

Shoreham and District  
Ornithological Society  
Spring Newsletter  
2023



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Front Cover: Stonechat at Brooklands: Ron Bewley

## Editorial

Following a necessarily rushed editing job on the 2022 Autumn Newsletter we headed off in very early September last year to sail on an expedition ship through the fabled North West Passage from Cambridge Bay in northern Canada via Greenland to Newfoundland. Even in recent years the ice pack does not clear until late summer, hence the September journey, and ships may still have difficulty getting through. The North West Passage is more a concept than a defined route, and there are potentially multiple ways through the channels of the island archipelago that lies to the north of Hudson's Bay. Open Google Maps and you will see the caption Northwestern Passages over an area of sea east of Baffin Island. This naming captures the idea.

The potentially navigable channels separate islands with names like Devon, Somerset, Queen Elizabeth, Victoria and Cornwallis. An occasional island name Bylot, for example, indicates that the exploration was not entirely a British effort. Over a period of 300 years European sailors attempted different routes, and produced maps and charts, and by 1845 the mapping efforts of various explorers indicated that the unknown gap in the North West Passage was now just about 300 miles. The well-furnished Franklin expedition, with two ships, set off that year with high hopes of a successful navigation. They became stuck in ice near King William Island in 1846. Franklin died in 1847 and in 1848 the survivors abandoned the ships and attempted to sledge southwards across the tundra. No-one survived.

There are a few widely spread remains of the Franklin expedition across the Arctic, and on Beechey Island, just off Devon Island, we visited a small gravesite where sailors from HMS Erebus, Franklin's ship, are buried. A bleak and windswept place where the land surface is covered by shattered rock sorted into stripes by repeated freezing and thawing. Only a few small plants, probably Saxifrages, shelter between the stones.

The Norwegian explorer, Amundsen, completed the first successful navigation of the North West Passage in a three-year journey that set out from Oslo in



1903. He used a small ship with a crew of six. This small outfit could more easily live off the land, hug the shore and sail through shallows than the larger ships that had failed previously. Later, in 1911, Amundsen led the first expedition to the South Pole, arriving just weeks ahead of the ill-fated Scott expedition.

Devon Island, the largest uninhabited island in the world, is at 75° North, about the same as Svalbard but without the warming effect of the Gulf Stream There are bird colonies on the cliffs in summer even at this latitude with the most common birds being Glaucous Gulls and Northern Fulmar. One afternoon we sailed up a sunny fjord and saw fourteen Polar Bears on the beaches, an Arctic Fox and schools of Beluga whales. Another fjord farther south on Somerset Island produced more bear sightings and also three Musk Oxen grazing in the tundra. September is a little late perhaps for land birds but I managed to find

six Ross's Geese near an Inuit supermarket in a small town where we made a landing.



Common Ravens were present along with Snow Buntings in the northern towns and Iceland Gulls and Redpolls appeared in Greenland. Remarkably a Peregrine came on board in southern Greenland: presumably it knew we were headed for Canada because there was where it flew off 36 hours later!

It is a long journey, 3,500 miles of sailing, and a great experience but would I do it again? There were great wildlife moments but also a lot of sailing across bird-less seas. My trip adviser recommendation would be do the Southern Ocean trip, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Antarctica first.

Best wishes to you all.

Roger

# Garden Double Takes

John Maskell

Whilst ornithological field guides show us the typical features of a species, it is interesting to discover that not all birds of the same species are identical. Obviously there are major plumage differences between different aged birds and sexes but with patience and diligent study one can confidently identify individual birds.

I have found that in my daily observations it is possible to identify birds that are regular garden visitors. This differentiation is often due to subtle plumage variations or repeated behaviour. Indeed I have already mentioned in a previous article in a SDOS Newsletter (Autumn 2022) how it has been possible to identify different Blackcaps feeding in the garden whilst another item (Autumn 2021) talked about “our” distinctive long-term resident pair of Blackbirds.

However, as an avid garden birdwatcher I have been rewarded with several more unusual encounters over the past 40 or so years. It is those individual birds that have made me “double take” that I wish to mention now.

On 26<sup>th</sup> January 2009 Shena and I became aware of a Wren that appeared to have a distinctly dark plumage. It was then seen regularly throughout the Spring. Wrens never stay still for very long and initially we wondered whether we were seeing a bird in heavy shadow. But prolonged watching and patience proved that this particular Wren had very definite black underparts, so was very much an unmistakable garden visitor.

Probably the most interesting bird that caused many double takes was a male House Sparrow with an all chestnut-brown cap which frequented our garden in 2010 and into the Spring of 2011. This generated much interest and research and the strong belief that this was a rare Italian Sparrow. The bird showed all the requisite features of an *italiae* but after a report and photos were submitted





and circulated by the British Birds Rarities Committee their verdict was “aberrant House Sparrow”. I still have my own doubts!

The House Sparrows that visit our garden provide us with constant entertainment and a year later, in February 2012, we noticed a female with noticeable white feathers in her wings. There was no mistaking her!



There have been other “double takes” in the garden of rarer species, but I’ll save those for another time.



# An interview with Bertie Harding

Tony Benton



Our chair, Tony Benton, interviews Bertie, age 17, one of our youngest members, and discovers what inspires his passion for birds and wildlife photography

*When did you first get interested in birds and why?*

I got into birding in 2020 when I moved to England from France. I had always been interested in the natural world, but birds are much easier to see here. It really started when I was walking around the Seven Sisters with my dad's camera and a kestrel came and hovered just above my head - I was blown away and enjoyed finding out what species it was. I decided I would make a list of what species I started seeing and really enjoyed it. I love birding because I like spending time outside, and identifying and ticking new species off is really rewarding.

I have always loved wildlife but never took the time to appreciate it, although there is some amazing wildlife in the Alps. For some reason when I came to England, I had more time and motivation to just get out and see what I could find.

*Can you tell me a little about how you got into bird photography?*

I was much more interested in photography before birding. I was 15 at the time, and it was through taking photos of the birds I could see out of my bedroom window that I became more interested in them. Now I often go out birding without a camera. Trying to get better at photography also kept me very interested in birding.

*You're studying for your A levels at the moment - what are your plans for the next few years?*

Later this year I'm volunteering with the British Trust for Ornithology and have a week's placement at their headquarters in Norfolk. I'm going to be helping with work connected with the GPS tracking of birds.

Once I have finished my A levels, I will definitely take a gap year to do some volunteering. I am not sure where yet, but I would love to go to southern France and do some work with the Vulture Conservation Foundation, or maybe go to Malta and volunteer for Birdlife Malta. It is during this gap year that I would also like to get a ringing licence. I would then like to go to Bangor University to study one of their courses, Zoology, with a specialisation in Ornithology.



*What's been your best ever day for combining birding and photography?*

My best ever day was probably in the Camargue during the summer. The Flamingoes were amazing for photography, and I saw lots of waders that I had never seen before from Little-ringed Plovers to Curlew Sandpipers.



*How do you think more young people can be attracted to birding and nature conservation?*

I think to get young people into birding and Nature Conservation you need to get them outside and interested in nature while they are young. I remember during primary school in France being taken to the Rosuel every year to watch the Bearded Vultures nest. This is still one of my favourite places to bird. I think being taken out and being surrounded by nature influenced my later passion for wildlife.

*What's your favourite bird and why?*

My favourite bird is the Bearded Vulture. I love huge birds of prey and I never get bored of watching Bearded Vultures. Their size, colour, and behaviour just blow me away.

*What are the ingredients of a good day out in nature?*

Good weather and conditions, some interesting birds, and some good photos.

*Favourite birding patch - Steyning or the Alps?*

The Alps, although I love birding here, the possibility of seeing large birds of prey are much higher over there. I have also seen some surprise migrants on their way through such as a Rock Bunting and a couple of Pied Flycatchers. And Crested Tits come to my garden bird feeder!

*What gets the pulse racing - raptors, sea birds or a skulking warbler?*

Although I love seabirds, large birds of prey are definitely my favourite.

