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Thanet Coast Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) Monitoring

January – February 2014



A Report to Natural England

by

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On behalf of

Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust (SBBOT)

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1 Summary

The population of Turnstones within the Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA in six surveys between 2001 and 2010 was found to vary between 1,087 and 1,335, with a mean of 1,227. This represented a relatively small variation from the average of no more than 11%. Against this background, a co-ordinated count of only 620 in the 2013 survey gave significant cause for concern, particularly as numbers were found to be reduced in almost all sections of the coast.

It was recommended that further co-ordinated counts of the coast be undertaken in winter 2013/14 to establish the accuracy of the 2013 result. It was also suggested that attention should be directed at establishing that all roost sites and areas used for feeding at high tide are being monitored, in case some birds using previously unused sites were missed during the 2013 count.

Recorders were asked to undertake a minimum of two visits at high tide between 12 January and the first co-ordinated count on 15 February, marking the position and numbers of Turnstones in each sector on a map appended to the recording form. This would show where they were roosting and/or feeding at high tide. Two co-ordinated counts of the coast were undertaken at high tide on 15 February and 1 March.

2 Summary of Methods

2.1 Co-ordinated Turnstone counts

Co-ordinated Turnstone counts were undertaken during high tide on 15th February 2014 and again on 1st March 2014. As with previous surveys, the coastline was divided into 21 sections of approximately 2km length (see Appendix 1). Each section was assigned to 1 or 2 volunteers, recruited from the Thanet Coast Project (North East Kent European Marine Site) volunteers, and Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory.

Surveyors were instructed to walk the whole length of their allocated stretch of coastline, commencing half an hour before high tide and counting Turnstones occurring in that section. Volunteers were asked to ensure that double-counting was kept to a minimum. Some surveyors were less than confident about identification of other waders so this survey concentrated solely on counting Turnstones.

2.2 Roost Site Monitoring

Volunteers were asked to walk each section of the coast, recording the number and positions of Turnstones within their allocated sector and making notes on their behaviour (ie whether they were roosting or feeding). Numbers were noted on a recording form that was provided and the positions of the birds marked on the map of the section of the coast appended to the recording form.



3 Results

3.1 Co-ordinated Turnstone counts

Results of the co-ordinated Turnstone counts are summarised below in Tables 1 and 2.

This year's survey took place during a very mild winter, with average temperatures of 9°C in January and 10°C in February. The distribution of Turnstones around the coast was broadly similar to the surveys conducted prior to 2010 but counts were broadly similar to the low numbers that were evident in February 2013.

Table 1. Results of the co-ordinated Turnstone counts on Saturday 15th February 2014 (total of 583) and Saturday 1st March 2014 (total of 664) and comparison with results from February 2001, March 2002, March 2003, March 2006, February 2008, February 2010 and February 2013.

| | SECTOR | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | TOT |
|-------------|--------|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
| 2014 | 0 | 25 | 11 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 34 | 3 | 14 | 10 | 1 | 148 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 4 | 25 | 19 | 112 | 142 | 583 |
| | 0 | 88 | 9 | 2 | 18 | 7 | 32 | 6 | 19 | 0 | | 110 | 10 | 23 | 6 | 0 | 17 | 22 | 42 | 106 | 147 | 664 |
| 2013 | 43 | 70 | 11 | 6 | 21 | 9 | 20 | 22 | 59 | 1 | 15 | 13 | 32 | 19 | 6 | 2 | 52 | 38 | 31 | 97 | 53 | 620 |
| 2010 | 0 | 927 | 0 | 2 | 16 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 37 | 12 | 0 | 21 | 0 | 8 | 13 | 0 | 8 | 187 | 2 | 1247 |
| 2008 | 0 | 117 | 13 | 14 | 62 | 56 | 177 | 20 | 47 | 41 | 6 | 83 | 20 | 22 | 20 | 17 | 16 | 47 | 32 | 168 | 109 | 1087 |
| 2006 | 133 | 67 | 24 | 0 | 17 | 53 | 120 | 56 | 36 | 2 | 8 | 62 | 102 | 125 | 40 | 4 | 0 | 33 | 61 | 108 | 284 | 1335 |
| 2003 | 171 | 11 | 3 | 0 | 31 | 157 | 37 | 0 | 53 | 74 | 0 | 65 | 19 | 278 | 39 | 82 | 0 | 70 | 0 | 136 | 35 | 1261 |
| 2002 | 165 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 131 | 38 | 2 | 28 | 6 | 56 | 0 | 100 | 309 | 76 | 14 | 0 | 4 | 26 | 225 | 19 | 1201 |
| 2001 | 66 | 14 | 0 | 7 | 12 | 79 | 41 | 18 | 86 | 51 | 5 | 93 | 19 | 366 | 28 | 103 | 33 | 50 | 2 | 4 | 154 | 1231 |

Table 2 also shows that the overall number of Turnstones recorded within the Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA during the 2013 and 2014 co-ordinated counts were significantly lower than in any of the six surveys between 2001-2010

Table 2. Turnstone numbers found within Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA in 2014 compared with the seven previous surveys.

