

Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

Category A

Formerly common but now a very rare vagrant. 11 records, 11 birds since 1950

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Hooded Crows breed in Ireland and north-west Scotland, but most of their distribution lies in Scandinavia, eastern Europe and western Asia. There is some southern and western movement in winter into Germany, and eastern and northern France, with a few reaching Britain.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to the county.



Hooded Crow at Abbotscliffe (Brendan Ryan)

Ticehurst (1909) wrote that “the Hooded Crow is a common winter visitor to Kent, and is most commonly found around the coast” and went on to state that (as well as in the north Kent marshes) “on the fields of the chalk downs they are also abundant, particularly in the vicinity of Folkestone and Dover, and from thence to the Stour Valley”.

He further described how “these winter visitors to Kent all arrive at the eastern end of the county from the east and south-east in company with the Rooks, Carrion Crows, Larks and Starlings, that come in large numbers between mid-September and mid-November. The main arrival takes place towards the end of October... The numbers that arrive are ‘sometimes immense’, as in 1902 and 1903, when in Thanet and on the Folkestone Downs, as I am informed by Messrs. Byron and Freke, the numbers were greater that they had ever seen before. Of course the majority do not stay in Kent, but pass through to winter-quarters elsewhere.

The return movement in the reverse direction begins in the second week of February, and is continued until the middle of April. The main part of this emigration seems to take place to the north of Kent, but occasionally birds have been recorded from the Varne and Goodwin Light-ships crossing the Channel for France in a south-easterly direction.”

The Hooded Crow was included in Knight & Tolputt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871). This list covered an area of six mile radius from Folkestone town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, and so this does not provide conclusive evidence of its occurrence here, it seems highly likely from Ticehurst’s comments that it was found locally at that time, and in some abundance.

By the time of Harrison (1953), numbers had greatly diminished in the county, and it was largely confined to the coast and its associated marshland. It occurred in varying numbers, and while hard winters sometimes produced larger arrivals, there was no clear correlation. Taylor *et al.* (1981) reported the continuing decline of passage and wintering numbers during 1952 to 1976. Numbers continued to vary from year to year, and winter totals were usually under 50.

Henderson (2020) wrote that “the decline in wintering numbers in England has been attributed to the Scandinavian populations becoming less migratory as a result of climatic amelioration. In other words, as temperatures in the breeding area and along the migration route have become warmer in winter, it has become possible for birds to remain there rather than travelling as far as they did before”. This ‘short stopping’ behaviour associated with climate change has also been identified in a range of waterfowl.

At that time, the Hooded Crow was considered to form a subspecies pair with the Carrion Crow and it was only relatively recently that it has been recognised a full species by the British Ornithologist’s Union (Knox *et al.* 2002). Since then, there have been around three records per annum in Kent, although some of these relate to birds that have been regularly over-wintering in the county. Most continue to appear, as in the historic period, at passage times, during October to November and March to April (KOS, 2020).

The first documented local occurrence since numbers had greatly declined by 1950, was in 1958 when one was noted by Roger Norman at Hythe Ranges from the 14th to 16th April (Norman 2006). In the 1960s T. Grant saw one flying in off the sea at Folkestone on the 26th October 1966 and another at Folkestone on the 10th January 1968. There were two further records in the 1970s but then no further records until 1993, yet there have been five since, as shown in figure 1.

