

## 2003 review

### January

Highlights of the month were 3 **Common Cranes** at Botolph's Bridge on the 5<sup>th</sup> (photos), a **Waxwing** west over Nickoll's Quarry on the 9<sup>th</sup>, and several scarce wildfowl at Nickoll's Quarry – the **Scaup** remaining from 2002 (to 4<sup>th</sup>, photo), 15 **Bewick's Swans** east on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, a **Ruddy Duck** on the 5<sup>th</sup> and a Goldeneye on the 9<sup>th</sup>.



Scaup - Nickoll's Quarry - January (Ian Roberts)

Commoner wildfowl were well represented too with good numbers of Pochard (peak 12 at Nickoll's Quarry on 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>), Tufted Duck (peak 43 there on 12<sup>th</sup>), Pintail (peak 40 at Sandling on 11<sup>th</sup>), Teal (70 off Hythe Ranges on 4<sup>th</sup>, 60 at Sandling on 5<sup>th</sup>, 23 at Nickoll's Quarry on 31<sup>st</sup>), Wigeon (80 west past Hythe Redoubt on 6<sup>th</sup>, 37 off Hythe Ranges on 4<sup>th</sup>), Mandarin (16 at Sandling on 11<sup>th</sup>), Gadwall (3 at Sandling on 5<sup>th</sup>, 4 at Nickoll's Quarry on 13<sup>th</sup>), and Shoveler (2 at Nickoll's Quarry on 22<sup>nd</sup>). Seaduck included Eider off Copt Point (peak 8), Mill Point (peak 7) and Hythe Redoubt (peak 3), a Velvet Scoter east past Mill Point on the 1<sup>st</sup>, and Red-breasted Mergansers past Copt Point on the 15<sup>th</sup> and Mill Point (2) on the 20<sup>th</sup>.



Common Cranes – Botolph's Bridge – 5<sup>th</sup>  
January (Ian Roberts & Dale Gibson)

The Nickoll's Quarry area also hosted single Little Egrets on 11<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>, a peak of 64 Coot on the 12<sup>th</sup>, up to 2 Jack Snipes and single Green Sandpipers on 4 dates. Other waders included an unusual run of Knot records, peaking at 11 at Hythe Redoubt on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 2 Purple Sandpipers on Folkestone Pier on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and a Woodcock at Casebourne Wood on the 18<sup>th</sup>. 36 Lapwings

in off the sea at Mill Point on the 31<sup>st</sup> were part of a small cold weather movement that also involved 12 Fieldfares in off there.

There was a notable influx of Little Gulls at the start of the month, with 20 off Copt Point and 9 west past Mill Point on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 20 west past Mill Point on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Great Skuas flew west past Mill Point on the 1<sup>st</sup> (2) and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Otherwise seawatching was very quiet until the end of the month when good numbers of auks were seen, involving a high proportion of Razorbills; 300 Razorbills flew west past Mill Point on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 2,400 auks east past Copt Point on the 29<sup>th</sup> included c.1,000 Razorbills and 2,600 auks east past Copt Point on the 30<sup>th</sup> included c.1,000 Razorbills. 160 Red-throated Divers and 100 Gannets east past Mill Point on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 80 Kittiwakes east past Copt Point on the 29<sup>th</sup> were also notable counts.

As usual notable passerines were few but a Black Redstart was along Hythe Ranges on the 4<sup>th</sup>, a Firecrest was at Mill Point on the 30<sup>th</sup>, and 20 Rock Pipits were counted between Copt Point and Samphire Hoe on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Siskins included a peak of 30 at Casebourne Wood on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and a count of 3 Nuthatches at Brockhill on the 12<sup>th</sup> was noteworthy.

## February

Notable movements of Red-throated Divers comprised 40 east past Mill Point on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 104 east there on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 100e there on the 28<sup>th</sup>, whilst one was at Nickoll's Quarry from the 21<sup>st</sup> (to 3<sup>rd</sup> March). Up to 3 Great Crested Grebes were at Nickoll's Quarry throughout, and 6 were off Mill Point on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was a peak of 5 Little Grebes at Nickoll's Quarry from 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, with at least 3 on the New Cut, and one at the more unusual location of Sandling on the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>.

Peak counts of 7 Fulmars and 13 Gannets flew east past Mill Point on the 28<sup>th</sup>, when a Greylag Goose and the first 45 Brent Geese of the spring also flew east there. A Barnacle Goose of unknown origin also appeared at Samphire Hoe on the 28<sup>th</sup> (and remained until 25<sup>th</sup> March). A Little Egret flew west over Botolph's Bridge on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and one was seen at Nickoll's Quarry on 6<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. Grey Herons occupied at least 2 nests at Lympe heronry.

