

Nuthatch

Sitta europaea Category A
Breeding resident.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):
Breeds across most of Europe, except in some of the more northern areas, and widely in northern Asia east to Sakhalin Island and Japan, continuing through north-east China south to the Indian sub-continent. It is chiefly sedentary, with limited dispersal, perhaps only of young birds.

Kent status (KOS 2021):
In Kent it is a widespread resident, but almost absent on the north Kent marshes, Thanet and Romney Marsh.



Nuthatch at Brockhill Country Park (Brian Harper)

The Nuthatch 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 “fairly numerous over the greater part of the county, where there are woods, orchards, and well-timbered parks, and is not infrequently seen in gardens where there are large and old trees”. He notes that “in the open ground in the south-east ... of the county it is naturally scarce, though in the wooded districts immediately adjoining it is not uncommon”. This is a similar situation to the present day, so there can be little doubt that 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 Nuthatch at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was not confirmed in any tetrads but there was probable breeding in two tetrads and possible breeding in four 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%)	3	(10%)	5	(16%)
Probable/Confirmed	5	(16%)	5	(16%)	2	(6%)
Total	6	(19%)	8	(26%)	7	(23%)
Change			+2	(+33%)	-1	(-13%)

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	+33%	-13%	+17%
Kent	+65%	+29%	+114%

Balmer *et al.* (2013) documented how the abundance of the Nuthatch in Britain has steadily increased since the 1970s, accompanied by a range expansion into northern England and southern Scotland. The increase appears to be linked to improved breeding success, but the ecological drivers are unclear. Clements *et al.* (2015) noted that the BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) trend for south-east England had shown a 54% increase over the period 1995 to 2012, which was confirmed by a steady increase in occupied tetrads in Kent over the past Atlas periods.

However, Clements *et al.* remarked that the change map for the county was most intriguing and seemed to show three separate zones. In the west of Kent there had appeared to be little change, but in the central band there were many gains, whilst by contrast in east Kent there were more losses than gains. This held true locally, where there were losses from four tetrads: TR13 C (probable/confirmed breeding), TR23 C (possible), TR23 P (possible) and TR23 U (possible) and gains from three: TR13 J (possible), TR13 T (possible) and TR23 E (possible).

The only tetrads where it was recorded in both of the most recent surveys (TR13 H, TR13 I, TR13 S and TR13 T) cover the species' core range of the woods around Hythe and Saltwood, as follows:

Tetrad	Site(s)
TR13 H	Folks' Wood, Lympne Park Wood
TR13 I	Kiln Wood, Perry Wood
TR13 M	Brockhill Country Park
TR13 N	American Garden, Chesterfield Wood, Cowtye Wood, Heane Wood, Thorn Wood, Willow Wood

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Nuthatch by tetrad, with records in 16 tetrads (52%).

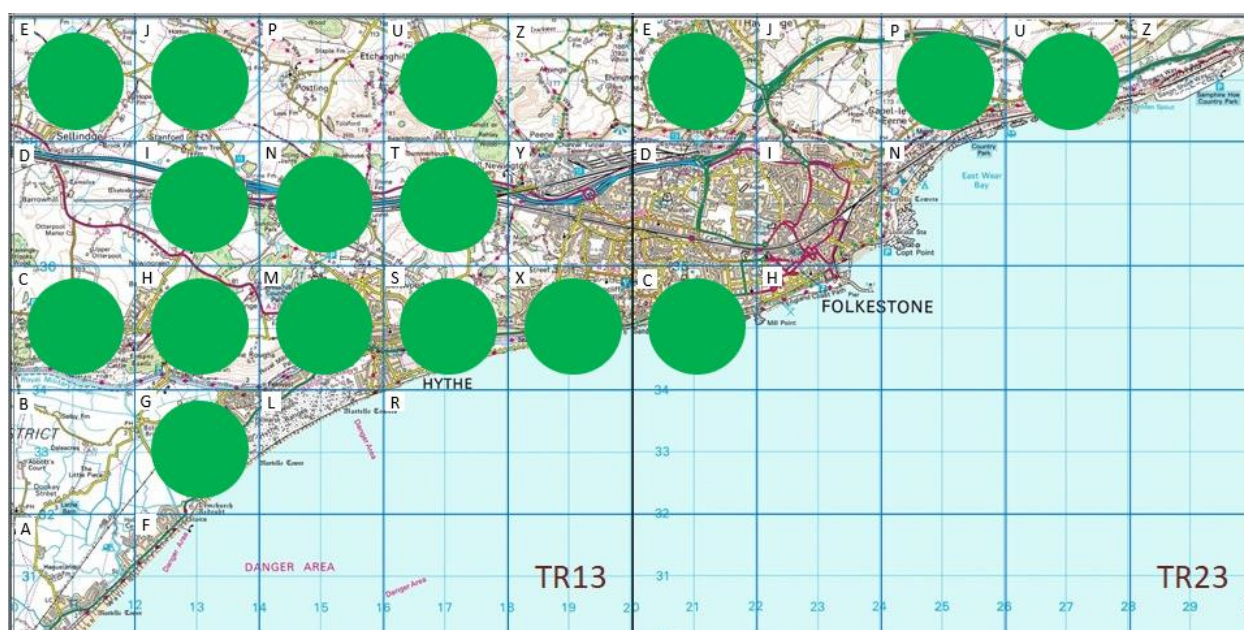


Figure 2: Distribution of all Nuthatch records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

This species exhibits only limited dispersal and a couple of sightings away from breeding habitat, presumably involving wandering young birds, are worthy of note: on the 26th June 1997 one was noted at Capel Battery and one the 5th June 2012 one flew over Botolph's Bridge, circled the field opposite and flew toward Nickolls Quarry (both represented the first and only records for those sites).



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Click [here](#) to listen to a local audio recording of one signing at Folks' Wood on the 28th March 2022 (Ian Roberts).

References

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Nuthatch at Beachborough Park (Steve Tomlinson)

Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/get-a-map) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk).

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