

# Black Kite

*Milvus migrans* Category A

Rare passage migrant, primarily in spring. 17 records, 19 birds

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

Breeds across most of Europe except Britain, north-west France, the Low Countries and Fenno-Scandia, with an extensive breeding range throughout much of Asia except the far north, and south to Australia. European birds winters in northern tropical Africa.

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

It is a rare but regular vagrant to the county, occurring between spring and autumn.

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 109

The Black Kite was formerly a very rare vagrant in Britain, with just five records prior to the period covered by the British Birds Rarities Committee began (1950), and a further four in the next twenty years. It started to be recorded annually in Britain from 1974, in gradually increasing numbers until it ceased to be considered a national rarity after 2005, when 365 had been logged (Fraser *et al.* 2007).

Taylor *et al.* (1981) noted that it was first recorded in Kent at Luddesdown, near Gravesend in the last year of their 25-year review period (1976). The next records occurred in 1980 and it has been recorded almost annually in the county since with a gradually increasing trend, there having been 2.1 per annum in the 1980s, 2.5 in the 1990s, 2.8 in the 2000s and 3.0 in the 2010s (KOS no date).

It was first recorded locally when Dale Gibson watched two separate individuals arrive in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne during the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1994. The same observer noted one heading east over Cheriton on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1995 but there was a ten year gap until Ian Roberts saw the next flying east over Hythe on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2005. The following year saw another multiple record, when Dale Gibson and Ian Roberts saw two separate individuals flying north-west over Abbotscliffe during the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2006. It has been a rare but fairly regular vagrant since, as figure 1 demonstrates, with a further 13 records.



Black Kite at Capel-le-Ferne (Dale Gibson)