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | 2014 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|
| 1231 | 1201 | 1261 | 1335 | 1087 | 1247 | 620 | 583 & 664 |

Figure 1. Turnstone distribution within the Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA in four study years 2001-2008.



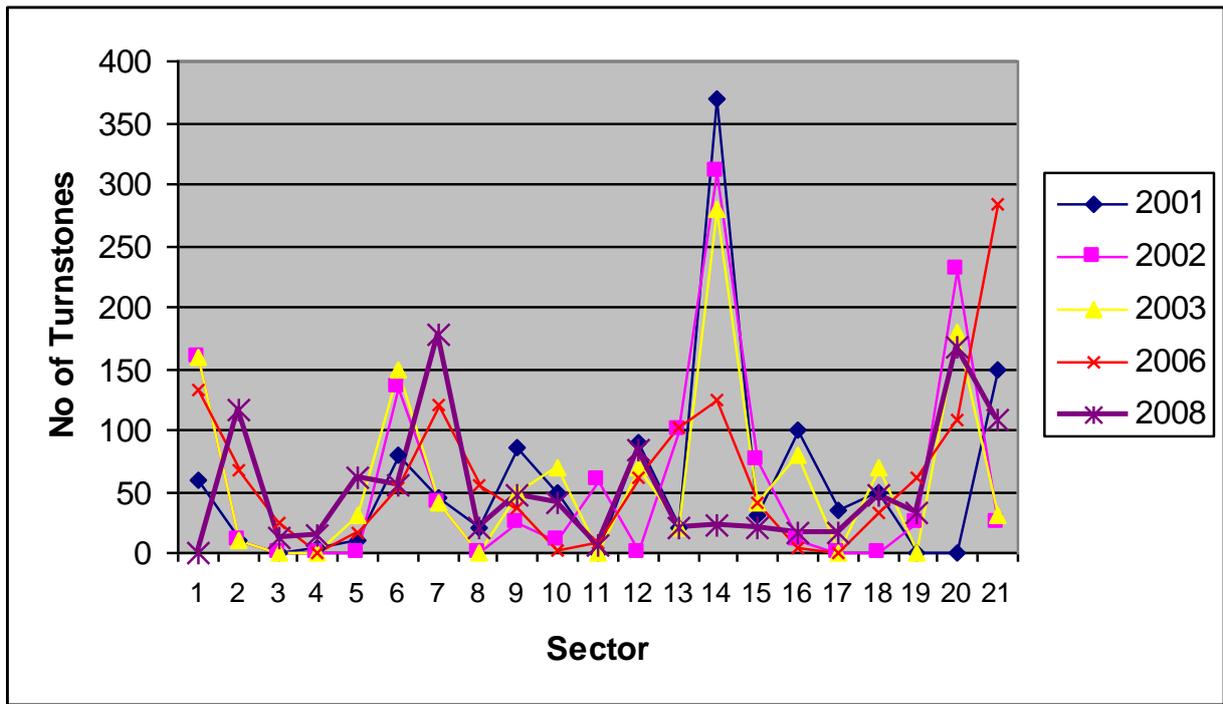


Figure 2. Turnstone distribution within the Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA 2001 - 2010 .

