

Review of 2009

January

The first 10 days of the month were mostly dry but very cold as high pressure covered the area and there were unusually prolonged and severe frosts, which caused even the majority of Nickoll's Quarry to freeze over. There was a fair amount of sunshine and little wind. There was a slow change over the following week as low pressure became dominant and south-westerly winds brought in milder air, though accompanied by bands of rain. It became very windy during the 17th as a very deep low moved through and colder westerly winds followed, bringing a mixture of sunny spells and wintry showers. It became quite unsettled from the 22nd as further areas of low pressure tracked eastwards, accompanied by bands of rain and bursts of strong south-westerly winds interspersed with sunshine and showers. The last couple of days of the month saw a return to much colder conditions and overall it was the coldest January for over a decade.

The year good off to a good start with some rarities remaining from 2008 and with the cold weather producing a number of other interesting records. The long-staying adult **Night Heron** remained at West Hythe until it finally departed to the south on the 24th and up to 23 **Waxwings** were still in the Park Farm area of Folkestone until the 5th with later records from north-west Cheriton (3 on the 6th) and north-east Folkestone (6 on the 8th) possibly being part of that flock fragmenting.

A **Goosander** was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 6th, reportedly having been present in the Palmarsch (canal) area since late December, and it or others were on the canal at Seabrook on the 6th, 15th and 25th-30th, with 3 together at Botolph's Bridge on the 11th. The Botolph's Bridge area also hosted a **White-fronted Goose** and 3 **Tundra Bean Geese** on the 2nd.

The cold weather also led to an influx of commoner wildfowl: at Nickoll's Quarry numbers gradually built up to peaks (generally over the 9th to 11th) of 2 Pintail, 2 Shoveler, 4 Wigeon, 5 Greylag Geese, 8 Gadwall, 12 Pochard, 19 Teal, 20 Tufted Ducks, and 110 Mute Swans. 6 Little Grebes and 54 Coot were also noted there. At nearby Botolph's Bridge there were a single Pochard and up to 4 Gadwall and 10 Teal, also a peak of 13 Little Grebes, whilst a Wigeon and 5 Pintail were on the sea off Hythe Redoubt on the 4th and 4 Wigeon were on the sea there on 7th. At Sandling 12 Mandarin, 12 Pintail, 32 Gadwall, and 40 Teal were counted on the 3rd and a single Wigeon was at Samphire Hoe on the 1st. Mallard numbers across the whole area numbered at least 130 during this period.

The severe frosts displaced a few Woodcock, with 1 at Nickoll's Quarry and at least 2 at Saltwood Castle on the 10th (though one at Brockhill CP on the 1st was at a more usual site) and brought a couple of Blackcaps



Night Heron and Mink at West Hythe
(Steve Reynaert)



Goosander at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

into gardens in Cheriton and Folkestone. Perhaps the most unusual displacement caused by the weather was a Mistle Thrush at Samphire Hoe on the 7th (the first ever record there and the 203rd species for the site).

Once the cold weather abated wildfowl numbers returned to normal with just a few scattered records of Gadwall, Teal, Pochard and Tufted Duck through the rest of the month. The windier conditions in the second half of January seemed to displace some Red-throated Divers as there were westerly movements of 85 on the 18th, 200 on the 20th and 90 on the 24th of birds apparently relocating. Also involved in these events were 32 Gannets, 55 Kittiwakes, and 475 Guillemots on the 18th and 4 Razorbills on the 20th. The only other record from the sea of any note was a Little Gull west past Battery Point (Seabrook) on the 30th.

There were good numbers of Great Crested Grebes offshore throughout, with a peak count of 300+ off the Hythe Redoubt on the 7th, and a **Red-necked Grebe** was seen off Hythe seafront on the 24th. A flock of 31 Cormorants flew north-west over Nickoll's Quarry on the 10th and good numbers were frequenting the Botolph's Bridge area around the same time, with a peak of 15 on the 13th, possibly part of the same group. A notable influx of Little Egrets occurred in the first half of the month with up to 3 in the Botolph's Bridge area and singles at Nickoll's Quarry, Westenhanger, Saltwood Castle, Park Farm (Folkestone) and Radnor Park.

1-2 Buzzards were seen in the Kiln Wood / Postling Wents, Blackhouse Hill / Saltwood Castle and Beachborough areas as the species continues to establish itself locally, but a Marsh Harrier at Botolph's Bridge on the 4th was more unusual as winter records are scarce. A Peregrine was also seen in this latter area and the Willop Outfall on a couple of dates. Single Water Rails were recorded at Nickoll's Quarry and the canal at Seabrook.

Purple Sandpipers were seen throughout the month on the rock groyne between Seabrook and Hythe with a peak count of 12 on the 3rd and single Green Sandpipers were seen on two dates at Botolph's Bridge. This latter site saw the peak counts of Golden Plover and Lapwing when 50 and 200 respectively were present on the 1st. Two Jack Snipe were at Westenhanger on the 16th and Common Snipe peaked with 10 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4th, with smaller numbers at several other sites. Other waders of note were up to 3 Redshank, 10 Turnstone and 20 Ringed Plover in the Folkestone Harbour / Beach area, up to 2 Oystercatcher, 13 Sanderling and 26 Turnstone in the Redoubt / Willop Outfall area, and a Dunlin and up to 4 Redshank in the Botolph's Bridge / Nickoll's Quarry area. Elsewhere there was a Dunlin at Samphire Hoe on the 1st and 2 Curlew along Donkey Street on the 8th.

A partial albino first-winter Herring Gull at Mill Point on the 24th-25th (and again on the 22nd February) was notable for its bizarre combination of fully white wings yet normal rump and tail, and what looks like the same bird was also photographed at Pitsea in Essex in February and appeared in *Birding World* (vol. 22, p. 82).

Kingfishers were noted at Blackhouse Hill, Folkestone Harbour (2), and in the Botolph's Bridge / West Hythe area (2-3) and Grey Wagtails were at Beachborough Ponds, Sandling, and Brockhill CP (2). Stonechats were seen at Nickoll's Quarry, Samphire Hoe, and the Willop Outfall. There were some reasonable counts of winter thrushes including 50 Redwings and 65 Fieldfares at Blackhouse Hill on the 17th and 100 Redwings at Postling Wents on the 31st.



Partial albino Herring Gull at Mill Point (Ian Roberts)

A Cetti's Warbler was along the canal at Seabrook on the 6th, a Chiffchaff was seen in a garden in Hythe on the 24th and a Firecrest was at West Hythe on the 1st-2nd. Nuthatches were noted regularly at Brockhill CP

with a peak of 3 on the 1st. Siskins were only noted from Saltwood Castle (1 on 3rd) and Hythe Roughs (4 on 17th).

A total of 105 species were recorded in January with a peak day total of 70 on the 1st.

February

There was a cold start to the month with frequent snow showers on the 2nd leading to a reasonable accumulation, but this soon thawed away as a band of rain moved up from the south on the 4th. It remained cold however over the following week with frequent showers or more prolonged spells of precipitation which were sometimes wintry. The 10th was particularly wet and windy, followed by more wintry showers the next day, and further snow on the 12th. From the 13th the weather became more settled though it remained cold and it wasn't until the 16th that daytime temperatures rose above 10 Celsius. High pressure became established in the second half of the month bringing milder and generally dry conditions, though some weak fronts brought occasional light rain and drizzle.

