

# **SANDWICH BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST**

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Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust is located on the East Kent coast, half way between the River Stour estuary and the mudflats of Pegwell Bay to the north and the town of Deal to the south. It operates within the private Sandwich Bay Estate and on the adjacent farmland and golf courses by courtesy of the landowners concerned. The Trust also manages several nature reserves which it has acquired by purchase or leasehold in the Sandwich Bay Estate area. A map of the full Recording Area can be found at the back of this Report.

The Sandwich Bay coastline and the marshes inland to the River Stour have been created over many centuries by the northerly coastal drift of sand and shingle, together with alluvial deposits; a process that is still continuing. The stabilised sand hills of three local golf courses form a protected stretch of coastal dunes unique in the county and are recognised as being of the highest scientific value. Much of the rest of the Recording Area is also officially designated and protected at local, national and international levels for its value to wildlife.

As well as the bird interest, the variety of habitats at Sandwich Bay ensures that a rich fauna and flora is present. Many plants are rare, unusual or restricted in range and in the summer the coastal dunes abound with a wide variety of insects. Butterfly and dragonfly surveys are carried out regularly during the summer and moth-trapping takes place on most days of the year.

The Observatory started life as one of the country's first independent bird ringing stations in 1952. Official Bird Observatory status was achieved in 1962, when a move was made into former First World War buildings on the site of its current headquarters. The Observatory became a Charitable Trust in 1985; a new, fully-renovated, Field Centre was opened in 2002, and in 2022 the Observatory became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

The main day-to-day work of the Observatory is to study and record the birds of Sandwich Bay, with the object of placing local distribution and bird movements within a national context. In addition, whilst monitoring the effects of continuing changes in the wider environment, it also provides valuable data in support of measures taken for the conservation of threatened habitats. As a result, the Observatory has become increasingly involved in the study and practical conservation of other aspects of the fauna and flora within its Recording Area. The Observatory also has a major educational role, working with local groups, schools, colleges, and the wider community.

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# Trustees and Officers 2024

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## Acknowledgements

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# Chair's Report

2024 was a busy year at the Observatory as we continued to monitor wildlife, contribute to national projects, provide comment on the continuing rash of developments around us, and provide events and activities for members and visitors.

On the staffing front our intern, Charlotte Middleton, finished in June and, sadly, we did not find a replacement. Greg Lee, the Assistant Warden, finished his contract at the end of the year and we wished him well as he moved on to be an Assistant Warden at Bardsey Bird Observatory. With the help of funding from the Swire Trust we extended the hours of our Education Officer, Faye Kavvadias-Large. Maintaining the fabric of the Observatory and providing accommodation creates demands on our funds which are countered by the income generated. In recognition of this we appointed a full-time Facilities and Accommodation Manager Lauren Dimsdale.

There were changes in the Trustee team. Pam Worrall stepped down as Chair and Trustee in July. I was elected Chair and Mike Witty Vice-chair. Ian Searle stepped up to be a Trustee, with particular responsibility for the programme of talks. Most importantly Kaye Draper stepped up to be Treasurer. She replaced Bo Boelens who filled the post when nobody else was willing to do this. The two worked in tandem until the end of the year so as to provide support for Kaye as she learned the workings of the Trust. Thank you to both for guiding us through a busy and challenging time.

Our activities would not be possible without the enthusiastic team of volunteers. They provide a myriad of support from staffing the shop, conservation work, education, ringing and censusing, to walks, talks and events. We always have room for more volunteers.

One small way we have to recognise such efforts is the Tim Garland Award. Recipients are nominated by the membership and voted for by previous winners. This year the award went to Claire Ward who has been a leading light in the Conservation Team, amongst other things, for more than 20 years.

Although the purchase of the Dragonfly Fields was completed last year a lot of work was needed to develop the area as we planned. We were fortunate in receiving funding and planning help from the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership to install three new ponds. Their contractors, FGS Pilcher, did a great job including recycling the spoil to provide raised paths. By late summer rare damselflies were already using the area. To finish the plan we increased the shelter belt along the seaward edge. This was done by an enthusiastic band of volunteers, including the town Mayor, who planted 500 saplings one Saturday morning in November.

The external signage around the Observatory and reserves has had a significant upgrade with the support of a grant from the Co-op Community Fund and design aid from RK Graphics.

New and one-off events included a bird-themed evening of music by Sandwich Music Group, a caterpillar identification course organised by Butterfly Conservation, and the Big Kent Migration Watch in conjunction with the KOS.

Regular events included the reinstatement of weekly Thursday evening talks, evening classes on aspects of bird biology, moth evenings, odonatan walks, regular walks at sites around Kent, Sunday morning walks on the first Sunday of each month, and an increase in educational sessions for young people. The Christmas Fair proved popular again.

The work of the Observatory would not be possible without the generous support and cooperation of our neighbours, particularly the officers of Sandwich Bay Residents Ltd, Royal St. Georges, Royal Cinque Ports, and Princes Golf Clubs, the RSPB and the Daw family.

**By Ian Hunter**



Sanderling by L.Sole

# Warden's Report

SBBOT continues to move forward and this year's biggest project was the purchase and development of the Dragonfly Pond Field and Jubilee Field. A huge amount of work was involved and this would not have been possible without our excellent supporters. It is already showing dividends with the discovery of a new species of *Odonata* for Kent on the site! There was one new species of bird for SBBOT this year, a Brown Booby in September, and it proved to be a milestone as it was our 350th species recorded.

There was lingering winter fare at the start of 2024 in the form of Twite, Long-tailed Duck, Waxwing, Tree Sparrow, Cattle Egret, and Scaup. Freezing conditions soon after saw an increase in wildfowl but also made the Winter Gull Survey rather testing. We held our first Quiz Night and Owl Walk of the year and Emily Hill joined us on work experience. Both Serin and White-tailed Eagle were good finds in early February, though not for the Warden who was at the BOC meeting in Thetford. These were followed by a big movement of divers and Cormorants offshore and the arrival of a White-fronted Goose flock. Meanwhile work on accessibility and links with the Nautical Archaeological Society were improved.

As Spring approached, SBBOT held a Kent Moth Group meeting and saw our first migrants, with a number of Stone-curlews recorded on Nocmig. Our hardworking team continued to improve the internet around the building and helped run a University of Kent Applied Ecology Course, though also had time to enjoy the Kent Magnificent Moths celebration in Canterbury and also John Buckingham's South Africa talk. April saw the bulk of spring migrants arrive and the area was alive with birdsong. A White Stork arrived on the 11th. Our Easter education activities were well-attended as well as the Pfizer Volunteer Day and our organised trip to RSPB Minsmere. However, the biggest news was that groundwork began on the Dragonfly Pond and Jubilee Fields, with three new ponds excavated.

The beginning of May saw lots of early records of *Odonata*, many of which were the earliest ever seen in the area. This was in contrast with other invertebrates which in general had a very poor spring. A singing Spotted Crake was a particular avian highlight but the area was also graced with Purple Heron, Golden Oriole, Honey-buzzards, Red-backed Shrike, Temminck's Stint, White Stork, four Red-footed Falcons, White-tailed Eagle, and two Cranes, making for a very Mediterranean feel. There was also impressive wader passage on RSPB Worth Marshes and we even saw the Northern Lights. Butterfly Conservation ran an excellent larvae Identification Course at the Field Centre and we organised a trip to Marquenterre, France. The discovery of a brood of Pintails at the end of the month was a terrific surprise and the first confirmed breeding in Kent since 1981.

The beginning of June saw Charlotte Middleton leave us after six months of great work on our internship placement. I wish her all the best with her final year of University. We were also lucky with Bee-eater, multiple Golden Orioles, and two new macro moth species appearing, namely Alder Moth and Fiery Clearwing. It may not seem much to west coast Bird Observatories but 12 Manx Shearwaters on the 15th was a new record for Sandwich Bay and a Green Hairstreak on the 17th was the first of two Hairstreak species to be reported this year. In addition to the wildlife highlights there were many visits from schools and cub groups, Age Concern, and the National Beaver Management Forum, whilst our AGM was on the 22nd and Sandwich Music Group performed a special fundraising concert for us on the 29th.

There was an influx of Cattle Egrets and other heron species in July, including a Glossy Ibis, whilst a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker on the 7th was unexpected. SBBOT attended the Cummins Community Event on the 5th and led the first of many Bat Walks over the summer on the 6th. It was also good to see reasonable breeding productivity in Turtle Doves. An excellent run of migrant moths in August included *Eana argentana*, Bedstraw Hawk-moth, and Three-humped Prominent, but the invertebrate highlight of the year was the discovery of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly on our recently-excavated pools, a new species for Kent. There were good numbers of Wood Warbler and Willow Warbler, and excellent counts of Common and Curlew Sandpiper and Mediterranean Gull, whilst c.70 White Storks on the 13th were presumably from the Knepp release scheme. A Hoopoe on the 18th was a nice surprise for those on the Ringing Course and was followed by an Ortolan Bunting (nocmig), another White-tailed Eagle, and a Honey-buzzard.

September started well with Wryneck on the 1st. A Bittern was popular on Restharrow Scrape on the 6th with an amazing passage of 100 Red Admirals a minute heading inland the same day. Good Balearic Shearwater, Firecrest, Tree Pipit, and Sand Martin passage followed but a Brown Booby on the 8th was the year's avian highlight. It was a pleasure to host Adam Riggs as part for the YBOV scheme mid-month. Soon after a Red-breasted Flycatcher was trapped and ringed on the 17th, followed by another Wryneck on the 19th. With regular Convolvulus Hawk-moths all month we also joined in with the arrival of *Euchromius ocella* on the 24th. There was an impressive fall of 1,500 warblers on the 25th, a few days before the inaugural KOS Big Kent Migration Watch on the 28th. In early October we appointed Lauren Dimsdale as our Facility Manager and a few days later we had our Annual Strategy Review. There was a scattering of Dartford Warblers around and an Eastern Lesser Whitethroat on the 4th showed characteristics of ssp. *halimondendri*, later confirmed by DNA as the second for Kent. After a handful of Yellow-browed Warblers an Isabelline Shrike sp. on the 18th was another great find. A surprise Smew a few days later was one of the earliest ever records for Kent for this declining duck. After attending the Great Kentish Bird Off in Pegwell Bay on the 26th we saw 3,000 Chaffinches pass over on the 30th.

These were followed by regular Hawfinches in November, a long-staying Black-necked Grebe, and impressive flocks of Gannet offshore. An influx of Geese occurred with up to 71 Pink-footed and seven White-fronted. Good numbers of migratory moths continued and a number of unusual and under-reported species from early stages. Our Tree Planting Day on the 9th was attended by a variety of the great and the good and should bear fruit over the next few years. Two Siberian Chiffchaffs were caught and ringed in quick succession and subsequently good numbers of Woodlarks and Merlin were seen. The Kent WeBS meeting was held at the Observatory on the 1st December and contained a good range of interesting speakers from around Kent. Our annual Xmas Fair proved popular on the 8th and Storm Darragh provided us with a Little Auk.

The final year's tally was 228 different bird species recorded in the SBBOT area. There were a handful of omissions from the year with no Tundra Bean Goose, Mandarin, Goldeneye, Purple Sandpiper, Pomarine Skua, and Crossbill, or once again Red-legged Partridge for the third year in succession.

In other news we also short-listed, interviewed, and appointed our new Residential Volunteer Warden when we welcomed Jonathan Bull to our team for 2025. Unfortunately, we said goodbye to Greg Lee in his last year as Assistant Warden. He deserves a big thank you for his past three years at Sandwich Bay and I'm sure he'll make a great addition to the team on Bardsey. Charlotte Middleton was an infectious bubbly addition to the SBBOT team as long-term volunteer whilst Emily Hill, James Brimson, and Adam Riggs all contributed well whilst looking for experience in the Observatory sector. Lauren stepped up brilliantly in her new role as Facility Manager and Faye Kavvadias-Large showcased her terrific skills as our Education Officer, we continue to expect great things from them both going forward! My thanks as always to all the trustees and volunteers for all their help and advice throughout the year and to the Sandwich Bay Estate Residents for supporting the work of the Observatory.

So another great year showcasing the diversity of Sandwich Bay. Why not come for a visit? Whatever your reason for visiting Kent, the Field Centre offers modern, comfortable, self-catering accommodation with a kitchen, library, wi-fi, and free parking, allowing you to be on hand for early morning ringing, late night moth-trapping, or just time to explore the local area. Visit [sbbot.org.uk](http://sbbot.org.uk) for more details.

**By Steffan Walton**

# Features of the Year

## January

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The year started off well with a relatively calm and dry day. Highlights were plentiful with three White-fronted Geese on Willow Farm and 15 Pintails, a Peregrine, three Cattle Egrets, and a Great White Egret on the other side of RSPB Worth Marshes. On the Estate a Siskin moved between the Observatory and the Haven, four Tree Sparrows were seen from the footpath behind the asparagus fields, and a few Razorbills were offshore. A male Merlin was on New Downs and in the Pegwell Bay area at least one Waxwing and two Twite remained into the New Year. The next day there were singles of Yellow-legged and Mediterranean Gull in the flock on the Green Wall (by the entrance to Royal St George's Golf Course), two Twite still at Pegwell Bay, and a male Red-breasted Merganser was offshore.

Pegwell Bay was busy on the 3rd with 445 Wigeons, 1,550 Oystercatchers, 1,500 Lapwings, 580 Golden Plovers, 1,190 Dunlins, 430 Sanderlings, and 300 Curlews, plus a male Pintail, a Spotted Redshank, and the two Twite present. The Green Wall the next day saw a Coal Tit and two Siskins of note and there were still at least 12 Pintails on RSPB Worth Marshes, plus eight Cattle Egrets and a Firecrest. High numbers of Pochard (for us) continued in the area with 16 on New Downs reservoir, four on the Green Wall, and another four on RSPB Worth Marshes. After the rain moved through on the 5th there were birds passing by offshore. Four Pintails were the highlight with small numbers of Brent Geese, Wigeons, Red-throated Divers, Great Crested Grebes, Auks, and Kittiwakes. The following day on RSPB Worth Marshes there was a Great White Egret, ten Pintails, eight Pochards, and a Kingfisher in strong winds, whilst the day after saw two Little Gulls, 17 Pintails, and around 50 Wigeons moving north offshore.

Despite the freezing temperatures and near-constant snow flurries, it never looked likely to settle, and the area remained very much underwater on the 8th. There were small numbers of Brent Geese and Shelducks moving offshore in the penetrating north-easterly gale. Two Eiders were the first of the year and a lone Little Gull was seen briefly in amongst the melee of gulls along the shore. Inland, six Pink-footed Geese flew south over RSPB Worth Marshes with nine White-fronted Geese dropping in on Willow Farm. The best of the rest were two Sandwich Terns and three Avocets in Pegwell Bay. The 9th was bright and sunny but with another day of perishing wind. A Caspian Gull was riding the surf offshore among 800+ other Gulls but overall sea passage was a little disappointing. This was made up by an increase in wildfowl with a flock of Geese on Willow Farm comprising 41 White-fronted, ten Brent, five Canada, 40 Greylag, and six Barnacle. A big flock of 384 Shovelers was on the Minnis side of RSPB Worth Marshes, a record count for the area. There were also singles of Great White Egret and Jack Snipe, 200 Fieldfares, and two Water Pipits present on site. In Pegwell, a smart

male Goosander dropped in with Shelducks and there was one Yellow-legged Gull and two Caspian Gulls on the mud.



Cattle Egret by S.North

The freezing weather continued to move wildfowl around and on the 10th there were now 47 White-fronted Geese on Willow Farm, but no sign of the Barnacles. The Shoveler flock rose to 407 with at least 3,750 Wigeons, 1,650 Teals, 275 Coots, and 15 Pintails spread across the site, as well as two Ruffs, Merlin, Great White Egret, and a Raven. New Downs was not quite as busy but still had plenty on offer with Pintail, Avocet, Ruff, Common Sandpiper, 45 Pied Wagtails, three Rock Pipits, Bearded Tit, and 11 Corn Buntings. The 84 Shovelers further increased the day's record tally.

Wildfowl numbers were somewhat down on the 11th but there was still a Great White Egret, three Ruffs, and a Chiffchaff of interest on RSPB Worth Marshes, and six White-fronted Geese appeared in the afternoon. The falling tide at Pegwell Bay held two Kittiwakes, an adult Caspian Gull, and a Sandwich Tern in the roost and the two Twite were still present in the Western Undercliff/Hoverport area. The 12 saw an influx of nine Woodcocks on the Estate and the next day a Long-tailed Duck in the Pegwell Bay rivermouth was presumably the nearby Ebbsfleet bird relocating. The two Twite were still at the Hoverport too. There were singles of Caspian Gull, Jack Snipe, and Short-eared Owl at the Point and three White-fronted Geese on New Downs. A thorough survey of RSPB Worth Marshes on the

14th produced nine White-fronted Geese, seven Pintails, a Great White Egret, a Great Crested Grebe (rare on the Marshes), almost 200 Coot, 25 Dunlins, two Black-tailed Godwits, a Jack Snipe, and a Water Pipit. There was a rare winter record of a Little Stint on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 16th and five Tree Sparrows and a Yellowhammer were seen on the footpath behind the asparagus fields. The sub-zero temperatures continued to make it hard for the resident waders and wildfowl, with a small flock of Lapwings taking to feeding just outside the Observatory.

A mostly frozen Restharrow Scrape contained over 360 Teal sitting on the ice on the 17th. There were still at least six Woodcocks on the Estate and Tree Sparrow flock now numbered 16 individuals, whilst there was a convincing report of a possible Serin in the same area. Elsewhere, there were eight White-fronted Geese and five Pintails among a good selection of wildfowl on New Downs. The morning of the 18th brought sightings of 27 Dunlins, a Merlin, and three Water Pipits on RSPB Worth Marshes and ten Tree Sparrows and 90 Skylarks on/around the asparagus fields on the Estate. In the evening, a coordinated stakeout of the gull roost at Pegwell Bay produced over 6,000 Black-headed Gulls and 10,500 Herring Gulls, with smaller numbers of other species including singles of 2cy Caspian Gull and 2cy Yellow-legged Gull, a Marsh Harrier in off the sea, and an Avocet flying south along the shore.

The Estate was busy with Robins on the 19th with at least 40 ticking away, plus six Stonechats. The Teal were using the fields around Restharrow Scrape whilst the water was iced over and of note was a flock of Ruff to the south of The Chequers and just outside the Recording Area. There were singles of Jack Snipe, Woodcock, and Blackcap on the Estate and the 12 Tree Sparrows still continued to be present on the 20th, whilst inland there was a sizeable flock of approximately 3,000 Wigeons on RSPB Worth Marshes. The next day singles of Black-throated Diver and Arctic Skua were seen offshore moving ahead of Storm Isha. Raven and Woodcock were the best on the Estate and Great White Egret and three Water Pipits were on RSPB Worth Marshes.

Small numbers of waders returned to the RSPB Worth Marshes after the thaw with seven Dunlins, seven Black-tailed Godwits, a Green Sandpiper, and a Redshank, as well as the regular 200 each of Lapwing and Golden Plover, on the 22nd. Eight Pintails and a Water Pipit were also present. In the afternoon two Cattle Egrets appeared in the field behind the ringing room. A Shag flying north offshore the following day was our first record of the year of this scarce seabird. The two Cattle Egrets remained at the Observatory. There was a surprising movement offshore with 887 Red-throated Divers, two Black-throated Divers, and 83 Great Crested Grebes recorded on the 24th. The ten Tree Sparrows were seen at the back of the Jubilee Field, three Yellowhammers were at the hay bales behind the Observatory, and the two Cattle Egrets were even closer; at times outside the windows of the building. RSPB Worth Marshes felt relatively spring-like

and there were 15 Pintails and six Ruffs on offer. On the 25th there were now three Cattle Egrets in the fields around the Observatory and a/the Shag was seen offshore again. Thousands of gulls were on RSPB Worth Marshes along with 20 Pintails, 150 Fieldfares, and three Water Pipits, whilst in Pegwell Bay the highlights were a Woodcock and two Yellow-legged Gulls. A male Goosander, two Pintails, two Avocets, and a Yellow-legged Gull were the highlights on New Downs on the 26th with 160 Brent Geese and 2,500 Lapwings in Pegwell Bay. A ringtail Hen Harrier was also seen to come in off the sea.

New Downs was again productive with the Goosander still present on the 27th along with eight Pochards, a Common Sandpiper, four Rock Pipits, and four Bearded Tits. The three Cattle Egrets were still posturing around the Observatory. The next day the three Cattle Egrets outside the Observatory windows made it onto our RSPB Garden BirdWatch. A flock of 12 Yellowhammers were not that far away among the haybales behind the Observatory and farm buildings. Offshore there was a movement of 240 Red-throated Divers and 50 Great Crested Grebes whilst ten Pintails and a Merlin were on RSPB Worth Marshes and four White-fronted Geese on New Downs. The drake Goosander relocated to Pegwell Bay on the 29th but the usual three Cattle Egrets were still present around the Observatory. The first two returning Oystercatchers were on RSPB Worth Marshes along with six Mediterranean Gulls, two Water Pipits, and 67 Fieldfares. The next day a Woodcock was on the Estate and a Great White Egret on RSPB Worth Marshes, whilst the last day of the month saw a high count of 100 Dunlins on RSPB Worth Marshes with Great White Egret, 18 Pintails, and Water Pipit all still present. A Woodcock was along the Green Wall.

## February

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A very pleasant, sunny, and cool morning walking the Estate on the 1st produced at least three Siskins knocking around and a nice fly-through female Merlin which headed north over the Haven area. A Red Kite and a Green Sandpiper were seen on RSPB Worth Marshes the next day but the bird of the day was a **SERIN** seen in the asparagus fields on the Estate. It followed on from a possible sighting in the same area a few weeks ago.

On the 3rd a **WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** flew north over the Estate causing havoc as it went. The bird was from the Isle of Wight release scheme. Nine Tree Sparrows were again in the asparagus fields and nine White-fronted Geese and five Canada Geese re-appeared. The next day the nine Tree Sparrows were seen on the Estate again and inland there were 3,500 assorted Gulls on RSPB Worth Marshes. The three Cattle Egrets were still frequenting the area around the Observatory on the 5th though wandering more widely and often seen separately in different fields. The 6th brought two Water Rails, eight Pintails, a Ruff, 26 Dunlins, 100 Golden Plovers, two Black-tailed Godwits, and a Green Sandpiper to RSPB Worth Marshes with six Yellowhammers and three Cattle Egrets still near to the Observatory.

The main activity on the 7th was offshore with two exceptional counts of 965 Red-throated Divers and 6,770 Cormorants, as well as one Black-throated Diver and two Great Northern Divers. A Firecrest in The Elms was the first there this winter whilst two Cattle Egrets were still at the Observatory. The other Cattle Egret was seen briefly on RSPB Worth Marshes with 500 Golden Plovers, 27 Mediterranean Gulls, and three Water Pipits also present. In the afternoon of the 8th a flock of 32 White-fronted Geese dropped into the fields just inland of the asparagus fields, between the Estate and the railway line. Four Canada Geese were also near Restharrow Scrape and at least two Cattle Egrets were still around the Observatory area.

The White-fronted Goose flock numbered at least 51 on the 9th although they were quite mobile. The two Cattle Egrets were still behind the Observatory and thousands of Gulls were taking advantage of all the standing water in the area. The usual good selection of farmland species was on the recently-cut asparagus fields on the Estate the following day including seven Grey Partridges, 240 Stock Doves, nine Tree Sparrows, and 65 Linnets, with 64 White-fronted Geese also showing well towards the railway. The regular pair of Oystercatchers were back on Restharrow Scrape prospecting for breeding sites and a Siskin flew over. Coverage of RSPB Worth Marshes produced a Black-tailed Godwit, three Ruffs, ten Stonechats, a Water Pipit, and nine Yellowhammers. An adult Yellow-legged Gull was in Pegwell Bay and our first Dartford Warbler of the year was along Prince's Beach. Three Water Rails and a nice male Goosander were in Pegwell Bay on the 11th, two Cattle Egrets were at the Observatory, and four Water Rails and a mobile Great White Egret were on RSPB Worth Marshes. At least seven Short-eared Owls were found across the Recording Area.

The 12th was a lovely spring-like morning. Four Canada Geese moved around the Estate and all three Cattle Egrets were back together around the Observatory for the first time in a week or so. There was a lot of activity on RSPB Worth Marshes with Spoonbill, Great White Egret, 15 Buzzards, 47 Dunlins, and nine Chiffchaffs. Despite the return to overcast and breezy conditions on the 13th there was still plenty of singing and breeding activity on the Estate. The Long-tailed Tits had begun to separate into pairs, the Magpies were fighting over territories, the Grey Partridges were very vocal, and even the Blackthorn and Snowdrops were all beginning to flower. The flock of Linnets continued to build on the asparagus fields with at least 85, two Ravens flew over the Green Wall, and ten Pintails were on RSPB Worth Marshes. The Cattle Egrets at the Observatory had increased to four birds and the flock of White-fronted Geese were seen briefly flying around inland of the asparagus fields on the 14th. Over in Pegwell Bay there was a decent count of 61 Turnstones and a small increase in Lesser Black-backed Gulls, the latter perhaps a sign of early spring migration. A Little Grebe, an Avocet, and a summer-plumaged Mediterranean Gull were all new in Pegwell Bay on the 15th whilst the growing Cattle Egret flock at the Observatory now numbered six birds. There were 40 White-fronted Geese, 15 Pintails, nine

Pochards, three Oystercatchers, a Water Pipit, and two Siskins on RSPB Worth Marshes whilst the large number of Gulls using the floods included 970 Black-headed, 845 Herring, and 240 Common. Two Siskins, a Raven, at least five Cattle Egrets were highlights on the Estate on the 16th whilst two Greenfinch were, depressingly, the first records for the Sandwich Bay Estate for the year. Singles of Goldcrest and Coal Tit were singing on the Green Wall and a summer-plumaged Mediterranean Gull was in the gull flock outside Royal St George's Golf Course. The flock of nine Yellowhammers were still hanging around the hay bales behind the Observatory and 64 White-fronted Geese were on the RSPB Worth Marshes.

On the 17th the 60+ White-fronted Geese remained in the RSPB Worth Marshes area, five Chiffchaffs were singing, and there were now 16 Yellowhammers between the Observatory and the Worth track. Only one Cattle Egret was seen on the Estate and on New Downs there were three Pintails, eight Avocets, and a Mediterranean Gull. There were then counts of 26 Wigeons and 33 Snipes on Restharrow Scrape on the 18th whilst 12 Pintails and nine Pochards were on RSPB Worth Marshes. The following day a **SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF** was discovered on RSPB Worth Marshes, viewable on the edge of the Great Wood from the public footpath, and at least eight other 'standard' Chiffchaffs were also on site. The Tree Sparrow flock were still on the Estate and at least 49 White-fronted Geese were on Willow Farm.

A wander to and around the Point on the 20th produced 105 Sanderlings, 155 Curlews, 45 Snipes, six Rock Pipits, and nine Stonechats. Three Firecrests, four Chiffchaffs, and four Cattle Egrets were on the Estate. The 21st was a day of increasingly awful conditions. Despite this, the signs of Spring continued to come with a singing Grey Wagtail on the Observatory building and a singing Firecrest on RSPB Worth Marshes, with the latter also seeing a Swallow flying around in the lee of the Great Wood! This became our joint-earliest ever sighting with 21st February 1998 and 2008.

White-fronted Geese by  
S.Reynaert



After a washout on the 22nd the area seemed to be under a foot of water, including the Observatory carpark! There was plenty to see on the 23rd though, with 43 White-fronted Geese, four Canada Geese, 95 Fieldfares, and ten Yellowhammers on RSPB Worth Marshes, plus the re-appearance of both the Swallow and the **SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF**. Two Cattle Egrets were still at the Observatory and two Firecrests in The Elms. The 24th then saw three Cattle Egrets, a Firecrest, and a Swallow all on the Estate whilst dodging rain showers. Another Swallow was also seen on RSPB Worth Marshes in the morning.

The annual build-up of Great Crested Grebes began on the 25th with at least 114 noted offshore. The 27th saw over 200 Brent Geese in Pegwell, three Pintails and five Corn Buntings on New Downs, a Cattle Egret and two Corn Buntings on the Estate, and two Shelducks on Restharrow Scrape. The overwintering flocks of Tree Sparrow and White-fronted Geese were still present on the 28th with eight of the former along the public footpath behind the asparagus fields and at least 30 of the latter inland towards the railway line. Four Cattle Egrets were at the Observatory and a Red Kite drifted over RSPB Worth Marshes. A drake Goosander, 40 Fieldfares, and a Rock Pipit were all on New Downs, and a Mediterranean Gull and two presumed) migrant Lesser Black-backed Gulls were in the gull flock outside Royal St George's Golf course.

## March

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The month began with the semi-resident flock of five Cattle Egrets performing very well in the flooded fields by the Observatory. A Ruff dropped in on Restharrow Scrape the next day, our first of the Spring, and at least two Bearded Tits were on New Downs and a Great White Egret flew over RSPB Worth Marshes. The 4th was the best day in some time and it was clear that birds were taking advantage of the conditions to move around. Small flocks of Siskins and Chaffinches were observed migrating south along the coast and a Blackcap was seen in the Jubilee Field. A Woodcock in the Gullies was likely passing through, four Mediterranean Gulls on Restharrow Scrape were definitely so, whilst a Little Grebe on the Dragonfly Pond was unusual and possibly a sign of migration. The flock of overwintering Tree Sparrows were seen at the back of the Jubilee Field whilst the regular male Goosander was on New Downs. Inland, the first returning Avocets were on RSPB Worth Marshes. The next day, however, was back to the winter birds to provide interest. The flock of 62 White-fronted Geese was fairly mobile over RSPB Worth Marshes and a Water Pipit was still present on the floods. The two Cattle Egrets were in the fields around the Observatory building.

A **BITTERN** on New Downs was the highlight of the 6th. Despite being regular in the Stour Valley it is always a rare find here. Singles of Bearded Tit and Pintail were also present. An adult Kittiwake in the wader roost at the Point was odd whilst a Swallow was across the river in Pegwell Bay.

The following day saw movements of 40 Chaffinches south, a Reed Bunting north, and a Skylark out to sea. There was also a light scattering of Chiffchaffs and Redwings across the Estate, possibly newly-arrived, plus six Cattle Egrets. Two Great White Egrets were seen, one on RSPB Worth Marshes and the other on New Downs. Two Ruffs and 12 Black-tailed Godwits were new in on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 8th with seven Pintails still present from the wintering flock.

A pleasant walk on New Downs on the 9th produced a good selection including two Bearded Tits, two Egyptian Geese, and seven Pintails but RSPB Worth Marshes struck gold with an early drake Garganey on Blue Pigeons pools. The 60+ White-fronted Geese, Great White Egret, Ruffs, and Black-tailed Godwits were all still present. The 11th was highlighted by the movement of Brent Geese offshore, with at least 317 logged flying north, plus three Red-breasted Mergansers. Another 422 Brent Geese were also in Pegwell Bay. The low cloud cover also meant light passage of 12 Meadow Pipits, two Fieldfares, 56 Redwings, 162 Starlings, 52 Chaffinches, and ten Lesser Black-backed Gulls overhead. There were also double-figures of Song Thrushes on the Estate and over 150 Redwings on the Green Wall. The next day was mostly rained off though a Knot on Restharrow Scrape was a very unusual sighting. There was also lots of activity overnight on the Nocmig (nocturnal migration) recordings and it included an early Stone-curlew over Stonar.

The Knot remained on Restharrow Scrape on the 13th and performed well just in front of the first hide. A 'small' ringtail Harrier flew over the Observatory early on but evaded identification and subsequent searches, with the five Cattle Egrets still cavorting around the flooded fields in the vicinity. Meanwhile two Great White Egrets were on Willow Farm, viewable from the Drove, and four Firecrests were in the Gorse and Bramble nearby. The Knot was still showing off to everyone on Restharrow Scrape the next day and 14 Mediterranean Gulls dropped in among the Black-headed Gulls. A White Wagtail was seen south of the Sailing Club and a few Siskins flew south. Just after midday a Waxwing flew over Stonar calling. The highlights on the Estate 15th included five Cattle Egrets, a Water Rail, nine Chiffchaffs, a Siskin, and a Bullfinch. A surprisingly busy session of seawatching the next day produced our first Slavonian Grebe of the year, singles of both Black-throated Diver and Great Northern Diver, a Shag, and small numbers of *intermedius* Lesser Black-backed Gulls. A Great White Egret and two Ruffs were on RSPB Worth Marshes and late morning raptor passage saw three Red Kites, 24 Buzzards, and a Marsh Harrier head north.

Three Wheatears on the Estate on the 18th were our first records. There was also a Woodcock in the Oasis, four Tree Sparrows still in their favoured spot behind the Asparagus fields, and six Cattle Egrets at the Observatory. There was another concerted movement of birds of prey with 39 Buzzards and three Red Kites north overhead. RSPB Worth Marshes contributed with three Bearded Tits and three additional Cattle Egrets.

A Little Ringed Plover on RSPB Worth Marshes the next day was another new spring arrival. Singles of White Wagtail and Water Pipit and at least five Cattle Egrets were also present. Six Pintails were still on New Downs plus a Bar-tailed Godwit and a Green Sandpiper. The previous day's Little Ringed Plover was still present on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 20th, as was the Wheatear on the Estate just south of Sandilands. Two Red Kites headed north in the late morning sunshine.

There were 70 Sanderlings, 17 Turnstones, and a Wheatear on Prince's Beach on the 21st whilst six Cattle Egrets, three Bar-tailed Godwits, and a few Blackcaps were new in on RSPB Worth Marshes. Of interest, was a striking Stonechat at Dickson's Corner showing a broad white collar, extensive white panel on the wing, and large white rump, all of which are usually features of the Continental subspecies, *S.r.rubicola*. On the 22nd the Estate produced a fine male Merlin, five Cattle Egrets, 16 Chiffchaffs, one Blackcap, and one Willow Warbler with a handful of Linnets and Siskins heading north and seven Black-tailed Godwits high overhead. A Swallow was also in Pegwell Bay. Four Red Kites flew north on the 23rd and over on RSPB Worth Marshes there were six Pintails, a Water Pipit, and three Blackcaps. Singles of Willow Warbler and Merlin were on the Estate again. The following day three Little Ringed Plovers were on RSPB Worth Marshes and a Red Kite flew north over the Observatory, where at least one Cattle Egret still remained.

The Little Ringed Plover flock continued to build on RSPB Worth Marshes with a minimum of eight birds on the 26th. Two Ruffs, one Dunlin, and two Egyptian Geese were also on the floods. A few Siskins and Ravens were flying around, a Swallow was near the Chequers, and there was a further increase in Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps in the area. The next day a Great Crested Grebe was fresh in on RSPB Worth Marshes. Though common offshore, this species has always been rare inland at Sandwich Bay. However, the appearance of individuals on various water bodies in the area seems to be becoming a regular spring occurrence. Two Little Ringed Plovers, two Cattle Egrets, and a Great White Egret were also on the marshes and 48 Siskins flew over. Despite the fairly horrible conditions over the previous few days it was pleasing to report the first Sedge Warbler on RSPB Worth Marshes and Common Tern offshore on the 29th. The next day RSPB Worth Marshes produced an adult Little Gull, eight Egyptian Geese, a Ruff, and a White Wagtail, whilst 23 Chiffchaffs were in full song on the Green Wall. Highlights on New Downs on the last day of the month were 12 Pintails, a Great Crested Grebe, and a Merlin. A Cattle Egret remained at the Observatory.

## April

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Two White Wagtails were on the recently-ploughed field outside the Observatory on the 1st but most interest was provided by the passage of Magpies through the area. At least 43 birds went north.

A strengthening westerly meant it was hard work the next day but rewards came in the form of three Common Terns and 160 Sandwich Terns offshore, with three of the latter also on Restharrow Scrape briefly. At least 20 Siskins went south and two Red Kites north. There was a very light trickle of Siskins heading south overhead on the 3rd. Four Sandwich Terns and four Mediterranean Gulls were among the throng of Black-headed Gulls on Restharrow Scrape.

RSPB Worth provided the main highlights of the 4th with four Egyptian Geese, two Pintails, two Garganeys, three Little Ringed Plovers, four Swallows, and six Sedge Warblers across the site. The Sandwich Tern flock on Restharrow Scrape increased to six. There was a good deal of activity after the morning rain on the 5th. Two Sand Martins, three Swallows, and singles of Yellow Wagtail and Whitethroat were on the Estate (the latter two new for the year). Three Pochards and a Swallow were on New Downs, a Sand Martin and 152 Sandwich Terns in Pegwell Bay, and 11 Swallows and three Sand Martins on RSPB Worth Marshes. Two Sedge Warblers, a Willow Warbler, ten Siskins, and our first House Martin of the year were along the Green Wall on the 6th. Not to be outdone, our first Tree Pipit flew over RSPB Worth Marshes with 20 Black-tailed Godwits and singles of Wheatear, Whitethroat, Yellow Wagtail, and Sand Martin all present. The Whitethroat was on the Estate and four Sandwich Terns were back on Restharrow Scrape.

The 7th saw two Willow Warblers and a Whitethroat on New Downs and a Wheatear on Prince's Beach. A new-for-the-year Greenshank and a Ruff were on RSPB Worth Marshes, along with two Garganeys and lots of Chiffchaffs and Sedge Warblers, whilst Willow Warbler, Whitethroat, and a Whimbrel were on the Estate, the latter another bird for the year. A Red Kite also flew north. A male Ring Ouzel performed well at Sandilands on the 8th with two Yellowhammers, three Whitethroats, and 20 Mediterranean Gulls also recorded on the Estate. Two Nightingales were also great finds on RSPB Worth Marshes with two Garganeys still present plus Green Sandpiper, Whimbrel, and two Wheatears. Conditions on the 9th were quite different. A Willow Warbler in Pegwell Bay Country Park, 20 Sandwich Terns offshore, and a mixed flock of c.50 hirundines on RSPB Worth Marshes were the picks of the bunch in strong winds. In the evening our first Swift of the year was hawking over Dickson's Corner.

A Nightingale sang briefly at New Downs New Pool on the 10th and two Red Kites flew south over Pegwell Bay. At the other end of our Recording Area three Great White Egrets and our first Reed Warbler were on RSPB Worth Marshes, and a drake Pochard on Restharrow Scrape. There was a noticeable arrival of Willow Warblers along the Kent coast the following day. We got in on the action with at least six on the Estate, four on New Downs, and two on RSPB Worth Marshes. A Garden Warbler at the latter site was new for the year whilst a **White Stork** appeared overhead in the afternoon.

Just the two Willow Warblers were on the Estate the next morning but two Garganeys, a Golden Plover, a Willow Warbler, a Lesser Redpoll, and a Yellowhammer were on RSPB Worth Marshes. There were also quite a few Mediterranean Gulls on the move with their distinctive calls heard overhead. A Wood Sandpiper was a nice spring find on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 13th. Two Garganeys and four Lesser Whitethroats were also present. A Swift was seen in Pegwell Bay and a Tree Pipit went south at the Chequers. At least 11 Wheatears were also spread throughout the Recording Area and two Red Kites flew north.

On the 14th, RSPB Worth Marshes was the place to be again with five Garganeys, the Wood Sandpiper, and four Great White Egrets the standout highlights plus one Red Kite, our first Hobby of the year, seven Ruffs, 12 Mediterranean Gulls, four Yellow Wagtails, and a Willow Warbler. The next day there were still at least four Garganeys and seven Ruffs on RSPB Worth Marshes. Around 100 mixed hirundines dropped in and our first Lapwing chicks of the year were seen (though considering the torrential downpours during the day I imagined they wished they waited to hatch the next day). Double-figures of Common Scoters and Sandwich Terns were offshore and in the evening the tern flock in Pegwell Bay comprised two Little and 212 Sandwich.

Two Greenshanks and three Little Terns were in Pegwell Bay early on the 16th, with another Little Tern and an Arctic Tern offshore later. Small numbers of Linnets went north in the strong winds and a flock 32 Siskins went over. Two Garganeys remained on RSPB Worth Marshes. The morning of the 17th started well with a **GOLDEN ORIOLE** singing in the Haven. It only stayed briefly and flew off strongly north. Prince's Beach was quite nippy in the north-westerly breeze but a male Ring Ouzel, a Wheatear, and three Willow Warblers were in the Sea Buckthorn. A Little Tern was across the river in Pegwell Bay and at the other end of the Recording Area two Garganeys, a Hobby, nine Ruffs, and a Wood Sandpiper were on RSPB Worth Marshes. An early morning team effort to log all the breeding birds on RSPB Worth Marshes the next day recorded lots of activity on the pools. There were a number of Lapwing young and displaying birds in most areas. Highlights across the site included Great White Egret, two Egyptian Geese, six Garganeys, five Pintails, Hobby, eight Black-tailed Godwits, Bar-tailed Godwit, nine Ruffs, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, ten Yellow Wagtails, and two White Wagtails.

The weather was very hit-and-miss throughout the morning of the 19th. Still, by dodging rain showers a good variety of birds were logged. A flock of five Velvet Scoters north offshore was the main highlight, but there were also five Willow Warblers and a Tree Pipit on the Estate, a Sandwich Tern on Restharrow Scrape, and eight Little Terns in Pegwell Bay. A Spoonbill also went south over Pegwell towards New Downs. The next day a Great White Egret and a good mix of waders was on RSPB Worth Marshes, three Willow

Warblers were around New Downs New Pool, and ten Wheatears on the Estate. These were followed by an adult **CRANE** on the 21st, a nice find on RSPB Worth Marshes and our first record since November 2021. Two Swifts and a Spoonbill were also present. The **CRANE** was seen briefly early the next morning but it flew south soon after. The main talking point was the start of Bar-tailed Godwit passage through the area. A few were seen on RSPB Worth Marshes the previous day but the main bulk arrived today with at least 207 in Pegwell Bay, many of which were in their brick-red breeding plumage.

Five Cattle Egrets flew south over the Estate on the 23rd and a lovely summer-plumaged Bar-tailed Godwit was on Restharrow Scrape. Eight Garganeys, 25 Whimbrels, and two Wood Sandpipers were all good stuff on RSPB Worth Marshes but it got better when the rain showers late afternoon dropped in a lot of hirundines, and a smart **RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** was found hawking among them.



Red-rumped Swallow by G.Lee

The **RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** was still present on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 24th. A male Ring Ouzel was on the Estate in the fields near Restharrow Scrape, with a few Wheatears and Whimbrels in the vicinity too.

Despite the switch to south-westerly conditions the next day was still very chilly. Two Egyptian Geese flew inland over Dickson's Corner, where a Wheatear and a Whimbrel were present, whilst four Mediterranean Gulls and three Sandwich Terns dropped into Restharrow Scrape. A few Willow Warblers were singing around the Oasis area and the **RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** was still present on RSPB Worth Marshes. There was a small arrival of spring migrants on the 26th with at least three Cuckoos, four Willow Warblers, four Swifts, and 25 Whimbrels spread throughout the Recording Area. Two Garganeys and a White Wagtail were on RSPB Worth Marshes.

Despite the impressive numbers of Terns moving off Dungeness there were little here, or anywhere else along the coast for that matter, on the 27th. A good handful of Whimbrels and Bar-tailed Godwits were dotted around, 14 Greenshanks and a Wood Sandpiper were on RSPB Worth Marshes, but the clear highlight was our first Turtle Dove of the year perching on the Green Wall. A Greenshank flock on RSPB Worth Marshes the following day numbered at least 31 birds with a backup cast of seven Ringed Plovers, seven Ruffs, five Bar-tailed Godwits, two Black-tailed Godwits, a Whimbrel, and a Common Sandpiper, plus the usual Lapwings, Avocets, Oystercatchers. An Arctic Skua passed by offshore and four Swifts were over the Observatory. A summer-plumaged Bar-tailed Godwit showed well on Restharrow Scrape on the 29th and two Swifts were screeching over the Estate. Over on New Downs there was an Egyptian Goose, five Green Sandpipers, three Common Sandpipers, and a Cuckoo, whilst five Garganeys, a Knot, and a Garden Warbler were on RSPB Worth Marshes. Low cloud and light southerlies made for a good morning on RSPB Worth Marshes on the last day of the month, particularly on the Blue Pigeons pools off the Pinnock Wall. Two Sanderlings in with the Ringed Plovers and Dunlins were rare birds for inland on the marsh, but a **TEMMINCK'S STINT** stole the show. Both Garganey and Wood Sandpiper were also present.

## May

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It was a really warm start to the month. A Tree Pipit over Pegwell and a male Hen Harrier and two Whinchats on RSPB Worth Marshes were the highlights, until the **TEMMINCK'S STINT** reappeared in the afternoon. The 2nd saw a surprise **PURPLE HERON** flushed out of Waldershare Gully mid-morning. It circled the Estate, before drifting over to Willow Farm and then north. Meanwhile the **TEMMINCK'S STINT** was seen again on RSPB Worth Marshes. Four-five Cuckoos were singing throughout the Recording Area. The next day hopes were high after a big arrival along many eastern sites in the UK the previous afternoon. Alas, there was no hoped-for Pied Flycatcher but a singing male Redstart between the Observatory and the Worth track was welcome compensation. Four Little Terns were in Pegwell Bay and a Willow Warbler in the Whitehouse. A handful of Whimbrels, Swifts, and Yellow Wagtails made up the rest until the evening when the **PURPLE HERON** was re-found on Willow Farm.

