

## Grey Phalarope

*Phalaropus fulicarius*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

8 records,  
10 birds

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):*

Breeds in the extreme north of Europe, Asia, North America and Greenland. Winters off western Africa and western South America. Migrates almost exclusively by sea routes, occurring inshore or inland only under stress of weather. Occasionally large numbers can occur off Britain and Ireland following passages of vigorous Atlantic depressions.

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

It is a scarce autumn and winter migrant in Kent.



Grey Phalarope at West Hythe (Mike Terry)

Ticehurst (1909) considered that it was “only in exceptional climatic circumstances that this bird occurs in Kent” noting that “it is not to be expected therefore as an annual autumnal migrant, but when it does happen that the birds are blown to our coast a good many are generally seen”. He lists only five county records before “the great immigration of 1866” which produced the first local records. During the autumn of that year “a large number was seen on the south coast of England... and... upwards of five hundred were killed”, with ten examples seen or obtained in Kent, including singles shot at Hythe “by a man named Norton” on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September.

The next year that was recorded in Kent was 1870 and Charles Gordon (1871) documented this occurrence: “last month [October 1870] Baillon’s Crake, three Grey Phalaropes and the Common Cormorant were taken in the Hythe Canal by Mr. F. Young”.

Ticehurst also mentioned that “Mr. W. Horton, of Hythe, has a pair of immature birds which he tells me were shot near that town in autumn”, which presumably were the same as those obtained in the 1866 influx.

Harrison (1953) found its status to “have remained basically unaltered, as that of an irregular autumn and winter visitor, sometimes, at intervals, occurring in considerable numbers”, but cited no further local records. Taylor *et al.* (1981) concluded that its “status was apparently similar” but did not note any influxes. It was during their review period (1952-76) that the next local record occurred: one seen and “fully described” by T. Grant at Folkestone (East Cliff) Sands on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1966.



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In 1981 Russell Heselden, Martin Sutherland and L. F. Woollard saw one in Folkestone Harbour on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> January and there have been three further records: one seen by Ian Roberts as it flew east past Copt Point on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2003, one seen and photographed by Mike Terry on the canal at West Hythe on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009 and one reported on the sea off Princes Parade on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

The records since 1985 by year are shown in figure 1.

