

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor

29 records

Birds seen in Kent are of the form *albifrons*, which breeds in northern Russia (Novaya Zemlya, Kolguev, Arkhangel'sk and Kanin Peninsula), and winters in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and England.

A regular passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent, particularly to the Sheppey and Walland Marshes. White-fronted Goose numbers in the county increased considerably between 1900 and 1970, and Kent now supports a nationally important wintering population. Numbers increase considerably when there is severe weather on the continent.



White-fronted Goose at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)

Whilst passage birds are often recorded from October, the main arrival of winter flocks in Kent often coincides with periods of cold weather in December, or occasionally in early January.

Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) states that one shot at Hythe in the winter of 1891 was in the collection of Mr. H. Stredwick, of St. Leonard's, where he had seen it. He also records that one in Folkestone Museum was shot "on the Warren near that town" (though is not dated) and that the Tournay collection at Hythe also contains a specimen but has no details at all.

The next two records came in 1958, and there were subsequent records in 1963 and 1969, but then only one further sighting (in 1980) until 1993. Since then however it has occurred with some regularity, being seen in 12 of out of the 21 years, as shown in figure 1. Whilst there have been a total of 21 records across this 22 year period, occurrence varies considerably, with three records in some years and several gaps of 2 or 3 years without any.

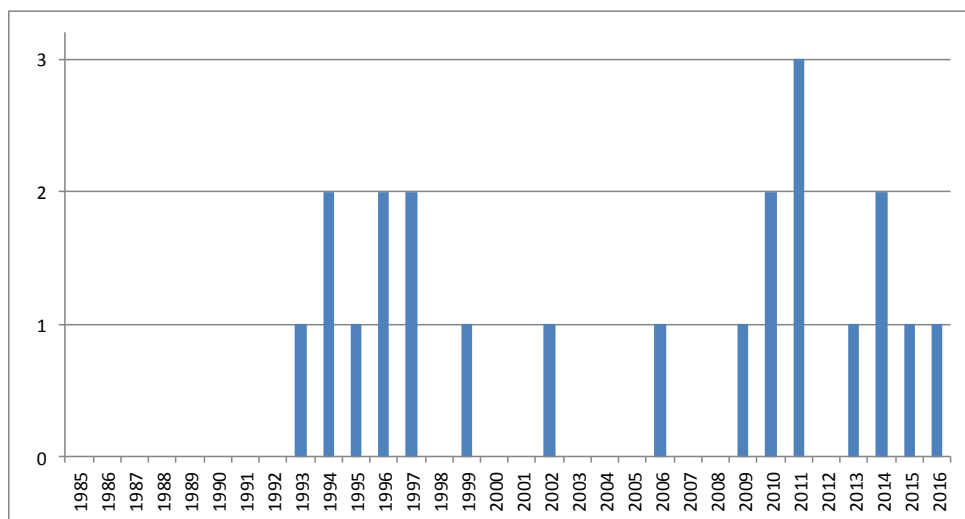


Figure 1: White-fronted Goose records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Apart from sightings on 12th November 2011, 11th March 1958 and 19th March 2002, all have been recorded between the 22nd December (week 51) and 25th February (week 8), with a peak of six sightings in the last week of December, as shown in figure 2.

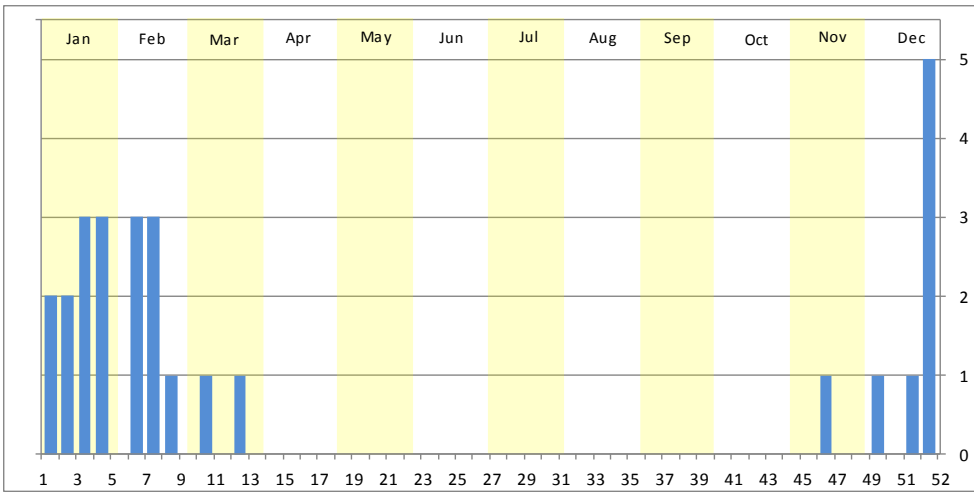


Figure 2: White-fronted Goose records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. Apart from a flock seen flying over Saltwood, all records were from Romney Marsh (Botolph’s Bridge, Donkey Street and Nickoll’s Quarry). Other records, listed in full below, are from Nickoll’s Quarry (7), Hythe (3), Hythe Ranges (2), Copt Point (2), Abbotscliffe, Folkestone, Palmarsh, Samphire Hoe, Westenhangar and the Willop Basin.

