

Iceland Gull

Larus glaucooides

Category A

Very rare vagrant

13 records

Nominate race breeds in Greenland, wintering in northern Iceland and regular visitor to north-west Europe, including Britain and Ireland, where most regular in north, especially Scotland. Race *kumleini* breeds in Arctic Canada and winters on the Atlantic coast of North America, straying occasionally to western Europe.

The nominate race is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent. The *kumleini* form has occurred in the county on just four occasions (in 1991, 1998, 2006 and 2012).



Iceland Gull at Folkestone Harbour (Ian Hodgson)

The first Folkestone and Hythe record was a first-winter individual which remained in the Copt Point and Folkestone Harbour area from late November 1980 to late February 1981. This was the first instance of over-wintering in the county. What was considered to be the same bird returned as a second-winter to Folkestone the following November, before moving to Hythe where it remained until May 1982. Quite remarkably two new first-winter birds were found in 1982, one at Nickoll's Quarry in January and the other at Hythe in December, with the latter overwintering until the 1st April. A third year bird, presumably the returning individual from the two previous winters, was seen at Folkestone and Hythe in January 1983, and was even seen together with the wintering Hythe first-year at Sandgate on the 30th January 1983. This remains the only multiple sighting locally.

There were no records in 1984 but in January 1985 an adult, possibly the returning bird, was at Folkestone in January, but only lingered for two days. An adult was then seen at Copt Point in December 1987. A five year gap followed before first-winter birds were noted in 1992, 1993 and 1994, with one of unspecified age in 1997. There then followed a ten year hiatus before one flew east at Samphire Hoe in February 2008. In January 2012 a second-winter bird of the form *kumleini* was found in Dover Harbour where it remained into early March, and it was seen flying east past Samphire Hoe towards Dover by Paul Holt on the 6th February. There was a notable influx of Kumlein's and nominate Iceland Gulls into the north-eastern Atlantic in January and February 2012 including, for example, an estimated 310 Kumlein's Gulls in the Faroe Islands (British Birds 105: 263 – 272).

In January 2017 a first-winter bird was seen on the lake at Nickolls Quarry before it flew off to the east over Palmarsh and there was a rather unseasonal sighting of an adult at Folkestone on the 27th July 2018.

The Folkestone and Hythe records since 1985 are shown in figure 1.

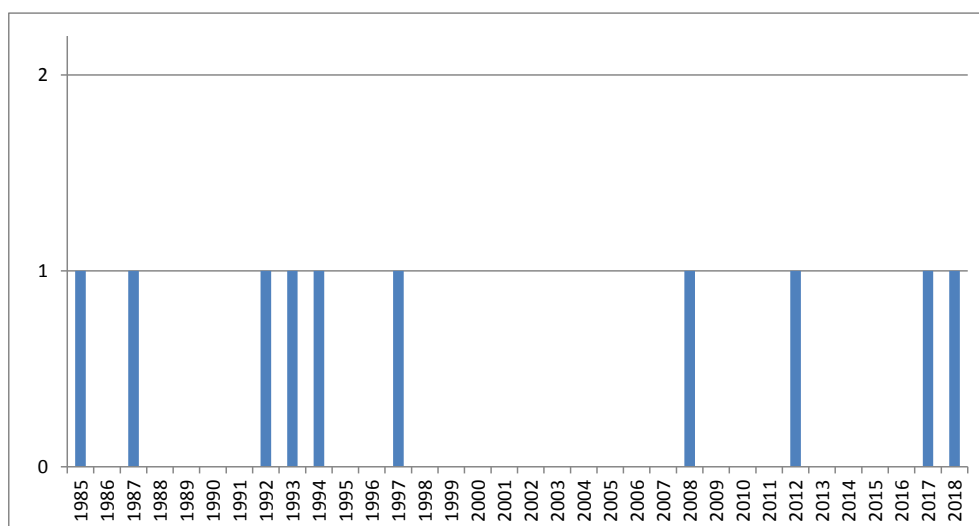


Figure 1: Iceland Gull records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Arrival dates fall between the 13th November (week 46) and 27th April (week 17), apart from the July occurrence in 2018, as shown in figure 2. The March and April records were typically short-staying, presumably migrant individuals.

