

Black-tailed Godwit

Limosa limosa

Category A

Rare passage migrant.

37 records,
303 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998, Holling et al. 2019):

Breeds mostly across upper middle latitudes in Europe from Britain eastwards into Russia, wintering mainly in Africa north of the Equator. An isolated race (*L. l. islandica*) that breeds in Iceland (with a few pairs in northern Scotland) winters in western Europe. It is a rare breeding species in Britain, with around 45 pairs of the nominate continental form nesting in England (with the majority in East Anglia) and around 8 pairs of the *islandica* form nesting in north and west Scotland.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is an increasing passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent, and an occasional breeder, but uncommon inland.

Ticehurst (1909) thought it to be “one of the rarest of visitors in spring” and “not by any means annual” in autumn. He mentions that there was one in the Folkestone Museum but the source of it was unknown and quite likely to have not been local, whilst it did not appear in Knight & Tolpitt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871).

Harrison (1953) was able to comment that “this species is one which has shown a very remarkable change of status, for, from being a rather scarce passage migrant, particularly in the spring, up to the end of 1920, from then on its visitations not only became more frequent but fully assumed a degree of regularity and abundance as to make the birds visits quite commonplace”.



Black-tailed Godwits at Battery Point (Brian Harper)



Black-tailed Godwit at the Willop Basin (Ian Roberts)

Taylor *et al.* (1981) considered it to be a locally numerous passage migrant and a winter visitor in small numbers, which had bred on occasion (on the north Kent marshes), and it was during their review period (1952-76) that the first local records occurred. The first sightings were at Nickolls Quarry on the 19th August 1956 when Roger Norman noted that “at 05:45 hours one flew in from the south, stayed in the old pit for a half-hour then set off north-west minutes before four more flew across the pit, heading south-west” (Norman 2007). Just over a decade later Geoffrey Munns saw one “at Hythe” (possibly the Nickolls Quarry site) on the 31st May 1968.

There were no further records until the 1980s, when Roger Norman saw one flying east past Hythe Ranges on the 9th August 1984, whilst a further seven flew east there on the 6th April 1991 (Norman 2006). It has since been recorded with some regularity, with a further 33 occurrences in the following 32 years, as figure 1 demonstrates, although it has remained erratic in its occurrence, with up to four records in some years (2000 and 2004) and but sometimes with none for two or three years.