Despite the wintry conditions 42 Brent Geese flew east past Folkestone on the 1st and a further 47 flew east past Hythe on the 15th. A Red-breasted Merganser was off Folkestone Beach on the 1st and the **Goosander** was seen again on the canal at Seabrook the following day. 10 Wigeon and 120 Common Scoters were on the sea off the Willop Outfall on the 7th and 5 Pintail and 10 Wigeon flew east past on the 18th. Six Mandarins were at Folk's Wood on the 15th.

Good numbers of Great Crested Grebes remained in Hythe Bay with c.200 present in the first half of the month. At least 5 pairs of Fulmars had returned to the cliffs at Capel-le-Ferne and 120 Gannets flew east past Hythe on the 2nd. A Shag was seen off Mill Point on the 22nd. There were a couple of further Little Egret records, with singles near Westenhanger on the 15th and at Radnor Park on the 16th, though these could have been the same birds as those seen at these sites in January.

4 Buzzards were seen over the eastern end of Hythe Roughs on the 14th, when another was at Saltwood Castle and a Peregrine flew over Hythe town, and a Marsh Harrier and 2 Buzzards were seen at Saltwood Castle on the 21st. Single Water Rails were again recorded at Nickoll's Quarry and the canal at Seabrook. There were at least 130 Moorhens wintering in the area, including counts of 24 at Cinderella Farm (West Hythe), 21 at Seabrook and 19 at Scene Wood.



Marsh Harrier at Saltwood Castle (Brian Harper)

Up to 8 Purple Sandpipers remained throughout the month on the rock groynes between Seabrook and Hythe and single Green Sandpipers were seen near Hythe Redoubt (7th) and Botolph's Bridge (15th). Numbers of Golden Plover and Lapwing were low with peaks of just 7 and 70 respectively at the latter site. A **Ruff** was seen with 6 Redshank at the Willop Outfall on the 7th, when 3 Curlew were also noted in that area. Single Woodcock were flushed from Newington Quarry on the 11th and Scene Wood on the 18th.

Auk numbers were low with a peak of just 70 Guillemots off Folkestone on the 1st and off Hythe on the 2nd, though an isolated movement of 50 Razorbills past Mill Point on the 17th was notable. A count of 23 Stock Doves near Lympne on the 14th was perhaps of note as were 550 Wood Pigeons at Westenhanger on the 8th. One of the early indications from the BTO winter atlas survey is that Green Woodpeckers have spread and

increased in the county, and this seems to be the case locally as fieldwork revealed at least 35 individuals across the area in January and February.

Small flocks of wintering Meadow Pipits were noted at Westenhanger (13) and Peene (15) and 8 Grey Wagtails were seen at different sites to the 4 in January. A flock of 35 Pied Wagtails were seen near the Hythe Redoubt on the 7th. Following some reasonable counts in January there again decent numbers of winter thrushes: Fieldfares peaked at 130 at Westenhanger on the 16th, with further flocks at Newington Quarry (30) and Abbotscliffe (12), and Redwings were seen at various sites, with a total of around 300 logged over the two months.

A Cetti's Warbler was again along the canal at Seabrook on the 2nd, a pair of Blackcaps frequented a garden in Folkestone in the first half of the month, a Chiffchaff was at Westenhanger on the 25th and 2 Firecrests were wintering at Sandgate (Enbrook Park). A Marsh Tit was at Scene Wood on the 18th but this was the only record from this winter.



Purple Sandpiper at Hythe (Brian Harper)

At least 150 Siskins were in the Casebourne Wood area in February and one which flew east at Capel-le-Ferne on the 28th was an early sign of spring visual migration. Of some note, as the first winter record for several years, was a Lapland Bunting in a field off Cauldham Lane, Capel-le-Ferne on the 16th.

March

The first half of the month was unsettled as weather systems spread bands of rain and showers eastwards across the country. A fine, mainly sunny week followed and daytime temperatures were above average though, with clear skies, nights were chilly with some frost. The fourth week of the month saw a return to less settled conditions and it turned cooler and cloudier, with further rain at times and stronger winds. High pressure began to build at the very end of March and it began to feel a little more spring-like again.

March began with a small up-channel movement of 105 Brent Geese past Copt Point on the 1st but the rest of the first week was extremely quiet. A Firecrest was at West Hythe on the 7th, when 85 Common Scoters were off the Willop Outfall, and a Cetti's Warbler and a Green Sandpiper were at Botolph's Bridge the next day. Common Buzzards were at West Hythe on the 8th, Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site on the 10th (2) and near Sandling on the 11th. A pair of Tufted Ducks was at Nickoll's Quarry on the latter date.

Four Chiffchaffs (the first migrant ones of the year) were at Samphire Hoe on the 12th and a Black Redstart and 2 Redwings were seen there the next day, when 35 Redwings were at Abbotscliffe and 24 Brent Geese flew east at sea. A female Blackcap in a garden in Hythe on the 13th was more likely to be a wintering individual than an early migrant however.

The 15th saw the first proper visual migration of the spring, when a Marsh Harrier, an alba wagtail, a Grey Wagtail, 2 Bramblings, 8 Stock Doves, 15 Siskins, 60 Starlings and 700 Chaffinches flew in/east at Capel-le-Ferne. A pair of Ravens there was the start of a series of sightings over the next week or so. Four Fieldfares were at Abbotscliffe, Chiffchaffs were at Capel-le-Ferne and Botolph's Bridge, and Cetti's Warblers were at Seabrook and West Hythe.



Great Crested Grebe in Folkestone Harbour and Mediterranean Gull at Copt Point (Brian Harper)

A male **Bearded Tit** at Nickoll's Quarry on the 16th was a good local record and a Tufted Duck, 2 Teal and another Chiffchaff were noted there. The following day saw another large movement of Chaffinches, with 1,545 over Abbotscliffe, and 2 Bramblings, 3 Stock Doves, 38 Siskins, and 170 Starlings also flew in/east there. A Little Egret was at Samphire Hoe on the 18th (with presumably the same bird at Abbotscliffe on the 21st).

Chaffinches were on the move again on the 19th, when 2,135 were logged heading in/east over Abbotscliffe, accompanied by 2 Bramblings, 118 Siskins and a small but unusual passage comprising a Coal Tit, 2 Long-tailed Tits, 3 Great Tits and 4 Blue Tits. Three Chiffchaffs were along the Hythe Canal at Seabrook the following day and records were almost daily thereafter. Two 'continental' Coal Tits were at Capel-le-Ferne on the 21st and a further 2 were at Samphire Hoe the next day.



Bearded Tit at Nickoll's Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Common Buzzards were seen over Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site (2), Folkestone and Hythe on the 21st and 1-2 were seen again over Folkestone the following day. 22 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 22nd but this was the only movement of any note at sea in the second half of the month. The regular Little Owl was seen again at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd and a pair of Little Grebes were also present. 5 Siskins and 70 Chaffinches flew east at Capel-le-Ferne on the 22nd and 5 Siskins and 30 Chaffinches flew east at Abbotscliffe on the 24th, bringing the Chaffinch total for the month to nearly 4,500.

Spring finally gathered some momentum at the very end of March, with a Swallow at Church Hougham and a Firecrest at Abbotscliffe on the 30th, and a Cuckoo reported at Hythe, 2 Swallows at Capel-le-Ferne, and the first 4 Sandwich Terns off Hythe on the 31st. Another Buzzard flew over Folkestone on the latter date.

April

The high pressure continued to build into April, which meant a settled start to the month with warm days but rather cooler nights. From the 6th a series of fronts moved in from the Atlantic bringing rain or showers over the next 10 days or so, but these were interspersed with plenty of drier interludes. The 16th and 17th saw some outbreaks of heavy rain before pressure rose again and settled conditions returned, as did the combination of warm days and chilly nights. On the 21st-23rd it was particularly pleasant with temperatures approaching 20 Celsius. The last 5 days of the month were showery but it remained quite mild during the day and overall it was one of the warmest Aprils on record.

