

## Falcated Duck

*Anas falcate*

Category D

Possible vagrant

1 record

Breeds in Eastern Siberia from Yenisey River and Baikal region east to Sea of Okhotsk and south to North-east China and Hokkaido, Japan. Winters from southern Japan to South-east China, locally west to Nepal.

In the Netherlands, where there is no Category D or equivalent, the species features on the national list with 11 accepted records to the end of 2011. Max Berlijn, in an article in Dutch Birding in 2007, reviewed all records from the Western Palearctic and found that most occurred between October and June, which fits the main period when migratory wildfowl species occur in temperate latitudes.



Falcated Duck on canal at Palmmarsh (Ian Roberts)

These records are evenly spread over several decades, and include two from the nineteenth century. Since Falcated Ducks breed in cool temperate latitudes in Siberia and northern Japan, it could be argued that occasional May and June records are comparable with birds summering at latitudes similar to those where they breed – a comparable situation exists with Bufflehead in Britain, which also breeds at similar latitudes, where five of the 15 post-1950 records have been in May and June.

Birds which winter in Japan will associate with other ducks on town park lakes and join in the scramble for hand-outs as well as frequenting more 'natural' sites.

Analysis of British Bird Rarity Committee (BBRC) reports and Kent Bird Reports reveals a total of approximately 24 national and 3 county records, when known (colour-ringed) escapes are discounted and presumed returning birds allowed for. The dates of the first sightings are shown in figure 1 and these appear to show a pattern of arrivals from mid-October through until May. Although long-staying or returning birds have been seen in the summer months there no apparent new sightings have been reported between late May and mid-October. All birds recorded to date have been males. Presumably females and juveniles are over-looked.

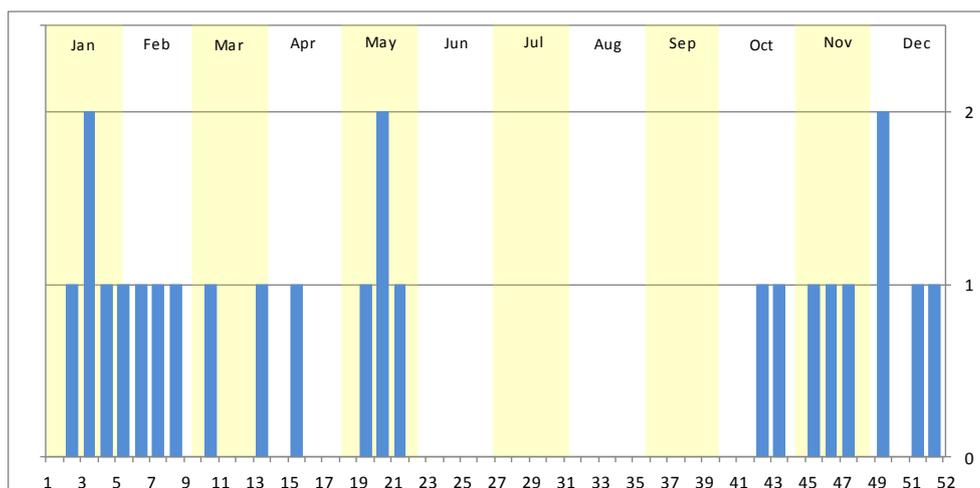


Figure 1: first sighting dates of Falcated Duck in Britain by week

The two other Kent records were both long-staying individuals. The first, at Motney Hill, was present from the 6<sup>th</sup> February to the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007, with presumably the same at Lower Rainham, from the 26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May of that year. The second was first seen in the Higham Bight area from the 18<sup>th</sup> to at least 24<sup>th</sup> December 2006, with presumably the same bird at Cliffe from the 21<sup>st</sup> January to the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007, and Swanscombe on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Presumably the same bird then again reappeared at Southfleet from the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008 intermittently until at least the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2009.

The only local record concerns a fine drake first sighted on the canal between West Hythe and Lympe on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2003, which was later seen on the canal at Palmarsh in late April and early May, then at Nickoll's Quarry on several dates in May and finally on the canal in Hythe Town (near Lady's Walk) on the 14<sup>th</sup> June.

Category D covers species which would otherwise appear in Categories A or B except that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a wild state. The debate on the origins of such birds tends to generate more heat than light, usually because, as with many other wildfowl that have both escape likelihood and vagrancy potential, it seems just like a best guess without ringing or isotope evidence. There is still a great deal to be learnt about the movements of Eastern Palearctic wildfowl, for example a Common Pochard that spent one recent winter at Slimbridge spent the following winter in the Sea of Japan. There are also however records of known (colour-ringed) escapes in Britain and it is likely that other instances do not get reported to the county or national recorders.

The sole Folkestone and Hythe record was included in the Kent Bird Report for the year under Category E (presumed escaped species).

Confirmation of the record is as follows:

**2003** West Hythe, Nickoll's Quarry and Hythe, male, 15<sup>th</sup> April to 14<sup>th</sup> June, photographed (I. A. Roberts, R. K. Norman, A. Clewes *et al*)



Falcated Duck at Nickoll's Quarry (Alan Clewes)



Falcated Duck on canal at Palmarsh (Ian Roberts)