

SOME OBSERVATIONS OF BIRDS ON HYTHE RANGES SINCE 1950

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INTRODUCTION

The military ranges at Hythe (Kent) have been in existence since the early 19th century and were acquired shortly after the Martello Towers, part of the defences against the threat of invasion by Napoleon, were built. Triangular in shape with the fort known as the Grand Redoubt at the apex, the area extends south-westward for one and a half miles from Hythe. It has undergone changes over the years, especially in the last 30-35 years as the active ranges have increased and extended from the east. It is bounded on two sides by the seashore and the A259 which meet at the Redoubt; on the third side by the line of what was Fort Road in Hythe though it originally reached Hythe Green.

The habitat is for the most part shingle but along the northern edge and extending as 'fingers', a layer of alluvium supports a variety of tree species, scrub and grass (Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Willow, Elder, Holm Oak, Bramble, Gorse and Willow-herb). The gorse extends in long runs across the shingle towards the sea. The shingle has become more 'vegetated' in recent years than it was in the 1950's.

Although the general vegetation has grown and matured over the years there has also been some considerable removal of bushes. The area opposite the Palmarsh Garage/Filling Station – adjacent to Gate 5 – especially good for nesting species and migrants was much reduced in size in 1968 to facilitate installation of some equipment and an urban fighting simulation site.

Another 'good' area opposite the 'Prince of Wales' public house – adjacent to the current main gate, Gate 3, – was affected in 1958 when much scrub cut away to facilitate a new firing range; in the 1970's when the A259 was realigned (straightened), and later in the mid-1990's when a new admin block was built. There were two small ponds there in late 1940's and 1950's but these were lost due either to the realignment or to the lower water table. Another small pond near the main H.Q. buildings remained until the early 1990's when a near-by tangle of old trees was cleared away and the area landscaped.

Yet another water area, situated close to the A259 and almost opposite the Botolph's Bridge Road turning was certainly there through the 1950's and 1960's: I refer to it as the 'Beach Pool'. A final set of pools known as the 'Target Pools' were close to some concrete structures near the seawall at the end of the 'Field Firing' range. This was roughly opposite the Beach Bank Caravan site. In 1972 an enclosed range was built at TR134328 (opposite Nickoll's Quarries) and this encroached onto the tern colony resulting in its total abandonment. The 'serials' referred to in the systematic list are the individual ranges and the numbering increases, with occasional exceptions, from east to west.

PERSONAL PERIODS OF OBSERVATION

Although I had visited parts of the ranges in the late 1940's when following the boyhood pursuit of birds' nesting, I first became interested as a birdwatcher in June 1949 when returning from an abortive cycle ride to Dungeness (to look for reported nesting gulls and terns), I noticed a number of Little Terns flying over the shingle opposite what was then Nickoll's 'New Pit' and indeed one bird flew over me to that pit. I soon visited that part of the ranges and 'discovered' the tern colony.

In September 1952 I enlisted in the Royal Air Force for five years, half of which – from September 1953 to March 1956 was served abroad. During the rest of the time I returned to my Hythe home on most weekends, on Bank Holidays and on leave. I once again lived at home after demobilisation in August 1957 but re-enlisted in May 1958 for another five years all of which were spent in U.K. The parental home had been sold before the end of that period and when I left the RAF I chose to live in London for two years, moving to Lincolnshire in 1965. Visits after May 1963 were extremely few and included two family holidays to the general area between 1965 & 1989.

I returned to Kent in 1990 and became a member of the MOD conservation group in 1991, taking part in the annual bird counts in most of the subsequent years. Visits at other times could be made when the ranges were ‘closed’ or there was ‘No Firing’ providing a prior telephone arrangement had been made and that an access permit was produced. Access therefore, was nowhere near as simple or easy as it had been in the earlier years (when there was no security fence as there is now - except the shore boundary).

OBSERVATIONS

Initially my interest centred on the Little Tern colony but widened first to include most of that western end of the ranges (where Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Redshank and Wheatear were nesting), then the area of bushes at gate 5, i.e. opposite Palmarsch Garage as my interest in breeding and migrant passerines developed. When I returned from abroad in April 1956 I redefined the area in which I intended to watch as regularly as possible and my coverage on the ranges was extended to the bushes at gate 3 (now the main gate), which is ‘opposite’ the Prince of Wales public house. Even so, those two areas of bushes were often favoured, to the detriment of those between them.

Visits were of two types – either covering some or all of the areas mentioned or sea-watching from the end of Range Road or the Redoubt. Time spent varied but was at least an hour on most occasions and often several hours during the breeding season or on visible migration or sea watches. Very occasionally I would walk from Hythe across the ranges as far as the tern colony either along the seawall or via the HQ and through the bushes.

It was not until I returned to Hythe in 1990 and became a member of the MOD conservation group that I conducted half or full day surveys covering the whole of the ranges. Other visits since 1990 were either for sea-watching at Fisherman’s beach in Hythe or the Redoubt, or early morning (pre-firing) walks along the seawall from the Redoubt before continuing to my place of work.

Table 1 shows the number of personal visits in the years up to 1968 and in table 2 those in 1984 and from 1990:

Year	Number of visits	Year	Number of visits
1948 – 1950	10	1960	18
1951	18	1961	7
1952	5	1962	2
1953	3	1963	1
1956	11	1964	3
1957	88	1965	2
1958	55	1968	3
1959	12	Total	238

Table 1: Personal visits in the years up to 1968

Year	Short visits	Full visits	Year	Short visits	Full visits
1984	2	0	1998	4	0
1990	13	0	1999	8	1
1991	19	3	2000	20	2
1992	29	8	2001	16	2
1993	24	6	2002	12	1
1994	32	8	2003	8	0
1995	6	4	2004	4	0
1996	9	1	2005	1	1
1997	5	0	Total	212	37

Table 2: Personal visits in the years 1984 – 1990

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although I did not seek permission from the outset to visit the ranges, I did contact Major F. Raine, the Range Officer in 1958 and was granted permission from him and the commandant to use mist-nets or traps to catch birds for ringing even though (due to my re-enlistment in the R.A.F.) that aspect of my birding did not materialise.

I am grateful to the people who provided information in those early years namely Eric Pilcher, Brian Uden, Ken Scrivener, John Perrott and the late Geoffrey Manser; in recent years to Derek Curtis, Perry Haines and especially Ian Roberts who in the years 1998 to 2005 made over 150 visits either along the shore or to the Redoubt, and also to the late Harry Cawkell who carried out the annual surveys from 1983 to 1990 and provided the data for those years. I thank Geoffrey Munns for the Shore Lark record.

I am indebted to the MOD Conservation Group for inviting me to join in 1990 and thus gaining access both to the ranges and to useful information from the range wardens and others.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

An overall total of 175 species have been recorded, with 123 species during the 'early' period (13 unique to that period), and 158 species in the 'recent' period (47 unique to that period).

'Early' refers to the period 1948 to 1968 and 'Recent' to the period 1980 to 2005

Red-throated Diver

Early - Up to four birds offshore in January and December 1956; October 1957 and January - March 1958.

Recent - Recorded offshore between early October and late March usually in numbers less than 10 and often ones or two's but up to 40 on several dates during January and February 1994 and 26 on 2 January 1999. On 27 January 2001 84 were on the sea at the Redoubt and 25 flew west. Of 80 birds there on 5 February, 50 flew west. In January 2002, 165 on 11th were either on the sea or moving east and in 25 minutes on 15th 147 flew east.

Black-throated Diver

Recent - Single birds offshore on seven dates in four winters between early November and late January. One flying up-channel on 8 May 1992.

Great Northern Diver

Recent - One on the sea off the Redoubt on 6 March 1999.

Great Crested Grebe

Early - Occasional records of small numbers – less than five – offshore between beginning December and mid-March. Higher numbers only on 27 January 1952 and 27 December 1957 (14) and 11 March 1950 (20).

Recent - Up to eight intermittently recorded offshore mostly late November to mid-March, but a few records of up to six birds in April and early May. 28 on 2 January 1999 and significantly higher numbers – 110 – on 5 February 2001 but an amazing 298 on 5 January 2002.

Red-necked Grebe

Recent - One on sea near the Redoubt on 15 February 1991 and on 28 December 2000. Two flew west on 26 December 1993.

