

# Hoopoe

*Upupa epops*

Category A

Formerly regular, bred on one occasion. Now a very rare vagrant 24 records (12 recent)

Since the late nineteenth century there has been a decrease in the population in Europe, particularly in the more northern and western parts of its range. Having bred in Britain on a number of occasions it is now absent as a breeding species, as it is from Fenno-Scandia and the Low Countries' however it continues to be a widespread breeding species across most of continental Europe. Most cross the Sahara to winter in Africa but a few remain in the Mediterranean Basin (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

The contraction in its European range is doubtless the main cause for a decrease in Kentish records which was observed over the last century. It is now a scarce but regular passage migrant to Kent (KOS, 2020).



Hoopoe at Hythe Imperial Golf Course (Brian Harper)

Knight & Tolputt (1871) included the Hoopoe in the list of species recorded in the neighbourhood of Folkestone, within a radius of six miles from the town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of occurrence here, it does suggest that the species was present locally in the days when it was more regular in the county.

Ticehurst (1909) mentioned Hythe as one locality where it had been recorded. He also gave several instances of probable breeding in Kent but considered that conclusive proof was lacking.

The first dated occurrence in the Folkestone and Hythe area was in 1948, when a pair bred at Hythe, successfully raising four young. This remarkable event is the only confirmed breeding record in the county. A pair were seen again the following year but failed to breed.

The details were given to Harrison (1953) by William Nevin, and were described to him as follows: "Mr W. S. Nevin informs me a pair nested successfully, bringing off a brood of four, in the summer of 1948, near Hythe. The birds were afforded every protection. In a further letter he informed me that he received repeated messages about Hoopoes near Hythe in the spring of 1949, but that as he was then situated he could not investigate personally. The birds had returned to the same large walled-garden where they had previously nested. The property, now a convent, could not be visited. The gate-keeper gardener, however, informed him that the Hoopoes had again nested that summer, but that the tree where they had built their nest was felled. He had rescued the four eggs, which he placed on top of the wall surrounding the garden, where they remained for weeks, finally disintegrating and disappearing entirely".

The site where the Hoopoes nested was presumably the Marist Sister's convent at 53-55 Seabrook Road in Hythe, though this cannot be proven beyond doubt.

There were further records from Hythe in five years during the 1950s, some of which might have related to the same returning pair, or perhaps even their progeny. There were also sightings in the same decade from Folkestone in three years, Lympne (1952) and West Hythe (1957), though details are scant.

Following the first modern record at Church Hougham in 1980, there have been a further 11 since 1985, including seven in the last ten years, as shown in figure 1.

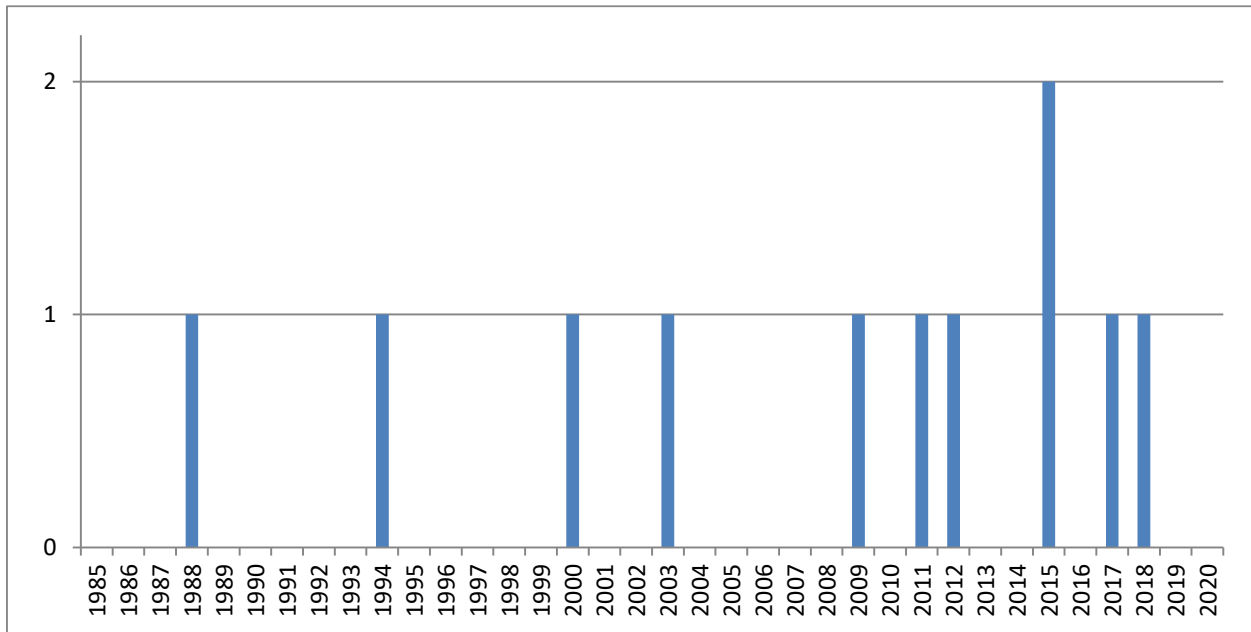


Figure 1: Hoopoe records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are given in figure 2 and figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.

