

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

1 record

Has a localised and patchy breeding range across southern Europe extending across Asia to Australia, and into Africa, also inhabiting the Atlantic and Caribbean regions of the Americas. European breeders are migratory and dispersive, with a considerable nomadic element. Flocks form after breeding, adults and juveniles often separated, and the latter begin dispersing in all directions, sometimes to Britain. In autumn withdraws south of the breeding range with small numbers wintering in the Mediterranean basin west to Morocco but most European breeders are probably trans-Saharan migrants. Returns in spring and re-occupies colonies in April, with some overshooting to northern Europe.

A breeding population became established in Spain in 1996 and increased significantly since 2006, expanding into southern France. This has led to a marked change in status in Britain, particularly since 2007 when the first influx of over 20 birds occurred, with this being repeated in most years since, and it appears to be following the egret species on a range expansion into north-western Europe. It was removed from the list of species which the BBRC considers in 2013 and the first breeding attempt in Britain occurred in 2014.

In Kent there were five historical records cited by Harrison (1953), then one at Swanscombe in 1974 and a famous long-staying individual which frequented the Stour Valley from 1975, being joined by another in 1979, with both remaining until 1985 and one until 1993. There were further records at Dungeness in 1986, Brookland in 1990, and Dungeness in 2001 and 2007 before an exceptional influx in 2009 which involved eight records of up to 14 birds. The following year produced an unprecedented flock of 18 Dungeness and there have been almost annual sightings in the county since.

The only Folkestone and Hythe record to date relates to one seen by Pete Coleman as it flew north over Port Lympne on the 8th December 2014, as confirmed below.

2014 Port Lympne, one flew north, 8th December (P. Coleman)