Slavonian Grebe

[**Early** - A small grebe, probably this species on the sea at the Redoubt 19 January 1951.]

Recent - One on the sea near the Redoubt on 5 March 1994 and two there on 3 March 2003.

Fulmar

Recent - Ones and twos passing offshore in either direction March - June and August - September but most records in March and August. Also one on 5 February 2001.

Manx Shearwater

Early - One flew west on 13 August 1952.

Balearic Shearwater

Recent - One flying east on 6 August 2001.

Gannet

Early - Two off the Redoubt on 30 December 1951 and nine flew west on 8 October 1961.

Recent - Infrequent offshore December – February in very small numbers. A few records in May to August and November. Maxima: 116 down-channel in 90 minutes on 17 November 1990 and 67 up-channel in 120 minutes on 9 August 1984; 24 up-channel in 10 minutes on 4 May 2001. 20 were fishing offshore on 8 June 2001.

Cormorant

Early - Single birds recorded occasionally during seawatches in April and August - November. Four flew west on 5 November 1957.

Recent - One to four fishing offshore throughout the year during the 1990's. Apparently higher numbers in August - maxima 24 on 18 August 2001 and 18 on 3 September 2000.

Shag

Recent - One flying west off the Redoubt on 26 January 1993.

Little Egret

Recent - One flew across the west end of the ranges on 24 August 1999.

Grey Heron

Early and Recent - One or two very occasionally seen on the shore at low tide but four flew west on 16 August 2005.

Spoonbill

Recent - A party of five flew east across serial 18 on 31 July 1991.

Mute Swan

Early - One on the sea on 18 November 1950 and two on the shore near serial 21 on 6 April 1958.

Recent - Six on the sea 1 May 1994.

Bewick's Swan

Recent - Two flew in off the sea and headed west on 30 October 1993.

Bean Goose

Recent - Two flew south-east across serial 20 on 13 March 1993.

Pink-footed Goose

Recent - A party of 17 flew north high over the west end of the ranges on 24 October 1997.

White-fronted Goose

Early - Flocks of 18 and 29 flew north-west on 9 February 1958.

Recent - 80 flew west on 27 December 1999.

Greylag Goose

Recent - One flew west on 30 May 1992. In 2001 three flew east on 17 March and four on 12 April.

Canada Goose

Recent - A group of 60 were on the sea off the Redoubt on 8 November 1998.

Brent Goose

Recent - Recorded mostly as offshore movement and in numbers usually less than 100, east between 28 February and 5 May; west from late September to mid-November but as early as 12 September in 1990. 14 on the shore on 10 January 1994 and 10 on the sea on 2 November 2001.

Shelduck

Recent - Seen occasionally on the shore November - March in very small numbers but 10 flew east on 10 August 1994, 17 in same direction 1 November 1998 and on the sea: 15 on 17 December 2000 and 27 on 1 January 2002.

Wigeon

Early - On the sea at the Redoubt: 20 on 18 November 1950 and 120 on 16 January 1951.

Recent - Recorded offshore November to March. Highest numbers were of birds on the sea: 23 on 1 November 1998; 108 on 8 December 2002; 37 on 4 January 2003. Four flew west on 22 March 2001 and 80 on 6 January 2003.

Gadwall

Recent - Four flew west offshore on 8 November 1998.

Teal

Early - Seen flying past offshore extremely infrequently in ones and twos only.

Recent - Infrequently seen offshore November to late April. Significant numbers were 32 on 16 February 2001 and 70 on 4 January 2003.

Mallard

Early - Groups of up to 30 on the sea off the Redoubt in loose association with Scoters seen occasionally in the winter months 1951/52 and 1956-58. Maxima 100 on 16 January 1951 and 130 on 27 January 1952.

Pintail

Recent - Eight flew west on 9 November 1992. Birds on the sea were one on 7 February 2002 and 17 on 5 March 2005.

Tufted Duck

Recent - Two flew east on 19 February 1996 and four on 17 March 2001.

Eider

Early - Single birds offshore on 13 January 1951 and 4 August 1958.

Recent - Most records are of very small numbers occasionally November to February and April to July. Significant numbers are 13 on sea 5 March 1996; up to 17 early January, 19 on 30 April and 28 on 27 July all in 1998; 28 flew east on 25 July 1999 and 14 on sea the following day. 12 on the sea on 5 December 2003.

Long-tailed Duck

Early - One offshore near the Redoubt on 19 January 1961.

Common Scoter

Early - Flocks of 50 - 70 on the sea off the Redoubt regularly January to March 1951 and 1952 and April 1958. Highest numbers on 3 February 1958 and during March 1960 (200); 8 August 1951 and 6 June 1960 (300). Up to 10 in August and September 1957.

Recent - Extremely small numbers: no more than 35 (except 120 on 5 February 2001) offshore during the winter months. Highest numbers in May and June e.g. a raft of 300 - 730 between 22 May and 5 June 1992, and minimum 400 on 11 May 2001. In 2003 100 on 8 May and 24 June, 51 on 27 June. 'Summer' records are 40 on 15 July 2000 and one on 14 August 1998. c.100 flew up-channel on 21 March 2001.

Velvet Scoter

Early - Despite memory suggesting otherwise, notebooks contain only seven records of birds seen off the Redoubt spanning 1951 - 1962 (Jan, April, Sept, and Oct). Maxima seven on 8 October 1957 and 10 from 11-20 April 1958.

Recent - One offshore on 6 November 1999.

Goldeneye

Recent - Eight flew west on 9 November 1992.

Red-breasted Merganser

Early - One on sea off the Redoubt on 9 February 1964.

Recent - In 1992, three east on 1 April; one west on 5 October and five on 9 November. Singles flew west on 26 December 2000 and 4 March 2005. Eight flew east on 3 March 2003.

Montagu's Harrier

Early - A male flew in off the sea and across the west end of the ranges on 11 May 1958.

Sparrowhawk

Recent - Single sightings in December or January 1991, 1993, 1994 and September 1992. Several sightings January - March 1996. One on 15 July 2000 and 9 June 2001.

Kestrel

Early - The only references in my notebooks are of single birds on 13 October 1957, 8 April and 11 May 1958.

Recent - A pair bred in the Redoubt in the 1990's, certainly to 1996 and also in 2000 and 2001. One, occasionally two, seen hunting fairly regularly during the rest of that decade. Two present on 30 September 2000.

Merlin

Recent - Singles on 19 November 1991, 13 April 1992, 9 March 1993 and 1 March 1994.

Hobby

Recent - Singles on 25 May 1991 and 1 May 1992. Seen coming in off the sea on 12 May 1998 and 12 May 2002.

Red-legged Partridge

Early - Not observed.

Recent - At least two pairs bred in the early 1990's, only one pair recorded with certainty after 1995 though possibly three pairs in 2000 and two in 2005. Up to 13 birds seen outside the breeding season.

Grey Partridge

Early - Recorded at the west end of the ranges 1957 - 1960; two or three pairs in spring. 10-14 birds noted in autumn and winter.

Recent - Marked as present on MOD annual survey forms in 1983, '84 and 1988. (H.A.R. Cawkell)

Pheasant

Recent - Single birds on 24 October 1992 and 9 October 1994. First recorded in spring and breeding in 2000. Four pairs by 2005.

Moorhen

Early - At least one pair bred in the area of serial 14 - 16 in late 1940's. One at serial 20 on 7 February 1960.

Recent - A pair bred near the old H.Q. in the early 1980's. One in serial 17 bushes on 20 December 1992.

Oystercatcher

Early - Occasional records of three to six birds on the shore in winter and autumn months. Eight on the shore on 25 March 1958.

Recent - Up to seven seen regularly on the shore throughout the year but 15 on 15 January 1998; in 2000: 13 on 21 April and 10 - 17 on seven dates between July and December. 17 on both 3 November 2001 and 5 March 2003. Passage birds moving up-channel seen on 28 April 1991 (26) and 8 May 1994 (18).

Avocet

Early - One flew in off the sea on 20 April 1958.

Recent - Two flew west on 14 April 1992, a flock of 30 in same direction on 9 November 1992. In 2001 one on the shore on 30 March and on 9 November 2001 four birds sitting on the sea off the Redoubt flew west at 09.00.

