

Stock Dove

Columba oenas

Category A

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Widespread across much of Europe eastwards to West Siberia and central Asia. Western populations are resident or dispersive but those from eastern Europe, Fenno-Scandia and Russia migrate south and west to southern half of France and Iberia (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

It is a widespread and increasing resident species in Kent and some passage is noted in most years (KOS, 2020).



Stock Dove at Palmarsh (Brian Harper)

Roger Norman recorded the Stock Dove in reasonable numbers in the 1950s, with “many” on the old aerodrome that forms part of the current Nickolls Quarry site in summer and early autumn 1951/1952, ten at Nickolls Quarry in June 1953 and 14 at Hythe Ranges in December 1957, but a sharp decline in numbers (noted across much of eastern England) followed during the late 1950s/early 1960s due to the effects of pesticides applied as seed dressings. After a pesticide ban a slow recovery ensued and by the early 1980s Neil Frampton noted that it bred “in good numbers mainly in mature timber” on Hythe Roughs.

Breeding distribution

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

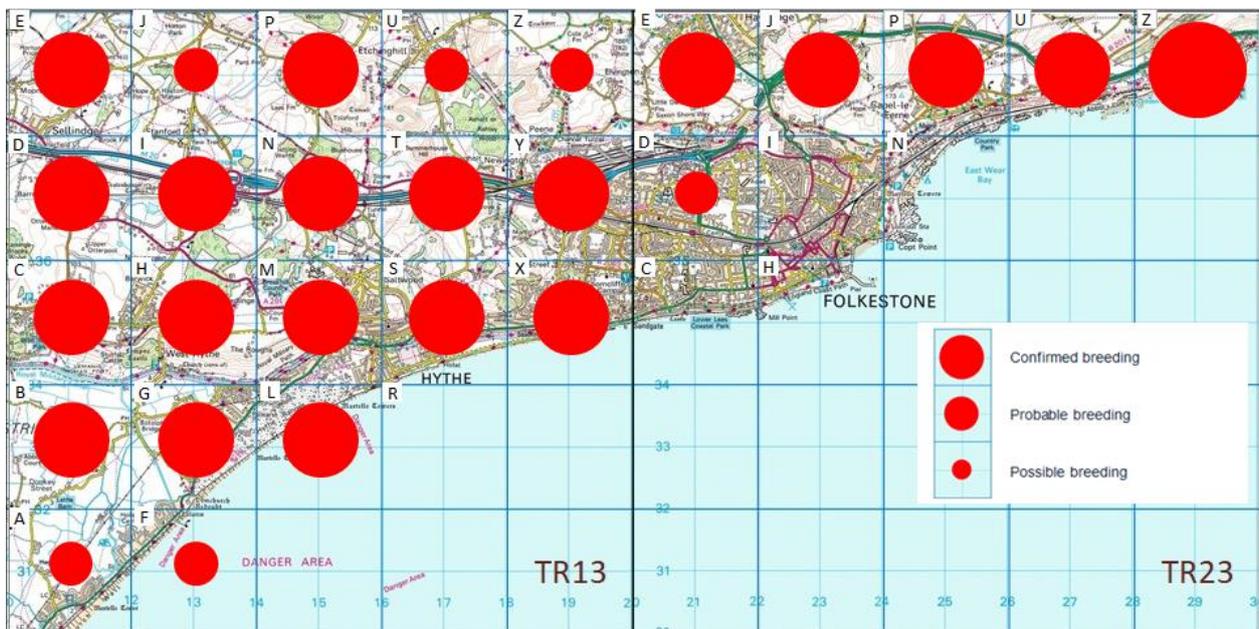


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Stock Dove at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in one tetrad, with probable breeding in 19 more and possible breeding in 6 others. 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%)	5	(16%)	6	(19%)
Probable/Confirmed	0	(0%)	17	(55%)	20	(65%)
Total	0	(0%)	22	(71%)	26	(84%)

Following the population crash there were no local breeding records during the first county atlas. Henderson & Hodge remarked upon a major expansion in range by the time of the second atlas, notably into the southern third of the county but also filling in gaps in the remaining parts. Clements et al (2015) stated that the evidence shows that the increase has continued through the current (third) Atlas period, but that breeding is often hard to prove, so many records are of possible or probable breeding.

Stock Doves are hole-nesting birds that reach their highest densities in mature woodland and parkland but can use holes in buildings or burrows where trees are absent. Reasonable numbers also breed in holes in sea cliffs, as can be seen along the chalk between Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe.