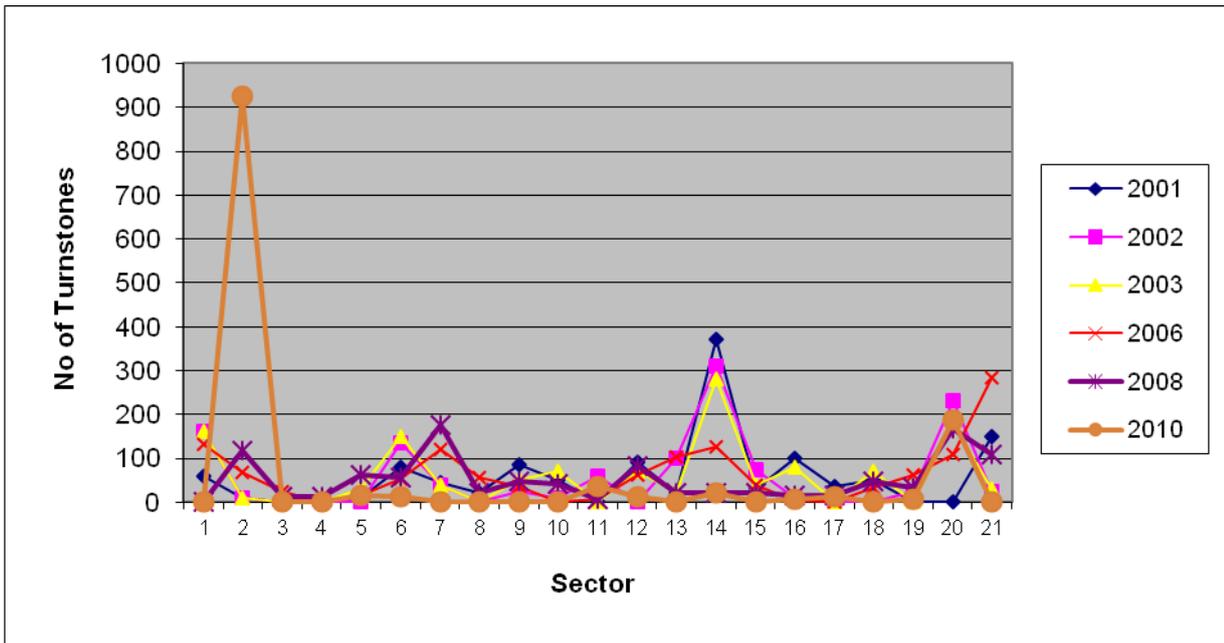


Figure 3. Turnstone distribution within the Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA 2013

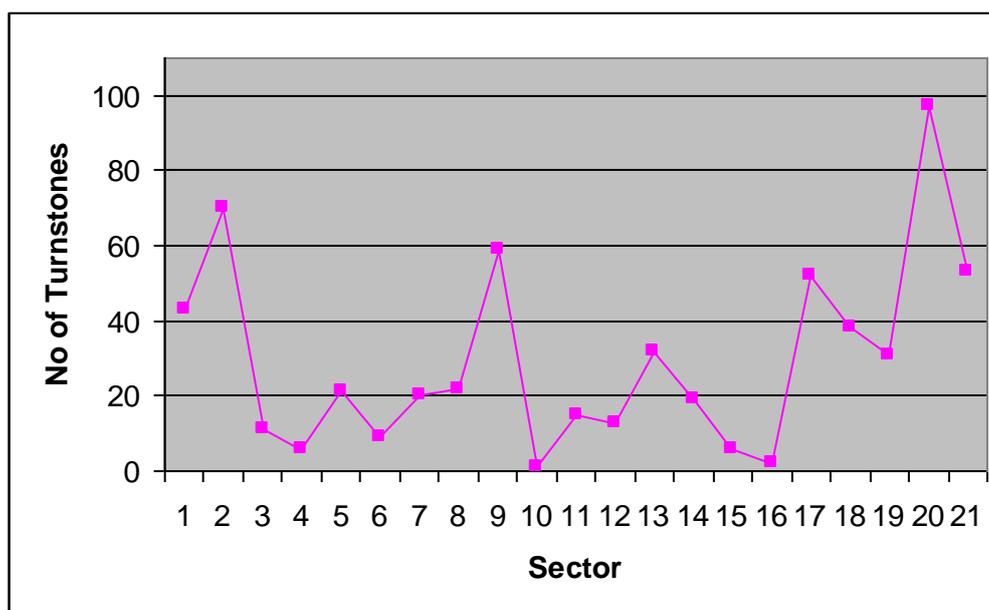


Table 3. Turnstone numbers found within Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA in 2014 in co-ordinated counts carried out on 15 February and 1 March and comparison with the seven previous surveys.

| | Sector | 2001 – 2013 counts | | 2014 counts | |
|----|------------------------------|--------------------|---------|-------------|------------|
| | | Range | Average | Feb 15 | Mar 1 |
| 1 | Pegwell Bay | 0-165 | 82 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Pegwell – West Cliff | 2-117* | 47* | 25 | 88 |
| 3 | Ramsgate | 0-24 | 7 | 11 | 9 |
| 4 | Dumpton / Dumpton Bay | 0-14 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| 5 | Broadstairs | 0-62 | 23 | 5 | 18 |
| 6 | N.Foreland / Kingsgate Bay | 14-157 | 71 | 11 | 7 |
| 7 | Botany Bay – Palm Bay | 0-177 | 62 | 34 | 32 |
| 8 | Margate east | 0-56 | 17 | 3 | 6 |
| 9 | Margate | 0-86 | 44 | 14 | 19 |
| 10 | St Mildred’s Bay | 0-74 | 25 | 10 | 0 |
| 11 | Westgate Bay | 0-56 | 18 | 1 | |
| 12 | Grenham Bay / Birchington | 0-93 | 47 | 148 | 110 |
| 13 | Minnis Bay | 0-102 | 42 | 1 | 10 |
| 14 | Plumpudding – Cold Harbour | 19-366 | 163 | 0 | 23 |
| 15 | Cold Harbour – Reculver east | 0-76 | 31 | 0 | 6 |
| 16 | Reculver west | 2-103 | 33 | 16 | 0 |
| 17 | Herne Bay east | 0-52 | 16 | 4 | 17 |
| 18 | Herne Bay | 0-70 | 34 | 25 | 22 |
| 19 | Hampton / Hampton Pier | 0-61 | 23 | 19 | 42 |
| 20 | Long Rock – Hampton | 4-225 | 132 | 112 | 106 |
| 21 | Whitstable / Tankerton | 2-284 | 79 | 142 | 147 |
| | TOTAL | | | 583 | 664 |

