

Manx Shearwater

Puffinus puffinus

Category A

Scarce passage migrant.

Breeds along the Atlantic seaboard from north-west France, through western Britain and Ireland, and the Faroe Islands north to southern Iceland, also with small numbers on the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands. Britain and Ireland are thought to hold the majority (perhaps as much as 90%) of the total population. Migrates to winter off South America and rarely recorded in breeding range between November and January (Snow & Perrins, 1998) (Snow & Perrins, 1998).



Manx Shearwater at Mill Point (Ian Roberts)

In Kent it is a regular visitor during April to October, occasionally in large numbers, but rare in winter (KOS, 2020).

The Manx Shearwater was not known locally to Knight & Tolputt (1871) and it did not appear in their “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood”, whilst Harrison (1953) listed only a few coastal records and two inland records in Kent. Taylor *et al* (1981) recorded an annual mean for the county of just three records up to 1969, but these included the first local records: singles seen by Roger Norman flying west past Hythe Ranges on the 13th August 1952, by John Hollyer flying west past Folkestone on the 9th September 1955 and by Dave Musson flying west Hythe on the 16th September 1960.

Taylor *et al* noted an increase in Kent since 1970 but there were no local records between 1960 and 1988, which was presumably due a lack of coverage as it has been noted in most years since 1988, when 12 flew west past Mill Point on the 1st September 1988.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Manx Shearwater by tetrad, with records in 7 tetrads (23%).

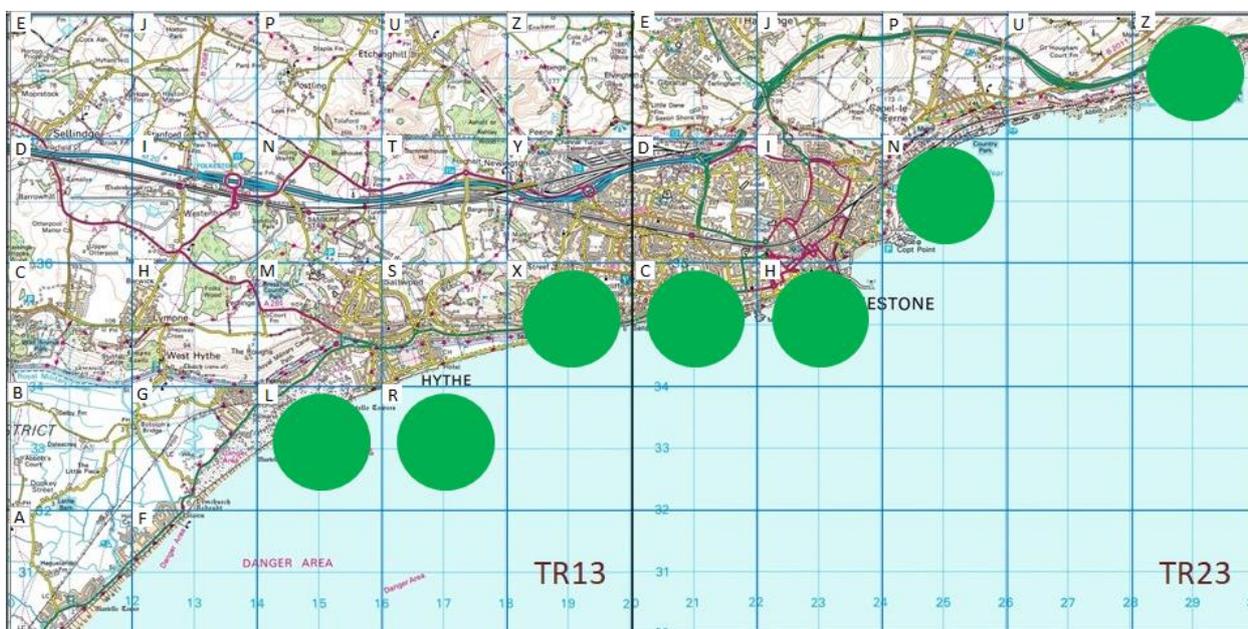


Figure 1: Distribution of all Manx Shearwater records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The earliest spring arrival involved one flying west Mill Point on the 4th April 2019, whilst one flew east past Samphire Hoe on the 12th April 2008, and four flew past (one west, three east) Copt Point on the 17th April 2012, with five flying west there the following day. It is more usually noted from the last ten days of April, with a peak in that month of nine flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 29th April 2016.

The largest movements tend to occur in May or June, when double-figure counts have been noted as follows:

- 16 west past Copt Point on the 27th May 1996
- 25 west past Copt Point on the 24th May 1999
- 36 east past Copt Point on the 2nd Jun 1999
- 16 (3 east, 13 west) past Copt Point on the 3rd Jun 1999
- 11 west past Copt Point on the 19th May 2006
- 66 west past Hythe on the 24th May 2021

There has only been one double-figure count in July, which involved 18 flying east past Copt Point on the 12th July 1998, whilst smaller numbers have been noted between August and October. Aside from the movement of 12 noted above, the only counts in excess of two in autumn comprised five flying west past Copt Point on the 30th August 1997 and six flying west there on the 24th September 1992.

Singles have been noted into the first week of October, with one notably later record off Copt Point on the 18th October 1996.

Annual variability is high, with no records in some years but years but peaks of 89 in 1999 and 75 in 2021, and a mean over the last two decades of around 13 per annum. Large movements are dependent on stormy weather, particularly in the summer months.



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References

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Acknowledgements

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