

Shore Lark

Eremophila alpestris

Category A

Rare passage migrant

22 records

Breed in arctic and sub-arctic regions of Fenno-Scandia and Russia, wintering on coasts of the southern North Sea and western Baltic, in north-central and eastern Europe, and across southern Soviet Union and its former states.

A passage migrant and winter visitor to Kent, usually in small numbers.



Shore Lark at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) stated that “the Warren near Folkestone provided a female for the museum of that town” and this is presumably the record included by Henry Ulyett in his *Rambles of a Naturalist Round Folkestone* (1880) within the list of species recorded in the neighbourhood of Folkestone, within a radius of six miles from the town hall.

The late Geoffrey Munns recorded two in the Hythe area in the 1960s, the first was seen at very close range from a car at Hythe on the 30th January 1963, and the second was at the western end of Hythe Ranges on the 9th November 1968.

After a wait of almost 30 years the Hythe area produced another, when one was found by Ian Roberts on the golf course by the Hotel Imperial on the 17th November 1996.

Just two years later however, an arrival on an unprecedented scale was noted, with fifteen records totalling some 50 individuals from the 6th October into December, but with the bulk of the apparent passage occurring in October. Apart from five at Samphire, all were at Abbotscliffe. There appeared to be a considerable turnover of birds with a number seen flying over, and peak day counts of four on the 12th October, six the next day, eight on the 15th October, 11 on the 18th October and 7 on the 1st November. The records are given in full below.

A large influx was noted on the east coast of England in general in 1998, with a count of over 200 at one site in Norfolk, and the heaviest autumn passage ever recorded in Kent, with probably over 150 individuals involved, around a third of which were logged locally.

There have been only three subsequent records, two at Abbotscliffe (singles on the 10th to 11th October and 24th October 2010) and one near the Hythe Redoubt in the first week of November 2015. The records by year since 1985 are shown in figure 1.

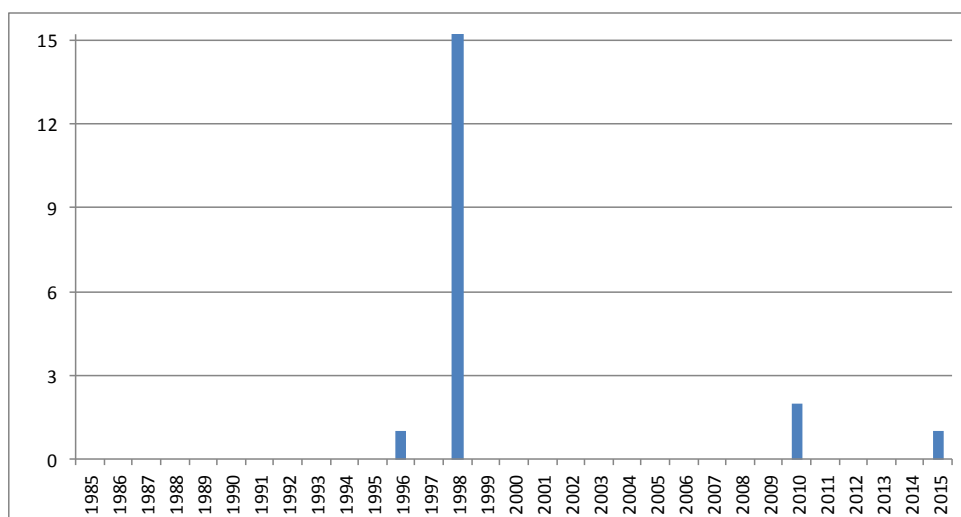


Figure 1: Shore Lark records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

Most records have occurred in the period from 6th October (week 40) to 17th November (week 46), with two records in December and one in January, as demonstrated by figure 2.

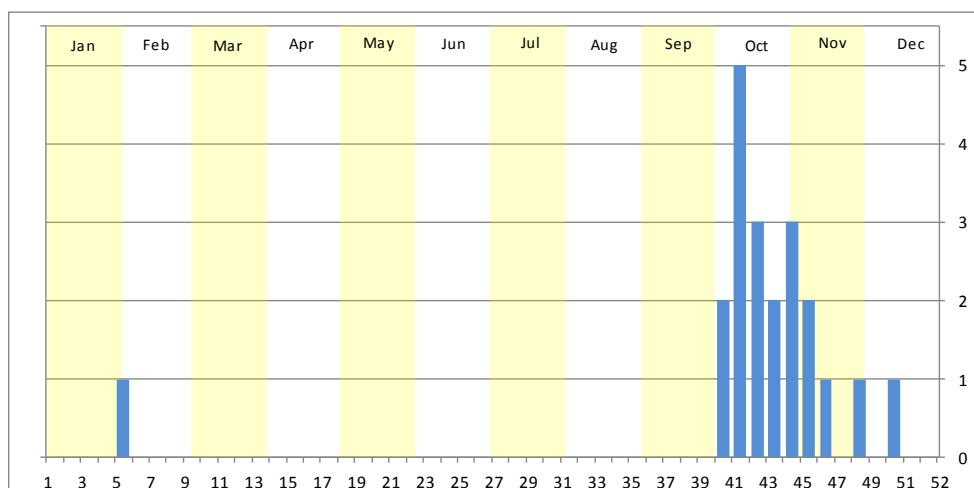


Figure 2: Shore Lark records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

As mentioned above, the first record was at Folkestone Warren, followed by three from Hythe, and the remainder at Abbotscliffe or Samphire Hoe, apart from the most recent which was near the Hythe Redoubt. The full list of dated records is as follows:

- 1963** Hythe, one, 30th January (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1968** Hythe Ranges, one, 9th November (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1996** Hythe, one, 17th November (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one on cliff near gully, 6th October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one in gully, 7th October (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts, P. Lightman)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one, 9th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, three, 10th October (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, four, 12th to 14th October (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, two additional birds, 13th October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, eight flew in/west, 15th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, 11, five in gully field and six flew west, 18th October (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, two flew west, 19th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, two in gully field, 24th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 29th October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, seven, two in field and five flew east, 1st November (I. A. Roberts, J. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Samphire Hoe, one, 9th November (D. E. Smith)
- 1998** Samphire Hoe, additional two reported in November (Reported)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, two in gully field, 2nd to about mid-December (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Samphire Hoe, two, 12th December (Reported)
- 2010** Abbotscliffe, one in gully, 10th to 11th October, possibly since the 9th, photographed (I. A. Roberts, M. Kennett, P. Edmondson)
- 2010** Abbotscliffe, one at eastern end, 24th October (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)
- 2015** Near Hythe Redoubt, one, first week of November, photographed (A. J. South)



Shore Lark at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)