

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

22 records

Breeds from France eastwards across central Europe into Russia, and across Asia, also locally in Africa and North America. Winters on lakes and coastal waters generally south of the breeding range, including southern Britain (Snow & Perrins, 1998). There is a small breeding population in Britain, mostly in northern England, with around 50 pairs on average (Holling *et al*, 2019).

It is a scarce but regular passage migrant and winter visitor in Kent, which has bred occasionally in recent years (KOS, 2020).

It was first recorded locally in 1958 when Roger Norman found one at Nickolls Quarry on the 13th March, with presumably the same individual seen intermittently until the 25th April, whilst four were seen off Folkestone by David Musson on the 1st April 1960.



Black-necked Grebe at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)

There then followed a twenty-year gap before singles were seen at Folkestone on the 8th December 1980 and at Sandgate on the 29th January 1981, with another 18 recorded since 1985, as shown in figure 1.

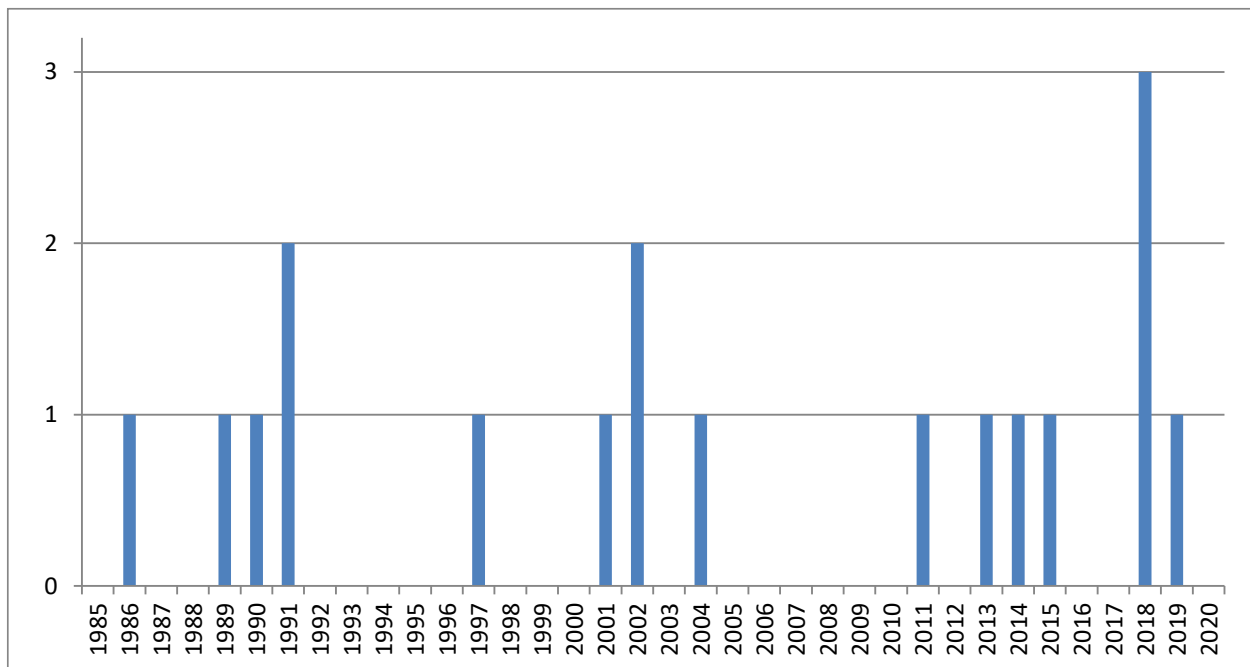


Figure 1: Black-necked Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The majority have occurred either in winter or on spring passage. Winter arrival dates are relatively late, with the earliest (apart from the most recent in October) not until the 8th December (week 49), and are generally associated with the onset of severe weather. Spring migrants have generally been recorded between mid-March and mid-April, with the latest on 24th April.

There are intriguing records from Nickolls Quarry of an “immature” on 26th August 1990 and of three birds present on an unspecified date in August 2002, which might related to dispersal from local breeding sites, possibly within the county. The arrival dates by week are shown in figure 2.

