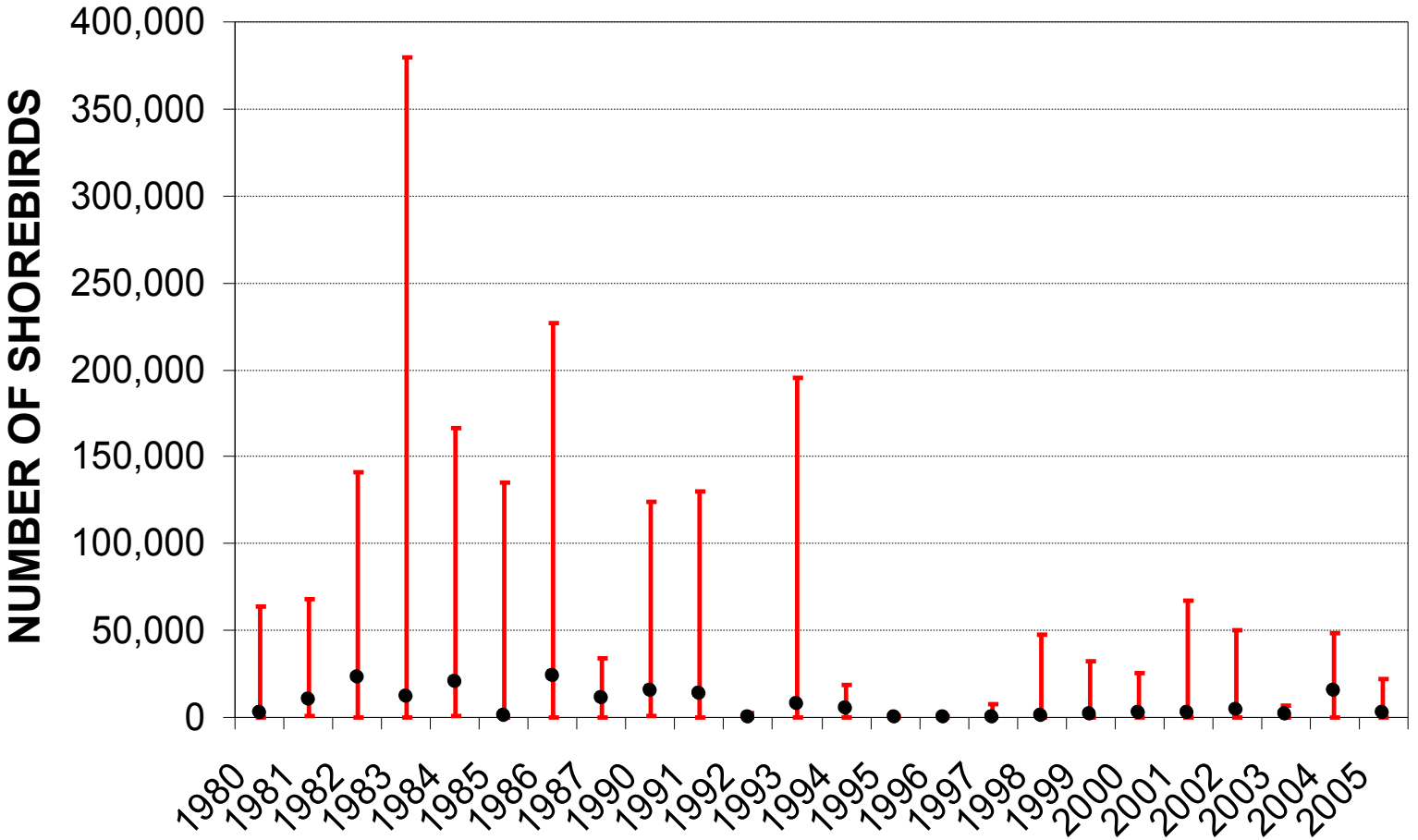
Cheyenne Bottoms Shorebird Viewing Guide

The following migration chronology graphs provide prospective visitors information to help plan trips to view shorebirds. The graphs illustrate average migration chronology over a 30-year period, however, migration chronology varies annually. Thus, there is no guarantee that future migration chronology will mirror that shown in the graphs.

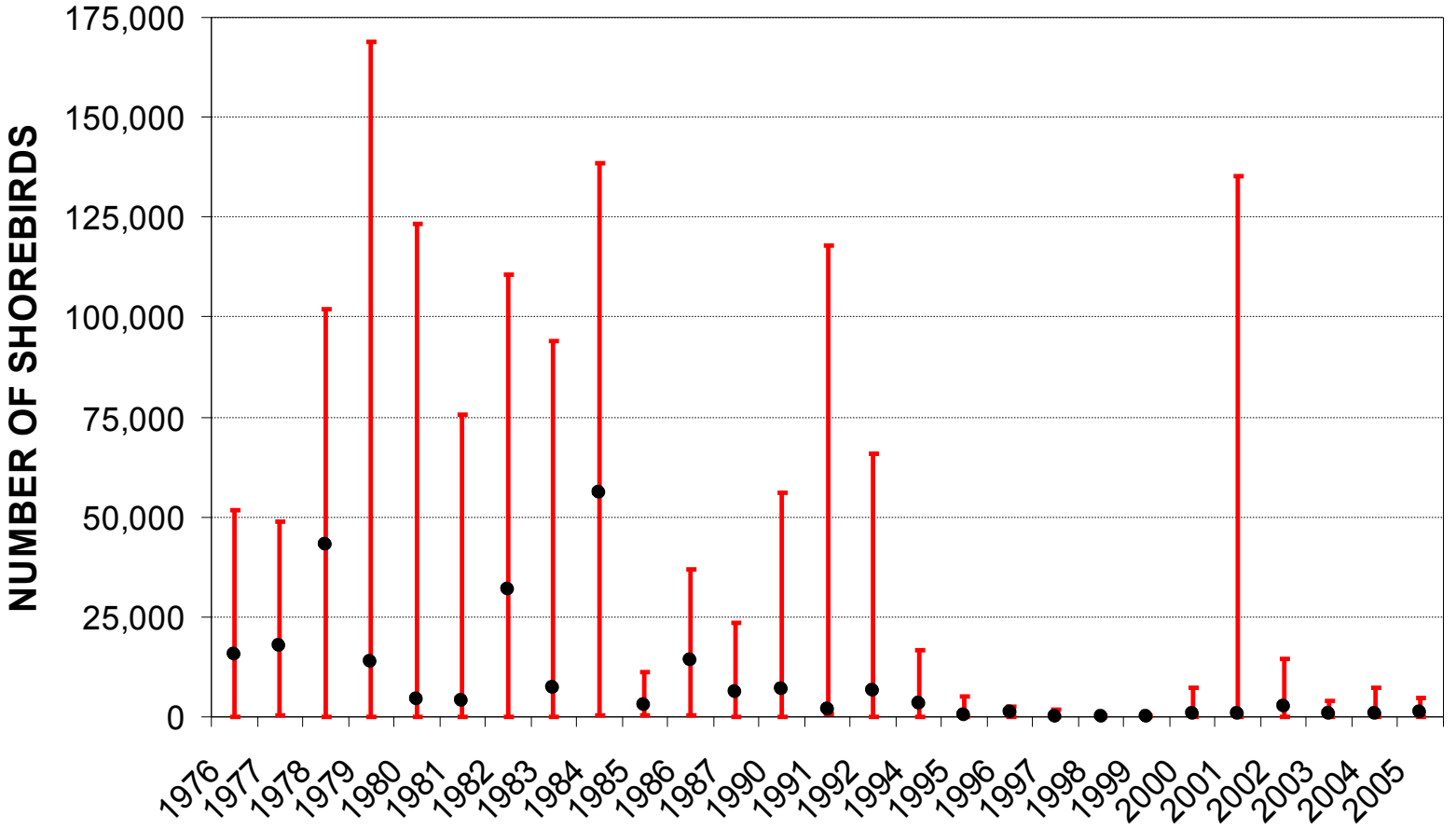
The migration chronology graphs are based on shorebird surveys conducted at Cheyenne Bottoms during 1976-1993 by Ed Martinez, a volunteer from Great Bend, and 1994-present by Helen Hands, Wildlife Biologist with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. In general, shorebird counts were conducted weekly, primarily from a vehicle, and on the wildlife area. Ed Martinez also counted shorebirds on adjacent private land when habitat was available there. Counts conducted during January 1-June 30 were arbitrarily defined as spring and counts during July 1-December 31 as summer-fall. For more information about the surveys and how the data were analyzed to create the graphs, contact Helen Hands at 620-793-3066 or helenh@wp.state.ks.us.

How many shorebirds are likely to be at Cheyenne Bottoms during spring?



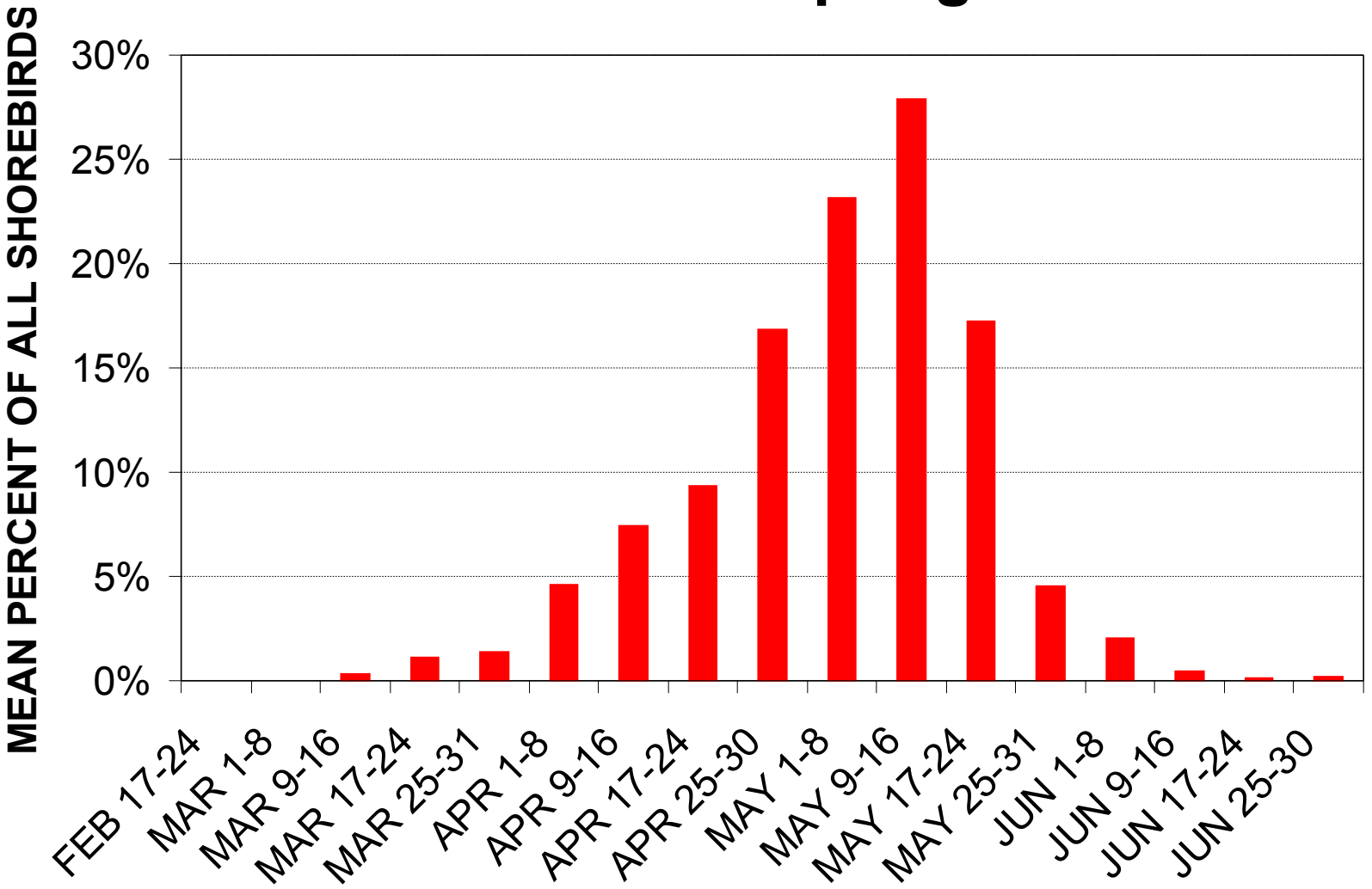
Numbers of shorebirds are extremely variable on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis. Numbers on any given day can range from 0 to a few hundred thousand. Red lines show range in counts for that year and black dots show median values (50% of counts were higher and 50% lower than the median).