**Birds recorded in the SDOS area between July and December 2022**

**Clive Hope and John Newnham**

At the end of January 2023 there were 27,100 records in the Sussex Ornithological Society's database from sites within the SDOS recording area. This excludes Wetland Bird Survey and BTO Garden Bird Watch records but includes all records entered into online systems by mid-January 2023. These records were submitted by approximately 220 observers, six finders providing more than 1000 sightings during this six month period. At least one record was submitted for 174 different sites within the area but seven sites held more

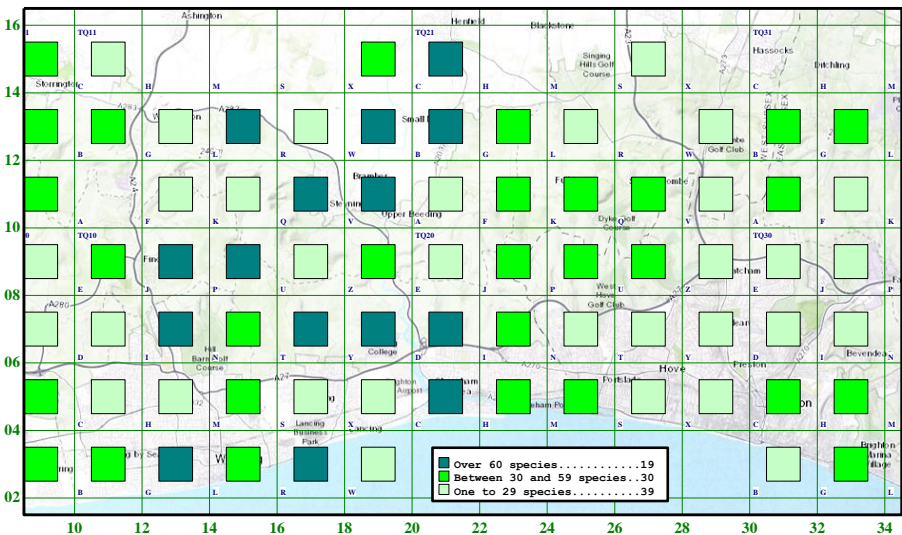


than 1000 records; the top three locations in terms of record numbers were Cissbury, Brooklands and Goring Gap. There were observations on every day in this period with most (356) on Christmas Eve, October with 5025 records was the month with most records whilst July, with 3231 records the least. About 73% of the records had a grid reference at tetrad or finer level allowing useful mapping. The following figure shows, in three bands, the number of species recorded in each tetrad (2km x2km grid square).

There were records from 88 different tetrads. TQ10G (West Tarring) with the most records but TQ20C (Adur estuary) with 107 species being the most diverse.

A total of 193 different species have been recorded in this period, the highlights in taxonomic order, some of which are still being assessed by records committees, were: - a **Black-necked Grebe** at Brooklands between 01-Oct

SDOS July - December 2022 species recorded in each tetrad



and 08 Oct; 250 **Golden Plovers** at Goring Gap on 11-Dec; a **Dotterel** at Waterhall on 07-Sep; **Caspian Gulls** at Worthing and Goring Gap on 16-Aug and 21-Nov respectively; a **Little Auk** at Goring Gap on 19-Nov; a **Storm**

**Petrel** at Goring on 27-Oct, a **Sooty Shearwater** passing West Worthing on 01-Nov; a **Purple Heron** at Patcham on 30-Oct; three **Honey-buzzards** between 03-Sep and 11-Sep; a **Wood Warbler** in Shoreham on 06-Aug; a **Siberian Chiffchaff** at Cissbury on 02-Nov, a **Sardinian Warbler** in a Lancing garden from November until the end of the year and a **Water Pipit** on Henfield Levels on 31-Oct.

Eleven other species were recorded on just one date during this period these being:- two **Mandarin Ducks** at Sandgate Park on 25-Oct; a **Quail** at Washington on 24-Jul; a **Common Cuckoo** at Mile Oak on 16-Aug and on the River Adur four **Avocets** on 15-Sep, a **Little Ringed Plover** on 27-Jul and 3 **Curlew Sandpipers** on 09-Sep. One **Great Skua** at Worthing on 11-Sep; 8 **Fulmars** at Brighton 17-Dec; an **Osprey** over the Upper Adur Levels on 10-Sep; two **Short-eared Owls** at Stanmer Park on 28-Nov and a **Woodlark** at Goring Gap on 24-Sep.

The following table lists the other species recorded in this period showing the number of days each species has been recorded, the first and last date and the maximum count for each. Where there are several days with the same maximum count, mostly one or two birds, then just one record is shown.

Species	Days	First date	Last date	Max. count
Brent Goose	44	16-Sep	29-Dec	192 on 30-Sep at Worthing
Canada Goose	23	09-Jul	25-Dec	320 on 03-Oct at Henfield Levels
Greylag Goose	20	09-Jul	17-Dec	370 on 03-Oct at Henfield Levels
Mute Swan	111	02-Jul	30-Dec	31 on 20-Jul at Lower Adur Valley 15 on 13-Nov at Upper Adur Levels
Egyptian Goose	11	26-Jul	24-Dec	Levels
Common Shelduck	10	05-Nov	29-Dec	8 on 14-Dec at Goring Gap
Shoveler	20	14-Nov	31-Dec	23 on 03-Dec at Beeding Brooks
Gadwall	10	13-Nov	17-Dec	48 on 01-Dec at Henfield Levels
Eurasian Wigeon	24	02-Sep	24-Dec	200 on 03-Dec at Beeding Brooks
Mallard	91	01-Jul	30-Dec	90 on 15-Jul at Brooklands
Pintail	12	30-Sep	29-Dec	33 on 03-Dec at Beeding Brooks
Eurasian Teal	49	31-Aug	30-Dec	1000 on 20-Nov at Beeding Brooks
Tufted Duck	2	25-Nov	06-Dec	2 on 25-Nov at Henfield Levels
Greater Scaup	3	25-Nov	04-Dec	2 on 01-Dec at Henfield Levels

Common Eider	2	15-Dec	15-Dec	1 on 15-Dec at Goring Gap
Common Scoter	26	02-Sep	12-Dec	15 on 21-Oct at Worthing
Long-tailed Duck	2	14-Sep	05-Nov	1 on 05-Nov at Worthing
Goosander	2	06-Nov	06-Dec	1 on 06-Nov at Widewater
Red-breasted Merganser	30 21	17-Oct	30-Dec	55 on 11-Dec at Goring Gap 10 on 16-Aug at Steyning Round Hill
Grey Partridge		09-Jul	29-Dec	
Common Pheasant	103	01-Jul	31-Dec	100 on 11-Nov at Kithurst Hill
Red-legged Partridge	36	03-Jul	24-Dec	80 on 17-Dec at Lower Standean
Common Swift	52	01-Jul	13-Sep	75 on 03-Jul at Goring Gap 250 on 07-Sep at Brighton Palace Pier
Feral Pigeon	175	01-Jul	31-Dec	
Stock Dove	125	01-Jul	29-Dec	105 on 10-Oct at Highdown
Woodpigeon	184	01-Jul	31-Dec	500 on 19-Sep at Kithurst Hill
Turtle Dove	3	29-Jul	07-Aug	1 on 29-Jul at Woods Mill
Collared Dove	122	01-Jul	31-Dec	70 on 10-Nov at Ditchling Beacon
Water Rail	17	05-Sep	24-Dec	4 on 03-Dec at Beeding Brooks 14 on 13-Nov at Upper Adur Levels
Moorhen	108	01-Jul	30-Dec	
Coot	56	02-Jul	30-Dec	60 on 26-Dec at Brooklands
Little Grebe	61	28-Jul	30-Dec	8 on 27-Dec at Widewater
Great Crested Grebe	24	03-Oct	25-Dec	45 on 07-Dec at Goring Gap
Slavonian Grebe	4	05-Dec	09-Dec	1 on 05-Dec at Goring Gap
Oystercatcher	97	06-Jul	29-Dec	41 on 12-Dec at Goring Gap
Lapwing	71	03-Jul	29-Dec	600 on 03-Dec at Beeding Brooks
Grey Plover	35	12-Sep	29-Dec	40 on 01-Dec at Goring Gap
Ringed Plover	91	03-Aug	29-Dec	80 on 06-Sep at Brooklands
Eurasian Whimbrel	34	11-Jul	17-Oct	5 on 14-Jul at River Adur
Curlew	35	04-Jul	27-Dec	2 on 04-Jul at Goring Gap
Bar-tailed Godwit	11	01-Sep	04-Oct	2 on 07-Sep at River Adur
Black-tailed Godwit	8	21-Jul	20-Dec	10 on 28-Aug at River Adur
Turnstone	98	10-Jul	30-Dec	87 on 09-Sep at Goring Gap
Knot	8	11-Sep	01-Dec	10 on 19-Nov at Goring Gap
Ruff	3	01-Oct	16-Nov	28 on 16-Nov at Worthing
Sanderling	38	21-Aug	30-Dec	140 on 18-Nov at Goring Gap
Dunlin	80	27-Jul	30-Dec	215 on 29-Dec at Goring Gap
Purple Sandpiper	7	18-Oct	25-Dec	2 on 18-Oct at Brighton Marina
Little Stint	3	16-Nov	18-Nov	1 on 16-Nov at Goring Gap
Woodcock	2	16-Dec	17-Dec	3 on 17-Dec at No-Mans Land
Common Snipe	31	10-Sep	27-Dec	160 on 24-Dec at Adur Saltings
Common Sandpiper	43	06-Jul	26-Dec	7 on 09-Sep at River Adur
Green Sandpiper	4	04-Jul	17-Dec	2 on 07-Sep at River Adur

