

Common Crane

Grus grus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

11 records

Breeds mainly in Fenno-Scandia and in Europe from eastern Germany eastwards into Russia. Winters chiefly in southern Europe and north Africa, though with a sizeable population in north-east France. The 2010 Rare Breeding Bird Report gave a total of 13-15 pairs, in line with the five year mean of 14 pairs, all in East Anglia and Yorkshire. The Great Crane Project began in 2010, and is based in Somerset, where it aims to secure the long-term future of Common Cranes in Britain by releasing about 20 birds in each of the years to 2015.

A rare passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent, occasionally occurring in larger numbers on autumn passage.



Common Crane at the Willop Outfall (Brian Harper)

H. M. Rowland in *Some aspects of the natural history of the Folkestone District* (1968) makes a reference to a record of Crane locally, though this might refer to an immature that wintered “near Dymchurch” from late October 1963 to early April 1964 (*Birds of Kent*).

On the 16th October 1977 a flock of 26 seen over Ashford were subsequently “thought to have been seen leaving the coast at Folkestone” (per D. W. Taylor), but the first certain record at Folkestone and Hythe was in 1982, with ten further records from 1985 (nine of which have occurred since 2000) as shown in figure 1. Whilst most records refer to one or two birds, the two October records involved quite large flocks, which mirrors the status in the county.

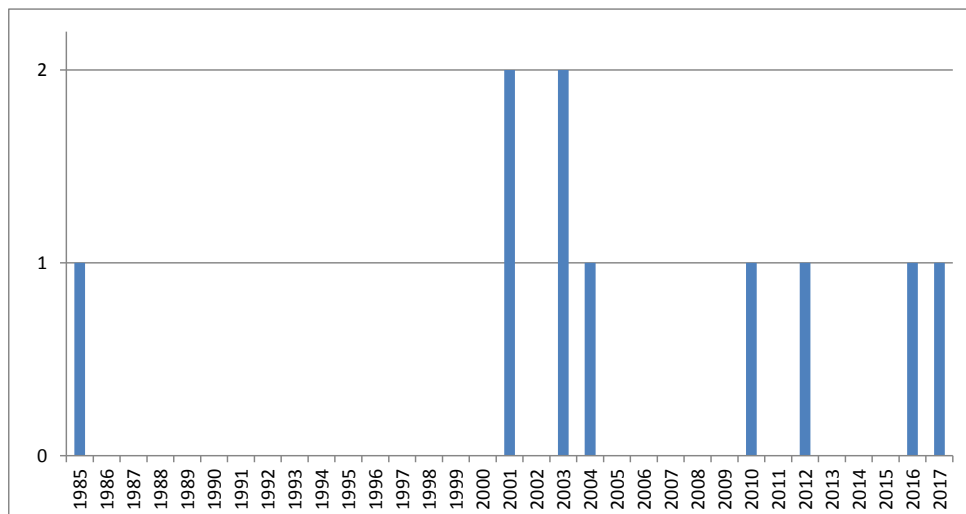


Figure 1: Common Crane records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Records have been fairly well spread throughout the year, with the exception of the summer / early autumn months, as demonstrated by figure 2. There has been a single record in January, four between mid-March and mid-April, two in late May, two in late October and two in late November / early December.

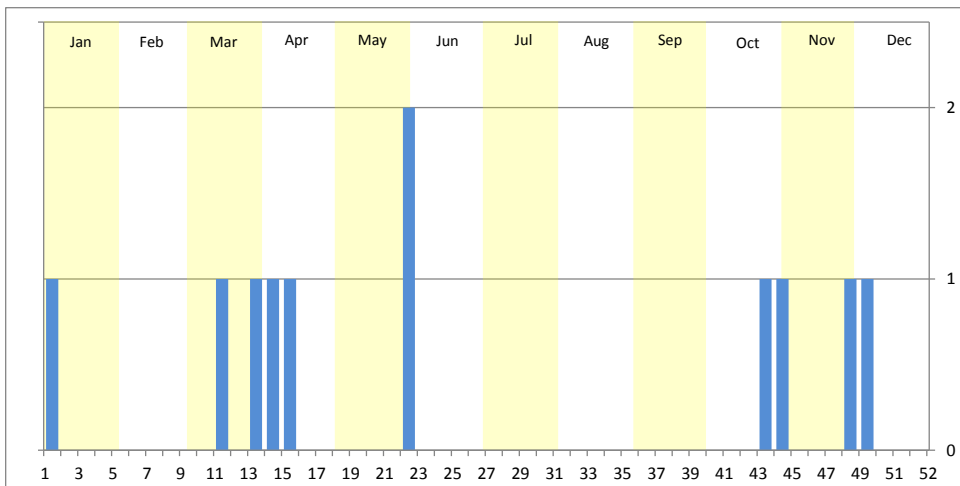


Figure 2: Common Crane records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. Other records are mostly from the lower lying areas from Hythe westwards: Hythe (3), Botolph's Bridge, Hythe Ranges and Palmarsh, but with others seen over Cheriton (3) and Saltwood.

