

## Rough-legged Buzzard

*Buteo lagopus*

Category A

Very rare vagrant

14 records

Breeds in high latitudes in subarctic and arctic Fenno-Scandia and Russia, largely in low-lying, treeless, tundra areas. In years favourable for prey, spills over into wooded tundra and even taiga, but, in contrast to Common Buzzard, at all seasons strongly prefers open terrain with good distant visibility and rough low-growing vegetation favourable to prey species.

Winters from the Baltic southwards to the Alps, Carpathians, northern Black Sea, and north Caucasus. A few cross the north sea to eastern Britain.

A rare passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent.

Henry Ulyyett in his *Rambles of a Naturalist Round Folkestone* (1880) includes the Rough-legged Buzzard in the list of species recorded in the neighbourhood of Folkestone, within a radius of six miles from the town hall. However this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of occurrence here. Harrison (1953) in his *The Birds of Kent* mentions one shot at Beachborough, near Folkestone on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1926 but again this might not necessarily be within the present boundaries.

The first certain occurrence in the Folkestone and Hythe area was when one was seen by H. Schreiber at Sandling Park in 1957. Another was seen in the Saltwood area by C. V. Nuttman on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1974 and according to a local farmer and one of his farmhands it had been present in the area since about late October, and they last reported in on the 1<sup>st</sup> February, whilst C. V. Nuttman saw it again over a nearby wood on the 6<sup>th</sup> February. The bird was described as being about a mile north of Saltwood.

There have been a further eleven records since 1985, including seven in the last seven years, as shown in figure 1. 2011 was the best year to date with three records involving four birds, including the only the second one ever that has lingered – a popular juvenile which frequented the Nickoll's Quarry area for at least six weeks in November/December.



Rough-legged Buzzard at Nickoll's Quarry (Ian Roberts)

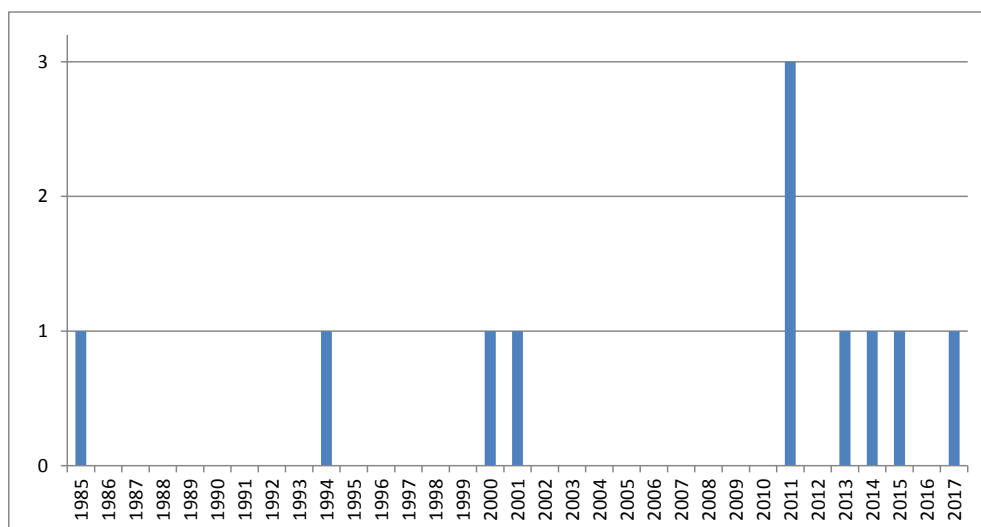


Figure 1: Rough-legged Buzzard records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Arrivals appear to be clustered into three distinct groups; autumn migrants between mid-October and mid-November, winter arrivals in late December and January, and spring migrants from mid-April to mid-May. The records by week are given in figure 2.

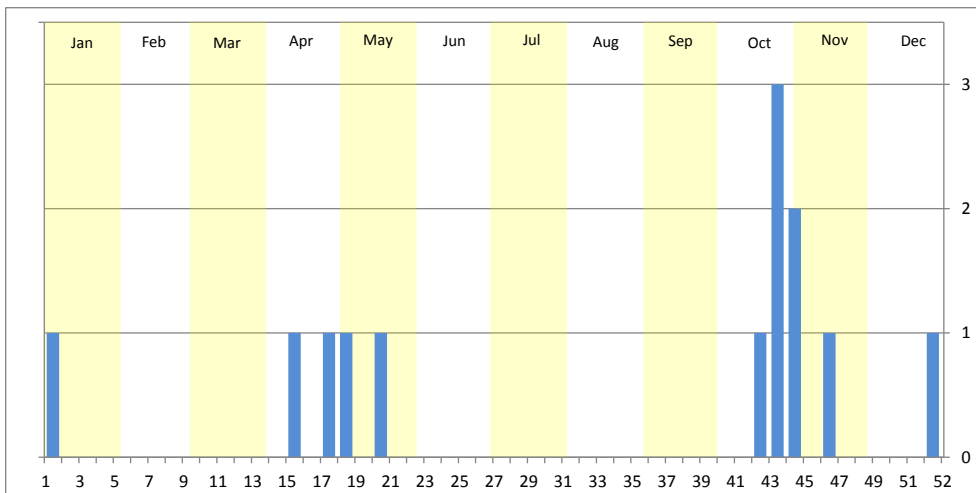


Figure 2: Rough-legged Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. This distribution relates to the single long-staying individual which wandered around the Nickoll’s Quarry / Botolph’s Bridge area late in 2011. Other records are fairly evenly split between Hythe/Saltwood (6), the Abbotscliffe/Capel-le-Ferne/Church Hougham area (4) and Cheriton/Folkestone (3).

