

2007 review

January

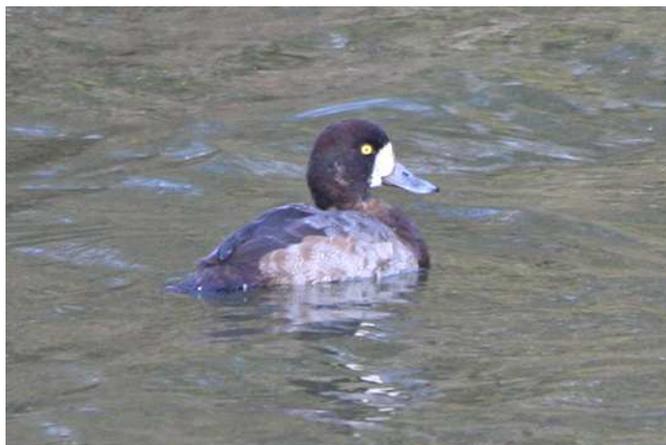
The first three weeks of the month were dominated by westerly winds, when most days saw at least a little rain, and there were several particularly wet and windy spells, but these were interspersed with the occasional dry, bright day. The 22nd finally saw a change, to northerly winds, and it was cooler, with several overnight frosts and a little snow. The last few days of January saw a return to westerly winds, but it was generally dry.

Wintering Little Egrets are now a regular feature and singles were seen at Samphire Hoe and Beachborough during January. Mute Swan numbers were low, with a peak of just 31 at Donkey Street on the 6th, and the only geese noted were 24 Brent east past Samphire Hoe on the 23rd and 11 west at Hythe on the 28th.

A first-winter drake **Scaup** was on the canal at Seabrook from the 1st-14th and Mandarin were seen at Sandling Park (8) and Pedlinge (2). Two drake Shoveler were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 26th, with a pair of Wigeon there the next day, and notable counts of more usual ducks included 6 Gadwall at Westenhanger and 4 at Sandling Park, 35 Teal at Sandling Park, and 17 Pochard and 35 Tufted Ducks at Westenhanger.

Peregrines were noted at Nickoll's Quarry and Samphire Hoe (2) and a Marsh Harrier which flew west at the latter site on the 25th was an unusual winter record. An escaped Asian White-backed Vulture in the Postling/Sandling Park area on the 11th-14th generated a fair amount of interest, including some from the local Buzzards, whilst another likely though unusual escape was a female Golden Pheasant at Horn Street on the 2nd.

Wintering Water Rails were at Nickoll's Quarry (at least 2), Hythe Canal, and Horn Street and there was a peak of just 11 Coot at the former site. Lapwing numbers were very low, with a peak of just 80 at Westenhanger, and no



Scaup on the Hythe Canal (Brian Harper)



above and below: escaped White-backed Vulture - Sandling (Chris Philpott)



Golden Plovers were recorded. 2 Jack Snipe were at Nickoll's Quarry throughout and there was a peak of 14 Snipe there. A Woodcock was flushed at Sandling Park on 14th and 17 Curlew were counted at the Willop Outfall on the 7th. A Green Sandpiper was seen at Nickoll's Quarry on 2 dates.

A flock of 15 Ringed Plovers in Folkestone Harbour on the 24th were presumably cold-weather migrants. Purple Sandpipers were at Hythe (at least 4 throughout) and the Willop Outfall (1 on 7th), and the latter site hosted up to 10 Sanderlings. There was a peak of 11 Redshanks in Folkestone Harbour on the 30th and Turnstones were counted at the Willop Outfall (17), Folkestone Harbour (12), and Hythe (10). Auks were in short supply, with a peak of just 8 Razorbills past Copt Point on the 23rd.

A Little Owl was seen at Hythe Roughs on the 21st and Tawny Owls were heard at Paraker Wood and Brockhill CP. A Kingfisher was in Folkestone Harbour on the 30th and several were seen around Hythe. Around 35 Meadow Pipits were wintering at Nickoll's Quarry and Rock Pipits were noted at Copt Point, Folkestone Harbour, and Samphire Hoe. Grey Wagtails were seen on 2 dates at Hythe.

Wintering Stonechats were at Samphire Hoe (4), Nickoll's Quarry (2), Westenhanger (2), and Hythe Golf Course (2). Up to 20 Song Thrushes were at Nickoll's Quarry throughout but winter thrushes were very scarce with just one flock of 8 Fieldfares at Beachborough on the 1st and 1-2 Redwings at a few sites.

Cetti's Warblers appear to be becoming established at Nickoll's Quarry with at least 3 present in January and Chiffchaffs were seen there and along the Hythe Canal (2). A **Dartford Warbler** was seen at Samphire Hoe intermittently during the month. Two **Bearded Tits** remained at Nickoll's Quarry from 2006 and were still present at the month's end. A Nuthatch was seen at Brockhill CP on 2 dates.

12 Goldfinches were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 6th and there were 7 Linnets there on the 14th, but Siskins and Redpolls were non-existent. A peak of 10 Yellowhammers were at Westenhanger on the 14th.

A total of 98 species were recorded in January, including a single day peak of 85 on the 14th.



escaped White-backed Vulture with Common Buzzard - Sandling (Chris Philpott)



presumed escape female Golden Pheasant - Horn Street Lake (Ian Roberts)

February

There was a cool start to the month, with winds predominately from the north, culminating in a good covering of snow on the 8th. The following week saw much milder conditions as the airflow changed to the west: winds increased and there was frequent rainfall. The 15th-18th saw a drier and calmer interlude before rather wet and windy weather returned and persisted until the month's end.

Numbers of Great Crested Grebes built up in February, with counts of 60 off Hythe on the 6th and 70 off Copt Point on the 24th, and there was a Shag at the latter site on the 1st. A small easterly movement (60) of Brent Geese on the 6th might have been in response to the cold weather, but larger up-channel passages of 300 on the 18th and 370 on the 19th were more likely to be early spring migrants.

Despite the cold weather there were few ducks recorded, with just a pair of Gadwall at Nickoll's Quarry (on the 5th) being of note in the first week of the month. A single Tufted Duck was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 24th, on which date 14 Tufted Ducks, 3 Pochards, and 2 Gadwall were counted at Westenhanger, and 4 Mandarin and 2 Wigeon were at Sandling Park.

A Merlin was hunting at Nickoll's Quarry on the 9th and Buzzards were recorded at Blackhouse Hill and Sandling Park. A Water Rail resided along the Hythe Canal near Seabrook throughout. Lapwing numbers were very low, and all had already departed by the month's end. Two Jack Snipes were at Nickoll's Quarry throughout and there was a peak of 13 Snipe there. A Woodcock was found dead at Sandling Park on the 24th, on which date a Green Sandpiper was seen at Botolph's Bridge.

14 Curlew were counted at the Willop Outfall on the 24th and the same site hosted 4 Ringed Plovers and a Sanderling the same day. Up to 5 Purple Sandpipers were at Hythe throughout and there were 5 Redshanks and 13 Turnstones in Folkestone Harbour on the 6th. The first returning Lesser Black-backed Gulls were recorded on the 8th and there was an unusual count of 92 Great Black-backed Gulls flying inland over Blackhouse Hill on the 3rd.

