

SUSSEX ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Sussex Bird Report



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Sussex Ornithological Society

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Sussex Bird Report 2018 –amendments and corrections

A number of errors in the 2018 report were brought to the Editor's attention. In general, details of the more significant of these and any additional records for the previous years can be found under the relevant species in the Systematic List.



The tern colony at Rye Harbour, 22 May (Barry Yates)

Photographs

It was with great enthusiasm I accepted the role as photo editor for the SOS Bird Report, this 2019 report being my first. My wish was to continue to uphold the excellent standard of photography that features in our annual report, which seems to get better year on year! Of course this is only possible through the kind submission of photographs from our members and birders from within the wider community in Sussex. I realise the time and care taken to select your work and then submit it is often great. With that in mind I'd like to thank every single person who took the time to do so, without you our report simply wouldn't be possible.

Despite the very high standard of submissions this year it is unfortunately not possible to include every image, so even if your photos didn't make it in this year please keep sending them in for future reports. I also felt it would be good to widen the scope in this report to include more artwork, and upon request many artists sent work in for consideration, which was fantastic. Again, a big thanks to all those who did.

I look forward to receiving the next round of photographs for the 2020 report and hope that despite the challenges this current year has forced upon us, collectively we will be able to produce a report as complete and impressive as in previous years. (Laurence Pitcher).

Cover photo: Dotterel, E Sussex, 30 April (Bob Eade)

Welcome to the 72nd edition of the Sussex Bird Report.

Having served as the Sussex Bird Report editor for five years, this the 2019 version, is my last. It has been a rewarding and instructive exercise but I have remained amazed by the tremendous help and advice I have received from the Editorial Team and many others throughout my tenure. Specific acknowledgements are given below.

The main change that readers will notice is to the species order in the Systematic List and to certain scientific names. This arises from the updates published on the IOC website (IOC World Bird List (V10.2)) which are auto-adopted by the BOU and is expected to be formally published in the BOURC's annual report in December 2020. One repercussion of this is that we lose Subalpine Warbler from the Sussex List since, although this is now split into Eastern and Western species, none of the Sussex records have currently been identified to the new species level. No new full species was recorded in 2019 and the list stands at 404. However, we do include Finders' Reports for Crag Martin (4th Sussex record), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (3rd), *blythi* Lesser Whitethroat and Northern Treecreeper (first confirmed records for these subspecies, see pages 217-221). These were compiled by Roger and Liz Charlwood, Robert Lawson, Laurence Pitcher and David Campbell respectively. The 2019 Report is based on 402,950 records from 1704 observers and covers 264 species. Note that the Bird Report only considers records on the Society's database, and with unusual records (See page 253) accepted by the Records Committee.

Conservation is of vital interest to the Society as our data is increasingly important in responding to planning application issues. We have therefore added to the species status statements an indication of those considered rarest and most threatened and listed under Section 41 of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act. This is in addition to the colour coded red and amber Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (BOCC 4). Again, we emphasise the importance of observers submitting records with the most precise grid reference possible, and evidence of breeding is especially valuable.

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 are acknowledged at the end of this Report. John Newnham as Database Manager digested the records, removed duplicates, and together with Mark Mallalieu, 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, R Black, D Boddington, C Brooks, C Buckle, D Burges, MJ Chattaway, J Curson, MC Daniel, C Davis, M Eade, GD Evans, J Franklin, D Green, AC Gutteridge, WG Harvey, JA Hobson, PK Holland, A House, DH Howey, G Hughes, BGR Ives, P James, ME Kalaher, M Mallalieu, JA Newnham, M Orchard-Webb, GA Osbourne, TW Parmenter, PJ Plant, AH Podmore, K Roszkowska, A Rowe, T Seabrook, K Smith, L Smith, A Thomas, G Turvey, AB Watson and JH Whitman. The authors of each species are identified at the end of every account.

Primary proof reading and checking the numbers was shared between Joanne Chattaway, John Hobson and Graham Hughes. Many thanks for their diligence. Owen Mitchell provided additional useful suggestions. All the editorial team then conscientiously read through the accounts and made corrections and recommendations for improvements, additions and amendments. Further

clarification came from people promptly responding to enquiries about surprising or ambiguous records. I am particularly grateful to John Newnham for his perceptive final review of all the accounts, and to Mark Mallalieu for guidance through the minefield of scientific names and species status. Matt Eade extracted the highlights, arranged chronologically as the Review of the Year (see page 6). 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 Laurence Pitcher assembled an impressive number of magnificent photographs taken in Sussex in 2019 and suggested a selection to be included in the Report to enhance the Systematic List and other available space. Thanks go to all providing images and to Laurence and Rob Yarham for designing the front cover. I am indebted to Stephen Message (www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk) and Jan Wilczur (www.artnorfolk.co.uk/jan-wilczur.html) for their superb artwork.

Ken Smith and Penny Green have provided papers on the breeding of Turtle Doves in Sussex in 2019 and Herons at the Knepp Estate, and Helen Crabtree, Christine George, Alan Perry and John Newnham provided survey tables. John Newnham produced the maps and Val Bentley the Ringing Report. Rob Yarham produced the cover.

Chris Barfield typeset the whole Report, and Graham Hughes provided invaluable insights throughout its production.

Finally I must acknowledge the help and professionalism of Neil Pennells of our printers, Cliffe Enterprise of Eastbourne. Please do not forget our loyal advertiser Swarovski Optik.

I hope you will enjoy and be informed by the Report. If you would like to join the many splendid volunteers listed above and contribute in any way to future Sussex Bird Reports please contact breditor@sos.org.uk.

Abbreviations			
AON	Apparently occupied nests	o/s	offshore
BBRC	British Birds Records Committee	R	River
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	Res	Reservoir
BGBW	Big Garden Bird Watch (RSPB)	RG	Ringing Group
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology	RS	Ringing Station
BOU	British Ornithologists Union	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
CP	Country Park	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Fm	Farm	SWBS	Sussex Winter Bird Survey
GBW	Garden Bird Watch (BTO)	WeBS	Wetland 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
IUCN	Int. Union for the Conservation of Nature	ha	hectares
LNR	Local Nature Reserve	hr	hours
MP	Mill Pond	km	kilometres
mo	many observers	m	miles
NR	Nature Reserve	N,E,S,W	compass points

Opposite: Stonechat in winter, by Jan Wilczur



Review of 2019

Matt Eade

A total of 264 species was recorded in 2019 compared to 262 during 2018. The most remarkable, yet sad finding, was of a deceased **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** in Seaford on 2 Oct, found during a spell of transatlantic vagrants making landfall in the far west of England. **Black Storks** were found on three dates during the summer, but probably relating to only two individuals. A **Pallid Harrier** at Beachy Head was the county's third record and the first away from The Burgh, and a **Crag Martin** at the same site was the fourth for the county and the third for the Beachy Head area. A **Squacco Heron** at Pagham Hbr was a popular bird and attracted many admirers over a period of ten days, whilst two **Ring-necked Ducks** and a drake **Ferruginous Duck** were species that had not been recorded for many years in the county (2007 and 2001 respectively), and a total of 28,809 **Gannets** passed Selsey Bill, setting an annual county record.

Various exciting species continued their stay into 2019 from the previous year. The **Hume's Warbler** first found in December at Newhaven remained until 30 Jan, while nearby in Seaford the moulting **Rose-coloured Starling** was also seen throughout the month. The pair of **Whooper Swans** around the Scotney GP complex were seen up until 12 Jan only, whilst other noteworthy wildfowl were the two **Pink-footed Geese** in the Ouse Valley that continued their stay well into the year. The well-watched **Hooded Crow** at Medmerry continued to prove elusive during a stay that lasted into March, but one of the ornithological highlights of this period was the number of **Cattle Egrets** at Pagham Harbour, with a maximum of 26 seen on a couple of occasions – such an abundance hinting at imminent breeding attempts! Lastly, the trio of **Twite** at Rye Hbr were seen frequently throughout this winter period and into spring.

January to March

January was rather variable, with a few sunny days among often overcast and windy spells. From the 30th a very cold snap with frosts and snow lasted until 3 Feb. There were some very strong south-westerly winds with rain over the following week, but thereafter mild weather with some frosts overnight followed by a remarkably warm spell at the end of the month that brought record-breaking temperatures to the UK. The first half of March was dominated by extremely windy and often wet conditions, but the rest of the month was calmer with milder and sunny weather.

On 1 Jan a **Crane** soared over Arundel WWT, and the next day the first of only ten **Little Stints** this year was at Pulborough Brooks, and a **Red-necked Grebe** off Worthing on the 3rd had a prolonged stay. The first **Ring-necked Duck** in the county since 2007, a female, spent just one day at West Rise Marsh on the 8th, associating with a small group of **Tufted Ducks**. A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** at Newhaven Harbour on the 12th was suspected to be the same bird seen at West Rise Marsh and the Cuckmere Valley over the following few days, and a **Black Guillemot** off Selsey Bill on the 19th was probably the same individual seen there on 1 Feb. **Great Grey Shrikes** were especially scarce, but one at Balcombe on 3 Jan and numerous sightings of an individual on Ashdown Forest were clearly different birds.

WeBS data throughout January revealed interesting numbers of wildfowl: **Brent Geese** had almost halved in Chichester Hbr compared to 2018, with 8721 counted. Wildfowl had a mixed winter, though those exceeding the 10-year average (2009 to 2018) were **Pintails** (549) and **Gadwalls** (1077), with 521 of the latter in Rye Bay. A superb count of 2100 **Cormorants** off Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 21 Jan was a new county record, while offshore on the same date were 424 **Great Crested Grebes**. Large wader gatherings during this period consisted of 5279 **Lapwings** in Rye Bay during February, including 2540 at Pett Level on the 17th, though 3000 at Pulborough Brooks on the



Ring-necked Duck with Tufted Duck, West Langney Lake, 8 January (Matt Eade)

11th was the largest single-site record throughout. Although **Dunlin** gatherings in Chichester Hbr were down from 2018, a count of 11,442 is still remarkable. However, **Turnstone** numbers were also down, with WeBS surveys during the first winter period showing a 38% and 32% reduction in January and February's 10-year average respectively. Bewl Water held a substantial number of roosting **Common Gulls** (44,130 on 9 Feb and 38,000 on 7 Mar) and **Black-headed Gulls** (25,200 on 26 Jan and 20,420 on 9 Feb), whilst large gatherings were also noted at other inland water bodies, namely Arlington and Weir Wood Reservoirs.

The only scarce 'grey goose' seen was a **Tundra Bean Goose** at Scotney GP on 3 Feb. At Selsey Bill 2000 **Gannets** were recorded offshore and three **Cattle Egrets** were at the Knepp Estate, an excellent local record; another brilliant inland record involved a first-winter **Caspian Gull** at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Feb. Other noteworthy sightings over the coming days included a **Puffin** off Birling Gap on the 12th and a **Red-necked Grebe** off Selsey Bill on the 16th and 17th (a **Whooper Swan** was also there on the 17th). A **Glossy Ibis** at Cuckmere Haven on 28 Feb showed well to many until 4 Apr feeding on the flooded fields; a **Glaucous Gull** at Camber and a **Caspian Gull** at Medmerry on 2 Mar were both notable – the latter is still a rare encounter in the far west of the county.

For the first three weeks of March the Cuckmere Valley was particularly productive for pipits, with a minimum of four **Water Pipits** and seven **Scandinavian Rock Pipits**. At West Rise Marsh wintering numbers of **Water Pipits** peaked at six in February and at Combe Valley CP there were up to four in January. A **White-tailed Eagle** over West Dean Woods on 7 Mar was surprisingly not seen elsewhere and a **Hooded Crow** at Cuckmere Haven remained for eight days from the 14th. **Red-necked Grebes** were at Newhaven Hbr on the 17th and Felpham on the 22nd and a **Stone-curlew** was recorded at night on 22/23 Mar. Remarkably, the second **Ring-necked Duck** of the year

(a drake) was at Rye Harbour on the 27th, remaining until 6 May. A minimum of four **Common Redpolls** at Balcombe on 28 Mar, after one nearby on 23 Jan, may well have been only a small percentage of the numbers actually present within these extensive mid-Sussex woodlands.

Towards the end of the month many summer migrants had already reached Sussex shores, including the first **Common Terns** and **Arctic Skuas** past Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford). A **Northern Wheatear** at Pagham Harbour on the 8th and a **Sedge Warbler** at Pett Level on the 21st were earlier than the 10-year average arrival dates, and **Willow Warblers** were scattered throughout the county, though numbers were generally low. A **Whinchat** at Goring Gap on the 31st was seven days earlier than the average arrival date.

April to June

After some frosts early in April, there was a hot spell until the last week, when it was cooler with some strong winds and rain before a warmer last three days. There was a cold snap with some frosts in early May followed by fine and often warm weather over much of the rest of the month, though there were some overcast and rainy days as well. The first days of June were hot, but cooler weather followed with heavy rain in the second week, before warmer days returned in the second half of the month, including a "scorcher" on 29 Jun when temperatures exceeded 30 °C.

Other returning summer migrants included two **Garden Warblers** on 1 Apr at St. Leonards Forest, a 'reeling' **Grasshopper Warbler** at Beachy Head and **Common Redstarts** at Pagham Hbr and Climping on the 2nd, a **Tree Pipit** at Ashdown Forest on the 5th, a **Reed Warbler** at Pagham Hbr on the 7th and a **Cuckoo** at Burgess Hill on the 8th. As is typical for this period, many scarcities were found throughout the county: **Black Kites** over Wakehurst Place and Wiston on 10 and 28 Apr respectively were typically short-lived encounters, as was a **Purple Heron** at West Rise Marsh that departed early on 14 Apr; a **Kentish Plover** at Cuckmere Haven on the same date was a great local record too.

A pair of **Black-winged Stilts** at Rye Hbr for four days from the 17th had the potential to be a breeding pair, that was until they departed! Two **Cranes** over Mayfield on the 20th and Pevensey the next day, then a **Serin** at Selsey Bill from the 22nd until the 24th continued the scarcity theme, while a **Subalpine Warbler** (not ascertained to species level but thought to be 'Western') at Beachy Head on the 26th was sadly a brief encounter. A **Red-rumped Swallow** at West Rise Marsh on the 28th was another typical April bird, and the same site hosted a **Blue-headed Wagtail** on the same day; though most unexpected was a drake **Surf Scoter** off Selsey Bill on the 30th, that despite flying east, could not be located from other coastal watchpoints.

Seawatching during this period was relatively poor. On 5 Apr 955 **Sandwich Terns** flew past Splash Point and **Red-necked Grebes** (perhaps just one individual) were seen off Selsey Bill, Rustington and Goring on a number of dates during the month. **Puffins** were seen off Selsey Bill on the 4th with two at Splash Point on the 13th, where 101 **Little Gulls** also passed on the 19th. On the 22nd the first decent south-easterly wind triggered the first good numbers of **Pomarine Skuas** past Splash Point and Beachy Head, with totals of 13 and 17 respectively. Into May, further **Pomarine Skuas** were seen from the typical seawatching sites, with a high count of 37 on the 16th at Selsey Bill and 19 at Splash Point. On 8 May, in heavy rain and favourable winds, 1940 '**Commic**' **Terns** and 76 **Black Terns** flew past Splash Point; the latter species included a single flock of 36 birds! An unseasonal **Puffin** was taken into care from Brighton Beach on 23 May, and lastly, five **Balearic Shearwaters** flew past Selsey Bill on the 24th, where **Storm Petrels** had another poor turnout, with just one bird on 18 May.

Exciting birds turned up throughout May, starting with a **White-tailed Eagle** over Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the first two days of the month. **Wood Warblers** were at Beachy Head on the 3rd and



Black Stork, Knepp, 18 May (Andy Leslie)

Cuckmere Haven on the 18th and further **Blue-headed Wagtails** were at West Rise Marsh on the 3rd and 4th and Goring Gap on the 23rd. A **Night-heron** flew over Waltham Brooks and a **Red-rumped Swallow** was at Litlington on the 5th, **Bee-eaters** at Winchelsea (15th) and Beachy Head (18th and 23rd) and **Golden Orioles** at Windmill Hill (15th), Medmerry (22nd) and Black Down (25th) were typical May sightings. **Black Storks** over the Knepp Estate on the 18th and Fernhurst on the 21st probably related to the same bird; a pair of **Black-winged Stilts** were at Pulborough Brooks on the 21st, but by far the rarest bird of the spring was a **Crag Martin** that spent a short time at Beachy Head on 23 May, though it was witnessed by only two fortunate observers!

A **Long-tailed Skua** off Selsey Bill on 2 Jun made the seawatching efforts for the spring worthwhile, but inland on the 4th, a remarkable record came in the form of a singing **Melodious Warbler** at Butcherland SWT, making up for no autumn records this year. A brief **Squacco Heron** at Pagham Harbour on the 11th was thankfully re-located in August. A **Red-necked Phalarope** at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Jun remained until the following day and a female **Montagu's Harrier** at Medmerry on the 23rd rounded off this period. A singing **Wood Warbler** at Black Down from 2 to 20 Jun brought hope that this former breeding site would be re-established, but unfortunately no females turned up this year.

July to September

There was a long period of hot weather in July, interspersed with a few rainy days, and a heatwave with temperatures in excess of 30 °C from the 22nd to the 25th. The other notable feature was a south-westerly gale on the 30th, when winds exceeded 45 mph. August started hot and sunny, but from the 5th the weather was more variable with a very strong south-westerly gale on the 10th. There was a record-breaking very hot spell from the 21st to the 27th and the rest of the month remained sunny. After a sunny and warm start, September was cool and wet until another sunny and warm spell in the middle of the month. Rainy and windy weather followed including very strong winds on the 27th and 29th before a mild and still last day.



Squacco Heron, Pagham Harbour, 3 August (Andrew Wilkes)

At least three pairs of **Stone-curlews** fledged young within the South Downs National Park, whilst other notable county breeders were; a minimum of six pairs of **Honey-buzzards**, 21 pairs of **Goshawks**, five pairs of **Marsh Harriers**, six pairs of **Long-eared Owls**, but sadly no **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** nests were located this year. At Pagham Hbr, 21 pairs of **Little Terns** raised 13 fledglings, the sixth successive year of breeding here. A **Ferruginous Duck** at Pett Pools from 13 Jul to 15 Aug was a highlight for many during a period that is generally quiet for rarities. A **Black Stork** and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** were at Pett Level on 14 Jul, the latter remaining to the 18th. A male **Red-backed Shrike** at Pevensey Levels on the 21st was only the fourth July record this century, albeit a very welcome record given how scarce they have become in recent years.

Passerine migration during August peaked on the 8th with 135 **Willow Warblers** at Charleston Reedbed (140 also at Beachy Head), 60 **Sedge Warblers** and 90 **Reed Warblers** also at Charleston Reedbed, and a peak count of 95 **Common Whitethroats** was made on the 24th at Beachy Head. On 20 Aug 33 **Tree Pipits** flew over Highdown (Worthing) and 300 **Yellow Wagtails** were at Pagham Hbr on the 30th. Throughout September, when **Blackcap** migration is at its peak, high daily totals of 285 birds were recorded at Beachy Head on 15 and 30 Sep. Also on 30 Sep, 2000 **Meadow Pipits** flew over Goring Gap, proving to be the highest single-day count record of the autumn.

August was memorable for the **Squacco Heron** that was re-found at Pagham Hbr on the 3rd and remained until the 17th; frequenting the fields around the North Wall, this became the longest-staying Squacco Heron in Sussex, allowing many to view this attractive *Ardeola*. A **Balearic Shearwater** was off Selsey Bill on the 9th and a late **Roseate Tern** nearby at Church Norton on the 12th, when an **Alpine Swift** was found exhausted at Rottingdean. After one at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Aug, coastal **Honey-buzzards** turned up at West Wittering (one on the 24th) and Beachy Head, the latter site enjoying a flock of three wonderful birds on the 23rd that included a superb pale adult female; they returned the next day too. An **Ortolan Bunting** at Beachy Head on the 24th was the only one this autumn, compared to six seen last year. The first **Wryneck** of the autumn was trapped and ringed at Pett Level on 25 Aug, the first of only a small number of these charismatic birds this year, with the majority typically recorded in September.

Two juvenile **Purple Herons** at Pett Level on 26 Aug were more than likely a post-breeding dispersal from the near continent rather than any breeding successes from counties nearby. A juvenile **Montagu's Harrier** remained in the Balsdean area from 26 to 31 Aug – despite spending five days on site, this was a particularly difficult bird to see as it toured the many valleys and hillsides. An adult **Grey-headed Wagtail** at Arlington Res on the 27th only stayed for an evening, and a brief view of a ringtail harrier at Devil's Dyke on the 28th was considered to be either a juvenile **Pallid** or **Montagu's Harrier**. **Wood Warblers** on their autumn migration are often encountered during August, and this year was no different, with four found at the following sites: Portslade (6th), Seaford Head (23rd) and two at Pulborough Brooks (18th and 23rd).

Between 7 and 15 Sep a juvenile **Montagu's Harrier** was roaming the Beachy Head area, but also commuting to as far west as East Dean, frustrating many that tried to intercept the wanderings of this bird. Cuckmere Haven had the first returning **Caspian Gull** on 11 Sep, while the second **Red-necked Phalarope** for the year, remarkably at Pulborough Brooks again, remained for six days. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was in the Ouse Valley on the 14th and remained until the following day, when nearby the first **Dotterel** of the autumn (a superb juvenile) was present on the South Downs; a second bird over Seaford Head on the 19th ensured that this was a better year for this species than recent ones.

A **Pallid Harrier** at Beachy Head was one of the 'birds of the autumn' – originally ringed in Finland and aged as a second-calendar year female, this superb harrier was found on 17 Sep and was last seen the following morning before departing off east. The first of two **Lapland Buntings**



Pallid Harrier, Beachy Head, 18 September (Liz & Roger Charwood)

this autumn was at Pagham Hbr on the 18th, and the second **Pectoral Sandpiper** was at Rye Hbr on the 20th; a **Stone-curlew** on the 22nd, also at Rye Hbr, remained into October and had apparently been present since late August. A juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** at Pagham Hbr lingered until the end of the month, and seawatching peaked towards the end of this period with three **Balearic Shearwaters** off Selsey Bill on the 26th and a **Sooty Shearwater** off Birling Gap on the 29th.

October to December

October was wet, though with some fine days and the first frosts towards the end of the month, with mainly south-westerly winds. Some low-lying areas were flooded, including Cuckmere Haven. November started with a severe south-westerly gale on the 1st. There was a cold spell mid-month with frost overnight and easterly winds and another bright, cold period from the 28th lasting until 4 Dec. Thereafter, it was a mild December, but with exceptionally heavy rainfall especially in the middle of the month, resulting in flooding in several parts of the county including again at Cuckmere Haven.

The undoubted highlight of a quiet October was the county's third **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, sadly found dead near Seaford seafront on 2 Oct – all previous records have also related to deceased birds. There were only three **Yellow-browed Warblers** in the county this autumn, all of which were in October: Pett Level (5th), Sidlesham (19th to 22nd) and Arundel WWT (26th). Single **Sooty Shearwaters** off Goring Gap on 6 Oct and Splash Point on the 11th were welcome records as this is generally a difficult species to encounter. Several **Grey Phalaropes** were seen during the incessant gusty conditions that made seawatching worthwhile: singles at Splash Point on the 11 Oct and Selsey Bill on the 13th; another spent eight days at Cuckmere Haven from the 19th and showed very well – one of their finest traits! Yet another was off Worthing on the 26th. The county's first definite *blythi* **Lesser Whitethroat** was at Birling Gap from 27 Oct to 6 Nov.

Final records in the year for departing summer migrants included a **Turtle Dove** at Pett Level on 5 Oct, two **Garden Warblers** at West Chidham (Chichester) on the 6th, a **Sedge Warbler** and a **Reed Warbler** at Combe Valley CP on the 10th and 17th respectively (the latter also at Pett Level on the 17th), a **Willow Warbler** at both Cissbury Ring and Iford (Lewes) and a **Spotted Flycatcher** at Pett Level on the 15th, a **Pied Flycatcher** and a **Quail** at Beachy Head on the 17th and 20th respectively, a **Tree Pipit** in the Arun Valley on the 17th, a **Hobby** at Pett Level on the 20th, an **Osprey** at Powdermill Res on the 21st, a **Common Redstart** at Cissbury Ring and a **Yellow Wagtail** at Beachy Head on the 22nd, a **Common Tern** off Selsey Bill on the 25th, an **Arctic Tern** off Church Norton on the 26th, a **Common Whitethroat** at Thorney Island and two **Sand Martins** at Beachy Head on the 27th, **Northern Wheatears** at Southease and Hastings CP on the 28th, and finally, a **Whinchat** at Cuckmere Haven on the 30th. Incoming migrants involved a huge movement of **Black Redstarts** in late October, where 150 birds were encountered across the county – the majority were coastal, but individuals were found as far inland as Small Dole and Fletching.

With regular coverage at Pett Level, it is probably right to assume that a **Purple Heron** there on 20 Oct was a different bird than the August individuals. A **Lapland Bunting** on the 22nd at Seaford Head was seen during a spell of calmer weather, the weather that prompted the annual mass migration of **Woodpigeons**, the highest totals coming from Selsey Bill when 12,170 flew over during a six-hour period, also on the 22nd. The rough weather experienced for most of the month was too much for a **Little Auk** that was taken into care in West Sussex on 31 Oct but later died. Into November, another storm-driven individual was taken into care on 21 Nov in Bognor Regis and a **Leach's Petrel** died on 5 Nov, also after being taken into care.

An unseasonal **Serin** was present under feeders at Flimwell for up to 13 days from 12 Nov. Seven **Greater Scaup** off Pett Level on the 15th was a reassuring record for this scarce winter visitor. A **Richard's Pipit** at Medmerry on the 20th was a typically short-lived visit. Finally in November, a **Twite** was at Rye Hbr on the 29th. In December, a **Pink-footed Goose** was in the Cuckmere Valley from the 4th to the 7th and a minimum of two **Glossy Ibises** were found at Iford Brooks, the Brede Valley and Pett Pools. **Caspian Gulls** were again prevalent throughout the early stages of December; Cuckmere Haven held the most records, but other coastal sites, namely West Rise Marsh and Goring Gap, also had regular sightings.

Blackcaps and **Chiffchaffs** were unsurprisingly seen throughout December; however, most surprising was a small gathering of **House Martins** at Battle, which started with an individual on 25 Nov, increasing to four on 2 Dec, and eventually reducing back to one bird on the 31st. There was also a **Barn Swallow** in the Firle/Glynde area throughout December, last seen on the 25th. **White-fronted Geese** returned in relatively large numbers towards the end of the month, with a flock of 100 birds at Pett Level on the 25th, but rather concerningly, only three **Bewick's Swans** had returned to the Arun Valley by the end of the year. Only a single **Smew** was in the county, at Rye Hbr from 4th to 30th, and 11 **Great White Egrets** also roosted there on the 27th.

Finally, WeBS data revealed that the following species surpassed their 10-year average totals in December: 714 **Common Shelducks** (including 382 in Chichester Hbr), 6221 **Teal** (including 2286 in the Arun Valley), 517 **Pintail** (including 359 in the Arun Valley), 979 **Shoveler** (including 294 in Rye Bay), 1528 **Grey Plovers** (including 895 in Chichester Hbr), 10,713 **Lapwings** (including 4457 in Rye Bay), 1562 **Curlews** (including 1246 in Chichester Hbr), 1218 **Black-tailed Godwits** (including 757 at Pagham Hbr) and 2111 **Common Redshanks** (including 1542 in Chichester Hbr). The remaining few days of the year were highlighted by the presence of a **'Northern' Treecreeper** found at Patching on 28 Dec (see finder's account on p.219). Throughout its stay - that lasted to 7 Jan 2020 - it remained mobile and elusive, though its distinctive features made separation from the other Treecreepers relatively straightforward.

Classified Records for 2019

John Newnham

This list covers all species in Categories A and C of the British Ornithologists' Union (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 page 269.

The Category A and C species are listed in the order published in the British List announced by the BOU in December 2020 and follows the International Ornithological Union's (IOU) and IOC World Bird List: Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P., (Eds) 2020. IOC World Bird List (v10.2).

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+

The introductory section for each species also shows those species on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red or Amber list (BoCC4 2015) and those afforded special protection, either being on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) or listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).

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	47	73	126	229	240	52	41	95	110	119	75	60	1267
Worthing & Goring	17	10	19	57	12	7	13	7	7	18	3	6	174
Telscombe Cliffs	25	21	16	43	7	2	3	3	9	10	0	8	145
Splash Point (Seaford)	2	5	20	110	48	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	187
Birling Gap	7	24	19	64	25	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	143

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 2019 the priority core count dates were 20 Jan, 17 Feb, 24 Mar, 21 Apr, 19 May, 16 Jun, 7 Jul, 4 Aug, 15 Sep, 13 Oct, 17 Nov and 15 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 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 2019 records were received from a total of 940 (90%) of the county’s 1039 tetrads. There were reports from 210 different gardens participating in the BTO Garden BirdWatch; 169 1-km squares were surveyed for the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and in the Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) 121 1-km squares were surveyed in the January/February period and 134 in November/December. A total of 121 1-km squares were surveyed for the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI) of which 81 were in Sussex and 40 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.

Yet again a record number of observations have been entered into the database with the total for 2019 being 402,950. The following figure shows there is no sign yet of the number of records starting to plateau.

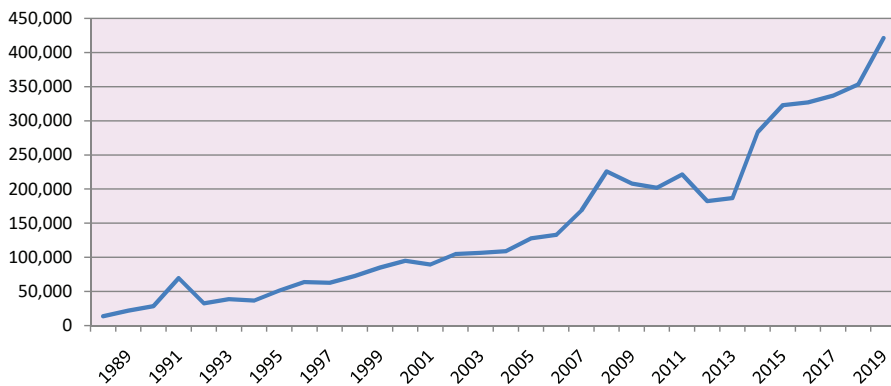


Figure 1. The numbers of records added to the SOS database, 1988-2019.

Nearly 85% of the records come from on-line recording with over 72% originated via the BTO. The number of records from each of the main on-line recording systems and largest contributing county databases are shown in Table 1.

Online recording source name	Records	Other databases source name	Records
BTO Birdtrack data	246,442	Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre	11618
Cornell University eBird	43,326	Ashdown Forest Bird Group	8611
BTO Garden Bird Watch	15,306	RSPB Reserves	6085
WeBS on-line	13,483	WWT Arundel Reserve	5017
BTO Breeding Bird Survey Data	9362	Weir Wood Res Group	3906
iRecord records	6922	Selsey Bill Seawatch Log	3374
Sussex Winter Bird Survey (via Birdtrack)	6508	Rye Hbr LNR records	2856

Table 1. The numbers of records sourced in 2019 from online recording systems (left) and the top other county databases (right)

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 Bird Watch (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).

The records have been provided by 1704 observers excluding those contributing to the WeBS, GBW or via iNaturalist only. Like recent years 72 observers contributed over 1000 records each whilst 363 individuals supplied just a single record.

As usual most records came from the well watched locations such as Chichester Hbr (11,875), Medmerry (5150), Pagham Hbr (20,526), Pulborough Brooks (44,194), Goring Gap (5054), Weir Wood Res (6883), Ashdown Forest (14,179), Pett Level (19,161) and Rye Hbr (17,893). A total of over 141,000 records were received from sites within the South Downs National Park. The coverage of the county was again excellent with 940 (just over 90%) tetrads with at least one record and, as the following map shows, most have more than ten records with the usual pattern of the coastal plain, river valleys and Ashdown Forest being the most intensively watched.

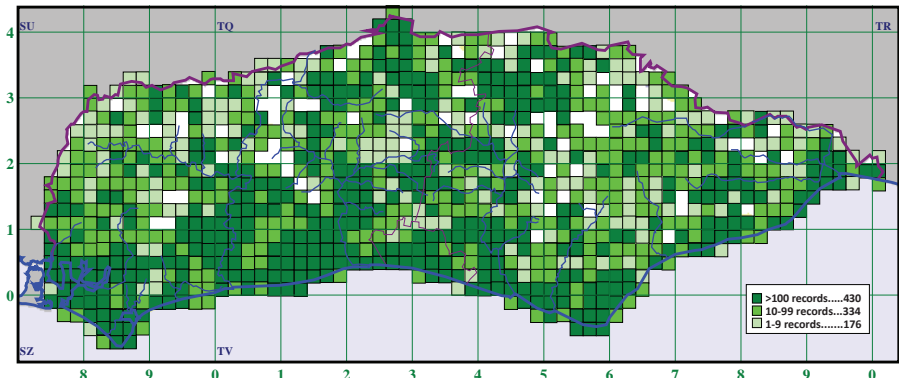


Figure 2. The number of records received for 2019 in each tetrad in Sussex. Dark green symbol, >100 records; mid-green symbol, 10-99 records, pale green symbol, 1-9 records.

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 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. From the conservation viewpoint the 'Gold Standard' would be for all records during the breeding season (April to July) of species of Conservation Concern (Red and Amber) or other designations such as Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) or Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) to have a pin-point 100m grid reference and a breeding status code. The following graph shows the disappointing change in the percentage of records from this very specific group which meet this standard.

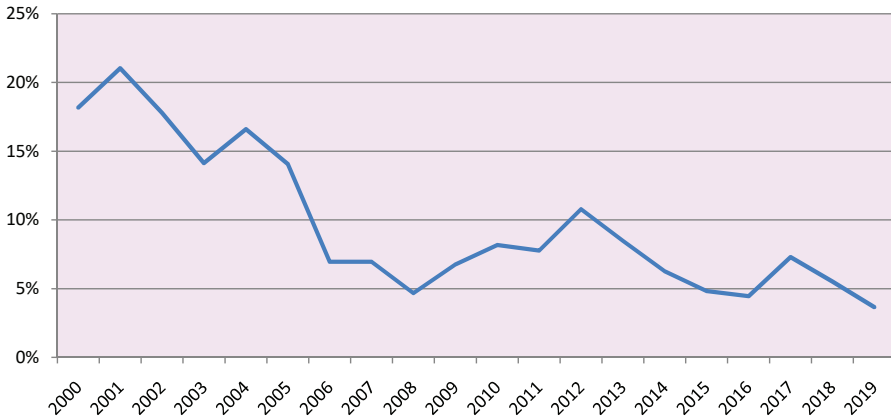


Figure 3. The percentage of records received between April and July (2000-2019) with eight character grid references and a breeding status code for designated species on the Red and Amber list of Birds of Conservation Concern, Schedule 1 (1981) and Section 41 (2006).

For observers using Birdtrack both these recording aspects are very easy to use so the value of the record is markedly enhanced.

With observers encouraged 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 as shown in Table 2. 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	11,456	Great Tit	8685	Mallard	6782	GS Woodpecker	4943
Blackbird	10,711	Goldfinch	8520	BH Gull	6513	Cormorant	4932
Robin	10,691	Herring Gull	8449	House Sparrow	6396	Long-tailed Tit	4777
Carrion Crow	10,381	Jackdaw	7440	Chiffchaff	6321	Blackcap	4731
Blue Tit	9924	Dunnock	6949	Buzzard	6244	Grey Heron	4625
Wren	8753	Starling	6924	Song Thrush	5732	Pheasant	4610
Magpie	8702	Chaffinch	6870	Moorhen	5106	Mute Swan	4299

Table 2. The number of records for the common and widespread species in 2019.

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 2019 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

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



Red Kite, Alciston, 10 April (Peter Brooks)

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

Red-legged Partridges were recorded in 185 tetrads (20%), the largest total in the past decade, although this apparent increase probably reflects the extra recorder effort. There were 55 encounters from 11 squares (9.0%) in the first winter period SWBS with a maximum of 15 at Balcombe. The highest count in the first winter period was 21 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Jan and there were ten other double-figure counts.

In the BBS the sum of the maximum counts was 74 in 25 (15%) 1-km squares with a maximum of 13 on 15 Apr, also at Balcombe. The only count to exceed this until late August was one of 14 at Bepton on 20 Apr.

There were only two records of confirmed breeding, with recently fledged young observed on downland near Burpham on 31 May and 3 Jul. There were eight records of probable breeding. However, discrimination between “wild” and captive bred stock presents problems.

The impact of the release of captive bred stock is apparent from the surge of numbers in the second half of the year. On 18 Nov there was a count of 97 at Balcombe, the highest of 19 counts over 20. In the late year SWBS 87 were observed in 11 1-km squares (8.2%) with the highest count of 23 near St Leonard's Forest on 28 Dec. [PJ Plant]

Grey Partridge*Perdix perdix****Scarce resident; much declined but benefitting locally through conservation effort. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.***

This species was recorded in 64 tetrads (6.8%), a significant improvement on the 44 (4.7%) of 2018, the third best year this decade and higher than the 10-year average of 54 (range 38 to 73).

In the first winter period Grey Partridges were encountered in some 17 broad sites, predominantly, but not exclusively, on downland. The well watched area around The Burgh (Burpham) was particularly favoured, where the highest count of 22 was recorded on 14 Jan. They were also noted nearer the coast on the Selsey Peninsula and at Rye Hbr.

During the spring months Grey Partridges were recorded widely at some 45 sites but with an average count of only 2.7. The highest counts were 15 at Swanborough Hill (Kingston) and ten at Annington (Bramber) on 1 Jun.

Breeding was poorly recorded and was confirmed at only two sites and probable in a further five. Grown young were seen on 3 Aug at both Wepham Down and Rackham Hill. At Rye Hbr four pairs were noted but no young were seen.

Post-breeding, in the autumn and second winter period, there were ten double-figure counts, the highest being 32 at Medmerry on 6 Oct, 31 at The Burgh on 17 Nov, 20 there on 27 Oct and 14 Dec. The average count was 6.8 from some 23 sites across the county. [JA Hobson]

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

Quail were recorded in 19 tetrads, fairly evenly distributed between West and East Sussex. This represents a welcome increase from recent years (five in 2018, eight in 2017, five in 2016). The first record of the year was one on 22 May at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne). Two more arriving

migrants were found on 23 May, one calling from long grass at Newenden, and another calling at Thunders Barrow Hill (Shoreham). Records from Chantry Hill and Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on 28 May could relate to one or possibly two birds. At Telscombe a bird, first heard on the 31 May, was regularly noted calling until flushed on 3 Jun and then heard again on 2 and 12 Jul. Concurrently a calling male was well noted at Medmerry from 1 Jun until 6 Jul. At two other sites, near Cissbury and Steep Down (Lancing), calling Quail were heard on well separated dates. Elsewhere single calling birds were noted at The Burgh (Burpham) on 22 Jun, Ditchling Beacon on 25 Jun, Beeding Brooks on 2 Jul and at Alfriston on 17 Jul.

Late August records were of single birds at Wilmington on the 19th and Seaford on the 26th. One was flushed on 5 Sep at Brighton Wild Park and the final record of the year was of one flushed at Cornish Fm (Beachy Head) on 20 Oct, much later than the previous last date at this site (2 Oct) in both 1977 and 1997. [PJ Plant]

Common Pheasant

Phasianus colchicus

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

Common Pheasants were recorded in 517 tetrads (55 %), virtually identical with 513 (55%) in 2018. However, the major factor influencing the population of this 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). Pheasants were recorded in 25% of the gardens participating in the GBW during the year.

The highest counts in the first quarter were 91 at Angmering Park Estate on 14 Jan, 52 at Cocking on 28 Jan and 17 counts of over 20. There were 307 encounters during the early year SWBS from 50% of the 1-km squares surveyed. In the BBS Pheasants were found in 129 (76%) of surveyed squares, with a maximum of 99 at Binderton (West Dean) on 17 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads and was probable in a further 28. Recently fledged chicks were found at The Burgh (Burpham) on 17 Jun and at Pagham Hbr on 7 Jul. Used nests were reported at Cocking on 13 May and 6 Jun.

Numbers increased in the autumn with post breeding additions and releases from shooting estates, most clearly exemplified by the report of 250 on 15 Oct at Balcombe and another 100 in the adjacent 1-km square and a further 16 counts of 50 or more. During the second winter period SWBS there were 645 encounters in 58% of the 1-km squares surveyed. [PJ Plant]

Brent Goose

Branta bernicla

Very common winter visitor and passage migrant; very scarce non-breeder in summer. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.

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	12,331	10,071	580	97	9	3	6	8	601	4328	11,227	9626
Chichester Hbr	8721	8196	446	21	6	-	6	7	601	4320	8827	8883
Pagham Hbr	3405	1747	132	3	1	1	-	-	-	7	2271	734
Av. County Total 2009-18	12,438	13,731	8903	53	13	10	8	8	285	4816	8794	10,449

Numbers recorded during the January WeBS were in line with the 10-year average, but the county totals for February and March were well below average, and barely half of last year's total.

However, the higher figures recorded at seawatching sites (see below) would suggest a fairly early spring departure.

As usual reports away from the western harbours and their hinterlands were few, though several reports from Climping Gap included a peak of 250 on 20 Jan, whilst 50 on Pett Level on 20 Jan was the only other notable count. Inland birds were few, comprising four at Arundel WWT on 11 Jan and singles on Lewes Brooks on 8 Jan and 15 Feb.

Spring migration started early, with 150 E past Cuckmere Haven on 2 Feb, 130 E past Telscombe Cliffs on the 5th and 355 E past Fairlight on the 8th being the first indications. By mid-month records were almost daily from seawatching sites, though the first big day was 7 Mar, when 687 E passed Beachy Head, though 941 E past Selsey Bill on 16 Mar was the highest count of the spring. There were moderate numbers of eastbound birds passing daily until 22 Apr when 249 E at Splash Point (Seaford) was the best total, after which numbers tailed off very swiftly, with barely 25 birds recorded in May. Summering birds were few, with a maximum of seven in Chichester Hbr and singles on a number of dates in the Pagham Hbr and Rye Bay areas.

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

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec		
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	
Selsey Bill	57	87	468	152	2152	56	2169	3		13	93	87	2472	90	417	363	116
Worthing/Goring	16	19	10	22	558	9	534	-		-	2	4	213	-	6	44	6
Telscombe Cliffs	136	5	699	36	815	22	349	-		2	-	-	68	-	-	2	-
Splash Point	-	-	277	8	205	-	1022	-		nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	-	-	789	-	942	12	1044	1		-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc



Brent Geese, Church Norton, 30 January (Andrew House)

The first returning birds were 121 in Chichester Hbr and one in Pagham Hbr on 19 Sep, with numbers up to 409 at the former site by the 28th. A count of 1490 W past Selsey Bill on 2 Oct was especially noteworthy as return passage numbers are usually low compared to spring at seawatching sites. Numbers built up quite quickly through October and into November, with a count of 4070 at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on 19 Dec being possibly one of the biggest single flocks ever recorded in the county.

In contrast to the first winter period, there were many reports from the Rye Bay area through the autumn of between 20 and 40 birds, but the only inland records were of two at Weir Wood Res on 11 Nov and a single bird on Lewes Brooks on 15 Nov and 16 Dec.

Pale-bellied Brent Goose, *B. b. hrota*

There were seven records of this race, totalling 17 individuals. The first two were seen in Pagham Hbr on 24 Jan, with two at Rye Hbr on 1 Apr and 2 E past Selsey Bill on the 22nd, followed by unseasonal individuals at Cuckmere Haven on 7 Aug and in Chichester Hbr on 13 Sep, this latter being a juvenile. Autumn records consisted of 2 W past Worthing on 2 Oct and 7 W past Selsey Bill and then again briefly at Medmerry shortly afterwards, before they continued west on 17 Nov. [A House]

Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Common introduced resident and partial migrant.

Canada Geese were recorded in 270 tetrads (29%) similar to 268 in 2018 but higher than the 10-year average of 246 (range 219 to 285). The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2003	1593	741	384	372	389	358	1193	4777	2006	3937	1698
Arun valley	50	241	192	116	115	23	10	37	289	439	1512	433
Cuckmere Haven	72	227	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	3	600	280	24
Arlington Res	7	8	5	2	4	19	25	137	2800	20	24	3
Pevensey Levels	317	58	49	5	19	-	nc	188	-	60	291	198
Bewl Water	291	245	8	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	419	23	473	460
Av. county total 2009-18	2499	1446	755	419	349	416	660	1789	2047	2352	2681	2963

The monthly WeBS county totals through the year were very variable compared to the 10-year averages but, overall, suggest a fairly stable population. The biggest counts early in the year were down on last year, but still included peaks of 291 at Bewl Water on 18 Jan, 510 at Pulborough Brooks on 28 Jan and 440 at Cuckmere Haven on 2 Feb.

A total of 37 was recorded flying east and 7 west past seawatching sites, with 15 E past Birling Gap on 18 Apr particularly noteworthy for a species rarely encountered offshore.

Breeding was confirmed in 36 tetrads and probable in a further eight. Sites were spread across the county, but nowhere were there more than two or three pairs in the same vicinity. Post-breeding flocks began assembling from mid-June, at a time when other pairs were still rearing young; 100 were at Chichester GP on the 14th, whilst there were still two pairs with unfledged young at the same location.

Numbers really started to build up from early August, when 250 were at Arlington Res from the 3rd and 288 at Wadhurst Park Estate two days later, with the biggest counts being 600 at Medmerry on the 20th and 500 at Arlington Res on the 31st. Numbers at these two sites peaked in September,

with 750 on the 2nd at the former and 1400 on the 15th at the latter, though both were eclipsed by 2000 at Pulborough Brooks on the 29th, which was the biggest count of the year. At this site counts of 1000 birds were recorded on several dates in the autumn; the only comparable count from elsewhere was 1000 at Cuckmere Haven on 22 Dec. [A House]

Barnacle Goose

Branta leucopsis

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

A flock of c.60 flew in off the sea at Pagham Hbr on 13 Jan and remained until the 16th, when numbers had risen to 125. The arrival of short-staying mid-winter flocks is becoming increasingly regular and possibly relates to the Dutch wintering population. Nine at Rye Hbr also on 13 Jan may have been part of the same movement, though the six that dropped in at Medmerry on 25 Feb in the company of two Cackling Geese probably were not. One flew east past Splash Point (Seaford) on 15 Apr among migrating Brent Geese.

A flock of eight seen off both Birling Gap and Seaford Head on 30 Oct and 24 that dropped in at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Dec could possibly relate to birds of wild origin but more likely fall into the unknowable category.

There were several records of the two well-established naturalised flocks; up to 70 at Barcombe Res from January until 18 Feb and again after 14 Oct, and up to 220 at Scotney GP in all months bar May, July and August. Another half a dozen locations also held odd birds of unknown origin. [A House]

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.

Greylag Geese were recorded in 180 tetrads (19%), an increase on the 174 (18.5%) in 2018, the highest tetrad count this century and much higher than the 10-year average of 145 (range 125 to 157). 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	991	958	527	444	398	552	512	1260	1571	1207	2535	1471
Arun Valley	46	39	40	44	25	5	13	41	124	305	110	110
Upper Adur Levels	3	175	60	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	30	400	30
Weir Wood Res	134	nc	-	-	1	79	72	19	324	52	358	214
Lower Ouse Valley	80	159	45	-	-	57	nc	nc	-	172	22	183
Rye Bay	461	246	209	229	197	296	200	784	11	501	1323	788
Av. county total 2009-18	856	642	376	222	248	417	604	1498	1102	1096	1165	929

The WeBS counts above exceeded the 10-year averages for every month except July and August, as the species continues to thrive in the county, and the November total of 2535 was a new peak for the population. The highest non-WeBS counts early in the year were 500 at Weir Wood Res on 1 Jan, 249 at Weir Wood Res on 2 Jan and 241 on Pett Level on 20 Jan, with 100 at the latter site on 25 Feb, the last treble-digit count of the winter.

Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads and probable in a further four. There were eight broods at Arundel WWT and Combe Valley CP, at least four at Rye Hbr and Henfield Levels and at least three at Chichester GP, though no breeding summary was received for Pett Level, which held 20 pairs in 2018.

A count of 160 at Rye Hbr on 7 Jul signified the start of the post-breeding gatherings at regular sites. Peak counts in August included 590 at Scotney GP on the 5th, 300 on East Guldeford Level on the 9th and 220 at Pulborough Brooks on the 13th. In September peaks were of 309 on Bewl Water on the 13th, 600 at Rye Hbr on the 19th and 420 at Weir Wood Res on the 22nd.

There were some notable autumn counts from a range of sites, with 400 at Henfield Levels, 1000 at Scotney GP on 18 Nov and 508 at Weir Wood Res on 5 Dec, though observers at Ardingly Res, Pulborough Brooks, Pett Level and Rye Hbr all recorded counts of over 200. [A House]

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

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

The two birds that first appeared on Lewes Brooks on 26 Dec 2018 remained in the area until 21 Feb, whilst the only other wild bird was one at Cuckmere Haven from 4 to 7 Dec (SH Linington, M Mallalieu).

What was possibly the same individual that turned up at Pulborough Brooks on 15 May, remaining until the 22nd and again on 30 Oct, was probably of probable feral origin. [A House]



Pink-footed Goose, Pulborough Brooks, 30 October (Juliet Moore)

Tundra Bean Goose

Anser serrirostris

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

The only record for the year was of a single bird at Scotney GP on 3 Feb. (M Casemore, S O'Donnell *et al.*). [A House]

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. Section 41.

In the first winter period the majority were seen in the Pett Level and Rye Hbr area, with up to 30 present in January and a peak of 32 on 27 Feb before the last three departed on 3 Mar. Elsewhere, two were seen at Pulborough Brooks from 13 Jan to 26 Mar.

In the second winter period two flew east over Hastings on 5 and 9 Nov, two were again at Pulborough Brooks from 18 to 24 Dec, and finally 60 were at Rye Hbr and 100 at Pett Level on 25 Dec. [A House]

Mute Swan*Cygnus olor*

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

Mute Swans are one of our most resident species and were recorded in 198 tetrads (21%) this year, 23 more than last year. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal locations were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	451	425	434	362	347	302	260	333	561	593	542	504
Chichester Hbr	109	89	79	128	97	84	84	84	226	244	233	171
Arun Valley (Arundel - L'hampton)	89	56	59	42	15	23	25	22	21	33	26	27
Arun Valley N of Arundel	82	36	40	43	74	48	35	34	32	53	56	31
Eastbourne Lakes	37	37	17	2	nc	nc	8	nc	28	21	29	33
Pevensey Levels	41	71	51	24	44	9	nc	26	32	41	56	57
Rye Bay	15	32	25	35	38	48	25	49	62	45	40	20
Average county total 2009-2018	556	502	452	386	465	453	420	435	557	575	589	601

It is interesting and perhaps alarming that in all months, except September and October, the county totals were below the 10-year averages. Locally though, there were 128 counted in Chichester Hbr in April (compared with 32 last year), while at Rye Bay there were just 38 in May (compared with 128 last year) and 20 in December (compared with 100 last year).

Notable first winter period counts in addition to the WeBS counts included 75 at Winchelsea on 12 Jan, 80 at Rye Hbr on the 19th, 40 at Partridge Green on the 28th, and in February 47 at Rodmell (Ouse Valley) and 48 at Jury's Gap, both on the 3rd, 80 in an arable field near Rye on the 6th and 27 in Princes Park (Eastbourne) on the 18th.

Breeding was confirmed in 39 tetrads, similar to the 36 in 2018 and 34 in 2016 showing there has been a fairly consistent number of tetrads with confirmed breeding in recent years. In addition, breeding was recorded as probable in a further eight (one fewer than last year). Display was first seen on 1 Mar at Warnham LNR with nest building seen there on the 19th. The first fledged cygnets were seen at Arundel Park on 8 May.

A large summering herd of 156 non-breeders was in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 22 May with 162 on 1 Jun. As usual summer counts at this site were high; additional to the WeBS there were 105 on 27 Jul and 115 on 26 Aug. In the autumn and second winter period there were few significant counts; as usual Chichester Hbr held the highest number with a peak count of 135 at Fishbourne on 19 Oct and 114 at Bosham on 14 Dec. [J Curson]



Mute Swan, Pevensey, 4 December (Bob Eade)

Bewick's Swan

Cygnus columbianus

Scarce winter visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

No Bewick's Swans were counted during the WeBS this year. All records came from the Arun Valley, where numbers were similar to last year. A herd of ten (seven adults and three juveniles) was seen on various dates in January and February between Arundel WWT and South Stoke up to 14 Feb.

In the second winter period two were seen for one day only at Arundel WWT on 3 Dec and three were at Amberley Wild Brooks from 25 Dec to the year's end.

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. [J Curson]

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

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

The two adults at Scotney GP first recorded on 13 Nov 2018 were last seen on 12 Jan after which they relocated to Dungeness (Kent). The only other record was of a first winter that flew west past Selsey Bill on 17 Feb (AP Bowley, S Hill, A House *et al.*). [P James]

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiaca

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

Egyptian Geese were recorded in 97 tetrads (10%), continuing the spread of the species across the county illustrated in last year's report. 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	45	34	48	30	48	45	48	30	68	33	57	25
Arun Valley N of Arundel	-	-	7	6	23	10	6	-	6	2	2	2
Ifield MP	17	14	4	1	nc	-	9	2	13	12	15	2
Ardingly Res	10	1	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	-	2	-
Weir Wood Res	4	nc	5	2	5	2	4	5	2	2	4	2
Rye Bay	-	8	4	12	11	13	19	17	14	8	22	8
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	13	10	8	16	10	16	20	20	22	19	15	17

Although the highest WeBS count was 23, a county record flock of 100 birds was noted on 15 Oct at Selham (Petworth).

In the first winter period, there was a high count of 59 at Jury's Gap on 10 Jan, and 21 was a sizeable flock at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Jan. An all-white leucistic bird was at Ifield on 16 Jan, with presumably the same at Weir Wood Res on 26 Jan, and it was back again at Ifield MP on 14 Feb; presumably the same individual was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Nov.

During the BBS Egyptian Geese were encountered in 5.3% of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 13 on 26 Apr at Petworth Park. Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads (compared with 11 in 2018) and was probable in a further four. The first goslings of the year were noted at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Mar, but those at Benbow Pond (Cowdray Park) on 18 Mar were thought to have probably hatched at least three weeks earlier. Other sites with successful breeding included Chichester GP, Petworth Park, Burton MP, Arundel WWT, Amberley Wild Brooks, Upper Beeding, Ifield MP, Worth Park (Crawley), Pett Level, Rye Hbr (where there were as many as six pairs), and Scotney GP. There were several counts of six or more goslings; the largest were nine at Ifield MP on 23 Jun, ten at Chichester GP on 19 Mar but 12 at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Mar and 10 Apr.

High counts in the second half of the year included 44 at Petworth Park on 8 Sep, 37 at Scotney GP on 25 Oct and 24 at Lewes on 29 Dec. A pair at Troutbeck (Eridge) was already prospecting nest sites on 21 Dec.

We can expect the strong upwards trend to continue and for the species to become an increasingly familiar sight. [A Thomas]

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 109 tetrads (11%) compared with 9.4% in 2018 and a 10-year average of 90 (range 78 to 100).

The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as in the table below. The counts for each month were close to the 10-year averages for the species, indicating that their wintering and breeding situation is relatively stable at present.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	899	746	624	545	283	215	88	40	59	176	498	714
Chichester Hbr	502	479	284	240	114	57	13	11	14	78	298	382
Medmerry	46	46	68	81	41	54	18	1	19	64	66	152
Pagham Hbr	285	101	136	62	46	41	44	13	10	11	98	87
Rye Bay	45	77	97	133	58	35	13	15	16	21	14	65
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	897	854	755	448	322	223	77	48	48	80	357	694

Successful breeding was confirmed in 11 tetrads and was probable in a further ten. The first ducklings of the year were seen at Pagham Hbr on 30 Apr, where there were thought to be three pairs of adults. Ten very small ducklings were also present there on 3 Jul showing how hatching can be over a protracted period, perhaps due to first clutches being lost.

Ducklings were also seen at Thorney Deeps, Iford Brooks, Cuckmere Haven, Pett Level and the Midrips. A pair was also at Medmerry in the breeding season, and one pair was apparently occupying territory at Pulborough Brooks on 23 May, but breeding was not proven either there or at Rye Hbr, despite 42 adults being at the latter site in May.

A prospecting pair was seen at Beachy Head in late March; a pair on Seaford Head in early April and May was probably doing likewise, and there was a pair near Cissbury on 1 Jun. Such records indicate the potential for breeding in the more unusual habitat of downland, both coastal and inland.

The small numbers of birds passing seawatching sites peaked in April, with 52 E at Birling Gap the highest monthly total for any site. However, small numbers, usually in single figures, were recorded in almost every month.

Unusual records during the year included two on Ardingly Res on 16 Apr, two at Bodiam Castle on 9 Jun and one at Weir Wood Res on 24 Nov. [A Thomas]



Shelducks, Sidlesham Ferry, 3 May (Andrew House)

Mandarin Duck

*Aix galericulata***Scarce introduced resident.**

Mandarin Ducks were encountered in 70 tetrads (7.5%), slightly down on the 75 (8%) of 2018 and lower than the 10-year average of 77 (range 59 to 102), but working out whether there is any population change in this often secretive woodland duck is difficult.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	26	20	33	32	24	44	66	83	20	25	41	24
Arun Valley (Arundel - L'hampton)	-	6	4	7	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-
Arun Valley N of Arundel	7	9	9	7	8	7	20	32	2	3	-	12
Kneppmill Pond	-	-	-	-	-	nc	1	7	1	7	-	2
Slaugham MP	-	-	-	-	1	nc	1	-	-	-	17	2
Weir Wood Res	4	nc	4	6	3	10	15	5	7	6	2	3
Wadhurst Park Estate	5	5	2	3	nc	5	8	6	2	1	8	nc
Powdermill Res	7	-	1	2	-	3	4	5	nc	6	13	4
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	43	32	24	22	20	28	41	35	35	29	34	42

Notable non-WeBS counts included 42 at Ardingly Res on 11 Sep, the highest in the county for the year and the largest ever count for the site, and 28 at Weir Wood Res on 19 Jul.

Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads and was probable in a further two. Courtship was noted at Arundel on 15 Jan, and a pair was seen prospecting for nest sites at Darwell Res on 28 Mar. The first ducklings were seen at Weir Wood Res on 19 May, and successful breeding was also noted at Ebernoe Common, Chingford Pond, Arundel Park, Coldwaltham, Billingshurst, Kneppmill Pond, Nymans (Handcross), Ardingly Res and Troutbeck (Eridge).

The strongest indication of a local population change was at Troutbeck, where it was formerly a common and regular breeder but where now there was thought to be just one pair.

Sightings at the coast included one at Rye Hbr on 20 and 22 May, one at Pett Level on 14 Jun and 13 Jul, two at Birdham on 3 Nov, and one at Ferring on 31 Dec. [A Thomas]

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 with the 10-year average of 25 (range 16 to 30). The first record was of a pair on 21 Mar at Pett Level, seven days later than the 10-year average and one day later than in 2018. Sightings were almost equally divided between West and East Sussex.

Minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Monthly minima*	26	35	7	6	8	4	1
No. of sites	11	15	3	4	3	2	1

* Twos at Litlington in March and Alfriston in April were assumed to be the same as the two at nearby Charleston Reedbed.

A total of 23 (six in March and 17 in April) were seen flying east from seawatching sites during the spring with the peak recorded at most sites on 15 Apr and a maximum of 5 E at Birling Gap. It is apparent that many birds seen flying east in spring were bound for sites other than Sussex.

During May a male was present at Rye Hbr on the 3rd, two males on the 18th and presumably the same were still present in mid-June. Successful breeding was then confirmed, with a female with perhaps nine ducklings seen in mid-June. Two pairs were noted at Pett Level but breeding was not confirmed. A male and female were noted at Waltham Brooks on 25 Mar but no further evidence of breeding was recorded; likewise a pair were seen in the Cuckmere Valley between 25 Mar and 17 Apr. Single males were recorded at Medmerry on 4 Jun, the Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on 30 Mar and a displaying male was seen at Pulborough Brooks during the season.

The last for the year was seen on 15 Sep at Rye Hbr, five days earlier than the 10-year average date of 20 Sep. [JA Hobson]

Shoveler

Spatula clypeata

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

Shovelers were recorded in 84 tetrads (8.9%), an improvement on the 10-year average of 75 (range 6 to 84) but equalling the score for 2010.

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	1123	772	471	116	31	28	8	23	112	348	871	979
Medmerry	60	72	42	17	-	-	-	-	2	80	45	34
Chichester GP	218	184	28	1	-	-	1	-	39	118	144	273
Arun Valley N of Arundel	107	125	69	10	7	5	-	3	9	30	213	208
Barcombe Res	2	17	22	2	-	-	4	-	35	27	114	67
Rye Bay	449	272	228	58	23	22	1	16	22	42	273	294
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	789	767	482	141	22	18	12	33	118	258	491	688

This was a good year for Shovelers; the monthly totals for most winter months exceeded the 10-year averages with that in January by 61%. The 1% national threshold figure of 190 was exceeded at Chichester GP in January and December, in the Arun Valley in November and December and in Rye Bay in all five winter months. Significant counts additional to the WeBS included 60 at Chichester GP on 19 Mar, and at Pulborough Brooks 200 on 13 Jan, 100 on 7 Mar, 150 on 14 Apr and 96 on 20 Oct. At Pagham Hbr, compared with Medmerry in the WeBS table, there were counts of 60 on 9 and 18 Mar, 30 on 3 and 8 Apr, 64 on 1 Nov and 40 on 28 Dec.

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

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak movement & hrs watched
Selsey Bill	9	26	5	8 on 21 Apr (5 hr)
Worthing/Goring	2	7	2	5 on 15 Apr (6 hr)
Splash Point	3	81	-	14 on 15 Apr (8 hr)
Birling Gap	4	20	10	10 on 16 May (3 hr)

Breeding was not proven at Rye Hbr but 40 pairs were at Pett Level, where fledged young were seen on 25 Jun. Display and copulation were seen at Arundel WWT on 9 Feb and juveniles on 6 Jul.

Numbers summering were generally in single figures; the exceptions were 11 in the Arun Valley, north of Arundel, on 27 Jul and five double-figure counts at Pett Level between 15 Jul and 24 Aug with a maximum of 25 on 16 Jul.

The presence of summering birds complicated identifying the first returning migrant but the first returning bird was recorded at Chichester GP on 12 Jul. It was not until the second half of September that the frequency of double-figure counts began to increase but the first treble-figure count was not until 4 Nov when 114 were noted at Pulborough Brooks. [JA Hobson]

Gadwall

Mareca strepera

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	1077	629	281	170	183	136	159	176	162	282	476	728
Chichester Hbr	102	28	18	2	2	-	-	4	4	-	19	31
Chichester GP	55	15	24	13	14	12	18	41	26	29	30	34
Wicks Fm (Yapton)	-	49	-	-	-	2	6	-	-	28	44	145
Arun Valley N of Arundel	147	79	40	44	30	36	47	15	41	25	45	106
Bewl Water	188	3	2	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	2	76	70
Rye Bay	521	346	114	89	120	70	74	74	36	120	146	251
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	758	683	255	122	89	73	60	131	269	290	415	789

The WeBS count for January was the highest on record for that month, thanks largely to a very impressive count at Rye Bay, but in February the county total was below the averages for the previous ten years. The count of 46 at Chichester GP on 18 Jan was the highest there of the year at a site that once regularly recorded counts of over 100; their absence was most marked at Ivy Lake which was once the principal gravel pit for them, but where there were just five records in the whole of the year and a peak count of only six birds. However, it was pleasing to see counts of 30 at Newenden Flood on 6 and 17 Feb, in what was a shallow pool in a wet field.

WeBS counts for each of the months from April to July were the highest on record, in large part because of good numbers in Rye Bay including up to 40 pairs at Pett Level and up to 79 at Rye Hbr.

There was limited proof of breeding for a species that can then be secretive and easily overlooked. However, breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads and was probable in a further four. Ducklings were seen at Pagham Hbr (at least one brood, with up to three pairs breeding), Arundel Park (two broods), Arundel WWT (four broods), Pulborough Brooks (one brood) and Pett Level (one brood).

WeBS totals in the second winter period were around the 10-year average. Notable counts included 145 at Wick Fm Res (Yapton) on 15 Dec and 144 at Swanbourne Lake on the 8th.

Few birds were seen passing the principal seawatching sites, with almost all limited to April, when there were 25 E recorded at Birling Gap, 14 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 2 W at Selsey Bill with no obvious peak day. At the latter site, there were 8 E on 31 Oct, a rare autumn seawatching record. [A Thomas]



Wigeon, Rye Harbour, 1 April (Barry Yates)

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 110 tetrads (11%), an increase on the 85 (9%) of 2018 and higher than the 10-year average of 94 (range 83 to 116). 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	8549	7200	1637	10	5	5	4	3	830	2767	6070	6988
Chichester Hbr	2103	1464	337	2	2	-	-	2	722	1560	1982	1993
Pagham Hbr	2002	548	142	2	2	-	1	-	55	119	368	757
Arun Valley N of Arundel	1701	2546	635	2	-	-	-	-	-	270	1918	1457
Rye Bay	1509	1702	178	1	-	3	-	-	19	635	1043	1623
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	10,834	9634	3955	75	6	3	2	19	1160	4577	6203	9096

The WeBS counts in each of the months in the first winter period were under the averages for the previous ten years; for example, the March count was just 41% of the average, and the April count was the lowest for that month on record. Notable non-WeBS counts included 1700 at Pulborough Brooks on 5 Jan and 1000 at Rye Hbr on 22 Nov.

The last three-figure flock of the spring was 100 at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Apr, with 50 there on the 21st. As is usual, just a handful of non-breeding birds remained in the county through the summer, with a maximum of four birds at any site.

A flock of 16 at Medmerry on 1 Sep marked the start of the autumn return, with a mass arrival of 800 at Thorney Deepes on the 20th. However, as in the first winter period, all monthly

counts were under the average for the previous ten years, with those for September, October and December substantially so. For example, the December count of 6988 is just 50% of the record for that month, which was in 2010.

Observed passage in the first months of the year was unremarkable; there were a few records involving only small numbers of birds, so the flock of 50 E at Birling Gap on 17 Feb was exceptional. The principal movements in the autumn and second winter period were noted only at Selsey Bill, where totals of 156 E and 328 W were recorded between the start of October and the end of the year. [A Thomas]

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

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

Mallards were recorded in 431 tetrads (46%), comparable with the 10-year average of 430 (range 357 to 551). During the first winter period SWBS they were encountered in 40 (33%) of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 110 on 17 Feb at Northchapel.

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	3279	2122	1563	1383	1458	1359	2474	2993	2893	3882	3770	3502
Chichester Hbr	344	240	227	111	102	19	124	130	301	415	379	305
Arun Valley N of Arundel	574	510	372	417	505	362	529	614	625	734	532	502
Angmering Decoy Ponds	90	53	23	62	8	32	534	617	316	302	251	328
Ardingly Res	326	150	71	60	95	37	89	119	193	124	161	220
Bewl Water	298	38	96	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	262	124	258	369
Rye Bay	198	164	103	126	157	137	263	531	108	422	631	312
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	3634	2835	1882	1281	1275	1688	2007	3086	3500	3659	3643	4070

In seven months the county total was lower than the 10-year average and in five it was above; these varied between 75% (February) and 123% (July) but overall there was no significant change in abundance. No site in the county reached the 1% national threshold of 6700.

Eastwards migration observed at the principal seawatching sites was almost negligible, the only records being 6 E at Selsey Bill on 28 Apr and 2 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 22nd.

Breeding was confirmed in 61 tetrads and probable in a further 24. Display was first noted on 20 Jan at Bodiam Castle, on 9 Feb at Arundel WWT and 2 Mar at Warnham LNR. The first ducklings were seen on 27 Mar at Westbourne (Emsworth) and 30 Mar at Pett Level. During the BBS Mallards were recorded in 51% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 90 on 26 Jun at Northchapel. During the late year SWBS the species was encountered in 21% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 140 on 1 Dec at Wardley. [JA Hobson]

Pintail

Anas acuta

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

Pintails were recorded in 58 tetrads (6.2%), more than the 10-year average of 53 (range 46 to 60). 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	549	415	44	-	-	-	-	2	40	16	242	517
Chichester Hbr	154	152	16	-	-	-	-	-	4	8	1	40
Pagham Hbr	346	179	14	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	14	69
Arun Valley N of Arundel	20	47	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	215	359
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	505	417	201	9	-	-	-	-	63	142	265	422

The count in March was markedly lower than the 10-year average, possibly due to an early departure to breeding grounds, while that in October was much lower, possibly due to later arrivals as by December numbers had increased to more than the 10-year average. Counts higher than the WeBS involved 60 on 5 Mar at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr), 25 at Pagham Hbr on 6 Mar and 20 there on 20 Oct, and at Pulborough Brooks 150 on 13 Jan, 34 on 18 Mar, 27 on 28 Sep and 40 on 30 Oct. The 1% national threshold of 200 was exceeded at Pagham Hbr in January and in the Arun Valley in November and December.

Eastwards migration observed at the principal seawatching sites was, as usual, very light. A total of just 41 E was recorded between February and May with peaks of 9 E at Birling Gap on 23 Feb and 7 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 23 Apr.

Breeding was not suspected but a male and female were seen together on 5 May at Ringmer and during the summer a lone female was seen variously at Pagham Hbr and Medmerry between 10 Jun and 24 Jul and was still there on 8 Sep.

The first signs of returning migrants were counts of 18 at Pulborough Brooks and 11 at Pagham Hbr on 11 Sep and 36 at Medmerry on the 15th. The next highest count was not until 1 Oct when 40 were counted on Amberley Wild Brooks and again in that area on the 30th. The first treble-figure count was 100 at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Nov and the highest single count later was 316 at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Dec. [JA Hobson]

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 132 tetrads (14%), an increase on the 119 (12.7%) of 2018 and slightly higher than the 10-year average of 126 (range 108 to 142). 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	4693	3797	1599	266	4	10	14	113	889	2463	3811	6221
Chichester Hbr	966	854	530	24	-	-	1	-	302	370	555	661
Medmerry	305	119	23	19	-	-	-	27	84	628	460	1321
Pagham Hbr	537	225	164	89	-	-	-	32	36	156	325	671
Arun Valley N of Arundel	1514	689	374	70	-	5	10	2	262	1055	1548	2286
Rye Bay	614	789	225	40	2	-	-	44	86	84	618	586
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	5687	4246	2321	324	9	32	37	326	1366	2113	3716	5044

The counts were somewhat under the 10-year average for the first four months of the year. The last three-figure count of the spring was 100 at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Apr.

In the breeding season, six pairs were at Pett Level, including two broods of ducklings seen, an excellent record for the county of what is now a rare breeding species. There was also a possible brood seen at Pulborough Brooks and breeding was probable at six other sites.

As usual, odd small flocks appeared intermittently at the main wetland sites over the summer, with a peak count of 28 at Pulborough Brooks on 29 Jun. From early August it was clear that small parties were beginning to return to the county, with 50 at Pagham Hbr on 9 Aug, but the first three-figure count was not until 16 Sep when there were 150 at Pulborough Brooks.

The September WeBS count was the highest on record for that month, and the December count was the fourth highest. The largest count at a single site was a non-WeBS count of 3000 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 25 Dec, and the WeBS count that month at Medmerry of 1321 was an excellent result just six years after the major habitat creation there. Noteworthy counts from smaller sites included 300 on Henfield Levels on 18 Dec and the same number at Doleham on the 28th.

At seawatching sites, April was, as usual, the prime month, with 140 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and a peak of 43 on the 15th. Conversely at Selsey Bill just 8 E were recorded in the month. A small return passage was noted from August onwards, especially at Selsey Bill, but with a peak day count of just 12 on 27 Aug. [A Thomas]

Red-crested Pochard

Netta rufina

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

The only records were of five (three males, one female and one first year) at Selsey East Beach on 1 Nov which arrived at 09:50 hr and stayed on the nearby pond for less than ten minutes before flying out to sea, and three males at Barcombe Res on 18 Nov. [JA Hobson]

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.

Common Pochards were recorded in 52 tetrads (5.5%), comparable with a 10-year average of 50 (range 41 to 60). 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	546	263	129	87	81	62	46	89	123	199	340	368
Chichester GP	221	160	91	59	49	21	19	58	52	110	179	184
Barcombe Res	30	14	1	-	-	-	4	2	10	12	36	45
Rye Bay	204	47	25	24	27	33	13	23	56	71	95	110
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	508	379	117	28	21	28	57	117	82	125	238	431

The only counts higher than the WeBS were at Rye Bay where there were 148 on 3 Feb, 38 on 15 Jun and 65 on 28 Jul. The January counts at both Chichester GP and Rye Bay fell slightly short of the 1% national threshold of 230.

Spring migration was scarcely observed, in keeping with the species' status. There were no spring seawatching records and the only passage noted was 6 E at Selsey Bill on 29 Oct.

Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and probable in a further one. Possibly as many as 11 pairs bred; four at Chichester GP, three at Arundel WWT and four in Rye Bay.