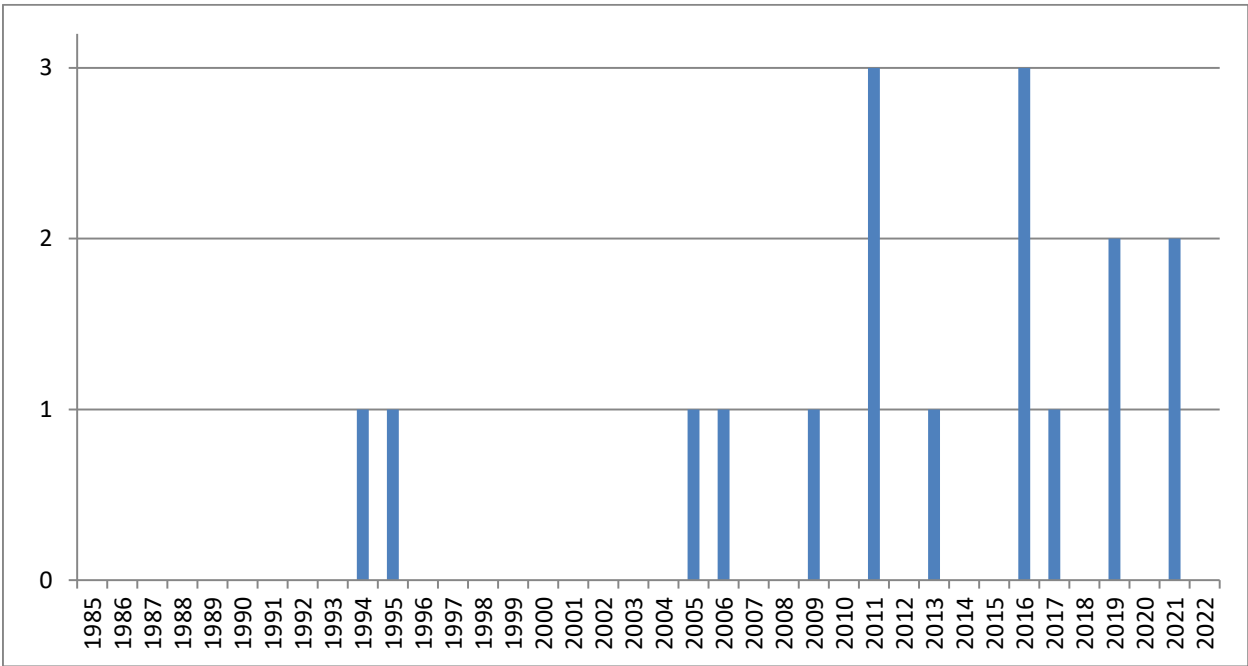


Figure 1: Black Kite records at Folkestone and Hythe

As figure 2 demonstrates, all have been recorded between the 25<sup>th</sup> March (week 12) and 19<sup>th</sup> May (week 20), except for two in June and a particularly late and unseasonable bird in December 2013, which was the only individual to have lingered for any length of time, being seen on three dates (the 4<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>). This was perhaps the same bird seen at Dungeness on at least five dates between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> November and at Sandwich Bay on the 30<sup>th</sup> November and 6<sup>th</sup> December.

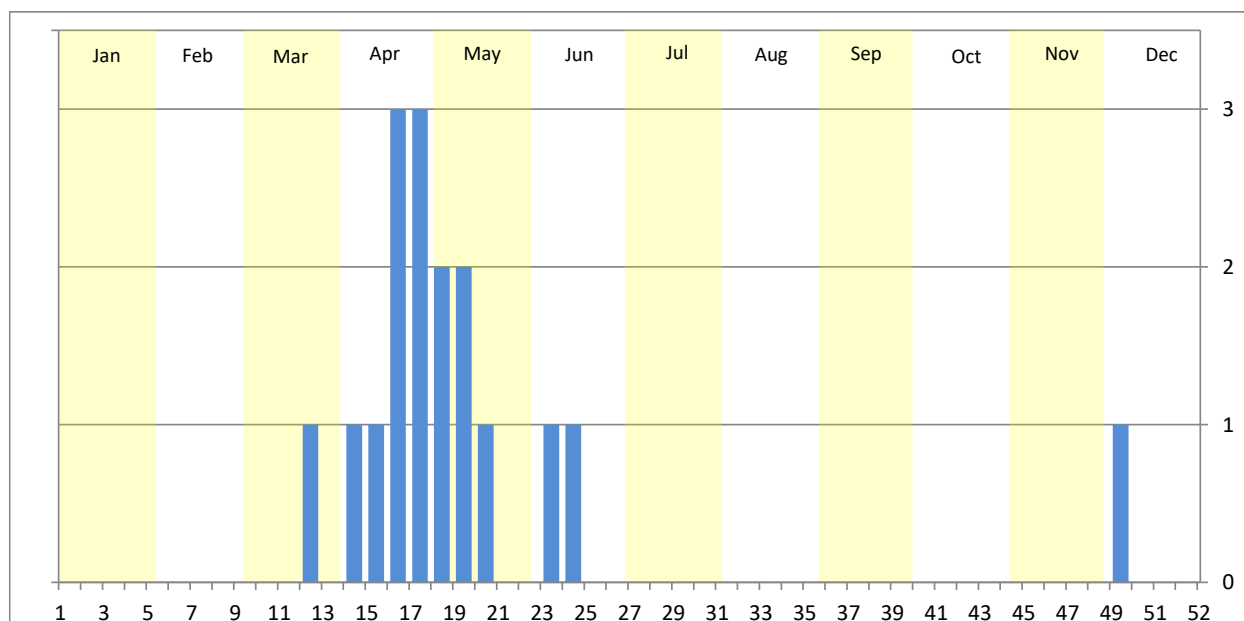


Figure 2: Black Kite records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad. Records have been fairly well distributed with records in 12 (39%) of tetrads. Five have been seen over Cheriton/ Folkestone, with five records (involving seven birds) at the cliffs between Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe, three at Hythe and singles at Westenhanger, Saltwood, Postling and Beachborough Park.

