

Goshawk

Accipiter gentilis

Category A / C

Very rare vagrant

12 records

Breeds across most of Europe, though relatively scarce in Britain where it probably bred regularly until the nineteenth century, but only sporadically thereafter, until regular breeding (partly due to escaped or released birds) was rediscovered from the late 1960s. Whilst subject to persecution it is increasing, with the 2010 Rare Breeding Bird Report giving a five year mean of 430 breeding pairs. Partially migratory in northern European populations but dispersive or resident further south.

A very rare vagrant to Kent. Most records probably relate to wanderers from the British population, though some might be escapes and a few might be dispersing birds from the continent. The peak month of occurrence is April, with another increase between September and November, and a small number through the winter months.

Summer records are few, though a single pair was present in the county in 2010 but breeding was not confirmed. Two pairs were noted in Sussex and one in Surrey in the same year, confirming that this is a very rare bird indeed in South-east England. The status in Kent is however clouded by misidentification – no other species has such a high rate of ‘not proven’ records.

Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) noted that there was an adult male Goshawk in the extensive collection of British Birds formed by the late Mr. William T. Tournay, of Brockhill Park, near Hythe. He states that this Goshawk, along with other specimens of various species, had been presented to the Kent Education Committee, and was housed in the Folkestone County Grammar School for Girls.

It is not clear what became of this specimen however and unfortunately there were no particulars with it to establish even that it was of Kentish origin. Ticehurst reported that a great many of Tournay’s birds were no doubt local, but that many also appeared to have been obtained during voyages in the far north, as the collection “was very rich in species such as the Greenland [Gyr] Falcon, King-Eider and Ivory-Gull”. It seems likely that the Goshawk was another specimen of more northern origin.

The first confirmed record at Folkestone and Hythe was in 1994, with eleven subsequent records as shown in figure 1, including two in 1997 and 2017.

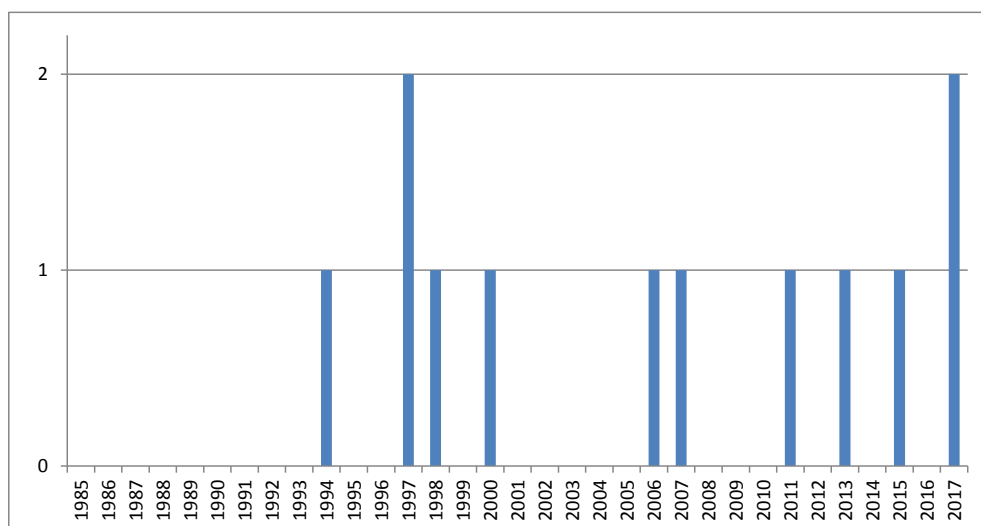


Figure 1: Goshawk records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

There are three records from April, two from March and May, and singles in January, June, September, October and November, as demonstrated by figure 2.

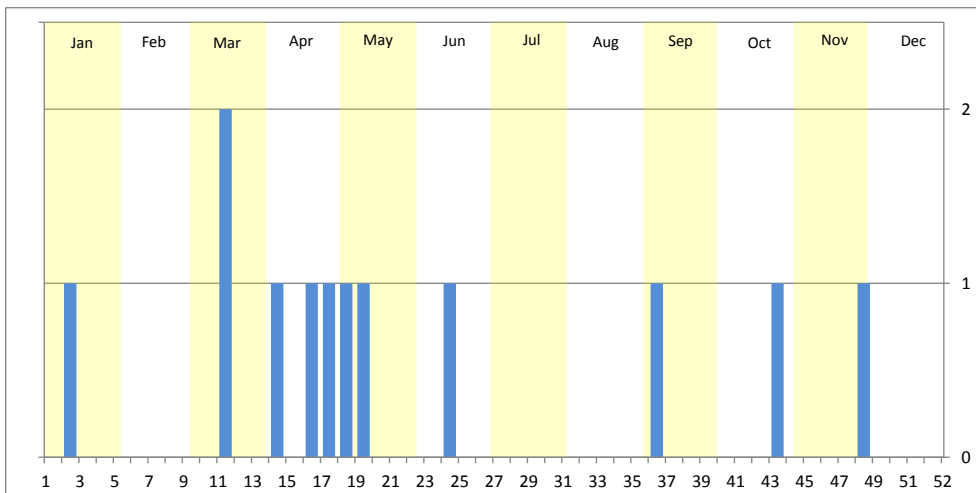


Figure 2: Goshawk records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. Other records are from Cheriton / Folkestone (4), Capel-le-Ferne (2), Saltwood (2), Beachborough Lakes, Paraker Wood and Copt Point.

