

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

25 records,
40 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998, Holling et al. 2019):

Breeds from France eastwards across central Europe into Russia, and across Asia, also locally in Africa and North America. There is a small breeding population in Britain, mostly in northern England, with around 50 pairs on average. It winters on lakes and coastal waters generally south of the breeding range, including parts of southern Britain.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a scarce but regular passage migrant and winter visitor in Kent, which has bred occasionally in recent years.



Black-necked Grebe at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

Ticehurst (1909) regarded the Black-necked Grebe as the rarest of the three scarce grebe species in the county and only documented 12 occurrences, all in autumn or winter, but Harrison (1953) was able to record an increase and Taylor *et al.* (1981) found it to be a regular, although uncommon, winter visitor. It was during their review period (1952-76) that the first local records occurred, with Roger Norman finding seeing one at Nickolls Quarry between the 13th and 15th March 1958, with one ("possibly the same bird") there between the 21st and 23rd March, and from the 3rd to 25th April 1958 (Norman 2007). Then, two years later, David Musson saw four off Folkestone on the 1st April 1960 but there were no further sightings for two decades.

Henderson (2021) described how occurrences in the county increased significantly shortly after the review period of Taylor *et al.* and (unlike the other two scarce grebes) have continued to do so, as figure 1 demonstrates. In the last ten years of Henderson's review period records of Black-necked Grebe outnumbered Slavonian Grebes by almost two to one, and Red-necked Grebe by almost four to one, a marked change in status from being the rarest of the three.

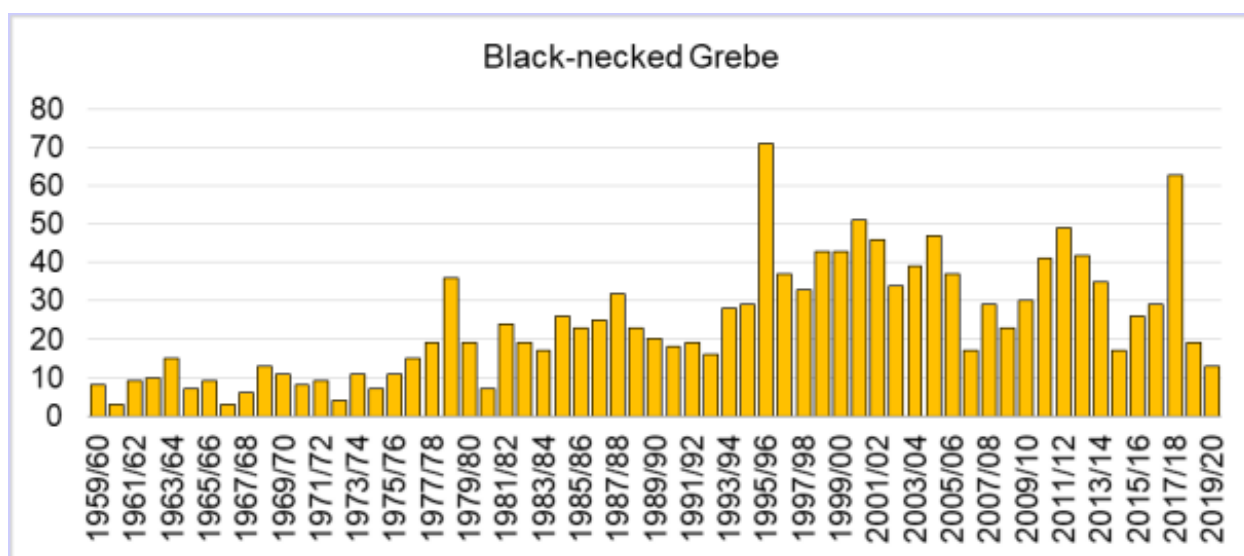


Figure 1: Black-necked Grebe records in Kent between 1959/60 and 2019/20

Locally there were no further records until 1980, when one was seen off Folkestone on the 8th December, with another off Sandgate on the 29th January 1981.

It has been noted with some regularity since 1985, with 19 records in 38 years, as demonstrated by figure 2. In contrast to the other two scarce grebes and in line with the county trend, it has been occurring with increasing frequency. The 21 years between 1980 and 2000 produced a total of seven records of eight birds (a rate of 0.3 records per annum) whereas the 22 years since have seen 13 records of 24 birds (0.6 records per annum).

