

Teal

Anas crecca

Category A

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

A widespread breeding species across much of northern Europe and Asia. The British population is largely resident, moving only in severe weather, but birds that breed in more northern and eastern areas migrate south and west to winter in Britain and the Low Countries, moving on to France and Iberia in cold spells.

Kent status (KOS 2021):

It is currently a scarce breeding species in Kent, as well as a passage migrant and common winter visitor.



Teal at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

The Teal 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, although it would have been more likely to have occurred in the lowland and coastal habitats that lie within the current boundaries. Furthermore, Ticehurst (1909) considered it to be, as a non-breeding bird, "abundant in the fleets and reed-beds of Romney Marsh in close proximity to the coast", also to "visit certain quiet pools in the woods", which rather neatly encapsulates its modern distribution.

Ticehurst also wrote that, as a breeding bird, although it was "nowhere numerous [it was to be found] in the drier parts of the Romney Marsh" and referred to nesting in the woods immediately joining Romney Marsh, such as the Orlestone Forest district. Taylor *et al.* (1981) remarked on a marked increase in the north of the county, but with a decrease in the south and east due to drainage, noting that the "the number of nesting pairs on Romney Marsh has shown a marked decline since Ticehurst's time".

Locally, there were no documented records however until the 1950s, when Roger Norman began watching the area that is now Nickolls Quarry. After noting two drakes there on the 17th January 1951 he found to be of regular occurrence between the months of August and April, with a peak count of 11 on the 22nd August 1957 (Norman 2007). He also noted from Hythe Ranges that it was "seen flying past offshore extremely infrequently in ones and twos" (Norman 2006). Elsewhere H. Schreiber counted 70 at Sandling Park on the 20th January 1960.



Teal at Chesterfield Wood (Ian Roberts)



Teal at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

None were noted after 1962 which was no doubt to a lack of coverage, as Dave Weaver again found it to be frequent in the Nickolls Quarry area from 1978, including counts of 24 on the 11th January 1978, 24 on the 14th January 1982 and 38 on the 21st February 1982. Elsewhere Neil Frampton noted a pair to the west of West Hythe dam on the 2nd February 1982, however commented that this was only time that he had recorded the species along the canal between 1980 and 1985.

Rob Lee saw one at Copt Point on the 17th and 18th September 1984 and Ian Roberts saw two flying west past Mill Point on the 1st September 1988, since when it has proved to be a regular passage migrant and common winter visitor.

Breeding atlas distribution

There was no evidence of breeding detected in the 2007-12 BTO/KOS atlas fieldwork period but the species did appear in the previous atlas, with two instances of possible breeding (in TR13 G and TR13 M). Birds have lingered at Nickolls Quarry and lakes in the Saltwood area into April which presumably gave rise to these records. The results of the recent atlas are confirmed in the table below, with comparison to previous atlases (Taylor *et al.*; Henderson & Hodge 1998).

Breeding atlases	1967 - 1973		1988 - 1994		2007 - 2013	
Possible	0	(0%)	2	(6%)	0	(0%)
Probable/Confirmed	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Total	0	(0%)	2	(6%)	0	(0%)
Change			+2	(--%)	-2	(-100%)

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%	0%
Kent	+24%	-41%	-27%

Breeding has never been confirmed locally and Clements *et al.* (2015), reviewing the most recent atlas results, commented that small numbers “remain well into the spring, often in pairs, and some stay throughout the summer. It is not certain how many of these attempt to breed, and it is likely that some, perhaps the majority, of records of possible and probable breeding really referred to non-breeding birds”.

There have been no local records in May (except a few coastal migrants in first half of the month) but there have been several sightings at Nickolls Quarry in June. In 1996 a female lingered between the 4th June and the 28th July, in 2001 a pair were seen on the 4th June and up to five birds were present between the 23rd and 26th June, in 2002 one was seen on the 24th and 25th June, in 2003 a drake was present from the 22nd to 25th June and in 2005 four were seen on the 26th June. Elsewhere a female was seen on the canal in Hythe on the 13th June 2009, three were at Samphire Hoe on the 26th June 2005, two were seen there on the 15th June 2015 and two were at Donkey Street on the 6th June 2018.



Teal at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)



Teal at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Overall distribution

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Teal by tetrad, with records in 21 tetrads (68%).

