

# Common Bittern

*Botaurus stellaris*

Category A

Very rare vagrant

6 records

A widespread but generally uncommon breeding species throughout Europe. It is uncertain whether the species has true migratory tendency or whether movements are dispersal in response to severe conditions. Some populations, particularly in North Sea countries, appear to be mostly resident. The 2010 Rare Breeding Bird report gave a total of 87-106 booming males at 56 sites which is a continued increase over the five year mean of 84. The species stronghold continues to be East Anglia and the Somerset levels.

A scarce but increasing resident in Kent, and a winter visitor in small numbers. In 2010 there were 3-4 booming males at four sites in the county.

First recorded at Folkestone and Hythe in 1956, when a bird was found dead at Hythe, but there were no further records for almost forty years until one was at Nickoll's Quarry in 1995. This site produced another one or possibly two birds in 2004, with further records from the Romney Marsh area in 2010 and 2012. The records by year are given in figure 1.

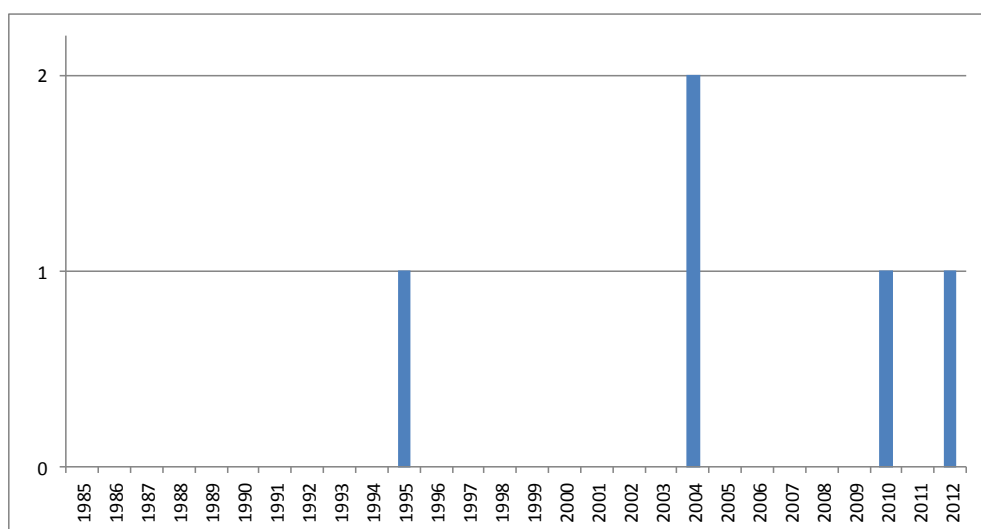


Figure 1: Common Bittern records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

There is a single record from December, with three in February, and two in late March / early April, as demonstrated by figure 2. Some, though not all, records have been associated with severe weather.

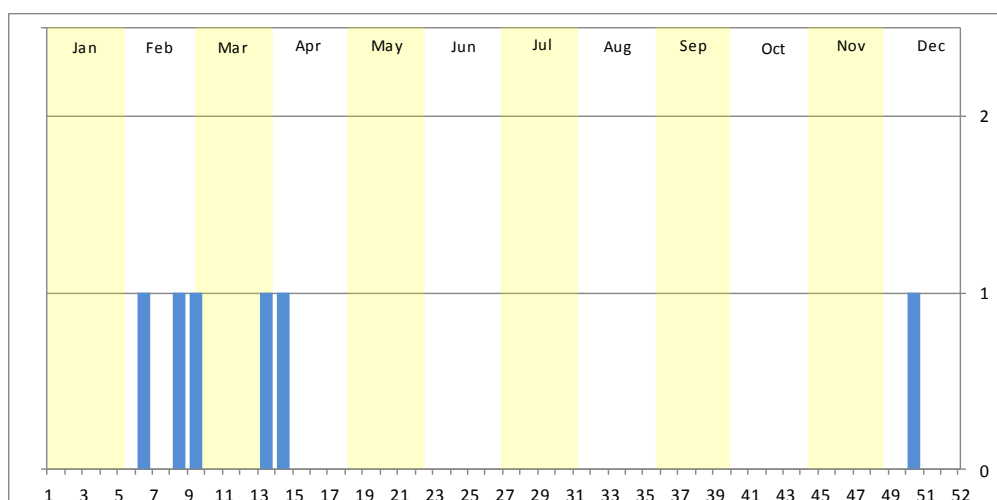


Figure 2: Common Bittern records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. Both records during the winter period were from the Romney Marsh area. Other records are from Nickoll’s Quarry (4) and Hythe.

