

Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

Category A

Very rare vagrant

11 recs since 1950

Breeds in northern and eastern Europe. Fenno-Scandian populations are partially migratory, more so in the north of the range, typically moving south-west or south along the Baltic coast. The Hooded Crow has been considered a full species by the British Ornithologist's Union Records Committee since 2002 (*Ibis* 144: 707-710, Knox et al).

The species was locally numerous in the past. Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) regarded the species as a common winter visitor and autumn passage migrant, noting that "on the fields of the chalk downs they are abundant, particularly in the vicinity of Folkestone and Dover".



Hooded Crow at Abbotscliffe (Brendan Ryan)

He went on to describe how "these winter visitors to Kent all arrive at the eastern end of the county from the east and south-east in company with the Rooks, Carrion Crows, Larks and Starlings, that come in large numbers between mid-September and mid-November. The main arrival takes place towards the end of October... The numbers that arrive are sometimes immense, as in 1902 and 1903, when in Thanet and on the Folkestone Downs, as I am informed by Messrs. Byron and Freke, the numbers were greater that they had ever seen before. Of course the majority do not stay in Kent, but pass through to winter-quarters elsewhere. The return movement in the reverse direction begins in the second week of February, and is continued until the middle of April. The main part of this emigration seems to take place to the north of Kent, but occasionally birds have been recorded from the Varne and Goodwin Light-ships crossing the Channel for France in a south-easterly direction."

Harrison in his *The Birds of Kent* (1953) still considered it to be common and "exceedingly numerous in severe winters", however there was a marked decrease in the latter half of the twentieth century and it is now a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to the county. About 16 birds were seen in Kent between the split in 2002 and 2010, with analysis complicated by two returning, over-wintering individuals. Those presumed to have been migrants occurred between mid-March and early April and in late October.

The first documented occurrence in the Folkestone and Hythe area after 1950 was in 1958, when one was noted by Roger Norman at Hythe Ranges from the 14th to 16th April. In the 1960s one flew in off the sea at Folkestone on the 26th October 1966 and one was recorded at Folkestone on the 10th January 1968. There were two further records in the 1970s but then no further records until 1993, but five since, as shown in figure 1.

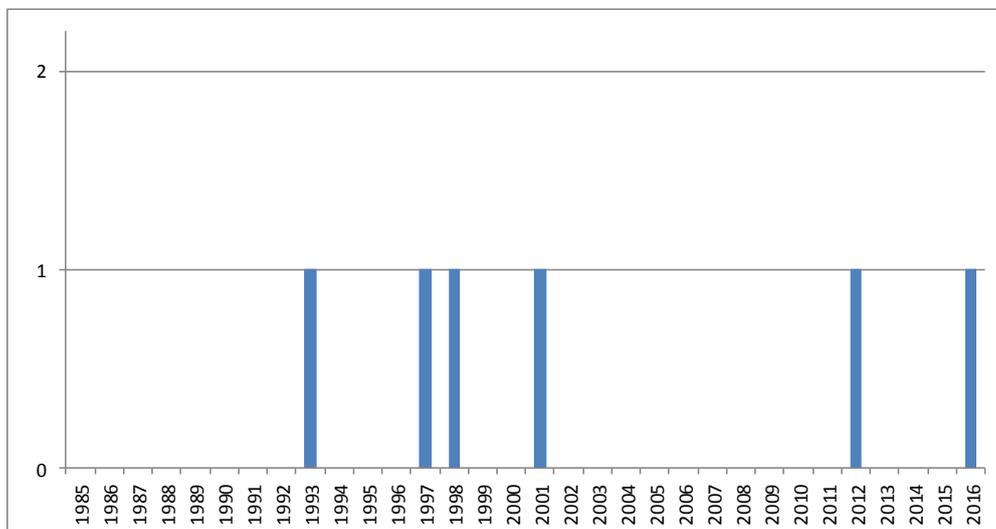


Figure 1: Hooded Crow records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

There have been four spring records, between the 5th April (week 14) and 12th May (week 19), and five in autumn, between the 22nd October (week 43) and 17th November (week 46). The two winter records were both in week 2 (on the 10th January 1968 and 12th January 1997), the latter of which occurred during a period of severe weather. The records by week are given in figure 2.

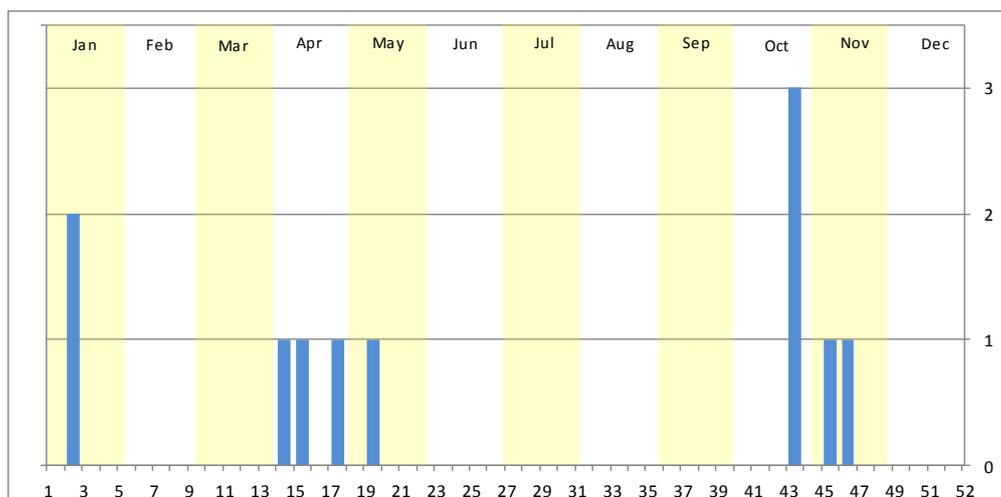


Figure 2: Hooded Crow records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Five of the six most recent records are from Abbotscliffe, with the other from Nickoll's Quarry. The older records are from Folkestone (2), Hythe Ranges, Sandling Park and West Hythe.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1958** Hythe Ranges, one, 14th to 16th April (R. K. Norman)
- 1966** Folkestone, one flew in off the sea, 26th October (T. Grant)
- 1968** Folkestone, one, 10th January (T. Grant)
- 1971** West Hythe, one, 11th November (P. Martin)
- 1974** Sandling Park, one, 26th October (D. E. Chittenden)
- 1993** Abbotscliffe, one, 22nd October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Nickoll's Quarry, one on frozen pit, 12th January (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one flew in off the sea, 17th November (D. A. Gibson)
- 2001** Abbotscliffe, one flew in off the sea and landed in Abbot's Gully field 5th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Abbotscliffe, one, 12th May, photographed (B. Ryan, J. Chantler, P. Chantler)
- 2016** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 23rd April (I. A. Roberts)



Hooded Crow at Abbotscliffe (Brendan Ryan)