

Garganey

Spatula querquedula

Category A

Rare passage migrant, mainly in spring, possibly bred in the past. 30 records, 80 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998, Eaton et al. 2022):

It is a widespread summer visitor across Europe, crossing the Sahara to winter in Africa. A rare breeding species in Britain, with an estimated 120 pairs nesting.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

In Kent it is a passage migrant and decreasing summer visitor, breeding annually in small numbers.



Garganey at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Ticehurst (1909) regarded the Garganey as "one of the rarer ducks that visit Kent" and found only a small number of pairs breeding in up to three districts, whilst Knight & Tolputt (1871) knew of no occurrence in Folkestone or its immediate neighbourhood. Ticehurst did remark that there were signs of an increase since the prohibition of spring shooting, whilst Harrison (1953) was able to report "that this species has increased greatly in numbers for the past forty years or more", considering the hunting ban to have been "surprisingly successful ... in establishing the Garganey as an abundant nesting bird". He continued to state that there had been a "slow but constant increase in the Romney Marsh" and that by the 1940s "it would appear that every suitable site in the Romney Marsh – Dungeness area held its few pairs".

Considering Harrison's remarks, the first local records are of considerable interest. On the 9th June 1957 Roger Norman flushed a female from an "airfield" dyke in the Palmarsh Gravel Pit (Nickolls Quarry) area, the same day as "a pair of small duck, either Garganey or Teal", were briefly seen flying away from the "old" pit. These sightings were followed later the same year (after a gap in observations) of "between four and six birds present daily in the area from 25th August to 3rd September". These events suggest breeding might have occurred locally. Furthermore in 1960 at the same site, the same observer found a pair in the "old" pit on the 15th March, with then up to three pairs present (including two birds in "airfield" dykes) until at least 27th March, after which unfortunately no coverage was possible until June (when there were no further sightings) (Norman 2007).



Garganey at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Taylor *et al.* (1981) lamented that the numbers breeding in Kent had declined during the 1960s and 1970s, but Clements *et al.* (2015) noted an increase from the mid-1990s, with the current distribution mainly restricted to the north Kent marshes, the Stour Valley and Dungeness.

There were no further records locally until C. R. Tuff saw a pair at Sandling Park on the 12th May 1978, whilst the next was reported at Lympe on the 18th April 1982. A pair seen flying east past Mill Point by Ian Roberts on the 30th April 1990 were the first seawatching record and it has been recorded with some regularity since, with 24 records in the subsequent 32 years, as demonstrated by figure 1.