Common Redshank	84	11-Jul	30-Dec	61 on 05-Dec at Adur Saltings
Greenshank	30	05-Aug	27-Dec	2 on 05-Aug at Adur Saltings
Kittiwake	17	30-Oct	24-Dec	17 on 23-Nov at Widewater
Black-headed Gull	166	01-Jul	30-Dec	2000 on 14-Nov at Henfield Levels
Little Gull	12	02-Sep	29-Dec	13 on 02-Sep at Worthing
Mediterranean Gull	86	03-Jul	31-Dec	80 on 18-Jul at Goring Gap
Common Gull	86	06-Jul	30-Dec	400 on 26-Nov at Cissbury
Great Black-backed Gull	129	03-Jul	30-Dec	115 on 02-Nov at River Adur
Herring Gull	183	01-Jul	31-Dec	1000 on 24-Aug at Widewater
Yellow-legged Gull	10	02-Jul	19-Dec	2 on 10-Dec at Hove St Annes Well
Lesser Black-backed Gull	75	06-Jul	30-Dec	30 on 05-Dec at Adur Saltings
Sandwich Tern	44	03-Jul	15-Dec	45 on 13-Sep at Worthing
Common Tern	3	11-Sep	03-Oct	3 on 19-Sep at Kingston Gorse
Arctic Tern	2	06-Nov	07-Nov	1 on 06-Nov at Worthing
Black Tern	5	04-Sep	08-Sep	3 on 04-Sep at Shoreham Harbour
Arctic Skua	2	22-Oct	08-Nov	1 on 22-Oct at Goring Gap
Common Guillemot	3	21-Sep	26-Sep	1 on 21-Sep at Goring Gap
Razorbill	17	12-Sep	12-Dec	15 on 07-Dec at Goring Gap
Unidentified auk spp	14	05-Oct	10-Dec	196 on 21-Oct at Worthing
Red-throated Diver	27	03-Oct	27-Dec	8 on 01-Dec at Goring Gap
Black-throated Diver	2	21-Nov	07-Dec	1 on 21-Nov at East Worthing
Great Northern Diver	2	10-Nov	06-Dec	1 on 10-Nov at West Worthing
White Stork	5	06-Jul	19-Aug	19 on 09-Aug at Wild Park
Gannet	54	22-Jul	25-Dec	403 on 21-Oct at Worthing 80 on 08-Oct at Brighton West Pier
Cormorant	131	01-Jul	30-Dec	
Shag	3	24-Sep	02-Nov	1 on 24-Sep at Worthing
Cattle Egret	6	03-Jul	15-Dec	26 on 30-Jul at Goring
Grey Heron	114	01-Jul	27-Dec	9 on 04-Nov at Lower Adur Valley
Little Egret	129	01-Jul	26-Dec	23 on 03-Oct at Goring Gap
Sparrowhawk	126	03-Jul	30-Dec	3 on 05-Aug at Brighton
Marsh Harrier	9	10-Aug	17-Dec	1 on 10-Aug at East Worthing 1 on 19-Nov at Barns Fm
Hen Harrier	6	19-Nov	30-Dec	Storrington
Red Kite	109	01-Jul	29-Dec	20 on 20-Sep at Michelgrove 2 on 19-Nov at Barns Fm
White-tailed Eagle	6	10-Aug	26-Dec	Storrington
Common Buzzard	151	01-Jul	31-Dec	11 on 27-Aug at Cissbury
Barn Owl	17	03-Jul	29-Dec	3 on 07-Dec at Beeding Brooks 1 on 16-Jul at Barns Fm
Little Owl	4	16-Jul	29-Dec	Storrington
Tawny Owl	35	07-Jul	31-Dec	5 on 09-Jul at Steep Down

Kingfisher	77	09-Jul	29-Dec	3 on 01-Oct at River Adur
Wryneck	6	17-Aug	14-Sep	1 on 17-Aug at Sheepcote Valley
Great Spotted Woodpecker	132	01-Jul	31-Dec	5 on 31-Jul at Edburton
Green Woodpecker	137	01-Jul	29-Dec	8 on 31-Jul at Edburton
Kestrel	151	01-Jul	29-Dec	7 on 17-Sep at Cissbury
Merlin	5	25-Sep	13-Nov	1 on 25-Sep at Beeding Hill
Hobby	16	03-Jul	09-Oct	2 on 11-Aug at Wappingthorn
Peregrine	89	06-Jul	29-Dec	3 on 06-Jul at Beeding Hill
Ring-necked Parakeet	15	04-Jul	05-Dec	2 on 14-Oct at Shoreham-by-Sea
Jay	115	01-Jul	30-Dec	7 on 23-Oct at Highdown
Magpie	184	01-Jul	31-Dec	40 on 20-Sep at Ferring
Jackdaw	175	01-Jul	31-Dec	200 on 13-Aug at Ladywell
Rook	129	02-Jul	29-Dec	300 on 06-Dec at Lancing Clump
Carriion Crow	182	01-Jul	31-Dec	100 on 09-Jul at Steep Down
Raven	90	02-Jul	26-Dec	10 on 06-Jul at Chantry Hill
Coal Tit	78	01-Jul	29-Dec	3 on 12-Nov at Brighton Patcham
Marsh Tit	25	13-Jul	16-Dec	9 on 08-Dec at Steyning Round Hill
Blue Tit	174	01-Jul	30-Dec	43 on 29-Sep at Edburton
Great Tit	170	01-Jul	30-Dec	19 on 24-Dec at Highdown
Skylark	139	01-Jul	30-Dec	70 on 06-Dec at Lancing Clump
Sand Martin	26	07-Jul	31-Oct	20 on 07-Jul at Lower Adur Valley
Barn Swallow	110	01-Jul	07-Dec	3500 on 03-Oct at Worthing
House Martin	77	04-Jul	14-Nov	1200 on 03-Oct at Worthing
Cetti's Warbler	63	02-Jul	25-Dec	5 on 19-Nov at Beeding Brooks
Long-tailed Tit	122	01-Jul	31-Dec	30 on 17-Dec at Lower Standean
Willow Warbler	55	04-Jul	03-Oct	80 on 23-Aug at Cissbury
Chiffchaff	137	01-Jul	31-Dec	72 on 25-Sep at Ladywell
Sedge Warbler	16	05-Jul	22-Sep	3 on 13-Aug at Sheepcote Valley
Reed Warbler	35	01-Jul	25-Sep	15 on 09-Jul at Ladywell
Grasshopper Warbler	5	24-Jul	01-Oct	1 on 24-Jul at Ladywell
Blackcap	128	01-Jul	28-Dec	170 on 09-Sep at Brighton
Garden Warbler	16	09-Jul	20-Sep	5 on 21-Aug at Ladywell
Lesser Whitethroat	38	03-Jul	17-Sep	8 on 14-Aug at Sheepcote Valley
Common Whitethroat	78	01-Jul	28-Sep	85 on 14-Aug at Sheepcote Valley
Dartford Warbler	22	07-Sep	26-Dec	2 on 22-Oct at Cissbury
Firecrest	37	21-Jul	24-Dec	3 on 10-Oct at Highdown
Goldcrest	91	01-Jul	31-Dec	16 on 16-Oct at Cissbury
Wren	160	01-Jul	30-Dec	16 on 23-Aug at Cissbury
Nuthatch	43	01-Jul	29-Dec	4 on 09-Dec at Henfield Levels
Eurasian Treecreeper	25	01-Jul	16-Dec	3 on 04-Sep at Chanctonbury Ring
Common Starling	181	01-Jul	30-Dec	3500 on 26-Dec at Brighton Palace Pier



