

Iceland Gull

Larus glaucooides

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

15 records,
13 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds in Greenland and Arctic Canada, wintering mainly in Iceland and on the Atlantic coast of North America. It is a regular visitor to north-west Europe, including Britain and Ireland where is most frequent in the north, especially Scotland.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent.



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Ticehurst (1909) was unable to locate any county records, whilst Harrison (1953) only listed seven authenticated occurrences. Taylor *et al.* (1981) described it as a rare and sporadic visitor, with 16 further records during their review period (1952-76), none of which were local.

The first local record involved a first-winter (1CY) individual that was found at Copt Point by Ray Henson on the 29th November 1980 and remained in the Copt Point and Folkestone Harbour area until late February 1981. This was the first instance of over-wintering in the county. A second-winter (2CY) bird, considered to be the same individual, returned to Folkestone the following November, before moving to Hythe where it remained until May 1982. Quite remarkably two new first-winter (1CY) birds were found in 1982, one at Nickolls Quarry in January and the other at Hythe in December, with the latter overwintering until the 1st April. A third-winter bird (3 CY), presumably the returning individual from the two previous winters, was seen at Folkestone and Hythe in January 1983, and was even seen together with the wintering Hythe first-year (1CY) at Sandgate on the 30th January 1983. This remains the only multiple sighting locally.

There were no records in 1984 but in January 1985 an adult (4+CY), possibly the returning bird, was at Folkestone in January, but only lingered for two days. An adult (4+CY) was then seen at Copt Point in December 1987. A five-year gap followed before first-winter (1CY) birds were noted in 1992, 1993 and 1994, with one of unspecified age in 1997.

There then followed a ten-year hiatus before one flew east at Samphire Hoe in February 2008, whilst in January 2017 a first-winter bird was seen on the lake at Nickolls Quarry before it flew off to the east over Palmmarsh and there was a rather unseasonal sighting of an adult at Folkestone on the 27th July 2018.



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



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The records by year are shown in figure 1.

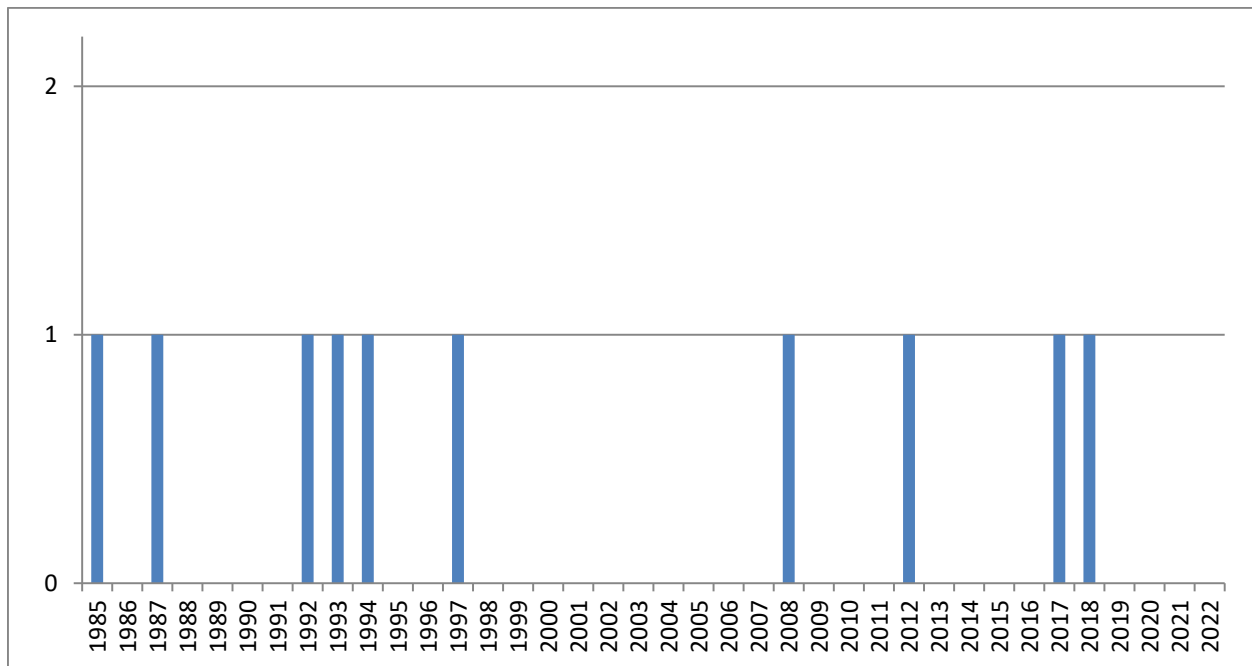


Figure 1: Iceland Gull records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Arrival dates fall between the 13th November (week 46) and 27th April (week 17), apart from the July occurrence in 2018, as shown in figure 2. The March and April records were typically short-staying, presumably migrant individuals.