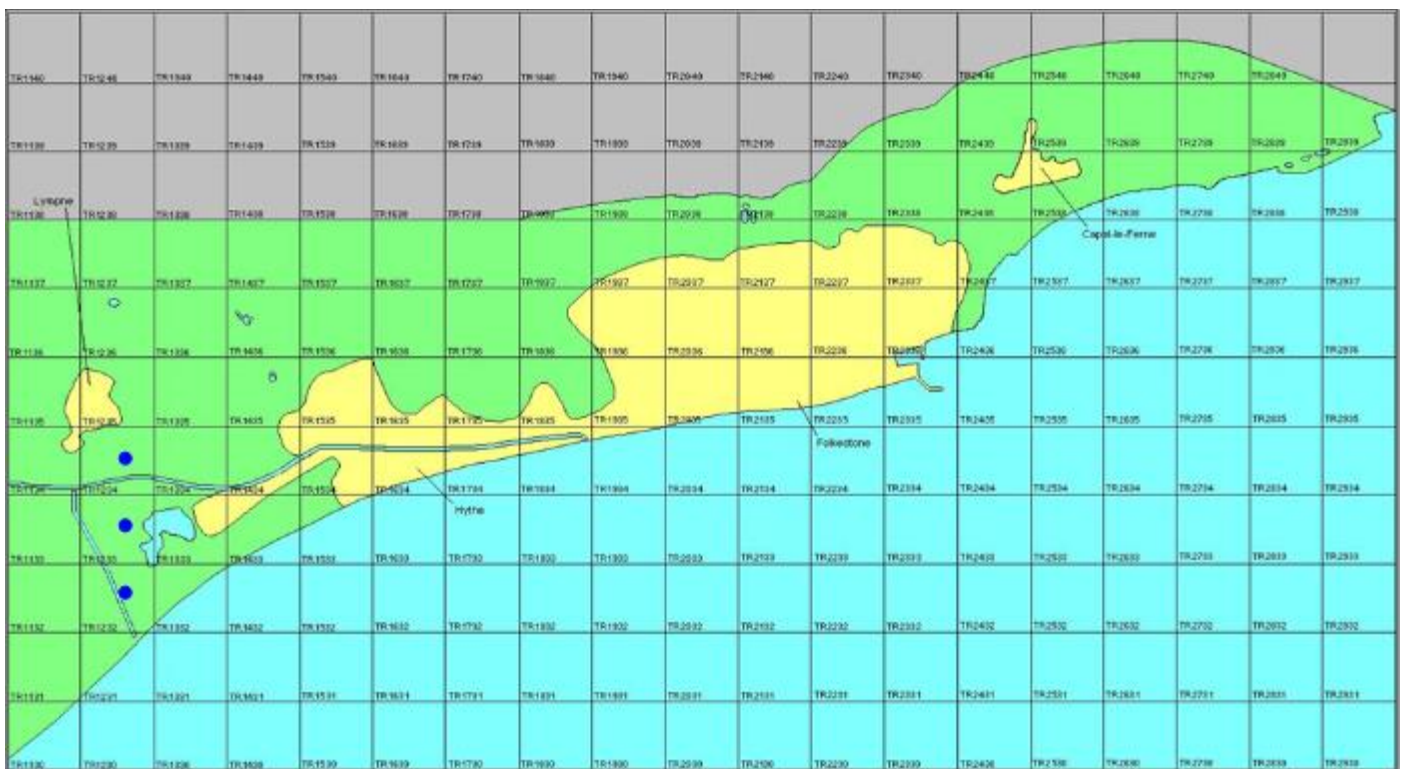


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Rough-legged Buzzard at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1957** Sandling Park, one, 15<sup>th</sup> October (H. Schreiber)
- 1974** Saltwood, one, 7<sup>th</sup> January, thought to have been present from late October and reported until 1<sup>st</sup> February, also seen nearby on 6<sup>th</sup> February (C. V. Nuttman)
- 1985** Folkestone, one, 29<sup>th</sup> January (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1985** Folkestone, one flew in off the sea, 29<sup>th</sup> December (D. Leach, per D. L. Davenport)
- 1994** Abbotscliffe, one landed in Church Wood then flew inland, 26<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Cheriton, one flew north north-east, 4<sup>th</sup> May (D. A. Gibson)
- 2001** Abbotscliffe, one flew north, 14<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts), later seen over Church Hougham
- 2011** Hythe, two flew north-east, 25<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew west, 14<sup>th</sup> May, photographed (D. A. Gibson)

**2011** Nickoll's Quarry, juvenile, 1<sup>st</sup> November to at least 19<sup>th</sup> December, possibly to 23<sup>rd</sup> December, photographed (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper *et al*)

**2013** Church Hougham, one flew west, 29<sup>th</sup> October (per Rare Bird Alert)

**2014** Saltwood, one flew north, 13<sup>th</sup> April (P. Howe)

**2015** Sandling, one, 24<sup>th</sup> October (B. Harper)

**2017** Saltwood, one, 25<sup>th</sup> October (B. Green)



Rough-legged Buzzard at Nickoll's Quarry (Brian Harper)



Rough-legged Buzzard at Nickoll's Quarry (Ian Roberts)

