

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Category A

Rare migrant, primarily in spring. 17 records

Breeds across most of Europe except Britain, north-west France, the Low Countries and Fenno-Scandia. Winters in northern tropical Africa (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

It 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), a further four in the next twenty years. It started to be recorded annually in Britain from 1974, in gradually increasing numbers and ceased to be considered a national rarity after 2005, when 365 had been logged (BBRC, 2020).



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

It was first recorded in Kent in 1976 at Luddesdown, near Gravesend (Taylor *et al*, 1981) and is now a rare but regular vagrant to the county between spring and autumn, with just over 100 accepted records to 2018 (KOS, 2020).

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 9th May 1994.

The same observer noted one heading east over Cheriton on the 20th April 1995 but there was a ten year gap until Ian Roberts saw the next flying east over Hythe on the 12th 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 6th May 2006.

It has been a rare but fairly regular vagrant since, as figure 1 demonstrates, with a further 13 records. Two years (2011 and 2016) have produced three records apiece and 2019 and 2021 produced two but there have been a number of 'blank' years too.

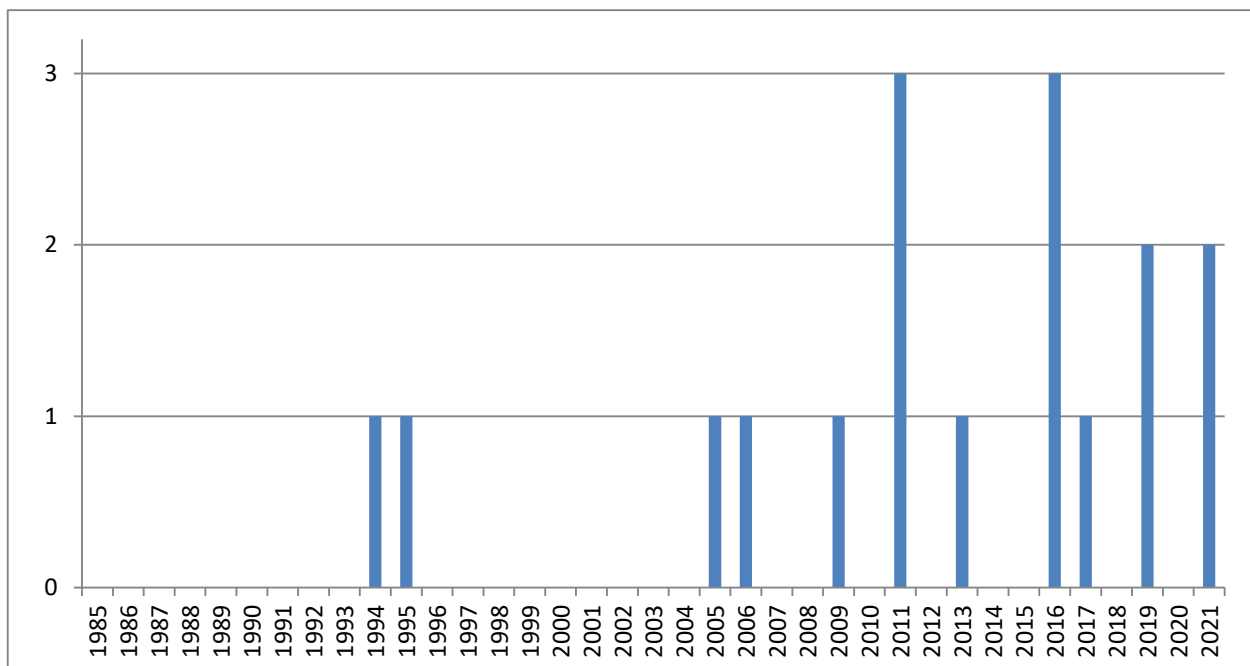


Figure 1: Black Kite records at Folkestone and Hythe

As figure 2 demonstrates, all have been recorded between the 25th March (week 12) and 19th 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 4th, 12th and 13th).

This was perhaps the same bird seen at Dungeness on at least five dates between the 13th and 26th November and at Sandwich Bay on the 30th November and 6th December.

The records by week are given in figure 2 and figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.

