

Stone Curlew

Burhinus oedicephalus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

2 records

Breeds across middle and lower middle latitude Europe in Mediterranean, steppe, mild temperate and arid zones of mainly continental climate. Has undergone a widespread and often severe contraction of its range, due mainly to loss of suitable breeding habitat through intensification of arable farming and conversion of dry grassland to cultivation. In Britain now restricted mainly to East Anglia and Salisbury Plain. The 2010 Rare Breeding Bird Report gave a total of 375 confirmed breeding pairs, which was slightly above the five year mean of 355 pairs. Mainly migratory in northern and eastern Europe, but often varying from partially migratory to resident under milder climatic regimes elsewhere. Substantial numbers of European birds cross the Mediterranean to winter in Africa.

Latham in his *A General Synopsis of Birds* (1785) write of the Stone Curlew as 'not uncommon' in some parts of Kent, including the Downs. By Ticehurst's time (in the mid-nineteenth century), the numbers were obviously much lower and breeding restricted to Dungeness, where a small population persisted until around 1970. It is now a rare passage migrant in Kent, with 54 records between 1970 and 2010, one-third of which were at Dungeness.

Henry Ulyett in his *Rambles of a Naturalist Round Folkestone* (1880) included the species in a list of those recorded in the neighbourhood of Folkestone, within a radius of six miles from the town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of occurrence here, it does suggest that the species was present locally, presumably on the Downs, in the days when it was more regular in the county.

In 1952 Roger Norman was informed by a Warrant Officer that one was seen on the Hythe Ranges in April of that year.

There has only been one modern area record, which concerns an individual that was seen at Copt Point in early September and reappeared in early October. On one occasion it was seen roosting with gulls on the beach!

The only modern area record is as follows:

1990 Copt Point, one, 6th September, presumed same on 2nd to 3rd October (D. A. Gibson)