

# Black-throated Diver

*Gavia arctica*

Category A

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in spring, and occasional winter visitor.

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

Breeds across northern Europe, from Scotland eastwards through Fenno-Scandia eastwards across northern Asia, with a few in Alaska. European birds migrate to winter along the Atlantic and North Sea coasts, south to north-west Spain, and around the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

*Kent status (KOS 2021):*

In Kent it is a scarce but regular passage migrant and winter visitor, rare inland and in summer.



Black-throated Diver at Folkestone Pier (Elliot Ranford)

Charles Gordon recounted how in 1871 “a specimen of the Black-throated Diver was shot by Mr. Frederick Tolputt, of Folkestone, on the 11<sup>th</sup> February. It was observed by that gentleman swimming in front of the harbour, and shortly after secured. It proved to be a female in perfect spring plumage. The bird measured from tip of beak to tail two feet, two and a half inches, and weighed three pounds two ounces. It is to be added to the collection of Mr. V. Knight, of Folkestone” (Gordon, 1871). This clearly formed the basis for its inclusion in his and Tolputt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871). Ticehurst (1909) makes reference to the above record and adds details of a “fine adult male from Hythe, obtained in April 1899, in the Maidstone Museum”.

Roger Norman noted one at Nickolls Quarry on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1958 (Norman 2007) and Dave Musson recorded singles off Hythe and Sandgate in the early part of 1960, but there were no further reports until the 1980s. This was almost certainly due to a lack of coverage as regular seawatching has produced records in all but one year since 1988.

## Overall distribution

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records of Black-throated Diver by tetrad, with records in 10 tetrads (32%).



Figure 1: Distribution of all Black-throated Diver records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Autumn sightings are rare. The earliest involved one seen by David Featherbe off Folkestone Sunny Sands on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014 and there has been just one record in September (one flying west past Samphire Hoe on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2010) and two in October: singles flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006, however early November has produced four: singles flying west past Mill Point on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1989, east past Copt Point on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1996, west past the Dymchurch Redoubt on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2001 and west past Samphire Hoe on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

Winter sightings (noted between mid-November and early March) are slightly more regular, with a total of 39 logged in the 34 years since 1988: an average of 1.1 per year. Almost all records involve single birds, although two flew west past Mill Point on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1989, two were on the sea off Hythe on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016 and two flew west past Folkestone Pier on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

This species is most often encountered on spring passage, when there has been an average of 6.1 per annum over the most recent two decades. Spring migration peaks in late April or early May, as figure 2 demonstrates.

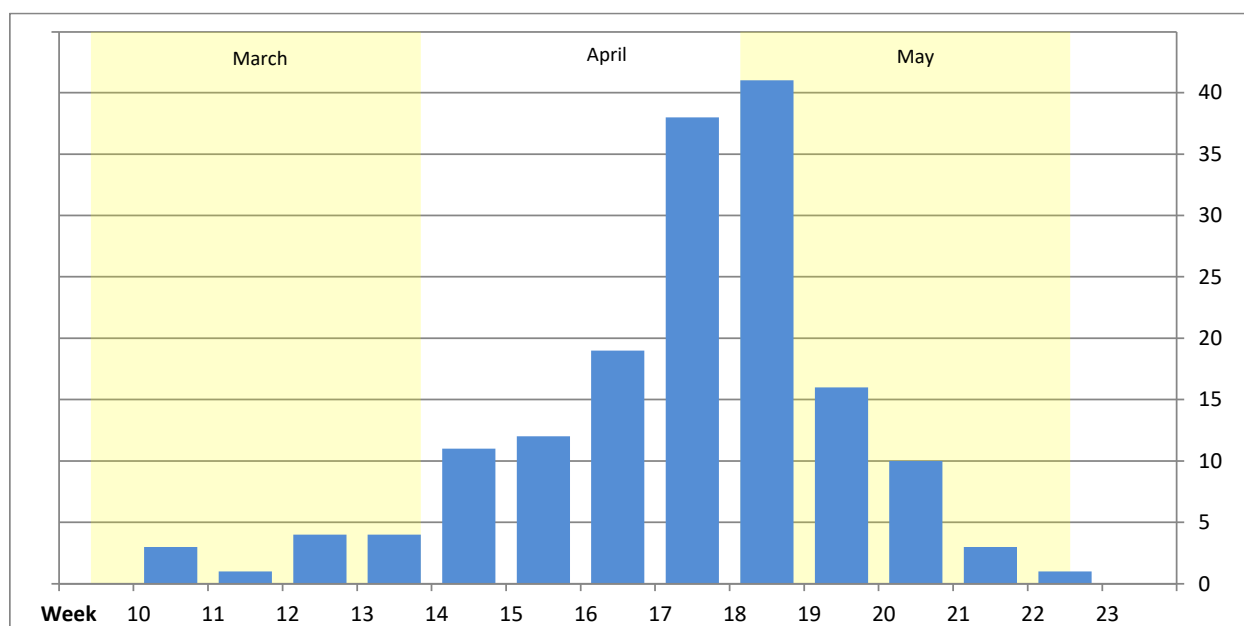


Figure 2: Spring Black-throated Diver numbers at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Most sightings involve ones or twos but larger totals have occurred on several occasions:

- 3 east past Copt Point on the 25<sup>th</sup> Apr 1999
- 4 east past Copt Point on the 29<sup>th</sup> Apr 2001
- 3 east past Copt Point on the 21<sup>st</sup> Apr 2003
- 3 east past Copt Point on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2004
- 4 east past Samphire Hoe on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2005
- 3 east past Copt Point on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2007
- 4 east past Samphire Hoe on the 24<sup>th</sup> Apr 2008
- 3 east past Copt Point on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011
- 3 east past Samphire Hoe on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016
- 3 east past Mill Point on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019

There have only been two records away from the coast, the one at Nickolls Quarry in January 1958 (as mentioned above) and a further single there on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 1995.

## 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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