Song Thrush	125	01-Jul	29-Dec	164 on 19-Oct at Storrington
Mistle Thrush	73	02-Jul	29-Dec	24 on 15-Aug at Patching Hill
Redwing	61	02-Oct	30-Dec	389 on 19-Oct at Storrington
Blackbird	174	01-Jul	30-Dec	40 on 03-Dec at Beeding Brooks
Fieldfare	32	11-Oct	24-Dec	220 on 02-Nov at Cissbury
Ring Ouzel	11	26-Sep	30-Dec	3 on 26-Sep at Beeding Hill 28 on 27-Aug at Chanctonbury Ring
Spotted Flycatcher	50	01-Jul	03-Oct	25 on 25-Oct at Sheepcote Valley
Robin	180	01-Jul	31-Dec	3 on 16-Aug at Sheepcote Valley
Common Nightingale	8	17-Jul	28-Aug	4 on 10-Sep at Steep Down
Pied Flycatcher	19	11-Aug	10-Sep	2 on 22-Oct at Cissbury
Black Redstart	29	22-Oct	24-Dec	9 on 22-Aug at Cissbury
Common Redstart	38	31-Jul	31-Oct	8 on 20-Aug at Cissbury
Whinchat	44	23-Jul	23-Oct	36 on 28-Sep at Steep Down 21 on 16-Aug at Chanctonbury Ring
Eurasian Stonechat	128	01-Jul	29-Dec	
Northern Wheatear	60	25-Jul	28-Oct	110 on 09-Sep at Goring Gap
House Sparrow	183	01-Jul	30-Dec	18 on 29-Sep at Edburton
Dunnock	173	01-Jul	31-Dec	100 on 03-Sep at Cissbury
Yellow Wagtail	34	14-Aug	09-Oct	3 on 19-Sep at Goring Gap
Grey Wagtail	73	02-Jul	26-Dec	95 on 07-Dec at Goring Gap
Pied Wagtail	145	02-Jul	30-Dec	170 on 03-Oct at Ferring Rife
Meadow Pipit	130	02-Jul	30-Dec	10 on 10-Sep at Cissbury
Tree Pipit	22	08-Aug	21-Sep	6 on 27-Oct at Shoreham Harbour
Rock Pipit	45	22-Jul	25-Dec	65 on 24-Dec at Lower Standean
Chaffinch	124	01-Jul	29-Dec	1 on 03-Oct at Ferring Rife
Brambling	3	03-Oct	29-Oct	2 on 13-Nov at Lancing
Hawfinch	2	26-Jul	13-Nov	8 on 20-Aug at Cissbury
Bullfinch	67	01-Jul	29-Dec	35 on 03-Jul at Kithurst Hill
Greenfinch	129	01-Jul	29-Dec	1200 on 23-Aug at Lancing Clump
Linnet	131	01-Jul	26-Dec	10 on 16-Oct at Cissbury
Lesser Redpoll	16	18-Sep	26-Nov	1630 on 31-Oct at Goring Gap
Goldfinch	175	01-Jul	31-Dec	77 on 31-Oct at Goring Gap
Siskin	29	12-Aug	08-Dec	130 on 10-Sep at Steep Down
Corn Bunting	73	02-Jul	29-Dec	45 on 29-Oct at Edburton
Yellowhammer	104	01-Jul	29-Dec	7 on 23-Dec at Adur Saltings
Reed Bunting	47	01-Jul	29-Dec	1 on 04-Jul at Shoreham-by-Sea
Alexandrine Parakeet	13	04-Jul	05-Dec	

Our thanks to all the observers, far too numerous to name, who have contributed records in our recording area during this period.

# Ringling in Ladywell 2022

## John Newnham

This was the sixteenth year of ringling and study of birds using the Ladywell valley. Like last year a total of 35 mist-netting sessions were undertaken and there were two morning visits when just the valley's nest boxes were inspected. The total number of birds ringed (1687) failed to reach the two thousand mark achieved between 2015 and 2020 probably related to few ringling sessions in the key month of September.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number sessions	38	37	39	40	35	23	35	35
Total birds ringed	2120	2057	2941	2252	2381	2373	1343	1687

**Table 1:-** The numbers of ringling sessions and birds ringed in Ladywell in each year (2015-2022).

Like most recent years the ringling effort was not spread evenly across the year with no sessions in either February or December and a concentration of effort during the productive autumn season although with September, clearly the best month, with fewer outings than usual. These features are clearly shown in Table 2.

Month	J.	F.	M.	A.	M.	J.	J.	A.	S.	O.	N.	D.
2007-21 sessions	18	12	20	40	37	38	47	68	81	64	42	30
Average catch (2007-21)	50	43	32	34	40	32	45	63	91	75	56	55
2022 sessions	1	0	2	2	4	2	4	6	4	6	3	0
Average catch (2022)	54	0	33	51	34	29	54	73	118	65	75	0

**Table 2:-** The number of ringling sessions in each month and the average monthly catch (2007-21 and 2022).

The combination of poor weather and team availability were the main constraints in 2022. A few years ago most of the ringers were retired

pensioners but now with just one retired member of the team it was more difficult to switch ringing plans at short notice; indeed most sessions were planned for weekends.

Species	2022	TOTAL	Species	2022	TOTAL
Sparrowhawk	2	12	Garden Warbler	9	109
Kestrel		10	Blackcap	361	4470
Moorhen		2	Yellow-browed Wblr		2
Water Rail		1	Wood Warbler		2
Snipe		1	Chiffchaff	380	5735
Stock Dove		7	Willow Warbler	173	2184
Woodpigeon	2	82	Goldcrest	81	988
Tawny Owl		3	Firecrest	6	81
Kingfisher	5	86	Spotted Flycatcher		22
Green Woodpecker	5	51	Pied Flycatcher	1	1
Great Sp Wdpecker	1	93	Long-tailed Tit	45	552
Swallow		19	Marsh Tit		1
House Martin	5	149	Coal Tit		4
Tree Pipit		3	Blue Tit	121	2127
Meadow Pipit		4	Great Tit	84	1128
Grey Wagtail	1	11	Nuthatch		25
Wren	32	649	Treecreeper	6	102
Dunnock	42	638	Jay		27
Robin	60	823	Magpie		11
Nightingale		2	Jackdaw	1	44
Redstart		12	Rook		1
Stonechat		1	Carrion Crow		1
Blackbird	39	823	House Sparrow		1
Song Thrush	31	470	Chaffinch	11	514
Redwing	3	80	Greenfinch	6	189
Mistle Thrush		6	Goldfinch	56	380
Cetti's Warbler	4	44	Siskin		4
Grasshopper Warbler	1	9	Lesser Redpoll	3	36
Sedge Warbler		45	Bullfinch		25
Reed Warbler	78	942	Yellowhammer	1	1
Lesser Whitethroat	7	49	Reed Bunting	2	32
Whitethroat	22	294	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1687</b>	<b>22541</b>

**Table 3:-** The annual total for 2022 and grand total for each species ringed in Ladywell.

Between 27 (in 2007) and 42 (in 2010) different species have been ringed in each year. The 36 species ringed in 2022 is just one below the average for the previous 15 years. Over the 35 ringing sessions in 2022 an average of 13

different species were trapped with a range of just seven (on 8<sup>th</sup> May) to 18 (on 8<sup>th</sup> October). Table 3 shows the totals of each species ringed in Ladywell for the years 2007 to 2022 and show that 1687 birds were ringed in the valley during 2022; an improvement on 2021 but rather fewer than the six years between 2015 and 2020. Two new species, a Pied Flycatcher and Yellowhammer illustrated below, were ringed during the year, both ringed on 13<sup>th</sup> August and for both only the second record for the valley.



Table 3 shows, in yellow highlight, the other exceptional points. Just one Great Spotted Woodpecker and 11 Chaffinches are record low totals whilst seven Lesser Whitethroats was the highest annual total to date. The red type shows the species on the red list of high conservation concern (BoCC5) and amount to just 12 individuals in 2022.

Table 4 shows the species for which over a thousand captures have been recorded; for Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tit the re-traps numbers are higher than ringing figures. The figures for Willow Warbler show very few are re-trapped with migratory birds moving on fairly quickly. The activity during 2022 brought no change in order to that at the end of 2021.

<b>Species</b>	<b>New</b>	<b>Retrap</b>	<b>Total</b>
Chiffchaff	5735	285	6020
Blue Tit	2127	2831	4958
Blackcap	4470	389	4859
Great Tit	1128	1670	2798
Willow Warbler	2184	14	2198
Robin	823	787	1610
Dunnock	638	901	1539
Blackbird	823	575	1398
Reed Warbler	942	422	1364
Long-tailed Tit	552	686	1238
Wren	649	559	1208
Goldcrest	988	200	1188

**Table 4:-** The total number of handlings (new birds and re-traps) for species with greater than 1000 handlings in Ladywell (2007-2022).

Perhaps the most exciting aspects of ringing come from hearing birds ringed in the valley have been found elsewhere (a recovery) or trapping a bird carrying a ring placed elsewhere (a control). Just four birds were trapped which had been ringed elsewhere (control) and eight ringed in Ladywell and recovered or controlled later in the year. The details of these movements are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

Five of the movements involved interchanges between Ladywell and the ringing site on the north scarp of Cissbury Ring including two Goldcrests ringed in Ladywell and controlled at Cissbury the following day. In the reports for 2020 and 2021 the locations where the four common warblers passing through Ladywell had either been ringed or recovered were plotted. As mentioned before although recoveries and controls are exciting the number reported is relatively small thus few conclusions can be drawn from those movements generated from ringing at a single site. However, when combined with the



information across the country, and indeed other country's ringing/banding schemes a comprehensive picture can be drawn as shown in the BTO's The Migration Atlas (2002).

Species	Date Ladywell		Ringing date	Ringing site	Movement
Robin	10 Apr	4	08/10/2019	Kraaijenstein, Zeeland, Netherlands	292km WSW
Blackcap	29 May	4F	18/09/2021	Cissbury	7km ESE
Blackcap	3 Sep	3M	12/02/2022	Sandwich Bay, Kent	127km WSW
Chiffchaff	26 Nov	3	13/11/2022	Cissbury	7km ESE

**Table 5:** The details of birds caught in Ladywell during 2022 and ringed elsewhere (2=age unknown; 3= hatched in calendar year; additional J signifies in juvenile plumage; 4=hatched before current calendar year; 5=hatched last calendar year).