A drake **Goldeneye** was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and there were peak counts there of 7 Pochard on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 36 Tufted Ducks on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 5 Shoveler and 6 Teal on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 2 Shelduck on various dates and a single Wigeon on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Sandling produced maxima of 30 Pintail, 20 Teal and 10 Mandarin on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and 4 Gadwall and 80 Mallard on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Mandarin were also seen at Kiln Wood (6 on 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Mallard were also counted at Brockhill CP (21 on 8<sup>th</sup>) and Radnor Park (20 on 15<sup>th</sup>). 3 Shelduck flew west past Mill Point on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and there were up to 6 Eider there in the first half of the month, with a single Red-breasted Merganser west on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2 Common Scoter east on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

A **Hen Harrier** was seen at Nickoll's Quarry on the 18<sup>th</sup> and at least 3 Water Rails were wintering in the west Hythe area. A peak count of 14 Redshank at Nickoll's Quarry on the 10<sup>th</sup> was notable, but waders were generally in short supply with only one Green Sandpiper recorded, at Botolph's Bridge on the 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, a peak of just 4 Snipe, 2 records of Dunlin and a single Curlew, all in the Nickoll's Quarry/Botolph's Bridge area. Two Sanderling were seen by the Hythe Redoubt on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 370 Golden Plover were counted at Botolph's Bridge on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Razorbills were recorded in reasonable numbers, but with nothing like the counts in January, with 47 west past Mill Point on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 20 east there on 13<sup>th</sup> and 40 on/west there on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Guillemots were also seen in smaller numbers, including 50 off Mill Point on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 100 east there on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 70 east there on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Kingfishers were seen at Nickoll's Quarry, Botolph's Bridge and West Hythe, whilst Stonechats were wintering at Nickoll's Quarry (2) and Hythe Golf Course. Winter thrushes were present in good numbers, with 250 Fieldfares along Burmarsh Road on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 60 at Kiln Wood the same day, and 40 at Sandling on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 90 Redwings at Sandling on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 20 at Brockhill CP the same day, and 20 at Botolph's Bridge on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A Chiffchaff was seen along the Hythe Canal (Roughs) on the 13<sup>th</sup> and a Firecrest was at Mill Point on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Marsh Tits were seen at Brockhill CP on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and, unusually, at West Hythe on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Passerine highlight of the month was 4 **Crossbills** at Sandling on the 8<sup>th</sup> – the first winter record for the area. Other wintering finches included 40 Siskins, 40 Chaffinches and 30 Goldfinches at Sandling. Up to 6 Reed Buntings were at Nickoll's Quarry, with up to 4 Yellowhammers on Burmarsh Road.

## March

50 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 1<sup>st</sup>, and a drake Pochard was an unusual record there. 8 Mediterranean Gulls and a Wigeon were at Nickoll's Quarry and 15 *alba* wagtails were counted at Botolph's Bridge. 2 **Slavonian Grebes** were on the sea off Hythe Redoubt on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 22 Brent Geese, 8 Red-breasted Mergansers and 3 Shelduck flew east there. 13 Greylag Geese flew north-east over Nickoll's Quarry, and 2 Tufted Duck and a Wigeon were present. 20 Linnets were at Botolph's Bridge.

First migrant dates in March:

29<sup>th</sup> - Little Ringed Plover  
27<sup>th</sup> - Wheatear  
24<sup>th</sup> - Black Redstart\*  
17<sup>th</sup> - Chiffchaff\*  
15<sup>th</sup> - Garganey  
12<sup>th</sup> - Firecrest\*  
10<sup>th</sup> - Sandwich Tern  
6<sup>th</sup> - White Wagtail

\*excludes wintering birds

On the 5<sup>th</sup> 130 Brent Geese flew east past Mill Point, and the first sign of visual passage at the cliffs involved 3 Meadow Pipits and a Chaffinch east over the Café, with 8 Redwings grounded at Abbotscliffe and a further 15 at Nickoll's Quarry. 20 Redwings were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 6<sup>th</sup> and a flock of 30 *alba* wagtails included the first White Wagtail of the year. A Merlin, 4 Wigeon and 2 Dunlin were also notable there, and a single Chaffinch flew east at Abbotscliffe.

20 Red-throated Divers and 289 Brent Geese flew east at sea on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 2 Shoveler were at Nickoll's Quarry. A **Ruff** was found at Botolph's Bridge on the 8<sup>th</sup> (to the 14<sup>th</sup>), and 14 Redshank, a Dunlin and a Ringed Plover were also present. A Green Sandpiper was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 9<sup>th</sup>, when 78 Brent Geese flew east past Copt Point, and 2 Meadow Pipits arrived in off the sea there. The first Sandwich Tern flew east past Mill Point on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and 10 Meadow Pipits arrived in off. Redshank increased to 15 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 10<sup>th</sup> and a Tufted Duck was seen there the next day, with 2 Mandarin at West Hythe.

A good count of 1,040 Chaffinches flew east at the Gun Site on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13 Siskins and 2 Crossbills also flew east, with 22 Meadow Pipits and 2 *alba* wagtails in off the sea, and 205 Wood Pigeons and 15 Stock Doves west. The first migrant Firecrest of the year was seen by the Café. 4 Dunlin were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The sea became the focus on the 15<sup>th</sup> as 2 **Garganey** (first of the year), 41 Red-throated Divers, 26 Fulmars, 102 Gannets, 84 Kittiwakes, 15 Brent Geese, 31 Pintail, 11 Eider, 10 Wigeon, 4 Shoveler, 3 Shelduck, 2 Tufted Ducks, 2 Teal and 13 Guillemots flew east. A single Siskin also flew east. The 16<sup>th</sup> produced a further 74 Red-throated Divers, 12 Fulmars, 20 Gannets, 58 Kittiwakes, 12 Shoveler, 11 Wigeon and 29 Guillemots east.

