

# White Stork

*Ciconia Ciconia*

Category A, E

Very rare vagrant.

15 records,  
16 birds

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998, White Stork Project no date):*

Breeds on the continent from Spain, through France, into Germany and beyond into eastern Europe and Russia. Some winter in the southern part of the breeding range but the majority migrate to tropical Africa, Iran or the Indian sub-continent. There has been a significant decrease in the north and west of the European range which has been offset to some extent by introduction schemes, including at Knepp Wildland in Sussex where a pair bred successfully for the first time in 2020.



White Stork at Folkestone (Dale Gibson)

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

It is a scarce migrant in the county. The Kent Bird Report for 2017 gave a total of 119 records to the end of that year but subsequent reports have found it “increasingly difficult to distinguish between wild birds and reintroduced birds”, either from programmes in the UK and Europe, and noted that sightings of captive bred birds have been increasing.

It was first recorded locally in 1993, with a further 13 records (excluding birds thought to have been captive bred) since as shown in figure 1. Three years have produced multiple sightings: 2001, 2003 and 2019.

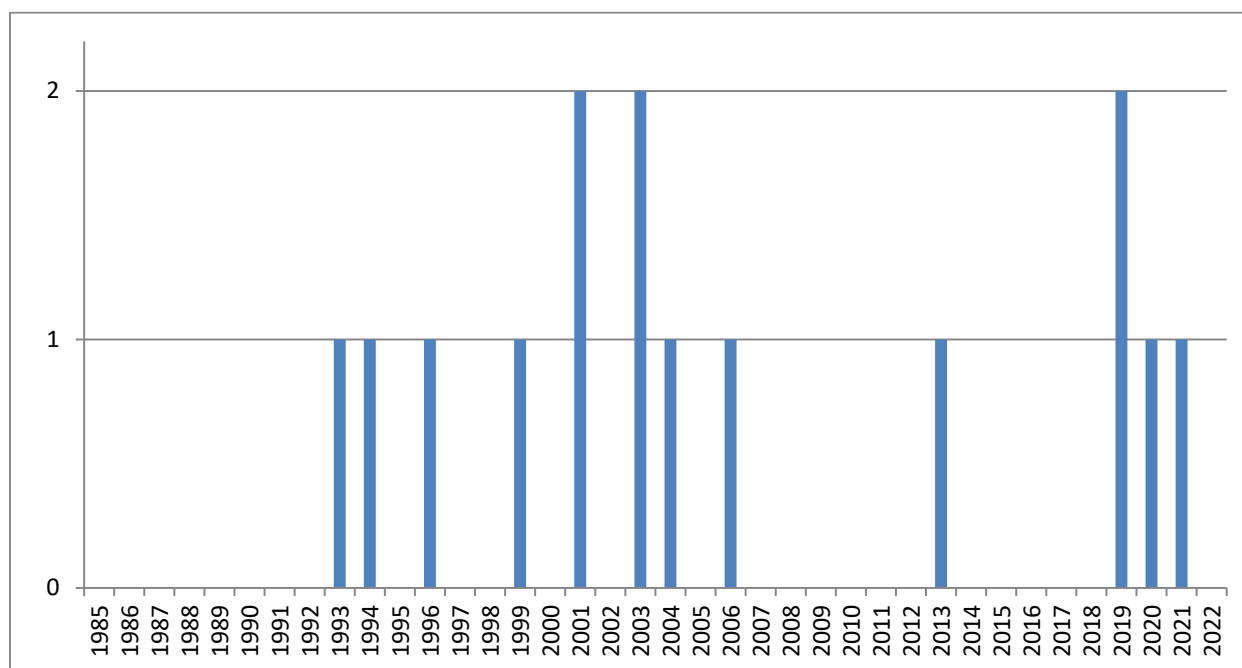


Figure 1: White Stork records at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are given in figure 2 and figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad. Birds have been recorded between the 24<sup>th</sup> March and the 30<sup>th</sup> September with sightings in all months except May. There are slight peaks in late March/April (when six records have occurred) and in late August/September (when five have occurred).

Six records relate to birds seen flying over Cheriton/Folkestone, with the others relating to single sightings at Abbotscliffe, Capel-le-Ferne, Folkestone Warren, Horn Street, the Hougham Valley, Hythe, Lympne and Samphire Hoe, whilst two reported “on the beach between Hythe and Dymchurch” are not shown on the map due to insufficient detail.

Escaped or introduced birds have been occurring with increasing frequency in Kent and the origin of some birds is difficult to determine. The majority of Folkestone and Hythe records have occurred in the migration seasons of spring and autumn, with two birds having been seen arriving in off the sea. The record from July 2001 has perhaps the worst credentials for consideration as a wild bird, being seen in summer, and at a time when a bird known to be an escape was wandering fairly widely in south and east Kent. However even this might have been a genuine vagrant encouraged across the Channel by the warm weather prevalent at the time. The bird seen in 1996 had a damaged wing and was considered by some to have been of captive origin.