* Excludes the unusually high number (927) recorded in February 2010



3.2 Roost Site Monitoring

Numbers of Turnstones occurring in each section and their behaviour are given for each sector of the coast, along with comparative data from the seven co-ordinated counts undertaken from 2001 – 2013.

Table 4. Turnstone numbers found in each section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and the maximum number found in roost site monitoring in January and February 2014.

| Sector | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|---------|------------|
| 1 | 66 | 165 | 171 | 133 | - | - | 43 | 0-165 | 82 | 0 |
| 2 | 14 | 2 | 11 | 67 | 117 | 927 | 70 | 2-117* | 47* | 42 |
| 3 | - | - | 3 | 24 | 13 | - | 11 | 0-24 | 7 | 6 |
| 4 | 7 | - | - | - | 14 | 2 | 6 | 0-14 | 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 12 | - | 31 | 17 | 62 | 16 | 21 | 0-62 | 23 | 12 |
| 6 | 79 | 131 | 157 | 53 | 56 | 14 | 9 | 14-157 | 71 | 18 |
| 7 | 41 | 38 | 37 | 120 | 177 | - | 20 | 0-177 | 62 | 33 |
| 8 | 18 | 2 | - | 56 | 20 | - | 22 | 0-56 | 17 | 26 |
| 9 | 86 | 28 | 53 | 36 | 47 | - | 59 | 0-86 | 44 | 51 |
| 10 | 51 | 6 | 74 | 2 | 41 | - | 1 | 0-74 | 25 | 24 |
| 11 | 5 | 56 | - | 8 | 6 | 37 | 15 | 0-56 | 18 | |
| 12 | 93 | - | 65 | 62 | 83 | 12 | 13 | 0-93 | 47 | 167 |
| 13 | 19 | 100 | 19 | 102 | 20 | - | 32 | 0-102 | 42 | 13 |
| 14 | 366 | 309 | 278 | 125 | 22 | 21 | 19 | 19-366 | 163 | 12 |
| 15 | 28 | 76 | 39 | 40 | 20 | - | 6 | 0-76 | 31 | 20 |
| 16 | 103 | 14 | 82 | 4 | 17 | 8 | 2 | 2-103 | 33 | 16 |
| 17 | 33 | - | - | - | 16 | 13 | 52 | 0-52 | 16 | 20 |
| 18 | 50 | 4 | 70 | 33 | 47 | - | 38 | 0-70 | 34 | 31 |
| 19 | 2 | 26 | - | 61 | 32 | 8 | 31 | 0-61 | 23 | 29 |
| 20 | 4 | 225 | 136 | 108 | 168 | 187 | 97 | 4-225 | 132 | 104 |
| 21 | 154 | 19 | 35 | 284 | 109 | 2 | 53 | 2-284 | 79 | 153 |

* Excludes the unusually high number (927) recorded in February 2010

Results of visits to each sector were as follows:

Sector 1 Pegwell Bay

From the south end of Pegwell Bay Nature Reserve, where the coastal path turns sharply north along the bay at TR342628 to opposite the old hoverport road, west of Little Cliffsend Farm, at TR354644.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|-------------|
| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
| 66 | 165 | 171 | 133 | - | - | 43 | 0-165 | 82 | 0 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 (results exclude the unusually high number (927) recorded in February 2010) | | | | | | | | | |

This sector was visited on 3 and 12 February 2014.

No birds were found on either visit. On the first visit activity from dog walkers and a kite surfer would have disturbed any birds likely to have been present, though no disturbance was evident during the second visit.



The accretion of the saltmarsh in this section has rendered it much less suitable than previously and high levels of disturbance almost certainly mean that the majority of Turnstones roosting in Pegwell Bay will use Sector 2.

