

Hoopoe

Upupa epops

Category A

Formerly more regular, bred on 28 records, 33 birds one occasion. Now a very rare (15 recent) vagrant.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Since the late nineteenth century there has been a decrease in the population in Europe, particularly in the more northern and western parts of its range. Having bred in Britain on a number of occasions it is now absent as a breeding species, as it is from Fenno-Scandia and the Low Countries' however it continues to be a widespread breeding species across most of continental Europe. Most cross the Sahara to winter in Africa but a few remain in the Mediterranean Basin.



Hoopoe at Hythe Imperial Golf Course (Brian Harper)

Kent status (KOS 2022):

The contraction in its European range is doubtless the main cause for a decrease in Kentish records which was observed over the last century. It is now a scarce but fairly regular passage migrant to the county.

Knight & Tolputt (1871) included the Hoopoe in their "List of species recorded in the neighbourhood of Folkestone", within a radius of six miles from the town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland that the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of occurrence here, it does suggest that the species was present locally in the days when it was more regular in the county. Ticehurst (1909) mentioned Hythe as one locality where it had been recorded. He also gave several instances of probable breeding in Kent but considered that conclusive proof was lacking.



Hoopoe at Lympne (Phil Sharp)



Hoopoe at Lympne (Phil Sharp)

The first dated occurrence in the Folkestone and Hythe area was in 1948, when a pair bred at Hythe, successfully raising four young. This remarkable event is the only confirmed breeding record in the county. A pair were seen again the following year but failed to breed. The details were given to Harrison (1953) by William Nevin and were described to him as follows: "Mr W. S. Nevin informs me a pair nested successfully, bringing off a brood of four, in the summer of 1948, near Hythe. The birds were afforded every protection. In a further letter he informed me that he received repeated messages about Hoopoes near Hythe in the spring of 1949, but that as he was then situated he could not investigate personally. The birds had returned to the same large walled-garden where they had previously nested. The property, now a convent, could not be visited. The gate-keeper gardener, however, informed him that the Hoopoes had again nested that summer, but that the tree where they had built their nest was felled. He had rescued the four eggs, which he placed on top of the wall surrounding the garden, where they remained for weeks, finally disintegrating and disappearing entirely".

The site where the Hoopoes nested was presumably the Marist Sister's convent at 53-55 Seabrook Road in Hythe, though this cannot be proven beyond doubt.

There were further records from Hythe in five years during the 1950s, some of which might have related to the same returning pair, or perhaps even their progeny. There were also sightings in the same decade from Folkestone in three years, Lymgne (1952) and West Hythe (1957), though details are scant.

Following the first modern record at Church Hougham in 1980, there have been a further 14 since 1985, including nine in the last 14 years, as shown in figure 1.