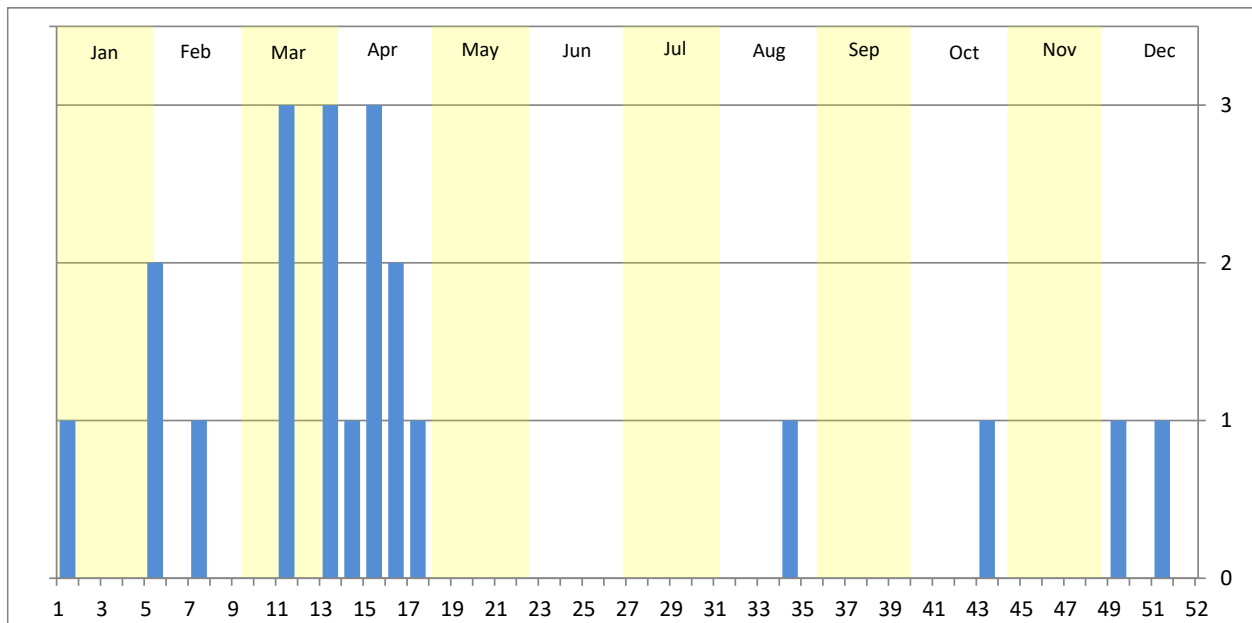


Figure 2: Black-necked Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Black-necked Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Records are mostly split between Nickolls Quarry (5) and coastal sites, with one at Samphire Hoe, three at Copt Point, three at Mill Point and six in the bay between Sandgate and Hythe, with two records at 'Folkestone' where the site was not specified. The remaining two were seen on the Royal Military Canal between Hythe and Seabrook, one present for a week during hard weather in February 1991 and an autumn migrant present for two days in October 2019.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1958** Nickolls Quarry, one, 13th to 15th March (R. K. Norman), presumed same on 21st to 23rd March, and 3rd to 25th April (E. J. Pilcher)
- 1960** Folkestone, four, 1st April (D. F. Musson)
- 1980** Folkestone, one, 8th December (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1981** Sandgate, one, 29th January (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1986** Copt Point, one, 17th April (reported)
- 1989** Mill Point, one flew west, 17th December (I. A. Roberts)

- 1990** Nickolls Quarry, immature, 26th August (P. Miller)
- 1991** Hythe Canal, one, 4th to 10th February (reported)
- 1991** Nickolls Quarry, one, 13th to 24th February (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Sandgate, two, 5th January (P. Howe)
- 2001** Copt Point, one in breeding plumage on the sea, 24th April (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Copt Point, one flew east, 26th March (reported)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, three, date not given in August (per Kent Bird Report)
- 2004** Seabrook, two in breeding plumage on the sea, 29th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Seabrook, three in breeding plumage on the sea, 12th March, photographed (B. Harper; I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Nickolls Quarry, one, 12th April, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2014** Mill Point, one flew east, 29th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2015** Seabrook, one on the sea, drifting east, 15th March, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Seabrook, two on the sea, 13th April, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2018** Samphire Hoe, five on the sea, drifting east, 15th April (M. Collins, S. Cutt, B. Woolhouse)
- 2018** Mill Point, one, 19th April (B. Harper)
- 2019** Hythe Canal near Hythe Imperial Golf Course, one, 22nd to 23rd October, photographed (B. Harper)



Black-necked Grebe on the Royal Military Canal at Seabrook (Brian Harper)



Black-necked Grebes at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

Black-necked Grebes at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

References

Holling, M. & the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 2019. Rare breeding birds in the UK in 2017. *British Birds*, 112: 706-758

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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Black-necked Grebe at Nickolls Quarry (Brian Harper)



Black-necked Grebe on the Royal Military Canal at Seabrook (Brian Harper)