

Rough-legged Buzzard

Buteo lagopus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

13 records

Breeds in high latitudes in subarctic and arctic Fennoscandia and Russia, largely in low-lying, treeless, tundra areas. In years favourable for prey, spills over into wooded tundra and even taiga, but, in contrast to Common Buzzard, at all seasons strongly prefers open terrain with good distant visibility and rough low-growing vegetation favourable to prey species.

Winters from the Baltic southwards to the Alps, Carpathians, northern Black Sea, and north Caucasus. A few cross the north sea to eastern Britain.



Rough-legged Buzzard at Nickoll's Quarry (Ian Roberts)

A rare passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent.

Henry Ulyett in his *Rambles of a Naturalist Round Folkestone* (1880) includes the Rough-legged Buzzard in the list of species recorded in the neighbourhood of Folkestone, within a radius of six miles from the town hall. However this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of occurrence here. Harrison (1953) in his *The Birds of Kent* mentions one shot at Beachborough, near Folkestone on the 22nd December 1926 but again this might not necessarily be within the present boundaries.

The first certain occurrence in the Folkestone and Hythe area was when one was seen by H. Schreiber at Sandling Park in 1957. Another was seen in the Saltwood area by C. V. Nuttman on the 7th January 1974 and according to a local farmer and one of his farmhands it had been present in the area since about late October, and they last reported in on the 1st February, whilst C. V. Nuttman saw it again over a nearby wood on the 6th February. The bird was described as being about a mile north of Saltwood.

There have been a further ten records since 1985, including three in the last three years, as shown in figure 1. 2011 was the best year to date with three records involving four birds, including the only the second one ever that has lingered – a popular juvenile which frequented the Nickoll's Quarry area for at least six weeks in November / December.

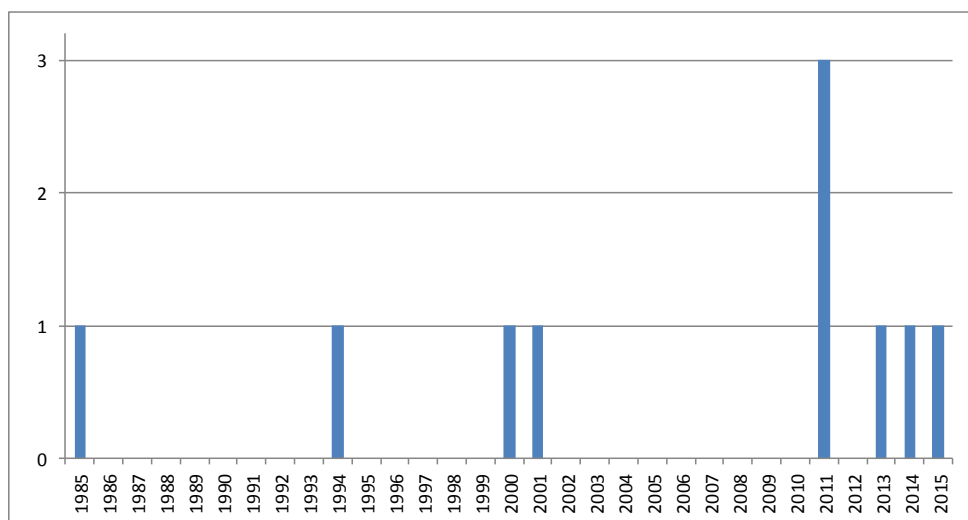


Figure 1: Rough-legged Buzzard records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Arrivals appear to be clustered into three distinct groups; autumn migrants between mid-October and mid-November, winter arrivals in late December and January, and spring migrants from mid-April to mid-May. The records by week are given in figure 2.

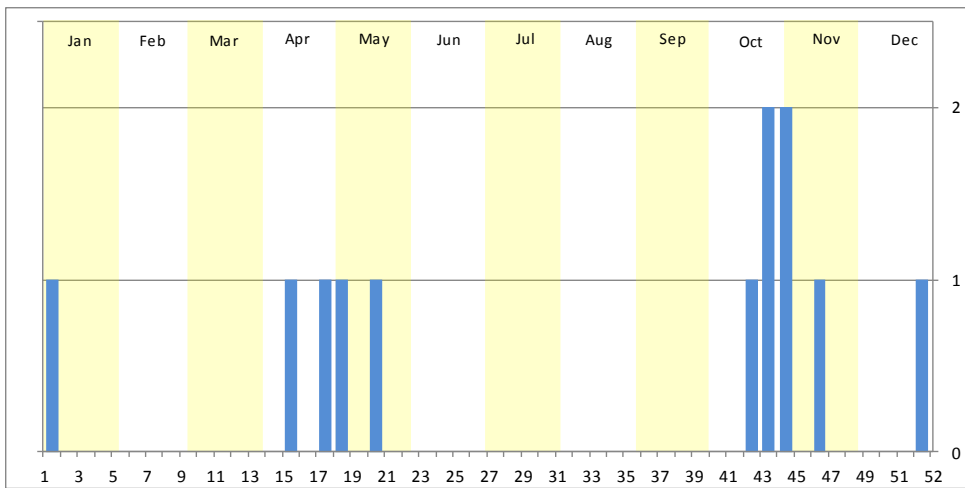


Figure 2: Rough-legged Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. This distribution relates to the single long-staying individual which wandered around the Nickoll’s Quarry / Botolph’s Bridge area late in 2011. Other records are fairly evenly split between Hythe / Saltwood (5), the Abbotscliffe / Capel-le-Ferne / Church Hougham area (4) and Cheriton / Folkestone (3).