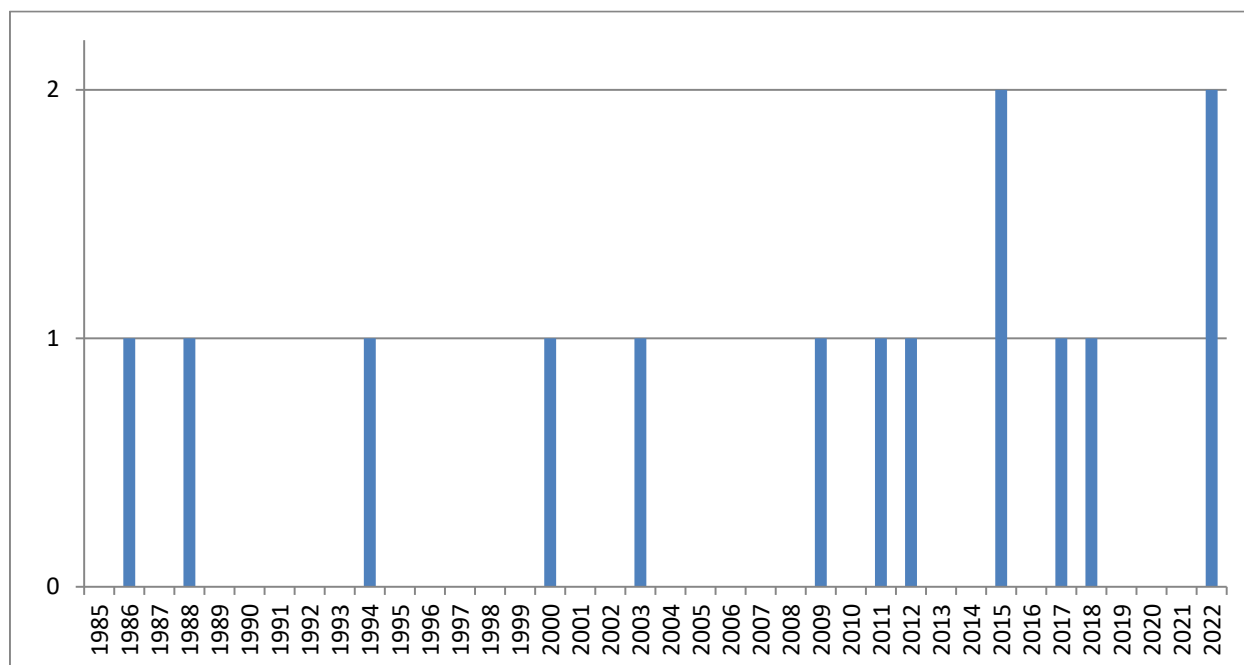


Figure 1: Hoopoe records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Around three-quarters (73%) of arrivals have occurred between the 5th April (week 14) and 27th May (week 21), with a peak in week 16, and with single records in June and July in the 1950s. The only modern autumn records involved one seen in late August 2009 and the most recent in Lymgne on the particularly late date of 17th November (2022). This latter bird was also the longest staying of all recent records. The other autumn records date from the 1950s. The records by week are given in figure 2.