Stone Curlew

Early - I was informed by a Warrant Officer that one was seen in the area of serial 18 in April 1952.

Little Ringed Plover

Recent - Singles calling overhead on 5 May 1983, 25 May 1991 and 29 May 1994.

Ringed Plover

Early - At least three pairs bred at the west end of the ranges up to 1965 (four pairs in 1957 and five in 1964). The shingle east of serial 18 (roughly in line with the Filling Station on the A259) was virtually never checked but one pair bred adjacent to serial 17 in 1959. Six birds on the shore on 10 March 1951 and 9 March 1958.

Recent - A pair bred each year to 1994 and again in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2005 (1997 and 1998 unknown). Present on the shore throughout the year, mostly single figures except during autumn. Highest counts were in 2000 with 9 on 25 February 2000 and up to 30 between early August and early October.

Golden Plover

Early - Heard overhead during the early hours of 28 March and the night of 17/18 April 1958; two at 'Target pools' on 20 April 1960.

Grey Plover

Early - Heard overhead in the early hours of 28 March 1958 and during the night of 17/18 April.

Recent - With the exception of singles on 18 March 2000 and 3 November 2001, records (six in five years) are of birds in May, five flew east on 11 May 2000, the others were on the shore - nine on 25 May 1996 being the highest number.

Lapwing

Early - Two or three breeding pairs recorded at the west end of the ranges up to 1961 (four pairs 1959 and 1960). Earliest full clutch found on 27 March 1960. One family present in 1964 and on 20 June 1968 – the only visit of the year – four adults and 12 juveniles were present. The only note of migrants was of 716 in 14 flocks moving east on 28 March 1958.

Recent - Wintering birds in nearby fields occasionally overfly. c.200 frequented the Redoubt 'grounds' in mid-winter 1994.

Knot

Early - Three flew west on 1 September 1957.

Recent - One on the shore 24 December 1998, another on 11 May 2000, 11 on 12 January and five there on 5 February 2003.

Sanderling

Early - Noted only in April 1957 and 1958 and on single dates in September and October 1957. Two to four birds involved except nine flying east on 25 April 1957 and 48 on the shore two days later.

Recent - Seen irregularly in very small numbers on the shore in most months of the year: only three records in June/July; singles on 23 July 1995, 18 July 2000 and 15 July 2001. Highest count was 33 on 13 January 2001. 23 flew up-channel on 9 November of same year.

Purple Sandpiper

Recent - All birds seen in winter on the Redoubt 'apron'. Two - three throughout January 1991; one - two from 24 December 1998 to 8 March 1999; one 16 February to 6 March 2001; two on 30 December 2001; one on 1 January and four on 4 February 2004 and again four on 6 February 2005.

Dunlin

Early - On the shore two or three on 4 May 1958, 31 May 1959, 28 June 1964.

Recent - Very occasional and mostly ones and twos but up to six seen on the shore November - January, May and August/September.

Jack Snipe

Early - Seen in each year 1957 - 1960 at a pool close to the main road at the west end of the ranges. Regular and up to five in March each year except 1958 when just one on one date in April. Latest date 29 April 1957.

Common Snipe

Early - Up to 13 on single dates in March 1957, '58 and '60 and 3-12 on four dates between 31 October and 27 December in 1958 and 1960. Seen at the same pool as previous species.

Recent - Few records and those confined to the years when access was easier. Up to five in October and November 1991 and 1993 but at least 50 on 28 February 1993 and five on 9 April of same year. Nine on 2 April 1994. All flushed from 'flooded' grassy areas at serials 22 and 23.

Woodcock

Early - Three in bushes at serial 17 and 20 on 14 February 1956, one at serial 16 on 9 April 1958.

Black-tailed Godwit

Recent - One flew east along the shore on 9 August 1984 and seven flew west on 6 April 1991.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Early - In April 1957, 15 flew up-channel on 25th, 33 on 27th and 12 on 28th.

Recent - Eastward migrants passing along the shore were 12 on 28 April and 18 on 8 May 1991; 14 on 8 May 1994 and 7 on 11 May 2000.

Whimbrel

Early - Very small numbers of birds on passage recorded in three of the years between 25 April and 12 May, maxima (in 1957) nine east on 27 April and 13 on 12 May. Also singles overflying on 18 July 1965 and 28 August 1957.

Recent - Heard flying over during breeding surveys on 25 May 1991 and 28 May 1996.

Curlew

Early - Very occasional singles on the shore, three flew west on 21 March 1957 and a party of 24 flew west on 25 March 1958. Heard continuously from 01:35 – 01:45 on 18 April 1958.

Recent - Very occasional singles on the shore in winter and spring.

Redshank

Early - Single nests found in the area of the little tern colony (serial 24) 1951 - 1964 with two nests in 1958. A lone bird was seen on the only visit in 1965 – 17 July – but none on the only visit in 1968 (14 June). A party of 10 flew west on 1 September 1957.

Recent - Occasional singles, though up to four on the shore in winter.

Greenshank

Early - One flew east on 24 April 1957.

Recent - Single birds overflying on 25 May 1991 and 24 April 1993.

Green Sandpiper

Recent - Two flushed from a small pool on serial 21 on 15 October 1994.

Common Sandpiper

Early - One on the shore on 10 August 1957.

Recent - Two on the shore on 3 May and 26 August 1993 and in 1994 one on the shore on 8 May and a late migrant with the previous species on 15 October. Four on the shore on 3 September 2000.

Turnstone

Early - Single birds on the shore 14, 23 and 27 April 1957, 21 March and 25 May 1958.

Recent - The highest winter numbers were recorded in February/March 1995 and 1996; March and November 1999; December 2000; January and March 2001: 17 - 33 birds with 41 on 16 January 2005. The only double figure spring counts were 19 on 21 April 2000, 26 on 2 April 2001, 33 on 7 May 2001 and 15 on 5 June 1999. 25 autumn counts between mid-August and early October in the five years 1998 - 2002 averaged 24 birds (maximum 40).

Pomarine Skua

Recent - One flew down-channel on 29 September 1990.

Arctic Skua

Early - One flew down-channel on 1 September 1957.

Recent - A total of 13 flew up-channel in 270 minutes watching during 9 - 11 August 1984. Singles moved down-channel on 25 and 29 September and 5 October 1992; but up-channel on 28 and 31 August 2001.

Bonxie

Early - One flew down-channel off the Redoubt on 28 August 1957.

Recent - One on the sea off the Redoubt, then flew east on 25 April 1999.

Mediterranean Gull

Recent - Apart from two on the shore on 25 May 1991, there were five records between 24 July and 13 August in four years from 1998 and 2005. Maxima five on 11 August 2000 and four

juveniles on 27 July 2004. Flying west were two on 29 October 1990, singles on five dates in 1992 and on 19 March 1994.

Little Gull

Early - An adult close inshore off Range Road on 6 June 1960.

Recent - One flew west off the Redoubt on 29 October 1990 and singles present there on 27 January 2001 and 8 December 2002.

Black-headed Gull

Early - Only references were in 1958: minimum 1,000 in shore roost in January and c.400 there on 16 April.

Recent - At the shore roost, 2,000 on 1 November 1998 and 1,000 on 24 February 2000. 400 were on the sea off the 'broken' Martello on 29 August 2001 and 600 there on 15 August 2002.

Common Gull

Early - The only references were of birds moving east in April 1958: 'Steady flow' on 8th, and 16th and a few immatures on 27th.

Recent - The only reference is 100 at the shore roost on 24 February 2000.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Early - Present in the day roost near the west end of the ranges in May/June (singles); August/September (up to 70). One October record of 20 birds.

Recent - 15 on shore 4 December 2001.

Herring Gull

Early - In the roost referred to above recorded 1956 - 58 and in 1964. Greater numbers in June/July (35 - 80). Only 10-15 in August/September.

Recent - Only reference is 1,250 on the shore on 8 June 2001.

Great Black-backed Gull

Early - Two references to birds in the roost: 12 in August 1958 and 25 in July 1964.

Recent - Only reference is of 250 on the shore on 8 June 2001.

Kittiwake

Early - Singles near the Redoubt on 31 January 1953; 17 February and 27 March 1957. Fresh corpse on 21 March 1960 and one near the Little Tern colony on 4 June 1960.