A Tawny Owl was heard at Paraker Wood on the 24th. A couple of Kingfishers were seen at Hythe during the month and a single Grey Wagtail was recorded at Mill Point. Stonechats continued to winter at Samphire Hoe (4), Nickoll's Quarry (2), and Hythe Golf Course. Considering the scarcity this year of winter thrushes a Fieldfare at Samphire Hoe on the 18th and 8 Redwings at Nickoll's Quarry on the 24th were probably early migrants, and an overnight passage of the latter species was heard on the 28th.

At least 1-2 Cetti's Warblers were at Nickoll's Quarry throughout, Chiffchaffs were at the Hythe Canal on the 3rd and Nickoll's Quarry on the 5th, and a male Blackcap was by the Hythe Canal on the 24th. The 2 **Bearded Tits** remained at Nickoll's Quarry and a Nuthatch was still at Brockhill CP. A flock of 30 Goldfinches were at the Hythe Canal on the 3rd and at Nickoll's Quarry there were just single records of Linnet (9th) and Yellowhammer (24th).

A total of 90 species were recorded in February, including a single day peak of 80 on the 24th.

March

There was a calm, sunny, and rather pleasant start to March and wintering birds included 2 **Bearded Tits**, a Cetti's Warbler, a Jack Snipe, and at least 8 Snipe at Nickoll's Quarry, 5 Purple Sandpipers at Hythe, a Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge, and a Water Rail, a Grey Wagtail, and a Chiffchaff at various points along the Hythe Canal. 10 Redwings which appeared at Nickoll's Quarry on the 1st (remaining to 7th) and a Black Redstart found at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd were perhaps early migrants.

First migrant dates in March:

31st - Little Ringed Plover
27th - Swallow
25th - Blackcap*
16th - Wood Lark
13th - Wheatear
9th - Chiffchaff*
8th - Firecrest
- White Wagtail

*excludes wintering birds

A south-easterly breeze picked up on the 4th and encouraged a movement of 435 Brent Geese, 66 Common Scoters, 22 Fulmars, 14 Great Crested Grebes, 13 Gannets, and 4 Gadwall past Samphire Hoe whilst a *littoralis* Rock Pipit was also noted there.

The weather turned even milder from the 8th, with daytime temperatures as high as 17 Celsius over the following week, and it was dry with a light westerly airflow. Unsurprisingly this led to the first flush of migrants, commencing with a Firecrest at the Gun Site and White Wagtails at Samphire Hoe (2) and Abbotscliffe on the 8th. The first migrant Chiffchaff was at Samphire Hoe the next day, increasing to 3 there on the 12th and 6 in the total area on the 13th. A Marsh Harrier flew over Hythe on the 10th and a Buzzard arrived in off the sea at the Gun Site on the 12th.

The first Wheatear was reported at Samphire Hoe on the 13th when visual migration at the Café produced 521 Chaffinches, 4 *alba* wagtails, 2 Yellowhammers, and a Brambling. Another Brambling was in trees by the Café on the 16th, but the highlight of that day was a **Wood Lark** at Nickoll's Quarry. This period also saw small numbers of migrant Meadow Pipits, Redwings, Fieldfares, Goldcrests, and Linnets, but it was very quiet on the sea, with just a single Black-throated Diver off Copt Point on the 12th being noteworthy.

Jack Snipes increased to a peak of 4 at Nickoll's Quarry on the 16th and also of note there were 7 Pochard and single Redshank and Curlew the same day and 3 Canada and 1 Greylag Goose and 2 pairs of Oystercatchers on the 17th.

A northerly airflow took hold from the 17th and it became much cooler, with daytime highs of only 7-8 Celsius, and this put migration on hold. A Wheatear at Samphire Hoe on 3 dates was thought to be the same bird, and even possibly the same as the one on the 13th, and a scattering of Chiffchaffs did not appear to be new arrivals either. The only signs of passage were 25 Chaffinches east over the Café on the 19th and a Marsh Harrier in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 21st.

The last week of the month saw milder conditions and migrants began to trickle in again. The first migrant Blackcap and 4 Chiffchaffs were at West Hythe on the 25th, with a Swallow at the Gun Site on the 27th, and a Little Ringed Plover flew over near Hythe on the 31st. A Buzzard came in off the sea at the Gun Site on the 25th, a Short-eared Owl flew over Folkestone on the 27th, and the third Marsh Harrier of the month was seen over Folkestone Harbour on the 30th. Highlight of this period however were 2 **Ravens** seen at Samphire Hoe and the Gun Site on the 26th-27th.

Visual migration was limited to 12 Chaffinches and a Grey Wagtail on the 27th and 236 Chaffinches east over the Café on the 30th and there was little more on the sea, with 60 Gannets,

54 Fulmars, and a Bar-tailed Godwit east past Samphire Hoe on the 25th and 78 Brent Geese and 2 Shelducks east there on the 28th. Other notable records in the last week of the month included 2 Little Egrets at Samphire Hoe on 2 dates, a Mandarin at Brockhill CP, 2 Teal at Horn Street Lake, Tufted Ducks at Westenhanger (4) and Nickoll's Quarry (2), a Buzzard at Sandling Park, and 2 Nuthatches and 4 Treecreepers at Brockhill CP.

A total of 104 species were recorded in March but the highest day total was just 73 on the 25th.

April

A cool north-easterly dominated the first few days of the month and encouraged a visual passage of Chaffinches, with a total 1,400 moving east, including a peak of 1,120 on the 3rd. Smaller numbers of Stock Doves, Meadow Pipits, Siskins, Greenfinches, Goldfinches, and Linnets also flew east. Grounded migrants amounted to no more than a few Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs and there was little movement on the sea although the first Sandwich Terns did appear off Hythe on the 1st. The two **Ravens** seen March were again at Samphire Hoe on the 5th - the first of their three visits to the area in April as they continued to wander widely across Kent and East Sussex.

Temperatures increased from the 6th, when 3 Swallows and the first House Martin arrived in off the sea at the cliffs, to reach 20 Celsius on the 8th. A further 3 Swallows arrived at the Gun Site on the 7th, when 200 Wood Pigeons, 60 Chaffinches, 8 Linnets, 4 Meadow Pipits, a Brambling, and a Redpoll flew east there, and a Wheatear was at Hythe Golf Course. An incredibly early Lesser Whitethroat was at Folkestone Warren on the 8th, with a Black Redstart at Abbotscliffe (to 9th).

The first Willow Warblers were at the Gun Site, Samphire Hoe, and Abbotscliffe (2) on the 9th, with a Wheatear at Samphire Hoe, and a few more Blackcaps at various sites. It remained quiet on the sea, with just 5 Sandwich Terns east past Samphire Hoe on the 9th. A Little Egret (the first of 3 there in April) flew west there and 8 Greylag Geese flew east over Horn Street on the same day, with a Greylag Goose west at the Gun Site on the 7th.

Improvement on the land continued with a fine male Pied Flycatcher, a Willow Warbler, 4 Blackcaps, and 6 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe on the 10th, and the first Yellow Wagtail at Abbotscliffe and 4 Sand Martins, 3 House Martins, and a Swallow at the Gun Site the next day. Several apparently migrant Yellowhammers appeared at the cliffs in April with a peak of 3 at Abbotscliffe on the 11th (and 2 at the Gun Site on the 7th).

