

Sussex Ornithological Society

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The Sussex Bird Report

No. 73, 2020



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Greylag and Canada Geese over Iford, 25 September (Brian Cox)

Sussex Bird Report 2019 – amendments and corrections

The cover photo of a Dotterel was taken on 15 Sep, not 30 Apr.

In the Sussex Ringing Report 2019, the figures in table 1 were presented incorrectly. The correct table can be accessed at <https://www.sos.org.uk/archives/2781>.

Photographs

2020 was a challenging year for many. For those of us who could get out into the natural world we found solace in its timeless rhythms and distraction in its avian spectacles. I had feared COVID-19 restrictions would seriously impact the number of images submitted for the report. Fortunately, although submissions were down a tad, quality was again high. I hope, along with the editorial team, you find we have selected some beautiful and high quality photographs to accompany the text. Without such images our report would not be so complete nor so easy on the eye. I must thank everyone who took the time to sort through and send in their work for consideration. Unfortunately, it's never possible to include everything and for those whose photographs didn't make it in please do keep on submitting for future reports as it really wouldn't be possible to produce a quality report without your generosity of time and overwhelming response to my requests for images. The report is the sum total of a lot of voluntary effort and your support is as important to its success as anyone of us directly involved in its production. Thank you.

Laurence Pitcher, Photographic Editor.

Cover photo: Bearded Vulture, Beachy Head, 15 October (John Wall)

Editorial

Mark Mallalieu

This 73rd edition of the Sussex Bird Report follows closely the format of the previous one and the order of the systematic list is very similar. I hope that you enjoy reading it and using it as a reference. If you would like to suggest any improvements, please email me at breditor@sos.org.uk.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in periods of lockdown in the spring and late winter that stopped or restricted survey work, ringing and birdwatching activities. The effect of this is only mentioned in a few species accounts where it was considered particularly relevant to do so. Because of the impact of the pandemic, fewer BBS squares than usual were surveyed and only late-season visits were possible, so it has not been possible to calculate BBS Sussex population trends and to produce the table of these trends that usually features in this report. Readers should also note that few WeBS counts were made in April due to the lockdown.

Acknowledgements

This report is the product of an enormous amount of voluntary effort. I would like first of all to highlight the input of John Hobson in drafting and proofreading accounts for this report and many previous ones. John passed away in May 2020, but had already made a valuable contribution to this report.

Having been the Society's Recorder for five years, I was already aware that as Database Manager, John Newnham's contribution to the Society's work, including the annual report, was hugely important. John harvests records from multiple sources, checks and uploads them to our database, and extracts them in many formats for different purposes. I am indebted to John for all his help in my first year as Editor. Thanks also to Peter Plant, my predecessor, for all his advice.

Clare Buckle, Assistant Editor, took on the allocation of species accounts and tracked their production and editing in a manner that made my role as Editor a great deal easier than it would otherwise have been. Graham Hughes, Assistant Editor, helpfully tracked all other elements of the report and produced some of them.

As ever, a large team of hard-working species account writers produced the drafts and I thank them all: CJR Barfield, VP Bentley, R Black, D Boddington, C Brooks, D Brothwell, C Buckle, D Burges, DK Campbell, MJ Chattaway, J Curson, MC Daniel, C Davis, MR Eade, GD Evans, J Franklin, D Green, AC Gutteridge, TD Hallahan, the late JA Hobson, PK Holland, A House, DH Howey, 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, KW Smith, L Smith, A Thomas, G Turvey and JH Whitman.

Primary proofreading was undertaken by Joanne Chattaway, the late John Hobson, Graham Hughes and Simon Linington. I am grateful to them for their hard work. Thanks are also due to Owen Mitchell, who offered many helpful suggestions on the species accounts. In addition to his other key contributions, John Newnham also checked every species account, which led to many corrections and improvements, and was much appreciated, as was his work in updating the arrival and departure tables, producing the maps, and writing the Classified Records and Contributors & Acknowledgement sections. I am most grateful to Matt Eade for again writing the Review of the Year (pages 6 to 11), bringing together the highlights of the ornithological year.

Some errors and omissions will inevitably remain and I take responsibility for those. Do please let me know of any that you notice using the email address above.

Despite the COVID-19 restrictions, another excellent set of photographs was offered for publication and Laurence Pitcher recommended those to be used in the main report and for the front cover. Thanks to Laurence for this work and to Chris Barfield for his work on the front cover.

The Society is again indebted to Stephen Message (www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk) for allowing us to use two of his superb paintings in the report.

Papers and articles were written by: Stephen Chapman and Lucy Groves on breeding White Storks on the Knepp Estate; Christine George on ten years of the Sussex Winter Bird Survey; Martin Daniel, Pete Denyer, Martin Kalaher and Ivan Lang on the first breeding of Cattle Egrets in Sussex; Linda and Ken Smith on roof-nesting Common Terns in Chichester; and Stephen Egerton-Read on the movements in Sussex of White-tailed Eagles from the Isle of Wight project. Val Bentley again wrote the Ringing Report. Andy Wilkes wrote the finder's account for Sussex's first Common Nighthawk and Matt Eade for the Bearded Vulture. Together these pieces of work add greatly to the interest of the report and I am most grateful to all the authors.

Chris Barfield typeset the whole publication, which is both demanding and time-consuming. Many thanks to Chris for again taking on this vital task. Finally, thanks as ever to Neil Pennells of our printers, Cliffe Enterprise of Eastbourne, for his help and professionalism, and to Swarovski Optik, our advertisers.

If you would like to help in any way with future Sussex Bird Reports, please contact me at the email address above.

Abbreviations			
AON	Apparently occupied nests	km	kilometres
BBRC	British Birds Records Committee	LNR	Local Nature Reserve
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey	m	metres
BGBW	Big Garden Bird Watch (RSPB)	mo	many observers
BOU	British Ornithologists Union	MP	Mill Pond
BOURC	BOU Records Committee	N,E,S,W	compass points
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology	nc	no count
CP	Country Park	NR	Nature Reserve
Defra	Dept.for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs	nr	near
Fm	Farm	o/s	offshore
GBW	Garden Bird Watch (BTO)	R	River
GC	Golf Course	Res	Reservoir
GP	Gravel Pit(s)	RG	Ringing Group
GPS	Global Positioning System	RS	Ringing Station
Gt	Great	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
ha	hectares	SDFBI	South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative
Hbr	Harbour	SOSRC	SOS Records Committee
hr	hours	SWBS	Sussex Winter Bird Survey
Incl.	including	WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey
IOC	International Ornithological Congress	WHBBS	Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey
IUCN	Int. Union for the Conservation of Nature	WTW	Water Treatment Works
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee	WWT	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust



Review of 2020

Matt Eade

A total of 262 species was recorded in the county in 2020, compared to 264 in 2019. It was an exceptional year for rarities, topped by the presence of a **Common Nighthawk** at Church Norton on 8 Oct, the first record for Sussex. Another firm highlight in the birding calendar was the **Bearded Vulture** that had summered in Northern England and then graced the county for two days in October. Other exciting birds involved the county's third **Blyth's Reed Warbler** at Beachy Head on 16 Jun and the fourth **Pallid Harrier** (and third for West Sussex) at Thorney Island.

There was also an incredible number of scarcities, with spring and early summer providing four **Red-footed Falcons** and no fewer than 22 **Hoopoes**. Two **Spotted Crakes**, three **Black-winged Stilts**, five **Black Kites**, four **Bee-eaters**, five **Golden Orioles**, two **Red-rumped Swallows** and eight **Serins** were also found during this remarkable period of fine and settled weather.

The autumn was equally impressive, as easterly winds heralded a nice arrival of Siberian vagrants into the county, whilst the second-winter period saw the arrival of hundreds of wild geese.

January to March

The year started with mixed weather in January, but February was relatively awful with constant strong winds and rainfall. Things settled slightly into March, until the dreaded north-easterlies arrived from the middle of the month, dropping temperatures into single figures.

In January, three over-wintering summer visitors were found, a **Barn Swallow** at Firle, a **House Martin** at Battle and a **Ring Ouzel** at Cuckmere Haven, the latter two being the first overwintering records for the county.

A **Glossy Ibis** at Southease on 1 Jan had been in the Ouse Valley since late December 2019, one at Pett Level from 4 to 7 Jan had also been present there in December, one remained on Henfield Levels for a week from 6 Jan and another was at Rye Hbr on several dates in March from at least the 15th (and on 5 Apr). Otherwise, it was a rather quiet time for wintering scarcities.

WeBS data in January revealed a decrease in most species, particularly wildfowl, however, **Brent Geese** had encouragingly increased in Chichester Hbr compared to 2019 with a count of 11,582. Other non-migratory goose species had also increased, respective to their 10-year average totals. Wildfowl had a poor first winter period, though those exceeding their 10-year average (2010 to 2019) were **Gadwall** (918) and **Shoveler** (1344), with 461 of the latter at Rye Bay. Although **Teal** numbers were lower than the 10-year average, there were still 1444 in the Arun Valley. A flock of four **Greater Scaup** at Combe Valley CP between 16 Jan and 6 Mar was noteworthy.

Seawatching in the winter can be hard work, but observers at Selsey Bill were rewarded with 3068 **auks** flying west on 7 Jan; the first winter period also saw **Puffins** at this site on 29 Feb and 7 Mar. On 15 Mar, favourable winds triggered the annual **Brent Goose** movement as 2716 flew past Birling Gap. However, other species were in lower numbers compared to previous years.

An excellent total of 3476 **Golden Plovers** in January and 12,153 **Lapwings** in February presumably related to attractive water levels. Other large wader gatherings comprised 7035 **Dunlins**, 1114 **Redshanks** and 952 **Knots** in Chichester Hbr.

The impressive winter gull roosts at Bewl Water revealed an astonishing count of 43,000 **Black-headed Gulls** roosting on 16 Jan and 50,270 **Common Gulls** roosting there on 1 Feb; 5000 of the former roosted at Arlington Res on 12 Jan and 3500 of the latter there on 3 Jan.

This period was exceptionally poor for grey geese; a **Tundra Bean Goose** at Horse Eye Level (Pevensey Levels) on 8 and 9 Mar was the only one of note. On 16 Mar, two **Cranes** were tracked



Cranes, Beachy Head, 16 March (Laurence Pitcher)

from Pett Level to East Dean and the only 'white-winged' gull of the winter was a juvenile **Iceland Gull** at Birling Gap on 18 Mar. On 25 Mar, a **Serin** flew over Worthing and a very early **Black Kite**, initially found at Cuckmere Haven, drifted over Seaford on 27 Mar and is the earliest county record. Continuing with the raptor theme, a juvenile **White-tailed Eagle** sat in sheep fields at Piddinghoe on 30 Mar and was thought to be feeding on a sheep's afterbirth.

Summer migrants began to arrive as early as February, with the first **Barn Swallow** at Pett Level on the 6th, a **Northern Wheatear** on the Selsey Peninsula on the 21st and a **Garganey** at Pulborough Brooks on the 26th. In March, summer visitors comprised a **Willow Warbler** at Arlington Res on the 7th, a **Sand Martin** at Rottingdean and two **Little Ringed Plovers** at Medmerry on the 14th, four **House Martins** at Pulborough Brooks on the 15th, an **Osprey** over South Malling (Lewes) on the 18th, a **Sedge Warbler** at Pett Level on the 17th, a **Common Redstart** at Cuckmere Haven on the 26th, and a **Hobby** at Steyning on the 29th.

April to June

Anticyclonic conditions, with temperatures soaring into the twenties, were experienced throughout this period. As is typical with April, north-easterly winds ensued for a period during the peak migration time, but in early May winds from the south prevailed for a short time. June was less settled with increased rainfall and an ease in temperatures, which was a relief for many.

Newly arrived summer migrants in April started with **Cuckoos** at three sites on the 3rd; a **Tree Pipit** at Cuckmere Haven, a **Yellow Wagtail** at Shoreham Hbr and **Common Whitethroats** at Ringmer and Thorney Island on the 4th; **Common Nightingales** at the Knepp Estate and near Rudgwick on the 6th; **Reed Warblers** at four sites on the 7th; **Garden Warblers** at Seaford Head and Crawley, a **Grasshopper Warbler** at Pagham Hbr and a **Pied Flycatcher** at Birdham, all on the 9th; a **Lesser Whitethroat** at Sidlesham and a **Common Swift** over Goring on the 10th; a **Whinchat** at Medmerry on the 11th; a **Turtle Dove** at Brightling on the 19th, and a **Spotted Flycatcher** at Sedlescombe on the 23rd.

Seawatching in this period was notable for a terrific movement of **Little Gulls** on 5 Apr with 477 past Splash Point (Seaford) representing the county's third highest day count; 575 **Sandwich Terns** past Splash Point on this day was also the year's spring peak count. The first **Pomarine Skuas** were seen on 23 Apr, peaking on the 7 May with 30 past Splash Point. However, due to the limited hours watched and the very clear conditions throughout the optimum periods, fewer numbers of birds of various species were seen passing. Later in the season, a superb count of 206 **Manx Shearwaters** flew past Selsey Bill on 6 Jun, and the next day revealed the only **Storm Petrels** of the season with two offshore at Selsey Bill on 7 Jun.

Scarcities were particularly abundant in April, with a staggering 16 **Hoopoes** found at numerous (predominantly coastal) locations. **Puffins** flew past Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 5 and 16 Apr, and on the 6th a **Spotted Crake** was recorded singing during the night at Pulborough Brooks. A **Savi's Warbler** was reeling at Pett Level on 11 Apr, whilst on the 16th, an **Iceland Gull** flew past Shoreham Beach and was only one of two white-winged gulls seen throughout the entire year. **Red-rumped Swallows** are annual in the county now, albeit in small numbers, but one at Piddinghoe Pond on the 17th and another at Earnley on the 19th were still exciting finds. A stunning adult **White-winged Black Tern** was briefly offshore at Selsey Bill on 23 Apr but was not seen subsequently. The first of four spring/early summer **Red-footed Falcons** was a male at Pevensey Levels on the 27th, and a **Purple Heron** flew over Arlington Res on the 29th.



Black Kite, Beachy Head, 8 May (Laurence Pitcher)

A rare spring **Tawny Pipit** was at Mount Caburn (nr Lewes) on 6 May and on 9 May a **Black-winged Stilt** spent the day at Sidlesham Ferry. The first of four **Bee-eaters** was heard at Splash Point on 7 May and a **Black Kite** lingered in the Beachy Head area on 8 May; different **Black Kites** were over Hastings CP and Pett Level over the following two days. More Mediterranean madness ensued on the 9th as two **Golden Orioles** were found in quick succession (Knepp Estate and Church Norton), with another at the Knepp Estate on the 24th and yet another at Pett Level on 7 Jun.

Incredibly, another **Spotted Crake** was found on 12 May, this time in East Sussex, staying until 20 May; the last record of **Spotted Crake** in Sussex was in 2013! Male **Red-backed Shrikes** are usually found later in the year, however, two were found in May, one at Rye Hbr on the 15th and another at West Burton (Bury) on the 20th. Three more **Bee-eaters** were found in May, with one at Beachy Head on the 9th, one at Fairlight Cliffs on the 15th and yet another at Winchelsea on the 29th. A ringtail **Montagu's Harrier**, the only record in 2020 of this species, was quartering fields at Rodmell

on 21 May and a **Black-winged Stilt** at Pett Level on the 30th was presumably this bird later found at Rye Hbr on 6 Jun and remaining until the 14th.

It was not until 9 Jun that the next **Red-footed Falcon** was found, this time an obliging first-summer male near Portslade, while oddly, the next day, another first-summer male (and equally obliging) spent seven days at Beeding Hill. Another **Red-footed Falcon** of the same age was at The Midrips on the 13th and 14th, indicative of another nationwide influx of this delightful small falcon. Perhaps the highlight for some in June was the arrival of a singing male **Blyth's Reed Warbler** at Beachy Head on 16 Jun, the third for the county and enjoyed by many during its short stay; an adult **Rose-coloured Starling** on the 20th, also at Beachy Head, was an expected find given the national influx of this species, but this was unfortunately, and perhaps surprisingly, the only one of the year.

July to September

Temperatures soared during July and August, reaching the mid-thirties within the county. Clear conditions prevailed throughout most of August, until the end when strengthening winds brought with it much rainfall. September had mixed weather with temperatures remaining in the mid-teens.

July began with the annual arrival of juvenile **Yellow-legged Gulls** in the county, with optimum sites being West Rise Marsh and Newhaven Hbr, while Pagham Hbr received the majority of older birds.

Breeding was confirmed for a number of scarcities in Sussex this year, including seven pairs of **Honey-buzzards**, 13 pairs of **Goshawks** and three pairs of **Marsh Harriers**. Other scarce species for which there were confirmed breeding records included **Garganey**, **Stone-curlew**, **Long-eared Owl** and **Tree Sparrow**. As in 2019, no **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** nests were located.

July was enriched by the presence of a **Great Reed Warbler** at Pett Level on the 17th. Despite this being the seventeenth record, very few observers have ever seen this reed-dweller in Sussex. Other exciting birds in July comprised a **White-winged Black Tern** at Pett Level on the 1st and four **Balearic Shearwaters** passing Selsey Bill during the month, whilst nearby, up to three **Roseate Terns** were at Church Norton between the 8th and 16th.

The autumn migration in this period was remarkable for the abundance of **Pied Flycatchers** with probably over 100 birds during August alone; continental winds during the month can only mean that the majority of these flycatchers were drift migrants. A **Melodious Warbler** was seen for a brief period at the likely location of Beachy Head on 10 Aug and the first of the autumn's 12 **Wrynecks** was at Climping on 16 Aug. Wader passage was noteworthy in August with no fewer than six **Little Stints**, 19 **Wood Sandpipers**, and 14 **Curlew Sandpipers** including an impressive flock of nine moulting adults at Cuckmere Haven on the 16th.

Unseasonal storms at the end of August brought with it two **Sooty Shearwaters** past Birling Gap on 25 Aug, marking the start of a far better autumn for this pelagic species than recent years. A juvenile **Pallid Harrier** was a lovely find at Thorney Island on 31 Aug. It was still present on 1 Sep and again from 10 to 15 Sep when it was last to be seen flying north.

The first of about nine **Lapland Buntings** in the autumn was one at Church Norton on 3 Sep, and on the 9th a superb total of 370 **Northern Wheatears** was widely scattered across the county, with Beachy Head claiming an impressive 131. A juvenile **Red-backed Shrike** at Pagham Hbr on this day was a typical September discovery, yet always welcome! Another juvenile **Red-backed Shrike** was on Thorney Island for two days from the 14th. A constant theme of the autumn was the coastal movement of **Siskins**, with observers at four sites claiming over 1000 individuals! Other large counts of autumn migrants involved 2500 **House Martins** at Beachy Head on 11 and 18 Sep and 3000 **Barn Swallows** at Pett Level on 21 Sep.

Four **Dotterel**, three at Ditchling Beacon between 1 and 5 Sep and another at Medmerry on the 22nd, was a welcome increase from recent years. The first of two autumn **Red-footed Falcons** was near Ditchling on 11 Sep and the second at Pett Level on 14 Sep. A **Kentish Plover** had a lengthy stay at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) from 19 Sep to 7 Oct and a **Sabine's Gull** was an excellent early autumn record off Pett Level on 29 Sep, when other sightings included a **Crane** past Portobello and a brief **Common Rosefinch** at Beachy Head. The first **Yellow-browed Warblers** arrived, with one at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 28th and another at Maynards Green on the 29th.



Pied Flycatcher, Beachy Head, 26 August (Jamie Partridge)

October to December

October started with a westerly airflow and mild conditions, but soon switched to an easterly airflow and relatively settled conditions. The final week was unsettled with strong southerly winds. November continued to be mild with temperatures in the low teens, but towards the end of the month unsettled conditions resumed and followed into December with the introduction of Storm Bella. There were days of northerly winds towards the end of the year that caused the temperatures to drop significantly.

Final records in the year for departing summer migrants in October included a **Common Tern** at Shoreham Hbr on the 1st, a **Lesser Whitethroat** of the nominate form at Cissbury Ring on the 5th, a **Grasshopper Warbler** at Pett Level on the 7th, a **Spotted Flycatcher** at Jevington on the 9th, two **Pied Flycatchers** at Rye Hbr on the 11th; a **Common Nightingale** and two **Tree Pipits** at Seaford Head, two **Common Redstarts** at Beachy Head and a **Whinchat** at Rye Hbr on the 14th; a **Willow Warbler** at Lancing on the 16th, a **Sedge Warbler** at Combe Valley CP on the 20th, a **Yellow Wagtail** at Pett Level on the 23rd, and a **Hobby** at Rye Hbr on the 24th. In November, final records were of two **Sand Martins** at Combe Valley CP and a **Northern Wheatear** at Friston Forest on the 4th, a **Reed Warbler** at Pett Level on the 7th, a **Common Whitethroat** at Medmerry on the 9th, a **House Martin** at Selsey Bill and Pagham Hbr on the 19th and a **Ring Ouzel** at Alfriston on the 30th.

On 8 Oct, the amazing discovery of a **Common Nighthawk** at Church Norton was completely unexpected and without doubt the rarest bird of the year, though it was only seen by a handful

of birders before it flew off into the harbour and out of sight. The highlight for many though in October was the discovery of the **Bearded Vulture** at Beachy Head on 14 Oct, where it entertained until the following day and was later seen heading out and over the English Channel.

Other exciting birds found in October involved no fewer than 25 more **Yellow-browed Warblers**, a **Marsh Warbler** photographed at Cuckmere Haven on the 3rd and the same day a **Purple Heron** commenced a week's stay at Burton MP, being joined for a short time by a (now more expected) **Great White Egret**. A **Radde's Warbler** at Seaford Head on the 11th was the first of many exciting Siberian vagrants which turned up in a matter of a few weeks; the first of three **Pallas's Warblers** was at Roedean on the 18th, with others at Seaford Head on the 26th and Beachy Head on the 31st, a **Little Bunting** at Beachy Head on the 19th and a **Dusky Warbler** spent ten days at Bewbush, Crawley from the 25th. In November, another **Dusky Warbler** was trapped and ringed at Beachy Head on the 5th and a **Hume's Warbler** was a surprise find in the mist nets at Pett Level on the 7th.

Other scarcities comprised at least nine **Sooty Shearwaters** passing five sites on 2 and 31 Oct. Disappointingly, the only **Great Grey Shrike** of the year was at Combe Valley CP on 26 Oct. Six **Grey Phalaropes** were found from 9 Oct, with the last being on 28 Dec at Brighton Marina.

Shore Larks are becoming less frequent nowadays, so a lingering bird at Rye Hbr from 16 Nov into 2021 was most welcome and was presumably the same bird seen at Pett Level on 29 Oct.

The end of November and into December was marked by an incredible arrival of 'grey geese', most notably **White-fronted Geese**, with a day count of 389 birds in December, after an initial arrival of 148 birds at the end of November; **Tundra Bean Geese** were also well represented during this period, though in far smaller numbers. Other wildfowl in December comprised the only **Red-crested Pochard** of the year at Warnham LNR on the 10th, ten **Bewick's Swans** at Burpham on the 25th and a **Black Brant** at Chichester Hbr on the 28th was the first in the county for three years, remaining on site into 2021.

Lastly, a **Richard's Pipit** at Sidlesham found on the 4 Dec and lingering into 2021 was the only other notable scarcity during December.



Radde's Warbler, Seaford Head GC, 11 October (Dave Sadler)

Classified Records for 2020

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 pages 269-272.

The Category A and C species are listed in the order published in the British List announced by the BOU in January 2020 and follows the International Ornithological Union's (IOU) IOC World Bird List (version 11.2).

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+

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	56	64	105	91	124	80	89	79	69	81	69	63	971
Worthing & Goring	11	6	14	70	29	8	6	12	27	25	22	26	255
Telscombe Cliffs	7	7	16	91	48	8	4	3	5	14	16	26	244
Splash Point (Seaford)	3	2	22	42	39	0	1	6	0	6	4	1	125
Birling Gap	9	7	13	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	34

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 2020 the priority core count dates were 12 Jan, 9 Feb, 8 Mar, 12 Apr, 10 May, 7 Jun, 5 Jul, 23 Aug, 20 Sep, 18 Oct, 15 Nov and 13 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.

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 online recording systems from the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (eBird) and the Biological Record Centre (iRecord). Additionally the observations come from a miscellany of recording systems used by various groups and nature reserves and from individual observers.

In 2020 there was a further 11% increase in the number of records admitted to the database with the total for the year being 519,558 and there is still no sign of the number of records starting to plateau. Over 90% of the records came from on-line recording, with 68% of the records 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	296,223	Horsham DC Reserves	8658
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology eBird	118,850	Ashdown Forest Bird Group	6912
BTO Garden Bird Watch	21,687	Weir Wood Res Group	3777
WeBS on-line (BTO computed)	10,995	Rye Hbr LNR records	3561
iRecord records	8760	Selsey Bill Seawatch Log	3421
Sussex Winter Bird Survey (via Birdtrack)	6481	Hastings area migration watchers data	1335
Breeding Bird Survey Data (BTO)	3967	Worthing & Goring coastal migration Log	1052

Table 1. The numbers of records sourced in 2020 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.

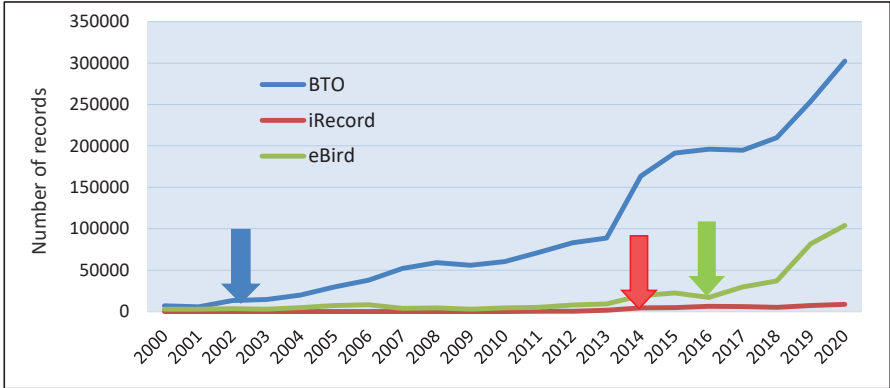


Figure 1. The numbers of records sourced from the three main on-line general recording systems 2000-2020. The arrow indicates the year in which records were first harvested from each.

Figure 1 shows the BTO's on-line recording, initially as Migration Watch but soon becoming Birdtrack, was used several years ahead of the other two main on-line systems in Sussex. In recent years eBird, administered by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (Ithaca, New York), has become a popular recording medium. iRecord, operated by the Biological Records Centre as part of the work of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, is used by more different observers than eBird but supply fewer bird records. The figure also indicates the relatively low level of digitising historic records from notebooks when compared with current sightings. Once again the observations from the BTO's Garden BirdWatch (GBW), Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) and the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) have been made available to be included in the species summaries in this report.

Slightly fewer observers provided records in 2000 (1658 c.f 1704 in 2019) and, as usual there was a large range of submissions, with 105 recorders submitting in excess of 1000 records whilst 706 contributed less than ten records. Like recent years these figures exclude those participating in the WeBS, GBW or via iNaturalist.

As usual most records came from the well watched locations such as Chichester Hbr (15,990), Pagham Hbr (26,136), the Arun Valley (53,400), Ashdown Forest (15,904), Pett Level (13,075) and Rye Hbr (42,304). A total of 160,224 records were received from sites within the South Downs

National Park. The coverage of the county was again excellent with at least one record coming from 966 (93%) out of the possible 1039 tetrads with land wholly or partially in Sussex. Of these 504 were entirely in West Sussex, 443 in East Sussex and a further 19 in tetrads on the border. The following map shows that most have more than ten records, with the usual pattern of the coastal plain, river valleys and Ashdown Forest being the most intensively watched.

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.

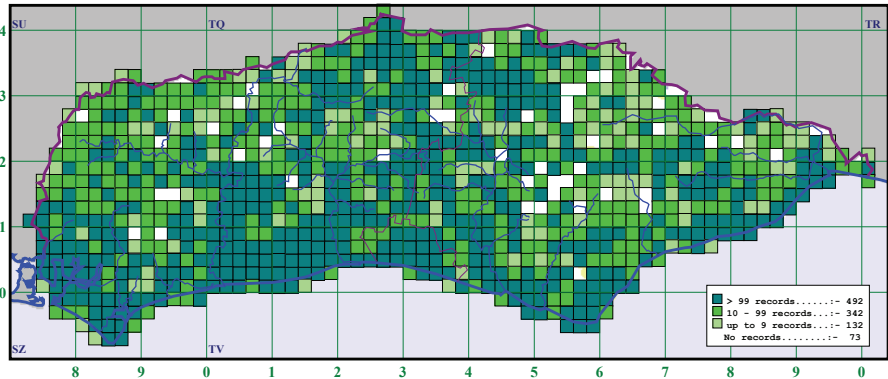


Figure 2. The number of records received for 2020 in each tetrad in Sussex. Dark green symbol, >100 records; mid-green symbol, 10-99 records; and pale green symbol, 1-9 records

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 graph below shows the disappointing change this century in the percentage of records from this very specific group of species during the breeding season which meet this standard.

Clearly during the years of the Atlas survey breeding status was recorded more assiduously. For observers using most recording systems 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. For eleven species over ten thousand records were received; for a further 91 species between 1000 and 9999 records and for 82 species between 100 and 999 records. Clearly many authors of this report will rely heavily on the account writer's summaries produced by the society's database.

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. During 2020 there was some capture of postings on the society's website and only limited capture of details from blogs therefore some interesting and important observations may be lost to the county avifauna.

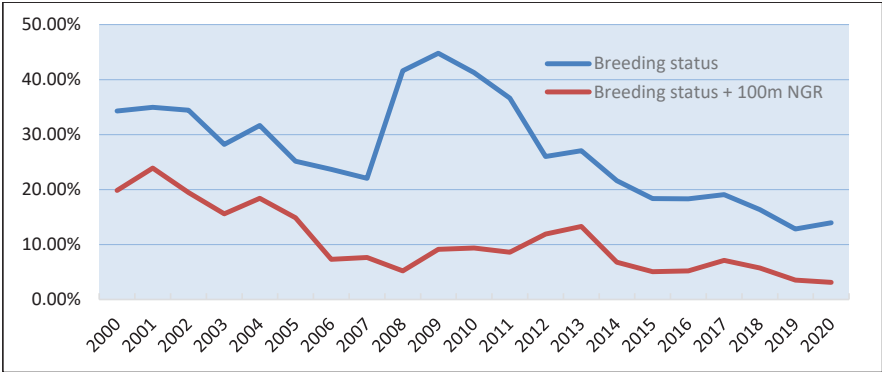


Figure 3. The percentage of records received between April and July (2000-2020) with a breeding status (blue) and additional eight character grid references (red) for designated species on the Red and Amber list of Birds of Conservation Concern, Schedule 1 (1981) and Section 41 (2006).

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 2020 records were received from a total of 966 (93%) of the county’s 1039 tetrads. There were reports from 408 different gardens participating in the BTO Garden BirdWatch; 125 1-km squares were surveyed for the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and in the Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) 124 1-km squares were surveyed in the January/February period and 146 in November/December. A total of 86 1-km squares were surveyed for the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative (SDFBI) of which 43 were in Sussex and 23 in Hampshire. Where a number 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.

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
Square symbols of differing shades display an element of abundance	Red represents the breeding season or summer, blue winter records and green records from the entire year

Tables

Throughout the systematic list there are many tables showing the abundance of species in each month. For most of the scarcer species the approximate numbers can be calculated with relative certainty from the records but for the more numerous, and particularly migratory, species this can be difficult. In these instances a guide to their monthly abundance has been calculated by summing the maximum count in each tetrad in each month giving ‘presence only’ records a value of one. These figures can be compared with an average for the previous ten year period calculated in the same way.

Red-legged Partridge

Alectoris rufa

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

Red-legged Partridges were recorded in 173 tetrads (18%), higher than the 10-year average of 135 (range 91 to 190). There were 49 encounters from ten squares (8.0%) in the first winter period SWBS with a maximum of 27 at Balcombe on 25 Feb, which was also the highest count in the first winter period.

BBS surveys were limited, especially in the early season due to COVID-19 restrictions, but 26 were found in nine (7.2%) of the 125 squares covered with a maximum of six at Pagham Hbr on 14 Jun. There was only one record of confirmed breeding, a bird on nest at Staplefield on 6 May, and six records of probable breeding.

The impact of the release of captive bred stock is apparent from the surge of numbers in the second half of the year, when there were six counts of over 30, including 50 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 16 Nov. In the late year SWBS 56 were encountered in seven (5.1%) of the 137 squares surveyed with the highest count of 20 on 29 Dec in St Leonard's Forest. [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.

Grey Partridge were recorded in 60 tetrads (6.2%), slightly less than 2019 (64) but above the ten-year average of 52 (range 38 to 64).

In the first winter period the species was recorded at eight downland sites with double-figure counts of 30 at The Burgh (Burpham) and 11 in the Arun Valley on 1 Jan and 12 at Yapton on 10 Jan. There were up to three at the two coastal sites of Sidlesham and Medmerry.

During the spring there were records from 26 widely distributed sites with the highest count of ten at The Burgh again. Counts elsewhere ranged from one to four.

As is becoming the norm for this species, breeding was poorly recorded and was confirmed at only one site, The Burgh, where two adults with 15 juveniles were observed on 22 Jun and possibly the same family group was seen again there on 13 Jul. Breeding was probable at two coastal sites: Rye Hbr and Medmerry, where adults with juveniles were reported during September, and possible at a further four sites. Of note in this period was a count of ten birds at Woodingdean on 1 Jun in an SDFBI survey.

Grey Partridges were reported from 25 sites through autumn and the second winter months, the highest count being 30 at The Burgh on 28 Nov. Elsewhere there were 20 at Chanctonbury Ring on 25 Nov, 12 at No-Mans Land (Findon) on 12 Oct and tens at Edburton Hill on 13 Nov and at Steep Down (Lancing) on 30 Dec. [G Turvey]

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, a rather elusive species more often heard than seen, was recorded in 11 tetrads, predominantly in West Sussex, with a minimum of 14 birds counted and a conservative maximum of three birds at any one site.

The first arrivals were noted on 24 May with singles at the R Adur Saltings (Shoreham-by-Sea), Lancing College and Steep Down (Lancing) where three calling males were reported the following day and then recorded intermittently until 15 Jun.

From the end of May through to early August there were records from ten further locations including West Wittering, where a calling male was heard and seen on a number of occasions in a stubble field close to the carpark from 29 May until 16 Jun; at The Burgh (Burpham) where three were reported on 13 Jul; and at Truleigh Hill with two on 14 Jul.

The last record of the year was of a bird was seen flying then heard calling from barley stubble on 6 Aug at West Marden. [G Turvey]

Common Pheasant

Phasianus colchicus

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

Common Pheasants were recorded in 569 tetrads (59%), an increase from 517 in 2019. In the early year SWBS 507 birds were found in 52% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 180 on 25 Feb at Balcombe. Another notable high count during the first winter period was 190 at Cross Bush (Arundel) on 3 Jan. Birds were recorded in 22% of the gardens surveyed in the GBW, a similar figure to previous years.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and was probable in 32, a small increase from four confirmed breeding records in 2018 and 2019. During the BBS birds were found in 66% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 25 at Binderton (West Dean) on 16 May, a decrease from 76% in 2019 and 85% in 2018. A female was seen with 14 chicks at Wivelsfield on 22 May and seven chicks were observed at Thorney Island on 4 Jun.

In the late year SWBS 432 were recorded in 53% of the 137 squares surveyed with a maximum of 33 at Catsfield on 6 Nov. The population is artificially maintained by release of captive-bred birds in the autumn by shooting estates. In the second half of the year there were 86 counts of more than 20, the highest being 154 at Cross Bush (Arundel) on 15 Dec, compared to 33 counts in the first six months. It is possible that in future the number of captive-bred birds released may decrease following campaigns to highlight the negative effect of gamebirds on native wildlife. At the time of writing this is under review by Defra. [D Brothwell]

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	13156	13053	3138	-	2	2	-	-	62	6630	8816	8712
Chichester Hbr	11582	10485	2001	nc	1	2	-	-	35	6786	7586	7467
Pagham Hbr	1536	2526	1131	nc	-	-	-	-	18	111	1036	1238
Average county total 2010-19	12741	12741	8440	59	12	9	8	7	342	4743	9318	10587

The numbers recorded during January and February WeBS counts were consistent with the 10-year average, but March's total was down by a half, with the month's seawatching totals being the biggest of the spring as evidence that eastward migration started quite early. It was notable that the Pagham Hbr Brent Goose survey produced several counts that were well above the WeBS

totals, including a peak of 3300 birds on 9 Jan and 7 Feb. At Climping Gap 75 were present on 2 Jan, with further sightings there of 250 on 13 Jan, 230 on 25 Jan, 100 on 15 Mar and 55 on 17 Mar. Elsewhere, one was at Pulborough Brooks from 1 Jan to 22 Mar.

A regular wintering flock appears to have become established in East Sussex in recent years, with up to 53 recorded at Rye Hbr throughout January, rising to 100 on 1 Feb, and up to eight at nearby Pett Level, though numbers reduced quickly at the former site and a peak of 32 at the latter site on 9 Feb may have involved birds moving through.

As usual, spring migration began slowly in February, with 175 birds east past Birling Gap on the 7th and 160 past Telscombe Cliffs on the 15th, but the prolonged spell of poor weather meant there was little movement thereafter until 187 flew east past Selsey Bill on 11 Mar, followed by 755 past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 14th and a huge count of 2716 past Birling Gap on the following day, when 1229 were recorded past St Leonard's-on-Sea and 764 past Selsey Bill. More modest movements continued on many days thereafter, with 497 past Telscombe Cliffs on 2 Apr the largest count of the month, and 475 past Splash Point on 23 Apr, the last big day. There were just two inland sightings during spring migration, of two at Arlington Res on 27 Mar and three on Lewes Brooks on 26 Apr.

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

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr/May		Sep/Oct		Nov		Dec	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	22	136	44	101	1718	12	1229	1	29	1095	64	366	274	201
Worthing & Goring	-	-	135	4	149	-	762	2	9	617	1	72	361	31
Telscombe Cliffs	8	-	166	-	815	22	1325	-	9	2	-	7	219	16
Splash Point (Seaford)	2	-	100	-	2018	-	1062	-	2	7	-	-	-	-
Birling Gap	26	-	184	-	3267	-	nc	nc	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc

There were very few summering birds this year: just two in Chichester Hbr, one seen three times passing Selsey Bill on 12 Jun and 6 and 12 Jul, and one that flew in off the sea and back out again at Rye Hbr on 20 Jul.

The first of the autumn flew west past Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 17 Sep and there were daily sightings of small numbers along the coast every day thereafter, with 77 W past Selsey Bill on 27 Sep the first substantial count. Numbers built up very rapidly in October in Chichester Hbr where there were 1500 on the 7th, rising to 2500 by the 13th, and it was not a coincidence that the preceding day saw the biggest westward movement of the autumn along the coast, with 380 passing Worthing and 388 passing Selsey Bill.

Relatively few birds settled in East Sussex, with a second-winter peak of just 13 on Pett Level on 22 Nov, whilst the only site away from the western harbours to regularly hold birds was Climping Gap, where large feeding flocks were seen on a number of dates in November and December, peaking at 650 on 2 Dec. These flocks roost in Pagham Hbr.

As usual, there was a scattering of inland records during the autumn, including one in the Arun Valley on 2 and 5 Oct, one on Lewes Brooks from 20 Oct to 4 Nov, one at Weir Wood Res from 10 to 22 Nov and one on Amberley Wild Brooks on 15 Nov, whilst migrating flocks of 94 over Lewes Brooks on 8 Nov and 80 over Pulborough Brooks on the following day were seen in flight only. A flock was heard over Troutbeck (Eridge) on the 7th.

Although the WeBS totals were slightly below the 10-year average for the second winter period, it was encouraging to note that large numbers of juveniles were recorded in many of the wintering flocks.

Black Brant, *B. b. nigricans*

After three blank years since 2016, a Black Brant was found among the Dark-bellied Brent Goose flock near Chichester Marina on 28 Dec, remaining in the vicinity into 2021 (AE Wilkes *et al.*). One resembling a Dark-bellied Brent x Black Brant was seen at West Wittering on 19 Nov, though this record was not assessed by SOSRC.

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

The four records early in the year comprised three in Chichester Hbr on 3 Jan, one inland at Pulborough Brooks from 26 Feb to 3 Mar, an impressive flock of 23 E past Selsey Bill on 25 Mar and finally 1 E past Southwick Beach on 29 Apr.

In the autumn, two were on Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 19 Sep, one was in the Pagham Hbr/Selsey Bill area from 28 to 30 Oct and one in Chichester Hbr from 22 Dec into 2021. Finally, one was at Climping Gap on 26 Dec and two were at Medmerry from 29 Dec into 2021. [A House]



Brent Geese, Bosham, 17 January (Bob Brewer)

Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
<i>Common introduced resident and partial migrant.</i>	

Canada Geese were recorded in 296 tetrads (31%), similar to recent years. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites are shown in the table below.

The WeBS counts were mostly above the 10-year average in the first half of the year and slightly below in the second half, but overall the species continues to prosper in the county. The above counts reflect the greatest concentrations of birds early in the year, though at Pulborough Brooks 700 birds on both 6 and 21 Jan were noteworthy.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3039	1990	1098	162	458	525	596	1487	2925	2749	2374	2184
Chichester Hbr	166	103	20	nc	62	31	108	120	262	140	100	117
Arun Valley	486	787	164	52	41	62	79	31	106	680	801	797
Cuckmere Haven	650	270	139	6	35	14	nc	nc	250	514	90	70
Arlington Res	38	30	25	6	14	36	46	389	957	45	2	12
Pevensey Levels	99	50	114	nc	-	-	43	-	26	51	308	225
Bewl Water	500	168	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	200	291	420
Rye Bay	295	57	73	18	7	21	140	327	242	19	111	150
Average county total 2010-2019	2530	1515	750	428	355	413	654	1699	2286	2340	2794	2780

Rather oddly, seawatchers at Selsey Bill, Worthing and Splash Point (Seaford) all recorded 12 birds offshore (mostly going east) between March and May, but they would all appear to be different birds on different dates.

Forty one tetrads held one or two confirmed breeding pairs with young, with four pairs at Medmerry the largest concentration, though there were also creches of 18 goslings at Weir Wood Res on 25 May and three creches, totalling 59 juveniles, at Ifield MP on 7 Jun. Birds were on nests on 31 Mar at both Fletching and Pett Level and the first goslings noted were on 23 Apr at Pett Level.

As is usual with this species, post-breeding flocks began to appear in June, with early peaks of 190 on Ifield MP on the 7th, 170 at Cuckmere Haven on the 14th, 100 at Petworth Park on the 17th and 200 on Bewl Water on the 22nd, before numbers began to build up in August, to include 450 at Medmerry on the 13th and 500 at Arlington Res on the 15th. At this latter site 2000 were recorded several times between 10 and 18 Sep, and were the biggest counts of the year, with other notable peaks including 490 at Weir Wood Res on 26 Sep, 950 at Pulborough Brooks on 19 Oct, 1500 in the Cuckmere Valley on 1 Dec and 454 on Henfield Levels on 14 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.

It is unlikely that there were any birds from the Greenland or Svalbard populations in the county during the first half of the year. In the second winter period there were possibly three occurrences coinciding with the big arrival of geese into the county in late November; two on Pett Level from 29 Nov to 2 Dec, one with a White-fronted Goose flock in the Arun Valley on 9 and 11 Dec and one that appeared at Medmerry among a big arrival of Dark-bellied Brent Geese on 30 Nov, relocating with the flock to Chichester Hbr for the remainder of the year.

The regular naturalised flocks at Scotney GP, peaking at 200 on 12 Jan and 90 on 12 Nov, and Barcombe Res, peaking at 72 on 13 Jan and 70 on 2 Sep, were both lower in the latter part of the year, whilst as usual there were reports of birds, probably related to these flocks, from a handful of other sites. [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 205 tetrads (21%), the highest number this century. The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as below.



Greylag Goose, Arundel WWT, 15 December (Bob Brewer)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1651	982	570	155	337	217	494	1914	2627	1955	1903	1455
Arun Valley	116	64	66	34	31	3	10	116	111	229	181	174
Weir Wood Res	185	136	26	Nc	2	74	91	123	346	3	339	176
Lower Ouse Valley	150	70	24	-	36	43	8	Nc	110	15	80	200
Rye Bay	963	289	99	115	131	59	262	1409	1137	1176	1014	642
Average county total 2010-2019	932	697	401	250	272	434	632	1545	1165	1136	1358	998

Yet again, the population increased this year, with the September WeBS total of 2627 representing a new county high and the total for the Rye Bay area exceeding 1000 birds for four months running from August. The biggest first-winter counts were 750 at Scotney GP on 12 Jan, 210 at Weir Wood Res on the 19th, 211 at Ardingly Res on 8 Feb and 254 at Pett Level on the 9th though, at a total of 15 sites, counts in excess of 100 were made during the period.

There were seven records from five seawatching sites, totalling 12 birds flying east and five west between 16 Mar and 15 May, with 5 E past Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 7 Apr the highest count.

Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads but Arundel WWT, which held eight broods last year, produced none this year and at Combe Valley CP there was a decline from eight broods to perhaps three. At Henfield Levels, Ardingly Res and Rye Hbr there were at least two broods, whilst at Lurgashall MP (on 7 May) and the Knepp Estate (on 7 Jun) flocks of 19 and 14 juveniles respectively were reported. One was on a nest on 5 Apr at Pett Level and the first goslings were noted on 20 Apr at Combe Valley CP.

At Petworth Park, Weir Wood Res, Pett Level and Scotney GP counts of 100 plus were recorded in June and July, but the bigger flocks of post-breeding birds did not begin to assemble until late

August, with Scotney GP observers recording a remarkable 1293 on the 23rd, whilst most of the other largest counts of the year were in September, including 371 at Pulborough Brooks on the 7th, 300 at Arlington Res between the 12th and 18th, 400 at Rye Hbr on the 17th and 460 at Weir Wood Res on the 26th. Scotney GP held the most birds during October, topping out at 870 on the 19th, with other peaks including 339 at Pulborough Brooks on the 5th and 300 at Pett Level on the 18th.

In the second winter period peak counts included 950 at Scotney GP on 15 Nov, 339 at Weir Wood on the 16th and 300 at Henfield Levels on 31 Dec. [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.

It was a good autumn/early winter for the species, with four accepted records of seven birds. Two were at Scotney GP on the early date of 9 Oct (MC Casemore), two flew west over Park Fm (Selsey) on 30 Nov (M Orchard-Webb, I Pitts), and on 11 Dec two were in the Arun Valley at Burpham (AS Cook) whilst another was on Horse Eye Level (Pevensy), the latter individual remaining until the following day (CF Ball *et al.*). [A House]

Tundra Bean Goose

Anser serrirostris

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

The only record in the first half of the year was of a single bird on Pevensy Levels on 8 and 9 Mar (CF Ball, D Burt, CB Peverett).

The autumn was much better, with 15 individuals at five sites, starting with a flock of seven including two juveniles in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 30 Nov (BR Cox *et al.*). In December one took up residence on Pett Level from the 1st to the 13th (GRF James, M Robards, D Rowlands *et al.*), with another at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th (A Baker, W Buckthorpe, C and J Moore *et al.*), one on Iford Brooks on the 12th and 13th (D Bird, LR Bird, BR Cox, SH Linington), and finally a flock of five at the latter site on the 28th (AJ Williams). [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.

After a rather average first winter period, 2020 proved to be a memorable year for the species with the biggest autumn arrival into southern England in a decade and Sussex fully getting its share. Almost every likely location reported flocks (in 75 tetrads) with many flocks remaining across the county until the year's end.

As usual Pett Level held the bulk of the county's birds in the first part of the year, peaking at 51 on 18 Jan and a last report of nine on 12 Mar. The only other records came from Pulborough Brooks, where two were present from the start of the year to 7 Feb, with three there on the 23rd to the 26th, and two again on 8 Mar, whilst one was in the Arundel area from 1 to 19 Mar.

The autumn started slowly, with two back at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Oct, relocating to Amberley Wild Brooks on 1 Nov, and three at Pett Level two days later increasing to five on 23 Nov. Three on Henfield Levels on 8 Nov were the only other additions until the last couple of days of the month.

A flock of 20 flying into Cuckmere Haven on 29 Nov proved to be the harbinger of a remarkable influx starting the following day when at least 148 birds arrived, including 44 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), 20 at Arlington Res, 14 near Charleston Reedbed, one past Southwick Beach, four in the Adur Valley, three in the Arun Valley, eight at Pulborough Brooks and the most westerly five at Marsh Fm (Sidlesham). December started in dramatic style, with 389 birds counted across the county (the highest count since December 2010), with peaks of 68 at West Rise Marsh, 64 in the Arundel area, 44 on Lewes Brooks and 23 reaching Pagham Hbr. There were further arrivals on the 2nd including an increase to 67 on Pett Level and 18 in Chichester Hbr on the 4th with 15 at Amberley Wild Brooks and 24 at Medmerry, and more on the 6th, including 59 at Rye Hbr.

Most of the highest counts were recorded during the following week, including 62 at Scotney GP on 9 Dec, 80 in the Arundel area and 70 at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th, 120 at Pett Level on the 12th and 100 on Pevensey Levels on the 15th. There was then a bit of a lull in reports until another flurry of big totals, including 60 at Combe Valley CP on the 21st, 137 on Lewes Brooks on the 23rd and, the biggest of the year, 150 on Pevensey Levels on the 27th.

Numbers appeared to tail off quickly at the end of the month, with 72 at Lewes Brooks on the 28th, 100 at Pevensey Levels on the 29th, 37 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 30th and 33 over Beeding Brooks on the 31st being the largest counts. Surprisingly, despite the scale of movement, there were only a handful of reports from seawatching sites, with 7 W past Selsey Bill on Christmas Day being the biggest count. [A House]



White-fronted Geese, Medmerry, 12 December (Andrew House)

Mute Swan*Cygnus olor*

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

Mute Swans were recorded in 214 tetrads this year, 15 more than last year and 35 more than the year before. 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	438	368	416	55	216	423	321	378	529	622	653	532
Chichester Hbr	63	50	52	nc	12	148	76	102	215	243	229	184
Arun Valley (Arundel-L'hampton)	54	54	37	14	19	38	28	43	27	24	21	36
Arun Valley N of Arundel	34	60	50	7	8	30	20	24	29	48	61	41
Upper Adur Levels	52	12	54	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	14	35	25	36
Glynde Level	14	33	43	nc	12	14	nc	nc	15	32	26	23
Eastbourne Lakes	33	24	23	nc	11	2	6	nc	16	52	50	22
Pevensay Levels	52	42	56	nc	44	2	8	26	24	32	71	41
Average county total 2010 to 2019	524	490	449	372	467	441	394	427	552	578	595	583

Overall the WeBS counts were similar to 2019; the very low April total count is due to there being no counts at the majority of sites due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

Notable first winter period counts in addition to the WeBS counts included 25 and 32 at Lewes Brooks on 8 and 21 Jan, 24 in Princes Park (Eastbourne) on 15 Jan, and 26 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 22 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 47 tetrads compared to 40 last year. In addition, breeding was recorded as probable in a further eight tetrads. The first note of breeding was a nest with one egg at Southwater CP on 8 Mar, with what was presumably the same nest containing three eggs on the 13th. There were few records of cygnets/immatures but the first were seen on 28 Apr at Brooklands (Worthing). Breeding success was reported as being virtually zero at Arundel WWT (as was the case with other waterfowl and waders) with this being thought to be primarily due to nest predation, including by corvids and mustelids.

Non-breeding and post-breeding aggregations in summer were as usual largest in Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) with high counts, in addition to the WeBS counts, of 102 on 4 May and 138 on 5 Jun. There were 140 at Rye Hbr on 28 Jul.

In the autumn and second winter period there were few significant counts; as usual Fishbourne Channel held the highest number with a peak count of 137 on 17 Oct. Elsewhere, there were 38 at Lewes Brooks on 23 Nov and 90 at East Guldeford Levels on 7 Dec. [J Curson]

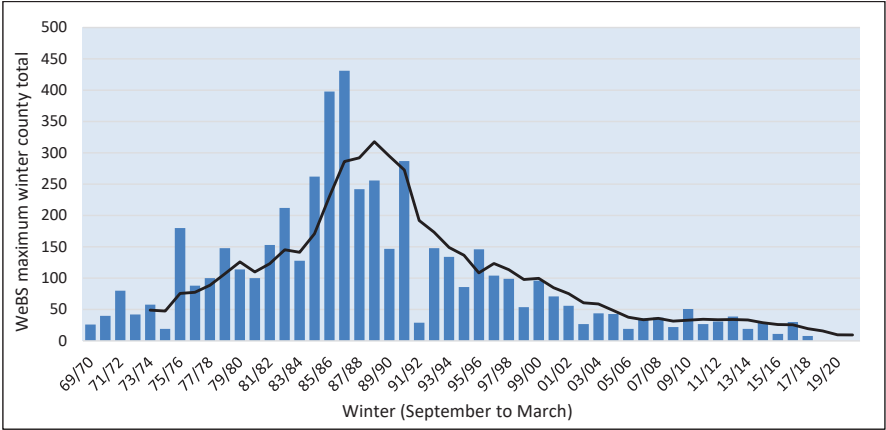
Bewick's Swan*Cygnus columbianus*

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

Numbers in the first winter period were similar to last year. The largest herd was of 15 at East Guldeford Level on 24 Jan and was a welcome count for this declining species. As usual, all other records came from the Arun Valley, where numbers were similar to those of the last two years. A group of three adults was seen on several dates in January and February between Amberley Wild Brooks and South Stoke. They were joined by another on 21 Jan, and on 15 Feb a total of six were present and remained until 26 Feb.

In the second winter period all records came from the Arun Valley, with two at Amberley Wild Brooks on 22 Dec. Five were at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Dec and a herd of ten (all adults) was at Burpham on the same day, remaining in the area until the year's end. From the records submitted it is not possible to say whether the five at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Dec were different to the ten seen at Burpham a couple of hours later on the same day or part of that herd.

For the second winter none was recorded in the WeBS and the graph below of the peak winter WeBS monthly county totals since 1969/70 and the five-year rolling mean trend line clearly shows the pattern of occurrence in the county.



There were no reports of young birds during the year (though the ages of the 15 at East Guldeford Level were not recorded), which is a worrying sign. Bewick's Swans have been in decline since the 1960s and this species is now classified as Endangered in the European Red List of Birds. [J Curson]

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiaca

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	36	42	52	14	18	48	56	60	137	92	47	69
Arun Valley N of Arundel	7	2	4	-	3	25	20	23	2	7	7	10
Ifield MP	2	6	-	-	2	3	nc	-	13	-	-	4
Ardingly Res	-	-	2	nc	nc	2	6	nc	32	2	4	8
Rye Bay	10	14	16	9	-	9	27	26	65	61	5	12
Average county total 2010 to 2019	17	13	12	19	14	19	23	22	26	20	20	19

There were sightings from 128 tetrads (13%), a considerable rise from the 97 in 2019 and further evidence of the spread of this species through the county.

As usual, the first goslings were seen in late winter, with six young at Midhurst on 13 Feb and nine at Crawley on the 19th. Breeding was also proven by single pairs at Benbow Pond, Parham Estate, Ardingly Res and Bayham, with three pairs at Pett Level and probably at least six pairs at Rye Hbr.

The highest counts of the year were in the second winter period, with 61 at Scotney GP on 21

Sep the peak. There were also 43 at Petworth Park on 19 Oct and 32 at Ardingly Res on 19 Sep, with a notable count of 21 at Broomhill Level on 30 Dec. There were 81 counts of ten or more birds during the year, compared with just four in 2011.

Interesting coastal records included one tagged onto the end of a line of Brent Geese flying east offshore from Telscombe Cliffs on 3 Apr and three flying south out to sea at Goring Gap on 7 Apr. [A Thomas]



Egyptian Goose goslings, Hampden Park, 24 April (Peter Brookes)

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 113 tetrads (12%), one more than in 2019 and higher than the 10-year average of 91 (range 78 to 112). 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	629	576	545	45	269	199	56	10	58	134	305	574
Chichester Hbr	407	333	312	nc	115	110	18	3	22	109	253	426
Pagham Hbr	139	133	139	nc	100	52	13	6	29	21	39	102
Rye Bay	36	54	54	38	38	29	25	1	7	2	6	30
Average county total 2010 to 2019	893	832	727	463	322	215	73	47	46	80	371	669

The count for January was the lowest since an incomplete count in 1965, numbers remaining low through the first winter period, with a count of 161 at Thorney Deepes on 10 Jan being the highest, while 63 at Rye Hbr on 13 Mar were the most seen at a single site during the year in East Sussex.

Successful breeding was noted at a good selection of sites, with two broods at West Wittering, one at Thorney Deepes, 10 ducklings with an adult pair at Pagham Hbr, young ducklings at South Stakes Island on the late date of 15 Jul, one brood at Medmerry, one at Warningcamp, one at Rodmell Brooks, one at Seven Sisters CP, and one at Camber. Twelve pairs produced four broods at Pett Level, and there were at least 15 ducklings at East Guldeford Level. Breeding was probable at Pulborough Brooks and at Rye Hbr where there were still 38 birds in mid-May. Probably the most unusual breeding records were pairs with nine and ten ducklings on dewponds on the downs above Sompting and Lancing on 20 May; by mid-July only two young had survived at the Sompting site.

Numbers on the WeBS counts in the second half of the year remained lower than average.

There were, as usual, just small numbers of birds seen passing seawatching sites, with peak passage in March to May and a total of 83 E at Splash Point (Seaford) during those three months. [A Thomas]

Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Scarce introduced resident.

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	48	29	5	7	23	34	30	19	29	16	21	19
Arun Valley (Arundel - l'hampton)	6	6	-	-	2	-	4	6	-	-	-	-
Arun Valley N of Arundel	-	1	2	3	10	2	3	1	-	2	7	12
Kneppmill Pond	nc	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	12	12	nc	nc
Slaugham MP	15	6	1	nc	3	18	13	5	4	-	8	5
Weir Wood Res	25	14	nc	nc	nc	5	2	nc	4	nc	nc	nc
Average county total 2010 - 2019	37	28	23	23	20	28	44	40	36	29	35	36

There were records from 81 tetrads (8.4%), higher than the 10-year average of 74 (range 59 to 99). The peak count of the year from a single site was 38 at Sapperton Wood (Maynards Green) on 18 Jan. There was also a high total of 25 at Powdermill Res on 25 Jan.

Successful breeding was noted at Stedham, Burton MP, Chingford Pond, Arundel WWT/Swanbourne Lake area, Coldwaltham, Pulborough Brooks, Warnham LNR (in a Tawny Owl box), Leonardslee, Tilgate Forest, Ardingly Res, Knowlands Fm (Barcombe), Weir Wood Res (at least two broods), Eridge Park, and Ham Fm (Groombridge). However, at Troutbeck (Eridge), where it has been in decline, there was no breeding for the first time in many years.

The highest count of the second winter period was 31 at Weir Wood Res on 15 Dec.

While most records were, as usual, in the Wealden woods and main river valleys, there were a few coastal records, with a female at Birdham Pool on 2 Jan, one at Ferring Rife on 22 Feb, two at Hastings on 2 and 3 Apr, two at Pagham Hbr on 7 Jun, one male at Widewater (Lancing) from 4 Aug to 18 Oct, and two at West Langney Lake (Eastbourne) on 22 Nov. [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 28 tetrads (2.9%), compared with the 10-year average of 25 (range 16 to 30). The first record was of one at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Feb, an early date compared with the 10-year mean arrival date of 15 Mar. At Pulborough Brooks there were then records of one up to 11 Mar, with three on 6 Mar and four on 12 Mar. At Pagham Hbr, up to three were recorded on several dates from 16 Mar to 1 Apr. There were also March and April records of between one and three birds at Chichester GP, Lidsey Rife, Amberley Wild Brooks, Henfield Levels, Seaford, the Cuckmere Valley, Pevensy Levels, Pett Level and Rye Hbr, with a higher count of six at Cuckmere Haven on 22 Mar. The only observed spring migration involved 7 E past Birling Gap on 15 Mar, 2 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 17 Mar and another 2 E there on 11 Apr.

Minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Monthly minima	1	26	20	10	6	4	15	3	4
No. of sites	1	9	11	7	4	2	4	2	2

Three at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) included a single male and a pair in May; one brood was seen. Although two pairs were present at Pett Level during the summer, breeding was not confirmed.

Notable autumn records included four at Weir Wood Res on 12 Aug, three there on 26 Aug and three at Arlington Res on 3 Oct. Offshore return migration was observed only at Selsey Bill, with 5 W on 16 Aug. The last record for the year was of one at Pett Level on 12 Oct, 20 days later than the mean last date of 22 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 95 tetrads (9.8%), higher than the 10-year average of 77 (range 64 to 85). 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	1344	1019	794	17	8	24	9	16	158	442	563	816
Chichester GP	216	112	94	nc	-	-	-	14	47	47	21	44
Arun Valley N of Arundel	171	143	77	8	5	-	-	1	5	70	75	86
Upper Adur Levels	20	50	240	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	20
Barcombe Res	186	93	65	nc	nc	-	-	-	2	95	nc	95
Eastbourne Lakes	220	118	56	nc	-	-	-	nc	15	24	14	79
Combe Valley CP	nc	186	82	nc	-	-	-	-	16	55	150	92
Rye Bay	461	243	103	9	2	24	8	-	51	96	205	320
Average county total 2010 to 2019	825	781	493	145	22	21	10	30	117	260	538	729

In the first winter period the county totals exceeded the 10-year averages in each month. The highest WeBS count was of 240 at Henfield Levels on 9 Mar, but higher counts were recorded at Pulborough Brooks with 300 on 6 Jan and 250 on the 28th, at Henfield Levels where there were 260 on 15 Mar and at Combe Valley CP with 320 on 25 Jan. The 1% national threshold figure of

190 was also exceeded at Rye Hbr (238 on 12 Jan), Shinewater Lake (Eastbourne) (220 on 6 Jan) and Scotney GP (200 on 13 Jan).

Observed eastwards spring migration was, as usual, very light; peak passage occurred on 5 Apr when 62 E were counted at Splash Point (Seaford) in 4 hr and smaller numbers, presumably of the same birds, were noted at Worthing (25 E) and Telscombe Cliffs (20 E).

Breeding was confirmed at three sites. At Pett Level there were an estimated 40 pairs and at least 12 broods were seen and 60 young fledged. This success was attributed to higher water levels on the scrape which attracted more nesting duck and a higher success rate particularly as the water was nevertheless too shallow to allow predatory pike to have much effect. At Rye Hbr only one brood was observed. At Waltham Brooks two adults were seen with three young. Only one pair was seen at Pulborough Brooks, on 2 Jul. At Arundel WWT wildfowl productivity was either very low or nil due to predation.

Detecting the first returning migrants was complicated by the small numbers summering, but 14 in eclipse at Chichester GP on 20 Aug were recorded as the first returning birds there, a month later than in 2019. There were double-figure counts at Pulborough Brooks from 7 Aug and numbers built up slowly from September with 40 at Pett Level on the 4th, 50 at Chichester GP on the 9th and the first treble-figure count of 150 at Rye Hbr on 7 Oct. [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.

Gadwall were recorded in 93 tetrads (10%) this year. 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	918	679	431	77	52	245	112	207	301	284	419	704
Chichester GP	54	43	16	nc	6	28	44	18	51	33	22	35
Arun Valley N of Arundel	117	72	94	34	20	22	21	13	41	61	54	119
Combe Valley CP	nc	78	42	nc	-	-	-	-	4	44	20	66
Rye Bay	437	344	178	35	15	165	39	117	107	53	183	269
Average county total 2010 to 2019	816	690	265	127	99	82	68	139	255	291	438	779

The highest count of the first winter period was 357 at Rye Hbr on 12 Jan, with 285 on Castle Water alone on 11 Jan. A total of 140 at Marsh Fm (Yapton), on 24 Jan was also notable.

The WeBS count for January was a little above the average for the previous ten years, but although numbers fell away through the rest of the first winter period as is usual, the number remaining at the March count was the highest on record for that month.

Successful breeding was noted at Chichester GP (one pair, but with nearly all of 50 birds there on 27 Jun thought to be juveniles), Pagham Hbr (one pair), Burton MP (two pairs), Chingford Pond (three pairs), Swanbourne Lake (an estimated 25 young fledged), and Warnham MP (one pair). At Pett Level at least 25 broods were seen; of 126 birds counted on 2 Aug, about 100 were thought to be fledged young, with ten quite small ducklings present there on the late date of 4 Aug. However, there was no evidence of success at Rye Hbr.

The June WeBS count was nearly double the previous record for that month, and the August count was likewise also a new county high.

In the second winter period, the highest count was 173 at Rye Hbr on 13 Dec, with 150 in the Combe Valley CP on 28 Nov an impressive total, as were 128 at Swanbourne Lake on 1 Dec and 100 at Ivy Lake (Chichester GP) on 24 Dec.

This is a very scarce species at seawatching sites, with peak monthly counts all at Selsey Bill of 4 W in March, 7 E in April, 9 W in May and 2 W in October. [A Thomas]



Wigeon, Dell Quay, 4 December (Bob Brewer)

Eurasian Wigeon

Mareca penelope

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

The species was recorded in 119 tetrads (12%), slightly more than recent years. 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	6815	8788	6543	4	1	3	-	4	2123	11618	6592	7790
Chichester Hbr	1184	1749	508	nc	-	-	-	-	807	7587	3215	2271
Pagham Hbr	977	990	476	nc	-	-	-	-	827	1018	827	1211
Arun Valley N of Arundel	1238	2410	3561	-	-	1	-	-	112	803	890	1674
Rye Bay	1682	1741	1087	-	-	2	-	4	275	1781	987	2044
Average county total 2010 to 2019	10810	9566	3693	74	6	3	2	18	1068	4449	6403	8974

The January count was the lowest on record, and numbers remained below average in February. However, the March count was the highest for that month since 1998, indicating lots of birds lingering in the county. In fact, the highest single site count in the first winter period was in March: 2372 at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 9th.

Away from the strongholds of Chichester Hbr, the Arun Valley and Pagham Hbr, there were peak annual counts of 894 at Rye Hbr on 21 Jan and 610 at Cuckmere Haven on 10 Jan.

The last three-figure counts of the spring were 107 and 100 at Pagham Hbr and Arlington Res respectively on 24 Mar. After a count of 20 at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Apr, there were then just single-figure maxima right through the summer, with no suggestion of breeding. The first marked return began on 31 Aug with double-figure counts at four coastal sites.

Numbers were unexceptional in September, although the build-up at Thorney Deepes hinted at what was to come, with 200 there on 3 Sep and 400 on 10 Sep. However, the October WeBS count was astonishing; the highest on record for that month and almost treble the average for the previous ten years. A large proportion of this was from Chichester Hbr, where 4000 at Thorney Island on 16 Oct was the highest single site count of the year.

Numbers in November and December were then down on the October count, although there were an impressive 1960 at Fishbourne on 27 Nov, 732 at Arlington Res on 11 Dec, 825 at Rye Hbr on 13 Dec and 830 at Scotney GP, also on the 13th.

At seawatching sites, there were the typical small numbers of birds seen, with 60 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 7 Feb exceptional in the first half of the year. There were, however, a good series of records from Selsey Bill from late August onwards, with highest counts in October when there were 71 E and 122 W recorded. [A Thomas]

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

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

Mallards were recorded in 450 tetrads (47%) compared with the 10-year average of 420 (range 358 to 531). During the first winter period SWBS 323 birds were encountered in 34% of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 43 on 7 Feb at Wardley.

The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2475	2087	1509	474	772	1624	1786	2846	2795	3372	3809	3307
Chichester Hbr	284	307	194	nc	53	100	76	77	120	216	328	305
Arun Valley N of Arundel	467	467	341	269	265	643	409	567	493	500	670	641
Angmering Decoy Ponds	111	nc	43	13	27	29	380	600	263	350	342	nc
Bewl Water	93	64	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	416	358	293
Rye Bay	280	220	114	44	50	99	177	626	240	381	406	352
Average county total 2010 to 2019	3654	2825	1864	1314	1311	1659	2117	3114	3470	3750	3681	3932

County totals were generally in keeping with the 10-year averages except in April, when the total was only 36% of the average, and May, when it was only 58%. No site reached the 1% national threshold total of 6700.

As usual, observed eastwards spring migration was scanty; the highest day count was 5 E at Selsey Bill on 20 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in 78 tetrads, an increase on last year's 61, and was probable in a further 45. Display was first seen on 12 Feb at Arundel WWT and on the 25th at Haywards Heath. The first ducklings were seen on 15 Mar at Pett Level and on the 21st at Crawley and young ducklings were still being recorded as late as 7 Sep at Ditchling Common and 9 Sep at

Henfield. During the BBS Mallards were encountered in 35% of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 40 on 21 Jun at Wivelsfield Green.

During the late year SWBS 433 birds were encountered in 21% of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 113 on 6 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 61 tetrads (6.3%), higher 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	310	210	237	-	-	-	-	-	81	113	190	469
Chichester Hbr	67	72	8	nc	-	-	-	-	2	18	23	180
Pagham Hbr	121	38	6	nc	-	-	-	-	70	86	10	140
Arun Valley N of Arundel	78	37	94	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	136	110
Upper Adur Levels	6	30	122	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	10	11
Average county total 2010 to 2019	470	406	186	8					40	126	271	425

While the county totals for January and February were well below the 10-year averages, that for March was higher, possibly due to delayed departure to the breeding grounds.

The highest WeBS count in the first winter period was 121 at Pagham Hbr, but higher counts, exceeding the 1% national threshold of 200, were recorded on other dates: at Pulborough Brooks the highest of eight counts of 200 or more was 500 on 6 Feb and at Henfield Levels there were 200 on 18 Feb and 250 on 15 Mar. In the second winter period, the highest WeBS count was 140 but of five counts of 140 or more at Pulborough Brooks the highest was 200 on 22 Nov.

Eastward migration recorded at the principal seawatching sites was, as usual, light. Between 8 Feb and 27 Apr a total of only 74 E was noted with a peak of 22 E at Selsey Bill on 8 Feb. The latest spring record was of one seen at Pett Level on 30 May.

Breeding was not suspected. Pairs were recorded at Pulborough Brooks on 16 Mar and at Pett Level on 6 and 22 Apr, presumably paired up before migrating. Four juveniles were noted at Rye Hbr on 15 Sep.

The first returning migrant was noted on 21 Jul at Pett Level. Peak westwards migration was recorded on 16 Nov with 25 W in ½ hr at Worthing. The first treble-figure count, of 122, was recorded on 24 Sep at Pagham Hbr. The next was more than a month later on 30 Oct when there were 100 at Pulborough Brooks. [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.

The species was recorded in 140 tetrads (14%), slightly more than in recent years. The monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites were as in the table below.

The counts in the first winter period were all a little lower than the average for the previous ten years. The highest single-site count was 1000 at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Jan. A count of 151 at Newenden Flood on 13 Feb was notable for the site.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	4020	4060	1971	26	2	95	12	201	1092	2671	2344	3428
Chichester Hbr	861	950	401	nc	-	-	-	8	384	653	598	981
Pagham Hbr	563	210	288	nc	-	4	-	66	218	295	273	393
Arun Valley N of Arundel	1444	1433	779	-	-	2	11	32	164	1200	877	933
Rye Bay	564	784	241	16	2	89	1	44	116	251	363	578
Average county total 2010 to 2019	5656	4240	2354	339	7	31	36	302	1263	2131	3780	5132

The last sizeable flock of spring was 100 at Thorney Deepes on 5 Apr. Over the summer, there was as usual a scattering of birds, mainly at Pagham Hbr, Pulborough Brooks, Pett Level and Rye Hbr. Most counts were in single figures, but there were exceptional tallies of 86 at Rye Hbr on 7 Jun and 30 at Winchelsea Beach on 9 Jun. There were, sadly, no breeding records this year.

Numbers built up from late August, with 120 at Pagham Hbr on 21 Aug the first three-figure count of the autumn. Although the October WeBS count was about 500 higher than the average for the previous ten years, the November and December counts were the lowest since 1989. However, the highest count from a single site was made during this time, 1500 at Pulborough Brooks on 17 Nov. A total of 700 at Medmerry on 20 Oct was also of note.

The bulk of the seawatching records were from Selsey Bill during the year, with small numbers of birds in most months, and a peak day count of 39 (27 W, 12 E) on 31 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 record was of a first winter drake at Warnham LNR on 10 Dec. [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.

Pochards were recorded in 55 tetrads (5.7%), almost equalling the 10-year average of 50 (range 41 to 60). The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	462	369	202	12	23	51	80	86	153	250	233	336
Chichester GP	273	150	110	nc	9	17	58	44	98	113	97	164
Barcombe Res	63	39	12	nc	nc	-	-	2	5	13	nc	18
Rye Bay	98	146	48	6	4	28	21	39	48	102	104	93
Average county total 2010 to 2019	496	377	123	34	27	33	59	120	91	127	246	402

During the seven core months, the county total was higher than the 10-year average in March, September and October. The only day counts higher than the WeBS occurred in the second winter period, see below.

