

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritus

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor

49 records

Breeds in northern Europe from Iceland, across Fenno-Scandia into Russia, with small numbers in Scotland. Winters mostly around coasts of western Europe. The 2010 Rare Breeding Bird report documents a steep decline (of nearly 70%) in the British population since the early 1990s, and concludes that “the situation appears critical – there is little doubt that the Slavonian Grebe is in big trouble as a British breeding species”.

A scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent.

Harrison in his *The Birds of Kent* (1953) refers to one seen on the sea off Folkestone by Miss A. V. Stone on the 16th February 1939 and this was followed by two records in the 1950s - singles seen off Folkestone by John Hollyer in 1954 and at Nickolls Quarry by Roger Norman in 1958. Dave Weaver recorded another at the latter site in 1979. Since 1985 however this species has occurred with some regularity, with records in 19 of the 34 years to 2018, as demonstrated by figure 1. In 1996 there was an exceptional influx, with ten records, including six in February, one of which involved a count of five individuals (off Copt Point on the 21st) – the record day total to date.

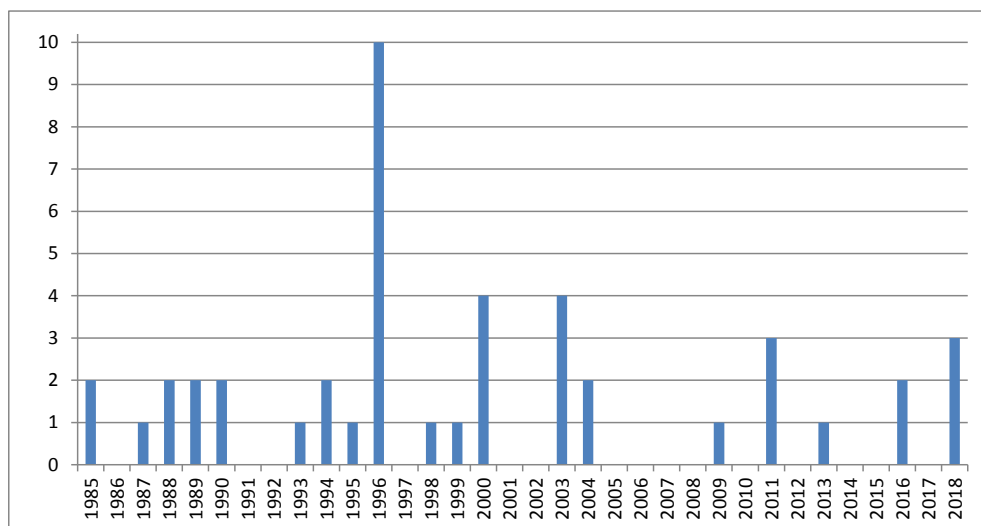


Figure 1: Slavonian Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Autumn records are relatively rare, with just one in October and two in November. This species is more regularly encountered from December through to February, and on spring passage in March and April. The latest record involved a bird in full breeding plumage at Nickolls Quarry from 27th April to 4th May 1994. The records by week are given in figure 2, and there is a further undated record from December.

