

Spotted Crake

Porzana porzana

Category A

Very rare vagrant,
possibly regular in the past

1 recent record

Has a well-scattered breeding distribution across Europe, with a small but sporadic population in Britain. A national survey being undertaken in 2012 will provide an up to date and complete population estimate. A few individuals overwinter in temperate Europe, mostly in North Sea countries, rather more winter in some parts of southern Europe, and many are migrants to trans-Saharan Africa.

A rare spring and autumn migrant to Kent, but has bred. There have been 55 county records since 1977. It was formerly a more regular summer visitor to the county, being more numerous in the mid-nineteenth century than in the twentieth.

Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) found it “very difficult to say anything definite as to the status” of the Spotted Crake. He explains that “they are so skulking in habits and their haunts are so obscure that these birds are very seldom seen”. Nonetheless they had “been seen or shot at different times in all the marshes around the Kent coast, and most of the local bird-stuffers in those districts have had specimens through their hands at different times, and all the county museums contain examples from the same localities”. He goes on to state that in the early 1840s “they appear to have been quite common in Romney Marsh” and “eastward of this one or two have been obtained near Hythe and Folkestone, and Mr. Gray, the Dover bird-stuffer, has had several from that neighbourhood”. He also mentions that a specimen in the Hythe museum was obtained locally.

The species was included in Knight and Tolputt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” published in the Folkestone Natural History Society’s annual report for 1871. This list covered an area of six mile radius of Folkestone town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe recording area, the reference is likely to refer to the lower-lying coastal margin, and so would most probably have been within the modern boundary.

There has only been one modern area record, which concerns an individual that frequented the small pond in Folkestone Warren for three weeks in late autumn 1982.

The only modern area record is as follows:

1982 Folkestone Warren, one, 14th November to 6th December (R. G. W. Heselden)