

# Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

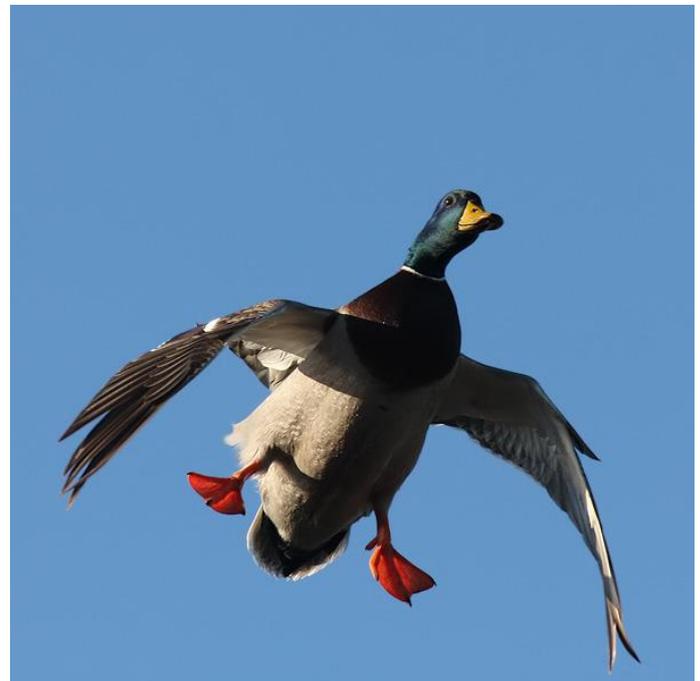
Category A

Breeding resident and winter visitor

Widespread across Europe, Asia and North America. In south and west Europe mainly resident; even in occasional severe winter, movement only to nearest open water, usually coasts, and hardly any emigration.

Many Icelandic birds winter in Britain, and those from northern and eastern Europe move south-west to winter in Britain and the Low Countries, with slight onwards passage as far as northern Spain (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

Harrison (1953) considered it to an abundant species in Kent both as a resident and as an immigrant and little has changed today, with Clements *et al* (2015) providing an estimate of around 4,000 breeding pairs in the county.



Mallard at the Willo Basin (Brian Harper)

The species was included in Knight and Tolputt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871). This list covered an area of six mile radius from Folkestone town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland that the current Folkestone and Hythe area, it seems very likely that Mallards would have been present locally.

When Roger Norman began watching from the Hythe Redoubt in the 1950s he occasionally saw “groups of up to 30 in loose association with Scoters” offshore “in the winter months”, with larger counts of 100 there on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1951 and 130 on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 1952. Later in the same decade, H. G. Forsaith recorded 100 on the Hythe Canal on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1959, whilst on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1960 H. Schreiber noted 400 at Sandling Park (which is still the largest count to date) and a further count of 300 there in the first week of September 1966.

## Breeding distribution

It is currently a common and widespread breeding species, as demonstrated by figure 1 which shows the breeding distribution by tetrad based on the results of the 2007-13 BTO/KOS atlas fieldwork.

