

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Category A

Very rare vagrant

3 records

Cattle Egret has an almost cosmopolitan distribution in the tropics, being present in five continents. It has recently increased its range quite dramatically on a global scale, with noticeable increases in both numbers and range within Europe, although its stronghold remains in the Mediterranean basin. It first bred in Britain in 2008 in Somerset in 2008, with a single pair again present in this county in 2010 but there have not yet been any further signs of colonisation. The European population is partially migratory, and winters mainly in Iberia and North Africa.



Cattle Egret at Round Down (Paul Holt)

Overshooting migrants probably account for the bulk of British records that have occurred mainly in April and May, however the species is an inveterate wanderer and birds have appeared in all months of the year. There had been c.130 previous British records to 2006, but the species is no longer assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee. In Kent there had been 43 records to the end of 2014 (all of which have occurred since 1992). Kent records have mainly occurred between April and October, with April and May being the most popular months, but winter records have been increasing and there have been a number of long-staying individuals.

There have been three area records, as shown in figure 1:

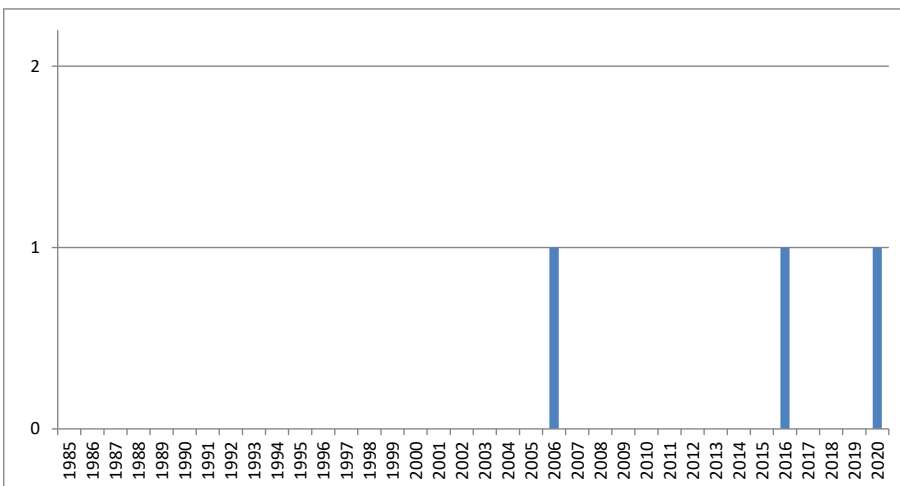


Figure 1: Cattle Egret records at Folkestone and Hythe

The first and third were found in April and the second in December, as shown in figure 2:

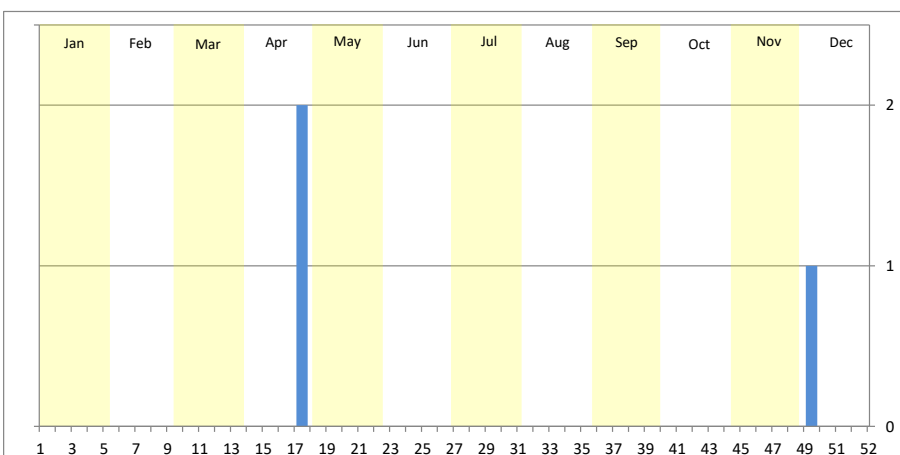


Figure 2: Cattle Egret records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The only area records are as follows:

2006 Samphire Hoe, one, 24th April (D. E. Smith)

2016 Round Down, one, 3rd December, photographed (M. C. Buckland, P. Holt *et al*)

2020 Copt Point, two flew east, 27th April (D. Featherbe)

An account of the first area record is given below.

Cattle Egret at Samphire Hoe

24th April 2006

(Derek E Smith)

Circumstances of the find:

On the afternoon of the 24th of April 2006 I decided to take one last walk around the Hoe before going home, on approaching the main pond I saw what I thought was a Little Egret, but getting closer to a distance of about 70/80 metres I realised that there was something different about this bird, i.e. head shape, short neck and a general hunched posture, and a short bill. A description was taken at the time and is given below. After about 5 minutes the bird flew off to the west.

Description of the bird:

Size and shape: short neck, general hunched posture, and different head shape to Little Egret.

Upperparts: mainly white, with buff cap/crest and buff mantle/scapulars.

Underparts: white.

Bare parts: short, yellow beak and legs greenish-brown.



Cattle Egret at Round Down (Paul Holt)