How many shorebirds are likely to be at Cheyenne Bottoms during summer-fall?



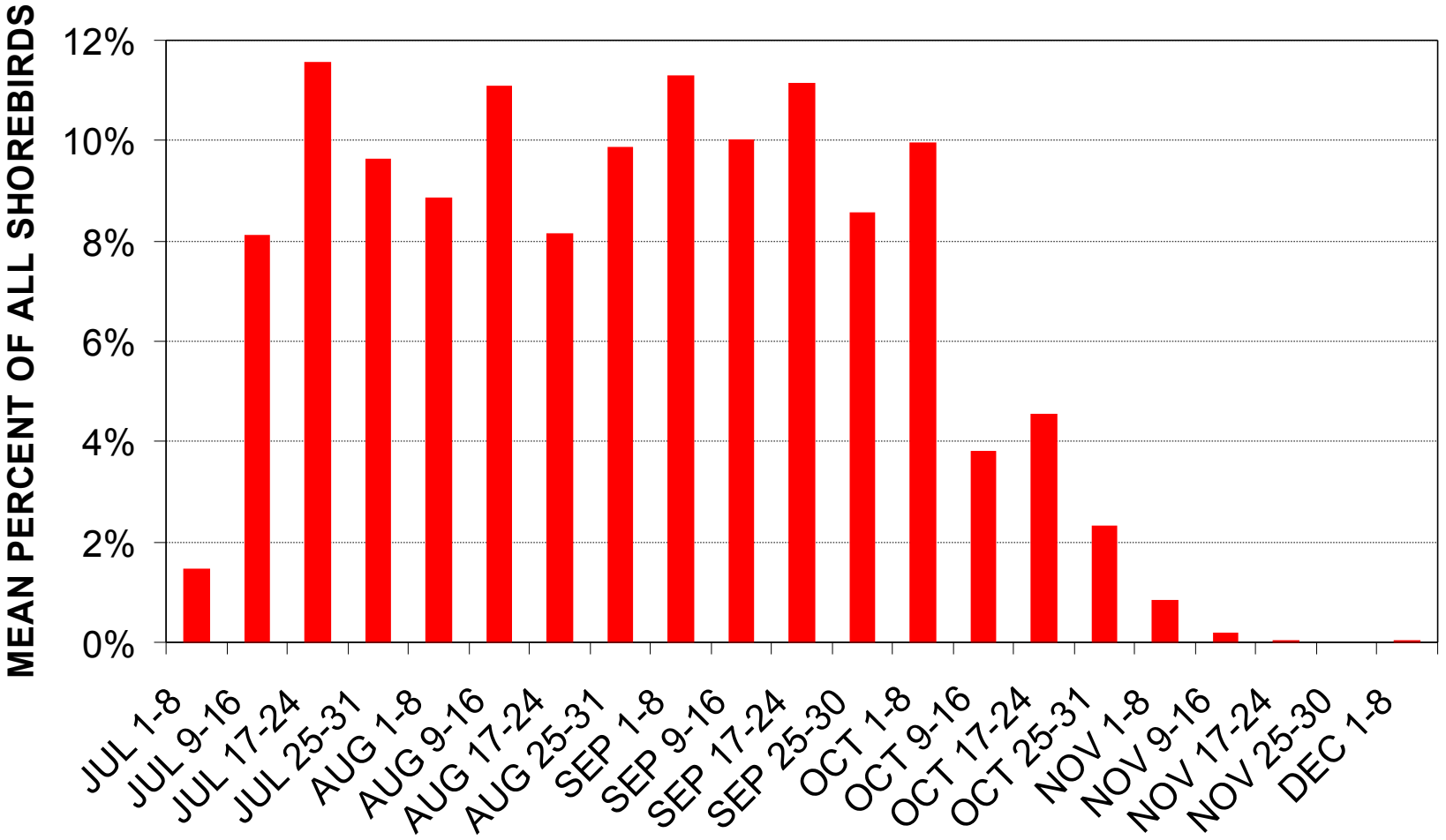
Same kind of graph as the previous one. Numbers on any given day can range from 0 to over 100,000 and are usually lower than in spring.

When do shorebirds typically reach their peak numbers in spring?



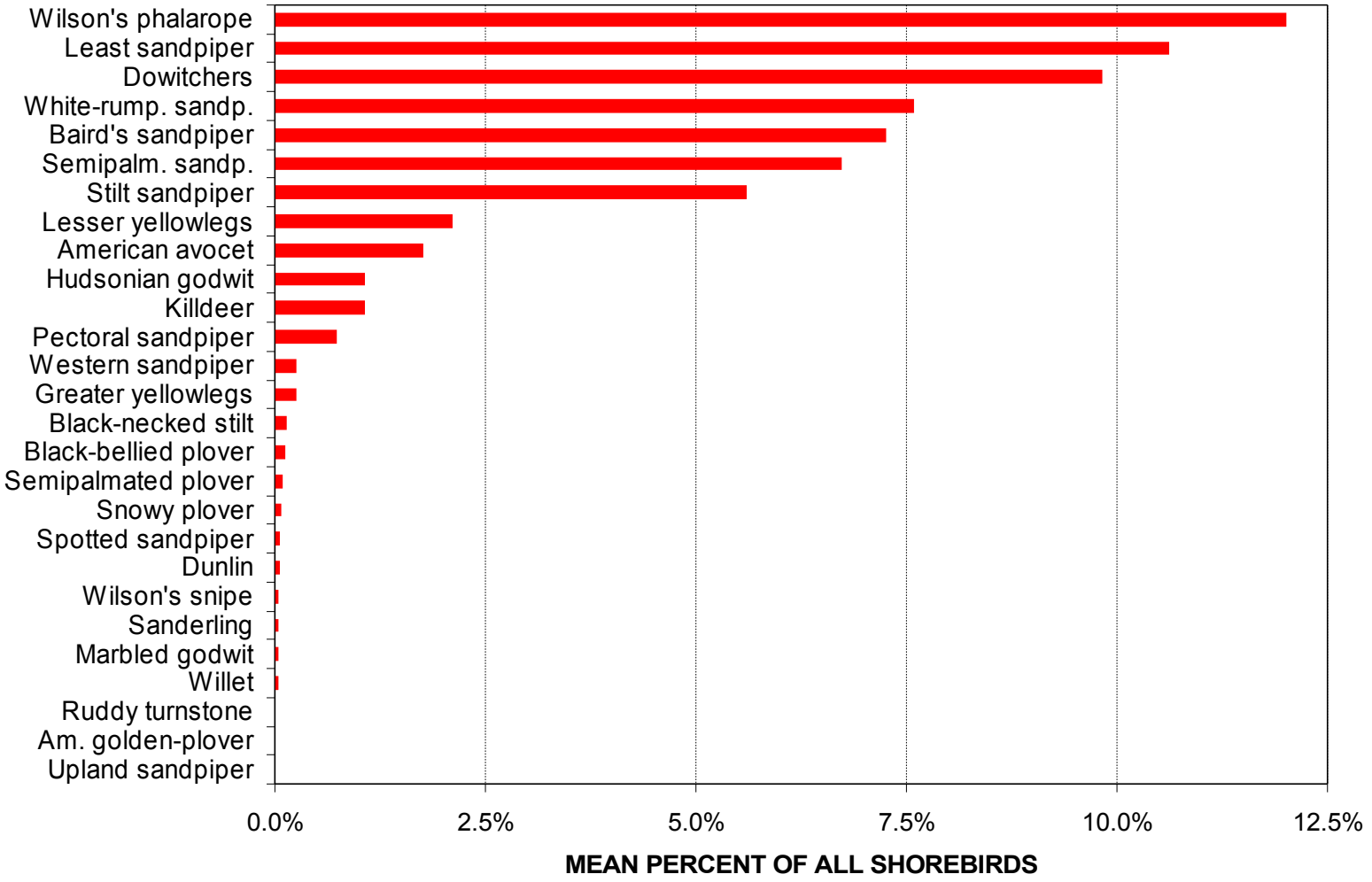
On average, peak shorebird numbers in spring occur during the second week of May, with the first week of May a close second. However, migration chronology can vary from year to year.

When do shorebirds typically reach their peak numbers in summer-fall?



