

Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

Category A

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998; Holling et al. 2019):

Breeds in northern and eastern Europe, eastwards across Asia to the Pacific, and in North America. About 200 pairs are thought to nest in Britain, mostly in Scotland.

Kent status (KOS 2021):

It is a regular passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent.



Goldeneye at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

The Goldeneye was included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871). This list covered an area of six miles radius from Folkestone town hall, therefore extending further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so this does not provide conclusive evidence of its occurrence here, however it seems likely that the record would have been from the coast and so within the modern boundary. Ticehurst (1909) considered it to be "one of the less common of our winter visitors" and "not in my opinion a regular visitor to south Kent, but is only seen in exceptionally hard winters".

The first fully documented local record involved two seen by Roger Norman at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th November 1958 (Norman 2007) and this was quickly followed by one seen by H. Schreiber at Sandling Park in January 1960, but there were no further sightings until 1983 when Paul Howe saw one on the sea off Seabrook on the 13th February. This was however the beginning of a series of annual records until 1998, since when it has become more erratic (although still of fairly regular occurrence, averaging 1.3 records per year), as demonstrated by figure 1. There had been a total of 74 area records (involving a total of 171 birds) to the end of 2022.

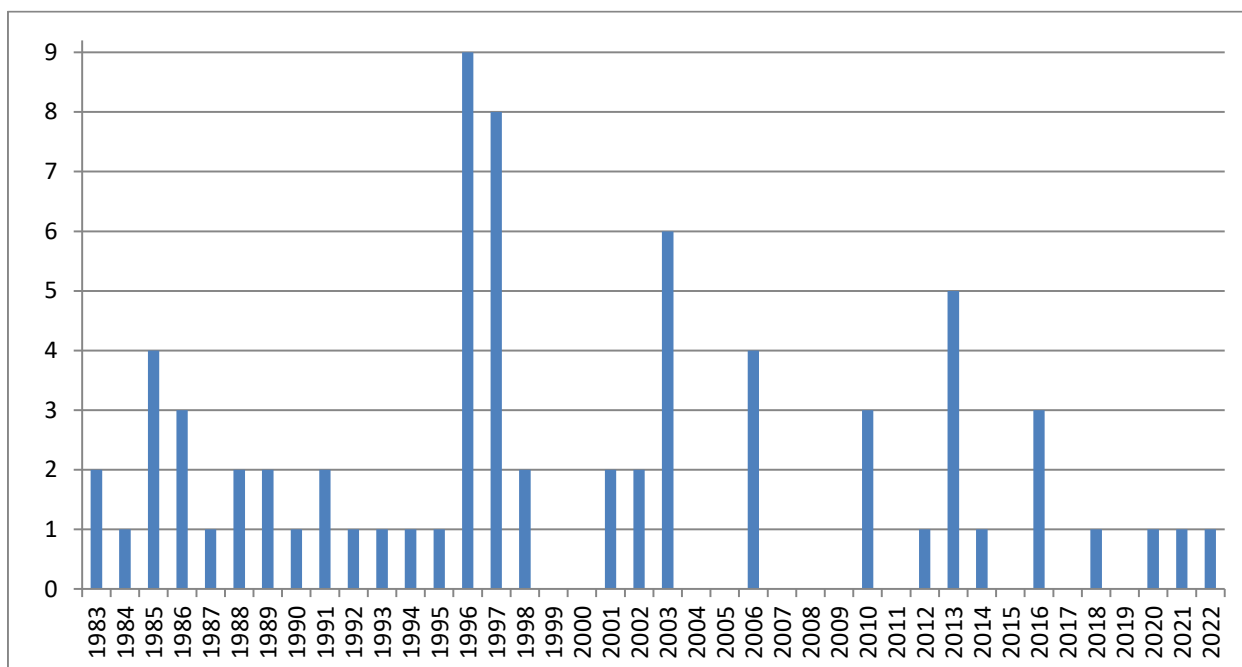


Figure 1: Goldeneye records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The earliest arrival date was the 2nd November (1989 and 2006) and there has been a distinct cluster of arrivals in November and early December, as demonstrated in figure 2, with a six week period (weeks 44 to 49) accounting for just under half (49%) of all records. The peak counts in autumn have been 23 flying west past Copt Point on the 4th November 1986 and eight flying west past Hythe Ranges on the 9th November 1992.

Arrivals can continue throughout the winter and may be associated with the onset of cold weather. The largest count by far involved 34 flying past Copt Point during hard weather on the 10th January 1987, with counts of nine there on the 10th February 1986 and flying across Nickolls Quarry on the 26th December 1996, and five off Sandgate on the 29th December 1996 and 27th February 2006 also worthy of note.

