

Scaup

Aythya marila

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor

28 records

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 (Snow & Perrins, 1998), including Britain where the wintering numbers are estimated at around 4,000 birds (Woodward et al, 2020).

In Kent it is a passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly with occasional large influxes associated with severe weather, but now scarce (KOS, 2020).



Scaup at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

Ticehurst (1909) noted that one Folkestone Museum had an example which was taken “on the Warren” but no date is given. It was not included in Knight and Tolputt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood”, so was presumably sometime after 1871.

The first dated record was in 1963, when Geoffrey Munns saw one on the Hythe Canal on the 26th January. Remarkably this was followed by a flock of 35 seen on the sea off Hythe by the same observer just three days later. These birds were part of a significant influx into south-east Kent during hard weather, which included a count of 120 off Littlestone, and involved several birds being found dead on the tideline between Hythe and Dungeness.

Following a subsequent sighting at Nickolls Quarry by Dave Weaver in January 1979, it has since occurred with some regularity, being seen in 15 of out of the 36 years since 1985 (as shown in figure 1). The peak year to date was 1996, with five records.

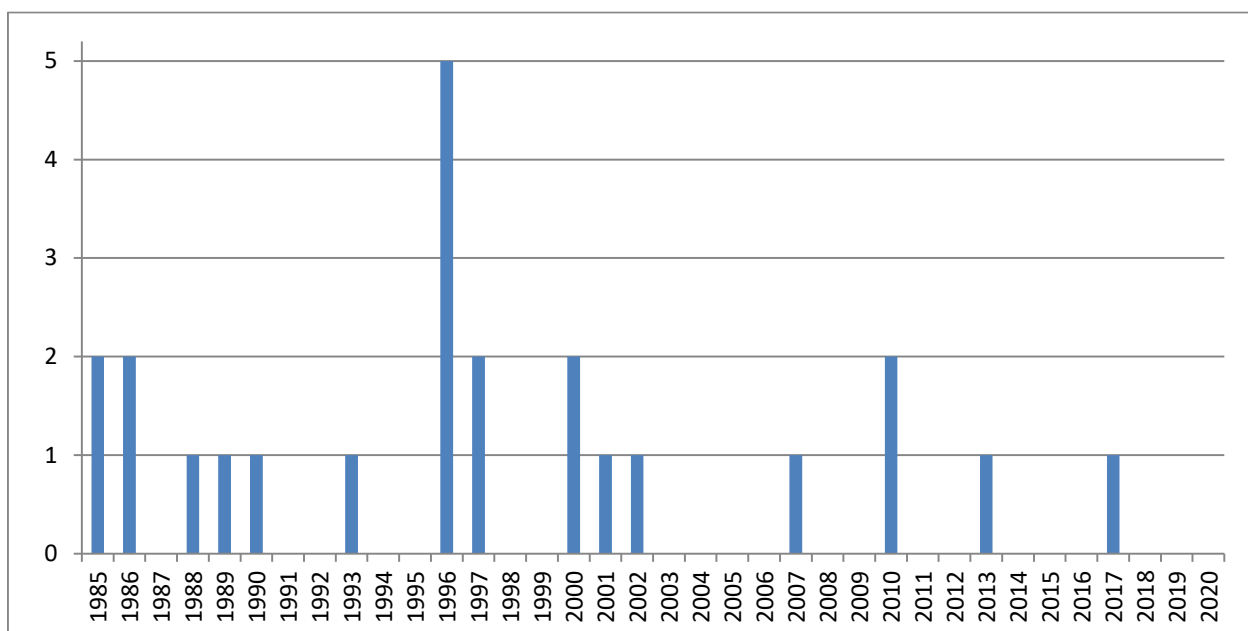


Figure 1: Scaup records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Apart from sightings on 29th September 2013, 4th October 1997 and 24th April 1989, all have been recorded between the 29th October (week 44) and 27th March (week 13), with a peak in late December / early January, as shown in figure 2.