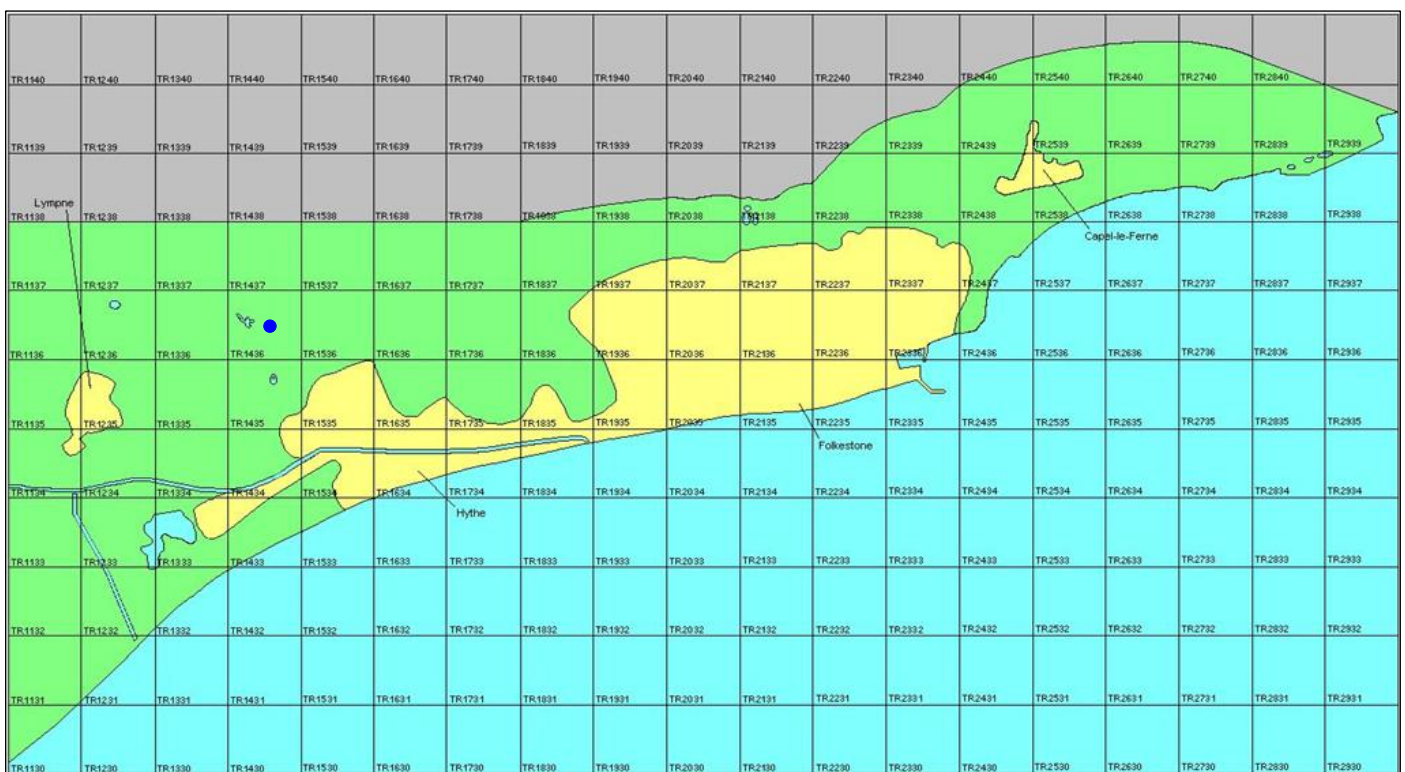


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Goshawk at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1994** Folkestone, one flew east, 8th May (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 23rd April (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Capel-le-Ferne, two, 7th September (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Cheriton, one flew west, 30th November (D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew in off the sea, 17th April (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Folkestone, female flew west, 3rd April (P. Howe)
- 2007** Folkestone, one flew west, 13th June (D. A. Gibson)
- 2011** Sandling (Saltwood), one flew east, 9th January (I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Saltwood, female, 3rd May (P. Howe)
- 2015** Saltwood, pair flew east, 16th March (P. Howe)
- 2017** Paraker Wood, one flew west, 14th March (K. Harding)

2017 Beachborough Lakes, female flew south-west, 26th October (S. Tomlinson)