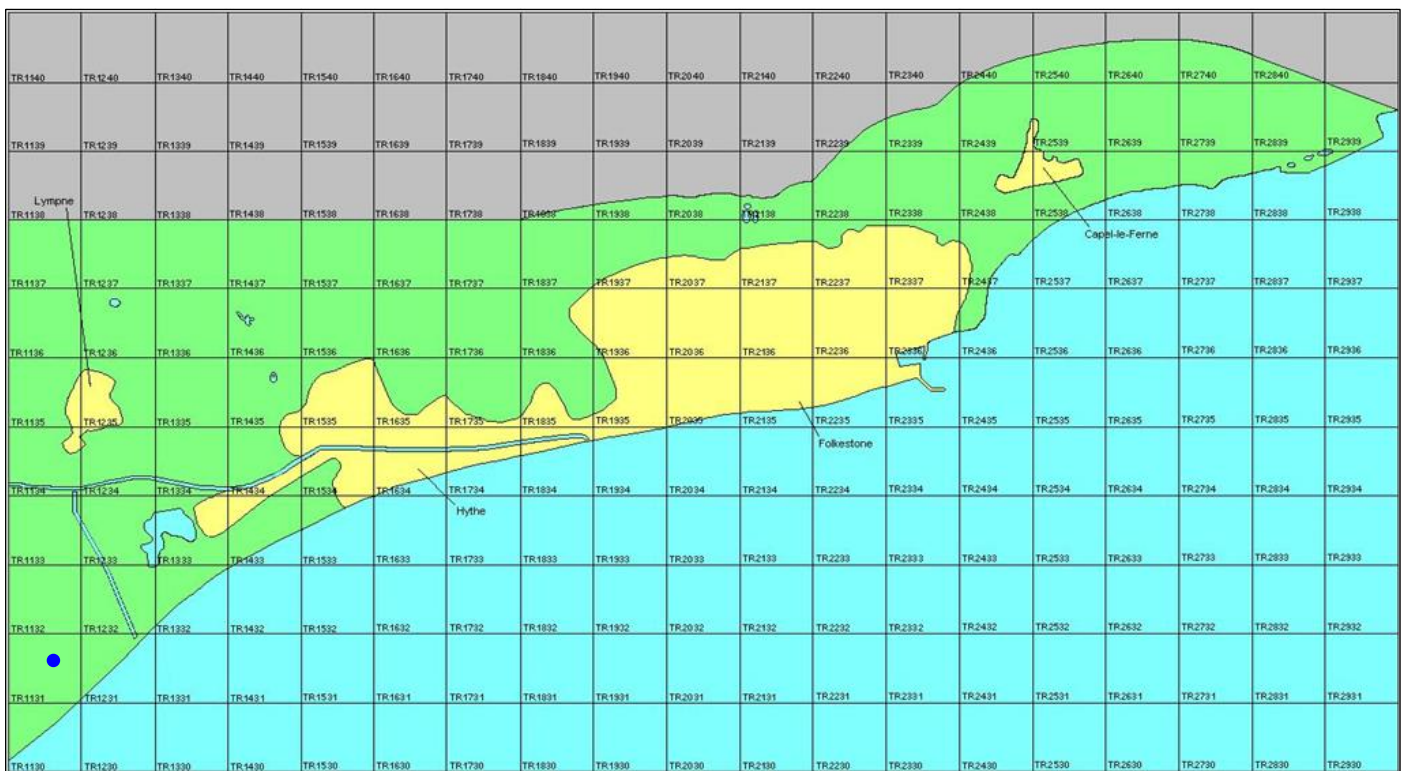


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Common Crane at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1982** Cheriton, 18 flew over, 31st October (S. Boreham), part of an influx into Kent in late October and early November
- 1985** Cheriton, 71 flew south, 25th October (O. French, P. French), later seen heading out to sea off Dungeness
- 2001** Hythe, one in fields beside Blackhouse Hill, 27th March (R. K. Norman, P. Haines)
- 2001** Hythe Redoubt, one flew north-east, 26th November (R. K. Norman), earlier seen over St. Mary's Bay
- 2003** Botolph's Bridge, three, 5th January, photographed (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson *et al*)
- 2003** Palmarsh, two flew in off the sea, 28th May (reported)
- 2004** Hythe, one flew north, 13th April (reported)
- 2010** Willop Outfall, one, 5th December, photographed (B. Harper, M. Harper)
- 2012** Saltwood, two heard calling, 15th March (P. Howe), earlier flew south-east from Sandwich Bay
- 2016** Hythe, one, 7th April (per Rare Bird Alert)

2017 Cheriton, at least on heard, 28th May (R. Thorogood)



Common Crane at Botolph's Bridge (Dale Gibson)