

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Dendrocopos major

Category A

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Widespread throughout Europe and Asia eastwards to Japan and south to northern south-east Asia (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

It is a widespread resident in Kent as well as a passage migrant, particularly in autumn (KOS, 2020).

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. This range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area and so this does not provide conclusive evidence of its occurrence here.



Great Spotted Woodpecker at Saltwood (Brian Harper)

Ticehurst (1909) considered it to be more or less confined to wooded areas in Kent and Harrison (1953) stated that there would seem to be very little doubt that this bird has increased in numbers and extended its range towards the east and south-east of the county, where, if not plentiful, it is at any rate established in scattered pairs. He also recorded that in 1934 Miss A. V. Stone noted its presence around Sandling Park, near Folkestone, which would appear to be the first documented local sighting.

There were regular records along the canal between West Hythe and Hythe in the 1950s, whilst William Nevin provided an usual record of a "young Greater Spotted Woodpecker, just out of the nest, seen in the High Street in Hythe" on the 22nd February 1957. There were also two records of migrants: one seen flying east at Hythe Ranges by Roger Norman during a movement of passerines on the 30th March 1958 and one arriving in off the sea at Folkestone on the 29th October 1959 (included in the Kent Bird Report for that year). It is a widespread resident today.

Breeding distribution

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

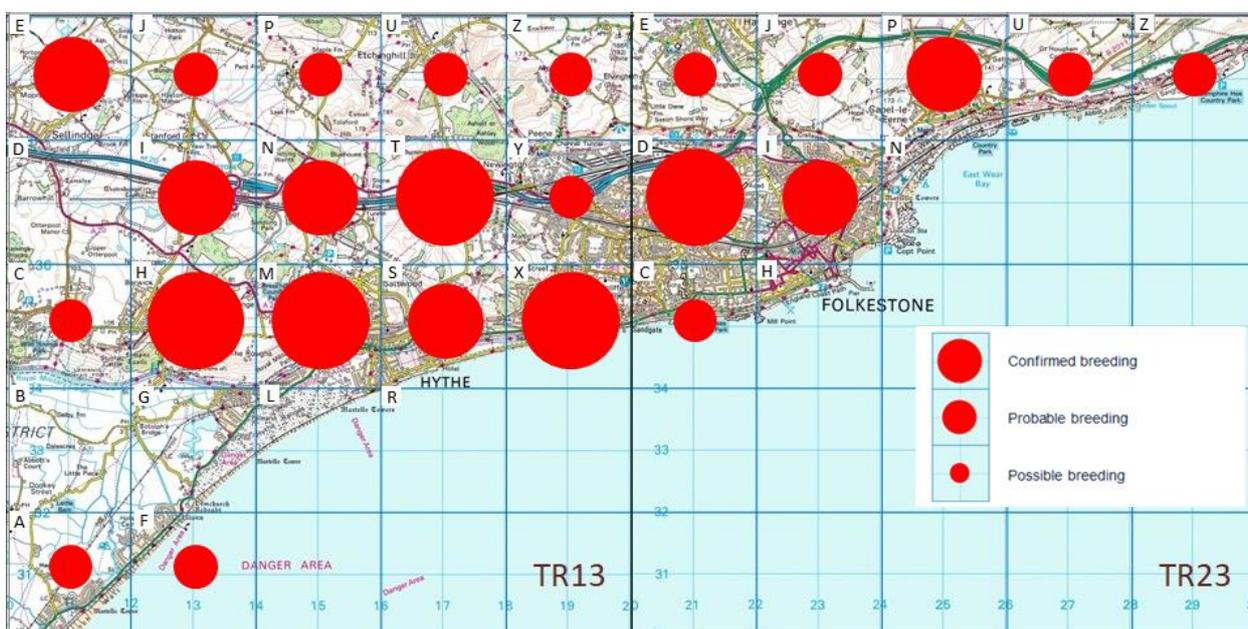


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Great Spotted Woodpecker at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads, with probable breeding in five more and possible breeding in 14 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%)	3	(10%)	13	(42%)
Probable/Confirmed	3	(10%)	9	(29%)	11	(35%)
Total	3	(10%)	12	(39%)	24	(77%)

Records from the first atlas were in the more wooded tetrads of TR13 H, TR13 M and TR13 N (covering West Hythe and the woods around Saltwood) but by the second atlas it had spread into 11 tetrads within TR13, plus TR23 P. The most recent atlas found that it has now colonised just about all tetrads with suitable habitat, being absent only from some treeless parts of the Romney Marsh, the open shingle of Hythe Ranges and some of the smaller coastal tetrads.

