

Global Birdfair 2024

Articles Review Of The Week 8 14 April 2024

15/04/2024

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Review of the Week: 8-14 April 2024

More wet and windy weather mid-week gave way to warm, dry weather by the weekend, with strong south-westerlies reaching much of Britain. This saw the floodgates once again open for spring migrants, including an exceptional early fall of **Golden Orioles**.

Some 16 birds were recorded in south-west England (five in Devon, four in Cornwall and seven on Scilly), with a further two reaching Wales (at Breakwater CP, Anglesey, and Cwm Ivy, Glamorgan) and one in Ireland (at Cahore Marsh, Co Wexford). This included a trio at Olchard, Devon, and at least four on St Mary's, Scilly, on 14th. Interestingly, the vast majority looked to be adult males. This early arrival appears to be unprecedented - there are just five records in the BirdGuides database before mid-April since the turn of the century.

Just what led to such a bumper fall is somewhat of a mystery, though it seems likely that record-breaking temperatures across southern Europe may have contributed. A high-pressure system embedded over mainland Europe brought extraordinary early heat to France and Iberia, with temperatures reaching a sweltering 33.5°C in Castilla y León. Birds haven't even arrived en-masse back in Iberia yet - perhaps some were encouraged to continue straight over? Whatever the case, it may mark the start of fourth spring in a row which proves fruitful for this species.



Three male Golden Orioles, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly (Scott Reid).

Portland and Dorset's first **Western Subalpine Warbler** since 2016 was one of the week's rarity highlights, when a male was found on the island on 14th. A rare twitchable Irish **Western Subalpine Warbler** resided at Hook Head, Co Wexford, from 11th, where it shared the stage with a **Woodchat Shrike**. A small arrival of the latter species saw five found in Britain. Most notably, a one-day bird at Beddington Farmlands on 12th was supremely popular with both Surrey and London listers, while another at Tanybwch, Ceredigion, was also noteworthy.



Western Subalpine Warbler, Hook Head, Wexford (Brian McCloskey).



Woodchat Shrike, Tanybwch, Ceredigion (John Ibbotson).

Birders in central and southern England were graced by a widespread **Whinchat** arrival that kicked off in style from 9th. These bundles of orange joy are undoubtedly one of the most eagerly awaited species during spring passage in lowland areas - alongside **Pied Flycatcher**, **Common Redstart** and **Ring Ouzel**. Cambridgeshire boasted the first returning **European Turtle Dove** on 12th.

Whinchat, Brogborough landfill site, Bedfordshire (Neil Wright).

Common Swifts are typically one of the latest migrants to arrive back in Britain for the summer, not usually occurring in numbers before late April. There is always a chance, therefore, that early arrivals might be of the rarer, Pallid variety. Confirmed **Pallid Swifts** were at Patrington Haven, East Yorkshire, on 9th and St Mary's, Scilly, on 13-14th, with swifts reported as **Common** at a further 12 sites. **Alpine Swifts** were in Cornwall, Norfolk and Co Wicklow.

Pallid Swift, Patrington Haven, East Yorkshire (David Constantine).

Lancashire's first twitchable **Red-rumped Swallow** for some 20 years was at Marton Mere on 9th - coincidentally, the last was at the same site on 18-19 April 2004. At least one was over the Isles of Scilly during the weekend, with another at Lough Clubir, Co Cork. The first **Montagu's Harrier** of 2024 concerned a female at Knockadoon Head, Co Cork, on 14th. The same date delivered a male **Bluethroat** at Grantchester, Cambridgeshire, with a vocal male **Iberian Chiffchaff** on St Agnes, Scilly, from 11th. Elsewhere were four **Wynegals** - including two at Holme, Norfolk - six **European Serins**, 12 **Hoopoes** and nine **Blue-headed Wagtails**.

European Serin, Southwold, Suffolk (Jake Gearty).

Hoopoe, Greatstone-on-Sea, Kent (Martin Casemore).

Blue-headed Wagtail, Southwold, Suffolk (Jake Gearty).

An early **Black-winged Stilt** was at Frampton Marsh RSPB, Lincolnshire, from 8th. Notably, the brown mantle makes it a female, while the white trailing edge to the wing makes it a bird born in 2023. Could this be the return of last year's successful fledgling? Another was at Smerwick Harbour, Co Kerry.

Black-winged Stilt, Frampton Marsh RSPB, Lincolnshire (R Coudray).

Lincolnshire's second **Bonaparte's Gull** was another welcome find at Frampton Marsh RSPB from 11th. The premier east-coast site was on fire this week, with a terrific line-up of sightings that included an adult **Red-breasted Goose**, the continuing **Lesser Yellowlegs** and the aforementioned **Black-winged Stilt**, as well as **Black Tern**, two **Little Gulls**, **Channel Wagtail**, two **Garganey**, three **Common Cranes**, two **Curlew Sandpipers** and two **Little Stints**.

