug and 1 Oct. Numbers were lower in October with one count of three at Cuckmere Haven on the 7th, the other records being of singles. The last sighting was in the lower Arun Valley on the 27th, one day later than the 10-year average last date. [GDE]

Eurasian Stonechat

Saxicola rubicola

Fairly common resident and partial migrant.

The species was recorded in 206 tetrads (22%), more than both last year and the 10-year average of 173 tetrads. There were only 26 days out of a possible 365 when no birds were recorded. Numbers, however, were lower than the previous two years. The highest monthly total was 322 in October compared with 909 in 2017, also in October. The minimum monthly totals and the number of days on which Stonechats were recorded were as follows:



Stonechat, Cuckmere Haven, 28 June (Robert Davis)

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| No. of birds | 190 | 169 | 126 | 117 | 136 | 137 | 101 | 175 | 319 | 322 | 163 | 180 |
| No. of days | 30 | 28 | 28 | 26 | 28 | 27 | 25 | 29 | 27 | 31 | 29 | 31 |

The highest counts in the first winter period were ten at Cuckmere Haven on 13 Mar and eight at Beachy Head on 21 and 30 Mar. There were four counts of seven. During the early year SWBS a total of 31 was recorded in 12 (7.7%) of the 156 squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads, mostly at sites on Ashdown Forest but also at Medmerry, Sidlesham, Iping Common, Heyshott Common, Ambersham Common, Pulborough Brooks, Cissbury, Steyning, Castle Hill (Falmer), Beachy Head and Hastings CP. A total of 39 territories were identified during the WHBBS (see page 211). Display was first observed on 6 Apr at Iping Common and the first fledglings were seen on 13 May at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and continued to be recorded until 15 Aug. On Ashdown Forest the highest numbers recorded during the breeding period from specific sites were 12 at West Chase on 15 Jul, the same number at Hollies on the 18th and ten at Old Lodge LNR on 24 May. Elsewhere during the breeding season there were 11 at Beachy Head on 30 Jun and nine at Cuckmere Haven on the 2nd. The highest count on the West Sussex commons was seven at Iping Common on two dates in June.

The Hastings migration watch team recorded 318 between 1 Sep and 5 Nov with a maximum of 37 on 27 Sep. There were 20 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 1 Sep, 20 at Rye Bay on the 27th and 17 at Medmerry on the 24th. In October twelves were at Cuckmere Haven on the 20th and at Medmerry on the 22nd. There was only one double figure count during the second winter period, of 12 at Medmerry on 2 Nov. In the late year SWBS 14 were found in eight (6.3%) of the 127 squares surveyed, with a maximum of four at Woodhorn Fm (Birdham) on 30 Dec. Stonechats continued to be recorded in small numbers on Ashdown Forest with three at Stonehill on the last day of the year. [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 143 tetrads, 17 more than in 2017, close to the 10-year average of 141 tetrads and predominantly at coastal or near coastal sites, 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 | 63 | 385 | 182 | 48 | 1 | 703 | 687 | 94 | 1 |
| No. of days | 15 | 29 | 22 | 5 | 1 | 29 | 29 | 22 | 1 |

Spring arrival was relatively slow in 2018, starting with three at Selsey Bill and singles at five other coastal sites on Mar 11, three days later than the 10-year average first date. The following day produced one at Goring, followed by three at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Mar. Modest numbers were recorded on the majority of the remaining days of March, with the highest counts of just four birds at Selsey Bill on the 25th and at Church Norton on the 31st. Passage picked up somewhat during April, although there were only four records in double figures: 13 at Medmerry on 23 Apr, 12 at Climping Gap on the 25th, ten at Church Norton on the 20th and ten at Goring Gap on the 27th. In May the highest counts all occurred on the first day of the month, when 37 birds were recorded at Medmerry and 20 were observed at both Beachy Head and Cuckmere Haven.

At least eight breeding territories were identified at Rye Hbr, with fledged broods recorded at three locations within the reserve. Elsewhere the only June record was one at Pagham Hbr on the 1st.

The first sign of autumn passage was at Rye Hbr with one on 31 Jul, but the peak occurred on 25 Aug when at least 115 were recorded. The largest single count, however, was on the 27th when an estimated 100 were in the fields north of Saltdean. Thirty were at Climping Gap on 7 Sep, 25 at Seaford Head on 24 Aug and 22 at Thorney Island on 25 Aug. During October the two highest counts involved five at Thorney Island on the 5th and the same number at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on the 18th. A total of 80 Wheatears were recorded by migration watchers at Hastings on 27 dates between 11 Aug and 18 Oct, with a maximum of 18 on 24 Aug. Autumn migration was over by late October, the last being singles at both Telscombe and Pilsley Island (Chichester Hbr) on 23 Oct, considerably earlier than the 10-year average last date of 13 Nov. [GO]

Greenland Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe leucorhoa

There were just two records of this subspecies during 2018; a pair at Newhaven Tide Mills on 23 Apr and two at Medmerry on the 29th. The numbers of spring records therefore moves to 69 since 1949 (44 this century) whilst the autumn figure remains at 28 (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 534 (57%) tetrads during the year, somewhat lower than the 10-year average of 555. In the first winter period there were 25 counts of 30 or more, the largest being 76 at Westbourne Common on 9 Jan, 85 at Broadbridge Heath on 29 Jan and 80 there on 16 Feb. The early year SWBS recorded 1199 in 97 (62%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 82 in a square near Uckfield on 22 Feb. In the BGBW the species was found in 62% of both East and West Sussex surveyed sites, whilst during the GBW it was recorded in 190 (83%) of participating gardens.

During the BBS, 1777 House Sparrows were encountered in 133 (76%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 81 on 24 Jun at Selsey East Beach. Breeding was confirmed in 48 tetrads and probable in a further 46. The earliest breeding activities noted were nest building on 10 Mar at Seaford, an occupied nest on 7 Apr in Brighton and food carrying on 30 Apr in Pulborough. The first nest with young was on 7 May at Uckfield and young were seen out of the nest on 9 May at Hangleton. A swift nest box was being used at West Tarring (Worthing), where another pair was taking nesting materials into a hole in a silver birch; an individual was seen to enter a House Martin's nest of the previous year at Selsey Bill, and a nest box was being used at Pulborough Brooks. There were three records of birds using more traditional nesting sites under the eaves or in roof spaces of houses. There was no report of nesting activity after the end of July. The Brighton & Hove House Sparrow Project recorded a total of 3157 in 49 different 1-km squares in the city.

On 23 May a flock at Broadbridge Heath held 100 including juveniles. Other large late spring/summer flocks included 104 at Southwick on 28 May, 120 at Castle Hill (Falmer) on 1 Aug, 126 at Telscombe on 9 Aug, 250 at Widewater (Lancing) on 15 Aug and 100 there on 20 Sep, while 100 were at Pulborough Brooks on the same day.

In the late year SWBS 1117 House Sparrows were encountered in 75 (59%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed. There were 30 counts of 30 or more in the second winter period, the largest being 146 during a SWBS survey at Westbourne Common on 15 Nov, 136 at Crowborough on 22 Dec and 100 at Broadbridge Heath on the 28th. [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 six tetrads, three fewer than in 2017 and ten fewer than in 2016, continuing the decline recorded this century.

As usual, all records except one were from East Sussex and predominantly from their remaining stronghold on East Guldeford Level. Eight there on 11 Mar was the highest first winter period count, while an anxious pair in an old hut on 9 May was the only indication of probable nesting anywhere. In the autumn there were two estimates of 80 on 13 Sep and 100 on 29 Nov but another observer counted only ten on 24 Dec. In the Hastings area Tree Sparrows were recorded moving on three dates in October: two flew north on the 1st, one south on the 16th and 7 E on the 19th. Elsewhere a juvenile was ringed at Hardham (Pulborough) on 7 Oct and retrapped several times until 3 Nov, one was photographed at Salehurst (Robertsbridge) on 16 Oct and 20 were noted at Scotney GP on 13 Nov. Unlike last year, there were no records from the SWT Pevensey Levels reserve. [JAH]

Dunnock*Prunella modularis*

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

Dunnocks were found in 606 (65%) tetrads compared with 573 in 2017 and 594 in 2016. The BGBW produced birds in 43% of East Sussex and 42% of West Sussex gardens during the hour long observation; this contrasting with the findings in the GBW when Dunnocks were recorded in 216 (94%) of the participating gardens. The first winter period SWBS produced 428 encounters within 114 (73%) of the surveyed squares, with a maximum count of 20 at Westergate on 16 Feb. Other high counts in the first winter period were 40 on Rackham Hill (Amberley) on 11 Mar and 20 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Jan and 4 Mar.

Several birds were heard singing on 1 Jan, three counter-singing males were observed in Patcham on the 2nd and other early singers later in the month. On 26 Mar one was foraging in an inauspicious small patch of vegetation in the Brighton Lanes.

During the BBS 590 Dunnocks were encountered in 146 (84%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 18 on 29 Jun at Northchapel. Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and was probable in a further 49. The first records of breeding activities involved display on 8 Feb at Crowborough and nest building on 15 Mar at High Salvington (Worthing). The first fledged birds were sighted at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 3 May (cf. 25 Apr in 2017 and 3 May 2016). At Rye Hbr 35 territories were mapped (31 in 2017); at Pagham Hbr 29 pairs were counted (23 in 2017) and Medmerry contained six pairs (eight in 2017).

In the autumn there were only four double figure counts, the highest being 12 at Hope Gap on 14 Oct which with ten at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 24th suggested dispersal. In the late year SWBS 226 Dunnocks were recorded from 78 (61%) of the 127 surveyed squares with a maximum count of 16 at Edburton on 11 Dec. Of five double figure counts during November and December the highest was 20 at Cradle Hill (Seaford) on 28 Dec. [GT]

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 82 (8.8%) tetrads (74 in 2017 and 79 in 2016), comparable with the 10-year average of 82.

The first spring arrival was one flying in off the sea at Goring Gap on 7 Apr, almost two weeks later than in the previous year, and 12 days later than the 10-year average. In East Sussex four males and a female were observed at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 9th, increasing to nine on the 10th when two were also seen at Cuckmere Haven. A peak spring count of 14 was noted at Dale Park (Slindon) on 11 Apr, with a number of birds observed at other locations on this date including at Pulborough Brooks, Broadwater Warren, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. During April the seawatchers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 20, with a high count of 11 on the 29th.

Although there were two records of males singing, at Down Level (Pevensey) on 15 Apr and Northiam on 15 May, breeding was confirmed at just one site, when fledglings were seen on 2 and 8 Jul at East Guldeford Level.

Two at Rye Hbr on 15 Jul were probably the first autumn migrants, followed by one at Pagham Hbr on the 16th and 1 E at Goring Gap the next day. Small numbers were noted at coastal locations across the county in the rest of July before numbers began to build throughout August and September. A movement of 255 E and 4 W was observed at Goring Gap on 31 Aug and on 4 Sep 200 were at Climping Gap. The migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 544 on 32 dates between 17 Aug and 7 Oct with a high count of 84 on 7 Sep. Away from the coast, small numbers were recorded from downland sites in September; eight were at Bury Hill on the 14th and 20 at Cissbury on the 16th. Twenty were at Medmerry on 1 Oct but thereafter no more than 11 were seen on eight dates until the 17th. The last straggler was seen at Chichester GP on 13 Nov, almost a month later than the last bird seen in 2017, and 18 days later than the 10-year average.

There were no records of any races other than *flavissima*. [CBu]

Grey Wagtail*Motacilla cinerea*

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Grey Wagtails were recorded in 237 (25%) tetrads in 2018 (244 in 2017 and 251 in 2016), comparable with the 10-year average of 226. They were recorded in every month of the year at Warnham LNR and at Weir Wood Res and in 11 months of the year at Arundel WWT and Pulborough Brooks. The largest group in the first winter period was four on the mill stream near Swanbourne Bridge (Arundel) on 23 Mar. Up to two were recorded in 11 (7.1%) of 1-km squares surveyed in the January and February SWBS. During the GBW, Grey Wagtails were recorded in 26 (11%) of the 230 participating garden in Sussex with a maximum of two at a garden in Graffham.

Although Grey Wagtail is a passage migrant, spring migration is not always easy to detect. In 2018 the only record suggestive of spring migration was a bird seen flying east past Splash Point (Seaford) on 17 Apr. During the BBS, Grey Wagtails were recorded in ten (5.7%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, again with a maximum of two. Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads (11 in 2017), with probable breeding in a further 19. The first record of confirmed breeding was noted at the Knepp Estate on 23 Apr. The latest record of fledglings was from Arundel on 15 Jul.

In the Hastings area 140 were recorded on 35 dates between 11 Aug and 18 Nov, with the highest count of 12 W on 10 Sep. Migration recorded at two West Sussex seawatching sites was as follows:

| | | Sep | Oct | Peak movement |
|-------------------|---|-----|-----|----------------|
| Selsey Bill | E | 16 | 8 | 11 E on 25 Sep |
| | W | 6 | 8 | |
| | N | 3 | 1 | |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 12 | 2 | 10 W on 14 Sep |
| | W | 20 | 3 | |

In the second winter period there were regular records of one or two birds at sites throughout the county, with a higher count in December of three at East Lavant on 20 Dec and the same number at Warnham LNR on the 28th. During the second winter period SWBS Grey Wagtails were recorded in ten (7.9%) of the 127 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of two. [CBu]



Grey Wagtail, Arundel WWT, 2 November (Karen Weston)

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba yarrellii

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Pied Wagtails were found in 425 (45%) tetrads in 2018, compared with 447 in 2017 and 456 in 2016, and were recorded on all but a handful of dates in the year. In the first winter period there was a very large count of 300 at Sidlesham on 14 Jan and other large counts included 110 at Ferring on 14 Mar, 105 at Battle on 19 Jan and 70 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 22 Mar. No significant urban roosts were recorded in the first winter period but, as in previous years, birds were observed congregating at water treatment works, with high counts of 50 at Barcombe on 17 Jan, 45 at Newick on 25 Jan and 30 at Steyning on 27 Feb.

During the January and February SWBS 195 were found in 46 (30%) of the surveyed squares, with the maximum count being the previously mentioned 105 at Battle. Throughout the year the species was recorded in 76 (33%) of gardens during the GBW with a maximum peak weekly count of four. In the BBS 125 were found in 75 1-km squares, 43% of the 174 squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads (19 in 2017) with probable breeding recorded in a further 13 (8 in 2017). Nest building was first recorded on 14 Apr at Wartling but the first confirmed breeding was of a bird observed carrying food at Plumpton on 10 May. The first fledgling seen was at Pevensey on 22 Jun and the latest report of confirmed breeding was of fledglings seen on 21 Jul at Arlington Res.

Larger congregations of birds began to be recorded from late July with 80 on fields at Selsey on 30 Jul and again on 19 Aug. At Climping Gap 106 were counted on 19 Oct and there were 11 other records during the autumn of counts of 50 or more. Migration watchers at Hastings counted a total of 399 on 27 dates between 11 Aug and 18 Nov, with a highest daily count of 54 E on 30 Sep. Migration records from two seawatching sites in West Sussex were as follows:

| | | Sep | Oct | Peak movement |
|-------------------|---|-----|-----|---------------|
| Selsey Bill | E | 126 | 194 | 63 on 29 Sep |
| | W | 33 | 132 | 41 on 3 Oct |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 20 | 217 | |
| | W | 9 | 102 | 90 on 26 Oct |

In addition, 28 N were recorded at Selsey Bill in October.

Birds were again present late in the year at water treatments works, with 41 at Newick on 3 Oct, 40 at Barcombe on 25 Nov and 48 at Steyning on 29 Dec. On 18 Oct at least 14 birds were observed possibly preparing to roost at the north terminal of Gatwick airport. The only other reported late winter roost was 33 coming in to roost on an island in a small pond in Robertsbridge on 25 Dec. During the second winter period SWBS, 229 Pied Wagtails were recorded in 60 squares (47%) of the 127 surveyed, with a maximum count of 46 in Battle on 17 Nov. [CBu]

White Wagtail

Motacilla alba alba

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 0 | 0 | 6 | 19 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 |

The first record was of six at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 29 Mar. Between 6 and 9 Apr probably 13 different individuals were recorded at Beachy Head with eight in a ploughed field on the 7th; this the largest day count of this form since regular watching started at Beachy Head in 1960. Also in April there was one at Arlington Res on the 6th and two at Selsey Bill on the 19th whilst in May individuals were seen at Climping Gap on the 1st, Wych Cross (Ashdown Forest) on the 12th and at Pulborough Brooks on the 15th, the last spring record.

The only breeding record involved a mixed Pied/White pair at Arundel which were seen with three juveniles on 9 Jul.

One at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Sep was the first in the autumn, followed by one at Birling Gap on 5 Oct and another at Warnham LNR on 24 Oct, where the final one was recorded on 16 Dec. [CBu]

Richard's Pipit*Anthus richardi***Rare vagrant.**

An exceptional year, with a total of up to five recorded, the best showing since 1968. Of these, up to four were in the Beachy Head area comprising a first calendar year bird flushed from set-aside between Birling Gap and Cornish Fm on 25 Sep (CAH), one flying east calling at Birling Gap on 14 Oct (MM), one flying southwest on 17 Oct (KH, RKH, NJNP) and another flying east at Birling Gap on 29 Oct (JARP, LP). It is unclear how many individuals were involved. The other record was of one in fields on the east side of Thorney Island on 21 Oct (LMF). The county total moves on to at least 85, including a minimum of 13 this century. [P]

Tawny Pipit*Anthus campestris***Rare visitor, mostly in autumn.**

One was found along the track leading to Cornish Fm, Beachy Head, in the early morning of 17 Sep (CAH), a typical date and location, albeit of a species that has become rarer in Sussex in recent years. It flew off east after about ten minutes and could not be relocated. The record has been accepted by BBRC and is the first since 2014. [MM]

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 261 tetrads (28%), a slight reduction on the 275 in 2017 and the 10-year average of 279 tetrads. During the first winter period the highest congregations were seen at sites on Ashdown Forest, with 161 going into a roost at Ashdown Ridge on 20 Feb and 107 at the Isle of Thorns on 17 Jan. There were 100 in maize stubble at South Common (Chailey) on 19 Feb and 60 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 14 Feb. Sixty were also counted at Beeding Brooks on 3 Mar. During the early winter SWBS a total of 170 were recorded in 20 (13%) of the surveyed squares, with a maximum count of 40 at Edburton on 26 Jan.

In March at Selsey Bill 523 (516 N) were recorded on 13 dates between the 3rd and the 31st with a high count of 444 N on the 11th. In April, numbers moving north at Selsey Bill were much lower with just 55 counted (49 N) on 12 dates between the 1st and 27th. This contrasts with a total of 186 counted in April 2017 and 97 in April 2016.

During the BBS 72 were found in 12 (6.9%) of the 174 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 33 at Thorney Island on 11 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in just three tetrads, all on Ashdown Forest, but probable breeding was recorded in a further 21. The first sign of display was at Climping Gap on 4 Mar, but breeding was not confirmed until July, when adults carrying food or a faecal sac were seen at Hollies and the Forest Centre on the 3rd and 4th.

Larger groups began to be noted from late August, when 30 were seen at Medmerry on the 30th, but the largest counts were all in September with a number of observers recording peak numbers on the 22nd. On this date the Hastings migration watch logged a high count of 3698 from a total of 7255 counted on 43 dates between 6 Sep and 3 Nov. Also on the 22nd, 2000 were counted at Splash Point (Seaford) and 1075 at Selsey Bill. Four days later a high of 1000, from a monthly total of 2399, was logged at Goring. The highest inland counts during September were 250 each at Pulborough Brooks on the 22nd and at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 24th.

The highest counts in the second winter period were 100 at Medmerry on 2 Nov and another 100 at Church Norton on the 13th. Away from the coast 88 were observed flying into a heathland roost at Ashdown Ridge on 2 Nov. In the late year SWBS 259 were recorded in 30 (23%) out of 127 squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 96 on 11 Dec at Edburton. Other high counts in December included birds going in to roost at sites on Ashdown Forest, but away from this area 50 were at Woodhorn Fm (Birdham) on the 30th and 40 at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on the 29th. On the same day there were 38 at Steyning WTW. [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 60 tetrads, similar to 2017 and the 10-year average of 62 tetrads, with the majority of sightings coming again from Ashdown Forest, the stronghold of this species in the county.

The first migrants of the year were seen on Ashdown Forest, at Lavender Platt and Wych Cross, on 6 Apr, five days later than the 10-year average arrival date. From 13 Apr birds were seen almost daily at various sites on Ashdown Forest until early July, with a peak count of 12 at Old Lodge LNR on 23 Apr. The first record of a bird displaying was at Old Lodge LNR on 18 Apr. In West Sussex the first record was one at Pulborough Brooks on 14 Apr and the first seen on the Wealden Heaths was at Iping Common on 29 Apr. One was seen to fly in off the sea at Medmerry on the 24th.

Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads. The first confirmed breeding was distraction display observed at Old Lodge LNR on 13 May, and birds were seen carrying food or a faecal sac at Broadwater Forest on 16 Jun, at Treyford Down on 7 Jul and at Lavender Platt on 30 Jul. They probably bred in a further 13 tetrads. These were primarily on Ashdown Forest but also included ten pairs at Broadwater Warren and 16 territories on five of the West Sussex heaths (see page 211).

The first autumn migrants were two seen at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Aug and one at Cissbury the following week. The Hastings migration watch team recorded 18 on ten dates between 20 Aug and 22 Sep, with a peak count of six on 25 Aug, while fifteen were recorded at Pett Level on 20 Aug. Numbers tailed off sharply from mid-September onwards, and other than four at Hastings on 22 Sep, all sightings were of singles. The final record of 2018 was one seen at North Stoke on 9 Oct, seven days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [CBu]

Water Pipit

Anthus spinoletta

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

2015: One was photographed on the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on 20 Apr (RH).

2018: The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|
| 5 | 4 | 4 | 8 | | 4 | 3 | - |

At West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), a traditional site for this species, there were up to two in January, three in February, four in March and six in April up to the 13th. Other records in the first half of the year were singles at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) from 14 Jan to 9 Mar, Brede Levels and

Crowhurst on 21 Jan, Pulborough Brooks on 6 Apr (AB, WB, CM, JM) and Climping Gap on 21 and 22 Apr (BA).

In the second half of the year, there were up to three at Combe Haven (another traditional site) from 10 Oct to 3 Nov and singles at West Rise Marsh on 20 Oct and 10 Nov, Cadborough (Rye) on 25 Oct and Horse Eye Level on 11 and 30 Nov. [PJ]

Rock Pipit

Anthus petrosus

Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.

Rock Pipits were recorded, primarily at coastal locations, in 44 (4.7%) tetrads (48 in 2017), comparable with the 10-year average of 47 (range 42-53). The highest counts in the first winter period were 18 at Cuckmere Haven on 16 Jan and 12 at Hope Gap (Seaford), some feeding on the cliff top and others on short turf at the bottom of the Gap. In West Sussex the highest counts were in Chichester Hbr with eight at Fishbourne Channel on 30 Jan and seven at Pilsley Island on 6 Jan. This species was recorded at Birling Gap on 16 dates from January to May but never more than four a day, although some were seen in flight display.

As in 2017, there were three confirmed records of breeding and four of probable breeding. Birds were seen displaying at Rottingdean on 17 Feb and at Birling Gap on 21 Mar and carrying food at Rottingdean on 21 May, then at Brighton Marina on 15 Jun. Fledglings were first recorded at Cuckmere Haven on 2 Aug.

Autumn visitors added to the numbers, with 5 W at Goring Gap on 4 Oct and three more similarly later in the month, while at Selsey Bill 14 were recorded in November, with a maximum of four on the 18th. The highest autumn counts were eight at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Oct and the same number at Fishbourne Channel on 27 Oct, and in the second winter period seven at Pilsley Island on 17 Dec.

Details of the recent survey of this species can be found on page 261-266 [CBu]

Scandinavian Rock Pipit

Anthus petrosus littoralis

The two accepted records of this race in 2018 were of one at Fishbourne Creek from 30 Jan to 3 Mar (APB, AH, BGRI, OM, IP) and one by the R Adur at Shoreham on 21 Mar (JM-S). [PJ]

Chaffinch

Fringilla coelebs

Abundant resident; probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.

The species was widely recorded across the county, from 634 tetrads (604 and 619 in 2017 and 2016). In the early year SWBS 792 Chaffinches were recorded in 69% of the 156 squares surveyed (down from 77% the previous year) with a maximum of 87 at Holme Fm (Stansted) on 9 Jan. In the BGBW Chaffinches were recorded in 26% of participating West Sussex gardens and 30% in East Sussex, whilst the species was recorded in 75% of the gardens surveyed for the GBW.

During the first winter period there were a total of almost 100 counts between 10 and 99, though these tailed off during March. The highest counts were 400 feeding in a game cover crop at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 28 Jan, 200 at Arlington, also on the 28th, 130 in stubble at Handcross on 25 Mar, 100 at Weir Wood Res on 28 Jan and 100 at Bignor Down on 22 Feb.

The South East regional BBS trend 1995-2017 reveals a significant decline of 32%, though in Sussex this decline is even steeper, at 60% from 1994 to 2017. This year 924 were recorded in 91% of the 174 squares surveyed for the BBS, with a maximum of 17 at East Ashling on 23 Apr. Breeding was confirmed from just ten tetrads and probable in a further 47, compared with 14 and 39 in 2017, thus similar when combined. Song was recorded from late January, the earliest confirmed breeding was a nest with eggs at Ashburnham Place (Battle) on 31 Mar and the first fledglings were seen at both Cocking and Albourne on 7 Jun.

Post breeding flocks began to appear in August with 30 feeding on a grain dump at West Stoke (Lavant) on the 12th and 50 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 28th. There were 11 double-figure counts in September, the highest being 50 at Climping Gap on the 27th. There were some significant autumn movements, most notably 341 N at Selsey Bill on 28 Oct. There were 105 N and 110 N on 17 and 29 Oct at Hastings, and the migration watch team there recorded a total of 582 between 13 Sep and 18 Nov.

In the second winter period all the highest counts were in December: 1000 at Westdean Woods on the 2nd, 200 there on the 27th, 120 at Handcross on the 30th and 100 at Rye Cadborough on the 26th. Additionally there were 90 double-figure counts, most notably 50 at Worthing on 26 Nov, 50 and 70 at Arundel Park on 4 and 29 Dec, 62 at Cocking on 13 Dec and 50 at North Marden on the 25th. During the late year SWBS, 512 Chaffinches were recorded in 86 (68%) of the 127 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 62 at Cocking mentioned above. [DB]

Brambling

Fringilla montifringilla

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

Bramblings were recorded in 70 (7.5%) tetrads (53 in 2017). In the first four months they were seen in 12 participating GBW gardens; at Fernhurst and Midhurst regularly from early January to early April and at Hartfield from early February to mid-March, usually singly but with one count of three at Fernhurst. There were 13 double-figure counts (compared to nine in 2017), the largest of which was 80 at Westdean Woods on 16 Jan, and two further counts of 40 at nearby Stapleash Fm (Chilgrove). Nine of these higher counts were from this area of Westdean Woods and Monkton.

Elsewhere, mostly one or two were recorded from about 30 distinct sites, most frequently from Fernhurst between 1 Jan to 22 Apr, Weir Wood Res from 1 Jan to 15 Apr and Arlington Res from 5 Jan to 13 Mar, with six there on 11 Feb. Bramblings were recorded on 22 dates in March but only ten in April (3 in 2016); the last one was seen at Fernhurst on 22 Apr (five days later than the 10-year average).

The earliest returning bird was one in Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 3 Oct (5 days later than the 10 year average of 28 Sep). The highest count in October was 75 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on the 27th. A total of 32 was recorded on 12 dates between 7 Oct and 18 Nov near Hastings, with the highest one day count of 14 on 29 Oct. From September to December only two sightings were registered in GBW gardens. During November observers in Ashdown Forest recorded Bramblings on eight dates between 5 and 22 Nov. A flock of 100 finches that flew past one observer at Old Lodge LNR on the 14th were mainly or all Bramblings and at Five Hundred Acre there were 15 and ten on the 21st and 22nd respectively. Records from other locations to the end of the year were usually of only ones or twos, but six were noted at Friston Forest on 19 Nov, Blackdown on 12 Dec and Robertsbridge on the 30th. [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.

Records came from 145 (15%) tetrads, reflecting the widespread nature of the exceptional 2017/18 influx. The vast majority of these records came during the first winter period, with none in August or September. For a detailed analysis of the 2017/18 Hawfinch influx see the paper on pages 222-237 of this report.

During the first winter period there were counts of 30 or more from 14 sites, where Hawfinches were attracted by Hornbean and Yew seeds or to roost sites. Of the 16 counts of 100 or more, most were made at roosts or where there was probably a nearby roost. These included Penhurst Lane (Netherfield), 100 on 15 Jan; at and overflying a roost at Hurst Wood (Haywards Heath), 127 and 119 on 10 and 11 Mar; and Ardingly/Worth, 156 at adjacent roosts on 13 Mar rising to 163 on 25 Mar. At Kingley Vale, where Yew seeds were the main attraction, there were 100 on 7 Mar, 400 between 12 and 16 Mar and still 125 on 20 Mar. The remarkable counts of 400 were the second highest in the UK during the influx.

During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in six (3.8%) of the 156 squares surveyed with a maximum of three at Hayes Fm (Udimore) on 21 Feb.

In the breeding season, a pair was displaying near Battle railway station on 19 Apr and another was there on 2 May. Four at Ardingly on 10 Jun may have been a family party. Other breeding season records were a single at Robertsbridge on 15 May, one at Worth on 2 Jun, two near Brede High Wood on 28 Jun, one at Ambersham Common on 20 Jul and one at Dixter (Northiam) on 20 Jul. There was also one in a West Wittering garden on 12 May, an odd location and date.

There was a return to a more usual reporting pattern in the second winter period, with records on 25 dates. Most of these were from the Arundel area, Westdean Woods and north of Battle, especially at Penhurst Lane. There was just one double-figure count, 23 at Penhurst Lane on 30 Nov. The next highest count was eight on 29 Oct at Rewell Wood (Arundel), with six and five recorded at Westdean Woods on 2 and 9 Dec. During the late year SWBS Hawfinches were encountered in only one square, three at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 22 Nov. [DB, MM]

Bullfinch*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

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

Bullfinches were recorded in 341 (36%) tetrads in 2018, falling back from the 374 of 2017 and the 10-year average of 384, which was boosted by high counts during the 2007-2011 Atlas years.

In the GBW throughout the year, Bullfinches were noted in 83 (36%) of 230 participating gardens (cf. 91 (38%) in 2017). In the early year SWBS 86 were found in 39 (25%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of eight on 26 Jan at Edburton. These figures were rather higher than those in the past three years. A male at Hope Gap (Seaford Head), on 18 Jan was unusual, although on 4 Jul one was at nearby Seaford GC. One at Barcombe Cross on 26 Jan had growths on its legs and feet, the third consecutive year that this affliction has been recorded.

Several observers recorded Bullfinches on Blackthorn buds in February and March. In May birds at Wivelsfield Green sought out Amelanchia (Rosacea family) and at Punnetts Town they fed on Forget-me-not (Green Alkanet) seeds, which were also the food source at South Malling in June.

Birds were found in 43 (25%) of the squares surveyed during the BBS. The sum of the maximum counts of the two surveys was 80, falling back from the 112 of 2017 to below the 2016 figure of 86. The maximum count was five on 20 Apr at West Lavington (Midhurst).

Courtship display was noted at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 25 Mar. Breeding was confirmed in just eight tetrads and probable in a further 42. The first fledged birds were at the Waterwoods (Arundel) on 6 Jun (in 2017 there had been an earlier record on 9 May). A family group at Kingley Vale on 25 Aug contained juveniles still showing some downy feathers. Birds at Rye Hbr late in August had probably bred locally.

