

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritus

Category A

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. 50 records, 68 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998; Holling et al. 2019; Eaton et al. 2021):

Breeds in Iceland, Scotland, Fenno-Scandia and Russia eastwards across Siberia to the Pacific, also in North America from Alaska to the Great Lakes. European breeders winter around coasts of western Europe, but also on large inland lakes. The Scottish population is in steep decline (a 61% decrease over the last 25 years) and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel report for 2017 reported fewer than 20 confirmed breeding pairs for the first time since the inception in 1973, whilst it has been almost completely lost from its previously fragmented range in central Europe and the Baltic States, with population declines reported in Fenno-Scandia and a decline of 76% over 40 years in the North America.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to the county.

Ticehurst (1909) regarded the Slavonian Grebe as a regular autumn and winter visitor to the county but cited no local occurrences and it was not included in Knight & Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871). Harrison (1953) was in "no doubt that this grebe ... is the most abundant" of the scarce grebes and provided the first area record, recounting how in 1939 Miss Alice Stone saw one at sea off Folkestone by on the 16th February.

Taylor *et al.* (1981) also considered it to be the "most frequently encountered" of the scarce grebes and it was during their review period (1952-76) that the next two local records occurred, with John Hollyer noting one off Folkestone on the 19th February 1954 and Roger Norman seeing one that "was rapidly achieving breeding plumage" at Nickolls Quarry between the 13th and 20th April 1958 (Norman 2007).

Henderson (2021) described how occurrences in the county increased significantly shortly after the review period of Taylor *et al.*, with the 1978/79 winter producing an exceptional total over 80 records, which included one seen by Dave Weaver at Nickolls Quarry on the 10th March 1979. As figure 1 demonstrates, Kent enjoyed relatively high annual numbers during the 1980s and 1990s and this period produced 29 local records, involving a total of 37 birds.

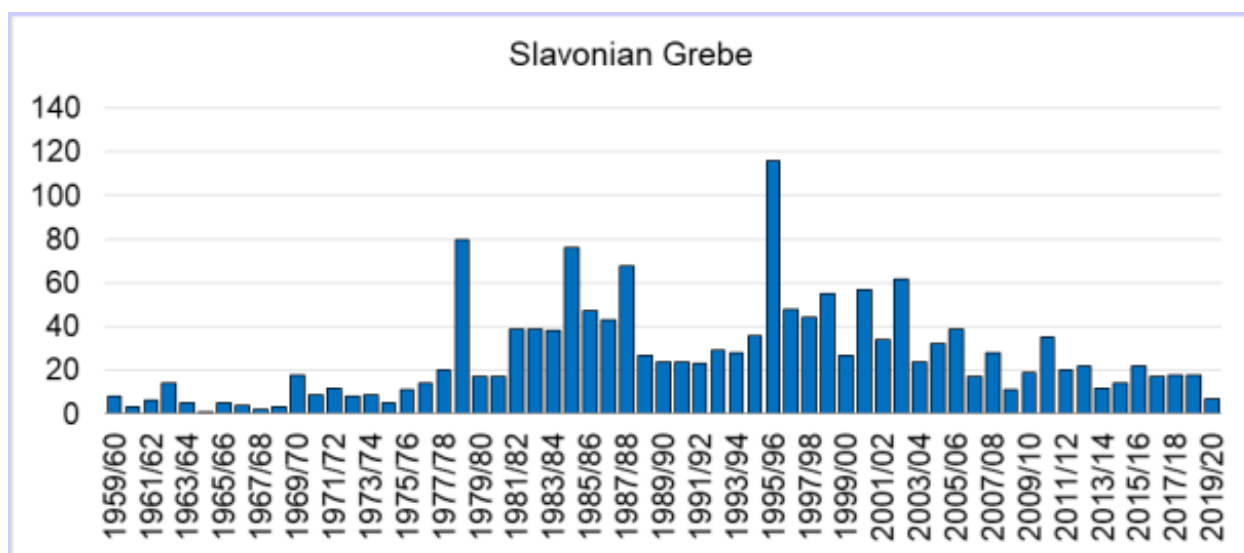


Figure 1: Slavonian Grebe records in Kent between 1959/60 and 2019/20

There has been a decline in Kent records since the early 2000s and figure 2 shows a similar pattern locally to the overall trend within the county. In the 1980s and 1990s there were a total of 29 local records (at a rate of 1.4 per annum), including an exceptional total of ten in 1996 (an influx which was noted at the county level, as figure 1 demonstrates), but since the turn of the millennium there have been just 17 records (at a rate of 0.8 per annum).

The 1996 influx included a count of five individuals off Copt Point on the 21st February which remains the record day total.

The records by year are shown in figure 2.