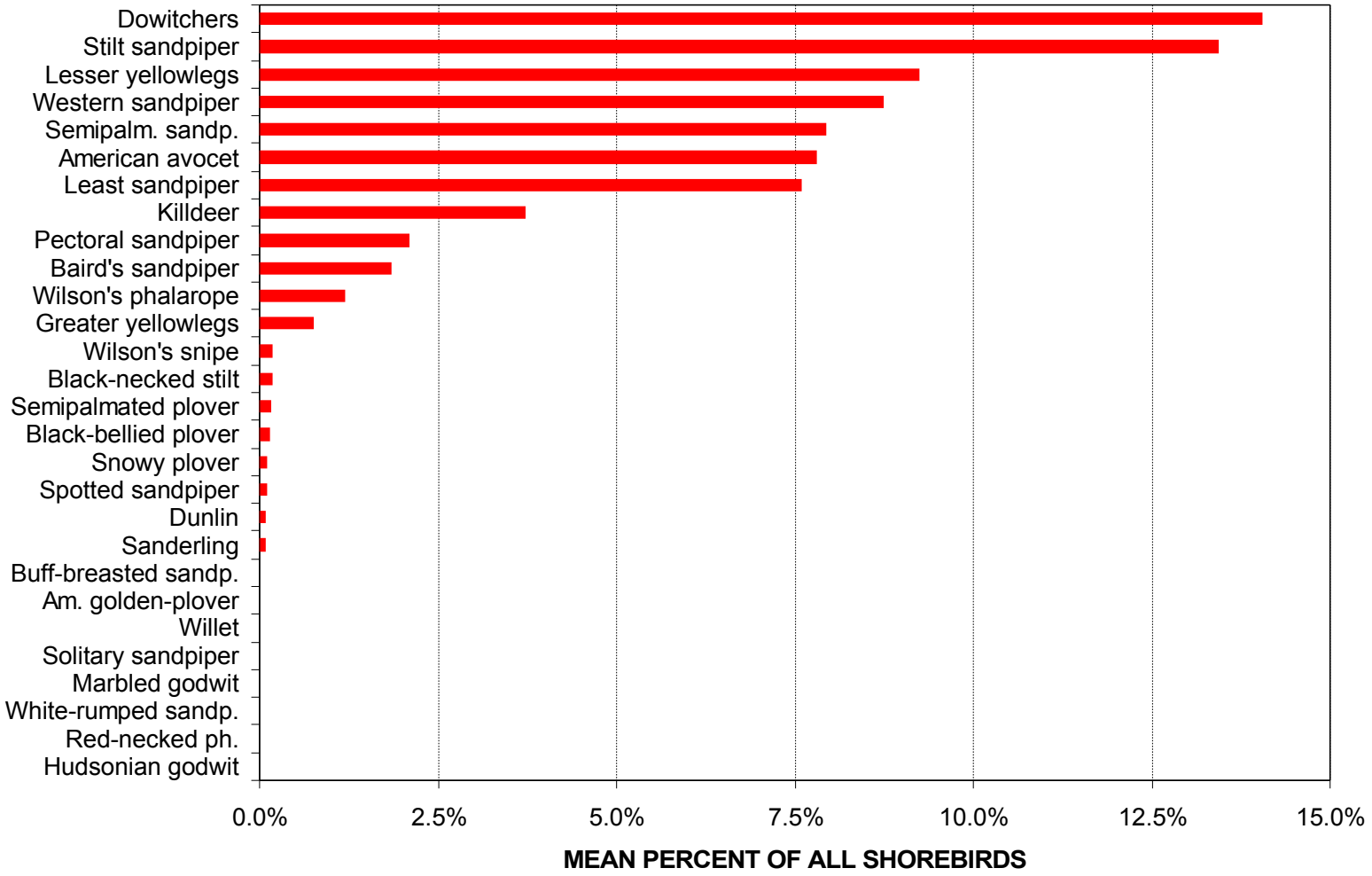
On average, there is no discernable peak in shorebird numbers during summer-fall. The peak varies annually based on habitat conditions.

What are the most common shorebird species in spring?



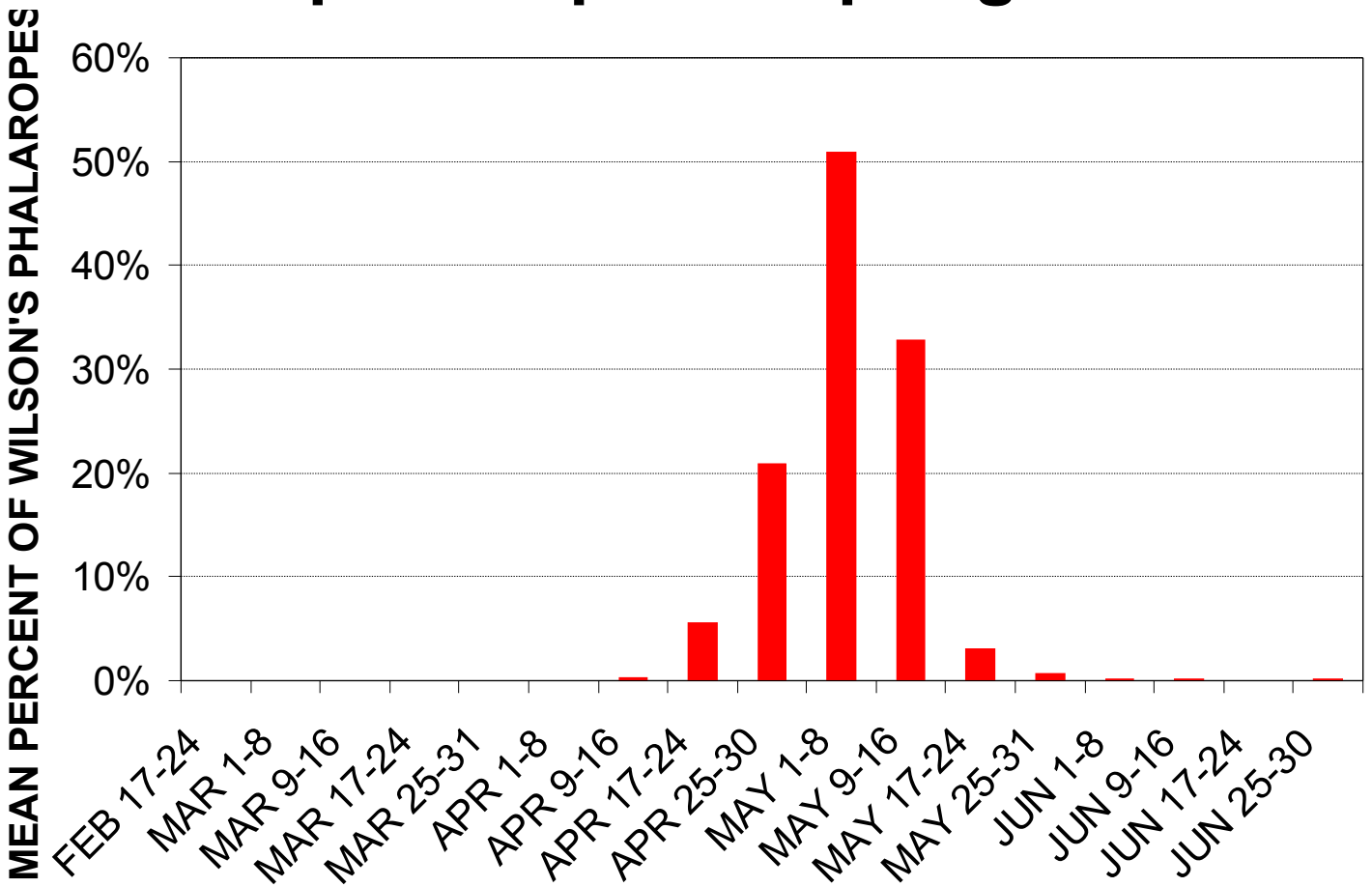
On average, Wilson's phalaropes, least sandpipers, and dowitchers are the most common species in spring. Both dowitcher species occur at the Bottoms, but long-billed are by far the most common.

What are the most common shorebird species in summer-fall?



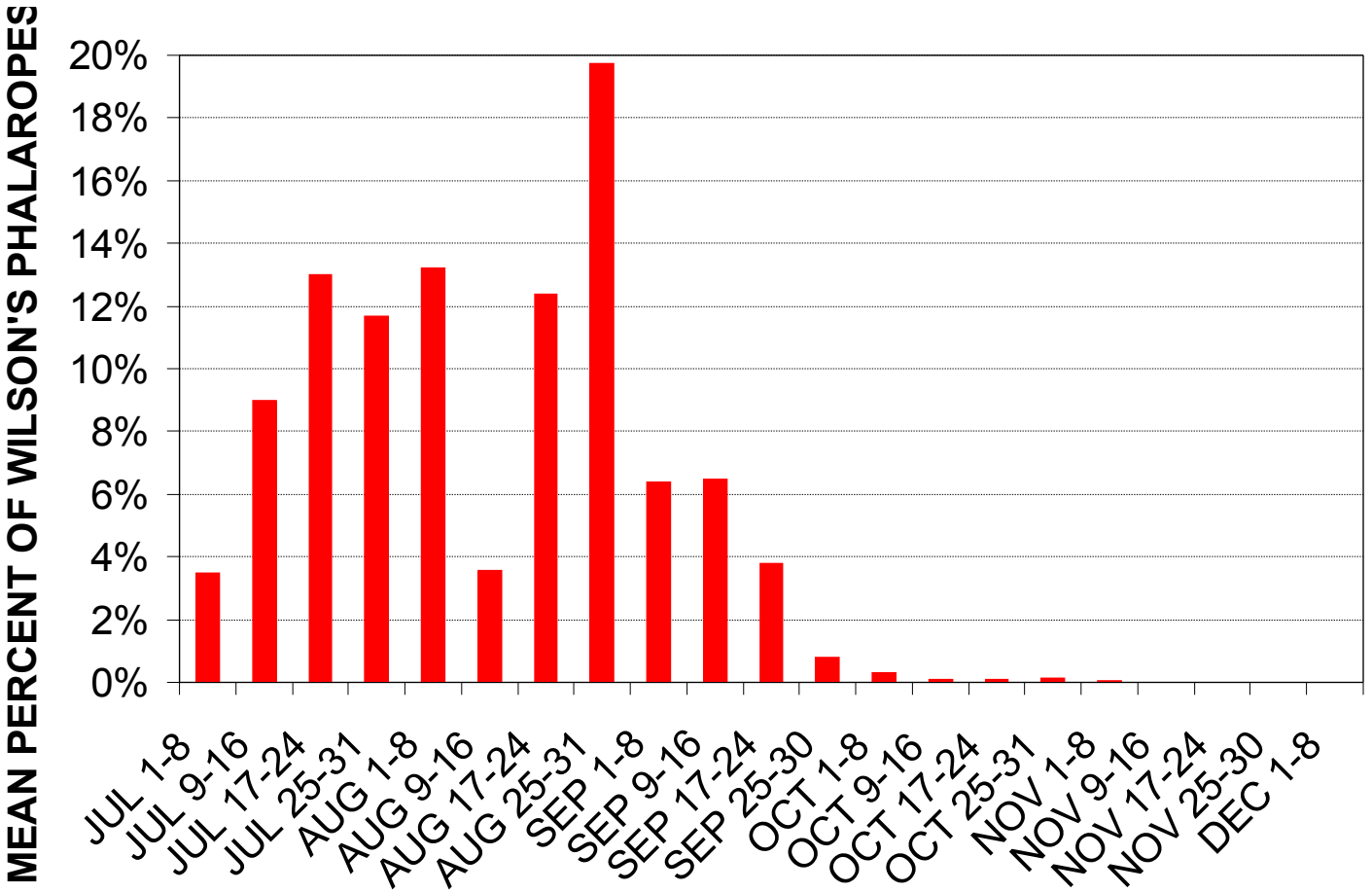
On average, dowitchers and stilt sandpipers are the most common species in summer-fall.

When is the best time to see Wilson's phalaropes in spring?



