

Crane

Grus grus

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

12 records,
102 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds from eastern Germany and Fenno-Scandia eastwards across Russia to Lake Baikal. Winters mainly in southern Europe, north Africa, and Turkey to south-west Iran. From the late 1970s large numbers have wintered in wetlands that had recently been created in east-central France.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a rare passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent, occasionally occurring in larger numbers on autumn passage.



Cranes at Lower Wall Road (Ian Roberts)

There has been a strong increase in the British population in recent years, partly fuelled by reintroductions in south-west England, and Eaton *et al.* (2022) reported that in 2020 “once again, the UK Common Crane population has reached a new high”, with 40 confirmed breeding pairs, raising 23 young, and a further 17 possible/probable pairs, with strongholds in East Anglia and Somerset/Gloucestershire.

Ticehurst (1909) provided details of a few records up to the eighteenth century but there were apparently no Kent records in the nineteenth nor in the first half of the twentieth century (Harrison, 1953). Taylor *et al.* (1981) were able to document four records during their review period (1952-76), including an immature that wintered “near Dymchurch” from the 30th October 1963 to the 4th April 1964, which was no doubt the same bird that Rowland (1968) made reference to as having occurred in the “Folkestone District”. The exact location of this record is unknown, but it is possible, though perhaps unlikely, that it was within the local boundaries.

Taylor *et al.* added a footnote in relation to “a remarkable series of records” that occurred just after their review period in 1977, which included a flock of 26 that flew south over Charing and Ashford on the 16th October. This flock was subsequently “thought to have been seen leaving the coast at Folkestone” (Taylor pers. comm.) but the identification could not be clinched.



Crane at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)



Cranes over Folkestone (John Phillips)

After this near miss the first area record was confirmed in 1982, when S. Boreham saw a flock of 18 flying over Cheriton on the 31st October, part of an influx into Kent in late October and early November of that year. Remarkably, just three years later O. & P. French recorded another flock (of an exceptional total of 71 birds) flying south over Cheriton on the 25th October 1985, with these later seen to head out to sea from Dungeness.

Although no further flocks have being noted, it has since occurred with some regularity, with there having been ten subsequent records involving up to three birds at a time since 2000, as demonstrated by in figure 1.

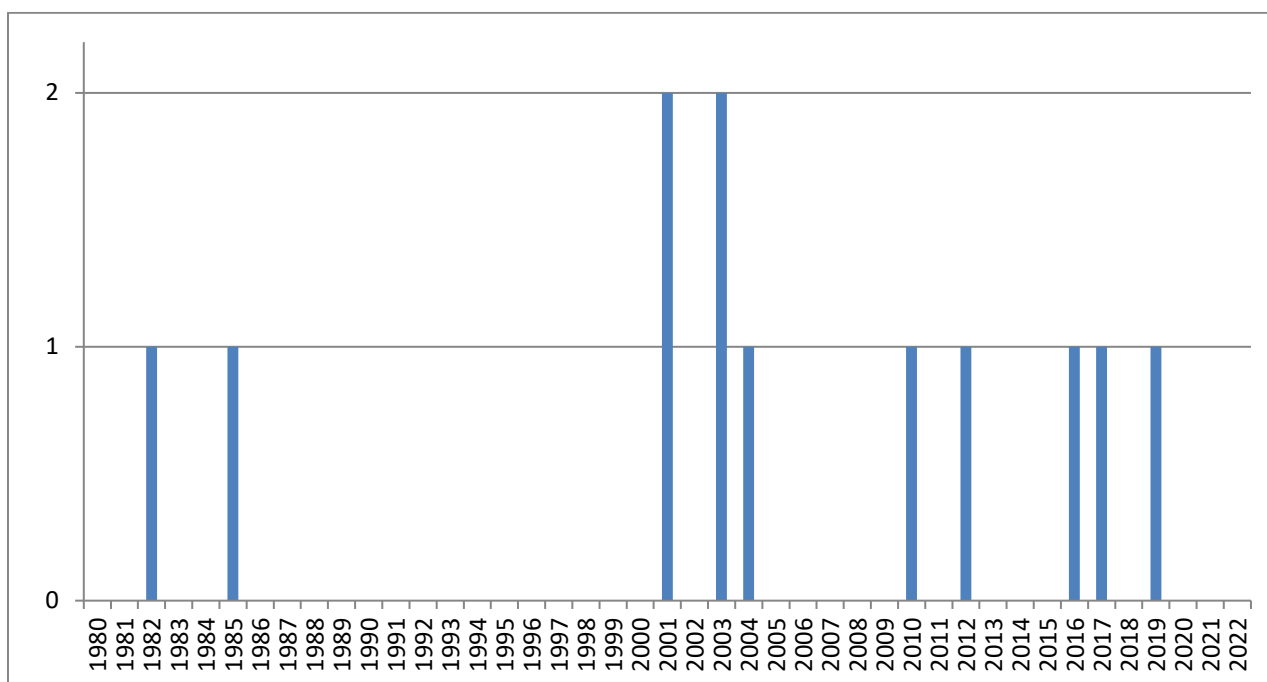


Figure 1: Crane records at Folkestone and Hythe

Records have been fairly well spread throughout the year, with the exception of the summer/early autumn months, as demonstrated by figure 2. There has been a single record in January, four between mid-March and mid-April, three in May, two in late October and two in late November/early December. The records by week are shown in figure 2.

