The Pigswill Bay Bird Report 2003

The one you've all been waiting for ….

But Was It Worth IT?

First Edition 01/01/2003

Key to initials:
BC = Barry Child
PFt = Peter Forest
DG = Dave Gilbert
IH = Ian Harding
RH = Richard Hoult
IHr = Ian Hunter
PL = Peter Laslett
BM = Barry Matlock
PM = Phil Milton
SM = Simon Mount
CS = Craig Sammels
FS = Francis Solly
TP = Terry Preston
DS = Dennis Sawyer
JV = John Veal
JW = John Websper
MW = Martyn Wilson
DW = Dylan Wrathall

About the author: P>J Milton…….

As with much truly great art which is not truly appreciated until many years of pondering and intellectual discussion have sharpened the minds of the viewer or reader – I feel the Pegwell bay bird reports have been grossly underestimated by the masses that have happened upon it's pages of wisdom, forthrightness and down right awesomeness that fill every centimetre of it's being from cover to cover. So I ask – Ne - Plead with you as a reader to try ones best at giving time and effort to straining the deep recesses of the mind into action so as to glory oneself in the magnificence of the literary genius on offer to one and all. It would be a crying shame if in years to come – perhaps even after the authors death that the proverbial "penny" dropped and society realised just what they had missed out on.
So I implore you to view this document with the respect and awe it deserves and shower our author with the praise he deserves whilst he is still amongst us lesser mortals in person. It is great honour on my behalf to have been chosen to start off this years report in this vein – truly my most valuable moment in a long and fruitful life … Words cannot describe the emotion of being asked to contribute towards something so historic. I will try and paint a portrait of the career of the greatest bird report "Artiste" in the known universe…

Phil 29 – a failed amateur entrepreneur from Ramsgate in Kent – first hit the national headlines way back in 1985 after becoming the first human to break the nine second barrier for the 100metres after noticing the approach of a group of twitchers at his local patch – Pegwell Bay in Kent. This bettered his 9.1-second dash to escape Tattooed Tony only the week before. An ex Conyngham University graduate {Where he studied both "The internal Physics of Ants" and "Rheumatism in Aphids"} and Thanets first man in space – Phil cuts a dashing figure in the area where he has become an expert on the local bird and insect life.

It hasn't all been plain sailing though as Phil has been no stranger to controversy as those who are familiar with his Thesis of 1991 "What colour trousers are best worn in the field." - causing a storm amongst those who received it back in the dark old days of this colourful characters life. Though with the passing of time it has become widely appreciated that this shows the levels of dedication and attention to minute detail our gracious author shows to his art.

His puritanical approach to ornithology is met with distain in other parts of the island known as Thanet. Local listers and Twitchers have both conflicted with the incredibly high standards the author keeps - though Phil with wisdom amuch and dignity abounding just says about the whole ordeal "I don't know why he doesn't just go away and get a haircut." Wise words mate – wise words indeed!

That said - Phil has come across some of the most rare and unusual birds ever seen in Kent. His discovery of the Penguin migration off Foreness in the winter months in the early 90s bought him many accolades locally. Phil spent many years in the Foreness area in search of the "Holy Grail" of all endemic Thanet birds – namely the Sea Ostrich. Sadly due to extraneous circumstances his life long ambition to see the said creature in its one and only location on earth had to be cut short and this left mad "screaming" Kevin Lord* as the only person to see the Sea Ostrich in the flesh. It's not even on "The Hairs" list he remarked candidly! Other miraculous discoveries include: 4 species of Albatross in a day in Northdown Park, Kents only ever flock of Spoon-billed Sandpipers {date and location withheld in case of breeding} and a fly-by Archaeopterix in Stonelees in 1995.

So may I personally – with as much humility as I can muster - thank our author for the dedication and time spent writing out such interesting and cutting edge information so that we lesser beings can be brought up to date with the Avian Fauna of Thanet. Thank you.

Read on:

Bill Finch October 2003.

Sponsored by:
Stan Wichtern, Harry hawk, Ray Neck, Graham Partridge, Walter Rail, Ken Tushplover {B.A.} representing **CYBEROPTICS UK LTD.** (Cyberoptics – a name you can trust!)

* “Sea Ostrich” stolen from the lips of Kevin Lord – N.Foreland c.1995. Surely the most ridiculous name for a bird any human being could think of? I wish I could say that I had thought it up.

The PEGWELL BAY Bird Report 2003

Smee again! Yep its that time of the year for tripe served up Pegwell style! Where to start? I know lets have a moan! What about? Er … what about modern birding? Na … too obvious. Everyone knows I hate modern birding … well they should do anyway? I read a bit in a rather excellent monthly birding journal the other day - whinging about a suppressed Ovenbird in a private garden in Hereford. The twitching mentality made me laugh, as the spin put on it in the magazine was that the local community missed out on a major fundraising event by keeping the boring thing quiet! Nothing about the chance of any of the appalling behaviour we’ve all witnessed over the years at such events – oh no! Incredible! I would rather die destitute of starvation than have my back garden crawling with twitchers I thought. Then amazingly – my conscience kicked in – and I had to ask myself a rather poignant question. Am I that selfish that I would actually spoil the enjoyment of all the twitchers the length and breadth of the country just to save myself the odd moment of discomfort? Lets face it I actually like most of the twitchers I’ve run into over the years – so what’s the problem? Have I just become one of those bitter, twisted patch watchers who couldn’t give a stuff about anyone who doesn’t share my own, rather limited point of view? Then “eureka” it came to me in a flash of light! I would rather die destitute of starvation than have my back garden crawling with twitchers! They’d never actually see the thing anyway I reasoned. There are far too many moth traps in my back garden to view any sort of bird – except perhaps the top half of an Ostrich – and they’re not too common in Thanet {though the hairs probably got it on his list!}…so the old conscience was in the clear again. I learned this style of thinking during my apprentice years back at sunny Foreness. Y’know Foreness – or suppressor city as its banded around in Kent and no doubt beyond! It surely has the worst reputation in the world amongst paranoid twitchers – bitterly twisted by the fact that the locals didn’t rush to the phone to put out every Yellow-Browed Warbler or Red-Backed Shrike that turned up! Oh how I hate the twitching mentality! Sometimes – whilst stationed in my normal spot outside the hide at Peggers – I quite often hear misinformed onlookers refer to my good self as a “twitcher”!!! Now as a nice placid Christian lad its not the done thing to vent ones fury a couple of old biddies out for a walk with their little doggy – though it has crossed my mind once or twice to purchase some rotting fruit or vegetables to pelt the next unfortunate person that I hear uttering the most dreaded of all accusations – “me a twitcher” aghhhrrrr!!!! I am sure its like a day out at the zoo for the average Pegwell dog walker – “Look Alice – theres a Robin. Oooh – look theres an Alsation and look theres a twitcher! Surely there are more interesting things of going on? Year’s back I overheard a bloke who was within earshot as he tried to impress a rather attractive foreign bird with his local knowledge. Part of the conversation went something like this:
Foreign bird: “What is man doing?” {Referring to me staring out over the mud through my telescope}
Thick Bloke replies: “Oh him – he’s a Twitter!”
Foreign Bird: “What is Twitter?”
Thick Bloke: {Trying his best to appear intelligent} “Oh yes now – Twitters are people who look for birds” etc,etc…

I should have said “Excuse me mate but its YOU who is the Twitter!!”

It’s a sad statement of fact in this day and age that anyone sporting a pair of bins is lumped with all the anoraks and numbers men out there passing for people like me! What an insult!

Another tenuous link type story to do with twitching {and at the risk of appearing hypocritical} I once saw a fantastic piece of behaviour at a twitch – when a Short-Toed Lark turned up at Dumpton back in 199???? Now unlike most of the birds you see in this country this bird was extremely approachable and I mean approachable. As I arrived to have a gander at the unfortunate little brown job – young Craigy Sammels was sitting on the ground with the bird about 4 foot away from his feet. It was quite unperturbed by the constant stream of dogwalkers that speckle Thanet like ants around a dropped sweet in the summer time – it would just jump up or run along until they passed by. Anyway as we tried our best to seem as if we were interested in this remarkably boring little thing – a screech of breaks behind us broke the monotony. Out jumps this berk armed with bins {and a scope} and starts stalking this thing like a big game hunter!! Even when it became patently obvious you had to be careful you didn’t actually tread on this thing – he still kept at it – making his approach from a weird array of

strategic angles as if it was going to fly off at any minute! This behaviour together with watching a mass of twitchers stalking a couple of Bluethroats that spent a day on the sea wall at Pegwell in 1999??? – from a safe distance I hasten to add – made it clear to me just how ridiculous the whole twitching thing really is. A bit controversial perhaps but there you go.

THE FORENESS YEARS

Ah Foreness – what a place. I have many happy memories of the area. Its funny isn't it just how the retrospective parts of our brains expertly sieves out all the bad bits such as endless days of bird-less trudgery in the area and leaves just happy, fluffy memories. Strange this coming from a bloke whose learned to moan for Britain this past few years? It's a Thanet disease is moaning – Franny's got it off to a fine art! A piece of information here for any outsiders who think of Thanet as a birding hotspot. You'd moan incessantly too if you watched here day in day out too. But I've been here before haven't I? I don't really want to go over the" how bad it is watching Thanet" thing again? If it's that bad then why bother going out at all eh? I dunno?

Back to Foreness – the main gripe back in those days {other than dog walkers} was the appalling weather forecasts we used to get. I would watch the weather forecast the day previous – to see an excellent sea watching wind, boiling up in the North Sea. I would spend the entire night catnapping, partly because my bedroom window faces north {into the wind} and I am a light sleeper and partly out of excitement - in the anticipation of seeing masses of Skuas or suchlike flying past the hide on the cliff top. Half an hour before first light I would set off on my bike for the arduous five mile ride into the wind and rain – then as I would get two minutes down the road – "hang on – there seems to be quite a bit of west in that wind" I would mutter under my breathe as another barrage of freezing rain hit me in the moosh! " No worries it'll go round north soon" I would think. {Where did all that youthful optimism go eh?} It hardly ever did. I would arrive – sweating on the inside and sodden on the outside, in a west/northwest wind which would push an Arctic Skua and around 3 oiled Kittiwakes past about once an hour. It normally turned out to be a complete waste of time. Then after about 9 hours of mind numbing boredom I would return home – every ounce of enthusiasm washed down the drain {good use of metaphor there eh!} – then about an hour after dark "ring - ring, ring - ring"

{ME after picking up the phone.}"Hello, who is it?"
{THE PHONEE} " Hello there Phil – its Dave Davenport here. Did you go seawatching today?"
{ME} "Yeah … I spent nine hours freezing to death in the hide at Foreness getting bored to death by F.Solly!"
{DD} "Did you get much?"
{ME} "Nah … the flippin wind was all wrong again! What's going on with that flippin Meridian forecast – they might as well as told me it was going to be 140c in Antartica today … if I get my flippin hands on that silly moo that forecast it was gonna be a force 8 northeasterly … I tell ya … I aint joking I will ….
{DD} interjects ,…"What did you ho-ho-ho get then ho ho?"
{ME} " er …7 Arctics, 2 Bonxies, 19 Kitts, 2 Divers, a Gannet and 14 stinking Auks!"
{DD} "Is that ho ho ho all? I only did three hours and I had 97 Poms, 497 Arctics, 56 Long-tails, 3 Sabines and ho ho ho guess what one of the Long-tails was taking butterflies about 15 feet off the end of my ho –ho – ho nose – the Poms were virtually overhead – absolutely magnificent."
{ME} "Oh did ya … that's a bit of a result isn't it!"
{DD} "Oh no, no, no … its always like this in a north-westerly off … ho, ho,ho Shellness … I was only surprised there weren't more ho – ho – ho Poms."
{ME} "Yeah??!"
{DD} "Are you going back down tommorow?"
{ME} "Yeah … first light again."
{DD} "See ya."
{ME} "Yep see ya …thanks for ringing."

