

## 2005 review

### January

The first half of the month was dominated by winds from the westerly quarter, which were occasionally strong (such as on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>) when the passage of fronts also brought wet conditions. It was generally fairly mild, though cooler and calmer days were interspersed, with frost on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. From the 18<sup>th</sup> the winds turned more northerly or north-easterly and it felt colder, with some snow even on the 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, though not enough to induce any cold weather movement.

Red-throated Divers were noted passing west past Folkestone in the early part of the month, with 20 on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 12 on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 42 on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and east on the 25<sup>th</sup>, with 35. A **Great Northern Diver** was reported at Samphire Hoe on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There was a good movement of Great Crested Grebes on the 8<sup>th</sup>, when 39 flew west past Mill Point, but otherwise 7 west there on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 16 off Hythe on the 29<sup>th</sup> were the only notable counts at sea. At Nickoll's Quarry there was a peak of 9 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Little Grebes were at Nickoll's Quarry (2 on the 26<sup>th</sup>) and on the New Cut (3-4 throughout).

Fulmars were seen off Mill Point on the 4<sup>th</sup> (2), Copt Point on the 8<sup>th</sup> (1 west) and Samphire Hoe (maximum 8 on the 15<sup>th</sup>), and peak counts of Gannet were 10 off Mill Point on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 28 west past Copt Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>. There was an apparent arrival of Shags late in the month, with one off Samphire Hoe on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, singles off Mill Point on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 3 there on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and 4 reported off Samphire Hoe on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Little Egrets continue to be a regular feature, with 2 at Nickoll's Quarry and one west at West Hythe on the 1<sup>st</sup>, one at Nickoll's Quarry on the 13<sup>th</sup>, singles west over the New Cut and at the Willop Outfall on the 30<sup>th</sup>, and one near Botolph's Bridge on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Grey Herons had returned to the heronry at Lympne by the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Donkey Street hosted up to 50 Mute Swans throughout and the Greylag Goose which joined them in 2004 lingered until about mid-month. Canada Geese were scarce, with just 8 by the New Cut on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 2 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 12<sup>th</sup>. 6 Brent Geese passed Mill Point on the 25<sup>th</sup> and one flew west past Hythe on the 26<sup>th</sup>, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> 10 Shelduck and 2 Wigeon also flew east past Mill Point. The only other Wigeon of the month were 5 west past Hythe Redoubt on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

23 Mandarin were counted at Sandling Park on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, when 6 Pintail and 25 Teal were also present. Teal were also seen on the Willop, with a peak of 30 on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Mallards were noted on the Hythe Canal (60), Sandling Park (40), Radnor Park (35), Botolph's Bridge (28), Brockhill CP (25), Samphire Hoe (20) and Broadmead Village (12) giving a wintering population of at least 220. Peak counts of Common Scoter were 8 off Hythe Redoubt (1<sup>st</sup>), 11 west past Copt Point (8<sup>th</sup>) and 7 off Mill Point (28<sup>th</sup>), and an Eider was reported off Samphire Hoe on the 30<sup>th</sup>. A male Hen Harrier flew south-west near Botolph's Bridge on the 31<sup>st</sup> and a Peregrine was seen there on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Water Rails were wintering at Nickoll's Quarry, West Hythe and Samphire Hoe, and Coots peaked at 70 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

40 Golden Plover were by Botolph's Bridge on the 1<sup>st</sup>, with 30 there on the 26<sup>th</sup>, and a Ringed Plover was at Hythe Redoubt on the 30<sup>th</sup>, when 3 Knot were at the Willop Outfall. Hythe Redoubt produced 6 Sanderling on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and up to 3 Purple Sandpipers were at Hythe throughout, with 7 reported there on the 30<sup>th</sup>, and one at Folkestone Warren on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Jack Snipe peaked at 3 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 26<sup>th</sup>, and Common Snipe also peaked on the same day there, with 14. A Woodcock was at Sandling Park on the 16<sup>th</sup>. 10 Curlew were at the Willop Outfall on the 30<sup>th</sup>, and Redshank were wintering at Copt Point (7), Botolph's Bridge (3) and the Willop Outfall (2). Single Green Sandpipers were at Botolph's Bridge on the 18<sup>th</sup> and Nickoll's Quarry on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Turnstone were counted at Copt Point (8), Mill Point (27), Hythe Redoubt (41) and the Willop Outfall (17).

The only Kittiwake count of any note was 35 west past Copt Point on the 8<sup>th</sup>. A westerly passage of auks was noted past Folkestone early in the month, with 50 Guillemots and 5 Razorbills on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 340 Guillemots and 5 Razorbills on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and 130 Guillemots on the 8<sup>th</sup>. A feeding flock of c.300 auks off Samphire Hoe on the 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> included at least 10 Razorbills. The best auk movement of the month occurred on the 25<sup>th</sup>, when 1,110 Guillemots and 13+ Razorbills flew east past Mill Point.

A count of 22 Stock Doves at Botolph's Bridge on the 4<sup>th</sup> was noteworthy. Little Owls were at West Hythe and near Botolph's Bridge during the month, and Kingfishers were seen at West Hythe, Botolph's Bridge, Brockhill CP, and Nickoll's Quarry. About 12 Rock Pipits were at Samphire Hoe on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Grey Wagtails were seen at Botolph's Bridge and Nickoll's Quarry. A Black Redstart was at Samphire Hoe on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Stonechats were seen there (max 3) and Abbotscliffe (1). The Botolph's Bridge area hosted good numbers of winter thrushes with up to 80 Redwings and 60 Fieldfares throughout, and elsewhere there were 22 Redwings and 6 Fieldfares east of Lympne on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and 5 Fieldfares at Sandling Park on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Cetti's Warblers were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 1<sup>st</sup>, near Botolph's Bridge on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, and at West Hythe on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and a Chiffchaff was along the Hythe Canal by the Roughs on the 31<sup>st</sup>. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> the Sandling-Brockhill area produced 2 Nuthatches, a Marsh Tit, and a Treecreeper, and a Marsh Tit was at Casebourne Wood on the 9<sup>th</sup>. A count of 400 Jackdaws at Nickoll's Quarry on the 1<sup>st</sup> was a record for the site. A Brambling was reported at West Hythe on the 1<sup>st</sup>, and Linnet flocks were east of Lympne (20 on 22<sup>nd</sup>) and by the New Cut (30 on 30<sup>th</sup>). A Snow Bunting was at Samphire Hoe on the 1<sup>st</sup>, with 2 there on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 15 Yellowhammers were counted near Botolph's Bridge on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 3 Corn Buntings were along Donkey Street on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

## February

The month began fairly calm and generally mild before a cool south-easterly breeze picked up between the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>. Calmer, milder and often overcast conditions returned from the 8<sup>th</sup>, then a front brought wind and rain on the night of the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>. A cold northerly brought some snow to higher ground on the 15<sup>th</sup>, which proved a foretaste of things to come – the last 10 days of the month seeing some real wintry weather, with regular snow showers, amounting to a covering of 2-3 inches on several days. The wind remained in the northerly quarter, and often led to considerable wind chill, particularly when it swung round to the north-east. Daytime temperatures remained generally above freezing though and little ice formed on open water.

Great Crested Grebes were present in reasonable numbers throughout, with a total of 67 in Hythe Bay on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 63 off Hythe Redoubt on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 45 off Seabrook/Sandgate on the 21<sup>st</sup> being notable. Up to 6 were at Nickoll's Quarry during the month. Little Grebes were at Nickoll's Quarry (on the 23<sup>rd</sup>) and on the New Cut (max 5). Two Fulmars flew east past Mill Point on the 6<sup>th</sup>, with another 2 on the 12<sup>th</sup>. 3-4 Shags were present off Mill Point throughout.

