

# Sooty Shearwater

*Ardenna grisea*

Category A

Scarce passage migrant

51 records

Breeds in the sub-Antarctic, with most migrating rapidly across equatorial seas to winter in the temperate zones of the North Atlantic and North Pacific. Northward movements begin in late March but are mostly in April to May, when it travels up the western North Atlantic into North American waters, where most are still concentrated in June; begins spreading across the temperate North Atlantic in July, becoming widespread off north-west European coasts in August to October, with stragglers remaining into late November/early December (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

A scarce but regular autumn migrant to Kent (KOS, 2020).

The first area record is given in *The Birds of Kent* by Harrison (1953) and was seen by the author: “whilst approaching Folkestone, and perhaps four or five miles offshore, on August 26th, 1948, I observed a single Sooty Shearwater flying south-west down the Channel”. After a gap of over 25 years, the next sighting involved one seen off Hythe in 1979. However, following the third record in 1988, the species has since been recorded with some regularity, being noted in 18 of the last 27 years, as demonstrated by figure 1. The best year to date was 2000, with six records involving a total of 25 birds, including a count of 8 on the 28th September and a flock of five together on the 2nd November. The highest count to date (11) was recorded at Hythe in 2014. Records are generally associated with strong onshore winds.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

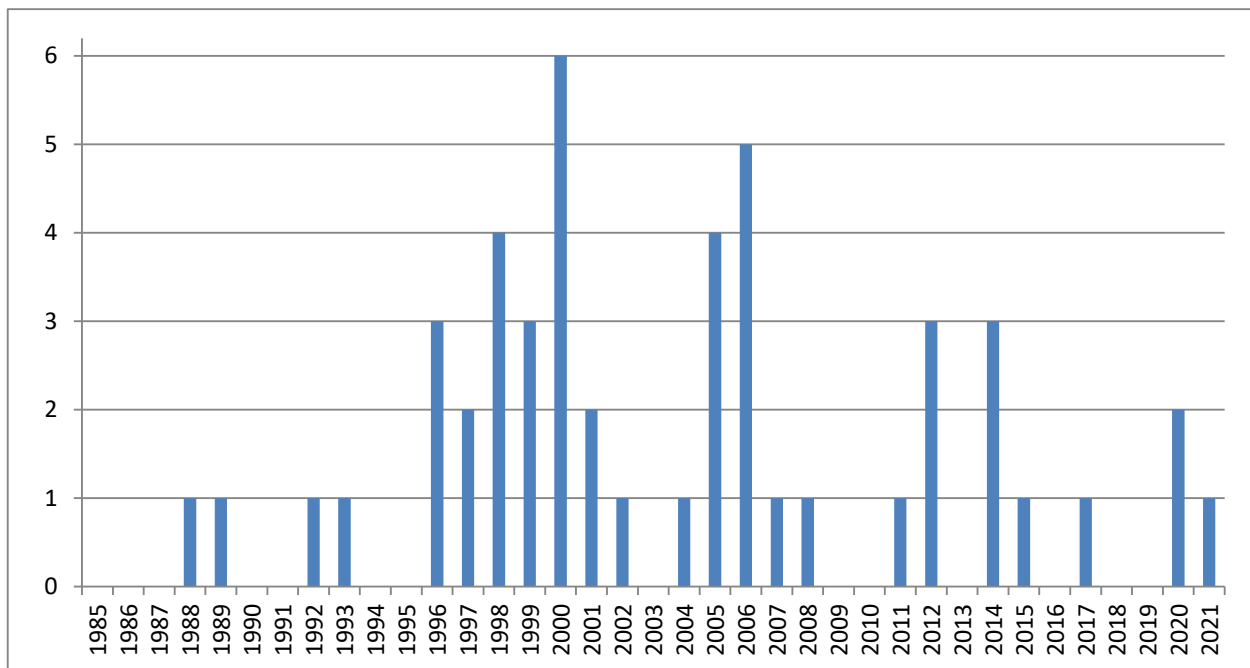


Figure 1: Sooty Shearwater records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Apart from particularly early and late birds on 27th July (1993), 1<sup>st</sup> August (2008) and 7th December (1997), all have been recorded between 18th August (week 33) and 11th November (week 46), with a peak in late September/early October. The records by week are given in figure 2.

The records by week are given in figure 2 and figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.

