

Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

4 records, 4 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

A widespread breeding species across much of Europe, eastwards to Mongolia and northern China, with the entire population wintering in Africa. There has been a significant decline in range and numbers, especially in north-west Europe, mainly in the second half of the twentieth century and particularly since 1970, probably chiefly due to habitat loss and deterioration, and decrease in large insect prey through use of pesticides, although it is also vulnerable to increasing leisure use of heathlands and to road-traffic.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a scarce and declining breeding summer visitor to Kent, with occasional coastal migrants.

Harrison (1953) considered the Nightjar to be well distributed in Kent, particularly in the west of the county and Taylor *et al.* (1981) described a similar pattern, with concentrations along the North Downs at Cobham and Luddesdown, and in Challock Forest, along the greensand ridge around Sevenoaks and Mereworth, and in King's Wood between Langley and Ulcombe, and in the Weald, near Pembury and at Hemstead Forest near Cranbrook, stating that they favour open areas with isolated mature trees and are often associated with bracken and newly planted conifers. A Nightingale census in 1970 also produced a total of 45 male Nightjars across the county, whilst a national Nightjar survey in 1981 returned a total of 44 males in Kent.

Clements *et al.* (2015) described a marked increase in Kent during the late 1980s and early 1990s due to clearance of damaged woodland following the 1987 storm, large scale felling and re-planting of conifer forests and widespread coppicing, with a total of 85 males recorded in a survey in 1992. This was followed by a steady decrease in the county linked to a decline in the coppicing industry and the maturation of the other habitats (with 52 males in a survey in 2004).

The species 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 mile radius from Folkestone town hall. This range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area and so this does not provide conclusive evidence of its occurrence here. Whilst there were no breeding records within this six mile radius in any of the three atlas surveys, it is possible that suitable habitat existed in the nineteenth century inside this radius but outside of the current area (in TR14 or TR24). The record could have related to a coastal migrant but these have always been rare in the county and remain so today.

The first local record dates from 1953 when William Nevin found a dead individual in his garden at "Oak Bank", 2 Tanners Hill, Hythe, on the 27th September which was "assumed to have flown into some object while on nocturnal migration" (KOS 1954).

There have been three modern records. Dale Gibson found a migrant roosting by day in Folkestone Warren on the 17th September 1996, Paul Holt flushed one at Gibbin's Brook in spring sometime in the early 2000s and Ade Jupp saw one flying over Seabrook on the 12th September 2014.

The records by year are shown in figure 1 (excluding the undated record from the early 2000s).

