

Shelduck

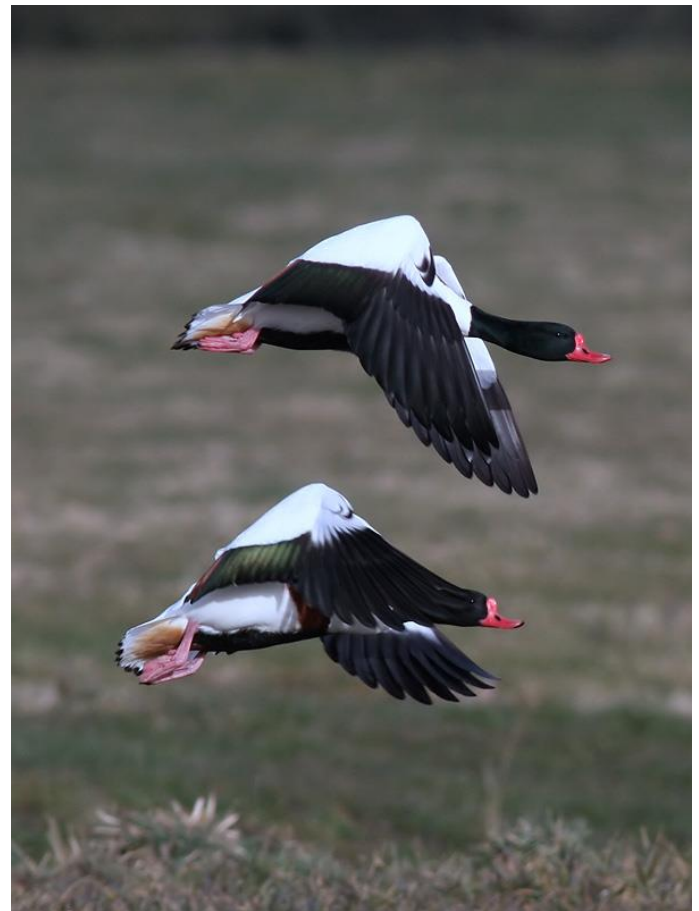
Tadorna tadorna

Category A

Winter visitor and passage migrant, may have bred on at least one occasion prior to 2004.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

It has a scattered, primarily coastal distribution in Europe, whilst its range extends eastwards through central Asia to around 120°E, and south to Iran. It has an unusual pattern of migration: breeders and immatures leave the nesting grounds for an annual moult in the Waddenzee area of Germany, leaving ducklings in the care of a small number of adults which moult locally. The first move in June, probably mostly immatures, with adults following in July. The Waddenzee is the moulting place of virtually all Shelduck in north-west Europe, except for several thousand which moult in Britain, notably in Bridgwater Bay in south-west England. When moult is completed the autumn migration begins. For breeders from the UK and the Low Countries, this entails a return to the breeding areas. Breeding populations from eastern areas winter around the coasts of the southern North Sea, west France and to some extent Britain and Ireland, but many thousands remain on the moulting grounds. Those wintering outside their breeding areas begin to return in March.



Shelduck at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Kent status (KOS 2021):

In Kent it is a common coastal resident, passage migrant and winter visitor, which occasionally breeds inland.

The Shelduck was not included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871), whilst Ticehurst (1909) stated that scattered pairs bred in north Kent but to the rest of the county it was only an autumn and winter visitor and by no means common. Harrison (1953) was able to report on a considerable increase in breeding population and wintering numbers during the first half of the twentieth century, with nesting taking place on Romney Marsh from 1920.

Despite the increase in population, it does not appear to have been observed locally until the 24th March 1979, when Roger Norman saw three at Nickolls Quarry. Roger recalled that it was not recorded at this site when it was watched in the 1950s and early 1960s (Norman 2007).



Shelduck at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

The next record followed fairly quickly, when Dave Weaver saw a pair at the same location on the 21st February 1982 and three juveniles were seen by Roger Norman on the 10th and 11th August 1984, prompting thoughts of local breeding. A further single occurred there on the 15th April 1985.

Ian Roberts began seawatching regularly at Mill Point from May 1988 and considered it to be fairly frequent in occurrence, particularly on spring passage. Counts included eight flying east on the 27th June 1988, seven flying east on the 9th May 1989, 13 flying east on the 22nd April 1990 and eight flying east on the 25th April 1990. Roger Norman saw 17 flying east past Hythe Ranges on the 1st November 1988 and noted it occasionally on the shore there in small numbers in the 1990s, with sightings between November and March (Norman 2006).