Our second **GOLDEN ORIOLE** of the spring was singing on the Green Wall on the 4th. It only stayed briefly and headed off north, as is usual with this species. Meanwhile the elusive **PURPLE HERON** continued to play hide-and-seek. It was seen briefly in the morning on RSPB Worth Marshes. A Great White Egret present was more co-operative. Participants on the early Dawn Chorus Walk on the 5th were treated to a Spoonbill on RSPB Worth Marshes. At least four Hobbies and 14 Ringed Plovers were also present. The next day there were Curlew Sandpipers at both Pegwell Bay and RSPB Worth Marshes, whilst also at the latter site were 44 Ringed Plovers, a Garden Warbler, and two Grasshopper Warblers.

A good mix of waders in Pegwell Bay at high tide on the 7th included 66 Dunlins, 41 Ringed Plovers, 11 Sanderlings, five Greenshanks, four Knots, six Whimbrels, 18 Grey Plovers, 24 Bar-tailed Godwits, and five Turnstones. Singles of Spoonbill, Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper, and Turtle Dove were on RSPB Worth Marshes. In the evening, yet again the **PURPLE HERON** put in a brief appearance flying north. After a few days with little to report, the **PURPLE HERON** put in its best appearance for some time on the 10th, showing well on the reedy pools west of the Great Wood on RSPB Worth Marshes. There was also an impressive flock of nine Wood Sandpipers on the marsh. After a night gazing at the impressive showing of the Northern Lights, attention changed back to the birds and early in the morning on the 11th the **PURPLE HERON** was seen again on RSPB Worth Marshes. The flock of migrant waders around Blue Pigeons included four Grey Plovers, 43 Ringed Plovers, two Turnstones with a similar range of species in Pegwell Bay at high tide.

Two Coal Tits on the Green Wall the next day was the first sighting for a while, whilst over on RSPB Worth Marshes the **PURPLE HERON** put in another appearance, both a Spoonbill and a Great White Egret dropped in, and at least two Turtle Doves were purring. Analysis of our 'nocmig' recorders produced our first Spotted Flycatcher of the year calling over Stonar in the early hours of the morning.. The 17th was a nice day and saw an unseasonal flock of seven Barnacle Geese south over the Estate. A **Honey-buzzard** that flew north over RSPB Worth Marshes was more typical. The 18th was something of a red-letter day for RSPB Worth Marshes as a selection of scarcities had dropped into the area. It was pleasing to join in on the notable East coast influx with a fine male **RED-BACKED SHRIKE** discovered early morning, utilising a hedgerow out in the fields near Roaring Gutter, where it remained for the day. Another **TEMMINCK'S STINT** was present on Blue Pigeons Flood though it disappeared mid-morning and then a superb male **RED-FOOTED FALCON** was found hawking over the Great Wood sharing the airspace with multiple Hobbies and 50+ Swifts. A Red Kite soared over in the mid-afternoon, quickly followed by a **White Stork** which then dropped onto the fields west of the Great Wood. Three Turtle Doves and two Quails were also present.



Red-footed Falcon by A.Marek

The following day the **PURPLE HERON** was seen again after a short absence flying south over the Estate and then onto RSPB Worth Marshes early in the day. A small northward passage of Red Kites occurred throughout the area and a **Honey-buzzard** flew north over the Green Wall. The **White Stork** remained on Worth in the early morning before flying out of the area and at least two Turtle Doves were present on site. Singles of Turtle Dove and Quail were present on RSPB Worth Marshes in the cooler, overcast conditions of the 20th. Two drake Garganey were also on the pools. Our first Lapwing chicks were on Restharrow Scrape. The next day a hepatic-form female Cuckoo was on the Estate being chased around by the local male. The Quail remained on Worth Marshes whilst the low cloud and rain dropped several flocks of Swifts into the area.

A/the **PURPLE HERON** put in another brief appearance on the 22nd flying south over the Green Wall and our first Avocet chicks were seen on RSPB Worth Marshes. A Great White Egret, a pair of Egyptian Geese with two goslings, and a Spotted Flycatcher were on New Downs. In the afternoon a **WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** was found on RSPB Worth Marshes. The **WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** showed briefly on RSPB Worth Marshes early on the next day before drifting off south, only to be seen again later in the day. Whilst flying around it also disturbed the **PURPLE HERON** which relocated out of sight (as always..). There was then further interest in the afternoon when two different female **RED-FOOTED FALCONS** were found on the marsh. There was also a big increase in Swifts, with a few hundred hawking over the Estate and marshes inland, and a late Grey Wagtail on the Estate.

The star birds continued to perform on the 24th with the **WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** seen in the morning on Willow Farm, viewable from the Drove. As the temperature rose and the invertebrates became more active, so did the falcons, and both of the female **RED-FOOTED FALCONS** were hawking and showing well on the other side of RSPB Worth Marshes. Just after midday a **White Stork** flew over and, as if the previous wasn't enough, in the evening a brood of Pintail were seen on the marshes, making for another special day in the area. Of interest was news from the Roy Dennis Foundation that the White-tailed Eagle was not one of their released birds from the Isle of Wight project and instead most likely a vagrant from the Continent.

RSPB Worth Marshes continued to attract the birds and the people on the 25th. Both of the **RED-FOOTED FALCONS** performed well to their admirers. A Wood Sandpiper and Garganey on RSPB Worth Marshes the next day once again played second fiddle to the **RED-FOOTED FALCONS**. A **Honey-buzzard** was also reported. The 29th saw a Spotted Flycatcher in the Oasis and a Red Kite overhead and the **RED-FOOTED FALCON** still performed well inland on the marshes. In the evening over 600 Swifts were in the Pegwell area. The switch to a north-westerly made things a lot cooler on the 30th and there were a few heavy downpours. A late Brent Goose in Pegwell was the highlight. The last day of the month saw an Osprey fishing in Pegwell Bay which then then headed off to New Downs with a decent sized Mullet.

## June

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On Sunday 2nd a **BEE-EATER** was tracked along the coast from St Margaret's and eager eyes picked it up flying over the asparagus fields and the Observatory not long after, continuing north. Eight Hobbies, two Curlew Sandpipers, and a Stonechat were also on RSPB Worth Marshes. The next day one of the Curlew Sandpipers still remained on RSPB Worth Marshes. Two Garganeys were also on the flashes and 15 Red Kites flew north.

Another group of 11 Red Kites flew north on the 4th, four Egyptian Geese were on New Downs, and a gathering of 650 Starlings was on Hundred Acre field. There were lots of young Black-headed Gulls on Restharrow Scrape. Small groups of waders were still passing through on their way north to their breeding grounds on the 5th with at least 25 Ringed Plovers on RSPB Worth Marshes and 12 Ringed Plovers, four Dunlins, seven Grey Plovers, two Greenshanks, and a Knot at Pegwell Bay. A Red Kite also flew north during the day. After not being reported for a while, the brood of nine Pintails appeared with the female again on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 6th. A few young Grey Herons also dropped into the marsh, having presumably fledged from somewhere not far away. Ten Hobbies and 20 Ringed Plovers were also present. A **GOLDEN ORIOLE** appeared on the 8th, our third of the year, this time on New Downs. Although hard to see, it sang frequently around the New Downs New Pool area.

There was no sign of the Oriole on the 9th (unsurprisingly) but two Egyptian Geese were on New Downs, a Red Kite on the Green Wall, and 80 Swifts over the Estate. A cool but sunny wander around the Estate on the 11th produced a male Marsh Harrier hunting over Restharrow Dunes, a male Bullfinch in the Cellars, and a showy Little Owl in the Gullies. A few Red Kites also flew over Stonar. A Garganey, nine Ringed Plovers, a Turtle Dove, and a party of Sand Martins were all on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 12th, the latter presumably the first signs of autumn. The following day two Pochards and a Greenshank on Restharrow Scrape were more signs of autumn approaching.

A Gadwall brood on Restharrow Scrape was the best record of the 14th whilst the previous day's Greenshank relocated to RSPB Worth Marshes. Perseverance paid off the next day as eager eyes picked up multiple Manx Shearwaters moving offshore. The scorecard at the end of the day finished on 12 birds, which might not seem much but was a new record for Sandwich Bay (previously seven on 28th May 2000). There was not so much to report on the 16th but it was great to see the brood of Pintails still alive and well on RSPB Worth Marshes, with six Hobbies and 75 Swifts hawking above. Both **Honey-buzzard** and Osprey were seen nearby on the 17th but failed to drift into the Recording Area. Instead, interest was provided by a mix of two Grey Plovers, 15 Knots, and two Common Terns in Pegwell Bay, five Sand Martins over Restharrow Scrape, and the Bullfinch seen on the Estate again. With only one Ringed Plover on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 18th it looked like spring migration of waders through the site finally came to an end. Lucky for us autumn waders were now upon us with three Wood Sandpipers and two Green Sandpipers present. A brood of Shovelers also appeared.

In sunny but breezy conditions on the 19th there was an influx of Swifts and Sand Martins on RSPB Worth Marshes, with 250 of the former and 25 of the latter. Other returning birds included a few Curlews passing by offshore and Teals on both Restharrow Scrape and New Downs. Singles of Great Crested Grebe and Bullfinch were seen on New Downs the next day whilst there were still new waders and wildfowl hatching on RSPB Worth Marshes. A couple of new broods of Tufted Duck were on Restharrow Scrape on the 21st and, excitingly, some Pochard young on RSPB Worth Marshes. The latter was the first confirmed breeding for many years and another high point in an excellent year in the area for breeding wildfowl. Two Red Kites were spotted flying over Worth and two Green Sandpipers on the pools. The 23rd was a very hot day out there. Sightings were limited but an Osprey flew south in the evening. The following day there were a few unusual sights on the local golf courses, namely an Avocet on Royal St George's Golf Course and families of both Water Rail and Stonechat on Prince's Golf Course. Curlew numbers were also building in Pegwell. Autumn birds were apparent on New Downs on the 26th with 17 Little Egrets, nine Teals, 16 Lapwings, and a Wood Sandpiper, whilst a family of Bearded Tits was particularly notable and is thought to be the first breeding record for the Sandwich Bay area.



Pintail by N.Davies

There was a late push of 16 Red Kites over RSPB Worth Marshes on the 28th. The next day there was an influx of various heron species with a Spoonbill in Pegwell Bay, two Great White Egrets and two Cattle Egrets on RSPB Worth Marshes, and 20 Little Egrets on New Downs. Then, on the 30th, the Cattle Egret flock on Worth Marshes increased to five and included one young bird in tow. In the evening around 800 Jackdaws came to roost on the Green Wall.

## July

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The month began with an increase in various Heron species on RSPB Worth Marshes. The Cattle Egret flock now numbered nine birds with Spoonbill, Great White Egret, and Greenshank all new in. On the 3rd a **GLOSSY IBIS** joined the throng and the Cattle Egret flock increased further to 11. The next day it reached 13 birds. The 7th saw a local 'mega' in the form of a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** seen along the Pinnock Wall on RSPB Worth Marshes. A Roseate Tern was also present in Pegwell Bay. After a slight lull a big surprise was the discovery of a Great Crested Grebe pair with young on New Downs on the 11th, having noted regular sightings of at least one individual throughout the spring on one of the Reservoirs. This is a new breeding species for the Recording Area. Four Turtle Doves on RSPB Worth Marshes included two juveniles, which was pleasing to record in the evening.

There were 100+ Sand Martins over the Estate and another 60 at Pegwell Bay on the 13th. After frequent sightings of an adult on the Estate throughout Spring, a juvenile Bullfinch was a nice confirmation of local breeding. An Osprey flew over Pegwell Bay in the evening before flying up the river toward New Downs. After a period of absence, the **GLOSSY IBIS** made a return to Worth on the 15th though it hid itself in deep cover for much of the day. A juvenile Coal Tit on Worth was perhaps even rarer for the site than the Ibis! Our first Willow Warbler of autumn was caught by the ringing team on the Estate on the 20th. A good mix of waders on New Downs included a Wood Sandpiper, 41 Common Sandpipers, and 113 Redshanks, whilst 240 Sandwich Terns were in Pegwell Bay. The change in weather the next day brought with it some new autumn migrants, namely a Whinchat and a Willow Warbler on RSPB Worth Marshes, with another Willow Warbler and a Garden Warbler on the Estate. Two Great White Egrets and the **GLOSSY IBIS** were also present inland on the Marshes.

A Grasshopper Warbler was caught by the ringing team at dawn on the 26th and at least 15 Willow Warblers were scattered around the Estate. A Wheatear on RSPB Worth Marshes was another first for the autumn whilst the **GLOSSY IBIS** was still around. An afternoon trip along the Stour at high tide recorded a very impressive 116 Common Sandpipers. The 28th saw a good mix around the Recording Area. A Wood Warbler was caught by the ringing team early on. Three Cattle Egrets, the **GLOSSY IBIS**, two Great White Egrets, and two Wood Sandpipers were all on RSPB marshes. At least 35 Common Sandpipers were sitting on the sluices along the river on New Downs and 30+ Mediterranean Gulls were flying around Prince's Golf Course. Finally, a Curlew Sandpiper, a Little Stint, and two Little Terns were in Pegwell Bay. The next day a count of 480 Sandwich Terns was made in Pegwell Bay. There was also a good mix of waders and large numbers of Little Egret present. Around 80-100 of the latter were spread through the Recording Area with Worth, New Downs, and Pegwell the hotspots. A Grasshopper Warbler was then seen briefly at the Point on the 30th. In the evening there were eight Little Terns, one Black Tern, and one Wood Sandpiper in Pegwell Bay. And finally, our first Spotted Flycatcher was on New Downs on the 31st.

## August

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A flock of 26 Curlew Sandpipers in Pegwell Bay early on the 1st was an impressive sight. One Black Tern was also present in the Bay. A trip along the river Stour produced another excellent count of 103 Common Sandpipers, meanwhile two Great White Egrets were on RSPB Worth Marshes. The next day a good mixture on the Estate included singles of Kingfisher, Redstart, Wheatear, and Yellow Wagtail. Migrant Warblers comprised 12 Sedge, 19 Reed, one Garden, and ten Willow, whilst 40 Sandwich Terns, a Fulmar, and a Common Sandpiper were offshore. An Egyptian Goose was on Restharrow Scrape and the two Great White Egrets and a Wood Sandpiper were on RSPB Worth Marshes.

There was a big increase in Mediterranean Gulls on the 3rd with at least 70 offshore and c.300 moving over Worth. A Garganey was on the pools on RSPB Worth Marshes and an unidentified grey Harrier flew through. There was a good mix of waders on New Downs, plus two Bearded Tits, over 200 Sandwich Terns offshore, and an Osprey in Pegwell Bay. A Nightingale was caught by the ringing team on the Estate on the 4th. Three Great White Egrets and a mix of two Wood, ten Green, and two Common Sandpipers were on RSPB Worth Marshes. On the 5th a Little Tern was offshore in the evening. This was followed by an arrival of 24 Willow Warblers on the Estate the next day. Also present were one Redstart, two Yellow Wagtails, and a good covey of 20 Grey Partridge in the Oasis. Two Great White Egrets and a Wood Sandpiper were on RSPB Worth Marshes.

The Estate produced our second Wood Warbler of autumn on the 7th, seen originally in the Haven before later being caught by the ringing team. It also scored two Garden Warblers, two Redstarts, three Yellow Wagtails, two Wheatears, and four Sand Martins. A Wood Sandpiper and another two Garden Warblers were on New Downs. The main talking point though was another arrival of Willow Warblers with 56 on the Estate, 13 on New Downs, 19 on the Green Wall, and four on Worth. Another day, another Wood Warbler, as a new bird was ringed on the Estate on the 8th. There were another 50 Willow Warblers and the lingering moulting male Redstart put on a good display in the Oasis area. Two Wood Sandpipers and seven Willow Warblers were on RSPB Worth Marshes. There was a noticeable increase in numbers on RSPB Worth Marshes the following day. The Lapwing flock now numbered 51 and the Teal flock 106, with a Garganey in tow. The Starling, Linnet, and Goldfinch flocks all also grew. After a one-day break there was another Wood Warbler on the Estate on the 10th. A flock of eight Little Egrets flew over and there was an impressive movement of Mediterranean Gulls in the evening with at least 785 going north. Our first Goldcrest of the Autumn was on New Downs. The 11th then saw our fifth Wood Warbler of the Autumn was on the Estate with four Sedge, 14 Reed, and 22 Willow Warblers also recorded.

Our first two Pied Flycatchers of the Autumn were in the Haven on the 12th and later others were found in Waldershare Gully, at Mary Bax, and two on New Downs. Another Wood Warbler was seen at Dickson's Corner. An impressive medley of Sandpipers on RSPB Worth Marshes included a minimum of 16 Wood, 21 Green, and two Common. The 13th was another day to be out early before the scorching temperatures made things too difficult. There were two Pied Flycatchers, one at Mary Bax and another further along at the Chequers, where at least 22 Yellow Wagtails were seen. A Grasshopper Warbler was in the Whitehouse. Eight Wood Sandpipers remained on RSPB Worth Marshes and a mega flock of around 70 **White Storks** thermalled over heading north late morning, all presumably recently released or bred at the Knepp scheme.

Two Wood Sandpipers and a lone **White Stork** were the highlights on New Downs on the 14th. A further 11 Wood Sandpipers were on RSPB Worth Marshes. In the evening a smart adult Roseate Tern was in Pegwell Bay. There seemed to be more hirundine activity the next day with a triple-figure flock over Royal St George's Golf Course. Seven Yellow Wagtails flew over the Estate whilst the impressive run of Wood Sandpipers on RSPB Worth Marshes continued with nine. Hundreds of Terns were moving around offshore on the 16th and in the evening singles of Black Tern and Little Stint were in Pegwell. Elsewhere there was a good mix on New Downs including Osprey, Spotted Redshank, two Bearded Tits, and a Treecreeper. A Pied Flycatcher was at the Observatory. A big arrival of *Acrocephalus* warblers on the Estate saw over 40 each of Sedge and Reed Warblers, plus one Grasshopper Warbler and smaller numbers of Willow Warbler, Whitethroat, and Blackcap. Pegwell Bay produced 246 Mediterranean Gulls and singles of Great White Egret and Black Tern, whilst two Wood Sandpipers and 15 Greenshanks were on New Downs. The 18th then saw really good diversity on the Estate. The headline bird was a surprise **HOOPOE** found on the Observatory track early in the morning, then subsequently flying around the back of the ringing room and then off over the neighbouring farm buildings. A very nice supporting cast included four Pied Flycatchers, one Spotted Flycatcher, one Redstart, five Wheatears, a Whinchat, a Red Kite, and a flyover Wood Sandpiper. Analysis of nocmig recording at Stonar then revealed a calling **ORTOLAN BUNTING** at 4am.



Pied Flycatcher by G.Lee

A Turtle Dove in the Oasis on the 19th was an increasingly rare record from the Estate. There was a reasonable selection of waders on the remaining pools on RSPB Worth Marshes, including still two Wood Sandpipers. The tides on the 20th was almost 7m at Pegwell and produced a 'mega' flock of 930 Mediterranean Gulls, as well as a 1cy Little Gull, an Arctic Tern, and a Curlew Sandpiper. Three Great White Egrets and three Wood Sandpipers continued their good run on RSPB Worth Marshes. Highlights the following day included three Whinchats and a Wood Warbler on the Estate, a Grasshopper Warbler on New Downs, and a Treecreeper on the Green Wall. Gales then picked up overnight and so the day was mostly spent sea watching. Two Little Gulls and 260 Sandwich Terns went north, plus a Swift south. Meanwhile ten **White Storks** were in and around RSPB Worth Marshes.

The 23rd was another day of very strong winds, though a little brighter. Only 50-60 Sandwich Terns were offshore, plus a few Common Terns and Kittiwakes. Pegwell Bay contained singles of Black, Little, and Arctic Terns. The ten **White Storks** were seen on RSPB Worth Marshes again. There were foul conditions all day on the 24th. Some brave souls ventured out to the Point and at Pegwell Bay in the evening and were rewarded with a movement of Terns. At least 14 Arctic and one Roseate were present among the hundreds of Sandwich and Common. There was also an excellent variety of waders, highlighted by five Little Stints, three Curlew Sandpipers, and one Spotted Redshank. A **WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** was seen on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 25th. New Downs held good numbers of waders including 77 Ringed Plovers, 29 Dunlins, one Knot, 95 Redshanks, 24 Greenshanks, ten Green Sandpipers, and 17 Common Sandpipers. A couple of Swifts, 18 Willow Warblers, and a Garden Warbler were also recorded on the Estate. The 26th saw the **WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** flying south-west over Stonar just after midday. One Swift and 80 Sand Martins were the best on the Estate. Two Green Sandpipers then flew over the Estate on the 27th where double-figures of Sand Martin and Swallow hawked. Four Whinchats and three Wheatears were in the Sandilands area and there was an increase in Robins and Reed Buntings.

The 28th got off to a crazy start with an adult female **Honey-buzzard** seen perched on the Heligoland trap in the Haven. It must have roosted there overnight. It flew off soon after but was seen again in the Oasis a little later, before disappearing mid-morning. It was very hot throughout the day so there were little other records of note. However, two Snipes and a Tufted Duck were unusual sightings from our newly-created ponds in the Dragonfly Pond Field - hopefully the first of many. It was another hot day on the 29th. There was a scattering of warblers on the Estate. Two Hobbies, six Yellow Wagtails, and two Grey Wagtails flew over and five Wheatears and two Whinchats were at Sandilands. In the late afternoon singles of Pied and Spotted Flycatcher were flitting around the Ringing Room and Observatory car park.

On the 30th the Estate held a Pied Flycatcher, a mobile Greenshank, nine Whinchats, six Yellow Wagtails, and 50 Linnets. Over in Pegwell Bay there were good numbers including 110 Ringed Plovers, 60 Dunlins, and a Curlew Sandpiper and inland on RSPB Worth Marshes there were three Great White Egrets and 120 Teals.

## September

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A **Wryneck** spent time on the 1st sitting deep in cover at Dickson's Corner. Two Curlew Sandpipers were in the wader roost on the Estate beach and another three were in Pegwell Bay. The 2nd was a grey day with a hint of drizzle in the air. There was no sign of either of yesterday's highlights but there was a notable influx of *hirundines*, with 600 Swallows and 300 Sand Martins. Two Wigeons were on Restharrow Scrape and a Great White Egret flew over. Small numbers of gulls and terns were moving offshore, plus a male Common Scoter sat on the sea. Two Little Terns were offshore and hundreds of Sand Martins were around the Oasis area on the 3rd. There was a really nice variety of birds on the Estate the next day. Overhead 'vismig' comprised two Ospreys, 160 Sand Martins, 210 Swallows, four Yellow Wagtails, eight Grey Wagtails, four Pied Wagtails, and singles of Great Spotted Woodpecker, Swift, and Little Egret north. There was a big increase in Robins to 58 and Blackcaps to 95, plus one Sedge Warbler, four Reed Warblers, five Whitethroats, one Lesser Whitethroat, one Garden Warbler, nine Willow Warblers, 30 Chiffchaffs, three Whinchats, and three Wheatears.

Fierce north-easterlies battered the Bay on the 5th, even knocking out the power to the area for a while, and so sea-watching was the aim of the day. It was a touch disappointing considering the conditions but a few groups of wildfowl and waders went north with singles of Black Tern and Arctic Skua being the highlights. The next day was much calmer but still grey and muggy. Bird of the day was undoubtedly the Bittern found on Restharrow Scrape mid-morning. After stalking the bank in the front of the Graham Crick hide it then flew across to the north-east corner. A Little Ringed Plover was also present and later in the day a Spoonbill dropped in too. There were small numbers of *hirundines* moving north over the Estate again, including four Swifts. The afternoon saw a big arrival of at least 35 Tree Pipits to area, plus a few Redstarts. On New Downs there was a Wood Sandpiper and two Curlew Sandpipers. A further Curlew Sandpiper was also seen in Pegwell Bay. The morning of the 7th continued how the evening left off with Tree Pipits still moving through. At least ten birds were seen. A Spotted Redshank was also on RSPB Worth Marshes. The dearth of birds in the bushes the next day was surprising considering the numbers which made landfall further north in the UK. There were good numbers of Tree Pipit again though with at least 15 seen today. Most birds are picked up flying overhead. Just when we thought that was going to be the highlight of the day a brilliant **BROWN BOOBY** flew north offshore. It was seen entering the Bay just before midday

before being lost to view. This was potentially the same bird seen off the Kent coast two-three times in the previous three weeks and a new species for Sandwich Bay. Three Little Gulls and a Marsh Harrier were then offshore on the 9th and a Pied Flycatcher was at the Chequers. The Estate held two Tree Pipits, a Redstart, eight Wheatears, and a Whinchat whilst singles of Little Tern and Curlew Sandpiper were in Pegwell Bay.

The 10th was our first big 'vismig' day of autumn. *Hirundines* dominated proceedings with at least 8,200 House Martins and 980 Swallows recorded flying north and smaller numbers of Sand Martins and Swifts. Two Tree Pipits were recorded among 287 Meadow Pipits, plus an impressive 31 Grey Wagtails, four Yellow Wagtails, two Great Spotted Woodpeckers, and a Mistle Thrush. The bushes on the Estate held 96 Blackcaps, 21 Chiffchaffs, and five Willow Warblers. Singles of Spotted and Pied Flycatcher were at The Chequers.

There was another arrival of Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs on the 11th with at least 80 of the former and 50 of the latter. A Tree Pipit was in the Oasis and a Merlin hunted the asparagus fields. A Tawny Owl was on the Green Wall in the evening. The next day a Firecrest on the Estate was our first of autumn. There were another 40 Chiffchaffs and 50 Blackcaps plus a/the Tree Pipit in the Oasis again. A Pied Flycatcher on New Downs was the best of the rest. The 13th may be unlucky for some but there was a decent enough mix for us around the Recording Area. A Firecrest was along the Worth track and two Great White Egrets on RSPB Worth Marshes. A Raven flew over the Observatory and a family of Grey Partridges was in the asparagus fields, whilst singles of Black Tern, Little Tern, and Spotted Redshank were in Pegwell Bay. The next day the Estate provided two Tree Pipits, a Grasshopper Warbler (Gullies), and two Firecrest, but the main talking point of the morning was the warblers with 124 Blackcaps and 125 Chiffchaffs logged. A big movement of Swallows in the evening saw approximately 5,000 birds in the area. The 15th was another day with the bushes teeming with just over 200 Chiffchaffs and just under 100 Blackcaps, plus another two Firecrests. Eight Whinchats were also recorded. Three Pochards were on Restharrow Scrape early on the 16th and there were over 50 Chiffchaffs on the Estate and 25 on New Downs. A Redstart was seen at the Drove and a few Pintails in Pegwell Bay.

Many of us were rudely/thankfully woken early on the 17th by news of a **RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER** trapped and ringed on the Estate. The bird was a first-calendar individual (born this year) and the first record in the area since October 2012. As the morning went on two Redstarts were found and then the wind picked up and encouraged some sea passage. Wildfowl were moving through in small flocks, namely Brent Geese, Wigeon, Teal, and Pintail. News of a Brown Booby off Foreness kept us searching and we eventually picked up a **Petrel sp**, most likely Leach's. Unfortunately, it zoomed past us so quickly that we couldn't get the finer details.

The wind was still very strong on the 18th but despite this there was a lot less moving offshore than expected, with an Arctic Tern north the lone highlight. A Spotted Flycatcher hid out of the wind in the Jubilee Field. Over in Pegwell Bay there was a reasonable variety on offer. The exceedingly high tide produced a Little Stint whilst the Wigeon flock was now into triple-figures. There was somewhat of a clear-out on the Estate on the 19th with only a handful of Sand Martins, Chiffchaffs, and Blackcaps, plus a Grey Wagtail and an odd sight of two Kestrels on the shingle. Later, a brief **Wryneck** was spied along the road. Two Little Stint were in Pegwell Bay early on but had (presumably) moved to New Downs in the afternoon. The next day there were hundreds of Swallows heading north early on in the low cloud. The sun broke through mid-morning though and by then the passage had finished. Three Ravens were cavorting about everywhere and there were three Firecrests at the southern end of the Estate.



Wryneck by J.Dodds

Three Firecrests, nine Whinchats, and a Spotted Flycatcher were the highlights on the Estate on the 21st whilst eight Tree Pipits, seven Whinchats, 11 Yellow Wagtails, and singles of Greenshank and Green Sandpiper were on RSPB Worth Marshes. Seven more Whinchats, two

Bearded Tits, and another Spotted Flycatcher were also logged on New Downs. Also of interest, there seemed to be a lot of Jay activity in the area with many birds seen at different sites perhaps moving through. The next day saw the first real push of Meadow Pipits with just over 200 flying north. Our first Brambling of the Autumn also dropped in at Mary Bax. In the afternoon three Little Stints were in Pegwell Bay and a Dotterel flew west over Royal Cinque Ports Golf Course. An early flurry of activity on the 23rd produced a Yellow-browed Warbler in the Haven among lots of Chiffchaffs. Later a Grasshopper Warbler was flushed from the path on Royal St George's Golf Course and a Firecrest was trapped and ringed. A late Cuckoo was on the Green Wall and a Little Stint was feeding along the tide line on Prince's Beach.

The Yellow-browed Warbler was still in the Haven the next day, joined this time by a Coal Tit, whilst a Kingfisher also flashed through too. Overhead passage had finished by mid-morning but before then over 500 Meadow Pipits, 30 Pied Wagtails, five Yellow Wagtails, three Grey Wagtails, two Bramblings, and 16 Reed Buntings flew north. The 25th was an excellent day with bushes bustling as the low cloud and intermittent showers brought with them a massive fall of birds. The final counts were approximately 540 Blackcaps and 390 Chiffchaffs on the Estate alone, plus at least 200 each of Blackcap and Chiffchaff were elsewhere in the Recording Area, giving a final total of around **1,500** Warblers. The Yellow-browed Warbler was still in the Haven, two Tree Pipits flew north, and over 1,000 Swallows and House Martins also went through. Two Balearic Shearwaters and a Little Gull were offshore and a Spotted Flycatcher at New Downs.

Three Balearic Shearwaters and six Arctic Skuas were the highlights offshore in strong winds and intermittent downpours on the 27th. Four Little Stints were also in Pegwell Bay. The 28th was busy with people for the inaugural Kent Bird Migration Day. Four Dotterels were seen briefly near Worth village before flying over RSPB Worth Marshes and towards the Observatory. Unfortunately, they could not be relocated. Two Great White Egrets were on the marshes plus at least 50 Chiffchaffs. There was a light movement of Buzzards with double-figures over the Estate, along at least 70 Mediterranean Gulls and singles of Tree Pipit and Rock Pipit. A Little Stint was in Pegwell Bay. The subsequent day was a lot cloudier and not as nice, but with it came a lot more birds. There was a fall of Chiffchaff and Blackcap again, with at least 120 of the former and 90 of the latter. Eighty Brent Geese were also offshore. The early onslaught of wind and rain on the final day of the month gave way somewhat around midday. Three Balearic Shearwaters were seen flying south with three Arctic Skuas, one Great Skua, one Little Gull, and one Arctic Tern also of note. There was an increase in winter wildfowl in Pegwell Bay.

## October

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A flock of 11 Egyptian Geese on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 1st was unexpected and our third-highest count ever (beaten by 13 in Pegwell Bay in 2020 and 15 on the Green Wall in 2001). Two Spoonbills were in Pegwell Bay and an Arctic Skua offshore. The next day there was a mixture of summer and winter on RSPB Worth Marshes with late records of Garganey and Little Ringed Plover mixing with Brambling and our first Water Pipit of the Autumn. There was a concerted passage of Brent Geese offshore throughout the day and our final tally was 1,700, plus five Little Gulls, 117 Wigeons, 24 Teals, 25 Common Scoters, one male Red-breasted Merganser, two Red-throated Divers, 28 Ringed Plovers, eight Dunlins, 19 Sandwich Terns, and two Common Terns. Two Firecrests were on the Estate and five Rock Pipits flew north along the shore.

A Black-necked Grebe on the Garage Pool in Pegwell Bay on the 3rd was a rare record for the area, our first since 13th December 2020. Almost equally-rare was a Red-necked Grebe offshore, plus a Great Skua and 300 Brent Geese. The Black-necked Grebe was still present on the Garage Pool at Pegwell Bay the following day. A Yellow-browed Warbler was trapped and ringed on the Estate as well as an **Eastern Lesser Whitethroat** showing characteristics of one of the rarer far-eastern races, ssp *halimondendri*. Two Spoonbills, a Spotted Redshank, and five Bramblings flew north. The 5th saw seven each of Canada and Egyptian Geese on Restharrow Scrape. In the evening a co-ordinated Gull count of Pegwell Bay revealed 4,000 Black-headed Gulls, 5,200 Herring Gulls, and smaller numbers of everything else including 75 Mediterranean Gulls. Two Spoonbills, 21 Little Egrets, 35 Stock Doves, and 130 Crows were also noted. A Yellow-browed Warbler was trapped and ringed on the Estate on the 6th and in the evening around 150 Swallows were seen. Two Bearded Tits were on RSPB Worth Marshes.

A Yellow-browed Warbler was calling from the Haven on the 7th, possibly the previous days' bird relocating, and a Whinchat was in the Dragonfly Pond Fields. The Black-necked Grebe was also still on the Garage Pool at Pegwell Bay. It was 'as you were' on the 8th with the Yellow-browed Warbler still in the Haven and the Black-necked Grebe also still at Pegwell Bay. A Great White Egret was on Restharrow Scrape and over on New Downs there were three Pintails and singles of Black-tailed Godwit and Ruff. There were lots of Stonechats in the area with double-figures on the Estate, along the Ancient Highway to the Chequers, and on RSPB Worth Marshes. The Yellow-browed Warbler was still in the Haven on the 9th. Other highlights on the Estate included Mistle Thrush, Bullfinch, two Greenfinches (rare here these days), Firecrest, and a handful of Siskins and Sand Martins. Five Egyptian Geese flew over to RSPB Worth Marshes and there were lots of Great Spotted Woodpeckers to-ing and fro-ing. The Black-necked Grebe remained at Pegwell Bay.

A switch in the wind to a north-westerly on the 10th meant a few groups of Meadow Pipits and Goldfinches flew north and singles of Firecrest and Yellow-browed Warbler were on the Estate. The following day there were Yellow-browed Warblers in Waldershare Gully and Jubilee Field and elsewhere around the Estate there were three Rock Pipits, 44 Chiffchaffs, three Firecrests, 62 Siskins, and two Bramblings. Two Tree Sparrows were in the Haven in the evening. Meanwhile two Coal Tits, a Treecreeper, and another Brambling were on the Green Wall and a Bearded Tit was found on RSPB Worth Marshes. Singles of Water Rail, Common Sandpiper, and Green Sandpiper were on New Downs on the 12th and over in Pegwell Bay there were two adult Yellow-legged Gulls and 155 Mediterranean Gulls. At least 90 Swallows were flying over the Estate.

A really good mix of birds was around the area on the 13th with a ringtail Hen Harrier, two Dartford Warblers, a Tree Sparrow, and a Yellow-browed Warbler on the Estate. In the afternoon 12 Pink-footed Geese and five Bearded Tits were on New Downs. After a deluge in the morning of the 14th there were two Firecrests, a Bullfinch, a Coal Tit, a Yellow-browed Warbler, and our first Jack Snipe of the Autumn on the Estate. The next day we woke with flocks of 30-40 Redwing 'seeping' through above the Observatory and the Oasis. News then came through from elsewhere of similar and it was clear there was a considerable arrival of Redwings all along the East Coast of the UK. We ended up with just under 500 birds passing through, all going south. With them there were small numbers of Song Thrushes, Starlings, Skylarks, and finches, including two Bramblings. A small movement offshore included 230 Brent Geese, 13 Shelducks, eight Pintails, and 11 Sandwich Terns. The Yellow-browed Warbler continued in Waldershare Gully and our first Black Redstart of the year was at Mary Bax.

The 16th brought completely different conditions from the previous day and with it a different range of species. Counts of 62 Robins, 21 Song Thrushes, 16 Goldcrests, and four Firecrests were on the Estate in a warm southerly breeze. The Yellow-browed Warbler was briefly shouting it's head off in The Elms before heading back to the Gullies, a Jack Snipe was flushed from long grass, whilst singles of Dartford Warbler and Brent Goose were on/around Restharrow Scrape.

It was very humid in the low cloud and gentle southerly on the 17th. This cloud cover brought some light 'vismig' in the form of 112 Goldfinches, small numbers of Skylarks and Meadow Pipits, two Rock Pipits, one late Tree Pipit, and our first two Redpolls of the Autumn. There were at least eight Firecrests scattered across the Estate, two Yellow-browed Warblers, and another increase to 79 Robins. An additional three Firecrests were around New Downs New Pool. The following day there was dense fog for the first few hours but by mid-morning the sun had burned through. There seemed to be a fair few birds moving around, perhaps disorientated by the fog. Three Tree Sparrows and four Bearded Tits were clocked flying over Estate.

A Little Stint was found in Pegwell Bay and a Dartford Warbler in the scrub by the hide. Not long after other Dartford Warblers were found along the Estate beach and Prince's beach. The latter site also held a Whinchat and our first Snow Bunting of autumn. Over on New Downs seven Bearded Tits were on the pools but on the way back the bird-of-the-day was discovered, an impressive **ISABELLINE SHRIKE** on Hundred Acre Field. Despite the morning's rain there were 11 Egyptian Geese, 14 Grey Partridges, 130 Lapwings, three Green Sandpipers, two Bearded Tits, and a Raven on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 19th. At least 210 Swallows and 12 House Martins flew north overhead whilst four Siskins and a Firecrest were on the Estate and a Dartford Warbler at the Point. There was no sign of the previous days' Shrike but a fine male Hen Harrier touring the area was some consolation.

The 20th was a wet and windy day again. A Dartford Warbler was on the Estate near St George's Bushes, at least 700 *hirundines* (mostly Swallows) were hawking over and moving through, and 45 Mediterranean Gulls were on RSPB Worth Marshes. Despite appalling conditions on the 21st a determined observer was out on RSPB Worth Marshes and they discovered a 'redhead' **Smew** on the large pool between the Pinnock Wall and the Great Wood. On the Estate, a Yellow-browed Warbler was still in the Haven and another was on New Downs around Prince's Reservoir. A Dartford Warbler and two Bearded Tits on RSPB Worth Marshes were good sightings in pleasant conditions on the 22nd. Five Tree Sparrows were reported down the Worth Track from the Observatory. On the 23rd another Dartford Warbler was on the Estate with at least one other bird along the Point. A late Whinchat was still lingering at Mary Bax, whilst frustratingly brief views of an unidentified ringtail Harrier were had as it headed north over the Estate. The male Hen Harrier was again present on the Point, as was a male Ring Ouzel, the latter our first of the Autumn.

It was a lovely (if quiet) walk around the Estate in the Autumn sunshine on the 24th. There was a fair bit of Grey Partridge activity, as noted in other subsites in the area in the last week or so, and still around 35 Swallows flitting around on Royal St George's Golf Course. Two Bearded Tits were still on RSPB Worth Marshes and the swirling mass of Gulls out there had at least 100 Mediterranean amongst the 3,000+ Black-headed. The 25th was somewhat similar to the previous day on the Estate with added interest in the form of Coal Tit, Firecrest, and two Lesser Redpolls. A Ring Ouzel was in Pegwell Bay Country Park.

Most of the 26th was spent taking part in the Great Kentish Bird Off at Pegwell Bay. As well as lots of stalls and activities to peruse there were also a fair amount of birds around including a Pale-bellied Brent Goose on the mudflats, a hunting male Hen Harrier, and a Hawfinch in Stonelees. A slight switch to northerlies overnight and it felt a lot cooler. The Dartford Warbler was showing well in Restharrow Dunes again with another at Dickson's

Corner, whilst a handful of Redpolls were on the Estate and our first few Fieldfares on RSPB Worth Marshes. Surprisingly, the **Smew** re-appeared on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 28th, favouring Roaring Gutter, whilst on the Estate there was a Great White Egret and a Dartford Warbler.



Smew by G.Lee

Highlights on the Estate on the 29th were Water Rail, 17 Swallows, House Martin, two Black Redstarts, Rock Pipit, Dartford Warbler, 19 Redpolls, and Bullfinch plus a Great Northern Diver close along the shore. A Fieldfare was on the Green Wall. Light northerlies and low cloud the following day were perfect conditions for visible migration. There were a few new flocks of thrushes moving around but the main activity was the northbound passage of finches through the area, with at least 2,900 Chaffinches, 590 Goldfinches, 16 Bramblings, 60 Redpolls, seven Linnets, three Greenfinches, and two Siskins. In addition, 30 Swallows, 15 Pied Wagtails, three Grey Wagtails, 220 Starlings, and a Great White Egret also moved through, whilst two Black Redstarts and two Dartford Warblers were on the Estate, and a Merlin and a Firecrest were at the Drove. The last day of the month saw another good variety of birds on offer. Two Hawfinches flew north over the Haven, two Coal Tits were mobile around the Estate, 250 Brent Geese went south offshore, and a Jack Snipe was on Restharrow Scrape. Just inland from the Observatory there was a small group of Yellowhammers around the hay bales and further inland on RSPB Worth Marshes our second Black-necked Grebe of the year was found.

## November

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Two Great White Egrets and a Woodlark flew over the Estate on the 1st. Among almost 80 species on New Downs were three Pintails, seven Pochards, a Merlin, three Water Rails, an Avocet, 314 Golden Plovers, 480 Lapwings, six Dunlins, 57 Redshanks, a Greenshank, a Common Sandpiper, six Rock Pipits, three Grey Wagtails, five Stonechats, three Fieldfares, two Bramblings, and four Yellowhammers. Overnight easterlies brought a small arrival of thrushes to the Estate and some good sea passage, including 1,200 Brent Geese, 150 Common Scoters, 45 Little Gulls, and one Great Northern Diver. A Yellow-browed Warbler was just off the Pinnock Wall on RSPB Worth Marshes and the Black-necked Grebe was still present from last month. The next day two Woodcocks on the Estate were our first of the Autumn whilst a late Wheatear was on Royal Cinque Ports Golf Course.

Around 50 Redpolls were on the Estate on the 4th with smaller numbers of Siskins and Goldfinches moving through. A Great White Egret was on RSPB Worth Marshes and there was some wildfowl activity offshore. At least 24 Pink-footed Geese and 13 White-fronted Geese spent the following morning flying around on RSPB Worth Marshes. They finally settled on Willow Farm and were often viewable from the Drove. On the other side of the railway the Yellow-browed Warbler and Black-necked Grebe were still present.

It was all about RSPB Worth Marshes on the 6th with 27 Pink-footed Geese, seven White-fronted Geese, Black-necked Grebe, Cattle Egret, Ring Ouzel, 260 Redwings, one Brambling, and two Hawfinches recorded. The weather remained quite murky on the 7th but despite this at least 290 Gannets could be seen feeding offshore. Inland the Pink-footed Goose flock rose to at least 55 individuals on RSPB Worth Marshes. A Merlin flashed past the Observatory and 60 Fieldfares looked set to roost. There continued to be a good variety of birds on offer in the area on the 8th. The regular Great White Egret and Black-necked Grebe were on RSPB Worth Marshes. Seven White-fronted Geese were also on the flood and approximately 70 Pink-footed Geese were in the Blue Pigeon fields off the Pinnock Wall. Meanwhile a Siberian Chiffchaff was trapped and ringed on the Estate, a Dartford Warbler and a Merlin were seen behind the asparagus fields, and a mobile Hawfinch was seen around the Elms and Waldershare Avenue area. There were also three Swallows, 85 Redwings, and 105 Siskins. Most of the 9th was spent planting trees along the edge of the Dragonfly Pond Field. Thank you to everyone who came along and helped out. Offshore the Gannet flock was just under 500 individuals and a late afternoon walk on New Downs produced an excellent 11 Water Rails and five Bearded Tits. The impressive flock of Gannets numbered at least 1,200 the next day and were feeding very close in to the shore. A Shag flew past the melee. Singles of Jack Snipe and Woodcock were on the Estate and two-three Woodlarks flew through.

The 11th was another day with a great mix of birds across the area. RSPB Worth Marshes provided 31 White-fronted Geese, a Merlin, a Black-necked Grebe, a Grey Plover, a Ring Ouzel, and our first Lapland Bunting of the year. The Estate hit back with four Bramblings, a Jack Snipe, a Dartford Warbler, and yet another Woodlark. Three late Swallows and five House Martins were also seen.

