

Sooty Shearwater

Puffinus griseus

Category A

Rare passage migrant

46 records

Breeds in the sub-Antarctic, with most migrating rapidly across equatorial seas to winter in the temperate zones of the North Atlantic and North Pacific. Northward movements begin in late March but are mostly in April to May, when travels up the western North Atlantic into North American waters, where most are still concentrated in June; begins spreading across temperate North Atlantic in July, becoming widespread off north-west European coasts in August to October, with stragglers remaining into late November / early December.

A scarce but regular autumn migrant to Kent.

The first area record is given in *The Birds of Kent* by Harrison (1953) and was seen by the author: “whilst approaching Folkestone, and perhaps four or five miles offshore, on August 26th, 1948, I observed a single Sooty Shearwater flying south-west down the Channel”. After a gap of over 25 years, the next sighting involved one seen off Hythe in 1979. However, following the third record in 1988, the species has since been recorded with some regularity, being noted in 16 of the last 24 years, as demonstrated by figure 1. The best year to date was 2000, with six records involving a total of 25 birds, including a count of 8 on the 28th September and a flock of five together on the 2nd November. The highest count to date (11) was recorded at Hythe in 2014. Records are generally associated with strong onshore winds.

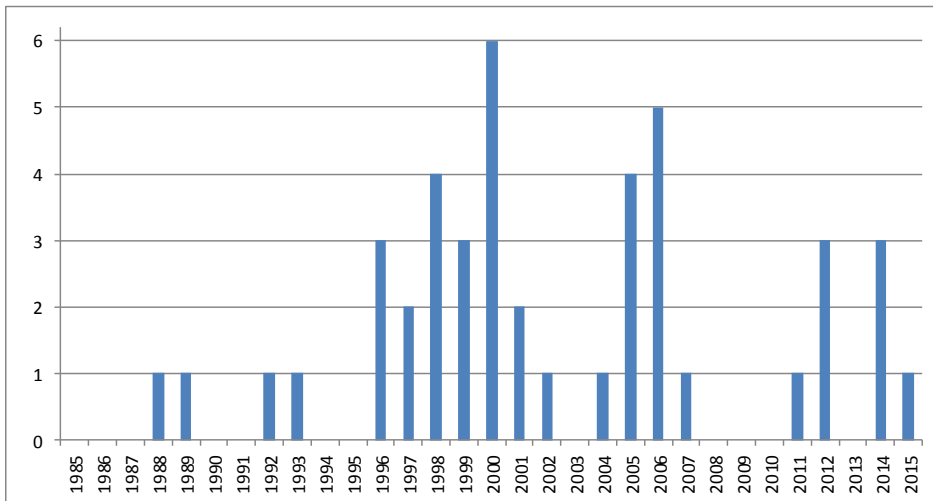


Figure 1: Sooty Shearwater records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Apart from particularly early and late birds on 27th July (1993) and 7th December (1997), all have been recorded between 18th August (week 33) and 11th November (week 46), with a peak in late September / early October. The records by week are given in figure 2.

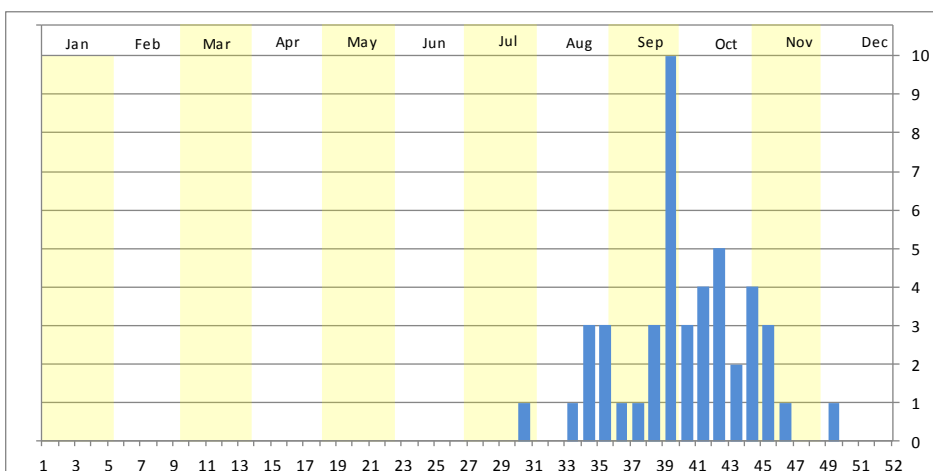


Figure 2: Sooty Shearwater records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The vast majority of records are from the Copt Point / Folkestone Pier / Mill Point area (36), with four at Samphire Hoe and Hythe. The first area record is only given as "Folkestone".

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1948** At sea, one flew west 4-5 miles off Folkestone, 26th August (per Harrison, 1953)
- 1979** Hythe, one, 18th August (Dungeness Bird Observatory)
- 1988** Mill Point, one flew west, 1st September (I. A. Roberts)
- 1989** Folkestone Pier, one flew west, 28th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1992** Copt Point, two flew west, 24th September (D. A. Gibson)
- 1993** Folkestone Pier, one on sea, 27th July (D. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Copt Point, two flew west, 23rd August (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Copt Point, one flew west, 18th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Copt Point, one flew east, 10th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew west, 21st October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Copt Point, one flew west, 7th December (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Copt Point, two flew west, 10th September (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Copt Point, one flew east, 30th September (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Copt Point, one flew west, 14th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Copt Point, one flew east, 21st October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1999** Copt Point, one flew east, 22nd August (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1999** Copt Point, one flew west, 18th September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1999** Copt Point, two flew west, 20th September (D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Copt Point, eight flew west, 28th September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2000** Copt Point, six flew west, 29th September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2000** Copt Point, four flew west, 12th October (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew west, 28th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2000** Copt Point, flock of five flew west, 2nd November (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew west, 11th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2001** Copt Point, one flew east, 5th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2001** Copt Point, four flew west, 7th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Copt Point, four (two east, two west), 2nd September (I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Copt Point, one flew west, 18th September (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Copt Point, one flew west, 21st October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Mill Point, one, 24th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Copt Point, one flew west, 3rd November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2005** Copt Point, three, 8th November (D. A. Gibson)
- 2006** Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 7th September (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 24th September (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Copt Point, one, 24th September (D. A. Gibson), considered different to bird seen at Samphire Hoe
- 2006** Copt Point, one flew west, 30th September (I. A. Roberts)
- 2006** Copt Point, two flew west, 1st October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2007** Copt Point, three flew west, 24th September (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 9th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Copt Point, one flew west, 23rd September (D. A. Gibson)
- 2012** Samphire Hoe, one flew east, 25th September (per D. E. Smith)
- 2012** Folkestone Beach, one flew east, 4th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2014** Hythe, 11 flew west, 8th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2014** Hythe, one flew west, 18th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2014** Hythe, two flew west, 2nd November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2015** Copt Point, two, 26th August (D. A. Gibson)