Numbers in Rye Bay, particularly Pett Level, held up well from mid-June through to the autumn; although counts fluctuated, monthly maxima were 38 on 14 Jun, 65 on 28 Jul and 55 on 13 Aug. Conversely, numbers at Chichester GP declined through June to a final one on 17 Jul. The next record there was not until 52 on 5 Aug, possibly the first indication of returning migrants. The next record was of 46 a month later on 13 Sep, a gap possibly more due to an absence of observers than birds. Numbers were slow to increase generally and the first treble-figure count was not until 12 Oct when 110 were counted at Chichester GP; the next similar count was not until 24 Dec, of 132 there. [JA Hobson]

Ferruginous Duck

Aythya nyroca

Rare vagrant

An unringed and fully-winged drake at Pett Pools from 13 Jul to 15 Aug (P Rouse *et al.*) was only the second county record this century, the last being at Rye Harbour in November 2001. Although it remained out of view for long periods, it was a welcome addition to a number of county lists. It remains subject to acceptance by BBRC. The true status of this species in the UK remains clouded by escapes, hybrids and a reintroduction project in Germany, although this bird would appear to have good credentials for a genuine wild vagrant. A drake at Tilgate Park (Crawley) from 5 Jan to 23 Feb bore colour and metal rings and originated from the German project. [P James]



Ferruginous Duck, Tilgate Park, 13 January (Gary Faulkner)

Ring-necked Duck

*Aythya collaris**Rare vagrant*

A first winter female on West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) on 8 Jan (DK Campbell *et al.*) was not seen subsequently but was followed by a more obliging drake at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) from 27 Mar to 11 Apr (DK Campbell, G Hersey, GRF James *et al.*) and then at nearby Pett Pools from 1 to 6 May (CH Dean, SJR Rumsey, MG Russell *et al.*). These are the first records of this Nearctic duck in Sussex since 2007. Previous records have been between early December and late April. The county total moves on to 13. [P James]

Tufted Duck

*Aythya fuligula**Fairly common resident although scarce breeder; fairly common winter visitor, scarce on observed passage.*

This species was recorded in 108 tetrads (12%), a welcome increase on the 89 (9.5%) in 2018 but comparable with the 10-year average of 105 (range 89 to 126). The monthly WeBS counts were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	1023	887	749	669	365	188	276	416	595	535	833	792
Chichester Hbr	66	43	48	58	28	6	32	17	18	29	65	35
Medmerry	38	60	26	21	7	8	11	12	40	36	75	8
Chichester GP	214	254	206	144	65	20	36	93	121	94	136	141
Burton & Chingford Ponds	36	62	70	63	20	17	17	35	29	33	26	38
Arun Valley N of Arundel	94	89	31	48	39	35	24	31	34	28	80	118
Barcombe Res	21	6	24	64	24	20	72	54	73	105	63	68
Eastbourne Lakes	93	43	52	-	nc	nc	-	nc	11	17	44	28
Rye Bay	287	164	186	231	164	61	46	105	150	90	207	194
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	1093	991	786	545	356	266	308	404	485	546	737	933

Of the seven core WeBS months the county totals for September and November were the only ones to exceed the 10-year averages. The peak winter count of 1023 in January was only slightly higher than in 2018 and hardly suggests a recovery of this species' fortunes, as was illustrated by the graph in SxBR 71, p. 36. Notable counts additional to the WeBS included 104 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 6 Jan, 85 at Petworth Park Lake on 17 Nov and 76 at Darwell Res on the 29th. The 1% national threshold figure of 1300 was not met at any site.

As usual, this species was scarce on spring migration; the highest counts at the seawatching sites were 3 E at Birling Gap on 28 Mar and 7 E at Goring on the 30th.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in a further eight. The first ducklings were observed at Arundel WWT on 7 May. There were some six broods of eight or more, the largest of which was ten at Arundel WWT on 9 Jun.

During the summer months there were 21 counts of 20 or more; the highest were of 72 at Barcombe Res on 14 Jul, 65 at Chichester GP on 5 Aug, 58 at Rye Hbr on the 1st and 45 at Powdermill Res (Battle) on the 26th. Numbers increased in the autumn months; there were 37 counts of 20 or more, with the first three figure counts of 119 at Scotney GP on 15 Sep and 105 at Barcombe Res on 14 Oct. In the second winter period, with the arrival of winter visitors, there were 123 counts of 20 or more, with 127 at Rye Hbr on 17 Nov and 114 at Swanbourne Lake on 16 Dec. [JA Hobson]

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. Section 41.

A total of 12 for the year was rather lower than the 10-year average of 26 (range 7 to 67). Monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Nov	Dec
Monthly totals	1	1	-	1	8	1

In the first winter period there were single females at Rye Hbr on 14 Jan and at West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) on 17 Feb. Easterly passage was very light and involved a single drake which passed both Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap on 15 Apr. Later in the year seven were offshore at Pett Level on 15 Nov, a female in Rye Bay on the 21st and finally a female type well inland at Kneppmill Pond on 15 Dec. [WG Harvey]



Common Eiders, East Head, 30 December (Andrew House)

Common Eider*Somateria mollissima*

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

This species was recorded in every month but in small numbers. The following table shows the approximate abundance in each month and separates birds recorded offshore or within harbours from those seen passing seawatching sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Offshore	2	-	9	5	3	6	2	4	4	4	15	45
Flying east	6	9	16	43	25	4	-	1	-	1	1	1
Flying west	5	-	24	3	12	1	-	-	-	11	3	16

Very few were recorded in the first winter period, the maximum being 6 E at Selsey Bill on 28 Feb. There was no clear passage during the spring, with a total of 84 E and 39 W between March and May and modest peaks of 15 W at Selsey Bill on 17 Mar, 9 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 19 Apr and 12 (3 W and 9 E) at Selsey Bill on 19 May. Throughout the summer and early autumn the most notable records were up to four at Pilsley Island (Chichester Hbr) on ten dates between 5 Jun and 15 Oct and 5 W off Church Norton on 7 Oct. The table shows most offshore birds were recorded at the end of the year, when 11 were at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 15 Nov and a flock of 44, including at least 30 adult males, were in the entrance to Chichester Hbr on 30 Dec. There were no inland records. [WG Harvey]

Surf Scoter

Melanitta perspicillata

Very rare vagrant.

In the morning of 30 Apr, an adult drake landed off Selsey Bill with 33 Common Scoters, then flew east with the flock (P Gammage, A House, O Mitchell, ID Pitts *et al.*). The record recalls last year's, when an adult drake flew east off Splash Point (Seaford) with c.40 Common Scoters on 22 Apr. The county total moves to 10, of which four have been this century, and this is the first record for West Sussex. [M Mallalieu]

Velvet Scoter

Melanitta fusca

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

In January there were typically small numbers at West Sussex sites, with 1 W at Medmerry on 1 Jan, two at Church Norton on the 3rd, 2 E there on the 6th and two again on the 19th while offshore at Widewater (Lancing) two were noted on five dates through the month. Most birds, however, were in East Sussex where the highest count in Rye Bay between 1 and 9 Jan was 20 on the 8th followed by 15 on the 26th. In February the only West Sussex record was of 1 E at Selsey Bill but in Rye Bay the highest count between the 15th and 27th was 12 on the 17th. The only records in March were six and 40 offshore at Pett Level on the 23rd and 24th respectively and 2 E at Selsey Bill on the 31st, the precursors of spring migration.

Eastwards spring passage, recorded at four of the principal seawatching sites, took off on 4 Apr with the main passage between the 18th and 25th as shown below:

April date	4	5	6	8	15	18	20	21	22	25	30	Total	Peak Movement
Selsey Bill	-	10	6	6	-	18	-	-	2	7	2	51	18 on 18 th (8 hr)
Worthing/Goring	-	4	4	-	-	20	-	-	-	7	-	35	20 on 18 th (4 hr)
Splash Point	2	3	3	-	8	-	3	4	-	8	2	33	8 on 15 th (8 hr), 8 on 25 th (8 hr)
Birling Gap	-	3	-	-	-	6	-	-	9	9	-	27	9 on 22 nd (9 hr), 9 on 25 th (6 hr)

In addition, 3 E were noted at Ovingdean on 5 Apr. The only records in May were from Selsey Bill with 3 E on the 13th and a final 2 E on the 16th, precisely on the 10-year average departure date.

The first returning birds were 2 W at Selsey Bill on 11 Oct, 13 days earlier than the 10-year average date, followed by a count of 16 in Rye Bay on the 13th, 1 W past Widewater (Lancing) and 5 W at Selsey Bill on the 30th. In November observers at Selsey Bill recorded totals of 4 W and 4 E while the highest count for the month was ten in Rye Bay on the 28th. In December this species was seen almost exclusively in Rye Bay, where the maximum was 14 on the 7th; elsewhere two were off St Leonards on the 9th and 1 W at Selsey Bill on the 29th. [WG Harvey, JA Hobson]

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. Section 41.

Offshore flocks of varying sizes were recorded in all months except September, and typically most were seen from the Selsey Peninsula and in Rye Bay, mainly from Pett Level. The maximum counts in each month at these two locations are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey area	140	80	45	20	2	2	1	-	1	7	19	12
Rye Bay	106	250	300	23	550	150	150	80	1	45	200	500

The peak count in West Sussex was 140 offshore at Medmerry on 20 Jan whilst in Rye Bay there were 550 offshore at Rye Hbr on 5 May and 500 off Pett Level on 29 Dec. Elsewhere the only notable counts were 260 and 50 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 15 Nov and 16 Dec respectively and 70 at St Leonards on 9 Dec; these were likely to be the same birds regularly seen in Rye Bay.

As usual most Common Scoters were recorded passing the shore from the regular seawatching sites, particularly in spring, where the monthly totals, computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at a single site was the maximum in the county that day and that birds seen on subsequent days were different, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Flying east	44	244	952	7482	2267	157	23	35	76	201	178	53
Flying west	60	145	63	53	71	57	8	57	68	305	104	39

The March to May eastward total of 10,701 was nearly 40% lower than the remarkable passage observed in 2018. The more detailed monthly figures from five locations are shown below; in most springs considerably higher numbers are seen from Splash Point (Seaford) and Birling Gap, but fewer hours of observations in 2019 meant that only in April were more seen passing these East Sussex sites than from Selsey Bill.

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	31	114	649	4656	2182	128	19	34	76	195	178	53
	W	24	142	59	50	71	48	8	57	62	295	102	39
Worthing/Goring	E	5	17	14	1481	40	-	5	-	-	1	-	-
	W	-	7	6	-	-	-	9	2	-	8	25	3
Telscombe Cliffs	E	5	20	-	1456	86	-	-	2	-	-	nc	-
	W	36	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	-
Splash Point	E	-	114	182	5813	605	nc	11	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	3	-	nc	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	E	8	63	474	5019	507	66	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	nc

On just four April days were more than 500 Common Scoters recorded flying east from any of the sites; the details of these days, with the hours of observation, are shown below and demonstrates a heavier passage seen from the East Sussex headlands.

	5 Apr	15 Apr	22 Apr	25 Apr
Selsey Bill	741 (12)	242 (10)	645 (11)	266 (12)
Worthing/Goring	648 (4)	221 (6)	136 (3)	218 (6)
Telscombe Cliffs	738 (4)	279 (3)	112 (1)	64 (4)
Splash Point	1213 (9)	1124 (8)	1176 (13)	618 (8)
Birling Gap	727 (4)	1104 (5)	1196 (9)	462 (6)

Two heard during nocturnal recording at Pulborough on the 18th, 21st and 24th Mar and one on the 19th were the only inland records. [JA Newnham]

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.

One flew west at Selsey Bill on 5 Mar and preceded a very light easterly spring passage only noted there which involved 1 E on 30 Apr, 2 E on 1 May and one offshore on 7 May.

The first autumn bird was one offshore at Selsey Bill on 27 Oct, but most second winter period activity began in the second week of November, when singles were seen at Rye Hbr on the 10th and in Chichester Hbr on the 11th and 13th. Thereafter single birds, usually noted as female, were recorded widely at some six locations within the harbour on 24 dates through to 29 Dec, with two at Fishbourne on 25 and 28 Nov. In East Sussex one was at Rye Hbr from 24 to 30 Dec and two were at Scotney GP on seven dates from 16 to 29 Dec with three there on the 30th. The only inland record was a female at Bewl Water on 25 Nov. [WG Harvey]



Long-tailed Duck, Dell Quay, 1 December (Dorian Mason)

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	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	21	8	1	1	10	14
Chichester Hbr	11	5	-	1	10	8
Pagham Hbr	7	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	2	3	1	-	-	5
Average county total 2009 - 2018	24	28	8	1	4	16

It was another rather disappointing year for this species. Although the county total in January was similar to the 10-year average, numbers in both the next two months were decidedly lower, which might, of course, have been due to relatively mild weather hastening return migration. As the table shows, the highest numbers were from sites within Chichester Hbr; the maxima were nine in Fishbourne Channel on 19 Jan and eight there on 6 and 12 Jan and 3 Feb. In Pagham Hbr up to three Goldeneyes were recorded on 16 dates between 1 Jan and 19 Feb, with maxima of seven on 19 Jan and five on 11 Feb. At Rye Hbr up to three were recorded on 14 dates between Jan 1 and 20 Feb, with the last singles on 20 and 24 Mar.

Elsewhere there were singles at Medmerry on 2 Jan and at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 17th and 20th. The only inland records were from Darwell Res, with one on 9 Jan, three on the 30th and 16 Feb, two on 23 Feb and a single on 23 Mar. The last record for the period was one at Rye Hbr on 24 Mar, 23 days earlier than the 10-year average departure date.

One at Fishbourne on 26 Oct was the first of the autumn and 12 days later than the 10-year arrival date, after which numbers were slow to increase. During November the highest single count was of eight at Thorney Deeps on the 24th. One was at Cuckmere Haven on the 25th and two at Darwell Res on the 29th. In December the biggest group in Chichester Hbr was 11 at Dell Quay on the 21st which had reduced to seven on the 28th. The highest count at Rye Hbr was six on 14 and 30 Dec. Elsewhere there were singles at Ifield MP on 5 Dec and Bewl Water on the 13th. [WG Harvey]

Smew*Mergellus albellus*

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

There were no records during the first winter period. In the second winter period a redhead flew east past Selsey Bill on 1 Nov, the first there since 1985. Unusually, there was a redhead at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Nov, only the fourth record there since 1960, the others having been in 1996, 1997 and 1999. At Rye Hbr there was a series of sightings of a redhead, probably involving the same individual, on 13 dates between 4 and 30 Dec. [WG Harvey]

Goosander

Mergus merganser

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	22	11	9	4	-	2	3	20	12
Coastal totals	15	5	6	4	-	2	3	16	9
Coastal sites	3	2	4	1	-	1	3	5	5
Inland totals	8	6	3	-	-	-	-	4	3
Inland sites	3	3	2	-	-	-	-	3	3

It was another good year, particularly in the first winter period. There were records from 18 sites, nine coastal and nine inland.

In the first quarter, most coastal records were from Rye Bay, where the maximum in January was four at Rye Hbr on the 5th, in February probably no more than two, while in March probably the same single bird was noted on 15 days at Pett Level from the 5th to 28th. Elsewhere there were 4 W past Selsey Bill on 6 Jan, 3 W there on the 17th and ones or twos were noted at Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr and Worthing. Inland, up to three were at Petworth Park between 4 Jan and 17 Feb, four at Wadhurst Park on 21 Jan and one there on 24 Mar, twos at Minstead Quarry (Midhurst) on 3 Feb and at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 12 Mar and singles at Piddinghoe on 25 Jan and at Pulborough Brooks on 6 and 16 Feb. The only April sightings were of 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 5th and three on the 15th. Unusually two redheads flew east at Church Norton on 23 Jun, this being just the fourth June record this century.

The first returning birds were singles at Pagham Hbr on 10 Oct and Thorney Deepes on the 15th. At Selsey Bill two flew west on 4 Nov, 1 W on the 7th, and 1 E on both the 4th and 30th. Up to two were seen in Chichester Hbr in November but the highest counts were three at Pett Level on the 15th and 19th and four at Cuckmere Haven on the 25th. During December ones and twos were noted at four coastal sites but again the highest count was three at Pett Level on the 3rd. Inland there were singles at Weir Wood Res on Nov 17 and Dec 9, Petworth Park on 30 Nov, Pulborough Brooks on 14 Dec, Ardingly Res on the 28th and two at Lewes Brooks on 29 Nov. [WG Harvey]

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

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

Red-breasted Mergansers were recorded in 49 tetrads (5%) compared with a 10-year average of 44 (range 41 to 51). The vast majority of sightings (84%) were from coastal sites in West Sussex; the highest single count at any site east of Hove was of only six at Splash Point (Seaford) on 22 Apr and there were only two counts of five. Conversely there were 16 day counts of 40 or more in West Sussex, with a maximum of 60 at Pagham Hbr on 18 Mar. There were no inland records.

The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	122	137	136	1	13	97	93
Chichester Hbr	88	132	134	-	13	92	85
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	153	138	150	7	13	97	135

Monthly totals in Chichester Hbr in February and March exceeded the 1% national threshold of 100. However, while the WeBS suggests that Chichester Hbr is the dominant site for this species in the county, significant numbers were recorded at two principal seawatching sites in West Sussex:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	222	158	184	69	23	-	12	157	229
	W	185	122	115	18	-	6	60	148	126
Worthing/Goring	E	9	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	1
	W	-	1	44	-	-	-	-	-	7

The monthly totals of birds moving either east or west probably involved local movement rather than passage. The highest day count of birds offshore at Selsey Bill was 17 on 20 Mar whilst between Goring and Worthing the highest count was 58 on 10 Jan, but there were 12 other day counts of 20 or more. During this century there have been 65 day counts of 100 or more at this latter site, with a maximum of 340 on 27 Nov 2004. Obviously there is something about this offshore area which appeals to wintering Red-breasted Mergansers; the highest day count for any other sea duck species was only 32 Common Scoters, and that was in June 2012.

The last spring count was of 2 E at Selsey Bill on 12 May and the first returning birds were 5 W there on 3 Sep, but numbers did not pick up until the end of October, with the first double-figure count of ten there on the 28th and 25 at W Chidham (Chichester Hbr) the next day. Numbers in November increased noticeably, with peak counts of 53 (17 W, 36 E) at Selsey Bill on the 24th, 50 at Thorney Island on the 17th and 47 at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on the 23rd. There were 33 double-figure counts in December, with a maximum of 44 at Goring Gap on the 12th. [JA Hobson]

Ruddy Duck

Oxyura jamaicensis

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

The only record was of an unsexed bird at Cuckmere Haven on 18 May. [WG Harvey]

Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Fairly common but localised summer visitor; rarely seen on migration. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.

This species was recorded in 42 (4.5%) tetrads, two more than in 2018 and four more than in 2017. These tetrads were located mainly on the Wealden Heaths (West Sussex) and Ashdown Forest. The first records of the year, of a displaying and churring male on Wiggonholt Common on 18 May and churring birds near Billingshurst and on Ashdown Forest on 19 May, were almost two weeks later than the 10-year mean arrival date. The only coastal records during spring migration were singles at Pagham Hbr on 22 and 28 May.

The first records for the Wealden Heaths were from Black Down, where one was recorded on 21 May, and then at Ambersham Common, with a churring male on the 24th and three the next day. During the WHBBS (see page 216), 59 pairs or territories were recorded, a further increase on the previous five-year mean of 44. This total included 19 pairs or territories on Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, nine on Black Down, eight on Iping Common and another eight on the Lavington Commons complex. Breeding on Ambersham Common was confirmed by

the observation on 17 Aug of an adult with one fledgling at one location and an adult with two fledglings at another.

Breeding counts on RSPB reserves recorded three displaying or calling males on Wiggonholt Common and ten at Broadwater Warren, with two fledged juveniles recorded on 16 Jul on Wiggonholt Common. Although there were no records confirming breeding on Ashdown Forest this year, there was evidence of probable breeding from at least seven sites there and churring males from at least another 15. Probable breeding was also recorded at Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham) and Groombridge, as well as churring at Stansted Forest, Severals Woods (Midhurst), Flexham Park (Fittleworth) and Chailey Common.

One bird on autumn passage was recorded hawking insects at Beachy Head on the evening of 23 Aug and another roosting during daylight at Thorney Island on 15 Sep. The latter was a new species for this site and the final record for 2019. [A Rowe]

Alpine Swift

Tachymarptis melba

Rare vagrant.

One was found in an exhausted state at Rottingdean on 12 Aug and was taken into care at Roger's Wildlife Rescue (Woodingdean) (R Musselle per Hon. Recorder). Sadly, it did not recover and died on 20 Aug. The county total moves on to 48, of which six have been in August. [P James]

Common Swift

Apus apus

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

Swifts were recorded in 321 tetrads (34%), an improvement on last year's 280. The first arrival was seen over Chichester on 10 Apr, earlier than the 10-year average arrival date of 13 Apr. The next was on 19 Apr at Slindon Park, followed by two at Arlington Res on the 21st. The first double-figure count was of 30 on the 28th at Pulborough Brooks with 100 there on 9 May. There were only two locations with double-figure counts in April; Barcombe Mills (10) and Selsey Bill (13).

Most larger counts, as usual, were over larger water bodies. In May and June there were only seven counts of 100 or more, the highest being 200 at Rye Hbr on 5 Jun and 200 at Steyning and 150 at Patching, both on the 9th.

During the BBS Swifts were found in 26% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of 12 on 25 May at Southwick. Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in a further 21. The RSPB Brighton Swift Group recorded 107 active nests across the city compared with 81 in 2018 and 76 in 2017, hopefully indicating a healthy trend. The first birds recorded back at their nest site were on 6 May at Horsham. Despite the high numbers of active nests recorded across Sussex, astonishingly no fledged young were reported.

The earliest signs of post breeding movements were 31 E at Fairlight on 26 Jun, and on 1 Jul 110 flew SW at Pett Level. There were then no further obvious movements reported until the end of the month when 200 were over Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 27th and 200 NW at Iford Brooks the next day. There were no further three figure counts, but 25 counts of ten and above, the highest being 75 at Beachy Head on 25 Aug and 63 at Selsey Bill on 9 Aug. Twenty-one records were received in September, the highest count was 20 at Beachy Head on the 9th and the

final record of the year was on the 30th, of one at Steyning and of one at Coombes (possibly the same one), two days later than the 10-year average last date. [MJ Chattaway]

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Coccyzus americanus

Very rare vagrant.

A recently dead individual, the third for Sussex, was found at Seaford on the morning of 2 Oct (M-A Carter, R Lawson). The last county record of this Nearctic cuckoo was in 1960 and both previous birds were also found dead. The record has been accepted by BBRC. The finder's account is on page 218 of this report. [M Mallalieu]

Common Cuckoo

Cuculus canorus

Fairly common but declining summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Cuckoos were recorded in 222 tetrads (24%) during 2019, approximately 7% up on 2018 and comparable with the 10-year average of 232 (range 169 to 328).

The first bird was recorded at Burgess Hill on 8 Apr, one day later than in 2018 and six days later than the 10-year average. This was followed by sightings on the 9th at Buxted, the 11th at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and then almost daily from the 14th at some 109 sites. Of 176 records 86% were of single birds, twos were recorded at some 14 sites during the month and threes at Sheffield Park on the 19th, Ashdown Forest on the 22nd, Pulborough Brooks on the 28th and Ifold on the 29th.

Sightings continued throughout May, mainly of single birds (82%) but occasionally two or three, although five were noted at the Knepp Estate on both 1st and 28th and fours at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on the 18th and Pett Level on the 31st. During the BBS Cuckoos were found in 22% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of five on 25 May on Pevensey Levels.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads and was probable in a further 17. Copulation was observed at Pett Level on 5 May when the female gave a bubbling call before mating. The first juvenile noted was one being fed by Dunnocks on 7 Jun at Henfield and at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Jul, and by a Meadow Pipit at Medmerry on the 9th. Another juvenile was being fed by Reed Warblers at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Aug.

Females were recorded at only ten sites: one was being chased by a male at Albourne (Hurstpierpoint) on 21 Apr and the last one was noted at the Old Lodge LNR on 29 Jun.

There were four September records, the last being of a juvenile at Arundel WWT on the 17th, five days later than the 10-year average last date. [T Seabrook]

Feral Pigeon

Columba livia

Common resident.

Feral Pigeons were recorded in 286 (30%) tetrads (266 (28%) in 2018). In the first winter period, there were seven three-figure counts, the highest being 200 at Balsdean on 24 Jan and 180 at Brighton on 5 Feb, with ten records of flocks of 50 or more, including 80 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Jan. In the early year SWBS, 241 birds were recorded in 18% of the squares studied. In the GBW the species was recorded in 37% of participating gardens during the year.

In the spring and summer periods, there were 150 at Brighton on 11 May and 82 at Hove on 2 Jun. Clearly breeding is under-reported for Feral Pigeons as it was not confirmed anywhere!

For the autumn and second winter period there were only two records of over 100 birds, with 117 at Antye Fm (Burgess Hill) on 10 Nov and 118 at Hove on 1 Dec. There were 18 other records of between 50 and 100, with the majority at or near the coast. One was seen to be beheaded by a Sparrowhawk at Hailsham on 17 Dec. In the late year SWBS they were encountered in 22% of squares surveyed. [A Podmore]

Stock Dove

Columba oenas

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

The species was recorded in 419 (45%) tetrads compared with 376 (40%) in 2018 and a 10-year average of 373. In the first winter period, the highest count was of 250 at Medmerry on 10 Jan, with four further records of over 50. During the early year SWBS Stock Doves were noted in 35% of the squares surveyed.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads (three in 2018) but considered probable or possible in a further 90 tetrads (103 in 2018). A pair was at an owl box at Mill Fm (Fletching) on 1 Jan, while courtship and display was first seen at Tilgate Forest on the 21st. Fledged young were first noted on 17 Mar at Iford Brooks. In the BBS the species was recorded in 82 1-km squares, just under half of all those surveyed. One nestbox at Troutbeck (Eridge) was predated by a Magpie which pulled out and ate one of the two youngsters there. The highest summer count was 44 at Petworth on 2 Jun.

There was a significant autumn passage, beginning with 87 E at Beachy Head on 17 Oct and building to 1145 at Hastings and 1220 at Beachy Head on the 20th. This was a record day count for Beachy Head, marginally beating the 1000 recorded on both 26 and 27 Oct 2014. Apart from one flock of 200 seen flying west, birds at Beachy Head were generally seen to be heading east, including a further 450 on 23 Oct.

Late winter counts of note were 200 at East Guldeford Level on 5 Nov and 150 at Medmerry on the 22nd. During this period's SWBS Stock Doves were encountered in only 19% of squares surveyed. [A Podmore]

Woodpigeon

Columba palumbus

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Wood pigeons were recorded in 713 tetrads, compared to 709 in 2018 and the 10-year average of 680. There were 54 records of flocks of over 100 (28 in 2018, 30 in 2017). There were five counts of note for the first winter period, with 1500 at Chilgrove on 21 Feb and of 1000 at Ifield on 17 Jan, Westdean Woods on 13 Feb, Lavant on the 14th and Balcombe on the 27th. In the early year SWBS they were recorded in 98% of the squares surveyed, with rates of 85% and 79% in West and East Sussex gardens respectively for the BGBW. The species was recorded in all but one garden throughout the year in the GBW. High counts in March were of 1000 at Stapleash Fm (Chilgrove) on the 19th and 1500 at Great Bentley Fm (Balcombe) on the 25th.

Although clearly a widespread breeder, breeding was confirmed in only 22 tetrads (16 in 2018) but likely in a further 95 (119 in 2018), while the species was found in all 169 1-km squares surveyed for the BBS. Juveniles were reported from 20 Mar at Goring Gap to 16 Dec at Bognor Regis.

Autumn passage began with 2604 W at Weir Wood Res and 5000 W at Climping on 20 Oct. At Beachy Head, 3000 flew east on 23 Oct while 12,170 were recorded at Selsey Bill on the 28th. At first light on 6 Nov, 8000 were seen heading out to sea at Beachy Head. In the Hastings area a total of 14,181 was recorded between 3 Oct and 13 Nov with a maximum of 4200 NE on 12 Nov.

The only records of note for December were 1000 at Colworth Down (Chilgrove) on the 18th and 800 flying east at Worth on the 23rd. During the late year SWBS the species was recorded in all squares surveyed. [A Podmore]

Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur

Scarce and declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Please note that a paper on the Breeding of Turtle Doves in Sussex in 2019 is published in this Bird Report on page 232.

Turtle Doves were recorded in 71 (7.6%) tetrads compared to 67 in 2018, 61 in 2017, 66 in 2016, 64 in 2015, 76 in 2014, 97 in 2013 and 80 in 2012.

The first arrival of the year was at Partridge Green on 24 Apr, ten days later than the 10-year average of 14 Apr. There were just another five records for April, all from the Knepp Estate except for one in an East Chidham garden. As in previous years, sightings were received on an almost daily basis during May and June, generally for one or two. Higher counts included five at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 15 May, seven on the Knepp Estate on the 26th and five at Castle Hill LNR (Newhaven) on the 31st.

Once again, there were several records of birds seen feeding or present in gardens, while supplementary feeding sites at Partridge Green, Small Dole and Ashurst regularly attracted birds.

There were no tetrads with confirmed breeding (one in 2018) while breeding was probable in 15 and possible in 27 other tetrads (11 and 20 in 2018). The only sighting of juveniles was of one on the Knepp Estate on 21 Jul. A structured survey of the southern block of the Knepp Estate estimated 19 territories (20 in 2018) while the 2019 Turtle Dove breeding survey estimated the county population at around 80 territories with a range of 50-100.

Allowing for duplication, there were a further 70 records for July followed by the usual dozen records for August which were all for single birds, except for three at Netherfield on 14 Aug. There were 11 records for September, including two at Sidlesham on the 11th and probably one that stayed at Wadhurst for a week from the 22nd to 29th. October saw the last departing bird at Pett Level on the 5th, seven days later than the ten-year average of 28 Sep. [A Podmore]

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Very common resident.

Collared Doves were recorded in 479 (51%) tetrads compared to 469 (50%) in 2018. In the first winter period, unusually there were no counts over 20 birds, the highest being 19 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 21 Jan during the early year SWBS, where the species was found in 45% of squares surveyed. They were seen in 40% of West Sussex and 44% of East Sussex gardens in the BGBW and in 84% of GBW participating gardens during the year.

Breeding was confirmed in just four tetrads (four in 2018) but likely in a further 69 (74 in 2018). The species was recorded in 55% of the squares surveyed for the BBS with a maximum of 16 on 12 Apr at Westergate. Display was first noticed on 25 Mar in Crowborough, birds were on a nest on 17 Apr at Sedlescombe and the first fledged young were seen on 2 Jun at Bexhill.

In the late summer, 50 were in a harvested field at Bexhill on 25 Aug and 68 at Jury's Gap on 28th. There were only 11 records for 20 or more during the autumn and second winter period, including counts of 61 at Iford Brooks on 15 Sep, 103 at Climping Gap on 16 Oct and 70 at

Piddinghoe (Newhaven) on 27 Nov. In the late year SWBS, Collared Doves were found in 28% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 21 at Ridgewood, the same square with the highest count of the early year SWBS. [A Podmore]

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

Scarce resident; scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Compared to 2018, both the number of records and their distribution increased in 2019 (the latter from 62 to 78 tetrads). However, at no site were birds recorded in every month of the year. An approximate number of birds recorded in each month by taking the highest count at each site in each month are shown in the following table:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
81	56	58	17	6	47	9	19	36	45	96	88

In January, five were squealing at Drayton House North Pit (Chichester GP) and seven were at Rye Hbr on 24 Jan. Four were at Birdham on 29 Jan and at Arundel WWT on 4 Feb, and two on the R Mole by Gatwick Airport continued the run of sightings there. There were three territories at Combe Valley CP on 24 Feb. Eight birds responded to play back calls at Burton MP on 26 Mar, only one was encountered a couple of days later, with one on 11 Apr (the last record of the year there). One or two were in the lower Cuckmere Valley early in the year, but there were no records after 5 Apr. The last two at Ferring Rife were on 22 Mar. Nocturnal flight calls were heard at Pulborough on 21 and 22 Mar. That birds were moving through, or out of, Sussex in the last ten days of March is also suggested by records from a garden at Selsey Bill on 22, 23, 26 and 28 Mar.

Between April and July Water Rails were recorded in about 20 sites but breeding proved difficult to record. At Arundel WWT a thorough survey found a single bird on 13 Jun and a juvenile was seen on 26 Aug. The “best guess” for the breeding population at Pett Level remained at 30 pairs; this high level was thought to be related to the continuing programme to eradicate mink from the site. Interestingly, three was the maximum count in the 23 records received from there for the rest of the year, demonstrating the elusive nature of this species.

At Drayton House North Pit at least five were calling on 15 Nov. Observers in the Hastings area counted four on 22 Aug, increasing to 16 at Glyne Gap Marsh on 7 Nov. Five were in and around Arundel WWT on 2 Dec, at Gatwick Airport on the 11th, in the Brede Valley north of Snailham on the 28th; and at Rye Hbr on the 30th. Fewer birds were found in unexpected locations in 2019 than in previous years, but a single was on the R Medway near Hartfield on 20 Nov. No records were received in 2019 from Southwater CP or from the Beachy Head area. The Ouse Valley Project (Newhaven) was unusual in holding birds late but not early in the year. [C Brooks]

Corncrake

Crex crex

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

A photo was published on social media on 28 Aug of one that had been found freshly dead near Cuckfield on or shortly before that date (per T Fox). The record is the 13th for the county this century. [M Mallalieu]

Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

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

Moorhens were recorded in 321 tetrads (34%) (cf. 326 in 2018) rather lower than the 10-year average of 355 (range 266 to 525). The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	409	457	371	199	132	130	221	226	301	405	458	435
Chichester Hbr	44	39	58	19	14	-	13	9	20	31	48	58
Chichester Canal	63	96	67	37	26	20	38	29	46	112	76	98
Arun Valley N of Arundel	75	80	49	35	29	20	60	65	64	80	94	68
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	558	547	468	243	188	185	264	336	526	573	597	586

It is noticeable that in all months the county total was lower than the 10-year averages, perhaps reflecting the long-term decline demonstrated in both the national WeBS and BBS results. In the early year SWBS, 97 birds were recorded in 20% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 16 at Rustington on 30 Jan. The only notable non-WeBS count was of 47 at Southwater CP on 22 Nov. Rather unusually, one was seen at Belle Tout (Beachy Head) on 7 Mar, one was on Seaford Head on the 31st, one by a downland dewpond near Cissbury on 19 Mar, 26 Jul and 4 Oct, as in April 2018, and one on Sullington Hill on 1 Oct.

During the BBS Moorhen was found in 25% of the squares surveyed, but with a maximum of only five at Hastings on 9 May. Breeding was confirmed in 48 tetrads and probable in a further nine. The first young were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 4 Apr and at Arundel WWT on the 7th. Waterlea Meadow (Crawley) was a new urban site at which successful breeding was noted, joining Rottingdean Pond and central Seaford. One to three were present throughout the year in Queens Park (Brighton) but did not breed. Late, perhaps third broods, were recorded at Brookfield Park (Rustington) on 4 Aug and at Poling Fishing Lakes on 14 Sep. One was on eggs at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 22 Aug. Medmerry hosted only two pairs in 2019, as against 13 in 2018.

In the second winter SWBS, 87 were recorded in 34% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 22 at Rustington, (as earlier in the year), on 6 Nov. [C Brooks]

Coot

Fulica atra

Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.

Coots were recorded in 191 tetrads in 2019, suggesting that the range is at least steady – cf. 173 in 2018, 167 in 2017, 172 in 2016, 184 in 2015. Numbers, however, remain a different matter. Monthly counts from the principal WeBS sites are shown in the following table, showing that numbers were below average for the past decade in all months except May and September.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	2736	1969	1224	674	592	703	895	1180	2678	2827	2583	2356
Chichester Hbr	411	293	169	55	37	14	57	77	165	257	304	375
Chichester GP	437	189	155	104	132	128	174	251	542	533	452	319
Barcombe Res	25	21	13	12	8	23	49	90	213	224	246	223
Bewl Water	246	189	77	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	213	107	154	193
Rye Bay	964	758	259	128	108	222	188	312	745	903	758	729
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	3388	2685	1509	703	574	804	1145	1665	2448	3064	3297	3708

In the early year SWBS, 208 were found in ten (8.2%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 125 near Fishbourne on 10 Jan. The highest early year count was of c.500 at Jury's Gap on 17 Feb, c.400 had been at nearby Scotney GP on 3 Jan and at Rye Hbr on 17 Feb.

In the BBS, Coots were noted in 23 (14%) of 169 squares (23 (13%) of 174 in 2018). The highest count was of 15 in Petworth Park on 26 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in 37 tetrads (as in 2018) and probable in one more. At Chichester Canal, a bird was sitting on a nest on 19 Mar, the first fledged young were found at Arundel WWT on 20 Apr and the last were at Pagham Hbr on 6 Aug. A bird was still on a nest at Arundel WWT on 20 Aug. Breeding was again judged to be "widespread" at Rye Hbr; there were six pairs at Medmerry, where there had been 12 in 2018, and 19 at Pagham Hbr.

In the late year SWBS, 56 were found in ten (7.4%) of the 134 surveyed squares (cf. 127 in 8 (6.3%) of 127 in 2018). A remarkable series of counts at Barcombe Res suggested that birds were staying for some time: there were 213 on 16 Sep, 224 on 14 Oct, 246 on 18 Nov and 223 on 16 Dec. Apart from a count of 252 on 16 Oct 2005 these were the second highest numbers for the site: in January there had been only 25 present.

Nocturnal flight calls were heard over Pulborough on eleven occasions: on 26 Feb and from 18 to 24 Mar, and then from 26 Aug to 7 Nov. A bat detector picked up Coot calls at Hunston (Chichester) on 21 Aug.

Coots were reported as being present throughout the year at a number of sites, although some are apparently uninviting for birds arriving to winter: these would include Ifield and Slaugham Mill Ponds and both Ardingly and Arlington Reservoirs. The table below shows that Brooklands (Worthing) hosts good numbers across the year, Southwater CP receives most outside the breeding season, but at Warnham LNR, by contrast, numbers are at their lowest in winter months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Brooklands (Worthing)	22	13	14	19	15	27	29	21	29	25	28	22
Southwater CP	34	25	26	2	10	15	1	-	39	36	32	34
Warnham LNR	18	17	31	20	52	110	122	156	167	128	15	10
Arlington Res	10	14	6	5	6	4	6	21	20	10	8	19

Coots can often turn up on small ponds and in unlikely places. The single bird which had frequented Queen's Park (Brighton), in the last months of 2018 was present until mid-February, and a group of five was on a netted-over pond by the runway at Gatwick Airport on 19 Sep (in 2018 there had been a similar record on 9 Mar). [C Brooks]

Crane

Grus grus

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

One over Arundel WWT on 1 Jan (JM & SM Court) was followed by one that flew east over the Cuckmere Valley on 2 Feb (M Washington, J Wilkinson *et al.*).

Two circling overhead and calling loudly at Mayfield on 20 Apr (P Burkett) flew off south-west and were relocated the following day on Down Level (Pevensey) (CF Ball *et al.*). The county total this century moves on to 74. [P James]



Little Grebe, Chichester Canal, 13 July (Andrew Wilkes)

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Scarce resident; passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

Little Grebes were recorded in 116 tetrads (12%), an increase on 110 tetrads in 2018 but comparable with the 10-year average of 109. The WeBS counts at the principal sites were as below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	214	183	124	57	46	56	56	91	164	143	159	139
Chichester Hbr	44	56	32	6	7	8	9	11	32	35	52	30
Pagham Hbr	16	17	7	4	-	1	-	-	21	11	16	21
Chichester GP	15	15	20	18	13	14	18	25	28	15	15	12
Burton & Chingford Ponds	17	17	13	9	6	1	9	16	21	10	10	6
Rye Bay	58	38	28	8	7	11	3	21	37	32	32	35
Average county total 2009-2018	180	158	103	45	30	32	49	98	143	187	189	202

In the first seven months numbers were above the 10-year averages, whilst in the later months, with the exception of September, fewer were recorded than the 10-year averages. Significant counts additional to the WeBS were 31 on 1 Jan and 33 on 23 Feb at Cuckmere Haven, 20 at Widewater (Lancing) on 3 Jan and 40 at Rye Hbr on 19 Oct.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads, and was probable in a further five. A pair and two well grown juveniles were observed at Chichester Canal on 16 May, whilst the next day six adults and two young were seen at Thorney Deeps (Chichester Hbr). On 1 Jun, an adult was feeding two well grown young at Medmerry. These were the earliest records of confirmed breeding. Fifteen pairs were present at Pett Level, eight at Pagham Hbr and at least seven at Rye Hbr.

During the autumn and second winter period there were 17 records of 20 or more, most from Rye Hbr, 40 being the peak count there on 19 Oct. Elsewhere 30 were at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on 3 Nov, 19 at Chingford Pond (Duncton) on 14 Sep and 19 at Cuckmere Haven on 13 Nov. [WD] Arrowsmith]

Red-necked Grebe

Podiceps grisegena

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

It is possible that the annual total was just five individuals this year. January sightings were restricted to a probable single bird noted offshore from 3 to 6 Jan between Bognor and Goring (B Akinola *et al.*). In February one was offshore at Selsey Bill on the 16th followed by 1 E the next day, perhaps the same individual (J Atkinson, S Hill, BGR Ives). Further singles noted at Selsey Bill on four separate dates between 1 and 8 Apr may all relate to the same individual (A House *et al.*).

Singles were also noted at Newhaven on 17 Mar (J MacCallum-Stewart) and a near summer plumage bird at Felpham (Bognor) on 22 Mar (IL Ralphs). Offshore sightings in April included 1 E at Goring on the 5th (DK Campbell, GRF James, RN Simpson), one in summer plumage at Rustington on the 13th (DK Campbell, G Prater) and one at Worthing on the 16th (GRF James). They are likely to relate to the same bird, which was the last one seen this year. In the autumn none was recorded. [C Davis]

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.

Great Crested Grebes were recorded in 127 (14%) tetrads across the county, slightly higher than the 10-year average of 111 (range 85 to 127), but equalling the count of 2010. 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	1187	621	426	210	180	161	216	227	466	261	268	215
Chichester GP	17	32	26	21	31	7	7	5	85	50	16	14
Weir Wood Res	30	nc	51	42	41	47	85	92	68	35	27	14
Arlington Res	16	23	24	28	17	19	45	31	78	46	18	7
Bewl Water	59	117	122	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	132	23	50	51
Normans Bay	250	1	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-
Glyne Gap (Bexhill)	424	347	9	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	4	51
Rye Bay	346	33	66	28	21	22	26	41	33	29	36	28
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	360	467	265	173	134	134	222	396	462	374	328	297

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 Bewl Water during spring and summer has resulted in some under-recording during this period.

During the first winter period, offshore counts, not wholly covered by the WeBS, were significant in terms of county totals. The highest figure was the WeBS count of 424 at Glynne Gap (Bexhill) on 21 Jan but non-WeBS counts included 400 off Pett Level on 23 Jan and a period maximum of 320 off Goring, also on 23 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was recorded as probable in four more. Display was noted as early as 10 Jan when a pair among a total of 128 was observed displaying on the sea at Goring. The earliest record of an occupied nest was at Milton Mount Park (Crawley) on 29 Mar. The only records of nests with young came from Ifield MP on 28 Apr and Tilgate Park (Crawley) on 11 May, but these were preceded by records of fledged birds at Worth Park (Crawley) on 17 Apr.

Post-breeding flocks gathered on inland waters as usual. During July and August no counts were received from Bewl Water, but 103 were observed at Weir Wood Res on 22 Jul, with 98 there on 15 and 19 Aug. During September 132 were at Bewl Water on the 13th and 92 were at Weir Wood Res on the 1st, reducing to 68 there for the WeBS count on the 15th.

Offshore numbers recorded towards the end of the year were relatively low compared with 2018, the highest being the WeBS count of 51 at Glynne Gap on 16 Dec. Similarly, little movement was reported by seawatchers, with maxima of 15 W at Selsey Bill on 4 Mar and 10 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 5 Apr. [G Osborne]

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 at each site as the minimum, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	25	19	25	2	1	6	16
Selsey Bill/Church Norton	18	17	14	-	-	4	11

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 maxima at Church Norton were 18 on 3 Jan and 17 on 6 Jan and 3 Feb. Numbers fluctuated thereafter, with the last notable count of 14 on 21 Mar. Elsewhere small numbers were recorded on 13 dates from eight other coastal sites, with maxima of four at Pett Level on 12 Jan and five offshore at Climping Gap on 22 Mar. The last spring record involved two offshore at Splash Point (Seaford) on 4 Apr, 18 days earlier than the 10-year average last spring record.

The first returning winter visitor was one at Thorney Island on 19 Oct; the next record was not until 1 Nov when one was recorded at Church Norton, where the peak November count was of just four on the 24th. The species was seen regularly in the usual Selsey Bill/Church Norton area but in lower numbers than normal from 17 Nov until the end of the year, peaking at 11 on 7 Dec at Selsey Bill (one offshore and 10 E). Elsewhere, one was in Chichester Hbr on 13, 16 and 23 Dec, one was at Scotney GP on the 15th and 18th and three were at St Leonards on the 26th.

There were no records from Birling Gap or Eastbourne, the first blank year since 2015. [C Davis]

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	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	6	2	4	9	1	1	2	4

Three were in Chichester Hbr from 1 to 4 Jan, one at Beachy Head on the 5th, and two at Rye Hbr on the 1st and 5th were likely to be birds from December 2018. Two remained at Rye Hbr throughout February. During March a summer plumaged bird was offshore at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 23rd and up to three were in Rye Bay between the 17th and 30th. A flurry of records in April during spring migration included five swimming east at Brighton Marina on 8 Apr, singles offshore at Selsey Bill on the 5th and 17th, one at Thorney Island on the 15th and two at Ferring on the 18th, the last spring record.

One at Rye Hbr on 20 Sep was the first autumn record, followed by singles at Pett Level on 19 Oct and at Scotney GP on 5 Nov. Up to two were seen in Chichester Hbr on five dates between 28 Nov and 6 Dec. Single birds were noted at Rye Hbr in December from the 11th to 18th and then 27th to 30th. [C Davis]



Black-necked Grebe, Rye Harbour, 25 March (Bob Eade)

Stone-curlew

Burhinus oedicnemus

Rare passage migrant. Formerly a scarce breeding summer visitor which since 2006 has tentatively started to recolonise the county. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

Stone-curlews were recorded at seven sites. In the spring a migrant was recorded with Noctmig sound recordings giving nocturnal flight calls on 22 and 23 Mar at Pulborough Brooks. By 14 Apr a pair had returned to the downland site they had nested at since 2015. This pair consisted of one unringed bird and one that was ringed in the area as a nestling and has attempted to breed locally every year since 2013. A nest was located which, on 15 May, proved to have two eggs in it. Hatching had occurred by 21 May but only one chick was ever seen. This was ringed on 9 Jun and confirmed as fledged on 7 Jul. Later in the month the adults were observed conducting courtship behaviour and a second nest, again containing two eggs, was located on 8 Aug. However this failed sometime between 15 and 23 Aug. The cause of failure was unknown but it was very late for a second attempt.

Also on 14 Apr an unringed pair was located at a site first known to be used in 2017. A nest containing a single egg was located on 30 Apr and this hatched on or before 17 May. By 25 Jun this chick had fledged and the adults had a second nest down, this time with two eggs. Both eggs hatched on or around 18 Jun. Both chicks were present until 1 Aug but were not seen thereafter, although the adults were. A second pair was reported in this area and the project team did locate what appeared to be an additional adult but could not confirm another pair.

At the site where a new pair attempted a late nest in 2018 a pair was observed mating on 17 Apr. A nest containing two eggs was located at this site on 30 Apr. These had hatched by the 20 May and both birds were ringed on 9 Jun but subsequently became difficult to find. One of the ringed young from this nest was located on 11 Jul on a neighbouring farm and was thus confirmed as fledged. It is unknown if the second chick fledged.

At one further downland site a Stone-curlew was heard calling on 5 May and 27 Jun but it is unknown if a pair was present or if nesting was attempted.

There was an unconfirmed report of possible breeding at another site in East Sussex, and elsewhere in East Sussex a single bird was seen on 16 Aug and again on 22 and 30 Sep and 2 Oct.

With three confirmed and three possible pairs and at least three fledged chicks this was probably the most successful year for the species since the 1970s. The RSPB Sussex Stone-curlew Project, actively supported by the Sussex Ornithological Society, remains indebted to the support of the landowners, farmers and gamekeepers whose efforts have allowed the breeding success we have seen so far.

There is still a long way to go before the recolonization 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 birds 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 please do pass the record on to the Project Team (contact: Nick.Tomalin@rspb.org.uk). If sites are known and conservation measures can be implemented, the probability of successful breeding improves significantly. [D Green, RA Black]

Oystercatcher*Haematopus ostralegus*

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

Oystercatchers were recorded in 111 (12%) tetrads during the year, rather higher than the 93 (10%) of 2018 and the 10-year mean of 91. The WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	1302	1471	1126	704	501	420	565	938	1206	1311	1621	1261
Chichester Hbr	1049	987	557	314	203	201	265	633	845	906	1218	642
Pagham Hbr	132	174	261	82	83	72	74	6	92	81	133	121
Rye Bay	118	266	282	292	193	135	207	282	255	309	255	487
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	1769	1860	1260	844	531	494	697	1108	1269	1506	1831	1646

Winter numbers at both ends of the year were well down on the 10-year averages. In the first three months the only counts higher than the WeBS were 300 at Rye Hbr on 12 Jan and 150 at Pagham Hbr on the 1st. The highest counts at sites not in the above table were 68 at Saltdean on 8 Feb and a March influx at Cuckmere Haven which peaked at 63 on the 8th.

During the spring there were several inland sightings; one or two at Pulborough Brooks on several dates between 30 Apr and 6 Jun and one at Weir Wood Res on 20 Apr. The usual light offshore passage was shown by a maximum day count of 17 E at Selsey Bill on 21 Apr.

About 72 pairs bred at 12 locations, very similar to the past five years, but success was as usual variable. At Rye Hbr there were 32 pairs but fledging success was low, and 11 pairs were at Pett Level. In Chichester Hbr, two pairs raised a total of five young at Pilsley Island, a pair at South Stakes Island produced one young, and a pair probably bred at Thorney Deeps. In Pagham Hbr 16 pairs produced only four young, there was only one pair at Medmerry, and a pair at Cuckmere Haven raised a single chick. The best success was at Arundel WWT, where three pairs all produced two young. Four pairs were found nesting on roofs this year, a record number; the pair on the tennis club in Rye returned for their 11th year, and another pair chose a house in nearby Playden. The pair using a Shoreham warehouse roof, now in their 10th year, seemed to have moved to a nearby block of flats, and a pair was found on a warehouse roof in Lewes.

During the autumn, 727 at West Wittering on 28 Sep was the year's highest total at a single site. Counts higher than WeBS included 400 at Rye Hbr on 20 Sep, 67 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Aug, 200 there on 27 Oct, and 85 at Cuckmere Haven on 12 Oct, the highest all year there. Nocturnal flight calls were recorded at Pulborough on four dates during the autumn.

In the last two months there were no counts higher than WeBS, although 600 at Pilsley Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 23 Nov was notable. Other notable counts were 100 at Medmerry on 3 Nov and 30 on the R Adur on 4 Dec and at Cuckmere Haven on the 28th. [CJR Barfield]

Black-winged Stilt*Himantopus himantopus*

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

This former vagrant is now annual in spring, with 2013 the last blank year in Sussex. There were two records in 2019 comprising two at Rye Hbr from 17 to 20 Apr, one of which was also seen on one of the Camber pits on the first date (CH Dean, PE Jones, BJ Yates *et al.*), and a pair at Pulborough Brooks on 21 May (G Trew *et al.*). The Pulborough birds were photographed mating (AR Kitson) but disappointingly they did not linger. The county total moves on to approximately 55, of which two-thirds (37) have been this century. [P James]



Avocets, Pagham Harbour, 6 March (Andrew House)

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 38 (4.0%) tetrads during the year. 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	69	72	130	95	84	81	13	1	-	-	60	55
Chichester Hbr	34	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43	29
Medmerry	-	-	34	26	7	11	3	-	-	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	35	70	10	8	8	2	-	-	-	-	17	24
Rye Bay	-	2	79	61	69	66	4	1	-	-	-	2
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	37	45	69	79	101	85	20	10	3	9	30	26

The usual wintering flock in Pagham Hbr held a regular 20 to 30 birds during the first half of January, and much to the enjoyment of visitors, numbers steadily built up to 50 on the 27th, 70 on 17 Feb and 75 on 6 Mar as birds perhaps stopped off there on the way to breeding grounds elsewhere. Numbers stayed at this level for several more days before falling rapidly, although there was an influx of 58 at nearby Medmerry on 21 Mar.

At the other traditional winter site in the Thorney Channel (Chichester Hbr), the only counts in the first two months were of 34 on 19 Jan and 20 on 11 Feb. The only sightings anywhere else during the first winter period were one at Rye Hbr on 18 Jan, three at Pett Level on the same date and two at Medmerry on the 30th.

Birds began to arrive on breeding sites from mid-February, but visible offshore passage was not noted until 29 Mar, with 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford), where the highest day total was 10 E on 30 Apr. During the spring a few birds lingered along the coast, with one on the R Adur from 18 to 22 Mar and up to three at Cuckmere Haven from 23 Mar to 11 Apr.

A total of about 89 pairs nested but success was very poor with hardly any fledged. At Rye Hbr there were about 45 pairs; some produced chicks but for the second year none survived. At Pett Level 21 pairs were present but again no young were recorded, and at Medmerry 22 pairs raised only three young. Up to 17 were at Sidlesham Ferry Pool from early April to early May but none stayed to breed, and at Pulborough Brooks a pair was present throughout the spring and summer for the third year running, but with no evidence of breeding. After 28 Jun only single figures were noted as birds left the county to moult, and Cuckmere Haven again attracted wandering birds, with one on 16 Jul and two from the 29th until the 31st.

The first double figure count of returning birds was 20 at Pagham Hbr on 23 Oct, where a regular flock of between 20 and 25 remained until the end of the year, peaking at 35 on 30 Dec. In Chichester Hbr there were ten at Thorney Deepes on 11 Nov, then a flock of 20 to 22 in the Thorney Channel throughout the month, increasing to 31 on 13 Dec and 40 on the 28th. The only birds reported away from these two sites in the last two months were singles at Medmerry on 3 Nov, Pett Level on the 30th and two at Rye Hbr on 15 Dec. [CJR Barfield]

Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

Scarce or fairly common resident and very common winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Lapwings were recorded in 166 tetrads (18%), lower than the 10-year average of 188 (range 160 to 258) and a reduction from the previous year's 209 which was high as the severe late February cold weather of 2018 moved birds about.

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	11,091	11,312	353	220	165	431	353	567	827	1420	8200	10,713
Chichester Hbr	865	248	5	1	6	8	41	30	64	325	479	1081
Pagham Hbr	1682	78	17	10	-	41	73	2	54	15	856	2154
Arun Valley N of Arundel	1785	3217	100	100	55	6	20	32	120	172	1399	1452
Pevensey Levels	2752	1113	91	32	30	28	nc	12	-	89	563	690
Rye Bay	2550	5279	60	44	46	260	172	449	244	514	3282	4457
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	10,497	8654	1001	232	194	372	764	1196	1200	2899	6751	8955

There were also large counts in Pagham Hbr of 2500 on 6 Feb, the lower Ouse Valley with 800 at Kingston on the 9th, 1000 at Iford Brooks on the 17th and 400 at Henfield Levels on the 15th. Soon after the February WeBS counts many birds left and the last four figure count was 1850 at Pulborough Brooks on the 25th. On 1 Mar they were down to 500 at Pagham Hbr and on the 5th to 100 at Pett Level. Thereafter all records were below 60 except at Pulborough Brooks where 170 were recorded on 25 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads, up on the 17 in 2018, and was probable in a further 12. Display was first noted at Arundel WWT on 20 Feb where there were three nests by 28 Mar and a chick hatched on 13 Apr. Early display was also seen at Combe Valley CP on 27 Feb among a count of 98. Nesting was seen at Pett Level from 31 Mar and Pulborough Brooks from 9 Apr. Fledging



Lapwing, Paghham Harbour, 4 April (Trevor Guy)

data were: six pairs at Medmerry produced none, five pairs at Pagham Hbr produced two, 29 pairs at Pulborough Brooks produced nine and five pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks produced one. At these sites the numbers of breeding pairs were higher than 2018 but the average productivity at 0.27 per pair was well below last year's productivity of 1.34 across more sites. Large chicks or fledglings were also recorded near Bognor, at Arundel WWT, Pevensy Levels and Rye Hbr. The total number of breeding pairs appears to be around 100. An unusual record was of two pairs nesting near the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest). During the BBS Lapwings were encountered in 8.8% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 224 on 23 Jun at Pett Level.

Post-breeding gatherings were first noted on 1 Jun with 30 at Rye Hbr, the first three-figure count was 191 at Pett Level on the 16th and in July there were 300 at Pett Level, 170 at Rye Hbr and 52 at East Guldeford. Small flocks of 20 to 115 were also reported from Pagham Hbr, the Arun Valley, Pulborough Brooks and Weir Wood Res in July and numbers slowly increased through autumn. The first flock above 1000 was recorded on 17 Nov at Rye Hbr. The WeBS total in December was well above the 10-year average and at the end of the year 2250 were at Iford Brooks on 29 Dec. [PK Holland]

Golden Plover

Pluvialis apricaria

Common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer.

Golden Plover was reported from 44 (4.7%) tetrads in the county this year, lower than the 62 (6.6%) of 2018 and the 10-year mean of 50. 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	200	1656	46	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	5037	1056
Chichester Hbr	195	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	325	46
Medmerry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	1000	-
Rye Bay	-	1647	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3500	1010
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	1396	1299	510	26	1	-	-	131	249	1119	2111	1291

The table below shows the highest monthly non-WeBS counts at Rye and Pagham Harbours, giving a better picture of the peak numbers at these key sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pagham Hbr	300	600	150	-	-	-	2	-	30	50	1000	600
Rye Hbr	3000	1500	30	-	2	-	24	4	22	1000	2000	2000

As in recent years, the overall picture was of consistently high numbers in East Sussex, with generally smaller numbers and perhaps greater mobility in West Sussex. At Pagham Hbr none was present on several of the WeBS count days, resulting in the site not appearing in that table.

Snow across the UK in late January and early February resulted in some higher than usual numbers at western sites; in addition to the WeBS counts there were 400 at East Head (West Wittering) on 22 Jan, 300 at Nutbourne (Chichester Hbr) on 5 Feb, and 200 at Medmerry on the 12th. This was also reflected at Pulborough Brooks on a smaller scale, with an influx of 20 to 30 between 5 and 10 Feb. A flock of 35 at Steyning Round Hill on the 3rd were obviously also on the move.

At Pagham Hbr the last spring record was of 45 on 24 Mar, at Rye Hbr it was 30 on the 20th and the last birds on the ground were two at Lyminster on 31 Mar. There was then a gap of over a month before a handful of May records: one at Cuckmere Haven on the 2nd, one or two at Rye Hbr from the

5th until the 17th and one at The Burgh (Burpham) on the 6th. The only, and unusual, spring report from seawatching points was 20 E at Selsey Bill on 8 Apr.

There was another long gap of nearly two months until the first autumn records, one at Rye Hbr on 15 Jul and two at Pagham Hbr on the 17th. At Rye Hbr, influxes of 24 on 26 Jul and 22 on 8 Sep seemed to move on quickly, otherwise there were only single figures there until 600 on 15 Oct, and 1000 were at Scotney GP on the 25th. At Pagham Hbr, the main arrivals were as usual much later, beginning with 220 on 10 Nov.

There were the usual reports from downland and coastal sites in late autumn, especially in mid-October. Most were singles, but there were ten at Beachy Head on 29 Sep and four there on 2 Oct, and 100 flew east over Glyndley Manor (Pevensey Levels) on the 26th. The only records of nocturnal calls were at Pulborough on 16 and 29 Oct. In the last two months, the only figure higher than in the above tables was 60 at West Wittering on 10 Dec. At Pulborough Brooks less than ten were noted, except for an influx of up to 60 from 23 to 25 Nov. [CJR Barfield]

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 52 (5.5%) tetrads this year, comparable with the 10-year mean 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	1697	1026	35	53	43	-	16	5	122	655	1421	1528
Chichester Hbr	957	407	4	-	28	-	2	2	117	523	1073	895
Pagham Hbr	585	522	30	51	12	-	12	3	5	126	307	564
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	1752	1420	1265	222	82	59	100	314	421	757	1151	1379

In the first two months there were no counts higher than the WeBS at the two main sites, but the West Sussex beaches, as usual, provided consistently good numbers, with maximum counts of 104 at Climping Gap on 20 Jan, 80 at Goring Gap on the 12th and 54 at Medmerry, also on the 12th. The highest count at Rye Hbr was 90 on 17 Feb. Elsewhere five on 2 Jan was the maximum count on the R Adur. After the end of February numbers fell dramatically, and March and April totals were well below average. In Chichester Hbr there was a maximum of eight in March and six in April, though Pagham Hbr held birds throughout the spring, with 100 on 9 Mar and migration peaks of 95 on 16 Apr and 25 on 15 May. A total of 223 E and 122 W was recorded between March and May at seawatching sites, with modest peaks of 36 E at Selsey Bill on 29 Apr and 27 E at Worthing on the 15th, with 18 at Splash Point (Seaford) on the same day apparently making their way inland. Cuckmere Haven attracted singles on 14 Apr and 14 May.

After 19 May there were only single figure records until 8 Jul, nearly all from Rye and Pagham Harbours, and throughout July and August numbers remained very low despite counts at Pagham Hbr of 30 on 12 Aug and 55 on 18 Sep. The first significant arrivals came in mid-September, with 150 at Thorney Island on the 17th and 55 at Pagham Hbr the following day.

In the last two months no counts exceeded the WeBS, and the peak at Goring Gap was a modest 40 on 2 Dec, with 55 at Climping Gap on 29 Nov. The maximum at Rye Hbr was 69 on 15 Dec, up to three were in the R Adur estuary from 4 Nov to 4 Dec and one at Cuckmere Haven on 3 Dec.

The only inland records during the year were singles at Pulborough Brooks on 12 Sep and 21 Dec, and one heard calling after dark at Beeding Hill on 27 Feb. [CJR Barfield]

Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

Scarce breeder; fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Ringed Plover was recorded in 57 (6.1%) tetrads during the year. 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	163	85	83	95	207	52	25	54	196	187	118	39
Chichester Hbr	126	4	63	20	138	28	12	12	60	172	86	28
Pagham Hbr	-	2	5	38	30	2	1	-	50	10	7	-
Climping	22	20	4	nc	15	11	nc	3	1	-	-	-
Goring	3	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	9	48	-	-	-
Lower Ouse Valley	-	14	7	-	-	-	nc	nc	12	-	-	11
Rye Bay	12	45	-	32	10	5	7	19	6	5	-	-
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	234	210	110	82	190	54	56	503	264	139	171	159

Regular counts at Goring Gap and Pilesey Island (Chichester Hbr) complement the WeBS and are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Goring	20	28	2	1	-	-	1	36	48	23	-	47
Pilesey Island	78	93	56	12	133	24	14	520	64	106	52	57

In the first three months there were higher numbers at Pagham Hbr in between the WeBS count days, with 25 on 15 Jan, 52 on 26 Feb and 25 on 8 Mar. At Rye Hbr 100 on 6 Jan was notable, and there were also good numbers at Newhaven Tide Mills during most of the month, peaking at 50 on the 20th. During the spring there were still 80 at Pagham Hbr on 25 May and 50 on 2 Jun.

There were about 44 breeding pairs, down from an average 52 over the last five years and the lowest since 2012. At Rye Hbr (where numbers have been stable in recent years), there were at least 26 pairs, and although many pairs had second broods, overall productivity was low. There was one pair at Pett Level, seven pairs raised three young at Pagham Hbr, and at Medmerry birds were already displaying on 15 Feb but only two pairs bred. At Pilesey Island two out of the four pairs were successful, producing three chicks.

Outside the above reserves birds often try to nest on heavily disturbed beaches. It was a slightly better year than usual, although again with little success. At Cuckmere Haven a pair nested but were probably unsuccessful; one chick was seen to be taken by Ravens. At West Beach (Littlehampton) there were six pairs on 19 Jun but probably only one was successful, raising one chick. At Elmer Rocks and West Wittering very young chicks were recorded, and at the eastern arm of Shoreham Hbr a pair with four chicks was seen on a warehouse roof on 17 Jul, probably the pair seen on the nearby beach on 29 Apr relocating after failure. This is the first record of roof nesting in Sussex for Ringed Plover, and there is little published evidence for it elsewhere. Unfortunately the birds had disappeared a week later.

During the autumn migration peak there were August counts of 60 at both Pagham and Rye Harbours in between the WeBS, and 150 at Medmerry on the 25th was the largest count of the year other than at Pilesey Island. The highest numbers away from the main sites were on the Adur Estuary, where regular counts revealed good numbers between 14 Aug and 22 Oct, with a maximum of 60 on 28 Aug. The second winter period found the highest numbers in West Sussex,

with 50 at Medmerry on 8 Nov, a peak of 47 at Goring on 20 Dec and 35 at Elmer Rocks on the 27th. In addition to the WeBS there were 30 at Paghams Hbr on 23 Dec and 24 at Rye Hbr on the 30th, and there were still 26 on the R Adur on the 12th.

Most of the inland records came from Pulborough Brooks, where there were two on 26 Mar, up to six from 18 Apr to 23 Jun with a peak in the first week of May, then one or two again from 8 Aug to 12 Sep. Additionally there were two at Henfield Brooks from 26 Mar to 5 Apr and one at Arlington Res on the 30th. [CJR Barfield]

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

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

Little Ringed Plover was recorded in 30 (3.2%) tetrads this year. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of birds	28	34	23	22	35	21	10
No. of sites	9	12	7	7	7	9	5
10-yr average totals	12	28	24	26	40	23	9



Little Ringed Plover, Medmerry, 11 June (Andrew Wilkes)

The first to arrive was one at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Mar, four days later than the 10-year average, followed by two at Medmerry on the 21st. The March county total was by far the highest so far, reflecting the trend towards earlier arrival over the years, and included nine at Medmerry on the 31st and five at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on the 30th. Nearly 75% of the year's records came from the above three sites, Pulborough Brooks alone accounting for just over 40%. During March and April one or two briefly passed through at Selsey Bill, Bognor Regis, the lower Arun Valley and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), with three at Weir Wood Res on 28 Mar.

Despite those early high numbers it was a poor breeding season, with an estimated nine pairs, compared with an average of 13 over the last five years, and with limited evidence of success. Two pairs at Medmerry raised two young, and there was one pair each at Pulborough Brooks, Pett Level, and Sidlesham Ferry Pool, also with juveniles seen. At Rye Hbr, two or three pairs were present and probably bred. A pair attempted to breed on the Knepp Estate for the second year but again failed, and one or two were occasionally seen at Cuckmere Haven between 25 Mar and 19 Jun. A single bird was at Warnham LNR from 30 Apr to 20 May.

At Pulborough Brooks numbers built up to 11 on 12 Jul as migrants passed through, and there were seven at Pett Level from the 16th to 21st. From July onwards the only birds recorded away from the breeding sites were three at Scotney GP on 8 Jul and one or two at Bewl Water, Combe Valley CP, the lower Arun Valley and Thorney Island. The last record was of two at Cuckmere Haven on 29 Sep, nine days later than the 10-year average. [CJR Barfield]

Kentish Plover

Charadrius alexandrinus

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

The only record was of a first summer male in flooded fields on the west side of Cuckmere Haven on 14 Apr (N)N Pope *et al.*), a typically brief stay by this increasingly rare bird in the UK. From 1 Jan 2020 records are assessed by BBRC. The county total this century moves on to 31. [P James]

Dotterel

Charadrius morinellus

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

There were two records in 2019, the first at an undisclosed downland location on 15 Sep (AD Whitcomb) followed on the 19th by an adult at Seaford Head that flew in from the west, landed briefly and then continued eastwards (MR Eade, M O'Shea). The county total this century moves on to 83. [P James]

Eurasian 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 62 tetrads (6.6%) compared with a 10-year average of 58 (range 38 to 67), mostly at or near coastal sites. Inland records were from Pulborough Brooks, where there were numerous spring records between 11 Apr and 17 May in small numbers, with a maximum of seven on five dates between 30 Apr and 6 May, followed by singles on three summer dates. Five were seen at Weir Wood Res on 15 Apr, one was seen flying west at Broadwater Warren on 7 Jul and there were two at Mannings Heath on 17 Jul. The WeBS counts at the main sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3	2	-	50	13	1	34	149	15	4	2	1
Chichester Hbr	2	1	-	20	4	-	20	96	11	1	2	-
Medmerry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	3	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	1	1	-	1	1	1	8	32	1	1	-	1
Average County Total 2009 - 2018	2	2	3	60	72	7	78	62	17	5	3	1

The WeBS counts, however, do not always record the highest numbers at a site. Higher counts than those shown in the above table included ten in Chichester Hbr on 1 May and 12 at Medmerry on 26 Apr. In Pagham Hbr peak monthly counts exceeding the WeBS were two on 2 and 18 Mar, 42 on 28 Apr, 20 on 1 May, two on 12 Jun, 24 on the 21 Jul; six on 17 Sep, five on 2 Oct and in November two on the 19th. In Rye Bay the highest WeBS count was 19 on 21 Apr.

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

	Apr	May	Peak movement and hrs watched
Selsey Bill	447	138	161 on 18 Apr in 8 hr
Worthing/Goring	258	33	69 on 22 Apr in 5 hr
Telscombe Cliffs	68	-	21 on 17 Apr in 3 hr
Splash Point	638	105	128 on 22 Apr in 13 hr
Birling Gap	320	48	74 on 22 Apr in 9 hr

Eastwards movements appeared to have begun in earnest on 14 Apr when 39 E passed Splash Point (Seaford). Daily counts thereafter increased steadily, even if erratically, to peak on the 18th when 161 E passed Selsey Bill, followed by a steady daily decline to the last notable counts of 27 E at Worthing and 32 E at Birling Gap on 16 May. Interestingly, the totals recorded at Splash Point between 14 Apr and 7 May exceeded those at Selsey Bill by a factor of 1.4.

One or two were recorded on a few days in June and early July but the first double-figure count was ten at Pilsey Island on 5 Jul followed by another ten at Pagham Hbr on the 14th and 24 there on the 21st. The highest counts in August were early in the month with 44 at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on the 2nd and 32 at Pagham Hbr on the 4th. Thereafter the highest counts were eight on 28 Aug at Pagham Hbr and six there on 17 Sep followed by mostly singles to the end of the year. [JA Hobson]

Curlew

Numenius arquata

Common passage migrant and winter visitor; formerly a very scarce breeder. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Curlews were recorded in 85 tetrads (9.0%) compared with a 10-year average of 81 (range 74 to 91). Once again, numbers in East Sussex were significantly lower than in West Sussex where the harbour complexes attracted the majority of birds.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	865	1519	1590	272	24	107	495	1121	924	1019	959	1562
Chichester Hbr	475	911	1025	61	17	40	345	833	638	881	577	1246
Pagham Hbr	177	226	380	201	3	49	122	228	112	61	251	112
Rye Bay	181	372	140	3	3	11	25	55	158	35	118	160
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	1798	1598	1406	378	78	293	1189	1278	1545	1301	1407	1403

With the exceptions of March and December all other monthly counts were lower than the 10-year average. The only notable counts additional to the WeBS were at Pett Level, where there were 150 on 15 and 24 Jul, 108 on 2 Oct, 220 on 30 Nov and 250 on 3 Dec. The 1% national threshold of 1200 was met in Chichester Hbr in December. The peak county total of 1562 in December was marginally greater than in 2018 (1487) but did nothing to reverse the continuing decline of this species demonstrated in Sussex Bird Report 71 (2018), p. 82-83.

Observed coastal migration was unremarkable, much as in 2018, as shown in the following table computed on the assumption that the highest number seen at a single site was the maximum in that day:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Flying east	12	11	14	53	6	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Flying west	18	7	2	1	-	10	8	9	8	1	-	1

The highest day total was only nine; flying west at Selsey Bill on 1 Jan, west at Birling Gap on 7 Jan and east at Birling Gap on 18 Apr.

The last double-figure count in April was of 14 on the 26th at Medmerry; thereafter most records through May were in single figures except for ten on the 17th at West Chidham. The next double-figure counts were of 26 on 7 Jun at Pilsey Island and 47 at Pagham Hbr on the 16th as birds returned from breeding grounds. The first treble-figure count was of 100 at Pett Level on 1 Jul followed by 270 at Pilsey Island on the 5th, both single day counts, suggesting that birds moved on rapidly. During the Hastings area migration watch between 28 Aug and 10 Oct a total of 12 Curlews were recorded over three dates with a maximum of eight on 30 Sep.

During the last four months of the year there were 47 counts of 100 or more, with a maximum of 254 at Thorney Island on 26 Oct. Many of these counts were for one day only, again suggesting rapid onwards movement. Conversely, at Pett Level numbers held up well for 11 dates in November and between 25 and 30 Dec.

There were few inland records. At Pulborough Brooks one was noted on four dates in February and March, with three on 29 Apr, but thereafter there were only singles on four dates between 10 Jul and 30 Dec. Two were noted at Hailsham on 25 Jun, two at the Knepp Estate on 28 Jun and one at Arlington Res on 27 Aug and 16 Nov. [JA Hobson]

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

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

This species was recorded in 36 tetrads (3.8%), the same as in 2018 and comparable with the 10-year mean of 39. The great majority of birds (excluding passage migrants) were recorded at Chichester Hbr, as indicated by the monthly WeBS counts:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	333	28	9	55	69	2	1	21	7	2	455	418
Chichester Harbour	330	27	7	9	48	2	1	21	5	2	455	409
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	623	681	272	52	51	17	35	55	73	119	287	452

Numbers in Chichester Hbr during the first winter period peaked at 500 on 20 Jan before falling to 260 on 11 Feb and 15 on 1 Mar. Double-figure counts were noted at only two other sites during the period. At Pagham Hbr the average count for the 29 days when the species was recorded between 1 Jan and 22 Mar was seven, with a high count of 50 on 6 Mar. At Rye Hbr the average



Bar-tailed Godwits, Rye Harbour, 18 May (Barry Yates)

count for the 11 days when the species was recorded between 11 Jan and 28 Mar was three, with a high count of 12 on 3 Mar. The only other records for the period came from Medmerry, where one or two birds were counted on three occasions, and Camber, where one was seen on 8 Jan.

