

## Red Kite

*Milvus milvus*

Category A, C

Scarce but increasing migrant

93 records

Breeds fairly widely across western Europe from southern Sweden south to Italy and Spain. Northern populations are mainly migratory and southern ones generally resident. The small isolated Welsh population is largely resident, though some juveniles disperse eastwards into England in their first autumn, winter there, and return in spring. A few continental birds reach Britain during immaturity. Being reintroduced into England, with a scheme centred on the Chilterns. There are now probably over 2,200 pairs breeding in Britain.

A regular visitor to Kent at any time of year. There has been a huge increase in the number of records recently reflecting the success of the re-introduction scheme in nearby counties. In 2010 two pairs bred in Sussex and it seems likely to return to Kent as a breeding species (as it was until the eighteenth century) in the future.



Red Kite over Folkestone (Dale Gibson)

This species might have once been common in the county but it was already rare by the mid-nineteenth century and Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) lists individual records from this time. These include one in Folkestone Museum which was shot by Mr. Benjamin Turner, the gamekeeper of Major H. W. Deedes of the Saltwood Castle estate, just outside the area at Aldington in 1853. A second was shot by a keeper at Swingfield (again just outside area) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1899, having been in the locality for about a month, and refers presumably to the information supplied by Mr. F. W. Blathwayt, that about the year 1901 Mr. Gordon, the taxidermist of Folkestone, had a Kite to set up that had been shot by a keeper of a pheasantry close to that town.

The first certain record within the Folkestone and Hythe recording area did not come until 1987, but it has since been seen with some regularity, with a significant increase in records in recent years (as figure 1 demonstrates), in line with the county as a whole. The first multiple records, with three records relating to two being seen together, were in 2010, whilst 2015 is now the best year to date. Due to this change in status it ceased to be treated as a rarity after the end of 2014.

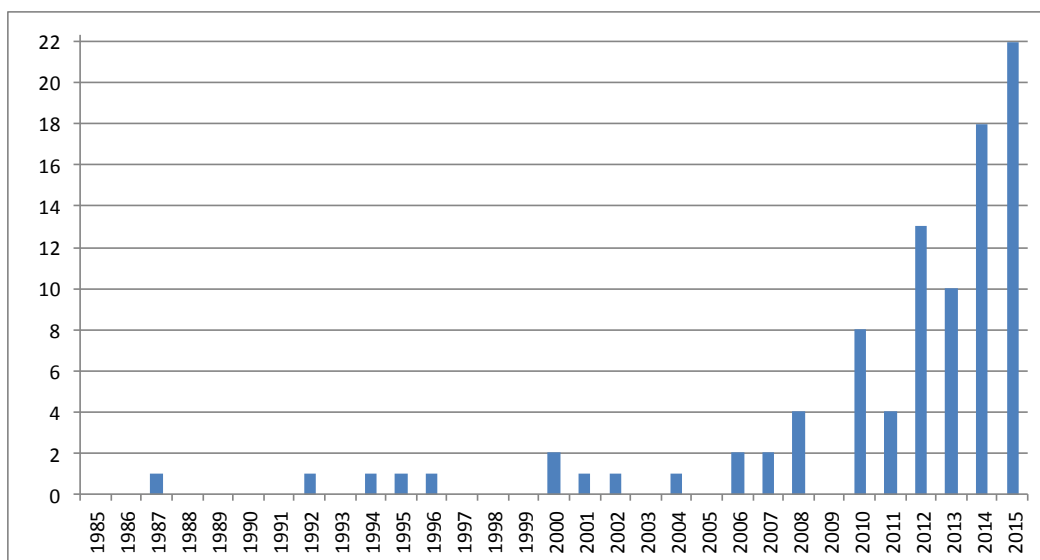


Figure 1: Red Kite records at Folkestone and Hythe

The increase in records recently appears to be linked to the re-introduction scheme in nearby counties. A bird seen at Nickoll's Quarry and Seabrook in May 2000 carried a wing-tag which could be read (yellow 64) and was found to be a bird from the Chilterns which had wild-fledged in the previous year. At least one other wing-tagged bird has been seen but details were not able to be recorded.

It is possible that some earlier records related to continental birds, though the only recovery in Kent concerns one which had been ringed as a nestling in mid-Wales in June and found dead in Kent that August.

Records have occurred in most months of the year, with a distinct peak in mid-May to early June (weeks 20 to 22), as shown in figure 2.

