

Goshawk

Accipiter gentilis

Category A/C3

Very rare vagrant

15 records

Breeds across most of Europe, though relatively scarce in Britain where it probably bred regularly until the nineteenth century, but only sporadically thereafter, until regular breeding (partly due to escaped or released birds) was rediscovered from the late 1960s (Snow & Perrins, 1998). Whilst still subject to persecution it is increasing, with the Holling *et al* (2019) giving an estimate of at least 600 breeding pairs, though consider this to be an underestimate, with the true figure nearer to 1,000. The population has more than double over the last 25 years. It is partially migratory in northern European populations but resident or dispersive further south.

It is a rare but increasing migrant in Kent, which is now possibly breeding occasionally. Most records probably relate to wanderers from the growing British population, though the occurrence of migrants from the continent is possible. Most historical sightings were likely to refer to falconer's releases and escapees. The peak time of occurrence in Kent is March and April, with another increase between September and November, and a small number through the winter months. The status in the county is however clouded by misidentification – no other species has such a high rate of 'not proven' or 'pended' records (Clements *et al*, 2015, KOS, 2020).

Ticehurst (1909) noted that there was an adult male Goshawk in the extensive collection of British Birds formed by the late Mr. William T. Tournay, of Brockhill Park, near Hythe. He states that this Goshawk, along with other specimens of various species, had been presented to the Kent Education Committee, and was housed in the Folkestone County Grammar School for Girls.

It is not clear what became of this specimen however and unfortunately there were no particulars with it to establish even that it was of Kentish origin. Ticehurst reported that a great many of Tournay's birds were no doubt local, but that many also appeared to have been obtained during voyages in the far north, as the collection "was very rich in species such as the Greenland [Gyr] Falcon, King-Eider and Ivory-Gull". It seems likely that the Goshawk was another specimen of more northern origin.

The first confirmed record at Folkestone and Hythe was in 1994, with 14 subsequent records as shown in figure 1, including two in 1997 and 2017.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

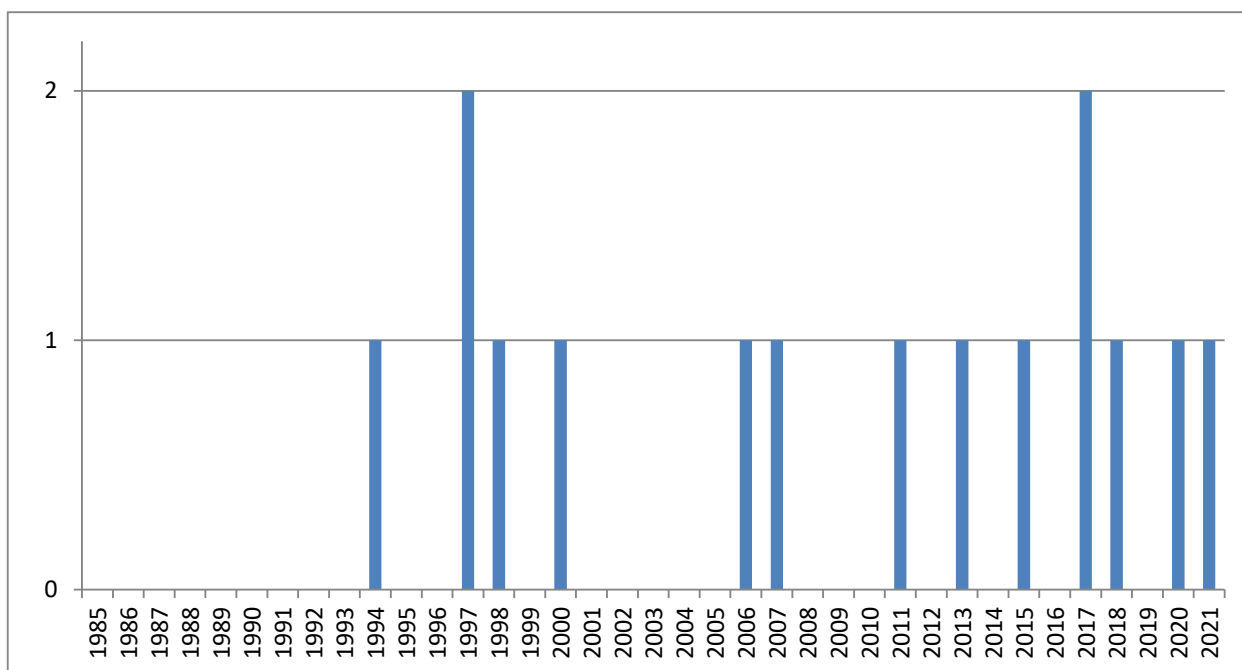


Figure 1: Goshawk records at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are given in figure 2.