There were only two records of observed spring migration: 4 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Apr and 4 E at Selsey Bill on 12 Jun.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites. At Chichester GP four broods of four, four, three and two were recorded on 5 Jul and the next day on a different pit broods of one, three and five were seen; and a female with one tiny duckling was recorded on the late date of 20 Aug, so there were at least eight broods at this extended site. At Pett Level three broods were seen and fledging success was

considered high. At Rye Hbr a brood was noted on 20 May and a possible second brood on 7 Jun.

An influx of 60 at Rye Hbr on 16 Aug was the first sizeable arrival of returning migrants. Numbers there increased to 150, the first treble-figure count, on 30 Sep following which there were five further treble-figure non-WeBS counts with peaks of 250 at Rye Hbr on 8 Nov and 9 Dec. [JA Hobson]

Ferruginous Duck

Aythya nyroca

Rare vagrant

2019. The record of a drake at Pett Pools from 13 Jul to 15 Aug (P Rouse et al.) has been accepted by BBRC. [M Mallalieu]

Tufted Duck

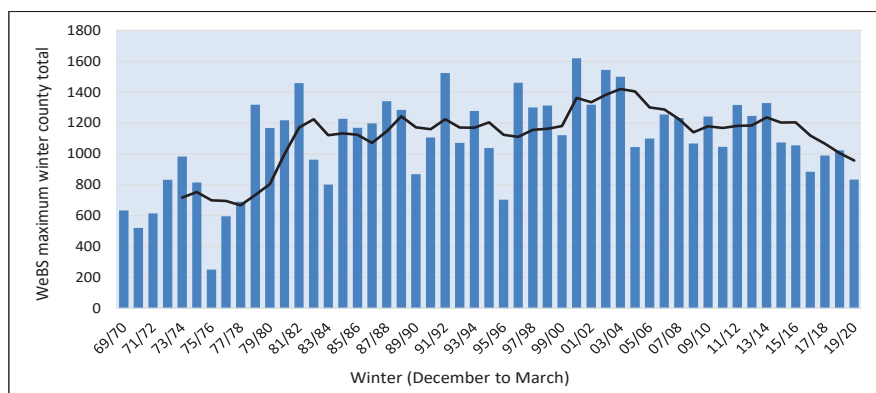
Aythya fuligula

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

Tufted Ducks were recorded in 115 tetrads (12%) compared with the 10-year average of 105 (range 89 to 126). The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	738	728	759	160	245	241	212	447	456	706	712	786
Chichester GP	169	177	270	nc	26	26	22	85	83	168	154	152
Burton & Chingford Pond	22	49	56	nc	35	27	6	34	67	78	85	118
Arun Valley N of Arundel	85	126	93	60	70	32	16	46	38	41	58	92
Rye Bay	154	151	137	99	53	89	62	179	104	203	221	181
Average county total 2010 to 2019	1089	993	785	558	363	260	313	407	510	556	769	922

Of the seven core months only in October was the county total higher than the 10-year average. The graph below of the annual peak winter WeBS monthly county totals since 1969/70 and the five-year rolling mean trend line, suggests a recent decline.



Significant non-WeBS counts included 120 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 1 Apr and 100 at Darwell Res on 25 Nov. Notable WeBS counts not mentioned in the table include 101 at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 10 Feb, 84 at Barcombe Res on 21 Sep and 258 at Southwater CP on 17 Oct. The 1% national threshold figure of 1300 was not met at any site.

As usual, observed eastwards spring migration was very light. The highest day count was four at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in 12 tetrads, slightly fewer than last year's 14, and was probable in a further 12. The first fledged young were recorded on 6 Jun at Pett Level. The largest broods counted were 11 on 1 Jul at Wivelsfield and nine at Pett Level on 13 Jun. Numbers began to increase in August; the first three-figure count was 146 at Scotney GP on the 23rd. There were six three-figure counts and 43 counts of between 50 and 99 during the autumn and second winter period. [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.

One was at Kneppmill Pond on 3 Jan but the majority of records in the first winter period were from Combe Valley CP, where a maximum of four (one drake and three females) was recorded from 16 Jan to 6 Mar. The only spring passage record was of six flying east together at Splash Point (Seaford) on 5 Mar. There were no further records until one at Scotney GP from 5 Dec with two there on the 29th. [BGR Ives]

Common Eider

Somateria mollissima

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

Common Eiders were recorded in small numbers along the coast in every month of the year except July. The most notable record of the first winter period and indeed of the year was an offshore raft of at least 20 at East Head (West Wittering) on 18 and 19 Jan. In addition, three were off Shoreham and Lancing on 1 Jan, presumably the same group, and a pair at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 3 Jan were also recorded on 14 Mar so presumably had remained in the area. At Selsey Bill in February a total of 15 flew west with a maximum count of 9 W on 10 Feb.

The largest of the spring movements and counts were 5 E at Birling Gap on 15 Mar, 6 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Mar, 6 E at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) and Goring on 4 Apr, these having been seen at Selsey Bill earlier the same day, and nine off Selsey Bill on 30 Apr. Late spring and summer records included 4 E at Selsey Bill on 15 May and 6 E at Pett Level on 12 Jun.

The first autumn record was of one at Selsey Bill on 30 Aug. The largest counts were 14 W at Goring on 12 Oct and 15 W past Church Norton later that day, perhaps only involving a total of 15 birds. There were 7 E and 5 W at Selsey on 6 Nov. From mid-November to the end of the year, ones and twos were recorded on several dates between Worthing and Chichester Hbr, with six at Selsey Bill on 2 Dec and 3 W at Goring on 31 Dec. Further east, there were 3 W at Beachy Head on 26 Dec. [BGR Ives]

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 the first records were from Pett Level, with three on the 1st and two on the 8th, followed by 2 W at Worthing on the 13th. There were no records in February and on 23 Mar there were 1 E at Goring, two at Worthing and 7 E at Splash Point (Seaford).

A total of 14 flew east on four dates between 4 Apr and 7 May comprising 3 E at Splash Point on 4 Apr, 7 E at Worthing and 6 E at Splash Point on 7 Apr, 2 E at Splash Point on 29 Apr and on 7 May 2 E at both Selsey Bill and Splash Point. This, the last sighting for the period, was nine days earlier than the 10-year average.

The first returning birds were 2 E past Selsey on 20 Sep, 31 days earlier than the 10-year average. There were no further sightings until 15 Oct when there were 2 E past Worthing. At Selsey Bill 23 birds were recorded from September through to December. For the same period 11 were recorded at Worthing. The highest daily counts were 7 W past Selsey on 6 Nov and 6 W past Goring on 28 Dec. A single, confiding individual Velvet Scoter remained at Sovereign Hbr Marina from 8 Dec into 2021. [M Orchard-Webb]



Velvet Scoter, Sovereign Harbour 30 December (Laurence Pitcher)

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.

Common Scoters were recorded offshore in all months as usual, mostly from the Selsey Peninsula and in Rye Bay, mainly from Pett Level. However, numbers were low, particularly in West Sussex, as the table of the maximum counts in each month at these two locations shows.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey area	3	1	9	25	8	6	1	-	3	-	25	25
Rye Bay	250	50	50	-	200	6	50	1	20	20	30	120

The peak counts in West Sussex were just 25 offshore at Selsey Bill on 23 Apr, 23 Nov and 6 Dec whilst in Rye Bay there were at least 250 offshore at Pett Level on 10 Jan. Elsewhere there were 700 at Pevensey Bay on 1 Jan comprising c.300 birds seen flying west followed an hour later by another c.400 which rose from the sea and also flew west.

The March to May eastbound total of 6591 was notably lower than the previous 10-year average of 10,737 but is likely to be related to considerably fewer hours watching with no observations

recorded from Birling Gap during April and May. The more detailed month figures for the year from five regularly watched locations are shown below:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	15	22	451	1255	1031	244	262	39	44	55	82	68
	W	32	12	77	25	31	31	218	69	64	171	137	263
Worthing & Goring	E	-	-	161	489	81	70	-	1	1	26	27	16
	W	-	-	3	25	22	-	-	-	2	3	23	41
Telscombe Cliffs	E	-	-	-	1172	224	47	-	3	1	19	-	3
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	-	4	1257	3096	544	-	-	3	-	1	3	-
	W	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Birling Gap	E	2	15	27	-	-	-	-	30	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	14	-	-

On just four spring days were more than 500 Common Scoters recorded flying east from any site; the details of these days, with the time watched to the nearest hour, are shown below:

	24 Mar	4 Apr	5 Apr	23 Apr
Selsey Bill	95 (4)	109 (3)	460 (4)	36 (3)
Worthing & Goring	101 (3)	14 (2)	242 (3)	25 (3)
Shoreham	333 (3)	34 (1)	393 (3)	2 (5)
Roedean	179 (2)	nc	418(3)	nc
Telscombe Cliffs	nc	125 (2)	381 (4)	52 (6)
Newhaven	nc	70 (4)	226 (6)	213 (6)
Splash Point (Seaford)	858 (7)	1124 (8)	1176 (13)	783 (10)

A drake at Weir Wood Res on 20 and 21 Mar and one there on 15 Sep were the only inland sightings. Nocturnal flight calls were recorded over Pulborough on 2, 3 and 26 Apr and 26 Oct. [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.

The best site for this species in the first winter period was Scotney GP where a maximum of five was recorded from 1 Jan to 17 Mar; these long staying birds were sometimes in Sussex and sometimes in Kent. This is the largest flock on a Sussex water since a party of 11 on one of Chichester GP on 14 Dec 1994. Elsewhere in East Sussex one was at Rye Hbr on 1 Jan and offshore at Pett Level on 2 Jan and 18 Mar.

In West Sussex one flew west at Selsey Bill on 1 Jan, presumably the same bird seen offshore at Felpham (Bognor Regis) the same day. In Chichester Hbr two were noted at Dell Quay on 4 Jan and subsequent records from Apuldram, Fishbourne and Nutbourne are likely to relate to one of these birds, notably an over-wintering female which was regularly recorded there.

Spring records for March, April and May were from the well-watched coastal sites at Selsey Bill (2 E on 20 Mar, 1 E on 18 Apr, 1 E on 24 May and one offshore on 13 and 17 Apr); and at Splash Point (Seaford) (1 E on 5 Apr).

In the second winter period singles were in Chichester Hbr on 26 Oct and at Scotney GP on 14 Nov, possibly the same as the individual there in early 2021. [BGR Ives]

Goldeneye*Bucephala clangula*

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	16	20	5		-	-	5
Chichester Hbr	10	6	1		-	-	2
Pagham Hbr	-	4	-		-	-	-
Rye Bay	6	9	4		-	-	3
Average county total 2010 to 2019	22	25	8		1	4	15

In the first winter period, the highest counts were in Chichester Hbr: ten at Thorney Island on both 10 and 11 Jan, nine in the Fishbourne Channel on 4 and 24 Jan, with up to eight recorded there on 18 other dates during the first quarter. Throughout this period Goldeneye were regularly recorded at Rye Hbr with a peak of eight on 9 Feb. Outside the principal sites, two were at Pett Level on 21 Feb and single birds were reported at Amberley Wild Brooks on 1 Jan, Bewl Water on 7 Feb, Darwell Res on 5 Jan and 2 Mar and Scotney GP on five dates. None was recorded after 17 Mar until the final spring record of a very late individual on 31 May at Darwell Res.

The first returning bird was on 28 Oct at Rye Hbr, eight days later than the 10-year average arrival date. Numbers were slow to increase during the second winter period with a few singles and just two records of two in November. The highest counts during this period were eight at Fishbourne Channel on 29 Dec, six there on 25 Dec, four at Thorney Deepes on 2 Dec and four at Rye Hbr on 26 Dec.

Away from these main locations singles were at Combe Valley CP on 9 Nov, Pett Level on the 29th and off Selsey Bill on the 27th, 29th and 30th. In December there was one at Scotney GP on the 4th and three at Pett Level on the 16th, with one there the next day. [M Orchard-Webb]

Smew*Mergellus albellus*

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

During the first winter period a redhead was recorded at Pulborough Brooks on 21, 25, 26 and 27 Jan and presumably the same individual appeared at nearby Amberley Wild Brooks on 29 Jan. There were a series of sightings at Rye Harbour, again of a redhead on 12 dates from 1 to 28 Jan.

There were no records during the second winter period. [M Orchard-Webb]

Goosander*Mergus merganser*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the first quarter records for Goosander came from nine coastal and six inland sites, differing from 2019 when the split was even. The first record of the year was of one at Pett Level on 6 Jan which lingered until the 12th. Later in the month four, a drake and three females, were noted there on the 26th and the same combination seen at Rye Hbr later that day were probably the same birds. Inland, a drake was at Chichester GP, albeit briefly, on 19 Jan whilst at the traditional site of Petworth Park one was present on 25 Jan and sightings of single birds went on into late February.

Other February records of note were two redheads on a scrape at Cuckmere Haven between

5 and 8 Feb, one at Pett Level on the 6th and a female feeding in the shallows of the lake at Slaugham on 8 Feb. At Troutbeck (Eridge) up to five were noted in late February with six together there from 12 to 17 Mar being the highest count in 2020. Two were noted in this period from Pulborough Brooks on 7 and 13 Mar and two flew west past Selsey Bill on 26 Mar. The two records in April both related to the same migrating drake passing east along the coast on the 3rd, initially at Selsey Bill and subsequently at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 3rd, 18 days earlier than the 10-year average departure date.

The first returning bird of the autumn was a redhead which flew down Ferring Rife on 26 Sep. It seems probable that this was the well-watched bird that lingered in the lower Adur Valley for the rest of the year and was only the second record for September this century.

The majority of records in the second winter period were in November and on the 7th a female noted at Pett Level was considered to be returning for its third winter in the area. Beeding Brooks held three on the 8th, the highest count at the year's end, and one of these was still present at the end of the month. One at Selsey Bill on both the 26th and 28th appears to be the redhead seen feeding from Church Norton spit in the early part of December. A drake and female were at Weir Wood Res on 17 and 18 Dec. One or two were at Troutbeck on four dates during this period.

The last records of the year were of a drake feeding in a drainage channel at Cuckmere Haven on 26 Dec and of a redhead at Pulborough Brooks on the same date. [BGR Ives]

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

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

The vast majority of sightings (91%) were from coastal or near-coastal sites in West Sussex. The highest day counts east of Hove were of 10 E past Splash Point (Seaford) and Fairlight on 24 Mar, 12 E at Splash Point on 11 Apr and four day counts of five to eight there. In West Sussex there were four counts of 50 or more. There were no inland records.

The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	110	105	134	-		1	9	34	60
Chichester Hbr	106	96	115	nc		-	7	33	55
Pagham Hbr	4	7	12	nc		1	2	1	5
Average county total 2010-19	153	134	145	6			12	94	123

Monthly totals in Chichester Hbr for January and March exceeded the 1% national threshold of 100. Significant monthly totals were also recorded at two seawatching sites in West Sussex during the winter months, as shown below:

		Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	222	123	164		9	94	183
	W	119	213	106		11	89	134
	o/s	26	75	47		1	28	16
Worthing & Goring	E	6	1	12		-	8	34
	W	2	-	-		4	12	28
	o/s	289	117	30		-	61	102

The monthly totals of birds moving east or west probably involved local movements rather than passage. While the highest day count of birds offshore at Selsey Bill was only 17 on 14

Feb, between Worthing and Goring there were 86 on 25 Jan and 65 on 5 Feb. At Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea), part way between these sites, the highest count was 45 on 26 Nov.

The latest spring record was of 6 E at Splash Point on 21 May. The first returning bird was noted at Pagham Hbr on 20 Sep but numbers were in single figures until 8 Nov when 10 W and 9 E were recorded at Selsey Bill. In November there were 15 day counts in double figures in a range of 11 to 45, the largest being the 45 offshore at Elmer Rocks on the 26th. In December there were 19 double-figure counts; 50 involving 28 W and 22 E at Selsey Bill on the 28th was the highest. [JA Hobson]

Common Nighthawk

Chordeiles minor

Very rare vagrant.

The most outlandish vagrant of the year, the first Common Nighthawk for Sussex was found hawking over Church Norton at 16:15 hr on 8 Oct (A Wilkes *et al.*). It lingered just long enough for some local birders to see it before it flew over Pagham Hbr two hours or so after discovery. The bird was searched for all the next day but it had clearly moved on. An account of this exciting find is on pages 220 to 221 of this report. The record has been accepted by BBRC. [DK Campbell]

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 54 (5.6%) tetrads, 12 more than in 2019 and also further increases on 2017 and 2018. Tetrads with records mainly covered the Wealden Heaths and Ashdown Forest. The first records of the year were close to the 10-year mean arrival date, with a single bird in flight at Sompting on 4 May and two churring males near Midhurst on 5 May. Coastal sightings during spring migration were of singles at Selsey Bill, Pagham Hbr, Aldwick, and Pett Level during the second and third weeks of May.

The first record for the Wealden Heaths was of one at Black Down on 18 May. At least five, including at least three churring birds, were reported on 19 May at Ambersham Common and another five at Lavington Common on the same date. Although the annual WHBBS was incomplete due to COVID-19 restrictions, 53 pairs or territories were recorded (see page 218). This total included 20 pairs or territories on Ambersham and Heyshott Commons, nine on the Lavington Commons complex, seven on Black Down and six on Iping Common. There were no records confirming breeding anywhere during 2020.

The first records for Ashdown Forest were of three birds on 16 May. There was evidence of probable breeding from at least six sites and at least another 17 churring males were reported.

As in 2019, counts on RSPB reserves recorded three displaying or calling males at Wiggonholt Common and ten at Broadwater Warren; two birds were recorded visiting a probable nest site at Wiggonholt Common on 26 Jun.

Elsewhere, there were reports indicative of probable, but again not confirmed, breeding at Midhurst, Burton MP, Rewell Wood (Arundel), Steyning Downland Scheme, Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods (Horsham), Red House Common (Chailey), and Abbot's Wood (Hailsham). Churring males were also recorded in the breeding season at West Heath Common, Marley Common, Elmer's Marsh (Milland), Memorial Common (Chailey) and Wilmington. The only record of autumn migration was of a bird that died after being caught by a cat at Woodingdean on 25 Sep, 13 days later than the 10-year average last date. [A Rowe]

Common Swift*Apus apus*

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

Common Swifts were recorded in 375 tetrads (39%) during the year compared to the 10-year average of 338 (range 262 to 407). The GBW recorded the species from 36 (9.3%) of 389 gardens surveyed during the year.

The first bird back in Sussex was observed at Goring on 10 Apr, the same date as for 2019 and three days earlier than the 10-year average. In the last 20 years the first arrival date for this species has varied by only 13 days but is gradually advancing. There were five further records of one until 17 Apr, four at Crawley on 19 Apr and daily observations thereafter. From 22 Apr where there were ten at Uckfield, larger numbers occurred; 100 at Rye Hbr on 1 May was the first 3-figure count, whilst on 4 May there were 67 at Newhaven, 68 at Barcombe Cross and 86 at Wivelsfield. A further ten counts greater than 50 were received by the end of May, three of which were 100 or more with a maximum of 140 at Rye Hbr on 13 May.

Breeding was confirmed from 12 tetrads and was probable in another 28 (cf. 16 and 21 respectively in 2019). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the RSPB Brighton Swift Group was unable to carry out any survey work during the year, perhaps influencing the lower number of tetrads recording breeding evidence. The Lewes Swift Group, however, were fully functioning and returned much useful data, as did others across Sussex. The first birds back at nest sites were in Lewes on 6 May, with young heard from a nest in Storrington on 8 Jun. Fledging was recorded at Mid Lavant and Bexhill (14 and 23 Jul respectively).

Large flocks (19 counts of 100 or more) were noted at many sites throughout the summer, representing either feeding (i.e. Weir Wood Res) or perhaps longer-distance feeding movements or migration (183 W at Selsey Bill on 21 Jun). The largest counts came on 8 Jun with 480 at Fairlight and 500 from the lower Cuckmere Valley; and 500 on 6 Jul at Broomhill Level.

The last 3-figure count, 100 at Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea), came on 30 Jul after which numbers dropped away. At Bognor Regis there were 70 S on 31 Jul and a further 60 E on 7 Aug, whilst a day later 50 were observed at Shoreham. Twenty at Broadwater (Worthing) on 27 Aug was the last double-figure count of the year.

September saw a total of 28 records, mostly of single birds and three of two, but there were five at Mill Hill (Shoreham) on the 1st and four at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 4th. The final bird was seen at Beachy Head on 29 Sep, just one day later than the 10-year average. [D Boddington]

Pallid Swift*Apus pallidus*

Very rare vagrant.

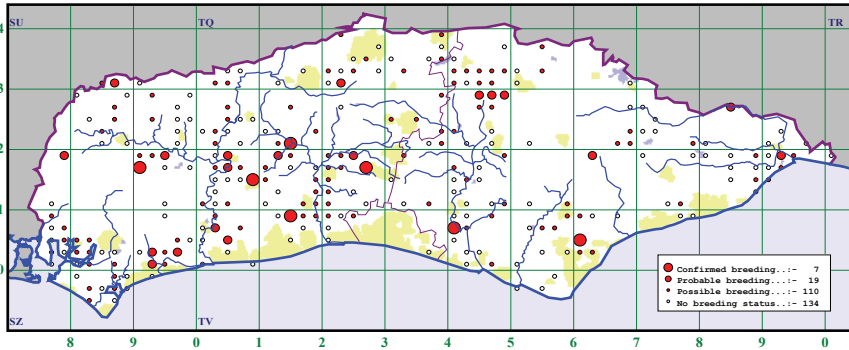
A bird taken into care at Upper Kewstoke, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, on 22 Oct, weighed in at 40 grams when released at Rye Hbr on 16 Nov, a gain in mass of 43% since being picked up. This record has been accepted by BBRC. As the bird was not found in Sussex this record will not become the second for the county (the sole record is of one at Church Norton on 13 Oct 2018) and is included here as an event of interest. [DK Campbell]

Common Cuckoo

Cuculus canorus

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

Cuckoos were found in 270 tetrads (28%), up by over 19% on the previous year and higher than the 10-year average of 226 (range 169 to 329).



Reports began on 7 Apr at Polegate, Hailsham, and Highden Hill (Washington) and continued almost daily throughout April, mainly of single birds, but three were noted at Steyning on 15 Apr and four were recorded on the Knepp Estate on 19 Apr. There were sightings almost every day throughout May and June.

The map shows that breeding was confirmed in just seven tetrads, probable breeding in 19 and possible breeding in 110. On 21 May a recently fledged bird was recorded being fed by a Dunnock at Storrington. Fledged young were reported with Dunnock at Hurstpierpoint on 30 Jun and on the Knepp Estate on 11 Jul where a juvenile was also reported on 19 Jul. Juveniles were noted at Cissbury (1 Aug) and Waltham Brooks (11 Aug).

Just three were recorded in September with the last, a juvenile, at Petworth on the 7th, close to the 10-year average. [T Seabrook]

Feral Pigeon

Columba livia

Common resident.

Feral Pigeons were recorded in 340 tetrads (294 in 2019). In the first winter period, there were only two three-figure counts, the highest being 179 at Hove on 22 Feb, with 17 records of 50 or more. In the early year SWBS, birds were recorded in 21 (17%) of the 125 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of the 179 mentioned above.

As usual breeding was under recorded and was only confirmed in four tetrads. In the spring and summer periods, the highest count was 275 at Hove on 20 Apr.

During the autumn and second winter period, there were seven records of over 100 including 400 at Castle Hill (Falmer) on 23 Sep and 415 at Hove on 23 Dec. There were 27 other records of flocks of over 50, the majority at or near the coast. In the late year SWBS birds were found in 20% of the 146 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 415, again at Hove. [A Podmore]

Stock Dove*Columba oenas*

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

The species was recorded in 501 tetrads (52%) compared with a 10-year average of 375 (range 292 to 502). In the first winter period, the highest count was 200 at Medmerry on 9 Jan and 200 at West Stoke (Lavant) on 19 Jan with four other records of 50 or more. In the early year SWBS there were records in 33 (26%) of the 125 squares surveyed with a maximum of 14 at Edburton on 3 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads (seven in 2019) but considered probable or possible in a further 136 tetrads (90 in 2019). Song was noted from early March, display on the 12th at Thakeham, a pair on a nest on the 30th at Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea) but fledged young were not reported until 1 Jul, at Rushlake Green. During the BBS the species was recorded in 55 squares, 44% of the 125 surveyed. The highest counts for the spring and summer were 105 at Maresfield on 6 May and 100 at Lewes Brooks the same day. One was seen drinking sea water on the beach at Goring Gap on 5 Sep.

There was no noticeable passage movement, with just three flocks of over 100 recorded in the autumn. Late winter counts, however included a notable 500 in fields at Arlington on 6 and 13 Dec. In the late year SWBS Stock Doves were encountered in 32 (22%) of the 146 squares surveyed with a maximum of 51 at Edburton on 28 Nov. [A Podmore]

Woodpigeon*Columba palumbus*

Abundant resident and winter visitor.

Woodpigeons were recorded in 784 tetrads (81%) compared to 711 in 2019. The only count of note in the first winter period was 1200 at Lewes Race Course on 31 Jan. There were over 200 records of flocks of over 100 (54 in 2019, 28 in 2018). In the early year SWBS there were records from 96% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 650 on 25 Feb at Balcombe. They were found in 96% of participating gardens in GBW during the year and there were encounter rates of 75% and 85% in East and West Sussex gardens respectively for the BGBW.

Although clearly a widespread breeder, breeding was confirmed in only 32 tetrads (21 in 2019) but considered likely in a further 163 tetrads (95 in 2019). Woodpigeons were found in 124 out of 125 squares (99%) surveyed for BBS with a maximum of 80 at Bignor on 21 May.

The first large autumn movement was 2900 SW at Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) on 28 Oct, with 4000 SW on the 31st and 8000 SW on 6 Nov. This proved to be the highest count for an unremarkable passage with only nine counts of over 2000. In the late year SWBS Woodpigeons were recorded in 93% of squares with a maximum of 550 at Pallingham (Pulborough) on 7 Nov. [A Podmore]

Turtle Dove*Streptopelia turtur*

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

Turtle Doves were recorded in 66 tetrads (7.0%) compared to 71 in 2019 and a 10-year average of 78 (range 62 to 104). The species has not been recorded in 100 or more tetrads in a year since 2011.

The first arrival of the year was one at Brightling on 19 Apr, four days later than the 10-year average. There were another 12 records of singles in April. As in previous years, sightings were received almost daily during May and June, generally of ones and twos. Higher counts were a maximum of seven at the Knepp Estate on 16 May and four at Balls Cross (Kirdford) on 28 May.

Several were seen taking supplementary food: two at Daylands Farm (Ashington) on 26 May, one at Chilver Bridge Fm (Arlington) on 1 Jun, two at Priors Byne Fm (Partridge Green) on 2 Jun and four there on 7 Jun. One was near a pond and supplementary feeding area at Hobshorts Fm (Dial Post) on 15 Jun. Another was on a sunflower seed feeder in a garden at Brightling on 9 Jun and one was feeding in a chicken pen at Oreham Manor Fm (Henfield) on 11 Jul.

As in 2019, there were no confirmed breeding records but breeding was probable in eight and possible in 23 other tetrads. A structured survey of the southern block of the Knepp Estate estimated 23 territories (19 in 2019).

Allowing for duplication, there were a further 40 records for July, mainly from the Knepp Estate, with two at Peacehaven on 6 Jul. There were just five records for August and only three in September, all of singles. October saw the last departing individual, at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 11 Oct, 13 days later than the ten-year average of 28 Sep. [A Podmore]

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Very common resident.

Collared Doves were recorded in 523 tetrads (54%) compared with a 10-year average of 478 (range 403 to 617). In the first winter period, there were three records of flocks of over 20 birds, with 40 at Southease on 8 Feb being the highest. During the early year SWBS, the species was recorded in 44 (35%) of the 125 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 15 at Burgess Hill on 8 Feb. They were found in 40% of East Sussex and 37% of West Sussex gardens in the BGBW and in 78% of gardens in the GBW during the year.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads (four in 2019) but likely in a further 89 tetrads (69 in 2019). There were records in 70 (56%) of the 125 squares surveyed for the BBS with a maximum of ten in two squares. Display was first reported on 25 Mar at Worthing with nest building at the same location on the 31st, an occupied nest was seen on 24 May at the Knepp Estate and the first fledglings seen on 15 Jun at Bognor Regis.

In the late summer, 50 were at Lewes Brooks on 31 Aug while there were 12 records of 20 or more during the autumn and second winter period. In the late year SWBS, Collared Doves were found in 47 (32%) of the 146 squares surveyed with a maximum of 37 at Iford (Lewes) on 28 Nov. [A Podmore]

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

Scarce resident; scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Records were distributed across 74 tetrads in 2020, slightly down from 78 in 2019 but above the 62 in 2018. Birds were recorded in every month at Pulborough Brooks and at Pett Level. At some traditional sites like Thorney Deeps and the west end of Weir Wood Res numbers remained low with no more than two in the former and four in the latter.

Early in the year, four to six birds were at Chichester GP, Charleston Reedbed, the Ouse Estuary Project at Newhaven, and at Combe Valley CP. Up to three birds were on the Medway near Hartfield in February. One in Fairlight Cove at midday on 8 Feb may well have been an incoming

bird; at Pulborough Brooks nocturnal flight calls were recorded from 15 Mar to 7 Apr (cf. 21 and 22 Mar in 2019) and one squealing from deep in Beckley Woods on 13 Mar, may have been a migrant also.

Confirmed breeding came from just two sites: Pulborough Brooks, where one youngster was seen on 15 Jun, and Sidlesham Ferry Pool, where an adult with two youngsters was seen on 2 Jul with subsequent records of one nearly fledged juvenile there on 22 and 29 Jul. Breeding was considered probable in a further four sites, including Rye Hbr (where two or three used nests were found in the autumn) and Amberley Wild Brooks. There was an estimate of up to 12 pairs in Combe Valley CP on 12 Apr. At Pett Level, though not systematically surveyed, an estimated 30 pairs were present in the breeding season but the maximum post breeding count there was of three birds on 16 Aug and 22 Dec.

In the autumn numbers peaked at 14 in the Hastings area on 16 Oct; eight at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 31 Oct, and at least six at Chichester GP in late November and December.

Unusual sightings included a bird walking along the path from Church Norton to the beach on 23 Oct and two found in Cokeham Brooks, rough ground between Sompting village and the railway line, in late November. [C Brooks]



Water Rail, Waltham Brooks, 19 January (Dorian Mason)

Spotted Crane*Porzana porzana*

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

One was sound recorded singing at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Apr (MS Phelps) and a singing male was heard at an undisclosed location in East Sussex from 12 to 20 May (CH Dean, J Newton, J Willsher). Spotted Crane remains a surprisingly scarce bird in the county, the most recent previous records being in 2013 and 2008, and an accessible, long-staying individual would seem overdue. The county total this century moves on to 18; occurrences have been in February (1), April (2), May (2), August (4), September (6) and October (3). [P James]

Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

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

The species was recorded in 370 tetrads (38%) compared with 323 in 2019, higher than the 10-year average of 335 (range 267 to 476). The monthly WeBS counts were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	351	391	389	50	73	124	154	189	379	399	414	494
Chichester Hbr	38	62	45	nc	7	7	4	8	31	37	19	52
Chichester Canal	84	82	67	nc	nc	23	28	30	50	47	69	75
Arun Valley N of Arundel	60	73	94	12	14	17	17	41	52	66	54	46
Eastbourne Lakes	13	25	14	nc	5	6	16	nc	27	30	21	26
Average county total 2010 to 2019	538	540	457	244	185	180	261	317	495	558	587	563

In the early year SWBS, there were 71 encounters in 22 (18%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 23 on 18 Jan at Rustington.

During the BBS there were 60 sightings from 31 (25%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of seven, again at Rustington on 30 May. Breeding was confirmed in 69 tetrads and was probable in a further 18. The first fledglings were recorded on 11 Apr at Middleton-on-Sea village pond, where there was a brood of six. Adults with small chicks were observed from late broods, for example at Flansham on 16 Aug, Wivelsfield on the 30th, Burton MP on the 31st, Bognor Regis on 6 Sep and Henfield on the 9th.

In the late-year SWBS 45 were encountered in 16 (11%) of squares surveyed with a maximum of 17 at Rustington on 7 Nov. [PJ Plant]

Coot*Fulica atra*

Fairly common resident and common winter visitor.

Coots were recorded in 202 tetrads (21%) during the year, more than the 10-year average of 174 (range 138 to 210). Breeding was confirmed in 45 of these, with probable breeding in a further nine. Monthly WeBS counts from the principal sites are shown in the table below.

In the first winter period good numbers were present in East Sussex with 600 at Scotney GP on 18 Jan, 549 at Rye Hbr on the 12th, a traditional stronghold of this species, and 200+ counts at Combe Valley CP, Eastbourne and Pett Level early in the year. In West Sussex, Fishbourne Creek held 120 on 1 Jan and 190 were at Thorney Island on the 10th. During a thorough survey of the

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2291	1732	1109	167	319	689	685	1837	2228	2662	2649	3442
Chichester Hbr	305	234	77	nc	26	28	53	113	171	203	220	266
Chichester GP	217	147	138	nc	66	100	144	189	650	623	792	947
Eastbourne Lakes	117	11	20	nc	5	6	3	nc	98	247	270	287
Bewl Water	168	102	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	144	175	231
Rye Bay	1064	575	394	68	49	140	127	890	690	941	767	1184
Average county total 2010 to 2019	3374	2705	1499	726	605	820	1161	1641	2448	3074	3278	3596

various lakes at another regular site, Chichester GP, on 13 Jan, 317 birds were counted. Nocturnal flight calls were recorded on a number of occasions in the first winter and spring periods from Pulborough.

Nest building was noted on 12 Feb at Arundel WWT, a bird on a nest was seen at Steyning on 8 Mar and an adult was feeding four juveniles at Southwater CP on 15 Apr. Eight occupied nests were counted at Warnham LNR on 5 May and there were five nests at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) on 22 Apr. Breeding continued to be noted from all the regular sites, such as Rye Harbour, throughout the season, with fledglings recorded as late as 24 Aug at Birdham (Chichester Hbr).

High counts for the summer period included 200 at Rye Hbr on 20 Jul, 68 at Barcombe Res on 6 Jul, 60 on the Knepp Estate on 15 Jul and 60 at Thorney Island on 5 Aug.

The autumn period saw between 200 and 400 birds regularly recorded at Rye Hbr and Scotney GP rising to 513 at Rye Hbr on 13 Dec; there were 482 at nearby Scotney GP on 13 Dec and at Pett Level 425 were counted on 16 Dec. The Chichester GP complex held good numbers with 685 on 7 Dec and high WeBS counts (see table above). [BGR Ives]

Crane

Grus grus

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

Two first seen over Pett Level and Toot Rock from 09:04 to 09:16 hr on 16 Mar (CH Dean, PE Jones *et al.*) then flew west over Bexhill at 09:55 hr (K Hackett) and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), Beachy Head (L Pitcher) and East Dean at approximately 10:39 hr. The only other record was of one that flew east close inshore past Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) at 08:41 hr on 29 Sep (DH Howey). The county total this century moves on to 77. [P James]

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Scarce resident; passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

Little Grebes were recorded in 114 tetrads (12%) in 2020, down by three on 2019 but four greater than 2018. WeBS counts at the principal sites were as in the table below.

Significant counts additional to the WeBS include between ten and 14 consistently throughout the second winter period at Thorney Island and 26 recorded at Birdham in December.

Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads, half the 2019 total, and was probable in a further 11 tetrads. The first fledged young were recorded on 1 May at Pett Level but no further reports of successful breeding were received until a chick was recorded at Rushlake Green on 15 Jun followed by a pair with chicks at Sidlesham Ferry on the 20th and three pairs were noted on the

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	147	144	90	4	39	64	51	115	150	208	143	151
Chichester Hbr	37	45	23	nc	8	12	6	13	22	38	46	28
Pagham Hbr	17	3	4	nc	2	2	-	5	13	28	5	12
Chichester GP	7	19	13	nc	15	13	17	12	21	6	11	16
Burton & Chingford Ponds	8	11	6	nc	6	9	9	12	13	12	6	13
Rye Bay	32	23	18	4	-	5	7	64	54	85	44	54
Average county total 2010 to 2019	185	161	102	48	33	36	52	94	147	186	195	199

24th to have bred at the roadside pools at Pett Level. In July two adults with three young were recorded at Combe Valley CP on the 16th, three juveniles were noted at Breech Pool (Pagham Hbr) on the 21st and on the 29th a family group was noted at Peasmarsh. An adult feeding a chick was seen at Small Dole on 23 Aug and a juvenile was at Medmerry on the 24th.

Numbers began to build during the autumn and second winter period with counts of 30 at Rye Hbr on 9 Sep and 20 at Pett Level on 11 Sep increasing to 30 by the 16th. The number at Rye Hbr had increased to 46 by 20 Sep and 50 by 30 Oct, but reducing to 44 on 13 Dec. At Pett Level there was a count of 39 on 16 Dec. [T Seabrook]

Red-necked Grebe

Podiceps grisegena

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

There were very few sightings with all restricted to the Selsey Bill and Church Norton area in the second winter period. One was seen landing on the sea off Selsey Bill on 25 Oct and then continuing its flight eastwards (J Atkinson *et al.*). One off Selsey Bill on 20 Nov (S Hill, A House, BGR Ives, I Pitts) was seen off Church Norton the next day (S Hill). One was again off Selsey Bill on 28 Dec, close inshore and moving west in the current (J Atkinson, S Hill, A House). It seems possible that all records relate to the same individual. [C Davis]

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor.

Great Crested Grebes were recorded in 138 tetrads (14%) across the county 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	237	250	151	40	107	153	127	217	298	376	291	298
Chichester Hbr	23	25	35	nc	9	7	5	6	12	47	30	12
Pagham Hbr	10	10	5	nc	6	10	15	20	18	37	15	13
Chichester GP	8	7	14	nc	4	6	8	17	46	30	32	17
Weir Wood Res	7	16	9	nc	25	28	39	70	103	40	31	12
Arlington Res	14	14	14	21	16	15	19	36	27	25	31	22
Bewl Water	61	96	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	89	65	41
Glyne Gap (Bexhill)	61	-	7	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	86
Rye Bay	21	38	14	7	10	30	6	19	24	56	52	53
Average county total 2010 to 2019	428	429	280	180	141	135	228	380	462	363	326	280

The freshwater reservoirs, particularly Weir Wood and Bewl Water, continue to provide the prime inland sites in the county for this species. As in 2019, there was an absence of WeBS counts at Bewl Water during spring and summer and COVID-19 restrictions meant that there was also a lack of records in some other locations in April.

The highest offshore counts of Great Crested Grebes during the early winter period were all non-WeBS records from Pett Level. The numbers observed were relatively modest, with a count of 200 on 21 Jan, 150 on 25 Jan and two records of 100 birds on 10 Jan and 6 Feb. The next highest single-day offshore count was recorded at Worthing, where there were 65 on 5 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and was recorded as probable in three more. Display was noted as early as 4 Jan when a pair was observed at Ifield MP. The earliest record of an occupied nest was at Milton Mount Park (Crawley) on 7 Mar. The only record of a nest with young came from the Knepp Estate on 29 Jun, but there were records of fledged birds at 12 sites up to the end of August, the first being at Pett Level on 1 May.

Post-breeding flocks of Great Crested Grebes gathered on inland waters as usual. During July, August and September no counts were received from Bewl Water, but 74 birds were observed at Weir Wood Res on 20 Jul, followed by a count of 75 there on 9 Aug. During September, 103 were at Weir Wood Res on the 20th (96 adults and 7 juveniles). The highest October count was a WeBS one of 89 at Bewl Water on the 16th.

Very little movement was reported by seawatchers, with maxima in both directions recorded at Selsey Bill of 7 W on 10 Feb and 5 E on 20 Jan. However, moderate numbers were recorded offshore towards the end of the year, the highest counts occurring at Pett Level with 120 there on 2 Dec, followed by 104 on 9 Dec. Elsewhere, 86 at Glyne Gap (Bexhill) on 12 Dec was the next highest count. [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 as the minimum, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr		Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	25	8	15	2		2	4	13
Selsey Bill/Church Norton	19	6	8	-		1	3	8

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 either direction.

The maximum at Church Norton in January was 19 on the 19th and the maximum elsewhere was two at Worthing on 26 Jan. Peak counts at Selsey Bill in February were six, increasing to eight on 15 Mar, and elsewhere there were four at Fairlight on 22 Mar and two at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 24th. The only other East Sussex records were singles at Telscombe on 8 Feb and St Leonards on 23 Mar. The last spring record was of two at Shoreham on 22 Apr. Interestingly, an individual at Selsey Bill on 26 Mar was reported to be in full summer plumage.

The first returning winter visitors were single birds offshore at Pagham and Pett Level on 18 Oct. The species was seen regularly in the Selsey Bill/Church Norton area from 4 Nov until the end of the year, but in low numbers. The maximum at Selsey Bill was eight on 28 Dec and

elsewhere in West Sussex there were two at Worthing on 29 and 31 Dec and singles at Climping on 27 Nov, Lancing on 7 Dec and Elmer Rocks on 28 Dec. In East Sussex there was just one at Rye Hbr from 6 to 9 Dec. [C Davis]

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

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

One was seen regularly at Rye Hbr from 1 to 16 Jan. In March one was at Arlington Res on the 23rd, increasing to four the following day. One was at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Mar and another was there the next day. In autumn one was at Pett Level on 28 Sep, perhaps the same individual as that seen at Winchelsea Beach and Rye Hbr on 1 Oct. [C Davis]

Stone-curlew

Burhinus oedipnemos

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.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions the RSPB Stone-curlew team was unable to monitor the species during 2020. Records from the known sites were kindly provided by land managers but, inevitably, the species was not recorded as well as in recent years.

Stone-curlews were recorded in the three areas where they bred last year. There were no additional records from elsewhere. At one downland site, where a pair has nested since 2015, two were seen on 13 Mar. It is probable that this was the same pair, consisting of one bird ringed locally and one unringed bird, which have bred in the area since 2013. However, as the rings were not read this year that cannot be confirmed. The pair certainly had a nest down by 20 May and later in the year two adults and a fledged juvenile were seen at the site. It is not known if a second nest was attempted this year.

On 7 Jul there were five Stone-curlews present at a site first known to be used in 2017 and where a second pair was suspected last year. It is very unlikely that the known pair here could have fledged two broods by this date and it is very rare for Stone-curlews to have more than two eggs in a clutch. Therefore, the presence of five birds at this time strongly suggests more than one pair in the area.

No birds were seen at the third site that had confirmed breeding in 2019. However, on 9 Aug four were seen in flight in the same area. Subsequently, on 11 Aug, four were located at a site less than 600 m from last year's nest site. It seems probable that this was the same pair that bred in the area in 2019 with two fledged young from this year but, again, this cannot be confirmed.

It appears that the three pairs that successfully fledged chicks in 2019 did so again in 2020 and probable that one of the sites had an additional adult or pair present. Notwithstanding the year's restrictions, the available evidence suggests that 2020 was, in relative terms, a successful year for the species.

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 and who provided records for the species in 2020.

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), 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: sussexstonecurlew@gmail.com). 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 winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Oystercatchers were recorded in 116 tetrads (12%) during the year, compared with a 10-year average of 94 (range 77 to 112). 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	1704	1562	702	316	497	589	703	1740	1173	1212	1514	1536
Chichester Hbr	1034	949	360	nc	160	311	467	1390	922	707	1123	1063
Pagham Hbr	193	102	67	nc	61	57	65	111	38	113	110	120
Rye Bay	451	488	253	311	268	218	161	236	198	370	281	347
Average county total 2010 to 2019	1720	1795	1240	840	538	488	671	1046	1270	1476	1800	1610

During the first two months there were no higher counts at any of the WeBS sites, although within Rye Bay the maximum at Pett Level was 150 on 8 Jan. The largest flocks at other sites were 56 at Littlehampton East Beach on 10 Feb and 25 at Cuckmere Haven on the 10th. Unusually there were several records of birds along the river valleys well away from the coast between January and March with up to three at Southease from 5 Jan to 15 Mar, four at Litlington on 2 Feb (with at least one still on 17 Mar) and one at Henfield Levels on 9 and 15 Mar.

Offshore passage can be difficult to tell from local movements; the highest spring eastwards day totals at seawatching sites were 18 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 24 Mar and Selsey Bill on 24 Apr.

Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and was probable in a further four. A record total of about 78 pairs nested, continuing a gradual increase. At Rye Hbr about 35 pairs produced probably less than six young, but 12 pairs at Pett Level fledged 15. At Pagham Hbr 13 pairs raised three, and there were three nests at Medmerry. Chichester Hbr did better than usual, with nine pairs. Two pairs bred at Arundel WWT, a pair was successful at Ford, and a pair probably bred at Cuckmere Haven.

Presumably the same pair which has nested on various roofs in Shoreham since 2011 relocated this year to the roof of Ricardo Engineering next to the toll bridge, and the birds which nested on a warehouse roof in Rye were presumably relocating from the tennis club roof, their address for the previous 11 years! A pair also returned to a rooftop in Playden.

During the spring and summer there were again regular sightings of one or two in the Ouse valley south of Lewes, suggesting possible breeding there, and singles were recorded at Hailsham on 13 Apr and Weir Wood Res on 21 Jun.

During the autumn peak there were maximum non-WeBS counts of 1000 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 3 Oct, 80 at Pagham Hbr on 14 Sep, 250 at Rye Hbr on the 30th and 450 there on 17 Oct (with 250 at Pett Level on the 12th). Elsewhere the highest counts came from Cuckmere Haven, with a peak of 70 on 25 Jul, and Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea), with 52 on 6 Sep.

In the last two months there were no higher counts at any of the WeBS sites, but 250 at Pett Level on 23 Nov underlines the importance of this site within Rye Bay. The highest number at a site not shown in the WeBS table was at Cuckmere Haven, with a maximum of 65 on 13 Dec, with smaller numbers roosting at other sites westwards. [CJR Barfield]

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

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

This former overshooting vagrant is now annual in spring with 2013 the last blank year in Sussex. There were three records in 2020 comprising one at Sidlesham Ferry Pool on 9 May (A House *et al.*) and singles at Pett Level on 30 May (PE Jones, SJR Rumsey, J Willsheer *et al.*) and probably the same at Castle Water (Rye Hbr) from 6 to 14 Jun (JI Medford *et al.*). Assuming the Pett Level and Castle Water birds to be the same, the county total moves on to approximately 57, of which 39 have been this century. [P James]

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 40 tetrads (4.1%), compared to a 10-year average of 33 (range 32 to 41). 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	74	91	108	64	63	60	16	1	3	-	26	71
Chichester Hbr	32	44	23	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
Pagham Hbr	41	47	50	nc	14	5	-	-	-	-	26	31
Rye Bay	1	-	35	64	49	49	8	1	1	-	-	-
Average county total 2010 to 2019	43	51	79	87	104	91	21	9	3	9	36	30

Wintering flocks from 2019 remained into March at the traditional sites in the western harbours. At Pagham Hbr numbers peaked at 48 on 16 Jan, 47 on 8 Feb and 50 on 8 Mar with most then departing rapidly by the end of March, but leaving 38 at Medmerry on 22nd. In Chichester Hbr the highest count was of 37 on 18 Jan at Thorney Channel, with the last records on 8 Feb. The only records elsewhere in January came from Rye Hbr, with an unusually high winter count of 30 briefly on the 1st, followed by one from the 12th to the 20th.

The first indication of birds returning to breeding areas came from Rye Hbr, with 22 on 24 Feb, building up to 55 on 3 Mar and 91 on the 21st. Offshore spring passage was again very light, beginning with 2 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 25 Mar and with a maximum day count of 9 E at Fairlight on 5 Apr.

A minimum of 61 pairs nested, the lowest total since 2015, with numbers of pairs at the regular sites well down on previous years. At Rye Hbr there were between 25 and 35 pairs, but predation was high and few young fledged, while at Pett Level nine pairs fledged no young and at Medmerry 11 pairs only raised two. There was better news however from Snowhill Marsh (W Wittering), where 14 pairs raised at least 21 young, the first confirmed breeding since 1987, and at Pulborough Brooks, where a pair had been present on the reserve for the previous three summers, two pairs finally bred, producing four young. At The Midrips a count of 50 on 14 Jun included at least six young, and young were also seen at nearby Scotney Court GP (any pairs breeding at these two sites would be additional to the 61 pairs mentioned above). During May and June, wandering birds were

reported briefly from Cuckmere Haven, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) and Lewes Brooks.

After 12 Jul there were only single-figure counts until October, when 18 were at Rye Hbr on the 3rd and 20 at Pagham Hbr on the 23rd. At Pulborough Brooks there were counts of up to 11 in July and up to five lingered throughout the autumn, with the last recorded on 11 Oct. The only birds away from these areas were five at Cuckmere Haven on 13 Aug and two at Arlington Res on 1 and 20 Sep, and nine passed east at Selsey Bill on 1 Sep.

In the last two months, numbers at Pagham Hbr built up to a regular 40 from 10 Dec to the end of the year. In Chichester Hbr the highest count was 43 in the Thorney Channel on 1 Dec. The only records elsewhere were 3 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 27 Nov, two at Pulborough Brooks on the 28th and singles at Rye Hbr on the 16th and Camber on 12 Dec. [CJR Barfield]

LapwingVanellus vanellus

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

Lapwings were recorded in 169 tetrads (17%) lower than the 10-year average of 178 (range 160-246) but precisely the same as 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	10389	12153	336	28	114	150	302	921	580	3247	4663	9021
Chichester Hbr	653	925	23	nc	18	32	16	66	54	439	486	1808
Pagham Hbr	1320	1931	64	nc	4	1	65	113	144	229	550	1314
Arun Valley N of Arundel	3000	3626	45	16	5	28	12	41	32	205	1338	2185
Rye Bay	4138	3471	57	8	23	44	64	600	180	1864	1090	2801
Average county total 2010 -2019	10644	8998	994	231	186	359	727	1100	1189	2625	6728	9572

At other sites or dates there were also large counts: 3000 in Pagham Hbr on 13 Jan, 1000 in the Adur Valley at Henfield Levels on 6 Feb and 1000 in the Ouse Valley at Iford Brooks on 17 Jan. Soon after the February WeBS counts many birds left and the highest count was 600 at Pett Level on 25th and 100 at Henfield Levels on 6 Mar. The biggest pre-breeding concentration was 152 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads only, well down from the 18 in 2019, though probable breeding recorded in 27 tetrads was a big increase from 12 last year. The first report of display was from Steyning on 25 Feb, the first nest from Pett Level on 23 Mar and the first chick from Lidsey on 18 Apr. A newly created wetland at Stansted Park attracted a pair which was seen with three large chicks on 15 May. Fledging data were: a pair at Medmerry produced none, three pairs at Pagham Hbr produced none, 17 pairs at Lidsey produced between 14 and 18, 22 pairs at Pett Level produced about 15, and 10 or 11 pairs at Rye Hbr were all thought to be unsuccessful so the average fledging success from these sites was around 0.6 per pair. There were about 20 pairs at Pulborough Brooks, seven at Amberley Wild Brooks and two at Lewes Brooks. The total number of breeding pairs appears to have been around 100 pairs allowing for a few others around the county.

Post-breeding gatherings built up with Pett Level numbers growing from 52 on 1 Jun to 200 on 1 Jul and 280 nearby at Rye Hbr on 20 Jul (presumably the East Sussex breeders plus some from Kent). In West Sussex the first three-figure flocks were 132 at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Jun with 200 on 1 Sep and at Pagham Hbr with 125 on 11 Sep. The first four-figure flock was 1600 on 19 Oct at Scotney GP. In addition to WeBS other good numbers were 1500 at Pagham Hbr (20 Dec), 550 at Lewes Brooks (12 Dec) and 1090 at Pevensey Levels (6 Dec). The largest single December report was 2000 at Thorney Deeps on the 30th. [PK Holland]

Golden Plover

*Pluvialis apricaria****Common winter visitor and passage migrant; rare in summer.***

Golden Plovers were recorded in 48 tetrads (4.9%), the same as the 10-year average (range 31 to 65). The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3476	2675	100	-	-	-	-	-	3	2159	1106	594
Chichester Hbr	26	125	-	nc	-	-	-	-	1	154	421	281
Pagham Hbr	400	300	-	nc	-	-	-	-	2	5	385	313
Rye Bay	3050	2250	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	2000	300	-
Average county total 2010 to 2019	1178	1261	480	26	1			114	186	946	2248	1299

The highest monthly non-WeBS counts in Pagham Hbr and Rye Bay are tabulated below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pagham Hbr	700	300	70	100	335	400
Rye Bay	2000	2000	100	2000	2000	1000

The year began rather unusually, with sightings on 1 Jan of six on downland near Findon and one at Iford. The only other record away from the traditional sites in the first two months was of one at Combe Valley CP on 25 Jan. At Pulborough Brooks there were up to 20 for most of January. The last double-figure counts were 40 at Pagham Hbr on 17 Mar and 20 at Rye Hbr on the 22nd. Thereafter only seven birds were recorded during April and May, the last being two at Rye Hbr on 15 May. Three were at Pagham Hbr on 20 Jun.

The first returning birds were four at Fishbourne on 14 Aug. In East Sussex, there were 110 at Jury's Gap on 9 Sep, otherwise only ones and twos until the main arrival in October, starting with 150 at Rye Hbr on the 3rd. In West Sussex the main arrival was rather later with 150 at East Head (Chichester Hbr) on the 17th. From August to early November there were the usual occasional sightings of birds at downland sites such as Ditchling Beacon, Chantry Hill or Cissbury Ring and at various coastal sites such as Beachy Head and Cuckmere Haven.

In the final two months most records came from the traditional sites shown in the tables above, but there were odd one-day sightings of singles at Netherfield, Lewes Brooks and Henfield between 20 Nov and 1 Dec, and a flock of 85 on Pevensey Levels on 6 Dec, a good count at this former key site. At Pulborough Brooks there were up to six intermittently from early October to the end of the year, with an influx of 30 on 3 Nov. [CJR Barfield]

Grey Plover

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

Grey Plovers were recorded in 54 tetrads (5.5%) this year, compared with a 10-year average of 49 (range 44 to 58). 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	2114	1770	231	-	36	14	3	161	420	661	1324	1242
Chichester Hbr	620	864	38	nc	35	14	3	140	323	483	720	530
Pagham Hbr	1389	882	142	nc	-	-	-	20	96	175	569	629
Average county total 2010 to 2019	1789	1323	1153	208	79	53	98	261	386	704	1164	1436

Unusually, the WeBS totals in the first winter period were higher in Pagham Hbr than in Chichester Hbr, particularly in January, one of the highest on record and nearly twice the 10-year site average of 743. Along the West Sussex beaches the best counts were 55 at Climping on 13 Jan and 50 at Goring Gap on the 25th. The highest total in East Sussex was 100 at Rye Hbr on the 18th. Local movements relating to tidal and feeding conditions are often recorded at Selsey Bill; the most notable of these were 50 W on 26 Jan and 200 W on 8 Mar.

There were few eastwards spring passage records from the principal seawatching sites in West Sussex; the highest day counts were 18 E at Worthing on 24 Apr, 46 E past Goring Gap on 8 May and a peak day count of 9 E past Selsey Bill on 6 May. In addition to the WeBS counts there were still 150 in Pagham Hbr on 18 Apr, reducing to 24 on 13 May and 12 on 14 Jun. In July there were only one or two in Pagham Hbr but 50 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 6th.

Numbers increased sporadically from mid-August, with 28 in Pagham Hbr on the 16th and a peak of 120 at Pilsey Island on the 21st. Numbers remained low until another peak of 89 occurred at Pilsey Island on 19 Sep. Elsewhere in the autumn a few were noted in unusual places; four flew out to sea at Beachy Head on 22 Sep, up to six lingered at Ford from 2 to 5 Oct, and one was noted at Pevensey Levels on 23 Aug, 8 Oct and 5 and 7 Nov.

In the last two months maximum counts away from the two principal sites were 75 at Climping on 15 Dec, 35 at Rye Hbr on the 20th and five on the R Adur (Shoreham) on 20 Nov. [CJR Barfield]

Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

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

Ringed Plovers were recorded in 71 tetrads (7.2%) compared with a 10-year average of 60 (range 51 to 70). 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	202	88	92	16	136	22	39	493	116	88	80	156
Chichester Hbr	139	65	33	nc	54	8	24	430	57	63	5	39
Pagham Hbr	40	1	7	nc	20	2	-	31	21	-	45	23
Climping Gap	18	nc	9	nc	-	2	3	12	-	-	3	36
Lower Ouse Valley	5	-	14	1	7	-	-	nc	26	25	21	24
Rye Bay	-	16	15	15	55	10	8	14	-	-	1	15
Average county total 2010 to 2019	201	185	109	75	206	53	52	445	269	150	164	138

High non-WeBS counts in the early part of the year included 50 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 11 Feb and 55 at Lancing on 6 Mar.

Breeding was confirmed at seven sites and was probable in a further two. There was a minimum of 48 breeding pairs, similar to recent years. Display was first noted at Rye Hbr on 7 Mar, and at least 25 pairs nested there but chick survival was very low. At Pagham Hbr eight pairs fledged seven young, but at Medmerry six pairs raised only one. In Chichester Hbr there were four pairs at Pilsey Island where a brood of four was seen, and at East Head a nest with four eggs was found. A pair at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) made two failed breeding attempts and a pair may have bred at Littlehampton West Beach. At the Tide Mills a pair with five young was seen on 26 May, with an adult and chick on 7 Aug. At Portslade Beach, a pair was noted on 30 Apr only.

During the autumn migration peak there were monthly maxima of 125 at Pagham Hbr on 7 Sep and 400 at Pilsey Sands in August and September, with 160 there in October. The highest numbers

away from the main sites were on the R Adur (Shoreham) from mid-August well into October, peaking at 131 on 27 Aug, the highest count there for 15 years. The year's highest total at Goring Beach was 58 on 27 Aug, and the same number was counted at Elmer Rocks on 28 Sep. In the last two months the highest non-WeBS counts came from the West Sussex beaches, with a maximum of 50 at Widewater on 29 Dec, 44 at Climping on the 30th, 37 at Medmerry on 26 Nov and 34 at Elmer Rocks on the 10th.

There were more inland records than usual. At Arlington Res there was one on 25 Apr, three on 5 May and one on the 9th; then birds were present continuously from 23 Aug through to 4 Oct, with a peak of nine on the 3rd. At Pulborough Brooks there were three on 12 Apr, then two on 27 Jul and one from 14 to 28 Aug. One was seen at Crawley on 6 Jul and one at Bewl Water on 1 Sep. [CJR Barfield]

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

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

Little Ringed Plovers were recorded in 33 tetrads (3.4%), compared with a 10-year average of 29 (range 17 to 36). The minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of birds	17	23	27	29	34	17	2
No. of sites	10	11	11	7	10	8	2

The first record was of a pair at Medmerry on 14 and 15 Mar, the same date as the mean first arrival date for the previous ten years, followed on the 16th by singles at Pulborough Brooks, Climping and Pett Level. By the end of the month there had been up to four at Medmerry and three at Pulborough, with records also from Hardham, Brooklands (Worthing), Weir Wood Res and Rye Hbr.

Breeding was confirmed in four sites and was probable in a further three involving between ten and 13 pairs. At Medmerry two pairs raised two young, at Pagham Hbr a pair fledged one, and a pair near Bognor Regis was also successful, raising one. A pair at Pulborough Brooks and two pairs at Rye Hbr probably bred, and at Pett Level three pairs raised three young. A pair at Weir Wood Res was present continuously from late March to mid-July, but with no proof of breeding. The only records elsewhere during the summer were singles at Snowhill Marsh (W Wittering) on 11 May, Arlington Res and Westerton (Chichester), both on 14 May.

The first record suggesting autumn dispersal was of one at Gatwick Airport on 1 Jul, and there were records of one or two at Lewes Brooks from 11 Jul to 24 Aug and singles on Pevensy Levels on 3 and 4 Aug and at Cuckmere Haven from 25 to 27 Jul and 20 Aug to 2 Sep. The last record at Medmerry was on 16 Jun, surprisingly early, but birds lingered at Rye Hbr until 27 Aug and at Pulborough Brooks until the 28th. There were only three records in September, the last being one at Rye Hbr on the 7th, 13 days earlier than the 10-year average. [CJR Barfield]

Kentish Plover

Charadrius alexandrinus

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

A first winter bird spent 19 Sep to 7 Oct off the southeast corner of Thorney Island, mainly sticking to Pilsey Island (CB Collins *et al.*). This was the first Kentish Plover in Sussex to go through BBRC assessment, the species being considered a national rarity from 2020, and it was accepted.

This change in official status reflects a downturn in the number of records this century, this bird bringing the county total to 32 since the turn of the millennium. The period 1962 to 1999 saw an average of just over three birds a year, almost exactly double this century's current average. [DK Campbell]



Kentish Plover, Thorney Island, 29 September (Mark Leitch)

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 2020, the first of three juveniles in stubble fields at Ditchling Beacon from 1 to 5 Sep, with one at least remaining until the 6th (RS Kelly *et al.*) followed by another juvenile on the beach at Medmerry on 22 Sep (DE Killick, J Killick *et al.*). The Ditchling Beacon birds were widely appreciated and attracted a steady stream of observers during their extended stay. The county total this century moves on to 87. [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 75 tetrads (7.8%), higher than any number over the previous ten years when the average was 59 (range 49 to 67). The majority were reported from sites at or near the coast. The WeBS counts at the principal sites were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1	2	7	4	53	16	70	114	6	6	1	-
Chichester Hbr	-	-	3	nc	49	16	65	73	3	4	-	-
Pagham Hbr	1	1	1	nc	-	-	1	41	2	2	1	-
Lower Adur Valley	-	1	1	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	-	2	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Average county total 2010 to 2019	1	2	3	60	71	6	68	74	17	3	2	1

It should be noted that there were no WeBS counts in April at four of the principal sites and that the total for August was 54% higher than the 10-year average.

In the first quarter, wintering singles were reported on a number of dates from Pagham Hbr, Chichester Hbr and on the R Adur at Shoreham; additionally, one was at Pett Level Pools on 8 Feb. Early migrants in March included two at Pevensey Levels on the 8th, 2 E at Selsey Bill on the 22nd and 3 E at Worthing on the 23rd. One heard calling at night as it flew north at Troutbeck near Eridge on the 31st was noteworthy.

The main easterly migration along the coast in April and May at four of the principal seawatching sites was as follows:

	Apr	May	Peak movement
Selsey Bill	175	38	37 on 17 Apr
Worthing & Goring	278	5	57 on 18 Apr
Telscombe Cliffs	114	8	65 on 16 Apr
Splash Point (Seaford)	546	10	448 on 23 Apr

In April, significant other counts included 45 at East Guldeford Level on the 29th, 40 at Rye Hbr on the 18th, 20 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 20th and a peak of 18 at Pagham Hbr on the 18th. In May, 80 were at Pilsey Island on the 6th, 25 were at Cuckmere Haven on the 4th, 14 were at Pett Level on the 3rd and 12 were at Pagham Hbr also on the 3rd. Inland records in April and May included singles at Pulborough on 26 Apr (nocturnal flight calls) and 18 May, seven at Arlington Res on 18 Apr plus a single there on 21 Apr, and singles on the brooks south of Lewes on 25 Apr and 15 May.

During June, there were a few scattered records of singles but 16 were at West Chidham (Chichester Hbr) on the 5th, three were in the Emsworth area on the 13th, three were at Pilsey Sands on the 15th and two were in Pagham Hbr on the 4th. Inland, one was heard during the evening of the 14th at Pulborough Brooks. Numbers began to build in July with non-WeBS counts including 22 at Pett Level on the 18th, nine at Cuckmere Haven on the 31st and eight at Pagham Hbr the same day. Inland, three were at Southease on the 21st.

In August, migrants passing along the coast comprised 1 W past Selsey Bill on the 1st, 4 W there on the 15th and 12 W past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 26th. Non-WeBS counts included 49 at Rye Hbr on the 27th and 11 at Pagham Hbr on the 8th.

Thereafter numbers dropped off significantly. In September the highest count was six in Pagham Hbr on the 13th and one at Weir Wood Res on the 18th was noteworthy. In October, four were at Thorney Island on the 7th, one was at Pulborough Brooks on the 17th and there were a few reports of up to two birds from both Chichester Hbr and Pagham Hbr. In the second winter period only single birds were recorded, all at Pagham Hbr except one at Shoreham Airport on 30 Nov. [JA Hobson]

Curlew

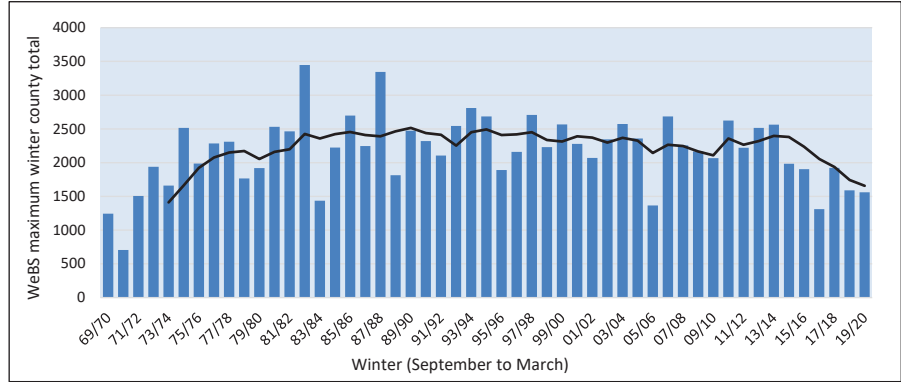
Numenius arquata

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

Curlews were present in 97 tetrads (10%) compared with the 10-year average of 83 (range 75 to 91). 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	1161	1262	1223	7	18	72	715	1063	1661	1545	1010	903
Chichester Hbr	858	989	944	nc	17	70	633	704	1341	1325	893	675
Pagham Hbr	237	216	124	nc	-	1	53	212	249	177	87	37
Rye Bay	61	48	105	7	1	-	28	147	69	9	14	155
Average county total 2010 to 2019	1694	1551	1366	355	69	218	1062	1249	1479	1249	1396	1411

With the exception of those for September and October, the monthly totals were all lower than their 10-year averages. The graph below of the annual peak winter WeBS monthly county totals since 1969/70 and the five-year rolling mean trend line, suggests a recent decline.



Notable day counts in the first five months, additional to those above, included 300 at Pett Level on 18 and 21 Jan; 70 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 19 Jan; 150 at East Guldeford Level on 29 Jan; 200 at Pett Level on 19 Jan and 6 Feb; 84 at Rye Hbr on 1 Apr; 80 at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) on 4 Apr; 60 at Newhaven on 16 Apr; and 60 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 6 May. Birds seen arriving to roost at Rye Hbr involved 110 on 12 Jan and 120 on the 21 Jan.

Spring migration along the coast was unremarkable. Double-figure monthly totals comprised 17 (7 E and 10 W) at Splash Point (Seaford) in March and 12 E in April; 18 (17 E) at Selsey Bill in April; and 10 W at Worthing in June.

The first significant count in early summer was of 86 at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 20 Jun followed by 50 at Pett Level four days later, presumably either early returnees or failed breeders. Numbers increased slowly during July: the first treble-figure count was of 130 on the 6th at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) followed by 320 there on the 23rd. The first notable count in East Sussex was

of 89 at Pett Level on 15 Jul. Following a count of 100 on 3 Aug at Chichester Hbr, the frequency of treble-figure counts increased steadily. The highest autumn non-WeBS day count was 507 on 21 Sep at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr). Birds seen at the Rye Hbr roosts in the latter part of the year included 110 on 9 Sep, 220 on 7 Nov and 120 on 1 Dec.

Inland records comprised: singles at Pulborough Brooks on 27 Jan, 12 Mar, 12 and 13 Apr, 16 Jun, 6 and 10 Aug, and 17 Oct; singles at Arlington Res on 14 and 16 Apr, 22 Jun, and 24 and 30 Aug; a single at Rodmell Brooks on 7 May; two flying over Iping Common on 16 May; 12 at Fernhurst on 12 Jul; a single at Broad Oak on 9 Aug; and singles at both South Harting and Steyning Levels on 29 Nov. [JA Hobson]



Curlew, Dell Quay, 12 March (Bob Brewer)

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

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

Records were received from 43 tetrads (4%) compared to 36 in 2019. The species was mainly seen at established coastal and seawatching locations with the great majority (excluding passage migrants) 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	402	467	2	1	-	6	-	132	31	104	221	173
Chichester Hbr	400	458	1	nc	-	6	-	132	27	99	220	162
Average county total 2010 to 2019	621	603	264	50	57	16	35	47	56	90	325	446

Nearly all of the wintering birds were recorded at three main sites (Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr) during the first three months of the year. A count of 600 at Chichester Hbr on 12 Feb was the only one that exceeded the 1% threshold figure of 500 for sites of national importance. By March, numbers at the main sites had fallen sharply with notable double-figure counts being 30 at Chichester Hbr on 2 Mar, 32 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Mar and 14 at Rye Hbr on 15 Mar. During this period, the only inland record was of one at Pulborough Brooks on 25 Jan.

From late March the focus shifted to birds seen from seawatching sites although there was a record of 2 E past Telscombe Cliffs on 13 Feb. Computed on the basis that the daily totals were the highest of the site counts each day, the spring passage totalled 606, with all but eight of the birds moving eastwards. This was under a third of the ten-year average of 1859. The following table gives the monthly totals at four of the main sites, the computed overall totals and the ten-year averages:

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Selsey Bill	-	10	331	37
Worthing & Goring	-	16	108	-
Telscombe Cliffs	2	-	118	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	-	16	297	60
All 2020 seawatching records	2	23	483	98
10-year average 2010-2019	-	30	1032	797

Much of the spring passage was concentrated between 20 and 25 Apr, with another smaller peak on 7 and 8 May. Fewer hours of coverage at most sites (or in certain cases, none in some months) may have contributed to the reduction compared to the 10-year average. However, it should be noted that Splash Point (Seaford) had its highest day count of 177 in 9¼ hr on 23 Apr whereas the peak passage date in 2019 (also 23 Apr) was 793 in 11½ hr.

The main counts of settled birds in April and May came from established sites with 16 at Pagham Hbr on 2 Apr, 20 at Medmerry on 20 Apr, 30 at Rye Hbr on 28 Apr and 17 at Shoreham Beach on 5 May. An inland record of three at Arlington Res on 18 Apr was noteworthy. The only June records comprised two single-figure counts from Chichester Hbr and one from Pagham Hbr. July was little different with three single-figure counts from Chichester Hbr and one from Rye Hbr.

August numbers were low until the 21st when there was the WeBS count of 132 at Chichester Hbr. A similarly-sized gathering of 126 was at Pagham Hbr on the 25th when 80 flew west at Selsey Bill. Records then returned to a scattering of single birds or small flocks until 30 were seen at Chichester Hbr on 18 Sep and 70 at Rye Hbr the following day. Numbers built gradually in Chichester Hbr from October with 99 counted on 17 Oct and 220 on 14 Nov with smaller numbers at Pagham Hbr and Rye Hbr. In mid-December, there was a surge in numbers at Chichester Hbr with a year-high count of 750 on 15 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 came from 55 tetrads (5%) compared to 53 in 2019, but the great majority of birds were recorded at Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr and Pulborough Brooks. The importance of these sites is reflected in the monthly WeBS counts below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1012	1243	288	8	38	15	106	243	194	947	847	788
Chichester Hbr	42	351	5	nc	-	1	5	146	64	857	457	644
Pagham Hbr	720	690	250	nc	38	8	30	76	118	80	38	39
Arun Valley N of Arundel	250	200	22	-	-	-	67	21	10	10	350	103
Average county total 2010 to 2019	912	553	432	185	54	62	87	253	276	559	766	771

The county totals exceeded the 10-year averages in all core winter months except March and September. The 1% threshold figure of 1110 for sites of international importance was not exceeded at any site during the WeBS counts but the equivalent national figure of 390 was exceeded by the WeBS counts at Pagham Hbr in January and February, and at Chichester Hbr in October, November and December.

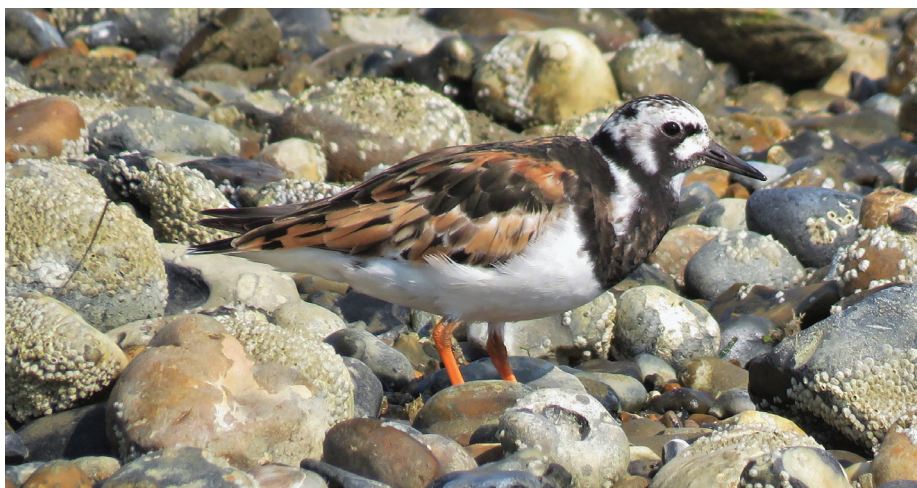
The WeBS counts at all three sites were exceeded on several occasions by other counts made during the first quarter of the year. For instance, there were counts at Chichester Hbr of 200 on 19 Jan and 300 on both 4 Mar and 20 Mar. At Pagham Hbr, counts that exceeded the WeBS figures included 1500 on 3 Jan, 700 on 14 Feb and 500 on 6 Mar with the 1% international threshold exceeded on the first of these and the 1% national threshold exceeded on 14 days during the quarter. At Pulborough Brooks, the highest count was 770 on 6 Jan, but numbers fell thereafter with the highest March count being of 24 on the 8th and 16th.