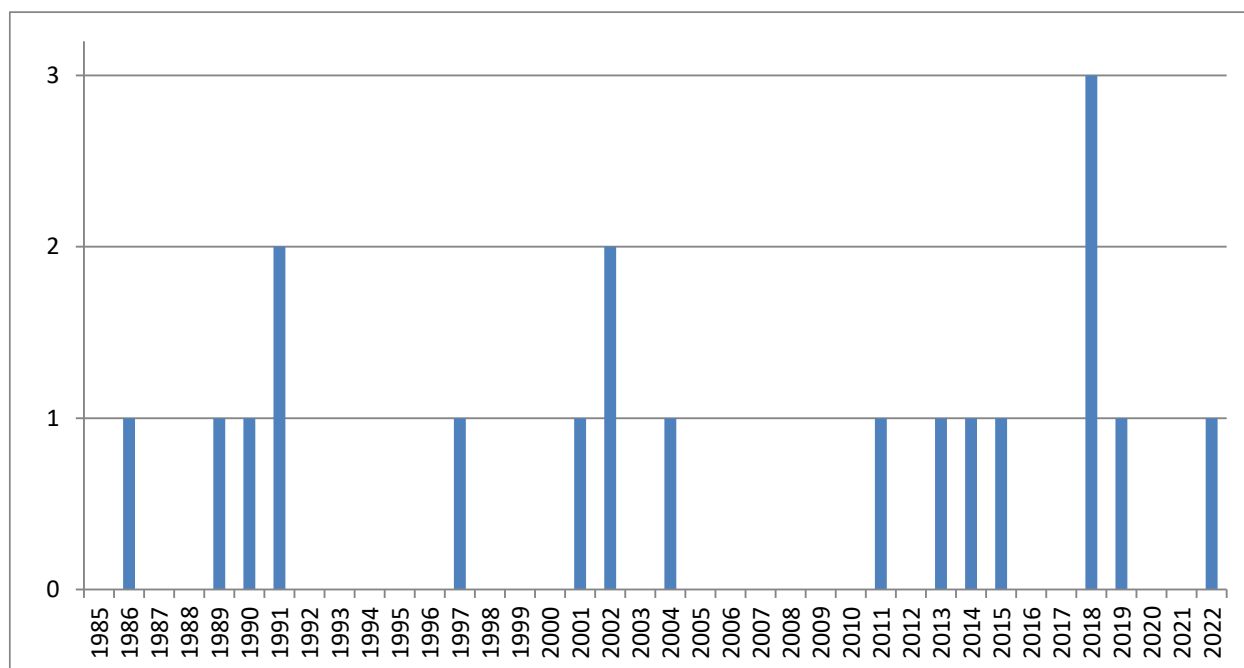


Figure 2: Black-necked Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The majority have occurred either in winter or on spring passage. Winter arrival dates are relatively late, with the earliest (apart from the most recent in October) not until the 8th December (week 49), and are generally associated with the onset of severe weather. Spring migrants have generally been recorded between mid-March and mid-April, with the latest on 24th April.

There are intriguing records from Nickolls Quarry of an “immature” on 26th August 1990 and of three birds present on an unspecified date in August 2002, which might have related to dispersal from local breeding sites, possibly within the county. The arrival dates by week are shown in figure 3.

