

# Hawfinch

*Coccothraustes coccothraustes* Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor 18 records

Well-distributed across Europe, only really being absent from Ireland and more northern areas such as northern Scotland, northern Fenno-Scandia and northern Russia. The northern populations migrate more than the southern ones which are largely sedentary. Juveniles migrate more than adults, and females more than males.

Many birds move south-west across Europe, and winter chiefly in southern France, north-east Spain, northern and central Italy and the Balkans. Some cross the Mediterranean Sea to the Balearic Islands, Sardinia and Corsica (Snow & Perrins, 1998).



Hawfinch at Burmarsh (Brian Harper)

The Hawfinch has been in steep decline across Britain in recent years and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel has been monitoring the species since 2006 (Holling *et al*, 2009). In Kent it is a thinly distributed resident in suitable woodlands primarily on the North Downs, with occasional coastal migrants. It favours mature deciduous woodland, with hornbeam, beech, sycamore and similar species, and shows a preference for cherry and damson orchards in the winter months (KOS, 2020 / Taylor *et al*, 1981).

It was first recorded on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1956 when F. R. Wise saw one “flying in from the direction of the sea during a big immigration of starlings, finches etc. It was following a party of Chaffinches and passed within six feet of the observer, flying close to the ground”. He had “excellent views of it and also heard the flight call”.

The next record occurred on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 1965 when Geoffrey Munns saw one at “New Inn Green, near Hythe” (Newingreen).

There have been 16 subsequent records, all since 1985, as shown by year in figure 1. In 1989 two were seen at Brockhill Country Park on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, and three were reported there in February, but other records mainly involve coastal migrants.