Species	Ringing date		Recovery date	Recovery location	Movement
Dunnoek	02/09/2021	3	19 Jan	Lancing	3km SSW
Goldcrest	17/10/2020	2M	22 Jan	Steyning	6km N
Blue Tit	29/05/2021	1	27 Feb	Cissbury	7km WNW
Chiffchaff	13/09/2020	3	22 Jun	Old Park Wood Bucklers Hard	80km W
Blackcap	16/07/2022	3J	28 Aug	Smokehouses, Knepp Estate	16km NNW
Blackcap	30/07/2022	3J	24 Sep	Squires Down, Dorset	146km W
Goldcrest	15/10/2022	2F	16 Oct	Cissbury	7km WNW
Goldcrest	15/10/2022	2F	16 Oct	Cissbury	7km WNW

**Table 6:** Details of birds ringed in Ladywell and recovered in 2022 (all controlled except the Dunnoek).

Handling birds and ringing provides considerably more information about population size and structure, species longevity and other aspects of avian biology than just their movements. Re-trapping individuals provide some interesting insights into individual's behaviour. During the year 359 different birds of 22 species were re-trapped, most, as shown in Table 7 were birds ringed earlier in the year with numbers decreasing rapidly for birds ringed in earlier years.

Year of ringing	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number	1	1	5	2	14	29	26	50	232

**Table 7:** The number of individuals from each year re-trapped in 2022.

Each session report throughout the year included the detailed histories of the more interesting re-traps. The most re-trapped species was Blue Tit with 103 different individuals being re-trapped; Great Tit (39 individuals), Dunnock (34) and Reed Warbler (29) following some way behind.

Ring No.	Species	Cap	Date	Age Code	Sex	Interval
DE53329	Green Woodpecker	N	14/09/2014	3	F	
		R	12/10/2014	3	F	0y 028d
		R	15/10/2014	3	F	0y 031d
		R	08/04/2015	4	F	0y 206d
		R	28/04/2015	4	F	0y 226d
		R	08/05/2022	6	F	7y 238d
LH59627	Blackbird	N	23/09/2015	3	M	
		R	09/12/2015	3	M	0y 077d
		R	14/04/2016	5	M	0y 204d
		R	08/06/2016	5	M	0y 259d
		R	09/10/2016	4	M	1y 017d
		R	09/08/2022	6	M	6y 322d
LH59671	Blackbird	N	01/05/2016	5	M	
		R	20/05/2016	5	M	0y 019d
		R	08/06/2016	5	M	0y 038d
		R	05/07/2016	5	M	0y 065d
		R	13/07/2016	5	M	0y 073d
		R	09/04/2017	6	M	0y 343d
		R	29/04/2017	6	M	0y 363d
		R	18/04/2018	6	M	1y 352d
		R	20/05/2018	6	M	2y 019d
		R	07/07/2018	6	M	2y 067d
		R	12/05/2019	6	M	3y 011d
		R	21/09/2019	4		3y 143d
		R	04/04/2021	6	M	4y 339d
		R	17/07/2021	6	M	5y 078d
R	10/10/2021	4	M	5y 163d		
R	20/03/2022	6	M	5y 324d		
R	01/05/2022	6	M	6y 001d		

**Table 8:** Details of birds re-trapped in 2022 with the greatest intervals between ringing and recapture and the most captures since being ringed.

Table 8 gives the details of the Green Woodpecker (DE53329) and Blackbird (LH59627) re-trapped in 2022 with the greatest interval since ringing and the details of the Blackbird (LH59671) re-trapped in 2022 with the greatest number of previous captures. Additionally, two Reed Warblers ringed in 2016 were re-trapped in 2022 and a Long-tailed Tit has been re-trapped in each year since 2016. A Blue Tit (ringed in 2019) and a Robin (ringed in 2020) have each been re-trapped on 15 different occasions. Since ringing commenced in Ladywell a Chaffinch, a Blue Tit and three other Blackbirds have a seven year interval between ringing and recapture and eight resident individuals a six year interval. In the past one Blue Tit has been captured on 37 occasions, a Great Tit on 25 occasions and a Dunnock on 20 occasions so the 17 handlings of LH59671 is still behind these individuals.

Each of the session reports contained a table of mist-net productivity. As mentioned before this has little scientific value and is mainly of interest to those who know the valley well and to see how much birds move about the valley. On most occasions when at least three experienced ringers were present the full set of nets were erected but on days when fewer ringers were present several mist-nets were left in their bags. Table 9 shows, like recent years, most birds were caught in net L5 which is set at the east end of the valley near to the Phragmites fringed stream and a willow stand but K2 set in similar habitat, matched L5 in the number of birds trapped per metre of net. Net site L1 continued to perform better than in previous years.

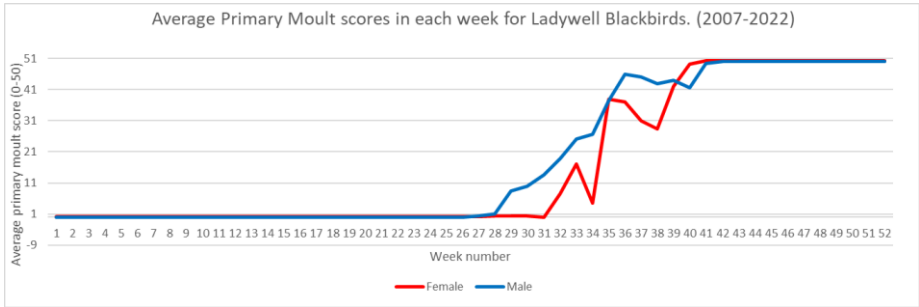
	Central			Ladywell valley					Applesham Pond		
Net	K	K2		L1	L2	L4	L5		P1	P2	P3
Number caught	102	206		192	37	76	401		276	357	146
Net length(metres)	24	18		18	18	18	30		54	72	18
Birds/metre	4	11		11	2	4	13		5	5	8

**Table 9:-** The various net productivity in 2022.

In past session reports and annual reviews the changes in fat deposits and weights of migrants have been explored. Another key piece of data collected concerns moult. Most small passerines renew their major feathers once a year,

the only common species occurring in Ladywell which replaces its feathers twice in each year is the Willow Warbler. Many will undergo this energy sapping process once breeding is complete but several migrants will not start their moult until they reach their winter quarters. The state of the moult is one of the many pieces of data collected on each bird handled and is recorded as one of a dozen single letter codes. Over 62% of the birds trapped in 2022 were coded “O” (old plumage) with about 12% recorded as “P” (Post-juvenile moult) but another 12% with no code, mainly due to uncertainty of being able to ascribe a definitive age to the bird being handled. Some national studies have requested that the number of retained juvenile greater coverts are recorded on young birds which have completed their post-juvenile moult; this is not always easy to determine and only 17% of birds aged 3 (hatched in the current calendar year) or 5 (hatched in the previous calendar year) have this item recorded.

Moulting birds tend to be less active and few birds are trapped in active primary moult (code M), just 47 in 2022. Nine Blackbirds was the most represented species. The progress of the primary moult is recorded by scoring each of the feathers zero (old feather) to 5 (completely new feather); thus before moult the score will be zero and after completion the score in most birds with ten primaries will be 50. The timing and rate of moult in the Ladywell Blackbirds is illustrated in the following figure which shows the males start moult a couple of weeks before the females. The earliest moulting Blackbird recorded in Ladywell was 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010 whilst a male was still undergoing active moult on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017. However, one male Blackbird trapped on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 was considered by all present to still be in old plumage with moult not yet started.



With the absence of nest box work in 2020 this was the fourteenth year the nest boxes in the valley were visited and the detailed findings logged on the British Trust for Ornithology’s (BTO) Nest Record Scheme. A summary and comparison with the previous seven years is shown in Table 10. Five boxes were either not found or had fallen during the winter months; considerable work was done later in the year to check, repair or replace damaged boxes and two boxes which were becoming difficult to access were moved. Furthermore, the location of the boxes were recorded on the What3Words app to facilitate finding the boxes within the dense, late spring vegetation.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of boxes available	32	21	37	34	39	40	41	36
Blue Tit	9	10	12	15	14	-	15	15
Great Tit	6	6	6	6	10	-	8	8
Nuthatch								
Total occupied boxes	15	16	18	21	24	-	23	23
Occupancy %	47	76	49	62	62	-	56	64
Total eggs laid	114	95	120	137	139	-	160	136
Total pulli	69	67	95	86	99	-	76	90
Total young fledged	25	47	57	79	99	-	67	76
% survival egg -> fledging	22	49	48	58	71	-	42	56

**Table 10:-** Summary of Ladywell nest box scheme results 2015-2022

On each visit, including some short visits for stocking feeders or maintenance work, a list of species recorded was logged onto the BTO's Birdtrack recording system. A total of 40 day-lists were created in 2022 and 79 bird species were seen during the year. No new species was recorded so the total remains at 120. Just Carrion Crow and Wren were recorded on all occasions whilst another 11 species were recorded on more than 90% of lists whilst 15 species were only recorded once. Whenever possible a note was made of other taxa, a task made much easier as during the year alterations in Birdtrack facilitated the recording of mammals, amphibians, reptiles and butterflies as well as dragonflies and birds. During the summer 19 species of butterflies were recorded.

