

Black-necked Grebe

Podiceps nigricollis

Category A

Very rare vagrant

18 records

Breeds from France eastwards across central Europe into Russia, with a small population in Britain, mostly in Scotland. Winters on lakes and coastal waters generally south of the breeding range, including southern Britain. The 2010 Rare Breeding Bird Report gave a total of 38-49 breeding pairs, which was lower than the five year mean of 51 breeding pairs, and continues the steady decline in numbers and distribution over the last 10-15 years.



Black-necked Grebes at Seabrook (Brian Harper)

A scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent, which has bred occasionally in recent years, including three pairs which fledged six young at one site in 2010.

First recorded at Folkestone and Hythe in 1958, with another in 1960, but then there was a twenty year gap before two in consecutive years in 1980 and 1981. Another 14 have been recorded since 1985, as shown in figure 1.

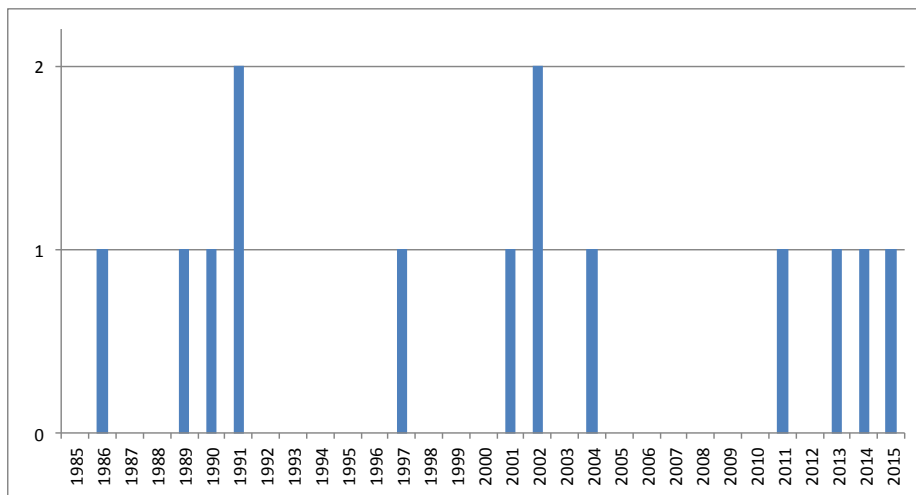


Figure 1: Black-necked Grebe records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

The majority have occurred either in winter or on spring passage. Winter arrival dates are relatively late, with the earliest not until the 8th December (week 49), and are generally associated with the onset of severe weather. Spring migrants have generally been recorded between mid-March and mid-April, with the latest on 24th April. There are intriguing records from Nickoll’s Quarry of an “immature” on 26th August 1990 and of three birds present on an unspecified date in August 2002, which might related to dispersal from local breeding sites, possibly within the county. The arrival dates by week are shown in figure 2.

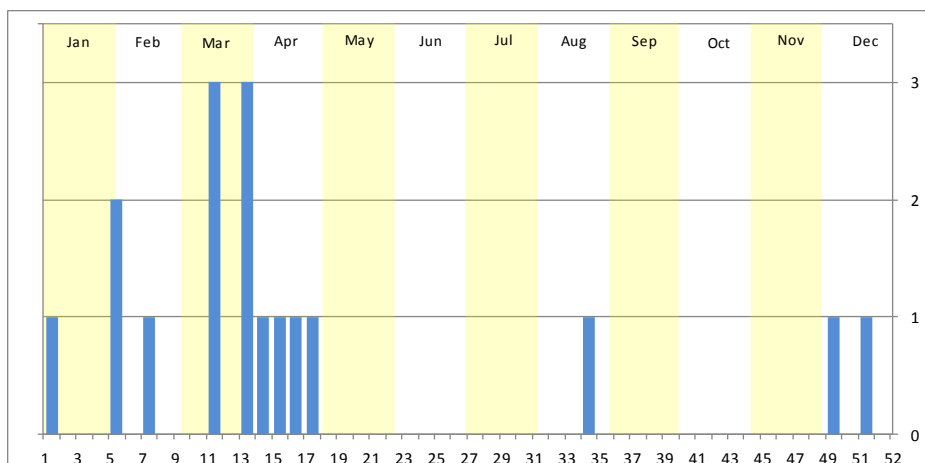


Figure 2: Black-necked Grebe records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

As might be expected, records are almost entirely from Nickoll's Quarry (5) or coastal sites: Copt Point (3), Seabrook (3), Folkestone (2), Mill Point (2) and Sandgate (2) and though one did spend a week on the Hythe Canal, near the Imperial Golf Course during hard weather in 1991. Most other records relate to birds present on just a single date, though an individual (possibly the one from Hythe Canal) at Nickoll's Quarry in 1991 lingered for 12 days, whilst the first area record is the longest stayer so far (assuming it involved just one bird), at 43 days.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1958** Nickoll's Quarry, one, 13th to 15th March (R. K. Norman), presumed same on 21st to 23rd March, and 3rd to 25th April (E. J. Pilcher)
- 1960** Folkestone, four, 1st April (D. F. Musson)
- 1980** Folkestone, one, 8th December (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1981** Sandgate, one, 29th January (per Kent Bird Report)
- 1986** Copt Point, one, 17th April (reported)
- 1989** Mill Point, one flew west, 17th December (I. A. Roberts)
- 1990** Nickoll's Quarry, immature, 26th August (P. Miller)
- 1991** Hythe Canal, one, 4th to 10th February (reported)
- 1991** Nickoll's Quarry, one, 13th to 24th February (R. K. Norman)
- 1997** Sandgate, two, 5th January (P. Howe)
- 2001** Copt Point, one in breeding plumage on the sea, 24th April (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Copt Point, one flew east, 26th March (reported)
- 2002** Nickoll's Quarry, three, date not given in August (per Kent Bird Report)
- 2004** Seabrook, two in breeding plumage on the sea, 29th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Seabrook, three in breeding plumage on the sea, 12th March, photographed (B. Harper; I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Nickoll's Quarry, one, 12th April, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2014** Mill Point, one flew east, 29th March (I. A. Roberts)
- 2015** Seabrook, one on the sea, drifting east, 15th March (B. Harper, I. A. Roberts)



Black-necked Grebe at Nickoll's Quarry (Brian Harper)