Recent - Singles on the shore 10 October 1994; down-channel 17 February 1995 and up-channel 11 May 2001. 80 on the sea off the Redoubt on 2 January 1999.

Sandwich Tern

Early - In 1957 two flew up-channel on 29 April and four were on the shore the following day. Four were fishing on 1 September that year, two offshore on 14 April 1958, 'several' were noted on 28 June 1964 and at least two offshore on 20 June 1968.

Recent - Earliest date was 23 March 1994 and the latest was 2 October 2000. Up to eight birds on the shore or sitting on breakwaters in spring of several years. The only 'significant' numbers were 50 west on 1 September 1990; 80 on 12 August 2000; 49 on the shore on 18 August 2001; 250 there on 8 August and c.100 on 18 August 2002.

Common Tern

Early - In the Little Tern colony, a pair nested unsuccessfully in 1956, one was present on 4 June 1960, three on 28 June 1964 and on 20 June 1968, 13 birds flew across the colony a number of times during two hours observation.

Recent - Very small numbers seen passing in both migration seasons but in 2000, 21 east on 11 May 2000, 25 on 15 August and 49 west in 30 mins on 25 August. A remarkable 350 present on 8 August 2002.

Arctic Tern

Early - One on the Redoubt shore on 14 May 1952 and two there on 16 August 1957.

Recent - Rarely distinguished from Common Tern. 16 up-channel on 11 May 2000.

Common/Arctic Tern

Early - Most records refer to very small numbers offshore in April 1957 and 58 (except 65 down-channel in 90 minutes on 20 April 58). A steady down-channel movement through the morning on 9 September 1957 and 'late' birds were offshore on 30 September 1956 and 18 October 1957.

Recent - Only significant number was at least 100 moving up-channel on 10 August 1984.

Little Tern

Early - The colony was known from 1909 and apparently moved progressively westward as the range activity increased. From 1950 to 1968 (the last year of successful breeding known to me) between 3 and 21 pairs bred. In addition a pair was nesting near Fort Sutherland in 1964 and may have done so in other years. Two pairs apparently attempted to nest in 1972 but were deterred by a new enclosed range being built on part of the colony that year. Arrival dates where recorded, fell between 18 and 25 April, first display noted on 21 April 1958 and 1 May 1957. The earliest egg found was on 10 May 1958 and latest nest still with eggs on 11 July of same year.

Significant numbers moving were 20 east in 15 minutes on 29 April 1957; 100 - 150 moving west in 60 minutes on 9 September 1957; and 117 west in 90 minutes on 20 April 1958. There were 36 on the shore on 20 April and 46 on 4 May 1958.

Recent - 11 records refer to up to seven birds in May, June and August in seven years, the most interesting perhaps being two fishing offshore on 29 May and 18 June 1992. Last seen in 1995 – seven fishing on 6 May, and 2001 – six east on 7 May.

Black Tern

Early - Five flew down-channel off the Redoubt on 14 September 1961.

Recent - Three up-channel 4 August 1986; four down-channel 29 September 1990 and 23 September 1992. Two offshore near the Redoubt on 11 August 2000 and four there three days later.

Tern species

Recent - A 'huge' tern, possibly Caspian flew up-channel on 19 May 1992.]

Razorbill

Recent - Singles on the sea close in at the Redoubt on 25 and 28 January 1994, 1 January 2000 and 5 February 2001.

Guillemot

Early - Singletons on the sea close in at the Redoubt on a few scattered winter dates in 1951 and 1957. Three on 13 October 1957.

Recent - Very small numbers January/February 1998 - 2005 but 30 on 28 December 2000 and a single bird on 8 August 1999.

Auk species

Recent - In 1994 regular in small numbers either on the sea or flying down-channel daily 22 January to 5 February. Maximum 10 on 26 Jan and 11 on 4 Feb. In most other years of the 1990's only occasional ones and twos seen. However in 1999, 200 moved west on 1 January and 120 on following day. In 2001 westerly movement was of 20 birds on 23 January and a surprising 340 on 27th (with a further 20 on the sea), c.100 on 5 February. Majority probably Guillemots. 20 east on 25 January 2002.

Little Auk

Recent - One close inshore at the Redoubt on 30 December 1990.

Feral Pigeon

Recent - Breeds in some of the Martello towers, number of pairs not known but individuals counted on breeding bird surveys in the 1990's varied between 10 and 23. Maximum outside the breeding season was 55 in October 1993.

Stock Dove

Early - At the western end 14 on 27 December 1957, one on 12 April 1958 and eight on 22 November 1959.

Recent - During the 1990's no more than two recorded on six dates, three of these being in late May.

Wood Pigeon

Early - Reference in my notebooks to breeding birds only in 1957 and '58 when five pairs counted between serials 14 and 20.

Recent - Estimates of breeding numbers from 1990 to 1995 varied from 20 to 29 pairs but only 11 recorded in 1999. 30 - 45 birds present in winter months.

Collared Dove

Early - No record.

Recent - Five to seven pairs present on breeding surveys 1991 - 1995. Two to three pairs 1996, 1999 and 2005. 15 birds were present near the Redoubt on 29 May 2000.

Turtle Dove

Early - Notes in 1958 and 1959 suggest at least five pairs breeding in both years. 'Several' flying east on 3 August 1957 and the latest dates were 23 September 1958 and 8 October 1961.

Recent - Breeding numbers were three pairs in 1991 and 1992, then two pairs to 2000, one pair 2001. Nil in 2005.

Cuckoo

Early - Noted on only five occasions 1956 - 58; once April and twice in June and August.

Recent - Single males present on each MoD breeding bird survey through the 1990's and early 2000's.

Barn Owl

Early - One hunting in area of serial 18 and 21 on 17 March 1960.

Recent - One on the Redoubt fence on 1 February 1996 was undoubtedly the bird which regularly roosted at the nearby gravel works.

Little Owl

Early - Single birds seen in the serial 18 - 21 area on three occasions. 10 October 1957; 25 March 1960 and 28 June 1964.

Recent - Single birds in same area as above three times during May/June 1991 and on 15 August 1993. Two roosted in a shed in the Redoubt compound in March 1994, one remaining to early April. A pair bred in 2000 and 2001.

Tawny Owl

Recent - Nest found by workmen in 1992.

Short-eared Owl

Early - One or two recorded in the area of serials 22 - 26 in January and March 1951, November 1958 and March 1959. One flew off high to east on 6 April 1958.

Recent - In 1991, one seen (from A259) over the western end of the ranges on 20 November and 5 December.

Long-eared Owl

Recent - One at serial 2 on May 1992 evenings (report by range wardens).

Tawny/Long-eared Owl

Recent - Single birds flushed from dense scrub at serial 14-15 during breeding surveys in 1991 and 1995.

Common Swift

Early and Recent - Most notes were of some 'local' birds overflying the eastern end of the ranges during the summer months, but c.200 in off the sea on 17 June 1956 and 15 in off the sea on 14 May 2005.

Common Kingfisher

Early - Single birds seen near the Redoubt on 18 November 1950 and 21 October 1957. One flushed from scrub at serial 16 on 10 April 1958.

Recent - One seen flying west over the sea on 17 January 2004 was attacked by Herring Gulls and devoured.

Green Woodpecker

Early - Single birds recorded, always in area of serials 18 and 20 during October 1956 and 57; January, March, November and December 1958.

Recent - Present in May/June in 1984 and 1995 and bred in 2001 and 2005. Other records refer to single birds September - November in several years but five on 23 October 1993.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Early - One flew east during movement of passerines on 30 March 1958.

Recent - Single birds on 10 September 1994 and 9 June 2001 near the old H.Q. and on 30 September 2000 at serial 17.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

Recent - One on 20 December 1992 near the old H.Q.

Wood Lark

Early - One in area of serial 18 on 13 March 1958 and on 22 August 1961.

Sky Lark

Early - The only references to breeding numbers were in 1958 - 60 when three to six pairs present in area of serial 18 and 21. Birds noted as present in autumn were in 1957: "very good numbers" on 10 October and 30 on 17/18 October; in 1959, 20 on two dates November/December. A flock of 26 came in off the sea on 27 January 1952.