The first week saw migrants continuing to arrive with the highlights being a fine male Redstart at Abbotscliffe on the 4th and a Ring Ouzel there on the 6th. The supporting cast included the first migrant Blackcap at Saltwood Castle on the 1st (with another at Horn Street on the 4th and 2 at Folkestone on the 6th), Willow Warblers at Hythe (2 on 4th), the Botolph's Bridge area (3 on 5th) and Folkestone (on the 6th), Wheatears at Hythe (3 on 4th) and Hythe Redoubt (on 5th) and a Black Redstart and a Swallow at Hythe Ranges on the 5th.

At sea there were 2 Red-breasted Mergansers and 15 Sandwich Terns off Hythe on the 4th and 4 Pintail, 5 Arctic Skuas, 13 Common Terns, 65 Gannets, 95 Common Scoters and 260 Sandwich Terns flew east past Copt Point on the 6th. Buzzards were noted at West Hythe (on the 5th) and Folkestone (on the 6th and 7th) and 2-3 Ravens flew past at Capel-le-Ferne on the 5th (with 2 there on the 11th). A Mandarin was at Saltwood Castle on the 1st, 2 Purple Sandpipers were still at Hythe on the 2nd, 2 Cetti's Warblers were along the canal at Hythe on the 4th and 2 Nuthatches were at Brockhill CP the same day.



Buzzard and Cetti's Warbler at West Hythe and Wheatear at Hythe (Brian Harper)

A quieter few days followed but there was a further flush of migrants from the 10th, when a Sedge Warbler and 2 Reed Warblers were at Botolph's Bridge, with a Lesser Whitethroat at the Gun Site on the 11th and single Whitethroats there and at Hythe on the same day. Swallows and Willow Warblers continued to arrive in small numbers. A Merlin was seen along Donkey Street on the 12th and migrant Marsh Harriers were noted at Botolph's Bridge on the 10th, the Gun Site on the 11th and Hythe on the 13th. A Buzzard flew over Hythe on the 12th (with another over Folkestone on the 16th and 18th).

Singles of Corn Bunting at Botolph's Bridge on the 10th and Tree Sparrow at the Gun Site the next day were both additions to the year list. Another Mandarin was on the canal at Hythe on the 11th. On the 14th a Greylag Goose and 50 Sandwich Terns flew east past Folkestone and 60 Common Scoters were offshore there.

Another short lull ensued with just a couple of new Lesser Whitethroats reported and a few Swallows noted trickling eastwards, before a **Wryneck** at the Gun Site on the 18th marked the start of a very good week. The same day saw the first Yellow Wagtail and 5 Sand Martins at Hythe and an Arctic Skua and 20 Whimbrel flew east at sea. An **Osprey** flew north over Brockhill CP on the 20th and on the 22nd a **Black Kite** flew north-east near Westenhanger. Commoner migrants continued to arrive including the first House Martins, more Yellow Wagtails, and several Wheatears, Lesser Whitethroats, Willow Warblers and Swallows. A flock of 11 Avocets and a Pintail flew east past Copt Point on the 24th, where a Great Skua flew east the next day and the first Common Sandpiper was recorded.

The 26th produced new firsts for the year - a Hobby at the Capel-le-Ferne Cafe and a Swift over Cheriton - whilst a Tree Sparrow, 2 Yellow Wagtails, 3 Lesser Whitethroats and 17 Swallows were at Abbotscliffe and a Cuckoo was at Nickoll's Quarry. Another 5 Swifts were noted over Hythe on the 29th and another Cuckoo was at West Hythe the same day.

May

A **Wood Warbler** was singing at Kiln Wood, Pedlinge on the 1st but otherwise it was a very slow start to the month: small numbers of Swifts, Swallows and House Martins continued to arrive, 24 Whimbrel were counted at Nickoll's Quarry on the 3rd and a Cuckoo was at Scene Wood, near Hythe on the 5th. An unseasonably strong westerly wind picked up from the 6th and the next couple of days saw only a few Swallows continuing to struggle in.

A calmer interlude produced the first Whinchat and a Hobby at Blackhouse Hill, Hythe on the 9th, where a Nuthatch, 2 Marsh Tits and 2 Mandarins were also seen. The first Turtle Dove was at West Hythe the next day and 20 Swallows were logged arriving at Abbotscliffe, where there was also a Black Redstart. Purple Sandpipers were last noted at Hythe on the 10th, when 3 were present (with 7 having been seen on the day before).

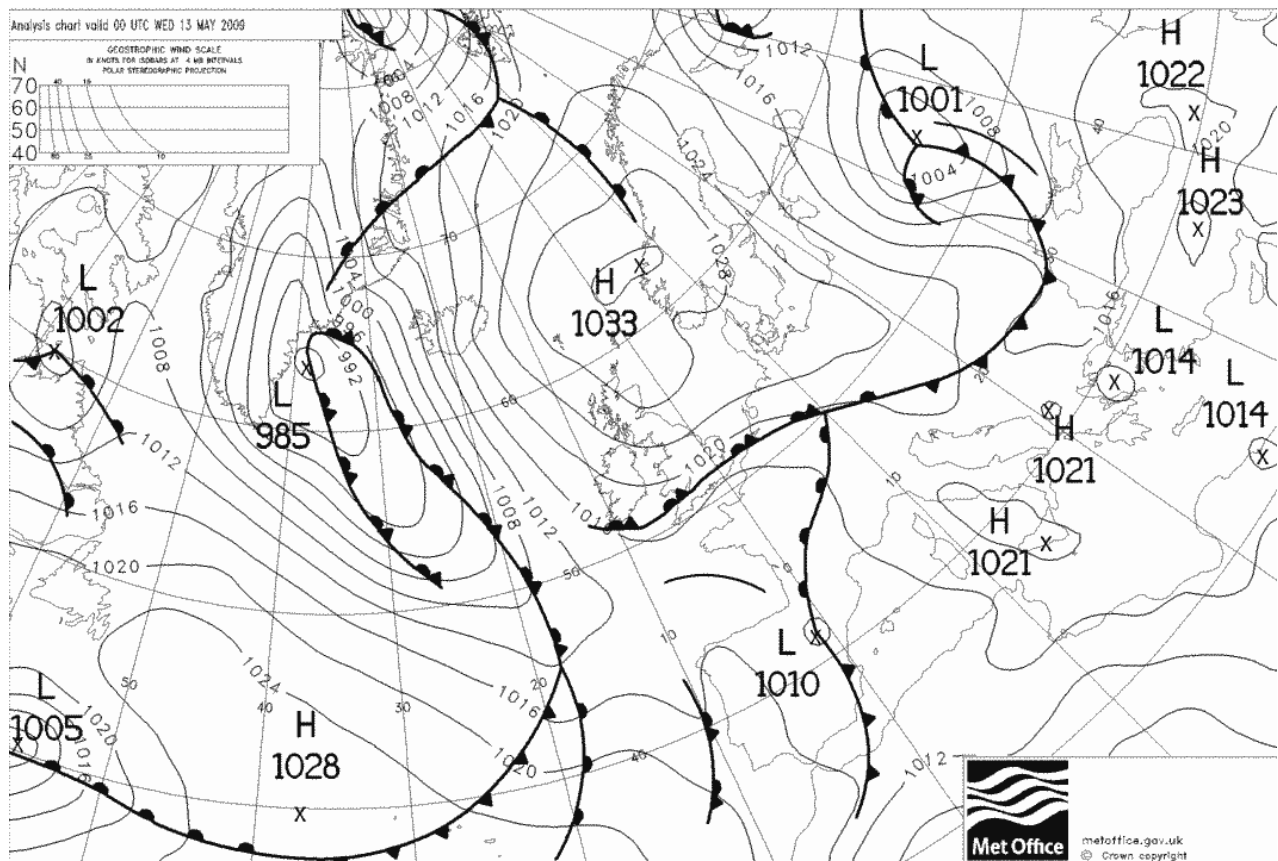
The wind increased again on the 11th, but this time from the north-east. It was just as quiet as before until an occluded front moved north across southern England on the 13th, bringing some heavy and thundery rain (see weather chart below) and grounding some late migrants. It was an arrival more of quality than quantity, with singles of Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat and Garden Warbler at Abbotscliffe and 2 Whinchats at Samphire Hoe on the 13th, followed by a singing **Icterine Warbler** at the latter site the next morning. 3 Common Sandpipers were also at Folkestone Reservoirs on the 14th and a Turtle Dove was at Barrowhill, Westenhanger. A Hobby was at Saltwood Castle on the 16th.



