

Roseate Tern

Sterna dougallii

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

4 records

In Europe it breeds mainly in Britain, Ireland and north-west France, with occasional pairs nesting in tern colonies in other coastal western European countries. The majority of the western Palearctic population breed in the Azores. Elsewhere it is found in the west Pacific south to Australia, in the Indian Ocean and on the east coast of the Americas from Nova Scotia south to Venezuela. The European population winters exclusively in West Africa (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

The population in Britain and Ireland is small and highly localised, having undergone a decline of 50% over 25 years. Hunting in its wintering grounds is thought to be the key driver of its long-term decline, although at a local scale habitat loss, predation, disturbance and competition for nest sites with gulls are cited as causes of colony contraction and loss. Balmer *et al* (2013) reported that 97% of the British and Irish population now bred at just three colonies, one in Northumberland and two in the east of Ireland, following a 33% contraction between the first (1968-1972) and second (1988-1991) national atlases, and a further 50% by the time of the third (2008-2011).

As Taylor *et al* (1981) noted, the Roseate Tern has frequently been seen in the Dungeness area since historical times, presumably attracted by the concentrations of terns in the area, but was not confirmed to have bred there until 1976, when one pair nested in the Common Tern colony. Henderson & Hodge (1998) reported that it then bred annually there to 1984, with a peak of four pairs in 1981, but has only subsequently bred in 1990, and Kent Bird Reports confirm that it has not nested since. It is now just a rare summer visitor and passage migrant (KOS, 2020).

There have been four Folkestone and Hythe records. The first was seen off Folkestone by Dave Musson on the 20th April 1960, before T. Grant found one in Folkestone Harbour on the 15th July 1966, with another three seen flying south-west past Folkestone on the 17th August 1968. The most recent was seen by Rob Lee at Copt Point on the 27th September 1984.

There have been single records in April, July, August and September, as demonstrated by figure 1.

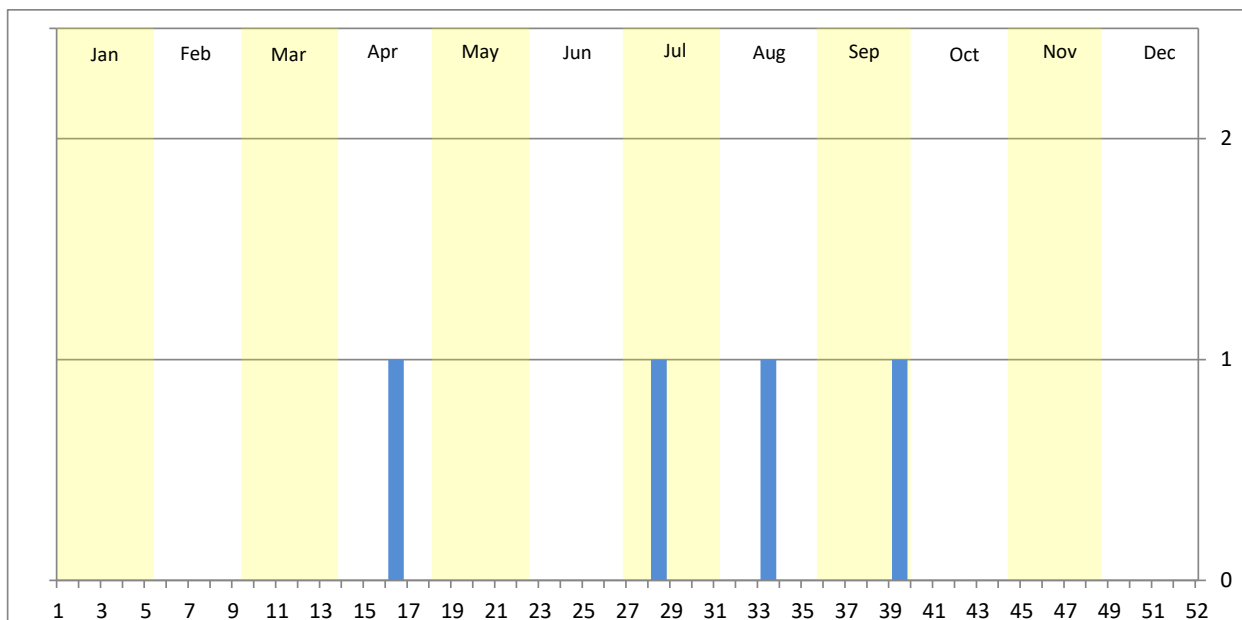


Figure 1: Roseate Tern records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Two records have the location given only as “Folkestone” but figure 2 shows the distribution of the other two records by tetrad.



Figure 2: Distribution of all Roseate Tern records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1960** Folkestone, one, 20th April (D. F. Musson)
- 1966** Folkestone Harbour, one, 15th July (T. Grant)
- 1968** Folkestone, three flew south-west, 17th August (T. Grant)
- 1984** Copt Point, one, 27th September (R. Lee)

References

- Balmer, D., Gillings, S., Caffrey, B., Swann, B., Downie, I & Fuller, R. 2013. *Bird Atlas 2007-11: The Breeding and Wintering Birds of Britain and Ireland*. British Trust for Ornithology
- Henderson, A. & Hodge, T. 1998. The Kent Breeding Bird Atlas 1988-94. *Kent Bird Report* 1996: 134-272.
- Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society
- Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M., 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society

Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).