Recent - During the MoD breeding surveys, 3-4 pairs present 1991 - 1994; 6 pairs in 1995 and 96; 7 pairs in 1999. Direct comparison with 'early' numbers would be 2 - 3 pairs each year. Only other reference was of 13 on 7 November 1992 and 30 flying north-east on 23 October 1993.

Shore Lark

Early - One at the west end on 9 November 1968.

Sand Martin

Recent - Spring and autumn migrants noted casually in small numbers. An early bird on 17 March 1993.

Swallow

Early - Only reference to breeding is of a nest found in a blockhouse on serial 23 on 28 June 1964. Passage birds were noted only when significant numbers were observed : 150 per minute west in a half-hour watch at the Redoubt on 8 August 1951; in 1957 a 'steady flow west' a.m. on 1 September and a continuous stream moved south-west during the morning of 23 September – 'over the sea as far as could be seen'. 'Clouds' of birds flew south-west over the sea on 22 September 1958.

Recent - At least one pair bred in workshop buildings in 1991, 1992 and 1995. Only significant movement noted was 2000/hour moving south-west during the morning of 19 September 1992, and 4-500/hour a.m. on 10 October 1998.

House Martin

Recent - Birds from nearby houses visit suitable areas near serial 3 to collect mud for nest-building. A flock of 60 was hawking near the Redoubt on 27 October 1993. 50 were counted on 8 October 1999 but a remarkable 10,000 were coasting south-west during the morning of 2 October 2000.

Tree Pipit

Early - One in serial 20 bushes on 26 September 1957.

Recent - One overflying on 10 September 1994.

Meadow Pipit

Early - My only reference was the area at serial 18 and 21 where two breeding pairs were recorded in spring 1958 and 1960 and "10 birds present" mid-March 1959. During September and October 1957 flocks of 20 - 30 noted.

Recent - Three to five pairs bred 1991 - 1996 (2 - 3 in area of serial 18 and 21). Only two pairs counted in 1999 and just one in 2005. Other records were of 60/hour coasting south-west on 19 September 1992 and 40 present on 2 October of same year. A flock of 33 was on the sea wall on 30 September 2000.

Rock Pipit

Recent - Spring records of single birds in five years of the 1990's and three years since fall between 6 - 24 March. In autumn, mostly singles but up to four between 10 October and end November. All seen along the shore Redoubt to 'broken' Martello.

Yellow Wagtail

Early - Single birds noted on only four occasions; earliest 16 April 1961 and latest 26 September 1957.

Recent - A male was present during the bird counts on 28 May 1995 and 20 June 2005. Otherwise extremely few passage migrants on very few dates in April and August/September.

Grey Wagtail

Early - One at the Redoubt on 18 October 1957 and two in off the sea plus one west on 25 September 1960.

Recent - Single birds on or near the shore on six dates August - March. 11 August 1993 was the earliest.

Pied Wagtail

Recent - A pair bred in 1984, '96 and '99 and 2000, and possibly in 1993, '94 and '95. Maximum seen is 8 on 8 March 1993 and 12 on 15 October 1994.

White Wagtail

Recent - A male at the Redoubt on 16 March 2002.

Wren

Early - Very few references in my notebooks and none of breeding. Up to three birds noted in the bushes at gate 5 in November 1957; March, April and December 1958.

Recent - 4 to 14 singing birds recorded on breeding bird counts, 1992 being the lowest and 1995 the highest. Outside the breeding season most records are of birds in October, max: 13.

Dunnock

Early - Almost all records relate to the scrub in area of serial 20: 6-10 pairs present in March and April 1958 and 1960. High numbers present on 25 September 1957 – c60, and 6 October 1961 – 25. The only winter count was three on 20 December 1958.

Recent - 13 to 24 singing birds noted on breeding bird counts 1991 - 1996 (2 - 5 in area of serial 20); only 7 pairs in 1999. Outside breeding season highest numbers were 30 on 24 October 1992 and 9 on 15 October 1994.

Robin

Early - The only 'possible' breeding reference was of three birds in serial 20 scrub on 16 March 1960. Birds showing very pale breasts – 'continental?' – present on 28 March 1958. Autumn records show 10 birds in the same area on 25 September 1957 and on 6 October 1961. 'Good numbers roosting' on 30 October 1960.

Recent - On breeding bird counts five pairs or singing birds in 1991 and 1992 thereafter 9 - 11 pairs (though only two – on a June count – in 2005). Counts on six October dates 1992 - 1995 varied between 21 and 37 birds and on two November dates between 16 and 26. Maximum six on winter visits.

Nightingale

Early - Most records refer to birds in April between the present gates 3 and 5 so no proper direct comparison can be made with recent figures. First dates in 1950's fell between 14th and 21st. The number of singing birds regularly logged as 5 - 6 but 10 in 1958. In addition up to four heard in the area of the old H.Q. and serial 10 in two of those years. Birds could be heard on still evenings in late May from Hythe Green 1 km away, those being presumably from that area. A nest was found on 21 June 1959 on which date four birds were singing.

Recent - The only reference from the 1980's was of eight singing birds on 6 May 1983, and three or four on 18th May. During the 1990's breeding bird counts two to six birds were heard though none in 1998. In only one year – 1999 – were birds heard away from the bushes referred to in the 'early ' section (between gates 3 and 5) and they were in serial 10-12 scrub. In 2001 just one bird was heard on one date and none since then.

Black Redstart

Early - One at serial 20 on 28 March 1958.

Recent - One or two on 12 dates in five years between 4 November and 27 March; a male on 15 May 1988. All at or near the Redoubt.

Common Redstart

Early - Single birds on 25 September 1957 and 10 September 1961.

Recent - A male on 27 May 1996.

Whinchat

Early - In 1957, two in scrub at serial 20 on 26 September and one on 2 October.

Recent - Singles on 10 September 1994, 6 May 1995 and 16 August 2005.

Stonechat

Early - One at serial 21 during October 1957. A pair bred very near the A259 road opposite the Botolph's Bridge road turning in 1958. Nest found 11 May but flattened by heavy vehicle on 25th. Second nest nearby in July. Male and immature male present in the area September to November and male seen again in January 1959.

Recent - Two or three on 24 October 1992; 9 October 1994 and 15 October 1995; male and female near the Redoubt on 6 December 2000 and 1 January 2001; a male on 30 December 2001.

Northern Wheatear

Early - First birds in spring arrived between 20 March and 1 April. Latest autumn record on 10 October 1957 and two on 18 October 1959. Highest number seen – 11 on 24 March 1968. In the area regularly watched two to three pairs bred annually at least until 1962 (four pairs in 1957). Further east another one to two pairs in six years except 1960 when four pairs there. In June 1957 a nest was found in part of the wreckage of a 'Flying Bomb'. A bird of the Greenland race was near the shore on 2 May 1957.

Recent - A single pair bred each year to 1996, not present 1999 but bred again 2001. In June 1991 a family party was seen during the annual bird count and another adult male (of another pair?) was also present. In 1994 a nest was found near Martello 15.

Earliest dates 17 March 2001 and 20 March 1992, the latest 24 October 1994 and 4 November 2000. Highest non-breeding numbers were 9 on 17 March 2001 and 12 on 2 October 2000. Three birds present on 8 May 2005 and small numbers of passage birds were noted along the 'seawall' on several dates in August 2000.

Ring Ouzel

Early - Six flew off from serial 17 scrub on 28 March 1958.

Blackbird

Early - Virtually no reference to breeding numbers: two to three pairs in serial 20 scrub in 1958 and 59, nest in pillbox, serial 21 in March 1958. Roost numbers in serial 20 scrub were c.80 in March/April and September/October 1957; 80 on 18 April 1958; 'good numbers' recorded on 30 September 1956, 25 October 1960 and 40 in October 1961.

Recent - During the 1990's annual breeding counts, 8 - 11 pairs present except in 1995 (17 pairs) and 1996 (14 pairs). Counts at other times of year were 3-17 in February; 13-30 in October and 13-20 in November.

Fieldfare

Early - In 1958 three with other diurnal migrants on 30 March and at least 125 grounded birds on 18 April.

Recent - One on 7 November 1992; two on 13 November 1994 and ones and twos occasionally in January-February 1996.

