

Barnacle Goose

Branta leucopsis

Category A, E

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

34 records

Feral birds also recorded.

Birds occurring in Kent probably originate from the population which breeds in northern Russia and winters chiefly in the Netherlands, or from the small but increasing feral populations in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands.

A scarce winter visitor to Kent with occasional cold weather influxes. Peak numbers in the county in January and February suggests that these birds normally winter in the Netherlands, and are driven out by severe weather on the Continent. Feral birds are regular throughout the year.



Barnacle Goose at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

One in Folkestone Museum was shot off Hythe pre-1900 and seems certain to relate to a wild individual as feral birds have only been prevalent in Kent since the 1960s. The first modern record was in 1989, since when it has been recorded with some regularity, though many records clearly relate to feral birds. Modern records by year are shown in figure 1.

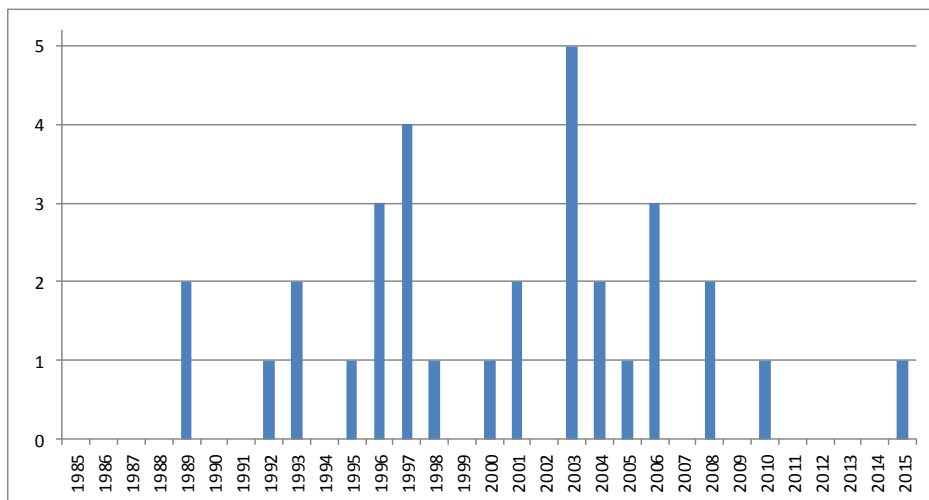


Figure 1: Barnacle Goose records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Figure 2 shows the arrival dates by week. Those recorded between March and August seem most likely to be of feral origin, though some of the December to February records might not be genuine migrants either.

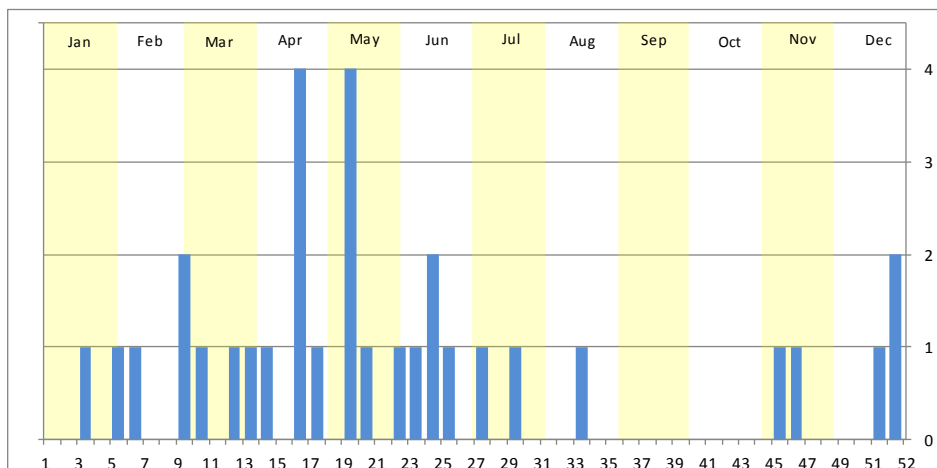


Figure 2: Barnacle Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. This individual was considered to be a wild bird. The majority of other records are from Nickolls Quarry (18), with others at Samphire Hoe (4), Copt Point (2), and single sightings at five other sites.