It has been noted regularly at Nickolls Quarry since 1990. Small numbers have typically been seen in January or February (with larger counts of nine on the 10th January 2012 and 20 on the 5th January 2017). In most springs between 1992 and 2005 a pair were present, often making prolonged stays, which on four occasions extended into early June, and in 2002 a pair were seen on an almost daily basis between the 7th March and the end of June.

There was no clear evidence of breeding and very few sightings in July but juveniles were seen in August 1996, August 2000, August 2002, August 2003 (two) and late July 2004, so perhaps nesting did take place here or nearby. Spring records were far more irregular after 2005 but the occasional presence of a pair during the most recent atlas period gave rise to a status of probable breeding, as shown in figure 1. Clements *et al.* warn that this is a difficult species to census as nest sites are often far from display areas and feeding territories, and with broods moving away from nests soon after hatching, as well as many non-breeding birds being present in the county in summer. It nests in rabbit burrows, straw stacks and similar concealed locations, while feeding on nearby wetlands.

Larger counts at Nickolls Quarry in spring referred to passage birds, with 12 on the 24th April 1991, seven flying east on the 23rd May 1995, six flying north-west on the 9th March 2001 and six flying east on the 11th May 2002. Irregular autumn/late winter records included counts of 12 on the 19th September 1994 and up to 20 in December 2002.

Breeding atlas distribution

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

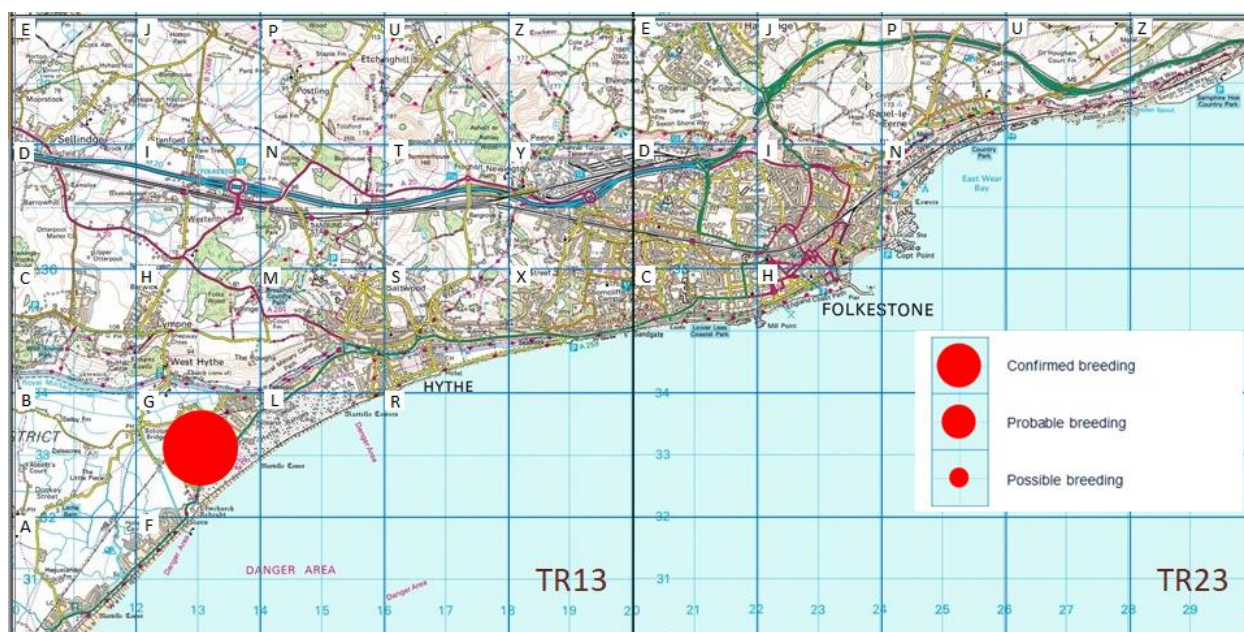


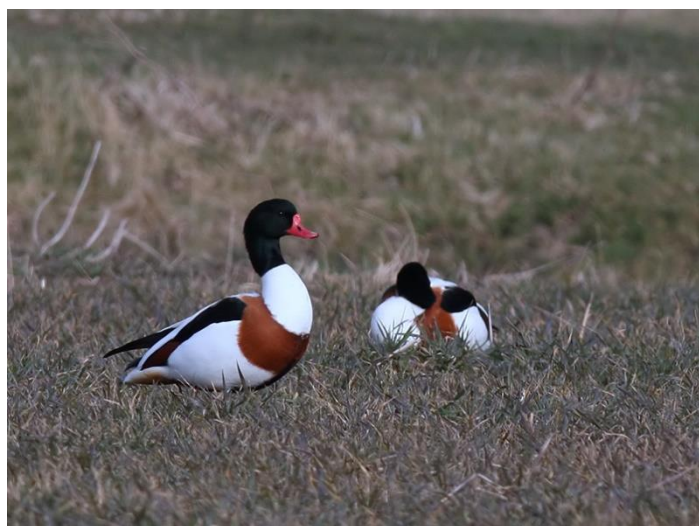
Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Shelduck at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was not confirmed in any tetrads but there was probable breeding in one. 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%)	0	(0%)
Probable/Confirmed	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	1	(3%)
Total	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	1	(3%)
Change			0	(--%)	+1	(--%)

