

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritus

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor.

50 records

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 (Snow & Perrins, 1998). The Scottish population is in steep decline (a 61% decrease over the last 25 years” and Holling *et al* (2019) reported in 2017 fewer than 20 confirmed breeding pairs for the first time since the inception of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel in 1973.

It is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent (KOS, 2020).

Harrison (1953) referred to one seen on the sea off Folkestone by Miss Alice Stone on the 16th February 1939 and this was followed by two records in the 1950s: one seen off Folkestone by John Hollyer on the 19th February 1954 and one that was rapidly achieving breeding plumage seen by Roger Norman at Nickolls Quarry between the 13th and 20th April in 1958. Dave Weaver recorded another at the latter site on the 10th March 1979.

In 1985 one was seen off Copt Point on the 19th January and two were at Nickolls Quarry from the 16th to 17th February, whilst another was at the latter site on the 21st February 1987. One was seen from Copt Point on the 8th December 1988, with two there later that month on the 28th December, whilst 1989 produced the longest staying record to date, another bird attaining breeding plumage at Nickolls Quarry between the 7th and 22nd April, and one on the canal by the Hythe Imperial golf course from late December to the 6th January 1990. There were further singles in 1990 at Mill Point on the 19th January and Copt Point on the 31st December.

Since then it has continued to be recorded with some regularity, and overall there have been records in 20 of the 36 years between 1985 and 2020, as demonstrated by figure 1. In 1996 there was an exceptional influx, with ten records, including six in February, one of which involved a count of five individuals (off Copt Point on the 21st) – the record day total to date.

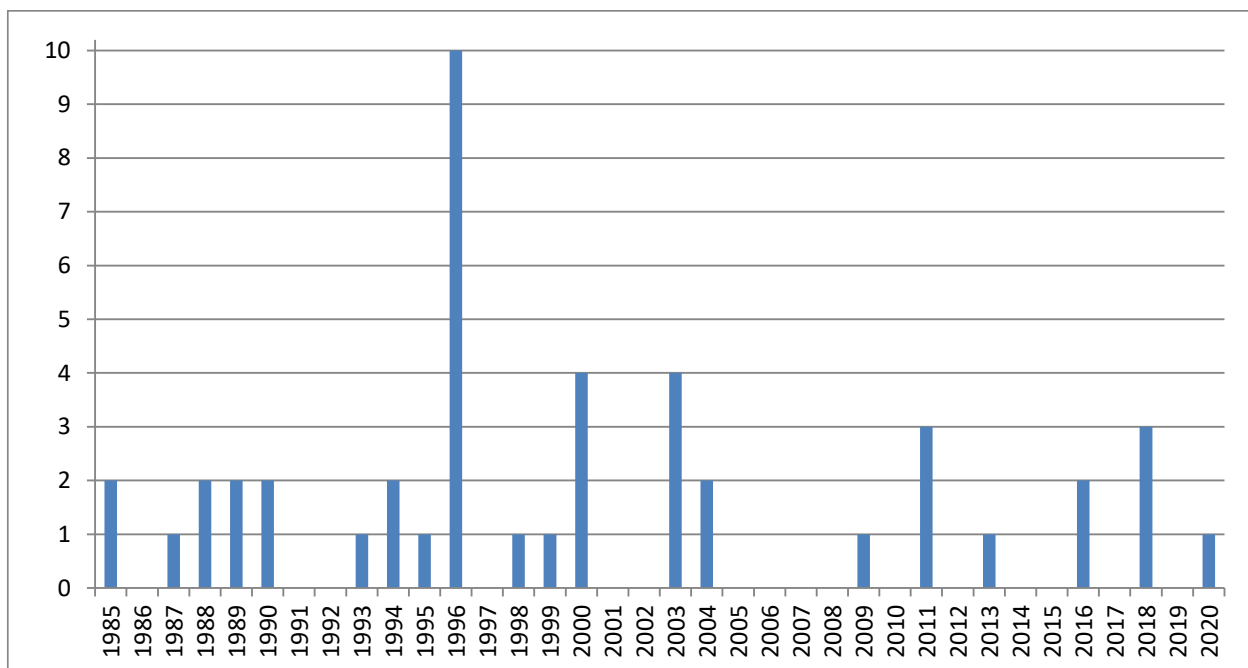


Figure 1: Slavonian Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

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 2, and there is a further undated record from December.