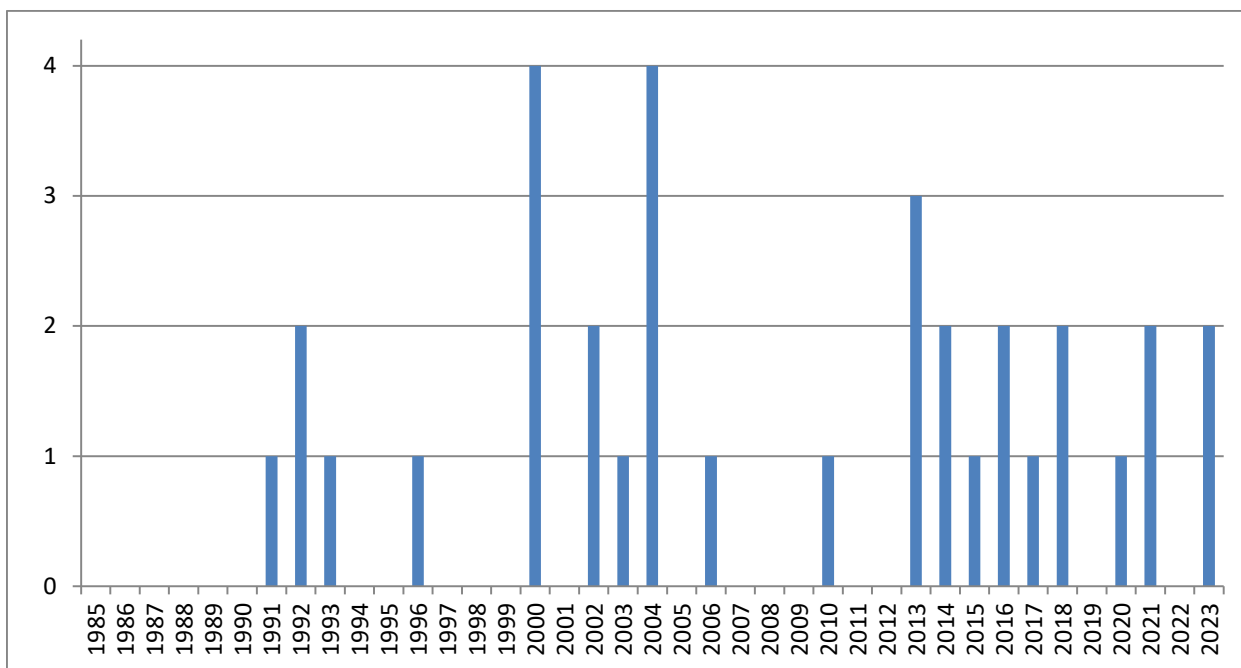


Figure 1: Black-tailed Godwit records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are shown in figure 2. All but three records have occurred between March and August, with sightings in each of those months and a peak in early April (when there have been six records between the 2nd and the 10th). The other records came in late November 2013 and early December 2014.

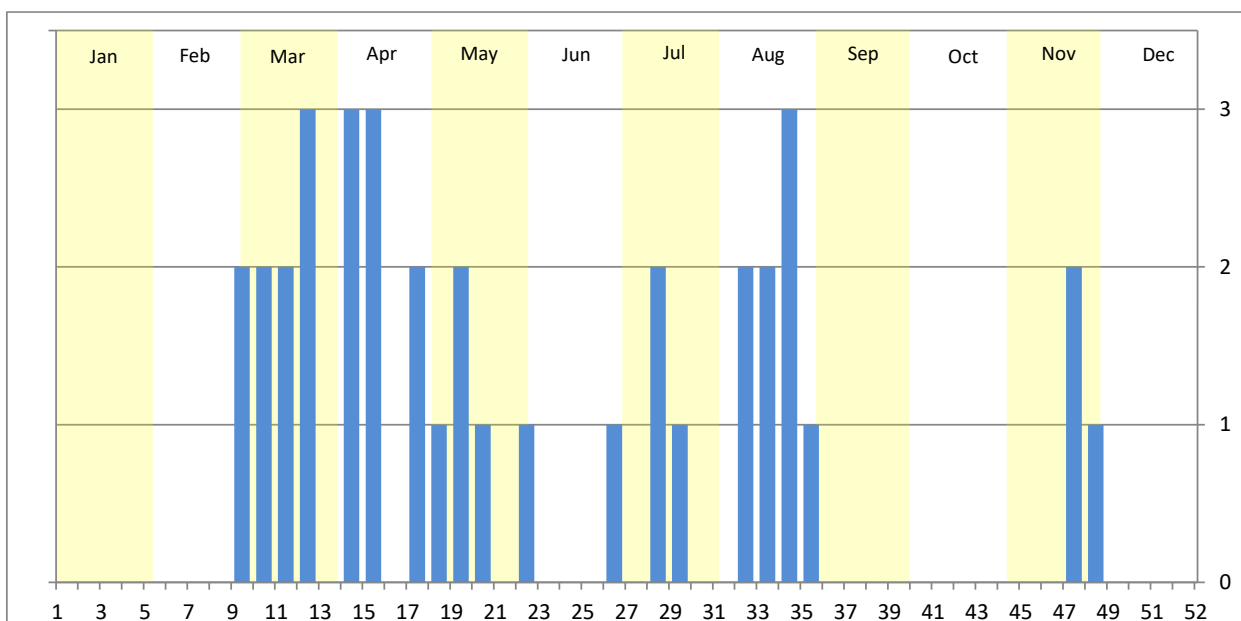


Figure 2: Black-tailed Godwit records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad. Nine of the first 18 records were at Nickolls Quarry but there has been only one sighting there since. Most of the others have been coastal, with sightings from Samphire Hoe (6), Abbotscliffe (3), Mill Point (3), Copt Point (2), Hythe Ranges (2) and singles at seven other sites. There were also three records at the Willop Basin between 2013 and 2014.