Little Egrets were at the Willop Outfall on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, and singles seen on 3 dates at Nickoll's Quarry, with 2 there on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 4 reported for 2 days at the end of the month. Up to 44 Mute Swans remained in the Donkey Street area until at least 8<sup>th</sup>, before dispersing later in the month, and single immature Mute Swans (possibly the same bird) on the sea off Hythe on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and flying west past Mill Point on the 4<sup>th</sup>, were more unusual records. At least 6 Canada Geese (3 pairs) had returned to Nickoll's Quarry by the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Brent Goose passage was noted off Mill Point on 3 dates, with 41 east on the 6<sup>th</sup>, 140 east on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 34 east on the 26<sup>th</sup>. About 20 Greylag Geese also flew east at Mill Point on the 6<sup>th</sup>. 14 Shelduck flew west at Hythe on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 2 flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 16<sup>th</sup>. At least 6 Mandarins remained at Sandling Park, and a Gadwall was seen there on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

A single Wigeon was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 7<sup>th</sup> before the cold spell brought 12 there on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and the weather also encouraged a female Pintail (on 20<sup>th</sup>), a Pochard (on 26<sup>th</sup>) and up to 4 Tufted Ducks (1 from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, with 4 on 25<sup>th</sup>) to visit the site. A Muscovy Duck at West Hythe on the 26<sup>th</sup> was an unusual sight. A female Eider lingered off Seabrook/Sandgate on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers were reported off Copt Point on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

A Common Buzzard was at Pedlinge on the 15<sup>th</sup> and a male Merlin was seen near Botolph's Bridge on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Water Rails were again at Nickoll's Quarry (photo), and also at Botolph's Bridge on 11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Up to 60 Coot were at Nickoll's Quarry throughout, and a pair of Oystercatchers returned to that site early in the month.

A good count of 16 Sanderling were at the Willop Outfall on the 1<sup>st</sup>, and up to 8 Purple Sandpipers were off Hythe throughout the month (photos), with 4 at Hythe Redoubt on the 6<sup>th</sup>. A count of 5 Jack Snipe at Nickoll's Quarry on the 3<sup>rd</sup> was a new record for the site, and 3 were still present on the 20<sup>th</sup>, together with 14 Common Snipe. A wintering flock of Curlew at the Willop Outfall peaked at 26 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and one flew east past Mill Point on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Green Sandpipers were seen on 3 dates in the west Hythe area. Turnstone were counted at the Willop Outfall (12), Hythe Redoubt (12) and Folkestone Harbour (20).



Purple Sandpiper - Hythe - February (Ian Roberts)

Two Tawny Owls were calling in Paraker Wood on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and a Short-eared Owl was reported flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Kingfishers were seen at West Hythe, Hythe Canal (Roughs), and Nickoll's Quarry. A Grey Wagtail was at Botolph's Bridge on the 11<sup>th</sup> and a Stonechat was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Up to 62 Fieldfares were in the Botolph's Bridge throughout, but Redwings numbered no more than 6 (at Nickoll's Quarry and Hythe).

Cetti's Warblers were near Botolph's Bridge on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, and at Nickoll's Quarry on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. A Blackcap and 2 Chiffchaffs were along the Hythe Canal (Roughs) on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and 3 Chiffchaffs were seen there on the 19<sup>th</sup>. A Firecrest was at Mill Point on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Jackdaws were counted at Dibgate Camp (500 on the 4<sup>th</sup>) and near Botolph's Bridge (300 on the 15<sup>th</sup>).

Two Tree Sparrows were at Willop Outfall on 1<sup>st</sup>, with 12 Reed Buntings near Botolph's Bridge on the 18<sup>th</sup> and single Corn Buntings at the Willop Outfall on the 1<sup>st</sup> and near Botolph's Bridge on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

## March

The month began cold, with some snow still lying from February, but there were little signs of any cold weather movement – 4 Tufted Ducks at Nickoll's Quarry on the 1st and 6 Pochards there on the 2nd being about all – indeed there were even signs of spring, with 80 Brent Geese and 8 Curlew east past Samphire Hoe on the 2nd and a male Blackcap (albeit probably a wintering bird) at Hythe on the 1st.

First migrant dates in March:

30<sup>th</sup> - Willow Warbler  
- Blackcap\*  
28<sup>th</sup> - Firecrest\*  
26<sup>th</sup> - Sand Martin  
20<sup>th</sup> - Garganey  
- Swallow  
19<sup>th</sup> - Sandwich Tern  
18<sup>th</sup> - Black Redstart\*  
17<sup>th</sup> - Wheatear  
- Little Ringed Plover  
- Chiffchaff\*  
6<sup>th</sup> - White Wagtail

\*excludes wintering birds

A change in conditions on the Continent on the 3rd, with particularly hard weather in the Netherlands, induced a notable influx of Lapwings with c.300 seen arriving in off the sea at Folkestone during the day and 6 grounded on playing fields in Hythe. 1,400 were counted in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 4th and birds continued to arrive on the 5th, with 4 in off the sea at the Hythe Redoubt and 1 in off at Samphire Hoe, and there were sightings from unusual localities: 9 at the latter site and 68 on the golf course and playing fields in Hythe. 1,400 were again counted in the Botolph's Bridge area on the 6th, but dispersal followed as the weather improved, with only 800 there the next day, and several large flocks were seen migrating back: 230 east past Hythe on the 8th and 675 (in 3 flocks) high to the north over the Botolph's Bridge area on the 10th. Just 3 were present at Nickoll's Quarry on the 11th, and stragglers involved one at Abbotscliffe on the 15th and 2 north-east over Nickoll's Quarry on the 17th.

Other waders were also affected with the highlight being 2 **Ruff** on Donkey Street on 4th, with 3 along Burmarsh Road on 5th (1 remaining to 7th). 2 Curlews over Hythe town on the 3rd were an unusual record, and 2 were on Donkey Street on 4th, with 3 at Nickoll's Quarry on 6th. 30 Golden Plover, 3 Redshank, and a Green Sandpiper were also in the Donkey Street/Botolph's Bridge area on the 4th. 23 Turnstone, 4 Redshank and 3 Ringed Plovers were counted in Folkestone Harbour on the 5th, when a further 25 Turnstone and 1 Ringed Plover were at Hythe Redoubt. A Snipe was a notable record for Samphire Hoe on the 5th and a Jack Snipe was at Nickoll's Quarry the next day. A total of 14 Oystercatchers were noted in the area on the 6th.

The cold weather also brought wildfowl, with 43 Wigeon, 13 Teal, 7 Gadwall, 21 Tufted Duck, and a Pochard at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4th – easily the largest duck count of the winter. An additional 4 Gadwall and a Red-breasted Merganser were also off the Hythe Redoubt on the 4th. Two Wigeon and 3 Teal were notable records for Samphire Hoe on the 5th, and a flock of 17 Pintail were on the sea off the Willop Outfall (remaining until the 6th). A further 2 Pintail were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 6th and 53 Teal and 4 Gadwall were seen on the New Cut south of Botolph's Bridge. 19 Wigeon at Nickoll's Quarry on the 7th was another notable count. Two flocks totaling 48 Greylag Geese flew east past Hythe on the 3rd.

The impact on passerines was minimal although 5 Sky Larks on a playing field in Hythe on 5th were certainly cold-weather migrants. A peak of 61 Meadow Pipits at Nickoll's Quarry on 4th might have been linked, as might an apparent increase in thrushes, including 62 Fieldfares and 32 Redwings at Botolph's Bridge on the 4th, 20 Song Thrushes at Nickoll's Quarry on the 6th and

18 Redwings there the next day. Some relief from the cold weather was provided during this period by the first White Wagtail of the year at Hythe Golf Course on the 6th and another wintering Blackcap along the Hythe Canal on the 7th.