The last Jack Snipe, 2 Green Sandpipers, and a Bar-tailed Godwit were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 12th. A Whinchat at Samphire Hoe and 2 Wheatears at the Gun Site were the pick of the land migrants on the 13th but there was little more than 8 Sandwich Terns east on the sea. The

First migrant dates in April:

30th - Cuckoo
- Common Sandpiper
- Sedge Warbler
26th - Turtle Dove
25th - Nightingale
24th - Reed Warbler
22nd - Swift
- Arctic Skua
21st - Common Tern
- Garganey
19th - Garden Warbler
18th - Ring Ouzel
17th - Grasshopper Warbler
- Whitethroat
- Whimbrel
13th - Whinchat
11th - Yellow Wagtail
- Sand Martin
10th - Pied Flycatcher
9th - Willow Warbler
8th - Lesser Whitethroat
6th - House Martin
1st - Sandwich Tern

wintering Purple Sandpipers were last seen at Hythe on the 14th when migrants included a new Wheatear, a House Martin, and 5 Swallows at the cliffs. Two Lesser Whitethroats appeared at the Gun Site on the 15th as temperatures climbed into the low twenties Celsius and 3 Greylag Geese flew west over Hythe.

Migration gathered pace on the 17th, when a reeling Grasshopper Warbler at the Gun Site and a Whitethroat at Samphire Hoe were new for the year, and there were 7 Swallows at the cliffs. At sea 16 Whimbrel and 2 Grey Plovers flew east past at Samphire Hoe, with another Grey Plover on the seawall. The 18th saw the first 2 Ring Ouzels arrive at Samphire Hoe, and there were also 6 Lesser Whitethroats, 4 Willow Warblers, a Whitethroat, a Yellow Wagtail, at least 16 Swallows, 3 Sand Martins and a House Martin at the cliffs. Up to 15 Snipe were roosting at Nickoll's Quarry (with at least one lingering until the end of the month).

A Garden Warbler at Nickoll's Quarry on the 19th was another new species and a Ring Ouzel was at Abbotscliffe as common migrants continued to arrive. The 21st saw the first decent sea movement of the month when a Garganey, 2 Great Skuas, 2 Shovelers, 7 Whimbrel, 11 Common Terns, 16 Little Gulls, and 23 Brent Geese flew east past Samphire Hoe. The first Arctic Skua, 2 Little Gulls, 45 Brent Geese, and 104 Sandwich Terns flew east past Copt Point the next day, whilst the first 3 Swifts were seen over Folkestone, and common migrants at the Gun Site included a Wheatear, a Yellow Wagtail, 4 Willow Warblers, and 6 Whitethroats.

Two Reed Warblers at Beachborough on the 24th were another new arrival as temperatures peaked at nearly 25 Celsius. The next day produced the first Nightingale singing at the Gun Site and a Yellow Wagtail, a Sand Martin, 2 Swifts, and 11 Swallows arrived in off the sea there. The first Turtle Dove was at West Hythe on the 26th and Swifts and hirundines continued to arrive. On the 27th a Bar-tailed Godwit, 6 Grey Plovers, 9 Whimbrel, and 9 Eiders flew east past Copt Point as the wind picked up from the north-east (and it remained strong from the same direction until the end of the month). A Knot on one of the pools at Samphire Hoe was an unusual record for the site on the 28th and 4 Wheatears were seen at Newington Quarry.

The 29th saw the only rain of an exceptionally warm, dry April, and 2 Black-throated Divers, 2 Great Skuas, 2 Grey Plovers, 3 Brent Geese, 3 Shelducks, 3 Dunlin, 3 Bar-tailed Godwits, 3 Razorbills, 6 Oystercatchers, and 8 Whimbrel flew east past Samphire Hoe. Further sea passage the next day comprised an Arctic Skua, 2 Black-throated Divers, 8 Brent Geese, 25 Gannets, 44 Whimbrel, and 195 Bar-tailed Godwits east past Copt Point. A Marsh Harrier flew east at Abbotscliffe and a Sparrowhawk came in off at Copt Point. The first Cuckoo was at Church Hougham and Sedge Warbler and Common Sandpiper at Nickoll's Quarry were also new for the year. Wheatears were seen at Abbotscliffe (2) and at Nickoll's Quarry, and 2 Lapwings were at Abbotscliffe (top fields).

Breeding or potential breeding species present at the end of the month included 3 pairs of Great Crested Grebes at Nickoll's Quarry (with a single at Westenhanger on the 30th), one pair of Little Grebes at both those sites, and a pair of Greylag Geese and 2 pairs of Canada Geese at Nickoll's Quarry. There were at least 4 pairs of Fulmars by the Café, with others at Samphire Hoe. At least 3 pairs of Mandarins were at Sandling Park and up to 9 Tufted Ducks were at Westenhanger late into April, though these may still depart (4 at Sandling Park on 25th were certainly migrants). Up to 3 pairs of Peregrines were on the cliffs between Folkestone and Dover.

Numbers of Grey Partridges were encouraging, with up to 3 pairs at Abbotscliffe and another at Samphire Hoe, and Red-legged Partridges were seen at Abbotscliffe and Nickoll's Quarry. About 3 pairs of Coots were at the latter site, with another pair at Westenhanger. The Nickoll's Quarry area also hosted 2 pairs of Oystercatchers. Owls are always under-recorded but there were at least 2-3 pairs of Tawny Owl in the Brockhill area and c.2 pairs of Little Owl at West Hythe. The

West Hythe area also saw at least 2 Cetti's Warblers holding territory, and there were a pair of Nuthatches at Brockhill.

A total of 126 species were recorded in April, including a single day peak of 93 on the 30th.

May

The month began dry and sunny and with a strong north-easterly airflow in place which encouraged some up-channel sea passage past Copt Point, including a Great Skua, an Arctic Skua, 2 Knot, 2 Grey Plover, 6 Turnstone, 10 Whimbrel, 20 Sanderling, 40 'Commic' Terns, and 235 Bar-tailed Godwits on the 1st and a Black Tern, an Arctic Skua, 2 Great Skuas, 3 Black-throated Divers, 3 Razorbills, 10 Whimbrel, 20 Bar-tailed Godwits, and 91 Sandwich and 270 'Commic' Terns on the 2nd. Bar-tailed Godwits were also noted in fields by the Willop Outfall (60) and at Nickoll's Quarry (2) on the 2nd, when there were also 10 Whimbrel at the former site and 2 Common Sandpipers at the latter.

The 2nd also saw some improvement on the land, with singles of Whinchat, Ring Ouzel, Wheatear, and Yellow Wagtail at Abbotscliffe, and a Ring Ouzel at the Gun Site, whilst an Osprey flew east at Samphire Hoe. Hirundines increased on the 3rd, when 30 Swallows, 10 House Martins, and a Sand Martin were at Nickoll's Quarry, together with 20 Swifts, and a late Tufted Duck, and there were 25 each of Swallow and House Martin at Abbotscliffe on the 5th. The only grounded migrant noted on the 5th was a Wheatear at the latter site.