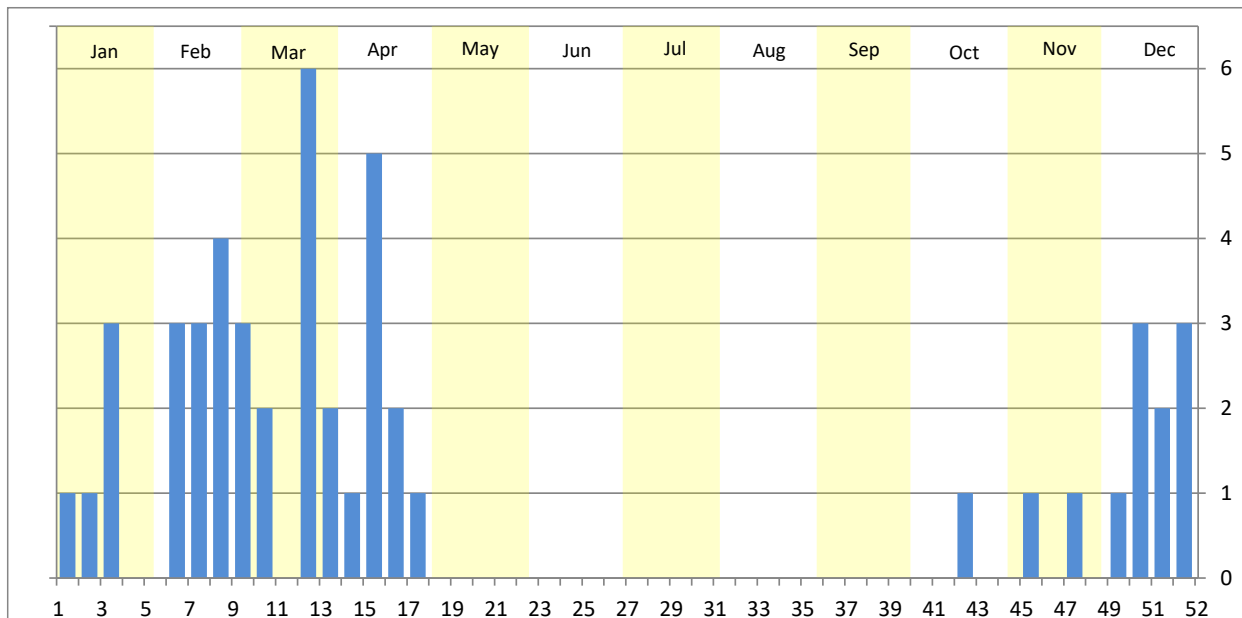


Figure 2: Slavonian Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.

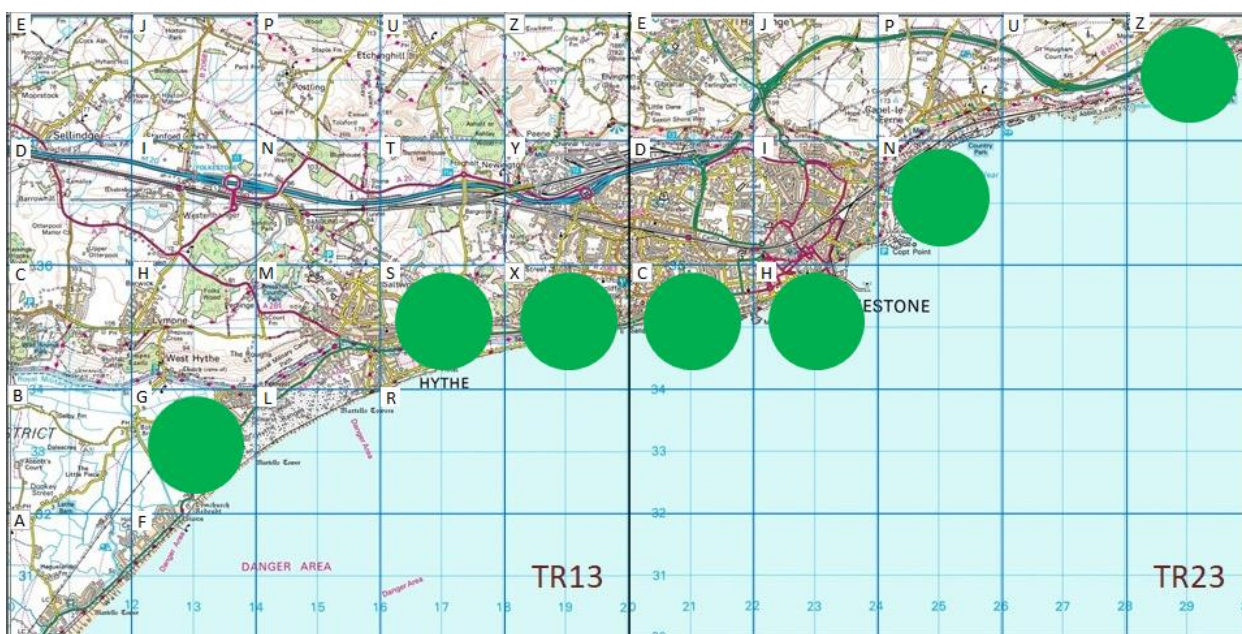


Figure 3: Distribution of all Slavonian Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

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.

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)

References

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Acknowledgements

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