

# Barnacle Goose

*Branta leucopsis* Category A, E

Rare migrant and winter visitor. 35 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.

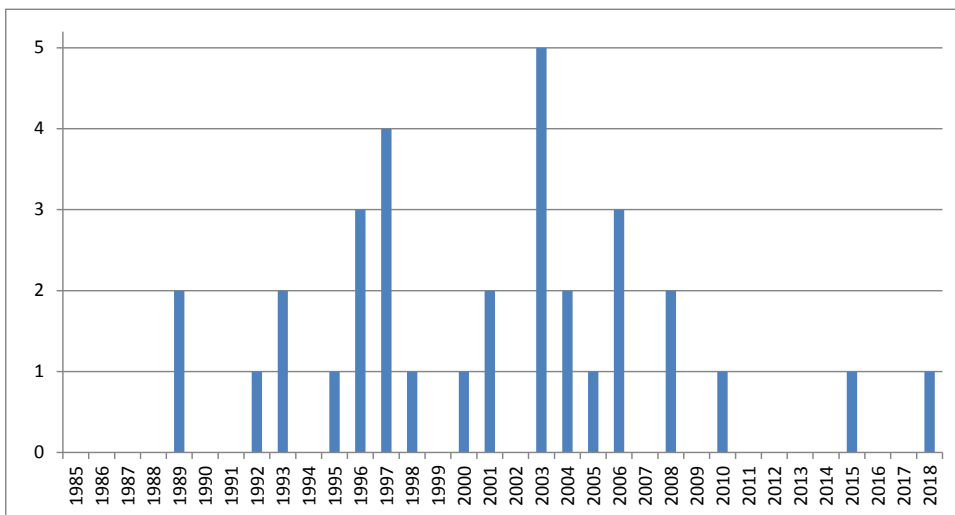


Figure 1: Barnacle Goose records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

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

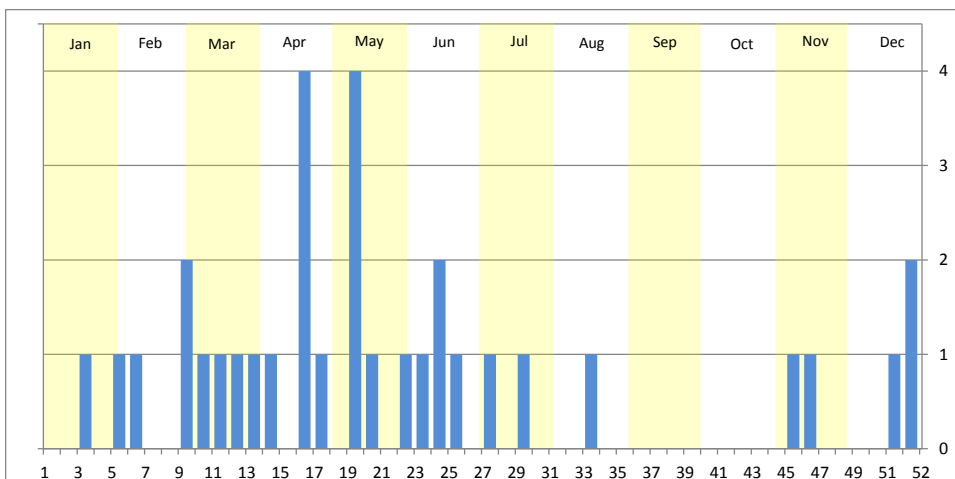


Figure 2: Barnacle Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

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 six other sites.