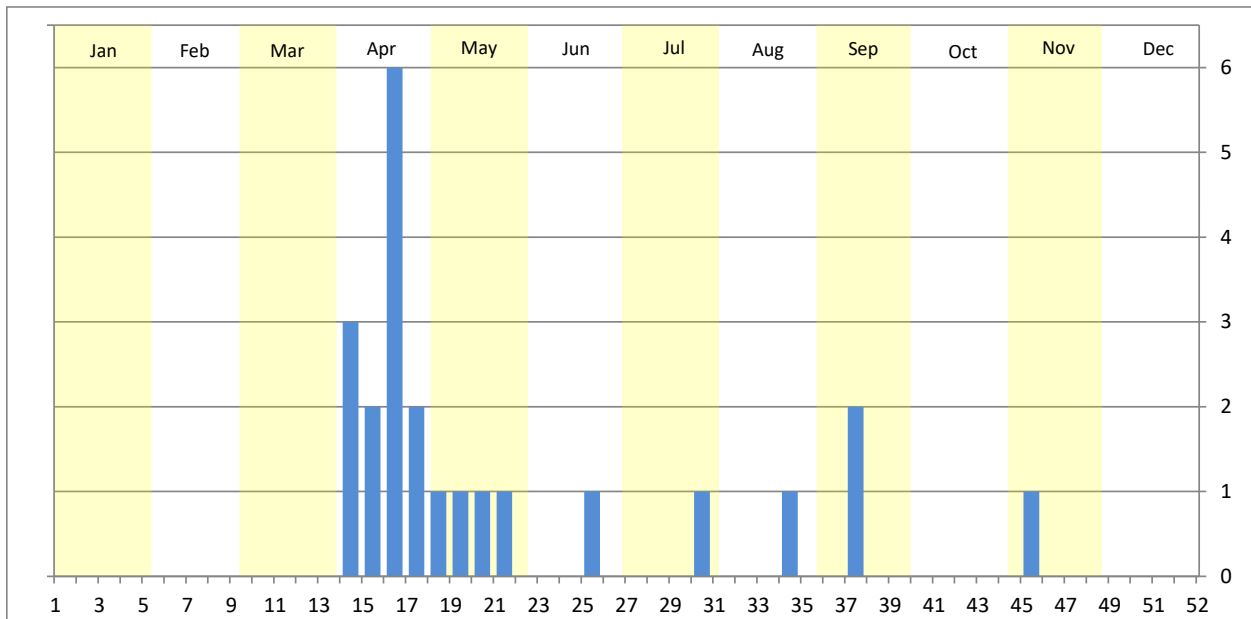


Figure 2: Hoopoe records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Two-thirds of arrivals have occurred between the 5<sup>th</sup> April (week 14) and 27<sup>th</sup> May (week 21), with a peak in week 16, and with single records in June and July in the 1950s. One was seen in late August 2009, with the other autumn records also dating from the 1950s, including a particularly late bird on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1955. The records by week are given in figure 2.

Whilst older records are primarily from the Hythe area, modern records are more widely scattered, although there are three from Hythe, with two at Folkestone and singles from Saltwood, Seabrook, Cheriton, Mill Point, Capel-le-Ferne, Church Hougham and Samphire Hoe.