Whinchat at Blackhouse Hill (Ian Roberts)



Whimbrel at Nickoll's Quarry (Brian Harper)



Weather chart for 13th May 2009 © Met Office

Single Arctic and Great Skuas and 25 Common Scoters flew east past Copt Point on the 17th and represented the only sea passage of any note all month. A Hobby, a Whimbrel and 4 Shelduck were at Nickoll's Quarry also on the 17th, whilst another Whimbrel was at Hythe Bay and a Turtle Dove was at Botolph's Bridge. A Cuckoo was at West Hougham on the 18th and further Turtle Doves were seen there the same day, at West Hythe on the 20th and at Hythe Ranges (2) on the 22nd, when 12 Shelduck flew west.

On the 23rd 60 Common Scoter were on the sea off the Hythe Redoubt. The 24th produced 2 Cuckoos and 3 Tufted Ducks at Botolph's Bridge, and 2 Spotted Flycatchers at Westenhanger. A **Honey Buzzard** flew over Folkestone and a Tree Pipit flew over Crete Road East on the 25th, and there was a movement of about 70 Swifts west over Hythe on the 27th. On the 31st a Mandarin and 2 Tufted Ducks were noted at Blackhouse Hill, Hythe.

Buzzards continue to increase locally and there were sightings in May from Blackhouse Hill (Hythe), Saltwood Castle, the Westenhanger area, Folkestone town (up to 3) and West Hythe (up to 4).



Cuckoo at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

June

June was mostly warm and dry though there were some heavy downpours. The month end was particularly warm with temperatures approaching 30 Celsius.

The breeding season is detailed in the July report. Notable non-breeding records in June included a female Teal on the canal at Hythe on the 13th, 60 Common Scoters off the Willop Outfall on the 3rd, Little Egrets over Hythe on the 7th and Westenhanger on the 16th, a **Honey Buzzard** north-east over Folkestone on the 22nd and Mediterranean Gulls at the Willop Outfall on the 3rd and Botolph's Bridge (5) on the 14th.

July

The warm weather from late June lasted into early July but it was rather unsettled thereafter. An **Osprey** flew over Cheriton on the evening of the 4th and a **Honey Buzzard** flew west along the cliffs at Samphire Hoe on the afternoon of the 16th. A Ring-necked Parakeet, which flew over Hythe on the 13th, was an unusual record.

A pair of Canada Geese were seen at Nickoll's Quarry on a couple of dates but there was no record of breeding. Mandarin successfully bred at Chesterfield Wood (Sandling) and Brockhill CP and there were also records in the breeding season from 3 other sites in the Saltwood area, whilst around 40-45 pairs of Mallard bred. Tufted Ducks bred on the canal cutting at Botolph's Bridge, raising 2 broods, in what appears to be the first confirmed case of breeding in the area, though it has been suspected before and pairs were also present in suitable breeding habitat at 3 other sites.

1-2 pairs of Red-legged Partridge were on the Hythe Ranges, with another at Nickoll's Quarry, and 3 pairs of Grey Partridge were at Abbotscliffe whilst 5 birds were seen on Summerhouse Hill in mid-July. Little Grebes were seen in suitable habitat at Westenhanger, Chesterfield Wood (Sandling) and the Willop Outfall / Sewer area, whilst 2 pairs of Great Crested Grebe were at Nickoll's Quarry, with at least 1 nesting successfully.

Around 30 Fulmars were on the cliffs between the Gun Site and Abbotscliffe and at least 6 pairs of Grey Herons had nests in Lympe Park Wood. Sparrowhawks were recorded in almost a quarter of all kilometre squares and were slightly more widespread than Kestrels. Buzzards continued to increase, with records of birds in suitable habitat from 11 widely-spread sites. There were records of Hobbies from 4 locations but no evidence of breeding and 1-2 pairs of Peregrines were on the cliffs in the Abbotscliffe to Samphire Hoe stretch.

Up to 6 pairs of Coot were noted on the marsh west of Hythe, with at least 5 breeding successfully, and single birds were also seen at Beachborough Ponds and Blackhouse Hill (Saltwood). A pair of Oystercatchers probably bred at Nickoll's Quarry and another pair were noted early in the season at the Willop Outfall but did not appear to stay. Another early season record was a pair of Ringed Plovers on the Hythe Ranges but they were not seen subsequently. Up to 4 pairs of Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found amongst the far more numerous Herrings but no evidence of breeding was obtained.

Stock Doves proved to be well-represented in the breeding survey, with records from 47% of kilometre squares, whilst Wood Pigeon was the second most widespread of all species, with records from 98% of squares. Turtle Doves were recorded at 7 sites and Cuckoos at about 5, though birds in the West Hythe / Nickoll's Quarry were particularly mobile. Little Owls were present at 4 sites at least but Tawny Owls were very under-recorded. Green Woodpeckers were found in 66% of squares and Great Spotted Woodpeckers in 29%. Sky Larks were just outside of the 20 most widespread species, with records from 62% of squares.

The 20 most widespread breeding species in the area (with a status of at least possible breeding) are shown in the table overleaf. The percentage relates to the proportion of the 86 single kilometre squares in which the species was recorded with a breeding status.

1	Wren	98.8%	11	Great Tit	82.6%
2	Wood Pigeon	97.7%	12	Blackcap	79.1%
3	Blackbird	94.2%	13	Starling	75.6%
4=	Dunnock	93.0%	14=	Collared Dove	74.4%
4=	Chaffinch	93.0%	14=	Chiffchaff	74.4%
6	Robin	91.9%	16	Song Thrush	73.3%
7	Blue Tit	90.7%	17=	Green Woodpecker	66.3%
8=	Magpie	89.5%	17=	Whitethroat	66.3%
8=	Carrion Crow	89.5%	19	House Sparrow	65.1%
10	Greenfinch	84.9%	20	Goldfinch	62.8%

Table 1: The 20 most widespread species in the Folkestone and Hythe area (2008 breeding survey)

A quarter of squares held Meadow Pipits whilst a couple of pairs of Rock Pipits were below the cliffs at Abbotscliffe / Samphire Hoe. Grey Wagtails were present at 5 sites and several Yellow Wagtails were recorded, mainly from the marsh west of Hythe. Black Redstarts were seen at Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe but no evidence of breeding was recorded, however Stonechats were successful at both of these sites.

