

Mandarin Duck

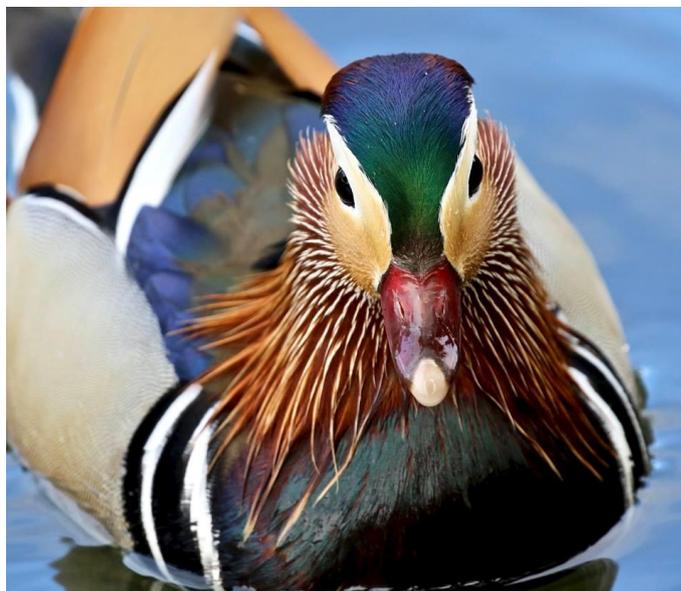
Aix galericulata

Category C1

Breeding resident.

Naturally found in south-east Russia, north-east China and Japan, it became established in Britain during the twentieth century through escapes and deliberate releases, mainly in south-east England (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

Kent's first Mandarin Ducks were a free-flying flock kept at Edenbridge between 1910 and 1935, when the first pair was known to have bred near Sevenoaks. It was not recorded locally in either of the first two atlases, when it was restricted to the Len Valley (where they were thought to have originated from the Leeds Castle collection) and the western Weald.



Mandarin Duck at Hythe (Phil Heading)

It has expanded its range considerably since, now occurring throughout the west of the county south of the Downs and along the clay soils between Ashford and Folkestone, with a few scattered pairs in the Stour valley (Clements *et al*, 2015, Taylor *et al*, 1981).

Breeding distribution

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

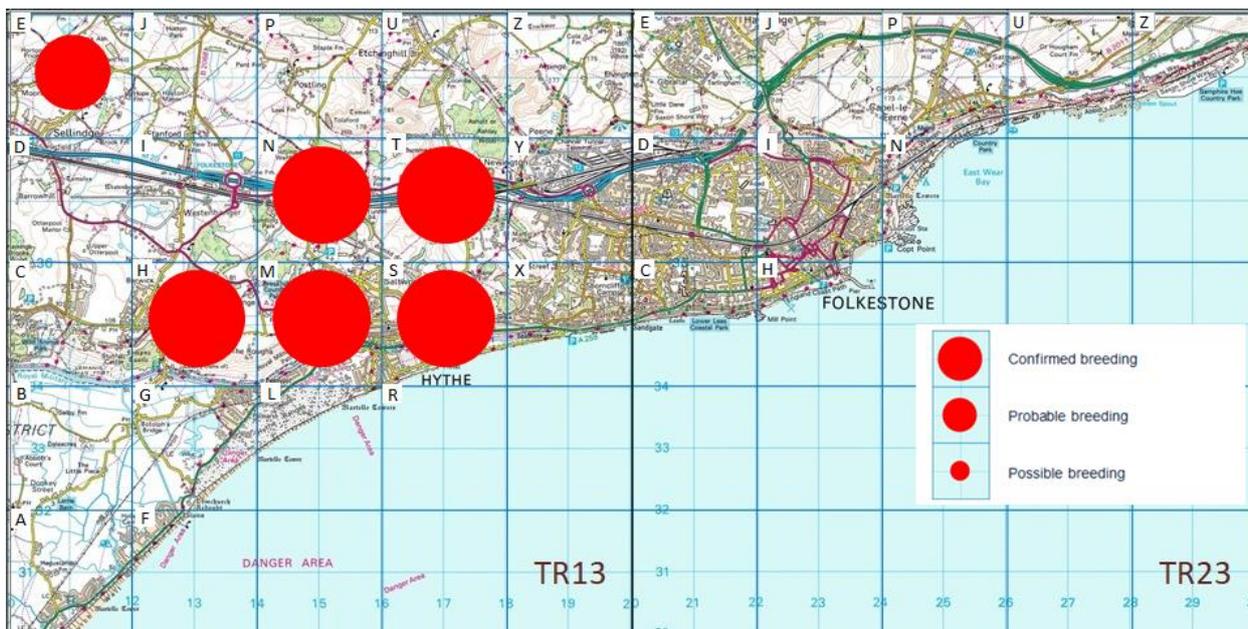


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Mandarin Duck at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads, with probable breeding in one more. 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%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Probable/Confirmed	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	6	(19%)
Total	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	6	(19%)

