

# Common Redpoll

*Acanthis flammea*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

1 record,  
2 birds

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998; Balmer et al. 2013):*

The nominate form *A. f. flammea* (Mealy Redpoll) breeds in Fenno-Scandia and northern Russia, eastwards throughout northern Asia south to 53°N, also across Alaska and northern Canada. European birds mostly migrate south-east in autumn to winter chiefly in European Russia, but variable numbers remain in Fenno-Scandia, more in years with a large seed crop of birch. It occurs in Britain as a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, mostly in northern areas, with occasional irruptions. The form *A. f. rostrata* (Greenland Redpoll) breeds in Iceland, where it is probably resident, and in north-east Canada and southern Greenland, from where it migrates to Iceland in winter, with a few reaching Britain and Ireland (chiefly north-west Scotland) each year. A few pairs of both forms have been reported to have bred in northern Scotland on occasion.

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

It is a scarce winter visitor and passage migrant in the county, also may be overlooked especially on visible passage.

Knight & Tolputt (1871) included the Lesser Redpoll but not the Common Redpoll in the "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871), whilst Ticehurst (1909) considered the Common Redpoll to be an irregular winter visitor to Kent and referred to two in the Folkestone Museum that "were obtained locally", but unfortunately this is insufficient information to determine whether this was within the local boundaries.

Ticehurst also mentioned "a phenomenal influx" into the county in late 1895, when he recounted how "the bird-catchers on the hills above Dover netted as many as two hundred a day when they first arrived, and thereafter five or six dozen daily during the next two weeks". Harrison (1953) was able to note a second mass immigration from October 1910, with "vast numbers present on the south coast of Kent during the month of November, and many taken in the nets of the bird-catchers".

Whilst these events appear to have taken place fairly locally, neither included specific mention of the Folkestone and Hythe area, although two that were obtained at Hythe in February 1911 (and displayed in the Maidstone Museum) had presumably overwintered following the arrival the previous autumn.

By the time of Taylor *et al.* (1981) there had been no further large autumn invasions and Kent Bird Reports since have recorded only small numbers, with no further local area records. Most local sightings of "redpolls" however involve birds seen flying over on visual passage, when this species could easily be overlooked amongst the more common Lesser Redpolls, as they cannot be safely identified by their calls.

The only confirmed local record is as follows:

**1911** Two obtained at Hythe in February, later displayed in the Maidstone Museum (per N. F. Ticehurst).

Unfortunately, this record has insufficient detail to assign it to a week of occurrence or to a tetrad.

## References

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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](http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46103)

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

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

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