Clements *et al* (2015) reported on an increase of 108% in South-east England over the period 1995 to 2012 (from BBS data) and considered that this level of increase was almost certainly mirrored in Kent. They also concluded that evidence from the increased numbers of occupied tetrads in the county supported the likelihood of a large increase in numbers (occupied tetrads in Kent increased by 82% between the first and second atlases, and by a further 58% by the third atlas; an overall increase of 187%). The reduction in coppicing has affected many other bird species, but has probably helped Great Spotted Woodpeckers by providing a greater stock of mature timber.

Non-breeding distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Great Spotted Woodpecker by tetrad, with records in 30 tetrads (97%). There have been records from all tetrads except TR13 R which is a tiny section of shingle beach.

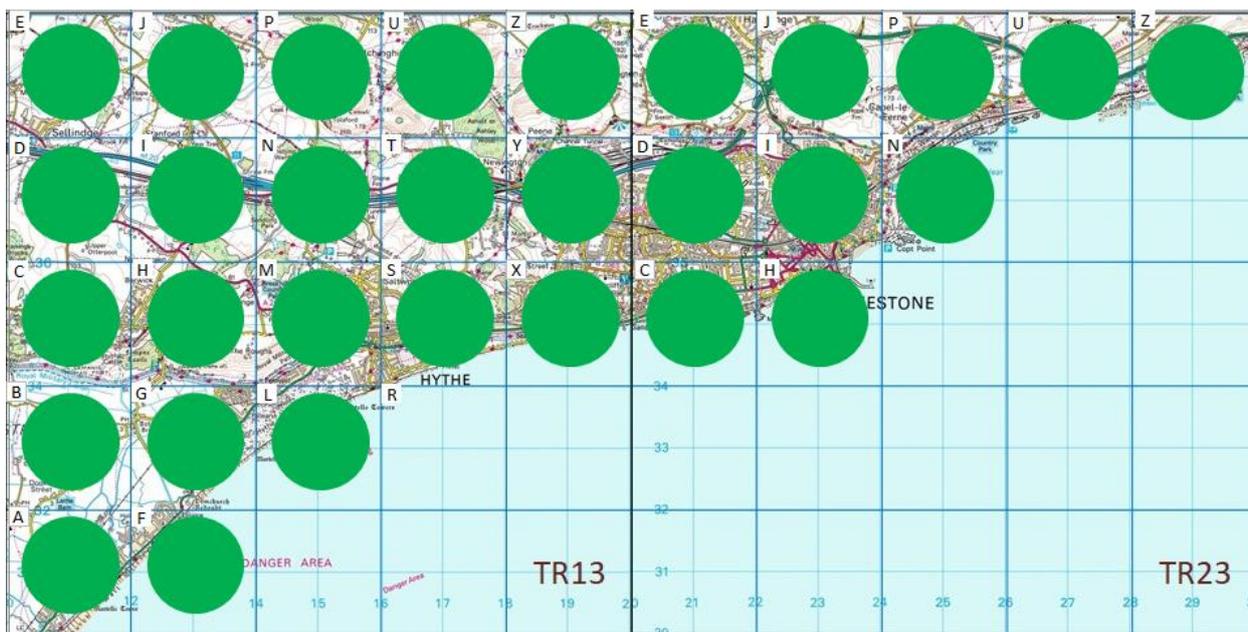


Figure 2: Distribution of all Great Spotted Woodpecker records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