The first local feral record involved a drake seen at Nickolls Quarry by Roger Norman on the 9th October 1992, with the same observer noting a pair there on the 2nd May 1995 and a drake from the 6th to the 7th June 1995. It was first recorded from the Sandling Park area by Don Taylor on the 7th May 1996, when three drakes were seen, with one still present on the 11th May.

During a cold spell in early 1997 a female was present in Folkestone Harbour between the 3rd and 9th January, whilst another female lingered on the canal in Hythe, near the Stade Street bridge, from the 5th January to the 16th February, and later the same year a pair were present at Brockhill Country Park on the 16th March. One was again present at Sandling Park in May 1998 and on the 28th November 1998 there were four (three drakes) at Nickolls Quarry.

Up to 12 were present at Sandling Park in December 1999, since when it has become established as a breeding resident, with further peak counts of 16 there in January 2003, 18 in January 2004, 20 in February 2004 and 23 in January 2005. It also spread as a breeding species to Brockhill Country Park and Folks' Wood and during the early 2000s, and small numbers continued to be noted on occasion at Nickolls Quarry and nearby Botolph's Bridge and West Hythe.

During the latest atlas fieldwork (2007-12) it was also noted in suitable breeding habitat at Saltwood Castle and Little Dibgate Wood in spring 2009, whilst a pair used at nest box at Saltwood Cricket Club in May 2011 (where Martin Harper found 8 eggs) and recently fledged young were seen at Oak Banks in June 2011. A pair were also noted in spring in the Horton Priory area during this period and there were winter records from Kiln Wood.

A more recent count of 27 at Folks' Wood on the 3rd January 2013 is of note as this is the highest recorded to date.

Non-breeding distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Mandarin Duck by tetrad.

