

Balearic Shearwater

Puffinus mauretanicus

Category A

Rare passage migrant.

47 records,
71 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds only on the Balearic Islands. After breeding it disperses into Mediterranean then through Straits of Gibraltar into the Atlantic. The majority winter in the Bay of Biscay, with some as north as the Irish and North Seas. Most of the population leave the Mediterranean from May, peaking off Gibraltar in late June, and present in English Channel and North Sea mainly July to October (occasionally as early as mid-May or as late as December).

Kent status (KOS 2022):

A scarce but regular summer and autumn visitor to Kent, particularly off Dungeness.

The Balearic Shearwater was formerly considered to be a subspecies of Manx Shearwater until 1991 when, following Bourne *et al.* (1988), the British Ornithologist Union's Records Committee (BOURC) recognised Mediterranean Shearwater as a separate species (comprising two subspecies: Balearic Shearwater and Yelkouan Shearwater). Sangster *et al.* (2002) then recommended that these two subspecies be recognised as full species, which is the current taxonomic treatment, however Obiol *et al.* 2022 have recently proposed that Balearic and Yelkouan Shearwaters should be recombined as a single species.

Ticehurst (1909) noted just one Kent record (found dead inland at Wingham in about 1865), with Taylor *et al.* (1981) noting the second in 1954. However, they reported that since 1960 it had been recorded almost annually in the county until the end of their review period (1972). Following its recognition as a separate species, Hodge (1992) undertook a review of its status in Kent and concluded that it was "recorded in small numbers off the ... coast in most years, particularly in the summer and autumn". He stated that "numbers increased markedly" after 1960, "particularly between 1972 and 1982".

It was not recorded in the Folkestone and Hythe area until 1995 when Dale Gibson saw one flying west past Copt Point on the 5th September but there were five records (comprising a total of seven birds) in 1997 and there have now been 46 sightings over the last 28 years, as demonstrated by figure 1. The years between 1997 and 1999 were a particularly productive spell, contributing a total of 15 records (23 birds).

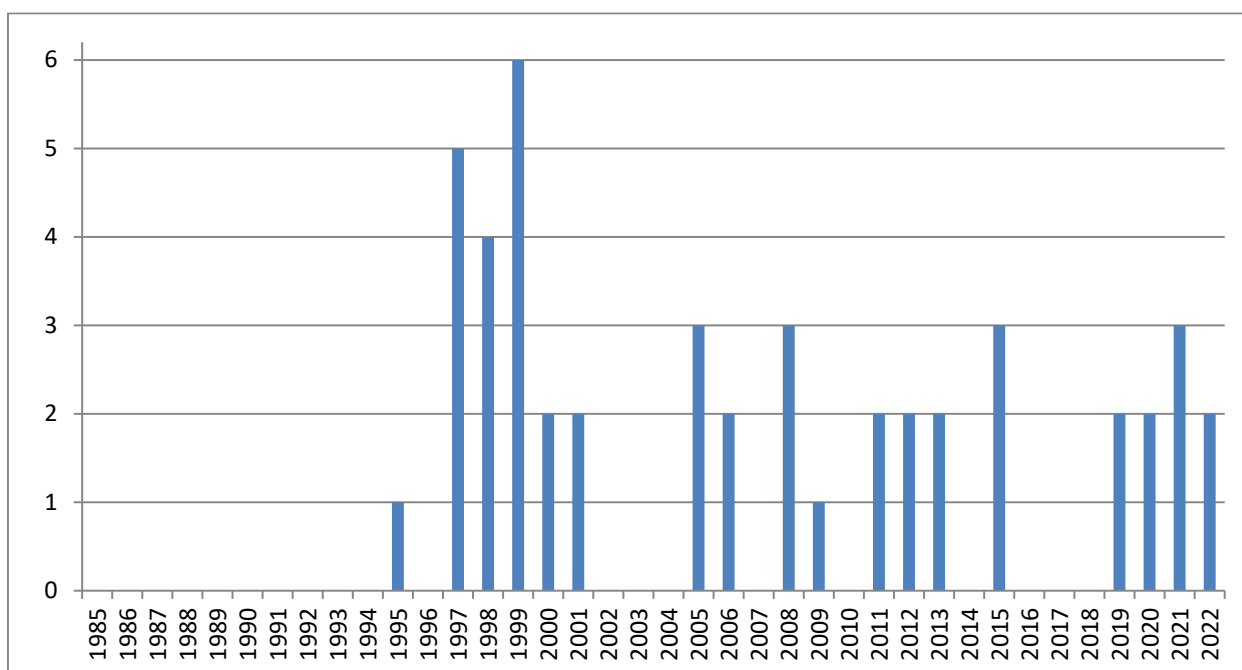


Figure 1: Balearic Shearwater records at Folkestone and Hythe

Most records (34) refer to single birds but the other 13 involve multiple sightings, with a maximum of four on the 18th September 1999 and 18th August 2013. The records by week are given in figure 2.