At Arundel WWT, on 1 Sep, two juveniles feeding on blackberries saw off an inquisitive Robin, but in mid-December they lost out to male Blackcaps while on Guelder Rose. No more than two were seen on any day at Whitbread Hollow, where birds were noted on seven dates from 11 Aug to 2 Nov (with one in the hotel garden on 16 Oct).

In the late year SWBS 63 were found in 32 (25%) of 127 1-km squares surveyed; the 2017 and 2016 totals were 124 and 106 respectively. The maximum count was of six in Hornshurst Wood (Crowborough), on 5 Nov. These figures suggest that there were fewer Bullfinches in the county at the end of the year than there had been in 2016 and 2017, and that their range had diminished. The total count at the Knepp estate reflected this decline: between 18 and 20 on 27 Nov compared with 25 on 17 Nov 2017.

There were thirteen double-figure counts across the year, the maximum was thirteen at the west end of Weir Wood Res on 8 Oct. The 2017 SxBR concluded that “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’”: 2018 may well have seen one of those downward variations. There were far fewer sightings of birds in unusual places than there were in 2017. [CB]

Common Rosefinch

Carpodacus erythrinus

Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.

A first year bird was trapped and ringed at Charleston Reedbed on 6 Nov (JAGD). This is the latest ever recorded in Sussex and the first in November. The county total moves on to 34, of which ten have been this century. [PJ]

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Very common resident and possibly fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Greenfinches were recorded from 477 (51%) tetrads during the year, slightly more than in the previous two years. Any thoughts that this might reflect an increase, however, should be read with caution. Data from several other sources suggest otherwise; most notably the BBS South East regional population trend, 1995-2017, which shows a significant decline of 64%. Records from the GBW also showed a decline from the previous year, with the species being recorded in 73% of participating gardens in 2018 compared to 76% in 2017. During the BGBW there was also a very small decrease of 1-2% in gardens where the species was recorded, down to 14% and 13% in West and East Sussex respectively. Finally, in the SWBS a decrease in presence from 36% in 2017 to 31% was recorded in the early year period in 2018.

Compared to 2017 when there were just 18 double-figure counts during the first winter period,

in 2018 there were 42 such counts. Notable amongst these were 75 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 20 Jan (40 on 10 Jan) and 60 at Church Norton on 11 Jan. The highest count from the previous year during this period was 20, so it is encouraging to find these larger flocks. In the early year SWBS the maximum count was 12 at Hurstpierpoint on 3 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads, similar to the previous two years (10 and 12), with probable breeding in a further 32 (27 in 2017 and 41 in 2016). Unfortunately very few records were received which noted breeding evidence. Fledged birds were observed from several locations however, the earliest being 22 May at Lec Airfield (Bognor Regis) and the latest from Cissbury on 21 Jul. At Pagham Hbr 18 pairs were noted. During the BBS 336 Greenfinches were found in 97 (56%) of the 174 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 53 at Woodhorn Fm (Birdham) on 16 Jun.

Post breeding numbers were low and did not reach double figures until ten were seen at Shipton Green (Ichenor) on 15 Aug. There were only 18 further counts of over ten during the autumn, the highest being 40 at Cuckmere Haven on 17 Oct. Autumnal movements were small, with 13 E at Hastings on 19 Oct, 9 E and 10 E on 14 and 16 Oct at Beachy Head, and at Selsey Bill a maximum of 10 E on 17 Oct.

The largest count of the year came during the second winter period, when two groups amounting to 175 were feeding on vegetated shingle at Climping Gap on 14 Nov. Other notable counts were 35 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 3 Dec, 30 at Climping Gap on 25 Dec and 25 at Westdean Woods on 22 Dec. During the late year SWBS a total of 68 Greenfinches was recorded in 28 (22%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 12 at Cocking on 13 Dec. [DB]

Twite

Linaria flavirostris

Rare winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Three first found feeding with Skylarks on Flat Beach (Rye Hbr) from 28 Dec remained well into 2019 (VM, DT et al.). This is the second year running that this increasingly rare species has been recorded in Sussex, following a period of five years (2011 to 2016) with no records. The county total this century moves on to 20. [PJ].



Twite, Rye Harbour, 28 December (David Thorns)

Linnet

Linaria cannabina

Fairly common but decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Linnets were recorded in 391 (40%) tetrads, a jump from the 357 in 2017 and somewhat higher than the 10-year average of 359. During the first winter period there were 40 counts of 100 or more. The largest flocks were at Medmerry, with 1240 and 1000 on 2 and 19 Mar and 13 further counts between 100 and 500 during the period. At Arlington the highest count was of 890 on 3 Mar, preceded by flocks of 300 on both 5 Jan and 18 Feb, a further 200 on 12 Feb and 150 on 28 Jan. On Ashdown Forest 400 on 28 Jan and 124 on 29 Jan were recorded. Other groups of 100 or more were encountered at Pulborough Brooks, where there were six counts of 100 and a maximum of 130 on 28 Mar. Smaller groups were noted across the county, with 70 records of from 30 to 96 at 12 sites. During the early year SWBS a total of 400 Linnets was recorded in 14 (9%) of the 156 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 79 on 21 Feb at Findon Park.

Spring migration was not particularly remarkable. The April total at Selsey Bill was 68, comprising 51 E, 4 W, 6 N and 7 noted as present; at Worthing the total of 200 comprised 193 E and 7 W with a maximum of 118 E on the 19th.

During the BBS 533 Linnets were found in 68 (39%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 152 on 16 Jun at Woodhorn Fm (Birdham). Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads (14 in 2017), and probable in a further 68 tetrads. The first evidence of nest building was on 14 Apr at Plumpton and the first fledged young were observed on Ashdown Forest on 24 April.

Over the summer months, there were 23 counts over 49, of which 15 were at coastal sites. There were seven three-figure counts including 250 from Medmerry and Rye Hbr on 25 Jul and 25 Aug respectively. Four further counts of 100 were registered at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 21 and 28 Aug, Rye Hbr on 25 Aug and Chantry Hill on 28 Aug. In the autumn numbers increased significantly. Migration recorded at two coastal sites was as follows:

| | | Sep | Oct | Nov | Peak movement |
|-------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|---------------|
| Selsey Bill | E | 774 | 882 | 139 | 486 on 28 Oct |
| | W | 43 | 186 | 43 | |
| | N | - | 537 | 16 | |
| | S | - | 59 | - | |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 4 | 451 | 79 | 162 on 22 Oct |
| | W | - | 39 | 2 | |
| | N | - | 10 | - | |

On 24 dates between 31 Aug and 5 Nov the migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 1465 Linnets with a maximum count of 223 on 19 Oct. During the period there were 45 three-figure counts from 19 mainly coastal locations. The largest flock of 1000 was at Rye Hbr on 27 Sep followed by 600 at Medmerry on 4 Oct, 350 there the next day and 380 on the 7th, 500 at Church Norton on the 18th and 19th, 486 N at Selsey Bill on the 28th and 383 E there on the 11th. Observers at Beachy Head registered three-figure counts up to 300 on five occasions during the period.

During the second winter period there were 13 counts over 100. The highest were 400 at Medmerry on 2 Nov, 300 at East Head (Wittering) on 27 Nov and 300, 200, 140 and 100 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 22 Nov, 11 Nov, 14 and 19 Dec. The other three-figure counts were at Medmerry, Selsey Bill, Pulborough Brooks, Findon, North Marden and Ladyholt Park. During the late year SWBS 400 were recorded in 18 (14%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 80 on 30 Dec at Pipers Copse (Northchapel). [MO]

Common Redpoll*Acanthis flammea*

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

The only record was of one photographed feeding on sunflower hearts in a Haywards Heath garden on 27 Feb (MM). The county total moves on to 132, of which 122 have been recorded this century, including an exceptional influx of 62 birds in 2013. [PJ]

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 113 (12%) tetrads compared with 124 in 2017 and the 10-year average of 125 (range 80-165). During the first winter period the highest day counts were 70 at Balcombe on 14 Mar and 30 at Lindfield on 25 Feb. Of the 14 counts between 10 and 20 only five were in West Sussex. During the January and February SWBS, the species was recorded in only five (8.2%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 11 on 11 Feb at Nutley. Lesser Redpolls were recorded in 12 (5.2%) of the 230 participating gardens in the GBW.

In April there were 180 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 17th and 100 at Cottesmore GC (Crawley) on the 11th; there were also 16 double-figure counts up to 80. The highest count in May, however, was only ten. Breeding was confirmed at one site on Ashdown Forest and was probable at a further four there but elsewhere at just three sites, these being Weaver's Down (Liss), Ambersham Common and Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted). Singing males were first recorded on 16 Mar on Ashdown Forest and at Pulborough Brooks on the 21st. The first fledged young were noted on 10 Jun on Ashdown Forest.

Between 17 Oct and 5 Nov the migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 116 on 11 dates, with a maximum count of 26 on 19 Oct, compared with totals of 977 in 2017 and 124 in 2016. Over the autumn period the largest flock was at Ashdown Forest where a count of 300 was logged on 22 Oct, the next highest count was 60 at Pett Level also on the 22nd, 60 again at a different Ashdown site on the 23rd and 52 at St Leonard's Forest on 30 Oct. Of the 19 counts of between 10 and 50, all but four were in East Sussex.

In the second winter period the highest count was of 300 at Old Lodge LNR on 2 Nov but there were also 12 other counts between 10 and 67 of which the three highest were on Ashdown Forest. The only double-figure count in West Sussex was 20 at Blackdown (Fernhurst) on 12 Dec. [MOW]

Common Crossbill*Loxia curvirostra*

Irruptive species; usually a scarce visitor but fairly common in some years. Very scarce breeder in some years. Schedule 1 species.

Crossbills were recorded in 53 tetrads in 2018, continuing the range recovery apparent in 2017. There were only five double-figure gatherings in 2017; in 2018 there were 34. Only three of these were in the first half of the year: ten at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 5 Mar, with 14 flying over there on 20 May, and an unusual record of ten over Winchelsea on 25 May.

The only sighting during the BBS was of two at Five Hundred Acre Wood (Ashdown Forest) on 2 Jun. Breeding was confirmed at one site, Paddockhurst (Worth), where a young bird was seen on 29 Jun and 1 Jul. An adult female was feeding two young in the same general area on 24 Oct.

In the autumn, the Hastings migration watch logged 47 between 13 and 29 Oct, with a maximum of 18 on the 13th. Late year records involved several interesting sites: West Dean Woods, Stansted Forest, Flexham Park (Fittleworth) and Buchan Park (Crawley). Unfortunately, it is not possible to discover whether these sites had been visited with no result earlier in the year. There were 25 double-figure counts in the autumn and second winter period, with about a third coming from Ashdown Forest with a maximum of 23 at Wren's Warren on 22 Oct. Birds at Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) in November and December (up to 21 on 19 Dec), were perhaps those at nearby Paddockhurst earlier in the year. November and December records at Robertsbridge and at Darwell Res (17 on 20 Dec) presumably referred to the same group. On 6 Nov there were eight at Broadwater Warren, which had hosted singles early in the year, rising to 30 through December.

There were more records than usual from the coastal strip: five at Fairlight on 27 May (and one on 7 Jun), one at Goring Gap on 11 Jul, two at Elmer (Middleton) on 19 Aug (flying off east), one at Pagham Hbr on 17 and 20 Oct and eight and 12 at Pett Level on 24 and 29 Oct. One came in off the sea at Selsey Bill on the 28th and one was at Hope Bottom (Seaford Head) on 9 Nov. It seems unlikely that records on this scale amount to an 'irruption'. [CB]

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Probably fairly common resident; common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

The BBS South East regional population trend 1995-2017 reveals a significant increase of 107% for Goldfinch. This is supported by the increase in the number of tetrads the species has been recorded in over the last few years: 643 (68%) in 2018, 607 (2017) and increases in each of the three years prior to that, from 573 in 2014. The BGBW noted increases in both West and East Sussex too; up by 3% to 32% in West Sussex and 4% to 31% in East Sussex. Although the species was recorded in 79% of GBW gardens this was a decline from 90% in 2017. Likewise the early year SWBS recorded a fall, with Goldfinches being recorded in 59% of surveyed squares compared to 65% in 2017, with a maximum of 60 at Tegdown Hill (Brighton) on 28 Feb.

During the first winter period there were five different locations with counts over 100: 180 on sunflower feeders in Three Bridges on 5 Feb, 120 at a roost in Hurst Wood (Haywards Heath) on 11 Mar and 100 each at Arlington (12 Feb), Medmerry (17 Feb) and Chichester (2 Mar).

Breeding was confirmed in 26 tetrads and probable in a further 48, similar to the previous year. Songsters were reported from mid-February, a bird was visiting a probable nest site at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Mar and the first confirmed breeding was an occupied nest at Filsham LNR on 20 Apr. The first fledglings were seen at Ferring on 30 May and continued to be reported throughout Sussex until 3 Sep. During the BBS, 1039 Goldfinches were recorded in 83% of the 174 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 25 at Blackboys on 13 Jun.

From around mid-July post-breeding flocks were evident in many places; most notable were 125 at Weir Wood Res on 6 Aug and 100 at the Ouse Estuary Project (Newhaven) on 25 Jul. The four highest counts during September were 200 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 8th, 150 in the Arun Valley on 21st, 120 at Climping Gap on the 16th and 100 at Beachy Head on the 10th.

As is often the case for this species, October proved to be the month with the highest counts, although not the numbers in 2017, when approximately 22,100 were recorded during the month. Almost all the higher counts came from well watched coastal sites and frequently involved flocks moving along the coast. At Goring Gap a total of 4389 was recorded flying east between 10 Oct and 26 Nov with peaks of 531 on 20 Oct, 1465 on 22 Oct and 660 on 18 Nov. The team of migration

watchers at Hastings recorded 3147 between 30 Sep and 5 Nov with maxima of 569 E and 597 E on 19 and 22 Oct. During a similar time period in 2017 this figure was 10,679. Additionally, there were 1000 at Climping Gap on both 18 and 19 Oct, 800 at Pett Level on the 7th and 500 E at Church Norton on both the 18th and 19th. Fewer were seen at inland sites, most notable were 150 at North Stoke on 9 Oct and 160 at Arundel Park on the 23rd.

Count sizes reduced in November but apart from those previously mentioned 100 were at Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) on the 2nd and 150 at Medmerry on the 22nd. A further reduction was noted in December but there were 84 counts over ten, the highest being 80 at Arundel Park on the 4th. During the late winter SWBS a total of 733 was recorded in 72% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 58 at Steyning Round Hill on 6 Dec. [DB]

Serin

Serinus serinus

Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

There were four records in 2018: a singing male at Press Ridge Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 6 Apr (CP), a male heard singing but not seen in central Eastbourne on 12 Apr (DGC, RC), a male in the Bill House garden at Selsey Bill on 3 May (PSB, ME *et al.*) and a male heard singing and seen briefly at Sidlesham on 4 May (CRJ, CN). The total this century moves on to a minimum of 76, 2009 being the last blank year. [PJ]

Siskin

Spinus spinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce or fairly common breeder.



Siskin, Battle, 1 June (David Gardiner)

During 2018 Siskins were recorded in 195 (21%) tetrads (169 in 2017), compared with a 10-year average of 215, which was boosted by high counts during the 2007-11 Atlas period. Over the first winter period there were 24 counts from 17 sites (19 from 16 in 2017) where 20 or more were

recorded. The highest counts were 200 at Lindfield Bridge on 10 Feb, 120 at Burton MP on 17 Mar and 100 at Furnace Wood (Felbridge) on 28 Jan. During the January and February SWBS, 48 Siskins were encountered in nine (6.8%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 20 on 17 Feb at Chelwood Common (Danehill).

During spring there were eight records of ten birds or greater, including four from Ashdown Forest of between 30 and 36 birds. During the BBS Siskins were found in only five (2.8%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in three tetrads and was probable in a further 16. Singing males were observed on 7, 12 and 27 Feb, all on Ashdown Forest, and fledglings were first recorded on 6 May at Wadhurst. In the GBW, Siskins were encountered in 52 (23%) of the 230 participating gardens in Sussex.

Numbers during the summer months were typically low, mostly of ones and twos with a maximum of eight at Balcombe on 15 Jul. Numbers increased markedly during the autumn; there were 16 counts of 50 or more, with maxima of 120 at Hastings on 19 Oct and 110 at Climping Gap on the 18th. The team recording migration at Hastings recorded a total of 1369 on 42 dates between 13 Sep and 18 Nov, with nine counts greater than 50. At other coastal sites recorded passage was as follows:

| | | Sep | Oct | Peak movement |
|-------------------|---|-----|-----|----------------|
| Selsey Bill | E | 4 | 58 | 40 E on 17 Oct |
| | W | 51 | 26 | |
| | N | 9 | 2 | |
| Worthing & Goring | E | 29 | 224 | 90 E on 22 Oct |
| | W | - | 13 | |
| | N | - | 2 | |

Elsewhere the highest count was 80 at Pett Level on 7 Oct.

During the second winter period the highest counts were 210 at Weir Wood Res on 25 Nov, 101 at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) and 60 at Troutbeck (Eridge). Smaller numbers were recorded widely around the county. During the late year SWBS only 11 Siskins were encountered in seven (5.5%) of the squares surveyed. [MO]

Lapland Bunting

Calcarius lapponicus

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

For the third year running, the only records were from the far east of the county, where there were up to three in stubble fields north of Scotney GP on 26 Jan, 27 Jan and 4 Feb, and one or two there from 16 Feb to 4 Mar (AP et al.). The county total this century moves on to c.110, the majority (c.70) of which 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.

Two were at Splash Point (Seaford) on 23 Nov and one was seen there on the following two days. On 25 Nov two were at East Head (Chichester Hbr) with one there on the 29th, and a fifth one was at Goring Gap on 6 and 9 Dec. [ACG]

Corn Bunting*Emberiza calandra*

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

Corn Buntings were recorded in 79 (8.4%) tetrads, comparable with the 10-year average of 77, but a substantial increase on the previous year's 66 and much below the peak of 104 in 2014. During the first winter period all records were from the South Downs, the Adur Valley or Medmerry. The large flocks of 2017 did not recur, the highest numbers were 40 at Beeding Brooks on 13 Jan, with 58 there on 12 Feb, and 30 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 7 Feb. The only other double figure count was ten at Beachy Head on 15 Feb, of which seven were singing.

During the BBS 16 were found in just six (3.4%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of nine on 23 Apr on Crapham Down (Beachy Head). Breeding was confirmed at three sites (Steep Down (Lancing), Stump Bottom (Steyning) and Beachy Head) and was probable at a further eight. Young were seen being fed at Stump Bottom on 14 Jul, and the first fledglings were seen on 5 Aug at Beachy Head. There were singing birds in another 26 tetrads, although breeding season numbers were lower than in recent years, with 15 heard at both East Guldeford and Beachy Head on 1 Apr, and 13 on the South Downs (Adur to A24) on the 5th. At Medmerry, nine pairs were counted.

The largest post-breeding flock was of 100 at Birling Gap on 20 Aug, and double-figure counts were recorded in the Beachy Head area on several dates through the period, with a maximum of 25 on 8 Nov. Other notable gatherings were 40 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 11 Sep, 80 at East Guldeford Levels on 2 Sep and 60 there on 30 Dec, 66 at Scotney GP on 6 Dec and 45 at Edburton Hill (Henfield) on 26 Dec. [ACG]

Yellowhammer*Emberiza citrinella*

Common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Yellowhammers were recorded from 356 (38%) tetrads, slightly higher than in 2017 and comparable to the 10-year average of 357 (range 281-488), uplifted by high counts in the 2007-11 Atlas years. As always, this species was far better represented in the west than the east of the county. In the early year SWBS a total of 79 were encountered in 25 (16%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of ten on 21 Feb at Balcombe. In the first winter period double-figure flocks were only found in 23 tetrads, all but four to the west of the Adur Valley. The largest concentrations were 80 at Medmerry on 18 Jan and again on 3 Mar (with smaller numbers on several dates), 70 at Arundel Park on 1 Jan and on 2 Feb, and 40 on 13 Mar at Kingley Vale. Whilst some winter flocks lingered on into April, the flock at Gillhope Fm (Mayfield) still numbered 25 on the 1st, and there were 12 at both Aldwick (Bognor) on the 9th and Balmer Down (Lewes) on the 16th.

During the BBS, 178 were found in 60 (34%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 13 on 11 May at West Dean. Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and probable in a further 53. The first record of successful breeding was fledglings at Newick WTW on 3 May. Counts of breeding pairs (last year's figures in brackets where available) include Medmerry 32 (16), Broadwater Warren 13 (11) and Knepp 12. In the WHBBS 45 pairs were recorded compared with 33 the previous year (see page 211).

In the late winter SWBS, 81 were found in 20 (16%) of the surveyed squares, with a maximum of 15 on 8 Dec at Albourne. In the second winter period 18 tetrads (all except four in West Sussex) held double figures. The highest count was 60 at Telscombe on 30 Dec, and other substantial flocks were 45 at Beeding Brooks on 25 Nov, 50 at Steyning WTW on 30 Dec and 40 at Arundel Park on the 29th. [ACG]

Ortolan Bunting*Emberiza hortulana****Very scarce migrant mainly in the autumn.***

2018 was an exceptional year for this species with a total of six recorded. The first flew west calling at Beachy Head on 24 Aug (LP) and was followed by a first calendar year bird (probably a male) trapped at Charleston Reedbed on 28 Aug (JAGD, OM, SP, TWP), one that flew west calling and was photographed at Seaford Head on 13 Sep (MRE) and three in stubbles in a recently harvested field at Hastings CP on 14 Sep (ASG). The county total moves on to 86, including 23 between 1995 and 2018 and four in 2016. The reason for the recent upsurge in records in Sussex (with ten recorded in the last three years) is unclear, especially with a population decline of up to 84% in Europe since 1980 and the capture of up to 30,000 birds annually on their autumn migration through France (Birdlife). [PJ]

Little Bunting*Emberiza pusilla****Rare vagrant.***

An elusive bird at Shooters' Bottom (Beachy Head) on 22 Apr was the third county record for the month and the latest in spring ever. The county total moves on to 18 of which nine have been this century, the most recent in February 2015 (Old Lodge LNR). [PJ]



Little Bunting, Beachy Head, 22 Apr (John Cooper)

Reed Bunting*Emberiza schoeniclus****Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Reed Buntings were recorded in 202 (22%) tetrads compared with 180 in 2017 and a 10-year average of 200. During the first winter period the species was widespread throughout the county. Large counts include 194 going to roost at Weir Wood Res on 12 Jan and 79 there on 28 Jan, 53 at Cowbeech on 1 Feb and 50 in stubble at Rodmell Brooks on 5 and 21 Mar. Other counts on

farmland include 53 at Cowbeech on 1 Feb and 30 at The Burgh (Burpham) on the 22nd and in addition there were 24 double-figure counts. During this period a total of 44 was encountered in 13 (8.3%) of the squares surveyed for the SWBS.

During the BBS, 71 Reed Buntings were found in 23 (13%) of the 174 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 12 on 28 May at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey). Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and probable in a further 26. The first evidences of successful breeding were as follows: an occupied nest on 6 Jun at Filsham LNR; distraction display on the 11th at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest); carrying food on the 16th at Arundel WWT; fledged young on the 17th at Arundel Watermeadows. Counts of breeding pairs or territories (2017 figures in brackets) were; Medmerry 31 (21), Pagham Hbr 15 (16), Amberley Wild Brooks 21 (32), Pulborough Brooks 20 (10), Lewes Brooks 10 (9), Filsham LNR 6 and Rye Hbr 49 (29).

The migration watch team at Hastings, observing on 79 dates between 11 Aug and 18 Nov, logged 196 Reed Buntings on 27 dates with a maximum of 11 on 26 Sep. Other evidence of movement were 2 W at Seaford Head on 13 Sep, 1 N at Selsey Bill on 20 and 28 Oct and 5 W there on the 24th, and at Goring Gap single birds flew east on three dates and west on two dates in October. At Beachy Head four were seen flying E on 17 Nov.

In the second winter period 15 tetrads held double-figure numbers. The roost at Weir Wood Res increased from 117 on 3 Nov and reached a maximum of 217 on 24 Dec. Other large counts included 70 at Wrens Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 22 Nov, 42 at The Burgh (Burpham) the same day and 30 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 11 Dec. A total of 45 was found in 14 (11%) of the squares surveyed for the SWBS with a maximum of 18 on 11 Dec at Edburton. [ACG]



Reed Bunting, Cuckmere Haven, 25 April (Peter Wilson)

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 2018 (unless stated otherwise). It should be noted that the identity of these birds is largely unchecked. Species' names and order follow IOC World Bird Names (V 9.1) available online at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Magpie Goose

Anseranas semipalmata

The sole living representative species of the family Anseranatidae; native to the Australasian region but now restricted to northern Australia and southern New Guinea. Prone to wandering, especially when not breeding. Present in some wildfowl collections.

One was seen at Shipton Green on 15 Aug.

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.

Two at Arundel WWT from 8 Apr to 5 May were assumed to be escapees.

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.

In West Sussex, a single individual was at Pulborough Brooks from 1 to 10 Jan and again on the 29th, and two were at Pagham Hbr from the 3rd to 6th, while another was at Chichester GP from the 10th to the 17th and again on 15 Feb. Single individuals were also sighted at Pulborough Brooks again on 26 Mar and at Northchapel on 22 Apr. None was then recorded until one at Chichester GP on 28 Jul. Two were seen at Medmerry on 17 and 31 Aug and 2 and 16 Sep while, in between, one turned up again at Chichester GP on 11 Sep and possibly the same later at Pulborough Brooks on the 25th. Two wandered into Chichester GP again on 13 Nov and again on 20 Dec; the year ended with a single bird at Runcton (Chichester) on 28 Dec but two at West Ashling on the 30th. In all, possibly only four birds were involved.

In East Sussex, possibly no more than three birds were involved. The only one seen in August was at Scotney GP on the 13th but on 10 Sep one was seen at Wadhurst Park and another at Rye Hbr and then, possibly the same, at Broomhill Level on the 25th. On 10 Oct two were seen at Wadhurst Park and one was at Scotney GP. One wanderer turned up at Bawl Water on 9 Nov and then at Scotney GP on the 11th and, finally, at Rye Hbr on the 16th.

Emperor Goose*Anser canagicus*

Breeds mainly in Alaska. Present in many wildfowl collections.

Three were at Scotney GP on 30 Jan and two there later in the year on 27 Dec.

Snow Goose*Anser careulescens*

Breeds in Arctic North America, winters in southern USA and Mexico. Presumed migrants may occur in the UK in winter, usually in association with other Arctic breeding geese, but are greatly outnumbered by escapes and feral birds. There have been no accepted records of wild birds in Sussex.

Three flew east with a Greylag Goose at West Hoathly on 4 Mar and six were at Barcombe Mills on 21 May.

Swan Goose (Chinese Goose)*Anser cygnoides*

Breeds naturally in Mongolia, northern China and south-eastern Russia and winters mainly in central and eastern China.

Two were in the Arun Valley at either Pulborough Brooks or Greatham Bridge on four dates between 5 Jan and 5 Feb.

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.

Black Swans were recorded in some eight broad sites; all sightings were in West Sussex except for two solitary birds in East Sussex, and possibly involved a minimum of ten adults. Two birds were recorded at Thorney Island on six dates from 16 Jul to 8 Sep but three were there on 19 Oct. At various other sites within Chichester Hbr a single individual was noted on nine dates between 30 Jan and 14 Jul, with three on 14 Sep, only one on 14 Oct but two on 22 Dec; at Birdham on 22 Mar a bird described as a broody female was building a large nest where she had laid clutches of infertile eggs over the two previous springs. At West Ashling one was seen on a pond throughout most of the year. At Chichester GP, up to two birds were noted between 10 Jan and 15 Feb, but on 13 Apr the year's only confirmed breeding was recorded there, a pair with seven cygnets; thereafter only single birds were recorded between 15 Apr and 17 Dec. At Medmerry, three birds were present from 21 Sep to 14 Oct but only two on 23 Nov. At Pagham Hbr up to three birds were recorded between 4 Jan and 20 Feb (one was seen on the sea at Selsey Bill on 16 Apr) and one there on 13 Oct.

In East Sussex, the only records were of single birds at Ardingly Res on 10 Mar, Broomhill Level on 25 Sep and two at Scotney GP on 13 Nov.

Ruddy Shelduck*Tadorna ferruginea*

Breeds in SE Europe and across central Asia. Rare vagrant or escape from captivity.

The great majority of records were from West Sussex. One was seen in Pagham Hbr on 4 Jan but all other records were of single birds at Pulborough Brooks on 13 dates from 3 Jan to 11 Feb (with one at Arundel WWT on 3 Feb). There was then a long gap until the next sighting of one at Pagham Hbr on 24 Jun followed by sightings there on six dates between 4 and 17 Jul. Meanwhile, another bird was recorded at Medmerry on seven dates from 13 Jul to 22 Aug. In East Sussex, single birds were recorded at Cuckmere Haven on 25 Mar, Pett Level on 7 Jul and at Ardingly Res on 15 Sep.



Ruddy Shelduck, Pagham Harbour, 7 July (Andrew House)

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.

One was at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 3 Jan.

Muscovy Duck*Cairina moschata*

Native to Mexico and Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form.

Muscovy Ducks were recorded at four sites. At Arundel Park a single individual was noted all year from 1 Jan to 29 Dec. At Barns Green, a pair was noted from 15 Oct to 10 Dec. At Horsted Keynes, there were two most of the year from 14 Jan to 8 Nov. At Hampden Park (Eastbourne) presence only was recorded on 9 Apr.

Wood Duck*Aix sponsa*

Breeds in the eastern half of the USA and southern Canada and Cuba; winters in southern and south-eastern USA near the Atlantic coast. A separate population exists on the Pacific Coast from British Columbia to California. Popular in waterfowl collections due to their attractive plumage and frequently recorded as escapes; a population became temporarily established in Surrey but was not self-sustaining.

A single drake was at Barcombe Res on 22 Jan, and a juvenile was at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 1 Jun.

Red-billed Teal*Anas erythrorhyncha*

Abundant resident breeder in southern and eastern Africa, typically south of 10° S, and in Madagascar. Non-migratory. Can be confused with Bahama Pintail (*Anas bahamensis*).

One at Pulborough on 25 Nov was recorded as perhaps the same bird that was at Arlington Res 'recently'.

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.

The only records came from the Arundel WWT or nearby and presumably were from their collection.

Reeves's Pheasant*Symaticus reevesii*

Endemic to evergreen forests of central and eastern China. Named after British naturalist John Reeves, who first introduced live specimens to Europe in 1831. Where introduced for sport and ornamental purposes they inhabit farmland close to woodlands. The tail of the male bird grows approximately 30 cm every year. Due to habitat loss and overhunting is evaluated by IUCN as Vulnerable. There may be only c.2000 wild birds remaining.

Recorded at three sites. At Graffham Common, one on 20 Mar and 16 Apr. At the Parham Estate, one on 4 May. At Faygate, two on 10 Jun but only one on five dates from 17 Jun to 22 Jul.

Indian Peafowl*Pavo cristatus*

Wild birds are restricted to the Indian subcontinent. A traditional favourite in ornamental gardens.

This species was recorded at 11 sites across the county, all but four being in East Sussex. In West Sussex, five were noted at Selden Fm (Patching) on 24 Apr, two at Amiesmill Fm (Horsham) on 11 Jun, and single (unsexed) individuals at St Leonard's Forest (Colgate) on 20 Apr and Hurstpierpoint on 1 May and 25 Jun.

In East Sussex, five were noted at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown) on 7 Mar (and singles on two subsequent dates), two were at West Firle on 28 Apr, and single birds were at Hempstead (Uckfield) on 16 May, Catsfield on 26 Apr and 11 Jun and Powdermill House (Battle) on 28 May. At Canadia (Battle) up to four were noted between 22 Jun and 8 Jul, whilst at Telham (Crowhurst) one was recorded on 23 Apr and 9 Jun.

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.