Winds picked up overnight and produced a reasonable morning's sea-watch comprising 285 Gannets, 45 Cormorants, three Great Crested Grebes, two Red-throated Divers, 52 Brent Geese, one Red-breasted Merganser, 53 Wigeons, two Teals, 35 Shelducks, 14 Common Scoters, one Shoveler, 103 Dunlins, five Sanderlings, 16 Knots, 14 Grey Plovers, one Golden Plover, four Oystercatchers, two Turnstones, one Arctic Skua, 88 Starlings, and one Snow Bunting, all mostly flying north. A male Merlin was at the Drove and there was the surprise reappearance of the **Smew** on RSPB Worth Marshes. Singles of Great White Egret, Black-necked Grebe, and Hawfinch were on RSPB Worth Marshes the next day and the ringing team caught another Siberian Chiffchaff on the Estate.

There were a few bits and bobs moving offshore on the 14th with Pintail, Knots, and Brent Geese the highlights. The Ring Ouzel was seen again on RSPB Worth Marshes and a lovely adult male Merlin flew through. The following day a surprising amount of visible migration was happening overhead with seven Swallows, 200 Goldfinches, 21 Siskins, four Redpolls, and two Bramblings the highlights. Singles of Jack Snipe, Dartford Warbler, Siberian Chiffchaff, and Bullfinch were on the Estate, plus three Corn Buntings. Two White-fronted Geese and the regular male Merlin were seen from the Drove looking across the Willow Farm side of RSPB Worth Marshes. An Eider was also sat offshore. These were followed the next day by a Great Northern Diver offshore and a Great White Egret on RSPB Worth Marshes. The usual good mix of waders at high tide in Pegwell Bay included 820 Oystercatchers, 449 Lapwings, 216 Golden Plovers, four Grey Plovers, 510 Dunlins, five Sanderlings, 11 Knots, 17 Black-tailed Godwits, 277 Curlews, 130 Redshanks, one Snipe, and 14 Turnstones. Meanwhile four Pintails, a Common Sandpiper, and an additional 574 Lapwings and 447 Golden Plovers were on New Downs. On the 17th an impressive 58 Snipes were seen on Restharrow Scrape, the Great White Egret was again on RSPB Worth Marshes, and there were still three late Swallows around the Observatory. The next day two Velvet Scoters went south offshore and then came back north and into Pegwell. A Jack Snipe was also seen briefly on the Estate. There was shocking weather on the 19th but three late Sandwich Terns were seen offshore. There was a turn in the weather again as freezing temperatures arrived on the 20th. There were a few hardy Chiffchaffs on the Estate and small numbers of winter thrushes. A Woodcock was flushed from the path behind the asparagus fields where a mighty flock of 540 Woodpigeons and 220 Stock Doves were feeding. Wildfowl were slightly higher on RSPB Worth Marshes and included a few Pintails.

The 21st was another day of cold conditions with heavy frost and ice at dawn. This brought in small numbers of Woodcocks with four seen in the Gullies/Elms area. There were lots of reports of Little Auks down the east coast of the UK but no sign here, though one made it close by to Ramsgate Harbour, however we did manage handfuls of wildfowl, divers, and grebes offshore and in the afternoon, a delightful **Grey Phalarope** was sitting off of Prince's Beach. Five Snow Buntings also flew over. The 22nd was another icy start and clearly the wildfowl were moving with the cold snap as a count of 1000+ Wigeon was on RSPB Worth Marshes. On the Estate, a surprisingly late Wheatear on Royal Cinque Ports defied the odds. A couple of Firecrests were also lingering on the Green Wall.

The deteriorating weather on the 23rd did bring in some rewards with a **Grey Phalarope** on RSPB Worth Marshes. Then the next day Jack Snipe and Woodcock were on the Estate. In the stormy conditions offshore, a Great Skua and a Sooty Shearwater flew south. The 25th saw five Bearded Tits on New Downs along with 300 Golden Plovers and 400 Lapwings. A good mix of waders was along Prince's Beach with 700 Dunlins, 40 Knots, 220 Sanderlings, and 30 Grey Plovers. The highlight of the next day was a pair of Whooper Swans on RSPB Worth Marshes. They settled on Minnis Flood before being spooked by the local Mute Swans, only to reappear at the end of the day. These are scarce migrants to the Sandwich Bay Recording Area. Elsewhere, a male Merlin was at the Drove and five Woodcocks were along the Green Wall.

Wet conditions for much of the daylight hours of the 27th made for a quiet day in the Recording Area. A Great White Egret was on RSPB Worth Marshes. Brighter conditions on the 28th saw a build-up of Great Crested Grebes and Cormorants offshore, with at least 168 of the latter gathering on the Point at high tide. On RSPB Worth Marshes, a Water Pipit and two Great White Egrets were present, whilst on the Estate a Dartford Warbler was seen.

## December

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The 1st of the month saw the first major Winter arrival of Cormorants with just under 1,500 seen offshore. Singles of Woodcock and Dartford Warbler were on the Estate. The next day the fields between the Observatory and Restharrow Scrape were cut and so a large number of Woodpigeons and Stock Doves, Grey Partridges and Pheasants, and Skylarks were on show. Five Tree Sparrows in the Jubilee Field were no doubt also displaced from the fields. The previous day's Dartford Warbler was also showing again at Dickson's Corner. The 3rd was another day of Cormorant mayhem offshore with at least 1,400 going to and fro, with smaller numbers of Gannets and wildfowl. Singles of Firecrest and Dartford Warbler were on the Estate. The 5th saw two Barnacle Geese joined by a lone Pink-footed Goose on Willow Farm.

There was brief respite on the 6th between two storms. New Downs provided an unseasonal Swallow around Prince's Reservoir and another 500 Cormorants were offshore. Often sea passage can be good in strong winds but despite Storm Darragh crashing through on the 8th there were fewer birds moving offshore than hoped. There were totals of 17 Wigeons, 23 Teals, one Common Scoter, 12 Gannets, 325 Cormorants, two Grey Plovers, two Knots, three Dunlins, and one Auk sp. logged. Another spell on the sea on the 9th produced a drake Eider and a Great Northern Diver, with a flock of 61 Ringed Plovers, 74 Sanderlings, 310 Dunlins on the receding tide on the beach. Persistence paid off though as sea-watchers were rewarded with a **Little Auk** seen flying north along the shore on the 10th. At least 1,200+ Gulls fed in the surf and included a 1cy Little Gull and two 1cy Caspian Gulls. There were at least five White-fronted Geese and three Brent Geese in a flock of 230+ Greylag Geese between the Observatory and the Worth track, whilst further inland there was a brief sighting of a Bittern at Roaring Gutter.



Little Auk by A.Lipczynski

A calm but very chilly walk around the Estate on the 13th found the Dartford Warbler still present with Stonechats at Dickson's Corner, two Firecrests chasing each other in The Elms, and three Kittiwakes following a local fishing boat offshore. Ten White-fronted Geese, one Brent Goose, four Barnacle Geese, three Green Sandpipers, and five Water Pipits were the highlights across RSPB Worth Marshes on the 14th whilst in Pegwell at least seven Caspian Gulls and one Yellow-legged Gull were seen on the incoming tide and a flock of seven Snow Buntings were present.

The following day there were lots of waders in Pegwell including an excellent local count of 380 Grey Plovers. The flock of seven Snow Buntings were still viewable (just) across the Bay on Shellness Point. Two Pink-footed Geese, three White-fronted Geese, and four Barnacle Geese were on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 16th. The seven Snow Buntings were seen again from Pegwell Bay and nine Caspian Gulls and two Yellow-legged Gulls were present. New arrivals on the 17th included ten Fieldfares, six Siskins, and a Bullfinch on the Estate. The seven Snow Buntings were reported again from Pegwell Bay. Horrid conditions early on the 18th but gradually the drizzle lifted (though still remained windy). There were two White-fronted Geese in the Greylag flock between the Observatory and the railway. Meanwhile there was a very impressive count of 16 Caspian Gulls in Pegwell Bay, a record count for the area, whilst the seven Snow Buntings were still present.

There was a switch in the wind to north-westerly the next day and it brought a chill to the air. A little activity offshore was livened up by a Black-necked Grebe drifting south mid-distance. After four years without any sightings this was our third bird of the year. A Hawfinch was the highlight on RSPB Worth Marshes. A Dartford Warbler was in Restharrow Dunes opposite the entrance to Restharrow Scrape the following day. A real mix of weather on the 21st with bright sunshine interspersed with heavy downpours. Two White-fronted Geese were in with the Greylag flock between the Observatory and the Worth track. A chilly and blustery 23rd saw at least 600 Cormorants offshore and a northward passage of a few hundred Gulls along the shore included three Caspians and two Yellow-leggeds. The two White-fronted Geese were seen again on RSPB Worth Marshes. The two White-fronted Geese continued on RSPB Worth Marshes the next day whilst a Lapland Bunting teetered on the edge of the SBBOT Recording Area along the cliff top at Pegwell Bay.

Four Barnacle Geese were on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 26th. Most people were either still full of Christmas turkey or out looking at the Yellow Warbler/Scops Owl elsewhere in the County on the 28th, but a Black-throated Diver was noted offshore. Four Black-tailed Godwits were new in on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 29th with two Egyptian Geese, three Marsh Harriers, a Great White Egret, and a Raven also seen. And finally, a Cattle Egret was at the Observatory on the 31st.

**By Steffan Walton**

Glossy Ibis by S.Ray



# A Systematic List of Species

At the end of 2023 the number of species recorded within the Observatory Recording Area stood at 349. The addition of Brown Booby in 2024 took the total to 350.

The taxonomic order in the list that follows and the English vernacular names used correspond to the most recent BOU list. Below each species name is the status of the bird in the SBBOT Recording Area. Peak monthly counts and bird-day totals are shown below many species. The peak count is the highest number recorded on one day combined across all the Recording Area. For example, if there were 12 Swallows on the Estate on 12th April and then six on the Green Wall, four on the Estate, and seven on Worth on the 13th. In this instance the peak count for the month would be 17. Bird-days are the sum of sightings each month. Using the same Swallow data as before the number of bird-days would be 29. Rare species included in the list have been accepted by the SBBOT, KOS, and BBRC records panels.

## **(Dark-bellied) Brent Goose *Branta bernicla***

### **Common migrant and winter visitor**

The year's bird-day total of 6,844 was a big improvement on last year. Regular counts from Pegwell Bay revealed 150-200 on most visits in January and February with a spring peak there of 422 on 11th March. Elsewhere there were ten on RSPB Worth marshes on 10th January, one on New Downs on 28th January, and small numbers of birds passing offshore. The last bird was in Pegwell on 30th May.

After a single in Pegwell on 25th July there was a gap until two singles in the area on 8th September. There was a significant passage in October with 1,721 south offshore on the 2nd, with 407 the next day, and a further 233 on the 15th. A lone bird was on Restharrow Scrape on the 16th. Then in November there was another big movement of 1,181 south offshore on the 2nd. December was mostly quiet but three birds were on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 10th and another on the 14th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	176	210	439	13	15		1		110	1728	1181	62
B/days	945	594	841	102	33		1		266	2414	1477	171

A Pale-bellied Brent Goose *B.hrota* was in Pegwell Bay on 26th October.

## **Canada Goose *Branta canadensis***

### **Regular visitor and occasional breeder**

The 287 bird-days was a 13.9% increase on last year, which itself was an above-average year. Five birds were either on RSPB Worth Marshes or on the Estate/Restharrow Scrape area at the start of the year, increasing to six

in February, and then eight in March. Four birds remained on RSPB Worth Marshes in May with one pair raising four young.

After only two sightings in June and July the family of six were seen three times in August before disappearing early in the month. After a two-month absence birds appeared on 5th October and were then seen fairly frequently until the end of the year. Nine on RSPB Worth Marshes on 23rd October was the year's peak.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	5	6	8	6	8	2	6	6		9	7	7
B/days	29	49	32	22	20	2	6	18		54	41	14

## **Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis***

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

Six were on RSPB Worth Marshes on 9th January and an unseasonal party of seven went over the Estate on 17th May.

In December there were 20 bird-days on RSPB Worth Marshes comprising two-four birds seen irregularly from the 4th until the 26th.

## **Greylag Goose *Anser anser***

### **Common resident breeder and winter visitor**

The regular wintering flock was quite mobile at the start of the year and often spread throughout various parts of the Recording Area. On the few times they came together the flock numbered just over 200 birds, peaking at 245 on 13th January. Five were offshore on 16th March and two were in Pegwell Bay on 25th April, with another four there on 1st May. Otherwise records in spring and summer came from New Downs and RSPB Worth Marshes where at least two pairs bred at the former and three at the latter.

The usual post-breeding accumulation was not as high as expected. There were 240 on Worth on 8th August, then rising later in autumn to 275 on 10th September. The flock stabilised around the mid-200's until November when there was an unexpected rise to 390 birds on Worth on the 21st and staying around 300-350 until the 28th. Later the flock dropped down to more normal levels of 200-230 birds.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	245	209	138	68	120	62	200	240	275	250	390	230
B/days	1326	1307	811	398	607	375	2088	1942	1147	1488	3068	1483

## **Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus***

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

Six birds were on RSPB Worth Marshes on 8th and 9th January.

After a flock of 12 on New Downs on 13th October there was a noticeable arrival into the area from 5th November, starting with 24 on RSPB Worth Marshes. This flock rose to 27th the next day, then 55, and then 71 on the 8th. Counts dropped thereafter with two stragglers left on the 13th. December saw one on the 5th and two on the 16th, both on RSPB Worth Marshes.



Pink-footed Goose by J.Draper

### **White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons***

#### **Occasional winter visitor and passage migrant**

There was a small arrival in early January on RSPB Worth Marshes with single-figures at first but then peaking at 51 on the 10th, plus up to eight birds also on New Downs. The flock settled on Worth during February with regular counts of up to 64 and were last seen in the area on 9th March. Around ten birds also flew over Stonar after dark on 11th March.

In November there were 13 on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 5th, with five-seven birds in the area over the next week, and then rising to 31 on Worth on the 11th. December saw birds on five dates between the 10th and 18th, peaking at ten on the 14th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	51	64	63								31	10
B/days	136	621	187								78	26

### **Mute Swan *Cygnus olor***

#### **Common resident breeder and winter visitor**

The high counts on Worth from the end of 2023 continued into the early part of 2024. A minimum of 88 birds were present on 7th January, 92 on 17th February, and 89 on 19th February. Two were also on the Green Wall and six on New Downs. In April birds moved around a lot more. There were regular records from Restharrow Scrape and four were in Pegwell Bay on 1st May, with one still present the next day. Six pairs nested on RSPB Worth Marshes over summer.

Just after the breeding season many birds left the area. In September two were sat on the sea on the 25th and another four flew in off the sea on the 28th. Two were also offshore on 6th November. Nearly all other records came from RSPB Worth Marshes where 30-33 birds stayed to winter.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	88	93	47	50	15	70	22	16	25	29	33	29
B/days	672	851	507	203	105	243	289	111	222	189	223	126

## Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

### Scarce winter visitor

Recorded for the third year in succession with two on RSPB Worth Marshes on 26th November.

## Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

### Occasional but increasing, rare breeder

The only birds in the early winter period were two on RSPB Worth Marshes on 9th January. Records became more frequent from 4th March with eight present on the 30th. Birds lingered in the area into late spring and subsequently two pairs bred. This was the first year with multiple breeding attempts with broods on RSPB Worth marshes and New Downs.

Many birds from these families stayed local and so autumn saw high bird-day totals. At this time the flock on RSPB Worth Marshes reached double-figures. Peak counts of 14 occurred on 27th November and 4th December and were the highest ever recorded in the SBBOT Recording Area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	2		8	4	6	4	6	9	8	11	14	14
B/days	2		16	21	28	16	9	36	34	97	131	36

## Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

### Annual breeder, common migrant and winter visitor

The first half of the year saw a bird-day total of 4,250, an increase of 77.8% over the same period of last year. This is in part due to increased coverage of Pegwell Bay during the migration period. Around 50-70 birds were either on New Downs or in Pegwell at the start of the year. Small numbers on RSPB Worth Marshes increased in spring with max counts of 18 on three dates in March and April. Subsequently, approximately 60 adults summered in Pegwell and there were at least three broods in the Bay, another along the river at New Downs, and one on Willow Farm on RSPB Worth Marshes.

There was a high count of 140 in Pegwell on 2nd July but soon after birds departed to their moult sites. Around 20 birds were present until later in the year when returning birds passed offshore, with 13 on 15th October, 23 on 4th November, 35 on the 12th, and 15 on 10th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	54	56	71	53	71	88	140	25	18	20	35	56
B/days	562	367	559	751	1246	774	1323	268	169	83	135	166

## **Garganey *Spatula querquedula***

### **Regular migrant and rare breeder**

An early male was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 9th March. There were no other records until two on 7th April whereupon there were daily counts from RSPB Worth Marshes, peaking at eight on the 23rd. Sightings continued infrequently into May with a pair still present in early June, possibly indicative of a breeding attempt.

After a busy spring, autumn was the opposite. There were only five singles in August and September, all from Worth, with the last of the year there on 2nd October.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak			1	8	3	2	3	1	1	1		
B/days			1	56	24	2	7	3	2	1		

## **Shoveler *Spatula clypeata***

### **Occasional breeder, common migrant and winter visitor**

The 14,000 bird-days recorded was slightly lower than in 2023 but still another good year for this species. RSPB Worth Marshes held 200-250 birds in January but with peaks of 386 on the 9th and 407 on the 10th. New Downs was normally around 35-45 but recorded 84 on the 10th and 173 on the 17th, and 30-45 were also in Pegwell Bay, but with 92 on the 18th. An additional eight were on Restharrow Scrape and six on the Green Wall. Although there was likely some degree of movement between sites there were potentially up to 700 birds in the area at this time. February and March stabilised around 300 birds, the majority still on Worth, and high numbers continued well into spring. Subsequently, three broods were recorded on RSPB Worth Marshes.

Around 50 birds were spread through the area in late summer and early autumn. There was an increase in October, with a few birds noted moving offshore, and then in November up to 106 were on New Downs and 135 on Worth. December saw similar numbers on Worth with smaller totals elsewhere.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	491	246	210	100	34	45	35	51	52	103	205	141
B/days	3553	2150	2078	813	235	196	319	176	304	791	2031	1222

## **Gadwall *Mareca strepera***

### **Uncommon breeder, common migrant and winter visitor**

In January there were peaks of 51 on Restharrow Scrape, eight on the Green Wall, 39 on New Downs, and 106 on RSPB Worth Marshes. After a slight dip in February numbers rose again in March. Two were in Pegwell Bay on the 7th. The only brood recorded was of 11 young on Restharrow Scrape but the high numbers on RSPB Worth Marshes over summer (e.g. 83 on 30th May and 45 on 19th June) suggests other pairs may have attempted.

July saw the lowest totals of the year but from there counts increased bit by bit. Numbers were not as high in the autumn with no triple-figure counts noted at any site. There were at least 120 birds spread through the Recording Area in November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	127	97	133	51	83	54	16	46	89	90	93	70
B/days	1437	795	1403	467	355	267	107	196	667	849	1080	322

## Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

### Common migrant and winter visitor

Although slightly lower than last year the 63,000 bird-days recorded in 2024 was another good tally. In January the four-figure flock on RSPB Worth Marshes rose to 2,900/3,000 on the 10th and 20th whilst elsewhere there were up to ten on Restharrow Scrape, 106 on New Downs, and 445 in Pegwell Bay. The high numbers on Worth were short-lived as they dropped down to around 500-900 birds thereafter, remaining until mid-April. Birds departed the area and left a handful of records in May, with two present on Worth on 2nd, 3rd, and 5th June, and then a male on the 18th and 19th.

After the first returning bird on New Downs on 27th August there was a rapid rise in numbers with 12 on the 31st, 63 on 10th September, and triple-figures by the 17th. Birds were seen moving offshore frequently during this time with 78 on 17th September and 117 on 2nd October. Despite this the first four-figure flocks didn't appear until quite late in the year. Around 1,000 birds were on RSPB Worth Marshes before rising to 2,500 on the 16th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	3033	991	548	78	3	2	12	190	461	1000	2558	
B/days	22970	9464	4196	207	16	8	17	1634	3185	8201	13241	

## Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

### Common resident breeder and winter visitor

Counts at the start of the year comprised up to four on the Estate, 40 on Restharrow Scrape, 38 on the Green Wall, 56 on New Downs, five at the Point, 103 on RSPB Worth Marshes, and 24 in Pegwell Bay. These numbers continued into February but gradually reduced from March onwards. The first ducklings were noted from 18th April. It was thought around 41 pairs bred on RSPB Worth Marshes with these and their offspring responsible for the high numbers over summer.

The usual post-breeding influx did not occur until very late and it was thought that the birds were using sites outside of the Recording Area. There were six triple-figure counts of up to 184 on RSPB Worth Marshes in October but by far the largest was 317 on the Green Wall on the 11th. The year ended with over 14,500 bird-days recorded, a 22.1% increase on last year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	159	115	94	93	65	107	168	141	177	327	171	154
B/days	1342	974	820	795	508	949	2102	1233	1287	1961	1535	1061

## Pintail *Anas acuta*

### Regular migrant and winter visitor, rare breeder

Over 1,000 bird-days were recorded for the first time in many years. In January there were up to six on New Downs, 20 on RSPB Worth Marshes, and five in Pegwell Bay. There seemed to be a bit of movement at this time with four north offshore on 5th January, 17 the next day, a single on the 12th, and then four on 26th February. Counts dropped in most subsites in February but 15 were on Worth on the 15th. Though counts dwindled as spring progressed there was still the occasional sighting on RSPB Worth Marshes into May. Despite this, we were all stunned when a female was seen with ten ducklings on the 24th. The brood continued to be seen intermittently in June and eventually all survived to fledging. This was the first confirmed breeding in Kent since 1981!

This brood were mostly responsible for the sightings in autumn. Three in Pegwell Bay on 27th August were likely the first true migrants. A flock of 12 north offshore on 17th September was the largest count in the second half of the year. The final few months saw up to seven on New Downs and five on RSPB Worth Marshes.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	22	15	15	5	18	11	11	5	12	8	9	5
B/days	309	198	146	53	29	85	41	10	20	31	54	28

## Teal *Anas crecca*

### Rare breeder, common migrant and winter visitor

There were particularly high numbers on RSPB Worth Marshes in mid-January, as seen with other wildfowl. Peak counts were 1,500 on the 7th and 1,750 on the 9th. But more normal numbers were around the low hundreds. There were also up to 411 on Restharrow Scrape, 35 on the Green Wall, 176 on New Downs, three at the Point, and 450 in Pegwell Bay at this time. As expected, counts dropped substantially through March and the last birds were seen on Restharrow Scrape on 16th April. A handful (8-12) remained on Worth but there was no sign of any breeding.

There was not long before return passage was in full flow and by early August there were triple-figures on RSPB Worth Marshes. Counts plateaued around the low hundreds despite a number of sightings of birds moving past offshore. However, December saw a sudden burst with 800 present on the 16th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1942	720	271	87	19	15	19	132	244	231	210	807
B/days	14355	4423	1971	741	89	91	135	908	2085	1874	1969	3721

## Pochard *Aythya ferina*

### Rare breeder, migrant and winter visitor

The status of this species is changing quickly and almost 900 bird-days were recorded in 2024, twice as many as last year. In January up to four were on the Green Wall, 17 on New Downs, and eight on RSPB Worth Marshes. The

flocks on the Green Wall and on New Downs gradually reduced or moved across to Worth in March. Two singles were on Restharrow Scrape in March and three were present on 16th April. Two-three pairs may have attempted to breed on RSPB Worth Marshes but one young on 21st June was the only confirmed success.

After a few late summer records from New Downs there was an increase on Worth in September. Later in the year up to 18 were present on New Downs and seven on RSPB Worth Marshes.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	20	13	11	11	5	2	1	1	7	10	18	16
B/days	160	137	136	119	70	8	1	2	36	56	83	72

## Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

### Resident breeder and common winter visitor

The year began with 13 on Restharrow Scrape, nine on the Green Wall, 20 on New Downs, 21 on Stonar, and 54 on RSPB Worth Marshes. An increase in March saw over 1,100 bird-days recorded during the month. The flock on Worth increased to a maximum of 85 birds. Numbers remained reasonably high into summer and around 30 pairs were in the Recording Area.

The post-breeding period saw a lot fewer birds around and overall the latter six months were a lot quieter than the preceding. The year ended with approximately 58 birds present with the majority on RSPB Worth Marshes.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	54	84	85	75	54	56	39	50	44	37	32	50
B/days	566	953	1121	897	388	480	278	209	242	317	336	344



Tufted Duck by S.Reynaert

## **Eider** *Somateria mollissima*

### **Regular migrant and winter visitor**

A very quiet year in comparison to 2023. Two males flew north offshore on 8th January and further singles were seen on 15th November and 9th December.

## **Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca*

### **Occasional migrant and winter visitor**

Two were offshore on 18th November.

## **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra*

### **Common migrant and winter visitor**

An improvement on the last few years of low numbers. There were 105 bird-days in the first six months and 339 in the latter. Though, for the most part, there was little in consistent passage and instead a handful of days which contributed a high percentage of the bird-day total. January saw the first of these days with 27 offshore on the 25th, followed by 25 south on 7th February. Birds were recorded on 'Nocmig' on six occasions in March either over the Observatory or Stonar, and in April 23 were offshore on the 15th. A final bird went north offshore on 14th June.

A drake was offshore on 31st August and birds were seen semi-regularly thereafter. Ten were offshore on 16th September, 25 on 2nd October, and 14 on the 10th. November was the busiest month and included 151 south on the 2nd (the only triple-figure count figure count of the year), 11 on the 6th, 25 on the 9th, 15 on the 11th, and 14 on the 12th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	27	25	5	23		1		1	10	26	151	3
B/days	32	25	24	23		1		1	32	65	232	9

## **Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis*

### **Uncommon migrant and winter visitor**

One was in Pegwell Bay on 13th January.

## **Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*

### **Uncommon migrant and winter visitor, becoming scarcer**

Another very quiet year with just the one in Pegwell Bay on 26th October.

## **Smew** *Mergellus albellus*

### **Scarce migrant and winter visitor**

One on RSPB Worth Marshes on 21st October was one of the earliest ever winter arrivals for Kent. It went missing for a week before reappearing on the 28th and 29th, and then again for the last time on 12th November.

## **Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

### **Occasional but increasing migrant and winter visitor**

A male in Pegwell Bay on 9th January was seen infrequently in the area thereafter, either in Pegwell or on New Downs, and then on two dates in February and March, last seen on the 5th.

## **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

Another year with just a handful of sightings. A drake went south offshore on 2nd January, three birds went north on 11th March, a drake north on 2nd October, and another north on 12th November.

## **Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*

### **Common resident breeder**

There were lots around at the start of the year, especially on the Estate, with 16 on the 1st, 15 on the 16th, and 12 on the 20th. Numbers dropped during February though and remained that way until summer. Breeding pairs were in all parts of the Recording Area with the Estate the most productive area.

Post-breeding totals were good. There were 17 and 16 on the Estate on 21st and 24th July, respectively, and then in August there were 20 on the 4th, 23 on the 7th, and 26 on the 20th. Ten were on New Downs on the 16th. In September there were ten on the 13th and 14 on the 23rd, both on the Estate, and seven were on Worth on the 21st. Over 200 bird-days were recorded in October with 12 on the Estate on the 27th, ten on New Downs on the 12th, 15 at the Point on the 21st, and on Worth there were 15 on the 7th, 17 on the 17th, 34 on the 19th, 20 on the 30th, and 15 on the 31st. The last major counts were 22 on the Estate on 8th November and 12 on Worth on both the 20th and 26th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	16	11	8	8	8	11	17	26	14	34	22	7
B/days	103	41	36	54	30	32	63	94	39	205	98	37

## **Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

### **Common resident breeder, increasing**

The first two months of the year saw up to 34 on the Estate, nine on the Green Wall, 23 on New Downs, and eight on RSPB Worth Marshes. There was a slight drop in the peak counts at each subsite in the subsequent months but the bird-days total remained high. Things only became quiet once the breeding season got underway in summer.

There was a gradual increase in sightings as autumn progressed culminating in the highest counts at the end of the year. The Estate and New Downs were the busiest again with 23 and 20 in November, respectively, and then a high count of 45 on the Estate on 4th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	33	37	20	38	23	18	7	11	12	27	38	58
B/days	267	312	256	328	166	118	33	78	86	173	209	339

## Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

### Common resident breeder

All records came in May. One was recorded flying over the Estate on the 8th and then three birds were singing on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 19th, followed by singles there on the 20th, 21st, 24th, 25th, and 26th.

## Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

### Scarce migrant

Recorded for the second year in succession with one sat on a road on the Estate after dark on 6th June.

## Swift *Apus apus*

### Non-breeding summer visitor and migrant

A single over the Estate on 9th April was the earliest record since 2008 (2nd April). Further early sightings followed on the 10th and 14th before the main arrival at the end of the month. Low numbers remained into early May until 35 on the 8th. A noticeable arrival of 107 occurred on the 20th and two days later there was a significant count of 784, all mostly hawking over RSPB Worth Marshes. Three more triple-figure counts occurred after including 650 in Pegwell Bay on the 29th. There were still some notable counts in early June with 160 on the 2nd and 119 on the 9th.

Autumn passage is always hard to separate from spring passage but 256 on 19th June was probably the start. July was not as busy as normal; it is usually a peak passage time. There were five counts over 50 and only one triple-figure of 185 on the 22nd. Counts dropped further in August and by September there were only a few sightings, the last of which went north on 25th September.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				16	784	256	185	12	7			
B/days				36	2353	888	649	42	21			

## Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

### Breeding summer visitor and migrant

A mostly similar set of records as last year, though the first on 13th April was over a week earlier. The peak count in May was ten on the 4th with a number of other dates with six or seven birds. One-two birds were regular on the Estate all month with sporadic sightings of up to three on the Green Wall and New Downs, five at the Point on the 15th, and regular records of up to four on RSPB Worth Marshes. Birds became secretive from June with only a handful of sightings thereafter, the last on the Estate on 21st August.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				4	10	5	2	1				
B/days				16	94	35	7	3				

Cuckoo by L.Sole



## Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

### Resident breeder, migrant, and winter visitor

The biggest numbers in the first two months came from the Estate as usual, with 400-450 feeding in the cut fields between the Observatory and Restharrow Scrape. Around 300 were on Worth intermittently but were most likely part of the wandering Estate flock, with 20-50 more regular. Elsewhere there were up to 94 on the Green Wall, 12 on New Downs, and eight at the Point. Flocks of 200-300 continued into late March and surprisingly there were still around 100 birds on the Estate well into May.

After the two summer months with lower numbers there was a return to triple-figures in August. The flock stabilised around 100-200 on the Estate for several months before a late surge to 550 on 9th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	475	535	303	103	118	40	34	117	107	226	104	550
B/days	4706	3699	1763	984	386	220	326	577	337	954	838	3098

## Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

### Resident breeder, migrant, and winter visitor

There were some large counts in the first three months of the year. A wintering flock of up to 450 birds was seen regularly on or around the Green Wall. Peak counts in February were 318 on the 7th, 442 on the 10th, and 314 on 19th. Up to 81 birds were on the Estate, 105 on New Downs, and 163 on Worth at this time, with perhaps some duplication. In March birds were mobile and at times strayed into other parts of the Recording Area such as 349 on New Downs on the 4th and 447 on the 5th. The flock sizes decreased in April but triple-figure day counts were still recorded on four occasions.

After a quiet summer there was a noticeable increase in September, followed by another in October. A flock of 48 north on 31st October was the only sign of visible migration. Most of the high counts came from the Estate and Worth, particularly the former with at least 390 there on 15th November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	217	569	447	154	87	85	77	55	128	335	390	310
B/days	1892	4042	2174	1498	759	656	713	551	1224	2158	2807	1666

## Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

### Declining breeding summer visitor and migrant

An improvement on the last few years with 69 bird-days recorded. As usual, almost all records came from RSPB Worth Marshes with the first two present on 1st May. A male was in Pegwell Bay Country Park on 27th April, and singles were on the Estate on 7th July and 19th August. The last was on Worth on 10th September.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak					3	3	4	3	1			
B/days					15	10	30	10	4			

## **Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

### **Resident breeder, migrant, and winter visitor**

Slightly higher numbers of birds roosted by the Observatory early in January with a peak of 38 on the 21st and five other counts in the region of 20-35. Fewer than 15 other birds were elsewhere in the Recording Area. As seen last year, there was a drop in the bird-days total for March and then an increase in April. There were at least 13 on the Estate, six on the Green Wall, three on New Downs, and three on Worth at this time.

There were regular sightings of up to eight on Worth in July, but apart from these the numbers in the autumn were very low. November and December tallies were higher as the roost near the Observatory grew, reaching 19 on 14th November and then plateauing at around 10-14 birds.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	38	16	8	19	9	11	12	5	8	9	19	14
B/days	296	133	86	123	76	65	110	34	40	40	83	72

## **Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus***

### **Scarce resident breeder, migrant, and winter visitor**

In January there were records of one-two in most subsites in the Recording Area though the largest numbers were on RSPB Worth Marshes, with at least five on the 16th. Three were in Pegwell Bay on 11th February. Large numbers were recorded on the Estate in March, particularly with passage birds picked up on 'Nocmig', including eight on the 11th and seven on the 22nd. With high water levels in the region small numbers continued to be found throughout the area. This led to a good year for breeding with confirmed young on Prince's Golf Course, lots of calls on RSPB Worth Marshes over summer indicative of multiple pairs, and a few calls from the South Pool on New Downs in June.

Bird-days remained steady over late summer and into autumn, with a clear increase from October onwards as migrants made landfall. An astonishing 21 on 9th November included 11 on New Downs and ten on RSPB Worth Marshes. Other notable counts from Worth included eight on the 13th and 21st.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	5	8	11	2	2	3	3	3	2	8	21	7
B/days	30	33	93	5	6	9	13	9	15	40	91	25

## **Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana***

### **Vagrant, rare breeder**

A singing male held territory on RSPB Worth Marshes from 29th April until 24th May. Surprisingly, the first SBBOT record since 1996.

## **Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

### **Common resident breeder and winter visitor**

The high levels of rainfall meant there was lots of standing water across the Recording Area. January saw seven on the Estate, 15 on the Green Wall, eight on New Downs, and 17 on RSPB Worth Marshes. There were no real signs of migration other than two in Pegwell Bay on 13th April. The high water remained into early summer and this translated into high numbers breeding with six pairs on the Estate alone (two at the Observatory, two in the Haven, one in Middle Field, and another in the Dragonfly Pond fields).

The second half of the year was the opposite with low rainfall and little water. After post-breeding dispersal there were around 50 birds in the Recording Area in October with similar numbers still present in December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	40	31	32	25	22	38	25	26	40	26	35	26
B/days	261	246	312	315	115	149	281	225	194	258	267	164

## **Coot *Fulica atra***

### **Common resident breeder and winter visitor**

The start of the year saw maximum counts of 21 on Restharrow Scrape, 15 on the Green Wall, 77 on New Downs, 16 on Stonar, and 275 on RSPB Worth Marshes. The latter was likely a record count for the site. There was a small reduction in February but still well into triple-figures present. These counts remained high into spring and the increased standing water meant birds bred in unusual areas over summer, with the Estate holding pairs in the Haven, Dragonfly Pond, and on Royal St George's Golf Course. Approximately 38 pairs bred on RSPB Worth Marshes.

The late summer totals were not as high as expected considering the large breeding numbers. Perhaps breeding productivity was low. In winter there was a resurgence in numbers and in November there were around 285 birds present, again mostly on RSPB Worth Marshes or New Downs. There was a later peak of 305 birds on Worth on 22nd December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	336	209	141	91	91	121	155	138	141	194	248	305
B/days	2800	1208	1034	596	517	1036	2436	1109	1338	1107	3560	1926

## **Crane *Grus grus***

### **Uncommon migrant**

One was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 21st and 22nd April and two flew north through the area on 25th May.

## **Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

### **Resident breeder and winter visitor**

The start of the year saw approximately 14 birds scattered throughout the Recording Area. March and April saw a considerable increase with a pair on the Estate, ten on Restharrow Scrape, four on New Downs, and an

impressive 17 on RSPB Worth Marshes. There was an unusual record of one in Pegwell Bay on 14th April.

Once again breeding success seemed good. There was a post-breeding gathering on a reservoir on the Green Wall with up to 15 birds present in August, plus 26 elsewhere, mostly either on Restharrow Scrape or on Worth. After a lull in September there was an increase again in November with 125 bird-days, before settling down again in December with 20 birds present. Another lone bird turned up in Pegwell on the 18th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	6	22	17	19	11	8	9	25	28	9	14	13
B/days	48	137	182	181	71	60	84	128	138	76	125	78

## **Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegana*

### **Uncommon migrant**

One flew north offshore on 3rd October.

## **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

### **Migrant and common winter visitor, rare breeder**

The first two months of the year saw a wintering population of around 20 to 50 birds offshore. There were peak counts of 83 on 24th January, 50 on the 28th, and 114 on 25th February. The latter was the first triple-figure count for three years. One was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 27th March. Recent years have seen a trend of wandering birds appearing on New Downs in spring. This year was no exception with sightings on three dates in April, four in May, and three in June. To our surprise the pair subsequently bred with two young seen on 11th July. This constitutes the first breeding record for the Sandwich Bay area.

The adults and fledged young were still present into August and one bird was seen intermittently on New Downs until the year's end. The wintering numbers offshore were very poor at the end of the year with only 19 on 1st and 16 on 25th December of any note.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	83	117	63	5	3	1	4	4	3	2	8	19
B/days	257	433	256	42	20	4	12	13	13	6	34	55

## **Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus*

### **Uncommon migrant and winter visitor**

One was offshore on 16th March.

## **Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*

### **Uncommon migrant**

After a few blank years there were three separate records in 2024. One was present on the Garage Pool in Pegwell Bay on 3rd-9th October, another on RSPB Worth Marshes on 31st October and nine dates in November (last on the 12th), and a final bird offshore on 19th December.



Black-necked Grebe by S.Ray

**Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicanus***

**Uncommon migrant**

There was an impressive run of 'Nocmig' records in early spring. Singles were sound-recorded over the Estate on 9th, 25th, and 31st March, over Stonar on 12th and 25th March, and a final bird over the Estate on 4th April.

**Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus***

**Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

The year started with an excellent count of 1,550 in Pegwell Bay on 3rd January. This wasn't the norm though, with the exception of 1,100 on the 9th all other counts in the first few months were in the region of 600-850. The first inland bird was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 31st January and then throughout February birds returned to there and New Downs to set up breeding territories. At least four pairs bred on RSPB Worth Marshes and eight on New Downs with single pairs on Restharrow Scrape and Prince's Beach. During the spring 400-500 remained at Pegwell and in June there were still around 110 birds summering, perhaps more.

The post-breeding flock in Pegwell built quickly with 450-500 present during the last week of July. The numbers continued to rise and by September four-figures were present. On the 23rd there was a mammoth count of 1,950 on 23rd, beating the 1,680 recorded on almost the same date last year as the highest count since 2002. There was another high count of 1,446 on 5th October but no subsequent four-figure totals until 1,150 on 2nd December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1550	864	658	516	415	240	510	878	1950	1446	870	1156
B/days	7513	5418	4780	4187	5298	1500	7427	15412	17362	6030	1471	3874

## **Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta***

### **Migrant and winter visitor, scarce breeder**

Three birds wintered in the northern parts of the area moving between New Downs and Pegwell Bay. A bird flew south offshore on 18th January. Arrivals on New Downs and RSPB Worth Marshes on 17th February were presumably the first breeding birds returning. Up to 11 birds were on New Downs and 34 on Worth in spring. Only one pair nested on Backsand Scrape but 14 pairs nested on RSPB Worth Marshes, but unfortunately productivity was poor.

Records in the second half of the year trailed off significantly. There were scattered sightings of single-figures until an arrival of 16 in Pegwell Bay on 6th September, followed by six there on the 13th. Just a handful of sightings followed of one-two birds on New Downs and in Pegwell in November and December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	3	10	22	30	34	24	6	2	16	3	1	2
B/days	27	13	132	430	276	168	16	5	35	6	3	3

## **Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus***

### **Resident breeder, migrant and abundant winter visitor**

The peak count across the area in January was 4,442 on the 26th. Birds were at times mobile between sites but with max counts of up to 2,250 on RSPB Worth Marshes, 820 on New Downs, and 2,650 in Pegwell Bay. A total of 1,850 birds on Worth on 3rd February was the last four-figure flock of the early winter period. Birds soon settled into their breeding areas. Three pairs bred on the Estate/Restharrow Scrape and at least 38 were on RSPB Worth Marshes.

There were a few double-figure post-breeding flocks already moving around in mid-June. In August these increased to 181 on the 3rd and 253 on the 26th and then remained into the mid-hundreds until the late winter months. In November there was an increase to 1,750 on RSPB Worth Marshes with 500-600 in the New Downs/Pegwell area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	4442	1850	127	55	44	61	88	253	310	626	1787	2315
B/days	30777	6196	813	387	260	394	858	1269	2104	3154	18698	14653

## **Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria***

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

There were 1,620 birds on 26th January comprising 1,200 on RSPB Worth Marshes and 420 in Pegwell Bay. Generally, though, numbers were much lower with a few hundred each on Worth and in Pegwell, and smaller numbers intermittently on the Estate and New Downs. Birds were quick to leave with mostly double-figures from mid-February (the exception being 103 on 13th March). One was present on 12th April and then in May there were 14 on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 9th and one still the next day.

The first autumn migrant appeared on 27th July and the bird-days increased slowly from then onwards. The wintering flocks arrived in October with 100-150 either on New Downs or in Pegwell Bay and around 250 also on RSPB Worth Marshes. In November there were 571 on the 13th and 663 on the 16th but December saw far fewer birds wintering than normal.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1620	400	103	1	14		2	25	58	251	663	113
B/days	4894	1899	377	1	15		4	40	148	647	2343	387

## Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

### Migrant and winter visitor

The usual wintering flock at Shellness Point peaked at 130 birds on 13th January with 124 on the 18th. Birds left in February leaving just a few stragglers in March. Migration began in April and there were daily counts of up to ten in Pegwell Bay, and then in May increasing to low double-figures, peaking at 24 on the 21st. There was also decent passage through RSPB Worth Marshes with birds on 21st, 27th, 28th (four), and 30th April, and then in May one on the 1st, two on the 6th, four on the 7th, six on the 8th-10th, four on the 11th, six on the 12th, and one on the 16th. The last birds of spring were five in Pegwell on 11th June.

It didn't take long for autumn migrants to appear with one in Pegwell on 9th July. Return passage was quite poor though with only 24 on 24th August of note. Wintering birds bolstered numbers in October and it looked like the usual 110-130 birds were set, when suddenly 300 appeared on 15th December, only to be gone the next day with more usual numbers to the year's end.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	130	83	9	10	24	7	2	24	4	85	110	300
B/days	855	233	14	77	285	37	14	37	23	133	207	647

## Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

The wintering population was low again with maximum counts in January on the Estate beach of 15 on the 7th and 11 on the 18th. There were sporadic singles from RSPB Worth Marshes and on New Downs in the first two months but the first real signs of spring migration occurred in late April. There were daily counts of low single-figures in Pegwell Bay and on RSPB Worth Marshes at first, but these took off in early May and quickly reached double-figures. Counts of 20-60 were regular in Pegwell Bay during the month (peaks of 81 on the 13th and 94 on the 17th) with inland numbers on RSPB Worth Marshes also impressive (60 on the 8th and 43 on the 11th). Migrant flocks continued to 12th June.

A few small flocks passed through Pegwell from early July, with 13 on the 26th, building throughout August to some decent figures. There were 126 on the 25th (with another 77 on New Downs the same day), 107 on the 28th, and 111 on the 30th. In September there were daily counts in Pegwell of 40

to 80 with a peak of 114 on the 2nd. A flock of 110 were on the Estate beach on the 28th. After autumn migration finished in October the wintering flock settled in the area, usually on either Prince's Beach or the Estate beach. This peaked at 61 on 9th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	15	11	5	16	104	44	13	203	146	58	26	61
B/days	35	19	21	110	1410	235	70	933	1524	220	34	115



Ringed Plover by S.Reynaert

## Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

### Occasional breeder and annual migrant

The first arrived on schedule on 19th March and by the 26th eight were already present on RSPB Worth Marshes. There were subsequently daily sightings from the Marshes in April of two-five with ten present on the 17th. There were no sightings away from RSPB Worth Marshes.

July saw totals reaching double-figures as territorial adults and recently-fledged juveniles combined with early returning autumn migrants. There were also two records from Pegwell Bay (26th and 30th) and one sound-recorded over the Estate on the 27th. In August another was sound-recorded over the Estate on the 27th and three were in Pegwell on the 30th. Low numbers persisted on RSPB Worth Marshes and the last bird on 17th October was over a month later than last year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak			8	10	6	8	11	4	1	3		
B/days			24	87	40	38	96	29	8	10		

## Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

### Scarce migrant

One flew over RSPB Worth Marshes on 22nd September and a flock of four did the same on the 28th.

## Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

### Common migrant

Two flew over the Estate on 31st March before the main passage began on 6th April. Single-figures passed through the Estate and Pegwell Bay during the first week or two followed by a marked increase from mid-month. At this time birds also started using RSPB Worth Marshes and daily counts of 28 to 54 birds were recorded on the site. This continued into May with 34 on the 5th, the last major flock noted. Small numbers continued in Pegwell Bay for a while longer with three on the 25th the last of spring. Overall, there was a 73.2% increase in bird-days over April and May compared to last year.

