

# White-fronted Goose

*Anser albifrons*

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

41 records

Birds seen in Kent are of the form *albifrons*, which breeds in northern Russia (Novaya Zemlya, Kolguev, Arkhangel'sk and Kanin Peninsula), and winters in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and England.

A regular passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent, particularly to the Sheppey and Walland Marshes. White-fronted Goose numbers in the county increased considerably between 1900 and 1970, and Kent now supports a nationally important wintering population (Taylor *et al.* 1981). Numbers increase considerably when there is severe weather on the continent.



White-fronted Goose at Hythe Imperial (Ian Roberts)

Whilst passage birds are often recorded from October, the main arrival of winter flocks in Kent often coincides with periods of cold weather in December, or occasionally in early January.

Ticehurst (1909) stated that one shot at Hythe in the winter of 1891 was in the collection of Mr. H. Stredwick, of St. Leonard's, where he had seen it. He also recorded that one in Folkestone Museum was shot "on the Warren near that town" (though is not dated) and that the Tournay collection at Hythe also contains a specimen but has no details at all.

The next two records came in 1958, and there were subsequent records in 1963 and 1969, but then only one further sighting (in 1980) until 1993. Since then however it has occurred with some regularity, being seen in 18 of out of the 30 years, as shown in figure 1. Whilst there have been a total of 34 records across this period, occurrence varies considerably, with up to seven records in some years and several gaps of 2 or 3 years without any.

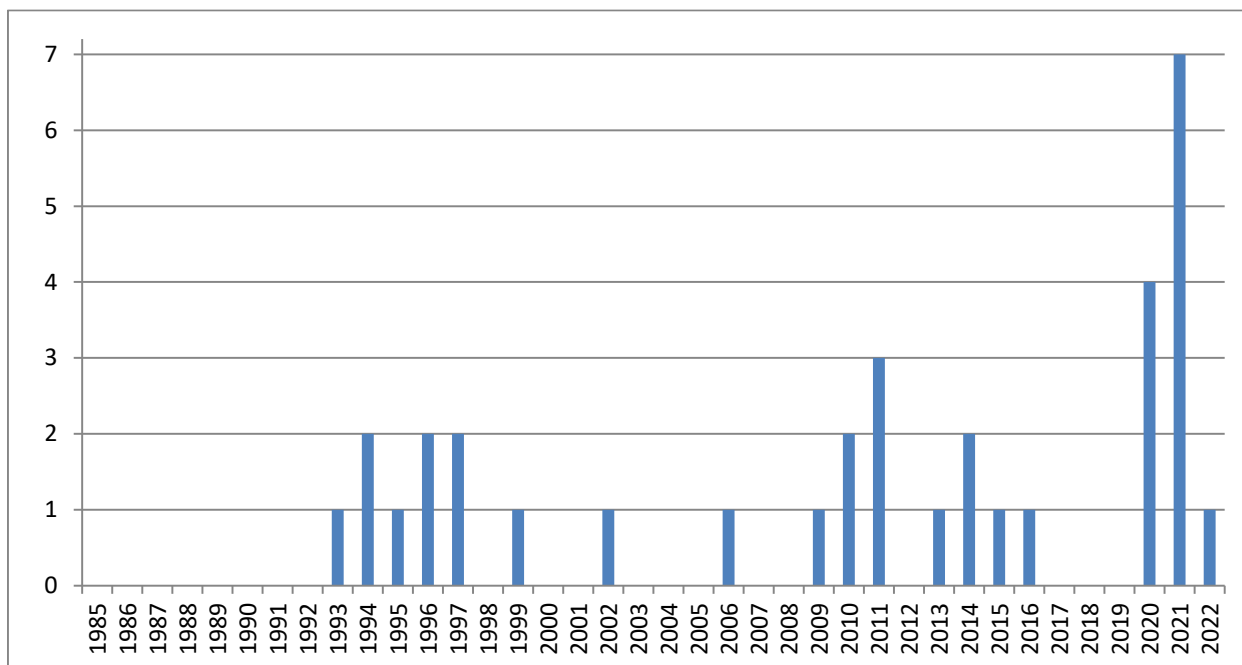


Figure 1: White-fronted Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Apart from one on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2011, a marked arrival in late November 2020 and a flock of 30 that flew over Saphire Hoe on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2022, all have been recorded between the 19<sup>th</sup> December (week 51) and 19<sup>th</sup> March (week 12), with a peak of five sightings in the last week of December, as shown in figure 2.