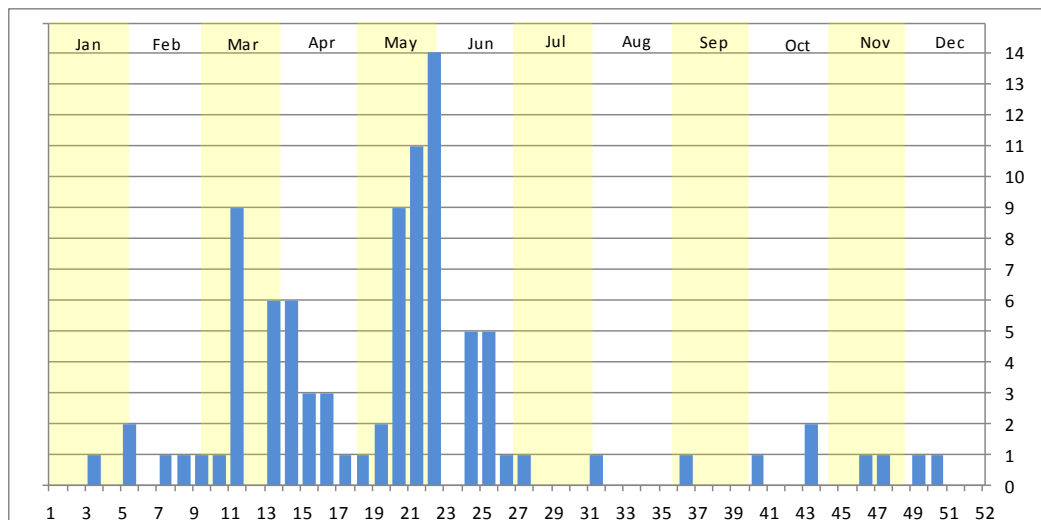


Figure 2: Red Kite records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3 – a single bird seen at West Hythe in January 2010. Other records have been well scattered, with 19 from the cliffs between Abbotscliffe and Capel-le-Ferne, 17 at Saltwood, 13 at Hythe, 12 over Cheriton or Folkestone, 7 at Samphire Hoe, 3 at Church Hougham and Lympne, 2 at Kiln Wood and Saltwood Castle, and singles at Bargrove Wood, Folkestone Downs, Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger), Newingreen, Nickoll's Quarry, Palmars, Summerhouse Hill, West Hythe and the Willo Basin.