There were records from 14 sites in April, but few large counts apart from at Pagham Hbr where 80 were recorded on 16 Apr. April counts included two unusual seawatching records: one east at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 26th and one at Langney Point (Eastbourne) on the 27th. By contrast, May records came from only three sites including Selsey Bill where one flew west on the 24th with the remainder coming from Pett Level and Pagham Hbr. The largest May count was one of 65 at the latter site on the 11th. June records came from six sites, with a maximum of 20 at Pagham Hbr on the 6th.

During the third quarter there were interesting records of 3 W at Selsey Bill on 6 Jul, 4 W there on 26 Jul and 8 W there on 19 Sep but most birds were again recorded at the three main sites though in modest numbers until September when numbers had built to 140 at Chichester Hbr on 28th. During the second winter period, Chichester Hbr dominated up to mid-November when the focus shifted to Pulborough Brooks where several four-figure counts were made in late December. During this period, WeBS counts were notably exceeded at Pagham Hbr with 100 on 19 Nov and 500 on 17 Dec, and at Pulborough Brooks with 80 on 30 Oct, 788 on 21 Nov and 1100 on 28 Dec. [MC Daniel]



Black-tailed Godwits, Fishbourne, 19 April (Bob Brewer)



Turnstone, Church Norton, 24 June (Andrew House)

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 84 tetrads (8.7%), higher than the 10-year average of 67. 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	413	365	455	16	26	21	19	151	156	317	535	273
Chichester Hbr	202	183	122	nc	9	1	13	5	35	36	232	105
Pagham Hbr	50	26	50	nc	-	20	-	68	36	92	102	63
Climping Gap	102	nc	164	nc	-	-	-	34	16	33	122	47
Bexhill Glyne Gap	32	31	73	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	18	47	11	14
Rye Bay	4	65	10	16	17	-	6	9	2	12	18	16
Average county total 2010 to 2019	600	485	462	176	57	22	44	186	263	314	367	433

Although the totals in the last two months of 2019 had been above average the WeBS counts in the first two months of 2020 were well below average. In January the largest individual count was 102 at Climping on the 13th closely followed by 99 at West Chidham on the 11th and reports of around 50 from Fishbourne, Goring Gap, St Leonards and Pett Level. The biggest count in March was 164 at Climping Gap during the WeBS on the 8th. Contrary to most years, the spring seawatch movements were mostly westward with a total at Selsey Bill of 170 west from March to June compared to only 40 east. By May the largest count was 38 at Goring Gap on the 8th, of which 29 were flying east, and the next largest was 36 at Bexhill on the 10th.

At Rye Hbr, 24 on 13 Jun included many in summer plumage with 40 there on the 22nd and 50 at Pagham Hbr on 6 Jul. There were 232 at Goring Gap on 9 Sep, 185 on the 30th, 150 on 5 Oct and 122 at Climping Gap on 15 Nov. Movements past Selsey Bill were mainly westward, as expected, with 188 counted from August to November. The WeBS total in November was 46% above the 10-year average while in all other months it was below average; possibly more birds are now spending mid-winter further west along the south coast.

The inland records during 2020 were in the Arun Valley with one at Pulborough Brooks on 26 Aug and four at North Stoke on 28 Oct.

During December the largest individual site count was 80 at Pagham Hbr on the 30th. The largest count in East Sussex was 20 at Pett Level while between 30 and 50 were reported from Nutbourne, Climping Gap, Goring Gap and Shoreham with small numbers reported from many other places along the coast. [PK Holland]

Knot

Calidris canutus

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	1228	1480	260	4	-	-	-	9	23	81	821	200
Chichester Hbr	952	630	38	nc	-	-	-	7	16	76	400	80
Pagham Hbr	257	600	22	nc	-	-	-	1	6	5	421	120
Rye Bay	19	250	200	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Average county total 2010 to 2019	1519	2162	647	14	12	-	1	7	48	32	381	1360

As usual the majority of birds were in Chichester Hbr with a peak count of 850 at Pilsey Sands on 12 Feb. The maximum count at Rye Hbr was 250 on 24 Feb; higher than the last few years. The maximum anywhere during March was 300 on the 8th at Pagham Hbr. In April the largest individual counts were 100 at Pagham Hbr on the 2nd and 65 flying east past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 24th but the main sites were infrequently counted.

From 8 May, when six were at Shoreham, through to 16 Aug when eight were at Rye Hbr, there were only 13 records; 12 of one or two birds at either Rye Hbr or Pagham Hbr and a count of three at Medmerry on 21 Jul. The only inland record was one at Bewl Water on 28 Sep.

The build up in autumn was slow with the first three-figure flock of 133 on 13 Nov at Pagham Hbr and a maximum of 600 at Pilsey Island on 26 Nov. At Rye Hbr the maximum was 30 on 23 Nov. Although the December WeBS count was very low there were 450 at Pilsey Sands on the 15th and 400 at Pagham Hbr on the 21st. [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	21	35	-	-	-	-	1	9	4	25	10	37
Arun Valley N of Arundel	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	1	1
Rye Bay	18	35	-	-	-	-	1	9	-	23	9	36
Average county total 2010 - 2019	12	18	8	1	-	-	-	6	6	8	9	10

County totals in January, February, October and December were noticeably higher than the ten-year averages but WeBS counts do not always capture the highest numbers. This was certainly the case at Pulborough Brooks, where they are frequent annual visitors and at Rye Bay also. The peak monthly counts at these two sites, mostly additional to WeBS (except where marked *) were as follows:



Curlew Sandpiper, Pagham Harbour, 12 September (Andy Wilkes)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pulborough Brooks	5	5	3	-	-	-	2	2	5	6	6	6
Rye Bay	26	35*	11	1	-	-	5	9*	22	30	29	31

Elsewhere during the first quarter there was one at Amberley Wild Brooks on 1 Jan, three near Barnham between 1 and 6 Mar and singles at Henfield Levels on 23 Mar, Beeding Brooks on 1 Apr and Lidsey Rife on 3 Apr. As usual, Ruff departed their wintering sites in April, with the last recorded on the 4th at Rye Harbour.

The first returning individual was at Sidlesham Ferry on 4 Jun, thought to be a first winter or female. The next arrival was not until the 20th, again at Sidlesham Ferry, a single white-ruffed male. Thereafter low numbers were reported on most days until the latter part of September with the first double-figure count of the period being 16 at Rye Hbr on 28 Sep rising to 22 there on the 30th and eventually to 30 between 14 and 23 Oct. Away from Rye Hbr the highest counts were of five at Amberley Wild Brooks on 10 Dec and five at Scotney GP on 13 Dec. [G Turvey]

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

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

The estimated minimum monthly totals were as follows:

May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
2	-	1	14	30	5

There were no records in April and the only spring sightings were of singles in May at Rye Hbr on the 14th and Pagham Hbr on the 22nd.

One was at Pagham Hbr on 28 Jul. The peak time for Curlew Sandpiper sightings is usually from mid to late August through September. During this period the largest count was of nine at Cuckmere Haven on 16 Aug, all moulting adults and a very unusual record for this location, followed by seven at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 3 Sep and six at Pagham Hbr on 17 and 19 Sep. A single was at Arlington Res on 15 and 16 Sep. On 17 Sep a juvenile settled briefly on the rock islands at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) before flying off westwards. October records were of singles at Pagham Hbr on the 5th, Rye Hbr on the 11th, Medmerry on the 18th and two at Fishbourne (Chichester Hbr) on the 6th. [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	105	141	334	-	256	-	232	131	-	1	67	98
Chichester Hbr	21	42	155	nc	217	-	232	130	-	-	-	9
Climping Gap	27	nc	134	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	34	57
Goring	7	70	-	nc	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	4
Rye Bay	50	29	44	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	20	28
Average county total 2010 to 2019	105	125	123	50	109	21	36	58	24	54	84	117

In the 2018 report it was pointed out that Sanderling are not comprehensively counted by WeBS. The maximum numbers reported in January were 100 at Jury's Gap on the 19th; in February there were 105 at Goring Gap on the 2nd and 70 at Camber Sands on the 27th. At Littlehampton, 285 on 6 Mar was the largest count in the first winter period. During April up to 32 were reported at sites between Chichester Hbr and Shoreham.

Seawatchers observed small movements in both directions during April and May but between 20 and 30 May it was only eastward with 52 at Selsey Bill and 87 at Splash Point (Seaford). There were 217 at Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 27 May and an inland sighting at Weir Wood Res on 26 May at the peak of passage.

None were recorded after 7 Jun until 10 Jul when there were 14 at Pilsey Sands rising to 232 roosting on 24 Jul. Two were at Rye Hbr on 16 Aug with one being juvenile. Three were seen at Arlington Res on 22 Aug and one remained to the 24th. Up to 30 were at Goring Gap during September and October.

On 18 Oct, 400 at Pilsey Sands indicated a significant return of birds to their wintering sites, with 120 there on 14 Nov and 112 on 15 Dec. Other sizeable counts in December were 57 at Climping on the 15th, 30 at Pett Level on the 16th, 86 at Rye Hbr on the 12th and 25 at Jury's Gap on the 27th. [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, February and December. The monthly WeBS counts at the two principal sites are shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	8822	9255	584	30	103	18	1221	462	391	1517	5113	5744
Chichester Hbr	7035	6358	138	nc	24	-	1200	371	99	1166	3334	3529
Pagham Hbr	1509	2367	340	nc	59	12	14	83	258	324	1674	1863
Average county total 2010 -2019	12823	8813	5401	311	634	37	263	680	567	2863	6987	9317

Totals were below the ten-year averages in most months, the exceptions being February and July, the latter greater by almost five-fold. The largest count of the year was 8000 on Pilsey Sands (Chichester Hbr) on 7 Feb. Apart from the two sites listed in the table, Rye Hbr was the most important wintering area, with for example 500 on 9 Feb.

High counts during the spring migration period included 340 at Pagham Hbr on 8 Mar, 300 there on 18 Apr and 275 at Medmerry on 4 May. The highest June count was of 30 at Pagham Hbr on the 6th. Return passage was evident in July with 500 at Pilsey Island on the 10th, 1200 there on the 24th and 300 at Pagham Hbr on the 20th. In August the largest numbers were again at Pilsey Island, with 1000 on the 18th. At Pagham Hbr the highest August count was 350, also on the 18th. In September, the largest count at Pilsey Island was 450 on the 3rd. In October the Pilsey numbers were up to 2400 on the 18th and this site held the highest numbers in November, with 4500 on the 14th and in December, with 2500 on the 15th. At Rye Hbr the highest late winter period count was 400 on 17 Dec.

Dunlin were present at a number of inland sites during the year. There were regular sightings in most months at Pulborough Brooks, with a maximum of 40 on 17 Jan, and at Arlington Res in five months, with a maximum of 14 on 12 Sep. There were also sightings at Arundel WWT, Weir Wood Res, Lewes Brooks and Bewl Water. [T Seabrook]



Purple Sandpipers, Newhaven, 16 December (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	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	13	9	14	4	11	1	6	31	30
Newhaven	9	5	11	-	10	-	-	13	21
Brighton Marina	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	5
Shoreham Hbr	4	4	2	4	-	-	-	2	2
Medmerry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Selsey Bill	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	-
Other	-	-	1	-	1	-	4	2	2

Total numbers recorded were generally low in the first winter period but increased to above the average figures for the past ten years in the second winter period.

The highest count in the first winter period was 11 at Newhaven on 8 Mar. Other high counts in this period were also at Newhaven with nine on both 11 and 12 Jan, eight on 25 Jan and a late high count of ten on 8 May. One was at Seaford on 2 Mar and the last record in this period was a single at Bexhill on 10 May.

The first record of a returning bird was at Brighton Marina on 12 Sep and this was the only September record. The six birds recorded in October were not at the usual locations: there were

singles at Climping on the 2nd, Pagham Hbr on the 30th and Beachy Head on the 31st, with two at Selsey Bill on the same date. The highest counts in the second winter period were again at Newhaven with 13 on 15 Nov and an exceptional count of 21 on 16 Dec, the highest number at any one location since 21 were recorded at Brighton Marina in February 2012 and 2011. There were some unusual November records with six at Selsey Bill on 3 Nov, one flew west at Lancing on 21 Nov and one at Seaford on 25 and 28 Nov. [C Davis]

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

Scarce passage migrant; very scarce in winter.

It was another poor year for Little Stints with an estimated 16 individuals recorded. The monthly totals compared with the 10-year averages are shown below:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	6	5	2	-	-
10-year average	1	-	1	1	7	-	2	6	11	5	1	-

Sightings were at just three coastal sites and there were no winter records at either end of the year. The first record was not until 16 Jul, at Rye Hbr, followed by one at Sidlesham Ferry Pool (Pagham Hbr) the next day and another at Cuckmere Haven on 25 and 26 Jul. These were followed by two more at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Aug. At Rye Hbr, one (a juvenile) was seen on 15 and 16 Aug. Another one was elsewhere on the reserve on 18 Aug. At Pagham Hbr, one at North Wall on 24 Aug is presumed different to the bird that spent between 25 Aug and 3 Sep at both Church Norton and the adjacent mudflats. There were no more sightings until one was at Pagham Hbr on 12 Sep. The next was at Rye Hbr on 16 Sep and two (juveniles) were there on 28 Sep. The two individuals in October were at Church Norton on the 4th and at Cuckmere Haven on the 11th. [JA Hobson]



Little Stint, Cuckmere Haven, 26 July (Matt Eade)

Woodcock*Scolopax rusticola*

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

Woodcocks were recorded in 68 tetrads (7.0%) compared with a 10-year average of 85 (range 63 to 147). The minimum numbers of birds and sites for the two winter periods are shown below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar		Oct	Nov	Dec
No of sites	23	11	7		3	12	17
No of birds	39	16	10		3	13	26

Records in the first two months came, as usual, mostly from the interior, with only occasional sightings on the Downs and along the coast. Most were of one or two, except for three at Portslade on 15 Jan and Pett Level on 17 Feb, and a high count of nine at Arundel WWT on 13 Jan. The January total was higher than usual.

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads and was probable in a further ten. Roding was first recorded on 5 Apr at Balcombe, and at least 31 territorial birds were recorded. A total of 12 was recorded on Ashdown Forest, eight on the West Sussex heaths (although seven were encountered at Lavington Common on 22 Jun independently of the WHBBS survey) and two at Wiggonholt Common. There was a slight but welcome increase in numbers of displaying birds away from the traditional areas, with one or two noted at various sites near Arundel and singles at Balcombe, St Leonard's Forest, and three near Fernhurst.

There were seven at Netherfield on 5 Jul, but only three others were recorded that month, the last on the 20th, and then none until one at Newhaven on 18 Oct.

During the last two months all records were of one or two except for five at Pulborough Brooks on 27 Dec and six on the 31st and four at Balcombe on the 9th leaving woodland at dusk to feed. The only records suggesting arrival from the sea were singles near Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 30 Nov and at Beachy Head on 30 Nov and 2 Dec; typical arrival dates for migrants from northern Europe. [CJR Barfield]

Jack Snipe*Lymnocyptes minimus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Records of a minimum of 51 birds were received from 22 (2.1%) sparsely distributed tetrads. 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	10	4	7		4	5	5
No. of birds	17	16	15		5	7	9

The first winter period saw a minimum of 33 birds recorded at 15 sites, almost all of them established or well-watched coastal and wetland locations.

The highest counts were reported from a wet area in Ashdown Forest, where the peak was 11 on 17 Feb. This had followed 13 in the same area at the end of 2019, though this number had dwindled to seven on 29 Jan. Numbers there subsequently fell to four by 2 Mar.

Elsewhere records were mostly of single birds, with the exceptions of four at Medmerry on 6 Mar,

three at Newhaven Tide Mills on 27 Feb, two at Pagham Hbr on 13 Jan and two at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 19 Mar. The final record for the first winter period came from Rye Hbr on 28 Mar, more than two weeks earlier than the 10-year average.

A minimum of 18 birds were recorded at 12 sites during the second winter period. The first returning bird was recorded at Seaford Head on 12 Oct, the same date as in 2019 but seventeen days later than the 10-year average. No more than two birds were recorded at any site during this period. Twos were recorded from Seaford Head on 15 Oct, Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea) on 5 and 7 Nov, Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on three dates between 12 Nov and 27 Dec, Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Dec, Pulborough Brooks on 27 Dec and the Tide Mills on 31 Dec. [MC Daniel]

Common Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

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

The species was recorded from 127 tetrads (13%), three more than in 2019 and well up on the two years previous to that. 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	220	245	134	-	-	-	-	-	39	71	152	283
Pagham Hbr	5	44	11	nc	-	-	-	-	2	1	15	44
Arun Valley N of Arundel	5	15	5	-	-	-	-	-	14	6	24	41
Upper Adur Levels	4	2	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	8	47	55
Lower Adur Valley	150	160	90	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	2	12	33	90
Average county total 2010-2019	258	270	198	30	1	-	2	20	33	116	206	259

The WeBS totals in every month but September and December were lower than the 10-year averages to 2019. While the WeBS counts provide an invaluable snapshot of the position across the county on one day a month, they necessarily miss monthly variations in numbers. Maximum counts by month at sites where at least 40 birds were seen in a single count at some stage in the year were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pagham Hbr	92	44	11	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	15	45
Pulborough Brooks	30	6	5	1	-	1	2	20	40	40	14	15
Upper Adur Levels	100	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	47	55
Lower Adur Valley	150	160	90	-	-	-	-	-	3	12	50	90
Ashdown Forest	46	45	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-
Waldron	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eastbourne Lakes	35	30	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	7	30

During the first winter period, numbers peaked in mid-January, with 100 counted at Henfield Levels on the 10th, 150 on the R Adur on the 12th and 92 at Pagham Hbr on the 13th. Numbers fell thereafter, with a count of 160 on the R Adur on 10 Feb being a notable exception. During March, the only substantial counts comprised 90 on the R Adur on the 11th, 50 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 19th and 34 near Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 24th. By April, most birds had left, with all counts being in single figures.

Birds were recorded at nine sites between the last week of April and the first week of July. At one site, drumming was heard on one date, at another vocalization was heard on 2 Jul while at a

third site birds were present throughout the period but no drumming was heard and Sparrowhawk predation was suggested as a reason for the lack of breeding success. The other records during this period may relate to late departures, summering individuals or even early returning birds.

There was a smattering of records of single birds in July with most coming from Pulborough Brooks where numbers began increasing during the first week of August, reaching double figures on the 9th. That site continued to provide most records in September and contributed the largest single count of 40 on the 30th. There were records of much smaller numbers at other widespread sites during August and September with double-figure counts coming from Lewes Brooks, Pagham Hbr, Pevensey Levels and Waltham Brooks. The dominance of Pulborough Brooks waned in October, although it still produced the largest single count for the month with 40 on 4 Oct.

During November and December, the larger counts came from Pagham Hbr, Rye Hbr, the Upper Adur Levels and R Adur at Shoreham. The latter two sites accounted for the largest counts in this second winter period, with 55 recorded at the Upper Adur Levels on 13 Dec and 90 on the R Adur on 15 Dec. [MC Daniel]



Grey Phalarope, Widewater, 13 October (Dorian Mason)

Grey Phalarope

Phalaropus fulicarius

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

Six were seen this year between 9 Oct and 28 Dec, an above average showing. The first, a juvenile at Church Norton on 9 Oct (S. Conner, P Rhodes), was followed by further juveniles at Widewater Lagoon on 13 and 14 Oct (FW Howard *et al.*), Henfield Levels on 28 to 31 Oct (VP Bentley *et al.*), Pulborough Brooks on 31 Oct (MS Phelps) and Church Norton on 4 Nov (W Justice). One at Brighton Marina on 28 Dec (CJR Barfield) was unaged. The Henfield Levels bird had the misfortune to be taken by a Sparrowhawk. The county total this century moves on to 73. [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 80 tetrads (8.3%), compared with 79 in 2019 and the 10-year average of 70 (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	7	3	4	8	8	8	39	60	32	7	7	5
Chichester Hbr	-	-	-	nc	-	-	1	2	9	1	-	4
Arun Valley (Arundel-L'hampton)	6	2	2	7	1	8	25	12	3	2	5	-
Lower Adur Valley	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	8	-	-	-
Barcombe Res	-	-	-	nc	nc	-	-	4	3	1	nc	-
Lower Ouse Valley	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	nc	1	2	2	1
Rye Bay	-	-	-	-	2	-	8	27	5	1	-	-
Average county total 2010 to 2019	2	2	1	5	13	1	54	69	30	7	4	2

The monthly numbers derived from the tetrad maxima in each month were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2020	13	10	5	33	88	10	93	157	64	25	12	12
2010 - 2019 average	10	7	9	43	60	10	121	150	71	18	11	10

In January, as well as six in the lower Arun Valley, there were reports of one at Shoreham and Botolphs on the R Adur, two on the R Ouse at Southease and three in the adjacent brooks (one at Lewes and two at Iford). One was at North Bersted (Bognor Regis) on 5 Feb, 26 Mar and 1 Apr. Additionally, four were at Littlehampton on 4 Feb.

On 12 Apr four at Rye Hbr was the first report of multiple birds away from the regular winter groups and there was also one at Arlington Res. One at Selsey Bill on 16 Apr and at Barcombe on 17 Apr followed. After single-figure numbers every day there were counts of 12 at Rye Hbr on 3 May and in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 9 May (five at Cuckmere Haven and seven at Exceat Bridge). The last spring passage report was of one at Arundel on 1 Jun.

One was at Rye Hbr on 14 and 21 Jun and at Bewl Water and Arlington Res on 22 Jun, followed by daily sightings on through July and August to 23 Sep. The biggest counts were 25 in the lower Arun Valley on 9 Jul and 20 at Union Canal (East Guldeford) on 23 Aug. Three at Crawley on 3 Jul, two calling on nocturnal migration over suburban Worthing at 00.30 on 15 Aug and nine at Birdham on 19 Sep were somewhat unusual. One at Barcombe on 19 Oct and one at Weir Wood Res on 29 Oct were probably the last before the wintering birds settled in, though November individuals at Cuckmere Haven on the 4th, Climping Gap on the 6th and Pulborough Brooks on the 26th were away from the regular winter haunts.

In December birds were in the Arun, Adur and Ouse tidal stretches as usual with four at Birdham on the 12th being less usual and five in Lewes Brooks on 24 Dec the highest count. [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.

Although Green Sandpipers breed in Scandinavia and further east they are present in Sussex throughout the year with low numbers in both winter periods, a small passage peak in April and a substantial increase through July, August and September with the return passage. Only the occasional bird is present here in May with most away in their breeding areas.

In the first winter period there were records from 23 sites usually of one individual but with two at Brede Levels on 19 Jan, Pett Level on the 22nd, Broomhill Level on 3 Feb, Pulborough Brooks on the 6th and Wadhurst Park Estate on 10 Mar. Interestingly, none were reported in this period from Sidlesham Ferry which regularly supported two or three during the first winter period in 2019. There was little evidence of passage in April with records of singles from ten sites and three at Sompthing Brooks on the 22nd.

There were three records in May: singles at Pett Level on the 2nd, Arundel on the 13th and Cuckmere Haven on the 28th. This last record was probably the precursor of the returning birds with records increasing into June starting with the first at Pulborough Brooks on the 1st.

There were records from ten broad sites in June, 25 in July, 38 in August, 16 in September and 11 in October. Pulborough Brooks was the site with most records during this period with records almost daily from mid-June until the end of August with a peak count of 17 on 31 Jul. The next highest counts at other sites were seven at Waltham Brooks on 31 Jul and 15 Aug and seven at Cuckmere Haven, also on 31 Jul.

From October through December there were records from 20 sites but only at East Guldeford Level and Pulborough Brooks were there reports in all three months. The records were usually of singles but there were two at East Guldeford Level on 26 Oct and 15 Nov, Pulborough Brooks on 31 Oct and Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on 11 Nov. There were three at Woodham Fm (Birdham) on 19 Nov and Wadhurst Park Estate on 23 Nov. [KW 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 87 tetrads during 2020, not significantly lower than the 90 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	1503	1946	1279	35	51	44	560	1319	1707	2167	1484	1389
Chichester Hbr	1114	1410	884	nc	23	16	481	1020	1257	1743	1007	960
Pagham Hbr	120	339	147	nc	15	1	56	198	266	185	223	171
Rye Bay	145	115	125	33	12	15	19	100	118	104	87	112
Average county total 2010 to 2019	1856	1847	1424	315	57	90	687	1392	1700	1955	2083	1823

As usual, the highest counts by far were in Chichester Hbr, where numbers exceeded the 1% national threshold of 1200 in February, September and October. Compared to 2019, counts were slightly higher during the first winter period, but lower in October and November when numbers were lower at all sites but significantly so in Chichester Hbr. Away from the principal sites, high

counts included 60 in the lower Adur Valley on 12 Jan, 44 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 27 Feb and 51 at East Guldeford Level on 4 Jan.

Spring migration was not very pronounced, with 33 at Rye Hbr on 12 Apr the only notable record among very few double-figure counts during April.

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads and regarded as probable in another six and possible in a further two. Although breeding was confirmed in three more tetrads than in 2019, it is suspected that breeding status at many sites, including Rye Hbr, was under reported as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. At Pett Level ten pairs raised about ten young, and at least three young were fledged at Pulborough Brooks.

Non-breeding birds began returning at the end of June with 30 at Rye Hbr on the 15th being the first notable count of the autumn. At Pagham Hbr there were 20 on 20 June, building to 56 on 5 Jul and 122 on the 13th and numbers continued to build there during August and September. Elsewhere notable autumn counts included the lower Adur Valley with 36 on 22 Aug and 50 on 18 Sep; East Guldeford Level with 70 on 23 Aug and 95 on 20 Sep and Camber with 45 on 7 Sep.

Significant counts during the second winter period, in addition to the WeBS counts, included 27 in the lower Adur Valley on 11 Oct, 72 on the Adur Saltings on 13 Nov and 58 at Newhaven Tide Mills on 12 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 relatively poor year with none recorded in spring and a modest autumn passage. The minimum monthly totals are shown in the following table.

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
2	5	19	3	4

The first records of the year were an adult at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 4 Jun and one at Pulborough Brooks on the 9th.

The first record in July was one at Pett Level on the 1st and 2nd but it was late in the month before passage properly got underway. Single birds were at Widewater (Lancing) on the 20th, Pulborough Brooks on the 23rd, 24th and 30th and Cuckmere Haven on the 25th to 28th. There was a fascinating record of one heard calling over Storrington at 9.45pm on 26 Jul.

The number of records peaked in August with singles at Rye Hbr on the 10th, Cuckmere Haven on the 11th, West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 13th, Lewes Brooks on the 16th and 24th and two there on the 18th, Arlington Res on the 22nd, two at Scotney GP on the 23rd and one each at The Midrips on the 28th and Litlington on the 29th. However, the two most frequented sites were Sidlesham Ferry with records almost daily from 9 to 20 Aug with a peak of five on the 16th, and Pulborough Brooks with records daily for the identical period with the peak of four from the 12th to 14th.

In September there were singles at Cuckmere Haven on the 10th and Rye Hbr on the 27th. A bird calling at sea off Fairlight on the 16th suggests that Wood Sandpipers were still on the move. In October there were three at Sidlesham Ferry on the 3rd with the last of the year at Pulborough Brooks on the 4th. [KW Smith]



Wood Sandpiper, Cuckmere Haven, 26 July (Darren Bird)

Spotted Redshank

Tringa erythropus

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

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	1	1
Chichester Hbr	1	4	-	nc	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Pagham Hbr	2	1	2	nc	-	-	-	-	3	5	1	1
Average county total 2010 to 2019	3	4	3	1				2	3	3	1	2

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
14	14	6	4	1	7	10	11	19	7	9	13

In the Chichester Hbr area the largest congregations of birds during the first winter period were in the Fishbourne Channel with three at Dell Quay on 5 Jan, eight at Apuldrum on 19 Jan and elsewhere two at Itchenor on 8 Feb and at least one seen in the Emsworth Channel on various dates.

Away from Chichester Hbr two were seen regularly at Pagham Hbr/ Sidlesham Ferry (assumed to have been the same birds) and a single at Rye Hbr.

As is generally the case, the start of spring migration was complicated by lingering wintering birds; the two at Pagham Hbr on 9 Apr were most likely the two that had wintered there, one of these remaining to the 13th. There were only two records of migrating birds, one flying east past Splash Point on 23 Apr and one at Sidlesham Ferry on 17 May, which is typical as this species is more common as an autumn migrant.

The first returning birds were six at Medmerry on 20 Jun, followed by one at Sidlesham Ferry on 24 Jun and one at Pagham Hbr on 29 Jun. The next was a single at Pagham Hbr on 10 Jul, with seven there the following day. The records of five birds at Pagham Hbr and two at Sidlesham Ferry on the 13th very likely related to the same group. Single birds were recorded regularly at Pagham Hbr through the rest of July and there was one at Pulborough Brooks on the 31st. Threes and fours were seen at Pagham Hbr/ Sidlesham Ferry throughout August, with a maximum of five there on the 25th, but none were seen elsewhere. They continued to be present in the Pagham Hbr area throughout September, with a peak count of eight at Sidlesham Ferry on the 23rd and 24th. The only birds elsewhere during September were one at Camber on the 7th and two at Birdham (Chichester Hbr) on the 19th.

Three at Sidlesham Ferry on 3 Oct were probably late migrants, as were five there on 18 Oct (with three still on the following day) and a single bird seen regularly there through the rest of October was probably a wintering bird. Elsewhere in October there were singles at Emsworth on the 19th and the 25th. Wintering birds in the Chichester Hbr area increased through November with six in the Fishbourne Channel on the 19th that remained through the rest of the second winter period, three at Dell Quay on 1 Dec and three at Thorney Deeps on 2 Dec. Elsewhere in the county during this period there were ones and twos at Pagham Hbr and one at Rye Hbr seen regularly from 20 Dec. [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	29	23	20	1	-	3	22	57	69	55	19	22
Chichester Hbr	26	20	19	nc	-	-	19	54	58	50	18	21
Average county total 2010 to 2019	23	23	20	17	5	1	43	99	87	59	32	22

As in previous years, the highest numbers seen during both winter periods were at Thorney Deeps (Chichester Hbr). In the first winter period there were 11 there on 10 Jan and 8 Feb, the maximum number seen between January and early March and though consistent with previous years it was lower than the 13 to 15 seen in 2019. Elsewhere in Chichester Hbr there were peaks of six in Fishbourne Channel, five at East Chidham and four at Dell Quay. At other locations during this period there were two at Rye Hbr on 12 Jan and 9 Feb, with singles at Pagham Hbr, Medmerry, Pulborough Brooks and the lower R Adur on various dates.

Spring migration starts early but its onset is often confused by lingering winter birds. Thus the 15 recorded at Thorney Deeps on 13 Mar and the singles recorded at Pulborough Brooks and on the R Adur through to early April might have been either migrants or lingering wintering birds. There seems little doubt that 1 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Apr and four at Arlington Res two

days later were migrants. Through April and May, migrating birds were seen at various coastal and inland locations, mostly involving ones and twos, but notably there were highs of 15 in Fishbourne Channel and of 22 at Arlington Res on 21 Apr, a record for this site. Numbers were much lower during May, mostly of singles at various localities.

As usual, June returned the fewest records with a total of eight recorded at five sites, with a maximum of three at Rye Hbr on the 7th. One at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th may have been the first returning bird.

Low numbers were recorded on most days in July. A count of 19 at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 23rd appeared to signal a significant influx of migrants but it was not reflected elsewhere in the county. Through August and September counts were of single figures at a number of coastal and inland locations, while at Thorney Deepes numbers peaked at an autumn high of 46 on 18 Sep, dwindling to 35 by 16 Oct.

Migrants continued to arrive into early October, with an impressive 38 at Rye Hbr on the 3rd, by far the highest count of the autumn away from Chichester Hbr. After 16 Oct numbers at Chichester Hbr fell away to leave the usual wintering flocks, which this year numbered 18 at Thorney Deepes and up to five at Dell Quay. There were ones and twos at the other regular wintering sites of Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Rye Harbour and the lower R Adur. Two in the lower Cuckmere on 24 Oct (with one remaining until the 26th) were probably late migrants. [J Curson]

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.

There were no records for September but birds were recorded at Selsey Bill in all other months. It should be noted that Kittiwakes are not counted at Splash Point (Seaford) once breeding pairs have settled on the cliffs, as birds are ever present and constantly flying back and forth. The totals from the principal seawatching sites are shown below:

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Bill	E	5	8	148	7	42	3	1	2	-	24	183	276
	W	110	17	30	6	11	6	14	11	-	315	462	1086
Worthing & Goring	E	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
	W	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	29
Telscombe Cliffs	E	-	-	-	10	5	3	-	-	-	-	1	5
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point	E	20	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	-	-	-
	W	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	-	-	-
Birling Gap	E	-	122	126	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc
	W	-	-	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	-	nc	-	nc	nc

During the first winter period, there were just three movements of over 100 birds: 122 E in 2½ hr from Birling Gap on 7 Feb, 102 E in 6¾ hr from Selsey Bill on 15 Mar and 120 E in 2 hr from Birling Gap on 17 Mar.

Away from the traditional nesting area, the largest offshore feeding group was 28 at Worthing on 31 Oct and 40 at Selsey Bill on 14 Nov. Single birds were reported at two inland sites only: Weir Wood Res on 13 Mar, the second year running with an early March sighting there, and at Blatchington Pond (Seaford) a bedraggled individual was reported on 19 Jun.

Seaford Head cliffs remain an important nesting site for Kittiwakes with numbers peaking at 2000 on 19 May, and at Seaford Head College on 26 May birds were seen collecting cut grass to line their nests. The annual nesting survey carried out in June gave an AON count of 461, which is a decrease from last year's figure of 528 and well short of the 1120 counted in 2016. The productivity level for the colony was calculated at 0.78 which is slightly below 0.8, the figure generally recognised as necessary for the colony to be self-sustaining (DH Howey pers. comm.). It was reported that a cliff fall in August was beneficial to the birds in that public access to the beach was prevented so the birds were left undisturbed. There was no evidence for breeding at other locations.

In the second winter period, Selsey Bill recorded ten movements of over 100 birds, the largest of which were 314 W in 2½ hr on 12 Dec and 238 W in 3¼ hr the following day. Reports away from the regularly watched sites included a November monthly total of 598 at Fairlight with one large movement of 195 W in 2½ hr recorded on 11 Nov and 189 birds reported at St Leonards in 4 hr on 13 Dec. [C Davis]

Sabine's Gull

Xema sabini

Rare mainly autumn vagrant.

A juvenile offshore at Pett Level on 29 Sep (GC Spinks) was the first county record since the confiding juvenile on Brighton and Hove seafront on 20 and 21 Oct 2012. The county total moves on to at least 73, of which 19 have been this century. [P James]

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.

As usual this species was well recorded from mainly coastal, downland and riverine locations and was found in 428 (44%) tetrads during the year. Bewl Water supported the highest numbers where roost counts were 31,200 on 15 Jan, 43,000 on 16 Jan, 26,090 on 1 Feb, 22,570 on 10 Feb, 22,830 on 16 Feb and 25,600 the following day. At other reservoirs considerably fewer were noted with peak counts of 5000 at Arlington Res on 12 Jan, 1500 at Weir Wood Res on 3 Jan, 420 at Ardingly Res on 11 Mar and 200 at Barcombe Res on 10 Feb. Elsewhere during the first quarter the highest counts were 8000 at Rye Hbr on 10 Mar, 3000 at Sidlesham Ferry on 13 Jan and 3409 during the WeBS at Chichester Hbr on 11 Jan.

Between March and May seawatchers recorded 1153 E and 503 W with peak movements of 470 E at Hastings on 1 Apr and 463 W at Selsey Bill on 4 Apr.

At Rye Hbr a count on 12 May found at least 175 breeding pairs on the beach reserve, 90 pairs at Castle Water and around 40 pairs on Harbour Fm. Hatching success however appeared to be poor and overall fledging numbers were probably in the low double figures. At Pett Level the colony was more successful and, despite Marsh Harriers regularly catching and eating incubating birds, the 2217 nests fledged more than 2000 young. The breeding survey at Arundel WWT revealed about 55 AON in mid-May and 34 in mid-June whilst at Pagham Hbr 785 fledged from 583 pairs. In Chichester Hbr there were four or five sitting on South Stakes Island on 27 May, at least one AON at Snowhill Marsh on 9 Jun and one nest containing three eggs on a raft at Thorney Island on 4 Jun. Remarkably, several pairs nested alongside Common Terns on a large garage roof in Chichester where 13 chicks were counted on 24 Jun (see article on page 242 for fuller details).

Small post breeding gatherings away from the colonies were noted from early July with 120 in the lower Adur Valley and 115 in the lower Arun Valley on the 1st, 110 at Goring Gap on the 18th,

300 at Cuckmere Haven on the 20th and 300 in the Ouse Valley on the 21st. The WeBS counts from Chichester Hbr, shown in the table below, give some indication how numbers increased during the later autumn and then fewer were counted into the winter.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3409	1748	1802	nc	288	492	1052	1233	1469	2886	766	826

Elsewhere counts towards the end of the year were higher with 3930 at Weir Wood Res on 14 Dec, 2200 and 2000 at Arlington Res on 14 Nov and 29 Dec respectively and 2000 at Nutbourne on 6 Nov. There were no large roost counts at Bewl Water at the year end. [JA Newnham]



Little Gull, Selsey Bill, 3 December (Andy Wilkes)

Little Gull

Hydrocoloeus minutus

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

Approximately 700 birds were recorded, slightly higher than the average of 630 for the years 2010 to 2019. The following table of monthly totals at both coastal and inland sites, and the number of days recorded, shows the typical pattern of most being recorded passing coastal locations during spring.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of days recorded	-	-	6	15	3	1	-	3	-	4	3	2
Coastal	-	-	102	542	8	1	-	11	-	1	7	2
Inland	-	-	10	9	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Total	-	-	112	551	9	1	-	14	-	3	7	2

The first were four at Pulborough Brooks and two at Waltham Brooks on 19 Mar with three at Cuckmere Haven on the 22nd and two at Weir Wood Res on the 23rd. The next two days produced an unusually early coastal movement of 74 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 24th and on the following day 23 at Selsey Bill and 15 at Shoreham. The largest movement in the spring occurred on 5 Apr with eastbound birds recorded at Selsey Bill (79), Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) (66), Worthing (22), Roedean (80), Telscombe Cliffs (23), Newhaven (52) and Splash Point (477). Precisely the same number was recorded at Splash Point on 21 Apr 2007 and 564 E at Brighton Marina on 26 Apr 2003 is the only greater count. Later in April fewer were recorded with 11 E and 20 E at Selsey Bill on the 17th and 18th respectively and 12 E at Splash Point on the 23rd.

The table shows that between the end of April and 24 Dec few were recorded with none in both July and September. Most records involved single birds but there were seven at Sovereign Hbr (Eastbourne) on 5 May, 8 W at Selsey Bill on 24 Aug, 2 W there on the 30th and four at Climping on 3 Nov. [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 153 (16%) tetrads during 2020; a similar figure to 2019. Most records and the highest numbers were from coastal sites and some inland locations in West Sussex. The following table, giving the highest count in each month for sites in West and East Sussex, clearly shows the now established pattern of occurrence with the highest counts in the spring and post breeding and few in East Sussex from June onwards.

	West Sussex			East Sussex		
	Number	Site	Day	Number	Site	Day
Jan	100	Climping Gap	25 th	15	Bewl Water	16 th
Feb	85	Climping Gap	7 th	137	Pett Level	25 th
Mar	650	Chilgrove	21 st	562	Pett Level	28 th
Apr	320	Shoreham Beach	23 rd	700	Pett Level	19 th & 21 st
May	370	Funtington	15 th	300	Pett Level	1 st
Jun	90	Older Hill (Redford)	16 th	20	Pett Level	5 th
Jul	300	Halsey's Fm (Sidlesham)	21 st	14	Beachy Head	15 th & 16 th
Aug	2100	West Wittering	14 th	15	Pett Level	7 th
Sep	875	Climping Gap	7 th	2	Rye Hbr	15 th
Oct	200	Medmerry	2 nd	2	Pett Level & Rye Hbr	11 th & 23 rd
Nov	510	Goring Gap	2 nd	2	Pett Level	29 th
Dec	59 W	Selsey Bill	13 th	3	Beachy Head	26 th

Excluding a number of high counts from Pett Level in the spring and coastal migrants there were several counts of 200 or more not shown in the table, these in the spring being 300 at Mid-Lavant on 7 Mar, 250 at Climping Gap on 3 Mar, 250 in Fishbourne Channel on 14 Mar and 300 at Thorney Deepes on 7 Apr. In the early autumn there were 200, 250 and 500 at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 12 Jul, 2 Aug and 8 Sep respectively, 330 in the lower Arun Valley on 24 Aug and 750 at Medmerry and 650 at Sidlesham Ferry on 20 Sep.

At least four were present at Rye Hbr during early May but breeding was not suspected. Nest counts at Pett Level revealed 153 on 1 May and 155 on 15 May but soon after most left and only about 30 chicks fledged. At Pagham Hbr two pairs raised three young.

Coastal movements typically showed a predominantly eastward movement in spring and, apart from September, a westward passage in autumn. The following table of month totals, 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
East	24	11	52	1511	59	23	50	40	385	70	60	95
West	22	8	12	187	14	25	308	41	114	245	139	173

There were five April days when more than 100 were seen moving eastward; 117 at Shoreham on the 8th; 170 at Newhaven on the 12th; 159 at Shoreham and 122 at Worthing on the 16th; 320 at Shoreham, 287 at Splash Point (Seaford) and 117 at Newhaven on the 23rd and 195 at Shoreham on the 24th. The largest movements later in the year were at Selsey Bill and may have involved local movements rather than passage; the monthly peaks were 56 W on 18 Jul, 23 E and 2 W on 16 Aug, 336 E on 20 Sep, 44 W on 10 Oct, 31 E on 28 Nov and 59 W on 13 Dec. [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.

Common Gulls were recorded in 252 (26%) tetrads mainly from coastal locations, river valleys and downland with a sparser distribution further inland. However, the highest numbers were inland at the nocturnal roost at Bewl Water where counts in the early year were 28,560 on 15 Jan, 43,500 on 16 Jan, 50,270 on 1 Feb, 37,420 on 10 Feb, 28,850 on 16 Feb and 36,650 on the following evening. At four other sites there were large gatherings; at Arlington Res 3500 on 3 Jan, 3000 on 1 Feb and 2500 on the 2nd; 1400 at Goring Gap on 3 Jan with 1000 there on 3 Feb and 2 Mar; 1300 were counted in the lower Adur Valley on 12 Mar and 1000 there on 15 Feb, 8 and 11 Mar and finally 1100 were at East Guldeford on 8 Mar. Additionally counts of more than 100 recorded at a further 38 locations during this period.

A small, predominantly eastward passage was noted in the winter and spring months. The numbers were fairly small as shown in the following table with peak movements at Splash Point (Seaford) of 711 E on 24 Mar and 155 E on 23 Apr.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
East	152	153	868	388	24	0	0	2	13	10	62	107
West	39	49	68	19	1	0	3	1	2	70	71	161

Up to two pairs were present at Rye Hbr from mid-May to mid-June; one pair hatched chicks but did not raise them whilst at Pett Level once again there was display during May but no nesting.

During the summer and autumn most records involved small numbers; notable exceptions included 50 at Petworth Park on 20 Jul, 260 roosting on the runway at Thorney Island on 29 Jul, 200 and 150 at Earham on 20 Aug and 10 Oct respectively, 100 at Slindon on 22 Aug and at West Wittering on 7 Sep and 130 at Goring Gap on 30 Oct. Thereafter more than 100 Common Gulls were recorded from 25 different sites with higher counts of 3500 and 1250 at Arlington Res on 29 and 19 Dec respectively and 1230 at Pett Level on 12 Dec. There were no roost counts from Bewl Water at the end of the year. [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 167 (17%) tetrads predominantly close to the coast, estuaries or river valleys. The highest counts in each month at five coastal sites are shown in the following table. Conforming to the pattern of recent years most were seen at the roost of gulls in the Cuckmere Valley where the highest counts, in chronological order, were 1200 on 10 Feb, 1150 on 24 Oct, and in December 1450 on the 10th, 1050 on the 18th and 100 on the 20th.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Selsey Peninsula	132	59	34	6	13	141	33	25	80	200	77	382
Lower Adur Valley	33	14	32	8	7	4	15	5	19	55	49	60
Seaford/ Cuckmere Haven	700	1200	100	30	20	20	50	30	45	1150	500	1450
Arlington Res	377	60	144	5	1	1	4	15	7	20	429	273
Rye Bay	48	50	52	15	25	20	6	30	75	50	100	100

Elsewhere notable counts were 70 at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 16 Dec and 40 at Littlehampton on 21 Feb. The only notable movement was 382 E at Selsey Bill on 5 Dec. Ten pairs were reported breeding at Lancing, Shoreham beach, Hove, Brighton (2 pairs), Rottingdean and at four sites in and around Rye Hbr. [JA Newnham]

Iceland Gull

Larus glaucoideus

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Two were recorded in 2020 following a blank year in 2019. A first winter was observed feeding with other gulls behind a tractor pulling a plough at Birling Gap on 18 Mar (L Pitcher) and a second winter flew east with Black-headed Gulls at Shoreham Beach on 16 Apr (RJ Fairbank). The county total this century moves on to c.47. [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.

Once again this was the most recorded of the gulls with records from 574 (59%) tetrads. The table below shows the WeBS county month totals and the highest counts in each month at regularly counted, mainly coastal locations. Clearly large numbers of this obvious species can be seen throughout the year.

Over 1000 were recorded at seven different locations on 13 different days with peak counts of 3500 at Arlington Res on 14 Nov and 1690 at Aldwick (Bognor Regis) on 10 Dec. Additional high counts, not shown in the table, were c.1000 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 20 Aug and 880 offshore at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 23 Nov. During the SWBS Herring Gulls were recorded in 52% of squares surveyed in January and February and 58% of those surveyed at the end of the year whilst in the BBS 50% of surveyed squares held this species. Herring Gull is not methodically recorded by seawatchers but several large movements were noted this year with 600 E at Beachy Head on 15 Mar, 1070 W at Selsey Bill on 18 Jul and 1543 E there on 5 Dec being the largest.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
WeBS County total	2161	1997	1696	222	1131	1272	1135	1986	2239	1996	1843	1936
Chichester Hbr	60	50	150	30	55	19	60	490	200	80	30	20
Selsey peninsula	200	1000	100	6	110	50	1500	75	64	200	82	1543
Bognor Regis area	450	160	66	35	73	22	23	25	5	540	1180	1690
Lower Arun area	300	280	174	166	162	190	149	263	274	340	180	120
Goring & Worthing	360	200	114	100	255	346	90	400	1000	500	400	200
Lower Adur Valley	141	400	250	450	450	243	165	270	320	900	1100	500
Arlington Res	239	500	1500	630	187	81	132	22	220	1000	150	3500
Cuckmere Valley	250	400	189	150	550	140	80	300	35	250	350	450
Bexhill/Hastings	111	193	164	8	20	30	100	80	220	100	170	112
Rye Bay	225	200	140	30	250	500	260	115	150	440	102	150

Confirmed or probable breeding was recorded in 43 tetrads, mostly from coastal towns but inland at Storrington, Burgess Hill, Horsham and Crawley. The completion of the fieldwork for the national seabird count was thwarted by Covid-19 restriction but 15 1-km squares were surveyed and a total of 140 AON were found with squares in central Worthing and Goring holding 67 and 44 AON respectively. Thirty two pairs nested at Rye Hbr with additional nests on houses and factories nearby.

The records showing the characteristics of the nominate race *L. a. argentatus* were two at Cuckmere Haven on 9 Jan, one at Goring Gap on 25 Oct, four at Cuckmere Haven on 10 Dec, one at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 11th, four again at Cuckmere Haven on the 13th with two there on the 18th. [JA Newnham]

Caspian Gull

Larus cachinnans

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

As is typical with Caspian Gulls, a greater number of birds were seen during the second winter period compared to the first winter period, as birds head on a westerly trajectory during October, November and December away from their breeding grounds in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Cuckmere Valley is still the prime site in the county to find this attractive gull, accounting for over half this year's records.

The first was a second winter at Rye Hbr on 1 Jan (MR Eade); other individuals during January and February were found at Newhaven Hbr, Arlington Res and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne), while four were seen at Cuckmere Haven. The final record in this period was a first winter on the R Adur (Shoreham) on 7 Mar (RJ Fairbank).

One at Cuckmere Haven and a first winter at Goring Gap on 2 Oct (RN Simpson) were the first autumn records. Other October sightings involved lone first winters at Goring Gap on 3 Oct (DK Campbell) and 17 Oct (N Bond, RA Ives), two, both adults, at Rye Hbr on 19 Oct (MR Eade) and three at Cuckmere Haven on the 24th. First winters were also at Littlehampton GC on 29 Nov (B Akinola) and at Goring Gap on 3 Dec (G Messenbird). There was a spate of records from Cuckmere Haven between 5 and 20 Dec, with a maximum count of eight individuals of varying ages on the 18th. [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 28 (2.9%) tetrads in small numbers and mainly from locations close to the coast.

The following table shows a further decline in numbers during the post-breeding season on the Selsey Peninsula and an increase during the winter months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Approx. county total	6	7	1	-	2	-	14	13	1	8	6	21
Max no. Selsey peninsula	1	4	-	-	-	-	4	2	1	1	-	1
Days recorded	6	4	1	-	2	-	12	11	2	10	8	11

The majority of records involved just one or two individuals but there were four at Pagham Hbr on 4 Feb, four there on 13 Jul, five in Chichester Hbr on 26 Jul and four at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 11 Dec. Like last year the highest numbers were seen in the large gull roost at Cuckmere Haven during December with seven on the 5th, six on the 10th, 12 on the 13th, five on the 15th and 11 on the 18th. It is not possible to know precisely how many birds were seen but the records suggest that somewhere between 60 and 90 individuals were involved during the year. [JA Newnham]



Yellow-legged Gull, Eastbourne, 13 July (Laurence Pitcher)

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 227 (23%) tetrads during the year; more than the 10-year average of 158 tetrads. 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
Chichester and Pagham Harbours	50	8	13	10	35	16	17	26	7	6	12	17
Arun Valley	1	5	10	18	4	6	3	8	3	23	15	1
Lower Adur Valley	1	10	29	2	3	3	1	2	1	4	2	26
Seaford/Cuckmere Haven	20	20	20	2	45	2	2	20	1	400	55	520
Arlington Res	45	65	105	9	6	4	2	15	2	3	27	229
Rye Bay	4	4	10	42	50	20	12	1	10	40	20	2

On ten dates over 100 were recorded in the Cuckmere Valley or at Arlington Res; the highest counts were 520 on 18 Dec, 500 on 17 Dec, 400 on 19 Oct and 300 on 15 Dec. Elsewhere 50 at Nutbourne (Chichester Hbr) on 1 Jan and at Rye Hbr on 20 May were the largest gatherings. Notable counts at sites not shown in the table were 43 at Petworth on 25 Jan, 45 at Plashett Park (Little Horsted) on 10 Nov and 45 on the Henfield Levels on 10 Dec. There were no significant movements recorded.

In just seven tetrads confirmed or probable breeding was recorded; with three pairs in Worthing, two pairs in Horsham and one in both Brighton and Rye Hbr. A pair was seen displaying on the water tower at Arlington Res. [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.

A wintering population of Sandwich Terns is probably becoming established in the west of the county, with birds recorded almost daily off Selsey Bill and Pagham Hbr through the first winter months. At Selsey Bill peak counts included ten on 13 Jan, 16 on 29 Jan and 17 on 2 Feb, the latter a new winter record. Small numbers were recorded intermittently in Chichester Hbr, with a peak of four on 11 Jan, whilst elsewhere there were 2 W past Worthing on 6 Feb and one in Rye Hbr on 22 Feb. The monthly totals at the principal sea-watching sites were as follows:

		Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Selsey Bill	E	30	2453	387	4	149	230	65	12
	W	6	141	-	30	285	268	102	23
Worthing & Goring	E	4	977	114	3	5	6	1	2
	W	-	97	31	7	4	6	4	-
Telscombe Cliffs	E	1	368	78	2	-	-	-	2
	W	4	2	3	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	201	1218	251	-	2	2	-	30
	W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The first probable migrant was 1 E past Telscombe Cliffs on 5 Mar, followed by another on the 8th, then eight past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 14th and 20 back in Rye Hbr by the 22nd. Birds were reported daily thereafter and 168 E past Splash Point on the 24th heralded the start of the main spring passage. Numbers peaked on 5 Apr with 511 E past Selsey Bill and 575 E past Splash Point. Reasonable numbers were recorded almost daily through April, with 294 E past Selsey Bill on the 25th the second highest count before dwindling in May to just 90 E past Selsey Bill on the 6th and 115 E past Splash Point on the 7th.

In the breeding season there was a stark contrast in the success of the two main tern colonies. Rye Hbr, for many years the mainstay of the county's breeding population, would appear to have been abandoned, possibly due to a lack of available food, with just a few birds present during the summer and little evidence of breeding success. Conversely, the more recently established colony in Pagham Hbr went from strength to strength, with 175 pairs fledging 164 chicks topping last year's impressive figures. Credit must go to the RSPB for managing to protect the colony in a difficult year.

Away from the west of the county there were very few summer records, with the largest gatherings of 43 in Rye Hbr on 20 Jul and at Pett Level there were 30 on 14 Aug that built to a peak of 200 on 9 Sep with 120 remaining until the 29th before dispersing rapidly afterwards, with four there on 18 Oct being the last reported.

Small numbers were recorded all along the coast in October, but by November the majority of the birds noted were in the far west, excepting one at Rye Hbr on the 5th, 2 W past Ferring on the 10th and one off Worthing on the 14th and 18th. The highest count in Chichester Hbr was ten on 11 Nov, and the highest off Selsey Bill were seven on 21 Nov and 12 on 20 Dec with one to five birds recorded regularly there and in the adjacent Pagham Hbr and Medmerry areas until the year's end. [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.

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

	Apr	May	Jun	Total	Peak Movement
Selsey Bill	74	25	2	101	27 E on 25 Apr
Worthing & Goring	8	-	-	8	5 E on 17 Apr
Telscombe Cliffs	12	2	-	14	5 E on 11 Apr
Splash Point (Seaford)	5	17	-	22	11 E on 7 May

For the third year running, the first birds were back on 5 Apr, with 1 E past Selsey Bill and five at Pagham Hbr. Thereafter a few were seen on most days along the coast, with counts remaining low until 17 Apr when there were 10 E off Selsey Bill rising to 27 E there on 25 Apr, the highest spring count. Almost all of the remaining passage occurred between 25 Apr and 7 May, when Splash Point (Seaford) recorded its highest total of 11 E in what turned out to be a very poor spring for this species.

Pagham Hbr has become the county's key breeding site for this species, with 21 pairs fledging 15 young this year, just above last year's total and, more importantly, its seventh consecutive successful breeding season. Elsewhere a single pair reared a chick in Chichester Hbr. Sadly, birds in the colony at Rye Hbr failed again to breed successfully; a few birds were present in May and June, but never settled to nest.

The population at Pagham Hbr peaked at around 60 birds between 11 and 14 Jul, before tailing off to 20 by the 28th, 12 there on 3 Aug being the last double-figure count. A couple of late fledged youngsters and their parents hung on there until a last report on 26 Aug. During the same period Chichester Hbr also hosted post-breeding birds, with 40 present on the 6 Jul, peaking at 65 on the 16th and 52 on the 24th before their rapid dispersal in August with five remaining to the 18th. Away from the west of the county, the only other reports in July and August were of two at Pett Level on 15 Jul, one there on 24 Aug and, at Rye Hbr, one on 27 Aug and two on the 28th, the last being the latest birds of the year, 23 days ahead of the ten-year average last 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.

It was a good year for the species in the west of the county with three or possibly four individuals recorded in a flurry of activity in July. The first record was of a single bird at East Head on the 8th, sitting out on a sandbank (BGR Ives). Another, or possibly the same individual, was seen briefly in Pagham Hbr on the following two days. On the 13th and 14th however, it became clear there were three different individuals present, with two remaining until the 16th (BF Forbes, A House, GRF James, P James *et al.*), and appreciated by a large number of visitors. [A House]



Roseate Tern, Church Norton, 14 July (Andrew House)

Common Tern*Sterna hirundo*

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

One flying east past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 24th was the only March record with no others until 4 Apr, when 26 flew east there. The following day saw a larger movement including 156 past Splash Point, 142 past Selsey Bill, reports from at least ten other coastal locations and the first inland record of two at Chichester GP.

However, it was a poor spring for this species with low numbers reported from most seawatching sites, the only notable count being 1330 past Splash Point on 3 May. A more comprehensive review of seawatching counts is provided in the Common/Arctic Tern report below.

There were mixed fortunes in the breeding success of Common Terns with colonies at the established sites of Weir Wood Res and Rye Hbr in particular faring badly. Predation by Mink was believed to be the cause of failure at Weir Wood Res and a lack of food combined with heavy predation at Rye Hbr resulted in 23 pairs failing to rear any young. However, at Pett Level about 50 young fledged from 85 nests. The news from other sites was also more positive: the long-suspected colony near Chichester GP was finally located on a flat roof in an industrial estate adjacent to the pits, where at least 11 pairs reared 19 young (see pages 242 to 244 of this report); two purpose-built rafts installed in Chichester Hbr were quickly occupied enabling c.33 pairs to fledge an impressive 48 young; eight young fledged from 11 pairs in Pagham Hbr and three young each from two pairs at both Warnham LNR and Ardingly Res.

Numbers dispersed quickly in July, with 120 at Pett Level on the 22nd the biggest count, while in August there were just a few double-figure totals, the highest being 25 (including 16 juveniles) in Pagham Hbr and ten at Weir Wood Res both on the 25th. There were just ten September reports of small numbers along the coast with the last of the year seen at Shoreham Hbr on 1 Oct, some 22 days ahead of the ten-year average last date and the earliest departure date on record. [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 returning birds arrived on 5 Apr, the same date as last year, with one past Selsey Bill, four past Worthing, seven past Southwick and five past Splash Point (Seaford). The next reports were not until the 17th, when there were 17 past Shoreham, with a scattering over the ensuing days until the 24th, when 90 (the biggest count of the year by a wide margin) were reported past Splash Point, followed by 21 and 11 on the following two days. Observers at the other main seawatching sites returned very few records, with six at Selsey Bill on 11 May, two more at Worthing on 18 and 26 Apr and one at Telscombe Cliffs on 2 May. There were two reports from inland, both at Weir Wood Res, where six were seen on 21 Apr and seven on 15 May.

Autumn records were even fewer with just two singles seen: an adult at Pagham Hbr on 11, 12 and 17 Jul and a juvenile at Weir Wood Res from 25 to 30 Aug, the latter being the last report of the year and 11 days ahead of the county's previous earliest recorded last date in 1978. [A House]

Common/Arctic Tern*Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*

Due to the difficulties in separating Common and Arctic Terns passing sea-watching sites, primarily brevity of view and distance, many birds 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:

		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Selsey Bill	E	1061	487	35	6	83	3	-
	W	3	10	9	56	17	3	1
Worthing & Goring	E	469	-	-	-	1	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Telscombe Cliffs	E	313	129	-	-	-	-	-
	W		5	-	-	-	-	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	E	776	1398	nc	-	1	nc	-
	W	-	-	nc	-	-	nc	-

Even allowing for some reduction in hours watched, there was a significant drop in the reported numbers of 'Commic' Terns off our shores this spring, with totals well down on last year's low counts and barely half of those of two years ago.

The notably high daily counts were 321 birds past Splash Point (Seaford) on 5 Apr, 311 past Selsey Bill and 216 past Worthing on 18 Apr, and 1330 E past Splash Point (Seaford) on 3 May, the highest of the year. There were just a handful of records assigned as 'Commic' Terns after the end of May, with the last report of 1 W past Selsey Bill on 4 Oct. [A House]

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

There were two records in 2020. An adult in summer plumage was photographed as it flew east offshore past Warner Road (Selsey) at 08:15 hr on 23 Apr (AE Wilkes) but, somewhat surprisingly, it was not picked up further east by other observers at Selsey Bill. The other record was of an adult in non-breeding plumage at Pett Level on 1 Jul (PE Jones, SJR Rumsey). The county total moves on to 54 although only seven have been this century, the most recent of which were at Chichester Hbr/ Medmerry in Aug 2017 and Rye Hbr in Oct/Nov 2014. [P James]

Black Tern*Chlidonias niger****Scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species.***

The approximate monthly totals within the county were as follows:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
No. of birds	8	1	-	1	4	3

2020 was, quite possibly, the poorest year for this species in the county, with just 17 birds recorded and just six past seawatching sites in the spring.

The first of the year was on the typical date of 17 Apr at Chichester GP, followed by one past Selsey Bill on the 18th, one at Weir Wood Res on the 19th, another at Selsey Bill on the 21st and then four past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 24th, with the sole May record being one east past Shoreham on the 5th.

Return passage was equally slight, though early, with the first returnee at Pett Level on 16 Jul, followed by singles at Medmerry on 6 Aug, Splash Point on the 16th, one west past Selsey Bill on the 22nd and a juvenile at Weir Wood Res between the 23rd and 29th, the latter being the only one to linger. The final record for the year was of three at Chichester Hbr on 13 Sep, a very early last date and fully 15 days ahead of the ten-year average. [A House]

Great Skua

Stercorarius skua

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

The monthly totals have been estimated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver (see page 96) but birds lingering offshore and not considered to be part of that day's movement have been added (though individuals remaining over successive days have been included only once). This method gives an annual total of 149 which is below both last year's figure of 176 and the 10-year average of 219. However, the travel restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in observer hours during the spring migration period at both Selsey Bill and Splash Point (Seaford) being approximately half of those in 2019; this will undoubtedly have affected the number of birds recorded. The estimated monthly totals are shown in the table.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	1	1	2	79	25	2	2	-	5	11	10	10
No. of days	1	1	2	17	14	2	2	-	4	8	5	7
Peak no.	1	1	1	15	5	1	1	-	2	2	4	3
Peak day	8 th	13 th	-	25 th	3 rd	-	-	-	30 th	19 th	12 th	5 th

In the first winter period there was little evidence of birds wintering off the Sussex coast although this may have been the effect of the four storms during that period. The only four records during this time were one at Beachy Head on 8 Jan, 1 E at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) on 13 Feb, one in Rye Hbr on 1 Mar and 1 E, presumably a migrating individual, at Splash Point (Seaford) on 21 Mar. Although easterly spring passage was recorded on 17 days in April and 14 days in May, the numbers were disappointing and largely confined to the last week of April when there were 11 E at Splash Point on the 24th, 11 E plus 1 W and four offshore at Goring Gap on the 25th and 14 E at Splash Point on the 29th. Passage in May included 4 E at Lancing on the 3rd and 4 E plus one offshore at Selsey Bill on the 7th but otherwise consisted of no more than two birds on any one day. The two records in June and one of those in July involved single birds moving west; the other July record was of one offshore.

There were none in August and the first returning bird was one off Church Norton and Selsey Bill on 20 Sep. In the second winter period, all records referred to birds either moving west or lingering offshore with larger counts involving three off Fairlight on 12 Nov and 3 W at Selsey Bill on 5 Dec. The last record of the year was of one off Church Norton on 29 Dec. [DH Howey]

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

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

Using the same calculation method as that used for Great Skua, the estimated total for Pomarine Skuas in 2020 was 86. This is below the 10-year average of 122 and is the third year in a row that the total has been below 100. However, the comments regarding reduced observer hours due to COVID-19 restrictions mentioned in the Great Skua account also apply in this case.

Spring passage was confined to the period 23 Apr to 16 May starting two days later than last year and ending five days earlier. The first records of the year were of 1 E at Selsey Bill and 6 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 23 Apr. The following day up to six were recorded at numerous points along the coast from Selsey Bill via Worthing, Hove, Rottingdean and Seaford to Bexhill. The two seen at the latter site were the only ones reported east of Beachy Head during the year. There were no double-figure counts during April with the highest count being 8 E at Birling Gap on the 26th. Easterly passage was only recorded on seven days in May with counts on the 7th and 8th accounting for over half of the annual total. On the 7th, there were 15 E at Selsey Bill and 30 E at Splash Point with a further 10 E at the latter site on the following day. The last spring record was of 7 E at Selsey Bill on 16 May.

	Apr	May	Total	Peak
Monthly totals *	26	57	83	
Selsey Bill	7	27	34	15 on 7 May
Worthing & Goring	4	4	8	2 on 25 April
Telscombe Cliffs	3	1	4	3 on 29 April
Splash Point (Seaford)	13	45	58	30 on 7 May
Birling Gap	8	-	8	8 on 26 April
* adjusted to compensate for duplication				

In addition to the birds shown in the table, two flew west at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 31 Oct (O Mitchell) and one was watched harassing gulls off Selsey Bill on 14 Nov (J Atkinson, S Hill) which is 21 days later than the 10-year average for the last sighting. [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 that for Great Skua, the Arctic Skua total for 2020 was 179. This was the lowest annual total this century but as with Great Skua counts, COVID-19 restrictions reduced observer hours. The minimum monthly totals were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	-	-	8	90	47	4	4	9	5	8	5	2
No. of days	-	-	3	17	17	4	3	5	4	6	3	2
Peak no.	-	-	6	17	11	1	2	3	2	2	2	2
Peak day	-	-	23 rd	23 rd	7 th	-	3 rd	25 th	28 th	24 th	14 th	-

The first record was of 6 E at Birling Gap on 23 Mar which marked the start of the easterly spring passage that continued into June. In April, there were three days with double-figure counts: 17 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 23rd, 11 E at Worthing and 15 E at Splash Point on the 24th and a further 10 E at Splash Point on the 29th. In May, the highest daily count of 11 E on the 8th was also from Splash Point.

The numbers seen flying east at four sea-watching sites in April and May are as follows:

	Selsey Bill	Worthing	Telscombe Cliffs	Splash Point (Seaford)
April	51	24	12	51
May	34	8	4	19

From June until the end of the year no more than three birds were seen on any day. During June, singles flew east at Selsey Bill on the 9th, at Telscombe Cliffs on the 10th and at Beachy Head on the 13th; another single flew west at Selsey Bill on the 23rd. A total of 4 W and 1 E were recorded at Selsey Bill during July. Autumn passage along the coast was unremarkable with 5 W and 3 E seen off Selsey Bill in August and a few singles elsewhere. There were none seen in the first half of September then a scattering of sightings until the last record of the year when there was 1 W at Worthing on 13 Dec. [DH Howey]



Arctic Skua, Selsey Bill, 23 April (Andrew House)

Little Auk

Alle alle

Very scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

2018. One flew west close inshore at Goring Gap on 2 Dec (DK Campbell). This record was the only one in that year and brings the total this century to 142. [M Mallalieu]

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 calculated using the same method as for Red-throated Diver (see page 96). The annual total of just 206 was a long way below both the 2019 figure of 947 and the 10-year average of 976. The monthly totals are shown in the table. The peak numbers shown include only birds involved in movements and do not include birds feeding offshore, although these are included in the monthly totals.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	31	22	4	18	18	5	2	-	2	11	10	83
Peak no.	9	1	1	14	5	3	1	-	1	6	3	29
Peak day	6 th	-	-	24 th	17 th	7 th	-	-	-	15 th	8 th	29 th

The February figure was particularly low with only two birds recorded in flight but with 20 offshore at Birling Gap on the 7th. It is possible that the four storms which occurred between mid-January and late February affected the numbers recorded in February. Throughout the year there were only three double-figure counts of birds moving offshore with 14 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 29 Apr and 21 W and 29 W at Beachy Head on 26 and 29 Dec respectively. Eleven were off Bulverhythe on 12 Dec. [DH Howey]

Razorbill

Alca torda

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

The same method of calculation as for Red-throated Diver (see page 96) gives an annual total of 3793 which is far fewer than the record of 15,671 set last year but still close to the 10-year average of 3889. The monthly totals are shown in the table below and include records of birds feeding offshore although the peak numbers relate only to movements of birds along the coast.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	1775	126	4	35	34	27	5	-	4	134	134	1515
Peak no.	1041	31	1	23	4	4	1	-	3	116	20	841
Peak day	7 th	7 th	-	29 th	18 th	17 th	-	-	28 th	12 th	24 th	13 th

Over 90% of all records were from Selsey Bill where the largest numbers occurred in January and December as shown below.

Selsey Bill	January			December		
	E	o/s	W	E	o/s	W
Monthly total	42	14	1746	97	-	1405

In January, the main movements off Selsey Bill involved a total of 1643 between the 5th and the 8th with a peak of 1041 on the 7th. Numbers in February were low with the only double-figure counts at Selsey Bill occurring on the 1st (17 W), 2nd (24 W), 3rd (33 W) and 7th (31 E) and at Beachy Head on the 7th (28 E). The only double-figure count during the spring period was of 23 E at Splash Point (Seaford) on 29 Apr. There were no further significant daily counts until 12 Oct when there were 116 W at Selsey Bill. During November, there were five double-figure counts, all at Selsey Bill, with a peak of 20 W on the 24th. Numbers at Selsey Bill increased in December with four three-figure daily totals including 841 W on the 13th. Away from Selsey Bill at this time, the highest counts were at Beachy Head with 66 W on 26 Dec and 70 W three days later. [DH Howey]

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

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

There were four records in 2020 compared to six in 2019.

At Selsey Bill there was 1 W on 29 Feb (A House, S Hill, BGR Ives, ID Pitts) and 1 E on 7 Mar (J Atkinson, S Hill, ID Pitts). The other two records were from Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) in April with 1 E on the 5th and another 1 E on the 16th (both DH Howey). These records bring the total this century to 31. [DH Howey]

Auk species

The approximate monthly totals of auks including Common Guillemot, Razorbill and those not specifically identified are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	5571	3424	36	161	290	95	14	6	15	452	439	11,421
Peak no.	3071	2573	6	32	66	15	4	6	4	217	53	1389
Peak day	7 th	7 th	14 th	29 th	10 th	27 th	7 th	29 th	28 th	12 th	24 th	13 th

The figures shown in the table above have not been adjusted to take account of duplication so should not be considered as an accurate assessment but merely a means of comparison with previous annual totals. The total of all auks recorded in 2020 was 21,924 which was considerably lower than the 2019 figure of 82,974 and also below the 10-year average of 29,197.

	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	511	21	5508	124	5	173	51	1	53	35	10	328	681	17	4387
Worthing & Goring	46	5	306	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	5	89	112	9	216
Telscombe Cliffs	167	31	17	58	-	14	-	-	-	2	-	-	19	-	199
Splash Point (Seaford)	439	-	-	60	3	-	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Birling Gap	978	20	15	-	-	-	3	1	-	nc	nc	nc	137	-	50
Other sites	902			48			-			3			6033		

Throughout the year, the majority of records were from Selsey Bill and on 7 Jan when there were 3 E and 3068 W here none were reported at other sites. The February peak occurred on the 7th when easterly movements recorded along the coast including 118 at Selsey Bill, 160 at Telscombe Cliffs, 406 at Splash Point (Seaford), 935 at Beachy Head and 870 at Fairlight. There were no further significant movements until December when Selsey Bill recorded four-figure counts on two dates with 1303 W on the 13th and 1107 W on the 25th. December numbers were boosted by a monthly total of 5669 at Fairlight.

The difficulties of identifying distant auks in flight are well known and as a result 80% of all sightings of auks were reported as 'auk species'. Where specific identification was possible the ratio of Razorbills to Common Guillemots was 18:1. [DH Howey]

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

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

In line with previous reports the estimated monthly totals shown in the tables below have been calculated by taking the highest daily count of birds recorded moving either east or west along the coast during the month plus the highest offshore count in the month together with any inland records. Adopting this method the estimated total for 2020 was 1560 which was less than 50% of the 2019 total of 3327 and only 60% of the 10-year rolling average of 2559.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
288	99	310	315	14	2	-	-	4	13	97	418	1560

In January the only major counts were of 30 E and 5 W at Birling Gap on the 1st, 60 in Rye Bay on the 21st and 36 E at Fairlight on the 23rd. Numbers in February were particularly low with very few in the last three weeks possibly due to the series of storms which impacted during the course of the month. Recorded easterly spring passage was low in both March and April. In March the only

notable counts were at Selsey Bill with 28 E on the 15th and at Splash Point (Seaford) where there were 38 E on the 14th and 165 E on the 24th. April started off promisingly with 70 E at Fairlight on the 2nd and 130 E and 64 E at Splash Point on the 4th and 5th respectively but with no other high counts during the month. May was very quiet with no double-figure counts. The last spring record was of 1 E at Selsey Bill on 24 May which is much in line with previous years. Records in June are rare so single birds flying west past Selsey Bill on the 19th and 23rd were notable.

