

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

Category A

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. 44 records

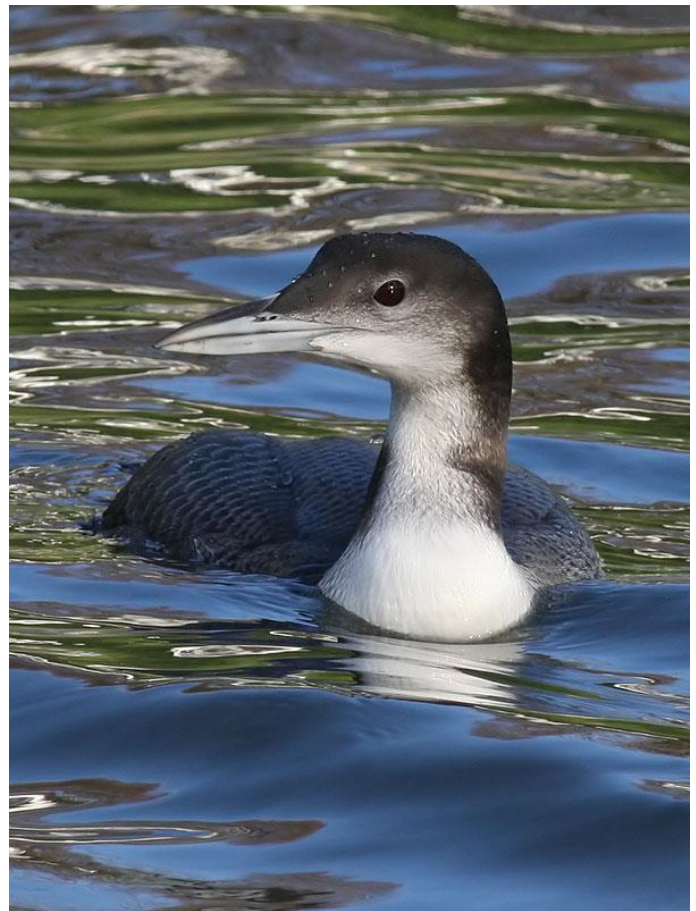
Breeds in Iceland, Greenland and North America, wintering around coasts of western Europe (Snow & Perrins 1998).

It is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to coasts in Kent, rare inland and in summer (KOS 2020).

It was first recorded locally in 1960 when David Musson saw one at Folkestone on the 7th March but there were no further sightings until one at Folkestone on the 21st May 1984 was reported in the Kent Bird Report for that year. Thereafter, Peter Wells recalled seeing one at Nickolls Quarry in winter 1986 or 1987 and Richard Stone saw a summer plumaged bird offshore from Mill Point on the 17th and 21st September 1988.

In 1989 singles were seen off Copt Point on the 3rd January and Mill Point on the 12th February and it has been noted with some regularity since, as figure 1 demonstrates. Overall there have been records in 22 of the 38 years between 1985 and 2022, with a total of 41 sightings across this period.

It remains unpredictable in its appearance though locally with three records in four years, and a peak of four in 2021, but none in others.



Great Northern Diver at Hythe (Brian Harper)