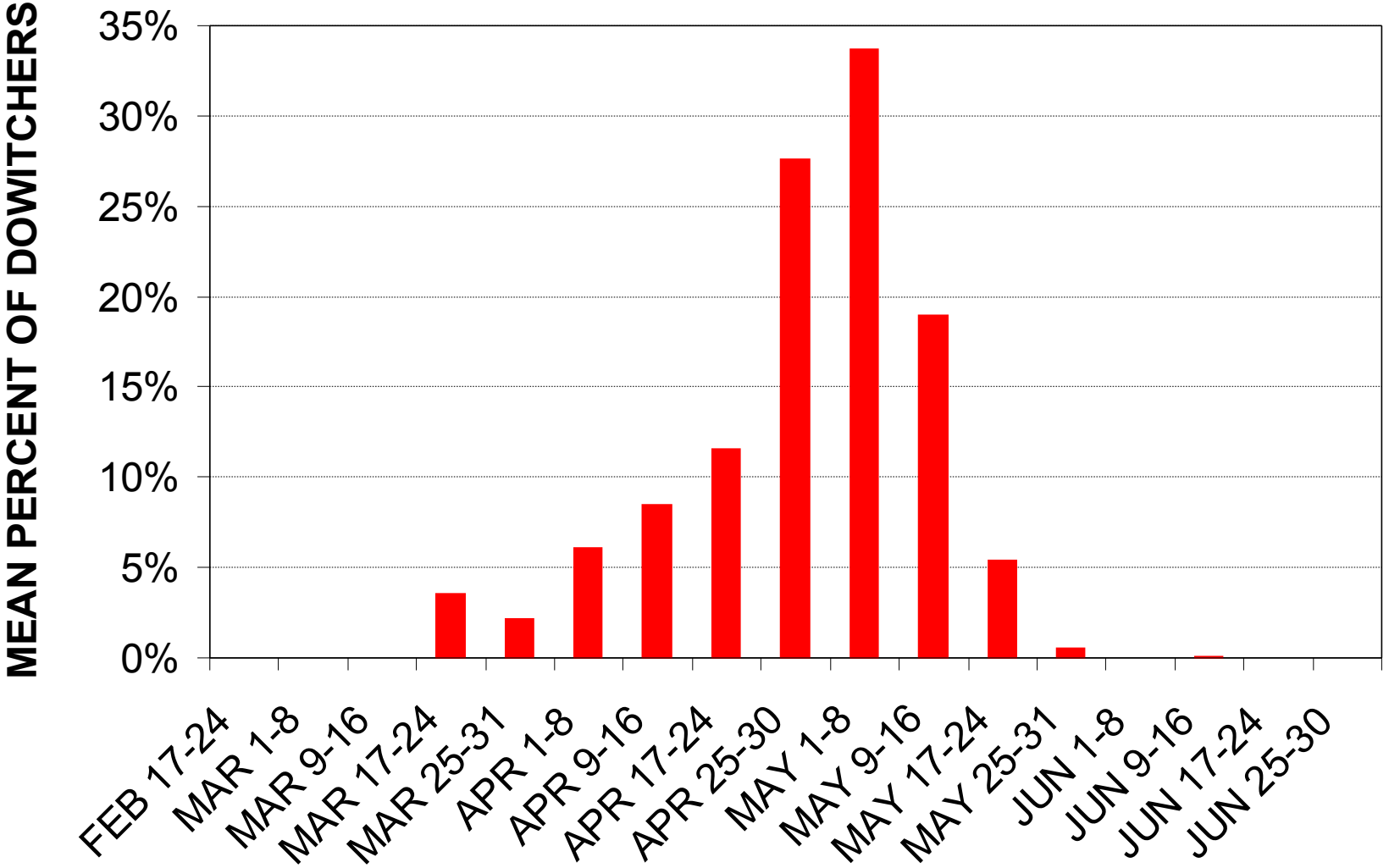
This and the following graphs show migration chronology as the average percent of the species for each week of the season relative to the total number of the species for the entire season. Thus, on average, Wilson's phalaropes peak in the first week of May, but migration chronology can vary from year to year.

When is the best time to see Wilson's phalaropes in summer-fall?



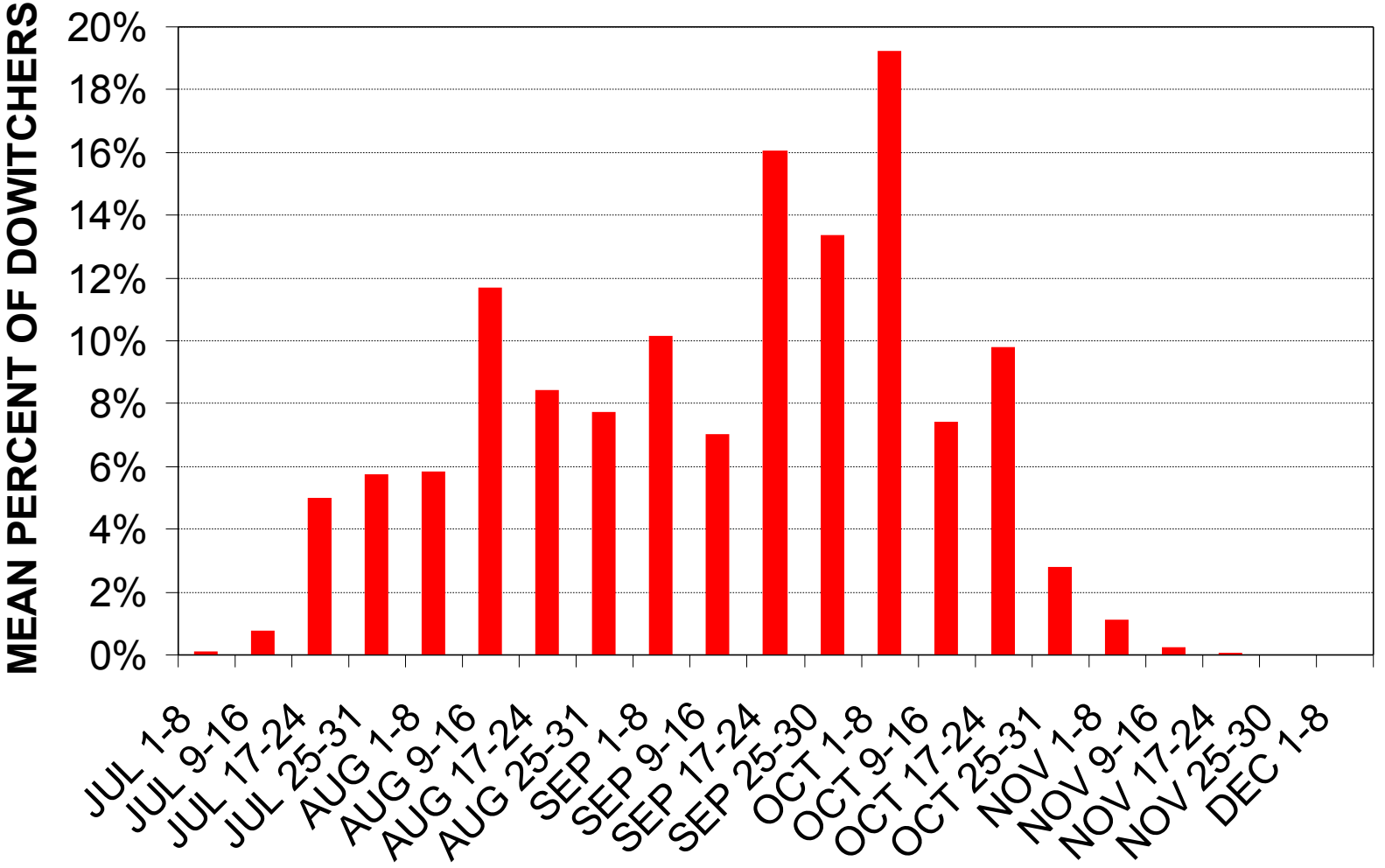
On average, highest numbers occur in the last week of August, but there is much annual variability.

When is the best time to see dowitchers in the spring?



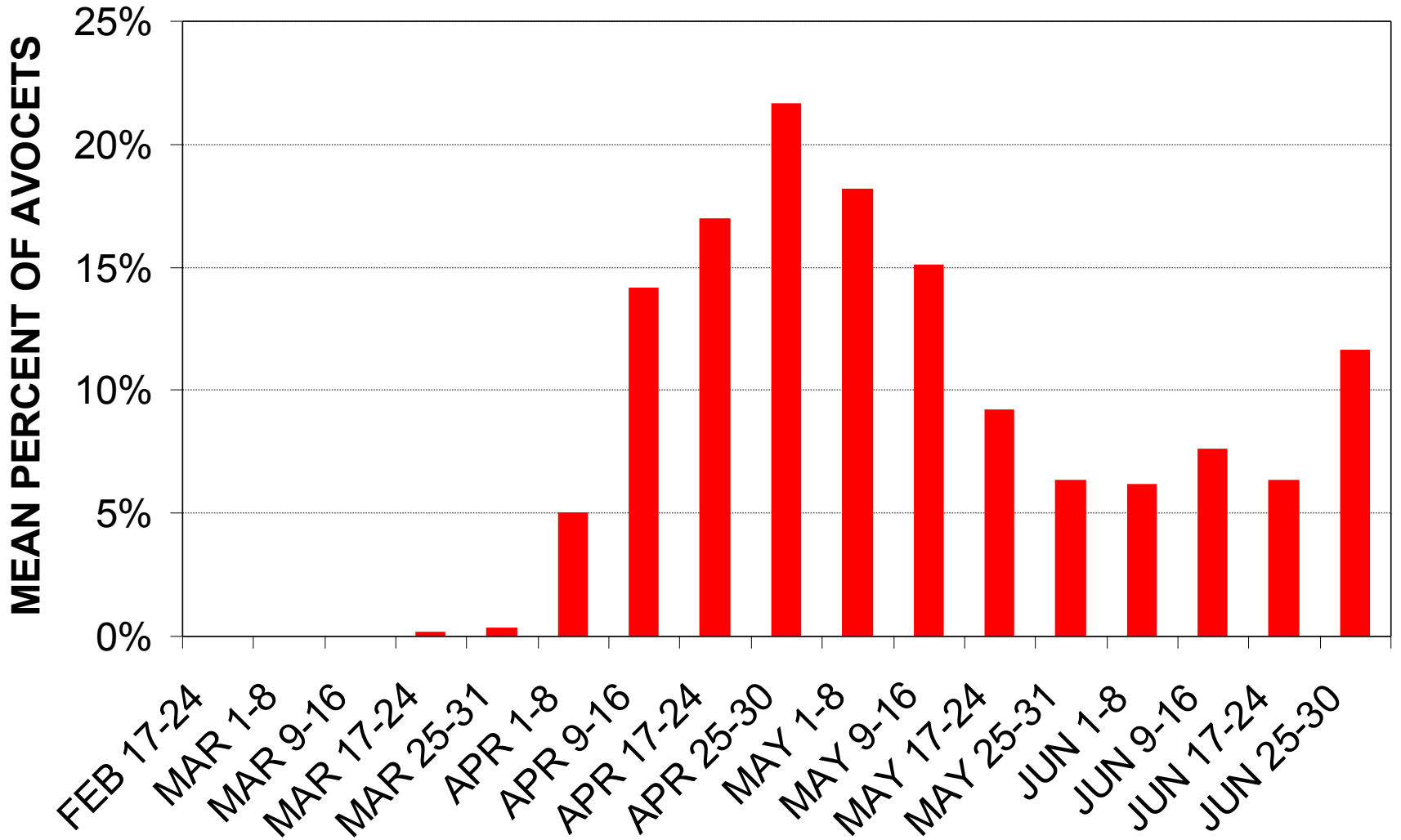
The first week of May or the last week of April.