A single bird was in Pegwell Bay on 1st July but consistent single-figure counts did not occur until the 13th. The end of the month saw 11 on the 29th and 13 on the 30th and then in August there were peak counts of 21 and 13 in Pegwell on the 24th and 25th, respectively. In contrast to spring there were precious few sightings from RSPB Worth Marshes. Birds were seen on 14 dates in September with the last on the 20th almost three weeks earlier than that of last year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak			2	62	34		15	22	4			
B/days			2	297	207		81	124	25			

## Curlew *Numenius arquata*

### Common resident and winter visitor

Counts in January and February reached 300-360 in Pegwell Bay and up to 41 were on the Estate, 63 on New Downs, and 18 at the Point. All of these were in line with counts in previous years. A few stragglers remained around the Estate and Worth in March and April leaving Pegwell Bay as the main source of sightings from then on. These gradually dwindled with 15 summering birds in Pegwell from late May to early June, a lower tally than usual.

It soon shot up to 84 on 24th June as migrants returned early again. Triple-figures were present on 1st July and then 226 on the 26th and 236 on the 30th, followed in August by 260 on 1st, 319 on the 14th, 310 on the 16th, and 335 on the 19th. The final peak was 385 on 23rd September. Away from Pegwell Bay there were only a handful of birds until November when the wintering birds took up their usual haunts. Up to 38 were on New Downs, 18 on the Estate, 14 at the Point, and 277 in Pegwell.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	400	339	343	118	31	84	237	335	392	298	302	206
B/days	2474	1203	1366	859	277	193	3543	5294	3824	1559	417	1187

## Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

### Migrant and winter visitor

Counts in the first two months saw the regular wintering flock at Pegwell Bay/Shellness Point at around 110-120 birds with a slightly higher count of 156 on 13th January. The flock had almost completely moved on by early March making the arrival of birds in April an obvious start to spring migration through the area. Almost 1,700 bird-days were recorded over April and May which was a good showing for recent years. The majority of flocks in Pegwell were of low double-figures but of note in April were 207 on the 22nd, 189 on the 23rd, 336 on the 24th, and 104 on the 27th. Elsewhere two flew north offshore on the 20th, a single was on Restharrow Scrape on the 29th and 30th, and up to seven birds were on RSPB Worth Marshes on four dates. May saw 13 double-figure counts in Pegwell with the last two birds present in the Bay on 1st and 10th June.

Two were also in Pegwell on 1st July, perhaps the birds from June, but sightings of one-six were more regular from the 8th. The autumn passage period was very quiet again and no count of any note was recorded until October. Low numbers were present in the usual wintering area until 125 and 133 on 15th and 16th December, respectively.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	156	115	5	336	59	2	6	7	8	25	19	133
B/days	563	364	15	1301	366	4	20	32	68	51	20	483

## **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

The usual wintering flock on the Garage Pool at Pegwell Bay numbered up to ten in January. For the second year in a row there was also a small group on RSPB Worth Marshes of up to eight birds. Spring migration began in March when 24 appeared on Worth on the 9th. In April there were daily sightings of fewer than ten birds punctuated with 20 on the 6th and 35 on the 21st. May was the busiest month of the year. There were almost 200 bird-days from RSPB Worth Marshes with peaks of 24 on the 10th, 29 on the 13th, 38 on the 16th, and 30 on the 17th and 18th. The last birds were seen on 4th June.

One was on New Downs on 1st July, increasing later to 13, and single-figures were seen daily in Pegwell Bay from the 7th. August and September were two busy months as daily records continued from Pegwell, with peaks of 20 on 24th August and 18th and 21st September, and no more than a few sightings from elsewhere. A flock of 37 in Pegwell on 9th October was the highest count of autumn. After that, all records came from the returning wintering birds with up to 18 present in Pegwell.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	10	4	25	35	49	5	17	21	23	37	17	18
B/days	85	10	64	93	217	7	137	155	136	70	17	60

## **Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

### **Migrant and winter visitor, decreasing**

There were higher counts from Pegwell Bay at the start of the year, particularly around the Western Undercliff/Hoverport section, with 22 on the 3rd, 27 on the 13th, and 36 on the 15th, rising in February to 70 on the 11th and 63 on the 14th. There were also six-seven birds along the Estate/Prince's beach stretch. Passage through Pegwell in spring was light but consistent with daily records of single-figures and a peak of 13 on 3rd May, and over by the 16th. RSPB Worth Marshes also saw records in May of two on the 11th and five on the 30th.

The first four were in Pegwell on 22nd July. Autumn passage was very similar to spring with low but regular counts in the Bay on a daily basis. The first double-figure flock (18) didn't appear until 30th October. This flock ended up as the highest count in the second half of the year with no sign of the larger numbers in Pegwell seen at the beginning of the year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	36	70	17	8	14		4	5	7	18	15	15
B/days	124	151	46	27	62		11	30	43	44	45	71

## **Knot** *Calidris canutus*

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

January saw the usual wintering flock at Shellness Point/Pegwell Bay numbering around 55 individuals. There were a few other counts in the region of 16-36 in February but it was clear that birds moved out of the area

early. It was hard to confirm when the first spring migrants appeared due to a few late stragglers but from the beginning of May there was a small turnover of birds in Pegwell Bay. Most counts were of less than five individuals but of note were 21 on the 6th, 16 on the 11th, 17 on the 12th, 21 on the 16th. There was a late arrival of 25 birds there on 9th June, the last birds of a reasonable spring passage.

Singles were in Pegwell Bay again on 15th, 25th, and 31st July. With the exception of 15 on the 24th, August saw mostly ones and twos dropping by. Six dates with double-figures followed in September though, including a peak of 31 on the 20th. The last two months of the year saw the wintering birds reach 50-60 birds and the year's peak of 67 on 15th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	55	36	5	5	21	25	1	15	31	18	50	67
B/days	204	140	17	22	115	33	3	38	197	41	142	180

## Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

### Migrant and occasional winter visitor

Six birds wintered on RSPB Worth Marshes. Additional birds were on New Downs on 12th January and on the Estate on 3rd March. Spring passage began in April with almost 80 bird-days recorded. There were almost daily counts of four-nine on RSPB Worth Marshes from the 11th. One was in Pegwell Bay on the 27th. After nine on 2nd May, birds quickly disappeared with one-two on three dates, the last on the 12th.

The first returner was in Pegwell on 9th July. Autumn passage was extremely poor in comparison to recent years with only eight bird-days. Three were in Pegwell on 12th August, singles were on Worth on 1st and 9th September, one flew north offshore on the 10th, and the last was on New Downs on 8th October.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	6	1	2	9	9		1	3	1	1		
B/days	13	1	11	79	14		1	3	3	1		

## Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

### Migrant

As part of a great spring for passage waders on RSPB Worth Marshes, there were two present on 6th May, two on 2nd June, and one the next day. These were our first spring records in four years.

The total of 66 bird-days in autumn was our highest since 2016. Three birds were in Pegwell Bay on 25th July with further records on the 28th and 30th. The bulk of passage occurred in August. Birds occurred in Pegwell on ten dates, of mostly one-four birds, though an impressive 26 were present in bad weather on the 1st. Up to three were then seen in Pegwell on six dates in September, with the last on the 11th. Elsewhere there were two on the Estate beach on the 1st, one the next day, and two were on Backsand Scrape on the 6th.

## Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

### Scarce migrant

One was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 30th April and 1st and 2nd May, and another there on the 18th.

## Sanderling *Calidris alba*

### Migrant and winter visitor

For the most part counts in the first three months were between 120 and 190, with an outlier of 430 in Pegwell Bay on 3rd January. April saw a changeover between late winterers and early migrants. Two were on RSPB Worth Marshes on 30th April. In May, there was a small turnover each day in Pegwell Bay, usually low-double-figures, but with highlights of 81 on the 3rd, 54 on the 21st, and 55 on the 26th. Passage finished rather abruptly in early June with only three on the 2nd and six on the 4th.

Sightings began again on 21st July and continued in drips and drabs until 63 on 24th August, mostly at the Point. Passage through Pegwell in September was very similar to spring with low numbers interspersed with the odd count around 40-50. Triple-figures in mid-October signalled the arrival of wintering birds and 334 were present on the 30th. This was to prove to be the highest count in the second half of the year, later the flock stabilised around 120 birds.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	430	190	166	92	83	6	4	63	81	334	220	210
B/days	1302	1164	935	414	633	9	10	116	658	736	762	995

## Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

### Migrant and winter visitor

There was a high count of 1,450 on 16th January and a few other counts at the time in and around the 1,200 mark. These were to be the highest counts of the year. There were unusually high numbers on RSPB Worth Marshes in the first few months, beginning with 45 on 26th January but later peaking at 100 on the 31st. These were followed by flocks of up to 49 present on ten dates in February and nine dates in March. In May there was consistent but low passage through Pegwell Bay (66 on the 6th and 61 on the 7th were the only two counts above 50). Flocks passed through Worth as well with up to 22 recorded.

Return passage was noted in Pegwell Bay from 8th July with 50-75 birds regularly seen at the end of the month. Triple-figure flocks were hard to come by in August, seen on just two dates, but it eventually picked up in mid-September. The highest count of 222 occurred on the 25th. Later in November the flock in Pegwell increased substantially as the wintering birds arrived. The flock peaked at 850 birds on 15th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1455	1100	350	78	149	6	76	116	222	287	703	850
B/days	12958	5837	1665	403	612	36	513	1056	3072	1066	1917	2932

## **Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*

### **Migrant and scarce winter visitor**

Spring birds comprised one on RSPB Worth Marshes on 7th and 8th May and another in Pegwell Bay on the latter date. A very unseasonal bird was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 16th June.

There were 30 bird-days in autumn with the first in Pegwell on 28th July. Two were sound-recorded calling over the Estate overnight on 13th August whilst five was a notable flock in Pegwell Bay on 24th August. The majority of birds occurred in September with birds seen in Pegwell on ten dates including three on the 22nd and four on the 24th. The last bird was in Pegwell on 18th October.

## **Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

A cold snap in mid-January saw up to nine on the Estate and six on the Green Wall. Two singles were also noted from Pegwell Bay Country Park. After that there was a gap with no sightings until presumed migrants on the Estate on 4th and 18th March.

Two on the Estate on 3rd November were the first of the latter winter period. A further 17 bird-days followed during the month with up to five noted on the Estate (21st), three on the Green Wall (7th), one on RSPB Worth Marshes (21st), and one in off the sea on the 18th. Two singles were noted on the Estate in December, on the 1st and the 4th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	9		1								6	1
B/days	34		2								19	2

## **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyrtes minimus*

### **Uncommon migrant and winter visitor**

Four were seen in January; singles on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 9th, at the Point on the 13th, on the Green Wall on the 17th, and on the Estate on the 20th. A late bird was at the Point on 17th April.

Nine bird-days followed in autumn. In October there were singles on the Estate on the 14th and 16th, and on Restharrow Scrape on the 31st, and then in November further singles on the Estate on six dates.

## **Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

This was the first year since 2013 without a triple-figure count, mostly due to a lack of any cold weather arrivals and species-specific monitoring in Pegwell Bay saltmarsh. In the early part of the year there were up to 11 on the Estate, 33 on Restharrow Scrape, five on the Green Wall, two on New Downs, 45 at the Point, 23 on RSPB Worth Marshes, and six in Pegwell Bay. In very early spring a few drumming birds were picked up on 'Nocmig' but they were not thought to have bred. A handful of birds remained on Worth into May with three present on the 12th being the last of the spring.

One was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 18th June and another on Restharrow Scrape on 3rd July. Birds began to be more regular at the end of the month with double-figures present. There were no counts of any significance until October when up to 44 were on Restharrow Scrape and 66 on RSPB Worth Marshes. Similar numbers were present in November but after that there seemed to be a drop into December, with around 75 in the Recording Area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	40	45	27	25	4	1	11	22	29	66	66	35
B/days	201	218	106	106	12	1	32	162	109	599	595	219



Snipe by S.Reynaert

## **Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius***

### **Vagrant**

Recorded for the third year in succession with a bird offshore on 21st November and another on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 23rd.

## **Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***

### **Common migrant and scarce winter visitor**

The only winter records were of a single bird seen on the river at New Downs on three dates in January. One there on 11th March was probably the same bird, with migrants arriving in mid-April on RSPB Worth Marshes and New Downs. Passage in May was light with only six on Worth on the 12th and three on New Downs on the 13th of note. The last bird on the 27th. Return birds were early with the first on 26th June. July once again saw impressive counts along the river. After an initial 42 on the 20th, specific boat trips along the river to monitor the species produced totals of 118 on the 26th and 103 on 1st August, the former was our highest count since

2014. Elsewhere there were up to three on Restharrow Scrape, six on RSPB Worth Marshes, and 12 in Pegwell Bay. As birds moved on in autumn it left a single bird wintering in the usual spot along the river on New Downs.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1		1	4	6	3	124	108	23	1	1	1
B/days	3		1	10	22	4	337	288	60	2	2	1

## Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

### Common migrant and scarce winter visitor

There was a 38.5% increase in bird-days in 2024 to 489. Singles were seen on New Downs and RSPB Worth Marshes sporadically in the first three months. There was an arrival of migrants from the first week in April with records in all parts of the Recording Area, mostly of singles, but later five on New Downs on the 29th. The last of spring was seen on 4th May.

The first arrival was on 17th June and was followed by concentrated passage in July and August. July saw up to five on New Downs and ten on RSPB Worth Marshes (21st and 30th July). In August up to six were on the Estate and two on Restharrow Scrape, but New Downs and Worth provided the largest counts, with 13 at the former on the 16th (plus 12 on the 17th and ten on the 22nd and 25th), and 14 on the 3rd, ten on the 4th, 21 on the 12th, 11 on the 18th, ten on the 23rd, 15 on the 27th, and 11 on the 30th at the latter. These numbers gradually decreased as autumn came to an end but three birds stayed to winter on RSPB Worth Marshes.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	2	1	1	5	1	3	12	26	9	6	2	3
B/days	4	1	1	26	2	10	109	255	43	27	6	5

## Redshank *Tringa totanus*

### Resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor

The first two months of the year saw up to 22 on New Downs and 140 in Pegwell. With the exception of one on 22nd January, there were no birds on RSPB Worth Marshes until the breeding population returned on 5th March (with 22 present by the 13th). A total of 19 pairs were thought to have been present in spring and summer. Elsewhere, around 20 birds were on New Downs and Pegwell Bay at the end of May and less than ten in early June.

Autumn passage started quickly and by 9th July there were 123 birds on New Downs. In August flocks moved between New Downs, Backsand Scrape, and Pegwell dependent on the tide, with 263 the peak on the 3rd and 241 on the 17th. The flock reduced by about a hundred during September before seeing a rise to 194 in October (30th). The final winter tally looked to have finalised around 140 birds but December saw far fewer present, with the flock peaking at 62 on the 26th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	140	105	63	54	23	25	149	263	147	194	135	62
B/days	741	535	508	576	181	139	1090	3451	1510	663	236	309

## Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

### Uncommon but annual migrant

A good spring showing. One-two were on RSPB Worth Marshes in April from the 13th and a bird was recorded calling over the Observatory overnight on the 22nd. Birds were seen on Worth on ten dates in May with an impressive nine on the 10th, all other counts between one and three. One there on 8th June was presumably a late spring migrant.

Hot on the heels of the late bird above were three on 18th June, the start of autumn. A further 79 bird-days followed with the last on 9th September. Peak counts were of 13 on 9th July and 12 on 12th August. The majority of birds were on RSPB Worth Marshes with one-two sporadically from New Downs, one in Pegwell Bay on 30th July, one over the Estate on 18th August.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				2	9	3	13	12	1			
B/days				11	24	5	23	50	2			

## Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

### Uncommon migrant and winter visitor

Two were in Pegwell Bay on 1st January with one on the 3rd. There was just the single spring record on RSPB Worth Marshes on 24th May.

Eight bird-days followed in autumn. In August there were singles on New Downs on the 16th, in Pegwell Bay on the 24th, and on Worth on the 26th, and in September on Worth on the 6th and 7th, and in Pegwell on the 6th and 13th. A final bird was on Worth on 6th October.

## Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

### Common migrant and uncommon winter visitor

A bird on RSPB Worth Marshes on 7th April was almost two weeks earlier than our first in 2023. From then on birds were seen more-or-less daily, especially on Worth, where at the end of the month there were 14 on the 27th and 31 on the 28th. There were small numbers in Pegwell in early May with eight on the 3rd the highest, and similarly up to six on Worth. Two on 5th June were the last of spring.

A week later a bird appeared on the 13th and then another on the 23rd, both presumed to be early returners rather than late spring migrants. The combined total of 252 bird-days in July and August was quite high, though somewhat biased by a mega flock of 94 on New Downs on 17th July. Conversely, September was a little quiet with just a few small flocks on New Downs and Backsand Scrape of note. A couple of birds were seen in both October and November with the last record comprising three on RSPB Worth Marshes on 2nd November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				31	13	2	94	20	9	3	3	
B/days				82	57	6	133	119	37	4	4	

## **Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

### **Common migrant and winter visitor**

Counts were very low over the year. Sightings were evenly split with 24 bird-days in the first six months and 25 in the latter. Birds were offshore on three dates in January with four on the 5th, and two were in Pegwell Bay on the 11th. Singles were offshore on three dates in February/March with one at the Point on 6th March. Four were offshore on 15th April.

Six offshore on 15th June was the year's peak. Three were seen on 23rd August and two on 5th September. A final flurry at the end of the year included three on 2nd November and five on both 10th and 23rd December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	4	1	1	4		6		3	2		3	5
B/days	9	1	3	4		7		3	2		5	15

## **Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

### **Abundant migrant and winter visitor, regular breeder**

A co-ordinated roost count on 18th January produced a total of 7,022 in Pegwell Bay. This was to be the largest count of the year. Most counts elsewhere were only of low double-figures but the wetlands on RSPB Worth Marshes produced some high counts at the end of the month, peaking at 1,750 on the 25th. In February there were also 600 on the Green Wall on the 9th and 263 on New Downs on the 11th. The water levels were still very high as spring progressed and this limited the available nesting areas on Restharrow Scrape, but at least 31 pairs nested. The Backsand Scrape colony was not counted but a new colony appeared on RSPB Worth Marshes, with at least two young fledging from Willow Farm.

There was a sudden arrival of 1,100 birds onto RSPB Worth Marshes on 19th July with up to 850 birds in Pegwell Bay at this time too. The latter site increased to 2,400 on 28th September and from then on there were regular counts of a few thousand in the area. However, of note, large flocks continued to utilise Worth again with 3,500 on 26th October, 2,500 on 1st November, and 4,000 on 16th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	7022	2363	748	416	181	190	1202	1680	2509	7500	2523	4122
B/days	20369	12119	4364	2864	1352	1360	11750	12067	5581	21689	11410	10288

## **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

### **Uncommon migrant and winter visitor**

Early records involved two offshore on 7th January and one the next day. An adult was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 30th March.

There were no other records until autumn. Three records in August comprised one in Pegwell on the 20th and two offshore on the 22nd. These were followed by sightings offshore in September of two on the 8th, three on the 9th, two on the 10th, and singles on the 25th and 30th. At least 13 followed on 2nd October and 45 flew south on 2nd November, the highest count of the year. One last bird was seen on 10th December.

## Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

### Common migrant, increasing

After a quiet start to the year there was an arrival of 27 on RSPB Worth Marshes on 7th February. Sightings became more regular but still low in March (with the exception of 39 on the 14th). As usual, April saw the highest numbers in the first half of the year as their distinctive calls rang out as flocks passed overhead. Birds continued to pass through in small flocks until June. The late summer and early autumn period once again saw a significant arrival into the Recording Area. The first double-figures appeared mid-July but by the end of the month there were birds everywhere, including 532 on the 28th. These high counts continued and almost 8,500 bird-days were recorded in August alone. Of particular note were 596 on the 3rd, 826 on the 10th, 508 on the 19th, 932 on the 20th, 538 on the 21st, 650 on the 25th, all from Pegwell Bay, and around 1,000 anting in the skies on the 27th. Numbers reduced considerably after but there were a few outlying totals of 196 on 28th September, 157 on 12th October, and 128 on 26th October.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	6	27	39	51	35	7	532	1000	196	157	47	9
B/days	21	81	114	278	95	49	1099	8373	509	729	124	13

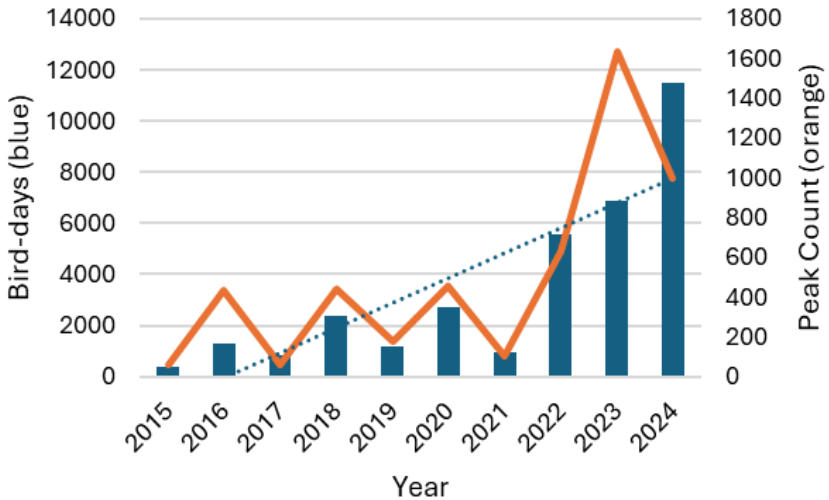


Figure.1 Yearly bird-day totals and peak counts of Mediterranean Gull 2015-2024. The status of Mediterranean Gull is changing rapidly and flocks into the hundreds, if not over a thousand, can now be expected in late summer and early autumn.

## Common Gull *Larus canus*

### Migrant and common winter visitor

The highest counts came from Pegwell Bay where up to 600 birds were seen in January and February. Elsewhere there was a wide-roaming flock moving to and from the Green Wall and RSPB Worth Marshes peaking at 350 on two dates. There was a significant drop off in March with just double-figures recorded and few sightings in April. In fact, there was only one sighting in May of a flock of 15 at the Point on the 13th and none in June.

The first returning bird was seen in Pegwell Bay on 1st July and by the 20th there were already 39 at the Point. Numbers remained fairly consistent until October when the first triple-figure flock was recorded on the 5th, increasing to 454 on the 12th. There were regular counts of a few hundred on Worth and in Pegwell Bay in the final few months of the year, with an outlier of 900 at the Point on 15th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1107	693	62	13	15		39	31	25	454	424	900
B/days	4537	3758	410	42	15		68	75	107	1399	1342	3022



Common Gull by R.Blackman

## Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

### Migrant and common winter visitor

There were two high counts in January of 313 on the 8th and 360 on the 9th but predominately the wintering population in Pegwell Bay was a third of that. After a quiet period in March there was an increase in activity from April onwards as groups of non-breeding immatures used RSPB Worth Marshes for bathing and loafing. Peak counts there included 70 on 15th May, 125 on 19th May, and 73 on 2nd June. The usual pair on the Discovery Park fledged three young.

Late summer saw 60-80 in the Pegwell Bay area before counts increased substantially in September. The highest was 350 on the 5th but there was also 149 on the 8th and 203 on the 30th. The flock in October was even higher with 675 on the 12th (the year's peak), and after dropping down to 'just' 375 in November, reached another peak of 600 offshore on 10th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	360	128	61	155	202	157	63	80	386	675	375	604
B/days	1317	531	362	1615	2268	1081	500	435	1841	1213	1300	1003

## Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

### Migrant and abundant winter visitor, rare breeder

Just shy of 10,500 came into roost in Pegwell Bay on 18th January. Day counts early in the year were a lot less though with 845 and 645 on RSPB Worth Marshes on 15th and 16th February. There was a general reduction in numbers through March and April followed by an increase again in May. Low hundreds were seen most days with a peak of 560 in Pegwell Bay on 11th May, carrying on into early June with 640 on the 8th. At least 200 were also offshore on the 15th. A few small colonies bred on New Downs/Discovery Park area and one pair nested again on the Estate.

The post-summer period was the quietest of the year. It wasn't until September onwards that totals grew. Almost 900 were in Pegwell Bay on the 28th. October saw 2,066 there on the 5th but this was to be a false dawn and no other four-figure count was reported. A few counts from RSPB Worth Marshes were notable, such as 560 on 2nd November and 500 on 16th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	10494	1096	429	254	560	800	391	225	973	2066	750	598
B/days	13298	4098	3271	1859	4431	2771	1394	2285	3211	3875	5005	3675

## Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

### Uncommon but increasingly regular migrant and winter visitor

The status of this species is changing quickly and there were double the number of bird-days compared to Yellow-legged Gull. There were seven bird-days in January, mostly of one-two in Pegwell Bay or at the Point, with one offshore on the 9th. One in Pegwell on 21st February was the last of winter.

There were no records until singles on 25th August (Pegwell) and 21st September (New Downs). These were followed by a break until an impressive arrival in December with 41 bird-days in Pegwell between the 14th and 22nd. There were seven birds on the 14th, four on the 15th, seven on the 16th, a mammoth 16 on the 18th (a new SBBOT record) and final seven again on the 22nd. Two were also offshore on the 10th and three on the 23rd.

## **Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis***

### **Uncommon migrant and winter visitor**

Six bird-days occurred in the first two months of the year, mostly singles from Pegwell Bay (though two were present on 25th January). One was on the Green Wall on 2nd January and another at the Point on the 17th.

A small arrival occurred in July and August. One was in Pegwell on 25th July and then in August singles on the 3rd and 19th, with one on New Downs on the 16th. After two birds in October there was an increase in December with 11 bird-days recorded. Most were in Pegwell with three on the 16th and four on the 18th. Two went north offshore on the 23rd.

## **Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus***

### **Migrant and winter visitor, breeds nearby**

Counts in Pegwell Bay in January of 44 on the 8th and 40 on the 9th were higher than typically seen in winter. Most other counts were in single or low double-figures until March when spring migration began in earnest. It was during this period that a high proportion of *L.f.intermedius* birds were seen as well as the usual *L.f.graellsii*. The highest count of spring occurred in April with 142 in Pegwell Bay on the 5th. No other count came anywhere near that total but 35 on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 20th was notable. In the summer a handful of pairs bred on the Discovery Park and small numbers summered in Pegwell Bay.

There was an arrival of almost 50 birds on 30th July, perhaps some failed breeders returning south early. Autumn passage was quite light with small but consistent numbers most days. A burst of sightings occurred in the last two months of the year as large numbers of Gulls graced the flooding pools on RSPB Worth Marshes. This included 43 on 12th November, 73 on the 23rd, and 40 on the 24th, and then 51 on 1st December and 43 on the 5th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	129	80	162	413	179	110	192	161	147	59	306	403
B/days	48	18	28	157	25	17	48	20	31	15	73	55

## **Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis***

### **Migrant, occasional winter visitor**

Two were in Pegwell Bay on 8th and 9th January, with a single on the 11th. They disappeared soon after as a cold spell hit. The first true spring migrants then appeared on 13th March (the same date as last year). A total of 1,782 bird-days were recorded from March to May. April saw the bulk of passage with most records from Pegwell Bay including 152 on the 5th, 237 on the 15th, 131 on the 16th, 354 on the 18th, and 121 on the 19th. Three-four birds were seen on Restharrow Scrape on five dates. May saw a slow decrease in numbers and then there were a handful of sightings offshore in mid-June with 11 on the 14th.

Almost 13,000 bird-days were recorded in July and August (double that of last year). There was an arrival of 153 in Pegwell Bay on the 8th and thereafter flocks of birds were ever-present, rising to 239 on the 20th, 270 on the 25th, and 480 on the 29th. There were only four days in August with less than triple-figures in Pegwell. Most days saw 250-400 birds with 540 on the 15th and 520 on the 16th. At the same time there was passage offshore of 208 north on the 3rd, 260 north on the 22nd, and 215 north on the 24th. Passage continued strongly into September, particularly early in the month, and then gradually decreased throughout October. The last three birds went north offshore on 19th November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	2		87	354	68	11	480	597	262	26	3	
B/days	5		93	1533	156	25	3926	8963	1242	74	3	

## **Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***

### **Regular migrant**

After two blank springs in a row it was good to get 22 bird-days in 2024. Two were in Pegwell Bay on 15th April with three the next day (plus one north offshore), one on the 17th, and nine on the 19th. Another bird was seen on the 24th and the last birds were offshore on 2nd May (one) and in Pegwell on the 3rd (four).

A further 25 bird-days occurred in autumn. The first was in Pegwell on 24th July with two on the 28th and eight on the 30th. There were four singles in Pegwell and one offshore in August and then in September two were offshore on the 3rd and singles were in Pegwell from the 7th to the 12th with two on the 13th.

## **Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii***

### **Scarce migrant**

A return to lower numbers this year with singles in Pegwell Bay on 7th July and 14th August and north offshore on 24th August.

## **Common Tern *Sterna hirundo***

### **Common migrant. Rare breeder**

An early bird went north offshore on 29th March and a total of 31 bird-days followed in April. Eight went north offshore on the 15th and birds were in Pegwell on four dates, including 11 on the 16th. There were just the three birds in May, two in Pegwell on the 3rd and one on the 26th. One south offshore on 15th June could have been either a late spring or an early autumn migrant.

There were 1,421 birds between July and October. All records were from either Pegwell Bay or passing offshore except two on RSPB Worth Marshes on 18th July. Single-figures were seen daily in Pegwell from 10th July, with low double-figures from 1st August, rising to 177 on the 15th and 168 on the 16th, 96 on the 24th, and the year's peak of 215 on the 29th. A total of 84 also moved north offshore on the 24th. September saw 74 in Pegwell on the 2nd and 60 south offshore on the 10th, but most other counts were a lot lower. The last two birds flew north offshore on 2nd October.

## **Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea***

### **Uncommon migrant**

One flew north offshore on 16th April. There were 28 bird-days in autumn. One was offshore on 16th August, 14 flew north on the 24th (a day of notable Tern movement), and one-three were in Pegwell Bay on five dates. In September there were singles offshore and in Pegwell on the 17th, and then three offshore on the 30th.

## **Black Tern *Chlidonias niger***

### **Uncommon but regular migrant**

There was a big drop in bird-days compared to last year. A total of 16 birds were logged in autumn. Singles were in Pegwell Bay on 25th and 30th July, and 1st, 16th, 17th, 23rd, and 30th August. In September, two flew north offshore on the 5th, four went south on the 8th, two went south on the 10th, and a last bird was in Pegwell on the 13th.

## **Great Skua *Stercorarius skua***

### **Uncommon but regular migrant and winter visitor**

The impact of Avian Flu continues to be represented by exceptionally low numbers seen on passage along the south coast. The only records were singles offshore on 28th and 30th September, 3rd October, and 24th November.

## **Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus***

### **Regular migrant**

There was an unusual mid-winter record on 21st January. After no spring sightings there were 24 bird-days in autumn between 5th September and 12th November. In September there were six on the 10th and 27th, and three on the 29th and 30th.

## **Little Auk *Alle alle***

### **Scarce winter visitor**

One flew north along the shore on 10th December.

## **Guillemot *Uria aalge***

### **Migrant and occasionally abundant winter visitor**

It was an even quieter year with only seven in early winter and two in the latter. Singles were offshore on 2nd, 21st, and 25th January, 7th February, two on the 25th, and one on 6th March. Two also flew north offshore on 11th November.

## **Razorbill *Alca torda***

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

There were only four confirmed Razorbills during the entire year. Two were offshore on 1st January, with one the next day, and another on 6th February.

## ***Auk sp.***

An additional 37 bird-days were recorded as *Auk sp.* This was mostly due to the distance of the birds offshore being too far to confirm identification. This was a low number compared to recent years, reflecting the few Guillemots and Razorbills recorded in 2024. A total of 28 were in January with 11 south on the 5th and 14 south on the 7th. Eight birds were seen in February and just one in September.

## **Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata***

### **Common migrant and winter visitor**

Very similar to last year with just single-figures offshore on most days punctuated with a few much higher counts of birds passing by. These included impressive movements of 887 south on 24th January, 239 north on 28th January, and 936 south on 7th February. There were a couple of subsequent smaller movements in March of 44 on the 6th and 63 on the 16th, with the last of spring in Pegwell Bay on 9th April.

Although the first singles went north offshore on 8th and 10th September there were very few sightings until later in the year. Low single-figures were present offshore in November with a peak of 12 on 25th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	887	936	64	4					3	2	7	12
B/days	1207	959	175	6					6	4	24	17

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

### **Scarce migrant and winter visitor**

A decent run of records offshore in the first three months comprised one on 21st January, two south on the 24th, one south on 7th February, and singles on 16th and 29th March.

One went north on 1st October as did another on 28th December.

## Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

### Scarce migrant and winter visitor

Two went south offshore on 7th February and further singles on 11th and 16th March. At the end of the year singles went south offshore on 29th October, 2nd and 16th November, and 9th December.

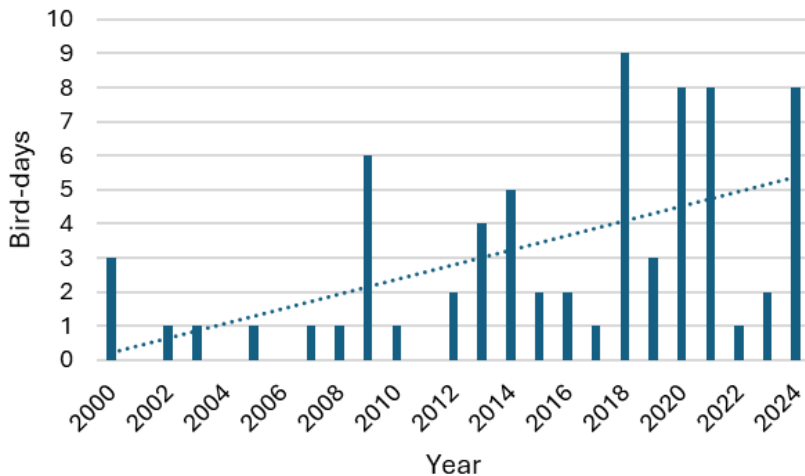


Figure.2 Yearly bird-day total of Great Northern Diver 2000-2024. Traditionally a scarce bird in the SBBOT Recording Area, this species has seen a noticeable increase in records over the last decade, possibly linked to increased time seawatching.



Red-throated Diver by S.Ray

## **Fulmar** *Fulmaris glacialis*

### **Common migrant, summer and winter visitor**

As usual there was a bias towards the first half of the year with 51 bird-days in the first six months and 14 in the latter. Seven were seen in Pegwell Bay on 26th January but most sightings were of one-two passing offshore. Nine flew north on 15th April, the highest count of the year, and the last of the summer were three north offshore on 19th June.

In August there was one on the 1st, four on the 22nd, and one on the 24th, but then none until eight in Pegwell Bay on 26th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	7	1	2	9	3	3		4				8
B/days	15	4	6	14	5	7		6				8

## **Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna grisea*

### **Irregular migrant**

One went south offshore on 24th November.

## **Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*

### **Irregular migrant**

There was a large movement along the Kent coast on 15th June. Our tally of 12 birds was the most ever recorded at Sandwich Bay.

## **Balearic Shearwater** *Puffinus mauretanicus*

### **Irregular migrant**

A terrific run of records in September comprised six offshore on the 9th (the highest count ever recorded at Sandwich Bay), one on the 15th, two on the 25th, four on the 27th, and three on the 30th.

## **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

### **Scarce migrant, increasing**

Four bird-days in spring comprised birds on/over RSPB Worth Marshes on 11th April, and 18th, 19th, and 24th May.

One was on New Downs on 14th August and a flock of ten birds were on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 22nd and 23rd. This was followed by a single flock of 31 on 4th September, all presumed to be Knepp released birds.

## **Gannet** *Morus bassanus*

### **Common migrant and winter visitor**

The first half of the year saw mostly low numbers offshore. There were 27 on 5th January but no count of any note until 30 on 5th April. Ten offshore on 14th June and 15 the next day were unusual for mid-summer but were logged during very strong southerly winds.

A single bird offshore on 1st July meant there were sightings in all months of the year. Passage picked up swiftly from August onwards and the first triple-figure numbers were recorded in September, with 151 on the 26th and 152

the following day. After a quiet October there was a massive increase in November as birds often fed close in on fish shoals. Peak counts were 290 on the 7th, 490 on the 9th, 1,315 on the 10th, 200 on the 11th, and 287 on the 12th. The 250 on 7th December was the last significant count of the year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	27	10	5	30	3	15	1	34	152	35	1315	250
B/days	58	17	9	72	3	27	1	104	576	70	2935	341

## **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster*

### **Vagrant**

One flew north offshore on 8th September. Read more about this first for Sandwich Bay on Page **130**.

## **Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

### **Common resident, migrant and abundant winter visitor**

There was a movement of 1,105 birds over New Downs on 30th January but most other counts during the month were in the low hundreds. That all changed in February when a massive 6,970 flew south offshore on the 7th. This was followed by 2,425 in Pegwell Bay on the 10th and then 6,000 there on the 12th. After these considerable counts there was a complete drop-off and only low double-figures remained. About 25 birds summered in the area. There was a gradual rise in number from October with 170 on the Point on 28th November being the first triple-figure count since February. Early December saw 1,213 north offshore on the 1st and 600 on the 5th. There were subsequently a few more counts in the low hundreds.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1326	6991	29	13	18	12	23	24	32	30	175	1213
B/days	2499	16927	243	159	147	95	170	156	253	264	613	3922

## **Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

### **Uncommon migrant and winter visitor**

There were four sightings offshore for the second year in a row. Singles went south on 23rd and 25th January, another was seen on 16th March, and a last bird on 10th November.

## **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*

### **Vagrant, increasing**

There were 13 bird-days in July with a bird found on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 3rd and 4th before disappearing and then returning on 15th-29th.

## Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

### Uncommon migrant, increasing

One flew north over RSPB Worth Marshes on 12th February and two were on New Downs on 11th March. After singles in April in Pegwell on the 19th and then on Worth on the 21st there was a small flurry of sightings in May. One was on Worth from the 4th to 7th, on New Downs on the 13th, and then two were in Pegwell on the 14th and on Worth on the 28th.

There were 27 bird-days in autumn from 1st July to 27th October. A flock of five on RSPB Worth Marshes on 14th July was the biggest number of the year. Most of the autumn comprised ones-tuos in Pegwell Bay but in September one was on Restharrow Scrape on the 6th and three flew north offshore on the 30th. Two were seen daily in various parts of the Recording Area from 1st to 5th October, with singles in Pegwell on the 16th and 27th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak		1	2	1	2		5	1	3	2		
B/days		1	2	2	8		9	2	4	12		

## Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

### Vagrant, increasing

A very good year with one on New Downs on 6th March and singles sound-recorded flying over the Observatory at night on 13th March and over Stonar on the 15th. In autumn one was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 25th August, on Restharrow Scrape on 6th September, and another sound-recorded flying over the Observatory at night on 25th September. The final record of the year was seen on RSPB Worth Marshes on 10th December.

## Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

### Scarce migrant, increasing rapidly

The 319 bird-days in 2024 was the most ever recorded in a year at SBBOT. Three birds overwintered at the Observatory and were seen more-or-less daily throughout January. Eight appeared on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 8th but quickly disappeared. In February the flock around the Observatory increased to six on the 15<sup>th</sup> and seven were seen on 19th March. The flock began to wander more widely in April, often flitting across towards Worth, where seven were present on the 8th. It was at this time birds came into their summer plumage and also showed some signs of breeding activity. They did, however, disappear during the month and only intermittent sightings of birds occurred over the summer.

At the end of June and in early July a group of at least 13 birds appeared on RSPB Worth Marshes. The flock contained multiple juveniles but whether these birds bred locally was uncertain. After a gap in sightings during autumn there was one on RSPB Worth Marshes on 6th November, two there on the 30th, and then singles on 18th and 31st December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	8	6	7	7	3	5	13	1			2	1
B/days	33	69	83	25	4	12	87	1			3	2

## Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

### Resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor

There were 1,165 bird-days in 2024, a 22% increase on last year. The early part of the year saw up to eight birds on RSPB Worth Marshes. This was more than usual and perhaps due to the higher water levels at this time. Around four-seven birds were elsewhere in the Recording Area. Spring passage was noted in March with up to 14 birds on RSPB Worth Marshes (6th). A bird flew south offshore on the 12th. Nine were also on Worth on 8th May

Ten on RSPB Worth Marshes on 24th June likely involved some local post-breeding dispersal. The next few months delivered the expected gathering of adult and young birds on receding pools in the area. There up to nine on New Downs, eight in Pegwell, and five double-figure counts on Worth including 17 on 4th September. The numbers dropped a bit in October and the end of the year saw about 16 birds set to winter.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	9	6	15	7	12	17	12	16	18	13	13	12
B/days	81	37	142	59	88	109	120	131	122	89	137	50

## Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

### Scarce migrant

There were 12 bird-days in May coinciding with a large influx into the UK. A bird flushed from Waldershare Gully on the 2nd was seen sporadically, mostly flying to or from RSPB Worth Marshes, until the 26th.

## Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

### Increasing migrant and winter visitor

Another excellent year with a total of 174 bird-days recorded, a 45% increase on 2023. An overwintering bird on RSPB Worth Marshes was responsible for all records in January and February. In March one was on New Downs on the 7th and another in Pegwell Bay on the 12th. Thereafter most records in spring and summer were of one-two but four flew north through Worth on 14th April and three were present on the marsh on 18th May.

There were almost daily counts of one-three on Worth in July and August. One was in Pegwell Bay on 17th August, one flew over the Estate on 2nd September, two were on New Downs on 6th September, one was on Restharrow Scrape on 8th October, and another flew over the Estate on 28th October, but otherwise most records came from RSPB Worth Marshes. Four were present on the marsh on 18th November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1	1	2	4	3	2	3	3	4	2	4	1
B/days	13	3	12	9	9	2	36	28	21	14	25	2

## Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

### Resident breeder, common migrant and small numbers in winter

Counts in January suggested a wintering population of around 15 birds (a lot higher than the same period last year). There was little change until April and May when bird-days increased considerably. This was particularly so on RSPB Worth Marshes and in Pegwell Bay where up to 11 and 14 were recorded, respectively. Low double-figures remained in the New Downs/Pegwell area into early June.

Late June saw an early autumn increase with up to 20 on New Downs on the 29th. July, as most years, saw some of the highest counts of the year. An impressive 73 on the 22nd was subsequently beaten by 80 on the 26th which included 13 on New Downs, 13 on RSPB Worth Marshes, and 54 in Pegwell Bay. Counts of 20-30 continued in Pegwell throughout August with lower numbers of New Downs and Worth. Gradually these birds moved off and the wintering numbers steadied at around ten birds.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	8	9	4	10	20	23	80	45	32	24	5	8
B/days	52	25	33	80	240	208	779	640	403	105	23	18

## Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

### Occasional migrant

An odd year with no spring records for the first time since 2016 but a strong autumn showing of seven records. One flew south along Prince's Beach on 23rd June. Singles were in Pegwell Bay on 14th July and 3rd August, with one over New Downs on the 16th. In September there were two over the Estate on the 4th and the last bird through RSPB Worth Marshes on the 8th.



Osprey by G.Lee

## Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

### Occasional migrant

In May singles were over RSPB Worth Marshes on the 17th, the Green Wall on the 19th, and Worth again on the 26th.

In autumn there was a remarkable occurrence of an adult female perched on the Heligoland trap in the Haven on 28th August.

## Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

The 265 bird-days recorded was a small 6.4% increase on the previous year but overall the data and month-by-month trend was incredibly similar. Around six birds were present in the Recording Area at the start of the year. There was an increase in bird-days in spring but no sign of any obvious migration. In April five were present on the 10th. Three breeding pairs were once again confirmed (Green Wall, Worth, and Estate) with the pair in The Elms fledging four young.

Five on 13th September equalled the highest day-count of the year and October saw the joint-highest bird-day count of any month (with May). There were at least nine birds present at this time with most records coming from the Estate or RSPB Worth Marshes. December saw a marked reduction.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	3	2	3	5	3	2	4	4	5	3	4	2
B/days	28	16	28	25	29	8	22	20	22	29	26	12



Sparrowhawk by S.Reynaert

## **Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus***

### **Migrant and winter visitor, breeds nearby**

A very steady year with little in the way of ups and down and clear migrations. Up to four were present on RSPB Worth Marshes in January with ones-tuos on the Green Wall, New Downs, and Pegwell suggesting six-seven birds were wintering in the Recording Area. One was offshore on 18th January. The majority of birds in spring were seen on RSPB Worth Marshes. Six birds were present on 16th April. It soon became apparent from behaviour that a breeding attempt was underway. Eventually the pair fledged two young, the first confirmed breeding within the SBBOT Recording Area. With young on the wing July ended up being the month with most bird-days. Afterwards the peak counts and bird-days dropped to about half. The year ended with 365 bird-days recorded, almost the exact figure as last year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	6	3	3	6	4	3	6	4	3	3	5	3
B/days	48	17	20	51	32	23	58	31	15	20	30	20

## **Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus***

### **Decreasing migrant and winter visitor**

A disappointing year with only 11 bird-days, though an unusually high proportion were adult males. One in off the sea on 26th January was the only winter record. In spring there was a male on RSPB Worth Marshes on 29th April to 1st May, and another male on 4th June.