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	--%	--%	--%
Kent	+54%	-12%	+35%



Shelduck at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Shelduck by tetrad, with sightings in 13 tetrads (42%).

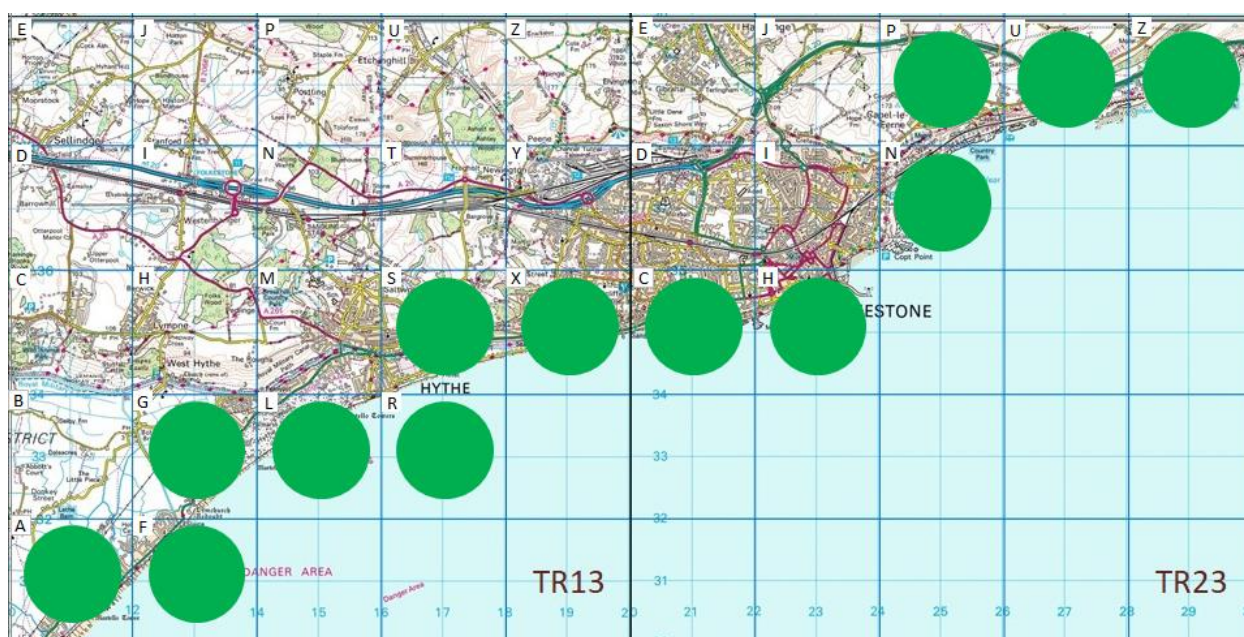


Figure 2: Distribution of all Shelduck records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The Shelduck is very much a coastal species locally. Away from Nickolls Quarry it is a passage migrant, mainly during spring and autumn, with larger numbers in the latter period. Some cold weather movement has also been noted. Counts of 25 or over have been recorded on 13 occasions:

25 off Copt Point on the 22nd December 1996
25 west past Copt Point on the 2nd November 2000
26 on the sea off Hythe on the 2nd November 2001
28 east past the Hythe Redoubt on the 9th November 2001
54 east past Copt Point on the 10th November 2001
27 on the sea off the Hythe Redoubt on the 1st January 2002
74 (34 west, 40 east) off Hythe on the 2nd December 2010, when 35 flew east past Samphire Hoe
33 east past Mill Point on the 29th November 2012
27 east past Samphire Hoe on the 10th January 2013
25 east past Samphire Hoe on the 28th October 2018
29 east past Mill Point on the 14th March 2020
at least 38 offshore during cold weather on the 8th February 2021
30 past Samphire Hoe on the 15th November 2021
194 east Samphire Hoe on the 22nd November 2021
45 east past Princes Parade on the 20th November 2022

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Shelduck at Samphire Hoe (Paul Holt)



Shelduck at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

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.