

## Buzzard

*Buteo buteo*

Category A

Formerly scarce but has bred since at least 2001 and continues to increase, also a passage migrant.

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

Breeds across most of Europe eastwards across southern Siberia and north-central Asia to Japan. Most western breeders winter within Europe but some eastern populations winter in sub-Saharan Africa.

*Kent status (KOS 2021):*

It is a rapidly increasing breeding resident in Kent, also a winter visitor and passage migrant.



Buzzard at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

The Buzzard was included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871), presumably on the basis of one that was obtained at Sandling in 1860. Ticehurst (1909) stated that this was just one of two that were recorded in the county between 1840 and 1870, although he thought that "if every one shot or seen were recorded it would probably be found that the bird was an annual visitor". He stated that there was "no doubt" that it "was once a common resident and breeding species in Kent" but "when it actually ceased to be so is somewhat uncertain, but the probability is that very few of the indigenous birds were left at the beginning of the nineteenth century" and considered that "the increasing preservation of game" was the main cause of their demise.

Harrison (1953) noted that it occurred regularly in spring and autumn, mostly in the eastern part of the county, and a similar pattern of occurrence was described by Taylor *et al.* (1981), apart from a "number of summer reports" in recent years (the early 1970s) that "suggest that it may return to breed".

The first documented modern local records were in 1955 when single birds were reported from Hythe "in the winter months" and Saltwood in "June or July". This was closely followed in 1957 when H. Schreiber noted one at Sandling Park from the 3<sup>rd</sup> October and William Nevin saw presumably the same individual "in the woods north of Saltwood" on the 21<sup>st</sup> December, noting that it had been present for some time and that "another observer there had seen two of the birds together on the previous day".

Further records followed in 1959, when singles were along the Burmarsh Road, near Nickolls Quarry, on the 29<sup>th</sup> July and 27<sup>th</sup> September and one was seen over Hythe on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1963, but there do not appear to be any documented sightings for almost 20 years until Peter Wells noted it "occasionally" at Biggin's Wood between 1982 and 1988.



Buzzard at Sandling (Brian Harper)



Buzzard at Creteway Down (Brian Harper)

In 1991 one flew north over Brockhill Country Park on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May and one flew west at Capel-le-Ferne on the 30<sup>th</sup> September, whilst in 1993 singles were seen over Cheriton on the 17<sup>th</sup> September and 2<sup>nd</sup> December and in 1994 a total of 12 (including a remarkable flock of ten) flew north-west there on the 17<sup>th</sup> October.

There have been annual records since, probably due to a combination of more regular coverage of the area as well as an increase in Buzzard populations, with totals of 2 in 1995, 2 in 1996, 4 in 1997, 12 in 1998, 7 in 1999 and 8 in 2000. In this latter year a pair were seen displaying in the Sandling Park area in spring and possibly bred, whilst breeding was confirmed here the following year, when three young fledged (one of only five pairs that nested in the county in 2001).

There were regular records from Sandling Park and the surrounding area thereafter as the pair continued to nest and the area was gradually colonised, with wanderers and migrants at various other sites. By the time of the most recent atlas it was becoming firmly established as a breeding resident.