Stock Dove at Palmmarsh (Brian Harper)



Stock Doves at Botolph's Bridge (Ian Roberts)

Non-breeding distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Stock Dove by tetrad, with records in 30 tetrads (97%).

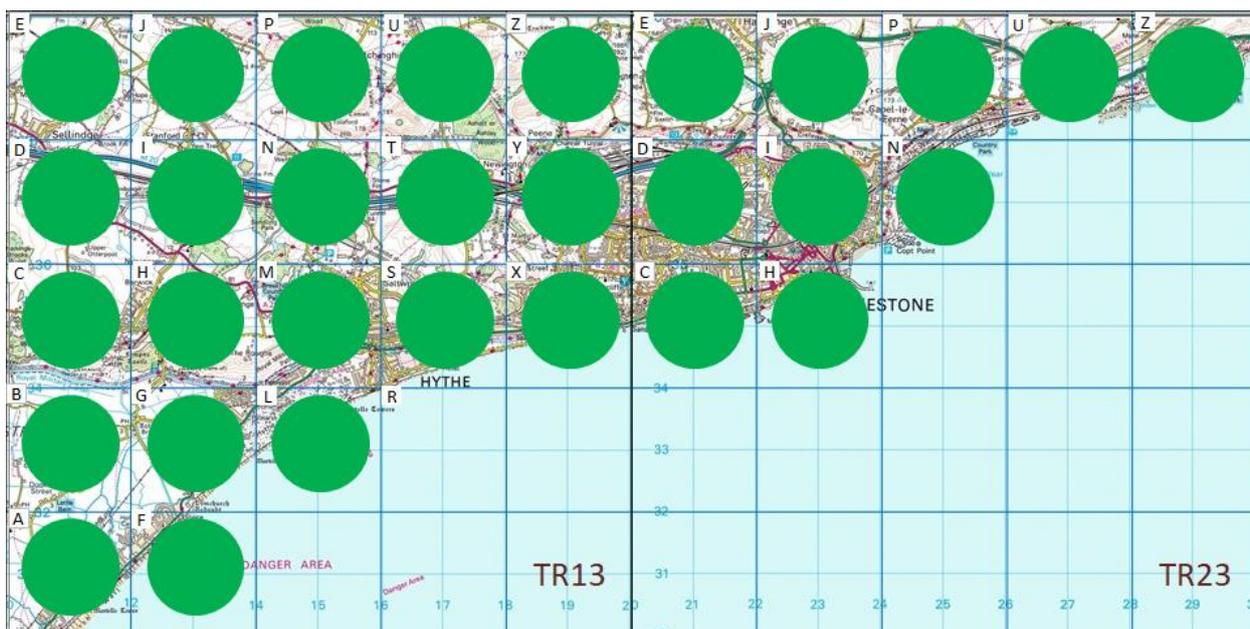


Figure 2: Distribution of all Stock Dove records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Flocks of up to 50 have been noted with some regularity in the winter months but larger concentrations are notable. Up to 80 were seen at Lympne in December 1997, up to 150 frequented the Botolph's Bridge area between December 1997 and March 1998, 130 were at Church Hougham in April 1999, at least 150 were at Nickolls Quarry in November 2002 and up to 300 were at Botolph's Bridge in January 2006.

A very light spring passage may be apparent in some years but double-figure counts are exceptional. These have involved 30 flying west at Folkestone on the 25th March 1995 and 10 flying west at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd April 1997.



Stock Dove at Church Hougham (Ian Roberts)



Stock Dove at Palmarsh (Brian Harper)



Stock Doves at Donkey Street (Ian Roberts)

The largest numbers typically occur on autumn passage, which can be noted from around the 10th October, with a peak usually in late October or early November. Counts of 200 or more have been recorded on nine occasions:

- 220 west at Folkestone on the 16th November 1994
- 205 west at Abbotscliffe on the 30th October 1998
- 205 west at Capel-le-Ferne on the 26th October 2000
- 297 west at Abbotscliffe on the 29th October 2001

1,325 west at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd October 2005
500 west at Abbotscliffe on the 5th November 2005
218 west at Abbotscliffe on the 27th October 2006
226 west at Abbotscliffe on the 29th October 2006
230 west at Abbotscliffe on the 20th October 2019

There has been one local ringing recovery involving a bird ringed as a chick at Dungeness on the 25th April 1956 and found dead at Folkestone less than a month later on the 19th May 1956.

References

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

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Acknowledgements

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