Back on land 9 Chaffinches and 2 Siskins flew east over the Café on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and the next day 115 Chaffinches, 20 Siskins and 200 Wood Pigeons flew east at Abbotscliffe and the first migrant Chiffchaff of the year was seen there. On the 18<sup>th</sup> 450 Starlings, 63 Siskins, 29 Chaffinches, 6

Crossbills and 2 Yellowhammers flew east at the Gun Site, and 32 Brent Geese flew east at sea. 20 Siskins flew east at Copt Point on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A small arrival of Chiffchaffs on the 20<sup>th</sup> involved 2 at the Gun Site, 1 in the Warren and 1 behind the Café, and a Firecrest was also seen by the Café. 19 Siskins flew east at the cliffs and a Goldeneye was on the sea off Mill Point. 12 Brent Geese and a Sandwich Tern flew east past Copt Point on the 21<sup>st</sup>, with 29 Siskins east over there and 3 Shoveler at Nickoll's Quarry. 2 Corn Buntings flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

268 Brent Geese, 6 Pintail, 4 Shoveler, 2 Sandwich Terns and the first Black-throated Diver flew east past Copt Point on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 5 Siskins flew east and a Chiffchaff was by the Café. The first migrant Black Redstart was at the Gun Site on the 24<sup>th</sup>, with 2 Chiffchaffs there, and 2 Siskins and 6 Meadow Pipits flew in/west. A Gadwall was at Nickoll's Quarry. 2 Firecrests were at Abbotscliffe on the 25<sup>th</sup> and a Grey Wagtail flew east. 23 Brent Geese and 3 Sandwich Tern went east at sea. On the 26<sup>th</sup> 195 Chaffinches, 190 Wood Pigeons, 16 Meadow Pipits, 9 Siskins, 5 Bramblings and a Crossbill flew east at the cliffs and 45 Redwings flew west. 2 Chiffchaffs were at the Gun Site, with another by the Café and 9 Sandwich Terns flew east past Copt Point. The second **Ruff** of the month was at Nickoll's Quarry.

The first Wheatear was at Abbotscliffe on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when a Black Redstart and a Chiffchaff were at the Gun Site, and 81 Chaffinches and a Siskin flew east. 39 Chaffinches and 12 Siskins flew east on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and 15 Sandwich Tern passed Mill Point. The first Little Ringed Plover was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and Abbotscliffe produced a Short-eared Owl, plus singles of Black Redstart, Wheatear, and Chiffchaff, with 2 Chiffchaffs by the Café. On the 30<sup>th</sup> 24 Crossbills, 409 Chaffinches, 90 Wood Pigeons, 45 Linnets, 20 Siskins, 17 Meadow Pipits, 3 Bramblings, 2 Yellowhammers, and a Reed Bunting flew east at the cliffs. A Black Redstart and 4 Chiffchaffs were at the Café and 25 Redwings, a Fieldfare and 2 Chiffchaff were at the Gun Site. Finally 18 Crossbills, 146 Chaffinches, 16 Linnets, 7 Siskins, a Brambling, 287 Wood Pigeons, 2 Stock Doves, and 37 Meadow Pipits flew east at the cliffs on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Totals of 2,065 Chaffinches, 203 Siskins and an excellent 51 Crossbills flew east at the cliffs in March.

## April

A quiet start to the month with just a single Redwing of note at Abbotscliffe on the 1<sup>st</sup>, whilst on the sea 20 Brent Geese flew east and 14 Sandwich Terns lingered offshore. The first Blackcap and 3 Chiffchaff were by the Café on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 124 Chaffinches, 10 Linnets and 3 Siskins flew east there, with 250 Wood Pigeons, 2 Stock Doves, 24 Linnets and 3 Siskins west. A further 30 Chaffinches and 3 Siskins flew east at the Café on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and a Dunlin was at Nickoll's Quarry. 6 Chiffchaffs and 2 Blackcaps were in the Warren on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Visual migration at the cliffs on the 5<sup>th</sup> comprised the first House Martin, 25 Crossbills, 454 Chaffinches, 250 Wood Pigeons, 87 Linnets, 30 Siskins, 5 Goldfinches, and 2 Stock Doves all flying east.

First migrant dates in April:

30<sup>th</sup> - Cuckoo  
25<sup>th</sup> - Little Tern  
- Swift  
24<sup>th</sup> - Wood Warbler  
22<sup>nd</sup> - Lesser Whitethroat  
21<sup>st</sup> - Pomarine Skua  
- Common Sandpiper  
- Hobby  
20<sup>th</sup> - Yellow Wagtail  
18<sup>th</sup> - Turtle Dove  
- Sedge Warbler  
16<sup>th</sup> - Swallow  
- Whitethroat  
- Reed Warbler  
15<sup>th</sup> - Sand Martin  
13<sup>th</sup> - Arctic Tern  
- Willow Warbler  
12<sup>th</sup> - Whimbrel  
10<sup>th</sup> - Common Tern  
- Arctic Skua

5<sup>th</sup> - House Martin  
2<sup>nd</sup> - Blackcap

Sea passage took over on the 6<sup>th</sup>, when 6 Red-throated Divers, 15 Fulmars, 10 Gannets, 31 Brent Geese, 2 Razorbills, and single Grey Plover and Red-breasted Merganser flew east at Copt Point, but just 10 Chaffinches flew east on the land. On the 7<sup>th</sup> 10 Fulmars, 10 Gannets, 11 Common Scoter, 2 Shoveler and 12 auks flew east and the next day 9 Gannets, 11 Common Scoters, 10 Shoveler, 7 Sandwich Terns and a Red-breasted Merganser went east. On the 9<sup>th</sup> 10 Grey Herons and 4 Sandwich Tern flew east past Copt Point, with 3 Velvet Scoter west, and 70 Wood Pigeons, 10 Linnets, 8 Chaffinches and 5 Siskins flew over. The first Arctic Skua and Common Terns (2) of the year flew east past Copt on the 10<sup>th</sup>, as did 8 Red-throated Divers, a Black-throated Diver and 140 Sandwich Terns. 36 Sandwich Terns flew east on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 100 Wood Pigeons went west.