Cetti's Warblers continue to do well and at least 7 birds were holding territory this year, whilst 9 Sedge Warbler territories was a good count locally. A Wood Warbler was found singing in suitable habitat in Kiln Wood in May but was probably just a migrant. It can also be difficult to distinguish between migrant and breeding Willow Warblers as very few remain to hold territory, however there appeared to be 4-5 singing males in habitat this summer. Spotted Flycatchers are now a very scarce breeding bird here but there was a pair recorded at Westenhanger and a single at least at Casebourne Wood.

Marsh Tits were only noted at Bargrove Wood and a single Nuthatch was recorded there with a pair at Brockhill CP. A pair of Ravens lingered around the cliffs in March and April but finally settled outside the area. At least 3 Corn Buntings were holding territory on the marsh west of Hythe.

August

August was generally rather settled with plenty of dry, warm days, though there a couple of spells of heavy rain. The first half of the month was extremely quiet though coverage was very limited. The first returning Wheatear was at Hythe on the 1st and a Marsh Harrier was at Botolph's Bridge on the 5th, with a couple of Hobbies noted at Folkestone and the cliffs. A Reed Warbler, a Sedge Warbler, 2 Willow Warblers and 10 Whitethroats were at Abbotscliffe on the 10th, with a Lapwing and a Whinchat new in there the next day, and on the 12th singles of Whinchat, Wheatear, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat were at Abbotscliffe together with 5 Whitethroats and 9 Willow Warblers. A Common Sandpiper was along the canal at Hythe on the 11th.

On the 17th Marsh Harriers were seen at Abbotscliffe and Nickoll's Quarry and an **Osprey** flew west over Crete Road East the next day. The 18th also produced a Grasshopper Warbler, a Garden Warbler and a Hobby at Abbotscliffe and a Kingfisher and 9 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe. A Raven flew west at Capel-le-Ferne on the 19th and 2 were at Abbotscliffe on the 22nd, when there were also 2 Whinchats and 5 Willow Warblers, whilst a Green Sandpiper and a Turtle Dove were seen at Botolph's Bridge.

A superb **Hoopoe** was at Samphire Hoe on the 25th, where the 2 Ravens were seen again, and a Common Sandpiper was noted, whilst 6 **Ring-necked Parakeets** flew over Folkestone. A Grasshopper Warbler, a Turtle Dove, a Hobby and 3 Wheatears were at Church Hougham on the 27th. The next day saw a **Honey Buzzard** fly south-east over Abbotscliffe and a Hobby was at West Hythe.



Hoopoe at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith) and Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

A juvenile **Red-necked Phalarope** was seen from a boat just inshore of Folkestone Pier on the 29th and a Whinchat, a Reed Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Chiffchaff, 2 Wheatears and several Whitethroats and Willow Warblers were at Abbotscliffe, where a Marsh Harrier and 3-4 Buzzards flew over, and 20 Sand Martins went west.

On the 30th a Reed Warbler, a Tree Pipit, a Black Redstart, a Lesser Whitethroat, a Blackcap, 2 Wheatears and 6 Willow Warblers were at Abbotscliffe and a Swift and 8 Yellow Wagtails and 15 Sand Martins flew west there. A Redstart, 2 Green Sandpipers and 2 Kingfishers were at Botolph's Bridge and a Hobby flew west over Hythe. A Shag was at Copt Point the following day.

September

There was an unsettled start to the month and there was little to be seen, with just a single Whinchat at Abbotscliffe on the 2nd, a Great Skua past Copt Point on the 3rd, and a Blackcap, 2 Yellowhammers and 2 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe on the 4th. The wind became north-westerly on the 5th, which is usually one of the better directions for migrants, and produced a Grasshopper Warbler and a Redstart at the Gun Site and 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 4 Wheatears and 5 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe. A few Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Whitethroats and Blackcaps were noted at both sites. A Tree Pipit, 5 Yellow Wagtails and 15 Sand Martins flew west at Abbotscliffe, and a Buzzard flew over the Gun Site. A Grey Wagtail flew over Hythe and a Wheatear, a Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Turtle Doves and 2 Swifts were at Botolph's Bridge. A Spotted Flycatcher and a Sedge Warbler were new in at Abbotscliffe the next day and a Swift and 5 Sand Martins flew west there.

Four Arctic Skuas and 50 Gannets flew west past Samphire Hoe on the 7th but it was quieter again on the land with just a lone Wheatear there and a Whinchat and 5 Whitethroats at Abbotscliffe. A Grey Wagtail and 7 Sand Martins flew west. The 8th saw little more than a Lesser Whitethroat and 2 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe and the following day produced only a Tree Pipit and a Wheatear there.

The 10th was better with a small arrival at Abbotscliffe which included singles of Pied and Spotted Flycatcher, Redstart and Whinchat amongst the commoner migrants and a Wheatear was at the Gun Site. A Blackcap, 2

Redstarts, 2 Lesser Whitethroats and 3 Whinchats were at Samphire Hoe on the 12th but Abbotscliffe held only a Whinchat, a Wheatear and a Blackcap, and 7 Sand Martins flew west. Two Redstarts, 2 Wheatears and 3 Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe the next day, when 8 Sand Martins, 13 Meadow Pipits and 70 Swallows flew east there, and 3 Little Egrets, 5 Golden Plovers, 14 Shelduck and 35 Gannets flew past Copt Point whilst the first Red-throated Diver of the autumn was offshore.

A Merlin, a Shag, a Common Sandpiper, 5 Blackcaps and 5 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe on the 15th and 2 Tree Pipits were at the Gun Site. A Dunlin and a Whinchat were new in at the former site the next day and Wheatears increased to 10 there, whilst a Whinchat and 8 Wheatears were at Abbotscliffe and visual migration gathered pace, with a Siskin, a Reed Bunting, 8 Sand Martins and 55 Meadow Pipits east there together with around 400 Swallows and 900 House Martins per hour (based on sample counts).

A Green Sandpiper was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 17th as were a Lesser Whitethroat, a Willow Warbler and 3 Whitethroats. The first Brent Goose of the autumn was off the Hythe Redoubt and another 2 passed Samphire Hoe, where a Teal was noted. Three Little Grebes, 7 Coot, 14 Moorhen and 54 Mallards were counted at Botolph's Bridge, 3 Whinchats and 5 Wheatears were at Church Hougham and 40 Meadow Pipits flew east at the cliffs. The next day saw 41 Sand Martins, 130 Meadow Pipits and 300 each of Swallow and House Martin fly east at Abbotscliffe and 2 Whinchats and 4 Wheatears were grounded there.

Visual passage at Abbotscliffe on the 19th included a Tree Pipit, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Collared Dove, 2 Jays, 2 *alba* wagtails, 2 Sand Martins, 3 Grey Wagtails, 4 Yellow Wagtails, at least 100 Meadow Pipits, and about 200 Swallows and 1,400 House Martins per hour. Grounded migrants comprised a Blackcap, 2 Reed Buntings, 4 Wheatears, 4 Whinchats and 4 Chiffchaffs. A Tree Pipit, a Wheatear, a Whitethroat, 2 Blackcaps and 3 Chiffchaffs were at the Gun Site. The next day saw a decent arrival of 10 Chiffchaffs and 20 Blackcaps at Samphire Hoe and Shag, a Teal, a Water Rail, a Grey Wagtail, a Willow Warbler, 2 Whitethroats and 2 House Sparrows were also seen, whilst 800 House Martins flew east and a Tree Pipit, 3 Wheatears and 11 Blackcaps were at Abbotscliffe.

