

Folkestone & Hythe birding and moths

Site guide: Nickoll's Quarry (a.k.a. Palmarsh or Hythe Gravel Pit)

Location: From Hythe head west on the A259 towards Dymchurch. After about 3 miles there is a 'Jet' petrol station on the right hand side. Park in the lay-by on the left hand side of the road (Grid ref: TR 136333), directly opposite the garage. Cross the road and take the public footpath just to the east of the garage, with the sign 'Nickoll's Quarries Ltd'.



Looking west across Nickoll's Quarry towards Dungeness

Facilities: The garage stocks the usual range of food and drink. There are toilets within the leisure complex, available to members only.

Access/route: There is a public footpath along the east side of the pit to the light railway. From here another footpath runs west through the sheep field, and re-crosses the railway beyond the sailing club. The footpath then runs around the perimeter of the site, beside the sewage works, to a small bridge across a reedy ditch. The path then tracks west to the 'west hedge' (an area of taller trees and scrub adjacent to the Botolph's Bridge road), and follows it south.

At the end the footpath crosses the road (there is another lay-by here which offers alternative access to the site) and runs through an area of weeds and scrub to the A259. From here follow the road east back to the garage.

Please note that the leisure complex itself is private and access is by membership only. Enquiries to the on-site bailiff or to the Nickoll's office on 01303 255152. Disabled access is difficult due to a number of gates and stiles, but members can drive around the pit

Birds: Unfortunately this is a declining habitat, with much of the better areas recently backfilled, and on the remaining open water the birds have to compete with fishing and sailing. The area is also subject to a planning proposal for housing. That said, the pit offers about the only chance locally of a number of duck and wader species, and has a record of turning up the unexpected - e.g. Squacco Heron in June 2006.



Spoonbill - Nickoll's Quarry - June 2003

The path along the east side allows the main lake to be viewed. In winter, particularly during a cold spell, there may be duck such as Pochard, Tufted Duck, Teal and Wigeon. Scaup, Goldeneye, Smew, Goosander, and Ruddy Duck have all been recorded.

Great Crested Grebes now breed. The ditch that runs through the sheep field is worth checking for Little Egret, Water Rail, Green Sandpiper, and Kingfisher.

After the path re-crosses the railway there is a small bridge over a reedy ditch. This area has had Bluethroat once and Sedge Warbler breeds. The bushes adjacent to the sewage works have held Woodcock in winter and the field to the east often has Jack Snipe in the same season. Where the path crosses the reedy ditch again Cetti's Warblers are regular and Bearded Tits have been recorded.

The pit near the reedy ditch is being backfilled and its potential for passage waders will depend on the habitat present. Currently there is enough to attract a few Common and Green Sandpipers, Greenshank, etc., and there is still the chance of something unusual. In the past Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Temminck's Stint, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, and Wood Sandpiper have all been recorded. In winter there are Snipe and Jack Snipe.

The 'west hedge' is worth checking in spring and autumn for passage migrants, as is the scrub beyond the lay-by. These areas have had Redstart, Nightingale, Ring Ouzel, Firecrest, Spotted Flycatcher etc. As you follow the road back to the garage check the trees on the left for migrants. Waxwings have occurred here.

Regular: breeding Great Crested Grebe, Canada Goose, Oystercatcher, Meadow Pipit, Reed and Sedge Warblers, and Reed Bunting; passage waders (esp. Common and Green Sandpipers) and passerines in season; wintering Water Rail, Coot, Lapwing, Green Sandpiper, Snipe and Jack Snipe.

Possible: Little Egret, Kingfisher and Cetti's Warbler; duck in winter - Tufted Duck, Pochard, Wigeon, Teal; wintering Stonechat and Chiffchaff.

Rarities: scarce grebes, Squacco Heron, Bittern, Spoonbill, wild swans and geese, Scaup, Goldeneye, Goosander, Smew, Ruddy Duck, Honey Buzzard, Red Kite, Osprey, Red-footed Falcon, Black-winged Stilt (twice), Woodcock, Temminck's and Little Stints, Curlew Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Wood Sandpiper, Glaucous and Iceland Gulls, Waxwing, Nightingale, Bluethroat, Bearded Tit.