From late March the focus shifted to birds seen from seawatching sites, where monthly totals of eastbound godwits were higher than in any of the previous four years, as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	5	1518	94
Worthing/Goring	-	720	58
Telscombe Cliffs	-	308	-
Splash Point	-	1913	141
Birling Gap	-	988	36

Much of the spring passage was concentrated between 22 and 24 Apr with a smaller spike in movement on the 30th. The numbers of eastbound birds recorded at the principal seawatching sites on these dates, with hours watched in brackets, were as follows:

	22 Apr	23 Apr	24 Apr	25 Apr	30 Apr
	E	E	E	E	E
Selsey Bill	636 (11)	228 (10)	338 (11)	-	92 (12)
Worthing/Goring	400 (3)	161 (3)	72 (5)	23 (6)	25 (4)
Telscombe Cliffs	220 (1)	76 (1)	- (2)	- (4)	- (1)
Splash Point	367 (13)	793 (12)	118 (9)	98 (8)	316 (8)
Birling Gap	283 (9)	525 (6)	25 (4)	4 (6)	43 (4)

The main counts within the western harbours in April and May included 48 in Chichester Hbr on 17 May, 16 in Pagham Hbr on 30 Apr and 33 on 6 May. At Rye Hbr, 46 were recorded on 21 Apr, up to 35 there from 3 to 6 May, and at Pett Level there were 30 on 23 Apr. The last double-figure count was of ten at Pagham Hbr on 19 May.

Thereafter only small numbers remained through the summer until the next double-figure counts of 21 on 3 Aug in Chichester Hbr, ten there on the 15th and 20 in Pagham Hbr on the 27th; otherwise numbers generally were fewer than ten to the end of the year except for 450 at Pilsley Island (Chichester Hbr) on 23 Nov and 400 there on 14 Dec. [MC Daniel]

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. Section 41.

Records were received from 53 tetrads (5.6%) compared to 52 (5.5%) in 2018 and a 10-year mean of 49. The great majority of birds were recorded at Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks, as reflected in the monthly WeBS counts below.

The county totals were below the 10-year averages in all of the first six months but were higher in the final quarter. The 1% international threshold figure of 1110 was not reached at any site but the 1% national threshold of 390 was exceeded at least once at all the sites shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	646	528	217	176	44	20	164	106	169	899	847	1218
Chichester Hbr	417	341	119	39	-	-	34	39	81	850	272	242
Pagham Hbr	210	71	94	137	44	3	60	24	85	18	126	757
Arun Valley N of Arundel	18	115	3	-	-	-	58	2	1	28	446	219
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	935	622	450	214	56	63	73	259	325	523	775	671

In the first winter period, counts in excess of the WeBS included 80 at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Jan, counts on seven days in the first half of February in excess of 100 with a peak of 550 there on the 12th, 300 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 9th and, in March at Pagham Hbr, three counts of 100 or more peaking at 179 on the 31st. Double-figure counts elsewhere included 15 at Arundel WWT on 18 Feb, 130 in the lower Arun Valley on 2 Mar, 20 at Pett Level on the 17th and 22 at Cuckmere Haven on the 18th.

In April and May the largest numbers were in Pagham Hbr where, over 27 days in April they averaged 54 with peak counts of 130 on the 1st and 110 on the 19th while in May the daily average (21 days) dropped to 28 with a peak of 70 on 11 May. In Chichester Hbr 20 were counted on both 15 and 20 Apr but the only other double-figure counts were 11 at Cuckmere Haven on the 4th, 11 at Pett Level on 18 and 20 May, and 17 at Rye Hbr on the 6th with 30 there on the 22nd. There were only two spring seawatching records; 12 E past Selsey Bill on 28 Mar and 2 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 15 Apr.

From June to August, when many birds summered, the largest counts were from Pagham Hbr. Numbers here varied widely as birds moved between sites; peaks of 96 in June and 87 in July were recorded but the 120 on 15 Aug was suggestive of returning migrants. Some also summered at Pulborough Brooks, with records on 38 dates from 25 Jun until the end of August, with a peak of 58 on 8 Jul. Small but varying numbers were recorded at other suitable sites, with peak counts in Chichester Hbr of 40 on 8 Jul and 38 on 2 Aug, and at Pett Level 32 on 3 Jun and 24 on 8 Aug. A count of 80 at Medmerry on 2 Aug suggested returning migrants.

Through the autumn months there was a steady increase in numbers; the daily average across the county in September was 25 with a peak of 78 at Pagham Hbr on the 15th. In October numbers increased considerably, as shown by the WeBS counts above; the daily average across the county rose to 74, with the first three-figure count of 120 at Pulborough Brooks on the 18th and a peak day count of 270 in Chichester Hbr on the 26th.

During the second winter period Pulborough Brooks was a favoured site; the daily average there during November was 235 with many three-figure counts, peaking at 600 on the 30th. Similarly in December the daily average there was 219, peaking at 500 on the 9th. Elsewhere there were nine three-figure counts in November shared between Chichester and Pagham Harbours, with a peak count in the former of 300 on the 13th and in the latter 300 on the 16th, but there were only ten double-figure counts elsewhere.

There was a similar picture in December; the seven three-figure counts were again shared between the two western harbours, where the highest count was 2000 at Pagham Hbr on 29 Dec. Records away from the above sites were few and generally in single figures. [MC Daniel, JA Hobson]



Turnstone, Shoreham Harbour, 12 October (Richard Allan)

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 78 tetrads (8.3%), higher than both the 10-year average of 66 (range 59 to 76) and the 69 (7.4%) of 2018, and were encountered more particularly in West Sussex. 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	253	183	272	50	17	-	12	52	279	162	467	471
Chichester Hbr	119	97	74	-	6	-	-	29	63	38	196	219
Pagham Hbr	17	4	-	9	6	-	10	-	51	26	68	22
Climping Gap	78	13	108	nc	5	-	nc	1	18	11	59	122
Glyne Gap (Bexhill)	25	18	78	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	65	39	72	78
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	662	561	494	194	59	27	44	209	268	323	351	423

The WeBS counts in both January and February were particularly low, just 38% and 33% of the 10-year averages. At Pagham Hbr, after 100 on 1 Jan most records were of around 20. The largest non-WeBS counts were 120 at Climping on 31 Jan and 79 at Goring Gap on the 2nd. The next highest was 37 on 9 Feb and most reports were below 20. At Pett Level the maximum count was 45 on 6 Jan. At St Leonards the count was 78 on 19 Feb and 90 on 8 Apr.

Seawatching numbers through April were low; the monthly total at Selsey Bill of 85 E and 7 W, and at Goring 45 E on 23 Apr being the only significant counts.

From 1 Jun to 20 Jul the only records came from Pagham Hbr with a peak of 14 on 5 Jul. Seventeen at Rye Hbr on 24 Jul suggested early returning migrants as did 17 at Selsey Bill on the 27th. During August a total of 128 flew west at Selsey Bill, and 60 at Goring Gap on the 17th, 23 at Pett Level on the 27th and 23 at Shoreham on 3 Sep showed they were returning. There were counts of 84 at Goring Gap on 28 Sep and 83 at Climping Gap on 4 Oct. Two at Union Canal (East Guldeford) on 13 Oct were watched flipping over cow pats to find food.

In the second winter period the Chichester Hbr population returned to more normal levels. The largest individual site count was 122 at Climping Gap on 14 Dec. As well as the Glyne Gap WeBS, maximum counts in East Sussex in December were 20 at Pett Level on the 5th and 35 at the river mouth in Rye Bay on the 15th. The only inland record during 2019 was four at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Oct. [PK Holland]

Knot

Calidris canutus

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

2018: The noted count of 504 E at Splash Point on 7 May in 2018 SxBR should have been 50.

2019: 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	692	701	-	2	32	-	2	-	63	33	1157	852
Chichester Hbr	686	604	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	33	1105	614
Pagham Hbr	6	67	-	2	14	-	-	-	35	-	50	138
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	1547	2268	717	37	8		2	7	46	31	344	1376

There were low WeBS counts in the first winter period, when the maximum non-WeBS count of 800 on Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 12 Feb was also low. Approximately 200 were at Pagham Hbr on 1 Jan and four dates in February, whilst the maximum at Rye Hbr was 30 on 20 Jan and 17 Feb, well below the 150 recorded in January 2018. The zero WeBS total in March was unusual (most had departed by 24 Feb) but because they usually depart in mid-March the WeBS count can be very variable depending on the set date, with highs in 2008 and 2013 of 2014 and 1919 respectively, and lows in 2007 and 2017 of 14 and 79 respectively. This year the maximum anywhere during March was 30 at Pagham Hbr on the 18th. April maxima were six at Pagham Hbr on the 5th and 8 E at Birling Gap on the 22nd.

In May there were 19 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 8th, 15 E past Selsey Bill on the 13th and 6 E past Worthing on the 16th. At Rye Hbr there were 18 on 19 May and one on 5 Jun. Only at Pagham Hbr (maximum two) and Rye Hbr (maximum four) were Knot recorded in June and July.

One at Arlington Res on 8 Sep was the only record from an inland site. Meanwhile at Rye Hbr, six on 25 Aug, 20 from 4 to 19 Sep, four on 22 Sep and then none except two on 16 Nov until 100 on 15 Dec and 150 on 29 Dec indicated two influxes. In Pagham Hbr there were 16 by 13 Aug, 35 on 15 Sep and 150 on 15 Oct, the first flock above 100 in the county.

The WeBS total in November was well above the 10-year average with 600 at Pilsey Island on 23 Nov. Although the WeBS total dropped in December it does not include the 150 at Rye Hbr on the 17th and 27th and there were also 150 at Pagham Hbr on the 8th. Nevertheless the status as a 'common' winter visitor appears to be at risk. [PK Holland]

Ruff*Calidris pugnax*

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

The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	19	27	1	-	1	-	1	9	5	1	23	6
Arun Valley N of Arundel	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	16	24	-	-	-	-	1	9	4	1	23	6
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	12	17	8	1	-	-	-	5	6	8	7	11

County totals in January, February, August and November were noticeably higher than the 10-year averages but the WeBS counts do not always capture the highest numbers. This was particularly so at Pulborough Brooks, the favoured site within the Arun Valley, and in Rye Bay. The peak monthly counts at these two sites, most of which were 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	31	26	55	3	2	-	5	9*	9	21	28	29
Pulborough Brooks	7	5	5	3	1	-	1	-	-	4	5	5
Rye Bay	24	21	50	-	1	-	4	9*	9	17	23*	24

The wintering population was, therefore, somewhat larger than represented by the WeBS counts.

Numbers reduced significantly during April as birds departed; the last April record was of one at Pulborough Brooks on the 10th. However, single stragglers were noted on two dates in May; in the lower Arun Valley on the 19th, and at Medmerry and Rye Hbr on the 22nd.

The first returning bird was at Rye Hbr on 7 Jul followed by a steady trickle of ones or twos until four were at Pett Level on the 29th. In August, following nine in Rye Bay on the 1st, most counts were of up to three. Ruffs were then recorded on many days in the following months but usually in single figures, the highest counts being shown in the second table above, although there were seven double-figure counts in November and eight such in December. Apart from Pulborough Brooks, the only inland sites where single Ruffs were recorded were Charleston Reedbed on 25 Mar and 14 Sep, Arlington Res on 8 Sep and Amberley Wild Brooks on 25 and 30 Dec. [G Turvey, JA Hobson]

Curlew Sandpiper*Calidris ferruginea*

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

Numbers of Curlew Sandpiper can vary greatly from year to year and the sum of the monthly totals is lower than the 10-year average (range 24 to 72). The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
2	3	-	10	11	13	3

A small scattering of spring records started with one at Pett Level on 5 Apr followed by one at the Midrips (Rye Bay) on the 30th and then one at Rye Hbr on 17 May, increasing to three on the 19th.

During July, one in summer plumage was recorded at Pett Level between 14 and 20 Jul and another adult was at Thorney Island on the 22nd. Eight were at Rye Hbr on the 28th but only one the next day. The peak time for Curlew Sandpiper is usually mid to late August and September when the passage of juveniles reaches its maximum. However, the overall August and September totals were lower than average this year and most records were from Pagham Hbr and Medmerry, with peak counts of six at Pagham Hbr on 3 Aug and five on 5 Sep. The only other records were three at Pilsley Island on 10 Sep, two at Rye Hbr on 28 Aug and again on 19 Sep. October records were one at Pagham Hbr on the 2nd and 3rd and the last one at Rye Hbr on the 26th. [C Davis]

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	54	77	191	-	98	26	-	-	2	76	91	66
Chichester Hbr	47	20	136	-	96	26	-	-	-	76	22	30
Pagham Hbr	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	62	-
Climping Gap	7	36	55	nc	-	-	nc	-	-	-	2	15
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	141	131	116	72	101	18	37	60	24	48	89	116

In the 2018 report it was pointed out that Sanderling are not comprehensively counted by WeBS; an observation which was true in 2019. The maximum non-WeBS numbers recorded in January were 62 on Pilsley Sands (Chichester Hbr) (11th), 80 at Pagham Hbr (8th), 75 at Climping (31st), 68 at Goring Gap (2nd) and 15 at Lancing (5th). On 1 Feb there were 70 at Elmer Rocks and at Pilsley Sands 72 on the 11th.

Winter numbers east of Lancing were small but ten were at Newhaven on 15 Jan and four at Rye Hbr on the 6th. On 23 Mar the Pilsley Island count of 136 was the largest of the first winter period and there were 120 at Pilsley Sands on 29 May.

Eastward passage, as recorded at four seawatching sites was as follows:

	Apr	May	Peak movements
Selsey Bill	58	339	19 E on 20 Apr and 87 E on 14 May
Worthing/Goring	5	18	10 E on 13 May
Splash Point	39	55	14 E on 25 Apr and 30 E on 16 May
Birling Gap	18	50	13 E on 14 Apr and 40 E on 16 May

Two birds in summer plumage were at Rye on 9 Jun and one on 12 Jun. The next records were four on the beach at Selsey Bill on 31 Jul and 28 passing (11 E and 17 W) during August. One at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Aug was the only inland record of the year. The highest count of the year was 300 at Pilsley Island on 12 Aug but elsewhere in August eight at Medmerry on the 2nd was the largest count. During September the peak count was 50 at Goring Gap on the 28th.

The highest count of the year in East Sussex was 50 at Pett Level on 7 Oct. On 15 Oct there were 120 at Pilsley Sands and notable counts thereafter were 62 at Pagham Hbr on 17 Nov, 30 at Rye Hbr on 22 Nov and at least 84 roosting in the fields at Goring Gap on 12 Dec. [PK Holland]

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 of 3400 was exceeded in Chichester Hbr in January, November and December. The highest counts at Pagham Hbr were 2000 on 8 Jan and 2538 on 15 Dec. The monthly WeBS counts at the two principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	16,381	5430	238	53	89	25	91	316	192	1022	7705	7470
Chichester Hbr	14,252	3313	231	45	67	16	24	193	59	795	6880	4791
Pagham Hbr	1786	1803	-	3	15	-	36	6	27	197	675	2538
Av. county total 2009-2018	11,967	9696	5877	329	633	38	261	764	584	3380	7241	9754

In January, the county total was 37% above the average for the last 10 years, although the rest of the year, with the exception of November, was considerably below the average.

Although Dunlins were recorded almost daily in April, numbers declined steadily, presumably as individuals headed north to their breeding grounds. Counts in April and May were of single and double figures; 119 at Pagham Hbr on 24 May was the only exception. Eastward coastal passage was unexceptional with a total of 226 recorded throughout April and May with a clear peak of 80 E at Selsey Bill on 29 Apr.

Signs of returning migrants were apparent from 2 Jul. By the 21st there were 80 at Pagham Hbr and 100 at Rye Hbr on the 29th. The first four-figure count in the autumn period was of 2000 on 12 Aug at Pilesey Sands (Chichester Hbr) with further high counts from this site of 1300 on 23 Nov and 2000 on 31 Dec.

Records of birds more than 10 km from the coast came from Arlington Res in May, July, August and September, whilst at Pulborough Brooks they were recorded almost daily in every month except for June. [WDJ Arrowsmith]



Dunlin, Arlington Reservoir, 1 May (Peter Wilson)



Purple Sandpiper, Newhaven, 28 November (Bob Eade)

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	Jun	Jul		Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	24	11	11	4	-	-	1	-	1	15	14
Shoreham Hbr	4	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
Brighton Marina	8	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newhaven Hbr	12	8	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	9
Other	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	2

Total numbers recorded were lower than the 10-year average, but counts at Brighton Marina were made difficult by the closure of the breakwaters. There was a low county total for April and no May records.

The highest count in the first winter period was 12 at Newhaven on both 3 and 13 Jan. Eight were recorded on three occasions, at Brighton Marina on 8 Jan and at Newhaven on both 20 Feb and 19 Mar. One was recorded at Seaford on 9 Feb. The last record of the season was four at Brighton Marina on 22 Apr, six days earlier than the 10-year average date.

One early returning bird was recorded at Rye Hbr on 23 Jul, 22 days later than the earliest ever recorded between 1960 and 2017 but much earlier than the 10-year average date of 3 Oct. There was then a long gap before the next record of one at Shoreham on 25 and 26 Oct, the only October record. The highest counts in the second winter period were at Newhaven, with ten on 30 Nov and nine on both 19 and 20 Dec. Unusual records were of one seen at Pett Level on 23 Nov and two at Hastings on 21 Dec. [C Davis]

Little Stint

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

It was a very poor year for Little Stints. They were recorded at just three sites on ten dates with a total of only ten individuals, as shown in the following table:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	2	4	-	-	-
10-year average	1	1	1	1	7	1	2	9	12	7	2	1

The first record was of one at Pulborough Brooks for one day only on 2 Jan. The next was on 18 Apr at Rye Hbr followed by another there on 11 May and a third on the 17th to 18th. The first returning migrants were two on 12 Aug at Pagham Hbr. A month later, at Rye Hbr, there was one on 13 Sep, another one on the 20th which was joined by yet another on the 21st and finally a third one on the 22nd. This was a fairly early last date compared with the average for the previous eight years of 8 Nov (birds stayed to over-winter in 2009 and 2010). [JA Hobson]

Pectoral Sandpiper

*Calidris melanotos***Very scarce passage migrant, mainly in autumn.**

After a blank year in 2018, there were three records in 2019: the first at Pett Level from 14 to 18 Jul (CM George, PE Jones *et al.*) followed by one at a private site in East Sussex on 14 and 15 Sep (SH Linington, AJ Williams *et al.*) and another at Rye Hbr on 20 Sep (A Parker *et al.*). The Pett Level bird becomes the earliest ever autumn arrival, exceeding the previous earliest (18 Jul 1987) by four days. The county total moves on to 100, with 26 seen this century. [P James]

Woodcock

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

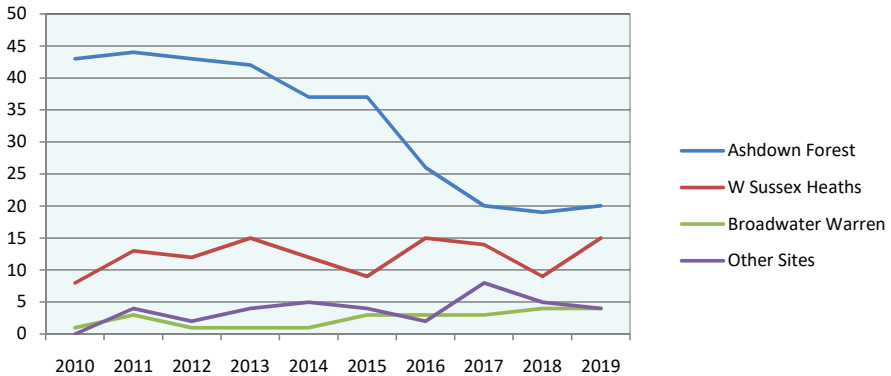
Woodcock was recorded in 76 (8.1%) tetrads this year compared with 63 (6.7%) in 2018 and a 10-year average of 90 (range 62-147). The minimum numbers of birds and sites for the two winter periods are shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of birds	32	35	10	3	18	25
No of sites	16	20	9	3	12	22

In the first two months there were ones and twos widely scattered across the interior, with only a few south of the South Downs. In late January and early February snow across the UK brought a small but noticeable influx, with six on the water meadows at Arundel on 21 Jan and four at Knowlands Wood (Barcombe) on 30 Jan and 2 Feb. There were only two other records of more than three; six at Pett Level on 24 Feb and four at Pulborough Brooks on the 21st. In the second half of March nearly all of the few records were from near the coast, with two at Pett Level on the 17th and singles at Beachy Head on the 21st and 23rd and at Brighton Wild Park on the 30th.

There are often not many records during April, but this year the first report was not until the 30th. Even more unusually, it was the only breeding proof of the year; a fledgling found on a track in Rewell Wood (Arundel) and helped back to safety. Roding was not reported until 6 May at St

Leonards Forest. There were an estimated 44 breeding territories, with about 21 on Ashdown Forest, 15 on the W Sussex heaths, four at Broadwater Warren and singles at Rewell Wood (Arundel), Pulborough Brooks, Fore Wood (Hastings) and St Leonards Forest. Numbers reported at Ashdown Forest have declined steeply in recent years as shown in the graph below, though they are stable or slowly increasing elsewhere.



Woodcock – approximate numbers of territories 2010 to 2019, based on SOS records

There were only two records in July and the only August sighting was of one at Medmerry on the 16th. Three records in the first half of September were followed by another long gap before the first autumn arrivals in mid-October, which included singles at Beachy Head on the 27th and 28th.

In the last two months all records were of one or two except for four at Kingley Vale and three at Pulborough Brooks on 24 Nov. The only coastal records were from Selsey Bill, where two were seen coming in off the sea on 15 Nov, with another on 8 Dec. [CJR Barfield]

Jack Snipe

Lymnocyptes minimus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Jack Snipes were recorded in 25 tetrads (2.7%) compared with 20 (2.1%) in 2018. The minimum monthly totals, computed on the basis that the highest monthly count at a site was the maximum, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of sites	5	4	3		5	8	9
No. of birds	6	6	3		10	15	26
10-yr average no. of birds 2009-2018	20	12	10		5	10	8
10-yr ranges	7-32	5-30	2-20		0-12	4-29	2-19

Monthly minimum totals in the first winter period continued the trend in recent years of falling numbers when compared with the 10-year averages. A minimum of nine individuals was recorded at seven sites, all of them suitable wetland locations. All but three of these records were of single birds; twos were noted at Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 10 Jan, at Newhaven on 6 Feb and at Medmerry on 12 Feb. The final record for the first winter period came from Pulborough Brooks on 27 Mar, almost three weeks earlier than the 10-year average date.

The first returning bird was recorded at Arundel WWT on 12 Oct, eighteen days later than the 10-year average. Monthly totals in October and November were the highest since 2013 (12

and 29 respectively) and that for December the highest since 2007 (also 26). A minimum of 31 birds was recorded at ten sites during the final quarter of the year. Most records were of one or two, but there were five at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 27 Oct, five at Medmerry on 20 Nov and six there on 5 Dec. However, the largest December counts came late in the month from Ashdown Forest, where nine were recorded on 22 Dec and 13 on the 27th, flushed up from wet boggy ground. [MC Daniel]

Common Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

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

This species was recorded from 123 tetrads (13%), up from 113 in 2018 and an increase in the 10-year average of 114 (range 88 to 176). The WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	151	201	79	10	2	-	2	6	16	156	104	227
Chichester Hbr	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	37	24	65
Arun Valley N of Arundel	28	66	21	4	-	-	-	3	2	48	34	13
Lower Adur Valley	36	74	31	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	35	74
Lower Ouse Valley	11	28	1	-	1	-	nc	nc	-	-	5	15
Eastbourne Lakes	2	1	9	-	nc	nc	-	nc	-	33	-	25
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	276	306	221	31	1		2	24	44	123	222	320

The WeBS totals in every month but May and October were lower than the 10-year averages for 2009 to 2018, often significantly so. While the WeBS counts provide an invaluable snapshot of the position across the county on one day a month, they necessarily miss the monthly variation in numbers, especially at well-watched sites. The monthly maxima from these sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	47	35	45	5	-	-	-	2	12	36	14	43
Medmerry	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	40	107
Pagham Hbr	300	5	10	2	-	-	-	1	10	12	40	20
Arundel WWT	34	60	40	6	1	1	-	4	7	40	45	7
Pulborough Brooks	25	26	30	3	1	-	10	20	25	100	50	16
Lower Adur Valley	36	74	31	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	35	74
Ashdown Forest	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	20	61
Eastbourne Lakes	2	12	9	3	-	-	-	-	-	33	70	25
Rye Bay	20	38	12	6	2	-	8	4	3	12	14	18
Total	466	268	26	25	4	1	18	32	58	253	328	371

During the first winter period Snipe were recorded widely across the county at some 70 sites but generally in small numbers up to five, although there were up to 18 counts of 20 or more in all three months. Numbers declined significantly towards the end of March. For instance counts made almost daily at Arundel WWT showed numbers averaging 14 in January (based on counts made on 25 days), 20 in February (27 days), 15 in March (29 days), but with that figure falling to five after 20 Mar (10 days), and three in April (10 days). The 300 seen at Pagham Hbr on 19 Jan, a flock flying high southwards, was the highest Common Snipe count in Sussex since 450 at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Oct 1995 and the highest count at Pagham Hbr since 546 on 12 Dec 1983. At sites not in the tables there was a one-off count of 30 at Twineham Place on 23 Feb.

By the end of March most birds had departed with fewer seen in April and in May, and only ones or twos were recorded at seven sites up to the 22nd. Between 1 and 16 Jun singles were noted at three sites but there was no evidence of breeding activity.

The first returning birds may have been two at Rye Hbr on 7 Jul followed by two at Pett Level on the 18th. Thereafter sightings were far more frequent; the first double-figure count was of ten at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th but the next was not until 14 there on 28 Aug. Thereafter most records and all double-figure counts came from Pulborough Brooks until the second half of September, when 12 were noted at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) on the 17th and ten at Pagham Hbr on the 20th. Pulborough Brooks continued to hold the highest numbers in October, with 100 there on the 10th, but numbers also increased elsewhere in late October and November, with double-figure counts being made at locations in the tables as well as Chichester GP and Combe Valley CP.

The highest single count of the second winter period was 107 at Medmerry on 5 Dec, but numbers at wetland sites such as Pulborough Brooks and Arundel WWT were low because of flooding. Conversely, unusually large numbers were at sites on higher ground; on Ashdown Forest there were counts of 61 on 22 Dec and 37 on the 27th while there were 27 at Iping Common also on the 27th. [MC Daniel]

Red-necked Phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus

Rare spring and autumn passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

There were two records in 2019, the first since 2016. Both were at Pulborough Brooks: an adult on 13 and 14 Jun (mo) and a juvenile from 11 to 17 Sep (MS Phelps *et al.*).

A total of 36 has been recorded since 1962, ten of which have been this century; in May (2), June (2), August (3) and September (3). [P James]



Grey Phalarope, Cuckmere Haven, 20 October (Matt Eade)

Grey Phalarope

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

Four were seen this year, all arriving between 11 and 26 Oct. The first flew east along the shoreline at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 11th, briefly landing on the sea twice (MR Eade), and was followed by a second one that flew west along the shoreline pursued by a Herring Gull at Selsey Bill on the 13th (S Hill, BGR Ives, ID Pitts); the third was a popular long staying first-winter bird on pools at Cuckmere Haven from the 19th to the 27th (NJN Pope *et al.*) and the fourth another first-winter bird close inshore on the sea at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 26th (JP Charteris). The county total this century moves on to 67. [P James]

Common Sandpiper

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

Common Sandpipers were recorded in 76 tetrads (8.1%) compared with 64 in 2018 and the 10-year average of 69 (range 60 to 79). 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	3	2	19	17	2	40	78	40	9	4	5
Medmerry	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	3	5	-	-	-
Arun Valley (Arundel to L'hampton)	2	2	2	3	5	1	22	11	12	3	3	4
Weir Wood Res	-	nc	-	5	1	-	1	6	4	-	-	-
Barcombe Res	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	4	4	-	-	1
Rye Bay	-	-	-	5	8	-	13	32	5	4	-	-
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	2	2	1	4	12	1	55	67	27	6	4	2

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	17	12	10	73	108	11	158	167	100	21	13	12
10-year average	9	7	6	35	59	12	122	146	70	18	12	9

In January to March records were usually of ones or twos, the sole exception being three at the Ouse-Glynde confluence on 27 Jan. Numbers began to increase from 13 Apr when seven were noted at Rodmell, the highest count for the month. Thereafter birds were noted daily but the next high counts were five at Weir Wood Res on the 22nd and 5 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 30th. Small numbers, usually not exceeding five, were seen nearly every day in May with peaks of 11 at Weir Wood Res on the 7th and 15 at Rye Hbr on the 17th. Individuals were recorded on four days in early June, presumably summering birds, but from the 16th sightings became more regular as migrants returned. There were no records suggestive of breeding attempts.

From 1 Jul there were daily sightings of small numbers, with ten at Union Canal (East Guldeford) on the 7th and further double figure counts of 13 at Weir Wood Res on the 24th, 22 along the lower R Arun on the 26th, 12 at Cuckmere Haven the next day and 11 on the lower R Adur on the 31st. The highest counts in August were 23 at East Guldeford Level on the 1st and 4th, 11 along the lower R Arun on the 6th and ten at Rye Hbr on the 3rd. After a count of 13 on the lower R Arun on 13 Sep numbers declined noticeably from mid-September and the last groups of four were at Barcombe Res

on the 16th and Pulborough Brooks two days later. Passage concluded with the last individuals seen at Weir Wood Res on 17 Oct, at Warnham LNR on the 22nd and at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Nov.

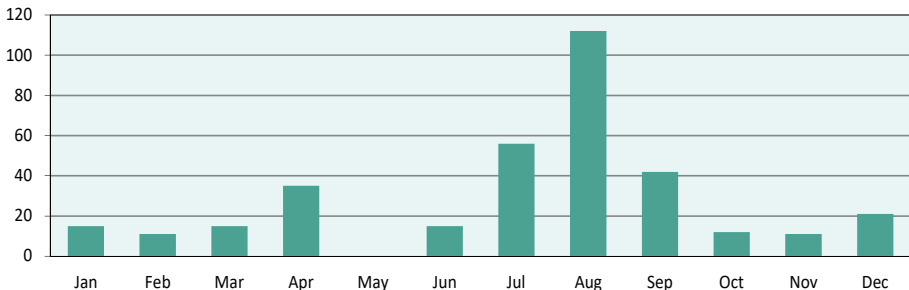
One at Piddinghoe on 27 Nov and five along the R Ouse between Lewes and Glynde on 29 Nov, one on 13 Dec along the lower R Adur, one at Barcombe Res on the 16th, and six on the lower R Arun (including two at Littlehampton) on 28 Dec suggested a wintering population of around a dozen. [PK Holland]

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 sums of the maximum monthly counts at each site illustrates the annual pattern of occurrence of this species extremely well, with low numbers of birds in both winter periods, a small passage peak in April and a substantial increase through July, August and September. There are three sites with records in most months of the year (Sidlesham Ferry, Pulborough Brooks and the Wadhurst Park Estate) although there were no records at all in May this year.



Green Sandpiper - the monthly sum of the maximum counts, 2019

Green Sandpipers are essentially birds of freshwater wetlands and are not well covered by the WeBS counts. Although the annual pattern shown by WeBS is similar to that shown by the county totals they only include around a third of the birds.

In the first winter period there were records from 15 sites with one or two birds reported almost daily at Sidlesham Ferry and a maximum of three there on 14 Jan. Elsewhere there were counts of three at the Knepp Estate on 27 Feb and two each at the Glynde Levels on 20 Jan, Scotney GP on 21 Jan and Pulborough Brooks on 8 Mar. There was evidence of passage birds in April with records from 14 sites with the highest count of four at Pulborough Brooks on the 21st. The last April record was one at Rye Hbr on the 29th.

The first record of a bird returning after the breeding season was at Small Dole (Henfield) on 9 Jun, with records from a further nine sites before the end of the month and a maximum of four at Pulborough Brooks on the 28th. Peak passage was from July to September with records from 40 sites, usually of one or two. At Pulborough Brooks they were recorded almost daily through this period with high counts of 13 on 27 Jul and 9 Aug. There was a high count of ten at Pett Level on 29 Jul.

From October to the end of the year there were low numbers at 25 sites with Pulborough Brooks still the site with most records, closely followed by Sidlesham Ferry. These records were of ones or twos except for three at Glynde Level on 23 Dec. [K Smith]

Common Redshank

Tringa totanus

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

Redshanks were recorded in 89 (9.5%) tetrads during 2019, which is a welcome increase over the 72 (7.7%) in 2018 and higher than the 10-year average of 81 (range 70-104). 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	1377	1927	1096	251	55	42	540	837	1107	1946	1928	2111
Chichester Hbr	983	1456	710	135	6	9	386	656	731	1607	1407	1542
Pagham Hbr	130	201	142	63	4	6	83	46	121	104	256	160
Rye Bay	109	143	149	20	16	16	55	99	202	137	111	181
Av. county total 2009-2018	1856	1855	1463	337	57	114	726	1426	1841	2005	2054	1808

As usual, the highest counts by far were in Chichester Hbr, where numbers exceeded the 1% national threshold number of 940 in January, February, October, November and December, and overall numbers were slightly higher than last year. Elsewhere, the regular flock at Newhaven Tide Mills peaked at 54 on 3 Jan and the high count on the lower R Adur was 65 on 20 Feb.

Spring migration is always difficult to gauge due to the presence of wintering birds into April, but was not very pronounced, with 30 at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Apr notable, although the high count of 122 at East Guldeford on 24 Mar may have included migrants. Disturbingly, fledging success at Rye Hbr was noted as 'very low', mirroring the situation of last year. Pulborough Brooks held 13 pairs and fledged three young, while at Pagham Hbr, a total of nine pairs managed to fledge just a single youngster between them. There were 11 pairs at Pett Level but their breeding success is not known. Elsewhere there was a pair at Amberley Wild Brooks that appeared not to breed successfully, and a pair were seen mating at Arundel WWT but no young were seen. There was no evidence of breeding at Lewes Brooks this year.

Non-breeding birds began returning at the end of June with 50 noted at Sidlesham Ferry on the 25th, and numbers continued to build in July with counts of 450 at Thorney Deeps on the 22nd and 300 at Pagham Hbr on the 25th being noteworthy.

Significant counts during the second winter period, in addition to WeBS, included 56 and 70 on the R Adur at Shoreham on 30 Oct and 11 Dec respectively and 31 in the lower Ouse Valley on 10 Nov. At Newhaven Tide Mills the high count was 37 on 20 Dec. [J Curson]

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

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

This was a good year with a strong autumn passage and one bird even stayed into November. The sums of the maximum monthly counts at each site are shown in the following table:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
1	2	2	15	26	2	2	1

The first of the year was at Sidlesham Ferry on the early date of 28 Apr followed by singles at Iford Brooks on 4 May and Pulborough Brooks on the 7th. There were three records of early returning birds; one at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Jun, one at Pagham Hbr on the 24th and two at Arundel WWT on 3 Jul.

Autumn passage continued with one at Weir Wood Res on 24 Jul and continued through August with most records from four sites; Sidlesham Ferry, Pulborough Brooks, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. At Sidlesham Ferry there was one every day from 31 Jul to 12 Aug. At Pulborough Brooks the first was on 28 Jul with daily sightings until 11 Aug and then a gap until two on 26 Aug and one on the 30th. There were high counts at Pett Level with four from 27 to 29 Jul and two on the 30th, six on 2 Aug, two on the 4th and 5th, five on the 7th and one on the 9th, 12th and 15th.

At Rye Hbr the first was one on 28 Jul with singles on nine August dates and two on the 2nd and 12th. At other sites there were three at Cuckmere Haven on 28 Jul and one there on 8 and 13 Aug, one at Crawley on 28 Jul, and one at Jury's Gap on the 29th with four there on 1 Aug. There was one at Combe Valley CP on 3, 5 and 6 Aug, one at Barcombe Res on the 5th and four at Winchelsea and one on the Pevensey Levels, both on the 7th. On the 24th there was one at Arundel WWT.

In September there was one at Hastings on the 7th and one at Cuckmere Haven on the 29th. Unusually there were records from two sites in October and November. One was at Rye Hbr on 28 and 29 Oct and then a bird was found at Pulborough Brooks on the 29th and was recorded almost daily until 8 Nov. This is the first winter record since one at Pett Level between 9 and 16 Nov 1997. [K Smith]

Spotted Redshank

Tringa erythropus

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

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

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	7	5	8	1	3	10	14	10	12	6	4

As usual in the first winter period, most were recorded from Chichester Hbr, with a maximum of seven at Fishbourne on 12 Jan. Elsewhere in the harbour, and possibly involving the same individuals, there were maxima of four at East Chidham on 19 Jan, three at Apuldrum on the 17th, two at Dell Quay on the 3rd and two at Thorney Island on the 11th. There was just a single bird in Pagham Hbr in January, with two recorded there on 27 Feb and three at Sidlesham Ferry on 30 Mar. Elsewhere during the same period there were singles at Cuckmere Haven on 20 Jan, at Newhaven Tide Mills on 20 Feb, at Rye Hbr on several dates, and on the R Adur at Shoreham on 22 Feb.

As is generally the case, the start of spring migration was complicated by lingering wintering birds, but four at Rye Hbr on 20 Apr were certainly migrants, as were two at Fishbourne on the 22nd. Apart from this the only birds recorded in April and May were singles at Pagham Hbr on many dates up to 7 May, with two there on 11, 12 and 14 Apr, which may have involved the same birds. All in all it was a poor spring.

One, in summer plumage, at Medmerry on 15 and 18 Jun was the first returning individual. Thereafter singles were seen in Pagham Hbr regularly between 19 and 28 Jun, with two there from 29 Jun to 4 Jul and a high count of three on the 18th. Elsewhere in July there were three at Medmerry on the 7th, one at Rye Hbr on the 16th and three at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on the 28th. Throughout August ones and twos were seen regularly in Pagham Hbr but with more significant counts of five on the 16th and six on the 28th, increasing to nine at Sidlesham Ferry on the 30th, eight remaining until 5 Sep. The only birds reported elsewhere during August were singles at Rye Hbr on several dates, three at Medmerry on the 16th, and one at Winchelsea on the 20th.

During September up to four were recorded on several dates at Pagham Hbr with five on the 13th. Elsewhere there was one at Thorney Deeps on the 17th and two at Fishbourne on the 24th. Birds continued to be seen at Pagham Hbr throughout October with a high count of eight there on the 11th. There were also two at Rye Hbr on the 13th and one there on the 26th.

Numbers fell away in November and probably mostly involved returning wintering birds. There were up to two at Pagham Hbr, one at Barnham on 16 Nov, and two between Dell Quay and Fishbourne by the end of the month. In December there were up to three in Chichester Hbr and singles in Pagham Hbr on three dates and at Rye Hbr at the end of the month. [J Curson]

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	13	30	28	9	3	1	12	47	56	45	25	25
Chichester Hbr	11	28	26	4	-	-	8	35	50	38	23	24
Average county total 2009-2018	24	22	20	18	5	1	44	105	90	59	32	21

As is normally the case, the highest number seen during both winter periods was at Thorney Deeps in Chichester Hbr. In the first winter period there were 13 to 15 seen on various dates from January through to early March with high counts of 16 on 22 Feb, 22 and 23 Mar. These counts are consistent with those recorded in previous years here. Elsewhere in Chichester Hbr the highest first winter period count was eight in Fishbourne Channel on 3 Feb with ones and twos at other locations in the harbour. There were three at Medmerry on 12 Jan, and singles on other dates at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Sidlesham Ferry, the R Adur and Goring Gap.

Six appearing for the first time at Cuckmere Haven on 27 Mar were probably the first spring migrants. Spring migration continued thereafter through April and May, with birds seen at various coastal and inland locations. Numbers involved were mostly ones and twos, but there were seven in Fishbourne Channel on 15 Apr, 17 there on 22 Apr, and five at Weir Wood Res on 13 May.

Greenshanks were recorded on just four dates in June; one at Rye Hbr on the 4th, three at Thorney Deeps on the 10th, and singles at Pagham Hbr on the 16th and Thorney Deeps on the 22nd. Autumn migration got properly underway from early July, with birds being seen at the usual coastal and inland sites on most days throughout the autumn period. This mostly involved small numbers of one to three, but more significant counts included six at Pett Level on 16 Jul, a remarkable 56 at Cuckmere Haven on 27 Jul, nine at Pett Level on 16 Aug, 11 at Fishbourne Channel on the 26th, and 10 at Pagham Hbr on 29 Sep. As usual Thorney Deeps regularly held higher numbers throughout the autumn period, with a high count there of 41 on 22 Jul.

A count of 25 at Thorney Deeps on 27 Oct probably involved late migrants as there was a more typical late winter period count of 14 on 24 Nov, falling to 12 during December. There were the usual small numbers elsewhere in Chichester Hbr, with a maximum of seven at Fishbourne Channel on 7 Dec. Away from Chichester Hbr there were singles at Medmerry, the lower R Adur and Pagham Hbr. [J Curson]



Kittiwake, Seaford, 5 April (Tim Squire)

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 during 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 available monthly totals from three seawatching sites are shown below:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	1199	121	5	86	41	2	3	5	3	31	5	28
	W	2746	784	71	15	84	24	-	23	12	558	13	13
Worthing/Goring	E	111	4	-	62	4	-	2	1	-	-	-	-
	W	11	14	5	6	-	-	-	2	3	7	-	3
Birling Gap	E	-	319	45	2218	-	-	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	20	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	nc	nc	nc

There were several large movements in January and early February at Selsey Bill, with 1997 W in 3½ hr on 16 Jan, 176 W and 397 E in 3 hr on the 19th, and 244 W and 86 E in 3¼ hr on 3 Feb, and an offshore feeding group of 200 there on 17 Jan. There was one inland record at Weir Wood Res of a single bird flying east on 10 Mar.

In spring three large movements were noted heading east at Birling Gap, the largest of which was 714 in 4¾ hr on 15 Apr. Seaford Head cliffs remain an important nesting site and the detailed survey carried out on 19 Jun revealed 528 AON, an encouraging increase from the previous year (431), but well short of the 1120 counted in 2016. The productivity level of the colony was calculated at 0.91, the first time in three years that this figure has been above 0.8, generally accepted as the level necessary for a colony to be self-sustainable (DH Howey pers comm). The highest number recorded at Seaford later was 800 on 6 Aug. There was no evidence for breeding at other locations.

In the second winter period, the only large movement was recorded at Selsey Bill with 318 W in 3 hr on 19 Oct. [C Davis]

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 404 (43%) tetrads during the year with most records from coastal or downland locations. As usual the highest counts in the first quarter were from the nocturnal roost at Bewl Water where 25,200 roosted on 26 Jan, 20,420 on 9 Feb, 5500 on 3 Mar and 19,260 on the 7th. Other large counts during this period were 1000 at Weir Wood Res on 20 Jan, c.2000 at Mid Lavant on 27 Feb, 1200 at Arundel WWT on 9 Mar and 1250 at Cuckmere Haven on the 16th.

Between March and May seawatchers recorded 1535 E and 52 W with peak movements of 420 E at Telscombe Cliffs on 20 Apr and 223 E at Birling Gap on the 22nd. The highest spring counts were associated with breeding sites, these being 1087 at Pagham Hbr on 19th May and 1000 at Rye Hbr on the 3rd.

There were mixed fortunes at the breeding colonies; at Rye Hbr a count on 5 May found at least 800 AON but overall it was estimated that at least 1000 pairs nested on the reserve with good fledging success and perhaps 1500+ birds reaching this stage. At nearby Pett Level there were 815 pairs but they suffered heavy predation by large gulls. At Arundel WWT approximately 80% of the 93 AON counted in April fledged some young and at Pagham Hbr 610 fledged from 523 pairs. There were no records suggesting breeding attempts at Chichester GP, Chichester Hbr or Medmerry this year.

Post breeding flocks away from the colonies started to increase in early July with 230 in the lower Adur Valley on the 3rd, 250 following a tractor at Medmerry on the 10th and 772 in the lower Arun Valley on the 26th. As the autumn progressed the highest counts were from Chichester Hbr and the table of WeBS counts shows the post breeding arrival and a clear peak in December.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
559	1491	1682	736	540	276	597	1019	2561	1498	1172	3124

Elsewhere counts in excess of 1000 were all towards the end of the year; at Arlington Res with 1250 on 29 Nov and 1500 on 29 Dec, 2000 in the Ouse Valley on 27 Dec and 5000 on the 29th and 1000 at Goring Gap on 24 Dec. However, these figures were dwarfed by the 25,400 which roosted at Bewl Water on 14 Dec. [JA Newnham]

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.

An unremarkable year, with approximately 435 birds recorded, a figure lower than the average of 636 for the years 2009 to 2018. The following table of monthly totals at both coastal and inland sites, and the number of days recorded, shows the fairly typical pattern of most being recorded passing coastal locations during spring and a small, late autumn passage.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of days recorded	-	2	10	23	16	2	-	5	3	5	3	1
Coastal	-	1	3	335	21	2	-	3	3	32	3	3
Inland	-	-	5	4	1	-	-	4	-	-	12	-
Total	-	1	8	339	22	2	-	7	3	32	18	3

Once again none was recorded in January and in February one was on the Selsey Peninsula on the 8th and 9th. During March most sightings were from inland locations, with two at Pulborough Brooks on the 4th and singles at Bewl Water on the 10th, Tangmere on the 12th, Pulborough Brooks on the 15th and in the Cuckmere Valley between the 25th and 28th.

Eastbound coastal migrants were seen between 4 Apr and 10 May but, as the table of monthly totals from the regularly watched sites shows, were only seen often from two sites.

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak Count (hours watched)
Selsey Bill	-	32	10	17 on 8 Apr (7)
Worthing/Goring	-	2	-	
Telscombe Cliffs	-	-	-	
Splash Point	-	289	1	101 on 19 Apr (6)
Birling Gap	-	2	-	2 on 25 Apr (6)

Other reasonable days of passage at Splash Point (Seaford) in April were 21 E on the 5th, 24 E on the 15th, 67 E on the 18th and 29 E on the 21st. Elsewhere 15 flew east at Saltdean on 26 Apr. There were just four seen from three inland sites during the spring; one remaining at Chichester GP between 25 Apr and 14 May.

Between the end of May and early October singles were seen on 12 dates, including inland observations at both Arlington and Weir Wood Reservoirs. From Oct 6 until the end of the year just 47 were recorded on nine dates; the most significant were 18 W at Selsey Bill on 19 Oct, seven at Pett Level on 29 Oct, 12 at Arlington Res on 2 Nov and three at Pagham Hbr on 9 Dec. [JA Newnham]

Mediterranean Gull*Ichthyaeetus 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 140 (15%) tetrads during 2019, the widest distribution of records so far recorded. However, as usual, most observations were from sites on or near the coast with some large flocks recorded inland in West Sussex. The pattern of occurrence was similar to recent years with notably 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	50	Pagham Hbr	20 th	1	Three sites	
Feb	75	Climping Gap	5 th	95	Pett Level	28 th
Mar	250	Midhurst	30 th	320	Pett Level	10 th
Apr	200	Thorney Deeps	28 th	310	Pett Level	4 th
May	70	Sidlesham Ferry	1 st	50	Rye Hbr	3 rd
Jun	200	Medmerry	18 th	134	Rye Hbr	16 th
Jul	300	Pagham Hbr	26 th	6	Pett Level	22 nd
Aug	1100	Pilsey Island	27 th	2	Pett Level	26 th
Sep	300	West Wittering	28 th	3	Telscombe Cliffs	13 th & 18 th
Oct	150	Climping Gap	27 th	30	Pett Level	24 th
Nov	40	Pagham Hbr	22 nd	1	Four sites	
Dec	27	Pagham Hbr	15 th	15	Fairlight	9 th

Excluding a number of high counts from Pett Level in the spring and coastal migrants, other notable counts not shown in the above table include 200 at The Trundle (Goodwood) on 27 Mar, 200 at Thorney Deeps on 29 Apr, 105 flying north at Waltham Brooks on 18 Apr, 200 at Pagham Hbr on 29 Jul and 1000 there on 25 Aug.

A survey at Rye Hbr on 5 May found at least 16 AON but overall it was estimated that at least 25 pairs bred. However, neither chicks nor fledglings were seen this year. Although large numbers were recorded at Pett Level during March and early April many left later in the month and only one nest was recorded. Nest building was recorded at Arundel WWT on 20 Apr but there was no later evidence of breeding. Most success was at Pagham Hbr where 17 young fledged from 15 pairs.

Coastal movements were similar to those recorded in recent years and showed a predominantly eastward movement in spring and westward passage in autumn. The following table of monthly totals at the main sites, derived from the sum of the highest daily count flying in each direction, shows the scale of these movements.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Flying east	14	53	86	1192	21	4	15	70	81	96	43	11
Flying west	32	45	32	82	4	3	22	166	162	337	54	39

Like last year the peak spring movements were in April; eastbound totals on the 17th were 118 at Ovingdean, 204 at Splash Point (Seaford) and 190 at Birling Gap; on the 22nd 164 at Goring, 161 at Splash Point and 152 at Birling Gap and on the 24th 172 at Splash Point with smaller numbers at several other sites. The largest movements later in the year were at Selsey Bill, in a westward direction and may have involved local movements rather than passage; the monthly peaks at Selsey Bill were 70 W on 6 Aug, 63 W on 30 Sep and 87 W on 12 Oct. [JA Newnham]

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.

The pattern of records for this species was similar to recent years with records coming from 240 (26%) tetrads mainly from the coastal locations, river valleys and downland. The highest numbers were again seen at the nocturnal roost at Bewl Water, with counts in the first quarter of 7400 on 26

Jan, 44,130 on 9 Feb, 16,000 on 3 Mar and 38,000 on the 7th. Elsewhere there were 1500 at Lancing Clump on 23 Feb, 2000 at Mid Lavant on the 27th and, in March, at least 1000 at Pett Level on the 1st and 2000 at Cuckmere Haven on the 16th. Additionally more than 100 Common Gulls were recorded from 24 other sites during this period.

By April the numbers had reduced considerably; most were seen passing the coast but movements were not large as the table showing the monthly totals reveals. The peak count was 250 E at Worthing on 14 Apr.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Flying east	17	33	166	745	12	1	1	-	-	17	16	26
Flying west	168	67	56	15	-	-	3	1	4	61	22	19

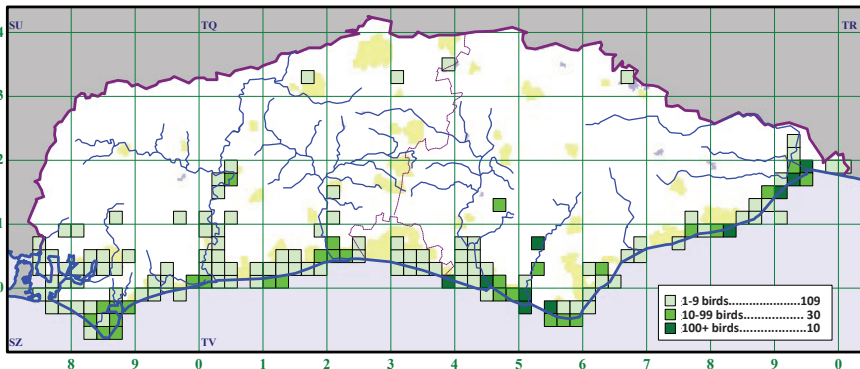
Three pairs nested at Rye Hbr, the first chick was recorded on 10 Jun but it did not survive long and the other two nests failed without producing young. At Pett Level there were no breeding attempts. Throughout the summer and early autumn most records involved fewer than ten with notable exceptions from Mid Lavant of 100 on 25 Jul, 200 on 31 Jul and 500 on 2 Sep. No other counts approached these until October when 50 were at Arlington Res on the 3rd, 100 at Pett Level on the 17th and 800 in Chichester Hbr on the 26th. Thereafter there were regular and widespread counts of more than 100 with exceptional records of 1000 at Mid Lavant on 9 Nov, 1750 at Arlington Res on the 29th, 2500 roosting at Bawl Water on 14 Dec and 1000 at Goring Gap on the 24th. [JA Newnham]

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.

Great Black-backed Gulls were recorded from 149 (16%) tetrads and, as the map shows, most were close to the coast, estuaries or river valleys, with the highest numbers recorded in East Sussex.



The highest counts in each month at seven coastal sites are shown in the table below. Clearly most were seen during the winter months and the Cuckmere Valley was the favoured location where the highest counts were 1750 on 23 Jan, 1002 on 25 Nov and 1000 on 18 Dec.

Elsewhere there were only five counts from three sites exceeding 100; 300 at Beachy Head on 15 Jan, 120 at Telscombe Cliffs on 28 Oct and December counts at Arlington Res of 150 on the 6th, 250 on the 8th and 150 again on the 15th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Peninsula	81	146	50	20	30	85	37	8	21	48	49	27
Lower Adur Valley	18	11	20	8	11	11	4	10	15	49	23	15
Brighton area	5	30	9	6	3	5	4	7	7	53	25	22
Newhaven area	100	24	6	2	15	22	1	5	30	-	25	5
Seaford/Cuckmere Haven	1750	400	50	8	30	15	4	4	100	420	1002	1000
Bexhill/Hastings	5	120	4	2	-	-	-	-	4	47	21	25
Rye Bay	35	50	65	55	17	6	8	35	80	10	30	180

At least 13 pairs bred, several at traditional sites, and these included Slipper Pond (Emsworth), Thorney Island, Chichester (2 pairs), Shoreham-by-Sea, Rottingdean, Telscombe, Hastings and Rye Hbr (4 pairs). An observer noted an increase in roof nesting in Brighton but gave no details. [JA Newnham]



Glaucous Gull, Newhaven, 12 January (Jamie Partridge)

Glaucous Gull

Larus hyperboreus

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

A first winter at Newhaven Hbr on 12 Jan (JW Partridge, L Pitcher *et al.*) and again on the 20th may have been the bird seen on the 13th at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) (KB Gillam) and then in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 16th and 17th (DK Campbell), but was considered to be different to another first winter in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 19th (RJ Fairbank, JW King). The only other records were of a second winter at East Pit (Camber) on 2 Mar (SJ Message) and a first or second winter at West Rise Marsh on 6 Mar (KB Gillam). [P James]

Herring Gull*Larus argentatus argentus*

Very common resident; status uncertain as passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

In keeping with recording patterns of recent years this was the most frequently noted and widespread of all the gulls, recorded on each day and from 502 (53%) tetrads. The following table shows the WeBS county monthly totals and the highest counts in each month at regularly counted locations. Clearly large numbers of this obvious species can be seen throughout the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
WeBS County total	1137	1320	1910	1924	1314	1529	1638	1062	3524	1758	1413	1696
Selsey Peninsula	67	75	883	484	77	100	156	200	1250	110	35	165
Chichester area	200	26	300	500	500	70	4	2	35	63	40	600
Lower Arun area	85	140	340	204	45	155	634	111	300	256	125	200
Goring/Worthing	134	255	512	100	112	42	120	219	190	20	40	150
Lower Adur Valley	256	300	280	400	170	150	200	200	450	550	220	230
Brighton/Hove	110	768	400	240	170	300	360	250	200	300	200	240
Lower Ouse area	175	200	25	64	150	120	31	100	130	31	184	800
Arlington Res	100	60	-	50	30	12	10	40	800	420	500	1000
Cuckmere Valley	200	120	350	130	92	24	250	165	50	490	170	260
Beachy Head	400	21	308	40	250	200	400	98	20	63	30	-
Bexhill/Hastings	38	121	91	30	20	30	150	250	137	49	105	77
Rye Bay	200	110	251	100	481	267	80	77	100	200	50	300

The highest counts were 1250 at Medmerry on 15 Sep, 1140 at Bewl Water on 7 Mar and 1000 at Arlington Res on 8 Dec. Additional counts over 500, not shown in the table, were 940 at Bognor on 8 Dec, 850 at Bewl Water on 26 Jan and 520 at Telscombe Cliffs on 13 Sep. During the SWBS Herring Gulls were recorded in 55% of squares surveyed in January and February and 61% of those surveyed at the end of the year, whilst in the BBS 66% of surveyed squares held this species.

Confirmed breeding was recorded from just 44 tetrads, most of which were near the coast although nests with young were seen in Horsham and Crawley. During the first year of urban nesting fieldwork for the national seabird count a total of 165 AON were found in 21 different 1-km squares. Forty pairs nested at Rye Hbr.

Apart from 400 W at Beachy Head on 15 Jan there were no significant coastal movements recorded. The only records showing the characteristics of the nominate race *L. a. argentatus* were from Cuckmere Haven, with five on 19 Jan and four on 15 Dec. [JA Newnham]

Caspian Gull*Larus cachinnans*

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

The trend of increasing numbers of Caspian Gulls recorded in Sussex, like previous years, continues. The second winter period is an excellent time to encounter this species in the county as birds disperse from the Continent. In the east of the county the Cuckmere Valley continues to be the prime location as the large gatherings of Great Black-backed Gulls attract, at times, significant numbers.

During the first winter period there were only six found; the first record of the year was a first winter at Goring Gap on 11 Jan (N Bond, DK Campbell, GRF James), soon followed by an excellent inland record at Pulborough Brooks (also a first winter) on 9 Feb (MS Phelps). Another first winter at Medmerry on 2 Mar (A House, BGR Ives, I Pitts) was the last record from West Sussex during this period. Further individuals in the east of the county were from the Cuckmere Valley on 19 Jan and 30 Mar (adult and first-winter respectively), and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 9 Mar (a German-ringed second winter).

After no spring or summer records, the first returning bird was a first winter at Cuckmere Haven on 11 Sep. There were then no records until November, when an influx of birds was noted at their regular late autumn/early winter haunts in East Sussex. The estimated number in November and December at coastal sites between Newhaven and Eastbourne (including Cuckmere Valley, Beachy Head and West Rise Marsh) was a staggering 71 birds, with a maximum count of ten in the Cuckmere Valley on 30 Nov, whilst further groups of six on 19 Dec and eight on 20 Dec were other excellent counts; all age groups were involved, though most were first winter birds.

The only records in West Sussex during the second winter period came from Goring Gap; a Dutch-ringed first winter on 6 Dec (DK Campbell), a first winter on 14 Dec (SP Simpson), another first winter on 17 Dec (DK Campbell, G Messingbird) and finally a second winter on 20 Dec (DK Campbell, G Messingbird).

The last record of the year was a first winter at Pevensey Levels on 23 Dec. [MR Eade]

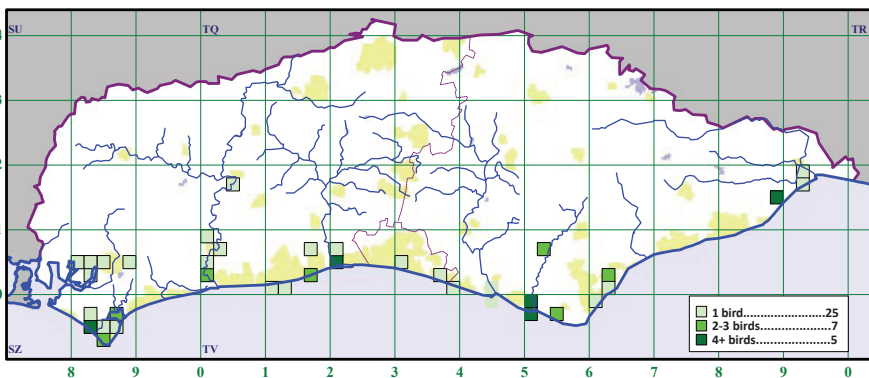
Descriptions are not normally required for records from the coastal area between Newhaven and Eastbourne. However, as with other scarce species, the Recorder may seek further details of some records such as those with unusual numbers or dates. It should be borne in mind that a proportion of records may relate to hybrids and backcrosses, given for example the numbers of individuals intermediate between Herring and Caspian Gulls at the best studied colony, in Poland, and the similarity of some of these to pure Caspian Gulls (Gibbins, Neubauer & Small, Brit. Birds, Vol.104 pp 702-742).

Yellow-legged Gull

Larus michahellis

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

Yellow-legged Gulls were recorded in small numbers from 35 (3.7%), mainly coastal, tetrads with the highest counts recorded on the Selsey Peninsula, in the lower Adur Valley and at Cuckmere Haven and Pett Level.





Yellow-legged Gull, Eastbourne, 8 July (Laurence Pitcher)

The usual pattern, with most seen between July and October at various sites on the Selsey Peninsula, is changing. The highest numbers, albeit considerably fewer than in the 1990s, are now seen in the winter roost of large gulls at Cuckmere Haven. However, as the following table shows, most are still recorded in the post-breeding period.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Approx. county total	3	10	4	1	1	8	19	12	8	2	22	11
Max no. Selsey peninsula	1	1	1	-	-	-	5	4	3	-	2	1
Days recorded	4	3	4	1	1	2	22	17	9	2	5	7

The peak counts at Cuckmere Haven were eight on 23 Nov, 11 on the 27th and 20 on the 30th. Elsewhere maxima were seven on the R Adur at Shoreham-by Sea on 6 Jun, six at Pett Level on 28 Feb and five at Medmerry on 22 Jul. It is not possible from the records to know precisely how many birds were involved, but assuming individuals seen in the same vicinity remained for several days then it appears that at least 70 individuals were involved during the year. [JA Newnham]

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 190 (20%) tetrads during the year, a similar distribution to the past few years. Most were recorded from the coast or river valleys and the following table gives the peak counts in each month at six sites.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Peninsula	12	5	20	6	15	28	25	35	12	2	4	8
Arun Valley	2	2	9	22	22	6	16	5	12	3	2	1
Lower Adur Valley	3	2	7	11	8	9	3	5	6	7	3	10
Seaford/Cuckmere Haven	100	80	45	10	13	6	2	16	3	115	54	500
Arlington Res	75	-	-	1	6	1	1	1	5	2	6	300
Rye Bay	40	11	12	67	15	4	5	6	30	6	10	4

Apart from 67 at Pett Level on 4 Apr all the counts greater than 40 were from the Cuckmere Valley; these being 500 on both 16 and 18 Dec, 400 on 7 Dec and 350 on 8 Dec when 300 were also recorded at Arlington Res. Thirty on Brighton seafront on 8 Aug was the highest count at a site not included in the above table. Well inland there were 18 at Weir Wood Res on 29 Apr, 12 at Warnham LNR on 22 Apr, eight there on 2 Jun and at Bewl Water on 3 Mar.

Breeding was again very poorly recorded with three pairs on factory roof-tops in Crawley, pairs in Horsham, Shoreham-by-Sea and Hove, and two pairs nested at Rye Hbr. [JA Newnham]

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.

In a shift from recent winters there were only four winter records from Chichester Hbr; singles on 1 Jan, 12 and 17 Feb and two on 8 Jan. By contrast, there were several January sightings at Selsey Bill, peaking at 3 E on the 15th and 3 W on the 29th. Small numbers were recorded on nine February dates at either Selsey Bill or Pagham Hbr, the highest counts were nine offshore on the 10th and 11 offshore and 1 E on the 24th.

With the presence of wintering birds it was difficult to ascertain the first spring migrant, though singles off Telscombe Cliffs on 5 and 8 Mar were the only birds away from the Selsey Peninsula and were probably new, whilst 14 off Selsey Bill and ten at Pagham Hbr on the 10th would suggest an increase. Passage birds were recorded daily thereafter. Monthly totals of eastwards migration at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Peak Movement in April and May
Selsey Bill	95	3805	1416	696 E on 5 Apr and 192 E on 14 May
Worthing/Goring	18	1146	84	337 E on 5 Apr and 45 E on 7 May
Telscombe Cliffs	1	85	15	21 E on 4 Apr and 9 E on 10 May
Splash Point	41	2612	296	955 E on 5 Apr and 105 E on 7 May
Birling Gap	11	1332	94	289 E on 25 Apr and 47 E on 7 May

There was a notable movement between 4 and 6 Apr, particularly on the 5th, when 696 were recorded passing Selsey Bill and 955 passing Splash Point (Seaford), the biggest single day's passage of the spring. The last sizeable passage was on the 25th when 408 E were recorded at Selsey Bill and 342 E at Splash Point. Numbers were low and late at Rye Hbr, the first being 17 on 18 Mar and a peak of 81 not reached until the 26th.

There was an absolute contrast in the fortunes of the county's two nesting colonies this year. In early May there were 320 nests at Rye Hbr, with many young hatching in early June, before the colony failed over a few days, with no young fledged at all, possibly due to a combination of predator activity and, more likely, the poor availability of food. However, the newly established

colony in Pagham Hbr had a bumper year; 173 pairs fledged 139 youngsters with food seemingly abundant. Indeed, a casual count on 20 Jun saw over 100 birds bringing in fish (mainly sand-eels) over a period of 90 minutes.

Numbers at Rye Hbr dwindled rapidly in July, though at Pagham Hbr many counts were in excess of 200. The first clear indication of return migration was at Selsey Bill on 30 Jul, when 101 W were noted and a further 508 W were counted between 4 and 9 Aug. There were also two obvious pulses of migrants at Rye Hbr, with 120 on 8 Aug, 400 there on the 25th and 150 still present on the 30th. The last big count at Pagham Hbr was 300 on 24 Aug, with just 40 still there on 1 Sep and few thereafter. In September there were a few counts from other sites as birds passed through, including 28 at Shoreham Hbr between the 3rd and 4th, 30 at Fairlight on the 18th and 45 at Pett Level on the 29th. Numbers flying west past Selsey Bill in October were higher than usual, with 89 (of a total of 352) on the 1st, and there were other unseasonably large counts elsewhere, including 25 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on the 15th and 40 at Normans Bay the following day. All the November and December records were from the west of the county, with almost daily sightings and peaks of seven in Chichester Hbr on 23 Nov and nine off Selsey Bill on 26 Dec. [A House]

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 of the year was on 5 Apr at Selsey Bill, the same date as last year and two days ahead of the 10-year average, followed by one on the 8th, two there on the 11th and a flurry of records along the coast on the 17th and 18th. By the 19th, ten were in Pagham Hbr, rising to 15 the following day.

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

	Apr	May	Total	Peak Movement
Selsey Bill	199	70	269	47 E on 7 May
Worthing/Goring	8	8	16	8 E on 25 Apr
Telscombe Cliffs	4	-	4	4 E on 17 Apr
Splash Point	57	28	85	25 E on 30 Apr
Beachy Head	7	-	7	5 E on 22 Apr

Most spring migration took place between 22 and 30 Apr, including 46 past Selsey Bill on the 25th and 25 past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 30th. There was one last flush on 7 May, including 17 past Selsey Bill and 19 past Splash Point, but thereafter there was minimal evidence of passage.

Once again, the fortunes of the county's two breeding colonies contrasted starkly, with the seven or so pairs at Rye Hbr failing to rear any young, whilst the 21 pairs at Pagham Hbr reared 13 young to fledging, a similar total to last year and, remarkably for this species, a sixth successful breeding season in succession.

As seems usual, they departed the breeding sites early. A peak late summer count at Pagham Hbr was of 36 on 14 Jul, with 17 still there on the 29th, but thereafter only eight days with records in August; the last three were seen there on the 28th, also the last date at Rye Hbr, where two were seen. A very impressive count of 55 was made on South Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr) on 2 Aug, with 20 still there on the 5th, mirroring a similar build-up at this time in 2018. Whether they were from Pagham Hbr or birds passing through from elsewhere is unknown.

The only site where observers recorded return passage was Selsey Bill; 27 W were noted in August, including 15 on the 5th, and the last two of the year, on 12 Sep, nine days ahead of the 10-year average date. [A House]

Roseate Tern*Sterna dougallii*

Very scarce passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

The only record was an adult which spent much of the day in Pagham Hbr on 12 Aug (A House *et al.*). This is the seventh year running that the species has been recorded on the Selsey Peninsula. The decline in records this century can be shown by a comparison of the annual average numbers since 2000 (approximately 9.2) and the more recent 10-year average of 3.9. [A House]

Common Tern*Sterna hirundo*

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

There were only two March records this year; the first was 1 E past Selsey Bill on the 26th, precisely on the 10-year average arrival date, then one at Rye Hbr on the 31st. Numbers were low until 4 Apr when 24 E past Telscombe Cliffs heralded a small peak over the next two days, with 180 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 5th, 38 E at Selsey Bill on the 6th and many seen at other coastal sites. A more comprehensive review of sea-watching totals can be found under Common/Arctic Tern below.

Away from the principal seawatching sites numbers were in single figures. The first inland sighting was one at Chichester GP on 3 Apr, the next was one at Weir Wood Res on the 13th and the first double-figure count was not until 22 Apr when 16 were at Pett Level. On 3 Jun one was seen flying over Ashdown Forest then later returning heading towards Weir Wood Res carrying a fish.

It was a better breeding season than 2018, particularly at Rye Hbr where after last year's almost complete failure (and despite this year's failure of the other two breeding tern species) around 75 pairs raised c.20 young to fledging. All the county's other sites had better productivity, albeit from smaller colonies, including 20 fledged young from just ten pairs at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr), four fledged at South Stakes Island (Chichester Hbr), 12 fledged from 15 pairs at Pagham Hbr, three from two pairs at Medmerry, two from three pairs at Warnham LNR, 15 from 12 pairs at Weir Wood Res and two from one pair at Ardingly Res. There were 35 pairs at Pett Level but no indication of numbers fledged.

There were few notable post-breeding counts, 70 in Pagham Hbr on 29 Jul and 150 in Rye Hbr on 8 Aug being the largest, but there was a notable westwards passage of 417 at Selsey Bill between 5 and 11 Aug, including 177 on the 6th. A count of at least 50 at Rye Hbr on 8 Sep was the last big gathering of the year, with small numbers at various coastal sites thereafter, all in West Sussex. The last of the seven October records was from Selsey Bill on the 25th, three days later than the 10-year average last date. [A House]

Arctic Tern*Sterna paradisaea*

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

The first of the year was 1 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 5 Apr, two days ahead of the 10-year average date, followed by another at Selsey Bill on the 11th and then 11 E there on the 13th. It was, however, a poor year for spring passage although the inevitable difficulty in separation from Common Terns at any sort of range may mean there was an element of under-recording. April totals were only 14 E at Selsey Bill and 22 E at Splash Point with a maximum of 13 there on the 25th.

Numbers generally were in single figures in May except for 53 E at Splash Point on the 7th out of a month's total of 64 E. There were three inland records, all from Weir Wood Res, one on 13 Apr, two on 1 May and one on the 9th.

The first returning bird was noted in Pagham Hbr on 1 Aug, with another there on the 11th, but no more until 24 Sep when 1 W passed Selsey Bill, followed by 11 E there on the 29th, 1 W on the 30th and 12 W on 1 Oct. There were two further October records, one at Climping Gap on the 4th and the last of the year off Church Norton on the 26th, 11 days later than the 10-year average date. [A House]

Common/Arctic Tern

Sterna hirundo/paradisaea

Due to the difficulties in separately identifying Common and Arctic Terns 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 of Common, Arctic and 'Commic' Terns recorded in each month at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Selsey Bill	E	1	1161	1009	15	-	9	54	1
	W	-	36	-	-	21	502	63	23
Worthing/Goring	E	-	259	54	-	6	-	3	-
	W	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	3
Telscombe Cliffs	E	-	180	7	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	4	-	-	5	-
Splash Point	E	-	1169	2782	nc	12	nc	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	nc	-	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	E	-	448	506	20	nc	nc	-	nc
	W	-	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	nc

It was a very disappointing spring for tern passage, with numbers down by about a third at both Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford) compared with 2018. However, there were a number of days of reasonable passage: at Selsey Bill 352 E on 5 Apr and 233 E on 7 May, and at Splash Point 287 E on 30 Apr, 480 E on 7 May and 1940 E the following day, by far the biggest movement of the year.

As usual there were few records after the end of the spring seawatching season, although notable exceptions were a total of 502 W at Selsey Bill during August, with 42 E there on 26 Sep and 18 W four days later. The last record of the year was of 3 W past Worthing on 11 Oct. [A House]

Black Tern

Chlidonias niger

Scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.

The approximate minimum monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
12	99	-	1	11	4

Eastwards spring migration at three of the principal seawatching sites was as follows:

	Apr	May	Peak movement
Selsey Bill	-	15	7 E on 17 May
Splash Point	5	81	76 E on 8 May
Birling Gap	2	6	6 E on 7 May

The year's first sighting was inland at Weir Wood Res on the relatively early date of 11 Apr, five days earlier than the 10-year average date. This was followed by two offshore at Worthing on the 22nd, two past Birling Gap and one at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 25th, three at Arlington Res and four past Splash Point on the 30th. On 7 May another was at Weir Wood Res, the first four of the year passed Selsey Bill and four passed Beachy Head before the 8th brought a large movement of 76 E only seen at Splash Point, including an extraordinary flock of 36, the largest day count this century. After that it was just ones and twos, except for 7 E past Selsey Bill and three in Chichester Hbr on the 17th.

The first returning bird, a juvenile, was at Weir Wood Res on the fairly early date of 30 Jul, but passage was slight thereafter, with singles in Pagham Hbr on 5 and 9 Aug, Rye Hbr on the 8th and 15th, 6 W in total past Selsey Bill including four on the 17th, one at Shoreham Hbr on 3 Sep and the last three of the year on Arlington Res on 15 Sep, 13 days ahead of the 10-year average last date. [A House]

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 monthly totals have been estimated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver (see page 104) but with the addition of birds lingering offshore not considered to be part of that day's movement, although those which linger offshore on successive days are included only once. Adopting this method gave an annual total of 176 which is below last year's figure of 217 and also below the 10-year average of 199. The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	6	10	5	128	16	1	1	2	2	4	1	-
No. of days	5	7	4	26	9	1	1	2	2	4	1	-
Peak no.	2	2	2	34	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	-
Peak day	19 th	8 th	2 nd	25 th	7 th	8 th	20 th	10 th	15 th	9 th	10 th	-

In the first winter period there was further evidence of this species wintering off the Sussex coast, with records of single birds in the first three months at Church Norton, with two on 19 Jan and one from 19 to 21 Feb, Splash Point (Seaford) on 17 Jan, Sovereign Hbr on 1 Mar and at Fairlight on six dates between 16 Jan and 11 Mar. At Selsey Bill single birds flying west were noted on seven dates between 22 Jan and 31 Mar (but 2 W on 8 Feb) and 1 E on 28 Feb. In addition, a dead juvenile was found at Littlehampton on 20 Jan.