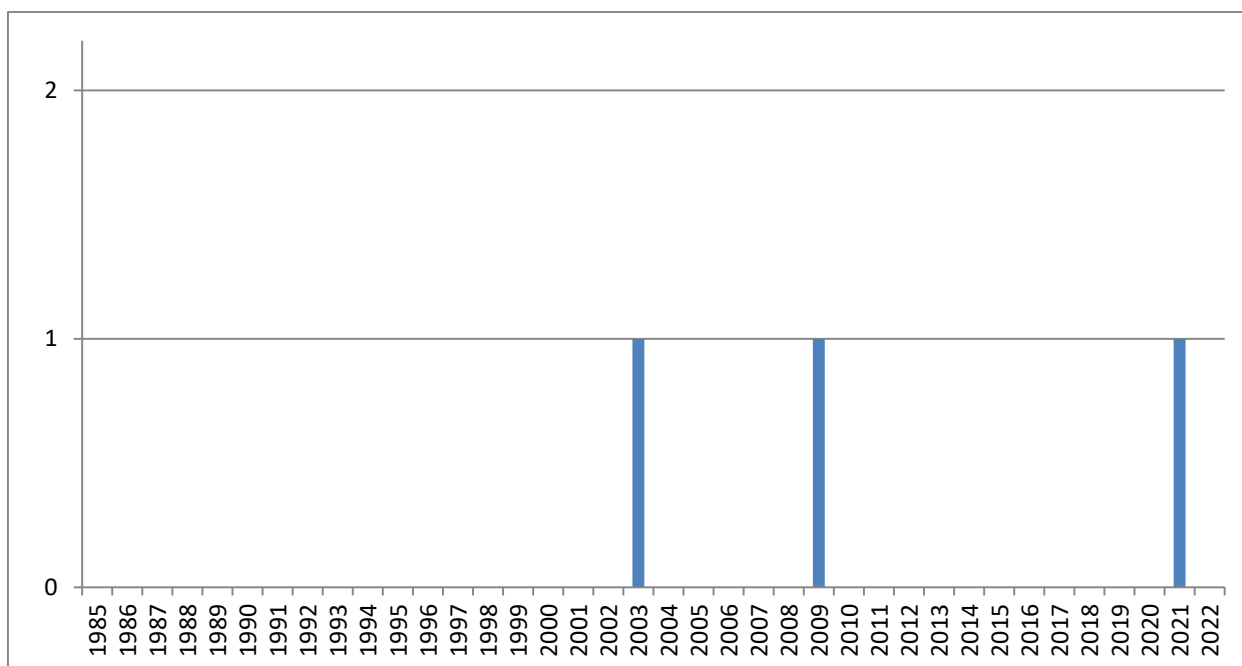


Figure 1: Grey Phalarope records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are shown in figure 2. All dated records have occurred between the 13<sup>th</sup> October (week 41) and the 6<sup>th</sup> January (week 1). One of the early area records was only given as “October”.

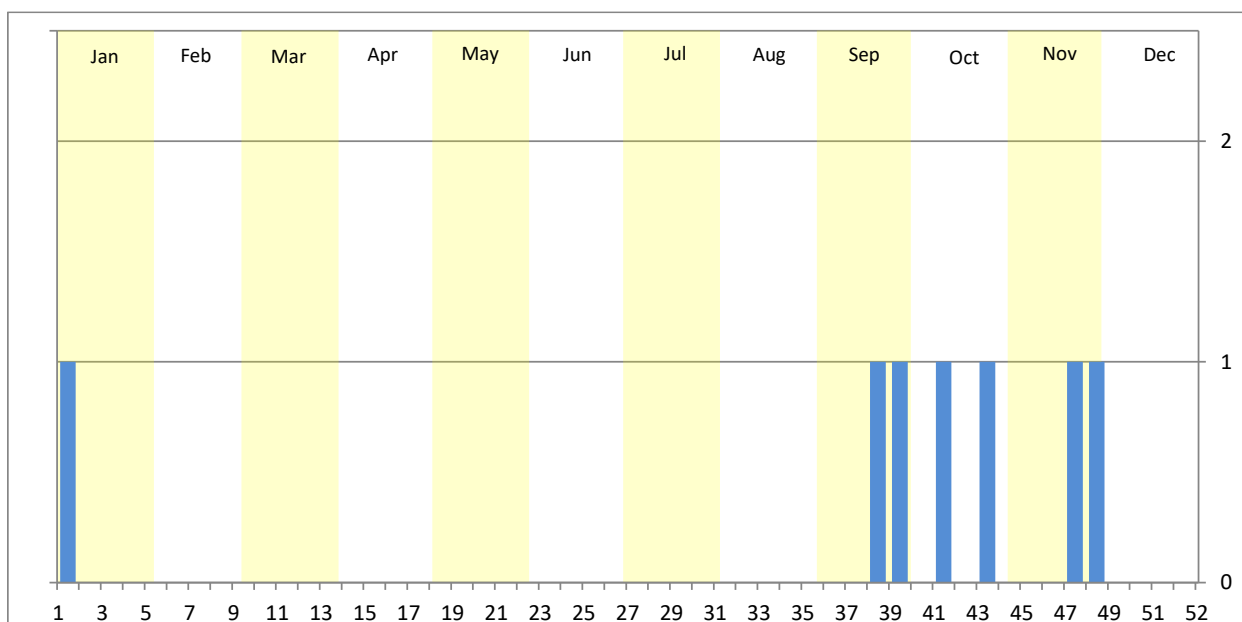


Figure 2: Grey Phalarope records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1866** Hythe, one shot, 19<sup>th</sup> September (Mr. Norton)
- 1866** Hythe, one shot, 24<sup>th</sup> September (Mr. Norton)
- 1870** Hythe Canal, three shot, October (F. Young)
- 1966** Folkestone Sands, one, 2<sup>nd</sup> December, fully described (T. Grant)
- 1981** Folkestone Harbour, one, 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> January (R. G. W. Heselden, M. P. Sutherland, L. F. Woollard)
- 2003** Copt Point, one flew east, 23<sup>rd</sup> October, (I. A. Roberts)
- 2009** West Hythe, one, 25<sup>th</sup> November, photographed (M. Terry)
- 2021** Princes Parade, one on the sea, 13<sup>th</sup> October (reported per Rare Bird Alert)

## References

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## Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/get-a-map) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk).

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