

Spotted Crake

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Category A

Very rare vagrant, possibly regular 1 recent record in the past.

Patchily distributed across much of Europe eastwards into Asia but scarce and distribution imperfectly known. A few winter in the Mediterranean basin but many are trans-Saharan migrants (Snow & Perrins, 1998). A rare and sporadic breeding species in Britain, with up to around 25 pairs in some years (Holling *et al*, 2019).

It is a rare passage migrant and occasional summer visitor in Kent (KOS, 2020).

Ticehurst (1909) found it “very difficult to say anything definite as to the status” of the Spotted Crake. He explains that “they are so skulking in habits and their haunts are so obscure that these birds are very seldom seen”. Nonetheless they had “been seen or shot at different times in all the marshes around the Kent coast, and most of the local bird-stuffers in those districts have had specimens through their hands at different times, and all the county museums contain examples from the same localities”. He goes on to state that in the early 1840s “they appear to have been quite common in Romney Marsh” and “eastward of this one or two have been obtained near Hythe and Folkestone, and Mr. Gray, the Dover bird-stuffer, has had several from that neighbourhood”.

The species was included in Knight and Tolpitt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871). This list covered an area of six mile radius of Folkestone town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe recording area, the reference is likely to refer to the lower-lying coastal margin, and so would most probably have been within the modern boundary.

Ticehurst also mentioned that a specimen in the Hythe museum was obtained locally, whilst Harrison (1953) referred to one in the Maidstone Museum that was “from Hythe”. Taylor *et al* (1981) suggested a change in status, on analysing the records from 1952 to 1976, to that of a passage migrant and winter visitor, rather than summer visitor.

There has only been one modern area record which concerns an individual found by Russell Heselden on the small pond in Folkestone Warren and which lingered for three weeks in late autumn 1982.

The modern record by year is shown in figure 1.

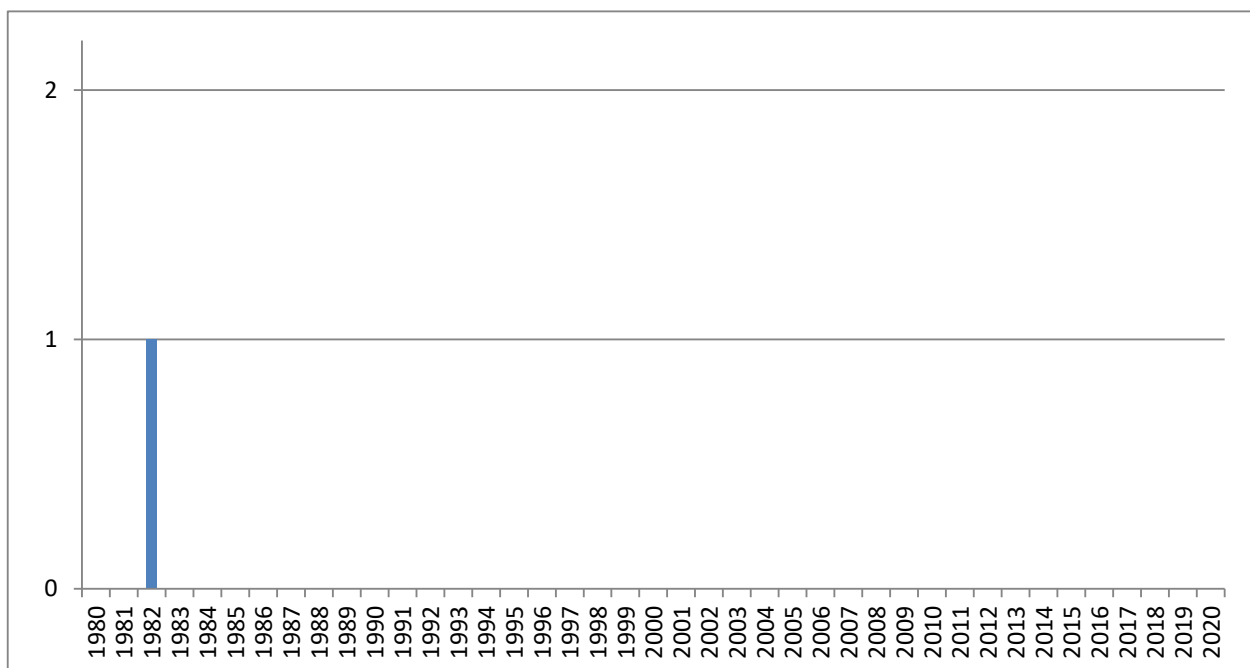


Figure 1: Spotted Crake records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1980

The modern record by week is given in figure 2 and figure 3 shows the distribution by tetrad.

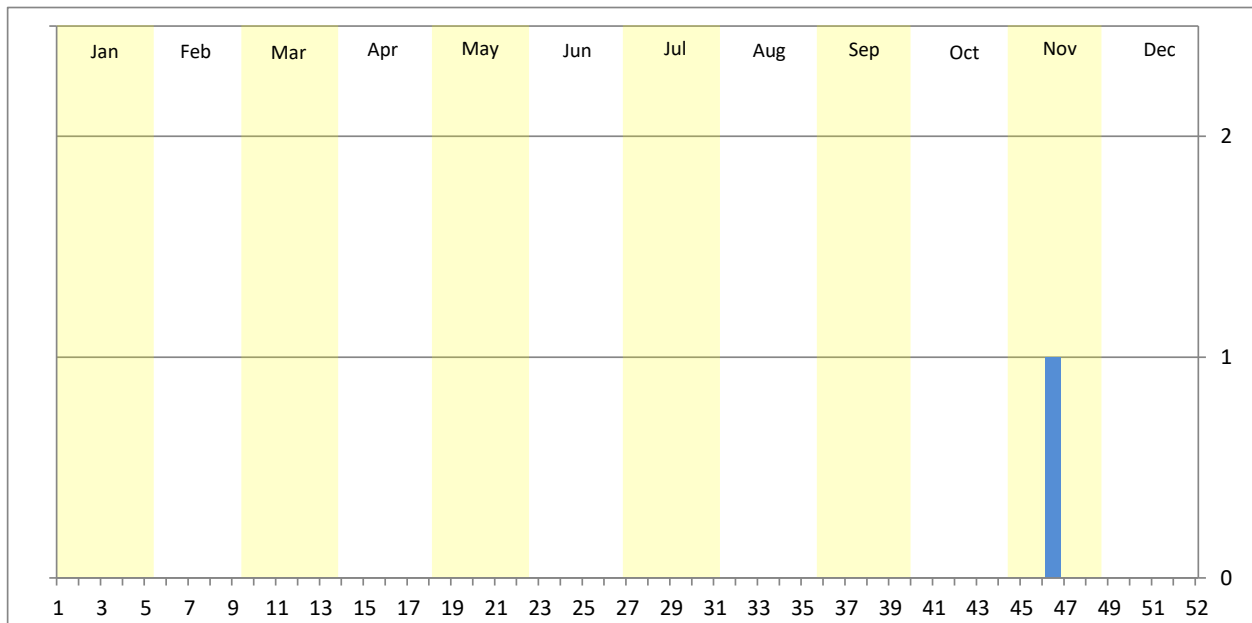


Figure 2: Spotted Crake records at Folkestone and Hythe by week



Figure 3: Distribution of all Spotted Crake records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Confirmation of the only modern area record is as follows:

1982 Folkestone Warren, one, 14th November to 6th December (R. G. W. Heselden)

References

Harrison, J. M. 1953. *The Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

Holling, M. & the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 2019. Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2017. *British Birds*, 112: 706-758

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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

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