

# Green Woodpecker

*Picus viridis*

Category A

Breeding resident.

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):*

A widespread resident across most of Europe, absent only from Ireland, Iceland and from northern Fennoscandia. Beyond Europe its distribution only extends to northern and western Iran and Turkmenistan. It is very local in its dispersal, with movements above 20km unusual, whilst adults show a high degree of fidelity to their home range.

*Kent status (KOS 2021):*

It is a widespread and increasing resident in Kent, with some autumn dispersal.



Green Woodpecker at Saltwood Castle (Brian Harper)

The Green Woodpecker 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 in Kent wherever there are woods, orchards, parks and hedgerow timber, and is by far the most abundant representative of its family", so there can be little doubt that it was to be found locally.

Harrison (1953) stated that it had undergone a considerable increase and spread towards the east and south-east of the county during the first half of the twentieth century, whilst by the time of Taylor *et al.* (1981) it had become widespread across much of Kent, but as a breeding species it was absent or scarce in Thanet, Sheppey, the Thames marshes and Romney Marsh. The first county atlas found only five occupied tetrads to the south of the Royal Military Canal, whereas the most recent atlas revealed that it now occupies the same number to the south of the canal in TR13 alone.

## Breeding atlas distribution

Figure 1 shows the breeding distribution by tetrad based on the results of the 2007-13 BTO/KOS atlas fieldwork.

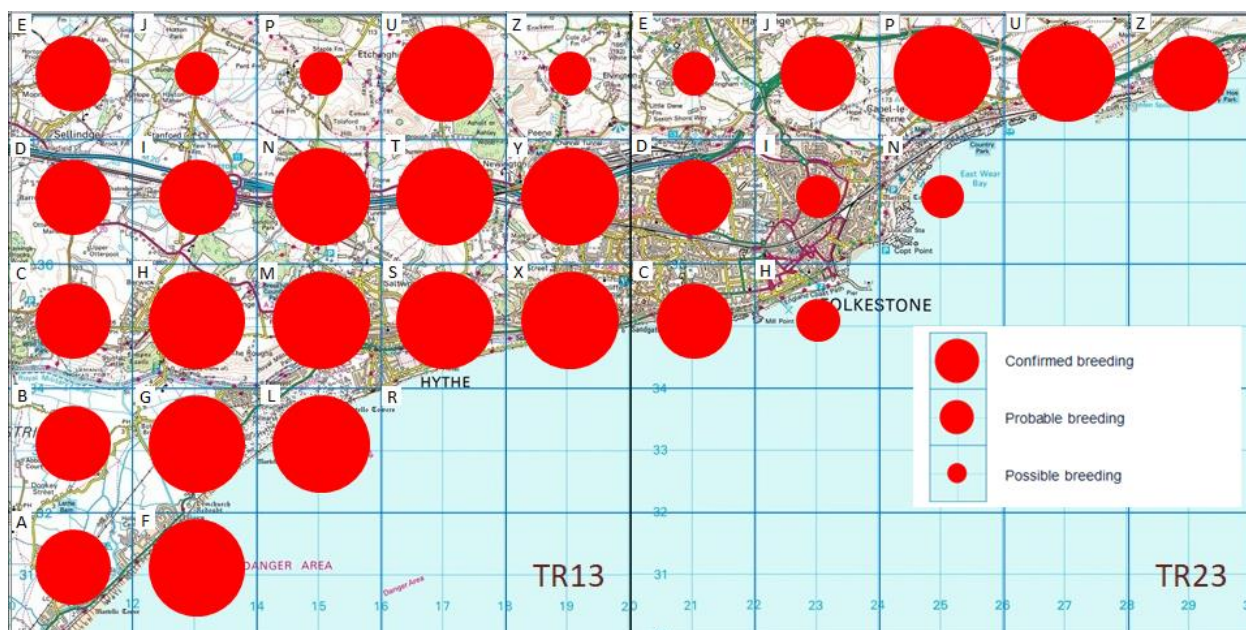


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Green Woodpecker at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads, with probable breeding in 10 more and possible breeding in 7 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%)	6	(19%)	7	(23%)
Probable/Confirmed	8	(26%)	13	(42%)	23	(74%)
Total	9	(29%)	19	(61%)	30	(97%)
Change			+10	(+111%)	+11	(+58%)

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	+111%	+58%	+233%
Kent	+72%	+50%	+157%

All records from the first atlas were in TR13, with a concentration along the canal and the wooded areas inland of there. By the time of the second atlas it occupied two-thirds of the tetrads in TR13 and had spread into TR23 (with five occupied tetrads), and the latest atlas found it to be present in all but one tetrad (TR13 R, which is a tiny section of shingle beach).