The 8th saw the peak count of Great Crested Grebes, when 190 were on the sea between Hythe and Copt Point, and 4 Shags and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers were on the sea off Mill Point. 18 Red-throated Divers also flew east off Hythe. A light north-westerly breeze encouraged the first visual migration of the spring on the 9th, with 30 Chaffinches, 3 Meadow Pipits, a Sky Lark and an alba wagtail in/east at the Café at Capel-le-Ferne, and 3 Siskins flew east at Samphire Hoe the next day. 5 Gadwall were noteworthy at Nickoll's Quarry on the 11th and a count of 22 Snipe there was the largest of the winter. 3 Green Sandpipers at Botolph's Bridge on the same date may well have been migrants.

The wind again went north-westerly on the 12th and there was a steady trickle of Chaffinches over the Cafe amounting to 286 in 2.5 hours. 21 Siskins, 240 Starlings, 8 Stock Doves, 5 Sky Larks, 2 Linnets, and an alba wagtail also flew in/east there. A few more Chaffinches (66) and Siskins (6) flew east at the Café the next day, and 44 Starlings, 3 Stock Doves and a Reed Bunting also went over, but the highlight of the day was a **Waxwing** in Folkestone town centre (remaining to the 17th). A Snow Bunting was at Copt Point on the 13th and another or the same was at Samphire Hoe on the 14th-15th. 90 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 14th.



Waxwing - Folkestone - 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> March (Dale Gibson)

A quiet couple of days preceded a spell of mild weather from the 17th, which produced the first summer migrants of the year. A heavy overnight passage of Redwings and other thrushes on the 16th/17th heralded a change in conditions and the first Wheatear was at Samphire Hoe the next morning, with the first migrant Chiffchaffs there and at Nickoll's Quarry (4). The latter site also saw the first Little Ringed Plover flying over. Grounded Redwings were at Cheriton (60) and Samphire Hoe (12), but 7 Brent Geese east past the Hoe was the only interest at sea. Wheatears increased to a good count of 9 at Samphire Hoe on the 18th, and the first migrant Black Redstart, 3 Chiffchaffs, 6 Redwings, 6 Goldcrests, and 3 Snipe were also of note there.



Snow Bunting - Samphire Hoe - March (Ian Roberts)

On the 19th 106 Meadow Pipits, 122 Wood Pigeons and a Stock Dove flew in/east at the Café, and a Woodcock was flushed from bushes inland. 50 Fieldfares, 43 Redwings, and a Siskin flew over Abbotscliffe and the first 6 Sandwich Terns were off Hythe.

A freshening easterly wind produced 2 **Garganey**, 49 Pintail, 17 Gadwall, 28 Shoveler, 34 Wigeon, 18 Red-breasted Mergansers, 111 Common Scoter, 17 Shelduck, 497 Brent Geese, 72 Dunlin, 199 Black-headed Gulls, 4 Mediterranean Gulls, a Little Gull, 20 Sandwich Terns and 31 auk sp. all flying east past Mill Point in 3 hours on the 20th, whilst 36 Meadow Pipits flew in off the sea there and a Wheatear was on the beach. The first Swallow and a White Wagtail were at Nickoll's Quarry. 3 Siskin flew east at Samphire Hoe and 2 Wheatear were seen there. A first-winter **Glaucous Gull** was off Mill Point in the morning of the 21st, and 365 Brent Geese, 13 Pintail, a Shag, 3 Curlew, 3 Med Gulls, 45 Black-headed Gulls, 38 Sandwich Terns, 20 Guillemots and 2 Razorbills flew east there. A Common Buzzard flew over Samphire Hoe. The sea was again the focus on the 22nd, when 4 Velvet Scoters, a Little Egret, 4 Grey Herons, 38 Brent Geese, 5 Shelduck, 3 Red-breasted Mergansers, 46 Black-headed Gulls, 1 Mediterranean Gull and 28 Sandwich Terns flew east. Another Little Egret flew west near Botolph's Bridge.

Three Common Buzzards flew over Samphire Hoe on the 23rd, and 2 Black Redstarts were seen there, with another in a garden in Folkestone. A single Siskin flew east at the Gun Site. Just 2 Grey Herons and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers east past Samphire Hoe were of note on the 24th. A trickle of visual migration was noted on the 25th, with 13 Meadow Pipits, 12 Linnets, 5 Stock Doves and singles of Siskin, Reed Bunting and Grey Wagtail over the Cafe.

A northerly breeze produced a good movement of Chaffinches on the 26th, with 846 east at the cliffs, also 2 Brambling, a Swallow, the first Sand Martin, a Merlin, 15 Meadow Pipits, 21 Linnets, 4 Stock Doves and 112 Starlings east there. A Wheatear and 6 Chiffchaffs were at the Gun Site and Common Buzzard flew east over Folkestone in the afternoon. A Swallow, 25 Meadow Pipits and 3 alba wagtails struggled in despite dismal conditions on the 27th and 13 Red-breasted Mergansers and 3 Sandwich Terns went past at sea. 2 Firecrests, 4 Chiffchaffs, and 2 Black Redstarts were at Samphire Hoe on the 28th, 17 Meadow Pipits arrived in off at the Café and 2 more Common Buzzards flew east over Folkestone (a total of 7 migrants in the last 8 days). A moderate easterly on the 29th caused a light passage at sea, with 2 Avocets, 87 Brent Geese and 3 Sandwich Terns east past Mill Point, and 27 Meadow Pipits in off the sea.



Common Buzzards - Folkestone - 28<sup>th</sup> March  
(Dale Gibson)

Fog produced a small arrival at Samphire Hoe on the 30th, including the first 5 Willow Warblers of the year (a good count for March). A Green Sandpiper was an unusual record for the site, and the first migrant Blackcap was seen. A Firecrest, 2 Black Redstarts, a Wheatear, 3 Fieldfares, 7 Chiffchaffs, 9 Redshank, and a Lesser Redpoll were also present. The month ended with 125 Brent Geese, 28 Sandwich Terns, and a Gadwall east at sea and 2 Wheatears at Mill Point.

## April

After a quiet first day, an increasing south-easterly wind produced a good movement at sea on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, with 12 **Garganey**, 3 Avocets, 6 Velvet Scoters, 3 Eider, 17 Red-breasted Mergansers, 19 Shoveler, 3 Gadwall, 31 Red-throated Divers, 129 Sandwich Terns, 19 Fulmars, 16 Gannets, 141 Common Gulls, and 46 Black-headed Gulls east past Samphire Hoe. A calmer 3<sup>rd</sup> saw the first 6 Common Terns of the year fly east past Copt Point, but otherwise just c.100 Sandwich Terns and 5 Red-breasted Mergansers were notable at sea. The first Yellow Wagtail flew over Abbotscliffe and a Firecrest was present, and 4 Black Redstarts and a Blackcap were at Samphire Hoe. The 4<sup>th</sup> continued calm, but rather wet, and c.50 Goldfinches and 15 Siskin flew in/east at Samphire Hoe, with 6 Chiffchaffs and a Blackcap there.

First migrant dates in April:

- 30<sup>th</sup> - Wood Warbler
  - Sedge Warbler
  - Whinchat
  - Turtle Dove
- 27<sup>th</sup> - Reed Warbler
- 26<sup>th</sup> - Ring Ouzel
- 24<sup>th</sup> - Common Swift
- 19<sup>th</sup> - Common Sandpiper
  - Arctic Tern
- 17<sup>th</sup> - Little Tern
  - Lesser Whitethroat
- 16<sup>th</sup> - Hobby
- 14<sup>th</sup> - Nightingale
  - Arctic Skua
- 12<sup>th</sup> - House Martin
- 9<sup>th</sup> - Whitethroat
- 5<sup>th</sup> - Common Redstart
- 3<sup>rd</sup> - Yellow Wagtail
  - Common Tern

A westerly airflow dominated the next five days, and it was often blustery with below average temperatures, including a heavy frost on the night of the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>, but it was generally dry. There was little to be seen with a fine male Common Redstart at Samphire Hoe on the 5<sup>th</sup> being easily the highlight. The 8<sup>th</sup> saw a trickle of visual passage, with 20 Chaffinches, 23 Linnets, 8 Meadow Pipits, a Siskin, and a Swallow struggling in off the sea, and the 9<sup>th</sup> was similar with 12 Linnets, 6 Chaffinches, and a Siskin in/east and the first Common Whitethroat at Samphire Hoe.

