

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

Category A

Passage migrant, occasionally overwinters.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998; Balmer et al. 2013):

Breeds across much of Europe, west-central Asia and in northern Asia east to Kamchatka and Japan. In Britain it breeds in the uplands of Wales, northern England and Scotland. Small numbers winter within the maritime climatic zone of western Europe north to Britain and around the Mediterranean Basin, but the majority winter in Africa, with eastern populations in southern Asia to Melanesia and Australia.



Common Sandpiper at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Kent status (KOS 2021):

In Kent it is a widespread passage migrant, with small numbers overwintering.

The Common Sandpiper 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 it would have been very likely to have been recorded at the coast and so within the modern boundary.

The first documented records date from the 1950s, when Roger Norman considered it to be a regular passage migrant through Nickolls Quarry. He noted spring passage between the 22nd April (1958) and 4th June (1960) and autumn migration between the 15th July (1959) and 23rd September (1958), with a peak count in spring of eight in May 1950 and in autumn of seven on the 4th September 1957 (Norman 2007). He also recorded singles at Hythe Ranges on the 10th August 1957 and Botolph's Bridge on the 7th August 1961 (Norman 2006).

There were few records in the 1960s or 1970s which seems very likely to reflect a lack of coverage. In the early 1980s Peter Wells noted that it visited the clay pit at Biggin's Wood, whilst Neil Frampton recorded it at West Hythe in each spring and autumn between 1980 and 1985, Dave Weaver counted a peak of eight at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th May 1980 and there were several reports from Copt Point, including totals of nine on the 12th May 1981, 15 on the 10th August 1981 and 12 on the 12th September 1981.

It has been recorded annually since as a regular passage migrant.



Common Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Overall distribution

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Common Sandpiper by tetrad, with records in 20 tetrads (65%).

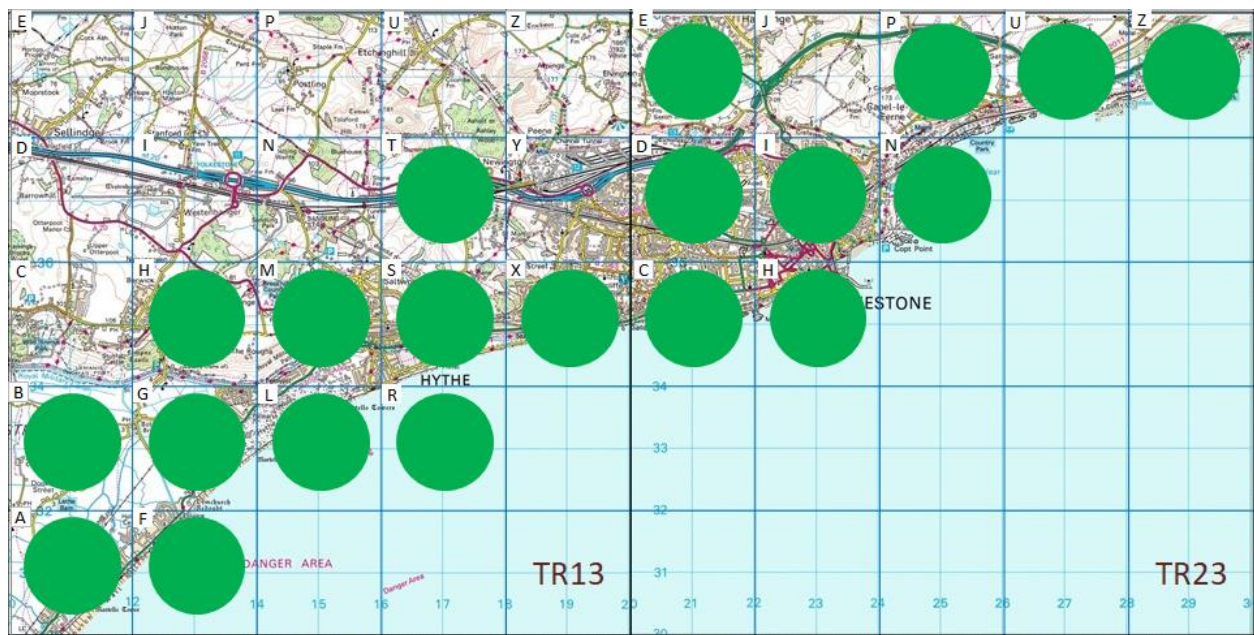


Figure 1: Distribution of all Common Sandpiper records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Excluding birds that have been known to have overwintered, there have been two particularly early records, both on the 4th March. The first, at West Hythe on the 4th March 1983, may have been a previously undetected overwintering individual as there were further sightings there on the 28th and 31st March of that year. The second however was seen on Folkestone Sands on the 4th March 2013 and appears unlikely to have wintered nearby. The only other March record involved two reported flying east past Sandgate on the 27th March 1996.

Arrival is more typically in April, with early individuals at Nickolls Quarry on the 11th April 2017, at Samphire Hoe on the 12th April 2001 and at Hythe Ranges on the 12th April 2018, whilst the mean arrival date over the most recent decade has been the 17th April. Double figure counts have been noted on four occasions in spring: 11 at Nickolls Quarry on the 5th May 2000 (when nine were also seen at Mill Point, giving a total of 20 across the area), 13 at Nickolls Quarry on the 9th May 2000, 11 there on the 24th May 2001 and 14 at Copt Point on the 1st May 2004.



Common Sandpiper at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Common Sandpiper at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

Birds have lingered into early June in seven years, with the latest at Nickolls Quarry on the 10th June 2001 and Seabrook on the same date in 2022. The first returning migrant was noted just 18 days later, at Nickolls Quarry on the 28th June 2001, whilst there were also late June records there in 2003 (on the 28th June) and 2004 (on the 30th June), with sightings more typically from early July.

Double figure counts have been recorded in autumn as follows:

12 at Copt Point on the 2nd August 1986
13 at Abbotscliffe on the 20th August 1987
12 at Copt Point on the 27th August 1987
16 at Copt Point on the 8th August 1994
10 at Copt Point on the 21st August 1995
12 at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th August 2000
14 at Nickolls Quarry on the 17th July 2003
13 at the Willop Outfall on the 15th July 2012

The mean departure date over the last decade has been the 23rd September, with birds lingering into the first half of October in some years. Excluding birds that have gone on to overwinter, there have been sightings in the second half of October as follows: one at Nickolls Quarry to the 25th October 2001, one at Folkestone Pier on the 26th October 2012 and one at Samphire Hoe on the 26th and 30th October 2018.



Common Sandpiper at the Dymchurch Redoubt
(Brian Harper)



Common Sandpiper at the Dymchurch Redoubt
(Brian Harper)

There have four winter records: one seen intermittently at Nickolls Quarry between the 8th November and 12th December 2002, one at Botolph's Bridge on the 6th December 2003, one there between the 24th December 2007 and the 21st March 2008 and one there on the 31st December 2008.



Common Sandpiper at Hythe (Nigel Webster)



Common Sandpipers at Beachborough (Steve Tomlinson)

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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Common Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge in January 2008
(Brian Harper)



Common Sandpiper at the Dymchurch Redoubt
(Brian Harper)