Sorry Dave but I had to get you in here somehow. No-ones exempt old bean!

Dave Davenport now there's a bloke. Now Dave's a seabird nut. {Bad joke time…he sees a bird and then goes nuts!} The funny thing is though I've not ever met him – I think I understand exactly where he's coming from? Now in my view - he should be a sort of role model to all birders – as he doesn't seem to give a hoot about whether Charlie Bloggs has got a Yellow-Browed Warbler on his latest year list? He just does his bit of birding up the Thames or on Shellness year in year out etc. I wonder what

Dave would do if he found an Ovenbird in his back garden? Probably mutter “pesky little blighter” and go out seawatching. It would certainly spoil the illusion if he did otherwise? That’s what I like to think he’d do anyway.

Now where was I?……

Oh yeah, you’ll notice if you’ve seen one of these pieces of junk in the past that I’ve changed the layout a tad? No? Well I have! I pinched the idea from Dylan Wrathalls expertly penned 2002 garden moth report. I say expertly penned … perhaps O.A.P. friendly would have been a better description? He’s a pussycat these days old Dyl – no longer the outspoken drunken oaf of old – oh no, no, no. Since he’s turned fifty he’s turned over a new leaf. A bit of a tart on the quiet. He wrote all his little moffy woffies out all nice and neat so that all the old ladies up his road would go into some time warped re-education mentality… it makes me chuckle to myself. The first time I remember seeing Dylan was in the early 90s at Stodmarsh. Who is that bloke …I used to think to myself? Now I can be a bit outspoken and self-opionated at times but this geezer really took the biscuit! “Flippin Kent lists only this and you lot are a load of nonsense if ya think so and so … etc!!!” And we hardly even knew the bloke!
Oh how things have changed nowadays! I see an older Dylan sitting on a rocking chair out in his back garden holding Bev’s hand and talking about fluffy bunny rabbits etc in future years! Perhaps even making daisy chains in-between watering the Roses in his comfy garden slippers?

Also - no poems this year I am afraid. Old Billy Ball had a brain haemorrhage {strangely in his foot?} when he saw the 2002 report! Apparently he read its contents, went a purpley colour, passed wind then past out before being rushed off to hospital. I’ve been told that whilst under anaesthetic during his brain operation he continually shouted at the surgeon to get a move on, as he had to get home to give the t’whippets their tripe for dinner! He threatens his legal team will take every penny I’ve got if I write another about him. He reckons if he won a huge cash fall off me he would have to buy himself an apparent much needed 25th telescope. Sad isn’t it? Sad isn’t he perhaps? Oops better watch what I say here .How do you spell allegedly? I had better sneak a few of these in to be on the safe side.

Its also been bought to my attention of rumblings in deepest Kent regarding the content of my past reports. My favourite one was from north Kent where someone {who really shouldn’t have been reading the report in the first place, as it should only be distributed to those who know all the people in it} remarked of the 2001 version – and I quote “it’s a disgrace to birding.” Excellent eh? Part of me wanted to agree with him and then the more cynical side of my rather Jeckyll and Hyde character came to the forefront and I had the overriding desire to send him a letter explaining in some detail the as yet unnoticed premise of irony in my writings. I wonder if he knows I am six foot five – was one of my other thoughts? I mean am I not making it as plain as the nose on your ear … or whatever the saying is? Is it not patently obvious? Look mate if you read this one – I will hereby admit – in public - to being the biggest berk around, not being too intelirigient, not knowing much about birds etc etc. but come on – get your laughing gear out mate … its all only a bit of fun this birding stuff y’know? It isn’t rocket science, no-ones gonna die if they don’t see the rarest bird or live forever if they attain to having the best birding reputation in the universe. I know this for a fact as I’ve spent the last 25 years of my life in the company of “the Hair” and this attitude never got him anywhere except for a PHD in twatism! No, No watching birds is surely just a wonderful break from the hustle and bustles of modern life {SPEECH – SPEECH} neh a stupendous particle of clear thought on the planet rock of muddied society – an escape – a valiant attempt to withdraw from the pitfalls of worthlessness so prevalent in modernity – ye – a speck of inner light to ward off the dark and dreary night that’s called modern life! Oh yeah – we quite like it too. Phew that’s better! I was coming over all Henry the fifth there! I always feel sorry for old king Henry y’know … imagine the stick he must have got going to school with “V” as a surname eh? Old Simon Schama didn’t even make mention of it on the Beebs History of Britain TV programme. Just goes to show that these so-called intellectuals sometimes miss the most obvious of facts. A bit like Stephen Hawkings really – he might be a bit of a bod but by the sounds of it his theories about the universe are about as understandable as my bird reports! The only thing is – I’m one step ahead of him as I am not under any illusion – knowing for sure that what I write about is mindless drivel. The problem is in this day and age in my view is if you can appear to be one step ahead of the rest then there are some too afraid to actually admit they don’t know what the hell your going on about and hail you top banana {a bit like the emperors new clothes} Now were not going to have that sort of problem with our own “a brief history in Pegwell time” now are we? We know the authors a clot and

his writings are only the strange and warped ramblings of a demented mind. I know this for certain as my ex-boss and part time Nazi told me – Mr Ronnie Hutton – the wealthiest man in Thanet. Hi Ron – bet you didn't expect to see your name in this did ya?

I do receive a mixed reaction to my ramblings in Bird Report guise. The worst one is from Kevin Thornton {of SBBObs fame …or should it be infamy?} as the e-mails he sends on go something like this: Oh Phil your bird reports are fantastic – Oh and your fantastic too – yeah you're the best birder in the universe by far and the funniest etc etc. What a crawler eh? So Kev me old china – if you send me any more complimentary garbage I will put it in the next report, then the next report and so on and so on, until you STOP LICKING MY BOOTS! OKAY! THANK YOU!!! Other reactions are more difficult to gauge. I've been sending these things out to some people for five years now who haven't even made a single mention of them in all that time! Perhaps I should take the hint? I cannot remember a single comment made to me about the birds in any of them? Yep – it's only the gags I get any feedback about. All the 2002 reports I sent out by e-mail last year were accompanied by a short request asking for some sort of reaction about the content. Nine times out of ten the replies were "yeah its real funny – thanks etc" which isn't really what I wanted from you punters out there. No while these comments were much appreciated I was really after some feedback about whether or not I had inadvertently overstepped the mark with any of my more scathing comments or why not put this in – y' know some sort of input. I certainly wasn't looking for any praise or anything like that as no one asked me to write these things and it's a dead cert that none of you lot out there enjoy reading them half as much as I do writing them. No … I write them for myself and Its not as though I am providing any sort of major service to anyone – though I do hope they might serve to break down a few barriers that might otherwise exist or give us something to talk about on a rainy afternoon stuck in that damned gloomy rabbit hutch of a hide. By far the best reply I received was from one P.W.J.Findley who – amongst other things wrote me via e-mail that my writings had reached the dizzy heights of being read by NASA! I suppose I shouldn't have been that surprised? Anyway this did lead me to wondering exactly what the initials PWJ actually represented? After literally seconds of detailed research I can now reveal to the world at large the aforementioned gents full name. Are you ready? It's Pedro Winnifred Jimjam Findley! I fully expect him to refute the above allegation – but – and the logic applied makes it an undeniable statement of fact – in MY world, its Pedro Winnifred Jimjam Findley – okay? The same as its – Jolly old Johnny Hollyer or Gap tooth Yokel Laslett. So now you know. I had the misfortune during the scorcher of a summer we've just endured to come across old Laslett birding topless in the Pegwell car park. Not a pretty sight, I can tell you. All he was wearing was an enormous pair of kaki shorts and a stupid floppy hat. He resembled a beached Whale attempting a cowboy impersonation. It wasn't until he muttered a few "Ooh arrs" in my direction that I even realised who it was.

In truth I love writing these things y'know. I sometimes think I like writing them more than I do going out looking for things {like birds} to actually write about in them? At least there is an end product – a long term end product I mean, as lets face it when you go out in the field you see a few bits that make you feel nice which in turn makes you go out the following day etc etc and its never ending, if you think about it? Personally speaking – these reports fill in a bit of a gap that's otherwise unfilled in my birding. If others enjoy them – all well and good – just keep it to yourself if you do eh? So the message is please, please tell me about any ideas or criticisms – especially criticisms as I always get nervous after I send them out – thinking I might have gone too far with one of my – well meaning character assassinations. I have to be a bit more careful as I hear of Pegwell Reports turning up at Dunge or in North Kent {as previously discussed} not that I mind anyone having them of course – its just I do like to know whose having them so they can be briefed as to what the reports are about. I'm going off on one here aint I? Sorry.

Also something I've always wanted to document in these things and never gotten around to is how the counts are conducted as if anyone was to compare the more recent counts with the 98/99 reports it might give the impression that most of the commoner waders and wildfowl are increasing in the area which would be inaccurate. Back in the old days I would pretty much count whatever was immediately in view close to the bird hide whereas these days I tend to sweep all the way across the bay from the west cliff southward to the sampha area. I have also tended to include birds flying into the bay to roost that on occasion adds in excess of 300 Oystercatchers to the counts. These birds feed on the rocky areas both to the north and south of Ramsgate Harbour and pile in when these areas are vacated because of the incoming tides.

I noticed when I revamped the incredibly badly written first attempts at penning the 1998/99 reports just how low some of the Duck counts were – especially Wigeon. No doubt this was because I was

ignoring the ducks sitting out on the sea and again only counting the closer individuals. Another thing to bear in mind that back in those days I was spending a lot of time watching at Foreness – which ground to a halt in the spring of 2000. After this circumstances dictated I concentrated solely on the Pegwell area so I have had more time this past few years in the area to conduct more accurate counts.

Regarding the wader counts; all wader counts are conducted from the bird hide area and this years counts should only be compared with the 2000 to 2002 counts as a direct comparison for the reasons already touched on earlier.