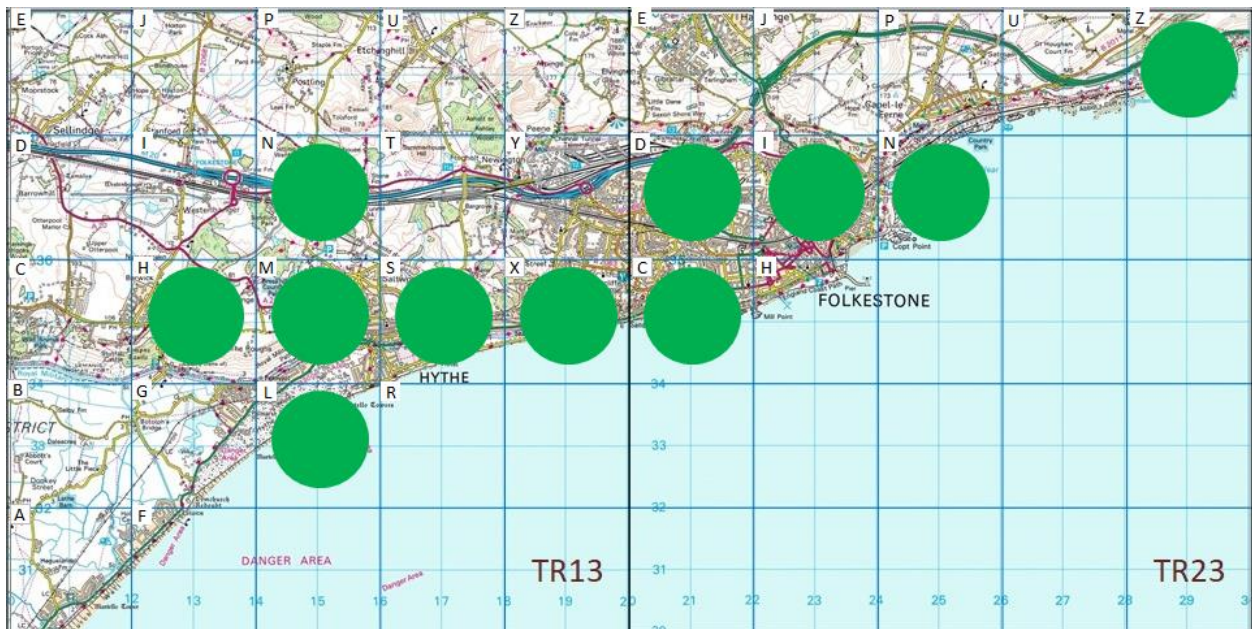


Figure 3: Distribution of all Hoopoe records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad



Hoopoe at Folkestone (Duncan Lawie)



Hoopoe at Hythe (Simon Knight)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1948** Hythe, pair bred and raised four young (W. S. Nevin)
- 1949** Hythe, pair seen again but failed to breed (per W. S. Nevin)
- 1952** Hythe, one, 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> April (W. S. Nevin, H. M. Rowland)
- 1952** Lympne, one, 3<sup>rd</sup> May (reported)
- 1953** Hythe, one, 27<sup>th</sup> July (K. Comyn)
- 1954** Folkestone, one, 5<sup>th</sup> April (W. S. Nevin, D. Kesby)
- 1955** Hythe, one found shot, 26<sup>th</sup> April (H. Schreiber)
- 1955** Folkestone, one, 10<sup>th</sup> November (reported)
- 1956** Folkestone, one, 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September (M. Jeaffreson)
- 1957** West Hythe, two, 24<sup>th</sup> June (W. S. Nevin)
- 1958** Hythe, one, 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> September (W. S. Nevin *et al*)
- 1959** Hythe, one, 8<sup>th</sup> April (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1980** Church Hougham, one, 16<sup>th</sup> April (M. P. Sutherland, I. P. Hodgson)
- 1988** Mill Point, one flew west, 5<sup>th</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)
- 1994** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> April (D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Cheriton, one flew west over "Cheriton Sports Ground" at midday, 8<sup>th</sup> April (reported)
- 2003** Seabrook, one, 10<sup>th</sup> May (reported)
- 2009** Saphire Hoe, one, 25<sup>th</sup> August, photographed (P. Smith, P. Holt, D. Smith, I. A. Roberts *et al*)
- 2011** Saltwood, one, approximately 18<sup>th</sup> April (reported on local news)

- 2012** Hythe, one on Imperial Golf Course, 19<sup>th</sup> April, photographed (B. Harper, M. Harper, I. A. Roberts, M. Whybrow)
- 2015** Hythe, one at Range Road, 18<sup>th</sup> April, photographed (I. A. Roberts, J. Tomsett, B. Harper, S. McMinn *et al*)
- 2015** Hythe, one at Ferguson Close, 16<sup>th</sup> May, with it or another near Waitrose at around the same time (per J. Tomsett)
- 2017** Folkestone, 29<sup>th</sup> April, one in the Dixwell Road/Turketel Road area (per B. Harper)
- 2018** Folkestone, 27<sup>th</sup> to at least 30<sup>th</sup> May, one in the Grand Hotel area, photographed (D. Lawie, N. C. Frampton, C. Jeffreys *et al*)

### **References**

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

Knight, V. and Tolputt, F., 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood, *Folkestone Natural History Society Annual Report*, 1871

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

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



Hoopoe at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Hoopoe at Hythe Imperial Golf Course (Brian Harper)

### **Acknowledgements**

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