

# ***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 as far as the sailing club.

**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, Cetti's, 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; 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, Rough-legged 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, Bee-eater, Waxwing, Nightingale, Bluethroat, Bearded Tit, Yellow-browed Warbler.

For further information refer to Roger Norman's account of 50 years birdwatching at this site (accessed via the link on the 'where to watch' page).

**Full site list:**

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

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

97. Wood Sandpiper
98. Redshank
99. Turnstone
100. Kittiwake
101. Black-headed Gull
102. Little Gull
103. Mediterranean Gull
104. Common Gull
105. Lesser Black-backed Gull
106. Herring Gull
107. Yellow-legged Gull
108. Iceland Gull
109. Glaucous Gull
110. Great Black-backed Gull
111. Little Tern
112. Black Tern
113. Sandwich Tern
114. Common Tern
115. Arctic Tern
116. Little Auk
117. Feral Pigeon
118. Stock Dove
119. Wood Pigeon
120. Collared Dove
121. Turtle Dove
122. Ring-necked Parakeet
123. Cuckoo
124. Barn Owl
125. Little Owl
126. Tawny Owl
127. Long-eared Owl
128. Short-eared Owl
129. Common Swift
130. Common Kingfisher
131. European Bee-eater
132. Green Woodpecker
133. Great Spotted Woodpecker
134. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
135. Red-backed Shrike
136. Magpie
137. Jay
138. Jackdaw
139. Rook
140. Carrion Crow
141. Hooded Crow
142. Raven
143. Goldcrest
144. Firecrest
145. Blue Tit
146. Great Tit
147. Coal Tit
148. Marsh Tit
149. Bearded Tit

150. Wood Lark
151. Sky Lark
152. Sand Martin
153. Swallow
154. House Martin
155. Cetti's Warbler
156. Long-tailed Tit
157. Yellow-browed Warbler
158. Chiffchaff
159. Willow Warbler
160. Blackcap
161. Garden Warbler
162. Lesser Whitethroat
163. Common Whitethroat
164. Sedge Warbler
165. Marsh Warbler
166. Reed Warbler
167. Waxwing
168. Nuthatch
169. Wren
170. Starling
171. Ring Ouzel
172. Blackbird
173. Fieldfare
174. Song Thrush
175. Redwing
176. Mistle Thrush
177. Spotted Flycatcher
178. Robin
179. Nightingale
180. Bluethroat
181. Pied Flycatcher
182. Black Redstart
183. Common Redstart
184. Whinchat
185. Stonechat
186. Northern Wheatear
187. Dunnock
188. House Sparrow
189. Tree Sparrow
190. Yellow Wagtail
191. Grey Wagtail
192. Pied Wagtail
193. Tree Pipit
194. Meadow Pipit
195. Rock Pipit
196. Chaffinch
197. Brambling
198. Greenfinch
199. Goldfinch
200. Siskin
201. Linnet
202. Twite

203. Lesser Redpoll
204. Bullfinch
205. Hawfinch
206. Snow Bunting
207. Lapland Bunting
208. Yellowhammer
209. Reed Bunting
210. 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
11. Red-crested Pochard