Sector 2 Pegwell – West Cliff

From opposite the old hoverport road, west of Little Cliffsend Farm, at TR354644 to the western limit of Ramsgate Harbour at TR377642

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|---------|------|
| 14 | 2 | 11 | 67 | 117 | 927 | 70 | 2-117* | 47* | 42 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 (results exclude the unusually high number (927) recorded in February 2010) | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 14 and 15 January 2014.

Birds were found at two sites on both visits, in each case feeding on the beach. One site (just east of the hoverport, beneath Cliffsend Farm) held seven birds on visit 1 and 27 on visit 2, while the other (West Cliff, just west of Ramsgate Harbour) held eight birds on visit 1 and 15 on visit 2. There was no interchange between these sites on either visit.

Numbers were found to be slightly below average.

Sector 3 Ramsgate Harbour and Beach

From western limit of Ramsgate Harbour or eastern limit of West Cliff at TR377642 to the large groin at the north end of Ramsgate main beach at TR392655

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| - | - | 3 | 24 | 13 | - | 11 | 0-24 | 7 | 6 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 14 and 15 January 2014.

Six birds were recorded on the first visit; four feeding and resting on the small hover pad within the harbour and two scavenging for food on the harbour wall.

Six were again present on the second visit; three were roosting on the outer harbour pontoon, two were roosting on the slipway east of the hover pad and one was feeding on the eastern harbour wall.

Numbers were found to be slightly below average.

Sector 4 Dumpton/Dumpton Bay

From the large groin at the north end of Ramsgate main beach at TR392655 to the south end of Louisa Bay south of Viking Bay at TR398673

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 7 | - | - | - | 14 | 2 | 6 | 0-14 | 4 | 3 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 16 January and 16 February 2014.

Two Turnstones were found on the first visit and three on the second, all feeding at Dumpton Gap. The surveyor remarked upon the high incidence of dogs off leads in the sector.

This is a sector with historically low numbers and the result is in line with previous surveys.



Sector 5 Broadstairs

From the south end of Louisa Bay south of Viking Bay at TR398673 to south of Joss Bay and N.Foreland lighthouse at TR401694

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 12 | - | 31 | 17 | 62 | 16 | 21 | 0-62 | 23 | 12 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 29 January and 9 and 12 February 2014.

Seven Turnstones were found on the first visit and 12 on the second. All were feeding close to the harbour.

Numbers were below average for this section.

Sector 6 North Foreland/Kingsgate Bay

From south of Joss Bay and N.Foreland lighthouse at TR401694 to Botany Bay at TR393711

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|---------|------|
| 79 | 131 | 157 | 53 | 56 | 14 | 9 | 14-157 | 71 | 18 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 19 January and 2 February 2014.

13 were found on the first visit and 18 on the second. Birds were found at two localities; the '39 Steps' at North Foreland (the extreme south end of this section) and at Whiteness Bay (at the extreme north end of the section). Up to five were found at the '39 Steps' and counts at Whiteness Bay were nine on the first visit and 13 on the second. All were feeding on the tideline.

These numbers were well below average, but in line with the downward trend apparent from the previous four co-ordinated counts.

Sector 7 Botany Bay – Palm Bay

From the public toilet block at Botany Bay at TR393711 to the bathing pool/jet ski hire at TR372715

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 41 | 38 | 37 | 120 | 177 | - | 20 | 0-177 | 62 | 33 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The sector was surveyed on 18 January and 11 February 2014.

18 Turnstones were found on the first visit and 33 on the second. Largest numbers were 11 at Foreness on the first visit and 12 near the Palm Bay jet ski hire on the second visit. Otherwise, groups of up to seven were seen at two sites at the western limit of the sector and three sites at the eastern end. All but two (roosting on a sand bank at Foreness) were foraging for food.

Numbers in this sector were lower than the average of the co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013, but in line with generally low numbers recently evident at the eastern end of the Thanet SPA.



Sector 8 Margate East

From the bathing pool/jet ski hire at TR372715 to the Main Pier at Margate Harbour TR354712

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 18 | 2 | - | 56 | 20 | - | 22 | 0-56 | 17 | 26 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The sector was surveyed on 16 and 30 January 2014.

22 birds were counted on the first visit and 26 on the second. They were found at eight sites in the sector, all on the beach and all between the eastern limit of the section and the lido. All but seven individuals (roosting at the lido on visit 1) were feeding. The observer walked from west to east and back again on both visits, finding considerable interchange between sites throughout each visit. For example, on the second visit, seven were present at the lido at 11.40 but none remained an hour later and 11 at the jet ski beach at 12.15 flew west to re-commence feeding at a site 200m away. However, on neither visit was there direct evidence of birds leaving the sector entirely.

Numbers were found to be above average, but well within the range recorded for this sector in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013.

