



Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd

Thanet Extension Offshore Wind Farm

**Annex 5-14: Passage of Ringed Plover in
Pegwell Bay**

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Passage of Ringed Plover in Pegwell Bay

The following counts refer to passage Ringed Plovers in Pegwell Bay during the period of 1st April to 1st June, and 1st July to 31st October, from 2013 to 2017. In 2015 and 2016 passage of Ringed Plovers continued into June and so a few extra counts are included for your benefit. The vast majority of counts were taken by volunteers and staff of Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust with very occasional input from members of the public. All counts were undertaken using optical equipment such as binoculars and spotting scopes. Counts in Pegwell are often dependent upon volunteers and so can be sporadic in coverage. It shouldn't be assumed that no count means no birds.

Results

2017

Date	Count
12th April	4
14th April	20
15th April	33
16th April	10
17th April	48
19th April	40
20th April	50
21st April	3
23rd April	18
24th April	22
25th April	35
26th April	11
27th April	2
1st May	69
2nd May	57
3rd May	43
4th May	130
5th May	12
6th May	120
7th May	80
8th May	240
9th May	130
10th May	28
11th May	57
12th May	26
14th May	1
15th May	11
16th May	17
17th May	29
18th May	19
19th May	4
21st May	11

Date	Count
5th July	7
31st July	3
12th August	3
14th August	38
17th August	100
28th August	30
30th August	32
31st August	25
1st September	9
2nd September	45
3rd September	1
7th September	70
13th September	24
14th September	35
15th September	10
16th September	34
18th September	19
19th September	10
20th September	18
23rd September	8
26th September	2
28th September	3
1st October	5
2nd October	55
4th October	3
5th October	1
7th October	1
9th October	6
17th October	4
19th October	1

2016

Date	Count	Date	Count
12th April	5	9th May	72
14th April	5	10th May	180
18th April	3	11th May	35
20th April	3	12th May	65
24th April	3	13th May	17
25th April	5	14th May	120
26th April	110	15th May	17
27th April	8	16th May	50
28th April	4	17th May	55
29th April	42	18th May	25
1st May	6	19th May	11
2nd May	82	20th May	17
3rd May	39	23rd May	1
4th May	64	24th May	23
5th May	27	25th May	130
6th May	60	2nd June	75
7th May	50	3rd June	130
8th May	30		

Date	Count	Date	Count
30th July	8	15th September	4
2nd August	2	16th September	60
3rd August	29	17th September	135
5th August	8	18th September	30
8th August	17	19th September	70
10th August	26	20th September	20
22nd August	6	21st September	12
28th August	21	22nd September	26
29th August	32	23rd September	5
30th August	70	25th September	1
31st August	100	27th September	3
1st September	40	28th September	15
2nd September	17	30th September	2
3rd September	4	1st October	25
4th September	2	2nd October	12
5th September	35	3rd October	6
7th September	35	13th October	5
8th September	2	16th October	20
9th September	21	21st October	2
10th September	4	22nd October	14
11th September	2	24th October	6
12th September	75	27th October	2
14th September	20		

2015

Date	Count	Date	Count
4th April	3	10th May	76
5th April	1	11th May	18
10th April	17	12th May	45
11th April	2	13th May	42
13th April	4	14th May	135
15th April	8	15th May	350
19th April	3	16th May	70
23rd April	8	17th May	30
25th April	1	18th May	52
26th April	8	19th May	3
27th April	50	20th May	70
28th April	2	21st May	30
29th April	13	23rd May	10
30th April	55	24th May	10
1st May	7	28th May	3
3rd May	10	1st June	31
4th May	15	3rd June	16
5th May	47	4th June	11
6th May	70	5th June	10
8th May	55	6th June	2
9th May	29	16th June	1

Date	Count	Date	Count
11th July	2	29th August	38
25th July	22	30th August	6
26th July	9	31st August	250
4th August	1	1st September	34
5th August	25	2nd September	12
7th August	6	3rd September	25
12th August	65	5th September	17
14th August	45	7th September	12
15th August	50	8th September	10
17th August	40	9th September	28
18th August	130	11th September	3
19th August	24	12th September	3
20th August	80	23rd September	1
21st August	37	25th September	2
22nd August	2	7th October	4
23rd August	1	22nd October	52
24th August	150	23rd October	26
25th August	60	24th October	50
26th August	40		

2014

Date	Count
1st May	5
6th May	180
7th May	90
8th May	16
9th May	12
10th May	120
19th May	42

Date	Count
24th July	11
4th August	6
5th August	6
6th August	49
11th August	6
16th August	30
17th August	2
19th August	10
20th August	25
22nd August	40
28th August	46
29th August	2
31st August	30
1st September	7
2nd September	6
3rd September	3
5th September	75
11th September	7
16th September	26
19th September	1
30th September	12
2nd October	16
16th October	35
17th October	30

2013

Date	Count	Date	Count
3rd April	12	8th May	140
8th April	8	9th May	4
9th April	10	10th May	6
10th April	9	11th May	9
12th April	2	14th May	6
16th April	15	15th May	80
17th April	2	16th May	25
25th April	8	17th May	31
26th April	30	18th May	26
27th April	4	19th May	20
29th April	12	20th May	180
1st May	2	21st May	3
4th May	9	22nd May	50
5th May	3	23rd May	45
6th May	5	28th May	13
7th May	20		