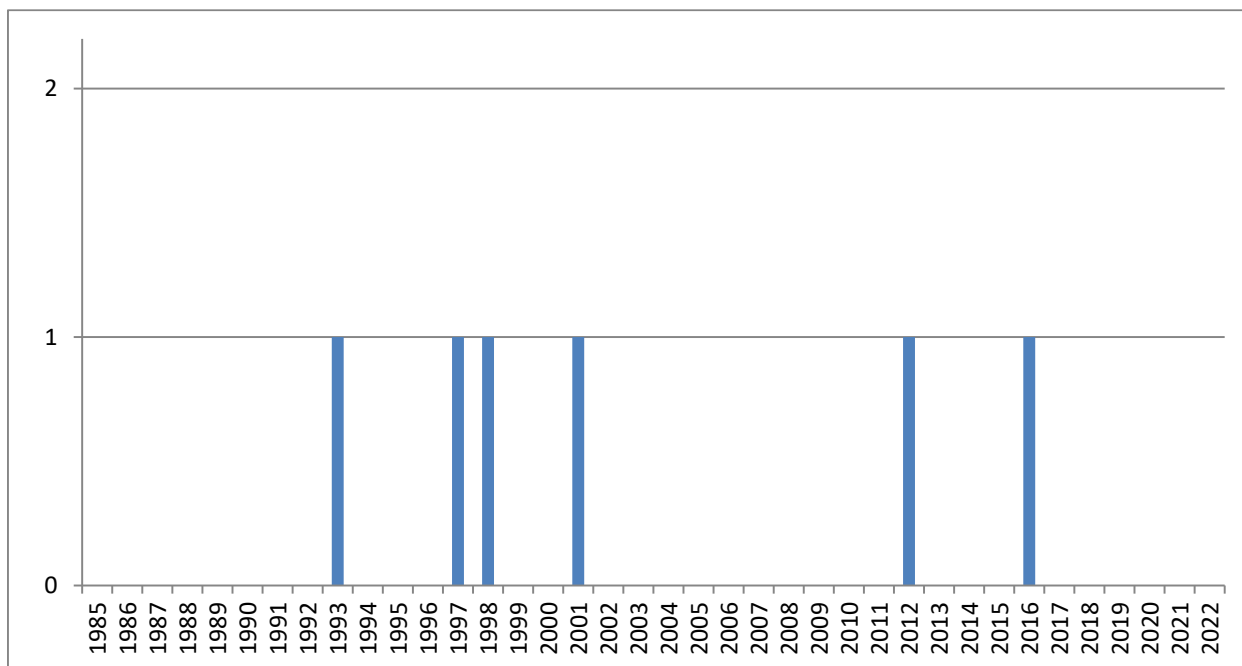


Figure 1: Hooded Crow records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1950

The records since 1950 by week are given in figure 2. There have been four spring records, between the 5th April (week 14) and 12th May (week 19), and five in autumn, between the 22nd October (week 43) and 17th November (week 46). The two winter records were both in week 2 (on the 10th January 1968 and 12th January 1997), the latter of which occurred during a period of severe weather.

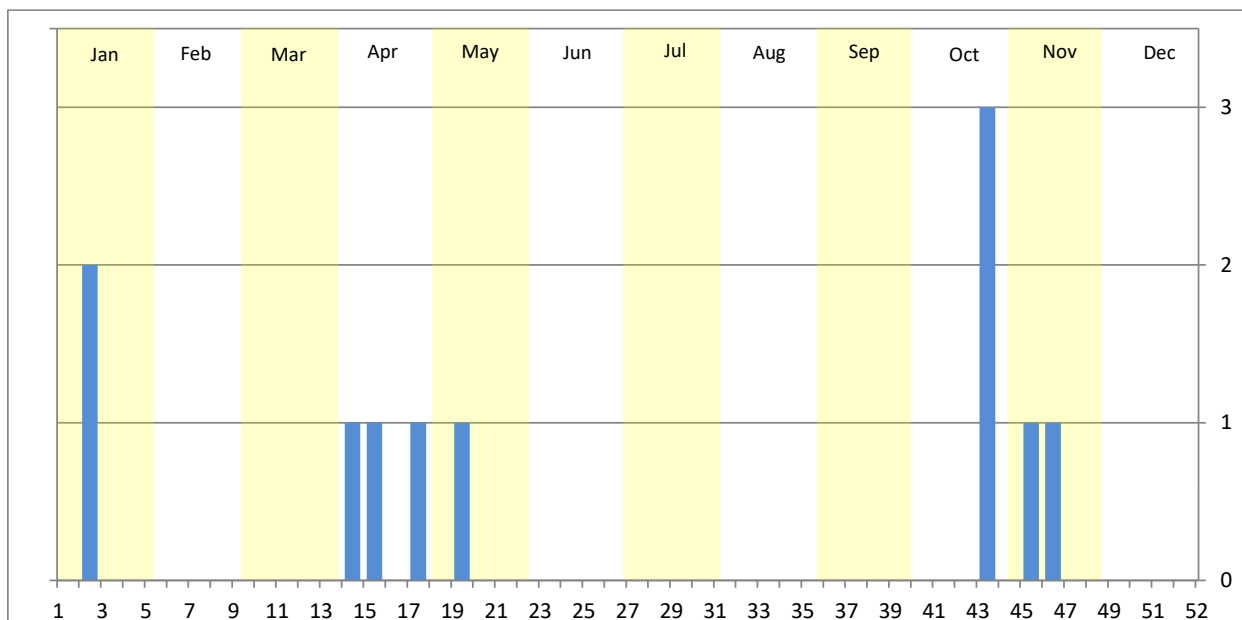


Figure 2: Hooded Crow records since 1950 at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records since 1950 by tetrad. Five of the six most recent records are from Abbotscliffe, with the other from Nickolls Quarry. The older records are from Folkestone (two, but not mapped due to insufficient details to identify the tetrad), Hythe Ranges, Sandling Park and West Hythe.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Hooded Crow records since 1950 at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records since 1950 is as follows:

- 1958** Hythe Ranges, one, 14th to 16th April (R. K. Norman)
- 1966** Folkestone, one flew in off the sea, 26th October (T. Grant)
- 1968** Folkestone, one, 10th January (T. Grant)
- 1971** West Hythe, one, 11th November (P. Martin)
- 1974** Sandling Park, one, 26th October (D. E. Chittenden)
- 1993** Abbotscliffe, one, 22nd October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, one on frozen gravel pit, 12th January (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one flew in off the sea, 17th November (D. A. Gibson)
- 2001** Abbotscliffe, one flew in off the sea and landed in Abbot's Gully field 5th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Abbotscliffe, one, 12th May, photographed (B. Ryan, J. Chantler, P. Chantler)
- 2016** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 23rd April (I. A. Roberts)

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](#).

I am indebted to Andrew Henderson and Tim Hodge for providing access to the Kent Ornithological Society archives.



Hooded Crow with Carrion Crow at Abbotscliffe (Brendan Ryan)