

# Honey Buzzard

*Pernis apivorus*

Category A

Scarce passage migrant.

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998, Eaton et al. 2022):*

Breeds across a broad swathe of Europe eastwards into Russia, though is rare in Britain. The European population appears to be broadly stable. Winters in west and central regions of equatorial Africa. Around 110 pairs are thought to nest in Britain, with around five pairs in Kent, and the national population has grown substantially over the last 20 years.

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

It is a scarce passage migrant to Kent in spring and autumn.



Honey Buzzard at Samphire Hoe (Michael Smith)

The Honey Buzzard was included in Knight & Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871) but this list covered an area of six mile radius from Folkestone town hall and extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of occurrence. Neither Ticehurst (1909) nor Harrison (1953) includes any record that would appear to relate to the basis for its inclusion on this list.

The first confirmed area record involved one seen over Folkestone by R. W. Prior on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1982 and the second was reported flying east at Abbotscliffe on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1987.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1991 Ian Roberts watched one arrive in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne and the following year he and Dale Gibson saw another arriving in off the sea there on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Regular coverage by these observers and others since has generated a further 140 sightings to date (an average of 4.3 per year since 1990).



Honey Buzzard with Carrion Crow at Samphire Hoe (Michael Smith)

The records by year since 1985 are shown in figure 1. There have been annual sightings now for 32 consecutive years, though with considerable fluctuation in numbers. Some years have produced just a single occurrence, whereas in 2000 there was a large influx into Britain in the autumn and there were 11 records, involving a total of 12 birds.

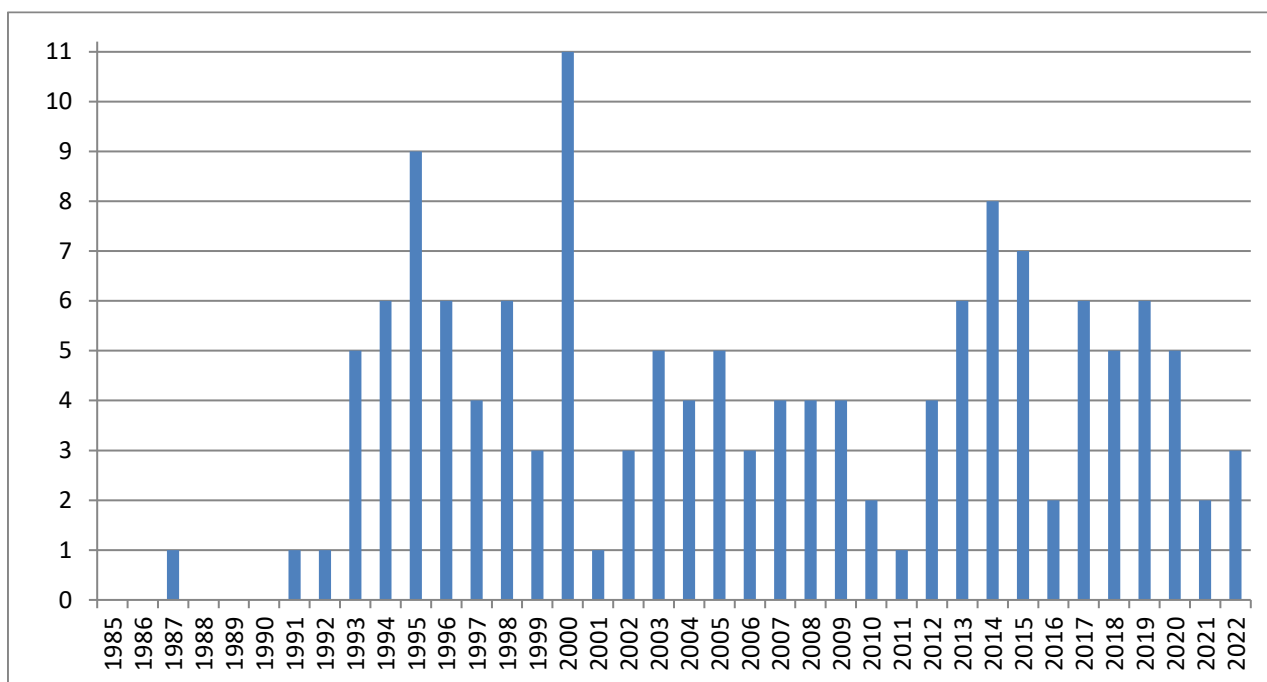


Figure 1: Honey Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The extreme arrival and departure dates are 3<sup>rd</sup> May (2013) and 15<sup>th</sup> October (1995). Records are more frequent in spring/summer (with 64% occurring between May and July) than in autumn (with 36% between August and October). The records by week are given in figure 2.

