

# Quail

*Coturnix coturnix*

Category A

Formerly bred, now a very rare 6 modern records  
vagrant.

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):*

A widespread breeding species across Europe, though patchily distributed in Britain and Ireland and largely absent from Fenno-Scandia. The majority of the European population are believed to be trans-Saharan migrants (Snow & Perrins 1998).

*Kent status (KOS 2021):*

Scarce passage migrant and summer visitor, rare in winter.

Ticehurst (1909) stated that the Quail has bred at one time or another in every part of the county and provided a number of specific accounts. One of these related to Mr. Benjamin Turner (gamekeeper to Major H. W. Deedes of the Saltwood Castle estate) who informed him that a pair bred regularly at Aldington (just outside the local area) from 1836 to 1840 before their favoured hedge was grubbed. Up till the 1890s he used to meet with the birds every year in autumn, he frequently shot five or six in a day, and found them particularly abundant on the high ground overlooking Romney Marsh. He did most of his shooting within the Saltwood Castle estate so presumably a number of these birds would have been met with in the local area. Ticehurst also noted a decline in numbers towards the end of the nineteenth century. These records may have been the basis for its inclusion in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871).

Harrison (1953) added another local record, recounting how Mr. F. A. C. Munns flushed one on Slodden Farm, close to Burmarsh Station (in TR13 A) "round about" the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1949. He was able to document only sporadic breeding, mostly in the east and south, and lamented that "there is of course no doubt at all that the Quail might be a good deal more common and regular in its appearances in the county were the present day pace of agricultural practice less impetuous".

There are two further documented historical records, with H. Schreiber hearing one singing at Sandling Park on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1959 and C. Moore seeing one on a railway bank at Cheriton on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1960, whilst a few years later Rowland (1968) writing about "bird watching around Folkestone" stated that "in spring and early summer it is not very unusual to hear a three-note call sounding like 'quic-quic-ic' or 'wet-mi-lips' coming from some downland field".

Taylor *et al.* (1981) described it as a scarce summer visitor to the county, breeding occasionally, and mentioned that there were infrequent invasion years when higher numbers would arrive.

There have only been six modern records of Quail in the Folkestone and Hythe area, although three of those have occurred in the last three years.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

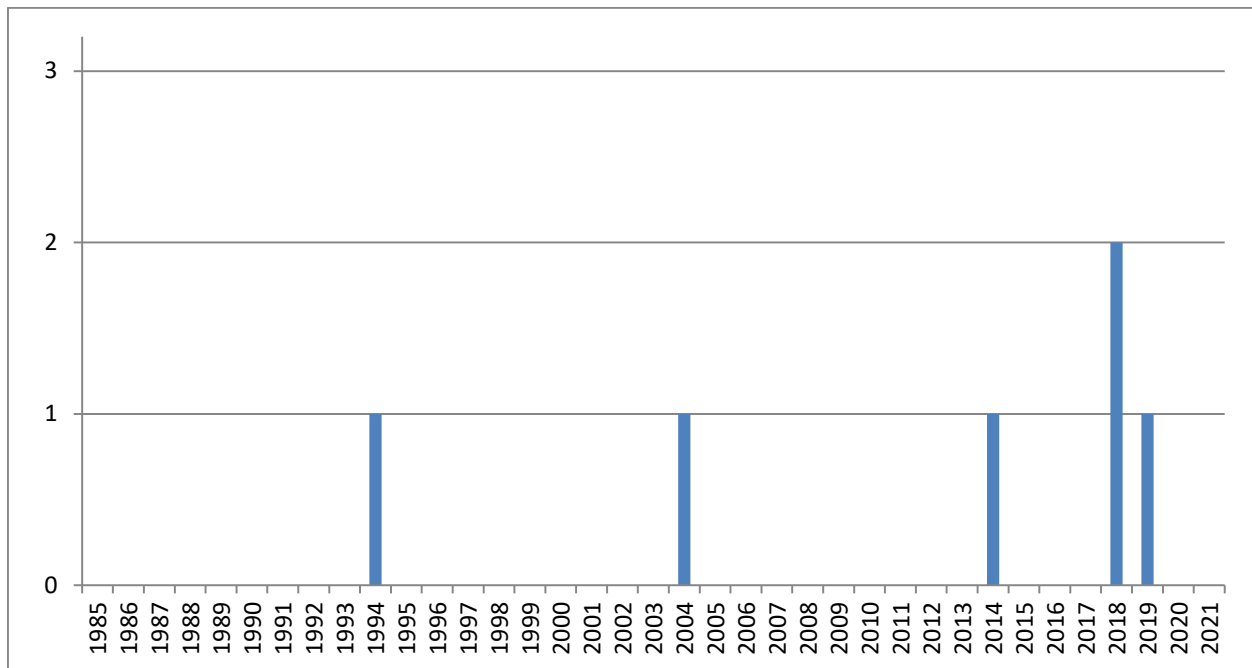


Figure 1: Quail records at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are given in figure 2.

