

Mistle Thrush

Turdus viscivorus Category A
Breeding resident.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):
Breeds across most of Europe eastwards to about 100°E, south to Iran and the north-west Himalayas. It is sedentary or dispersive in the south and west of its range, but migratory in the north and east, wintering from Belgium, through western and southern France to north-east Spain. British birds tend to be sedentary or make movements of less than 50km, though a proportion travel considerably further, some to France.

Kent status (KOS 2021):
In Kent it is a widespread but declining breeding species.



Mistle Thrush at Lower Wall Road (Brian Harper)

The Mistle Thrush 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 miles radius from Folkestone town hall, therefore extending further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so this does not provide conclusive evidence of its occurrence here. However, Ticehurst (1909) considered it to be “generally and universally distributed wherever there is a tree or bush suitable for its nest. Even in the marshes it breeds in the pollard-willows and thorn-bushes”. He continued to remark that “such a well-wooded county as ours offers nesting sites in abundance, but besides the woods themselves, this bird is particularly partial to hedgerow timber, and orchards”. There can be little doubt that it was to be found locally.

Breeding atlas distribution

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

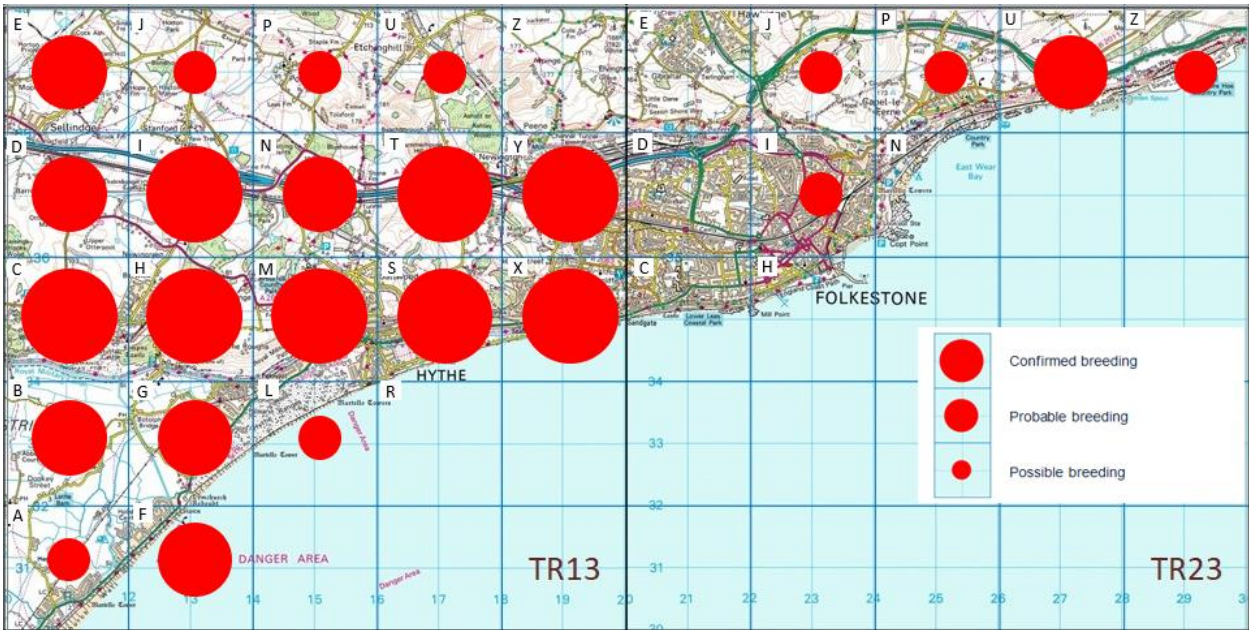


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Mistle Thrush at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in eight tetrads, with probable breeding in seven more and possible breeding in nine others. 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 | 1 | (3%) | 1 | (3%) | 9 | (29%) |
| Probable/Confirmed | 25 | (81%) | 28 | (90%) | 15 | (48%) |
| Total | 26 | (84%) | 29 | (94%) | 24 | (77%) |
| Change | | | +3 | (+12%) | -5 | (-17%) |

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 | +12% | -17% | -8% |
| Kent | +5% | -2% | +3% |

Balmer *et al.* (2013) reported on a breeding population decline across England which had been underway since the 1970s and encompassed a 35% decrease during 1995 to 2010. The reasons for this are unclear, although are likely to have been driven by reductions in annual survival. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) trend for south-east England showed an even more marked decline of 59% between 1995 and 2010.

Clements *et al.* (2015) reported that there had been a steady decline in numbers since the second county atlas, reflected in a reduction in occupied tetrads of 7% across in Kent (with a 17% reduction locally).

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Mistle Thrush by tetrad, with records in 30 tetrads (97%).



Figure 2: Distribution of all Mistle Thrush records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The largest counts often relate to post-breeding congregations, when flocks of 15 or more have been noted on five occasions:

- 15 at Nickolls Quarry on the 18th July 1998
- Up to 40 at Botolph's Bridge between mid-June and early July 2000
- Up to 15 in the Hougham Valley in June 2001
- 19 at Beachborough Park on the 18th August 2002
- Up to 31 at Beachborough Park between mid-July and late August 2017

There may be some indications of autumn passage, when counts have included:

10 north-west over Hythe Ranges on the 2nd October 1957
20 at Hythe Ranges on the 8th October 1961
16 south-east over Hythe Ranges on the 10th October 1961
16 west over Folkestone on the 14th October 1994
11 at Crete Road East on the 12th October 2013
10 south-east over Horn Street on the 8th September 2015
16 at Crete Road East on the 12th October 2015
24 over Beachborough Park on the 11th October 2016
28 west over Beachborough Park on the 26th October 2018



Mistle Thrush at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Mistle Thrush at Pond Hill Road (Brian Harper)



Mistle Thrush at West Hythe (Brian Harper)



Mistle Thrush at Lower Wall Road (Brian Harper)

There may be some movement in response to cold weather, including three of the five records at Samphire Hoe: singles on the 7th January 2009, 11th January 2010 and 15th January 2019. The other sightings there involved two flying east on the 12th October 2013 and one on the 10th July 2018.



Mistle Thrush at Pond Hill Road (Brian Harper)



Mistle Thrush at Lower Wall Road (Brian Harper)

Click [here](#) to listen to a local audio recording of one singing at Lympne on the 28th April 2022 (Ian Roberts).

References

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Acknowledgements

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

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