Eastwards spring passage was largely confined to April and in particular to the third week of that month, although small numbers were noted from the 2nd. On 22 Apr there were 14 E at Splash Point and 10 E off Birling Gap with a further 13 E past Splash Point two days later. The peak day was 25 Apr when there were 16 E at Selsey Bill, 17 E at Goring, 34 E at Splash Point and 23 E at Birling Gap. Records in May were largely of single birds although there were 3 E at Worthing on the 7th and 3 E off Splash Point the following day; the last spring record was 1 E at Selsey Bill on 8 Jun.

The first returnee and only record for the month was 1 W at Goring on 20 Jul. All records during the remainder of the year from 10 Aug were of single birds, with the last being one offshore at Worthing on 10 Nov. [DH Howey]

Pomarine Skua*Stercorarius pomarinus*

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

Using the same method of calculation as for Great Skua the estimated annual total for this species was 90 which is identical to the 2018 figure and below the 10-year average of 118.

The first record of the year was 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 21 Apr, one day later than the 10-year average. There were only seven further records during April with peak counts of 13 E at Splash Point and 17 E at Birling Gap on the 22nd. Spring passage continued to be sporadic during May with records on only ten days. The only double-figure counts occurred on 16 May with 37 E at Selsey Bill and 19 E off Splash Point. The last spring record was of one off Goring on 21 May.

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

	Apr	May	Total	Peaks
Monthly totals*	28	60	88	
Selsey Bill	9	52	61	37 on 16 May
Worthing/Goring	3	8	11	8 on 16 May
Splash Point	19	31	50	19 on 16 May
Birling Gap	21	5	26	17 on 22 Apr

* adjusted to compensate for duplication

[DH Howey]

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 estimation as used for Great Skua the annual total was 418 which was slightly above the 2018 total of 407 and considerably higher than the 10-year average of 323. The minimum monthly totals were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	1	-	3	242	76	7	3	24	14	46	-	-
No. of days	1	-	2	22	23	6	3	12	8	11	-	-
Peak no.	1	-	2	44	14	2	1	8	6	15	-	-
Peak day	19 th	-	16 th	22 nd	8 th	1 st	-	17 th	27 th	19 th	-	-

The only records in the first winter period were one offshore at Selsey Bill on 19 Jan, 2 E also at Selsey Bill on 16 Mar and 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 28 Mar. Passage birds were recorded on 22 dates in April with double-figure counts on nine days. Peak days in April were 24 E at Selsey Bill, 30 E at Splash Point and 19 E at Birling Gap on the 5th; 44 E at Splash Point and 24 E at Birling Gap on the 22nd and 24 E at Selsey Bill, 34 E at Splash Point and 32 E at Birling Gap on the 25th. Numbers in May were much lower in comparison, with 12 E on the 8th and 10 E on the 15th both at Splash Point being the highest daily counts.

The easterly spring passage totals during April and May at five seawatching sites were as below.

	S. Bill	Worthing	T. Cliffs	Splash Pt	Birling Gap
April	126	35	19	209	143
May	54	7	2	34	3

After mid-May, when 10 E were recorded at Selsey Bill, numbers for the remainder of the year were typically low; mostly singles on seven dates in June and three dates in July. There were several reports of birds flying west and lingering offshore in August, with five off Selsey Bill on two consecutive dates and singles off Saltdean and Fairlight. In October there were signs of autumn migration with a total of 32 W off Selsey Bill including 13 W on the 19th, the last record of the year.

Overland migration of Arctic Skua is rarely observed in Sussex so 2 NE at Balcombe on 20 Apr was noteworthy. [DH Howey]

Long-tailed Skua

Stercorarius longicaudus

Rare vagrant.

Following a blank year in 2018 there was a single record this year, 1 E past Selsey Bill on 2 Jun (BGR Ives *et al.*). This was the first June record this century and brings the total since 2000 to 20. [DH Howey]

Little Auk

Alle alle

Very scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

Following a blank year in 2018 there were two records this year both of birds found, taken into care but subsequently died. One, found at an unknown West Sussex site, was taken into care at Brent Lodge Wildlife Hospital on 31 Oct and one found in Bognor Regis town centre on 21 Nov was cared for at Alphapet. These records bring the total this century to 141. [DH Howey]

Common Guillemot

Uria aalge

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

The monthly and annual totals have been derived using the same method as for Red-throated Diver (see page 104). Following last year's worryingly low total of just 136 the 2019 total showed a welcome increase to 947 which is close to the 10-year average of 981. The monthly totals were as shown in the table below. The peak numbers relate only to movements of birds and do not include birds feeding offshore, although these do form part of the monthly totals.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	302	531	6	50	25	2	-	-	1	7	1	22
Peak no.	200	400	1	40	3	1	-	-	1	2	1	20
Peak day	16 th	1 st	-	15 th	8 th	-	-	-	-	-	-	26 th

Two movements made up 60% of the annual total: 200 W at Selsey Bill on 16 Jan and 400 E past Newhaven on 1 Feb. The largest offshore gatherings were 50 off Birling Gap on 5 Jan, 80 off Shoreham on 5 Feb and 20 off St Leonards on 26 Dec. [DH Howey]

Razorbill

Alca torda

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

Major feeding movements off Selsey Bill in January resulted in 2019 being a record year for this species. Using the same method of calculation as for Red-throated Diver (see page 104) gave an

annual total of 15,671 which is a county record, considerably higher than the 8608 recorded in 2003. This record total also resulted in the 10-year average increasing from 2163 to 3578.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	10,394	4995	5	32	22	14	1	2	4	155	25	23
Peak no.	3500	1088	1	10	4	4	1	1	1	58	5	2
Peak day	16 th	3 rd	-	15 th	8 th	13 th	-	-	-	25 th	9 th	-

Nearly 95% of all records came from Selsey Bill with particularly large numbers in January and February as shown in the table below.

	January			February		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
Monthly total	3510	26	9501	2226	513	3477

The peak of 3500 W on 16 Jan was a new single-day county record, exceeding the previous record of 1652 at Splash Point (Seaford) in February 2011. Other large movements were 90 E and 1158 W on 18 Jan, 2461 E and 2243 W on 19 Jan and 1088 E and 223 W on 3 Feb. [DH Howey]

Black Guillemot

Cephus grylle

Rare vagrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

The two records during the year were both from Selsey Bill; 1 W on 19 Jan (J Atkinson, BGR Ives, ID Pitts) and 1 W on 1 Feb (J Atkinson, A House, BGR Ives, ID Pitts). These records increase the county total to 22. [DH Howey]

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

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

Five records of six birds was the highest annual total this century.

1 E at Birling Gap on 12 Feb (DR Cooper, JF Cooper), 1 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 4 Apr (CA Holter), 2 E off Selsey Bill on 13 Apr (J Atkinson, S Hill, B Worsfield) and 1 E off Splash Point (Seaford) on 13 May (CA Holter). One was found on the beach at Brighton on 23 May and taken into care. These records bring the total this century to 27. [DH Howey]

Auk species

The approximate monthly totals of auks, which includes all records of Common Guillemot, Razorbill and unidentified auks, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	47,856	33,323	138	452	250	26	1	2	15	437	120	354
Peak no.	9652	19,779	46	158	21	6	1	1	4	171	18	201
Peak day	31 st	2 nd	2 nd	15 th	7 th	14 th	-	-	27 th	25 th	9 th	26 th

The total of all auks reported in 2019 was 82,974 which was the highest annual figure since 2003 and resulted in the 10-year average (2010-2019) increasing from 22,940 to 28,840. The figures in the table do not include any adjustment for duplication and should not be considered an accurate assessment but simply a method of comparing previous annual totals.

In addition to the record-breaking Razorbill figures there were also large movements in late January and early February of auks which were too distant for specific identification. At Selsey Bill the major movements included 2159 W on 13 Jan, 2200 W on 29 Jan and 2448 W on 3 Feb; at Worthing there were c.8000 E on 31 Jan, at Goring 6600 E on 2 Feb and 3600 E on the 3rd while at Telscombe Cliffs the peaks were 3422 W on 1 Feb and 2382 W the following day.

	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	15,249	1093	31,740	210	7	150	21	-	14	172	6	221	109	6	127
Worthing/Goring	17,596	603	1561	6	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	16	-	10	10
Telscombe Cliffs	2783	115	5333	2	-	7	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Splash Point	708	6	227	311	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	3432	207	2823	135	5	0	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Other sites	2376	1871	2502	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	31	-	-	223	-

The figures highlight the difficulties of identifying distant auks in flight. As a result, 75% of all auks reported were recorded as 'auk species'. Due to the large Razorbill movements, where specific identification was possible, the Razorbill to Common Guillemot ratio was 20:1. [DH Howey]

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

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

Using the same method as in previous years the estimated monthly totals shown 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. Adopting this method, the estimated total for 2019 was 3327 which is above both the 2018 figure of 3048 and the 10-year average of 2616.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
583	1829	179	243	34	-	-	-	1	9	65	384	3327

In January the four major counts were from Birling Gap where there were 36 W on the 7th and from Selsey Bill with 39 W on the 20th, 42 E on the 29th and 68 W on the 31st. In February there were two days with three-figure counts. On 2 Feb there were 102 W at Telscombe Cliffs but the following day there were two large movements with 878 E at Fairlight while at the other end of the county there were 579 W at Selsey Bill. The Fairlight figure of 878 is the second highest one-day count in Sussex but a long way short of the county record of 1500 W at Rock-a-Nore (Hastings) on 1 Jan 2011. During the remainder of February the highest counts were recorded at Birling Gap including 68 W on the 16th and 56 E the following day which were typical of feeding movements.

Numbers in March were very much lower than those in the two previous months with 51E at Birling Gap on 30th the only significant record. In the first winter period the numbers offshore in Rye Bay rose from 202 on 23 Jan to 300 on 2 Feb. Easterly spring migration was confined largely to just the three days of 4 to 6 Apr when there were totals of 83 E at Selsey Bill, 72 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 37 E at Birling Gap. Numbers in May were typically low with 1 E at Selsey Bill on the 26th the last spring record.

The first returning bird was 1 W at both Selsey Bill and Worthing on 22 Sep. In October there were records on seven dates but with no more than three on any one day. Although birds were seen on 25 days in November there were no double-figure counts. Sightings were more numerous in

December with records on 29 dates but the only significant counts were of 29 W at Fairlight on the 8th and 134 W at Selsey Bill on the 28th with a further 31 W there the following day. In Rye Bay there were 55 by the end of the year.

The estimated totals for coastal passage, eastwards and westwards but omitting birds seen 'offshore', at the principal seawatching sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total*	381	1230	176	241	33	1	8	60	300
Selsey Bill	367	1168	103	131	27	1	6	80	384
Worthing/Goring	54	223	3	38	2	1	-	-	1
Telscombe Cliffs	100	220	3	17	-	-	-	-	24
Splash Point	16	26	29	128	16	nc	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	79	470	118	86	-	-	nc-	nc	nc

* adjusted for duplication in direction and between sites

There were no records during the year of any away from the sea or tidal harbours. [DH Howey]

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 shown in the table below have been calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
8	3	2	49	7	1	2	3	75

The estimated total of 75 was lower than both the 2018 figure of 93 and the 10-year average (also 93). This was a disappointing total after last year's figure gave a glimmer of hope of a recovery in numbers, which have steadily declined since the beginning of the century.

In the first winter period birds were recorded on 11 dates in January, but just five in February and three in March with no more than two on any one day. Spring passage started reasonably well in April but was sparse in May. On 4 Apr there were 6 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 4 E at Birling Gap with 4 E at Roedean the following day. Later in April there were 9 E at Splash Point on the 15th and a further 8 E there on the 22nd. On 25 Apr 6 E were recorded at Worthing, 7 E at Splash Point and 9 E at Birling Gap. May is sometimes good for passage birds but in 2019 there were only seven recorded over five days with the last spring sighting on the 17th.

The first returning bird was 1 W off Selsey Bill on 19 Oct. Single birds were seen on four dates in November and three in December including in Chichester Hbr, off Selsey Bill, Goring, Bexhill and Pett Level. One at Bewl Water on the last day of the year was the only record away from the sea or tidal harbours. [DH Howey]

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

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

Selsey Bill again proved to be an important wintering area for this species. Birds from this core area tend to feed over a wide area so those recorded between Chichester Hbr to the west and Bognor Regis to the east are considered to emanate from Selsey. The approximate monthly totals were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	8	7	12	14	6	2		2	6	10
Maximum in Selsey area	6	6	11	11	6	2		2	6	7

In the first winter period numbers increased steadily from five on 3 Jan to six on 26 Feb, nine on 5 Mar and a peak of 11 on 28 Mar. Elsewhere during the first winter period there was 1 W at Lancing on 7 Jan, one offshore at Goring on 10 Jan, one off Pett Level on 2 Feb and 1 W at Goring on 17 Mar. In April 11 remained off Selsey Bill on the 18th and single birds flew east past Splash Point (Seaford) on two dates. At Selsey Bill the numbers reduced from six on 1 May with the last spring record being 1 E on 17 Jun.

The first returning bird was one offshore at Selsey Bill on 2 Oct, with two there on the 26th rising to six on 24 Nov and seven on 28 Dec. In December one in Newhaven Hbr on the 18th remained until the end of the year and there were also 2 W at Shoreham on the 27th. [DH Howey]

Diver species

The difficulties of identifying distant divers in flight to species have been mentioned in previous reports. In 2019 those difficulties resulted in one in twenty-nine sightings of divers in flight being reported 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.

	Diver sp		R-t Diver		B-t Diver		Total		No. per hr	
	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D
Selsey Bill	64	17	1815	482	19	2	1898	501	2.7	2.0
Worthing/Goring	14	1	340	9	14	1	368	10	3.2	0.4
Telscombe Cliffs	4	4	342	25	6	-	354	29	3.2	1.6
Splash Point	44	nc	217	nc	38	nc	288	-	1.6	-
Birling Gap	-	nc	757	nc	33	nc	790	-	5.7	-

The totals shown for each site have been calculated by adding monthly totals of all birds flying both east and west together with those reported as 'offshore'. No allowance has been made for duplication at or between sites so no attempt should be made to total the columns. [DH Howey]

Storm Petrel

Hydrobates pelagicus

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

After a blank year in 2018 the only record this year was of 1 flying E then W off Selsey Bill on 18 May (P Bowley, J Faithfull, S Hill, CR Janman). The 10-year rolling average is now below three and it is eleven years since there was a double-figure total. [DH Howey]

Leach's Petrel

Oceanodroma leucorhoa

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

Photos were published on social media of one that was brought into a veterinary centre in Portslade on 5 Nov. Unfortunately, it did not survive. This is the first record since 2014. [M Mallalieu]

Fulmar*Fulmarus glacialis*

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

During the first two months records of birds at or near suitable sea cliffs included; ten at Cuckmere Haven in January, 23 at Newhaven on 3 Feb, ten at Hope Gap (Seaford) on the 10th, 16 between Brighton and Saltdean on the 13th, 12 at Birling Gap on the 15th, two at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs), and four at Cliff End (Pett). There were no double-figure movements in the first two months and 15 W at Selsey Bill on the 16th was the largest for March. In April the two main movements were 21 W at Worthing on the 4th and 32 W at Fairlight on the 27th. In May, 14 W at Selsey Bill on the 24th was the only double-figure count during that month after which numbers generally dropped substantially.

This year, unlike 2018, there was a clearly defined gap between the last sighting of 1W at Portobello on 20 Sep and the first returning bird at Fairlight on 17 Nov.

The only record of birds away from the coast was of two over Alfriston on 26 Jul. [DH Howey]

Sooty Shearwater*Ardeanna grisea*

Very scarce autumn visitor.

Following two blank years three were recorded this year, bringing the total this century to 191; 1 W past Beachy Head on 29 Sep (KB Gillam, A Redman), 1 E at Goring Gap on 6 Oct (RA Ives) and 1 W off Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Oct (MR Eade). [DH Howey]

Manx Shearwater*Puffinus puffinus*

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

Using the same method of estimation as for Red-throated Diver, the annual total was 268, above the 10-year average of 217 but considerably lower than the 2018 figure of 446. This figure was mainly due to 115 W passing Selsey Bill on 14 Jun, representing 40% of the annual total in what was otherwise a very poor year. The monthly totals from the main seawatching sites were as follows:

	Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct	
County totals *	57		54		148		1		-		1		7	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	14	4	39	21	32	117	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	7
Worthing/Goring	2	10	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	50	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Birling Gap	3	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* adjusted to compensate for duplication

The first of the year were recorded on 4 Apr at five sites between Selsey Bill and Birling Gap including 10 W at Worthing and 20 E at Splash Point (Seaford). The only other double-figure count in April was of 22 E off Splash Point on the 25th. May is traditionally a good month for this species but the only two double-figure counts were at Selsey Bill with 11 W and 6 E on the 17th and 10 E on the 24th. June's figures were dominated by 115 W off Selsey Bill where there had also

been 29 E on the 8th. In July single birds were recorded at Worthing and Splash Point but there were no sightings in August. There was just one record in September and the last was of 7 W at Selsey Bill on 17 Oct. In what was a disappointing year in many ways, just over 75% of the records came from Selsey Bill. [DH Howey]

Balearic Shearwater

Puffinus mauretanicus

Very scarce spring to autumn visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Considered critically endangered by IUCN. Section 41.

After just a single record in 2018 this year's total was nine, giving a 10-year average of 19, although it is three years since the number was in double figures.

All birds were recorded on three dates off Selsey Bill: 5 W on 24 May (PS Bowley, ID Pitts *et al.*); 1 E on 9 Aug (BGR Ives) and 3 E on 26 Sep (O Mitchell). [DH Howey]



White Stork, Cuckmere Haven, 5 September (Bob Eade)

Black Stork*Ciconia nigra****Rare vagrant.***

After a gap of two years, two or three were recorded. The first was found on 18 May at the Knepp Estate (A Leslie), the same location as one of the two 2016 records, suggesting that the White Stork project is attracting wandering Black Storks. What was presumably the same individual soared west near Fernhurst on 21 May (DJ Burges). Another flew north over Pett Level on 14 Jul (AJ Smith), completing an excellent year for the species. All these records have been accepted by BBRC, with the May records considered to relate to the same bird. The county total now stands at 19, of which 12 have been this century. [M Mallalieu]

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 (where a single nest failed in 2019) has resulted in birds being allowed to fly freely and roam widely, thus clouding the true status of this species in Sussex. However, a bird first seen circling over the north of Medmerry before soaring off NW on 24 Mar (AP Bowley, CB Collins, MA Collins, O Mitchell) appeared to be unringed and fully-winged and thus a good candidate for a wild bird.

All other birds recorded were assumed to have been wanderers, mainly from Knepp, comprising singles at or over Offington (Worthing) on 24 Mar, Henfield Levels on the 26th, Hailsham on the 30th, North Chailey on 24 May, Arundel WWT on 8 Jun, Worthing on 16 Jul, Henfield on the 24th, Anchor Bottom (Upper Beeding) on 1 Sep, Cuckmere Haven on the 5th and 6th and Lancing College on the 6th, 3 SW at Pett Level on 20 Aug, 20 over Manxey Level the same day, 18 over Henfield on the 21st and 27 over Bognor Regis on the 23rd. Knepp birds are identifiable by blue colour rings with a white four alpha-numeric code starting with the letters GB, on the left tibia. [P James]

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 five 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	2799	7283	6570	2875	793	326	1148	6460	182	373
Worthing/Goring	599	215	908	158	195	224	272	506	2	32
Telscombe Cliffs	722	1030	1049	222	117	8	257	498	10	31
Splash Point	7	59	1731	28	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	323	384	2292	26	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc

During the year observers at Selsey Bill set a new annual total record of 28,809, which included birds flying both east and west but not those feeding offshore. This total exceeded the previous record of 23,563 set in 2017 and represented 70% of all records for the county. In contrast to 2018 there were large numbers recorded during the first winter period, with over 20 three-figure and three four-figure day totals of birds offshore as opposed to flying by. The three largest daily totals were all at Selsey Bill, with 1388 W on 16 Jan, 1205 E and 1075 W on 19 Jan and 1708 W on 4 Feb.

Elsewhere during this period the largest daily movements were 250 E at Worthing on 31 Jan, 343 E at Telscombe Cliffs on 2 Feb and 121 E at Birling Gap on 15 Feb. Good numbers feeding offshore were also recorded at this time, with 1200 off Climping Gap, 500 off both Shoreham and Worthing and 800 off Lancing, with numbers off Selsey Bill rising from 700 on 29 Jan to 1500 two days later, and a peak of 2000 on 3 Feb which was the largest gathering off the Sussex coast since the record of 2500 off Worthing in December 2005.

Numbers dropped sharply after mid-February but increased again in April when there were ten days of three-figure counts, the largest being 675 E at Selsey Bill, 208 E at Worthing, 202 E at Telscombe Cliffs, 454 E at Splash Point (Seaford) and 387 E at Birling Gap on the 5th. In May the seven days with three-figure counts mostly involved birds moving east in the first half of the month.

In June and July numbers were broadly in line with those of previous years. With 18 days of three-figure counts at Selsey Bill the total for the period August to October was 7628 which was double that for the same period in 2018; but the last two months of the year were unusually quiet. During the second winter period the largest offshore gatherings were in East Sussex, with 170 off Fairlight on 13 Oct, 120 off Newhaven on 10 Nov and 100 off St Leonards on 26 Dec. [DH Howey]

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.

Cormorants were recorded from 279 tetrads (30%), a continued expansion from previous years. The records were clustered along the coast, river valleys and water bodies including fishing lakes. 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	3199	747	643	642	805	499	733	923	1406	1161	667	457
Pagham Hbr	176	71	58	27	50	51	64	36	41	50	67	18
Glyne Gap	2100	16	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	21	18	10	2
Rye Bay	451	350	205	413	471	291	506	660	786	593	182	177
Av. County Total 2009 to 2018	555	599	547	453	532	491	597	685	693	750	668	595

In the first winter period there was an exceptional movement on 21 Jan. Birds were seen leaving the Castle Water roost at Rye Hbr at dawn flying west over the sea. At Cliff End (Pett) 1500+ had been noted by 11:03, at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) the WeBS counter recorded 2100 by 11:08 streaming past in huge flocks hundreds strong, making this a county record. Birds were seen starting to return at 11:30. There were 2000 at Scotney GP on 31 Jan. Seawatchers reported 150 offshore at Selsey Bill on 1 Feb and 245 W at Birling Gap on the 2nd and 1000 were at Pett Level the same day.

Breeding was confirmed from four sites with 257 AON counted, a decrease from the 348 in 2018. At Rye Hbr there were 161 nests, New Lake (Chichester GP) 72, Weir Wood Res 15 and Medmerry nine.

During the summer and autumn, the largest concentrations were in the Rye Bay area, 663 at Rye Hbr on 15 Sep being the highest count. Inland there were 84 at Bewl Water on 13 Sep, 93 at Barcombe Res on 16 Sep and 40 at Weir Wood Res on 15 Oct. In the second winter period, in addition to the counts in the table above, 77 E were noted at Selsey Bill on 23 Nov, 250 offshore at Beachy Head on 23 Dec and 300 at Pett Level on the 27th with over 900 coming in to roost at Rye Hbr the same day. [L Smith]

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 11 coastal tetrads with the majority of records from Selsey Bill. The aggregate monthly totals from Selsey Bill are shown in the following table:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
4	7	7	9	2	-	-	18	148	516	74	36

The autumn and second winter period numbers from Selsey Bill were higher than in previous years, with ten or more seen almost daily from 23 Sep until 1 Nov, with a maximum of 33 on 18 and 25 Oct.

Elsewhere in the first winter period Shags were seen from Climping Gap (two on 5 Feb) and Splash Point (Seaford) (one on 16 Feb). In April and May individuals were seen from Telscombe Cliffs (flying east on 3 Apr), Splash Point (14 and 22 Apr and 1 and 15 May), West Wittering (20 Apr), Beachy Head (east on 22 Apr, west on 25th and 26th), and two from Bracklesham Bay on 30 Apr. One at Splash Point on 5 Jun was the only record for that month. In autumn individuals were seen from Worthing (22 Sep, 10 and 11 Oct), all flying west, and Brighton (20 Oct). In the second winter period one was at Pett Level on 27 Dec. [L Smith]



Glossy Ibis, Cuckmere Haven, 1 April (Ray Baker)

Glossy Ibis*Plegadis falcinellus****Very scarce but increasing visitor.***

A better year than 2018 with a total of five or six recorded. One in the lower Cuckmere Valley from 28 Feb to 4 Apr (DJ Beer *et al.*) was followed by one at Camber from 12 to 16 Apr (MC Casemore *et al.*).

There were no further records until November when one flew north-east over the Visitor Centre at Pagham Hbr on the 9th (SM Bignold, J Fisher, A House, R Iredale) followed by singles at Pett Level from 24 Dec into 2020 (G Spinks *et al.*) and at Iford Brooks and other locations in the Ouse Valley from 27 Dec into 2020 (AJ Williams *et al.*). One in the Brede Valley on 31 Dec (TG Waters) seems likely to have been the Pett Level bird.

The county total moves on to approximately 77, of which 35 have been this century. [P James]

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

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1	1	4	8	6	3	1	3	4	8	-	-
Chichester Hbr	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area	-	-	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	-	-
Pulborough Brooks	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Weir Wood Res	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-
Cuckmere Haven/Beachy Head	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Pett Level	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	-	1	1	4	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-

There were rather fewer individuals seen in the county than in recent years, with several long-staying birds producing the bulk of the records.

The first of the year, at Thorney Deeps on 3 Jan, was the only one until another appeared at Rye Hbr on 19 and 20 Feb, with it or another on 3 and 17 Mar, possibly the same as one at Cuckmere Haven on 1 and 22 Mar. Similarly, one at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Mar might well have been the same one seen at Medmerry on the 23rd and 24th.

April saw an upturn in records, with one at Thorney Deeps on the 1st and 2nd, one flying east past Beachy Head on the 19th, three seen in flight at Rye Hbr on the 21st and then two that settled at Medmerry from the 22nd until 10 May. In May two were at Rye Hbr on the 6th, with one there on the 9th and it or another on 5 Jun; another was at Cuckmere Haven from 11 to 19 May and one was at Pett Level on the 26th.

One at Medmerry on 5 Jun, joined by a second bird from the 6th to the 9th, remained there, save a couple of visits to Pagham Hbr, until 19 Sep, again joined by a second one from 3 Aug until 4 Sep. There were only three other records for the year; one over West Chidham on 28 Sep, another at Medmerry on 8 Oct and finally, to end with a flourish, seven high over Weir Wood Res on 20 Oct. [A House]



Spoonbill, Medmerry, 12 June (Andrew Wilkes)

Eurasian Bittern*Botaurus stellaris*

Scarce winter visitor; rare outside the winter months. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1	1	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	1
Chichester Marina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Arundel WWT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Eastbourne	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rye Hbr	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-

It was another poor year for this species; one at Rye Hbr from the start of the year to mid-June, including being heard booming there, accounted for two-thirds of all records. Elsewhere in the first half of the year one was flushed from long grass at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 2 Mar.

There were just three later in the year; one at Rye Hbr on 17 Nov, one seen regularly in the reedbeds at Chichester Marina from 20 Nov until 9 Dec and one at Arundel WWT on 23 and 25 Nov. [A House]

Night-heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

Rare vagrant.

An adult seen in flight and photographed at Waltham Brooks on 5 May (A Huttly) appeared to land before heading off south down the Arun Valley. Despite being searched for, it was not relocated. The county total moves on to 38, of which just over a third (13) have been in May. [P James]

Squacco Heron*Ardeola ralloides*

Very rare vagrant.

One was on an island off the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the evening of 11 Jun (DW Hillier). It was not seen again until what was presumably the same individual was found in the nearby Halsey's Fm area on 3 Aug (G Hicks *et al.*). It remained until 17 Aug, giving observers plenty of opportunities to watch and photograph this attractive small heron. When first re-found, it was in a reedy ditch from where it made occasional brief forays into the adjoining long grass of a field. Initially very elusive, it soon became more confident and would often show well for some time as it fed on grasshoppers before disappearing back into its sheltered ditch.

BBRC has accepted these records as relating to the same individual. They are the first for the county since 2015 and the total moves to ten. [M Mallalieu]

Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Scarce but increasing visitor.

2019 was another exceptional year for this increasing species, as is evident from the following monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	38	27	26	16	7	8	10	24	29	20	30	26
Chichester Hbr	-	-	-	-	4	7	6	18	14	6	-	-
Selsey Peninsula	26	20	17	13	2	1	3	2	5	8	25	23
Arun Valley	8	2	4	2	1	-	-	-	10	-	2	2
Rye Bay	4	2	4	1	-	-	-	4	-	3	-	-

In January the largest numbers were recorded at Marsh Fm (Sidlesham) where the peak count was 26 on the 1st and 2nd. Elsewhere there were up to three at Pett Level from the 2nd to the 20th, four roosting at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) on the 20th and a peak count for the Arun Valley of eight at Lyminster on the 30th. It would appear that the Marsh Fm birds then relocated to Reedbridge Fm (Hunston) where the peak counts were 20 on 16 Feb and 17 on 24 Mar. Other records for February and March included three over the Knepp Estate on 3 Feb, up to four at both Arundel WWT and Rye Hbr and singles in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 2 and 6 Mar and at Pulborough Brooks on the 10th. Numbers tailed off in April but included 13 at Bramber Fm (Sidlesham) on the 1st and 7th with eight still there on the 21st and 24th, up to two at Arundel WWT and one at Rye Hbr on the 10th and 21st.

There were no records between 24 Apr and 16 May, but on 17 May four appeared at Thorney Island where they were seen until the end of the month, increasing to seven on 1 Jun. The only other records for May and June were of one at Pulborough Brooks on 18 May, 2 W at Selsey Bill on the 27th and one at Sidlesham Ferry on 17 Jun. In July there were up to six at Thorney Island, up to three at Pagham Hbr and one at the Knepp Estate on the 18th. Numbers at Thorney Island started to build in August, reaching a peak of 18 from the 23rd, while elsewhere there were up to two at Pagham Hbr and four at Pett Level on the 22nd. From 18 Aug the flock at Thorney Island included up to eight juveniles from the first successful breeding by this species in Hampshire, at Langstone MP. In September there were up to 14 at Thorney Island and five at Pagham Hbr, and at Arundel there were ten on the 10th and one on the 27th.

Pagham Hbr and Thorney again accounted for the bulk of the records in October, with peak counts of eight and six respectively. One at Cedar Fm (Flimwell) on the 9th was noteworthy, while other records for the month included three at Pett Level on the 22nd, 1 N over Selsey Bill on the 28th and one at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th. In the remaining two months of the year numbers built up in the Pagham Hbr area, with peak counts of 25 on 25 Nov and 23 on 18 Dec. Other records included singles at Arlington Res on 3 Nov (with presumably the same bird at Cuckmere Haven on the 5th), at Rodmell on 18 Nov, Henfield Levels on 20 Nov, Iford on 1 Dec and Chichester GP on 15 Dec, with two roosting at Arundel WWT from 22 Nov until the end of the year. [P James]

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Fairly common resident.

Grey Herons were recorded from 348 tetrads (37%) compared with 360 in 2018. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites are shown in the table below. Continuing the trend, the monthly totals were higher than the ten-year average in all except the summer months.

During the breeding season 293 nests were counted at 30 sites as part of the BTO Heronries Survey, the details are in the table below. This compares with 294 nests at 31 sites in 2018.

Grey Heron - monthly counts at WeBS sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	138	108	141	105	94	69	84	91	145	134	125	100
Chichester Hbr	9	16	24	7	8	5	10	9	24	21	11	13
Arun Valley N of Arundel	7	8	10	8	9	16	15	5	10	12	14	12
Weir Wood Res	9	nc	33	32	19	7	12	16	9	4	4	3
Pevensey Levels	10	8	9	7	6	5	nc	10	13	7	17	11
Rye Bay	21	11	13	5	9	7	10	13	8	19	7	10
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	90	97	107	84	70	75	88	103	136	131	116	96

Grey Heron - counts of occupied nests at heronries

Thorney Island Little Deeps	2	Stretham Manor (Henfield)	3	Hampden Park (Eastbourne)	6
Itchenor (Ch)	2	Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes)	nc	Glyndley Manor (Hailsham)	23
Forest Mere (Liphook)	3	Hammonds Mill Fm (B. Hill)	3	Wadhurst Park Lake	6
Old Park Wood (Fishbourne)	4	Ardingly Res	8	Gt. Coppice Wood (Bayham)	0
Norton Priory	2	Weir Wood Res	44	Wartling	12
Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr)	11	Rodmell/Southease, R Ouse	3	Burwash	19
Hoe Farm (Flansham)	14	Decoy Pond (Firle Park)	4	Alder Shaw (Brede Level)	5
Warningcamp	5	Hempstead Wood (Uckfield)	4	Winchelsea	18
Northpark Wood (Parham)	5	Friston Forest (2 sites)	2	Houghton Green (Playden)	3
Ham Manor GC (Angmering)	2	Hadlow Down	11		
Kneppmill Pond	29	Old Park (Eridge)	20		
Warnham LNR	19	Troutbeck (Eridge)	1	Total	293



Young Grey Herons in the nest at Kneppmill Pond (Penny and David Green)

One nest at Troutbeck (Eridge) was a new site in 2019. At Kneppmill Pond only five nests were seen from the ground in the Heronries Survey but 24 nests with a further five in a sub-colony at the other end of the lake were found when the area was surveyed by drone (see paper on p. 240). There was no nest count at Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) which had nests in 2018.

Away from the heronries, large reservoirs and harbours, most records were of one to three birds at ponds, streams and marshy areas. The only double figure count in the first winter period was 13 at Rye Hbr on 20 Jan. In the autumn on 10 Sep, 20 were reported from Medmerry and 23 at Pilsley Island (Chichester Hbr) with 21 taking off and flying west together at 10.55. On 17 Nov 39 were counted in the Cuckmere Valley which was the largest second winter period count. [L Smith]

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.

Following a blank year in 2018, four were recorded in 2019. The first was at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 14 Apr (KB Gillam). The others were at Pett Pools, where there were two juveniles on 26 Aug (CH Dean, P Rouse *et al.*) and then another juvenile on 20 Oct (CH Dean, J Newton, GC Spinks). The latter could conceivably have been one of the August individuals, but is treated here as additional.

The county total moves on to 68, of which 20 have been this century. The October bird, although late, was a month earlier than the latest ever (22 Nov 1963). [P James]

Great White Egret

Ardea alba

Scarce but increasing visitor.

Estimation of number of Great White Egrets within the county is difficult, with their wandering habit within an area needing to be taken into consideration. Such areas where duplication is likely are as follows: Pagham Hbr and Chichester GPs, the Arun Valley, Pevensey Levels and Rye Bay. The totals below therefore give minimum numbers of birds recorded per month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019	11	8	6	9	4	5	6	7	16	12	9	17
2018	11	10	8	11	6	3	7	11	18	16	18	7

During the first winter period birds were recorded almost daily from the Rye Bay area, with a maximum count of eight leaving the Castle Water roost on 5 Jan. Three at Pett Level on 3 Feb and two at Scotney GP throughout this period were the other high counts from this area. Elsewhere, two at Pevensey Levels and two at Weir Wood Res were the other East Sussex locations, whilst in West Sussex an individual was residing at Chichester GPs, and another in the Arun Valley was ranging from Arundel to Amberley Wild Brooks.

During the spring there were frequent sightings from Pevensey Levels and Rye Bay, though the highest numbers were three at Cuckmere Haven on 10 Apr, with one in the area until the 15th, and three at Pett Level on the 21st. Two were at Shripney (Bognor Regis) on 11 Apr and at Pevensey Levels on the 21st. At Pagham Hbr one was present from 22 Apr to 18 May. Away from the traditional sites in April one was at Bexhill on the 16th and probably the same at Combe Valley CP on the 29th.

During June and July birds were recorded on only 13 dates, with two being the maximum, at the Knepp Estate on 4 Jun and Pett Level on 15 Jul. In this period singles were recorded at Pagham Hbr, the Arun Valley, Weir Wood Res, Cuckmere Haven and Rye Hbr. August was similarly quiet; ones were recorded at Thorney Island on the 8th, Seaford Head on the 23rd and Goring Gap the next day.

Records increased in September, with maximum counts of three at Weir Wood Res on the 11th and four flew in off the sea at Birling Gap on the 21st. Two at Beeding Brooks also on the 21st was the only other sighting away from the regular locations. After this increase in records during September, presumably due to post-breeding movements, records in October decreased slightly. Three at Arundel WWT on 15 Oct and Thorney Island on 29 Oct were this month's highest numbers, whilst individuals at Glynde Level on 23 Oct and Worthing on 27 Oct were the only encounters away from the regular sites.

The high counts during the second winter period were of four at Pevensey Levels on 8 Dec, and an exceptional 11 returning to roost at Castle Water on 27 Dec, with five seen there on 30 Dec. With such a large number roosting at Rye Hbr throughout December there were regular sightings from the entire Rye Bay area, which thus constituted 79% of all records in December. [MR Eade]



Little Egret, 12 July (Tim Squire)

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

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

Little Egrets were recorded from 216 tetrads (23%), compared with 178 tetrads in 2018. Birds were seen throughout the year, mainly alone, along the coast, in estuaries and the river valleys, in particular Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr, Arun Valley, Adur Valley, Cuckmere Valley, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total	58	95	155	68	74	75	151	181	258	242	136	41
Chichester Hbr	24	58	100	23	33	23	42	87	127	136	62	12
Medmerry	6	3	7	5	5	7	15	16	14	16	8	1
Pagham Hbr	4	2	9	11	7	17	21	21	42	26	8	4
Rye Bay	1	3	7	3	15	9	38	28	25	20	15	3
Average County Total 2009 to 2018	68	60	95	63	51	72	138	185	318	278	155	92

The numbers seem to be broadly stable over the last ten years. Regular high counts not mentioned in the above table occurred in the lower Cuckmere Valley: 21 on 9 Mar, 20 on 5 Apr, 20 on 17 Jun, 37 on 29 Jul, 35 on 8 Aug, 21 on 12 Sep, 26 on 20 Oct, 35 on 13 Nov and 17 on 8 Dec.

A total of 44 occupied nests were recorded from seven colonies, continuing the decrease in breeding numbers seen in previous years (54 nests found in 2018, 62 in 2017 and 72 in 2016). Nest counts were: Thorney Little Deepes (Chichester Hbr) 2, Old Park Wood (Bosham) 6, Warningcamp 4, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 23, Rodmell (River Ouse) 4, Friston Forest 5 and Rye Hbr 1 (this in the Cormorant colony at Castle Water and a new nest location for this species). There was no heronry count at Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) which held nine nests in 2018.

Numbers peaked through the summer and autumn and 73 were watched going to roost at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) on 29 Oct. [L Smith]

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

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

The approximate numbers of Ospreys in each month after allowing for duplication and long staying individuals are shown in the following table:

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
2	8	4	2	2	13	19	3

The first sighting was of one flying east over the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 17 Mar, five days earlier than the 10-year average. One observed here on the 19th may have been the same bird.

Sightings of singles became more frequent from mid-April. The first bird back at the regular haunt of Thorney Island was on 6 May, seen eating a fish on a post near the landing lights, and may have accounted for the reports there on the 7th and 10th. Notably in June a bird heading north-west at Weir Wood Res on the 4th was later found to be satellite tagged and identified as a 3rd calendar year individual originally hatched in Northumberland.

Other notable records from well watched East Sussex sites included one at Beachy Head on 24 and 26 Aug and photographed on the 27th. At Rye Hbr one flew north on 10 Sep, Bawl Water hosted one on the 11th that remained until the 14th and one fleetingly visited Ardingly Res on the 21st.

The first record of multiple birds was of two at Pagham Hbr on 1 Sep rising to three on the 7th and again on the 10th. Coincidentally, two were observed at Thorney Island on the 7th and were considered to be different individuals; an adult eating a fish and a juvenile fishing unsuccessfully. Four were fishing at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 10 Sep. Elsewhere twos were sighted at Medmerry on 15 Sep and Weir Wood on the 20th. Two remained at Thorney Island until the 29th.

In October singles were reported from five sites. The last sighting of the year was of one at Powdermill Res on 21 Oct. [BGR Ives]



Honey-buzzards, Beachy Head, 3 August (Laurence Pitcher)

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 this species in Sussex provided a summary of all the breeding pairs, non-breeding pairs and summering individuals known to them. Honey-buzzards were present in the breeding season at a minimum of 16 sites. The first record of the year was of a male displaying on 13 May.

There were at least six successful pairs. Two of these involved males that had summered at the breeding sites in 2018 but had not found mates. Another pair moved 2½ km during the early summer from a site that had been used for many years, giving the searchers quite a challenge. At three of the six sites, the young were ringed: two nests each had two fledglings and the third held a single juvenile. Two fledged juveniles were seen together at a fourth location on 22 Aug and two on 25 Aug at a fifth site. At the sixth site, both the male and female of a pair were seen carrying food into a wood where a male had been displaying, so this pair certainly had young, though these were not seen or ringed. All three nests found were in Douglas Firs.

At a seventh site, a male was seen entering a wood carrying food on 1 Aug and there were other sightings of this male and of a pair; breeding was considered probable. Not far away, a male was seen carrying food towards a different area on 2 Aug, but there was no other evidence of breeding.

At two further sites, there were apparent pairs of Honey-buzzards, but since there was no indication of breeding activity at these locations, they were considered to be summering pairs; such pairs may go on to breed the following year. There were also five unpaired males occupying territories, one of which was seen displaying, and an apparently unpaired female was twice seen visiting an active nest, only to be escorted away on both occasions by the resident female.

There were no definite records of spring migrants, though one over Arundel on 1 Jun may have been on passage. During the summer months there were numerous inland sightings; most of these relate to the sites mentioned above, but not all, so there may well have been other pairs or unpaired summering birds in addition to those that were found.

The autumn migration began on 21 Aug with an adult at Pulborough Brooks (DK Campbell, C&J Moore, I Allan). In the early afternoon of 23 Aug there were three adult females at Beachy Head, including a strikingly pale female, but instead of heading out to sea they drifted north, returning over the headland the following morning (RH Charlwood, JW Partridge, L Pitcher *et al.*); later on 24 Aug at Beachy Head an adult male drifted north-east (JW Partridge). Also on 24 Aug, a single drifted east at West Wittering (GA Michelmore) and on 26 Aug a low-flying adult flew south at Catsfield (C Meek). There were one or possibly two more at Beachy Head on 27 Aug, one of which was an adult female (SH Linington, L Pitcher *et al.*) and the final migrant of the year was seen near Uckfield on 13 Sep, flying east (MJ Chattaway), a rather early date for the last record. [ME Kalaher]

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

Common resident and passage migrant.

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 397 (42%) tetrads, more than in 2018 but lower than the 10-year average of 452 (range 352 to 502). The vast majority of records were of one, but there were 144 records of two and 17 records of three to five. During the first winter period there were four at Steyning Levels on 28 Jan and in the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 6.7% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of two at Danehill on 25 Jan. In the GBW they were recorded in 52% of participating gardens during the first winter period. One was recorded as probably having flown in off the sea at Birling Gap on 11 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and probable in a further ten. Display was first recorded on 28 Jan at Netherfield, nest building was underway by 9 Apr at Rustington and the first confirmed breeding was a bird on a nest on 30 Apr at Hurstpierpoint. The first nest with young was noted on 20 Jun at Shoreham-by-Sea and fledged young were first seen on 11 Jul at both Warnham LNR and Seaford; both reports were of one young with two adults. During the BBS Sparrowhawks were found in 9.4% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of three at Billingshurst on 7 May.

The highest autumn count was five at Beachy Head on 17 Sep with further counts of four there and the same number at Climping on 27 Oct. The highest second winter period count was five at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Dec; other counts did not exceed two. In the late year SWBS Sparrowhawks were recorded in 9.0% of squares surveyed with a maximum of two at Lidsey on 18 Dec. There were no records of birds flying out to sea.

Prey species recorded were Lapwing, Feral Pigeon, Collared Dove, Jackdaw, Blue Tit, Starling, House Sparrow and Goldfinch. [MJ Chattaway]

Goshawk

Accipiter gentilis

Scarce but increasing resident. Schedule 1 species.

Goshawks continued to consolidate their numbers and expand their range in Sussex in 2019. Extensive, but not county-wide, observer coverage revealed some 34 territories, 21 of which were occupied by pairs and another 13 apparently by unpaired individuals, compared to 15 to 19 territories in 2018. Breeding was confirmed at seven sites, producing what was an undoubted minimum of nine fledged young. Breeding was considered probable or possible at a further five

and nine sites respectively, and it is very likely that young were also fledged at some of these sites. At present the core areas are the western Weald, parts of the South Downs, and the Weald of central and East Sussex. The vast majority of submitted records were from these areas, but as the population grows records can be expected from other areas. [D Burges, M 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 74 tetrads (7.9%), the highest number in any year. Records were received in every month of the year from the Medmerry/Pagham Hbr area, the Arun Valley (including Pulborough Brooks), Pevensey Levels, Pett Level and Rye Hbr and in ten months of the year from Thorney Island, demonstrating the welcome expansion of this species in Sussex. Conservative estimates of numbers of birds in Sussex are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	25	19	22	16	18	13	17	19	12	22	19	20

Most records during the first winter period were from the above named sites plus Combe Valley CP. The highest counts were seven at Pett Level on 20 Jan and the same number in the Arun Valley on 12 Feb, with further counts of five and six at both locations. The maximum number seen at Pevensey Levels was four on 15 Jan.

There are good indications that the breeding population in Sussex is increasing, as breeding was confirmed at five sites and attempted at a sixth site. At one site in East Sussex a pair was present throughout the breeding season and one fledged young seen. At another East Sussex site one pair fledged two young, at another three young fledged, and at a fourth site a pair were present doing food passes and visiting a nest but the nest failed, thought to be due to predation by foxes. In West Sussex, for the first time, two pairs at different locations each raised two young.

In addition to the usual sites, birds were present at more varied locations from late summer. Early signs of migration were a first year bird at Pagham Hbr on 23 Jul, one in the Ouse Valley on 28 Jul and two juveniles at Thorney Deepes on 2 Aug. The Hastings migration watchers recorded the first of their six on 3 Aug; one was at East Guldeford Level on the 5th, one flew south at Lancing on the 21st, three were at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 25th, two at Findon on the 27th and one was seen to fly out to sea on the 27th at Beachy Head. Most September records were from the usual locations with the highest counts being three at Pett Level. In October the maximum numbers were: six at Pett Level, four at Offham (Arun Valley) and three at Pulborough Brooks.

The highest second winter period counts were of six in the Arun Valley on 29 Nov, 25 and 30 Dec and at Pett Level on 5 Dec, and threes from Pevensey Levels, Brede Level and Rye Hbr. [MJ Chattaway]

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

Hen Harriers were recorded in 48 tetrads (5.1%), an improvement on the 34 (3.6%) of 2018 and near the 10-year average of 47 (range 34 to 70). The sum of the monthly totals of 41 is conservative and shows no improvement for this species as a winter visitor in Sussex. Records came from all the main areas except the West Sussex commons and are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total*	7	5	2	3		1	3	7	7	6
Selsey Peninsula	-	-	-	-		-	1	2	1	-
West Sussex Downs	4	2	1	2		-	-	1	5	4
Arun Valley	1	1	1	1		-	-	3	3	2
East Sussex Downs	1	-	-	-		-	1	1	-	1
Ashdown Forest	-	-	-	-		-	1	1	-	-
Ouse Valley	-	-	-	-		1	-	-	-	-
Pevensy Levels	2	3	1	-		-	-	-	-	-
Rye Bay	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	1	1
Others	-	1	1	1		-	-	-	1	-

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

There were observations on 23 days in January, usually of one; most records were from downland in West Sussex and where indicated by the observers were ringtails. Two were seen in The Burgh area on 3 and 10 Jan and at Findon on the 20th and 31st. Elsewhere one was reported at Pevensy Levels from the 1st with two there on the 20th, and one was seen in the Alfriston/Seaford area on the 20th. Records for February were fewer, with birds seen on 17 days; one male and two females were present at Pevensy Levels. Numbers and sightings declined in March, when there was probably only one ringtail in The Burgh and Arun Valley areas. The last winter record for Pevensy Levels was 9 Feb and one was seen flying NW over Halland on the 13th, possibly the Pevensy bird. In April a male was at The Burgh on the 6th and at Warningcamp on the 9th, a ringtail at Steyning on the 8th and one was seen soaring high above Horsham on the 23rd. The final record of the spring was one at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 24th.

The first bird to return in autumn was seen on 30 Aug at Lewes Brooks, the only record for the Ouse Valley this year. In September a male was seen on a fence post on the 7th at Polegate, then a ringtail offshore at Selsey Bill on the 22nd and a male on Ashdown Forest on the 28th. There were at least three birds in the Arun Valley in October, one male and two ringtails, with the male also seen at Chantry Hill. The only record for Pagham Hbr was on the 2nd with another over Thorney Deeps on the 28th. Elsewhere on downland one was at Steyning on the 22nd and others at Beachy Head on the 27th and 29th and Burpham on the 31st. The Ashdown Forest bird was seen at Nutley also on the 31st. During November and December most were from West Sussex, predominantly The Burgh area and the Arun Valley where they were seen on 43 days. Peak counts were three at Amberley Wild Brooks on 30 Nov and at The Burgh on 30 Dec, with twos recorded at five sites on 15 different dates. In East Sussex one was at Scotney GP on 15 Nov, a male was at Rye Hbr on 23 Dec and a ringtail in the Cradle Valley (Alfriston) on the 27th. [MJ Chattaway]

Pallid Harrier

Circus macrourus

Rare vagrant.

A second calendar year female was at Beachy Head on 17 and 18 Sep (RH Charlwood, D Hales, L Pitcher). The second-named observer was able to take some excellent photographs, some of which showed a colour ring, as a result of which it was discovered that this individual had been ringed as a nestling on 25 Jun 2018 near Oulu, Finland, at the western edge of the species' range. Beachy Head is 2139 km south-west of Oulu. Sightings of Pallid Harriers in Europe have been increasing since the early years of the present century and, from 2003, a few pairs have bred in Finland in most

years, with numbers influenced by vole population cycles (Henry, M. 2018. The changing status of the Pallid Harrier in western Europe. *Brit. Birds* 111: 744-760).

The record is only the third for the county, with the first two both from The Burgh (in 2011 and 2015), and has been accepted by BBRC. [M Mallalieu]

Montagu's Harrier

Circus pygargus

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

After a blank year in 2018, there was a welcome upturn in 2019 with three different birds recorded. A first summer female hunting over the west side of Medmerry on 23 Jun (M Booker, AP Bowley, DK Campbell *et al.*) appeared to go to roost at dusk but was not seen the following day. It was followed by a ringtail on downland north of Telscombe from 26 to 31 Aug (P Denyer, M Washington *et al.*) and a juvenile intermittently at Beachy Head from 7 to 15 Sep (ME Charlwood, CA Holter, JS Gowers, L Pitcher *et al.*). One at East Dean on 14 Sep (C Hoff, RC Self) was presumably the widely ranging Beachy Head bird. The county total this century moves on to 53.

A ringtail harrier at the Devil's Dyke on 28 Aug (J Gearty) was accepted as either a Montagu's or Pallid Harrier. [P James]



Montagu's Harrier, Beachy Head, 9 September (Laurence Pitcher)

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 307 tetrads (33%) compared with 357 tetrads (34%) in 2018; 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	144	94	105	110	123	143	92	77	61	65	110	119
West Dean	55	12	6	1	5	4	1	-	2	4	10	6
The Burgh	45	4	4	3	2	6	4	7	9	5	12	10
Elsewhere	44	78	95	106	116	133	87	70	50	56	88	103

In 2019 just under 1400 records were received, providing us with a great deal of very interesting data, much of which is summarised in the table above. The two known downland roosts at West Dean and The Burgh have been monitored for many years, with counts usually taking place in December and January. At least 45 were recorded at the roost near The Burgh on 4 Jan, with 50 at West Dean on 6 Jan and 55 on the 8th. Whether these were mostly Sussex-born 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.

Nesting pairs are most readily located in late February, March and the first few days of April, and for this period in 2019 there were around 20 records of two or more seen in localities with suitable breeding habitat. The estimated breeding population of Sussex is 70 to 80 nesting pairs, which is perhaps rather lower than might be expected, given the abundance of suitable habitat in the county. In time there seems to be no logical reason why the numbers should not match those of Common Buzzards. There are never many breeding records submitted and in 2019 there were just four, in both West and East Sussex, with adults seen carrying food into their nesting woods at two locations, at least one fledged young at a third location, and three fledged young at a fourth location.

Further evidence of an expanding population of Red Kites comes from the movement of birds in fine weather. Whilst breeding pairs generally remain in their nesting woods throughout the year, young birds are known to wander extensively, and this movement is most pronounced between March and June. In 2019 the peak month was June, with 133 recorded at 77 different localities, 60 in West Sussex (78%) and 17 in East Sussex (22%). Away from the usual downland hotspots there were no records of any sizeable flocks during this fine-weather movement.

Some of the most remarkable records for the year came in December when much of the Arun Valley was substantially flooded. There was a long, narrow strip of dry land to the west of Rackham Woods on which large numbers of wildfowl, waders and other birds congregated. This attracted many raptor species, including Red Kites, of which there were at least 20 on 22 December. [ME Kalaher]

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Rare vagrant.

There were two accepted records in 2019: at Wakehurst Place on 10 Apr (M Mallalieu) and at Wiston on 28 Apr (CA Holt), typical dates for this spring overshoot. The Wakehurst bird was the earliest ever county record, exceeding the previous earliest (12 Apr 1970) by two days. The county total moves on to 43, of which just over half (24) have been this century. [P James]

White-tailed Eagle

Haliaeetus albicilla

Rare vagrant. Reintroduction scheme on the Isle of Wight. Schedule 1 species.

An immature individual seen and photographed at West Dean Woods on 7 Mar (A Cameron, M Jeffree) was followed by another immature at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 1 and 2 May (B Caffarey, MC Daniel, R Lusted). The three previous records since 1929 were of an adult fishing off Selsey Bill on 30 Jul 1961, a juvenile at Amberley Wild Brooks on 11 and 12 Dec 2010 and a juvenile at East Guldeford on 16 Feb 2012.

Following the successful reintroduction of White-tailed Eagles to Scotland, licences have now been granted to begin an English reintroduction based on the Isle of Wight, where the first six birds were translocated in June 2019. They were subsequently released in August 2019. Satellite transmitters have provided valuable data on the subsequent movements of these birds, one of which was tracked across Sussex on 3 Sep. [P James]

Common Buzzard

Buteo buteo

Fairly common and increasing resident; probably scarce passage migrant.

Common Buzzards were recorded in 640 tetrads (68%), an increase over 2018 (613, (65%) and over the 10-year average of 586 (range 477 to 636). During the first winter period there were 35 counts of ten or more of which 22 were in West Sussex and 13 in East Sussex with a maximum of 35 at West Dean on 8 Mar, the highest count for the year. The records included three further counts of 20 or more in the West Dean/Monkton/Chilgrove area and one of 20 at Nymans (Handcross) on 25 Feb. During the first winter period SWBS the species was recorded in 57% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of six during three surveys.

Breeding was confirmed in only 21 tetrads and probable in a further 66. As is usual with this species there were few records of breeding other than display, the first such record being on 22 Jan at High Cross Fm (Uckfield). A pair visiting a probable nest site was observed on 2 Feb at St Leonard's Forest and nest building was recorded on 5 Mar at Birdham Marina (Chichester). An occupied nest was noted at Warnham LNR on a date between 17 and 24 Apr. Young in a nest were first noted on 31 May at Paddockhurst (Worth) and fledged young first observed on 20 Jun at Partridge Green. During the BBS Buzzards were encountered in 63% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of ten at Chalvington on 19 Apr.

High counts in summer (June to August) were few, with only ten double-figure records, the highest being 14 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 2 Jun. Most autumn records were of fewer than five with only six counts of ten or more, the highest being 30 in the Burpham area on 1 Oct. In the second winter period there were five counts of ten, the highest number in this period. During the end of the year SWBS Common Buzzards were recorded in 51% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven at Petworth on 19 Dec.

The only prey species recorded was rabbit. [MJ Chattaway]

Barn Owl

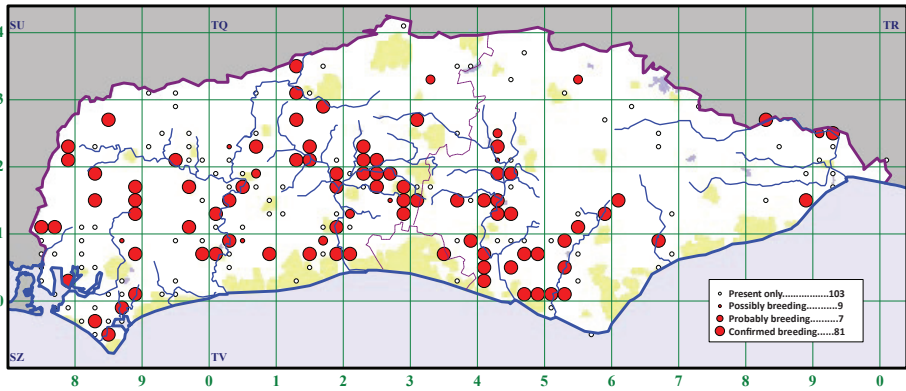
Tyto alba

Fairly common resident. Schedule 1 species.

Single birds and sometimes two were reported flying and hunting over suitable habitat at sites across Sussex, particularly in the first four and the last two months of the year. That more records tended to come from reserves and other well watched habitats may reflect the activities of the observers rather than of the birds. The sightings and the breeding records came from 196 (21%) tetrads as shown in the map below.

Breeding was confirmed in 81 tetrads with a total of 85 reported attempts. A pair nested in a tree hole at a new site and another in a deserted building, and the others in nest boxes on trees and in buildings. Five young were reported at four sites at the time of checking, but the majority of nests contained only two or three young and there was no evidence of second broods.

A Barn Owl was found drowned in a cattle trough and there were five reports of birds killed on roads. [AB Watson]



Barn Owl, Pevensey Levels, 2 October (Peter Brooks)

Tawny Owl

*Strix aluco***Common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.**

Tawny Owls were recorded in 213 tetrads (23%), fewer than the 250 (27%) in 2018 but comparable with the 10-year mean of 226, with most records being of single birds or pairs. In the first winter period the highest counts were from Offham (Arun Valley) where at least five were heard calling on 24 Jan. Counts of three were recorded at Pulborough Brooks on 11 Feb and Steyning on 19 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads, an increase of eight from the previous year but a slight decrease from the year before. Probable or possible breeding came from a further 39 tetrads. The first confirmed breeding report was on 10 May at St Leonard's Forest where fledglings were noted, followed by two owlets seen at the Discovery Centre (Pagham Hbr) two days later and the following day a third was noticed. On the 26th a fledgling was seen at Pulborough Brooks, and a nest with young was seen on the 31st at West Chilton Common. Later in the summer confirmed breeding was recorded at Arundel WWT, Cootham, the Knepp Estate, Warnham LNR, Owlbeech Wood (Horsham), Stansted Forest, Wineham, near Gatwick Airport, Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and Westmeston. The highest summer count was five at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 1 Jul while groups of three were heard in nine other locations.

Most records in autumn and the second winter period were of one or two, but four were at Arundel WWT on 1 Nov with three at five further locations. One was found dead by the side of a road in Slinfold and another dead alongside the rail tracks at Falmer Station, both in April. [K Roszkowska, MJ Chattaway]



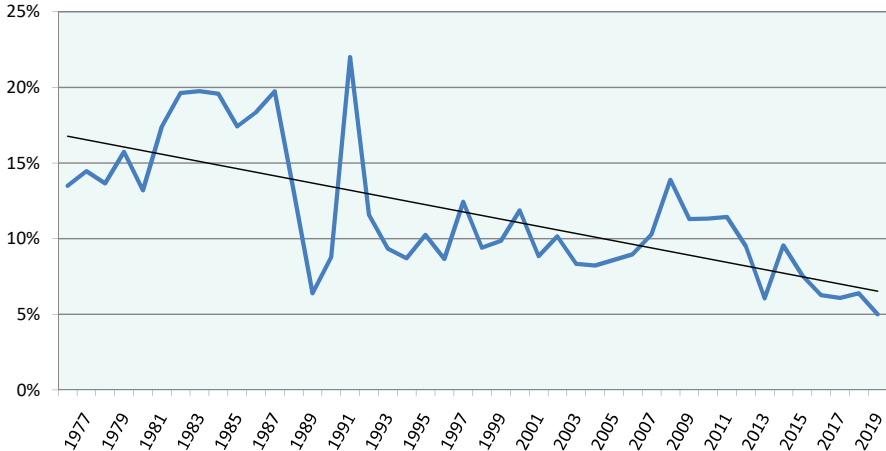
Little Owl, Streat, 12 February (Colin Holter)

Little Owl

Athene noctua

Fairly common but declining resident.

Little Owls had a poor year, only being recorded in 47 tetrads (5.0%), down from 59 tetrads (6.3%) in 2018, perhaps evidence of the decline of this species in Sussex, as shown in the graph below. There were only two tetrads with confirmed breeding and a further three tetrads with probable and one with possible breeding.



Little Owl; percentage of Sussex tetrads with records, 1976 - 2019

In West Sussex most records were from Pulborough Brooks and the Knepp Estate, the latter site with two juveniles outside a nest on 2 Jul. The other confirmed breeding pair was on the Parham Estate, whilst an individual perched on the outside of a nest box at Poynings on 21 May was a likely breeder. In East Sussex, Fletching held a regular pair all year which was seen in all months, but with no confirmed breeding. Other records came from numerous sites within the South Downs on typical farmland habitat, ranging from Duncton in the west to Balsdean (Rottingdean) in the east.

With a significant decline in records, finding breeding Little Owls in Sussex is becoming increasingly difficult. However, with an abundance of suitable habitat, there is the continued hope this species still resides on private land where access is restricted. [MR Eade]

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Birds were recorded from eight sites during the year from West and mid-Sussex with the only record for the year away from downland being of one in mixed woodland in central Sussex. The welcome increase in records is solely down to targeted work on this species by two individuals. There were no specific records of birds at roosts in the first winter period, and the first record of the year was of a pair calling to each other at a downland locality on 27 Mar. No spring migrants were recorded.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites, which is the highest number for more than a decade. At one locality there were multiple sightings of wing clapping and calling birds in late March and at

least three pairs were present here on 1 Apr; records culminated in two young calling on 12 Jul. Elsewhere on scrubby downland pairs were found at two further locations where breeding was proven, with one young calling at one on 15 May, and two young at the other on the 28th. A recently fledged bird was encountered on a fence post during the daytime at a further locality in early July and single birds were recorded from two further sites during the protracted breeding season.

No autumn migrants were recorded and there was only one record of a bird in the second winter period, from an allotment next to downland on 9 Dec. This species is very rarely encountered by chance and without widespread and concerted recorder effort it will be under-recorded. These records probably represent a significant understatement of the species' true numbers and range in Sussex. [D Green]

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 59 tetrads (6.3%), a further increase from the two preceding years (42 (4.6%) in 2017, 46 (4.9%) in 2018) and above the 10-year average (54). The approximate monthly totals were:-

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
18	16	7	10	3	1	-	-	1	14	12	8

In the early year most sightings were from West Sussex, mostly of singles but with peak counts of four at Beeding Brooks and four, increasing to five in February, at Pevensy Levels. Birds were not seen at the traditional sites of Pilsey Island, Thorney Island and The Burgh until the middle of January onwards when numbers peaked at five, three and one respectively.

During the spring, there were at least nine presumed passage migrants; three on Pilsey Island, seen roosting in sand dunes on 23 and 30 Mar, two at Beachy Head on 17 Apr, singles at Worthing on 19 and 22 Apr, one at Telscombe Cliffs on 20 Apr, one at Rye Hbr on 5 May and one at Cuckmere Haven on the 18th and 19th. There was one record in June of one on the 27th at Newhaven Tide Mills.

Autumn migration began on 16 Sep with one flushed from rough ground near Beacon Hill LNR (Rottingdean), then on 2 Oct one was seen at Beachy Head and another at Combe Valley CP the next day. Thereafter in October birds were reported from a range of coastal sites, including Pilsey Island, Beachy Head and Climping, but never more than two at any site.

The second winter period produced totals of two at a range of sites: Thorney Deeps, Amberley Wild Brooks, Pulborough Brooks and Climping, with Pilsey Island having the largest congregation of four on 23 Nov. As in the first winter period, most sightings occurred in West Sussex. [G Hughes]

Hoopoe

Upupa epops

Very scarce spring and even scarcer autumn passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

Two Hoopoes were recorded in the spring and one in the autumn. One was seen on Rye GC on the morning of 26 Apr and again during that afternoon. Another was at Pevensy Levels on 2 May. Finally, one photographed in a Lancing garden stayed for four days from 23 to 26 Aug. The year's total is below the average for this century of 3.6 in spring and 0.95 in autumn. [PJ Plant]

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 146 tetrads (16%) in 2019, slightly up on the 141 (15%) of 2018 and almost the same as the 145 in 2017, comparable with the 10-year average of 143 (range 97 to 191). The majority of records (88%) were from West Sussex. There were records in every month of the year at Arundel WWT, Warnham LNR, the Knepp Estate and Weir Wood Res, in 11 months along the R Arun between Arundel and Littlehampton, and in ten months at Pulborough Brooks and Rye Hbr.

Birds were recorded regularly during the first winter period, most frequently as singles, but there were five at Offham (Arun Valley) on 23 Jan and threes at Arundel WWT on the 6th and 9th and at Weir Wood Res on the 20th and 25th.

Breeding was confirmed in only seven tetrads (one more than in 2018) and was probable in a further five. Probable nesting was first recorded on 3 Apr at the Knepp Estate. A bird carrying food was seen at Warnham LNR on 29 Apr. A bird entering a likely nest site was noted at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) on 10 May and on the same date at Weir Wood Res a bird was noted taking food to a nest site. A newly fledged bird was seen at the Knepp Estate on 28 May and a nest site was noted on 31 May at Rustington GC.

During the summer months Kingfishers were recorded regularly, again mainly as singles, occasionally in twos, but threes were noted at Warnham LNR and at Weir Wood Res where four were seen on 4 Aug. The pattern of sightings during the remainder of the year was similar; the highest counts were of fives at Weir Wood Res on 15 Sep and Pagham Hbr on 18 Oct, with threes noted at Thorney Deeps and Fishbourne (Chichester Hbr), Arundel WWT, the lower Cuckmere Valley, Plashett Lakes and Rye Hbr. [T Seabrook]

Bee-eater*Merops apiaster*

Very scarce visitor; mainly in spring; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.

There were three records of this typical spring overshoot in 2019, all condensed into a period of eight days. The first was at Winchelsea on 15 May (N Loverock) followed by singles at Beachy Head on 18 May (ME and RH Charlwood) and 23 May (L Pitcher). The total recorded this century moves on to 91 with records in all but two years since 2000. [P James]

Wryneck*Jynx torquilla*

Very scarce passage migrant; most in autumn; last bred in 1944. Schedule 1 species.

There were no spring records in 2019, the first blank spring since 2014.

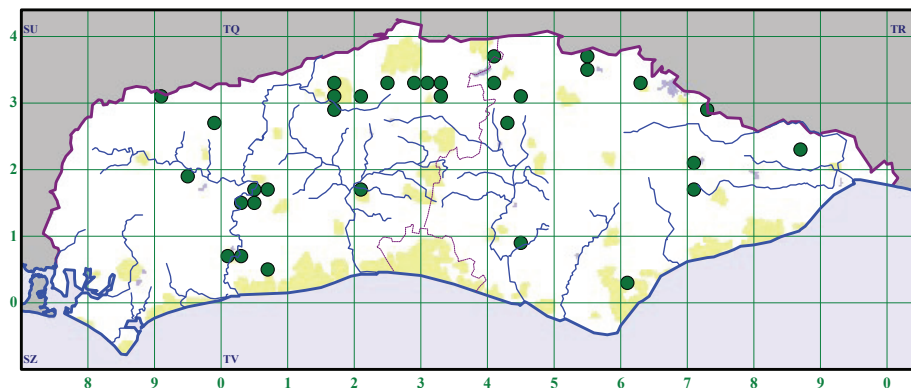
The autumn passage was also relatively poor with only seven or eight different birds reported over the whole period. Passage began with a first year bird ringed at Pett Level on 25 Aug, closely followed by one at Birling Gap the next day and one at Woods Mill (Henfield) on the 27th. At Shooters Bottom (Beachy Head) one was present from the 28th until 6 Sep and there were additional sightings at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and Iford Brooks (Lewes) on 1 Sep. In the Pagham Hbr area there were no records until one at Church Norton on 14 Sep which stayed until the 17th. There was then a gap until one was found on the west bank of the harbour on the late date of 19 Oct and possibly the same bird at Sidlesham Ferry on the 27th. Since 1960 there have only been four years with later records: 1969 (28 Oct), 1991 (2 Nov), 1997 (30 Oct) and 2013 (29 Oct). [K Smith]

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

Dryobates minor

Very scarce and declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

The species was recorded in 33 tetrads (3.5%) as shown in the map below. This is slightly up on the 32 in 2017 and 31 in 2018. No nests were reported but breeding was probable in six tetrads and possible in a further four. Over 60% of the records were in March and April, when birds are most detectable from their calling and drumming.



In January and February there were seven records of single birds; Shinewater Marsh (Eastbourne) on 6 Jan, Tilgate Forest on the 14th, Darwell Res on the 16th and 23rd, Greentrees Fm (Balcombe) on the 24th, Lumbston Stone (Ashdown Forest) on the 25th and Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on the 27th. Of these the Tilgate Forest, Darwell Res and Lumbston Stone birds were all drumming. The drumming season is short with the last record of drumming at Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) on 23 Apr.

During the breeding season from March to mid-June there were records from 22 sites thinly spread over the county: Graffham Common, Balls Cross (Kirdford), Arundel, Amberley Wild Brooks, Pulborough Brooks, Warnham LNR, Horsham, Henfield, Balcombe (two sites), Worth, Wakehurst Place, Sheffield Forest, Ashdown Forest (three sites), Eridge Park, Broadwater Warren, Darwell Res and Peasmarsh. Most of these records were of calling or drumming birds. No nests were found in 2019.

At Pulborough Brooks there were five records between 11 Mar and 28 Apr with three of these (18, 20 and 21 Mar) based on recordings of drums detected by 'Audiomoth' automatic bird song recording systems run by the site staff and volunteers. The recordings of drums were checked with sound analysis software and were an excellent match for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. This is an extremely useful technique for this elusive species and deserves to be tested more widely.

From mid-June until the end of the year there were 14 records, all except one of single birds; Glynde two on 5 Jul, Broadwater Warren 7 Jul and 22 Sep, Arundel 17 Jul, Sparrows Green (Wadhurst) 29 Jul, Chesworth Fm (Horsham) 4 Aug, Black Down 26 Aug, Little Strudgate 20 Sep, St Leonard's Forest 22 Sep and 9 Nov, Angmering 19 Oct, Cedar Fm (Flimwell) 29 Oct, High Wood (Netherfield) 24 Nov and Rackham Wood (Amberley) 29 Dec. [K Smith]



Great Spotted Woodpecker*Dendrocopos major****Very common resident.***

The species was recorded in 589 tetrads, similar to the 593 in 2018. The Sussex BBS index stood at 231 in 2019, maintaining the high level of recent years.

In the first winter period the highest counts were eight at Brede High Wood on 21 Feb, eight at Kneppmill Pond on 27 Feb and seven at Slindon Park on 27 Mar. In the early year SWBS, 157 were recorded in 64% of the squares surveyed with maxima of six at Petworth Park on 29 Jan and at Sutton End on 17 Feb. As usual the first drumming was heard in early January with one on Ashdown Forest on the 3rd and others at South Mundham and Arundel WWT on the 5th.

In April and May there were maximum counts of nine at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 19 Apr, at Colgate (St Leonard's Forest) on 23 May and at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 30th, all during the BBS, where the species was found in 51% of squares surveyed. The numbers of breeding records continued to increase with confirmed breeding in 39 tetrads and probable in a further 53 (the equivalent figures in 2018 were 34 and 45 respectively). Breeding season counts from RSPB reserves were; Broadwater Warren six territories, Fore Wood (Crowhurst) eight and Pagham Hbr three. The highest summer counts were ten on the Knepp Estate on 16 Jun, ten at Partridge Green on the 20th and eight at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 20 Aug.

In the autumn, the most notable counts were sevens at Old Lodge LNR on 30 Sep and Combe Valley CP on 10 Oct, and in the second winter period sevens at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 3 Nov, Balcombe and Nutley both on 29 Dec. In the late year SWBS, 121 were recorded in 48% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven at Nutley. There were no records of drumming in December 2019. [K Smith]

Green Woodpecker*Picus viridis****Common resident.***

This species was recorded in 504 (54%) tetrads, a small increase on the 478 (51%) of 2018, with good numbers of records in every month of the year.

In the first winter period the highest counts were five at Slindon on 24 Jan, six in Petworth Park on the 29th, six at Pulborough Brooks on 3 Feb and five at Ripe on the 14th. Overall, in the early year SWBS, 80 were recorded in 40% of the squares surveyed.