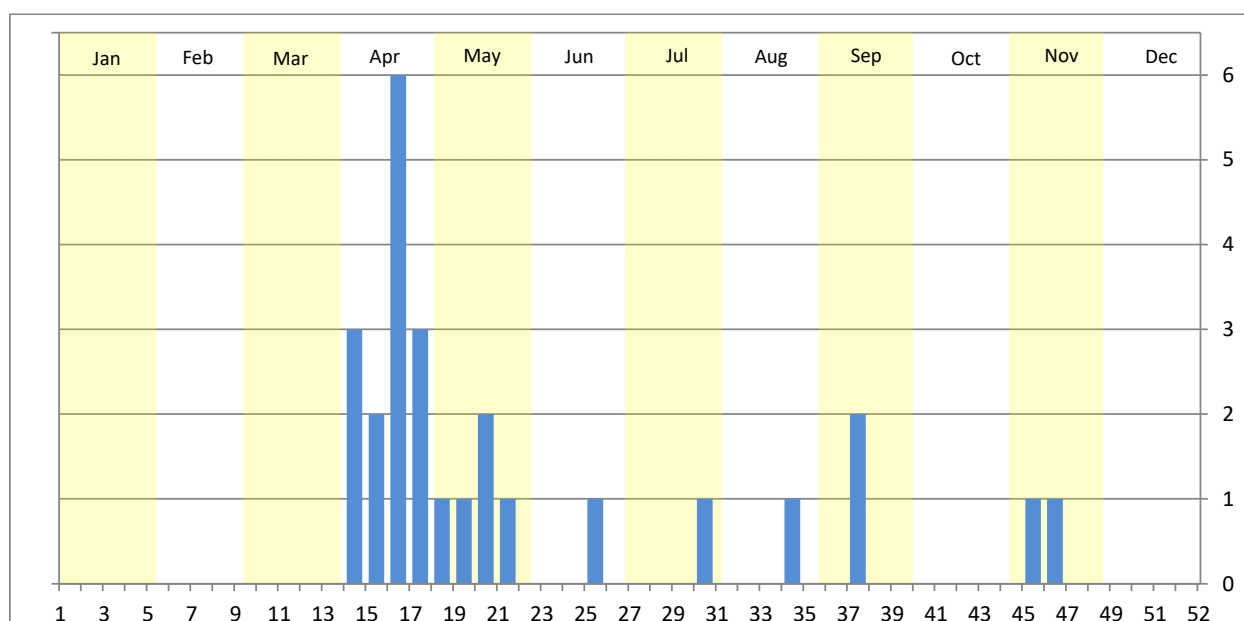


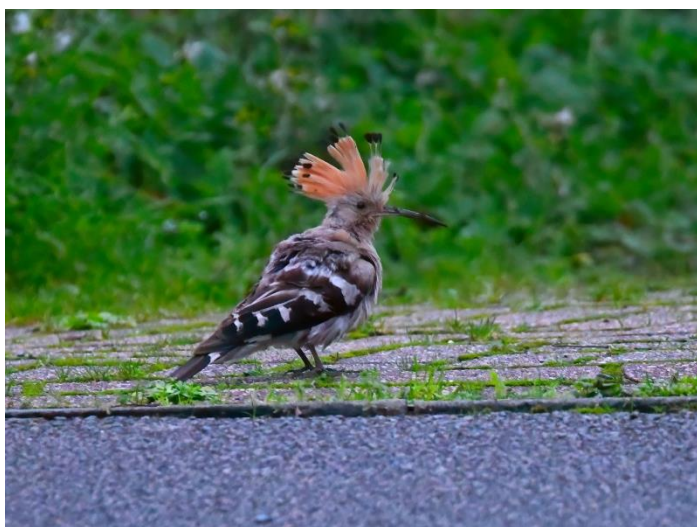
Figure 2: Hoopoe records at Folkestone and Hythe by week



Hoopoe at Folkestone (Duncan Lawie)



Hoopoe at Hythe (Simon Knight)



Hoopoe at Lympne (Elliot Ranford)



Hoopoe at Lympne (Barry Wright)

Whilst older records are primarily from the Hythe area, modern records are more widely scattered, although there are three from Hythe, with two at Folkestone and singles from Lympne, Saltwood, Seabrook, Cheriton, Mill Point, Hawkinge, Capel-le-Ferne, Church Hougham, Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe. Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.

