

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

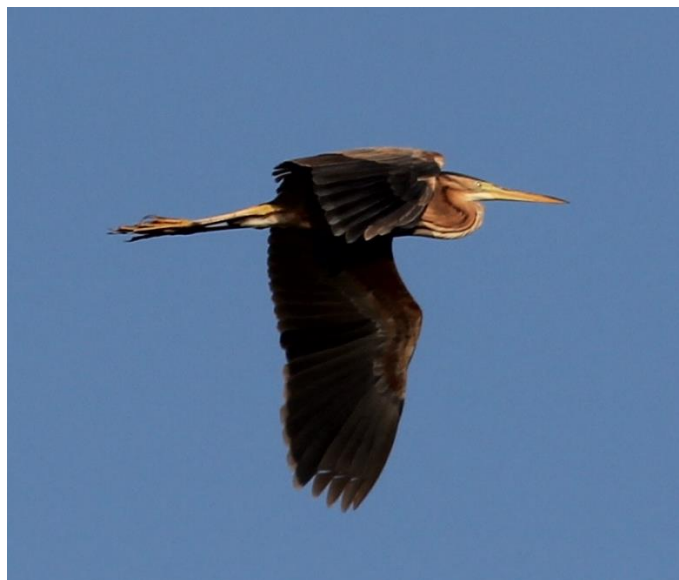
Category A

Very rare vagrant.

7 records

Breeds across southern Europe with some as far north as north-eastern France and an isolated population in the Netherlands. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa. Decreasing across most of its range (Snow & Perrins 1998) but the number of migrants reaching Britain has remained fairly consistent (White & Kehoe 2019). First bred successfully in Britain in 2010 at Dungeness (Holling *et al.* 2012).

A rare passage migrant to Kent, with a total of 154 county records to the end of 2019. The extreme dates of occurrence are 27th March and 13th November, with April and May accounting for the majority (55%) of records (KOS 2020).



Purple Heron at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

It was first recorded at Folkestone and Hythe in 1983, when one was seen flying over Copt Point on the 30th October, with the next four years later, when one flew over Folkestone Warren on the 28th July 1987. Five years later one was seen arriving in off the sea over Folkestone Harbour on the 15th May 1992 but then eleven years elapsed until the next flew east past Capel-le-Ferne Cliff-top Café on the 13th April. There followed a wait of another decade before two occurred in consecutive years, one flying north over Saltwood on the 31st May 2013 and another, the first to be photographed, which flew circled over Nickolls Quarry on the 16th May 2014. The most recent record involved a juvenile reported flying over Hythe on the 10th September 2022.

The distribution of records by year is confirmed in figure 1.