Read Roger Norman's account of 50 years birdwatching at this site:

<http://www.freewebs.com/folkestonebirds/NQRKN.pdf>

Full site list:

1. Red-throated Diver
2. Black-throated Diver
3. Great Northern Diver
4. Little Grebe
5. Great Crested Grebe
6. Red-necked Grebe
7. Slavonian Grebe
8. Black-necked Grebe
9. Fulmar
10. Cormorant
11. Shag
12. Common Bittern
13. Squacco Heron
14. Little Egret
15. Grey Heron
16. Spoonbill
17. Mute Swan
18. Bewick's Swan
19. Whooper Swan
20. (Tundra) Bean Goose
21. Pink-footed Goose
22. White-fronted Goose
23. Greylag Goose
24. Snow Goose
25. Canada Goose
26. Barnacle Goose
27. (Dark-bellied) Brent Goose
28. Egyptian Goose
29. Shelduck
30. Mandarin
31. Wigeon
32. Gadwall
33. Teal
34. Mallard
35. Pintail
36. Garganey
37. Shoveler
38. Red-crested Pochard
39. Pochard
40. Tufted Duck
41. Scaup
42. Eider
43. Common Scoter

44. Velvet Scoter
45. Goldeneye
46. Smew
47. Red-breasted Merganser
48. Goosander
49. Ruddy Duck
50. Honey Buzzard
51. Red Kite
52. Marsh Harrier
53. Hen Harrier
54. Montagu's Harrier
55. Sparrowhawk
56. Common Buzzard
57. Osprey
58. Common Kestrel
59. Red-footed Falcon
60. Merlin
61. Hobby
62. Peregrine
63. Red-legged Partridge
64. Grey Partridge
65. Pheasant
66. Water Rail
67. Corncrake
68. Moorhen
69. Coot
70. Oystercatcher
71. Black-winged Stilt
72. Avocet
73. Little Ringed Plover
74. Ringed Plover
75. Golden Plover
76. Grey Plover
77. Lapwing
78. Knot
79. Sanderling
80. Little Stint
81. Temminck's Stint
82. Curlew Sandpiper
83. Dunlin
84. Ruff
85. Jack Snipe
86. Common Snipe
87. Woodcock
88. Black-tailed Godwit
89. Bar-tailed Godwit
90. Whimbrel
91. Curlew
92. Spotted Redshank
93. Redshank
94. Greenshank
95. Green Sandpiper
96. Wood Sandpiper

97. Common Sandpiper
98. Turnstone
99. Mediterranean Gull
100. Little Gull
101. Black-headed Gull
102. Common Gull
103. Lesser Black-backed Gull
104. Herring Gull
105. Yellow-legged Gull
106. Iceland Gull
107. Glaucous Gull
108. Great Black-backed Gull
109. Kittiwake
110. Sandwich Tern
111. Common Tern
112. Arctic Tern
113. Little Tern
114. Black Tern
115. Little Auk
116. Feral Pigeon/Rock Dove
117. Stock Dove
118. Wood Pigeon
119. Collared Dove
120. Turtle Dove
121. Ring-necked Parakeet
122. Cuckoo
123. Barn Owl
124. Little Owl
125. Tawny Owl
126. Short-eared Owl
127. Common Swift
128. Common Kingfisher
129. Green Woodpecker
130. Great Spotted Woodpecker
131. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
132. Wood Lark
133. Sky Lark
134. Sand Martin
135. Swallow
136. House Martin
137. Tree Pipit
138. Meadow Pipit
139. Rock Pipit
140. Yellow Wagtail
141. Grey Wagtail
142. Pied Wagtail
143. Waxwing
144. Wren
145. Dunnock
146. Robin
147. Nightingale
148. Bluethroat
149. Black Redstart

150. Common Redstart
151. Whinchat
152. Stonechat
153. Northern Wheatear
154. Ring Ouzel
155. Blackbird
156. Fieldfare
157. Song Thrush
158. Redwing
159. Mistle Thrush
160. Cetti's Warbler
161. Sedge Warbler
162. Marsh Warbler
163. Reed Warbler
164. Lesser Whitethroat
165. Common Whitethroat
166. Garden Warbler
167. Blackcap
168. Chiffchaff
169. Willow Warbler
170. Goldcrest
171. Firecrest
172. Spotted Flycatcher
173. Pied Flycatcher
174. Bearded Tit
175. Long-tailed Tit
176. Marsh Tit
177. Coal Tit
178. Blue Tit
179. Great Tit
180. Red-backed Shrike
181. Jay
182. Magpie
183. Jackdaw
184. Rook
185. Carrion Crow
186. Hooded Crow
187. Raven
188. Starling
189. House Sparrow
190. Tree Sparrow
191. Chaffinch
192. Brambling
193. Greenfinch
194. Goldfinch
195. Siskin
196. Linnet
197. Twite
198. Lesser Redpoll
199. Bullfinch
200. Hawfinch
201. Lapland Bunting
202. Snow Bunting

- 203. Yellowhammer
- 204. Reed Bunting
- 205. Corn Bunting

Escaped or feral species

- 1. White Pelican
- 2. Pink-backed Pelican
- 3. Black Swan
- 4. Bar-headed Goose
- 5. Emperor Goose
- 6. Domestic Chinese Goose
- 7. White-Faced Whistling Duck
- 8. Fulvous Whistling Duck
- 9. Falcated Duck
- 10. Bahama Pintail