A calm morning on the 6th allowed a Reed Warbler, a Wheatear, 2 Yellow Wagtails, and 2 Willow Warblers to be found at Samphire Hoe, with a new Wheatear at Abbotscliffe, and a Cuckoo at Nickoll's Quarry, whilst 100 Sandwich Terns flew east at sea. The wind steadily increased from the south-west during the day and the next two days were very quiet, with only 2 Common Sandpipers at Copt Point on the 8th being of note.

The morning of the 9th was calmer, following overnight rain, and a few grounded migrants at Abbotscliffe comprised a Golden Plover, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Ring Ouzel, 2 Wheatears, and 2 Yellow Wagtails. Another Wheatear was at Hythe the next day, but a quiet spell ensued with the winds continuing in the westerly quarter and the weather becoming progressively wetter. Three Arctic Skuas and 85 Sandwich Terns flew east past Copt Point on the 13th, and single Hobbies arrived in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the same day and at Seabrook on the 14th.

The next few days were cool, wet, and windy and it didn't seem like May in terms of either weather or birds. Eventually the wind switched to the east on the 20th and Spotted Flycatchers appeared at the Gun Site (20th), Abbotscliffe (22nd), and Folkestone (25th). There was also an

First migrant dates in May:

13th - Hobby
9th - Spotted Flycatcher
2nd - Black Tern
- Osprey
1st - Arctic Tern



Osprey at Samphire Hoe (Nigel Jennings)

easterly trickle of hirundines including 22 Swallows over the Gun Site on the 20th and c.40 Swallows and c.60 House Martins over Abbotscliffe on the 22nd. A late Wheatear was at the latter site on the same day.

The month ended without incident and only a single Razorbill off Samphire Hoe on the 27th was at all noteworthy.

A total of 112 species were recorded in May, including a single day peak of 96 on the 2nd.

June

A warm and dry start to the month, with temperatures in excess of 20 C on 2nd, but it became increasingly unsettled as a ridge of high pressure slowly declined. Cloud increased and there were heavy thunderstorms on the 8th, but it remained mild with generally light winds. Further spells of heavy and thundery rain developed over the next fortnight, and the last week of the month was particularly wet, and also somewhat windier.

June got off to a spectacular start with the first area record of **Squacco Heron** at Nickoll's Quarry on the 2nd, and less unusual late migrants included a Cuckoo and a Yellow Wagtail at Capel-le-Ferne the same day, a singing Reed Warbler there on the 3rd, and a Turtle Dove in off the sea at Hythe on the 10th. There were also a few small movements of Swifts.

Large raptors appear to be a feature of June and this year produced a Red Kite east over the area on the 2nd, Honey Buzzards over Folkestone on the 10th and 19th, a Goshawk over Folkestone on the 13th, and a Buzzard near Hythe on the 18th.

A pair of Little Grebes at Sandling Park on the 2nd was an unusual record and breeding may have gone undetected there. Elsewhere there were few highlights of the breeding season, and a number of notable absentees. Of some note was at least one successful pair of Canada Geese at Nickoll's Quarry, where 2-3 pairs of Great Crested Grebes, 1-2 pairs of Oystercatcher, and 4 singing male Sedge Warblers were also present. At Samphire Hoe 3 pairs of Stonechats fledged young.

A strange mid-summer record involved a flock of 12 Canada Geese on the sea off Capel-le-Ferne on the 9th. Early returning Lapwings were noted from the 11th, when 3 were at Nickoll's Quarry, and a Curlew flew west past Mill Point on the 30th.

A total of 82 species were recorded in June, including a single day peak of 75 on the 2nd.

July

Low pressure was situated close to, or over the British Isles throughout the first four weeks of the month, and gave generally unsettled conditions with frequent showers or longer spells of rain. The showers were often very heavy and thundery, with particularly torrential downpours on the 3rd, 16th-17th, and 20th. The last three days of the month saw a change, with high pressure building across from the west, and it was mostly dry and sunny.

July got off to a typically quiet start and there was little of note really prior to a juvenile Wheatear above Samphire Hoe on the 11th – locally bred or an early migrant? A buzzard species, possibly Honey, was seen over the same site on the 19th, and the first returning migrant Sedge Warbler was also recorded there on the 22nd. The 28th produced another Sedge Warbler, this time at Abbotscliffe, where there were also a Lesser Whitethroat and 2 Willow Warblers, and a Yellow Wagtail and 300 Swifts flew west. Returning waders were also noted on the 28th, with singles of

Green Sandpiper and Dunlin at Nickoll's Quarry. A Tufted Duck at Sandling Park on the same date was an unusual record, and 15 Mandarins were counted there. Hobbies made an appearance late in the month with 2 at Nickoll's Quarry and 1 at West Hythe on the 28th, and one over Hythe Hill on the 30th.

A total of 76 species were recorded in July, including a single day peak of 67 on the 28th.

August

There was a mostly dry and bright start to the month, with some fine, warm weather on the 3rd-5th, with temperatures peaking at close to 30 Celsius on the latter date. This gave way to thundery showers on the 6th-7th, with some torrential downpours, but it then became largely dry and warm (mid-20s Celsius) with sunny spells, until it turned more showery again over the 11th-13th. Wet and windy conditions spread from the southwest on the 14th and showers followed the next day. Then a cooler north-westerly airflow brought further showers on the 16th-17th, before another Atlantic depression brought more persistent rain on the 18th, again followed by showers the next day. Further rain fell on the 20th in cool conditions, and it remained unseasonably chilly until the 23rd. The last week of the month was generally settled, with high pressure in control. Overall it was the coldest August nationally since 1993.

Five Grey Herons flew west over Cheriton on the 2nd, with another west over Hythe the same day, and a Little Egret was at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd. A small arrival of common migrants at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4th comprised 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 6 Reed Warblers, 9 Willow Warblers, and 9 Whitethroats. A Red Kite was reported over Folkestone Warren on the 5th.

There was little else of note before 2 Whinchats were seen at Abbotscliffe on the 12th, and otherwise migrants amounted to not much more than 1-2 Wheatears on most days at Samphire Hoe. There was improvement from the 20th when a cool north-easterly wind led to a substantial fall on the east coast of England, although it was several days before quality migrants filtered down to our area. A Spotted Flycatcher, 3 Willow Warblers, and 7 Whitethroats were at Samphire Hoe on the 20th, with a Hobby there until the 22nd. Singles of Teal, Lapwing, and Whinchat were noted there on the 21st, with a Shoveler the next day. A Grey Plover flew east past the Hoe on the 23rd, but only 3 Wheatears were grounded.

A Reed Warbler, 2 Tree Pipits, and 8 Whinchats were at Abbotscliffe on the 24th, when 4 Tree Pipits flew west at the Gun Site. Singles of Redstart, Tree Pipit, and Wheatear were at Abbotscliffe the next day, and numbers were provided by Sedge Warbler (2), Lesser Whitethroat (2), Whitethroat (6), Willow Warbler (6), and Whinchat (9).

