

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

9 records

There are two discrete breeding populations in the western Palearctic, one in Iceland and the other in Fenno-Scandia and Russia.

The former winters in Britain and Ireland, and the latter in north Germany, Denmark and Sweden, continuing to the Low Countries in cold weather.

It is uncertain whether any of this second population reaches Britain regularly.



Whooper Swan at Botolph's Bridge (Ian Roberts)

In addition a few pairs now breed in Britain, mainly in northern and western Scotland, having originated from injured birds (possibly rehabilitated to the wild), which were subsequently joined by wild birds to form a resident breeding population, for which the 2010 Rare Breeding Birds report gives a five year mean of 16 pairs.

A scarce passage migrant and winter visitor in Kent. Whilst Bewick's Swan has increased in occurrence in the county, records of Whooper Swan have remained fairly constant.

Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) records that one in Folkestone Museum was shot at Hythe by Mr. Benjamin Turner (gamekeeper of Major H. W. Deedes of the Saltwood Castle estate). The record is undated but was presumably prior to 1871 as the species was included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" published in the Folkestone Natural History Society's annual report for that year. The first dated record in the Folkestone and Hythe area was in 1959, with a further sighting in the following year, and seven since 1985 as shown in figure 1.

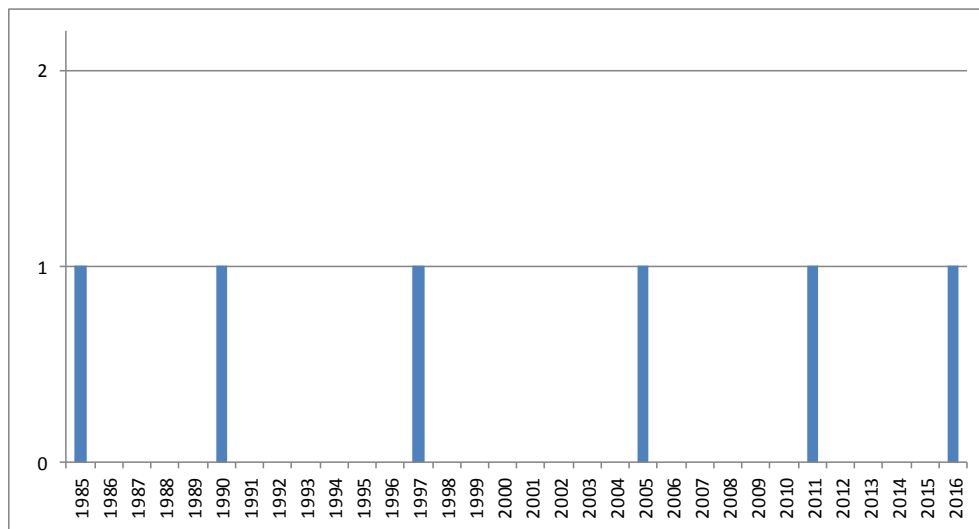


Figure 1: Whooper Swan records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

All dated records fall between 13th October (week 41) and 8th January (week 2). The records by week are given in figure 2, though there is an additional undated record from January / February.

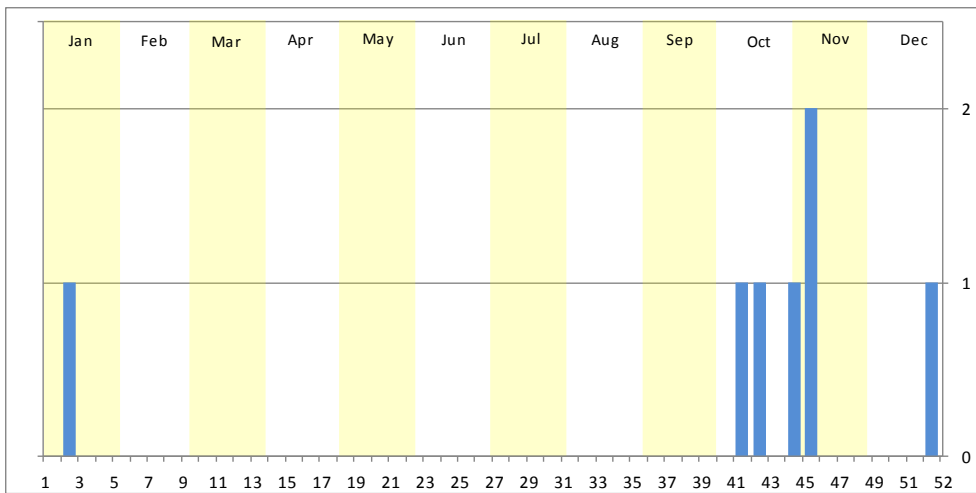


Figure 2: Whooper Swan records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3, which involved a single record from Nickoll’s Quarry. Two earlier records were also from that site, with the others at Folkestone (3), Botolph’s Bridge and Abbotscliffe.