Clements *et al* (2015) reported on an increase in occupied tetrads in Kent of 72% between the first and second atlases, and by a further 50% by the third atlas; an overall increase of 157%). This spread is reflected in local data, with an increase in occupied tetrads 111% between the first and second atlases, and by a further 58% by the third atlas; an overall increase of 233%).

### Overall distribution

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

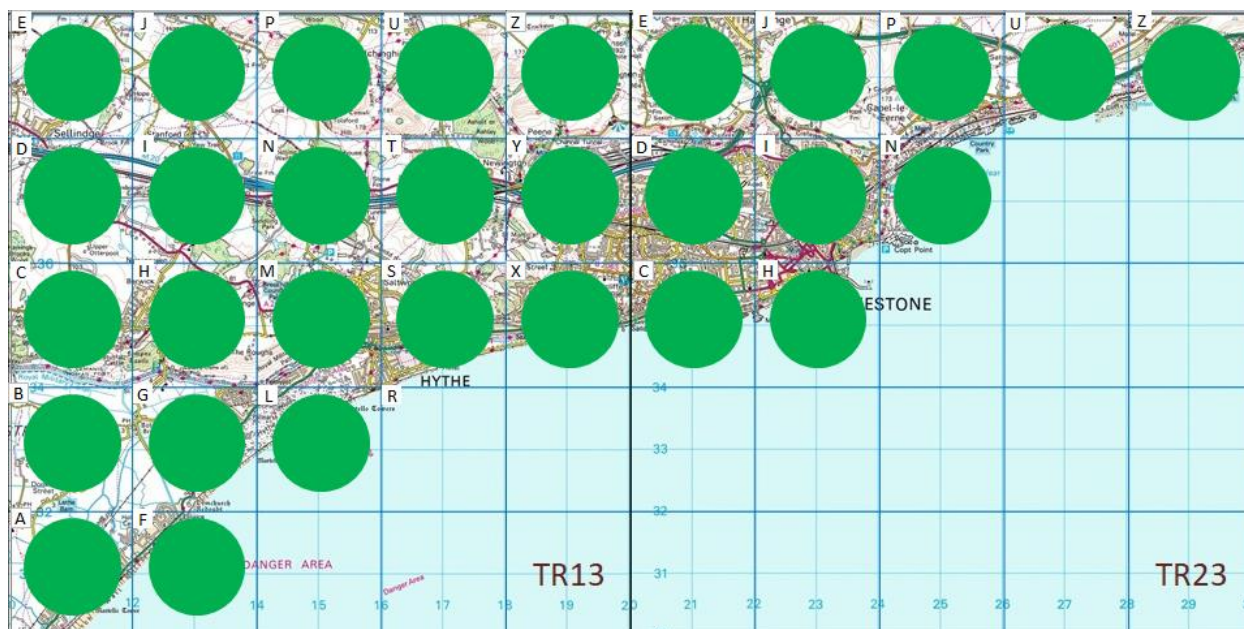


Figure 2: Distribution of all Green Woodpecker records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

There non-breeding distributed exactly mirrors the breeding distribution, with records from all but one tetrad. Adults typically demonstrate extreme site-fidelity throughout the year, following the establishment of their breeding territories (Snow & Perrins) but some individuals (mainly immatures) may disperse in autumn and winter, leaving wooded areas in favour of more open habitats, and movements in severe weather have also been recorded (Wernham *et al.* 2002).



Due to its widespread distribution any movements locally are hard to detect, however at Samphire Hoe (where it does not breed) there are records in most years. The earliest post-breeding arrival was on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2008, but first appearances in July or August were more typical. Sightings usually involved one or two birds, but three were present in January 2010 and December 2012. Departure was usually in February, or March in some years, with the latest on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2009.



Green Woodpecker at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Green Woodpecker at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Green Woodpecker at Cheriton (Brian Harper)



Green Woodpecker at Saltwood Castle (Brian Harper)

Click [here](#) to listen to a local audio recording of one calling at Botolph's Bridge on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2015 (Brian Harper).

### **References**

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

Harrison, J. M. 1953. *The Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

Henderson, A. & Hodge, T. 1998. The Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 1988-94. *Kent Bird Report 1996*: 134-272.

Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2021. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.

Knight, V. & Tolputt, F. 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood. *Fourth Annual Report of the Folkestone Natural History Society*. Available at: [www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46103](http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46103)

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.

Ticehurst, N. F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

Wernham, C. V., Toms, M. P., Marchant, J. H., Clark, J. A., Sitiwardena, G. M. & Baillie, S. R. (eds). 2002. *The Migration Atlas: movements of the birds of Britain and Ireland*. T. & A. D. Poyser, London.

### ***Acknowledgements***

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

I am indebted to Andrew Henderson and Tim Hodge for providing access to the Kent Ornithological Society archives.