

# Mandarin Duck

*Aix galericulata*

Category C1

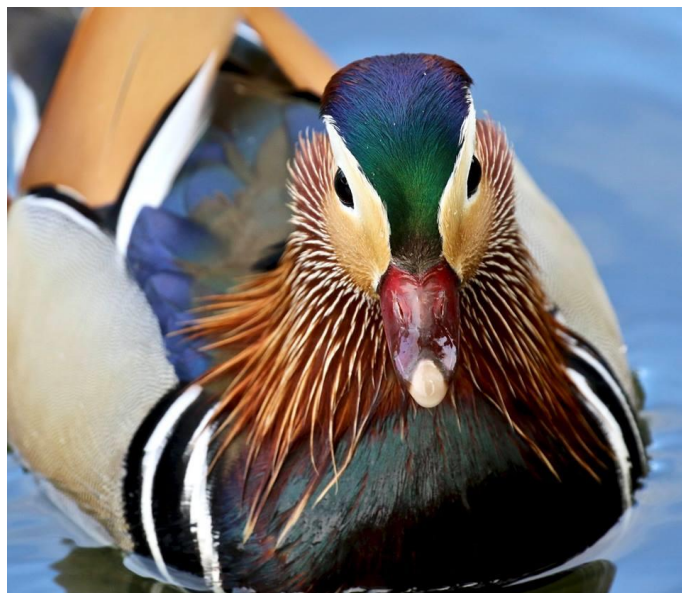
Breeding resident.

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):*

Naturally found in south-east Russia, north-east China and Japan, it became established as a breeding resident in Britain during the twentieth century through escapes and deliberate releases, mainly in south-east England, but also locally elsewhere. Small feral populations exist in other European countries but appear not to be established. The indigenous population is migratory and dispersive but British breeders are resident.

*Kent status (KOS 2021):*

In Kent it is an introduced species with a small but increasing breeding population, especially in the Weald.



Mandarin Duck at Hythe (Phil Heading)

The Mandarin Duck was not included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871) and it was known in the county until a free-flying flock were kept at Edenbridge between 1910 and 1935, when the first pair was known to have bred near Sevenoaks. By the time of the first two atlases it was restricted to the Len Valley (where the population was thought to have originated from the Leeds Castle collection) and the western Weald, so was not recorded locally.

It has expanded its range considerably since, now occurring throughout the west of the county south of the Downs and along the clay soils between Ashford and Folkestone, with a few scattered pairs in the Stour valley (Clements *et al.* 2015; Taylor *et al.* 1981).

It nests in tree-holes or nest boxes beside rivers, streams and lakes, often in wooded areas.

## Breeding atlas distribution

Figure 1 shows the breeding distribution by tetrad based on the results of the 2007-13 BTO/KOS atlas fieldwork.