The first 2 Whimbrel and 125 Sandwich Terns, 25 Common Gulls, 15 Common Scoter, 13 Shelduck, and a Greylag Goose flew east past Copt Point on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Highlight of the month was a **Purple Heron** in/east past the Café on the 13<sup>th</sup>, when the first 2 Arctic Terns and 296 Sandwich Terns, 17 Common Terns, 10 Fulmars, 30 Brent Goose, a Greylag Goose, 17 Common Scoter, 3 Shelduck, a Red-breasted Merganser, an Eider, 6 Oystercatchers, 6 Whimbrel, a Sanderling 20 Common Gulls, 20 Black-headed Gulls, and a Little Gull flew east past Copt Point. The first 2 Willow Warblers at Nickoll's Quarry completed a busy day. The first Marsh Harrier flew east at Copt Point on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and a Black-throated Diver, 116 Sandwich Terns, 7 Common Terns, 5 Shoveler, 2 Whimbrel, an Arctic Skua also flew east. A record flock of **13 Garganey** east past Copt Point on the 15<sup>th</sup> continued the good run, and another day of good sea passage also included 2 **Slavonian Grebes**, 14 Fulmars, 44 Brent Geese, 71 Common Scoters, a Velvet Scoter, 4 Red-breasted Mergansers, 4 Whimbrel, 109 Common Gulls, 79 Black-headed Gulls, 4 Mediterranean Gulls, 285 Sandwich Terns, 8 Common Terns east. The first Sand Martin was at Botolph's Bridge.

The 16<sup>th</sup> produced three firsts for the year – Swallows at the Gun Site and West Hythe, 2 Whitethroats behind the Café and 2 Reed Warblers at West Hythe. At sea 37 Brent Geese, 32 Common Scoter, a Whimbrel, 59 Black-headed Gulls, 50 Common Gulls, a Mediterranean Gull, 101 Sandwich Terns and 3 Common Terns flew east. 50 Wood Pigeons, 18 Linnets, and 6 Goldfinches also flew east. A Falcated Duck of presumably escaped origin appeared at West Hythe (and remained in the general area, also visiting Nickoll's Quarry and Hythe, to 14<sup>th</sup> June). On the 17<sup>th</sup> 16 Gannets, 9 Cormorants, 75 Brent Geese, 19 Eiders, 35 Common Scoter, 9 Dunlin, 5 Oystercatcher, a Whimbrel, 2 Mediterranean Gulls, 53 Sandwich Terns and a Common Tern flew east past Copt Point, and 29 Linnets, 16 Goldfinches, 14 Chaffinches, and a Swallow flew over. 3 Whitethroats, a House Martin and a Swallow were at the cliffs.

Another two firsts appeared on the 18<sup>th</sup> - a Sedge Warbler at Nickoll's Quarry and a Turtle Dove at the Gun Site, and 30 Crossbills flew east at the latter site. 47 Gannets, 3 Whimbrel, 1 Arctic Skua, 50 Sandwich Terns and 28 Common Tern flew east on the sea and 6 Swallows, 3 Sand Martins and a House Martin arrived in off. A further 5 Swallows and 2 Sand Martins were at Nickoll's Quarry. On the 19<sup>th</sup> 24 Fulmars, 27 Gannets, 5 Red-breasted Mergansers, 15 Bar-tailed Godwits, 5 Knot, 5 Grey Plovers, 3 Arctic Skuas, 138 Sandwich Tern and 4 Common Tern flew east past Copt Point, and a single Crossbill flew over. The first Yellow Wagtail was at Botolph's Bridge on the 20<sup>th</sup>, but the sea was again the place to be, with a Black-throated Diver, 111 Fulmars, 29 Gannets, 3 Pintail, 11 Shoveler, 22 Teal, 13 Bar-tailed Godwits, 3 Whimbrel, 1 Grey Plover, 53 Common Gulls, 5 Mediterranean Gulls, 51 Kittiwakes, 192 Sandwich Terns and 32 Common Terns east past Copt Point.

The 21<sup>st</sup> produced probably the best sea passage of the year, with the first 8 Pomarine Skuas of the year, and 3 Black-throated Divers, 3 **Slavonian Grebes**, 100 Gannets, a Shag, 57 Brent Geese, 29 Velvet and 669 Common Scoter, 13 Teal, 2 Red-breasted Mergansers, 7 Arctic and 1 Great Skua, 10 Little Gulls, 60 Common Gulls, 2 Mediterranean Gulls, 45 Kittiwakes, 230 Sandwich Terns and 105 Common Terns east past Copt Point. The first Common Sandpiper was also seen there, and 9 Swallows and a Yellow Wagtail flew in off the sea, with the first Hobby at Hythe Roughts. Wheatears were at Nickoll's Quarry (2) and Hythe Ranges. The first Lesser Whitethroats were at the Gun Site and the Café on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, with a Woodcock at the latter site, and a Short-eared Owl, a Black Redstart and 3 Corn Buntings at Abbotscliffe. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> 3 Crossbills, 25 Goldfinches and 2 Siskins flew east at the Gun Site and 8 Swallows came in off, whilst 3 Gadwall, 6 Red-breasted Mergansers, 19 Whimbrel, a Little Gull and 127 Sandwich Tern passed at sea.