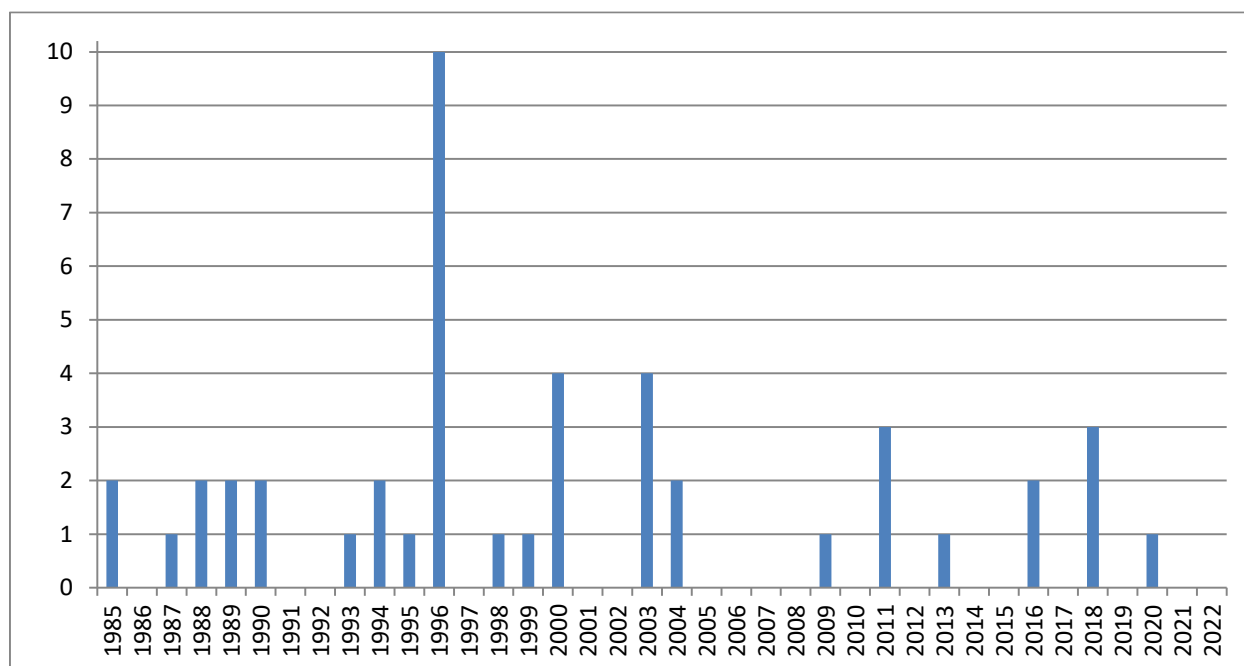


Figure 2: Slavonian Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Autumn records are relatively rare, with just one in October and two in November. This species is more regularly encountered from December through to February, and on spring passage in March and April. The latest record involved one in full breeding plumage at Nickolls Quarry on the 27th April 1994 (which lingered until the 4th May). The records by week are given in figure 3. There is a further undated record from December.