The 26th produced a **Wryneck** and a **Honey Buzzard** at Samphire Hoe, with a supporting cast of Pied Flycatcher, Redstart, and Garden Warbler there. More common migrants comprised a Lesser Whitethroat, 3 Wheatears, 6 Willow Warblers, 7 Whitethroats, and 12 Whinchats in the Samphire Hoe - Abbotscliffe area. 17 Sand Martins, 23 Yellow Wagtails, and 250 Swallows flew west at Abbotscliffe and single Lapwing and Common Sandpiper were



Wryneck at Samphire Hoe, and below with Pied Flycatcher (Ian Roberts)

at Samphire Hoe.

Smaller numbers of migrants were present the next day as a general dispersal followed. The only new birds of note were 7 Wigeon west past Hythe on the 30th.

Coverage was limited in August and a total of just 77 species were recorded, and the single day peak was just 55 (on the 26th).



September

A couple of weak fronts passed across the area in the first two days of the month before high pressure became established, bringing fine and settled conditions until the 9th, and there was a quiet start to September. 3 Greenshank were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 3rd, with a Common Sandpiper and 2 Snipe there the following day. Migrant Great Spotted Woodpeckers were seen at Hythe on the 2nd and Samphire Hoe on the 4th, and a Kingfisher appeared in Folkestone Harbour on the 9th (with 2 there later in the month). Hirundines began to pass through, with an increase to 350 House Martins at Samphire Hoe on the 5th, a peak of 100 Swallows west at Abbotscliffe on the 8th, and small numbers of Sand Martins there. The first Grey Wagtails of the autumn were at Folkestone Harbour and Samphire Hoe on the 9th.

Robins increased in the first week of the month, up to a peak of 10 at Samphire Hoe on the 7th, and Whinchats and Wheatears were seen in ones and twos at Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe. Sedge Warblers were at Nickoll's Quarry (4th), Samphire Hoe (7th) and Abbotscliffe (2 on the 8th) and single Reed Warblers were at Samphire Hoe on 3 dates, with 2 there on the 9th. Common Whitethroats were well scattered with a peak of 4 at Samphire Hoe on the 9th, and there were 2 Lesser Whitethroats there on the 5th. Blackcaps increased to 8 at Samphire Hoe on the 5th and there was a peak of 5 Chiffchaffs there the same day. Single Willow Warblers were at Nickoll's Quarry and Samphire Hoe on the 4th.

More unusual migrants comprised a Redstart at Samphire Hoe on the 4th, 2 Firecrests there on the 5th and a Grasshopper Warbler there on the 7th. A Hobby was at Samphire Hoe on 4th and a Marsh Harrier flew in off the sea there on the 8th, whilst an Arctic Skua and 12 Gannets flew east on the 9th. Elsewhere a Little Egret was at Nickoll's Quarry on the 3rd (with 2 reported there in the previous week) and another was below Abbotscliffe on the 8th, where the Goldfinch flock had begun to build up, peaking at 60 on the same date.

Last migrant dates in September:

- 30th - Garden Warbler
- Willow Warbler
- 29th - Hobby
- Swift
- Tree Pipit
- Whinchat
- Sedge Warbler
- 16th - Spotted Flycatcher
- 13th - Yellow Wagtail
- 12th - Lesser Whitethroat
- 7th - Grasshopper Warbler

A cold front pushed south on the 10th and a Honey Buzzard flew south-west over Folkestone. The next week or so was mostly fine and warm although a couple of bands of rain passed through. The 12th saw a small movement at sea, with a Great Crested Grebe, a Fulmar, 2 Gadwall, 3 Teal, 6 Common Scoters, 7 Wigeon, and 15 Gannets past Samphire Hoe, whilst a Spotted Flycatcher, a Tree Sparrow, 3 Whitethroats, 4 Wheatears, and the last Lesser Whitethroat were also seen there.

A Firecrest was at Abbotscliffe on the 13th and 2 Grey and the last 2 Yellow Wagtails flew east. A small arrival at Samphire Hoe on the 16th included a Sedge Warbler, a Spotted Flycatcher, 4 Wheatears, 7 Chiffchaffs, 11 Blackcaps, and 16 Robins. A late Swift was at the Gun Site on the 17th and a Razorbill was feeding off Seabrook. A Green Sandpiper at Samphire Hoe on the 18th was a good record for the site, and 6 Blackcaps and 6 Chiffchaffs were counted.

A change to strong south-westerlies from the 20th generated some interest at sea, in particular a small influx of Little Gulls and Arctic Terns: two Little Gulls were off Copt Point on the 20th, before 13 were lingering off Seabrook on the 23rd, and 25 flew west past Folkestone the next day; and two Arctic Terns were also off Copt Point on the 20th, with 6 on the beach there the next day, and at least 40 flew west there on the 24th.

A Manx and 3 Sooty Shearwaters, and 3 Arctic Skuas flew west past Copt Point on the 24th, and reasonable numbers of Gannets (peak 100 off Mill Point on the 24th), Sandwich Terns (peak 200 on Folkestone Beach on the 21st), and Razorbills (peak 7 past Folkestone on the 24th) were also seen during this period. It was quiet on the land, although a Sedge Warbler, a Whitethroat, 2 Wheatears, 6 Chiffchaffs, and c.15 Blackcaps were at Samphire Hoe on the 23rd, and small numbers of Meadow Pipits and hirundines moved west.