Sector 9 Margate (Westbrook and Margate Bays)

From Margate Harbour at TR354712 to the small slipway at the west end of Westbrook Bay, by the shelter east of the 'sunken gardens' at TR335705

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 86 | 28 | 53 | 36 | 47 | - | 59 | 0-86 | 44 | 51 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The sector was surveyed on 23 and 31 January 2014.

Birds were found in two areas, at each end of the section. Most favoured the harbour end of the sector and most (45 of 51 found on the first visit and all 12 on the second visit) were feeding on seaweed in the harbour, along with Redshanks and Sanderling.

Numbers found in this section were slightly above average.

Sector 10 St.Mildred's Bay

From the small slipway at the west end of Westbrook Bay, by the shelter east of the 'sunken gardens' at TR335705 to Westbrook Pavilion ('Ledge Point' on the OS map) at TR321705

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 51 | 6 | 74 | 2 | 41 | - | 1 | 0-74 | 25 | 24 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The sector was surveyed on 23 and 31 January 2014.

Roosting birds were found at the same site on the sea wall at the east end of St.Mildred's Bay on both visits, with 24 on visit 1 and five on visit 2.

The numbers found were fractionally below average for this section.



Sector 11 Westgate Bay

From Westbrook Pavilion ('Ledge Point' on the OS map) at TR321705 to the eastern limit of Epple Bay at TR308699

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 5 | 56 | - | 8 | 6 | 37 | 15 | 0-56 | 18 | |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

This sector was not visited during Roost Site Monitoring, but the omission of data from this sector is regarded as of low significance.

Sector 12 Grenham Bay/Birchington

From the eastern limit of Epple Bay at TR308699 to the western limit of Grenham Bay at TR291701.

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 93 | - | 65 | 62 | 83 | 12 | 13 | 0-93 | 47 | 167 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

This sector was visited on 5 and 18 January and 1 February 2014.

Numbers found were consistently higher than average, with counts of 161, 132 and 167 on each visit. Largest gatherings (of fifty or more) were at the eastern end of the sector, involving 86 feeding in Epple Bay on the first visit, 60 roosting just to the east of Epple Bay on the second visit and 91 roosting in the same locality on the third. Otherwise, 46 were feeding in Epple Bay on the third visit and, at the other end of the sector, 37 were feeding about 150 metres from its western limit on the second visit.

Sector 13 Minnis Bay

From the western limit of Grenham Bay at TR291701 to the western end of the small groins at 'Plumpudding Island', opposite the mussel bed and public path leading south at TR273694.

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 19 | 100 | 19 | 102 | 20 | - | 32 | 0-102 | 42 | 13 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

This sector was visited on 4 January and 1 February 2014.

Most (ten on visit 1 and four on visit 2) were roosting on groins at the western end of the sector. Three were feeding about 100 metres to the east of this on visit 1.

Numbers here were well below average.

Sector 14 Plumpudding Island/Coldharbour

From the western end of the small groins at 'Plumpudding Island', opposite the mussel bed and public path leading south at TR273694 to Coldharbour, opposite the mussel beds and lagoons at TR252694.

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------|---------|------|
| 366 | 309 | 278 | 125 | 22 | 21 | 19 | 19-366 | 163 | 12 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |



This sector was visited on 18 January and 1 February 2014. All birds were feeding, in two sites at either end of the sector, including ten at the western end on the first visit and five at the eastern end on the second visit.

Numbers were significantly below average for this sector, although numbers have steadily decreased since 2001 to levels more in line with those found this winter.

Sector 15 Coldharbour – Reculver East

From Coldharbour, opposite the mussel beds and lagoons at TR252694 to the western end of the shellfish hatchery at TR230694.

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 28 | 76 | 39 | 40 | 20 | - | 6 | 0-76 | 31 | 20 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

This sector was visited on 16 and 18 January 2014.

20 birds were roosting at a site about 300 metres from the western limit of the sector on the first visit and four were feeding about 100 metres further east on the second.

Numbers were significantly below average for this sector, although numbers have steadily decreased since 2001 to levels more in line with those found this winter.

Sector 16 Reculver West

From the western end of the shellfish hatchery at TR230694 to car park at Bishopstone Manor at TR211687

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 103 | 14 | 82 | 4 | 17 | 8 | 2 | 2-103 | 33 | 16 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 12 February 2014.

18 Turnstones were found on the visit on 12 February, four of which were roosting, with the remainder feeding in parties of up to five at a total of five localities, evenly distributed along the sector. An extremely high level of disturbance from dogs off leads was evident.

Numbers were well below average for this sector, but in line with the maximum number recorded in the previous four co-ordinated counts.

Sector 17 Herne Bay East

From the car park at Bishopstone Manor at TR211687 to half way along cliff, opposite 'Wantsum Walk' on OS map at TR191685

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 33 | - | - | - | 16 | 13 | 52 | 0-52 | 16 | 20 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 29 January and 10 February 2014.