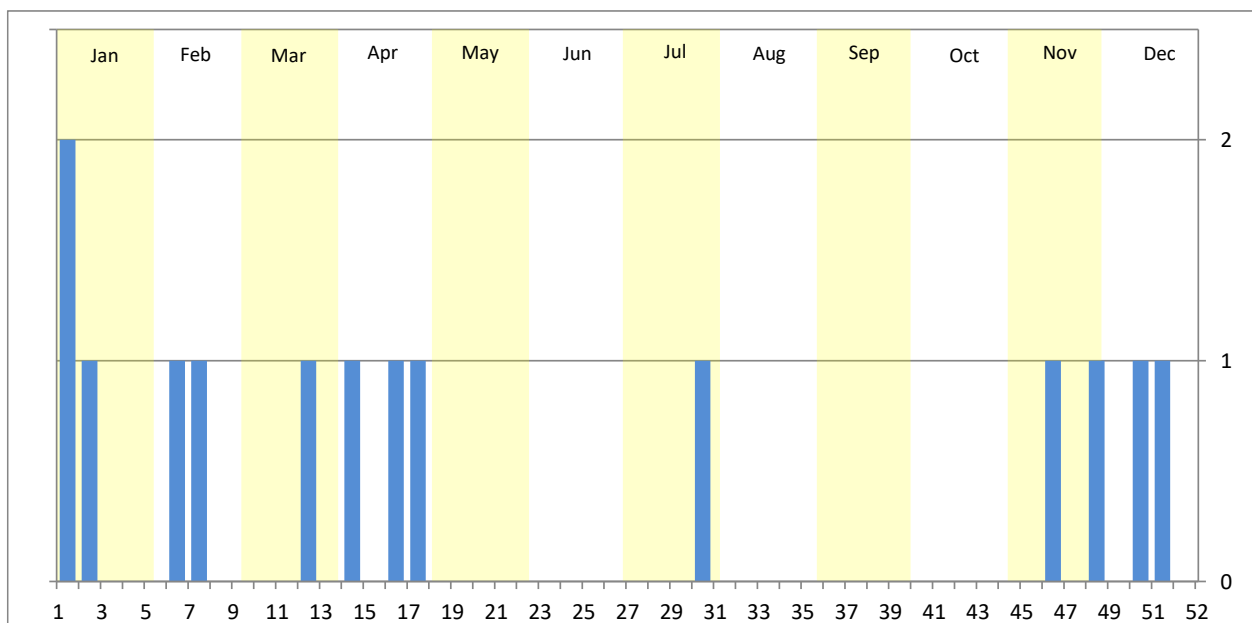


Figure 2: Iceland Gull records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1980** Copt Point and Folkestone Harbour, first winter (1CY), 29th November to 20th February 1981, photographed (R. Henson *et al.*)
- 1981** Folkestone, second winter (2CY), 13th to 15th November, then at Hythe from 27th November to 10th May 1982, visiting Folkestone again on 21st January, considered to be same as above (R. Henson *et al.*)
- 1982** Nickolls Quarry, first winter (1CY), 8th January (D. Weaver)
- 1982** Hythe, first winter (1CY), 16th December to 1st April (J. Smith, P. J. Wells)
- 1983** Folkestone and Hythe, third-winter (3CY), 9th January (D. C. Gilbert), seen together with above first-winter at Sandgate on 30th January, presumed same as 1980 and 1981
- 1985** Folkestone, adult (4+CY), 5th to 6th January (R. F. Henson), possibly same returning bird as 1983
- 1987** Copt Point, adult (4+CY), 20th to 21st December (R. F. Henson), later seen at Dover
- 1992** Copt Point, first winter (1CY), 22nd March (reported)
- 1993** Folkestone Harbour, first winter (1CY), 23rd April (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Copt Point, first winter (1CY), 27th April (R. F. Henson)
- 1997** Copt Point, age not given, 4th April (R. F. Henson)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, first winter (1CY) flew east, 17th February (I. A. Roberts), later seen at Dover
- 2017** Nickolls Quarry, first or second winter (1+CY), 6th January, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Folkestone Sunny Sands, adult (4+CY), 27th July (P. Edmondson)



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Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Kumlein's Gull

L. g. kumleini

The nominate form of Iceland Gull breeds in Greenland and winters in Europe, whilst the race *kumleini* ("Kumlein's Gull") breeds in Arctic Canada and winters on the Atlantic coast of North America, only occasionally straying to western Europe (Snow & Perrins 1998). It is a very rare vagrant to Kent, having occurred in the county on just four occasions (in 1991, 1998, 2006 and 2012) (KOS 2022, KOS no date).

On the 31st January 2012 a second-winter (2CY) bird of the form *kumleini* was found in Dover Harbour where it remained until at least the 7th March, and it was seen flying east past Samphire Hoe towards Dover by Paul Holt on the 6th February. There was a notable influx of *kumleini* and nominate Iceland Gulls into the north-eastern Atlantic in January and February 2012 including, for example, an estimated 310 Kumlein's Gulls in the Faroe Islands (Fray *et al.* 2012).

Confirmation of the only area record is as follows:

2012 Samphire Hoe, second-winter (2CY) flew east, 6th February (P. Holt), also seen in Dover Harbour



Iceland Gull at Folkestone Harbour (Ian Hodgson)



Kumlein's Gull at Dover Harbour, the same individual as seen flying past Samphire Hoe (Martyn Wilson)

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](#).

I am indebted to Andrew Henderson and Tim Hodge for providing access to the Kent Ornithological Society archives.