

Canada Goose

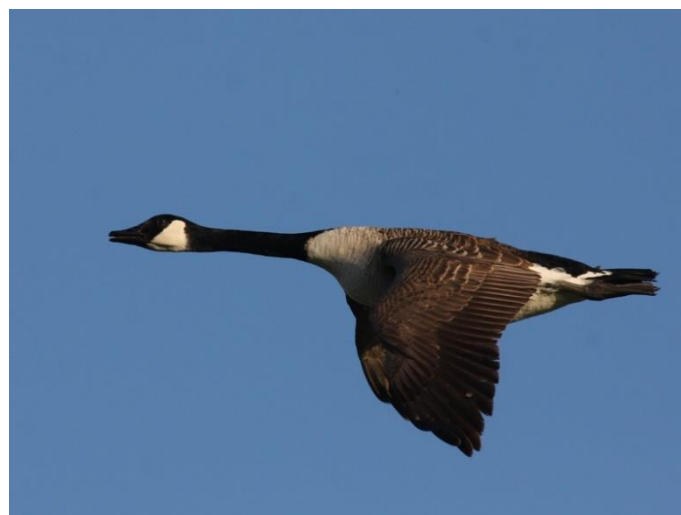
Branta canadensis

Category C1

One pair usually breeds annually but formerly more numerous. Otherwise can be a visitor at any time of year.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Native to North America, where it is distributed south to central USA, also in the north Pacific islands. Introduced into Europe (Britain, France, the Low Countries, Germany and Fenno-Scandia) and New Zealand. The indigenous population is migratory, with some reaching central Mexico. Some Fenno-Scandia breeders move south to continental Europe, but most introduced populations are largely sedentary.



Canada Goose at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Kent status (KOS 2021):

A common introduced resident species in Kent, particularly being found on inland waters.

The Canada Goose was not included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871) and Ticehurst (1909) did not admit this species to the county list. Although he noted that "several specimens of the Canada Goose have been obtained in Kent from time to time", and that these included "one in the Hammond collection in Canterbury that was shot at Beachborough", he remarked that "there is no reason for thinking that these are otherwise than wanderers from the numerous flocks that are kept in a semi-domesticated condition in different parks and ornamental waters in this country".

Breeding atlas distribution

Figure 1 shows the breeding distribution by tetrad based on the results of the 2007-13 BTO/KOS atlas fieldwork.



Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Canada Goose at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in one tetrad, with probable breeding in three more and possible breeding in one other. The table below shows how this compares to previous atlases (Taylor *et al.* 1981; Henderson & Hodge 1998). The confirmed and probable breeding categories have been combined to account for differing definitions of these in the first atlas.

| Breeding atlases | 1967 - 1973 | | 1988 - 1994 | | 2007 - 2013 | |
|--------------------|-------------|------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Possible | 0 | (0%) | 1 | (3%) | 1 | (3%) |
| Probable/Confirmed | 1 | (3%) | 1 | (3%) | 4 | (13%) |
| Total | 1 | (3%) | 2 | (6%) | 5 | (16%) |
| Change | | | +1 | (+100%) | +3 | (+150%) |

The table below shows the changes in tetrad occupancy across the three atlas periods.

| Trends | First to second atlas (1967-73 to 1988-94) | Second to third atlas (1988-94 to 2007-13) | First to third atlas (1967-73 to 2007-13) |
|--------|---|---|--|
| Local | +100% | +150% | +400% |
| Kent | +210% | +37% | +325% |

Taylor *et al.* (1981) described how it appeared to have started to become established in the county in the 1940s and spread slowly, augmented by introductions at Sevenoaks in 1956 and Dungeness in 1964. The first local record appears to be from the 1967-73 breeding atlas fieldwork (a pair in TR13 T), followed by a pair breeding at Nickolls Quarry in 1975. It was recorded as being “infrequent” at the latter site during the 1980s before a pair bred again in 1990. There were regular records thereafter and a pair bred in each year from 1992 to 1995, before the population increased to at least 12 pairs by 2000 and 15 pairs in 2001 to 2003. Increased backfilling of the quarry, closure of the works and subsequent extension of angling into hitherto restricted areas resulted in a loss of nesting sites and only two pairs bred in 2005 and 2006 (Norman 2007). A single pair has bred in most years since and continues to do so in 2020.

As mentioned above, in the 1967-73 atlas a pair was seen in TR13 T and in the most recent survey a pair was also present there (at the lake by Oak Banks in April 2011), though there are no records from the tetrad in the intervening years or since. In the 1988-94 atlas breeding was confirmed at Nickolls Quarry (as it was in the most recent) and a bird was also present (possible breeding) in TR13 E. The most recent survey also found single pairs present (though not confirmed breeding) in TR13 A (at the Willop Basin) and in TR13 J (where a pair more recently bred, raising six young at Horton Park Lakes, in 2020). The only other breeding occurrence involved a pair that raised at least one young at Donkey Street (TR13 B) in 2021 and nested again in 2022, although young were not noted.