A falconer was flying his Harris's Hawk on 10 Jul in Brighton to deter gulls from a retail area of restaurants which, apparently, he does three times a week, much to the displeasure of the gulls! A free flying individual with leather/metal on its legs was noted at Haywards Heath on 4 Nov; it was still present intermittently to 1 Jan 2019 when it was seen with unidentified prey.

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.

Two birds were noted at Cocking on 16 Feb, 10 May and 7 Jun; this species has been recorded at this site annually since 2008. Another one was seen at Crowhurst on 23 Feb circling high over SW.

Alexandrine Parakeet*Psittacula eupatria*

Native to the Indian sub-continent and SE Asia, it has been introduced to various European and Mediterranean countries and regions where it has established feral populations and lives alongside feral populations of its close relative, the Rose-ringed (Ring-necked) Parakeet (Psittacula krameri).

One was noted at Winchelsea on 23 Feb; it was recorded as having been flying free in the area for about two years.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) results for Sussex, 2014 - 2018

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 are shown in the table below, for the period 2014 - 2018. 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 and amber-listed species of conservation concern are shown in the relevant colours.

| | Year (and total no. of squares surveyed) | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|------------|----|
| | 2014 (167) | | 2015 (179) | | 2016 (170) | | 2017 (172) | | 2018 (174) | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Mute Swan | 21 | 13 | 29 | 16 | 21 | 12 | 18 | 10 | 18 | 10 |
| Greylag Goose | 22 | 13 | 22 | 12 | 24 | 14 | 27 | 16 | 30 | 17 |
| Greylag Goose (domestic) | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Canada Goose | 45 | 27 | 55 | 31 | 47 | 28 | 58 | 34 | 60 | 34 |
| Egyptian Goose | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Shelduck | 12 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 14 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 12 | 7 |
| Mandarin Duck | 11 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Gadwall | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 5 |
| Mallard | 99 | 59 | 108 | 60 | 102 | 60 | 93 | 54 | 95 | 55 |
| Mallard (domestic) | 3 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Tufted Duck | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Red-legged Partridge | 20 | 12 | 16 | 9 | 24 | 14 | 27 | 16 | 23 | 13 |
| Grey Partridge | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | - | - |
| Pheasant | 135 | 81 | 142 | 79 | 142 | 84 | 143 | 83 | 148 | 85 |
| Cormorant | 19 | 11 | 25 | 14 | 21 | 12 | 24 | 14 | 27 | 16 |
| Little Egret | 11 | 7 | 14 | 8 | 14 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 5 |
| Grey Heron | 52 | 31 | 53 | 30 | 62 | 36 | 44 | 26 | 52 | 30 |
| Little Grebe | 4 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| Great Crested Grebe | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Marsh Harrier | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| Sparrowhawk | 15 | 9 | 24 | 13 | 28 | 16 | 18 | 10 | 14 | 8 |
| Buzzard | 80 | 48 | 96 | 54 | 95 | 56 | 94 | 55 | 101 | 58 |
| Kestrel | 30 | 18 | 51 | 28 | 47 | 28 | 38 | 22 | 44 | 25 |
| Hobby | 1 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Peregrine | 2 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Moorhen | 52 | 31 | 69 | 39 | 56 | 33 | 41 | 24 | 49 | 28 |
| Coot | 23 | 14 | 26 | 15 | 23 | 14 | 21 | 3 | 23 | 13 |
| Oystercatcher | 5 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Lapwing | 17 | 10 | 25 | 14 | 19 | 11 | 20 | 12 | 20 | 12 |
| Whimbrel | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | - | - |
| Curlew | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Redshank | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Black-headed Gull | 28 | 17 | 36 | 20 | 32 | 19 | 31 | 18 | 26 | 15 |
| Mediterranean Gull | 6 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 11 | 6 | 12 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| Common Gull | 4 | 2 | 13 | 7 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | 13 | 8 | 20 | 11 | 22 | 13 | 18 | 10 | 12 | 7 |
| Herring Gull | 102 | 61 | 104 | 58 | 112 | 66 | 118 | 69 | 114 | 65 |
| Great Black-backed Gull | 7 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 5 |
| Sandwich Tern | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Common Tern | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Feral Pigeon | 43 | 26 | 40 | 22 | 34 | 20 | 35 | 20 | 37 | 21 |
| Stock Dove | 68 | 41 | 72 | 40 | 72 | 42 | 78 | 45 | 85 | 49 |
| Woodpigeon | 166 | 99 | 177 | 99 | 170 | 100 | 172 | 100 | 174 | 100 |
| Collared Dove | 101 | 60 | 111 | 62 | 99 | 58 | 106 | 62 | 110 | 63 |
| Turtle Dove | 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Cuckoo | 38 | 23 | 39 | 22 | 42 | 25 | 36 | 21 | 42 | 24 |
| Barn Owl | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Little Owl | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Tawny Owl | 8 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 5 |
| Swift | 49 | 29 | 46 | 26 | 44 | 26 | 54 | 31 | 41 | 23 |
| Kingfisher | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Green Woodpecker | 112 | 67 | 123 | 69 | 108 | 64 | 112 | 65 | 102 | 59 |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | 99 | 59 | 119 | 66 | 107 | 63 | 118 | 69 | 120 | 69 |
| Lesser Spotted Woodpecker | - | - | - | - | 3 | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| Magpie | 152 | 91 | 160 | 89 | 148 | 87 | 156 | 91 | 152 | 87 |
| Jay | 68 | 41 | 83 | 46 | 77 | 45 | 82 | 48 | 76 | 44 |
| Jackdaw | 141 | 84 | 159 | 89 | 138 | 81 | 151 | 88 | 148 | 85 |
| Rook | 90 | 54 | 98 | 55 | 97 | 57 | 96 | 56 | 100 | 57 |
| Carrion Crow | 164 | 98 | 175 | 98 | 168 | 99 | 169 | 98 | 171 | 98 |
| Raven | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 12 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 11 | 6 |
| Goldcrest | 54 | 32 | 84 | 47 | 81 | 48 | 85 | 49 | 65 | 37 |
| Firecrest | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Blue Tit | 162 | 97 | 174 | 97 | 166 | 98 | 170 | 99 | 171 | 98 |
| Great Tit | 161 | 96 | 169 | 94 | 166 | 98 | 161 | 94 | 170 | 98 |
| Coal Tit | 42 | 25 | 36 | 20 | 53 | 31 | 59 | 34 | 68 | 39 |
| Marsh Tit | 10 | 6 | 15 | 8 | 13 | 8 | 15 | 9 | 21 | 12 |
| Woodlark | - | - | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Skylark | 90 | 54 | 87 | 49 | 79 | 46 | 81 | 47 | 82 | 47 |
| Swallow | 117 | 70 | 120 | 67 | 113 | 66 | 117 | 68 | 116 | 67 |
| House Martin | 37 | 22 | 33 | 18 | 35 | 21 | 34 | 20 | 29 | 17 |
| Cetti's Warbler | 12 | 7 | 15 | 8 | 15 | 9 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 7 |
| Long-tailed Tit | 59 | 35 | 93 | 52 | 78 | 46 | 87 | 50 | 84 | 48 |
| Chiffchaff | 147 | 88 | 160 | 89 | 153 | 90 | 158 | 92 | 159 | 91 |
| Willow Warbler | 34 | 20 | 41 | 23 | 34 | 20 | 40 | 23 | 23 | 13 |
| Blackcap | 145 | 87 | 144 | 80 | 144 | 85 | 145 | 84 | 152 | 87 |
| Garden Warbler | 22 | 13 | 30 | 17 | 27 | 16 | 30 | 17 | 30 | 17 |
| Lesser Whitethroat | 26 | 16 | 18 | 10 | 21 | 12 | 22 | 13 | 22 | 13 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Whitethroat | 107 | 64 | 105 | 59 | 106 | 62 | 104 | 60 | 97 | 56 |
| Sedge Warbler | 13 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 6 |
| Reed Warbler | 25 | 15 | 22 | 12 | 25 | 15 | 20 | 12 | 20 | 11 |
| Nuthatch | 70 | 42 | 87 | 49 | 7 | 45 | 84 | 49 | 93 | 53 |
| Treecreeper | 36 | 22 | 36 | 20 | 36 | 21 | 47 | 27 | 40 | 23 |
| Wren | 163 | 98 | 172 | 96 | 165 | 97 | 169 | 98 | 168 | 96 |
| Starling | 107 | 64 | 124 | 69 | 107 | 63 | 116 | 67 | 114 | 65 |
| Blackbird | 166 | 99 | 178 | 99 | 170 | 100 | 171 | 99 | 174 | 100 |
| Song Thrush | 142 | 85 | 157 | 88 | 148 | 87 | 149 | 87 | 150 | 86 |
| Mistle Thrush | 51 | 31 | 58 | 32 | 49 | 29 | 55 | 32 | 55 | 31 |
| Spotted Flycatcher | 5 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Robin | 165 | 99 | 176 | 98 | 165 | 97 | 170 | 99 | 170 | 98 |
| Nightingale | 16 | 10 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 14 | 8 | 12 | 7 |
| Stonechat | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Wheatear | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 11 | 6 |
| Dunnock | 145 | 87 | 147 | 82 | 146 | 86 | 146 | 85 | 145 | 83 |
| House Sparrow | 129 | 77 | 136 | 76 | 126 | 74 | 130 | 75 | 133 | 76 |
| Yellow Wagtail | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | - | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Grey Wagtail | 6 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 10 | 6 |
| Pied/White Wagtail | 64 | 38 | 78 | 44 | 79 | 46 | 70 | 41 | 74 | 42 |
| Tree Pipit | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Meadow Pipit | 20 | 12 | 14 | 8 | 18 | 11 | 15 | 9 | 12 | 7 |
| Chaffinch | 162 | 97 | 172 | 96 | 163 | 96 | 163 | 95 | 157 | 90 |
| Greenfinch | 118 | 71 | 124 | 69 | 120 | 71 | 105 | 61 | 97 | 56 |
| Goldfinch | 123 | 74 | 140 | 78 | 143 | 84 | 142 | 83 | 143 | 82 |
| Siskin | 6 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Linnet | 63 | 38 | 64 | 36 | 62 | 36 | 62 | 36 | 68 | 39 |
| Lesser Redpoll | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Common Crossbill | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Bullfinch | 36 | 22 | 43 | 24 | 40 | 24 | 58 | 34 | 42 | 24 |
| Yellowhammer | 64 | 38 | 65 | 36 | 74 | 44 | 57 | 33 | 60 | 34 |
| Reed Bunting | 19 | 11 | 23 | 13 | 22 | 13 | 19 | 11 | 23 | 13 |
| Corn Bunting | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 3 |
| Number of species | 144 | | 143 | | 147 | | 127 | | 126 | |

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) Sussex population trends 1994 - 2018

Sussex BBS population trends for the period 1994 - 2018 are presented in the table below, along with population trends for 2017 -18. 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 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 - 2018.

| | Change 1994-2018 (%) | sig | UCL | LCL | Change 2017-2018 (%) | sig | Sample size |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------------|-----|-------------|
| Mallard | 318 | * | 466 | 208 | 55 | | 57 |
| Pheasant | 45 | * | 63 | 29 | -2 | | 81 |
| Moorhen | -21 | | 10 | -44 | -7 | | 36 |
| Woodpigeon | 34 | * | 46 | 23 | -6 | | 101 |
| Collared Dove | 65 | * | 86 | 46 | 10 | | 62 |
| Stock Dove | 488 | * | 718 | 323 | 148 | * | 35 |
| Cuckoo | -67 | * | -57 | -75 | 20 | | 32 |
| Swift | -74 | * | -66 | -80 | 70 | | 30 |
| Green Woodpecker | -51 | * | -40 | -60 | -56 | * | 68 |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | 355 | * | 502 | 243 | 8 | | 65 |
| Maggie | 1 | | 19 | -15 | -21 | | 90 |
| Jay | -19 | * | 0 | -34 | 95 | * | 47 |
| Jackdaw | 202 | * | 256 | 156 | 6 | | 81 |
| Rook | 93 | * | 121 | 69 | 12 | | 56 |
| Carrion Crow | 179 | * | 242 | 128 | -9 | | 98 |
| Goldcrest | -4 | | 27 | -28 | -57 | * | 40 |
| Blue Tit | 48 | * | 65 | 32 | 16 | | 98 |
| Great Tit | 33 | * | 49 | 18 | 25 | | 96 |
| Skylark | -48 | * | -36 | -58 | 2 | | 53 |
| Swallow | -16 | | 1 | -30 | -48 | * | 68 |
| Long-tailed Tit | -53 | * | -40 | -63 | -38 | * | 46 |
| Chiffchaff | 23 | * | 48 | 2 | -41 | * | 86 |
| Blackcap | 117 | * | 155 | 85 | 33 | | 81 |
| Whitethroat | 200 | * | 292 | 130 | -19 | | 60 |
| Nuthatch | 55 | * | 101 | 19 | 112 | * | 47 |
| Wren | 7 | | 16 | -2 | 2 | | 96 |
| Starling | -66 | * | -58 | -72 | 14 | | 72 |
| Blackbird | 37 | * | 48 | 27 | -9 | | 100 |
| Song Thrush | 31 | * | 47 | 16 | 22 | | 89 |
| Mistle Thrush | -51 | * | -42 | -59 | 60 | * | 35 |
| Robin | 10 | * | 21 | 0 | -10 | | 98 |
| Dunnock | -22 | * | -11 | -32 | -18 | | 84 |
| House Sparrow | 21 | * | 34 | 9 | -1 | | 75 |
| Pied Wagtail | -41 | * | -26 | -52 | -24 | | 43 |
| Chaffinch | -53 | * | -49 | -57 | 15 | | 98 |
| Greenfinch | -65 | * | -59 | -71 | 52 | * | 75 |
| Goldfinch | 265 | * | 333 | 208 | 32 | | 69 |
| Linnet | 215 | * | 311 | 142 | -4 | | 37 |
| Yellowhammer | -75 | * | -68 | -80 | -32 | | 43 |

Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) results Nov 2016 – Feb 2019

SWBS has been running for eight consecutive winters. Below is a summary of the results for each of the three previous winters.

For each species recorded during a Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) there are three columns per 'winter'.

Column 1 (Total Squares) is the number of 1-km squares surveyed in Sussex in which that species was recorded.

Column 2 (% of squares) is the percentage of 1-km squares surveyed in Sussex in which that species was recorded. The percentage rather than the specific number facilitates year to year comparison.

Column 3 (Total) represents the total encounters recorded 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 that the species was not recorded during that 'winter'

| | Winter 6 Nov 2016 – Feb 2017 | | | Winter 7 Nov 2017 – Feb 2018 | | | Winter 8 Nov 2018 – Feb 2019 | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|-------|---------------------------------|--------------|-------|---------------------------------|--------------|-------|
| | Total squares | % of squares | Total | Total squares | % of squares | Total | Total squares | % of squares | Total |
| 1-km squares surveyed | 137 | | | 167 | | | 134 | | |
| No. of observers | 77 | | | 99 | | | 84 | | |
| No. of species recorded | 113 | | | 126 | | | 110 | | |
| Red-throated Diver | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Little Grebe | 3 | 4.8 | 19 | 2 | 3.3 | 13 | 4 | 1.5 | 9 |
| Great Crested Grebe | <1 | 6.0 | 6 | 2 | 2.7 | 8 | | | |
| Fulmar | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Gannet | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Cormorant | 13 | 3.1 | 56 | 17 | 3.5 | 99 | 13 | 2.7 | 49 |
| Little Egret | 9 | 2.1 | 25 | 7 | 2.4 | 29 | 11 | 2.2 | 33 |
| Cattle Egret | | | | | | | <1 | 9.0 | 9 |
| Great White Egret | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Grey Heron | 20 | 1.6 | 42 | 18 | 1.9 | 58 | 14 | 2.2 | 42 |
| Mute Swan | 12 | 3.6 | 58 | 13 | 7.4 | 156 | 9 | 7.7 | 92 |
| Greylag Goose | 4 | 7.6 | 38 | 5 | 37.1 | 297 | 8 | 9.9 | 109 |
| Greylag Goose (Dom) | <1 | 3.0 | 3 | 2 | 12.7 | 38 | <1 | 17.0 | 17 |
| Canada Goose | 12 | 6.1 | 97 | 17 | 14.3 | 399 | 14 | 19.6 | 372 |
| Barnacle Goose | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Brent Goose | 2 | 73.7 | 221 | 3 | 297.6 | 1488 | 3 | 231.0 | 924 |
| Egyptian Goose | 2 | 3.7 | 11 | 2 | 6.3 | 19 | 5 | 3.7 | 26 |
| Common Shelduck | 1 | 11.0 | 22 | <1 | 61.0 | 61 | <1 | 6.0 | 6 |
| Mandarin Duck | 1 | 22.0 | 44 | 4 | 5.5 | 33 | 1 | 2.0 | 4 |
| Eurasian Wigeon | 1 | 27.5 | 55 | 2 | 39.3 | 157 | 2 | 60.3 | 181 |
| Gadwall | 2 | 19.7 | 59 | 2 | 9.7 | 29 | 2 | 6.3 | 19 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|-------|------|----|-------|------|-----|------|------|
| Eurasian Teal | 8 | 14.5 | 160 | 4 | 22.3 | 134 | 5 | 17.1 | 120 |
| Mallard | 48 | 19.9 | 1313 | 43 | 20.5 | 1475 | 40 | 26.6 | 1435 |
| Mallard (Domestic) | <1 | 9.0 | 9 | 1 | 2.0 | 2 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 |
| Pintail | <1 | 10 | 10 | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | | | |
| Shoveler | 1 | 20.0 | 40 | 1 | 18.5 | 37 | <1 | 29.0 | 29 |
| Common Pochard | <1 | 4.0 | 4 | 1 | 5.5 | 11 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 |
| Tufted Duck | 1 | 29.5 | 59 | 3 | 12.0 | 60 | 2 | 15.0 | 45 |
| Red-breasted Merganser | | | | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | | | |
| Goosander | 1 | 1.0 | 2 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | <1 | 3.0 | 3 |
| Red Kite | 3 | 1.0 | 4 | 7 | 1.3 | 16 | 6 | 1.6 | 13 |
| Marsh Harrier | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | 1 | 2.0 | 4 | 4 | 1.4 | 7 |
| Hen Harrier | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Sparrowhawk | 15 | 1.0 | 22 | 17 | 1.1 | 30 | 13 | 1.2 | 21 |
| Common Buzzard | 67 | 2.8 | 255 | 66 | 2.8 | 316 | 71 | 2.8 | 271 |
| Kestrel | 31 | 1.5 | 65 | 35 | 1.6 | 97 | 40 | 1.5 | 82 |
| Merlin | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Peregrine | 4 | 1.0 | 5 | 1 | 1.0 | 2 | 3 | 1.5 | 6 |
| Red-legged Partridge | 10 | 9.1 | 128 | 8 | 11.7 | 164 | 12 | 9.0 | 144 |
| Grey Partridge | | | | <1 | 24.0 | 24 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 |
| Common Pheasant | 72 | 10.3 | 1022 | 75 | 8.2 | 1032 | 66 | 9.2 | 807 |
| Water Rail | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 |
| Moorhen | 31 | 4.4 | 183 | 29 | 4.0 | 192 | 29 | 5.1 | 197 |
| Coot | 7 | 13.6 | 136 | 12 | 7.1 | 141 | 9 | 26.3 | 315 |
| Oystercatcher | 1.5 | 2.0 | 4 | 1 | 14.5 | 29 | 1.5 | 8.5 | 17 |
| Ringed Plover | | | | <1 | 7.0 | 7 | | | |
| Golden Plover | <1 | 200.0 | 200 | 2 | 125.3 | 501 | <1 | 2.0 | 2 |
| Grey Plover | | | | 2 | 6.7 | 20 | <1 | 2.0 | 2 |
| Lapwing | 12 | 82.4 | 1318 | 13 | 133.1 | 2929 | 12 | 72.1 | 1153 |
| Dunlin | | | | 1 | 32.0 | 64 | | | |
| Ruff | | | | | | | <1 | 2.0 | 2 |
| Common Snipe | 7 | 5.1 | 51 | 5 | 3.0 | 24 | 3 | 13.3 | 53 |
| Woodcock | 2 | 1.7 | 5 | 2 | 1.3 | 4 | 1 | 1.0 | 2 |
| Black-tailed Godwit | <1 | 72.0 | 72 | 1 | 69.0 | 138 | <1 | 51.0 | 51 |
| Bar-tailed Godwit | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | <1 | 6.0 | 6 | | | |
| Whimbrel | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Curlew | 4 | 15.6 | 78 | 4 | 21.4 | 150 | 5 | 8.6 | 60 |
| Common Redshank | 2 | 4.3 | 13 | 2 | 25.7 | 77 | 1 | 8.0 | 16 |
| Greenshank | | | | <1 | 5.0 | 5 | | | |
| Green Sandpiper | 3 | 1.5 | 6 | 2 | 1.7 | 5 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 |
| Common Sandpiper | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Turnstone | 1 | 10.0 | 20 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Pomarine Skua | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Mediterranean Gull | <1 | 8.0 | 8 | 2 | 4.3 | 13 | 4 | 7.2 | 36 |
| Black-headed Gull | 50 | 33.5 | 2276 | 57 | 35.8 | 3437 | 62 | 45.4 | 3764 |
| Common Gull | 25 | 45.7 | 1553 | 22 | 25.0 | 926 | 21 | 33.8 | 981 |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | 3 | 1.0 | 4 | 4 | 1.8 | 11 | 4 | 1.3 | 8 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|------|------|-----|------|-------|-----|------|-------|
| Herring Gull | 66 | 18.6 | 1678 | 68 | 24.0 | 2709 | 69 | 24.0 | 2233 |
| Great Black-backed Gull | 4 | 1.6 | 8 | 2 | 4.3 | 17 | 4 | 2.4 | 12 |
| Feral Pigeon | 20 | 14.3 | 385 | 20 | 18.0 | 593 | 25 | 20.6 | 680 |
| Stock Dove | 34 | 4.5 | 208 | 36 | 4.1 | 246 | 41 | 4.2 | 231 |
| Woodpigeon | 100 | 65.8 | 9021 | 99 | 81.0 | 13364 | 100 | 77.6 | 10403 |
| Collared Dove | 49 | 8.1 | 540 | 54 | 7.7 | 690 | 51 | 6.0 | 416 |
| Barn Owl | | | | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | 1 | 1.0 | 2 |
| Little Owl | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | 1 | 1.0 | 2 | 4 | 1.4 | 7 |
| Tawny Owl | 2 | 1.0 | 3 | 2 | 1.0 | 4 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 |
| Short-eared Owl | 2 | 2.0 | 4 | | | | | | |
| Kingfisher | 4 | 1.2 | 6 | 2 | 1.3 | 4 | 2 | 1.0 | 3 |
| Green Woodpecker | 55 | 1.9 | 140 | 51 | 2.0 | 172 | 48 | 2.2 | 140 |
| Gt Spotted Woodpecker | 69 | 2.6 | 251 | 70 | 2.6 | 308 | 80 | 2.7 | 280 |
| Woodlark | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | 1 | 1.5 | 3 |
| Skylark | 36 | 12.9 | 631 | 28 | 8.0 | 376 | 38 | 10.9 | 554 |
| Meadow Pipit | 29 | 11.6 | 462 | 28 | 10.3 | 472 | 36 | 8.9 | 429 |
| Grey Wagtail | 12 | 1.2 | 21 | 11 | 1.6 | 28 | 13 | 1.4 | 23 |
| Pied Wagtail | 61 | 7.1 | 586 | 49 | 4.6 | 376 | 54 | 6.6 | 475 |
| Wren | 90 | 6.5 | 799 | 87 | 5.5 | 800 | 88 | 6.8 | 797 |
| Dunnock | 90 | 5.4 | 659 | 82 | 5.5 | 757 | 79 | 5.1 | 538 |
| Robin | 99 | 18.3 | 2495 | 99 | 15.7 | 2592 | 99 | 17.2 | 2274 |
| Eurasian Stonechat | 13 | 2.1 | 38 | 14 | 3.2 | 77 | 13 | 2.5 | 42 |
| Blackbird | 98 | 20.9 | 2800 | 99 | 18.5 | 3077 | 99 | 17.5 | 2324 |
| Fieldfare | 55 | 20.9 | 1566 | 46 | 29.1 | 2243 | 40 | 18.5 | 1001 |
| Song Thrush | 88 | 4.4 | 532 | 78 | 4.3 | 557 | 76 | 3.7 | 372 |
| Redwing | 61 | 22.1 | 1837 | 68 | 26.6 | 3007 | 67 | 30.0 | 2702 |
| Mistle Thrush | 36 | 2.4 | 117 | 33 | 2.0 | 111 | 46 | 2.1 | 126 |
| Cetti's Warbler | 1 | 1.0 | 2 | 1 | 2.2 | 5 | 3 | 1.3 | 5 |
| Dartford Warbler | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Blackcap | 3 | 1.3 | 5 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Chiffchaff | 7 | 1.4 | 14 | 2 | 1.5 | 6 | 11 | 1.6 | 24 |
| Goldcrest | 58 | 3.4 | 269 | 59 | 3.3 | 323 | 60 | 4.7 | 375 |
| Firecrest | 1 | 2.5 | 5 | 2 | 1.3 | 5 | 3 | 1.5 | 6 |
| Long-tailed Tit | 64 | 7.7 | 668 | 59 | 8.1 | 797 | 62 | 7.3 | 604 |
| Marsh Tit | 19 | 2.1 | 55 | 19 | 2.0 | 63 | 21 | 2.6 | 72 |
| Coal Tit | 36 | 3.5 | 171 | 44 | 3.8 | 280 | 40 | 3.8 | 206 |
| Blue Tit | 99 | 17.7 | 2402 | 96 | 21.1 | 3369 | 100 | 22.9 | 3069 |
| Great Tit | 95 | 10.0 | 1301 | 97 | 10.7 | 1741 | 96 | 12.6 | 1620 |
| Nuthatch | 47 | 3.3 | 208 | 52 | 3.4 | 295 | 56 | 4.1 | 308 |
| Treecreeper | 27 | 1.8 | 66 | 29 | 1.8 | 84 | 27 | 2.0 | 72 |
| Jay | 61 | 2.5 | 209 | 63 | 2.6 | 272 | 62 | 2.7 | 224 |
| Magpie | 95 | 9.5 | 1234 | 95 | 8.9 | 1418 | 96 | 10.5 | 1339 |
| Jackdaw | 86 | 31.4 | 3701 | 83 | 8.9 | 4638 | 87 | 41.6 | 4829 |
| Rook | 52 | 46.7 | 3319 | 55 | 33.1 | 3041 | 54 | 35.7 | 2571 |
| Carrion Crow | 98 | 19.1 | 2559 | 100 | 21.4 | 3577 | 99 | 20.6 | 2714 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----|------|------|----|------|------|----|------|------|
| Raven | 13 | 1.7 | 31 | 11 | 1.6 | 30 | 13 | 1.8 | 33 |
| Common Starling | 72 | 58.8 | 5821 | 78 | 54.5 | 7081 | 74 | 56.1 | 5549 |
| House Sparrow | 72 | 19.1 | 1869 | 68 | 20.4 | 2321 | 69 | 25.7 | 2392 |
| Tree Sparrow | <1 | 4.0 | 4 | | | | | | |
| Chaffinch | 88 | 8.6 | 1038 | 81 | 11.1 | 1496 | 84 | 9.6 | 1074 |
| Brambling | | | | 1 | 1.0 | 2 | <1 | 16.0 | 16 |
| Greenfinch | 45 | 3.4 | 205 | 41 | 3.0 | 206 | 39 | 3.4 | 178 |
| Hawfinch | | | | 6 | 1.4 | 14 | <1 | 3.0 | 3 |
| Goldfinch | 80 | 10.2 | 1122 | 77 | 10.0 | 1293 | 82 | 13.2 | 1455 |
| Siskin | 10 | 12.0 | 168 | 8 | 5.1 | 71 | 14 | 9.6 | 183 |
| Linnet | 13 | 28.3 | 510 | 14 | 25.3 | 607 | 18 | 37.6 | 902 |
| Lesser Redpoll | 5 | 7.9 | 55 | 6 | 4.7 | 47 | 4 | 8.2 | 49 |
| Common Crossbill | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | 3 | 4.5 | 18 |
| Bullfinch | 35 | 3.8 | 181 | 41 | 3.0 | 210 | 33 | 3.1 | 138 |
| Yellowhammer | 23 | 6.8 | 217 | 22 | 5.0 | 181 | 25 | 4.4 | 149 |
| Reed Bunting | 11 | 3.6 | 54 | 8 | 5.0 | 70 | 12 | 4.6 | 76 |
| Corn Bunting | 1 | 18.5 | 37 | 1 | 12.0 | 24 | 4 | 6.2 | 37 |
| Red-tailed Hawk | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | <1 | 2.0 | 2 |
| Com / Indian Peafowl | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | <1 | 1.0 | 1 |
| Rock Pipit | <1 | 2.0 | 2 | | | | | | |
| Black Swan | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 |
| Muscovy Duck | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | <1 | 4.0 | 4 | | | |
| Bar-headed Goose | | | | <1 | 1.0 | 1 | | | |
| Helmeted Guineafowl | | | | < | 10.0 | 10 | | | |



Brambling, Pagham Harbour, 19 March (Andrew House)

Arrival and departure dates of summer visitors, 2018

| | First recorded date | | | Last recorded date | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| | 2018 | 1960 to 2017 | 10-yr average (± SD in days) | 2018 | 1960 to 2017 | 10-yr average (± SD in days) |
| Garganey | 20 Mar | 02 Feb | 10 Mar (± 11) | 13 Sep | 17 Dec | 23 Sep (± 22) |
| Quail | 20 May | 06 Feb | 17 May (± 29) | 30 Jun | 15 Nov ² | 27 Aug (± 32) |
| Osprey | 09 Mar | 04 Mar | 23 Mar (± 10) | 24 Oct | 09 Dec | 28 Oct (± 8) |
| Little Ringed Plover | 11 Mar | 06 Mar | 14 Mar (± 5) | 06 Oct | 08 Oct | 19 Sep (± 8) |
| Wood Sandpiper | 19 Apr | 11 Feb | 03 May (± 9) | 30 Aug | 03 Nov | 29 Sep (± 15) |
| Little Tern | 05 Apr | 01 Apr | 08 Apr (± 4) | 27 Sep | 04 Nov | 20 Sep (± 8) |
| Roseate Tern | 20 May | 17 Apr | 04 May (± 13) | 02 Jul | 05 Oct | 07 Aug (± 25) |
| Common Tern | 15 Mar | 14 Mar | 25 Mar (± 5) | 10 Oct | 26 Nov | 22 Oct (± 14) |
| Arctic Tern | 06 Apr | 24 Mar | 08 Apr (± 7) | 17 Nov | 31 Dec | 13 Oct (± 15) |
| Common/Arctic Tern | 02 Apr | 10 Mar | 01 Apr (± 5) | 21 Sep | 31 Dec | 05 Oct (± 11) |
| Black Tern | 07 Apr | 09 Mar | 17 Apr (± 14) | 13 Oct | 16 Nov ³ | 28 Sep (± 13) |
| Pomarine Skua | 24 Apr | 10 Mar | 20 Apr (± 5) | 25 Dec | 31 Dec | 20 Oct (± 34) |
| Turtle Dove | 22 Apr | 05 Feb | 14 Apr (± 9) | 22 Sep | 18 Dec | 28 Sep (± 18) |
| Common Cuckoo | 07 Apr | 21 Mar ⁴ | 02 Apr (± 5) | 01 Oct | 23 Oct ⁵ | 09 Sep (± 12) |
| Nightjar | 13 May | 14 Apr ¹⁴ | 06 May (± 8) | 07 Sep | 05 Nov | 12 Sep (± 10) |
| Common Swift | 19 Apr | 07 Apr | 13 Apr (± 4) | 16 Sep | 24 Nov | 29 Sep (± 14) |
| Wryneck | 22 Apr | 22 Mar ¹⁸ | 15 Apr (± 10) | 24 Sep | 02 Nov ⁶ | 06 Oct (± 10) |
| Hobby | 09 Apr | 21 Mar | 04 Apr (± 5) | 17 Oct | 09 Nov | 24 Oct (± 7) |
| Sand Martin | 18 Mar | 27 Feb | 10 Mar (± 7) | 19 Oct | 01 Dec ⁷ | 21 Oct (± 10) |
| Barn Swallow | 21 Mar | 04 Feb ¹⁷ | 09 Mar (± 9) | 10 Dec | 28 Dec ¹⁷ | 30 Nov (± 11) |
| House Martin | 29 Mar | 01 Feb | 20 Mar (± 6) | 10 Nov | 18 Dec ⁸ | 17 Nov (± 11) |
| Wood Warbler | 01 May | 07 Apr | 19 Apr (± 8) | 25 Aug | 07 Oct | 14 Sep (± 14) |
| Willow Warbler | 21 Mar | 04 Mar | 17 Mar (± 4) | 22 Oct | 27 Nov ⁹ | 25 Oct (± 8) |
| Sedge Warbler | 08 Apr | 23 Mar | 31 Mar (± 5) | 20 Oct | 01 Nov | 15 Oct (± 8) |
| Reed Warbler | 14 Apr | 02 Apr | 06 Apr (± 4) | 19 Oct | 01 Dec | 03 Nov (± 16) |
| Grasshopper Warbler | 14 Apr | 02 Apr | 08 Apr (± 5) | 28 Sep | 01 Nov | 10 Oct (± 5) |
| Garden Warbler | 10 Apr | 28 Mar | 05 Apr (± 6) | 16 Sep | 16 Nov | 16 Oct (± 11) |
| Lesser Whitethroat | 06 Apr | 04 Apr | 10 Apr (± 3) | 05 Nov | 18 Nov ¹⁰ | 11 Oct (± 10) |
| Common Whitethroat | 08 Apr | 19 Mar | 03 Apr (± 4) | 17 Oct | 17 Dec | 23 Oct (± 16) |
| Ring Ouzel | 03 Apr | 09 Feb ¹¹ | 24 Mar (± 20) | 04 Dec | 26 Dec | 12 Nov (± 5) |
| Spotted Flycatcher | 23 Apr | 10 Apr ¹⁵ | 25 Apr (± 8) | 16 Oct | 18 Nov | 12 Oct (± 10) |
| Common Nightingale | 08 Apr | 21 Mar | 05 Apr (± 2) | 09 Sep | 01 Oct ¹² | 14 Sep (± 10) |
| Pied Flycatcher | 15 Apr | 01 Apr | 10 Apr (± 6) | 22 Oct | 01 Nov | 28 Sep (± 7) |
| Common Redstart | 07 Apr | 05 Mar | 28 Mar (± 11) | 13 Nov | 26 Dec | 26 Oct (± 24) |
| Whinchat | 14 Apr | 18 Feb | 08 Apr (± 13) | 27 Oct | 02 Dec | 26 Oct (± 10) |
| Northern Wheatear | 11 Mar | 13 Feb | 08 Mar (± 6) | 23 Oct ¹ | 31 Dec | 13 Nov (± 8) |
| Yellow Wagtail | 07 Apr | 12 Feb | 26 Mar (± 8) | 13 Nov | 23 Nov ¹³ | 27 Oct (± 10) |
| Tree Pipit | 06 Apr | 24 Mar ¹⁶ | 01 Apr (± 6) | 09 Oct | 09 Nov | 16 Oct (± 10) |

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; ⁸excludes three at Fishbourne on 22 Dec 1894; ⁹excludes two historic records on 26 Dec 1892 and 1949; ¹⁰excludes one at Burgess Hill on 21 Nov 1957 and known wintering birds; ¹¹excludes one at Mannings Heath on 2 Feb 1905; ¹²excludes one at North Bersted on 19 Oct 1943; ¹³excludes one at Sidlesham between 11 Dec 1960 and 14 Jan 1961; ¹⁴excludes one at Pulborough on 8 Apr 1912; ¹⁵excludes one at Hastings on 8 Apr 1909; ¹⁶excludes record from unknown location on 17 Mar 1922; ¹⁷excludes wintering one at Newick; ¹⁸excludes one on 9 Mar 1908 and on 10 Mar 1918 both at Pulborough.