When is the best time to see dowitchers in summer-fall?



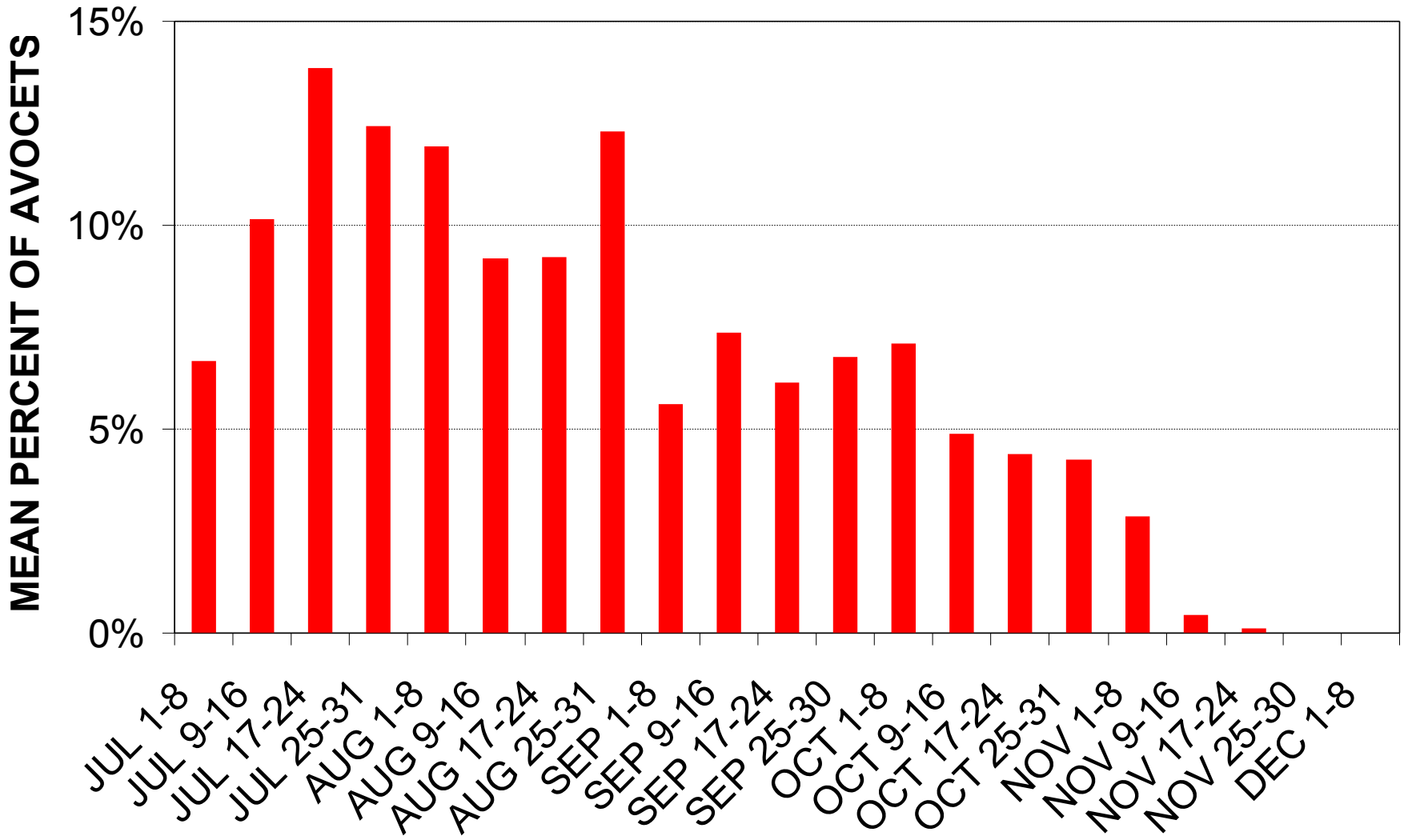
Late September through early October.

When is the best time to see avocets in spring?



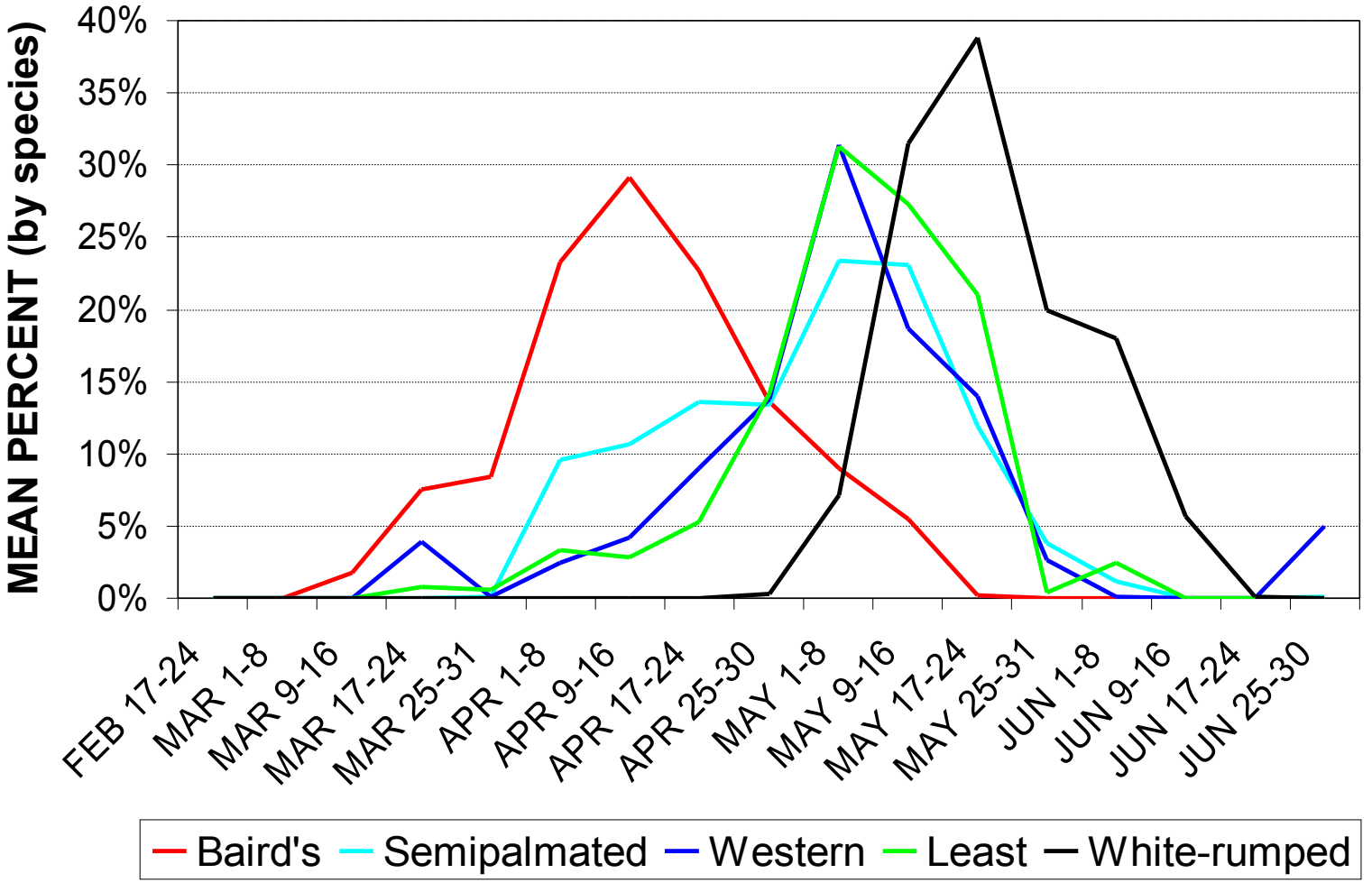
Mid-April through mid-May.

When is the best time to see avocets in summer-fall?



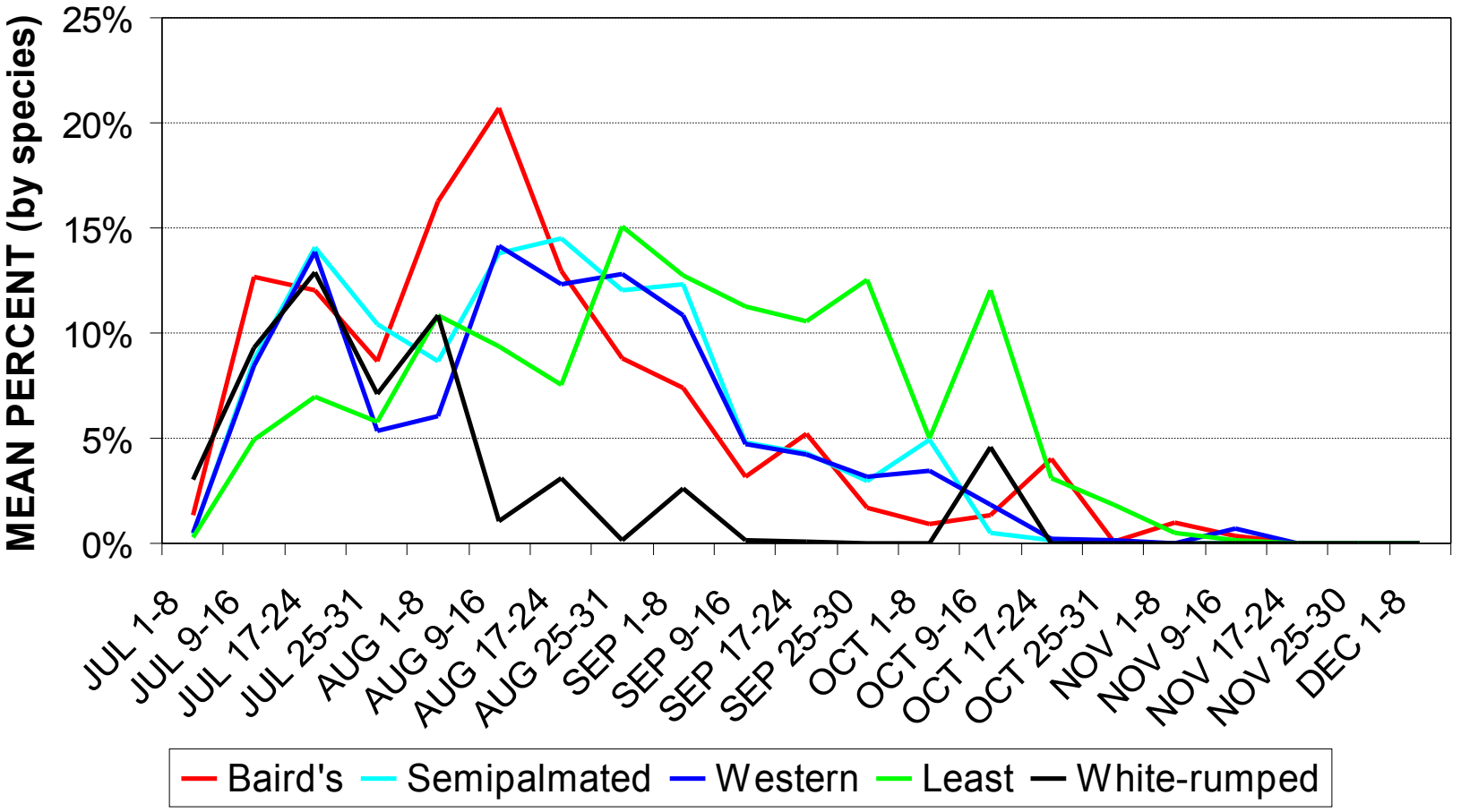
On average, fairly consistent numbers through early October.

