

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

Category A

Formerly a breeding summer visitor and scarce passage migrant.
Now a very rare vagrant

6 records away from Nickolls Quarry

A widespread breeding species where suitable habitat exists across the Western Palearctic, being only completely absent from the far north and the Sahara. Winters in northern tropics of Africa.

A scarce breeding species in Kent (with 15 confirmed or probable breeding pairs in 2010), and a regular passage migrant.



Little Ringed Plover at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

The first Folkestone and Hythe area record was in 1957 when one stayed briefly in the old pit at Nickolls Quarry during the morning of the 29th April before flying off to the north.

The next area record came over twenty-five years later, when one was heard calling overhead at Hythe Ranges on the 5th May 1983, followed by another in the west pool at Nickolls Quarry on 4th August 1986. On 15th May 1988 one was seen in display flight at Nickolls Quarry but there were no further records until 1991, when one was again heard calling over Hythe Ranges on the 25th May and a pair probably bred at Nickolls Quarry.

From 1992 until 2006 it was regularly recorded at Nickolls Quarry, with breeding first confirmed in 1994, though it probably first occurred in 1991, or possibly even earlier. In the 1990s display was noted in at least seven years, being more intense in late April, and breeding was proved in four years and probably occurred in another three. Breeding was again confirmed in 2001, 2002 and 2004, and was attempted in 2003 and 2005 but the nest was abandoned. The final attempt at breeding in 2006 failed and just a single bird was recorded in 2007 (and this was only seen flying high overhead). The areas of shallow water and shingle islets favoured by the birds were filled in around this time and suitable habitat for breeding, or even attracting the species on passage, did not exist after 2007 until construction work in 2018 created some seasonal pools which again attracted a breeding pair.

In all instances just a single pair bred and raised two or three young when successful. In some years an additional adult was present in spring but counts never exceeded three adults except on two occasions, when four were seen on the 28th April 2002 and the 8th May 2005. The earliest date was 16th March (2002) and the latest was 18th April (1999), with the first arrival typically noted in late March or very early April.

Adults and juveniles seemed to desert the area in July, between the 7th and the 26th, and there are no records for the period 27th July to 5th August. Birds noted after this time were presumed to have been passage migrants, and were recorded in some but not all years during this period, as listed below:

1992 One on 10th August

1997 Three on 17th August

2000 Two on 6th August, one from 25th to 29th August, four from 4th to 17th September

2001 Singles on 9th, 20th and 27th August, then up to two in late August / early September

2002 Singles on 10th, 18th and 22nd August, then up to three between the 8th and 13th September

2004 Four from 8th to 9th August, with one remaining until the 11th August, then one on the 14th August

As well as the two records cited above, another was heard calling overhead at Hythe Ranges on the 29th May 1994. The records from this site in 1991 and 1994, and possibly even in 1983, seen likely to relate to wandering birds from nearby Nickolls Quarry.

This species has always been a very rare vagrant away from the Nickolls Quarry area and it has now returned to that overall status. There have been six records elsewhere, as shown in figure 1.