Throughout the year considerable 'gardening' was needed to maintain the net rides in operable conditions; this year the usual tasks of brush-cutting, raking, clearing of fallen branches and pollarding of willows was undertaken. I would like to extend our continued gratitude and thanks to the college authorities and staff, particularly Jon Hutcheon the farm manager, and to Hugh and Christopher Passmore of Applesham Farm for their on-going interest, help and support with the ringing in Ladywell. Sometimes the landowners visit us during a ringing session and we are always pleased to see them.

As previously noted our Health and Safety (H&S) policy requires at least two permit holding ringers to be present at each session; the average number of ringers present for the 35 sessions was just over three; indeed three ringers were present for 15 sessions, one session on 25<sup>th</sup> June when six were present but nine sessions when just two were available. During the year the number of outings each team member attended was John Newnham (32), Sue Walsh (25), Clare Buckle (22), Chrissi Twitchen (18) and Becky Parangi (13). Laura Muchmore joined us for three sessions in the spring and Emma Waller for three sessions later in the year. Emily Mustafa, a previous trainee with the group, was able join us during a brief return to Sussex in June. Other visitors included Matt, Mandy Bright, Jan ten Sythoff, Carolyn Garton with Riley and Val Bentley and Toby Stapleton from the Cissbury ringing team. During the summer Clare was assessed for a ringing permit upgrade and in September

learnt that she had successfully gained not only her 'A' permit but has been recognised by the BTO as a ringing trainer. She has subsequently taken over as the lead trainer for the group's two active trainees. During the latter part of the year the H&S policy was revisited to cater and include measures set out by the BTO to prevent the further spread of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

During 2022 the team continued inputting all the ringing data into the BTO's on-line recording software (DeMon) and I thank the team members who take turns keying the data into DeMon. My thanks also to Sue, Clare and Chrissi who have done much of the organisation of ringing sessions this year. I also thank team members for their photographs, some of which are included in this summary.

## Ringling at Cissbury 2022

### Val Bentley

A year without any Covid-19 restrictions enabled us to start with a single session in January, and to complete a total of 28 before wet, then cold, conditions at the end of the year brought a close to activities on 26 Nov. So just one more session was carried out this year than in 2021, but the total of captures was about 30% higher, up from 1003 to 1313, and the number of new birds ringed climbed from 841 to 1075 (+28%). However, this was still lower than in 2020 – possibly that year birds had a bumper breeding season because restrictions on movements due to Covid-19 led to less disturbance at the most important time?

The year was one of comings and goings on the ringers' front and it was fortunate indeed that A ringer Chrissi Twitchen agreed to divide her time between Ladywell and Cissbury, becoming a stalwart this year! C ringer Peter Denyer spent the majority of the year as Assistant Warden at Landguard Bird Observatory in Suffolk, so was only available at the start and very end of the year and on a couple of weekend breaks. David Campbell, another C ringer, was extremely busy, but when time permitted came along and was very useful



in the capture and identification of a *tristis* race “Siberian” Chiffchaff on 2 Nov! Trainee Mya Bambrick was continuing her studies at Bournemouth University and was only able to come twice. Toby Stapleton started training at the end of 2021, and was a regular attendee until he also departed for university in Bangor in September. New trainee Alex Rosenfeld put in his first appearance at the end of August, and thereafter became a very welcome regular member of the team. Members of the Ladywell team who assisted were Sue Walsh and Clare Buckle who both came twice.

Captures were higher in both number and variety. The total of 32 different species ringed was four more than in 2021, though two fewer than 2020. Again no Marsh Tits, though a single Grasshopper Warbler, two Great Spotted Woodpeckers and two Treecreepers put in an appearance. The single Pied Flycatcher was the first since 2007. Conditions were never quite right for



catching any hirundines. Table I shows the results of the efforts during the year.

Species	2018 New	2019 New	2020 New	2021 New	2022 New (New for Year*)	2022 Total Captures (inc. re-traps)
Blackbird	18	20	19	18	26 (30)	35
Blackcap	294	527	741	319	428 (435)	461
Blue Tit	21	39	14	35	31 (38)	54
Bullfinch	12	14	27	14	23 (25)	30
Chaffinch	10	4	9	6	9	9
Chiffchaff	97	142	244	148	142 (144)	147
Coal Tit	-	1	-	-	-	
Dunnock	16	35	30	26	31 (43)	58
Firecrest	4	9	3	5	6 (8)	10
Garden Warbler	13	10	10	3	8	10
Goldcrest	36	92	24	11	54 (60)	77
Goldfinch	2	3	13	8	7	7
Grasshopper Warbler	-	1	2	-	1	1
<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	-	-	-	-	2	2
Great Tit	27	27	9	10	13 (17)	23
Greenfinch	4	1	9	4	9	9
House Martin	-	-	6	-	-	
Kestrel	-	1	1	-	-	
Lesser Redpoll	-	-	63	22	19	19
Lesser Whitethroat	4	3	5	2	6	6
Linnet	-	-	-	1	1	1
Long-tailed Tit	25	61	16	18	25 (31)	71

<i>Magpie</i>	-	1	1	-	-	-
<i>Marsh Tit</i>	-	2	4	-	-	-
<i>Nightingale</i>	-	-	2	1	-	-
<b>Pied Flycatcher</b>	-	-	-	-	1	1
Redstart	-	1	1	-	2	2
Redwing	2	19	13	22	8	8
Reed Warbler	11	5	5	6	3	3
Robin	43	47	62	47	66 (81)	100
<i>Sedge Warbler</i>	-	2	-	-	-	-
Siskin	-	-	19	-	-	-
Song Thrush	17	17	22	22	17 (20)	21
<i>Sparrowhawk</i>	-	1	-	2	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher	1	2	4	2	5	5
Swallow	-	-	-	1	-	-
Tree Pipit	-	-	3	-	1	1
Treecreeper	3	3	-	-	2	2
Whitethroat	47	45	53	15	42	47
Willow Warbler	115	118	135	46	65 (66)	66
<i>Wood Pigeon</i>	1	2	1	--	-	-
Wren	22	20	23	27	22 (25)	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>1275</b>	<b>1593</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>1075 (1150)</b>	<b>1313</b>

**Table 1: Captures at Cissbury**

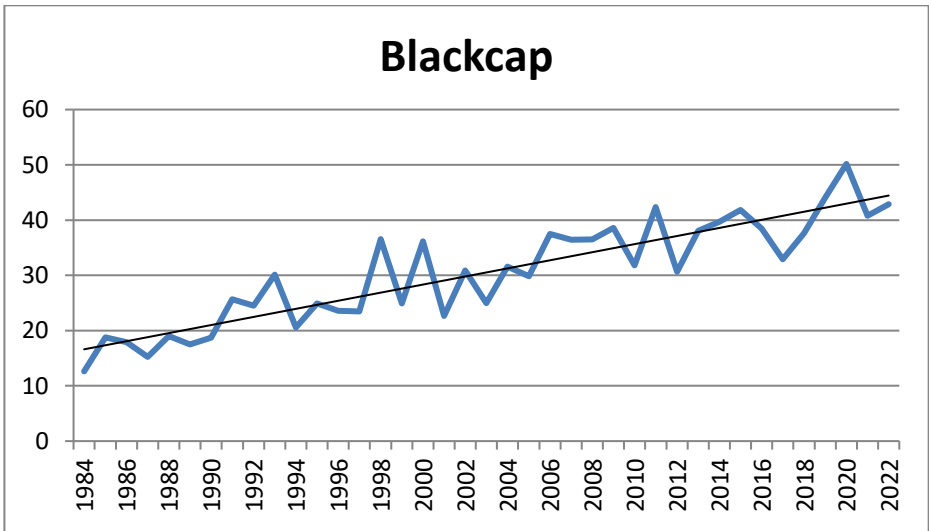
The final column in Table 1 is the figure for the total captures (including re-traps and controls), the penultimate column shows new birds ringed and \*in brackets the number of different individuals of the species i.e. including re-traps ringed in previous years and controls. For comparison, also shown are totals for new birds ringed during each of the previous four years. Species in italics

were ringed in at least one of the previous four years, but not in 2022, while the two species in **bold** were ringed in 2022 but not any of the previous four years.

Our database shows that we only caught the first Great Spotted Woodpecker at the site in 2005 and then each year until 2014, followed by seven blank years. Pied Flycatchers are very infrequent, with only 15 ever trapped, none since 2007; 1984 was the best year when four were ringed.

