

Green Sandpiper

Tringa ochropus

Category A

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Breeds in middle latitudes from Germany and Fenno-Scandia eastwards across northern Asia to 160°E. Winters sparingly in western and west-central Europe but the main winter range lies in the Mediterranean basin and Africa, and across southern Asia from Turkey to eastern China (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

In Kent it is a regular passage migrant and winter visitor (KOS, 2020).



Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Knight and Tolputt included the Green Sandpiper in their "list of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871), however this list covered an area of six mile radius from Folkestone town hall and extended further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of local occurrence.

Roger Norman considered it to be regular on passage at Nickolls Quarry and Botolph's Bridge in the 1950s, with occasional winter records, and gave an earliest arrival date of the 14th July (1957), a latest departure date of 9th May (1958) and a peak count of eight (at Nickolls Quarry on the 21st August 1952).

There were few records in the 1960s or 1970s which seems certain to reflect a lack of coverage, as it has been noted almost annually since 1978.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Green Sandpiper by tetrad, with records in 17 tetrads (55%).



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

The first post-breeding arrivals can occur as early as the first half of June, with one at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th June 2000, one at Botolph's Bridge on the 12th June 2008 and singles at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th June 2002 and 15th June 2003, but the first sighting is typically in the second half of the month or in July. The peak count in June involved to four at Nickolls Quarry on the 28th June 2000.

Autumn passage tends to peak between late July and early September, when counts of eight or more have been noted in six years:

Up to 9 at Nickolls Quarry between the 25th July and 5th September 1999
 Up to 9 at Nickolls Quarry between the 13th and 21st August 2000
 8 at Nickolls Quarry on the 8th August 2004
 8 (including 5 flying south-west) at Nickolls Quarry on the 14th August 2004
 8 flying south-west at Nickolls Quarry on the 18th August 2005
 13 at Nickolls Quarry on the 23rd August 2015

Few autumn migrants are noted away from the marsh, with on average 1 or 2 records per annum, typically involving single birds although three flew west at Copt Point on the 13th August 1999, two flew west at Capel Battery on the 11th September 1999, two flew south over Capel-le-Ferne on the 13th August 2000, two were in a flooded field at Abbotscliffe on the 8th August 2011, two were on a small pond at Samphire Hoe on the 27th August 2013 and three flew west over Beachborough Lakes on the 17th August 2016.



Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



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At least two birds tend to overwinter and frequent the Nickolls Quarry/Botolph's Bridge/Donkey Street area, with a peak of four present during the 2000/2001 winter. Winter records are rare away from the marsh and the only sightings in recent years (excluding a couple of fly-overs) have involved one frequenting a small pool to the east of Cowtye Wood between the 19th January and 9th February 2014, one along the stream near Kiln Wood on the 13th January 2019 and one at the spring at Holy Well from the 10th to 12th February 2021 during a period of severe weather.

Spring passage is generally noted between mid-March and late April, when counts of five or more have been logged as follows:

6 at Nickolls Quarry on the 4th Apr 1999
 5 at Nickolls Quarry on the 3rd April 2000
 6 at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th April 2004
 6 at Beachborough Lakes on the 13th Apr 2019
 9 at Beachborough Lakes on the 19th Apr 2019
 5 at Nickolls Quarry on the 3rd Apr 2020, with 6 the next day
 7 at Nickolls Quarry on the 10th Apr 2020

Apart from the unusually large counts at Beachborough Lakes in April 2019, spring records away from the marsh are rare: one flew over Capel Battery on the 2nd April 1994, one was at Abbotscliffe on the 4th April 1995, one was at Samphire Hoe on the 30th March 2005 and two flew north over Saltwood on the 28th March 2012.

