

Carrion Crow

Corvus corone Category A

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998; Knox *et al.* 2002):

Breeds in western Europe, from Britain (although absent from Ireland and north-west Scotland) south to Iberia and east to Germany, and (separated by the Hooded Crow's range in eastern Europe and western Asia) in eastern Asia (where the subspecies *orientalis* is found).

Kent status (KOS 2021):

It is a widespread breeding species in Kent and a passage migrant, usually in small numbers.



Carrion Crow at Princes Parade (Brian Harper)

The Carrion Crow 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. Ticehurst (1909) considered it to be "the least numerous of the *Corvidae* that breed regularly in Kent ... and steadily decreasing, chiefly through the attentions of gamekeepers". He continued to note that "single pairs are only found at long intervals, breeding in the more secluded and larger woods, especially those of the chalk districts, where it was formerly numerous, especially in the south-east of its range", so there can be little doubt that it was to be found locally, although he had "never identified a bird in Romney Marsh".

Breeding atlas distribution

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

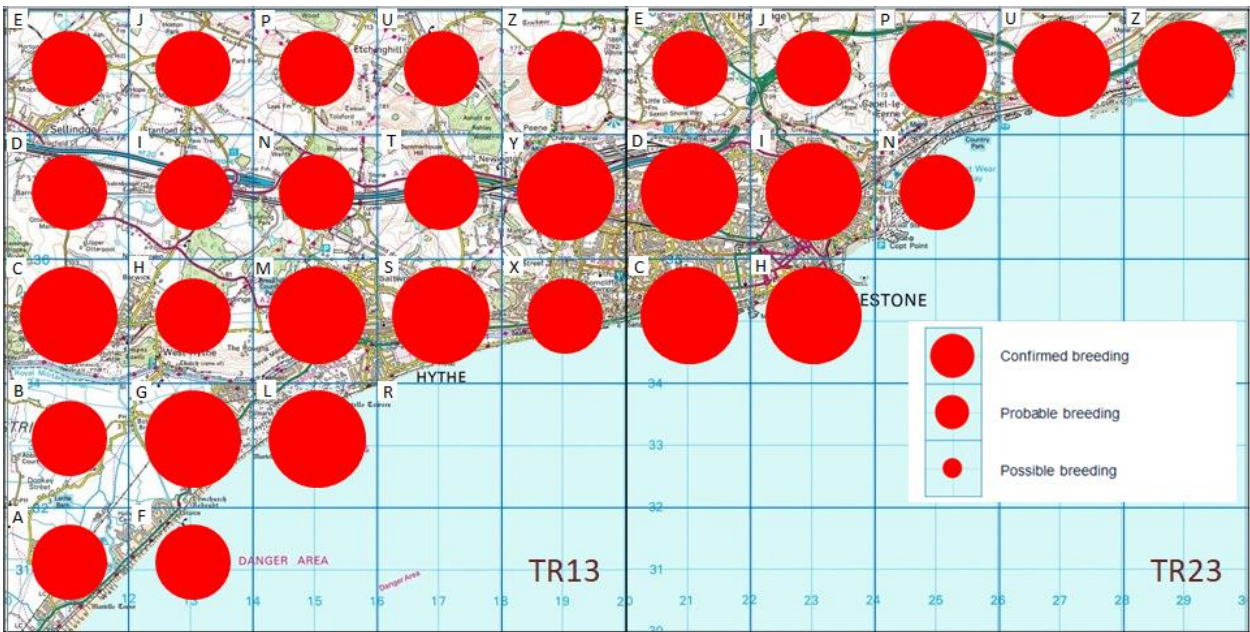


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Carrion Crow at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in 13 tetrads, with probable breeding in 17 more. 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	4	(13%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Probable/Confirmed	14	(45%)	30	(97%)	30	(97%)
Total	18	(58%)	30	(97%)	30	(97%)
Change			+12	(+67%)	0	(0%)

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	+67%	0%	+67%
Kent	+42%	+2%	+45%

As mentioned above, Ticehurst regarded the Carrion Crow as rare and declining, but since then there has been a considerable increase in numbers, which Clements *et al.* (2015) attribute to a decline in game-keeping and of gamekeepers controlling their numbers. The spread onto Romney Marsh during the 1920s and 1930s was well-documented by Harrison (1953).

In the most recent atlas it was recorded in almost every tetrad in the county and it is clearly able to find food resources and nesting opportunities in almost all habitats. Nests are fairly easy to locate, resulting in a fairly high proportion of confirmed breeding records.

