

Gyr Falcon

Falco rusticolus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

1 record

Breeds in Greenland, Iceland, Fenno-Scandia and Russia. The high arctic Greenland population, mostly of the white type, winters several hundred kilometres south on coasts of southern Greenland, some crossing regularly to Iceland for winter, a few also reaching Britain and Ireland more or less annually. Continental populations are mainly resident and dispersive, with some (especially juveniles) wandering south and west in autumn.

There had been 387 records in Britain to the end of 2010, the vast majority of which were in northern and western Scotland.

The Folkestone and Hythe sighting in 1979 remains the only Kent record to date.

The only area record is as follows:

1979 East Cliff, Folkestone, one white phase, 28th April (J. N. Hollyer, P. R. Laslett)

Some details of the first area record are given below.

Gyr Falcon at Folkestone

28th April 1979

The 1979 Kent Bird Report provides the following details of the sighting:

The observers were able to watch this bird in flight, at close range, for about ten minutes, and the following points are taken from their field notes: a very pale, large, triangular winged falcon, flying with shallow wing beats like those of a Fulmar. Head snowy white, with no marked moustachial streak, but an eye smudge. Upperparts pale grey, similar to Fulmar. Underparts white, with tiny black dots. Underwing very pale, with fine pale barring and darker primaries. Tail longish, underside appearing grey.