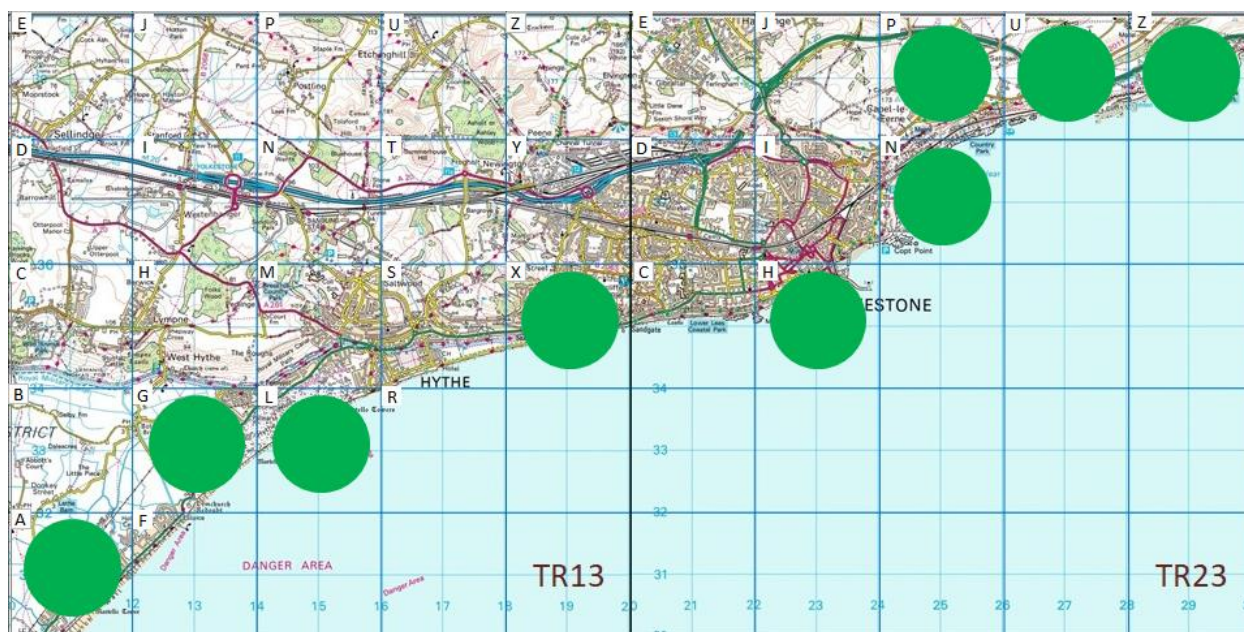


Figure 3: Distribution of all Black-tailed Godwit records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1956** Nickolls Quarry, five, 19th August (R. K. Norman)
- 1968** Hythe, one, 31st May (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1984** Hythe Ranges, one flew east, 9th August (R. K. Norman)
- 1991** Hythe Ranges, seven flew east, 6th April (R. K. Norman)
- 1992** Nickolls Quarry, four circled the pit but did not land, 3rd April (R. K. Norman)
- 1992** Abbotscliffe, four flew west, 26th August (I. A. Roberts)
- 1993** Abbotscliffe, four flew east, 23rd August (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, one present for most of the day, 16th March (R. K. Norman)
- 2000** Nickolls Quarry, one, 9th April (R. K. Norman)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew east, 10th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2000** Nickolls Quarry, seven, 14th May (R. K. Norman)
- 2000** Nickolls Quarry, two adults, 9th July (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 23rd March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, one, 30th June (R. K. Norman)
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, three, 12th July (reported)
- 2004** Mill Point, four flew east, 2nd April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Copt Point, three flew east, 27th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Nickolls Quarry, one, 14th August (R. K. Norman)
- 2004** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, ten flew east, 14th August (D. A. Gibson)
- 2006** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 24th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2010** Samphire Hoe, 21 flew east, 10th August (D. E. Smith, P. R. Smith, P. I. Holt)
- 2013** Battery Point (Seabrook), 29 flew west, 6th May, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2013** Samphire Hoe, two flew west, 21st November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Willop Basin, one, 23rd November, photographed (B. Harper, M. Harper, I. A. Roberts, R. K. Norman)
- 2014** Willop Basin, one briefly then flew east, 15th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2014** Willop Basin, five, 1st December, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2015** Nickolls Quarry, three, 9th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2016** Samphire Hoe, eight flew east, 13th March (per D. E. Smith)
- 2016** Folkestone Warren, one flew west, 17th July (R. Lee, B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
- 2017** Mill Point, four flew east, 24th March (I. A. Roberts)

2018 Samphire Hoe, ten flew east, 24th March (I. A. Roberts)
2018 Samphire Hoe, c.150 flew west, 8th May (I. A. Roberts)
2020 Mill Point, four flew east, 6th May (I. A. Roberts)
2021 Folkestone Beach, one flew east, 4th March (I. A. Roberts)
2021 Seabrook, two flew east, 22nd August (P. Howe)
2023 Willop Outfall, two flew east, 1st March (I. A. Roberts)
2023 Princes Parade, one flew east, 9th March (I. A. Roberts)



Black-tailed Godwits at the Willop Basin (Ian Roberts)

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Acknowledgements

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