A Great Spotted Woodpecker, 2 Ravens, 4 Wheatears, 10 Chiffchaffs and 14 Blackcaps were at Samphire Hoe on the 21st and a Buzzard and 2 Grey Wagtails flew east. A Whinchat and 6 Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe. The 22nd produced a Green Sandpiper, a Snipe, a Hobby, a Sedge Warbler and 2 Kingfishers at Nickoll's Quarry, and a Little Owl, a Wheatear and 15 Blackcaps were at Samphire Hoe on the 23rd, when 60 Goldfinches flew east. A Garden Warbler, 2 Common Sandpipers and 2 Wheatears were at Samphire Hoe the next day and Grey and 4 *alba* wagtails flew west at Abbotscliffe.

Two Black Redstarts, 7 Wheatears, 9 Chiffchaffs, 10 Blackcaps, 14 Stonechats and 15 Robins were at Samphire Hoe on the 26th and a Buzzard, a Willow Warbler, a Wheatear, 5 Black Redstarts, 6 Blackcaps and 10 Chiffchaffs at Abbotscliffe where a Grey and 15 *alba* wagtails flew east. The 27th produced a Sedge Warbler, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Whitethroat, 6 Blackcaps, 8 Chiffchaffs and 10 Wheatears at Abbotscliffe and an increase in Robins and Dunnocks was noted, whilst a Little Owl, a Wheatear and a Reed Bunting were at Church Hougham and 7 Chiffchaffs were at Capel-le-Ferne.

On the 28th a Wheatear, a Whitethroat, a Snipe, 3 Blackcaps, 7 Jays and 10 Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe, a Marsh Harrier and 30 Starlings flew in off the sea there, and a Grey Wagtail, 2 *alba* wagtails and 3 Siskins flew east. A Hobby, 4 Chiffchaffs, 6 Blackcaps and 12 Meadow Pipits were at Samphire Hoe. A Grasshopper Warbler, 8 Stonechats and 14 Chiffchaffs were at Abbotscliffe the next day and the month ended with a Blackcap, 10 Chiffchaffs and 400 House Martins there on the 30th.

October

A Dartford Warbler, a Water Rail, a Little Owl, a Whitethroat, 2 Grey Wagtails, 2 Black Redstarts, 7 Blackcaps, 9 Chiffchaffs, 10 Stonechats and 12 Robins were noted at Samphire Hoe in calm conditions on the 1st, but the wind had increased considerably from the south-west by the 3rd, with 50 mph gusts in the

afternoon, when an Arctic Tern, a Red-throated Diver and 13 Brent Geese flew past Copt Point. The wind had moderated the next day and 2 Ravens were seen at Samphire Hoe.

Three rather wet days with mid-strength southerly winds followed and it was quiet on both land and sea: single Arctic Skuas passed Samphire Hoe on the 5th and 6th, whilst a Wheatear was present on the former date and a Reed Bunting, 2 Chiffchaffs and 3 Blackcaps on the latter. On the 7th 3 *alba* wagtails, 30 Linnets and 40 Goldfinches flew west at Samphire Hoe and a similar range of species were logged at Abbotscliffe the following day, when 2 *alba* wagtails and 20 Goldfinches flew east and a Chiffchaff, 2 Reed Buntings, 3 Blackcaps and 30 Goldfinches were grounded. A Dunlin was at Samphire Hoe.

A strong easterly wind blew on the 9th and 2 Firecrests arrived at Abbotscliffe. A Grey Wagtail and a Black Redstart were at Samphire Hoe, where 6 Brent Geese went east, and a Blackcap and 6 Chiffchaffs were at the Gun Site. The next day was more pleasant with a light northerly and a Grasshopper Warbler, a Firecrest, a Fieldfare, 2 Wheatears, 2 Ravens, 5 Ring Ouzels and 8 Chiffchaffs were found at Abbotscliffe, whilst 2 Siskins and 45 Goldfinches flew over. A Firecrest, a Brambling, a Redwing, 3 Ring Ouzels, 4 Black Redstarts, 13 Chiffchaffs, 18 Robins and 20 Stonechats were at Samphire Hoe and a Firecrest and 7 Chiffchaffs were at Mill Point.

Overcast conditions on the 11th made for another decent day, with a Firecrest, 2 Ring Ouzels, 5 Reed Buntings and 13 Chiffchaffs at Abbotscliffe, where a Redpoll, a Grey Wagtail, 3 *alba* wagtails, 11 Siskins and around 320 Goldfinches flew over, a Wheatear, a Yellowhammer, 2 Redwings, 2 Ring Ouzels, 6 Song Thrushes, 11 Chiffchaffs, 17 Blackbirds and 22 Robins at Samphire Hoe, and a Firecrest at the Gun Site. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was found at Samphire Hoe on the 12th (remaining to the 13th) and a Ring Ouzel was also noted, whilst 300 Brent Geese flew over, and a Redwing was at Hythe.

A light northerly on the 13th produced another good selection of common migrants, including a Buzzard, a Firecrest, a Goldcrest, a Brambling, a Wheatear, up to 3 Ring Ouzels, 3 Blackcaps, 4 Black Redstarts, 7 Chiffchaffs, 9 Redwings and 15 Rock Pipits at Samphire Hoe and a Ring Ouzel, 2 Grey Wagtails, 3 Mistle Thrushes, 3 Song Thrush, 4 Chiffchaffs and 11 Stonechats at Abbotscliffe. A light north-easterly with drizzle on the 14th produced a **Great Grey Shrike**, a Ring Ouzel, a Wheatear, a Goldcrest, 5 Redwings and 6 Song Thrushes at Abbotscliffe whilst 1,500 Starlings flew in off the sea and 2 Shelduck and 14 Brent Geese flew east there. A Ring Ouzel was at Samphire Hoe and a number of thrushes were heard moving over Hythe seafront pre-dawn.



Brambling at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

The next day was calm and overcast and there was a little visible passage at Abbotscliffe, including a Fieldfare, a Tree Sparrow, a Yellowhammer, 2 House Sparrows, 2 Redpolls, 2 Siskins, 3 Reed Buntings, 4 *alba* wagtails, a few Chaffinches, Greenfinches and Goldfinches, and 150 Starlings, but only a couple of Chiffchaffs and Goldcrests were grounded there. A Ring Ouzel, 5 Chiffchaffs and 20 Robins were at Samphire Hoe and 9 Shelduck and 170 Siskins flew east there, whilst a Buzzard and 2 Ravens were at Church Hougham. On the 17th a Firecrest was behind the Capel-le-Ferne Café and 2 Firecrests and 15 Chiffchaffs were at the Gun Site, where a Tree Sparrow, a few Redpolls and Siskins, 15 Redwings and 200 Goldfinches flew over.

Another 3 Firecrests were in Folkestone Warren on the 18th and there was one at Abbotscliffe, where a Snipe and a Black Redstart were seen, and a Stock Dove, a Grey Wagtail, a Redwing, 4 Yellowhammers, 5

Redpolls, 7 Reed Buntings, 15 Siskins, 30 Swallows, 40 Sky Larks, 150 Goldfinches, 150 Chaffinches and 750 Starlings flew over. The 19th produced a Little Grebe, a Wheatear, 2 Ring Ouzels and 2 Black Redstarts at Samphire Hoe and a Raven flew past Capel-le-Ferne Café.

