

Kent Listing; a history. Geoff Burton

I first began to pay attention to my Kent list in 1988 when I moved from Tonbridge to Boughton under Blean near Faversham. This was a more central location in the county with Dungeness now only 30 miles away and Sandwich Bay only 20. Bough Beech Reservoir, however, which had been my local patch, was now about 44 miles away. My first addition after the move was a Baird's Sandpiper at Dungeness, ironically, the next was a White Stork at Fordcombe near Tonbridge and near the Sussex border, followed by the wader duo of Oriental Pratincole and Wilson's Phalarope at Elmey! In my first month after moving, I added four species to my Kent list. I reached 300 species with the Desert Warbler at Seasalter in November 1991.

Fast forward six years. Barry Wright had begun to collect Kent lists from several birders. I got involved and then, I don't remember exactly how or why, I took over. The top ten lists at the end of 1996 were:

Dave Gilbert	333
Don Taylor	330
Geoff Burton	327
John Cantelo	324
Mike Buckland	322
Marcus Lawson	322
Chris Abrams	321
Barry Wright	321
Chris Bradshaw	320
Martin Coath	320

In the early years, there was much talk about what the 400th species for Kent might be. However, with splits and lumps and re-evaluations, this milestone passed unnoticed. It would be difficult, but not impossible if anyone has the time, to calculate what the 400th species was!

Tale of the century

The last year of the old century had been a particular good one for Kent birding. Pied-billed Grebe and Blyth's Reed Warbler were added to the Kent List and much sort after birds included Greater Yellowlegs, Slender-billed Gull, Canvasback, Little Bittern, Baillon's Crake and Sardinian Warbler occurred.

And so, to the the 21st century. We chugged along at a steady pace adding, on average, one species to the Kent list each year. There were four blank years: 2000 itself then 2007, 2009 and 2017 and no more than two additions in any one year. Thus, by 2019 (year 20) we had added exactly 20 species to the list. Four of these, Audouin's Gull, Tufted Puffin, Acadian Flycatcher and Brown Booby were new to Britain as well. And then there was 2020! In an 86-day period between 17th October and 10th January 2021, no less than six potential additions were seen (and photographed). It is telling of the times that half of these were photographed by non-birders and identified later and, also of the times that they could not be twitched! All of these, except the White-throated Sparrow, which is still under consideration, have already been accepted by the BBRC.