Canada Goose family at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Canada Geese at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

The first double-figure count at Nickolls Quarry related to 24 in August 1991 before these became a regular occurrence, with a peak of 22 in August 1992, 31 in March 1994 and 53 in August of the same year and 51 in October 1995. The post-breeding flock continued to grow as the population increased and appeared to also be augmented by temporary visitors, with counts of 111 in August 1996 (increasing to 123 in September), 185 in September 1998, 125 in June 1999 (increasing rapidly during August to the current record count of 243 on the 27th), 165 in August 2000, 169 in July 2001, 147 in July 2002 and 200 in September 2003. The last three figure count from this period was 110 on the 28th September 2003 and the peak in 2004 was just 42 in August, with a maximum of 30 in August 2005, however 60 were reported flying east over the site on the 19th February 2006 (Norman 2007).

In recent years double-figure counts have become unusual although 51 were present on the 30th September 2018 and up to 119 were present at Nickolls Quarry between mid-September and mid-October 2021.

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Canada Goose by tetrad, with records in 19 tetrads (61%).

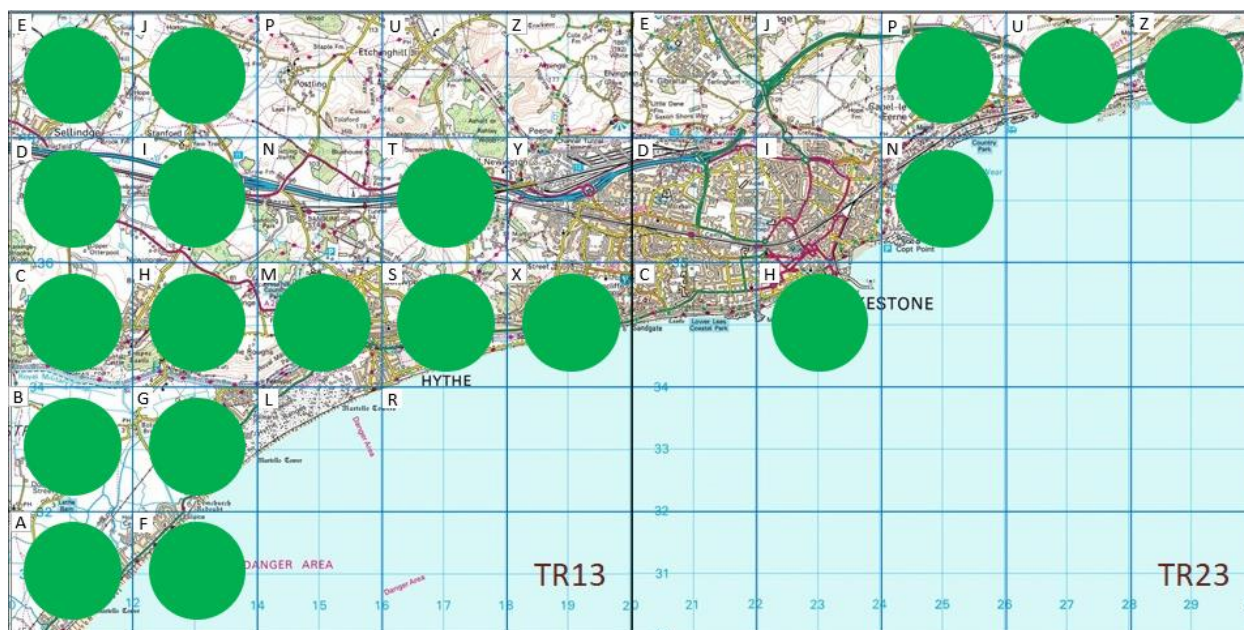


Figure 2: Distribution of all Canada Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Canada Geese have been recorded in 61% of tetrads, with a noticeable gap from the Cheriton/Folkestone area and inland of there. Wandering birds from the breeding population at Nickolls Quarry were probably responsible for most of the larger counts at other sites in the Hythe area between 1992 and 2005, including 32 flying east over Hythe on the 17th August 1992, 60 on the sea off the Hythe Redoubt on the 8th November 1998, 54 that flew east then back west over Hythe on the 23rd September 2000 and c.60 that flew north over Pennypot on the 17th August 2002.

Flocks of 25 heading north over Botolph's Bridge (and later seen at Pedlinge) on the 3rd January 2011, 51 at Donkey Street on the 5th September 2015 and 42 at the Willop Basin on the 2nd January 2018 however must have originated from further afield.

Smaller numbers have been noted at coastal watch points in most years, with larger counts having included 12 off Copt Point on the 24th January 1999, 12 on the sea off Capel-le-Ferne on the 9th June 2007, 16 on the sea off Copt Point on the 9th June 2012 and 32 flying west past Seabrook on the 5th June 2020.



Canada Geese at Donkey Street (Brian Harper)



Canada Geese at Copt Point (Ian Roberts)

References

Henderson, A. & Hodge, T. 1998. The Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 1988-94. *Kent Bird Report 1996*: 134-272.

Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2021. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.

Knight, V. & Tolputt, F. 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood. *Fourth Annual Report of the Folkestone Natural History Society*. Available at: www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46103

Norman, R. K. 2007. The Birds of Palmarsh Gravel Pit. <https://folkestonebirds.com/where-to-watch> (see "Further Information" section).

Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society.

Ticehurst, N. F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).

I am indebted to Andrew Henderson and Tim Hodge for providing access to the Kent Ornithological Society archives.



Canada Goose on nest at Donkey Street (Ian Roberts)