Turnstones were found at seven different localities, more or less evenly spaced from about 150 metres from the western end of the sector to about 100 metres from the eastern end. 17 were found on the first visit and 20 on the second and all but two were actively feeding. The largest concentrations were nine on the first visit and 19 on the second, in each case just to the east of the half way mark along the sector.

Disturbance from dogs off leads was noted as very high on both visits.

Numbers recorded were slightly above average for this sector.



Sector 18 Herne Bay

From half way along cliff, opposite 'Wantsum Walk' on OS map at TR191685 to Herne Bay pier at TR172683

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 50 | 4 | 70 | 33 | 47 | - | 38 | 0-70 | 34 | 31 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 16 and 30 January 2014.

31 birds were recorded on the first visit, in groups of seven, eight, two, five and nine. All were found on the beach with the exception of two on grass about 90 metres from the eastern end of this section.

30 birds were present on the second visit, in groups of 13, nine and eight; all of these were on the beach.

Disturbance from dogs off leads was noted as extremely high on both visits, with up to 50 dogs in the area.

Numbers found were slightly below average.

Sector 19 Hampton/Hampton Pier

From Herne Bay pier at TR172683 to half way along cliff, opposite 'Wantsum Walk' on OS map at TR191685 to the small slipway to west of Hampton Pier at TR157679

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 2 | 26 | - | 61 | 32 | 8 | 31 | 0-61 | 23 | 29 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 10 and 11 February 2014.

17 Turnstones were counted on the first visit and 29 on the second. They were all feeding on the beach, mostly in parties of up to eight, at four sites evenly spread along the sector. The largest group was 19 about 200 metres from the eastern limit of the sector.

Numbers found here were slightly above average for this part of the coast, but fairly typical of numbers found in the three most recent co-ordinated counts.

Sector 20 Long Rock – Hampton

From the small slipway to west of Hampton Pier at TR157679 to Long Rock, opposite the sand spit at TR137678

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 4 | 225 | 136 | 108 | 168 | 187 | 97 | 4-225 | 132 | 104 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 13 January and 3 February 2014.

52 birds in groups of up to 12 were found at eight evenly distributed sites in the sector on the first visit and 104 were found at ten sites, similarly evenly distributed along the sector, on the second visit. Largest groups on the second visit contained 17 and 25 individuals, all roosting near the western end. However, the majority of birds (73% over the two visits) were found to be feeding along the tide line.

The numbers found in this sector were below average.



Sector 21 Whitstable/Tankerton

From Long Rock, opposite the sand spit at TR137678 to Whitstable Harbour at TR108670

| 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2013 | Range | Average | 2014 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| 154 | 19 | 35 | 284 | 109 | 2 | 53 | 2-284 | 79 | 153 |
| Results from this section in co-ordinated counts between 2001 – 2013 and maximum number found in 2014 | | | | | | | | | |

The area was surveyed on 11 and 13 February 2014.

153 Turnstones were found on the first visit. 30 were roosting at the eastern limit of the section and 30 were roosting on a wooden piling at the western extremity of Whitstable Harbour. Most of the remainder were feeding within the harbour, including at least 40 within the environs of the fish market. 144 were found on the second visit. 77 of these were feeding within the harbour environs, including 24 in the shop area, 30 were roosting on the wooden piling at the harbour's western extremity, five were feeding at Tankerton Flats and 32 were roosting near the eastern limit of the section.

Large numbers of dogs were noted on all visits, with 103 counted during the co-ordinated count on 15 February.

Numbers were well above average for this section, which remains one of the most significant for Turnstones around the Thanet SPA.

4 Discussion

4.1 Current Thanet Turnstone population and distribution

In 2013 the population of Turnstones within the Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA was found to be significantly lower than the totals that were evident in the six surveys carried out between 2001 and 2010. Despite concerns that some birds may have been missed in the 2013 survey, results from two co-ordinated counts in 2014, supported by a programme of roost site monitoring, confirmed that the apparent decrease has been genuine.

The reasons for this decrease are not easy to pinpoint, however. The surveys in 2013 and 2014 took place during one winter that was very cold (2012/13) and one that was very mild (2013/14), suggesting that local weather conditions are not to blame. Further afield, although the 2013/14 winter was very mild in western Europe, in both winters it was very cold in Greenland, from where the majority of Turnstones wintering around the Thanet coast originate. Although it is thought that low wildfowl numbers in the 2013/14 winter resulted from relatively mild conditions in the Baltic, encouraging birds to spend the winter further north, this will not have affected the majority of the Turnstone population.

