

## Scaup

*Aythya marila*

Category A

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor. 29 records, 95 birds

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998, Woodward et al. 2020):*

The Scaup is the most northerly of the *Aythias* in its breeding range and also the most marine, nesting in the extreme north of Europe, Asia and North America. The European population migrates south or west to winter mainly along coasts, including Britain where the wintering numbers are estimated at around 4,000 birds].

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

In Kent it is a passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly with occasional large influxes, but now scarce.



Scaup at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

Ticehurst (1909) found the Scaup to be an annual winter visitor to the tidal waters of the Kent coast in small parties and noted that in hard weather its numbers were “naturally greater” than in normal winters, and it was only in the more severe ones that he had met with it off the south coast of the county. He cited an example in the Folkestone Museum that had been “taken on the Warren”, but no date was given. It was not included in Knight and Tolputt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871), so was presumably obtained sometime between 1871 and 1909.

Taylor *et al.* (1981) considered it to be a winter visitor to the county in variable numbers and recorded exceptional numbers in several severe winters in the 1950s and 1960s. It was during one of these influxes (in the 1962/63 winter, which saw the largest numbers and the most widespread flocks of any influx) that the first dated local records occurred, when Geoffrey Munns saw a drake on the Hythe Canal on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1963 and a flock of 35 on the sea off Hythe on the 29<sup>th</sup> January, just three days later. These birds were part of a significant influx into south-east Kent (which included a count of 120 off Littlestone) and involved several birds being found dead on the tideline between Hythe and Dungeness.

The next record followed in 1979, when Dave Weaver found an immature drake at Nickolls Quarry on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January, and the same site provided two further records in 1985, with Sue and Chris Philpott noting a drake there on the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> February and Pat Miller finding two females on the 19<sup>th</sup> December (remaining until the 1<sup>st</sup> January) (Norman 2007). It occurred with some regularity between 1985 and 2000, with 17 records within this 16 year period (a rate of 1.1 per annum) but has since become scarcer, with just eight records since 2001 (a rate of 0.4 per annum).



Scaup at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Scaup at Folkestone Warren (Dale Gibson)

The records by year are shown in figure 1. The peak year to date was 1996, with five records.

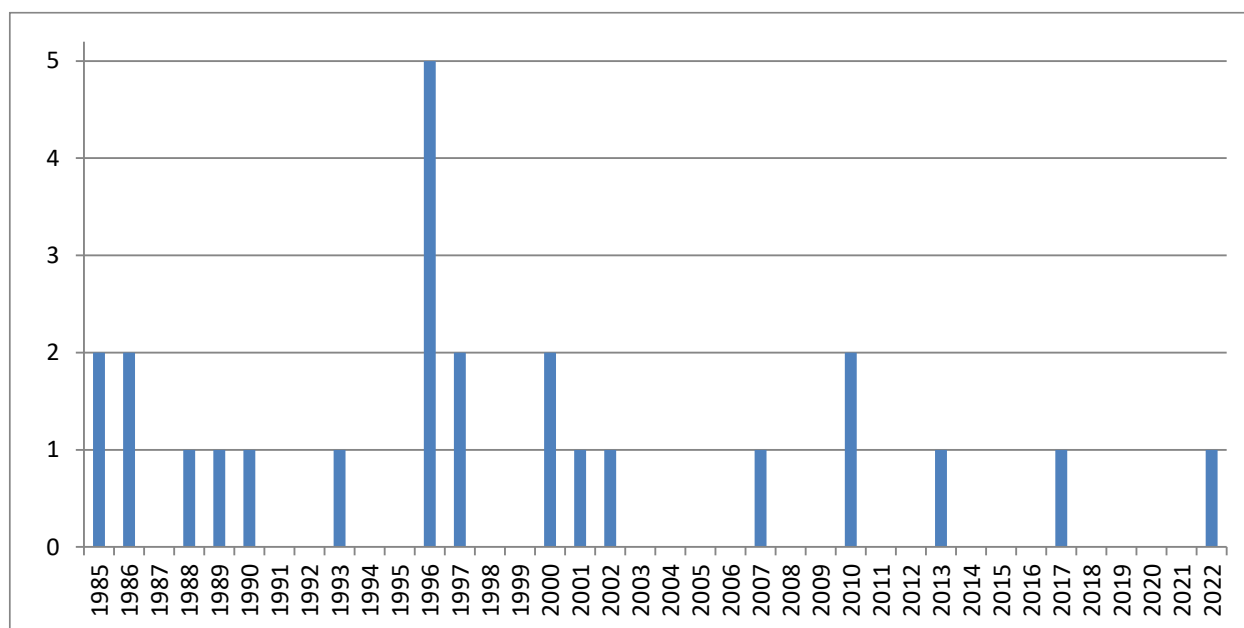


Figure 1: Scaup records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Apart from sightings on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013, 4<sup>th</sup> October 1997 and 24<sup>th</sup> April 1989, all have been recorded between the 29<sup>th</sup> October (week 44) and 27<sup>th</sup> March (week 13), with a peak in late December / early January, as shown in figure 2. Whilst most records have related to short-stayers or birds flying past, three individuals lingered for at least a fortnight, with one bird taking up residence at Nickolls Quarry for 56 days in the 2002/03 winter.