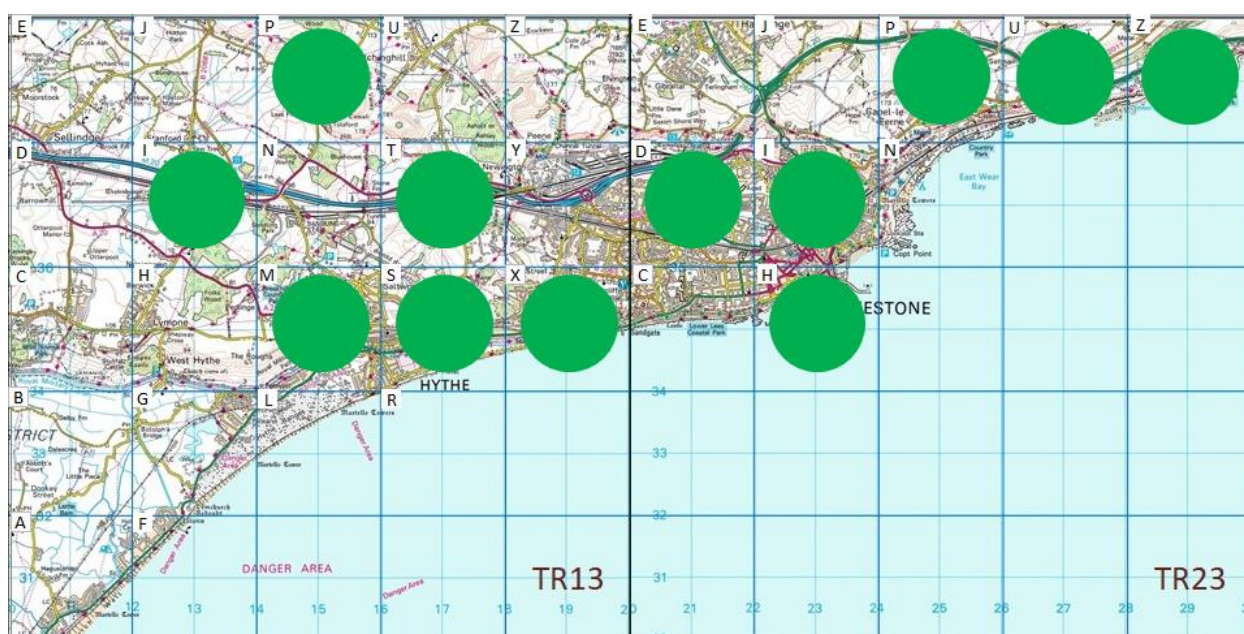


Figure 3: Distribution of all Black Kite records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1994** Capel-le-Ferne, two arrived in off the sea (singles at 10:45 and 11:30), 9<sup>th</sup> May, photographed (D. A. Gibson)
- 1995** Cheriton, one flew east, 20<sup>th</sup> April (D. A. Gibson)
- 2005** Hythe, one flew east, 12<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Abbotscliffe, two flew north-west (singles at 10:15 and 11:15), 6<sup>th</sup> May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)

**2009** Westenhanger, one flew north-east, 22<sup>nd</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)  
**2011** Folkestone, one flew north, 25<sup>th</sup> April (D. A. Gibson)  
**2011** Saltwood, one, 25<sup>th</sup> April (P. Howe), possibly same as above  
**2011** Cheriton, one flew west, 19<sup>th</sup> May (O. Leyshon)  
**2013** Samphire Hoe, one, 4<sup>th</sup> December (R. Smith), presumed same 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> December (P. Holt, D. Mansfield), possibly also seen at Dungeness and Sandwich Bay  
**2016** Hythe, one flew east, 3<sup>rd</sup> April (N. Webster)  
**2016** Capel-le-Ferne, one flew west, 7<sup>th</sup> May (D. A. Gibson)  
**2016** Hythe, one flew west, 11<sup>th</sup> June (C. Griggs)  
**2017** Folkestone, one flew in off the sea, also seen flying west at Seabrook (D. A. Gibson, P. Howe)  
**2019** Beachborough Park, one flew west, 25<sup>th</sup> March, photographed (S. Tomlinson)  
**2019** Cheriton, one flew south-west, 18<sup>th</sup> April (P. Howe)  
**2021** Samphire Hoe, one flew in off the sea, 24<sup>th</sup> April (S. Cutt, I. A. Roberts *et al*)  
**2021** Postling, one flew north, 5<sup>th</sup> June (reported, per RBA)



Black Kite at Capel-le-Ferne (Dale Gibson)

## 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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