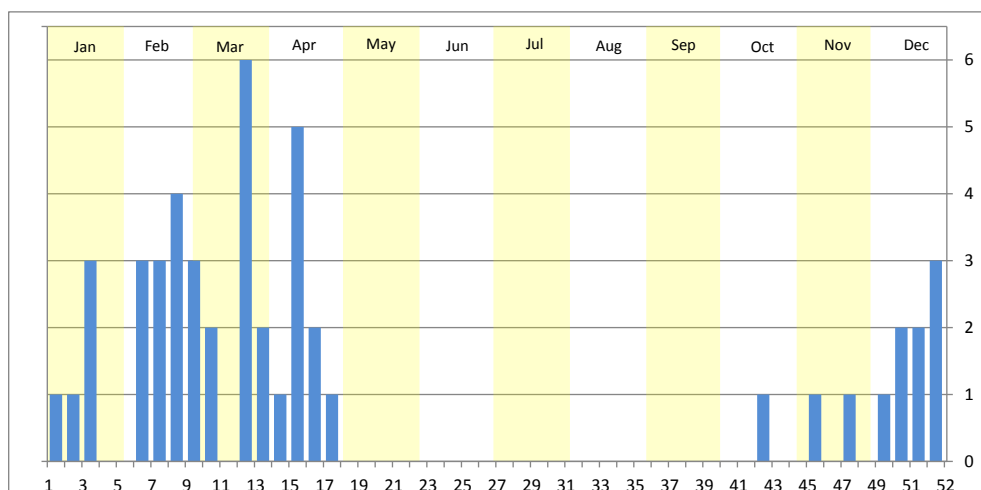


Figure 2: Slavonian Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. As with the other scarce grebes most sightings are either from Nickolls Quarry (10) and coastal sites: Copt Point (15), Mill Point (5), Hythe (4), Samphire Hoe (4), Sandgate (3), Hythe Redoubt (2), Folkestone (2), Folkestone Harbour and Princes Parade, with one record from the canal at Hythe, near the Hotel Imperial from late December 1989 into early January.