### Breeding atlas distribution

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

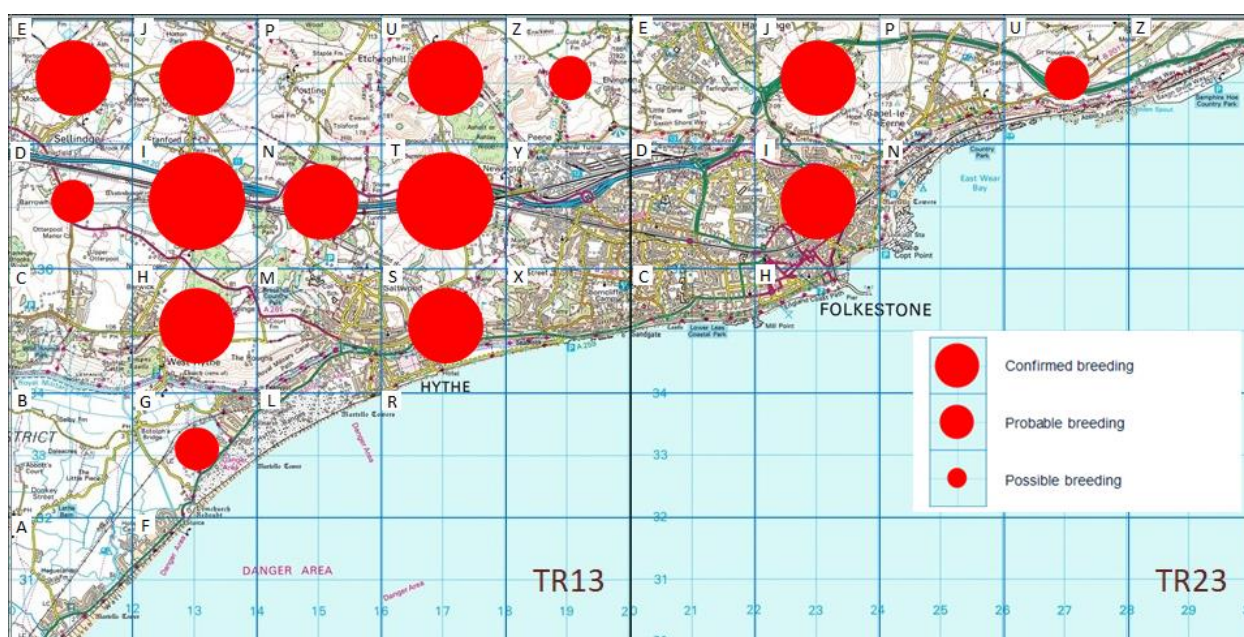


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Buzzard at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in two tetrads, with probable breeding in eight more and possible breeding in four 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	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	4	(13%)
Probable/Confirmed	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	10	(32%)
Total	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	14	(45%)
Change			0	(--%)	+14	(--%)

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	--%	+14%	--%
Kent	--%	+11,000%	--%

Clements *et al.* (2015), reviewing the results of the latest county atlas, remarked that “probably the most remarkable change in the status of any species has been the re-colonisation and subsequent spread of the Buzzard in Kent”. From just one pair nesting in 1999 the population increased to an estimate of at least 1,000 pairs by the end of the atlas period (2012).

The Buzzard was not recorded in the earlier atlases but was noted in just under half of the tetrads in the most recent survey. It has continued to spread and increase, and Clements *et al* suggested that a tetrad with good habitat on the North Downs can be expected to hold an average of 4-5 pairs. Buzzards are most numerous in well-wooded farmland, but can also use open country with a few hedgerow trees.

### Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records by tetrad. The Buzzard has now been recorded from 29 tetrads (94%), only being absent from two squares are mostly sea (TR13 F and TR13 R).

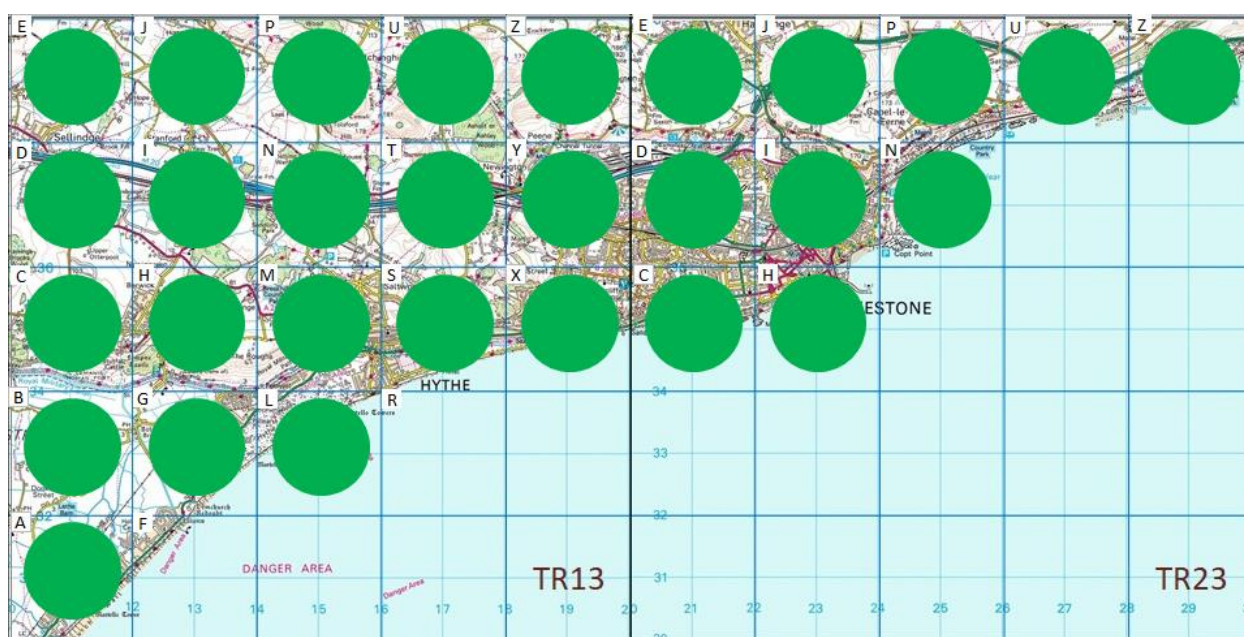


Figure 2: Distribution of all Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The more notable counts of migrants have included 11 over Saltwood on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2012, 20 over Port Lympne on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2013, 12 at Abbotscliffe on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2014, 11 north over Bargrove Wood on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2016, 16 north over Hythe seafront on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 2018, 11 west there on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and 22 west over Beachborough Park on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

### 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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Buzzard at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Buzzard at West Hythe (Brian Harper)