A male on Worth on 13th July was very unseasonal. Four sightings followed in October; a ringtail on the Estate on the 13th, a male on New Downs on 19th, with presumably the same bird at the Point on the 23rd and in Pegwell Bay on the 26th. A final male was seen on the Estate on 5th December.

## **Red Kite *Milvus milvus***

### **Regular spring migrant, increasing in numbers**

Singles on 2nd, 3rd, and 28th February were bang on cue as our first records of the year. A further ten birds followed in March with four on the 23rd of note. After a slightly quieter April there was the annual gathering and movement of immature birds in May and June. Totals were much reduced compared to previous years though, with 13 on 19th May, 15 on 3rd June, and 17 on 28th June the only double-figure movements.

The only records in the second half of the year were two over the Estate on 26th July and another on 18th August.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak		1	4	2	13	17	2	1				
B/days		3	10	8	23	38	2	1				

## White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

### Vagrant, increasing

There were three records. One north over the Estate on 3rd February was from the Isle of Wight release scheme, as most birds are assumed to be. However, a bird present on RSPB Worth Marshes for three days on 22nd-25th May was not from this scheme and was assumed to be a wild Continental vagrant. Another bird from the Isle of Wight scheme was also on Worth on 25th August and was seen over Stonar the next day.

## Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

### Resident breeder, migrant

Counts at the start of the year suggested a wintering population of around 14 individuals. Spring passage was much better than last year. The first signs were of 22 on 12th February and 17 on the 16th. In March, there were movements of 20 on the 4th, 12 on the 5th, ten on the 6th, 30 on the 16th, 43 on the 18th, and 13 on the 19th. These were followed by a final impressive movement on 1st May of at least 51 birds. Three further low double-figures counts occurred soon after leaving just the breeding territories. At least three pairs were thought to have bred.

The second half of the year was much quieter in comparison. There were very few counts of any note with ten on 3rd and 28th September and 11 on 18th October. December was the quietest month of the year with just 23 bird-days.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	7	22	43	18	51	11	11	8	10	11	7	4
B/days	49	89	183	113	139	83	83	65	55	58	82	23

## Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

### Resident breeder and winter visitor

There were two sightings from Worth in January and two from New Downs in February, but all other records in the first six months came from the Estate, where two pairs bred.

The second half of the year saw birds recorded very regularly. Typically, this species is very nocturnal at Sandwich Bay but there was an almost complete reversal in behaviour. Later in the year up to three birds were seen flying around in the day on RSPB Worth Marshes and at least two doing the same along the Ancient Highway between the Estate and the Chequers. This led to an excellent total of over 150 bird-days in 2024.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	3
B/days	9	5	16	11	5	6	10	20	20	19	12	19

## Little Owl *Athene noctua*

### Resident breeder

There was decent activity in the first four months with nearly all records coming from the Estate, plus a single on New Downs seen on six dates. There was a lull in records over the breeding season though birds were recorded on three dates on the Estate throughout May, a single on the Green Wall on the 8th and a single on New Downs on the 17th.

Birds were more noticeable again after the breeding season where up to three were on New Downs on 2nd and 8th August. October was the busiest month of the year with almost daily records of one-two from the Estate. Records away from the Estate in the last four months were singles on New Downs on three dates, a pair on Green Wall on 15th November, and a single on RSPB Worth Marshes on 20th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	4	1	3	2	2
B/days	9	16	17	12	5	4	8	19	17	29	10	12

## Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

### Migrant, winter visitor, and rare breeder

There were nine bird-days in February on the Estate and at a private site. Breeding activity was noted at both and later in the year calling young were confirmed at the latter site. Also of note, were a series of records in May on RSPB Worth Marshes highly suggestive of another breeding attempt.

In October singles were on the Estate on the 15th and 18th, and another on 13th November.

## Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

### Migrant and winter visitor

Most of the activity at the beginning of the year was concentrated along the Ancient Highway between Dickson's Corner and The Chequers. At least five birds were present, with smaller numbers on Worth and the Estate. One was at Pegwell Bay on 18th January and another at the Point on 11th February. For the second year in a row birds stayed late into the summer at two sites and hopes were high for breeding, but unfortunately they were not seen again and it was assumed no attempt took place.

Singles were on the Estate on 17th and 20th September. The rest of the Autumn and Winter was quieter in comparison to early in the year. Only three birds looked set to winter.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	4	7	3	1	2	1			1	1	2	2
B/days	13	14	12	6	8	2			2	3	7	5



Short-eared Owl by P.Coltman

## **Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*

### **Rare breeder**

The 12 bird-days was about the same as last year. There were records early in the year from the Estate on 19th January, 20th February, and 10th and 13th March, all from sound recording at night. There were also birds in February at the Drove on the 19th and the Green Wall on the 29th. A recently-fledged young bird was seen along the edge of the Great Wood on RSPB Worth Marshes in May, a very rare confirmed breeding for the area, whilst there was an unusual mid-summer record from the Green Wall on 19th June. Two were recorded in September (Green Wall on the 11th and the Estate on the 24th) and three in November (Green Wall on the 2nd, 15th, and 28th).

## **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

### **Scarce migrant**

One was around the Observatory on 18th August.

## Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

### Occasional breeder, common migrant and winter visitor

A very quiet opening six months. Four birds were present in January with most activity on the Green Wall, and the occasional sighting on New Downs and RSPB Worth Marshes.

Birds began to be seen in the area again from 9th July. Autumn was a lot better with September particularly so, including five on the 14th (four of those on New Downs). Dispersing birds were on the Estate on 2nd August and on 24th September. The end of the year was quiet again with three birds present.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	2	1	1				1	2	5	3	4	1
B/days	9	4	4				4	7	22	13	13	3

## Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

### Scarce migrant

One flew north over the Estate on 2nd June.

## Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

### Scarce migrant

One was seen on the Estate on 1st September.

## Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*

### Vagrant

One was seen briefly on RSPB Worth Marshes on 7th September. Our first record since October 2016.

## Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

Counts in January suggested that nine birds wintered in the area. There was an increase in bird-days at the start of Spring where four were seen on RSPB Worth Marshes on 14th March. However, bird-days decreased into April and May records dropped off further, with one-two recorded on the Green Wall, New Downs, and Worth.

Bird-days increased again in June following post-breeding dispersal. However, the first migrants were not noted until 30th August where one bird flew north. Autumn movements increased in September with singles on 'vismig' on two dates, a pair on the 10th and three on the 22nd, all heading north. October saw the highest counts of the year and were double that of the previous year in both bird-days and peak counts. Most reports came from the Estate with a peak count of five on the 9th. Counts reduced considerably thereafter but remained higher than in the previous year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	5	3	6	3	3	6	4	4	5	10	6	7
B/days	38	24	39	17	10	27	39	35	41	76	38	29

## Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

### Resident breeder

The 2023 total saw a roughly 12% decrease on 2022, but 2024 saw the opposite, a 12% increase on 2023. These ups and downs are broadly correlated with breeding productivity. January saw up to three on the Estate, six on the Green Wall, four on New Downs, and two on Worth. There was a slight rise in bird-days in spring as breeding birds became more vocal.

The highest day count of the year was 11 on 16th July which included seven on the Green Wall. Activity declined from September as young birds dispersed out of the Recording Area. The year finished with a very low December bird-day total of just 18.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	7	7	7	9	5	8	11	7	5	9	5	4
B/days	56	60	86	62	40	51	95	81	48	59	39	18

## Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor.

The 1,132 bird-days recorded was an impressive 32% increase on last year. The first half of the year saw totals broadly consistent with previous years. Around 11-12 birds were present and in the summer three pairs bred.

The late Summer and early Autumn period then saw exceptional numbers. There were ten days with double-figures recorded in July, three in August, and seven in September. These were primarily from Worth with 16 birds present on 27th July, 17 the next day, 12 on 2nd August, and 15 on 13th September. Counts dropped thereafter but decent numbers remained into November, before finally dispersing at the beginning of December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	7	6	8	8	7	9	17	14	21	7	11	7
B/days	67	60	59	69	54	76	210	111	160	98	121	47

## Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

### Scarce migrant

An adult male on 18th April was the start of 13 bird-days that month. Two females on the 23rd rose to three on the 25th, with at least one remaining until the 29th.

## Merlin *Falco columbarius*

### Migrant and winter visitor

There were only 11 bird-days in the first three months and 12 in the latter. At the beginning of the year a female-type was seen on RSPB Worth Marshes and a male occasionally on New Downs. In March a male appeared on the Estate with the male on New Downs remaining until the 31st.

One was on Worth on 7th September. It was quiet until November when at least three separate birds were seen on RSPB Worth Marshes with singles also on the Estate and New Downs.

## Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

### Summer visitor and occasional breeder

The first on RSPB Worth Marshes on 14th April was one day later than last year. Passage in May was above average with regular counts of four-five a day. Nearly all records came from RSPB Worth Marshes. The peak counts were nine on the 24th and eight on the 29th, and then in June there were nine on the 2nd and ten on the 6th. There were still regular records of up to six on Worth into late July. Two pairs bred in the Recording Area.

The autumn passage period was mostly uneventful. Three singles were seen in October on the 1st, 7th, and 9th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				1	9	10	7	3	3	1		
B/days				7	83	74	70	23	24	3		

## Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

It was a very quiet year for this species with only 85 bird-days recorded. Quite why this was is unclear with the various haunts in the Recording Area still productive in terms of habitat and prey, and pairs still breeding in the usual sites nearby. The first four months of the year proved to be the 'busiest' time with 12 bird-days in January and 14 in March. May was a rare month with no records.

Ones and twos continued to be seen infrequently throughout Autumn. Most of the records came from RSPB Worth Marshes with occasional birds in Pegwell Bay.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	2	2	2	2		1	1	1	1	2	2	2
B/days	12	11	14	10		1	3	6	5	6	10	7

## Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

### Uncommon resident breeder

It was another busy year with 750 bird-days in the first half of the year and 838 in the latter. The highest count in January was of 48 in Pegwell Bay on the 18th. Elsewhere there were single and low double-figures present in most other subsites, with the exceptions of 17 and 24 on New Downs on 11th and 18th May. A pair bred in the Great Wood on RSPB Worth Marshes for the first time.

There was only one triple-figure count during the year; 136 on 7th August which included 120 north over the Green Wall. The rest of the year saw 15-20 on the Green Wall, New Downs, and Worth, with smaller numbers on the Estate.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	51	12	10	12	24	9	17	136	16	30	35	22
B/days	222	110	102	122	116	78	49	311	71	144	187	76

## **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*

### **Scarce migrant**

A brilliant adult male on RSPB Worth Marshes on 18th May was part of a huge influx of this species into the UK.

## **Daurian/Turkestan Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus/phoenicuroides*

### **Vagrant**

A first-calendar individual on Hundred Acre Field on 18th October was our fourth record of Daurian/Turkestan Shrike. Immature shrikes of the 'Isabelline' complex are notoriously hard to identify in the field though the warm plumage colouration of the bird made it more likely to have been a Daurian Shrike (the commoner of the two species to occur in the UK).



Daurian/Turkestan Shrike sp by A.Lipczynski

## **Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*

### **Scarce migrant**

An early male was in the Haven on 17th April, with another on the Green Wall on 4th May. A singing male was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 7th June and then an immature male on New Downs the next day.

## Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

A fairly typical set of records in the first six months. There seemed to be fewer than ten birds in the Recording Area with two-three each on the Estate, Green Wall, New Downs, and Worth.

The second half of the year saw twice the number of birds-days. Bigger flocks began to be seen from August onwards, especially on RSPB Worth Marshes with 11 on 30th September, ten there the next day, and nine on 4th November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	7	11	10	10	4
B/days	24	13	36	35	20	5	30	33	55	75	77	25

## Magpie *Pica pica*

### Resident breeder, partial migrant and winter visitor

In the first two months there were peaks of 19 on the Estate, 33 on the Green Wall, 17 on New Downs, four at the Point, and 19 on RSPB Worth Marshes, all of which were slightly higher than the poor numbers recorded in the previous year. There were some signs of spring passage when 14 flew north on 18th March, though grounded counts were generally unchanged.

Autumn migration was similarly lacking. However, counts of 27 on Worth on 2nd October and 29 on the Estate on the 11th hinted at some signs of movement at this time. Winter records were poor with 61 individuals present in the Recording Area at the year's end, a drop of 39% over the previous year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	33	56	41	59	20	28	26	26	28	36	31	38
B/days	377	409	383	318	152	229	217	183	189	358	315	203

## Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

There were six counts in January and February of around 150-200 birds. The peak of 275 on 17th January was a roost count at Prince's Golf Course. There wasn't much in the way of Spring migration but a movement of multiple species on 16th March included ten Jackdaws north.

An impressive 800 were seen coming to roost on the Green Wall on 30th June and this was to be the highest count of the year. The rest of the post-breeding period was unusually quiet. There were no major counts of note until the end of the year when 410 came to roost at Prince's Golf Course on 12th November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	275	249	145	113	61	800	133	70	38	135	410	140
B/days	2055	1430	1249	917	591	1201	404	305	191	651	1065	777

## **Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

Most of the bird-days at the beginning of the year came from either the Estate or the Green Wall. Flocks usually numbered around 100 -130 birds with at least 230 spread through the area on 19th January. There was no sign of any Spring migration. In the summer at least 39 nests were at Royal St George's Golf Club House.

Post-breeding flocks appeared from mid-July. There were 225 on RSPB Worth Marshes on 6th August but no other counts in that range until November when 235 were present on the 12th and 230 on the 15th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	236	105	124	56	99	70	118	225	112	190	235	120
B/days	1034	600	543	375	331	292	284	547	494	819	1161	355

## **Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

After last year's drop, there was thankfully an increase in bird-days to 3,705 in 2024. The start of the year saw usually no more than 10-20 at each subsite in the Recording Area with the exception of the Point with 29 on 13th January and 60 there on the 17th. There was increased activity in March, as noted by a flock of 26 birds which went north over the Estate on the 16th. Up to 29 were on the Green Wall, 52 on New Downs, and 27 at the Point. In April there were notable counts of 36 on the Estate on the 10th and 39 on New Downs on the 29th. At least 25 birds remained in a non-breeding flock on New Downs over the Summer.

There was an increase in bird-days in August with notable tallies of 37 on the Estate on the 8th, 56 on New Downs on the 12th, and 50 at the Point on the 17th. After a quiet September there was a count of 198 on 5th October (the highest count of the year), most of which came into roost at the Point. The final Winter period was quieter with 69 at the Point on 12th November being the only count of note.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	78	58	62	74	35	29	26	56	41	198	69	40
B/days	317	299	455	369	176	218	121	322	133	573	363	169

## **Raven** *Corvus corax*

### **Resident breeder nearby, migrant and winter visitor**

There was another increase in bird-days with 187 recorded (36.5% higher than last year. This was primarily because a pair bred just outside the Recording Area and there were regular sightings on RSPB Worth Marshes during the breeding season. Six birds on RSPB Worth Marshes on 6th April was the highest count of the year. Sightings were more sporadic in the second half of the year but at least four birds were present.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	4	5	4	6	4	5	3	2	3	4	3	3
B/days	19	11	27	24	24	9	15	6	16	16	9	11

## Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

### Uncommon migrant

One was in the Pegwell Bay Country Park/Stonelees area on 1st January and another flew over Stonar on 14th March.

## Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

### Rare breeder, migrant and winter visitor

A peak count of three in January was the highest of the year. It proved to be a mostly poor year though with just 20 bird days over the first six months.

While largely confined to the Green Wall earlier in the year, records were more varied from July onwards, likely from post-breeding dispersal. There were sightings from the Estate on four dates, including a pair in October, and a very scarce record from RSPB Worth Marshes on 15th July.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	3	1	1	2	2	2	1		1	2	1	
B/days	6	5	1	2	2	4	2		2	6	1	



Coal Tits by G.Lee

## Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

### Resident breeder and migrant

There was another small decline in bird-days from last year. Most activity was weighted towards the first four months when up to 23 were on the Estate, 26 on the Green Wall, 12 on New Downs, two at the Point, and 12 on RSPB Worth Marshes.

The breeding season was largely unproductive and so the Autumn saw low numbers through the Recording Area. There was also no sign of any migration. Gradually numbers dropped and counts at the end of the year suggested a wintering population of fewer than 50 birds.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	49	36	31	31	18	26	24	25	30	32	34	32
B/days	363	387	269	295	135	163	202	194	165	198	190	163

## Great Tit *Parus major*

### Resident breeder and migrant

There was surprisingly little difference in counts over Winter compared to during the breeding season. Perhaps the flocking behaviour of Winter was matched by the singing behaviour of Summer and thus producing similar detectability and bird-days. Counts suggested a population of around 40 birds with the highest numbers from the Estate and the Green Wall.

After a quiet Summer there was an increase again in Autumn and perhaps a slight peak in October (a month that often sees movements through the area). Bird-days were not overly high but it was thought to have been a very poor breeding season in the area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	17	19	23	26	9	12	18	20	22	20	21	17
B/days	208	219	199	209	92	88	138	137	143	166	135	133

## Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

### Uncommon migrant and winter visitor

In January there were two on the Green Wall and four on New Downs. After a gap in February two were on New Downs on four dates in March and three were on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 18th. Following last year's curious summer records, birds were again seen on New Downs in Summer. Our suspicions were finally proven when three-four young were seen, the first confirmed breeding at Sandwich Bay.

With the breeding birds still present until well into the Autumn it was difficult to ascertain when migrants arrived, but counts increased from mid-October. Four flew over the Estate on 18th October, a rare record from the site. Up to seven were on New Downs and two on Worth on six dates. An impressive 19 on New Downs on 30th November was the highest count of the year. After that, just four remained on New Downs until the end of the year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	4		3			5	1	4	2	11	19	4
B/days	8		10			6	3	6	4	27	37	6

## Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

### Uncommon migrant

There were four birds in November. One was on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 1st and three went north over the Estate on the 10th.

## Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

Up to 90 birds were present on the Estate at the start of the year with also up to 53 on RSPB Worth Marshes and 12 on New Downs. Wintering numbers dropped by March to 18 on the Estate, 21 on Worth, 24 on New Downs, and low singles on the other subsites. Numbers would remain consistent throughout the rest of Spring.

The first signs of visible migration occurred with seven flying north on 28th September. Bird-days greatly increased in October and were 60% higher than the previous year. Peak grounded counts included 41 on the Estate on the 11th and 65 on Worth on the 29th. Movements were noted with 25 heading north on the 15th and 11 on the 31st. Counts in December suggested a wintering population of around 90 birds in the Recording Area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	90	50	44	50	43	47	29	7	17	80	58	73
B/days	459	376	373	437	255	221	247	33	59	616	358	164

## Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

### Non-breeding summer visitor and migrant

Arrivals began in early April, starting on the 5th with a single bird at Pegwell Bay. Passage was slow and there were 146 bird-days for the month, a drop of 43% from the previous year and flocks of 30 on the 15th and 16th were the only notable movements. May records were also poor and none were reported after the 8th.

Five weeks after the last Spring record there were three on 12th June and Autumn began. July and August records were very similar, consisting of mostly single or low-digit figures highlighted by the occasional big flock, such as 161 through the Estate on 9th July, 87 on the 13th, and 171 on 26th August. September was a marked difference to their usual habits as large numbers arrived alongside other *hirundine* movements. On 2nd September, 700 moved through the Recording Area, followed by 1,220 on the 3rd. There were high triple-figure counts on four more dates up to the 13th, returning to lower double-digits. The last notable record came on 1st October with 31 on RSPB Worth Marshes and the last record was of two on the Estate on the 13th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				30	3	25	161	171	1220	31		
B/days				146	8	42	443	336	5502	44		



Sand Martin by S.Ray

## Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

### Breeding summer visitor and migrant

The first of the year was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 21st and 23rd February and another was on the Estate on the 24th. Spring passage was not too eventful but triple-figures were seen on three dates, those being 115 on 23rd April, 224 on 26th April, and 157 on 3rd May.

After the breeding season there was an increase in July, particularly at the end of the month when 324 appeared on the 26th. After a surprisingly quiet August there were some big movements in September (though not as large as seen in many recent years). The four-figure days were as follows: 1,041 on the 10th, 5,125 on the 14th, and 2,316 on the 15th. There were a number of high triple-figure day counts at the end of the month and then into October, the last two of note being 713 on the 20th and 415 on the 23rd. Records took a nosedive in November and the three birds on the Estate on the 17th were the last of the year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak		1	6	224	157	25	324	151	5125	941	32	
B/days		3	9	1017	379	192	846	954	14152	3510	139	

## House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

### Breeding summer visitor and migrant

The first bird was back on breeding territory on the Green Wall on 6th April (the exact same date as last year) and double-figures were reached on the 15th with 20 birds on RSPB Worth Marshes. Spring passage was quite poor though, with no count higher than 67 (on 30th May). There was an arrival of 105 on the Estate on 15th August but there were no other large counts until early September. There was a movement of 1,079 on the 9th (mostly over Worth) and then the year's peak of 8,368 on the 10th. These were to be the only four-figure movements with subsequent tallies of 600 on the 15th, 800 on the 23rd, and 380 on the 25th. October was extremely quiet with very few birds noted. A final flock of five was on the Estate on 11th November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				43	67	35	24	105	8368	16	5	
B/days				251	451	256	263	363	11658	95	5	

## Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

### Scarce migrant

Recorded for the third year in a row with one present on RSPB Worth Marshes on 23rd-25th May.

## Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

### Resident breeder, uncommon migrant and winter visitor

There were 1,621 bird-days in 2024, a 15% increase on last year. This was primarily due to regular double-figure counts from Worth and a consistent run of sightings on the Estate. After two records in January, there were 24

bird-days of one-two birds on the Estate between March and June. The presence of young birds in July was highly indicative of a successful breeding attempt. A second peak in records occurred around October time as young dispersed. There were 19 bird-days from the Estate, for example, and up to 13 on the Green Wall, seven on New Downs, eight at the Point, and 20 on Worth.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	11	23	21	32	17	16	9	10	24	28	30	14
B/days	72	148	201	310	143	68	62	60	135	198	149	75

## **Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus***

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

January saw peak counts of 14 on both the Estate and the Green Wall, eight on New Downs, and 31 on Worth. Birds began splintering out into pairs from February onwards and taking on breeding territories. The Spring was quite quiet, however, and it wasn't until fledged young appeared in mid-May that the bird-days increased.

A mega-flock of up to 60 birds was on RSPB Worth Marshes in June and July, with also up to 25 on the Estate. This large flock was seen on and off on Worth with at least 49 still present there in October, with other flocks of up to 14 on the Green Wall, 17 on New Downs, and 30 on the Estate. This continued into November but then quickly quietened down.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	34	18	10	11	16	54	63	55	42	70	57	47
B/days	265	158	83	77	156	395	449	353	328	486	587	252

## **Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix***

### **Uncommon migrant**

There were seven birds in autumn and all were on the Estate. The first was on 28th July and further singles followed on the 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and 21st.

## **Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus***

### **Uncommon but increasingly regular autumn migrant**

As expected, the only records came from the autumn, with 17 bird-days, over double that recorded in the previous year. Singles were present on the Estate in September on the 23rd through to the 25th. The Estate held most records during October with singles ringed on the 4th and 6th with a further two present on and off from the 7th until the 21st, and a single record from New Downs on the 21st. In November, one bird was on RSPB Worth Marshes from the 2nd to the 5th and another single on the Estate on the 5th.

## Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

### Migrant

It might not seem like much but the 61 bird-days in Spring were an improvement on last year's dreadful showing. The first was seen on the Estate on 22nd March with another present the next day. April saw almost all the rest of the records, with the exception of one bird in May on the 13th. Birds were seen on 21 days in April with peak counts of 12 on the 11th, nine on the 19th, and seven on the 26th.

The first of 705 bird-days in Autumn was one on the Estate on 20th July. Nearly all the records in August came from the Estate with high counts of 39 on the 6th, 56 on the 7th, 49 on the 8th, 43 on the 13th, 53 on the 17th, and 29 on the 21st. Elsewhere, 20 were on the Green Wall and 13 on New Downs on the 7th, and 12 on Worth on the 10th. The only double-figure count in September was 12 on the 4th. thereafter passage dropped significantly and the last was seen on the 28th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak			1	12	1		17	95	12			
B/days			2	58	1		63	584	58			

## Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

### Breeding summer visitor, abundant migrant, uncommon winter visitor

The year began with four on the Estate and two on RSPB Worth Marshes. Numbers increased in February, surprisingly, with one on the Green Wall, two on New Downs, one at the Point, now up to eight on RSPB Worth Marshes, and one in Pegwell Bay Country Park, plus the four still remaining on the Estate. A good number of bird-days then followed in Spring, arriving from early March. There were nine on the Estate on the 15th and 15 by the 18th. Elsewhere there were up to 23 on the Green Wall, four on New Downs, and 19 on Worth, whilst in April a few sites increased further to at least 28 on the Green Wall, 13 on New Downs, and four at the Point.

The 17 on the Estate on 21st August was perhaps indicative of the start of Autumn passage, if not it was certainly well underway when 30 arrived there on 4th September. Thereafter there was a constant turnover of birds with 52 on the 11th, 125 on the 14th, and 200 on the 15th. There was a massive arrival of 442 on the Estate on the 25th with 53 on both New Downs and on Worth the same day. The Estate subsequently saw 113 on the 28th, 112 on the 29th, and then in October, 154 on the 4th, and 94 on the 11th. Migration trailed off after that and the final days of the year saw around ten birds present in the Recording Area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	4	15	40	63	22	20	14	23	548	189	19	10
B/days	31	119	428	583	199	115	133	161	1972	854	142	56

There were three records of **Siberian Chiffchaff** *P.c.tristis*. One was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 19th and 23rd February and then later in the year two were ringed on the Estate, on 8th and 13th November.

## **Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus***

### **Breeding summer visitor and migrant**

Singles on the Green Wall and RSPB Worth Marshes on 29th March were the first of the year, increasing to three on Worth the following day. Bird days over April and May dropped back to 2022 levels following a boom in the previous year, falling 31% to 507. Peak counts were similarly lower with 34 on Worth on 30th April being the highest of the Spring. On other parts of the Recording Area there were 11 on the Green Wall, 15 on New Downs, with the Estate holding just a single bird.

Autumn migration on the Estate began with three on 24th July, increasing to 11 by the 28th. August movements were a consistent trickle with low single digit counts highlighted by a mass arrival of 48 on the Estate on 17th August. Counts on Worth were disappointing as 11 on the 6th was the only count of note. Passage had stopped by September where a single on the Estate held on until the 25th.

Peak	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
B/days			5	369	138	83	73	89	6			
Peak			3	46	26	17	12	48	2			

## **Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***

### **Breeding summer visitor and migrant**

Two appeared on 10th April (Green Wall and RSPB Worth Marshes), one day ahead of last year, but it took two weeks before any meaningful numbers were present. May and early June were full of singing males. Up to 15 birds were on the Green Wall, 22 on New Downs, eight at the Point, two on the Estate, and 37 on Worth.

Migrants began to be detected on the Estate from 18th July but the bulk of Autumn passage occurred in August. As seen last year, migrants seemed thin on the ground with only a few days with high numbers, such as 19 on the Estate on the 11th but with a more impressive 51 on the 17th. Other notable counts included 20 on Worth on the 1st, 18 on Worth on the 8th, and 31 on New Downs on the 16th. After a quiet September there were singles in October on Worth on the 3rd and on the Estate on the 11th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				31	45	35	28	51	7	1		
B/days				109	245	277	348	327	38	2		

## **Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides***

### **Vagrant**

A singing male was present on RSPB Worth Marshes at 2am on 10th May but not seen or heard by any observer! A sound recording was obtained from a passive recording device left overnight to monitor nocturnal birds. It represents the fifth record for the Recording Area.

*Erratum. A bird recorded on the Estate in September 2023 was subsequently found Not Proven by BBRC and removed from the SBBOT list.*

## **Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

### **Migrant**

Two on RSPB Worth Marshes on 6th May were the only birds of the Spring. Eight bird-days followed in autumn (the same as last year). Singles were on the Estate on 26th July, at the Point on the 30th, on the Estate on 13th and 17th August, at Backsand Scrape on the 21st, on New Downs on 1st September, and then on the Estate on the 14th and 23rd.

## **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

### **Breeding summer visitor, abundant migrant, scarce winter visitor**

One was on the Estate on 20th January. There were no further sightings until single birds on the Estate on 4th and 6th March, but it wasn't until the end of the month that activity increased. The peak time in April saw up to 15 on the Estate, 14 on the Green Wall, nine on New Downs, three at the Point, ten on RSPB Worth Marshes, and 14 in Pegwell Bay Country Park, producing almost double the bird-days than April last year.

Some low double-figure tallies on the Estate in mid-to-late August may have signalled the start of autumn migration, but 36 there on the 30th was definitely the first obvious arrival. September was similar to last year with over 1,900 bird-days recorded. There were fewer 'big' falls of birds on the Estate with 'just' 95 on the 4th, 96 on the 10th, 124 on the 14th, and 95 on the 15th. That was until a massive fall on the 25th which comprised 680 birds on the Estate, plus 26 on New Downs and 53 on Worth. Totals of 97 and 75 followed on the 28th and 29th, respectively, and then in October, 67 on the 4th was the last major influx. In December two were on the Estate on the 4th and one on the 13th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	1		7	37	26	13	9	47	759	68	5	2
B/days	1		36	418	161	108	139	236	1934	216	16	3

## **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*

### **Occasional breeder, summer visitor, and regular autumn migrant**

One on RSPB Worth Marshes on 11th April and another there on 6th May was a typical scarce Spring showing.

A total of 47 bird-days followed in Autumn, just under half that of last year. Birds began to appear on the Estate from 21st July, with three on the 29th. The majority of birds occurred in August with three on the Estate on the 7th and 11th, five on the 13th, and seven on the 17th. Very few birds were seen away from the Estate with single records from the Green Wall, New Downs, and Worth. There were five singles on the Estate in September, the last on the 25th, and a single on Worth on the 11th.

## **Lesser Whitethroat** *Curruca curruca*

### **Breeding summer visitor and migrant**

An early bird arrived on 12th April with five the next day and thereafter daily counts until mid-summer. Up to three were on the Estate, six on the Green

Wall, two on New Downs, one at the Point, eight on RSPB Worth Marshes, and three in Pegwell Bay Country Park during this time. Five were on the Estate on 24th July and 8th August. These were to be the highest counts of autumn and away from the Estate they were few and far between.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				14	9	5	5	5	4	1		
B/days				92	39	18	9	36	31	2		

There were two records of '**Eastern Lesser Whitethroat**'. A bird trapped and ringed on 4th October was identified as belonging to the far-eastern race *C.c.halimondendri*. It was later confirmed by DNA analysis. A new subspecies for Sandwich Bay and only the second for Kent. A later bird was on the Estate on 17th October but was not seen well enough to confirm its subspecies and so was not submitted to the KOS.



'Eastern Lesser Whitethroat' *C.c.halimondendri* by I.Hunter

## **Whitethroat** *Curruca communis*

### **Breeding summer visitor and migrant**

2024 saw a 34.5% decrease in bird-days compared to the previous year. One on the Estate on 5th April was bang on cue and the totals for the rest of April seemed normal. However, during May the totals were lower than expected, particularly on New Downs with a maximum of only nine birds.

Peak passage of Whitethroat occurs in August and there was a corresponding increase in peak counts and bird-days during the month, but again, these were a lot lower than normal. Both the peak count and bird-day total of August were half that of last year. The highest number was 20 on the Estate on the 13th. Sightings dwindled during September and the last two were on the Estate on the 25th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				36	37	27	21	34	11			
B/days				301	321	237	176	203	42			

## **Dartford Warbler** *Curruca undata*

### **Uncommon but regular migrant and winter visitor**

One was on Prince's Beach on 10th February.

There were 25 bird-days in the last three months of the year. In October, singles were in Pegwell Bay on the 18th, on New Downs on the 19th, on Prince's Beach on the 18th and 23rd, and on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 22nd. Two were on the Estate on 13th October and were seen intermittently until the year's end.

## **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*

### **Migrant and uncommon winter visitor**

Despite none being seen in January, up to three birds were on the Estate in February, perhaps implying early spring passage or local movements (as seen with Chiffchaff)? In March there was also one on the Green Wall and four on Worth.

The bulk of records occurred from September to November. There was an arrival of three on 12th September. After that, there were regular counts of up to three on the Estate and two on Worth. Eight were present on the Estate and three on New Downs on 17th October. This was to be the year's peak. Further records in October also came from the Green Wall and Pegwell Bay Country Park, whilst in November the majority of bird-days were from the Estate. The year's end saw two on the Estate.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak		3	4						3	11	4	2
B/days		9	9						22	49	23	5

## **Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

### **Scarce breeder, common migrant and winter visitor**

Overwintering birds numbered 24 across the Recording Area with the Estate, Green Wall, and RSPB Worth Marshes each recording peak counts of six between January and February, an increase over 2023 where few were seen outside of the Estate. Spring passage was lacking and numbers dwindled until April with none recorded throughout May and June.

A single bird was present on the Green Wall on 16th July, mirroring a similar record the year prior. Another single was recorded on New Downs on 10th August, likely due to post-breeding dispersal. True migration began with a single on the Estate on 14th September increasing to six on the 29th. However, October movements proved to be poor as arrivals didn't exceed 16 birds, 31.4% of the peak arrival in 2023. November saw a bump in movement and a maximum arrival of 29 on the 3rd was the highest recorded for the year. The Recording Area held 11 individuals at the year's end.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	7	7	8	2			1	1	6	16	29	7
B/days	59	54	38	7			1	1	19	202	230	28

## **Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes***

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

After last year's low tally there was a comforting 26.9% increase in bird-days in 2024. As usual, most of the higher counts of the year occurred in Spring when singing and other breeding activity increased detectability. Peak counts were 19 on the Estate, 26 on the Green Wall, 22 on New Downs, eight at the Point, and 20 on Worth.

There was a second peak later in the year as birds dispersed out of natal sites. October and November saw a combined total of over 500 bird-days and included multiple days with 20+ on the Green Wall, New Downs, and Worth.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	20	26	45	45	25	26	19	20	27	43	34	17
B/days	171	227	329	415	207	172	119	162	158	271	235	140

## **Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris***

### **Rare resident, migrant**

Another poor year for the species with singles on New Downs on 16th August and two records from the Green Wall on 21st August and 11th October.

## **Starling *Sturnus vulgaris***

### **Resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor**

Around 250-350 birds were seen around either the Estate or Worth in January and February, with an additional 60 roaming the northern sectors of the Recording Area. Migration began in early March with 430 on the 7th, increasing to 2,506 on the 9th, and then 4,077 on the 11th. The total of 1,010 the next day was the last four-figure count and soon it dropped below three-figures for the last week or so of the month. Counts remained low until 29th May when 240 were at the Point and 150 on Worth and the first juveniles fledged. June then saw these flocks continue to swell, noticeably 650 at the Point and 300 on Worth on the 4th, with the latter increasing to 500 on the 24th.

The subsequent three-month period saw little change with flocks of 200-300 floating around the area. Both the peak counts and bird-days rose in October as eastern migrants began to arrive. This would climax in November with 4,000 on New Downs on the 5th. Strangely, this would prove to be the only count of any note as afterwards the numbers dropped significantly into the low hundreds and stayed that way until the end of the year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	255	370	4077	82	414	982	336	340	214	643	4000	320
B/days	2017	1389	10481	575	678	4077	1753	1289	2011	5594	7238	1790

## Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

### Migrant

In April there were singles on the Estate on the 8th and 24th and at the Point on the 17th.

A male at the Point on 23rd October was the first of the Autumn. Four in November included singles on Worth on the 6th, 11th, and 14th, and the Estate on the 13th.

## Blackbird *Turdus merula*

### Resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor

Most counts from the Estate, Green Wall, New Downs, and Worth in January were of under 20 birds, with a few exceptions. There were 43 on the Estate on the 12th and on the Green Wall there were 64 on the 16th and 41 on the 19th. The number of bird-days halved going into February and stayed that way for the Spring with no discernible sign of migration.

The Summer and post-summer period saw low numbers recorded. Bird-days shot up again in October. Counts from the Estate indicated small arrivals (<10) from mid-month and 20 each on the Estate, Green Wall, and Worth on the final few days. November was the busiest month in the latter half of the year. Having said that, there were no significant falls with only 32 on the Estate on the 2nd and 26 on the 6th, 31 and 25 on the Green Wall on the 22nd and 28th, respectively, and 32 on Worth on the 18th. There was a late arrival of 45 on the Estate on 4th December, and after a wintering population settled around 75 individuals.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	79	38	40	34	20	30	12	10	12	44	60	63
B/days	670	355	302	319	204	176	119	83	80	229	614	405

## Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

### Migrant and winter visitor

There was no sign of the roaming four-figure flocks as seen in the last few years. A wintering flock of around 200-220 birds was on RSPB Worth Marshes. In February there were a few other notable counts of 76 on the Estate on the 2nd, 39 on New Downs on the 28th, and 84 on the Green Wall on the 29th. There were also 49 and 52 on the Green Wall on 5th and 11th March, respectively, but afterwards birds disappeared on the 13th.

A single was on the Green Wall on 29th October and two were on the Estate the next day. There was a sudden arrival of 119 on the Estate on 2nd November, but most other sightings came from Worth where 24 on the 3rd increased to 52 on the 4th, 60 on the 5th, and 103 on the 9th, and later stabilising around 30-60 birds during the rest of the month. With the exception of 225 on 11th December, it would remain this way to the year's end.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	200	228	73							2	119	225
B/days	344	1136	220							3	902	439

## Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

### Rare breeder, migrant and winter visitor

There were 36 around the Recording Area in January mainly around the Green Wall and RSPB Worth Marshes. Numbers increased in March with a peak count of 247 on the 11th when 150 flew over the Green Wall. The last Spring records were two birds on the Estate on 3rd April.

A pair sound recorded overnight on the Estate on 2nd October were the first Autumn birds. Nearly two thirds of bird-days for the month came from the 14th and 15th with a peak of 504 birds recorded. Movements continued to pick up into November with triple-figures recorded on six days including a count of 267 on Worth on the 6th. A grounded flock of 37 on Worth on 4th December was the last count of note. Despite a more pronounced passage than the previous year, the rest of December's counts were disappointing and less than ten birds were in the area at the years end.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	16	22	247	2						504	292	41
B/days	110	92	668	3						934	1650	94

## Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

### Resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor

Around 30 birds wintered in the Recording Area. There was a light passage of thrushes through the area in mid-March. Up to 13 were on the Estate at this time. It was all over quite quickly though and from April onwards only the breeding birds seemed to remain.

As usual, birds were extremely quiet and hard to come by in the post-breeding and moult period. The bird-day totals increased again in September. It's possible that the 11 on Worth on the 21st and ten on the Estate on the 25th were the first arrivals of Autumn migration. The subsequent two months saw the highest bird-days of the year and a total of 782 combined. This was three times higher than over the same period last year. It was particularly affected by the big increase in birds recorded overnight, with sound-recording at the Observatory responsible for at least 44 birds overnight on 2nd October, 96 on the 3rd, 52 on the 11th, and 74 on the 14th. November saw grounded totals of up to 22 on the Estate (2nd) and 61 on Worth (10th), with far smaller totals elsewhere in the Recording Area. The end of the year finished with around 40 birds present, with a large proportion on Worth.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	12	10	19	7	5	4	2	3	15	96	69	25
B/days	131	90	83	69	31	32	20	17	39	482	300	100

## Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

A strangely quiet year with half the number of bird-days as 2023. The year began with up to three on the Green Wall, two on New Downs, three on RSPB Worth Marshes, and one on the Estate. There didn't seem to be any Spring movement through the area, though up four were on both the Green Wall and Worth in May.

There were no sightings at all in June and only the odd single from July to September. Bird-days increased a little from October but were low. Nine on Worth on 4th December was very much the outlier of the year.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	5	4	5	4	2		1	1	1	2	3	9
B/days	36	20	27	21	7		2	1	3	10	11	18

## Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

### Migrant

In May there were singles on New Downs on the 22nd, in Pegwell Bay Country Park on the 24th, and on the Estate on the 29th.

The first of Autumn was on New Downs on 30th July. Only 15 further birds followed, five times less than the tally recorded last year. August saw five birds, two on the Estate on the 18th, and September saw ten. There were five days of one-two on the Estate (often sound-recorded at night), singles on Worth on the 10th and New Downs on the 25th, and two were in Pegwell on the 13th.

## Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

### Resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor

There were usually fewer than 20 on the Estate in the first two months of the year, so a count of 40 on 19th January was strange. There were also up to 26 on the Green Wall, 16 on New Downs, and nine on Worth. Bird-days dipped thereafter, suggesting the breeding or passage population was less than the wintering population, and then dropped further as Summer progressed and the breeding birds became more secretive.

Bird-days on the Estate rose from single (or low double-figures) at the beginning of August to 20-30 birds at the end as Autumn commenced. September saw 58 on the Estate on the 4th, 42 on the 20th and 25th, and on Worth it rose to 34 on the 21st. The peak of activity occurred in October with almost 1,000 bird-days recorded. The Estate saw nine counts over 30 and notable arrivals of 62 on the 16th and 79 on the 17th. Elsewhere there were 37 on New Downs on the 12th, 28 on Worth on the 17th, and 47 on the Green Wall on the 30th. The last fall of note was 40 on the Estate on 15th November. The final month saw approximately 55 birds in the Recording Area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	59	45	32	35	12	19	12	31	73	118	58	50
B/days	432	416	298	327	137	96	79	223	483	973	484	229

## **Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

### **Uncommon migrant and occasional breeder**

In April there were two birds on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 8th followed by a single on New Downs on the 10th. The only May records came from Pegwell Bay with two on the 24th. There were three autumn records, one on RSPB Worth Marshes on 26th July, another single at Backsand Scrape on 3rd August, and the last bird ringed on the Estate on the 4th.

## **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*

### **Vagrant**

A first-calendar individual was trapped and ringed on the Estate on 27th September. This was the first record in the area since October 2012.



Red-breasted Flycatcher by R.Johnson

## **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

### **Migrant**

In a carbon-copy of last year, there were no spring records (for the third year in a row) and only 19 bird-days in Autumn. Six of these were on 12th August with three on the Estate, two on New Downs, and one on Worth. Four were on the Estate on the 18th and singles on the 29th and 30th. In September birds were sound-recorded migrating at night over the Estate on the 3rd and 21st, and singles were on Worth on the 9th and 10th, and on New Downs on the 12th.

## **Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros***

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

2024 was the first year since 1966 without any spring records. There were only five bird-days and all were in October. One was on Worth on the 15th and two were on the Estate on the 29th and 30th.

## **Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus***

### **Migrant**

In May a male was on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 3rd and in Pegwell Bay Country Park on the 7th. These were to be the only birds of the spring.

It was another poor autumn showing with only 13 bird-days recorded. One was on the Estate on 24th July. One-two were on the Estate on four dates from 2nd to 8th August, another on the 18th, and then in September there were singles on the Estate on the 6th and 9th, and two on the 17th, with singles also on New Downs on the 6th and one on Worth on the 16th.

## **Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra***

### **Migrant**

The only spring record was of two males on RSPB Worth Marshes on 1st May. It was a disappointing autumn with a total of 179 bird-days starting with a single on Worth on 21st July and another on the Estate on 18th August. The month ended with nine on the Estate. September held the majority of records with 12 on Worth the first double-figure counts of the year. The peak count of 24 on the 21st included 11 on Worth, seven on New Downs, and six on the Estate. Singles hung on around on Worth, the Estate, and New Downs into October with the last from Worth on the 23rd.

## **Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola***

### **Rare resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor**

Approximately 27 birds wintered in the area, with most either on RSPB Worth Marshes or along Prince's Beach. This was quite a high tally and as such it was difficult to assess when Spring migrants appeared. Traditionally, the first birds move through in February, and the 13 on Worth on the 10th were most likely at least part-migrants. After March only the breeding birds remained. Pairs bred at Dickson's Corner and on Prince's Golf Course.

Despite this, there were no records at all in July. Sightings of up to six came from the Estate and New Downs in August. September saw an increase with 12 on Worth on the 22nd and 11 on the Estate on the 23rd. The following month was the busiest of the year with twice the number of bird-days compared to any other month. The bulk of these came from RSPB Worth Marshes where there were ten double-figure counts including 20 on the 3rd, 23 on the 4th, 28 on the 7th, and 23 on the 17th. Numbers there were a little less in November but still regularly reaching into double-figures. The final month saw around 17 birds set to winter.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	12	13	7	2	2	3		10	12	33	19	9
B/days	120	73	28	8	5	8		46	71	308	152	50

## **Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe***

### **Occasional breeding summer visitor and migrant**

Three appeared on 18th March and one was present on the 21st. Passage in April was about average. Most records came from the Estate with 11 days of one-six recorded, with peaks of 17 on the 19th and 11 on the 20th. There were a handful of records of one-two on RSPB Worth Marshes, one on the Green Wall on the 15th, and four at the Point on the 14th. Two on the Estate on the 29th were surprisingly the last records of spring, with no May records at all.

