

# Nightjar

*Caprimulgus europaeus*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

3 records

A widespread breeding species across much of Europe. Eastwards to Mongolia and northern China, with the entire population wintering in Africa. There has been a significant decline in range and numbers, especially in north-west Europe, mainly in the second half of the twentieth century and particularly since 1970, probably chiefly due to habitat loss and deterioration, and decrease in large insect prey through use of pesticides; also vulnerable to increasing leisure use of heathlands and to road-traffic (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

Clements *et al* (2015) describe a marked increase in Kent during the late 1980s and early 1990s due to clearance of damaged woodland following the 1987 storm, large scale felling and re-planting of conifer forests and widespread coppicing. A decline in the coppicing industry and the maturation of the other habitats has less to a steady decline in the Nightjar population in the county since (from 85 males in a survey in 1992 to 52 by 2004). Coastal migrants are also occasionally encountered in Kent (KOS, 2020).

The species was included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871). This list covered an area of six mile radius from Folkestone town hall. This range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area and so this does not provide conclusive evidence of its occurrence here.

There is no suitable breeding habitat in the local area so the few records relate to birds on migration.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1953 William Nevin found a dead Nightjar in a garden at "Oak Bank", 2 Tanners Hill, Hythe, which was "assumed to have flown into some object while on nocturnal migration" (KOS, 1954).

The only modern records are of one found roosting by day by Dale Gibson in Folkestone Warren on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1996 and one which Ade Jupp saw flying over Seabrook on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

The two modern records are shown in figure 1.

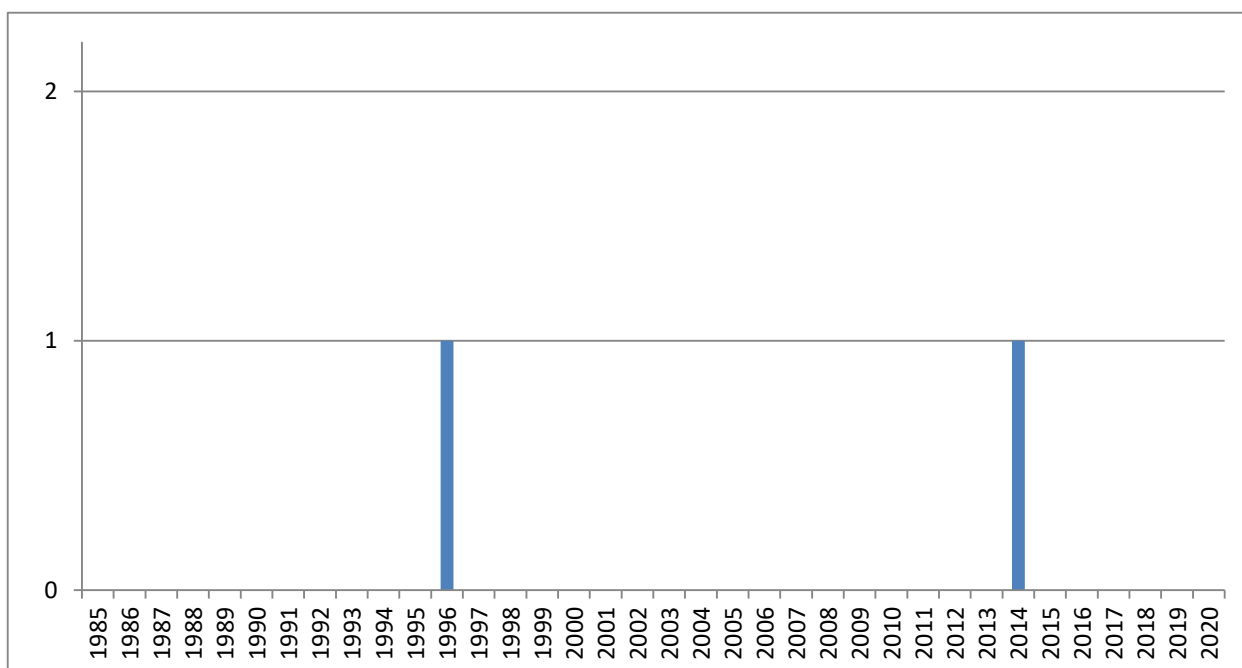


Figure 1: Nightjar records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

All records occurred in September, between the 12<sup>th</sup> (week 37) and 27<sup>th</sup> (week 39), as shown in figure 2.

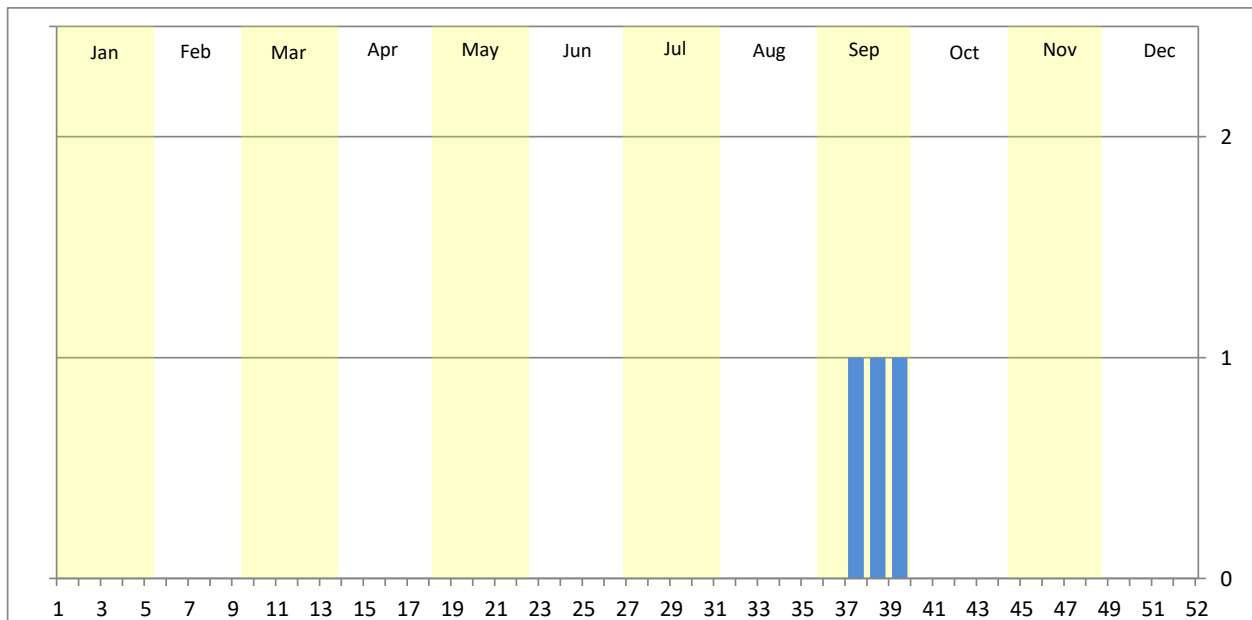


Figure 2: Nightjar records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Nightjar records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1953** Tanner's Hill, Hythe, one found dead, 27<sup>th</sup> September (W. S. Nevin)
- 1996** Folkestone Warren, one, 17<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts, A. F. Roberts)
- 2014** Seabrook, one flew over, 12<sup>th</sup> September (A. Jupp)

### References

Clements, R., Orchard, M., McCanch, N. & Wood, S. 2015. *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13*. Kent Ornithological Society

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

Knight, V. and Tolputt, F., 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood, *Folkestone Natural History Society Annual Report*, 1871

Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M., 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

### ***Acknowledgements***

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