When is the best time to see the various species of “peeps” in spring?



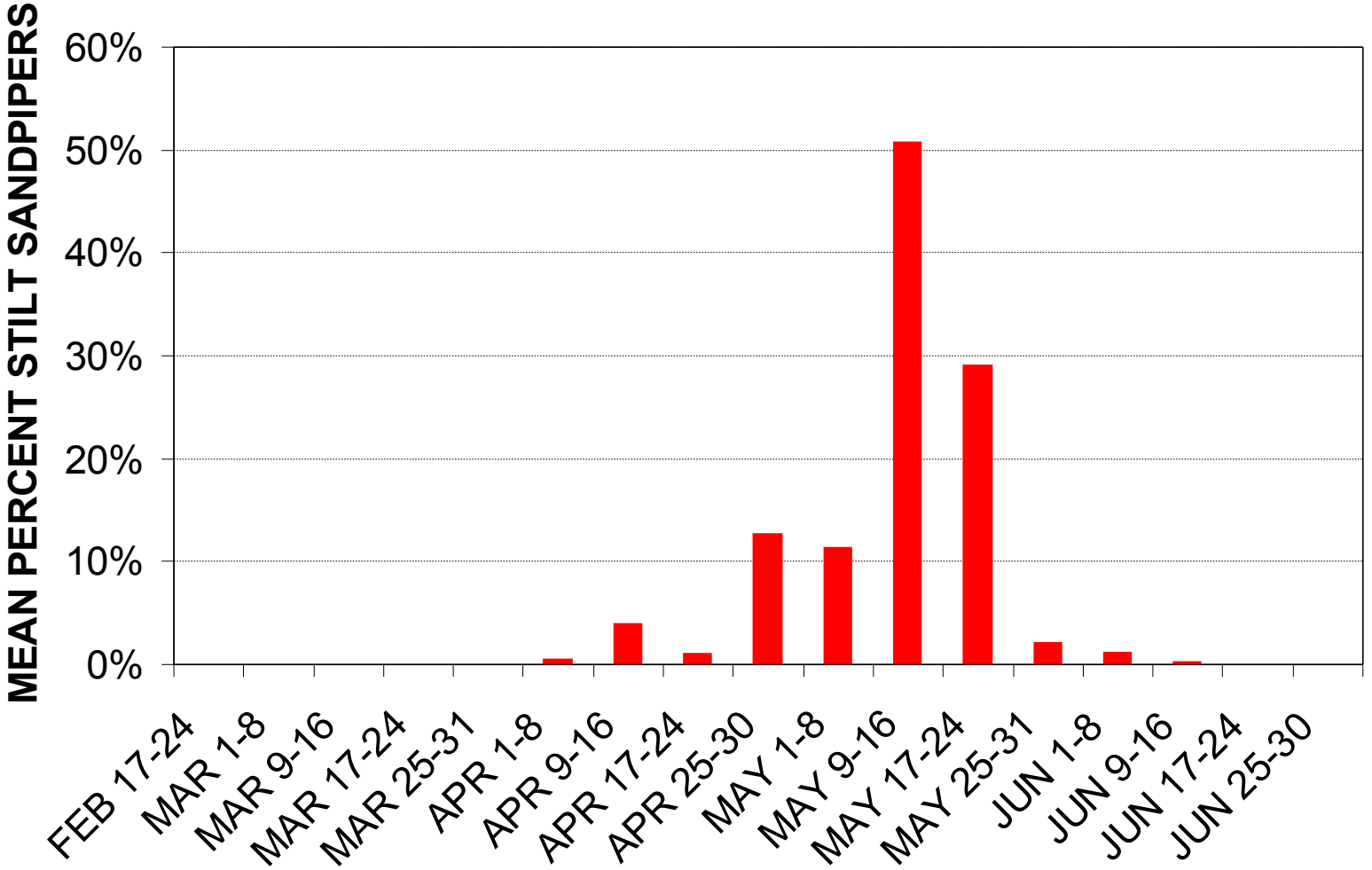
April for Baird’s; early May for semipalmated, western, and least; and late May for white-rumped. Note these species vary widely in abundance with all species far more common than westerns in spring.

When is the best time to see the various species of “peeps” in summer-fall?



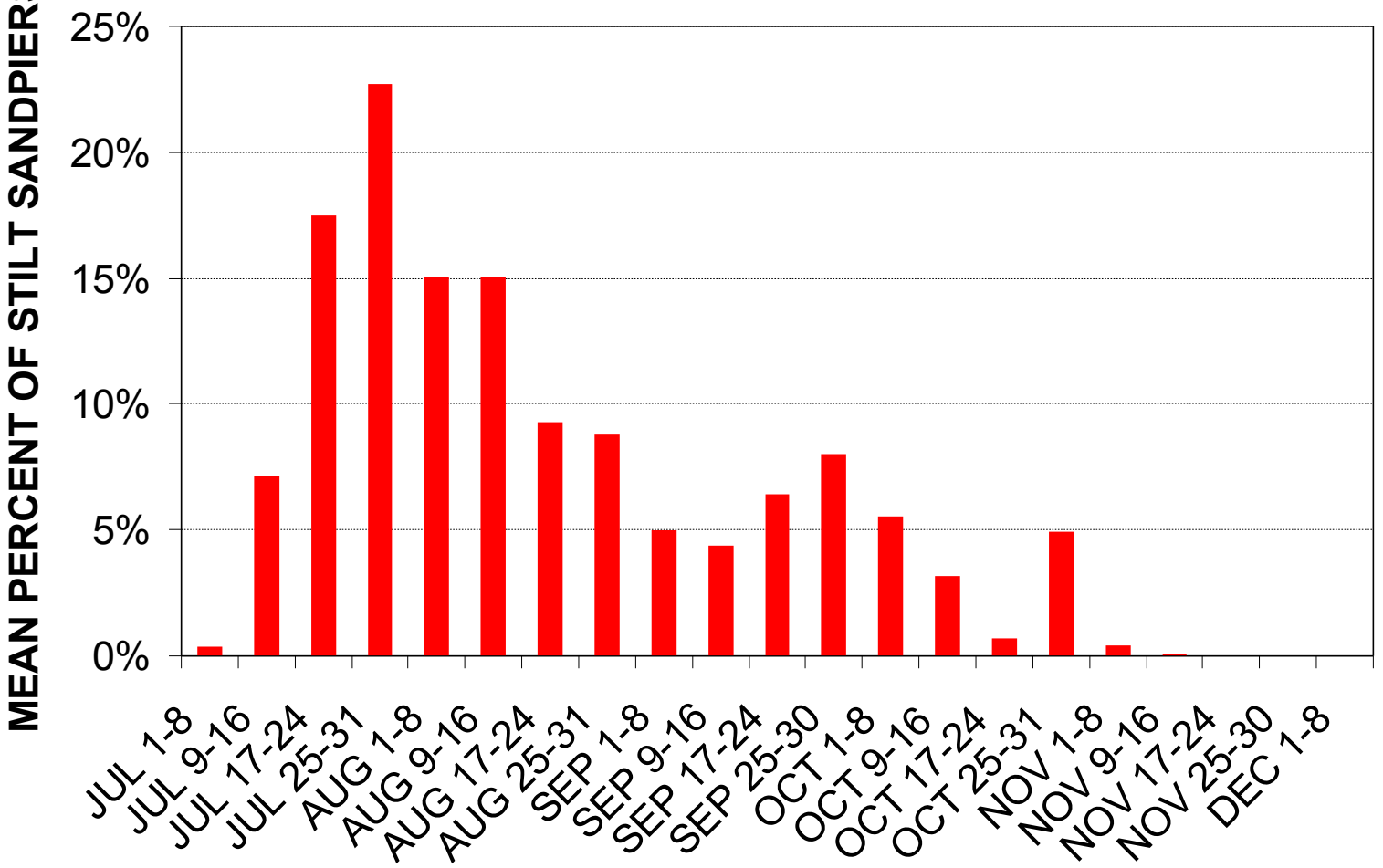
July for white-rumps, although many fewer pass through in summer-fall than in spring. August for Baird’s. No marked peaks for the other species. Note, semipalmated, western, and least by far more common than Baird’s and white-rumped in summer-fall.

When is the best time to see stilt sandpipers in spring?



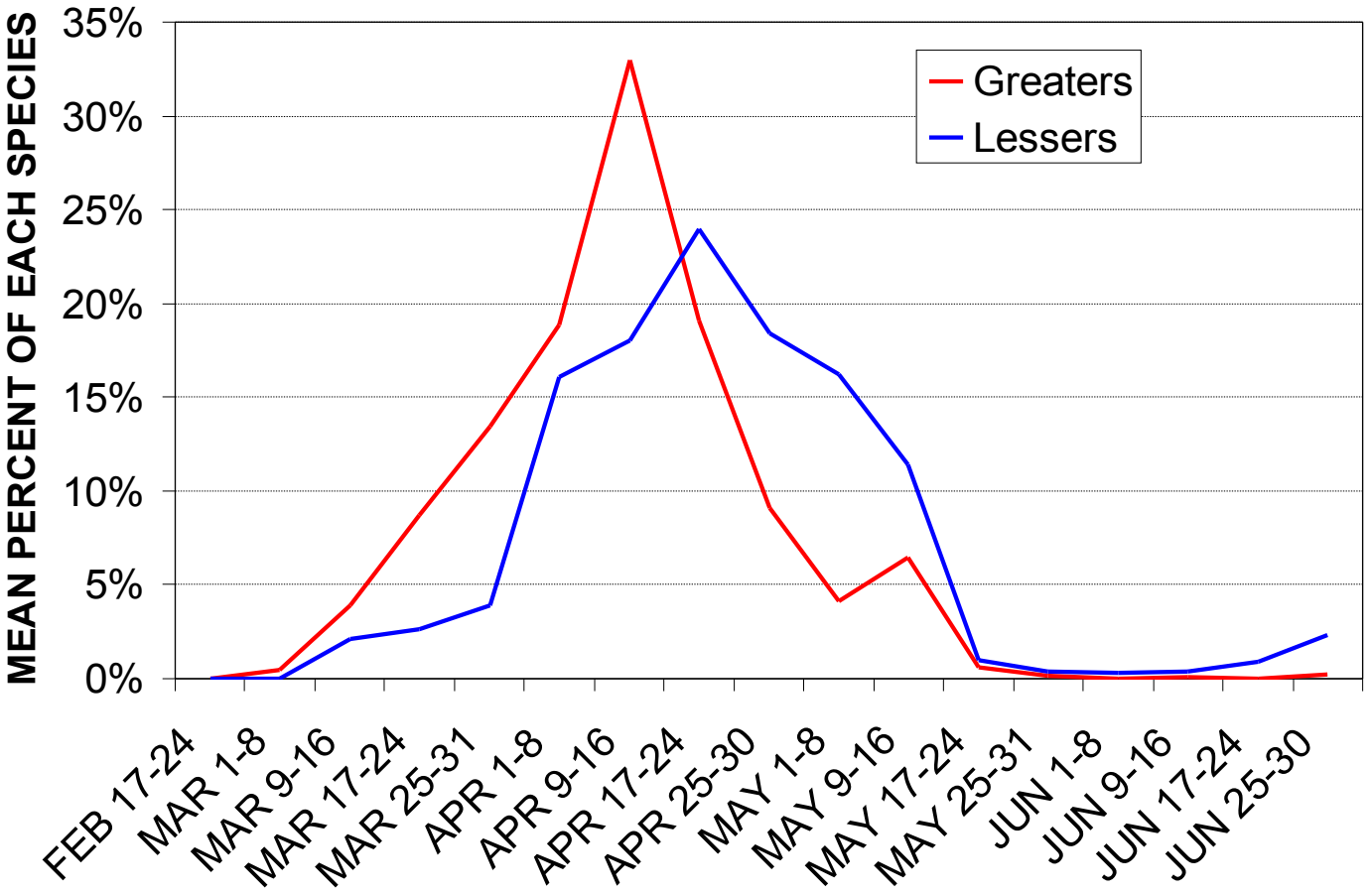
The second week in May.