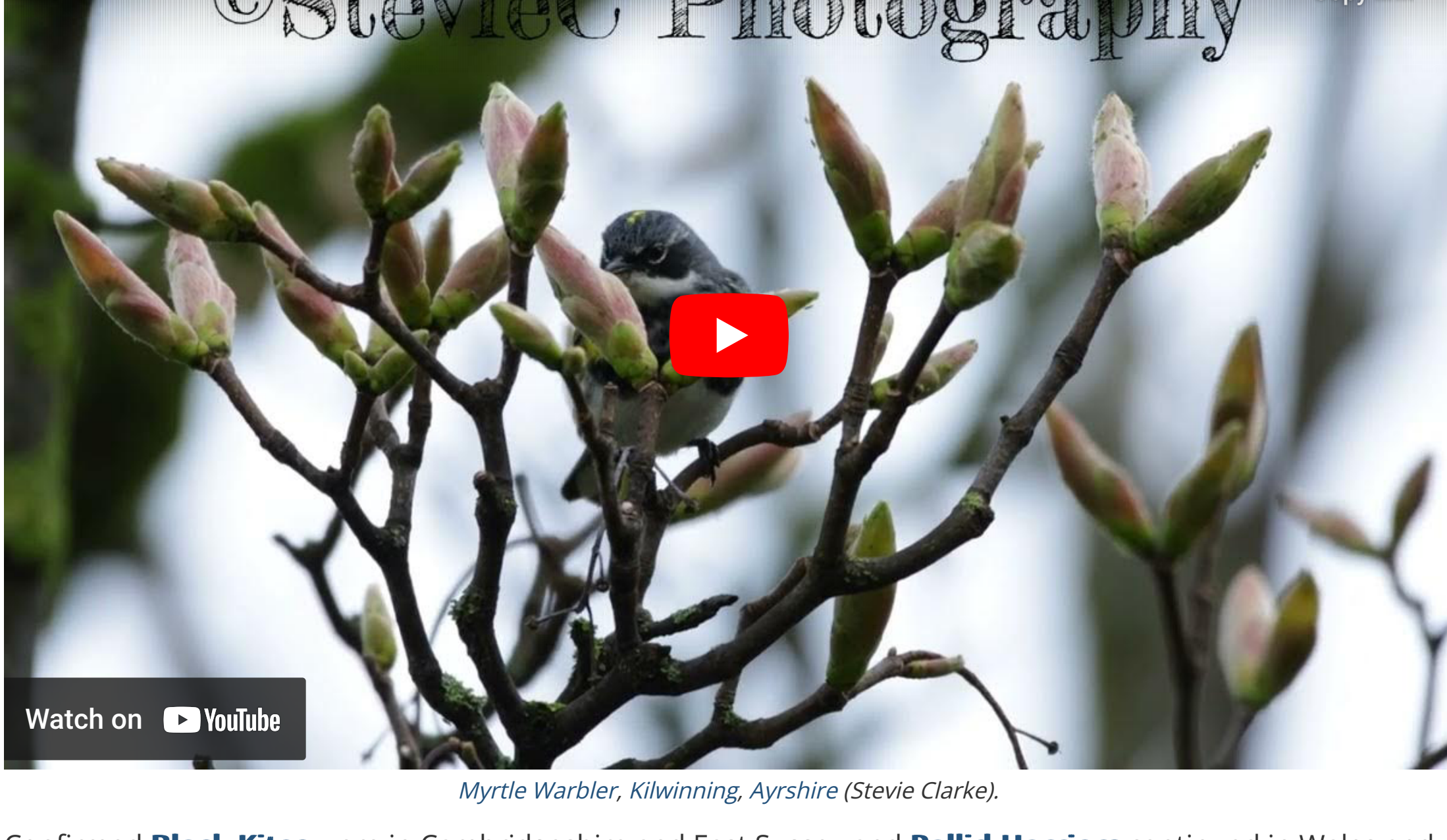
Bonaparte's Gull, Frampton Marsh RSPB, Lincolnshire (Steve Furber).

While not quite at the level of spring 2023's exceptional arrival, the week saw a decent flush of **Purple Herons** appear, with the bulk arriving over the weekend. Birds were split between southern England (11) and Ireland (three). Most notable were two roosting at Winchester, Hampshire, on 13th and one on the Leicestershire-Northamptonshire border at Stanford Reservoir on 9-10th. An incredible four **Black-crowned Night Herons** were in a garden at Wiston, West Sussex, with a further five elsewhere (one in Cornwall and two on Lundy, Devon, and St Mary's, Scilly). The first **Squacco Heron** for Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, was an excellent find for Emmanuel Jatta, an Ornithological Research Assistant on an exchange placement from Kartong Bird Observatory in The Gambia.