The 10<sup>th</sup> was milder and 7 Swallows, 16 Meadow Pipits, and 40 Linnets arrived in off the sea, whilst 2 Spotted Redshank were heard over Folkestone at night. A calm 11<sup>th</sup> saw 3 Sand Martins fly in off the sea at the Cafe, and 75 Sandwich Terns and 12 Brent Geese went east past Samphire Hoe. Despite a cool north-westerly breeze the 12<sup>th</sup> produced the highlight of the month, in the form of a **Black Kite** east over Hythe. The first 2 House Martins were seen over Cheriton, and single Common Whitethroats were at the Gun Site and Samphire Hoe.

The wind veered round to the west on the 13<sup>th</sup> but it was fairly calm, and rain grounded a male Common Redstart, 5 Willow Warblers, 2 Whitethroats, a White Wagtail, a Wheatear, a Chiffchaff, and a Swallow at Samphire Hoe. The 14<sup>th</sup> remained wet and the wind continued round to the south-west. The drizzle deposited a singing Nightingale at Mill Point, whilst a brief dry spell allowed the first Arctic Skua and Bonxie of the year to pass by. 40 Gannets, 64 Common Scoter, 3 Common Terns, and a Little Gull also flew east and single Yellow Wagtail and Swallow arrived in off. The next day saw 270 Common Scoter, 34 Sandwich Terns, 18 Brent Geese, and 17 Gannets go east at sea.

The 16<sup>th</sup> was fairly calm and dry and the first Hobby of the year flew in off the sea at Samphire Hoe, together with 11 Swallows and single Yellow Wagtail and Redpoll. 356 Sandwich Terns, 96 Gannets, 27 Whimbrel, 13 Velvet Scoter, and a Shag flew east at sea there. Another calm morning saw 7 Avocets, 2 Little Terns, 12 Whimbrel, a Bar-tailed Godwit, 134 Sandwich Terns, 85 Gannets, 72 Common Scoter, 3 Mediterranean Gulls and a Tufted Duck pass Samphire Hoe. The first Lesser Whitethroat was noted at the Gun Site. The wind increased during the 17<sup>th</sup> and a

front passed through overnight, leaving a wet morning on the 18<sup>th</sup>, which yielded just 35 Sandwich Terns, 8 Common Terns, 40 Gannets, 46 Common Scoter, 6 Shelduck and 4 Whimbrel east at sea.

The 19<sup>th</sup> was a much better day, with a moderate easterly encouraging 450 'commic' terns, including 54+ Arctic Terns, 850 Sandwich Terns, 2,235 Common Scoter, 85 Brent Geese, 75 Gannets, 15 Whimbrel, 14 Velvet Scoter, 12 Red-breasted Mergansers, a Black-throated and 12 Red-throated Divers, and 2 Bonxies to move east at sea. The first Common Sandpiper was at Nickoll's Quarry. The next day was calmer and just 250 Sandwich Terns, 66 Gannets, 13 Common Terns and a Bonxie went east at sea. Single Lesser Whitethroat and Willow Warbler were at the Gun Site, and 4 House Martins and a Willow Warbler were at Abbotscliffe.

The next few days saw fairly gentle easterlies, with mostly dry conditions, and there was a steady trickle of birds moving east at sea, with 2 Grey Plovers, 10 Whimbrel, 82 Gannets and 34 Sandwich Terns on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 93 Gannets, 45 Sandwich Terns, 36 Common Scoter, 4 Shoveler and a Bonxie on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 296 Sandwich Terns, 74 Gannets, 25 Whimbrel, 17 Common Terns, 5 Shoveler, a Bonxie and a Little Egret on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 37 Whimbrel, 10 Shoveler, 3 Arctic Skuas, a Bonxie and a Bar-tailed Godwit on the 24<sup>th</sup>. It was quiet on the land though, with just single Wheatear and Yellow Wagtail at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and another Wheatear at Abbotscliffe on the 24<sup>th</sup>, when the first 2 Common Swifts, 27 Swallows, a House Martin and 2 Siskins flew in off the sea at the Café.

Following a day of heavy rain on the 25<sup>th</sup> there were a few grounded migrants evident the next morning, with the first 2-3 Ring Ouzels at Abbotscliffe, also a Wheatear and 3 Willow Warblers there, and 11 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe. The latter site also produced 4 Arctic Skuas, 260 Bar-tailed Godwits, 40 Brent Geese and 3 Red-breasted Mergansers east at sea. Single Greenshank and Common Sandpiper were at Nickoll's Quarry, and a Swift was seen there, with 3 more over Hythe. The wind increased from the west on the 27<sup>th</sup> and the only bird of note was the first Reed Warbler at Nickoll's Quarry. Moderate south to south-west winds on the 28<sup>th</sup> saw a Manx Shearwater, 2 Arctic Skuas, 2 Bonxies and 22 Bar-tailed Godwits fly east past Mill Point.

The 30<sup>th</sup> was warm, with a light southerly wind and fog patches, and produced the best arrival of the month, with a **Serin** singing briefly by the Royal Oak pub in Capel-le-Ferne, a Wood Warbler and the first Sedge Warbler singing at the Gun Site, the first Whinchat and a Ring Ouzel at Abbotscliffe, the first Turtle Dove at Hythe Golf Course, and totals of 10 Lesser Whitethroats, 5 Wheatears, 4 Reed Warblers, 2 Willow Warblers, a Common Redstart, 23 Swallows and c.40 Whitethroats in the area.

## May

A calm and mild 1st saw a record day total of 46 Pomarine Skuas east past Samphire Hoe, and 2 Bonxies, 4 Black-throated Divers, 80 Bar-tailed Godwits, 155 Common Scoters, and 80 Sandwich Terns also flew east there, whilst c.50 Swallows, 15 House Martins, and 6 Swifts arrived in off the sea. The first Tree Pipit of the year was at Abbotscliffe and a Marsh Harrier flew east over Nickoll's Quarry in the evening.

First migrant dates in May:

15<sup>th</sup> - Spotted Flycatcher  
10<sup>th</sup> - Honey Buzzard  
- Cuckoo  
9<sup>th</sup> - Montagu's Harrier  
3<sup>rd</sup> - Black Tern  
1<sup>st</sup> - Pomarine Skua  
- Tree Pipit

Rain on the 2nd deposited a Nightingale and Reed Warbler behind the Café, but there was little else of note. A band of drizzle on the 3rd induced an excellent tern passage off Samphire Hoe, with 1,980 Common/Arctic (a record spring count), 750+ Sandwich, 33 Little, and the first Black



of the year passing east. 65 Gannets, 58 Bar-tailed Godwits, 9 Brent Geese, 8 Whimbrel, 6 Grey Plover, 6 Dunlin, 3 Arctic Skuas, and a Black-throated Diver were also caught up in the movement. It was quiet on the land however, with just single Wheatears at Samphire Hoe and Capel-le-Ferne.

A run of rather cool north-westerlies from the 4<sup>th</sup> encouraged hirundines and swifts to cross the Channel, with 48 Swallows (4<sup>th</sup>), 103 Swallows (6<sup>th</sup>), 38 Swallows, 23 Swifts, and 23 House Martins (7<sup>th</sup>), and 64 Swallows, 18 House Martins, and 18 Swifts (8<sup>th</sup>) being the more notable counts. Unsurprisingly, Hobbies were also incoming, with singles on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, and Grey Herons appeared to be on the move, with 6 logged arriving in off the sea between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Grounded migrants were very scarce, with just a Tree Pipit at the Café on the 6<sup>th</sup>, a Siskin there on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and Wheatears at Hythe Ranges (3) and Nickoll's Quarry on the 8<sup>th</sup> of note. A trickle of waders comprised 3 Common Sandpipers at Nickoll's Quarry on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and 2 Common Sandpipers and a Dunlin there on the 8<sup>th</sup>, with a Dunlin at Hythe Ranges the same day.