A **Wood Warbler** was in song at the Gun Site on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and 11 Common and 2 Lesser Whitethroats were in the area. Single Redpoll and Yellow Wagtail flew over. The first 4 Little Terns flew east past Mill Point the next day, and 6 Red-breasted Mergansers, 9 Whimbrel and 330 Sandwich Terns were also logged, whilst the first Swift was seen over the town in the evening. Terns featured again on the 26<sup>th</sup>, with totals of 1,042 Common and 320 Sandwich east past Copt Point, and 56 Gannets, 80 Common Scoters, 6 Whimbrel, 20 Bar-tailed Godwit, 5 Arctic Skuas, 2 Great Skuas, 19 Little Gulls, and 3 Mediterranean Gulls also flew east there. 11 Swallows were in the area. 2 Hobbies and 51 Swallows flew in off the sea at Copt Point on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and 15 Fulmars, 50 Gannets, 45 Common Scoter, an Eider, 2 Arctic Skuas and 68 Sandwich Terns flew east. 6 Swifts, 35 House Martins, 10 Swallows and a Sand Martin were at Nickoll's Quarry.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> 15 Fulmars, 45 Gannets, 3 Dunlin and an Arctic Skua flew east past Copt Point and 25 Swifts, 35 Swallows and 5 House Martins were at Nickoll's Quarry. 86 Swallows, 29 House Martins, 7 Swifts and single Hobby and Yellow Wagtail arrived in off the sea at Copt Point the next day, and 70 Sandwich Terns flew east. Hirundine arrival continued on the 30<sup>th</sup> with 41 Swallows in off the sea and 40 House Martins and 15 Swallows at Nickoll's Quarry. The first Cuckoo was at West Hythe, a probable Greenland Wheatear was at the Gun Site, 2 Turtle Doves were by the Café, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers and 57 Common Scoter passed at sea and 11 Swifts were in the area.

## May

A slow start to the month, with just 34 Gannets, 44 Sandwich Terns and 1 Common Tern east past Copt Point, and 28 Swallows and a House Martin in off the sea there on the 1<sup>st</sup>. 50 Swallows, 45 House Martins, 20 Swifts and 2 Sand Martin were at Nickoll's Quarry, and a Peregrine flew north. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> a single Arctic Skua flew east past Copt Point and 11 Swallows arrived in off the sea. 120 Sandwich Terns, 8 Eider and a Bonxie flew east at sea on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and hirundine passage picked up with 37 Swallows, 25 House Martins and 2 Sand Martins in off the sea. 12 Swifts and 2 Turtle Doves also arrived. Sea passage improved on the 4<sup>th</sup>, with 3 Pomarine and 1 Arctic Skua, 25 Common Scoter, a Whimbrel, 2 Mediterranean Gulls, and 90 Sandwich Terns east past Copt

First migrant dates in May:

31<sup>st</sup> - Honey Buzzard  
8<sup>th</sup> - Nightingale  
6<sup>th</sup> - Spotted Flycatcher  
5<sup>th</sup> - Tree Pipit



Point. 41 Swallows and 5 House Martins flew in off the sea.

The first Tree Pipit and a Wheatear were at the Gun Site on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and 17 Swallows, 33 Goldfinches, 3 Siskins, and 2 Yellow Wagtails flew over. At sea 3 Velvet and 47 Common Scoters, 15 Eider, single Arctic and Great Skuas, 38 Sandwich Terns, and 2 Common Terns flew east. A **Red-rumped Swallow** and a Cuckoo were seen at the Café on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and the first Spotted Flycatcher and 10 Whitethroats were at the Gun Site. Totals of 161 Swallows, 75 House Martins, 7 Sand Martins, 2 Swifts, 1 Yellow Wagtail, 2 Turtle Doves and 2 Hobbies flew in off the sea, and 150 Wood Pigeons and a Siskin flew west. On the 7<sup>th</sup> 35 Swallows, 5 House Martins, 2 Sand Martins and a Yellow Wagtail flew in off the sea at the cliffs.



Falcated Duck - Nickoll's Quarry - 30<sup>th</sup> May (Ian Roberts)

15 Common Scoters, 5 Whimbrel, 2 Arctic Skuas, 32 Sandwich Terns, 20 Common Terns and 3 Razorbills flew east at sea on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and a total of 91 species were recorded in the area, including Mandarin, Little Ringed Plover, Mediterranean Gull, Tawny Owl, Little Owl, Nightingale, Black Redstart, Cetti's Warbler and Marsh Tit. On the 9<sup>th</sup> 105 Sandwich and 3 Common Terns flew east past Copt Point, a Marsh Harrier flew west there and a Hobby came in off. 41 Swallows flew in at the cliffs and a Firecrest was at Copt Point. A **Hoopoe** was reported at Seabrook on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15 Swallows and a Turtle Dove flew in off the sea at Copt Point. Next day a Crossbill flew west at the Gun Site and 15 Swallows and 8 Swifts arrived in off.

A probable Greenland Wheatear and 3 Turtle Doves were at the Gun Site on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 8 Sandwich and 1 Common Tern flew east and 2 Swift came in off. On the 13<sup>th</sup> 10 Swallows, 8 House Martins, and 4 Swifts flew in off the sea at the Gun Site and single Spotted Flycatcher and Lapwing were at Nickoll's Quarry. 7 Swifts and a Turtle Dove flew in off the sea on the 14<sup>th</sup>. 8 Whimbrel, a Sanderling, 55 Black-headed Gulls, a Mediterranean Gull, and 8 Sandwich Terns flew east the next day, and 15 Swallows arrived in off. 2 Shoveler and 30 Sandwich Terns flew east on the 16<sup>th</sup>. A Nightingale was singing in the Golden Valley on the 17<sup>th</sup>, a Common Sandpiper flew in off the sea at Copt Point and 2 Common Sandpipers, a Lapwing and 8 Swifts were at Nickoll's Quarry.