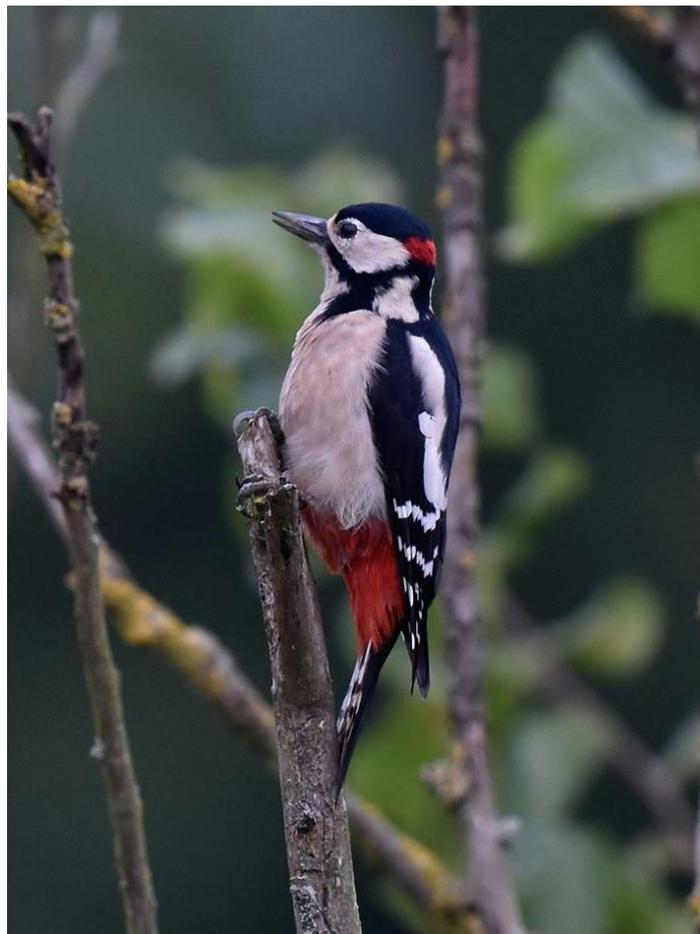
Spring migrants are scarce and Taylor *et al* (1981) noted that there were just two at Dungeness over a 25-year period. Locally there has been just one spring record at Abbotscliffe in nearly 30 years of recording: one flying east on the 30th March 1997.

Autumn passage is more pronounced with a mean of 15 suspected migrants per annum over the last 20 years. Most records involve of one or two birds but larger counts can occur, and day totals of five at Capel Battery on the 2nd October 1997, five at Abbotscliffe on the 1st October 2002 and seven at Abbotscliffe on the 2nd October 2010 have been recorded.

The majority of coastal records are thought to involve dispersing Kentish birds, although a few are likely to be continental immigrants of the nominate form *D. m. major* (Taylor *et al*, 1981, Wernham *et al*, 2002).



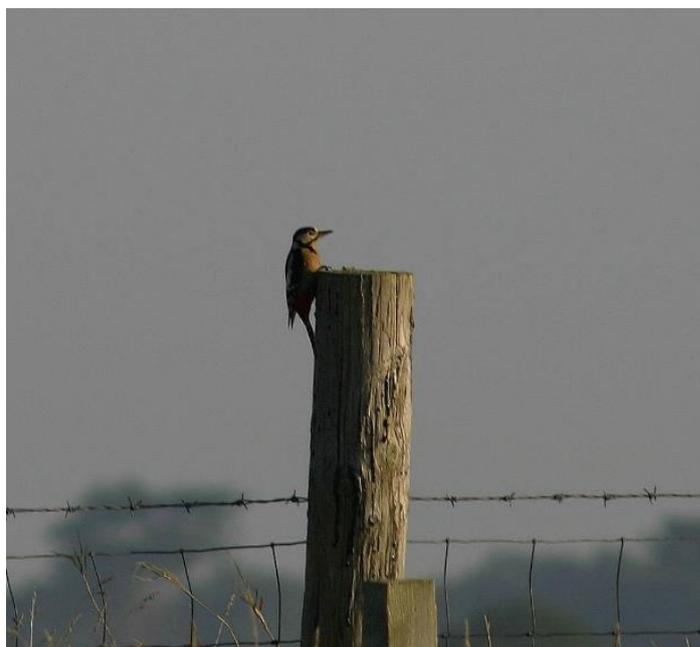
Great Spotted Woodpecker at Saltwood Castle
(Brian Harper)



Great Spotted Woodpecker at Princes Parade
(Nigel Webster)



Great Spotted Woodpecker at Saltwood Castle
(Nigel Webster)



Great Spotted Woodpecker at Abbotscliffe
(Ian Roberts)

References

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Acknowledgements

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