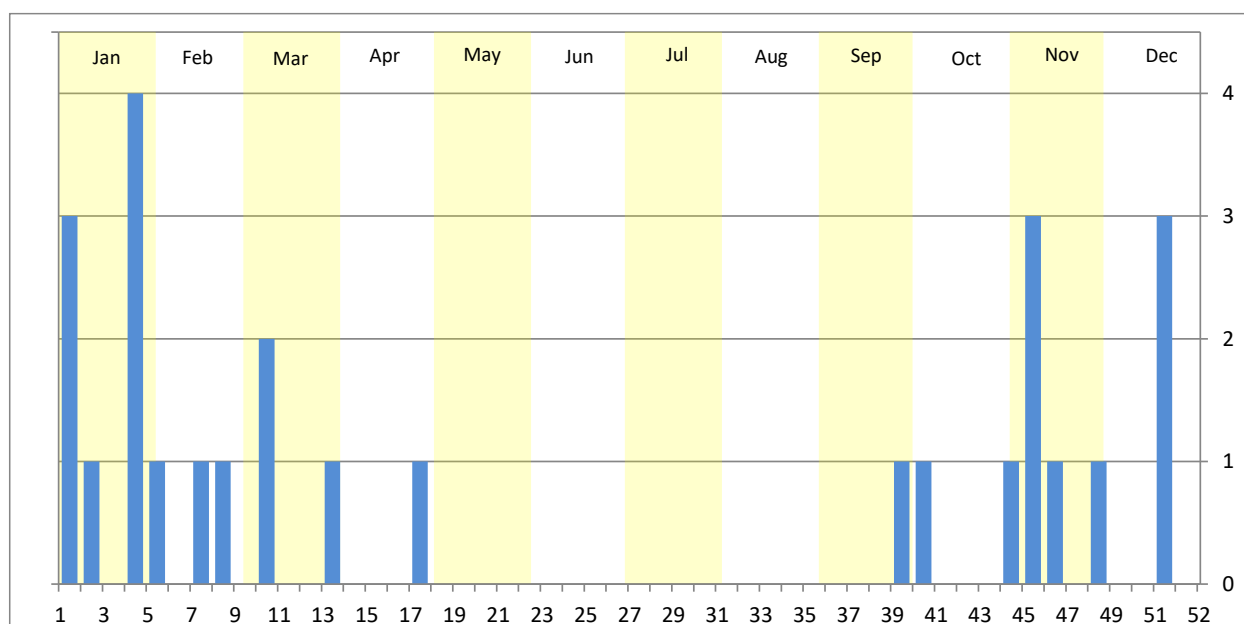


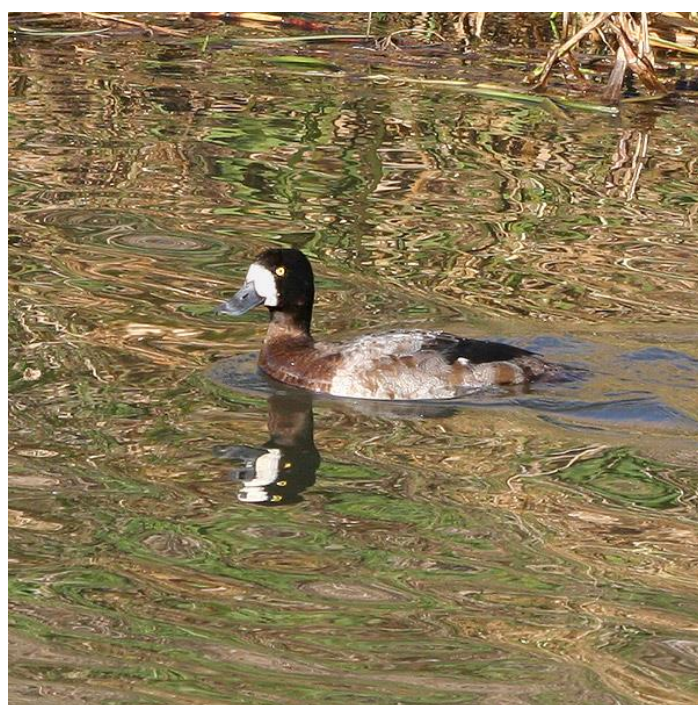
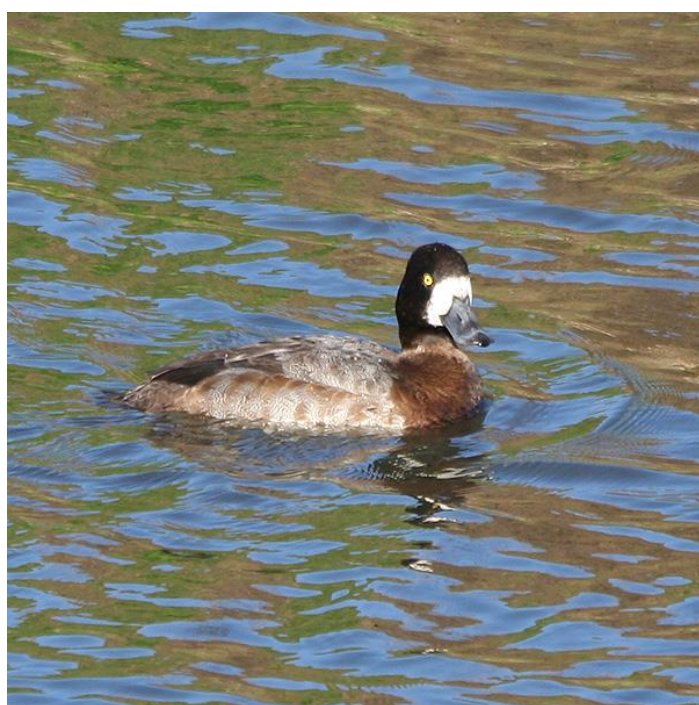
Figure 2: Scaup records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Eight of the first 14 dated records occurred at Nickolls Quarry, but this site has only produced one record since. There have been two records on the canal and one at Botolph's Bridge, whilst all others have been coastal, with nine in the Copt Point/Folkestone Warren area, two at Hythe and Samphire Hoe, and singles at four other sites. Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.





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



Scaup at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

The full list of records is as follows:

- Prior to 1909** Folkestone Warren, one obtained, undated (per N. Ticehurst)
- 1963** Hythe Canal, drake, 26<sup>th</sup> January (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1963** Hythe, 35 on the sea, 29<sup>th</sup> January (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1979** Nickolls Quarry, immature drake, 23<sup>rd</sup> January (D. Weaver)
- 1985** Nickolls Quarry, drake, 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> February (R. & S. Philpott)
- 1985** Nickolls Quarry, two females, 19<sup>th</sup> December to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1986 (P. Miller)
- 1986** Botolph's Bridge, two, 1<sup>st</sup> January (reported), possibly same as two females seen at Nickolls Quarry
- 1986** Nickolls Quarry, 14 mid-morning, 1<sup>st</sup> January (P. Wells)
- 1988** Nickolls Quarry, one, for three weeks in February (R. & S. Philpott)
- 1989** Nickolls Quarry, drake, 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)
- 1990** Nickolls Quarry, female, 11<sup>th</sup> November (R. K. Norman)