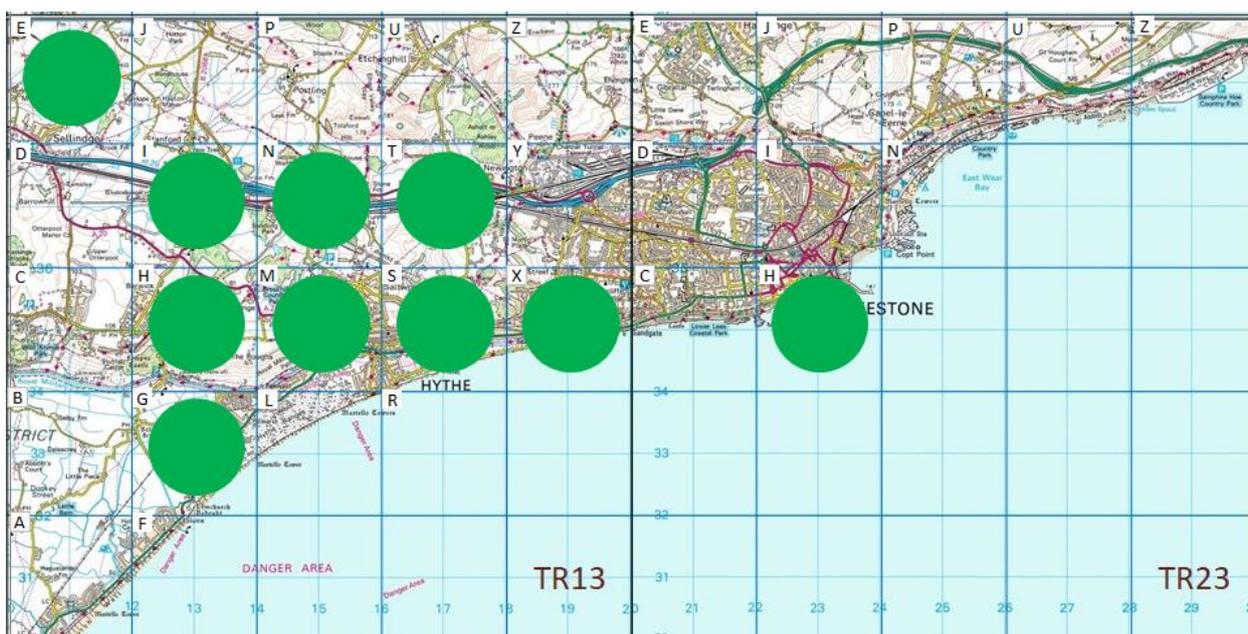


Figure 2: Distribution of all Mandarin Duck records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The Mandarin Duck has been recorded from 10 tetrads (32%) being largely sedentary but with some dispersal or occasional wandering from the breeding range. These records include singles on the canal at Seabrook in April 2009 and February 2012 and the canal in Hythe town in October 2014, March 2017 and a long-staying drake from the 12th February to 28th May 2019 which had appeared to adopt brood of Mallard chicks. A pair were also present in Folkestone Harbour 28th March 2014 and up to two were seen at Beachborough Lakes on 14th to 15th November 2018.

Little is known of the origin of the Sandling Park population but Ian Roberts recalls seeing 2 drakes and 4 females that were kept in a private garden on the Sandling Road in Saltwood in the late 1980s and it is possibly that these or their progeny escaped into the nearby woods.



Mandarin Ducks at Brockhill Country Park (Brian Harper)

References

Clements, R., Orchard, M., McCanch, N. & Wood, S. 2015. *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13*. Kent Ornithological Society

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

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M., 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