A strong southerly breeze picked up on the 20th, when a Wheatear, a Redwing, 2 Firecrests and 2 Grey Wagtails were at Samphire Hoe, whilst a count of 250 Carrion Crows there was noteworthy, and in a slightly less strong wind the following day a Water Rail, a Ring Ouzel, a Redwing, 2 Firecrests and 20 Blackbirds were at Samphire Hoe before a band of rain arrived. The wind continued to drop but stayed southerly on the 22nd, and an **Arctic Warbler** was found behind Capel-le-Ferne Café – the first area record. 2 Firecrests were also seen there and a Raven, 2 Firecrests and 4 Long-tailed Tits were at Samphire Hoe. A Ring Ouzel, a Marsh Harrier, a Tree Sparrow, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Reed Bunting were in the Abbotscliffe area the next day and 4 Chiffchaffs and 5 Firecrests were behind Capel-le-Ferne Café, where 2 Sky Larks, 2 Redpolls and 4 *alba* wagtails flew over.

On the 24th 3 Ring Ouzels and a Firecrest were at Samphire Hoe and a Firecrest was in the trees behind Capel-le-Ferne Café. Three Firecrests were in Folkestone Warren the next day, with 2 Firecrests and 3 Tree Sparrows behind Capel-le-Ferne Café, another Firecrest at Abbotscliffe, where 2 Siskins, 3 Redpolls and 9 Swallows flew over, 3 Firecrests at West Hythe and one in Millennium Wood (Lympne), which brought the day total up to 10. The 26th saw a Stock Dove, a Brambling, 3 Swallows, 16 Crossbills and 16 Siskins over Abbotscliffe, where a Snipe was flushed, and a Marsh Tit and 2 Firecrests were at West Hythe.



Firecrest and Marsh Tit at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

A Little Grebe, a Wigeon, a Blackcap, 3 Chiffchaffs and a Reed Bunting were at Samphire Hoe on the 27th, whilst a Buzzard flew in off the sea there and a Great Skua was brought in and released by a vet. A Ring Ouzel and 2 Fieldfares were in the trees behind Capel-le-Ferne Café and a Little Egret and a Grey Wagtail flew west. On the 28th a Corn Bunting was at Abbotscliffe and a Siskin, 4 Collared Doves, 5 Redpolls, 8 Stock Doves, 20 Wood Pigeons and 50 Redwings flew over. The next day saw a Grey Wagtail, a Siskin, 2 Redwings, 2 Redpolls, 2 Reed Buntings, 6 Snipe and 9 Grey Partridges at Abbotscliffe and 3 Firecrests behind Capel-le-Ferne Café.

A Fieldfare and around 6 Redwings were heard over Hythe on the night of the 30th and on the last day of the month 4 Lapwings arrived in off the sea at Abbotscliffe and 40 flew west at Beachborough. A Chiffchaff was behind Capel-le-Ferne Café and a Sky Larks, Redwings, Redpolls and Siskins flew over.

November

The first ten days of the month saw some reasonable weather but it turned rather wet and often windy for the last three weeks. Nationally it was the wettest November on record.

November opened with seawatching weather and a Little Gull, a Great Skua, an Eider, a Wigeon, 2 Gadwall, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 5 Common Scoters and 70 Gannets flew west past Copt Point on the 1st. Conditions on the 2nd were more suited to visible passage and a Siskin, a Mistle Thrush, 2 *alba* wagtails, 2 Reed Buntings, 2 Tree Sparrows, 5 Redpolls, 6 Goldfinches, 7 Linnets, 25 Sky Larks and 80 Wood Pigeons flew over Abbotscliffe, where a Ring Ouzel was present. On the 3rd a Snow Bunting flew west over Capel-le-Ferne Café and 2 Chiffchaffs were at Samphire Hoe.

A **Yellow-browed Warbler** in cliff-top bushes just west of Abbot's House was the highlight of the 4th, whilst an *alba* wagtail, 3 Redpolls, 4 Linnets and 20 Starlings flew over and 3 Fieldfares were also noted. A Ring Ouzel was at Samphire Hoe and 8 Goldfinches flew west whilst a Brent Goose was on the beach there. Singles of Little Grebe and Little Owl were also seen at Samphire Hoe and remained throughout the month, with 2 Little Owls present on the 10th. Finally a Little Egret was seen near Westenhanger.

The 5th was quieter although 2 Firecrests were notable at Enbrook Park, Sandgate, where a Stock Dove and 80 Wood Pigeons flew west, and a Blackcap was at Samphire Hoe. A Brambling was at Mill Point the next day and a Grey Wagtail, 2 *alba* wagtails, 3 Meadow Pipits, 10 Siskins and 20 Wood Pigeons flew east there. An Eider was noted off Hythe and a Redpoll flew west. On the 7th a Snipe, 2 Redwings, 3 Yellowhammers and 30 Linnets were at Abbotscliffe and a Reed Bunting and 8 Chaffinches flew over. A Blackcap and a Redwing were at Samphire Hoe.

Two Ravens were at Samphire Hoe on the 8th and 32 Ringed Plovers were counted on Folkestone Beach (increasing to 39 by the 20th), where a single Brent Goose flew east. A Razorbill flew west at Hythe and 7 Purple Sandpipers were on the rocks there, where they remained for the rest of the month. A Grey Wagtail was at Brockhill CP. The next day produced 2 Chiffchaffs and 3 Firecrests in Folkestone Warren, where a Crossbill, a Stock Dove, an *alba* wagtail, 2 Siskins, 2 Sky Larks, 6 Goldfinches, 20 Chaffinches and 85 Starlings flew over. A Water Rail was at Samphire Hoe, where it remained to the month's end, and 200 Starlings flew in off the sea there. 6 Snipes and 9 Grey Partridges were at Abbotscliffe.

A very late Whinchat, a Firecrest and 2 Fieldfares were at Capel-le-Ferne (Gun Site) on the 10th and a Siskin, a Redpoll and 4 Meadow Pipits flew east, whilst 2 Stock Doves and 45 Wood Pigeons flew west. A Black-throated Diver and 20 Rock Pipits were at Samphire Hoe and a Grey Wagtail was at Enbrook Park, Sandgate. On the 11th a Fieldfare, 2 Firecrests, 3 Redwings, 3 Redpolls, 3 Yellowhammers and 10 Stock Doves were in the Church Hougham area, and a Redwing, 8 Yellowhammers, 12 Stock Doves and 15 Meadow Pipits were seen there the next day.

The weather deteriorated from the 12th and the next week or so was rather quiet. A Blackcap, 2 Firecrests and 2 Marsh Tits were along the canal at West Hythe on the 15th, when the last Swallow was seen over Saltwood, 50 Fieldfares were at Capel-le-Ferne, and Grey Wagtails were at Satmar and Brockhill CP. A Common Scoter and 3 Brent Geese flew west at Samphire Hoe and 2 Brent Geese were seen off Hythe. A Firecrest was in a garden in Folkestone on the 16th. On the 17th a Fieldfare and 7 Redwings were at the Gun Site and a Stock Dove, a Siskin, 7 Meadow Pipits, 7 Linnets and 40 Chaffinches flew over. A Green Sandpiper was at Botolph's Bridge the following day and a Brent Goose flew east at the Hythe Redoubt.

Two Ravens were again at Samphire Hoe on the 21st and a Buzzard, a Firecrest, a Grey Wagtail, a Redpoll, 3 Yellowhammers, 17 Redwings, 17 Meadow Pipits and 34 Fieldfares were in the Crete Road East area. A Brent Goose, a Greylag Goose, 4 Canada Geese and 15 Mute Swans were in the Donkey Street area the next day, a Redpoll flew over Botolph's Bridge, an Eider was seen off Hythe and a Chiffchaff, 5 Fieldfares and 15 Redwings were at Brockhill CP. On the 24th a Grey Wagtail, 20 Fieldfares and 23 Golden Plovers were at Capel-le-Ferne.