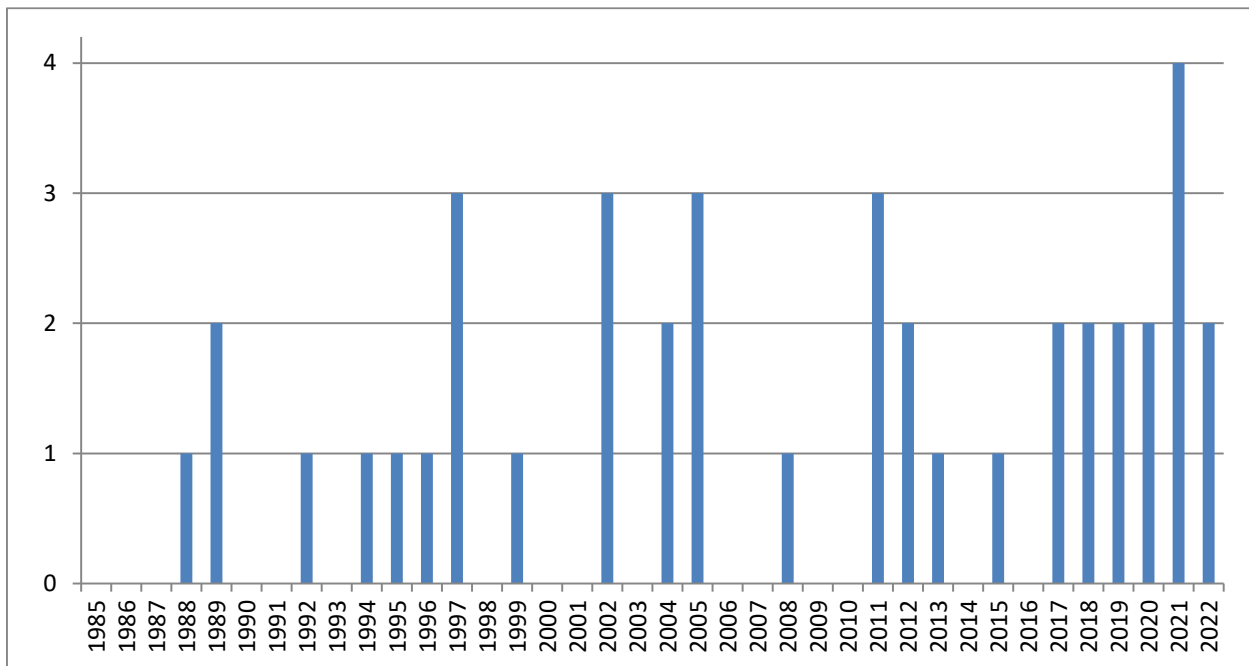


Figure 1: Great Northern Diver records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

A particularly early bird was seen off Mill Point from the 17th September 1988 and an autumn migrant flew west past Copt Point on the 27th October 1997. The other records are split between winter occurrences from 14th November to 7th March, and spring migrants, which have been noted from the 31st March to the 21st May (weeks 13 to 21), as shown in figure 2.

