

Jay

Garrulus glandarius

Category A

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Widespread across most of Europe and Asia apart from treeless areas in the far north. It is sedentary in the south and west of its range but mainly an eruptive migrant in the north and east, with notable movements in some years thought to be linked to a failure of the acorn crop.

Kent status (KOS 2021):

It is a widespread breeding species in Kent and a passage migrant in varying numbers, occasionally irruptive.



Jay at Cheriton (Dave Clarke)

The Jay 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 "numerous and generally distributed throughout the wooded districts of Kent", so 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.

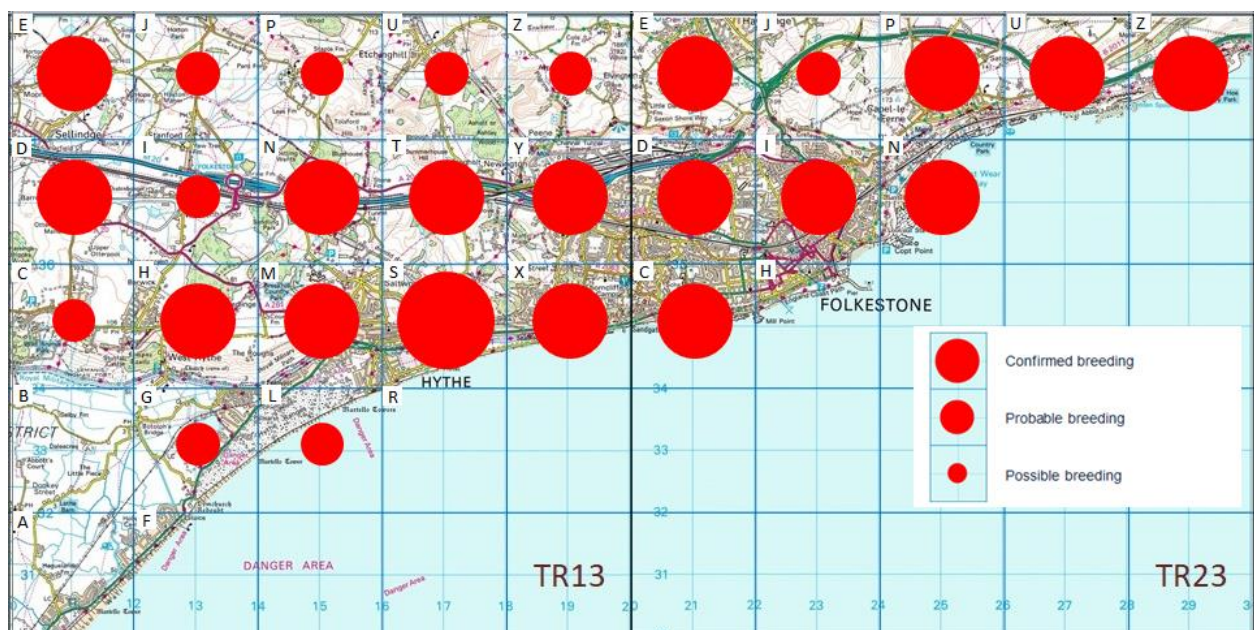


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Jay at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in one tetrad, with probable breeding in 16 more and possible breeding in 9 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%)	9	(29%)
Probable/Confirmed	5	(16%)	8	(26%)	17	(55%)
Total	6	(19%)	11	(35%)	26	(84%)
Change			+5	(+83%)	+15	(+136%)

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	+83%	+136%	+333%
Kent	+24%	+29%	+60%

Clements *et al.* (2015) upon reviewing the results of the third Kent atlas commented that although Jays prefer dense broad-leaved woodland they have increasingly spread into more marginal habitats such as parkland, large gardens and isolated copses. They reported a 29% increase in the number of occupied tetrads in the county since the second atlas and noted that Jays were recorded in almost every tetrad containing woodland or groups of mature trees, although they remained almost totally absent from Sheppey and the Romney Marsh.

This is reflected in the local position, where there has been a considerable increase since the first and second atlases, and the only gap in distribution is now the Romney Marsh area. Clements *et al* noted that as to be expected with such a secretive bird, there were a lower proportion of confirmed breeding records compared with the other corvid species and this was also the case locally.

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Jay by tetrad, with records in 27 tetrads (87%).