After yet another night of wet and windy weather a **Grey Phalarope** was found on the canal at West Hythe on the 25th. A Wigeon and 5 Curlew were at the Willop Outfall and a Tufted Duck and a Grey Wagtail were at Nickoll's Quarry. A Water Rail, a Kingfisher, a Firecrest, 2 Redpolls, 6 Siskins and 22 Redwings were at West Hythe the following day, and 2 Kingfishers, 2 Yellowhammers, 4 Fieldfares and 4 Redwings were in that area on the 27th.



Grey Phalarope at West Hythe (Mike Terry)

On the 28th a Water Rail, 2 Firecrests and 12 Siskins were at West Hythe and a Green Sandpiper was at Botolph's Bridge. A Siskin, a Yellowhammer, 2 Redpolls, 4 Bullfinches and 100 Chaffinches were noted at Capel-le-Ferne and a Grey Wagtail was at Park Farm, Folkestone. The next day produced a Water Rail, a Kittiwake, a Pochard, a Grey Wagtail, a Yellowhammer, 2 Stonechats, 6 Fieldfares, 6 Redwings and 14 Coot at Nickoll's Quarry. The month ended with 2 Black Redstarts and 2 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe on the 30th.

December

The first half of the month was generally rather mild. A female Eider was seen off Hythe on several dates from the 5th and a Shag was also present on the 14th and 19th, with singles of both species (presumably the same birds) together off the Hythe Redoubt on the 15th. Ten Grey Partridges were at Abbotscliffe on the 6th.

A band of rain and strong winds passed through on the night of the 5th and when it cleared on the 6th a **Balearic Shearwater** and a Little Gull were seen close inshore off Hythe Ranges. A Little Egret was at Westenhanger on the 2nd, a Buzzard was at Saltwood Castle on the 10th and a Water Rail was along the canal by the Hotel Imperial Golf Course, Hythe, on the 9th.

Up to 9 Purple Sandpipers were in the Hythe area throughout, generally on the rocks opposite the Imperial or Stade Court Hotels. Ten Lapwings were at Capel-le-Ferne on the 1st, a Curlew, 9 Sanderling and 30 Golden Plover were at the Willop Outfall on the 4th, a Snipe was at Abbotscliffe on the 6th, and a Green Sandpiper at Nickoll's Quarry on the 15th completed the wader sightings in this period.



Eider at Hythe (Brian Harper)



Purple Sandpipers at Hythe (Nick Hollands)

A Kingfisher was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 15th, 42 Sky Larks were counted at Abbotscliffe on the 6th and Grey Wagtails were seen at Saltwood Castle (3), Capel-le-Ferne (2) and Samphire Hoe. Winter thrush numbers were low, with the only report being 2 Redwings and 3 Fieldfares at Capel-le-Ferne on the 1st.

A Cetti's Warbler and a Blackcap were along the canal by the Hotel Imperial Golf Course, Hythe, on the 9th, and single Chiffchaffs were recorded at Hythe Town and Saltwood Castle. Firecrests were seen at Capel-le-Ferne, Saltwood Castle and Paraker Wood (2).

Two Nuthatches were at Brockhill CP on the 5th and 2 were at Bargrove Wood on the 10th, when 3 Marsh Tits were also noted. A Siskin and 4 Redpolls were at Capel-le-Ferne on the 1st and a Redpoll and 2 Siskins were at Saltwood Castle on the 10th. On the 6th a Yellowhammer and 30 Linnets were at Abbotscliffe.

The weather turned much colder from mid-month onwards. Early results of this perhaps were a Shoveler, 3 Gadwall, 12 Teal and an increase to 38 Coot at Nickoll's Quarry on the 16th, when a Green Sandpiper and a Redpoll were also noted. North-easterly winds brought several centimetres of snow on the 17th and 18th, and some very sharp frosts followed and there was a further spell of snow on the 21st. It remained cold and icy for the remainder of the month and it was particularly adverse on the near continent which appeared to cause dispersal of a number of species.

Woodcock were among the most notable, with an exceptional influx of at least 22 birds, including 12 in Kiln Wood on the 23rd, with others at Hythe Roughs (4), Pedlinge (2), Postling Wents (2), Lympne and Brockhill CP. Snipe were similarly affected, with 36 recorded in the second half of the month (compared to two in the first), the largest counts were at Hythe Roughs (10), Westenhanger (10) and Abbotscliffe (6), and 3 records from Samphire Hoe, where the species is scarce, were also noteworthy.

There was some movement of plovers in response to the conditions with 8 Golden Plovers and 55 Lapwings over Westenhanger on the 18th, and 4 Golden Plovers and 9 Lapwings over Abbotscliffe and 9 Golden Plovers and 50 Lapwings over Hythe Roughs the next day. 4 Lapwings flew south over Brockhill CP on the 20th and one was at Samphire Hoe.

There were later counts of 4 Golden Plovers and 370 Lapwings near Saltwood on the 26th, 200 Lapwings at Postling Wents on the 27th and 32 Golden Plovers at Abbotscliffe on the 31st. A Redshank on the beach at Hythe was unusual on the 19th but waders otherwise were limited to small numbers of Oystercatchers, Curlew, Ringed Plover, Redshank and Turnstone in the usual places.

Displaced wildfowl comprised 55 Wigeon at Nickoll's Quarry on the 19th, when 25 flew west past Hythe, and Teal were on the Hythe Canal at Seabrook (4), Battery Point (3 east) and Hythe Roughs. Four Eider and 8 Common Scoters were also seen off Battery Point, Seabrook on the 19th. The following day saw 2 Pintail and 12 Teal flying over Brockhill CP. Six Mandarins at Pedlinge on the 22nd were local birds. On the 28th a drake **Goosander** was on the Hythe Canal at Seabrook and 2 red-heads were at Nickoll's Quarry.



Goosander on the canal at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

The low numbers of winter thrushes from the first half of the month were swelled by immigrants, with totals of 23 Fieldfares and 175 Redwings from the 19th, including counts of 50 Redwings at Hythe Roughs on the 19th and 85 at Church Hougham on the 27th. There was an increase of Song Thrushes at Samphire Hoe to 10.

A probable Slavonian Grebe was on the sea at Hythe on the 19th when a Little Egret flew over Hythe Ranges, 2 Water Rails were on the canal at Seabrook and 16 Grey Partridges were at Abbotscliffe (with 18 there on the 31st). A Little Grebe was at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd and a Little Egret and a Water Rail were seen there on the 20th. A Marsh Harrier was hunting over Nickoll's Quarry on the 28th, a Buzzard was at Sandling on the 30th and a Raven flew over Abbotscliffe on the 31st.

20 Sky Larks on the beach at Seabrook on the 19th were clearly cold-weather migrants, and other passerines of note included 2 Stonechats on the Hythe Roughs on the 19th, with 7 at Samphire Hoe on the 22nd, Grey Wagtails at three sites, a Nuthatch and 2 Firecrests at Brockhill CP on the 20th, a Firecrest and a Redpoll along Crete Road West on the 28th, 46 Yellowhammers and 70 Sky Larks at Abbotscliffe on the 19th, a Marsh Tit at Perry Wood on the 30th, and a Corn Bunting and 2 Reed Buntings at Abbotscliffe on the 31st.

Overall it was the coldest December in over a decade, despite the mild beginning, and the cold snap persisted well into 2010...