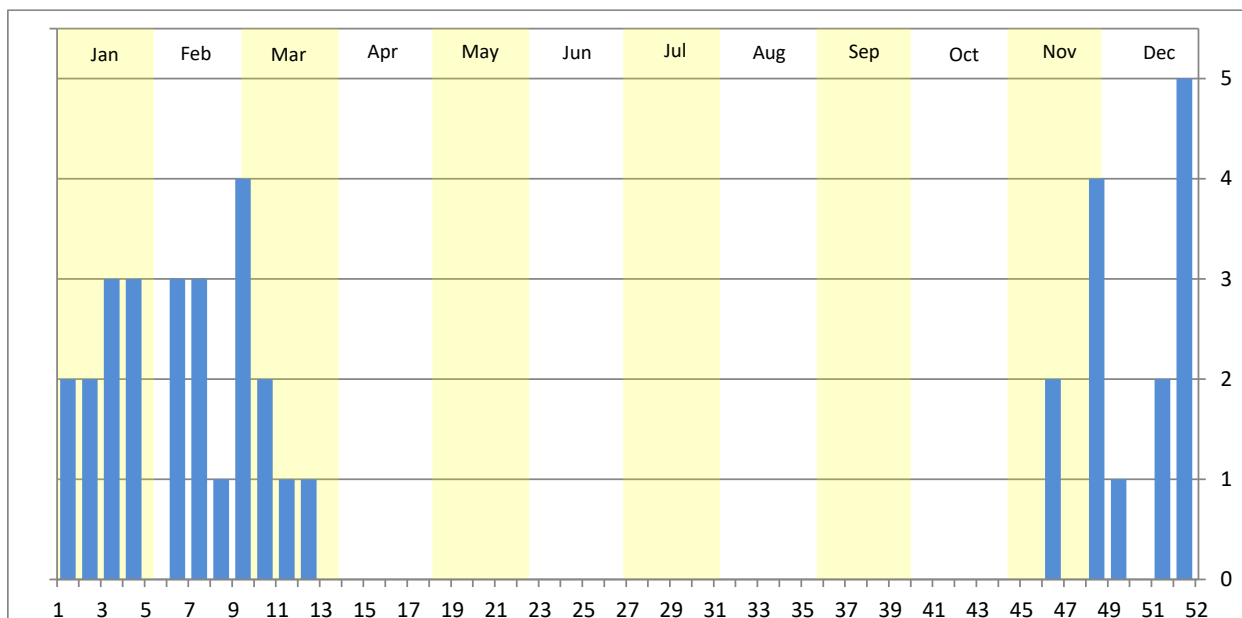


Figure 2: White-fronted Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad. Most of the records are either from the Romney Marsh area (39%) or from the coast (46%) where there have been records from a number of regularly watched sites (Hythe Ranges, Hythe, Princes Parade, Seabrook, Copt Point, Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe). There are inland records of birds flying over Hythe Roughs, Saltwood and Cheriton, whilst in February 2006 a flock spent nine days in the Folkestone Racecourse area (near Westenhangar) and in March 2021 flocks were seen at Cock Ash Lake and at Lympne.