Departure and arrival dates of winter visitors, 2018

| | Last recorded date | | | First recorded date | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| | 2018 | 1960 to 2017 | 10-yr average (± SD in days) | 2018 | 1960 to 2017 | 10-yr average (± SD in days) |
| White-fronted Goose | 07 Apr | 25 May | 03 Apr (± 33) | 17 Nov | 12 Sep | 23 Oct (± 31) |
| Bewick's Swan | 09 Mar | 26 Apr | 01 Mar (± 9) | 14 Nov | 06 Oct | 12 Nov (± 15) |
| Velvet Scoter | 29 Apr | 15 Jun | 19 May (± 14) | 21 Oct | 02 Aug | 25 Oct (± 13) |
| Long-tailed Duck | 18 Apr | 14 Jun | 24 Apr (± 41) | - | 12 Aug | 01 Nov (± 13) |
| Goldeneye | 15 May | 31 May | 15 Apr (± 16) | 20 Oct | 06 Aug | 15 Oct (± 24) |
| Smew | 14 Mar | 24 Apr | 05 Mar (± 15) | - | 22 Oct | 02 Dec (± 21) |
| Goosander | 06 Apr | 14 Jun | 10 Apr (± 42) | 01 Sep ¹ | 12 Sep | 26 Oct (± 12) |
| Black-throated Diver | 20 May | 21 Jun | 19 May (± 9) | 13 Oct | 03 Aug | 10 Oct (± 23) |
| Great Northern Diver | 28 May | 21 Jun | 30 May (± 8) | 13 Oct | 16 Sep | 20 Oct (± 11) |
| Red-necked Grebe | 07 Apr | 19 Jun | 11 Apr (± 28) | 11 Oct | 13 Aug ² | 17 Oct (± 31) |
| Hen Harrier | 23 May | 19 Jun | 28 May (± 8) | 01 Sep | 04 Aug | 24 Aug (± 13) |
| Purple Sandpiper | 11 May | 04 Jun | 29 Apr (± 17) | 12 Oct | 01 Jul | 01 Oct (± 37) |
| Jack Snipe | 13 Apr | 19 May | 16 Apr (± 13) | 26 Oct | 11 Aug | 21 Sep (± 26) |
| Great Grey Shrike | 02 Feb | 05 May ⁴ | 30 Mar (± 9) | 22 Oct | 26 Sep ³ | 13 Oct (± 7) |
| Fieldfare | 13 Apr | 05 Jun | 25 Apr (± 10) | 04 Oct | 06 Aug | 29 Sep (± 7) |
| Redwing | 13 Apr | 26 May ⁵ | 14 Apr (± 10) | 23 Sep | 06 Aug | 19 Sep (± 16) |
| Water Pipit | 22 Apr | 28 May | 27 Mar (± 17) | 10 Oct | 01 Sep | 29 Oct (± 8) |
| Brambling | 22 Apr | 12 May | 17 Apr (± 11) | 03 Oct | 03 Sep | 28 Sep (± 4) |
| Snow Bunting | - | 6 May | 21 Feb (±13) | 23 Nov | 17 Sep | 20 Oct (± 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.

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 2018 - summary of counts in West Sussex

| | AC | BD | BH | CC | CL | GC | IC | LC | LS | SC | WC | WD |
|-----------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Woodcock | 1 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 |
| Stock Dove | - | 4 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 7 | 2 | - | - | 5 |
| Turtle Dove | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Nightjar | 20 | 9 | - | - | - | 2 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Green Woodpecker | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | - | 9 |
| Gt Spotted Woodpecker | 3 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| Hobby | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Woodlark | 3 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 2 | - | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Skylark | - | - | - | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Common Whitethroat | 1 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 14 | - | 2 | 2 | - | 1 | - | 5 |
| Dartford Warbler | 9 | 4 | - | - | - | - | 4 | 3 | - | 1 | - | - |
| Common Redstart | - | 1 | - | 3 | - | - | 1 | - | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| Eurasian Stonechat | 8 | 10 | - | 2 | 2 | - | 8 | 3 | - | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Tree Pipit | - | 8 | - | - | - | - | 5 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Meadow Pipit | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Linnet | 12 | 6 | - | 1 | 3 | - | 5 | 9 | - | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Lesser Redpoll | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Common Crossbill | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Siskin | - | - | - | 4 | - | 2 | 1 | - | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| Yellowhammer | 6 | - | 2 | 1 | 4 | - | 9 | 5 | - | 4 | 14 | - |
| Reed Bunting | - | - | - | - | 2 | - | 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 |
| CC | Chapel Common |
| 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 2018

Royal Tern, Church Norton, 19th June

Colin Holter



Royal Tern, Church Norton, 19 June (Colin Holter)

After spending much of the day at Medmerry, I belatedly thought I'd pop into Church Norton to sit on the bench and watch the tern colony for the last hour and a half of the afternoon rising tide. I arrived to find the tide already a bit higher than I'd hoped, just a few muddy islets left to flood, no other birders about – just me and the birds. I could see some terns preening on this last of the mud, I sat down and put the scope straight onto them. In my first field of view, yes there were Sandwich Terns, but also with them a much larger tern with a huge orange bill, I nearly fell off the bench!

My first thought, knowing it to be around a year since the Elegant Tern had graced the harbour for a week or more, was that it must surely be that bird returning (as I, and I'm sure many other birders, had hoped it would)...how wrong can you be! I tried to compose myself, fortunately I'd remembered to bring my bridge camera so I rattled off a few distant record shots and settled down to try to look at the bird and note some details (including a single metal ring on its lower right leg).

I was aware that the tide would soon flood its muddy islet. Having by now convinced myself that it “must” be last year's Elegant Tern returned, I was thinking I needed to get the news out and get some other birders to see it, when it took off and flew across the harbour and out of sight...panic! What if it's gone and I'm the only one to see it? Was I sure it was an Elegant Tern? (Last year's bird was the only large, orange-billed tern species I had ever seen). I decided that the priority was to get the news out and plumped for Elegant Tern - surely it had to be? Whilst doing this and attempting to keep scanning for the bird's reappearance, it flew back in and landed on the very last of the exposed mud – phew! Just a moment or two later, the whole colony on the island went up in a “dread” but I managed pick up the bird again as it landed behind the new electric fence on Tern Island amongst the Black-headed Gulls and Sandwich Terns, and looking very much at home in the same spot that the Elegant Tern had often frequented last summer.

A steady trickle of birders were beginning to appear, most seemed to agree that it was just too much of a coincidence for it not to be last year's ET back again. Apart from one briefly around, it

remained in the colony for the next couple of hours, with just its head, neck and that huge orange bill showing. It was now high tide, with no prospect of any exposed mud in the harbour for a while, and the bird looking very settled. I decided I'd had the best views I was likely to get unless I waited for the tide drop again. So after watching it for over 3 hours, still thinking it was an Elegant Tern, I left for home.

It was only when I got home around an hour later that I found the bird had been re-identified from photos as almost certainly the American Royal Tern that had recently been in the Channel Islands and along the north French coast. It only now began to dawn on my increasingly fallible memory that last year's ET had been colour-ringed, so this was clearly a different bird (having just a single metal ring – exactly as per the 'French' Royal Tern). At home, I checked my records of ET from last year, fieldguides, and my record shots and notes of today's bird, which was clearly much bigger billed, altogether larger, and stood taller than ET, and rapidly came to the conclusion that, yes, the bird I'd found today was indeed a Royal Tern (of the American subspecies) and a first Sussex record to boot! A special bird I'll certainly never forget, and a salient lesson not to make assumptions in matters of bird identification!

The bird was seen by around 100 observers that evening, and a large crowd gathered at first light the following morning, when the bird was seen for around 10 minutes before flying out to sea not to return. It was reported later in the day off Weymouth in Dorset.

Pallid Swift, Church Norton, 13th October

The finders' accounts below are taken with their permission from the submission to the BBRC of their independent accounts of sightings and of detailed evidence of identification, coordinated by Owen Mitchell.

The period 12th-13th October 2018 was notable along the coast of West Sussex for strong to severe gale force southerly winds, these being mild or even warm winds, with very little rain. A severe storm – named storm Callam – was imminent along the west/south-west coasts; however most of its dramatic effects missed the south and east coasts entirely.

Andrew Wilkes

On Saturday 13 Oct at 16.52 I was walking along the Spit at Church Norton, Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, when I noticed a bird approaching from the east over the harbour entrance. The light was good, the sun low but shining from behind me. I raised my binoculars (Zeiss ED 10X42) and saw that it was a Swift, which was very odd for the time of year.

I then raised my camera (Canon SX60HS) and began to take a number of photos. The bird moved away to my right, towards the sea, and dropped below the line of the spit. I climbed up on to the highest point of the spit and relocated it in my camera. I took a number of photos as it passed by.

It struck me as being a rather plump brown bird with a paler head and rear end. It was undulating in flight, like it was struggling against the wind, rising and falling, rather than flying straight. This slow flight pattern meant that it took nearly three minutes to fly past me and out of sight, continuing along the coastline heading west.

My initial thought was that it was a late Common Swift, but when I posted the photos on Twitter I soon realised it might be something else when dozens of people liked or shared the photos (nearly 100 to date). Alan Kitson was the first to write "Pallid" and Adam Hutt from Spurn Bird Observatory, among others, wrote "Pallid Swift." He then added "Brown toned plumage, dark eye mask, restricted pale on underwing, with contrasting dark lesser coverts and primaries, lack of contrasting white super and on throat."



Pallid Swift, Church Norton, 13 October (Andrew Wilkes)

I have little experience of Pallid Swifts, having only seen them in Gibraltar when the adults have a visible white throat in the Mediterranean light.

A second observer, David Murdoch, had also seen the bird that day, though more briefly and at further range than Andrew. Both were unaware of the other when they observed the bird.

David Murdoch

I was lucky enough to see the swift briefly on Saturday at 16.50, while I was 50 yds out of the Church Norton car park and the bird was over the harbour. I posted (in a hurry) on Sunday morning without knowing that Andrew had seen it.

I saw the bird for no more than 15 seconds at quite a distance (how does one estimate distances in the air!! I can't) till it went below the trees. I registered a swift species immediately (an all-dark brown bird, scimitar wings, unique scissor flight, Swallow-ish size) then GULP - then no white and it isn't a Chimney - at the same time as looking for any contrast in the shades of dark brown - and then it was gone. The light was behind me and strong, not good for spotting subtle differences in shades of brown plumage. It did look a little 'tubby' - but that's not enough to call a Pallid!

I am familiar with Pallid Swift, and also Little, Chimney and White-rumped, and have seen Pacific (which it certainly wasn't). I was going to put this down as Swift sp. but looking at Andrew's photos I am very confident it was a Pallid.

- Contrast between saddle and secondary panel
- Blunter wings (P3 = P4, I seem to remember) which looked broader too
- Chunkier body

I am not confident about seeing a significant eye mask.

I have never found throat patch or body scaling of any use except at close range.

The joker in the pack would be a '*pekinensis*', but that's even less likely. The underwing should be dark. Also there are several races of *pallidus* that do differ significantly in plumage, with varying colour of rump and back (hence varying contrast) making ID even more interesting.

The outcome was acceptance of Pallid Swift by the BBRC and a new species for Sussex. This underscores the benefit of detailed records and supporting photographic evidence, especially where species with tricky identification are involved.

The Sussex Ringing Report 2018

Val Bentley

There were two significant weather events during 2018 which would have affected both the survival of resident and wintering species and the breeding success of resident species and summer visitors. The first became colloquially known as “The Beast from the East” and was a prolonged period of extremely cold weather during late February and early March, which was evident even in the usually milder southern UK. The second was the unusually dry summer, the driest since 2003, and apparently the south experienced the driest summer since 1925, with some parts of the south-east only receiving 10% of average rainfall for the month of June, a month when many species are raising young and are relying on supplies of insects and grubs for their broods. (ref: www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2018/annual)

At the time of writing, the latest edition of the BTO Lifecycle magazine had not been published. This summarises results from Constant Effort Site (CES) ringing and provides a good indication of how well adults survived the winter, whether in the UK or elsewhere, and their breeding productivity. However, the ringing effort throughout the county during 2018 was broadly similar to that of the previous four years, hence the lower overall total of birds ringed in comparison with 2017 will be a reflection of generally lower bird populations in the county this year.

There were 33,435 birds ringed in Sussex in 2018, 8,227 fewer than in 2017, (See Table 1) though this was still in excess of the figures from 2014-2016. The main difference was the much lower total from Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG), despite the same amount of effort by the team as in previous years. The total number of birds ringed in Britain & Ireland in 2018 did not reach one million, as it had done in 2017 and 2016, and at 983,176 meant that 56,579 fewer birds were ringed nationally this year than in 2017. The combined East and West Sussex contributions represent approximately 3.4% of the overall total.

Table 1. Ringing totals in Sussex 2013-2018

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total | 51,020 | 31,700 | 28,683 | 28,170 | 41,633 | 33,436 |
| Rye Bay RG | 34,752 | 15,883 | 12,847 | 11,124 | 19,137 | 11,917 |
| Others | 16,268 | 15,817 | 15,836 | 17,046 | 22,496 | 21,439 |

Figures for the annual totals of birds ringed in Sussex are based on those published on the BTO website; <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>. There are some species which 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. The 2017 totals have been updated to correspond with those now shown on the BTO website.

There were five ringing groups operating mainly in Sussex in 2018; most of the other ringers in the county also kindly provided information on their individual activities.

Four of the five most ringed species in the county are primarily trapped on their autumn migration, and Sussex contributed 9.8% of the total number of Blackcaps ringed in Britain & Ireland, 9.8% of Chiffchaffs, 13.7% of Sedge Warblers and 11.9% of Reed Warblers, though all these percentages are lower than they were in 2017. These last two species are targeted by RBRG at Pett Level, where at just this one site they captured 27% of the national total of Grasshopper Warblers, a Red listed Bird of Conservation Concern. Although Garden Warbler was only 18th of the 20 most ringed species in Sussex in 2018, this constituted 9.3% of the national total of 4,175.

| Position in 2018 | Species (position in 2017) | 2018 | | Previous years | |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------|------|----------------|------|
| | | Total | RBRG | 2017 | 2016 |
| 1 | Blackcap (1) | 6109 | 2305 | 8099 | 4095 |
| 2 | Blue Tit (5) | 3099 | 491 | 3135 | 1826 |
| 3 | Chiffchaff (2) | 2941 | 619 | 5774 | 3864 |
| 4 | Sedge Warbler (4) | 2935 | 2501 | 3909 | 2108 |
| 5 | Reed Warbler (3) | 2928 | 1788 | 4049 | 2783 |
| 6 | Goldfinch (7) | 2407 | 793 | 2007 | 1220 |
| 7 | (A) Willow Warbler (5) | 1544 | 497 | 2479 | 1840 |
| 8 | Great Tit (9)) | 1437 | 247 | 1187 | 878 |
| 9 | Barn Swallow (-) | 822 | 43 | 261 | 285 |
| 10 | Common Whitethroat (10) | 764 | 273 | 1055 | 659 |
| 11 | Greenfinch (19) | 684 | 32 | 396 | 492 |
| 12 | Robin (9) | 633 | 156 | 659 | 848 |
| 13 | Goldcrest (8) | 591 | 39 | 1331 | 632 |
| 14 | (R) Grasshopper Warbler (13) | 545 | 488 | 573 | 357 |
| 15 | Blackbird (14) | 544 | 194 | 519 | 563 |
| 16 | Wren (16)) | 436 | 95 | 441 | 452 |
| 17 | (A) Dunnock (17) | 429 | 69 | 434 | 427 |
| 18 | Garden Warbler (15) | 389 | 217 | 478 | 226 |
| 19 | Chaffinch (-) | 377 | 23 | 244 | 299 |
| 20 | Long-tailed Tit (18) | 322 | 39 | 431 | 271 |

Table 2. Sussex ringing totals for the 20 most ringed species in 2018/2017. Birds of conservation concern are marked as: (R) Red listed (A) Amber listed

It is clear from Table 2 that numbers for virtually all of the most commonly trapped species were considerably lower than in 2017, but were still above those in 2016, apart from Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Robin and Goldcrest. This last species is one of those which suffered from “The Beast from the East”, showing a 38% decline from last year according to The Breeding Bird Survey 2018 (Harris et al 2019). The BBS also indicated a drop of 30% between 2017 and 2018 for Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. Numbers for all three of the resident finches increased, but fewer Lesser Redpolls were trapped this year, only 176 compared with 821 in 2017 and 326 in 2016. Efforts by Cuckmere RG and Reg & Martin Lanaway were responsible for the increase in the number of Swallows ringed in 2018; between them they contributed 684 of the 822 ringed.

There were 312 Barn Owls ringed this year, of which all but eight were nestlings. The majority, 211, were due to the efforts of the Sussex Barn Owl Study Group, who also ringed 19 Kestrels, seven Buzzards, four Tawny Owls and three Little Owls. A further 39 Barn Owls and four Kestrels were ringed by Graham Roberts, while Reg Lanaway ringed 15 Barn Owls and four Little Owls.

There were several species where five or fewer were ringed in 2018, including (with the Sussex total since 1979 in brackets), two Mandarins (32), three Pintails (43), two Common Pochards (21), two Cormorants (32), one Ringed Plover (194), three Common Snipe (527), one Woodcock (47), five Common Sandpipers (76), five Little Terns (77), three Sandwich Terns (10), two Turtle Doves (106), one Nightjar (65), one Hobby (29), one Marsh Warbler (82), one Barred Warbler (19), one Dartford Warbler (53), three Wood Warblers (158), one Tree Sparrow (1691), two Hawfinches (4), one Common Rosefinch (7) and one Oortolan Bunting (6). All the terns were ringed at Pagham Hbr, bar three Common Terns which were at Ardingly Res. The Tree Sparrow was an unexpected capture

near a House Sparrow roost in West Sussex, the Hawfinches were in a garden in West Sussex, the Common Rosefinch and Ortolan Bunting were ringed by Cuckmere RG, and the Nightjar, Hobby, Barred and Marsh Warblers by RBRG.



Ortolan Bunting, Charleston Reedbed, 28 August (Tim Parmenter)

Colour ringing and tagging projects

Honey-buzzard. In 2018, four Honey-buzzard chicks were colour-ringed at two different sites in the county, making a total now of 120 birds ringed in Sussex since the project started in 1997 (number adjusted for previous discrepancy).

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.

Lapwing. Eleven Lapwing chicks were colour-ringed at Pulborough Brooks. Please email richard.black@rspb.org.uk with any sightings.

Greenshank and Redshank. There were no captures of these species in Sussex in 2018. However, three Redshanks which had been ringed by Farlington RG at Thorney Island were seen further afield. One ringed in 2005 and another ringed in 2015 were in the Western Isles on 30 Jul and 24 May respectively, while the Group's first Icelandic sighting of one of their Redshanks was a 2015-ringed bird on the island of Heimaey on 14 Jun. The first bird was ringed as an adult, so was in its 14th year of life; the species typical lifespan is only four years though the longevity record is 20 years (BTO BirdFacts). Further information can be found on <http://www.greenshank.info>

Cuckoo. Three adult male Cuckoos, named Knepp, Lambert and Raymond, were satellite-tagged on 18 May 2018 on the Knepp Estate. All three had left the UK by 22 Jun, with Raymond being the final one to leave. All three birds took the westerly route through Spain and Morocco. Lambert had crossed the Sahara by 30 Jul, Knepp by 2 Aug and Raymond by the 8th. They moved through

Burkina Faso, Nigeria and on to Congo. Raymond was the last of the three to arrive in Congo by 11 Dec and remained there, but the other two had moved through Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo by mid-November and spent the winter in Angola.

Of the three previously tagged Sussex Cuckoos, two (Sussex in 2013 and Chester in 2014) took the westerly migration route used by the Knepp birds and one (Ash 2014) the route to the east of the Mediterranean (Buckle 2015). Information on the BTO Cuckoo Tracking Project website link, reveals that (a) until the project started, there had been “no hint of this westerly route from ringing data” (b) Cuckoos “migrating via Spain were much more likely to die before they reached sub-Saharan Africa than those migrating via Italy” and (c) the “proportion of Spanish-route birds in local populations correlated with the degree of recent population decline seen in the region”. (www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking).

Peregrine. Four broods of Peregrine chicks, totalling 14, were colour-ringed in Sussex in 2018 by Jon Franklin and Graham Roberts. Several movements of Sussex-ringed birds were reported. A male from a 2003 Chichester Cathedral brood was killed by a car near Portsmouth University on 5 Sep and a female from the same brood was seen on 5 Jun, on eggs, at Dial House, a tall 1930s building in Manchester. A male nestling ringed at the same site in 2005 was seen at Southampton Container Port (Hants) on 19 Mar; it had also been seen at the same location in April 2016 and March 2017. A ten year old female fledged from a Brighton nest in 2008 was at Shoreham Hbr on 14 Apr, a female ringed at Sussex Heights (Brighton) in 2014 was seen in Streatley (West Berks) on 28 May and a male from a 2016 Sussex Heights brood was killed when hit by a small aeroplane at Shoreham Airport on 22 Aug. It was apparently eating a kill when startled by a plane taking off.

All sightings of colour-ringed Peregrines are greatly appreciated. Please send to:
Graham.C.M.Roberts@btinternet.com

Tree Sparrow. No Tree Sparrow nestlings were ringed in 2018, but Richard Black would appreciate details of any sightings of Tree Sparrows colour-ringed in previous years. Please email richard.black@rspb.org.uk

Recoveries & Controls

In this section, where no year is stated, the record relates to 2018. The following is a selection from the BTO On-line Ringing Report of birds which have been reported away from the site where they were ringed, and are not included in the project summaries above. Other records have come either directly from ringers, from observers who have kindly let me have information obtained personally from other ringing schemes, or from postings on the SOS website which contained comprehensive details. Controls are birds 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.

There were three foreign recoveries of duck species and predictably, all originated from RBRG and had been targets of hunters. A **Mallard** ringed as an adult in December 2014 was at Dunkerque near the north coast of France on 26 Nov, a first year female **Teal** ringed on 28 Oct was a little unlucky to be killed just five days later in Calvados (France), and an adult male **Tufted Duck** ringed on 4 Jan was shot nearly 4000 km away at Peregrebnoe (Russian Federation) on 22 May.

A **White Stork** colour-ringed as a nestling in Friesland (Netherlands) on 22 Jun 2015 was seen in Northamptonshire on 21 Apr, then at various sites in Hampshire from 24 to 29 Apr, before turning up at Arlington Res on 14 May. Perhaps on its way it flew over the pens housing the White Storks

at Knepp? On 28 Jun 2017 a nestling **Marsh Harrier** was ringed and wing-tagged at Breydon Water (Norfolk); it had moved to Suffolk by that October, then flew SSW and was seen in December in the Réserve Naturelle du Domaine du Beauguillot in Manche (France) before heading back sometime this year, arriving near Bexhill by 20 Oct. By December it was at Grove Ferry in Kent.

The well-travelled colour-ringed **Avocet**, hatched in May 2014 near Beaulieu (Hants) which had been seen in Rye Hbr in 2017 was back at Rye Hbr on 21 Mar having visited Titchfield Haven and Poole in between its Sussex appearances. Another colour-ringed sighting was of a **Curlew** in Chichester Hbr on 19 Sep, which had been ringed as a nestling 1586 km away in eastern Poland in mid-July. A **Black-tailed Godwit** seen in West Sussex on 22 Mar, was ringed as an adult at Farlington Marsh on 10 Sep 2008, so was over ten years old, half of the species' typical lifespan of 18 years (BTO BirdFacts). Another seen at Pulborough Brooks at the end of November proved to be a regular winter visitor there since 2012, apparently with a regular route from Iceland to Sussex via Norfolk/Kent/Essex, and often appears in Chichester Hbr.

Three colour-ringed **Sanderlings** were photographed at Climping in February. Two of the birds had been ringed by Farlington RG and one of these had ventured as far as Orkney, but the most mobile and oldest of the of the birds was ringed at Vlieland Island (Netherlands) on 12 Sep 2010. It was subsequently sighted in Pas-de-Calais, France, then Titchwell in mid-May 2013, but was in north-east Iceland on 28 May 2013. On 8 Nov 2014 it was back in The Netherlands and just a week later it was at Littlehampton. In 2015 there were five sightings, in The Netherlands and France, but it was not seen again until at Climping on 25 Feb 2018. More detailed information on this Sanderling Project can be found in the SOS 2018 summer newsletter and from the International Wader Study Group at www.waderstudygroup.org/res/project/sanderling

On 13 Jun 2007 a **Black-headed Gull** chick was ringed at Chichester GP. Just over 11 years later it was seen at Cropston Res (Leicestershire) on 16 Jul. One ringed in Denmark earlier in the year was at Arundel WWT on 29 Oct, and one seen at Littlehampton Marina on 10 Nov had been ringed two years previously on a rubbish dump in Zagreb (Croatia). Many colour-ringed **Mediterranean Gulls** were seen along the coast, including a total of 16 by the R Arun in July. One of these had come from Belgium (via France, Spain and the Netherlands), another from Hungary (via France and Belgium) and three from Poland. At Pett Level 22 were seen during the year, of which 12 were from Belgium, two from France, six from the Netherlands and two from Poland. The oldest was one of the Dutch birds, ringed as a chick on 17 Jun 2000, and a regular visitor, seen each year since 2010, always between late February and early April. Of two **Common Gulls** seen on the R Adur on 28 Mar one had been ringed in southern Norway in July 2017 and the other as an adult female in a colony in Estonia in May 2011; the latter bird has been seen each summer back at the nesting area. A colour ringed **Herring Gull** seen at Falmer pond on 17 Jun was only just over the A27 from where it was ringed as an adult male at the University of Sussex, but this was back in June 2007. A far greater distance had been travelled by a **Great Black-backed Gull** found dead at Church Norton on 10 Oct; ringed in Norway on 30 Jun 2014, it had also been recorded in France and Devon.

As to be expected, **Barn Owl** recoveries comprised several road casualties, but four birds had survived beyond the typical life span for the species of four years (BTO BirdFacts). A nestling ringed at Goddards Green in 2013 was found dead at Broadford Bridge on 19 Jul, another nestling from Pett Level ringed in 2012 was hit by a car 6 km away in July. One ringed in South Godstone (Surrey) in 2007 was found dead 28 km away at Bletchinglye (E Sussex) in May, but on a happier note, a female nestling ringed at Cocking on 4 Jul 2011 was caught at a nestbox in Chilgrove on 9 Jul. Another road casualty was a **Kestrel** hatched 311 km away in West Yorkshire in July hit by a car on 27 Nov at Lodsworth.

Two **Jackdaws** ringed in 2010 and **Rooks** ringed as adults 11 and 14 years ago were retrapped at Pett Level. The longevity records for these species are 18 and 22 years, but their typical life spans are only five and six years respectively (BTO BirdFacts).

We think of **Blue Tits** as fairly sedentary, and living short lives. However, one ringed at Minsmere on 30 Aug was controlled at Weir Wood Res on 22 Nov, and another ringed in a garden in Sedlescombe on 6 Sep 2011 was retrapped in the same garden on 8 Jan. Also retrapped at Sedlescombe, on 21 Aug, was a **Great Tit** ringed there on 21 Jun 2011. A first year **Sand Martin**, ringed at Pett Level on its autumn migration in 2013 was controlled at Cockerham Marsh (Lancs) in 2015 and was there again on 23 May. Two **Swallows**, also from Pett Level, were controlled at the same site in Essex on 28 Apr. The older of these was first trapped in 2010. Another, ringed in 2012 at Pett Level was controlled near Antwerp (Belgium) on 19 Sep.