- 1993** Copt Point, five flew east, 8<sup>th</sup> March (D. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Seabrook, three on the sea, 27<sup>th</sup> January (M. Whybrow)

**1996** Copt Point, two flew east, 21<sup>st</sup> February (D. A. Gibson)  
**1996** Nickolls Quarry, drake, 6<sup>th</sup> March (R. K. Norman)  
**1996** Copt Point, drake flew east, 14<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)  
**1996** Copt Point, two flew east, 21<sup>st</sup> December (I. A. Roberts)  
**1997** Samphire Hoe, immature/female, 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> October (P. Chantler *et al*)  
**1997** Copt Point, one flew west, 5<sup>th</sup> November (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
**2000** Samphire Hoe, one, in March (reported)  
**2000** Copt Point, one flew west, 29<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
**2001** Copt Point, three, 27<sup>th</sup> March (D. A. Gibson)  
**2002** Nickolls Quarry, female, 9<sup>th</sup> November to 4<sup>th</sup> January 2003, photographed (I. A. Roberts, R. K. Norman)  
**2007** Hythe Canal (Seabrook), first-winter drake, 1<sup>st</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> January, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts *et al*)  
**2010** Willop Outfall, immature/female on the sea, 27<sup>th</sup> November, photographed (B. & M. Harper)  
**2010** Sandgate, female on the sea, 19<sup>th</sup> December (M. Whybrow)  
**2013** Folkestone Warren, immature/female on the sea, 29<sup>th</sup> September, photographed (D. A. Gibson)  
**2017** Dymchurch Redoubt, ten on the sea, 10<sup>th</sup> January (reported)  
**2022** Hythe, one offshore, 26<sup>th</sup> January (reported)

## References

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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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