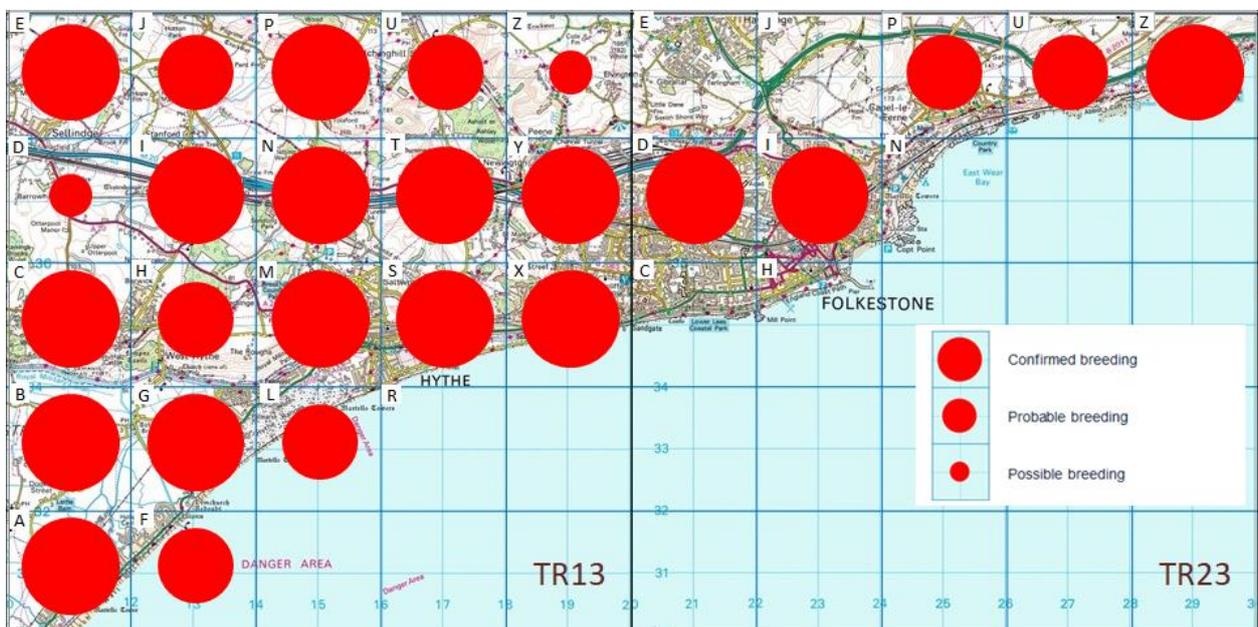


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Mallard at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in 16 tetrads, with probable breeding in seven more and possible breeding in two others. The table below shows how this compares to previous atlases (Taylor *et al* 1981, Henderson & Hodge 1998). The confirmed and breeding categories have been combined to account for differing definitions of these in the first atlas. Breeding is usually easily proven for this species which is reflected in the relatively high percentage of confirmed breeding records.

Breeding atlases	1967 - 1973		1988 - 1994		2007 – 2013	
Possible	0	(0%)	4	(13%)	2	(6%)
Probable/Confirmed	11	(35%)	11	(35%)	23	(74%)
Total	11	(35%)	15	(48%)	25	(81%)

The apparent spread across the three atlas periods is reflected to some extent in the county position, and Clements *et al* suggested that it may have increased in numbers and spread into more marginal habitat, but improved observer coverage may also possibly be a factor. Locally, as is the case in Kent generally, it is only really absent from the drier areas of the North Downs.

### Non-breeding distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Mallard by tetrad, with records in 30 tetrads (97%). To date the only tetrad it has not been recorded from is TR23 J.



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

No attempt has yet been made to quantify the breeding population locally but Clements *et al* suggested a likely density of 2-4 pairs for a typical tetrad, from which a total of 60 to 120 breeding pairs could be derived. Post-breeding flocks may accumulate between August and October and have exceeded 100 on five occasions:

- 106 at Nickolls Quarry on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1992
- 109 at Nickolls Quarry on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1995
- 135 at the Willop Basin on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2012, increasing to 148 on the 28<sup>th</sup> September
- 285 at the Willop Basin on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2014
- 123 at Botolph's Bridge on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Nickolls Quarry attracted large numbers of wintering birds until 2001 when increased disturbance due to the formation of a new leisure club at the site and commencement of habitat degradation associated with development works saw these reduce. Figure 3 shows the winter maxima between the 1990/91 and 2000/01.

