

Canada Goose

Branta Canadensis

Category C1

One pair usually breeds annually but formerly more numerous (between the late 1990s and 2004). Otherwise can be a visitor at any time of year.

A North American species that was introduced to Britain several centuries ago, the Canada Goose is a familiar sight on and around the major river systems of Kent. It also uses gravel pits and park lakes and will take readily to newly-created waters.



Canada Goose at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Ticehurst (1909) placed this species within square brackets as the recorded specimens at that time were properly regarded as escapes from captivity, for the bird was then popular on ornamental waters. The occurrences included one in the Hammond collection from Beachborough.

Taylor *et al* (1981) described how it appeared to have started to become established in the county in the 1940s and spread slowly, augmented by introductions at Sevenoaks in 1956 and Dungeness in 1964. The first local record appears to be from the 1967-73 breeding atlas fieldwork (a pair in TR13 T), followed by a pair breeding at Nickolls Quarry in 1975. It was recorded as being "infrequent" at the latter site during the 1980s before a pair bred again in 1990. There were regular records thereafter and a pair bred in each year from 1992 to 1995, before the population increased to at least 12 pairs by 2000 and 15 pairs in 2001 to 2003. Increased backfilling of the quarry, closure of the works and subsequent extension of angling into hitherto restricted areas resulted in a loss of nesting sites and only two pairs bred in 2005 and 2006. A single pair has bred in most years since and continues to do so in 2020.

Breeding distribution

Figure 1 shows the breeding distribution by tetrad based on the results of the 2007-13 BTO/KOS atlas fieldwork.



Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Canada Goose at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in one tetrad, with probable breeding in three more and possible breeding in one other. The table below shows how this compares to previous atlases (Taylor *et al* 1981, Henderson & Hodge 1998). The confirmed and probable breeding categories have been combined to account for differing definitions of these in the first atlas.

Breeding atlases	1967 - 1973		1988 – 1994		2007 - 2013	
Possible	0	(0%)	1	(3%)	1	(3%)
Probable/Confirmed	1	(3%)	1	(3%)	4	(13%)
Total	1	(3%)	2	(6%)	5	(16%)

As mentioned above, in the 1967-73 atlas a pair was seen in TR13 T and in the most recent survey a pair was also present there (at the lake by Oak Banks in April 2011), though there are no records from the tetrad in the intervening years or since. In the 1988-94 atlas breeding was confirmed at Nickolls Quarry (as it was in the most recent) and a bird was also present (possible breeding) in TR13 E. The most recent survey also found single pairs present (though not confirmed breeding) in TR13 A (at the Willop Basin) and in TR13 J (where a pair more recently bred, raising six young at Horton Park Lakes, in 2020). There have been no other suspected breeding occurrences.

The first double-figure count at Nickolls Quarry related to 24 in August 1991 before these became a regular occurrence, with a peak of 22 in August 1992, 31 in March 1994 and 53 in August of the same year and 51 in October 1995. The post-breeding flock continued to grow as the population increased and appeared to also be augmented by temporary visitors, with counts of 111 in August 1996 (increasing to 123 in September), 185 in September 1998, 125 in June 1999 (increasing rapidly during August to the current record count of 243 on the 27th), 165 in August 2000, 169 in July 2001, 147 in July 2002 and 200 in September 2003. The last three figure count was 110 on the 28th September 2003 and the peak in 2004 was just 42 in August, with a maximum of 30 in August 2005, however 60 were reported flying east over the site on the 19th February 2006. In recent years double-figure counts have become unusual although 51 were present on the 30th September 2018.

Non-breeding distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Canada Goose by tetrad.

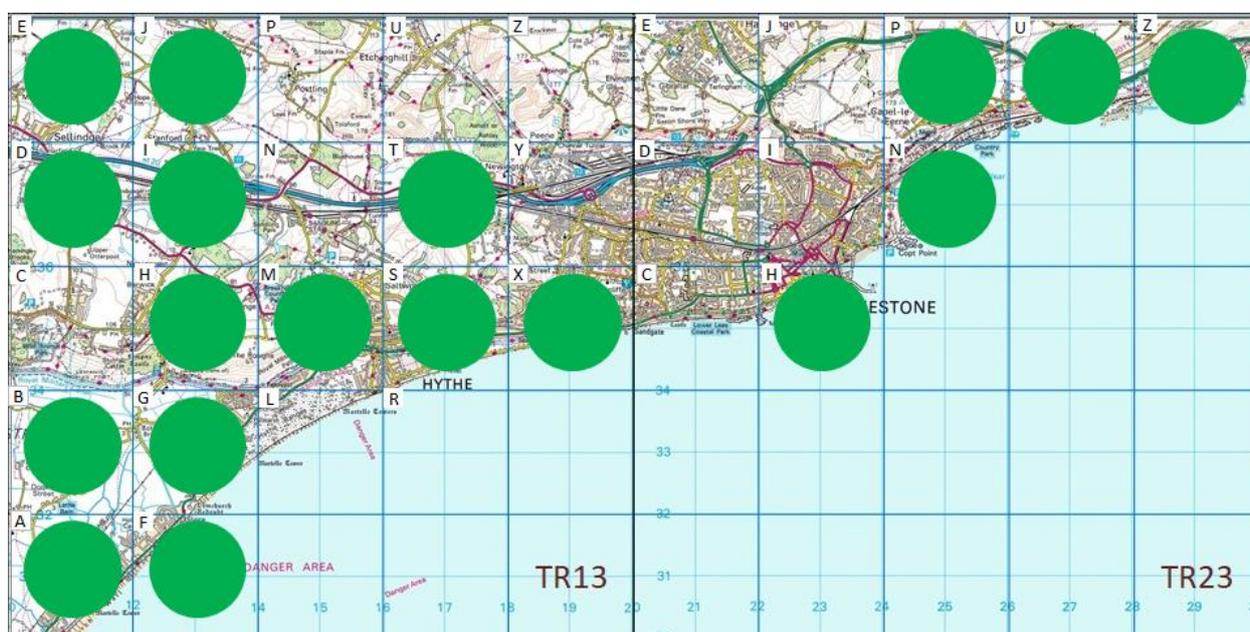


Figure 2: Distribution of all Canada Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Canada Geese have been recorded in 18 tetrads (58% of all tetrads), with a noticeable gap from the Cheriton/Folkestone area and inland of here.

Wandering birds from the breeding population at Nickolls Quarry were probably responsible for most of the larger counts at other sites in the Hythe area between 1992 and 2005, including 32 flying east over Hythe on the 17th August 1992, 60 on the sea off the Hythe Redoubt on the 8th November 1998, 54 that flew east then back west over Hythe on the 23rd September 2000 and c.60 that flew north over Pennypot on the 17th August 2002. Flocks of 25 heading north over Botolph's Bridge (and later seen at Pedlinge) on the 3rd January 2011, 51 at Donkey Street on the 5th September 2015 and 42 at the Willop Basin on the 2nd January 2018 however must have emanated from further afield.



Canada Geese at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Canada Geese at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

Smaller numbers have been noted at coastal watch points in most years, with larger counts having included 12 off Copt Point on the 24th January 1999, 12 on the sea off Capel-le-Ferne on the 9th June 2007, 16 on the sea off Copt Point on the 9th June 2012 and 32 flying west past Seabrook on the 5th June 2020.



Canada Geese at Donkey Street (Brian Harper)



Canada Geese at Copt Point (Ian Roberts)

References

Henderson, A. & Hodge, T. 1998. The Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 1988-94. *Kent Bird Report* 1996: 134-272.

Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society

Ticehurst, N. F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).