

Glauous Gull

Larus hyperboreus

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor. 29 records,
30 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds along arctic coasts of North America, Asia and Europe. Winters in Britain and Ireland annually in variable numbers, mainly in the north, with greatest concentrations in severe weather.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is an uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent, with occasional summer records.



Glaucous Gull at Hythe (Ian Roberts)

Ticehurst (1909) and Harrison (1953) both considered it to be rare visitor to the county, whilst Taylor *et al.* (1981) described it as an “occasional visitor” however noted that during their review period (1952-76) it was appearing with increasing frequency. It was during this period that the first local record occurred, when David Musson found a first-winter bird at Folkestone on the 1st March 1961. There were no further sightings however for almost 20 years until Ray Henson saw a first-winter at Copt Point on the 26th January 1980.

It has since occurred with some regularity, with 27 records in the 42 subsequent years as demonstrated by figure 1, although was recorded with greater frequency to 2008 (0.8 records per year) than it has been since (0.4 records per year).

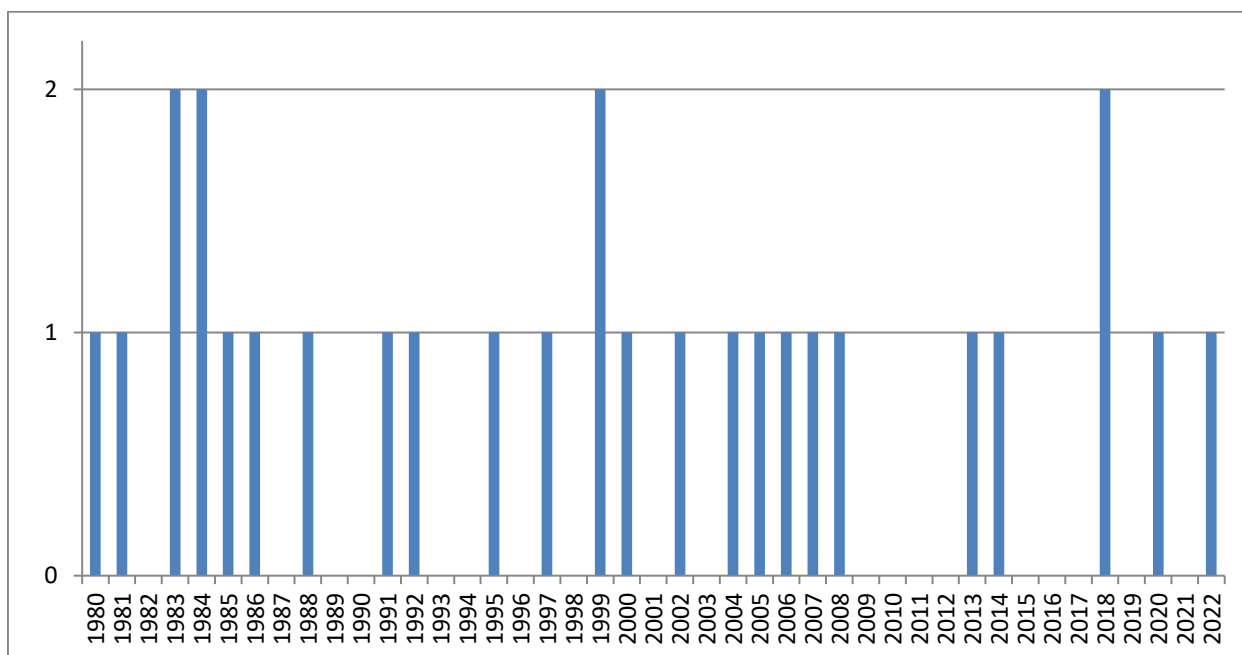


Figure 1: Glaucous Gull records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1980

All records have related to single birds apart from two seen together at Hythe in November 2007.

Where the age was given, the majority (76%) have been first calendar year birds, as is the case in the county overall (Taylor *et al.*, 1981). Only one adult has been recorded, at Nickolls Quarry on the 23rd January 1999 (Norman 2007), with two “sub-adults” also being logged.

Arrival dates have been between the 13th November (week 46) and 20th May (week 20), though with a peak in late January/early February (weeks 4 to 7).

The records by week are given in figure 2.