The first returning bird was 1 W past Selsey Bill on the relatively early date of 9 Sep but numbers remained in single figures through October and November. Counts picked up in December with a maximum of 140 at St Leonards on the 13th giving a boost to the county total for the month. It was not until the last week of the year that any significant movement was recorded at Selsey Bill where between the 25th and 31st a total of 147 W was logged.

The estimated totals for coastal passage at five seawatching sites, both eastwards and westwards but excluding birds seen on the water offshore, were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total*	228	79	300	314	14	2	1	12	82	278
Selsey Bill	175	102	105	55	9	2	1	11	103	337
Worthing & Goring	43	14	7	11	-	-	-	1	13	80
Telscombe Cliffs	6	2	3	32	-	-	-	-	4	57
Splash Point (Seaford)	16	12	232	214	8	n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c
Birling Gap	96	19	40	n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c

* adjusted for duplication in direction and between sites

There were no records of birds away from the sea or tidal harbours during the year. [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 that used for Red-throated Diver.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	3	7	21	5	1	2	6	49

The estimated total of 49 is the same as in 2015 and equals the lowest annual total this century.

In the first winter period movement offshore was recorded on just eight dates with no more than two birds on any occasion. Spring passage was recorded on five dates in April and two in May with 7 E on both 4 Apr and 29 Apr at Splash Point (Seaford) being the highest one day counts during the year. The last spring sighting was on 8 May which is 11 days earlier than the 10-year average. The first returning bird was at Climbing on 18 Oct which is a similar date to last year. During the second winter period birds were recorded on the coast on one day in October, four in November and four in December with no more than two on any one day.

There were two inland records during the year. One that arrived at Bewl Water on 31 Dec 2019 remained until 18 Jan. At Arlington Res a popular attraction was a bird that arrived on 5 Dec and was still present at the end of the year. [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 continues to be an important wintering area for this species although the maximum daily figure was slightly lower than in 2019. Great Northern Divers from this core site tend to feed over a wide area so sightings of birds between Chichester Hbr to the west and Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) in the east are assumed to relate to the Selsey population, though they may also feed offshore further east. The approximate monthly totals were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Monthly total	11	8	7	8	5	1	2	11	22
Maximum in Selsey area	6	6	5	7	5	-	2	7	20

During the first winter period six were offshore at Selsey on 1 Jan and counts remained at around that level throughout the period. During January away from the core area there were single birds offshore at Pett Level on the 1st, Lancing on the 10th, Newhaven from the 15th to the 17th and off Jury's Gap on the 19th. In February one at Newhaven on the 20th remained until 14 Mar. Also in March there was 1 E off Hove and one offshore at Brooklands (Worthing). Offshore at Selsey the number of birds in March peaked at five. There were no records of spring passage while at Selsey the number of birds offshore peaked at seven on 4 Apr reducing to five on 3 May with the final spring sighting on 29 May, the same date as last year.

The first returning bird was at Climping on the early date of 24 Sep which is 26 days earlier than the 10-year average. At Selsey the first bird was recorded offshore on 4 Oct with numbers increasing in November to three on the 12th and six on the 17th. Also in November there was 1 E off Worthing on the 14th. At Selsey Bill a maximum of seven birds was recorded offshore during December. However, on the 28th the total recorded there was 20, which included 13 birds in flight in addition to those offshore. This is the highest number ever recorded in one day in the county. Away from the core area, singles were recorded at Seaford on 4 Dec, off Worthing on 11 and 17 Dec, with two off Climping on 28 Dec. [DH Howey]

Diver species

The difficulties in the specific identification of distant divers in flight are well documented. Consequently, in 2020 one in twenty five sightings of divers were reported as 'Diver sp'.

The numbers of all divers recorded at five seawatching sites during the periods January-May and October-December are shown below.

	Diver sp		R-t Diver		B-t Diver		Total	
	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D	J-M	O-D
Selsey Bill	45	13	452	466	7	5	504	484
Worthing & Goring	2	16	85	104	-	2	87	122
Telscombe Cliffs	2	3	43	61	1	-	46	64
Splash Point (Seaford)	7	nc	490	nc	27	nc	524	nc
Birling Gap	-	nc	155	nc	-	nc	155	nc

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

The only record this year was of two birds offshore at Selsey Bill for over 2½ hours on 7 Jun. (J Atkinson, PS Bowley, S Hill, ID Pitts *et al.*). Not since 2008 has there been a double-figure annual total. [DH Howey]

Fulmar*Fulmarus glacialis*

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

During the first winter period Fulmars were established on suitable breeding cliffs during the first week of January with seven pairs between Rottingdean and Saltdean, seven at Newhaven, 12 at Seaford Head, two at Beachy Head and six at Cliff End (Pett). Once birds have become established on their breeding cliffs it is difficult to determine whether or not birds seen flying offshore nearby emanate from the local population. Movements prior to breeding such as 39 W at Fairlight on 28 Jan and 29 E and 24 E at Birling Gap on 25 Jan and 7 Feb respectively were probably non-breeding birds.

Other than two or three pairs on the Isle of Wight there are no breeding Fulmars in the vicinity of Selsey Bill and records from there show an interesting pattern, although numbers were never large. The monthly totals for March were 4 E and 30 W which again suggests non-breeding birds. The May totals were 36 E and 76 W which was possibly a combination of non-breeding and failed breeding birds while totals of 22 E and 32 W in June suggest a combination of post-breeding adults and juveniles. Numbers recorded throughout the county dropped significantly in July and August with the last birds recorded at Beachy Head and Pett on 9 Sep. The first returning individual was 1 E off Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 31 Oct with birds returning to the breeding cliffs at Cliff End on 11 Nov and at Portobello (Telscombe Cliffs) two days later. [DH Howey]



Fulmar, Telscombe Cliffs, 8 Mar (Tim Squire)

Sooty Shearwater

Ardenna grisea

Very scarce autumn visitor.

Sooty Shearwaters were recorded on just three dates and totalled a minimum of 11 for the year, which is the highest annual figure since 2007. There have been sightings in 16 of the 21 years this century.

The first record of the year was of 2 W at Birling Gap on 25 Aug (A Quinn). On 2 Oct there were 1 W and 1 E at Splash Point (Seaford) (MR Eade), 1 W at Lancing (RJ Fairbank) and 1 W at Selsey Bill (BGR Ives). The times of the sightings suggest that two birds were involved. There were also records at three locations on 31 Oct with 3 W at Beachy Head (KB Gillam, A Redman), 1W at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) (O Mitchell) and 4 W at Selsey Bill (J Atkinson, S Hill, BGR Ives *et al.*). On this occasion the times of the various sightings suggest that a minimum of seven birds were involved. [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 235, lower than the figure of 268 in 2019 but similar to the 10-year average of 234. As was the case in 2019, the total was inflated by a single record, this year of 206 E past Selsey Bill on 6 Jun, which accounted for 83% of the annual total. Other than this one record it was another disappointing year particularly away from Selsey Bill. The monthly totals from two seawatching sites are shown in the table below.

	Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Nov	
County totals *	11		7		3		213		3		1		1	
	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W	E	W
Selsey Bill	4	7	-	1	-	-	213	5	2	1	-	1	-	-
Splash Point (Seaford)	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

* adjusted to compensate for duplication

The first record of the year was 4 E and 7 W at Selsey Bill on 15 Mar. The next was of one off Climping on 19 Apr. During April there were three occasions when birds were tracked along the coast with 2 E at both Newhaven and Roedean on the 24th and one or two moving west past Lancing, Littlehampton, Middleton-on-Sea and Selsey Bill on the 29th and 30th. A single bird moving east off Fairlight on 9 May was the only record east of Seaford during the year. Birds were recorded on only four dates in June and three in July with all records coming from Selsey Bill including 206 E and 1 W on 6 Jun. In August there was just 1 W at Selsey Bill on the 21st. The last record of the year was of 1 W at Splash Point (Seaford) on the relatively late date of 15 Nov. [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.

With a minimum of 11 birds recorded, 2020 was the first year since 2016 that the total was in double figures. The 2020 total is a slight increase over the 2019 figure of nine but below the 10-year average of 20.

The first records of the year were all from Selsey Bill and all involved single birds moving west during July on the 4th (S Hill, BGR Ives), the 12th and the 15th (both S Hill) and on the 27th (BGR Ives). On 6 Aug there was 1 W at Selsey Bill (A House, MA Orchard-Webb, SA Russell). Also in August 1 W at Lancing (RJ Fairbank) on the 21st may have been one of the two seen later in the morning at Selsey Bill (J Atkinson, BGR Ives *et al.*). The final records of the year also came from Selsey Bill where there were 3 W on 24 Oct (J Atkinson, P Bowley, S Hill, BGR Ives) and 1 W on 14 Nov (J Atkinson, S Hill). [DH Howey]

White Stork

Ciconia ciconia

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

Most or all records related to released individuals and their young, though the unringed male of the pair that bred successfully on the Knepp Estate may have been the offspring of a Continental introduction programme or of entirely wild origin. Further details of the notable first breeding occurrence in Sussex are on pages 235 to 241 of this report.

Away from the release sites, wandering White Storks were seen in every month and at many locations across the county, giving much pleasure to many observers. The largest flock, of between 21 and 23, was seen at various coastal and inland sites between Rustington and Thorney Island between 24 and 30 Aug and was in Cornwall by 31 Aug before starting to move back east. For further information on such movements within Britain and to the Continent see <https://www.whitestorkproject.org/news>.

All White Storks from the project are ringed with a blue Darvic ring starting with GB on the left tibia and a BTO metal ring on the right tarsus. [M Mallalieu]

Gannet

Morus bassanus

Common passage migrant and non-breeding summer visitor; 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	109	603	3544	1281	894	1360	1422	2654	846	1795
Worthing & Goring	25	33	1094	115	-	6	114	358	32	1028
Telscombe Cliffs	18	27	1095	283	29	2	162	208	282	1494
Splash Point (Seaford)	16	1	1222	-	n/c	n/c	587	-	-	144
Birling Gap	214	9	-	-	n/c	n/c	250	1620	n/c	n/c

Selsey Bill continues to be the major site for observing Gannets and, although numbers there did not match the record of 28,809 set last year, it still contributed over 50% of the county total in 2020. Unlike 2019, numbers in the first two months of the year were low with the only two three-figure counts being 148 E at Birling Gap on 2 Jan and 290 W at Selsey Bill on 11 Jan. February numbers were particularly low possibly due to the series of storms which hit the coast during the month. The period March to May saw an increase in numbers, with a distinct bias towards easterly movements. During this period there were 21 three-figure counts, the three largest of which were in April with 552 E at Selsey Bill on the 17th, 305 E at Goring on the 25th and 447 E at Splash Point on the 29th. The only notable feeding party in this period was of 150 off Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on 16 May.

Numbers were low in June while in July the two largest movements were both at Selsey Bill with 205 W on the 8th and 255 W the following day as well as feeding parties of between 100 and 150 birds on three dates in the first half of July. On 19 Aug there were 621 E at Selsey Bill, but there was no particular pattern to movements in the month typified by 250 E and 120 W at Birling Gap on 25 Aug. The only three-figure count in September involved 120 offshore at Fairlight on the 6th. Numbers increased in October starting with 500 E at Splash Point on the 2nd but after that the movements were predominantly westward including 1500 W at Birling Gap on the 31st. The highest count in November was 431 W at Worthing on the 14th and 200 offshore at Selsey Bill that same day. Westerly movement on 13 Dec was noted along the coast with 215 W at Telscombe Cliffs, 300 W at Worthing and 511 W at Selsey Bill. In contrast, the largest offshore gatherings were further east with 200 off Fairlight on 12 Dec and 250 off St Leonards the following day. [DH Howey]



Cormorant, Sovereign Harbour, 30 December (Richard Allan)

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Fairly common but localised resident and common winter visitor.

Cormorants were recorded in 331 tetrads (34%), a continued expansion from previous years. The records are mainly from sites along the coast, but also from river valleys and water bodies including fishing lakes further inland. 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	881	742	731	238	190	668	341	713	1077	1135	705	486
Chichester Hbr	32	53	36	nc	7	13	18	17	49	93	86	100
Rye Bay	366	338	422	220	69	564	199	508	590	510	295	100
Average county total 2010 to 2019	825	615	553	477	572	493	622	723	770	813	681	580

High counts in addition to the WeBS counts in the first winter period included 800 at Pett Level on 2 Jan, 220 at Hastings Pier on the 3rd, 57 in flight offshore from Newhaven Tide Mills on the 5th, 500 W at Fairlight just after dawn on the 6th, 33 at Burton MP on the 19th, 70 at the Ardingly Res roost also on the 19th, 45 at Weir Wood Res on 10 Feb and 32 at Arlington Res on the 21st. There was no repeat of the huge movement of over 2000 birds through Glynne Gap in January 2019.

Breeding was confirmed from four sites with 190 AON, a decline from 257 AON in 2019 and 348 in 2018. At Rye Hbr there were 158 nests, Medmerry 18 (up from nine in 2019), Weir Wood Res 13 (13 nests with young counted on 10 May) and one nest in the heronry at Ardingly Res, a first for the site. The heronry trees at New Lake (Chichester GP), where there were 72 AON in 2019, suffered winter storm damage and there were no occupied nests in March. The site was not counted in April or May and it is not known if there were late breeding attempts, which explains the decline in the numbers of AON recorded in 2020.

High counts during the summer and autumn included 496 at Rye Hbr on 7 Jun, 50 at Pagham Hbr on the 8th, 45 at Medmerry on 12 Jul, 65 at Hastings CP on 14 Aug, 110 at Pett Level on the 23rd and 55 at Weir Wood Res on the 31st. A local record count of 135 was made at Barcombe Res on 21 Sep. In October there were 71 in the roost at Burton MP on the 17th, 208 at Pett Level, also on the 17th and 64 at New Lake on the 20th.

Notable counts in the second winter period included 44 at Bewl Water on 1 Nov, 275 at Rye Hbr on the 8th, 51 at Pagham Hbr on 1 Dec, 53 at Weir Wood Res on 31 Dec and several counts of about 200 at Pett Level. [L Smith]

Shag

Gulosus aristotelis

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

Shags were reported from 16 coastal tetrads and one inland, with most records from Selsey Bill. The aggregate monthly totals from Selsey Bill for 2020 are shown in the following table together with the totals from the two previous years. The unusually high numbers seen there in the autumn and second winter period in 2019 were not repeated. Most daily records were of one or occasionally two birds with a maximum of four, 3 W and 1 E, on 26 Jan and 3 E on 7 Feb.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2018	14	5	2	10	13	-	-	-	1	8	4	15
2019	4	7	7	9	2	-	-	18	148	516	74	36
2020	11	6	4	2	-	-	2	12	3	6	2	7

Elsewhere in the first winter period individuals were seen from Birling Gap (W on 26 Jan) Shoreham on 19 Mar and Newhaven on 27 Mar.

In April and May Shags were seen from Splash Point (Seaford) 1 E on both 4 and 11 Apr; Sovereign Hbr Marina (one on 6 Apr and 9 May); Newhaven (one on 9 and 10 Apr and three on the 12th); Worthing (1 o/s on 14 Apr); and Medmerry (one on 29 Apr).

In summer, a juvenile was at Weir Wood Res on 25 Aug, the only inland record for the year, and

an adult was at East Hill (Hastings) on the 31st. In autumn, one was seen from Shoreham Fort on 25 Sep, then 3 W off Worthing on 9 Oct and a juvenile was at Southwick Canal on the 31st.

In the second winter period singles were reported from Widewater (Lancing) on 18 Nov, Pett Level on 22 Nov, Worthing (W on 20 Dec), Shoreham Hbr (a juvenile on 25, 27 and 28 Dec), Brighton Marina on 27 Dec and Climping on 30 Dec. Two flew west off Beachy Head on 29 Dec. [L Smith]

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Very scarce but increasing visitor.

There were six records in 2020. One at Pett Level from 4 to 7 Jan had been present in the area since 24 Dec 2019 and one at Southease on 1 Jan had been in the Ouse Valley since 27 Dec 2019. One at Henfield Levels from 6 to 16 Jan (VP Bentley *et al.*) was followed by others at Rye Hbr on 15 to 16 Mar, 26 to 27 Mar and 5 Apr (A Walters *et al.*), Seaford on 26 Oct (S Baldwin) and at Marsh Fm (Sidlesham) from 24 Nov into 2021 (A House *et al.*). The Marsh Fm individual sometimes associated with a large flock of Cattle Egrets. The bird at Rye Hbr was known to have been present for some weeks previously apparently feeding with chickens, and may have been the same as the one at Pett Level in early January. The Seaford individual was observed in a field behind the beach near the Martello tower at 11:00 hr but had gone by 11:45 hr.

The county total moves on to approximately 81, of which 39 have been this century. [P James]

Spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia

Very scarce visitor; most frequent in summer and autumn. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The estimated minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No. of birds	-	2	5	3	6	3	2	1	9	15	10	2

There were no over-wintering Spoonbills this year, with the first seen at Pulborough Brooks on 9 and 10 Feb, followed by one at Medmerry on 22 Feb and one at Pagham Hbr on 7 Mar. Remarkably, on 25 Mar, a flock of two adults and two second calendar year birds was tracked flying east past Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) at 8.40am, Lancing, Shoreham, Newhaven and finally Pevensey Bay at 10.40am, a distance of approximately 50 miles in two hours.

There were only three April reports, one past Ovingdean on the 3rd, one over Highdown (Worthing) on the 10th and one at Pulborough Brooks on the 30th, whilst May records comprised one at Medmerry on the 2nd, 5th and 7th, two past Splash Point (Seaford) on the 7th, one at Sidlesham Ferry on the 14th and finally two at Pulborough Brooks between the 23rd and the 28th.

There were relatively few summer records. In June one was at Cuckmere Haven on the 3rd and 6th, one flew over Goring Gap on the 4th, one was at Medmerry on the 13th and 14th, and was seen flying east past Selsey Bill the following day. In July there was one at Pulborough Brooks from the 3rd to the 6th and one at Rye Hbr on the 23rd. The only August record was of one heading SW over Pagham Hbr on the 28th.

There was a plethora of records from West Sussex in the early autumn, mainly at Medmerry, where three appeared on 1 Sep, with five present between the 12th and 22nd, seven there briefly on the 15th and three remaining until 6 Oct. One was also seen on Thorney Island on 15 and 16 Sep and there were half a dozen records during this time from Pagham Hbr, including the last for West Sussex, when three were seen there on 7 Oct and one on the 10th.

One at Rye Hbr on 15 Sep was the only record for East Sussex for the month, but thereafter East Sussex predominated, with three at Arlington Res on 2 Oct, one remaining until the following day, six briefly at Rye Hbr on 3 Oct, one over Beachy Head on 11 Oct, one on Pevensy Levels on 23 Oct, nine flying SW over Hastings on 9 Nov and one remaining in the Rye Hbr/Pett Level area from 18 Oct until 30 Dec, with a final record from Cuckmere Haven on the following day. [A House]

Eurasian Bittern

Botaurus stellaris

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

There were only two regularly reported wintering birds: at Chichester GP until 25 Feb and at Rye Hbr, where one stayed well into the spring and summer. Elsewhere there was a single at Pevensy Levels on 10 Jan and sightings at Pett Level on 5 and 28 Feb.

The Rye Hbr bird was reported until 20 Jul, often heard booming, but again there was no indication of breeding. There were just two autumn and late winter records, from Weir Wood Res on 11 Dec and Arundel WWT on 25 Dec. [A House]

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Scarce but increasing visitor. Bred for first time in 2020.

This was another exceptional year with breeding reported for the first time in Sussex. An article with further details of the breeding events is on pages 245 to 247 of this report.

The monthly totals at the main sites were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Chichester Hbr	6	2	5	6	6	9	19	28	6	5	1	1
Selsey Peninsula	25	25	25	-	-	7	17	46	56	15	56	56
Arun Valley	2	1	2	2	3	7	13	3	6	3	6	3
Cuckmere Valley	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	3	-	-	-	-

In the first winter period a mobile flock of 24 birds moved around fields on the Selsey Peninsula often favouring Marsh Fm (Sidlesham), with 25 counted on 12 Mar. One or two were seen regularly in the Arundel area and up to six at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr). In East Sussex, one was at Rye Hbr on 15 Apr and one at Pett Level on 15 May.

Breeding or attempted breeding occurred at Pagham Hbr and in the Arun and Cuckmere Valleys. There were five nests in the Little Egret colony at Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr). Young were seen in the nests on 21 May. An adult with two recently fledged young was at Halsey's Fm (Sidlesham) on 23 Jun and an adult with one recently fledged young was at Ferry Field (Sidlesham) on the 29th. Three juveniles with adults were regularly seen together in the area in July, with five juveniles on 7 and 8 Aug.

In the Arun Valley there were two or possibly three nests in a heronry near Arundel WWT. However, the nests do not appear to have been successful as by early August all activity at the heronry had ceased and no fledged young were seen. Five were at Pulborough Brooks on 29 and 30 Jul.

In the Cuckmere Valley there was at least one nest associated with the heronry at Friston Forest. It was found deep in the woods on 15 Jun, and was reported as damaged by a recent gale on 29 Jun, but on 13 Jul the Cattle Egrets were back on the nest, which contained three young. A different juvenile seen in the valley whilst these young were still in the nest and a Cattle Egret flying into another area of the forest on 8 Jun suggests that there may have been a second undiscovered nest.

Post breeding numbers built up in Chichester Hbr with 12 (including two juveniles) foraging amongst cattle at Thorney Deepes on 23 Jul, 28 (21 adults and seven juveniles) on 18 Aug and 21 (nine adults and 12 juveniles) on the 23rd. On the Selsey Peninsula 46 were at Pagham Hbr on 23 Aug with county record counts there of 56 on 5 Sep, 21 Nov and 28 Dec. In the Arun Valley, six were at Warningcamp on 18 and 20 Sep.

Elsewhere, 15 were at Henfield Levels on 23 Jul and 21 at Southease (Ouse Valley) on 22 Aug. Singles were in the Pevensey area from 29 Jul with four at Horse Eye Level on 23 Aug, three on the 24th and three on 20 Sep. At Rye Hbr single birds were seen on 12 July and at Pett Level one was seen on 1 Jul, 15 Sep and 4 Oct. [L Smith]



Cattle Egrets, Sidlesham, 26 November (Dorian Mason)

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Fairly common resident.

Grey Herons were recorded from 406 tetrads (42%) an increase compared with 348 in 2019. The additional sites are spread across the county, mainly in the more populated areas and are unlikely to have anything to do with changes in distribution but probably reflect the impact of COVID-19 restrictions with observers visiting local sites which are not normally covered.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites are shown in the table below. Note that most WeBS sites were not counted in April and May due to COVID-19 restrictions.

During the breeding season 266 nests were counted at 30 sites as part of the BTO Heronries Survey, but four heronries were not counted due to COVID-19 restrictions; the details are in the table below. This compares with 293 nests at 33 sites in 2019. There were three successful nests at Combe Valley CP. Apparently, the heronry has been established there for some time but has not been recorded before, although an adult with a recently fledged juvenile was reported from the site in 2019 about 1.2 km from the heronry.

Grey Heron - monthly counts at WeBS sites

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	104	195	160	17	77	112	89	108	152	147	109	112
Chichester Hbr	17	18	16	nc	5	18	15	20	23	30	10	16
Arun Valley N of Arundel	5	32	7	-	1	4	9	21	13	7	13	8
Weir Wood Res	7	40	45	nc	15	14	14	8	8	7	2	3
Lower Ouse Valley	8	3	9	-	2	1	5	nc	9	9	6	9
Pevensey Levels	7	11	8	nc	10	3	4	7	9	9	11	15
Rye Bay	6	18	12	1	3	8	5	11	14	14	15	18
Average county total 2010 to 2019	96	97	110	88	74	71	91	101	137	134	120	97

Grey Heron - counts of occupied nests at heronries

Thorney Island Little Deeps	0	Stretham Manor (Henfield)	3	Hampden Park (Eastbourne)	4
Itchenor (Ch)	2	Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes)	4	Glyndley Manor (Hailsham)	nc
Forest Mere (Liphook)	2	Hammonds Mill Fm (B. Hill)	nc	Wadhurst Park Lake	7
Old Park Wood (Fishbourne)	6	Ardingly Res	18	Gt Coppice Wood (Bayham)	0
Norton Priory	1	Weir Wood Res	48	Wartling	12
Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr)	11	Rodmell/Southease, R Ouse	4	Burwash	nc
Hoe Farm (Flansham)	11	Decoy Pond (Firle Park)	3	Combe Valley CP	3
Warningcamp/Arundel	2	Hempstead Wood (Uckfield)	3	Alder Shaw (Brede Level)	4
Northpark Wood (Parham)	8	Friston Forest (2 sites)	6	Winchelsea	12
Ham Manor GC (Angmering)	2	Hadlow Down	13	Houghton Green (Playden)	nc
Kneppmill Pond	30	Old Park (Eridge)	15		
Warnham LNR	29	Troutbeck (Eridge)	3	Total	266

Away from the heronries, large reservoirs and harbours, most records were of one to three birds at ponds, streams and marshy areas. In the first winter period, in addition to the WeBS counts, there were 30 at Winchelsea on 9 Mar and 25 at Warnham LNR on 26 Jan. In autumn 15 were at Pagham Hbr on 20 Sep and 11 flew west together along the coast at Ferring on 3 Oct. In the second winter period 13 were in one field at Offham (Arun Valley) on 18 Dec and there were counts of ten at both Pulborough Brooks and Cuckmere Haven. [L Smith]

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea****Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.***

There were two records of this overshooting southern heron in 2020: one that flew south low over Arlington Res on 29 Apr (JJ Everitt) and a juvenile at Burton MP from 3 to 10 Oct (DA & P Green *et al.*). The latter bird was often elusive during its eight day stay but showed in flight at dusk on most evenings before dropping into reeds to roost.

The county total moves on to 70, of which 22 have been this century. [P James]

Great White Egret*Ardea alba****Scarce but increasing visitor.***

Great White Egrets were recorded in 80 (8.3%) tetrads and as is typical for this species the late-autumn and early-winter period contributed the majority of records, with 16% of the annual total in November.

During the first winter period, one or two Great White Egrets were seen frequently at Pett Level, Rye Hbr (three on 8 Mar), the Knepp Estate and Pevensey Levels (three on 7 Mar), while sporadic sightings came from Pagham Hbr and the Arun Valley. Maximum counts comprised four at both Brede Levels and East Chiltington on 13 Jan and 12 Feb respectively.

During the spring, further individuals were seen at Thorney Island, Chichester GP, Patching, Hurstpierpoint, Littleington and Arlington Res, while April passage involved two flying east together off Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 23rd, one off Shoreham Beach on the 23rd and a distant bird off Medmerry on the 27th.

In the summer, individuals remained at Rye Hbr with four on 24 Aug. There was no evidence of breeding, though this site does perhaps remain the most likely future breeding location in the county. As autumn progressed, records increased and were well spread across the county; the highest counts of the year involved eight roosting at Rye Hbr on 25 Oct and seven flying over Bewl Water on 16 Oct, with ones and twos at mostly coastal locations into the winter. [MR Eade]

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

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

Little Egrets were recorded from 217 tetrads (22%), compared with 216 in 2019. The species is seen throughout the year, often alone, along the coast in all the estuaries and river valleys, with the highest numbers at Chichester Hbr, Pagham Hbr, Arun, Adur and Cuckmere Valleys, Pett Level and Rye Hbr.

The monthly WeBS counts at the principal sites are shown in the table below. Note that counts were not done in some months due to COVID-19 restrictions, but taking this into account, the numbers seem to be broadly stable over the last ten years.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	83	143	123	17	48	112	207	150	326	253	129	54
Chichester Hbr	39	79	85	nc	20	38	100	59	224	163	61	18
Pagham Hbr	-	15	3	nc	11	18	50	37	36	32	5	-
Rye Bay	10	3	-	9	2	17	9	31	20	23	7	6
Average county total 2010 to 2019	69	65	102	63	54	72	141	185	310	274	159	89

In the first winter period, 16 were at Southease (R Ouse) on 8 Feb, 15 at North Bersted (Bognor Regis) on 13 Feb, 15 each at Rye Hbr and Amberley Wild Brooks on 8 and 21 Mar respectively and 16 at Alfriston on the 22nd.

A total of 51 occupied nests was recorded from eight colonies, a halt to the decline seen in previous years (44 nests found in 2019, 54 in 2018, 62 in 2017 and 72 in 2016). Nest counts were: Old Park Wood (Bosham) six, Owl Copse (Pagham Hbr) 24, Warningcamp/Arundel Watermeadows two, Ham Manor GC (Angmering) one, Badgerhole Shaw (Coombes) six, Rodmell (Southease, River Ouse) three, Friston Forest six, and Rye Hbr three (in the Cormorant colony at Castle Point).

Post-breeding concentrations during August to October included 53 at Pagham Hbr on 7 Aug, 80 at Rye Hbr on the 15th, 70 at Cuckmere Haven on the 16th and 19th, 48 on Worthing Beach on 3 Sep and 40 going to roost at Thorney Deepes (Chichester Hbr) on 18 Oct. The highest second winter period counts were 14 at both Burton MP and Cuckmere Haven on 17 and 27 Nov respectively. [L Smith]

Bearded Vulture

*Gypaetus barbatus****Very rare vagrant.***

A second calendar year bird that had arrived in the UK in June was found near East Dean, northwest of Beachy Head, in the early afternoon of 14 Oct (MR Eade *et al.*). Within an hour, it became mobile and roamed the area between High and Over and Charleston Bottom before settling to roost half a mile east of Litlington.

Departing its roost the next morning, the vulture made its way to Beachy Head, eventually concluding its tour of Britain with a flight across the Channel at 14:00 hr. This record was accepted by BBRC, but may be placed by BOURC into Category E, which does not form part of the British List. Further details are in the finder's account on pages 221 to 223 of this report. [DK Campbell]

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

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

The approximate monthly totals, allowing for duplication, are shown in the following table.

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
4	4	10	5	6	18	19	3

The first record was of one over South Malling (Lewes) on 18 Mar, four days earlier than the 10-year average first date, followed by three or four over West Sussex from the 26th to the 30th. In April, reports came from the Selsey/Medmerry area (16th to 18th), Storrington (2nd), Littlehampton (3rd) and Ovingdean (4th). Also in April there were records from Weir Wood Res on the 5th, 15th, 27th, 29th (two) and 30th; and at Ardingly Res on the 6th, 8th and 14th. At Selsey Bill on 5 May, one was seen on offshore rocks after catching a fish, while another came in off the sea on the 7th and one flew north over Thorney Island on the 29th.

Records from the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area in June likely relate to one individual, as do those at Weir Wood Res from 22 Jun to 2 Jul, but further records at the latter site in July, on the 6th, 17th and 31st, probably involved different individuals. One was seen fishing successfully at Ardingly Res on 10 Jul and another was at Brede Levels on the 19th. In August, on the 3rd, a juvenile was noted inland at Black Down after being seen fishing in the valley lakes just to the west and another fishing bird was at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on the 4th, this site also hosting Ospreys on the 22nd, 23rd and 27th. A notable sighting on 26 Aug was of four different individuals seen at or near Eridge Park over the course of the morning, one successfully catching a fish from a lake. Two were at Cuckmere Haven on the 23rd and another pair seen both at Pagham Hbr and Thorney Island on 1 Sep were probably the same individuals.

There was a long-stayer at Medmerry from 10 to 17 Sep. A surprise sighting was of one at Plumpton on the 14th and two were seen on southbound migration at Beachy Head that day. Two more headed south at Beachy Head on 18 Sep and one flew south over the sea at Selsey Bill on the 25th. A juvenile was at Weir Wood Res on 25 Sep and another on 10 Oct; this was the last record of the year, early compared to the 10-year average last date of 27 Oct. [BGR Ives]



Honey-buzzard, Sussex, 26 August (Mark Mallalieu)

Honey-buzzard

Pernis apivorus

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

There were three spring records: one flew low NE over Seaford pursued by gulls on 7 May (NJN Pope); one flew south at Firls on 25 May (M Berridge, PC Stevens); and a male was at the Knepp Estate on 31 May (MDM Helps, AR Kitson).

As part of the 2020-2021 national survey of breeding Honey-buzzards in the UK, fieldworkers carried out a partial survey of potential breeding sites in Sussex. Seven pairs were confirmed breeding (compared with at least six in 2019). At two of the nests, two young were ringed. At a third, one young was ringed and a fledged juvenile was present. Of the other four breeding pairs,

adults were seen bringing in food to three nest sites and a flying juvenile was seen on 30 Aug at the fourth site, where a pair of adults had been present. Non-breeding pairs were found at four sites and unpaired males at two more. At a further two locations well inland that were adjacent to one another, a total of 2 or 3 juveniles were seen on 1 Sep though there were no sightings of adults here earlier in the season. In addition, at least five other adults were seen inland during the breeding season. It is not known whether any of these individuals were paired. After further survey work in 2021, the results will be written up in the 2021 Sussex Bird Report.

There were just three records of autumn migrants: an adult male flew west and later back east at Church Norton on 22 Aug (A Bowley, A House); an adult soared over Pulborough Brooks on 2 Sep with three Common Buzzards (A Baker, CH Moore, J Moore); and one flew low south over Chichester (JM Dale) on 12 Sep, an early date for the final sighting of the year. [M Mallalieu]

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

Common resident and passage migrant.

Sparrowhawks were recorded in 473 tetrads (399 in 2019), higher than the 10-year average of 452. During the early year SWBS, the species was encountered in 8.0% of squares surveyed. In the GBW, Sparrowhawks were recorded in 47% of gardens surveyed during the year.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads, was probable in 26 and possible in a further 14. Display was first observed on 28 Jan at West Lavington, display was noted on 27 Mar at Newhaven, one was carrying food on 19 Jun at Sompting Brooks and the first fledged young were seen on 23 Jul at Cowdray Forest (Worth). In the limited BBS encounters, the species occurred in only six squares (4.8%), all records were of one.

The largest counts of the autumn were from Beachy Head with five on four dates between 2 Sep and 12 Oct and at least six on 18 Sep. Elsewhere four were at both Kingley Vale on 8 Sep and Rye Hbr on 11 and 14 Oct. In the late year SWBS, Sparrowhawks were encountered in 8.7% of squares surveyed.

There was a report of a Sparrowhawk found paralysed beside a brick wall in Brighton, probably having flown into it, in August. Unfortunately, it had to be put down. Recorded prey species included a Grey Phalarope at Henfield Levels (on 31 Oct) and Feral Pigeon, Collared Dove, Jackdaw, Blue Tit, Chiffchaff, Starling and House Sparrow. [MJ Chattaway]

Goshawk

Accipiter gentilis

Scarce but increasing resident. Schedule 1 species.

Fieldwork revealed at least 37 territories (34 in 2019), of which 13 were occupied by confirmed breeding pairs. At five further sites probable breeding was recorded, with possible breeding at 19 more. Fledged juveniles were flying from late June, with at least 21 individuals seen or heard, though it is likely that over 40 actually fledged given the number of confirmed and probable breeding pairs. As in 2019, coverage was far from complete, so the true number of territories is likely to be higher and there were a small number of casual records from other potential breeding sites. The core areas remain the western Weald, parts of the South Downs, and the Weald of central and eastern Sussex.

Although most casual records related to known territories or were from suitable breeding habitat, wandering immatures were seen in areas unsuitable for breeding with singles at Chanctonbury Ring on 27 Feb and at Sompting on 24 Mar. [D Burges, M Mallalieu]



Marsh Harrier, Pett Level, 25 February (Colin Holter)

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 83 (8.6%) tetrads, improving on last year’s record year by nine. Records were received in every month of the year from the Arun Valley (including Pulborough Brooks), Pett Level and Rye Hbr, and in ten months of the year from Thorney Island and Deeps, and Pevensy Levels. 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	30	23	24	15	17	17	16	16	18	16	22	34

Most records during the first winter period were from the above-named sites plus the Pagham Hbr/Chichester area and Combe Valley CP. The highest count was ten at Arundel WWT on 2 and 4 Jan with eight further counts of between five and nine birds at various locations in the Arun Valley. At Pett Level, six were seen on 14 Feb and 18 Mar and there were five further counts of five. The maximum at Rye Hbr was three. One flew along the shoreline at Thorney Island and then high north on 14 Mar.

Successful breeding was confirmed at two East Sussex locations: at one site a pair was present throughout the breeding season fledging at least two young and at a second site, two males and

three females fledged at least three young. At a third East Sussex site, a pair attempted to breed but deserted following disturbance by dogs. In West Sussex, one pair successfully fledged at least one young. Two nesting attempts were made at a second West Sussex location but both failed at the egg stage and at a third site display was noted.

A female in heavy moult flew high and south at High and Over (Cuckmere Valley) on 14 Jun. This was followed by a female or immature at Lewes Brooks on 20 Jun, and single juveniles at Glynde Levels on the 22 Jun, at Thorney Deeps on 6 and 18 Jul and at Beachy Head on 29 Jul. The latter was the first of six birds seen at that site during the autumn. One was at Weir Wood Res on 24 Aug and the first of six in the Hastings area was seen on the 29 Aug. Most autumn records were from the usual locations with the highest counts being five at Arundel on both 22 Sep and 23 Oct and four at both Pett Level and at various locations in the Arun Valley on several dates. A juvenile, wing-tagged in Norfolk, was seen at Pulborough Brooks and elsewhere in the Arun Valley from mid-October until at least mid-December.

The highest second winter period counts were eight at Arundel WWT on 7 Dec, six at both Arundel on 13 Nov and at Pett Level on 15 Nov, plus three further counts of five. [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 64 tetrads (6.7%) compared to the 10-year average of 47 (range 34 to 70). The sum of the estimated monthly totals of 57, shown in the following table, is conservative. The total would perhaps be considerably higher were it not for continued persecution of this species on some upland driven grouse shooting estates in northern Britain. All records were specified by the observers were of ringtails unless noted below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total*	10	3	4	3	1	-	3	3	4	6	12	8
Selsey Peninsula	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	1
West Sussex Downs	3	1	1	-	-	-	2	1	1	2	3	2
Arun Valley	2	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1
East Sussex Downs	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2
Ashdown Forest	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ouse Valley	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pevensey Levels	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5	2
Rye Bay	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Others	3	-	-	2	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 27 days in January, usually of one, with most records coming from the West Sussex Downs and the Arun Valley. The maximum number seen was three at The Burgh (Burpham) on 1 Jan with two seen there on three further dates. Two were recorded from Amberley Wild Brooks on five dates and two were at Rodmell on the 26th. In February, singles were seen on 16 dates and all records were from West Sussex except one at Cuckmere Haven on the 7th. One seen at No Man's Land (Findon) on 5 Feb was identified as a young male. March was similar to February; birds were seen on 20 days with a maximum of two in the Arun Valley on three dates and the only East Sussex records were at Pevensey Levels with one on the 11th and another (an adult male) on the

27th. There were three or four birds in April, one or two in the Arun Valley until the 19th, one (an adult male) at West Grinstead on the 20th and one at Ifield on the 22nd. On the late date of 25 May, an adult male was seen to fly ENE over St Leonard's Forest, an unusual location.

The first returning birds were in July at The Burgh on the 11th then one at Steep Down (Lancing) from the 27th to the 30th and one near Uckfield on the 30th. There were three or possibly four birds in August: at Beachy Head on the 10th, the Adur Valley and West Sussex Downs from the 18th to 29th, and one at Medmerry on the 30th. In September, a male was seen at Seaford Head and one at Cissbury on the 1st; followed by singles flying over Rudgwick (Horsham) on the 7th, in the Brighton area on the 12th and at Durrington (Worthing) on the 17th. Towards the end of the month and up to 9 Oct, one was in the Pagham Hbr/Medmerry area. In October there were records on eight dates including an adult male at The Burgh on the 23rd.

November sightings on 20 days included single adult males on nine dates and a young male on another, and sightings on 17 days in December included an adult male and a young male each on one date. Most records at this time came from the West Sussex Downs, the Arun Valley and Pevensey Levels. Five were at Pevensey Levels on 29 Nov with two seen there on four further dates. Other multiple sightings were of two at Wepham Down on 7 and 9 Nov. There was only one record (on 15 Jan) from Ashdown Forest this year and none from the West Sussex commons. [MJ Chattaway]

Pallid Harrier

Circus macrourus

Very rare vagrant.

Thorney Island hosted a juvenile from 31 Aug to 1 Sep and from 10 Sep to 15 Sep (CB Collins, P Evans *et al.*). It was absent between 2 and 9 Sep and for some of this period, the bird was seemingly accounted for on the Isle of Wight. This fourth for Sussex delighted a good number of birders during its time on Thorney Island. The record has been accepted by BBRC. [DK Campbell]



Pallid Harrier, Thorney Island, 31 August (Paul Evans)

Montagu's Harrier

Circus pygargus

Very scarce spring and autumn visitor; last bred successfully in 1962. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The only record of this increasingly scarce bird in the UK was of a first summer female photographed quartering fields at Rodmell on 21 May (E Clift, T Lees). The county total this century moves on to 54. [P James]

Red Kite

Milvus milvus

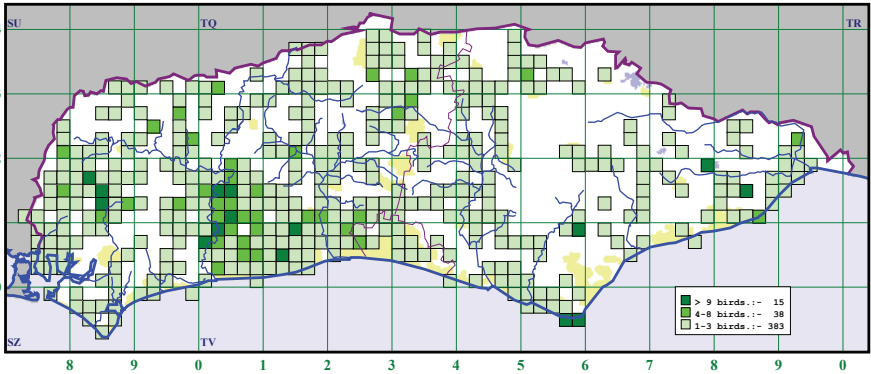
Scarce or fairly common breeding resident (first bred in 2004) and fairly common and increasing visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Red Kites were recorded in 436 tetrads (45%) compared with 307 (33%) in 2019, with approximately a 2:1 split between West and East Sussex. The gap between west and east is narrowing with increasing evidence that the re-colonisation of East Sussex is gathering momentum. The estimated minimum monthly totals were as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	118	109	219	227	438	232	94	85	140	98	137	161
West Dean	7	9	3	5	4	4	4	2	20	12	14	8
The Burgh	15	6	6	5	7	9	5	8	20	11	20	50
Elsewhere	96	94	210	217	427	219	85	75	100	75	103	103

The Storrington-Amberley downland produced many double-figure records in both January and February and again between September and December. Additionally, the Amberley Wild Brooks and Rackham Woods areas provided many sightings in every month of the year, especially whenever there was partial flooding of the river valley. In the early part of the year there were 15 on 3 Jan, 20 on 25 Jan and ten on 1 Feb, and towards the end of the year there were 17 on 17 Dec and 8 on 24 Dec.

The two known downland roosts at West Dean and The Burgh have been monitored for many years with counts usually taking place in January and December. At The Burgh, there was a count of between 50 and 60 on 28 Dec. As the table above shows, the numbers were low at West Dean in 2020 but it is likely that alternative sites were used in that area and with COVID-19 restrictions these other roosts were not found.



The number and wide distribution of Red Kites reported during the year was quite astonishing, as shown in the map, with the resident population swollen by large numbers of visiting birds between late March and early June when ten weeks of settled weather and a legion of birdwatchers skygazing from their gardens (at times due to travel restrictions), created ideal conditions to spot Red Kites passing through. These visiting parties were first noted in the Beachy Head area where small flocks were recorded on eight dates between 26 Mar and 24 Apr, with a peak count of 12 on 7 Apr. The main influx began in the second week of May, with about 215 recorded between 8 and 10 May (albeit with some duplication presumably involved).

There were notable counts of 14 at Arundel, 15 at Hailsham, 12 at Beachy Head, all on 8 May. These were followed by two larger counts of 20 at Cissbury and 31 at Offington (Worthing) on 10 May. Of the 438 Red Kites recorded in May it is likely that well over 300 were visitors, and just passing through, as few of these birds appeared to hang around for more than a few hours. These are unprecedented numbers for the county, more than doubling the previous monthly record of 195 Red Kites recorded in April 2018. On 2 Jun, there was another remarkable passage reported at Three Oaks (Guestling), when a total of 54 kites was seen heading east, in two flocks of 32 and 22.

Nesting pairs of Red Kites are most readily located in late February, the whole of March and the first few days of April and for this period in 2020 there were around 33 records of two kites seen in localities with suitable breeding habitat. Just a handful of confirmed breeding records were received, and at one West Sussex site an occupied nest was seen, at another, an adult was seen carrying food towards a presumed nest and also attacking a Common Buzzard over the wood, and in two different locations in East Sussex there were two juveniles flying above their nesting woods.

These records do not reflect the considerably larger Sussex breeding population (which may now be over 100 pairs). The re-colonisation of the county, since 2004, has been relatively slow but with the addition of large numbers of juveniles every year and the considerable numbers present in neighbouring Hampshire, the population in Sussex is set to rise very rapidly and maybe in ten years the re-colonisation of the county will be complete. [ME Kalaher]

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Rare vagrant.

There were five accepted records of this spring overshoot in 2020: at Exceat on 27 Mar (L Curson) and later over Seaford (J Curson), lingering at Beachy Head for 4 hr on 8 May (ME & RH Charlwood, A Whitcomb *et al.*), at Hastings CP on 9 May (C Cogley), at Pett on 10 May (CH Dean) and at Arundel on 26 May (MC Daniel). The Exceat bird was the earliest ever county record exceeding the previous earliest (10 Apr 2019) by two weeks whilst the Beachy Head bird coincided with an easterly movement of c.30 Red Kites there on 8 and 9 May. The description of the Pett individual and photos of the Hastings one show that these were different birds. The county total moves on to 48, of which 29 have been this century. [P James]

White-tailed Eagle

Haliaeetus albicilla

Rare vagrant. Reintroduction scheme on the Isle of Wight. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

An immature seen in a field between Newhaven and Piddinghoe on 30 Mar later flew north up the valley (MF Austin). It was not one of the released individuals from the Isle of Wight (IOW) programme as these have GPS satellite transmitters and none were in Sussex at the

time. This was the sixth record since 1929 though there were two in 2019. A short account of the movements in Sussex during the year of released individuals from the IOW is on pages 248-249 of this report. [M Mallalieu]

Common Buzzard

Buteo buteo

Fairly common and increasing resident; probably scarce passage migrant.

Common Buzzards were recorded in 706 tetrads (73%), the highest number on record; the previous high was 640 in 2019. Of 51 counts of ten and above, 38 were in West Sussex and 13 in East Sussex. A total of 33 counts were during the first winter period with the highest being 33 at Balcombe on 1 Mar, 26 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 10 Jan and 25 at Westdean Woods on 7 Feb. The highest East Sussex count was 20 at Maynards Green (Heathfield) on 8 Feb. During the early year SWBS, the species was encountered in 58% of squares surveyed with a maximum of eight at Sutton (Pulborough) on 19 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed in 25 tetrads and was probable in a further 64. As usual for this species, there were few records of actual breeding but display was recorded from late January, copulation was noted on 8 Feb at Highdown (Worthing), display was reported at Newhaven on several dates from 30 Mar, and nest building was observed on 30 Mar at Steyning. The first fledged young were seen at Goddards Green (Hassocks) on 31 May. Young still at a nest were heard as late as 24 Aug at Mountfield. During the BBS, Common Buzzards were found in 51% of squares with a maximum of five on Pevensey Levels on 5 May and at Fernhurst on 1 Jul.

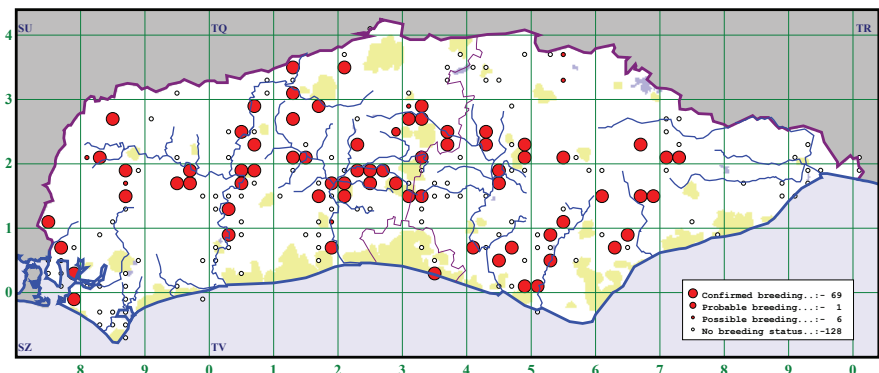
In the summer, there were only four double-figure counts until the end of August. These comprised ten at The Burgh on 22 Jun, and in August, 12 at Thorney Island on the 20th, 12 at Mark Cross on the 27th and 11 at Pagham Hbr on the 31st. In September, 15 were at The Burgh on the 2nd and 30 were on the South Downs (A24 to the R Arun) on the 7th. Most records until the end of the year were of fewer than five. Notable counts were 16 at Chilgrove on 11 Oct, 21 at Bow Hill (Stoughton) on 10 Nov and 20 on the South Downs (A24 to the R Arun) the same day. During the late year SWBS, Common Buzzards were found in 48% of squares with a maximum of five on 17 Dec at Cocking.

The only prey species reported were young rabbits and earthworms. [M J Chattaway]

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Fairly common resident. Schedule 1 species.



Barn Owls were recorded in 204 tetrads (21%) compared with a 10-year average of 181 (range 151 to 236). There was increased fieldwork in East Sussex by the Sussex Barn Owl Study Group leading to some additional records there. In 2020, 41% of general sightings came in the first quarter when Barn Owls are often seen during daylight hours as hunting may be proving lean. The number of sightings by month, excluding nest box monitoring, is shown in the following table.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Tot
58	41	41	20	27	28	28	20	15	20	19	19	336

Breeding was confirmed in 69 tetrads (7.1%). Broods of five were recorded at only two sites and the majority of nest box sites contained only one or two young. No second broods were reported in 2020. Of food caches discovered, 95% contained only Short-tailed Vole; other prey species included Mole, Common Shrew, Field Mouse and Common Starling. [TD Hallahan]



Barn Owl, Newhaven Tide Mills, 27 February (Bob Eade)

Tawny Owl

Strix aluco

Common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Tawny Owls were recorded from 239 tetrads (25%), an increase of 20 on 2019, higher than the 10-yr average of 221 (range 194 to 330), with most records being of single birds. In the first winter period, there were counts of four at Etchingham on 12 Jan and at Lychpole (Cissbury) on 5 Feb, with threes at Sidlesham, Offham, Findon and Arundel on three dates between 10 Jan and 23 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads, the same as 2019 with probable or possible breeding in a further 39 tetrads. The first confirmed breeding report was of a juvenile heard on 18 May at Troutbeck (Eridge). Two days later, on the 20th, a recently fledged owlet was seen at Lullington Heath and an adult with owlet were seen together at Bramber Brooks NR. Further sightings included two owlets at Woods Mill (Henfield) on the 21st and three owlets were seen and heard calling alongside two adults at Abbot's Wood (Hailsham) on the 26th and 27th. In June, a nest and a fledgling were seen at the Discovery Centre (Pagham Hbr). The highest count in the breeding period was of seven at Darwell Woods on 16 Jun, when three young and four adults were heard calling.

During summer, high counts were of four at Beechdown Wood (Battle) on 4 Aug, with threes at Netherfield, Rushlake Green, Crawley Down, Darch's Wood (Cross-in-Hand), Arundel, Pulborough Brooks and Chilgrove.

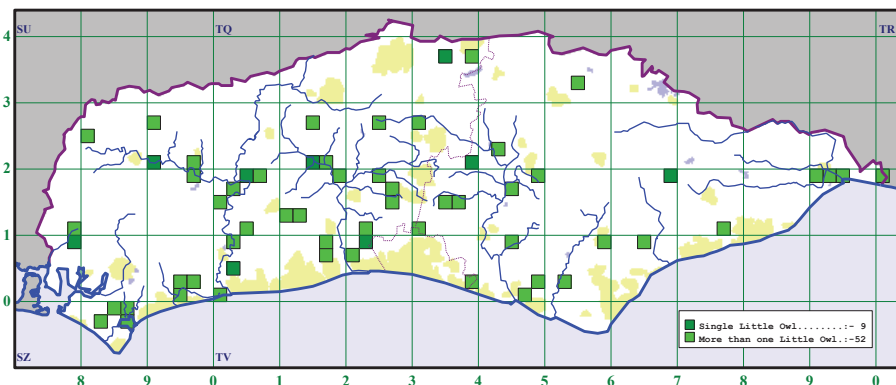
Most records in autumn were of one or two, but threes were heard at Beachy Head, Ladywell (nr Coombes), Burton MP, Arundel and Bodiam. During the second winter period, four were recorded at Arundel on 13 Nov, three at Weir Wood Res on 23 Nov and at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 22 Dec two males and female were heard calling. [K Roszkowska]

Little Owl

Athene noctua

Fairly common but declining resident.

Little Owls were recorded in 61 tetrads (6.3%), a welcome increase from the 2019 total of 48. However, there were only two tetrads with confirmed breeding and a further five tetrads with probable and four with possible breeding. The distribution is shown in the map below.



Three fledglings were seen at both the Knepp Estate and Crawley Down, while regular sightings during the year comprised individuals at The Burgh, Sompting, Portslade, Balcombe, Plumpton, Isfield, Fletching and Rye Hbr. An individual at Uckfield was the first heard there in two years, and

further promising signs included a calling bird at Terwick Common (Rogate), a record which gives hope for other under-watched areas within the county.

Although Little Owls appear to be struggling in both Sussex and surrounding counties, it is reassuring that the number of records remains broadly consistent over the past five years. [MR Eade]

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Long-eared Owls were recorded from 15 sites during the year and the good number of records is largely down to targeted work on this species by three individuals. In the first winter period there were records from six areas. One was inland in a river valley on 2 Jan, on the 4th one was seen hunting over fields and scrub at a coastal downland location, and on the 15th another was observed at a different downland location. At two known roosts on downland, there were up to two at one site between 20 Jan and 11 Mar, while at the second up to three were present between 19 Jan and 26 Apr. On 11 Apr one was discovered roosting in scrub at a further coastal downland location, ignored by the surrounding birds of other species.

Two spring migrants were seen. One found trapped and partly stunned in a glass-fronted balcony in Hastings on the 24th was released later that day at Hastings Castle. A second individual came in off the sea at Widewater (Lancing) at 7:40am on 29 Apr.

All breeding season records were from scrub on downland, with breeding confirmed at two sites, while four further pairs were recorded in suitable breeding habitat along with one single bird. Breeding was confirmed at a site where this species successfully bred in 2019, with a female heard calling on 25 May, and at least one young heard on 30 May and 16 Jun. At another site an adult was seen hunting on 26 May when one young was also heard, and close to this site an additional two pairs had been recorded with all four birds calling on 16 Apr. Two further pairs were recorded elsewhere close together in potential breeding habitat between 8 Apr and 31 May, and at another location an adult was seen hunting in suitable breeding habitat on 4 Jun.

No autumn migrants were seen, but individuals were recorded from three sites in the second winter period. At two downland roosts, also used in the first winter period, birds returned in November. At the first site one was recorded on 7 Nov and a second was there on 30 Dec. At the second site one had returned to the roost on 6 Nov, with another there on 28 Dec, and on that date one was also seen hunting nearby at dusk. Elsewhere one was accidentally flushed from its roost in a holly tree in an area of grazing meadow on 17 Dec.

This species is very rarely encountered by chance and without widespread and concerted recorder effort throughout suitable habitat it will be under-recorded, so these records likely represent a significant understatement of the true number and range of this species 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 57 tetrads (5.9%), slightly lower than 2019 but the same as the 10-year average (range 33 to 77). The approximate monthly totals, split for comparison into the East and West Sussex, were as in the table below.

Early year counts were mostly of ones and twos with peaks of four at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 22 Jan and three at Rackham Woods on 12 Jan.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
West Sussex	13	2	1	4	3	1	-	9	11	9	15	9
East Sussex	2	2	3	1	1	-	-	6	10	12	4	5
County totals	15	4	4	5	4	1	-	15	21	19	19	14

April sightings, presumably passage migrants, were of single birds seen predominantly at coastal locations: Pilsey Island, Goring, Shoreham beach, Southwick beach, Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and inland at Amberley Mount. In May there were singles on several dates between the 6th and the 18th at Pilsey Island, Pagham Hbr and Beachy Head. In June the only record was of one above Portslade on the 9th.

Notably in August there was a high number of sightings: 15 compared with none in 2019 and less than ten in the previous two years, which is indicative of early migration. Birds were recorded from Chichester Hbr, Medmerry, Pagham Hbr, Climping, Springhead Hill (Rackham), Truleigh Hill, Beacon Hill LNR (Rottingdean), Beachy Head and Rye Bay, with a maximum of three at Beachy Head on 31 Aug.

Thereafter, to the end of the year, sightings were mainly of ones and twos but from 30 widespread locations, with numerous records from Chichester and Pagham Hbrs, and The Burgh where there was a peak count of three on 27 Dec. [TD Hallahan]

Hoopoe

Upupa epops

Very scarce spring and even scarcer autumn passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

It was a remarkable spring for Hoopoes, with about 22 recorded, by far the largest number this century and the largest annual total since the 32 in 1968.

All sightings were of single birds. The first of the year was at Goring on 4 Apr (R Bower), followed by records from Storrington on the 7th (S & S Price), Fairlight (J Howell, A Parker) and Pett Level (per PE Jones) on the 8th, and West Chiltington (R Harraway) and Cooden Beach (A Redman) on the 9th. Thereafter sightings were from Jury's Gap on the 10th and 11th (per MG Freeman), Arlington Res on the 11th (JJ Everitt), Climping on the 12th to at least the 20th (per Hon. Recorder), Piddinghoe from the 17th to the 23rd (D Bird, BR Cox), Newhaven Tide Mills on the 20th (MF Austin, N Greenaway) and probably the same individual at Bishopstone the following day (A Payne), Tortington on the 20th (per C Glanfield), Angmering on the 22nd (N Levett), Sompting on the 24th (MA Galtry), Kingston on the 25th (W Banfield), Littlehampton GC on the 26th and 27th (D Booker, C Glanfield *et al.*), considered a new arrival, and near Henfield on the 29th (VP Bentley).

The influx concluded in May with records from Kingston Gorse on the 4th (DK Campbell), Arundel on the 6th (MC Daniel), Knepp Estate on the 17th (I Mephram), Lancing on the 18th (P Strzelecki) and Hailsham on the 20th (R Hoad). There were no autumn records. [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 205 tetrads (21%) compared with 16% last year and a 10-year average of 142 (range 97 to 191). They were seen in every month of the year at Rye Hbr, in 11 months at Arundel WWT and in ten months at Arlington Res and Burton MP. Elsewhere during the first winter period they were regularly recorded in ones and twos, mainly in coastal locations.

Breeding was confirmed at only one location when a family group of four was seen on 2 Jun at Fittleworth. However, breeding was considered as probable or possible in a further 16 tetrads.

During the summer birds were recorded almost daily, usually as singles or twos but three were at Weir Wood Res on 7 Jul and another three in the lower Arun Valley on 24 Aug. On the same day, four were noted at Arundel WWT.

In the autumn, four were seen in the lower Arun Valley on 9 Sep and counts of three were made at Brighton Marina on 12 Sep, in the lower Adur Valley on the 18th and at Weir Wood Res on the 20th, with four at Rye Hbr on 7 Oct. During the autumn/second winter period birds were also recorded almost daily in ones or twos. [T Seabrook]

Bee-eater

Merops apiaster

Very scarce visitor; mainly in spring; bred once in 1955. Schedule 1 species.

There were four records of this typical spring overshoot in 2020, all in May. The first, heard calling twice but not seen, over Splash Point (Seaford) on 7 May (BR Cox, L Curson) was followed by singles at Beachy Head on 9 May (ME & RH Charlwood), flying west and then north at Fairlight Cliffs on 15 May (A Parker) and flying west at Winchelsea on 29 May (BJ Holcombe). The total recorded this century moves on to 95 with records in all but two years since 2000. [P James]



Wryneck, Seaford Head, 2 September (Marc Read)

Wryneck*Jynx torquilla****Very scarce passage migrant; most in autumn; last bred in 1944. Schedule 1 species.***

The only spring record was of one in a garden in Polegate on 19 Apr.

The autumn passage was a little improved in 2020 compared with 2019 with at least 12 different birds reported over the whole period. The first was one at Climping on 16 and 17 Aug followed by one at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 31st. The peak month was September with two at Seaford Head on the 2nd and singles at Walderton (Chichester) and Stoughton on the 4th and Brighton Wild Park on the 5th. One, perhaps the same bird, was at Newhaven Tide Mills on the 5th, 6th and 8th. As the month progressed there were singles at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) on the 6th and 7th, Ferring on the 9th, Beachy Head on the 12th, 14th and 18th and Castle Hill LNR (Newhaven), also on the 18th, the last date Wrynecks were seen and earlier than the 10-year average last date of 7 Oct. [KW 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 27 tetrads (2.8%) in 2020, a return to the level of 2016. No nests were reported but breeding was probable in seven tetrads and possible in a further four. About half the records were in the build up to the breeding season from February to April when birds are most detectable because of their calling and drumming. The numbers of records were low in April and May, probably the result of COVID-19 restrictions which came into force at the end of March.

In January and February there were 18 records, all of single birds. The most exciting and unexpected was one seen on a SWBS survey at Marley House (Battle) on 10 Jan. At Crowborough there was a series of records of a drumming bird at Poundfield and Pellings Woods through February (12th to 15th, 18th, 19th, 21st, 24th and 25th). In addition, there were singles at Combe Valley CP on 24 Jan, Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 7, 19 and 25 Feb, the Knepp Estate on 11 Feb, Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) on 12 and 19 Feb and Arundel Park on 19 Feb. All except the Combe Valley CP and the Knepp Estate birds were drumming or displaying. The first drumming was reported on 12 Feb with the last at Mannings Heath on 14 May, a comparatively late date for this species.

During the breeding season from March to mid-June there were records from 19 sites thinly spread over the county: Arundel Park, Ashdown Forest (five sites), Bensonhill Wood (Crawley), Broadwater Warren, Crowborough, Darwell Res, Eridge Park, Little Strudgate Fm, Mannings Heath, Netherfield, Pulborough Brooks, Rackham Woods, Southwater, Tilgate Forest and Tilgate Park. Most of these records were of calling or drumming birds or pairs.

From mid-June until the end of the year there were 19 records from 12 sites, all except one of single birds. At Darwell Res there were records on 23 and 24 Jun, 12 Jul, 16 Aug and 29 Dec. Records elsewhere were: Tilgate Forest on 25 Jun and 17 Jul, Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 26 Jun, 12 Jul and two on 16 Nov, Battle on 27 Jun, Paddockhurst (Worth) on 10 Jul, Hollybush Wood (East Grinstead) on 15 Jul, Ashburnham Place (Battle) on 30 Jul, Dragons Green (Horsham) on 10 Aug, Vines Cross on 29 Aug, Balcombe on 6 Sep, Angmering on 1 Oct, and Broadwater Warren on 24 Oct. [KW Smith]



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Ashdown Forest, 20 March (Edward Paxton)

Great Spotted Woodpecker

*Dendrocopos major***Very common and increasing resident.**

The species was recorded in 669 (69%) tetrads, a small increase from the 589 in 2019. In the first winter period the highest counts were seven each at Darwell Res on 5 Jan, Northpark Wood (Parham) on 18 Feb and Blackham on 22 Mar. In the early year SWBS, they were recorded in 51% of squares surveyed with a maximum of six at Ditchling on 20 Jan. The first reports of drumming were from Steel Cross (Crowborough) on 4 Jan and Tillingham Valley (Rye), Pulborough Brooks and Ladywell (nr Coombes) on the 5th.

In April and May high counts were ten at Ashington on 21 Apr, ten on the Knepp Estate on 30 May and nine at Herstmonceux on 19 Apr. The numbers of breeding records continued to increase in 2020 with confirmed breeding in 51 tetrads and probable breeding in a further 60 (the equivalent figures in 2019 were 39 and 53 respectively). No breeding season territory counts were available for RSPB reserves in 2020. During the BBS Great Spotted Woodpeckers were encountered in 62% of squares surveyed with a maximum of eight at Hartfield on 31 May. The first fledglings were reported from Mountfield on 6 May. High summer counts were seven at Nutley on 5 Jun, eight at Balcombe on the 8th, with seven at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 21 and 29 Jul and seven at Pulborough Brooks on 10 Aug.

In autumn there were seven at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 15 Sep and ten there on 13 Oct. In the late year SWBS, they were recorded in 50% of squares surveyed with a maximum of five at Old Lodge LNR on 12 Nov. There were four counts of six during the second winter period and there were records of drumming from Goring Gap, Henfield, Small Dole, Barcombe and Ashdown Forest in December.

The species is a frequent visitor to garden feeders and in 2020 was recorded in 63% of the 389 gardens contributing to the GBW. [KW Smith]

Green Woodpecker

*Picus viridis***Common resident.**

Green Woodpeckers were recorded in 563 (58%) tetrads in 2020, yet another small increase, with records throughout the year, with the peak in April. This species is so ubiquitous that it was still widely detected even with the limited local surveys allowed under the COVID-19 restrictions in place over much of the spring.

In the first winter period the highest counts were during timed surveys with six at Pulborough Brooks on 8 Feb and five each at the Knepp Estate on 11 Feb, Antye Fm (Burgess Hill) on 1 Mar and Little Streele (Framfield) on 7 Mar. In the first winter period SWBS they were recorded in 43% of squares surveyed with a maximum of four at Ripe on 8 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads, largely because of the presence of recently fledged young, and probable in a further 35, similar figures to 2019. Three nests were reported, one each at Goring Gap, Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) and St Leonards Forest. There were some high counts during the breeding season (April to June), usually during timed surveys. Eleven were reported from the Knepp Estate on 16 Apr and nine in Petworth Park on 28 May during a BBS, when they were found in 34% of squares surveyed.

The highest late summer/autumn count was 15 at the Knepp Estate on 29 Jul with six at Pulborough Brooks on the 11th and 17th and six at Northpark Wood (Parham) on 15 Sep. The

highest counts in the second winter period were six at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Nov and 28 Dec. In the late year SWBS, they were recorded in 39% of squares surveyed with a maximum of four in three surveys.

In 2020 the species was recorded in 114 (29.3%) of the 389 gardens contributing to the GBW. [KW Smith]

Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus

Fairly common or common resident and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.

Kestrels were recorded in 528 tetrads (55%) compared to a 10-year average of 438 (range 365 to 511). They were recorded in more tetrads than Sparrowhawks (473) but fewer than Common Buzzards (706). During the first winter period, the highest count was 15 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 8 Feb, the only double-figure count recorded. Seven were at The Burgh on 10 Jan and six at Thorney Island on 21 Mar. In the early year SWBS, they were recorded in 26% of squares surveyed with a maximum of two in nine squares.

Breeding was confirmed in 17 tetrads, probable in 19 and possible in a further 41. Display was first noted at Barcombe on 15 Feb, birds were visiting a probable nest site on 10 Apr at Sheffield Park, and the first confirmed breeding was of birds at an occupied nest on 23 Apr on the Knepp Estate. The first fledglings were seen on 15 Jun at Arundel. During the limited BBS surveys, Kestrels were found in 22% of squares studied with a maximum of five at Edburton on 24 May. There were three pairs at Thorney Island and the nest box at Woods Mill (Henfield) was again successful with six chicks. A nest in a stack of straw bales was reported from Rye and a box in a barn at Balcombe was also used successfully.

Evidently Kestrels had a good breeding season as there were some high late summer and autumn counts. In August, there were six at Pulborough Brooks on the 1st, Rye on the 23rd and Arundel Park on the 31st. In September, there were nine at Beeding Hill on the 9th (and eight there on the 4th, 17th and 28th), eight at Medmerry on the 9th and counts of seven at Winchelsea on the 6th and on the 9th at both the South Downs between the A24 and the R Arun, and at Beachy Head. The highest October count was seven at Beeding Hill on the 10th. Six was the highest count in the second winter period on both downland between the A24 and the R Arun on 10 Nov and in The Burgh area on the 12 Nov, and five were at Pulborough Brooks on 21 Nov. In the late year SWBS, Kestrels were encountered in 27% of squares studied with a maximum of two in nine squares.

Interesting observations on prey items included one eating a lizard on Ashdown Forest on 24 Apr and another carrying a Slow-worm to a nest site at Chantry Hill on 27 Apr. [MJ Chattaway]

Red-footed Falcon

Falco tinnunculus

Rare vagrant.

2020 was an exceptional year for this graceful falcon that winters in southern Africa, breeds in Eastern Europe and is subject to periodic influxes into the UK. The first of the six was an adult male recorded at Pevensey Levels on 27 Apr by four children who, when confronted with a bird they were unfamiliar with, made sketches which established the identification beyond doubt (A, I, R & R Topping). The next was not until 9 Jun when a first summer male was photographed on the South Downs, north of Portslade (S Gale). A first summer male at Beeding Hill the following day (RJ Fairbank *et al.*) was assumed at first to have relocated the short distance (2.7 km) from Portslade but it soon transpired that it was different, with both being watched simultaneously. The Portslade bird

was not seen after the 10th but the Beeding Hill individual remained until 16 Jun much to the delight of a constant stream of admirers. The remaining records were of another first summer male at The Midrips (Jury's Gap) on 13 and 14 Jun (MC Casemore, OJ Leyshon, G Parry, C Turley), a juvenile or female on the South Downs, near Ditchling on 11 Sep (RC Fullbrook) and a first summer male at Pett Level on 14 Sep (PW Rouse).

The Pevensey bird constitutes the first county record for April whilst that at Ditchling is only the fourth to be recorded in September since 1962. The previous best years were 1973, 1989 and 1992 with three recorded in each. The county total since 1962 moves on to 34, of which 14 have been recorded this century, the most recent in 2017. [P James]



Red-footed Falcon, Beeding Hill, 11 June (Darren Bird)

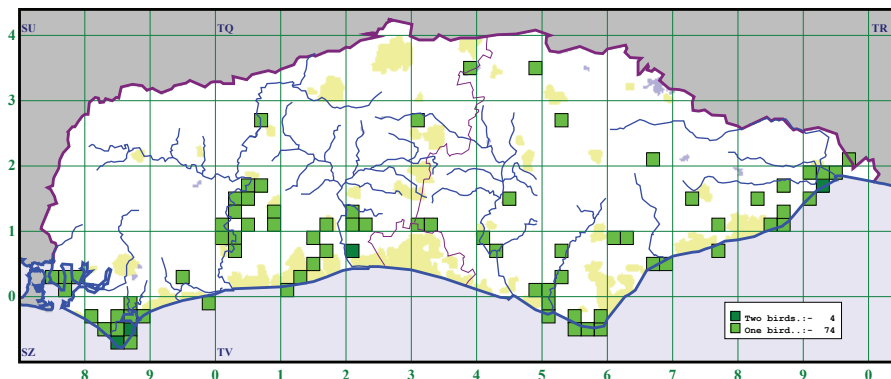
Merlin

Falco columbarius

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

Merlins were recorded in 78 tetrads (8.1%) in 2020, compared with the 10-year average of 51 (range 43 to 60), and in all months except June and July. The approximate monthly totals are shown in the following table and the distribution of observations in the map.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
16	7	15	7	1	2	13	20	18	18



Most records during the first winter period were coastal or near coastal, exceptions being Pulborough Brooks where there were records on six dates, Weir Wood Res on 6 Jan, Ringmer on 28 Jan, Balcombe on 1 Mar and Crowborough on 14 Mar.

The earliest spring passage migrant was probably one hunting offshore and flying in off the sea at Selsey Bill on 8 Mar. During April there were records from seven sites between the 2nd and 30th, with inland records from Small Dole (Henfield) on the 2nd and the Arun Valley on the 4th. One was seen to fly in off the sea at Selsey Bill on the late date of 11 May.

The first migrants of the autumn were in late August, with one seen at Hastings on the 28th and one at Beachy Head on the 31st. Records came from 11 locations in September and 15 in October, all of one except for two at Selsey Bill on three dates; on 28 Oct two were hunting a passerine together offshore. A notable occurrence was a female closely following a Hen Harrier at Medmerry on 29 Sep. In November there were records from 13 locations, all of one and all coastal or near coastal except Pulborough Brooks and Amberley Wild Brooks on several dates and one at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on the 7th and at Arlington Res on the 21st. December was similar with records from 13 coastal sites, mostly singles except for two at Pagham Hbr on the 17th. [BGR Ives, MJ Chattaway]

Hobby

Falco subbuteo

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

Hobbies were recorded in 200 tetrads (21%) compared with a 10-year average of 153 (range 138 to 170) and only just short of the highest ever total of 206 tetrads in 2008.