A total of 166 was found in 50% of the Sussex BBS squares, both down on the 2018 totals (198 found in 59% of the Sussex squares). The Sussex BBS index was 49 in 2018 (having been set at 100 in 1994) and in 2019 it was 99. Are these the first signs of a reversal of fortunes for this species in the county? Remarkably, for such a large and conspicuous bird, no nests were reported in 2019. However, breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads, largely because of the presence of recently fledged young, and probable in a further 32, similar figures to 2018. There were some high counts during the breeding season (April to June) suggesting a high breeding density. For instance, there were ten reported from Greatham Bridge on 23 Apr and nine on a BBS survey at West Lavington on May 27; both on dates before numbers could have been boosted by young leaving the nests.

The highest late summer/autumn count was a remarkable 19 recorded during a long visit to the Knepp Estate on 26 Jul. Apart from this record, the highest counts were eight from Pulborough Brooks on 16 Jul and Northpark Wood (Parham) on 20 Aug. In the second winter period, there was a count of five from Madehurst on 18 Dec and in the late winter SWBS, 57 were recorded in 34% of the squares surveyed. [K Smith]

Kestrel*Falco tinnunculus*

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

Kestrels were recorded in 462 tetrads (49%), a slight increase on the 457 of 2018, but comparable with the 10-year average of 447 (range 365 to 561). They were recorded in more tetrads than Sparrowhawks (397) and fewer than Common Buzzard (640). During the first winter period the highest count was nine at Durham Fm (lower Ouse Valley) on 12 Jan. There were two counts of five at Pulborough Brooks in January and fours from The Burgh (Burpham) on 2 Jan and the lower Cuckmere Valley on 28 Feb. During the early year SWBS the species was recorded in 23% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of three at Edburton on 19 Feb. There were no records of birds flying in off the sea but a resident male appeared to be hunting over the sea off Birling Gap on 24 and 25 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads, four more than in 2018 and probable in 35, ten more than in 2018. Display was first noted at Ellison's Pond (Ashdown Forest) on 25 Feb. The first confirmed breeding was a bird with food on 12 May at Telscombe and the first fledged young were recorded on 11 Jun at Shermanbury. During the BBS Kestrels were found in 24% of the squares surveyed with maximum counts of three at Edburton on 21 Apr and at Sidlesham on 29 Jun. Three pairs were at Thorney Island in June. The highest summer counts were in August with eight at Thorney Island on the 18th, seven at Rackham Hill on the 3rd and fives at Pagham Hbr on the 5th and at Pulborough Brooks on the 17th.

Autumn counts were low compared to the previous year with eight at Thorney Island on 2 Sep and sixes at Burpham on 1 Sep and Thorney Island on 20 Oct. There were no records of birds flying out to sea. Ten was the highest number recorded in the second winter period, at The Burgh on 4 Dec. There were four further records of four from The Burgh, Rackham, Amberley and Pulborough Brooks. During the late year SWBS the species was recorded in 28% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of four at Rackham on 21 Dec.

Interesting observations included a female which flew from the ground carrying a snake at Stedham Common on 21 Jul, a juvenile hunting grasshoppers at Pagham Hbr on 5 Aug and another which caught a lizard at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 28 Aug. [MJ Chattaway]

Merlin*Falco columbarius*

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

Merlins were recorded from 49 (5.2%) tetrads, comparable to the 10-year average of 52. The approximate monthly totals were:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	6	10	6	7	14	8	7

Sightings in the first winter period were mostly at coastal sites but with inland sightings at Pulborough Brooks, The Burgh and Ashdown Forest, with no more than two seen at any one site.

Merlins were observed hunting on several occasions: one chasing small birds returning to roost at Arundel WWT on 17 Jan, a female scattering Black-headed Gulls at Goring on 26 Feb and one chasing prey at Cooksbridge on 17 Mar, a female type seen hunting at Beachy Head on 22 Mar and one hunting offshore at Selsey Bill on 6 and 13 Apr.



Kestrel, Beachy Head, 28 February (Roger & Liz Charwood)

The last record of spring was at Rye Hbr on 24 Apr and there were no further sightings until the start of the autumn period, with the first returning bird observed at Arundel on 1 Sep. Thereafter birds were seen at a range of coastal and inland sites until the end of the year. One, presumably the same individual, was observed hunting offshore at Selsey Bill on a number of occasions during October with at least one successful hunting trip recorded. [BGR Ives]

Hobby

Falco subbuteo

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

The species was recorded in 141 (15%) tetrads during the year, a distribution similar to the 10-year average of 156 tetrads. The first Hobby of 2019 was noted at Blackham (East Sussex) on 24 Mar, three days later than the earliest recorded arrival of 21 Mar at Waltham Brooks in 2004. However, there were no further sightings until 20 Apr when singles were seen at Arundel and Beachy Head and thereafter ones or twos at a range of sites until mid-May. Notable counts during this period were four at Amberley Wild Brooks on 28 and 30 Apr, rising to five on 6 May, and eight at Pulborough Brooks on the same date, the largest gathering seen in the year. Elsewhere groups of four were recorded at Pett Level on 14 May and Bexhill on 9 Jun.

Breeding was confirmed at just three sites, down from five in 2018, although considered probable or possible in a further 22 tetrads. Displaying pairs were noted at Ashdown Forest on 20 May and at Harting Down on 2 Jun, while a pair remained at Pulborough Brooks throughout June. The first sign of successful breeding was of an adult carrying prey on 24 Jul at Cowdray Forest. Subsequently, a juvenile was at West Dean with a calling parent on 30 Jul and two fledged birds calling and being fed on the wing were at Ashdown Forest on 22 Aug.

Later in the year juveniles were seen at Church Norton, where a confiding individual was present around the churchyard for most of the day on 12 Sep, a juvenile at Weir Wood Res on 15 Sep was observed catching dragonflies, with possibly the same bird recorded on 23 Sep, and one at Beachy Head on 15 Sep and another on 5 Oct. Most autumn records involved one or two but there were three at Hastings on 7 Sep and four at Pett Level on the 30th. Singles were recorded on 11 dates in October with two at Pett Level on the 19th and the last, a presumed first summer bird, also at Pett Level on the 20th, four days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [BGR Ives]

Peregrine

Falco peregrinus

Scarce breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.

There was a rise in the overall number of Peregrine records submitted, from 1080 in 2018 to 1214 for 2019. The number of observations in the breeding season between March and June however only increased from 358 in 2018 to 367 in 2019, and of these only a handful record breeding data, most being casual observations whilst recording other species. However, this may be a reflection of observer effort or change of reporting practice. The tetrad count is 172 (18%) compared with 177 (19%) in 2018 and a 10-year average of 164 (range 143 to 178).

As fewer sites are being monitored in detail it is difficult to estimate the overall breeding status but there are indications that the wider population remains stable. More than two adults were present at several sites during the breeding season and also a handful of second calendar year juveniles were reported. Additional pairs were also observed away from the more traditional coastal and quarry sites, and the use of alternative nesting sites such as trees and in particular the use of pylons, both as breeding and non-breeding sites, seem to be on the increase and have been reported throughout the county.

The use of several large buildings away from the coast, including some unusual historic sites, have also been frequently observed, but with very few reports of breeding success. Competition with Ravens, which are present near most pairs of nesting Peregrines, was certainly to blame for the failure of one pair in East Sussex, with the displaced female eventually laying an egg on the ground.

There were nevertheless a number of successful sea cliff and quarry sites. A number of young were raised in at least three quarry sites in addition to one sea cliff nesting pair near Eastbourne where two young were raised. The pair that previously nested on the ground in West Sussex were present again but no young were recorded. Outside the breeding season the signs are positive and there were frequent observations of singles and pairs at locations with an abundant food supply, including Pulborough Brooks, Chichester Hbr and Pett Level. One presumed family, consisting of two adults and three juveniles, were seen together in the area of West Langney and Willingdon Levels in August.

Several urban sites including one near Worthing continue to be annually disturbed despite reports being made to the police. The nest boxes however enjoy more success, although this year the pair at Sussex Heights (Brighton) only managed to raise one male chick from two eggs laid between 7 and 9 Apr. It hatched on 14 May and after being ringed in 4 Jun, was seen flying on the 22nd.

The Chichester Cathedral pair fared better, with four eggs laid between 31 Mar and 7 Apr, slightly later than in 2018, . They all hatched between 8 and 10 May. The chicks, one male and three females, were ringed on 31 May. The first two chicks to fledge were a male and female on the 21 Jun with the last female leaving the cathedral two days later. Chichester Cathedral continues to be the most successful urban site. [J Franklin]

Ring-necked Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

Scarce introduced breeding resident.

There were a similar number of sightings to previous years, with just under 20 records, although there were larger flocks, with 21 at Weir Wood Res on 3 Nov being the biggest group ever recorded in Sussex. Favoured locations still appear to be the Crawley and Gatwick areas, with sightings on seven dates, including six on 11 Dec and eight at nearby Copthorne on 6 Apr. Elsewhere two were seen on Ashdown Forest on 16 May and singles at Seaford (11 Apr), Lewes (1 Aug and 6 Sep), Wivelsfield Green (6 Sep) and Lancing (4 Oct). [A Podmore]

Red-backed Shrike

Lanius collurio

Very scarce passage migrant; formerly a breeding summer visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The only record was of an adult male beside Hurst Haven, north of Rickney (Pevensey Levels) on 21 Jul (C Gape). Despite being searched for, it was not seen subsequently. It was only the fourth record for July since 2000 and takes the county total this century to 48. [P James]

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The first record of the year was of one at Balcombe on 3 Jan. Thereafter there were many records at various sites on Ashdown Forest between 8 Jan and 18 Apr, probably involving the same individual, with sightings on five dates in January, 11 in February, 11 in March and finally on 2 and 18 Apr.

In the autumn and second winter periods there were just two sightings on Ashdown Forest, on 30 Nov and 7 Dec, one was at Cissbury on five dates between 4 and 23 Dec and one at Thorney Deepes on 30 Dec. Thus probably no more than six individuals were seen during the year. [T Seabrook]

Golden Oriole

Oriolus oriolus

Rare passage migrant and summer visitor; may have bred in 1965. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

There were three typical spring records in 2019, all of singing males, at Windmill Hill (Herstmonceux) on 15 May (C Duncan), West Wittering on 22 May (GA Michelmore) and Black Down on 25 May (GK Mitchell). The county total this century moves on to 34 with records in all but four years. [P James]

Jay

Garrulus glandarius

Very common resident.

Jays were recorded in 502 tetrads (53%) (cf. 471 (50%) in 2018 and a 10-year average of 547). During the first winter period the highest counts were eight at both Darwell Res on 5 Jan and the Knepp Estate on 20 Feb. Otherwise the highest counts were of six or fewer. During this period's SWBS a total of 82 was recorded in 37% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of six on 15 Jan in Petworth.

During the BBS Jays were found in 51% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 11 on 19 Apr at West Lavington (Midhurst). Participants in the GBW recorded Jays in 57% of gardens, with a maximum of five on five occasions at Henfield and once at both Barcombe and Guestling.

Breeding was confirmed in just four tetrads and was probable in a further 20. Nest building was first noted on 6 Apr at Arundel WWT and the first fledglings were seen at Pulborough Brooks on 13 Jun. The lack of recorded breeding evidence is a feature of the under recording of this very common species.

While 89% of records with a count were of ones or twos, the highest counts were of tens at Greatham Bridge on 4 Jun and Weir Wood Res on 13 Oct. In the later SWBS 118 were recorded from 46% of the squares surveyed, with maxima of six at Burgess Hill on 13 Nov and at West Lavington. [M Orchard-Webb]

Magpie

Pica pica

Very common resident.

Magpies were recorded in 650 tetrads (69%) (cf. 629 (67%) in 2018), comparable with the 10-year average of 644 (range 559 to 816). During the first winter period there were seven counts of 20 or more, the highest being 40 at Pagham Hbr on 16 Feb and 25 at Newhaven on the 5th. During the SWBS there was a further high count of 34 on 14 Feb at Wick Bottom (Woodingdean) from encounters in 90% of the squares surveyed. On 13 Mar 34 went into a roost at Warnham LNR.

During the GBW Magpies were recorded in 97% of participating gardens in Sussex. BBS surveyors found 789 in 91% of the squares studied, with a maximum count of 22 on 31 May at Hempstead (Uckfield). Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in a further 38. Nest building was first recorded at Riverside Park (Newhaven) on 13 Jan, at East Dean on 19 Jan and at Mountfield on 5 Feb. An occupied nest was seen on 22 Mar at Uckfield and the first fledglings

were seen at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 9 May. On 13 Jul one was seen trying to prise open a Swift nest box near Preston Park (Brighton).

During autumn there were nine counts of 20 or more. The highest were a flock of 66 at Beachy Head on 28 Oct, 40 at Climping Gap on the 27th and 35 at Seaford Head GC on the 17th. In the second winter period there were eight counts of 20 or more; the highest was 45 at Elmer (Middleton) on 20 Dec. During the late winter SWBS 606 were encountered in 85% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 25 on 13 Dec at Burgess Hill. [M Orchard-Webb]

Jackdaw

Coloeus monedula

Very common resident.

Jackdaws were recorded in 635 tetrads (68%), a small increase over 2018 (628 (67%)) but comparable with the 10-year average of 616 (range 511 to 756). During the first winter period an astonishing estimated total of 5200 were observed coming in to roost in a coombe near Glyndebourne on 30 Jan. Other large counts were recorded at Barcombe Cross, where 1300 were counted on 4 Jan and 1670 were seen flying to roost on 23 Feb. Elsewhere, 950 were counted on downland near Lewes on 3 Mar and there were four records of 700 at four other locations during January and February. During the early year SWBS a total of 2446 was recorded from 80% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 336 at East Chiltington. In the BGBW Jackdaws were recorded in 18% of participating gardens in West Sussex compared to 29% in East Sussex, whilst in the GBW they were recorded in 64% of the 210 participating gardens in Sussex during the year.

During the BBS 2897 Jackdaws were encountered in 89% of the 169 squares studied, with a maximum of 155 at Petworth Park on 26 Apr. Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads with evidence of probable breeding in a further 37. Nest building was first noted on 25 Mar at Crowborough but the first record of occupied nests came from the quarries at Southerham (Lewes) where there were 13 as early as 4 Mar. The first record of (four) fledged birds came from the Beeches Estate at Crowborough on 20 May.

The summer period produced some notably high counts, with 2000 at Midhurst on 5 Aug, 1000 at Slaugham on 15 Jul, 1000 at Clayhill (Ringmer) on the 18th and 300 at Beachy Head on the 11th. There were 200 at Barcombe Mills on 24 Jul and a further ten records of 100 or more.

During the autumn there were 22 records of 100 or more, with a maximum of 402 at Selsey Bill on 23 Oct and 400 at Cissbury on the 10th. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 525 on 15 dates between 15 Sep and 31 Oct with a maximum of 149 on 20 Oct. During the second winter period 1000 were recorded at Waldron on 11 Dec and 700 at Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on 29 Nov. Two counts of 500 were reported, from Bishopstone (Seaford) on 12 Nov and Rye Hbr on 27 Dec, and there were a further 32 records of 100 or more. During the late year SWBS a total of 2394 was recorded from 75% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 210 at Chelwood Common (Danehill) on 25 Dec. [G Osborne]

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Very common resident.

Rooks were recorded in 458 tetrads (49%) compared with 444 (47%) in 2018, comparable with the 10-year average of 450 (range 353 to 627). During the first winter period the highest counts were 300 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Feb, 250 at Racton on the 2nd and 250 at Iford (Lewes) on the 11th; there were four counts of 200 and eleven of 100 or more. During the early year SWBS a total of 1256 was found in 45% of the squares surveyed, the maximum count being 250 at Racton on 2 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 40 tetrads and was recorded as probable in a further 13 tetrads. Nest building was first noted on 9 Feb at Arundel WWT and the first occupied nests were seen at Hunston (Chichester) on the 28th, where 12 active nests were observed. The earliest nest with young was seen at Abingworth (Thakeham) on 6 Apr and the first fledged young at Burgess Hill on the 27th. During the BBS 2886 were encountered in 62% of the squares surveyed, with the highest count of 300 at Hooe Level (Pevensy Levels) on 28 May. In the GBW Rooks were encountered in 24% of participating Sussex gardens. A rookery survey undertaken between Littlehampton and Arundel produced a total of 343 AON in 28 rookeries. This indicates a 29% decline since 2017 when there were 482 AON in 34 rookeries in the same area, and a 37% decline since 2014 when there were 550 AON in 33 rookeries. Elsewhere in the county 13 rookeries were recorded holding at least 234 nests, an average of 18 per rookery. The largest rookeries were at Friston Forest (Westdean) (49 AON) and at Summersdale (Chichester) (42 AON).

During the summer period the highest counts were 350 at Beachy Head on 13 Jul, 200 at Angmering on 3 Aug and four other counts of 100 at different locations.

During the autumn the largest 'parliaments' of Rooks were 400 at Cuckmere Haven on 28 Oct and 200 at Arlington Res on 20 Sep, and there were six other 'clamours' of 100 or more at four different locations. During the second winter a count of 400 was recorded at Racton on 22 Dec, 250 were observed at Cuckmere Haven on the 16th, 225 were at Seaford Head on Christmas Day and there were 20 further counts of 100 or more from 12 different locations. During the late year SWBS a total of 1872 was found in 46% of the squares surveyed, with the maximum count being the 400 at Racton on 22 Dec. [G Osborne]

Carrion Crow

Corvus corone

Very common resident.

Carrion Crows were recorded in 682 tetrads (73%), the same as in 2018 and comparable with the 10-year average of 678 (range 581 to 852). During the first quarter there were five records of 100 or more, the highest being 402 at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 15 Jan. There were 200 at Pett Level on 17 Mar, 120 at East Guldeford Level on 22 Feb, plus counts of 100 at Weir Wood Res on 1 Jan and at Cuckmere Haven on 21 Mar. There were a further eleven counts of 50 or more at nine different locations. During the early year SWBS a total of 1229 was found in 99% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 70 at Balcombe on 27 Feb. In the BGBW the species was recorded in 30% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 32% in East Sussex, whilst in the GBW they were recorded in 76% of surveyed gardens during the year. There was an interesting observation of two birds eating frogspawn from a small pond near Preston Church (Brighton) on 19 Mar.

During the spring, observers at Beachy Head recorded a total of 13 flying in from the sea between 13 Apr and 11 May, with a daily maximum of five on 19 Apr. Elsewhere a single bird was seen flying in from the sea at Hastings CP on 10 Apr, whilst no fewer than 38 were recorded flying in from a long way out at Selsey Bill on 13 Apr. A total of 2469 was recorded from 99% of the squares surveyed for the BBS, with a maximum count of 213 at Hooe Level (Pevensy) on 25 May.

Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads and probable in a further 29. Nest building was first observed as early as 6 Feb at Abingworth (Thakeham) which, while it was the earliest date this century, is not unprecedented as it equalled the first date in 2010 and the next earliest of 9 Feb 2012. The first occupied nest was noted on 6 Mar at Crawley but a nest with young birds was not recorded until 10 May at Dexter (Northiam). The earliest record of fledged young was from Southerham (Lewes) on 26 May. The largest gathering during the breeding season was of 132 at Telscombe

on 2 Jun. During the summer period the highest counts were of 110 at Petworth Park on 7 Aug and 100 at Warnham LNR on the same date.

During the autumn, a count of 400 was recorded at Mark Cross (Rotherfield) on 6 Sep and 136 were seen at Dell Quay (Chichester Hbr) on the 28th. During the second winter period an exceptional count of 1000 was recorded at Hampden Park (Eastbourne) on 7 Dec, with 276 reported from Great Bentley Fm (Balcombe) on 18 Nov. During the late year SWBS a total of 1659 were recorded from 100% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 105 at Kingston (Lewes) on 23 Dec. [G Osborne]

Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.

The individual first seen at Earnley on 7 Jun 2018 remained in the area well into 2019 and was last recorded on 4 Mar at Pagham Hbr. The only other record was of one at Cuckmere Haven from 14 to 22 Mar (MR Eade, R Lusted, P Wells *et al.*); it was also seen at Seaford Head on 21 Mar. The county total this century moves on to ten. [P James]



Hooded Crow, Church Norton, 11 February (Andrew House)



Raven, Beachy Head, 27 February (Peter Brooks)

Raven

Corvus corax

Fairly common breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.

More than 1400 records were submitted from 287 tetrads (31%), a slight decrease on the 298 (32%) of 2018, with numbers 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 territories. Since Ravens have large broods and a high fledging success rate, it is likely that the Sussex population is now around 120 to 150 pairs. Not every known pair will be reported annually but in 2019 there were records of two or more birds from 74 localities with suitable breeding habitat. Such has been the recent success of this species we should expect to find a pair of these corvids in most large blocks of woodland in the county.

The nesting season begins early, and at one location there was nest building on 31 Jan and at another on 2 Feb. At a third location, on 26 Feb, one of the adults was observed bringing in sheep's wool, which is often used to line the nesting bowl. At this well-observed nest, there were feathered young perched on the edge of the nest on 1 May, with recently-fledged young on the 21st. There were a few records of family parties of five birds and if we were to extrapolate these data for the entire Sussex population then they would have had an average year. During the BBS Ravens were found in 9.4% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of four on 3 May at the Parham Estate.

There were many sightings of groups of Ravens, in date order as follows: 12 at The Burgh on 8 Apr, 12 at Alfriston on 26 Jul, 17 at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Aug, eight at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 25 Aug, 12 at Monkton (Chilgrove) and 30 at The Burgh on 1 Sep, 16 at Cocking on 2 Oct, 12 at Chantry Hill on 3 Oct, nine at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Nov, 14 at Westdean Woods on 18 Nov and eight at The Burgh on 4 Dec.

In the latter part of the year, a significant roost was discovered in the Ashdown Forest area and observations made on several dates, peaking at 38 on 7 Dec. In the autumn of 2019, large numbers

were regularly recorded between Storrington and Amberley, and it seems very likely that there was a regular downland roost somewhere in that general area. [ME Kalaher]

Waxwing

Bombycilla garrulus

Irruptive winter visitor; very scarce or scarce; occasionally fairly common.

During the first winter period there were two records from West Sussex. A flock of ten was at Kingley Vale on 2 Jan for a period of half an hour before flying off to the northeast, and a flock of four at Emsworth from 4 to 5 Jan frequently flew over the border to Hampshire, before returning to their favoured berry tree. The only record from the second winter period involved a minimum of two birds at Three Oaks (Hastings) on 18 Dec. [MR Eade]

Coal Tit

Periparus ater

Very common resident.

Coal Tits were recorded in 454 tetrads (48%), rather more than the 10-year average of 401 (range 536 to 324). During the first winter period there were 14 counts of ten or more, with a maximum of 20 at Lavington Common on 15 Feb. During the early year SWBS they were encountered in 31% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 14 on 5 Feb at West Lavington.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads and probable in a further 14. Nest building was first noted on 25 Mar at Pulborough Brooks, food carrying on 1 May at Bedelands LNR (Burgess Hill), and fledged young on 12 May at Roundell Wood (Arundel) and at a further 14 sites across the county to 28 Jul. At Broadwater Warren 18 pairs were recorded and seven at Fore Wood (Crowhurst). During the BBS they were recorded in 38% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 13 on 16 Apr at Tilgate Forest. During the GBW they were recorded in 80% of participating gardens during the year, with an average peak count of two.

Post-breeding, there was no noticeable increase in the size of flocks but there were six counts of ten or more, with a maximum of 20 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 10 Sep.

During the second winter period there were five counts of ten or more with a maximum of 19 at Kingley Vale on 24 Nov. During the SWBS they were encountered in 19% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 14 on 3 Dec, again at West Lavington. On 17 Nov a Coal Tit was trapped and ringed at Cissbury, the first ringed since 1989.

Continental Coal Tit, *P. a. ater*

One associating with Chiffchaffs in Tamarisks at Birling Gap on 3 Oct showed characteristics of this race (DR Cooper, JF Cooper). [JA Hobson]

Marsh Tit

Poecile palustris

Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Marsh Tits were recorded in 232 tetrads (25%) compared to the 10-year average of 210 (range 150 to 292). As usual most records were from the Wealden woods and were of one or two birds. There are usually a few records annually from the Fairlight area and this year fledged young were seen there, the only coastal location where this species was recorded. On 28 May an adult was observed feeding a juvenile at Old Marsham Fm and on 30 Jun an adult and two juveniles were seen near the cliff edge at Fairlight Cove. There were records in every month of the year from Warnham LNR, Weir Wood Res, Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) and Battle.

The highest first winter period counts were ten at Binsted on 25 Jan, eight at Steyning Round Hill on 18 Jan, and sevens at Weir Wood Res on 27 Jan and at Darwell Res on 13 Feb. During the early year SWBS they were encountered in 17% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of eight, mentioned above. During the GBW they were recorded in 19% of participating gardens, similar to the 20% in 2018.

Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads, the same as last year, and probable in a further 22, fewer than last year. Records during the breeding season were received from 100 locations, down on the 113 of 2018. The first songster was heard on 9 Feb at Arundel WWT, nest building was first observed on 8 Apr at Darwell Res and the earliest confirmed breeding of a bird on a nest was on 25 Apr at Wadhurst. The first fledglings were those mentioned above on 28 May at Old Marsham Fm. During the BBS Marsh Tits were found in 14% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven on 1 Jun at Pallingham (Pulborough). In the RSPB reserves four pairs bred at Broadwater Warren and three at Fore Wood (Crowhurst); at both reserves dormouse boxes were used by some pairs.

The highest counts during the autumn or second winter period were nine on 24 Nov at Kingley Vale, eight at Ashburnham Place (Battle) on 14 Dec and two counts of six. During this season's SWBS Marsh Tits were recorded in 10% of squares surveyed with a maximum of three on 5 Nov at Slinfold. This species is being surveyed in Sussex so observers are encouraged to submit records, particularly with evidence of breeding. [M] Chattaway]

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Abundant resident.

Blue Tits were recorded in 687 tetrads (73%), comparable with the 10-year average of 676 (range 581 to 847). During the first winter period there were six counts of 40 or more with a maximum of 64 on 26 Feb at Broadbridge Heath, and 13 further counts of 30 to 39. In this season's SWBS this species was recorded in 99% squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 52 on 18 Jan at Steyning Round Hill. During the BGBW they were recorded in 77% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 78% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 80 tetrads and was probable in a further 36. The first dates on which various breeding activity events were noted were as follows: display on 28 Jan at Hampden Park (Eastbourne); birds investigating potential nesting cavities on 9 Feb at Arundel WWT; nest building on 25 Mar at Broadbridge Heath; on 17 Apr an occupied nest was noted at Sedlescombe and fledged young on 16 May at Horsted Keynes. During the BBS Blue Tits were recorded in 96% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of 43 on 16 Apr at St Georges (Wivelsfield).

A breeding pair was studied in detail in Henfield; the nest monitor was set up on 11 Mar, birds were bringing in nesting material from the 16th, 11 eggs had been laid by 12 Apr of which seven had hatched by the 23rd and nine by 9 May, from which possibly seven fledged on the 15th. This was this nest's most successful year, and the village children who visited took great interest in the progress of the birds.

During July and August there were double figure counts from some 24 sites across the county with only two counts of 30 or more. In the autumn there were 14 counts of 40 or more with a maximum of 64 at Combe Valley CP on 2 Oct and 12 further counts of between 30 and 39.

In the second winter period there were seven counts of 40 or more with a maximum of 57 on 24 Nov at Balcombe and 17 further counts of between 30 and 39. In the SWBS Blue Tits were recorded in 94% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 38 on 28 Dec at Plumpton Green. During the GBW they were recorded in 99.5% of gardens surveyed, with an average weekly count of four. The largest count recorded in a garden was eight on 3 Oct at Pevensey Bay. [JA Hobson]

Great Tit*Parus major****Abundant resident.***

Great Tits were recorded in 677 tetrads (72%), comparable with the 10-year average of 660 (range 559 to 836). In the first winter period there were only three records of 30 or more with a maximum of 35 at Warnham LNR on 6 Mar. In the early year SWBS they were recorded in 95% squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 21 on 18 Jan at Steyning Round Hill.

Breeding was confirmed in 58 tetrads and probable in a further 40. The first signs of the various aspects of breeding activity were as follows: visiting a nest site on 9 Feb at Arundel WWT, nest building on 6 Apr at Arundel WWT, a nest with young on 27 Apr at Burgess Hill and fledged young on 16 May at Horsted Keynes and Bexhill. Most of the few counts of fledged birds were of five or fewer with the single exception of c.10 recently fledged at Blackboys on 21 May. The only unusual nest site recorded was of birds appearing to be nesting in a sculpture at Pashley Manor (Etchingham) on 6 May. The only significant breeding survey count was of 23 pairs at Pulborough Brooks, and 17 singing birds were recorded on 24 Apr in Monkmead Wood (West Chiltington). During the BBS Great Tits were recorded in 96% of the squares surveyed, with maxima of 37 on 16 Apr at Wivelsfield and on 1 Jun at Northchapel. During the GBW they were recorded in 97% of gardens surveyed during the year, with an average peak weekly count of three.

In the autumn, the highest count was 30 at Beachy Head on 22 and 23 Oct. In the second winter period there were six counts of 30 or more, all at Warnham LNR, with a maximum of 38 on 24 Nov. In the late year SWBS Great Tits were recorded in 79% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 25 on 5 Dec at Ripe. [JA Hobson]

Bearded Tit*Panurus biarmicus****Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.***

Bearded Tits were recorded in 18 tetrads (1.9%), an increase on recent years, perhaps indicating that they had a productive breeding season. They were recorded in every month of the year at Pett Level. The highest monthly counts outside the breeding season, from the nine locations where they were recorded, are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County Total (minimum)	6	1	4					7	22	39	21	25
Thorney Deep/Island	1	-	-					-	10	10	2	6
Pagham Hbr	-	-	-					-	-	1	-	-
Chichester Marina	-	-	-					-	-	-	4	2
Gatwick Airport	-	-	-					-	-	-	-	1
Eastbourne Lakes	1	-	-					-	-	2	12	2
Pevensey Levels	-	-	-					-	-	1	-	-
Combe Valley CP	-	-	-					-	-	3	2	-
Pett Level	2	1	1					1	12	18	1	14
Rye Hbr	2	-	3					6	-	4	-	-

Breeding occurred at Thorney, with fledged young seen on several dates from 18 May. Eight pairs bred at Pett Level with fledged young seen, and at Rye Hbr at least two pairs bred.

There were four records of high flying. At Combe Valley CP on 12 Apr “one flew up high and probably left the site” and at Rye Hbr one flew up high and headed south on 18 Apr. In the autumn at Thorney Deepes on 30 Sep five flew high and then east, and at Pett Level on 20 Oct two appeared to move east. A very unusual record was received of one in reedbeds at Gatwick Airport on 11 Dec, surprising and delighting the observers studying wildlife in and around the airport. [MJ Chattaway]

Woodlark

Lullula arborea

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

Woodlarks were recorded in 59 tetrads (6.3%) (cf. 48 (5.1%) in 2018), comparable with the 10-year average of 58 (range 48 to 72). About 39% of submitted records were from Ashdown Forest, followed by Pulborough Brooks with 21% and the Wealden Heaths with 12%. Numbers at Pulborough Brooks had been boosted by the presence of up to 19 birds, which had arrived at the end of 2018 and which stayed into 2019.

Breeding was confirmed in only three tetrads but was probable in a further 24. Singing was first heard on 12 Feb at Broadwater Warren, an occupied nest was found at the Isle of Thorns (Ashdown Forest) on 10 Apr and newly fledged birds were seen at Stedham Common on 30 May. During the WHBBS 53 territories were identified, with maxima of 11 at Black Down and ten at Woolbeding (see report, page 216). Those surveys had found 37 territories in 2017 and 45 in 2018, suggesting a gradual increase in the breeding population. At Broadwater Warren there was something of a decrease, from 13 pairs in 2018 to ten. The number of territories/pairs on Ashdown Forest was not stated but six singing males and a pair were found at Old Lodge LNR on 8 Apr (and 12 were found nearby on 29 Aug). One was singing alongside Nightingales on the Knepp Estate in late May.

Although breeding was not proved elsewhere, a pair was very active at Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) in April and May and birds remained in the area after the breeding season. A pair at Borden (Rogate) on 10 Feb was in arable fields with sparse mature trees. Two males were singing at Flexham Park (Petworth) on 25 Feb. A singing male was on the south western edge of St. Leonard's Forest on 24 Mar, the same or another was singing nearby on 5 Jul. Two were found near Northend Fm (Wardley) on 26 May.

In September the highest count was of ten on the 21st on acid grassland and heathland edge next to Weavers Down (Liss). Six were counted during migration watching at Hastings on four October dates, including one flying out to sea from Fairlight on the 28th. A flock of up to 16 was present from late November to the end of the year in a stubble field at Rushlake Green. Stubble was also favoured by a group of eight at Paddockhurst (Worth), and nearby at Little Strudgate Fm, 15 were in winter wheat on 23 Dec. [C Brooks]

Skylark

Alauda arvensis

Very common but declining resident and probably common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

This species was recorded in 375 tetrads (40%), a slight increase from the previous year, but comparable with the 10-year average of 380 (range 290 to 494). A total of 298 was recorded in 35% of the squares surveyed in the early year SWBS with a maximum count of 100 on 14 Feb at Woodingdean. Skylarks were widely distributed in the first winter period; there were 49 counts of

20 or more with the largest counts of 100 at Beachy Head on 5 Jan and 18 Jan, and the same number at East Guldeford Level on 22 Jan and at Woodingdean on 14 Feb.

During the BBS, Skylarks were noted in 47% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 29 on 25 May at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels). Breeding was only confirmed in nine tetrads, a slight increase on last year, and was probable in a further 41, a slight decrease on last year. Distraction display was first noted on 25 Feb on Ashdown Forest, where the first nest with eggs was noted on 18 Apr. Food carrying was noted on 26 Apr at Bewl Water but the earliest fledging date is unknown.

During the autumn period there were 38 counts of 20 or more, the highest counts being 130 at Medmerry on 6 Oct and 115 in the Arun Valley on the 22nd.

In the late year SWBS a total of 274 Skylarks was found in 19% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of 51 at Portslade on 18 Dec. During this period there were 47 counts of 20 or more, similar to the early months, but the two highest were 175 at East Guldeford Level on 22 Nov and 70 at Chichester Hbr on 29 Nov. [WDJ Arrowsmith]

Sand Martin

Riparia riparia

Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

Sand Martins were recorded in 102 tetrads (11%), a significant increase on the 80 (8.5%) of 2018 and on the 10-year average of 83 (range 67 to 103).

The earliest returning bird was seen on 1 Mar at Combe Valley CP, ten days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by another at Pulborough Brooks on the 4th and three at Weir Wood Res on the 6th. Thereafter small numbers were seen on five dates until the 22nd when there were 33 at Cuckmere Haven, 20 at Pagham Hbr and 15 at Pulborough Brooks.

Two hundred at Pulborough Brooks on the 31st was the first of ten spring counts of 100 or more from either Chichester GPs or Pulborough Brooks with a maximum of 400 at the former site on Apr 2. In May there were 18 counts of 20 or more including 70 at Arundel WWT on the 17th and 80 at Pulborough Brooks on the 9th. Spring migration northwards was only lightly recorded at Selsey Bill; the total of just 58 of which 50 were recorded in April with a maximum of 13 on the 19th.

Breeding was confirmed at four West Sussex sites, at West Heath Common, Arundel WWT, Poling and Rock Common (Washington), and was probable in a further two. At Arundel WWT birds were checking nesting holes on 14 May and were actively using them on the 16th and food was being carried there on 12 Jul. Nests with young were recorded at Rock Common on 23 Jul and the first fledged young were recorded at Arundel WWT on 4 Aug.

The earliest possibly returning migrants were 6 W on 10 Jul at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne). At Selsey Bill 57 were logged during the month with a maximum of 25 on the 13th but the total there for August was 447, with a maximum of 274 on the 25th. During August there were 16 counts of 100 or more, including 500 at Chichester GP on the 31st and 1000 at Pett Level on the 24th.

High numbers declined in frequency in September; there were only seven counts in excess of 100. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 1141 on 31 dates between 13 Aug and 15 Oct with a maximum of 350 on 12 Sep, the highest count of the month anywhere. At Selsey Bill 74 were recorded in September with a maximum of 24 on the 14th. During October 31 were recorded on ten dates, the highest single count was ten on the 13th at Rye Hbr and the final record was two at Beachy Head on the 27th, six days later than the 10-year average departure date. [JA Hobson]

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica***Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.**

Barn Swallows were recorded in 477 tetrads (51%), slightly higher than the 460 (49%) of 2018 but lower than the 10-year average of 495 (range 415 to 595).

The earliest returning migrants were seen on 19 and 23 Feb at Medmerry and on the 24th at Beachy Head, earlier than the 10-year average arrival date of 12 Mar. However, passage in March was little below the average for this century with 54 recorded (average 72) with a maxima of just 5 at Pulborough Brooks on the 31st. On 1 Apr there were ten at Weir Wood Res and 20 the next day at sites in the Arun Valley. The first 100s were counted on the 9th at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) and Portshole Fm (Sidlesham) the next day. The highest April count was 200 at Ivy Lake on the 13th. The largest number recorded at seawatching sites was from Selsey Bill where the April total was 516 with a maximum of 141 on the 17th and 851 during May with a maximum of 266 on the 1st.

During the BBS 494 Swallows were encountered in 66% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 16 on 12 May at West Wittering. Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and probable in a further 35. The earliest stages of breeding noted were as follows: nest building on 29 Apr at West Marden, an occupied nest on 2 May at Arundel WWT and fledglings on 2 Jun at Punnetts Town.

The first post-breeding gathering noted was of 100 on 12 Jul at Ham Fm (Medmerry) followed by 150 there on the 24th and 118 at Telscombe on the 15th, otherwise only small numbers were noted. In August there were 19 records of 100 or more including 600 E at Beachy Head on the 25th. At Selsey Bill 2309 were recorded during the month with a maximum of 1243 W on the 27th. The Hastings migration watch team recorded 11,246 between 4 Aug and 18 Nov with a maximum of 1515 on 30 Sep. In September, 22 counts of in excess of 500 included 2132 E and 2077 E at Selsey Bill on the 20th and 14th respectively from a month's total of 14,018 (8210 E, 6797 W), c.2000 E at Beachy Head on the 13th, 2000 SW at Glynde Level on the 27th and 1800 S at Uckfield on the 13th.

The highest counts in October were, as expected, early in the month and included 1250 and 1345 at Combe Valley CP on the 1st and 2nd and at Selsey Bill 704 E and 793 E on the 2nd and 3rd. Following 552 E at Selsey Bill on the 7th numbers declined markedly. Approximately 42 continued to be seen migrating during November but the highest count was only 6 on the 1st at Selsey Bill.

There were four records of singles in December, on the 15th, 16th, 19th and, finally, the 25th, all from the Glynde/Firle area, probably the same bird, and later than the 10-year average last date of 1 Dec. [JA Hobson]

Crag Martin*Ptyonoprogne rupestris***Very rare vagrant.**

One was present briefly at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 22 May (ME Charlwood, RH Charlwood). This was the fourth record for Sussex and the third for Beachy Head. It has been accepted by BBRC. The finder's account is on page 217 of this report. [M Mallalieu]

House Martin*Delichon urbicum*

Common but declining summer visitor and abundant passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

House Martins were recorded in 345 tetrads (37%), a welcome increase on the 32% of 2018, a recovery from the 28% of 2017 and better than the 10-year average of 313 (33%) (range 252 to 394).

The earliest record was of four on 13 Mar at Rye Hbr, seven days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by singles ten days later at Weir Wood Res and Pett Level. In April, there were 15 counts greater than 20 including 50 on the 13th at Pagham Hbr and 200 on the 28th at Thorney WTW. In May there were 17 such counts and eight of more than 100, with maxima of 200 at Ambersham Common on the 5th, Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on the 10th and Portshole Fm (Sidlesham) on the 16th, but 41% of records were of ones or twos. The highest counts in June were 100 at Medmerry on the 14th and 200 at Portshole Fm on the 3rd.

During the BBS 141 House Martins were encountered in 17% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 23 on 3 Jun at Tillington (Petworth). Breeding was confirmed in 30 tetrads and probable in a further 17. The earliest sign of confirmed breeding was an occupied nest on 7 May at Storrington and the first fledgling seen on 23 Jun at Punnetts Town. The only records of colonies were as follows: 20 nest building at the Brinsbury Estate (Pulborough) on 14 May, ten nests on Waterstones and Lloyds Bank building in Horsham on 16 May, 15 nests being built or occupied at Itchenor on 1 Jun, ten nests at Crowhurst Park (Battle) on 11 Jun and 29 active nests at a detached house at Eridge Green on 1 Jul.

The largest counts in July were 58 at Eridge Green on the 1st, 60 at Warnham LNR on the 7th and 70 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on the 21st. Numbers increased noticeably in August as migration got under way, with maxima of 200 at Weir Wood Res on the 10th and 12th and 400 at Bewl Water on the 24th.

Even bigger numbers occurred in September; 15 counts exceeding 500 and eight in four figures, including c.3000 E at Beachy Head on the 13th and c.5000 there on the 16th. The month's total at Selsey Bill of 3242 included a peak count of 717 on the 14th. During migration watching around Hastings 8098 were recorded on 48 dates between 2 Aug and 12 Nov with a maximum of 1570 W on 16 Sep.

The species was recorded on all but two days in October, but with the main passage over, there were fewer high numbers and the maxima were 1152 in the Combe Valley CP area on the 2nd, 500 there on the 15th and c.500 at Beachy Head on the 3rd. In November, 15 were at Hastings CP on the 5th, 20 in the Hastings area on the 7th and small numbers were recorded on five dates to the 12th. However, surprisingly perhaps, one was seen on the 25th at Battle and four were counted there on 2 Dec; this reduced to two from the 7th to 24th and one was still around on the 31st, cf. the 10-year average last date is 17 Nov. Apart from three at St Leonards on 21 Dec 1938 singles have been recorded in December in just seven years between 1972 and 2015. [JA Hobson]

Red-rumped Swallow*Cecropis daurica*

Rare but increasing vagrant

There were two records of this spring overshoot in 2019, the first at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 28 Apr (AD Whitcomb *et al.*) followed a week later by one hawking over flooded fields at Litlington with other hirundines on 5 May (GRF James, P James, J MacCallum-Stewart *et al.*). The county total since 1962 moves on to 51, of which 33 have been this century, 17 in April and 30 in May. [P James]



Cetti's Warbler, Arundel WWT, 17 April (Chris Moore)

Cetti's Warbler

Cettia cetti

Fairly common and increasing resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Cetti's Warblers were recorded in 117 tetrads (12%) during 2019, an increase not only over 2018 (10%), but also greater than the 111 (12%) found in 2017, when a dedicated survey was undertaken. In the first winter period there were records from at least 34 broad locations, ten more than the previous year, though there was only a single encounter of two birds (at Pett Level) in one of the surveyed squares in the early year SWBS. Six were reported at Steyning on 1 Jan, five at Combe Valley CP on 18 Jan and the same number at Arundel WWT two days later.

During the BBS the species was found in 8.2% of the squares surveyed, with maximum counts of ten in squares at both Lewes Brooks and Pevensy Levels. Nest building was noted at Arundel WWT on 22 Apr and fledged young were seen there on 25 May. Fifteen males were singing at Thorney Island, an increase of four from 2018, and four fledged young with two adults were seen there on 1 Jun. The totals of 22 singing males at Pagham Hbr and 16 at Rye Hbr were identical to those in 2018, though there were two fewer at Medmerry. Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads, but was probable in 14 and possible in a further 39.

A female trapped and ringed on 20 Oct in downland scrub at Beachy Head was not in the expected habitat for the species. At other ringing sites, 76 were ringed at Pett Level and 29 different individuals trapped at Charleston Reedbed, including seven ringed in previous years. In the late year SWBS there were six encounters in four of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of three on 28 Dec in a square near Littlehampton. There were also reports from other locations with suitable

habitat throughout the second winter period. These included eight heard singing at Thorney Island on 3 Nov, ten at Bexhill on the 9th, four at Brede Level on 1 Dec, five at Rye Hbr on the 30th and fours at various locations in the lower Ouse Valley in December. [VP Bentley]

Long-tailed Tit

Aegithalos caudatus

Very common resident.

Long-tailed Tits were recorded in 564 tetrads (60%) compared with a 10-year average of 547 (range 440 to 718).

In the first winter period there were seven counts of 20 or more with a maximum of 31 at Darwell Res on 5 Jan. During the early year SWBS they were recorded in 54% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 22 on 17 Feb at Hellingly. During the BGBW they were recorded in 23% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 21% in East Sussex. Breeding was confirmed in 39 tetrads and probable in a further 32. The first signs of the various stages of breeding activity were as follows: nest building on 9 Feb at Arundel WWT; occupying a nest on 19 Apr at Pulborough Brooks; a nest with young on 28 Apr at Cissbury and fledged birds on 20 Apr at Arundel WWT. At RSPB reserves ten pairs bred at Pagham Hbr and six at Broadwater Warren. During the BBS they were found in 54% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 32 on 1 Jun at Northchapel.

Post-breeding there were 15 counts of more than 20 between August and October with a maximum of 40 at Climping Gap on 16 Oct.

In the second winter period there were 12 counts of 20 or more with a maximum of 32 at Beachy Head on 6 Nov comprising counts of six, 12 and 14 at different sites in the area. During the late year SWBS they were recorded in 61 (46%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 19 on 12 Nov at Fernhurst. During the year Long-tailed Tits were recorded in the GBW in 83% of participating gardens, with an average peak weekly count of four. [JA Hobson]

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. Section 41.

In spring there were five individuals. The first was at Beachy Head with a single in Belle Tout Wood on 3 May (L Pitcher, NJN Pope), followed by another at Cuckmere Haven on the 18th (P Nason). Inland there were records from West Sussex of one at Black Down from 2 until 20 Jun (DJ Burges, P Davy) and another at Iping Common on the 26th (CJR Barfield, N Barnes).

In the autumn there were at least four individuals. One was found injured by a cat at Mile Oak (Portslade) on 6 Aug (R Musselle) and taken to a Wildlife Rescue Centre at Woodingdean where sadly it died the next day. One was at Pulborough Brooks on 18 Aug (MS Phelps) and another, or possibly the same, was there on the 23rd (A Baker, W Buckthorpe, CH Moore, J Moore) and another was at Seaford Head on the 23rd (RC Self). Finally one was observed drinking from a garden birdbath in Angmering on 3 Sep (JR Cowser). [T Parmenter]

Hume's Warbler

Phylloscopus humei

Very rare vagrant.

The well-watched individual found in Riverside Park, Newhaven, on 27 Dec 2018 remained until 30 Jan. [M Mallalieu]

Yellow-browed Warbler*Phylloscopus inornatus****Scarce visitor, mainly in late autumn.***

2019 was a particularly poor year for this delightful Siberian gem. All records were from October and were of only three individuals. The first was at Pett Level on 5 Oct, the only East Sussex record this year. One was at Sidlesham Ferry Fields from 19 to 22 Oct and the last record was at Arundel WWT on the 26th. [MR Eade]

Willow Warbler*Phylloscopus trochilus****Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Willow Warblers were recorded from 269 tetrads (28%) a slight but welcome recovery from the low of 231 in 2018 (range 231 to 348). March records came from ten sites, nearly all singles, the earliest being one at Northcommon Fm (Selsey) on the 21st, four days later than the 10-year average date, followed by one at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 22nd and another at Balcombe on the 26th. Thereafter few were seen until 'falls' on 8 Apr, with 30 at Seaford Head and 80 at Beachy Head, and the 17th when at least 95 were at Beachy Head.

Small numbers were then recorded widely across the county during spring although there were several double figure counts inland with maxima on Ashdown Forest of 20 at Old Lodge LNR on 19 Apr and 12 at both Ashdown Res on 19 May and the Old Airstrip on the 30th. During June a bird was noted at Barcombe with an unusual song which included some Chiffchaff phrases.

Breeding was confirmed at just four sites; Lavington Plantation, Fletching, Wrens Warren (Ashdown Forest), and Broadwater Warren, where there were 20 pairs. At other RSPB reserves there were five pairs at Pagham Hbr, one at Medmerry and two at Fore Wood (Crowhurst). Probable breeding was noted at just nine other locations, showing a further decline. However, during the BBS the species was found in 17% of the squares surveyed; this an improvement on the 13% in 2018.

The first returning migrants were singles at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 15 Jul and Charleston Reedbed on the 19th followed by small numbers widely, peaking at six at Seaford Head on the 23rd. As in 2018 a significant movement was recorded on 1 Aug involving a minimum of 62 at Ladywell (Coombes), 45 at Cissbury and 34 at Charleston Reedbed. On the 2nd observers at Beachy Head noted 45 and then 70 on the 3rd. There was another major fall on the 8th when ringers trapped 115 at Ladywell, 38 at Cissbury and 135 at Charleston Reedbed, whilst Beachy Head held 140 with 67 ringed in Whitbread Hollow. On the 13th observers at Pagham Hbr recorded 30, Beachy Head experienced another fall of 91 and 46 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed.

Although numbers during the second half of August and first few days of September were lower, there were still several good counts, with the highest being 52 at Charleston Reedbed on 21 Aug, 56 at Ladywell on the 27th and 55 at Beachy Head on 1 Sep. Migration watchers in the Hastings area recorded a total of 293 on 30 days between 3 Aug and 21 Sep, with a peak of 52 on 21 Aug. After 2 Sep numbers were largely in single figures for the rest of the month.

A total of eleven was recorded at eight sites during October, the last being singles at Cissbury and Iford (Lewes) on the 15th, ten days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [T Parmenter]



Willow Warbler, Beachy Head, 25 August (Jamie Partridge)

Chiffchaff*Phylloscopus collybita*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

Chiffchaffs were recorded in 576 tetrads (61%), similar to the 10-year average of 571 (range 478 to 676). In the first two months they were recorded widely in some 87 1-km squares, often at water treatment works and mostly as singles, but with 13 double-figure counts. The highest counts included 20 at Waltham Brooks and the nearby Coldwaltham WTW on 24 and 28 Jan, 15 at Offham on the 24th and 11 at both Burpham on the 15th and at Kingston (Lewes) on the 16th. Singles at Selsey Bill on 16 Feb and at Seaford on the 24th may have been early migrants. During the early year SWBS they were recorded in seven (5.8%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of two.

During March a fall was noted at Beachy Head on the 20th with at least 75 present, whilst elsewhere notable counts were 30 at Lidsey WTW on the 17th, 20 at Selsey Bill on the 23rd, 20 at Pulborough Brooks on the 24th and 18 at the Knepp Estate on the 27th. April was an improvement on 2018 at coastal locations but the majority of birds seemed to head directly inland, where many counts were in double figures. In the spring observers at Beachy Head recorded this species on 47 dates from 14 Mar to 1 Jun.

Breeding was confirmed in just 17 tetrads and considered probable in 34. Breeding counts from reserves revealed 40 pairs at Broadwater Warren, 38 pairs at Pagham Hbr, four pairs at Medmerry, five pairs at Fore Wood (Crowhurst), three pairs at Amberley and a very healthy population on Ashdown Forest. During the BBS Chiffchaffs were found in 147 (87%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 23 on 20 Apr at Nutley.

With so many widespread records, both coastal and inland, detecting the first true autumn migrants was difficult. Two at Selsey Bill on 22 Aug were probably setting out, as were some of the 40 at Beachy Head on 3 Sep, while 90 there on the 7th showed progressive passage. At Beachy Head there was a fall of 95 on the 10th followed by 140 there on the 15th. At Ladywell 80 were trapped on the 21st and 40 were present at Climping Gap on the 22nd. However, the best was yet to come; on the 30th an estimated 400 were present at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) with a further 120 on the headland, while at Ladywell 127 were trapped. Large numbers continued into October with 250 at Beachy Head on the 2nd, 74 at Seaford Head and 190 at Beachy Head on the 3rd, 166 there on the 5th and a further 220 on the 7th. Thereafter numbers declined but many counts were still in double figures until the 15th when another 100 were at Beachy Head. The last of the big numbers were 150 at Beachy Head and 70 at Seaford Head on the 17th although there were 52 at Beachy Head on the 22nd. Migration watchers in the Hastings area noted a total of 1978 on 63 dates between 2 Aug and 18 Nov with a maximum of 220 on 14 Sep.

There were daily records throughout November, the highest totals being 25 at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 3rd with ten there on the 8th and 17th. Chiffchaffs were recorded almost daily in December; the only double-figure counts were 18 at Steyning WTW on the 2nd and 20 at Coldwaltham WTW on the 13th and 30th. During the late year SWBS they were recorded in 6.0% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of two. Throughout the year they were recorded in 32% of the GBW participating gardens. [T Parmenter]

Siberian Chiffchaff, *P. c. tristis*

There were a number of records of birds considered to show the characteristics of this race, most of which were associating with wintering Common Chiffchaffs at water treatment works: one at Burpham WTW until 19 Mar had lingered from 2018, one at Bishopstone on 13 Jan (TD Hallahan), up to three at Coldwaltham WTW from 20 Jan to 18 Mar (mo), and singles

at Donnington (Chichester) on 11 May, only the second ever May record (PH Wallace), in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 14 Nov (MR Eade), at Steyning WTW on 1 and 2 Dec (BF Forbes, AR Kitson), Burpham WTW from 7 Dec into 2020 (BF Forbes, AR Kitson, O Mitchell *et al.*), Coldwaltham WTW from 13 Dec into 2020 (BF Forbes, D Mason *et al.*) and Pagham WTW from 14 Dec into 2020 (BGR Ives *et al.*). [P James]

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

Sedge Warblers were recorded in 95 tetrads (10%), slightly better than the 10-year average of 91 (range 66 to 125). They were recorded in 83 tetrads in West Sussex compared with 64 in East Sussex, a ratio of 1.3 : 1.0, possibly reflecting the greater availability of suitable habitat in West Sussex.

The first was at Pett Level on 21 Mar, a new county earliest arrival date and ten days earlier than the 10-year average date. There was then a gap before singles were recorded at Pagham Hbr on the 30th and Pulborough Brooks on the 31st. On 1 Apr singles occurred at Medmerry and Charleston Manor and three at Rye Hbr. Another one at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 2nd was the earliest ever recorded there by four days. There then followed a trickle of records, mostly singles, except for five at Pagham Hbr on the 11th.

On the 18th there were 17 singing males at Arundel WWT, seven at Waltham Brooks and five at Sidlesham Ferry Pool, and on the 20th a minimum of ten were at Rye Hbr. On Pevensey Levels 20 were counted on the 21st and by the end of the month birds were widespread across the county. Good numbers continued to be recorded during May; the highest numbers were 23 during a BBS at Pevensey Levels on the 25th and 14 singing males at Arundel WWT on the 16th.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads, up on 2018 by one, but was probable in only two, eight fewer than in 2018. Nest building was first noted at Arundel WWT on 22 May and food or faecal sac carrying was noted there on the 25th. The first fledged young were noted on 17 Jun at Northpoint GP (Rye). During the BBS the species was recorded in 12 (7.1%) of the squares surveyed. Breeding surveys from the county's reserves revealed 32 territories were mapped at Rye Hbr, down from the 35 in 2018 and 40 in 2017. Pagham Hbr held 33 pairs, Medmerry six pairs, Amberley Wild Brooks 17 pairs, Pulborough Brooks nine singing males and Lewes Brooks three pairs.

Autumn migration was first noted at Beachy Head, with four there on 15 Jul and one on the 17th. Three were at Charleston Reedbed on the 19th (where they no longer breed) and a further three at Beachy Head on the 21st. August started with seven at Beachy Head on the 3rd and ten were there on the 8th when 60 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed and another 32 on the 25th, whilst Combe Valley CP held 22 on the 13th. On 26 dates between 8 Aug and 10 Oct migration watchers in the Hastings area (including Combe Valley) logged a total of 260, with a maximum of 58 on 21 Aug.

Birds were observed throughout September with no single site recording more than single figures. There were two records in October, both at Combe Valley CP, of singles on the 3rd and 10th, six days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [T Parmenter]

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

Reed Warblers were recorded in 148 tetrads (16%) compared with the 10-year average of 132 (range 109 to 176). The first records were of one at Pagham Hbr on 7 Apr with two there on the 11th. Few were then noted at several sites until ten were at Beeding Brooks on the 19th and, on the 21st, 13

at Bexhill and 12 at Lewes Brooks. Later in the spring the highest numbers were 31 at the Railway Land Reserve (Lewes) on 10 May, 40 at Medmerry on the 21st and on the 27th there were counts of 28 at Beeding Brooks and 29 at Newenden.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in a further 15, a slight increase over 2018. The first occupied nest was noted on 15 May at Binstead (Arundel), food or faecal sac carrying on 25 May at Arundel WWT and the first fledged young seen on 11 Jun at Pagham Hbr. During the BBS 107 were found in 21 (12%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 19 on 25 May at Pevensey Levels. Breeding counts from reserves included 150 to 200 pairs at Rye Hbr, 62 pairs at Pagham Hbr, 29 pairs at Medmerry, 16 pairs at Arundel WWT, 14 pairs at Lewes Brooks and two pairs at both Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks.

The first returning migrant was one at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 15 Jul, followed by four there and a further ten on the headland on the 19th. It was reportedly a very good year for this species there. On the 29th ringers at Charleston Reedbed trapped 44 and a further 61 on 1 Aug. Observers at Whitbread Hollow recorded 30 on 8 Aug on the same day as the peak of 91 were ringed at Charleston Reedbed. Another 30 were present at Whitbread Hollow and 67 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 13th. A further 25 were recorded at Whitbread Hollow on the 24th and 20 there on the 30th. Movement continued throughout September but in smaller numbers, but 12 in Whitbread Hollow on the 2nd was notable. During the migration watch in the Hastings area a total of 457 were recorded on 33 dates between 8 Aug and 17 Oct with a maximum of 45, mostly at Combe Valley CP on 13 Aug.

In October Reed Warblers were recorded on eight dates, with a maximum of eight at Combe Valley CP on the 1st. The last was recorded at both Pett Level and Combe Valley CP on the 17th, two days earlier than 2018 and 17 days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [T Parmenter]

Melodious Warbler

Hippolais polyglotta

Very scarce visitor in spring and autumn.

For the fourth year running, there was one record: a singing male at Butcherland LNR (Ebernoe Common) on 4 Jun (G Lyons), taking the county total this century to 22. This is only the second inland and third June record for Sussex. The previous inland record was at Weir Wood Res (9 Sep 1990). [P James]

Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia

Very scarce and declining summer visitor and fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

The species was recorded in 30 tetrads this year, seven more than in 2018, and just above the 10-year average. Virtually all of these records were of incoming or outgoing migrants as was the case with the first of the year, when one was reeling at Beachy Head on 2 Apr, six days sooner than the 10-year average arrival date and matching the county's earliest arrival, also at Beachy Head, in 2002. The next individuals were at Bodiam on 7 Apr and Seaford Head on the 8th. Other reports during late April and May were from eight other locations; West Dean Woods, Pagham Hbr, North Stoke, Waltham Brooks, Greatham, where two reeling males were heard on 21 Apr, Henfield, Sheffield Park and Bishopstone. In June there were single records from the Selsey Peninsula and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), but it was only in the Amberley Wild Brooks area where individuals were reported on more than one occasion during the month. The final record from this site was on 16 Jun and breeding was not confirmed.

A returning migrant was noted by the Cuckmere RG on 9 Jul on the same day that reeling was heard from a well-hidden bird on the Knepp Estate. Thereafter, the majority of records came from ringing sites. Totals captured were 291 at Pett Level, 197 fewer than in 2018, 28 at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) and 39 at Charleston Reedbed, this last figure being an improvement on the 2018 total of 14. The only reports from West Sussex during August and September were of one at Cissbury on 3 Aug and one in beachside scrub at Church Norton on 13 Sep. There were three records from East Sussex coastal locations on 28 Sep; Beachy Head, Combe Valley CP and Pett Level, and this was the final date, the same as in 2018 but 12 days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [VP Bentley]

Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.

Blackcaps were recorded in 548 tetrads (58%) during the year, an increase of 26 from 2018. None were found during the SWBS in the first winter period. However, the species was found in 50 (26%) of 193 gardens surveyed in the GBW during January to March, almost identical to the 2018 figure. Most garden records in this period were of single birds taking advantage of fat balls, apples, spindle berries and other food sources. The maximum count was four, in mid-February, in a garden at West Tarring (Worthing) which regularly held three and where a male was heard singing on several days from 13 Feb. The first sighting at Beachy Head was of three on 23 Mar.

During the BBS Blackcaps were found in 153 (91%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 25 at Nutley on 20 Apr. Despite the widespread distribution, breeding was only confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable or possible in another 199. There were 47 pairs at Pagham Hbr, an increase of 16 from 2018, and a further eight at Medmerry. At least 12 singing males were at Rye Hbr, maintaining the increase seen last year, 20 pairs at Broadwater Warren and 17 at Weir Wood Res. A nest with young at Pulborough Brooks on 15 May was the earliest confirmed breeding and the first fledged young were seen at Arundel WWT on the 25th and St Leonard's Forest the next day. A pair chased off a Jay with loud alarm calls at Boxgrove Common on 2 Jun. On 18 Jun a male was heard imitating a Nightingale at Black Down.

The first migrants noted at Pett Level arrived on 13 Aug and during the autumn 4,863 individuals were ringed there, very similar to 2017 numbers after a poor year in 2018. Other ringing sites and groups which trapped greater numbers this year were Ladywell (Coombes), Steyning RG, and Beachy Head RS, which saw its fifth best year with 1,323 ringed. Nationally, the BBS results from 2019 showed an increase of 22% over 2018, adding to the 175% increase seen over the years 1995-2018 (The Breeding Bird Survey 2019, BTO). Monthly maxima on passage at Beachy Head were 240 on 28 Aug and 285 on both 15 and 30 Sep, while at Seaford Head 60 on 22 Aug was the highest number recorded. Migration watchers in the Hastings area recorded a total of 665 on 42 dates between 18 Aug and 4 Nov, with a maximum of 138 on 14 Sep. Pre-migration fat deposition was in evidence at Cissbury on 23 Sep when the lightest Blackcap weighed 17.1g while the heaviest was 24.7g.

During the final quarter Blackcaps were seen in 41 (23%) of Sussex gardens participating in the GBW, though October birds were probably migrants. There was a single encounter in the second winter period SWBS. In December reports came from 20 locations, mostly in gardens, with a maximum of five at Patcham on the 22nd, and in a Hove garden both a male and female were seen feeding on grapes on a vine. [VP Bentley]

Garden Warbler*Sylvia borin****Common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

Garden Warbler was recorded in 201 tetrads (21%) in 2019, 32 more than in 2018 and better than the 10-year average. The first report was of two at St Leonards Forest on 1 Apr, four days earlier than both 2018 and the 10-year average date. However, it was not until 9 Apr that there was a further report, of a single bird at Slindon (Arundel), with the main arrival occurring from the 22nd.

During the BBS the species was found in 33 (20%) of the squares surveyed, similar to 2018, with a maximum of six on 2 Jun in a square near Ifold. Ten pairs were at Broadwater Warren, and at other sites the maximum numbers reported were eight at Pulborough Brooks on 12 May, seven at Flexham Park (Fittleworth) on the 2nd and six at Buchan Park on the 3rd. Breeding was only confirmed in a single tetrad, when an adult was seen with food at Weir Wood Res on 3 Jul, but was probable or possible in a further 78. An observer at Troutbeck (Eridge) commented that the species was formerly a common breeder there, but is now scarce.

Beachy Head RS trapped 45 new birds (32 in 2018) but at several other sites numbers were lower than last year (2018 figures in brackets): Steyning RG 13 (29), Cuckmere RG 12 (31) and at Pett Level 287 (324). Nationally, the BBS results from 2019 showed an increase of 14% over 2018, some compensation for the 24% decrease over the years 1995-2018 (The Breeding Bird Survey 2019, BTO). The only double-figure count at Beachy Head was 11 on 8 Aug. Most had departed by mid-September, with a handful of October sightings comprising single birds at Beachy Head on the 2nd and the 5th, and two seen at West Chidham (Chichester) on the 6th, 20 days later than in 2018 but still ten days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [VP Bentley]

Lesser Whitethroat*Curruca curruca****Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

2018: The location for the wintering bird noted in late December 2018 was at Shripney (Bognor Regis), not Ringmer, and was the same individual that stayed until mid-February 2019.

2019: Lesser Whitethroats were recorded in 170 tetrads (18%), 31 more than in 2018. One was photographed in a garden at Shripney on 25 Jan; it had been visiting regularly since December 2018, feeding from a bird table, and is reported by the observer to have stayed until February. This is the sixth winter in which the species has been recorded in Sussex, and the second successive one.

The first migrant was seen at Paghham Hbr on 9 Apr, three days later than in 2018 but precisely on the 10-year average arrival date. Singles followed in the lower Adur Valley on the 11th, at Northchapel and Rye Hbr on the 12th, and the main influx commenced from mid-month.

During the BBS the species was found in 24 (14%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of four on 11 May in a square at Rye Hbr. Four were at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Apr, six at Thorney Island on the 28th, six at Church Norton on the 29th and five on Henfield Levels on the 30th. Breeding was confirmed in only four tetrads, though probable in eight and possible in a further 62. Six were at the Knepp Estate on 12 May, with at least one seen visiting a probable nest site. Fledged young were among five seen at Glynde Level on 27 May followed by Newhaven on 11 Jun. Breeding season counts comprised 25 pairs at Paghham Hbr with a further six at Medmerry, both increased from 2018, and eight pairs at Rye Hbr. Nationally, the BBS results from 2019 showed an increase of 34% over 2018 (The Breeding Bird Survey 2019, BTO).

At Beachy Head RS another poor autumn was noted, with 11 birds ringed, though this was better than only four in 2018. Numbers moving through the site reached double figures on two

occasions, with ten on both 24 and 25 Aug. At Pett Level a total of 74 were ringed, compared with 36 in 2018 and 61 and 49 in the two previous years. Birds continued to move through until early October. Probably the last outgoing migrant was seen at Cissbury on 9 Oct, four days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. There were two reports thereafter, probably of two different individuals, one at Beachy Head from 20 to 22 Oct and another at Birling Gap from 27 Oct to 6 Nov (both L Pitcher). Both showed characteristics of the eastern race *blythi*, confirmed in the case of the bird at Birling Gap from DNA analysis, the first fully confirmed record for Sussex (see finder's account on page 221 of this report). [VP Bentley]



Lesser Whitethroat, Pulborough Brooks, 28 April (Gary Faulkner)

Common Whitethroat

Curruca communis

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The species was recorded in 409 tetrads (44%) this year, 50 more than the total in 2018. One at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on 29 Mar, 6 days earlier than the 10-year average, was the first, followed by one at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) on 6 Apr and then daily records from the 8th, although sightings did not become more widespread until mid-April. Six were at Waltham Brooks on 18 Apr, 16 at Medmerry the next day and 20 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 20th. Two days later 13 singing males were heard at The Burgh. Observers at Beachy Head noted a slight improvement in numbers this spring, with a maximum of 30 seen in the area on 24 Apr.

During the BBS, Whitethroats were found in 97 (57%) of the squares surveyed, broadly similar to the previous five years, with a maximum of 27 on 9 Jun in a square at Rye Hbr. Breeding was confirmed in 30 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 140. There were 65 pairs at Pagham Hbr, a further 54 at Medmerry and 45 territories at Rye Hbr. This latter figure was a decrease from the 58 territories mapped there in 2018. By the end of May adults were seen carrying food in several locations and fledged young were noted at Findon on the 30th. Double-figure counts

were recorded in July, notably 30 at Medmerry on the 7th and several family parties in a total of 25 at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 15th.

There were only double-figure counts at Beachy Head during autumn migration, the highest being 95 on 24 Aug. At the Beachy Head RS a “rather poor autumn passage” with “unspectacular peaks” was noted. They trapped 126 different individuals and though an improvement on the total of 91 in 2018, it was still considerably lower than in 2017 when 224 were ringed. Numbers ringed by Cuckmere RG were down from 154 in 2018 to 120 this year but, conversely, at Pett Level 663 were ringed, compared with 273 in 2018 and 388 the previous year. Nationally, the BBS results from 2019 showed an increase of 26% in the UK breeding population over 2019 (The Breeding Bird Survey 2019, BTO). Migration watchers in the Hastings area recorded 544 on 33 dates between 3 Aug and 30 Sep, with a maximum count of 60 on 3 Aug. A few birds were still moving through in October, including six at Beachy Head on the 2nd and one there on the 19th. The final outgoing individual was at Thorney Island on 27 Oct, four days later than the ten-year average date.

However, a surprise was to follow when a report, including a photograph, was received via the SOS website in March 2020 of a Whitethroat in a garden at Haywards Heath, which had also visited on 16 Dec 2019. The only previous December record of the species was on 17 Dec 1972 at Darwell Res. Mark Mallalieu, County Recorder, commented “In some photos it looks very grey above, hinting possibly at an eastern origin. Given the bird’s erratic appearance it is unlikely that it will be possible to obtain any evidence of its subspecies via DNA analysis”. That indeed proved to be the case. [VP Bentley]

Dartford Warbler

Curruca undata

Scarce to fairly common but localised resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

Dartford Warblers were recorded in 32 (3.4%) tetrads, perhaps a sign of a slight recovery on the decline observed in 2018, which was possibly due to particularly cold weather in February and March of that year, and which had followed a period of recovery following the hard winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11.

In January there were singles at Medmerry and Beachy Head and two at Newhaven. Inland, sightings were mostly of one, with records at five sites on Ashdown Forest and at Broadwater Warren. In February there were records of up to two on four West Sussex commons and at five sites on Ashdown Forest, with four seen on the 24th, when one was also recorded at Beachy Head.

During the WHBBS, 34 territories were recorded (see page 216), a substantial increase on the 21 and 26 territories in 2018 and 2017 respectively. Evidence of confirmed breeding was observed at five sites, two on Ashdown Forest and three on West Sussex commons, with fledged young seen between 28 May and 2 Jul. There was evidence indicating probable breeding from at least another 14 sites on Ashdown Forest.

Two birds were seen at three sites on the West Sussex commons in September and October and one at another. On Ashdown Forest, a family party with three juveniles was observed at Old Lodge LNR on 6 Oct and another three juveniles at Wrens Warren on 27 Oct; adults were reported at more than seven sites during the autumn. One was recorded at Chailey Common on 23 Oct. Autumn coastal records were all from October and mostly of singles at Pagham Hbr, Medmerry (two on the 28th) Seaford Head, Beachy Head (two on the 5th), and Combe Valley CP.

On the West Sussex commons, birds were recorded at Iping and Ambersham Commons during November and December, with three seen at each on 3 and 28 Nov. There were also records, mostly

of one, from at least eight locations on Ashdown Forest. One was seen at Pound Common (Chailey) on two dates in this period. There were records at two coastal locations during these months: one was recorded at Medmerry on 23 and 30 Nov and 28 Dec, and at Beachy Head on 3 and 6 Nov, with two there on 27 Dec. [A Rowe]

Western/Eastern Subalpine Warbler/Moltoni's Warbler *Curruca iberiae/cantillans/subalpina ssp*

Rare vagrant

A male was heard singing and was seen briefly at Beachy Head on 26 Apr (L Pitcher). It flew off as the finder attempted to photograph it and despite an intensive search, could not be refound. This record has been accepted by BBRC as relating to Western *S. c. iberiae/inornata*, Eastern Subalpine Warbler *S. c. cantillans/albistriata* or Moltoni's Warbler *S. subalpina* based on taxonomy that treated Western and Eastern forms of Subalpine Warbler as subspecies. It is the first county record of a bird belonging to these taxa since 2005 and the 14th in total, ten of which have come from Beachy Head. No Sussex records have been accepted by BBRC as being referable to a particular species or subspecies within this group.

Western and Eastern Subalpine Warblers have recently been split into two species in the genus *Curruca* by the International Ornithological Congress (IOC), and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee follows the IOC list. [M Mallalieu]

Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla

Fairly common breeding resident and summer visitor; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Firecrests were recorded in 185 tetrads (20%) in 2019, 22 fewer than in 2018 when the highest number to date was achieved following an SOS survey of the species. That the species is increasing in the county can be seen from the five-year average of tetrads in which it has been recorded: 120 from 2010 to 2014 but 184 from 2015 to 2019. There were three encounters during the early year SWBS in two of the squares surveyed, with two at Steyning Round Hill on 18 Jan. Sightings came from across the county during the first two months of the year, including one in the gardens of the Royal Pavilion (Brighton), seen on two occasions in January. The maximum reported at a single location during this period was six at Kingley Vale on 14 Feb. In March four singing males were among nine at Slindon Park (Arundel).

During the BBS Firecrests were recorded in five (2.9%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of five on 19 Apr in a square at West Lavington. Breeding was confirmed in only one tetrad, when two recently fledged young with an adult were seen on 27 May at Leonardslee Gardens, and was probable or possible in a further 39.

Autumn numbers at ringing sites were higher than the previous year. At the Beachy Head RS only three were caught in 2018, but they reported "a good autumn" this year with 15 ringed. There were nine at Cissbury and 13 at Ladywell (Coombes), where four and seven respectively were the 2018 figures. Only three were trapped by Cuckmere RG due to flooding preventing access in the latter part of the year. The maximum number seen at any site during the year was 18 at Beachy Head on 3 Nov. Five were encountered in three of the squares surveyed in the late year SWBS, with twos at Findon on 14 Nov and at Nutley on 29 Dec. [VP Bentley]



Firecrest, Seaford, 14 November (Bob Eade)

Goldcrest*Regulus regulus****Very common breeding resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Goldcrests were recorded in 467 tetrads (50%), seven more than the previous year and above the 10-year average of 452. In the early year SWBS, 167 birds were recorded in 52 (43%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 14 on 18 Jan in a square at Telham (Crowhurst). Eighteen were found in a regular transect survey at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 23 Jan, 22 at Binstead Wood on the 25th, a loose flock of 20 at Ambersham Common on 19 Feb, and they were recorded in 49 (25%) of 193 gardens participating in the GBW during January to March.

