

# Common Sandpiper

*Actitis hypoleucos*

Category A

Passage migrant, occasionally overwinters.

Breeds across much of Europe, west-central Asia and in northern Asia east to Kamchatka and Japan. In Britain it breeds in the uplands of Wales, northern England and Scotland. Small numbers winter within the maritime climatic zone of western Europe north to Britain and around the Mediterranean Basin, but the majority winter in Africa, with eastern populations in southern Asia to Melanesia and Australia (Snow & Perrins, 1998, Balmer *et al*, 2013).

In Kent it is a widespread passage migrant, with small numbers overwintering (KOS, 2020).



Common Sandpiper at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Knight and Tolputt included the Common Sandpiper 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 records date from the 1950s, when Roger Norman considered it to be a regular passage migrant through Nickolls Quarry. He noted spring passage between the 22<sup>nd</sup> April (1958) and 4<sup>th</sup> June (1960) and autumn migration between the 15<sup>th</sup> July (1959) and 23<sup>rd</sup> September (1958), with a peak count in spring of eight in May 1950 and in autumn of seven on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1957. He also recorded singles at Hythe Ranges on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1957 and Botolph’s Bridge on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1961.

There were few records in the 1960s or 1970s which seems very likely to reflect a lack of coverage. In the early 1980s Peter wells noted that it visited the clay pit at Biggin's Wood, whilst Neil Frampton recorded it at West Hythe in each spring and autumn between 1980 and 1985, Dave Weaver counted a peak of eight at Nickolls Quarry on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1980 and there were several reports from Copt Point, including totals of nine on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1981, 15 on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1981 and 12 on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1981.

It has been recorded annually since as a regular passage migrant. Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Common Sandpiper by tetrad, with records in 20 tetrads (65%).

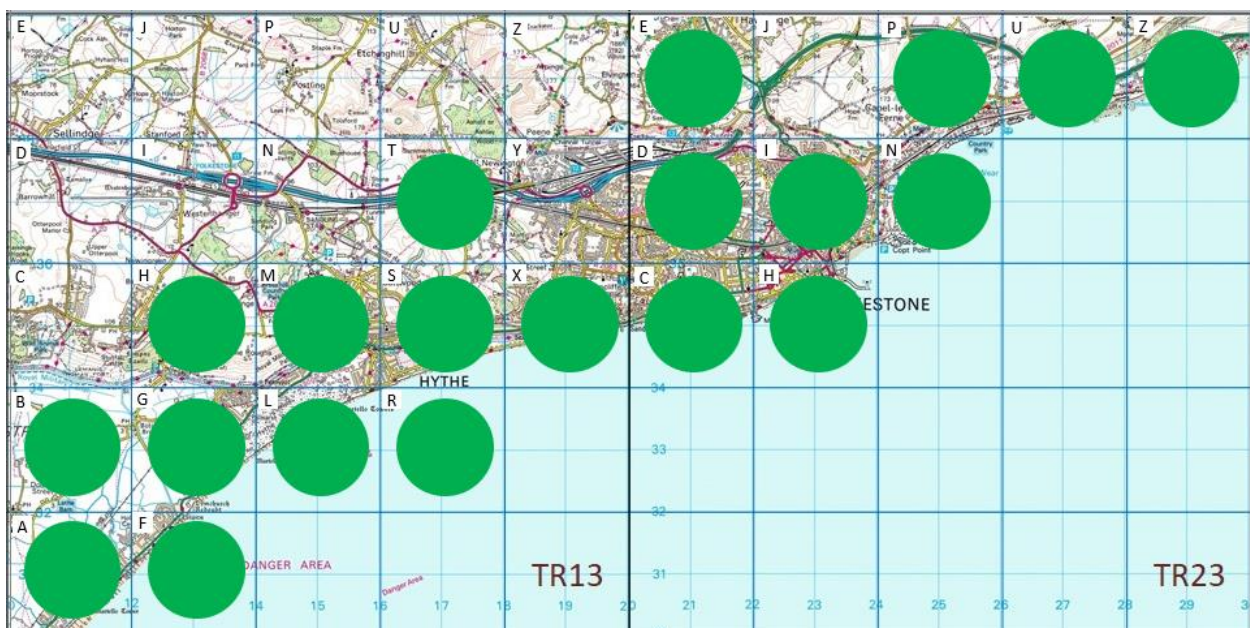


Figure 1: Distribution of all Common Sandpiper records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad



Excluding birds that have been known to have overwintered, there have been two particularly early records, both on the 4<sup>th</sup> March. The first, at West Hythe on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1983, may have been a previously undetected overwintering individual as there were further sightings there on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March of that year. The second however was seen on Folkestone Sands on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and appears unlikely to have wintered nearby. The only other March record involved two reported flying east past Sandgate on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1996.



Common Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Arrival is more typically in April, with early individuals at Nickolls Quarry on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017, at Samphire Hoe on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2001 and at Hythe Ranges on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2018, whilst the mean arrival date over the most recent decade has been the 19<sup>th</sup> April. Double figure counts have been noted on four occasions in spring: 11 at Nickolls Quarry on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2000 (when nine were also seen at Mill Point, giving a total of 20 across the area), 13 at Nickolls Quarry on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2000, 11 there on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2001 and 14 at Copt Point on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004.



Common Sandpiper at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Common Sandpiper at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

Birds have lingered into early June in six years, with the latest at Nickolls Quarry on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2001. The first returning migrant was noted just 18 days later, at Nickolls Quarry on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2001, whilst there were also late June records there in 2003 (on the 28<sup>th</sup> June) and 2004 (on the 30<sup>th</sup> June), with sightings more typically from early July. Double figure counts have been recorded in autumn as follows:

- 12 at Copt Point on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1986
- 13 at Abbotscliffe on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1987
- 12 at Copt Point on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1987
- 16 at Copt Point on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1994
- 10 at Copt Point on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1995
- 12 at Nickolls Quarry on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2000
- 14 at Nickolls Quarry on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003
- 13 at the Willop Outfall on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2012



The mean departure date over the last decade has been the 23<sup>rd</sup> September, with birds lingering into the first half of October in some years. Excluding birds that have gone on to overwinter, there have been sightings in the second half of October as follows: one at Nickolls Quarry to the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2001, one at Folkestone Pier on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and one at Samphire Hoe on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2018.



Common Sandpiper at the Dymchurch Redoubt  
(Brian Harper)



Common Sandpiper at the Dymchurch Redoubt  
(Brian Harper)

There have four winter records: one seen intermittently at Nickolls Quarry between the 8<sup>th</sup> November and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2002, one at Botolph's Bridge on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2003, one there between the 24<sup>th</sup> December 2007 and the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2008 and one there on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008.



Common Sandpiper at Hythe (Nigel Webster)



Common Sandpipers at Beachborough (Steve Tomlinson)

## References

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**Acknowledgements**

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Common Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge in January 2008  
(Brian Harper)



Common Sandpiper at the Dymchurch Redoubt  
(Brian Harper)