A smaller peak in the first half of March appears to relate to the appearance of spring migrants, with a greater proportion of records from coastal sites at this time. The only records to have occurred later than March involved two flying east past Copt Point on the 3rd April 1988, two on the sea off Seabrook on the 13th April 1983 and a drake flying east past Copt Point on the 4th May 1985.

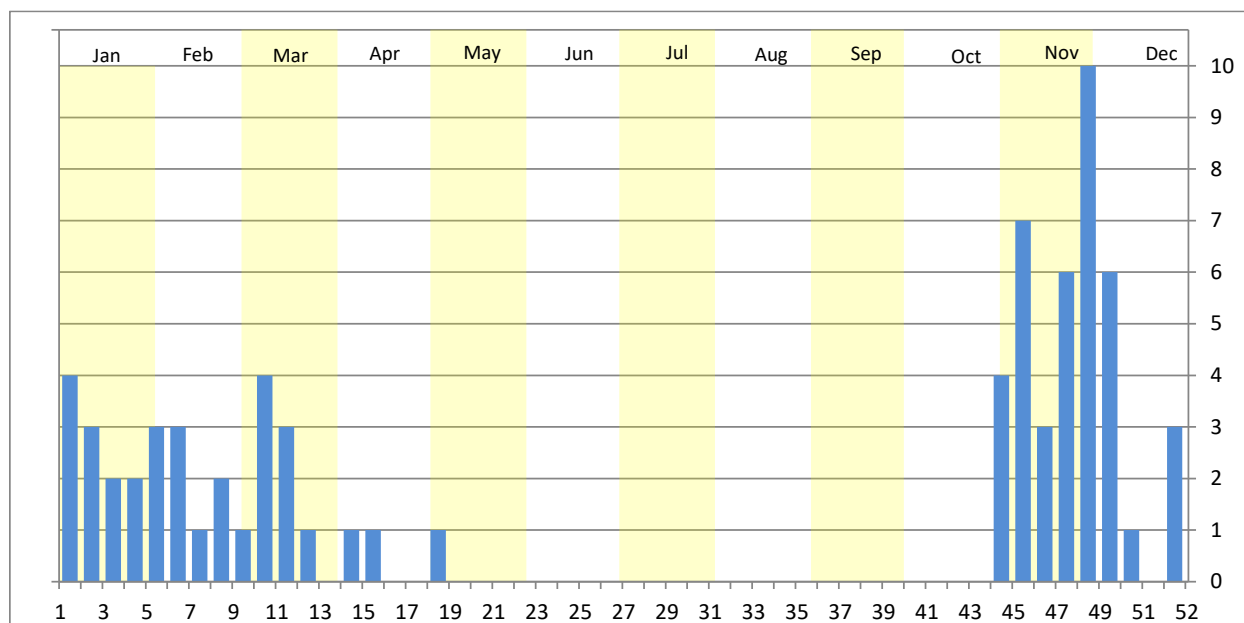


Figure 2: Goldeneye records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Overall distribution

Figure 3 shows the distribution of all records of Goldeneye by tetrad, with records in 13 tetrads (42%).