Sand Martin, Charleston Reedbed (Graham Dunlop)

There were a few overseas recoveries or controls of migrating warblers. A **Willow Warbler** ringed at the Knepp Estate on 11 Aug was trapped 535 km away at La Rochelle (France) on the 23rd, while an even speedier bird was a **Chiffchaff** from Beachy Head RS which covered 892 km to Navarra (Spain) in only ten days, but unfortunately died in a collision with glass. There was one foreign control of a **Grasshopper Warbler** on its way to winter in West Africa; an individual ringed on 6 Sep by RBRG was captured in Lot-et-Garonne (France) eight days and 729 km later, an average daily distance of 57 miles. Six **Sedge Warblers** from Scotland were controlled in Sussex along with one ringed in 2017 in Loire-Atlantique (France) and another two ringed in Belgium in 2017; there were 13 same year controls in France of birds ringed in Sussex. Surprisingly, bearing in mind that almost identical number of **Reed Warblers** were trapped in the county this year, only one had cross-channel credentials, a bird ringed at Nodebais (Belgium) on 24 Aug, which appeared to be

heading in the wrong direction as it was at Pett Level on the 31st. An astonishingly fast movement south was evident from a bird ringed by Cuckmere RG on 5 Aug, controlled in Charente-Maritime (France) on the 7th, a distance of 551 km in just two days. A particularly long-lived individual, ringed as an adult female on 26 Jun 2010, was retrapped at Steyning on 6 May; the longevity record is 12 years 11 months (BTO BirdFacts). There was just one foreign-controlled **Blackcap** in 2018, ringed on 8 Sep at Pett Level and captured at Yonne (France) on the 22nd.

It is very unusual for a foreign-ringed **Wren** to be found in Sussex, though one from Baltic Russia was found dead at Bosham in 1977 (Thomas 2014). However, one controlled at Pett Level on 23 Nov was ringed just a short hop across the Channel at Marck, Pas de Calais (France) on 6 Apr 2017, but maybe it had hitched a ride on a cross-channel ferry? Moving in the opposite direction was one ringed at Beachy Head RS on 23 Sep 2017, found dead at Hardwick Hall (Notts) in April.

Two **Blackbirds** ringed as adult females in the Netherlands were found in Sussex. One was a victim of a cat on 4 Jan at Shoreham-by-Sea, and the second was controlled at Pett Level on 31 Oct. No other significant movements of thrushes were reported in 2018 although a Song Thrush found dead in Horsham in April had survived almost nine years since it was ringed at Warnham NR in July 2009.

Though only 176 **Lesser Redpolls** were ringed in Sussex in 2018, there were several recoveries and controls, with birds moving within the UK to or from Cornwall, Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire, Staffordshire, and Worcestershire; a bird ringed on 17 Oct 2017 at Pett Level was captured in Côte D'Or (France) on 24 Jan. **Goldfinch** movements included three which had travelled from East Anglia to Sussex, and Sussex-ringed birds controlled in Tyne & Wear, Northumberland, Dumfries & Galloway and the Isle of Man; a first-year male ringed at Hardham on 1 Nov 2017 was recaptured in Orne (France) on 25 Mar. A first-year female **Siskin** ringed at Lower Dicker on 22 Feb 2016 was caught 803 km away in the Highlands of Scotland near Kildary on 5 Aug. Most of our Sussex **Reed Buntings** probably do not move too far from where they fledge though "ringing returns show some long movements within Britain or between Sussex and Scandinavia, the Low Countries and France" (Thomas 2014). Cuckmere RG added further proof of this when on 25 Mar they trapped a female ringed at Örebro (Sweden) the previous September.

Acknowledgements

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The 2017/2018 influx of Hawfinches into the UK: observations in Sussex

Mark Mallalieu

Introduction

The Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* occurs across the Palearctic from North Africa and Spain to Japan (Perrins 1994) and globally is a species of least conservation concern (Birdlife 2018). However, according to the 2007-2011 Bird Atlas, there was an estimated 76% reduction in breeding range in Britain over 40 years, most of which occurred after the late 1980's (Balmer *et al.* 2013), so that now fewer than 1000 pairs may remain (Kirby 2018). It has been a Red-listed Bird of Conservation Concern since 2009. In Sussex, where Hawfinches were first detected in the second half of the 19th century and appear always to have been scarce breeders (Walpole-Bond 1938), they were recorded in the breeding season in only six tetrads in the county Bird Atlas 2007-11 compared to 29 in the 1988-92 Sussex Atlas (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Thomas 2014). Although slightly more widespread in winter, there were records from only 24 tetrads in the Bird Atlas 2007-11, with Westdean Woods being an especially favoured location.

Walpole-Bond once saw a flock of 200 Hawfinches and stated that winter flocks “of appreciable dimensions” were frequently formed, but since the 1940's and prior to 2017, wintering flocks or roosts in excess of 20 birds have only ever been found on eight occasions in Sussex. Of these, four were in Westdean Woods, where there was a maximum count of 69 in January 2006, a year when Britain experienced an influx during the early months.

In 2017-18 there was another influx, the largest ever recorded in Britain, that gave observers in Sussex an exceptional opportunity to see Hawfinches, learn about their behaviour outside the breeding season and pick up skills in detecting this usually elusive species. The reasons for the influx have not been fully explained, but may have been a combination of food shortages in the northern and eastern parts of the European range and strong winds from the remnants of Hurricane ‘Ophelia’ pushing migrating flocks off course in mid-October 2017 from their usual south-westerly route towards the Mediterranean (König *et al.* 2018). There appear to have been failures of the Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* and Beech *Fagus sylvatica* crops in northern Germany (P Combridge pers. comm.) and of Hornbeam in Poland (K Smith pers. comm.), whilst late spring frosts that reduced commercial cherry production in Europe (Faust & Herbold 2018) may also have affected species of wild Cherry *Prunus spp.* in parts of northern Europe where Hawfinches normally overwinter.

Methodology

The findings presented here are based mainly on the ca. 1000 records in the SOS database. Once the scale of the influx became apparent, observers were encouraged to record details of Hawfinch behaviour and the author and other observers made a concerted effort to find birds by locating their favoured food sources. This initially involved searching for Hornbeam using, for example, clues on Ordnance Surveys maps such as sites of old iron forges and names of lanes and woods with the word “furnace” (since Hornbeam was important in iron and charcoal-making), as well as searching the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory (<https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>). As Hawfinches were feeding on seeds of Yew *Taxus baccata*, searches were also made of rural churchyards, aided by data available from the Ancient Yew Group (<https://www.ancient-yew.org/>) and the Sussex Parish Churches website (<http://sussexparishchurches.org/>). Yew woodlands were

also searched, most frequently near Arundel. In addition, a limited attempt was made to locate roosts by interpreting flight lines of birds in the early morning and early to mid-afternoon. No special effort was made to search for breeding birds in 2018, but a proportion of the sites where Hawfinches were recorded during the 2017-2018 influx were revisited between October 2018 and April 2019. A series of photographs was taken by the author of Hawfinches, their habitats and foods, a few of which are included here.

Results

Arrival and departure

The influx was first detected in Sussex on 10 Oct when 15 were found above Fairmile Bottom at Yewtree Gate (Arundel). There were 26 close by at Sherwood Rough on 13 Oct and two at Pulborough Brooks the next day, followed by almost daily records throughout the winter and early spring until the last sightings on 10 Apr of about 10 at Beckley and one at Winchelsea, followed by one at Sheffield Park and two at Kingley Vale on 14 Apr. Apart from one in a West Wittering garden on 12 May, the only other six records in the first half of 2018 (between 19 Apr and 28 Jun) relate to probable breeding rather than winter visitors. The limited evidence of birds apparently on migration included five over Seaford Head on 15 Oct, nine at Pett Level on 19 Oct, one over Hastings on 27 Oct, four there on 29 Oct and two more on 31 Oct, one flying northeast over Rye Hbr on 29 Oct, two in a Seaford garden on 7 Apr and three there the next day, and the Winchelsea individual mentioned above. Records of seven flying west near Weir Wood Reservoir at 07:30 on 16 Oct and flocks of six, four and two flying west across Nymans between 10:30 and 12:40 on 25 Oct may also possibly relate to migration rather than local movements.



Female Hawfinch, Fletching, March 2018

Distribution and numbers

Between October 2017 and April 2018, Hawfinches were recorded from 177 tetrads (see Figure 1). Away from the coast and most of the adjacent Downland, where few were seen, records were widely distributed and linked to favoured foods - see under '*Habitat and food*' below. There were concentrations of sightings and/or high counts in the areas around Westdean Woods, Kingley Vale, Heyshott Down, Arundel, southeast of Crawley, east of Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill, and northwest of Battle. There were also gaps, at least some of which may reflect real absence of Hawfinches (e.g. in much of Ashdown Forest, which is well-watched), rather than lack of observer coverage.

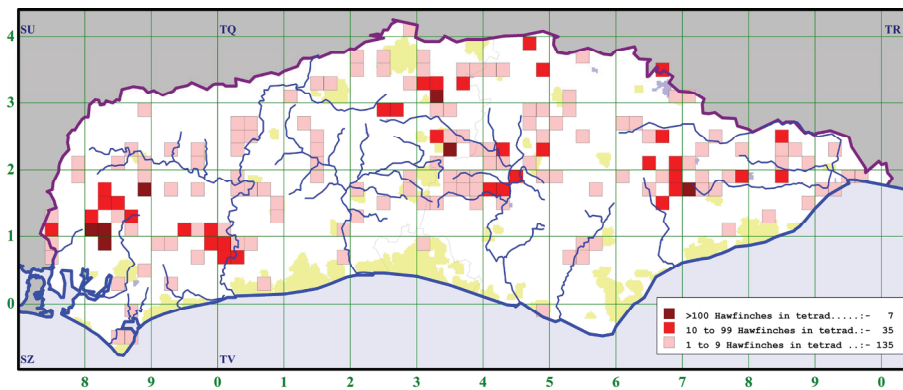


Figure 1. Tetrads in which Hawfinches were recorded, Oct 2017 – Apr 2018.

The sums of maximum counts in tetrads by two-week period during the influx are shown in Table 1 below.

| Two weeks commencing | 7 Oct | 21 Oct | 4 Nov | 18 Nov | 2 Dec | 16 Dec | 30 Dec |
|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| No of tetrads | 7 | 28 | 34 | 33 | 31 | 28 | 36 |
| Totals | 48 | 242 | 415 | 277 | 126 | 241 | 246 |
| Two weeks commencing | 13 Jan | 27 Jan | 10 Feb | 24 Feb | 10 Mar | 24 Mar | 7 Apr |
| No of tetrads | 38 | 44 | 20 | 34 | 27 | 27 | 9 |
| Totals | 340 | 280 | 224 | 598 | 738 | 501 | 59 |

Table 1. Sums of maximum counts of Hawfinches in tetrads by two-week period.

Sites where gatherings of at least 30 birds were recorded are in Table 2 (listed west to east). This table gives maximum counts with dates, the first and last dates for records from the site and whether it was known to be used for feeding, as a roost, or both.

| Site | Central 1km ² grid ref | Max. count | Date(s) of max. count(s) | First date | Last date | Feeding (F) or Roost (R) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Kingley Vale | SU8110 | 400 | 12-16 Mar | 28 Nov | 14 Apr | F |
| Westdean Woods | SU8415 | 48 | 9 Nov | 30 Oct | 19 Mar | F, R |
| Heyshott Down | SU8916 | 120 | 30 Dec | 30 Dec | 5 Jan | F |
| Northwood, Slindon | SU9610 | 35 | 21 Nov | 25 Oct | 6 Dec | F? |
| Sherwood Rough | SU9909 | 70 | 20 Nov | 10 Oct | 11 Mar | F |
| The Warren, Worth (roost B) | TQ3232 | 80 | 13 Mar | 24 Feb | 9 Apr | R |
| Fire Wood, Ardingly (roost A) | TQ3231 | 103 | 25 Mar | 15 Feb | 8 Apr | R |
| Hurst Wood, Haywards Heath (roost C) | TQ3422 | 127 | 10 Mar | 10 Mar | 5 Apr | R |
| Fletching | TQ4223 | 30 | 8-9 Feb | 7 Feb | 6 Mar | F |
| Harrock House, Buxted | TQ4823 | 32 | 22 Dec | 14 Dec | 29 Jan | F |
| Dallington Forest (roost D) | TQ6521 | 30 | 31 Mar | 10 Nov | 31 Mar | R |
| Brownbread Street, Ashburnham | TQ6714 | 30 | 16 Mar | 5 Dec | 16 Mar | F |
| Penhurst Lane, Netherfield | TQ7017 | 150 | 12 Nov | 30 Oct | 24 Mar | F (R?) |
| Udimore | TQ8418 | 32 | 9 Mar | 9 Nov | 9 Mar | F |

Table 2. Sites with counts of 30 or more Hawfinches during the 2017/18 influx.

The following gives further details from four of the more frequently visited sites, though Hawfinches were not surveyed systematically at any of them and all the data are from casual records.

At Kingley Vale there were 17 on 28 Nov, but the site was not well-watched until about 40 were found on 9 Jan; thereafter, numbers remained in the 30-40 range until 70 were seen on 3 Mar and 100 on 7 Mar. Then a remarkable 400 was detected on 12-14 Mar, the second-largest concentration recorded in Britain during the influx. There was a further estimate of 400 on 16 Mar, though numbers then reduced to 125 on 20 Mar, 100 on 25 Mar and 60 on 31 Mar, followed by two on 14 Apr.

In the Sherwood Rough/Fairmile Bottom area (hereafter 'Sherwood Rough'), there were up to 36 in October, 70 in November, 30 in December, 55 in January, two in February and 12 in March.

At Penhurst Lane, 40-60 were present on 30 Oct when first visited, rising to 150 on 12 Nov before declining to 100 on 15 Jan, 50 on 18 Jan, two on 29 Jan and again two on 24 Mar. At Harrock House, there were 15 on 14 Dec, 32 on 22 Dec, 30+ on 10 Jan, but thereafter only nine on 24 and 29 Jan and two on 14 Feb.

Counts at four roosts showed how numbers declined in the late winter and early spring – see under 'Roosts and social behaviour' below.

Habitat and food

Few of the records in the SOS database contain notes on habitat or food. However, where notes were provided, or where enquiries by the author produced further information, Yew and Hornbeam were by far the most frequently mentioned food sources.

All the large Yew woods searched in Sussex held Hawfinches at some periods between October and March. Scattered Yews also occur widely within mainly broadleaf woodland, but casual searches by the author produced no evidence of Hawfinches exploiting such Yews where they were deep within woodland. Here the female trees (Yew is a dioecious species) appeared to carry little seed and evidence on the ground suggested consumption by rodents rather than birds. However, isolated trees and those on woodland edges and in some gardens carried much seed, attracting Hawfinches at least in certain locations (D&P Green, pers. ob.), as did churchyard Yews. Of the 383 rural parish churches that appeared from their location and online information to be potentially suitable for Hawfinches, 62 were checked and Hawfinches found in 22 (35%), with an average of five birds per site. Yews in nearby rectory and other gardens were also used for feeding. Hawfinches were observed in churchyards between 26 Nov and 4 Apr.



Ancient female yew at Stopham church that attracted Hawfinches during the influx, March 2018

From the dates of observations, the persistent presence of Hawfinches in Yews, sometimes in large numbers, sightings of birds cracking open seeds and large amounts of seed shells under trees (pers. ob.), it is clear that Yew seeds were an important food source during the entire period of the influx. Greenfinches *Chloris chloris* and Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* were also observed taking Yew seeds, (SH Linington, P Green, pers. comm., pers. ob.), so the presence of seed shells alone did not prove the presence of Hawfinches.

Searches in areas with Hornbeams in the Weald during October to mid-January almost invariably resulted in Hawfinches being detected, frequently feeding on seeds still on the trees, but also taking seed from the ground (SH Linington pers. comm., pers. ob.). Not all Hornbeams carried seed: trees within woodland, e.g. Oak *Quercus* spp./Hornbeam, or otherwise shaded, carried little or none. Trees growing above hedges and those on woodland margins held most seed. After about the middle or third week of January, there was little seed left on Hornbeams and Hawfinch numbers declined sharply, as at Penhurst Lane.



Hawfinches on Yew, Slaugham church, February 2018



Hornbeam fruit clusters, Rushlake Green, December 2017

All 30+ counts related to Hawfinches in Yew and Hornbeam-rich sites in cases where the food source was known. However, smaller numbers were present in rural and some peri-urban areas where there may have been less, or no, dependence on these trees. Hawfinches were observed taking several other foods. Even where Hornbeam seed was plentiful, the seeds of Field Maple *Acer campestre* were also taken (KB Gillam, M Phillips, pers. comm., pers. ob.), though this food source appeared to have been exhausted by early in 2018 (pers. ob.). At Kingley Vale, where Yews appeared to be the main attraction, Hawfinches were seen feeding on haws (Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*) in January (P Hughes pers. comm.). Haws appeared to be an important food in the Millstream area

of Arundel, at least in December and January and also attracted Hawfinches to a garden on the edge of Westdean Woods (R Williamson pers. comm.). Other foods included Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* seeds and buds; and buds of Cherry, Apple *Malus spp.* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Ivy *Hedera helix* berries may also have been taken (pers. ob.). In January at Arundel, a Hawfinch was observed taking spilled grain from a pheasant feeding bin, alongside a mixed flock of mainly Chaffinches (MC Daniel pers. comm.).

Five reports were received of Hawfinches attracted to bird food put out in gardens (partly or entirely consisting of sunflower seeds in the four instances where the food type was noted): near Balcombe and The Mens, where the birds had been feeding in Yews adjacent to or in the gardens, in Hassocks, and at the coastal sites of West Wittering and Seaford mentioned above. Between November and the first half of January, small flocks of 4-5 Hawfinches were frequently observed in a secluded garden near Penhurst, drinking from a pond, but not taking the available bird food.

There were five reports between November and January of Hawfinches following, or associated with, flocks of Redwings, though it was not clear whether both species were feeding directly on the same food, or whether the Hawfinches were also taking seed discarded by Redwings, which they are known to do (Ward 2016).

Roosts and social behaviour

Four roosts were found. All were in conifers of a similar height, 8-10m, and were within, or contiguous with, other woodland; all were reasonably sheltered from the prevailing southwest winds. There was also a roost somewhere in the Penhurst Lane area near Netherfield, where large numbers were seen in the very early morning, but it was not located.

| Roost | Central 1km Grid Ref | Approx. area (ha) | Main trees |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| A Fire Wood, Ardingly | TQ3231 | 6 | Norway Spruce |
| B The Warren, Worth | TQ3232 | 1 | Mixed Norway Spruce, Western Hemlock, some broadleaf. |
| C Hurst Wood, Haywards Heath | TQ3422 | 3 | Norway Spruce, Western Hemlock |
| D Dallington Forest | TQ6521 | 3 | Norway Spruce |

Table 3. *Hawfinch roosts located during the 2017/18 influx.*

Systematic weekly counts were made at three of these roosts, two in the Worth/Ardingly area, roosts A and B, and one on the south east side of Haywards Heath, roost C. However, none of these roosts was found until late in the winter. Roost A was first accurately counted on 21 Feb, roost B on 13 Mar and roost C on 10 Mar. Figures 2-4 show the trends in numbers counted at the roosts, with no birds remaining on the date of the last count.

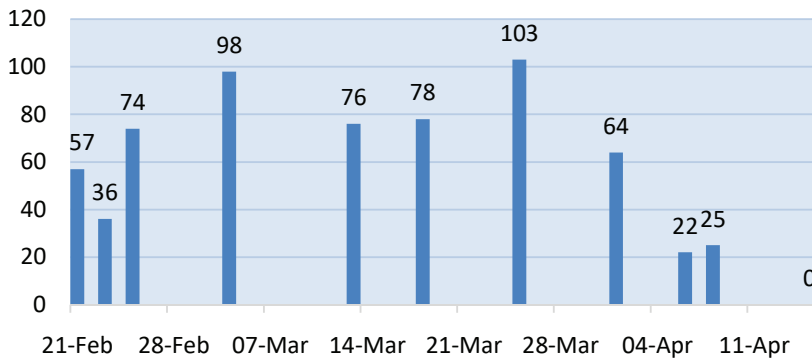


Figure 2. Fire Wood (roost A) counts on eleven dates 21 February – 15 April.

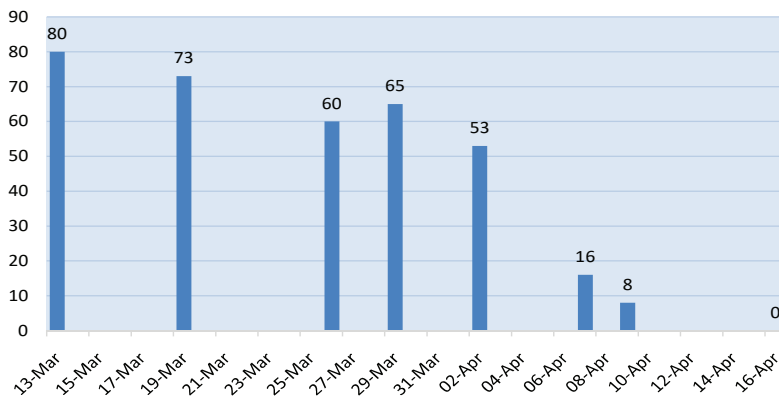


Figure 3. The Warren (roost B) counts on eight dates 13 March – 16 April.

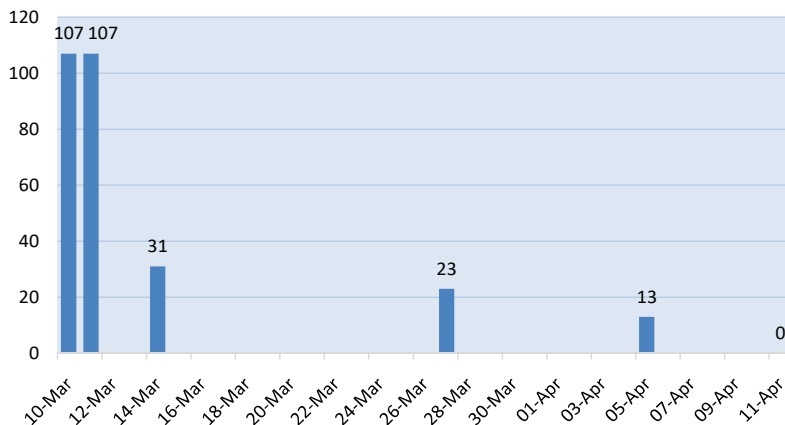


Figure 4. Hurst Wood (roost C) counts on six dates 10 March – 12 April.

Figure 5 below shows combined counts from roosts A and B for dates when they were both counted on the same or consecutive days as these roosts were only 1.5km apart and may be best considered as a single roosting site (see under roosting behaviour below).

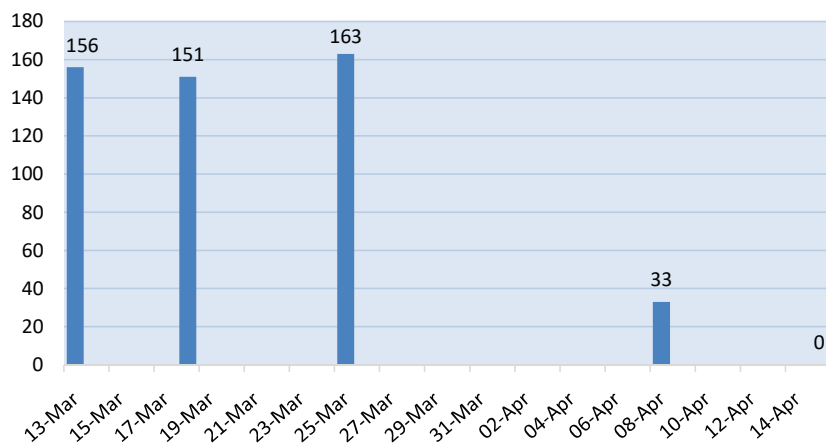


Figure 5. Counts at Fire Wood (roost A) and The Warren (roost B) combined, 13 Mar – 16 Apr.

These counts suggest a rapid decline in numbers at roosts A and B from late March. At roost C, departure occurred earlier, after 11 Mar. Roost D held 30 birds on the only date visited, 31 Mar.

These roost counts did not provide information on whether the same individuals were using the roosts for several weeks, or whether there was a rapid turnover.



Fire Wood with Norway Spruce used by roosting Hawfinches, February 2018

During the weekly counts, birds were observed in the afternoon approaching roosts A – C singly, in pairs or in small flocks, flying fast and low, up to about 25m above the tree line, with individuals within flocks widely separated. The maximum flock size was 16, but most were of fewer than 10 and there were many singles or pairs. The descent into the roost wood was fast, with some birds disappearing from sight immediately, whilst others remained perched conspicuously at or near the tips of conifers or bare broadleaf trees for up to 20 minutes. When flocks approached roost A, sometimes all the flock would continue flying past the roost; in other cases, the flock would split up, with some descending into the roost and others flying on; or all would land in the roost. The birds that flew on were then observed flying towards roost B, 1.5km away, which the observers considered a “twinned” roost. Near roost D some birds were seen flying off towards an undetected roost, whilst others flew into the roost, suggesting another “twinned” roost. There was also one instance at roost B and two at C when small flocks appeared to overfly the roost after approaching it, hinting at further connected roosts.

Most counts were made in the afternoon, on a total of 15 occasions. The mean time for first arrivals was 3hr 46min before sunset (BS) and for the last arrivals 1hr 54min BS. The length of time between first and last arrivals varied between 57 minutes and 3hr 5min. The earliest arrival was 5hr 6min BS and the latest 1h 9min BS.

Nine counts of morning departures were made. The mean time for first departures was 3min after sunrise (AS) and for the last departures 28min AS. The length of time between first and last departures varied between 10min and 40min. The earliest departure was 12min before sunrise and the latest 50min AS. Departures were not only more concentrated in time than arrivals, but typically in double-figure flocks of up to 26.

At roost C birds arrived from, and departed in, all directions. At roosts A and B most arrived from the northeast to southeast and departed in the same directions. No equivalent information was obtained for roost D, though flocks were seen in the early morning at Burwash Weald heading north from the direction of the roost, which was about 2km to the south (KB Gillam pers. comm.). An attempt was made to locate flocks that had left roost A at points further east. Strongly flying flocks were observed still heading ENE some 3.75 kms from the roost shortly after sunrise, but searches further away failed to detect them. Remarkably, very few birds (<10) were seen feeding within 100km² of any of these roosts in the count periods.

Observations at Kingley Vale suggested that the large numbers in March may have been roosting near the main vale where they were usually seen. On 14 Mar, flocks totalling 348 individuals were seen flying south over the vale from 10 min after sunrise (CR Janman pers. comm.). On 20 Mar, all of the 120 seen in the afternoon flew east in large flocks over the adjacent ridge and appeared to descend (pers. ob.).

When roost C was first located, there was a pre-roost gathering area in Norway Spruce 100m from the actual roost, but during later counts this distinction was less apparent with birds arriving and landing at the roost itself. At roosts A and B, there were no obvious pre-roost areas.

Little information was gathered on other aspects of social behaviour. Whilst the main “tzik” and “see” calls became familiar to many observers, song (which is extremely simple and quiet) was only reported on about three occasions. Pair-bonding occurs in winter flocks from January (Perrins 1994, Walpole-Bond 1938) and there was a trend towards an increased number of apparent pairs at Roost B, as shown in Table 4.

| Date | No. in pairs | Total | % paired |
|--------|--------------|-------|----------|
| 13 Mar | 2 | 80 | 2.5 |
| 19 Mar | 4 | 73 | 5.5 |
| 26 Mar | 4 | 60 | 6.7 |
| 29 Mar | 6 | 65 | 9.2 |
| 2 Apr | 10 | 53 | 18.9 |
| 7 Apr | 6 | 16 | 37.5 |
| 8 Apr | 0 | 8 | 0 |

Table 4. Percentage of Hawfinches at roost B that arrived or left in apparent pairs.

However, there was no similar trend for counts at roost A, where the equivalent percentage declined from 36% on 25 Feb to 10% on 25 Mar before increasing to 23% on the final count on 8 Apr. It was not possible to determine whether the apparent pairs observed actually comprised male and female birds.

Other than the presence of these apparently paired birds, there were no other reports relating to heterosexual behaviour among “influx birds”. The report of a pair of Hawfinches “chasing and trilling” over trees behind Battle railway station at 07:20am on 19 Apr is perhaps more likely to refer to resident birds.

Predation and mortality

A male Hawfinch seen being caught by a 1CY female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* in Bewbush, Crawley, on 22 Dec, was the only evidence of predation (AS Cook pers. comm.) although a flock was chased by a Sparrowhawk at Arundel (MC Daniel pers. comm.). The only dead Hawfinch reported had flown into a window of a house near Penhurst where birds were coming to drink from the garden pond

2018: summer, autumn and late winter period

Between 19 Apr and 20 Jul 2018 there were a small number of records indicating that breeding may have taken place, but nothing to suggest an increase in breeding pairs following the influx - see Hawfinch species account in this Sussex Bird Report (Boddington and Mallalieu 2019). In the autumn and winter, there was no evidence of a further influx, but a previously unknown roost was found in the Penhurst Lane area, which held up to 23 individuals in November (and up to 32 in January 2019), the largest concentration in the county during the 2018/19 winter.

Discussion

Food

As would be expected, the results show a strong link between Hawfinches and their preferred foods. It is likely that the list of foods above is very incomplete, given the secretive behaviour of Hawfinches. In particular, the stones of Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, a widespread and common tree in Sussex, can be an important food source for Hawfinches (Mountfort 1957, Ziegler 1982). Garden Cherry tree cultivars and Cherry orchards could also be attractive if some fallen fruit or discarded stones remain on the ground after the summer. In Surrey, Hawfinches were seen to take rosehips *Rosa* spp., Larch *Larix decidua* seeds and fresh growth just behind the tips of Yew twigs (Gale 2018), so these may also have been taken in Sussex. It is also possible that some potential

foods were in short supply in 2017/18. For example, it was a poor year for Beech mast, a favoured food in the New Forest (Ward 2017). In December 2018, a Hawfinch was seen taking berries of Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus* (MC Daniel pers. comm.).

As only female Yew trees bear seed, churchyards with only male trees, or only small female trees, would have attracted few, if any, Hawfinches. Greenfinches often fed in “Irish” Yews *T. b. fastigiata*, which are present in most or all churchyards, but Hawfinches were only observed, at least by the author, in or under native Yews, with large ancient trees being the most favoured.

In early 2018, there were still seeds on Hornbeams until mid to late January. However, perhaps due to very strong winds in the second week of November 2018, some trees checked then carried little or no seed, even those that had done so in the same period of 2017. The presence of Hawfinches in Hornbeam-rich areas during an influx would therefore depend in part on how much seed remains on trees, which is in turn weather dependent. As already noted, Hawfinches will feed on seed on the ground, but this may be less readily accessible and flocks in woodland may be very hard to see (KW Smith pers. comm.). Hawfinches are known to abandon feeding sites after storms have blown seed off trees (Ziegler 1982).



Male, by pond used by Hawfinches for drinking, near Penhurst, November 2017

The huge concentration of 400 at Kingley Vale, at the same time as 600 were in the Yew woods at Bramblehall Wood in Surrey (Gale 2018), an all-time British record count, suggests a shortage of food in other places and that these woodlands were perhaps drawing in Hawfinches from other parts of Britain. However, the counts at the central Sussex roosts show that large numbers of Hawfinches were feeding largely undetected across at least this part of the Weald throughout March. In most years, the much smaller numbers that may be scattered across the Sussex countryside are unlikely to be found except by chance or if a roost is located.

Finding Hawfinches

Even during the influx, birdwatchers found that Hawfinches lived up to their reputation for being extremely shy, as earlier Sussex observers also found “....this is a creature of exemplary caution and coyness, and one, therefore, of which to get unbroken views is often desperately difficult” (Walpole-Bond 1938). When feeding, Hawfinches could be hard or impossible to see, though when perched at or near the tops of trees they were easily detected with binoculars from 200m more, at least when there was sky in the background. If a telescope or large telephoto lens was used, this increased to about 1km. Fortunately, Hawfinches often rest in bare treetops at intervals when not feeding and on the tops of conifers and other trees before descending into roosts. In flight, the distinctive shape and white on the wings make detection easy at up to several hundred metres in good light.