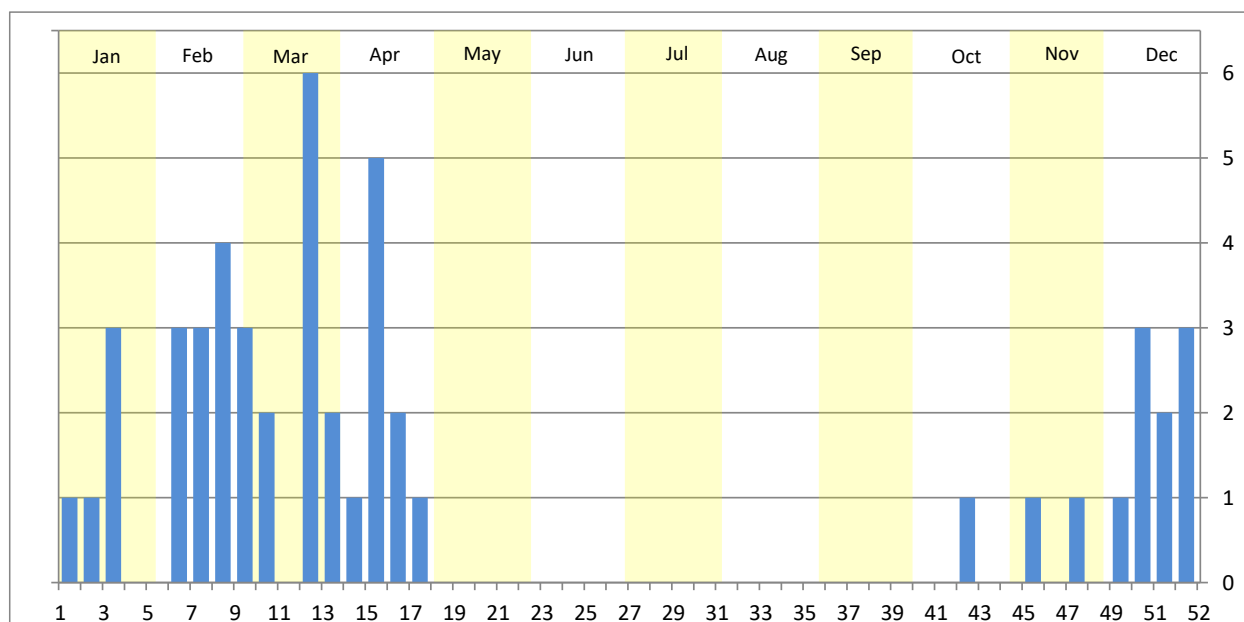


Figure 3: Slavonian Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

As with the other scarce grebes most sightings are either from Nickolls Quarry (ten) or coastal sites, with 15 off Copt Point, five off Mill Point and Samphire Hoe, ten in the bay between Sandgate and the Dymchurch Redoubt, one in Folkestone Harbour, two early records “at Folkestone” (site unspecified) and one on the canal at Hythe, near the Hotel Imperial. Figure 4 shows the location of records by tetrad.



Figure 4: Distribution of all Slavonian Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1939** Folkestone, one on the sea, 16th February (A. V. Stone)
- 1954** Folkestone, one, 19th February (J. N. Hollyer)
- 1958** Nickolls Quarry, one rapidly achieving breeding plumage, 13th to 20th April (R. K. Norman)
- 1979** Nickolls Quarry, one, 10th March (D. Weaver)
- 1985** Copt Point, one, 19th January (reported)
- 1985** Nickolls Quarry, two, 16th to 17th February (R. & S. Philpott)
- 1987** Nickolls Quarry, one, 21st February (P. Miller)
- 1988** Copt Point, one, 8th December (reported)
- 1988** Copt Point, two, 28th December (reported)
- 1989** Nickolls Quarry, one, 7th to 22nd April (J. Sanderson, I. Andrews, I. A. Roberts *et al*)
- 1989** Hythe Canal (Hythe Imperial), one, late December to 6th January 1990 (I. A. Roberts, J. P. Siddle *et al*)
- 1990** Mill Point, one, 19th January (I. A. Roberts)
- 1990** Copt Point, one, 31st December (reported)
- 1993** Copt Point, one, 2nd March (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Dymchurch Redoubt, one, 5th March (R. K. Norman)
- 1994** Nickolls Quarry, one in full breeding plumage, 27th April to 4th May (R. K. Norman)
- 1995** Nickolls Quarry, one, 19th November (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Folkestone Harbour, one, 9th February (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Sandgate, one, 10th February (P. Howe, H. G. Brown, R. Thorogood)
- 1996** Copt Point, one, 11th February (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Copt Point, one, 17th February (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, two, 21st February to 22nd March (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Copt Point, five, 21st February (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Sandgate, one, 19th to 21st March (P. Howe, H. G. Brown, R. Thorogood)
- 1996** Copt Point, one, 4th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Sandgate, one, 13th December (P. Howe, H. G. Brown, R. Thorogood)
- 1996** Hythe, two, 18th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Samphire Hoe, one, 2nd March (D. E. Smith)
- 1999** Nickolls Quarry, one, 17th October (R. K. Norman)
- 2000** Copt Point, one, 16th January (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)

2000 Copt Point, one, 19th March (I. A. Roberts)
2000 Copt Point, one, 9th December (I. A. Roberts)
2000 Hythe, one, 23rd December (I. A. Roberts)
2003 Nickolls Quarry, one, 7th January (R. K. Norman)
2003 Dymchurch Redoubt, two, 3rd March (I. A. Roberts)
2003 Copt Point, two, 15th April (I. A. Roberts)
2003 Copt Point, three, 21st April (I. A. Roberts)
2004 Mill Point, one on the sea, 11th January (I. A. Roberts)
2004 Copt Point, one, 13th April (I. A. Roberts)
2009 Hythe, one, 19th December (B. Harper)
2011 Hythe, two, 20th March (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
2011 Samphire Hoe, two, 27th March (G. Burton)
2011 Mill Point, one, 19th April (I. A. Roberts)
2013 Samphire Hoe, two flew east, 24th March (I. A. Roberts)
2016 Mill Point, one, 20th March (B. Harper)
2016 Hythe, one, 24th March (S. McMinn)
2018 Princes Parade, one, 27th March (B. Harper)
2018 Samphire Hoe, three on the sea, 12th April (S. Cutt)
2018 Mill Point, two on the sea, 13th April (O. Leyshon)
2020 Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 12th December (S. Cutt)

In addition, small grebes (not identified to species), but thought most likely to be Slavonian have been recorded as follows. These are not included in the statistics above.

1951 Hythe Redoubt, one, 19th January (R. K. Norman)
1994 Nickolls Quarry, one, 24th February (reported by an angler, per R. K. Norman)
1998 Copt Point, one, 22nd October (I. A. Roberts)

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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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