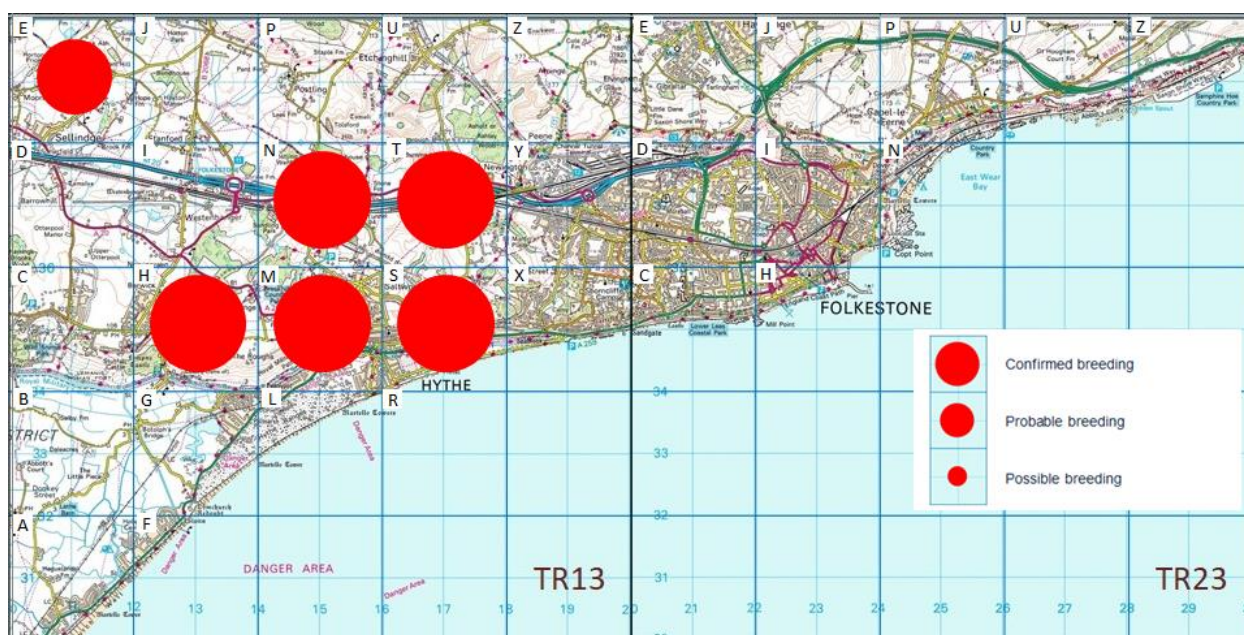


Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Mandarin Duck at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was confirmed in five tetrads, with probable breeding in one more. The table below shows how this compares to previous atlases (Taylor *et al.*; Henderson & Hodge 1998). The confirmed and probable breeding categories have been combined to account for differing definitions of these in the first atlas.

Breeding atlases	1967 - 1973		1988 - 1994		2007 - 2013	
Possible	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
Probable/Confirmed	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	6	(19%)
Total	0	(0%)	0	(0%)	6	(19%)
Change			0	(--%)	+6	(--%)

The table below shows the changes in tetrad occupancy across the three atlas periods.

Trends	First to second atlas (1967-73 to 1988-94)	Second to third atlas (1988-94 to 2007-13)	First to third atlas (1967-73 to 2007-13)
Local	--%	--%	--%
Kent	--%	+197%	--%

The first local feral record involved a drake seen at Nickolls Quarry by Roger Norman on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1992, with the same observer noting a pair there on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1995 and a drake from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1995. It was first recorded from the Sandling Park area by Don Taylor on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1996, when three drakes were seen, with one still present on the 11<sup>th</sup> May.

During a cold spell in early 1997 a female was present in Folkestone Harbour between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> January, whilst another female lingered on the canal in Hythe, near the Stade Street bridge, from the 5<sup>th</sup> January to the 16<sup>th</sup> February, and later the same year a pair were present at Brockhill Country Park on the 16<sup>th</sup> March. One was again present at Sandling Park in May 1998 and on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1998 there were four (three drakes) at Nickolls Quarry.

Up to 12 were present at Sandling Park in December 1999, since when it has become established as a breeding resident, with further peak counts of 16 there in January 2003, 18 in January 2004, 20 in February 2004 and 23 in January 2005. It also spread as a breeding species to Brockhill Country Park and Folks' Wood and during the early 2000s, and small numbers continued to be noted on occasion at Nickolls Quarry and nearby Botolph's Bridge and West Hythe.



Mandarin Ducks at Brockhill Country Park (Brian Harper)

During the latest atlas fieldwork (2007-12) it was also noted in suitable breeding habitat at Saltwood Castle and Little Dibgate Wood in spring 2009, whilst a pair used at nest box at Saltwood Cricket Club in May 2011 (where Martin Harper found 8 eggs) and recently fledged young were seen at Oak Banks in June 2011. A pair were also noted in spring in the Horton Priory area during this period and there were winter records from Kiln Wood.

A more recent count of 27 at Folks' Wood on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 is of note as this is the highest recorded to date.



## Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Mandarin Duck by tetrad, with records in 11 tetrads (35%).



Figure 2: Distribution of all Mandarin Duck records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The Mandarin Duck is largely sedentary but with some dispersal or occasional wandering from the breeding range. These records include a male seen floating offshore at the eastern end of Samphire Hoe on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2002, singles on the canal at Seabrook in April 2009 and February 2012, and on the canal in Hythe town in October 2014, March 2017 and a long-staying drake there from the 12<sup>th</sup> February to 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019 which had appeared to adopt brood of Mallard chicks. A pair were also present in Folkestone Harbour 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and up to two were seen at Beachborough Lakes on 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

Little is known of the origin of the Sandling Park population but Ian Roberts recalls seeing two drakes and four females that were kept in a private garden on the Sandling Road in Saltwood in the late 1980s and it is possible that these or their progeny escaped into the nearby woods.



Mandarin Duck with Mallards at Hythe (Phil Heading)



Mandarin Duck at Hythe (Glenn Tutton)

## 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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