

## Hooded Crow

*Corvus cornix*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

11 records since 1950

Hooded Crows breed in Ireland and north-west Scotland, but most of their distribution lies in Scandinavia, eastern Europe and western Asia. There is some southern and western movement in winter into Germany, and eastern and northern France, with a few reaching Britain (Snow & Perrins, 1998). It is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor in Kent (KOS, 2020).

The Hooded Crow was long considered to form a subspecies pair with the Carrion Crow but has been recognised a full species by the British Ornithologist's Union since 2002 (Knox et al, 2002).



Hooded Crow at Abbotscliffe (Brendan Ryan)

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 from Folkestone town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, and so this does not provide conclusive evidence of its occurrence here, it was present in abundance in the county at the time and seems certain to have occurred locally.

Ticehurst (1909) considered the Hooded Crow to be an abundant winter visitor to Kent, found most commonly around the coast, but also abundant on the fields of the chalk downs especially near Folkestone and Dover and through to the Stour Valley, but with only scattered birds further inland.

He went on to describe how "these winter visitors to Kent all arrive at the eastern end of the county from the east and south-east in company with the Rooks, Carrion Crows, Larks and Starlings, that come in large numbers between mid-September and mid-November. The main arrival takes place towards the end of October... The numbers that arrive are 'sometimes immense', as in 1902 and 1903, when in Thanet and on the Folkestone Downs, as I am informed by Messrs. Byron and Freke, the numbers were greater than they had ever seen before. Of course the majority do not stay in Kent, but pass through to winter-quarters elsewhere. The return movement in the reverse direction begins in the second week of February, and is continued until the middle of April. The main part of this emigration seems to take place to the north of Kent, but occasionally birds have been recorded from the Varne and Goodwin Light-ships crossing the Channel for France in a south-easterly direction."

In keeping with the period, no numbers are given, but the use of terms such as 'abundant' and 'immense' suggests that counts could have been in the hundreds at least.

By the time of Harrison (1953), numbers had greatly diminished in the county, and it was largely confined to the coast and its associated marshland. It occurred in varying numbers, and while hard winters sometimes produced larger arrivals, there was no clear correlation. Taylor *et al* (1981) reported the continuing decline of passage and wintering numbers during 1952 to 1976. Numbers continued to vary from year to year, and winter totals were usually under 50.

Henderson (2020) wrote that "the decline in wintering numbers in England has been attributed to the Scandinavian populations becoming less migratory as a result of climatic amelioration. In other words, as temperatures in the breeding area and along the migration route have become warmer in winter, it has become possible for birds to remain there rather than travelling as far as they did before". This 'short stopping' behaviour associated with climate change has also been identified in a range of waterfowl.

Since it was recognised as a full species in 2002, there have been around three records per annum in Kent, although some of these relate to birds that have been regularly over-wintering in the county. Most continue to appear, as in the historic period, at passage times, during October to November and March to April (KOS, 2020).

The first documented occurrence in the Folkestone and Hythe area after 1950 was in 1958, when one was noted by Roger Norman at Hythe Ranges from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> April. In the 1960s T. Grant saw one fly in off the sea at Folkestone on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1966 and another at Folkestone on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1968. There were two further records in the 1970s but then no further records until 1993, however there have been five since, as shown in figure 1.