Even when not visible, the distinctive calls, notably the hard “tzik” and softer “seee” often drew attention to birds feeding or flying over. In Surrey, a very wide range of calls was heard from large flocks, “composed of all manner of ticks, sips, squeaks, chips and cheeps” (Gale 2018). Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were heard to imitate Hawfinch calls at Fletching and at Capel in Surrey (Gale 2017, pers. ob.).

Very few were seen away from feeding and roost sites, so knowing and checking suitable habitat is the key to locating birds, bearing in mind time of year and other factors, e.g. that Hornbeam and Field Maple are more likely to attract birds earlier in the winter, strong winds can affect seed availability, and Yew seeds are available throughout the autumn to early spring.

Roosts proved to be very hard to find as birds flew in so fast and low; it may be necessary to be within 200m or less of a roost to be sure of detecting it. However, repeated views of singles, pairs and flocks in the very early morning and in early to mid-afternoon, all flying in the same direction, are sure signs of departure from or return to a roost. Pre- and post-roost gathering trees are a feature of roosts in the New Forest (Ward 2015) and although little evidence of these was found in Sussex in 2017/18, at the Penhurst Lane roost found in January 2019, a pre- and post-roosting site was in a tall oak and adjacent broadleaves about 800m from the roost (pers. ob.); in hindsight this site probably served the same purpose in 2017/18 as Hawfinches were frequently seen in the same trees during that winter.

Severe weather

The severe weather that brought snow and icy conditions in late February and March, nicknamed “the Beast from the East”, had no observed impact on Hawfinch behaviour or numbers.

Heterosexual behaviour

The limited evidence of pair-bonding is perhaps surprising as pairing is known to start in flocks in winter. This was observed in Surrey from January 2018 and more frequently from early March (Gale 2018), whilst in the New Forest birds often leave roosts in pairs from mid-February to late April, when Hawfinches frequently sing in the roosts (Ward 2015). The data presented in this paper on percentages of apparently paired birds flying into roosts shows very different results from the two sites. It may be that many pairs fly into roosts within larger flocks. The observation points for the Sussex roosts were too far away to hear calls or song.

Peak numbers

No surveys were undertaken in 2017/18 that could produce an accurate estimate of the peak numbers of Hawfinches, but it is worth trying to give some sort of estimate. The influx resulted in birds being detected in many more tetrads than in any previous winter. However, Hornbeam and Yew are widespread in Sussex, as shown in Figures 6 and 7 below (Sussex Botanical Recording

Society 2018); note the presence of Hornbeam across almost all the Weald. Bearing in mind that other foods are also taken, it seems highly probable that Hawfinches were far more widely distributed than the records show.



Figure 6. *Distribution of Hornbeam in Sussex.*

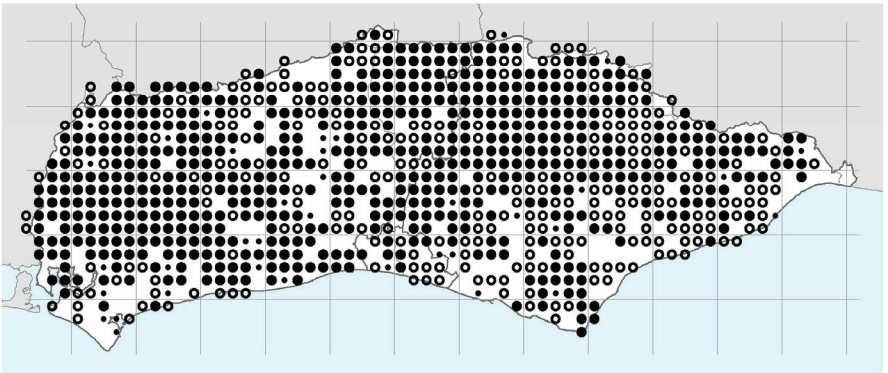


Figure 7. *Distribution of Yew in Sussex.*

Key to symbols: small black dot = recorded 1966-1999; hollow dot = recorded 2000-2015; large black dot = recorded 1966 – 2015.

Care is needed to avoid double-counting as most of the counts in both churchyards and Yew woodland, and all of the large counts in those habitats, were made after the peak numbers in Hornbeam.

Searches by the author of sites with seed-bearing Hornbeam where Hawfinches had not already been found in 2017/18, resulted in a near 100% success rate in the period November – January whilst seed was still on trees, with an average maximum count of six birds per site (35 in all). Even if only half the tetrads in Sussex with hornbeam held Hawfinches, i.e. 311, with an average of 10 birds per tetrad, this would give a total of about 3110, whilst Hornbeam seed was plentiful, i.e. up to about mid-January, and excluding numbers already feeding on other foods at Sherwood Rough, where there were up to 60 in November, and Westdean Woods (up to 48 in November), 108 in all, say 300 taking into account possible presence at other sites such as Heyshott Down not counted

at that time. The county total estimated in this way is $3110 + 300 = 3410$. A more conservative calculation might assume that 25% of “Hornbeam tetrads” held the average of 10 birds, giving about 1600 in total, plus another 200 in other habitats, so $1600 + 200 = 1800$.

An alternative method of calculating peak numbers is based on the mid-March counts, when about 400 Hawfinches were at Kingley Vale and 275 were counted at the three roosts in central Sussex (average 137 per roost, treating the adjacent “twinned” roosts A and B as one). As already noted, very few of the birds using the roosts were feeding in the immediate vicinity and those leaving roost A were detected still flying strongly away up to 3.75km from the roost. If these roosts were drawing birds from about 100km² and even if only 10% of the rest of Sussex contained a similar combination of roosts and sparsely distributed, hard to detect birds, that would indicate about a further 490 individuals, giving a combined total of $400 + 275 + 490 = 1165$, rounded to 1200. A less conservative calculation might assume 500 Hawfinches in Yew woodland (i.e. another 100 were in woods other than Kingley Vale) and that 30% of the rest of Sussex away from the 100km squares with the known roosts A-C held a similar density of birds, about 1500. The combined total would then be $500 + 275 + 1500 = 2275$, rounded to 2300.

There is the potential for a wide margin of error with these crude calculations. However, in the absence of better data, it seems reasonable to conclude that peak numbers exceeded 1500 and were probably below 4000, with 2000 being a central estimate for future reference.

Conclusions

The influx gave much pleasure to many people and may prove to be a once in a lifetime experience. Despite hopes, there was no evidence that the influx resulted in more Hawfinches breeding in 2018. However, the knowledge gained on both sites and behaviour did result in birds being detected in places that were not known prior to the influx, or where very few had ever been seen. The Penhurst Lane area in East Sussex may prove to be a reliable winter site for Hawfinches in future years, perhaps on a par with Westdean Woods. Even in a winter with exceptional numbers, Hawfinches could remain undetected over large areas and few roosts were found, so in most winters, a great deal of effort will be required to find feeding birds and roosts in new sites. The information presented here adds to our knowledge of Hawfinches in Sussex and provides a basis for further winter studies and surveys to try to detect breeding birds.

Acknowledgements

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Breeding Firecrest survey 2018: distribution, habitat preferences, population densities and population estimate

Mark Mallalieu

Introduction

The Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* was first confirmed breeding in Britain in 1962, in the New Forest (Balmer *et al.* 2013). In Sussex, breeding took place on Ashdown Forest in 1973, followed by occasional suspected breeding in some subsequent years here or elsewhere. Eleven singing males were located at four sites in 1982, mainly in the West Sussex Weald (James 1996). Thereafter, there was further gradual expansion, with likely or confirmed breeding in several areas, notably in the forests south of Crawley and in Westdean Woods. At the latter site, there were at least 14 singing males in 2002 and 23 in 2003 (Manns 2003, Green 2004). By 2006, the population increase had gathered pace and there were estimated to be at least 64 singing males in the county, of which 49 were in Westdean Woods (Perry 2007). In 2007, there were estimated to be at least 70 singing males in Westdean Woods and at least 121 across the whole county (Bayley 2008). After 2007, there was less effort to count breeding Firecrests until 2017, when 92 territories were estimated in 15km² of mixed (largely private) woodland south of Crawley, with about 70% of suitable habitat covered (Clements *et al.* 2017). Outside the breeding season, the species is now a reasonably familiar, though still much appreciated, migrant, and some also overwinter.

Firecrests in Britain have been monitored by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) since 1973. With the British breeding population now perhaps exceeding 4000 pairs (Clements *et al.* 2017), considerably above the usual threshold for inclusion by RBBP, the SOS decided to conduct a survey in 2018 to better understand the distribution of breeding Firecrests as well as habitat preferences and population densities. In this paper an attempt is also made to estimate the number of territories in Sussex.

Survey methods

Volunteer surveyors were given guidance on the habitats that breeding Firecrests are known to occupy in Britain and either selected 1-km squares that they knew or suspected to hold breeding Firecrests, or were allocated squares where singing Firecrests had been recorded previously or where there was thought to be particularly suitable habitat. Some randomly-selected squares were also made available. One 1-km square was selected within each 10-km square using a random number generator and after discarding squares with no possibly suitable habitat, a suitable square was found within each 10-km square. For each 1-km square, volunteers were asked to make one to three early to mid-morning visits between 14 Apr and 30 Jun, avoiding poor weather and searching all suitable habitat without using playback of Firecrest song. Ideally one visit, or the only visit, was to be made between 7 May and 7 Jun. Volunteers were instructed to map all singing Firecrests and also to record totals of singing Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* to give some results for that species and also because if an observer heard Goldcrests but no Firecrests, it was likely, though by no means certain, that Firecrests were not present.

If multiple visits were made, volunteers were asked to combine map registrations onto a single map, indicating each territory and any uncertainties about them. One or more records of a singing Firecrest identified in this way is treated in this paper as a territory (see Discussion below for risk of over or underestimating territories). The maps were used to calculate breeding densities. For each territory, volunteers were asked to record the habitat using the categories in Table 1, selecting all that were applicable.

| | | | |
|-----|---|-----|--|
| 1. | Conifer plantation | 11. | Grand Fir <i>Abies grandis</i> |
| 2. | Mixed woodland | 12. | Western Red Cedar <i>Thuja plicata</i> |
| 3. | Deciduous woodland | 13. | Holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> |
| 4. | Park/large ornamental gardens | 14. | Ivy <i>Hedera helix</i> |
| 5. | Smaller domestic garden | 15. | Yew <i>Taxus baccata</i> |
| 6. | Churchyard | 16. | Other tree species |
| 7. | Western Hemlock <i>Tsuga heterophylla</i> | 17. | Young plantation (<5m high) |
| 8. | Douglas Fir <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> | 18. | Mature plantation |
| 9. | Norway Spruce <i>Picea abies</i> | 19. | Other habitat feature |
| 10. | Spruce spp. <i>Picea</i> spp. | | |

Table 1. Habitat categories used in the 2018 Firecrest survey.

In this paper, the term ‘broadleaf’ replaces ‘deciduous’ woodland. For categories 16 and 19, volunteers were invited to note additional details. Volunteers and other observers were also asked to submit casual records of singing Firecrests together with habitat information.

Results

Distribution and numbers

A total of 46 volunteers surveyed 76 1-km squares, including 11 of the randomly selected squares as shown in Figure 1.

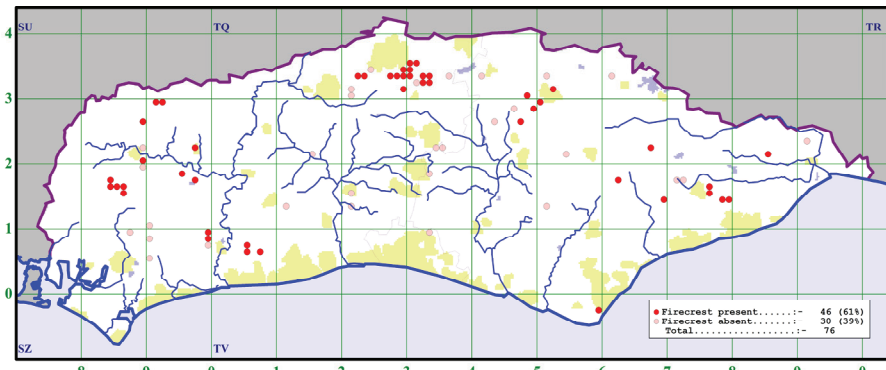


Figure 1. 1-km squares surveyed in the Firecrest breeding survey 2018.

Eight of the volunteers also provided casual records with habitat data, as did a further three observers. These records were received from an additional 47 1-km squares.

Scrutiny of the data indicated that most records from the middle of April to the end of June related to birds in breeding habitat, with only a few exceptions, e.g. a coastal location with no suitable breeding habitat. Records before 14 Apr were excluded from the analysis, unless there was a further record from the same location during 14 Apr to 30 Jun, as was the coastal record.

Applying these criteria, a total of 287 singing Firecrests was found, of which 193 were in 44 (58%) of the 76 surveyed squares and 94 were from casual observations for which habitat data were provided. Only one Firecrest was found in a randomly-selected square and this is not included in the analysis as it was the coastal migrant mentioned above. The distribution of territories is shown in Figure 2.

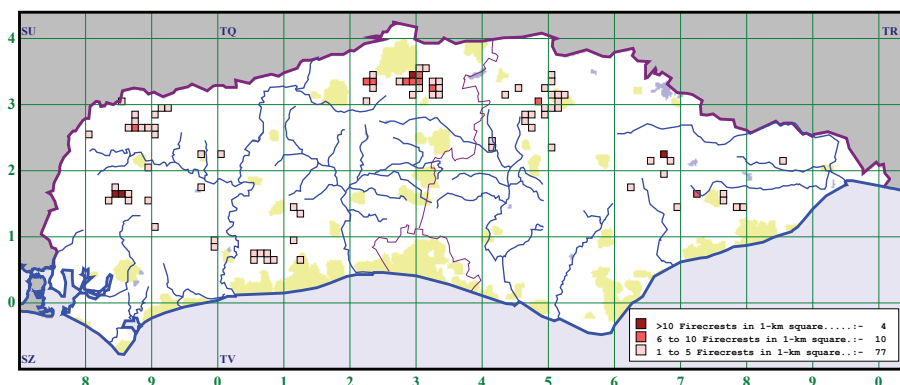


Figure 2. Map showing distribution of territories in the 2018 breeding Firecrest survey.

Habitat features recorded

As Figure 3 shows, most Firecrests were found in conifer plantations, which accounted for 206 territories (71.8% of all territories). The next most frequent category was mixed woodland, accounting for 28 territories (9.7% of all territories). There is no duplication across these categories. If mixed woodland and conifer plantation were both selected for a territory (14 instances), this is treated here as conifer plantation. For one territory both conifer plantation and large gardens/ornamental parks were selected and this is also treated here as conifer plantation.

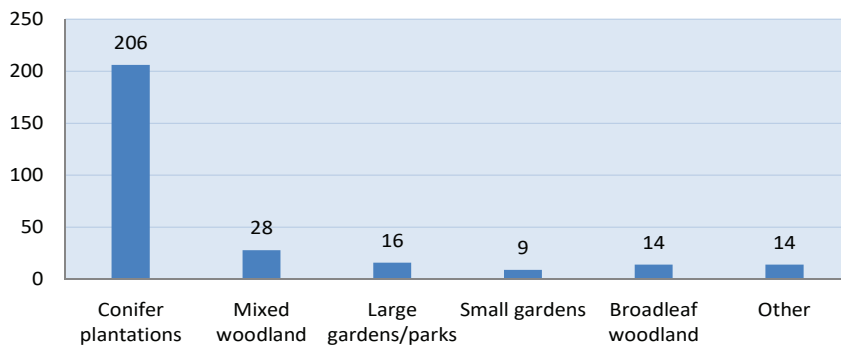


Figure 3. Numbers of singing Firecrests 15 Apr – 30 Jun 2018 in the most frequently registered habitat categories.

The broadleaf woodland category includes five territories where conifers were also selected: two included Yew, one Norway Spruce, one Western Hemlock and one Western Red Cedar. In the author's experience even one or two conifers in an area of broadleaf woodland can attract breeding Firecrests. In two territories categorised as broadleaf woodland, Holly was also recorded and in a further two both Holly and Ivy were recorded. Overall, Holly was recorded for 31 territories and Ivy in the same number. For 19 territories both species were recorded. Yew was recorded for 11 territories. Two categories, Grand Fir and churchyard, were not recorded for any territory.

Figure 4 is a more detailed breakdown of the territories by type of conifer plantation. A total of 87 singing Firecrests was found in Norway Spruce (42.2% of all territories in conifer plantations)

and 73 (35.4%) in Western Hemlock. Douglas Fir accounted for 38 territories (18.4%). The total for Norway Spruce includes three records for which 'spruce' was registered.

The 'mixed' category covers six records where more than one conifer species was registered: Douglas Fir and Norway Spruce in three instances; Western Hemlock and Douglas Fir in two instances; and Western Hemlock and Norway Spruce in one instance.

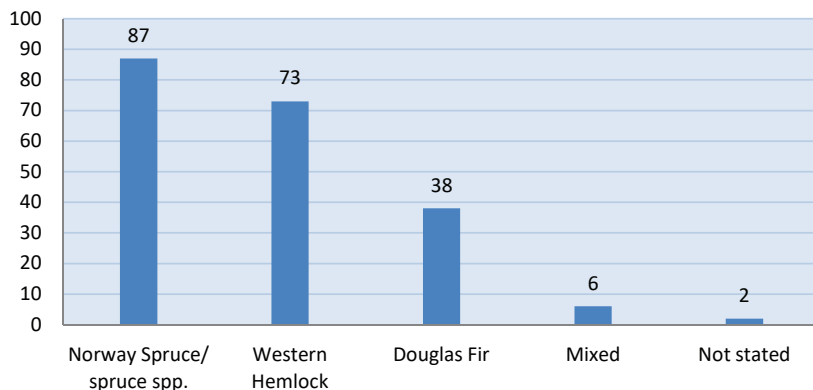


Figure 4. Numbers of singing Firecrests in different types of conifer plantations.

The young plantation category was selected for 17 of the 206 territories in conifer plantations, though in nine of these mature plantation was also selected, indicating that the two types were adjacent. Mature plantation was selected for 133 conifer plantation territories, though is likely to have been an applicable category for most of the remainder for which no age category was selected. Western Red Cedar was selected for seven territories, six of which were in plantations of other species; only one territory was in a Western Red Cedar plantation where no other conifers were registered.

Of the 206 territories in conifer plantations, habitat notes for 113 were provided in addition to the recording of categories. Figure 5 summarises the most frequently mentioned tree species or other habitat characteristics (a territory can be included under more than one of these).

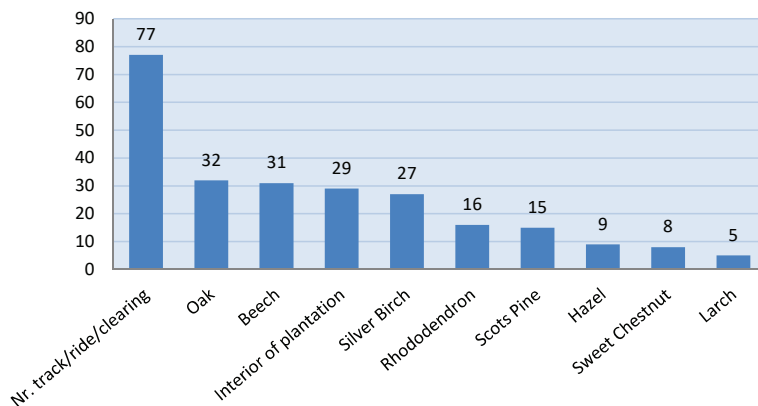


Figure 5. Most frequently noted habitat characteristics.

Territory densities

Where singing Firecrests were present, the number of territories detected per 1-km square varied between one and 18. The ten 1-km squares with the highest densities are listed in Table 2 with the main habitat type.

| | 1-km sq | Name | Main habitat type(s) | No. of territories |
|-----|---------|--------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 1. | SU8416 | Westdean Linchball Wood | Open mature Norway Spruce | 18 |
| 2. | SU8516 | Westdean Venus Wood | Open mature Norway Spruce | 16 |
| 3. | TQ6722 | Leggetts Wood | Western Hemlock plantation | 13 |
| 4. | TQ2934 | Oldhouse Warren, Pillow Mounds | Mainly mature Norway Spruce plantation with some Western Hemlock and broadleaves with many tracks | 12 |
| 5. | TQ3033 | Denches Copse, Cowdray Forest | Mature Western Hemlock plantation and broadleaf woodland | 10 |
| 6. | TQ2233 | Holmbush Forest, Tower Road | Mature Western Hemlock plantation with broadleaved trees, Rhododendron spp. and tracks | 9 |
| 7. | TQ2933 | Oldhouse Warren Burnt Place | Mature Norway Spruce and Western Hemlock plantations, mixed woodland | 8 |
| 8. | TQ3034 | Worth Forest, Whiteley Hill | Mature Norway Spruce and Western Hemlock plantations, Scots Pine & broadleaved trees, with tracks | 7 |
| 9. | TQ2333 | Holmbush Forest | Mature Western Hemlock plantation with tracks | 6 |
| 10. | TQ3232 | Little Strudgate Farm | Mature and young Norway Spruce plantation, mature Western Hemlock plantation with Rhododendron, mixed woodland, tracks | 6 |

Table 2. *The 1-km squares with the highest densities of Firecrest territories.*

In the most densely occupied parts of site 1, there were an estimated 0.91 territories per hectare of open mature Norway Spruce plantation. In site 2, also mature open Norway Spruce plantation, the equivalent density was also estimated as 0.91 territories per hectare. In site 3, which had the highest count in Western Hemlock plantation, the highest density was estimated as 0.5 territories per hectare. However, this density may be exceeded in optimum Western Hemlock plantations, e.g. a density of 0.73 per hectare was estimated in part of site 6. It should be stressed that these estimates are based on measurements taken from hand-annotated maps.

Goldcrests

A total of 356 singing Goldcrests was recorded in 55 (80%) of 69 1-km squares. In the other seven surveyed squares, no attempt was made to record Goldcrests. In five squares, Firecrests outnumbered Goldcrests, whilst the counts were equal in a further four. In 27 squares, there were more Goldcrests than Firecrests and in 19 squares Goldcrests were found, but no Firecrests. In all squares where Firecrests outnumbered Goldcrests, the habitat was conifer plantation, mainly Norway Spruce, with high densities of Firecrests.

Discussion

The extent and location of suitable habitat for breeding Firecrests in Sussex is not fully understood, including the extent to which broadleaf and especially mixed woodland is occupied. A randomised survey based on all potentially suitable habitat could not therefore be carried out, but a range of habitats was surveyed with clear differences in Firecrest presence and densities. Although there is some risk that the results presented here contain biases that give a misleading picture of habitat preferences, the results are consistent with information held by the SOS on the spread of breeding Firecrests in Sussex over many years, including the preference for mature Norway Spruce and other conifer plantations. The importance of Western Hemlock plantations, already apparent from recent records in Sussex and to some extent from studies in Norfolk (Mason 2012), was confirmed by the survey, although some localities with plantations or scattered Western Hemlock, e.g. in TQ3422 and TQ3522, did not hold Firecrests (pers. ob.). The use of gardens and parks with suitable tree species was also confirmed. As expected, some Firecrests were found in mixed woodland. Very few were in broadleaf woodland. However, Firecrests do occupy non-conifer habitats in Hampshire (Clements *et al.* 2017) and the bias towards searching conifer habitats in this survey, as well as the limited number of random squares surveyed, may have distorted the results to some extent.

The habitat notes provided by volunteers suggest that breeding Firecrests prefer the more open areas of conifer plantations, with tracks, rides or clearings, where there is light and space for a range of other trees and vegetation, and that they avoid the dark interior of plantations (see Figures 6 and 7).



Figure 6. Ride in Linchball Wood, with widely spaced Norway Spruce. Beech of various ages also present. This habitat supports high densities of Firecrests (M Mallalieu).



Figure 7. Clearing created by fallen trees near edge of mature Western Hemlock plantation in Cowdray Forest. Young self-seeded Western Hemlock in right foreground. Typical habitat for breeding Firecrests, which were absent from the dark interior of this plantation (M Mallalieu).



Figure 8. Widely spaced mature Norway Spruce, Linchball Wood, with evidence of removal of some trees. Much more light penetration than in denser plantations. Breeding Firecrests were present in the interior of this woodland (M Mallalieu).

Where Firecrests were occupying the interior of plantations, the trees were widely spaced allowing some undergrowth and light penetration; this was especially the case in mature Norway Spruce plantations such as at Linchball Wood (SU8416) and Venus Wood (SU8516), where high densities of territories were found (see Figure 8). Oak *Quercus spp.*, Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Silver Birch *Betulus pendula* were the most frequently recorded broadleaf species in additional habitat notes relating to territories in conifer plantations, these being often associated with clearings, tracks and rides (pers. ob.).

There was a wide variation in the amount of detail provided by volunteers both for supplementary habitat categories (i.e. other than for the main categories such conifer plantation and dominant tree species) and additional notes, so the data presented here on for example the presence of Holly and Ivy should not be treated as presenting a consistent or comprehensive picture of habitat composition. It is possible that a number of the records relate to migrant birds, especially as just one observation of a singing male was treated as a territory. However, for several reasons, the total of 287 is more likely to be an under-estimate of territories in the 1-km squares where singing males were found in the survey. Not all observers would have had equal skill in identifying the most likely areas within 1-km squares; hearing abilities will have varied, and some visits may have taken place at times when there was a lull in song, which Mason (2012) noted in early June, for example. In some cases, surveyors stated that they had not been able to cover all suitable habitat. It also seems likely that not using playback of Firecrest song resulted in birds not being detected. Evidence for this comes for example from the author's surveys of several 1-km squares using playback (under licence from Natural England) in 2017 and then not using it in 2018. In one area where five squares were surveyed in both years, 41 singing males were found in 2017 and 28 in 2018, i.e. 46% more using sound. In another area, 23 were detected in two squares in 2017 and 15 in 2018, i.e. 53% more using sound. It is of course possible that there were fewer breeding Firecrests in 2018, but the species has been increasing, not declining, and it appears not to be affected by hard winters (Balmer et. al. 2013). Playback could have led to the same singing Firecrest being recorded twice. However, Mason (2012) found similar results in Norfolk, where a study located 14 territories in 2008, 19 in 2010 and 30 in 2011, with brief bursts of song playback being used to help confirm territories in 2011 only; eight additional localities were visited in 2011, but only two held Firecrests. These results suggest an increase due to playback of up to 47%, though an increase in the population might also have occurred in Norfolk between 2010 and 2011. Set against this evidence, Clements *et al.* (2017) did not consider use of sound lures to be necessary to survey breeding Firecrests in Hampshire.

The distribution of breeding Firecrests in Figure 2 is consistent with an expansion in range since the Bird Atlas 2007-11 (Newnham and Crabtree 2012, Thomas 2014) and gaps in Figure 2 compared to the atlas distribution map are likely to be mainly or entirely due to tetrads not being covered in the 2018 survey. Figure 9 shows the tetrads from the 2018 survey plus additional ones with some breeding evidence in 2008 – 2018.

The 2008 – 2018 records suggest about 169 territories in addition to the 287 found in the survey, giving 456 in total. However, this is still likely to understate the actual breeding population, as the following analysis shows.

The numbers counted in fully surveyed 1km squares were used to arrive at an approximate population estimate. Using the mapped distribution in 19 fully surveyed 1 km squares, the area of suitable conifers in each square was measured and the density of Firecrests per hectare of suitable habitat calculated for each square. The areas were measured by overlaying a dotted transparency on the 1:25000 map and counting dots. This gave a mean density of 0.15 (\pm 0.019 S.E.) territories per hectare of suitable conifer.

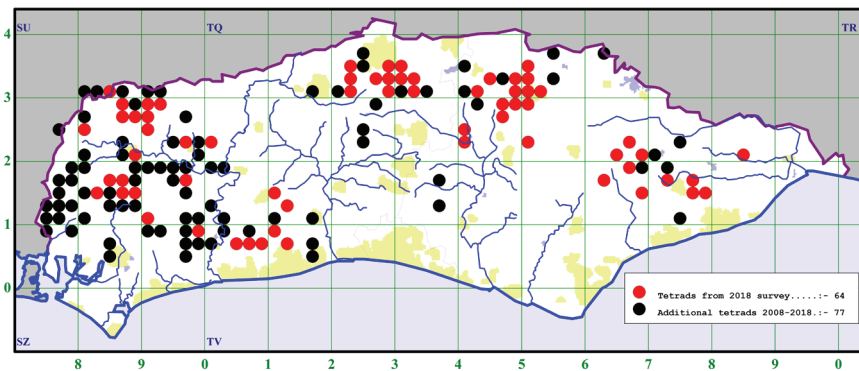


Figure 9. Map showing all tetrads with Firecrest breeding evidence 2008 -2018.

Next, data from the Forestry Commission National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (Forestry Commission 2002a & b) was used to estimate the area of suitable conifer forest in Sussex. There was a total of 8891 ha of conifer forest in Sussex but most of this was Scots Pine, which is not used by Firecrests in England unless mixed with other suitable species, as suggested by this survey and previous field work (Clements *et al.* 2017, pers. ob.). Removing Scots Pine and Larch spp. from the total leaves 4042 ha of conifers suitable for Firecrests (mainly Norway Spruce, Douglas Fir and others). On this basis, there are an estimated 600 territories (95% range 450-750) in this habitat.

In addition, some Firecrests were found in mixed conifer/broadleaved woods in this survey (see Figure 10). Density estimates could not be calculated for this habitat with any confidence as there were insufficient data, but there are 8561 ha in Sussex. Even a Firecrest density of 1/10th that in the preferred conifers gives an additional 120 territories.



Figure 10. Mixed woodland in Cowdray Forest with Birch, Beech, Oak spp., Sweet Chestnut, Douglas Fir and (not visible in photo) Scots Pine. Such habitat supports lower densities of breeding Firecrests than a nearby Western Hemlock plantation (M Mallalieu).

Given these two estimates, a total of 700 territories (95% range 550-850) is justified. The true number of territories is likely to be even higher taking into account the numbers found in parks and gardens, and if use of sound lures does make the difference implied by the field work mentioned above, so there could be over 1000 territories in Sussex.

The most obvious threat to local populations is clear-felling of conifer plantations. There is no reason to suppose that this would happen across the county at a scale that would threaten the status of Firecrest as a fairly common breeding species, though large local reductions in breeding numbers could and presumably will occur periodically. The RBBP decided in late 2018 to remove Firecrest from the list of species that it monitors (M Holling pers. comm.), with the preliminary Sussex survey results contributing to this decision.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all the observers who conducted the 1-km square surveys or submitted casual records and who are identified in the list of contributors to this Sussex Bird Report, as well as to the landowners who gave permission for surveys on their land. I would especially like to thank Dr Helen Crabtree, who put a great deal of effort into planning the survey and reviewing earlier drafts, Dr Ken Smith for his advice and assistance in data analysis and Dr John Newnham for producing the maps used in this paper. Bob Foreman kindly made available in map form data on Forestry Commission-managed conifer plantations in Sussex. Thanks are also due to Richard Cowser, John Hobson and Alan Perry for their helpful comments on drafts of the paper.

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Winter Starling roosts in Brighton

Chris Barfield

Introduction

The spectacular flocking displays of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* roosting on Brighton's piers during the winter months have become well-known in recent years, to the extent of being something of a tourist attraction. Increased public use of the seafront throughout the year and greater public awareness of nature are perhaps some of the reasons behind this, plus the attention drawn by the collapse of the West Pier. In 2008 the RSPB generated further publicity for the roosts with a regular volunteer presence on the Palace Pier in their 'Date with Nature' campaign. Estimates of the number of birds using these roosts have been made at various times by different people, but until the present study no regular standardised counts had been made.