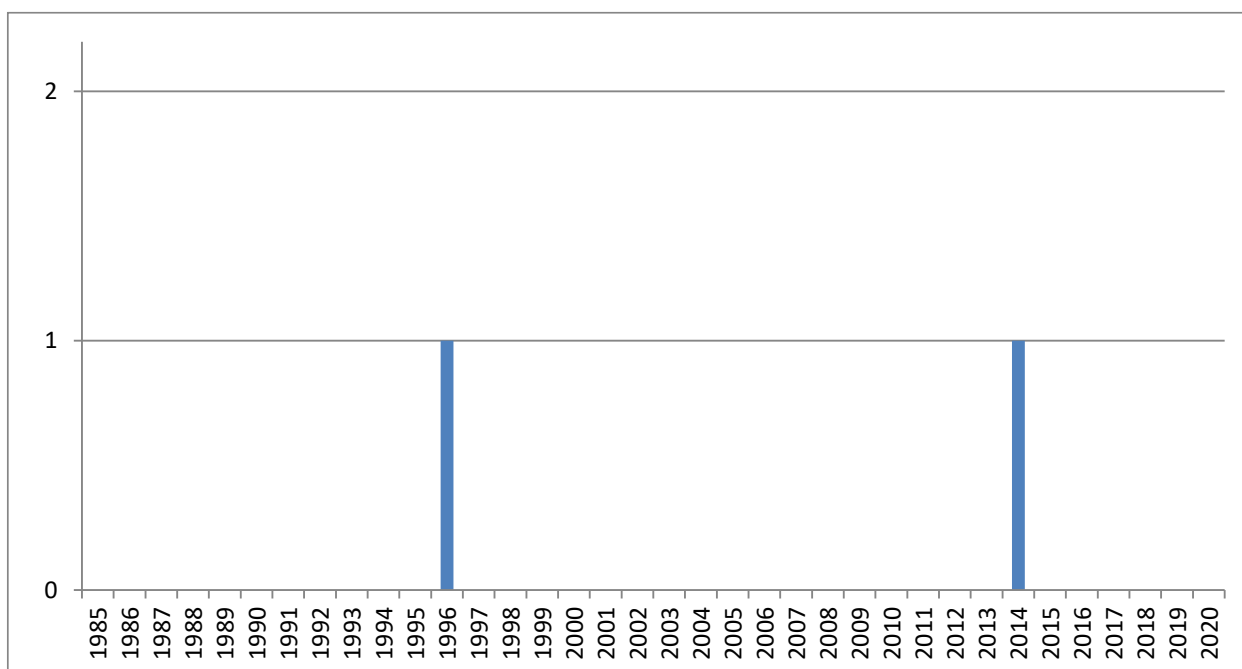


Figure 1: Nightjar records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are given in figure 2.

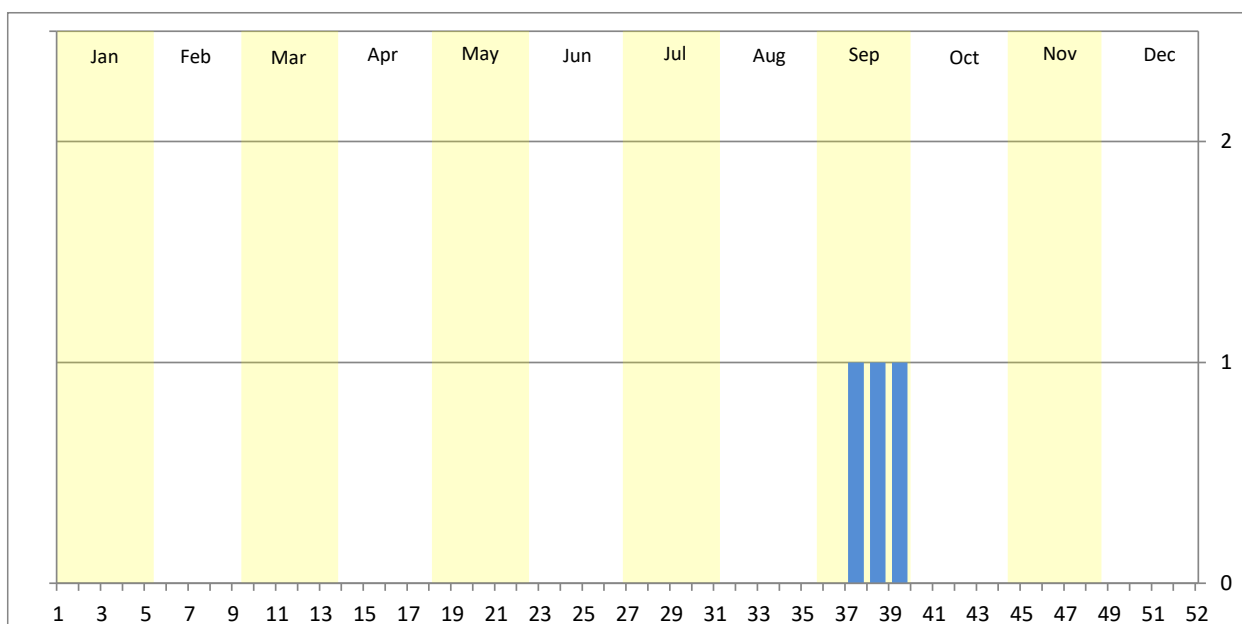


Figure 2: Nightjar records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1953** Tanner's Hill, Hythe, one found dead, 27th September (W. S. Nevin)
- 1996** Folkestone Warren, one, 17th September (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts, A. F. Roberts)
- early 2000s** Gibbin's Brook, one flushed in spring (P. Holt)
- 2014** Seabrook, one flew over, 12th September (A. Jupp)

References

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- Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society.

Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/get-a-map) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk).

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