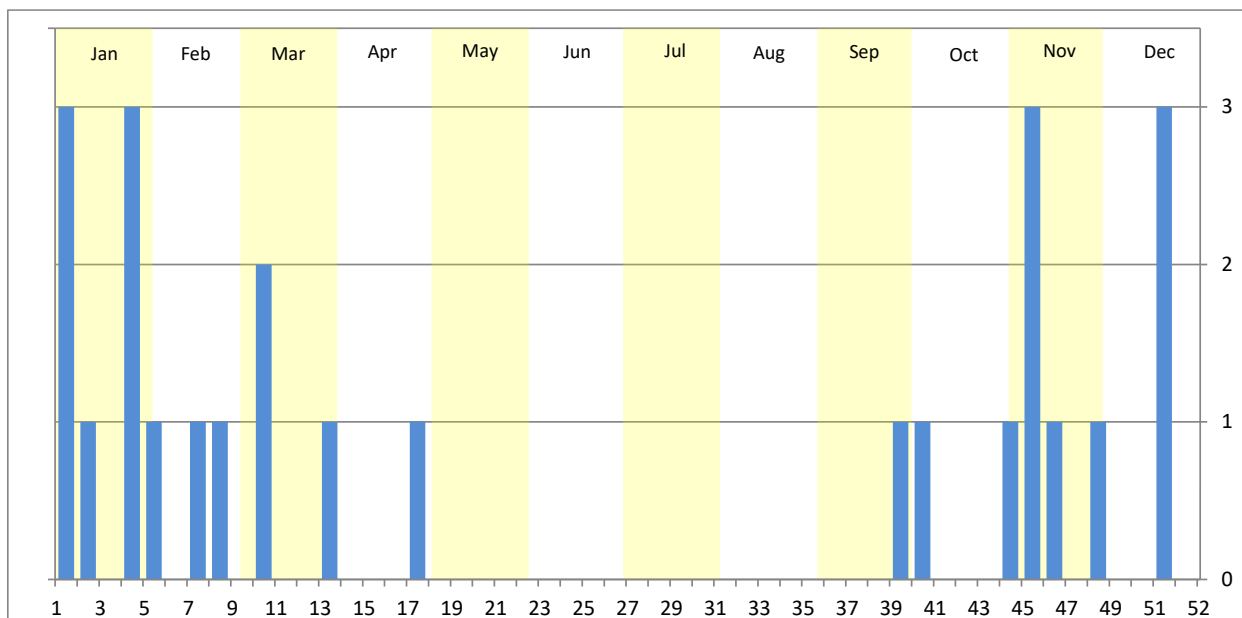


Figure 2: Scaup records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.

