

Redshank

Tringa totanus

Category A

Formerly bred but now a winter visitor and passage migrant.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds across much of Europe eastwards across central Asia to the Amur region, also from the Himalayas to western China. Declines have been reported from many countries, chiefly due to the intensification of agriculture and land drainage. It is mainly migratory, though some are resident in the maritime countries of western Europe. Birds breeding in northern Fenno-Scandia winter the furthest south, in West Africa, whilst those from Iceland winter around North Sea coasts, and west-central European birds winter in France, Iberia and the western Mediterranean.



Redshank at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Kent status (KOS 2021):

In Kent is a locally common but declining breeding species, a widespread passage migrant and a winter visitor.

The Redshank was not included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871) and neither Ticehurst (1909) nor Harrison (1953) made mention of any local records, however Roger Norman found that "at least 6 or 7 pairs" were nesting in the Nickolls Quarry area when he started watching there in 1950. He noted that breeding productivity appeared to be low, citing an example of just one chick fledging from four nests in the "old pit" in 1951. The number of breeding pairs dropped during the 1950s but there were "still 2 to 4 pairs in 1958 to 1961", the last year that full coverage was possible (Norman 2007).

Roger noted that birds arrived at the breeding site between mid-February and mid-March but moved away soon after the young fledged and that the only autumn records were of four birds on the 21st October 1956 and singles through September 1958. Roger also found single nests in the Little Tern colony at Hythe Ranges between 1951 and 1964, with two nests in 1958, but just a single bird was seen in 1965 (on the 17th July) (Norman 2006).



Redshank at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Redshank at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)

It is not known when local breeding ceased but Taylor *et al.* (1981) did not report any local breeding during the first county atlas (1967 to 1973), although a single bird was seen at Nickolls Quarry on the 22nd July 1971, and Dave Weaver was unable to provide any summer sightings from that site between 1978 and 1983.

Whilst the local population may have already disappeared by the time of the first county atlas, Clements *et al.* (2015) remarked on a further decline of 39% in the number of occupied tetrads across the county by the time of the third atlas (2008-2013). There have been no further indications of local nesting aside from the intermittent presence of a bird at Nickolls Quarry through May and June 1993, which Roger Norman thought “may suggest a nearby breeding pair”.

Overall distribution

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Redshank by tetrad, with records in 13 tetrads (42%).



Figure 1: Distribution of all Redshank 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 8th June 2003, one flying east past Princes Parade on the 12th June 2016 and one at Nickolls Quarry on the 14th June 2021, but the first sighting is typically in the second half of the month or in July. All modern occurrences in June have involved single birds apart from two at Nickolls Quarry on the 23rd June 1999.



Redshanks at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)



Redshank at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Autumn passage tends to peak between July and early September, when counts in excess of five have been noted on four occasions: six at Nickolls Quarry on the 7th September 2007, a flock of 16 flying east over Abbotscliffe on the 30th August 1993, 21 at Nickolls Quarry on the 23rd August 2003 and 24 there on the 22nd July 1992.

Dave Weaver recorded an exceptional total of about 30 at Nickolls Quarry on the 23rd January 1979 and Roger Norman considered it to be a regular winter visitor there in small numbers, but with counts of more than ten noted on four winters: 11 in 1997/1998, 17 in 1998/1999, 11 in 2000/2001 and 15 in 2002/03. It favoured an area of shallow water, islets and mud that existed at the site but was infilled in the mid-2000s, since when it has become much more infrequent. In recent years there have only been occasional sightings of one or two, although four were present in December 2010 and six were noted on the 7th February 2012.



Redshank at Folkestone Harbour (Ian Roberts)



Redshanks at Folkestone Harbour (Elliot Ranford)

Neil Frampton found that “one or two birds were regularly present on the muddy banks of the Botolph's Bridge cut” in the winter in the first half of the 1980s, whilst Dave Weaver noted five there on the 5th December 1981. It had since been recorded frequently in winter there from 1990, with up to six noted in many winters and larger counts of seven on the 12th December 2004, eight on the 19th February 1995 a peak of 14 on the 8th March 2003 (although these may have included migrants), but numbers have declined since 2004/2005 (which was the last winter in which five were counted) with three or four still wintering until 2010, but only intermittent singles have been noted since.



Redshank at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Redshank at Folkestone Harbour (Phil Smith)

A roost at the Willop Sewer near Key Barn Farm was discovered in 2001, when 20 were counted on the 4th March. These birds may feed on the adjacent Willop Basin if conditions are suitable, or perhaps disperse onto the marsh and/or the coast south of Dymchurch.

The largest counts were made in 2013, when 19 were present on the 17th February and a peak of 29 were counted on the 18th November, whilst 17 were present in January 2014 and 16 were present in January 2015. In recent years there have been double-figure counts in most winters, with ten noted in January 2021.

Away from the marsh, a small wintering population in the Folkestone Harbour/Copt Point area has been known since 1987, with usually between six and nine birds present and larger counts of 12 on the 1st February 1987, 10 on the 8th January 1997, 10 on two dates in December 2006, 11 on the 30th January and 25th March 2007, and 12 on the 7th January 2012.

In spring, small numbers may occasionally be noted passing coastal watch-points, generally between mid-April and the third week of May. Counts of five or more have involved: five east past Mill Point on the 2nd May 1990, six east past Copt Point on the 15th May 1997, six east there on the 11th May 2000, nine east there on the 9th May 2001 and five east there on the 17th May 2002.

Stragglers may linger into the last week of May, with one at Nickolls Quarry on the 24th May 2001, one at Donkey Street on the 29th May 2018, one at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th May 2005 and one flying over Samphire Hoe on the 30th May 2005.



Redshank at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

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