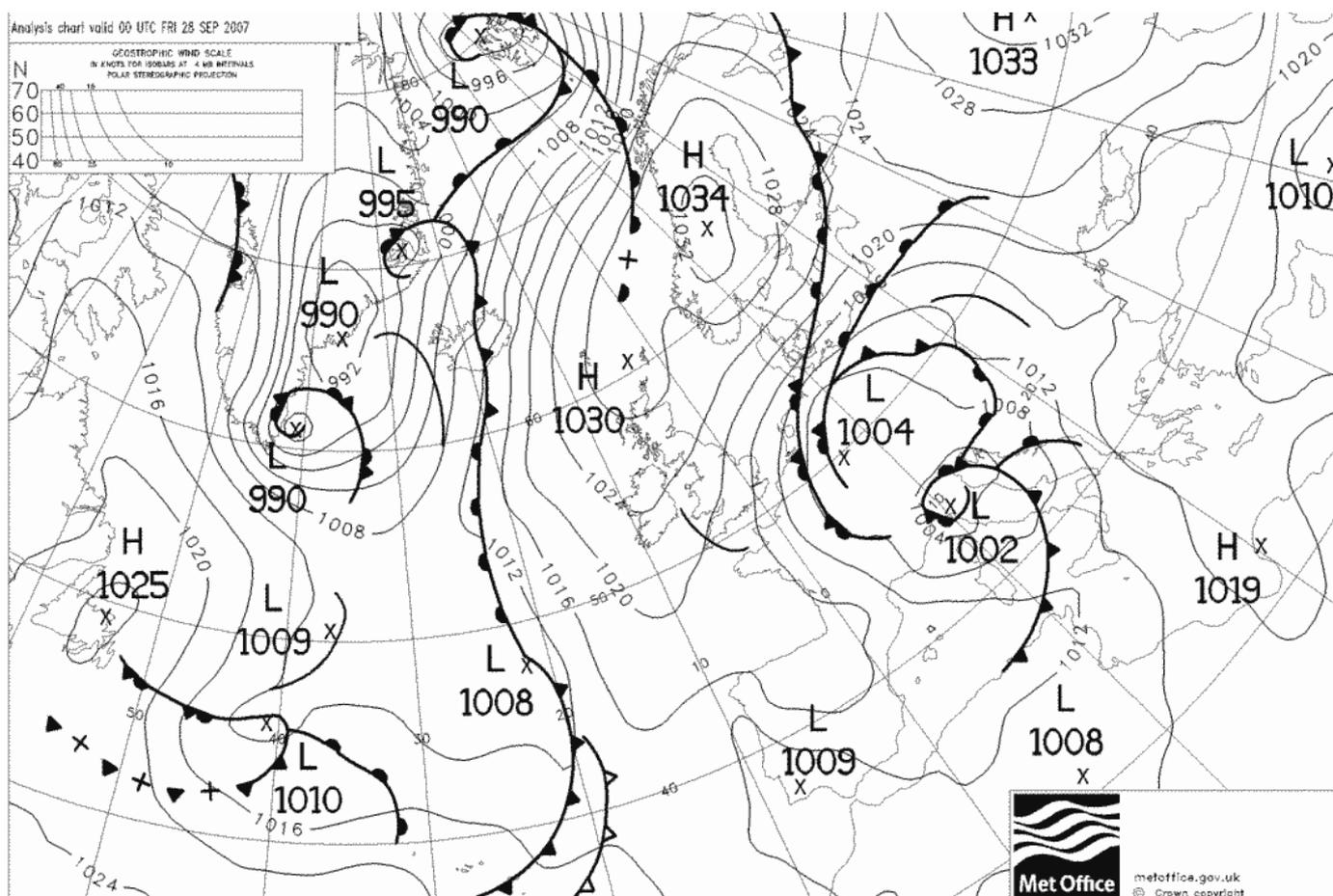


Spotted Flycatcher at Samphire Hoe (Paul Holt)



Golden Plover at Samphire Hoe (Tony Prentice)

The month ended in fine style as high pressure over Scandinavia and a cold north-easterly wind (see chart below) combined to produce one of the best arrivals of recent years. The highlight was the second area record of **Greenish Warbler** at Samphire Hoe from the 27th into October, with a **Yellow-browed Warbler** in the same tree on the 27th and another 1-2 there on the 30th. The supporting cast included a Pied Flycatcher at the Gun Site on the 29th, Tree Pipits at Abbotscliffe (3) and Samphire Hoe, Redstarts at Samphire Hoe (2) and Abbotscliffe, and Ring Ouzels at the Gun Site (peak of 9 on the 29th), Samphire Hoe (peak of 5 on the 29th), and Abbotscliffe (singles on 2 dates).



Synoptic chart at 00:00 on 28th September: the high pressure over Scandinavia, occluded front along the north German coast and easterly airflow combined to produce classic drift conditions.

A variety of late summer migrants comprised a Hobby and a Swift at the Gun Site (on the 29th), Whinchats at Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe (both on 29th), a Sedge Warbler at Abbotscliffe (29th), a Reed Warbler at Samphire Hoe (30th), single Whitethroats at 3 sites (on 29th/30th), a Garden Warbler at Samphire Hoe (30th), and Willow Warblers at Abbotscliffe (2 on 29th) and Samphire Hoe (30th). Incoming winter migrants involved a Hen Harrier over Sandling on the 29th, a Merlin at Samphire Hoe on 28th-29th, a Golden Plover there on 29th, a Fieldfare at Abbotscliffe the same day, 30+ Redwings at the cliffs, a Brambling at Abbotscliffe on the 28th, and totals of 53 Siskins and 7 Lesser Redpolls.

Counts of common migrants included peaks of 6 Wheatears, 6 Goldcrests, 16 Blackcaps, 20 Song Thrushes, 25 Stonechats, and c.100 Chiffchaffs, whilst 360 Meadow Pipits, c.1000 Swallows, and smaller numbers of Sky Larks, Sand Martins, *alba* and Grey Wagtails, Greenfinches, Goldfinches, Linnets, and Reed Buntings passed overhead.

Other birds of note were a Shag off Samphire Hoe on the 29th, 20 Brent Geese and 20 Shelducks west past Seabrook on the 27th, 3 Wigeon and 6 Tufted Ducks at Sandling Park on the 29th, 100 Lapwings at Nickoll's Quarry the same day, 7 Dunlin east past Samphire Hoe on the 28th, 2 Common Sandpipers there on the 29th, and a Razorbill off Hythe the same day.

A total of 126 species were recorded in September, with a single day peak of 96 on the 29th.

October

October began much as September ended, with easterly winds, overcast skies, and good numbers of migrants. The **Greenish Warbler** was last reported at Samphire Hoe on the 1st, a **Yellow-browed Warbler** arrived at Nickoll's Quarry on the 3rd, and a **Great Grey Shrike** appeared at Abbotscliffe on the 4th.

At least 4 Firecrests at Samphire Hoe and another at Abbotscliffe provided back up, as did a male Redstart at Samphire Hoe, a day peak of 17 Ring Ouzels there (with 1s and 2s elsewhere), and a Short-eared Owl at Samphire Hoe. A Cetti's Warbler and 3 Reed Warblers were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4th and the last Common Whitethroat was noted at the Gun Site on the 3rd.

Counts of common migrants included peaks of 25 Blackbirds and 20 Song Thrushes at Nickoll's Quarry, 5 Redwings there and smaller numbers elsewhere, and an increase in Dunnocks and Robins, with peaks of 23 of the latter at Samphire Hoe on the 3rd and 21 at Nickoll's Quarry the next day. Stonechats also increased, including 8 at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd. At least 50 Chiffchaffs were logged in the area on the 3rd, but only small numbers of Blackcaps and Goldcrests were seen. At least 14 Great Tits were at Nickoll's Quarry on the 4th and appeared to be moving through, whilst a flock of 14 Long-tailed Tits at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd were certainly (at least local) migrants.

There was a large movement of hirundines on the 4th, with estimates of 3,000 House Martins and 1,200 Swallows moving west at Abbotscliffe. Small numbers of *alba* and Grey Wagtails, finches (including 2 Lesser Redpolls and 21 Siskins), and Reed Buntings were also noted overhead.

There were also a few birds of note at sea, including an Arctic Tern, 2 Arctic Skuas, 2 Razorbills, 3 Snipe, 5 Shelduck, 6 Dunlin, 12 Pintail, 22 Wigeon and 29 Brent Geese off Samphire Hoe. 16 Wigeon were also seen off Hythe on the 3rd.

A quieter spell followed as high pressure built, bringing variable winds, dry conditions, and some patchy fog. The 7th produced a continental Coal Tit, a Kingfisher, 2 Redwings and 12 Chiffchaffs at Samphire Hoe whilst an Arctic Tern, 2 Teal and 4 Arctic Skuas flew east, 2 Shags were on the sea and 160 Goldfinches flew over. Single Ring Ouzel and Rock Pipit were of note at Nickoll's Quarry on the 8th and a Little Egret flew east past Hythe.