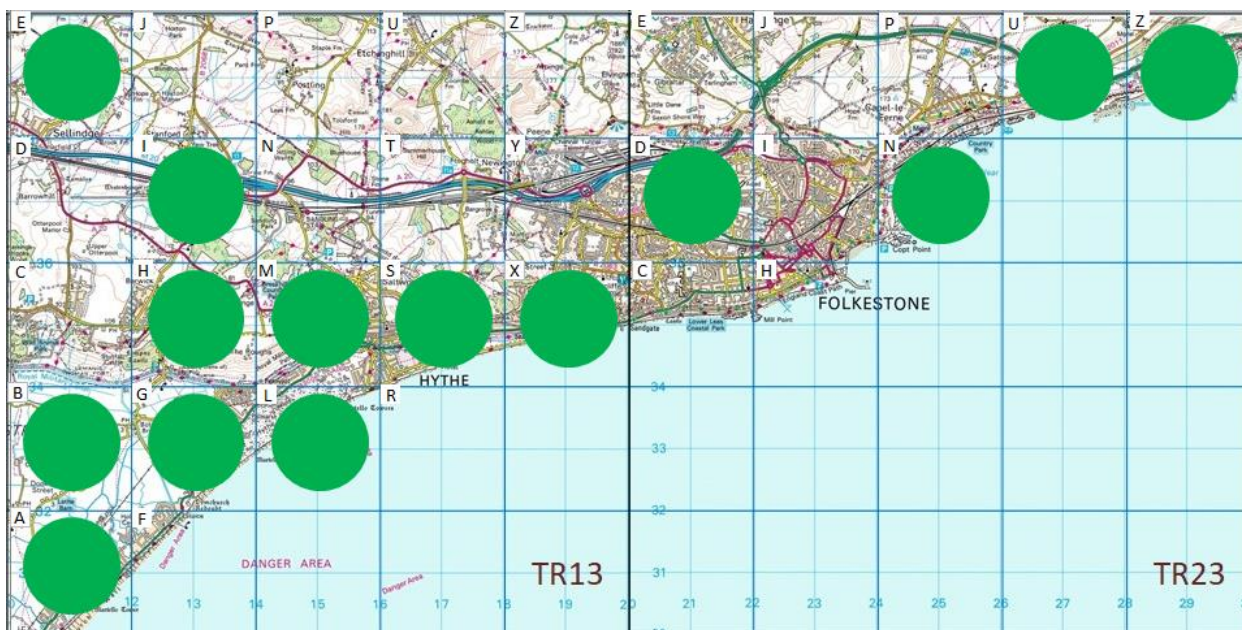


Figure 3: Distribution of all White-fronted Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1891** Hythe, one shot in winter (per Ticehurst, 1909)
- Prior to 1909** Folkestone Warren, one shot, undated (per Ticehurst, 1909)
- 1958** Hythe Ranges, 47 (in flocks of 18 and 29) flew north-west, 9<sup>th</sup> February (R. K. Norman)
- 1958** Pennypot Farm, Palmarsh (now Pennypot Estate), 11<sup>th</sup> March (R. K. Norman)
- 1963** Hythe, 100, 3<sup>rd</sup> January (W. S. Nevin)
- 1969** Nickolls Quarry, ten, 13<sup>th</sup> January (R. K. Norman)
- 1980** Hythe Roughs, 15 flew west, 27<sup>th</sup> January (D. J. Weaver)
- 1993** Hythe, six flew east, 30<sup>th</sup> December (I. A. Roberts)

- 1994** Copt Point, 26 flew west, 16<sup>th</sup> January (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Nickolls Quarry, one, 25<sup>th</sup> February (R. K. Norman)
- 1995** Folkestone, 24 flew north, 24<sup>th</sup> December (P. Howe, H. G. Brown)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, 29 flew east, 14<sup>th</sup> January (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, one, 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> February (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Abbotscliffe, 75 flew out to sea, 25<sup>th</sup> January (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Copt Point, two flew west, 17<sup>th</sup> February (D. A. Gibson)
- 1999** Hythe Ranges, 80 flew west, 27<sup>th</sup> December (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, three flew east, 19<sup>th</sup> March (R. K. Norman)
- 2006** Folkestone Racecourse lake (Westenhanger), 14, 11<sup>th</sup> February, with 7 remaining until the 19<sup>th</sup> (I. A. Roberts, D. Brown)
- 2009** Botolph's Bridge, one, 2<sup>nd</sup> January (D. Brown)
- 2010** Donkey Street, 180, 22<sup>nd</sup> December, with 3 remaining until the 24<sup>th</sup> (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper)
- 2010** Nickolls Quarry, 300 flew in from the south and back out to sea, 25<sup>th</sup> December (D. Weller)
- 2011** Saltwood, 12 flew south, 16<sup>th</sup> January (P. Howe)
- 2011** Nickolls Quarry, six flew over, 12<sup>th</sup> November, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2011** Nickolls Quarry, six flew west, 5<sup>th</sup> December (R. K. Norman)
- 2013** Samphire Hoe, two flew east, 12<sup>th</sup> February (I. A. Roberts, P. Smith)
- 2014** Princes Parade, Seabrook, adult flew west, 26<sup>th</sup> January (I. A. Roberts)
- 2014** Nickolls Quarry, six flew west, 28<sup>th</sup> December, photographed, earlier seen over Seabrook (B. Harper, D. Wrathall)
- 2015** Willop Basin, adult, 15<sup>th</sup> February, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
- 2016** West Hythe, eight flew south-west, 17<sup>th</sup> January (I. A. Roberts)
- 2020** Donkey Street, adult, 29<sup>th</sup> November, with three adults on 30<sup>th</sup> November and six birds on the 1<sup>st</sup> December, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
- 2020** Hythe Imperial golf course, juvenile, 29<sup>th</sup> November, with adult and juvenile on 30<sup>th</sup> November, photographed (P. Smith, I. A. Roberts)
- 2020** Samphire Hoe, one, 29<sup>th</sup> November, with eight on 30<sup>th</sup> November (L. Collins, P. Holt, P. Smith)
- 2020** Willop Basin, seven, 30<sup>th</sup> November, increasing to 41 on the 1<sup>st</sup> December and 51 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, with varying numbers (between 2 and 46) present daily until the 10<sup>th</sup> December, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2021** Seabrook, 104 (flocks of 23 and 81) flew east, 1<sup>st</sup> March (P. Howe)
- 2021** Cheriton, 30 flew over, 1<sup>st</sup> March (C. Gillard)
- 2021** Seabrook, 18 flew east, 2<sup>nd</sup> March (P. Howe)
- 2021** Willop Basin, four, 4<sup>th</sup> March (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper)
- 2021** Lympe, 27, 5<sup>th</sup> March, photographed (P. Sharp)
- 2021** Cock Ash Lake, six, 14<sup>th</sup> March, photographed (D. Smith)
- 2022** Samphire Hoe, 30 flew south, 18<sup>th</sup> November (P. Holt)



White-fronted Goose at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)



White-fronted Geese at Cock Ash Lake (Derek Smith)

## References

Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2021. Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society.

Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society.

Ticehurst, N. F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

## Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).



White-fronted Geese at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



White-fronted Goose at Hythe Imperial (Phil Smith)



White-fronted Goose at Donkey Street (Ian Roberts)