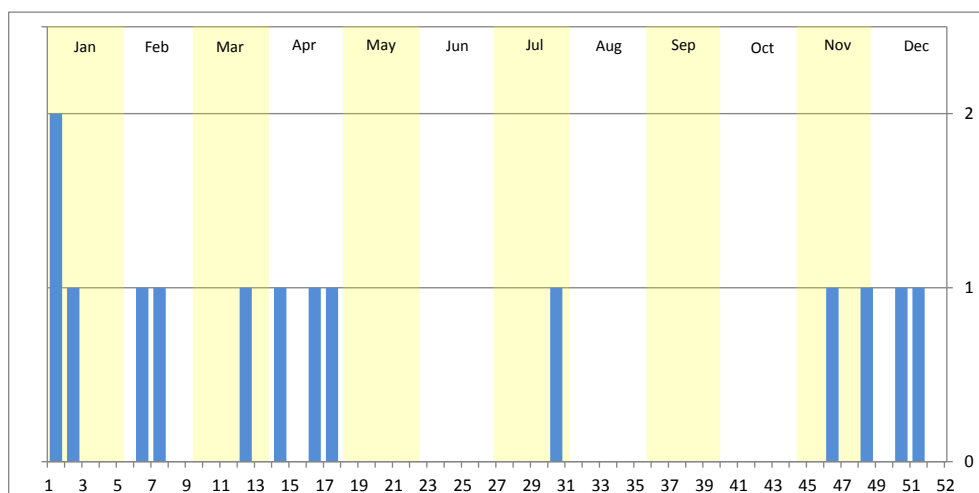


Figure 2: Iceland Gull arrival dates at Folkestone and Hythe by week (includes arrival dates of returning bird)

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. The record shown covers both the 2008 sighting at Samphire Hoe and the 2012 Kumlein’s Gull. The majority of records are from the Copt Point / Folkestone Harbour area, which was also the preferred haunt of the long-staying, returning individual, although it also roamed west to Sandgate and Hythe. The latter site and Nickoll’s Quarry have also hosted single first-winter birds.