The wind edged round to the north on the 9<sup>th</sup> which proved favourable for raptors, with a male **Montagu's Harrier**, a Marsh Harrier and a Hobby in off the sea at the cliffs on the 9<sup>th</sup> and a **Honey Buzzard** in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 10<sup>th</sup>. 168 Swifts, 69 Swallows and 11 House Martins also arrived on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 53 Swallows, 44 Swifts and 31 House Martins were noted the next day. The 10<sup>th</sup> also produced the first Cuckoo of the year, in off the sea at the Café.

During the 11<sup>th</sup> the wind picked up from the east and 2 Black-throated Divers, 2 Grey Plovers, and 102 Gannets flew east past Samphire Hoe. Moderate easterlies the next day produced another good movement of Pomarine Skuas, with a total of 32 passing the area, and a Great Northern Diver, 4 Arctic Skuas, 220 Gannets, 223 Sandwich Terns, 41 Common Terns, and 4 Little Terns also flew east. A trickle of waders throughout the day amounted to 140 Bar-tailed Godwits, 36 Whimbrel, 35 Grey Plover, 21 Sanderling, 5 Common Sandpipers, and 4 Knot. Despite similar conditions on the 13<sup>th</sup> much less was moving, with totals of 110 Gannets, 45 Sandwich Terns, 2 Arctic Skuas, 9 Bar-tailed Godwits, 4 Grey Plover, 3 Ringed Plover, 2 Whimbrel, a Knot and a Redshank east, and passage almost petered out completely on the 14<sup>th</sup>, with just single Arctic Skua and Little Tern of note.

A brief switch to south-easterlies on the 15<sup>th</sup> was enough to produce 2 **Honey Buzzards** and a Marsh Harrier in off the sea at the Café, the first Spotted Flycatcher of the year at Abbotscliffe, and totals of 67 Swallows, 24 House Martins, 20 Swifts, 2 Sand Martins and a Yellow Wagtail in off at the cliffs. 5 Common Sandpipers, 2 Dunlin, and a Redshank were at Nickoll's Quarry. The wind went back north over the next three days, but Spotted Flycatchers continued to arrive, with singles at the Café on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, and hirundines did likewise, with 41 Swallows and 13 House Martins on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 35 House Martins, 21 Swallows, and 2 Sand Martins on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and 17 House Martins and 15 Swallows on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Two Avocets at Nickoll's Quarry on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the fourth Marsh Harrier of the month in off the sea at the Café the next day were also of note.

South-westerlies took hold from the 18<sup>th</sup> and led to six days of breezy and often rather damp weather, and there was little to be seen. Seawatching produced just one Arctic Skua east past Mill Point on the 21<sup>st</sup> and single Pomarine Skua and Manx Shearwater east there the next day. Swifts were the only birds moving on land, with 60 west over Nickoll's Quarry on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 28 in off the sea at Mill Point on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The 25<sup>th</sup> was milder and fog grounded a scattering of late migrants - single Reed Warbler and Wheatear at Samphire Hoe and a Willow Warbler at Abbotscliffe. 21 Swifts, 10 House Martins, and 6 Swallows flew in off the sea.

The 27<sup>th</sup> was hot, with a light easterly, but delivered only 10 Swallows, 9 Swifts, 5 House Martins and a Turtle Dove in off the sea, a Corn Bunting west, at the cliffs. In complete contrast, the next day saw south-westerlies reaching force 7, and just 33 Swifts were logged moving west at the

Café. Light north-westerlies followed on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and the first Crossbill of the year flew east at the Café. 23 Swallows, 17 Swifts, 11 House Martins, a Sand Martin, and a Turtle Dove arrived in off the sea there. After early rain, the 30<sup>th</sup> was fairly calm and a little muggy - ideal for Swifts, with 90 counted flying in off the sea at the Café. 60 House Martins, 20 Swallows and 2 Sand Martins also flew in off there. Totals for the month were 648 Swifts, 696 Swallows, 431 House Martins, and 8 Sand Martins. A Hobby was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 30<sup>th</sup> and single Dunlin and Redshank there were unusually late migrants.

## June

After a rather cool and breezy first week, a couple of fairly calm and warm days were enjoyed on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, only for windier conditions to return for another week. After early fog on the 18<sup>th</sup>, a hot and humid week ensued, culminating in heavy thunderstorms on the 24<sup>th</sup>. A couple of fresher days followed, with a cooler northerly wind, but the month ended with warm, though somewhat unsettled conditions.

June, like the second half of May, failed to produce any real quality, however there were a few late migrants to be seen - the highlights of which were two migrant Marsh Warblers, at different areas of Nickoll's Quarry, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> (first and second records for the site). Neither lingered however, nor were they in suitable breeding habitat. Elsewhere single Cuckoos were at Abbotscliffe on the 11<sup>th</sup> and flying in off the sea at the Café on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and a Reed Warbler was singing at Samphire Hoe on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

15 Swifts flew west at Nickoll's Quarry on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, with 20 at Abbotscliffe on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and larger numbers were noted from the 11<sup>th</sup> when c.300 were at Abbotscliffe, with c.450 west past the Café the next day. Counts of 120 in/west at the Café on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 75 east there on the 25<sup>th</sup> were also notable. A few Swallows and House Martins continued to trickle in, particularly in the warm weather in the third week of the month, but neither reached double figures.

The only Hobbies noted were one east over Hythe on the 11<sup>th</sup> and one east past the Café on the 19<sup>th</sup> - completing a poor spring for the species. A Saker or Saker-type hybrid was reported over Folkestone on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Following the late May record, Crossbills flew west at the Café on the 19<sup>th</sup> (3) and 20<sup>th</sup>.

Moderate south-westerlies on the 15<sup>th</sup> produced the only notable sea movement of the month, with a Mediterranean Shearwater and 80 Gannets west past Mill Point, and 7 Shelduck, 13 Common Scoter and 12 Fulmars east. 16 Curlews also flew west there, heralding the start of a slow return passage of waders, which also included 17 Lapwings in off the sea at the Café on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 5 Lapwings at Nickoll's Quarry on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, increasing to 42 by the 26<sup>th</sup>, a Curlew east at the Café on the 25<sup>th</sup>, a Green Sandpiper at Nickoll's Quarry on the 26<sup>th</sup>, a Dunlin there on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and a Curlew at Samphire Hoe on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

## July

July was generally dry and warm, though the last week was wetter and windier. The month was typically quiet, with a Laughing Dove (of unknown origin) in Cheriton from c.12<sup>th</sup> to at least 24<sup>th</sup> probably providing the most interest (photo).



Laughing Dove - Cheriton - July (Ian Roberts)

Passage waders are a usual feature of July, and included Greenshanks at Samphire Hoe on 9<sup>th</sup> and on 3 dates at Nickoll's Quarry, up to 3 Green Sandpipers at the latter site, and up to 3 Common Sandpipers there, with one at Samphire Hoe on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 2 there on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. 215 Lapwings were at Botolph's Bridge on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and a Whimbrel flew over Nickoll's Quarry on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Single Grey Plover and Redshank flew west past Mill Point on the 25<sup>th</sup> and a Dunlin was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>.

There was little at sea, with 2 Arctic Skuas east past Mill Point on the 30<sup>th</sup> and one off Hythe on the 31<sup>st</sup> being the most noteworthy sightings. 30 Common Scoter flew west past Mill Point on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12 Common Terns were off Mill Point on the 30<sup>th</sup> and a peak of 21 Sandwich Terns were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Samphire Hoe hosted Little Egrets on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, and single Hobbies were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the Gun Site on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Sand Martins are a traditionally early migrant, and the first was noted at Nickoll's Quarry on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. 17 flew west at Mill Point the next day, and 60 flew east over Cheriton on the 10<sup>th</sup>. 6 flew west at Abbotscliffe on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with 35 west at the Gun Site on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 36 west at Mill Point the next day.