The first of the spring was seen on 29 Mar at Steyning, five days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date, followed by one at Thakeham on 3 Apr. Single birds were noted throughout April from a variety of sites including Pulborough Brooks, Shoreham, Cissbury, Petworth and Pevensey Levels. The first duo of the year was seen at Arundel on 19 Apr, two were at Fernhurst the following day and another two flew north at Selsey Bill on the 24th, one arriving in off the sea at 05:55 hr. Hobbies continued to be recorded frequently in May throughout Sussex. Notable multiple counts in this period were fours at Pevensey Levels on 2 May and at Beeding Brooks on the 17th with threes recorded on ten occasions during the month. In June six were hawking insects together at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 17th. At West Dean one was noted harassing a Red Kite on 11 Jul and a bold pair was seen mobbing a Honey-buzzard, a Goshawk and a Common Buzzard on Ashdown Forest on the 18th.

Breeding was greatly under-recorded, being confirmed in just four tetrads and probable or possible in 31 more. An adult was observed carrying food in the Worth area on 29 Jun, two adults and three young were observed near Wisborough Green on 8 Aug, an adult was seen feeding a youngster at Broadwater Warren on 21 Aug and near Hailsham, a Forestry Commission worker reported regular nesting for a few years including 2020.

Between July and September the species was recorded from nearly 150 sites, mostly in ones or twos but there were four at Rackham Plantation on 9 Sep and at least four, possibly six, feeding over nearby Amberley Wild Brooks two days later. During this period three were noted at Fernhurst, Pulborough Brooks, Cissbury, Brede High Wood, Pett Level and Winchelsea Beach. A total of between 25 and 30 were seen on 15 different October dates; the maximum of three again at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 17th and the final Hobby of the year was at Rye Hbr on the 24th which is the 10-year average last date. [BGR Ives]

Peregrine

Falco peregrinus

Scarce breeding resident. Schedule 1 species.

The species was recorded in 229 tetrads (24%) during the year with most records occurring in January, October and December and the least during June and July. There was a healthy rise in records submitted from all over the county, including breeding success at some of the more historical coastal locations.

The Peregrine population as a whole remains well established with no indication of any significant changes in numbers. Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads and probable in 12 more but these low numbers are most likely a reflection of the species' protected status. It is still estimated that there are in excess of 40 resident breeding pairs throughout Sussex with annual fluctuations at a handful of sites within the population. These fluctuations are to some extent due to non-breeding adults still holding territories and the ageing adults being challenged by prospectors.

Following on from 2019, there were further reports of three individuals being present at one site during the early part of the breeding season, which does not seem to be an unusual occurrence given the present numbers of territories. Perhaps this has become more frequent in the population now that it is firmly re-established.

Urban sites continue to be reported with varying breeding success and there were further incidents associated with some breeding birds coming into conflict with property owners, for instance when they have taken up residence on a balcony or roof where they are not welcome. Two well-known urban sites are Sussex Heights in Brighton and Chichester Cathedral. Breeding was successful at both sites, the former with three eggs being laid in a nest box between 20 and 25 Mar, two of which hatched producing male and female young. The latter site continues to be a success story and four chicks (three males and one female) were reared from four eggs laid between 30 Mar and 6 Apr. All four of these young fledged by 26 Jun. None of the young at either nest box were ringed this year because of COVID-19 restrictions.

As in previous years, there were a good number of sightings throughout the year in areas with a plentiful food supply such as Amberley Wild Brooks, Pett Levels and Rye Hbr though the highest number of records submitted were from the RSPB nature reserves at Pulborough Brooks and Pagham Hbr. Most non-breeding records were of single birds but two and occasionally three were sometimes reported and five were seen at Adversane (nr Billingshurst) on 24 Jan. Prey items caught included Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Common Starling, Stock Dove and Eurasian Teal; those chased included Black-tailed Godwit, Common Snipe, Curlew and Dunlin. [J Franklin]



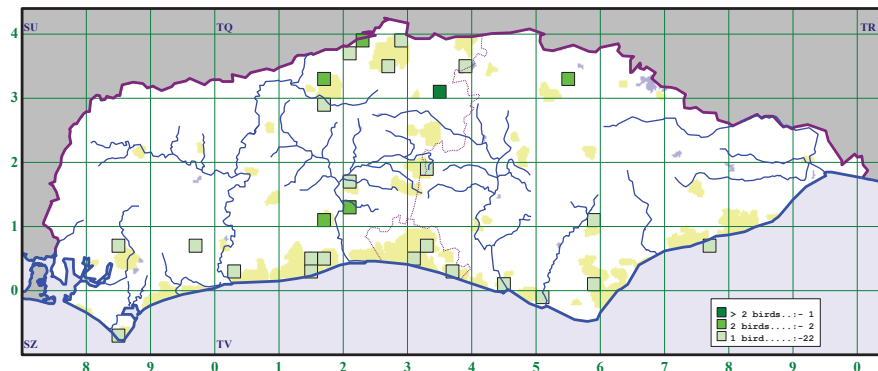
Peregrines, Chichester, 1 July (Bob Brewer)

Ring-necked Parakeet

Psittacula krameri

Scarce introduced resident; has bred.

During 2020 there was an increase in sightings from previous years with 35 records from 28 tetrads (2.9%), all of one or two birds except for five at Wakehurst Place on 3 Oct.



Reports were received for all months except for March and June, with 14 records in November. The usual hotspots of Crawley and Gatwick were less apparent with a wider circle of locations as shown in the map. [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.

There were four accepted records in 2020: adult males at Rye Hbr on 15 May (CM & M George), at West Burton (Bury) on 20 May (PD Stevens), a juvenile at the North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 5 Sep (per A House, mo) and another juvenile at Thorney Island on 14 and 15 Sep (JA & TGF Holter *et al.*). The county total this century moves on to 52 with records in all but five years. The last blank year was 2014. [P James]

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Very scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

It was a disappointing year for this species with one at Combe Valley CP on 26 Oct being the only record. This was the poorest showing since just one was recorded in 2006 whilst 1985 remains the only year when none was recorded. [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.

2020 was a very good year for this secretive spring overshoot with probably five different birds recorded. The first, a singing first summer male in the southern block of the Knepp Estate (DA & P Green, BD & P James) and a female seen in flight at Church Norton (ID Pitts), on 9 May were

followed by one in song at the Long Pit (Rye Hbr) on 16 May (SJ Burgess), a female or first summer male at the Knepp Estate on 24 May (CH & J Moore) and another female or first summer male at Pett Level on 7 Jun (T Hanson). Assuming the Knepp birds were different, the county total this century moves on to 39 with records in all but four years. [P James]

Jay

Garrulus glandarius

Very common resident.

During the year, Jays were recorded in 538 (56%) tetrads compared with 506 (53%) in 2019.

In the first winter period, the highest count was of 12 at Muddles Green (Chiddingly) on 22 Mar. The next highest counts were of five and made at five sites: Great Noven Farm (Chailey) on 22 Jan; Robertsbridge on 3 Feb; Aldwick (Bognor) on 22 Mar; Lewes Race Course on 24 Mar; and Slindon Woods on 31 Mar. Otherwise, counts in the county were of four birds or fewer. Between 5 Jan and 29 Feb, the SWBS recorded a total of 72 encounters with Jays in 41 (33%) of the 125 squares surveyed with a maximum count of four on 25 Feb in Denne Park (Horsham).

The BBS recorded 61 encounters with Jays in 32 (26%) of the 125 squares surveyed with a maximum of six on 1 Jul at Fernhurst. The GBW registered Jays in 184 (47%) of the 389 participating Sussex gardens during the year with both of the maximum counts, six on 19 Jul and five on 14 Jun, being recorded at West Chilmington. Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable in a further 24. Singing males were found at Sullington Warren on 22 Mar, Ringles Cross (Uckfield) on 15 Apr and Loxwood on 15 May. Nest building was noted on 7 May at Highdown (Worthing). What was considered to be a family party of six was seen at Chichester GP on 21 Apr and there were further reports of fledged young at Shoreham-by-Sea on 7 Jun, Tilgate Forest on 1 Jul and Maidenbower (Three Bridges) on 14 Jul. Further breeding evidence would be welcome for this very common species in the county.

During the autumn and second winter period, the highest counts were of eight at Thorney Deepes on 4 Nov and seven at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Nov. The second winter period SWBS produced a total of 117 encounters with Jays in 61 (42%) of the 146 squares surveyed, with a maximum of six at Verdley Place (Fernhurst) on 1 Dec. [M Orchard-Webb]



Jay, Worth, 12 June (Mark Mallalieu)

Magpie*Pica pica****Very common resident.***

Magpies were recorded in 716 (74%) tetrads during the year compared to a 10-year average of 628 (range 561 to 716). There were GBW records in 367 (94%) of the 389 Sussex gardens surveyed whilst in the BGBW Magpies were recorded in 58% and 62% of West and East Sussex gardens respectively.

During the first winter period, the highest counts were on the evening of 28 Jan when 112 flew into roost at Seaford GC (Bishopstone) and on 23 Jan when there were 40 on the Upper Adur Levels. Additionally, there were 21 other counts of 20 or more. In the early year SWBS survey 640 were recorded in 112 (90%) of the squares surveyed.

During the BBS Magpies were found in 101 (81%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum count of 23 on 31 May at Southwick. Breeding was confirmed in 31 tetrads and probable in a further 55. Nest building was first recorded at Aldwick (Bognor) on 1 Feb, at Gossops Green (Crawley) on 11 Feb and at Chesworth Fm (Horsham) on 29 Feb. The first occupied nest was found at Chesworth Fm on 29 Mar and the first fledglings were seen at Angmering on 21 Apr. The highest counts during spring were 36 at Newhaven on 3 May and 35 there on 8 Apr.

During the period July to September, there were seven counts of 20 or more. The highest were 29 at Medmerry on 9 Sep and 26 at Beacon Hill LNR (Rottingdean) on 14 Sep.

The late winter period saw 23 counts of 20 or more, the largest being one of 41 gathering at dusk to roost at Bishopstone (Seaford) on 10 Dec and at least 30 roosting at Sandgate Park (Storrington) on 15 Dec. In the late year SWBS 694 Magpies were recorded in 136 (93%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum count of 21 on 8 Dec at Hurstpierpoint. [M Orchard-Webb]

Jackdaw*Coloeus monedula****Very common resident.***

Jackdaws were recorded in 682 (73%) tetrads compared to 636 in 2019. During the first winter period a flock of 2248, counted from a photograph, was seen on 5 Jan wheeling around prior to settling into roost at Withyham. On 28 Jan 1500 arrived at a roost at Seaford GC (Bishopstone). An estimated 850 were recorded flying south over Knowlands Fm (Barcombe) on their way to roost on 22 Feb, and there were further counts of 600 at Crowborough on 17 Feb and 570 south at dusk over Barcombe Cross on 18 Jan.

During the early year SWBS, 2440 Jackdaws were recorded in 98 (78%) of the 125 1-km squares surveyed, with a maximum count of 260 at Glynde Level on 6 Feb. In the BGBW, the species was recorded in 17% of the participating gardens in West Sussex compared to 27% in East Sussex. In the GBW, Jackdaws were recorded in 244 (63%) of the 389 Sussex gardens surveyed during the year.

During the BBS, 2042 Jackdaws were encountered in 95 (76%) of the 125 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 190 at Claverham (Chalvington) on 9 Jun. Breeding was confirmed in 21 tetrads with evidence of probable breeding in a further 60 tetrads. The first record of occupied nests was at Arundel on 14 Mar and the first report of fledged Jackdaws was from the Beeches Estate (Crowborough) on 1 May. An interesting record came from Seaford Head on 13 May when a Raven was seen attempting to predate a nest on the cliff where young Jackdaws could be heard calling. Fortunately for the Jackdaws, the crevice in the cliff was too narrow for the Raven to gain access.

The highest counts of the period April to August were 1000 on 27 Jun and 400 on 10 Jul at Great Bentley Fm (Balcombe), 500 at Slaugham on 18 Jun, 400 at Hazelhurst (Bewl) on 12 May and 400 at Charleston Reedbed on 4 Aug. There was a count of 300 at Combe Valley CP on 16 Jul and counts of 250 at both Maidenbower (Three Bridges) on 13 Jul and at Ladywell (nr Coombes) on 27 Aug. There were a further 39 records of 100 or more birds at various different locations during this time.

During September and October, there were 21 records of 100 or more Jackdaws, with a maximum of 332 at Crawley on 17 Oct, and two counts of 300: at Cissbury on 15 Sep and at High Cross Fm (Uckfield) on 23 Oct. On 28 Nov 1000 flew south over Barcombe Cross on their way to roost. Other high counts included 700 at Beeding Hill on 15 Dec and 500 at Waldron on 14 Dec. In addition, there were a further 36 counts involving 100 or more birds. During the November and December SWBS, 2927 Jackdaws were recorded in 113 (77%) of the 146 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 285 at Rodmell on 4 Nov. [G Osborne]

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Very common resident.

Rooks were recorded in 503 (52%) tetrads compared with 462 in 2019. During the first winter period, the highest counts were 340 at Sapperton Wood (Maynards Green) on 8 Feb and 250 at Norton (nr Seaford) on New Year's Day. There were six counts of 200 birds and 16 counts of 100 or more at various locations. During the early year SWBS, 1270 Rooks were found in 63 (50%) of the 125 squares surveyed, the maximum count being 110 at Chates Fm (Cowfold) on 7 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 39 tetrads and was probable in a further 14 tetrads. Nest building was notably first observed as early as New Year's Day at Lewes where several Rooks were seen carrying sticks to a rookery opposite the railway station. The first occupied nests were seen on 8 Mar with 13 nests at the dam area of Weir Wood Res and nine nests at Warningcamp (Arundel). The earliest report of a nest with young was on 12 Apr and that of the first fledged young was on 3 May, both from Storrington.

During the BBS, 1502 Rooks were encountered in 51 (41%) of the 125 squares surveyed, with the highest count being 217 at Claverham (Chalvington) on 9 Jun. In the GBW, Rooks were encountered in 21% of participating Sussex gardens. A minimum of 28 rookeries were recorded holding in total more than 500 nests. The largest rookeries were 61 AON at Binderton (West Dean), 47 AON at Funtington and 45 AON at Fulking (Henfield).

During July and August, the highest counts of Rooks were 450 at Funtington on 8 Aug, 400 at the same site on 4 and 5 Aug and 400 at Charleston Reedbed on 4 Aug. There were five counts of 300 birds and fourteen additional counts of 100 or more at various different locations.

During September and October, there were two 'clamours' of 300 Rooks, at Charleston Manor and High and Over (nr Seaford) on 15 Oct with other large counts comprising 159 at Arlington Res on 13 Sep and 150 at Cissbury on 8 Sep. There were five counts of 120 birds and twelve additional records of 100 at various sites. During November and December, there were counts of 450 at Arlington Res on both 30 Nov and 29 Dec. The next largest count was one of 300 at Bosham on 4 Dec and there were 22 further gatherings of 100 or more in this period. During the late year SWBS, 1969 Rooks were found in 65 (45%) of squares surveyed, with the maximum of 280 at Rodmell on 4 Nov. [G Osborne]

Carrion Crow*Corvus corone****Very common resident.***

Carrion Crows were recorded in 756 (78%) tetrads during the year compared to 684 in 2019. During the first quarter, there were six records of 100 or more, the highest being 200 at Great Bentley Fm (Balcombe) on 1 Mar. There were two gatherings of 150: at Offham (Arun Valley) on 16 Jan and at Adversane (nr Billingshurst) on 24 Jan. The remaining three large counts were of 120 at Uckfield on 21 Mar, and 100 at both Cuckmere Haven on 7 Feb and Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on 22 Mar. There were a further seven counts of 50 or more at five different locations. During the early year SWBS, there were 1347 encounters with the species in 121 (97%) of the 125 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 90 at Sands Wood (Balcombe) on 25 Feb. In the BGBW, the species was recorded in 25% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 27% in East Sussex. In the GBW, Carrion Crows were recorded in 269 (69%) of the 389 Sussex gardens surveyed during the year.

During the spring, there were just two records of Carrion Crows flying in from the sea: at least two at West Worthing on 16 Apr and a single bird seen arriving from a long way out at Widewater (Lancing) on 20 Apr. In the BBS, there were 1206 encounters with this species in 121 (97%) of the 125 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 66 at Southwick on 31 May. Breeding was confirmed in 23 tetrads and probable in a further 53. Nest building was first observed on 19 Feb at Crowborough CP, whilst the first occupied nest was reported on 30 Mar at Elmer (Middleton-on-Sea). The earliest record of fledged young was from Furnace Green (Crawley) on 21 Apr. The largest gatherings between April and July were of 156 birds at East Lavant on 22 Jun, 150 at Medmerry on 26 Jun, 150 at Tilton Bottom (nr Firle) on 13 Jul and 142 at the Burgh (Burpham) on 7 Jul.

Between August and October, the largest counts were 190 at Goring Gap on 28 Oct and 170 at Climping Gap on 17 Oct. During the second winter period, a morning on the South Downs between the R Adur and the A24 produced a total of 320 birds on 25 Nov, and there were 120 at Medmerry on 10 Nov. During the late year SWBS, there were a total of 1784 encounters with the species in 144 (99%) of the 146 squares surveyed, with a maximum of 100 at Heath Fm (Wivelsfield Green) on the last day of the year. [G Osborne]

Hooded Crow*Corvus cornix****Rare winter visitor and passage migrant.***

The only record was of one at Bury from 10 to 12 Oct (MP Lanaway). [P James]

Raven*Corvus corax****Fairly common breeding resident; first bred in modern era in 2001.***

Records were submitted from 392 (41%) tetrads compared to 290 in 2019 and just 132 ten years before, in 2010.

Ravens nest on cliffs, quarries, tall buildings, electricity pylons and tall trees and, with an abundance of potential nest sites, there has been a rapid re-colonisation of the county in just twenty years. The best time to locate pairs of Ravens is February and March, when they soar and tumble over their nesting areas and their evocative calls can be easily heard. In 2020 there were late-winter records for 90 pairs, though the breeding population may be as high as 150 pairs. This species has large broods and a fledging success of three to four juveniles for each nest and therefore large areas of countryside may be re-colonised very rapidly.

These corvids can be very aggressive towards any raptor that inadvertently wanders too close to the nesting area and this mobbing behaviour is usually at its fiercest in the early part of the breeding cycle, particularly when there are very small nestlings to protect. There were five records demonstrating this behaviour with a male Goshawk driven away at one location on 9 Mar, and single Common Buzzards mobbed at four other locations between 18 Mar and 12 Apr.

There were just nine reports which provided some indication as to breeding success. One pair fledged two juveniles, six pairs fledged three and two pairs fledged four. The earliest recorded date of fledged young was 3 May, at Camber Castle (Rye Hbr).

There were 40 counts of ten or more, with those of 20 or more as follows: between 20 and 39 on five January dates at Withyham, 20 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 26 Jan, 22 at West Marden on 15 Apr and 25 at Chantry Hill on 3 Oct. Although there were no roost counts reported for the downland around Storrington, this area is now one of the most reliable locations to see Ravens during the winter months, with regular high counts. [ME Kalaher]

Coal Tit

Periparus ater

Very common resident.

Coal Tits were recorded in 474 tetrads (49%) compared with a 10-year average of 395 (range 324 to 578). During the first winter period SWBS they were encountered in 28% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 12 on 28 Jan at West Lavington (Midhurst). During the BGBW they were recorded in 32% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 34% in East Sussex. They were recorded in 64% of participating GBW gardens with an average weekly peak count of one.

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and was probable in a further 20. Display was first noticed on 10 Jan at Chichester GP but nest building not until 17 Mar at Crowborough, where adults carrying food or faecal sacs were noted on 28 Apr. The first fledglings were recorded on 20 May at Rookwood (West Wittering). During the BBS they were encountered in 18% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of nine on 21 May at Colgate.

During the second winter period SWBS they were encountered in 20% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 12 on 12 Nov at the Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest).

Continental Coal Tit, *P. a. ater*

One was photographed on 17 Feb at Brooklands (Worthing) (BF Forbes). [JA Hobson]

Marsh Tit

Poecile palustris

Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Marsh Tits were recorded in 262 tetrads (27%) well above the 10-year average of 205 (range 150 to 261), probably due to survey work (see below). As usual most records were from the Wealden woods and were mostly of one or two. Coastal or near coastal records are very few but there were GBW records from Fairlight in the 1st, 3rd and 4th quarters. They were recorded in 7.5% of participating gardens in GBW during the year. A county survey was carried out in 2020 and 2021 and results will appear in the 2021 Sussex Bird Report.

In the first winter period the highest counts were of seven on 21 Jan at Steyning Round Hill and Darwell Res on 2 Mar and six on 17 Mar at Ashburnham Place (Battle) with five at four further locations. In the early year SWBS Marsh Tits were recorded in 10% of squares surveyed with a maximum of seven at Steyning Round Hill.

Breeding was confirmed in 18 tetrads and probable in a further 24. The species was recorded in 169 locations during the breeding season, a large increase on the 113 in 2019, which probably reflects the coverage of the Marsh Tit survey which began in 2020. The first songsters were heard in mid-February from a range of sites in the Weald, nest building was first noted on 10 Apr at Skippers Hill (Five Ashes), a bird with food or faecal sac was seen on 15 Apr at Patching and the first fledglings were encountered on 27 May at Ardingly Res. During the BBS they were encountered in only 4.8% of squares, with a maximum of three on 30 May at Five Hundred Acre Wood (Ashdown Forest).

In the autumn and second winter period ten at Weir Wood Res on 8 Dec was the highest count (with seven there on 15 Nov), followed by fives at Burton MP on 6 Oct, Angmering Park Estate on 19 Nov, Droke Forest (East Dean, West Sussex) on 10 Dec and Warnham LNR on the 31st. During the late year SWBS they were recorded in 9.7% of squares with a maximum of four at Steyning Round Hill on 26 Nov. [MJ Chattaway]

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Abundant resident.

Blue Tits were recorded in 766 tetrads (79%) compared with a 10-year average of 661 (range 582 to 745). During the first winter period SWBS they were encountered in 96% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 58 on 20 Jan at Ditchling Common. During the first quarter there were a further 18 counts of 40 or more (seven of them at Balcombe). During the BGBW they were recorded in 80% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 81% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 94 tetrads and was probable in a further 74. The earliest signs of breeding activity were seen on 7 Feb when birds were exploring a potential nest site at Withean (Brighton) and displaying at West Tarring (Worthing). An agitated pair at a nest was seen on 17 Mar at Upper Beeding, nest building was noted on 20 Mar at Sedlescombe and a nest with young and parents with food was seen on 3 Apr at Loxwood. The first fledgling was recorded on 9 May at Litlington. During the BBS Blue Tits were recorded in 91% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 33 on 17 May at Cowfold.

During the autumn there were fewer large counts than earlier in the year; there were only three in excess of 40 but a further 26 between 20 and 39. Similarly, in the second winter period, there were only three counts over 40 (all at Balcombe) but 54 day counts of 20 to 39. During the second winter period SWBS Blue Tits were encountered in 93% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 39 at Burgess Hill. In the GBW year Blue Tits were recorded in 97% of participating gardens. [JA Hobson]

Great Tit

Parus major

Abundant resident.

Great Tits were recorded in 748 tetrads (77%) compared with a 10-year average of 644 (range 560 to 741). During the first winter period SWBS they were encountered in 94% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 34 on 25 Feb at Denne Park (Horsham). There were 36 counts of 20 or more during the first winter period, the highest being 50 on 13 Jan at Pulborough Brooks. During the BGBW they were recorded in 58% of participating gardens in West Sussex and in 57% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 63 tetrads and was probable in a further 59. The first signs of breeding activity recorded were the visiting of a possible nest site on 31 Mar at Aldwick (Bognor) and



Bearded Tit, West Rise Marsh, 18 January (Peter Brookes)

agitated behaviour on 4 Apr at Cross-in-Hand. Nest building was first seen on 7 Apr at Uckfield. The carrying of food or faecal sacs was noted on 20 Apr at Combe Valley CP and the first fledged young were seen on 15 May at Arundel. During the BBS Great Tits were recorded in 82% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 27 on 17 May at Cowfold.

During the autumn and second winter periods there were 12 day counts of 20 or more with a maximum of 28 at Burgess Hill on 5 Dec. During the second winter period SWBS they were encountered in 80% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 20 on 15 Dec on the Wiston Estate (Steyning). During the GBW Great Tits were recorded in 91% of participating gardens. [JA Hobson]

Bearded Tit

Panurus biarmicus

Scarce breeding resident and very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

The vast majority of records were from East Sussex where Bearded Tits were found in every month of the year at Pett Level and in ten months at Rye Hbr. 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		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	19	4	7		15	24	30	18	8
Thorney Island and Deeps	-	-	-		10	20	2	4	-
Chichester Marina	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	1
Brooklands (Worthing)	-	-	-		-	-	2	-	-
Newhaven	-	-	-		-	-	-	2+	-
Beachy Head	-	-	-		-	-	3	-	-
Eastbourne Lakes	10	1	4		-	-	-	-	5
Hastings incl. Combe Valley CP	-	-	-		-	-	5	1	-
Pett Level	9	2	2		4	2	6	10	2
Rye Hbr	-	1	1		1	2	12	1	-

Fledged young were seen at Thorney Deeps on 16 May and West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on 13 Jul. At Pett Level there were eight pairs and fledged young seen and at Rye Hbr there were at least three pairs and “breeding undoubtedly occurred” but no fledged young were seen. On 13 Sep 20 were present at Thorney Deeps including many juveniles.

There were two records of “high flying” birds, both on 17 Oct. At Beachy Head three flew over at 07:11 hr and at Cliff End (Pett Level) one was heard flying south over a lucky observer’s garden at 13:15 hr. [MJ Chattaway]

Woodlark

Lullula arborea

Scarce resident and very scarce passage migrant. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

Woodlarks were recorded in 91 tetrads (9.4%), an increase from the 59 tetrads in 2019.

In January, Rushlake Green retained its wintering flock from 2019, with 14 on the 3rd and seven on the 19th. The wintering flock of up to 15 remained at Pulborough Brooks during January with 13 still present on 14 Feb. At Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) there was a flock of nine in winter wheat on 17 Jan. An individual flying in off the sea at Beachy Head on 7 Feb was noteworthy.

Breeding was confirmed in only three tetrads, was probable in a further 28 and possible in 34. During the WHBBS, 50 territories were identified, which is slightly down from the 53 from

2019 but up from 45 in 2018. There were 14 territories at Woolbeding Common and 11 at Black Down (Fernhurst). It was concerning that no territories were identified at Lynchmere and Stanley Commons, yet reassuring increases were made from Iping Common and Weavers Down (Liss) (see page 218). Other areas remained consistent with 2019's totals. Singing was first heard on 8 Jan on Ashdown Forest and the first fledged young were seen there on 16 May. There were probably two pairs at Balcombe and an adult was seen carrying food on 11 Jun, the first breeding record for this farmland site, the nest probably being in poorly growing winter wheat. Several juveniles were observed at Lurgashall MP on 20 Aug.

The first migrant flew over Fairlight on 29 Sep. In October, migrating Woodlarks were recorded on five dates at Selsey Bill (five on the 9th), six dates at Beachy Head (four on the 14th) and three dates at Seaford Head (four on the 14th). In the second winter period, flocks gathered at favoured haunts with 12 at Rushlake Green, 11 at Little Strudgate Fm and nine at Pulborough Brooks. [MR Eade]

Skylark

Alauda arvensis

Very common but declining resident; probably common passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Skylarks were recorded in 435 tetrads (45%) compared with a 10-year average of 369 (range 290 to 469). The species was widely distributed during the first winter period. Large flocks included 33 in the Arun Valley on 1 Jan, 80 at Beachy Head on the 6th and 100 at Medmerry on the 11th. In the SWBS a total of 253 were encountered in 30% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 78 on 21 Jan at Woodingdean.

Breeding was confirmed in only 6 tetrads but was probable in a further 67. Display was noted as early as 5 Feb at Cuckmere Haven. Agitated distraction display was recorded on 5 Apr at East Chidham. The first definite record of breeding was of a pair, each carrying food, at Barcombe on 13 May while food collecting was noted on 5 Jun at Chesworth Fm (Horsham). Nesting was recorded at Binderton (West Dean) on 24 Jun and fledglings were seen at Coldean (Brighton) on the 25th. During the BBS a total of 394 were encountered in 54% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 35 on 1 Jun at Lullington.

During the autumn there were counts of 40 at Steep Down (Lancing) on 21 Sep, 60 at Kingston on 29 Sep, and 50 at Rye Hbr on 30 Sep rising to 75 by 23 Oct. Other high October counts included 60 flying west at Beachy Head on the 11th, 60 at Seaford Head on the 14th, 100 at Lancing Clump on the 16th, 60 at Thorney Island on the 16th, 60 at Ditchling Beacon on the 22nd and 60 at East Guldeford Level on the 26th.

In November and December, the highest counts were 115 at Woodingdean on 4 Nov, 100 at Steep Down on 7 Nov, 150 at Rye Hbr on 8 Nov, 100 at Steyning on 31 Dec and 117 at Henfield on the same date. During the late winter SWBS a total of 325 were encountered in 20% of the squares surveyed. [T Seabrook]

Shore Lark

Eremophila alpestris

Rare autumn migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

One photographed at Pett Level on 29 Oct (A Lillycrop) may have been the same bird that remained at Flat Beach (Rye Hbr) from 16 Nov into 2021 (M Twydell *et al.*). These are the first county records since 2016 and, assuming that just the one bird was involved, take the county total to 106 since 1948, only 12 of which have occurred this century. [P James]

Sand Martin*Riparia riparia*

Scarce or fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

The species was recorded in 117 (12%) tetrads, continuing the increase noted over the last few years, from 80 (8.5%) in 2018 and 102 (11%) in 2019.

The first returning bird was observed at Rottingdean on 14 Mar, two days later than the 10-year average, followed by three at Waltham Brooks and two at Pulborough Brooks on the 15th. Records came from consecutive days thereafter with 15 at Pagham Hbr on 18 Mar and 60 at Weir Wood Res on the 20th and 21st. Observers at Pulborough Brooks recorded 100 on 20 Apr, whilst the only other 3-figure count of the spring/summer was 400 at West Heath Common on 7 Jun. Up to 40 were recorded at larger water bodies such as Arlington Res, Chichester GP and Pulborough Brooks through April and May; the last site held 60 on 27 Jun.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites, and was probable in another one, all in West Sussex. Birds were observed excavating new holes on 21 and 22 Apr at Rock Common (Washington), the previous holes having been destroyed by sand excavation work. Two hundred active nest holes in three sand faces were counted at West Heath Common on 7 Jun and there were ten nest holes at Sandgate Park (Storrington) on 24 Jun. The only record of fledging came from Arundel WWT on 6 Jul.

Migration back to their wintering grounds begins early for Sand Martins. Already by 9 Jul there were 50 at Rye Hbr and 30 W past Selsey Bill with a further 56 E three days later and 183 E on 31 Jul. From 8 Aug, when 500 were at Pagham Hbr, until 20 Sep there were 23 three-figure counts. Peaks occurred at the end of August, with 2200 birds in four days (28th to 31st), with a maximum of 450 at Arlington Res on the 28th; and in September with 1250 birds in six days (7th to 12th), with a maximum of 450 again at Arlington Res on the 11th.

There were 17 records during October, with 175 on the 1st at Rye Hbr by far the highest; eight from Lancing was the next highest record. The final two birds were observed at Combe Valley CP on 4 Nov, two weeks later than the 10-year average. [D Boddington]

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor and abundant passage migrant.

Barn Swallows were recorded from 547 (57%) tetrads, higher than the 10-year average of 484 (range 415 to 626). Records were received for all months of the year, with over-wintering individuals at the beginning and, potentially, end of 2020. One that was seen in the Glynde/Firle area up to 25 Dec 2019 was then recorded from Firle in January on the 1st, 2nd and 31st. Over-wintering was first confirmed in Sussex from Newick WTW in 2013-14.

The earliest possible incoming migrant was at Pett Level on 6 Feb, over a month earlier than the 10-year average of 12 Mar. It was a long wait, however, before the next observation at Winchelsea Beach on 25 Mar; daily sightings followed, with the first double-figure count of 12 at Pagham Hbr on 13 Apr followed by 60 at Lidsey WTW the next day. Notable counts greater than 100 came from three sites during this time, with 500 at Porthole Farm (Sidlesham) on 10 May.

Breeding was confirmed in 28 tetrads and was probable in a further 34 (22 and 35 respectively in 2019). During the BBS the species was recorded in 74 (59%) of 125 squares surveyed. Pairs were back at nest sites from 3 May and there was a nest with eggs at Bury on 25 May and with young on 9 Jun. A second clutch of eggs was noted on 27 Jul at Bedham (nr Fittleworth) and a nest still containing young was noted at Singleton on 24 Aug. Fledged young were observed at numerous sites from 8 Jun (Midhurst) until 19 Sep (Thorney Island).

Post-breeding flocks increased from early August, with 250 at Charleston Reedbed on the 4th and 1000 at Pagham Hbr on the 8th. By the latter half of the month when migration began in earnest until the end of September, there were 131 three-figure counts, including seven over 500. During this time six counts of 1000 or more were made including 1100 past Hastings on 29 Aug, 1245 there on 20 Sep and 1800 at Beachy Head on 31 Aug. The highest counts of the year came from Pett Level, however, where 2500 were roosting in the reedbeds on 8 Sep and 3000 on the 21st. The final pulses of migrants were observed around mid-October with 500 past Beachy Head on the 12th and 1100 at Goring Gap on the 17th; the final large count saw 275 E at Goring Gap on 18 Oct.

Swallows were recorded on twenty dates in November, varying from singles to 12 at Beachy Head on the 4th and 10 E at Selsey Bill on the 7th. Towards the end of the month, single birds were seen at Hove (27th) and Pett Level (28th) with 2 E past Selsey Bill on the latter date. Two December records involved one at Weir Wood Res on the 11th and another at Fletching on the 25th, an unusual but pleasant Christmas Day sighting! [D Boddington]



House Martin, Selsey Bill, 26 May (Andrew House)

House Martin

Delichon urbicum

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

An increase in the number of tetrads from which the species was recorded was welcome; from 348 (37%) in 2019 to 403 (41%) this year. The 10-year average is 312 (range 253 to 394).

One at Battle WTW on four dates between 2 and 6 Jan becomes the first example of an over-

wintering House Martin in Sussex. This is presumably the same bird that was present at Battle on 31 Dec 2019. Previous very early records from 1975 and 2004 (recorded on 1 and 9 Feb respectively) can perhaps be considered very early migrants.

The first returning birds were four at Pulborough Brooks on 15 Mar, three days earlier than the 10-year average. After single birds at Hastings and Pagham Hbr (16 and 18 Mar respectively), four were at Rye Hbr on the 20th with six on the 22nd. Sixty at Lidsey on 14 Apr was the first double-figure count of the year and five counts between 50 and 60 were received by the month's end. Between 1 and 28 May eight counts of 100 or more came from four sites, the highest at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) with 300 on the 14th and 200 on the 10th and the 28th.

Breeding was confirmed in 26 tetrads and probable in a further 19. The first active nest was recorded from West Marden on 26 Apr, whilst the first fledged birds were observed on 20 Jun at Wineham. A pair using an artificial nest cup was observed at Bury, where discarded eggshells were found underneath on 26 May. The largest colony recorded was at The Warren (Eridge Green), with 38 occupied nests on 15 Jun.

Migration began as usual around mid-August, when flocks of up to 30 were quite common, with higher counts of 80 at Pulborough Brooks on the 16th and 200 at Pagham Hbr on the 17th. By the end of the month numbers had risen, with between 100 and 400 recorded at five sites. The largest counts of the year all came in early to mid-September. There were seven counts over 1000, with a maximum of 2500 at Beachy Head on both the 11th and 18th. Selsey Bill (maximum 1526 on the 17th) and Pagham Hbr (1500 on the 16th) also featured with significant counts. The last four-figure count was 1150 at Beachy Head on 12 Oct. Thereafter, on 17 Oct there were 600 at Goring Gap, 300 E at Worthing and 300 at Climping Gap. The following day 100 at Hastings and 50 E at Worthing represented the final counts above 20. The team recording migration at Hastings recorded 6508 birds between 25 Aug and 5 Nov.

November produced 14 records, with the 7th providing a late flurry of migrating birds: seven at Pett Level, six at Selsey Bill, 5 E past Worthing and a single bird at Cuckmere Haven. The final observations came from Pagham Hbr and Selsey Bill where one, or perhaps two separate birds, were recorded on 19 Nov, precisely on the 10-year average last date. [D Boddington]

Red-rumped Swallow

Cecropis daurica

Rare but increasing vagrant.

There were two typical records of this now virtually annual spring overshoot in 2020: at Piddinghoe on 17 Apr (MF Austin) and photographed at Earnley on 19 Apr (S Hill). First recorded in 1967, the county total moves on to 53, of which 19 have been in April, 30 in May and 35 this century. The last blank year was 2018 but there have been records in seven of the last eight years. [P James]

Cetti's Warbler

Cettia cetti

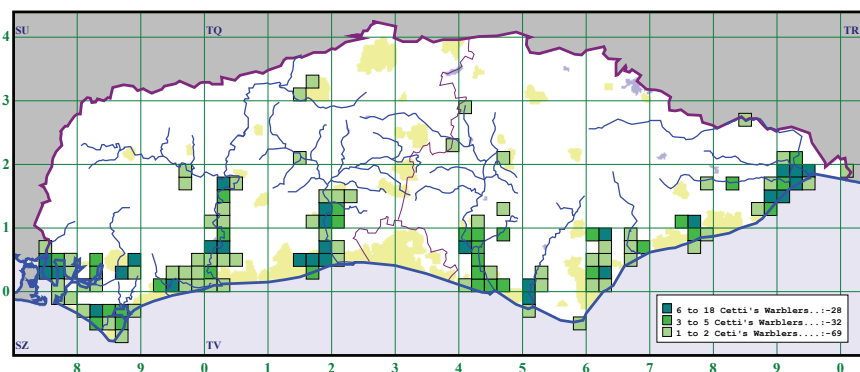
Fairly common and increasing resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

This year saw yet another increase in the number of tetrads in which the species was recorded, with a total of 129 (13%), ten more than in 2019. The peak counts for each tetrad when plotted on the map below show the mainly riverine distribution of records.

In the first winter period there were records from 36 broad locations, two more than the previous

year, and the species was found in 4.8% of squares in the early year SWBS with a maximum count of two in three squares. Four were at Birdham Marina (Chichester) on 1 Jan, the same number at Beeding Brooks on the 4th and Rye Hbr on the 10th, and 14 in Combe Valley CP on the 23rd. In March six were at both Chichester GP on the 10th and Sompting on the 25th with ten territories noted at West Rise Marsh (Eastbourne) on the 16th. Though the BBS was only partly completed, the species was found in 8.0% of the squares visited, a similar percentage to that in 2019, with a maximum of 14 on 25 May in a square on Pevensey Levels.

During the breeding season 18 singing males were present at Thorney Island, an increase of three from the previous year, and very different from 20 years ago, when there were just three pairs there. There were also 18 singing males present at Rye Hbr during the breeding season. The first fledged young were seen at Newhaven Tide Mills on 8 Jun. Four young birds were heard giving alarm calls at Thorney Island on 13 Jun, then were seen together in a bush. On 29 Jul three very recent fledglings were trapped and ringed at Ladywell (Coombes). Breeding was confirmed in seven tetrads, was probable in 11 and possible in a further 51.



A minimum of 170 were ringed in the county, of which 108 were at Pett Level and 33 at Charleston Reedbed. In 2010 the number ringed at Pett Level was just 12.

In the late year SWBS the species was encountered in 4.7% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of five on 6 Dec in the same BBS square at Pevensey Levels. There were reports from many other areas with suitable habitat during this period, including seven at Rye Hbr on 8 Nov, six at Medmerry on the 10th, six at Waltham Brooks on the 18th and eight at Combe Valley CP on the 28th. In December the highest counts were of five at both Pevensey Levels on the 6th and Waltham Brooks on the 30th. [VP Bentley]

Long-tailed Tit

Aegithalos caudatus

Very common resident.

Long-tailed Tits were recorded in 574 tetrads (59%) compared with a 10-year average of 533 (range 442 to 643). During the first winter period SWBS they were encountered in 50% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 25 on 20 Jan at Hartfield and there were 76 double-figure counts with a maximum of 51 at Pulborough Brooks on 6 Feb. During the BGBW they were recorded in 27% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 24% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 35 tetrads and was probable in a further 43. Nest building was first observed on 12 Mar at Leonardslee; an occupied nest was noted on 14 Apr at Arundel; adults

were seen carrying food or faecal sacs on 7 May at Highdown (Worthing) and the first fledged young seen on 8 May at Barcombe Cross. During the BBS they were encountered in 22% of squares surveyed with a maximum count of seven during three surveys.

While numbers were generally low, between 1 Aug and 31 Oct and in the second winter period there were 20 counts of 20 or more in both periods with maxima of 32 at Danegate (Mark Cross) on 26 Aug and 37 at Stedham Common on 16 Nov. During the SWBS Long-tailed Tits were recorded in 36% of squares surveyed, the maximum being the 37 above. During the GBW they were recorded

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 four individuals. The first, a singing male, was at Castle Hill LNR (Newhaven) on 7 May (NM Greenaway). It was followed by a singing male at Black Down between 1 and 7 Jun, which was joined by a female on at least the 2nd (DJ Burges, E Stubbs, D Sadler, T Sadler *et al.*). A singing male at Chapel Common (Liphook) on the 10th remained until the 17th (A Timms).

In the autumn only two individuals were found: a single at Hodcombe (Beachy Head) on 31 Aug (ME Charlwood, RH Charlwood) and one accompanying a tit flock at Ardingly Res on 1 Sep (A Gray). [TW Parmenter]

Hume's Warbler

Phylloscopus humei

Very rare vagrant.

One trapped and ringed at Pett Level on 7 Nov was the eighth county record and has been accepted by BBRC (PE Jones, J Willsher & JR Willsher). The results of genetic analysis by the University of Aberdeen supported the identification and formed part of the evidence for this record. [DK Campbell]

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus

Scarce visitor, mainly in late autumn.

It was an excellent autumn for Yellow-browed Warblers, with at least 27 different individuals, compared with only three in 2019. The first was heard at Brooklands (Worthing) on 28 Sep. The only other September record was from Maynards Green on the 29th.

During October, there was at least one at Pagham Hbr between the 1st and the 7th and another on the 18th, with singles at Beachy Head on the 3rd and 17th and one at Birling Gap on the 15th. Other coastal records were of one at Climping on 4 Oct, one at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) and one at Rottingdean on 5 Oct, Hastings CP on the 5th and 15th, Rye Hbr on the 7th, Seaford Head on the 11th and Pett Level on the 17th. Inland records were from Cissbury Ring on the 3rd, Gatwick Airport and Burton MP on the 6th (the latter remaining until the 15th), Firle Beacon on the 10th, Warnham LNR on the 14th, Black Down (Fernhurst), Ashburnham Place (Battle) on the 23rd and Findon Valley (Worthing) on the 26th. The last record of the year was at Westdene (Brighton) on 27 Oct. In addition to these records, three were ringed: two at Charleston Reedbed on 3 Oct and one at Ladywell (nr Coombes) on 5 Oct. [MR Eade]

Pallas's Leaf Warbler*Phylloscopus proregulus****Rare visitor; mostly in late autumn.***

There were three typical records of this delightful species in 2020, following a blank year in 2019. The first, in sycamores at Roedean (East Brighton) on 18 Oct (J Wilkinson *et al.*), was followed by further singles at Seaford Head on 26 Oct (BR Cox) and at Beachy Head on 31 Oct (ME & RH Charlwood). The county total moves on to 104, of which 52 have been at Beachy Head and 43 this century. [P James]



Pallas's Leaf Warbler, Roedean, 18 October (Tim Squire)

Radde's Warbler*Phylloscopus schwarzi****Very rare vagrant.***

One in scrub at Seaford Head GC on 11 Oct (J Curson *et al.*) takes the county total to 14 since the first in 1974 (18 Oct, Beachy Head). Being the first Sussex record since 2013, it attracted a lot of interest and was a welcome addition to a number of county lists. Previous records have fallen between 30 Sep (1992) and 2 Nov (1995) with the majority being one-day birds. [P James]

Dusky Warbler*Phylloscopus fuscatus****Very rare vagrant.***

In a very good autumn for Siberian vagrants in Sussex, it was perhaps not too surprising that there were two records of this species, the first at Bewbush (Crawley) from 25 Oct to 3 Nov (AS Cook *et al.*) followed by one trapped and ringed at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 5 Nov (RDM Edgar, S McKenzie). The Bewbush bird was an excellent inland find and, although typically skulking much of the time, was appreciated by many during its extended ten day stay. These are the ninth and tenth records for Sussex since the first in 1974 (18 Oct, Beachy Head, cf. Radde's Warbler). Previous records have been in January (1), October (5), November (1) and December (1). [P James]

Willow Warbler*Phylloscopus trochilus****Common but declining summer visitor and passage migrant. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.***

Willow Warblers were recorded in 282 tetrads (29%) compared to a 10-year average of 270 (range 231 to 348). In March they were recorded from nine sites, the earliest being one at Arlington Res on the 7th. This was followed by singles at Ashdown Forest, Ringmer and Bodiam on the 21st, then at Pulborough Brooks on the 22nd, Weir Wood Res on the 23rd and Uckfield on the 31st. The beginning of April saw ones and twos at many sites and 12 at Ferring Rife on the 6th. A steady trickle then ensued with 12 on Ashdown Forest on the 17th, rising to 19 by the 23rd and 24 on 6 May, the only area with double-figure counts in that month.

Breeding was confirmed in just four tetrads with probable breeding in a further 11. At several RSPB reserves it was noted that birds were present but not counted. Songsters were widely reported from Ashdown Forest. During the BBS Willow Warblers were encountered in 9.6% of squares surveyed with a maximum of five on 16 Jun at Plumpton Green.

Although one at Newhaven on 7 Jul was probably a returning migrant, one at Beachy Head on the 14th certainly was, as were the four there on the 17th. These were followed by 17 on the 21st, eight on the 22nd and ten on the 23rd. As usual, ringing activities combined with field observations revealed high numbers in July, with 90 trapped and others seen at Ladywell (nr Coombes) on the 29th, when there were 140 at Beachy Head. The Rye Bay RG (RBRG) ringed 151 during July. In August, high numbers in the first three weeks included 39 trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 2nd, 45 trapped at Ladywell on the 3rd, 33 at Beachy Head on the same day and 40 there on the 13th. On the 24th 40 were at Bixley Wood (Beckley). On the 27th there were further large numbers, with 64 trapped at Ladywell, 41 at Cissbury, 72 at Charleston Reedbed, 40 counted at Beachy Head and 41 in the Hastings area. On the 28th 16 were at Arlington Res and on the 31st there were 14 at Cissbury, 35 at Ladywell and 22 at Beachy Head. The RBRG ringed 469 during the month.

September began with ten at Beachy Head and 31 trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 1st. On the 5th at Cissbury 15 were trapped and 30 at Charleston Reedbed. After 13 were ringed at Ladywell on the 6th numbers dropped significantly. The only figures of note were 30 at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on the 5th, ten at Broadwater Warren on the 9th and 20 at Petworth Park on the 11th. Migration watchers in the Hastings area recorded a total of 163 on 25 dates between 1 Aug and 14 Sep with a maximum of 41 on 27 Aug at various locations in that area. In October only singles were recorded and the last sighting was on the 16th at Lancing Clump, eight days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [TW Parmenter]

Chiffchaff*Phylloscopus collybita*

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; small numbers winter.

Chiffchaffs were recorded in 636 tetrads (66%) compared to the 10-year average of 562 (range 479 to 676). In January five were at Battle WTW on the 1st; on the 6th Waltham Brooks, including the WTW, held 20 and there were 12 at Burpham WTW. An exceptional 30 were at Lidsey WTW on the 10th and at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) there were 12 on the 19th. February started with ten at Coldwaltham WTW on the 6th and at Burpham WTW numbers had increased to 20 on the same day. At many other sites single-figure counts were made in January and February.

In March ten migrants were at Beachy Head on the 14th. A further influx was apparent on the 16th, with 16 at Medmerry, six at Selsey GC and 90 at Beachy Head. On the 17th at both Ashburnham Place (Battle) and Climping Gap 21 were recorded and at Pulborough Brooks and Beachy Head 30 were counted on the 19th and 20th respectively. Also on the 20th, 25 were at Steyning, there were 23 on the Knepp Estate on the 23rd, then 18 at Lewes on the 24th. By April the species was widespread, with for example 53 on the Knepp Estate on the 19th.

Breeding was confirmed in 24 tetrads and probable in a further 57. The first fledglings were recorded at Combe Valley CP on 12 May. During the BBS Chiffchaffs were found in 99 (72%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 24 on 9 Jun at Nutley.

Fifteen at Cissbury and 25 at Brooklands (Worthing) on 20 Aug would have included returning migrants, as would the 45 at Combe Valley CP on the 27th. The highest counts in the first half of September were 60 at Beachy Head and 96 in the Hastings area on the 6th. In the second half of the month the highest counts were 225 at Beachy Head on the 21st, 163 trapped at Ladywell (nr Coombes) on the 22nd, 120 at Beachy Head and 100 at Rye Hbr on the 30th. At sites in the Hastings area 154 were counted on the 28th and 122 on the 31st. The highest number trapped in a day during September at Charleston Reedbed was 73 on the 28th and at Cissbury 54 on the 22nd. Counts in October included 137 trapped at Ladywell on 5 Oct, and 86 there on the 7th when 100 were at Rye Hbr. On the 9th, 50 were at Beachy Head and 51 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed. The next day 96 were trapped at Ladywell and on the 11th there were 130 at Beachy Head and 100 at Rye Hbr. Numbers after this declined as the month progressed.

Few of the 196 records received in November were in double figures. There were almost daily records in December with maxima of 12 at Coldwaltham WTW on the 10th, 12 at Ladywell on the 12th, 30 at Coldwaltham WTW on the 30th and finally 13 at Steyning WTW on the 31st. [TW Parmenter]

Siberian Chiffchaff, *P. c. tristis*

2016: One at Arlington Res on 28 Mar (L Pitcher).

2017: The individual at Beachy Head was on 3 May not 9 May.

2020: There were again a number of records of birds considered to show characteristics of this race, most of which were associating with wintering Common Chiffchaffs at water treatment works. Lingering individuals from 2019 included one at Pagham WTW until 25 Jan (BGR Ives *et al.*), one at Burpham WTW until 30 Mar (BF Forbes, AR Kitson, O Mitchell *et al.*) and one at Coldwaltham WTW until 13 Feb (BF Forbes, D Mason *et al.*). Others in 2020 comprised one at Botolphs on 6 Jan (DK Campbell), one at Patching WTW on 7 Jan (with two there on 29 Jan and 9 Mar) (DK Campbell, J Gearty, G Kinnard), one at Seaford Head on 15 Oct (MR Eade), one at Burpham WTW from 10 Dec into 2021 (BF Forbes, DI Smith *et al.*), one at Pagham WTW from 12 to 24 Dec (BGR Ives *et al.*), one at Coldwaltham WTW on 15 Dec (BF Forbes, DR Mason, DI

Smith) and two at Lidsey WTW from 23 to 26 Dec (O Mitchell). In addition, a feather sample of one trapped at Beachy Head on 23 Nov was analysed at Aberdeen University and showed that this individual was *tristis* (RDM Edgar). [P James]

Great Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus arundinaceus

Rare vagrant.

One was seen at Pett Level on 17 Jul (SJR Rumsey). This is the seventeenth individual recorded in the county, but the first since 1998. A long staying bird at an accessible location would seem overdue. The record has been accepted by BBRC. [DK Campbell]

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Fairly common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

Sedge Warblers were recorded in 113 (12%) tetrads, higher than the 10-year average of 91 (range 66 to 126). The first was singing at Pett Level on 17 Mar, another new county earliest arrival date after the individual on 21 Mar in 2019. The next sighting was not until 3 Apr, when there were two at Beeding Brooks. Thereafter there was a steady trickle of mainly ones and twos at many, mostly coastal sites until eight at Beeding Brooks and seven in the Arun Valley on the 17th. Waltham Brooks held 14 on the 23rd, the first double-figure count, followed by 11 at Beeding Brooks on the 28th. A very late individual was observed at Seaford Head on 17 May.

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads and was probable in a further seven. At Arundel WWT a breeding survey found 13 singing males on 15 May, Pagham Hbr held 12 pairs and at Rye Hbr 34 territories were mapped. A pair made a welcome comeback to Charleston Reedbed with successful fledging of young after a period of non-breeding there. The first fledglings were encountered on 30 May at Waltham Brooks. During the BBS Sedge Warblers were found in 6.4% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 14 at New Bridge (Pevensy Levels) on 25 May.

Autumn migration was first noted at Beachy Head with three on 17 Jul, another there on the 19th, two on the 20th and singles on the 22nd and 29th. Also on the 29th, 68 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed and a further 34 on 7 Aug. At Beachy Head 12 were present on the 13th and Combe Valley CP also held 12 on the 27th. Ringing totals at Pett Level included 820 in July, 1346 in August and 302 in September. In October there were records from Pett Level on the 1st (two) and 5th (three) and at Combe Valley CP on the 9th and 20th, six days later than the average last date. The migration watchers in the Hastings area recorded 80 between 2 Aug and 20 Oct with a maximum of 12 on 27 Aug. [TW Parmenter]

Blyth's Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus dumetorum

Very rare vagrant.

A singing male in scrub just west of Horseshoe Plantation (Beachy Head) on 16 Jun (L Pitcher *et al.*) was one of the highlights of the year and part of an exceptional influx into the UK in spring 2020. Elusive at first, it gradually became more showy as the afternoon progressed, enabling many observers to see this species for the first time in Sussex.

This is only the 3rd county record, the first having been trapped at Pett Level on 10 Jun 2011 and the second a singing male at Rye Hbr from 17 to 19 Jun 2016. June is clearly the month for this species to occur in Sussex although a late autumn bird is also a possibility. [P James]



Blyth's Reed Warbler, Beachy Head, 16 June (Roger Charlwood)

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common summer visitor and very common passage migrant.

Reed Warblers were recorded from 159 (16%) tetrads compared with the 10-year average of 132 (range 109 to 177). The first were on 7 Apr with two at Barnham and singles at Applesham (Coombes), North Bersted and Waltham Brooks. Thereafter there was a daily trickle of individuals until seven were counted on Beeding Brooks on the 11th where there were 17 by the 17th. On the 18th there were also 17 at Chichester GP and ten at Lewes Brooks. At Pagham Hbr there were at least ten on the 23rd with other notable concentrations being 14 at Rodmell on the 24th, and 20 at both Warningcamp and Sompting on the 25th. On 4 May there were 25 at Beeding Brooks and by the end of May counts of 20 or more were made at seven further locations, including 31 at New Bridge (Pevensey Levels) during a BBS on 25 May.

Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and probable in a further 24. Breeding counts from reserves included between 150 and 200 pairs at Rye Hbr, 18 pairs at Pagham Hbr and 13 pairs at Medmerry. The first nest with young was seen on 31 May at Rye Hbr and the first fledglings on 7 Jun at Warningcamp. During the BBS the species was recorded in 14% of squares with the maximum at New Bridge, mentioned above.

The first returning migrants were observed at Seaford Head with four on 22 Jun. On 11 Jul, 74 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed and whilst some of these would have been resident breeders there were also migrants involved. The first migrant at Beachy Head was recorded on 13 Jul. A further 31 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 17th and 15 at Ladywell on the 18th. Nine were in Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on the 24th, on the 29th 15 were at Ladywell (nr Coombes) and 44 were trapped at Charleston Reedbed. A further eight were at Beachy Head on the 30th.

High site counts in August included 50 trapped at Charleston Reedbed on the 2nd, 15 at Warningcamp on the 16th, ten at Lewes Railwayland LNR on the 24th and 12 at Beachy Head on the 27th. At Pett Level monthly ringing totals included 625 in July and 1122 in August.

Site counts in September were mainly of single figures, but 432 were ringed at Pett Level during the month and 42 in October, when 12 were ringed on the 9th, the last double-figure count. The last individual was recorded there on 7 Nov, 13 days later than the 10-year average last date. During the migration watch in the Hastings area a total of 156 were recorded from 25 dates between 4 Aug and 15 Oct with a maximum of 26 on 1 Sep. [TW Parmenter]

Marsh Warbler

Acrocephalus palustris

Rare summer visitor and very scarce passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

After a blank year in 2019, there were two accepted records in 2020; a singing male at an undisclosed location on 12 and 13 Jun and a first calendar year bird photographed at Cuckmere Haven on 3 Oct (S Humphrey). However, information given to the county Recorder by observers familiar with the species suggests that several more singing males were present in early summer. [P James]

Melodious Warbler

Hippolais polyglotta

Very scarce visitor in spring and autumn.

There was just one record of an individual which showed well but briefly in the hotel garden at Beachy Head on 10 Aug (JF Cooper). It then flew and was not relocated. The total seen this century stands at 23, of which all but six have been in the Beachy Head area, and at 74 records overall. [VP Bentley]

Savi's Warbler

Locustella luscinioides

Rare visitor; has bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species. Section 41.

A singing bird was heard and sound recorded, but not seen, at Pett Level on 11 Apr (CH Dean). This record, which has been accepted by BBRC, is only the fourth individual since breeding was last confirmed in the county in 2010. [DK Campbell]

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 26 tetrads this year, three fewer than in 2019, with breeding possible in two. The first to arrive was at Pagham Hbr on 9 Apr, a week later than in 2019 and one day later than the 10-year average. The following day there were two at Amberley Wild Brooks, but the next report was not until one was heard at Seaford GC (Bishopstone) on the 18th. Up to three reeling males were regularly reported from the Arun Valley, but the only reports during April and May from outside this area were an individual at Brooklands (Worthing) on 19 Apr and an adult trapped at The Mumbles (Steyning) on 16 May. Three males were heard reeling in a small area at Waltham Brooks on 9 Jun, and later in the month singing was reported from Cuckmere Haven on the 23rd and Rye Hbr on several dates in late June.

The first returning migrant at Pett Level was trapped and ringed on 7 Jul, and between then and 7 Oct a total of 552 were ringed there. Another 28 were ringed by Cuckmere RG and 19 at Beachy Head RS. While final ringing totals for Sussex were not available at the time of writing, at least 600 were ringed in the county; this is the highest number since 1635 in 2011, after which there was a reduction in ringing activity at Pett Level. Other late summer and autumn records were from Pagham Hbr on 11 Jul, Ladywell (nr Coombes) on the 29th, Pulborough Brooks on 4 to 7 Aug, Weir Wood Res on the 10th and 31st and both the Arun Valley and Brighton Wild Park on the 24th. In September there were sightings at six different locations, and October saw just two records, both of birds trapped at Pett Level; the final of these on the 7th, exactly on the 10-year average last date but nine days later than in 2019. [VP Bentley]



Blackcap, Seaford, 5 October (Bob Eade)

Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Very common summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce winter visitor.

Blackcaps were recorded in 598 (62%) tetrads during the year, an increase of 8.3% from 2019. Though none were found during the SWBS in the first winter period, the species was present in 61 (28%) of 217 gardens surveyed in the GBW during the first quarter, slightly more than in the same period the previous year. They were noted feeding on apples, buggy nibbles, sunflower hearts, and foraging in ivy. The maximum count was of seven, on 1 Mar, in a garden in West Tarring (Worthing) where three males and three females were seen together in groups, while another male was singing in a hedge. On 20 Feb in Burgess Hill a male was heard singing throughout a rainy day. The first report from Beachy Head was on 14 Mar.

During the limited number of BBS visits, the species was encountered in 79% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 21 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 26 May. This is lower than the percentage in 2019, but it was not possible to carry out many of the early season surveys, when the males are likely to be more vocal. Breeding was confirmed in only 22 tetrads, though was probable or possible in a further 269, both figures higher than those for 2019. There were 19 at Highdown (Worthing) on 16 Apr, 27 at the Knepp Estate on the 19th and 23 in a wood near Ashington on the 23rd. The first fledged young were noted at Combe Valley CP on 17 May and two fledged individuals were trapped and ringed at Cissbury on the 24th. More Blackcaps than any other warbler species are ringed in Britain and Ireland and numbers trapped at Sussex sites included 3130 at Pett Level, 779 at Charleston Reedbed, 741 at Cissbury, 585 at Ladywell (nr Coombes), and 372 at Beachy Head. At this last site it was estimated that there were between 600 and 750 in the area on 27 Aug. On 22 Sep, 99 different individuals were trapped at Cissbury, the vast majority being first year birds, indicative of a productive breeding season for the species.

During the final quarter Blackcaps were recorded in 59 (22%) of 275 gardens surveyed in the GBW. Single birds were encountered in three squares in the second winter period SWBS. In December there were reports of wintering birds from 33 locations, mainly in gardens. Two males and a female frequenting a Horsham garden for up to five weeks ignored sunflower seeds and apple, focussing instead on Yucca berries. A first-year male trapped at Cissbury on 12 Dec appeared to still be in post-juvenile moult with black feathers still replacing brown ones in the cap. [VP Bentley]

Garden Warbler

Sylvia borin

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The species was recorded in 197 (20%) tetrads, slightly fewer than in 2019, but higher than in the previous two years. The first reports were of single birds at Seaford Head and Crawley on 9 Apr, eight days later than in 2019 and four days later than the 10-year average and it was not until the 12th that more turned up in other parts of the county. A total of 17, including 15 singing males, found at Ardingly Res during a three hour visit on 26 Apr was an unusually high tally, but numbers had returned to more normal levels by May, when only five were reported on the 14th by the same observer.

During the 125 BBS visits that were completed, the species was encountered in 22 (18%) of the squares surveyed, slightly down on 2019, with a maximum of six on 30 May in a square at Blackham. Breeding was confirmed in three tetrads, and was probable or possible in a further 81, broadly similar to 2019. Breeding season counts were not completed at the RSPB reserves, but the species was noted as present at Pulborough Brooks and Broadwater Warren. A bird with food or faecal sac was noted on the Knepp Estate on 24 May, the first report of fledged young was the next day at Park Corner Heath (East Hoathly) and others were seen at Tilgate Forest on 1 Jul.

The species is trapped on autumn migration at several ringing sites. In 2020 numbers were slightly lower than in the previous two years at Pett Level where 202 were trapped but 29 were ringed by Cuckmere RG compared with only 12 in 2019. Apart from the April influx at Ardingly Res the only other counts in double figures were ten at Beachy Head on 29 and 30 Jul. Few were reported after mid-September, and one at Beachy Head on 3 Oct was the final individual of the year, three days earlier than in 2019, and ten days earlier than the 10-year average last date. [VP Bentley]

Lesser Whitethroat*Curruca curruca****Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

Lesser Whitethroats were recorded in 177 (18%) tetrads, seven more than the previous year and 37 more than in 2018. The first migrant was at Sidlesham on 10 Apr, one day later than the 10-year average. Individuals were at Lewes Brooks and Cadborough (Rye) the following day, and there were reports from across the county by the middle of the month, with six at the Knepp Estate on the 19th and 20 at Rye Hbr on the 23rd.

During the BBS the species was encountered in ten of the squares surveyed, with maximum counts of three on 28 May at Udimore and 7 Jun at Rye Hbr. An estimated and remarkable 58 territories were found during surveys in the 473 ha southern block of the Knepp Estate. There were ten pairs at Pagham Hbr and a further four at Medmerry, both sites seeing a reduction from the 2019 estimate of 25 and six, while Thorney Island held six singing males. The total of 11 pairs at Rye Hbr was an increase of three compared to 2019. Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and was probable or possible in another 76. The first fledged young were in a family group seen at Pulborough Brooks on 9 Jul and two were seen with two adults at Chelwood Vachery (Ashdown Forest) on the 21st.

During autumn migration the Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 45 between 4 Aug and 17 Sep with a maximum of ten on 1 Sep and the maximum count at Beachy Head was 15 on 10 Aug, with double-figure counts on five other days; 14 birds were ringed there. At other ringing sites total captures were 38 at Pett Level, only just over half the 2019 number, 35 at Charleston Reedbed and 41 at a recently established site at Rye Hbr. An individual at Cissbury on 5 Oct was the last recorded departing migrant of the nominate subspecies, four days earlier than in 2019 and 11 days earlier than the 10-year average date. A later individual seen and photographed at Beachy Head on 17 Oct is considered likely to be of the eastern subspecies *blythi*. [VP Bentley]

Eastern Lesser Whitethroat, *C. c. blythi*

2018: One showing characteristics of the eastern race *blythi* was trapped and ringed at Pett Level on 5 Nov 2018 (PE Jones, J Willsher). Mapping of the bird's DNA profile by Dr Martin Collinson at Aberdeen University confirmed it as a *blythi* Lesser Whitethroat which now becomes the first Sussex record, pre-dating the already accepted 2019 record of one at Birling Gap from 24 Oct to 6 Nov. *Blythi* breeds across central and eastern Siberia and winters mainly in Pakistan and India and is most likely to occur in the UK in late autumn. [P James]

Common Whitethroat*Curruca communis****Very common summer visitor and passage migrant.***

Whitethroats were recorded in 429 (44%) tetrads in 2020, 17 more than the previous year and 67 more than in 2018. The very grey-looking individual first seen in a garden in Haywards Heath on 16 Dec 2019 was last reported on 7 Mar. It resembled one of the eastern races *rubicola* or *icterops* (neither of which has been definitely recorded in Britain). The first migrants arrived on 4 Apr, with one at Ringmer and another heard singing at Thorney Island. This was three days later than in 2019 and exactly the 10-year average. They were reported more widely from 9 Apr and one pair at Small Dole was seen taking nesting material into a bramble patch on that date. On 16 Apr 12 were reported from the Medmerry trail at Pagham Hbr and 20 at the Knepp Estate where 55 were counted on the 19th. At Black Ditch (Poling) 15 were seen on the 24th and 30 were at Henfield Levels on the 26th.



Common Whitethroat, Seaford, 7 May (Bob Eade)

During the BBS, the species was found in 64% of the squares surveyed, a slight increase over the previous year, with a maximum count of 24 on 7 Jun in a square at Rye Hbr. Breeding was confirmed in 26 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 206. There were 41 at the Rathfinny Wine Estate (Seaford) on 26 May, where 36 territories were counted. A minimum of 46 singing males were present at Thorney Island during the breeding season. Breeding surveys produced a total of 30 pairs at Pagham Hbr and a further 19 at Medmerry. At Rye Hbr 72 territories were mapped. The first fledged young were reported from The Burgh (Burpham) on 25 May, while on 7 Jun at Whitehawk (Brighton) they were reported as being in every bush and shrub, with several fledglings being fed.

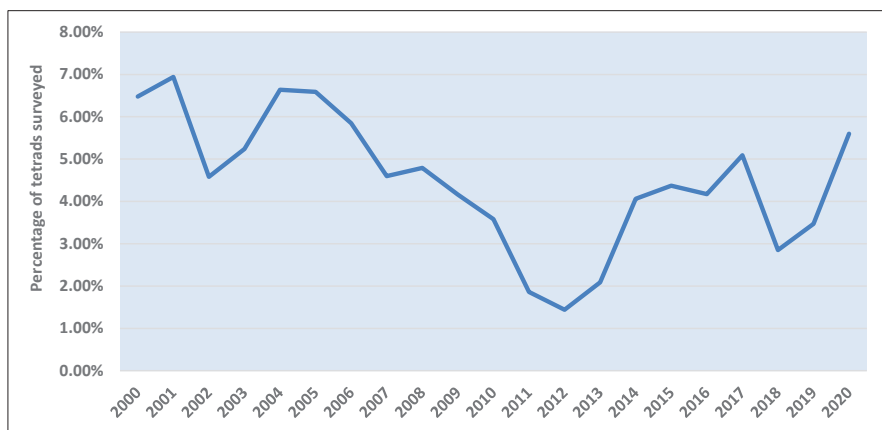
Numbers noted on autumn passage at Beachy Head were poor, with the highest August counts being 69 on the 3rd and 60 on both the 4th and 10th. At the ringing sites numbers were similar or lower than the previous year, with (2019 figures in brackets): 316 (663) at Pett Level; 125 (120) at Charleston Reedbed; 64 (126) at Beachy Head RS and 53 (45) at Cissbury. Migration watchers in the Hastings area recorded 361 on 28 dates between 2 Aug and 21 Sep, with a maximum of 53 on 5 Sep. There were records from 12 locations in October and from two in November of one at Brooklands (Worthing) on the 8th and 9th and one at Medmerry on the 9th, 12 days later than the 10-year average last date. [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 55 (5.6%) tetrads, the highest number since the 56 tetrads in 2005, and a further sign of recovery following the particularly cold weather in February and March 2018.



Percentage of tetrads holding Dartford Warbler 2000–2020, based on tetrads with records.

Coastal sightings during January were of up to two birds at Medmerry and Beachy Head. Inland, sightings were mostly of single birds, at Ambersham and Lavington Commons, and nine sites on Ashdown Forest. In February, one was recorded at Medmerry on the 5th, at Graffham Common on the 26th, and at six sites on Ashdown Forest, as well as a male courting a female at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 25th.



Dartford Warbler, Ashdown Forest, 1 May (Jake Gearty)

Although the annual WHBBS was incomplete due to COVID-19 restrictions, 36 territories were recorded (see page 218). There was evidence of breeding on Lavington Common, with fledged young seen on 19 May and 9 Jul. Adults carrying faecal sacs or food were reported at three sites on Ashdown Forest in May, and juveniles were recorded at ten sites between May and September. There was evidence of probable breeding at another 17 sites on Ashdown Forest.

As well as sightings on the West Sussex commons and Ashdown Forest throughout September and October, single birds were recorded in late October at Butcherlands (Balls Cross), Wepham Down, Waltham Brooks and Broadwater Warren. Autumn coastal records, mostly of one or two birds, were all from October onwards at Medmerry, Pagham Hbr and the Beachy Head area. Nine birds were recorded at sites around Hastings between 13 Oct and 5 Nov.

During November and December, there were sightings on Ambersham Common, Black Down and Lavington Common, with five counted at the last-named site on 9 Nov. There were records

of between one and four from each of at least sixteen locations on Ashdown Forest, with seven counted at one site on 7 Nov. Coastal records came from seven sites and were most frequent at Thorney Island (Chichester Hbr), Pagham Hbr, Beachy Head and Hastings CP, where six birds were recorded on 5 Nov. Away from the coast and heathland in this period, the few records were mostly from downland, including an adult and juvenile seen at Cissbury, also on 5 Nov. [A Rowe]

Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla

Fairly common breeding resident and summer visitor; passage migrant and winter visitor. Schedule 1 species.

Firecrests were recorded in 221 tetrads (23%), the highest number to date. During the first winter period, maximum counts comprised four at Waltham Brooks, with threes at Chichester GP, Burpham and Rye Hbr; individuals were widely scattered throughout the county during this time.

The first presumed spring migrant was at Beachy Head on 6 Mar, with seven there on 17 Mar. In April, when males become vocal, the following sites had multiple sightings: Worthing GC, Angmering Park Estate, Patching Hill, Steyning Round Hill, Balcombe and Battle. As the season progressed, concentrations of singing males were noted at Angmering Park Estate (six on 10 Apr) and Stanley Common (15 on 25 May).

During the BBS, Firecrests were recorded in three (2.4%) of the squares surveyed with a maximum of four on 26 May at West Lavington. Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads: a noisy family of five at West Marden on 29 May, an adult feeding a fledgling at Robertsbridge on 15 Jun, fledglings at Arundel the same day and lastly, an adult with three fledglings at Iping Common on 23 Jun. There were 15 tetrads with probable breeding and 35 with possible breeding. However, the county breeding population was estimated to be about 700 pairs in 2018 (Sussex Bird Report no. 71, 2018, pages 238 - 247).

In the autumn, 14 birds were trapped and ringed at Charleston Reedbed and the highest daily count was of six at Beachy Head on 17 Oct. Individuals were seen up until the end of the year at several inland and coastal localities, emphasising the species' status as a winter resident in parts of the county. The highest counts during the second winter period were six at Goodwood on 29 Nov, five at Pett Level on 8 Nov and four at Buxted Park (Uckfield) on 24 Nov. [MR Eade]

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Very common breeding resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Goldcrests were recorded in 517 tetrads (54%), above the ten-year average of 453 (range 336 to 572). Ninety one were encountered in 53 squares (42%) surveyed in the early year SWBS with a maximum of nine on 10 Jan at Battle. In the GBW, Goldcrests were recorded in 29% of participating gardens.

The species was recorded in 34 (27%) of BBS squares. Breeding was confirmed in 15 tetrads and was probable or possible in a further 120. Singing was noted from mid-February, nest building was first observed on 15 Mar at Thakeham and the first fledglings reported on 15 May at Arundel.

Autumn passage peaked in mid-October and early November. Thirty were recorded at Beachy Head on 16 Oct with 80 there on 17 Oct and 50 the next day. Other large counts in this period included 29 at Hastings and 20 at Pett Level on the 17th. The next day saw 32 ringed by the Cuckmere RG and 11 at Climping Gap, while 20 were recorded at Cissbury on the 23rd.

The early November peak included 24 at Beachy Head on both the 4th and 5th, with 60 there on the 6th and 180 on the 7th. The next day there were 25 at Rye Hbr and 20 at Climping Gap. Thereafter

numbers tailed off, although some high counts were made later in the month. These included 23 at Angmering Park Estate on the 19th and 20 at Hindleap Warren (Ashdown Forest) on the 21st. During the late winter SWBS, 122 were encountered in 37% of squares with a maximum of ten at Westfield on 22 Nov. [MC Daniel]

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

Abundant resident.