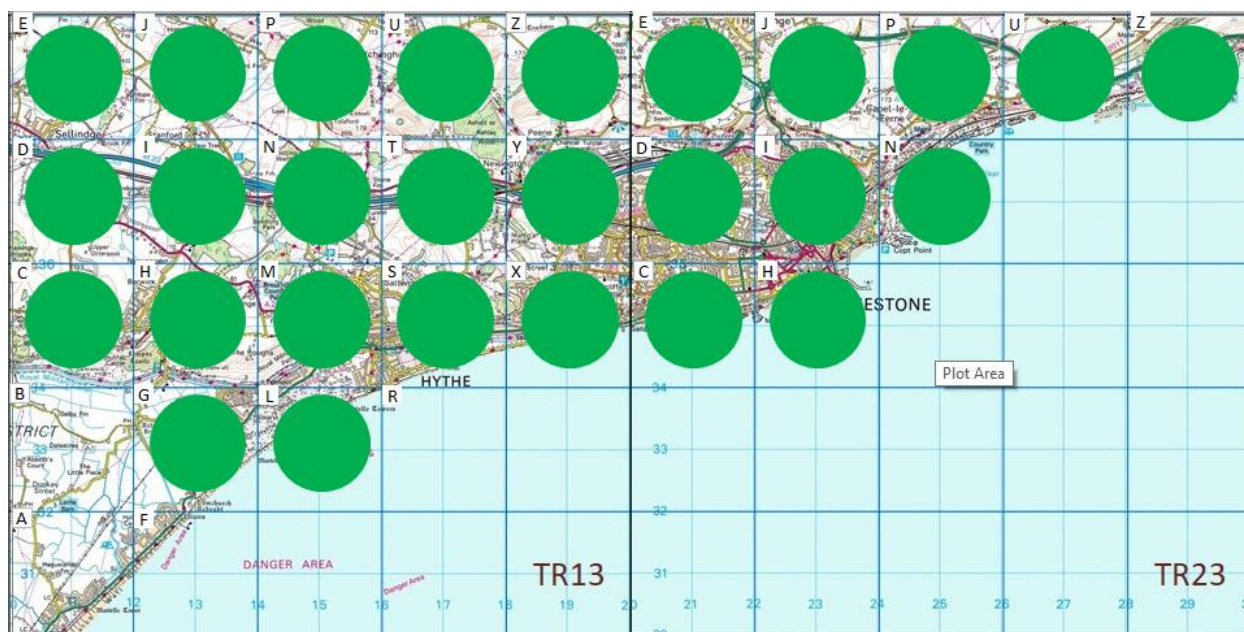


Figure 2: Distribution of all Jay records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Taylor *et al.* wrote that one of the interesting features of this species in Kent is the irruptive nature of the autumn movements. Small groups may be seen arriving in off the sea around the coast from mid-September and throughout October. Increased numbers and some migration are also noted at inland localities. Heavy movements probably reflect the annual variation in the crop size of such trees as oak, hazel and beech. The most significant event in their review period (1952-76) occurred in 1957, when well over 1,000 were reported from coastal localities during the second half of September, whilst locally 39 were seen flying south-west over Sandling Park by H. Schreiber on the 23rd September, with other smaller flocks noted there and at Hythe at around this time.

The following autumn a flock of 11 were seen arriving in off the sea by F. Wise on the 15th October, whilst in 1983 Roger Norman saw 13 flying west at Hythe on the 25th October and in 1996 Ian Roberts watched 12 arrive in off the sea at Folkestone on the 19th October 1996.

There was a notable irruption in 1998 which involved around 107 birds, including 39 arriving in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October and 20 in off there on the 18th October. There were modest influxes in 2000, 2002 and 2010, with a peak count in the latter year of 21 flying in/west at Abbotscliffe on the 2nd October.

2012 saw the largest irruption to date, with a total of around 295 recorded, including counts of birds arriving at Abbotscliffe of 20 on the 2nd October, 31 on the 3rd October, 51 on the 4th October, 36 on the 6th October, 37 on the 14th October and 38 on the 20th October.

A more modest influx was noted in 2014 (with a total of 57), whilst in 2018 a flock of 17 flew west over Beachborough Park on the 17th September.



Jay at Mill Point (Ian Roberts)



Jay at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)



Jay at Hospital Hill, Seabrook (Brian Harper)



Jay at Mill Point (Ian Roberts)

Taylor *et al* noted that spring migrants are recorded only sporadically in Kent, usually in May. There was an exceptional movement in 1997, when around 47 were logged at the cliffs, including counts of 12 flying east at Capel-le-Ferne on the 1st May and six flying east there on the 17th May.

A flock of eight flying over Abbotscliffe on the 11th May 2015 is also of note.

Click [here](#) to listen to a local audio recording of one singing at Mill Point on the 29th March 2022 (Ian Roberts).

References

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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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Jays at Abbotscliffe in October 2012 (Ian Roberts) – part of a record irruption