Between 2005 and 2019, regular winter counts of the Starlings coming to roost at the piers were carried out. This paper presents the methodology and results of these, and discusses how they relate to the wider picture of population change for Starling in the UK and Europe. The history of Starling roosts in Brighton and the origins of the birds and their roosting behaviour are also discussed, and records of roost counts elsewhere in Sussex summarised.

The history of the roosts

West Pier

The West Pier seems to have been originally the main roost site, and may have developed after the pier was closed to the public in 1975. Birds were roosting in trees in the city centre in the 1960s (pers. obs), and it has been suggested that the destruction of trees in the 1987 storm drove the birds to roost on the pier (Easlea 2008), but there are no records of any counts in the SOS database before 1995. One-off counts and estimates were made at various times by different observers after then, particularly during the 1990s, when up to 50,000 were recorded.

Plans to restore the derelict pier in the early 2000s led to concerns about the possible effect on the roost, particularly at a time when a steep decline in the breeding population of Starling was being noted. These concerns prompted English Nature to commission a survey in 2001 which estimated a maximum roost size of 50,000.

The structure of the West Pier continued to slowly deteriorate, and in 2003 two fires reduced it to a skeleton, bringing a new focus to restoration plans. Over the next few years the remains of the pier suffered from further erosion and collapse, any idea of restoration was finally abandoned, and roosting numbers rapidly declined.

Palace Pier

Roosting at the Palace Pier has been even less well documented in the past, and before 2005 there is only one count recorded (of 10,000 in 1986). This roost rapidly came to prominence after the collapse of the West Pier, presumably because most of the birds relocated from there.

Roosting behaviour

Birds usually gather in small groups before roosting, in trees and on buildings up to a mile or more from the roost and often more than an hour before sunset (pers. obs), when they are very vocal. Birds at a roost can come from up to 80km away, although usually much nearer (Hamilton & Gilbert 1969). In Sussex, they feed on grassland on the Downs and in the river valleys, and

observation at the pier roosts show that most of the birds arrive from the west.

The first birds usually arrive at the roost around 15-20 minutes before sunset, starting with a small group circling high above the pier. Subsequent arrivals merge with them, the flock quickly increasing in size and then splitting into smaller groups and making low passes over the pier, sometimes alighting on the girders for a short time and then flying out and back again, as if unsure about finally settling. Observations on the pier itself show that the birds are silent whilst in flight, but on alighting are very vocal, suddenly falling silent again as night falls and they sleep.

At the West Pier, birds roost on the exposed metal girders which are all that remain of the structure, at the Palace Pier they roost on the girders beneath the decking, a much more sheltered location. Contact with the Palace Pier staff confirms that the pier management have a positive attitude to the birds, and no attempts to discourage them from roosting there have been or would be considered.

Counting method

Counting very large numbers of birds in flight is highly prone to error and subjectivity, but the birds roosting on the piers arrive in groups of usually between 100 and 1000, making it easy to keep a running total, rather than try to estimate the whole flock. A personal accuracy check can be made by estimating the size of flocks from photos and then making an accurate count from them, and the photo below (Figure 1) is a good example of one which can be used in this way.

Counts of the Palace Pier roost were made from a high vantage point on Marine Parade, giving a view over both sides of the pier. Between three and five counts were made on random dates during each winter period (November – February), from the same point and from about half an hour before sunset until about ten minutes after.

Counts of the West Pier roost were made between 2006/7 and 2012/13, from the pavement adjoining. The roosting capacity of the West Pier was severely affected by the progressive collapse of the structure after the 2003 fires, resulting in a dramatic fall in numbers, and counting there was abandoned in 2013.



Starlings at Brighton (Sandra Palme)

Results

Figure 2 shows all counts of the Palace Pier roost during the winters 2005/6 to 2018/9, with the trendline shown. At the West Pier, numbers declined from a regular 6-7,000 in 2005-7 to around 500 in 2012, when counting was discontinued.

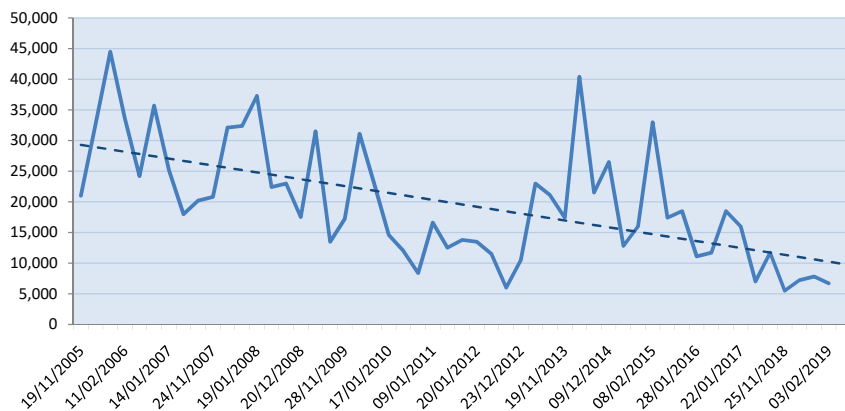


Figure 2. Roost counts at the Palace Pier 2005/6 - 2018/19.

Population decline

In the UK, the breeding population of Starlings decreased by 41% between 2006 and 2017, the nearest data available to the period of this survey (Woodward *et. al* 2018 from Breeding Bird Survey data). The decline was from a high point in the 1960s after an expansion dating from the 1830s (Feare 1996), and was greatest in the South East (Robinson *et. al.* 2005a). Towards the end of the last century the decline continued to the point where in 2002 the UK conservation concern status of Starling was upgraded from amber to red.

Across Europe as a whole populations have also shown a marked decline (Feare 1996), although the reduction of 18% between 2005 and 2016 (PECBMS 2018) was much lower than in the UK. The reasons put forward for the decline of Starling populations are based on agricultural changes affecting the availability of invertebrate food, particularly loss of grassland to cereal production and the switch from spring to autumn sowing (Feare 1996). Figure 3 shows the graph for the UK BBS and that for Europe as a whole for the period of this study, with trendlines. No national or international index of wintering numbers for Starling is currently produced.

The origins of birds using the roosts

The resident population is considerably augmented during the winter by immigrants from northern and eastern Europe and Russia, where frozen ground makes it impossible for them to probe for invertebrates (James 1996). It has been said that large roosts consist of mostly immigrant birds (Clergeau 1993), which may benefit more than the local birds from some of the advantages of communal roosting, particularly protection from unfamiliar predators and the sharing of knowledge of the best feeding areas, and that local birds roost in smaller numbers and not in large roosts. In a Sussex context, Walpole-Bond (1938) says much the same thing.

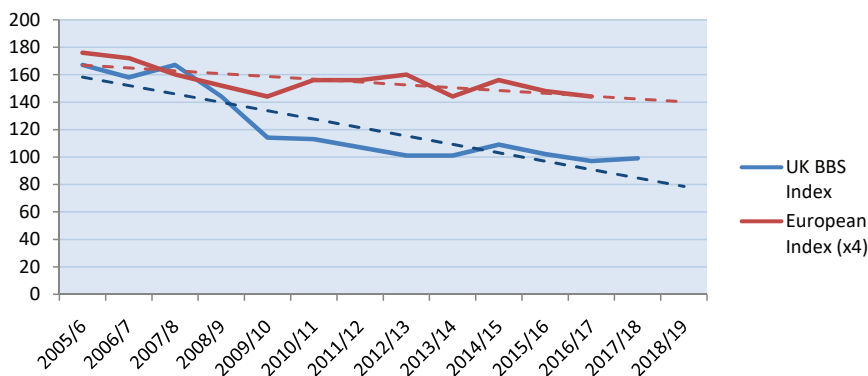


Figure 3. Declines in breeding populations of Starling in the UK and Europe.

Other roosts in Brighton and Sussex

Within Brighton, a number of other smaller roosts have been recorded at various times. In 2007 a roost of about 1000 was found in trees in a small back yard in West Street, and at about the same time birds roosted in ivy in the front basement of a house off Regency Square, again a very small area (pers. obs). Birds also roost on girders underneath the West Quay pub at Brighton Marina, gathering on the rigging of yachts beforehand, and occasional counts of this roost during the study period varied between 1500 and 2500.

Significant roosts have also been recorded elsewhere in Sussex, and Table 1 below shows a summary of counts carried out with any regularity, plus those which were only one-off counts. All are taken from the SOS records database.

| Area | Date range | No. of counts | Max. count | Date of max. count | Comments |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Regular counts | | | | | |
| Rye Harbour/Pett Level | 1969-2010 | 14 | 15,000 | Sep 1997 | |
| Thorney Island | 1976-2010 | 12 | 20,000 | Dec 1990 & Aug 2000 | reedbed roosts |
| Shoreham/Lancing | 1968-2017 | 11 | 90,000 | Dec 1967 | |
| Eastbourne Pier | 1998-2003 | 5 | 1,000,000 | Jan 1998 | |
| Other one-off counts | | | | | |
| Berwick | - | 1 | 50,000 | Dec 1984 | |
| Ovingdean | - | 1 | 30,000 | Feb 1968 | |
| Burgess Hill | - | 1 | 30,000 | Dec 2015 | |
| Seaford | - | 1 | 20,000 | Dec 1988 | |

Table 1. Summary of roost counts in Sussex outside the Brighton area.

Conclusions

Starlings have formed large roosts on the two Brighton piers for some years, although until this study only occasional counts and estimates had been made. Regular counts at the Palace Pier between 2005 and 2019 confirm that the pier remains an important traditional roosting site, although numbers of birds declined steeply during this period, as they have done generally across the UK and Europe. Counts elsewhere in Sussex over the years confirm this - at all sites, the highest count was before 2000.

The counts reveal very wide variations between and within years, even within a matter of a few weeks. This can be expected, since most of the birds will be immigrants whose numbers fluctuate according to weather conditions. However, the decline at this roost has been much steeper than the European index, suggesting that smaller numbers of birds are now getting as far as Sussex. Climate change, making it easier for birds to winter further north, is one possible explanation for this, and it will be interesting to see how the size of the roost continues to change in the future.

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Sussex results from the Non-estuarine Waterbird Survey (NEWS) 2015-2016

Dr Helen Crabtree and Dr John Newnham

Introduction

Many wintering waterbirds across the UK are monitored annually by the national Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) (Frost *et al.* 2019). However, the majority of the WeBS counts are made on estuaries and inland waterbodies, with counts not being carried out along most of the coastline. Important populations of several species occur around the non-estuarine coastline of the UK, and these species are therefore not monitored annually by WeBS counts.

During the winter of 1984-1985 the Winter Shorebird Count was organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), and it was found that the non-estuarine coast of the UK held particularly important numbers of Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. A repeat survey, the Non-estuarine Waterbird Survey (NEWS), was carried out during the winter of 1997-1998, and this revealed declines in the numbers of Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, as well as suggesting changes in the winter distributions of some of these species. Another repeat national survey was carried out in 2006-2007 when for the first time the entire length of the Sussex coastline was surveyed (Crabtree and Newnham 2007). The aim of the repeat NEWS during the winter of 2015-2016 was nationally to update estimates of wader populations within the UK, and within Sussex to achieve complete coverage of the coastline again and compare the results with those from the 2006-2007 survey.

This paper presents the results of the NEWS counts carried out in Sussex during the winter of 2015-2016, and discusses some of these results in relation to WeBS counts made during the same period and also in relation to the 2006-2007 NEWS counts.

Methods

As with previous surveys, the basis of the survey was single counts of waterbirds on non-estuarine sections of the coast, made on any date in December 2015 or January 2016 (but ideally as close as possible to mid-January to coincide with the annual International Waterbird Census coordinated by Wetlands International). Counts were to be made at any time within a 6-hour period commencing 3 hours before low water and finishing 3 hours after low water.

The recording of waders on the intertidal habitat was the priority for the survey, but observers were encouraged to record other species of waterbirds (wildfowl, divers, grebes, cormorants, shags, herons and egrets) within each section of coast, including birds on the sea adjacent to the coast and in inland areas visible from the coast, as well as those birds using the intertidal shore. The numbers of birds using these three different habitats were to be recorded separately.

The sections of coast to be surveyed were based nationally on a representative sample of count sections covered in past surveys. The selected count sections were prioritised, with a number of “key” sections constituting the minimum level of survey coverage required, and with other sections to be surveyed if sufficient observers were available. Because all sections of the Sussex coast had been surveyed in 2006-2007 it was the aim with this current survey for all sections to be surveyed again.

Grid references were provided for the start and end points of each of the sections to be covered. These grid references specified precise locations indicated by observers taking part in the original Winter Shorebird Count in 1985, who were asked to base the limits of their count sections on identifiable features such as rock outcrops and piers. As a consequence of this method of section definition, the actual lengths of the count sections varied.

Observers were requested to walk each count section in good weather conditions and ideally commencing on a falling tide, and wherever possible to walk well down the intertidal area to facilitate the counting of waterbirds feeding at the water edge. All waders and other birds using the count section were to be counted, and instructions were given to minimise the possibilities of double counting due to movements of birds. Waterbirds on the sea directly offshore from the count section were to be counted, as far offshore as the observer was confident in identifying them. Waterbirds using inland areas were to be counted if they were within 100 m of the high-water mark. Observers were also asked to record the state of the tide during each survey, and also the level of accuracy of the counts (dependent on disturbance, weather conditions and the proportion of each count section that it was possible to access).

Results and discussion

A total of 45 count sections were surveyed along the Sussex coast. Most of these sections were consecutive (with gaps where there are river estuaries and harbours), and the sections varied in length between 1 and 7 km, with an average length of 3.9 km. Most of the sections were 3-5 km in length, and the total length of coast surveyed was 175 km. Exactly the same sections were surveyed as in 2006-2007.

With the exception of one count section along Shoreham Beach which was surveyed on 20 December 2015, all of the count sections were surveyed during the period 5-30 January 2016. Many observers reported low count accuracy, either because of disturbance on the beaches or because of restricted access to the beaches caused by unsafe cliffs.

The counts of intertidal waders for each count section are given in Table 1. Eleven different species of wader were recorded. Also given in Table 1 are the counts of Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* and Red-breasted Mergansers *Mergus serrator* observed on the sea off each count section. Counts of all other species observed in the intertidal area, on the sea and in the inland area visible from the coast are available from the Sussex Ornithological Society database but are considered to be of limited significance.

Table 1. Counts of waders observed in the intertidal area for each count section, and counts of Great Crested Grebes and Red-breasted Mergansers observed on the sea off each count section.

| | OC | SS | RK | RP | TT | CU | DN | PS | GV | BA | BW | GG | RM |
|------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|----|------|----|-----|----|----|-----|----|
| Total | 947 | 498 | 60 | 38 | 616 | 67 | 1031 | 3 | 217 | 1 | 2 | 319 | 9 |
| West Wittering | 4 | 18 | | | | | 4 | | 4 | | | | |
| East Wittering | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bracklesham Bay | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Selsey Bill | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Selsey E Beach | 79 | | 39 | | 162 | 1 | 170 | | 79 | | | | |
| Pagham Beach | 8 | | 2 | | 17 | | | | 8 | | | | 5 |
| Bognor | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Felpham | 1 | 25 | | | 4 | 6 | 2 | | 1 | | | | 4 |
| Elmer | 10 | 10 | | | 40 | | | | 10 | | | | |

| | OC | SS | RK | RP | TT | CU | DN | PS | GV | BA | BW | GG | RM |
|------------------|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|----|
| Littlehampton | 16 | 89 | | | 26 | | | | 16 | | | | |
| Rustington | 19 | 101 | | | 43 | | | | 19 | | | | |
| Ferring | 24 | 34 | 1 | 4 | 51 | | 25 | | 24 | | | | |
| West Worthing | 5 | 181 | | 13 | 35 | | 207 | | 5 | | | | |
| East Worthing | 2 | | | | 1 | | | | 2 | | | | |
| Lancing | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Shoreham Beach | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Southwick | 1 | | | | 4 | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Portslade | | | | | 5 | | | | | | | | |
| Brighton | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black Rock | 12 | | | | 5 | | | 2 | 12 | | | | |
| Rottingdean | 12 | | | 6 | | 1 | | | 12 | | | | |
| Telscombe | 11 | | | | | 3 | | | 11 | | | | |
| Peacehaven | 5 | | | | | 3 | | | 5 | | | | |
| Newhaven | 7 | | | | 2 | 14 | | 1 | 7 | | | | |
| Seaford | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Seaford Head | 18 | | | | | 9 | | | 18 | | | | |
| Cuckmere Haven | 4 | | | | | | | | 4 | | | | |
| Birling Gap | 7 | | | | | 3 | | | 7 | | | | |
| Beachy Head | 14 | | | | | 2 | | | 14 | | | 16 | |
| Eastbourne (W) | 10 | | | | | 1 | | | 10 | | | 2 | |
| Eastbourne (E) | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Sovereign Hbr | 2 | | 2 | 15 | 15 | | 25 | | 2 | | | 1 | |
| Pevensey Bay (W) | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | |
| Pevensey Bay (E) | | | | | 13 | | | | | | | 4 | |
| Bexhill | 1 | | | | 16 | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Galley Hill | 8 | | | | 91 | | | | 8 | | | 25 | |
| St Leonards | | | | | 21 | | | | | | | | |
| Hastings | | | | | 23 | | | | | | | | |
| Hastings CP | 12 | | | | | 5 | | | 12 | | | 1 | |
| Fairlight | 38 | | | | | 3 | | | 38 | | | 20 | |
| Cliff End | 245 | | | | | 8 | | | 245 | | | 144 | |
| Pett Level beach | 143 | | 5 | | 16 | 8 | 76 | | 143 | | | 101 | |
| Winchelsea Beach | 88 | 10 | | | 2 | | 330 | | 88 | | | | |
| Rye Hbr beach | 112 | 1 | 4 | | | | 191 | | 112 | | 2 | 5 | |
| Camber beach | 24 | 29 | 7 | | 20 | | 1 | | 24 | 1 | | | |

OC, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*; SS, Sanderling; RK, Redshank *Tringa totanus*; RP, Ringed Plover; TT, Turnstone; CU, Curlew *Numenius arquata*; DN, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*; PS, Purple Sandpiper; GV, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*; BA, Bar-tailed Godwit; BW, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*; GG, Great Crested Grebe; RM, Red-breasted Merganser.

These counts are directly comparable with those from the 2006-2007 survey, but there are no earlier comparable counts of the entire coast because neither the original 1984-1985 national Winter Shorebird Count nor the 1997-1998 NEWS were undertaken fully in Sussex. For many of

these species the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) provides some comparisons and at several locations the high-tide roost counts of the WeBS will include the same birds as counted in NEWS. The WeBS, however, is not a consistent and reliable survey for birds feeding offshore. For a selection of the most significant species a comparison of the results of the current survey with the 2006-2007 NEWS results and a more detailed discussion of the results are presented below, and Table 2 shows the counts for these six species at coastal sites during the core WeBS count in January 2016.

Table 2. *The numbers of six species recorded at non-estuarine coastal sites in the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) in January 2016.*

| | RM | GG | OC | RP | SS | TT |
|-----------------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|-----------|
| Total | 2 (22%) | 63 (20%) | 47 (5%) | 32 (84%) | 35 (7%) | 223 (36%) |
| West Wittering | | 6 | 16 | | | 8 |
| Pagham Hbr beach | | | 21 | 3 | | 104 |
| Climping Gap | | | 1 | | 20 | 77 |
| Goring Beach | | | | 28 | 15 | 11 |
| Lancing and Shoreham | 2 | | 4 | | | 7 |
| Newhaven | | | 1 | | | |
| Cuckmere Haven | | | 3 | 1 | | |
| Glyne Gap (Bexhill) | | 24 | | | | |
| Pett Level beach | | 33 | 1 | | | 16 |

RM, Red-breasted Merganser; GG, Great Crested Grebe; OC, Oystercatcher; RP, Ringed Plover; SS, Sanderling; TT, Turnstone. Next to the total for each species is the percentage counted at coastal WeBS sites compared with the NEWS counts.

Red-breasted Merganser

The total of just nine Red-breasted Mergansers recorded by the NEWS was most unexpected, and indeed the 128 recorded during the 2006-2007 NEWS was considered lower than anticipated (see Figure 1). Thomas (2014) showed that this species occurs mainly in West Sussex and significant numbers occur offshore between Ferring and Worthing; the record count for Sussex of 340 in November 2004 was from this site. The numbers visible from the shore do fluctuate considerably and in January 2016 the highest of several counts on this section of coast was just eight and the peak count for the entire winter was 44, considerably lower than the average peak winter count of 143 for the preceding ten winters.

Great Crested Grebe

Figure 2 shows that most Great Crested Grebes were recorded from the East Sussex coast with nearly 300 recorded between Bexhill and Rye. Although this number was well short of the 1286 recorded in January 2011 it is not far below the average peak winter count of 537 for the ten winters leading up to this survey. Thomas (2014) showed a rise in numbers wintering off this section of coast but also showed substantial numbers found offshore between Worthing and Ferring. This 2015-2016 survey recorded none along the entire West Sussex coast, and indeed none were recorded from the Worthing area throughout January 2016 although in March 2016 there were up to 125 recorded, a figure still lower than the ten-year average peak winter count from this coastal stretch of 276 birds.

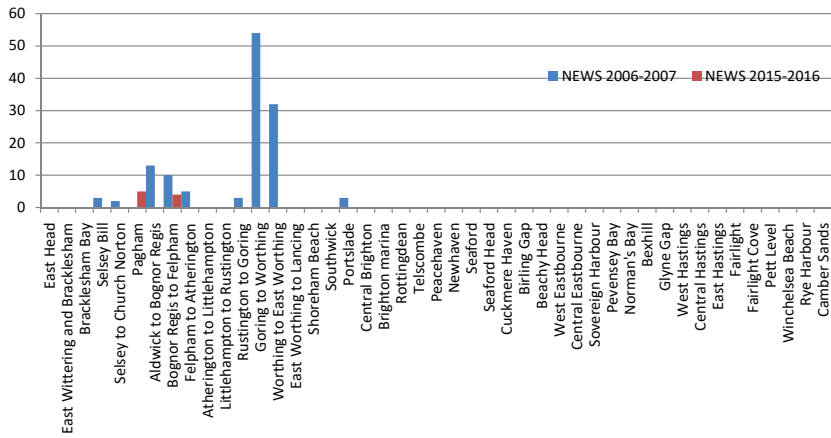


Figure 1. The numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers counted in each NEWS section of the Sussex coast during the winters of 2006-2007 (blue) and 2015-2016 (red).

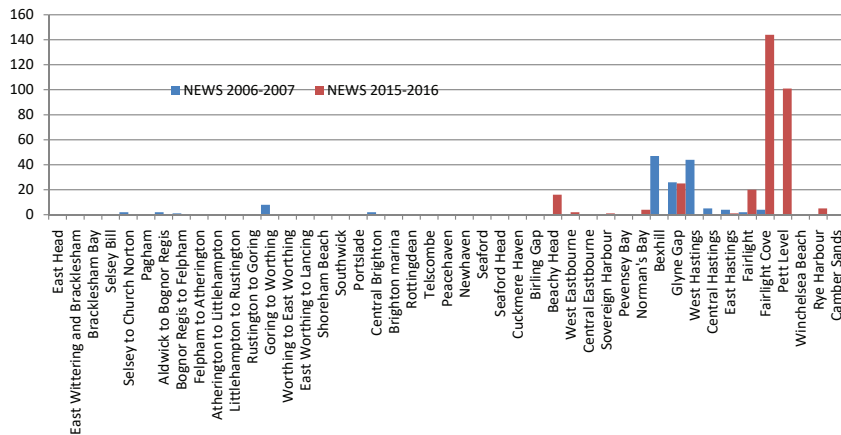


Figure 2. The numbers of Great Crested Grebes counted in each NEWS section of the Sussex coast during the winters of 2006-2007 (blue) and 2015-2016 (red).

Oystercatcher

Oystercatchers were the second most-recorded species during this survey and were found on more sectors of coastline than any other species. As with the 2006-2007 NEWS most birds were found in East Sussex with 70% occurring east of Hastings (see Figure 3). Likewise the total recorded in the 2015-2016 survey was almost the same as the 943 found in the 2006-2007 survey. Results from the WeBS show that the wintering population in Sussex has remained steady for at least the last four decades with the five-year average peak winter counts close to 2000 birds (Thomas 2014). The 2006-2007 and 2015-2016 NEWS surveys also support the view that the Sussex winter population remains steady.

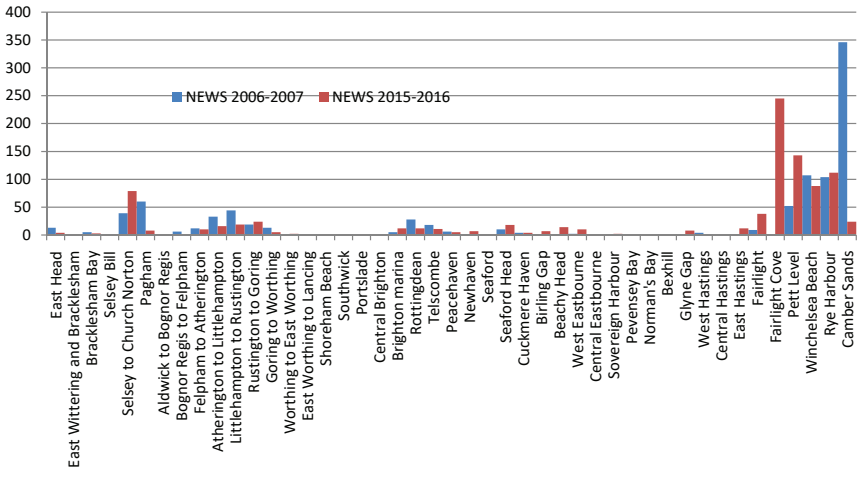


Figure 3. The numbers of Oystercatchers counted in each NEWS section of the Sussex coast during the winters of 2006-2007 (blue) and 2015-2016 (red).

Ringed Plover

Just 38 Ringed Plovers were recorded from four sections of coast which was a marked decline from the 240 encountered in 11 sections in the 2006-2007 NEWS (see Figure 4). There were very few coastal tetrads in West Sussex where this species was not recorded during Bird Atlas 2007-2011 fieldwork (Thomas 2014) but clearly Ringed Plovers were absent from most during January 2016. Newnham *et al.* (2007) demonstrated, using the WeBS data, a clear decline in the wintering population of this species since the early 1990s. This decline has continued with the most recent averages of peak winter counts of 350 (winters 2009-2014) and 338 (winters 2014-2018) being the lowest recorded. During January 2016 the species was recorded on at least 15 days at Goring with a peak count of 153 on 25 January.

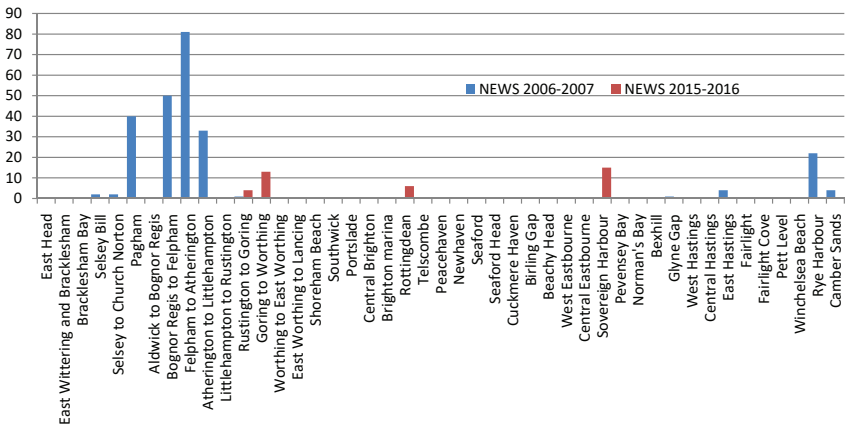


Figure 4. The numbers of Ringed Plovers counted in each NEWS section of the Sussex coast during the winters 2006-2007 (blue) and 2015-2016 (red).

Sanderling

Sanderlings are typically found on sandy shores and are most reliably encountered west of Lancing and between Rye and Camber. Figure 5 clearly shows this and demonstrates that the species was recorded in the same coastal sections in both the 2006–2007 and the 2015–2016 NEWS. Overall the total of 498 in 2015–2016 was slightly lower than the total of 613 in the 2006–2007 survey with the greatest reduction from Camber Sands; indeed along the West Sussex coast there was a 15% increase from the previous survey. Based on the perhaps unreliable WeBS counts, the Sussex wintering Sanderling population is slowly declining (Thomas 2014), and is continuing to fall with the most recent averages of peak winter counts of 207 (winters 2009–2014) and 220 (winters 2014–2018) being the lowest recorded. Clearly the NEWS records higher figures and is probably a more reliable survey for monitoring this species.

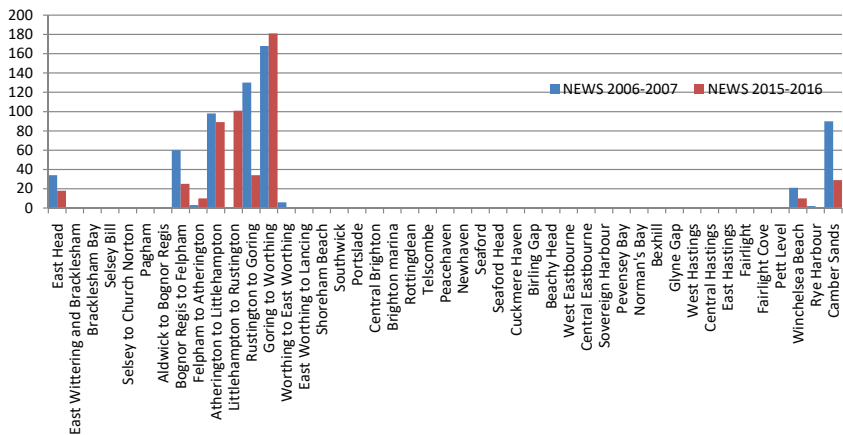


Figure 5. The numbers of Sanderlings counted in each NEWS section of the Sussex coast during the winters of 2006–2007 (blue) and 2015–2016 (red).

Turnstone

The Bird Atlas 2007–2011 winter fieldwork showed that Turnstones could be found along most of the Sussex coast apart from shores under the chalk cliffs (Thomas 2014). This pattern is reproduced in Figure 6 which also shows Selsey beach and Glyne Gap as the two sites with the highest numbers. Although the species was recorded in 25 coastal sections the total of 616 was 36% lower than the 959 found in the 2006–2007 survey. Over half of the total were found on sections of the coast not close to a WeBS site so are unlikely to be included in the monthly WeBS counts which makes this survey a useful means to monitor the winter population of this species. The WeBS five-year means of maxima tabulated in Thomas (2014) show some fluctuations but the most recent averages of peak winter counts of 856 (winters 2009–2014) and 508 (winters 2014–2018) suggest a decline in winter numbers in line with the finding in the 2015–2016 NEWS.

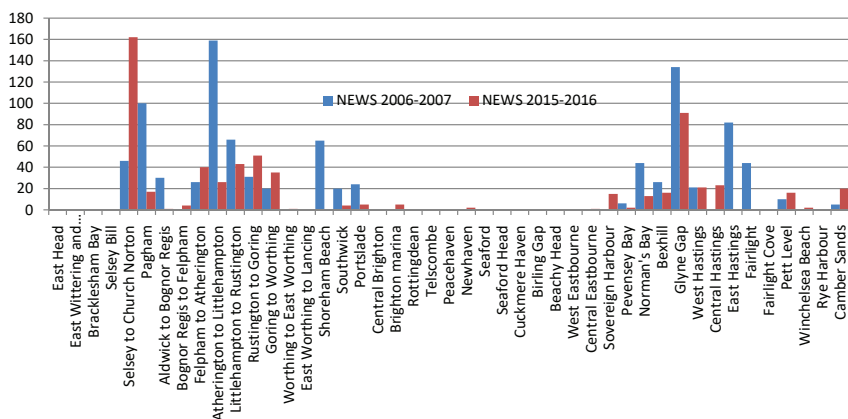


Figure 6. The numbers of Turnstones counted in each NEWS section of the Sussex coast during the winters of 2006-2007 (blue) and 2015-2016 (red).