Wrens were recorded in 736 tetrads (76%) an increase from the 657 in 2019 and 659 in 2018. In the early year SWBS a total of 366 was recorded in 82% of the squares surveyed, a similar percentage to 2019; the largest count was 12 on 25 Feb in Golden Cross (Hailsham). Twenty-one were recorded in Crowborough on 4 Jan and 18 in Botolphs (Bramber) on 24 Jan.

During the GBW birds were recorded in 79% of the gardens surveyed with a higher percentage of records from the first and second winter periods (72% and 74%) compared to the spring and summer periods (68% and 60%).

Breeding was confirmed in 38 tetrads and probable in a further 60, the highest totals for the past few years (cf. 20 and 47 in 2019, 24 and 47 in 2018 and 29 and 24 in 2017) indicating that Wren populations are stable and may be benefitting from the lack of prolonged cold weather in recent years. During the BBS they were found in 97% of the squares studied, an identical percentage to the previous two years; the highest count was 34 at Southleigh Forest (Emsworth) on 25 May. Other high counts in the breeding season were 38 at Plumpton and 48 in Newhaven on 2 and 9 May respectively. On the county's reserves 46 territories were mapped at Rye Hbr and eight at Pulborough Brooks. Birds were singing from late January, nest building was first observed on 10 Apr at Wisborough Green and the first fledged young were seen on 5 Jun at Tilgate Forest.

In the late year SWBS, 432 were recorded in 77% of the squares surveyed, a decrease from the 84% of squares during 2019, with a maximum of 21 at Steyning Round Hill on 26 Nov. Other notable high counts in the autumn and second winter period were 40 at Seaford Head on 12 Oct and 27 at Steep Down on 20 Nov. These high October and November counts suggest migration, perhaps including birds from the Continent. One Wren was noted to have died after becoming tangled in garden netting in Hambrook (Chichester) on 1 Oct. Communal roosting was observed with a minimum of ten seen going into roost at Pulborough Brooks on 27 Dec and two were seen going into a nest box to roost at Pevensey Bay on 13 Jan. [D Brothwell]

Nuthatch

Sitta europaea

Common resident.

Nuthatches were recorded in 476 tetrads (49%) compared with a 10-year average of 423 (range 364 to 533). During the GBW they were recorded in 45% of participating gardens and during the BGBW in 11% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 12% in East Sussex.

During the first winter period SWBS they were encountered in 42% of squares surveyed with a maximum count of seven on 20 Jan at Ditchling Common. The highest count in this period was 11 at Colgate (St Leonards Forest) on 1 Mar. There were two counts of eight, at Balcombe on 5 Jan and Maynards Green on 18 Jan. There were eight counts of seven elsewhere.

Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads and was probable in 26. The first record of confirmed breeding (carrying food to a nest at Pulborough) was on 25 Apr, two weeks earlier than in 2019. Young were first seen in the nest at Iping Common and at Weir Wood Res on 16 May. The first fledged young

were seen at Woolbeding Common on 2 Jun. During the BBS 91 Nuthatches were recorded in 31% of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of eight on 26 May at West Lavington (Midhurst).

During the autumn the highest counts were ten at Wakehurst Place on 26 Sep and at Balcombe on 11 Oct. During the late year SWBS Nuthatches were recorded in 38% of squares surveyed with a maximum of seven on 1 Dec at Fernhurst. During this period there were two counts of eight, at Balcombe on 29 Nov and 12 Dec, three counts of seven and nine counts of six. [GD Evans]



Nuthatch, Ringmer, 19 February (Bob Eade)

Eurasian Treecreeper

Certhia familiaris

Common resident.

Treecreepers were recorded in 344 tetrads (36%), more than the 10-year average of 300 (range 238 to 432). During the first winter period the highest counts were seven at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 19 Feb, six at Weir Wood Res on 1 Jan and at Darwell Res on 5 Jan. Elsewhere there were three counts of five, three counts of four and 16 of three. A total of 32 were recorded in this period's SWBS from 18% of the squares surveyed. Throughout the year the species was recorded in 10% of gardens studied for the GBW.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in another 19. The first occupied nest was seen on 30 Apr at the Knepp Estate and the first sign of food being carried to a nest was on 12 May at Sheffield Park. The first fledged young were seen at Arundel on 24 May.

Through late summer the highest counts were seven at Arundel on 11 Jul, six at Pulborough on 10 Aug followed by three counts of five at Knepp on 29 Jul and Pulborough Brooks on 16 and 29 Aug. During autumn, the highest counts were five at Burton MP on 6 Oct and at Wivelsfield on 29 Oct and a further five counts of four elsewhere. Over the second winter period the highest counts were of fives at Slinfold on 10 Nov, Combe Valley CP on 28 Dec and Wiggonholt Common on 31 Dec. In the late year SWBS 30 Treecreepers were recorded from 15% of the surveyed squares. [GD Evans]

Northern Treecreeper, *C. f. familiaris*

The individual found at Patching on 28 Dec 2020, the first for Sussex, remained until 7 Jan. [M Mallalieu]

Rose-coloured Starling

Pastor roseus

Rare vagrant.

The only record this year was of an adult at Beachy Head on 20 Jun (CF Ball). This brings the county total to 49 with 24 this century. The species has been recorded in every year since 2015. [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 621 tetrads (64%) compared with 557 in 2019 and a 10-year average of 507 (range 425 to 645), and in 82% of participating GBW gardens. Large flocks in the first winter period included between 3000 and 4000 preparing to roost at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Jan, 4000 at the Weir Wood Res reedbed roost two days later, 5300 roosting at the Palace Pier (Brighton) on 15 Jan, 1000 at Steyning on 22 Feb and 1670 at Pevensey Levels on 29 Feb. Smaller murmurations of 800 at Slinfold, 250 at Bulverhythe and 100 at Coolham (Billingshurst) were also reported. In the early year SWBS a total of 4778 was recorded from 59% of squares surveyed with the maximum of 1670 at Pevensey Levels on 29 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 70 tetrads and probable in 12 more. As early as 8 Jan a pair were investigating Swift and House Sparrow nest boxes in Worthing. The first young were heard in a nest at Seaford on 8 Apr; fledged young were reported on 20 Apr from Combe Valley CP and by 26 May 300 juveniles were observed feeding at Lidsey WTW (Bognor Regis). During the BBS the species was found in 60% of squares studied with a maximum of 78 at Southwick on 31 May.

On 16 Aug a flock of 2000 was present on Thorney Island. On 30 Aug a murmuration exceeding 100 was seen at Worthing pier rising to 1000 on 16 Oct. The migration watchers in the Hastings area logged 1514 Starlings between 21 Sep and 9 Nov with a highest count of 220 N on 19 Oct. In the second winter period the Palace Pier roost held 5700 on 22 Nov and 6000 on 7 Dec. At Waltham Brooks on 28 Nov 3000 dropped into the reedbed roost at dusk and the peak count going to roost at Weir Wood Res was 2050 on 6 Dec. In the late year SWBS, 4237 Starlings were counted in 61% of squares visited with a maximum of 973 on Pevensey Levels on 6 Dec. [AC Gutteridge]



Ring Ouzel, Cissbury Ring, 7 October (Dorian Mason)

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 mostly at coastal sites or on downland. An average spring count was followed by a rather poor autumn passage. The estimated minimum monthly totals, after adjusting for possible duplication, were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	1	1	18	18	120	4	-

Overwintering birds are very unusual but one was recorded at Cuckmere Haven on seven dates between 22 Jan and 2 Mar.

One was at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Apr, eleven days later than the 10-year average first date, and on the 5th single migrants arrived at Cissbury, Five Ashes (Butchers Cross), Seaford and Sompting Downs. All the remaining spring records were also in April and, apart from one at North Chailey on the 11th, the next eight birds were all at Cissbury, peaking at five on the 22nd. There were then two at Ditchling Beacon on the 23rd, another at Woodingdean the following day and the final bird of the spring at Warninglid on the 29th, four days earlier than the 10-year average date.

The first returning bird was at Hastings on 3 Sep, nine days earlier than the 10-year average date. There were two there next day and another at Black Down on the 11th and 12th. During the rest of September, there were ten further day counts of one or two birds from Thorney Island, Cissbury, Uckfield, Beachy Head and Rye. Numbers gradually built during the first half of October with larger counts being four at Beachy Head on the 5th and eight at Black Down on the 10th. Peak passage was during the 14th to the 20th when there were up to 17 at Hastings and 16 at Beachy Head with smaller numbers widely distributed along the coast and downland. Monthly site counts for October are difficult to estimate due to birds remaining over several days but approximate monthly minima include 45 at Beachy Head, 22 in the Hastings area and 12 at Black Down.

The four individuals in November were at Beachy Head on the 4th, Goring on the 15th, Westdean Woods on the 24th and Alfriston on the 30th, over two weeks later than the 10-year average last date of 12 Nov. [JH Whitman]

Blackbird

Turdus merula

Abundant breeding resident; very common or abundant winter visitor; status uncertain as passage migrant.

Blackbirds were recorded from 774 (80%) tetrads, more than the 691 in 2019 and above the 10-year average of 679 (range 603 to 773). The species was recorded in 379 (97%) of the 389 gardens surveyed during the GBW, was encountered in 118 (94%) of the 125 squares surveyed in the first quarter SWBS and in the BGBW occurred in 81% and 78% of West and East Sussex gardens respectively. There were 11 counts of 25 or more in the first winter period including 51 at Crowborough on 2 Jan. A count of 35 at Arlington Res on 7 Mar plus four other counts of 20 or more in March preceded a set of high April counts of 40 or more at Capite Wood (Ashington) and the Knepp Estate, and of 25 or more at Amberley Wild Brooks, Antye Fm (Burgess Hill), Arlington Res, Balcombe, Newhaven and West Marden.

A count of 50 on Harting Down on 20 May was exceptional and there were another five reports of 30 or more that month. Confirmed breeding came from 85 tetrads and was probable at another 78. Singing was reported from West Worthing on 23 Feb and the first report of nest building came from Mountfield on 10 Mar, almost a month later than last year's report from there on 13 Feb. Further reports of nest building during March came from West Worthing on the 14th, Crawley on the 21st and more widely subsequently. Nest visiting was noted on 25 Mar at Worthing and feeding young was seen at Washington on 31 Mar (and last seen at Aldwick (Bognor Regis) on 10 Aug) while the first fledglings were noted at Storrington on 12 Apr and at Wisborough Green on the 19th. In the BBS, the species was encountered in 122 (98%) of the 125 squares surveyed.

The traditional post-breeding slump in count size was relieved by 20 at Mill Hill (Shoreham) on 23 Sep and at Pagham Hbr on 1 Oct. There were then nine sightings of 20 or more in the middle

two weeks of October, peaking at 76 counted on Seaford Head on the 14th, followed by 32 counts of 20 or more between 6 Nov and 15 Dec, with maxima of 33 at Battle, 32 at Bepton (nr Midhurst) and 40 at Pulborough Brooks. At the very end of the year, there were 30 at both Arlington Res on 29 Dec and at Pulborough Brooks on the 31st with 25 at Plumpton and 22 at Lancing College, both on the 30th. The species was encountered in 139 (95%) of the 146 squares surveyed for the last quarter SWBS. [JH 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 278 (29%) tetrads, more than the 253 in 2019 but below the 10-year average of 297 (range 248 to 437). A below average first winter period was followed by a relatively quiet second winter period. Approximate monthly totals, derived from taking the maximum count in each tetrad in each month, are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	2658	1695	832	95	1	1228	3179	3433
Average 2010-19	5599	3681	1709	166	2	1145	3042	2608

The late winter SWBS recorded the species in 20 (16%) of the 125 squares surveyed. January opened with large counts in the lower Arun Valley with 168 on the 1st and 180 on the 5th, and in the Tillingham Valley (nr Rye) with 230 on the 1st and 430 on the 5th. There were then 160 at Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) on the 8th, 120 at Treyford (near Midhurst) on the 12th, 100 at Barcombe Res on the 13th, 250 at Pevensey Levels on the 15th, 100 at Burpham on the 18th, 100 near Balcombe on the 20th, 150 in the upper Adur Valley on the 23rd and 300 in the Tillingham Valley on the 25th. In February, the largest counts were 210 at Arundel Park on the 2nd and 200 at Combe Valley CP on the 19th, while there were counts of 120 at Pett Level on the 6th, Paddockhurst (Worth) on both the 6th and 19th, Berwick Station on the 21st and Little Strudgate Fm on the 19th. In March, 210 were at Arlington Res on the 8th, 100 were at Barcombe Res on the 9th, 150 were at Arlington Res on the 14th, 120 were at The Burgh (near Burpham) on the 20th, and 100 were at Little Strudgate Fm on the 21st. April gatherings included 52 at Paddockhurst on the 6th and 32 on the Wiston Estate (nr Steyning) on the 8th with the final sighting at Woolbeding on the 26th, six days later than the 10-year average.

A returning bird was noted at Weir Wood Res on 15 Sep, 15 days before the 10-year average arrival date of 30 Sep. The next report was of 60 at Amberley Wild Brooks on 3 Oct followed by 11 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 6th, three at the Knepp Estate on the 10th and 122 at Paddockhurst the next day. There were then widespread records. On 14 Oct, a single flock of 200 flew up from fields near the hotel on Beachy Head and departed high to the east and on the next day, a total of 123 flew north and east at Charleston Manor in the Cuckmere Valley. On the 16th there were 100 at Old Lodge LNR and 200 at Combe Valley CP. At the end of the month, the largest count was 130 at Bewl Water on the 28th. High counts continued into November with 120 north over Kithurst Hill (Storrington) on the 5th, 200 at Chantry Hill on the 8th, 200 at Brede Levels on the 11th, 120 at Beeding Hill on the 14th, 200 on Steyning Levels on the 19th, 150 at Flimwell and 120 at Sidlesham on the 21st, 200 at Edburton Hill on the 28th and 190 in the Tillingham Valley on the 29th. In December the highest counts were 200 at both Marsh Fm (Sidlesham) on the 7th and Horse Eye Level (Pevensey) on the 9th, 250 at Amberley Wild Brooks and Iford on the 11th and at Rye Hbr on the 17th, 300 at Hankham Level (Pevensey) on the 16th and 260 in the Tillingham Valley on the 30th. The early winter SWBS recorded the species in 47 (32%) of the 146 squares studied. The species was noted in 14 (4%) of the 389 gardens surveyed during the year as part of the GBW. [JH 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 414 (43%) tetrads, rather more than the 367 in 2019. The first winter period had fairly average numbers of birds while in the second winter period numbers were well above average and probably exceeded only by the exceptional 2004 total. The approximate monthly totals, derived from the maximum counts in each tetrad in each month, are shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
County total	3613	2250	1273	180	1		1	24	4689	2314	3646
Average 2010-19	3396	2467	1742	206	<1		<1	5	1685	1407	2685

The late winter SWBS recorded 922 in 52 (42%) of the 125 squares surveyed. The high numbers reported in December 2019 had reduced by January with peaks of 300 at Uckfield on the 24th, 250 at Harting on the 12th and further counts of about 200 on Ashdown Forest and in the Paddockhurst (Worth) area. At a further ten sites 100 or more were reported in January with 150 at both the Knepp Estate and the upper Adur Levels. February was quieter with 200 at the Knepp Estate on the 21st and 100 at both Crawley Down on the 15th and Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on the 19th. In March, large counts included 300 at Netherfield on the 11th, 140 at St Leonards on the 3rd, and 100 at both Waltham Brooks on the 7th and West Worthing on the 10th. Sightings reduced further in April with just two counts of about 45. The penultimate bird of the spring was at Waltham Brooks on 18 Apr and the last of the spring was one at Arundel on 5 May, about three weeks later than the 10-year average of 13 Apr.

Eleven at Storrington on 11 Sep, nine days earlier than the 10-year average, preceded two at the Knepp Estate on 17 Sep and then a further dozen in September. In October, small numbers at the start of the month preceded a period of considerable passage with nearly 200 passing over both Paddockhurst and Bowlers Town (nr Iden) on the 11th followed the next day by 1700 heading WNW over Little Strudgate Fm (Balcombe) in just over three hours, 300 over Cedar Fm (Flimwell), and 200 over Crawley. On the 14th, 259 birds flew over Crawley and on the next day there were about 600 at Gills Lap (Ashdown Forest) and 140 at Wivelsfield. The only other three-figure count to the month's end was one of 187 over Monks Forest (nr Balcombe) on the 16th.

Another burst of activity in early November included 200 at Kithurst Hill (Storrington) and about 100 in the Hastings area on the 5th with 100 at Weir Wood Res on the 16th. High counts in December included 150 at Iford (Lewes) on the 11th, 150 at West Chiltington on the 25th, 144 at Arlington Res on the 29th, 140 at Pulborough Brooks on the 12th and 127 at Rusper on the 28th. During the late year SWBS 1162 were recorded in 71 (49%) of the 146 squares surveyed. Redwings were recorded in 43 (11%) of the 389 gardens surveyed during the year for the GBW. [JH 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 649 (67%) tetrads, compared with 617 in 2019 and the 10-year average of 595 (range 527 to 698). The GBW survey during the year reported Song Thrushes from 211 (54%) of the 389 gardens studied.

During the first quarter, ten or more were recorded from 16 sites including 22 at Botolphs (Bramber) on 24 Jan, 20 at Westdean Woods on 7 Feb and 23 at Arlington Res on 31 Mar. In the late winter SWBS, the species was found in 92 (74%) of the 125 squares surveyed.

BBS records came from 95 (76%) of the 125 squares surveyed. In April, breeding records included adults carrying food to nests at Plumpton on the 2nd and Findon on the 10th while nest building was noted in Horsham on the 3rd, in Arundel on the 8th then more widely. Also that month, an adult with a fledgling was seen at Steyning Round Hill on the 15th and another fledgling was at Felpham (Bognor Regis) on the 24th. At the other end of the breeding season, a very young fledgling was reported at Cissbury on 9 Aug.

Migration was indicated by a total of 97 birds recorded on a long walk at Seaford Head on 14 Oct when 20 were also recorded from around Hastings. At the latter area 32 were recorded on 16 Oct, 29 on 17 Oct, 32 on 5 Nov and 26 on 8 Nov. Other large counts suggestive of migration include 30 N at Combe Valley CP on 16 Oct and 17 at Wivelsfield on 18 Oct. In the last two months of the year, the SWBS noted this species in 74 (51%) of the 146 squares surveyed. During this period, the largest counts were all in November and comprised 15 at three sites: near Barcombe Cross on the 1st, Mill Hill (Shoreham) on the 23rd and Pulborough Brooks on the 29th.

Five continental birds were identified during ringing activities at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) during November. [JH Whitman]

Mistle Thrush

Turdus viscivorus

Common resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Mistle Thrushes were recorded from 435 (45%) tetrads compared to the 10-year average of 354 (range 277 to 441). During the GBW survey, this species was found in 38 (10%) of 389 Sussex gardens. The late winter SWBS reported 58 in 32 (26%) of the 125 squares surveyed. All counts in the first half year were of fewer than ten, the highest being of nine at Madehurst on 13 Apr and eight there on 19 May. Additionally, there were eight at both the Knepp Estate on the 19 Apr and at Ashdown Forest on 26 Jun. Larger counts towards the end of this period were probably of family parties and this was confirmed at Wakehurst Place on 29 May where four immature birds were reported among seven birds seen.

Breeding was confirmed in 20 tetrads and was probable in 38. In the BBS 59 were reported in 28 (22%) of the 125 squares surveyed. The first evidence of nest building was on 3 Mar at St Leonards and there were just two other similar reports. Adults visiting nests with food in April were noted at Sedlescombe on 14th, Winchelsea on the 15th and Cissbury on the 16th with more widespread reports subsequently. In May, the first fledgling was seen at Crowborough on 5 May, another was at Arundel Park on the 11th and then there were three at Arlington Res on the 15th followed by a few further scattered reports of young birds.

The second half of the year had some larger counts than the first with 30 reported at several locations: Bignor Hill on 13 Aug, Ashburnham Place (nr Battle) on 16 Aug, Groombridge on 3 Sep and Weir Wood Res on 19 Sep. There were a further 30 reports of smaller gatherings of 10 or more birds. The early winter SWBS reported 80 in 43 (29%) of the 146 squares surveyed. [JH Whitman]



Spotted Flycatcher, Beachy Head, 9 August (Derek Hayles)

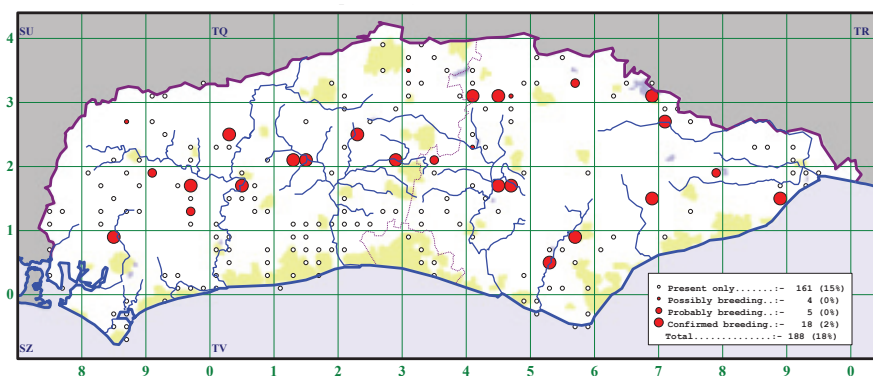
Spotted Flycatcher

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 198 tetrads (21%) compared with the 10-year average of 144 (range 114 to 194), and an increase from the 157 of 2019.

The first sighting of the year was on 23 Apr at Sedlescombe. This is the same date as the previous two years and two days earlier than the 10-year average first date. The next sighting was on the 26 Apr at Selsey. During May there were regular sightings of one or two individuals. The distribution of this species across the county in 2020 is illustrated on the map below.



Breeding was confirmed in 19 tetrads, a welcome doubling on the eight of 2019; probable breeding was recorded in a further five tetrads.

On 9 May a bird was seen with nesting material on the Knepp Estate. At Milton Street a pair was occupying a nest box on 31 May and by 9 Jul had fledged three young. A pair also adopted a nest box at Strood Green and had laid three eggs by 12 Jun.

Juveniles continued to be recorded during July. In August Spotted Flycatchers began congregating as return migration started. Eleven were recorded at both Pulborough Brooks and Sheffield Park on 28 Aug, ten at Maynards Green and Sompting on the 9th and 31st respectively. Day counts in early September were the highest in the year; 20 at Lychpole (Cissbury) and at Hastings on the 5th and 20 also at Highdown (Worthing) on the 6th. Fifteen were at Madehurst on the 4th and at Bignor Hill on the 8th. About 12 were recorded in October with the last one at Jevington on 9 Oct, precisely on the 10-year average last date. [T Seabrook]

Robin

Erithacus rubecula

Abundant resident; probably common passage migrant mainly in autumn; status uncertain as winter visitor.

Robins were recorded in 783 tetrads (81%), above the 10-year average of 673 (range 585 to 750). During the first winter period SWBS the species was recorded in 96% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 38 on 6 Feb at Chelwood Common. In the GBW they were recorded in 96% of participating gardens, whilst in the BGBW the species was recorded in 83% of participating gardens in West Sussex and 81% in East Sussex.

Breeding was confirmed in 95 tetrads and probable in a further 55. Nest building was first recorded on 10 Jan at Bognor Regis and on the 25th at Plumpton. Courting behaviour was recorded on 14 Mar when a male was observed sharing food with a female. Similar activity was noted on 26 Mar and an adult was feeding a fledgling on 11 Apr at Westbourne (Emsworth). During the BBS the species was recorded in 92% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 56 on 25 May at Emsworth.

In autumn the highest count was of 139 on 14 Oct at Seaford Head and there were a further eight counts of 30 or more, the highest being 40 at Balcombe on 6 Sep. In the second winter period there were 32 counts of 20 or more, with 35 at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Nov the highest. During the second winter period SWBS 1229 Robins were recorded in 96% of the squares surveyed with a maximum count of 27 on 4 Nov at Blackhorse Hill (Telham). [T Seabrook]

Common Nightingale

Luscinia megarhynchos

Fairly common summer visitor and infrequently seen passage migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Records came from 140 tetrads (14%), confirming the revival of Nightingale distribution from the low point in 2016, when records came from just 94 tetrads. The 10-year average is 125 tetrads (range 94 to 226).

The first arrivals were singles at both the Knepp Estate and near Rudgwick on 6 Apr, one day later than the 10-year average. The following day saw one at Amberley Wild Brooks, two near Steyning and two singing in bright moonlight near Barcombe Cross. Thereafter records were submitted for every day through to 2 Jul, with the exception of 18 Jun. Even allowing for the special circumstances of 2020 and for the remarkable coverage at two sites, Knepp and Pulborough Brooks, this seems one of a number of hopeful signs for Nightingales in the county. It is equally heartening that Nightingales consolidated their strongholds in the Rother Valley around Robertsbridge, the Barcombe area, the Adur Valley around Henfield, and the Arun Valley west of Billingshurst. An unusual record came from Knepp on 11 Apr when three birds were watched fighting in a birch tree while another sang nearby.

A very recently fledged young bird was seen near Barcombe Cross on 14 Jun. Three fledged young were seen just west of Wisborough Green on 24 Jun. These were the only confirmed breeding records for the year. Most breeding records were of singing birds. Structured breeding season surveys in the southern block of the Knepp Estate estimated 28 territories with a further seven around nearby Shipley. At least nine territories were estimated in the Barcombe area during the spring, at least seven singing birds were reported from Pulborough Brooks on 3 May and six were at West Chiltington on 5 May. Five were at each of the following: Capite Wood (Ashington) on 23 Apr; Abbots Wood (Hailsham) on 24 Apr; Edburton on 24 May; and Shortland Copse (Plaistow) on 28 May. Some records were received from apparently new localities: two sang from a disused chalk pit near Glynde in late April, with one still there on 4 May and one was near Selmeston from the latter date to 11 May.

Frequency of records from Arlington Res have reduced in recent years so it was encouraging that one was singing there from 19 to 22 Apr and again from 14 to 18 May. There remain considerable areas of woodland in the east of the county from which few records are received; these may justify further attention. For instance, there was just one report (on 9 May) from Battle Great Wood and two further records from the area between Sedlescombe and Brede. One was singing near Darwell Hole on 7 May, with two on territory there on 24 May; it was the first time that the observer had found them in the area, despite its apparently suitable habitat. There seems to have been no repeat of last year's possible breeding at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head). There is an apparently isolated population at Hambrook (Chichester) with three singing males there on 9 May.

Autumn movement was surely underway in late June with one in the lower Cuckmere Valley on the 26th. At Beachy Head, there were reports of up to three birds on seven dates in July and on five dates in August. In August, there was also one at Hastings on the 10th while at Seaford Head, there was one on the 7th and three on the 16th. There were two records in September: one was at Cedar Fm (Flinwell), an unusual location, on the 7th and three were at Pulborough Brooks on the 12th (just one day earlier than the 10-year average last date). The last record was from Seaford Head, where one was heard croaking on the very late date of 14 Oct; this the latest record since one at North Bersted on 19 Oct 1943. [C Brooks]

Pied Flycatcher

Ficedula hypoleuca

Scarce passage migrant; more numerous in autumn than spring. Has bred. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

There were records from 75 (7.8%) tetrads, the highest total yet and more than the 58 in 2019, which itself set a new county record. The first for the year was at Birdham (Chichester) on 9 Apr followed by other singles at Cissbury on the 11th, Bracklesham Bay on the 16th and two at Combe Valley CP on the 23rd. Following ones at Pagham Hbr on 27 Apr, 7 and 8 May there were no more sightings in the spring period.

The approximate monthly totals, assuming that birds seen at the same location on the following day were different, were as follows:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
6	2	-	8	123	22	3

The first returning migrants were two at Netherfield on 5 Jul. Throughout July and August sightings continued at both coastal and inland locations of between one and three individuals, but with four at Beachy Head on 15 Aug. On 31 Aug there were eight at Beachy Head, the highest count of the year.

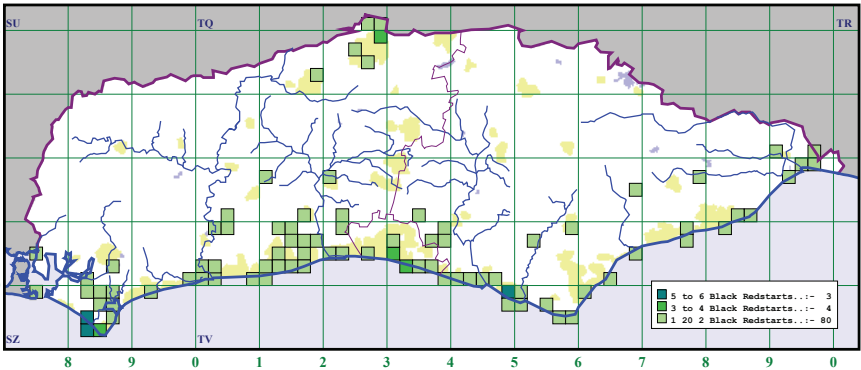
Single birds were seen throughout September until the last record of the year, of two at Rye Hbr on 11 Oct, six days earlier than 2019 and a day later than the 10-year average. [T Seabrook]

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochruros

Rare resident; scarce passage migrant and very scarce winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Schedule 1 species.

The species was recorded in 87 tetrads (8.9%). This was fewer than the 95 tetrads of 2019 (a new peak for this century) but close to the previous peak of 85 tetrads in 2010. The peak counts for each tetrad when plotted show the mainly coastal distribution of records.



Using the total of peak counts in each tetrad gives a guide to the monthly occurrence and how this year compares with the average for the previous decade.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2020	7	7	29	28	3	5	1	1	3	28	84	33
Average 2010 to 2019	21	14	32	18	3	1	1	2	2	46	42	17

In January and February there were reports from nine coastal sites with one inland record from Gatwick Airport on 8 Jan. All but one of the records were of singles, the exception being two at Telscombe Cliffs on 24 Jan.

In March and April, as spring migrants passed through, one or two were recorded from 28 different coastal sites and more records were received from inland locations. March records included one at Roffey near Horsham on 15 Mar and another at Lychpole near Cissbury on the 29th. In April an individual was seen on three consecutive dates at Truleigh Hill between the 1st and 3rd; two at Lancing Clump on the 7th; a singing male at Thakeham on the 10th and, later in the month, singles at Burpham on the 19th and at Cissbury on the 21st.

As in 2019, there was no evidence of confirmed breeding this year, but possible breeding was recorded at four sites. In addition to the record of a singing male at Thakeham, singing was heard at Fairlight on 6 Apr, Beachy Head on 1 and 13 Jun, and at Gatwick Airport on 11 Jun.

Autumn migration picked up strongly from mid-October with almost daily reports from 14 Oct until the end of the year, primarily at coastal sites and inland as far as The Burgh (Burpham). Most autumn records were of one or two birds, but on 10 Nov three were at Selsey Bill and six were at Medmerry and along the beach near the caravan park at Bracklesham Bay. In East Sussex five at Splash Point (Seaford) on 23 Nov was the highest count. In December most counts were of ones or twos with the highest being of three on the 2nd and 8th at Splash Point. [C Buckle]

Common Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

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

Common Redstarts were recorded in 120 tetrads (12%) in 2020, a county record that compares to a 10-year average of 92 (range 78 to 108). The first record was at Cuckmere Haven on 26 Mar, three days earlier than the 10-year average arrival date. There were then no sightings until 6 Apr, with individuals at Sidlesham and Whitehawk (Brighton) and from mid-April onwards a plethora of records came from both coastal and inland locations.

Singing males were located at Stanley Common, Chapel Common (Liphook), Black Down, Balcombe and many locations on or around Ashdown Forest, including Old Lodge LNR. An individual was also singing at Ambersham Common throughout May.

Breeding was confirmed in ten tetrads and probable in a further eight. An impressive 25 confirmed breeding pairs were discovered at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) where the first fledged young were seen on 31 May. Three breeding pairs were at Balcombe and the WHBBS revealed six territories at Black Down, up from three in 2019, and no territories at Weavers Down (Liss) compared with two in 2019; at Linchmere and Stanley Commons there were three territories, compared to two the previous year (see page 218).

Autumn migration commenced with a juvenile at Beachy Head on 21 Jul. However, it wasn't until late August and September when good numbers were at many coastal locations and inland vantage points. Maximum day counts comprised 13 at Offham (Lewes) on 31 Aug, 11 at Beachy Head on 5 Sep and 14 at Cissbury Ring on 10 Sep. The Hastings migration watchers recorded 46 on 16 dates between 11 Aug and 12 Sep with a maximum of seven on 2 Sep.

The last record of the year involved two at Beachy Head on 14 Oct, over two weeks earlier than the 10-year average departure date. [MR Eade]



Common Redstart, Beachy Head, 27 August (Laurence Pitcher)

Whinchat

Saxicola rubetra

Fairly common passage migrant. Rare summer visitor; last bred in 1999. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Whinchats were recorded in 114 (12%) tetrads, higher than the 2019 record of 104. As usual there was a strong bias in records towards the coast. Using the total of peak counts in each tetrad gives a guide to the monthly occurrence and how this year compares with the average for the previous decade. These figures and the number of days on which they were recorded are shown below.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
2020	-	24	10	3	21	210	226	17	-
Average 2010-2019	<1	18	19	<1	8	132	173	23	<1
No of days	0	12	9	2	15	30	27	11	0

The first was at Medmerry on 11 Apr, five days later than the 10-year average first date. Birds were seen on 12 days in April, twice that of 2019 with three seen at Medmerry on the 22nd. Nearly all spring records were from coastal or near coastal locations. There were two June records, two at East Grinstead on the 1st and one at Ovingdean on the 15th.



Whinchat, Cuckmere Haven, 24 August (Sara Humphrey)

The earliest returning birds were two at Climping Gap on 6 Jul, the same date as last year, followed by one at Pulborough Brooks the next day but it wasn't until mid-July that sightings became daily. The numbers for August were 25% lower than last year but considerably above the 10-year average. The highest daily total for August was 15 at Sompting on the 31st. Other high counts were ten at both Beeding Brooks on the 16th and Findon on the 31st, with nine at Lancing, also on the 31st. There were six further counts of eight.

Hastings Migration watchers recorded 105 in the Hastings area between 15 Aug and 21 Sep with a maximum of 14 on 5 Sep. The highest September count at Beachy Head was 23 on the 5th. Other notable counts were 11 at Beeding Hill and Hollingbury (Brighton) both on the 4th and the same number at Pulborough Brooks on the 6th, with counts of between five and nine at eight further locations. In October there was one count of three at Amberley Wild Brooks on the 3rd and three counts of two with the last Whinchats seen at Medmerry and Rye Hbr on the 14th, two weeks earlier than the 10-year average last date. [GD Evans]

Eurasian Stonechat

Saxicola rubicola

Fairly common resident and partial migrant.

Stonechats were recorded in 303 tetrads (31%), a large increase over last year's record 238 (25%) and well above the 10-year average of 173 (range 121 to 238). It is possible that due to COVID-19 restrictions, Stonechats were recorded in more varied locations because people were birding in locations not usually visited. Birds were seen on every day except five during the year. A guide to the monthly occurrence, produced by summing the highest counts in each tetrad in each month, is shown in the following table. In each month more were recorded than the average for the previous decade, most noticeably during the autumn.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2020	125	185	148	96	260	170	159	237	579	758	297	255
2010-2019	92	76	78	83	94	113	82	101	179	241	118	97

The highest counts in the first winter period were 13 at Steyning Round Hill on 25 Feb, 11 at Sidlesham Ferry on 27 Feb and 16 at Beachy Head on 16 Mar. During the first winter period SWBS they were found in 16% of squares surveyed with a maximum of five at Oving on 25 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 33 tetrads and probable in a further 31, both increases on recent years. Most locations were on Ashdown Forest but confirmed breeding also occurred at 26 other sites. On the West Sussex commons 49 pairs or territories were identified (see page 218). On the RSPB reserves the numbers of pairs present were: Medmerry nine, Pulborough Brooks five, Pagham Hbr four, Amberley Wild Brooks two; at Broadwater Warren they were not counted this year. The first confirmed breeding was distraction with display at Seaford Head on 19 Mar, a bird with food or faecal sac was noted at Newhaven on 5 Apr and the first fledged young were seen at Ashdown Forest on 14 May. On Ashdown Forest the highest counts at specific locations during the breeding season were 21 at Poundgate on 13 Jun, 18 at Old Lodge LNR on 11 and 21 Jul and 13 at Friends on 19 May. Elsewhere the highest counts were 20 at Beachy Head on 30 May and 14 at Medmerry on 20 May. There were 23 further counts of ten or more from various locations. The highest count on the West Sussex commons was eight at Black Down on 28 May.

In the autumn 56 were counted at Beachy Head on 26 Sep (with six further counts above 30), 32 at Beeding Hill on 28 Sep, 55 at Medmerry on the 29th, 40 at Sidlesham Ferry on 3 Oct and 39 at Cissbury on the 5th. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 391 on 30 dates between 4 Aug and 26 Oct with a maximum of 35 on 6 Sep at various locations around Hastings.

There were nine double-figure counts in the second winter period with a maximum of 20 at Medmerry on 5 Nov; the last double-figure count on Ashdown Forest was 12 on 7 Nov at Poundgate, with a few remaining until the end of the year. In the second winter period SWBS Stonechats were found in 18% of squares surveyed with a maximum of five on 2 Nov at Downs GC (Eastbourne) and on 6 Dec at Pevensey Levels. [MJ Chattaway]

Siberian/Stejneger's Stonechat

Saxicola maurus/stejnegeri

Very rare vagrant.

A bird showing features of Stejneger's Stonechat was discovered at Medmerry on 20 Oct (P Alfrey *et al.*). It stayed for three days, allowing faeces to be collected for DNA analysis by University of Aberdeen. Unfortunately, no useful material could be extracted from the sample. The record was therefore submitted to BBRC as referring to one of the species pair Siberian/Stejneger's Stonechat, in line with the committee's current criteria and a decision is pending. There are five previous Sussex records of Eastern Stonechats, all in October, the most recent in 2012 and all were accepted at the time as *maurus* by BBRC though the recent split between this taxon and *stejnegeri* means that they are now considered as Eastern Stonechat sp. [DK Campbell]



Siberian/Stejneger's Stonechat, Medmerry, 21 October (Matt Eade)

Northern Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe

Very scarce breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant; very rare in mid-winter.

Northern Wheatears were recorded in 188 (19%) tetrads, a considerable increase over the 143 in 2019 and well in excess of the 10-year average of 145 (range 127 to 168). Records were predominantly at or near coastal sites, along the river valleys and on downland. Using the total of peak counts in each tetrad gives a guide to the monthly occurrence and how this year compares with the average for the previous decade.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2020	0	1	134	151	86	12	20	304	549	161	5	0
Average 2010-19	0	0	91	205	86	30	17	310	371	97	5	0

Arrival of the first Wheatear was particularly early with one between Medmerry and Porthole Fm (Selsey) on 21 Feb. This was 16 days before the ten-year average first date (8 Mar) and only eight days after the earliest recorded in the period since 1960 (13 Feb). However, almost three weeks passed before the next arrivals on 12 Mar, when two birds were seen at Goring Gap and about three in the Rye Hbr area. There was an influx on 16 Mar which included 15 at Climping, the highest spring count. On the same date, 14 were at Brooklands (Worthing), 12 at Goring Gap and ten at both Medmerry and Selsey Bill. There were then nine at Brooklands on 19 Mar after which daily passage numbers were more modest through to mid-April. On 16 Apr there were nine on Thunders Barrow Hill (Southwick), followed by 14 at Widewater (Lancing) and 12 at Cissbury on 18 Apr and 13 at Wick Bottom (Woodingdean) on 24 Apr. Thereafter records of single birds and small groups, mainly at coastal sites and on downland, but some further inland, continued through to the end of May.

At least five breeding territories were identified at Rye Hbr, with fledged broods recorded at three locations on the reserve. June records included on the 1st singles at both Cuckmere Haven and Castle Hill (Falmer) and two at Buckland Bank (Falmer); and one at Jurys Gap on the 14th.

The first sign of autumn passage was in July when a single was inland at Oldhouse Fm (Coolham) on the 13th followed by further singles at Pagham Hbr on the 17th, Cuckmere Haven on the 20th and Beachy Head on the 22nd. Autumn passage built during August with more notable counts of 22 at Beachy Head on the 13th and 21 at Thorney Island on the 18th. The peak autumn passage occurred in early September when a total of about 370 was recorded across the county on the 5th. On that day, there were 131 at Beachy Head, 67 at Thorney Island and 50 at Climping. The day before there had also been a notable count of 28 at Beeding Hill. Observers at Selsey Bill recorded a total of 47 on 23 dates between 1 Aug and 12 Oct, whilst at Worthing and Goring beaches a total of 29 was recorded on 14 dates between 14 Aug and 6 Oct. At Hastings, a total of 103 was recorded on 24 dates between 4 Aug and 10 Oct. The last record of the year was of a single at Friston Forest on 4 Nov, 11 days earlier than the 10-year average.

Greenland Wheatear, *O. o. leucorhoa*

There were two records of birds showing characteristics of this subspecies. One was at Newhaven Tide Mills on 21 Sep, whilst on 9 Oct a group of five notably rufous-toned birds was seen at Thorney Island.

Observers are reminded that nominate birds from Russia 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 610 tetrads (63%) compared to 565 in 2019 and a 10-year average of 505 (range 427 to 610). In the GBW they were recorded in 84% of participating gardens whilst during the BGBW they were seen in 63% and 66% of sites in West and East Sussex respectively. A number of observers reported encountering House Sparrows at new sites or in slightly higher numbers.

The largest count of the first winter period was 92 at Ridgewood (Uckfield) on 7 Feb during the early year SWBS, when 1024 were counted in 62% of the squares surveyed. Breeding was confirmed in 44 tetrads and probable in a further 75. A breeding colony of over 100 was reported from Tillingham Valley (Rye). Birds were investigating a possible nest site on 3 Mar at Battle, nest building was observed on 8 Mar at Worthing and the first fledged young were seen at Combe Valley CP on 6 May. During the BBS they were encountered in 73% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 87 at Southwick. Over the summer 3-figure flocks occurred in eight locations, the largest being 200 at Winchelsea Marsh on 24 Aug.

In the late year SWBS 1218 were counted in 63% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 80 at Ridgewood on 1 Dec. Eighty were also counted at Ifield MP on 15 Nov and Widewater (Lancing) on 29 Nov. [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 species is hanging on in East Sussex and most of the records are from there but there was one record from West Sussex: a single bird that flew over Selsey Bill on 31 May.

The only record from the first winter period was of four at East Guldeford Level on 18 Feb. There were records from there during the breeding season at a known nest site and the highest count was of eight on 19 Jul. This was very poor compared to last year's high count of 50 but did include a recently fledged juvenile indicating successful breeding. The species was also recorded during the breeding season at Scotney GP; one was observed there carrying food on 8 Jun, confirming breeding, with the highest count also of eight there on 6 Jul. Again this was very low compared to last year's count of 24. For the third year in a row no breeding was recorded at Pevensy Levels and, even more worrying, there were no records from there at all this year.

In the autumn and second winter period there were records from the Hastings area of two migrants on 9 Oct and five on 2 Nov. The highest winter count at East Guldeford Level was six on 20 Nov. There were eight records at a new site, Gillshaw Fm, west of Rye, during the second winter period. The first of these was of four on 22 Nov and the last, also of four, on 28 Dec, which was the last sighting of the year.

Lockdown doubtless accounts for the reduced number of records from the main populations this year, nevertheless the large reduction in high count numbers is very concerning as the species appears to be in very real danger of becoming extinct in the county. This is a species of high conservation concern and observers are asked to report all sightings, particularly if breeding evidence is encountered. [RA Black]

Dunnock*Prunella modularis*

Very common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.

Dunnocks were recorded in 660 (68%) tetrads compared to 614 in 2019 and the 10-year average of 591 (range 504 to 689).

During the early year SWBS, 259 were encountered in 70% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 13 on 6 Feb at Danehill. There were ten double-figure counts, the highest of which were 18 at Northchapel on 25 Feb and 14 at Crowborough on 21 Jan. In the GBW Dunnocks were encountered in 82% of gardens surveyed, 11% lower than 2019 and during the BGBW the species was recorded in 39% and 41% of West and East Sussex gardens respectively.

In the BBS 262 birds were recorded in 73% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 11 on 7 Apr at Fishbourne (Chichester). Breeding was confirmed in 31 tetrads and probable in a further 57. In early spring 15 pairs were logged at Beachy Head on 16 Mar and 17 males were singing at a BBS square in the Sompting area on the 25th. Nesting was first reported on 4 Apr in East Grinstead when one was seen on its nest. Shortly after, on the 15th an adult was noted carrying food to a nest in a garden at Barcombe Cross and the first fledgling was reported on the 22nd at Skippers Hill. At Rye Hbr 27 territories were mapped but no counts were made at any of the other reserves.

In the autumn there were 16 double-figure counts ranging from ten to 15 and two higher counts of 33 and 31 at Seaford Head on 12 and 14 Oct respectively.

In the late year SWBS a total of 251 Dunnocks were recorded in 68% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 12 at Fishbourne (Chichester) on 7 Nov. During this period there were 21 double-figure counts peaking at 27 on downland west of the R Adur on 20 Nov with 20 each at Pulborough Brooks and The Burgh (Burpham) on the 23rd and 28th respectively. [G Turvey]

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 121 (13%) tetrads compared to a 10-year average of 86 (range 72 to 99). The first of the year was seen at Shoreham Hbr on 4 Apr, nine days later than the 10-year average and before multiple sightings along the coast from 8 Apr onwards including at Medmerry, Selsey Bill, Goring, Ferring, Hove, Cuckmere Haven, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Hbr during that week. At Selsey Bill there was a total of ten during April with a maximum of four on the 20th. An early inland record was of one at Staplefield on the 9th.

Breeding was confirmed at three sites, two more than the previous two years, all at the eastern edge of the county. Birds were seen carrying food at Newenden (6 Jun), East Guldeford Level (22 Jun) and Broomhill Level (6 Jul). At Newenden, the adults were feeding in Kent but the nest was in Sussex! Six pairs were noted at East Guldeford Level. Probable breeding was recorded at two further sites: East Guldeford village and Crutches Fm (Winchelsea). A male at Scotney GP on 8 Jun was acting anxiously possibly due to a nearby nest and six males were in song there on 6 Jul. There were 30 at Broomhill Level on 6 Jul including three singing males and at Winchelsea there were 16 on 25 May and 13 on 21 Jun.

Autumn passage probably began on 17 Jul with 1 E at Goring Gap. There were further records in July from Cuckmere Haven, Beachy Head, Pevensey Levels and Pett Level. The first double-figure count of the autumn was 19 at Rye Hbr on 13 Aug. Numbers reached a peak in the last week

of August and first two weeks of September. At Beachy Head 60 flew west on 31 Aug and there were 51 at Cuckmere Haven and 50 at Pett Level on the same day. Other high counts were 48 at Goring Gap and 45 at Combe Valley CP on 27 Aug, 70 at North Wall (Pagham Hbr) on 1 Sep, and 45 at Climping Gap on 5 Sep. Inland at Amberley Wild Brooks there were 40 on 3 Sep and 37 at Arlington Res on 30 Aug.

The largest count of the autumn was a flock of 200 among cattle at Medmerry on 10 Sep. At Selsey Bill there were 246 in August (67 E, 179 W) with a maximum of 110 on the 31st. In August at Worthing there were 146, all west, with a maximum of 60 on the 31st. In September at Selsey Bill there were 205 (72 E, 133 W) with a maximum of 34 on the 5th, while at Worthing in the same month there were 107 (43 E and 36W) with a maximum of 36 on the 5th. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 354 between 15 Aug and 12 Oct with a maximum of 54 on 1 Sep.

The last double-figure count was ten at Rottingdean on 1 Oct and the final record, one at Pett Level on 23 Oct, was four days earlier than the 10-year average last date.

There were no records submitted of any of the continental races this year. [D Brothwell]

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Red listed species of high conservation concern.

Grey Wagtails were recorded in 322 tetrads (33%) compared with a 10-year average of 227 (range 154 to 266) with records evenly distributed throughout the county. Warnham LNR was the only site with records in every month of the year, although birds were recorded in ten months at Pulborough Brooks, Brooklands (Worthing) and Weir Wood Res. In the early year SWBS eight were recorded in 5.6% of squares surveyed, with a maximum of two at Tangmere on 25 Feb. An exceptional count of nine was made at Battle on 12 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 22 tetrads and probable in a further 12 (cf. 14 and 15 in 2019 and 14 and 19 in 2018). During the BBS, birds were found in 4.8% of the squares surveyed, a decrease from 8% in 2019 and 6% in 2018, perhaps due to COVID-19 restrictions, with a maximum of two at Ringmer on 15 Jun. The first evidence of breeding was at Warnham LNR where nest building was recorded on 2 Apr. At Wantley (Storrington) a pair were feeding young in a nest on 16 Apr and one fledgling was seen there on the 29th. Reports of fledglings included two at Runcton the next day, four at Powdermill Res on 30 May and four with an adult at Weir Wood Res on 20 Jun. The last report of fledglings was at Arundel on 26 Aug. Nest sites noted included the eaves of a cottage at Dallington, a streamside bank at Wantley and an old swallow nest at Burwash.

Although not typically a garden bird, Grey Wagtails were recorded in 8% of gardens surveyed during the GBW, a similar figure to previous years. There was evidence of autumn passage on the coast with a total of 47 E and 93 W during August and September at Selsey Bill with a maximum daily count of 22 W on 26 Sep. There was a total of 11 E and 14 W at Worthing with a daily maximum of 9 W on 5 Sep. At Beachy Head there were 6 W on 6 Sep followed by 5 W the 11th. Migration watchers in the Hastings area recorded a total of 110 on 38 dates between 6 Aug and 26 Oct with a maximum of 15 W on 6 Sep.

In the late year SWBS nine were recorded in 5.4% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of two at North Chailey on 29 Dec. Notable counts in the second winter period were six in maize stubble at Medmerry on 5 Nov and four at Rye Hbr on 12 Nov. [D Brothwell]

Pied Wagtail*Motacilla alba yarrellii****Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Pied Wagtails were found in 527 tetrads (54%) compared with a 10-year average of 469 (range 409 to 602). In the early year SWBS, 314 were recorded in 25% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 167 on 10 Jan at Marley House WTW (Battle). Other high counts in the first winter period included 170 at that location on 1 Jan, 100 on 1 Jan at Burpham and the same number on 19 Jan at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham). At Gatwick Airport the roost rose from 137 on 17 Jan to 178 on 2 Feb and 226 on 2 Mar. Other regular roosts were Ashdown Ridge where there were 20 on 1 Jan and Pett Level where there were 30 on 4 Jan. During the GBW Pied Wagtails were recorded in 22% of the participating gardens throughout the year.

Breeding was confirmed in 40 tetrads with probable breeding in a further eight. During the BBS, 63 were found in 29% of the squares surveyed with the highest count of five on 26 May in West Lavington (Midhurst). Nest building was reported on 4 May at Pett Level and the first fledged young were seen on 14 May at Lewes Brooks.

From August, larger groups were recorded with 40 on the 16th at Arlington Res and 30 at Lewes Brooks on the 26th. Thirteen were feeding in a ploughed field on 27 Sep at Worth.

Coastal movements in September totalled 134 at Selsey Bill with a maximum of 54 on the 26th. At Worthing there were 15 E and 13 W with a maximum of 14 on the 16th. Passage peaked in October with 621 (54 E, 2 S and 564 W) at Selsey Bill with a maximum of 109 on the 10th and the Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 432 between 6 Sep and 7 Nov with a maximum of 83 on 7 Oct.

In the late year SWBS, 463 were recorded in 51% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 120 on 24 Dec in Billingshurst. The highest count of the year was of 300 on 15 Dec at Sandgate Park (Storrington) at a roost in scrub at the edge of the quarry. At Railwayland LNR (Lewes) there were 160 on 17 Nov at a reedbed roost, 120 were at Billingshurst on 24 Dec and 100 at Rye Hbr on the 26th. [D Brothwell]

White Wagtail, *M. a. alba*

There were about 28 White Wagtails recorded from 14 sites during the year with all but one from the coast or near coast. The approximate monthly totals are as follows:

Mar	Apr	May	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
7	6	8	4	2	2	1

The first record was of one at Pulborough Brooks on 2 Mar, then one at Beachy Head on 5 Mar, two at Ferring on the 14th, ones at Climping Gap and Seaford Head on the 17th, Beachy Head on the 18th and Lychpole (Cissbury) on the 29th. In April one was seen at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 4th, 5th and 18th, one at Ferring from the 8th to the 10th, one feeding on a freshly ploughed field with Pied Wagtails at Ancton (Middleton-on-sea) on the 14th and two at Splash Point on the 23rd to the 25th. In May there were two or three in the Pagham Hbr/ Medmerry area, one at Cuckmere Haven on the 13th and a pair at Splash Point (Seaford) on the 3rd, with one on the 7th. At Birling Gap on 28 May a pair were seen taking food to a nest. This is the first confirmed breeding by a pure pair of White Wagtails since 1974.

In August one was seen at Beachy Head on the 17th, three in the lower Adur Valley on the 28th and two at Cuckmere Haven on 18 Sep. There were two October records; one at the Severals (Pagham Hbr) on the 3rd and one on downland between the R Adur and the A24 on the 12th. The last of the year was on 3 Nov at Climping Gap. [MJ Chattaway]



White Wagtail, Splash Point (Seaford) 3 May (Brian Cox)

Richard's Pipit

Anthus richardi

Rare vagrant.

One in fields adjacent to Church Farm Lane (Sidlesham) from 4 Dec into 2021 (N Moll *et al.*) was seen by many observers during its extended stay. The county total moves on to at least 87, including a minimum of 15 this century. This species has undergone something of a resurgence in Sussex with records in six of the last seven years totalling up to ten birds, including up to five in 2018. [P James]

Tawny Pipit

Anthus campestris

Rare visitor; mostly in autumn.

On 6 May one was found feeding on short turf at Caburn Bottom (Lewes), where it was watched for several minutes (J Grover). Although this is just the 15th for the county this century, it's the 259th for the all-time total. Most of these records were in the late 20th century, when Tawny Pipit was a 'bread and butter' scarcity. Spring records have always been at a premium, this year's bird being the third spring record this century and only the twelfth ever for Sussex. The record has been accepted by BBRC. [DK Campbell]

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 340 tetrads (35%), the highest number since the Atlas period and well above the 10-year average of 265 (range 207 to 320). During the first winter period the largest aggregations were 200 at Medmerry on 10 Jan and 100 there on 5 Feb, 135 at Crow & Gate (Ashdown Forest) on 29 Jan and 120 at Ashdown Ridge on 4 Feb, in the latter two instances flying to heathland roosts. Sixty on the shingle beach at Cuckmere Haven on 23 Jan and 50 at Tillington

(Petworth) on 4 Feb were other notable counts. During the first winter SWBS the species was found in 22% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 57 at Holme Fm (Stansted) on 18 Jan.

Larger movements were noted from 1 Mar with 180 W at Cadborough (Rye). Observers at Selsey Bill logged 1087 N during March, with a maximum of 422 N on the 12th, and at Hastings 215 N in 2¼ hr on the 19th.

Breeding was confirmed in only nine tetrads and probable in a further 13. Display was observed first on 7 Mar at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest), distraction display on the 19th at Seaford Head, visiting a probable nest site on 2 May at Pulborough Brooks and fledged young on 15 May at Ellison's Pond (Ashdown Forest). During the BBS Meadow Pipits were encountered in 9.6% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 14 on 23 Jun at Westmeston.

Thirty were at Wych Cross (Ashdown Forest) on 16 Aug but it wasn't until September that larger groups were seen, beginning with 70 at Thorney Island on the 1st, then 100 at Climping Gap on the 8th. The highest single count at Beachy Head was 450 on the 26th. At Selsey Bill a total of 1908 was recorded during September, with a maximum of 542 on the 26th, and in October 1224 were counted with a maximum of 239 on the 10th. The Hastings migration watchers recorded 4095 between 28 Aug and 4 Nov with a maximum of 735 on 6 Oct. Other notable counts in October were 200 at Rye Hbr on the 3rd, 220 at Beachy Head and 200 at Worthing, both on the 5th, 400 at Cuckmere Haven on the 7th and 220 at Seaford Head on the 12th.

In the second winter period the largest counts were of birds flying into roosts on Ashdown Forest: in November, 144 on the 13th and 127 on the 22nd. Elsewhere there were 120 at Climping Gap on the 8th, 100 at Porthole Fm (Sidlesham) on the 20th and between 50 and 70 at five further locations. The highest December count was 55 at Paddockhurst (Worthing) on the 20th. During the second winter period SWBS Meadow Pipits were found in 29% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 70 at Almodington on 23 Nov. [MJ Chattaway]

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 75 tetrads (7.8%), two more than in 2019, compared with a 10-year average of 63 (range 54 to 73). Most records came from East Sussex reflecting the species' stronghold on Ashdown Forest. The first record was of one flying north at Cuckmere Haven on 4 Apr, followed by one flying north over Haywards Heath on the 6th. Two were on Ashdown Forest on the 15th and thereafter here they were recorded on most days through mid-July with a peak count of six at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 6 May.

Breeding was confirmed in only two tetrads (both Ashdown Forest) and probable in a further 11 including the West Sussex Commons (see page 218). The first record of display was on 23 Apr at Stansted Forest, a bird with food or faecal sac was first seen on 17 May at Old Lodge LNR and the first juvenile noted was on 17 Jun in the Hindleap Warren area of Ashdown Forest.

The first indication of autumn migration was one over Patching Hill on 2 Aug followed by two flying over Highdown (Worthing) two days later. The peak daily count was 12 at Pett Level on 27 Aug followed by 11 at Cissbury on 23 Aug. Migration watchers at Hastings recorded a total of 39 on 16 dates between 18 Aug and 19 Sep with a maximum of 11 at various sites on 27 Aug. Ten were seen at Beachy Head on 9 Oct, the highest daily count there, and the last record was of two at Seaford Head on 14 Oct, which is the 10-year average last date. [MJ Chattaway]



Tree Pipits at Broadwater Warren, by Stephen Message

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, one on 5 Jan was followed by two on 1 Feb, up to six in March and up to 15 in April including a flock of ten that flew off high to the south on the 9th, presumably on return migration to continental Europe. The last recorded at this site was one on 18 Apr. At Combe Valley CP (another traditional site) there were up to six in January and two on 10 Feb. The bird first seen at Fishbourne Creek on 28 Nov 2019 remained until 10 Jan whilst other records for the first winter period were of one at Henfield Levels on 1 Jan (MR Eade), two at Pett Level on 4 Jan with singles there on 26 and 27 Feb and 24 Mar, three at Brede Levels on 4 Jan and two there on 19 Jan.

In the latter part of the year, a total of 15 was recorded at Combe Valley CP between 11 and 28 Oct including five on the 28th. Elsewhere, there were singles at Thorney Deepes on 17 Oct (CB Collins), Down Level (Pevensy) on 26 Oct, 29 Nov and 1 Dec, Pett Level on 30 Nov, Cuckmere Haven on 9 Dec (LD Curson) and West Rise Marsh on 16 Dec. [P James]

Rock Pipit*Anthus petrosus*

Scarce resident and scarce winter visitor; very rare away from the coast.

Rock Pipits were recorded in 59 tetrads (6.1%), compared with a 10-year average of 50 (range 42 to 56). All records bar two were from primarily coastal locations; the exceptions were two at Barcombe Res on 21 Sep and one at Arlington Res on 13 Dec.

In the first winter period the highest counts were 20 at Cuckmere Haven and the lower valley on 1 Jan and 20 on 2 Feb. The only other location with double-figure counts was Fishbourne Channel (Chichester Hbr) where ten were noted on 2, 23 and 26 Jan.

Breeding was confirmed at four sites and was probable at a further three. Distraction display was noted at Cuckmere Haven on 2 Mar, nest building at Newhaven on 9 Apr, food or faecal sac carrying in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 11 Jun and the first fledged young at Cuckmere Haven on 10 Jul. At least 15 territories were identified at Seaford Head and three at Ovingdean. Post-breeding the largest counts were 15 in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 17 Aug and the same number at Hope Gap on the 24th.

In the autumn at least 30 were counted in the lower Cuckmere Valley on 1 Oct and in the second winter period this location again held the highest numbers recorded (15 on 17 Dec, ten on 7 Nov and 5 Dec). Elsewhere there were ten at Telscombe Cliffs on 6 Nov and ten in the Fishbourne Channel on 29 Dec. Six at Rye Hbr and along the R Rother on 17 Nov was an exceptional number for this location. [MJ Chattaway]

Scandinavian Rock Pipit, *A. p. littoralis*

There were seven accepted records of this race totalling at least 15 birds. A colour-ringed bird in Chichester Hbr on 3 Jan (R Avis) had been ringed at Giske Ornithological Station, Norway on 31 Aug 2018. It was followed in the first winter period (towards the end of which birds are easier to identify on plumage characteristics) by at least seven at Seaford Head and at least another three in the lower Cuckmere Valley at Exceat on 4 Mar (LD Curson) and singles at Shoreham Fort on 20 Mar and 5 Apr (RJ Fairbank).

In the second winter period, colour-ringed birds were recorded in Chichester Hbr on 6 Nov and

10 Dec (the same ringed individual seen there on 3 Jan) (P Hughes), and at Selsey Bill the following day (S Russell). The latter had been ringed at Maletangen Ornithological Station, Norway on 11 Aug 2019. The sightings of Norwegian-ringed birds may indicate that many of the Rock Pipits that winter in West Sussex are of this rather than the nominate race. [P James]

Chaffinch

Fringilla coelebs

Abundant resident; probably very common passage migrant and winter visitor.

The number of tetrads in which Chaffinches were recorded, 677 (70%), was in line with the 10-year average of 660 (range 578 to 850). Curiously, the species was recorded in the GBW from fewer gardens (56%) than in 2019 (76%). It might have been expected that more observations would be forthcoming due to COVID-19 restrictions.

During the early year SWBS, Chaffinches were found in 64% of squares surveyed, down from 74% the previous year, with a maximum of 63 at Holme Fm (Stansted) on 18 Jan. The highest counts during the first winter period were at Paddockhurst (Worth) reaching a maximum of 205 on 27 Jan and 180 on 2 Feb; 102 at Lavant on 28 Jan; 100 at West Dean on 7 Feb; and counts of 50 and above at four further locations.

There were significant spring movements at Hastings: 735 E on 26 Mar, 871 E or NE on the 31st and 548 E or NE on 1 Apr, all observed in the early mornings.

Breeding was confirmed in just 13 tetrads (3.2%) and was probable in a further 47, continuing the pattern of under-reporting of this common species. During the BBS, Chaffinches were present in 79% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 13 at West Lavington (Midhurst) on 26 Jun. Singing was noted from early February, display first seen on 16 Mar at Ellison's Pond (Ashdown Forest) and the first fledglings observed on 5 May at Seaford.

The first sizeable post-breeding flock was 40 at Balcombe on 19 Jun, feeding in an uncultivated field, but the next was not until 9 Aug when the same number were seen at Iden (Rye) and then at Paddockhurst on 7 Sep.

October and November saw sizeable movements from coastal migration points: at Beachy Head 100 were recorded on 9 Oct, whilst at Seaford Head there were 110 W or NW on the 12th and 157 on the 14th. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 811 between 10 Sep and 6 Nov, with a maximum of 149 on 7 Oct at various sites in the area. Away from the coast the highest counts were from the Balcombe area where 100 or more were recorded on 11 dates, peaking at 300 on 2 Nov. Elsewhere, at Weir Wood Res 125 were counted on 16 Oct, there were 87 NW over Crawley on 14 Oct, 70 N over West Marden on 19 Nov and 59 W or NW over the Old Airstrip (Ashdown Forest) on 15 Oct.

During the late year SWBS Chaffinches were encountered in 50% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 55 at Pallingham (Pulborough) on 7 Nov. In December the highest counts by a long way were 250 at Linchmere (Fernhurst) on the 12th and 150 at Cadborough (Rye) on the 28th, with counts of between 30 and 50 at five further locations. [D Boddington]

Brambling

Fringilla montifringilla

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

Bramblings were recorded in 65 tetrads (6.7%) compared with a 10-year average of 68 (range 54 to 98). During the first four months only one was found in participating GBW gardens. Overall, of 19 records during this period, the largest count was 15 at Westdean Woods on 7 Feb; the remaining

counts were one or two with one count of three. The final spring record was one at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 18 Apr, two days later than the 10-year average.

Autumn migration commenced ten days earlier than the 10-year average of 28 Sep with the earliest returning bird logged at Selsey Bill on 18 Sep. The highest counts of the autumn and second winter period were ten on 12 Oct at Paddockhurst (Worth), with a further ten on 15 Oct at Hastings and ten at Linchmere (Fernhurst) on 12 Dec. Otherwise, the next highest count was eight at Beachy Head on 9 Oct. Numbers were low with 84% of the records of only one and two. At the traditional strongholds of Ashdown Forest and the Chilgrove area none were recorded during this period.

Between 5 Oct and 4 Nov, the Hastings migration team logged a total of 33, their highest one-day count being the ten mentioned above. From October to December Bramblings were recorded in five participating gardens in the GBW. [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.

Although further fieldwork is needed, the distribution of Hawfinches is better understood than prior to the 2017/18 influx and records were received from 46 tetrads (4.7%). In the first winter period, two extensive sites again held the largest numbers. In the Westdean Woods/Monkton area a maximum of 36 was counted on 14 Feb at a post-roost gathering, with five other counts of 20 or more. Thirty at Stoughton Down on 31 Jan may have been from the same wintering population. At Penhurst Lane (Netherfield), there were counts of up to 32 in January and February followed by 45 on 2 Mar and 50 on 11 Mar, the flocks taking advantage of abundant Hornbeam seed.

Counts were low at the regular sites around Arundel, with up to three on four dates. Near Ardingly, at a site found in late 2019 numbers peaked at nine on 27 Feb. Elsewhere there were 16 widely spread records mainly of singles, with two at Brede High Wood and Robertsbridge on 1 Jan and 5 Jan respectively, and three at Ebernoe Common on 10 Mar. There were no records in this period after 6 Apr, when one was at Penhurst Lane, though one over Ashcombe Bottom (Lewes) on 19 Apr may have been a late migrant.

At Arundel there were five records of singles between 26 Apr and 9 Aug, at a site where breeding occurred in 2019. At Westdean Woods/Monkton, six were seen on 11 Aug and three on 18 Aug. On 1 Sep, 85 were at the same post-roost site where 50 were counted on 2 Sep 2019. Many were juveniles in advanced body moult, so there had been a good breeding season somewhere in the wider area. There were counts of up to 59 Hawfinches here later in the month. At nearby Kingley Vale three were seen on 24 Jun. A single was at Woolbeding Common on 9 May. In East Sussex there were singles at Mountfield on 21 Jun and Flimwell on 13 Jul.

The Hornbeam crop almost entirely failed in Sussex in summer 2020 and as a result the second winter period produced very low counts at Penhurst Lane, with a maximum of only 17 on 20 Nov and there were few records from elsewhere in East Sussex. Up to 17 near Burwash Weald in November and December were taking sloes and haws. At Arundel, there were 18 at a roost on 26 Oct and between one and 12 on several other dates from 18 Oct to the end of the year. At Westdean/Monkton up to 45 were at a roost in October and 34 in November. About ten at Graffham Down in October and November were taking Yew seeds and associating with Redwings. Singles at Heyshott Down on 8 and 9 Nov were probably also attracted to Yews. There were four other records of singles from widely scattered locations in this period. [M Mallalieu]



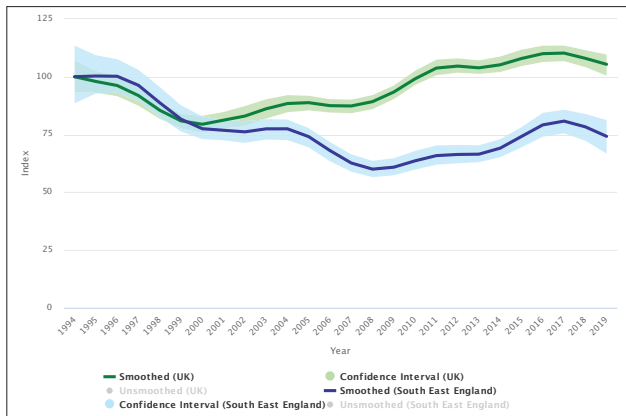
Hawfinch, Penhurst Lane, 23 March (Mark Mallalieu)

Bullfinch

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

Fairly common or common resident. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.

Bullfinches were recorded in 367 tetrads (38%), a slight increase on the 348 in 2019 and 341 in 2018. This is still a substantial reduction from the 2007-2011 Atlas period when they were found in a cumulative total of 72% of tetrads over the four-year period. They were in decline in the UK from 1996 but numbers started to recover in 2000 and by 2011 were back to their 1994 levels. However, in the South East the decline continued until 2008 and numbers have still not fully recovered as shown in the BBS index trend diagram below reproduced from BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey.



Bullfinches were seen in 94 (24%) of the gardens participating in GBW (compared with 33% in 2019). In the early year SWBS, 33 were recorded in 15 (12%) of the surveyed squares compared to 24% in 2019 and in the late year SWBS 60 were recorded in 27 (18%) of surveyed squares (25% in 2019).

There were records of confirmed breeding in just nine tetrads, probable breeding in 46 tetrads and possible breeding in a further 22 tetrads. The first fledglings were noted on 25 May at Pett Level.

Ringers at Cissbury processed 30 different birds in 2020, but reported that two ringed in January had developed leg lesions, more commonly known as 'scaly leg' or 'tassel foot', when retrapped later in the year. At least two other birds with leg lesions were trapped, but these were not ringed. Leg lesions are one of the most commonly seen signs of ill health in British birds. Results from post-mortems on over a thousand finches have found that these leg lesions have two causes, a virus (*Fringilla coelebs* papillomavirus) and mites (*Cnemidocoptes*). The most frequently affected birds are Chaffinches but it also affects other finches including Bullfinches. The latest advice from BTO is that leg lesions, whilst distressing to see, often do not impede the birds and most of the time they behave normally, but in severe cases birds can become lame and will be increasingly vulnerable to predation. Currently there is no evidence that leg lesions pose a threat to conservation of wild finches. (Reference, <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/peer-reviewed-papers/spatio-temporal-dynamics-and-aetiology-proliferative>). [L Smith]

Common Rosefinch

Carpodacus erythrurus

Rare vagrant. Schedule 1 species.

One seen briefly a couple of times at Shooters' Bottom (Beachy Head) on 29 Sep (DG Barber, A Harris) was not relocated despite an extensive search. The county total moves on to 35, of which 11 have been this century in May (1), Jun (4), Aug (2), Sep (1), Oct (2) and Nov (1). Dates have ranged between 19 May (2013) and 6 Nov (2018). [P James]

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Very common resident and possibly fairly common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Greenfinches were recorded in 520 tetrads (54%), closer to the 10-year average of 540 than for the last two years. In the GBW they were recorded in 55% of participating gardens during the year but during the BGBW were only seen in 9.4% and 11% of gardens in East and West Sussex respectively. They were encountered in only 30% of squares surveyed for the early year SWBS with a maximum of 14 at Pulborough on 16 Jan.

There were only 24 double-figure counts during the first winter period, compared to 26 in 2019 and 42 in 2018. The largest count was 85 on 2 Mar at Horsham but most were of 20 or fewer.

Breeding was confirmed from more tetrads than in 2019, 25 compared to 11, and was probable in a further 45 (28 in 2019). Evidence received of activity at nests however, was scant indeed: nest building was noted on 18 Jan at Hambrook (Chichester) and birds were at a probable nest site on 26 Mar at Hailsham but few other records were received. An active nest in a small Cypress tree was observed at the Knepp Estate on 23 Apr. Fledging was recorded widely from numerous locations from 11 May at Bognor Regis until 1 Sep at Mountfield, reflecting the extended breeding season of this species.

Post-breeding numbers remained relatively low, with 33 double-figure counts between 1 Jul and 30 Sep; the largest, of 25 at Sheepcote Valley (Brighton) on 15 Sep is indicative of the scale of the numbers being recorded. Few migrating birds were observed, 13 NW at Seaford Head on 12 Oct being the only count of note.

From the beginning of October until the end of the year, 61 double-figure counts were received, with 11 of these being 30 or more. Observers at Horsham Park recorded the highest count, 76 on 1 Dec and 50 the following day, whilst at Battle there were 50 on 25 Oct. At Newhaven Tide Mills there were notable counts of 43 on 23 Dec, rising to 45 on the 29th. In the late year SWBS Greenfinches were recorded in 17% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 29 at Coates Common on 6 Nov. [D Boddington]

Linnet

Linaria cannabina

Common but decreasing resident and partial migrant. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Linnets were recorded in 422 tetrads (44%, cf. 384 in 2018). During the first winter period, there were 11 counts of 100 or more. The largest flocks were of 300 at both Scotney GP on 3 Jan and Medmerry on 5 Feb. Three counts of 200 were at Seaford (1 Jan), Findon (5 Feb) and Sharpthorne (6 Jan). Elsewhere the highest counts were 110 and 150 at The Burgh (Burpham) on 1 and 24 Jan. From mid-February smaller groups were encountered throughout the county: 78 at Ashdown Ridge on 11 Feb and in March 50 at The Burgh on the 12th, 65 at Selsey on the 16th, 60 at Uckfield on the 21st and 30th and 60 at Steyning on the 29th. During the early year SWBS Linnets were recorded in ten (8%) of the 1-km squares surveyed with a maximum of 177 on 21 Jan at Woodingdean.