Migrating raptors are generally looked for again from the bird hide area or the fields up to the north of the reserve of Little Cliffsend Farm where along with the west cliff is where most of the passerine vismig is noted. A good joke that – passerine migration – AS If!

Also this year I have concentrated virtually all my sea watching to the East Pier off Ramsgate Harbour though a certain amount is done on speck from the bird hide. It is not – and never will be, a very good sea watching area geographically anyway but that said the Pier is as close as you can get to birds either passing through the area or moving in or out of the bay. It's much better than my spot on the western under cliff anyway – though I do get a soaking from the occasional wave when watching off the harbour. But yet again I'm starting to repeat myself.

So read on – enjoy – criticise etc! Oh do what you want!

SHE CARRIES ME …THROUGH DAYS OF APATHY.
SHE WASHES OVER ME.
SHE SAVED MY LIFE - IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING –
WHEN SHE GAVE ME BACK -
THE POWER TO BELIEVE.

The Pigswill Bay Bird Report for 2003

Red-throated Diver/Diver Species

Peak day counts as follows: in January = 171 south on 23rd, 266 south on 28th, 115 south on 29th, 385 south and 126 north on 30th and 372 north on the 31st.

There were also2 late birds with 1 north on April 5th and 1 offshore on May 6th.

	JAN	FEB	MAR		OCT	NOV	DEC
South	1031	483	42		0	8	5
North	488	29	6		0	1	8

Black-throated Diver

1 flew north off Ramsgate Harbour on January 30th. {PM} Also, just outside the recording area proper - there was one in Ramsgate Harbour on November 3rd. {SM}

Great Northern Diver

Again - just outside the area there was a first winter bird in Ramsgate Harbour from November 4th to the end of the year {DW, etc.}

Great Crested Grebe

Early winter numbers peaked at 120 on January 19th and 220 present offshore on February7th. There were also in this same period a total of birds seen whilst watching off Ramsgate Harbour - 23 birds moving south and 103 north – with peaks of 35 north and 51 north on January the 30th and 31st respectively.

Birds started reappearing offshore during late summer/autumn but numbers were low compared with past years. Winter numbers peaked with a mere 8 on December 10th!

Red-necked Grebe

2 which flew north on January 30th {PM} past Ramsgate Harbour were claimed by "the Hair" a little later on the same day flying past North Foreland. How desperate is he getting these days eh? I didn't have the heart to tell him they were probably a bit dodgy!

Slavonian Grebe

A better than average year with1which flew north on January 31st, {PM} then another was present offshore on March 4th {PM} and {presumably the same individual?} was seen again on the 6th.

Little Grebe

1 in Ramsgate Harbour on January 24th then regular in the Garage pools {1 – 2 birds} during February, March and April and then again during December. On March 29th 3 birds were showing signs of territorial behaviour but no breeding took place. The occasional bird was seen in the Little Cliffsend Farm reservoir in September when a single bird was also seen offshore. After that up to 3 birds were seen on the garage pools during December.

Fulmar

Common breeder {10+ pairs} with birds regular off shore and around the cliffs most of the year. 30+ offshore January 22nd and 52, which flew north on January 31st, the highest counts noted. A very dark morph "Blue Fulmar" was seen flying north past Ramsgate Harbour on January 30th. {PM}

Gannet

100+ were loitering offshore on June 5th.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
STH	66	3	0	0	43	0	5	63	0	3	0	0
NTH	16	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Cormorant Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
3	3	4	2	3	8	35	46	38	22	23	16

Shag

1which flew north on January 22nd, and 1 on the western under cliff on January 30th could all have been the same bird? After this a first winter bird flew in from the southeast on March 29th and was still present on the 30th.

Single birds were seen in Ramsgate Harbour in January and November.

Little Egret

Regular in the winter these days with 1-3 birds present on most days if you can be bothered to walk up and check the areas behind Stonelees and the river where they spend their time hiding from us.

Peak numbers were present during the mid July to early September period when counts exceeding 30 birds were noted on 9 dates with 20+ birds almost the norm. The highest numbers were: 35 on July 19th and 20th, an influx of 46+ birds on August 30th and 38 on September 9th. The 46 birds represent a new record count for the area.

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
3	3	4	2	3	8	35	46	38	22	9	4

Great White Egret

One was seen on the shoreline on a high tide before flying off strongly N/NE on the evening of August 22nd. {P.Ft}

Spoonbill

Another decent year with – 2 that flew southwest on March 20th; {PM} An immature bird which was present for a couple of hours before flying off west on April 23rd, {DG, PM, CS} then another immature present on May 10th. {PM, DW, FS, PL etc} After this an adult bird was present on June 27th {DG, BC etc.} and another flew north on July 9th. {BC}

Grey Heron Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
6	4	2	5	5	12	6	12	10	3	4	2

Bittern

One was flushed from the reed beds behind Stonelees on January 18th. {FS}

Mute Swan

1 on January 15th, 11 west on April 17th, 1 on April 24th, 11 west on May 17th, 1 on May 24thand 3 west on September 24th.

Bewicks Swan

7 flew north on January 1st {SBBO} and a single flew "in off" on December 14th.

Whooper Swan

4 flew s/west on October 25th. {PM}

Bean Goose {A. Fabalis}

A single, which was present briefly with Brents before flying of south on March 5th {PM}, was considered to be one of the larger Taiga race "Fabalis."

Pink-footed Goose

A single bird east – plus a flock of 37 {or 38?} flew southwest on September 24th and 1 flew south on the following day.

White-fronted Goose

24 flew north and 17 s/west on January 3rd, 2 north on January 31stand 2 north on February 19th.

Greylag Goose

2 were present between February 14th and 16th, 9 flew northeast out to sea on February 20th, 1 flew southwest on April 1st, 5 southwest on April 17th, 2 north on April 24th, 1 April 27th to 29th, 2 south on May 12th, 8 south on July 5th and 9 south on September 2nd.

Canada Goose

An uncommon bird in the Thanet area with: 1 on April 13th and 5 on April 27th about typical for a year at Pegwell.

Brent Goose

Early winter numbers were typically low {generally less than 30 birds present} though there were 47 present on January 3rd, 74 present on January 18th and 45 present on January 24th.

Spring migration was under way by the latter half of February with small numbers seen moving offshore before the highest numbers of 244, 153 and 323 birds on March the 2nd, 3rd and 4th. Birds were present regularly until April 21st with late birds present on May 7th and the 24th.

The first autumn birds didn't arrive until September 24th with the bulk of the Brent "action" noted during October and November. No excessively large movements – with peaks of: 109 present and 40 north on October 14th, 90 south, 133 north and 120 present on October 21st and 20 south, 362 north and 38 present on November 24th. Extremely scarce during December with a peak count of only 8 birds on the 8th.

Monthly peak counts of birds present were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
74	76	173	15	1	0	0	0	40	126	38	8

Monthly migrant totals:

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR		SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
South	24	59	90	0		0	211	20	0
North	68	52	232	0		0	266	413	0

Pale-bellied Brent Goose {B.Hrota}

Up to 6 birds were present in the general area on and off from January 10th until February 25th at least. {PM, BC, FS, IH, JW etc} Seemingly making a bit of a comeback in these parts this past couple of years after quite a barren spell locally. Also on February 18th there was a group of 8 adults and a separate group of 3 first winters, which may have been different birds to the 6 over wintering group?

Mallard Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
570	310	56	11	11	20	27	114	230	180	240	330

**There was a drake Mallard/Pintail hybrid in the area during January, which had been present on and off since October 2002.I forgot to put it in last years rag … sorry. While I am at it – there was also a drake Wigeon/Teal present on a few dates in the early winter of 2002 too … which again I forgot to mention. Then – although not a duck – I forgot to mention in the 2002 report the Marsh Warbler that John Veal found singing in the stinging nettles up near Stonelees in the rather strange month of July! (Local breeder perhaps?) Sorry John. I also forgot … oh what was it now? Er - umm …it was … er? Anyway…where was I? Who am I?

Gadwall Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
7	25	3	1	1	0	0	1	7	1	18	23

Pintail Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
41*	5	0	1	1	1	0	1	9	8	1	13

Shoveler

Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
27	17	7	7	7	2	5	9	5	4	5	21

Wigeon Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1720	920	360	19	19	0	0	2	200	470	740	1230

Very good numbers were present in the early winter period {considering how mild it was} with 1520 present and 200+ south on January 3rd and 1330 present on January 12th.

Teal Peak month counts:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
308	210	32	3	3	10	9	112	287*	121	67	76

*The 287 birds on September 2nd was a good arrival so early in the year.

Green-winged Teal {Anus Crecca Carolinensis}

A drake that was present out on the mud flat on January 15th, {PM} was almost certainly a new bird for the area?

Garganey

I wrote Garganey on the list – as for years they have been annual visitors to the area. As I wrote it I thought I was taking them for granted. Guess what – none turned up this year! Murphy's law perhaps?

Pochard

1 on January 7th…hoorah! Then another on November 12th!! Double hoorah!!

Tufted Duck

Nowadays with these mild, damp, boring winters we get - any "Aythya" constitutes a real red-letter day. To add weight to this statement the 4 Tufties that turned up on January 23rd were the first ones I had seen anywhere in nearly two years! Mind you I only watch Pegwell, but even then its still a sad statement of fact innit – two years between Tufties! Also 3 on June 13th, 1 on October 8th, 1 on November 9th and 7 on December 10th.

Scaup

One was present offshore on September 21st, an extremely unusual record for hereabouts in September.

Eider

The wintering group {2002/03} peaked at 26 birds in January/February/March / built up to a peak of 33 birds on March 29th. Very little offshore movement was noted yet again.

Monthly offshore peaks:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
26	26	33	28	17	6	7	17	18	21	21	4

Common Scoter

Blah etc – they're black not white – yer cant see them at night… common scoter – common scoter! Most of the Scoters were seen during January during the month 100 flew south and 2 north (80 on the 3rd and 20 on the 22nd) but after this they were relatively scarce. After this: 2 north on May 24th, 6 north on June 29th, 30 south on July 4th then a few insignificant bits of movement offshore during October that I cant be bothered to type out!

Long-tailed Duck

A drake was seen flying south into the bay off the western under cliff on February 19th. {PM}

Goldeneye

1which was offshore on January 19th the only early winter record. 2 birds were present off shore on October 19th {eventually flying off south} and 2 present on October 27th.

Red-breasted Merganser

1 north on January 30th, singles were present on February 6th, 7th, 11th, 21st, 24th then in March 5 offshore on the 1st, 1 on 2nd, 4 north and 1 south on the 3rd, 1 on the 5th, 2 on 17th, 1 on 19th/20th, 1 on 24th and 1 on 29th.

In the second part of the year: September – 1 on 28th. October - 2 on 19th and 1 on 25th.