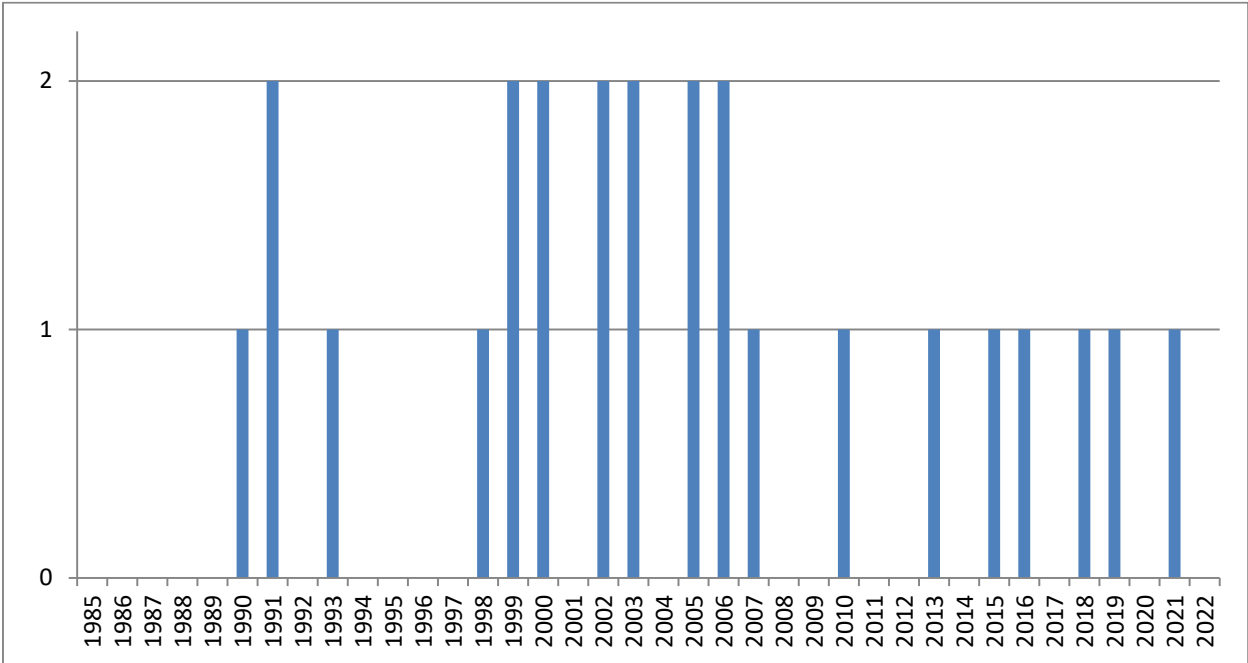


Figure 1: Garganey records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Most records have occurred in spring, between 15th March (week 11) and 21st May (week 21), as demonstrated by figure 2. There have only been three records from outside of this period (in addition to the August sighting in 1957). Two of these were autumn migrants: a female/immature at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th October 1998 and a male at Horn Street Lake on the 4th September 2000. The other record was an exceptional winter sighting of a drake at Nickolls Quarry on the 17th January, with presumably the same bird again there on the 14th February.

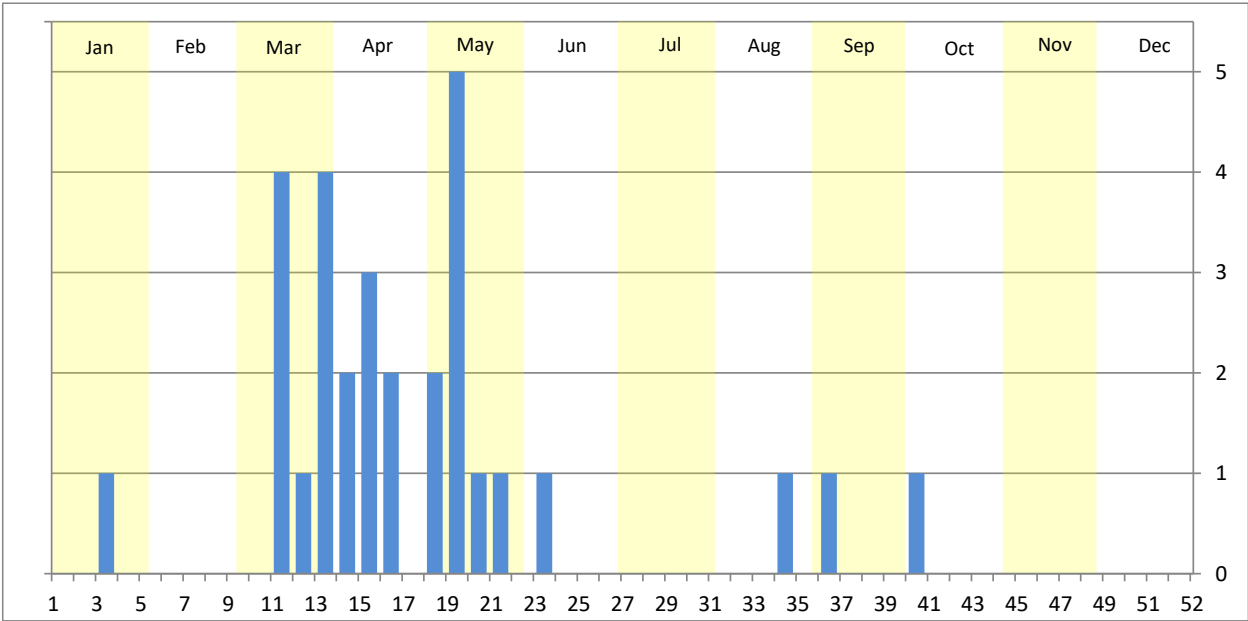


Figure 2: Garganey records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The majority of records have been from Nickolls Quarry (eight, with a further two on the Oak Arm sewer just to the north) or coastal seawatching points (14), with the others at the former trout farm lake at Horn Street (two), Cherry Garden Reservoirs, Lympne, Sandling Park and the Willop Basin. Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.

