

Fieldfare

Turdus pilaris

Category A

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

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

Breeds across much of northern and central Europe, from eastern France and Fenno-Scandia eastwards through Siberia to around 117°E, south to Kazakhstan and Lake Baikal. Winters mainly in western, central and southern Europe, Turkey and Iran. In some years of winter abundance of food some are resident or move only short distances. It occasionally nests in Britain, with the most recent confirmed breeding occurring in Northumberland in 2012.

Kent status (KOS 2021):

In Kent is a common passage and winter visitor that is occasionally recorded in summer.



Fieldfare at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

The Fieldfare 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 "a common winter visitor" and there can be little doubt that it was to be found locally.

Overall distribution

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Fieldfare by tetrad, with records in 30 tetrads (97%).

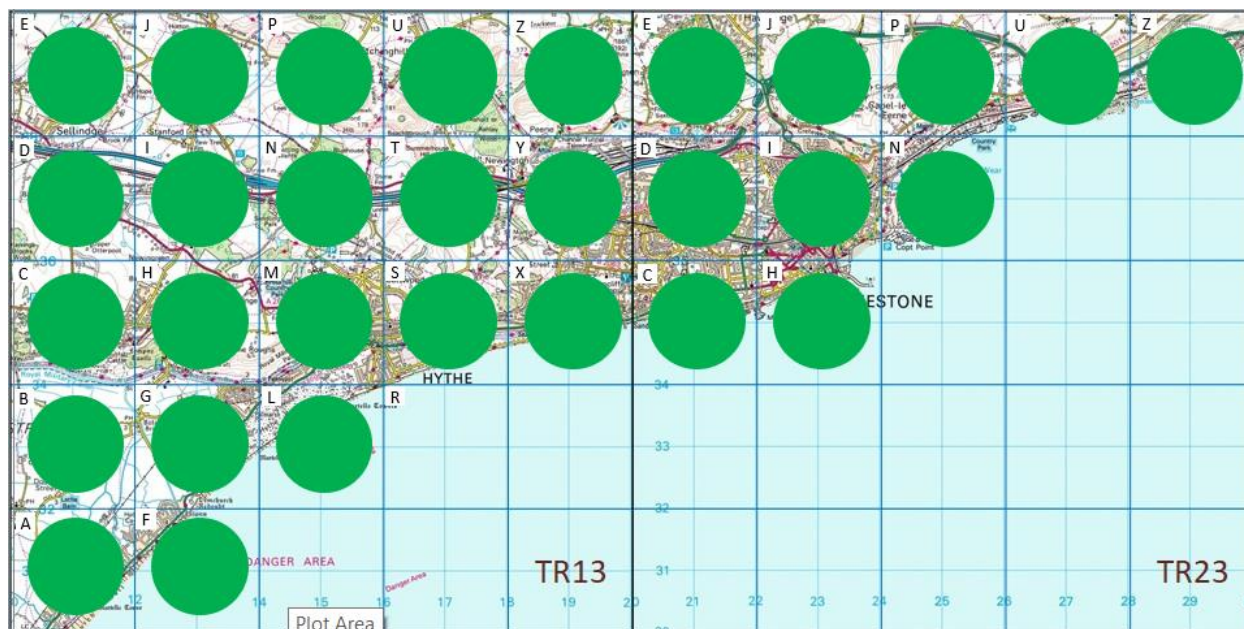


Figure 1: Distribution of all Fieldfare records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The earliest autumn arrival involved two at Beachborough Lakes on the 21st September 2018 and records in that month are rare, with just three other sightings: one at Abbotscliffe on the 29th September 2007, one at Capel Battery on the 30th September 2002 and two at Sandling Park on the 30th September 1966. October arrivals are more usual, with an average arrival date over the previous decade of the 12th October.

The earliest double-figure count involved 31 arriving in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 5th October 1999, whilst the earliest count of three figures (or more) relates to largest ever arrival, when a total of 2,675 flew in/west at Abbotscliffe on the 14th October 1993. There was also a historical arrival of at least 2,000 at Folkestone on the 4th November 1961, with the Kent Bird Report for that year stating that “two flocks each of over 1,000 birds came in over the coast”. Other arrivals of 200 or more have comprised:

261 in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 16th Oct 1994
 200 in off the sea at Capel Battery on the 10th Nov 1999
 530 in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 20th October 2003
 263 west at Abbotscliffe on the 1st November 2006
 280 in off the sea at Capel Battery on the 19th October 2015
 785 in/west at Abbotscliffe and 900 in off the sea at Creteway Down on the 24th October 2016
 240 at Beachborough Park on the 24th October 2018
 1,200 east at Botolph's Bridge on the 26th November 2018



Fieldfare at Donkey Street (Brian Harper)



Fieldfare at Donkey Street (Brian Harper)



Fieldfare at Holy Well (Elliot Ranford)



Fieldfare at Sellindge (Derek Smith)

Winter counts of 200 or more have been noted as follows:

240 at Cheriton on the 10th December 1967
 200 at Capel-le-Ferne on the 3rd January 1996
 220 at Blackhouse Hill/Newington Quarry on the 15th February 2000
 250 at Donkey Street on the 13th February 2003
 250 at New Cut on the 24th February 2006

230 at Donkey Street on the 7th February 2010
258 at Botolph's Bridge on the 27th January 2013
200 at Round Down/Hougham Valley area on the 11th February 2013
Up to 400 at Beachborough Park between the 22nd November and 3rd December 2018
200 at West Hythe on the 29th December 2020

Spring passage is usually noted during March and the first half of April. Noteworthy counts/movements have included:

c.60 east at Nickolls Quarry on the 21st March 1958
125 at Hythe Ranges on the 18th April 1958
100 north at Hythe on the 7th April 1964
100 at Abbotscliffe on the 23rd March 1996
50 at Abbotscliffe on the 19th March 2005
53 at Botolph's Bridge on the 19th March 2018
76 at Beachborough Park on the 21st March 2018



Fieldfare at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)



Cheriton (Dave Clarke)

The mean departure date over the most recent decade has been the 20th April, with birds occasionally lingering into the last week of the month, when there have been singles at Capel Battery on the 24th April 2000 and at Lympe on the 24th April 2021, six at Church Hougham on the 26th April 1995 and one at Capel Battery on the 27th April 1997. May sightings have been noted in just four years: one at Abbotscliffe on the 1st May 2017, one at Capel Battery on the 2nd May 1997, one in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 3rd May 2012 and one at Church Hougham from the 13th to 19th 1996. In 2016 there was an exceptional record of one seen by Dylan Wrathall at Seabrook on the 3rd June, with presumably the same individual noted there by Paul Howe on the 5th June.



Fieldfare at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)



Fieldfare at Broadmead Village (Ian Roberts)

References

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Acknowledgements

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Fieldfare at Donkey Street (Brian Harper)



Fieldfare at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



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