3 Swallows flew in off at Copt Point on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with 2 in off on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 6 on the 21<sup>st</sup>, when a Little Egret was at Nickoll's Quarry. 8 House Martins and 2 Swallows arrived in off the sea at Copt Point on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> 20 Common Scoters and 6 Sandwich Terns flew east past Copt Point, and 13 Dunlin and a Turnstone flew in off the sea, as did 21 Swifts and 2 House Martins. 25 House Martins, 22 Swallows and 6 Swifts came in off at the Café on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and the next day produced totals of 196 House Martins, 27 Swallows, 6 Swifts, 3 Turtle Doves, and a Sand Martin in off the sea there. On the 26<sup>th</sup> 14 House Martins, 13 Swallows, 20 Swifts and 2 Siskins flew in off.

The second **Red-rumped Swallow** of the month flew west at the Café on the 27<sup>th</sup>, as did 3 House Martins, 3 Swallows and a Cuckoo. Two **Common Cranes** were reported flying north over Palmarsh on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and 31 Wood Pigeons and a Stock Dove flew west at the Gun Site, with a Hobby in off the sea at the Copt Point. On the 29<sup>th</sup> a Black-throated Diver flew east past

Copt Point, 15 Swifts, 4 Swallows and a Grey Heron flew in off the sea, and 3 Corn Buntings were in the area. The next day 50 House Martins and 25 Swifts arrived in off the sea and 6 Lapwings were at Nickoll's Quarry. The last day of the month produced a **Honey Buzzard** in off the sea at Abbotscliffe, and 15 Swifts, a Hobby and a Lapwing also flew in, and 2 Grey Herons flew west.

## June

50 House Martins, 20 Swifts, 15 Swallows and a Grey Heron flew west at the Café on the 1<sup>st</sup> and a late Common Sandpiper was at Nickoll's Quarry the next day. A Little Egret was at Copt Point on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, with 5 Eider offshore there and a Hobby flew over Botolph's Bridge. 10 Swifts, 2 Swallows, and a House Martin flew west at the Café on the 4<sup>th</sup>, a Little Egret flew over Botolph's Bridge and 9 Lapwings were at Nickoll's Quarry. A Crossbill flew east at the cliffs on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and 53 Swifts, 9 House Martins, 3 Swallows and a Hobby flew west. A Cuckoo flew in off the sea at the cliffs, and another was at Church Hougham. Lapwings increased to 16 at Nickoll's Quarry.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> a Little Egret was at Nickoll's Quarry and 20 Swifts flew west at the Café. 279 Swifts flew west at the cliffs the next day and a Curlew flew south there, whilst a Little Grebe at Botolph's Bridge was suggestive of local breeding. A Hobby flew in off at the Café on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and a Redshank was at Nickoll's Quarry, with a Cuckoo at Abbotscliffe the next day. 10 Swifts and 2 Lapwings flew west at the Gun Site on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 37 Lapwings were at Nickoll's Quarry. 110 Swifts flew west at a Hobby flew east at the cliffs on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Two Grey Herons flew north over Abbotscliffe on the 14<sup>th</sup> and a flock of 14 came in off the sea there on the 16<sup>th</sup>, when an **Osprey** and another Grey Heron flew in/west at Hythe Golf Course. 6 Grey Herons and 60 Lapwings were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and a Green Sandpiper was seen there on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Lapwings increased to 140 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 2 Eider were offshore of Hythe, and 3 Mediterranean Gulls had returned to Copt Point. A late migrant Reed Warbler was at Copt Point on the 18<sup>th</sup>, a Lapwing flew in off the sea there and 4 Curlews went west at Mill Point. 10 Eider were off Copt Point on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and a Little Egret was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 21<sup>st</sup>. 30 Swifts and a Yellow Wagtail flew west at the Gun Site on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 175 Swifts and a Lapwing flew west at the Café the next day. 100 Common Scoter were off Hythe Redoubt on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 26<sup>th</sup> a Little Egret and a Mediterranean Gull were at Nickoll's Quarry.



Little Egret - Nickoll's Quarry - June (Ian Roberts)



Spoonbill - Nickoll's Quarry - 27<sup>th</sup> June (Ian Roberts)



The 27<sup>th</sup> was a surprisingly productive day, with both **Spoonbill** (photo) and **Spotted Redshank** at Nickoll's Quarry, also c.100 Sand Martins, c.100 Lapwings, 2 Mediterranean Gulls and a Curlew there. A Grey Heron flew south over Hythe and 4 Eider and 51 Common Scoter were off Hythe Redoubt. 2 Green Sandpipers were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and a Hobby flew west over Hythe on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

## July

A Little Egret was at Nickoll's Quarry from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup>, with 3 there on the 7<sup>th</sup>. Wader passage at this site included up to 2 Green Sandpipers daily, Common Sandpipers on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, up to 2 Little Ringed Plovers, a Whimbrel on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 115 Lapwings and 7 Oystercatchers on the 9<sup>th</sup>, and a Redshank on the 11<sup>th</sup>. 76 Canada Geese were counted at Nickoll's Quarry on the 6<sup>th</sup> and single Greylags were present on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Passerine interest was restricted to a Great Spotted Woodpecker north-east at Abbotscliffe on the 8<sup>th</sup> and single Yellow Wagtails west there on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.