Song Thrush

Early - The only breeding references are to single nests found in 1958 and 1959, and four pairs in serial 14-20 bushes in 1960. Other records are of birds in the serial 20 scrub during September and October. Maxima: at least 40 on 25 September 1957; 'good numbers' on 23 September 1958, 35 on 18 April 1958 and 40 on 8 October 1961.

Recent - In the 1990's breeding bird counts three to five pairs recorded (two pairs in 1999 and 2001). Other counts suggest four to eight birds present November - March; 13 -20 in October.

Redwing

Early - All notes refer to 1958. 12 at serial 21 on 26 January; heard overhead in the early hours of 28 March; and hundreds moving at night 17/18 April with a minimum of 700 grounded birds at first light.

Recent - Very small numbers recorded October/November and January/February. 20 on 23 October 1993.

Mistle Thrush

Early - Two present on 31 May 1958 may have been breeding birds though several on serial 18 and 21 on 21 June 1959 were thought to be families from outside the area. Autumn migrants were 10 north-west on 2 October 1957; 20 in serial 18 scrub on 8 October 1961 and 16 flying south-east two days later. Three or four present on 22 November 1959 and 17 January 1960.

Recent - Single birds noted on the breeding bird surveys in 1992, 1994 and 1999. Not thought to breed. One on 24 October 1992 and three on 13 November 1994.

Grasshopper Warbler

Early - One near gate five on 25 April 1958.

Sedge Warbler

Early - Two birds singing in scrub near gate 3 on 28 April 1958, one singing at serial 17 on 21 June 1959 and on 1 May 1960. 'Several' singing in bushes between gates 3 and 5 on 24 May 1961.

Recent - A singleton on 2 September 2000.

Reed Warbler

Recent - One was singing on the annual bird count on 27 May 1996. Three present on 10 September 1994 and one on 6 May 1995.

Lesser Whitethroat

Early - Reference to breeding in 1959 – 10 singing in June and 1961 – 5 singing in June. Two present on earlyish date of 16 April 1961 and in autumn, two on 26 September and one on 2 October 1957, one on 29 September 1958.

Recent - Earliest date was 12 April 2001. During the 1990's annual bird counts three to five birds singing (six in 1994), but seven in 2001 and eight in 2005. Autumn records were six on 15 August 1993 and three on 2 October 1992.

Common Whitethroat

Early - Earliest migrants were on 16 April 1961 and on 21 April in three other years. Latest on 5 October 1958. 22 were present in the bushes between gates 3 and 5 on 28 April 1958. The only breeding references were 'several' in serial 20 bushes on 21 June 1959 and 'many juveniles' in serial 14-16 bushes on 19 July same year.

Recent - Earliest date noted was 20 April 2000. During the 1990's the poorest breeding year was 1992 – two pairs – and the best were 1993 and 96: seven pairs; 2000 and 2005: nine pairs; and 2001: 13 pairs. No early dates but one bird on 9 October 1992.

Garden Warbler

Recent - A pair bred in 1992 and one was singing on the 1999 bird count. Two present 10 September 1994.

Blackcap

Early - One in scrub at serial 18 on 28 March 1958.

Recent - One to four birds present in April/May most years. On annual bird counts the highest number of .singing birds was three in 1993; four in 1999 and seven in 2005. None in 1994. In autumn 14 counted on 19 September 1992 and three on 15 October 1994.

Chiffchaff

Early - Recorded only in 1958. Two singing in serial 16 bushes on 9 April and one on 18 April.

Recent - On the annual bird counts single singing birds in 1984; 1992, 1995 and two in 1996, 2000 and 2001. Seven singing in June 2005. In autumn mostly singles in September and October.

Willow Warbler

Early - Records relate to only 1957 - 59. 'First' birds recorded between 31 March and 10 April. Other spring references were 'good numbers' in serial 15 scrub on 21 April 1957 and 20 singing in bushes between gates 3 and 5 on 22 April 1958. In 1959 a few were singing at serial 14-15 on 1 June and many juveniles noted there on 19 July. A late bird on 29 September 1958.

Recent - Single singing birds on the annual bird counts in 1983, 84 and 88, 93, 99 and 2001 (though the dates of the count in 1983 and 88 were in early May. Outside the breeding season the maximum seen was six on 10 September 1994 and a late bird was present on 9 October of that year.

Goldcrest

Early - All birds seen (in 1956- 59 and 1961) were in scrub at serial 20 and usually in ones and twos. Spring migrants occurred between 23 March and 28 April; autumn birds from 8 to 23 October. There were two winter records: four on 5 January 1958 and two on 30 December 1959.

Recent - Recorded on eight dates in four years of 1990's half of which were in October. Winter records of single birds in December and February (twice).

Spotted Flycatcher

Early - One in bushes at serial 15 on 10 May 1959.

Recent - Single birds on 30 May 1989 and 19 September 1992.

Pied Flycatcher

Early - Two in bushes at serial 20 on 25 September 1957.

Recent - One as above on 19 September 1992.

Long-tailed Tit

Early - Eight in serial 20 bushes on 27 October 1957 was the only record.

Recent - Single pairs bred in all years except 1992, 1993 and 1996. Other records were mostly of birds in October: up to 12, and also in 1992, 15 on 7 November and one on 20 December.

Coal Tit

Early - "Several" in serial 20 scrub 9 - 13 October 1957.

Recent - Seen in 1992 - 1995 on eight dates between 19 September and 9 April. One or two birds each time.

Blue Tit

Early - Noted only 1957 - 1960 and the only reference to breeding was at the end of April 1958 when six pairs present in the bushes between gates 3 and 5. In October 1957 "good numbers everywhere" on 4th and a minimum of 20 in serial 20 scrub on 10th and 16th reflected the mass movement of this species and others which occurred that autumn. Winter numbers were two in February 1958 and four in December 1959 - January 1960. Visible migrants were 10 north-west on 2 October 1957, 'many flying over' on following day and 25 east in two hours on 30 March 1958.

Recent - 4 - 5 pairs on annual counts in the 1990's (9 pairs in 1994). Highest number outside the breeding season was 25 on 2 April 1994 and 18 - 21 in October 1992 -1994. Winter numbers between 20 December and 28 February varied between 9 and 17.

Great Tit

Early - Three pairs in bushes between gates 3 and 5 on 16 and 28 April 1958 probably refer to breeding birds. Migrant birds noted on 16 October 1957: 10 in serial 20 scrub (see previous species) and 'good numbers generally' on 9 April 1958. Visible migrants noted with other species on 31 March 1958: 7 east.

Recent - Three to four pairs present on annual bird counts in 1990's except 1992: one pair. Outside breeding season maxima 12 on 2 October 1992 and 9 on 28 February 1993.

Jay

Recent - At least one bird in area of dense trees and bushes at serial 15 (gate 3) on 20 June 2005 but it was not possible to ascertain whether it was breeding. A curious date otherwise.

Magpie

Early - Virtually no breeding references. Notes from early spring 1957 - 59 suggest two or three pairs in bushes from gate 3 westwards. Largest autumn/winter number was five.

Recent - During 1990's seven to nine pairs recorded except in 1996 when only five pairs counted. Outside the breeding season in autumn and winter 10 - 20 birds recorded. However, one of the wardens told me in 1999 that he had shot over 200 during that year.

Jackdaw

Early - My only note was of 'several' at 'N' Martello on 10 March 1957.

Recent - Absolute minimum of 10 pairs breed in the Redoubt and Martello towers. Birds at the Redoubt easier to count in the winter months. Often 30 - 40 but 53 in January 1996 and 70 - 90 December/January 1999/2000; 2000/2001; 2001/2002; 2002/2003 but 108 in January 2004.

Rook

Early - Only note is of some flying over in March 1958.

Recent - Flocks feeding on grass areas seen in October 1992 and 1993, February 1994. Maximum 35.

Carrion Crow

Early - Only reference was of eight on serial 21 on 22 November 1959; and some on the seawall on 29 October 1957.

Recent - Up to five pairs bred during the 1990's though only two in 1999. Only other count was of 13 on 2 October 1992.

Hooded Crow

Early - One at serial 21 - 25 on 14 - 16 April 1958.

Rook/Crow

Recent - Seen at a distance on serial 2: c.70 on 7 November 1992 and up to 50 on 9 October and 13 November 1994.

Raven

Recent - One flew south just east of the Redoubt on 2 May 1997.