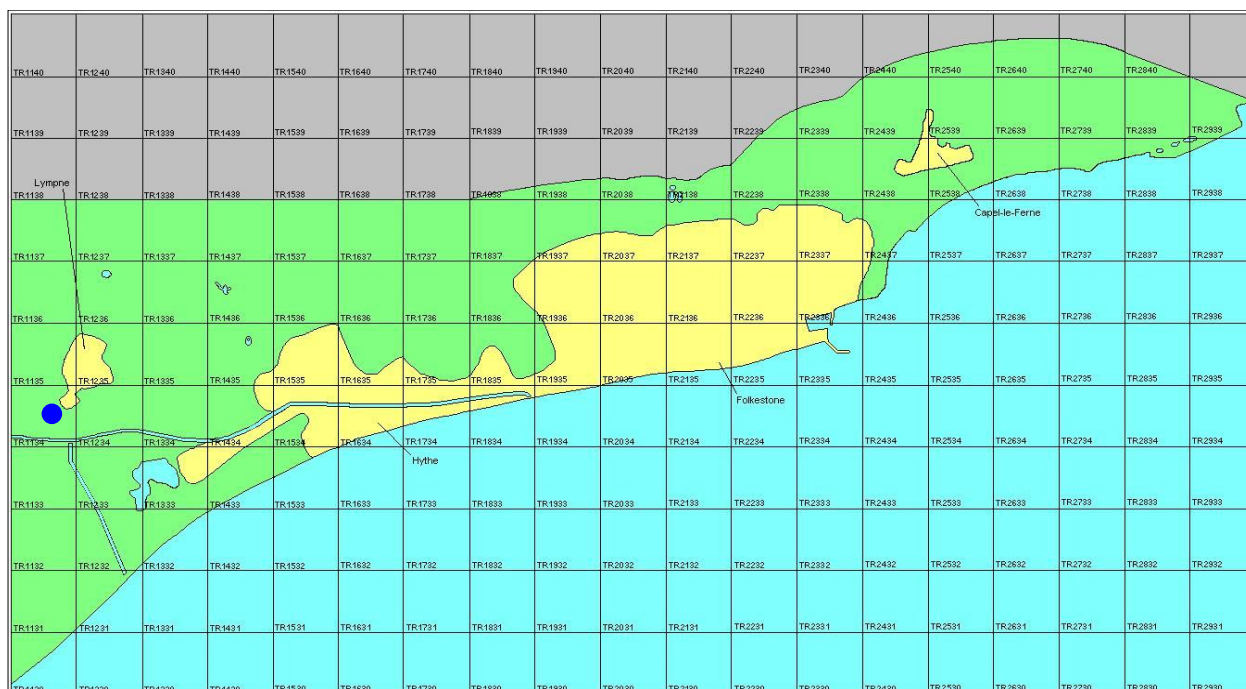


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Red Kite at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1987** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 12<sup>th</sup> February (J. Tomlinson)
- 1992** Cheriton, one flew north-east, 11<sup>th</sup> November (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Cheriton, one flew west south-west, 24<sup>th</sup> June (D. A. Gibson)
- 1995** Capel-le-Ferne, one flew in off the sea, 18<sup>th</sup> May (D. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Abbotscliffe, one flew south-west, 1<sup>st</sup> October, wing-tagged (D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Nickoll's Quarry, one flew east and landed in trees at Seabrook, 19<sup>th</sup> May, wing-tagged, photographed (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Folkestone, one flew north-west, 23<sup>rd</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 2001** Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 29<sup>th</sup> May, later seen at Samphire Hoe (D. A. Gibson, D. H. Featherbe)
- 2002** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 31<sup>st</sup> May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew in off the sea, 13<sup>th</sup> June (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one flew east, 28<sup>th</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Church Hougham, one flew east, 13<sup>th</sup> June (I. A. Roberts)
- 2007** Folkestone, one flew east, 2<sup>nd</sup> June, later seen at Capel-le-Ferne Café (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2007** Folkestone Warren, one, 5<sup>th</sup> August (J. A. Gibson)
- 2008** Saltwood Castle, one, 1<sup>st</sup> March, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2008** Folkestone, one flew north, 8<sup>th</sup> March (D. A. Gibson)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 7<sup>th</sup> May (P. Holt)
- 2008** Hythe, one flew north, 1<sup>st</sup> June (I. A. Roberts)
- 2010** West Hythe, one flew west, 17<sup>th</sup> January (M. Vandoen)
- 2010** Folkestone, two flew north-east, 13<sup>th</sup> March (D. A. Gibson)
- 2010** Abbotscliffe, two flew east, 18<sup>th</sup> April (M. Kennett)
- 2010** Folkestone, one flew north, 17<sup>th</sup> May (M. Vandoen)
- 2010** Lympne, one flew north, 22<sup>nd</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2010** Saltwood Castle, two, 22<sup>nd</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2010** Summerhouse Hill, one flew east, 23<sup>rd</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2010** Samphire Hoe, one flew in off the sea, 26<sup>th</sup> October (G. J. A. Burton)
- 2011** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 29<sup>th</sup> March (M. Kennett)
- 2011** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 4<sup>th</sup> April (M. Varley)
- 2011** Church Hougham, one flew east, 14<sup>th</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Folkestone, one flew east, 3<sup>rd</sup> June (reported)
- 2012** Folkestone, one, 25<sup>th</sup> March, photographed (D. A. Gibson)
- 2012** Abbotscliffe, one flew north, 29<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Lympne, one flew north, 19<sup>th</sup> May (P. Sharp)
- 2012** Bargrove Wood, one, 20<sup>th</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew west, 23<sup>rd</sup> May, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Saltwood, one flew north, 23<sup>rd</sup> May (P. Howe)
- 2012** Hougham Valley, one flew east, 27<sup>th</sup> May (M. Kennett)
- 2012** Saltwood, two flew north, 28<sup>th</sup> May (P. Howe)
- 2012** Hythe, one flew south-east, 28<sup>th</sup> May (S. P. Clancy)
- 2012** Saltwood, one flew north, 29<sup>th</sup> May (P. Howe)
- 2012** Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 29<sup>th</sup> May (P. Holt, P. Smith)
- 2012** near Kiln Wood, one, 27<sup>th</sup> June (Bruce Findlay)
- 2012** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 18<sup>th</sup> November (P. J. Chantler)
- 2013** Folkestone Downs, one, 2<sup>nd</sup> February (B. Findlay)
- 2013** Kiln Wood, one flew north, 20<sup>th</sup> February (I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Capel-le-Ferne, one flew south-west, 29<sup>th</sup> March (D. A. Gibson)
- 2013** Hythe, one flew north-west, 30<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Saltwood, one flew north, 7<sup>th</sup> April (P. Howe)
- 2013** Samphire Hoe, one, 21<sup>st</sup> April (per P. Holt)
- 2013** Saltwood, one flew north, 22<sup>nd</sup> May (P. Howe)
- 2013** West Parade (Hythe), three flew west, 23<sup>rd</sup> May (S. McMinn)
- 2013** Saltwood, one flew north, 2<sup>nd</sup> June (P. Howe)
- 2013** Cheriton, one, 11<sup>th</sup> June (J. Russell)
- 2014** Hythe, one flew north-east, 15<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)