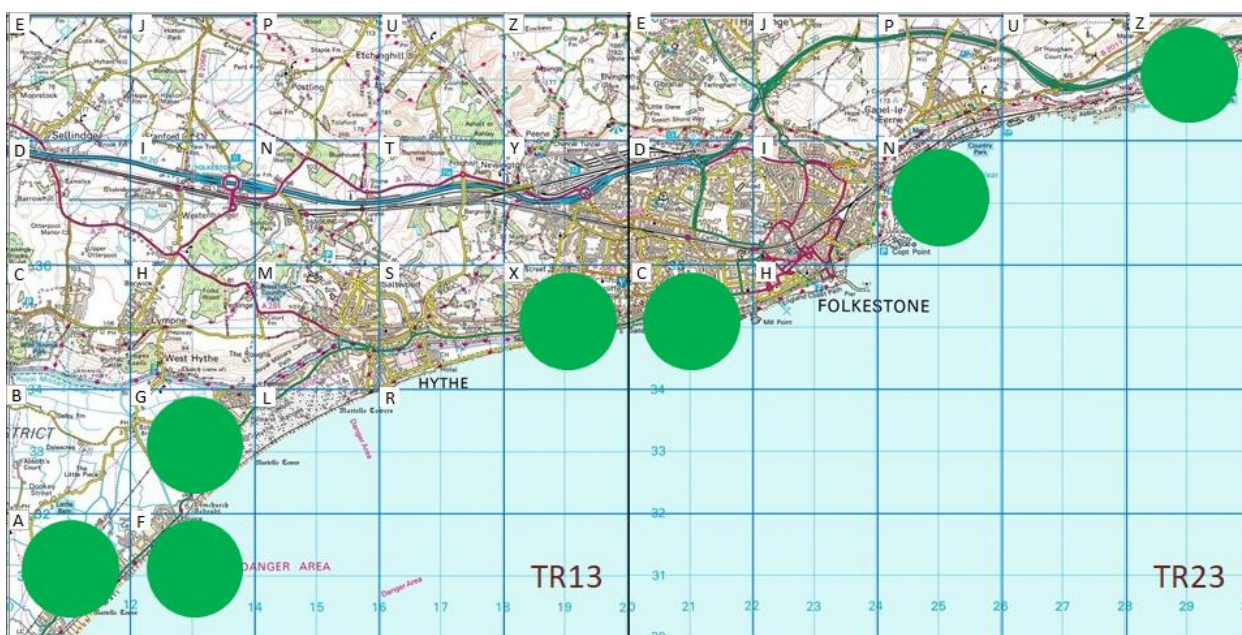


Figure 3: Distribution of all Scaup records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The majority of records are from Copt Point/Folkestone Warren or Nickolls Quarry (with nine apiece), with two on the canal between Hythe and Seabrook, one at Botolph's Bridge, and the remaining seven at coastal sites between the Willop Outfall and Samphire Hoe.

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

The full list of records is as follows:

- Prior to 1909** Folkestone Warren, one obtained, undated (per N. Ticehurst)
- 1963** Hythe Canal, drake, 26th January (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1963** Hythe, 35, 29th January (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1979** Nickolls Quarry, immature drake, 23rd January (D. Weaver)
- 1985** Nickolls Quarry, drake, 16th to 17th February (R. & S. Philpott)
- 1985** Nickolls Quarry, two females, 19th December to 1st January 1986 (P. Miller)

- 1986** Botolph's Bridge, two, 1st January (reported), possibly same as two females seen at Nickolls Quarry
- 1986** Nickolls Quarry, 14 mid-morning, 1st January (P. Wells)
- 1988** Nickolls Quarry, one, for three weeks in February (R. & S. Philpott)
- 1989** Nickolls Quarry, drake, 24th to 30th April (I. A. Roberts)
- 1990** Nickolls Quarry, female, 11th November (R. K. Norman)
- 1993** Copt Point, five flew east, 8th March (D. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Seabrook, three on the sea, 27th January (M. Whybrow)
- 1996** Copt Point, two flew east, 21st February (D. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, drake, 6th March (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Copt Point, drake flew east, 14th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Copt Point, two flew east, 21st December (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Samphire Hoe, immature/female, 4th to 7th October (P. Chantler *et al*)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew west, 5th November (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2000** Samphire Hoe, one, in March (reported)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew west, 29th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2001** Copt Point, three, 27th March (D. A. Gibson)
- 2002** Nickolls Quarry, female, 9th November to 4th January 2003, photographed (I. A. Roberts, R. K. Norman)
- 2007** Hythe Canal (Seabrook), first-winter drake, 1st to 14th January, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts *et al*)
- 2010** Willop Outfall, immature/female on the sea, 27th November, photographed (B. & M. Harper)
- 2010** Sandgate, female on the sea, 19th December (M. Whybrow)
- 2013** Folkestone Warren, immature/female on the sea, 29th September, photographed (D. A. Gibson)
- 2017** Dymchurch Redoubt, ten on the sea, 10th January (reported)



Scaup at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Scaup at Folkestone Warren (Dale Gibson)

References

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Acknowledgements

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Scaup at Seabrook (Brian Harper)