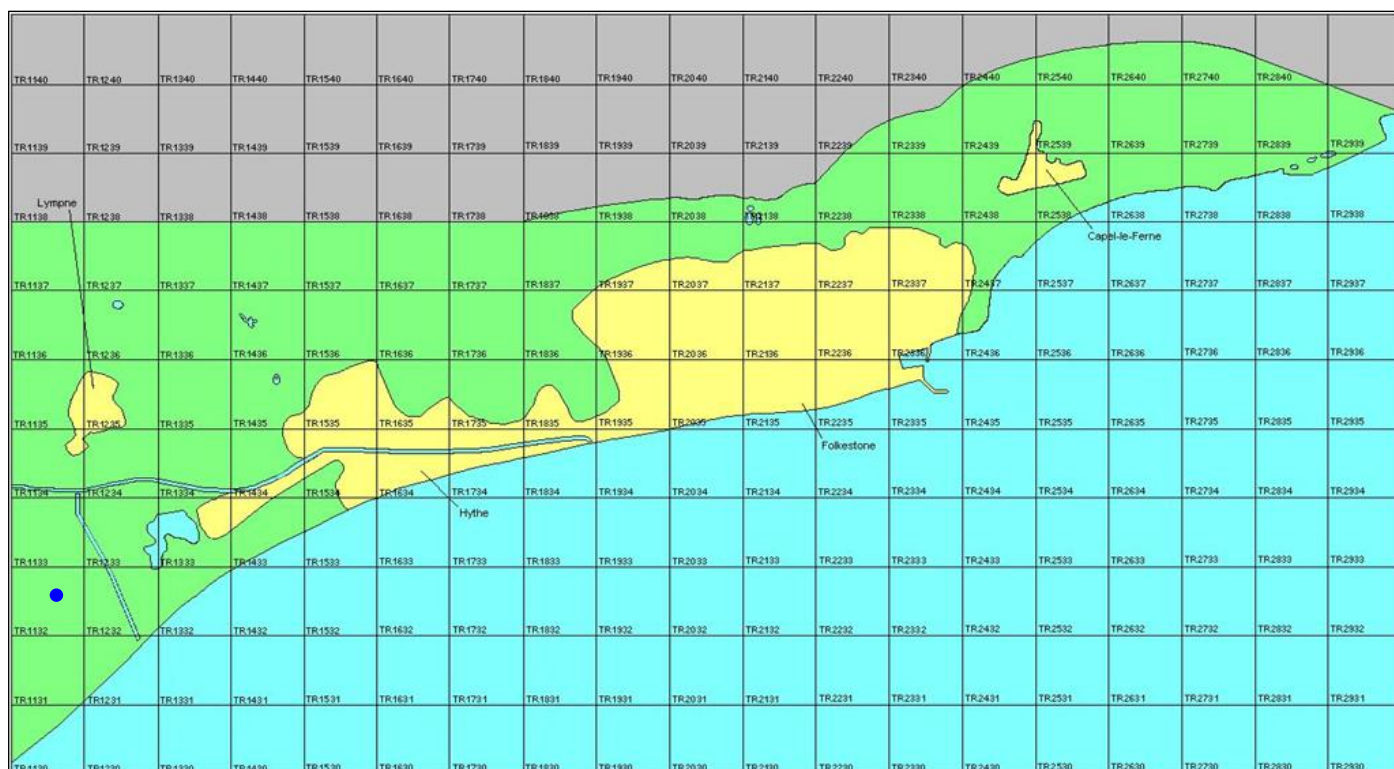


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Barnacle Goose at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

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, 29<sup>th</sup> December (I. A. Roberts)

**1989** Mill Point, one flew east, 30<sup>th</sup> 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, 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> 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, 16<sup>th</sup> 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, 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> 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, 22<sup>nd</sup> 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, 11<sup>th</sup> May (reported)
- 1993** Capel-le-Ferne, 12 flew south, 27<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)
- 1995** Nickolls Quarry, two, 11<sup>th</sup> May (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, one, 29<sup>th</sup> February (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, two, 10<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> March (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, two to six birds, from 10<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> September (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one, 13<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one, 8<sup>th</sup> June (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one, 21<sup>st</sup> June (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one, 8<sup>th</sup> July (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, two, 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> August (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Nickolls Quarry, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2001** Nickolls Quarry, 12 flew north, 7<sup>th</sup> May (R. K. Norman)
- 2001** Nickolls Quarry, ten flew south-west, 10<sup>th</sup> June (R. K. Norman)
- 2003** Samphire Hoe, one, 28<sup>th</sup> February to 25<sup>th</sup> March, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, three, 17<sup>th</sup> April (R. K. Norman)
- 2003** Copt Point, three, 18<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts), possibly same as above
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, one, 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> July (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, four, 7<sup>th</sup> November (R. K. Norman)
- 2004** Nickolls Quarry, two regularly, 17<sup>th</sup> April to 11<sup>th</sup> August (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Nickolls Quarry, one, 13<sup>th</sup> November (R. K. Norman)
- 2005** Nickolls Quarry, one on eight dates between 19<sup>th</sup> April and 10<sup>th</sup> June, then two until 2<sup>nd</sup> August (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Samphire Hoe, 12 flew west, 16<sup>th</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Nickolls Quarry, one on five dates between 11<sup>th</sup> June and 18<sup>th</sup> August (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, seven flew west, 24<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, two flew west, 31<sup>st</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2015** Nickolls Quarry, one, 5<sup>th</sup> April, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Willop Basin, three, then flew west, 17<sup>th</sup> March (B. Harper)