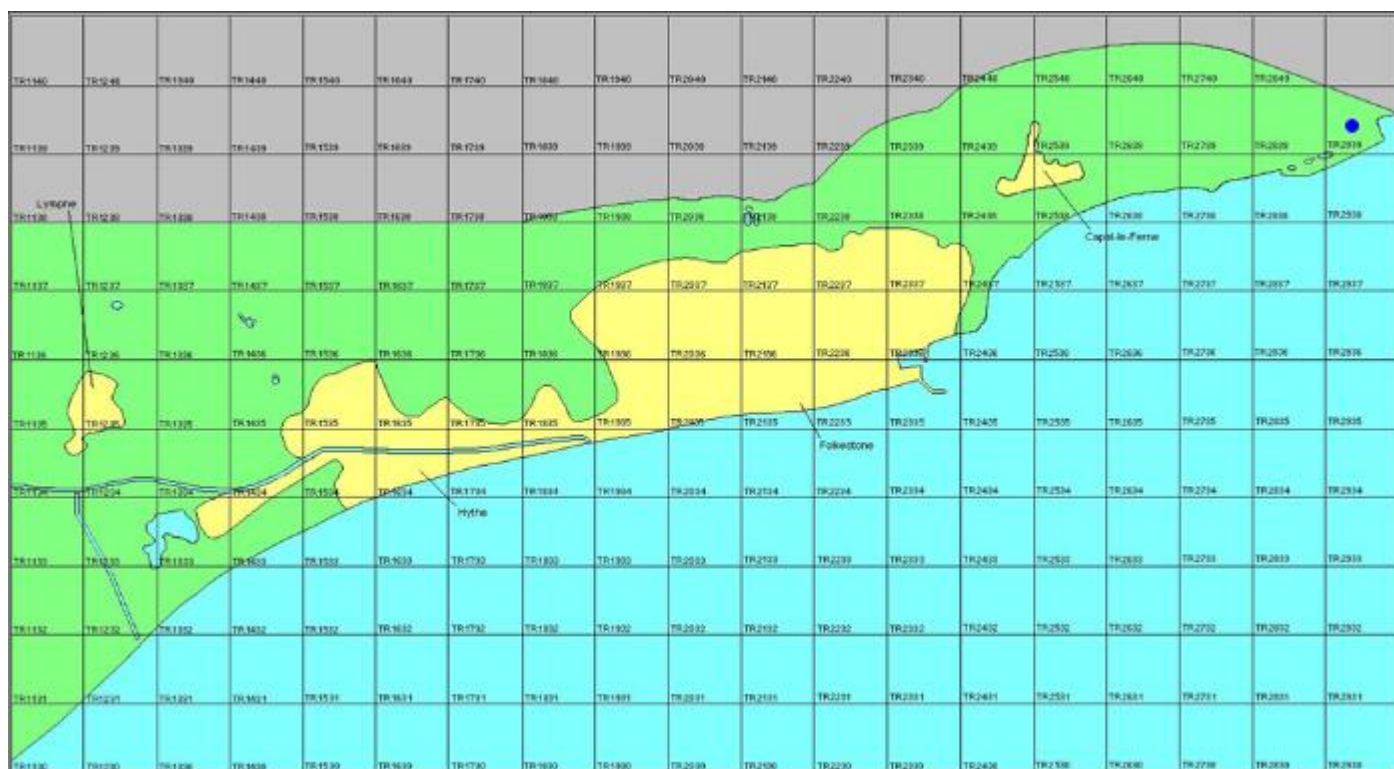


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Iceland Gull at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1980** Copt Point and Folkestone Harbour, first winter, 29th November to 20th February 1981, photographed (R. Lee *et al*)
- 1981** Folkestone, second winter, 13th to 15th November, then at Hythe from 27th November to 10th May 1982, visiting Folkestone again on 21st January, considered to be same as above (R. Henson *et al*)
- 1982** Nickoll’s Quarry, first winter, 8th January (D. Weaver)
- 1982** Hythe, first winter, 16th December to 1st April (J. Smith, P. J. Wells)

- 1983** Folkestone and Hythe, third winter, 9th January (D. C. Gilbert), seen together with above first winter at Sandgate on 30th January, presumed same as 1980 and 1981
- 1985** Folkestone, adult, 5th to 6th January (R. F. Henson), possibly same returning bird as 1983
- 1987** Copt Point, adult, 20th to 21st December (R. F. Henson), later seen at Dover
- 1992** Copt Point, first winter, 22nd March (reported)
- 1993** Folkestone Harbour, first winter, 23rd April (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Copt Point, first winter, 27th April (R. F. Henson)
- 1997** Copt Point, age not given, 4th April (R. F. Henson)
- 2008** Samphire Hoe, first winter flew east, 17th February (I. A. Roberts), later seen at Dover
- 2017** Nickolls Quarry, first or second winter, 6th January, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Folkestone Sunny Sands, adult, 27th July (P. Edmondson)



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)



Iceland Gull at Nickolls Quarry (Ian Roberts)

Kumlein's Gull

Larus glaucooides kumleini

- 2012** Samphire Hoe, second winter flew east, 6th February (P. Holt), present in Dover Harbour from late January to early March, also visible from Samphire Hoe whilst over western side of Dover Harbour on 7th March (I. A. Roberts). Photographed whilst at Dover Harbour.



Kumlein's Gull at Dover Harbour (Martyn Wilson)