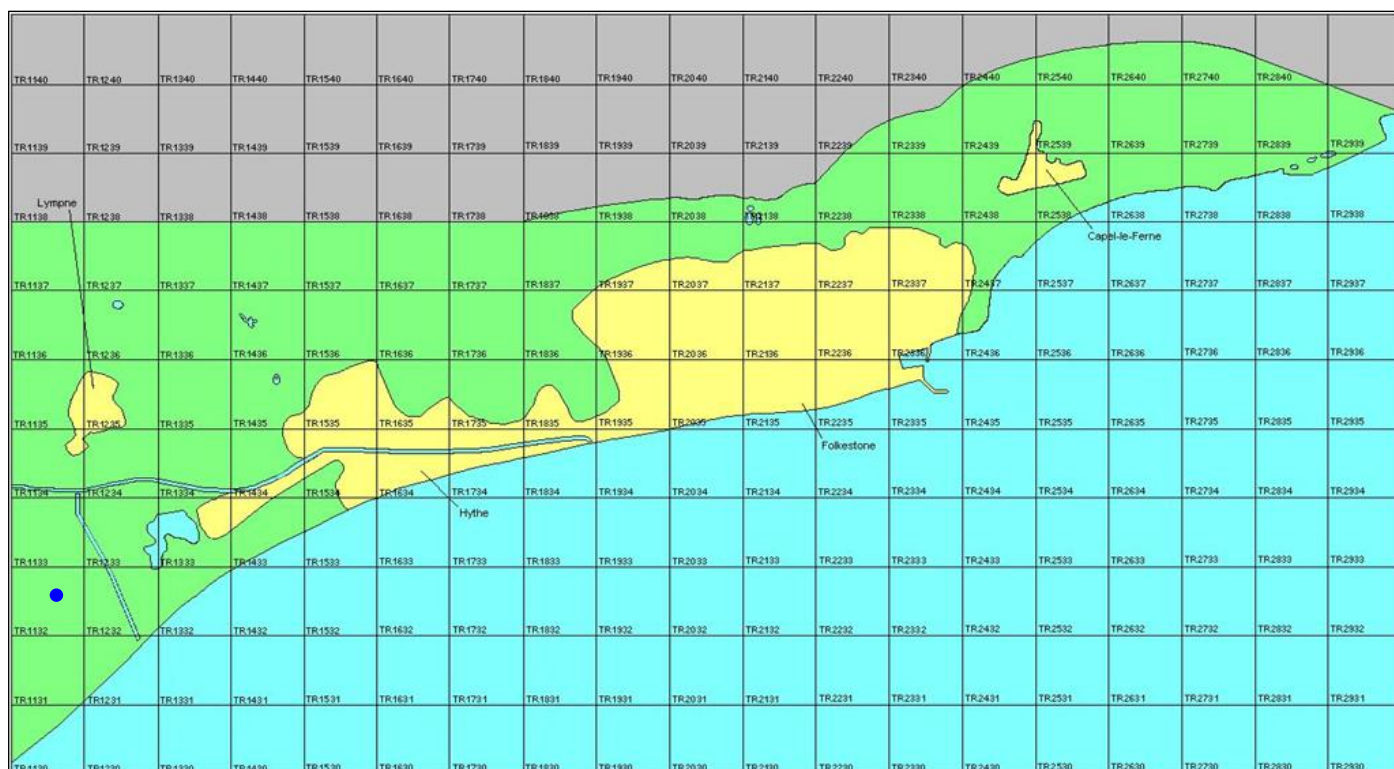


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Barnacle Goose at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The records with the best credentials for being considered as wild birds are as follows:

Pre-1900 Hythe, one in Folkestone Museum was shot off Hythe, pre-1900

- Seems certain to relate to a wild individual as feral birds have only been prevalent in Kent since the 1960s

1989 Copt Point, one on golf course, 29th December (I. A. Roberts)

1989 Mill Point, one flew east, 30th December (J. P. Siddle)

- There was a small influx into the county in late 1989 which it was considered might have involved wild birds

1993 Nickolls Quarry, 35 in field near sewage works, 3rd to 8th February (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)

- This flock arrived during cold weather and were presumed to be wild birds

2000 Folkestone, four flew north-east, 16th January (D. A. Gibson)

- These were seen at a similar time to a flock in the Swale which were considered to have originated in the Low Countries

2006 Folkestone Racecourse lake (Westenhanger), three, 11th to 12th February (I. A. Roberts)

- These birds arrived with a flock of 14 White-fronted Geese which suggests that they originated from the Netherlands. Elsewhere in Kent a flock at Worth Marshes and an increase at Dungeness in February were also associated with arrivals of White-fronted Geese.

2010 Donkey Street, one, 22nd December 2010 (I. A. Roberts)

- This bird arrived, during a period of very severe weather, with flock of 180 White-fronted Geese which suggests that it originated from the Netherlands.

The list of other records is as follows:

- 1992** Nickolls Quarry, two, 11th May (reported)
- 1993** Capel-le-Ferne, 12 flew south, 27th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 1995** Nickolls Quarry, two, 11th May (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, one, 29th February (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, two, 10th to 22nd March (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, two to six birds, from 10th June to 1st September (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one, 13th to 22nd May (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one, 8th June (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one, 21st June (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one, 8th July (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, two, 16th to 18th August (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Nickolls Quarry, one, 22nd March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2001** Nickolls Quarry, 12 flew north, 7th May (R. K. Norman)
- 2001** Nickolls Quarry, ten flew south-west, 10th June (R. K. Norman)
- 2003** Samphire Hoe, one, 28th February to 25th March, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, three, 17th April (R. K. Norman)
- 2003** Copt Point, three, 18th April (I. A. Roberts), possibly same as above
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, one, 16th to 17th July (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, four, 7th November (R. K. Norman)
- 2004** Nickolls Quarry, two regularly, 17th April to 11th August (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Nickolls Quarry, one, 13th November (R. K. Norman)
- 2005** Nickolls Quarry, one on eight dates between 19th April and 10th June, then two until 2nd August (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Samphire Hoe, 12 flew west, 16th May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Nickolls Quarry, one on five dates between 11th June and 18th August (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, seven flew west, 24th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, two flew west, 31st May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2015** Nickolls Quarry, one, 5th April, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)