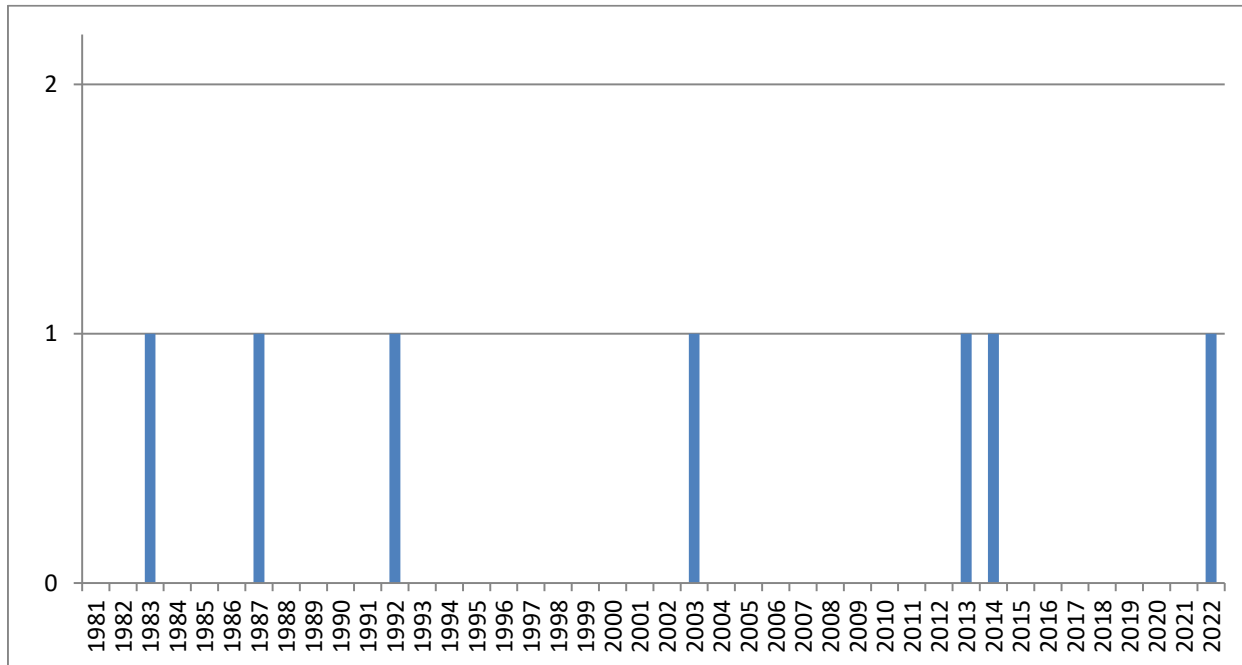


Figure 1: Purple Heron records at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are given in figure 2 and figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad. Four of the seven local records (57%) occurred in April or May, including two in week 20.

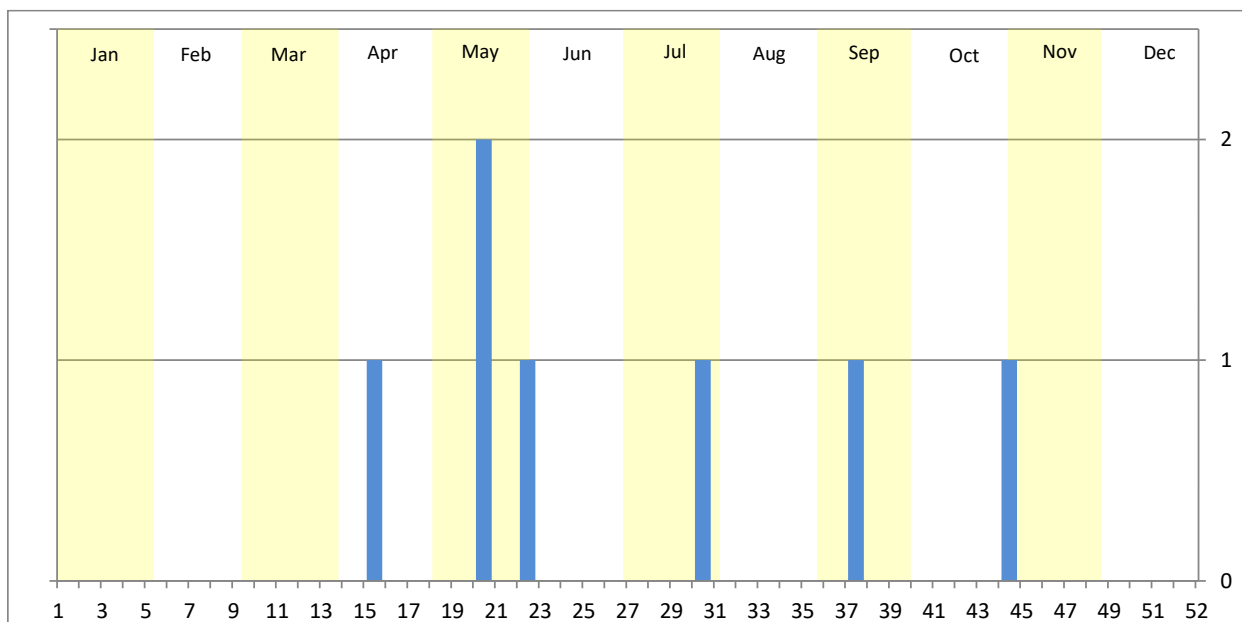


Figure 2: Purple Heron records at Folkestone and Hythe by week



Figure 3: Distribution of all Purple Heron records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1983** Copt Point, one flew over, 30th October (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson, R. Philpott *et al*)
- 1987** Folkestone Warren, one adult flew over, 28th July (K. G. Holland)
- 1992** Folkestone Harbour, one sub-adult flew in off the sea then north-west, 15th May (D. A. Gibson)
- 2003** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew east, 13th April (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Saltwood, one flew north, 31st May (P. Howe)
- 2014** Nickolls Quarry, one flew in from east, circled and flew back east, 16th May, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2022** Hythe, juvenile reported flying over A259, 10th September (reported)

References

Holling, M. & the Rare Breeding Birds Panel 2012. Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2010. *British Birds* 105: 352-416.

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White, S. & Kehoe, C. 2019. Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2017. *British Birds* 112: 444-468.



Purple Heron at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).