During the BBS Goldcrests were recorded in 68 (40%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 13 on 5 May in Five Hundred Acre Wood (Ashdown Forest), indicating a recovery from the low figure in 2018, a year marked by severe weather in late February and early March. Nationally, the BBS results from 2019 showed an increase of 25% over 2018, after a 22% decrease that year (The Breeding Bird Survey 2019, BTO). Breeding was confirmed in 10 tetrads and probable or possible in a further 74. Goldcrests were singing from mid-February and the first indication of success was a pair seen with three recently fledged young at Misbourne (Ashdown Forest) on 19 May. On 28 Jun a family party were noted at Pulborough Brooks, and an adult was feeding at least two juveniles at Brooklands (Worthing) on 11 Jul. Twelve pairs were present in the breeding season at Broadwater Warren. A rather strange report from Arundel WWT on 26 Aug was of a juvenile “freed from cobwebs” at a hide.

The first Goldcrest of the autumn at Beachy Head arrived on 8 Sep, and a strong autumn passage was reported; there were 40 on 17 Oct, 54 on the 20th, and a maximum of 100 on the 23rd. The number of new birds ringed at different sites showed increases over the previous year with 197 at Beachy Head RS, 82 at Ladywell (Coombes), and 92 at Cissbury, compared with 114, 72 and 36 respectively in 2018. Very few were trapped by Cuckmere RG as access to the site late in the year was very limited because of flooding in the Cuckmere Valley. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded 322 between 30 Aug and 12 Nov, with a maximum of 45 on 3 Nov, similar to the 2017 total and a great improvement on 2018 when only 33 were seen. Other locations with high counts during the autumn were 50 at Seaford Head on 23 Oct and 22 at Cissbury on the 5th. In November there were 29 at Fairlight on the 3rd. During the late year SWBS 117 individuals were encountered in 55 (41%) of the squares surveyed, with the highest count of eight on 11 Nov in the same square as in the early year survey. The species was also recorded in 51 (29%) of 175 gardens participating in the GBW during the fourth quarter of the year. [VP Bentley]

Wren*Troglodytes troglodytes****Abundant resident.***

Birds were noted in 654 tetrads (70%), almost exactly as in 2018 (657). There were a number of areas from which no records were received; the north west of Sussex, from around Lewes up to Bewl Water, and between the Rother, the Tillingham and the Brede rivers: it is surely unlikely that Wrens are actually absent from those areas.

Over the year, Wrens were seen in 88% of the gardens participating in the GBW (again very close to 2018's 89% but below the 95% in 2017). In the early year SWBS, 391 birds were encountered in 98 (81%) of the surveyed squares, an increase in both numbers and distribution over 2018: the maximum was 16 at Steyning Round Hill.

At Goring Gap on 4 Mar a bird was uttering a “shrill compressed song while rotating its cocked tail”; another (mate or rival) was calling nearby. Twenty territories were mapped in Stanmer Park on 22 Mar, 14 were noted at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 27 Mar and seven pairs were logged in Lavington Plantation on the following day. On 19 Apr, 12 singing birds were counted along 1.5 km of the old railway track at Barcombe, with 13 there on the 22nd. As in 2018, the verdict from Beachy Head was of “reasonable numbers” in the spring. Three were in Brighton Pavilion gardens on 11 May and 35 were counted on the Knepp Estate on the 12th, followed by 54 on 16 Jun. A survey there on 19 Jan had found only seven birds in six plots, figures replicated on 20 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and probable in a further 47 (cf. 24 and 47 in 2018, 29 and 24 in 2017 and 18 and 50 in 2016). The first proof of successful breeding came from Warnham LNR on the early date of 28 Feb; an adult was carrying food there as late as 5 Aug. During the BBS, the sum of the maximum counts in 164 (97%) of the squares surveyed was 1957. Judging by both BBS numbers and distribution, Wrens appear to have maintained their population over the past few years. The number of double-figure BBS counts from 2019 to 2016 tells a similar tale: 164, 159, 156, 166. The maxima were 34 at Telham (Crowhurst) and at Five Hundred Acre (Ashdown Forest). At Tilgate Forest, where the largest numbers were recorded between 2016 and 2018, there were 31 in 2019.

On the county’s reserves, 32 territories were mapped at Rye Hbr (31 in 2018 and 41 in both 2017 and 2016); 74 at Pagham Hbr (70 in 2018, 51 in 2017, 87 in 2016); 14 at Fore Wood (Crowhurst); 22 at Medmerry 22 and 28 at Broadwater Warren.

In the late year SWBS, 374 birds were discovered in 113 (84%) of the squares surveyed, marginally down from the 387 of 2018 but an increase in distribution from the 79% of that year. The maximum count was of 11, again at Steyning Round Hill. A number of autumn records came from the shoreline at Eastbourne, Shoreham and Elmer, though there was no suggestion of migration. [C Brooks]

Nuthatch

Sitta europaea

Common resident.

Nuthatches were recorded in 456 tetrads (49%), 31 more than in 2018 and slightly higher than the 10-year average of 435 (range 376 to 581). During the early year SWBS 156 were recorded in 45% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 12 on 14 Jan at Fernhurst. Additional high counts were 12 at Darwell Res on 5 Jan and Balcombe on 24 Feb and there were five counts of eight. During the GBW birds were recorded in 52% of participating gardens in Sussex.

During the BBS a total of 285 was recorded in 53% of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 12 on 24 Apr at Colgate. Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and was probable in a further 30. Nest building was first recorded on 17 Mar at Chichester but the first carrying of food was not noted until 10 May at Ifield. The first fledged young were seen at Arundel WWT on 27 May and at Fairlight on the 28th. Nine pairs were confirmed at Fore Wood (Crowhurst).

During the autumn the highest count was 12 again at Balcombe on 8 Sep but counts elsewhere did not exceed six. During the late year SWBS 131 were recorded in 40% of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven during three surveys. In this period the three highest counts were of eight at Washington Common on 10 Nov, Burgess Hill on 8 Dec and Balcombe on the 23rd, and there were three counts of seven and two of six. [G Evans]

Eurasian Treecreeper*Certhia familiaris***Common resident.**

Treecreepers were recorded in 315 tetrads (34%) 34 more than in 2018 and slightly more than the 10-year average of 307 (range 238 to 432). During the first winter period SWBS 43 birds were encountered in 20% of the tetrads surveyed, with a maximum of four during three surveys. The highest counts were five at Burton MP on 13 Feb and at the Knepp Estate on 20 Jan and 23 Feb. There were eight counts of four and 17 of three.

During the BBS Treecreepers were found in 22% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven on 29 Jun at Northchapel. Breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads and probable in another 14. The first sign of nest building was on Ashdown Forest on 11 Mar and breeding was confirmed with birds carrying food at Warnham LNR on 5 Apr, an occupied nest found on 16 May at the Knepp Estate and the first fledged young seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 23rd. The highest spring count was of ten at Pulborough Brooks on 30 May and there were five counts of seven.

During late summer there were six on 21 Jun at the Knepp Estate and two counts of five, at Barcombe Mills on 24 Jul and Pulborough Brooks on 6 Aug. During autumn the highest counts were six on Ashdown Forest on 6 Oct and four at Sheffield Park on 7 Sep. In the second winter period the highest counts were seven at Rackham Woods on 31 Dec and six on Ashdown Forest on 17 Nov. In this period's SWBS 34 Treecreepers were recorded in 16% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of four in three surveys. [G Evans]

Northern Treecreeper, C. f. familiaris

A first year individual was at Patching from 28 Dec into 2020, the first record of this subspecies in Sussex (DK Campbell *et al.*). The finder's account is on page 219 of this report. [M Mallalieu]

Rose-coloured Starling*Pastor roseus***Rare vagrant.**

The first winter bird first noted on 28 Dec 2018 in gardens in Seaford remained until 30 Jan 2019. Another individual, a juvenile, was present at Paghams Hbr from 24 Sep to the end of the month. This is the fourth consecutive year that this species has been recorded in Sussex and the county total now stands at 48, with 23 this century. [AC Gutteridge]

Common Starling*Sturnus vulgaris***Common but declining resident and very common to abundant winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.**

Starlings were recorded in 556 tetrads (59%) during the year, the highest count since 2011 and lower than the 10-year average of 607 (range 463 to 746). The species was recorded during the year in 83% of participating GBW gardens, with an average weekly peak count of six, and during the BGBW was reported in over 43% in both West and East Sussex gardens.

Large flocks in the first winter period included a roost of 3000 at Chichester GP on 3 Jan, a roost at the Palace Pier (Brighton) of 7800 on 8 Jan and 6200 on 3 Feb, and a flock of 1000 at Pett Level on 11 Feb. There were also counts from five other sites of between 500 and 700 during February. In the early year SWBS a total of 1982 was recorded from 67% of the 1-km squares visited.

Breeding was confirmed in 73 tetrads and probable in a further 16. Prospecting of nest sites was reported from several sites from as early as 11 Jan. The first fledged birds were recorded on 2 May at Crowborough and by mid-May flocks of 50 including juveniles were present at several sites. In the BBS a total of 1994 was recorded from 70% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 214 on 28 May at Hooe Level (Pevensy).

On 12 May a young Starling was killed by a Magpie at West Tarring (Worthing). Possible second broods were indicated by birds visiting nests at Bodiam Castle and Pagham Hbr on 17 Jun and a nest with young was noted at Rye Hbr on the 29th. Post-breeding flocks of 100 or more occurred in 17 locations, the largest being 500 at Normans Bay on 24 Jul. A white Starling was noted at Middleton-on-Sea on 13 May and a leucistic bird was noted at Pagham Hbr in a flock of 200 on 25 Jun. During the summer flocks continued to grow, with 500 or more at many coastal sites and numbers reaching 1000 at Rye Hbr on 2 Sep.

The first indications of roosting were 50 at South Malling on 23 Sep and 21 at East Chidham on 26 Sep, in both cases using thick or tall hedges. In the second winter period the first four-figure roosts were recorded on 10 Nov of 1650 at Weir Wood Res and 2500 at Chichester. Of a dozen roosts located the largest were 7000 at the Palace Pier on 3 Dec, 5000 in an oak tree at Arundel two days later, up to 3000 in a reedbed at Chichester GP on 29 Nov and at Weir Wood Res throughout the period, 2000 NW at Uckfield at dawn on 24 Oct, and 1000 in a reedbed at Ardingly Res on 22 Dec. The migration watchers at Hastings during August to mid-November logged 4618 Starlings with a maximum of 857 (770 W and 87 E) on 30 Oct. On 7 Oct 150 were observed to fly west high over Beachy Head. In the SWBS during this period Starlings were recorded in 63% of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 1200 at Pett Level on 23 Dec. [AC Gutteridge]



Common Starling, Pulborough, 7 July (Karen Weston)



Ring Ouzel, Beachy Head, 19 October (Gary Faulkner)

Ring Ouzel

Turdus torquatus

Passage migrant; very scarce in spring; scarce to fairly common in autumn. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Ring Ouzels were recorded in 59 tetrads (6.3%), a significant increase on the 37 (3.9%) of 2018 and more than the 10-year average of 42 (range 20 to 63). As usual they were mostly at or near coastal sites or downland prominences. A very poor spring count was followed by a fine autumn passage. The estimated minimum monthly totals, after adjusting for possible duplication, were as follows:

Mar	Apr	May	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2	11	-	-	2	481	15	-

A single at Lancing on 29 Mar was just four days later than the 10-year average first date and a male at Shoreham the next day was the only other March bird. Three birds were seen near the Beachy Head Hotel on 8 Apr and a single was at Rye Hbr on the 10th while later singles were seen at Pagham Hbr, Offham (Arun Valley), The Burgh (Burpham), Seaford and Beachy Head, with an inland sighting at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and a final bird at Cissbury on 30 Apr. The spring total of 13 birds was the second lowest of the decade and contrasts with the 10-year average of 24.

A single bird at Cuckmere Haven on 28 Sep heralded the return passage and was followed by another at Old Lodge LNR on the 30th. Ones and twos were seen in early October at Pagham Hbr, Climping, Black Down, Brighton, Lewes, Seaford and Ashdown Forest while 20 were seen at Cissbury on the 7th and 16 at Black Down on the 8th. The bulk of the passage passed through Beachy Head with 21

on the 7th and 34, including a flock of 22, on the 8th, 23 on the 15th and many other double-figure counts. In the Hastings area a total of 36 were seen over nine days between 9 Oct and 20 Oct with a maximum of 11 on the 17th. Other notable site counts were six at Devils Dyke on the 8th and four on Beeding Hill.

Only singles were noted in November, mainly in West Sussex, and the final bird left from Shoreham on the 19th, five days later than the 10-year average date. The autumn total was 49 above the 10-year average of 334. [J Whitman]

Blackbird

Turdus merula

Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.

Blackbirds were recorded from 691 tetrads (74%), two less than in 2018 and comparable with the 10-year average of 696. There were just five first winter counts of 25 or more birds, all in January, with a maximum of 41 at Broadbridge Heath on the 28th and the rest, none exceeding 27, at Offham (Arun Valley), Ifield MP, Lewes and Battle. In February there were four counts of 20 and in March three. Such numbers increased in April with 11 counts of over 25, including 48 at Broadbridge Heath, and another 11 of 20 or more. During the early year SWBS 1004 were encountered in 98% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 25 on 20 Jan at Battle. In the late January BGBW the species was recorded in 85% and 84% respectively of West and East Sussex gardens with an average count of two in both. During the GBW they were recorded in 100% of participating gardens.

During the BBS 2236 Blackbirds were encountered in 100% of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 39 on 27 May at West Lavington (Midhurst). Confirmed breeding came from 66 tetrads and was probable in a further 41. First indications of breeding were nest building at Mountfield on 13 Feb and at Crowborough the next day while nest visiting was noted on the 25th at Preston Park (Brighton). Food carrying was seen at Barnham on 26 Mar and fledglings were recorded at Arundel WWT from 20 April.

The autumn movement was late; there were 16 counts of 20 or more in September and October with a maximum of 51 at Combe Valley CP on 31 Oct, 50 at Beachy Head on the 22nd, 36 there on the 27th and 40 at Climping Gap on the same day. Despite these numbers there were no records of obvious passage. During migration watching in the Hastings area a total of 225 Blackbirds was recorded on 16 dates between 5 Oct and 7 Nov.

In the second winter period there were 34 counts of 20 or more (including 16 in November) with a maximum of 40 on 6 Nov at Chichester GP, where this was noted as an obvious influx. In the late year SWBS 1379 were encountered in 97% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 33 on 2 Dec at Streat. [J Whitman]

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 253 tetrads (27%), fewer than the 280 in 2018, much lower than the 10-year average of 313 (range 247 to 425) and almost than the lowest count in the previous decade. A very poor first winter period was followed by a fine second winter period dominated by one day. Approximate monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2115	1847	586	234	-	-	-	-	8039	2873	3564
West of TQ30	978	1024	255	135	-	-	-	-	334	1116	1609
East of TQ30	1137	823	331	99	-	-	-	-	7705	1757	1955

The first winter count was just 35% of the 10-year average as numbers continued their decline since the previous November. During the early year SWBS 304 birds were encountered in 21% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 60 on 17 Feb at Northchapel. There were eight counts of 100 or more: 200 at Scotney GP on 6 Jan, 150 at Pett Level on the 13th and 20th and 128 at Pease Pottage on the 23rd, while in February 300 were at Westdean Woods on the 14th, 180 at Rye Hbr on the 17th and 100 at Weir Wood Res on the 23rd. Later similar counts were 110 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Mar and 120 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 8 Apr. In April birds were reported most days with five seen at Cuckfield on the 21st and the final three at Pulborough Brooks on the 22nd, three days earlier than the 10-year average departure date. Six were sighted at Beachy Head over three days between 28 Mar and 19 Apr, ending an absence of five years.

Return passage started quietly with a single feeding in Yew at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) and 2 W at Weir Wood Res on 6 Oct, seven days later than the 10-year average date, with just a dozen at Ashdown Forest on the 19th lifting the early numbers. During the Hastings area migration watch a total of 5723 was recorded on 15 dates between 17 Oct and 18 Nov which included no less than 5627 flying west in heavy rain on 21 Oct, the highest October count ever recorded in Sussex. Parts of this movement were seen elsewhere in East Sussex, including 500 in two waves at Pevensey Bay, 300 at Beachy Head and 200 at Seaford Head. A week later there were 170 at Brighton and 120 at Ardingly Res and in West Sussex 200 were seen at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th.

During the late year SWBS 636 were encountered in 35% of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 98 on 23 Dec at Glynde Level. On 17 Nov 250 were recorded at Amberley Wild Brooks followed by another 200 at Pulborough Brooks on the 21st and 100 at Chilgrove on the 29th. In East Sussex 400 were at Ticehurst on the 23rd, 200 at Flimwell a day later followed by 130 at Uckfield on the 28th, 263 at Iford and 100 at Pevensey Levels on the 29th. The high counts continued in December with, in date order, 200 at The Burgh on the 4th, 450 at Flimwell on the 14th, 200 at East Chidham on the 21st, 180 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on the 29th and counts of 100 or more at Iford, Uckfield, Henfield, Amberley and Glynde Level, with another 14 counts of at least 50. [J Whitman]

Redwing

Turdus iliacus

Common, occasionally very common, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern, Schedule 1 species.

Redwings were recorded from 367 tetrads (39%), a slight drop from the 386 of 2018 but comparable with the 10-year average of 369 (range 313 to 511). The first winter period passage was above average and the last quarter was, again, 60% above average and the highest since 2005. The approximate minimum monthly totals in the west and east sides of the county were as follows.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	4434	3016	1899	97	-	-	-	-	2947	1970	4447
West of TQ30	2375	1719	464	39	-	-	-	-	778	1100	2000
East of TQ30	2079	1297	1435	58	-	-	-	-	2169	870	2447

During the early year SWBS a total of 1558 Redwings was encountered in 50% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 160 on 21 Jan at the Knepp Estate. There were 28 records of 100 or more birds in the first winter period, including an astonishing 1078 flight calls recorded in 40 minutes at Seaford on 22 Mar, 250 were at Balcombe on 27 Jan and 200s at East Lavant on the 3rd, at Balcombe on 17 Feb and at Chanctonbury Ring on the 26th. The highest of several counts at the Knepp Estate was 171 on 20 Jan. Both Darwell Res and Ifield hosted 150 in January as did Flimwell in February, while 140 were seen at Westbourne Common on 15 Jan. There were still 80 birds at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Mar and 30s at Balcombe and Netherfield in April, and the last bird left Ifield (Crawley) on 17 Apr, just four days later than the 10-year average date. On 18 Mar a very dark individual with a dark brown back was present on Beachy Head and was considered to be of the Icelandic race *coburni*.

Return passage was marked by 46 birds at Hastings and six at Crowborough on 2 Oct, two weeks later than the 10-year average date of 19 Sep and the latest since a first arrival on 9 Oct in 2000. There were 20 at Balcombe on 4 Oct, 15 at Black Down the next day and 179 at Weir Wood Res, 80 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest), 30 at Pulborough Brooks and 11 at Balcombe, all on the 6th. Numbers escalated at most sites, with counts of 120 at Pett Level on 21 Oct and 400 at Crowborough on the 29th. During the Hastings area migration watch 703 were recorded on 20 dates between 2 Oct and 18 Nov with a maximum of 395 on 21 Oct. In the second winter period there were 15 counts of 100 or more. Weir Wood Res supported 250 on 19 Nov, Chilgrove 200 on the 29th and a flock of 570 was at Balcombe on 30 Dec. During this period's SWBS 1323 Redwings were encountered in 49% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 185 on 17 Dec at Guestling. [J Whitman]

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. Section 41.

The species was recorded in 617 tetrads (77%) compared with 590 in 2018 and the 10-year average of 614 (range 527 to 814), and were widely distributed across the county. During the first winter period SWBS a total of 215 Song Thrushes was encountered in 70% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 18 on 3 Feb at Albourne (Hurstpierpoint). During the GBW they were recorded in 72% of participating gardens during the year. Before April observers at eight sites recorded more than ten birds including 20 at Rodmell on 3 Feb, 19 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Jan and 18 at The Burgh (Burpham) on the 9th.

During the BBS 663 were recorded in 88% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 15 on 7 May at Billingshurst. Breeding was confirmed in 34 tetrads and was probable in a further 29. Nest building was first noted at Pulborough Brooks on 22 Mar then at Arundel WWT on 6 Apr followed by an adult seen carrying food at Mountfield on the 7th and at Loxwood and Warnham on the 12th. The first fledglings were three seen at Petworth Park on 15 Apr and at Wisborough Green on the 16th. In addition, 15 pairs were counted in both Pagham Hbr and Broadwater Warren and there were ten singing males on the Knepp Estate.

During migration watching at Hastings a total of 1580 was recorded on 27 dates between 13 Sep and 12 Nov with a maximum of 1192 WNW in flocks up to 120 strong over West Hill on 6 Oct. In the autumn months there were 19 counts of 20 or more with maxima of 60 at Balcombe on 16 Oct and 50 at Cissbury on the 7th, whilst 41 were heard over Pulborough on the 16th and 36 were recorded at Weir Wood Res on the 7th. Twenties were fairly common until November when most of the high teen counts were in West Sussex, peaking, during the SWBS, at 24 at Lidsey Lodge on 18 Dec. During the late year SWBS 181 were encountered in 51% of the squares surveyed. [J Whitman]

Mistle Thrush*Turdus viscivorus***Common resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.**

Mistle Thrushes were recorded in 384 tetrads (41%) spread across the county, which compares with a 10-year average of 369. During the January and February SWBS 66 birds were encountered in 34% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of ten on 29 Jan at Petworth Park. During the GBW they were recorded in 12% of participating gardens in Sussex.

Every month's count exceeded the average, with the second half-year 64% above it and the total 39% above it. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	222	190	118	216	222	174	127	161	256	217	161	173

The first half-year total was the highest since 2008 and 2009, which were outstanding, though there were few significant records. Ten birds were seen in Petworth Park on 25 Jan, eight there on 26 Apr and another eight at Plashett Lakes (Little Horsted) on 25 Feb. In May there were 15 in Eartham Woods on the 24th and nine at Petworth Park on the 31st then 12 at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Jun and 14 at the Knepp Estate the next day. Elsewhere most records were of ones or twos.

During the BBS 96 were recorded in 31% of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of nine on 31 May at Petworth Park again. Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads and was probable in a further 30. A bird in Chichester was attacking Treecreepers on 14 Mar and another in Newick was nest building on the 15th, but food carrying wasn't noted until 6 Apr at Arundel WWT. The first fledglings, of eight reports, were a couple at Troutbeck (Eridge) on 10 May while the next were on 9 Jun at Ashburnham Furnace and the last were on 21 Jul at Rewell Wood (Arundel).

The second half-year opened with 16 at Pease Pottage on 12 Jul, 12 at Netherfield on the 14th and 19 in a single flock at Bells Yew Green on the 26th. Numbers increased through August with 17 at Winchelsea on the 16th, 40 at Flimwell on the 17th and 20 at Battle on the 23rd. September was the peak month with nine double-figure counts including 32 at Weir Wood Res on the 1st, at least 21 at Coates on the 12th and 30 at Uckfield the next day, followed by 40s at Balcombe on the 20th and at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 30th.

A calmer October included 12 at Cissbury on the 3rd and at Uckfield the next day, 18 on the South Downs west of the R Adur on the 14th and 37 (29 E, 8 N) at Beachy Head on the 29th. Thereafter there were no more than six birds anywhere except for 12 at Plashett Lakes on 5 Nov. During the second winter period SWBS 60 were encountered in 23% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of five on 18 Dec at Lidsey Lodge. [J Whitman]

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. Section 41.**

Spotted Flycatchers were recorded in 153 tetrads (16%) in 2019, an increase from the 131 in 2018 and higher than the 10-year average of 143.

The first sighting was during the BBS near Udimore on 23 Apr, the same arrival date as that in 2018 and just one day earlier than the 10-year average. The next, however, were nearly two weeks later on 6 May: two at Northcommon Fm (Selsey) and singles at Medmerry and Beachy Head. From 10 May to the end of the month they were recorded on 18 dates, mostly in ones or twos but

threes at Beachy Head on the 12th and Medmerry on the 25th and fours at Beachy Head on the 10th and 22nd. A similar pattern was repeated in June when the only count of four was at Pulborough Brooks on the 1st, but threes were noted at Black Down on the 1st and at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 22nd.

Breeding was confirmed at just eight sites. A pair with a nest was noted on 7 Jul at Wadhurst Park and another nest was noted at Rudgwick on the 25th. Fledged young were first recorded at the Knepp Estate on 24 Jun and an apparent family party was seen there on 9 Jul. Fledged young were also noted at Arundel on 15 Jul and Vert Wood (Laughton) on 3 Aug; two adults with three young were recorded at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Aug and two adults, one with food, and two young were seen at Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) on the 13th. A family party of seven was recorded at Flimwell on 18 Aug. During the BBS, Spotted Flycatchers were found in just 2.9% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of two in three squares.

The frequency of sightings and day counts increased markedly from 13 Aug as return migration began. In August there were 27 counts of four or more with maxima of ten at Chantry Hill on the 25th, 12 at Black Down on the 21st and 27th, 16 there on the 26th and 26 at Bignor Hill on the 27th.

Migrating birds were recorded on a daily basis in September from nearly 90 sites; the highest counts were 12 at Black Down on the 1st, ten at Chilgrove on the 19th, 16 at Cissbury on the 15th and 18 at Bignor Hill on the 8th. During the migration watches in the Hastings area a total of 36 were seen on 13 dates between 20 Aug and 21 Sep with a maximum of six on 14 Sep. Thereafter sightings in October dwindled, with just eight single birds recorded on six dates and the final one at Pett Level on the 15th, four days later than the 10-year average. [T Seabrook]

Robin

Erithacus rubecula

Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.

Robins were recorded in 683 tetrads (73%) in 2019, a slight reduction on the 693 of 2018, but comparable with the 10-year average of 688 (range 584 to 858). During the first winter period there were 23 counts of 20 or more with a maximum of 45 recorded as the minimum heard singing or calling at dawn during a walk around Seaford on 13 Jan.

Like last year, Robins were recorded in all bar one of the participating GBW gardens, whilst in the BGBW they were recorded in 82% of East Sussex gardens and 84% in West Sussex. In the early year SWBS 1301 were recorded in 99% of the 1-km squares surveyed; the maximum count was of 34 at Catsfield on 16 Feb.

During the BBS the species was encountered in 96% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 32 on 19 Apr at Stansted. Breeding was confirmed in 55 tetrads, and was probable in a further 40. The earliest confirmed breeding was a pair observed nesting in ivy in East Dean on 18 Mar, whilst on 14 Apr a pair nesting in a shed in Loxwood were feeding young. The first fledged bird was observed on 18 Apr at Crowborough.

In the autumn there were 104 double figure counts including 38 of 20 or more, the highest being 55 at Seaford Head on 3 Oct. During the Hastings area migration watch 141 were recorded on 19 dates between 1 Aug and 18 Nov with a maximum of 16 on 15 Oct. During the second winter period there were 108 double-figure counts, an increase on last year and in this period's SWBS 1037 were recorded in 98% of the squares surveyed, the highest count being 44 at Danehill on 25 Dec. [WDJ Arrowsmith]

Common Nightingale*Luscinia megarhynchos*

Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Records came from 113 tetrads (12%), compared with 111 in 2018, perhaps confirming something of a recovery from the recent low of 94 in 2016. The first was at Bersted Brooks on 9 Apr, four days later than the 10-year average. As is usually the case, most incoming birds were picked up on their breeding grounds, though a few were found elsewhere in the county, e.g. at Netherfield on the 19th, at Hunston on the 20th and on the northern edge of Burgess Hill on the 26th. Records were forthcoming on each day from 16 Apr through to 9 Jun. A bird was singing in Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) from 23 Apr to 9 Jun, and possibly bred there.

Perhaps inexperienced birds arrive later and are found in unexpected places, like the one singing from gorse and birch scrub on Black Down on 30 Apr and another at Gatwick Airport on the same day. Single birds were scattered across the county in early May: at Angmering on the 1st, a garden at Selsey Bill on the 4th, Church Norton on the 8th, and Woodmancote (Emsworth) on the 11th.

Well watched sites such as Barcombe (where there were six singing males on 19 Apr), the Henfield area, the Knepp Estate, Pulborough Brooks and Billingshurst as usual produced the majority of records. However, records from woodland further east suggest that a well dispersed population probably breeds there. These include one in Lordship Wood (Robertsbridge) on 28 Apr, six in the Brightling and Darwell Res area (with the last noted on 11 Jun), one in Brede High Wood from 29 Apr to 15 May and two near Salehurst in mid-May. In addition, four were at Blackham, near the Kent border, on 25 May and two at Dexter on the 27th. Three were near Shoyswell Manor (Etchingham) on 11 May; six territories had been logged there in 2018. Single birds were recorded at Ripe on 6 May and 2 Jun. There were just two reports of migrants from Pagham Hbr, and one singing at Cadborough Cliff from 26 Apr to 8 May was the only record from the Rye area.

Breeding was confirmed in just three tetrads and probable in a further twelve. A bird seen carrying food at Barcombe on 27 May provided the first evidence of successful breeding, and young were seen at Pulborough Brooks the next day. One was still in the nest at Woods Mill (Henfield) on 3 Jul. There were three pairs at Amberley Wild Brooks and five at Pulborough Brooks; four were along the track from Woods Mill to Stretham and as many as 23 territories were recorded in the southern part of the Knepp Estate (cf. 19 in 2018).

One was singing loudly from scrub at Bells Yew Green as late as 20 Jun. Three at St Leonards-on-Sea on 18 Jun may well have been migrating. There were just four records from Seaford Head, from 23 Jul to 22 Aug (with three on 9 Aug) and three from Pett Level from 12 to 30 Aug. The last bird of the year was at Whitbread Hollow on 30 Aug, well in advance of the 10-year mean last date of 13 Sep. [C Brooks]

Pied Flycatcher*Ficedula hypoleuca*

Scarce passage migrant; more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Birds were seen in 57 tetrads (6.1%) in 2019, an increase of 50% on last year's 38 and the highest count on record. The approximate monthly totals were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct
4	1	-	1	88	23	2

One at Newhaven on 20 Apr was the first in a poor spring and 11 days later than the 10-year average arrival date. Thereafter there were singles at Sidlesham Ferry and Brighton Wild Park on the 3rd, at Birling Gap on the 23rd and at Medmerry on 13 May.

The first returning migrant was one at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 28 Jul. There were then regular sightings of predominantly single birds throughout August, but three at Beachy Head on the 3rd. However, from the 20th there was a significant increase in sightings; five at Beachy Head on the 24th, threes at Shoreham and Lewes on the 24th and at Truleigh Hill, Brighton and Beachy Head on the 27th. Also on the 27th there were no less than 14 at Northcommon Fm (Selsey).

Sightings of predominantly single birds continued during September to the 19th followed by a gap until one at Beachy Head on 3 Oct and another there on the 17th, 18 days later than the 10-year average last date. [T Seabrook]

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochruros

Rare resident; scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Schedule 1 species. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

The species was recorded in 95 tetrads (10%), not only a significant increase compared with 59 in 2018 but also a new peak this century, surpassing that of 86 in 2010. Monthly totals for 2019 were generally higher than those of 2010, most notably during the autumn and late winter period, when numbers peaked at an unprecedented 150 in October.

Estimated minimum monthly totals comparing 2019 and 2010 are shown in the following table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2019 Monthly totals	17	11	22	20	7	3	0	2	5	150	60	7
10-year averages (2009-2018)	16	11	30	27	3	1	1	1	3	49	32	15
2010 Monthly totals	17	19	26	5	2	1	-	3	3	15	23	6
5-year averages (2005-2009)	7	8	27	11	3	2	1	1	4	33	27	16

In January birds were reported from a range of coastal sites and on most days of the month, though no more than two together, at Medmerry and Shoreham. One was at Pulborough Brooks on the 13th, the only record from an inland site in the month. February records were all of single birds ranging from Selsey Bill to Jury's Gap and all coastal. As spring migrants passed through numbers increased in March and April with three at Beachy Head on 22 Mar and four there on 8 Apr. Records from all other sites were of one or two.

Disappointingly there was no evidence of confirmed breeding, though single males were singing at Splash Point (Seaford) on 15 and 19 Apr, Beachy Head on the 28th and at Rottingdean on 12 May. An anxious female was reported at Fairlight in June but there were no subsequent records of fledged birds at any of these sites.

In early October there were a handful of single bird sightings. However, autumn migration picked up strongly from the 21st onwards, with records at many coastal sites and inland as far north as Small Dole and Fletching. The majority of October records involved one to three, but on the 23rd a total of 15 were recorded at seven separate areas around Beachy Head and 12 at Normans Bay. The following day seawatchers at Selsey Bill logged the arrival of 18 in misty, drizzly conditions. Thereafter in October notable counts were six at Eastbourne on the 26th, seven at Pevensy Bay on the 27th and six at both Medmerry and Selsey Bill on the 31st. Numbers remained high through November with peaks of seven at Selsey Bill on the 4th and 5th and five at Jury's Gap on the 6th. By December sightings were reduced to singles only at seven sites across the county, falling to below the 10-year average. [G Hughes]



Black Redstart, Shoreham, 20 January (Dorian Mason)

Common Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

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

Records came from 93 tetrads (9.9%) in 2019. This represents an improvement on 2018 when 81 tetrads (8.6%) were involved. The first birds to arrive were at Pagham Hbr and Climping on 2 Apr, slightly later than the 10-year average of 30 Mar.

At Beachy Head, it was “another poor spring with low numbers of migrants”. There were only eight bird-days there compared with 24 in 2017. Scattered records of spring migrants came from along the coast, with the last from Bexhill on 26 Apr and Playden (Rye), where a late arriving bird was flycatching on 17 May. One at Midhurst on 14 Apr was an excellent addition to a GBW list.

Birds were back on their breeding grounds earlier in 2019 than in 2018: two males were at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 6 Apr, 12 were there on 6 May with a maximum of 17 on the 30th. It is not clear how many breeding pairs were involved at this site, but a nest with young was found on 2 Jun and the first fledglings were seen there on the 15th. Alongside Ashdown Forest, the woods between Worth and Balcombe are something of a magnet for this species. Seven were singing near Greentrees Fm on 30 Apr; their breeding fortunes were not followed, though one appeared to be visiting a nest as late as 23 Jun. Nor was breeding proved at nearby Paddockhurst Park, where two had been recorded on 21 Apr, with a single still present in mid-May and at the end of the month. Records from the western heaths suggested ten pairs or territories; one at Ambersham, three on Black Down and twos at Chapel Common, Linchmere and Weaver’s Down. Totals from the WHBBS (see table on page 216) for the five years before 2019 were 9, 12, 10, 8 and 24, underlining again the short-term fluctuations in the fortunes of the species in Sussex.

A number of birds remained on or near their breeding grounds in late June and early July, with most on Ashdown Forest, and a fledgling attended by an adult near Chailey Common were seen

on the 2nd. Only 11 July records were submitted, with no evidence of return movement until one at Shooter's Bottom (Beachy Head) on 1 Aug.

A feature of the early and late autumnal movement was the number of small groups discovered, both at familiar migration watch points and at less obvious places. Thus there were good numbers on downland, particularly from the Brighton area west through Cissbury, Findon and Nepcote to Bignor Hill and Chantry Hill, Arundel Park and Levin Down (each having groups of four or more). Five were at Church Norton on 20 Aug and four at nearby Halsey's Fm on the 25th. The Hastings migration watch team logged 26 with a maximum of four on 24 Aug. The highest count was ten at Beachy Head on 25 Aug. There were a few birds scattered in just ones and twos to the east of Beachy Head. Inland, single birds were on Black Down and at Weir Wood Res on 27 Aug, 31 Aug, 2 and 15 Sep.

There were only 75 records in September (cf. 114 in 2018) and 15 in October, probably involving about 19 birds. (There had been but two October records in 2017 and 11 in 2018.) The last two were both at Cissbury, on 15 and 22 Oct, seven days short of the 10-year average last date. [C Brooks]

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 100 tetrads (11%), the highest count on record, compared with 76 (8.1%) in 2018 and 68 (7.4%) in 2017. As usual there was a strong bias towards the coast with numbers in August well above the 10-year average.

The approximate monthly numbers of birds compared with the 10-year average 2010 to 2019 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	1	24	13	0	4	427	257	29	0
10 year average	<1	18	22	<1	7	265	328	26	<1
No of days	1	6	11	0	3	21	28	12	0

The first was seen at Goring Gap on 31 Mar, seven days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. The next was at Friston Forest on 19 Apr. Birds were seen on only six days in April compared to ten in 2018, although the total recorded was greater than the 10-year average for this month including one count of five at Beachy Head on the 20th. The last spring record was at Pagham Hbr on 26 May. All the records in April and May were from coastal or near coastal locations apart from a single at Weir Wood Res on 13 May. There were no records of breeding.

The earliest returning bird was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Jul. During August numbers were higher than in recent years with the peak daily counts being 23 at Beachy Head on the 26th, 16 and 12 at Chantry Hill on the 23rd and 24th, with further counts of 15, 12 and 11 at Beachy Head and 13 at Truleigh Hill on the 31st. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded 94 between 13 Aug and 3 Oct with a maximum of 12 on 2 Sep at Combe Valley CP. September numbers were lower than average; the next highest were ten at Brighton on the 1st with nine at Hailsham on the 1st and at Hastings on the 12th and 14th. Six on downland north of Worthing on the 2nd was the largest count in October and the last sighting of the year was at Cuckmere Haven on the 30th, three days later than the 10-year average last date. [G Evans]

Eurasian Stonechat*Saxicola rubicola****Fairly common resident and partial migrant.***

Stonechats were recorded in 237 (25%) tetrads, the highest count on record, the 10-year average being 169. There were only 18 days during the year when the species was not recorded. Numbers, however, were significantly higher than last year in every month. The highest monthly total was 1071 in October (332 in 2018). Evidently Stonechats had a good breeding season.

The minimum monthly totals and number of days on which they were recorded were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	324	258	255	292	299	246	307	352	554	1071	412	227
No. of days	31	27	29	28	31	26	29	28	29	31	29	29

The highest counts in the first winter period were 16 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 28 Feb and 12 there on the 21 Mar and at Beachy Head on the 22nd. There were two counts of 11 and one of ten. During the early year SWBS a total of 27 was recorded in 9.9% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of seven near Woodingdean on 14 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 27 tetrads (six more than in 2018), and probable in a further 29, mostly on Ashdown Forest but also at 20 other locations. Fifty pairs or territories were identified on the West Sussex commons (see page 216.) and ten pairs at Broadwater Warren. The first confirmed breeding was of one carrying food on 26 Apr at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) and the first fledglings were seen on 16 May at Medmerry and continued to be recorded until 21 Aug. On Ashdown Forest the highest number during the breeding period at specific locations was 13 at Old Lodge LNR on 28 Jun and the same number at Ellison's Pond on 16 Jul. Eleven were counted at Black Down on 1 Jun. Elsewhere there were 22 at Seven Sisters CP on 11 Jul, 16 at Cuckmere Haven on 29 Jul and 11 at Birling Gap on 22 May. There were at least twelve further counts of ten at various locations.

Seventy at Beachy Head on 2 Oct was a record day count at this site, the previous high being 60 on 6 Oct 1973. The migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 300 between 13 Aug and 11 Nov, with a maximum of 32 on 22 Oct at Combe Valley CP. Other notable high counts were 20 at Steyning on 18 Oct and 19 at both Steep Down (Lancing) on 19 Sep and at Seaford Head on 3 Oct.

There were five double figure counts in the second winter period, the highest being 13 at Bexhill on 9 Nov and 12 at three locations: Thorney Island on the 3rd, Eastbourne on the 5th and Medmerry on the 10th. In the late year SWBS Stonechats were recorded in 9.7% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of 12 at Eastbourne, mentioned above. A few individuals remained on Ashdown Forest and the West Sussex commons until the end of December. [G Evans, MJ Chattaway]

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 (15%), two fewer than in 2018, close to the 10-year average of 143 (range 127 to 167) and predominantly at coastal or near coastal sites, along the river valleys and on downland. The estimated minimum monthly totals, computed on the assumption that birds seen on different dates at the same site were different and may therefore include some duplication, were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
No. of birds	401	260	49	41	11	831	795	130
No. of sites	17	27	20	10	5	29	29	24

Spring arrival started on 8 Mar, one day earlier than the 10-year average, when one appeared at Pagham Hbr. A further five days passed before the next records on 13 Mar, with three at Thorney Island and singles at Pagham Hbr and Beachy Head. From 16 Mar numbers increased steadily and continued through to mid-May. The March total of 78 at Selsey Bill included the month's highest day count of 39 on the 20th. Other high March counts were 23 on the Selsey Peninsula on the 31st, 20 on the beach at Widewater (Lancing) on the 20th and five other counts of ten or more at four coastal sites (Selsey Bill, Medmerry, Seaford Head and Beachy Head). Passage continued steadily during April, the highest counts were of ten at Beachy Head on the 20th and three of nine: at Selsey Bill on the 2nd, Medmerry on the 19th and Beachy Head on the 29th. There were twelve more records of five or more at various sites during the month. Numbers dropped off noticeably from 13 May.

Breeding was confirmed only at Rye Hbr where at least five territories were identified, with fledged broods recorded at three locations within the reserve. Breeding was probable at two other sites, one each in West and East Sussex. Elsewhere, there were four June records of single birds: at Beachy Head on the 1st, at Bosham (Chichester) on the 2nd, at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 8th and at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 23rd.

The first sign of autumn passage was at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) with one there on 20 and 21 Jul. This was followed by singles at Selsey Bill on the 21st and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 28th and two at Church Norton on the 29th. Peak autumn passage occurred over several days at the end of August and the beginning of September, the county's highest single day total being at least 102 on 1 Sep; the largest day counts were from Thorney Island where 34 were recorded on 17 Aug and 41 on 8 Sep. Observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 86 on 24 dates between 2 Aug and 24 Oct whilst the team recording migration at Hastings logged a total of 46 on 20 dates between 8 Aug and 28 Oct. The last two records of the year were of singles at Southease (R Ouse) and Hastings on 28 Oct, 14 days earlier than the 10-year average date.

Greenland Wheatear, *O. o. leucorhoa*

There were three records of birds showing characters of this subspecies, which breeds in Iceland, Greenland and NE Canada. In the spring, three in a group of eight Wheatears at Beachy Head on 29 Apr resembled this race, as did a single female seen briefly at Selsey Bill on 2 May. In the autumn, there were two among four Wheatears seen at Goring on 30 Sep.

Observers are reminded that nominate birds from Russian and Fenno-Scandian tundras can resemble *leucorhoa* in early spring and autumn, and safe identification of genuine *leucorhoa* generally involves trapping and measuring (Collins Bird Guide, 2nd Ed., p.282). [G Osborne]

House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Very common but possibly declining resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

House Sparrows were recorded in 563 tetrads (60%) during the year compared with 536 (57%) in 2018 and a 10-year average of 556 (range 452 to 728). In the GBW they were recorded in 86% of participating gardens. A farmer at Pitsham (Midhurst) reported that large flocks at two sites had almost disappeared recently for no obvious reason, while an observer at South Malling (Lewes) reported a recent substantial increase in numbers after recent declines.

In the first winter period there were 33 counts of 30 or more, the largest being 190 at Westbourne Common on 15 Jan, 98 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 21 Jan and 100 at Broadbridge Heath on 25 Mar. In the early year SWBS 1190 were encountered in 64% squares surveyed. In the BGBW the species was recorded in 65% of participating gardens in East Sussex and 62% in West Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 51 tetrads and probable in a further 36 but it is likely that it was under-recorded. The earliest breeding activities noted were of birds nesting in sparrow boxes on 18 Mar at East Dean, a nest with young at West Tarring (Worthing) on 30 Apr and the first fledglings noted on 24 May at Bognor Regis. During the BBS, 1842 House Sparrows were encountered in 76% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 92 on 18 Apr in Portslade. During this period counts of 100 or above were reported from Lancing, Seaford and two sites in Bexhill. On 16 Aug numbers at Telscombe exceeded 200 and on 12 Sep reached 150 at Ferring (Worthing).

In the late year SWBS 836 House Sparrows were located in 55% of the squares surveyed. In the second winter period there were 24 counts of 30 or more, the largest being 200 at Sovereign Hbr Marina (Eastbourne) on 28 Dec. [AC Gutteridge]

Tree Sparrow

Passer montanus

Much declined and now very scarce resident; scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

The population of Tree Sparrows in Sussex continued to follow the trend of recent years, with records from only four tetrads this year, compared to six last year and nine in 2017, indicating clearly within a short period its marked decline.

All records this year were from East Sussex where the highest count of the first winter period, and of the year, was of 50 at East Guldeford Level on 11 Feb. The highest counts at the other main sites during this period were 24 at Scotney GP on 27 Jan and ten at Horse Eye Level (Pevensy) on the 17th. The only record from the SWT Pevensy Levels reserve was of two on 17 Feb and for the second year in a row breeding was not recorded at the reserve.

Tree Sparrows were recorded during the breeding season at both Scotney GP and East Guldeford Level. At the latter site four were recorded at Lookers hut on 9 Jun, where breeding was considered probable last year, and a fledged juvenile in the same area on 29 Jun was the only evidence of breeding within the county. A flock of 25 was at the same location on 1 Aug.

In the autumn there were counts of 20 at Scotney GP on 25 Oct and ten at East Guldeford Level on 12 Nov. The last sighting of the year was of two birds at Scotney GP on 3 Dec. [RA Black]

Dunnock

Prunella modularis

Very common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.

Dunnocks were recorded in 613 tetrads (65%) compared with 609 (65%) in 2018 and with a 10-year average of 608 (range 503 to 784).

During the early year SWBS 302 were encountered in 71% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 13 on 17 Feb at Northchapel. There were 12 double-figure counts, the highest of which were 22 at Newhaven Tide Mills and 17 at Rodmill (Eastbourne) both on 22 Jan. However, some 72% of records which carried a count were of ones or twos. Indeed two was the average of 5659 peak weekly counts in the GBW in which the species was recorded in 94% of surveyed gardens.

During the BBS 575 Dunnocks were recorded in 89% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 16 on 1 Jun at Northchapel again. Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads and was probable in a further 42. Nest building was first noted on 5 Mar at Mountfield where food carrying was noted on 16 Apr and the first fledglings were seen on 18 Apr at Crowborough. At Rye Hbr 33 territories were identified, there were 27 pairs at Pagham Hbr, nine pairs at Broadwater Warren, five territories at Stanmer Park (Brighton) and four pairs at Medmerry.

In the autumn there were 12 double-figure counts with 50 on 30 Sep at Beachy Head containing several small parties, while 35 at Seaford Head on 3 Oct was suggestive of migrants.

In the late year SWBS a total of 224 was encountered in 57% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 13 on 19 Nov at Steyning Round Hill. During this period there were 11 double-figure counts, with a maximum of 15 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 20 Dec. [G Turvey, JA Hobson]



Yellow Wagtails, Beachy Head, 13 August (Laurence Pitcher)

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. Section 41.

Yellow Wagtails were recorded in 90 (9.6%) tetrads (83 in 2018). One was recorded flying north at Waltham Brooks on 31 Mar, five days later than the 10-year average first date, but the first arrivals at the coast were noted almost a week later on 6 Apr, when four flew north at Selsey Bill and one was at Scotney GP. The following day individuals were seen at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) and at Beachy Head, and two were at Selsey Bill. On 8 Apr two were at The Burgh and by the 9th there was one on the filter beds at Newick WTW. The April total at Selsey Bill was 40, with a high of 14 on the 19th. During the spring a number were observed at other locations around the county including Pagham Hbr, Goring Gap, Pulborough Brooks, Beeding Brooks, Weir Wood Res, Pevensey Levels, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. A peak spring count of 20 was recorded at Scotney GP on 20 May.

As in 2018, breeding was confirmed at just one site when a bird was seen carrying food at East Guldeford Level on 1 Aug. At Rye Hbr a pair was seen near the WTW on 21 May and a male and female were also seen several times during June to the north of Castle Water. Birds were observed in suitable nesting habitat at Rye Hbr on 26 Apr and at Pevensy Levels on 6 May.

Autumn movement was first noted on 15 Jul, when two were seen at Medmerry. The next day two more were at Arundel. Small numbers were observed at coastal sites in July and the first half of August before numbers began to build. At Rye Hbr 150 were observed in the north east part of the reserve on 21 Aug, 131 were counted in fields at Beachy Head on the 26th and 136 were counted at an evening roost at Cuckmere Haven on the 27th. In West Sussex at least 300 were seen flying around at dusk waiting to drop into the Breech Pool at Pagham Hbr on the 30th.

In September 134 were at Climping Gap on the 1st and there were 200 at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on the 14th. At Selsey Bill the total for the month was 137, with 89 E and 48 W and a maximum count of 69 on 14 Sep. In East Sussex, the Hastings migration watch team had a high count of 54 on 12 Sep.

Away from the coast the largest congregation was 50 at Iford Brooks (Lewes) on 14 Sep and there were 20 at Glynde Level on the 27th. At downland sites 20 were recorded at Steep Down (Lancing) on 21 Aug, and another 20 were at Cissbury on 8 Sep. After September birds were recorded on just seven dates and the last seen was at Beachy Head on 22 Oct, six days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [C Buckle]

Blue-headed Wagtail, *M. f. flava*

Males showing the characteristics of this race (the continental counterpart of our own Yellow Wagtail) were recorded at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 28 Apr (KB Gillam) and 3 and 4 May (L Pitcher) and briefly at Goring Gap on 23 May (DK Campbell). [P James]

Grey-headed Wagtail, *M. f. thunbergi*

One showing the characteristics of this race from Scandinavia was recorded at Arlington Res on 27 Aug (P Denyer). This is the tenth county record and the first since 2013. [P James]

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

Fairly common resident passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Grey Wagtails were recorded in 263 tetrads (28%) (241 in 2018 and 246 in 2017), somewhat higher than the 10-year average of 227 (range 154 to 274). There was no site where they were recorded in every month of the year, but they were noted in 11 months at Arundel WWT, Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res. During the early year SWBS 11 were encountered in 6.6% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of only three on 27 Feb at Balcombe. The highest congregation of birds in this period was eight at Marley House WTW (Battle) on 30 Jan, but all other records were of no more than three.

During the BBS 20 were recorded in 8.2% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of three on 29 Apr at Ifold. As in 2018, breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads with probable breeding in a further 15. The first record of confirmed breeding was noted at Warnham LNR on 20 Mar when one was seen carrying food. The first fledglings were seen at Tilgate Park (Crawley) on 11 May, and the latest record of fledglings was from Ifield on 23 Jul.

In the autumn coastal passage was very light. In September Selsey Bill recorded 7 E and 10 W, and at Worthing the total was 8 W. During migration watching in the Hastings area a total

of 76 was logged over 32 dates between 17 Aug and 17 Oct, with a highest count of 11 on 12 Sep. In the second winter period there were regular records of one or two at sites throughout the county, with a highest count of three at Rye on 19 Nov. Just ten were encountered in 5.9% of the squares surveyed for the SWBS with a maximum of two on 3 Dec at two sites. [C Buckle]

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba yarrellii

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Pied Wagtails were found in 482 (51%) tetrads (cf. 448 in 2017 and 431 in 2018) compared with a 10-year average of 487 (range 408 to 668).

In the first winter period the largest counts were at Marley House WTW (Battle) where 200 were counted on 23 and 24 Jan. In West Sussex the highest count was a roost of 120 at Lyons Fm retail park (Worthing) on 7 Feb. Other large counts were 60 at Mount Pleasant (Woodingdean) on 17 Jan and the same day a roost of 50 was counted at Bexhill. Another 50 were noted at Barcombe WTW on 26 and 30 Jan. During this period's SWBS 234 were recorded in 32% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 123 at Marley House WTW (Battle) on 20 Jan. During the GBW this species was recorded in 32% of participating gardens in Sussex throughout the year.

In the BBS 133 were found in 45% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of five on 19 Apr at Chalvington. Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads (14 in 2018) and was probable in a further 15 (13 in 2018). The first confirmed breeding was a bird observed carrying food at Pett Level on 6 May. The first fledgling seen was the same day at Weir Wood Res.

Larger congregations of birds began to be noticed from early August. Groups of 20 were counted at both Cuckmere Haven and Rye Hbr on 8 Aug but there were 30 at Arlington Res on the 23rd. In September numbers at inland sites increased; there were 37 at Weir Wood Res on the 8th and 50 at Arlington Res on the 13th. Coastal movements were first noticed at Selsey Bill on the 6th with 19 W; the monthly total there was 153 with a peak of 29 on the 30th. The October total there was 932 with a maximum of 188 on the 10th while at Worthing the month's total was 135 with a maximum of 43 W and 17 E on the 2nd. At Hastings a total of 526 was recorded on 24 dates between 14 Sep and 6 Nov with a high count of 80 on 20 Oct.

During the second winter period SWBS 336 Pied Wagtails were recorded in 43% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 106 at Battle on 3 Dec. A total of 130 was counted on the Steyning Levels on 6 Nov. On 23 Nov at least 286 were counted going into a roost in trees by the multi-storey car park at Gatwick Airport. Another roost was noted at Lyons Fm (Worthing) where 95 were counted on 24 Dec, and on the 30th 60 were observed roosting at Pett Level. [C Buckle]

White Wagtail, *M. a. alba*

The approximate monthly totals, assuming that birds seen on different dates were different (so there might be some duplication) were as follows:

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
14	16	2	-	-	3	-	1

The first record was one seen at Beachy Head on 18 Mar followed by another on the 21st. Two were seen at Seaford Head on the 27th then on the 29th there were at least five at Beachy Head. In April there were singles at Exceat Bridge (Cuckmere) and Rye Hbr on the 1st, two at Scotney GP on the 6th, another inland at Arlington Res on the 9th and two at Beachy Head on the 20th. Another was at Telscombe Cliffs on the 20th then on the 24th a single bird at Sidlesham was the only spring

record from West Sussex. There was an individual at Seaford on 5 May and later in the month the last spring record was one seen at Barcombe Res on the 20th.

There were only three autumn records; one at Cuckmere Haven on 7 Aug and then two at Beachy Head on the 27th. One at Medmerry on 1 Oct was the last record of the year. [C Buckle]

Richard's Pipit

Anthus richardi

Rare vagrant.

The only record was of one flushed and heard calling as it flew round before landing during a farmland bird survey at Medmerry on 20 Nov (HS Baggaley, M White). The county total moves on to at least 86, including a minimum of 14 this century. [P James]

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 315 tetrads (34%), the highest number since the Atlas period. During the first winter period the highest congregations were at Medmerry with 150 on 9 Jan and 100 on the 28th, and at sites on Ashdown Forest where the highest count was of 123 going into a heathland roost on 18 Feb. Away from Ashdown Forest there were 71 at Pitsham (Midhurst) on 16 Feb and 60 at Little Sprays Fm (Netherfield) on 22 Jan. At Lavington Common 54 flew out of a heathland roost on 22 Feb. During the early year SWBS a total of 162 were recorded in 26% of the surveyed squares, with a maximum of 22 at Petworth on 29 Jan.

In March at Selsey Bill 809 (802 N) were recorded on 23 dates between the 6th and the 31st with a high count of 268 N on the 31st.

During the BBS 40 were found in 7.6% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 17 on 16 Apr at Wick Fm (Westmeston). Breeding was confirmed in just nine tetrads, with probable breeding recorded in a further 12. The first sign of breeding was birds observed visiting a probable nest site on Ashdown Forest on 1 Apr and breeding was first confirmed when one was seen carrying food at Steep Down (Lancing) on 25 Apr. The first fledglings were noted on 25 May at Amberley Mount.

Counts of 32 were made at Thorney Island and Cuckmere Haven on 7 and 29 Jul respectively but larger groups were noted from early September. There were 80 at Beachy Head on the 2nd but the highest single count was 2000 at Goring Gap on the 30th. At Selsey Bill a total of 6054 were recorded on 60 dates between 7 Sep and 17 Nov with a maximum of 1026 W, also on 30 Sep. Migration watchers at Hastings counted 4834 on 51 dates between 21 Aug and 18 Nov with a maximum of 580 at Combe Valley CP on 2 Oct. Other notable counts in September were 500 at Pagham Hbr on 29th, 310 at Combe Valley CP and 300 at Pett Level, both on the 28th and in October 450 at Seaford Head on the 3rd and 344 at Goring Gap on the 2nd. The highest inland counts were 302 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 30 Sep, 200 at Sullington on 1 Oct and on the same day 150 at Pulborough Brooks. Later in October 150 were also at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 22nd.

In the second winter period 156 were seen flying into a roost at Ashdown Forest on 6 Nov. During the SWBS a total of 324 was recorded from 27% of the surveyed squares, with a maximum of 60 at Tillington (Petworth) on 13 Nov. In December double figures were regularly counted at Ashdown Forest and there were larger congregations at Church Norton, Uckfield and Glynde Level, but the highest December count was 200 at Medmerry on the 29th. [C Buckle]



Meadow Pipit, Beachy Head, 17 March (Gareth Hughes)

Tree Pipit

Anthus trivialis

Fairly common but local summer visitor; fairly common passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Tree Pipits were recorded in 72 tetrads (7.6%), compared with 60 in 2018 and the 10-year average of 62. Significantly more records came from East Sussex, reflecting that Ashdown Forest remains the stronghold of this species in Sussex. The first record was one seen at Lavender Platt (Ashdown Forest) on 5 Apr, three days later than the 10-year average arrival date for this species. The following day one was recorded flying north at Selsey Bill. From 10 Apr Tree Pipits were seen almost daily at various sites on Ashdown Forest until early July, with a peak count of eight at Pippingford Park on 18 May. The first bird seen on the West Sussex Wealden Heaths was at Iping Common on 29 Apr, as in 2018.

The first record of display was at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 20 Apr and the first confirmed breeding was on Woolbeding Common on 24 May where one was seen carrying food. Elsewhere confirmed breeding was recorded on Ashdown Forest and at Rewell Wood (Arundel). Probable breeding was noted at a further 12 sites, primarily on Ashdown Forest, but also on a

number of the Wealden Heaths; Ambersham Common, Iping Common, Linchmere Common and Weaver's Down (see page 216).

The first autumn migrants were four at Beachy Head on 8 Aug, and on 12 Aug nocturnal flight calls were recorded at Pulborough. In West Sussex 33 were counted moving west at Highdown (Worthing) on 20 Aug and the following day there were 15 at Black Down and ten at Brighton. On 24 Aug 15 flew over Beachy Head. Around Hastings the migration watch team recorded 26 on 14 dates between 13 Aug and 30 Sep, with a maximum of seven on 24 Aug, when seven were also counted at Newhaven.

Numbers tailed off from mid-September and the final record was one in the lower Arun Valley on 17 Oct, three days later than the 10-year average departure date. [C Buckle]

Water Pipit

Anthus spinoletta

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

At West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), a traditional site for this species, there were up to two in January, six in February, one in March and four in April up to the 9th, while at Combe Valley CP (another traditional site) the corresponding totals were four, two, two and one respectively up to 13 Apr. Other records for the first winter period were of two at Horse Eye Level on 17 Feb and 24 Mar, three at Exceat in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 5 Mar (MR Eade), one at Litlington on 7 Mar (JF Cooper), another (possibly the same) nearby on the 11th (RS Kelly), and one at Riverside Park (Newhaven) on 3 Apr (MF Austin).

In the latter part of the year, at West Rise Marsh, there were up to seven in October, eight in November and five in December while at Combe Valley CP the corresponding totals were six, ten and one respectively. Elsewhere, there were singles at Cuckmere Haven on 23 and 24 Nov (MR Eade), Fishbourne Creek from 28 Nov into 2020 (SA Russell *et al.*), Pett Level on 1 Dec and at Church Norton on 23 Dec (CA Holter), with two at Doleham (Brede Levels) on 1 Dec and one there on the 28th. [P James]

Rock Pipit

Anthus petrosus

Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.

Rock Pipits were recorded in primarily coastal locations, in 55 tetrads (5.8%), (44 in 2018). In the first winter period the highest counts were seven at Saltdean on 9 Feb and the same number at Cuckmere Haven on 21 and 23 Mar. This species was recorded at Cuckmere Haven and the lower Cuckmere Valley on a total of 19 dates between 1 Jan and 27 Mar. In Chichester Hbr there were six at Fishbourne Channel on 19 Jan, and another six were recorded at West Chidham on 23 Feb.

Display was noted at Beachy Head on 7 Apr and the first record of confirmed breeding was of fledglings at Roedean on 28 May. Fledglings were also seen at Cuckmere Haven on 12 Jun and at Hope Gap (Seaford) on 7 Jul, and a bird with food was noted at Rottingdean on 30 Jun. There was only one further record of probable breeding when a pair was observed exhibiting agitated behaviour at Peacehaven on 5 Jul.

Later in the summer larger numbers were seen, with ten observed together on the clifftop at Crowlink on 27 Aug and eight at Cuckmere Haven on 1 Sep. The highest autumn counts all occurred in October. There were 17 at Cuckmere Haven and along the river on the 3rd and 20 at Telscombe Cliffs on the 28th. Ten seen at Thorney Island on the 29th and 15 at Fishbourne Channel

on 25 Nov were the only double-figure counts in West Sussex. The highest second winter period count was 16 at Cuckmere Haven on 17 Nov and the only records away from the coast were singles at Arlington Res on 13 Sep, 17 Nov and 4 Dec. [C Buckle]

Scandinavian Rock Pipit, *A. p. littoralis*

There were five accepted records of this race totalling up to 11 birds. With the exception of one at Nutbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) from 16 Nov to 29 Dec (HS Baggaley), all records were from the lower Cuckmere Valley/Cuckmere Haven where there were two on 5 Mar (MR Eade), two on 9 Mar (EJ Chandler, J Thorogood), one on 11 Mar (RS Kelly) and five on 22 Mar (MR Eade). [P James]

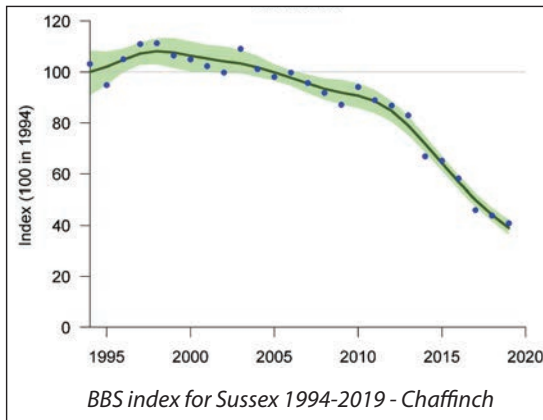
Chaffinch

Fringilla coelebs

Abundant resident; probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Chaffinches were recorded from 623 tetrads, compared with 604 in 2018 and a 10-year average of 660 (range 578 to 850). In the early year SWBS 533 were recorded in 74% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 55 at Holme Fm (Stansted) on 15 Jan. Although the percentage of occupied squares is a little higher than the previous year (69%), fewer squares were surveyed this year and the total number of birds was far lower (792 in 156 squares in 2018). In the BGBW Chaffinches were recorded in 25% of participating West Sussex gardens and 29% in East Sussex whilst overall in the GBW 76% of the Sussex gardens recorded the species.

During the first winter period there were 108 double-figure counts with a maximum of 220 at Lodge Hill Fm (West Dean) on 6 Jan, feeding on beech mast. Double-figure counts declined to eight in March and the highest counts were 200 at Westdean Woods on the 2nd and Beckley Woods on the 8th, 170 at Monkton (Chilgrove) on the 30th and 150 at Philliswood Down (Marden) on the 19th were feeding in stubbles.



The significant decline revealed in the South East regional BBS trend 1995-2018 (-38%) shows no sign of abating, and the graph for Sussex (left) indicates the trend continuing at a steeper rate in the county.

During the BBS a total of 822 was encountered in 92% of the km squares surveyed, with a maximum of 15 at Holme Fm (Stansted) on 17 May. Breeding was confirmed in just 11 tetrads and probable in a further 44; although similar to recent years, this pattern shows significant under-reporting. Song was first reported at

Birdham Marina (Chichester Hbr) on 31 Jan, the earliest confirmed breeding was of a fledged bird at East Blatchington (Seaford) on 5 May, food carrying was seen at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on the 15th and one was on the nest at Rye GC on the 24th.

From mid-August larger, post breeding, double-figure counts began to increase, with 20 observed at Pagham Hbr on 20 Aug and 35 at Slindon Park on the 31st, becoming more frequent into the autumn period. In October 31 counts exceeding 20 included 142 at Seaford Head on the

3rd, 105 at Weir Wood Res on the 20th and 100 each at Balcombe and Pett Level on the 27th and 31st respectively. Autumn movements were much reduced compared to previous years, but during the Hastings area migration watch a total of 962 birds were recorded over 24 dates between 30 Sep to 13 Nov with a highest daily number of 188 W on 30 Sep.

During the second winter period there were c.50 counts of over 20, with highs of 200 at Monkton (Chilgrove) on 17 Nov, 100 at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on the 20th and 112 at Stammer's Copse (Madehurst) on 18 Dec. In the late year SWBS 430 were recorded in 58% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of 88 at Holme Fm on 20 Nov. [G Hughes]

Brambling

Fringilla montifringilla

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

Bramblings were recorded in 60 tetrads (6.5%) (cf. 71 in 2018), somewhat lower than the 10-year average of 71 (range 60 to 98). In the first four months they were seen in five participating GBW gardens. Some 70% of records were of ones or twos; there were six double-figure counts (cf. 13 in 2018), the largest being 30 at Pippingford Park and 15 at Old Lodge LNR (both Ashdown Forest) on 20 Mar and 14 Apr respectively; elsewhere the highest count was 14 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 13 Mar and 12 at Barcombe on 9 Jan. The final spring record was one at Old Lodge LNR on 18 Apr, one day later than the 10-year average last date.

The earliest returning bird was one at Cissbury on 7 Oct, nine days later than the 10-year average date of 28 Sep. Again numbers were low, with 69% of records of only ones or twos. The highest counts of the autumn and second winter period were in October with 7 E at Seaford Head on the 23rd and seven over Beachy Head on the 27th. A total of 34 was recorded in the Hastings area on 16 dates between 15 Oct and 18 Nov, with the highest one day counts of five at Combe Valley CP on 29 Oct and 4 Nov. From October to December only five participating gardens recorded Bramblings in the GBW. Unusually there were no records from Ashdown Forest and only two from the area around Chilgrove. Elsewhere six were at Seaford Head on 28 Oct, and five past Beachy Head on the 22nd. [M Orchard-Webb]

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. Section 41.

Records were received from 43 tetrads (4.6%), down on the 145 for 2018 when the exceptional influx of 2017/18 occurred, but far higher than the 14 in 2016 and the 2007–2011 Bird Atlas results. This reflects the increased understanding of how to detect this species that was gained during the influx and probably also good winter food availability. In the first winter period there were 15 counts of ten or more from three locations, all in East Sussex, the highest being 32 coming into roost at Penhurst Lane (Netherfield) on 22 Jan, followed by 20 there on the 28th. The highest West Sussex count was nine at Monkton (West Dean) on 19 Mar.

For the first time since 1998 there was a confirmed breeding record, a single fledged juvenile with an adult female at Rewell Wood on 23 Jun. Display was observed at Arundel WWT on 4 May and, in September, juveniles were at Monkton on the 2nd, 8th and 17th when an adult was seen apparently feeding a presumed juvenile (though these young at Monkton may have fledged some distance from this location). Summer counts were typically low, with a maximum of five on 25 Jul at Rewell Wood. There were two at Penhurst Lane on 7 and 13 August.

September was remarkable with the highest count of the year occurring on the 2nd when at least 50 were seen at dawn flying from a roost to the east of Monkton, with other counts of up to 40 there through into October. Most records in autumn were from this area of West Sussex with only single-figure counts in the east, mainly from Penhurst Lane.

In the second winter period high numbers were still occurring in the Monkton area with up to 45 there in November. From mid-November double-figure counts were again recorded at Penhurst Lane (peaking at 40 on 24 Nov), the Hawfinches being attracted mainly by the exceptional Hornbeam seed crop. There were smaller numbers elsewhere in the West and East Sussex Weald, though counts at Arundel peaked at 30 on 3 Nov. The highest December counts were 36 at Penhurst Lane on the 4th and 46 at Monkton on the 24th. Up to six were regularly recorded near Ardingly from 29 Nov into 2020, a new location for this species, at least in recent years. There were probably well over 100 birds recorded in Sussex in November and December.

There was only one record during any of the surveys, of two at Dallington on 15 Dec in the late year SWBS. [MJ Chattaway, M Mallalieu]



Bullfinch, Arundel WWT, 13 March (Chris Moore)

Bullfinch

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

Fairly common or common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.

Bullfinches were recorded in 348 tetrads (37%) in 2019, suggesting a similar spread to that of 2018. In the GBW, they appeared in 69 (33%) of participating gardens (cf. 36% in 2018). In the early year SWBS, 68 birds were recorded from 24% of the surveyed squares, with a maximum of 12 on 13 Jan at Pallingham, compared with 2018 when a total of 86 were found in 25% of surveyed squares. In January birds fed in silver birches at Tilgate Park and on ash seeds at Newick. Apple

buds were favoured at Loxwood on 22 Apr and dandelion seed heads at Plumpton Green on 22 May. At Westbourne (Emsworth) it was noted that Bullfinches visited garden feeders more often than in the past. A sunflower heart feeder at Angmering was visited on 4 Jun and birds were taking water forget-me-not seeds at Boreham Street on the 8th. The blackthorn thickets and hedges around Troutbeck (Eridge) proved attractive to Bullfinches throughout the year. Twelve were counted around the Knepp Estate on 3 Feb and 11 at Weir Wood Res on the 22nd.

Nest building was observed at Arundel WWT on 6 Apr, one with food was noted at Warnham LNR on 26 May, and the first fledged young were found at Arundel WWT and at Ardingly Res on 16 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads and was thought probable in a further 33 (cf. 8 and 42 in 2018). The sum of the maximum counts on the early and late BBS surveys was 80, as in 2018, with a maximum of four at Westfield on 11 Apr. Birds were found in 25% of the squares surveyed, the same as in 2018.

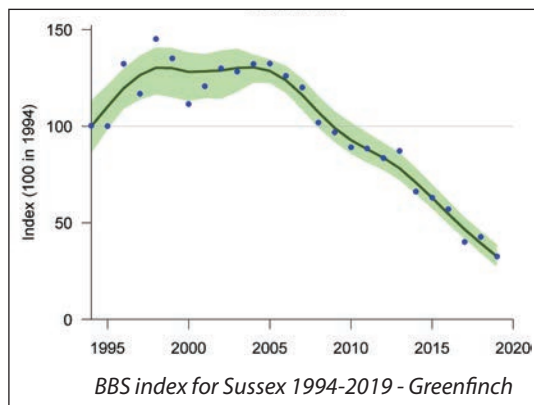
One in Hollingbury Camp (Brighton) on 30 Jun was unusual, perhaps wandering from nearby haunts in the Wild Park, Bullfinches do not usually reach inner Brighton's parks. A juvenile which flew into a kitchen window at East Lavington on 2 Jul was only the second record there in five years. There were 12 double-figure counts across the year, including counts at the west end of Weir Wood Res in February, September, October and November, the highest being 20 on 1 Sep. In the late year SWBS, 73 were noted in 25% of the squares surveyed (cf. 63 in 25% of surveyed squares in 2018). There were 57 recorded around the Knepp Estate on 18 Dec. [C Brooks]

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Very common resident and possibly fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Greenfinches were recorded in 467 tetrads (50%), 14 fewer than in 2018 and much lower than the 10-year average of 540 (57%). The graph below charts the population trend for the species in Sussex over the last 25 years, illustrating its steep and continued decline over the last 15 years; the latest BBS population trend for the South East region reveals a similar 69% decline.



During the first winter period there were 26 double-figure counts, much lower than the 42 in 2018, with high counts of 40 at Kingley Vale on 2 Jan, 31 there on 18 Mar, 32 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Jan and 30 at the Wey and Arun Canal on 18 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed from 11 tetrads with probable breeding in another 28. Display was first seen on 20 Mar at Crowborough, and nest building first observed at Friston Forest on 30 Mar, followed by Seaford Head on 19 Apr and Arundel WWT on 7 May. Fledging was first confirmed at

Haywards Heath, with two recently fledged youngsters appearing at garden feeders on 3 May. Thereafter fledglings were reported through to mid-August. During the GBW birds were recorded in 71% of participating gardens.

Post breeding numbers remained moderate through July to October, when counts rose slightly. During this period there were 46 double-figure counts with peaks of 30 at Cissbury on 24 Jul and 70 feeding on the beach at Newhaven Tide Mills on 12 Oct. Conversely, autumn movements were minimal: at Climping Gap 98 flew east and four west on 27 Oct, the migration watchers in the Hastings area logged 90 on 14 dates between 30 Sep and 12 Nov, with a peak of 16 at Combe Valley CP on 31 Oct and seawatchers at Selsey Bill logged 30 E and 4 W between 1 and 28 Oct, with a peak of 22 on the 13th.

During the second winter period there were 25 double-figure counts, the peaks were 30 at Pagham Hbr on 5 Nov, 35 at Climping Gap on the 10th, 60 at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 30th, 32 at Balcombe on 29 Dec and 40 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 22nd. During the late year SWBS a total of 96 was recorded in 23% of the squares surveyed, with maxima of ten at Springhead Hill (Rackham) on 29 Nov and Coates Common on 4 Dec. [G Hughes]

Twite

Linaria flavirostris

Rare winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

The mini resurgence in the fortunes of this declining species continues, with records in each of the last three years, following a period of six years (2011 to 2016) with no records. The three birds first seen at Rye Hbr on 28 Dec 2018 remained until 12 Apr (mo). One photographed at Flat Beach (Rye Hbr) on 29 Nov (AJ Martin), was exactly where the three were seen earlier in the year. The county total this century moves on to 21. [P James]

Linnets

Linaria cannabina

Fairly common but decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Linnets were recorded in 384 tetrads (41%) (cf. 378 in 2018), higher than the 10-year average of 348 (range 254 to 425). During the first winter period, there were 20 counts of 100 or more. The largest flocks were of 500 in a field of sunflowers at Kingley Vale on 4 Jan, 14 Feb and 27 Feb and at Medmerry on 9 Jan where counts of 300 were also achieved on 28 Jan and 21 Feb. Elsewhere high counts were 312 at Telscombe on 20 Feb and 205 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 8 Jan. Smaller groups were noted across the county, with 85 records of up to 30 at 96 sites throughout Sussex. During the early year SWBS 502 Linnets were recorded in 12% of the squares surveyed with a maximum count of 150 on 17 Jan at Lullington.