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to the observers involved in this survey: Guy Michelmores, Ed Rowsell, Graham Hughes, John Bryant, Alan Buckle, Helen Crabtree, Andy Burns, Marc Shaw, Andrew Smithen, Steve Gilbert, Richard Cowser, Stephen Simpson, John Newnham, David Mutters, Richard Fairbank, Dave Boddington, Alison Giacomelli, Colin Brooks, David West, Nevil Hutchinson, Mark Wright, Joanne Chattaway, Peter Calladine, Nicky Caldwell, Chris Davis, Neil Greenaway, Richard Butler, Richard Bown, Chris Barfield, Christine George, Mike Russell, Alan Parker, Phil Jones, Patrick Bonham. Helen Crabtree and Dave Boddington organised the fieldwork in West Sussex and East Sussex, respectively.

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The Sussex winter Rock Pipit survey 2016 - 2017 and 2017 - 2018

Clare Buckle and Helen Crabtree

Introduction

In the winters of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, the Sussex Ornithological Society conducted a county survey of Rock Pipits *Anthus petrosus*. The aims of the survey were to provide information about winter population numbers of this species, which had not previously been surveyed in Sussex or nationally and for which only casual records were previously available, and to investigate the different habitats used by this species in Sussex.

Survey method

Volunteer surveyors were asked to choose a linear stretch of coast, or the edge of an estuary or harbour or tidal river, with a defined length of at least 1-2 km, and to make two or more visits between 1 November 2016 and 28 February 2017. They were asked to divide their chosen stretch into sections based on general habitat types, and to estimate the length of each section. The habitat categories to be used were as follows: (1) rocky shore; (2) sandy beach; (3) intertidal mud; (4) beach with pebbles/cobbles; (5) beach with boulders; (6) saltmarsh; (7) other (to be specified). Additionally, surveyors were asked to state whether the habitat was backed by cliffs or not.

During each visit, volunteers walked the entire length of the chosen stretch and counted the number of Rock Pipits seen in each of the habitat sections.

No request was made to survey at high or low tide, except for stretches below cliffs, where surveying during a falling tide was required for safety reasons. Surveys could take place at any time during daylight hours, but avoiding periods of heavy rain or strong wind.

The initial survey period ran from 1 November 2016 to 28 February 2017, but subsequent to this, because of the small numbers of Rock Pipits detected, and the possibility of the 2016-2017 winter not having been representative, it was decided to repeat the survey for a second winter. The second survey period ran from 1 October 2017 to 28 February 2018 and the survey methods used during this period were unchanged, the earlier start date being chosen in response to casual reports of October birds in the previous year.

A small number of the Rock Pipits wintering in Sussex may be Scandinavian Rock Pipits *A.p. littoralis*, but as this subspecies is very difficult to separate from nominate birds *A.p. petrosus* in winter plumage, volunteers were not asked to identify the Scandinavian birds.

Results

In the 2016-2017 survey period 28 surveyors covered a total of 110 km of coast and estuary/harbour/river edges; the total lengths of the main habitat types surveyed are shown in Figure 1. There were no stretches surveyed that were classed as sandy beach; very short distances were classed as beach with boulders and other habitat types including marina breakwater, promenade, clifftop and saline lagoon. Volunteers made up to three visits to each stretch; Figure 2 shows the maximum number of Rock Pipits observed in each stretch (not adjusted for the length of each stretch) on any one visit during the survey period. Figure 3 shows the number of Rock Pipits found in each of the main habitat types (using the maximum count during the winter for each stretch surveyed), adjusted for the total distance of that habitat type surveyed.

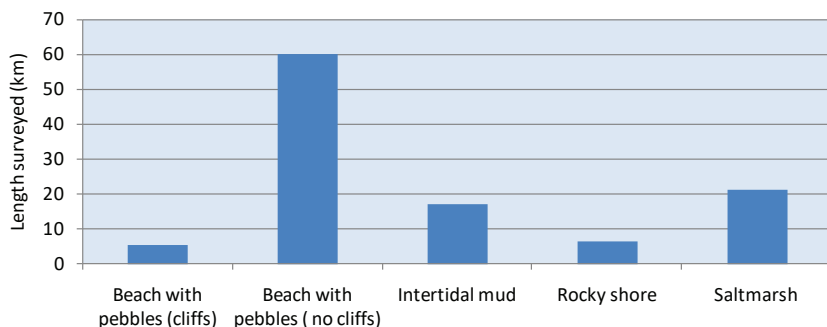


Figure 1. The total lengths of the main habitat types surveyed in the 2016-2017 winter period.

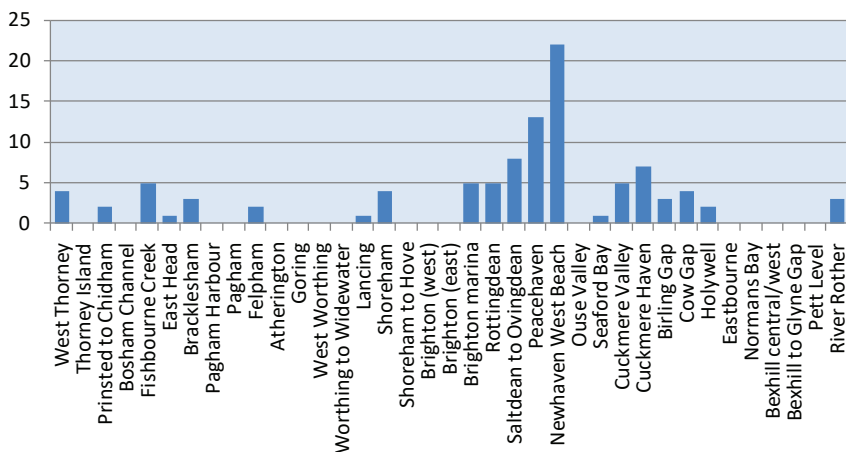


Figure 2. The maximum numbers of Rock Pipits observed in each surveyed stretch on any one visit during the 2016-2017 survey period.

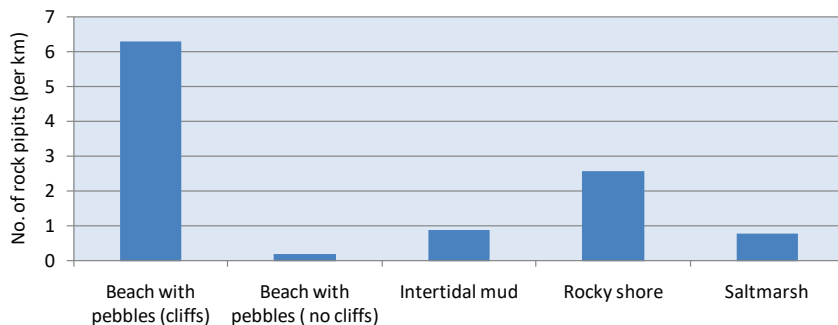


Figure 3. The number of Rock Pipits found in each of the main habitat types (using the maximum count during the 2016-2017 winter for each stretch surveyed), adjusted for the total distance of that habitat type surveyed.

These results should be considered in the light of the relatively short distances surveyed of some habitat types, and the small numbers of Rock Pipits found during many of the surveys. Of the main habitat types, the habitat type with the highest density of Rock Pipits was beach with pebbles backed by cliffs, with 6.3 birds per km observed, although one particularly high count of 18 Rock Pipits on a stretch of beach backed by cliffs at Newhaven West Beach will have significantly affected this result. Although the 60 km surveyed of beach with pebbles and no cliffs made up the majority of the habitat surveyed during the 2016-2017 winter, this habitat held the lowest density of Rock Pipits, with 0.2 birds per km observed.

In the 2017-2018 survey period 26 surveyors covered 101.2 km of coast and estuary/harbour/river edges; the total lengths of the main habitat types surveyed are shown in Figure 4. Many of the stretches were the same as those covered in the 2016-2017 survey period. As with the first survey period, there were no stretches surveyed that were classed as sandy beach, and very short distances were classed as beach with boulders and other habitat types including marina breakwater, promenade, clifftop and saline lagoon.

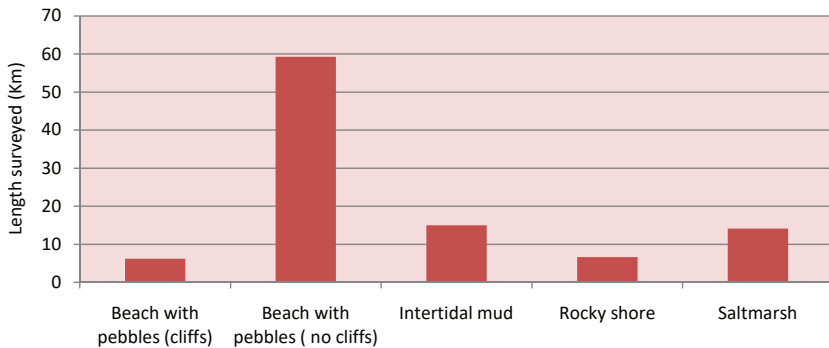


Figure 4. The total lengths of the main habitat types surveyed in the 2017-2018 winter period.

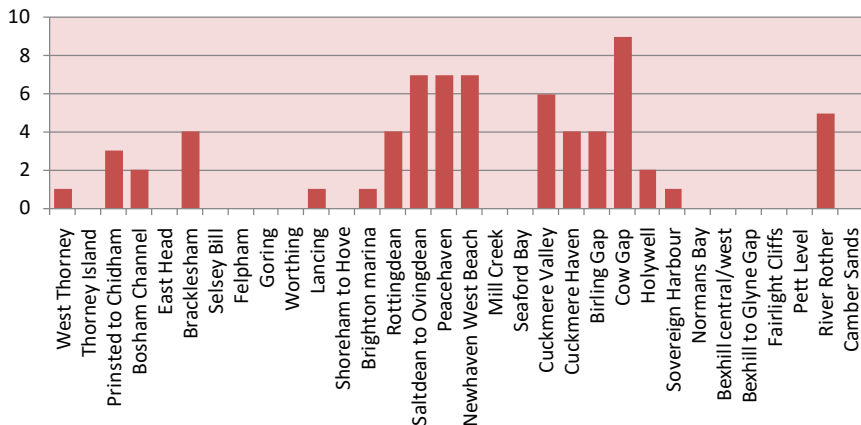


Figure 5. The maximum numbers of Rock Pipits observed in each surveyed stretch on any one visit during the 2017-2018 survey period.

Figure 5 shows the maximum number of Rock Pipits observed in each stretch (not adjusted for the length of each stretch) on any one visit during the survey period. Figure 6 shows the number of Rock Pipits found in each of the main habitat types (using the maximum count during the winter for each stretch surveyed), adjusted for the total distance of that habitat type surveyed.

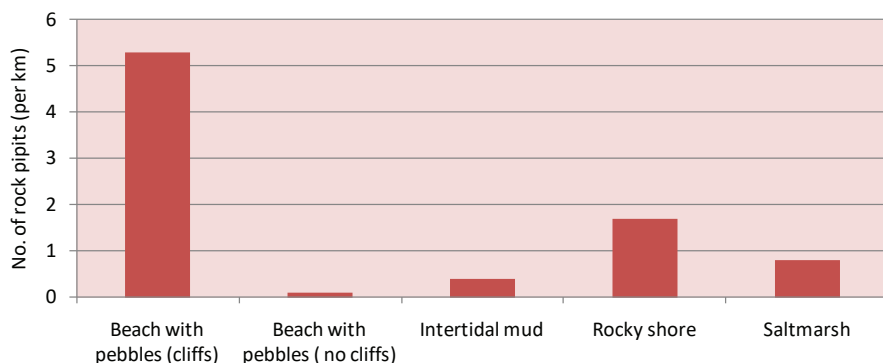


Figure 6. *The number of Rock Pipits found in each of the main habitat types (using the maximum count during the 2017-2018 winter for each stretch surveyed), adjusted for the total distance of that habitat type surveyed.*

These results are similar to those found in the 2016-2017 survey period. Of the main habitat types, again the habitat type with the highest density of Rock Pipits was beach with pebbles backed by cliffs, with 5.3 birds per km observed. The habitat type with the lowest density of Rock Pipits was again beach with pebbles and no cliffs, with 0.1 birds per km observed.

Discussion

Rock Pipits breed on rocky shores in Sussex in small numbers and these breeding birds are thought to be resident throughout the year (Shrubbs 1976), but the winter population of this species in Sussex is thought to be supplemented by the arrival of winter visitors along the coast from October to March. Previously the only information available about winter populations has been from casual records, with no formal surveys having been undertaken other than winter atlas surveys assessing distribution and relative abundance. In this current survey, Rock Pipits were counted along non-overlapping stretches of coast with defined lengths, although the entire length of the coastline was not surveyed and not all potentially suitable areas of estuary and harbour and intertidal river habitat were surveyed. If the maximum numbers of Rock Pipits observed in each stretch (not adjusted for the length of each stretch) on any one visit during the 2016-2017 survey period (as shown in Figure 2) are added, this gives a possible minimum population during the 2016-2017 winter of 100 birds. The same calculation for the 2017-2018 survey period (using the data shown in Figure 5) gives a possible minimum population during the 2017-2018 winter of 68 birds. These are considered to be minimum populations due to the potentially suitable habitat that was not surveyed and the possibility of missed birds along the stretches that were surveyed (although there is also the possibility of double-counting due to mobility of birds along the coast). The length of the non-estuarine coastline in Sussex is 175 km, of which approximately 75 km was surveyed for Rock Pipits in both 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 and these distances included most of the rocky shore and beaches backed by cliffs. Most of the coastline that was not surveyed is beach not backed by cliffs, and based on the numbers of Rock Pipits found in this habitat type in this survey (0.1-0.2 birds per km) there were probably very few birds missed along the coastline

that was not surveyed. The amounts of saltmarsh and intertidal mud not surveyed are difficult to estimate. Thomas (2014) suggests a minimum wintering population in Sussex averaging 71 birds (using only casual records), ranging between 43 birds in 2003-2004 and 101 birds in 1997-1998. These winter population numbers derived from casual records over many years are in line with the results of the current survey, suggesting that perhaps casual records are a reasonably reliable means to assess winter Rock Pipit numbers in Sussex.

Besides allowing the simple estimation of winter numbers of Rock Pipits in Sussex, the current survey provides information on the numbers of Rock Pipits observed in different habitats, although for some habitat types the numbers of Rock Pipits observed were so small as to make any conclusions difficult. The main findings of the survey (for both winter survey periods) are that the highest densities of Rock Pipits are found on beaches with pebbles that are backed by cliffs and on rocky shores, and that significant numbers of Rock Pipits are also found in areas of saltmarsh and intertidal mud in estuaries and along rivers; the long stretches that were surveyed of beaches with pebbles not backed by cliffs hold very small numbers of Rock Pipits in the winter. These findings are consistent with the winter relative abundance map shown in Figure 7 which is derived from the fieldwork for the Bird Atlas 2007-2011 project (Newnham and Crabtree 2012; Thomas 2014); most Rock Pipits are found in Sussex in the winter along the more rocky coast with cliffs between Brighton and Eastbourne, with very few being found elsewhere except for in estuaries and along intertidal river edges.

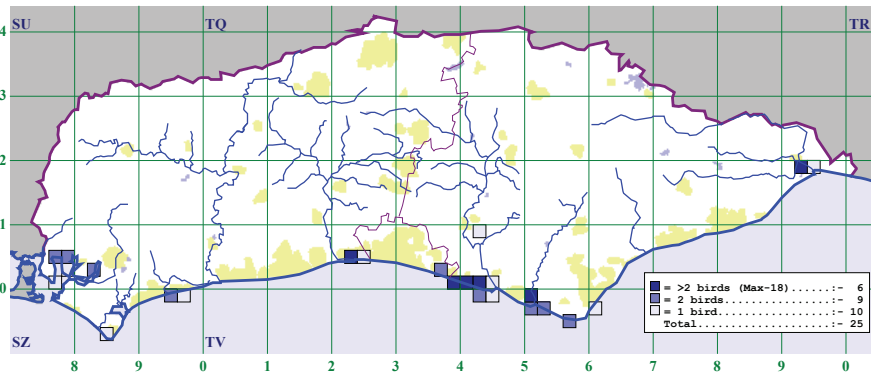


Figure 7. *The relative abundance of winter Rock Pipits in Sussex during the winters 2007-2008 to 2010-2011 inclusive.*

The numbers of surveys carried out by volunteers in each month over both winter survey periods varied (there was no requirement for volunteers to conduct surveys in every month of the survey periods) so it is difficult to compare the numbers of Rock Pipits recorded in each month, but the survey results suggest that Rock Pipit numbers may have been higher in October/November and again in February and lower in December and January. A review of historical casual records from the Rye Bay area saw a similar pattern (Bonham 2018), with autumn and spring peaks in numbers and lower numbers in December and January. It is possible that numbers are higher in autumn and spring due to the presence of passage migrants.

Conclusions

The survey of Rock Pipits in Sussex during the winters of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 found a minimum winter population of 100 birds in 2016-2017 and 68 birds in 2017-2018 although not all areas of potentially suitable habitat were surveyed. The highest densities of Rock Pipits were found on beaches with pebbles that are backed by cliffs (6.3 birds per km observed in this habitat type in the 2016-2017 winter and 5.3 birds per km in the 2017-2018 winter) and on rocky shores, and significant numbers of Rock Pipits were also found in areas of saltmarsh and intertidal mud in estuaries and along rivers; the long stretches that were surveyed of beaches with pebbles not backed by cliffs held very small numbers of Rock Pipits (0.2 birds per km observed in this habitat type in the 2016-2017 winter and 0.1 birds per km in the 2017-2018 winter). Further work in the future that involves more systematic surveys at regular intervals throughout the winter, perhaps focused on coastline stretches of rocky shore and beach with pebbles backed by cliffs, would be useful to provide more information on monthly changes in winter Rock Pipit numbers in Sussex.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to the 35 observers who took part in this survey and who are identified in the list of contributors. Further thanks are due to Rob Hukin and members of the Sussex Ornithological Society scientific committee for helpful comments.

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Rock Pipit, Peacehaven, 4 May (Chris Barfield)

Photographers' Gallery



Melodious Warbler, Beachy Head, 23 August (John Cooper)



Water Rail, Arundel WWT, 24 December (Richard Allan)



Savi's Warbler, West Rise Marsh, 11 May (Gary Faulkner)



Pied Flycatcher, Beachy Head, 4 August (Roger Charlwood)



Cattle Egret, Paghham Harbour, 16 September (Dorian Mason)



Firecrest, Arundel, 24 February (Gary Faulkner)



argentatus Herring Gull, Newhaven, 5 November (Matt Eade)



Ruff, Pett Level, 15 September (Tim Squire)



Red Kite, Lewes, 28 September (Tim Duffield)



Goldfinch, Sussex, 3 June (Christopher Hobden)

Unusual Records

All records of the unusual species listed below are required to be considered by the Records Committee and it may be assumed that those published in the annual Sussex Bird Report have been fully authenticated. The treatment of species and subspecies reflects the decision by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee to adopt the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) World Bird List with effect from January 2018.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Whooper Swan | Temminck's Stint | Red-rumped Swallow |
| Taiga Bean Goose | White-rumped Sandpiper | Willow Tit |
| Pink-footed Goose | Buff-breasted Sandpiper | Arctic Warbler |
| Tundra Bean Goose | Pectoral Sandpiper | Greenish Warbler |
| American Wigeon | Red-necked Phalarope | Pallas's Leaf Warbler |
| Green-winged Teal | Grey Phalarope | Radde's Warbler |
| Ring-necked Duck | Lesser Yellowlegs | Dusky Warbler |
| Lesser Scaup | Pomarine Skua (not spring) | Wood Warbler |
| Surf Scoter | Long-tailed Skua | Barred 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 |
| Purple Heron | Sabine's Gull | Dipper |
| White Stork (not released birds) | Ring-billed Gull | Bluethroat |
| Glossy Ibis | Caspian Gull | Red-flanked Bluetail |
| Red-necked Grebe | Iceland Gull | Red-breasted Flycatcher |
| Honey-buzzard | Glaucous Gull | Citrine Wagtail |
| Black Kite | Alpine Swift | Richard's Pipit |
| White-tailed Eagle | Bee-eater | Olive-backed Pipit |
| Montagu's Harrier | Hoopoe | Water Pipit |
| Rough-legged Buzzard | Red-footed Falcon | Common Rosefinch |
| Corncrake | Golden Oriole | Twite |
| Spotted Crake | Red-backed Shrike | Common Redpoll |
| Crane | Woodchat Shrike | Parrot Crossbill |
| Stone-curlew | Chough | Serin |
| Black-winged Stilt | Hooded Crow | Lapland Bunting |
| American Golden Plover | Penduline Tit | Cirl Bunting |
| Kentish Plover | Shore Lark | Ortolan Bunting |
| Dotterel | Short-toed Lark | Little Bunting |

In addition, descriptions are required for all races other than the normally occurring one including: Black Brant, 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.

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.

What are the benefits of being a member of the SOS?

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.



Visit our website www.sos.org.uk for the latest bird sightings in Sussex, and information about the society and how to join us.

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Contributors and Acknowledgements 2018

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| DP Parish ^C | R Platt ^T | M Redford | C Rose ^S |
| N Park ^{BCFT} | D Plummer | A Redman | C Rose-Smyth ^U |
| A Parker | J Plumstead ^X | A Redman ^T | K Roszkowska |
| M Parker ^X | AH Podmore | I Redman ^X | MM Roterman |
| G Parkes ^{WU} | S Pont ^T | B Reeve ^H | P Rouse ^T |
| S Parmenter | CR Poole ^{BCT} | J Reeve ^X | H Rowe |
| TW Parmenter | NJN Pope | JP Reeves ^{TX} | J Rowland ^X |
| G Parry | L Popley ^T | R Reeves | S Rowledge ^X |
| R Parsons ^W | RF Porter | R Regan ^X | LP Rowlinson ^T |
| F Partridge ^X | DA Potter | A Reglar ^T | E Rowsell ^{TW} |
| J Partridge | C Powell ^X | A Reid ^T | RSPB ^T |
| RA Pask | I Powell ^X | RF Rettke-Grover ^T | SJR Rumsey |
| M Patterson ^X | J Powell ^X | G Reynolds ^T | L Rusbridge ^T |
| PN Paul ^T | J Power ^X | T Reynolds | C Russell ^T |
| E Paxton ^U | G Prater | A Rice ^D | I Russell ^X |
| D Payne ^T | J Preece ^T | H Richards ^S | MG Russell ^R |
| M Peacock | HDV Prendergast ^{BCT} | JP Richards ^T | MJ Russell ^{CFT} |
| R Peck ^T | J Price ^{SX} | K Richards ^X | SA Russell ^{BDT} |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ND Rutherford ^{BCRW} | R Sherrington ^C | T Starnes ^X | A Timms ^E |
| S Ryan ^{BO} | G Sherwin ^X | S Starr ^U | PA Tinning |
| T Ryder ^X | EM Shilland ^T | G Steedman-Jones ^X | PC Tinning ^X |
| E Sabin ^X | I Shulgina ^U | L Stevens ^B | P Tinsley-Marshall ^X |
| D Sadler ^X | Y Simmonds ^T | P Stevens ^{WX} | P Toe |
| D Salgud ^T | OJ Simms ^U | PR Stevens ^T | D Tombling ^X |
| E Salmon | K Simon ^{TX} | S Stevens ^C | A Tomlinson ^T |
| MJ Salmon | T Simon ^{TX} | P Steyning ^X | J Tomlinson |
| E Sandvig ^U | J Simons | A Stocker ^T | MP Toms ^X |
| M Sang ^X | RN Simpson ^T | N Stonestreet ^{DT} | K Tondeur ^X |
| D Satchell ^X | SP Simpson ^{BCRTW} | PJ Strangeman ^B | EF Tooth |
| D Saunders | T Simpson ^{TX} | J Street ^T | M Townsend ^T |
| G Saunders ^T | AC Sims ^T | S Streeter ^O | T Townsend |
| M Saunders ^B | D Singer ^U | P Stuart ^X | W Townsend ^T |
| S Savage ^S | PA Sketch ^T | S Stuart ^F | L Tozer |
| K Say ^S | AJ Skinner ^W | DJ Stuppel ^T | Trektellen ^T |
| A Scarlett ^T | C Skinner ^D | J Stylianou ^T | S Trenery ^T |
| D Scott | J Smallwood ^T | Sussex Peregrine Study | G Trew ^W |
| S Scott ^T | P Smart ^X | CD Sutton ^T | S Trice |
| M Scott-ham ^{BFHT} | B Smethurst ^X | CJ Sutton | V Trinkwon ^X |
| L Scragg ^X | A Smith ^X | P Sutton ^T | E Tristram ^X |
| AM Seabrook ^T | D Smith | S Sutton ^{HX} | M Tristram ^X |
| R Searles ^X | KW Smith ^{BORT} | JL Swallow ^T | M Tristram ^X |
| CM Seaton ^{BU} | L Smith ^{ORT} | O Swan ^X | P Trodd |
| G Segelbacher ^U | M Smith ^W | I Swann ^X | CE Trollope ^{HT} |
| B Self ^T | PA Smith ^T | P Swaysland ^T | JE Trowell ^W |
| RC Self | PG Smith ^T | R Swift | L Trownson ^X |
| RJ Senior ^W | R Smith ^D | WIE Tagg ^X | L Trueman |
| MV Sennitt ^X | S Smith ^W | F Tait ^X | M Turner ^W |
| E Serpis | AC Smithen ^{BCFRTW} | G Tana ^X | RM Turner ^T |
| K Sexton ^T | R Snaith ^S | K Tarrant ^U | JTM Turner-Moss ^T |
| M Shaft ^H | D Sneller | K Taylor ^T | J Turton ^X |
| N Sharma ^X | TG Snow ^{BC} | LJ Taylor ^T | MH Turton ^T |
| P Sharman ^X | S Solliss ^X | P Taylor | G Turvey ^{BO} |
| M Sharp ^T | CR Somers | RA Taylor | D Tutt ^T |
| PJ Sharp ^T | J Somerville | SR Taylor ^W | C Twitchen ^T |
| C Sharpe | F Southgate ^X | S Teale ^X | HL Twizell ^B |
| ? Sharpin ^T | L Southgate ^X | M Temple ^W | D Tyler ^T |
| MD Shaw ^{BCHTW} | M Southon | S Thackray ^X | P Tyler ^T |
| CR Sawyer | M Sowden ^X | RD Thomas ^{BCT} | M Usher ^X |
| AJ Shearman ^T | K Sparks ^U | T Thomas ^{BDFTWX} | A Utting ^X |
| C Sheer ^X | D Spensley ^T | A Thompson ^T | S Van-Orden ^X |
| P Sheer ^X | P Spiers ^W | J Thompson ^X | M Varvill ^X |
| M Sheldon ^{DX} | GC Spinks ^U | PP Thompson ^U | D Vaughan ^X |
| A Sheppard ^X | CD Spooner ^T | PS Thompson | J Vaughan ^X |
| A Sheppard | T Squire ^{CDTX} | T Thorneycroft ^T | C Veale ^T |
| P Shergold ^X | G Stacey ^T | D Thorns ^T | D Verrall ^X |
| I Sheriffs ^T | T Stachnicki ^T | P Thornton ^W | C Vince ^W |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| C Vine ^W | R Watson | JH Whitman | I Wiltshire ^B |
| D Wagland | RF Watson ^T | K Whitton ^X | JS Winder |
| N Walford | C Webb | M Wiggins ^T | R Wingfield ^X |
| D Walker ^W | N Webb | Wildcall Recorder ^X | MP Winkworth ^T |
| S Walker ^X | R Webb ^T | J Wilder | J Wolsey-Cooper |
| S Walker ^U | PJ Webster ^{TUX} | P Wilder | JM Wood ^X |
| R Wallace ^T | S Webster | G Wilkerson ^W | R Wood |
| ? Waller ^T | S Weeks ^X | A Wilkes ^T | T Wood ^T |
| SS Walls ^T | S Weir ^W | C Wilkinson | P Woodall ^U |
| S Wallsgrove ^X | M Welcome ^W | G Wilkinson | CD Woodcock ^T |
| P Walsh | PJ Wells | J Wilkinson ^T | K Woodhouse |
| SF Walsh | AJ Wende ^T | M Wilkinson ^X | V Wood-Mewett ^B |
| B Walter ^X | A West ^{BCST} | J Wilks ^X | V Wood-Mewton ^{COT} |
| LA Walther ^{TX} | DR West ^{CRT} | A Williams | M Woods ^O |
| R Walton ^{RX} | R West ^T | AJ Williams | K Woolner ^{DT} |
| A Ward ^X | JD Weston ^{TW} | DC Williams | I Woolsey ^H |
| B Ward ^X | K Weston | KA Williams ^T | JA Worrall ^F |
| G Ward ^X | S Whincop | M Williams ^T | L Wren |
| N Ward | S Whitbread ^X | D Williams-Jones ^T | GMV Wright ^{BCDOTW} |
| S Ward ^X | P Whitby ^X | RLC Williamson ^W | G Wright ^U |
| L Wareham ^X | PJ Whitcomb ^{TX} | N Willis ^X | J Wyatt ^X |
| N Warne ^B | G White ^T | J Willmott ^X | M Yallop ^X |
| M Warren | M White | A Willoughby ^X | BJ Yates ^{HW} |
| J Warwick | R White ^F | J Willsheer | B Yeoman ^X |
| N Warwick ^{CT} | R White ^S | HMV Wilsdon ^S | P Youlten ^X |
| MD Washington ^W | G Whitehead | AR Wilson ^T | C Young ^U |
| A Wasik ^X | CA Whiteman ^R | B Wilson ^X | R Young ^U |
| T Waters ^{HW} | S Whiting ^O | G Wilson ^T | S Younger ^{TW} |
| D Watkins ^{BX} | AM Whitman | KDP Wilson | D Zinzen ^X |
| AB Watson | J Whitman ^X | S Wilson ^S | |

| | |
|----------|---|
| 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) |
| F | Firecrest Survey |
| H | Heronry Census |
| O | Tawny Owl Survey |
| R | Rock Pipit 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 are due 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, 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 128 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 2018 by Christine George (sussex.wbs@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 107 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 42 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 ten observers involved who are indicated by ^E in the list of contributors.

Firecrest Survey: This county survey was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and the 43 participants are indicated by ^F in the above table.

Heronry Census: This long-standing national census was organised in Sussex during 2018 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.

Rock Pipit Survey: This county survey of wintering Rock Pipits which was conducted during the two winters 2016/17 and 2017/18 was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and the 35 participants are indicated by ^R in the above table.

Tawny Owl Survey: This BTO national, sample survey was conducted during the autumn of 2018 and replicated similar studies done in 1989 and 2005. The fieldwork in Sussex was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and the 46 participants are indicated by ^O 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 (bhsparrows@gmail.com) and for the Swifts by the late John Cuthbert (BHSwifts@rspb.org.uk) and the 39 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 128 counters who are indicated by ^W in the list of contributors.

Coordination 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 Pilsley Islands from CB Collins; Medmerry and Pagham Hbr from IM Lang; 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 386 observers (marked ^X in the above table).

For the third year, records from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (eBird) have been included, and involved observations from 84 recognised recorders each labelled **U** in the contributors table. Additionally there were 134 eBird observers whose records could only be identified by a code. Likewise the 33 contributors recording important records through iNaturalist could not be recognised to be individually acknowledged.

The on-line recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 500 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a ^T in the above table. The records from Birdguides and Trektellen for 2018 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 the detailed records from 230 Garden BirdWatch participants. Thanks also to 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.

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Blackbird, Beachy Head, 26 February (Roger Charlwood)



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