When is the best time to see stilt sandpipers in summer-fall?



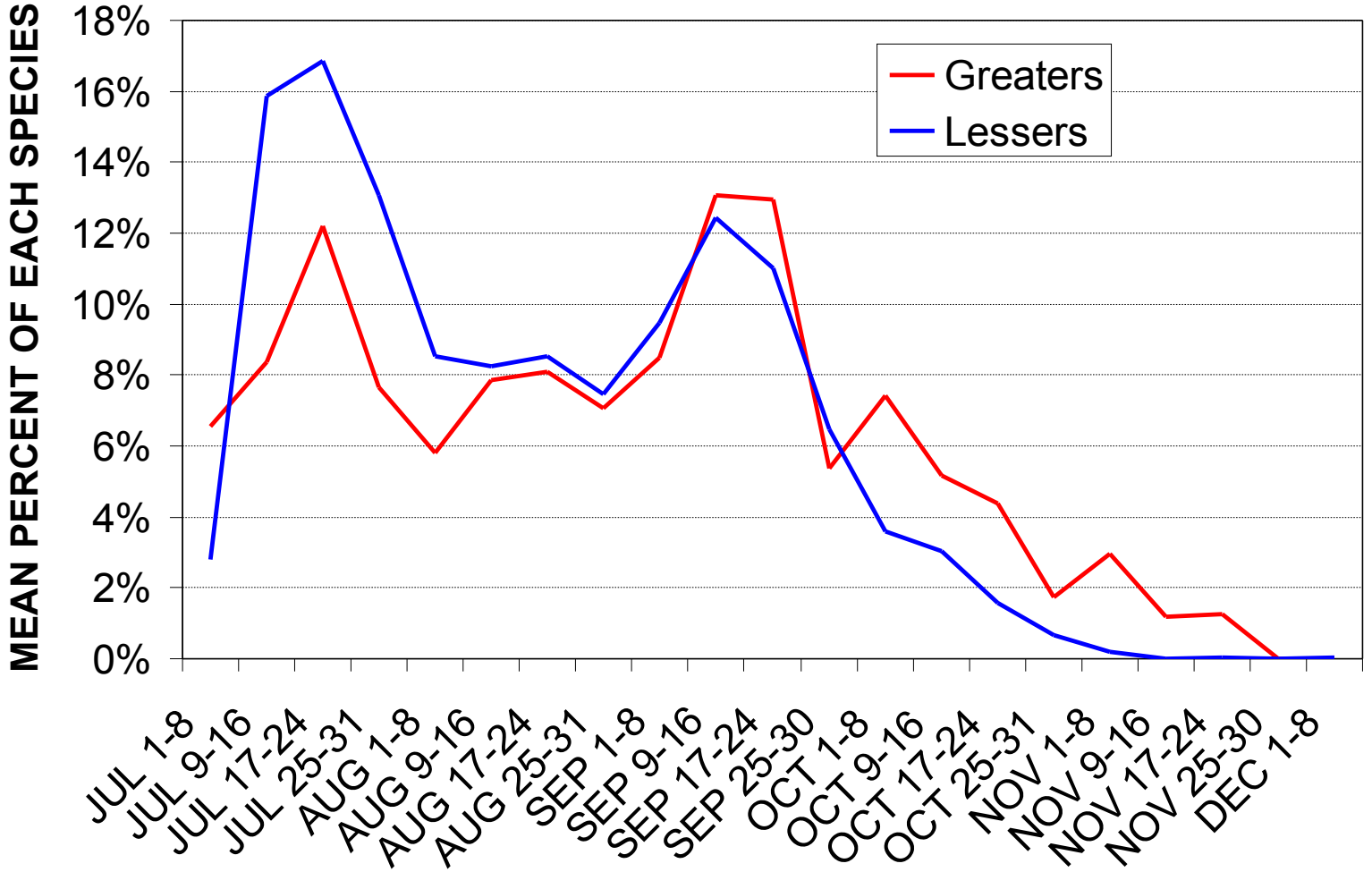
Late July.

When is the best time to see yellowlegs in spring?



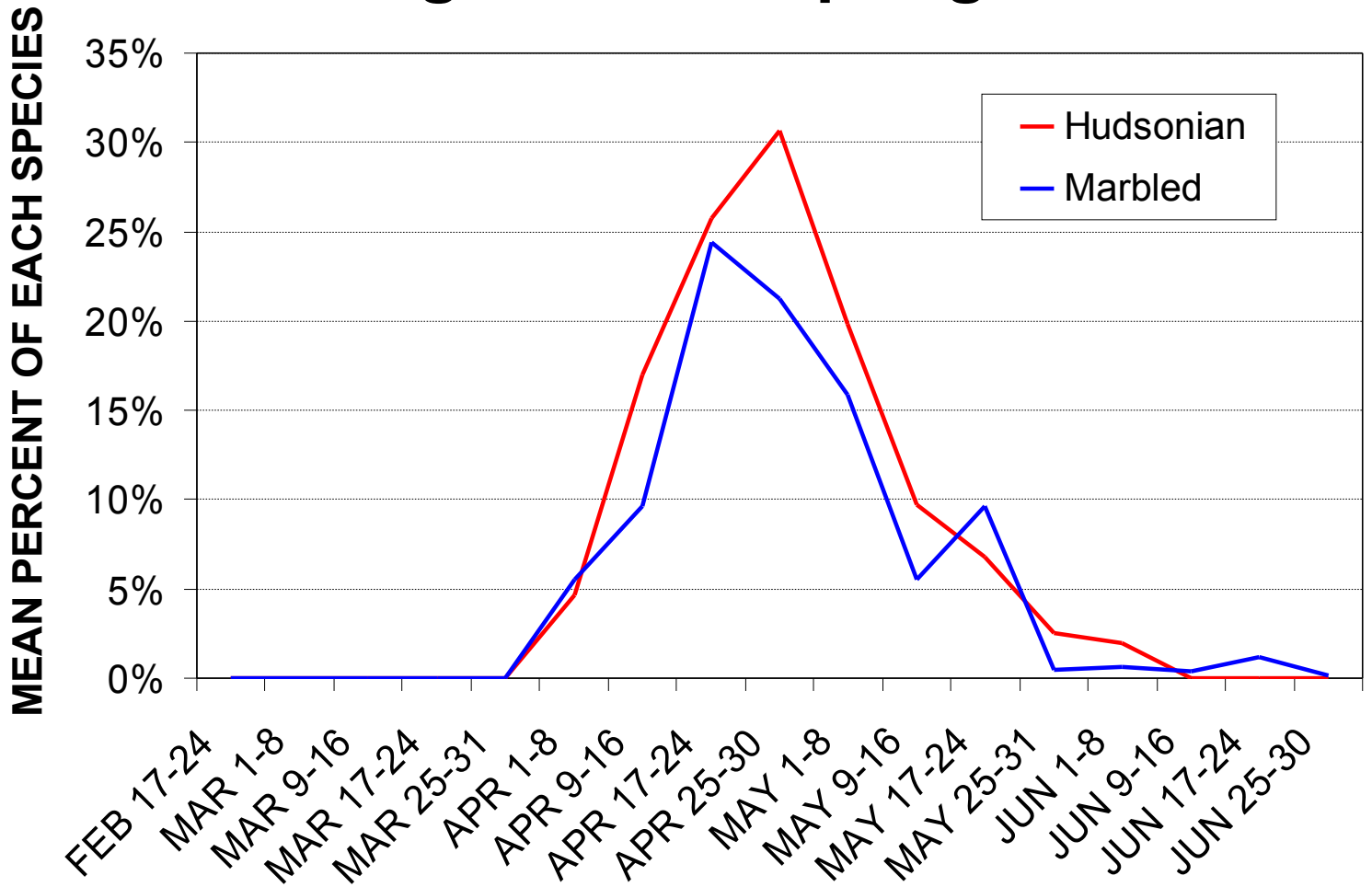
Peak of migration for greater yellowlegs is slightly earlier (mid-April) than for lesser yellowlegs (late April). Note that lessers are far more numerous than greaters.

