

Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

Category A

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

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 (Holling *et al*, 2019). It is a regular passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent (KOS, 2020).

The species 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 mile radius from Folkestone town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, it is very likely that the record would have been from the coastal area and so within the modern boundary.



Goldeneye at Botolph’s Bridge (Brian Harper)

The first definitive and dated local record however involved two seen by Roger Norman at Nickolls Quarry on the 30th November 1958 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 fairly regular, averaging 1.3 records per year) in its occurrence, as demonstrated by figure 1. There had been a total of 73 area records to the end of November 2021.

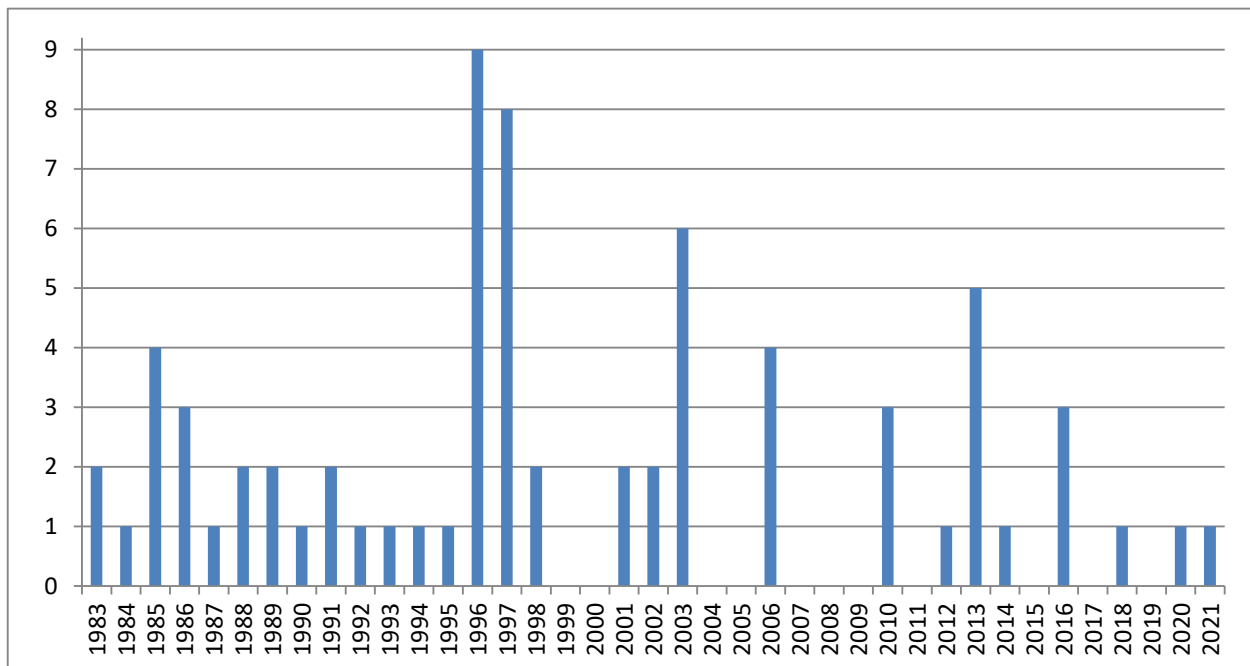


Figure 1: Goldeneye records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

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.