A **Honey Buzzard** was reported flying in off the sea over the Warren on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 3 **Black-tailed Godwits** and 3 Green Sandpipers were at Nickoll's Quarry. A Greenshank was at the latter site the next day, with another on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and a **Ruff** also appeared on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 2-3 Green Sandpipers were seen regularly (with a peak of 4 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>), with up to 4 Common Sandpipers (and an excellent count 14 on the 17<sup>th</sup>), up to 100 Lapwing, a Redshank on the 16<sup>th</sup> and a Dunlin on the 17<sup>th</sup>. 2 Common Sandpipers were at Copt Point on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and a Curlew flew west at Hythe on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Nickoll's Quarry also hosted a Little Egret on the 14<sup>th</sup> and an exceptional influx of Mediterranean Gulls, with 13 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, increasing to 40 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 45 on the 25<sup>th</sup> (a record count for the site). Seawatching produced very little apart from an Arctic Skua, 30 Gannets, 11 Sandwich and 1 Common Tern west past Copt Point on the 17<sup>th</sup>. 10 Eider were seen offshore there on the 20<sup>th</sup>. The only returning passerines noted were a Willow Warbler at the Gun Site on the 20<sup>th</sup> and a Yellow Wagtail west there on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

## August

Highlight of the month was a **White Stork**, which flew east over Abbotscliffe on the 31<sup>st</sup>. An **Icterine Warbler** at Samphire Hoe on the 28<sup>th</sup> was a close second and the pick of the passerine migrants, which also included c.4 Pied Flycatchers and a Redstart at the cliffs. However it was a poor month for the commoner migrants, with only low numbers of Tree Pipits, Yellow Wagtails, Whinchats, Wheatears and Willow Warblers, and just the occasional Grey Wagtail, Reed Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher.

A **Honey Buzzard** flew over Joyes Road, Folkestone on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and a single Common Buzzard was seen over Abbotscliffe on the 30<sup>th</sup>, but Hobby passage was poor. Notable waders included a **Wood Sandpiper** over Nickoll's Quarry on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, a peak of 4 Greenshanks at the same site on the 10<sup>th</sup> and a **Spotted Redshank** there on the 6<sup>th</sup> but, as with passerines, the commoner species (Green and Common Sandpipers) were in short supply. Nickoll's Quarry also hosted single Little Egrets on several dates, with 2 on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Seawatching was virtually non-existent, with just 2 Black Terns off Copt Point on the 26<sup>th</sup> being of note.

## September

Highlight of the month was the second **White Stork** of the autumn, which flew west over Hythe on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Two **Honey Buzzards** were also notable - singles flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 21<sup>st</sup> and south-east there on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and raptors were also represented by a Marsh Harrier

west over Cheriton on the 16th, a Common Buzzard over Palmarsh on the 3rd and an early Merlin at Nickoll's Quarry on the 16th.

The most unusual passerine was a Cetti's Warbler at Nickoll's Quarry on the 15th (the first for the site), and other scarcer species were 6 Firecrests, 3 Redstarts, 3 Grasshopper Warblers (at Abbotscliffe on 11th-12th), and single Ring Ouzel (Abbotscliffe on 23rd) and Pied Flycatcher (Abbotscliffe on 20th). 8 Reed Warblers, 6 Sedge Warblers, 4 Garden Warblers and 2 Spotted Flycatchers were also notable. Last dates for summer migrants included Turtle Dove (28th), Yellow Wagtail (26th) and Swift (20th). It was a better month for common passerines with good numbers of Chiffchaffs, Goldcrests and Blackcaps, mainly in the last fortnight, but numbers of Whinchats (peak 5 on 14th) and Wheatears (peak 8 on 1st) were low, and visual migration was sparse with the best day on the 20th when c.5,550 House Martins, 1,000 Swallows and 150 Meadow Pipits flew west at Abbotscliffe. 3 Tree Sparrows west at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd were of note and a few Siskins and Brambling began to appear at the end of the month.

Notable amongst the waders were two records of **Ruff** at Nickoll's Quarry (a female on 3rd-4th and a male on 1st-2nd) and a peak of 4 Greenshank there on the 3rd. Little Egrets were still being seen at Nickoll's Quarry occasionally, with 2 there on the 3rd, and 2 were at Samphire Hoe on the 7th. Seawatching was again disappointing with only Arctic Skuas recorded in any numbers - peaks of 9+ chasing terns off Hythe on the 20th and 4 off Copt Point on the 22nd. At least 210 Mediterranean Gulls were counted at Copt Point on the 14th.

## October

Three species made a welcome and overdue re-appearance after several years - firstly a **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Mill Point on the 16th (the first since one at the same site in 1988), then a **Grey Phalarope** east past Copt Point on the 23rd (the first since 1981) and finally a **Long-eared Owl** at Samphire Hoe from 29th to the month's end (last recorded in 1991) (photo). However a **Richard's Pipit** at Abbotscliffe on the 19th was the 11th record since 1990!

