

# Honey Buzzard

*Pernis apivorus*

Category A

Scarce passage migrant.

Breeds across a broad swathe of Europe eastwards into Russia, though is rare in Britain. The European population appears to be broadly stable. Winters in west and central regions of equatorial Africa. (Snow & Perrins, 1998). Holling *et al* (2019) provided an estimate of around 40 breeding pairs in Britain, though warn that this may be an underestimate of this secretive species. At least one but possibly as many as four pairs bred in Kent in 2017. They also describe a strong increase in breeding numbers over the last 25 years. Otherwise it is a scarce passage migrant to Kent in spring and autumn (KOS, 2020).



Honey Buzzard at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

The Honey Buzzard is included in Knight & Tolputt’s “list of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871) but this list covered an area of six mile radius from Folkestone town hall and extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of occurrence. Neither Ticehurst (1909) nor Harrison (1953) includes any record that would appear to relate to the basis for its inclusion on this list.

The first confirmed area record involved one seen over Folkestone by R. W. Prior on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1982 and the second was reported flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1987.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1991 Ian Roberts watched one arrive in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne and the following year he and Dale Gibson saw another arriving in off the sea there on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Regular coverage by these observers and others since has clocked up a further 135 sightings to date (an average of 4.5 per year since 1990).

The records by year since 1985 are shown in figure 1. There have been annual sightings now for 30 consecutive years, though with considerable fluctuation in numbers. Some years have produced just a single occurrence, whereas in 2000 there was a large influx into Britain in the autumn and there were 11 records, involving a total of 12 birds.

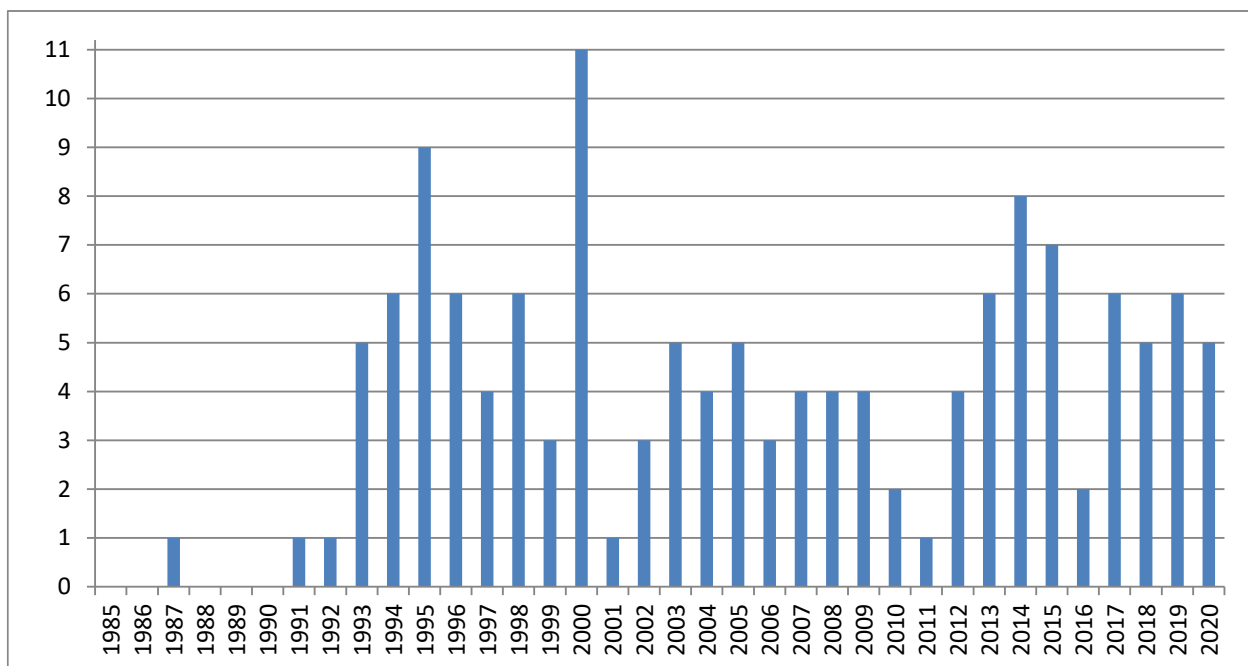


Figure 1: Honey Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are given in figure 2.