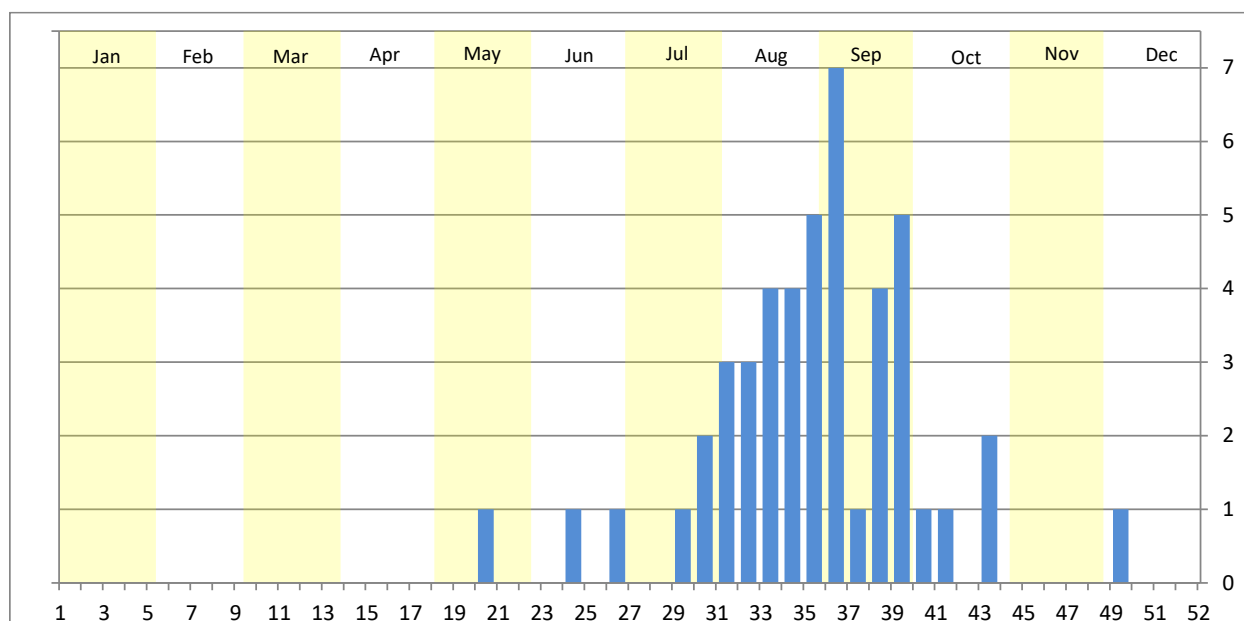


Figure 2: Balearic Shearwater records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The majority of records are from Copt Point (25), with 11 at Samphire Hoe, five in the Hythe Ranges/Dymchurch Redoubt area, three at Hythe, two at Mill Point and one at Sandgate. Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Balearic Shearwater records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1995** Copt Point, one flew west, 5th September (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew east, 29th August (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Copt Point, three flew west, 30th August (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Copt Point, one, 31st August (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew west, 4th September (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew west, 8th October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Copt Point, two flew west, 27th June (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Copt Point, one flew west, 23rd July (I. A. Roberts)

1998 Copt Point, two flew east, 9th September (D. A. Gibson)
1998 Copt Point, one flew west, 24th October (I. A. Roberts)
1999 Copt Point, one flew east, 18th May (D. A. Gibson)
1999 Mill Point, one flew west, 20th July (I. A. Roberts)
1999 Copt Point, one flew west, 14th August (I. A. Roberts)
1999 Copt Point, one flew west, 18th August (D. A. Gibson)
1999 Copt Point, four flew west, 18th September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
1999 Copt Point, two flew east, 20th September (D. A. Gibson)
2000 Copt Point, two flew west, 19th September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
2000 Copt Point, one flew west, 27th September (I. A. Roberts)
2001 Dymchurch Redoubt, one flew east, 6th August (R. K. Norman)
2001 Copt Point, one flew west, 18th August (I. A. Roberts)
2005 Mill Point, one flew west, 15th June (I. A. Roberts)
2005 Copt Point, one flew west, 25th August (I. A. Roberts)
2005 Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 11th September (I. A. Roberts)
2006 Copt Point, one flew west, 31st July (I. A. Roberts)
2006 Copt Point, one flew east then west, 3rd September (I. A. Roberts)
2008 Samphire Hoe, one on sea, 23rd July (I. A. Roberts)
2008 Samphire Hoe, two flew west, 1st August (I. A. Roberts)
2008 Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 3rd August (I. A. Roberts)
2009 Hythe Ranges, one flew west, 6th December (I. A. Roberts)
2011 Hythe Ranges, one offshore, 11th August (S. McMinn)
2011 Copt Point, one flew west, 6th September (I. A. Roberts)
2012 Copt Point, six flew west, 27th August (I. A. Roberts)
2012 Copt Point, two flew east, 23rd September (D. A. Gibson)
2013 Samphire Hoe, four flew west, 18th August (I. A. Roberts)
2013 Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 25th October (I. A. Roberts)
2015 Hythe, two flew west, 25th August (I. A. Roberts)
2015 Hythe, two flew west, 26th August (I. A. Roberts)
2015 Hythe, one flew west, 24th September (I. A. Roberts)
2019 Copt Point, one flew west, 27th September (M. J. Varley)
2019 Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 29th September (S. M. Cutt)
2020 Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 22nd August (S. M. Cutt)
2020 Samphire Hoe, two flew west, 30th August (S. M. Cutt)
2021 Samphire Hoe, three flew west, 11th August (S. M. Cutt)
2021 Dymchurch Redoubt, one flew west, 17th September (I. A. Roberts)
2021 Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 2nd October (I. A. Roberts, M. D. Kennett)
2022 Hythe, one offshore, 7th September (I. A. Roberts)
2022 Sandgate, one flew west, 7th September (C. Powell)

In addition, there is a record of three unidentified shearwaters which flew west past Folkestone Pier on the 19th August 2013 which seems very likely to have related to this species.

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Acknowledgements

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