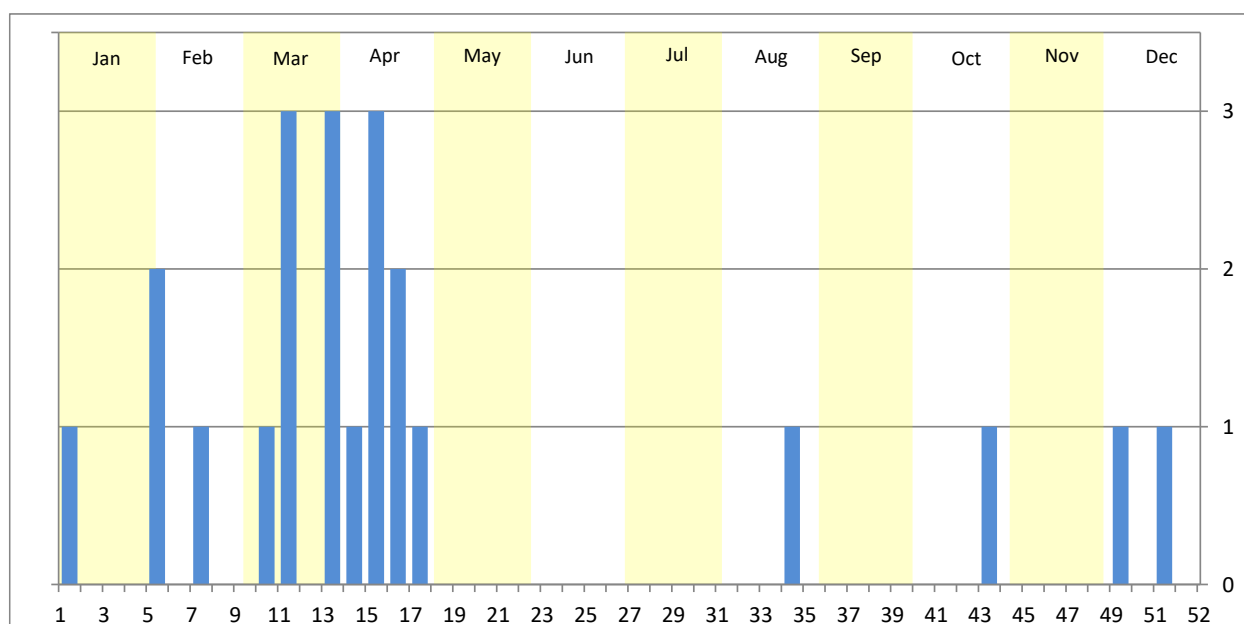


Figure 3: Black-necked Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by week



Black-necked Grebe at Hythe Canal (Brian Harper)



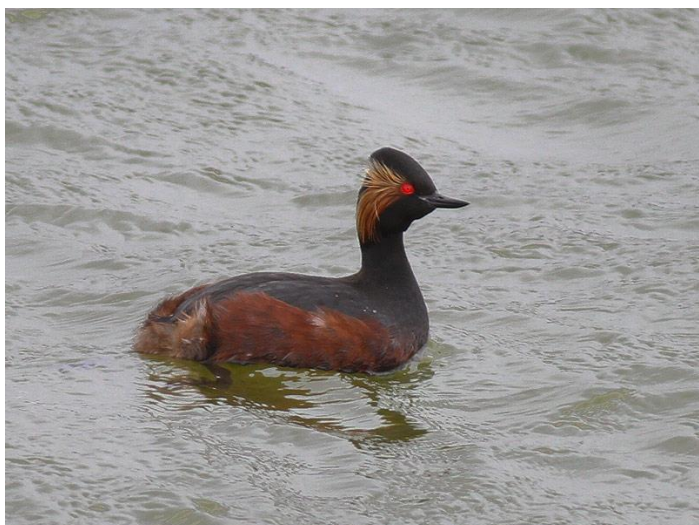
Black-necked Grebe at Hythe Canal (Brian Harper)



Black-necked Grebe at Hythe Canal (Brian Harper)



Black-necked Grebe at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



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Records are mostly split between Nickolls Quarry (five) and coastal sites, with one at Samphire Hoe, three at Copt Point, three at Mill Point and seven in the bay between Sandgate and Hythe, with two records at 'Folkestone' where the site was not specified. The remaining two were seen on the Royal Military Canal between Hythe and Seabrook, one present for a week during hard weather in February 1991 and an autumn migrant present for two days in October 2019. Figure 4 shows the location of records by tetrad.



Figure 4: Distribution of all Black-necked Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1958** Nickolls Quarry, one, 13th to 15th March (R. K. Norman)
- 1958** Nickolls Quarry, one, 21st to 23rd March (R. K. Norman), possibly same as above
- 1958** Nickolls Quarry, one, 3rd to 25th April (E. J. Pilcher), possibly same as above
- 1960** Folkestone, four, 1st April (D. F. Musson)
- 1980** Folkestone, one, 8th December (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1981** Sandgate, one, 29th January (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1986** Copt Point, one, 17th April (reported)
- 1989** Mill Point, one flew west, 17th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 1990** Nickolls Quarry, immature, 26th August (P. Miller)
- 1991** Hythe Canal, one, 4th to 10th February (reported)
- 1991** Nickolls Quarry, one, 13th to 24th February (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Sandgate, two, 5th January (P. Howe)
- 2001** Copt Point, one in breeding plumage on the sea, 24th April (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Copt Point, one flew east, 26th March (reported)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, three, date not given in August (per Kent Bird Report)
- 2004** Seabrook, two in breeding plumage on the sea, 29th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Seabrook, three in breeding plumage on the sea, 12th March, photographed (B. Harper; I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Nickolls Quarry, one, 12th April, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2014** Mill Point, one flew east, 29th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2015** Seabrook, one on the sea, drifting east, 15th March, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Seabrook, two on the sea, 13th April, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2018** Samphire Hoe, five on the sea, drifting east, 15th April (M. Collins, S. Cutt, B. Woolhouse)
- 2018** Mill Point, one, 19th April (B. Harper)
- 2019** Hythe Canal near Hythe Imperial Golf Course, one, 22nd to 23rd October, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2022** Hythe Beach, two in breeding plumage on the sea, 9th March (I. A. Roberts)

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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](#).

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Black-necked Grebe at Princes Parade (Brian Harper)



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