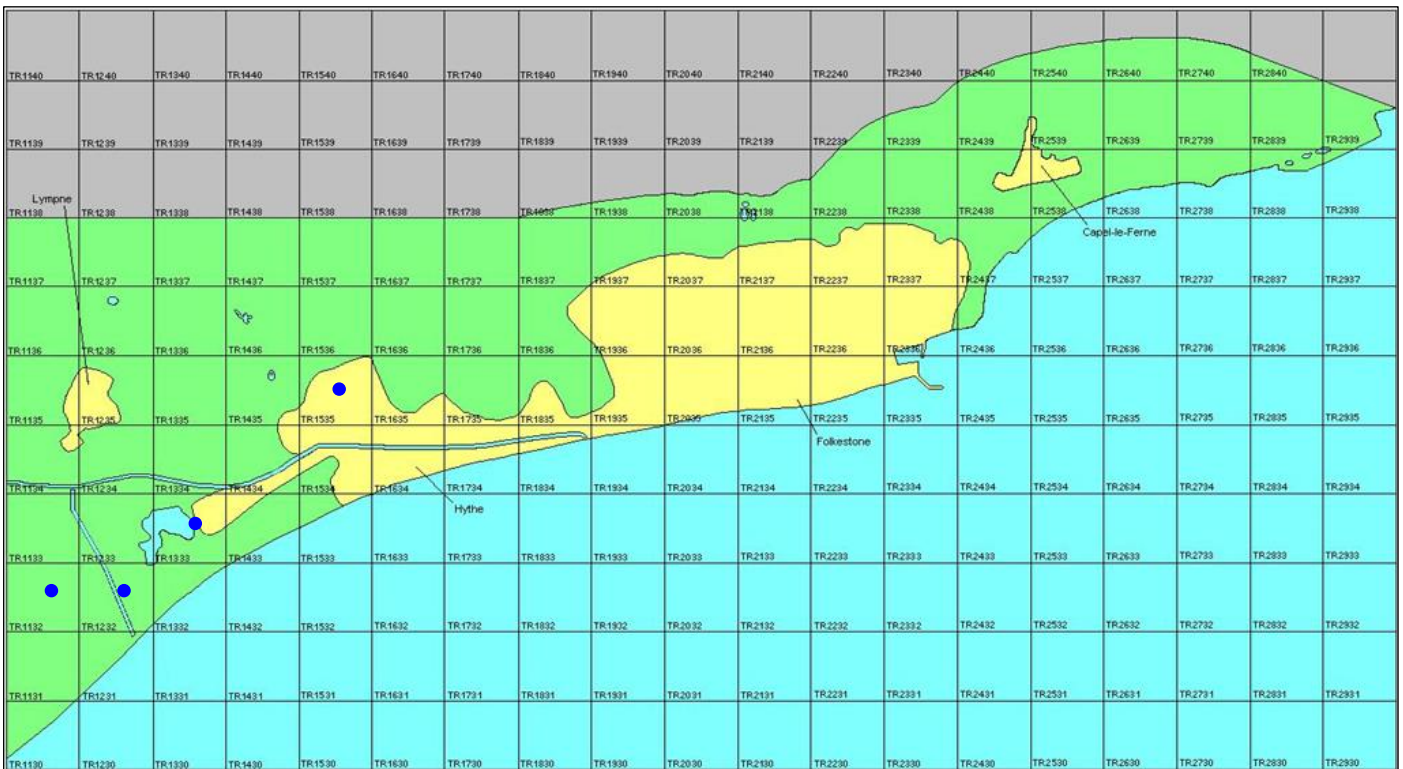


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of White-fronted Goose at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1891** Hythe, one shot in winter (per Ticehurst, 1909)
- Prior to 1909** Folkestone Warren, one shot, undated (per Ticehurst, 1909)
- 1958** Hythe Ranges, 47 (in flocks of 18 and 29) flew north-west, 9th February (R. K. Norman)
- 1958** Pennypot Farm, Palmarsh (now Pennypot Estate), 11th March (R. K. Norman)
- 1963** Hythe, 100, 3rd January (W. S. Nevin)
- 1969** Nickoll’s Quarry, ten, 13th January (R. K. Norman)
- 1980** Hythe Roughs, 15 flew west, 27th January (D. J. Weaver)
- 1993** Hythe, six flew east, 30th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 1994** Copt Point, 26 flew west, 16th January (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Nickoll’s Quarry, one, 25th February (R. K. Norman)

- 1995** Folkestone, 24 flew north, 24th December (P. Howe, H. G. Brown)
- 1996** Nickoll's Quarry, 29 flew east, 14th January (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Nickoll's Quarry, one, 5th to 7th February (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Abbotscliffe, 75 flew out to sea, 25th January (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Copt Point, two flew west, 17th February (D. A. Gibson)
- 1999** Hythe Ranges, 80 flew west, 27th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Nickoll's Quarry, three flew east, 19th March (R. K. Norman)
- 2006** Folkestone Racecourse lake (Westenhanger), 14, 11th February, with 7 remaining until the 19th (I. A. Roberts, D. Brown)
- 2009** Botolph's Bridge, one, 2nd January (D. Brown)
- 2010** Donkey Street, 180, 22nd December, with 3 remaining until the 24th (I. A. Roberts, B. Harper)
- 2010** Nickoll's Quarry, 300 flew in from the south and back out to sea, 25th December (D. Weller)
- 2011** Saltwood, 12 flew south, 16th January (P. Howe)
- 2011** Nickoll's Quarry, six flew over, 12th November, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2011** Nickoll's Quarry, six flew west, 5th December (R. K. Norman)
- 2013** Samphire Hoe, two flew east, 12th February (I. A. Roberts, P. Smith)
- 2014** Princes Parade, Seabrook, adult flew west, 26th January (I. A. Roberts)
- 2014** Nickoll's Quarry, six flew west, 28th December, photographed, earlier seen over Seabrook (B. Harper, D. Wrathall)
- 2015** Willop Basin, adult, 15th February, photographed (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
- 2016** West Hythe, eight flew south-west, 17th January (I. A. Roberts)



White-fronted Geese at Nickoll's Quarry (Brian Harper)



White-fronted Goose at the Willop Basin (Brian Harper)