The first returning Wheatear was at Samphire Hoe on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2 Sedge Warblers were at the Gun Site on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 6 Lesser Whitethroats were counted at Abbotscliffe on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and an early Blackcap was at Samphire Hoe on the 4<sup>th</sup>, however the passerine highlight was a Crossbill east over Folkestone on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

## August

The first half of the month was fairly settled and, apart from a Honey Buzzard reported past at Café on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, was uneventful, with just a few common migrants - mainly Wheatears, Sedge Warblers, and Willow Warblers - noted. At Nickoll's Quarry the occasional Common Sandpiper and Dunlin were seen and a Little Egret was present for most of the month.

Last migrant dates in August:

28<sup>th</sup> - Swift

A northerly breeze on the 15<sup>th</sup> deposited a few migrants in the area, with 14 Willow Warblers, 4 Lesser Whitethroats, and a Garden Warbler at Nickoll's Quarry, and 8 Willow Warblers, 3 Whinchats and 2 Sedge Warblers at Abbotscliffe. The 16<sup>th</sup> was warmer and calmer, and a Marsh Harrier flew over Samphire Hoe, whilst 2 Reed Warblers and a Whinchat were at Hythe Redoubt,

and 4 Grey Herons flew west there. Another Marsh Harrier flew in off the sea at the Gun Site on the 17<sup>th</sup>, where there was also a Redstart, and Abbotscliffe produced 12 Sedge Warblers, 5 Whinchats, and 4 Reed Warblers. A Shag was offshore of Mill Point.

A light easterly on the 18<sup>th</sup> produced a Pied and 3 Spotted Flycatchers at the Gun Site, and 5 Crossbills flew east there. Despite overcast skies just 4 Whinchats and 2 Willow Warblers were notable at Abbotscliffe on the 19<sup>th</sup>, but the 20<sup>th</sup> saw a Garden Warbler, 3 Wheatears, a Whinchat, and single Reed and Sedge Warblers at Samphire Hoe, and 3 Sedge Warblers and a Whinchat at Abbotscliffe. 2 Swifts and 2 Tree Pipits overflew, and a Buzzard west flew over Folkestone.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> two Pied Flycatchers were at Samphire Hoe and a Honey Buzzard flew over Cheriton, and a Redstart, 4 Whinchats, 6 Willow Warblers, 3 Reed Warblers and a Sedge Warbler were at Abbotscliffe the next day, whilst 10 Sand Martins flew west there. A Common Buzzard was reported over the Gun Site on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and a Pied Flycatcher was noted there. Single Reed and Sedge Warblers were at Samphire Hoe.

Moderate south-westerlies on the 24<sup>th</sup> produced just a single Black Tern off Mill Point, but a Mediterranean Shearwater flew west past Copt Point the next day. A Whinchat and 3 Sedge Warblers were at Abbotscliffe. On the 26<sup>th</sup> a Tree Pipit was grounded at Abbotscliffe, and single Swift and Wheatear were noted at Church Hougham. 2 Spotted Flycatchers, 7 Willow Warblers, 4 Swifts, a Grey Wagtail, a Turtle Dove, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker were at the Gun Site on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

The last 3 days of the month were warm and dry, and a Honey Buzzard flew south over Folkestone on the 29<sup>th</sup>, when 7 Sedge Warblers, 5 Whinchats, 5 Willow Warblers, a Reed Warbler, and a Wheatear were at Abbotscliffe. A Spotted Flycatcher was at the Gun Site on the 30<sup>th</sup>, but just 2 Whinchats and 2 Sedge Warblers were at Abbotscliffe. On the 31<sup>st</sup> 3 Whinchats and 2 Sedge Warblers were at Samphire Hoe.

## September

September began warm and dry with a light north-easterly airflow, which produced 4 Grasshopper Warblers at Abbotscliffe between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup>, the first of c.10 recorded there in the month. Other migrants included a Reed Warbler and 4 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, two Sedge Warblers and 3 Wheatears there on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and a few Willow Warblers, Blackcaps, and Lesser Whitethroats. A trickle of waders involved a Curlew east over Abbotscliffe on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 2 Green Sandpipers, 3 Curlew, a Common Sandpiper and a Dunlin at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Last migrant dates in September:

30<sup>th</sup> - Common Tern  
- Sandwich Tern  
28<sup>th</sup> - Turtle Dove  
22<sup>nd</sup> - Sedge Warbler  
21<sup>st</sup> - Garden Warbler  
- Lesser Whitethroat  
20<sup>th</sup> - Tree Pipit  
- Yellow Wagtail  
17<sup>th</sup> - Willow Warbler  
13<sup>th</sup> - Spotted Flycatcher

An Osprey was seen over Folkestone on the 7<sup>th</sup> and a small arrival was noted at Abbotscliffe, with 10 Whinchats, 2 Wheatears, 2 Sedge Warblers, 5 Willow Warblers, 3 Chiffchaffs, and a Tree Pipit. The next day saw quality rather than quantity, with a **Wryneck** and 2 Grasshopper Warblers new in at Abbotscliffe, but little else of note. On the 9<sup>th</sup> three Grey Wagtails flew east over Abbotscliffe, and 4 Yellow Wagtails flew west, whilst 10 Yellow Wagtails and a Wheatear were at Church Hougham. A Crossbill flew over the Gun Site on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and a variety of migrants in the area included Redstart, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, and Whinchat at Samphire Hoe, 4 Wheatears, 4 Whinchats, and a Sedge Warbler at Abbotscliffe, and 4 Wheatears at Church Hougham, whilst 2 Grey Wagtails and a Siskin flew over.



Osprey - Hythe - 12<sup>th</sup> September to 29<sup>th</sup> October (Ian Roberts)

South-easterlies on the 11<sup>th</sup> produced some movement at sea, with a Mediterranean Shearwater, 3 Bonxies, 6 Arctic Skuas, 12 Black Terns, 87 Commic and 2+ Arctic Terns, 11 Wigeon, 48 Teal, and 2 Knot past. The land was also productive, with a Grasshopper Warbler, a Sedge Warbler, and 7 Whinchats at Abbotscliffe, with 17 Yellow Wagtails over, and a Blue-headed Wagtail, a Tree Pipit, a Buzzard, 4 Wheatears, and 15 Yellow Wagtails at Church Hougham. An Osprey was found at Hythe on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and became the most popular bird of the month – giving exceptional views and remaining into October. Elsewhere on the 12<sup>th</sup> a Tree Pipit was noted at Abbotscliffe, 52 Wigeon passed Samphire Hoe and c.1,000 House Martins were feeding along the cliffs, with 14 Siskins east.

Two Tree Pipits, 2 Whinchats, a Reed Warbler, and a Spotted Flycatcher were at Abbotscliffe on the 13<sup>th</sup>, but cool northerly winds produced little over the next few days, until a Buzzard and 45 Siskins flew over the Gun Site on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and 2 Whinchats and a Tree Pipit were at Abbotscliffe, with 5 Black Redstarts, 5 Whinchats and 3 Wheatears at Samphire Hoe. 16 Siskins were logged at Abbotscliffe on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and a Sedge Warbler, 3 Whinchats, 5 Chiffchaffs, and 5 Blackcaps were present.

The third Osprey of the month flew east over Radnor Park, Folkestone on the 19<sup>th</sup>, but at the cliffs just 4 Siskins and 1,200 House Martins flew east. A light north-westerly induced a little more movement at Abbotscliffe on the 20<sup>th</sup>, with 19 Siskins, 7 Yellow Wagtails, 2 Grey Wagtails, a Tree Pipit, a Jay and 1,200 House Martins over. Single Garden Warbler and Grasshopper Warbler were new in at Abbotscliffe on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and there were 3 Wheatears there. A Buzzard lingered over Samphire Hoe, 15 Siskins flew east, and 6 Blackcaps and 6 Chiffchaffs were counted.

