

Sabine's Gull

Xema sabini

Category A

Very rare vagrant

5 records

Breeds in Greenland and eastern Canada, then migrates south-east across the open Atlantic towards Iberia and western Morocco before turning south and heading into the South Atlantic to winter off southern Africa. Present in European inshore waters mainly after westerly gales and in Britain occurs mainly in the Western Approaches, chiefly mid-August to mid-November.



Sabine's Gull at Copt Point (Ian Roberts)

A rare but regular autumn migrant to Kent, with very occasional records in winter, spring and summer.

Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) provides details of a sight record of "an immature specimen, examined under exceptionally favourable conditions whilst feeding with a flock of Black-headed Gulls by the late Mr J. L. Bonhote on the 25th September 1896". This was only the second record for the county.

The next area record came over a century later, when one was seen off Copt Point on the 31st August 1997, but the third followed much more quickly: a single at the same site on the same date in the subsequent year. The fourth record was again at Copt Point, in October 2000, and the most recent was in 2012, again at Copt Point, but on the much more unusual date of 30th June (spring and summer records are very rare in the county and this appears to be the first to have been seen in June). The modern records are shown in figure 1.

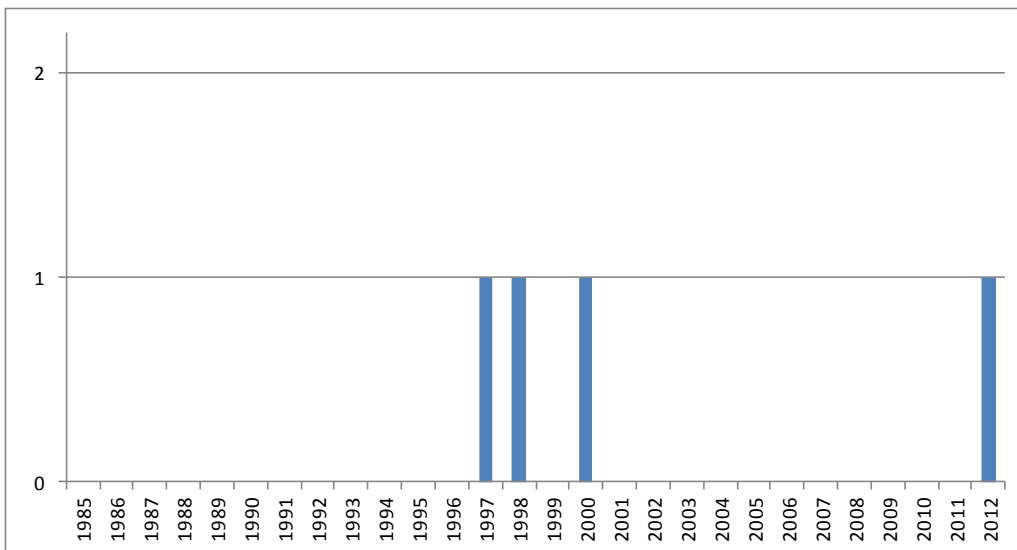


Figure 1: Sabine's Gull records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

All records have occurred in autumn, with two on the 31st August (week 35) and the others on 25th September (week 39) and 12th October (week 41), as demonstrated by figure 2.

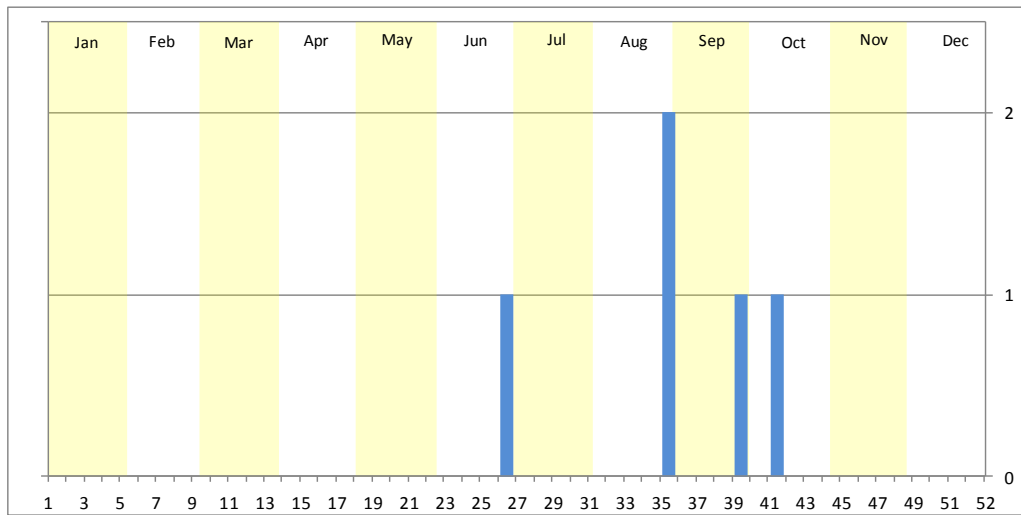


Figure 2: Sabine's Gull records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

All have been recorded from Folkestone, with three at Copt Point with the first at an unspecified site.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1896** Folkestone, juvenile offshore, 25th September (J. L. Bonhote)
- 1997** Copt Point, juvenile offshore then drifted east, 31st August (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Copt Point, juvenile offshore from 08:30 to 17:30 at least, 31st August (I. A. Roberts *et al*)
- 2000** Copt Point, juvenile flew in from east and landed on the sea, 12th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Copt Point, adult or first-summer flew west, 30th June, photographed (I. A. Roberts)



Sabine's Gull at Copt Point (Ian Roberts)