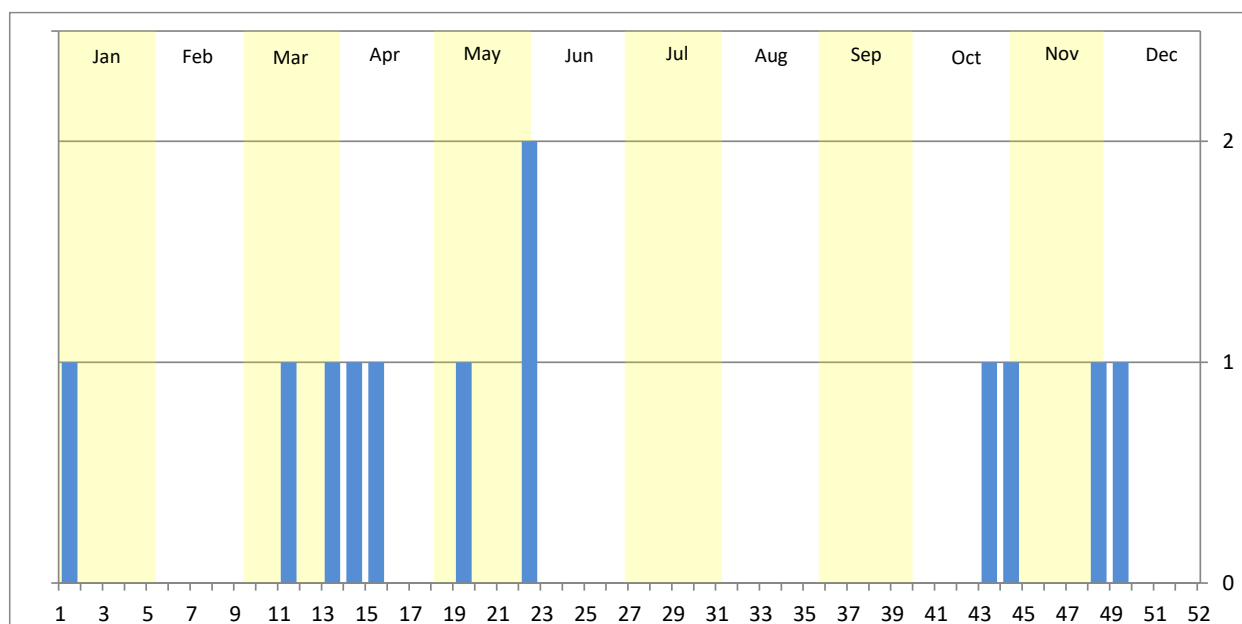


Figure 2: Crane records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad. There have been four records in the Romney Marsh area, four in the Hythe/Saltwood area and four in the Cheriton/Folkestone area (although these latter four have not been mapped as insufficient details were provided to identify the tetrad).



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1982** Cheriton, 18 flew over, 31st October (S. Boreham), part of an influx into Kent in late October and early November
- 1985** Cheriton, 71 flew south, 25th October (O. French, P. French), later seen heading out to sea off Dungeness
- 2001** Hythe, one in fields beside Blackhouse Hill, 27th March (R. K. Norman, P. Haines)
- 2001** Hythe Redoubt, one flew north-east, 26th November (R. K. Norman), earlier seen over St. Mary's Bay
- 2003** Lower Wall Road, three, 5th January, photographed (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson *et al*)
- 2003** Palmarsh, two flew in off the sea, 28th May (reported)
- 2004** Hythe, one flew north, 13th April (reported)
- 2010** Willop Outfall, one, 5th December, photographed (B. Harper, M. Harper)
- 2012** Saltwood, two heard calling, 15th March (P. Howe), earlier flew south-east from Sandwich Bay
- 2016** Hythe, one, 7th April (per Rare Bird Alert)
- 2017** Cheriton, at least one heard, 28th May (R. Thorogood)
- 2019** Folkestone, two flew west, later seen over Horn Street, 13th May (P. Howe, J. Phillips)

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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Cranes at Lower Wall Road (Dale Gibson)