

Long-tailed Skua

Stercorarius longicaudus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

11 records

Breeds in northern Fenno-Scandia eastwards across northernmost Siberia to the north-west Pacific coast and also in northern North America and Greenland (Snow & Perrins, 1998). Western Palearctic birds winter off southern and western Africa and mainly follow the Atlantic coast of Britain on their northward migration with very few passing through the English Channel (Wynn *et al*, 2014). In autumn most move south-west to a staging area east of Newfoundland before continuing south, with a few being displaced into the North Sea by stormy weather (Gilg *et al*, 2013). It is a rare spring migrant and a scarce but increasingly regular migrant in Kent (KOS, 2020).

Long-tailed Skua was first recorded locally in 1996, when Dale Gibson saw a juvenile flying west past Copt Point on the 24th August 1996, and further sightings soon followed in 1998 (with singles in spring and autumn) and in autumn 1999. There were a further four records between 2001 and 2006 but a twelve year wait ensued until 2018 produced singles in both spring and autumn, and a further sighting was made in 2021. The records by year are shown in figure 1.

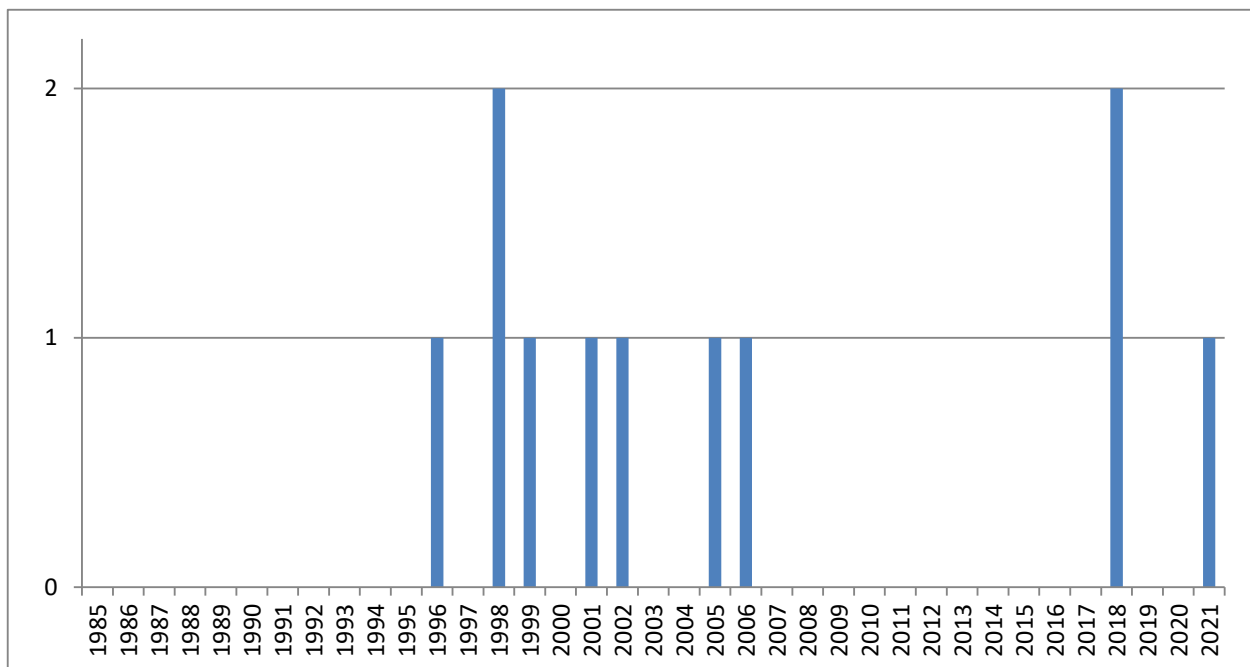


Figure 1: Long-tailed Skua records at Folkestone and Hythe

Records fall into two distinct periods, with three in spring (all in May) and eight in autumn, between the 24th August (week 34) and 10th November (week 45), as demonstrated by figure 2.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad. Folkestone has produced nine sightings (with two at Mill Point and seven at Copt Point) and the other two were seen passing Hythe (one of which was later seen off Mill Point as well).