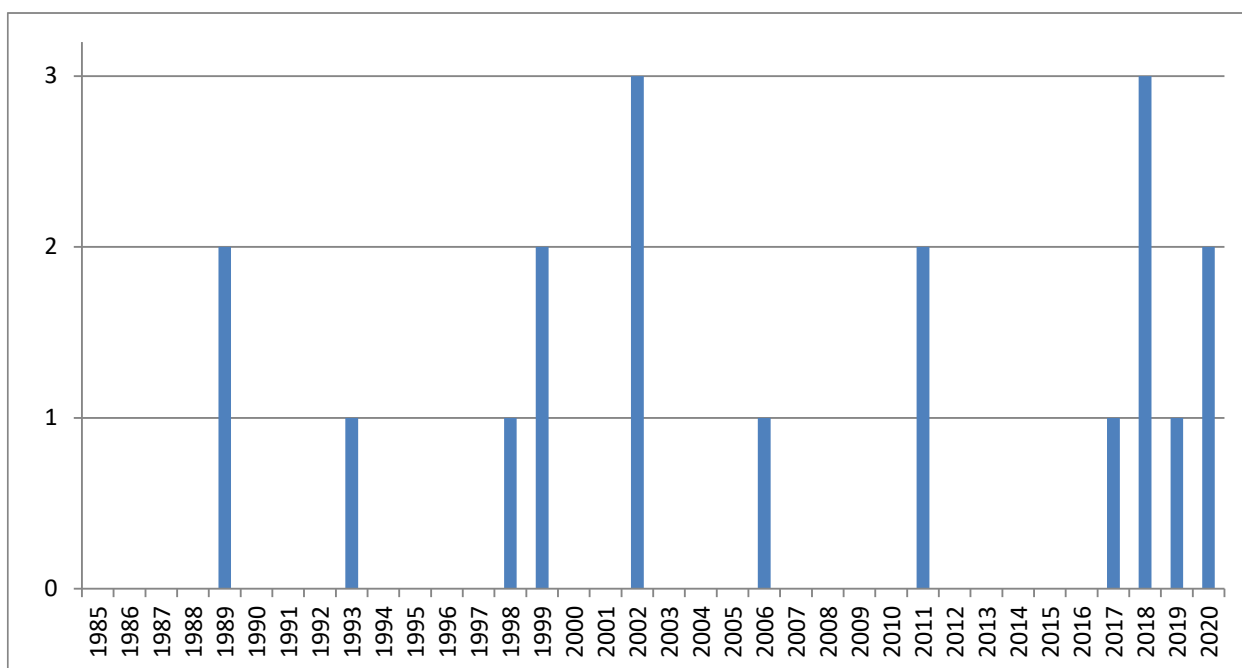


Figure 1: Hawfinch records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

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

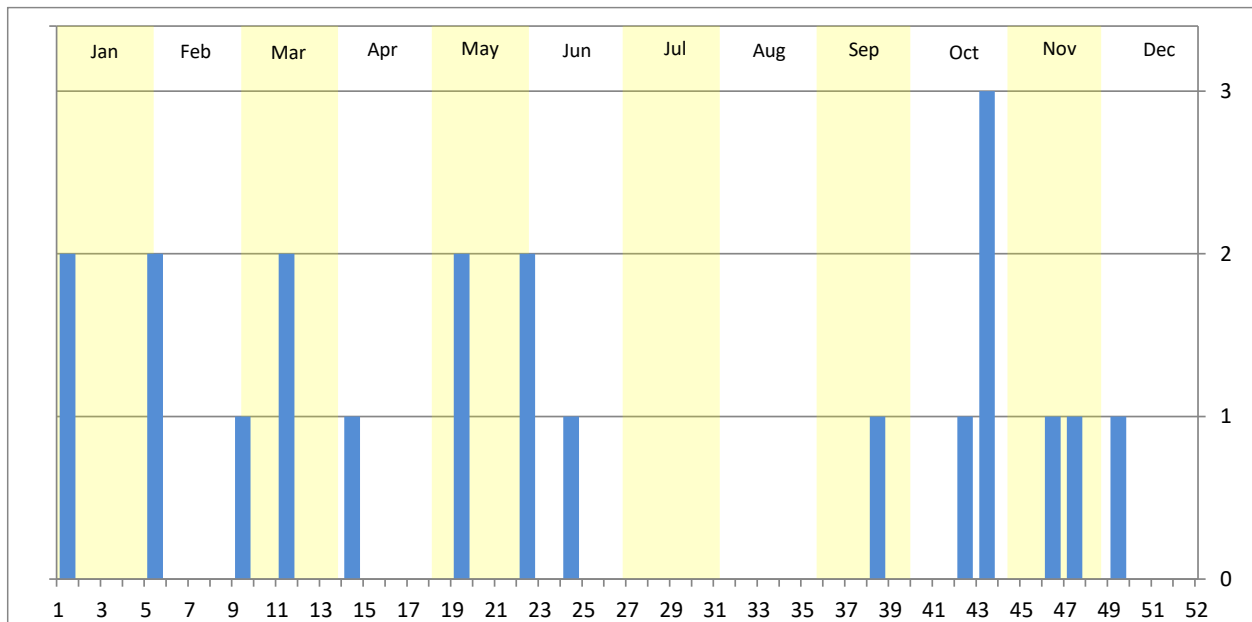


Figure 2: Hawfinch records at Folkestone and Hythe by week



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

Records are well distributed by month with records in all except July and August. There have been five records from Capel-le-Ferne (between 1993 and 2006), with others at nearby Creteway Down (in October 2017) and Copt Point (in September 2020), and three at Nickolls Quarry (two in late 2002 and one in October 2019). One was seen flying east along the top of Hythe Roughs in January 2011, there were three records during a national irruption in 2018, with one at a garden feeder in Saltwood on the 12<sup>th</sup> March, two in a garden in central Folkestone on the 17<sup>th</sup> March and a pair at Horn Street on the 18<sup>th</sup> October, and one was seen in Burmarsh Churchyard on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1956** Folkestone, one flew in off sea, 27<sup>th</sup> October (F. R. Wise)
- 1965** Newingreen, one at "New Inn Green, near Hythe" 13<sup>th</sup> November (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1989** Brockhill CP, two, 31<sup>st</sup> January (I. A. Roberts), with three reported in February
- 1993** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew east, 16<sup>th</sup> June (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one flew east, 10<sup>th</sup> May (D. A. Gibson)

- 1999** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one flew in/east, 1<sup>st</sup> June (I. A. Roberts), presumed same flew east again there the following day (D. A. Gibson)
- 2002** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 11<sup>th</sup> May (D. A. Gibson)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, one flew north, 25<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, one, 5<sup>th</sup> December (R. K. Norman), possibly same as above
- 2006** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, two, then flew east, 2<sup>nd</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Hythe Roughs, one flew east, 13<sup>th</sup> January (I. A. Roberts)
- 2017** Creteway Down, three flew over, 27<sup>th</sup> October (B. Harper)
- 2018** Saltwood, one, 12<sup>th</sup> March (G. Cooke)
- 2018** Folkestone, two, 17<sup>th</sup> March (C. & J. Tomlinson)
- 2018** Horn Street, pair, 18<sup>th</sup> October (P. Howe)
- 2019** Nickolls Quarry, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> October (R. K. Norman)
- 2020** Burmarsh Churchyard, one, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2020** Copt Point, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> September (D. A. Gibson)

### **References**

Holling, M. & the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 2009. Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2006. *British Birds*, 102: 158-202

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

Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society

### **Acknowledgements**

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