

## Iceland Gull

*Larus glaucooides*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

13 records

The nominate form breeds in Greenland and migrates south to winter mainly in Iceland but it is a regular visitor to north-west Europe, including Britain and Ireland where it is most frequent in the north, especially Scotland.

The race *kumleini* breeds in Arctic Canada and winters on the Atlantic coast of North America, straying occasionally to western Europe (Snow & Perrins, 1998).



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

The nominate form is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent. The *kumleini* race has occurred in the county on just four occasions (in 1991, 1998, 2006 and 2012) (KOS, 2020, KOS, 2021).

The first local record involved a first-winter individual that remained in the Copt Point and Folkestone Harbour area from late November 1980 to late February 1981. This was the first instance of over-wintering in the county. A second-winter bird, considered to be the same individual, returned to Folkestone the following November, before moving to Hythe where it remained until May 1982. Quite remarkably two new first-winter birds were found in 1982, one at Nickolls Quarry in January and the other at Hythe in December, with the latter overwintering until the 1<sup>st</sup> April. A third-year bird, presumably the returning individual from the two previous winters, was seen at Folkestone and Hythe in January 1983, and was even seen together with the wintering Hythe first-year at Sandgate on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1983. This remains the only multiple sighting locally.

There were no records in 1984 but in January 1985 an adult, possibly the returning bird, was at Folkestone in January, but only lingered for two days. An adult was then seen at Copt Point in December 1987. A five year gap followed before first-winter birds were noted in 1992, 1993 and 1994, with one of unspecified age in 1997. There then followed a ten year hiatus before one flew east at Samphire Hoe in February 2008. In January 2012 a second-winter bird of the form *kumleini* ("Kumlein's Gull") was found in Dover Harbour where it remained into early March, and it was seen flying east past Samphire Hoe towards Dover by Paul Holt on the 6<sup>th</sup> February. There was a notable influx of *kumleini* and nominate Iceland Gulls into the north-eastern Atlantic in January and February 2012 including, for example, an estimated 310 Kumlein's Gulls in the Faroe Islands (Fray *et al*, 2012).

In January 2017 a first-winter bird was seen on the lake at Nickolls Quarry before it flew off to the east over Palmarsh and there was a rather unseasonal sighting of an adult at Folkestone on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2018.



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

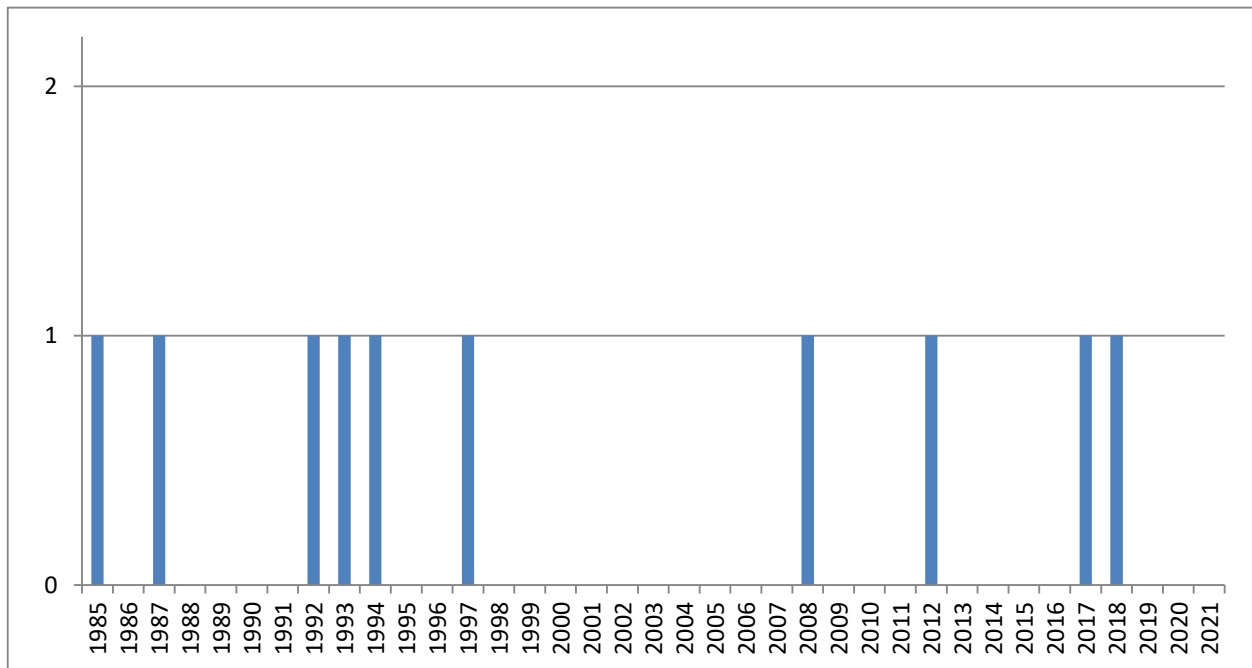


Figure 1: Iceland Gull records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Arrival dates fall between the 13<sup>th</sup> November (week 46) and 27<sup>th</sup> April (week 17), apart from the July occurrence in 2018, as shown in figure 2. The March and April records were typically short-staying, presumably migrant individuals.