Starling

Early - No note of breeding. In fact the only reference to birds present was of 60 - 100 birds at serial 18 and 21 from 2 March to 3 April 1958, and of a small – c.50 – roost in the bushes at gate 5 on 27 December 1958. Significant numbers seen moving east or north-east in March 1958 and March 1960. 2-3,000 passed in a half-hour from 06.00 on 28 and 31 March 1958 and 5,100 - 5,600 in one to one and half hours on 23 and 24 March 1960. Few seen after 07.30 so possibly these were ex-roost birds. An albino was present throughout March 1958. One autumn record: 1,100 flying north-west in 20 minutes on 2 October 1957.

Recent - Not fully counted on annual bird counts in 1990's but certainly 9-10 pairs bred. Totals of 50 and 80 in 1994 and 1996 counts involved juveniles. Other flock figures were 55 on 24 October and 70 on 20 December 1992. Minimum 100 on 28 February 1993. c.3,000 flew in off the sea on 5 November 2002.

House Sparrow

Early - In the late 1950's there was a roost of several hundred birds in scrub near the A259 and adjacent to the old H.Q. Small numbers also seen going to roost near gate 3 on 28 December 1956.

Recent - Apart from confirmation that it bred, the species was largely ignored on the annual counts and no counts were made outside the breeding season.

Tree Sparrow

Early - Apart from a pair in serial 17 scrub on 22 April and five birds on 29 April 1957 all references are to presumed migrants. NNW movement was noted on three dates in October 1957 (maximum 60 birds) ; west or south-west on 22 November 1959 (20 birds) and on 8 October 1961 (constant parties 08.00 - 09.00). 112 flew east in two hours on 30 March 1958 and 50 on 16 April. There were 10 - 13 grounded birds at the Redoubt in March 1957 and November 1959.

Recent - Single birds noted on the annual bird counts in 1991 and 1994. Two at the Redoubt on 18 April 1993 and three there on 16 October 1994.

Chaffinch

Early - In spring 1957 I made vague notes of 'good numbers' and 'a few singing' but in late April of the following year a count of eight pairs in the bushes from serial 14 to 20 (between gates 3 and 5).

Significant numbers of visible migrants were seen in late March 1958 and 1960. 2,100 passed NE in two hours a.m. on 30 March 1958: movement possibly continuing all day as a further 140

were counted between 16.15 and 17.00 when observations resumed. On 7 April 350 passed in 20 minutes. The 1960 dates were 15, 23 and 24 March: 183 counted in one hour on first date, 780 in 90 minutes on the second and 1300 in 90 minutes on the third. The only autumn references were on 25 and 28 October 1957 when constant parties of finches including this species moved west and south-west in a 30 minute period.

Recent - Four to seven pairs noted on the annual bird counts in 1990's (except three pairs in 1992). No more than 10 birds seen on autumn or winter visits.

Brambling

Early - Two flew N.E with Chaffinches on 23 March 1958.

Greenfinch

Early - Three pairs on 15 April 1958 in serial 14 - 17 bushes is the only spring/summer reference. In autumn 12 on the seawall on 18 October 1957; small parties present on 23 September 1958 and constant parties S.W. 08.00 - 09.00 on 8 October 1961.

Recent - 13 - 16 pairs recorded on the annual bird count 1991 - 1995 but 7 pairs in 1996 and 1999. In autumn 1992, 70 - 110 mostly along the seawall on three dates October/November. c.30 on 23 October 1993.

Goldfinch

Early - No references to birds in spring or summer and of six entries five refer to birds in October/November in four years. No more than 20 on any date.

Recent - During the 1990's, breeding numbers varied from 1-2 to 6 pairs. Of eight other entries six refer to birds in October/November when up to 40 noted.

Siskin

Early - Three flying west on 22 November 1959 (I did not know the call until autumn 1958).

Recent - In 1993, one on 28 February, 11 overflying on 14 December and three on 26 December. Three flew NE on 15 October 1994.

Linnet

Early - Breeding references: 35 - 40 pairs in serial 14 - 20 scrub in late April 1958; 'flocks of juveniles everywhere' on 21 June 1959. In autumn 50 flew west on 30 September 1956; c.250 in serial 20 scrub on 8 August 1957 and minimum 80 in a mixed roost there on 28 December 1958. The only other 'winter' record was 10 on 5 January 1958.

Recent - On annual bird counts c.30 pairs 1991 - 1995 then 14 - 16 pairs. Rarely recorded December to February: two on 1 January 2001 and 2 January 2005; a flock of 20 on 26 December 2004, otherwise. 67 counted on 9 April 1993, c.100 on 9 October 1994 and 100 in two flocks along the seawall on 30 September 2000.

Twite

Recent - One flew SW on 17 October 1993.

Lesser Redpoll

Early - A single bird flew west on 8 October 1961.

Recent - Two present on 24 October 1992 and one on 13 November 1994.

Bullfinch

Early - Most complete spring count was of five pairs in serial 14 - 20 bushes on 16 April 1958. Highest number seen was nine in serial 20 scrub on 23 October 1957.

Recent - Two to three pairs bred in 1990's with possibly five pairs in 1994. Less than three pairs in the new millennium and no birds recorded on the annual counts in May 2000 or June 2005. Highest number in autumn was six on 23 October 1993.

Snow Bunting

Early - A male near the Redoubt on 31 October 1960.

Recent - One flew over on 24 October 1992 and one near the Redoubt on 10 March 1996.

Lapland Bunting

Recent - One flying NW on 5 November 2002.

Yellowhammer

Early - Nests regularly found in gorse runs nearest to Hythe Green (i.e. serial 1) 1948 - 50. References to singing birds were 'some' in serial 20 scrub in March 1957 and four in serial 16 - 21 scrub in April 1958. The only other note was of 'good numbers' and 'small parties all bushes' on 2nd, 3rd and 4th October 1957. Two's and three's were noted during the period November 1957 to March 1958. a minimum of 13 were in a mixed roost on 28 December 1958.

Recent - The only records were of seven on 24 October 1992; occasional singles at serial 22 in March/April 1993, one on 6 March 1994 and on 15 October of same year.

Reed Bunting

Early - A pair present at the 'Beach Pool' in April 1957 and May 1959 may have bred (no later spring visits to that site) Small numbers flew east on 10 October 1957 and eight were present on 25th .

Recent - A pair present on annual bird count in 1983 and a pair bred at serial 23 in 1993. Otherwise one to four birds on three dates in October 1994 and 1995 and a male on 17 March 2001.

Corn Bunting

Early - Single birds singing serials 18 and 21 in April 1958 and May/June 1959. Presumably bred.

TABLES

Table 3 shows the range and average of most breeding species in the period 1990 to 2005:

Species	1990s		2000-05	
	Range	Ave	Range	Ave
Ringed Plover	1	--	1	--
Wood Pigeon	15 - 29	21	14 - 24	19
Collared Dove	4 - 6	4	3 - 5	4
Turtle Dove	3 - 4	3	1 (2 years)	--
Cuckoo	1	--	1	--
Skylark	3 - 7	4	6 - 10	8
Meadow Pipit	2 - 5	3	1 - 3	2
Wren	7 - 11	8	10 - 11	10
Dunnock	13 - 24	16	11 - 14	13
Robin	9 - 11	9	5 - 9	7
Nightingale	2 - 6	3	1 (1 year)	--
Wheatear	1	--	1 (1 year)	--
Blackbird	9 - 17	12	7 - 11	9
Song Thrush	2 - 5	3	1 - 2	2
Mistle Thrush	1	--	Nil	--
Reed Warbler	1 (1 year)	--	Nil	--
Lesser Whitethroat	2 - 5	3	3 - 8	5
Whitethroat	4 - 7	4	9 - 13	10
Garden Warbler	1 (1 year)	--	Nil	--
Blackcap	1 - 4	2	5 - 7	6
Chiffchaff	1 - 2	1	2 - 7	3
Long-tailed Tit	1 - 2	1	1 - 2	1
Blue Tit	4 - 8	5	4 - 9	6
Great Tit	2 - 4	3	3 - 6	4
Magpie	5 - 9	7	4 - 8	5
Carrion Crow	2 - 4	2	2 - 4	3
Chaffinch	3 - 7	4	7 - 11	9
Greenfinch	12 - 14	11	4 - 9	6
Goldfinch	3 - 8	3	1 - 3	2
Linnet	14 - 30	21	13 - 16	15
Bullfinch	2 - 4	3	1 - 3	2
Reed Bunting	1 (1 year)	--	Nil	--