Smew

2 flew south {I think?} past Ramsgate Harbour on January 23rd. {PM}

Osprey

1 flew southwest on March 24th, {FS} 1 fishing offshore before flying off to the north on April 28th, {PM} 1 west on May 26th, {PM} and 1 west on August 15th. {PM}

Marsh Harrier

1 on April 16th, 26th, May 1 north on 1st, 1 west on May 22nd, 1 present on June 10th, 1 n/west on July 31st, 1 north on August 14th, 1 on August 22nd, 4 on August 30th, {2 present, 1 north and 1 west} 1 on August 31st, a second year male present on and off between September 2nd and 10th, another south on 10th, 1 on September 12th, 1 on September 14th, 1 north and 1 west on September 15th, 1 south on September 20th, 1 west on September 24th, 1 north on October 3rd, 1 present on October 28th, 1 present on November 21st and 2 present on December 10th.

Hen Harrier

Irregular in the early winter period and were reported on only 6 dates in January, only 1 date in February and 7 dates in March, when there were 2 birds present on 3 dates and 3 dates in April with the last record on April 17th. A male bird was seen flying off high northwest - away from the area, on March 20th.

The first returning bird was not until October 7th. {Which is quite late} but they were seen with any regularity until mid November.

Montagu's Harrier

A smart juv. flew off n/west after a brief fly around the salt marsh on August 6th. {PM}

Red Kite

1 flew north on March 25th {PM} and another west {PM} on September 24th.

Black Kite

A fantastic spring with: 1 north on April 24th {DG} and 1 n/west on May 31st. {PM and DG}

Common Buzzard

1 on January 14th, a different one on January 22nd, then 1 was reported flying over on February 24th before a reasonable period of spring passage started locally on March 15th over Thanet but none were seen at Pegwell until March 17th when 5 birds were seen flying north – then 2 north and 1 south on the 19th, {6 over Ramsgate on the same day CS} 1 north and 1 west on the 20th, 4 s/west and 1 east on 24th, 1 n/west on 25th, 1 circling on 26th, 1 west and 2 north on 30th and 2 s/west on 31st. There was then a gap until April 7th when a single bird was seen followed by further birds in April of: 3 north on the 8th, 3 s/west and 1 west on 11th with the final movement of the spring being 5 birds south and s/west on the 21st. The spring/early winter total ended up being a very reasonable 37 birds.

Autumn is normally a very hit and miss affair at Pegwell for Buzzards – even though in recent years they can be reasonable reliable in favourable conditions during the mid March to early May period of the year. This past year proved to be the exception with a record amount of birds being recorded in September. 1 s/west on the 9th, 11 on the 14th, 5 on the 15th, 1 north on the 19th and 7 on the 24th far exceeded anything ever recorded at this time of the year in the area.

Honey Buzzard

1 n/west on May 12th {PM} then an above average autumn with: 1 south on July 31st, {DG, MW,RH} 2 west on September 14th, {PM} 1 southeast on September 15th {CS,PM} with another probable - seen circling distantly over Ramsgate from the reserve on September 17th.

Sparrowhawk

Sprawks were reasonably scarce in the early and late winter periods, - with just the odd one or two knocking about.

Raptor watching from mid-March to May turned up 38 migrants in the spring including: 7 birds on March 17th, 5 on March 31st and 5 on April 21st. Most of the birds were either heading north or west.

There were also 1 –3 birds regularly present during this period away from the breeding things up near the cliff top.

Autumn migrants from late August with 7 birds north on September 14th the best day. Lots of birds were present during the late October/early November period. At least 6 different birds were present on November 6th.

Kestrel

A leucistic bird was seen on April 27th – otherwise daily in numbers as low as 1 to as high as 2.7.

Red-footed Falcon

Two birds were seen on June 2nd – a male type which flew in from the n/east and was present for at least 20 minutes and a female type that flew n/east after joining briefly with the first bird. {PM} Just for the record I had one fly over my garden in late May/early June.

Hobby

The first spring record was on April 29th when 2 birds flew west. Most of the spring records were seen from May 6th – 28th when birds were seen on most days with 3 on 2 dates then 4 on 26th.

After this 3 records in June, 7 dates in July, 7 dates in August and 9 dates in September with a peak of 4 on September 9th during this latter period. The last record was on September 26th.

Peregrine Falcon

Two birds were present for most of the year {probably all of it} using the nearby Richborough Cooling Towers as a roost. These birds were once again seen displaying in March and copulating on the Clifftop on April 5th. There were also 3 birds on March 19th and 31st then October 25th plus 4 birds on April 11th.

Merlin

A very poor series of records in the early part of the year – with birds seen on only 8 dates in January and February, 4 singles during March and 3 dates in April. Migrants were seen on April 16th and May 16th. A Male bird was seen on 3 dates in January.

Returning birds from September 9th and were once again seen very irregularly during the rest of the autumn/late winter period.

Grey Partridge

Regularly seen {in small numbers} all year - with a peak count of 20 birds present during the autumn. At least 2 pairs bred in the general area.

Pheasant

7 were present on or around the Country Park on April 20th and in September there were about 4 adults and 8 immatures present around the Country Park/salt marsh. Do other sites get so many Pheasants using the salt marsh? I even get them when I am trying to stomp out Jack Snipe from the Garage pools these days! That's all your getting!

Water Rail

Regularly heard calling (from the salt marsh) during the winter/autumn months. As normal – it would be impossible to say how many birds are present? Terry Preston estimated 7.75?

Moorhen

2 – 3 were seen regularly on the Garage pools in the early winter months with up to 2 birds present on the Little Cliffsend Farm reservoir on and off all year.
An adult with 2 newly hatched young were seen on the garage pools on May 30th.

Oystercatcher Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1280	1340	870	267	207	217	370	1160	1260	1180	1150	1040
4th	2nd	2nd	10th	31st	2nd	31st	30th	17th	8th	15th	26th

Avocet

Another poor year for Avocets which was odd as we had lots of easterly winds this year?

February: 3 on 28th. March: singles on 2nd, 3rd, 7th, 10th, 7 on 17th, 2 on 18th and 19th, 1 on 29th, 3 on 30th and 5 on 31st. April: singles on 3rd, 6th and 4 on 10th. May: 1 on 25th and 4 on 30th.

August: 2 on 19th. September: 4 on 4th, 3 on 13th, 6 on 14th, 1 on 17th and 21st. October: 1 on 10th and 8 on 21st. November: 4 on 8th, 1 on 13th and 4 on 17th.

Little-ringed Plover

In the spring 1 flew northwest on April 11th, 1 was present on the mudflat on May 2nd then singles on July 5th and 8th.

Ringed Plover Peak Month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
48	56	28	13	60	25	10	273	170	207	42	2
3rd	18th	17th	20th	20th	1st	30th	16th	6th	3rd	8th	25th

Kentish Plover

A female on April 18th {PM} plus a pair present on the unusual date of June 24th {PM} – which is the first June record for the area. During August – singles were seen on the 10th {PM/PFt} and the 16th. {PM}

Grey Plover Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
279	288	380	73	11	3	4	67	56	152	154	216
10th	28th	6th	3rd	17th	2 date	31st	30th	24th	16th	14th	26th

Golden Plover Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
5800	7100	1170	50	1	0	3	20	190	1410	6330	6500
3rd	13th	1st	3rd	10th	0th	20th	13th	17th	11th	18th	6th

Lapwing Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
5300	9630	1400	1	0	30	22	28	150	2500	8000	7700
22nd	12th	1st	14th	0th	13th	18th	12th	19th	11th	18th	25th

Dotterel

One was seen flying north with a group of Golden Plovers on October 21st. {PM} Only the third area record as far as I am aware?

Knot Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
341	510	420	91	9	3	2	18	20	81	173	274
3rd	26th	3rd	3rd	25th	1st	2 date	31st	25th	29th	7th	25th

Sanderling Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
68	39	62	52	30	5	15	51	48	26	86	68
15th	28th	29th	1st	25th	2nd	28th	29th	1st	12th	14th	25th

Purple Sandpiper

1 on January 14th, 2 flew north past Ramsgate Harbour on January 28th and 4 on the western under cliff on December 1st.

Turnstone

Roost peak counts: Jan: 187 on 7th Feb**:** 192 on 3rd. March: 159 on 3rd. April: 52 on 2nd. May 30 on 1st.

Aug: 36 on 29th. Sept: 36. Oct: 230. Nov: 124. Dec: 150 on 6th.

Dunlin Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2060	2230	1360	141	86	8	120	520	440	680	1440	1630
22nd	7th	1st	1st	23rd	4th	30th	31st	6th	29th	21st	25th

Curlew Sandpiper

2 on May 3rd the sole spring records with the first autumn arrivals {3 birds} not until July 22nd.

The boring counts were as follows: July: 3 on 22nd, 8 on 29th& 5 on 30th. August: 2 on 4th, 1 on 8th, 1 on 9th, 1 on 10th, 22 on 13th, 2 on 14th, 1 on 27th {1st Juv.} 1 on 29th, 7 on 30th and 4 on

31st. September: 1 on 1st, 2 on 3rd, 3 on 4th, 11 on 5th, 7 on 6th, 9 on 7th, 7 on 8th, 2 on 9th, 5 on 10th, 1 on 11th, 25 on 12th, 1 on 13th, 2 on 14th, 14 on 15th, 3 on 16th, 1 on 17th, 2 on 18th, 1 on 19th, 7 on 20th, 2 on 21st, 1 on 22nd, 4 on 23rd, 6 on 24th, 6 on 25th, 4 on 26th, 2 on 28th, 5 on 29th and 4 on 30th. October: 3 on 1st, 4 on 3rd, 2 on 4th, 1 on 7th, 8 on 10th, 3 on 12th, 3 on 19thand 1 on 23rd.

Little Stint

An isolated winter record of 2 birds - which were present on January 12th - then spring records {all singles} on May 1st, May 31st and June 1st.

Autumn birds: August: 1 on 6th and 1 on 31st. September: 3 on 12th, 3 on 14th, 1 on 15th, 2 on 16th, 5 on 20th, 4 on 21st, 2 on 25th, 1 on 26th, 1 on 28th, 3 on 29th and 1 on 30th. October: singles on 2nd, 3rd and 5th. November: 1 on 19th plus a pair on one date the same week.

Wood Sandpiper

A single on April 26th {flying southwest} the only record. {FS}

Green Sandpiper

April: 1 on 13th, 2 on 14thand 1 on 21st. July: 1 on 5th, 2 on 17th and 1 on 23rd. August: singles on 6th, 10th, 16th, 7 on 18th, 1 on 19th and 21st. September: 1 on 15th.

Common Sandpiper

Recorded on only 3 dates in the spring with 1 on April 21st and 2 on May 17th and 22nd. Pants! In the autumn from July 7th to mid September with peaks of 7 on July 31st then in August 11 on 7th, 12 on 8th, 10 on 9th, 14 on 10th and a big arrival {by Pegwell standards} of 42 birds on 29th. A late bird was seen flying east across the Country Park on October 14th.