### **Winners and Losers**

Normally Blackcaps make up a third or more of our total of new birds. This year was no exception with the species representing almost 43% of birds ringed. The gradual increase in proportion of Blackcaps compared with the total number of birds ringed can be seen from the trendline in the Table below (where the y axis is a percentage rather than an actual number)



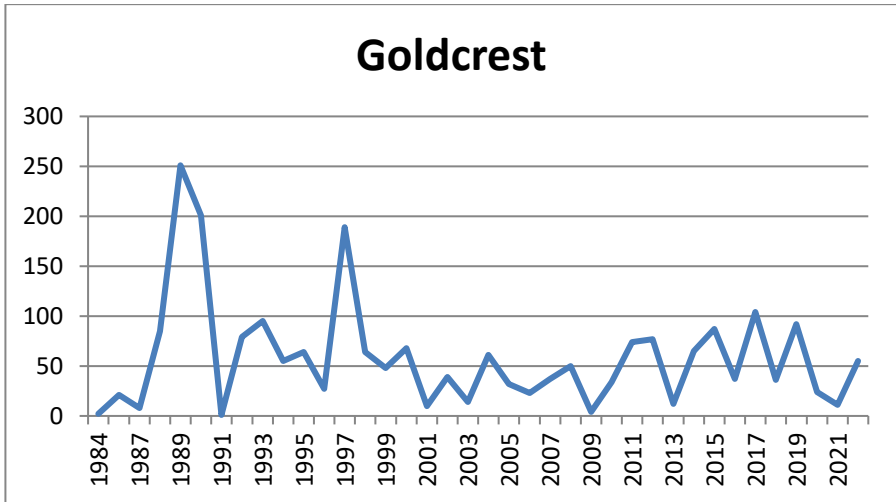
**Table 2 Blackcaps ringed 1984-2022 as percentage of total birds ringed**

Whitethroats fared somewhat better than in the previous two years. We ringed 42, compared with only 15 in 2021 though this had been the lowest figure ever.

The total of 26 new Blackbirds was the highest since 2015, and 66 new Robins the best haul since 2011. Though just six new Lesser Whitethroats is not very impressive, in only one other year since 2011 has this number been equalled. This year also saw highest total of Spotted Flycatchers since 2011.



In comparison with 2021 other species ringed in greater numbers were Bullfinch, where 23 new birds was encouraging, while new Goldcrests increased from 11 to 55. being trapped on every session from 11 Sep to the final one of the year on 26 Nov.



**Table 3 Number of Goldcrests ringed 1984-2022**

Note that the two highest totals (251 in 1989, 201 in 1990) were followed by the lowest (1) in 1991 after an exceptionally cold and prolonged winter. Even the 2018 “beast from the east” did not have such a dramatic effect. The low number in 2020 was most likely due to the lack of visits during Covid-19 restrictions from 4 Nov.

In 2021 all 22 Redwings were autumn captures, but this was the case with only four of the eight ringed this year – rather a surprise as there were five visits in November. This undoubtedly indicates fewer were actually present here.

**The Year as it Happened**

**Winter to Early Summer**

Ringers on duty for the first session of the year on 16 Jan were Mya, Pete, Toby and myself. The total of 34 birds of 14 species included 20 retraps; then

followed four extremely quiet sessions from February to April. Three returning Willow Warblers on 10 Apr had “male” wing lengths. We were slightly busier on 8 May, but even then 11 of the 24 captures were Long-tailed Tits, of which 6 were juveniles. Another nice crop of Long-tailed Tits followed on the 15th, this time with 14 out of the day total of 25, including further 11 juveniles. This brought the number of juveniles ringed to 17, which equalled the total number of young Long-tailed Tits ringed in May prior to 2022. A fortnight later we surpassed it with two more. An unusual spring species for our downland site on the 15th was a returning Reed Warbler. Chrissi wondered at my surprise when I saw it, but it was only the third ever May capture from 415 ringed here! A returning adult looking rather more worn than the predominantly juvenile autumn captures, despite putting on a new set of feathers in its African winter quarters.

### **Summer to early Autumn**

For various reasons, there were no visits in June, so 2 Jul saw the next session, when there were eight juvenile Chiffchaffs. Later in the month we started to enjoy – or otherwise – a period of extreme temperatures and lack of rainfall. Brian has a theory that birds desert the site when it’s too dry. On 10 Jul, though a good day for butterfly sightings, we had few birds; a Lesser Whitethroat had already started its post-breeding moult, so could have been a failed breeder. We noted that we had only trapped one Whitethroat so far, and that our usual serenade of song by the table was absent. Two weeks later it was reassuring to find two juveniles and the following week six young birds were ringed.

The first passage Willow Warbler arrived on 24 Jul. Nine more, all lemon yellow first year birds, followed by another 17 on the 31<sup>st</sup>, along with three of the site’s scarcer species, Linnet, Firecrest and Redstart, all juveniles. We have no record of having previously trapped a juvenile Firecrest with no crest showing, though the facial markings were there in muted form, and the Redstart was only the second we have seen in speckly plumage.



The hot weather in July and August meant we closed the nets earlier than usual so birds were in no danger of overheating when the sun was high in the sky. During August the total number of new birds was 432, of which 261 (60%) were Blackcaps, 52 (12%) Willow Warblers and 33 (8%) Whitethroats. The only other species in double figures was Robin at 31. August also saw the busiest session of the year on the 27th, when 103 new Blackcaps made up 74% of the 139 birds ringed – among the remainder were two Spotted Flycatchers, a Pied Flycatcher and a Grasshopper Warbler. Just two sessions in September added little by way of variety, though rather a lot more Blackcaps

### **October onwards**

Blackcaps continued to outnumber Chiffchaffs on 1 Oct, but the situation was reversed on the 16th, when we also found the first Lesser Redpolls, followed

by a few Redwings on 2 Nov. Also that day a “*tristis*” race/subspecies Chiffchaff (aka Siberian Chiffchaff) was trapped. An amazingly grey bird, very unlike the green-hued “*collybita*” race we normally see. We had ringed a rather brown individual in the previous session, possibly of the “*abietinus*” race. It was interesting to see the different nuances of plumage. On the 13th we trapped two Blue Tits. One adult and one first year, which also had rather unusual plumage. They looked as though they had been rooting around in the coal shed! Not the first time we had caught similar looking birds.

We managed five visits in November with the last on the 26th; this proved to be the final one of the year. Thereafter deluges, then freezing temperatures kept us away.

### **Comparison of Main Passage Species**

Table 4 shows the percentage of the four main passage species ringed compared with the overall total. Actual numbers were higher for three of the species, and there were proportionally more Blackcaps, Whitethroats and Willow Warblers, but a lower percentage, and marginally lower number, of Chiffchaffs.

<b>Year/s</b>	<b>Blackcap</b>	<b>Chiffchaff</b>	<b>Whitethroat</b>	<b>Willow Warbler</b>
2000-2004	25.5	13.7	6.9	6.8
2005-2009	30.6	15.9	5.0	5.8
2010-2014	30.5	18.4	5.5	6.6
2015-2019	36.0	15.3	4.5	9.1
2020	49.7	15.0	3.3	8.5
2021	37.9	17.6	1.8	5.5
2022	39.8	13.2	3.9	6.0

**Table 4: Totals of Four Passage Species (as percentages of total number of all birds ringed)**



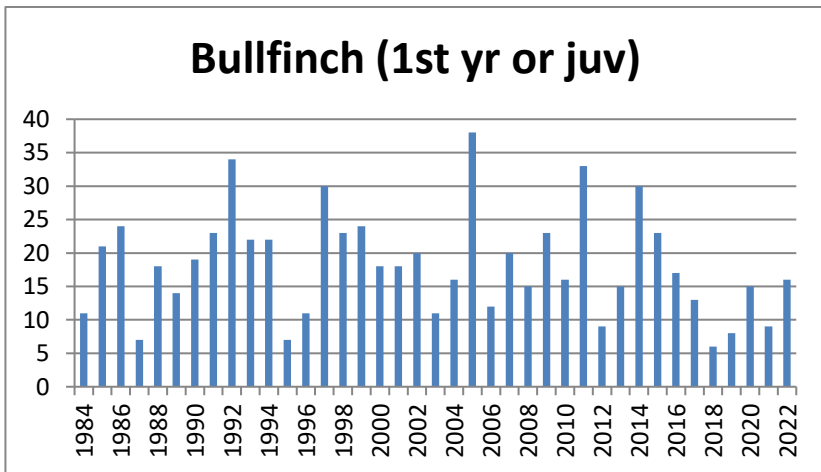
## Residents

From our very small sample of juveniles and first year birds ringed until the end of September, only Robins seem to have had a bumper year. Of the other five species noted below, young Blue Tits, Dunnocks and Great Tits were slightly fewer and Wrens at only just over half the 2021 figure.

Species	Number of juveniles and first year birds (to 30/9)						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Blackbird	5	2	6	8	11	8	8
Blue Tit	5	8	8	20	10	19	17
Dunnock	11	13	10	22	20	17	13
Great Tit	9	4	15	15	7	5	6
Robin	24	12	27	27	44	33	49
Wren	13	6	14	12	20	15	9

### **Table 5: Productivity of six resident species**

Note: Only juveniles and first year birds trapped until the end of September are included; these are most likely to have been hatched on or near the site.