After a considerable increase in population between the first and second atlases, there has been a more gradual increase since and the BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) trend for south-east England from 1995 to 2012 was an increase of 12%.

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Carrion Crow by tetrad, with records in 31 tetrads (100%).

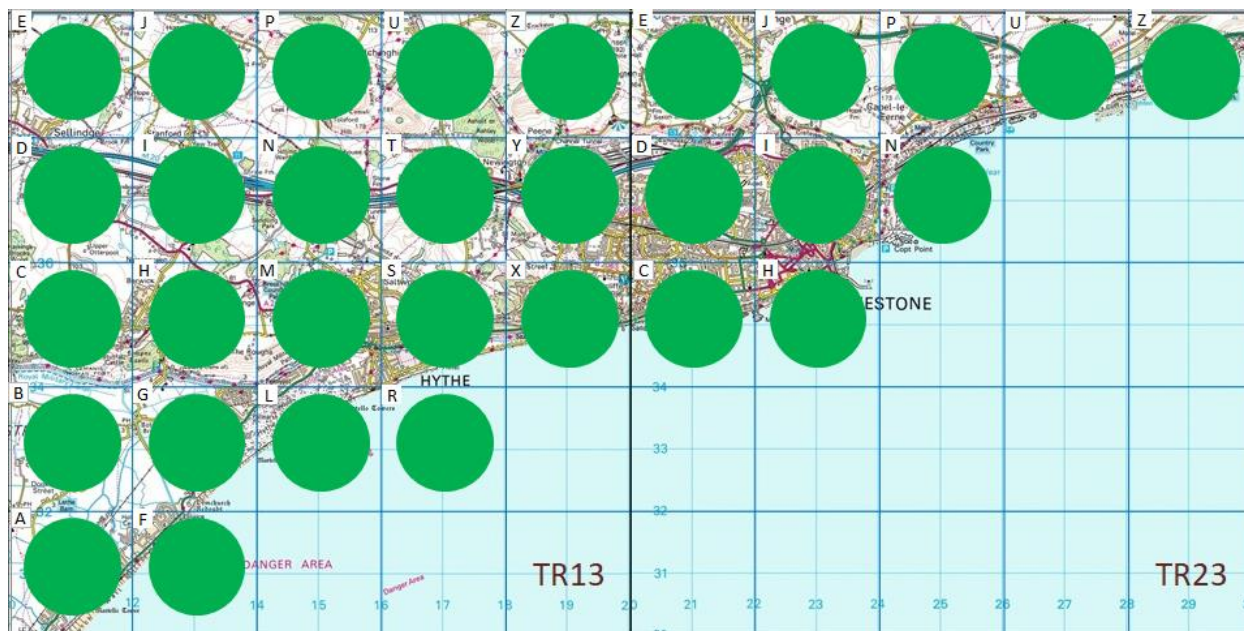


Figure 2: Distribution of all Carrion Crow records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Congregations of 100 or more have been noted with increasing frequency and most often these occur during the autumn and winter months. Around 100 were at Church Hougham in December 1995, 150 were at Abbotscliffe in October 1998, 250 were at Samphire Hoe in October 2009, 107 were at Abbotscliffe on the 24th September 2011, 140 were at Abbotscliffe in November 2012, 100 were at Samphire Hoe in October 2015, 150 were at Beachborough Park in November 2018 and c.600 were reported flying south-west there on the 14th December 2018.

A very small spring passage through March to April has been witnessed occasionally at coastal sites, with counts of over five being noteworthy: nine flew east at Mill Point on the 26th April 1990, nine flew east at Copt Point on the 9th April 1990, 11 arrived in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne on the 27th April 1998, seven flew in/east at Capel Battery on the 24th April 2000, ten flew east at Copt Point on the 23rd March 2002 and 25 flew east at Samphire Hoe on the 15th March 2008.



Carrion Crow at Princes Parade (Martin Collins)



Carrion Crow at Princes Parade (Brian Harper)

In autumn small numbers can be seen on passage in September and October, with counts of 20 or more being notable: 20 arrived in off the sea at Folkestone on the 27th October, 50 arrived in off the sea there the following day, a flock of over 100 arrived in off the sea at Folkestone Harbour on the 29th October 1973, 30 arrived in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 24th October 1991, 22 flew west there on the 27th October 2006 and 50 flew west at Samphire Hoe on the 5th September 2015.



Carrion Crow at Princes Parade (Brian Harper)



Carrion Crow at Princes Parade (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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Carrion Crows at West Road, Cheriton (Brian Harper)