

Common Redpoll

Carduelis flammea Category A

Very rare vagrant 1 record

Breeds in Fenno-Scandia and northern Russia. The northernmost populations migrate south, occasionally irrupting much further beyond than their typical winter range. It is considered to be a scarce winter visitor and passage migrant in Kent but difficulties with the identification of visual migrants makes the status in the county difficult to determine.

For many years Lesser (*C. f. cabaret*) and Common Redpoll (*C. f. flammea*) were regarded as sub-species but, following study of the differences of morphology, vocalisations and behaviour, and sympatric breeding of the two forms in Norway by Knox (British Birds 94: 260-267), their separation into full species was recommended. The 'split' was formally accepted in the 27th report of the BOURC in October 2000 (Ibis 143: 171–175).

An occurrence of this species locally has recently come to light through research for 'The Birds of Folkestone and Hythe' project. Harrison in his *The Birds of Kent* (1953) cites two in Maidstone Museum which were from Hythe, obtained in February 1911.

Ticehurst in his earlier *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) refers to two in the Folkestone Museum "which were obtained locally" but no further details are known, and these might not have been collected within the recording area.

These earlier authors also mention a couple of large immigrations into the south of Kent in 1895-96 and 1910. The first was recorded by Ticehurst, who states that "in December 1895, on the hills above Dover, it is recounted by Mr Seth-Smith that the bird-catchers netted as many as two hundred a day when they first arrived; thereafter five or six dozen daily during the next two weeks – a phenomenal influx".

A second similar influx was mentioned by Harrison, as recounted in *The Migration Report of the British Ornithologist Club* for 1910: "the immigration began on the night of October 3rd-4th, and reached its height between October 26th to 30th. Vast numbers were present on the south coast of Kent during the month of November, and many were taken in the nets of the bird-catchers".

There is no specific reference to the Folkestone and Hythe area in relation to these arrivals but it is known that the "Dover" bird-catchers were active to the west of that town, at least as far as Folkestone Warren, and given the scale of the influxes there is a good chance that some were obtained within the recording area.

Redpolls are frequently recorded locally on passage but the vast majority relate to birds flying over and not being able to be identified to species. These are generally logged as Lesser Redpolls which is thought to be far the commoner species in the county.

There was another more recent influx of Common Redpolls into Kent in 2011, with Dungeness in particular recording large numbers between mid-October and mid-November. During this period over 200 'redpolls' were logged at Folkestone and Hythe but all were fly-overs. At Dungeness however a proportion were trapped and 60% proved to be Common Redpolls. The difficulties of identification are highlighted by the fact that, even in the hand, some 15% could not be assigned to species.

The only confirmed area record is as follows:

1911 Hythe, two obtained, February (per N. Ticehurst)