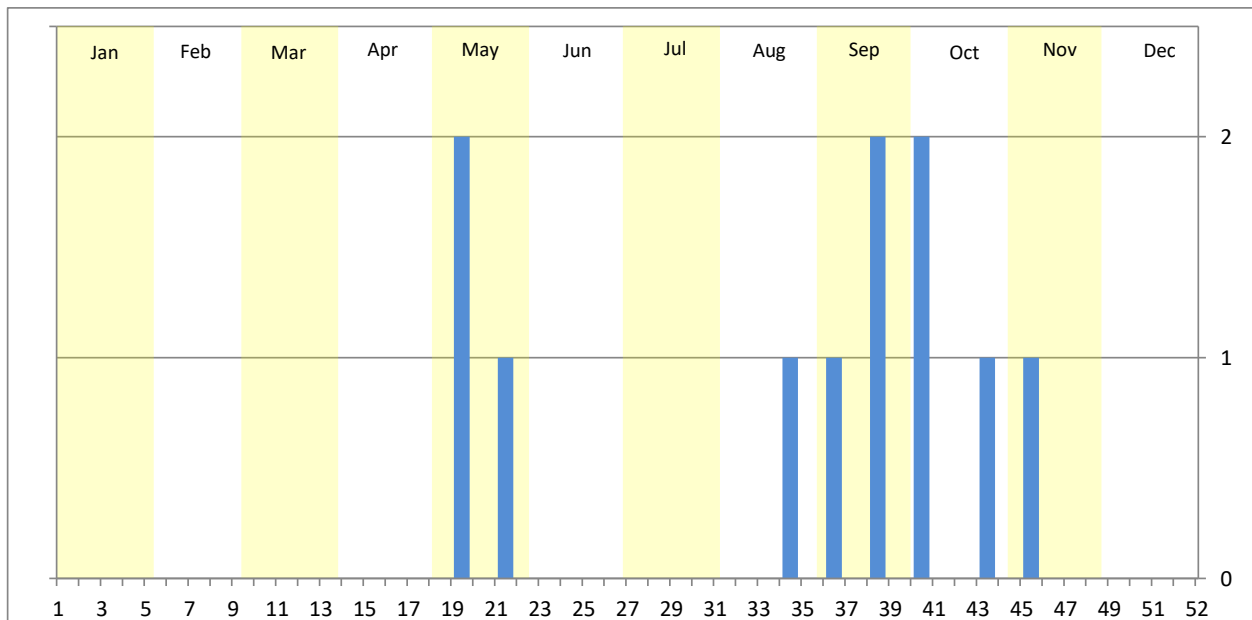


Figure 2: Long-tailed Skua records at Folkestone and Hythe by week



Figure 3: Distribution of all Long-tailed Skua records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1996** Copt Point, juvenile flew west, 24th August (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Copt Point, adult flew east, 10th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Copt Point, juvenile offshore then flew east, 5th September (D. A. Gibson)
- 1999** Copt Point, juvenile flew east, 20th September (I. A. Roberts)
- 2001** Copt Point, adult flew east, 10th May (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Copt Point, juvenile flew east, 23rd September (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Mill Point, juvenile flew east, 24th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Copt Point, juvenile flew west, 6th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Hythe, adult, 24th May (I. A. Roberts), later flew east past Mill Point (B. Harper)
- 2018** Hythe, juvenile, 10th November (S. McMinn)
- 2021** Mill Point, juvenile flew west, 1st October (J. Russell)

References

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Wynn, R. B., Brown, D., Thomas, G., Holt, C. A., Hanssen, S. A., Moe, B. & Gilg, O., 2014. Spring migration routes of Long-tailed Skuas around and across the UK – results of observational and tracking data. *British Birds* 107:220-228

Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).