

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

6 records

Breeds along western and northern coasts in north-west France, mainly western and northern Britain, Ireland, Iceland, Fenno-Scandia, European Russia, Greenland and North America south to Maine. It is strongly dispersive and essentially pelagic outside of the breeding season, and is scarce in the southern North Sea and eastern English Channel (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

Ticehurst (1909) referred to a document dating from 1802 which stated that the Puffin bred “on the stupendous cliffs of Dover”, with several more recent corroborating references, and Harrison (1953) concluded that “it would seem to have become extinct as a Kentish breeding bird some time during the latter half of the nineteenth century”. It is now just a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor in Kent (KOS, 2020).

It was first recorded locally in 1960, when Dave Musson found one dead at Folkestone on the 8th February. The first live record involved one off on the 17th February Copt Point in 1986, before Dale Gibson saw one on the sea just offshore of Folkestone Pier for at least 30 minutes on the 7th August 1995.

There have been three further records: one seen flying east past Copt Point with a small group of Guillemots on the 2nd May 2000, one flying east past Folkestone Harbour on the 19th January 2002 and one flying east past Samphire Hoe on the 22nd April 2019.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

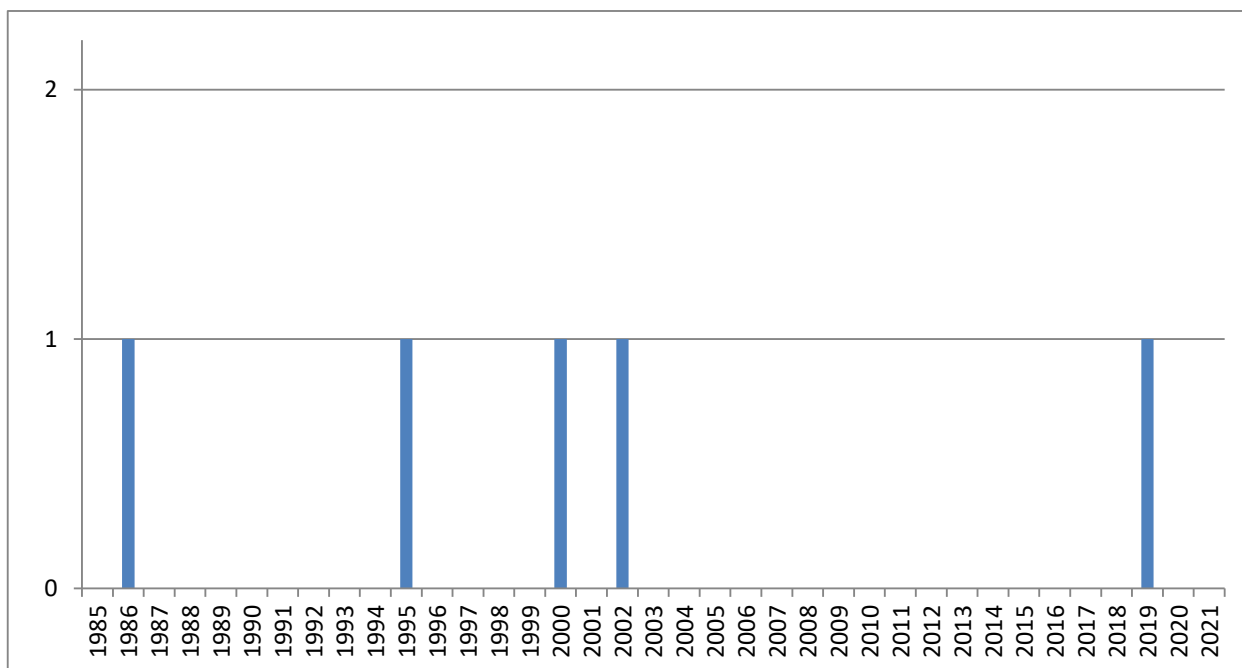


Figure 1: Puffin records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

There have been three winter records (in January/February), two in spring (late April/early May) and one in summer/early autumn (in early August), as demonstrated by figure 2.

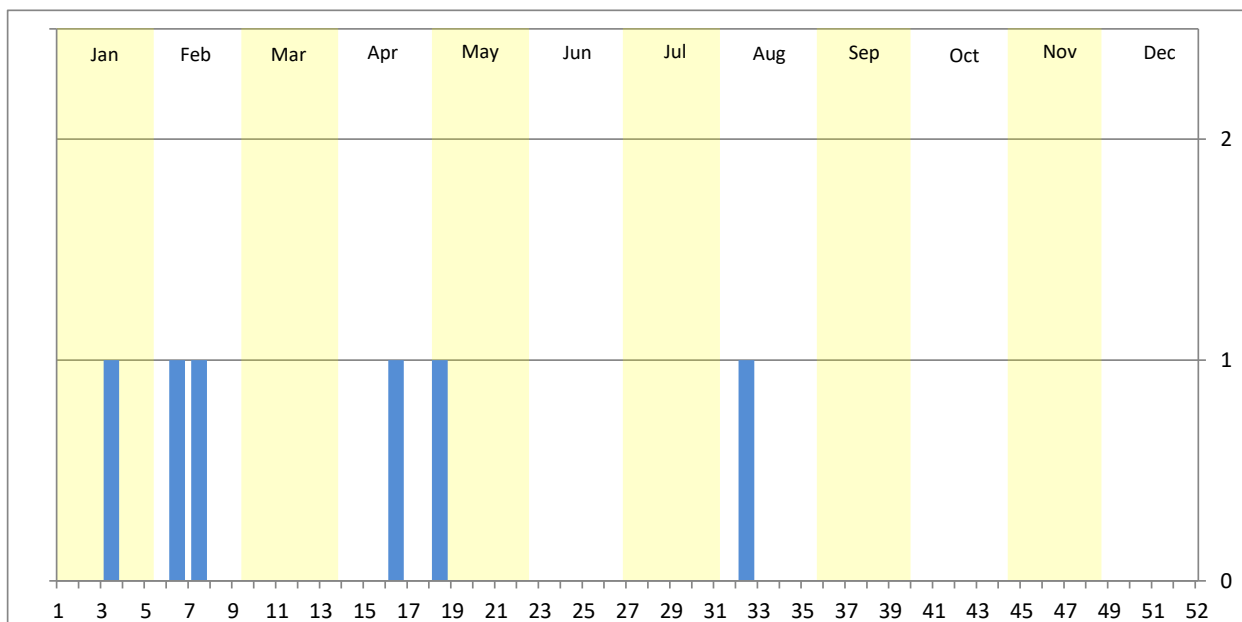


Figure 2: Puffin records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

All records are from the Folkestone/Copt Point area, apart from the most recent at Samphire Hoe. Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1960** Folkestone, one found dead, 8th February (D. F. Musson)
- 1986** Copt Point, one, 17th February (reported)
- 1995** Folkestone Pier, one on the sea, 7th August (D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew east, 2nd May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Folkestone Harbour, one flew east, 19th January (reported)
- 2019** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 22nd April (S. M. Cutt)

References

Harrison, J. M. 1953. *The Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M., 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

Ticehurst, N. F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

Acknowledgements

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