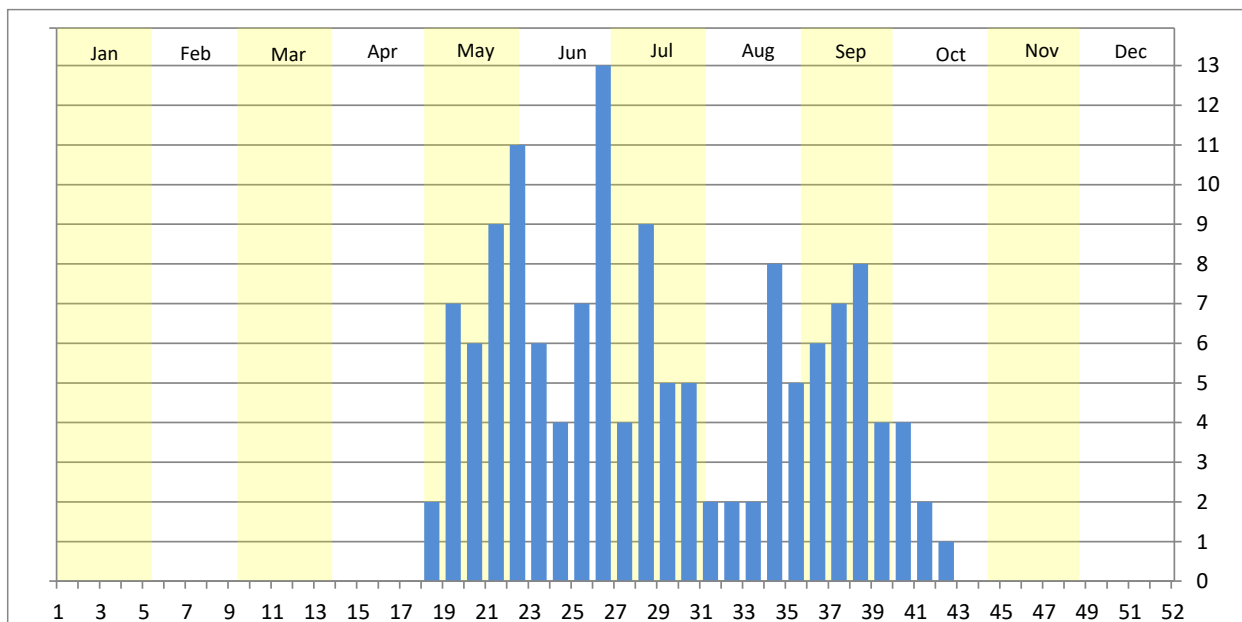


Figure 2: Honey Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The extreme arrival and departure dates are 3<sup>rd</sup> May (2013) and 15<sup>th</sup> October (1995). Records are more frequent in spring/summer (with 63% occurring between May and July) than in autumn (with 37% between August and October).

Figure 3 shows the distribution of all records of Honey Buzzard by tetrad.

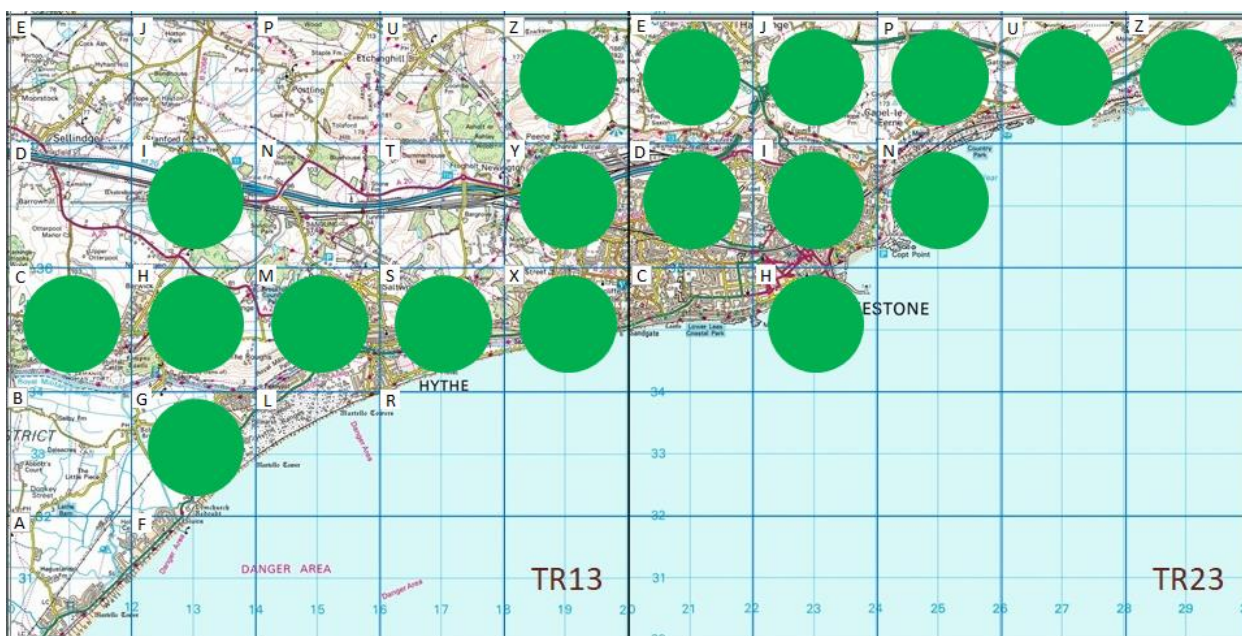


Figure 3: Distribution of all Honey Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

There have been records from just over half (18, or 58%) of the tetrads. A good proportion (45%) have been seen at the cliffs, between Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe with a further 32% having been picked up over Cheriton or Folkestone where they often attract the attention of the local Herring Gulls.

**References**

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

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



Honey Buzzard at Samphire Hoe (Jamie Partridge)



Honey Buzzard at Peene Quarry (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](#).



Honey Buzzard at Samphire Hoe (Jamie Partridge). Arriving migrants are often mobbed by gulls or crows, or both