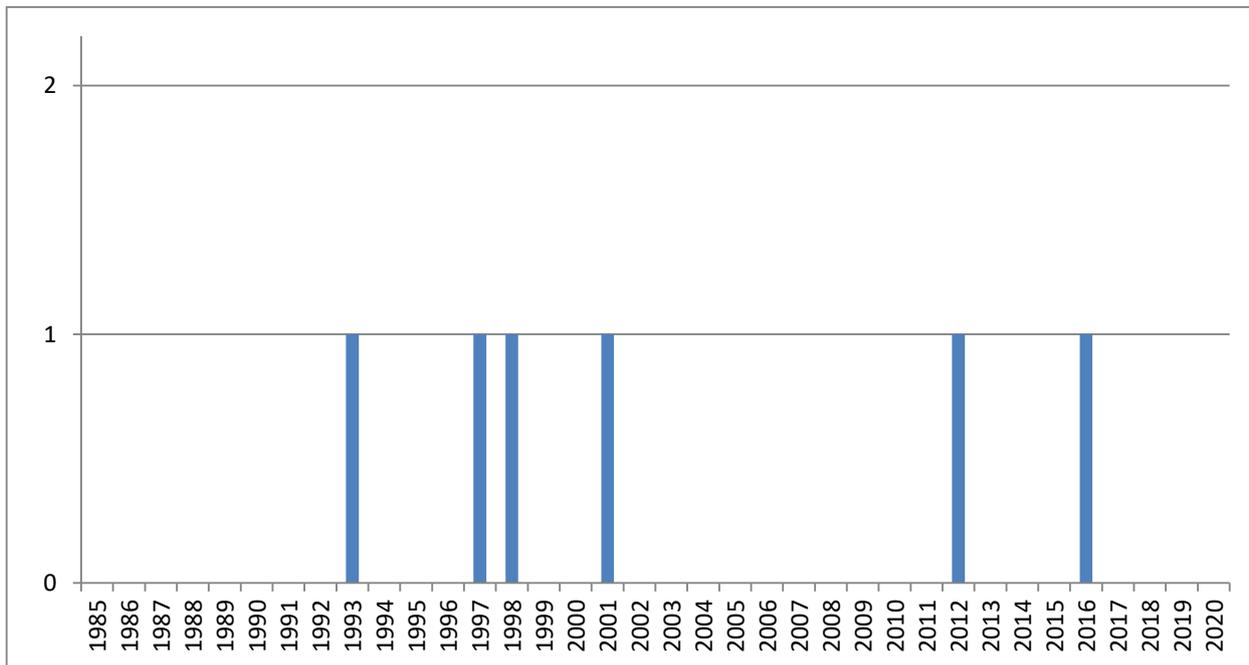


Figure 1: Hooded Crow records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are given in figure 2. There have been four spring records, between the 5<sup>th</sup> April (week 14) and 12<sup>th</sup> May (week 19), and five in autumn, between the 22<sup>nd</sup> October (week 43) and 17<sup>th</sup> November (week 46). The two winter records were both in week 2 (on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1968 and 12<sup>th</sup> January 1997), the latter of which occurred during a period of severe weather.

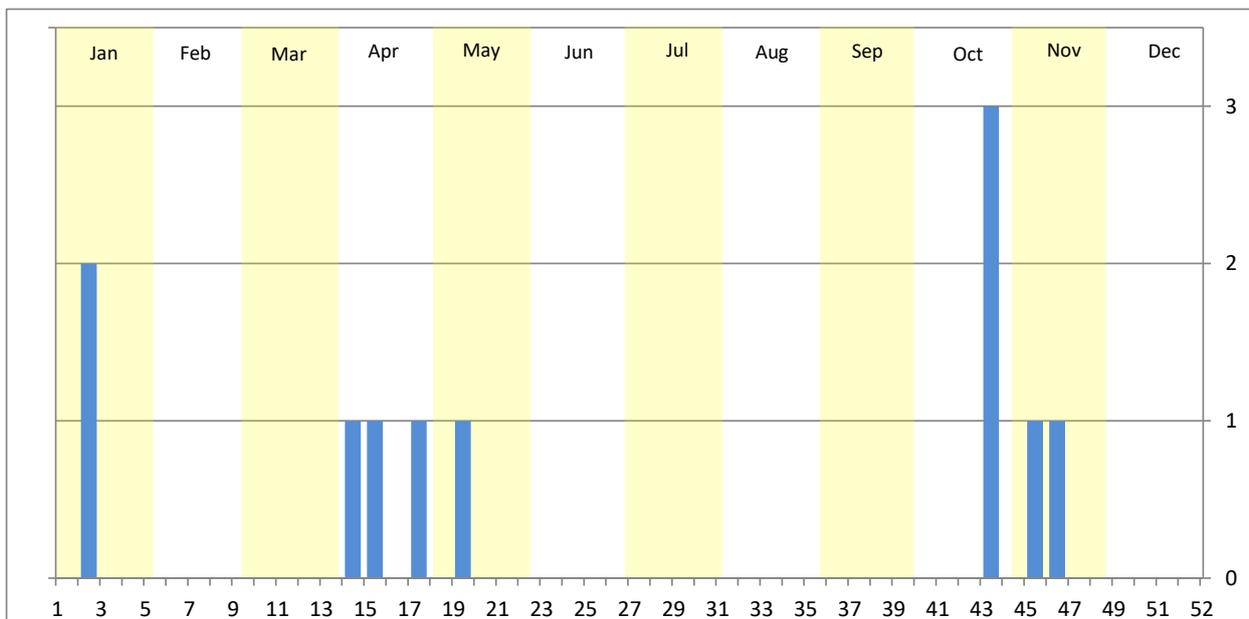


Figure 2: Hooded Crow records since 1950 at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad. Five of the six most recent records are from Abbotscliffe, with the other from Nickolls Quarry. The older records are from Folkestone (two, but not mapped due to insufficient details to identify the tetrad), Hythe Ranges, Sandling Park and West Hythe.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Hooded Crow records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1950 by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1958** Hythe Ranges, one, 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> April (R. K. Norman)
- 1966** Folkestone, one flew in off the sea, 26<sup>th</sup> October (T. Grant)
- 1968** Folkestone, one, 10<sup>th</sup> January (T. Grant)
- 1971** West Hythe, one, 11<sup>th</sup> November (P. Martin)
- 1974** Sandling Park, one, 26<sup>th</sup> October (D. E. Chittenden)
- 1993** Abbotscliffe, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one on frozen gravel pit, 12<sup>th</sup> January (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one flew in off the sea, 17<sup>th</sup> November (D. A. Gibson)
- 2001** Abbotscliffe, one flew in off the sea and landed in Abbot's Gully field 5<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Abbotscliffe, one, 12<sup>th</sup> May, photographed (B. Ryan, J. Chantler, P. Chantler)
- 2016** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 23<sup>rd</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)

### References

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***Acknowledgements***

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Hooded Crow with Carrion Crow at Abbotscliffe (Brendan Ryan)