When is the best time to see yellowlegs in summer-fall



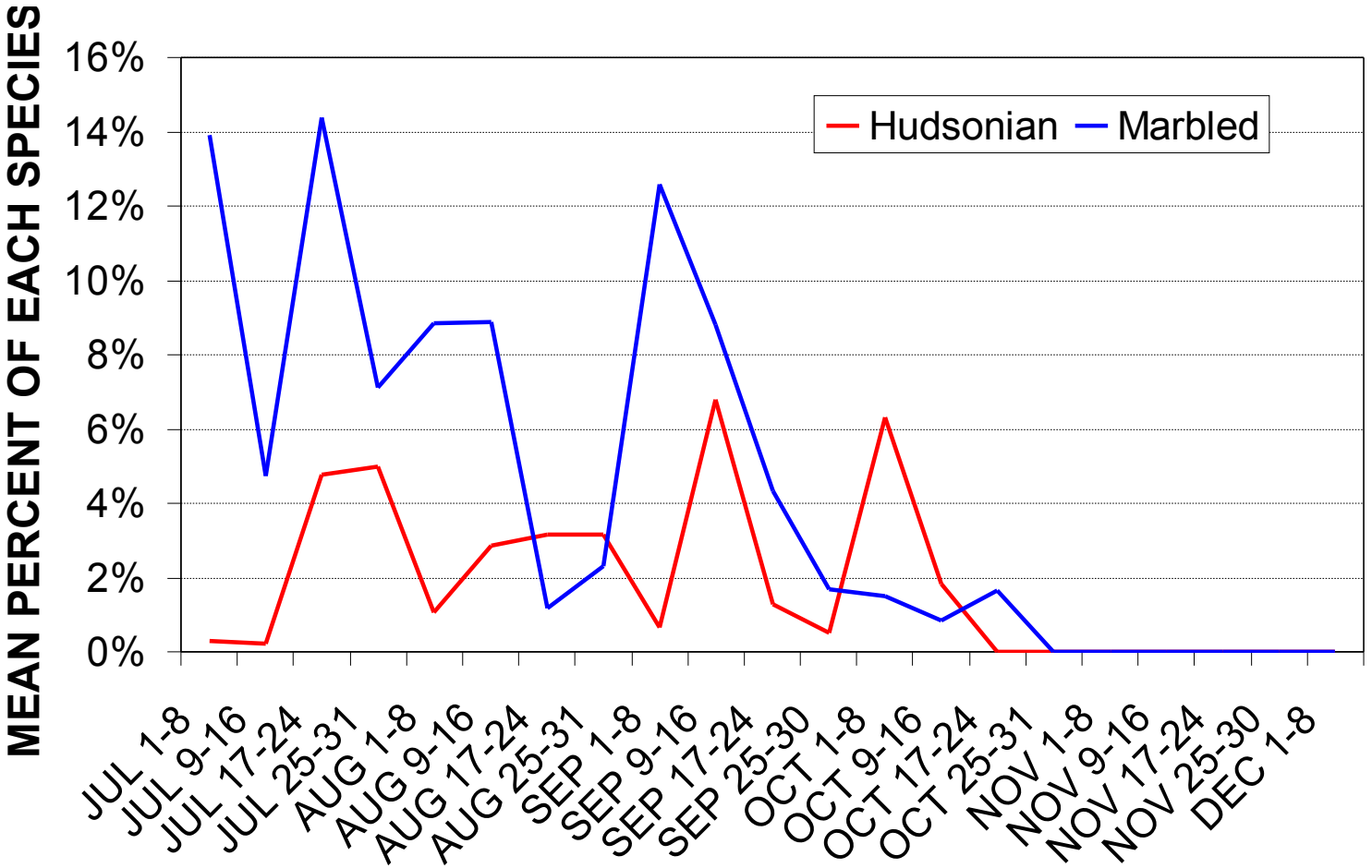
Mid- to late July and mid- to late September. Note that lessers are far more numerous than greaters.

When is the best time to see godwits in spring?



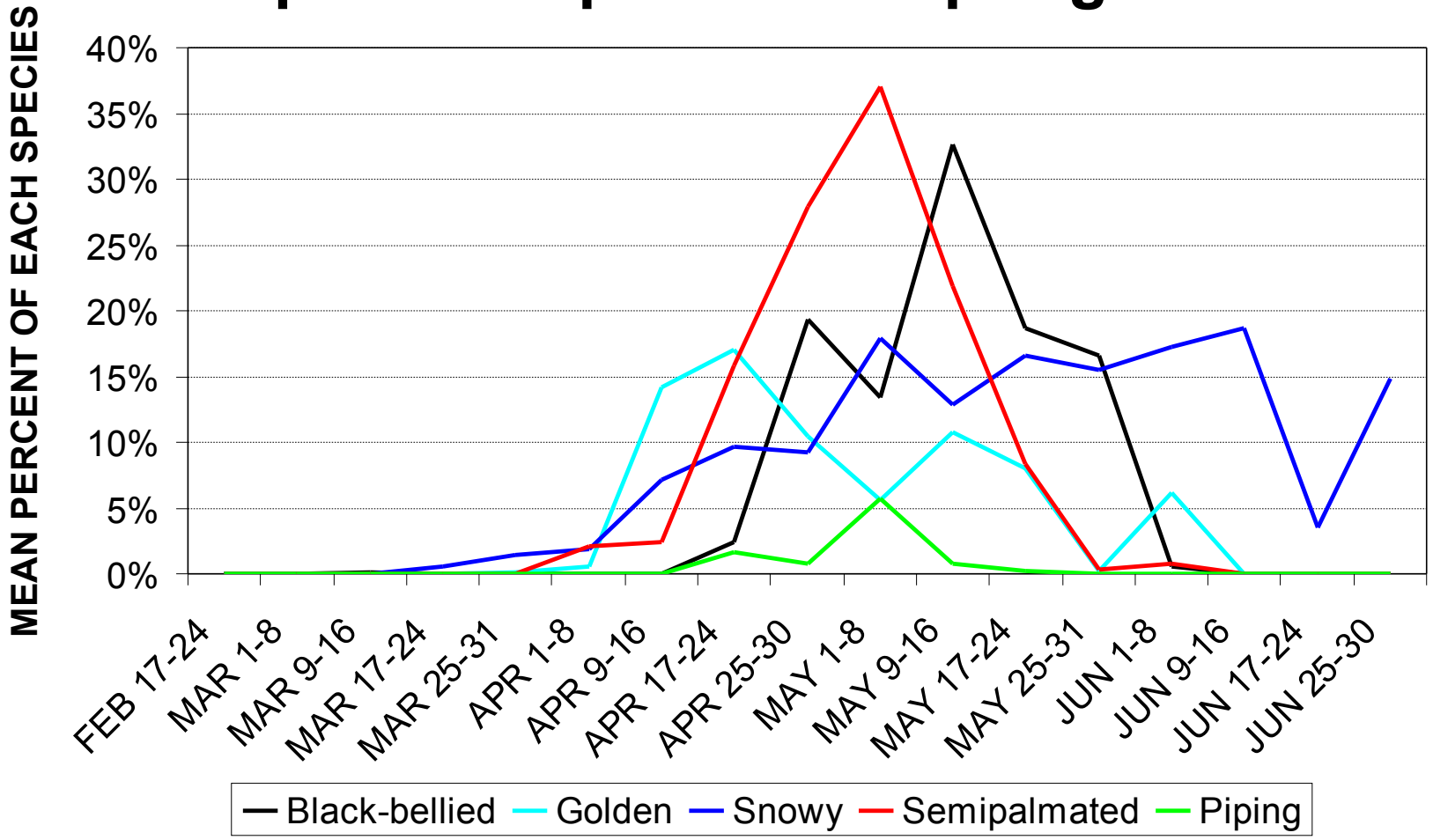
Mid-April to early May. Note Hudsonian godwits are far more common than marbled.

When is the best time to see godwits in summer-fall?



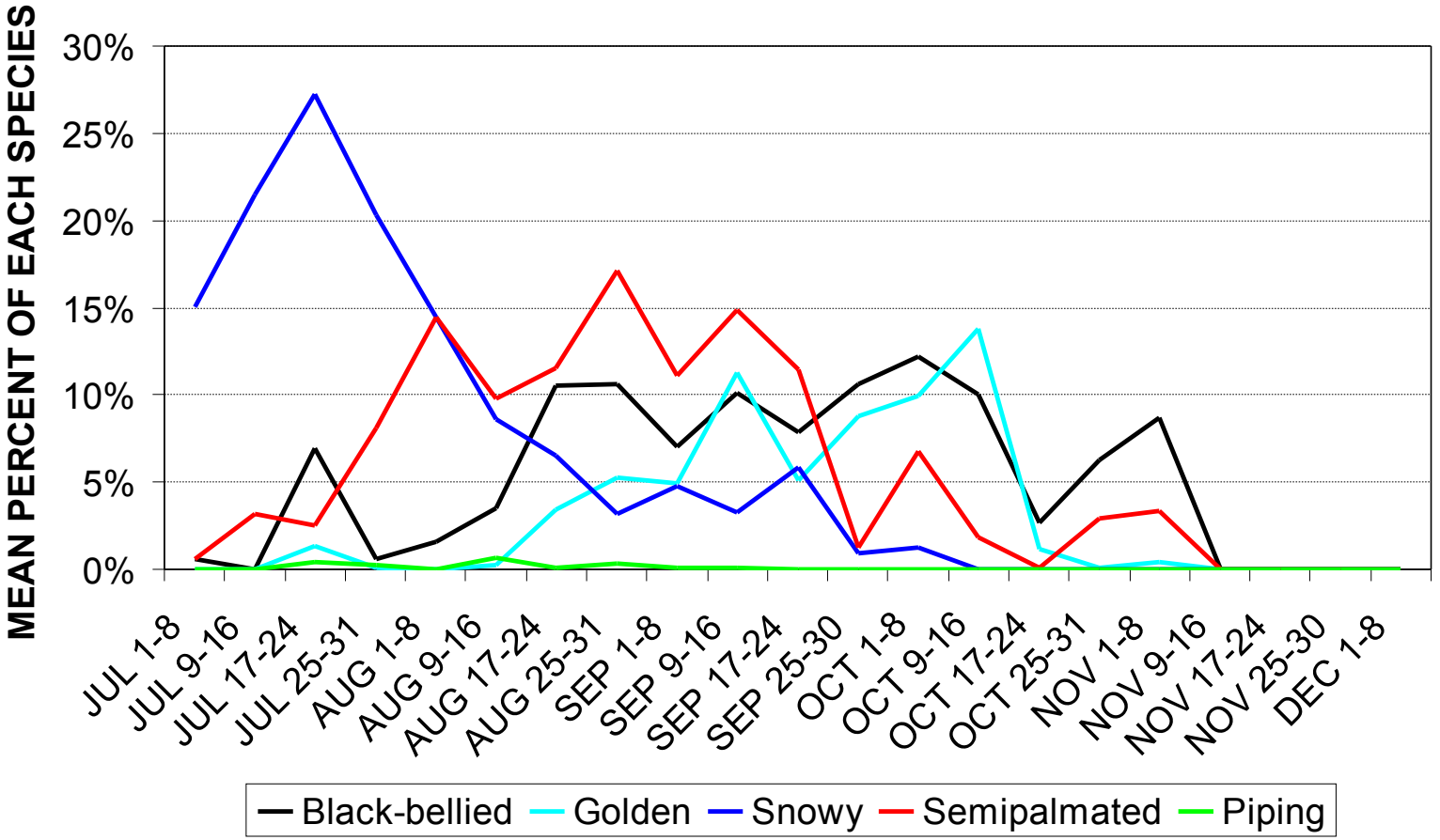
No discernible peak in migration chronology for either species, probably because both species are uncommon in summer-fall.

When is the best time to see the different species of plovers in spring?



On average, American golden-plovers peak in April, semipalmateds in late April to early May, and black-bellieds in mid-May. Others have variable chronologies. Note that black-bellied, semipalmated, and snowy plovers are by far more common than golden- and piping plovers in spring.

When is the best time to see the different species of plovers in summer-fall?



On average, snowy plovers peak in late July. Others have no discernable peaks in abundance. Note that black-bellied, semipalmated, and snowy plovers are by far more common than golden- and piping plovers in summer-fall.