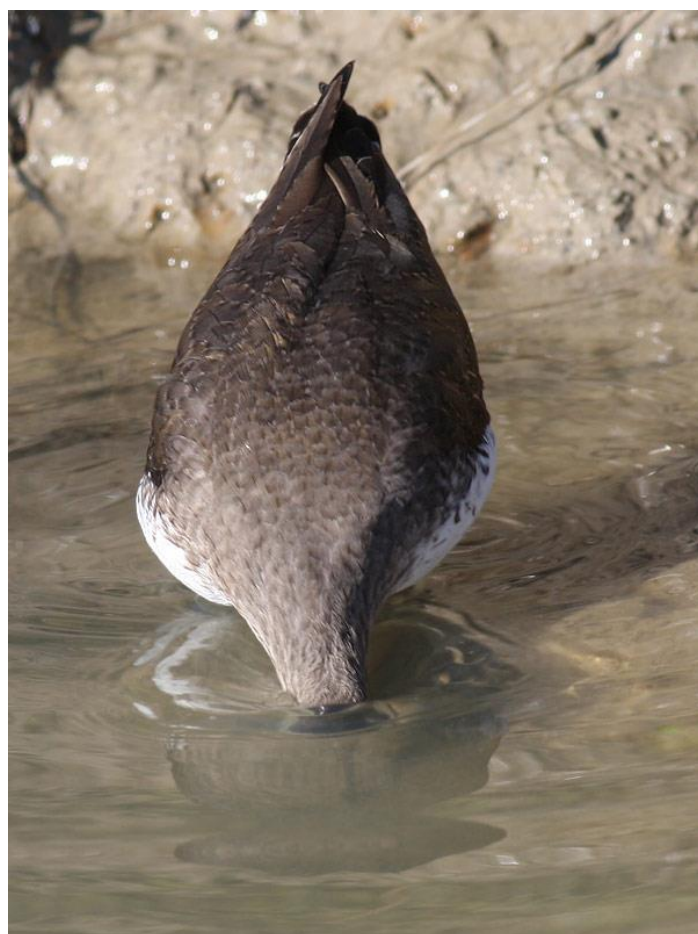
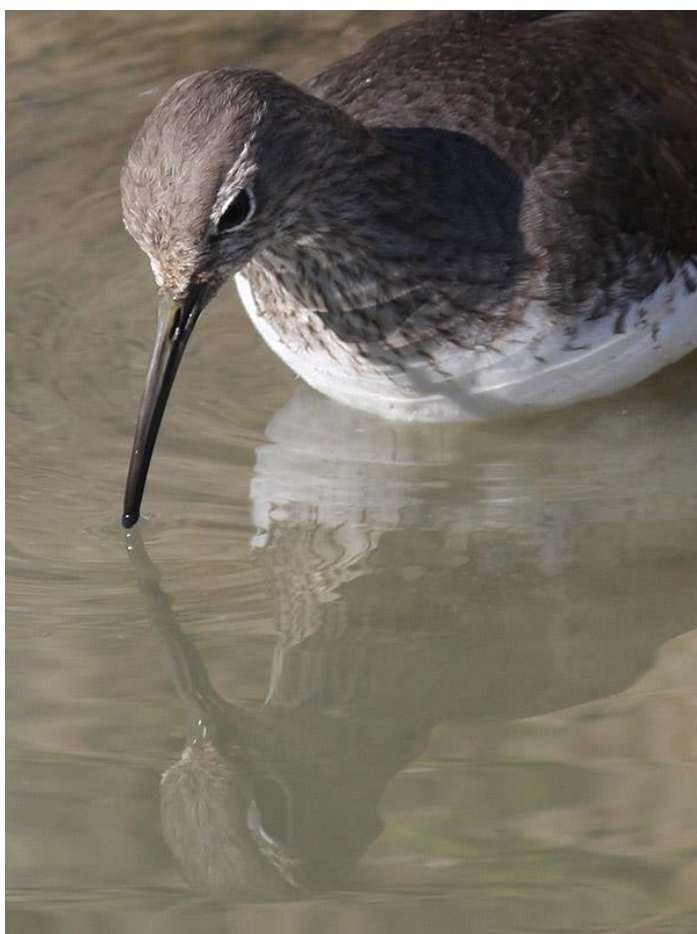
Stragglers may linger into early May, when there was one at Nickolls Quarry on the 1st May 2017, one there on the 4th May 2000 and one at Donkey Street on the 9th May 2018.



Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Ian Roberts)



Green Sandpiper at the Willop Basin (Paul Apps)



Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

References

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

Knight, V. and Tolputt, F., 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood, *Folkestone Natural History Society Annual Report*, 1871

Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M., 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

Acknowledgements

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Green Sandpiper at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



Green Sandpiper at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)