Redshank Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
180	210	205	129	20	22	266	480	420	380	320	120
3rd	3rd	5th	14th	3rd	28th	23rd	3rd	5th	8th	6th	25th

Spotted Redshank

In the early winter up to two birds were regular on the mudflat with 3 on February 3rd. Another poor spring passage with singles on April 21st and 22nd the only records.

Autumn birds were hard to come by as is usual these days with 2 on July 19th then singles on July 21st, July 31st, August 1st, 6th, 18th, 22nd and September 3rd. 2 on October 7th may have been migrants {??} though at least 2 birds wintered in the latter part of the year so these may indeed have been these birds?

Greenshank

1 bird was present in the Turnstone roost or on the west cliff rocks during January, February and March. Although there has been the odd short staying winter record this is the first occasion as far as I am aware that one has wintered for any length of time?

Spring migrants were noted from April 15th when 14 birds were present – with bird's regular on passage until the end of May. Spring peaks were: 17 on May 1St and 20 on May 3rd.

Autumn birds were regular between June 27th and the end of October. The highest numbers during this period were: 23 on August 5th, 20 on August 27th and 26 on September 12th with double figure counts recorded on 38 other dates. The last one was seen on November 3rd.

Black-tailed Godwit

Up to 9 birds were still present into January dropping to 1 on a few dates during February/March.

A group on 7 were present on March 28th. Into April – 1 on 24th and 4 on 27th also in the spring 2 on May 3rd, 7 on 11th, 12 on 24th and 2 on 28th.

Black-tails have been increasing in the area there past few years – numbers are reasonably stable on spring passage but wintering and autumnal birds are now present in reasonable numbers where in the not too distant past they were rather scarce. A group of 20+ birds were present for the autumn and winter, which clouded attempts to count migrant birds with any accuracy. Peak counts were – during September: 30 on the 2nd, 28 on 11th and 26 on 29th. Also 28 birds were present on October 7th.

Peak monthly counts were:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
9	1	7	4	12	1	2	24	30	28	22	15

Bar-tailed Godwit Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
292	309	268	63	22	2	23	13	22	127	164	268
25th	1st	3rd	21st	16th	2 date	29th	27th	20th	26th	13th	25th

Curlew Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
639	360	370	137	19	196	334	518	672	237	130	151
19th	3rd	3rd	1st	19th	29th	19th	23rd	5th	8th	19th	27th

Early winter numbers peaked on January 19th when 639 birds were counted – which is a record winter count for the area for at least a decade. Peak numbers {up to 750+ birds} are generally recorded during the late summer/autumn migration.

Whimbrel

2 early records with a flock of 15 flying north on March 24th and 2 west on April 1st before birds started turning up more regularly from April 12th with the spring passage lasting until late May. 36 on April 22nd and 27 on April 28th the only 20+ counts with double figures present on only 2 other dates.

Autumn birds noted regularly from mid June to late September. Birds were noted daily during July and August with highs of 12 on June 13th, 10 on July 9th, 11 on July 27th, 14 on July 31st, 11 on August 1st, 30 on August 2nd and 12 on August 23rd. The last record was on September 25th.

Woodcock

Singles on February 7th, March 10th, 22nd, October 18th, 24th, 2 on November 10th and 1 on November 14th.

Snipe Peak month counts: (date below)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
80	75	35	2	1	0	0	5	6	20	150	30
24th	12th	10th	2 date	9th	-	-	10th	25th	27th	18th	27th

Jack Snipe

1 on January 12th, {JV} 2 on January 18th, {FS} 1 on January 24th, 5 on January 28th, 2 on January 31st, {IH} 1 on October 21st, 1 on October 24th, 2 on November 3rd, 5 on 17th and singles on 19th and 20th. Only 1 bird was seen away from the normal flooded areas of salt marsh.

Ruff

A few early winter records with in January: 10 on 3rd, 15 on 22nd, 1 on 23rd and 2 on 27th and February 9 on 7th and 8 on 9th, March 12 on 1st, 16 on 4th and 3 on 5th.

A terrible autumn passage with in September: 1 on 5th, 4 on 7th and 2 on 12th.
During the latter winter period: Singles on November10th and 16th.

Grey Phalarope

1 was present on the sea below the western under cliff and was last seen flying into Pegwell on December18th. (DW)

Arctic Skua

July: 1 west {overland} on 21st and 1 on 26th. August: 1 on 16th and 3 south on 29th. September: 2 on 6th. Awful!

Great Skua

1 flew south on August 29th.

Black-headed Gull

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2290	3250	1380	80	169	120	1610	8150	11000	6400	1330	1500

An albino bird was seen on May 15th and 17th.

Common Gull

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1670	1100	380	56	18	3	38	370	730	260	680	280

Mediterranean Gull

In January: 1 on the 3rd and 2 on 10th. February: singles on the 1st, 20th and 21st. March: 2 on 31st.
April: 2 on 16th, 2 on 17th, 2 on 22nd, 2 on 24th, 2 on 26th and 1 on 28th. May: 3 on 8th, 1 on 10th, 1 on 11th and 2 on 15th. June: singles on 1st, 2nd, 10th, 13th, 28th and 30th. July: 1 on 2nd, 1 on 5th, 3 on 6th, then singles on 11th, 19th, 21st, 23rd, 24th, 25th and 27th. August: 1 on 5th, 2 on 6th, 2 on 7th then singles on 9th, 11th and 30th. September: 2 on 3rd then singles on 5th, 15th and 21st. October: singles on 4th, 12th and 24th. November: 2 on 24th. December: Zilch.

Herring Gull

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1440	640	340	380	1580	210	150	5200	3700	1750	1150	750

American (Type) Herring Gull? Larus Smthsonianus

A first winter bird present on February 7th {PM, BC, TP} was probably of this type? Though I am not entirely happy with its correct identification as proper flight views of the rump/tail pattern were not conclusive – though the fully black tail and juvenile type plumage features etc. were all ascertained whilst the bird was present on the mudflat prior to it flying off. This follows hot on the heels of the other definite Smithsonianus present in the area in February 2001, which raises the question – just how many of these birds are being overlooked elsewhere? As far as I am aware other than these two birds the only other claim of a Smithsonianus in Kent was from Dungeness in the winter of 2001/2002? The retained juvenile type plumage does really start to make the Yanks stand out amongst the moulting 1st winter/summer Argenteus by late January/February – so any overly dark looking Herring gull needs to be checked out for Smithsonianus it seems?

Gull Specie:

A first winter bird present on January 10th showed all the signs of being a Herring x Glaucous hybrid. It showed a Glaucous type bi-coloured bill, pale tertials and brown/black wingtips. I don't think it was a Black-Headed Gull anyway? Francis was absolutely irate when I told him a couple of days later. "You could have phoned me – it would have been half a year tick," he ranted. I always wondered how his Kent list had arrived at the total of three hundred and eighty two and a half!

Yellow-legged Gull {Larus Michahellis}

1 – 3 birds were recorded on 4 dates in January and 1 date during February.
A bird showing all the features of the" Atlantis" race was seen on January 10th. Due to the amount of head streaking and jizz - it appears this individual originated from the Azores.

Yellow-L.Gull cont:
Into July: singles on 2 dates, August: 5 dates including 2 on the 21st, September: only 1 bird {on 18th} October: singles on 3 dates. November: increased to 8 dates (though coverage was poor) with peaks of 5 on 18th and 4 on 20th. December: 1 to 2 birds on a few dates.

Caspian Gull {Larus Cachinnans}

A third winter bird on January 22nd, a 1st winter bird was on the beach near the East Pier on February 20th, a 2nd summer on August 21st, a juv/1st winter on September 3rd, a 2nd winter on October 12th, a third winter on November 13th, a 1st winter on November 14th, 2 adults on November 16th and a single adult on December 15th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
56	56	84	45	76	62	68	270	157	70	229	72

Great Black-backed Gull

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JLY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
172	37	42	34	24	148	95	520	720	960	1175	580

Little Gull

A flock of 20 flew north on January 3rd, 2 flew north on January 31st, a 1st summer present between May 8th and 25thand 1 on September 19th the only records.

Kittiwake

JAN: 147 south and 28 north with peaks of 56 south on 23rd and 39 south on 28th. FEB: 6 nth on 3rd and 5 present on 9th. MARCH: 1 on 1st.

Glaucous Gull

A first winter bird was present on December 24th. (FS)

Little Tern

Spring migrants recorded on 15 dates between April 11th and May 25th with a peak of 9 birds on April 28th.

Autumn birds: From June 24th with numbers peaking during the mid July/August period. Double figure counts were recorded on 3 dates in July and 3 dates in August with peaks of 27 on July 21st and 15 on August 14th. The last birds were seen on September 28th.

Sandwich Tern

The long staying wintering bird present since at least1992 was once again seen in the early part of the winter and then again from late October – November but not in December.

The first spring migrants {2 birds} were seen flying into the Bay on March 3rd with the first decent arrival of the spring not until April 1st, when 61 birds were present. April numbers peaked at 455 birds on the 29th with the only other 400+ count of the spring being 474 on May 1st.

Autumn birds were present in huge and unprecedented numbers – with peaks of 1084 birds on July 21st {DG} and 1110 birds on July 23rd. {FS} There were also 800+ counts on 2 other dates plus 910 present on July 26th. After July - high counts of 560 on August 15th and 667 on August 23rd. This continues a recent trend of increasing numbers of Sani's in the bay these past few years. Numbers dropped significantly during September (a high of 132 on the 2nd) with the last migrants on 24th of October.

Common Tern

The first spring arrivals not until April 17th when a group of 12 birds finally showed up! Migration lasted until May 20th though birds were recorded on only 12 dates during this period with a peak of 13 on April 24th.

Returning birds from early June with the last one on October 1st. No large numbers were recorded with high counts of only: 91 on August 22nd and 128 on the following day.

Arctic Tern

1 on April 26th and 2 on May 1st the only spring records. Then into July: 1 on 3rd, 1 on 20th, 1 on 22nd, 2 on 28th. August: 2 on 9th, 4 on 16th, 2 on 19th then 2 on 21st. Rubbish!

Roseate Tern

Once again there were no spring records. Things picked up – as is usual in July with the first one on the 10th, {PM} followed by 1 on the 20th, {DG,MW etc} 2 on the 21st, {FS} 1 on the 23rd, {PM} then another on August 12th. {PM}

Black Tern

2 on July 13th then single birds on August 1st, 20th and 29th the only records of a very poor year.

Auk Species

A good movement during late January with 854 south and 19 north on the 22nd, 541 south and 21 north the following day and 364 south and 9 north on the 28th. Prior to this about 200 Auks flew south on January 17th. January totals were: 2235 south and 629 north.

Guillemot

Many were present offshore during the Auk movements in late January. Approximately 200 birds were on the sea on January 22nd.

