

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

9 records,
74 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998, Holling et al. 2012):

There are two discrete breeding populations, one in Iceland and Greenland, and the other in Spitsbergen. The former winter in Britain, south to the Wash, and the latter in Denmark, west Germany and the Low Countries, with a few reaching northern France and eastern England, especially in severe winters. The first successful breeding in Britain was documented in 2010 when single pairs bred in Cumbria and Highland, with another pair present in the Outer Hebrides. These records appeared to relate to wild birds which lingered in the spring perhaps because of injury.



Pink-footed Goose at Folkestone Racecourse
(Ian Roberts)

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to the county in small numbers, with occasional larger flocks. Taylor *et al.* (1981) considered it most likely that Kent birds originate from the Spitsbergen population.

The early status of the Pink-footed Goose in Kent was confused by difficulties of identification and by its taxonomic position, with Ticehurst (1909) stating that it “was quite unknown to the older writers” since it was not separated specifically until 1833, whilst by the time of Harrison (1953) it had been again relegated to “the pink-footed race of the Bean-Goose”. Harrison considered it to be of “irregular occurrence in the county” but noted that it “on occasions occurs in considerable flocks”, typically “during spells of inclement weather”. It was unknown locally to Knight and Tolputt, who did not mention the species within their “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871).

Taylor *et al.* considered it to be a passage migrant and winter visitor to the county in variable but usually small numbers, however they noted that, with the population wintering in the low countries increasing, “this goose could well increase further in Kent”.

It was first recorded locally in autumn 1997, when Roger Norman saw a flock of 18 flying north-east over Nickolls Quarry on the 12th October, with a further flock of 17 seen flying north over Hythe Ranges on the 24th October (Norman 2006, 2007). The following year F. Fisher saw one “on the water and in flight” at Samphire Hoe on the 30th October, whilst the first (and to date only) spring record occurred in the subsequent year, when Dale Gibson noted a flock of six flying west at Capel Battery on the 12th March. A 12 year gap ensued before the next records occurred, with Ian Roberts seeing one flying east at the Willop Outfall on the 6th November 2011 and the same observer then found a flock of 28 in a field adjacent to Botolph’s Bridge on the 15th November 2012.



Pink-footed Geese at Botolph’s Bridge (Ian Roberts)

There were no further sightings until 2020, when Mark Kennett saw one at Samphire Hoe on the 8th November, which later flew east and was perhaps the same individual as one seen flying west at Seabrook by Paul Howe the following day. The most recent record involved one that joined a Greylag Goose flock in fields adjacent to the lake at Folkestone Racecourse on the 22nd January 2022 and remained until the 26th, becoming the only bird to linger more than a single day.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

