

Leach's Petrel

Oceanodroma leucorhoa

Category A

Very rare vagrant

10 records

Breeds on remote islands around the coasts of Ireland and Scotland, with colonies also on the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Norway. Migrates south to winter to winter in regions of tropical convergences. A regular passage migrant into the North Sea with small numbers forced south to the English Channel by severe weather.

A scarce but regular autumn visitor to Kent.

The species was included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" published in the Folkestone Natural History Society's annual report for 1871. This list covered an area of six mile radius of Folkestone town hall.



Leach's Petrel at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, it is very likely that the record would have been from the coast, and so would most probably have been within the modern boundary. Knight and Tolputt's list is included by Henry Ulyett in his *Rambles of a Naturalist Round Folkestone* (1880) and Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) makes mention of the reference to the species in Ulyett's book.

The next sighting did not occur until 1958 and then there was another long gap before the one in October 2000. A second bird was seen the following day, however, and the next five years produced another four records, as shown in figure 1, but there have only been two since 2005 (both in 2013).

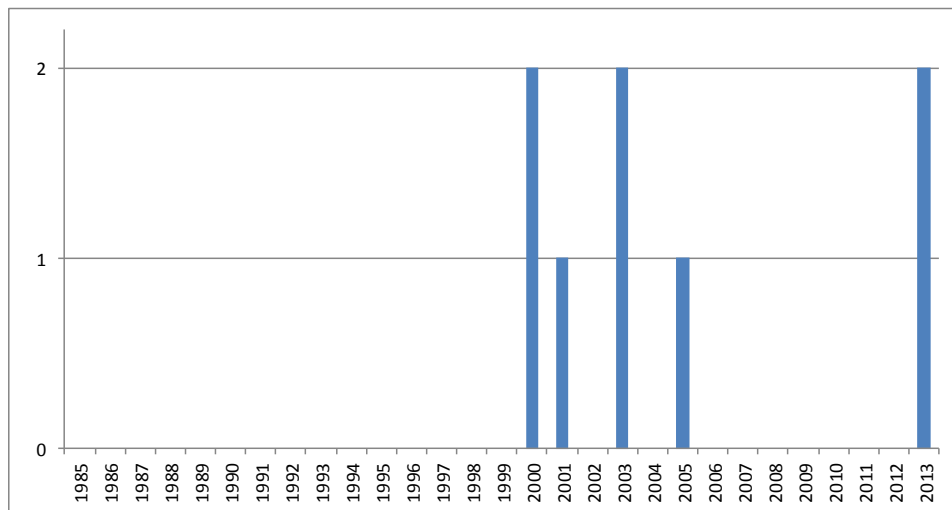


Figure 1: Leach's Petrel records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

All have been recorded between the 26th October (week 43) and 24th November (week 47). The arrival dates by week are shown in figure 2.

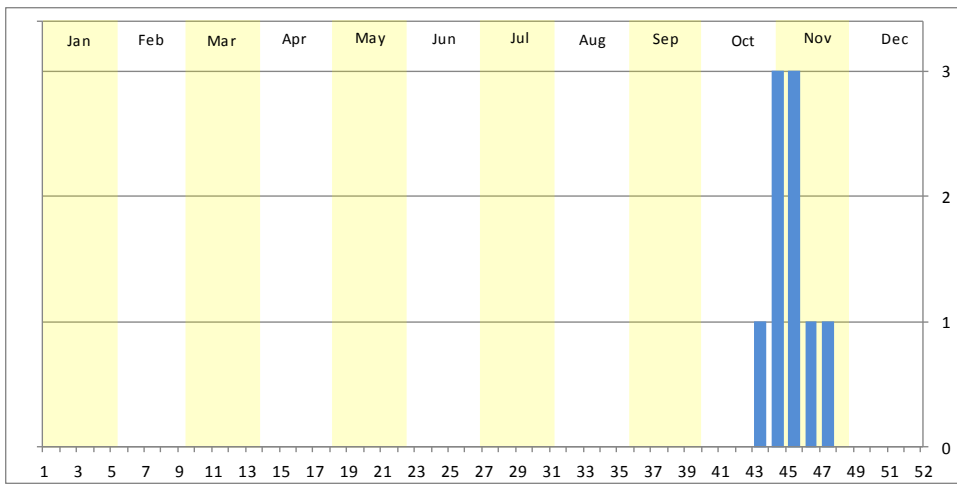


Figure 2: Leach's Petrel records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The first area record relates to a bird which was caught and released the following day and two of the subsequent records involve individuals found on cross-channel ferries and taken to Samphire Hoe for release (both in 2003). The other five records, which involved a total of six birds, were of birds flying past seawatching points.

The full list of dated records is as follows:

- 1958** Folkestone Harbour, one caught, 8th November, was released the following day (W. G. Fluke, R. B. Codd)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew west, 28th October (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Copt Point, one flew slowly west, landing twice on the sea, 29th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2001** Copt Point, two flew west, one lingering for c.10 minutes, 26th October (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Samphire Hoe, one found on a cross-channel ferry was released, 15th November, photographed (P. Holt *et al*)
- 2003** Samphire Hoe, one found on a cross-channel ferry was released, 24th November, photographed (P. Holt *et al*)
- 2005** Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 10th November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2013** Folkestone, one seen from RV Endeavour four miles south of Folkestone, 31st October (per Rare Bird Alert)
- 2013** Samphire Hoe, one flew west, 5th November (I. A. Roberts)



Leach's Petrel at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)



Leach's Petrel at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

In addition, there is a record of two distant unidentified petrels, either this species or Storm Petrel (though probably Leach's Petrel), which flew west past Copt Point on the 19th September 2000.