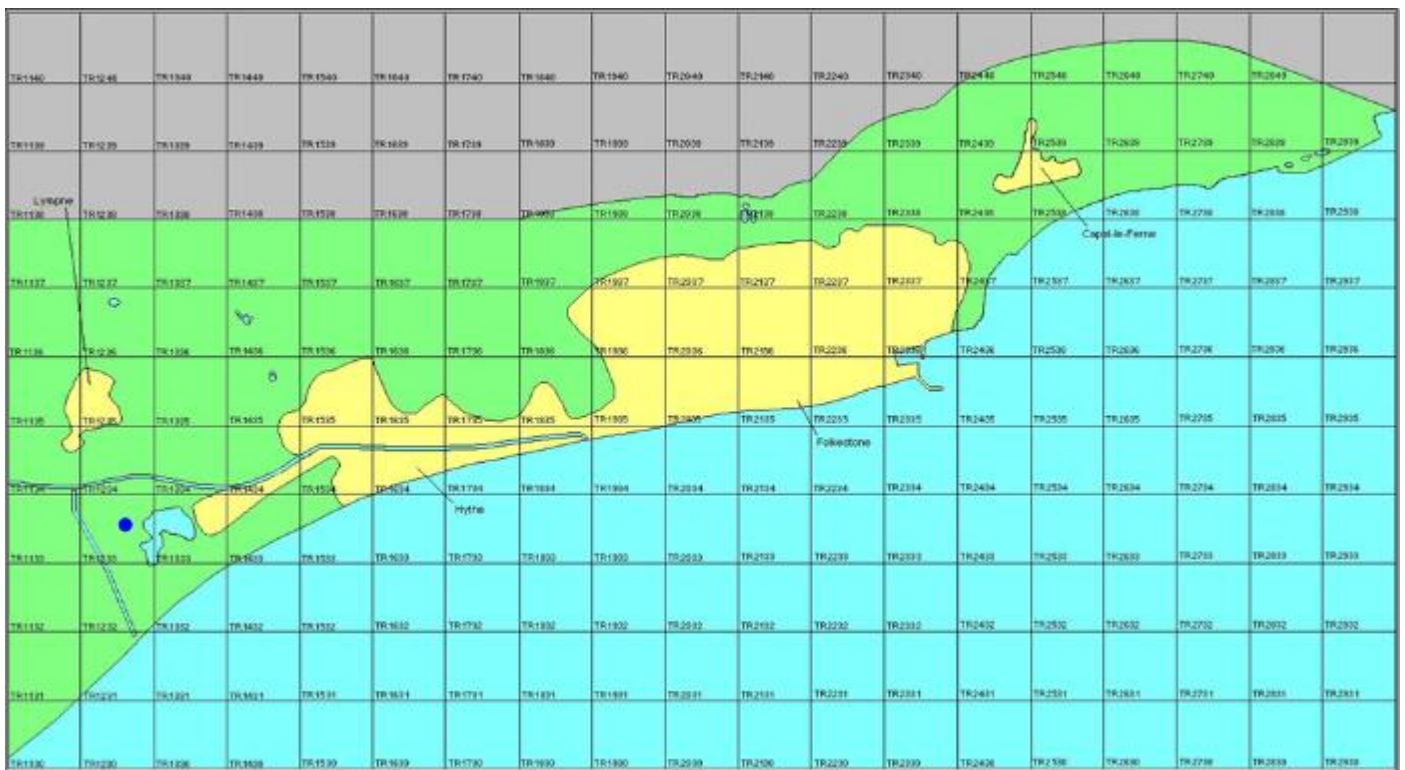


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Whooper Swan at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- Prior to 1871** Hythe, one shot, undated (B. Turner)
- 1959** Folkestone, one, 2nd November (D. F. Musson)
- 1960** Folkestone, one, 13th October (D. F. Musson)
- 1985** Folkestone, eight flew south-west, 8th January (reported)
- 1990** Nickoll’s Quarry, three that were present in the Dymchurch area in January / February were reportedly seen at Nickoll’s Quarry on occasion (reported)
- 1997** Abbotscliffe, two flew south, 20th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Nickoll’s Quarry, three flew east, 28th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Nickoll’s Quarry, two flew west, 9th November (M. Casemore)
- 2016** Botolph’s Bridge, adult, 6th to 16th November, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts, N. Webster *et al*)



Whooper Swan at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)