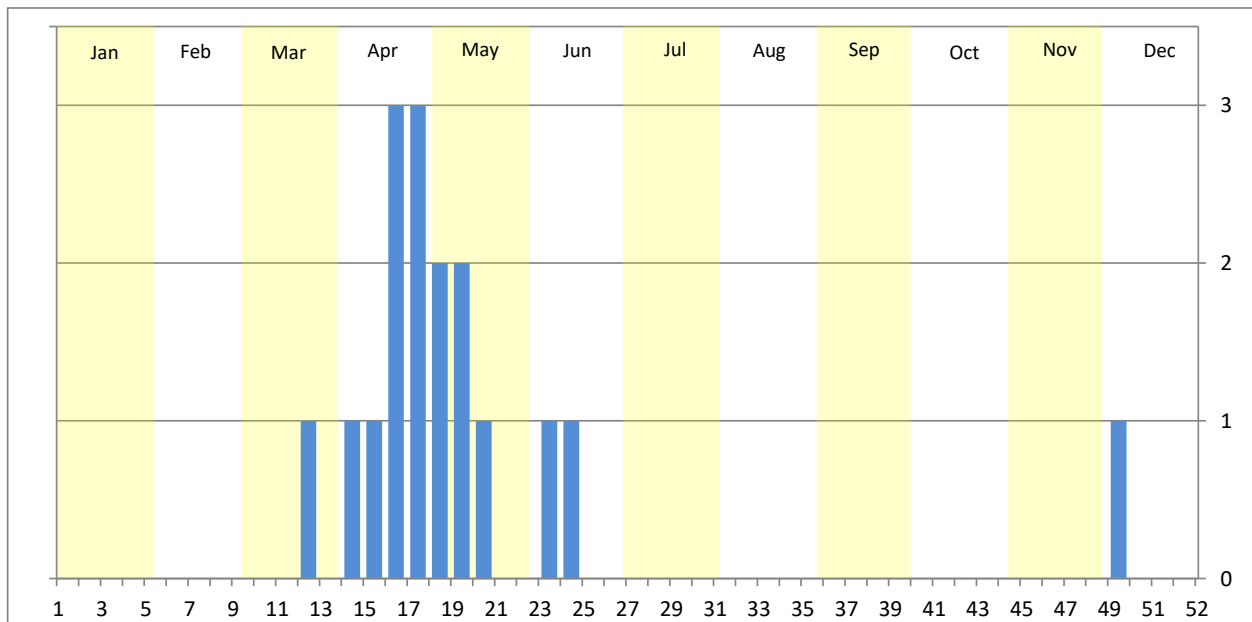


Figure 2: Black Kite records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

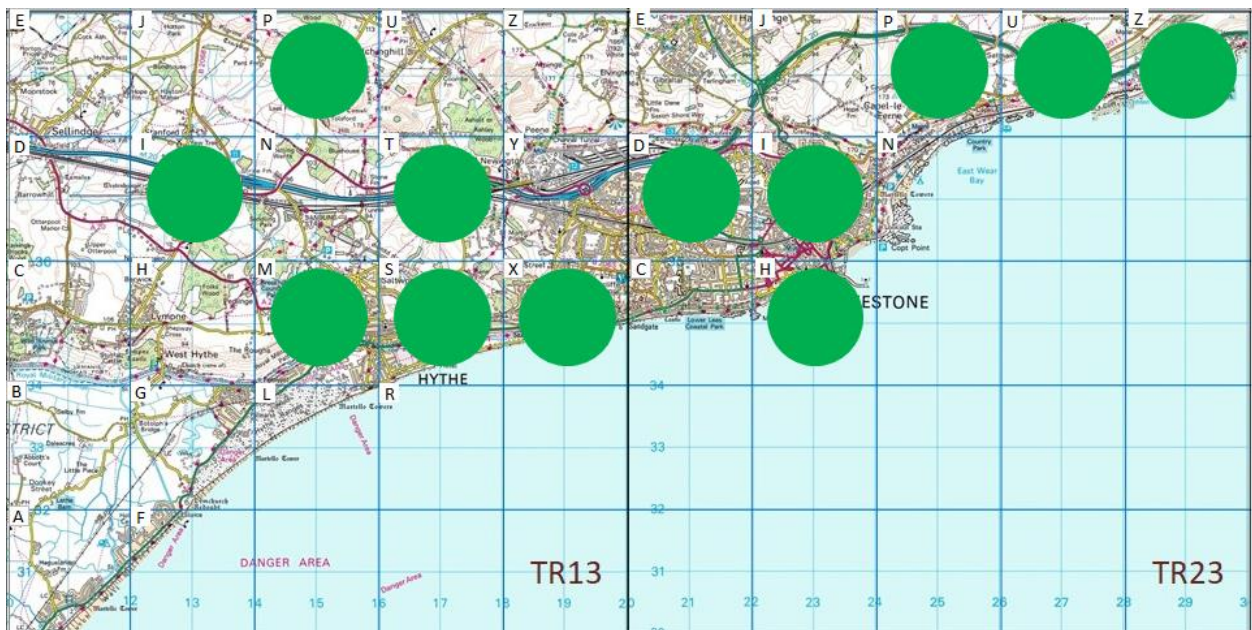


Figure 3: Distribution of all Black Kite records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

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 Sapphire Hoe, three at Hythe and singles at Westenhanger, Saltwood, Postling and Beachborough Park.

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), 9th May, photographed (D. A. Gibson)
- 1995** Cheriton, one flew east, 20th April (D. A. Gibson)
- 2005** Hythe, one flew east, 12th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Abbotscliffe, two flew north-west (singles at 10:15 and 11:15), 6th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2009** Westenhanger, one flew north-east, 22nd April (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Folkestone, one flew north, 25th April (D. A. Gibson)

- 2011** Saltwood, one, 25th April (P. Howe), possibly same as above
2011 Cheriton, one flew west, 19th May (O. Leyshon)
2013 Samphire Hoe, one, 4th December (R. Smith), presumed same 12th to 13th December (P. Holt, D. Mansfield)
2016 Hythe, one flew east, 3rd April (N. Webster)
2016 Capel-le-Ferne, one flew west, 7th May (D. A. Gibson)
2016 Hythe, one flew west, 11th 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, 25th March, photographed (S. Tomlinson)
2019 Cheriton, one flew south-west, 18th April (P. Howe)
2021 Samphire Hoe, one flew in off the sea, 24th April (S. Cutt, I. A. Roberts *et al*)
2021 Postling, one flew north, 5th June (reported, per RBA)

References

BBRC statistics: <https://www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/statistics> (accessed 2020)

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

KOS Kent list: <https://kentos.org.uk/kent-list> (accessed 2020)

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](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).



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