Date	Count
1st July	1
17th July	1
3rd August	2
4th August	2
12th August	27
14th August	2
16th August	3
15th September	3
19th September	6
20th September	3
22nd September	3
28th September	4
30th September	3
2nd October	9

Spatial Distribution, Behaviour, and other notes

As you are probably aware the problem with WeBS counts is that they only take a once-a-month snapshot of bird numbers. Accurate winter wader counts would actually take a week or so of watching tides (in and out) to gather together roughly how many birds are wintering. Recording 470 Oystercatchers on one tide for example, when we knew that there were 700 birds wintering, misrepresents the actual numbers of birds utilising Pegwell Bay. Not every bird will be seen on every tide of course. It might take two weeks to gather together accurate numbers of Grey Plover, Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit in Pegwell as in recent years they tend to feed on the Sandwich side out of view. Maybe the mud has changed in the Bay as in the past pretty much all of the waders would be in Pegwell most days. Nowadays even the Dunlin often won't venture into the Bay on an incoming tide and are seen far more frequently on the dropping tide, flying in from the high tide roost as soon as the mud starts to show. Once the tide goes out about 150 yards, the first time they get spooked they will fly behind Shellness and might not show up again unless someone or something flushes them back into Pegwell. The other reason for them to show as the tide drops is due to the fact that they are more easily disturbed at the Shellness high tide roost. With them being on the dry land (instead of out in the mud at range as they would be at low tide) they come into contact with people more often and when they do there is only one place for them to fly, into Pegwell. This is less of a problem with Ringed Plovers as they are never too numerous during the winter months (in recent years early and late winter peaks of less than ten in Pegwell, though up 50 in the wider area). A few are usually loitering along the 'Western Undercliff' (the northern edge of Recording Compartment 1) where they rarely get recorded.

However, these 'snapshots' are particularly flawed during migration periods when they have a slim chance of coinciding with a big passage day for Ringed Plovers. This is especially evident in spring when peak numbers are rarely present for more than 24 hours (e.g. 110 on 26th April 2016 but only eight present the next day). For this reason spring movements tend to be an 'all-or-nothing' event. Spring migration is usually short, between mid-April and late May (occasionally into early June in some years), and often birds are associated with Dunlin flocks and occasional Kentish Plovers. The resident breeding population then remains in the area from then onwards. In 2017 a pair bred on the remains of the old Hoverport whilst at least four pairs attempted on Shellness Point, though productivity is poor at both sites due to disturbance. Autumn migration is a different drawn out affair commencing slowly usually from early July, peaking throughout August/September, and dribbling through into October. In recent years there has been a trends for less 'large arrivals' compared to spring (though 250 on 31st August 2015 an exception). Whilst in some years, such as 2013, passage through the area is almost negligible. This is a far cry from the past though. In the 1970's flocks of 300+ were recorded on many dates during the autumn period and counts of 500+ were far from uncommon. There have been no exceptionally large arrivals since 640 on 25th August 2004.

Like most waders Ringed Plovers prefer the estuary end of the mud where the river mouth joins the Bay. The birds would be expected to be within a spacial square 2-300 yards north of Shellness Point (encompassing the areas of Shellness Point, Intertidal Area of Interest, and into Recording Compartment 1). This is by far the main feeding area at low tide. They are usually found in a close, dense and skittish flock. Some birds deliberately feed up in this area before flying off north-west overland continuing their migration. Alternatively, they can be found in the 100 yard stretch to the

south of this area (on the Sandwich side). Apart from these two favoured areas small numbers can also be found on the mud at the edge of the saltmarsh in front of the bird hide (Western edge of Recording Compartment 1) and following the edge of the receding tide as it edges out (similar to Sanderling). When the tide has gone out sufficiently far the flock will often fly back to the original favoured area. During high tides when the mud is covered the majority of birds tend to choose the shingle of Shellness Point to roost with small numbers following the river edges along the northern edge of Recording Compartment 2. Though of course flocks regularly move around the Bay due to regular disturbance issues (boats, walkers, dogs etc.).

Ringed Plovers are regular just outside the Pegwell Bay area too but do not seem to reach the high numbers regularly seen in the Bay (100+). They are regularly on the beach from the south side of the estuary and will mix with the Pegwell Bay flock during passage periods. For example, at least 51 birds wintered on the Sandwich Bay Estate/Prince's beach during 2016/17 and 95 were present on 9th September 2017. Birds are also present on the new inland scrapes and pools made by the Environment Agency Flood Alleviation Scheme. This area (Recording Compartment 4) holds small numbers of breeding birds but can hold flocks during migration, such as 89 on 28th August 2016. It may be slightly outside the scope of your request but Ringed Plovers can also be found in small groups along the shore to Deal during migration, recently 65 on 23rd August 2017 and 70 on 29th August 2016.

In truth this is a species in steep decline as a bird of passage. Counts throughout both passage periods in Pegwell Bay are a shadow of their former selves. And similar species such as Lapwing and Golden Plover are going the same. Though Pegwell Bay still provides a refuge, albeit an increasingly disturbed refuge, where passage Ringed Plovers and other Waders, Terns, Gulls, etc. can roost and feed in preparation to continue their migration.

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