

# Jack Snipe

*Lymnocyptes minimus*

Category A

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Breeds in Fenno-Scandia eastwards across Siberia to around 160°E. Winters mainly in western and southern Europe, North Africa, the northern Afrotropics and the northern Middle East eastwards to Vietnam (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

In Kent it is a scarce but regular winter visitor and passage migrant (KOS, 2020).



Jack Snipe at the Willop Basin (Ian Roberts)

Knight and Tolputt included the Jack Snipe in their “list of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871), however this list covered an area of six mile radius from Folkestone town hall and extended further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of local occurrence.

The first documented record involved one seen by Roger Norman at Nickolls Quarry on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1951 and he found it to be regular at this site in the 1950s, with a peak of three present in January 1957. The earliest arrival was noted on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1957 and the latest departure on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1957. Roger also noted in at nearby Hythe Ranges in every year between 1957 and 1960 at a pool close to the A259 at the western end, with a peak of five in March 1957, 1959 and 1960. Geoffrey Manser also noted one along the Royal Military Canal near Palmarsh in the second week of February 1956.

There were no records in the 1960s or 1970s which seems very likely to reflect a lack of coverage, whilst Peter Wells recorded it on a single occasion at Biggin’s Wood in the 1980s.

It was recorded almost annually at Nickolls Quarry between 1991 and 2017 before much of the favoured habitat was destroyed due to the site being developed into a housing estate. Three or four were noted in many winters between 1996 and 2014, with a peak of five present on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015. The only records since January 2017 have comprised a migrant on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and two during severe weather on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Jack Snipe by tetrad, with records in 14 tetrads (45%).



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

There have been annual records at the Willop Basin since 2016, with up to three in most winters, and it has also been recorded annually at Donkey Street since 2018, with a peak of two in March and November 2018.

A range of other sites have produced winter records, often a consequence of birds being displaced during hard weather, although this species can be under-recorded due to its skulking nature and some areas are perhaps occupied with some regularity. There have been winter records from flooded fields inland of New Beach holiday Park (TR13 F) and the Dymchurch Redoubt (TR13 G), from a marshy area at Fairmead Farm (TR13 I), from a stubble field near Hillhurst Farm (TR13 I), from wet flushes at Brockhill Country Park (TR13 M), from rough ground at Princes Parade (TR13 S), from the stream running out of Beachborough Lakes (TR13 T), from wet flushes at Casebourne Wood (TR13 Y), from the lower lake at Radnor Park (TR23 I), from the spring at Holy Well (TR23 J), from the pond at Copt Point (TR23 N), from a stubble field at the eastern end of Abbotscliffe (TR23 Z) and from the small stream and ponds at Samphire Hoe (TR23 Z). The only sites to produce a count of more than one are Fairmead Farm (two on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2009) and Samphire Hoe (two on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2013).



Jack Snipe at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

The only September records are from Nickolls Quarry in 1957 and the earliest arrival in recent years involved one at Abbotscliffe on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2006, with another there on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1998 (increasing to two the following day) and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007. The first arrival is typically in the second half of October or even into November.

The only May records are also from Nickolls Quarry in 1957 and the latest departures in recent years have been at Beachborough Lakes on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and at Nickolls Quarry on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

### **References**

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

Knight, V. and Tolputt, F., 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood, *Folkestone Natural History Society Annual Report*, 1871

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

### **Acknowledgements**

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Jack Snipe at Holy Well (Elliot Ranford)