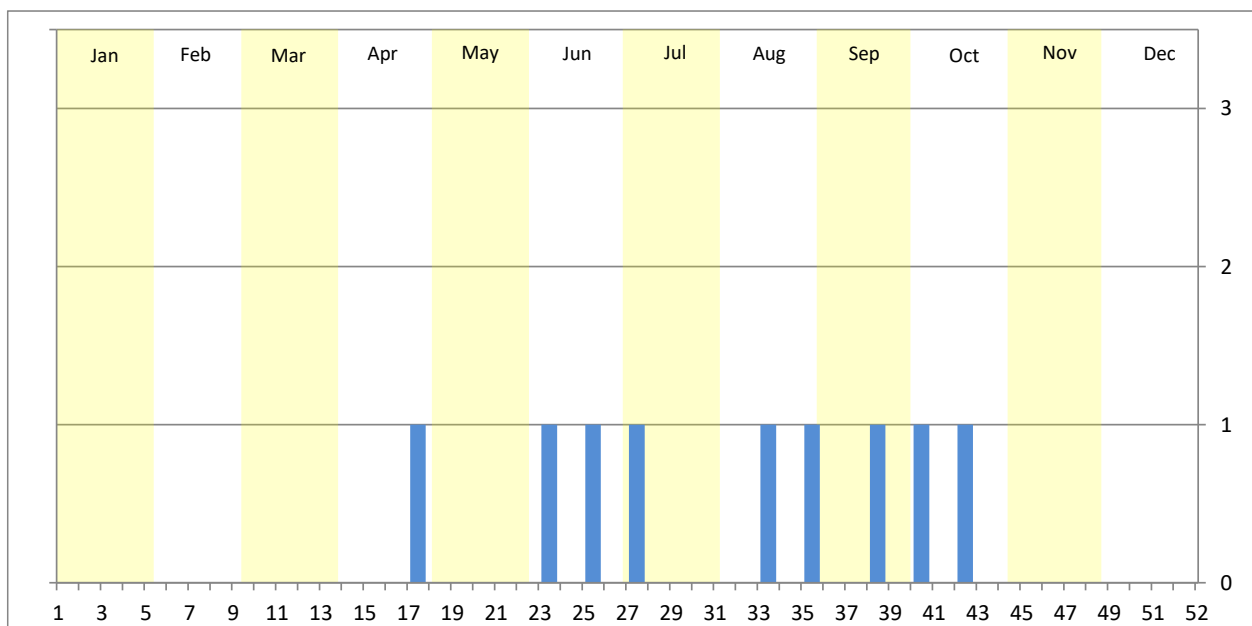


Figure 2: Quail records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



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

The dated records are well spread, as demonstrated by figure 2, with records from every month between April and October, and two in June, August and October. The modern records are considered to relate to migrants though one calling at Beachborough Lakes on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018 could have involved a local breeder.

The records of presumed migrants were from Abbotscliffe (four) and Nickolls Quarry.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1959** Sandling Park, singing, 4<sup>th</sup> July (H. Schreiber).
- 1960** Cheriton, seen on a railway bank, 15<sup>th</sup> August (C. Moore).
- 1994** Abbotscliffe, flushed from field, 1<sup>st</sup> October, (Dale A Gibson).
- 2004** Abbotscliffe, flushed from cliff-edge then flew inland, 24<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts).
- 2014** Abbotscliffe, flushed from arable field, 31<sup>st</sup> August (M. D. Kennett).
- 2018** Nickolls Quarry, flew over singing at night, 10<sup>th</sup> June (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts).
- 2018** Beachborough Lakes, singing, 21<sup>st</sup> June (S. Tomlinson).
- 2019** Abbotscliffe, flushed from stubble field, 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October (M. D. Kennett).

## References

- Harrison, J. M. 1953. *The Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.
- Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2021. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.
- Knight, V. & Tolpitt, 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)
- Rowland, H. M. 1968. *Some aspects of the Natural History of the Folkestone District*. The Invicta Press, Ashford.
- Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.
- 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.