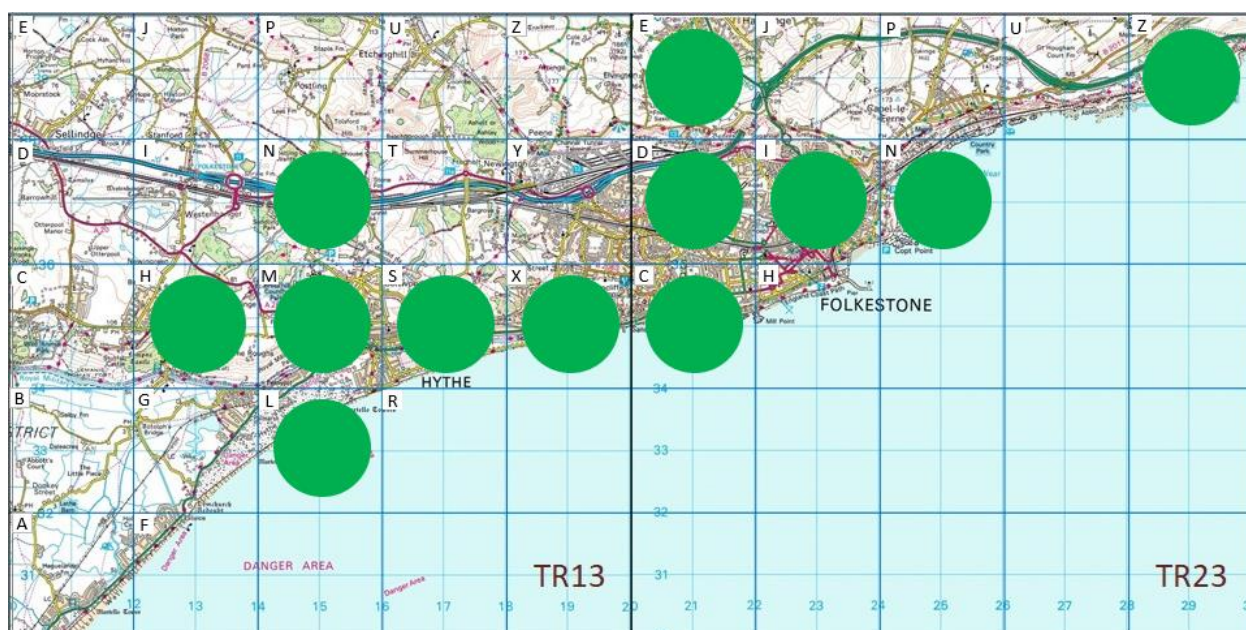


Figure 3: Distribution of all Hoopoe records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1948** Hythe, pair bred and raised four young (per W. S. Nevin)
1949 Hythe, pair seen again but failed to breed (per W. S. Nevin)
1952 Hythe, one, 7th to 9th April (per W. S. Nevin)
1952 Radnor Park (Folkestone), one, 3rd May (H. M. Rowland)
1953 Hythe, one, 27th July (K. Comyn)
1954 Folkestone, one, 5th April (W. S. Nevin, D. Kesby)
1955 Hythe, one found shot, 26th April (H. Schreiber)
1955 Folkestone, one, 10th November (reported)
1956 Folkestone, one, 10th to 15th September (M. Jeaffreson)
1957 West Hythe, two, 24th June (W. S. Nevin)
1958 Hythe, one, 11th to 14th September (W. S. Nevin *et al.*)
1959 Sandling Park, one, 8th April (H. Schreiber)
1959 Hythe, one, 17th April (Mr. Alebourne)
1980 Church Hougham, one, 16th April (M. P. Sutherland, I. P. Hodgson)
1988 Mill Point, one flew west, 5th May (I. A. Roberts)
1986 Abbotscliffe, 27th to 29th April (D. E. Smith, M. D. Kennett *et al.*)
1994 Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one, 22nd April (D. A. Gibson)
2000 Cheriton, one flew west over “Cheriton Sports Ground” at midday, 8th April (reported)
2003 Seabrook, one, 10th May (reported)
2009 Samphire Hoe, one, 25th August, photographed (P. Smith, P. Holt, D. Smith, I. A. Roberts *et al.*)
2011 Saltwood, one, approximately 18th April (reported on local news)
2012 Hythe, one on Imperial Golf Course, 19th April, photographed (B. Harper, M. Harper, I. A. Roberts, M. Whybrow)
2015 Hythe, one at Range Road, 18th April, photographed (I. A. Roberts, J. Tomsett, B. Harper, S. McMinn *et al.*)
2015 Hythe, one at Ferguson Close, 16th May, with it or another near Waitrose at around the same time (per J. Tomsett)
2017 Folkestone, one in the Dixwell Road/Turketel Road area, 29th April, (per B. Harper)
2018 Folkestone, one in the Grand Hotel area, 27th to at least 30th May, photographed (D. Lawie, N. C. Frampton, C. Jeffreys *et al.*)
2022 Hawkinge, one, 14th May (reported)
2022 Lympne, one, 17th to 22nd November, photographed, video-recorded (P. Sharp, I. A. Roberts *et al.*)

Click [here](#) see a short video of the bird at Lympne in November 2022.



Hoopoe at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Hoopoe at Hythe Imperial Golf Course (Brian Harper)

References

Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2022. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.

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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.



Hoopoe at Lympne (Mike Fitch)



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