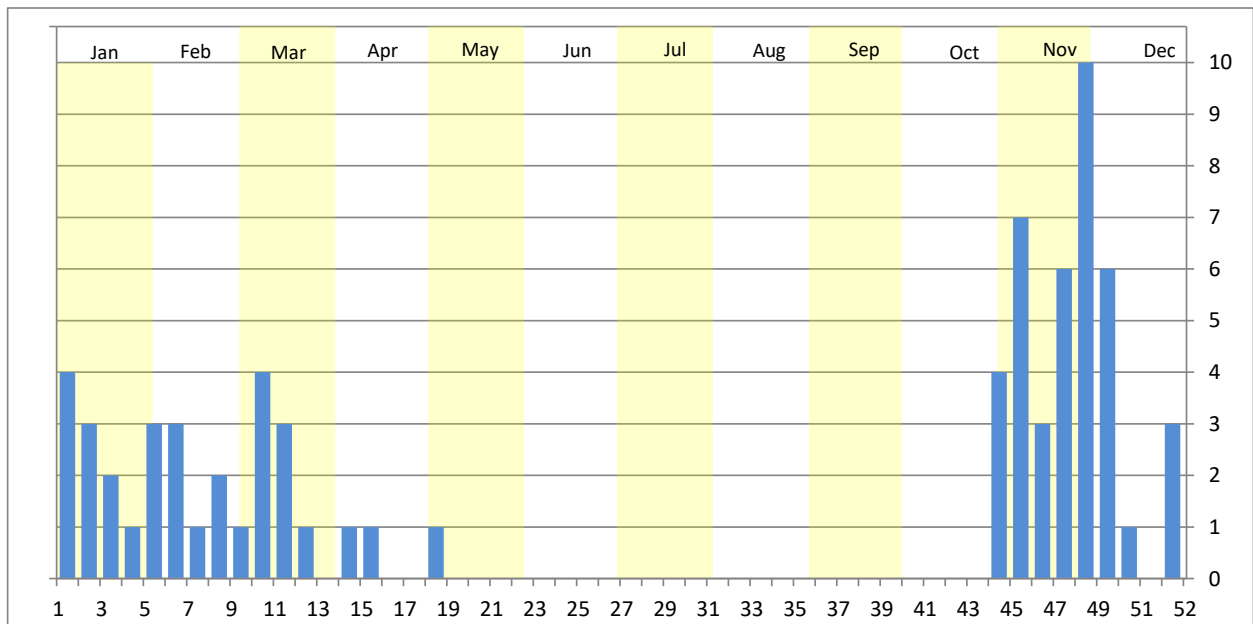


Figure 2: Goldeneye records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

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 (25%) at Nickolls Quarry and five 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.

References

Holling, M. & the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 2019. Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2017. *British Birds*, 112: 706-758

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Knight, V. and Tolputt, F., 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood, *Folkestone Natural History Society Annual Report*, 1871

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



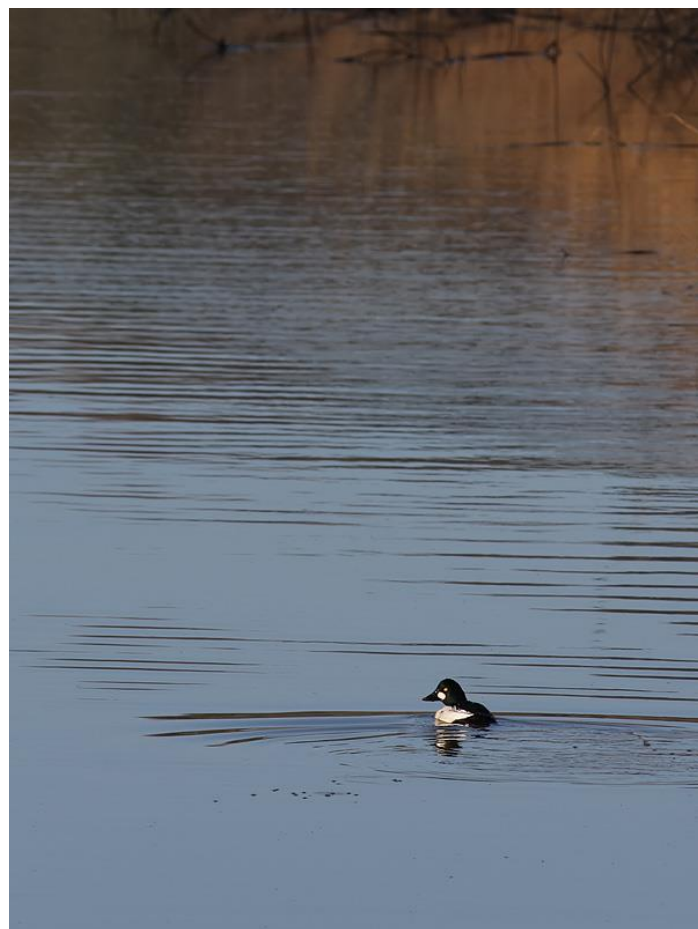
Goldeneye at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)

Acknowledgements

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Goldeneye at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



Goldeneye at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)