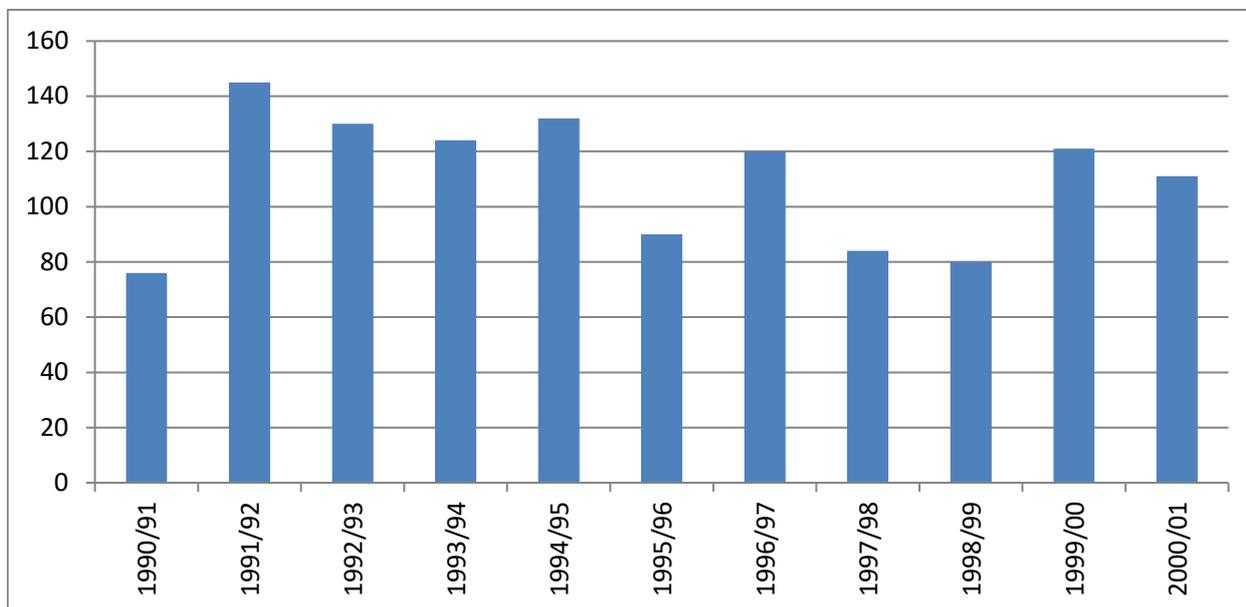


Figure 3: Winter maxima of Mallard at Nickolls Quarry between 1990/91 and 2000/01

Counts of 100 were exceeded in seven of these seasons but there have not been any since and the only three figure elsewhere relate to 106 on the canal in Hythe on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011, 122 at Botolph’s Bridge on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2016, 100 at Donkey Street on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018, 100 at Botolph’s Bridge on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2018 and 100 there on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

The wintering population is now more widely more dispersed across marsh, with smaller numbers at other sites, and collation of counts over a couple of recent winter periods suggests a current wintering population in excess of 300 birds (however not all sites were covered in both samples and there may also be small numbers at sites that were not counted at all, so the total could be closer to 400):

Tetrad	Site	2015/16	2017/18
TR13 A/B	Willop Basin/Donkey Street area	60	92
TR13 C	Port Lymgne	38	-
TR13 G	Botolph’s Bridge (New Cut)	122	81
TR13 G	Nickolls Quarry	10	-
TR13 I	Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger)	4	-
TR13 N	Chesterfield Wood	17	60
TR13 S	Hythe (Royal Military Canal)	40	34
TR13 T	Beachborough Lakes	-	21
TR13 X	Seabrook (Royal Military Canal)	15	-
TR23 D	Broadmead Village	14	-
TR23 I	Radnor Park	21	21
TR23 Z	Samphire Hoe	12	6
<b>Total wintering population</b>		<b>353</b>	<b>315</b>

There is little evidence of any coastal passage though cold weather migration does sometimes occur and an exceptional movement of wildfowl off the Willop Outfall on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2012 included up to 30 Mallard (10 west and 20 east).

### References

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Mallards at Saltwood Castle (Brian Harper)



Mallard at Seabrook (Brian Harper)



Mallards at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Mallard at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)

### **Acknowledgements**

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