Purple Heron, Thornwick Bay, East Yorkshire (Glyn Sellors).

Squacco Heron, Skokholm, Pembrokeshire (Richard Brown / Skokholm Warden).

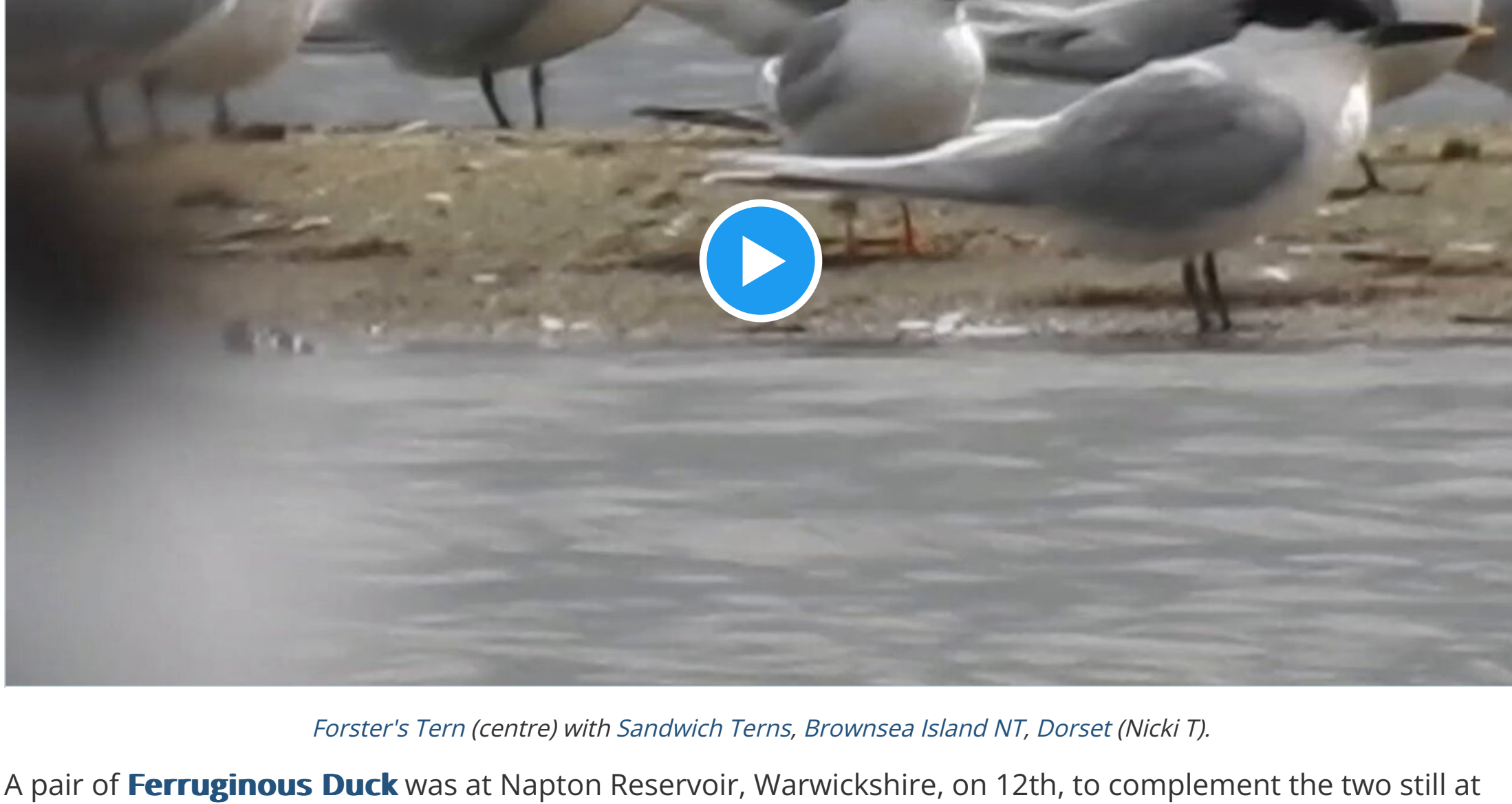
The first-summer male **Myrtle Warbler** at Kilwinning, Fife, looks smarter and smarter by the day. A notable find came in the form of a brief **Little Bunting** at Avon Meadows, Worcestershire, on 12th. Elsewhere, a mobile **Richard's Pipit** was again at Patrington Haven, East Yorkshire. Other lingering passerines included the Dorset **Yellow-browed Warbler**, Hampshire **Great Grey Shrike** and two **Shore Larks**.



Myrtle Warbler Singing, Kilwinning, Ayrshire (Stevie Clarke).

