

Long-tailed Skua

<i>Scientific name</i>	Category A
Very rare vagrant.	11 records, 11 birds

World/British distribution (Gilg et al. 2013, Snow & Perrins 1998, Wynn et al. 2014):

Breeds in northern Fenno-Scandia eastwards across northernmost Siberia to the north-west Pacific coast and also in northern North America and Greenland. 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. 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.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a rare spring migrant and a scarce but increasingly regular autumn migrant to the county.

Ticehurst (1909) considered it to be the “rarest of the four species that sometimes visit the Kent coast” and had “not been able to find any record of it from Kent for the last sixty years”. Harrison (1953) noted three records in the county in 1910 and one in 1936, whilst Taylor *et al.* (1981) was able to add a further 11 records (four in spring and seven in autumn).

It remains the rarest of the four skuas that have been recorded in Kent but has become increasingly regular in occurrence. It 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.

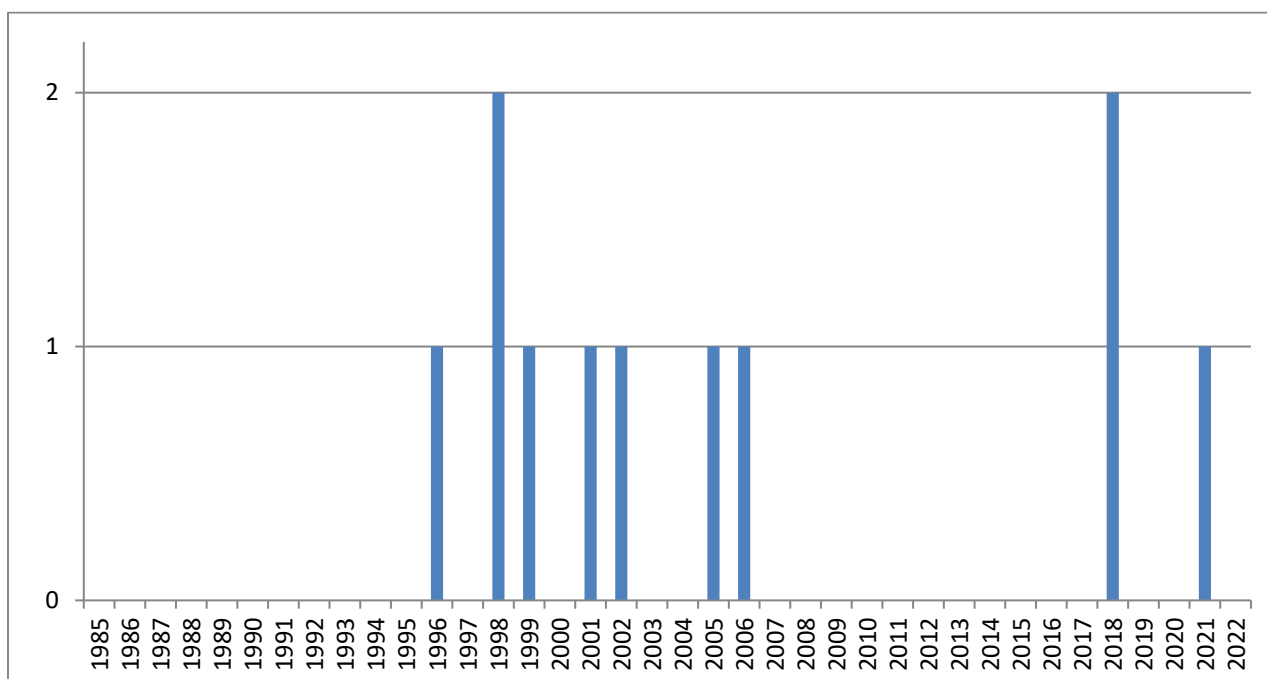


Figure 1: Long-tailed Skua records at Folkestone and Hythe

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.

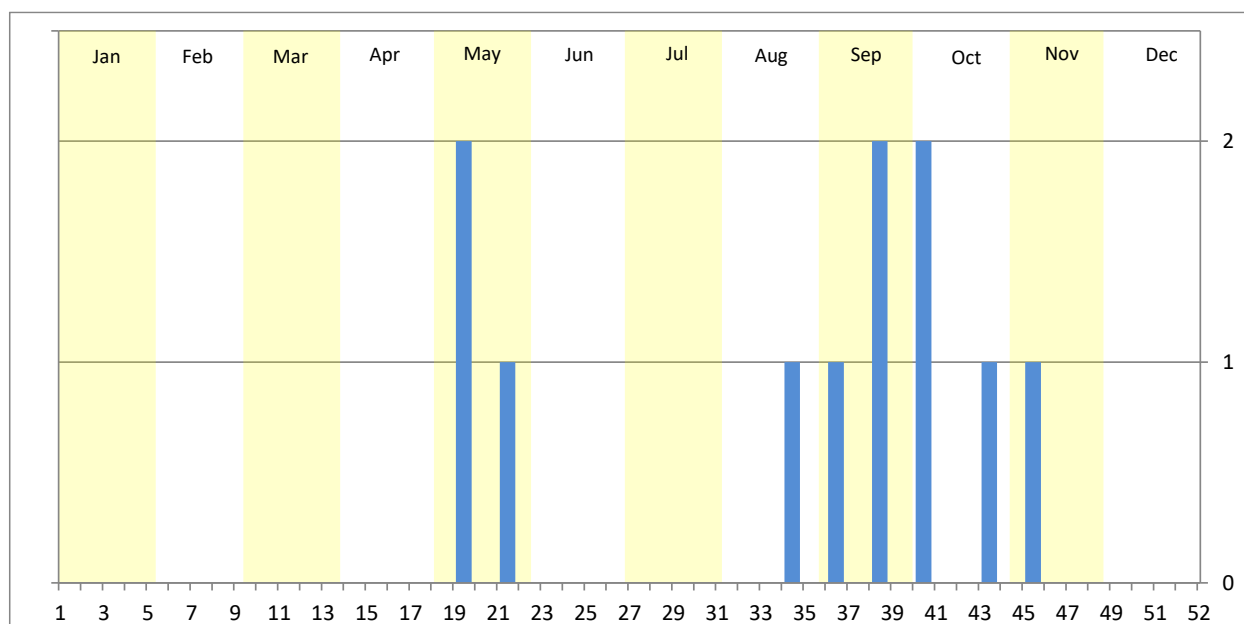


Figure 2: Long-tailed Skua records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

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 also seen off Mill Point)).



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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Acknowledgements

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

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