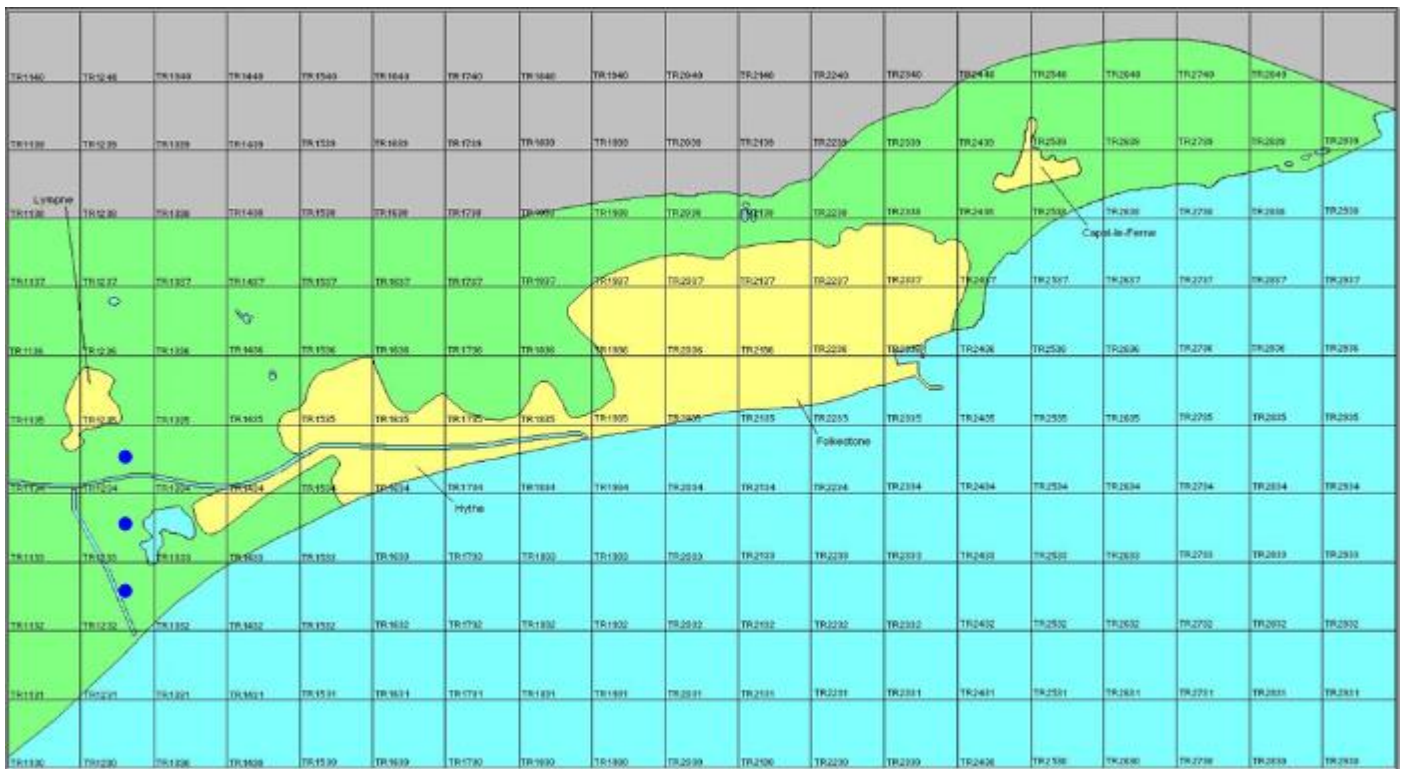


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Rough-legged Buzzard at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1957** Sandling Park, one, 15th October (H. Schreiber)
- 1974** Saltwood, one, 7th January, thought to have been present from late October and reported until 1st February, also seen nearby on 6th February (C. V. Nuttman)
- 1985** Folkestone, one, 29th January (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1985** Folkestone, one flew in off the sea, 29th December (D. Leach, per D. L. Davenport)
- 1994** Abbotscliffe, one landed in Church Wood then flew inland, 26th October (D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Cheriton, one flew north north-east, 4th May (D. A. Gibson)
- 2001** Abbotscliffe, one flew north, 14th November (I. A. Roberts), later seen over Church Hougham
- 2011** Hythe, two flew north-east, 25th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew west, 14th May, photographed (D. A. Gibson)

2011 Nickoll's Quarry, juvenile, 1st November to at least 19th December, possibly to 23rd December, photographed (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper *et al*)

2013 Church Hougham, one flew west, 29th October (per Rare Bird Alert)

2014 Saltwood, one flew north, 13th April (P. Howe)

2015 Sandling, one, 24th October (B. Harper)



Rough-legged Buzzard at Nickoll's Quarry (Brian Harper)



Rough-legged Buzzard at Nickoll's Quarry (Ian Roberts)