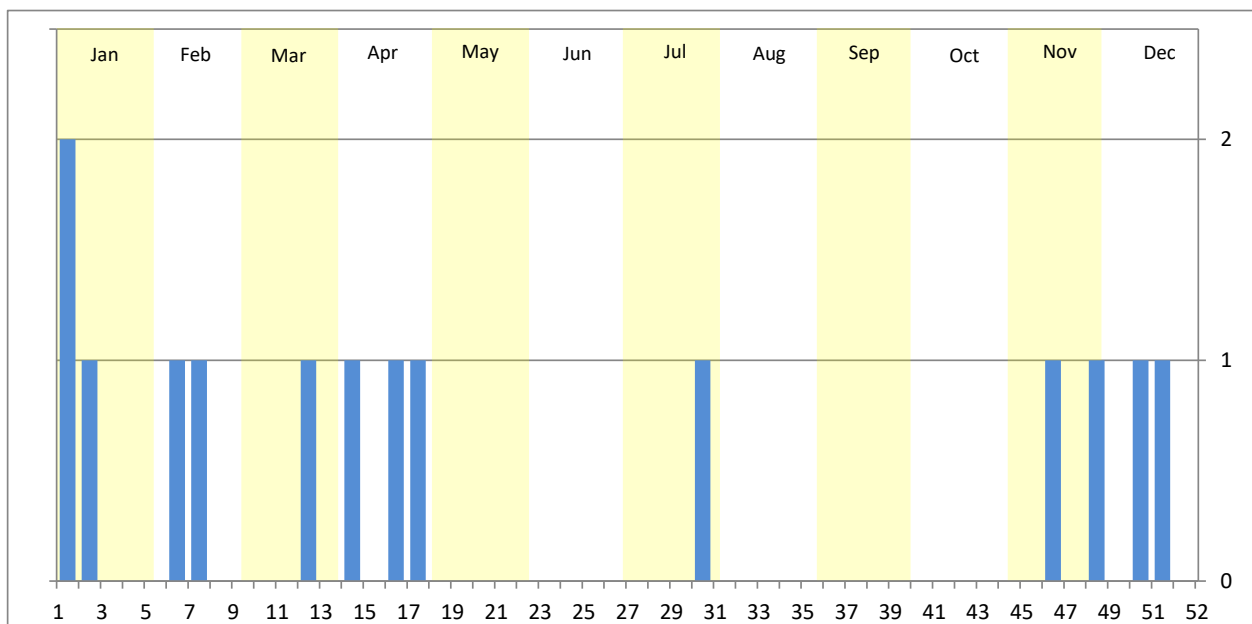


Figure 2: Iceland Gull records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.



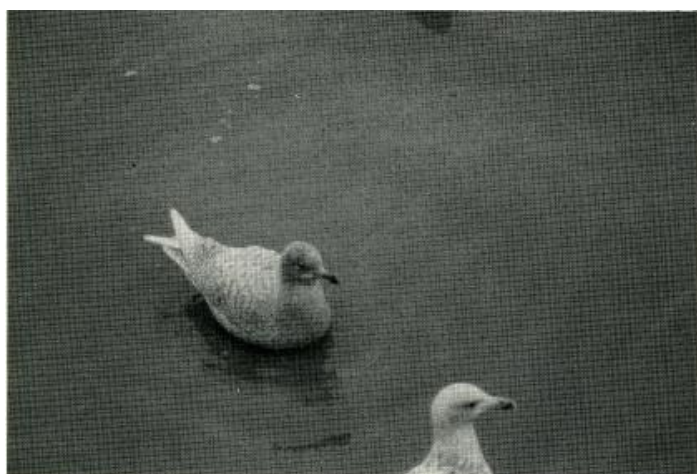
Figure 3: Distribution of all Iceland Gull records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Iceland Gull at Folkestone Harbour (Ian Hodgson)



Kumlein's Gull at Dover Harbour, the same individual as seen flying past Samphire Hoe (Martyn Wilson)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1980** Copt Point and Folkestone Harbour, first winter, 29<sup>th</sup> November to 20<sup>th</sup> February 1981, photographed (R. Lee *et al*)
- 1981** Folkestone, second winter, 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> November, then at Hythe from 27<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> May 1982, visiting Folkestone again on 21<sup>st</sup> January, considered to be same as above (R. Henson *et al*)
- 1982** Nickolls Quarry, first winter, 8<sup>th</sup> January (D. Weaver)
- 1982** Hythe, first winter, 16<sup>th</sup> December to 1<sup>st</sup> April (J. Smith, P. J. Wells)
- 1983** Folkestone and Hythe, third winter, 9<sup>th</sup> January (D. C. Gilbert), seen together with above first winter at Sandgate on 30<sup>th</sup> January, presumed same as 1980 and 1981
- 1985** Folkestone, adult, 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> January (R. F. Henson), possibly same returning bird as 1983
- 1987** Copt Point, adult, 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> December (R. F. Henson), later seen at Dover
- 1992** Copt Point, first winter, 22<sup>nd</sup> March (reported)
- 1993** Folkestone Harbour, first winter, 23<sup>rd</sup> April (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Copt Point, first winter, 27<sup>th</sup> April (R. F. Henson)
- 1997** Copt Point, age not given, 4<sup>th</sup> April (R. F. Henson)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, first winter flew east, 17<sup>th</sup> February (I. A. Roberts), later seen at Dover
- 2017** Nickolls Quarry, first or second winter, 6<sup>th</sup> January, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Folkestone Sunny Sands, adult, 27<sup>th</sup> July (P. Edmondson)

### **References**

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### **Acknowledgements**

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