Birds began filtering back through from 26th July. Five were on Worth on 6th August and seven were on the Estate on the 20th and 22nd. September saw some good passage with almost daily records from the Estate peaking at 11 on the 6th, ten on the 9th and 11th, and 12 on the 25th. At least 13 were at the Point on the 11th and five were on New Downs on the 15th. Most birds had disappeared by early October so it was some surprise when one popped up on the Estate on 3rd November and then stayed until the 22nd.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak			3	17			1	7	25	4	1	
B/days			4	70			2	64	136	6	3	

## **House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

The first few months saw counts up to 22 on the Estate, 28 on the Green Wall, nine on New Downs, one at the Point, and 23 on Worth. This changed little as Spring progressed, though there were fewer counts of larger flocks in Summer. Breeding productivity around the Observatory was not good at all.

After this there seemed to be an exodus of birds from the Estate. As such, the bird-days at this time plummeted, whereas usually they would be high with post-breeding flocks full of fledged young. Away from the Estate the drop was not as dramatic, but still lower numbers than expected. The flock on Worth numbered at least 40 birds and grew to 70 on 22nd September. After that, bird-days were extremely low and the end of the year saw around only 55 birds present across the entire Recording Area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	46	41	48	35	24	32	57	40	70	32	11	38
B/days	342	300	416	374	185	137	445	113	132	69	46	191

## **Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus***

### **Increasingly scarce migrant and winter visitor**

Up to 16 birds continued from last year and wintered on the Estate in the asparagus fields. The flock was down to nine in February and was last seen on 4th March.

One flew south over the Estate on 4th September. In October two were on the Estate on the 11th, one on the 13th, and three flew west on the 18th. Five were on the Estate on 2nd December.

## Duncock *Prunella modularis*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

The early Winter period had very little to talk about but as this secretive bird became more active during the breeding season, the resulting bird-day totals of February, March, and April increased. Counts suggested around 15 singing males on the Estate, 15 on the Green Wall, 11 on New Downs, nine at the Point, and nine on Worth. There was no sign of any migration.

The peak counts and bird-day totals began to increase again in September. Again, there were no clear sings of migration, but it seems likely that birds were moving through the area until early November. There were no particularly high counts but up to 14 on the Estate, where the majority of bird-days were recorded. December was quieter, as expected, with around 30-35 birds in the Recording Area.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	13	24	30	29	7	14	14	9	26	29	18	14
B/days	104	177	187	192	85	74	113	71	110	201	134	118

## Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

### Rare breeding summer visitor and common migrant

One on the Estate on 5th April was the exact day as last year's first sighting. A further 79 bird-days during the month was a decent showing and included at least 14 present on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 18th. Later, a pair in suitable habitat in the fields between the Estate and RSPB Worth Marshes indicated possible breeding, though not confirmed.

A few birds began passing through the area at the end of July. In August, nine were on the Estate on the 15th and six flew north on both the 29th and 30th, but the bigger numbers were mostly from RSPB Worth Marshes where 24 were recorded on the 13th, 18 on the 14th, and 37 on the 26th. September was a little lower but still saw consistent numbers on Worth with 11 on the 21st and 18 on the 27th. The last two birds of the year were on New Downs on 8th October.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak				14	6	1	3	37	18	3		
B/days				80	31	1	9	127	96	9		

There was one record of **Blue-headed Wagtail** *M.f.flava.*, a single bird on RSPB Worth Marshes on 19th April.

## Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

### Migrant and winter visitor

In January and February there were sporadic sightings of one on the Estate, two on the Green Wall, three on New Downs, and two on RSPB Worth Marshes. A roost of at least eight birds was found using thermal imaging on the Green Wall on 28th January. It was unclear when records went from wintering birds to passage birds, but after four singles in April a bird flew north on 13th May and one was on the Estate on the 23rd.

One was on New Downs on 17th July. Two flew north over the Estate on 29th August signalling the start of Autumn. A further 60 'visibly-migrating' birds were logged moving over the Estate in September, this included 12 north on the 4th and an impressive 31 north on the 10th. Birds continued to move through in October but at a lower level. Two north on 15th November were probably the last migrants before Winter took over. December was very quiet with only four sightings of a single on Worth and the Estate.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	8	3	3	1	1		1	2	31	5	4	1
B/days	26	14	13	4	2		1	2	74	33	26	4

## **Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba***

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

Wintering birds around the Recording Area numbered 86 at the start of the year, the bulk of records coming from New Downs with a peak count of 48 in January. Numbers fell slightly in February with birds moving to Worth where a peak of 39 was seen on the 10th. Small flocks would continue through the rest of March with New Downs and Worth holding low double-figures and five or six on both the Estate and Green Wall. Spring passage was very light with just a pair north on 5th April. Birds in Summer were more numerous compared to the previous year, starting with ten across the Recording Area in May.

Six north on 4th September signalled the start of Autumn passage, followed by 22 north on the 24th. Low numbers passed though until into October, with a notable grounded count of 82 on the Estate on the 11th. There were no signs of movement after the 31st though counts remained high in November with double-figures recorded on Worth and the Estate and a peak of 86 on New Downs on the 30th. Numbers fell slightly in December with New Downs recording 50 on the 15th, 16 persisting on Worth, and ones-twos on the Estate and Green Wall.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	49	44	22	6	6	11	21	16	32	86	86	50
B/days	268	234	152	60	22	51	216	70	141	501	356	183

**White Wagtail *M.a.alba*** sightings were around 60% lower than the previous year with a total of 34 bird-days. A single on Worth on 3rd February was an early record followed by a more standard arrival on the 25th, with another single on the Green Wall. The bulk of March records came from the Green Wall with nine on the 3rd being the peak count for the year, and further singles seen on the Estate and Worth. Remaining records would be of ones and twos with most April records coming from Worth until the 21st. The last record was a single bird on Worth on 9th May.

## Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

Overwintering flocks comprised at least 15 on the Estate, seven on the Green Wall, 45 on New Downs, 30 at the Point, and 41 on Worth. Spring passage was exceedingly poor with just 12 north on 11th March, eight north on the 16th, and two north on 5th April. It was thought that around 16-17 pairs bred in the Recording Area.

Post-breeding totals were very low with only 26 bird-days in the whole of August. Small groups of up to 25 were on the Estate early in September and were probably the first signs of Autumn. Visible migration began quite suddenly with 287 north on the 10th, with other decent totals of 210 on the 22nd, 494 on the 24th, and 123 on the 28th (though none into four-figures this year). There was also a count of 149 grounded on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 21st. October was quieter than expected but 105 were on the Estate on the 11th and there were still small numbers of birds moving overhead until the 29th. The final totals at the end of the year stabilised around 85 birds, most of which were on RSPB Worth Marshes.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	50	51	34	21	9	16	8	6	494	115	63	58
B/days	361	312	252	123	58	83	50	26	1844	715	438	250



Meadow Pipit by J.Buckingham

## Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

### Migrant

There were six bird-days in Spring. In April singles flew over RSPB Worth Marshes on the 6th and 13th, the Estate on the 19th, and Pegwell on the 26th. Another was over Pegwell on 1st May and the last was on Worth on 19th May.

The total of 97 bird-days in Autumn was the highest for 40 years. Records began on 12th August, mostly from analysing nocturnal sound-recordings at the Observatory, but sightings of one-four were then seen daily on the Estate from early September. A rainstorm on the 6th saw a flock of 23 birds grounded on New Downs, with eight present on Worth the next day, and similar conditions on the 8th saw 13 birds fly south and a further nine grounded on the Estate. The last bird of the year, and the only bird in October, flew south on the 17th.

## Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

### Migrant and winter visitor

The 51 bird-days recorded in the first four months was only a third of last year's tally. This was primarily due to fewer birds wintering on RSPB Worth Marshes. Still, at least four were present on the site in January and February. One was on the Green Wall on 10th February. The last wintering bird left by 23rd March, with a lone bird on Worth on 15th and 16th April thought to be a Spring migrant.

One on RSPB Worth Marshes on 2nd October was an early arrival. The second Winter period was again quieter than usual. One on the Green Wall on 28th November was the only record away from RSPB Worth Marshes. Two were present in late October and through November, increasing to five in December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	4	4	3	1						2	2	5
B/days	22	17	10	2						7	15	13

## Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

### Resident breeder nearby, migrant and winter visitor

January and February saw up to four wintering on New Downs and ten in the saltmarsh at Pegwell Bay. Spring passage was very light with two on the Estate on 4th March and one on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 6th.

One was in Pegwell on 16th August and three were on the Estate on 28th September. There was then an increase in October and November. Ten birds (including five on 2nd) were seen migrating north along the shore in October, with up to two on the Estate, a single on Worth on two dates, and up to three at the Point and in Pegwell Bay. Six were on New Downs on 1st November.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	10	6	5					1	3	6	7	4
B/days	45	16	9					1	3	24	14	6

## **Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

### **Resident breeder, common migrant and winter visitor**

The numbers of birds overwintering were reasonable with up to 42 on the Estate, 17 on the Green Wall, 51 on New Downs, four at the Point, and 14 on RSPB Worth Marshes. In contrast, Spring passage was one of the poorest in years. Only 94 'visibly-migrating' birds were logged in March over five dates, with 52 south on the 11th the highest. Thereafter only the residents remained and probably 18-20 pairs bred in the Recording Area over the Summer.

It was all quiet until ten flew north on 24th September. There were then five double-figure counts (up to 75) of migrating birds in October before a sudden movement of 2,909 north on the 30th. This latter count was the biggest autumn movement since 3,500 on 25th October 2017. A few final flocks pushed through in November with the last 91 north on the 15th.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	62	37	108	30	13	19	7	11	13	3019	132	36
B/days	463	308	428	282	127	96	42	74	101	3521	698	282

## **Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

There were no spring sightings. The 59 bird-days in autumn was a slight improvement on last year but still very low. All activity was concentrated between 22nd September and 15th November, the bulk of which was in October with four north on the 4th and 16 north on the 30th the only counts of more than one or two.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak									2	16	6	
B/days									3	36	20	

## **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

### **Irregular migrant**

A decent autumn, as seen across many parts of the UK. In October one was in Stonelees on the 26th and two flew over the Estate on the 31st. Four birds in November comprised two north over RSPB Worth Marshes on the 6th, one on the Estate on the 8th, and another over Worth on the 13th.

## **Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

Hard to come by at the start of the year with just the odd sighting from the Worth area. There was a gradual increase in records in March, including from the Estate. A male was then seen collecting nest-lining in the Cellars on 11th June, confirming a rare breeding attempt on the Estate. A subsequent run of records on the Estate in July and August suggested successful fledging of a number of young.

There was a slightly quieter period in late Summer and early Autumn before October saw an increase. This included up to five on Worth. Singles continued to be seen on the Estate until at least 17th December, with one-two also seen on the Green Wall and New Downs, and up to four on Worth.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	2	3	4	3	4	2	4	2	2	6	4	5
B/days	5	11	19	14	18	8	11	13	4	25	23	12

## Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

### Resident breeder, decreasing migrant and winter visitor

Six birds at Pegwell Bay on the 24th and a single on the Green Wall on the 19th were the only notable January records. Records remained sporadic for the next three months with the odd single reported across the Recording Area. Spring records remained sparse with most coming from a single lingering bird at Pegwell until 21st May.

Sightings were mostly limited to RSPB Worth Marshes from June where a flock of five were seen occasionally until 12th August. There was a slight increase in bird days in October when Worth and the Estate held three birds, however, only the former remained by the year's end.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	6	2	3	2	1	5	5	5	3	4	3	2
B/days	8	2	11	14	4	7	8	10	8	22	8	3

## Twite *Linaria flavirostris*

### Rare winter visitor

The two wintering birds in Pegwell Bay in late 2023 remained into the New Year. They were seen on nine dates in January with the last on the 27th.

Twite by S.Reynaert (below)



## **Linnet** *Linaria cannabina*

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

The bulk of the wintering population was either on the Estate or at the Point, with at least 50 at both, and only small numbers elsewhere. The Estate population reached at least 80 birds in mid-February. Spring passage was very light with only 11 south on 3rd March, 29 north on 16th March, 23 north on 22nd March, 26 north on 16th April, and 13 north on 17th April noted. A flock of 81 on Worth on 18th April likely included migrants too. Around 60-70 birds remained in the Recording Area over the Summer.

A few post-breeding flocks in August peaked at 31 on Worth on the 9th, 61 on the Estate on the 15th, and 70 on New Downs on the 25th. September saw similar numbers and the beginning of Autumn passage at the end of the month. However, from 25th September to 31st October just 59 'visibly-migrating' birds were logged on passage. October saw the highest number of bird-days of the year. Peak counts included 76 grounded on Worth on the 7th, 129 on the Estate on the 9th, 87 on New Downs on the 12th, and 56 at the Point on the 23rd. There was a significant drop in November and these low numbers continued into December, with 105 birds on the 15th comprising 40+ at both the Point and in Pegwell Bay.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	70	81	36	81	33	30	74	70	78	197	60	105
B/days	416	404	255	575	223	197	375	649	534	922	236	192

## **Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis cabaret*

### **Migrant and uncommon winter visitor**

There were no Winter sightings and the only Spring record was one on RSPB Worth Marshes on 12th April.

Two on 17th October were the first of the Autumn. Passage was much reduced, as seen with other irruptive finch species, and there were only 134 bird-days in October and 266 in November. There were 13 double-figure day counts (none reaching triple-figures) with peaks of 61 on 30th October and 90 on 4th November. The last seven birds were on the Estate on 30th November.

## **Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

### **Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor**

At the start of the year there was a good-sized flock on the Estate numbering at least 76 birds, with also up to 32 on the Green Wall, 16 on New Downs, and 24 on Worth. These disappeared as spring drew closer. Passage seemed almost non-existent, despite the increase in bird-days, with 14 north on 17th April the only flock noted. Around 30 birds were present in summer.

A few August post-breeding flocks comprised 39 on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 9th and 35 on the Estate on the 19th. Higher numbers occurred in September with 115 on Worth on the 2nd and three counts in the region of 50-60. Migration kicked off at the end of the month with 197 north on the 28th. October saw mostly small movements punctuated by particular days of

activity, such as 112 south on the 17th, 136 north on the 18th, 596 north on the 30th, and then in November, 338 north on the 5th and 198 north on the 15th. Away from Estate there were 130 and 215 on Worth on the 6th and 7th, respectively. The last few birds were moving on the 20th, leaving about 70 birds present in December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	81	49	44	42	17	14	28	39	230	660	361	51
B/days	438	314	354	416	130	119	377	257	657	1895	1469	213

## **Serin** *Serinus serinus*

### **Scarce migrant**

An elusive bird seen on the Estate at the end of 2023 was presumably responsible for the year's sole record on 2nd January.

## **Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

Winter sightings were scarce with one-two on eight dates, and five on 16th February. A total of 269 bird-days followed in March to May. Notable counts included 18 on the Green Wall on 3rd March, 48 south over Worth on 27th March, 11 south over the Estate on 1st April, 19 on New Downs on 2nd April, 11 on Worth and 12 on the Green Wall on 6th April, 32 on Worth on 16th April, and 12 on Worth on 17th April. The last three were on 2nd May.

The autumn period (Sep-Nov) produced 520 bird-days, a quarter of the previous year's total. A total of 27 flew north over the Estate on 28th September signalling the start of passage. In October 27 flew north on the 22nd, 30 south on the 29th, and 21 north on the 31st. November was the busiest month of the year and saw 24 on Worth on the 1st, 67 north on the 5th, 102 on the Estate on the 8th, and 18 on Worth on the 13th. Just the ten birds followed in December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	2	5	48	34	3				27	46	104	7
B/days	6	14	113	153	3				30	171	319	10

## **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus*

### **Uncommon migrant and winter visitor**

Another very poor year. The only record came from RSPB Worth Marshes with two on 11th November.

## **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

### **Migrant and winter visitor**

There were no sightings in the first six months for the first time in SBBOT history. One was at the Point on 18th October. One flew north offshore on 12th November and five flew north along Prince's Beach on the 21st. In December a lingering flock of up to seven birds were seen in the Pegwell Bay/Shellness Point area on five dates between the 14th and 22nd. This included an unusual juvenile plumaged individual (see photo overleaf).



Snow Bunting by L.Sole

## Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

### Resident breeder, irregular migrant, and winter visitor

In January 11 were on New Downs on the 10th, five were on Worth on the 16th, and a single was on the Estate on a few dates. Most of the records continued to come from New Downs with a maximum of 20 on 11th March. This flock splintered off as Spring progressed. Surveying of the local golf courses revealed at least six territorial males on Royal St George's Golf Course and five on Prince's Golf Course, plus a few extra between Restharrow Scrape and the Chequers.

Sightings were far more infrequent in the second half of the year. Eight were on the Estate on 8th September but there were no further counts of note until eight on New Downs on 20th December.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	11	7	20	9	11	4	2	2	8	2	3	8
B/days	38	13	55	25	24	18	6	2	12	2	7	8

## Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

Following the same trend as in previous years, most records came from the first four months and largely dried up by Summer with small numbers returning later in the year. In January, three birds, first seen on Worth, moved to the Estate and increased in numbers with 12 seen on the 28th. This build-up increased into February reaching a peak of 16 birds on the 17th which remained on the Estate until 14th March, when three birds were back on Worth. This small flock moved back onto the Estate in April for a handful of days before moving off by May. No pairs were thought to have bred.

An unseasonal bird was on New Downs on 17th June. Following ones and twos on the Estate and Worth in July and August, the first winter arrival was a single on Worth on 23rd October and three more on 'vismig' at the month's end. November records were scatted with a single on the Estate on two dates, a single on Worth, and four on New Downs on the 1st. The year ended with four on Worth.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	12	16	3	4		1	2	2		4	4	4
B/days	25	64	4	10		1	2	4		7	7	5

## Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

### Scarce migrant

One was sound-recorded calling over Stonar at night on 18th August.

## Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

### Resident breeder, migrant and winter visitor

January and February saw small numbers of usually four-eight in all subsites in the Recording Area, with exceptions of 20 on the Estate on 16th January and 20 on New Downs on 27th January. March saw breeding activity begin and during the Spring up to 18 birds were recorded on RSPB Worth Marshes, where the bulk of the local population lay.

There was a small increase on the Estate at the end of August suggesting the start of Autumn migration. Visible migration seemed quite poor with fewer than 50 birds recorded, though this did include 16 north on 24th September. There were some higher grounded counts, though, including 31 on Worth on 21st September and 42 on the Estate on 11th October. There were no large counts at the end of the year with a wintering population apparently less than 20.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Peak	27	17	28	13	12	13	12	7	39	47	25	9
B/days	147	132	153	125	75	93	113	43	164	269	152	41

## Hybrids

### Canada Goose x Greylag Goose *Branta canadensis* x *Anser anser*

One was on RSPB Worth marshes on 13th March, 10th April, and 8th and 10th May.

## Escapes and Feral Species

### Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

#### Australia

Two were on Worth on 2nd January.

### Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

#### Eastern Europe and Asia

Two flew north on 2nd August.

### Yellow-billed Teal *Anser flavirostris*

#### South America

One on Restharrow Scrape on 8th and 15th January.

## **Alexandrine Parakeet** *Pssitacula eupatria*

### **India**

Eight bird-days from 28th January to 29th March predominantly from RSPB Worth Marshes.

## **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug*

### **Central Europe and Asia**

A presumed escaped falconer's bird was on RSPB Worth Marshes on 6th and 7th July and later on New Downs on the 23rd.

In addition, there were a number of birds reported for which no description was received:

- Black Brant in Pegwell Bay on 11th March
- Black Kite on RSPB Worth marshes on 19th April
- Pallid Harrier in Pegwell Bay on 22nd October

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Marsh Harrier by S.Ray

# Brown Booby – a new bird for the Recording Area

At 1030 on 8th September 2024, I started sea-watching from the top of the beach at the Sandwich Bay Estate, Kent. The tide was still fairly low, high tide not being until 1500, but the freshening southerly wind and approaching rain made me optimistic that a bit of movement might develop.

Initially, it was rather quiet and conditions were rather hazy and when, at 1130, I reached the end of my first hour I had had little of note apart from a group of three Black Terns with Sandwich and Commons feeding some way out. These had dispersed on the rising tide. With the wind continuing to increase I decided to continue.

At 1145 I was watching southeast towards a passing belt of rain hoping for some seabird movement ahead of it. A single 2cy/3cy Gannet flew north at some distance and, soon after, I picked up a nearer Gannet-type bird approximately 1-1.5 km distant and coasting north. My immediate impression was that it was uniformly dark above and with similarly dark head and breast with the rest of the underparts white. Brown Booby started banging in my head but I told myself not to be stupid. However, it really did look like a Brown Booby! I kept my eye on it and the bird continued passing north, at its closest about 1 km out. At this point any doubt of its identity as a Brown Booby had now long left me and I fumblingly texted people to put the message out and, as I don't do other social media, requested they put it out to other local groups in the hope that it might be picked up. Unfortunately, on having sent the message I was unable to relocate the bird which I'd last seen heading in towards Pegwell Bay.

## Flight action and jizz

The bird's build was similar to Gannet but it appeared distinctly smaller, lighter in build, proportionately shorter-winged, and with a more buoyant flight action, continuous shallow wing beats estimated at 3-4 per second: a similar rate to passing Herring Gulls at that time. I didn't see the bird bank or glide at any time, just steadily continue north with shallow wing beats.

## Plumage

The whole of its upperparts appeared uniformly chocolate brown, with no white in the upper tail coverts or upper wing coverts, the brown including the entire head, neck, and upper breast. The white of the lower breast and underparts were clean white with a sharp division at the boundary between the upper and lower breast.

As the bird was side-on with steady shallow wingbeats, I never obtained a decent view of the underwing but the white of the underparts continued over the axillaries and on to the underwing coverts, the extent not being visible.

#### Bare parts

The bird's bill was typical Gannet-bill shape and pale-ish but it was too distant to get good bill detail and I concentrated on confirming plumage features while it was in view.

#### Light conditions

When first picked up the bird was slightly 'greyed-out' by light rain but as it moved through it left the rain and passed through clearer air with better light, though not full sunlight. The sun, though obscured, was virtually due south and I was looking from south-east to north as it passed.

#### Optics:

Viewed through Swarovski ATX 25-60 85mm.

**By Martin Sutherland**

# Ringling Report

In 2024 5,035 birds of 56 species were ringed (2023 - 4,815 birds of 60 species). 283 of these were nestlings (2022 - 230). There were also 1,230 records of birds re-trapped, controlled from elsewhere, or sighted during the year (2022 - 1,262).

No species were new, but a Lesser Whitethroat on 4th October was confirmed by DNA analysis to be of the race *halimodendri* and was a first for us and a second for Kent. There were also two *tristis* race Chiffchaffs and three Yellow-browed Warblers. A Woodcock on 3rd November was the first since 2009 and a Red-breasted Flycatcher on 17th September was the first for twelve years.

Blackcap continued to be the most numerous with 1,244 individuals (1,354 in 2023) and it was closely followed by Chiffchaff with 1,233 (970 in 2023), with, surprisingly, Willow Warbler with 236 ringed coming in third place. Increases included Goldfinch (136, up from 43), Sand Martin (212, up from four), Moorhen (ten, up from four), Robin (161, up from 97), and Sedge Warbler (95, up from 35). Noticeable decreases included Redpoll (226, down from 501), plus the other three common *Sylvia* warblers; Whitethroat reduced from 101 to 60, Lesser Whitethroat from 32 to 22, and Garden Warbler from 56 to 34. Once again there were no chats, wagtails, or pipits.

There was an interesting variety of movements. The importance of the south-east for departing Blackcaps is shown by the spread across the UK of places of origin. However, one ringed by us on 27th September 2023 which was recorded at Revtangen in Rogaland, Norway (872 km NNE) was only the 18th BTO ringed Blackcap recorded in Norway.

Some species winter in differing areas each year depending on climatic conditions. This was demonstrated by a Redwing, ringed here on 11th October 2022 but found dead at Ballycrogue, Eire on 26th February 2024.

The report on controls and recoveries includes movements involving the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Spain, and Eire. An advantage of the BTO online reporting system is that we can now see the full history of birds we have recorded including subsequent records from elsewhere.

Colour ringing is an interesting source of subsequent records and any observer can contribute as the bird does not need to be caught again. We are participating in a national project using colour rings to study Blackbird survival rates. We ring birds caught outside the main migration times with individually numbered colour rings. A bird ringed here on 14th January 2024 was re-trapped at Landguard Bird Observatory on 16th November 2024, probably as it came back into the country to spend another winter.

Other colour ring sightings included a Curlew, read at the Point on 25th August, which had been ringed as a chick in the Netherlands on 28th June 2018. Also from the Netherlands was an Oystercatcher, ringed as a chick on 22nd May 2023, and seen at the Point on 11th July 2024.

As usual, gulls contributed to the colour ringed records and included a Black-headed Gull ringed on 3rd December 2016 and seen on New Downs on 19th September 2024. Another Black-headed Gull which we recorded on 17th May 2022 was sighted on Kvaløya, a Norwegian Island near Tromsø in the Arctic Circle, on 19th May 2024, presumably breeding there, which is interesting, as it was originally ringed in the nest at Pagham Harbour, in Sussex. A Black-headed Gull ringed by SBBOT on 30th January 2012 at Hampton, Herne Bay, continues to be recorded in that area with the latest record being photographed on 16th December 2024, almost 13 years after ringing. There were two German ringed Mediterranean Gulls from the same site near Leipzig which were read on Restharrow Scrape, one of which was back in Germany only one week after our sighting of it.



Darvic-ringed Mediterranean Gull by S.Reynaert

The Curlew mentioned above has returned to the Netherlands most years and wintered in East Kent, although in 2020 and 2023 it was not sighted/reported in either country. Another Curlew, ringed in Norfolk on 12th August 2014, was recorded at the Point in 2017 but every other year barring 2021 has moved between Norfolk in winter and Lapland in the far north of Sweden to breed. There is a very old record in the report of a movement of a Sand Martin in 1968, from Trenley Park Woods near Canterbury to Worksop, Nottinghamshire, which does not appear to have been published before. Another record from previous years is a little more interesting. The ring of a Blackbird ringed by us on 15th November 2016 was read in the field in Latvia in March 2017 - only the 10th record of a British-ringed Blackbird to that country. The Redpoll to Norway was only the 19th BTO ringed bird of this now lumped species to be recorded there.

We continue to participate in national projects such as Retrapping Adults for Survival, where we colour ring House Sparrows, and the RADAR project which is a study into the movement of viruses carried by certain species such as Blackbird, Blackcap, and Chiffchaff. A big project this year was the replacement of the old wooden boardwalk across the Haven, using planks made from recycled plastic. We also continue to replace wooden nest boxes with woodpecker resistant 'Woodstone' boxes provided at a favourable rate by CJ Wildlife.

We provided demonstrations of ringing to visiting groups including from the RSPB, U3A, and Age Concern. We led sessions for the University of Kent field course again this year and this continues to provide one or two potential ringing trainees each year.

We are grateful for the continued support from adjacent landowners, Royal St. Georges Golf Club and the Daw family, who allow us to continue our studies on their land.

The Motus aerials had fewer detections this year but still provided two interesting bird detections and a group of five bat detections. A Wheatear was tagged on Helgoland on 29th August and then detected on the Dutch coast on 31st August. Our aerials detected it on 4th and 5th September. A Song Thrush tagged in southern Denmark on 17th September remained in that area until 9th October when it headed south, crossing Germany and then arriving on the coast of Holland on 15th October, where it was detected until the 17th. It was next detected on the Belgian coast on 2nd November when it crossed the North Sea and was detected here the same day before moving on past Dungeness. All the bat records were of Nathusius' Pipistrelles. One was tagged at Bedfont Lakes, Greater London and the others in the Minsmere area in late April and May. They passed here in early to mid-May and two were then detected at Dungeness.

It is not possible to summarise the year's ringing without mentioning the effect that the increasingly variable weather is having. The number of windy days when ringing was restricted or not possible continues to increase.

We should like to acknowledge data gleaned from the British Trust for Ornithology's Annual Ringing Reports and website and from the Euring website, which have been used to compile much of this report.

**By Keith Ellis and Ian Hunter**



Wood Warbler by G.Lee

# Selected Recoveries and Controls

## White Stork

1721043	3F	09/08/2022	Knepp Castle Estate, West Grinstead, (West Sussex)
	RR	15/08/2022	New Downs Farm, Sandwich Bay (Kent) 125km ENE 6 days
	RR	25/03/2024	Knepp Castle Estate, West Grinstead, (West Sussex) 1 yr 229 days

## Sparrowhawk

EZ68953	1F	04/07/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	XF	16/08/2024	Margate (Kent) 13km N 43 days

## Moorhen

FH39190	5M	26/03/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	XF	03/04/2024	New Downs Farm, Sandwich Bay (Kent) 2km W 8 days

## Oystercatcher

5620950	1	22/05/2023	Berkel en Rodenrijs, Delft, (Zuid-Holland), <b>NETHERLANDS</b>
NLA	RR	11/07/2024	Stour Estuary / Pegwell Bay (Kent) 223km WSW 1 yr 50 days

## Curlew

5507380	1	28/06/2018	Staphorsterveld, nr Rouveen, (Overijssel), <b>NETHERLANDS</b>
NLA	VV	17/10/2018	Margate Beach, (Kent)
NLA	VV	22/12/2018	Margate Beach, (Kent)
NLA	VV	10/01/2019	Margate Beach, (Kent)
NLA	VV	21/06/2019	Culemborg, (Gelderland), <b>NETHERLANDS</b>
NLA	VV	09/11/2019	Margate Beach, (Kent)
NLA	VV	26/03/2021	Staphorsterveld, nr Rouveen (Overijssel), <b>NETHERLANDS</b>
NLA	VV	13/08/2021	Foreness Point, Margate, (Kent)
NLA	VV	07/12/2021	Palm Bay, Margate, (Kent)
NLA	VV	03/08/2022	Staphorsterveld, nr Rouveen, (Overijssel), <b>NETHERLANDS</b>
NLA	RR	25/08/2024	Stour Estuary / Pegwell Bay, (Kent) 358km WSW 6 yrs 58 days

FH30917	2	12/08/2014	Heacham, (Norfolk)
	VV	04/05/2016	Akerby, (Norrbotten), <b>SWEDEN</b>
	VV	26/11/2017	Stour Estuary / Pegwell Bay, (Kent) 188km SSE 106 days
	VV	08/05/2018	Akerby, (Norrbotten), <b>SWEDEN</b>
	VV	25/12/2018	Heacham, (Norfolk)
	VV	23/04/2019	Akerby, (Norrbotten), <b>SWEDEN</b>
	VV	14/12/2019	Heacham, (Norfolk)
	VV	03/05/2020	Akerby, (Norrbotten), <b>SWEDEN</b>
	VV	22/08/2020	Heacham, (Norfolk)
	VV	15/09/2021	Snettisham, (Norfolk)
	VV	25/04/2022	Akerby, (Norrbotten), <b>SWEDEN</b>
	VV	26/03/2023	Heacham, (Norfolk)
	VV	01/05/2023	Akerby, (Norrbotten), <b>SWEDEN</b>
	VV	02/09/2023	Heacham, (Norfolk)
	VV	01/05/2024	Akerby, (Norrbotten), <b>SWEDEN</b> 1,858km NNE 9 yrs 263 days

### **Mediterranean Gull**

E923525	1	28/16/2016	Antwerp, (Antwerpen), <b>BELGIUM</b>
BLB	VV	30/07/2017	Stour Estuary / Pegwell Bay, (Kent) 209km W 2yrs 32 days
	VV	06/03/2024	Icklesham, (East Sussex)
IA186869	1	23/06/2020	Löbnitz Gravel Pit, Leipzig, (Sachsen), <b>GERMANY</b>
DEH	VV	06/09/2020	Strouanne, Cap Blanc Nez, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	R	18/12/2020	Wissant, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	20/02/2021	Boulogne-sur-Mer, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	22/02/2021	Boulogne-sur-Mer, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	14/04/2021	Haamstede, Duinzoom, (Zeeland), <b>NETHERLANDS</b>
	VV	24/05/2021	Löbnitz Gravel Pit, Leipzig, (Sachsen), <b>GERMANY</b>
	VV	01/09/2021	Strouanne, Cap Blanc Nez, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	21/11/2021	Strouanne, Cap Blanc Nez, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	16/04/2022	Rehbach Gravel Pit, Leipzig, (Sachsen), <b>GERMANY</b>
	VV	21/05/2022	Löbnitz Gravel Pit, Leipzig, (Sachsen), <b>GERMANY</b>

	VV	27/07/2022	Le Portel, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	15/08/2022	Itchenor, Chichester Harbour (West Sussex)
	VV	23/08/2022	Le Portel, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	13/09/2022	Wimereux, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	20/09/2022	Strouanne, Cap Blanc Nez, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	23/04/2023	Löbnitz Gravel Pit, Leipzig, (Sachsen), <b>GERMANY</b>
	VV	27/08/2023	Wissant, (Pas-de-Calais), <b>FRANCE</b>
	VV	15/03/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory (Kent) 769km W 3 yrs 266 days
	VV	22/03/2024	Rehbach Gravel Pit, Leipzig, (Sachsen), <b>GERMANY</b>
IA230153	1	24/06/2023	Löbnitz Gravel Pit, Leipzig, (Sachsen), <b>GERMANY</b>
DEH	VV	03/05/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory (Kent) 769km W 314 days

### **Black-headed Gull**

EA84539	1	21/07/2021	Tern Island, Pagham Harbour, (West Sussex)
	VV	17/05/2022	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 161km ENE 300 days
	VV	19/05/2024	Hammerfest, Kvaløya, (Finnmark), <b>NORWAY</b> 2,555km NNE 2 yrs 302 days
EL08513	8	02/01/2012	Kingsdown, (Kent)
	R	24/06/2024	Sint Jan-in-Eremo, (Oost-Vlaanderen), <b>BELGIUM</b> 151km E 12 yrs 174 days
EL08542	8	30/01/2012	Hampton Beach, Herne Bay, (Kent)
	VV	21/01/2023	Herne Bay, (Kent)
	VV	11/02/2024	Herne Bay, (Kent)
	VV	16/12/2024	Herne Bay, (Kent) 2km E 12 yrs 321 days
EZ58665	4	03/12/2016	Pitsea Landfill site, (Essex)
	RR	16/07/2020	Den Helder, (Noord-Holland), <b>NETHERLANDS</b> 329km ENE 3 yrs 226 days
	RR	31/12/2020	Rainham Tip, (Greater London)
	RR	19/09/2024	New Downs Farm, Sandwich Bay (Kent) 66km ESE 7 yrs 291 days

### Herring Gull

GV15816	5	21/03/2015	Pitsea Landfill Site, (Essex) Silvertown. Thames Barrier (Greater London) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 68km ESE 9 yrs 166 days
	VV	05/02/2017	
	VV	05/11/2018	
	VV	29/12/2019	
	VV	02/09/2024	

### Sand Martin

HJ45807	4	01/06/1968	Trenley Park Wood, Canterbury, (Kent)
	R	23/06/1968	Castle Hill, Worksop, (Nottinghamshire) 273km NNW 22 days

### House Martin

S741924	1	15/06/2022	Sandwich Town (East), (Kent) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 3km E 1 yr 345 days
	XF	25/05/2024	

### Wren

NJK167	3	26/08/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Hastings, (East Sussex) 72km SW 42 days
	R	13/09/2024	
	XF	07/10/2024	

### Blackbird

LH29869	3M	15/11/2016	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Liepāja, <b>LATVIA</b> 1,410km ENE 113 days
	VV	18/03/2017	
LK59311	3F	25/11/2022	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Lammi, Hämeenlinna, (Häme), <b>FINLAND</b> 1,813km NE 1 yr 204 days
	XF	16/06/2024	
LK59400	5F	14/01/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Landguard Point, Felixstowe, (Suffolk) 74km N 307 days
	R	16/11/2024	

### Redwing

RY01466	4	11/10/2022	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Ballycrogue, Carlow, (Wexford), <b>EIRE</b> 591km WNW 1 yr 138 days
	XF	26/02/2024	

### **Sedge Warbler**

AXP4502	3	17/08/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	R	19/08/2024	Westdown Plantation, Salisbury Plain, (Wiltshire) 232km W 2 days

### **Reed Warbler**

AEV2284	1	08/07/2023	Richborough Farm, (Kent)
	R	04/08/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 4km ESE 1 yr 27 days
BFC9520	3J	12/08/2024	Brook Farm, Reculver, (Kent)
	R	17/08/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 18km SE 5 days
BNC7936	3	20/07/2024	Weatherlees Hill, Minster Marshes, (Kent)
	R	11/08/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 7km SSE 22 days
S740107	3	12/08/2022	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	R	01/05/2024	Jubilee River, Slough, (Surrey) 143km W 1 yr 263 days

### **Lesser Whitethroat**

AXP3015	3	26/09/2023	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	R	11/08/2024	Keyhaven, Lympington, (Hampshire) 215km WSW 320 days

### **Garden Warbler**

AXP4429	3	11/08/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	R	17/08/2024	Weatherlees Hill, Minster Marshes (Kent) 7km NNW 6 days

### **Blackcap**

AXP0231	3F	21/09/2022	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	XF	12/04/2024	Horsecastle Bay, (Scottish Borders) 565km NNW 1 yr 204 days
AXP2230	3M	08/09/2023	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	R	30/06/2024	Two Tree Island, Leigh-on-Sea, (Southend) 61km WNW 296 days
AXP2931	3F	23/09/2023	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
	R	26/04/2024	Emmeloord, (Ijsselmeerpolders), <b>NETHERLANDS</b> 341km ENE 216 days

AXP3091	3M R	27/09/2023 08/04/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Revtangen, Klepp, (Rogaland), <b>NORWAY</b> 872km NNE 194 days
AXP4570	3M R	19/08/2024 04/09/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Richborough Farm, Richborough, (Kent) 4km WNW 16 days
AXP5627	3F R	15/09/2024 16/09/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Firdown Wood, Bekesbourne, (Kent) 19km W 1 day
BNF9769	3M R	21/09/2024 29/09/2024	Titchfield Haven, (Hampshire) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 189km ENE 8 days
BYE9977	3J  R	12/08/2024  04/09/2024	Knepp Castle Estate, West Grinstead, (West Sussex) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 128km ENE 23 days
S734987	3M XL	01/09/2020 05/04/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory St Austell, (Cornwall) 444km WSW 3 yrs 217days

### Chiffchaff

NDY735	3J R	25/07/2023 20/03/2024	St Margarets, South Foreland, (Kent) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 15km N 239 days
NJJ406	3 R	06/10/2023 21/09/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Bowthorpe Hall, (North Yorkshire) 322km NNW 351 days
NJJ485	3 R	08/10/2023 17/07/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Kelsall, (Cheshire) 350km NW 283 days
NJJ862	4 R	19/03/2024 20/07/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Weatherlees Hill, Minster Marshes, (Kent) 7km NNW 123 days
NJJ888	5M R  R	21/04/2024 24/05/2024  27/06/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Sycamore Farm, Witnesham, (Suffolk) Sycamore Farm, Witnesham, (Suffolk) 93km N 67 days
NJK174	3 R	27/08/2024 19/10/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Cartaya, (Huelva), <b>SPAIN</b> 1,693km SSW 53 days

PRV174	3 R	28/09/2024 04/10/2024	Jubilee River, Slough, (Surrey) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 143km E 6 days
PTL066	3J R	03/08/2024 14/09/2024	Hinderclay Fen, Hinderclay, (Suffolk) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 126km SSE 42 days
PXR153	3 R	25/09/2024 29/09/2024	Worplesdon, (Surrey) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 139km E 4 days

### **Goldcrest**

LXD441	3M  XF	07/10/2022  18/10/2024	Gazen Salts Nature Reserve, Sandwich, (Kent) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 3km E 2 yrs 11 days
NJJ160	4M R	30/09/2023 20/03/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Dukes Warren, (Surrey) 122km W 172 days
PEJ358	3 R	18/10/2024 26/10/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Brook Farm, Reculver, (Kent) 18km NW 8 days

### **Starling**

LR95932	3J R	05/06/2023 20/01/2024	Deal, (Kent) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 7km N 229 days
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### **Goldfinch**

AXP6663	3F R	26/11/2024 26/12/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Richborough Farm, Richborough, (Kent) 5km WNW 30 days
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### **Siskin**

AXP3656	3M R	22/10/2023 26/06/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Inchberry, nr Fochabers, (Moray) 760km NNW 248 days
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### **Lesser Redpoll**

ANY5181	3 R	24/10/2023 30/11/2024	Cannock Chase, (Staffordshire) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 284km SE 1 yr 37days
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AXP1282	3 R	05/11/2022 17/11/2023	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Chevron, Liège, <b>BELGIUM</b> 321km ESE 377days
AXP3955	3 R	01/10/2023 04/11/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Chilworth, Southampton, (Hampshire) 198km W 102 days
BCE5785	4M R	01/11/2024 04/11/2024	Shadoxhurst, (Kent) Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 45km ENE 3 days
S736987	3M R	06/10/2020 18/10/2024	Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Stora Fjäderägg, Holmön, (Västerbotten), <b>SWEDEN</b> 1,811km NE 4 yrs 12days

#### Codes used:

X	found dead
V	alive and prob healthy, caught and released, not by ringer
XF	found freshly dead or dying
N	alive and probably healthy, caught and released, not by ringer - nesting
XL	found dead (not recent)
VV	alive and prob healthy, ring or colour marks read in the field, not by ringer
+	shot or intentionally killed by man
NN	alive and prob healthy, ring or marks read in field, not by ringer - nesting
+F	shot or intentionally killed by man - fresh
R	caught and released by ringer
+L	shot or intentionally killed by man - not recent
B	caught and released by ringer - nesting
SR	sick or injured, released with ring
RR	alive and probably healthy, ring or colour marks read in the field by a ringer
S	sick or injured - not known to have been released
BB	alive and prob healthy, ring or colour marks read in field by ringer - nesting
A	alive and probably healthy - fate unknown
//	condition on finding wholly unknown
AC	alive and probably healthy - now captive

# Ringling Totals

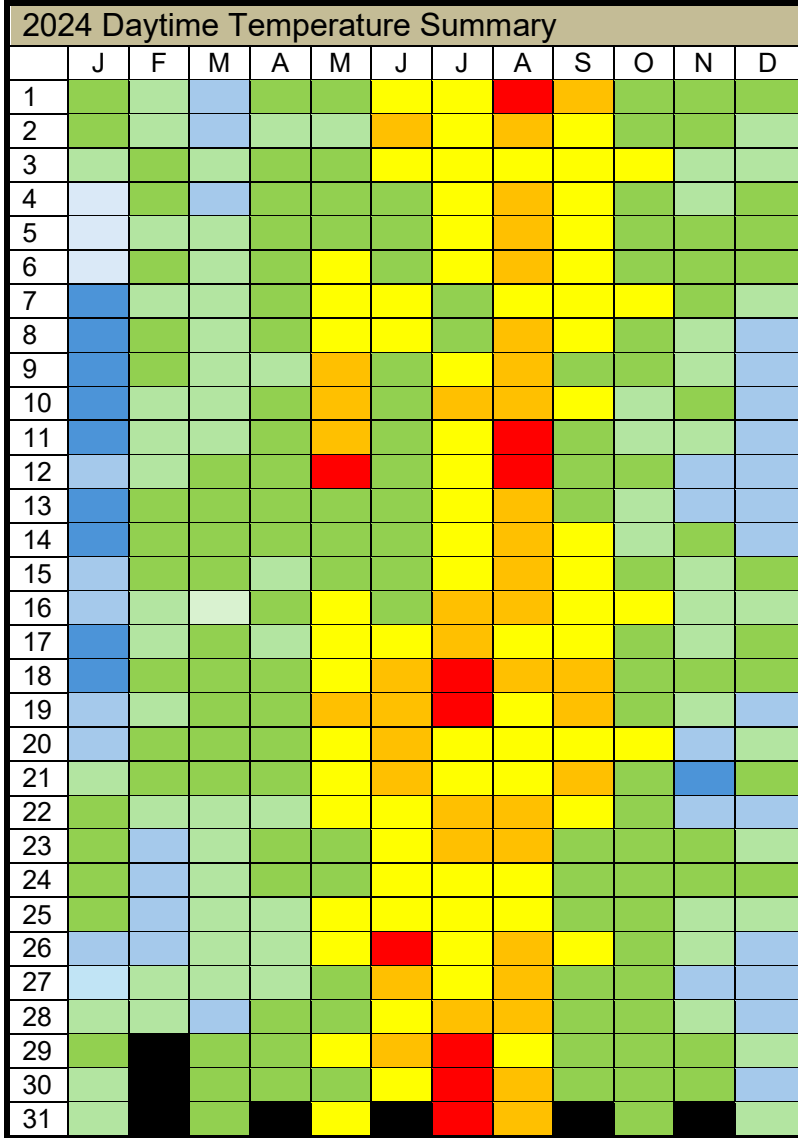
	Total 2024	Total 1952- 2024		Total 2024	Total 1952- 2024
Mute Swan		245	Coot		15
Greylag Goose		13	Oystercatcher		162
Canada Goose		10	Little Ringed Plover		36
Barnacle Goose		2	Ringed Plover		573
Brent Goose		2	Kentish Plover		1
Shelduck		13	Golden Plover		13
Wigeon		2	Grey Plover		15
Teal		6	Lapwing		899
Mallard	1	101	Knot		70
Shoveler		1	Sanderling		1,227
Red-crested Pochard		1	Little Stint		10
Pochard		1	Curlew Sandpiper		18
Tufted Duck		7	Purple Sandpiper		38
Long-tailed Duck		1	Dunlin		1,086
Common Scoter		1	Ruff		11
Red-legged Partridge		3	Jack Snipe		17
Grey Partridge		30	Common Snipe		207
Quail		3	Woodcock	1	41
Pheasant		1	Bar-tailed Godwit		1
Golden Pheasant		1	Whimbrel		9
Red-throated Diver		1	Curlew		21
Little Grebe		18	Common Sandpiper		470
Great Crested Grebe		3	Green Sandpiper		80
Red-necked Grebe		2	Spotted Redshank		1
Slavonian Grebe		2	Greenshank		33
Black-necked Grebe		2	Wood Sandpiper		20
Fulmar		155	Common Redshank		508
Manx Shearwater		1	Turnstone		694
Storm Petrel		4	Pomarine Skua		2
Leach's Petrel		1	Great Skua		1
Gannet		8	Long-tailed Skua		1
Cormorant		151	Kittiwake		1,413
Shag		5	Black-headed Gull		3,388
Bittern		1	Mediterranean Gull		68
Little Bittern		1	Common Gull		475
Little Egret		1	Ring-billed Gull		1
Grey Heron		1	Lesser Black-backed Gull		3
Hen Harrier		1	Herring Gull		901
Sparrowhawk	8	203	Great Black-backed Gull		46
Buzzard		3	Little Tern		27
Kestrel	5	241	Sandwich Tern		21
Merlin		2	Common Tern		67
Hobby		9	Arctic Tern		1
Water Rail		83	Guillemot		45
Spotted Crake		2	Razorbill		5
Moorhen	10	274	Black Guillemot		1

	Total 2024	Total 1952- 2024		Total 2024	Total 1952- 2024
Little Auk		6	Blackbird	176	17,135
Stock Dove	2	243	Fieldfare	27	641
Woodpigeon	3	556	Song Thrush	58	6,701
Collared Dove		1,425	Redwing	101	2,372
Turtle Dove		223	Mistle Thrush		1,162
Ring-necked Parakeet		6	Cetti's Warbler	8	345
Cuckoo	1	202	Grasshopper Warbler	1	326
Barn Owl	6	107	Savi's Warbler		4
Little Owl		110	Aquatic Warbler		6
Tawny Owl		8	Sedge Warbler	95	23,066
Long-eared Owl		72	Blyth's Reed Warbler		1
Short-eared Owl		4	Marsh Warbler		14
Nightjar		8	Reed Warbler	136	31,651
Common Swift		156	Great Reed Warbler		5
Kingfisher		165	Olivaceous Warbler		1
Wryneck		34	Icterine Warbler		48
Green Woodpecker	7	446	Melodious Warbler		5
Great Spotted Woodpecker	15	652	Blackcap	1,244	37,925
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker		25	Garden Warbler	34	3,384
Skylark		677	Barred Warbler		16
Sand Martin	212	31,420	Lesser Whitethroat	22	4,315
Swallow	15	18,885	Common Whitethroat	60	5,979
Swallow x House Martin		2	Dartford Warbler		4
House Martin	92	31,512	Subalpine Warbler		1
Richard's Pipit		2	Greenish Warbler		2
Tawny Pipit		2	Arctic Warbler		1
Olive-backed Pipit		1	Pallas's Warbler		24
Tree Pipit		157	Yellow-browed Warbler	3	98
Meadow Pipit		3,508	Radde's Warbler		4
Rock Pipit		51	Dusky Warbler		7
Water Pipit		5	Wood Warbler	5	97
Yellow Wagtail		4,107	Chiffchaff	1,233	28,542
Grey Wagtail		24	Willow Warbler	236	18,133
Pied Wagtail		367	Goldcrest	97	14,798
Waxwing		3	Firecrest	38	1,122
Wren	37	5,268	Spotted Flycatcher	1	590
Duncock	33	5,613	Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	18
Robin	161	14,052	Pied Flycatcher	4	1,565
Thrush Nightingale		2	Bearded Tit		3,525
Nightingale	1	245	Long-tailed Tit	59	2,681
Bluethroat		20	Blue Tit	104	11,802
Red-flanked Bluetail		1	Great Tit	132	6,843
Black Redstart		117	Coal Tit		299
Common Redstart	1	1,329	Willow Tit		61
Whinchat		1,187	Marsh Tit		79
Stonechat		219	Marsh/Willow Tit		4
Wheatear		406	Nuthatch		5
Swainson's Thrush		1	Common Treecreeper		210
Ring Ouzel		59	Short-toed Treecreeper		4

	Total 2024	Total 1952- 2024		Total 2024	Total 1952- 2024
Penduline Tit		2	Siskin	7	1,888
Golden Oriole		5	Linnnet	1	7,107
Isabelline Shrike		1	Twite		46
Red-backed Shrike		33	Lesser Redpoll	226	9,602
Lesser Grey Shrike		1	Common Redpoll		59
Great Grey Shrike		7	Redpoll sp.		1,294
Woodchat Shrike		2	Common Rosefinch		2
Jay	3	225	Crossbill		3
Magpie	2	303	Parrot Crossbill		1
Jackdaw		580	Bullfinch	5	1,476
Rook **		216	Hawfinch		3
Carrion Crow		190	Lapland Bunting		57
Starling	15	21,780	Snow Bunting		437
House Sparrow	60	9,789	Yellowhammer		783
Tree Sparrow		1,866	Ortolan Bunting		1
House x Tree Sparrow		3	Little Bunting		2
Chaffinch	91	10,250	Yellow-browed Bunting		1
Brambling	1	561	Reed Bunting	1	4,533
Greenfinch	1	16,056	African Rock Bunting		1
Goldfinch	136	6,013	Corn Bunting		345
			TOTAL	5,035	459,196
			Total number of species	56	226

\*\* NB The total for Rook, and the Cumulative Ringing Total has been adjusted by four to correct a clerical error in 2016.