Two 'continental' Coal Tits at Samphire Hoe on the 22<sup>nd</sup> were a new species for the site, and a Firecrest was also of note there, but elsewhere there were just 3 Whinchats, a Wheatear, and a Sedge Warbler at Abbotscliffe, and a Golden Plover over the Gun Site. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> a Black Redstart, a Wheatear, a Grey Wagtail, and 5 Blackcaps were at Samphire Hoe. A cool northerly on the 24<sup>th</sup> produced a Lapland Bunting at Abbotscliffe, and 29 Siskins and 2 Grey Wagtails flew east. Green Sandpiper, Snipe, and Turtle Dove were at Nickoll's Quarry.

The wind picked up from the south-west over the next few days and attention turned to the sea, though there was little of note: 50 Gannets, 40 Common Scoter, 32 Commic Terns, 5 Dunlin, an

Arctic Skua and the first 5 Brent Geese of the autumn passed Copt Point on the 25<sup>th</sup> and a Little Gull, 5 Arctic Skuas, 20 Common Terns, and an Arctic Tern flew west past Mill Point on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when 4 Eider were offshore. The 28<sup>th</sup> saw cooler and clearer conditions and a Ring-necked Parakeet flew over Abbotscliffe, whilst 11 Siskins, 2 Grey Wagtails and a Redpoll flew east at Samphire Hoe, where 10 Chiffchaffs were counted. Similar weather the next day produced 130 Goldfinches and 10 Siskins east at the Café, but westerlies and rain returned on the 30<sup>th</sup>, and just 4 Arctic Skuas passed Mill Point.

## October

A Lapland Bunting was at Abbotscliffe on the 1<sup>st</sup> and single Ring Ouzel and Firecrest were at Samphire Hoe. The Osprey was still present at Hythe (photo), and remained until at least the 29<sup>th</sup>. Northerly winds from the 2<sup>nd</sup> induced some visual passage, with 20 Redpolls, 57 Siskins, 160 Goldfinches, 250 Starlings, 180 Meadow Pipits, 9 alba wagtails, 2 Grey Wagtails, and 2 Dunlin over the cliffs, whilst the second **Wryneck** of the autumn was at the Capel-le-Ferne Café and a Grasshopper Warbler was at the Gun Site.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> a **Richard's Pipit** flew west at Abbotscliffe, and 325 Goldfinches, 89 Siskins, 43 Chaffinches, 8 alba wagtails, and 4 Redpolls flew east. 150 Starlings and a Marsh Harrier flew in off the sea. The Ring-necked Parakeet was seen again at Abbotscliffe on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and a Redstart, 11 Chiffchaffs, and 15 Song Thrushes were also of note. 100 Goldfinches, 9 Siskins, 8 alba Wagtails, 2 Grey Wagtails, 2 Redpolls, and a Brambling flew over.

The first two Redwings of the autumn were at the Gun Site on the 5<sup>th</sup>, but just 20 Siskins and 2 Grey Wagtails flew over. At sea 19 Brent Geese and a Wigeon flew east. The wind went easterly on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and produced a **Yellow-browed Warbler**, a Firecrest, and a 'continental' Coal Tit at Samphire Hoe, whilst a small influx of thrushes comprised 10 Ring Ouzels, c.20 Redwings, and c.70 Song Thrushes at the cliffs. A single Ring Ouzel, 30 Song Thrushes, and 70 Blackbirds were noted the next day, and 365 Goldfinches, 30+ Siskins, and 2 Redpolls flew east. A superb **Great Grey Shrike** at Samphire Hoe on the 8<sup>th</sup> (until 10<sup>th</sup>, photo) continued the good run, but otherwise a Ring Ouzel at the Hoe and a Reed Warbler at Abbotscliffe were all that was of interest.

Last migrant dates in October:

27<sup>th</sup> - Swallow  
23<sup>rd</sup> - Wheatear  
15<sup>th</sup> - Whinchat  
13<sup>th</sup> - Redstart  
8<sup>th</sup> - Reed Warbler  
3<sup>rd</sup> - Sand Martin  
2<sup>nd</sup> - Grasshopper Warbler



above and below: Great Grey Shrike -  
Samphire Hoe - 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October (Dale  
Gibson)

3 Ring Ouzels, 6 Tree Sparrows, 17 Siskins, and 2 Wheatears were logged at the cliffs on the 9<sup>th</sup>, but a quieter spell followed before moderate southerlies on the 12<sup>th</sup> led to 160 Gannets and an Arctic Skua passing Samphire Hoe. Early rain on the 13<sup>th</sup> cleared to reveal 2 Dartford Warblers, 3 Black Redstarts, and a Wheatear at Samphire Hoe, a Whinchat at Abbotscliffe, and a Redstart at Capel-le-Ferne (Green Lane). c.45 Siskins, 4 Redpolls, and 2 Little Egrets flew over.



Easterly winds returned on the 14<sup>th</sup> and a Ring Ouzel and 6 Redwings were seen at Samphire Hoe, with 5 Bramblings in fields at Capel-le-Ferne, and c.250 Goldfinches, 2 Siskins, a Redpoll, and 26 Golden Plover flying over. Visual migration at the cliffs on the 15<sup>th</sup> comprised a Lapland Bunting, 2 Crossbills, 5 Redpolls, 7 Bramblings, 7 Redwings, and 16 Tree Sparrows, and at least 50 Goldcrests were at Samphire Hoe. 140 Redwings, 15 Fieldfares, 4 Bramblings, 2 Redpolls, and 2 Grey Wagtails were at the cliffs the next day. A Dartford Warbler was at Samphire Hoe on the 17<sup>th</sup> and a Short-eared Owl, 2 Bramblings, 8 Reed Buntings, and 15 Redpolls flew east.

A spell of south-westerlies ensued and attention turned to the sea, though there was little of note, with just 45 Brent Geese past Copt Point on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and 90 Brent Geese, 10 Eider, and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers past Samphire Hoe on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Ring Ouzels were at Samphire Hoe on the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the Café on the 20<sup>th</sup>, when a Firecrest was also seen, and a Short-eared Owl was found dead at Samphire Hoe. Strong southerlies on the 21<sup>st</sup> produced a Sooty Shearwater past Copt Point.

North-westerlies followed and, as is often the case, induced some visual passage with 152 Stock Doves, 200 Goldfinches, 17 Siskins, and 15 Redpolls over the cliffs on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 1,325 Stock Doves, 570 Starlings, 250 Chaffinches, 58 Sky Larks, 28 Redpolls, 21 Siskins, 6 Bramblings, 9 Collared Doves, 8 Reed Buntings, 2 Bullfinches, 3 Sparrowhawks, a Marsh Harrier and a Corn Bunting in/west there the next day. 10 Ring Ouzels were at the cliffs on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and a Dartford Warbler was at Abbotscliffe on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Strong southerlies returned on the 24<sup>th</sup> and saw good passage at sea, with a **Long-tailed Skua**, a Sooty Shearwater, 2 Pomarine Skuas, 3 Bonxies, 16 Arctic Skuas, 64 Little Gulls, 124 Brent Geese, 10 Wigeon, 33 large auks, c.200 Gannets, and a good selection of waders: 2 Purple Sandpipers, 4 Dunlin, 3 Grey Plovers, 2 Curlew, a Bar-tailed Godwit, and a Sanderling past Mill Point. There was more west in the wind the next day, and consequently it was much quieter at sea, with just 1 Little Gull, 3 Eider and 9 Brent Geese past.

