

Marsh Tit

Poecile palustris

Category A

Breeding resident.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

A widespread breeding species across much of middle and upper latitude Europe and Asia, east to Sakhalin Island and Japan. It is sedentary throughout its range, only undergoing short post-breeding dispersal, and does not participate in irregular eruptive movements of some other tits.

Kent status (KOS 2021):

A thinly distributed and apparently declining resident in Kent.



Marsh Tit at Paraker Wood (Brian Harper)

The Marsh Tit 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 "common in most parts, though of rather more local distribution than either the Great or Blue Tit", being less numerous in the east of the county. Neither Ticehurst, Harrison (1953), Taylor *et al.* (1981), Henderson & Hodge (1998) nor Clements *et al.* (2015) allude to any expansion of range, so there can be little doubt that it has always been found locally.

Marsh Tits are sedentary birds, occupying deciduous and mixed woodland, often on well-drained land. They mainly avoid conifer plantations and urban areas.

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 Marsh Tit at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was not confirmed in any tetrads, but there was probable breeding in one and possible breeding in one other. The table below shows how this compares to previous atlases (Taylor *et al.*; Henderson & Hodge). 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 | 2 | (6%) | 5 | (16%) | 1 | (3%) |
| Probable/Confirmed | 4 | (13%) | 2 | (6%) | 1 | (3%) |
| Total | 6 | (19%) | 7 | (23%) | 2 | (6%) |
| Change | | | +1 | (+17%) | -5 | (-71%) |

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 | +17% | -71% | -67% |
| Kent | +7% | -17% | -12% |

During the most recent atlas fieldwork a pair were seen at Bargrove Wood (TR13 T) in 2009 and 2011 and a pair were seen at Asholt Wood (TR13 T) in April 2012 (probable breeding). Singles were also present in suitable breeding habitat at Postling Wents (TR13 N) in April 2011 and Chesterfield Wood (TR13 N) in May 2012 (possible breeding).

In the first atlas there was probable or confirmed breeding recorded in TR13 M, N, S and T, and possible breeding in TR23 J and N, whilst the second atlas found probable or confirmed breeding in TR13 H and N, and possible breeding in TR13 M, TR13 X, TR23 C, TR23 N and TR23 P.

Clements *et al.* remarked upon a 30% decline in south-east England between 1995 and 2012 (as shown from BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data) and commented that this was mirrored by a reduction in occupied tetrads in Kent of 17% between the second and third atlases. They considered that the lack of recent coppicing in many Kentish woods may be responsible for the decline, since Marsh Tits are rare in woodland without at least some scrub layer. Locally there appears to have been a significant reduction over the same period.

Few estimates of breeding population have been recorded but six pairs held territory at Sandling Park in 1974, which suggests presence at a higher density than today.



Marsh Tit at Paraker Wood (Louise Gower)



Marsh Tit at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Marsh Tit by tetrad, with records in 16 tetrads (52%).

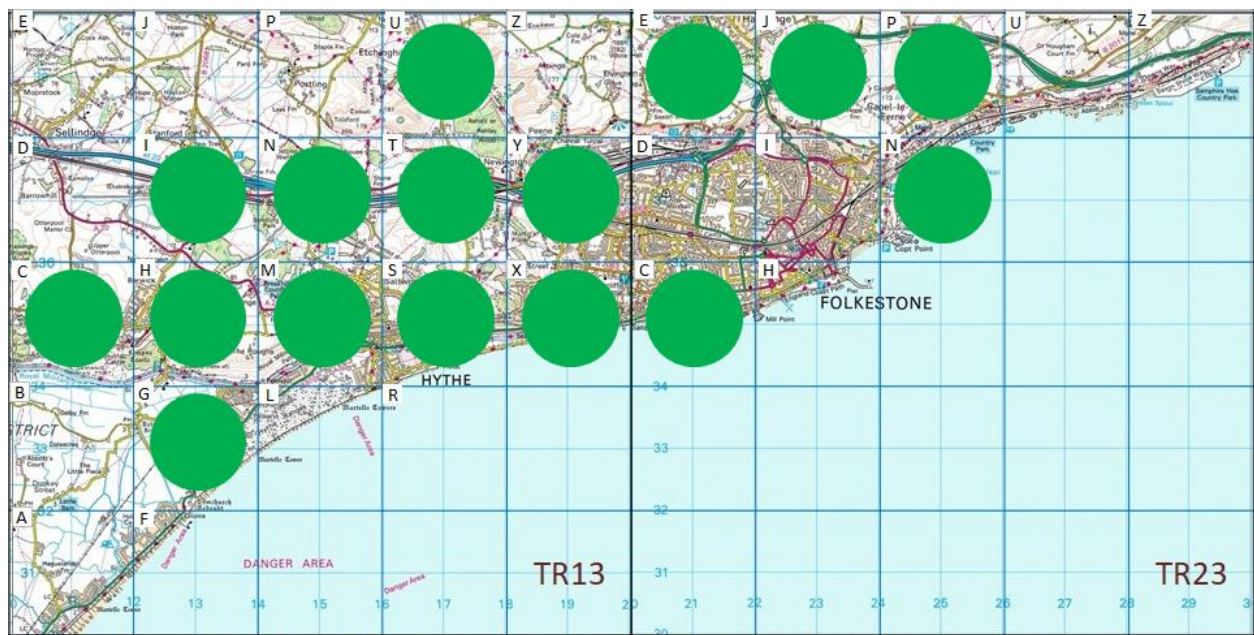


Figure 2: Distribution of all Marsh Tit records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

In the period since the last atlas (2014 onwards) there have been sightings in TR13 C (Port Lymgne), TR13 H (Folks' Wood), TR13 I (Kiln Wood), TR13 M (Brockhill Country Park and Turnpike Hill), TR13 N (Bartholomew's Wood, Chesterfield Wood and Cowtye Wood), TR13 S (Saltwood Castle), TR13 T (Bargrove Wood and Oak Banks), TR13 U (Asholt Wood and Beachborough Park), TR13 X (Paraker Wood), TR13 Y (Casebourne Wood), TR23 C (Enbrook Park) and TR23 E (Crete Road West), so perhaps the Marsh Tit, which can be unobtrusive during the breeding season, was overlooked to some degree in the most recent atlas.

There have been no indications of passage, with no records from well-watched coastal sites such as Samphire Hoe, Abbotscliffe or Mill Point. A single record at Nickolls Quarry (in the trees bordering the Botolph's Bridge Road) on the 26th October 1999 is worthy of note, and perhaps wandered with a tit flock from Lymgne Park Wood.



Marsh Tit at Paraker Wood (Brian Harper)



Marsh Tit at Chesterfield Wood (Ian Roberts)

Click [here](#) to listen to a local audio recording of one calling at Cowtye Wood on the 23rd November 2014 (Brian Harper).

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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