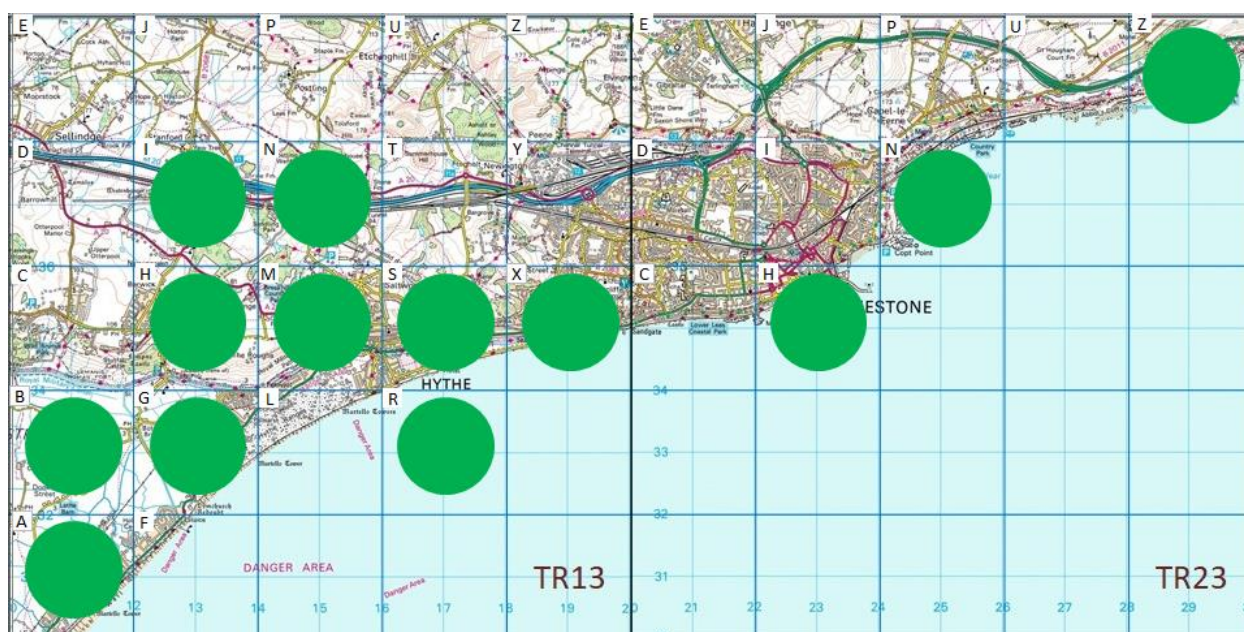


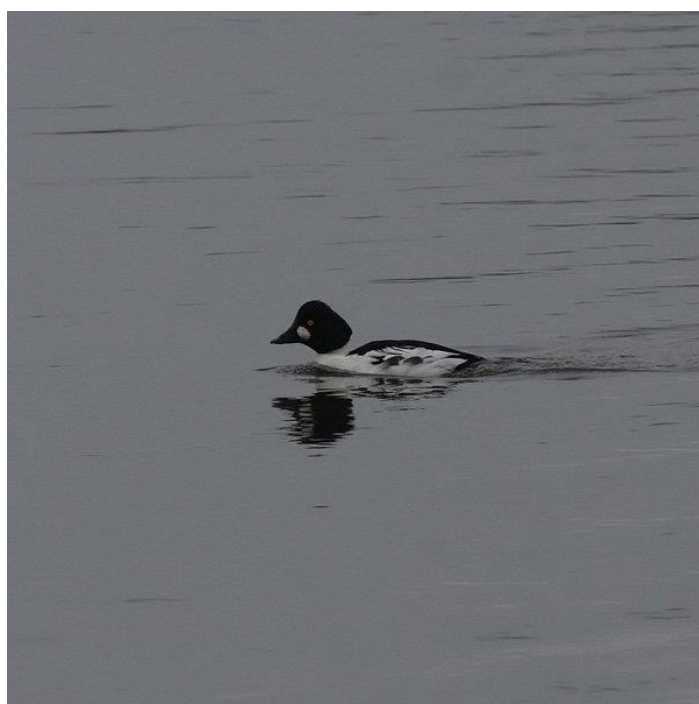
Figure 3: Distribution of all Goldeneye records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The majority of records (47 records, 64%) have been from coastal sites, with a further 18 (24%) at Nickolls Quarry and six records from the Royal Military Canal or canal cutting at Botolph's Bridge. There have also been records from Folkestone Racecourse (Westenhanger) and Sandling Park.

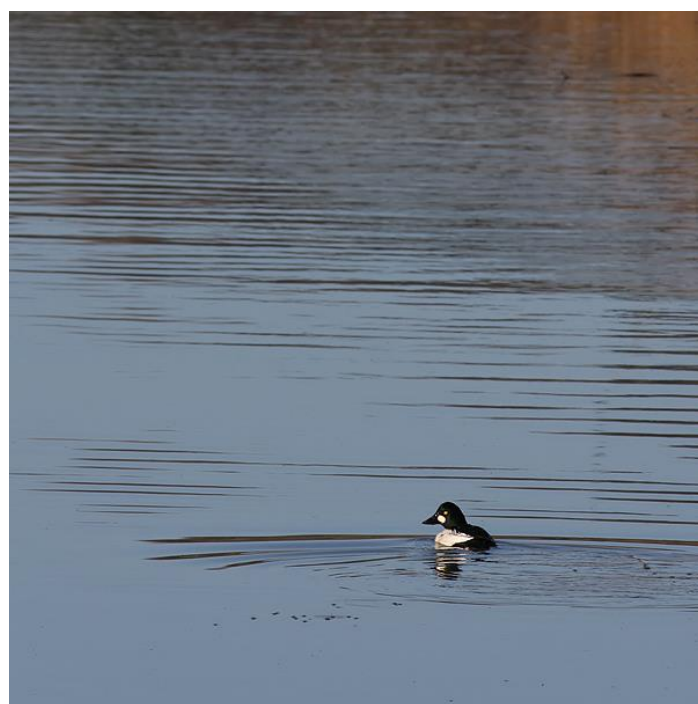
The full list of records is as follows:

- 1958** Nickolls Quarry, two, 30th November (R. K. Norman)
- 1960** Sandling Park, one, date not given (H. Schreiber)
- 1983** Seabrook, one on the sea, 13th February (P. Howe)
- 1983** Seabrook, two on the sea, 13th April (P. Howe)
- 1984** St. Martin's Plain, female, 15th January (P. Howe)
- 1985** Copt Point, female flew east, 18th January (P. Howe)
- 1985** Copt Point, female, 3rd February (P. Howe)
- 1985** Copt Point, female flew east, 25th February (P. Howe)
- 1985** Copt Point, male flew east, 4th May (P. Howe)
- 1986** Copt Point, nine, 10th February (P. Howe)
- 1986** Copt Point, two females, 9th March (P. Howe)
- 1986** Copt Point, 23 flew west, 4th November (P. Howe)
- 1987** Copt Point, 34, 10th January (P. Howe)
- 1988** Copt Point, two flew east, 3rd April (P. Howe)
- 1988** Copt Point, male flew east, 9th December (P. Howe)
- 1989** Mill Point, three flew west, 2nd November (I. A. Roberts)
- 1989** Mill Point, pair flew east, 15th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 1990** Nickolls Quarry, one, 11th November (R. K. Norman)
- 1991** Nickolls Quarry, two to four, from 9th to 18 February (R. K. Norman)
- 1991** Copt Point, one, 20th November (P. Howe)
- 1992** Hythe Ranges, eight flew west, 9th November (R. K. Norman)
- 1993** Nickolls Quarry, immature/female, 1st January (R. K. Norman)
- 1994** Sandgate, pair flew west, 6th November (P. Howe)
- 1995** Nickolls Quarry, male, 24th January (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Seabrook, immature/female, 7th to 27th January (M. Whybrow)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, male, 4th February (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Copt Point, one flew east, 21st February (D. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Folkestone, immature/female, 4th March (P. Howe, R. Thorogood)
- 1996** Sandgate, male flew east, 29th November (P. Howe)
- 1996** Sandgate, female flew west, 30th November (P. Howe)
- 1996** Copt Point, one flew east, 24th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, nine flew over, 26th December (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Sandgate, five flew east, 29th December (P. Howe)
- 1997** Nickolls Quarry, female and immature male, 1st January (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Seabrook, female on the sea, 3rd January (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Hythe Canal, female, adjacent to Hythe Imperial Golf Course, 9th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Seabrook, female on the sea, 14th March (P. Howe)
- 1997** Sandgate, female flew west, 15th March (P. Howe)
- 1997** Hythe Canal (Seabrook), female, 18th March (P. Howe)
- 1997** Copt Point, immature/female flew west, 4th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew east, 14th November (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Nickolls Quarry, male, 1st to 3rd December (R. K. Norman)
- 1998** Mill Point, immature/female flew east and then west, 8th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 2001** Nickolls Quarry, one, 7th to 13th November, with four on 9th and two on 13th November (R. K. Norman)
- 2001** Copt Point, one flew east, 10th November (D. A. Gibson)
- 2002** Copt Point, immature/female flew east, 20th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, male, 9th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, immature/female, 9th January (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, male, 5th February (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Mill Point, immature/female on the sea, 23rd March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Samphire Hoe, male, 24th to 27th November, photographed (P. Holt, I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Nickolls Quarry, one, 7th December (R. K. Norman)
- 2003** West Hythe, male, 9th December (I. A. Roberts), possibly same as above
- 2006** Folkestone Racecourse, Westenhanger, immature/female, 3rd February (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Sandgate, five (four drakes) on the sea, 27th February (I. A. Roberts)

2006 Mill Point, male flew west, 2nd November (I. A. Roberts)
2006 Nickolls Quarry, immature/female, 21st November (I. A. Roberts)
2010 Willop Outfall, immature/female on the sea, 27th November (B. Harper)
2010 Nickolls Quarry, male, 1st December, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
2010 Hythe, immature/female flew west, 2nd December (I. A. Roberts)
2012 Willop Outfall, male on the sea, 8th December (B. Harper, M. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
2013 Samphire Hoe, male flew east, 11th January (G. J. A. Burton)
2013 Willop Outfall, female flew east, 10th March (B. Harper)
2013 Nickolls Quarry, immature/female, 17th November (B. Harper)
2013 Samphire Hoe, male flew west, 20th November (I. A. Roberts)
2013 Samphire Hoe, immature/female flew east, 28th November (I. A. Roberts)
2014 Botolph's Bridge, male, 31st December to at least 16th January 2015 (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts, C. Gillard *et al*)
2016 Mill Point, male flew east then west, 7th November (I. A. Roberts)
2016 Mill Point, immature/female flew east, 8th November (I. A. Roberts)
2016 Nickolls Quarry, male, 2nd December (B. Harper)
2018 Mill Point, immature/female flew east, 20th November (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
2020 Dymchurch Redoubt, male, 27th November (C. Gillard)
2021 Mill Point, immature/female flew east, 29th November (I. A. Roberts)
2022 Botolph's Bridge, immature/female, 22nd January (N. Burt)



Goldeneye at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



Goldeneye at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

References

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Acknowledgements

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Goldeneye at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)