Confirmed **Black Kites** were in Cambridgeshire and East Sussex and **Pallid Harriers** continued in Wales and Scilly. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was in Shetland, while a **Hooded Crow** in Worcestershire is the county's first since 1983. A male **Corncrake** trapped and ringed on Bardsey Island, Gwynedd, is the first to be ringed on the island since 2015.

The **Forster's Tern** remained settled around Poole Harbour, Dorset, and the adult **Bonaparte's Gull** lingered at Sandy Water Park, Carmarthen, until 12th. White-winged gulls totalled 17 **Iceland Gulls** (including three **Kumlien's Gulls**) and seven **Glaucous Gulls**. The **Double-crested Cormorant** was still at Colgagh Lough, Co Sligo, with at least one **White-billed Diver** still off Aberdeenshire.



Forster's Tern (centre) with Sandwich Terns, Brownsea Island NT, Dorset (Nicki T).

A pair of **Ferruginous Duck** was at Napton Reservoir, Warwickshire, on 12th, to complement the two still at Woolston Eyes NR, Cheshire, whether the **Ruddy Duck** was also still present. Another **Ferruginous Duck** remained in Kent. **Lesser Scaup** numbered 12, with the Cheshire female relocating to Greater Manchester on 8th and a pair near Shelley, Suffolk, on 14th. Other totals consisted of two **American Wigeon**, 12 **Green-winged Teal**, 12 **Ring-necked Ducks**, two **Smew** and three **Surf Scoter**, with a drake **King Eider** reported again off Loffhan.

Ferruginous Duck, Woolston Eyes NR (permit only), Cheshire (John Tymon).

Ring-necked Duck (front bird) with Common Pochard, Dublin, Dublin (Ian Stevenson).

A stunning six **Red-breasted Geese** were on offer this week, though at least three are perhaps best described as of unknown origin (two at Lytchett Bay, Dorset, and one in Lancashire with Pink-footed Geese). Two were with Dark-bellied Brent Geese in East Anglia, and the wintering bird from Islay, Argyll, relocated to the Outer Hebrides at Callernish, North Uist. Pink-footed Goose flocks in Lancashire also held a **Todd's Canada Goose** and a late **Tundra Bean Goose**. A family party of five **Grey-bellied Brant** were at Dalkey Island, Co Dublin, and a **Black Brant** was still in East Yorkshire.

It was a quiet week as far as shorebirds were concerned, though four **Long-billed Dowitchers** and three **Lesser Yellowlegs** all lingered. **Little Stints** were at four sites

Long-billed Dowitcher, Clew Marshes NWT, Norfolk (Oscar Lawrence).

Western Palearctic

Now in the company of Barnacle Geese, the pair of **Ross's Geese** wandered across the German border to Neufeld from 10-12th - where they will likely be accepted as the first Category A German record. They were later seen in active migration along the Swedish Baltic coast on 13th. A **Sociable Lapwing** was also in the Outer Hebrides at Callernish, North Uist. Pink-footed Goose flocks in Lancashire also held a **Todd's Canada Goose** and a late **Tundra Bean Goose**. A family party of five **Grey-bellied Brant** were at Dalkey Island, Co Dublin, and a **Black Brant** was still in East Yorkshire.

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Black Kite (Yellow-billed) *Milvus migrans aegyptius/parasitus* Macaulay Library ML 616728134
Norbert Writling eBird checklist S166680619
21 Mar 2024 The Cornell Lab

An action-packed run in the Canary Islands saw the **African Crane** reported again at Costa Teguse, Lanzarote, and the **Sudan Golden Sparrow** and **Sempalmated Plover** still on Gran Canaria. Most noteworthy of all was the belated news of a **Yellow-billed Kite** at Morro Jable, Fuerteventura, on 13th. A series of records on the European continent in recent years has led to some speculation about whether these might be wild vagrants. News from the Spanish mainland comprised a **Cream-coloured Courser**, **American Herring Gull** and **Brown Booby**.

Lampedusa, Sicily, hosted Italy's fifth **White-crowned Wheatear**, with Italy's fourth **American Golden Plover** on the mainland at Castel Volturno. An **Intermediate Egret** and **Hudsonian Whimbrel** were again on São Vicente, Cape Verde, while a **Double-crested Cormorant**, **American Coot** and **Wood Duck** remained in the Azores. In the Channel Islands, a male **Iberian Wagtail** was at St Ouen's Pond, Jersey.

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- View all sightings
- 15/04/2024 21:53 **White-spotted Bluethroat** Cambridgeshire Details
 - 15/04/2024 21:39 **Black-crowned Night Heron** Devon Details
 - 15/04/2024 21:29 **Black-winged Kite** Saare Details
 - 15/04/2024 20:35 **Golden Oriole** Cornwall Details
 - 15/04/2024 20:32 **European Bee-eater** Dorset Details

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