

Jackdaw

Coloeus monedula Category A
Breeding resident and passage migrant.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):
A widespread breeding species across most of Europe and Asia eastwards to the Himalayas. Mostly resident especially within the south and west of its range, but some more northern and eastern breeders move west or south-west in winter.

Kent status (KOS 2021):
In Kent it is a widespread and increasing breeding species and a passage migrant in small numbers.



Jackdaw at Summerhouse Hill (Steve Tomlinson)

The Jackdaw 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 “abundant throughout the county and is increasing”, noting that “in most of the towns it is a familiar bird enough, breeding in the chimneys of the houses, the towers and spires of the churches, and hollow trees where these are found. In the country, colonies are present in many of the church towers, otherwise their distribution is dependent on the presence of old castles and other ruins and large old trees with suitable holes in them”. He also remarked that “in the crannies of the chalk cliffs on the coast ... about Dover, they nest abundantly”. There can be little doubt that it 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.

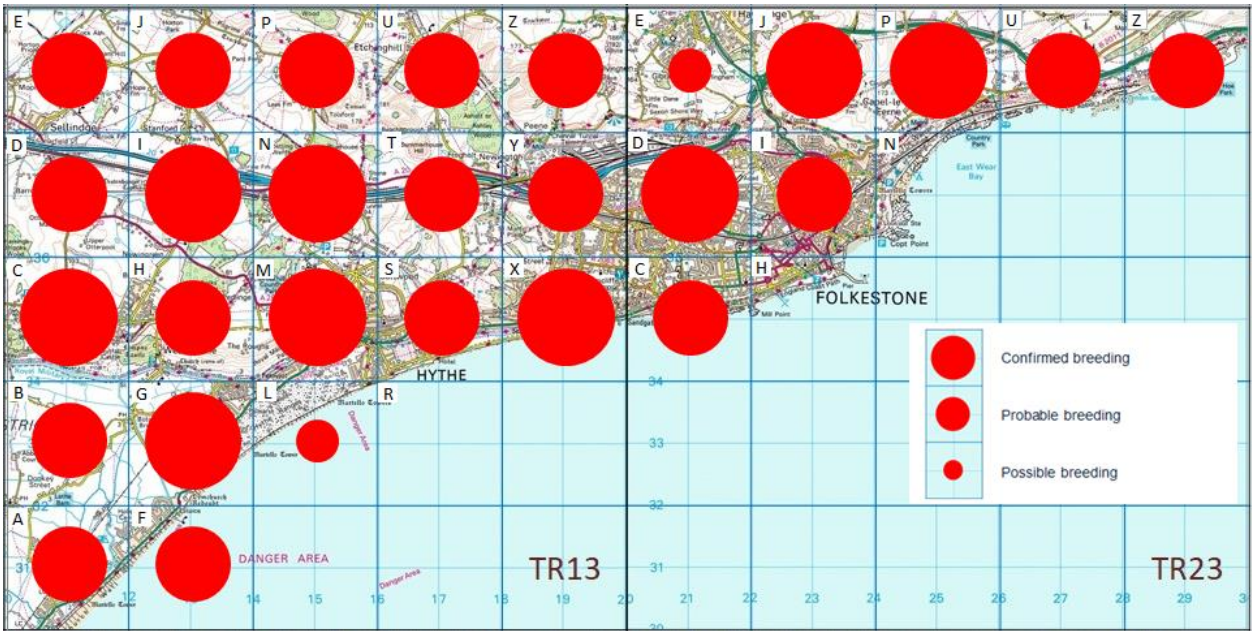


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Jackdaw at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in nine tetrads, with probable breeding in 17 more and possible breeding in two 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%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Probable/Confirmed	23	(74%)	30	(97%)	30	(97%)
Total	24	(77%)	30	(97%)	30	(97%)
Change			+6	(+25%)	0	(0%)

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	+25%	0%	+25%
Kent	+24%	+19%	+46%

Clements *et al.* (2015) remarked that Jackdaws are highly adaptable birds, utilising a wide variety of nest sites in towns and countryside. They are highly gregarious and can exploit a wide range of invertebrate and vegetable food resources. There is little doubt that Jackdaws have increased substantially in numbers in Kent, with an increase of 19% in occupied tetrads since the second atlas, mirrored by a 71% increase in the BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) trend in south-east England between 1995 and 2012. Locally there was an expansion in range between the first and second atlases, by which time it had occupied all suitable tetrads, but numbers have continued to increase.

There have been few estimates of breeding populations but Neil Frampton found at least 50 pairs nesting in Lympe Park Wood in the 1980s and Ian Roberts estimated that around 20 pairs nested at the Dymchurch Redoubt during the most recent atlas.

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Jackdaw by tetrad, with records in 30 tetrads (97%).