Coastal spring migration was regularly recorded at Worthing with 85 on 11 dates between 3 and 25 Apr and a maximum of 18 on 16 Apr. At Selsey Bill 28 were recorded during March, and 46 in April with a maximum of 18 on 10 Apr. At Seaford 24 were noted on 4 Apr.

During the BBS Linnets were encountered in 33% of the 125 squares surveyed with a maximum of 35 at Blackham on 22 Mar. Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads and probable in 91 with the first singing male heard at Stonehill (Ashdown Forest) on 25 Mar. The first record of nest building was on 7 Apr at Sedlescombe, a nest containing eggs was seen on 4 May at East Head and the first fledged young were observed at Lewes on 24 May.

Over the summer months, there were 17 counts of 50 or more; the highest were 320 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 6 Aug, 300 at Pagham Hbr on the 15th, 300 at Gilshaw Fm (Rye) on the 18th and 200 at Rye Hbr on the 21st.

In the autumn numbers increased significantly as birds congregated and then dispersed. The Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 2945 between 22 Sep and 6 Nov, with a maximum of 1310 W on 7 Oct. There were fifty further counts of over 100 at mainly coastal locations. At Chantry Hill (Storrington) the peak was 750 on 5 Sep and at Beachy Head the highest count was 600 on 7 Oct. Other high counts included 400 at Medmerry on 15 Sep and 280 at Arlington Res on the 20th and in October: 200 at Thorney Island on the 13th, 220 at Seaford Head on the 14th and 300 at Pett Level on the 16th.

During the second winter period, there were 12 counts over 100, the largest of which was 350 at Rogate on 26 Nov and 19 Dec. In the late year SWBS Linnets were encountered in 14% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 63 on 26 Nov at Steyning Round Hill. [M Orchard-Webb, MJ Chattaway]

Common Redpoll*Acanthis flammea****Very scarce visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern.***

There was just one record, of one trapped at Whitbread Hollow (Beachy Head) on 17 Oct (RDM Edgar, MI Banks). Over 3000 redpolls have been ringed at Whitbread Hollow but only two (including this bird), have definitely been identified as Common Redpoll.

The county total moves on to 137, of which 127 were this century including 62 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 150 (16%) tetrads compared with 81 (8.7%) in 2019 and more than the 10-year average of 125 (range 80 to 162). In the GBW they were recorded in 2.1% of participating gardens.

During the first winter period there were only five counts of ten or more with the highest being 40 at Bewl Water on 14 Jan and 20 at Pippingford Park (Ashdown Forest) on 19 Feb. Only one was recorded in the early year SWBS, at Wardley on 7 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed at just one site and was probable in a further four. Singing males were first recorded on 22 Apr at Poundgate (Ashdown Forest) and the only fledglings recorded were at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on 28 Jun. Post breeding flocks were noted on Ashdown Forest from 1 Jul with 15 at Lavender Platt.

More Lesser Redpolls were recorded during autumn migration than the previous two years. Between 21 Sep and 20 Nov, the Hastings migration watch team recorded 3097 (compared with 39 in 2019 and 118 in 2018) with maxima of 511 E on 16 Oct, 370 E the previous day and 324 E on the 17th. At Selsey Bill a total of 52 was recorded between 1 Sep and 30 Nov, the high day count being 17 W on 17 Oct. During the same period at Worthing a total of 92 was recorded, the highest count being 52 E on 8 Nov. Elsewhere there were further high numbers in October. The largest were at Pett Level where 600 were seen on the 17th and 500 on the 12th. At Beachy Head there were nine counts over 100 with a maximum of 233 also on the 12th. The largest Ashdown Forest count during this period was 300 at Ashdown Ridge on the 13th. Coastal passage continued well into November; 128 recorded in the Hastings area on 4 Nov and on the same day 83 were ringed at Charleston Reedbed.

During the second winter period there were a further 42 counts between 20 and 75 from 20 locations but as the winter progressed most of the largest groups were recorded inland, with 50 at Lavender Platt on 16 Nov, at Pulborough Brooks on 23 Nov, at Dallington on 24 Nov and at Wivelsfield on 16 Dec. During the late year SWBS birds were encountered in 3.4% of squares surveyed with a maximum of seven at Pallingham (Pulborough) on 7 Nov. [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.***

Common Crossbills were recorded in 131 tetrads (13%), a total that far exceeded the 54 tetrads (5%) in 2019. The majority of records came from the second half of the year, with October contributing 24% of the year's total. This species can often be unpredictable in its presence, and

after the paucity of sightings in 2019, it was excellent to see many flocks arrive in the county in 2020, after what was surely a bumper breeding season.

Following on from 2019, few records came from the first winter period, but in April dispersing flocks were noted at many locations, including ten over Worthing and Hastings CP, both on the 10th and 20 over Patching on the 19th.

Breeding was confirmed at only three locations: Black Down, Abbots Wood (Hailsham) and Ashdown Forest. Breeding was probable in two further tetrads and possible in three. The eruptive nature of this species again became apparent in June, with the following migrating groups noted: 14 at Pett Level on the 3rd, 13 at Pagham Hbr on the 5th, 17 at Rowlands Castle on the 13th, eight at West Wittering on the 20th and 11 at Staplecross and seven at Brighton Wild Park on the 26th. Passage continued into July with a maximum day count of 38 at Patching on the 23rd.

Sightings were plentiful further into the second half of the year, with maximum counts in September of 25 at Broadwater Warren on the 9th and Ambersham Common on the 12th, 20 at Pulborough Brooks on the 20th and 40 at Black Down on the 27th. Increasingly, larger flocks were forming in October, with 50 at Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) on the 1st, 90 at Burton MP on the 7th, 30 at Balcombe on the 13th and 70 at Rewell Wood (Arundel) on the 18th. The largest coastal movements also occurred in October. Across 28 dates, between 12 Aug and 9 Nov, 208 individuals were recorded by the Hastings area migration watch team, the maximum was 41 E on 16 Oct. The following day 30 flew east at Elmer Rocks (Middleton-on-Sea) and 31 E at Climping Gap.

Small groups were found at many typical inland locations during the second winter period, namely Black Down, Lavington Common, Worth Forest, Balcombe and Ashdown Forest. [MR Eade]

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Probably fairly common resident; common summer visitor and passage migrant and fairly common winter visitor.

Goldfinches were recorded in 721 tetrads (75%) compared with a 10-year average of 605 (range 515 to 705). The number of tetrads in which the species was found has increased in each year since 2013. In the GBW they were recorded in 84% of participating gardens during the year compared to 79% in 2018 and 92% in 2019.

During the first winter period the highest counts were 56 at Balcombe on 2 Feb, 53 at Battle on 10 Jan and 50 at Crowborough on 22 Jan, with 237 further double-figure counts. During the early year SWBS Goldfinches were recorded in 54% of squares surveyed with a maximum of the 53 at Battle, mentioned above.

Breeding was confirmed in 39 tetrads and probable in a further 65, considerably higher than for the previous two years (confirmed 26 and 32, probable 48 and 46 in 2018 and 2019 respectively). Although not much breeding detail was recorded before fledging occurred, this was observed widely from 3 May at Leechpool and Owlbeech Wood (Horsham) until 21 Sep at Wivelsfield, illustrating the length of the breeding season and the second and third broods that the species may have. During the BBS Goldfinches were recorded in 81% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 30 at Falmer on 5 Apr. Post breeding flocks were observed from mid-July, reaching 100 on the 15th on the South Downs between the A24 and R Adur and 75 at Steep Down (Lancing) on the 18th. Numbers increased through August, with highs of 150 in the lower Arun Valley on the 3rd, 150 at Thorney Island on two dates and counts of c.100 at The Burgh (Burpham), Southease and Uckfield. The trend continued in September, and during October numbers increased further. Of the 55 counts of 100 or more the highest were 1150 E at Goring Gap, 1000 at Widewater (Lancing)

and 830 at Seaford Head on the 14th and 1000 E at Pett Level and 1600 E at Hastings on the 16th. The last was the maximum day count from a total of 7872 counted on 30 dates between 20 Sep and 20 Nov at various locations in the Hastings area.

There were some very high counts in November with 2545 E on the 7th at Worthing and 3438 E on the following day, the highest counts of the year, and 1000 E at Beachy Head on the 7th. During the three days from 6 to 8 Nov, over 10,000 birds were recorded, many heading in an easterly direction. Thereafter numbers dropped and the highest December count was 70, on Christmas Day at West Chiltington. In the late year SWBS Goldfinches were recorded in 67% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 40 at Fernhurst on 1 Dec. [D Boddington]

Serin

Serinus serinus

Very scarce passage migrant; has bred. Schedule 1 species.

2020 was a very good year for this species with a total of eight recorded. The first, seen in flight and sound recorded, over West Worthing on 25 Mar (DK Campbell) was followed by a singing male at Bishopstone on 1 Apr (TD Hallahan), one that flew east at Cow Gap (Beachy Head) on 10 Apr (L Pitcher), a first summer female at Goring Gap on 6 and 9 May (DK Campbell), three at Beachy Head on 30 May (IT Barnard, MR Eade, JJ Everitt, JW Partridge) and one there on 7 Jul (ME & RH Charlwood). The total this century moves on to a minimum of 87. [P James]

Siskin

Spinus spinus

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Scarce or fairly common breeder.

Siskins were recorded in 251 tetrads (26%) compared with 175 in 2019 and were encountered in 14% of GBW gardens. Over the first winter period there were 14 counts from 13 sites (37 from 25 in 2019), where 20 or more were recorded. The highest were 50 at Brightling on 7 Mar, 35 at Darwell Res on 5 Jan and 32 E past Fairlight on 27 Mar. In the early year SWBS they were recorded in 4.8% of the squares surveyed with a maximum of 24 at Wivelsfield Green on 26 Jan.

In the BBS Siskins were found in only 1.6% of squares surveyed with a maximum of four on 26 May at West Lavington (Midhurst). Breeding was confirmed in six tetrads and probable in a further six. Display was noted on 1 Feb at Crowborough and fledglings were first recorded on 25 May at Coldwaltham.

Numbers during the summer months were typically low, mostly of fewer than five but 40 were seen at Beech Mill (Battle) on 17 Jul. Counts increased markedly during autumn; the Hastings migration watch team recorded a total of 6398 on 87 dates between 1 Sep and 9 Nov with a maximum of 575 E on 28 Sep. At Selsey Bill a total of 913 were logged between 22 Aug and 13 Oct, with a high of 181 W on 26 Sep and at Worthing 1443 were recorded between 31 Aug and 9 Nov with the highest count being 523 E on 14 Sep. At Beachy Head a total of 1144 were recorded between 31 Aug and 29 Nov, with highs of 180 W on 11 Sep, 150 W on 7 Oct and 145 on 5 Oct. The highest daily count of the year was 1000 NE at Pett Level on 19 Sep described as “constant movement of flocks of up to 50”. Inland, the highest counts of 100 to 150 came from Cissbury on several dates and there were 100 at Broadwater Warren on 14 Oct.

During December the highest counts were inland with 46 at Mill Fm (Fletching) on the 16th, 42 at Horsham on the 4th and 30s at Coates Common on the 4th, Buxted Park (Uckfield) on the 14th and Marley Common on the 17th. In the late-year SWBS Siskins were encountered in 4.1% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 30 also at Coates Common on 6 Nov. [M Orchard-Webb]

Lapland Bunting*Calcarius lapponicus*

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

In a good autumn for this species, there were six records comprising probably nine different birds. A tired bird photographed at Church Norton on 3 Sep (AE Wilkes) and the one seen there on 9 Sep (IM Lang) may possibly have been the same bird. Subsequent records were of two near the Beachy Head Hotel on 5 Oct, with one remaining until the 11th (BR Cox *et al.*), two over Litlington on 15 Oct (E Stubbs), one west over Belle Tout (Beachy Head) on 17 Oct (MR Eade) and two at Pilsey Island (Chichester Hbr) on 17 Oct (CB Collins). The Church Norton bird was the earliest ever autumn record for Sussex, preceding the previous earliest (10 Sep 1968) by a week.

The county total moves on to approximately 121, most of which (70) were recorded during the exceptional influx in autumn 2010. 2007 was the last blank year. [P James]



Lapland Bunting, Beachy Head, 5 October (Laurence Pitcher)



Snow Bunting, Pett Level, 6 June (Jake Gearty)

Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

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

There were no early year records but a splendid adult male in full summer plumage was enjoyed by many observers at Pett Level from 5 to 9 Jun. Prior to this no Snow Buntings had been recorded in Sussex between 6 May and 17 Sep.

Aside from this it was a poor year for the species as the only other records were of two at East Head on many dates from 25 Nov to the end of the year and one at Arlington Res from 29 Nov to 2 Dec. [AC Gutteridge]

Corn Bunting

Emberiza calandra

Fairly common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Corn Buntings were recorded in 97 tetrads (10%) compared with 93 in 2019 and a 10-year average of 76 (range 66 to 101). During the first winter period only seven double-figure flocks were reported, the largest being 40 on set-aside at Beachy Head on 25 Jan. Away from downland 20 were at Scotney GP on 2 Feb and three on 17 Mar was the highest count at Medmerry.

Breeding was confirmed in four tetrads with probable breeding in a further 13. Birds carrying food for young were noted at Steep Down (Lancing) on 15 Jun and at Medmerry on 15 Jul and young were seen there on 6 Aug, at Swanborough Hill (Kingston) on 7 Jul and The Burgh

(Burpham) on 13 Jul. During the breeding season the main stronghold was Steep Down where at least 44 singing males were located on 12 Jun and a post breeding flock of 70 was seen on 22 Jul. Other breeding season records were of 30 at Cissbury on 22 Apr, 35 on downland between the R Adur and the A24 and between ten and 12 at The Burgh, Firl Beacon, Cradle Hill (Seaford) and Beachy Head. Five at Catsfield on 22 Jun and sightings at Petworth and Fisher Street (Northchapel) were the only records from the Weald during the breeding season.

During the autumn flocks of up to 45 were seen at Steep Down and the surrounding area, a maximum of 50 at Beachy Head and 20 at both Rodmell and Westmeston.

In the second winter period there were double-figure flocks in 11 tetrads. The largest flocks were 75 at Steep Down on 7 Nov, 60 at Findon on 30 Dec and 30 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 28 Nov. The highest count at East Guldeford Level was 20 on 7 Dec compared with 110 there the previous year. On 29 Nov nine entered a reedbed roost at Rodmell Brooks. Despite the lack of very large flocks the Corn Bunting does seem to be at least holding its own at present. [AC Gutteridge]



Corn Bunting, Lancing Ring, 20 April (Karen Weston)

Yellowhammer

Emberiza citrinella

Common resident. Red listed species of high conservation concern. Section 41.

Yellowhammers were recorded in 379 tetrads (39%) during the year, above both the 346 of 2019 and the 10-year average of 331 (range 282 to 420). As usual sightings were sparser in the north and east of Sussex. During the first winter period double-figure counts were made in 35 tetrads compared with only 23 the previous year. The largest flocks were 45 at Barcombe on 1 Jan and at Rushlake Green on 2 Feb, 52 at Edburton on 26 Feb and 75 at Houndean Bottom (Lewes) on 2 Mar. In the early year SWBS a total of 94 was recorded in 14% of squares surveyed compared with 66 in 17% of surveyed squares in 2019 with a maximum of 13 at Findon Park on 14 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in 14 tetrads and was probable in a further 64, an improvement on the

seven confirmed and 44 probable in 2019. Singing was noted from mid-February, display was first seen at Ellison's Pond (Ashdown Forest) on 16 Mar and the first evidence of successful breeding was a male with food on 12 May at Combe Valley CP. The first fledged young were seen at Chailey Common on 3 Jun. During the BBS Yellowhammers were found in 32% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 16 at Binderton (West Dean) on 16 May. Late summer flocks of 20 or more were noted at Medmerry, Patching, Punnetts Town and Rushlake Green.

In the autumn and second winter period double-figure flocks were recorded in 32 locations, few of which were in East Sussex. The largest were 50 at Medmerry on 11 Oct, 40 at Chantry Hill (Storrington) on 28 Nov and 50 at Sidlesham on 29 Dec. During the late year SWBS Yellowhammers were recorded in 13% of squares surveyed with a maximum of 30 at Tillington (Petworth) on 26 Nov. [AC Gutteridge]

Little Bunting

Emberiza pusilla

Rare vagrant.

One seen briefly and photographed at Shooters' Bottom (Beachy Head) on 19 Oct (RJ Fairbank) did not linger. The county total moves on to 19, of which ten have been this century, the most recent also in Shooters' Bottom in April 2018. Perhaps surprisingly, it is only the third to be recorded at Beachy Head. Previous arrival dates have been in January (one), February (one), March (one), April (two), September (one), October (seven), November (four) and autumn (one in 1906, date not known). [P James]

Reed Bunting

Emberiza schoeniclus

Fairly common resident; passage migrant and winter visitor. Amber listed species of medium conservation concern. Section 41.

Reed Buntings were recorded in 210 tetrads (22%) during the year compared with 211 the previous year and a 10-year average of 187 (range 157 to 215). In the first winter period double-figure flocks were recorded in 19 locations, the largest being 100 on burnt gorse on Ashdown Forest on 24 Jan. At Weir Wood Res the highest count was 87 on New Year's Day and the last significant count at the roost site was 62 on 12 Jan. At Ardingly Res 72 entered the roost on 19 Jan. During the early year SWBS the species was found in 5.6% of squares surveyed with a maximum of six in a square near St Leonard's Forest on 22 Feb.

Breeding was confirmed in only five tetrads and was probable in a further 29. Display was noted on 7 Mar at Pett Level, a nest with young observed on 1 Jun at the Knepp Estate and the first fledged young were seen on 27 Jun at Pulborough Brooks. At Rye Hbr 19 territories were mapped compared with 20 the previous year but 49 in 2018. During the BBS Reed Buntings were encountered in 14% of squares studied with a maximum of 11 at Pevensey Levels on 25 May.

The migration watchers in the Hastings area counted a total of 91 Reed Buntings on 21 dates in the period 11 Sep to 3 Nov; the highest count being 22 W on 9 Oct. The only other indications of movement were three flying east and five west at Selsey Bill on 18 Oct, one at Splash Point (Seaford) on 11 Oct and 11 there two days later.

The Weir Wood Res roost grew from 35 on 16 Oct to 140 on 6 Dec. Aside from this, in the second winter period double-figure counts were received from ten locations with 48 at Pett Level on 30 Dec. During the late year SWBS 33 birds were recorded in eight (5.5%) of the squares covered with a maximum of 21 at Pevensey Levels on 6 Dec. [AC Gutteridge]

ESCAPES AND INTRODUCTIONS

All records of BOU Category D and E species, primarily probable or certain escapes from captivity (but not those clearly in captivity) and introduced species without self-sustaining wild populations in the area from which the bird originated, will be welcomed by the Hon. Recorder for this annual feature. In order to track individual birds or flocks, observers are reminded to include the age, sex, hybrid evidence and any other distinctive features when submitting records.

Note that records of White Stork and Bearded Vulture are included in the main list in recognition of the very special interest that they attracted. Records of introduced White-tailed Eagles are also included in the main account along with the record of a wild individual of that species.

The following escaped or introduced birds, other than those Category C species in the main list, were recorded in the county in 2020. It should be noted that the identity of these birds is largely unchecked. Species' names and order follow IOC World Bird Names (V 11.2) available online at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

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.

The two at Arlington Res on 12 Apr were doubtless the same as the two recorded at Glynde Level in late 2019. One of these was also seen at Arlington Res on several dates from 25 Apr to 17 Oct. Another, or possibly one of the same, was at Rye Hbr on 21 Jul.

Fulvous Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna bicolor

Breeds across much of Mexico and South America, the West Indies, the southern United States, sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent.

One was reported from the Knepp Estate on 29 Jul.

Cackling Goose

Branta hutchinsii

Breeds in NE Russia, Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland and winters mainly in western USA. B. hutchinsii includes the subspecies hutchinsii, leucopareia, minima and taverneri.

Up to four were in the Arundel area from February to May and one was at Cuckmere Haven on 5 Aug. A flock of eight geese at Pagham Hbr on 23 Nov were thought to be possibly hybrids between this species and Barnacle Goose.

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 was seen on Henfield Levels on at least 12 Feb, 1 May, 16 Oct and there or Beeding Brooks on several dates between 8 Nov and 31 Dec. Individuals were also recorded as follows: lower

Cuckmere Valley on 7 Jan, Combe Valley CP on 26 Jan, Rye Hbr on 20 Feb, Scotney GP on 23 Aug, Wadhurst Park on 24 Aug, Bewl Water on 23 Oct and Chichester GP on 24 Oct.

Emperor Goose

Anser canagicus

Breeds mainly in Alaska. Present in many wildfowl collections.

One at Scotney GP on 7 Jan with feral Barnacle Geese and three there on 18 Jan.

Snow Goose

Anser caerulescens

Breeds in Arctic North America, winters in southern USA and Mexico. Presumed migrants may occur in the UK in winter, usually in association with other Arctic breeding geese, but are greatly outnumbered by escaped or introduced birds. There have been no accepted records of wild birds in Sussex.

Four were at Scotney GP on 16 Jan and one was at Pett Level between at least 1 and 22 Jan and on 7 Mar. Records of one at Rye Hbr on 7 Sep, at Pett Level on 12, 19 and 23 Oct and at Scotney GP on 4 Dec presumably relate to one individual.

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.

One to two were seen in the Arun Valley at Amberley Wild Brooks and Pulborough Brooks throughout January and again on 16 Nov. One to two were seen at various locations in Chichester Hbr and Chichester GP from January to May, in July, and from September to December. Up to four were regularly reported at Cowdray Park from March to December. Elsewhere, there was one at Cuckmere Haven on 6 Jan, one at the Singleton Downland Museum on 20 Jan, one was on the R Adur at Shoreham on 27 Dec and two were at Brighton on 30 Dec.

Ruddy Shelduck

Tadorna ferruginea

Breeds in SE Europe and across central and east Asia with naturalised populations in central Europe. Rare vagrant from wild or naturalised populations or escape from captivity.

One was seen at Pulborough Brooks on 13 and 16 Apr and one was with Egyptian Geese at Cocking Causeway on 30 Dec. A possible hybrid with a rather darker head than is typical was at Pulborough Brooks on 7 Jan and presumably the same individual there on 25 Jan was considered to be a hybrid between Ruddy Shelduck and Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*.

Muscovy Duck

Cairina moschata

Native to Mexico and Central and South America. Widespread in its domesticated form.

One was at Swanbourne Lake (Arundel) from at least 2 Jan to 22 Apr and again from 11 Oct to at least 24 Dec. One was at Cowdray Park on 14 Mar and another was seen at Waldron on several dates from 14 Sep to 30 Nov. Several other reports probably related to captive individuals.

Wood Duck*Aix sponsa****Widespread in North America***

There were records of one at Novington (Plumpton) on 12 Apr, one at North Chailey on 5 May and one at Offham on 17 Oct.

Ringed Teal*Callonetta leucophrys****South America from SE Bolivia to SE Brazil and Uruguay.***

A pair was on Henfield Levels on 24 May, two were at Shermanbury on 9 Nov and three were there on 22 Dec.

Chiloe Wigeon*Mareca sibilatrix****Southern part of South America.***

A drake was seen at Arlington Res on many dates from 2 Jan to 11 Apr, on 7 Jun and on 8 Nov. A drake at Barcombe Res on 19 Oct was presumably the same individual. Elsewhere, a pair was reported from Cuckmere Haven on 4 Jan.

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.***

The small population near Newick WTW was still present and seen between at least 16 Jan and 15 Apr, with a maximum of 11 on 11 Feb. Elsewhere, one was at Herstmonceux Castle on 16 Jan, one at Levin Down (Singleton) on 12 Sep, one at Horsted Keynes on 14 Dec and one at Burpham on 29 Dec.

Indian Peafowl*Pavo cristatus****Wild birds are restricted to the Indian subcontinent. A traditional favourite in ornamental gardens.***

Indian Peafowls were reported as follows (singles unless otherwise stated): Lavington Common two on 26 Jun; Storrington 17 Oct; Horsham 15 May and 9 Jun; Colgate 21 May, two, and juvenile on 18 Jul; Henfield five apparently resident; Burgess Hill 8 Feb; Patching two on 15 Jun; Old Lodge LNR (Ashdown Forest) 27 Mar, 23 Apr and 28 May; Catsfield 27 May; Hailsham 27 May; and Telham 29 May.

Violet Turaco*Musophaga violacea****Native to West Africa from Senegal to Nigeria, isolated population 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 there on at least 23 May 2020 and then at Bognor Regis on 14 Aug and Shoreham-by-Sea on 14 and 15 Sep.

Red-tailed Hawk*Buteo jamaicensis*

Breeds commonly throughout much of North America and the Caribbean; some move south to winter in Central America.

One was seen at Cocking on 6 Feb and 8 Jun.

American Kestrel*Falco sparverius*

North and South America.

A male that flew into a window in Bognor Regis on 12 May departed later apparently uninjured. It was photographed and appeared unringed, but was not considered likely to be a genuine vagrant.

Cockatiel*Nymphicus hollandicus*

Australia.

One was at Selsey Bill on 15 Sep.

Alexandrine Parakeet*Psittacula eupatria*

Indian subcontinent and SE Asia.

One was reported at Cootham (Storrington) on 12 Jul and one at Crowborough on 11 Oct.

Northern Red Bishop*Euplectes franciscanus*

Sub-saharan Africa.

A male was seen at Ferring Rife on 6th August. A male red and black-coloured Bishop photographed at Brighton Marina on the same day was possibly the same individual though Southern Red Bishop *E. orix* was not ruled out.



Robin, Beachy Head, 31 March (Roger Charlwood)

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) Results for Sussex 2016 - 2020

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 2016 - 2020. 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)											
		2016 (170)		2017 (172)		2018 (174)		2019 (170)		2020 (128)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Red-legged Partridge	24	14	27	16	23	13	25	15	9	7
	Grey Partridge	2	1	3	2	-	-	1	1	1	1
	Pheasant	142	84	143	83	148	85	134	79	84	65
	Canada Goose	47	28	58	34	60	34	52	31	23	18
	Greylag Goose	24	14	27	16	30	17	30	18	12	9
	Greylag Goose (domestic)	1	1	1	1	-	-	2	1	1	1
	Mute Swan	21	12	18	10	18	10	19	11	13	10
	Egyptian Goose	2	1	5	3	6	3	9	5	4	3
	Shelduck	14	8	4	2	12	7	10	6	6	5
	Mandarin Duck	7	4	6	3	6	3	5	3	3	2
	Gadwall	3	2	6	3	8	5	5	3	1	1
	Mallard	102	60	93	54	95	55	87	51	46	36
	Mallard (domestic)	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
	Tufted Duck	5	3	6	3	6	3	4	2	3	2
	Swift	44	26	54	31	41	23	45	26	25	20
	Cuckoo	42	25	36	21	42	24	37	22	14	11
	Feral Pigeon	34	20	35	20	37	21	39	23	26	20
	Stock Dove	72	42	78	45	85	49	82	48	58	45
	Woodpigeon	170	100	172	100	174	100	169	99	127	99
	Collared Dove	99	58	106	62	110	63	93	55	71	55
	Turtle Dove	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	-	-
	Moorhen	56	33	41	24	49	28	43	25	31	24
	Coot	23	14	21	3	23	13	23	14	15	12
	Little Grebe	5	3	6	3	7	4	5	3	2	2
	Great Crested Grebe	4	2	4	2	3	2	3	2	2	2
	Oystercatcher	4	2	5	3	5	3	5	3	2	2
	Lapwing	19	11	20	12	20	12	15	9	11	9
	Whimbrel	4	2	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-
	Curlew	7	4	6	3	2	1	4	2	2	2
	Redshank	4	2	3	2	5	3	7	4	3	2
	Black-headed Gull	32	19	31	18	26	15	33	19	21	16

Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)											
		2016 (170)		2017 (172)		2018 (174)		2019 (170)		2020 (128)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Mediterranean Gull	11	6	12	7	7	4	10	6	4	3
	Common Gull	10	6	8	5	4	2	6	4	2	2
	Great Black-backed Gull	6	4	8	5	8	5	6	4	2	2
	Herring Gull	112	66	118	69	114	65	112	66	63	49
	Lesser Black-backed Gull	22	13	18	10	12	7	17	10	9	7
	Sandwich Tern	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	2	1	1
	Common Tern	6	4	4	2	3	2	3	2	3	2
	Cormorant	21	12	24	14	27	16	22	13	12	9
	Grey Heron	62	36	44	26	52	30	36	21	27	21
	Little Egret	14	8	8	5	9	5	12	7	7	5
	Sparrowhawk	28	16	18	10	14	8	16	9	6	5
	Marsh Harrier	4	2	2	1	-	-	2	1	2	2
	Common Buzzard	95	56	94	55	101	58	107	63	65	51
	Barn Owl	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	2
	Tawny Owl	5	3	4	2	8	5	8	5	6	5
	Little Owl	-	-	2	1	3	2	-	-	2	2
	Kingfisher	5	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	-	-
	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Great Spotted Woodpecker	107	63	118	69	120	69	121	71	80	62
	Green Woodpecker	108	64	112	65	102	59	84	49	46	36
	Kestrel	47	28	38	22	44	25	41	24	29	23
	Hobby	6	4	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	2
	Peregrine	4	2	7	4	4	2	1	1	4	3
	Jay	77	45	82	48	76	44	86	51	33	26
	Magpie	148	87	156	91	152	87	153	90	103	80
	Jackdaw	138	81	151	88	148	85	150	88	99	77
	Rook	97	57	96	56	100	57	104	61	52	41
	Carrion Crow	168	99	169	98	171	98	167	98	124	99
	Raven	12	7	7	4	11	6	16	9	12	9
	Coal Tit	53	31	59	34	68	39	65	38	25	20
	Marsh Tit	13	8	15	9	21	12	23	14	7	5
	Blue Tit	166	98	170	99	171	98	163	96	117	91
	Great Tit	166	98	161	94	170	98	162	95	106	83
	Woodlark	5	3	3	2	1	1	3	2	4	3
	Skylark	79	46	81	47	82	47	79	46	68	53
	Swallow	113	66	117	68	116	67	111	65	76	59
	House Martin	35	21	34	20	29	17	31	18	22	17
	Cetti's Warbler	15	9	11	6	13	7	14	8	10	8
	Long-tailed Tit	78	46	87	50	84	48	91	53	30	23
	Willow Warbler	34	20	40	23	23	13	29	17	14	11
	Chiffchaff	153	90	158	92	159	91	147	86	102	80

Year (and total no. of squares surveyed)											
		2016 (170)		2017 (172)		2018 (174)		2019 (170)		2020 (128)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Sedge Warbler	9	5	10	6	10	6	12	7	8	6
	Reed Warbler	25	15	20	12	20	11	21	12	17	13
	Blackcap	144	85	145	84	152	87	153	90	102	80
	Garden Warbler	27	16	30	17	30	17	33	19	24	19
	Lesser Whitethroat	21	12	22	13	22	13	24	14	13	10
	Whitethroat	106	62	104	60	97	56	97	57	82	64
	Firecrest	4	2	5	3	4	2	5	3	3	2
	Goldcrest	81	48	85	49	65	37	68	40	35	27
	Wren	165	97	169	98	168	96	164	96	124	97
	Nuthatch	7	45	84	49	93	53	89	52	42	33
	Treecreeper	36	21	47	27	40	23	38	22	20	16
	Starling	107	63	116	67	114	65	118	69	76	59
	Blackbird	170	100	171	99	174	100	169	99	125	98
	Song Thrush	148	87	149	87	150	86	148	87	98	77
	Mistle Thrush	49	29	55	32	55	31	53	31	31	24
	Spotted Flycatcher	4	2	5	3	5	3	5	3	4	3
	Robin	165	97	170	99	170	98	163	96	118	92
	Nightingale	7	4	14	8	12	7	12	7	7	6
	Common Redstart	2	1	2	1	-	-	2	1	-	-
	Stonechat	1	1	6	3	5	3	8	5	4	3
	Wheatear	6	4	7	4	11	6	4	2	1	1
	House Sparrow	126	74	130	75	133	76	128	75	94	73
	Dunnock	146	86	146	85	145	83	150	88	93	73
	Yellow Wagtail	-	-	3	2	3	2	2	1	1	1
	Grey Wagtail	9	5	8	5	10	6	14	8	6	5
	Pied/White Wagtail	79	46	70	41	74	42	76	45	36	28
	Meadow Pipit	18	11	15	9	12	7	13	8	12	9
	Tree Pipit	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	-	-
	Chaffinch	163	96	163	95	157	90	156	92	102	80
	Bullfinch	40	24	58	34	42	24	42	25	18	14
	Greenfinch	120	71	105	61	97	56	97	57	56	44
	Linnet	62	36	62	36	68	39	60	35	41	32
	Lesser Redpoll	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-
	Common Crossbill	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
	Goldfinch	143	84	142	83	143	82	148	87	101	79
	Siskin	10	6	5	3	5	3	9	5	2	2
	Corn Bunting	3	2	3	2	6	3	7	4	7	5
	Yellowhammer	74	44	57	33	60	34	60	35	42	33
	Reed Bunting	22	13	19	11	23	13	19	11	18	14
Number of species		143		147		127		121		111	



Stonechat, Beachy Head, 15 May (Derek Hayles)

Sussex Winter Bird Survey - the first ten years

Christine George

Introduction

The Sussex Winter Bird Survey (SWBS) was set up in 2011 with the aim of monitoring annual changes in winter populations of birds in Sussex. The survey is a local initiative organised by the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS) and uses standardised counts from randomly-distributed 1-km squares. The majority of these squares are also surveyed annually in the breeding season for the national Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). The data collected from SWBS are analysed by the SOS and the results are published annually in the Sussex Bird Report. This report presents a summary of the first ten years of the survey.

Survey method and aims

All SWBS sites are 1-km squares and the majority are surveyed for the annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). If a participant currently undertakes a BBS survey, they are encouraged to use the same square and same route for SWBS. However, for this local survey, participants who do not wish to register for a BBS square, or those who wish to survey another 1-km square for SWBS, can be allocated a randomly selected 1-km square within a 10-km square of their choice. For those already doing SWBS in their BBS square, who wish to survey another square in the same outing, an adjacent square can be allocated. Although these squares are not randomly selected, they are not considered to introduce bias, as the BBS square itself was randomly selected.

SWBS uses a line transect method as with BBS, and recording is undertaken along two 1-km transects approximately 500m apart. BBS surveyors are asked to use the same route as they would for their BBS, and participants using non-BBS squares are asked to set up transects using BBS criteria. Two morning visits are made to each square - one during November or December and the other during January or February. All birds seen or heard, including those in flight, are recorded using a simple tally system. Ideally, each square will be surveyed by the same person using the same route for all consecutive years. BBS squares are randomly selected according to strict criteria and these make up the majority of the SWBS surveys. Of the total 289 1-km squares in which at least one survey has been undertaken in the ten-year period, 176 have been BBS squares and 113 randomly selected by the organiser.

Results are entered via the BTO's 'BirdTrack' online system which can be accessed by SOS. Each square being surveyed is set up as a 1-km site. The results are then entered as a species list along with the tally for that species. A comment of 'SWBS' is added to each species entered for that survey to allow the results specific to SWBS to be extracted from the database in the spring following that year's winter survey.

Statistics drawn from the data include the number of species recorded and the total count of individuals within each species. The number of squares surveyed each year is known and, therefore, the number and percentage of squares in which each species can be found, in addition, the average occupancy rate, can be calculated. As the same statistics are calculated each year, data can be compared with that from previous years. A brief summary is sent to each participant following the end of that year's survey and, in addition, an SOS newsletter article is produced later in the year as well as a report in the annual Sussex Bird Report.

Survey coverage 2011–21

Over the course of the ten years that SWBS has been running (2011 to 2021), 2,541 surveys have been undertaken in 289 different 1-km squares, finding 144 different species (excluding birds such

as those escaped from private collections). Twenty-eight of the 289 squares have been surveyed for each of the ten winters but there has been considerable turn over with 78 surveyed for eight to ten winters, 85 for four to seven winters and 126 for one to three winters. Ideally, each square would be surveyed every winter, but this is not achievable for a variety of reasons. The number of squares surveyed, along with the number of surveyors, has varied a little over the ten-year period. Table 1 shows the specific numbers. The number of species recorded in each winter season is also shown as is the total number of squares surveyed, surveyors and species recorded during the ten-year period.

Year	No. of 1-km squares surveyed	No. of surveyors	No of species recorded
Winter 1 (2011-12)	139	81	111
Winter 2 (2012-13)	114	63	96
Winter 3 (2013-14)	114	67	101
Winter 4 (2014-15)	143	78	114
Winter 5 (2015-16)	125	74	107
Winter 6 (2016-17)	137	77	107
Winter 7 (2017-18)	167	99	119
Winter 8 (2018-19)	134	84	105
Winter 9 (2019-20)	138	90	112
Winter 10 (2020-21)	153	97	114
Total from all winters	289	161	144

Table 1. A ten-year comparison of 1-km squares surveyed, the number of surveyors and the number of species encountered.

Last winter (Winter 10, 2020-21) was a particularly challenging time for us all and COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions impacted on SWBS surveying. Despite this, 153 squares received at least one survey (the second highest number ever) and 112 squares received both early and late surveys. As a result, the considerable amount of data received, which was more than expected, can be used to help compile this 10-year report. Figure 1 shows the distribution of SWBS surveys and for how many winters each has been surveyed.

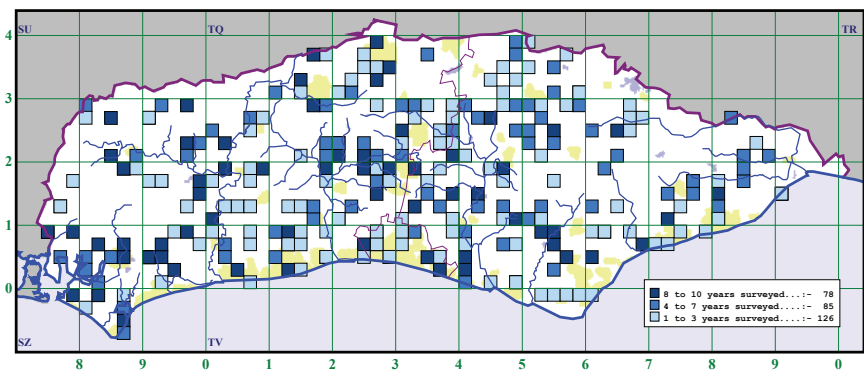


Figure 1. Distribution of surveys for the SWBS 10 winters (plotted at tetrad level for clarity).

Of the 144 species recorded, 79 have been encountered in at least one 1-km square every winter that SWBS has been undertaken, with another ten recorded in nine out of those ten winters, figure 2.

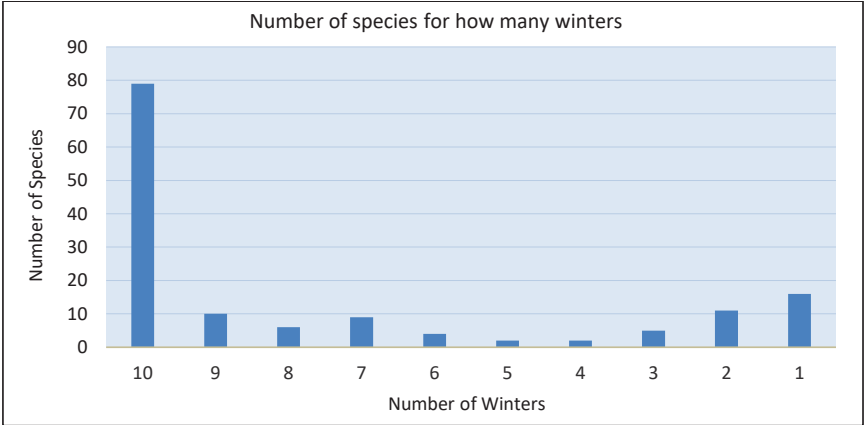


Figure 2. The 144 species found, showing how many have been recorded for a specific number of winters.

Results and discussion

To help achieve consistent results, surveyors are strongly encouraged, where possible, to survey the same square year after year. In addition, over 100 squares have been surveyed in each of the ten years, ensuring that a wide range of habitats is covered in any one year.

Table 2 shows a ten-winter comparison for the 30 most commonly encountered species. This is based on the presence of the given species in a 1-km square for each year of the ten-year period. The selection of species shown is that of the top 30 in Winter 10 (2020-21). The number given under each of the ten winters is the percentage of squares out of the total surveyed during that winter in which the species was recorded. Winter 1 refers to 2011-12 and continues sequentially up to Winter 10, referring to 2020-21.

Species	Winter (%)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Carriion Crow	96	98	99	99	99	98	100	99	99	99
Robin	95	95	98	99	99	99	99	99	98	98
Blackbird	96	99	99	100	100	98	99	99	96	98
Woodpigeon	96	96	98	100	100	100	99	100	99	97
Magpie	94	94	92	94	97	95	95	96	95	95
Blue Tit	95	94	100	99	98	99	96	100	96	94
Great Tit	94	88	94	94	94	95	97	96	91	87
Wren	81	78	85	92	93	90	87	88	88	87
Jackdaw	80	85	84	89	85	86	83	87	86	86
Dunnock	79	76	70	80	84	90	82	79	76	80
Goldfinch	65	61	70	74	77	80	77	82	73	77
Common Starling	73	67	73	67	80	72	78	74	73	76
Song Thrush	73	77	66	83	86	88	78	76	81	75
House Sparrow	66	73	70	76	73	72	68	69	69	71
Chaffinch	94	91	85	90	93	88	81	84	72	69

Herring Gull	61	65	61	62	66	66	68	69	68	68
Common Buzzard	54	53	67	63	62	67	66	71	67	65
Gt Spotted Woodpecker	66	57	52	62	63	69	70	80	65	64
Common Pheasant	60	61	65	69	70	72	75	66	68	61
Redwing	47	46	53	60	60	61	68	67	61	59
Pied Wagtail	51	52	59	58	57	61	49	54	51	57
Long-tailed Tit	60	56	50	61	66	64	59	62	67	54
Rook	53	58	59	62	57	52	55	54	59	51
Jay	58	61	54	56	62	61	63	62	56	50
Green Woodpecker	58	52	57	64	58	55	51	48	52	50
Black-headed Gull	53	52	53	57	60	50	57	62	50	48
Goldcrest	47	35	38	52	66	58	59	60	57	45
Nuthatch	49	49	41	50	46	47	52	56	50	44
Collared Dove	47	46	51	52	50	49	54	51	42	43
Fieldfare	57	50	47	50	47	55	46	40	36	41

Table 2. Showing the percentage of all surveyed squares in which the species was recorded.

The top 30 most recorded species have changed remarkably little over the ten years of the survey, with the only change being that of Greenfinch, which is no longer amongst the top 30 recorded species.

National population declines in Greenfinch are well documented and the Breeding Bird Survey Report 2020 (Harris *et al.* 2021) notes ‘Population declines in Greenfinch have been tracked using BBS data since 2007 and linked to the parasite *Trichomonas gallinae* (Lawson *et al.* 2012) which causes the disease finch trichomonosis, that affects the upper digestive tract.’ Integrated population modelling shows that changes in survival have been the strongest contributor to annual population change (Robinson *et al.* 2014). Table 3 below, shows the SWBS ten-winter comparison for Greenfinch, highlighting the decline within Sussex.

Winter (% with Greenfinch present)									
Greenfinch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10
% of surveyed 1-km squares	58	53	54	52	55	45	41	39	29
Rank	20 th	23 rd	23 rd	28 th	28 th	40 th	34 th	36 th	38 th

Table 3. The percentage of all surveyed squares in which Greenfinch was recorded, along with the rank for that winter where 1st would be the most frequently encountered species.

The latest BTO bird trend report (Woodward *et al.* 2020) has highlighted the rapid and alarming decline in Greenfinch and states that should the current decline continue then this species would qualify for addition to the national red list at the next review. A decline of 59% in 10 years nationally was noted.

The number of 1-km squares surveyed each year has varied a little, making comparing total counts from one winter to another unreliable for the purposes of comparison. To achieve an accurate evaluation of the abundance of birds recorded each winter on square visits, the total recorded for each species in any particular winter has been divided by the number of squares surveyed that winter and then divided by two to represent the mean number encountered on any one visit to a 1-km SWBS square.

For many species the mean abundance during the 10 winters has remained remarkably consistent. In some species, in particular gulls, abundance has varied widely from one year to another, possibly

due to climatic conditions around the time of some of the surveys. However, for some species, a distinct upward or downward trend does appear to be present. Mean Goldfinch numbers recorded are steadily rising for each surveyed square, whilst for Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Fieldfare there has been a steady decline in the mean number recorded per surveyed square. Abundance per square visit for the most widely distributed species is shown in Table 4.

Species	Mean abundance per square visit									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Carriion Crow	11.1	9.4	8.3	9.7	11.1	9.3	10.7	10.1	10.9	10.0
Robin	6.9	7.7	7.2	8.4	8.5	9.1	7.8	8.5	8.7	8.1
Blackbird	8.4	10.2	7.2	10.8	9.3	10.2	9.2	8.7	8.7	7.7
Woodpigeon	45.3	47.8	42.0	46.5	45.1	32.9	40.0	38.8	42.7	30.0
Magpie	4.6	5.2	4.5	4.6	4.9	4.5	4.2	5.0	4.5	4.3
Blue Tit	11.9	11.7	9.0	11.1	10.5	8.8	10.1	11.5	11.0	9.0
Great Tit	6.2	6.1	4.9	5.8	5.3	4.7	5.2	6.0	5.3	4.4
Wren	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.9	3.5	2.9	2.4	3.0	2.7	2.6
Jackdaw	13.2	18.2	17.1	16.8	16.2	13.5	13.9	18.0	17.5	15.6
Dunnock	1.9	1.8	1.7	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.0	1.8	2.0
Goldfinch	2.6	2.5	3.4	3.9	3.9	4.1	3.9	5.4	4.2	4.3
Common Starling	23.4	22.6	21.1	14.4	21.8	21.2	21.2	20.7	36.2	23.8
Song Thrush	1.5	1.4	1.2	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.4	1.7	1.6
House Sparrow	7.7	7.4	6.1	7.8	7.6	6.8	6.9	8.9	6.7	7.7
Chaffinch	7.2	5.9	4.5	5.0	3.8	3.8	4.5	4.0	3.1	2.9
Herring Gull	9.6	8.4	9.4	8.6	11.5	6.1	8.1	8.3	14.1	8.8
Common Buzzard	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.8
Gt Spotted Woodpecker	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9
Common Pheasant	2.6	2.8	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.7	3.1	3.0	4.2	2.4
Redwing	5.3	8.8	7.4	8.7	10.7	6.7	9.0	10.1	8.1	10.0
Pied Wagtail	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.5	2.1	1.1	1.8	2.4	2.0
Long-tailed Tit	2.3	2.2	1.6	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.2	1.9
Rook	12.6	16.7	11.7	13.8	13.0	12.1	9.1	9.6	11.4	10.0
Jay	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7
Green Woodpecker	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5
Black-headed Gull	10.0	14.2	11.4	11.2	15.7	8.3	10.3	14.0	16.7	8.7
Goldcrest	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.4	0.8	0.7
Nuthatch	0.8	0.9	0.6	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.0	0.7
Collared Dove	1.7	2.0	1.6	2.4	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.1	1.3
Fieldfare	9.4	12.3	6.6	5.7	7.7	5.7	6.7	3.7	3.6	3.8
Greenfinch	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.2	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.6

Table 4. Showing the mean abundance, for each species, per surveyed square visit, for each of the 10 winters.

For a survey of this type, ten years is still fairly early days but it is still valuable to look at developing trends. For the common birds with the highest numbers and distributions in terms of squares occupied we have calculated an annual index of abundance as follows:

1. Selecting the maximum of the one or two counts in each square in each winter (this reduces the effects of some squares only having one early or late winter survey).
2. Summing these maximum counts.
3. Dividing this total by the number of squares surveyed in each winter.
4. Setting the first year at 100 and plotting the 'trend' over the 10 winters.

In addition to Greenfinch mentioned above, finches have shown some of the most marked trends over the ten-year period (Figure 3). For the first eight years of the survey, there was an overall increase in Goldfinch numbers recorded. This may have reached a peak in Winter 8 (2018-19). However, it will be interesting to see how the trend develops, using data from future years.

The UK-wide reduction in Chaffinch numbers has been the subject of several articles in the media recently. The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey 2020 (Harris *et al.* 2021) reports that between 2007 and 2018, the UK population of Chaffinches fell by 30%. The BTO launched an appeal at the beginning of 2020 with requests for funding to help understand this decrease and fund conservation where possible. Results from SWBS also demonstrate this downward trend. In Winter 10 (2020-21) of SWBS, Chaffinch was only found in 69% of surveyed squares, the lowest ever figure. For the first two years of the survey this figure was 94% and 91% respectively. Mean numbers recorded (both visits) per occupied square also showed marked declines. In Winter 10, this number was just 8.5, compared with 15.4 in Winter 1. In addition, the 'index' as shown in Figure 3 had fallen from 100 in winter 1 to 40 by winter 10.

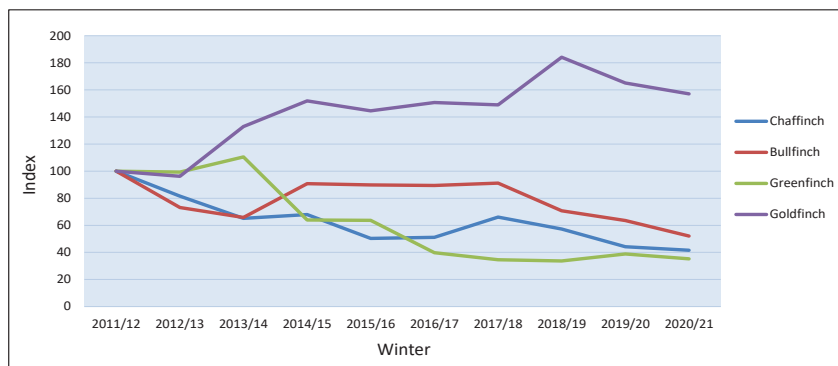


Figure 3. Showing a comparison of Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Greenfinch and Goldfinch.

Meanwhile, BBS results have shown positive trends for Goldfinch since the mid-1980s and the ten-year SWBS results would endorse this trend. Goldfinch is a partial short distance migrant, with some birds remaining to winter in Britain and others leaving Britain to winter in areas such as France and Spain (BTO ringing data). The increase in winter sightings may be further evidence of how the British population of this species is expanding.

Thrushes show contrasting trends (Figure 4). Blackbird and Song Thrush numbers have fluctuated slightly from year to year, but appear to be broadly stable with Blackbird remaining a very common bird, being found in 98% of all surveyed squares in Winter 10. Winter populations of these species are made up of resident birds, short distance migrants (within the UK) and longer distance migrants (mainly Northern European). The other two thrush species (Fieldfare and Redwing), show markedly differing wintering population trends over the ten-year period, with Fieldfare numbers showing a steady decline and Redwings fluctuating widely. It is likely that all of our wintering birds of these two species will be migrants. Ringing recoveries indicate that our Fieldfares generally come from

Scandinavia, in particular Norway. Redwing recoveries indicate that they are generally from much further east than Fieldfare, migrating to us for winter from Finland or as far east as Russia. Therefore, it is likely that there will be many influences on the trends for both of these species, from factors on their breeding grounds, along their migration routes to within Sussex itself.

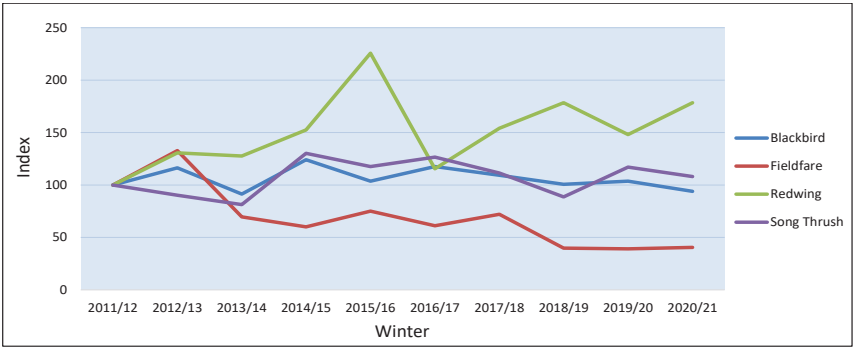


Figure 4. Trends in Winter Thrush records.

Pigeons and Doves appear to be demonstrating mixed fortunes (Figure 5). Woodpigeon remains by far the most frequently encountered species each year in terms of numbers of birds recorded and they have consistently been found in more than 96% of surveyed squares each year of SWBS. Surprisingly, given the frequency of encounters, there is a slight downward trend in this species developing. Squares hosting Stock Dove steadily increased from 24% up to 41% between Winters 1 (2011-12) and 8 (2018-19). Although the past two winters have shown a slight drop off in occupied squares (33% and 31%), the encounter rate in occupied squares remains high.

In the last two winters, Collared Doves have been recorded in the two lowest percentages of occupied squares during the 10 years of the survey. In addition, encounters within each occupied square have also decreased. Last winter this species was encountered in 42.5% of squares, whilst the 10-year mean is 48.5%. There were just 6.3 mean encounters per occupied square compared with a mean over the 10 years of 7.3, with the lowest numbers in recent years.

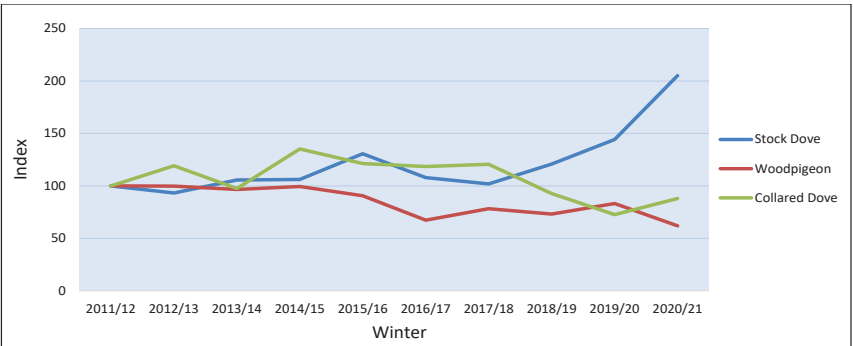


Figure 5. Trends in Wintering Pigeons and Doves records.

SWBS results show that the numbers of common corvid species found in Sussex, Carrion Crow, Rook and Jackdaw appear to have remained fairly stable over the ten years (Figure 6). Raven, however, although still only found in very small numbers compared with other Corvids, has shown

a steady increase over the last seven years (Figure 7). Winter 10 (2020-21) saw the highest ever total, with 51 being recorded over both early and late surveys plus the highest ever number of occupied squares at 31 (20.3%).

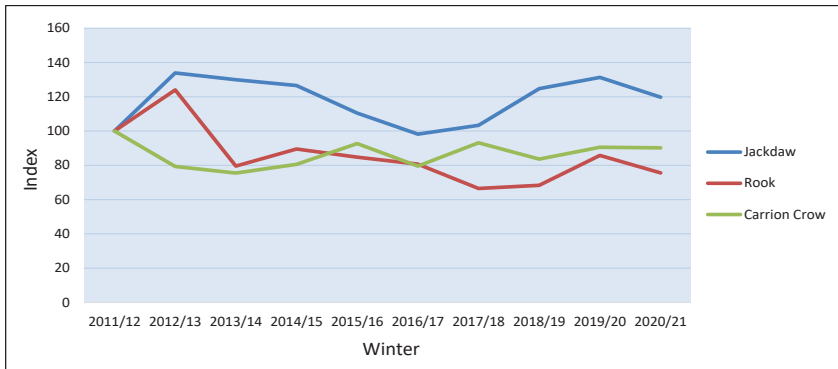


Figure 6. Trends in Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow records.

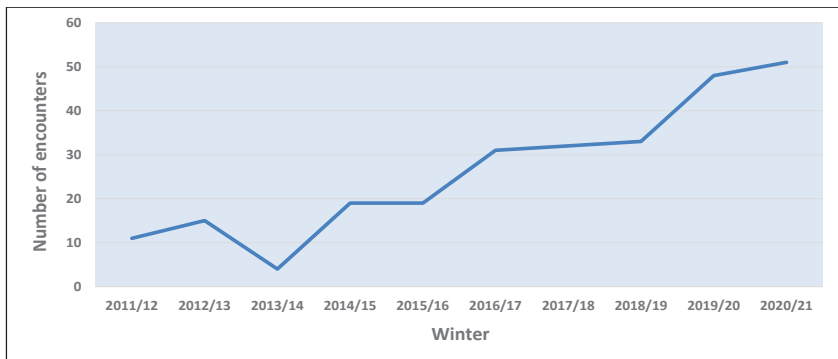


Figure 7. Trends in Raven records, although still only found in small numbers this species is being recorded more frequently.

Red Kite is another species which has shown a marked increase both in encounters and the percentage of squares in which it has been found. Winter 9 (2019-20) demonstrated a peak, with 36 individuals being recorded in 17 (12%) squares. Red Kite records were slightly decreased in winter 10 (2020-21), however, in terms of distribution, as this species was still found in 17 squares (11%) it would seem unlikely this reflects an actual decrease in numbers. Prior to the past two years, the highest record was of 16 in 12 (7%) squares in Winter 7 (2017-18.) The latest Breeding Bird Survey Report (2020) (Harris *et al.* 2021) reports 'Red Kite have increased by a staggering 18,695% over the long term. Reintroduction programmes in England, and the ability of this species to exploit a vacant niche, have no doubt been behind the increase recorded in England.'

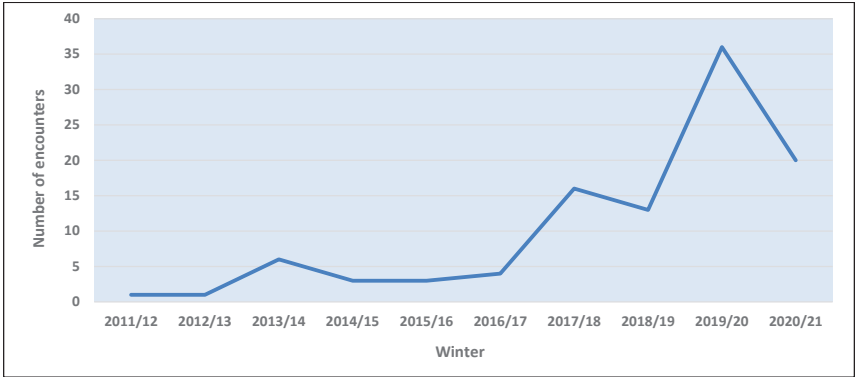


Figure 8. Showing the rise in Red Kite records.

The Firecrest appears to be following a similar pattern to Raven and though still only found in low numbers, this species is showing an upward trend in encounters (Figure 9). Data from Winter 10 (2020-21) shows that Firecrests were recorded in 13 (8.5 %) squares, the highest ever distribution for this species during the ten years of SWBS. The previous highest distribution was in 5% of squares in Winter 5 (2015-16). Seventeen records in Winter 10 were also equal best with Winter 9 (2019-20). This suggests that Firecrest is increasing as a wintering species in Sussex. This species was green listed as a breeding bird in the 2015 Birds of Conservation Concern publication (BoCC4) (Eaton *et al.* 2015) and since 2018 has not been on the list of species considered by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel.

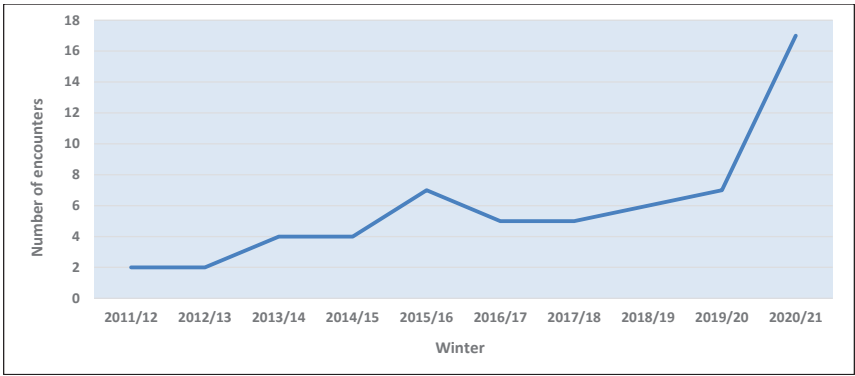


Figure 9. Trend in Firecrest records.

Conclusions

The SWBS has been running for ten years and though still in its infancy is already producing interesting results. The main purpose of the survey is to monitor annual changes in winter populations of birds in Sussex, with the most reliable data being produced for those species most commonly encountered shown in Tables 2 and 4 above. Many of the breeding season trends shown by the BTO's BBS are being mirrored by SWBS. Greenfinch and Chaffinch have shown marked declines in both BBS and SWBS and the decline in Collared Doves and an increase in Stock Doves over the past ten years shown in SWBS are also seen with the BBS. BBS trends for Red Kite have shown a consistent upward trend since 2000 and Figure 8 shows the broad increase in Red Kite recorded during SWBS.

Raven, although not found in numbers great enough for the BTO to produce BBS trend graphs, are noted in the Bird Trends report to be increasing. Firecrest is another bird still found in too low numbers for BBS trends, however, a paper on breeding Firecrest in Sussex by Mark Mallalieu published in the 2018 Sussex Bird Report, shows that the distribution of breeding Firecrests found during the survey period (2018) is consistent with an expansion in range since the Bird Atlas 2007-11, in addition to being found more frequently in winter.

Being winter visitors, the increasing disparity in encounters with Fieldfare and Redwing numbers as demonstrated above are not included in the BBS and it will be interesting to discover whether this trend in Sussex continues. It would appear a consistent downward trend for Fieldfare is developing more widely in England and this presents an opportunity for research.

Many factors, such as breeding success, food availability, weather conditions both in the UK and abroad, and habitat change will be reflected in the results for individual years. In order to obtain true indications of long-term population changes in Sussex, it would be beneficial for survey coverage to be maintained or increased for many years to come. New volunteers will be welcomed and should contact the author.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to all the observers who take part in the Sussex Winter Bird Survey, often surveying in uncomfortable conditions. The author would like to thank landowners and farmers for allowing volunteers to gain access to their land in order to complete the surveys. Special thanks are due to John Newnham for his work on extracting the SWBS data from BirdTrack and for helping with the analysis and presentation of the results, to Ken Smith and Mark Mallalieu for their assistance with this paper, and to Helen Crabtree for setting up the survey initially and for ongoing support.

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Full results table

A PDF of a table with the results for all species for each of the ten years of the survey can be found on the Sussex Ornithological Society website or can be provided via email on application to the author or the SOS. Unfortunately, the table is too large to be successfully printed for posting.

Arrival and departure dates of summer visitors, 2020

	First recorded date			Last recorded date		
	2020	1960 - 2019	10-yr average (± SD in days)	2020	1960 - 2019	10-yr average (± SD in days)
Quail	24 May	06 Feb	19 May (±28)	6 Aug	15 Nov ²	20 Aug (±38)
Garganey	26 Feb	02 Feb	15 Mar (±7)	12 Oct	17 Dec	22 Sep (±19)
Nightjar	04 May	14 Apr ¹⁴	07 May (±9)	25 Sep	05 Nov	12 Sep (±9)
Common Swift	10 Apr	07 Apr	13 Apr (±4)	28 Sep	24 Nov	28 Sep (±14)
Common Cuckoo	03 Apr	21 Mar ⁴	02 Apr (±6)	07 Sep	23 Oct ⁵	13 Sep (±14)
Turtle Dove	19 Apr	05 Feb	15 Apr (±10)	11 Oct	18 Dec	28 Sep (±18)
Little Ringed Plover	14 Mar	06 Mar	14 Mar (±5)	07 Sep	08 Oct	20 Sep (±9)
Wood Sandpiper	04 Jun	11 Feb	30 Apr (±9)	04 Oct	16 Nov	29 Sep (±22)
Little Tern	05 Apr	01 Apr	07 Apr (±4)	28 Aug	04 Nov	20 Sep (±9)
Roseate Tern	-	17 Apr	06 May (±14)	16 Jul	05 Oct	04 Aug (±28)
Common Tern	24 Mar	14 Mar	24 Mar (±6)	01 Oct ¹	26 Nov	23 Oct (±13)
Arctic Tern	05 Apr	24 Mar	06 Apr (±6)	30 Aug ¹	31 Dec	17 Oct (±19)
Common/Arctic Tern	04 Apr	10 Mar	01 Apr (±4)	04 Oct	31 Dec	02 Oct (±11)
Black Tern	17 Apr	09 Mar	15 Apr (±15)	13 Sep	16 Nov ³	28 Sep (±13)
Pomarine Skua	23 Apr	10 Mar	21 Apr (±5)	14 Nov	31 Dec	25 Oct (±40)
Osprey	18 Mar	04 Mar	22 Mar (±11)	10 Oct	09 Dec	27 Oct (±8)
Wryneck	19 Apr	22 Mar ¹⁸	14 Apr (±9)	18 Sep	02 Nov ⁶	07 Oct (±12)
Hobby	29 Mar	21 Mar	03 Apr (±6)	24 Oct	09 Nov	24 Oct (±7)
Sand Martin	14 Mar	27 Feb	12 Mar (±7)	04 Nov	01 Dec ⁷	23 Oct (±9)
Barn Swallow	06 Feb	04 Feb ¹⁷	09 Mar (±10)	25 Dec	28 Dec ¹⁷	02 Dec (±13)
House Martin	15 Mar	01 Feb	18 Mar (±8)	19 Nov	31 Dec	19 Nov (±18)
Wood Warbler	07 May	07 Apr	23 Apr (±8)	01 Sep	07 Oct	10 Sep (±15)
Willow Warbler	07 Mar	04 Mar	17 Mar (±4)	16 Oct	27 Nov	24 Oct (±8)
Sedge Warbler	17 Mar ¹	23 Mar	31 Mar (±7)	20 Oct	01 Nov	14 Oct (±7)
Reed Warbler	07 Apr	02 Apr	07 Apr (±4)	07 Nov	01 Dec	29 Oct (±13)
Grasshopper Warbler	09 Apr	02 Apr	08 Apr (±5)	07 Oct	01 Nov	07 Oct (±7)
Garden Warbler	09 Apr	28 Mar	05 Apr (±6)	03 Oct	16 Nov	13 Oct (±14)
Lesser Whitethroat	10 Apr	04 Apr	09 Apr (±4)	17 Oct	18 Nov ¹⁰	16 Oct (±14)
Common Whitethroat	04 Apr	19 Mar	04 Apr (±4)	09 Nov	17 Dec	28 Oct (±23)
Ring Ouzel	04 Apr ¹⁹	04 Feb ¹¹	24 Mar (±19)	30 Nov	26 Dec	12 Nov (±12)
Spotted Flycatcher	23 Apr	10 Apr ¹⁵	25 Apr (±7)	09 Oct	18 Nov	09 Oct (±7)
Common Nightingale	06 Apr	21 Mar	05 Apr (±3)	14 Oct ¹	01 Oct ¹²	11 Sep (±11)
Pied Flycatcher	09 Apr	01 Apr	12 Apr (±6)	11 Oct	01 Nov	01 Oct (±12)
Common Redstart	26 Mar	05 Mar	29 Mar (±11)	14 Oct	26 Dec	29 Oct (±24)
Whinchat	11 Apr	18 Feb	06 Apr (±13)	14 Oct	02 Dec	28 Oct (±9)
Northern Wheatear	21 Feb	13 Feb	10 Mar (±4)	04 Nov	31 Dec	10 Nov (±11)
Yellow Wagtail	04 Apr	12 Feb	26 Mar (±8)	23 Oct	23 Nov ¹³	27 Oct (±11)
Tree Pipit	04 Apr	24 Mar ¹⁶	03 Apr (±5)	14 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;

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 2013-14 and at Firle 2019-20; ¹⁸ excludes one on 9 Mar 1908 and on 10 Mar 1918 both at Pulborough; ¹⁹ excludes wintering individual at Cuckmere Haven 22 Jan 2020 to 2 Mar.

Departure and arrival dates of winter visitors, 2020

	Last recorded date			First recorded date		
	2020	1960 - 2019	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)	2020	1960 - 2019	10-yr average (\pm SD in days)
White-fronted Goose	19 Mar	25 May	01 Apr (± 26)	15 Oct	12 Sep	24 Oct (± 29)
Bewick's Swan	26 Feb	26 Apr	01 Mar (± 8)	22 Dec	06 Oct	12 Nov (± 15)
Velvet Scoter	07 May	15 Jun	16 May (± 15)	20 Sep	02 Aug	21 Oct (± 12)
Long-tailed Duck	24 May	14 Jun	19 Apr (± 38)	26 Oct	12 Aug	29 Oct (± 12)
Goldeneye	31 May ¹	31 May	15 Apr (± 19)	28 Oct	06 Aug	20 Oct (± 15)
Smew	29 Jan	24 Apr	07 Mar (± 15)	-	22 Oct	24 Nov (± 23)
Goosander	03 Apr	23 Jun	21 Apr (± 44)	26 Sep	12 Sep	17 Oct (± 20)
Red-necked Grebe	-	19 Jun	14 Apr (± 27)	25 Oct	13 Aug ²	23 Oct (± 28)
Purple Sandpiper	10 May	4 Jun	26 Apr (± 15)	12 Sep	1 Jul	29 Sep (± 42)
Jack Snipe	28 Mar	19 May	14 Apr (± 14)	12 Oct	11 Aug	26 Sep (± 29)
Black-throated Diver	08 May	21 Jun	19 May (± 8)	18 Oct	03 Aug	15 Oct (± 19)
Great Northern Diver	29 May	21 Jun	31 May (± 8)	24 Sep	16 Sep	20 Oct (± 11)
Hen Harrier	25 May	19 Jun	23 May (± 13)	10 Aug ⁶	4 Aug	24 Aug (± 11)
Great Grey Shrike	-	5 May ⁴	25 Mar (± 22)	24 Oct	26 Sep ³	18 Oct (± 16)
Fieldfare	26 Apr	5 Jun	20 Apr (± 4)	15 Sep	6 Aug	30 Sep (± 6)
Redwing	01 May	26 May ⁵	13 Apr (± 10)	11 Sep	6 Aug	20 Sep (± 17)
Water Pipit	18 Apr	28 May	03 Apr (± 16)	11 Oct	1 Sep	25 Oct (± 11)
Brambling	18 Apr	12 May	16 Apr (± 10)	18 Sep	3 Sep	30 Sep (± 4)
Snow Bunting	09 Jun ¹	6 May	22 Feb (± 13)	25 Nov	17 Sep	22 Oct (± 15)

Notes: ¹ earliest or latest county record; ² excludes one off Brighton on 3 Aug 1872; ³ excludes one at The Crumbles on 7 Sep 1899; ⁴ excludes one at Rye Hbr on 14 May 1950; ⁵ excludes two undated historic records of birds found dead in June; ⁶ at least three July birds.

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 2020 - summary of counts in West Sussex

	AC	BD	CC	GC	IC	LC	LS	SC	WC	WD
Woodcock	3	2	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Stock Dove	1	-	2	-	2	3	2	1	-	8
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nightjar	20	7	4	-	6	9	-	2	5	-
Green Woodpecker	5	-	1	-	4	6	1	1	3	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	7	-	1	6	5	4	1	3	3	3
Hobby	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Woodlark	4	11	2	3	9	3	-	1	14	3
Skylark	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Whitethroat	3	7	1	-	2	3	-	2	10	-
Dartford Warbler	7	14	2	-	6	5	-	1	1	-
Common Redstart	1	6	2	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Eurasian Stonechat	5	13	2	-	12	5	-	1	10	1
Tree Pipit	5	12	4	1	4	-	2	-	-	-
Meadow Pipit	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Linnet	5	5	-	-	3	5	-	1	5	4
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Crossbill	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Siskin	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Yellowhammer	2	-	-	-	8	6	-	3	16	-
Reed Bunting	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

Figures relate to pairs or territories. The small hyphen (-) indicates that no territories were identified. The surveys this year were incomplete due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Key to sites

AC	Ambersham & Heyshott Commons	LC	Lavington & Duncton Commons & Plantation
BD	Black Down (Fernhurst)	LS	Linchmere & Stanley Commons
CC	Chapel Common	SC	Stedham Common
GC	Graffham Common	WC	Woolbeding Common
IC	Iping Common	WD	Weavers Down (Liss)

The above heathland sites were the only ones surveyed this year



Nightjar, Ambersham Common, 25 May (Matt Eade)

Finders' Accounts of Notable Species in Sussex, 2020

Common Nighthawk, Church Norton, 8th October

Rev. Andy Wilkes

On Thursday 8 Oct at 14:15 hr I was walking along the beach at Church Norton when something caused me to look up and I saw what appeared to be a falcon heading towards me. It was silhouetted against the sky and thinking it to be one of the local Peregrines I lifted my camera to take a few photos. As I did so I could see white flashes on the bird's long wings. I immediately assumed it to be a Nightjar, a bird I had seen many times before just a few miles to the north. I took a few more photos as it passed directly overhead before it turned inland, heading for Norton Wood at the back of the Severals.