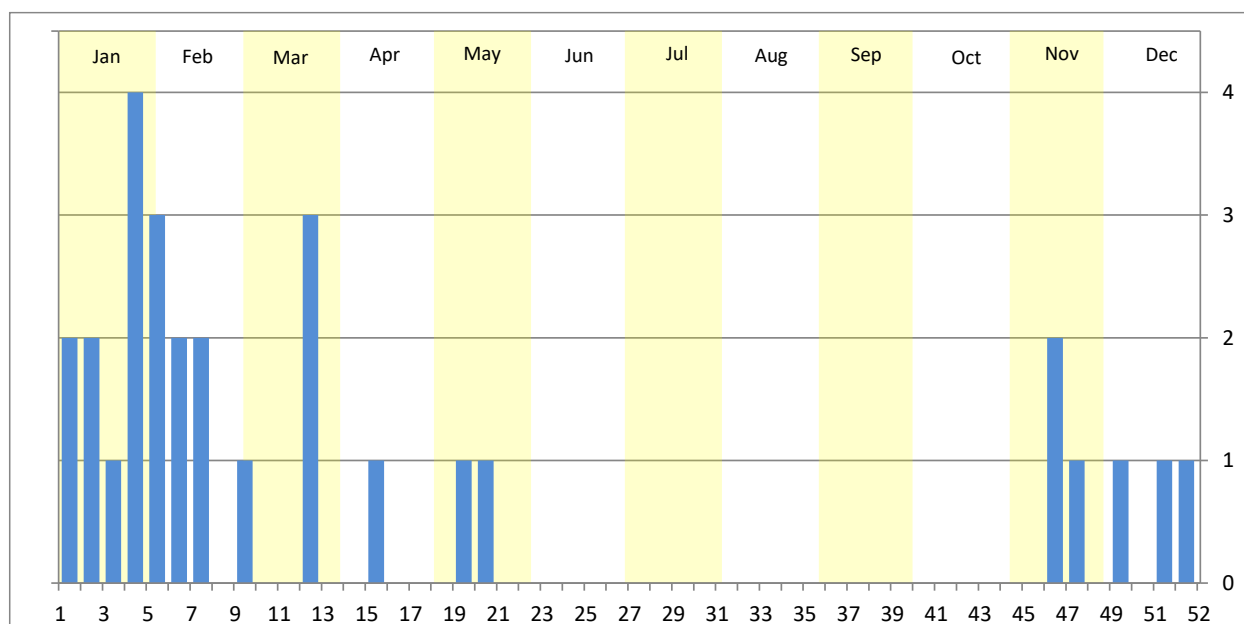


Figure 2: Glaucous Gull records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The majority of records have been from the Folkestone area (mainly Copt Point and Folkestone Harbour) with 18 records, with the others at Samphire Hoe (4), Hythe (4, including three of the four most recent sightings) and Nickolls Quarry (3).

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1961** Folkestone, first-winter (1CY), 1st March (D. F. Musson)
- 1980** Copt Point, first-winter (1CY), 26th January (R. F. Henson)
- 1981** Copt Point, sub-adult (3+CY), 2nd February (A. Parker)
- 1983** Folkestone, second-winter (2CY), 21st March (P. Howe, R. Hollingsworth)
- 1983** Copt Point and Folkestone Harbour, first-winter (1CY), 3rd December to at least 14th April 1984 (R. Henson *et al*)
- 1984** Copt Point, first-winter (1CY) (additional bird), 16th February (D. Weaver)
- 1984** Copt Point, first-winter (1CY) (additional bird), 8th April (J. Tomlinson)

1985 Copt Point, one, 5th February (P. Howe)
1986 Copt Point, sub-adult (3+CY), 10th January to 9th February (per Kent Bird Report)
1988 Copt Point, first-winter (1CY), 13th February (per Kent Bird Report)
1991 Mill Point, second-summer (3CY) flew east, 10th May (I. A. Roberts)
1992 Copt Point, first-winter (1CY) flew to Folkestone Harbour, 6th February (S. McMinn)
1995 Copt Point, first-winter (1CY), 13th January, presumed same flying over east Cheriton towards Copt Point on 26th January, also at Copt Point again on 13th February (D. A. Gibson)
1997 Samphire Hoe, first-winter (1CY) roosting on Hoe then flew towards Dover, 25th January (D. A. Gibson)
1999 Folkestone Harbour, first-winter (1CY) flew into outer harbour from east, then flew back east, 16th January (I. A. Roberts)
1999 Nickolls Quarry, adult (4+CY) on western side, 23rd January (R. K. Norman)
2000 Nickolls Quarry, immature (1+CY) on western side, 19th March (R. K. Norman)
2002 Copt Point, first-winter (1CY), 29th January (R. F. Henson)
2004 Folkestone Harbour, first-winter (1CY), 1st February (R. F. Henson)
2005 Mill Point, first-winter (1CY) flew in from east and landed on sea, 21st March (I. A. Roberts)
2006 Nickolls Quarry, first-winter (1CY), 24th November (R. K. Norman)
2007 Hythe, two first-winters (1CY) on beach opposite Stade Court, 13th November, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
2008 Samphire Hoe, first-winter (1CY), seen on six occasions between 1st January and 9th April (I. A. Roberts), commuting from in Dover Harbour where present from late December
2013 Samphire Hoe, first-winter (1CY) flew east, 20th December (I. A. Roberts)
2014 Hythe, first-winter (1CY) flew west, 27th December (I. A. Roberts)
2018 Samphire Hoe, first-winter (1CY) flew west, 23rd January (P. Smith)
2018 Hythe, first-summer (2CY), 20th May, then intermittently to 28th May and presumed same flying west there on 17th July, photographed (S. McMinn, B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
2020 Hythe, first-winter (1CY), 13th to 14th November, photographed (S. McMinn, I. A. Roberts)
2022 Folkestone Sunny Sands, one flew west, 2nd January (P. Smith)



Glaucous Gull at Hythe (Ian Roberts)



Glaucous Gull at Hythe (Brian Harper)

References

- Harrison, J. M. 1953. *The Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.
- Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2022. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.
- Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society.
- Ticehurst, N. F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

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.



The two first-winter Glaucous Gulls at Hythe on 13th November 2007 (Ian Roberts)



Glaucous Gull at Hythe (Sean McMinn)



Glaucous Gull at Hythe (Ian Roberts)