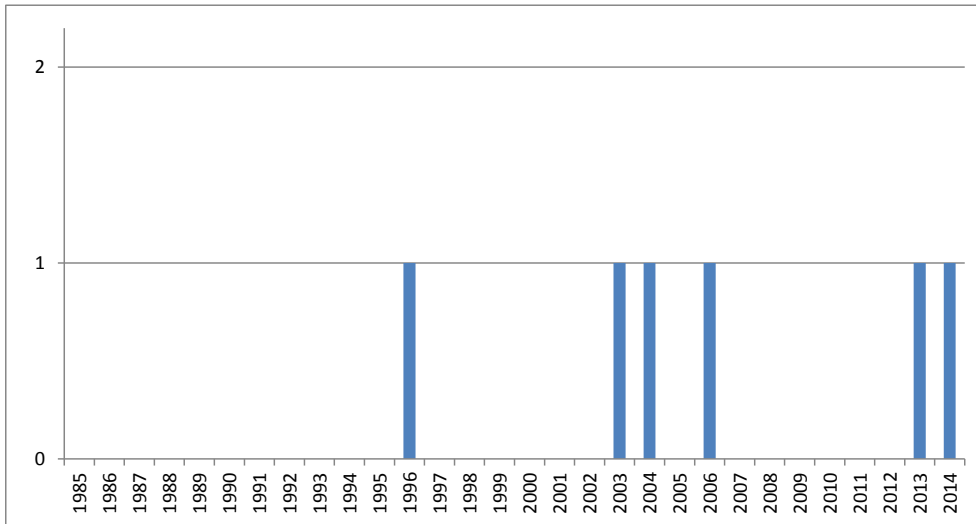


Figure 1: Little Ringed Plover records away from Nickolls Quarry since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Records have occurred in both spring and autumn, with two in three and singles in May, July and August, as demonstrated by figure 2. The last three records away from Nickolls Quarry have all occurred in week 12.

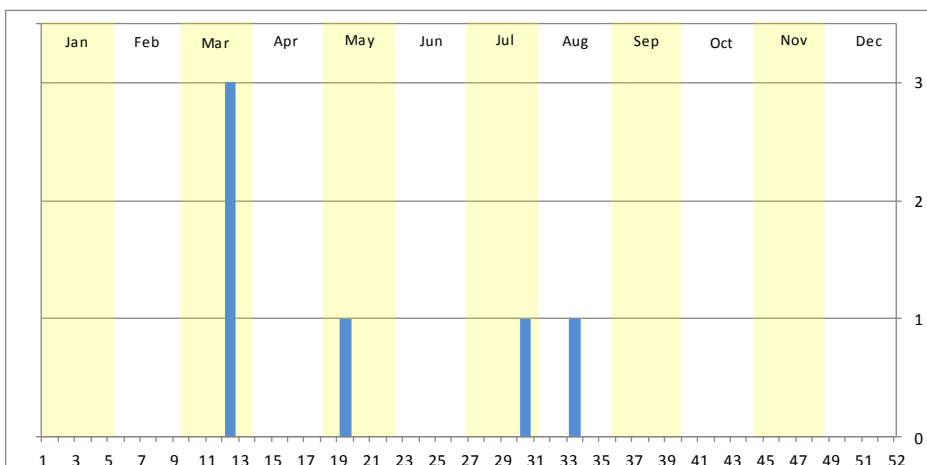


Figure 2: Little Ringed Plover records away from Nickolls Quarry at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Those records away from the Nickolls Quarry area are from Samphire Hoe (3), Copt Point, Capel-le-Ferne Café and most recently the Willop Basin.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1957** Nickolls Quarry, one briefly in the old pit then flew north, 29th April (R. K. Norman)
- 1983** Hythe Ranges, one calling overhead, 5th May (R. K. Norman)
- 1986** Nickolls Quarry, one in the west pool, 4th August 1986 (R. K. Norman)
- 1988** Nickolls Quarry, one in display flight, 15th May 1988 (R. K. Norman)
- 1991** Hythe Ranges, one calling overhead, 25th May (R. K. Norman)
- 1991 - 2006** Regular at Nickolls Quarry, as detailed above
- 1994** Hythe Ranges, one calling overhead, 29th May (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Copt Point, one flew east, 13th August (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Samphire Hoe, one, 27th July (G. J. A. Burton)
- 2004** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew in off the sea, 7th May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Samphire Hoe, one, 25th to 26th March (I. A. Roberts, G. J. A. Burton)
- 2007** Nickolls Quarry, one flew high south-west, 31st March (R. K. Norman)
- 2013** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 22nd March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2014** Willop Basin, one, 21st March (I. A. Roberts)

2018 Nickolls Quarry, pair, from 5th May, bred successfully with two young fledged. At least one adult regularly seen at Donkey Street, with the family group noted there on the 13th July, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)



Little Ringed Plover at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Little Ringed Plover at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)