Razorbill

1 flew north on January 7th, 1 south on January 22nd, 1 south on January 23rd, c 10 north on January 30th, {ps: all the ones I claimed were probably Guillemots. Keep it to yerselves eh! Cheers.}

Puffin

1 flew north past the Harbour on January 30th. {PM} Yep I know what you're thinking … another dodgy sighting.

Little Auk

1 flew north past Ramsgate Harbour on January 31st {PM} and another was present in the river mouth on February 6th. {PM,BC}

Stock Dove

30+ birds were present in the north fields in the early winter period and at least 30 birds {12 to15 breeding pairs?} were seen between the west cliff and the Hover pad in the spring. Poorly recorded otherwise – GOOD!

Wood Pigeon

Early winter counts peaked with c400 birds present on February 13th. Spring migrants noted from early March onward with c100 south on the 10th, 100 west on 11th, 160 south and west on 20th, 370 s/west on 25th and 150 s/west on the following day.
ZZZZZzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz … ZZZZzzzzzzzzz

In the autumn 840 flew west on November 6th. I didn't take any counts after that – well they are Pigeons after all?

Turtle Dove

From April 24th until September the thingamy with a few pairs breeding.

Collared Dove

Generally common in my back garden - with the peak numbers at Pegwell recorded in the autumn months. The highest count I took was 120 on August 25th though they were greatly un-recorded. My back garden is so well light up (to attract moths) that I have had one calling in the middle of the night! Brilliant eh?

Cuckoo

Present from April 26th to - umm er … about the end of June? Then a few late records of single birds on: August 7th, 13th and 14th.

Short-eared Owl

In the early winter period up to 4+ birds were seen in the 100-acre field {regularly Jan - March} with only the odd bird venturing across onto our side of the river. Also 1 on May 10th.

2 were seen in September – 1 on the reserve {10th} and migrant birds flying south on the 14th and October 25th. It would seem that only a single bird wintered during the second winter period – being seen on many dates during October and November.

Long-eared Owl

The only definite records were singles were seen on the Country Park on August 19th {PFt} and October 29th. {PFt}

Barn Owl

The bird, which spent the whole of December 2002 entertaining us plebs {I put that in for Kevin} carried on - though not quite as frequently- pleasing us into January. A loud "hoorah" was heard on the evening of January 1st – from the direction of a huge mop of hair – "Barn Owls out of the way already!" as "the hair" marched away towards his car in triumphant fashion.

Swift

From April 24th with birds moving inland in small numbers {peak 86 s/west} for the next month or so. The largest numbers after the spring/summer were: 1000+ west on July 4th, 500 on July 10th, 430 south on July 18th and 400 south on July 26th. The last record was of 2 birds flying s/west on September 12th.

Kingfisher

Occasionally seen either flying over the salt marsh or more regularly on the sea wall on the hover pad. {Mainly August – October} Regular in Ramsgate Harbour in October to December with 2 seen there on November 13th.

Ring-necked Parakeet

Now – I know they call them Rose-Ringed Parakeets – but I like the old name … Okay! 47 flew north to roost on January 7th and a high count of 56 was counted on November 6th.

Otherwise present daily around the houses at Cliffsend/Hoverport and are easy to see each evening when they fly north to roost. Up until this year reasonably scarce south of Cliffsend but birds were regular – especially in the evenings – flying north over the Country Park towards the roost in Thanet. A definite change in behaviour.

Green Woodpecker

Up to five birds were present in the area during February. Generally common at most times of the year.

Great-spotted Woodpecker

Early winter: up to 4 present – a build up of birds in late September with 4 or 5 birds present on a few dates then again during October when up to half a dozen were present.

Wryneck

1 was seen in one of the gardens at Cliffsend on May 2nd {SBBO} with another present on the Country Park on September 10th and 11th {PFt, FS, PM} plus a third bird on the old Hover port on October 2nd. {PM}

Shore Lark

3 were spotted on the Country Park on November 15th {BM} and were seen in the area (Shellness Point) until the 18th at least. There were also 2 more birds seen on the Country Park whilst the other birds were still in view across the river on November 18th. 2 more birds were reported on December 19th.

Skylark

Nothing of any note from the spring vismig sessions!!

Most of the autumn migration was seen during October when birds were seen on the move most days. No large numbers were recorded – with 52 s/west on October 22nd, 65 west on the 23rd and 116 west on the 25th the highest counts. After this 80 flew s/west on November 14th. Up to 40 to 50 plus birds were regularly present during this period.

Woodlark

One flew west on November 5th {PM} and 1 went north the following day. {PM}

Sand Martin

Spring migrants on 10 dates between March 29th and April 29th with no day counts even reaching double figures.

Returning birds were noted moving from mid June. Unfortunately the normal large July movements didn't materialise and numbers were very low this year with a peak of only 118 north on the 4th. In fact they were noted on only 15 dates during the autumn {up till September 18th}, which shows just how poor the autumn migration was for Sand Martins.

Swallow

Very late turning up after the freezing temperatures of the early spring with the first record of 2 birds not until April 5th. Spring peaks were: 60 south on April 28th, 117 west on April 29th, 40 west on April 30thand 42 west on May 6th.

Autumn highs of a poor season were: 300 north and 800 west on September 11th, 1100 west on September 30th and 610 north and west on October 21st. The last record was on November 4th.

Red-rumped Swallow

One flew south through Stonelees on May 15th. {DW} I doubt if this bird was about in inclement weather or else Dylan would have been forced to go to the Pub or a Café – he doesn't like getting his hair wet or even windswept these days y'see. It's his age I think?

House Martin

From April 21st in the spring with highs of only 40 south on April 28th, 68 west the following day then 40 s/west on May 14th.

A poor autumn with during September - 1100 west on 6thand 450 north and west on 11ththe only half decent movements recorded. The last ones were seen on October 25th.

Rock Pipit

Easy to see along the western under cliff/hover port (1 – 10 birds) with larger numbers in the salt marsh in autumn and winter when approx 30 to 50+ were present?

"Littoralis" Rock Pipit

2 extremely smart birds were found on the Bowling Greens on the West Cliff on April 18th. Probably some of the spring/autumn migrants were of this race.

Meadow Pipit

Scarce in the early winter period with only the odd ones and twos present.

Spring: light passage was noted from mid March and early April – with the highest counts being 50 west on March 17th 50 s/west on March 29th and 40 present on April 22nd.

Autumn: Passage high counts were; September – 460 s/west on 21st, 120 west on 24th, 110 west on 26th and 120 south on October 2nd. There were also 100 in to roost on October 5th and 180 present on October 13th. Light passage continued into early November.

Tree Pipit

In April - 4 on 24th, 1 present on 29th and 1 south on 30th a single present on August 26th then in September: 1 south on 6th, 1 west on 23rd, 2 west on 24th, 2 present and 4 south on 25th and 1 west on 26th.

Tawny Pipit

A large Pipit, which flew in to roost on October 3rd, was thought to probably be a Tawny. {IHr}

Richard's Pipit

One was flushed out of the "weedy field" on the cliff top – and flew off west on October 23rd. {PM}

Pied Wagtail

If anyone's really interested in Pied Wags – then get in touch and I will fill you in on another unremarkable year for the species?

White Wagtail

Spring migrants were noted on 11 dates {total = 19 birds} between March 5th and April 21st. Peak day was 5 on March 12th.

Grey Wagtail

1 was present in the west cliff area during January.

Spring: 10 birds on 8 dates between March 17th and April 14th. Most birds were seen flying north.

Autumn: Birds started from late August - with single flyovers on the 21st and 30th. The bulk of the migrants passed through during Sept/Oct when 30 birds flew over on 20 dates peaking with 6 south on September 6th. Also a couple of birds wintered in the West cliff area…Yawn….

Yellow Wagtail

Spring: A very early bird was seen on March 19th with birds regular between March 30th through to early May. Numbers were so small they were deemed too insignificant to write out!

Autumn: I am fed up with writing this tripe!! 83 birds were noted on 21 dates between August 22nd and September 25th with a peak of 14 south on September 4th.

Wren

The most interesting thing I can say about Wrens is that they are Terry Prestons favourite bird. He made confession of this to me in October last. Funny that - as I thought it would be Kentucky Fried Chicken or half a Turkey and chips etc.

Waxwing

1 was reported in the car park on January 12th, {?} and 2 flew northwest on January 24th. {PM} Then a very early record – when one flew west along the cliff top on October 25th. {PM} 1 was reported in Stonelees on December 7th.

Dunnock

Reasonably boring.

Robin

See Dunnock. Have you deduced just how bored I get with writing this rubbish out by this stage of the report?

Nightingale

Spring birds present from April 15th {in Stonelees} plus up to 2 singing males present on the Country Park by the 26th though only one lingered and probably bred?

Redstart

Spring: 2 were in Stonelees on April 15th with another there on the 18th then 1 on the Country Park on April 30th.

Autumn: August: 1 on 29th. September: 1 on 2nd, 1 on 4th, 1 on 6th, 2 on 7th, 3 on 15th, 6 on 16th, 1 on 17th, 1 on 19th and 1 on 25th. October: 1 on 2nd and 1 on 13th.

Black Redstart

Spring: 1 on April 3rd and 2 on April 7th the only ones.

Autumn: Singles on Oct. 3rd and a 1st winter male on November 7th to the 24that least.

Wheatear

Spring: Only 15 birds on 10 dates between April 2nd and May 16th with a peak of 3 on April 30th.

Autumn: 87 birds on 23 dates from August 25th to October 14th with a peak of 35 on August 25th.

Whinchat

Spring: Singles on May 13th and 26th about average for this rubbish area.

Autumn: Far better with 117 birds on 27 dates between Aug 12th and Sept 26th, with highs of 23 on August 25th, 12 on August 27th and 10 on September 2nd.

Stonechat

Monthly peak counts were as follows:

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY		AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2	2	0	0	0		0	4	5	6	4

Redwing

Scarce in the early part of the year – or should I say virtually nonexistent until the first week of March when 50 flew west on the 3rd and there were 250 present and 100 west on the 6th.

The first autumn migrant was noted on September 24th. October vismig turned up birds virtually everday from the 8th till the end of the month. Peak counts were: 183 west on 23rd, 113 west and 60 present on 24th and one and three-quarters on wotsit the thingamajig. Otherwise - numbers were uneventful!

Song Thrush

An overnight "drop" of about 150 birds was present around the hoverpad/clifftop bushes on October 22nd. That's it folks!

Mistle Thrush

Present in small numbers all year. Very few migrants were seen on the move in the autumn – virtually none!

Fieldfare

As is usual, scarce in the early part of the year with only 2 singles during January. 13 on March 30th and 1 on April 2nd were the only spring migrants reported.

In the autumn Thrush movements: Daily between October 13th to the 28th with 255 west on the 23rd the highest number.

Ring Ouzel

In April: 1 – 2 on the 18th, 1 on 22nd then 2+ on October 13th and a single on October 21st the only records.

Blackbird

Under recorded - as who is going to go around counting every Blackbird – not me? I did try and keep some records from the autumns – which were: (All October) 100 on 21st, 120 on 22nd and 200 on the 24th but then gave up.