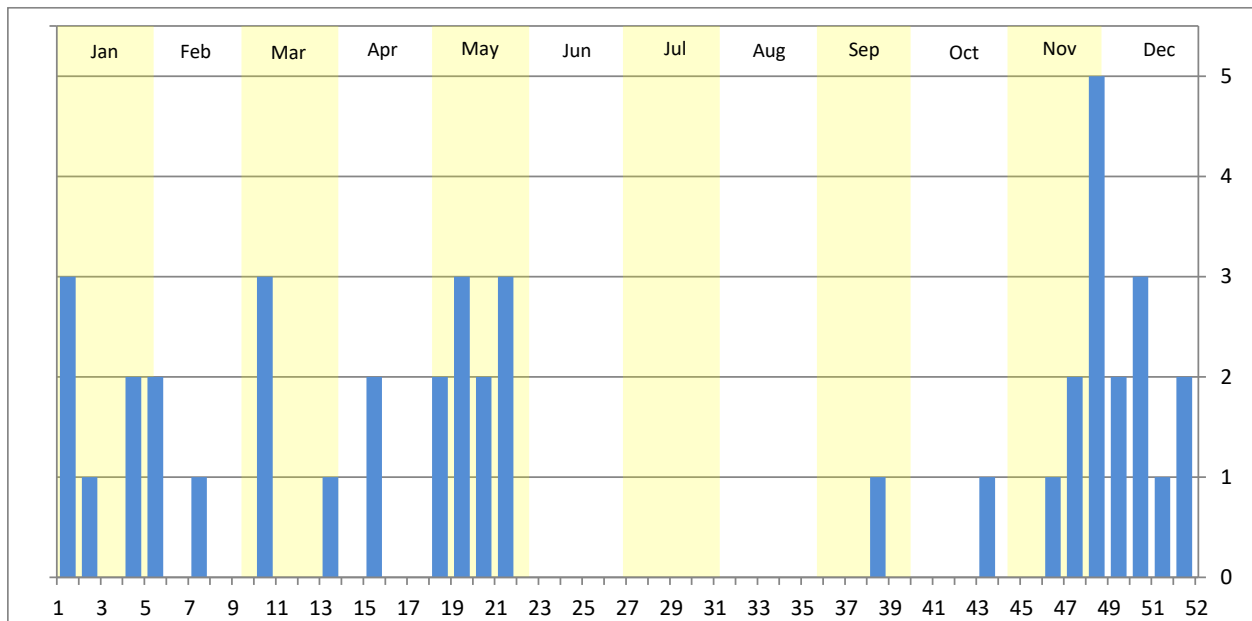


Figure 2: Great Northern Diver records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad. The majority of records have been from the Folkestone area (with 9 at Copt Point/Folkestone Warren, 9 at Mill Point and two early records “at Folkestone”, where the site was unspecified), Samphire Hoe (10) and Sandgate (7), with three seen from Princes Parade, singles off the Willop Outfall, Dymchurch Redoubt and Hythe Ranges and inland records from Nickolls Quarry (2) and a particularly approachable individual which ranged widely along the canal between Hythe and Seabrook in December 2011.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Great Northern Diver records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1960** Folkestone, one, 7th March (D. F. Musson)
- 1984** Folkestone, one, 21st May (per Kent Bird Report)
- c.1986** Nickolls Quarry, one in winter 1986 or 1987 (P. Wells)
- 1988** Mill Point, one in summer plumage, 17th and 21st September (R. C. Stone)
- 1989** Copt Point, one, 3rd January (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1989** Mill Point, one flew west, 12th February (I. A. Roberts)
- 1992** Nickolls Quarry, one in the west pool, 26th December (S. Hollands)

- 1994** Copt Point, one flew east, 21st May (D. A. Gibson)
- 1995** Sandgate, one, 17th December (D. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Sandgate, one, 13th December (P. Howe, H. G. Brown, R. Thorogood)
- 1997** Sandgate, two flew east, 22nd January (P. Howe)
- 1997** Sandgate, one flew east, 29th January (P. Howe)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew west, 27th October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1999** Hythe Redoubt, one on the sea then flew west, 6th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Copt Point, one flew west, 1st May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Copt Point, one flew west, 14th May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Copt Point, one flew east, 28th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Sandgate, one offshore, 26th January (I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Copt Point, two flew east, 21st May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Samphire Hoe, one, 30th January (Reported)
- 2005** Copt Point, one flew east, 12th May (D. A. Gibson), also past Samphire Hoe (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Mill Point, one offshore, 27th November, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 9th May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Copt Point, one flew east, 1st May (D. A. Gibson), also past Samphire Hoe (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Hythe Canal, juvenile ranging between Hythe and Seabrook, 6th to 11th December, photographed (M. Marsh, I. A. Roberts, B. Harper *et al*)
- 2011** Samphire Hoe, one, 7th December (D. E. Smith)
- 2012** Folkestone Beach, one flew east, 29th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Folkestone Warren, one feeding close inshore, 1st December (P. Chantler), possibly same as above
- 2013** Samphire Hoe, one, 19th to 20th November (P. R. Smith, M. D. Kennett)
- 2015** Mill Point, two flew east, 14th May (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper)
- 2017** Princes Parade, one on the sea, 14th November (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
- 2017** Princes Parade, one on the sea, 2nd December, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Between Sandgate and Seabrook, one on the sea, 9th April (N. C. Frampton)
- 2018** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 15th April (S. Cutt)
- 2019** Mill Point, one on the sea, 3rd January, photographed (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper, D. Brown)
- 2019** Sandgate/Seabrook, one on the sea, 5th January to 1st February, photographed (P. Howe, I. A. Roberts, N. C. Frampton *et al*), considered to be same as above
- 2019** Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 10th March (S. Cutt)
- 2020** Samphire Hoe, two flew west, 12th December (S. Cutt)
- 2020** Sandgate, one, 31st December to 5th March 2021, increasing to two (presumably having been joined by the individual first seen at Hythe Ranges) from 3rd to 8th January (B. Harper *et al*)
- 2021** Hythe Ranges, one, 2nd January (S. McMinn), presumed same as above
- 2021** Willop Outfall, one, 31st March (B. Harper)
- 2021** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 9th May (I. A. Roberts, M. Collins, B. Woolhouse)
- 2021** Samphire Hoe, one on the sea, 14th December (P. Smith)
- 2022** Seabrook, one flew east, 10th January (P. Howe)
- 2022** Princes Parade, one flew west, 21st November (I. A. Roberts)



Great Northern Diver at Mill Point (Ian Roberts)



Great Northern Diver at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

References

Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2021. Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society.

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

Acknowledgements

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Great Northern Diver at Sandgate (Ian Roberts)



Great Northern Diver at Hythe (Brian Harper)



Great Northern Diver at Hythe (Mark Tomlins)