**2014** Saltwood, one flew north, 15<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)  
**2014** Abbotscliffe, seven flew west, 16<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)  
**2014** Hythe, one flew west, 16<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)  
**2014** Hythe Roughs, one, 16<sup>th</sup> March (B. Harper)  
**2014** Brockhill CP, one, 16<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts)  
**2014** Saltwood, two flew south west, 16<sup>th</sup> March (P. Howe)  
**2014** Samphire Hoe, one, 17<sup>th</sup> March (reported)  
**2014** Hythe, one flew east, 5<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)  
**2014** Willop Basin, one, 18<sup>th</sup> April (B. Harper)  
**2014** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 23<sup>rd</sup> April (M. Kennett)  
**2014** Folkestone, one, 18<sup>th</sup> May (N. C. Frampton)  
**2014** Near Newingreen, one, 20<sup>th</sup> May (N. Spencer)  
**2014** Round Down, one, 1<sup>st</sup> June (M. Kennett)  
**2014** Saltwood, seven, 1<sup>st</sup> June (P. Howe)  
**2014** Lympne Castle, one, 19<sup>th</sup> June (P. Sharp)  
**2014** Peene Quarry, one flew north, 21<sup>st</sup> June (B. Harper)  
**2014** Saltwood, one flew east, 4<sup>th</sup> September (P. Howe)  
**2015** Saltwood, one, 6<sup>th</sup> April (P. Howe)  
**2015** Hythe, one, 8<sup>th</sup> April (S. Clancy, I. A. Roberts)  
**2015** Saltwood, one, 8<sup>th</sup> April (P. Howe)  
**2015** West Hythe, one, 9<sup>th</sup> April (P. Wells)  
**2015** Folkestone Downs, one, 10<sup>th</sup> April (M. Varley)  
**2015** Saltwood, one flew east, 11<sup>th</sup> April (P. Howe)  
**2015** Saltwood, one, 4<sup>th</sup> May (P. Howe)  
**2015** Hythe, one, flew west, 12<sup>th</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)  
**2015** Saltwood, one, 16<sup>th</sup> May (P. Howe)  
**2015** Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger), one flew south, 17<sup>th</sup> May (J. Tomsett)  
**2015** Saltwood, one flew north, 25<sup>th</sup> May (P. Howe)  
**2015** Abbotscliffe, one, 25<sup>th</sup> May (P. Coleman)  
**2015** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 27<sup>th</sup> May (M. Kennett)  
**2015** Abbotscliffe, one, 14<sup>th</sup> June (M. Kennett)  
**2015** Palmars, one, 17<sup>th</sup> June (P. Howe)  
**2015** Lympne, one, 19<sup>th</sup> June (P. Coleman)  
**2015** Saltwood, three, 19<sup>th</sup> June (C. Gillard)  
**2015** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 4<sup>th</sup> July (J. Tomsett)  
**2015** Hythe, two, 9<sup>th</sup> December (S. McMinn)  
**2015** Hythe, one flew north-west, 16<sup>th</sup> December (S. McMinn)

In addition, there are two records of unidentified kites: one flew in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 1995 and one flew east over Folkestone on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2008.



Red Kite over Folkestone (Dale Gibson)



Red Kite at Capel-le-Ferne (Ian Roberts)