**Table 6: Annual totals of first year/juvenile Bullfinches**

## Other Residents

Only two positively aged first year Song Thrushes were captured, one in October and a second in November. We trapped nine adult Bullfinches during the year, three males and six females, and 16 juvenile or young birds. Three more, hatched in 2022, were trapped in early 2023. Their numbers do fluctuate, but are generally on a downward trend, as indicated by the following Table.

## Survivors, Controls & Recoveries

Having a known date of ringing gives an indication of the age of an individual if it is re-trapped, e.g. if a bird is a known adult when it is ringed, it is at least into its second calendar year, so if it is recaptured the following year it will be into its third year of life.

Table 7 shows older individuals recaptured in 2022, with estimated age.

Species	Ringed	Age/Sex	Re-trapped	Notes
Robin	10/10/19	First year	2/11/22	3 <sup>rd</sup> recapture, 4 <sup>th</sup> calendar year
Blackbird	21/4/17	Second year male	26/11/22	2 <sup>nd</sup> recapture, 7 <sup>th</sup> calendar year
Blackcap	21/7/18	Adult female	22/10/22	Re-trapped each year, 6 <sup>th</sup> calendar year
Blue Tit	8/8/19	Juvenile	13/11/22	3 <sup>rd</sup> recapture, 4 <sup>th</sup> calendar year
Great Tit	2/9/17	First year	29/5/22	7 <sup>th</sup> recapture, 6 <sup>th</sup> calendar year

**Table 7: Selection of Re-traps 2022**

Five birds caught had been ringed elsewhere. Two were Goldcrests on 16 Oct, which had been ringed the previous day at Ladywell. Another visitor from

there was a Blue Tit, ringed as a nestling on 29 May 2021 which was at Cissbury on 27 Feb. Two passage migrants were on their way south; a Willow Warbler ringed at Weldrake Ings NR, York on 14 Aug, was at Cissbury on the 22nd, and on 18 Sep, we trapped a female Blackcap ringed at Ingrebourne Valley, Greater London, on the 3rd.

Two birds moved from Cissbury to Ladywell. A female Blackcap we ringed on 18 Sep 2021 may well have been breeding at Ladywell as it turned up there on 29 May and a Chiffchaff we ringed on 13 Nov was at Ladywell 13 days later. A first year male Blackcap ringed on 20 Aug found its way to Sandwich Bay by 11 Sep. Captured rather further afield at Auchenhew Bay, Isle of Arran, on 7 Jul was a male Blackcap we had ringed on 13 Sep 2020. Of particular interest to myself as only a few years ago I was on holiday just a couple of miles from there!

## **Summary**

We were able to carry out 28 ringing sessions during the year, one more than in 2021, with an average of 47 birds per session, ranging from a paltry five on 12 Mar to 146 on 27 Aug.

We were grateful for the efforts of the Worthing Conservation Volunteers when they visited on 6 Mar and despatched rather a lot of sapling ash and sycamore. We had set some nets in the hope of showing them a few birds, but none were trapped after they had arrived on site!

Thanks are due to our Group Secretary, Brian Clay who oversees the return of data to the BTO; to Chrissi, David, Peter, Mya, Toby and Alex for their involvement with the ringing operations during the year, and to others from the Ladywell team for their assistance; to my husband Roger for carrying out tree and scrub clearance with me in winter and ride maintenance in summer; to the National Trust for their support for ringing at the site; and to the owners of the track for allowing access so equipment can be transported to and from the site.

Next year will mark the 40th year of ringing at Cissbury. There have been many changes of personnel since those early days, with the one constant being Brian who is Group Secretary and keeps a watching brief on activities!

## A tribute to Dave Smith: my Friend

Dave and I knew each other over many years going back to the early 1980's. In fact it was my Dad, Frank, who first met Dave whilst birding on Goring beach. Dave was an avid sea-watcher and really enjoyed logging the passage of birds moving up and down the coastline in Sussex - especially in the spring and autumn migration. We soon became firm friends and bird watched continuously for over 35 years going out on a regular basis, sometimes even twice a week..

We enjoyed many birding holidays together visiting Yorkshire, Norfolk and Cornwall including the Scilly Isles, Scotland, and on occasions, even foreign birding destinations such as Spain and the Caribbean. We spent many hours birding around West Sussex. Pagham Harbour was a place he especially loved, and we would sit in the hide at Church Norton, or sit on the bench on the inner beach, whilst talking endlessly about the birds we had found or some of the birds we were likely to find. We had a long list of rare birds that we had found together such as Pallid and Montague's Harrier, Pallas's Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Richards Pipit, Kentish Plover, White-billed Diver and many more.

When on a birding twitch we always shared the driving. If Dave was driving we passengers dreaded the journey back as he would often play loud rock music in the car. Something he enjoyed, although the passengers did not! In fact, we spent so much time together we would often solve the world's problems by just chatting. I would say we were experts and could solve Tottenham Hotspurs Football Club's problems better than any overpaid manager. He supported Spurs enthusiastically and passed on his allegiance to his sons, Ian



and Tim. We often discussed politics and we soon realized that we could run Downing street far more successfully than any politician. It was fortunate that our political views were aligned.

In later years Dorian Mason joined our gang and became a regular member once he had retired, making us a formidable team of birders. The three of us enjoyed so many great days out together. In recent years Dave's health was in decline and many of the new members of our society will be unaware of Dave's previous activities or contribution to the SDOS. He suffered many setbacks due to his declining health. Dorian and I still managed to get him out bird watching as frequently as possible. Dave not was not one to complain and stoically he took his illness in his stride.

Being an excellent birdwatcher Dave was well known and respected amongst the birding community of Sussex and was frequently seen around the County pursuing his passion for bird watching. He found many rare birds in the county some of them challenging and difficult to identify. He was also a meticulous record keeper. His knowledge extended to many other areas of natural history and he was well versed in the identification of butterflies and dragonflies. He was very generous with his time and was involved with recording and analysing bird sightings in the county and worked in various ways for the Sussex Ornithological Society Records Committee. He served several terms including one as Assistant Recorder.

Dave was also a long-standing member of Shoreham & District Ornithological Society and he was our Recorder for many years. Dave would frequently lead walks for both ornithological societies, often co-leading with me as a double act. He was adept in passing on his depth of knowledge both to beginners and also to more experienced members who joined us on the walks. He had a deep understanding of and enthusiasm for history, especially ancient Britain, and Roman and Egyptian cultures. He was always willing to share his knowledge with others in his own quiet manner and was ready to answer any questions that came his way.

Dave liked his hair long, windswept even, and when I went around in the early days, Joan, Dave's mum would often say "Dave, I wish you would have a sensible hair cut like Bernie", often with a big smile on her face. Joan moved in with Dave and the family after Linda, his wife, passed away, taking on the role of Gran In charge, and taking some of the pressure of running the home. Joan died a few years ago and was a great loss to the family.

Dave was a good, kind, family man with two sons and a grandchild. He lost his wife Linda to cancer at a very young age of 49 in 2002. This loss created for Dave and his family massive emotional upheaval and anxiety. Dave was a former member of the banking industry working locally in IT at the offices of Lloyds Bank Headquarters in Durrington. He took early retirement after many years working in a pressurized environment.

That was Dave, my friend and yours. Rest In Peace old friend. Gone but not forgotten.

## Image Gallery

Dorian Mason has provided us with a series of images taken at Goring Gap over the winter period. We have taken the opportunity to include some birds that we do not often feature in the Image Gallery. In sequence are Wood Pigeon, Pied Wagtail, Carrion Crow, Ringed Plover, Mediterranean Gull and Common Gull.











## Photograph acknowledgments

The source of photographs is often clear from the context or other attribution and those are not listed here. Note also that some of the bird photographs are illustrative; they may not be of the actual bird referred to in the account.

Front cover: Stonechat – Ron Bewley

Page 4: Graves on Beechey Island - Roger Smith

Page 5: Ross's Goose – Roger Smith

Page 11: Greater Flamingo – Bertie Harding

Page 12: Pallid Swift – Bertie Harding

Page 31: 'Tristis' Chiffchaff

Page 35: Lesser Whitethroat

Page 38: Juvenile Redstart

Back cover: Common Buzzard – Dorian Mason

## Society officers and the User Group

<b>Role in SDOS</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>eMail</b>
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Minutes Secretary	Jenny Holter	minutes@sdos.org
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USER GROUP (www.groups.io)	Peter Wyld Sue Miles Time Holter	admin@sdos.org
WEBSITE ( <a href="http://www.sdos.org">www.sdos.org</a> )	Peter Wyld Jerry Campbell Roger Smith	webmaster@sdos.org
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA (Public)</b>	~~~~~	~~~~~
Facebook Group - ‘Shoreham Birders’	Tony Benton Jenny Holter	

23/3/2022

If you use an email address but are not a member of the User Group then please consider joining (<https://groups.io/g/sdos/join>) to make sure you receive up-to-date information about SDOS activities.