Spring migration at Selsey Bill was most pronounced in April when a total of 139 passage birds was recorded, with a peak of 53 N on the 9th. Similarly observers at Worthing recorded an April total of 116 with a peak of 22 E and 5 W, also on 9 Apr.

During the BBS a total of 421 was found in 36% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 70 on 5 Apr at Hartfield. Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and probable in a further 61. The first evidence of nest building was on 17 Apr at Selsey and the first fledged young were observed on Ashdown Forest on 26 May.

Over the summer months, there were 15 counts of 50 or more with maxima of 400 on 16 Aug at Bewl Water and on the 21st at Steep Down (Lancing), 180 at Scotney GP on 9 Aug and 125 and 120 at Rye on 29 Jul and 30 Aug respectively.

In the autumn numbers increased significantly as birds congregated and then dispersed. In the Hastings area a total of 2162 was recorded on 26 dates between 18 Sep and 18 Nov, with a

maximum count of 439 W on 10 Oct. At Selsey Bill between 5 and 31 Oct 452 were recorded with a peak of 250 E on 30 Oct and at Worthing 447 were counted between 2 and 29 Oct with a maximum of 228 (217 E, 11 W) on 17 Oct. During this period there were 33 other three-figure counts from 13 mainly coastal locations. The largest count was a flock of 550 at Medmerry on 8 Oct and the total of 429 at Beachy Head on 15 Oct included 200 in a set aside field and 220 W; there were 11 further counts from that area of between 100 and 340.

During the second winter period SWBS 538 were recorded from 10% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 250 on 30 Dec at Wick Bottom (Woodingdean). There were only two other three-figure counts, of 130 on Ashdown Forest on 7 Dec and 120 at Scotney GP on the 3rd. [M Orchard-Webb]

Common Redpoll

Acanthis flammea

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

There were two records in 2019 comprising a single bird in Worth Forest on 23 Jan (DK Campbell) and four near Balcombe on 28 Mar within a flock of about 300 Lesser Redpolls (M Mallalieu). The county total moves on to 136. Of these, 126 were this century, almost half of which (62) were in 2013. [P James]

Lesser Redpoll

Acanthis cabaret

Scarce breeder and common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Lesser Redpolls were recorded in only 82 tetrads (8.7%) compared with 116 (12%) in 2018; this was 34% lower than the 10-year average of 125 (range 80 to 162).

During this period there were 13 counts of 20 or more with the highest being c.100 in a mixed species feeding flock at Brede High Wood and 70 at Cowdray Forest (Worth) on 11 Feb. In March, however, the highest count was of a roving flock of up to 300 in the woodlands around Paddockhurst (Worth) and Wakehurst Place on 28 to 31 Mar. There was a further count of 160 at Brede High Wood on 6 Mar. In April the flocks around Paddockhurst were still in evidence, with up to 200 there between 11 and 15 Apr and there was one further high count of 150 at Cowdray Forest on the 8th. Thereafter only single-figure counts were recorded until October.

Breeding was confirmed in just two tetrads and was probable in a further three. Singing males were first recorded on 21 Apr on Ashdown Forest where a nest with young was seen on 23 Jul and fledglings on 25 Aug.

Migration and dispersal records were sparse. During migration watching in the Hastings area a total of 39 (compared with 116 in 2018 and 977 in 2017) were recorded on 16 dates between 5 Oct and 12 Nov, with a maximum of only six on the 12th. At Selsey Bill the total for October was 46 (26 N, 13 E, 7 W), with a peak of 26 on 21 Oct. Over the autumn period the largest flock was at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) where 70 were logged on 31 Oct, while observers at Beachy Head regarded it a poor autumn.

In the second winter period the highest count was of 20 at Old Lodge LNR on 17 Nov, and there were only six other counts in double figures. [M Orchard-Webb]

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.

Records from 54 tetrads (5.7 %) were received for 2019 (53 in 2018). The pattern in 2019 was very different from that in 2018. In 2019, the majority of records came from the first half of the year and especially the first three months, with fewer from later months. In 2018, by contrast, October was the peak month and the majority of birds were seen in the last three months. There was only one encounter in the early year SWBS when six were seen in Tilgate Forest on 13 Feb and the species was not encountered in either the BBS or late year SWBS.

Some groups stayed for extended periods in favoured locations and may have been present since the closing months of 2018. Peak counts were 32 at Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) on 31 Jan, 28 at Brede High Wood on the 24th, 24 at Robertsbridge on the 6th and 21 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 20 Mar. During this period groups of 20 were noted at Stansted Forest, Westdean Woods and Broadwater Warren. Some movement was detected in March: birds were heard over Pulborough Brooks on the 2nd, ten, mainly juveniles, flew west over Peacehaven on the 17th, and one came in off the sea at Fairlight, also on the 17th.

Confirmed breeding came from four locations, fledged young were encountered at Old Lodge LNR on 8 and 20 Mar, at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on 7 Apr, Black Down on 1 Jun and Ambersham Common the next day. Breeding was probable or possible in five further locations. The highest post breeding flocks were 60 at Black Down on 21 May and 30 at Little Strudgate Fm the next day.

Sightings in the second half of the year were few and far between, with a maximum of five at Old Lodge LNR on 6 Sep. At Black Down, after a handful of records on 1 Jun, there were none until a mere two on 29 Oct and then 13 there on 17 Nov. Small numbers were recorded from Older Hill (North of Woolbeding Common), Paddockhurst (Worth) and Balcombe. There were no coastal records late in the year. [C Brooks]



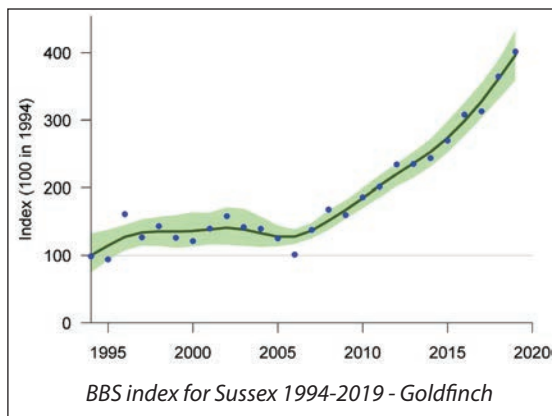
Common Crossbill, Ashdown Forest, 5 March (Bob Eade)

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Probably fairly common resident; common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

Goldfinches were encountered in 646 tetrads (69%), similar to 2018 but continuing the gradual increase in distribution. Likewise this species continues to increase in abundance; the SE regional population trend 1995-2018 indicates a 121% increase and the trend for Sussex, as shown in the graph below, mirrors this growth. Recent research suggests that the decline in Greenfinch numbers may have reduced competition which, together with the increase in garden food availability, might have benefitted Goldfinches (BBS Population Trends 2019).



Evidence of the growth trend was also provided from the GBW data, with birds recorded in 92% of participating gardens, a significant increase from 79% in 2018 and a welcome return to the 2017 level (90%). Likewise in the early year SWBS 661 were recorded in 72% of squares surveyed compared with 59% in 2018 and 65% in 2017, with a maximum count of 30 at Lullington on 17 Jan.

During the first winter period there were over 200 double-figure counts and three treble-figure counts of 100

each at Stansted Forest and Medmerry on 9 and 28 Jan respectively, and 220 at Norton (Seaford) on 2 Feb and 80 at Tilgate Forest on 27 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 32 tetrads and probable in 46, (26 and 48 in 2018). The first signs of nesting were from late March with a pair visiting a probable nest site at Kings Barn WTW (Steyning) between 22 and 28 Mar; birds nest building at Cissbury on 16 Apr were seen gathering fluff from last year's willow herb and disappearing into thick scrub; the first fledgling seen was at Storrington on 2 May, and there were further reports of fledglings until 25 Aug. The bird reported on the nest at Petworth on 12 Jul may very well have been starting a second brood. During the BBS, 1118 Goldfinches were recorded in 88% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 29 at Hellingly on 26 Apr.

Post breeding flocks were evident from early August with treble-figure flocks seen at eight sites between 16 Aug and 30 Sep; most notable were: c.400 at Bewl Water on 16 Aug, 160 at Weir Wood Res on the 25th, rising to 200 on 8 Sep, and 150 on downland north of Worthing on 26 Aug. However, the highest counts were made in October as flocks moved through well-watched coastal sites. Migration watchers in the Hastings area logged 6883 on 30 dates between 30 Sep and 18 Nov, with a maximum of 1500 E on 20 Oct. At Beachy Head 1500 E were recorded on 23 Oct and 1000 E were at Climping on the 20th. Other counts included 470 at Worthing on the 28th, 800 at Pett Level on the 5th and 1000 there on the 31st. Notable numbers at inland sites included 70 in the Arun Valley on 1 Oct, 67 at Pulborough Brooks on the 7th, 80 at Cissbury on the 7th and 115 at Crowborough on the 10th.

During the second winter period count numbers began to reduce, with highs of 300 at Weir Wood Res on 5 Nov, 310 at Combe Valley CP on the 6th and 226 E at Goring Gap on the 17th. Inland, the highest count was 50 at Arundel WWT on the 7th. In December count sizes reduced further, although there were still 80 reports of double-figures; notable counts were 180 at Weir Wood Res on the 22nd, 70 at Gatwick Airport on the 25th and 65 at Lewes on the 29th. In this period's SWBS 690 Goldfinches were recorded in 64% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 75 at Westfield on 10 Dec. [G Hughes]

Serin

Serinus serinus

Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

There were three records in 2019: one that flew in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 22 Apr and lingered there until the 24th (J Atkinson, P Bowley, BGR Ives *et al.*), a male at Beachy Head on 24 May (ME and RH Charlwood) and a long staying individual at Cedar Fm (Flinwell) from 12 to 25 Nov (MJ Phillips *et al.*). Thanks are due to the finder of the latter bird who kindly allowed access to his farm. The total this century moves on to a minimum of 79. [P James]

Siskin

Spinus spinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce or fairly common breeder.

During 2019 Siskins were recorded in 178 tetrads (19%) (cf. 195 in 2018), the third lowest count this past decade and 18% lower than the 10-year average of 216.

Over the first winter period there were 26 counts from 22 inland sites (cf. 24 from 17 in 2018) where 20 or more were recorded. The highest counts were 110 at Tilgate Park on 16 Jan, 80 at Paddockhurst (Worth) on 21 Jan and 60 at Darwell Res on 19 Jan. During this period's SWBS 172 were encountered in 12% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 46 on 20 Jan at Marley House (Battle). During March 20 or more were seen at five sites including 30 at Broadwater Warren on the 5th, at Pellings Wood (Crowborough) on the 15th and 22nd and at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 20th.

During the BBS 23 Siskins were recorded in 5.3% of the 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum of eight on 16 Apr at Tilgate Forest. Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads and was probable in a further seven. Singing males were observed on 22 occasions at 14 locations from 12 Feb and fledglings were first recorded on 1 May at Crowborough.

Numbers recorded during the summer months were typically low, mostly of ones and twos, with a maximum of ten at Pellings Wood on 29 Jul. However, counts increased noticeably during autumn, particularly in October with migration in full swing. There were 28 double-figure counts, with highs of 56 at Weir Wood Res on the 20th and 50 at Pulborough Brooks on the 17th. The Hastings area migration watch team recorded a total of 185 Siskins on 24 dates between 15 Sep and 10 Nov with a maximum daily count of 38 on 17 Oct. Observers at Selsey Bill logged a total of 33 (7 E, 22 W) in October with a maximum of 19 on the 22nd.

During the second winter period SWBS 84 were encountered in seven (5.2%) of the squares surveyed, with a maximum of 40 on 20 Nov at Hartfield. There were nine counts of ten or more, the largest being of a flock of 70 feeding in alders at Paddockhurst on 4 Nov and 40 at Hartfield on the 20th. Throughout the year Siskins were encountered in 19% of participating gardens during the GBW. [M Orchard-Webb]

Lapland Bunting*Calcarius lapponicus*

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

There were two records in 2019, the first feeding on the path along the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 18 Sep (I McKercher *et al.*) followed by one at Seaford Head on 22 Oct that flew off high north-west (L Curson, MR Eade). The county total this century moves on to approximately 112. Most of these (70) were recorded during the exceptional influx in autumn 2010. [P James]



Snow Bunting, Goring, 20 January (Peter Brooks)

Snow Bunting*Plectrophenax nivalis*

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

A first winter female, seen regularly between 16 Jan and 20 Feb at Goring Gap, was the only record from the early months. One on downland north of Sompting on 28 and 29 Sep was not only the first autumn record but also the only one of the year away from the coast. Thereafter singles

were at Chidham from 17 to 20 Oct, Shoreham on the 20th and 22nd, Thorney Island on the 29th, and Cuckmere Haven on the 30th and 31st. In November single birds were seen at Beachy Head on the 5th, Church Norton and Hove on the 6th, Medmerry from the 9th to the 17th, Thorney Island also on the 17th, Combe Valley CP on the 18th and Rye Bay on the 19th. The last one of the year was seen flying east at Rye Hbr on 5 Dec. Although it is difficult to estimate how many birds were involved in these records it would appear there were no more than 14, a figure comparable to the winter average this century.

Monitoring the numbers of Snow Buntings wintering in Sussex is probably best done by considering numbers for each winter, i.e. from October to March. Winter totals in the last 20 years have varied widely from six to 60, averaging 18 from 1999/2000 to 2008/9 but 15.7 for 2009/10 to 2018/19, as shown below:

Winters	99/00	00/1	01/2	02/3	03/4	04/5	05/6	06/7	07/8	08/9
Totals	20	13	8	14	14	25	60	7	11	8
Winters	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17-18	18/19
Totals	10	43	28	12	24	9	10	6	9	6

It may be that milder winters in recent years, particularly when compared with those from the second half of the 20th century, give less cause to move to Sussex and the suggestion of a reduction in numbers. [AC Gutteridge]

Corn Bunting

Emberiza calandra

Fairly common but decreasing resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Corn Buntings were recorded in 93 tetrads (9.9%), compared with 81 in 2018 and a 10-year average of 77 (range 67 to 104). In the first winter period the largest flocks were 110 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 2 Jan and 230 at East Guldeford Level on 11 Feb, a record number for the site, and 120 there on 22 Feb. In addition there were ten double-figure counts during the period the maximum being 50 at Steyning Round Hill on 14 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in just four tetrads and was probable in a further ten. Birds were seen carrying food at Medmerry on 2 Jun, Balsdean (Rottingdean) on 2 Jul and Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 1 Aug and the first fledglings were seen at Newhaven Cliffs on 11 Jun. At Medmerry 11 pairs were located, up from nine in the previous year, and at Beachy Head up to ten around a setaside field was probably the breeding population. At Steep Down (Lancing) 48 Corn Buntings, including 36 singing males and some family parties, were seen on 16 Jul. Elements of the relict population north of Chichester were located on two occasions and one was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Jun, but otherwise in the breeding season this species is almost entirely confined to the South Downs and the coastal plains at either end of Sussex. During the BBS Corn Buntings were found in 4.1% of the squares studied.

Eighteen near Steyning Bostal on 12 Aug was the largest count during the late summer and autumn. Double-figure flocks were recorded at only six sites during the second winter period; the largest were 35 at Chantry Hill on 3 Nov, 40 at East Guldeford Level on the 12th and 110 there on the 30th. [AC Gutteridge]



Yellowhammer, Medmerry, 29 April (Dorian Mason)

Yellowhammer

Emberiza citrinella

Common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Yellowhammers were recorded in 339 tetrads (36%) during the year, an improvement on the 327 for 2018 but less than the 10-year average of 358 (range 281 to 488).

In the first winter period double-figure counts were located at 23 sites, all but six in West Sussex. The highest numbers were 50 at Steyning on New Year's Day and 60 at Partridge Green on 6 Jan. In the early year SWBS a total of 66 was recorded in 17% of the squares surveyed, down from 79 in 25 (16%) in 2018.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and probable in a further 44. Counts of breeding pairs (2018 figures in brackets) on RSPB reserves were 21 (32) at Medmerry and 10 (13) at Broadwater Warren. Singing was noted at many sites from mid-February and on 25 Mar at least 11 males were singing at Balcombe, but winter flocks persisted in places into mid-April, with 60 at Medmerry on 14 Apr. During the BBS a total of 201 were found in 36% of the squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 14 on 24 May at Edburton. In the WHBBS 47 pairs were recorded compared with 45 the previous year (see page 216). The first fledged birds were noted at Amberley Mount on 25 May.

Notable counts during the late summer and autumn included 15 at Rackham Hill on 3 Aug, 14 at Earham Folley on 13 Aug and 25 at Patching Hill on 20 Oct. In the late year SWBS a total of 82 was recorded in 13% of the squares surveyed, comparable with 81 from 16% in 2018. During November and December some 26 double-figure counts were recorded from 21 locations, the highest being 50 at Medmerry on 11 Dec, while 17 at Rushlake Green on 23 Dec was thought by the observer to be an unusually high number for the site. [AC Gutteridge]

Ortolan Bunting*Emberiza hortulana****Very scarce migrant mainly in the autumn.***

After the remarkable total of six in 2018, a first year individual seen and photographed at Beachy Head on 24 Aug (KB Gillam) was the only record. The county total moves to 87, including 11 in the last four years. [M Mallalieu]

Little Bunting*Emberiza pusilla****Rare vagrant.***

2018. The finder of the Little Bunting at Beachy Head on 22 Apr 2018 should have been noted as L Pitcher.

Reed Bunting*Emberiza schoeniclus****Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.***

Reed Buntings were encountered in 206 (22%) tetrads during the year compared with 202 (22%) the previous year and a 10-year average of 200 (range 163 to 243).

During the first winter period there was a good sprinkling of records away from the coastal plain and river valleys. The highest number at the roost at Weir Wood Res was 229 on 4 Jan. Other large flocks found in January were 100 at Findon on the 31st, 50 at Cissbury on the 18th, 60 at Edburton on the 22nd and 60 at East Guldeford on the 29th. There were double-figure counts of up to 50 from 21 other sites across the county. Several observers commented that setaside, wild bird and game crop and weedy stubbles were favoured and that the species was to be found in mixed flocks with Chaffinches, Yellowhammers and Corn Buntings. During the early year SWBS a total of 29 was recorded in 6.6% of the squares surveyed. During the GBW the species was recorded in 4.3% of 210 participating gardens surveyed during the year.

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads and probable in a further 20. Song was noted from 10 Feb and on 5 Mar a female was seen to carry off Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*). The first fledged young were recorded on 31 May at Warnham LNR where a male was feeding a juvenile. Counts of breeding pairs or territories (2018 figures in brackets) were: Medmerry 13 (31), Pagham Hbr 19 (15), Arundel WWT 1, Amberley Wild Brooks 17 (21), Pulborough Brooks 21 (20), Lewes Brooks 7 (10) and Rye Hbr 20 (49). Three pairs were recorded in the WHBBS and four in Ashdown Forest. During the BBS 62 Reed Buntings were found in 19 (11%) of the squares surveyed, compared with 71 in 23 (13%) the previous year.

Evidence of autumn movements were 10 W at Seaford Head on 17 Oct and 25 W there three days later. During the Hastings area migration watch 174 were logged on 18 dates between 12 Sep and 12 Nov with a maximum of 32 on 10 Oct.

During the late year SWBS a total of 34 was recorded in 6.0% of the squares surveyed. On 5 Nov 197 were counted entering a reedbed roost at Weir Wood Res, where frequent counts exceeding 100 were recorded to the end of the year, with 155 on 23 Dec. The maximum recorded at Ardingly Res was 104 on 22 Dec. Double-figure flocks were noted at ten other sites with a flock at Medmerry reaching 40 on 20 Nov. It seems that numbers were generally slightly down on 2018. [AC Gutteridge]

ESCAPES AND INTRODUCTIONS

All records of BOU Category D and E species, i.e. primarily probable or certain escapes from captivity (but not those clearly in captivity) and introduced species without self-sustaining wild populations, 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 introduced birds, other than those Category C species in the main list, were recorded in the county in 2019 (unless stated otherwise). It should be noted that the identity of these birds is largely unchecked. A list of useful references can be found in SxBR 62:210 (2009). Species' names and order follow IOC World Bird Names (V 10.2) available online at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Helmeted Guineafowl

Numida meleagris

Breeds in Africa, mostly south of the Sahara. Widely introduced and domesticated. Roosts in trees like pheasants and takes 'siesta' in shade.

Up to 17 were at Newick WTW between 1 Jan and 21 Mar and one was at Cocking on 6 Jun.

Indian Peafowl

Pavo cristatus

Wild birds are restricted to the Indian subcontinent. A traditional favourite in ornamental gardens.

Recorded at four sites in West Sussex and eight in East Sussex. In West Sussex single birds were seen at Lavington Common on 19 Jun, Amieshill Fm (Horsham) on 22 May, Colgate on 26 May and Hurstpierpoint on 15 Jan but two were there on 26 Apr.

In East Sussex single birds were at the Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on three dates, at Uckfield on 30 Apr and 31 May, Herstmonceux on 15 May, Catsfield on 20 Apr, Telham (Crowhurst) on 26 Apr and 25 May. At Battle one or two were noted frequently between 24 Jun and 15 Aug.

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Has a peculiar disjunctive distribution; breeds in sub-Saharan Africa and much of South America; probably transported to new locations by humans. Preferred habitat is fresh-water lakes or reservoirs with plentiful vegetation.

Two at Glynde Level on 20 Nov and 23 Dec.

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 Medmerry on 25 Feb were with six Barnacle Geese.

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.

One on 2 Jan at Chichester GP and then on numerous dates through the year at various sites as far east as Scotney GP but finally at Cuckmere Haven from 19 Nov to 18 Dec sometimes with other geese. Two were at Medmerry and occasionally at Earnley on numerous dates from 16 Aug to 15 Dec often with Canada Geese.

Emperor Goose*Anser canagicus*

Breeds mainly in Alaska. Present in many wildfowl collections.

One at Scotney GP on 10 Jan and 21 Feb was associating with Barnacle Geese.

Snow Goose*Anser caerulescens*

Breeds in Arctic North America and winters in southern USA and Mexico. Presumed migrants may occur on the UK in winter usually in association with other Arctic breeding geese but are greatly outnumbered by escapes and feral birds. There have been no accepted records of wild birds in Sussex.

Five blue-phase birds were at Scotney GP on 3 Jan and one was at Pett Level between 9 Nov and 11 Dec.

Swan Goose (Chinese Goose)*Anser cygnoides*

Breeds naturally in Mongolia northern China and south-eastern Russia and winters mainly in central and eastern China.

One was at Ifield MP on 4 Jan.

Lesser White-fronted Goose*Anser erythropus*

Breeds in northernmost Palearctic but a scarce breeder in Europe where it is declining. There is a re-introduction scheme in Fennoscandia. Winters further south in Europe and is a rare winter vagrant to Great Britain. Widely kept in wildfowl collections from which escapes do occur; individuals seen in summer or in the company of other feral geese are likely to be of captive origin.

A presumed escapee in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 9 Feb and then elsewhere in the valley until at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 14 Apr and Pevensey Levels on the 27th.

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 seen widely across the county through the year from 6 Jan to 30 Dec as ones at some 11 sites from Chichester Hbr to Rye Hbr, and twos at a further ten sites, with three at Pagham Hbr on 4 Mar. The most favoured site was Cuckmere Haven and the lower valley where usually

two were seen between 14 Mar and 17 Apr. An un-paired female at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) built a nest and laid five probably infertile eggs, an event which has happened in previous years.

Ruddy Shelduck

Tadorna ferruginea

Breeds in SE Europe and across central Asia. Rare vagrant or escape from captivity.

Singles were at Offham (Arun Valley) on 25 Feb and Pagham Hbr on 30 Sep. A pair was with Egyptian Geese at Selham (Petworth) on 15 Oct. One at Pulborough Brooks on 11 and 23 Nov and 21 Dec was described on 23 Nov as a hybrid without further details.

Muscovy Duck

Cairina moschata

Native to Mexico and Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form.

One was seen frequently between 1 Jan and 14 Dec at Arundel Park although two were there on 20 Apr. Two were at Horsted Keynes on four dates between 18 Jan and 5 Apr. One was at Hampden Pk (Eastbourne) on 27 and 28 Jan and 9 Feb. Ones were at Cowdray Pk (Midhurst) on 11 Jan, 10 Apr and 20 Oct, another was at Warnham LNR on 11 and 15 Sep and yet another at Selsey East Beach on the 16th.

Violet Turaco

Musophaga violacea

Native to West Africa from Senegal to Nigeria, isolated in Chad and Central African Republic; occurs in tropical savannas, wetlands, woodlands and forests. Locally common but vulnerable to trapping for the pet trade.

One, first recorded in September 2018 in Tangmere, but thought to have been present for a year or more, was seen in Bognor Regis in 2020, so was presumably resident in the area throughout.

Great Bustard

Otis tarda

Native to Iberia and Morocco, with fragmented populations through central and south-east Europe to Turkey and east to central Siberia. Extinct in Great Britain in 1832; since 2013 it has been the subject of a re-introduction programme led by the Great Bustard Group in Wiltshire, under licence from DEFRA.

On 6 Nov a young female was found by Simon Linington, leading an SOS group, in a field at Birling Gap. It was wearing a red ring 92 on its left leg which identified it as from the Wiltshire re-introduction programme. The egg had been imported from Spain in summer 2018 so it was aged 2CY (females do not breed until 2 or 3 years of age). On the 9th it was relocated in the Bishopstone/Norton area NW of Newhaven where it stayed until at least the 15th.

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.

Single birds were seen at Angmering on 17 Aug and between Amberley and Pulborough on 29 Dec.

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.

One was at Cocking on 16 Feb, two there on 19 Mar and ones on 6 Jun and 18 Dec. One was also at Kneppmill Pond on 29 Aug.

Pied Crow*Corvus albus*

Native to sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar and common and ubiquitous in urban areas as well as more open country. Largely sedentary.

One wandered from Winchelsea on 30 Mar to Seaford Head on 6 Apr via Litlington and Cuckmere Haven.



Pied Crow, Seaford, 5 April (Tim Squire)

Canary*Serinus canaria*

A domesticated form of the wild canary originating from the Macaronesian islands (the Azores Madeira and Canary Islands). A popular cage and aviary bird.

One was seen at Selsey Bill on 10 May in a nearby garden.



Robin, Beachy Head, 1 May (Liz & Roger Charlwood)

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) Results for Sussex, 2015 - 2019

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 2015 - 2019. 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 in column 1.

		Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
		2015 (179)		2016 (170)		2017 (172)		2018 (174)		2019 (170)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Mute Swan	29	16	21	12	18	10	18	10	19	11
	Greylag Goose	22	12	24	14	27	16	30	17	30	18
	Greylag Goose (domestic)	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	2	1
	Canada Goose	55	31	47	28	58	34	60	34	52	31
	Egyptian Goose	3	2	2	1	5	3	6	3	9	5
	Shelduck	5	3	14	8	4	2	12	7	10	6
	Mandarin Duck	9	5	7	4	6	3	6	3	5	3
	Gadwall	4	2	3	2	6	3	8	5	5	3
	Mallard	108	60	102	60	93	54	95	55	87	51
	Mallard (domestic)	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
	Tufted Duck	6	3	5	3	6	3	6	3	4	2
	Red-legged Partridge	16	9	24	14	27	16	23	13	25	15
	Grey Partridge	2	1	2	1	3	2	-	-	1	1
	Pheasant	142	79	142	84	143	83	148	85	134	79
	Cormorant	25	14	21	12	24	14	27	16	22	13
	Little Egret	14	8	14	8	8	5	9	5	12	7
	Grey Heron	53	30	62	36	44	26	52	30	36	21
	Little Grebe	7	4	5	3	6	3	7	4	5	3
	Great Crested Grebe	3	2	4	2	4	2	3	2	3	2
	Marsh Harrier	3	2	4	2	2	1	-	-	2	1
	Sparrowhawk	24	13	28	16	18	10	14	8	16	9
	Buzzard	96	54	95	56	94	55	101	58	107	63
	Kestrel	51	28	47	28	38	22	44	25	41	24
	Hobby	5	3	6	4	2	1	2	1	2	1
	Peregrine	6	3	4	2	7	4	4	2	1	1
	Moorhen	69	39	56	33	41	24	49	28	43	25
	Coot	26	15	23	14	21	3	23	13	23	14
	Oystercatcher	6	3	4	2	5	3	5	3	5	3
	Lapwing	25	14	19	11	20	12	20	12	15	9
	Whimbrel	3	2	4	2	1	1	-	-	1	1

		Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
		2015 (179)		2016 (170)		2017 (172)		2018 (174)		2019 (170)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Curlew	3	2	7	4	6	3	2	1	4	2
	Redshank	3	2	4	2	3	2	5	3	7	4
	Black-headed Gull	36	20	32	19	31	18	26	15	33	19
	Mediterranean Gull	3	2	11	6	12	7	7	4	10	6
	Common Gull	13	7	10	6	8	5	4	2	6	4
	Lesser Black-backed Gull	20	11	22	13	18	10	12	7	17	10
	Herring Gull	104	58	112	66	118	69	114	65	112	66
	Great Black-backed Gull	8	4	6	4	8	5	8	5	6	4
	Sandwich Tern	3	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	2
	Common Tern	3	2	6	4	4	2	3	2	3	2
	Feral Pigeon	40	22	34	20	35	20	37	21	39	23
	Stock Dove	72	40	72	42	78	45	85	49	82	48
	Woodpigeon	177	99	170	100	172	100	174	100	169	99
	Collared Dove	111	62	99	58	106	62	110	63	93	55
	Turtle Dove	2	1	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	1
	Cuckoo	39	22	42	25	36	21	42	24	37	22
	Barn Owl	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	1
	Little Owl	4	2	-	-	2	1	3	2	-	-
	Tawny Owl	5	3	5	3	4	2	8	5	8	5
	Swift	46	26	44	26	54	31	41	23	45	26
	Kingfisher	3	2	5	3	2	1	1	1	2	1
	Green Woodpecker	123	69	108	64	112	65	102	59	84	49
	Great Spotted Woodpecker	119	66	107	63	118	69	120	69	121	71
	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Magpie	160	89	148	87	156	91	152	87	153	90
	Jay	83	46	77	45	82	48	76	44	86	51
	Jackdaw	159	89	138	81	151	88	148	85	150	88
	Rook	98	55	97	57	96	56	100	57	104	61
	Carrion Crow	175	98	168	99	169	98	171	98	167	98
	Raven	5	3	12	7	7	4	11	6	16	9
	Goldcrest	84	47	81	48	85	49	65	37	68	40
	Firecrest	3	2	4	2	5	3	4	2	5	3
	Blue Tit	174	97	166	98	170	99	171	98	163	96
	Great Tit	169	94	166	98	161	94	170	98	162	95
	Coal Tit	36	20	53	31	59	34	68	39	65	38
	Marsh Tit	15	8	13	8	15	9	21	12	23	14
	Woodlark	4	2	5	3	3	2	1	1	3	2
	Skylark	87	49	79	46	81	47	82	47	79	46
	Swallow	120	67	113	66	117	68	116	67	111	65
	House Martin	33	18	35	21	34	20	29	17	31	18
	Cetti's Warbler	15	8	15	9	11	6	13	7	14	8

		Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)									
		2015 (179)		2016 (170)		2017 (172)		2018 (174)		2019 (170)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Long-tailed Tit	93	52	78	46	87	50	84	48	91	53
	Chiffchaff	160	89	153	90	158	92	159	91	147	86
	Willow Warbler	41	23	34	20	40	23	23	13	29	17
	Blackcap	144	80	144	85	145	84	152	87	153	90
	Garden Warbler	30	17	27	16	30	17	30	17	33	19
	Lesser Whitethroat	18	10	21	12	22	13	22	13	24	14
	Whitethroat	105	59	106	62	104	60	97	56	97	57
	Sedge Warbler	15	8	9	5	10	6	10	6	12	7
	Reed Warbler	22	12	25	15	20	12	20	11	21	12
	Nuthatch	87	49	7	45	84	49	93	53	89	52
	Treecreeper	36	20	36	21	47	27	40	23	38	22
	Wren	172	96	165	97	169	98	168	96	164	96
	Starling	124	69	107	63	116	67	114	65	118	69
	Blackbird	178	99	170	100	171	99	174	100	169	99
	Song Thrush	157	88	148	87	149	87	150	86	148	87
	Mistle Thrush	58	32	49	29	55	32	55	31	53	31
	Spotted Flycatcher	8	4	4	2	5	3	5	3	5	3
	Robin	176	98	165	97	170	99	170	98	163	96
	Nightingale	16	9	7	4	14	8	12	7	12	7
	Common Redstart	-	-	2	1	2	1	-	-	2	1
	Stonechat	1	1	1	1	6	3	5	3	8	5
	Wheatear	5	3	6	4	7	4	11	6	4	2
	Dunnock	147	82	146	86	146	85	145	83	150	88
	House Sparrow	136	76	126	74	130	75	133	76	128	75
	Yellow Wagtail	2	1	-	-	3	2	3	2	2	1
	Grey Wagtail	8	4	9	5	8	5	10	6	14	8
	Pied/White Wagtail	78	44	79	46	70	41	74	42	76	45
	Tree Pipit	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
	Meadow Pipit	14	8	18	11	15	9	12	7	13	8
	Chaffinch	172	96	163	96	163	95	157	90	156	92
	Greenfinch	124	69	120	71	105	61	97	56	97	57
	Goldfinch	140	78	143	84	142	83	143	82	148	87
	Siskin	6	3	10	6	5	3	5	3	9	5
	Linnet	64	36	62	36	62	36	68	39	60	35
	Lesser Redpoll	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	-
	Common Crossbill	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
	Bullfinch	43	24	40	24	58	34	42	24	42	25
	Yellowhammer	65	36	74	44	57	33	60	34	60	35
	Reed Bunting	23	13	22	13	19	11	23	13	19	11
	Corn Bunting	5	3	3	2	3	2	6	3	7	4
Number of species		144		143		147		127		121	

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) Sussex population trends 1994 - 2019

Sussex BBS population trends for 1994 - 2019 are shown in the table below, along with those for 2018 -19. Statistically significant trends 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 - 2019.

	Sample size	% change 1994-2019	sig	LCL	UCL	% change 2018-2019	sig	LCL	UCL
Blackbird	103	1		-9	13	-2		-8	3
Blackcap	85	163	*	109	226	30	*	18	44
Blue Tit	101	2		-16	24	2		-7	11
Carrion Crow	101	70	*	33	124	8		-12	36
Chaffinch	100	-57	*	-62	-50	-7		-16	2
Chiffchaff	89	57	*	24	99	16	*	6	25
Coal Tit	32	19		-29	95	5		-17	30
Collared Dove	64	-11		-35	39	-28	*	-38	-18
Cuckoo	32	-78	*	-87	-66	-12		-36	24
Dunnock	87	-8		-27	25	0		-12	13
Goldcrest	41	19		-20	99	33		-4	76
Goldfinch	73	215	*	137	325	10		-4	24
GS Woodpecker	68	131	*	68	236	6		-8	24
Great Tit	99	30	*	6	59	6		-3	16
Green Woodpecker	69	-1		-25	29	-10		-30	9
Greenfinch	76	-64	*	-73	-52	-23		-47	4
House Sparrow	78	-3		-25	35	1		-9	14
Jackdaw	84	131	*	59	259	10		-7	32
Jay	48	-27		-53	9	14		-9	40
Linnet	38	13		-34	87	-21		-62	49
Long-tailed Tit	48	-29		-54	17	36	*	3	71
Magpie	93	25	*	0	56	-4		-13	8
Mallard	58	151	*	16	422	7		-21	40
Mistle Thrush	36	-56	*	-71	-27	-5		-31	28
Moorhen	36	-34		-62	5	2		-24	35
Nuthatch	49	31		-4	88	-5		-19	10
Pheasant	84	69	*	40	124	-5		-19	14
Pied Wagtail	45	19		-14	83	9		-13	33
Robin	101	7		-13	29	8	*	0	17
Rook	58	10		-37	59	48	*	9	106
Skylark	54	-24		-53	48	-6		-16	7
Song Thrush	91	-10		-26	13	6		-3	18
Starling	74	-59	*	-70	-46	12		-13	55
Stock Dove	37	44		-15	306	14		-18	54
Swallow	70	8		-26	56	5		-11	26
Swift	31	-78	*	-89	-51	-20		-41	19
Whitethroat	61	3		-33	56	43	*	23	67
Woodpigeon	104	51	*	22	87	-2		-11	7
Wren	99	-2		-18	19	7	*	1	13
Yellowhammer	44	-37		-62	5	18		-12	47



Chaffinch, Beachy Head, 23 April (Peter Brooks)

Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) results, Nov 2017 – Feb 2020

Christine George

The Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) was set up by the Sussex Ornithological Society in November 2011 with the aim of monitoring annual fluctuations in winter populations of common birds. Since then, the survey has been repeated annually, with the winter of 2019-20 being the ninth winter for the survey. Standardised counts from randomly-distributed 1-km squares form the basis of this survey, with many of these squares also being surveyed annually in the breeding season for the national Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). As with BBS, birds are recorded along the same route (2 x 1-km transects) twice every winter.

The results of the past three winters are shown in the tables below. In Table 1, column 'Rank 2019/20' shows each species ranked by the percentage of 1-km squares in which they were recorded during winter 2019/20. Only those species recorded in at least thirty surveyed 1-km squares have been included. The figure in parentheses is the mean ranking for all nine winters.

For each 'winter' there are three columns:

Column 1 (Total squares) is the total number of 1-km squares surveyed for SWBS in which that species was recorded

Column 2 (% of squares) is the percentage of 1-km squares surveyed for SWBS in which that species was recorded.

Column 3 (Mean/sq visit) is the mean encounters per single visit to a surveyed 1-km square. This number is derived from the total number of encounters over the two surveys, divided by the total number of squares surveyed that year, and further divided by two.

Both column 2 and column 3 facilitate year to year comparison.

Table 1. Comparative results for the commonest species, recorded in at least thirty surveyed squares.

		WINTER 7 (2017/18)			WINTER 8 (2018/19)			WINTER 9 (2019/20)		
1-km squares surveyed		167			134			138		
No. of observers		99			84			90		
Species (inc esc/ feral)		126			110			118		
Rank 2019/20	Species	Total squares	% of squares	Mean/sq visit	Total squares	% of squares	Mean/sq visit	Total squares	% of squares	Mean/sq visit
1 (1)	Woodpigeon	165	99	40.0	134	100	38.8	136	99	42.7
2 (3)	Carrion Crow	167	100	10.7	132	99	10.1	136	99	10.9
3 (5)	Robin	165	99	7.8	132	99	8.5	135	98	8.7
4 (4)	Blue Tit	160	96	10.1	134	100	11.5	133	96	11.0
5 (2)	Blackbird	166	99	9.2	133	99	8.7	132	96	8.7
6 (7)	Maggie	159	95	4.2	128	96	5.0	131	95	4.5
7 (6)	Great Tit	162	97	5.2	129	96	6.0	126	91	5.3
8 (8)	Wren	145	87	2.4	118	88	3.0	122	88	2.7
9 (10)	Jackdaw	139	83	13.9	116	87	18.0	119	86	17.5
10 (12)	Song Thrush	130	78	1.7	102	76	1.4	112	81	1.7

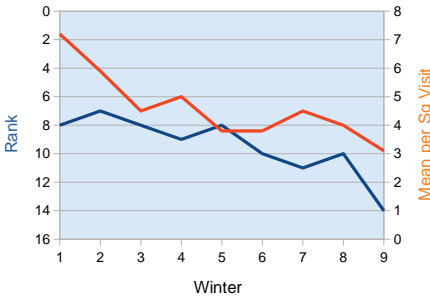
Rank 2019/20	Species	WINTER 7 (2017/18)			WINTER 8 (2018/19)			WINTER 9 (2019/20)		
		Total squares	% of squares	Mean/ sq visit	Total squares	% of squares	Mean/ sq visit	Total squares	% of squares	Mean/ sq visit
11 (11)	Dunnoek	137	82	2.3	106	79	2.0	105	76	1.8
12 (13)	Starling	130	78	21.2	99	74	20.7	101	73	36.2
13 (14)	Goldfinch	129	77	3.9	110	82	5.4	101	73	4.2
14 (9)	Chaffinch	135	81	4.5	112	84	4.0	99	72	3.1
15 (15)	House Sparrow	114	68	6.9	93	69	8.9	95	69	6.7
16 (16)	Pheasant	126	75	3.1	88	66	3.0	94	68	4.2
17 (17)	Herring Gull	113	68	8.1	93	69	8.3	94	68	14.1
18 (19)	Buzzard	111	66	0.9	96	71	1.0	93	67	1.0
19 (20)	Long-tailed Tit	99	59	2.4	83	62	2.3	92	67	2.2
20 (18)	GS Woodpecker	117	70	0.9	103	80	1.0	90	65	0.9
21 (23)	Redwing	113	68	9.0	90	67	10.1	84	61	8.1
22 (22)	Rook	92	55	9.1	72	54	9.6	81	59	11.4
23 (27)	Goldcrest	98	59	1.0	80	60	1.4	78	57	0.8
24 (21)	Jay	106	63	0.8	83	62	0.8	77	56	0.7
25 (24)	Gr Woodpecker	86	51	0.5	64	48	0.5	72	52	0.6
26 (26)	Pied Wagtail	82	49	1.1	72	54	1.8	71	51	2.4
27 (25)	BH Gull	96	57	10.3	83	62	14.0	70	51	16.7
28 (30)	Nuthatch	87	52	0.9	75	56	1.1	69	50	1.0
29 (29)	Collared Dove	90	54	2.1	69	51	1.6	58	42	1.1
30 (28)	Greenfinch	68	41	0.6	52	39	0.7	53	38	0.8
31 (35)	Kestrel	59	35	0.3	54	40	0.3	52	38	0.3
32 (32)	Mallard	72	43	4.4	54	40	5.4	51	37	2.9
33 (31)	Fieldfare	77	46	6.7	54	40	3.7	50	36	3.6
34 (37)	Skylark	47	28	1.1	51	38	2.1	48	35	1.9
35 (33)	Coal Tit	73	44	0.8	54	40	0.8	48	35	0.5
36 (36)	Mistle Thrush	55	33	0.3	61	46	0.5	47	34	0.4
37 (38)	Stock Dove	60	36	0.7	55	41	0.9	46	33	1.0
38 (41)	Meadow Pipit	46	28	1.4	48	36	1.6	43	31	2.3
39 (39)	Moorhen	48	29	0.6	39	29	0.7	41	30	0.6
40 (34)	Bullfinch	69	41	0.6	44	33	0.5	40	29	0.4
41 (42)	Feral Pigeon	33	20	1.8	33	25	2.5	37	27	3.1
42 (40)	Treecreeper	48	29	0.3	36	27	0.3	33	24	0.2

By way of illustration, data has been extracted from all years of SWBS for the common finches and wintering thrushes, to show the trends over the last nine years, as shown below.

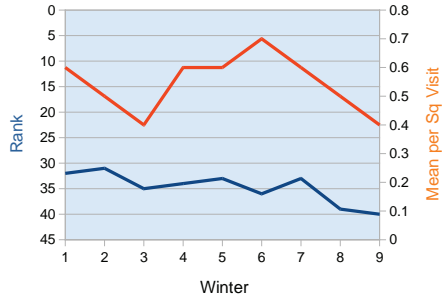
On the graphs, the blue line shows the comparative rank for each of the nine winters of the survey, based on the percentage of 1-km squares in which the species was encountered (Table 1, column 2) and the red line shows the mean encounters per single survey visit (Table 1, column 3)

From the species highlighted in Table 1 above, the most notable changes have occurred in Chaffinch (14th place in winter 9, compared with a 9-year average of 9th) and Bullfinch (40th place in winter 9, compared with a 9-year average of 34th).

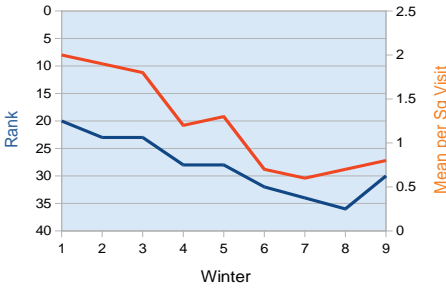
Graph 1. Chaffinch



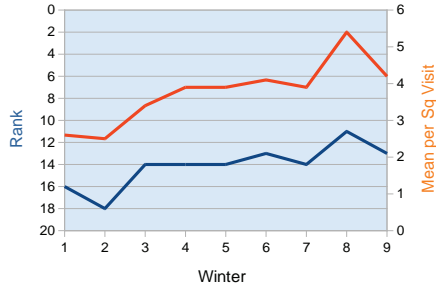
Graph 2. Bullfinch



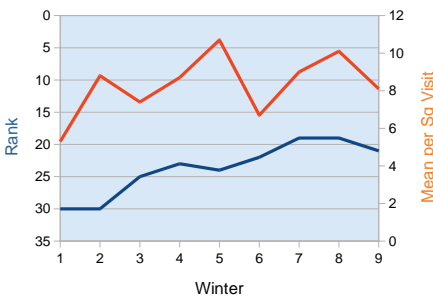
Graph 3. Greenfinch



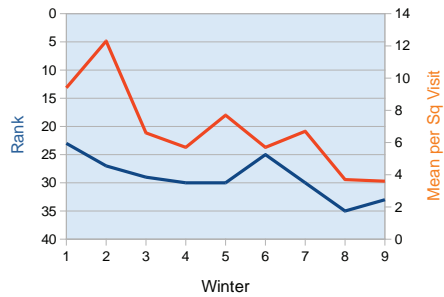
Graph 4. Goldfinch



Graph 5. Redwing



Graph 6. Fieldfare



For Chaffinch, the mean per square visit (the total number of encounters divided by the number of 1-km squares surveyed, divided by two) has also shown a steady decrease as demonstrated in Graph 1. Bullfinch has shown more variability (Graph 2).

Although the rank of Greenfinch relative to other species improved in winter nine, halting what had, until winter 8, been a steep decline, the percentage of 1-km squares in which this species was noted continues to fall. Mean encounters per square visit have also demonstrated the same pattern, as shown by Graph 3. In contrast to other finches, Goldfinch is broadly showing an upward trend as demonstrated in Graph 4. Winter nine appears to have been somewhat atypical for this species.

Redwing and Fieldfare, both winter visitors to Sussex, show contrasting results in both the number of 1-km squares in which they have been recorded and also the mean encounters per square visit. Overall Redwing is being encountered more frequently, both in terms of square percentages and counts (Graph 5) and Fieldfare less frequently (Graph 6).

A table containing results for all species encountered for each of the nine years of the survey, is available on the Sussex Ornithological Society website or by application to the SWBS organiser at sussex.wbs@gmail.com.

Other species recorded during SWBS, but occurring in 29 or less of the surveyed 1-km squares are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Other species encountered during SWBS 2018/19, along with the number of squares in which they were found.

Grey Heron	27	Eurasian Wigeon	5	Pintail	1
Cormorant	26	Little Grebe	5	Common Pochard	1
Yellowhammer	26	Eurasian Teal	5	Goosander	1
Eurasian Stonechat	25	Great Black-backed Gull	5	Water Rail	1
Raven	24	Curlew	4	Grey Plover	1
Common Gull	23	Common Snipe	4	Turnstone	1
Marsh Tit	22	Green Sandpiper	4	Dunlin	1
Linnet	21	Mediterranean Gull	4	Woodcock	1
Sparrowhawk	20	Brent Goose	3	Common Sandpiper	1
Red Kite	17	Tufted Duck	3	Greenshank	1
Red-legged Partridge	16	Common Shelduck	3	Great White Egret	1
Lapwing	16	Great Crested Grebe	3	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1
Mute Swan	15	Marsh Harrier	3	Merlin	1
Coot	13	Tawny Owl	3	Ring-necked Parakeet	1
Grey Wagtail	13	Kingfisher	3	Great Grey Shrike	1
Canada Goose	12	Peregrine	3	Blackcap	1
Chiffchaff	11	Woodlark	3	Black Redstart	1
Siskin	11	Corn Bunting	3	Water Pipit	1
Reed Bunting	11	Greylag Goose (Domestic)	2	Hawfinch	1
Lesser Black-backed Gull	10	Oystercatcher	2	Lesser Redpoll	1
Greylag Goose	9	Golden Plover	2	White-faced Whistling Duck	1
Egyptian Goose	7	Common Redshank	2	Black Swan	1
Cetti's Warbler	7	Little Owl	2	Indian Peafowl	1
Little Egret	6	White-fronted Goose	1	Red-tailed Hawk	1
Firecrest	6	Shoveler	1		
Gadwall	5	Mallard (Domestic)	1		

Arrival and departure dates of summer visitors, 2019

	First recorded date			Last recorded date		
	2019	1960 - 2018	10-yr average (± SD in days)	2019	1960 - 2018	10-yr average (± SD in days)
Quail	22 May	06 Feb	20 May (±28)	20 Oct	15 Nov ²	18 Aug (±35)
Garganey	21 Mar	02 Feb	14 Mar (±7)	15 Sep	17 Dec	20 Sep (± 21)
Nightjar	18 May	14 Apr ¹⁴	06 May (±8)	15 Sep	05 Nov	11 Sep (±10)
Common Swift	10 Apr	07 Apr	13 Apr (±4)	30 Sep	24 Nov	27 Sep (±14)
Common Cuckoo	08 Apr	21 Mar ⁴	02 Apr (±5)	17 Sep	23 Oct ⁵	12 Sep (±13)
Turtle Dove	24 Apr	05 Feb	14 Apr(±10)	05 Oct	18 Dec	28 Sep (±18)
Little Ringed Plover	17 Mar	06 Mar	13 Mar (±5)	29 Sep	08 Oct	20 Sep (± 9)
Wood Sandpiper	28 Apr	11 Feb	01 May (±10)	08 Nov	16 Nov	25 Sep (±17)
Little Tern	05 Apr	01 Apr	07 Apr (±4)	12 Sep	04 Nov	21 Sep (±9)
Roseate Tern	-	17 Apr	06 May (±13)	12 Aug	05 Oct	03 Aug (±31)
Common Tern	23 Mar	14 Mar	23 Mar (±6)	25 Oct	26 Nov	21 Oct (±14)
Arctic Tern	05 Apr	24 Mar	07 Apr (±6)	26 Oct	31 Dec	15 Oct (±18)
Common/Arctic Tern	05 Apr	10 Mar	01 Apr (±4)	11 Oct	31 Dec	03 Oct (±11)
Black Tern	11 Apr	09 Mar	16 Apr (±15)	15 Sep	16 Nov ³	28 Sep (±13)
Pomarine Skua	21 Apr	10 Mar	20 Apr (±5)	-	31 Dec	24 Oct (±40)
Osprey	17 Mar	04 Mar	22 Mar (±11)	21 Oct	09 Dec	28 Oct (± 8)
Wryneck	-	22 Mar ¹⁸	16 Apr (±10)	27 Oct	02 Nov ⁶	04 Oct (±11)
Hobby	25 Mar	21 Mar	05 Apr (±5)	20 Oct	09 Nov	24 Oct (± 7)
Sand Martin	01 Mar	27 Feb	11 Mar (±7)	27 Oct	01 Dec ⁷	21 Oct (±10)
Barn Swallow	19 Feb	04 Feb ¹⁷	12 Mar (±7)	25 Dec	28 Dec ¹⁷	01 Dec (±11)
House Martin	13 Mar	01 Feb	19 Mar (±7)	31 Dec ¹	18 Dec ⁸	15 Nov (±11)
Wood Warbler	03 May	07 Apr	21 Apr (±7)	03 Sep	07 Oct	12 Sep (±15)
Willow Warbler	21 Mar	04 Mar	17 Mar (±4)	15 Oct	27 Nov ⁹	25 Oct (±8)
Sedge Warbler	21 Mar ¹	23 Mar	01 Apr (±6)	10 Oct	01 Nov	16 Oct (±8)
Reed Warbler	7 Apr	02 Apr	07 Apr (±4)	17 Oct	01 Dec	03 Nov (±16)
Grasshopper Warbler	02 Apr ¹	02 Apr	08 Apr (±5)	28 Sep	01 Nov	08 Oct (±6)
Garden Warbler	01 Apr	28 Mar	05 Apr (±6)	06 Oct	16 Nov	15 Oct (±14)
Lesser Whitethroat	09 Apr	04 Apr	09 Apr (±4)	06 Nov	18 Nov ¹⁰	13 Oct (±12)
Common Whitethroat	29 Mar	19 Mar	04 Apr (±4)	16 Dec	17 Dec	23 Oct (±16)
Ring Ouzel	29 Mar	09 Feb ¹¹	25 Mar (±20)	19 Oct	26 Dec	14 Nov (±9)
Spotted Flycatcher	23 Apr	10 Apr ¹⁵	24 Apr (±7)	15 Oct	18 Nov	11 Oct (±10)
Common Nightingale	09 Apr	21 Mar	05 Apr (±2)	30 Aug	01 Oct ¹²	13 Sep (±10)
Pied Flycatcher	20 Apr	01 Apr	11 Apr (±6)	17 Oct	01 Nov	29 Sep (±10)
Common Redstart	02 Apr	05 Mar	30 Mar (±11)	22 Oct	26 Dec	29 Oct (±24)
Whinchat	31 Mar	18 Feb	07 Apr (±13)	30 Oct	02 Dec	27 Oct (±9)
Northern Wheatear	08 Mar	13 Feb	09 Mar (±6)	28 Oct	31 Dec	11 Nov (±10)
Yellow Wagtail	31 Mar	12 Feb	26 Mar (±9)	22 Oct	23 Nov ¹³	28 Oct (±11)
Tree Pipit	05 Apr	24 Mar ¹⁶	02 Apr (±6)	17 Oct	09 Nov	14 Oct (±9)

Notes: ¹ county record early or late date; ² excludes historic December records; ³ excludes one in Cuckmere Valley 13-21 Nov 1954; ⁴ excludes one at Fairlight Cove on 15 Mar 1936; ⁵ excludes one at Goodwood on 11 Nov 1928; ⁶ excludes one at the Crumbles on 5 Nov 1947; ⁷ excludes record from unknown

location on 5 Dec 1911;⁸ excludes three at Fishbourne on 22 Dec 1894;⁹ excludes two historic records on 26 Dec 1892 and 1949;¹⁰ excludes one at Burgess Hill on 21 Nov 1957 and known wintering birds;¹¹ excludes one at Mannings Heath on 2 Feb 1905;¹² excludes one at North Bersted on 19 Oct 1943;¹³ excludes one at Sidlesham between 11 Dec 1960 and 14 Jan 1961;¹⁴ excludes one at Pulborough on 8 Apr 1912;¹⁵ excludes one at Hastings on 8 Apr 1909;¹⁶ excludes record from unknown location on 17 Mar 1922;¹⁷ excludes wintering one at Newick;¹⁸ excludes one on 9 Mar 1908 and on 10 Mar 1918 both at Pulborough.

Departure and arrival dates of winter visitors, 2019

	Last recorded date			First recorded date		
	2019	1960 - 2018	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)	2019	1960 - 2018	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)
White-fronted Goose	26 Mar	25 May	29 Mar (\pm 28)	05 Nov	12 Sep	24 Oct (\pm 29)
Bewick's Swan	14 Feb	26 Apr	04 Mar (\pm 7)	03 Dec	06 Oct	11 Nov (\pm 15)
Velvet Scoter	16 May	15 Jun	16 May (\pm 15)	11 Oct	02 Aug	24 Oct (\pm 13)
Long-tailed Duck	07 May	14 Jun	18 Apr (\pm 38)	27 Oct	12 Aug	01 Nov (\pm 14)
Goldeneye	24 Mar	31 May	16 Apr (\pm 18)	26 Oct	06 Aug	14 Oct (\pm 23)
Smew	-	24 Apr	06 Mar (\pm 15)	01 Nov	22 Oct	30 Nov (\pm 21)
Goosander	23 Jun ¹	14 Jun	09 Apr (\pm 42)	10 Oct	12 Sep	20 Oct (\pm 21)
Red-necked Grebe	16 Apr	19 Jun	11 Apr (\pm 28)	-	13 Aug ²	19 Oct (\pm 30)
Purple Sandpiper	22 Apr	4 Jun	28 Apr (\pm 15)	23 Jul	1 Jul	03 Oct (\pm 37)
Jack Snipe	27 Mar	19 May	15 Apr (\pm 13)	12 Oct	11 Aug	24 Sep (\pm 28)
Black-throated Diver	17 May	21 Jun	18 May (\pm 9)	19 Oct	03 Aug	14 Oct (\pm 19)
Great Northern Diver	17 Jun	21 Jun	29 May (\pm 6)	02 Oct	16 Sep	20 Oct (\pm 11)
Hen Harrier	24 Apr	19 Jun	27 May (\pm 8)	30 Aug	4 Aug	23 Aug (\pm 11)
Great Grey Shrike	18 Apr	5 May ⁴	23 Mar (\pm 21)	30 Nov	26 Sep ³	14 Oct (\pm 7)
Fieldfare	22 Apr	5 Jun	23 Apr (\pm 10)	06 Oct	6 Aug	30 Sep (\pm 6)
Redwing	17 Apr	26 May ⁵	13 Apr (\pm 10)	02 Oct	6 Aug	19 Sep (\pm 16)
Water Pipit	12 Apr	28 May	02 Apr (\pm 16)	13 Oct	1 Sep	27 Oct (\pm 10)
Brambling	18 Apr	12 May	16 Apr (\pm 11)	07 Oct	3 Sep	28 Sep (\pm 4)
Snow Bunting	20 Feb	6 May	22 Feb (\pm 14)	28 Sep	17 Sep	24 Oct (\pm 13)

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 2019 - summary of counts in West Sussex

	AC	BD	BH	CC	CL	GC	IC	LC	LS	SC	WC	WD
Woodcock	3	4	1	2	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	1
Stock Dove	-	3	1	-	2	-	-	3	4	-	-	5
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nightjar	19	9	-	3	-	2	8	8	1	2	4	3
Green Woodpecker	2	2	2	1	1	1	3	5	3	4	2	5
Great Spotted Woodpecker	-	5	3	1	2	5	5	8	4	3	5	4
Hobby	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Woodlark	4	11	2	2	4	3	8	3	3	1	10	2
Skylark	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Whitethroat	1	10	3	2	5	-	-	2	2	-	6	5
Dartford Warbler	7	10	-	4	-	-	5	4	-	1	2	1
Common Redstart	1	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Eurasian Stonechat	6	11	1	4	1	-	12	3	-	1	7	4
Tree Pipit	3	7	-	1	-	-	2	-	3	-	-	3
Meadow Pipit	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linnet	6	10	1	1	5	-	4	8	3	1	4	10
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Crossbill	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Siskin	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	2	3	1	-	3
Yellowhammer	7	-	4	1	3	-	9	6	-	3	14	-
Reed Bunting	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1

Figures relate to pairs or territories. The small hyphen (-) indicates that no territories were identified.

Key to sites

AC	Ambersham & Heyshott Commons	IC	Iping Common
BD	Black Down (Fernhurst)	LC	Lavington & Duncton Commons & Plantation
BH	Broad Halfpenny	LS	Linchmere & Stanley Commons
CC	Chapel Common	SC	Stedham Common
CL	Coates Common & Lords Piece (Fittleworth)	WC	Woolbeding Common
GC	Graffham Common	WD	Weavers Down (Liss)

The above sites were the only ones surveyed this year

Finders' Accounts of Notable Species in Sussex, 2019

Crag Martin, Beachy Head, 22 May

Roger and Liz Charlwood

We already had five days previously a European Bee-eater fly by calling overhead, and this morning was a really nice day, sunny and quite warm, and had good potential. Having had eight Red-rumped Swallows including two birds together twice before over the 50 odd years we have been living at Hodcombe, the last being 2016, I was hoping I might get another. We have four pairs of Barn Swallows breeding on the premises and these seem to attract them.

While sitting in my deck chair overlooking the lawns keeping awake with one eye on the Swallows, at about 12.30pm a martin appeared from the south, at about house height, flying towards me. I was looking into the sun so could not get any colouration, but it looked odd. I got out of my deck chair to have a better look and as it flew low over the barn away from me, with the sun behind, I got a good look at the upper side of the typical martin shape, and noted it was pale dull brownish grey on the whole of the upper surface, and had white dots on the tail. Further, next to the Swallows it appeared larger and a lot more compact. I was stunned, and quickly called Liz to bring her binoculars as I think I must just have had a Crag Martin!

We both quickly made our way through the gate and up to the adjacent field knowing that some of the resident swallows were hunting at the back of Hodcombe. Sure enough after an anxious few minutes scanning the swallows, a few which were new arrivals, we picked out the bird hunting low over the field, and as it flew we spotted the black under wing coverts, which stood out against the pale brownish cream of the rest of the underwing and body, and were able to confirm the white spots on the upper tail feathers. It is a Crag Martin!

Over the next half hour the Crag Martin would fly past at about 75 to 300 yards, once flying over the house. At times, it would disappear with some of the swallows low over the brow of the hill to thankfully return to fly past again. It then did this once too often and never returned. We managed to contact three of our friends who came up but unfortunately it was never seen again.

This is the third record of Crag Martin on Beachy Head, but like the other two only the finders ever saw them. It is also the 4th record for Sussex, and only the 12th record of this rare bird for the UK, so having a quarter of all records here is remarkable!

Size; Martin shape and appeared larger than the accompanying swallows and this was in part because of the quite stocky broad based pointed wings, only slightly noticeable forked tail, and rather plump body. Upperparts; the whole of the upper parts, head, back, wings and tail were pale dull brownish grey, the tail showing white spots which were clearly visible to see when close. Underparts...throat and body were pale brownish cream, darkening onto the under tail coverts. The white spots on the under tail were difficult to see. The under wing was pale grey, with conspicuous contrasting black underwing coverts, which could be seen from quite some way off. We never heard it call.

We have seen Crag Martins before when abroad and also both Brown-throated and Rock Martins, but these two latter species were quickly eliminated. Oddly enough, up to this time we had not seen at Hodcombe, our valued private premises, either House or Sand Martin this year!!

Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Seaford, 2 October

Robert Lawson

On the morning of 2 Oct, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was found by Mary-Anne Carter of Gerald Road, Seaford, under the brick arch at the top of Gerald Road, the entrance to the path to Splash Point and the chalk cliffs under Seaford Head. The bird was dead but was in very good condition indicating that it had only just died.

Mary-Anne came and asked if I could identify the bird. There was a good image of the cuckoo in the Collin's Guide to The Birds of Britain and Europe. I contacted Mark Mallalieu of Sussex Ornithological Society who confirmed the identification. Several images of the bird were later taken by local bird enthusiasts, one of which is reproduced below.

The cuckoo was found after a prolonged period of unsettled weather, several Atlantic low-pressure systems and severe SW gales. I was contacted by Dr Alex Bond of the Natural History Museum Tring, who asked if they could have the specimen. The cuckoo was kept in our freezer and picked up two days later by courier. At Tring, it was prepared straight away into a study skin registration number NHMUK 2020.2.1.

This was the third record of Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Sussex. The first was found dead in Eastbourne on 4 Nov 1952 and the second was also found dead, at Middleton-on-Sea on 14 Dec 1960. There were one or two other Yellow-billed Cuckoos during 2019, on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. The first was found on the same day as the Sussex individual, 2 Oct, and the same or another was present between 6 and 16 Oct. About 69 have been recorded in Great Britain in total up to the end of 2019.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Seaford, 2 October (Matt Eade)

Northern Treecreeper, Patching, 28 December

David Campbell

I visited Patching on the morning of 28th December 2019 to familiarise myself with the small sewage works I'd heard was on the outskirts of the village. My hope was that it would turn out to be a handy local site to watch wintering Chiffchaffs, hopefully including the occasional *tristis*. Once I crossed the road and walked towards the A27 underpass, a vocal pair of Firecrests caught my attention. I paused to watch them and realised the habitat right there looked like promising ground for late autumn and winter scarcities. While I was daydreaming about how it reminded me of Lower Moors on St. Mary's in the Isles of Scilly, a Treecreeper alighted low on the trunk of a small tree in front of me.

Like most British birders, I've seen hundreds of Treecreepers but this was the first that has ever struck me as something different. Being low down, within a copse on an overcast day, the light was wonderfully neutral and the bird looked uniquely frosty and desaturated. It basically appeared grey and white. The nominate form *Certhia familiaris familiaris*, 'Northern Treecreeper' immediately came to mind. Over the next couple of minutes it was in view, I switched between firing off as many photographs as I could and reaffirming my initial perceptions through my binoculars.

Once the bird had continued its feeding circuit and left my view, I spent a few minutes on my phone searching online material about 'Northern Treecreepers'. Everything I found reassured me that I was right to consider my bird a candidate, as outlandish as it seemed, especially a post on Richard Bonser's blog about a bird he encountered in Shetland in 2017. To my eyes, the bird that was just in front of me looked at least as good as his. However, Richard's was an autumn bird in the Northern Isles and mine was a little way inland in West Sussex close to New Year!

At home in the evening, I checked further references, such as Martin Garner's Autumn Challenge Series, Svensson/Shirihai's Handbook of Western Palearctic Birds and the Advanced Bird ID Handbook. I also compared my bird against several images of other Treecreepers mooted or accepted as nominate *familiaris*. This left me with no real doubt that the Patching bird matched *familiaris*. I returned to observe the bird on four further occasions and ended up watching it in almost every possible light condition. It always gave the same impression and screamed out as different in comparison to the two *britannica* Treecreepers which shared the same area.

The main features identifying the bird as *familiaris* were the bold white supercilium which was flared behind the eye, the cold cream-coloured wingbar, the broad white streaking on the crown, many mantle and scapular feathers being strongly grey cast with a white shaft streak, the gleaming white underparts all the way to the undertail coverts, and the contrast between the warm brown rump – when revealed – with the rest of the bird's upperparts. Some references describe *familiaris* as tending to have paler claws and a shorter bill than *britannica/macrodactyla*. The importance of these latter characters is perhaps debatable but they are both features which I and other observers believe the Patching bird showed. The bird was aged as a first-winter by the contrast between large and small spots at the tips of the primary coverts.

While *C. f. familiaris* is clearly not a common migrant in Britain, the form's status in Britain is surely far from fully understood due to lack of widespread understanding of its identification. 'Northern Treecreeper' doesn't quite seem to have found a place among the 'trendy' taxa to search for, and isn't really on the birder's radar away from the Northern Isles and the east coast, where it has occurred with some regularity in recent years. Somewhere like Shetland or Flamborough, where any Treecreeper is a migrant on some level, they are more likely to catch an observer's attention and get a closer look, and a continental origin is obviously plausible. At Patching, however, surrounded by *C. f. britannica* territories, it took a while for the sense of incredulity to wear off!

The Patching bird is just the 29th record of *C. f. familiaris* to be accepted by the BBRC and is among the most unusual in terms of location. Its stay was surprisingly short, being last observed on 7th January 2020 but during this time the bird provided an unexpected and most welcome opportunity to gain experience with 'Northern Treecreeper'.



Northern Treecreeper, Patching, 28 December (David Campbell)

Eastern Lesser Whitethroat, Birling Gap, 27 October – 6 November

Laurence Pitcher

At about 13:00hrs on the 27 Oct, I encountered two birders, Chris Furlepa and Jim Lee, watching a Lesser Whitethroat at Birling Gap. It was in low cover between the National Trust buildings and Birling Lane. I had seen a suspected *blythi* (a subspecies of Lesser Whitethroat that breeds in Siberia), at Long Wood the previous week and I remarked to the finders that it was well worth a good look, given the late date.

The bird quickly reappeared and immediately looked interesting; although structurally similar it was quite unlike the clean, grey and white *curruca* individuals that pass through the headland earlier in the autumn. It also seemed to prefer feeding in ground cover, particularly Tree Mallow, and frequently made forays onto open stony ground, perhaps dictated by habitat and insect availability, although large tamarisk and hawthorn bushes were nearby.

Light conditions affected how the bird appeared, looking brighter and more contrasty in strong sunlight, then much duller and plain-looking in overcast conditions. It was essentially much browner and subtly more concolorous than "regular" *curruca*; at times the white throat contrasted against the buff underparts. Above, light brown/grey tones were prevalent across the mantle and

infused into the nape; crown greyer, indistinct paler supercilium, darker lores and ear coverts, the latter faintly tinged brown, though this was captured only in some images and not noted in the field. The wings were a similar colour to the mantle, if a little darker, with warmer fringes to the secondaries and tertials; in bright light the fringes had a slight ginger tone. The length of the primary projection looked fairly similar in relation to the exposed tertials to what I'd expect in *curruca* and not at all short and blunt-winged. The tail was a similar colour to the folded wing, much pure white on T6 with a dark shaft and dark marking along part of the inner web; T5 dark with a very indistinct pale smudge at the tip; no markings on the other tail feathers. Legs dark; bill dark with greyer base to lower mandible; iris pale brown though indistinct. Call a sharp "tek" note similar to *curruca*. It remained in the area for several days and I last saw it on 6 Nov.

Although the bird was very active and seemingly healthy it had a large swelling on the hind toe of its right foot. This at one point left a small trace of blood on a piece of Tree Mallow, which I promptly collected and sent to Dr Martin Collinson at Aberdeen University, where the bird's DNA profile was mapped, confirming it as a *blythi* Lesser Whitethroat. The Sussex Ornithological Society therefore accepted it as the first confirmed Sussex record (this subspecies does not meet the threshold of rarity in Great Britain to be assessed by BBRC). *Blythi* breeds across central and eastern Siberia and winters mainly in Pakistan and India. Recent research (Olsson *et al.* 2013) suggests that *blythi* has its closest relatives in the *S. curruca* complex to the south-east of its range, rather than to the west where it meets the nominate subspecies *S. c. curruca*.

References

Olsson, U., Leader, P.J., Carey, G.J., Khan, A.A., Svensson, L. and Alström, P. 2013. New Insights into the intricate taxonomy and phylogeny of the *Sylvia curruca* complex. *J. Mol. Evol.* 67, 72-85.



Eastern Lesser Whitethroat, Beachy Head, 28 October (Laurence Pitcher)

The Sussex Ringing Report 2019

Val Bentley

The year was “one of extremes” according to the Meteorological Office review of UK weather in 2019. Storm “Erik” in February was followed by unseasonably warm temperatures, then Storms “Freyja” and “Gareth” followed at the start of March. The summer alternated between spells of wet weather and some extremely warm temperatures, with a new UK temperature record of 38.7°C (101.6°F) being set at Cambridge at the end of July. Higher autumn and winter rainfall contributed to high river levels and the filling of flood plains as rain fell on already saturated ground. (Ref: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2019/annual>).

Extremes in weather are likely to impact both winter survival of resident species and breeding success of both resident and migrant species during the spring and summer. Year on year comparisons are made by the BTO Constant Effort Sites (CES) scheme, operating at approximately 140 sites in Britain & Ireland between May and August, which monitors both adult abundance and breeding productivity. Their preliminary report for 2019 is available, and will be referred to in this article. (Ref: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/ringing-scheme/ringing-surveys/constant-effort-sites/ces-results/preliminary>).

There are five ringing groups operating in the county; Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG) at Pett Level, Beachy Head Ringing Station (BHRS), Cuckmere Ringing Group (CRG) at Charleston Reedbed near Litlington, a team at Ladywell (Lancing College), and Steyning Ringing Group (SRG) at both Steyning and Cissbury. There are also many other individual sites throughout the county, including Hardham, Hastings CP, Warnham LNR and Weir Wood Res. The ringers send in their annual results providing an overall picture of where in the county the birds have been ringed. There is one location, the Knepp Estate, from where totals are not supplied separately, so it is assumed that most of the shortfall between the figures given on the BTO Online Ringing Report and the combined total provided by ringers refers to birds ringed at Knepp.

A total of 36,378 birds was ringed in Sussex in 2019, nearly 10% more than in 2018 (See Table 1). This increase is mainly due to higher numbers by RBRG. The rest saw a combined decrease of 212, with higher totals by BHRS, the Ladywell team and SRG being cancelled out by over 2,000 fewer birds by CRG. Extensive flooding of the reedbed caused access problems there early in the year and for the whole of November and December, leading to a hiatus in the group’s ringing activity. Ringers in Sussex contributed 3.47% of the total of 1,047,521 birds ringed in the UK and Ireland in 2019.

Figures for the annual totals of birds ringed in Sussex are taken from the website of the British Trust for Ornithology (<http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-reporting-reports>), and are shown below, together with those for the preceding six years.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	36,378	33,436	41,633	28,170	28,683	31,700	51,020
Rye Bay RG	15,151	11,917	19,137	11,124	12,847	15,883	34,752
Others	21,227	21,439	22,496	17,046	15,836	15,817	16,268

Table 1. Ringing totals in Sussex 2013-2019

Top 20 species ringed

As expected, migrating Blackcaps maintain their customary place as the most ringed species, with 9448 ringed, of which RBRG contributed 8571. This is the highest total since over 11,000 in 2010, and Sussex contributed 12.6% of the total number of Blackcaps ringed in Britain & Ireland (9.8% in 2018). Of other migrant warblers the Sussex totals represent 11.8% of the national total for Reed Warbler (11.9% in 2018), 9% for both Sedge Warbler and Common Whitethroat (13.7% and 6.2% in 2018), 7% for Chiffchaff (9.8% in 2018) and 6.2% for Willow Warblers (the same as in 2018). Only 441 Garden Warblers were ringed in Sussex, but this was 10.6% of the national total, up from 9.3% the previous year. The number of Grasshopper Warblers was considerably lower in 2019 than the previous two years, but still represented 20.1% of the national figure of 1760. The majority of these are trapped by RBRG.