The increased willingness of Turnstones to tolerate humans continues to be apparent. However, several observers remarked upon the high incidence of dogs off leads and the negative effect this had on roosting flocks in particular. This continues to be the main cause of disturbance and is likely to be a significant factor in the decline of the wintering Turnstone population of the Thanet and Sandwich Bay SPA.



Acknowledgements

The following people and organisations deserve special thanks for their considerable assistance in undertaking and helping to organise this survey, principally as volunteer surveyors for the roost disturbance monitoring and co-ordinated wader count on 23rd February 2013:

- Volunteer surveyors from among the NEKMPA Coastal Wardens (Thanet District Council)
- North East Kent Marine Protected Area (NEKMPA) Officer Tony Child, with particular thanks for commenting on an earlier draft of this report.
- Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust volunteer surveyors

References

WeBS. Waterbirds in the UK 2005/06. The Wetland Bird Survey. Published by British Trust for Ornithology, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Joint Nature Conservation Committee, November 2007.



Appendix 1 - Details of co-ordinated wader count sectors.

| Sector # | Sector | From | To |
|----------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Pegwell Bay | TR342628: South end of Pegwell Bay Nature Reserve, where coastal path turns sharply north along bay | TR354644: Opposite old hoverport road, west of Little Cliffsend Farm |
| 2 | Pegwell – West Cliff | TR354644: Opposite old hoverport road, west of Little Cliffsend Farm | TR377642: Western limit of Ramsgate Harbour, eastern limit of West Cliff |
| 3 | Ramsgate (harbour & beach) | TR377642: Western limit of Ramsgate Harbour, eastern limit of West Cliff | TR392655: By large groin at north end of Ramsgate main beach |
| 4 | Dumpton / Dumpton Bay | TR392655: By large groyne at north end of Ramsgate main beach | TR398673: South end of Louisa Bay south of Viking Bay |
| 5 | Broadstairs | TR398673: South end of Louisa Bay south of Viking Bay | TR401694: South of Joss Bay & North Foreland Lighthouse, opposite Convent |
| 6 | North Foreland / Kingsgate Bay | TR401694: South of Joss Bay & North Foreland Lighthouse, opposite Convent | TR393711: Botany Bay, by public toilet block |
| 7 | Botany Bay – Palm Bay | TR393711: Botany Bay, by public toilet block | TR372715: Bathing Pool / Jet Ski hire |
| 8 | Margate east | TR372715: Bathing Pool / Jet Ski hire | TR354712: Main Pier at Margate Harbour |
| 9 | Margate (Westbrook Bay & Margate Bay) | TR354712: Main Pier at Margate Harbour | TR335705: Small slipway at west end of Westbrook Bay, east of 'Sunken Gardens' by shelter |
| 10 | St Mildred's Bay | TR335705: Small slipway at west end of Westbrook Bay, east of 'Sunken Gardens' by shelter | TR321705: Westgate Pavilion ('Ledge Point' on O/S map) |
| 11 | Westgate Bay | TR321705: Westgate Pavilion ('Ledge Point' on O/S map) | TR308699 Eastern limit of Epple Bay |
| 12 | Grenham Bay / Birchington | TR308699: Eastern limit of Epple Bay | TR291701: Western limit of Grenham Bay |
| 13 | Minnis Bay | TR291701: Western limit of Grenham Bay | TR273694: Western end of small groins at 'Plumpudding Island', opposite mussel bed & public path leading south |
| 14 | Plumpudding Island – Cold Harbour | TR273694: Western end of small groins at 'Plumpudding Island', opposite mussel bed & public path leading south | TR252694: Cold Harbour, opposite mussel beds & lagoons |
| 15 | Cold Harbour – Reculver east | TR252694: Cold Harbour, opposite mussel beds & lagoons | TR230694: Western end of shellfish hatchery |
| 16 | Reculver west | TR230694: Western end of shellfish hatchery | TR211687: Car park near 'Bishopstone Manor' |
| 17 | Herne Bay east ('Beltinge Cliff') | TR211687: Car park near 'Bishopstone Manor' | TR191685: Half-way along cliff, opposite 'Wantsum Walk' on O/S map |
| 18 | Herne Bay | TR191685: Half-way along cliff, opposite 'Wantsum Walk' on O/S map | TR172683: Herne Bay Pier |
| 19 | Hampton / Hampton Pier | TR172683: Herne Bay Pier | TR157679: Small slipway to west of Hampton Pier |
| 20 | Long Rock (Swalecliff) – Hampton | TR157679: Small slipway to west of Hampton Pier | TR137678: Long Rock, opposite sand spit |
| 21 | Whitstable / Tankerton | TR137678: Long Rock, opposite sand spit | TR108670: Whitstable Harbour |



March 2014

