

White-winged Black Tern

Chlidonias leucopterus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

2 records

Breeds in eastern Europe from eastern Poland and eastern Romania into Russia. Winters at inland water bodies of Afrotropical region. A scarce passage migrant through northern and western Europe, including Britain.

A scarce passage migrant to Kent with 98 records to the end of 2010. All county records have occurred between the 3rd May and the 26th October, with over two-thirds arriving between August and October.

Harrison in his *The Birds of Kent* (1953) notes that “on the afternoon of 15th May 1951 Sir Henry Woodward saw a bird off the sea front, between Sandgate and Hythe, which he believed was a White-winged Black Tern. His original description (20th May 1951) states: ‘I saw a tern appearing about 100 yards out, parallel to the shore, and was struck by its dark body – I observed it till it was out of recognisable distance and at its closest it was about 30 yards off – the body and head were all very dark, but the wings were almost white’. In a subsequent letter (12th June 1951) the observer adds: ‘the dark body was noticeable as soon as I caught sight of it about 100 yards off and I never took my eyes off it until it had passed out of sight... The whitish wings, particularly at the shoulder, were very distinct and noticeable – it was alone’. I consider his identification substantiated”.

The only recent record concerns a juvenile which flew west past Copt Point on the 24th September 1992 and was later seen passing Dungeness. The recent record is shown in figure 1.

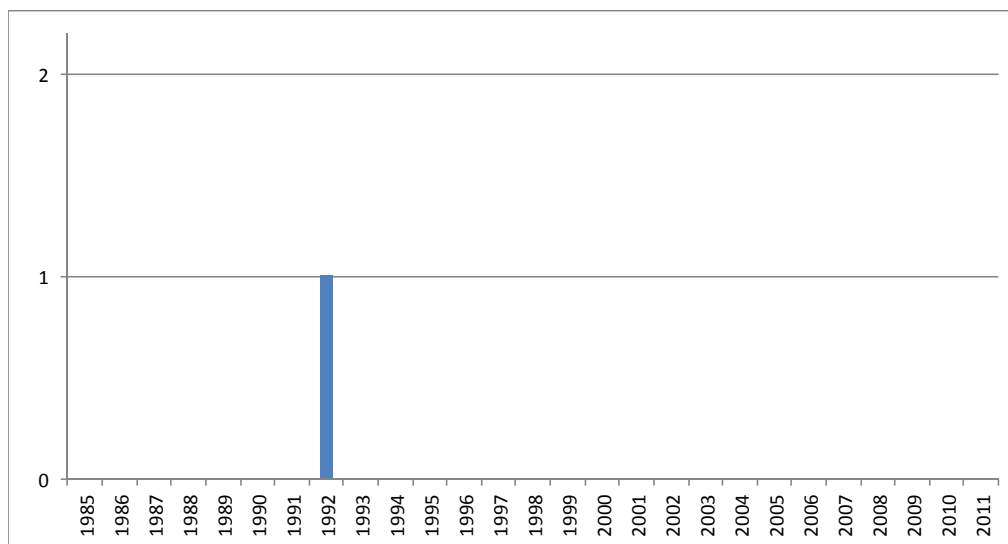


Figure 1: White-winged Black Tern records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

One record occurred in spring and the other in autumn, as demonstrated by figure 2.

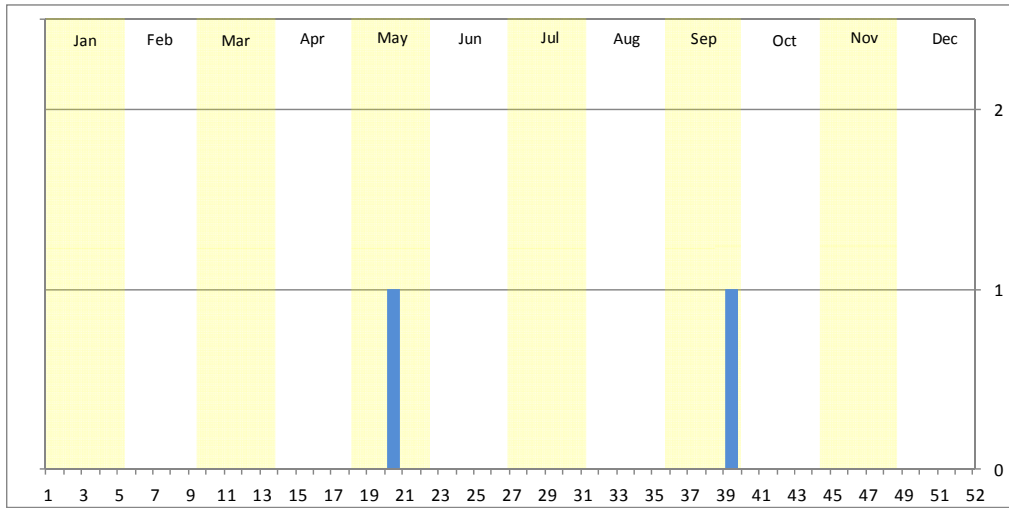


Figure 2: White-winged Black Tern records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The full list of records is as follows:

1951 Sandgate, adult, 15th May (H. Woodward)

1992 Copt Point, first-winter flew west, 24th September (D. A. Gibson), later seen off Dungeness