An influx of at least 30 Firecrests (mainly from the 13th - photo) was a feature of the month, with a day peak of c.15 on the 16th. Other notable passerines included single **Dartford Warblers** at Abbotscliffe (14th to at least 28th, 2 reported on 27th) and at Samphire Hoe (30th), a **Lapland Bunting** inland of Abbotscliffe (22nd), a Snow Bunting at Abbotscliffe (24th), 2 probable 'continental' Coal Tits by the Cafe (25th), an eastern-type Chiffchaff at Abbotscliffe (11th), and 8 or 9 Ring Ouzels (peak 5 at Abbotscliffe on 18th). 2 Black Redstarts and 3 Common Redstarts were also of note.

October witnessed some excellent visual migration with totals of about 335 Bramblings (peak 155 on 24th), 400 Redpolls (peak 179 on the 24th) and 760 Siskins (peak 255 on 21st). The commoner finches were also moving in good numbers with day peaks of 1,550 Goldfinches (21st), 1,250 Chaffinches (9th) and 335 Greenfinches (21st). Winter thrush movements included 1,620 Redwings in off on the 5th, and 530 Fieldfares and 420 Redwings in off on the 20th. Tree Sparrows were recorded in good numbers with 39 in off at the Cafe on the 24th, up to 20 at Abbotscliffe from the same date, and an additional 12 migrants earlier in the month.

Raptors were represented by just single Marsh Harrier on the 5th and Common Buzzard on the 12th, but a Short-eared Owl was also recorded (in off at the Cafe on the 20th), and other oddities included Woodcocks on the 24th and 28th, a Ring-necked Parakeet at the Gun Site on the 18th, and Little Egrets at Samphire Hoe on the 14th and 24th. Despite all the activity on the land it was another quiet month on the sea (aside from the Grey Phalarope) although the only Manx Shearwater of the autumn was logged on the 6th, Bonxies featured on the 6th and 7th (2) and a Little Gull was seen off Copt Point on the 7th. A peak of 115 Brent Geese flew west on the 14th.



Firecrest - Abbotscliffe - 18<sup>th</sup> October (Dale Gibson)



Long-eared Owl - Samphire Hoe - 29<sup>th</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> November (Ian Roberts)

## November

Somewhat amazingly two different **Leach's Petrels** were found stranded on cross-channel ferries and later released at Samphire Hoe during the month - on the 15th and 24th (photos). Other highlights included a **Serim** just inland from Abbotscliffe briefly on the 15th, a drake **Goldeneye** at Samphire Hoe from at least 24th-27th, a Snow Bunting at Copt Point on the 14th (photo) and the **Long-eared Owl** remaining at Samphire Hoe until the 1st.

Firecrests were again prominent, with up to 6 at Mill Point throughout, 4 at Copt Point on the 15th, and scattered singles in the first half of the month. Straggling summer migrants included the last Chiffchaff at Mill Point (21st), single Blackcaps on 10th, 11th and 15th, a Black Redstart at Samphire Hoe (11th), and 3 House Martins over Abbotscliffe on the 4th, with 2 over Hythe on the 2nd.

Finch passage continued into early November, with 81 Redpolls and 7 Bramblings over Abbotscliffe on the 4th, and 21 Siskins and 5 Redpolls east at Samphire Hoe on the 11th, but soon petered out. Other visual migration was limited to 800 Starlings in off on the 2nd, 150 Starlings and 27 Sky Larks in off on the 5th, and 200 Wood Pigeons east on the 17th. The only notable winter thrush count was 200 Redwings grounded at the Gun Site on the 8th. Up to 20 Tree Sparrows remained at Abbotscliffe to mid-month and 2 were at Nickoll's Quarry on 13th.

Seawatching was again a non-event, with a single Velvet Scoter west past Copt Point on the 12th, and 33 Brent Geese and 20 Wigeon east on the 24th the only notable passage. A Woodcock was at the Gun Site on the 8th and 2 Little Egrets were at Samphire Hoe on the 27th.





Leach's Petrels – Sapphire Hoe – above left: 15<sup>th</sup> November (Phil Chantler); others: 24<sup>th</sup> November (Ian Roberts)



Snow Bunting - Copt Point - 14<sup>th</sup> November (Ian Roberts)

## December

Highlights of the month were a **Waxwing** briefly in Hythe on the 16th, a **Goldeneye** in the Nickoll's Quarry / West Hythe area on the 7th-9th, the long-staying Cetti's Warbler again at West Hythe on the 9th, a female Marsh Harrier reported near Botolph's Bridge on the 10th, and 3 Snow Buntings at Samphire Hoe from the 3rd. The latter site also hosted 2 Little Egrets (24th), a Shag (31st), Black Redstart (19th and 27th), a Water Rail (a good site record - on the 13th), and a peak of 19 Rock Pipits (3rd).

Single Firecrests were at Mill Point and East Cliff Gardens (both on 6th), with Chiffchaffs at Mill Point on the 2nd, Nickoll's Quarry on the 9th, and at West Hythe on the 10th. Winter thrush counts comprised 60 Redwings at Nickoll's Quarry on the 12th, 80 at West Hythe on the 17th, and 15 Fieldfares at the latter site on the 9th. The only winter finches noted were 7 Siskins at Sandling Park on the 7th.

Wildfowl numbers were disappointing, with a peak of just 6 Tufted Ducks (10th), 3 Gadwall (12th) and a single Pochard at Nickoll's Quarry. 4 Wigeon and 12 Eiders flew east past Hythe Redoubt on the 5th and 2 Eiders passed Mill Point on the 4th, but the sea was generally quiet, although 2 Bonxies were seen off Mill Point on the 4th. Red-throated Divers peaked at 30 east past Mill Point on the 6th. Green Sandpipers were at West Hythe (9th) and Nickoll's Quarry (23rd).