# Weather in 2024



## Non-avian Reports

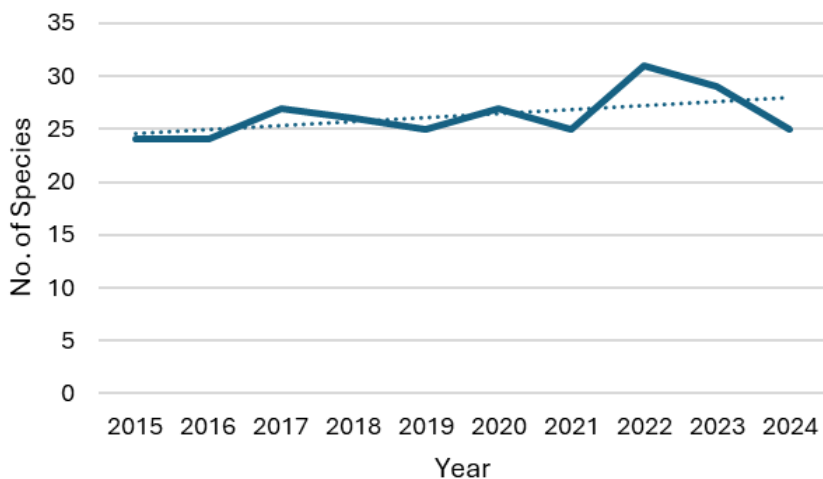


Sand Catchfly by S.North

# Butterflies

The numbers of all invertebrates were very low in the Sandwich Bay area in spring and summer. This was reflected on SBBOT's Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) transect and also seen anecdotally across the whole of England. It was perhaps caused by the huge rainfall and standing water over the previous winter and early spring, coupled with mild temperatures. Numbers on Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count were the lowest on record and they declared 2024 a 'Butterfly Emergency'.

All the grassland species fared poorly in the area but there were a few species which bucked the trend. The number of Walls was notable and it was the best year ever for Brimstone. White-letter Hairstreak continued to cement itself as a Sandwich Bay resident, Green Hairstreak appeared once again, and it was an above-average year for Green-veined White (finally). There was slightly less diversity in 2024 with 'just' 25 species of butterfly recorded in the SBBOT area. With no record of Ringlet again it is now best assumed this species has gone extinct in the Recording Area.



*Figure.3 Yearly species total of Butterflies at Sandwich Bay 2015-2024. The number of butterfly species recorded fluctuates each year dependent on weather conditions. Recent years have seen high temperatures and southerly winds resulting in unusual occurrences of insects wandering out of nearby habitats (e.g. Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Blue) or from the near-Continent (e.g. Long-tailed Blue, Large Tortoiseshell). This, coupled with increased observer awareness, has produced high species totals. 2024 saw a drop in the number of species recorded to a more usual 25 species.*

## JANUARY

It was some surprise to see a **Small Tortoiseshell** fly in off the sea on the 24th. A strange record and the first butterfly to be recorded of the year.

## FEBRUARY

On the 2nd a **Peacock** was seen around the back of the asparagus fields on the Estate. A few weeks later on the 15th the first **Red Admiral** of the year was seen on the hay bales at the back of the Observatory. Then, the following day, was the first day of the year with multiple butterflies with a Small Tortoiseshell and a male **Brimstone** on the Estate.

## MARCH

A Peacock was enjoying the warm sun in the Middle Field on the 6th and a male Brimstone wandered around the Little Elms on the 9th, quickly followed by a Small Tortoiseshell on New Downs the next day. Three Peacocks and our first **Comma** were in Middle Field on the 16th and started off a run of butterfly sightings. There were a minimum of 11 Peacocks on the Estate on the 18th, with two Small Tortoiseshells, one Brimstone, and one Comma, with another Small Tortoiseshell and a brief 'white sp.' on the Green Wall.

On the 19th a Red Admiral was on Worth and there was another sighting of a Brimstone on the Estate, whilst our first **Large White** and yet another Brimstone were on the Green Wall. The next day four species were on the Estate with two male Brimstones of note. New butterflies continued to come fast with our first **Speckled Wood** of the year on the Estate on the 27th and the month ended with Large White and another Brimstone on the Green Wall.

## APRIL

Three Peacocks were at Mary Bax and two Peacocks and a Speckled Wood were on the Estate on the 1st. Despite the strong breeze on the 5th there were a number of butterflies out in the sunshine. Two Red Admirals, one Peacock, six Speckled Woods, and a **Small White** were on the Estate, with singles of the latter also seen on New Downs and RSPB Worth Marshes. The next period of nice weather was on the 10th and New Downs produced three Red Admirals, three Peacocks, two Speckled Woods, one Small Tortoiseshell, and five Green-veined Whites (a count higher than any last year). Two **Orange-tips** on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 12th were our first of the year but the biggest news was the four Brimstones on the Estate. This is a species which is usually fairly scarce at Sandwich Bay. The good year for Green-veined White locally continued with five at Mary Bax and three on the Estate the next day. These were followed by a male Orange-tip in the Observatory garden on the 17th and six Green-veined Whites on Worth and a male Brimstone at the Observatory on the 18th.

A few **Green Hairstreaks** were at their usual site in Stonelees on the 26th and a good morning on the Estate on the 29th produced an Orange-tip, two Green-veined Whites, a Red Admiral, a Comma, eight Holly Blues, a Speckled Wood, and our first **Wall** and **Small Coppers** of the year.

## MAY

An Orange-tip, a Red Admiral, and two Peacocks were between the Chequers and Mary Bax on the 1st, whilst six Orange-tips were on the Estate. A Wall was on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 5th and a good mix there on the 7th included two Orange-tips, two Green-veined Whites, one Small White, three Peacocks, one Red Admiral, and one Speckled Wood.

Our first **Small Heath** was at Dickson's Corner on the 8th and the following day the weather was good enough to do the BMS Transect. Two Orange-tips, four Small Coppers, three Red Admirals, five Walls, and two Small Heaths. A similar spread was also seen inland on Worth.

The BMS Transect on the 13th produced 38 butterflies of ten species. Of note were seven Walls, an impressive tally for the transect. Another two were also seen on New Downs. A good mix around the Whitehouse and Oasis on the 17th included two Speckled Woods, three Orange-tips, three Red Admirals, one Wall, five Small Coppers, six Small Heaths, two Holly Blues, one Small White, and our first **Painted Lady** and **Common Blue**. The end of the month was very temperamental with the weather, but eight species were on the Estate on the 23rd with **Brown Argus** the highlight.

## JUNE

There was sunny weather on the 4th for the first time in a while. Small numbers of blues and Heaths were on the Estate, whilst a small orangey butterfly flew across the path by the Haven, most likely a skipper species. On the 6th a female Brimstone and a Meadow Brown were in the Jubilee Field on the Estate. After a week with little butterfly activity two **Large Skippers** were in the Jubilee Field on the 13th. Two **Small/Essex Skippers** and two **Marbled Whites** on the BMS Transect on the 17th were the first of the year. And that was going to be the highlight until a surprise **Green Hairstreak** appeared by the Cellars, the first to ever be recorded on the transect. Filling up the rest of the transect were one Small White, one Green-veined White, six Common Blues, two Holly Blues, two Red Admirals, 13 Meadow Browns, and 34 Small Heaths.

The 20th saw at least seven Holly Blues on the Estate and then the 27th saw the best transect of the year, with 200 butterflies exactly. Meadow Browns led the way with 75, followed by Small Heath on 50 and Small/Essex Skipper on 35. A few Large Skippers were logged and the first of the next generation of Small Tortoiseshell. The month ended with a **WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK** on the Green Wall.

## JULY

Our first Gatekeeper of the year was on the Estate on the 1st of the month. The BMS Transect was squeezed in on the 4th before it got too windy. Just over 250 butterflies were recorded, most of which either Small/Essex Skippers or Meadow Browns. There were disappointing numbers of Marbled White. The next generation of 'whites' and Small Copper were seen.

Just over 350 butterflies were then seen on the following week's BMS transect. As usual, Small/Essex Skipper and Meadow Brown led the charge, with just over double-figures of Marbled White. The sighting of a **WHITE-LETTER HAIRSTREAK** in The Elms on the 15th was exciting and the first record for the Estate, though perhaps not too surprising given the recent discovery of small colonies elsewhere in the Recording Area and locally in East Kent.

The next week's BMS Transect was completed on the 19th and recorded 475 butterflies of 14 species. Gatekeepers, as expected, were the most numerous species with 230 present in the heat. Small/Essex Skippers had a drop from the previous week to 130. Just the one Common Blue was observed whilst there appeared to be a few more Red Admirals around. The next generation of Wall was underway on the 21st with six seen on RSPB Worth marshes. And lastly a male Brimstone was in the Observatory garden on the 29th.



Brimstone by G.Lee

## AUGUST

A Brimstone was seen on the Estate on the 1st. The next day eight Walls and our first Marbled White for two weeks were on the Estate. There had been very few Common Blues throughout the area in spring and summer so it was some surprise to see good numbers nectaring on the Sea Holly along Prince's Beach on the 5th.

After a run of poor weather the numbers on the BMS transect were a lot lower on the 14th. The total crept into triple-figures with 101. Gatekeeper was most numerous with 43, followed by Common Blue with 23. A trip to New Downs on the 17th produced five Green-veined Whites, four Small Whites, seven Large Whites, 24 Common Blues, two Brown Argus, seven Small Heaths, two Gatekeepers, and 18 Meadow Browns. Nine species were seen on the Green Wall on the 21st. This included good numbers of Green-veined White with a minimum of 19 recorded. Also of note were six Commas and ten Speckled Woods.

There was an unconfirmed report of a Purple Hairstreak in Stonelees on the 27th. This would have been the first SBBOT record and the third hairstreak species to be recorded in the area during the year. The following day there were 66 butterflies of 11 species on the BMS Transect. There was an increase in 'whites' and 'blues' but a decrease in 'browns'.

## SEPTEMBER

A Painted Lady was at Restharrow Scrape on the 4th, one of very few sightings this year. It was clear from early in the morning on the 6th that something big was happening with Red Admirals. There were individuals all over the bushes, along the track, and even in the moth trap. A timed point count looking across the asparagus fields revealed butterflies heading inland at approximately **100 a minute**. This was repeated on multiple occasions so many thousands must have passed through.

After a period of bad weather there were still pockets of Red Admirals in areas out of the wind on the 12th. But nowhere near as many as the previous week. A few Painted Ladies were also seen so a few of these may have also come in off the sea. The 14th was a little breezy but four Commas, two Holly Blues, eight Large Whites, two Meadow Browns, 15 Red Admirals, six Small Coppers, 20 Small Whites, six Speckled Woods, one Wall, and two Common Blues were on the Estate. The next day there must've been an emergence of Commas as seven were in one small area of the Estate.

The buddleias were busy on the 20th with various *Vanessids* and Speckled Wood seemed to be getting more numerous on the Estate. A good count of nine Walls was on RSPB Worth Marshes the next day. On the 28th at least six were flying around the Estate along with a few Small Coppers, Speckled Woods, and Large Whites.

## OCTOBER

A male Common Blue was on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 1st and six Walls were also present, continuing their excellent year. After a period of bad weather there seemed to be a very light passage of Red Admirals in the nice southerly winds on the 9th. A few days later on the 11th four Speckled Woods, two Red Admirals, and singles of Small White and Small Heath were on the Green Wall. Warm conditions on the Estate on the 16th produced singles of Comma, Peacock, and Small White and four Speckled Woods. Conditions the next day were not too dissimilar and singles of Wall and Small Copper joined the party. Lastly, a Painted Lady was on the Estate on the 24th, perhaps just in on the southerly winds.



Small Heath by J.Dodds

## NOVEMBER

Sightings were few and far between during the month. A Red Admiral was on the Estate on the 10th and then the next day a Peacock was seen, also on the Estate. Another Red Admiral followed on the 14th and then a break until a male Brimstone was seen on the Green Wall on the 24th, likely our latest ever record. A final Red Admiral was seen on RSPB Worth marshes on the 26th.

## DECEMBER

Just when we thought the butterfly season was over, a Peacock was seen flying strongly around Waldershare Avenue on the Estate on the 30th, our latest ever record.

# A Systematic List of Butterflies Recorded in 2024

## **Small Skipper** *Thymelicus sylvestris*

### **Essex Skipper** *Thymelicus lineola*

Both species are lumped together for the purposes of the BMS transect. The 24% total of the BMS transect is the highest recorded percentage total since the start of the survey, with the index total of 485 being the highest since 2017. The year started with two on the Estate on 17th June, with small numbers reported from the Point and New Downs until a notable spike of 40 on the Estate on 26th June. The peak count of the year occurred on 11th June with 180 on the Estate. Double figure counts were recorded on New Downs and the Point during this period, the highest of which concerned 48 on 17th July on the former site. The last sighting of the year was seven on the Estate on 7th August.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	597	652	866	674	307	192	256	505	385
% of total	21	20	16	20	15	9	9	15	13
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	562	523	348	320	299	241	305	379	485
% of total	15	14	12	17	17	18	17	14	24

## **Large Skipper** *Ochlodes sylvanus*

There were eight records on the Estate, all in June. The first consisted of two on 13th June, with a peak count of three on the 23rd on the BMS, and the final count of the year of two on the 26th. Elsewhere, two were seen on RSPB Worth Marshes on 24th June.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	-	-	5	5	5	1	11	8	4
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	13	11	8	-	1	6	18	1	3

## **Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni*

The total of 16 records was the highest-ever annual total of this surprisingly scarce species in the Recording Area (beating 12 in 2020). A male on the Estate on 16th February was the harbinger of an impressive first-generation with a further ten individuals from 9th March to 18th April on the Estate and a

further two on the Green Wall during this period. Singles on 29th July and 1st August on the Estate appeared to be the only records of the second generation until a very late record on the Green Wall on 24th November.

### Large White *Pieris brassicae*

A BMS index total of nine was a substantial drop from the two previous years and only marginally better than 2021, which was also marked by a cold spring. The first record of the year was a single on the Green Wall on 19th March with two further singles recorded on the 30th and 31st. The only record in April was a single in Pegwell on the 26th. There were only three further records in May and June coming from the Estate, New Downs and the Point. An increase occurred in July on the Estate with eight records, seven of which featured on the BMS transect during the month. August recorded some better counts with seven on New Downs on the 17th and three on the Green Wall and the Estate on the 21st and 28th, respectively. The second generation continued well into September with five on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 13th and the peak count of the year of eight on the Estate on the 14th. The last sighting of the year was a single on the Estate on 24th October.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	15	29	244	72	14	24	48	20	30
% of total	1	1	4	2	1	1	2	1	1
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	19	14	21	50	25	5	64	105	9
% of total	1	-	1	3	1	-	4	4	0

### Small White *Pieris rapae*

BMS totals were nearly half of the previous year, though still higher than 2021 and 2022. The first records of the year were singles on the Estate, New Downs and RSPB Worth Marshes on 5th April. Single figure counts were noted throughout spring and into June across the Recording Area. Numbers increased rapidly into July with 27 on the 11th, the first double-figure count of the year, and 26 on New Downs were also recorded on the 28th. Numbers dropped during August but improved again into September, with the peak count of the year on the 13th, with 38 on RSPB Worth Marshes. The last record of the year was a single on the Point on 23rd October.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	298	331	290	370	295	137	349	163	363
% of total	10	10	5	11	14	7	12	5	12
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	254	182	85	117	165	39	33	135	70
% of total	7	5	3	6	9	3	2	5	3

## Green-veined White *Pieris napi*

A much better year on the BMS transect, though far below counts during the 2010's. Singles on the Green Wall and RSPB Worth Marshes on 6th April were the first for the year and numbers picked up across the Recording Area into the month, with 21 recorded at the Point on the 29th. Counts dropped in May though sightings remained consistent, followed by only three singles recorded in June. Counts on the Estate remained in the low single-figures through July. August with a slight increase in September with a peak of six on the 16th, the last records of the year. The Green Wall also held a few records with 19 present on 19th August.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	37	62	40	22	42	10	16	76	37
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	47	32	69	19	5	5	9	4	11

## Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

There were four records of this spring butterfly on the BMS transect this year. A single on the Estate on 7th April was the first for the year and small flurry of sightings occurred during the month with up to four on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 12th and six on New Downs on the 19th, with counts of singles elsewhere. May witnessed the peak activity with 40 butterfly-days. Six were on the Estate on the 1st with another four on the 5th. On RSPB Worth Marshes, five were present on the 9th and six were present on the 17th. Two were present on New Downs on the 13th. A late single on the Estate on 2nd June was the final record of the year.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	4	8	7	7	10	9	3	5	4
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	3	8	5	4	2	-	-	3	4

## Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

The BMS index of 19 is the lowest on record. Two on the Estate on 29th April were the first records of the year. Numbers were fairly low in May with a peak count of seven on the Estate on the 10th. The midsummer period was even quieter with just one record on the Estate during June and only five during July, with four recorded on the 19th. The Point recorded singles during this period on 11th and 29th July. After a quiet August with just six butterfly-days, numbers picked up in September with a peak count of 14 on the Estate on the 7th. A total of 13 were recorded on Worth on the 28th.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	116	90	123	62	54	85	88	122	63
% of total	4	3	2	2	3	4	3	4	2
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	111	39	26	24	70	48	35	77	19
% of total	3	1	1	1	4	4	2	3	1

## Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

This diminutive and charming spring butterfly has local populations outside of the Recording Area, with occasional wanderers straying in. Two individuals on 26th April were found in their stronghold in Stonelees and a single was discovered on the Estate during a BMS transect on 11th June.

## White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album*

After the discovery of a new population on the Green Wall in 2023, eyes were peeled for other populations in the Recording Area. Just the one individual was found on the Green Wall on 29th June. However, after a suspected sighting in 2023, two were seen on the Estate on 15th July, though proved to be exceptionally elusive.

## Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*

The poorest year on record for the BMS index, a single on the Estate on 2nd May was the first for the year, with only three on the Point on 4th June and two on the Estate on 11th of the first generation. A considerable gap then occurred until a sighting at the Point on 29th July. There were only eight more butterfly-days in August. Four on the Estate on 28th August were the final sightings of a woeful year for this grassland species.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	22	23	77	39	54	43	44	71	11
% of total	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	1
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	95	110	50	59	22	26	14	76	4
% of total	3	3	2	3	1	2	1	3	0

## Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Like other grassland species, the Common Blue had the lowest index on record for the BMS in 2024. There were just the two records on the Estate in May, the first of these on the 17th. June saw an increase with the year's peak count of 28 at the Point on the 4th. However, numbers did not rise above double-figures across the Recording Area again until 29th July with 11, again at the Point. Counts in August improved on the Estate with 25 and 23 on the 7th and 14th respectively. A further 24 were recorded on New Downs on the 17th. There were just three records in both September and October, including a single on RSPB Worth Marshes on 1st October and two at the Point on the 2nd, which were the final sightings of the year.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	130	324	488	334	150	199	333	183	116
% of total	5	10	9	10	7	9	12	5	4
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	287	223	396	86	163	106	95	108	59
% of total	8	6	14	5	9	8	5	4	3

## Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

The total of 74 butterfly-days was a further improvement on the good showing last year, though fewer individuals were recorded on the BMS transect. A single on 5th April on the Estate was the first for the year with counts occurring across the Recording Area during the month including on New Downs, Pegwell Bay, and the Point. An impressive eight were recorded on the Estate on 29th April. Sightings remained consistent on the Estate through May and June, with several records occurring on RSPB Worth Marshes and New Downs during this period. Numbers decreased in July before another increase during late August, with a count of three on the Green Wall on the 24th and four on the Estate on the 28th. Counts of up to two were recorded on the Estate during September, the last of which occurred on the 15th. Eight on RSPB Worth Marshes on 13th September was the joint peak count of the year.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	7	5	10	18	2	-	4	3	4
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	12	4	17	5	6	8	3	20	10

## Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

A single on the Estate on 15th February was the first of the year. Four further records occurred in March with a further increase into April with low single-figure counts across the Recording Area. These single-figure counts occurred at a steady rate through May and June, with the first double-figure counts of the year occurring in July with a count of 12 on the Estate on the 19th. The first half of August was quieter before numbers started to pick up during the second half of the month, with 19 on the Estate on the 27th. This would be the first signs of things to come with an unprecedented surge in numbers in September during a sustained period of migration. Peak counts included 75 and 76 on RSPB Worth Marshes and New Downs on the 6th and a minimum of 300 passing through the Estate on the same day, with 205 recorded the next day. It is worth noting that passage of these butterflies continued at an impressive rate throughout the 6th, so the final number would likely be far higher, likely into the thousands. Counts then reduced after the influx with 24 recorded on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 13th. In October, nine were at the Point on the 18th, seven on the Estate on the 9th, and two on the Green Wall on the 11th. There just three records in November, the last of which was on the Estate on the 26th.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	108	33	30	28	58	26	12	56	24
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	80	37	24	13	25	58	27	105	45

## Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

There were just 32 records of this migrant species in 2024. The first was a single on RSPB Worth Marshes on 30th April. Two further records occurred in May, with a single on the Estate on 17th and another on Worth the following day. June and July recorded four individuals apiece, the Estate holding four of these with singles recorded on RSPB Worth Marshes, the Point, Pegwell, and New Downs. Late August to mid-September experienced the peak of activity, coinciding with other insect migration, with 18 on the Estate (including a peak count of nine on 7th September) and singles on RSPB Worth Marshes and the Green Wall between 21st August and September. The last record of the year was a single on the Estate on 24th October. There were no records on the BMS transect.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	23	2	593	11	3	2	10	2	9
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	17	18	10	30	1	13	28	6	0



Painted Lady by S.Reynaert

## Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

A single flying off the sea on 24th January was the first butterfly record of the year, followed by another on the Estate on 16th February. There were eight butterfly-days in March, with records coming from the Estate, the Green Wall, and RSPB Worth Marshes. April was surprisingly quiet, with a single at New Downs on the 10th the sole record. Nine butterfly-days occurred in June and July, mainly consisting of singles on the Estate and RSPB Worth Marshes although two were at Pegwell Bay on 10th July. After this small period of activity, there was only one more record, a single at the Point on 6th September. Only three records occurred on the BMS transect.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	17	12	24	53	70	24	68	259	60
% of total	1	-	-	2	3	1	2	8	2
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	50	64	9	0	3	4	41	8	3
% of total	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0

## Peacock *Aglais io*

One on 2nd February was the first record of the year. March saw a fair amount of activity with 11 on the Estate on the 18th, the only double-figure count of spring. Records were well distributed across the Recording Area through April, with sightings recorded on the Estate, New Downs, the Point, Pegwell Bay and RSPB Worth Marshes. The highest of which was six on New Downs on the 8th. May was less busy with the majority of sightings coming from RSPB Worth Marshes. After a blank June, sightings increased again into July with a peak count of 14 on the Estate on the 26th. For the rest of the year, counts remained in single-figures with late records on 11th November and a very late single on 30th December.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	149	54	113	92	89	26	47	73	51
% of total	5	2	2	3	4	1	2	2	2
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	45	64	27	20	35	8	20	62	20
% of total	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1

## Comma *Polygonia c-album*

There were 46 butterfly-days during the year with the Estate holding the majority of records. There were three records on the Estate in March, with the first on the 16th. April was rather quiet with only three records on the 2nd, 23rd, and the 30th. There were no records in May and only one in June on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 17th. Sightings increased into July and August, with the Estate the core area for activity, however, six were on the Green Wall on 21st August. September was busier with 21 butterfly-days on the Estate with a peak of seven on the 15th. The last record of the year consisted of two on the Estate on the 28th.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	7	8	10	14	7	6	-	10	8
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	9	10	4	4	1	1	5	13	4

### **Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria***

There was a drop in numbers on the BMS transect after several years of increase, and, in fact, the index total was the lowest on record. The first of the year was a single on the Estate on 27th March. The peak in April was six on the Estate on the 5th, followed by four at the Point on the 29th. Numbers remained fairly consistent through the summer, though never reaching above four. The Estate, RSPB Worth Marshes, and New Downs were the only subsites to record this species during this period. The peak count of ten was recorded on the Green Wall on 21st August. The species experienced a small surge in activity throughout September from the Estate, the Green Wall, and RSPB Worth Marshes with counts in single-figures. There were five records in October with the last at the Point on the 18th.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	41	56	50	18	27	12	35	90	56
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	37	53	53	16	19	21	37	38	13

### **Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera***

The apparent resurgence of this species continued with an excellent 123 butterfly-days through the year and the highest index total ever recorded on the BMS transect. The first record came from the Estate on 29th April but the season wouldn't advance until mid-May, when five were present on the Estate and two were recorded on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 9th. A couple of records also came from New Downs during the month. The Estate spring peak of seven was recorded on the 10th. However, the season for the first-generation was rather short with the final sighting concerning a single on 23rd May. The second generation wouldn't become apparent until 21st July when six were on RSPB Worth Marshes. Numbers were relatively low throughout July and August, with a peak of eight on 8th August before a reduction in sightings. A considerable gap then followed until mid-September with impressive counts noted on RSPB Worth Marshes including an exceptional 21 on the 28th. On the Estate, ten were logged on the 25th. A single on the Estate on 17th October was the last sighting of the year.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	2	1	3	5	5	3	2	4	8
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	1	1	0	0	4	4	18	15	19

## Marbled White *Melanargia galathea*

Another short season for this species with the lowest BMS total on record, mirroring other grassland butterfly species in 2024. Two on 17th June were the first of the year. The peak count on the Estate was 32 on 26th June, whilst elsewhere, 12 were recorded on New Downs and six on the Point. By 19th July it appeared to be all over with four on the Estate noted, however, a late outlier was still on the wing on 5th August.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	126	188	424	289	219	224	242	367	177
% of total	5	6	8	9	10	11	9	11	6
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	282	201	202	250	130	79	90	73	59
% of total	8	5	7	14	7	6	5	4	4

## Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

A single on 1st July was the first record of this high summer butterfly species. It was an impressive season with 1,025 butterfly-days, a marked increase on the previous year. The Estate held several triple-figure counts including 225 on 26th July, 230 on 19th July, and 140 on 24th July. Elsewhere, New Downs recorded 43 on 20th July and RSPB Worth Marshes held 39 on 18th July. Counts proceeded into August with 79 on the Estate on the 6th being most notable as well as an atypical record on the Green Wall on 21st August. The last record of the year was a single on 12th August. Once again, this species had the highest percentage total on the BMS transect.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	303	349	554	442	240	234	432	381	614
% of total	11	11	10	13	11	11	15	11	20
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Index	561	863	563	404	477	334	420	723	630
% of total	15	23	20	22	26	25	24	27	31

## Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

There was a slight reduction on last year's total for the BMS transect. A single was at the Point on 7th June with records quickly increasing across the Recording Area by the end of the month. The Estate held the highest counts with 98 on 4th July being the highest for the year. Peak counts from other subsites included 58 at the Point, 47 on New Downs, and 20 on RSPB Worth Marshes. A single on the Estate on 15th September was the last record of the year. It is interesting to note that this species appeared to fare better than other grassland species which mostly struggled during the year.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	465	734	1010	281	188	381	460	559	570
% of total	16	22	18	8	9	18	16	17	19
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	776	629	454	271	171	179	288	431	420
% of total	21	17	16	15	9	14	16	16	20

## Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

There were 423 butterfly-days during the year. A single on 8th May on the Estate was the first record with numbers increasing towards the end of the month. High counts in June across the Recording Area included 28 on the Point, 52 on the Estate, and 14 on New Downs. Counts of 20+ occurred in July on the Estate and the Point, the former recording the majority of sightings. Numbers appeared to be fairly low in August compared to previous years with only a peak count of 22 on the 28th. A count of 26 on 7th September was the last significant count of the year on the Estate with numbers quickly decreasing until a final sighting on the Green Wall on 11th October.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Index	360	349	496	490	266	455	374	388	462
% of total	13	11	9	15	13	22	13	12	15
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Index	390	718	422	148	173	130	224	256	167
% of total	11	19	15	8	10	10	13	10	8

## References

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/uk-butterfly-emergency-declared>

**By Greg Lee and Steffan Walton**

# Dragonflies and Damselflies

This year 29 species of *Odonata* were recorded at Sandwich Bay equalling the record set in 2021. The stand-out event of the year was the discovery of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly, *Ischnura pumilio*, on 8th August on newly excavated pools in the recently acquired Dragonfly Pond Field. At the time, this was thought to be the first record for Kent and both mating & ovipositing was observed. This is the 32nd species to have been recorded in the area and we are not aware of any other UK site that has a greater diversity. We are exceedingly grateful to all our members, volunteers, supporters and organisations that helped plan, fund, and got their hands dirty. To quote both God (to Noah and his Ark) and Kevin Costner (in the movie Field of Dreams) 'If you build it, they will come'!

The second major event of the year was that a remarkable nine of the then known 28 'resident' species had their earliest (or equal earliest) ever emergence dates. The wet and mild winter of 2023/24 considered to have been part-responsible for the 'collapse' in abundance of butterflies, moths, bumblebees, etc. appears to have favoured aquatic invertebrates. In order of appearance these were Hairy Dragonfly (by five days), Common Blue Damselfly (three days), Variable Damselfly (eight days), Blue-tailed Damselfly (five days), Broad-bodied Chaser (two days), Banded Demoiselle (=), Dainty Damselfly (four days), Black-tailed Skimmer (four days), and Southern Migrant Hawker (=).

An additional three species were only just outside the record; Southern Emerald (by one day late), Willow Emerald Damselfly (two days late) and Ruddy Darter (two days late - probably a lot less). At the other end of the season, three species set new 'latest' records, namely Azure Damselfly (by four days), Dainty Damselfly (13 days), Brown Hawker (eight days), and Norfolk Hawker (seven days).

In terms of abundance there were winners and losers. Positive news first; nearly all species had a good season especially Willow Emerald and it was reassuring to see the return of Large Red Damselfly after last year's absence. On the debit side Scarce and Four-spotted Chasers both had their worst years since 2019. The decline of Red-eyed Damselfly continued, perhaps due to competition with Small Red-eyed Damselfly. Only low numbers of Scarce and Southern Emeralds were recorded and both are vulnerable having very local distribution while Southern Hawker just about persists. There was no evidence of Red-veined Darter breeding this year and the number of presumed migrants was very low. It was probably no coincidence that this occurred in a year when Clouded Yellow *C. crocea* was not seen in the entire Recording Area for the first time since records began.

## APRIL

Three **Hairy Dragonflies** at Mary Bax on the 13th were our first adult *odonates* of the year, and not only that, but our earliest ever records of this species (previously 18th April 2014). There was some nice sunshine mid-morning on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 18th and it produced a number of damselflies along the edge of the Great Wood, namely the first three **Large Red Damselflies** and two **Common Blue Damselflies**. A **Variable Damselfly** was also seen elsewhere on site. Both of the latter two species were our earliest ever records! Record emergence dates continued to fall, this time two **Blue-tailed Damselflies** on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 23rd were the earliest ever (previously 28th April 2017). A general **Broad-bodied Chaser** on the Wildlife Pond at the Observatory on the 27th was yet another earliest ever record.



Broad-bodied Chaser by S.North

## MAY

A Hairy Dragonfly and two Variable Damselflies were at Mary Bax on the 1st. Six species of Odonata were recorded on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 7th including our first five **Azure Damselflies** of the year. On the 9th one Azure and three Common Blue Damselflies were on the Estate, with one Azure, 11 Blue-tailed, 16 Variable Damselflies plus two Hairy Dragonflies on Worth. Our joint-earliest ever **Banded Demoiselle** was at Roaring Gutter on the 10th and the first two **Dainty Damselflies** were on the wing on the 12th. The first **Four-spotted Chasers** of the year were seen on both the Estate and New Downs on the 13th.

Records continued to be broken with our earliest ever **Black-tailed Skimmer** (a teneral female) on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 15th. On the 17th, two Four-spotted Chasers and four Azure Damselflies were on New Downs, a Variable Damselfly was on the Estate and large numbers of **Emperor Dragonfly** exuviae were found in Middle Field pond. The first **Scarce Chaser** of the year was on Worth on the 24th and the first **Norfolk Hawker** of the year (a teneral) was photographed in the Haven on the 25th.

## JUNE

At least 300 Dainty Damselflies were counted on the 3rd. On the 4th, three Emperor Dragonflies were on the Estate and 14 **Ruddy Darters** were at the Point. The first four **Common Darters** were out on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 5th. The first **Emerald Damselfly** of the year was found on the Green Wall on the 7th and the first **Southern Emerald Damselfly** was a surprise find on the Estate on the 8th. On the 13th three Norfolk Hawkets and a Banded Demoiselle were on the Estate. The 15th saw gale force winds and rain but all who came along to the Dainty Damselfly walks left very happy. At least 30 were seen during the day, plus a Norfolk Hawker was in The Elms.

A productive wander around the Estate on the 17th produced an impressive total of nine Norfolk Hawkets, plus a Banded Demoiselle, 32 Common Darters, three Ruddy Darters, two **Southern Migrant Hawkets**, five four-spotted Chasers, and three Black-tailed Skimmers. At least 110 Dainty Damselflies were out on the 19th for the last guided walks of the year. Four Emerald Damselflies and a Southern Migrant Hawker were also seen. A Southern Migrant Hawker was in Waldershare Gully on the 20th. On the 24th RSPB Worth Marshes produced 17 Banded Demoiselles, the first **Red Eyed Damselfly** of the year, 13 Black-tailed Skimmers, two Emperor Dragonflies, seven Scarce Chasers, one four-spotted Chaser, six Norfolk Hawker, five Common Darters, two Ruddy Darters, and at least 85 'darter sp'. On the 26th Black-tailed Skimmers were becoming more prevalent with double-figures on Restharrow Scrape and singles of Norfolk and Southern Migrant Hawker were also on the Estate again. The first **Small Red-eyed Damselflies** were seen around the Observatory ponds on the 28th.

Also on the 28th, two **Lesser Emperors** and a **Red-veined Darter** were both on Restharrow Scrape, both firsts for the year. Singles of Norfolk Hawker and a Southern Emerald Damselfly, and 41 Ruddy Darters, were at the Point too. Four Scarce Chasers, five Norfolk Hawkers, and 36 Banded Demoiselles were on Worth whilst the Red-veined Darter and Lesser Emperors were still on Restharrow Scrape on the 28th.

## JULY

Four Emperor Dragonflies, two Southern Migrant Hawkers, two Norfolk Hawkers, 12 Ruddy Darters, and one Banded Demoiselle were on the Estate on the 4th. On the 7th our first **Willow Emerald Damselfly** of the year was found on the Estate. A successful foray into the far reaches of the Recording Area on the 11th yielded four Southern Emerald Damselflies, eight **Scarce Emerald Damselflies**, and three Southern Migrant Hawkers while on the Estate the first three **Brown Hawkers** of the year were joined by three Norfolk Hawker, a Banded Demoiselle, and another Southern Migrant Hawker. Two Norfolk and two Southern Migrant Hawkers were on the Estate on the 15th. Two Lesser Emperors on New Downs on the 20th were the first records from that sector. On the 22nd a Willow Emerald Damselfly was at the Observatory and another two on New Downs as were the first **Migrant Hawkers** of the year. The first **Southern Hawker** of the year was on Worth on 29th.

## AUGUST

A Southern Hawker was in the Haven on the 2nd while on the 5th two Norfolk Hawkers and 70 Common Darters were counted on RSPB Worth Marshes. On the 6th, a Willow Emerald Damselfly, a Southern Hawker, and a Lesser Emperor were on Worth. There were still a few Dainty Damselflies on the wing on the Estate. On the 8th another Lesser Emperor was found hawking around Waldershare Gully. Four late Dainty Damselflies, 72 Small Red-eyed Damselflies, three Emerald Damselflies, four Common Blue Damselflies, eight Emperor Dragonflies, 47 Migrant Hawkers, six Brown Hawkers, one Ruddy Darter, and two Southern Migrant Hawkers were also noted on the Estate.

The 12th started with a casual look through some photos taken in the area on the 8th. Sharp eyes noted that one of the damselflies looked remarkably like a male **SCARCE BLUE-TAILED DAMSELFLY!** Photos and books were consulted, plus a second opinion sought, and sure enough everyone agreed; **a new species for Kent!** The area was checked and three males were found. All individuals were on the recently excavated pools in the Dragonfly Pond Field. Proof that if you build it, they will come! A full account of subsequent events is provided in the species section. In other news, a mid-morning walk along the Green Wall on the 21st brought extraordinary numbers of Willow Emerald Damselflies. A minimum of 66 were recorded, a huge increase on the previous record!

Two Common Blue Damselflies, one Blue-tailed Damselfly, 26 Ruddy Darters, nine Common Darters, one Emperor Dragonfly, 21 Migrant Hawkers, and two Brown Hawkers were also logged. After a week of windy and/or wet conditions, conditions on the 28th were perfect to look for Odonata. The recently-discovered **SCARCE BLUE-TAILED DAMSELFLIES** were still present with at least seven on the new Dragonfly Ponds. Also on the Estate were four Blue-tailed Damselflies, six Common Blue Damselflies, one Red-eyed Damselfly, 34 Small Red-eyed Damselflies, one Azure Damselfly, two Willow Emerald Damselflies, two Emerald Damselflies, five Ruddy Darters, 29 Common Darters, one Brown Hawker, one Southern Hawker, 25 Migrant Hawkers, and two Emperor Dragonflies.



Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies by A.Blackman

## SEPTEMBER

At least one **SCARCE BLUE-TAILED DAMSELFLY** was seen on the 3rd but the strengthening wind made searches very difficult. Seven Willow Emerald Damselflies and a few Common Darters were on the Green Wall on the 12th. Five Willow Emerald Damselflies, 28 Migrant Hawkets, and five Common Darters were on RSPB Worth Marshes on the 13th and two Willow Emerald Damselflies were in the Observatory carpark on the 17th. A late-ish Ruddy Darter was in the Dragonfly Pond fields on the 19th. The 21st was a hot day on RSPB Worth Marshes with lots of Odonata activity; at least 35 Migrant Hawkets and 70 Common Darters were noted.

## OCTOBER / NOVEMBER

Warm weather on the 16th encouraged at least 20 Common Darters and four Migrant Hawkets on the Estate and at least 15 Common Darters and two Migrant Hawkets were present on the 24th. For a while it looked like there would be no further sightings of any Odonata. However, on 15th November a brief period of sunshine revealed at least nine Common Darters still hanging on along the edge of the Great Wood on RSPB Worth Marshes.

Species recorded in 2024 were:

### **Banded Demoiselle** *Calopteryx splendens*

A decent year; the first at Roaring Gutter on 10th May was the joint-earliest ever (= 2023). A total of 75 ‘Demoiselle days’ were recorded with a maximum day count of 36 on 29th June from the traditional streams on RSPB Worth Marshes. Elsewhere there were singles on the Estate during June and a peak count of four on the Green Wall on 7th June. The last of the year was on the Estate on 11th July.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
‘Dem’ Days	48	132	136	74	93	44	33	92	105	39	75
Peak Count	-	109	66	26	30	14	8	26	24	19	36

### **Southern Emerald Damselfly** *Lestes barbarus*

The first was a surprise find on the Estate on 8th June; only a day later than the earliest set in 2022. However, all other records were from the traditional strongholds on the northern edge of Prince’s Golf Course and KWT’s Hundred Acre Field. The first was on 28th June increasing to four on July 11th, six on the 30th, and the last a male with a deformed abdomen on 31st July. A pattern of distribution contrary to that seen in 2022 and 2023 when none were recorded at the Point and so reassuring to see they are still present.