The 9th was particularly quiet and rather wet, and a few cooler, clearer days followed. A very early Jack Snipe was with 8 Snipe at Nickoll's Quarry on the 10th, whilst a Greenshank there was rather late, and 2 Green Sandpipers and the last Common Sandpiper were at Botolph's Bridge. A

Last migrant dates in October:

30th - Common Tern
26th - Ring Ouzel
20th - Sandwich Tern
- Arctic Tern
- Northern Wheatear
19th - Sand Martin
10th - Common Sandpiper
4th - Reed Warbler
3rd - Common Redstart
- Common Whitethroat

Little Egret was at Samphire Hoe the same day, with 1-2 seen fairly regularly in the area thereafter, but only single Ring Ouzel and Redwing were noted in the bushes.

A foggy morning on the 11th produced just a Fieldfare and 3 Redwings at Samphire Hoe, with a Grey Wagtail, 2 Lesser Redpolls and 4 Siskins east, 14 Sky Larks in off and 25 Brent Geese past. The 12th was quieter still, with 2 Lesser Redpolls over Copt Point and 200 Goldfinches west at the Gun Site being all that was reported.

The 13th was better, with a Lapland Bunting flying north over the Gun Site, a Firecrest by the Café, a Black Redstart in a garden in the town, a Fieldfare at Abbotscliffe and a Wheatear and 2 Kingfishers at Folkestone Harbour. At least 360 Goldfinches flew east at the cliffs and 65 Brent Geese passed at sea. A Water Rail and 2 Ring Ouzels were at Samphire Hoe the next day and 6 Siskins at 100 Goldfinches flew over Abbotscliffe.

The next three days were mild and wet and there was little of note, but drier, fresher conditions followed and there was a reasonable visual immigration into a cool northerly headwind. The 18th produced good numbers of thrushes, with a Ring Ouzel, 6 Song Thrushes, 35 Fieldfares, and 450 Redwings, and finches included 2 Bramblings, 10 Siskins, 15 Lesser Redpolls, and 150 Goldfinches. A Snipe, 2 Grey Wagtails, and 18 Tree Sparrows were also logged. There were very few thrushes on the 19th, but finches were again in evidence, with 7 Lesser Redpolls, 10 Bramblings, 16 Siskins, 22 Greenfinches, 54 Chaffinches, and 100 Goldfinches. A Yellowhammer, 2 Sand Martins, and 3 Stock Doves were also noteworthy.



Redwing at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

Good coverage on the 20th produced a total of 87 species, with the highlight being a **Tawny Pipit** at Abbotscliffe. A Wheatear, 2 Fieldfares, and 6 Redwings were also seen there, with 2 Firecrests in nearby Church Wood, and 3 Ring Ouzels and 6 Redwings at Samphire Hoe. 2 Lesser Redpolls, 8 Siskins, 60 Goldfinches, and 370 Starlings arrived in off the sea, and an Arctic Tern, a Razorbill, 13 Wigeon, and 160 Brent Geese flew past Samphire Hoe, whilst a Shag and 26 Cormorants were counted there. Away from the cliffs there were a Jack Snipe and a Pochard at Nickoll's Quarry, 2 Green Sandpipers and 300 Lapwings at Botolph's Bridge, 13 Curlew at the Willop Outfall, and 3 Mandarins and 9 Pintail at Sandling Park.

A quiet few days followed, with 2 Ring Ouzels and a Kingfisher (seen on several dates to the month's end) at Samphire Hoe the highlights of the 22nd. Single Ring Ouzels were at Samphire Hoe and Nickoll's Quarry the subsequent day, with 10 Siskins east at the former site and 3 Fieldfares at the latter. The first Red-throated Divers of the autumn were also noted off Hythe and Samphire Hoe on the 23rd. 12 Siskins flew east at Samphire Hoe on the 25th and the 26th produced a Ring Ouzel at the Gun Site and a small arrival of 14 Goldcrests at Samphire Hoe in the afternoon.

A change in the weather to cooler, clearer conditions at the end of month produced a little more of note, including a drake Goosander east past Samphire Hoe on the 30th, when there was also fairly late Common Tern and Blackcap there. Visual migration at Abbotscliffe comprised a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Brambling, 3 Stock Doves, 4 Swallows, and 35 Wood Pigeons the same

day. Another Great Spotted Woodpecker was at Samphire Hoe on the 31st and Merlin and Short-eared Owl were seen there, whilst 22 Siskins flew west.

A total of 118 species were recorded in October, with a single day peak of 87 on the 20th.

November

A quiet start to the month, both in terms of birds and weather, with high pressure producing mild and dry conditions, and little real movement on either land or sea. A Yellowhammer, 2 Siskins, and 4 Little Egrets flew over Samphire Hoe on the 1st and 8 Siskins flew east over Nickoll's Quarry on the 2nd, when a Water Rail was heard there. A single Redpoll flew over Hythe on the 3rd.

There was a little visual migration on the 4th, when 2 Bramblings, 2 Yellowhammers, 2 Reed Buntings, 3 Siskins, 70 Sky Larks, and 140 Starlings flew in/west at Abbotscliffe. 2 Little Egrets were also seen there and a Green Sandpiper was at Botolph's Bridge. A Little Egret was at Samphire Hoe on the 5th (with 1s and 2s there on a further 4 dates) and a Little Grebe arrived there, whilst the last 5 Swallows were noted. The last migrant Blackcap was at Samphire Hoe the next day and a Kingfisher was present (and remained to the month's end, with others recorded at Nickoll's Quarry and Botolph's Bridge in November).

23 Common Scoters were off Folkestone Harbour on the 7th, and 14 were seen off Samphire Hoe the next day, when a Great Crested Grebe, a Shelduck, and 2 Red-throated Divers flew past. 45 Siskins flew in off the sea at Samphire Hoe, with another 8 over Folkestone Harbour.

A significant surge was blown down the North Sea coast on the night of the 8th and early morning on the 9th in conjunction with a deep area of low pressure and associated strong northerly winds (see chart below).

This led to a huge influx of Little Auks into the North Sea, although it took several days for a few stragglers to filter this far south. A total of 8 **Little Auks** were recorded on the 11th (4 at Samphire Hoe, 3 at Copt Point and 1 at Folkestone Harbour), with singles at Samphire Hoe and Seabrook on 12th, and another at Hythe on the 13th. This weather also brought two first-winter **Glaucous Gulls** to Hythe on the latter date and seawatching during this period also produced a late Arctic Skua past Samphire Hoe on the 10th, single Great Skuas off there on the 10th and Copt Point on the 11th, and a skua sp. off the latter site the same day.