A westerly airflow dominated the rest of the month, and it was generally quiet. 6 Ring Ouzels were at Abbotscliffe on the 26<sup>th</sup>, and a Redpoll, 6 Siskins, and 14 Stock Doves flew over. Next day 220 Starlings, 80 Goldfinches, 50 Greenfinches, 3 Siskin, and a Redpoll were logged over Abbotscliffe, and 180 Starlings flew in off the sea on the 28<sup>th</sup>. 6 Ring Ouzels were at Samphire Hoe on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 7 Siskins flew over. On the 31<sup>st</sup> just 2 Ring Ouzels and a Black Redstart were of note at Samphire Hoe.

## November

The month began quietly before strong south-westerlies on the 3<sup>rd</sup> produced a Sooty Shearwater and 6 Little Gulls past Copt Point. The next day was calmer with a cool westerly breeze and 154 Stock Doves, 145 Wood Pigeons, 10 Redpolls, 6 Siskins, 3 Bramblings, and 2 Bullfinches went west over the Café. Pigeon passage gathered pace on the 5<sup>th</sup>, with 1,855 Wood Pigeons, 500 Stock Doves, and 14 Collared Doves west at Abbotscliffe, and c.100 Chaffinches, 68 Bramblings, 38 Siskins, 6 Bullfinches, 2 Redpolls, 35 Sky Larks, 14 Fieldfares, 5 Reed Buntings, 2 Snow Buntings, a Corn Bunting, and 2 Marsh Harriers also flew west there.

A windy 6<sup>th</sup> saw a Marsh Harrier, a Peregrine and 280 Starlings struggle in off the sea at Mill Point, but just 4 Little Gulls, a Bonxie and a Grey Plover flew past. A Long-eared Owl (photo) spent the day roosting at Samphire Hoe on the 7<sup>th</sup>.



Long-eared Owl - Samphire Hoe - 7<sup>th</sup>  
November (Paul Holt)

A brisk southerly the next day encouraged 3 Sooty Shearwaters, 8 Brent Geese, an Arctic Tern, and a Red-breasted Merganser past Copt Point, and single Little Egret and Ring Ouzel were at Samphire Hoe. Ring Ouzels increased to 2 at Samphire Hoe on the 9<sup>th</sup>, and these remained until the 15<sup>th</sup>, with at least one until the very late date of 26<sup>th</sup>, whilst others were at Abbotscliffe on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.

In strong south-westerlies on the 10<sup>th</sup> a Leach's Petrel flew west past Samphire Hoe, whilst an Arctic Skua was offshore. An Arctic Tern, a Shag, and a Kingfisher were in Folkestone Harbour on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and 8 Siskins, a Brambling, and a Bullfinch flew over the Café the next day. 30 Chaffinches, 19 Stock Doves, 7 Siskins, 2 Redpolls, a Brambling, and a Bullfinch flew over Abbotscliffe on the 13<sup>th</sup> and there were late House Martins at the Gun Site and at Hythe. On the 14<sup>th</sup> a Marsh Harrier flew out to sea from Samphire Hoe and 30 Siskins went east, and a Dartford Warbler was seen there the next day. 3 Purple Sandpipers had returned to the rock groyne off Stade Street, Hythe, where they remained until the month's end, increasing to 6.

The weather turned colder on the 16<sup>th</sup>, a Hen Harrier (remaining until 18<sup>th</sup>) and a Water Rail arrived at Samphire Hoe, whilst a Snow Bunting, 2 Redpolls and 6 Siskins flew over the Café. A heavy frost on the 17<sup>th</sup> induced an impressive movement of Blackbirds, with 230+ at Samphire Hoe, and 60 Fieldfares, 30 Redwings, and 20 Song Thrushes were also recorded, whilst two Woodcock were a new species for the site. A Barn Owl was seen just north of Hythe, by junction 11 of the M20. A trickle of thrushes continued to arrive on the 18<sup>th</sup>, with 16 Blackbirds, 10 Fieldfares, and 2 Redwings at Abbotscliffe, whilst a Blackcap was at Samphire Hoe. A Red-necked Grebe and 10 Brent Geese passed Samphire Hoe on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 2 Lapwings flew in off the sea at Samphire Hoe and 550 Golden Plovers were counted at Hythe. 6 Siskins flew east over the Café.

Last migrant dates in November:

26<sup>th</sup> - Ring Ouzel  
13<sup>th</sup> - House Martin  
11<sup>th</sup> - Arctic Tern  
10<sup>th</sup> - Arctic Skua



A quieter spell ensued with just a Chiffchaff and a Kingfisher of note at Copt Point on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and a single Golden Plover in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 21<sup>st</sup>. 31 Turnstones, 4 Redshank, and a Ringed Plover were in Folkestone Harbour on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 2 Water Rails were at Samphire Hoe, increasing to 3 the next day. Two Snow Buntings were at Samphire Hoe on the 26<sup>th</sup>, where they remained until at least the end of the month.

A Great Northern Diver was feeding close inshore off Mill Point on the 27<sup>th</sup>, with an Eider and 13 Common Scoters also offshore. Next day a Ring-necked Parakeet flew over the Golden Valley area of Folkestone. Finally two Shovelers flew west past Samphire Hoe on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

## December

December was generally fairly mild apart from a spell of cool north-easterlies just before mid-month and some fairly significant snowfall after Christmas, with up to 6 inches on higher ground. Although overnight temperatures fell to minus 4C there was no prolonged freezing and cold weather movement was rather limited.

The two cooler periods produced the only counts of Red-throated Divers, but even then these were just 45 east past Sandgate on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and 20 east at Hythe on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Up to 3 Great Crested Grebes and 3 Little Grebes were at Nickoll's Quarry throughout, and a Little Grebe was on the canal at Seabrook on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Fulmars had returned to Shakespeare Cliff by the 10<sup>th</sup>, when 8 were counted.

Highlight of the snowy weather was a group of 3 **Whooper Swans**, which flew east over Nickoll's Quarry on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Other cold weather movement the same day included 5 Tufted Ducks at Nickoll's Quarry, 5 Brent Geese east past Samphire Hoe and 6 Mallards displaced onto the sea off Hythe. Six Wigeon were on the sea off Hythe the following day, and 11 Shelducks were seen off Hythe Ranges on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Earlier in the month a **Goosander** was seen at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4<sup>th</sup>, and a Pochard on the sea off Sandgate on the 13<sup>th</sup> was unusual, whilst 2 Eider off Copt Point on the 2<sup>nd</sup> were a more normal sight. 65 Mallard were counted at Hythe on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

A Buzzard was reported at Samphire Hoe on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and up to 2 Water Rails were seen there in the first half of the month. Purple Sandpipers were at Hythe throughout, peaking at 8 in the high tide roost on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Up to 20 Snipe were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 28<sup>th</sup>, with 1-2 Jack Snipe there the same day. A Green Sandpiper was near Botolph's Bridge on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

A **Little Auk** was reported off Samphire Hoe on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and a **Barn Owl** found dead on the roadside at Abbotscliffe on the 14<sup>th</sup> was another interesting record, especially following the one seen near Hythe in November.

Kingfishers could be seen at Nickoll's Quarry and along the Hythe Canal, whilst Grey Wagtails were at the latter site as well as in Cheriton. A Black Redstart remained at Samphire Hoe until at least the 10<sup>th</sup>, on which date 6 Stonechats were present there, with another at Hythe Ranges on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

A flock of 60 Redwings were seen arriving in off the sea at Hythe during snow on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and 5 at Samphire Hoe the same day were probably new arrivals. A Dartford Warbler was at Samphire Hoe on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> at least, and a Blackcap was reported in a Folkestone garden on the latter date. Up to 2 Chiffchaffs were wintering along the Hythe Canal.

Three Siskins flew over Samphire Hoe on the 6<sup>th</sup> and up to 40 were along Hythe Canal on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Flocks of 35 Greenfinches and 30 Linnets were noted at Hythe Ranges on the 26<sup>th</sup>.