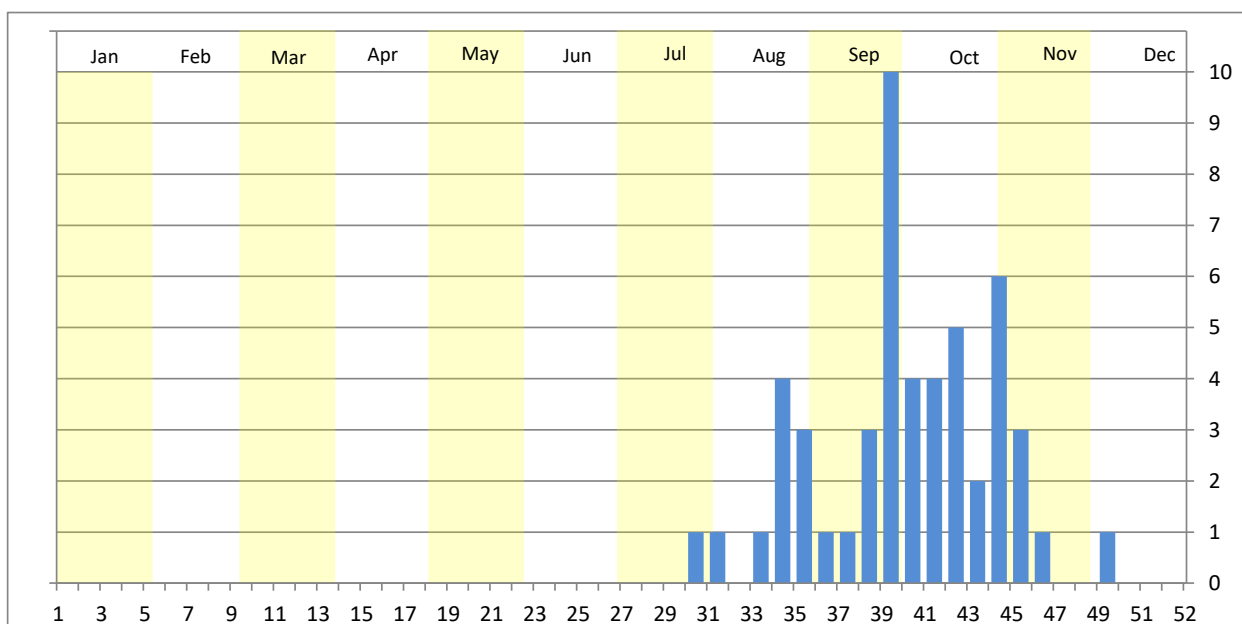


Figure 2: Sooty Shearwater records at Folkestone and Hythe by week



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

The vast majority of records are from the Copt Point/Folkestone Pier/Mill Point area (37), with six at Samphire Hoe, five at Hythe and one at the Willop Basin. The first area record was only given as “Folkestone”.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1948** At sea, one flew west 4-5 miles off Folkestone, 26<sup>th</sup> August (per Harrison, 1953)
- 1979** Hythe, one, 18<sup>th</sup> August (Dungeness Bird Observatory)
- 1988** Mill Point, one flew west, 1<sup>st</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)
- 1989** Folkestone Pier, one flew west, 28<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1992** Copt Point, two flew west, 24<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson)
- 1993** Folkestone Pier, one on sea, 27<sup>th</sup> July (D. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Copt Point, two flew west, 23<sup>rd</sup> August (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Copt Point, one flew west, 18<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Copt Point, one flew east, 10<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew west, 21<sup>st</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)

1997 Copt Point, one flew west, 7<sup>th</sup> December (D. A. Gibson)  
1998 Copt Point, two flew west, 10<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
1998 Copt Point, one flew east, 30<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
1998 Copt Point, one flew west, 14<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
1998 Copt Point, one flew east, 21<sup>st</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
1999 Copt Point, one flew east, 22<sup>nd</sup> August (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
1999 Copt Point, one flew west, 18<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
1999 Copt Point, two flew west, 20<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson)  
2000 Copt Point, eight flew west, 28<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
2000 Copt Point, six flew west, 29<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
2000 Copt Point, four flew west, 12<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
2000 Copt Point, one flew west, 28<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2000 Copt Point, flock of five flew west, 2<sup>nd</sup> November (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
2000 Copt Point, one flew west, 11<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)  
2001 Copt Point, one flew east, 5<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2001 Copt Point, four flew west, 7<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2002 Copt Point, four (two east, two west), 2<sup>nd</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
2004 Copt Point, one flew west, 18<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
2005 Copt Point, one flew west, 21<sup>st</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2005 Mill Point, one, 24<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2005 Copt Point, one flew west, 3<sup>rd</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)  
2005 Copt Point, three, 8<sup>th</sup> November (D. A. Gibson)  
2006 Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 7<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
2006 Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 24<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
2006 Copt Point, one, 24<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson), considered different to bird seen at Samphire Hoe  
2006 Copt Point, one flew west, 30<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
2006 Copt Point, two flew west, 1<sup>st</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2007 Copt Point, three flew west, 24<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
2008 Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 1<sup>st</sup> August (per D. E. Smith)  
2011 Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 9<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2012 Copt Point, one flew west, 23<sup>rd</sup> September (D. A. Gibson)  
2012 Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 25<sup>th</sup> September (per D. E. Smith)  
2012 Folkestone Beach, one flew east, 4<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)  
2014 Hythe, 11 flew west, 8<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2014 Hythe, one flew west, 18<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2014 Hythe, two flew west, 2<sup>nd</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)  
2015 Copt Point, two, 26<sup>th</sup> August (D. A. Gibson)  
2017 Mill Point, one flew east, 31<sup>st</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2020 Willop Outfall, two flew west, 25<sup>th</sup> August (B. Harper)  
2020 Mill Point, one flew west, 31<sup>st</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
2021 Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 2<sup>nd</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)

## References

Harrison, J. M. 1953. *The Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

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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