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

Acknowledgements

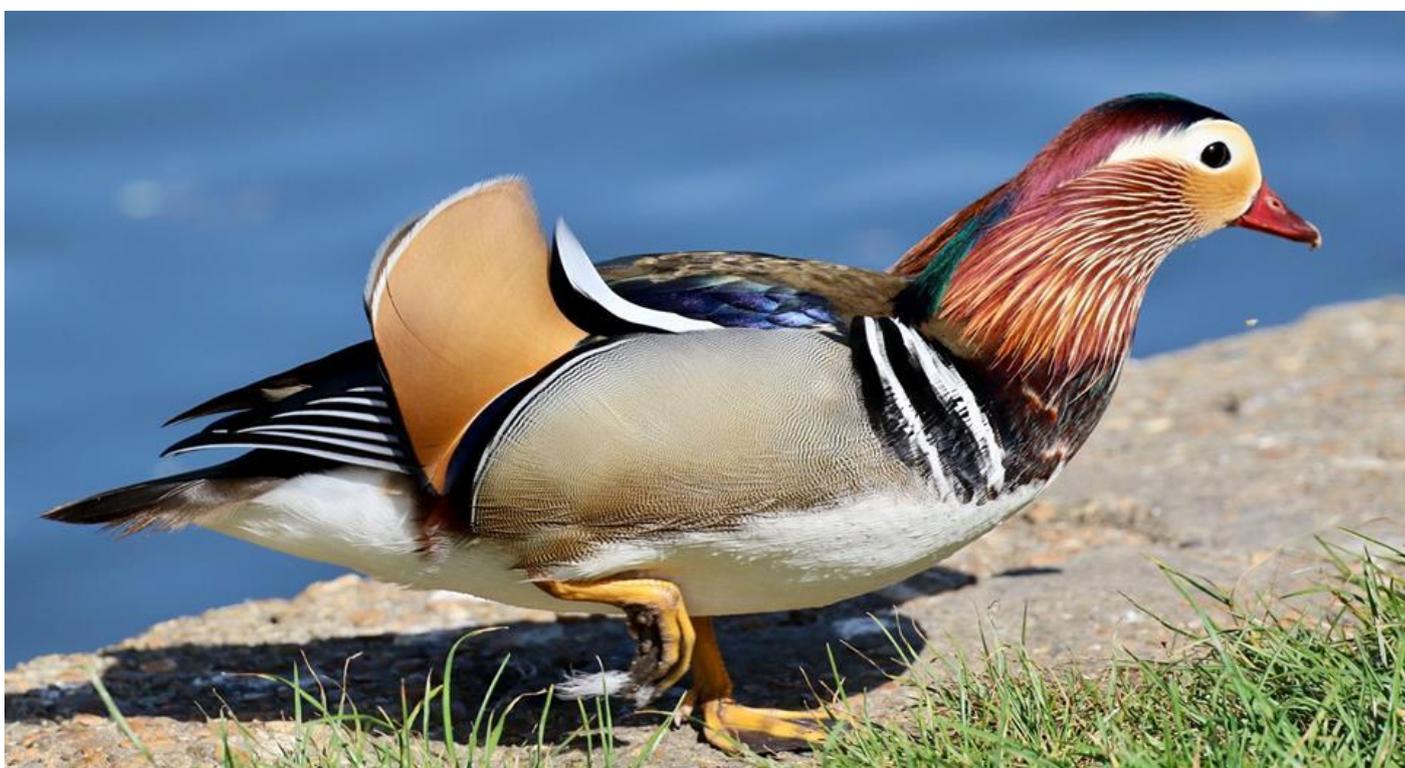
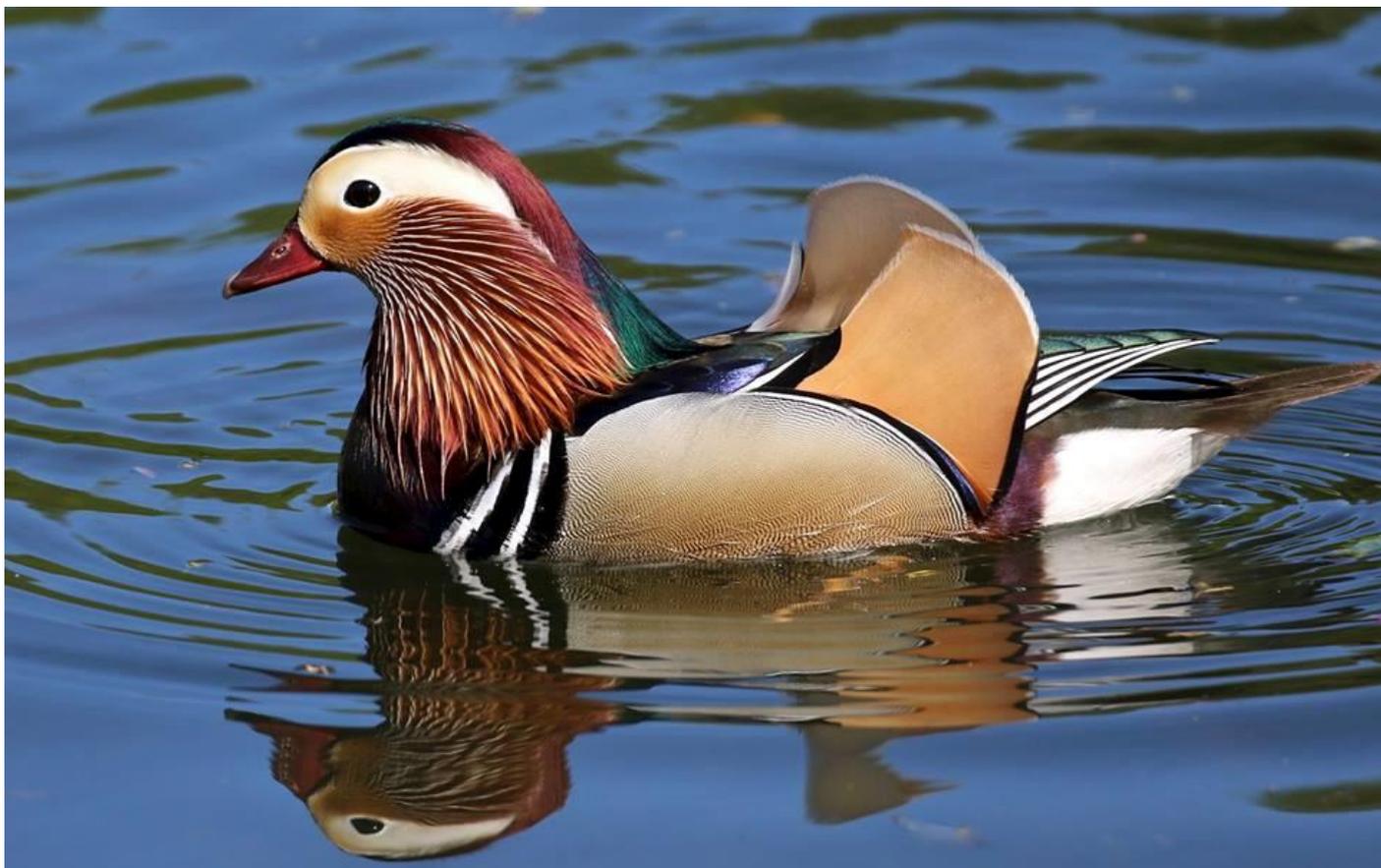
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Mandarin Duck with Mallards at Hythe (Phil Heading)



Mandarin Duck at Hythe (Glenn Tutton)



Mandarin Duck at Hythe (Phil Heading)