Garden Warbler

Very few were recorded for the second year in succession. The peak spring count was only 2 on May 11th (which was also the first date) and there were hardly any during the autumn passage!

Blackcap

Common – March 29th to October 29th. A light spring passage, (peak 20 on April 29th) but some impressive counts recorded in September when 80 were present on the 10th and 50 on the 13th.

Lesser Whitethroat

Regular from April 22nd - with a few small arrivals between then and the end of May. 7 heard singing on a couple of dates during May being the highest counts taken.

Most of the autumn passage was recorded in September with a lowly peak of only 8 birds recorded on the 6th. The last date was on October 12th.

Whitethroat

From April 11th to October 2nd. Otherwise under recorded.

Dartford Warbler

One was seen on the Country Park on November 6th. {PM} "The hair" actually admitted to not even acknowledging them at Foreness this autumn he saw so many. There was another on the Cliff near the Hoverport on November 18th. (FS)

Sedge Warbler

The first one was present on the Country Park on March 31st with a gradual build up in numbers during April/May. As has been the case of late – large numbers were present during August/September but I couldn't be bothered to count them. The last record was of 2 birds on October 2nd.

Reed Warbler

Spring birds from April 16th and the last one on October 3rd.Very little effort was made to record Reed Wobblers numbers otherwise.

Cetti's Warbler

1 was heard calling on November 13th. {PFt} This was the first record since 1999 and only the third in the past 10+ years.

Grasshopper Warbler

One was heard singing on the Country Park on April 26th {DG} with another seen in Stonelees on September 12th. {PFt}

Willow Warbler

The first spring record was on March 30th, which was the start of yet another awful spring migration. Guess what? The autumn migration was equally as poor. Peaks at both ends of the

years migration were 20 on April 30th and approximately 15 birds on August 3rd though coverage of the passerines was once again largely ignored in the early autumn when some of the Willow Warblers would have been passing through. 3 or 4 singing males were present in Stonelees in the spring with another on The Country Park.

Chiffchaff

One was present in Stonelees in late February. The first definite migrant was noted on March 7th and they were reasonably regular thereafter in small numbers.

Autumn migrants from September when there were 30+ on a few dates with 40 on 10th and 36 on 26th. Into October: peaks of 28 on 2nd, 25 on 10th and 20 on 14th.

Greenish Warbler

One was seen on the Country Park on the morning of September 23rd. {PM} The first Pegwell area record unless you know any better? I've never heard of one?

Dusky warbler

2 turned up on November 10th with both birds probably still present for the following four days? {PM, FS, DS, DW etc} Only the second ever record for the area.

Raddes Warbler

One was seen briefly on the Country Park on the morning of October 14th. {PM} Although showing well initially the bird didn't settle and couldn't be re-located after.

Yellow-browed Warbler

Singles birds: on the cliff top on October 14th and 15th, {PM} another in the Sunken Garden on October 17th {PM} then a third bird seen on the Hoverpad on October 25th. {PFt.}

Wood Warbler

A rare autumn thing in this area – I can tell you! A late bird was present on September 15th.

Goldcrest

The occasional bird can be found during the winter months (3 were present in the early winter period) with reasonable numbers present only during the autumn. Birds started to appear in mid September and were ever present during October/November. Peaks (all during October) were 30 on 2nd, 40 on 17th, 70 on 24th and 33 on 25th. There were also 42 birds on November 6th.

Firecrest

Spring: Only 2 singles - on March 30th and April 21st.

Autumn: September – 3 on 14th, 1 on 26th and 1 on 30th. October – 1 on 13th, 3 on 14th, 3 on 15th, 1 on 16th, 6 on 17th, 2 on 18th, 1 on 19th, 12 on 22nd, 4 on 23rd, 17 on 24th, 20+ on 25th, 1 on 26th, 1 on 27th then November: 5 on 6th, 4 on 10th, 6 on 11th, 2 on 12th, 1 on 13th, 1 on 16th, 1 on 17th and 2 on 18th.

Pied Flycatcher

3 separate singles were seen on August 24th, 25th and 26th then others on September 13th, 15th and October 15th.

Spotted Flycatcher

Singles on May 13th, 19th and 26th – then September 9th, 14th, 15th and 17th.

Great Tit

Largely uncounted though Francis Solly "claimed" one on September 25th. Bet it was a Blue Tit?

Blue Tit

Again under-recorded.

Long -tailed Tit

A few pairs breed nowadays {how many?} with 30+ present on some days in the autumn months.

Coal tit

A few "continental" birds showed during October with - 1 on October 23rd, 13 on October 24th, 1 on October 25th and 2 on October 26th. Also 1 on November 11th.

Bearded Tit

4 flew high west and 2 s/west on October 25th.

Treecreeper

1 on the cliff top on September 14th – was the first record for many years.

Magpie

Common resident – with 2 – 10+ birds' present daily. Perhaps 20+ in late autumn? Well what else could I say about flippin Magpies?

Jay

Highest numbers occurred in the autumn months when up to 6 birds were present.

Jackdaw

A good name for a Carpenter perhaps? Only an occasional bird in the area – peak count was c60 migrant birds flying west on October 15th.

Rook

Scarce - save for the brief excursions of the birds that occupy the Rookery across the road from Stonelees and the occasional birds on the ploughed fields north of the Reserve. Very little migration noticed at either end of the year.

Carrion Crow

Sounds like the title to a bad sixties British comedy film? Crows exist at Pegwell – that's about as much info your going to get about them.

Starling

c16000 flew north over the reserve to the Ramsgate roost on January 7th also c9000 took the same route on February 27th. A leucistic bird was present during September and October. Once again – that's all your getting!

House Sparrow

Early winter numbers c.50 – 70+ birds. Up to 120 were counted in the north fields on August 25th then a bit of migration was witnessed (I think?) on a day of Finch vismig on October 24th when 90+ birds past through – 50 north and another 40+ west.

Tree Sparrow

1 north on March 30th then none until the normal October migrants with: 2 north on 8th, 4 north on 22nd, 2 west on 23rd, 29 west on 24th, 1 north and 2 west on 26th, 3 present and 1 west on 28th then 1 present on November 5th.

Chaffinch

A peak of 15 birds was recorded in the area during the early winter months. Very few spring migrants were seen with 176 south and west on March 11th the only noteworthy movement.

Autumn: Again very poor – with peaks during October of only 58 west on 24th, 41 west on 25th and 50 west on 27th. Up to 30+ birds were present during early November. I can't remember the last big autumn Chaffinch movement? Was it in 1756? I'll ask Johnny Websper – he'll know.

Brambling

The spring migration typically poor with only 1 north on March 31st, 5 south on April 4th and 2 west on April 16th.

(A reasonable) autumn migration totalling: 173 birds (on 19 dates) between October 2nd and November 6th. The best days were in October: 20 south on 16th, 23 west and 9 present on 21st, 23 west on 22nd, 13 west on 23rd and 49 west on 24th.

After mid November: 2 on November 18th the only record.

Linnet

Reasonable numbers were present in the early part of the year with: up to 60 in January/February. Into March – 50 west on 11th, 123 mainly west on 25th, 200 present on 29th, 60 west on 30th and 50 west on 31st. Other spring migrants: 100 west on April 1st and 60 west on April 29th.

Autumn: Appalling … very little noteworthy vismig at all. 150 were present on September 23rd and the highest counts I have of birds seen on the move are 28 north on October 3rd and 30 west on October 24th! Perhaps Franny's right – I should start going back to Foreness? It's rubbish here!

Twite

In the early winter period impressive numbers were still present from the autumn/winter of 2002 when 20 to 30+ birds were regularly seen. Peak counts were: 51 birds on January 3rd and 72 on January 27th. There was a gap in sightings between February 2nd (when a group of 35 birds were seen) and March 2nd when a flock of 20 showed up and spent a few days in the area.

During October birds were seen whilst vismiging it on the cliff top – 5 north on 22nd and 16 west on the 24th – though a flock of 16 birds seen flitting across the salt marsh on October 28th may have been the same group? November/December numbers increased to 54 birds on November 18th with a group of 28 birds seen on and off throughout that whole period.

Redpoll

7 birds were in the car park on January 13th. Another very poor spring with 2 south on March 25th the only record I have!

Autumn: 12 west on September 23rd then a reasonable trickle of birds during October totalling: 68 north and 99 west with peaks of 44 west on the 25th and 46 north on the 27th. Occasional birds were present during this period with 15 in Stonelees on October 25th the highest count. Yawn … etc.

Siskin

Spring migrants were noted on 6 dates between March 17th and April 4th totalling 52 north, 1 south and 1 east with the bulk of the birds {33 north} on March 18th.

In the autumn passage noted between September 25th and November 6th totalling 6 south, 38 north and 76 west. The high count (if that's not a contradiction in terms?) was only 34 west on October 24th.

Goldfinch

A peak of 7 birds during January and 8 during February...Oooooh! Fascinating!

Spring Movements: A few during April with 30 west on 24th, 50 west on 29th and 40 west on 30th.

Autumn Movements: (Sept – Nov) Mostly during October with highs of 170 north on 2nd, 110 north on 3rd, 80 north on 14th, 160 west on 23rd and 75 west on 24th.

Good numbers of birds were present during the autumn months with: 160 on October 8th, 200 on the 10th, 250 on 14th, 240 on 21st dropping to not very many by early November. (30 on Nov 6th.)

Greenfinch

January: c20 birds present and 3 displaying pairs present {north end} March/April.

Spring Movements: Laughable! Peaks of 12 south on March 20th, 11 north on 31st and I didn't take note of any on the move during April!

Autumn Movements: 73 south on October 10th, 170 west on 24th and 107 west on 25th plus there were 75 birds present on November 6th.

Bullfinch

1 – 2+ birds regular in Stonelees. Generally scarce elsewhere in the area - with only the occasional record noted on the Country Park etc. A flock of 5 migrant birds were seen flying north on November 6th.

Crossbill

1 n/west on July 2nd and 3 south on July 21st.

Reed Bunting

40+ were present in the area on January 23rd. Autumn vismig turned up very few with 31 north on October 3rd the highest count. There were however good numbers present during October and November – perhaps 200 or more birds? I estimated there were at least 150 on October 25th.

Snow Bunting

There were no early winter records. Singles were seen on the Hover Pad on October12th and the Country Park on October 19th. There was an influx of birds in the Southeast on November 16th when groups of 23 and 4 were seen across on Shellness point – the flock of 23 eventually flying off south. After this – a flock of 47 birds were flushed from Shellness onto our side of the river (by a Marsh Harrier) on December 10th. Also flocks of 61 birds on December 15th and 100+ birds (in 2 groups) on December 25th.

Lapland Bunting

1 in the north fields on October 21st {PFt} and 1 flew west on October 23rd. {PM} Into November – 1 flew south on the 6th (PM) and another was reported on the Country Park on the 18th and 19th.