Table 3: Range and average of most breeding species 1990 – 2005

Table 4 shows a comparison of breeding numbers (pairs of birds) in three periods for the area between the Redoubt and Gate 3:

Species	1950-60s	1990s	2000-05
Ringed Plover	3 - 5	1	1
Lapwing	1 - 4	Nil	Nil
Redshank	1 - 2	Nil	Nil
Common Tern	1 (1 year)	Nil	Nil
Little Tern	3 - 21	Nil	Nil
Woodpigeon	5 *	7 - 18	7 - 9
Collared Dove	Nil	2 - 5	1
Turtle Dove	Min. 5	1 - 3	1 (2 years)
Skylark	3 - 6	1 - 3	5 - 6
Meadow Pipit	2	1 - 3	1 - 3
Wren	No ref	1 - 6	7
Dunnock	No ref	9 - 14	4 - 10
Robin	No ref	3 - 5	1 - 4
Nightingale	5 - 10	1 - 4	1 (1 year)
Wheatear	2 - 4	1	1 (1 year)
Blackbird	Min. 4	3 - 7	5 - 8
Song Thrush	No ref	1 - 2	1 (1 year)
Lesser Whitethroat	5 - 8 **	1 - 3	2 - 6
Common Whitethroat	Sev. *	1 - 4	6 - 10
Blackcap	Nil	1 - 2	3 - 5
Willow Warbler	Sev. *	1 (1 year)	Nil
Chiffchaff	Nil	1	1 - 4
Long-tailed Tit	Nil	1	1
Blue Tit	6 *	1 - 5	3 - 5
Great Tit	3 *	1 - 3	2
Magpie	2 - 3	3 - 6	2 - 6
Carrion Crow	No ref	1 - 2	1 - 6
Chaffinch	8 *	2 - 5	4 - 5
Greenfinch	3 *	4 - 9	2 - 4
Goldfinch	Nil	1	Nil
Linnet	Min. 25 *	9 - 17	8 - 13
Bullfinch	5 *	1 - 3	1 - 2
Yellowhammer	Sev.	Nil	Nil
Reed Bunting	1 *	1	Nil
Corn Bunting	1 (2 years)	Nil	Nil

* denotes checked in only one year. ** denotes checked in two years only.

Table 4: Breeding numbers in the area between the Redoubt and Gate 3.

APPENDIX I

The overnight movement of Redwing and other species on 17/18 April 1958

At 19.30 on 17 April 1958 the sky was full overcast – no stars showing – and there was intermittent drizzle. I was close to the eastern end of the ranges and heard Redwings calling. As the calls were numerous I made regular one minute counts and until 20.15 the rate was 30 / min sometimes even more. Between 20.15 and 21.30 a count was made every ten minutes and they averaged 10/min. Also heard in that period were Lapwing, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Oystercatcher and one Fieldfare.

I decided to spend the rest of the night at the west end of the ranges where there would be no detracting noise such as people talking, dogs barking etc. After preparing some sustenance I made my way out to Norrington's Garage (Palmarsh) and walked approximately half-way across to the shore and found a suitable gunpit/bunker which provided some shelter. The time was then 23.00.

In the first hour, light rain started at 23.20 and Redwings called continuously though I did not make a specific count. Two Blackbird calls and ten unidentified soft croaking calls reminiscent of Moorhen were also heard. From 00.01 I made a five minute count of all calls heard during each half-hour and made a note of the weather:

00.01 – 00.30

Light rain, heavier at 00.25.

Five minute call count – 23 Redwing but the rate was noted as decreasing near the end of the period. 'Croaking' calls – 5.

00.30 – 01.00

Steady light rain. Wind south-east 2.

No Redwing calls heard until 00.40 then 10 on a five minute count. 'Croaking' call – 4. Song Thrush – 2.

01.00 – 01.30

Steady drizzle. Wind south-westerly 2.

Five minute call count – 5 Redwing but increase in rate noted in last ten minutes of period. One 'croaking' call, sounding strangely muffled.

01.30 – 02.00

Rain stopped.

Five minute call count – 21 Redwing; 6 Song Thrush; 2 'croaking'. Also another unidentified call described as a soft "id-id-id-id" – 3 times.

02.00 – 02.30

Mist developing. Calm.

Five minute call count – 10 Redwing; 2 Curlew; 2 'id-id-id-id' calls.

02.30 – 03.00

Mist thickening.

Five minute call count – 5 Redwing; 1 Song Thrush; 1 'croaking'.

03.00 – 03.30

Intermittent drizzle from 03.18.

No Redwing calls until 03.19 then 13 calls during rest of the period.

03.30 – 04.00

Wind south-west 1.

Five minute call count – 3 Redwing (only 10 in the half-hour); 1 Snipe.

Local breeding birds activity – Lapwing called 03.35 and ‘singing’ 03.43; Blackbird called 03.47; Wheatear singing 03.51; Redshank singing 03.55.

04.00 – 04.30

Mist.

10 minute call count – 53 Redwing (presumably these were grounded birds?); 3 Song Thrush.

Local breeding bird activity: Skylark singing 04.00; Grey Partridge calling 04.06; Blackbird singing 04.12.

04.30 – 05.00

Still misty. Calm.

Redwings calling all around me on the ground and some Fieldfares. Although it was slowly getting light I did not move away from the bunker until 04.50 for fear of disturbing birds before I could identify them. By that time c.200 Redwing in small parties had flown off or past me heading south-west. and there were still many either on the ground or the scattered Bramble and Blackthorn bushes on that part of the range, i.e. west of a line from gate 5 to ‘N’ Martello. Fieldfares heard but not located partly due to my binoculars becoming ‘steamed up’ internally.

05.00 – 05.30

Seamist rolling in at 05.10 eventually reducing visibility to 40 yards.

However the main species recorded were 300 Redwing, 100 Fieldfare, 50 Blackbirds, 30 Song Thrush.

05.30 – 07.00.

Sea mist had cleared by 06.00.

The bushes between gates 3 and 5 (opposite the Filling Station to the Prince of Wales public house) were toured and a minimum 200 Redwing, 25 Fieldfare and 30 Blackbirds were counted. The total number of grounded Redwings seen between 04.30 and 07.00 was estimated at 700 but could have been many more.

Comments

The ‘croaking’ calls sometimes sounded soft, sometimes clear and loud perhaps due to the distance or height from me but I did make a note at 02.00 that it was not possible to determine whether the call was from airborne or grounded birds. Described as a rapid “ek-ek-ek” – once or twice more like “ak-ak-ak” and not always a triple note. Initial thought was of Moorhen and it is tempting, given that one appeared at Dungeness light at midnight, that this was the species. However according to the ‘Handbook of British Birds’ and ‘Birds of the Western Palearctic’ it is not considered or known to be a migrant through the south-east so 23 widely separated calls = individuals through the night would seem to be an exceptional number. As both Redwing and Starling were reported in thousands (an avalanche!) at Dungeness light, it does seem surprising that I recorded only one group- 30 - of the latter in flight after dawn, so is it possible that the calls could be attributed to that species ? and were they from individuals on the ground ? I certainly did not consider Starling at the time. However during the sea mist period I made a note of Ca150 very noisy Redwing “sounding like the Starling roost at Clapham Common” (which I had visited three weeks earlier). Just possibly these birds were Starlings but Redwings calling nearby had led me to an incorrect identification.

The ‘id-id-id-id’ call was also described as ‘wip-it-kwik’ and ‘wit-wirro’, though possibly different species were involved. A single ‘wit’ was also heard once. I also made a note that when heard

in the distance the id-id-id-id call sounded like a continuous tremulous note. Might that be Waxwing? a call I was not familiar with at that time.

At 17.30 I walked the hedges along the Burmarsh Road from Burmarsh Bridge to the current Children's playground (then Uden's pigfarm) and noted 'good numbers' of Redwing plus c.200 in waste ground adjacent to 'Heronsgate'.

On the following day there was not one Redwing or Fieldfare to be seen on the ranges.