## Scarce Emerald Damselfly *Lestes dryas*

As expected the only records were from KWT's Hundred Acre Field with surveys on 11th and 30th July finding eight and two, respectively. This species continues to persist at Sandwich Bay but in a small area and at low density and hence vulnerable to any disturbance.

## Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa*

One of the few widespread UK species found to be in significant decline (BDS, 2021) and a total of 61 'sponsa-days' were recorded in 2024 compared to 104 in 2023 and ~300 in 2022. However, the 2022 figure was bolstered by a count of 200 during transects over the Minnis Farm sector of RSPB Worth Marshes which have not been repeated since. The first of the year was early-ish on the Green Wall on 7th June followed by two on the Estate on the 10th and 13th, while the first on Worth was on the 17th. Most of June and July's records were on the Estate with peaks of four (19th June), five (11th July), and ten (24th July) with only singletons in; and on Worth on 18th and 29th July. It was a similar picture in August with nearly all sightings on the Estate with a peak of five on 13th except for the final sighting of the year on Worth on the 30th.

## Willow Emerald Damselfly *Chalcolestes viridis*

From its discovery in 2014 and after surviving the "Beast from the East" in 2018, this year the population exploded at Sandwich Bay. The first of the year was on the Estate on 7th July (only two days later than the earliest record set in 2023) followed by one on Worth on 18th and two on New Downs on the 22nd. There were further sightings of singletons on the Estate and from RSPB Worth marshes (in vicinity of Great Wood) until an incredible 66 were counted along the Green Wall on 21st August, four times higher than the previous record day count of 17 across the Estate on 6th August 2017. There were counts of five on Worth on 30th August and 13th Sept and eight on Green Wall on 12th Sept. As the weather turned the flight season closed with a final sighting on the Estate on 21st September.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
'viridis days'	1	0	10	75	14	52	34	21	40	41	104
Peak Count	1	0	4	17	5	10	13	6	10	4	66

## Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*

Five on RSPB Worth marshes on 7th May were first for the year followed by ten/eight on the Estate 12/13th and five/four on New Downs 13/17th. On 4th June, ten were on the Estate plus 26 at the Point. Thereafter there were peaks of four on the Estate (17th/28th) and seven on Worth on 29th June. July was very quiet with only singles noted on the Estate on 15th and Worth on 18th. In August the only sightings were from the Estate with singles on 12th and 28th plus two on 29th which were last of the year and beat the 'latest ever' record (25th August set in 2010 and 2021). A total of 102 'puella' days was better than the 52 recorded last year.

### **Variable Damselfly *Coenagrion pulchellum***

First of the year was a female on RSPB Worth marshes on 18th April, eight days ahead of the previous record set in 2022. Next were two on Worth on 1st May increasing there to 16 on the 9th, 50 on the 17th, and 20 on the 23rd. Elsewhere four were on the Estate on the 12th and two on New Downs on the 13th. June. Otherwise, it was very quiet with just singles noted on the Estate on the 19th and on Worth on the 29th, which was last of the year. A strange year for this 'Near Threatened' species the population of which at Sandwich Bay/Worth Marshes is of national importance.

### **Dainty Damselfly *Coenagrion scitulum***

Continuing the trend of early emergences, first of the year here and in the UK were two teneral in the Dragonfly Pond Field on 12th May, four days earlier than the previous record set in 2023. Two were again present on the 23rd before a staggering 300 were recorded on 3rd June close to the record day count of 380 set on 11th June 2021. There were further day counts of 40 (6th), 30 (15th), 130 (17th), and 132 (19th) during June. Numbers persisted throughout July with a peak of 20 on the 15th. With heightened interest in the area following discovery of the Scare Blue-tailed Damselflies, it is perhaps not too surprising that for the first time sightings continued into August with two on the 1st and fours on 6th and 8th; the latest ever by 13 days.



Dainty Damselfly by J.Dodds

Away from the primary natal pool there were a scatter of sightings nearby including eight pairs ovipositing on one of the pools on Royal St George's on 8th June and a female on the recently created wildlife pond at the Field Centre on 17th July. Perhaps most significant was a male photographed on the Hundred Acre Field 5km distant on 16th June.

**2019:** A retrospective review of photographs taken before the initial discovery of *C. scitulum* at Sandwich Bay on 6th July revealed the presence of a mature male on the SBBOT Dragonfly Pond on 11th June.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Peak Count	15	180	380	140	283	300
Earliest Date	11 June	20 May	29 May	17 May	16 May	12 May
Latest Date	26 July	13 July	13 July	17 July	5 July	8 Aug

### Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*

First of the year was a female on the Delf Stream on RSPB Worth marshes on 24th June, followed by four there on the 29th. There were no sightings in July. With heightened interest in the area, one-to-two males were recorded on one of the newly excavated pools in the Dragonfly Pond Field from 13th to 28th August.

For the second year running numbers were very low. There is a hypothesis (Cranston, 2023) that *E. najas* disappears more frequently from sites where *E. viridulum* is also present. *E. najas* was first recorded at Sandwich Bay in 2002 followed by *E. viridulum* in 2004. A basic comparison of recent data (see Table below) suggests that the two species happily co-existed, until recently!

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
'najas days'	59	-	-	70	38	23	58	38	46	1	9
Peak 'najas' Count	20	20	12	17	12	11	18	12	18	1	4
Peak 'virid' Count	40	12	17	65	15	275	22	25	100	28	72

### Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum*

The season kicked off on schedule with eight across the Estate and three on Worth on 28th and 29th June, respectively. Numbers increased from mid-July onwards with local peaks of 11 (15th) and 15 (26th) on the Estate, 11 (29th) at the Point, and 14 (31st) on Worth. There were further increases in August exclusively on the Estate with day totals of 33 (6th), 72 (8th), 45 (13th), 34 (28th), and a final 20 on the 29th. There was a single record from the Green Wall of four on 7th August. Tens of 'shed' wings floating on Middle Field Pond on 14th August suggested that an (aquatic?) predator was taking full advantage of the abundant *viridulum* present.

## **Large Red Damselfly *Pyrhosoma nymphula***

After an absence in 2023, it was reassuring to find three (two males and one female, f. *fulvipes*) on the sheltered edge of the Great Wood on RSPB Worth marshes on 18th April, followed by a teneral on the 22nd and a female on the 26th. This species has a tenuous presence and somewhat unpredictable distribution in the Recording Area and it is possible that numbers are 'topped up' from colonies on KWT's Ham Fen Nature Reserve nearby.

## **Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum***

Another earliest emergence broken by a pair of females by the Great Wood on RSPB Worth marshes on 18th April. The previous record was 21st April set in 2011 and there had been no further April sightings until this year. The first on the Estate was on 9th May while numbers on Worth increased rapidly with 30 and 20 recorded there on 17th and 23rd May, respectively. The first sightings from the Point were three on 7th June increasing to six on the 16th. Further increases on Worth were noted with a peak of 60 on 17th June while the Estate peaked at 11 on the 29th. There was a scatter of sightings throughout July but the only double-figure count was of 12 on Worth on the 18th. A similar picture during August with ten on the Green Wall on the 7th, six on the Estate on the 28th, and finally one on Worth on the 30th.

## **Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans***

Yet another earliest emergence record broken by two males at Roaring Gutter on RSPB Worth marshes on 23rd April; the previous record was 28th April in 2017. In May numbers increased with 11 and 30 on Worth on the 9th and 23rd, respectively, while the first for the Estate was on the 13th and for New Downs on the 22nd. In June five were on the Estate on 4th and five at the Point on 7th. Numbers increased during the month with local peaks of 15 and 17 on Worth on the 17th and the 29th but the best was 24 on the Estate on the 28th. There were a scatter of sightings throughout July, the best being eight on the Estate on 15th. A similar picture in August with a peak of 15 on the Estate on the 14th and a final pair there on the 29th. A so-so year for one of the most abundant zygopterans at Sandwich Bay which can often number in their hundreds in favoured haunts.

## **Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura pumilio***

On Monday 12th August photographs taken on Thursday the 8th at the original Dragonfly Pond (DFP) were reviewed and of the many damselflies present, one looked remarkably like a male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly. The literature was consulted, a second opinion sought, and identification confirmed. It is an understatement to say this was a great surprise because this species had never been recorded previously in Kent \*. The nearest known UK colony is (was) at Sompting Brooks in West Sussex and this was only discovered in 2020 (Sadler 2022). The area where the photograph was taken was searched immediately and three males were found nearby on one of the three recently excavated sandy pools containing the barest of emergent vegetation.

On the morning of the 13th a total of five males (two on the new pool plus three on another new pool on private land nearby) were found. Later a female was photographed ovipositing underwater below a perched territorial male on the new pool. Another female was photographed resting in pool-side vegetation and a mating pair *in copula* was also photographed on the DFP. Four males and two females were present on the pools on the 17th. On the 18th despite thorough searches there were no sightings however, after a long effort at least one male was found on the 19th. After a week of windy and/or wet conditions, three were found on the 26th. Conditions on the 28th were perfect to look for Odonata and at least 14 (five males and two females ovipositing on the DFP plus five males and an ovipositing pair on the private pool), were found in the area. Unusually, one of the males was photographed clasping a male Small Red-eyed Damselfly *E. viridulum*. The weather again deteriorated, the strengthening wind and cooler temperatures rendering searches difficult, but a male was found on the private pool on the 29th and a male was photographed on the DFP on 3rd September. This was the final sighting of the year.



Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly by S.North

Bodout and Kalkman (2015) describe *I. pumilio* as a pioneer species with strong dispersal powers found in sparsely vegetated waters such as newly created and ephemeral ponds. It has a wide range throughout Europe but in England, it is locally common only in the West Country, Dorset, and New

Forest. It is very rare in most of eastern England but 2019 saw small-scale arrivals in coastal Norfolk and Suffolk. 2020 saw an extensive series of reports from Worcestershire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, West Sussex and Suffolk. In 2021 there were reports from Bristol, Portland Bill, and Oxfordshire but there were none in 2022 and 2023 (Parr 2020 - 2024).

Due to the coastal position of Sandwich Bay coupled with no previous records in Kent, it is most likely that sightings at Sandwich Bay resulted from a wave of dispersal from colonies in continental Europe across the English Channel which fortuitously hit our newly excavated pools. But when did the influx first occur? The absence of *exuvia*, teneral and/or immature insects, plus the single record from Sholden \*, suggest a very recent event but the possibility that they were the progeny of individuals overlooked earlier in the season (or the previous year) cannot be completely excluded.

\* On 12th August, following release of information on the discovery of *pumilio* at Sandwich Bay, we received a communication from Adrian Parr who had found and identified a female from a photograph on iRecord taken at Sholden, near Deal by Paula Young on 31st July. Consequently, this is the first record for Kent and was presumably part of the same influx.

### **Southern Migrant Hawker** *Aeshna affinis*

First of the year were two on the Estate on 17th June, equalling the previous record set in 2021. The firsts on the Green Wall were a pair on the 29th. In July there were records from most sectors including three at the Point on the 11th, firsts on Worth and New Downs on the 15th and 20th, respectively, with a peak of nine in the Hundred Acre Field on the 30th. In August the only reports were from the Estate with one-tuos from the 2nd to the last of the year on the 14th providing a total of 38 '*affinis*' days.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
' <i>affinis</i> days'	13	4	40	13	7	38	38
Est. min no. of individuals	9	4	24	8	2	11	15
No. of sites	4	3	5	4	2	5	6
Earliest Date	17 Jul	23 Jul	23 Jun	17 Jun	24 Jul	23 Jun	17 Jun
Latest Date	7 Aug	12 Sep	27 Aug	4 Aug	15 Aug	1 Sep	14 Aug

### **Southern Hawker** *Aeshna cyanea*

Firsts of the year were on Worth on 29th July and on the Estate on 2nd August. There were only single day counts from the Estate (mainly) and Worth during August with the last of the year on the Estate on the 29th. A total of eight *cyanea* days underlines a very poor year for what is now our scarcest *Aeshna*.

## Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*

A late-ish start to the flight season with the first three of the year on the Estate on 11th July, followed by two on RSPB Worth marshes on the 18th where numbers increased to six on the 29th. In August, four were on Worth on the 5th while numbers increased on the Estate to six on the 8th. Two were on the Green Wall on the 21st. Numbers then decreased with just occasional singles on the Estate. The first three weeks of September were blank and we thought the season over until one on the Estate on the 20th, followed by another on Worth on the 21st, both of the latter breaking the 'latest' record of 13th September set in 2010. Otherwise, a mediocre total of 39 '*grandis*' days.

## Norfolk Hawker *Aeshna isosceles*

The first of the year (a teneral) was photographed in the Haven on 25th May. There was a pause until three were on the Estate on 13th June followed by a surprising nine there, plus a further six on Worth on the 17th. The number on the Estate dropped to the occasional single while five-six continued on RSPB Worth marshes until month end. One at the Point on the 28th was the first record for that sector of the Recording Area. There were reports from the Estate and Worth throughout July peaking at three on the 11th and six on the 18th, respectively. One on New Downs on 20th was another new sub-site. For the first time sightings continued into August with two seen on Worth on the 5th beating the previous 'latest' record of 29th July set in 2020. An excellent year with a record highest 'total days' count, high numbers on the Estate, and notable sightings in two new sectors all away from the core area along the Delf and North Streams on Worth.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
'isos days'	4	7	7	33	46	45	62	63
Peak Count	2	2	3	11	24	16	14	15
Earliest Date	22 Jun	15 Jun	29 May	30 May	9 Jun	4 Jun	17 May	25 May
Latest Date	26 Jun	16 Jul	21 Jul	29 Jul	24 Jun	23 Jul	5 Jul	5 Aug

## Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*

We had to wait until 22nd July when five were in flight over New Downs, followed by counts of 15 on the Estate on the 24th and 26th. The first on RSPB Worth marshes was on the 29th and at the Point on the 30th. The first half of August was deceptively quiet until numbers suddenly rose with peaks of 21 on the Green Wall on the 21st, 25 on the Estate on the 28th, and 42 on Worth on the 30th. Spells of fair weather in September resulted in peaks of 28 on Worth on the 13th and 60 on the Estate the day after. There were still counts of 35 and 15 on the Estate on the 21st and 28th, respectively. As weather deteriorated, numbers dropped quickly in October with ones-twos on the Estate, four at the Point on 18th, and a final flourish of five on Worth on the 24th.

## **Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator***

Large numbers of exuviae were found on Middle Field pond on 17th May but the first seen on the wing were three on the Estate plus one at the Point on 4th June, followed by reports of three-four until the first on RSPB Worth marshes on the 17th. There were sightings throughout the rest of June and into July with local peaks of five on the Estate (4th), four on Worth (18th), six on New Downs (20th), and nine at the Point (29th). During August most reports were from the Estate with a peak of eight on the 8th, just two on Worth on the 5th, plus singles on the Green Wall on the 7th and 21st. The last of the year was on the Estate on 7th September. A decent season with counts well up from those in 2023.

## **Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope***

The season started with two males in flight over Restharrow Scrape (RHS) on 28th and 29th June. However, we had to wait until 22nd July before two were seen over the South Scrape (one of two 'borrow pits' used to provide material for the new sea defences) on New Downs, the first time this species has been sighted from this part of the Recording Area. A male was again on RHS on 26th July and one was hawking along a footpath near to the Great Wood on RSPB Worth marshes on 6th August. The last of the year was in Waldershare Gully on 8th August.

## **Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense***

Another earliest record with three in the Worth area on 13th April beating the previous best of 18th April set in 2014. Singles were seen on Worth for the rest of the month and one was on New Downs on the 29th. During May all sightings were on Worth with three on the 7th, 10th, and 17th with the last of the year there on the 24th. A typical season.

## **Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa***

Yet another record broken, a teneral emerging from the Wildlife Pond at the Field Centre on 27th April (previously 29th April 2011) followed by one on RSPB Worth marshes on 7th May. In general, the study of larval stages is under-recorded at Sandwich Bay consequently the identification of 15 exuviae on the Middle Field Pond on 13th May increases significantly our understanding of the status of *L. depressa*. The next record of just one on the Estate on 6th June illustrates how dragonflies can 'disappear' after they emerge, disperse, and mature. There were further singles on the Estate on the 19th and the 26th and pairs at the Point on the 24th and the 29th which were last of the year.

## **Scarce Chaser *Libellula fulva***

All records were from RSPB Worth marshes. A teneral on 24th May was first for the year then a wait until two on 17th June. Numbers increased to seven (all males) on the 24th and a final four on the 29th. A very poor year for this GB Red List Near Threatened species.

## Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*

Firsts of the year were singles on both the Estate and New Downs on 13th May and then three on RSPB Worth marshes on the 17th. Numbers increased to peaks of five on Worth on 24th May and five on the Estate on 17th June. The rest of June and July were very quiet with just occasional singles on the Estate and Worth and the season finished with two at the Point on 30th July. The poorest year in terms of abundance since 2019, similar to that seen for its congener *L. fulva*.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
'quad days'	54	23	26	53	106	66	33
Peak Count	17	4	8	11	53	10	5
Earliest Date	6 May	20 May	8 May	31 May	12 May	7 May	13 May
Latest Date	26 Jun	1 Aug	25 Jul	13 Jul	8 Jul	5 Jul	30 Jul

## Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*

A teneral female fluttering on RSPB Worth Marshes on 15th May was our earliest ever (previously 19th May 2023 and 21st May 2009). Three were on Worth on the 23rd and 24th. There were no reports during the first half of June until three on the Estate on the 17th. Numbers rose quickly with peaks of 13 on Worth on the 24th and 14 on the Estate on the 26th. There was one at the Point on the 24th. There were further increases during July with peaks of 51 on New Downs on the 20th, 28 on the Estate (26th), and 20 on Worth (29th). Continuing into August, five were on Worth on the 5th, one on the Green Wall on the 7th, ones-tuos on the Estate mid-month with last of the year on Worth on 30th August.



Black-tailed Skimmer by A.Lipczynski

### **Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii***

A male on RHS on 28th and 29th June was the only record. A poor year with no indication of local breeding, coincidentally in a year when the Clouded Yellow butterfly *C. crocea* was not seen in the entire area for the first time since records began.

### **Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum***

A survey of the Hundred Acre Field revealed 14 on 4th June, our second earliest record. One on the Estate on 2nd June in 2020 was thought to be exceptional but this year's record suggests otherwise and it is interesting to speculate on when they were first present/emerged. Elsewhere, the first on the Estate was on the 14th and on Worth on the 17th. Small increases to three/four were noted there until another trip to the Point recorded 41 on the 29th. In July there were peaks of 12 on the Estate on the 4th, ten on Worth on the 29th, and 40 at the Point on the 30th (note no Common Darters were seen at the Point on all three visits). Throughout August there were peaks of five on both Worth and the Estate, eclipsed by 26 on the Green Wall on the 21st. Singles lingered on the Estate during September with the last seen on the 21st.

### **Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum***

Firsts of the year were four on RSPB Worth marshes on 5th June followed ten days later by one on the Estate on the 15th. Number rose quickly with 32 on the Estate on the 17th and 23 on Worth on the 29th. Six were on the Green Wall on the 25th. In July there were peaks of 19 on New Downs on the 22nd, 18 on the Estate on the 26th, and 30 on Worth on the 29th. In early August there were peaks of 70 on Worth on the 5th and 55 on the Estate the day after. Numbers started to fall but there were still nine on the Green Wall on the 21st, 29 on the Estate on the 28th, and 15 on Worth on the 30th. Similar numbers continued throughout September whilst a spell of fine weather resulted in 70 across the Estate on the 20th. In October six were on the Green Wall on the 11th, 45 at the Point on the 18th, and 15 on Estate and 42 on Worth on the 24th. The weather deteriorated and we thought the season over until a sunny spell on 15th November revealed the last nine of the year by the Great Wood on Worth.

Occasionally, there are times in the season (for instance during mass emergence of teneral or in late summer/early autumn when many darters are in flight) it is impractical to identify all to species level. Dependent upon location the majority will be *S. striolatum* but for the sake of correctness they are recorded as Darter sp. At least 85 were on RSPB Worth marshes on 24th June.

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**By Andrew Lipczynski**

# Moths

In 2024 379 macro and 374 micromoth species were recorded. Of these 25 were new for our Recording Area. These were Apple Dot *Stigmella malella*, Beech Dot *S. hemargyrella*, Black-barred Fungus Moth *Nemapogon clematella*, Pale Maple Stilt *Caloptilia honoratella*, Gorse Leaf-miner *Phyllonorycter ulicicolella*, Grey Orache Miner *Scrobipalpa obsoletella*, Pine Needle-moth *Batrachedra confusella*, Small Elm Case-bearer *Coleophora badiipennella*, Apple and Plum Case-bearer *C. spinella*, Sea-purslane Case-bearer *C. salinella*, Pale Orache Case-bearer *C. versurella*, Fat Hen Case-bearer *C. clypeiferella*, Twin-spot Sedge-miner *Elachista biatomella*, Common Grass-miner *E. canapennella*, Streaked Ridge-back *Epermenia falciformis*, Scarce Grey Tortrix *Cnephasia genitalana*, Southern Grey Tortrix *C. communana*, Wood Marble *Lobesia reliquana*, Rufous Hook-wing *Ancyliis dimutana*, Knapweed Pearl *Paratalanta hyalinalis*, Toadflax Pearl *Antigastra catalaunalis*, Silver-spotted Veneer *Euchromius ocella*, Fiery Clearwing *Pyropteron chyrsidiformis*, Golden-rod Pug *Eupithecia virgaureata*, and Alder Moth *Acronicta alni*.

As is often the case, trapping conditions were rarely suitable early in the year. The first incidental records were Winter Moth and *Acleris cristana* at the start of January. The trap was first used on the night of 4th February and caught three species - Clouded Drab, Dark Chestnut, and Satellite. Shelter provided by The Elms gave a nice catch on 8th March. This included a Scorched Carpet which was our earliest of this species by a month. Throughout most of March the car park was flooded enough to make trapping difficult. A Dark Sword-grass on the 19th was the first migrant to be recorded.

Wet and windy conditions continued to limit trapping opportunities in April. The first Silver Y was recorded on the 7th. Delicate used to be considered a migrant but numbers and regularity suggest it is establishing itself and the first was recorded on the 11th. The first Diamondback was caught on the 29th and the next night there were 19 Silver Ys and a Dark Sword-grass.

May started with a successful caterpillar identification course led by Phil Sterling and Barry Henwood on behalf of Butterfly Conservation. This added some excellent larval records, such as Dusky-lemon Sallow, Shore Wainscot, and Sussex Emerald. Although the days were regularly sunny the nights remained cool. Daytime searches in sheltered spots located plenty of the usual species such as *Adela reamurella*, Oblique-striped, and Mother Shipton. Mid-May improved and Silver Ys started to arrive with 22 plus six Diamondbacks on the 14th. The next night there was a Dusky Hook-tip. There were 23 more Silver Ys on the 17th and the first Pearly Underwing occurred on the 28th.



Sussex Emerald larva by B.Henwood

Conditions were very variable in June varying from 6.7°C on the 11th with just 16 moths, to 15.2°C and 290 moths on the 27th. There were two new macro species. Visitors trapped our first record of **Alder Moth** on the 7th. This was followed by a **Fiery Clearwing** found in the field on the 12th (with a second on the 25th). Migration was patchy with a high of 17 Diamondbacks and 12 Silver Ys on the 3rd. There was a Golden Twin-spot on the 9th followed by our second record of **Porter's Rustic** on the 12th. Sunny daytime conditions resulted in species such as Burnet Companion and Silver Barred. Four Foresters on the 26th was the highest count since the experiment with pheromone lures a few years ago.

July continued unsettled but there were more cloudy, humid nights. The month started with the scarce pyralid *Catoptria verullus* on the 1st (with further singles on the 4th and 19th) and the fifth record for SBBOT of Scarce Silver-lines on Sandown Road. The next night there was our fifth ever September Thorn. On the 4th a Red-necked Footman and 12 Silver Barreds were caught. For the third year in a row the scarce pyralid *Sciota rhenella* was caught on the 5th. There was an arrival of Silver Ys on the 6th with 148 in the trap. The next night saw another *Sciota rhenella* and a Pearly Underwing. *Isophrictis anthemidella* was confirmed again on Prince's Beach on the 17th (after its UK discovery here in 2020). Calm, humid conditions on the 18th resulted in 419 moths of 132 species in the trap. The highlight was a **Brussels Lace**.

There was an upturn in conditions from the 24th when a Four-spotted Footman was caught. The next day there was the first Small Mottled Willow and a second Dusky Hook-tip for the year, with another Dusky Hook-tip on the 28th. Nighttime temperatures improved a lot in August which produced some interesting catches. This started with the second record of the very rare tortrix *Eana argentana* on the 1st. There was a **Bedstraw Hawk-moth** on the 3rd and the steady trickle of Silver Ys continued. The first Scarce Bordered Straw of the year turned up on the 7th when a trap in The Elms briefly held our third ever record of the distinctive tortrix *Acleris literana*. Are Dusky Hook-tip establishing in the area? The third of the year was on the 10th. The attractive Dewick's Plusia graced the trap on the 12th but was overshadowed by our second ever records of the scarce migrant **Three-humped Prominent** and the pyralid *Sciota hostilis* together with five Scarce Bordered Straws and a *Cydia amplana*. The first Convolvulus Hawk-moth of the year was on the 15th. Another new species the tortrix *Ancylis diminutana* was caught on the 19th and was followed by the first ever **Golden-rod Pug** on the 30th together with the second Porter's Rustic for the year.

In September the nights started warm but by the 13th there was the first frost. Catches of 450-500 moths at the start were bolstered by migrants. Silver Ys reached 64 on the 2nd, when there were also two each of Golden Twin-spot and Scarce Bordered Straw. A Clifton Nonpareil on the 5th will have been a migrant here and was the first Kent Black Arches since early August also a migrant? A Red Admiral in the trap was followed by a steady flow of them heading inland on the 6th.

Another species which seems to now have a toehold in the area is Portland Ribbon Wave and there was one on the 7th. Another Clifden Nonpareil, a Gem, and a *Palpita vitrealis* turned up on the 6th. The next night there were three Convolvulus Hawk-moths and another *P. vitrealis*. The frost on the 13th did not deter another Convolvulus Hawk-moth. The night of the 21st saw our first record of the very recent UK colonist *Caloptilia honoratella*. Scarce Bordered Straws remained almost nightly and on the 23rd there was our first record of the attractive migrant pyralid *Euchromis ocella*.

Whenever the weather allowed in October, and that was not every night, the regular migrant species continued to appear. Radford's Flame Shoulder would definitely have been included in this category until last year but it now seems to be establishing along the south coast. The first was recorded on the 3rd followed by another five during the month. Migrants continued on the few suitable nights in November but one of the highlights was our second ever **Streak**. After the 12th, cooler conditions put an end to migrant moths and by the 15th it was not possible to trap until the 25th, when there was one moth – a Feathered Thorn. There were only three suitable nights in December and on the 15th it was pleasing to catch a December Moth after none in 2023.

**By Ian Hunter**



Feathered Gothic by M.Golley

## Other Noteworthy Observations in 2024

Nine **Man Orchids** *Orchis anthropophora* flowered on the Estate beach and two **Chalk Fragrant Orchids** *Gymnadenia conopsea* on Prince's Golf Course were the first sightings for around a decade. **Pale Persicaria** *Persicaria lapathifolia* in the Dragonfly Pond Field and **Chicory** *Cichorium intybus* on RSPB Worth marshes were both new for their respective sites and the first records in the local area since the 1980's. Recently-disturbed waste ground on the Green Wall also revealed records of **Wild Radish** *Raphanus raphanistrum*, **Common Amaranthe** *Amaranthus retroflexus*, and **Apple Of Peru** *Nicandra physalodes*.

It was another excellent spring for **Red-shanked Carder Bee** *Bombus ruderarius* not just at hotspots like the Estate but also with records on the Green Wall, New Downs, and Worth. **Mottled Shieldbug** *Rhaphigaster nebulosa* continued to colonise with a sighting at the Observatory on 11th March followed by late instars in the Cellars on 9th September and in Little Gully on 16th September. A **Forget-me-knot Shieldbug** *Sehirus luctuosus* at the top of King's Avenue on 4th June was new for the area. Seven **Southern Dune Tiger Beetles** *Cicindela maritima* were recorded on Prince's Beach on 16th June and another on 28th June. *Chalcis sispes* was found in the Dragonfly Pond Field, a scarce chalcid wasp mostly encountered on southern coastal grazing marsh. There was also a very interesting run of **Ant-lion** *Euroleon nostras* sightings on 10th, 12th, 28th, 30th August, and 1st September, mostly from the Haven area but also Dragonfly Pond Field. This meant this species was recorded for the fourth year in succession and possibly suggestive of a colonisation attempt. Attempts will be made in future years to search for their telltale pitfall trips to confirm breeding.

On the mammal front a **Water Vole** *Arvicola amphibius* on the Green Wall on 7th June was unusual for the site. **Beavers** *Castor fiber* were recorded on the Estate beach on 17th and 26th March, two on Worth on 11th May and 18th June, and the Green Wall on 14th September. However, nocturnal camera trapping and visual signs of feeding have revealed far more individuals than are observed during the day. A dead **Badger** on Goretop Lane next to RSPB Worth marshes was a rare local record on 13th March. Unfortunately, escaped **Polecat-Ferret(s)** were seen in The Elms on 26th April, in Waldershare Gully on 8th June, near Restharrow Scrape on 7th July, and again in Waldershare Gully on 19th August, and there was also another sighting of an **American Mink** *Neovison vison* along the river on New Downs on 1st August. A new project has begun with hopes to eradicate this species from Kent and the rest of the South-east. **Hedgehog** *Erinaceus europaeus* was seen on the Estate on six dates and the Green Wall on two dates, and a **Harbour Porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena* was offshore on 5th April.

Whilst the commoner Pipistrelle species are recorded regularly, records of **Noctule Bat** *Nyctalus noctula* are rare, so it was pleasing to confirm one along the Guilford Rd on 6th July.

**Common Frogs** *Rana temporaria* were on the Green Wall on 24th January and 1st March and targeted **Sand Lizard** *Lacerta agilis* searches on Prince's Beach revealed four on 8th June and an impressive 14 on the 9th. Finally, there was an unusual discovery of **Mirror Carp** *Cyprinus carpio carpio* in the ponds on Prince's Golf Course on 29th July.

**By Steffan Walton**



Ant-lion by C.Ward

# The Dragonfly Fields Project

Dainty Damselflies (*Coenagrion scitulum*) had been identified at the Dragonfly Pond by 2020. They were creating a bit of a stir. The Kent *Odonata* recorder, Marc Heath, came to investigate.

It was clear that Dainty Damselflies were pretty limited in distribution in the UK and that our population was therefore very important to the overall fortune of the species. Having leased the Dragonfly Pond and Jubilee Fields for a number of years and with the lease coming up for renewal it seemed to be the right time to try to buy the fields.

We started negotiations towards the purchase at the end of 2022 but it would take us until July 2023 to finalise the purchase. In the meantime, we continued to make plans for the development of the area for the good of the wildlife and to make it as accessible as possible for our members and visitors. We set up two groups to oversee the purchase and plan the development of the area. We also set up plans to raise as much money as we could to enable our more ambitious plans to be realised.



A drone photo taken in May 2023 prior to the excavation of the new ponds,  
by Vicky Peuple, Warden of RSPB Worth Marshes.

From the start we were able to get the commitment of the **Banister Trust** (who had helped us purchase the Restharrow Scrape field) to support half of the purchase price. **The Kent Community Foundation, Charles Burnett III Memorial Fund, the Nineveh Trust, Bullough Thompson Trust, and Birding for All** provided grants to help. The **Co-op Community Fund** supported the nature trail plans with a grant of over £5,000.

We also ran several fund-raising appeals which our members and others were very generous in supporting:

Your help  
will  
ensure we  
can do  
more of  
this

**Please help us to make *more* of the fields -  
our plans include:**



Our **Just Giving** appeal raised over £4,500. We were able to secure a match funding opportunity from the **Big Give**. We thought we were being a touch optimistic thinking we could raise £10,000 ourselves in order to leverage that amount again in match funding. However, we did it – with the generous help of, mostly, our members we were able to secure the full amount of £10,000 funding from Big Give donors. One other major contributor to the fund-raising was the amount of Gift Aid we could add, thanks to those who agreed that we could claim back tax they had already paid.

We designed a few branded items to sell in our shop to raise awareness and funds – these included Dainty Damselfly pins plus various other practical items including mugs and water bottles.

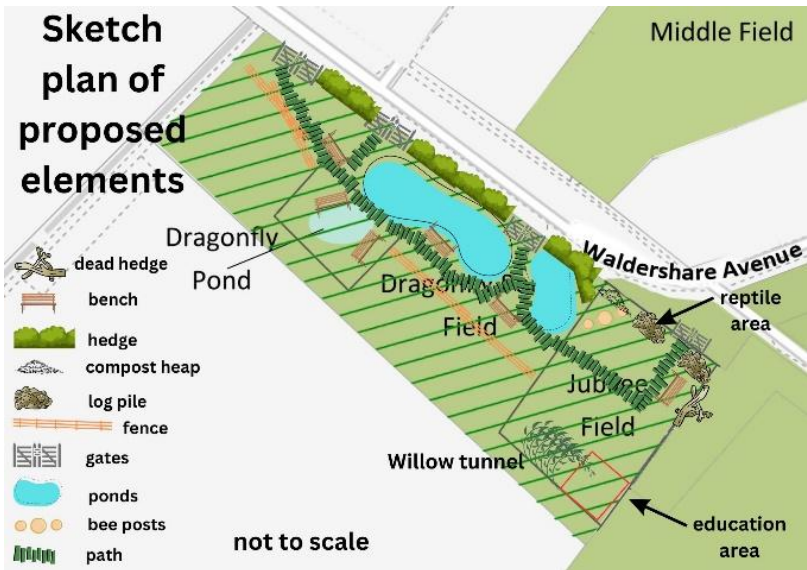
We ran several events to raise both awareness and money. These included several *Odonata* walks led by Steffan, a special Thursday evening talk by John Buckingham, a boat trip on the River Stour with all the proceeds being donated to us by **Grove Ferry River Trips**, and a talk by David Lindo, one of our patrons, together with a Christmas Draw in 2023 and other activities

where the proceeds were earmarked for the Dragonfly Fields Appeal. Our thanks to all those whose efforts large and small helped us raise sufficient funds to do all we wanted to do to improve this new reserve for both wildlife and people.



The area was notorious for being really wet in winter as this picture (left) by Steffan Walton, our Warden, taken in January 2021, shows. So along with the work to increase biodiversity we wanted to ensure that the area would be accessible to as many people as possible throughout the year.

From the beginning we knew that the main focus of our development work to increase the biodiversity of the area would be to increase the number of ponds in the area and to focus other developments on invertebrates. We drew up a project plan so that we could track our progress towards our main goals. One of the first pictorial plans we drew up:



Once we knew what we wanted to do we were extremely lucky in finding some organisations to support the work:

Firstly - The **Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP)**. Under their remit to provide ponds for Great Crested Newts, they were able to provide three ponds. All the work from applying for planning permission to the digging of the ponds was undertaken by them (and their contractors). They worked on the actual plans with us and agreed to use the spoil to create the paths throughout the area, and also to use the better soil from the first diggings to provide a bank above the winter water level to later accommodate trees along the road side of the Dragonfly Pond field. They completed the work in April 2024 when the site was extremely wet and they needed to use a pump to temporarily remove water to allow the digging to proceed.



Secondly - Andrew Haining at **Eforest** trees provided us with 500 shrubs and trees. These were planted in November 2024 to provide a thicker hedge along the road side edge of the Dragonfly Field. We had a most enjoyable tree-planting day to which we invited our members, plus representatives from the various organisations who had supported the project, and those from local government. All the trees were native species that would provide nectar, fruit, or shelter in the future:

Aspen ( <i>Populus tremuloides</i> )	Field Maple ( <i>Acer campestre</i> )
Bird Cherry ( <i>Prunus padus</i> )	Guelder Rose ( <i>Viburnum opulus</i> )
Blackthorn ( <i>Prunus spinosa</i> )	Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> )
Cherry Plum ( <i>Prunus cerasifera</i> )	Privet ( <i>Ligustrum vulgare</i> )
Common Buckthorn ( <i>Rhamnus cathartica</i> )	Wild Cherry ( <i>Prunus avium</i> )
Common Gorse ( <i>Ulex europaeus</i> )	Wild Pear ( <i>Pyrus communis</i> )
Crab Apple ( <i>Malus sylvestris</i> )	Wild Service Tree ( <i>Sorbus torminalis</i> )
Downy Birch ( <i>Betula pubescens</i> )	



Sandwich Town Mayor, Paul Carter, planting a tree. By S.Reynaert.

Once the digging work was completed our wonderful Conservation Team added the other elements we had planned. These included bee posts (helped by the members of our young people's group), dead hedges, a wood pile, compost heaps and hoverfly lagoons. The Conservation Team also installed the fencing to keep the conservation grazing cattle in the correct part of the field, the gates to allow access for all to the site, the nature trail signs, and the benches which had been donated in the names of three people who sadly are no longer with us: Ian Hodgson, our previous Warden,

Colin North, a recent member, and Mick Allen, who had been active with us in the 70s and 80s.



Hoverfly lagoon and signage by S.Reynaert

We then completed the installation of the Nature Trail signs and produced a children's activity booklet to expand the experience as they go around the Nature Reserve. A new conservation management plan is in operation.

The site was already proving its worth in the summer of 2024. There were sightings of Dainty Damselflies on the new pools, **a new Damselfly for Kent** also seen on the new pools, an Antlion (*Euroleon nostras*) (perhaps attracted to the sand paths?), and solitary bees using the bee posts.

We are grateful to the Sandwich Bay Estate for allowing us to create access points across their road verge in order to site our gates where we wanted them. Everyone who helped us in our plans – whether financially, physically, with expertise, or in the management of the project – should feel proud that the project achieved so much in the first two years and is continuing to provide habitat for a huge range of creatures to use as a temporary or permanent place to feed, rest or breed, and a pleasant place for members and visitors of all ages to enjoy either as an accessible path away from the road towards the Restharrow Scrape or as a place to sit and enjoy the natural world. Thank you!

**By Sally Hunter**

Members of the Conservation Team proud of their new gate. By Steve Reynaert

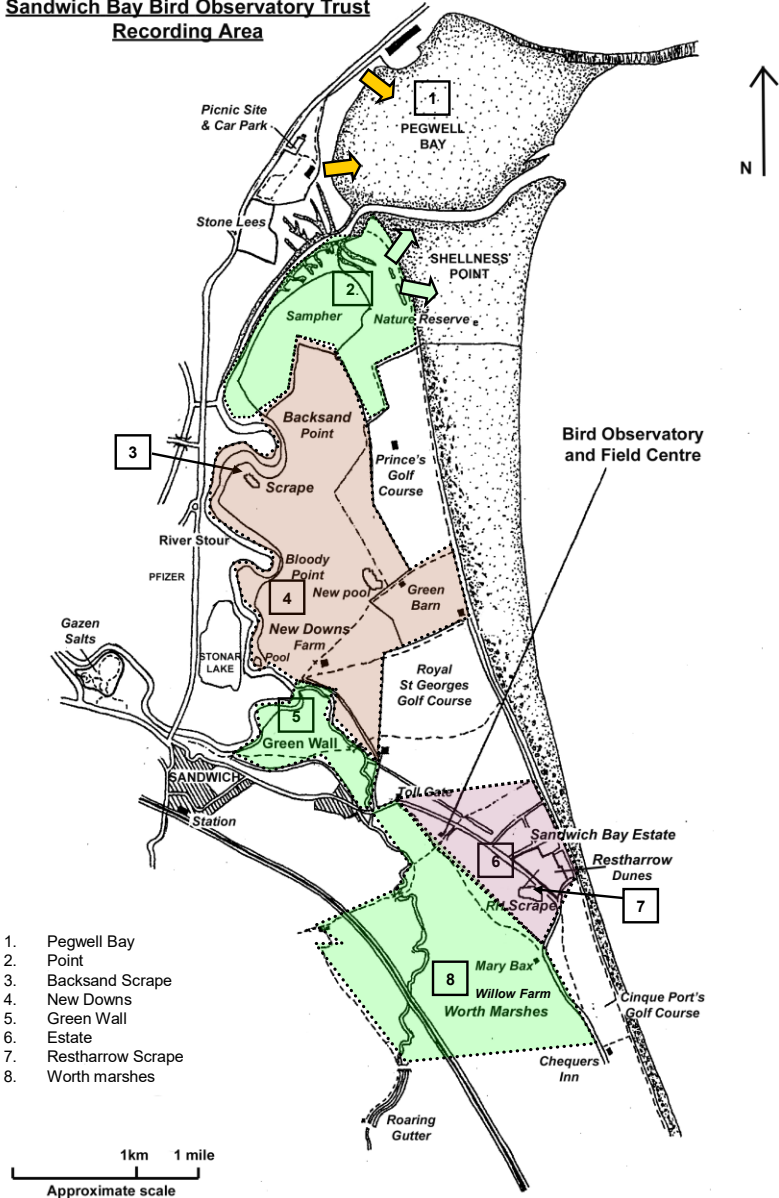


The new Damsselfly for Kent – the Scarce Blue-tailed Damsselfly on the first piece of vegetation in one of the new pools! By Steve Reynaert



# Map of SBBOT Recording Area

## Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust Recording Area



# Activities

As well as our conservation and monitoring work we aim to entertain and educate our members and the general public. To this end we hold weekly guided walks, birdwatching classes, illustrated talks about wildlife, and educational courses. Our activities are open to all and refreshments are provided at our events.

Our regular guided walks from the Field Centre occur every month on Sunday at 09:00. They are informal, relaxing and aimed for all ages and abilities. Talks are given on Wednesday and Thursday evenings at 19:30, either online or at the Observatory, on a wide range of topics. Wednesday talks are often educational to learn hints and tips on all aspects of natural history whilst Thursday illustrated talks are from guest speakers, exploring wildlife or specific projects near and far. In the summer months Thursday evening talks are often replaced by evening walks instead.

Throughout the year there are various additional Natural History events such as Bee Identification Courses, Fungal Forays, Bat walks, and Moth nights. Day-trips and Holidays are organised and offered by SBBOT. Recent trips include Costa Rica, North Wales, Bulgaria, Isle of Scilly, Spain, Islay, Northumberland and Norfolk, and past reports can be read on the website.

SBBOT runs two youth groups in conjunction with the RSPB. Wildlife Explorers is a group for ages 8-12 and the Phoenix group for ages 13-18 years old. The aim is to bring nature to life by having fun with lots of hands on activities. Events take place in and around the Field Centre (unless otherwise indicated) on the last Saturday of the month from 10.00 till 14.00.

Our annual Open Day is held every bank holiday weekend in August with also regular Photographic Competitions, Quiz nights, In Focus optics days, Exhibitions, and more. In most years SBBOT organises over 240 different events. You can find the latest on all our events at **[www.sbbot.org.uk/activities](http://www.sbbot.org.uk/activities)** or pick up an events leaflet in person from the Field Centre.



For all the latest news, photos and sightings follow us on social media:



@Sandwichbirdobs



@Sandwichbirdobs



SBBOT Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust



Sandwichbirdobs

## Membership of the Trust

Membership is open to everyone interested in the aims of the Trust. Members receive discounted accommodation, monthly updates, a quarterly newsletter, an annual report and exclusive access to our trips and holidays.

Members are vital to the continuing success of the Observatory and our conservation work and monitoring. To help us with the work of the Trust please complete an application form available from the Field Centre or from our website [www.sbbot.org.uk/support-us](http://www.sbbot.org.uk/support-us)

## Bookings and General Enquires

The Field Centre has modern and comfortable self-catering accommodation for up to 18 people which includes a Family Room and six Twin Rooms. The spacious lecture hall seating up to 80 people is also available for hire. Information regarding upcoming events and courses can be found on our website: [www.sbbot.org.uk](http://www.sbbot.org.uk)

For all enquires or bookings please contact the Field Centre by e-mail: [info@sbbot.org.uk](mailto:info@sbbot.org.uk).



# SANDWICH BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST

## DO SOMETHING AMAZING LEAVE A LEGACY

PLEASE HELP US TO SECURE OUR FUTURE

Legacies to Registered Charities are free from Inheritance Tax.

Leaving a lasting gift to SBBOT is a wonderful way to be remembered by your friends and family.

SBBOT is a registered Charity. You can make a real difference to our future by adding a simple bequest in your Will or adding a Codicil (a short addendum to your existing Will, which is signed and witnessed) asking that some of your estate be left directly to the Observatory.

We have a sample Codicil which you can pick up from the Observatory or print off and complete from our website: [sbbot.org.uk/legacies](http://sbbot.org.uk/legacies)