Position in 2019	Species (position in 2018)	2019	2018	2017	2016
1	Blackcap (1)	9448	6109	8099	4095
2	Blue Tit (2)	3893	3099	3135	1826
3	Chiffchaff (3)	3091	2941	5774	3864
4	Reed Warbler (5)	2749	2928	4049	2783
5	Goldfinch (6)	2328	2407	2007	1220
6	Sedge Warbler (4)	1720	2935	3909	2108
7	Willow Warbler (7)	1584	1544	2479	1840
8	Great Tit (8)	1474	1437	1187	878
9	Common Whitethroat (10)	1399	764	1055	659
10	Robin (12)	815	633	659	848
11	Goldcrest (13)	631	591	1331	632
12	Blackbird (15)	539	544	519	563
13	Dunnock (17)	512	429	434	427
14	Wren (16)	442	436	441	452
15	Garden Warbler (18)	441	389	478	226
16	Greenfinch (11)	367	684	396	492
17	Long-tailed Tit (20)	364	322	431	271
18	Grasshopper Warbler (14)	363	545	573	357
19	Reed Bunting (-)	318	300	345	304
20	Chaffinch (19)	273	377	244	299

Table 2. Sussex ringing totals for the 20 most ringed species. Red and amber listed birds of conservation concern are highlighted in the relevant colours.

This table shows the mixed fortunes of our most commonly trapped migratory species. While Blackcap increased by 55%, Whitethroat by 83% and Garden Warbler by 13% over 2018, and totals for Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler were broadly similar, those for Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler were lower by 6% and 41% respectively.

The preliminary national results from CES, reproduced in part below, indicate that the adult abundance in 2019 increased for Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Garden Warbler and Whitethroat by differing amounts in comparison with the five-year mean and that productivity also varied, but was generally

low, particularly for Garden Warbler. Hence it appears that the increase in numbers of Blackcaps ringed could be due to the higher number of breeding adults producing more young collectively, though with less individual productivity. In contrast, the higher productivity of Sedge Warblers is being outweighed by the decrease in numbers of adults returning in spring.

Species	Adult Abundance Change % (Confidence Intervals %)	Productivity Change % (Confidence Intervals %)
Chiffchaff	10.4 (2, 20)	29.8 (18, 42)
Willow Warbler	-1.2 (-10, 9)	-7 (-18, 5)
Blackcap	44.9 (37, 53)	-4.2 (-11, 3)
Garden Warbler	12.5 (-1, 28)	-30.3 (-43, -15)
Whitethroat	16.6 (6, 28)	-10.7 (-21, 1)
Sedge Warbler	-15.4 (-23, -8)	10.4 (-2, 24)
Reed Warbler	-7.9 (-13, -3)	6.8 (-1, 15)

Table 3. Adult Abundance and Breeding/Success of Migrant Warblers in Britain & Ireland in 2019 compared with the five-year mean (Extract from BTO CES preliminary report)

Fewer resident finches were ringed in 2019, though only a small decrease is apparent for Goldfinch, and the reduced winter activity by CRG no doubt had a bearing on the numbers of Chaffinches, Greenfinches and Goldfinches ringed (see Table 1). In Britain & Ireland as a whole the CES preliminary results report adult abundance for Chaffinches and Greenfinches as reduced by 40.8% and 40% respectively, while productivity was up by 74.6% and 26.5%, indicating that low survival rate is the predominant cause of the species decline. CRG caught no Lesser Redpolls at all in 2019, compared with 76 in 2018 and 221 in 2017, and only 28 were ringed in the county as a whole, reflecting the general lack of records of this species during the year.

After an exceptional 822 in 2018, Barn Swallow numbers were back to a more usual level at 226, while Sand and House Martin totals were much improved at 219 (121 in 2018, 25 in 2017) and 162 (29 in 2018, 2 in 2017). Trapping of hirundines is very dependent upon weather conditions and, in the case of Barn Swallow, whether their chosen roost site is suitable for mist netting.

Barn Owls and Kestrels

There were 259 Barn Owls ringed in 2019, compared with 312 the previous year. Of these 226 were nestlings (304 in 2018), two juveniles and 31 adults. Of these the Sussex Barn Owl Study Group contributed 154 pulli and 26 adults, and 21 were ringed by GCM Roberts.

In addition, 29 Kestrels were ringed, including 13 pulli by the Barn Owl Study Group and seven by RJ Lanaway.

Gulls and Terns

Since AB Watson's cannon netting efforts at rubbish tips ceased, few gulls have been ringed, but this year nestling gulls and terns at Pagham Hbr were targeted by the RSPB during June, with the ringing effort led by PM Potts resulting in the following:

Black-headed Gull: 19

Mediterranean Gull: 7 (of which four were also colour-ringed)

Common Tern: 7

Sandwich Tern: 53 (only ten had been ringed in Sussex since 1979)

Little Tern: 22 (of which five were also colour-ringed)

A further three Common Tern chicks were ringed on a tern raft at Wakehurst Place.

Other Species (Totals since 1979 in brackets where relevant)

Two Mute Swans were ringed at Warnham LNR. RBRG captured one Canada Goose, six Shelducks (122) and two Eurasian Teal. A total of 15 Mallards was ringed in the county, a Mandarin Duck (33) was ringed at Weir Wood Res and there were three Water Rails, four Moorhens, one Coot, four Common Snipe, one Woodcock (47) and one Common Sandpiper (77) ringed at various sites. A total of 44 Lapwing chicks, and three adults, were ringed. A single Wryneck (63) was trapped by RBRG. There were nine Redstarts, two Whinchats and three Stonechats, plus 23 Nightingales, one Mistle Thrush and a single Yellow-browed Warbler (38), these last two species by RBRG. A single Pied Flycatcher (276) was trapped by BHRS; this species appears less frequently now and in smaller numbers than Spotted Flycatchers, of which 13 were ringed this year.

The total of 102 Marsh Tits included 63 nestlings, and six Bramblings and five Siskins were ringed.

Colour-ringing and Tagging Projects

Honey-buzzard. Five Honey-buzzard chicks from three broods were colour-ringed, making a total now of 125 birds ringed in Sussex since the project started in 1997 (see species account).

Stone-curlew. Three chicks were colour-ringed by The South Downs Stone-curlew Project this year (see species account).

Greenshank and Redshank. There were no captures of these species in Sussex in 2019. However a Redshank ringed as a first-year bird at Thorney Island on 3 Sep 2016 was reported near Reykjavik (Iceland) on 31 May and a Greenshank ringed as an adult on 19 Mar 2013 at Thorney was in Emsworth Hbr on 6 Mar. In addition, a Greenshank, colour-ringed as an adult in Portugal on 13 Feb 2014, was seen at Pett Level on 14 Jul. This was the first sighting in the UK of one of the birds from this project.

Cuckoo. Three adult male Cuckoos, named Knepp, Lambert and Raymond, were satellite-tagged on 18 May 2018 on the Knepp Estate. Raymond spent the winter of 2018/19 in Congo, but the other two flew on to Angola and spent the winter there.

On 18 Jan Knepp started to move, was in Gabon by 14 Feb, Ivory Coast by 8 Mar, crossed the Sahara to Morocco by 15 Apr and arrived back at the Knepp Estate on the 25th. He had departed for France by 14 Jun, but the last transmission from his tag was on 12 Jul when he was in Spain. With no evidence for battery decline, it is likely that he has died. Lambert started his return journey on 25 Feb, flying through Congo, Cameroon and Nigeria, beginning the desert crossing between 19 and 21 Apr, making it back to the Knepp Estate by 8 May, where he stayed until 19 Jun then moved through France during early July, but indications were that he perished there. Raymond followed a similar route to Lambert, leaving Angola on 18 Feb but not completing the Sahara crossing until 2 May. He arrived at the Knepp Estate on 22 May, but spent time around the downs near Steyning before leaving by 20 Jun, having spent less than a month in the UK. He took the western route through France and Spain, and started the desert crossing, but appears not to have survived, with the last transmission received from Mauritania on 5 Aug.

All three of the tagged Cuckoos were able to successfully complete their migration journeys to Africa and back during 2018/19, but the species faces huge challenges on the way, and sadly all three appear to have succumbed on their post-breeding migration in 2019. (Ref: <https://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking>).

Peregrine. Five chicks were colour-ringed, a brood of four at Chichester Cathedral and a single chick at Sussex Heights, Brighton. One long-lived individual, ringed in a nest at Birling Gap on 16 May 2007, which had taken up residence at Charing Cross Hospital later that year and was reported from there or nearby in all but one of the subsequent years, was found dead near



Nightingale, Ladywell, 3 August (Sue Walsh)

Kensington Gardens on 13 Aug. Another old female, ringed as a chick at Chichester Cathedral in 2003, was reported again from Manchester City Centre where she has bred since 2005. Three more Chichester Cathedral birds were reported in Hampshire, the oldest of which was ringed in 2005 and found dead near Southampton on 22 Oct. All sightings of colour-ringed Peregrines are greatly appreciated. Please send to: Graham.C.M.Roberts@btinternet.com.

Recoveries and Controls

In this section, where no year is stated, the record relates to 2019. The following is a selection from the BTO Online Ringing Report of birds which have been reported away from the site where they were ringed, and which 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 ringed birds captured and subsequently released at another ringing site, and recoveries are birds found, usually dead, by members of the public. Recoveries and controls also provide 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.

Recoveries of geese and ducks are almost always as a result of hunting activity. A first year **Egyptian Goose** ringed at Walton-on-Thames in July 2016 was shot near Henfield on 27 Jan, and a male **Mallard** ringed in 2017 by RBRG suffered the same fate in Norfolk in November. A **Wigeon** shot at Chidham (Chichester) on 4 Feb had been ringed at Seaton Marshes (Devon) in December 2010. Two **Tufted Ducks** from RBRG perished abroad. The first was just across the Channel at Marck in Northern France on 11 Sep, 18 months after it was ringed, while the second, ringed in 2016, made it nearly 4000 km to Yamal-Nenets in the northern part of the Russian Federation, where it was shot on 25 May. In February 2002 a young male **Common Scoter** which had been rescued from Rye Hbr, nursed back to health and ringed, was released back into Rye Bay. It was shot over 5000 km away at Krasnoyarsk in the Russian Federation in September. At over 18 years old it easily beat the species previous longevity record of just over 13 years, and was well beyond the species' typical lifespan of six years (BTO BirdFacts). A **Little Egret** seen at Rye Hbr on 9 Jul was from a 2016 brood at Netherhall (Essex). A **Cormorant** ringed as a nestling in Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) on 1 Jun did not survive long; it was found dead at Cobnor Point (Chichester) on 14 Jul.

Pallid Harriers are rare, and a colour-ringed one even rarer, but an individual seen at Beachy Head on 17 and 18 Sep hatched in 2018 in Finland (see species account). The colour ring was read from a photograph. A wing tag was fitted to a **Red Kite** in Dorset on 17 Jan and the bird was noted at Beachy Head on 24 Apr.

An **Avocet** ringed as a chick in Loire-Atlantique (France) on 20 Jun 2007 has been regularly visiting the Rye Hbr area since 2010; it was not seen in 2018, but was back again this year and colour-rings were read on 23 Jun. A 2016 Hampshire-ringed bird, seen in Poole Hbr earlier in the year, was at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Sep. A **Little Ringed Plover** at Warnham LNR on 1 May had been ringed as a nestling at gravel pits in West Berkshire on 13 Jun 2016, and a Polish-ringed **Curlew** at Pagham Hbr on 18 Sep had hatched in 2017. Two colour-ringed **Black-tailed Godwits** were reported; one ringed as an adult on 29 Sep 2012 at Harty (Kent) travelled to Gloucestershire and Hampshire before arriving at Pagham Hbr by 8 Apr. Ten days later it was in Co. Down (N Ireland) then moved back to Kent by 5 Jul and on to Hampshire by November. The second bird, seen at Pagham Hbr on 19 Feb, had been ringed as an adult in Yorkshire in 2018. Another hunting casualty was a **Woodcock** from the Knepp Estate, ringed on 7 Jan 2018 and shot north-east of Moscow (Russian Federation) on 15 Apr.

There were many sightings of colour-ringed gulls. A **Black-headed Gull** seen on the R Adur on 17 July was from a Latvian scheme, and another at Arlington Res in November was ringed as an adult in Poland in 2016. Two more Polish-ringed birds were reported near the R Adur in December, with one also seen in February. Two individuals from Norway, and another from Croatia were also seen in West Sussex, the oldest of these ringed as an adult in 2011. A metal ring found in a barn near Eastbourne had been put on a nestling in the Netherlands in 1964, so must have been there rather a long time, even with the species longevity record standing at 32 years! Two **Mediterranean Gulls** on the R Adur on 11 Jul had been ringed as nestlings in Vendée (France). The reverse direction was taken by one ringed at Paghams Hbr on 19 Jun which had ventured to San Lorenzo beach, Asturias (Spain) by 7 December. Most sightings of this species were at Pett Level, with PE Jones of RBRG reading rings on 83 different individuals in 2019. These included 28 from Belgium, 20 from France, 12 from The Netherlands, six from Germany, five from Hungary, three from Poland and one from the Czech Republic. One of the Netherlands birds was ringed as a nestling on 1 Jun 2000 and sets a new longevity record for the species at nearly 19 years old. Two others were 16, and another 14 years old.

Four **Great Black-backed Gulls** were reported at Pett Level, all colour-ringed as nestlings in Norway during the previous three years. Two British-ringed individuals from the Bristol Channel and Dorset had both travelled across the Channel to France before being seen at Paghams Hbr and Amberley Wild Brooks respectively. Several colour-ringed individuals were found in the lower Cuckmere Valley; five were ringed as nestlings in Northern France, the oldest of these in 2007, and four were from a Norwegian scheme, with the oldest from 2006. However, a **Herring Gull** found dead at Bexhill on 20 Dec was only 2 km from where it was ringed as a first-year bird on 16 Sep 2003. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** ringed at Havergate Island (Suffolk) in 2009, was in Malaga (Spain) in 2011, at Dungeness in 2017 and 2018, and at Cuckmere Haven on Christmas Eve, while another individual at Pett Level on 5 Apr was ringed in Malaga in 2018. An older bird, ringed in Zeebrugge (Belgium) on 13 Jun 2006 appeared to have spent most of its life that side of the Channel, until being seen on the R Adur on 4 Dec.

Three of the **Sandwich Terns** ringed at Paghams Hbr in the summer were reported during the following two months from Dawlish Warren (Devon). A Dutch-ringed bird from a 2018 colony at Texel (The Netherlands) had an interesting post-fledging history, visiting Denmark before heading south, presumably to Africa. According to project representative Mardik Leopold (Wageningen University & Research), the youngsters normally stay in Africa for at least a year, but this one came back north and was seen at Selsey on 8 Mar, where it appeared to be begging, possibly from one of its parents. See <https://www.wur.nl/en/project/Colour-ringing-Sandwich-terns-on-Texel-2014.htm> for further information on this project. Fifteen years after being ringed as a nestling at Pett Level, a **Common Tern** revisited Rye Hbr on 10 Jul. A **Great Skua** found dead at Seaford on 11 Jan was ringed the previous summer as a nestling on Bear Island, halfway between mainland Norway & Svalbard.

A 10+ year old female **Barn Owl** was retrapped at the same site near Arlington where she was first ringed, as an adult, in 2010. A nestling female ringed in Suffolk in 2014 was controlled at Plumpton, and another ringed in Plumpton in 2018 was found injured in Cambridgeshire this year.

Only 17 **Kingfishers** were ringed in Sussex in 2019, but a first year bird captured at Charleston Reedbed on 6 Jul was controlled by the team at Ladywell, 33 km away on both 5 Sep and 13 Nov.

Three **Jackdaws** ringed in 2010 and **Rooks** ringed as adults 14 and 12 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).



Snipe, Charleston Reedbed, 29 Jan (Graeme Dunlop)

The typical lifespan of a **Blue Tit** is three years (BTO BirdFacts), so a juvenile ringed on 18 Jun 2011 at Steyning had done well to survive to be retrapped on 23 Feb at the same site, and a **Great Tit** retrapped at Fairlight in September was over six years old.

The success story of the **Cetti's Warbler** since its first Sussex record in 1962 is well documented (Thomas 2014), and its capacity to spread is borne out by movements in 2019. A female ringed at Ladywell in 2016, which moved to Charleston Reedbed later that year, has been retrapped there each year since, while one ringed at Pett Level on 8 Sep 2018 was controlled at Hersey NR (Isle of Wight) on 19 May.

Several migrating warbler species were found overseas: a **Chiffchaff** ringed at Pett Level on 28 Sep 2018 was in a mist net on Alderney (Channel Islands) in March, and another ringed at Steyning on 16 Jul 2018 was found dead at Zuidhorn (Netherlands) on 21 Mar. Several **Sedge Warblers** were controlled; one ringed at Lough Neagh (N. Ireland) on 25 Aug turned up at Pett Level on 2 Sep, while an older individual trapped at Pett Level on 6 Aug had been ringed as a first year bird at Tielt (Belgium) on 3 Aug 2014. Of Sussex-ringed birds, one ringed on 4 Aug 2017 at Pett was trapped exactly two years later in Aberdeenshire, two 2018-ringed birds were also trapped in Scotland, while overseas recaptures were one on Alderney (Channel Islands), another in the Netherlands and three in France. The speediest of these had flown 716 km from Charleston Reedbed to Lot-et-Garonne (France) in only six days.

Overseas controls of **Reed Warblers** were two ringed at Beachy Head in August, both trapped at the same site in Gironde (France) a week later, one ringed in 2015 by CRG caught at Grouville Marsh (Jersey) on 28 Apr and another ringed at Steyning in 2017 trapped in Guizpucoa (Spain) on 6 Aug. Individuals ringed in 2018 in Portugal and Spain were trapped at Pett Level and Charleston Reedbed. Two long-lived birds reappeared. An adult female ringed at Steyning on 26 Jun 2010, also retrapped in five of the intervening summers, was back again on 22 Jun, and a first year bird ringed in 2009 was retrapped for the first time at Pett Level on 15 Aug; the longevity record is 12 years 11 months (BTO BirdFacts). As sub-Saharan migrants, their return trips must be at least 10,000 km, so these individuals must have flown up to 100,000 km in their lifetimes. Two first-year **Blackcaps** were controlled at the same site in Charente-Maritime (France) in August and October; both were ringed at Pett Level, and had taken 13 and 14 days respectively to make the 571 km journey. Another ringed as a first year by CRG on 22 Aug 2018 was recovered in The Netherlands on 19 May.

For a bird weighing between 5g and 7g a **Goldcrest** can fly surprisingly long distances, even migrating across the North Sea (BTO Migration Atlas), but the longest journey reported for a Sussex bird in 2019 was by one ringed at Plumpton on 29 Oct, controlled 353 km NNW in Merseyside 16 days later. There are no previous records of **Robins** from Finland being found in Sussex, but two different birds arrived this year, both first years ringed in the south-west of the country. One was found dead in Southwick on 28 Dec, and the second was controlled by RBRG on 7 Oct. A cat casualty in Lancing on 25 Oct had been ringed earlier that month in The Netherlands.

Colour rings noted on a **Rock Pipit** on 21 Feb and 16 Nov in different areas of Chichester Hbr revealed that it was a Scandinavian Rock Pipit ringed as a first year male at Makkevika (Norway) on 31 Aug 2018. Interestingly, a female also from Makkevika, but ringed in 2019, was seen in East Lothian (Scotland) on 8 Oct. Hit by a car in Leon (Spain) on 3 Apr, presumably on its way back to the UK, was one of 42 **Tree Pipits** ringed at Pett Level in 2018.

There were three controls of **Lesser Redpolls**, a first year male trapped at Pett Level on 2 Nov 2013 was into its 6th year of life when caught in Lancashire on 25 Feb, and birds ringed at Charleston Reedbed on 24 Oct 2018, and Beachy Head on 26 Oct 2017 were controlled in Greater Manchester in July and South Yorkshire in January respectively. **Goldfinch** movements within the UK included

two that had flown to Sussex, one from Calf of Man and the other from North Yorkshire, two Sussex-ringed birds that were found in Scotland and another in Co. Antrim (N Ireland). Three birds from Sussex were found in France, two just across the Channel in Seine-Maritime, and one ringed in Plumpton on 28 Oct 2018 was recaptured 728 km away in Lot-et-Garonne. A male ringed in its first year at Hardham on 5 Dec 2010 which reappeared on 9 May was only 18 months behind the species longevity record of 10 years (BTO BirdFacts).

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Barn Owl chick being ringed by Barn Owl Study Group trainee, nr. Firle, 27 June (Terry Hallahan)

Turtle Doves Breeding in Sussex in 2019

Ken Smith and Penny Green

The aims of the 2019 survey were to estimate the numbers of Turtle Doves breeding in the county and to assess any changes in the distribution since the last full breeding atlas was completed in 2011 (Thomas 2014).

Background

The Turtle Dove is one of the most rapidly declining breeding species in UK with a population decline of 94% since 1995. It is the subject of a Europe-wide action plan designed to determine the causes of the decline and bring about a recovery in the population (EU, 2018). In the UK there is currently a national conservation initiative, Operation Turtle Dove, led by the RSPB, Conservation Grade, Pensthorpe Conservation Trust and Natural England (<https://www.operationturtledove.org>). This involves research into the causes of the decline as well as conservation on the ground with farmers and other landowners providing nesting and feeding habitat, supplementary food and access to fresh water.

The core breeding range now stretches from Hampshire, Sussex and Kent through East Anglia as far north as Yorkshire. Although the last national breeding atlas showed the abundance of birds in Sussex was lower than that in neighbouring Hampshire and Kent (Balmer *et al.* 2013), Sussex is still thought to hold significant and nationally important numbers. In the 2008-11 breeding atlas there was evidence of breeding (proved, probable and possible) in 195 tetrads in Sussex with the county population estimated as around 300 pairs (Thomas 2014). Since then there have been between 200-300 records submitted each year to the County Recorder although a large fraction of these are from one site, the Knepp Estate.

There are at least two sites in the county (Butcherlands SWT and the Knepp Estate) where Turtle Dove numbers have been maintained or increased in response to large scale extensification of the management of agricultural land; wilding projects. In addition, as part of Operation Turtle Dove, the RSPB has been working with farmers and land managers to provide suitable breeding and feeding sites in two Turtle Dove Friendly Zones (TDFZ) in the county; around Walderton in the far west and in and around the Adur valley in the centre of the county (Figure 1).

With the continued importance of Sussex for Turtle Doves and the ongoing actions to help them, the SOS Scientific Committee decided that we should try to establish the current status of the species and recent population trends. Given the pressures on land-use in the county, we also felt that it was important we identify the key breeding sites so they can be safeguarded as part of SOS conservation work.

Methods

It was not feasible to attempt to count all the Turtle Doves in Sussex in 2019 so some form of sampling of suitable areas was needed so we could extrapolate to estimate the county population. We decided to base the sampling on the tetrads (2 km x 2 km squares) occupied by Turtle Doves in the 2008-11 breeding atlas, the most recent comprehensive data on their distribution within the county. There were records from a total of 253 tetrads in this atlas (58 present only, 123 possible breeding, 67 probable breeding and five with confirmed breeding). We decided there was likely to be little value in sampling the tetrads where birds were only recorded as present in 2008-11. These were most likely birds passing through and seen only once or where incomplete details were provided. Instead we focused on those tetrads with some breeding evidence. We

aimed to survey 40 of the 72 tetrads with probable or confirmed breeding in 2008-11 and 20 of the 123 squares with possible breeding. We decided to sample a lower fraction of 'possible' squares because we predicted that these would be less likely to still hold birds compared with the 'probable and confirmed' squares.

We kept the survey methods simple with volunteers asked to search their tetrads for Turtle Doves with two visits over the season; visit 1 between May 11 and June 20, visit 2 June 21 to July 24. Large scale maps were provided, with observers asked to record their Turtle Dove observations on the maps and survey forms using standard codes and to make an overall assessment at the end of the season of the numbers of territories. A tetrad is quite a large area to cover, so often more than one visit was required in each survey period. Any areas not visited, either because the habitat was unsuitable or access was not possible, were marked on the maps.

We have also extracted all the Turtle Dove records submitted to the County Recorder over the period from 2016 to 2019. To keep everything on a comparable basis we have converted these to tetrad records with breeding evidence using the standard BTO categories.

Analyses

We used the numbers of Turtle Dove territories in the randomly selected tetrads to estimate the mean number per tetrad with 95% confidence intervals estimated by a bootstrap procedure (Thomas *et al.* 2015). We planned to make separate estimates for the tetrads with 'probable and proved' breeding and those with only 'possible' breeding in 2008-11.

We also checked all the Turtle Dove records submitted to the County Recorder for any in 2019 which had not been found as part of the survey. We dealt with these extra records in two ways. For those that were within the randomly selected tetrads we checked carefully against the survey maps, and if they were indeed extra birds they were added to the survey total for that tetrad. In practice this was not a big issue, there were seven extra Turtle Doves in five of the tetrads.

Secondly, there were records in 2019 from tetrads that held no Turtle Doves during the 2008-11 atlas, suggesting either birds were missed during the atlas or there was considerable turnover of sites from year to year. These extra birds would have been missed by our survey design. To deal with this we added the numbers found on these non-atlas squares in 2019 to our population estimate for the randomly selected atlas tetrads.

There are six areas in Sussex which either still hold significant numbers of Turtle Doves or are subject to coordinated recovery action. These are Walderton (Turtle Dove Friendly Zone), the Knepp Estate, Adur valley (Turtle Dove Friendly Zone), Butcherlands (Sussex Wildlife Trust), Ashdown Forest and the area around Rye. To look for changes in distribution in these areas since 2011, we compare the numbers of occupied tetrads for the four year atlas period (2008-11) with the occupancy in the four years leading up to and including the 2019 survey (2016-19) using our survey data and records submitted to the County Recorder. We decided to use the data from 2016 to 2019 to provide a comparable survey period with the atlas.

Results

The survey coverage was good, with only six of the original random sample of tetrads not covered. Additional tetrads were selected randomly as substitutes, so the final totals were 21 'possible' and 41 'probable or proved' tetrads covered. The numbers of territories in each surveyed tetrad together with the additional ones submitted to SOS are summarised in Table 1 and mapped in Figure 2.

No Turtle Doves were found in the 21 tetrads surveyed with only 'possible' breeding in the 2008-11 atlas which demonstrates the value of focussing most of the survey effort on the squares with 'probable and proved' breeding. In the 'probable and proved' stratum a total of 26 territories

were found in 14 of the 41 tetrads surveyed, giving an overall mean density of 0.63 territories per tetrad (95% range 0.32 to 0.98). In addition, there were 19 tetrads where the SOS records showed territorial birds in 2019 but where no Turtle Doves were found during the 2008-11 atlas (Table 1). These held a total of 31 territories. Combining these figures with those from the randomly selected tetrads gives our best estimate of the Sussex population as 77 (95% range 54 to 101) territories.

With only 14 of the 41 ‘probable and proved’ tetrads still holding birds in 2019 and none of the 21 ‘possible’ tetrads, there has clearly been a big decline in the distribution since the 2008-11 atlas. Combining the surveys of the randomly selected tetrads with the records from the SOS database gives a best estimate of 45 tetrads with possible, probable or proved breeding in 2019 compared with 195 in the 2008-11 atlas, a decline of 77%. If we compare our population estimate of 77 with the 300 suggested in the 2008-11 atlas (Thomas 2014) the decline comes out at 75% over eight years.

The distribution of the birds has become more concentrated in a few key areas since the 2008-11 atlas (Figure 2). Is there any evidence that areas with project interventions have fared better than elsewhere? We have extracted the breeding records for all the tetrads within and around these project areas and compared the breeding evidence between 2008-11 and 2016-19 and the numbers of territories found in 2019 (Table 2). Compared with the decline in range over the county, the numbers of occupied tetrads within the project areas appears to be holding up better. In Walderton and Knepp/AdurValley the numbers of occupied tetrads have increased slightly whereas in Butcherlands, Ashdown and Rye they have declined but by less than the county average.

Discussion

The numbers and distribution of Turtle Doves in Sussex have declined markedly since the 2008-11 atlas, with the numbers of occupied tetrads down by an estimated 77%. We estimate the county population at around 80 territories, with a range of 50 to 100. This will be a small under-estimate because 37% of the total came from casual records submitted to the County Recorder in 2019 and these are unlikely to be complete.

Although the core areas appear to be relatively stable there is considerable turnover of birds in other tetrads with over 30 territories in tetrads where there were no records during the 2008-11 atlas. All these involved birds holding a territory by purring over at least a few days but it is not clear whether they actually bred or whether these were birds moving through the landscape over the course of the summer.

There are many records in the database of birds visiting feeding stations over the summer – both in farmland but also in gardens. It is a good thing that the birds are finding this supplementary food but it is also a concern that it may indicate a shortage of natural foods in the landscape. It seems that supplementary feeding may have a key role to play in retaining the species in an area, but it would be preferable to be able to provide more natural food resources.

The evidence for the effectiveness of recovery areas is mixed. The Knepp Wilding project is outstanding, with 19 territories recorded in the 473 ha southern block in 2019. The project began in 2001 with land in the southern block first being left fallow in 2003. There had been very few Turtle Dove records from the area before the project started but then a single bird was recorded in May 2003 with a gradual increase since. Knepp lies within the Adur Valley recovery area which stretches from the Knepp Estate southeast to Small Dole and was established in 2012. There is also a farm cluster being established in the area with Turtle Doves one of the target species. The prospects look good for Turtle Doves in this area.

SWT Butcherlands has sustained three or four Turtle Dove territories consistently over the last eight years or so but the numbers of occupied tetrads within the surrounding area has declined

since the 2008-11 atlas. It could be that Butcherlands has pulled birds in from surrounding areas and that in time recolonization will occur. With an extensive wilding site at its centre this has the potential to become another Turtle Dove core area but it probably requires some supplementary feeding initiatives and provision of breeding and feeding habitat in the surrounding land to help to consolidate the numbers.

The Walderton recovery project has succeeded in attracting and retaining birds at supplementary fed areas but the numbers are still very low and the tetrad occupancy figures present a rather optimistic picture. One of the areas with 'purring' birds is by chance on the boundary of three tetrads with what were probably the same birds recorded in more than one tetrad. The geology of the area also means that ponds and freshwater may be limiting and it is good that this is being addressed at some sites as part of the Turtle Dove initiative.

The two Turtle Dove areas in the county of most concern are the Ashdown Forest and the Rye area. Both have traditionally been strongholds for Turtle Doves and there are still reasonable numbers present but the areas are not included in any of the Turtle Dove initiatives such as TDFZs. There is also little knowledge of how the birds use the habitats in these areas and what will be required to retain them.

Acknowledgements

We thank Mark Mallalieu and Rich Black for help with the survey design and comments on our draft paper. Graeme Lyons provided background information on the Turtle Doves at Butcherlands. Rich Black and the RSPB facilitated the production of all the maps used in the survey and Caroline French commented on the paper and provided background on the Turtle Dove Friendly Zones in Sussex. John Newnham helped with the map production for this paper but most of all his work in masterminding the database made the records submitted to SOS over the years accessible for analysis.

Most of all we thank all the volunteer surveyors who did most of the work: Adele Anderson, David Arrowsmith, Dave Bangs, Angela Benham, Val Bentley, Rich Black, Dave Boddington, Pat Bonham, Clare Buckle, Val & Mick Bullen, David Campbell, Helena Carter, Chris Davis, Cliff Dean, Bob Edgar, Kim Fleming, Dave Green, Neil Greenaway, Robert Greenhalf, Jeff Grice, Tony Gutteridge, Phil Holland, Colin Holter, Hugh Horne, Bridget James, Richard John, Ann Jones, Phil Jones, Mark Mallalieu, Rob Manvell, Nick Maudsley, Peter Midwinter, Juliet & Chris Moore, Jeremy Nason, John Newnham, Robin & Linda Owen, Derek Palmer, Alan Parker, Richard Penticost, Adrian Podmore, IstvánRádi, Max Robards, Caroline Russell, Alan Skinner, Tom Snow, Nigel Symington, Andie Timms, Lee Walther, Nick Warwick, Mark Wright, Barry Yates.

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Table 1. *The survey results grouped by tetrad.*

(a) randomly selected survey tetrads where Turtle Doves were found in 2019

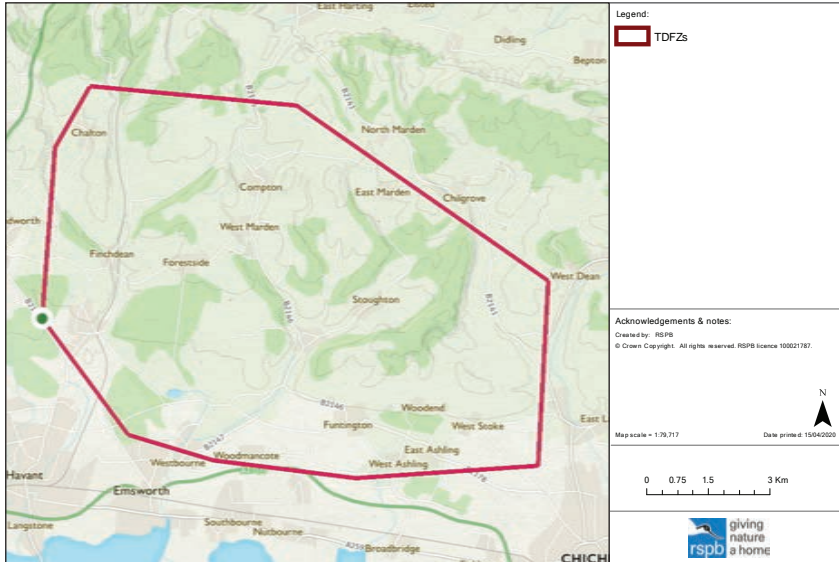
Tetrad	Number of territories in 2019	Tetrad	Number of territories in 2019
TQ12F	4	TQ43R	3
TQ21B	2	TQ50I	2
TQ21D	1	TQ61S	2
TQ42P	1	TQ81X	1
TQ42T	1	TQ91J	2
TQ42U	1	TQ92A	4
TQ43Q	1	TQ92G	1

(b) tetrads with Turtle Dove breeding records for 2019 submitted to SOS but not part of the survey. Tetrads with no breeding records during the 2008-11 atlas are shown blank, otherwise the atlas breeding status is included.

Tetrad	Status of tetrad in 2008-11 atlas	Number of territories in 2019	Tetrad	Status of tetrad in 2008-11 atlas	Number of territories in 2019
SU70V		1	TQ11T		1
SU70X	Possible	1	TQ11Y		2
SU70Y	Possible	1	TQ11Z		2
SU71L		1	TQ12K		7
SU71M	Possible	1	TQ21G	Possible	1
SU71Q		1	TQ53F		1
SU80J		1	TQ61T		2
SU81A		1	TQ61W		1
SU81F	Possible	1	TQ62K		1
SU92U		2	TQ62Q	Possible	1
SU92Y	Probable	2	TQ71E	Present	1
TQ03F	Possible	1	TQ72G		1
TQ11H		1	TQ81E	Possible	1
TQ11J	Possible	6	TQ82X		2
TQ11P		2	TQ91E	Probable	1
TQ11S		1	TQ92F	Probable	1

Figure 1. The approximate boundaries of the Turtle Dove Friendly Zones in Sussex;

Walderton



Knepp/Adur Valley

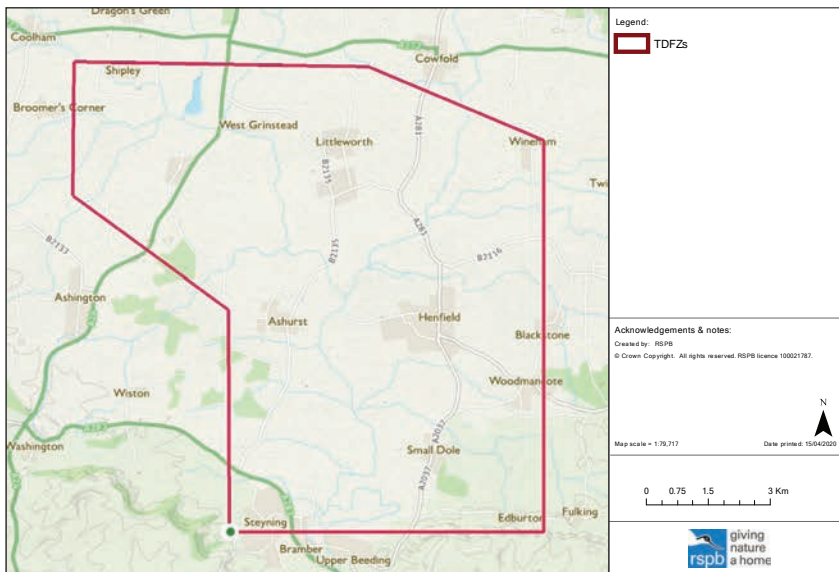
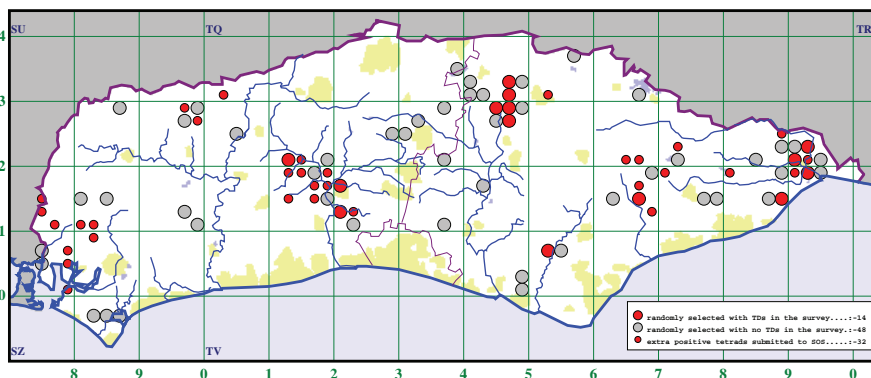


Table 2. The numbers of tetrads in the key Turtle Dove areas in the county with breeding evidence in 2008-11 and 2016-19. Tetrads with possible, probable or proved breeding are included.

Area	Total no. of tetrads within the area	No. of tetrads with breeding evidence in 2008-11	No. of tetrads with breeding evidence in 2016-19	No. of occupied territories in 2019
Walderton	21	9	10	6*
Butcherlands	8	7	4	4
Knepp/Adur Valley	21	13	14	22
Ashdown Forest	13	11	8	7
Rye	11	11	7	9

* An additional two territories were found in the Hampshire part of the project area in 2019.

Figure 2. Distribution of tetrads with Turtle Doves in 2019. Large red symbols, randomly selected tetrads with Turtle Doves; grey symbols, randomly selected tetrads with no Turtle Doves found. Small red symbols, tetrads with breeding evidence from records submitted to SOS in 2019.



Appendix

Tetrads with 'probable and proved' breeding in 2008-11 where no Turtle Doves were found in the 2019 survey.

SU70M	SU70N	SU81M	SU82U	SU91V	SZ89N	SZ89T	TQ11U	TQ11X
TQ21F	TQ22X	TQ31Q	TQ40W	TQ42N	TQ42Z	TQ43A	TQ43F	TQ43W
TQ50N	TQ53T	TQ71X	TQ81S	TQ82K	TQ82W	TQ91P	TQ92B	TQ92K

Tetrads with 'possible' breeding in 2008-11 where no Turtle Doves were found in the 2019 survey.

SU81C	SU91R	SU92T	SU92Z	SZ89I	TQ02M	TQ12V	TQ32C	TQ32I
TQ32Q	TQ32U	TQ33X	TQ40V	TQ41I	TQ43B	TQ61H	TQ61Z	TQ63Q
TQ71S	TQ72F	TQ81Z						



Turtle Dove, Selsey, 2 May (Andrew House)

The history of the Kneppmill pond heronry and the value of surveying nests using a remotely piloted drone

Penny Green, Knepp Ecologist

Introduction

Surveys of the Kneppmill Pond heronry have been carried out for many years, officially by Iris and Alf Simpson from 1989 to 2013, David Buckingham 2014-2015 (although he submitted data for many years before this in addition to Alf and Iris Simpson's counts) and most recently by Chris and Juliet Moore when they took over in 2016. In this paper we present the nest counts for the 44 years from 1976 to 2019 together with the results of recent drone-based surveys.

The heronry at Kneppmill Pond was known to be significant in the county and, anecdotally, Charlie Burrell's grandfather who died in 1985 thought it to be one of the largest in the south east region. Taken from the *Birds of Sussex* published in 1996, this excerpt refers to the first record of a heronry at Knepp:

"Several nests were noticed in 1975 at Knepp, some 8 km NNW of Wyckham Wood on the western arm of the upper Adur. There was a count of eight the following year and the totals have been between nine and 16 since. The founding of this heronry does not correspond with any change in numbers at Wyckham Wood." Wyckham Wood was the nearest large heronry to Knepp at the time.

Since 1975 the Knepp heronry has been monitored annually as part of the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) heronries census, along with (currently) 30 other heronries in Sussex. Records from 1976 onwards can be seen in Fig. 1, this is quite a dataset with 44 years' worth of data. In 2018 Kneppmill Pond was the second largest heronry in Sussex holding just over 10% of the total nests in the county.

Most heronries are counted from the ground usually from vantage points but often by walking through beneath the nests. One of the difficulties in long-term monitoring of numbers of nests is that the locations of individual nests can gradually shift over time with some becoming more or less visible to observers. At the Kneppmill Pond heronry this has been particularly apparent. As early as 2010 it was noted by David Buckingham of the eight nests that he recorded: "6 nests all much lower down than in previous years; 6 occupied nests all in willow and not in tall oaks as is usually the case."

Charlie Burrell noticed in 2010 "there was an obvious shift of herons from their usual nesting sites in the tops of oaks on the millpond bow to 12' off the water in willows". Anecdotally this was thought to coincide with an increase in raptor and raven pressure in the area: "We couldn't think of any other explanation" he said.

Knepp Castle Deer Park Restoration Management Plan, published in May 2000, noted "The Bow is specifically managed as a heronry which supports an average of 15 breeding pairs. The size of the heronry has recently expanded towards Floodgates and the south side of the pond since the storm of 1987."

The move of the heronry to further east along the edge of the mill pond (now centred around TQ160213) made observation difficult, and in turn resulted in a decline in the number of nests being recorded.

Methods

Due to this decline in the number counted it was thought that further investigation was needed to see whether this was a true representation of the number of nests in the heronry, or if it was because they were out of view.

In 2017 a boat survey was carried out to ascertain if this would be a better way of surveying as it allowed the observers to get closer to the heronry, and underneath the nests. Fifteen nests were recorded from the boat, whereas only five nests were recorded from the ground in the same year.

In 2018, inspired by the RSPB Great White Egret nest monitoring on the Somerset Levels, a drone survey was carried out, to see if there were any more nests further back in the woods that couldn't be seen from the ground or by boat. The drone is flown at a height of 75m; high enough to avoid any disturbance to the herons with surveys restricted to fine, sunny conditions.

The drone used for the surveys is a DJI Mavic Pro and we've been joined by Ian Shaw, a professional drone pilot (ShawPix), who has kindly volunteered his time and expertise with a selection of drones since 2018: DJI Phantom 4 Pro and DJI Inspire 2. The drones are registered with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and the operators have passed tests to gain a CAA ID number. All flights comply with CAA regulations by not flying in restricted areas, near buildings or large groups of people.

The drones are flown in a methodical manner in order to gain complete coverage. The drone pilot always has a spotter with them to look out for other aircraft in the airspace and to give guidance regarding heron activity and visibility of the nests. The altitude is set at 75m above ground and the pilot flies to the colony with the drone always in line of sight. The spotter monitors the airspace and watches the video stream from a camera mounted on the drone. The camera zoom is used to obtain close-up images of the nests to identify the contents.

Ideally two or three surveys are carried out each year across the breeding season, to get a picture of number of eggs and young at different stages, with the idea that we could complete nest record cards and look at success rates. In practice, though, this did not always work out, as some nests were at a much earlier stage than others. Carrying out two or three visits did, however, allow us to get a better picture of how many nests were active across the breeding season, which might have been missed if only one visit had been carried out. Surveys from the ground were continued for comparison with the drone results.

Results

Use of a drone in 2018 revealed a much larger colony than we had previously been aware of, with 27 active nests recorded where only five were being recorded from the ground. The colony had two main clusters of nests at TQ160212/TQ160213 and TQ159212. The nests in the area of TQ159212 are the ones that are being spotted from the ground surveys, viewed from the bird hide which is on the opposite side of the mill pond and also from the polo pitch which is on the opposite side of the water. In addition, a new sub-colony was found at the northern end of the pond in 2018. The map below shows the main clusters of nests.

The data in the figure below are a combination of BTO heronry data and records from Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) for years when data had not been submitted to the BTO (1987, 1989, 1990 & 1991). There was a big increase in the numbers of nests counted from 2017 onwards – the direct result of using boat and drone-based surveys



The two main nest clusters on the eastern arm of Knepp Mill Pond, only one of which is viewable from where the surveys are conducted (1. the bird hide and 2. the polo ground). The location of the newly discovered sub-colony at the northern end of Kneppmill Pond is also shown

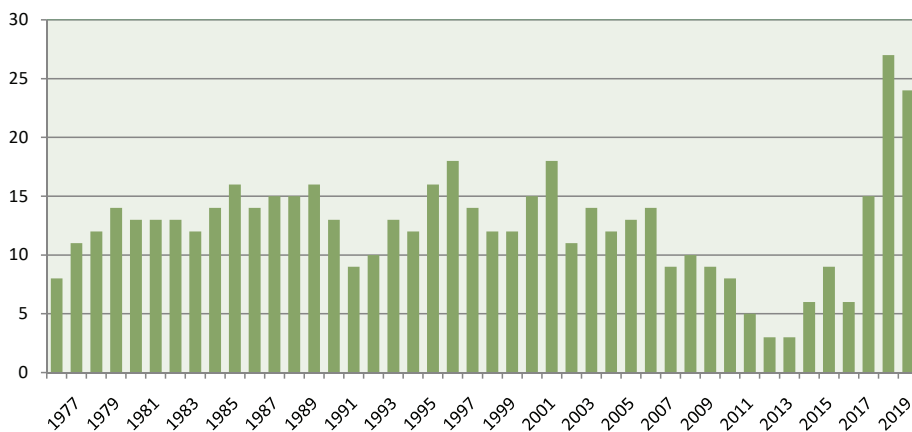


Fig. 1. The maximum counts of nests in the Kneppmill Pond heronry from 1976-2019 based on the best estimate for each year

Chris and Juliet Moore's nest counts for the main colony taken from the ground are shown for comparison with the maximum count using the boat and the drone, in the table below.

Method of max. count	Year	Main colony count	Count from the ground	Sub-colony count	Total
Boat	2017	15	5	n/a	15
Drone	2018	27	8	5	32
Drone	2019	24	5	5	29

Table 1. Maximum nest counts by novel methods compared to traditional counts from the ground – 2017 to 2019

A sub-colony was discovered in 2018 about 800m to the north, on the northern edge of the extent of open water of the mill pond centred around TQ159221. This site was inaccessible on foot but in 2018 five nests were counted there by drone and there were five nests there again in 2019.

By using the drone we have been able to determine the contents of many of the nests as shown in the following table.

Year	Dates	No. of nests checked	Sitting adult	Nests with eggs	Adult on young	Nests with young	Active nest, contents not known	Mean clutch (n=)	Mean young per nest (n=)
2018	22/23 Apr	32	11	8	2	8	3	2.4 (n=7)	2.1 (n=8)
2019	27 Feb 30 Mar 5 May	29	9	3	4	13	0	2.3 (n=3)	1.6 (n=17)

Table 2. A summary of the contents of each nest as determined from the drone images. In 2019 when there were surveys on three dates the most advanced stage of each nest is given

Summary

Using a drone has massively enhanced our knowledge of the heronry at Kneppmill Pond, increasing the number of known nests from five to 27 on the eastern arm of the mill pond and allowing us to monitor the smaller sub-colony in low willow on the northern part of the mill pond which would not be accessible otherwise.

From our observations so far the drone surveys cause no detectable disturbance to the herons and probably cause less disturbance than ground or boat surveys.

A best estimate of the total number of nests is made after collating the images from two or three surveys, but it's not always easy to determine whether nests are definitely in use, especially if flying at a high altitude to avoid disturbing the birds. The active nests appear to be lighter in colour due to the guano excreted by the adult birds but it can sometimes be difficult to see the contents of a nest if obscured by a sitting adult, or over-hanging vegetation. There is also a considerable spread of laying dates with some late season nests still containing eggs when there are full-grown young in neighbouring nests. These could be old eggs due to abandonment of the nest or could be replacement clutches. Grey Herons do lay replacement clutches even after young have been lost (Ferguson-Lees *et al.*, 2001)

Kneppmill Pond is the second largest of the 31 heronries being monitored in Sussex and is second only to Weir Wood Reservoir with 44 nests (in 2018). Using a drone to survey some other Sussex heronries would likely prove them to have more nests than the current records suggest.

Looking forward to how the drone data could be utilised in the future at Knepp, and further afield, it could be a useful tool to collect a series of data over the breeding season to contribute to the BTO Nest Recording Scheme. This would be an interesting exercise to determine success rates of some of the nests. There are limitations to this though, as sitting adults do obscure the contents of the nests and the complexities of re-finding particular nests to monitor their progress as the foliage changes can make it a time-consuming task.

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Thanks also go to Jason and Teddy Emrich for their excellent boat rowing and heron spotting skills.

And finally, thanks go to Ian Woodward from BTO and John Newnham from the SOS for providing the historic heronry count data.

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For more information about the BTO heronries census:

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/heronries-census>



Sitting adults and a nest with an egg. Image taken during the 2018 survey by Dave Green

Photographers' Gallery



Bittern, Chichester Marina, 9 December (Andrew Wilkes)



Spotted Redshank, Pagham Harbour, 27 April (Andrew House)



Chiffchaff, Beachy Head, 31 October (Laurence Pitcher)



Great Bustard, Birling Gap, 6 October (Laurence Pitcher)



Dartford Warbler, Ambersham Common, 19 February (Colin Holter)



Rock Pipit, Cuckmere Haven, 27 October (Gary Faulkner)



Common Sandpiper, Rye Harbour, 2 August (Barry Yates)



Green Woodpecker, Church Norton, 12 August (Dorian Mason)



Cattle Egret, Pagham Harbour, 29 August (Andrew House)



Sedge Warbler, Beachy Head, 17 September (Laurence Pitcher)



Great White Egrets, Beachy Head, 21 September (John Cooper)



Wryneck, Church Norton, 16 September (Dorian Mason)



Whimbrel, Pagham Harbour, 24 April (Tim Squire)

Unusual Records

All records of the unusual species listed below are subject to assessment by the SOS Records Committee and it may be assumed that those published in the annual Sussex Bird Report have been fully authenticated.

All pheasants (except Common)	White-winged Black Tern	Wood Warbler
Taiga Bean Goose	Pomarine Skua (not spring)	Pallas's Leaf Warbler
Pink-footed Goose	Long-tailed Skua	Radde's Warbler
Tundra Bean Goose	Little Auk	Dusky Warbler
Whooper Swan	Black Guillemot	Greenish Warbler
American Wigeon	Puffin	Arctic Warbler
Green-winged Teal	White-billed Diver	Blyth's Reed Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	All petrels (except Fulmar)	Marsh Warbler
Surf Scoter	All shearwaters (except Manx)	Melodious Warbler
Alpine Swift	White Stork ³	Icterine Warbler
Corncrake	Glossy Ibis	Barred Warbler
Spotted Crake	Night-heron	Rose-coloured Starling
Crane	Purple Heron	Bluethroat
Red-necked Grebe	Honey-buzzard	Red-flanked Bluetail
Stone-curlew	Montagu's Harrier	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Black-winged Stilt	Black Kite	Dipper
American Golden Plover	White-tailed Eagle	Citrine Wagtail
Dotterel	Rough-legged Buzzard	Richard's Pipit
Temminck's Stint	Hoopoe	Olive-backed Pipit
White-rumped Sandpiper	Bee-eater	Water Pipit ⁴
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Red-footed Falcon	Common Rosefinch
Pectoral Sandpiper	Red-backed Shrike	Twite
Red-necked Phalarope	Woodchat Shrike	Common Redpoll
Grey Phalarope	Golden Oriole	Parrot Crossbill
Lesser Yellowlegs	Chough	Serin
Sabine's Gull	Hooded Crow	Lapland Bunting
Ring-billed Gull	Willow Tit	Ortolan Bunting
Glaucous Gull	Penduline Tit	Cirl Bunting
Iceland Gull	Shore Lark	Little Bunting
Caspian Gull ¹	Short-toed Lark	
Roseate Tern ²	Red-rumped Swallow	

¹ Except for coastal area from Newhaven to Eastbourne.

² Except for Rye Hbr LNR.

³ Except individuals referable to UK White Stork Project.

⁴ Except for coastal area from Eastbourne eastwards.

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 other than *flavissima*. However, descriptions are not required for the following subspecies: Pale-bellied Brent Goose, *argentatus* Herring Gull, *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gull, Greenland Wheatear and White Wagtail.

Descriptions may also 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 are also acceptable.

Reports of national rarities as defined by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) should be submitted to the Recorder either in the same format as above or on BBRC forms available from the Recorder or via the BBRC website <https://www.bbrc.org.uk/submit-a-sighting>.



Rose-coloured Starling, Paghham Harbour, 24 September (Andrew Wilkes)

Contributors and Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following observers for records for the 2019 Sussex Bird Report. For an explanation of the superscripts, see the key below the table.

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EM ab Owain ^T	D Asher ^{BCT}	D Barnes ^X	M Biddulph ^B
D Adam ^U	D Asquith ^T	DJ Barnes ^T	N Biddulph ^B
J Adams ^X	T Atkins ^C	N Barnes	SM Bignold
P Adil-Smith ^U	J Atkinson	S Barnes	W Bilham ^X
D Agombar ^T	S Atkinson ^T	S Barnes ^X	IS Bindon
J Aidley	K Attree ^X	RG Barnett ^W	JH Bingley ^T
B Akinola ^T	MF Austin	C Barraclough ^X	C Bird ^T
S Akkaraju ^U	P Austin ^X	J Bassett ^W	B Birder ^U
S Akkaraju ^U	M Ayling ^{BCTWX}	RJ Bassett ^B	Birdguides ^T
C Albanese ^U	J Aylward ^T	P Bate ^{TU}	J Birdsey ^{CT}
J Aldridge ^W	S Aylward ^T	R Bates ^X	JM Birdsey ^B
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K Alexander ^U	JTA Bagley	N Baxter ^X	G Bishop ^T
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P Alfrey ^U	K Bailey ^U	J Beam ^U	R Blackburn ^X
DJ Allcock ^U	M Bailey ^T	VR Beaney ^T	R Blackman ^T
S Allday	N Bailey ^W	L Beaton ^X	P Blake ^T
E Allen ^X	SR Baillie ^T	M Becker ^T	C Blakey ^T
J Allen ^X	T Bain	S Beckett ^U	M Blencowe ^X
L Allen ^T	S Baines ^{TU}	DJ Beer ^{BCTW}	D Block ^X
N Allen ^X	J Baird ^T	M Beer ^U	A Blockley ^U
T Allen ^{CT}	N Baird ^X	S Bell	M Blount ^U
S Allen-Mepham ^X	A Baker	D Bellamy ^U	D Boddington ^{BCDPTW}
L Allen-Williams ^X	L Baker ^X	B Benatt ^T	N Bond ^T
S Alley ^U	N Baker ^U	AJ Benham ^{BPT}	M Bonham ^P
R Allison ^X	R Baker ^T	G Bennen ^U	PF Bonham ^{PX}
JE Alloway ^W	S Baker-Irons ^X	C Bentley ^{WX}	T Bonner
A Allum	N Baldwin ^U	DP Bentley ^T	M Booker
AE Almeida ^{BCTW}	N Baldwin ^U	M Bentley ^X	D Bookless ^T
PHL Ambler ^X	M Bale ^T	VP Bentley ^{BCHPTW}	G Boorman ^{BCT}
A Anderson ^P	J Balfagn ^U	AJ Benton ^T	P Boult ^T
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R Ansell-White ^X	P Ballantine ^T	M Bertuzzo ^U	A Bowden ^U
F Antram ^U	M Bambrick ^T	NW Beswick ^T	C Bowden ^U
H Antram ^U	W Banfield ^U	L Beun ^D	LD Bower ^B
T Appleton ^X	D Bangs ^P	A Bevan ^T	AL Bowley
V Appleyard ^X	MI Banks ^X	MJ Bevan ^T	AP Bowley
K Archer ^{TX}	R Bannister ^T	M Bevington ^T	PS Bowley ^T
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C Brooks ^{BCT}	S Capsey ^X	J Clay	C Corrigan ^{BT}
T Brooks ^U	S Card ^{TUX}	L Clay ^X	S Cossey ^T
DP Broome	N Care ^X	M Clayton-Harding ^T	G Costin ^X
D Brown ^X	G Carmichael ^U	J Clements ^T	? Cotten ^T
DR Brown ^{CT}	BR Carpenter ^T	L Clements ^X	M Cottingham ^T
J Brown ^{CT}	P Carr ^U	G Clewley ^U	A Coughlan ^U
JG Brown ^T	J Carrell	P Clissold ^X	Z Courchene ^{BC}
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R Brown ^X	HM Carter ^{PT}	S Cocker ^{WX}	M Court ^X
S Brown ^D	P Carter ^T	G Coe ^X	SM Court
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SJ Burgess ^T	J Chapman ^W	CF Collins ^W	G Crisp ^X
N Burgum ^T	SE Chapman ^{TW}	M Collins ^{BT}	R Crisp ^X
P Burkett	S Charles	MA Collins	JK Cross ^H
ANM Burns ^{BCHT}	? Charleston ^T	P Collins ^T	? Crotty ^T
T Burns ^X	P Charleston	REC Collins ^T	FE Crowe

S Crowe ^T	J Dee ^U	N Earley ^U	R Ferronato ^U
CSA Environmental ^X	R Delta Simons ^X	L Easom ^T	G Fewster ^X
CSU CSU Horsham DC ^X	G Denison-Pender ^T	J Eaton-Brown ^{BC}	C Field ^X
MJ Cuff ^T	MN Denness ^C	A Edden ^U	S Field ^X
S Cullum ^T	N Dennies ^U	J Ede ^U	A Fielding ^X
B Cumming ^U	D Dennis ^X	RDM Edgar ^P	JE Fields ^B
T Cummins ^T	P Denyer ^{CTWU}	T Edom ^X	M Fielker ^T
S Cunliffe ^X	SC Devereau ^T	A Edwards ^U	N Finley ^U
J Curnick ^U	M Dew ^T	J Edwards	J Firth ^U
L Curson ^T	O Dewhurst ^U	D Elliott ^X	J Fisher
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L Davies ^T	J Downing ^T	M Evans	T Forbes ^{CT}
P Davies	M Dowty ^T	MJ Evans ^B	A Ford
P Davies ^T	C Drake ^X	R Evans ^U	AE Ford ^T
P Davies ^X	E Drewett ^T	M Eveleigh ^{CT}	G Ford ^X
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BR Davison ^X	DP Dunk ^T	AR Farrar ^T	TP Fox ^{BDHT}
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A Dean ^X	MR Eade ^T	R Felstead ^T	CD French ^{BCT}
CH Dean ^{BCHPTW}	R Eagles ^T	G Fenn ^T	RI French ^W
J Dean ^U	C Eames	P Fenwick ^H	L Friedland ^U
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R Frost ^U	L Glanz ^X	K Grove ^X	R Hart ^T
C Fry ^X	J Glen ^T	E Groves ^X	Z Hartman ^U
? Fullbrook ^T	A Glossop ^X	L Groves	WG Harvey
S Fuller ^X	J Glossop ^X	J Grundy ^T	A Harwood ^X
TP Fuller ^T	CJ Glover ^B	N Guerin ^X	R Hastings ^U
WW Fuller ^{BCW}	J Glover ^{DT}	AJ Guest ^{BCT}	S Havens ^U
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K Furlong ^X	C Goddard ^D	T Gunnell ^U	C Hawes ^U
R Gale ^X	I Godfrey ^X	j Gurney ^X	C Hawkins ^X
c Gallagher ^X	N Goldsmith ^T	M Gurney ^X	JN Hawtree ^T
A Galloway ^X	D Goodge ^{BC}	C Gutjahr ^B	RM Haydon ^T
KM Galtry	T Goodge ^B	AC Gutteridge ^{BCPT}	F Hayes ^X
MA Galtry ^T	LJ Gooding ^{TU}	D Hales	R Haylor ^X
P Gammage	M Goodrum ^T	M Hall ^X	E Hayward ^T
L Gandolphi	R Goozee ^U	T Hall ^T	J Headon ^T
C Gape	SM Gordon ^U	TD Hallahan ^T	D Heath ^U
AH Gardiner ^T	T Gordon ^T	M Halliwell ^X	GA Heath
D Gardiner ^T	W Gordon ^W	A Halloway ^W	P Heathcote
R Gardner ^U	E Gosnell ^U	S Halpin	R Heelan ^X
RDJ Gardner	S Govus ^X	C Halstead ^X	W Heeney ^X
N Garnsworthy ^T	JS Gowers ^{TU}	H Halstead ^T	S Heinrich ^U
M Garrido ^U	K Gowers ^B	R Hamblett ^X	M Helicar ^W
J Garrity ^X	R Gowing ^X	CH Hamilton ^T	MDM Helps
SJ Gates ^T	AS Grace ^X	J Hamilton	N Henry ^X
L Gauntlett ^X	K Grant ^X	N Hammatt ^T	G Hersey
J Gearty ^{TW}	A Gray ^T	B Hammond	J Heywood ^T
A Genty ^X	M Gray ^X	P Hampsen	G Hicks
CM George ^{BCTWX}	I Grealey	G Hance ^X	L Hicks ^X
H George ^X	R Greaves ^X	V Hancock ^X	M Higham ^T
M George ^X	MA Grech ^T	JC Hannam ^T	B Hijjas ^U
R George ^C	D Green ^{BP}	T Hanson ^{CT}	C Hill
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A Giacomelli ^X	S Green ^T	AJ Hardie ^T	D Hillier
S Giacomelli ^{UX}	NM Greenaway ^{DPW}	M Hare ^T	K Hillier-Palmer
A Gibb ^T	C Greenfield ^T	F Hargreaves ^{TW}	E Hillyer ^X
I Gibb ^B	RR Greenhalf ^{PWX}	F Harmer ^T	AC Hilton ^T
K Gibbons ^X	D Greenwood ^X	? Harper ^T	E Hinton ^X
AP Gibbs ^X	J Greenwood ^T	DGC Harper ^T	C Hitching ^T
C Gibbs ^X	D Gregg ^X	j Harrington ^X	RS Hoad ^{BCDT}
T Gibson ^U	C Gregory ^T	D Harris ^P	D Hoare ^T
TE Gibson-Poole ^T	T Gregory ^X	G Harris	J Hoare ^X
SA Gilbert ^{BW}	J Grice ^{PT}	RG Harris ^{TW}	JA Hobson ^B
KB Gillam ^T	G Griffin ^W	S Harris ^U	D Hodgkiss ^X
C Gillett ^X	AJ Griffiths ^X	C Harrison ^T	H Hodson ^X
L Gillett ^X	D Griffiths ^T	D Harrison ^T	C Hoff
? Gillibrand ^T	B Grimes	T Harris-Ross ^{BCTX}	P Hogan ^T
N Gilligan ^X	A Grimsey ^T	D Hart ^X	M Hoit
V Gilson ^X	V Grinstead ^T	E Hart	R Holbrook ^X

AM Holden	AM Hutson ^{CW}	MGM Jones ^T	A Kitching ^X
AP Holding ^T	A Huttly	PD Jones ^U	AR Kitson
PK Holland ^{PT}	C Hyde ^T	PE Jones ^{BCPTWX}	B Knight ^X
R Holland ^X	DJ Hyland ^T	RI Jones ^T	DC Knight ^T
R Hollis ^T	K Ind ^X	RJ Jones ^T	J Knight
C Holloway ^X	JB Ingham ^T	SEI Jones ^U	L Knight ^{CT}
AL Holmes ^T	T Inskipp ^U	T Jones ^X	P Knight ^X
Z Holmes	R Iredale ^T	T Jones ^T	R Knight
CA Holter ^{CDPT}	BGR Ives ^T	T Jones	RM Knight ^T
J Holter ^{TW}	RA Ives	M Jordan	T Knight ^X
T Holter ^W	RL Izzard	T Jordan ^T	RM Knightall ^{TU}
G Honey ^T	K Jackson ^{BC}	J Jupp ^B	G Knott ^X
I Honeyman	L Jackson ^X	P Kaestner	R Knott
S Hooper	RA Jackson ^T	ME Kalaher	J Knowlson ^X
CE Hope ^W	RJB Jackson	J Kaliniecki ^T	H Koch ^X
O Hopgood ^X	SJ Jackson ^T	N Kay ^X	M Kohler ^T
M Horman	S Jacobs ^T	S Keirnan	S Kovalenko-Atkins
JHM Horne ^{BCPTW}	T Jacobs ^X	N Kelly ^X	M Kucha
A House	BD James ^P	RS Kelly	R Kurtz ^U
AC Howard ^W	GF James	RJL Kemp ^T	B Lack ^X
AM Howard	GRF James ^{TU}	T Kendall-Sykes ^X	P Ladd ^X
M Howard ^X	P James ^T	E Kendon ^X	S Lahiri
T Howard-Jones ^{TX}	CR Janman	AD Kennelly ^T	A Laing
R Howe	D Javens ^X	J Kennerley ^U	DA Lake ^T
J Howell	M Jeffrey	V Kent ^X	L Lambert ^{BC}
J Howell ^X	A Jeffrey ^U	M Kenward	MP Lambert ^B
R Howell ^X	EJ Jenkins ^U	N Keogh	S Lambert ^T
S Howells ^X	L Jenkins	M Kerry ^X	C Lamsdell
DH Howey ^T	SJ Jenkins ^T	J Keynes ^X	S Lanaway ^W
R Howorth ^X	GG Jenner	AJ Killick ^T	IM Lang ^{HTW}
J Howse ^B	S Jennings ^T	DE Killick	GB Langley ^U
SLJ Hudson ^T	M Jerome	DR King ^X	C Langmead ^X
G Hughes ^{CT}	DJ Jode ^{TWX}	G King ^X	C Large
G Hughes ^{BW}	R John ^P	H King ^X	D Larkin ^X
PH Hughes ^{HT}	R Johnson	J King ^T	M Larkin ^X
S Hughes ^X	RJ Johnson ^{HW}	JE King ^{BC}	B Lawrence ^T
S Hughes ^T	S Johnson ^T	JW King	M Lawrence ^X
C Huisman ^X	S Johnson-Hawes ^X	MN King ^{BCDT}	S Lawrence ^T
S Humphrey ^X	A Johnston ^C	R King ^X	D Lawson ^X
A Humphrys ^T	A Jones	G Kinnard	J Lawson ^{BTW}
P Hunnisett ^X	A Jones ^P	R Kinnunen	R Lawson
V Hunt ^X	B Jones ^T	J Kipling ^X	N Layt ^X
E Hunter ^U	C Jones ^{TUX}	AJ Kirby ^T	A Lee ^X
P Hunter ^U	CJ Jones ^T	W Kirby ^X	A Lee ^X
C Hurworth ^T	CM Jones ^T	C Kirk ^T	BD Lee ^T
EA Hutchby ^{BCT}	I Jones ^T	M Kirk ^{BTW}	D Lee ^X
N Hutchin	MA Jones ^T	K Kirkham-Brown ^T	HJA Lee ^{BC_EW}
NP Hutchinson ^{BDTW}	MF Jones ^T	A Kirkwood ^W	M Lee ^U

R Lee ^T	R Lusted	JI McCulloch ^T	L Morris ^X
S Lee ^U	P Lynch ^X	D McGuire	R Morris ^W
SR Lee ^T	J Lynn ^X	R Mcintyre ^T	T Morris
A Lees ^U	R Lyon ^X	C Mckellar	T Morris ^U
CL Leevest ^T	G Lyons	I Mckerchar	A Morrison ^W
W Legge ^U	K Lyons ^X	M Mcmanus- ^{ETW}	D Morrison ^T
MP LeGrys	I Lyth	DF McNair ^{BCDTW}	P Morrison-Price ^{DX}
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E Leonardi	M Macfadyen	D McNiven ^T	N Moura
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K Lerwill ^X	C MacKenzie	SJ Mcwilliam ^X	PL Mulcahy ^X
A Leslie	DJ Madgin ^T	JI Medford ^T	J Mulford ^X
R Leslie ^T	A Maguire	G Meech	M Mullen ^T
DC Leversedge ^{BC}	D Maguire	C Meek	MF Mullen ^{BCT}
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C Lickfold	P Mair	SJ Message	C Munday ^X
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MW Light ^{BC}	M Maltby	E Meston ^T	ST Munday
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D Livingstone	N Marriner ^T	G Miller	J Mycock
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M Lloyd ^X	R Marshall ^T	A Mills ^T	A Nakrem
D Lo	AJ Martin	D Millward ^X	P Nason ^U
L Lockyer ^X	D Martin ^X	G Milner	J Nason ^P
G Locy	JB Martin ^T	L Milward ^T	National Trust ^X
C Lodge ^T	JNR Martin ^{BT}	C Mitchell	SM Neal ^T
S Lopes	P Martin ^T	D Mitchell ^U	C Nelson
DM Love ^B	R Martin ^U	GK Mitchell	M Neville ^X
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J Lowther	S Masters	JR Monkhouse ^U	R Newnham
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AI Taylor ^W	R Tofts ^T	PH Wallace	A West ^{BCT}
G Taylor ^T	D Tombling ^X	? Waller ^T	DR West ^{BC}
G Taylor	A Tomlinson ^T	E Waller ^X	R West ^T
K Taylor ^T	J Tomlinson ^{PTX}	SF Walsh	JD Weston ^{TW}
L Taylor	SA Tomlinson	B Walter ^X	C Whelan ^X
LJ Taylor ^T	TJ Toohig ^T	LA Walther ^{PTX}	D Whitby ^X
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M Wilkinson	C Winchester ^{DT}	P Worley ^X	N Young
S Wilkinson	R Wingfield ^X	B Worsfold	P Young ^X
J Wilks ^X	MP Winkworth ^T	C Wren ^T	R Young ^U
AJ Williams	DI Winn ^X	L Wren	R Young
I Williams ^X	M Wittmer	A Wright ^X	S Young ^X
J Williams ^X	J Witton ^X	CMV Wright ^{BCDPTW}	S Younger ^{TWU}
S Williams ^X	A Witts ^T	D Wright ^U	R Zhang
T Williams ^U	JM Wood ^X	G Wright ^U	

Key to superscripts in the above table	
B	Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)
C	Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS)
D	South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI)
E	Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey (WHBBS)
H	Heronry Census
P	SOS Turtle Dove Survey
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) or Living Records

Assistance to Recorder

The Recorder and Database Manager thank contributors for submitting their records through one of the on-line recording systems or providing the society with digitised records. Particular thanks to the following team of helpers for capturing records submitted on paper or preparing datasets for importing into the society's database - CJR Barfield, JR Cowser, JA Hobson, T Howard-Jones and JH Whitman.

Surveys

Society members again gave a great deal of their time during the year to a wide range of national, county and local surveys. Their invaluable support and contributions are acknowledged with grateful thanks. Details of the surveys and the Sussex organisers follow.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)

This BTO annual national breeding survey, based on selected 1-km squares, was organised in Sussex by Dr Helen Crabtree (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 2019 by Christine George (sussex.wbs@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 103 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. It 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 41 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 Alan Perry (alan@alanperry.uk.com). Thanks are due to the 9 observers involved who are indicated by **E** in the list of contributors.

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.

Turtle Dove Survey

This county survey was organised by Dr Ken Smith (ken.smith.lsw@gmail.com) and the 63 participants are indicated by **P** 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 (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 137 counters who are indicated by **W** in the list of contributors.

Co-ordination of Seawatching Records: The annual co-ordination of these records for the Society is carried out by Dr JA Newnham (j.newnham1@ntlworld.com).

Summaries of Observations

We are grateful for organising survey work and summaries of detailed observations at Chichester Harbour from PH Hughes; Thorney and Pilsey Islands from CB Collins; Medmerry and Pagham Hbr from IM Lang; Selsey Bill from J Atkinson; Arundel WWT from P Stevens; Pulborough Brooks and the Arun Valley from A Allum and J Bassett; Worthing from Dr JA Newnham; Knepp Estate from P Green; 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; Bawl Water from MG Freeman and MJ Phillips; and Rye Harbour from Dr BJ Yates. We also thank C Blencowe and R Foreman at the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for providing ornithological records from the centre and with records via iRecord and Living Records this involved 490 observers (marked **X** in the above table).

For the fourth year records from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (eBird) have been included and involved observations from 198 recorders each labelled **U** in the contributors table. Additionally there were 126 iNaturalist observers whose records could only be identified by a code.

The on-line recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 621 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a **T** in the above table. The records from Birdguides and Trektellen for 2019 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 210 Garden BirdWatch participants. Thanks also to the RSPB for the records from their reserves in Sussex.

Ringing

Thanks are due to VP Bentley for maintaining detailed records of ringing in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.



Curlew, Rye Harbour, 29 October (Barry Yates)



Grey Plover, by Jan Wilczur

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 members to keep and submit records of the birds they see, and also take part in survey work to monitor bird populations. Our database now has well over five million records, which are regularly used in support of wildlife conservation.

What are the benefits of membership?

- our quarterly newsletter to keep you up to date
- a free copy of our award-winning annual Bird Report
- regular outings led by expert birders
- your membership supports conservation work to help Sussex 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**



Registered Charity 256936

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