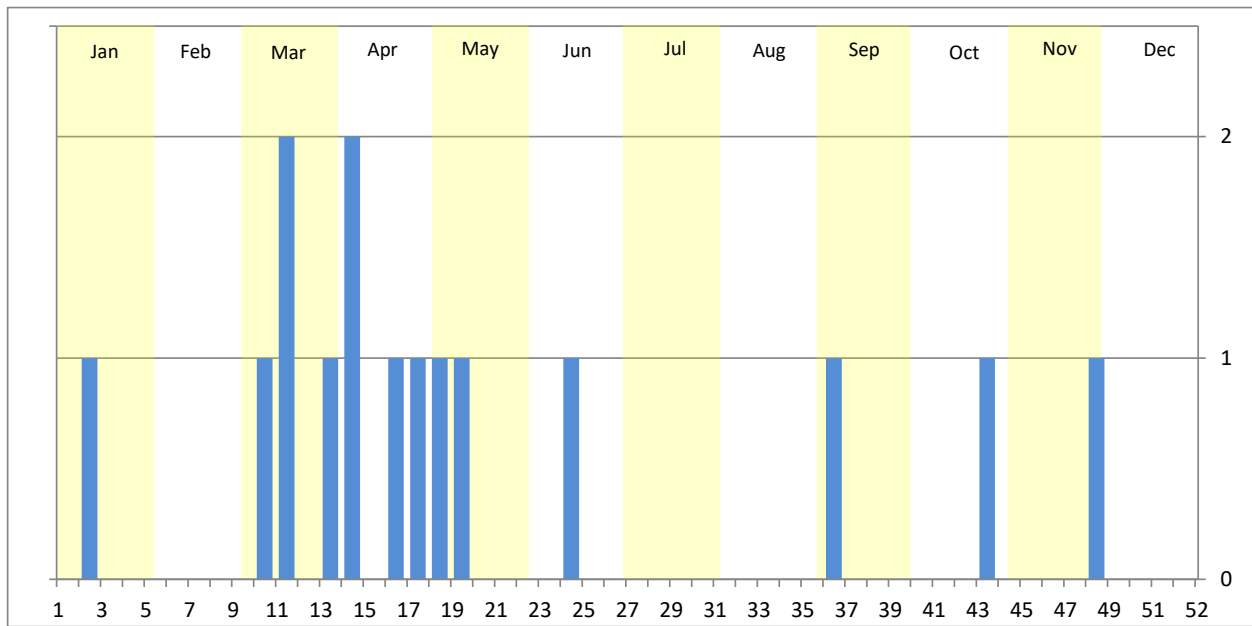


Figure 2: Goshawk records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

There have been four records in March, four in April, two in May, and singles in January, June, September, October and November.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.

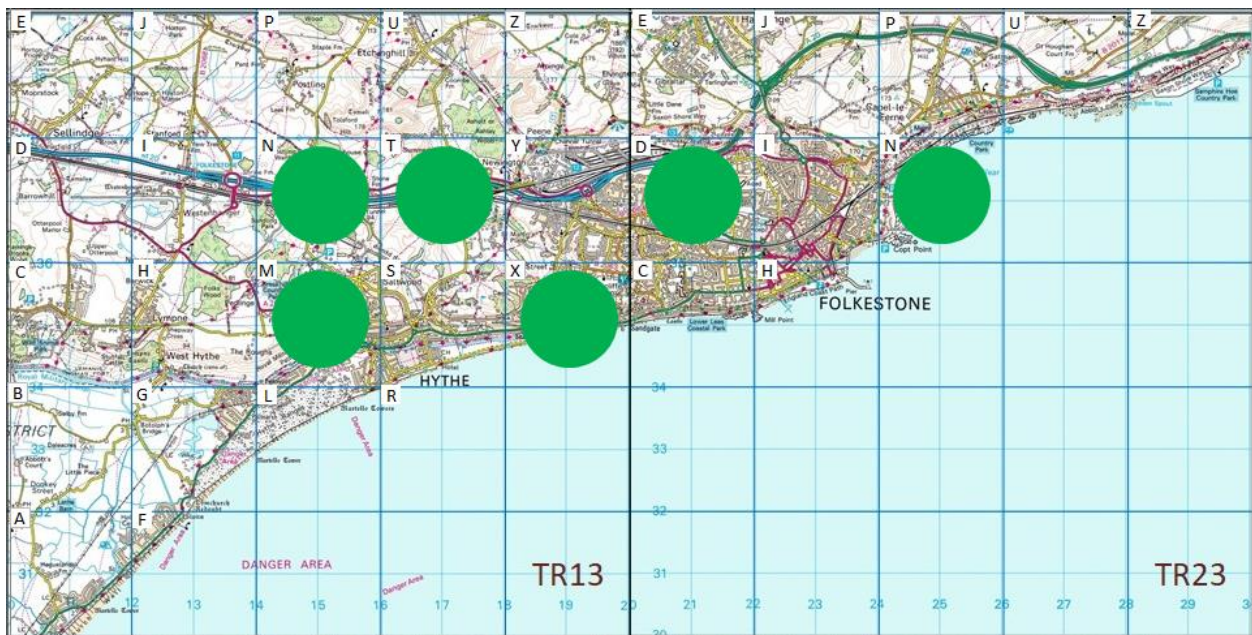


Figure 3: Distribution of all Goshawk records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

There have been sightings at Cheriton/Folkestone (4), Saltwood/Brockhill Country Park (4), Capel-le-Ferne (2), Beachborough Lakes, Copt Point, Hythe, Paraker Wood and Seabrook.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1994** Folkestone, one flew east, 8th May (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 23rd April (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Capel-le-Ferne, two, 7th September (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Cheriton, one flew west, 30th November (D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew in off the sea, 17th April (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)

- 2006** Folkestone, female flew west, 3rd April (P. Howe)
2007 Folkestone, one flew west, 13th June (D. A. Gibson)
2011 Sandling (Saltwood), one flew east, 9th January (I. A. Roberts)
2013 Saltwood, female, 3rd May (P. Howe)
2015 Saltwood, pair flew east, 16th March (P. Howe)
2017 Paraker Wood, one flew west, 14th March (K. Harding)
2017 Beachborough Lakes, female flew south-west, 26th October (S. Tomlinson)
2018 Seabrook, one flew south-west, 5th March (P. Howe)
2020 Brockhill Country Park, one, 4th April (S. McMinn)
2021 Barrack Hill, Hythe, one flew west, 31st March (C. Gillard)

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](#).