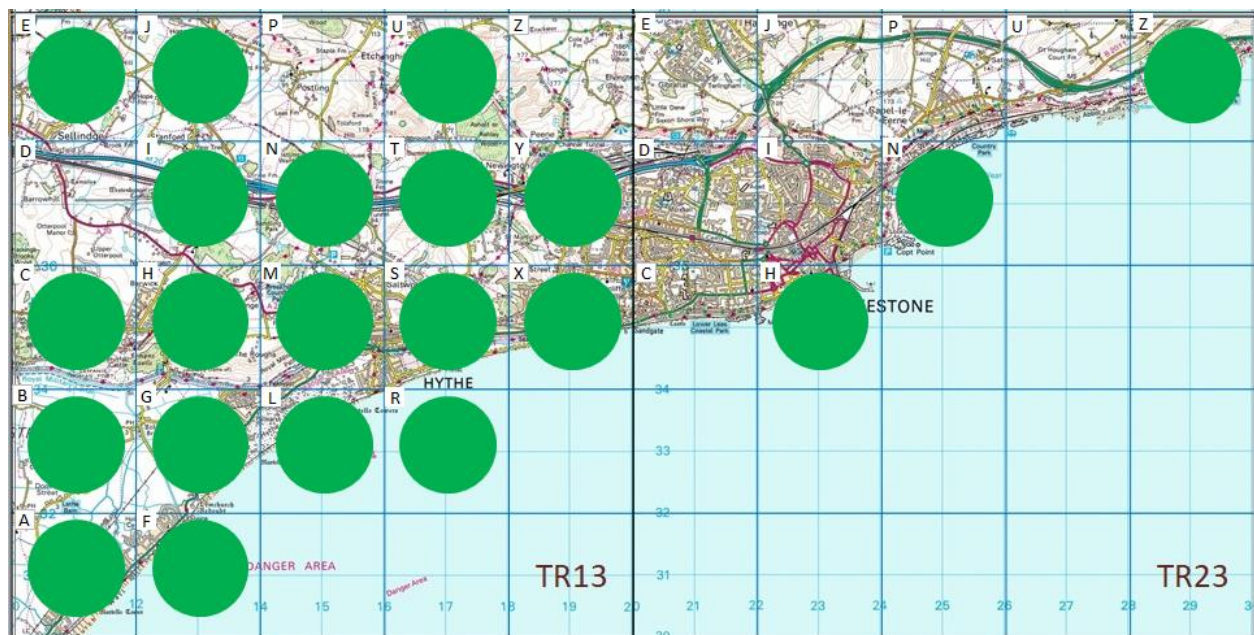


Figure 1: Distribution of all Teal records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

It is relatively scarce in July and autumn arrival is usually noted in small numbers from August, with a peak count in that month of 16 at Nickolls Quarry on the 10th August 2001.

Larger numbers in September and October have included counts of 25 at Botolph's Bridge on the 19th September 1994, 25 flying past Copt Point on the 23rd September 2002, 25 at Nickolls Quarry on the 2nd September 2003, 41 flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 9th October 2011 and 48 flying west there on the 11th September 2005.

Numbers generally increase during November and usually peak between December and February, when three-figure counts have involved:

- 100 at Nickolls Quarry on the 21st December 2010
- 100 at Chesterfield Wood on the 2nd January 2012
- 105 at the Willop Basin on the 23rd December 2014
- 100 at Chesterfield Wood on the 12th December 2016
- 130 at Chesterfield Wood on the 20th January 2017
- 180 at Chesterfield Wood on the 17th February 2017
- 180 at Chesterfield Wood on the 5th January 2019
- 112 in the Donkey Street/Willop Basin area on the 12th February 2021
- 120 at the Willop Basin on the 1st January 2022

Small offshore movements can occur at any time and may be (but frequently are not) associated with the onset of cold weather. One particular count on the 8th December 2012 is worthy of note when, in a chilly north-easterly wind, there was a spectacular movement of wildfowl including a record count of 400 Teal (with some groups on the sea and others flying east) off the Willop Outfall, with a further 135 flying east past Mill Point later in the day.

A small offshore up-channel passage may be evident in spring, with counts of over 20 being notable: 21 east past Samphire Hoe on the 23rd March 2013, 22 east Copt Point on the 20th April 2003, 33 east there on the 6th April 2002, 39 east there on the 2nd April 2004 and 49 east past Copt Point on the 10th March 1995. Very few have been noted into May, with the latest sighting referring to two flying east past Copt Point on the 12th May 2000.

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Teal at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)

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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