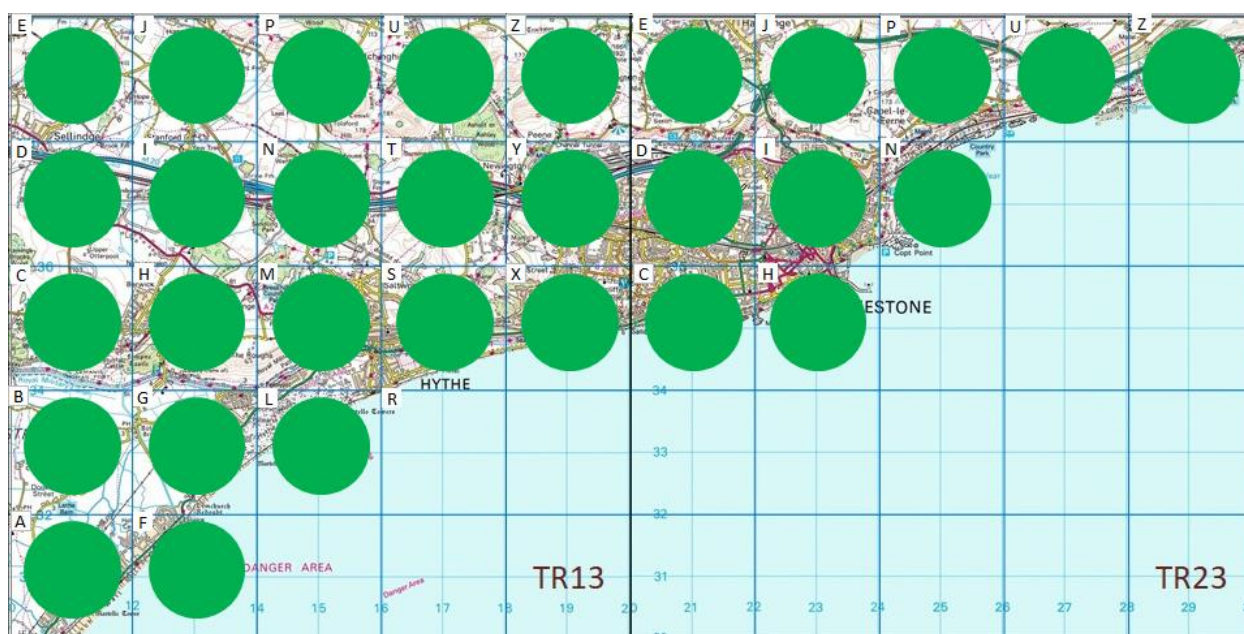


Figure 2: Distribution of all Jackdaw records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Post-breeding flocks begin to congregate in July and August, with a peak count of 561 at Beachborough Park on the 9th August 2016, but the largest concentrations occur in winter, particularly at the roost at Chesterfield Wood (Saltwood). Winter counts have included 400 at Nickolls Quarry in January 2005, 300 at the Lower Wall Road and 500 at Dibgate Camp in February 2005, 250 going to roost at Chesterfield Wood in November and December 2006, and 400 going to roost at Chesterfield Wood in January 2010.

There has been a marked increase since 2013, when around 1,250 were noted at a pre-roost gathering at Pedlinge on the 25th February, with 870 seen heading into the roost at Chesterfield Wood in November of that year.

In 2014, 1,200 were seen heading to roost at Chesterfield Wood on the 12th January and 1,000 departed at dawn on the 18th November. Further counts of note at the roost have included 1,500 in December 2016, 1,000 January 2017, 1,750 in December 2017, 1,000 in January 2018 and 1,000 in November 2020.



Jackdaw at the Dymchurch Redoubt (Brian Harper)



Jackdaw at the Dymchurch Redoubt (Brian Harper)

A light spring passage may be apparent in some years, with peak counts of 12 flying in/east at Capel-le-Ferne on the 11th April 2009 and 8 arriving in off the sea at Samphire Hoe on the 14th March 2013.

As Taylor *et al* noted, autumn passage in October/November is much more marked and counts have included 350 arriving in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 28th October 1993, 155 flying north-west over Cheriton on the 14th October 1999, 50 in off the sea at Capel Battery on the 17th October 1999, 60 west over Nickolls Quarry on the 10th October 2003, 60 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 11th October 2003, 64 west over Nickolls Quarry on the 21st October 2013 and 90 west there on the 25th October 2007.



Jackdaw at Cheriton (Brian Harper)



Jackdaw at Saltwood Castle (Brian Harper)

References

- Clements, R., Orchard, M., McCanch, N. & Wood, S. 2015. *Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 2008-13*. Kent Ornithological Society.
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- 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.
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Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).

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Jackdaw at the Dymchurch Redoubt (Brian Harper)