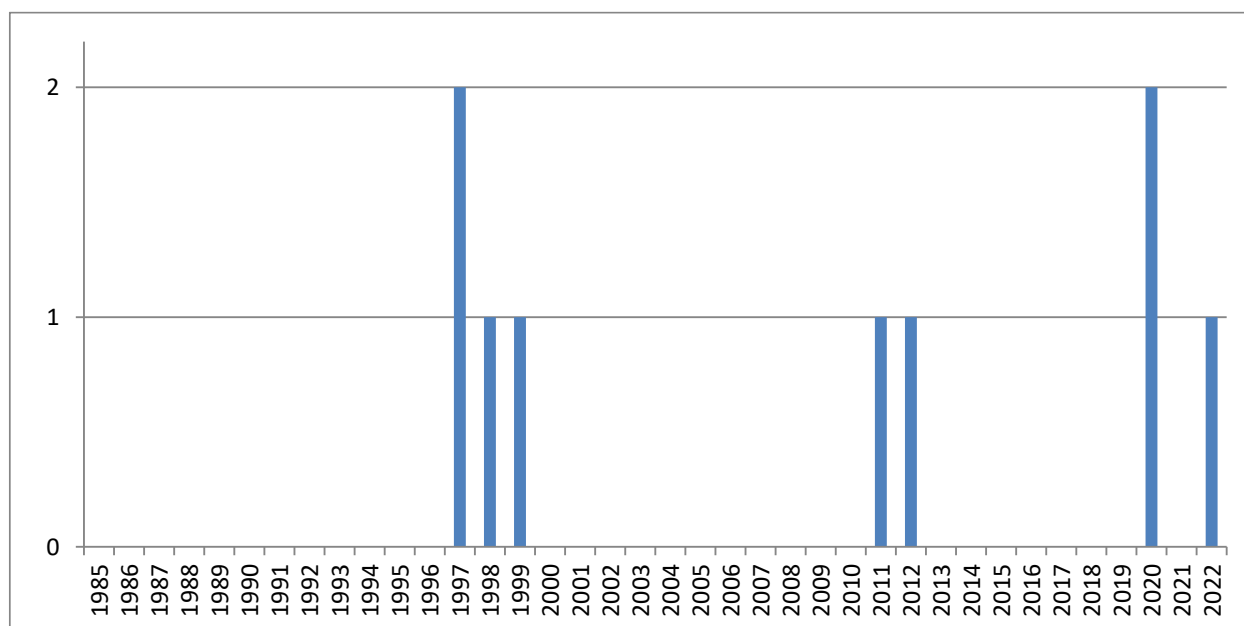


Figure 1: Pink-footed Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are given in figure 2. There have been six autumn records, between the 12th October (week 41) and the 15th November (week 46), one in winter, in January 2022 (week 4), and one in spring, on the 12th March 1999 (week 11).

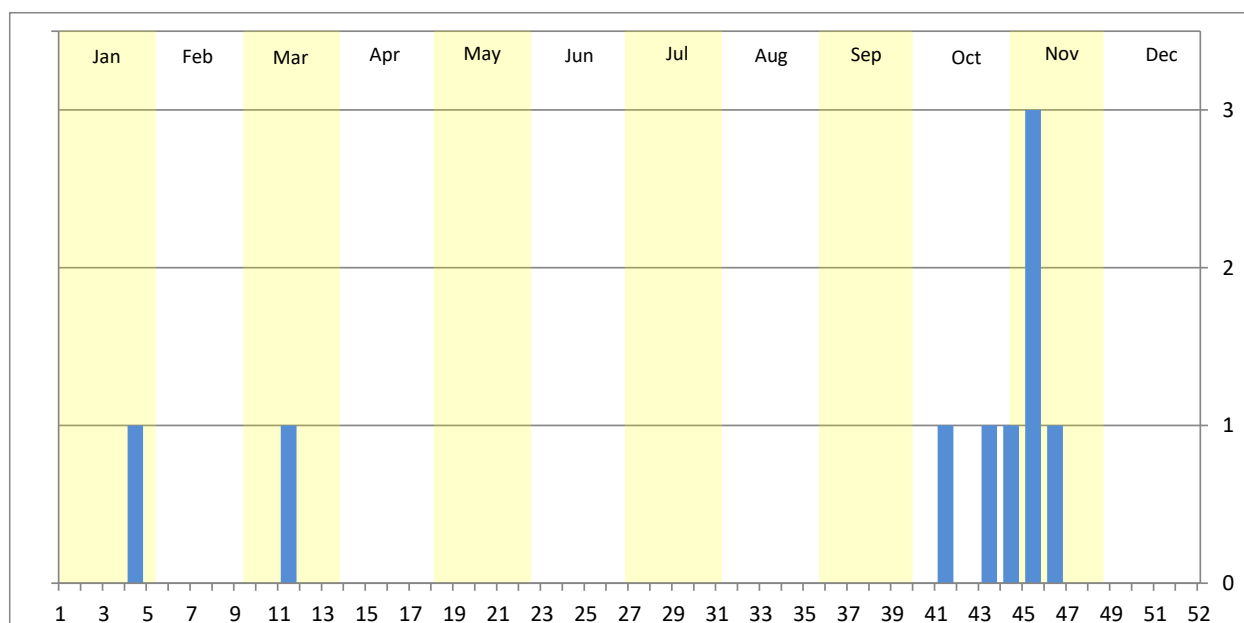


Figure 2: Pink-footed Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Pink-footed Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, 18 flew north-east, 12th October (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Hythe Ranges, 17 flew north, 24th October (R. K. Norman)
- 1998** Samphire Hoe, one, 30th October (F. R. Fisher)
- 1999** Capel Battery, six flew west, 12th March (D. A. Gibson)
- 2011** Willop Outfall, one flew east, 6th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Botolph's Bridge, 28, 15th November, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2020** Samphire Hoe, one, then flew east, 8th November (M. D. Kennett)
- 2020** Seabrook, one flew west, 9th November (P. Howe), possibly same as above
- 2022** Folkestone Racecourse, one, 22nd to 26th January, photographed (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper *et al*)

References

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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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Pink-footed Goose with Greylag Geese at Folkestone Racecourse (Ian Roberts)