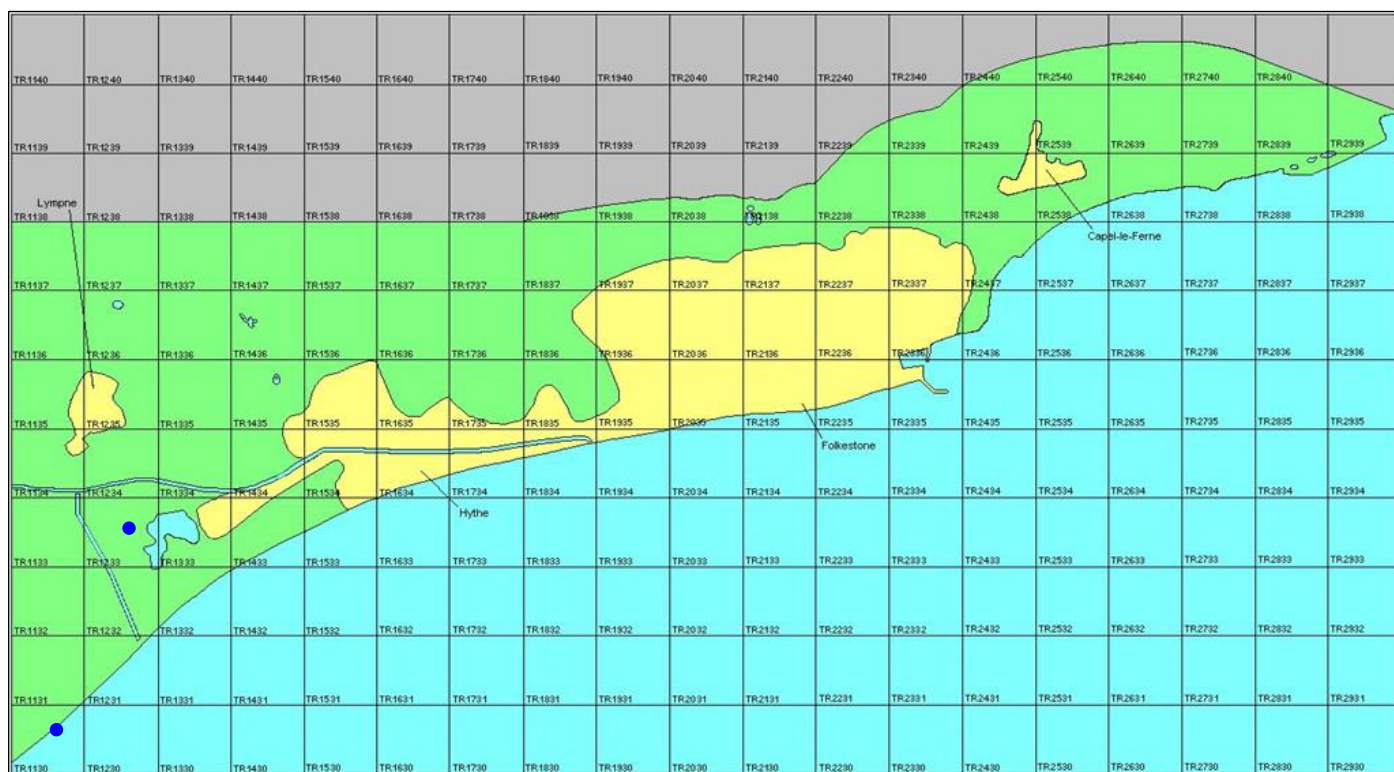


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Common Bittern at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1956** Hythe, found dead, 25<sup>th</sup> February (J. M. Harrison)
- 1995** Nickoll’s Quarry, one, 30<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> March (“an excellent description provided by an angler” per R. K. Norman)
- 2004** Nickoll’s Quarry, one, 26<sup>th</sup> February (reported by a knowledgeable angler per R. K. Norman)
- 2004** Nickoll’s Quarry, one, 7<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> April (reported by a knowledgeable angler per R. K. Norman), possibly same as above
- 2010** Willop Outfall, one flew east, 10<sup>th</sup> December (P. Trodd)
- 2012** Botolph’s Bridge, one near Stonereach Bridge, 8<sup>th</sup> February (R. K. Norman)