

Folkestone & Hythe birding and moths

Site guide: Abbotscliffe

Location: From M20 junction 13 take the A20 towards Dover. Leave at the B2011 (Capel-le-Ferne junction) and take the 3rd exit off the roundabout towards the village. Take the first left (sharp) turn after about 3-400 yards. Follow this to the end, where this is a limited amount of parking (TR 267386).

Facilities: none, however the Royal Oak pub is located about 1/2 mile west of the entrance track.

Access/route: There is a footpath along the cliff edge as far as Dover, and a cycle track (which doubles as a path) which runs slightly inland of the footpath. Explore the rough grass and scrub between the footpath and the cycle track, and scan fields inland.

Visual migration can be experienced anywhere along the cliff edge. Disabled access is possible along the cycle track, although there is a series of gates and the path is steep in places.

Birds: In spring and autumn the scrub and weeds provide cover for common passage migrants such as Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Common and Lesser Whitethroats, and Goldcrest.

Reed, Sedge, Garden, and Grasshopper Warblers are more frequent in autumn, as are Redstart, Wheatear, Whinchat, Spotted, and Pied Flycatchers. Black Redstart, Ring Ouzel, and Firecrest are regular.

Dartford Warblers are annual, and rarer species have included Wryneck, Bluethroat, Siberian Stonechat, Isabelline Wheatear, Icterine, Pallas's, and Yellow-browed Warblers, Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike, and Great Grey Shrike.



Looking east along the cliff edge from Abbot's House



Looking west from the old rifle range



Visible migration begins in March, with Chaffinches, Siskins, and a few Bramblings, and continues in April with hirundines, Meadow Pipits, *alba* wagtails, Goldfinches, and Linnets.

Swifts take over in May and continue to move around through the summer. Spring oddities have included Alpine Swift, Bee-eater, Red-rumped Swallow, and Serin.

Swifts begin returning from July, with Yellow Wagtails and Tree Pipits featuring from mid-August, and hirundines and Meadow Pipits in September, finches and thrushes in October, then Stock Dove and Wood Pigeon in early November.

Grounded flocks of Meadow Pipits are worth checking for Tawny and Richard's Pipits, and the fields have also held Shore and Wood Larks, and Lapland, Snow, and Ortolan Buntings.

This is a good site to watch for raptors, and Honey Buzzard, Black and Red Kites, Marsh, Hen, and Montagu's Harriers, Buzzard, Rough-legged Buzzard, Osprey, Red-footed Falcon, Merlin, and Hobby have all been recorded. Peregrines are frequent. White Stork and Spoonbill have also occurred.

Both partridges are regularly flushed here, and more unusual encounters have involved Quail, Corncrake, and Jack Snipe, and Short-eared Owls are also found in the long grass on occasion.

Other species logged include Little Stint, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Ring-necked Parakeet, Bearded Tit, Raven, Hooded Crow, and Twite.

The foreshore below the cliff can be accessed from either the Warren or Samphire Hoe, and has breeding Rock Pipit, passage Common Sandpiper, regular Shag, and occasional Little Egret. Red-necked Phalarope has occurred.

Looking east from the old rifle range across the 'Blockhouse Field'



Looking west across 'Abbot's Gully'



Bluethroat - Abbotscliffe - April 1996 (Mike Gould)



Raven - Abbotscliffe - May 2006



singing Yellow-browed Warbler - Abbotscliffe -
May 2006

Regular: passage migrants and visible migration in season, Peregrine, Grey and Red-legged Partridges, Green Woodpecker, Sky Lark, Rock Pipit, Stonechat, Yellowhammer.

Possible: Shag, Little Egret, Hobby, Redstart, Black Redstart, Ring Ouzel, Grasshopper Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Spotted and Pied Flycatchers, Firecrest, Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting.

Rarities: White Stork, Spoonbill, Honey Buzzard, Black Kite, Red Kite, Montagu's Harrier, Rough-legged Buzzard, Osprey, Red-footed Falcon, Quail, Corncrake, Little Stint, Black-tailed Godwit, Red-necked Phalarope, Alpine Swift, Bee-eater, Red-rumped Swallow, Richard's and Tawny Pipits, Wood and Shore Larks, Wryneck, Bluethroat, Siberian Stonechat, Isabelline Wheatear, Icterine Warbler, Pallas's Warbler, Yellow-browed Warbler, Golden Oriole, Red-backed and Great Grey Shrikes, Bearded Tit, Hooded Crow, Serin, Twite, Crossbill, Lapland, Snow and Ortolan Buntings.