

Gyr Falcon

Falco rusticolus

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

1 record

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds along the extreme northern coasts of Europe, in Iceland, Fenno-Scandia and Russia, eastwards across northern Asia and North America, including coastal Greenland. Migratory only in the highest latitudes, with high arctic Greenland population (mostly of the white type) wintering in the south of the island, some crossing to Iceland and a few also reaching the Faroe Islands, Britain and Ireland, more or less annually.

Kent status (KOS 2021):

Rare vagrant.

British (BBRC) records to end 2020: 378

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 1

It is a rare but regular vagrant to Britain with a recent average of around three sightings per year, with most having occurred in northern and western Scotland (BBRC no date; Holt *et al.* 2021).

There has been one local record, which was also the first to be recorded in Kent (and is still the only occurrence in the county to date), involving a white phase bird seen at the East Cliff, Folkestone by John Hollyer and Pete Laslett on the 28th April 1979.

The record by week is given in figure 1.

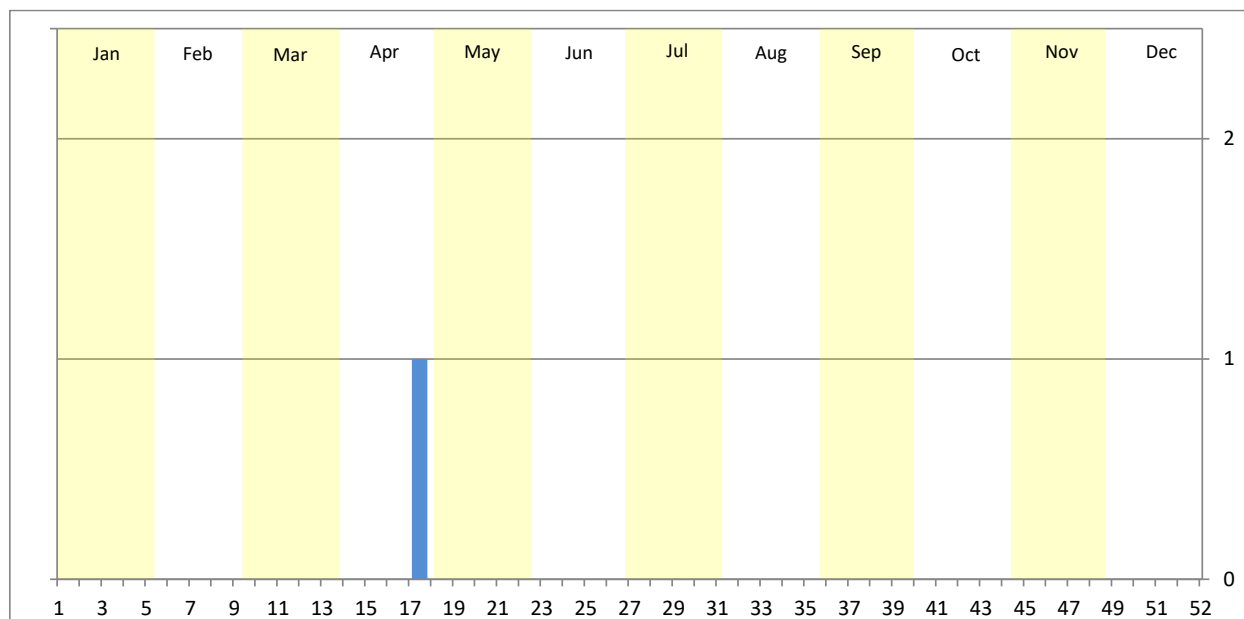


Figure 1: Gyr Falcon records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 2 shows the location of the record by tetrad.



Figure 2: Distribution of all Gyr Falcon records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Confirmation of the only area record is as follows:

1979 East Cliff (Folkestone), white phase, 28th April (J. N. Hollyer, P. R. Laslett).

An account of the first area record is given below, as it appears in the 1979 Kent Bird Report (KOS, 1981).

Gyr Falcon at Folkestone 28th April 1979

The observers were able to watch this bird in flight, at close range, for about ten minutes, and the following points are taken from their field notes: a very pale, large, triangular winged falcon, flying with shallow wing beats like those of a Fulmar. Head snowy white, with no marked moustachial streak, but an eye smudge. Upperparts pale grey, similar to Fulmar. Underparts white, with tiny black dots. Underwing very pale, with fine pale barring and darker primaries. Tail longish, underside appearing grey.

References

- British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). Statistics. www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/statistics (accessed 2021).
- Holt, C., French, P. & the Rarities Committee 2021. Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2020. *British Birds* 114: 570-628.
- Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1981. *Kent Bird Report 1979*. Kent Ornithological Society.
- Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). The Kent List. <https://kentos.org.uk/index.php/recording/the-kent-list> (accessed 2021).
- Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

Acknowledgements

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