In 2021 a flock of 45 flew over West Hythe in the afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> September and later roosted at Etchinghill, departing to the north-east early the next morning whilst in 2022 a flock of 22 were seen passing west over Samphire Hoe, Castle Hill, Cheriton and Sandgate on the 16<sup>th</sup> August. Both of these flocks were considered to have certainly originated from the introduction program at Knepp Wildland in Sussex and are not included in the statistics.

The records by week are given in figure 2.

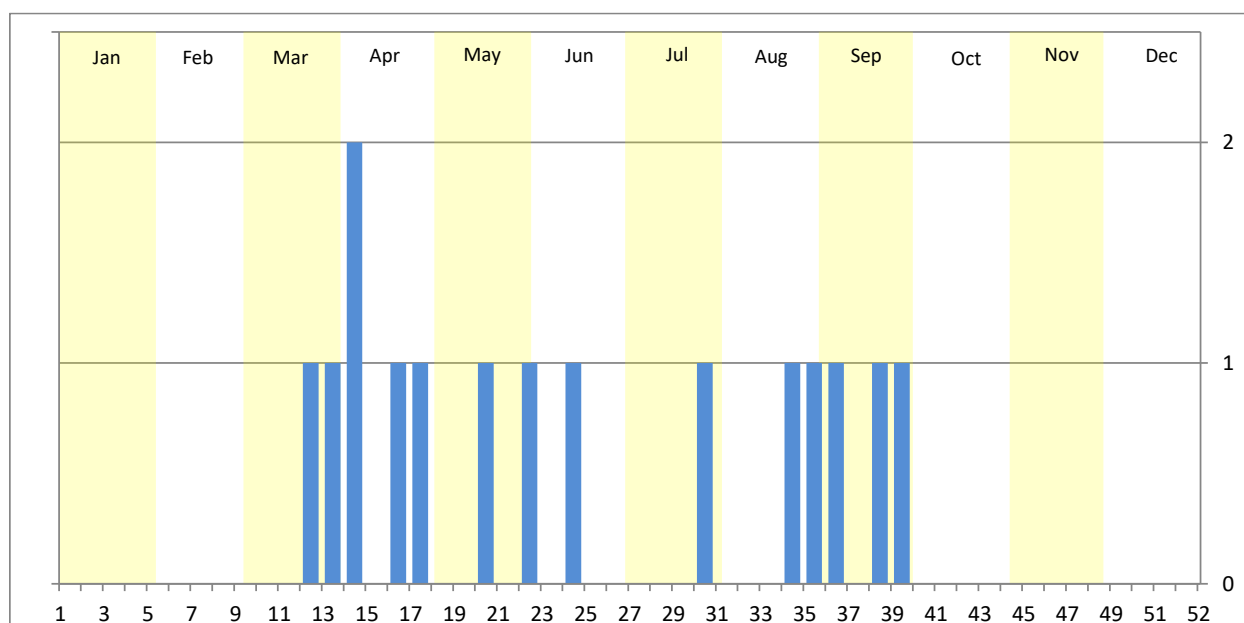


Figure 2: White Stork records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1993** Cheriton, one flew north-west, 1<sup>st</sup> June (D. A. Gibson)  
**1994** Capel-le-Ferne, one flew in off the sea then north-east, 21<sup>st</sup> August (D. A. Gibson)  
**1996** Folkestone, one flew south-west, 21<sup>st</sup> April (D. A. Gibson)  
**1999** Cheriton, one flew west, 30<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson), also reported over Dymchurch Redoubt later that day.  
It had earlier been seen flying in off the sea at Dover, and was later seen in the Dungeness/Lydd area  
**2001** Horn Street, one flew east, 11<sup>th</sup> June (P. Howe)  
**2001** Folkestone, one, around 26<sup>th</sup> July (D. A. Gibson), of unknown origin (as described above)  
**2003** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 31<sup>st</sup> August (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
**2003** Hythe, one flew west, 6<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
**2004** Hougham Valley, one flew east, 13<sup>th</sup> May (M. D. Kennett)  
**2006** Folkestone, one circled for 45 minutes, then flew north-west, 1<sup>st</sup> April, photographed (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
**2013** Folkestone, one, 6<sup>th</sup> April, photographed (D. A. Gibson)  
**2019** Folkestone Warren, one flew in off the sea, 24<sup>th</sup> March (I. & S. Smith)  
**2019** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 8<sup>th</sup> April, photographed (S. Wright)  
**2020** Lympne, one flew north-east, 26<sup>th</sup> April (per RBA)  
**2021** Between Hythe and Dymchurch, two on the beach then flew west, 20<sup>th</sup> September (per Rare Bird Alert)



White Stork at Samphire Hoe (Shelagh Wright)

## References

- Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2022. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.
- Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.
- White Stork Project. [www.whitestorkproject.org](http://www.whitestorkproject.org) (accessed 2021)

## ***Acknowledgements***

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

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White Storks of captive origin at Etchinghill (Ruth McCabe)



White Storks of captive origin at Sandgate (Chris Powell)