I walked up the shingle to follow its progress through my binoculars until it dropped down into a group of dead trees behind the old horse field. Once in the trees it was lost from my view. I decided to put the message out to our local birding group that a Nightjar had just dropped in. Looking at my mobile phone I could see that it had very little battery charge left, and I could barely read the dark screen to type the letters. I decided to head home to check my photos on my computer. Back at the car park, and with my glasses on, I could just about read a message asking if I had any photos. I was able to reply that I did and that I was heading home to check them. As I drove the two miles back to the rectory, I started to wonder if it had been just an ordinary Nightjar. What else could it be?

Back at my computer and with my Collins Guide to hand I noticed straight away the forked tail, the throat marks and the barred belly! As I stared at my photos on my computer, and compared them with the book, I knew exactly what it was, a Common Nighthawk! I walked slowly into the kitchen with my face in my hands and told my wife that I might just have found a rare American bird, a MEGA! I quickly downloaded a couple of photos and sent them to the local group asking if this was in fact a Nighthawk. Messages started to come back positive. More experienced birders than me were happy with my identification. I then posted a few photos on Twitter, to get the news out, before heading back down to Church Norton.

Back at the Severals six of us scanned the woods where I had last seen the bird. Then someone shouted that it was there! Sure enough the Nighthawk was flying around, first at a distance over the woods and then much closer over the Severals. We all watched in awe as it danced and dived, flitting about with those long erratic wing beats. It even doubled back and flew directly over our heads, much to the delight of everyone present. It then moved off, heading down the spit towards the harbour entrance. As a few more birders started to arrive I decided to head home, still shaking from all the excitement. I was glad that a few other birders had got to share that excitement too. I think my experience once again demonstrates the value of patch-birding. Having a patch that one can walk regularly throughout the year, through the changing seasons and in all weathers, sometimes pays off.

Over the last few years, I have found many interesting birds here, such as Bee-eater, Golden Oriole, Pallid Swift (another first for Sussex), Black Tern, Red-necked Grebe and more recently Lapland Bunting and Yellow-browed Warbler, all on the same patch at Church Norton. And, of course, we occasionally get the big ones, like the Elegant and Royal Terns. Birds happen, and you never quite know what you are going to find. One thing is for sure, if you are not out there looking you are never going to find anything. The Common Nighthawk is my first self-found MEGA and I have learned much from the experience. The Latin name for it is *Chordeiles minor* meaning evening dancer, and what a wonderful sight it was.



Common Nighthawk, Church Norton, 8 October (Andy Wilkes)

Bearded Vulture, Beachy Head area, 14th and 15th October

Matt Eade

As I'm now based in NE Hampshire, my lack of autumnal days spent on the patch and surrounding coastal sites in East Sussex had been hard to take in autumn 2020. Therefore, it was with some relief that I was granted 12 days of annual leave during the mid-October period, a period that saw the winds originating from Siberia; a distinct improvement from last year's appalling autumn!

In the days prior, the long-staying Bearded Vulture (or Lammergeier as I prefer) that had taken up some form of residence in or around the Peak District had now started its journey south, stopping off in some of the counties in eastern England. Thinking it would carry on along this trajectory, further sightings of the bird flying south over Bedfordshire, and then a sighting in west Kent, gave us Sussex birders some hope that we would be its last chosen county before its inevitable return flight across the Channel. However, it had been two days without any more sightings, therefore, it felt likely the vulture had sneaked off unnoticed.

My first day of 12, on 14 Oct, saw me driving down from Hampshire and stopping off at Widewater Lagoon for the Grey Phalarope, which showed briefly before flying off. A grand start, so

I headed straight for the headlands further east full of optimism, where I began my quest of trying to find what is surely the most sought-after eastern vagrant in Sussex, a Red-flanked Bluetail (not one of the three recent birds have been 'twitchable' in the county)!

I arrived at Crowlink car park (near Friston Forest) around midday and walked down to the small village that always feels like it should be harbouring a White's Thrush, or a vagrant of similar ilk. With barely anything to note here, I walked towards the gorse-laden cliffs, and then east towards Birling Gap, before traipsing north along 'Sardine Valley' (a Sardinian Warbler was found here in 1976) to a swing gate where I strategically stopped for a well-deserved breather. Leaning on the gate and facing north, I soon became aware of an absolute brute of a bird cruising low over the distant horizon. As this bird was gliding ever so slightly towards me, I failed to make out any features at all, so I quickly concluded that I was either in the presence of a White-tailed Eagle, or even perhaps, the Lammergeier that had been wandering south in the preceding few days.

Mercifully, the unnamed bird changed course, revealing its long and 'rounded' tail, and then, after some deep wingbeats where a little height was gained, the vulture-like head shape was a dead giveaway – the mystery of the Lammergeier's disappearance was over!

As is always the case when I find a rarity (this occurs not so often as one would like), panic stations soon set in, and with good reason: not only had the vulture glided out of sight, but I was also in a signal black-out area. In my wellies, I hurtled myself up the slope of the seventh Sister, past two bemused Chinese tourists and, now exhausted, arrived on the ridge of Went Hill overlooking the village of East Dean. A quick tweet was tweeted, however I could no longer see the vulture. With improving phone signal, I sent out further 'WhatsApps' and tweets, which expectedly, gathered a mass response. Laurence, aka 'Beachy Birder', was only a mile away at Belle Tout, and whilst having a frantic phone call with him, I again spotted the Lammergeier, this time sat in a field surrounded by an army of corvids. I was quickly joined by Laurence, and with news now firmly out on the bird information services, I could relax and await fellow twitchers from around the county.

Raptors, however, are not generally the easiest birds to twitch as they rarely stay still for long. On this occasion, and somewhat typically, the Lammergeier was prompted to lift-off as a farmer approached the bird in his vehicle. For the next 45 minutes, the vulture circled above the village of East Dean, at times showing incredibly well and dwarfing anything that came close (the width of a Common Buzzard wasn't even a width of the Lammergeier's wing!) before gradually heading off in a westerly direction, where it was later viewed from High and Over car park (east of Seaford).

Ever since the Lammergeier appeared on our shores and settled down in the Peak District (where I was lucky to see it during its stay), the route of its return leg to the Alps certainly exercised the minds of a few local patch workers. Beachy Head has long been known as a reliable site for migrating birds of prey in the autumn, therefore, it was rather fitting to watch this incredible bird rise into the thermals the following day and eventually drift out to sea.

As great as it was to find this excellent bird, it was as always even more pleasing to share this wonderful experience with all the birders that came to see it. From a bird-finder's perspective, distributing news as soon as possible can be just as rewarding as finding the pot of gold in the first place.

The remaining 11 days of my leave were, unsurprisingly, underwhelming compared to the events that had just occurred, sad to say that the Bluetail will have to wait for yet another year.

Currently, it is thought the Lammergeier will end up being accepted into Category E, therefore, its likelihood of appearing on the Sussex list is slim, but when you can say to yourself that you have seen a wild-bred Lammergeier in Sussex, does it really matter what list it ends up on?

Recorder's note

As Matt anticipated, this individual was placed in BOU Category E, and not admitted to the British List, on the basis that the population from which it came is not yet considered to be self-sustaining.

Details of the bird's plumage proved it to be the same bird seen in northern France, the Netherlands, Belgium and the Channel Islands in May and June. It first appeared in Britain on 25 Jun, when it was photographed in the West Midlands. Between the last day of June and 19 Sep, the vulture was seen regularly in the Peak District. As it subsequently roamed in the autumn, sightings followed in Leicestershire, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Kent; the last just two days before reaching East Sussex.

Genetic material extracted from feathers collected below one of the bird's Peak District roosts revealed its individual identity and parentage. The female bird, named "Flysch", had fledged on 6 Jul 2019 in the northwest Alps to a released female and a wild-hatched male (whose parents were releases). These Bearded Vultures are from a reintroduction project which some argue has restored a self-sustaining population in the mountain range. However, other authorities (including the British Ornithologists' Union) do not yet agree that this has been proven. Importantly, additional releases continue to be made to boost genetic diversity. Therefore, any vagrants from the Alps population may be consigned to Category E for the time being. Nonetheless, watching a Bearded Vulture in a wild state in Sussex was an unforgettable experience for many birders, regardless of its place on the British List, and probably not one they'd ever anticipated.



Bearded Vulture, East Dean, 14 October (Matt Eade)

The Sussex Ringing Report 2020

Val Bentley

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions did not permit ringing activities, except in gardens, during the “lockdown” from the end of March to late May. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) issued guidance for ringers, which was updated whenever relevant announcements were made by the government. From the end of May there was a relaxation of the restrictions, so that outdoor activities with social distancing and limited numbers were permitted, and most ringers were able to operate during the busy summer and autumn months, keeping activities within the published guidance. Most migration was finished by the time a second lockdown arrived, from 5 Nov, which again put a stop to most ringing until the end of the year.

This year was another one which brought frequent storms, and the flooding which had occurred at the end of 2019 continued into the first part of 2020. This affected winter ringing at sites such as Ladywell and Charleston Reedbed which both remained under water. The Meteorological Office reported that February 2020 was the wettest on record, with named Storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge sweeping through the country, but then followed a sunny spring, the eighth warmest on record for the UK, and a summer which had long, hot dry spells leading to worries about low levels of supplies in reservoirs. However, autumn brought the wettest day since records began in 1891, on 3 Oct in the wake of Storm Alex. The final three months of the year were changeable, but with no really cold snaps, and plenty of rain to replenish the reservoirs.

With no prolonged cold weather during the winter of 2019/20 it is likely that our resident species will have survived well. This is supported by the comparisons are made by the BTO Constant Effort Sites (CES) scheme. The preliminary report for 2020 is available online at <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/ringing-scheme/ringing-surveys/constant-effort-sites/ces-results/preliminary-1> and will be referred to later in this article.

Five ringing groups operate in Sussex: Rye Bay Ringing Group (RBRG) at Pett Level, Beachy Head Ringing Station (BHRS), Cuckmere Ringing Group (CuRG) 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 sites throughout the county, where individual ringers operate. The Barn Owl Study Group (BOSG) monitors nest boxes for the species, and rings nestlings, some adults and other species which sometimes use Barn Owl boxes. The primary source of data is the BTO Online Ringing Report. With a few exceptions, most ringers also send in their annual results which give an overall picture of where in the county species have been ringed. Information on ringing at the Knepp Estate is taken from the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre “Adastra” report.

The total of 38,428 birds ringed in Sussex in 2020 was 5.6% higher than in 2019 (See Table 1). RBRG contributed an additional 2467 birds, CuRG also ringed just over a thousand more than in 2019 when the site was affected even more badly by floods. The only group returning a significant decrease was at BHRS where the total was down from 3048 in 2019 to 1588 this year. Ringers in Sussex contributed just over 4.1% of the total of 930,091 birds ringed in the UK and Ireland in 2020. This overall total may be subject to adjustment if data is received after the initial publication.

Figures for the annual totals of birds ringed in Sussex are taken from the British Trust for Ornithology website at <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports>, and are shown below, together with those for the preceding six years.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	31,700	28,683	28,170	41,633	33,436	36,378	38,428
Rye Bay RG	15,883	12,847	11,124	19,137	11,917	15,151	17,618
Others	15,817	15,836	17,046	22,496	21,439	21,227	20,810

Table 1. Ringing totals in Sussex 2014-2020

Top 20 species ringed

There were 91 species ringed in the county in 2020, and the complete annual totals of all species for East and West Sussex can be found on the BTO Online Ringing Report.

With Sussex being on the flyway to Europe for migrating warblers, it is expected that many of these will find their way into the county's mist nets. Blackcap numbers were reduced this year, and were 11% of the total ringed in Britain & Ireland (13% in 2019). For other migrant warbler species trapped in the county, the Sussex totals compared with those nationally were 14% for both Reed and Sedge Warbler (12% and 9% in 2019), 7% for Common Whitethroat (9% in 2019), 8.4% for Chiffchaff (7% in 2019) and 7.5% for Willow Warbler (6.2% in 2019). Over 100 Lesser Whitethroats were ringed at the Knepp Estate within a county total of 256 which was 11% of the national figure. The 606 Grasshopper Warblers ringed, 552 of which were by RBRG, was 36% of the total of 1685 for the whole of Great Britain & Ireland. The year saw an autumnal influx of Lesser Redpolls; of the 3555 ringed in Sussex, 10% of the overall total, 2414 were by RBRG, 397 by CuRG and 374 at BHRS.

Position in 2020	Species (position in 2019)	2020	2019	Previous years 2018	2017
1	Blackcap (1)	7122	9448	6109	8099
2	Chiffchaff (3)	3854	3091	2941	5774
3	Lesser Redpoll (-)	3555	28	176	821
4	Reed Warbler (4)	3090	2749	2928	4049
5	Sedge Warbler (6)	2869	1720	2935	3909
6	Goldfinch (5)	2736	2328	2407	2007
7	Blue Tit (2)	2553	3893	3099	3135
8	Willow Warbler (7)	1874	1584	1544	2479
9	Great Tit (8)	1026	1474	1437	1187
10	Swallow (-)	1022	226	822	261
11	Common Whitethroat (9)	962	1399	764	1055
12	Robin (10)	718	815	633	659
13	Grasshopper Warbler (18)	606	363	545	573
14	Greenfinch (16)	572	367	684	396
15	Goldcrest (11)	479	631	591	1331
16	Dunnock (13)	458	512	429	434
17	Wren (14)	422	442	436	441
18	Blackbird (12)	361	539	544	519
19	Reed Bunting (19)	358	318	300	345
20	Garden Warbler (15)	352	441	389	478

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.

Comparing this year’s Sussex totals with those from 2019, decreases were evident for Blackcap and Common Whitethroat, down by 25% and 31% respectively, though both were ringed in greater numbers than in 2018. Only 352 Garden Warblers were ringed, which was the lowest total since 2016. Totals for Reed and Sedge Warbler increased, by 12.5% and 67% respectively, with the vast majority of the birds trapped by RBRG. Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff also showed increases, of 18% and 25%.

Preliminary results from the BTO’s CES ringing scheme indicate that while adult abundance for five migrant species appeared to have been good, the largest increases were noted for the shorter-distance migrants, Blackcap and Chiffchaff “both of which were found to be more abundant than in any previous years since CES began in 1983”; Common Whitethroat, Garden Warbler and Willow Warbler also increased but by a smaller amount (see below). However, breeding success (productivity) decreased for all five. Reed and Sedge Warblers showed decreases in both adult abundance and productivity, which appears to run contrary to the results from ringing in Sussex, with an increase in totals for both species compared with 2019.

Species	Adult Abundance Change	Productivity Change
Chiffchaff	21%	-4%
Willow Warbler	14%	-11%
Blackcap	39%	-13%
Garden Warbler	12%	-16%
Whitethroat	17%	-6%
Sedge Warbler	-8%	-7%
Reed Warbler	-3%	-3%

Table 3. *Adult Abundance and Breeding Success of Migrant Warblers in Britain and Ireland in 2020 compared with the five-year average (Extract from BTO CES preliminary report)*

Although results this year were affected by the lower number of sites where visits were able to be made, “the programmes that calculate the CES trends are able to compensate for missed visits however, so this should not have affected the results”.

CES adult abundance change as a percentage compared to the five-year average (2015-9) showed increases of 61% and 20% for Blue and Great Tits. However, productivity was significantly reduced, 55% lower for the former and 39% lower for the latter. Comparing the proportion of first years to adults of these two species ringed in Sussex in 2020 with that in 2019 shows a similar trend. In 2019 79% of Blue Tits ringed were nestlings or juvenile birds, compared with only 56% this year, while for Great Tits 76% of those ringed in 2019 were nestlings or juveniles, compared with 63% in 2020. The BTO suggest that “the above average abundance of these species during 2020 resulted in increased competition for resources between pairs”.

For the most common finches, the Goldfinch total was the highest since 2011, but in that year activity by RBRG was much greater than in subsequent years, and the combined county ringing total for all species was over 100,000. In Britain & Ireland 23% more Goldfinches were ringed in 2020 than in 2011, but it is a different scenario with Greenfinch and Chaffinch over the same period, down by 50% and 41% respectively.

Two of the hirundine species were ringed in slightly greater numbers in 2020. RBRG ringed 873 out of a county total of 1022 Barn Swallows, and 274 House Martins were ringed. However, there were only 58 Sand Martins, of which RBRG contributed 56.



Spotted Flycatcher , Cissbury, 31 August (Peter Denyer)

Barn Owls and Kestrels

There were 201 Barn Owls ringed in what was “a poor breeding year for the species nationwide” (T Hallahan pers comm); of these 198 were nestlings and only three were adults. The BOSG ringed 158, GCM Roberts 16 and RJ Lanaway 10. An adult trapped at Plumpton in both 2019 and 2020 was from a brood ringed on 16 Jun 2014 in Suffolk.

In addition, 18 Kestrels were ringed, including 11 nestlings by the BOSG. Recoveries in Sussex of birds from outside the county included one found dead at Brooks Green (Horsham) on 23 Aug, ringed as a nestling in West Meon (Hampshire) on 22 Jun 2016 and another ringed as a nestling at Send (Surrey) on 30 May 2017 found dead in a car park on the Goodwood Estate on 30 Mar. Moving from Sussex was one ringed as a chick in 2019 in Bishopstone Village which drowned in a water trough in February, 188 km away in Chilton (Oxfordshire).

Other occupants of Barn Owl boxes checked by the BOSG included Stock Dove (18), Jackdaw (9), Kestrel (3), Tawny Owl (1) and Mandarin Duck (1).

Gulls and Terns

Due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, no nestlings were ringed at Pagham Hbr this year, though five Common Tern chicks were ringed, three at Ardingly Res, and two at Warnham LNR.

Other Species (Totals 1979-2020 in brackets where relevant)

As in 2019 two Mute Swans were ringed at Warnham LNR. RBRG captured one Greylag Goose and five Mallards. A new addition to the Sussex ringing list was White Stork; four nestlings were ringed as part of the breeding project at the Knepp Estate. There were eight Water Rails, all in the Rye area, 14 Moorhens, three Common Snipe and two Woodcock (50). A single Cuckoo (90) was ringed, at Warnham LNR. RBRG captured two of the three Tawny Owls ringed this year, plus a Long-eared Owl (24). Four Swift nestlings were ringed.

There were 41 Nightingales, the majority ringed at Knepp, including seven pulli, 18% of the UK & Ireland total of 228, and 16 Common Redstarts. All five Whinchats this year were trapped by RBRG, who also ringed 38 of the 48 Stonechats. The fact that only 80 Redwings were ringed in 2020 was probably due to the November to December COVID restrictions. They are easier to attract into mist nets than Fieldfares; only three of the latter species were trapped, and a single Mistle Thrush. CuRG caught the only Dartford Warbler (54).

The vast majority of *Phylloscopus* warblers ringed are Willow Warblers or Chiffchaffs, but occasionally a more unusual species turns up. In 2020 three different eastern Palearctic warbler species were found. A total of five Yellow-browed Warblers (43) arrived at four different sites. A Dusky Warbler at BHRS was the second of the species trapped there, the previous one as long ago as 1974; the only others ringed in the county were both by RBRG, in 2008 and 2011. It proved very difficult to assign an age to this latest individual, and eventually, with the agreement of the BTO, this was left undetermined. A Hume's Warbler at Pett Level was another new addition to the county ringing list on 7 Nov. Initially counted as a second Yellow-browed, there were suspicions that it was not; a feather was sent for DNA analysis, which confirmed it as a Hume's, only recognised as a full species by the BOURC in 1995 (Thomas 2014). The only other individual of the species ringed in Britain & Ireland in 2020 was in Orkney.

Three Pied Flycatchers (279), including two by RBRG, and 15 Spotted Flycatchers were ringed at various sites. RBRG trapped all of the 22 Bearded Tits ringed in the county this year an increase over eight in 2019, and of a county-wide total of 37 Marsh Tits, 15 were nestlings. It is likely that the spring lockdown was a factor in the decrease from 63 nestlings in 2019.

As far as less frequently ringed finches were concerned, there was a single Brambling at RBRG, a Common Redpoll (116) at BHRS, and four Corn Buntings, the first for many years.

Not counted as part of the county ringing totals, but of interest, was the release in November at Rye Hbr of a rehabilitated Pallid Swift, which had been transported to Sussex from a wildlife rescue service in Somerset, where a BTO ring had been fitted.



Common Redpoll, Beachy Head, 17 October (Martin Banks)



Hume's Warbler, Pett Level, 7 November (John Willsher)



Dusky Warbler, Beachy Head, 5 November (Sarah McKenzie)

Colour-ringing and Tagging Projects

Honey-buzzard. Five Honey-buzzard chicks from three broods were colour-ringed, making a total of 130 birds ringed in Sussex since the project started in 1997 (see species account in main Report).

Stone-curlew. No chicks were ringed this year (see species account in main Report)

Greenshank and Redshank. There were no captures of these species in Sussex in 2020. However, the Redshank ringed as a first-year bird at Thorney Island on 3 Sep 2016 and reported near Reykjavik (Iceland) on 31 May 2019 was at the same location on 19 Jun this year.

Peregrine. Because of COVID restrictions it was not possible to ring Peregrine nestlings in 2020. Two Sussex-ringed birds were discovered elsewhere in 2020. A nestling female ringed at Chichester Cathedral on 23 May 2013 was found dead in Wiltshire on 29 May, and another female ringed as a chick near Amberley on 26 May 2017 was found sick at Dorking on 13 Aug. 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 2020. The following is a selection from the BTO Online Ringing Report of birds which have been seen, trapped by ringers, or found dead 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 provided information obtained personally from other ringing schemes, usually those involving

colour rings, or from postings on the SOS website which contained comprehensive details. Controls are ringed birds captured and subsequently released at another ringing site, or where a colour ring has been read and reported; 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 individuals which have survived longer than the species' usual life span, some of which were retrapped at the site where they were first encountered. Longevity records referred to are as shown on BTO BirdFacts and give the time elapsed between ringing and recovery or control and are thus only an accurate reflection of the age of the individual if it was ringed as a nestling.

Recoveries of wildfowl are normally the result of hunting activity. Two **Canada Geese** ringed on the same day In July 2018 at Walthamstow Res were shot in Sussex, one at Barns Green on 14 Jan and the second at Amberley on 15 Nov. Another ringed at Regent's Park (London) on 5 Jul 2009 was found dead at Barns Green on 27 Jan. A ring found at Powdermill Wood (Battle) in January had come from an adult female ringed at Grimsthorpe Castle (Lincs) on 4 Jul 1970, but the bird itself was probably long dead. Of the nestlings from the **White Stork** Project site at the Knepp Estate, one individual ringed in May was near Plymouth on 2 Sep, found its way back to Knepp by the 6th, but then was seen on 3 Nov at Wadhurst Park, another site participating in the Project. Two **Gannets** found dead on the coast originated from different nesting sites. The oldest was ringed as a nestling on 20 Jul 1990 at Gjesværstappan, a nature reserve consisting of islands off the north coast of Norway. The second bird was from a colony on Les Etacs (Alderney), ringed at the nest on 22 Jun 2002. In addition, a ring from one originating from a 1992 nest at Ortac (Alderney) was found at Seaford in May. The listed longevity record of 21 years 6 months for a **Cormorant** was easily beaten when a bird found dead at Winchelsea on 13 May proved to have been ringed as a chick exactly 29 years previously on 13 May 1991 at Tofteso (Denmark).

A sighting on the SOS website noted that a **Spoonbill** at Pulborough Brooks in February was of Dutch origin. An **Oystercatcher** ringed as an adult on 17 November 2000 at Dawlish Warren (Devon) was seen there in 2019, but this year was at Pagham Hbr, seen alive on 2 Feb, but subsequently found dead on 29 Aug. It had survived for nearly 20 years since it was ringed, but the longevity record for the species currently stands at over 41 years. A colour-ringed **Avocet** from a 2007 nest in Loire-Atlantique (France) was once again noted at Pett Level in both March and April having now been seen there in nine of the last eleven years. One of 21 **Avocets** seen on the Ferry Field at Pagham Hbr on 6 Jun was a 2018 chick from Titchfield Haven (Hants). Two **Curlews** ringed in Europe were reported in Sussex; the first, an adult male ringed on 31 May in Finland was at Fishbourne on 4 Dec, while satellite tag data showed that the second, which had been at Rye Hbr on 27 Aug and then at RSPB Medmerry on 2 Sep, had come from a 2018 nest in north-eastern Poland. Information received on another colour-ringed Curlew seen at Pett Level on 19 Jan revealed that it had been ringed as an adult male on 12 Aug 2007 at Shell Ness (Kent) and that between those dates it had been trapped by ringers at Münster (Germany) on 22 May 2011.

Two **Black-tailed Godwits** colour-ringed at the same site in Yorkshire on 6 Nov 2018 were seen in West Sussex on 20 Jul; one of these was also at Pagham Hbr on 3 Jan. A chick colour-ringed in 2018 as part of a "headstarting" project at WWT Welney was reported at a known migration stopover area in Portugal (ref: [rug-gfn-report_report-black-tailed-godwit-iberia-2018-v2-.pdf](#)) on 4 Feb, but returned to the UK and was seen back at Welney on 8 Apr, at Ouse Washes on 28 Jun and then at Pagham Hbr on 1 Jul. A ring only found at Sussex Heights (Brighton), belonged to a female hatched in Cambridgeshire in May 2002; it was retrapped at its natal site in 2019, but presumably had subsequently become a meal for a Peregrine. Two colour-ringed **Dunlins** were seen at Cuckmere Haven in August; one had been ringed as an adult in August 2018 at Ynyslas NNR (Ceredigion) and the second in northern Poland on 11 Aug, just 19 days previously.

Sussex is a county with a long coastline well watched by birders, hence there are many reports of gulls with colour rings and the following is a summary of those birds which have travelled furthest or have survived longest. Three **Black-headed Gulls** ringed in Poland were seen in East Sussex, another at Goring Gap, and an adult female ringed in Denmark on 25 Mar 2011 was at Pett Level on 12 Mar. Another Polish bird seen on the R Adur on 3 Mar was its first appearance since being ringed as an adult in June 2016. A locally-ringed bird, from a 2007 nest at Chichester GP, was found freshly dead at Widnes GC (Yorkshire) on 21 Jul. At Pett Level, rings were read on 138 **Mediterranean Gulls** (PE Jones pers comm). The breakdown of countries from which these birds originated was Belgium 59, France 32, Netherlands 16, Germany 15, UK 6, Hungary 4, Czech Republic 3, Denmark 2 and Poland 1. The oldest individuals were all ringed as nestlings, three on 26 May 2002 at Zandvlietsluis, Antwerp (Belgium), and another on 1 Jun 2000 at Reimerswaal (The Netherlands), breaking the existing longevity record. One well-travelled individual ringed as an adult at Great Yarmouth (Norfolk) on 8 Nov 2013 had also been seen in The Netherlands and Germany in 2015 and Belgium in 2017. Elsewhere, by the R Arun on 30 Jul was a juvenile ringed as a chick 600 km away in Vendée (France) on 26 Jun, while a Polish-ringed bird from 2018 was also seen there on the same day. An Estonian-ringed **Common Gull** seen by the R Adur on 18 Feb was a female in her 23rd year, on her third colour ring, and it is the first time she has been reported away from her colony at Matsalu NR; however, she is still younger than Estonia's oldest Common Gull "Marta" which lived for 34 years. (RJ Fairbank pers comm).

Two **Great Black-backed Gulls** noted in the Rye area had been ringed abroad, one on 30 Jun 2009 in Seine-Maritime (France) and the second on 27 Jun 2019 at Lindesnes, on the southern tip of Norway. Seen outside McDonald's in Shoreham was a 10 year old female ringed as a chick at Le Havre (France) on 1 Jul 2010, which has also been reported at Dawlish Warren in 2014 and in or around the R Adur in 2015 and 2017. A long-lived **Herring Gull** ringed in its first year of life at Fairlight on 26 Jul 2000 had survived over 20 years before being killed in a collision with a car in Tonbridge in September, and another ringed as an orphan in Hastings in 2003 was seen again on the R Adur on 31 Jan for the first time since 2015. A **Yellow-legged Gull** trapped at Pitsea Landfill Site (Essex) on 20 Nov 2018 had visited France, Bedfordshire and Greater London before being found dead at St Leonards-on-Sea on 1 Mar. The ring from a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was discovered at Pett Level on 16 Nov; the bird was from the same area of Norway as the Great Black-backed Gull, and had been trapped in 2018. In addition, one on the Lower Cuckmere on 10 Feb, ringed as an adult at a landfill site in Guernsey in April 2014, had been seen in Pembroke Bay in 2015 and in Málaga (Spain) on six occasions, including on 22 Jan this year.

Two **Jackdaws** ringed at Pett Level in 2010 were retrapped at the same site in 2020, while another, ringed on 3 Jan 2003 was shot in Burmarsh (Kent) on 31 Aug. RBRG also retrapped several "elderly" **Rooks**, two almost 13 years since they were ringed, and one 15 years later. The longevity records for these two species are 18 and 22 years, but their typical life spans are only five and six years respectively (BTO BirdFacts).

The typical lifespan of a **Blue Tit** is three years (BTO BirdFacts), but CuRG retrapped two individuals ringed in July 2014. An unusually adventurous individual, ringed in Henfield on 25 Mar was controlled in Cambridgeshire on 20 Jun. On 9 Nov RBRG retrapped a **Bearded Tit** ringed on 11 Oct 2015. A young **Cetti's Warbler** from Wiltshire was controlled at Warnham LNR on 22 Sep, fitting in with ringing records which suggest that they "move very little once established as breeders" (Wernham et al 2002). Two migrating **Barn Swallows** trapped at Pett Level on 21 Sep had been ringed over 800 km to the north, one in a nest at Glencalvie (Highlands) on 19 Aug, and the other in Orkney on 16 Aug 2019.

An exchange of **Chiffchaffs** between France and Steyning occurred, when one ringed there on 15 Sep 2019 was controlled at Yvelines NR near Versailles on 10 Sep, while moving the opposite direction was one ringed on 19 Nov 2019 at Marck, near Calais, trapped at Steyning on 8 Feb. Moving 592 km in just 8 days was another from CuRG, trapped in Charente-Maritime (France) on 11 Oct.

RBRG reported 30 controls or recoveries of **Sedge Warblers**, mostly in the UK, but there were three found in Spain, one in The Netherlands, and two in France, while two French-ringed birds, including one ringed in 2017, were controlled by the group. There was an interesting exchange with the Causeway Coast RG (Co Tyrone); an RBRG bird ringed on 6 Aug 18 was trapped at Lough Neagh on 24 Aug, while one ringed there on 8 Aug was caught by RBRG on 24 Aug. With return migration journeys to sub-Saharan Africa of at least 10,000 km it is astonishing how long some **Reed Warblers** can live, and this year there were captures of an individual ringed as a juvenile by RBRG in 2009, which had not been retrapped since 2013, another ringed as a first year bird by CuRG in 2010, and a female which was already an adult when ringed at Steyning in June 2010. RBRG reported that one of their birds was recovered in Spain, while a first year bird ringed by CuRG on 27 Aug 2019 was trapped in The Netherlands on 8 Jul. Two Sussex-ringed **Grasshopper Warblers**, both ringed in 2019, were trapped elsewhere in the UK, one near Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the second in Norfolk. The oldest **Blackcap** captured this year was at Pett Level, just over nine years since it was ringed on 3 Jul 2011. There were two movements to or from the continent; a female ringed by RBRG in 2019 trapped in northern Germany on 2 May, and another ringed at Tardighen, near Boulogne, (France) on 25 Aug, controlled at Rye Hbr on 21 Sep.

Blackbirds hatched in the UK can be very faithful to their natal sites; a male retrapped at Steyning on 19 Sep had also been caught in all but one of the intervening years since it was ringed in 2013. Yet another male, ringed at Cissbury in 2013 was recaptured for the first time on 4 Aug. A ring put on a male on 15 Nov 2004 by RBRG was found at Lakenheath (Suffolk), without its recipient, on 20 Oct. If the bird had survived it would have beaten the longevity record. There were two movements of **Song Thrushes** between Sussex and continental Europe; a first year bird ringed in November 2018 by RBRG was found dead in northern Germany, while a bird trapped at Fairlight in November had been ringed at Brabant (Belgium) in October 2019.

A colour-ringed **Rock Pipit** from Norway was seen at Selsey on 7 Nov. It had been ringed at Malentangen Ornithological Station on the east coast of Norway on 11 Aug 2019 in a similar location to the one reported in Chichester Hbr in 2019. This latter bird was noted again on 3 Jan and returned for a second winter, being seen on both 6 Nov and 10 Dec. According to The Migration Atlas (Wernham et al 2002) "along ice-free shores the species is normally sedentary, but the more northerly populations of *littoralis* migrate southwards in autumn." Found freshly dead at Al Hoceima (Morocco) on 6 Nov was a **Meadow Pipit** ringed by CuRG five years ago on 25 Sep 2015. A total of 38 British-ringed Meadow Pipits have been found in Morocco.

Ringling recoveries for **Chaffinches** demonstrate that movements between the UK and continental Europe mainly involve The Netherlands, Belgium and Norway. Further evidence came from an individual found dead at Horsham on 30 Nov which was an adult male ringed about 140 km north of Oslo (Norway) on 4 Jul. **Lesser Redpolls** captured in autumn at Beachy Head and Pett Level included five ringed in Scotland, one in 2016, another in 2018 and three in 2019. **Goldfinches** ringed five years previously were retrapped at Steyning and Hardham; neither had been seen again until this year. Three birds ringed in Oct 2019 at Hardham were found dead in different regions of France in February, March and April 2020, the furthest distance travelled being 492 km. Moving in the opposite direction was a female ringed 572 km away in Haute-Vienne (France) on 28 Dec 2017, which turned up at Hardham on 18 Jan. Two 2018 birds, from CuRG and RBRG were found on the Continent; the first killed by a cat in Oise (France) on 3 Apr and the second controlled in Belgium

on 28 Mar. The current Bird Report Editor caught three **Siskins** in his garden in Haywards Heath in March 2018; he must have been extremely surprised to receive the information that one was controlled 1850 km away near Helsinki (Finland) on 18 Sep. Only 29 Siskins ringed in Britain & Ireland have been found in Finland, most continental recoveries are in Belgium. RBRG retrapped a **Reed Bunting**, aged as an adult male when ringed on 12 May 2015, for the first time since that year.

Acknowledgements

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Adult Grasshopper Warbler, Cissbury, 31 August (Val Bentley)

The first successful breeding of White Storks in Britain in recent recorded history – events at the nest and post-fledging behaviour of young birds

Stephen Chapman and Lucy Groves

The story of rewilding the 3,500 acres of Knepp Castle estate is well documented (Marren 2016, Tree 2018 & <https://www.kneppestate.co.uk>). The conversion of the land to extensive naturalistic grazing has resulted in rapid development of new habitats and has benefitted both the migrant and resident bird species. The site now supports some of the most important populations of Turtle Doves, Nightingales and warblers in the whole of Sussex (see for instance Smith & Green 2020). The Knepp Wilding project is now recognised internationally as a pioneering and innovative approach to large scale land management. The regeneration and change in habitat is being systematically monitored to better understand the impacts on a whole spectrum of flora and fauna beyond the changing bird populations.

Background on the project

A step change in the history of the Knepp Wilding project came in 2016 with the formation of the White Stork Project which aims to restore a self-sustaining population of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* in southern England by 2030 using Knepp as a base. This project is led by a pioneering partnership of private landowners and nature conservation organisations which include Knepp Estate, Cotswold Wildlife Park and Gardens, Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Warsaw Zoo, and two satellite sites at Wintershall Estate in Surrey and Wadhurst Park Estate in East Sussex.

The goal to establish 50 breeding pairs in the southeast of England by 2030 is being undertaken through a phased release programme which follows the methodology used by a Swedish reintroduction which started in the 1980s and developed into a three-phased programme (Rimberth 2013).

Phase one establishes a static population using flightless birds – wild Polish storks which were injured and, although fully rehabilitated, not fit enough to be released back to the wild. Kept in large six-acre open-topped predator proof enclosures at Knepp in Sussex and satellite sites in the southeast, they act as a magnet for any wild storks flying over. These non-flying birds can breed once sexually mature using specially designed low-level nest sites within the enclosure with their juveniles being able to disperse once fledged, further supplementing the population.

Phase two uses rehabilitated birds, which can fly, held in large aviaries at the sites for two winters so they imprint on the area. These free-flying individuals form resident breeding populations (as seen with the first wild-hatched chicks in spring 2020) and they will stay near the sites that they are imprinted on, remaining in the UK over winter.

The third phase is the release of captive bred juveniles, which facilitates a migratory population, undertaken over a five-year period (2019-2023). The juveniles retain the urge and instincts to migrate south for the winter, returning to these release sites when they reach sexual maturity.

The first Polish storks arrived in 2016. These formed the basis for a captive breeding population at Cotswold Wildlife Park to supply young birds to the project each year and a static population at the Knepp enclosure. These were supplemented by further imports between 2017 and 2019 providing birds to populate the satellite sites in the southeast.

Along with the resident non-flying birds, initial releases aimed at establishing local breeding populations have been undertaken with a total of 58 White Storks being released at Knepp between 2018-2019.

August of 2019 saw the first release of 24 captive-bred juveniles from Cotswold Wildlife Park with a further 19 being released in 2020, eight individuals from each cohort being fitted with GPS tracking devices in partnership with the University of East Anglia, Movetech, British Trust for Ornithology and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. The GPS tracking data allows us to determine home ranges, habitat choice, foraging strategies and flight efficiency as well as tracking migration success and routes. So far, they have shown fascinating behaviour and migration success.

Breeding White Storks at Knepp

In 2019 a pair were seen displaying at Knepp. This pair was formed of a female from the project, GB07, originally from Poland and part of the 2016 cohort. The age of rehabilitated birds is an estimate, however the majority are in their first year when rescued, leading us to believe that the female would have only been in her third year. The male, an unringed individual, is likely to have been a wild vagrant attracted to the project, as all released birds are ringed. They were not successful in their breeding attempt; three eggs were laid which ultimately failed to hatch. This is not unexpected with young birds. The modal age of first breeding in an expanding population in western France was 3.4 years (Barbraud 1999).

Three nesting attempts in 2020

There were three nesting attempts at Knepp in 2020; the Pond Field nest which is the main subject of this paper, and two others. The second nest was located to the north west of Pond Field and had four eggs, three of which hatched, but only a single chick was reared to fledging. This pair was made up of two individuals from an earlier cohort, identified by their Polish rings, female Z9404 green ring (left tibia) and male DE blue ring (left tarsus). These are only two individuals from the project not wearing the blue project ring but retaining their Polish rings. The chick was ringed with a blue Darvic ring GB0J on the left tibia and a BTO ring on the right tarsus.

The third nest, north east of the stork enclosure, was built by a younger pair who arrived at Knepp in early 2019 after being transferred from Poland in 2018. This pair were formed of a female ringed GB5B and a male GB18, and although on the lower end of sexual maturity built a fantastic nest in a dead oak tree and were seen mating. However, they failed to lay any eggs but continued to stay on or near the nest throughout 2020.

In addition to these three nests, a pair were seen attempting to rebuild the nest from 2019 which had been abandoned, however the pair nearby at the second nest became very territorial and often saw any rivals off. This nest was gradually depleted of material as the other nesting pairs utilised it for their own.

The Pond Field nest in 2020

Nest building in 2020 was first noted by Penny Green on 14 Mar in the crown of an old oak in the middle of Pond Field (plate 1). The individuals were later confirmed as most probably the pair from 2019, female GB07 and an unringed male. Typically, White Storks have a strong nest-bond and site fidelity, preferring to return to the same area and frequently to the same nest in subsequent years (Bocheński *et al.* 2006). However, on this occasion the pair built a new nest 500m south west of the 2019 nest. This is not unusual after the failure to rear any young in 2019. Nest switching often occurs when breeding success is low, birds are inexperienced or competition is high (Turjeman *et al.* 2021).



Plate 1. Oak in Pond Field with nest in the crown, right hand side (Stephen Chapman)

A bird was first noted sitting on Pond Field nest on 3 Apr. By 7 Apr it was clear that their behaviour indicated there was a clutch of eggs. On the 7th the female was sitting when the male brought food to the nest and left. The female was seen to move something in the nest and then sat again: a behaviour that indicated she was sitting on eggs. Next day drone footage confirmed there were five eggs. The swap over with the male and female was very quick with very little time off the eggs. They continued to share incubation.

Hatching

On 6 May the male was observed by LG to be moving and eating eggshell and the female was seen returning and regurgitating food onto the nest and moving things around. It was clear that the first egg had hatched. Incubation is 33-34 days (Cramp, ed 1977). On 23 May, inspection of the nest with the drone confirmed that there were three chicks. They were ringed on 17 Jun. Each young bird has a Darvic project ring on the left tibia with white lettering on blue and serials GB3H, GB4H and GB5H plus a BTO ring on the right tarsus.

Fledging

On 2 Jul one chick was seen exercising its wings, hovering and jumping above the nest with another standing and the other sitting low in the nest. The parents were coming and going quite often and not hanging around much, as if trying to entice them out of the nest.

A week later, on the 9th at 1530 hr GB4H the largest chick and thought to be the oldest made its first flight from the nest, simply circling the field and returning. Our best estimate is that this was 64 days after hatching. The expected range is 58-64 days (Cramp, ed 1977), while it can be up to 70 days, ten weeks after hatching (Eggers *et al.* 2015). The next day the same bird made four flights around the field. A second chick GB3H was doing a little flapping but not much else.

11 Jul (66 days since the first evidence of hatching) was a landmark day: the smallest chick GB5H (thought to be the youngest) left the nest at 06.20 hr but was unable to get back up. GB3H followed at around 0830 hr. Both tried to fly up to the nest but could not get high enough. They were still on the ground at 2330 hr. So, both spent the night on the ground amongst the Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*. Early the next day GB3H managed to get back up to the nest and remained there. GB4H, the first bird to fledge, was seen in the enclosure with the adults at feeding time although it was not seen to take any food. GB5H, lacking the power and coordination, was still unable to get high enough to get back into the nest. It again remained on the ground overnight. On the 13th GB4H and GB5H were seen foraging on the ground at 0530 hr. GB3H was up in the nest. At 1515 hr all three young were back in the nest.

The efforts and struggle that GB5H made to gain the ability to fly indicated its younger age or slow development. On the morning of 15 Jul after being fed by the female it was vigorously flapping and lifting off the nest repeatedly, several times one after the other in a freshening westerly breeze. Sometime later that day it left the tree as the next morning on the 16th at 08.45 hr it was at the base of the oak while its siblings were in the nest. It made attempts to regain the nest but was unable to gain sufficient height. It now had the power for sustained flight, circling several times. For example, field notes record 'at 1206 hr it takes off circles the tree and approaches from the west side (others come from the east into the wind), crashes into branches, circles again twice and gives up, landing again in the Ragwort'. It spent the night on the ground and next day at 0900 hr circled the tree twice, below the level of the nest, and flew on by. At last, unconventionally, it landed on the northwest side of the nest. This day when GB5H was seen to be able to make the nest, the older two showed their prowess by joining a soaring group of 15 storks circling very high overhead, before dropping down again to the nest (plate 2).



Plate 2. A fledgling returning to the nest (Stephen Chapman)

The youngest, GB5H continued to struggle with gaining enough height to make the nest. At the same time the older two in the mornings were joining adult birds to soar on thermals. Table 1 shows time away from nest soaring. GB5H was not seen to make one of these sallies, until on day 83 the three birds dropped from height to land on the nest one after the other.

Age (days)	Date	GB3H	GB4H	GB5H
71	16 Jul	13	22	
72	17 Jul	16	16	
75	20 Jul		17	
83	28 Jul		54	32
85	30 Jul	*	15	*
* drops down from high				

Table 1. *The first instances of soaring flights: numbers of minutes each bird spent away from the nest soaring.*

Behaviour on the nest

Observations at the nest covered more than 100 hours over 47 days. Adult birds frequently used the nest tree as a perch during the day and in the evenings (and assumed overnight). The only adults to come near the nest were the parents, or on one occasion an unrelated individual (DE Yellow) which brought food. An adult arriving to feed threw the young into a competitive frenzy with wings outstretched and bills soliciting direct feeds from the parent. By chance of observation, SC witnessed three feeds on day 86 at 0955, 1226 and 1937 hrs. Feeding was generally very functional the bird giving the food departing after only two or three minutes. The last feed witnessed on the nest was on day 88 after hatching.

The young White Storks at Knepp spent a lot of time preening on the nest. From time to time they would engage in allopreening. This activity was never aggressive and never rejected. Towards the end it became difficult to identify ring numbers as the white lettering became obscured with guano. Identification of individuals then had to rely on bill colouration; the extent of reddening varied being more extensive with age. When the weather was windy or wet the birds would stand facing the weather or sitting in strong winds. Temperatures over 30°C would lead to panting with the bill held open.

Hissing was often heard. It was never clear which bird was making the sound, or why. Bill clattering with head back was used as a greeting or acknowledgement. Aggression was witnessed in squabbling over a twig or detritus in the bottom of the nest. In the evenings after arriving back at the nest in the hour before sunset they could be fidgety and seemingly unable to settle. Other days after preening they would settle heads down dozing with one or two sitting down.

All three young were last seen together on the nest on day 110, at sunset on 24 Aug. On the 28th there were two young birds settled on the nest but it was too dark to read their ring numbers.

A group of 25 storks left Knepp on 30 Aug and headed west. It is thought that the chicks from 2020 were part of this group. No further sightings were reported of GB3H and GB5H after leaving Knepp. However, GB4H was reported in Ernesettle, Dorset, on 2 and 3 Sep before being sighted back at Knepp on the 6th. GB4H was then reported as being at Wadhurst Park in East Sussex with several of the juveniles released in August 2020 and has remained there since.

Food

White Storks are opportunistic and have a broad diet that represents this. However, a large proportion of their diet during the breeding season and in summer grounds is made up of invertebrate prey (Kosicki et al, 2006). A study by Antczak *et al.* (2002) found that by number insects constituted 83% of the diet but that by biomass 58% was small mammals (mainly vole species), 22% insects and 11.5% earthworms in immature and non-breeding storks. White Storks are also well documented for using anthropogenic food sources such as landfill sites (Bialas *et al.*, 2021). At Knepp the project birds spend a large amount of time foraging in lags and long grass, feeding on a combination of wild forage, predominantly insects and earthworms along with utilising supplementary feed given to the captive birds. Due to the difficulties of studying food items being brought to the nest by adults (who regurgitate food into the centre of the nest bowl) it is unclear as to the complete composition of this food and the project aims to collaborate with Cardiff University to analyse faecal samples and pellets using DNA barcoding to identify prey items.

How to report sightings

All White Storks from the project are ringed with a blue Darvic ring starting with GB on the left tibia and BTO ring on right tarsus.

White Stork sightings can be submitted via the form on www.whitestorkproject.org or by emailing whitestorksgb@gmail.com You can follow the progress of the project on the website or through social media:

Twitter and Facebook - @ProjectStork

Instagram - @WhiteStorkProject

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White Storks at Knepp, 15 August (Kevin Harwood)

Missing our terns: Common Terns and Black-headed Gulls nesting successfully on a factory roof in Chichester

Linda Smith and Ken Smith

On 21 June 2020 we received an intriguing message from Chichester naturalist, Mary Iden. During her lockdown local walks in early June she had noticed a noisy agitated group of Black-headed Gulls and terns which seemed disturbed by a Herring Gull, above the roof of a building in Quarry Lane Industrial Estate, Chichester. There are always plenty of gulls on the lake nearby, so she thought no more of it. But on a subsequent walk with binoculars, she saw that there were chicks walking around on the roof.

We went straight down there the same day and were amazed to find a mixed breeding colony of Black-headed Gulls and Common Terns nesting on the roof of a popular motor vehicle repair workshop. We could see chicks and counted 12 adult Black-headed Gulls and 11 Common Terns in attendance but the site is difficult to view from the ground and with only binoculars they were hard to count. We returned on 24 June with a telescope and our best estimate was 17 adult Black-headed Gulls with 13 chicks and 9 adult Common Terns with 14 chicks.

We went again on 8 July and counted three adult gulls with five chicks and 11 adult terns with 19 chicks.

The building is a small industrial unit within a few metres of the edge of Quarry Lake as shown in the photographs. The shallow pitched roof is corrugated asbestos cement with the nests and chicks sheltering in the corrugations on both sides. According to the workshop manager the birds have been there for some seven or eight years. Although the staff sometimes get 'dive bombed' they all love the birds and regularly replace any chicks found on the ground back onto the roof. They have put a line of 'pigeon spikes' along the front edge of the workshop building to prevent chicks falling off, potentially onto customers' cars.



The building with terns and gulls nesting on the roof as seen from Quarry Lane Industrial Estate (Linda Smith).

Although Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls nesting on roofs is now very frequent and widespread (Rook 2005, Mitchell *et al.* 2004), roof nesting is rarely reported for Common Terns and Black-headed Gulls. For the UK we found a reference to Common Terns using a roof for nesting from the early days of the Minsmere RSPB reserve (Axell 1977) and birds using a factory roof in Lowestoft since 1993 (Brown & Grice 2005). Elsewhere in the world, roof nesting Common Terns were reported from New York from 1975 (MacFarlane 1977) and from Finland in 1966 (Fisk 1978). In Switzerland it was not until 2015 that roof nesting was reported for Common Terns (Knauss *et al.* 2018). We have found no references to Black-headed Gulls nesting on roofs and, although now quite dated, a review of roof nesting by birds carried out in the late 1970s did not mention the species (Fisk 1978).

The Quarry Lane site is probably unusual in being so close to the shores of the lake offering easy access to open water foraging habitat for the terns. The building is within a few metres of the lake shore and although fishermen use the bank directly below, they are well hidden by the vegetation and the birds don't seem to be disturbed by them. Roof nests are well protected from ground predators. The main avian predators in the area are Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls which nest in low numbers on the roofs of other building in the industrial estate. The terns and Black-headed Gulls nesting together will provide some protection from avian predation.



The building as seen from the footpath alongside Quarry Lake (Linda Smith)

For us this seemed to solve a little mystery. Since moving to Chichester in 2016 we had seen Common Terns flying around the Chichester GPs carrying fish through the summer but as far as we could see they were not nesting on the tern rafts on the lakes themselves. Common Terns have nested on rafts in New Lake since the 1960s. The Sussex Ornithological Society provided and managed the tern rafts and numbers built up, in 1994 at least 22 pairs nested and 54 chicks were ringed and in 2000 there were an estimated 50 pairs nesting alongside Black-headed Gulls. Numbers declined over the next decade and the rafts were increasingly taken over by the gulls, until the last record of 8-10 nesting adults in 2010. The rafts are now abandoned and largely used by Cormorants. Since 2010 there have been no records whatsoever of Common Terns nesting in the Chichester GP complex. It seems that they may have been at the Quarry Lake site all the time.

Footnote: in June 2021 we counted 41 BHG adults with 35 chicks and 13 Terns with 10 chicks.

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Adult Common Tern, West Sussex, 23 April (Andrew House)

Cattle Egret - first breeding records for Sussex

The Lower Cuckmere Valley *Pete Denyer*

Once travel restrictions were over in spring 2020, I made a trip over to the Cuckmere and Friston Forest in late May. I had a nice time on the Cuckmere, seeing my first Whinchat of the year, amongst various other interesting birds, and spent an hour or two there. As I had been keeping a 'lockdown bird list' I decided to go and try for some woodland species, Treecreeper primarily. As I walked through the woods, I noticed that the local heronry was very visible from one the footpaths, and I had some great views of some Little Egret and Grey Heron fledglings. Later on, I heard on the twitchers' grapevine that Cattle Egrets were reportedly breeding in the forest. Having never seen them at the nest, I was immediately intrigued, though didn't hold out much hope of seeing them, the Friston heronry being very spread out and high up in tall trees. Just on the off chance on 15 Jun, I went back to the place where I'd had good views of a few nests and I saw a small egret on a nest precariously on the end of a branch, where I hadn't noticed one before. Thirty minutes passed before I saw the telltale short yellow bill and I immediately contacted the county recorder and the BTO representative to work out how they should be monitored.

I visited again several times between 15 Jun and 15 Aug, to monitor the progress of the nest. I was privileged to view interactions between the adults and later on the development of the chicks. Despite strong winds and the presence of lots of potential predators, including young Grey Herons in the same tree and Common Buzzards, they managed to fledge three young by 15 Aug, which is a decent average clutch size and not bad for a single pair attempt. All three juveniles were still present on 20 Aug, but further visits drew a blank even out on the fields. Interestingly, as I was monitoring them there came reports of a fledged Cattle Egret on the Cuckmere (I don't recall the date), raising suspicions that the nest I was watching wasn't the one that had been initially reported. So there were probably two pairs breeding in Friston Forest this year, despite the enormous visitor pressure on parts of the heronry. It's going to be interesting to see what happens with the species in Sussex in the near future.



Cattle Egrets at nest, Friston Forest (Pete Denyer)

Pagham Harbour *Ivan Lang*

Over the last ten years Cattle Egrets have slowly become an annual feature in ones and twos to the avifauna at RSPB Pagham harbour. In 2008 a pair overwintered in the vicinity of the reserve and there was a possibility they bred but it was not proven. However, in the winter 2018/19 a flock of 26 built up, a record for Sussex at the time. They remained in the area to early spring and were observed carrying nesting material, leading to the hope of breeding. Unfortunately, they moved on in April and some may have been the four pairs that bred successfully in Hampshire in 2019 (Milinets-Raby 2020). As the autumn of 2019 progressed the numbers around the reserve increased again reaching 25 over the winter. They were regularly observed roosting with the Little Egrets in the latter's breeding colony trees.

As spring approached, once again the wait was on to see if they would breed. Reports continued to come in well into May, with lots of activity around the Little Egret colony. By this stage it seemed certain that a few pairs were nesting. At the beginning of June 2020, the annual survey of the colony was carried out. With observations of nests in the colony and observers overlooking the colony, it was confirmed that at least five pairs of Cattle Egrets were breeding alongside 24 pairs of Little Egrets and 11 pairs of Grey Herons, all apparently with young.

By the end of the month the first young Cattle Egrets were observed fledged, associated with the fledged Little Egrets. Observations continued through the early summer and a roost count in July found a minimum of five juveniles in the colony and the adjacent fields. By the autumn into the early part of the winter a total of 56 birds were reported, doubtless joined by birds from Hampshire.



Juvenile Cattle Egret, Pagham Hbr (Ivan Lang)

Arun Valley *Martin Daniel and Martin Kalaher*

In the Arun Valley, there were 2-3 pairs of Cattle Egrets that made a late-summer breeding attempt, but unfortunately none proceeded beyond the incubation stage. We do now see Cattle Egrets in the Arun Valley but not that many, and in the early part of 2020 there were just a few sightings. There was a single Cattle Egret roosting with Little Egrets at Arundel WWT on 2 Jan,

with further singles in the meadows to the east of the reserve on 15 and 16 Feb. On 27 Mar there was a single in the Arundel area, with MD noting that this was the first he had seen in that area for a couple of months. In the spring there were two at Amberley Wildbrooks on 6 May and three in the egret roost at Arundel WWT on 25 May.

Over the next couple of weeks, 2-3 were regularly seen in the Arundel WWT egret roost and then on 11 Jun one of the birds was noted to be in breeding plumage. The following day there was a flock of 12-13 feeding with a herd of cattle in the meadows to the east of the reserve. On 23 Jun eight Cattle Egrets roosted in Arundel WWT but two remained in a nearby heronry. Both were behaving in a territorial manner moving sticks around on abandoned Little Egret nests. On 1 Jul there were at least seven Cattle Egrets in the heronry, with 2-3 birds sitting low down and presumably incubating eggs. On 7 Jul there were at least 13 in the area with six in the heronry, three in breeding plumage and two standing next to two others sitting on nests, with possibly another pair deeper in the wood and other birds feeding in the field 200m to the north. As the weeks went by the sitting birds remained but the others had moved away from the area, and by 3 Aug they had all gone.

The failure of these nests may have been due to the inexperience of these birds but probably more likely it was due to a lack of invertebrates in late July. This species tends to feed on dry grasslands and in the Arun Valley it is likely that in mid-to-late summer, grasshoppers would form the bulk of its diet. With the heatwave of late July/early August in 2020, the grasshopper population plummeted over a 2-3 week period and with the loss of its staple food, these egrets may have been forced to abandon their breeding efforts.

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Adult Cattle Egret, Pagham Hbr (Ivan Lang)

Movements in Sussex in 2020 of White-tailed Eagles from the Isle of Wight project

Steve Egerton-Read, Project Officer

In 2019, the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation and Forestry England started a five-year reintroduction programme to release up to 60 juvenile White-tailed Eagles on the Isle of Wight under licence from Natural England. The juvenile birds are collected as chicks from nests in Scotland under licence from Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot). The chicks are then translocated to special aviaries at a confidential location where they are held until they are ready to be released that same summer. Prior to release, all the juveniles are fitted with GPS transmitters, allowing the project team to follow their movements closely and collect field data across the country. The project hopes that from this translocated population six to eight breeding pairs may become established within 50 km of the release site. This will take some time as White-tailed Eagles do not reach maturity and attempt to breed until they are four or five years of age. Further information and regular updates can be found on <https://www.roydennis.org/category/sea-eagle/isle-of-wight-sea-eagles/> or on social media channels @RoyDennisWF or @seaeagleengland.

Six birds were released in 2019 and seven in 2020. The birds have done well and, at the end of 2020, ten of them were known to be alive. At this early stage of the project, many of the juveniles are still in an exploratory phase of life and unsurprisingly a few travelled through Sussex in 2020. Of the three birds that are known to have done so, G274 and G324 passed through during exploratory flights during the spring and summer and G461 settled briefly in the autumn.

G274, a male released in 2019, was the first bird released by the project known to visit Sussex, arriving on 8 Feb 2020 and spending two days near Goodwood. This was also his first flight away from the island, passing over Hayling Island and through Goodwood before returning to the Isle of Wight via Hampshire and the New Forest. G274 would make two longer exploratory flights that summer, both passing through Sussex but as with his earlier flight, he did not remain for long.

G324, a female also released in 2019, made an incredible journey north into southern Scotland in May, summering in the Lammermuir hills before returning south in September. She passed through Sussex on 7 Sep 2020, spending the next day in the South Downs National Park near Midhurst before returning to the Isle of Wight.

G461, a male released in 2020, was the first of his cohort to leave the Isle of Wight and the last record of known White-tailed Eagles in Sussex in 2020. After leaving the Isle of Wight he spent a week meandering through eastern Hampshire before reaching East Sussex on 7 Oct. He was spotted by local birders over Beachy Head, Eastbourne and Ninfield, but otherwise went quite unnoticed (see Figure 1). G461 would eventually leave the two counties on 13 Oct, returning to the Isle of Wight where he would spend the rest of the winter.

As the numbers of released birds increase more excursions into Sussex can be expected and indeed that has been the case in 2021 with more visits and birds settling in some areas for extended periods. For such large birds White-tailed Eagles can be very inconspicuous so please submit all your records.



Figure 1. G461's journey around East and West Sussex in October 2020. (RDWF/FE).



Common Buzzard and White-tailed Eagle G461, Ninfield, 9 October (Kim Parks)

Photographers' Gallery



Red Kite, Beachy Head, 8 May (Laurence Pitcher)



Shelduck, Cuckmere Haven, 22 March (Matt Eade)



Whimbrel, Cuckmere Haven, 12 July (Sara Humphrey)



Dunlins, Cuckmere Haven, 16 August (Brian Cox)



Willow Warbler, Beachy Head, 24 August (Laurence Pitcher)



Black Redstart, Brighton Marina, 12 December (Tim Squire)



Jackdaws, Beachy Head, 11 June (Roger Charlwood)

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	'Red-spotted' Bluethroat ⁵
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 ⁴	Citrine Wagtail
Dotterel	Rough-legged Buzzard	Richard's Pipit
Temminck's Stint	Hoopoe	Olive-backed Pipit
White-rumped Sandpiper	Bee-eater	Water Pipit ⁶
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 Only where there is evidence that the individual is not from an introduction project or an escape

⁴ Only where there is evidence that the individual is not from the Isle of Wight project.

⁵ White-spotted Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica cyaneola* is a BBRC subspecies.

⁶ Except for coastal area from Eastbourne eastwards.

In addition, descriptions are required for some subspecies, including: 'Black Brant' (*B. b. nigricans*), 'Kumlien's Gull' (*L. g. kumlieni*), 'Continental' Coal Tit (nominate *P. a. ater*), 'Siberian' Chiffchaff (*P. c. tristis*), 'Northern' Willow Warbler (*P. t. acredula*), 'Scandinavian' Rock Pipit (*A. p. littoralis*) and Yellow Wagtail forms *M. f. thunbergi* and *M. f. flava*. However, descriptions are not required for the following subspecies: 'Pale-bellied' Brent Goose (*B. b. hrota*), nominate Herring Gull (*L. a. argentatus*), *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gull, 'Greenland' Wheatear (*O. o. leucorhoa*) and nominate White Wagtail (*M. a. alba*).

Descriptions may also be required for birds seen in unusual circumstances or on an unusual date.

Records of unusual taxa 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 email although postal submissions are also acceptable.

Reports of national rarities (including subspecies) 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>.



Black Brant, Chichester Marina, 28 December (Andy Wilkes)

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D Aguilera ^U	A Ashton-Butt ^T	DG Barber ^{BH}	R Bicker ^{TX}
A Ainge ^X	D Asquith ^T	C Barenhorst ^U	T Bickerton ^W
K Akers-Douglas ^X	T Atkins ^C	CJR Barfield ^{CHTW}	A Bickmore
B Akinola ^{TU}	J Atkinson	A Barker ^X	W Bilham ^X
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S Akkaraju ^U	A Atterbury ^X	D Barker ^T	P Birch ^X
C Albanese ^U	J Attiwell ^T	D Barker ^U	C Bird ^T
J Aldridge ^T	K Attree	J Barker ^X	D Bird
J Alford	S Aubrey-Killen ^T	T Barker ^X	J Bird ^T
S Alford	M Austad ^U	C Barker-Wyatt ^T	LR Bird
P Alfrey ^U	MF Austin	E Barlow ^T	M Bird ^T
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E Allen ^X	S Aylward ^T	B Barry ^X	G Bishop ^T
L Allen ^W	R Aziz ^T	M Barth ^U	R Black ^X
R Allen ^U	U Baake ^U	J Bassett ^W	R Blackman ^T
S Allen ^U	L Bacon ^T	S Bate ^U	N Blackwood
T Allen ^{BCDTW}	J Baddams ^U	A Bateson	S Blair ^X
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L Allen-Williams ^X	R Baggott ^T	E Batiste ^T	T Blake ^T
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M Bravery ^U	N Burrell	J Chapman ^W	J Comford
L Brazier	C Burt	P Chapman ^U	S Conway ^T
A Brennan ^{HWX}	D Burt ^{TUX}	R Chapman ^T	AS Cook
E Brennan ^T	A Burtenshaw	SE Chapman ^T	F Coomber ^X
C Brewer ^X	S Burtenshaw	G Charles	C Cooper ^T
R Brewer	M Busby ^T	ME Charlwood	JF Cooper
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S Brown ^D	N Care ^X	PJ Clay	M Creighton ^T
R Brown-Douglas ^X	G Carmichael ^T	M Clayton-Harding ^{TW}	NC Crighton ^T
S Broxton ^X	S Carpender ^U	J Clements ^T	G Crisp ^X
P Bruce ^X	P Carr ^U	E Clift	S Cro ^U
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R Gardner ^U	T Gordon ^T	T Hall ^T	K Hawkins ^U
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E Garrud ^X	S Gove ^X	C Halstead ^X	RM Haydon ^T
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J Gearing ^U	GW Gowlett	M Hamer ^{UX}	E Hayward ^T
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G Geer ^T	MR Grace ^X	J Hamilton ^T	P Heath-Coleman ^X
CM George ^{BCTW}	T Graham ^T	T Hampton	K Heaven ^X
R George ^C	A Gray ^T	C Hance	K Hedgecock ^X
W George ^X	CC Gray ^T	G Hance	J Hedger ^T
K Gerada	M Gray ^X	A Handford ^T	C Hedley ^X
G Gerrard ^U	P Greaves ^T	D Handley ^U	R Heelan ^X
A Giacomelli ^T	R Greaves ^X	J Hankers ^X	E Hein ^U
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W Holden	AM Hutson ^C	MF Jones ^T	AJ Kirby ^T
AP Holding ^T	M Iden ^X	MGM Jones ^T	W Kirby
PK Holland ^T	D Illman	PD Jones ^U	C Kirk ^T
LG Holloway ^X	JB Ingham ^T	PE Jones ^{BC^{TW}}	J Kirk
AL Holmes ^T	A Ingham ^T	R Jones ^U	M Kirk ^T
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J Holter ^{TW}	R Iredale ^T	S Jones ^X	C Knight ^X
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G Honey ^T	C Iverson ^X	T Jones ^{DT}	L Knight ^{BCT}
M Hooper ^{TU}	BGR Ives ^T	T Jones	RM Knight ^T
S Hooper	RA Ives	M Jordan ^U	RM Knightall ^{TU}
CE Hope ^W	K Jackson ^{BC}	G Judd ^X	J Knowlson ^X
C Horgan ^U	L Jackson ^{TX}	E Jupp ^W	T Knox ^U
JHM Horne ^{CTW}	RA Jackson ^T	W Justice ^T	M Kohler ^T
Horsham DC Recorder	SJ Jackson ^T	ME Kalaher	H Krajenbrink ^T
N Houlihan ^U	S Jacobs ^T	J Kaliniecki ^T	M Kucha ^U
A House	T Jacobs ^X	D Kalyan ^T	R Kurtz ^{TU}
FW Howard	A James ^T	G Keep ^D	O Kyrieleis ^U
M Howard ^X	BD James ^U	A Kelly ^T	A Labrum ^U
MA Howard ^T	D James	RS Kelly	S Laidlaw ^U
T Howard-Jones ^{TX}	GRF James ^{TU}	JJ Kelsall ^X	A Laing ^U
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J Howell	P James ^{TU}	E Kendon ^X	L Lambert ^C
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L Hughes	A Jeffrey ^U	AJ Killick ^{TW}	T Langley ^X
MA Hughes	J Jenner ^T	DE Killick	T Langmead ^T
PH Hughes ^{HT}	F Jennings	J Killick	E Lanneau ^U
R Hughes	P Jepsen ^U	J Kinchington ^C	C Large ^U
C Huisman ^X	DJ Jode ^{TW}	C King ^U	M Larkin ^X
G Humphrey ^U	D Johnson ^U	D King ^X	K Larmer ^U
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P Hunnisett ^X	S Johnson ^X	H King ^X	MR Lawn ^T
L Hunt ^U	S Johnson ^X	J King ^T	B Lawrence ^T
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P Hunter ^U	I Johnston ^X	M King ^T	D Lawson ^X
L Hurley ^T	A Jones ^X	MN King ^{BC^{DT}}	J Lawson ^W
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J Hutcheon ^T	D Jones ^T	R King ^X	A Lee ^X
J Hutchinson ^X	G Jones ^T	T King ^U	BD Lee ^T
NP Hutchinson ^{DTWX}	I Jones ^U	G Kinnard	HJA Lee ^{CEW}

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CL Leeves ^T	S Macpherson ^X	PAF McKenzie Lloyd ^T	L Morton ^X
MP LeGrys	C Maestri ^U	L McManamon ^X	H Mossman ^U
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DC Leversedge ^{BC}	MC Mallett	F McStea ^X	CA Mulley ^T
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SM Lewis	L Mandry ^X	P Meares ^T	A Multhalib
OJ Leyshon	AC Manley	JI Medford ^T	T Munnery ^T
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T Lifton ^{BCT}	S Manning-Jones ^T	J Meeke-Gurney ^X	K Murphy ^{BCT}
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A Lillycrop	R Manso de Zuniga ^X	D Melville ^T	D Murray ^T
D Lindo ^U	MV Mansson ^X	I Mephram	R Muselle
J Lindop ^C	L Manvell ^T	M Merritt ^U	E Mustafa ^{CTW}
C Lindsay ^T	B Mapp ^T	G Messenbird	D Mutters ^T
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C Lister ^T	N Marriner ^T	A Millar ^T	SM Neal ^T
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AH Lloyd	JNR Martin ^T	C Mills ^T	JA Newnham ^{BCHTW}
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CGK Roome ^T	W Sheikh ^U	P Smith ^U	J Swann White ^T
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CE Trollope ^{HT}	P Walkington ^T	L Whitbourn ^X	M Woodgate ^X
D Trott ^T	PH Wallace ^U	P Whitby ^W	K Woodhouse ^T
J Trowell ^W	? Waller ^T	AD Whitcomb	V Wood-Mewett ^{CTX}
L Trownson ^{TX}	E Waller ^X	PJ Whitcomb ^T	P Woods ^T
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G Turrell	G Ward ^T	J Whitman ^X	D Wright ^X
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M Unwin	A Wasley ^U	M Wilkinson	P Young ^X
C Upton	D Waterhouse	J Wilks	P Young ^U
G Upton ^T	T Waters ^{HW}	AJ Williams	S Younger ^{WU}
N Upton ^U	D Watkins ^B	DC Williams ^T	M Zabransky ^T
R Upton ^T	V Watkins ^U	G Williams ^X	N Zimmerman
M Usher ^X	AB Watson	I Williams ^X	Zockler ^T
J Vaillancourt ^U	L Watson ^T	D Williams-Jones	
M Valeriani ^U	M Watson	N Williamson ^X	

Key to superscripts in the above table	
B	Breeding Birds 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
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, 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, the late 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 90 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 2020 by Christine George (sussex.wbs@gmail.com). Thanks are due to the 105 observers involved who are indicated by **C** in the above table.

South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative

This survey started in 2014 with the aim to monitor the farmland birds within the South Downs National Park. This survey was organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details above) and involved a BBS like survey of randomly selected 1-km squares containing at least 50% farmland habitat. The BBS squares in the national park were included in this survey and the 44 surveyors involved are shown with **D** in the above table.

Wealden Heaths Breeding Bird Survey

This continuing survey of heaths and heath woodlands is undertaken in collaboration with the RSPB and the bird clubs of Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey. The Sussex organiser is A Perry, Edgehill Barn, Byworth near Petworth West Sussex, GU28 0HR (alan@alanperry.uk.com). Thanks are due to the ten observers involved who are indicated by **E** in the list of contributors.

Heronry Census

This long-standing national census was organised in Sussex during 2020 by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above). Counts of breeding Grey Herons, Little and Cattle Egrets and Cormorants are given in the systematic list. Thanks are due to the 31 contributors who are indicated by **H** in the above table.

Marsh Tit Survey

This county survey was organised by Dr Rich Black but was not completed due to COVID-19 restrictions; the survey was finished in 2021 and a list of contributors will be published in the report for 2021.

Urban Nesting Gulls survey

This national survey, part of Britain and Ireland's 4th Breeding Seabird Census, was organised in Sussex by Alison Giacomelli (Alison.giacomelli@naturalengland.org.uk) but was also not completed due to COVID-19 restrictions; the survey was finished in 2021 and a list of contributors will be published in the report for 2021.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

Monthly counts were carried out for this BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC survey and organised by Dr Helen Crabtree (contact details as above) and Dave Boddington, 193 Hartington Rd, Brighton, BN2 3PA (davebodds@yahoo.co.uk). Coordinating the counts in large areas has been undertaken by local reserve wardens as shown below. Thanks are due to these and the 122 counters who are indicated by **W** in the list of contributors.

Co-ordination of Seawatching Records

The annual co-ordination of these records for the Society is carried out by Dr JA Newnham, 61 Grand Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 5BA (j.newnham1@ntlworld.com).

Summaries of Observations

We are grateful for organising survey work or 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 S Lanaway; the Arun Valley from J Bassett; Worthing from Dr JA Newnham; Knepp Estate from P. Green; Horsham District Council reserves from JJ Everitt; Weir Wood Reservoir from RJ Johnson; Ashdown Forest from P Johnson; Telscombe Cliffs from DH Howey; Splash Point (Seaford) from BR Gilmore; Beachy Head from RDM Edgar and JF Cooper; Hastings area migration watches from A Parker; Bewl Water from MG Freeman and MJ Phillips; and Rye Harbour from Dr BJ Yates. We also thank Mrs C Blencowe and R Foreman at the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre for providing ornithological records from the centre and with records via iRecord and Living Records, this involved 378 observers (marked X in the above table). Once again records from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (eBird) have been included and involved observations from 304 recorders each labelled U in the contributors table. Additionally there were 221 iNaturalist observers whose records could only be identified by a code and therefore cannot be individually acknowledged. The on-line recording of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveys provided a plethora of records; the 685 Sussex contributors to BirdTrack are marked with a T in the above table. The records from Birdguides and Trektellen for 2020 were again 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 408 Garden BirdWatch participants. Thanks also to the RSPB for the records from their reserves in Sussex.

Ringling

Thanks are due to VP Bentley for maintaining detailed records of ringling in the county and to all ringers who contributed data.



Rook, Sidlesham, 27 April (Andrew House)

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 to take part in survey work to monitor bird populations. Our database now has well over six 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**



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Warbler, Savi's	151	Yellowhammer	195



Kingfisher, Sovereign Harbour, 31 December (Peter Brookes)