Yellowhammer

1 on October 23rd was the only record.

Corn Bunting

Regular around the country park in January – peaking at 15 birds on the 13th – but recorded on only one date during February. None were recorded until the last week of October and even then numbers were very low – with 1 to 8 birds being the norm. The peak count was a reported 20 birds on December 25th.

Quotes

F.Solly: "I am only interested in rare migrants." {during a chat about local moth trapping}
T.Preston: "ouch – me feet! Hand me that 12 pack of meat pies will ya?"
D.Wrathall: "They haven't got a Café at Foreness!" {after being questioned re his choice of venue after a fruitless days sea watching in a northerly wind on Deal Pier.}
D.Sawyer: "I can't see it – there's a bit of short grass in the way!"

The Pegwell Listers Society {established AD 1974}

Yep the PLS has been up and running now since a twelve year old Francois Horatio Solly first set foot on Pegwell soil some 29 years ago. Not heard of it? Well that's unsurprising as it's been a secret society with a membership of one up till now. Yep old Frannys kept it under wraps all that time until an incident in the autumn of last year when the cat was well and truly let out of the bag so to speak. A list of a nights moth catch was handed to a person {better not say who?} who noticed that on the back of the paper that there was an impression of a rather long list of birds – in Mr Sollys rather distinct and microscopic handwriting. Though extremely feint – the writing could indeed be read in the right light and held amongst many other things - Mr Sollys entire list of birdlists! What a find eh? Though unsure whether to auction it out to the highest bidder at the time – I thought the fairest option would be to publish it via my annual effort of bird recording as surely then we could all have a giggle at his expense rather than the richest man out there? Sorry about that Barry. Now I know what you're thinking – just how many birds did the list contain? Lets just say for now it is a truly staggering amount! All will be revealed in good time – be patient now! Let me give you a bit of background information.

Its only known locally that Francis {AKA the Hair} holds the Kent record for the amount of birds he's seen and during a conversation behind his back in February we would hazard an educated guess that he holds the Kent moth list record too? Not that Francis has ever mentioned this of course – it's just something we worked out – once again well out of earshot of the hairy one.

Now the numbers:

British = 429
Kent = 341
Thanet = 326
Foreness = 293
Garden = 189
World = 6128

The breakdown of the Pegwell thingamajig {PRC?}

Unfortunately - after only a single year in existence – the PRC 2002 (Pegwell Bay Recording Committee 02) has suffered a series of knock backs that has caused the committee {i.e. me} to disband it completely. The main cause of this has been the complete disregard of the totally fair and expertly written rules (as penned in last years report) by the members who continue to watch other areas – as they continue with twitching and other equally despicable acts of wanton misconduct. As I speak for the whole committee – I can announce my dismay at the attitude of some of you lot out there…… the anarchic behaviour has caused me a great pain in my heart … sniffle …

So a new set of – well not so much rules as guidelines of how to conduct yourselves – will be summed up as thus:
All of us should try and be both peaceful and humble. Those of you that aren't yet in on the crack in this neck of the woods should be made aware of the following things;
A: at all costs not to try and impress with things you my have seen {ie rarities} or places you've been and don't think we will kiss your boots if you have a long list of birds and its gone to your head. If you are in any way under any illusion that you're the top banana – it will have the opposite affect here – and you will be treated as, for want of a better description – bottom banana!
All competitiveness will be treated with contempt as birding is not a competition – it's fun.

B: Humility is an added bonus (except for moi) when mistakes are made in the field you are expected to admit to them? We all make mistakes – everybody does – so tell us them and I am sure well get along just fine.
C: Its costs nothing to be both friendly and approachable. Help wherever and whenever you can. I think that sums it up?
D: Birds don't count outside Thanet.

Pegwell Quiz?

Question 1: Identify the following Pegwell characters>
A: Long – curly-haired twitcher/lister – suppressor and closet Morris dancer? Two words – the first ending in "ancis" and the second in "olly."
B: Six foot tall and 41 stone – likes ballet dancing, eating, drinking then eating some more …
C: Teeny, Tiny tot – eeny and weeny – etc.

Question 2: 6 foot five of pure muscle crossed with intellectual brilliance – who am I?

Please send all answers to Phil Milton – plus £30.00 to cover P+P and handling. Prizes to be announced.

Annual awards??

This year's award has to go to that Dullard at SBBO – none other than Marc Reid for the sensational, snoozy, snozzle snapping Sandwich situation. Well done – well done indeed!

Whinge for2003

People who put Bird stickers on their cars … what's all that about?? Years ago I noticed that the huge tub of lard known as Terry Preston had a pigeon sticker in the back window of his motor vehicle. {Which I alluded to in the 2001 report} Now how did he get around to thinking – ooh a pigeon picture – great, I will stick it in the car window immediately! Or perhaps did he pay money to purchase the stupid thing with the intention of actually advertising the fact that he was "into pigeons?" A definite case of severely misplaced pride in a subject I would say. Back to the bird sticker thing – take my advice lads – take a step back and think about it …it's a bit nerdy don't you think eh? Well am I wrong? Subject for next year will be – people who turn up on a beautiful windless day and sit in dingy stuffy bird hides saying things like "I've never ever seen a Buzzard here." Well your not going to are you when they are 500 foot up in the sky! Lunacy absolute lunacy! That's better … I needed to get that off my chest.

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Thanks to: Barry Wright (for being a cheeky, cheerful little chappy.) and being the only birder I've ever been able to have a conversation with about motor racing … Cheers!

And to end – surely the funniest story of the year – {perhaps ever?} must be the nose-snapping event at SBBO headquarters in early October already touched upon in the awards section. To fill you in – local clumsy person and all round dullard Marc Read {who we lovingly refer to as Serena} during a wrestling match with one K. Thornton actually managed to snap the snozzle of the Gob from the Obs! How much would I have given to actually seen this happen in person? All my earthly belongings – that's how much! {Cept the old Guitars of course} This even took the biscuit off of old Graham Crick's fantastic falling of a ladder accident. Apparently he failed to stop climbing when he got to the top of it and fell off! Perhaps he thought it was a magic ladder? I reckon he's been watching too much Star Trek? Or do they have a clumsy window cleaner on Coronation Street?

Strangest event of this past year – was the rather surreal moment when I decided to stay on at the Obs to listen to one of the aforementioned Kev Thorntons boring public lectures on wait for it … THE WEATHER! Scraping the bottom of the barrel there matey I think? Couldn't you think of a more interesting subject? Of course I didn't stay long – oh no – in fact after about five minutes of mind numbing boredom I decided to leave the rather plush surroundings of the new 21st century Observatory and with Kev in full flow – to check I hadn't died in the night. Well it turned out not to be some sort of surreal dream… It actually happened! Won't happen again of course.

There and back again (365 times)
A Hobbit's Tale
By J Arthur Tolkein

For millenia the creature known as Miltum had wandered the Bay. Once he had been as normal as you or I, but the power of the string had overcome him, until one day, overcome by envy and greed, Miltum had claimed Great Auk and had to kill the only witness, Cricko.

Miltum fled to the escarpment and hid away for years. Sometimes he would sneak down to the Bay, when no-one was looking, clutching his bins, stroking his tripod legs and muttering in an oddly wailing Middle-Thanet tongue "they're my precious sightings, mine, oh yes, precious. Those nasty Orcses and Hobbitses and raritimenses can't have them, can they my precious, oh no. They would take them, and check them and say wes do fakes them, wouldn't they, oh yessss. Beter theys kept by poor Miltum, deep, deep under the chalk Cliffs of Thaneta wheres no-ones will see em, oh yesssss".

And so they remained, hidden by Miltum from the sight of man until something happened that few would have expected. A lanky Hobbit, one Forresto of the Trust, chanced upon Miltum's records in his little wooden hide, and took them.

"Noooooooooooooooooooooooo!" cried Miltum "Nasty little Forrestses! Thiefs and lowlisters! Miltum, Miltum!!"

And so it came to be that Miltum's records were passed from one to another, truth becoming story, story becoming myth, myth becoming legend, legend becoming reported sighting on the grapevines then claims on the Birdlines until, one day, these records were known by all in the land. And Miltum, still hidden in the Bay, was known as 'The Lord of the Strings'.

The ancient world of Thanet was torn asunder. The records of all men who dwelt there fell under suspicion. A great Council was called, and a group of companions chosen to deliver these records to MiddleKent for scrutiny. They were known as the 'Fellowship of the Strings". Gadglet the dwarf, Leggydyl the Elf, Borrowmore the jolly Warden, Avesgorn the pony-tailed true King, Gonedeaf the dribbly old websperwizard and the four young Hobbities Wiko, Sollo, Craigo and Gilbo. (There would have been a tenth member of the fellowship, Terry the Cave Troll, but he had stood still so long his poor old feet had turned to stone).

They were passed the battered notebook, on which were inscribed a curse in ancient Thane: only Gonedeaf could translate the words inscribed on the cover "One string to scare them all, one string to bring them, One string to pee them all, and in their daftess rile them".

Together, the Fellowship tried to carry the records out of Pegwell, but the dark forces of Snadwuch were gathered against them: Dandevole the evil wizard, Grima Thornytongue the weasel-worded one, Dullard the Dull (Captain of the Orcs), and everywhere, the evil, pervading all-seeing eye of Pedro, scouring the Bay for records. Many battles were fought, great battles, quite who started them no-one was sure, but no-one ever won. "Them's all mad, fighting like that, aren'ts they, precious, oh yes" remarked Miltum.

Miltum stalked the Fellowship throughout their journey until Gadgli, Leggydyl and Sollo stood at last on the crest of Mount Doom's west cliffs, there to meet the King of Middle Kent, Theodontaylor. Seizing his chance, Miltum threw himself upon Sollo, and tried vainly to snatch the records from his grasp "they're our preciouses, you hairy hairy hairy minker" he cried "ours, poor Miltum's"

With one mighty tug of the hobbit's long braided feet hair, Miltum made Sollo squeal like a girl and throw the records into the air. They were grasped by the boney paws of Miltum, who began to dance with glee,

singing “ours again, ours again, we hideses from the nasty menses, don’t we, Miltum, Miltum!” But in his frenzied state he did not see Gadgli, and, tripping over him, hurtling headlong into the abyss of the sunken gardens, the records falling with him.

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And so the records were lost to all. Or were they? Could Miltum and the records have survived? Is he still going there, hidden to all? Are you about to read the very ‘the Lord of the Strings’ right now? Will ever you know for sure, will you care, or will you just laugh out loud?? Remember the final curse, for it is said, ‘all who read them, believe them.’

The end?

Please note: The above nonsense was written by one Kevin Thornton in answer to my request that he give me a public slating to add a degree of “balance” to the report – in which I – slag off everybody else, as you are well aware of! The fact that he couldn’t come up with a single derogatory word about moi adds weight to my claim of proclaiming oneself as the perfect birding being. Good morrow!