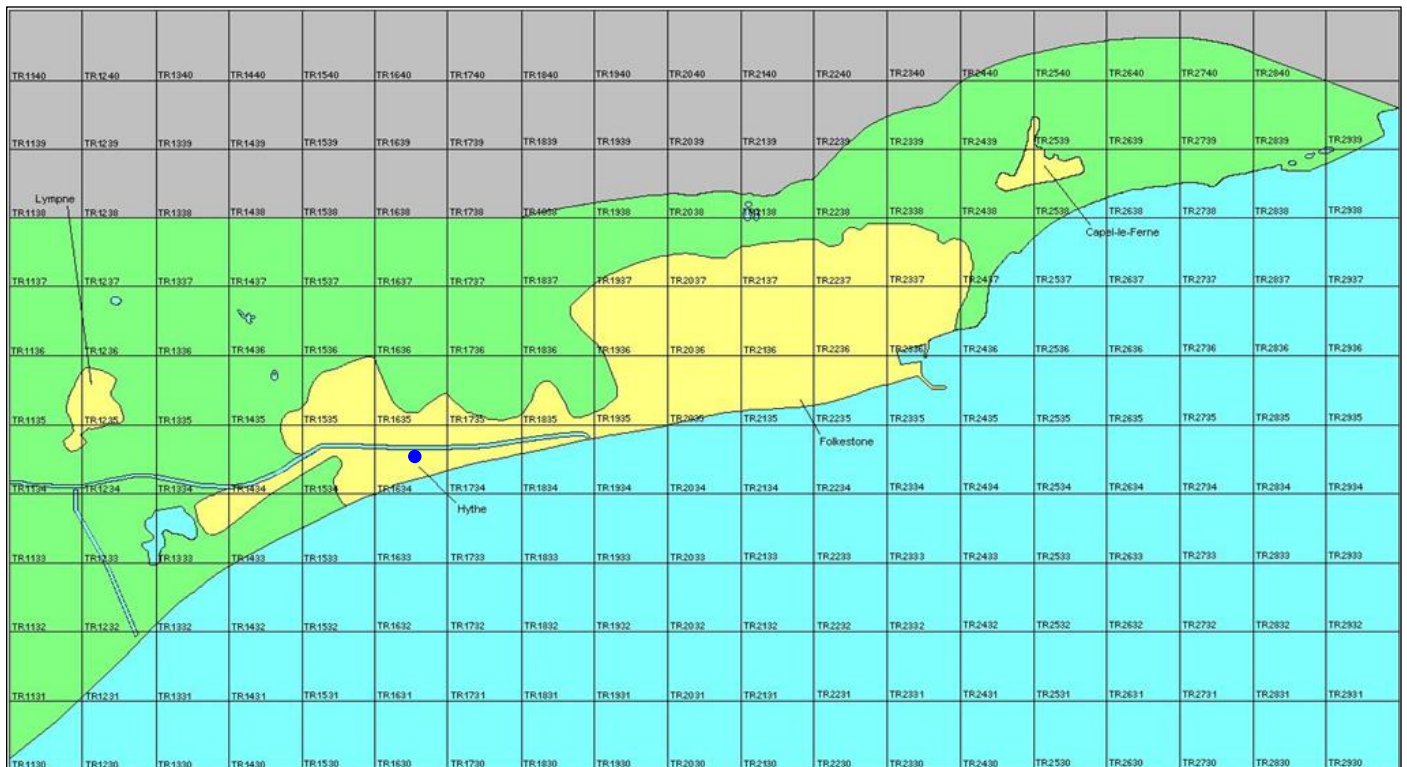


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Slavonian Grebe at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1939** Folkestone, one on the sea, 16th February (A. V. Stone)
- 1954** Folkestone, one, 19th February (J. N. Hollyer)
- 1958** Nickolls Quarry, one rapidly achieving breeding plumage, 13th to 20th April (R. K. Norman)
- 1979** Nickolls Quarry, one, 10th March (D. Weaver)
- 1985** Copt Point, one, 19th January (reported)
- 1985** Nickolls Quarry, two, 16th to 17th February (R. & S. Philpott)
- 1987** Nickolls Quarry, one, 21st February (P. Miller)
- 1988** Copt Point, one, 8th December (reported)
- 1988** Copt Point, two, 28th December (reported)
- 1989** Nickolls Quarry, one, 7th to 22nd April (J. Sanderson, I. Andrews, I. A. Roberts *et al*)
- 1989** Hythe Canal (Hythe Imperial), one, late December to 6th January 1990 (I. A. Roberts, J. P. Siddle *et al*)
- 1990** Mill Point, one, 19th January (I. A. Roberts)
- 1990** Copt Point, one, 31st December (reported)
- 1993** Copt Point, one, 2nd March (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Hythe Redoubt, one, 5th March (R. K. Norman)
- 1994** Nickolls Quarry, one in full breeding plumage, 27th April to 4th May (R. K. Norman)
- 1995** Nickolls Quarry, one, 19th November (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Folkestone Harbour, one, 9th February (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Sandgate, one, 10th February (P. Howe, H. G. Brown, R. Thorogood)
- 1996** Copt Point, one, 11th February (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Copt Point, one, 17th February (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Nickolls Quarry, two, 21st February to 22nd March (R. K. Norman)
- 1996** Copt Point, five, 21st February (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Sandgate, one, 19th to 21st March (P. Howe, H. G. Brown, R. Thorogood)
- 1996** Copt Point, one, 4th November (I. A. Roberts)

1996 Sandgate, one, 13th December (P. Howe, H. G. Brown, R. Thorogood)
1996 Hythe, two, 18th December (I. A. Roberts)
1998 Samphire Hoe, one, 2nd March (D. E. Smith)
1999 Nickolls Quarry, one, 17th October (R. K. Norman)
2000 Copt Point, one, 16th January (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
2000 Copt Point, one, 19th March (I. A. Roberts)
2000 Copt Point, one, 9th December (I. A. Roberts)
2000 Hythe, one, 23rd December (I. A. Roberts)
2003 Nickolls Quarry, one, 7th January (R. K. Norman)
2003 Hythe Redoubt, two, 3rd March (I. A. Roberts)
2003 Copt Point, two, 15th April (I. A. Roberts)
2003 Copt Point, three, 21st April (I. A. Roberts)
2004 Mill Point, one on the sea, 11th January (I. A. Roberts)
2004 Copt Point, one, 13th April (I. A. Roberts)
2009 Hythe, one, 19th December (B. Harper)
2011 Hythe, two, 20th March (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)
2011 Samphire Hoe, two, 27th March (G. Burton)
2011 Mill Point, one, 19th April (I. A. Roberts)
2013 Samphire Hoe, two flew east, 24th March (I. A. Roberts)
2016 Mill Point, one, 20th March (B. Harper)
2016 Hythe, one, 24th March (S. McMinn)
2018 Princes Parade, one, 27th March (B. Harper)
2018 Samphire Hoe, three on the sea, 12th April (S. Cutt)
2018 Mill Point, two on the sea, 13th April (O. Leyshon)

In addition small grebes, not identified to species, but thought most likely to be Slavonian have been recorded as follows. These are not included from the statistics above.

1951 Hythe Redoubt, one, 19th January (R. K. Norman)
1994 Nickolls Quarry, one, 24th February (reported by an angler, per R. K. Norman)
1998 Copt Point, one, 22nd October (I. A. Roberts)