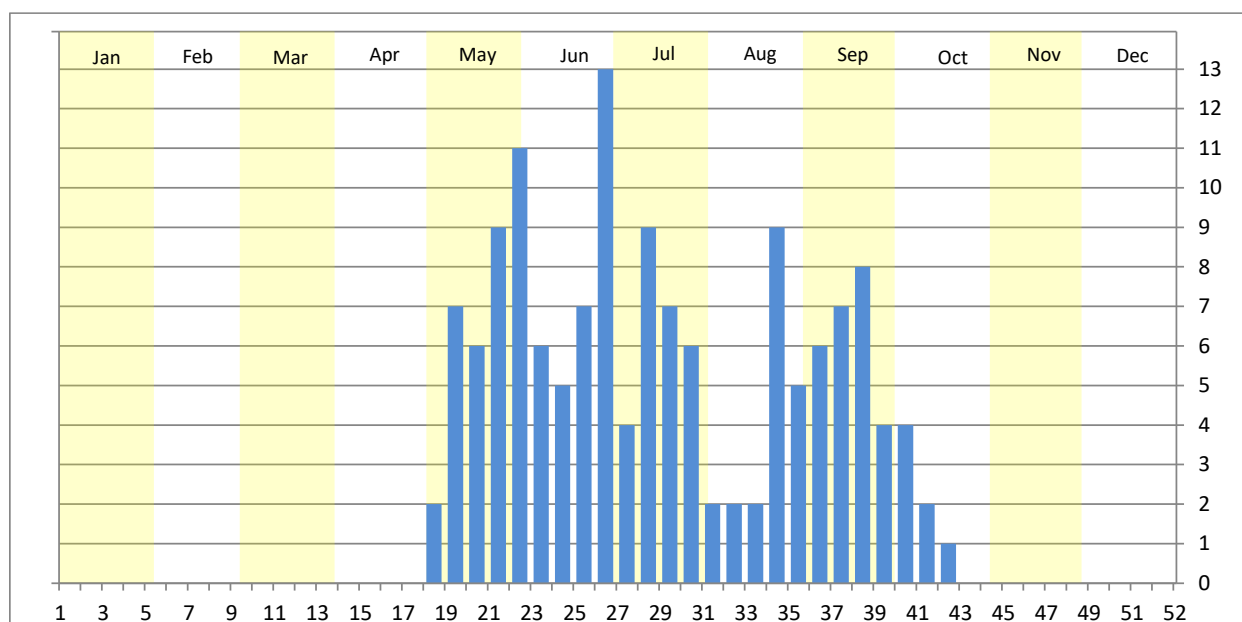


Figure 2: Honey Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

There have been records from 19 (or 61%) of the tetrads. Almost half (46%) have been seen at the cliffs, between Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe with a further 31% having been found over Cheriton or Folkestone where they often attract the attention of the local Herring Gulls. Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.

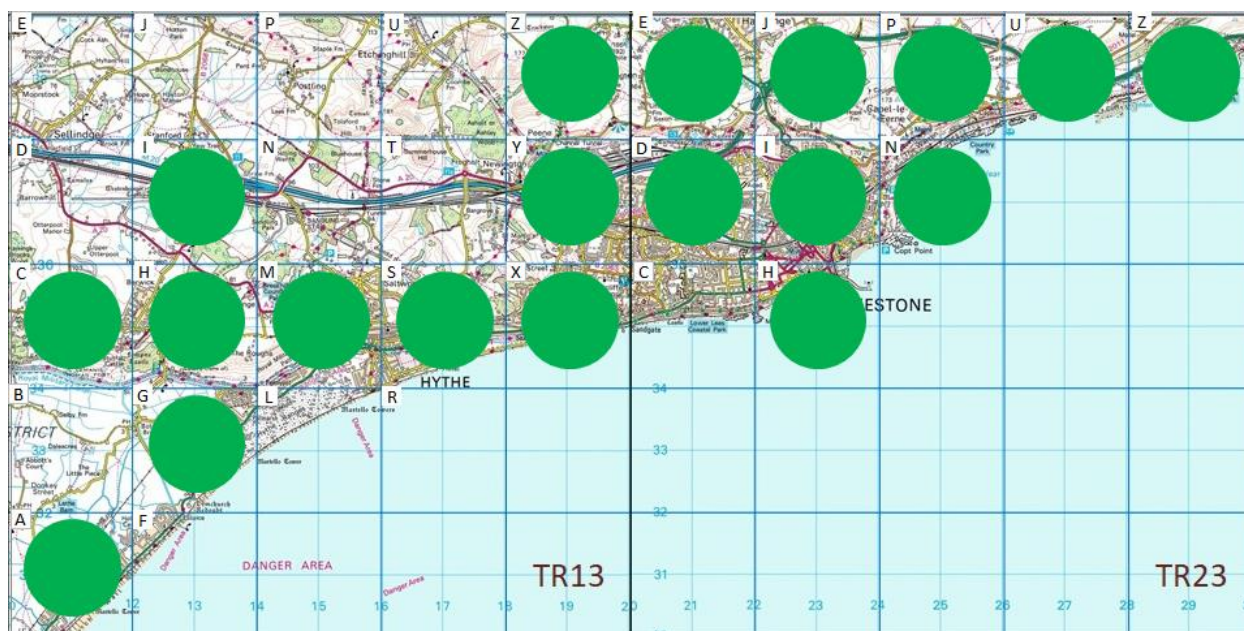


Figure 3: Distribution of all Honey Buzzard records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad



Honey Buzzard at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Honey Buzzard at Samphire Hoe (Dave Clarke)

## References

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- Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.
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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](#).

I am indebted to Andrew Henderson and Tim Hodge for providing access to the Kent Ornithological Society archives.



Honey Buzzard at Samphire Hoe (Michael Smith)



Honey Buzzard with Carrion Crow and Herring Gull at Samphire Hoe (Jamie Partridge) - arriving migrants are often mobbed by gulls or crows, or both





Honey Buzzard at Samphire Hoe (Jamie Partridge)



Honey Buzzard at Peene Quarry (Brian Harper)



Honey Buzzard with Herring Hull at Samphire Hoe (Michael Smith)