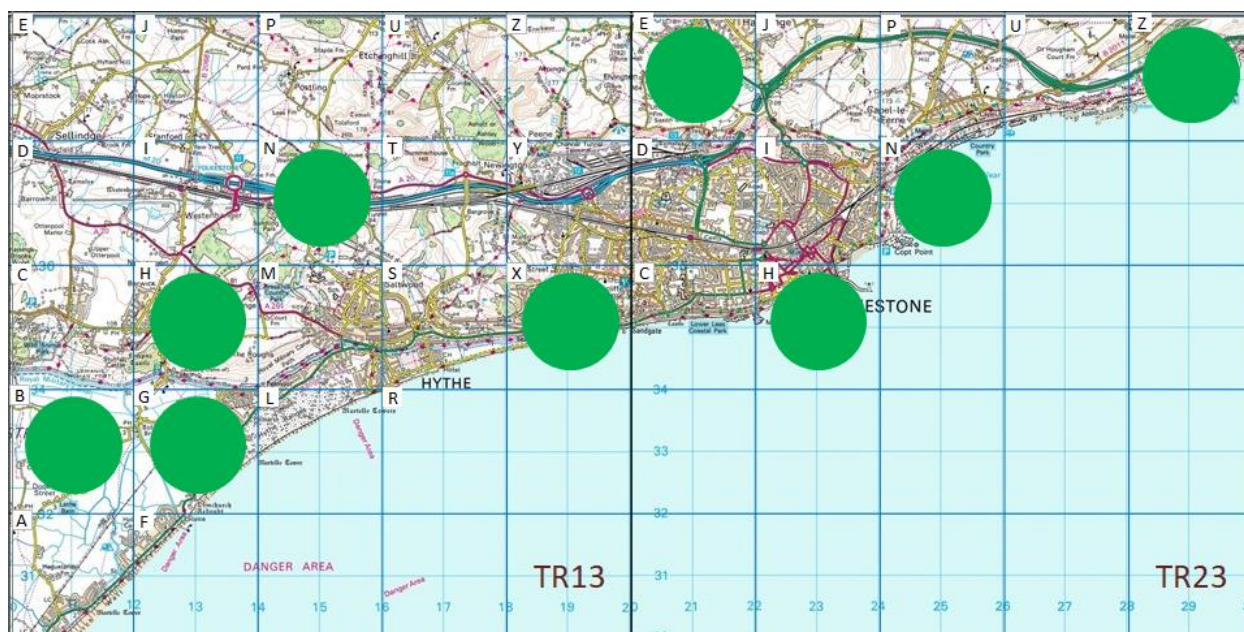


Figure 3: Distribution of all Garganey records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1957** Nickolls Quarry, female, 9th June (R. K. Norman)
- 1957** Nickolls Quarry, four to six birds present daily, from 25th August to 3rd September (R. K. Norman)
- 1960** Nickolls Quarry, a pair, 15th March, then three pairs until at least 27th March (R. K. Norman)
- 1978** Sandling Park, a pair, 12th May (C. R. Tuff)
- 1982** Lympne, one, 18th April (Reported)
- 1990** Mill Point, a pair flew east, 30th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 1991** Oak Arm (north of Nickolls Quarry), three (one male, two females), 28th March (R. K. Norman)
- 1991** Willop Basin (on sewer between Botolph's Bridge and the Willop Basin), two, 7th April (R. K. Norman)
- 1993** Horn Street Lake, male, 28th to 29th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Nickolls Quarry, female/immature, 7th October (R. K. Norman)
- 1999** Nickolls Quarry, male 17th January, presumed same 14th February (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 1999** Nickolls Quarry, one 21st May (R. K. Norman)
- 2000** Copt Point, male flew east, 1st May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2000** Horn Street Lake, male, 4th September (P. Howe)
- 2002** Copt Point, male flew east, 9th May (D. A. Gibson)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, male, 10th May (R. K. Norman, I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Mill Point, pair flew east, 15th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Copt Point, 13 flew east, 15th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Mill Point, a pair flew east, 20th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Samphire Hoe, 12 flew east (in three flocks), 2nd April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Samphire Hoe, five flew east, 14th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Samphire Hoe, male flew east, 14th May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2007** Samphire Hoe, male flew east, 21st April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2010** Folkestone Reservoirs (Castle Hill), female, 14th March (P. Holt)
- 2013** Oak Arm (north of Nickolls Quarry), pair, 11th April, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2015** Nickolls Quarry, pair, 9th April, photographed (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper)
- 2016** Mill Point, male flew east with Common Scoters, 6th May (B. Harper), also seen off Copt Point (D. A. Gibson) and Samphire Hoe (I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Samphire Hoe, two flew east, 8th May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2019** Samphire Hoe, four flew east, 1st April (S. Cutt)
- 2021** Folkestone Beach, male flew east, 1st April (I. A. Roberts)

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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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Garganey at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)