Last migrant dates in November:

13th - House Martin

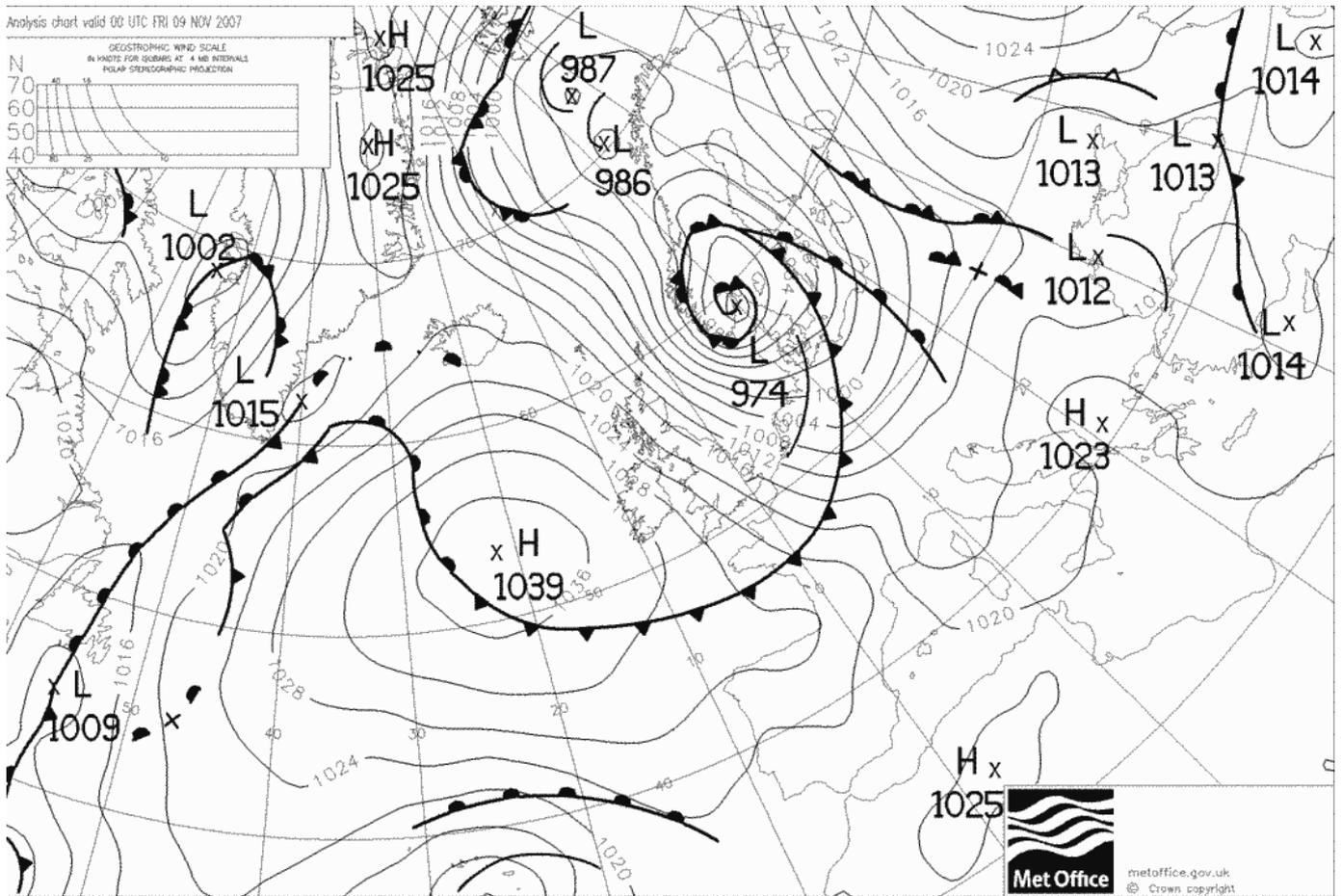
10th - Arctic Skua

6th - Blackcap

5th - Swallow



Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Synoptic chart at 00:00 on 9th November: the tightly-packed isobars over the North Sea show the strength of the northerly winds.



First-winter Glaucous Gulls at Hythe (Ian Roberts)



Little Auk at Hythe (Ian Roberts)



Snow Bunting at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

Wildfowl were also involved in the movement and included totals of 53 Brent Geese, 32 Common Scoters, 17 Shelducks, and a Red-breasted Merganser, and a small number of Red-throated Divers, Great Crested Grebes, Gannets, Kittiwakes, and large auks were also logged. A Short-eared Owl flew in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 11th, on which date a Snow Bunting was on the seawall there, and 3 Purple Sandpipers flew west past Folkestone Beach.

Four late House Martins were at Samphire Hoe on the 12th-13th, with 2 Redwings and a Chiffchaff there on the latter date. There was a significant movement of Redwings on the night of the 14th/15th, and 40 Siskins flew east at Samphire Hoe on the 15th, whilst 5 Wigeon, 10 Brent Geese, 11 Shelducks, and 20 Common Scoter flew east there, with a further 18 of the latter species off Hythe the next day.



Brent Goose at Folkestone (Ian Roberts)



Purple Sandpiper at Hythe (Ian Roberts)

Low pressure returned from the 18th and there was rain and showers, often heavy and thundery, and temperatures dropped from the 23rd as wind turned more northerly again, whilst the last few days of the month were milder, but more unsettled. This meant that the latter half of the month was rather quiet. Up to 5 Purple Sandpipers were wintering at Hythe, and other waders included a peak of 36 Ringed Plovers on Folkestone Beach, up to 29 Turnstones at Hythe, 6 Redshank at Folkestone Harbour, and a few Snipe at Nickoll's Quarry.

Two Water Rails were at Samphire Hoe at the month's end, and the same site held a Black Redstart and 10 Linnets, whilst an Eider was offshore on the 26th. Other records of note were a Buzzard over Saltwood Castle on the 3rd and a count of 90 Mallards at Hythe the same day.

December

There was an unsettled start to the month with a sequence of depressions and their associated frontal systems sweeping in from the west, and it was frequently wet and sometimes windy, though interspersed with clearer or brighter and showery weather. It was typically quiet though a Velvet Scoter off Hythe on the 2nd was notable and a Tufted Duck was on the Hythe Canal the same day. Five very late Siskins arrived in off the sea at Folkestone Harbour on the 4th whilst a good selection of thrushes at Nickoll's Quarry on the 8th – 8 Fieldfares, 8 Song Thrushes, 27 Redwings, and 47 Blackbirds – might have included some migrants.

A large high pressure area became established over northern Europe from the 11th and extended westwards to cover much of the UK. This led to a dry spell of weather with little if any rain and often quite sunny skies by day. It was much colder at night with frequent frosts and some areas of fog. The frosts gradually caused areas of open water to freeze over and Nickoll's Quarry saw a small influx of wildfowl comprising 28 Mallard, 20 Gadwall, 8 Wigeon, 3 Tufted Ducks, 2 Shoveler, and a Goosander over the 20th-22nd. A Dunlin was also noted there and Coot increased to 23.

The area of high pressure moved away on about the 22nd allowing Atlantic weather systems to return, bringing the resumption of often wet and windy weather, but with some drier and clearer conditions between. A Snow Bunting appeared at Samphire Hoe on the 23rd but unfortunately did not linger. A Water Rail did decide to winter there however, with others at the Hythe Canal (2) and Nickoll's Quarry (2). The latter site also hosted a Jack Snipe and up to 29 Common Snipe, and a Green Sandpiper commuted between there and Botolph's Bridge, where a Common Sandpiper remained until the year's end – the first over-wintering record for the area. At least 6 Little Grebes were in the Botolph's Bridge area, but there were just 19 Mute Swans on the marsh, Lapwing numbers were low and no Golden Plovers were noted.

At least 4 Purple Sandpipers were wintering at Hythe, usually by the Hotel Imperial, with another 2 in Folkestone Warren, and 25 Turnstones were also counted at Hythe. Kingfishers were at Brockhill CP and on the Hythe Canal.