

## Pallas's Warbler

*Phylloscopus proregulus*

Category A

Very rare vagrant

5 records

Breeds in southern Siberia, west to approximately the River Yenisei, and winters mainly in southern China.

There had been 551 records in Britain to the end of 1990 when the BBRC removed it from the list of species which they considered, due to its increasing frequency of occurrence.

In Kent it is a rare but regular late autumn vagrant, with occasional overwintering records.



Pallas's Warbler at Pond Hill Road (Brian Harper)

The first two Pallas's Warblers to be recorded in the Folkestone and Hythe area were in 1996 and there have been three further sightings, in 2000, 2012 and 2014, as demonstrated by figure 1.

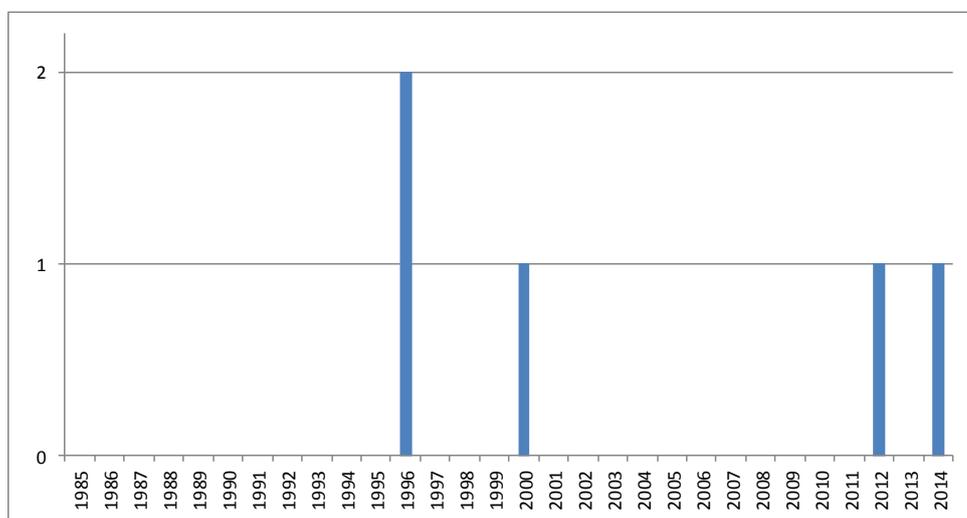


Figure 1: Pallas's Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe

The first four records were typical late autumn sightings, occurring between 16<sup>th</sup> October (week 42) and 10<sup>th</sup> November (week 45), but the fifth was a far more unusual winter bird. Sightings in the winter (or early spring) months have become more frequent in Britain in recent years, as is the case with Yellow-browed Warbler, and there have been two previously in Kent – at River, near Dover in January to April 2004 and at Wouldham, near Snodland in April 2007. The records by week are shown in figure 2.



Pallas Warbler at Pond Hill Road (Brian Harper)



Figure 2: Pallas's Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

All the autumn records were at the cliffs, with two at Capel-le-Ferne, one at Abbotscliffe and one at Samphire Hoe, but the most recent was inland (in the Horn Street valley), as demonstrated by figure 3.

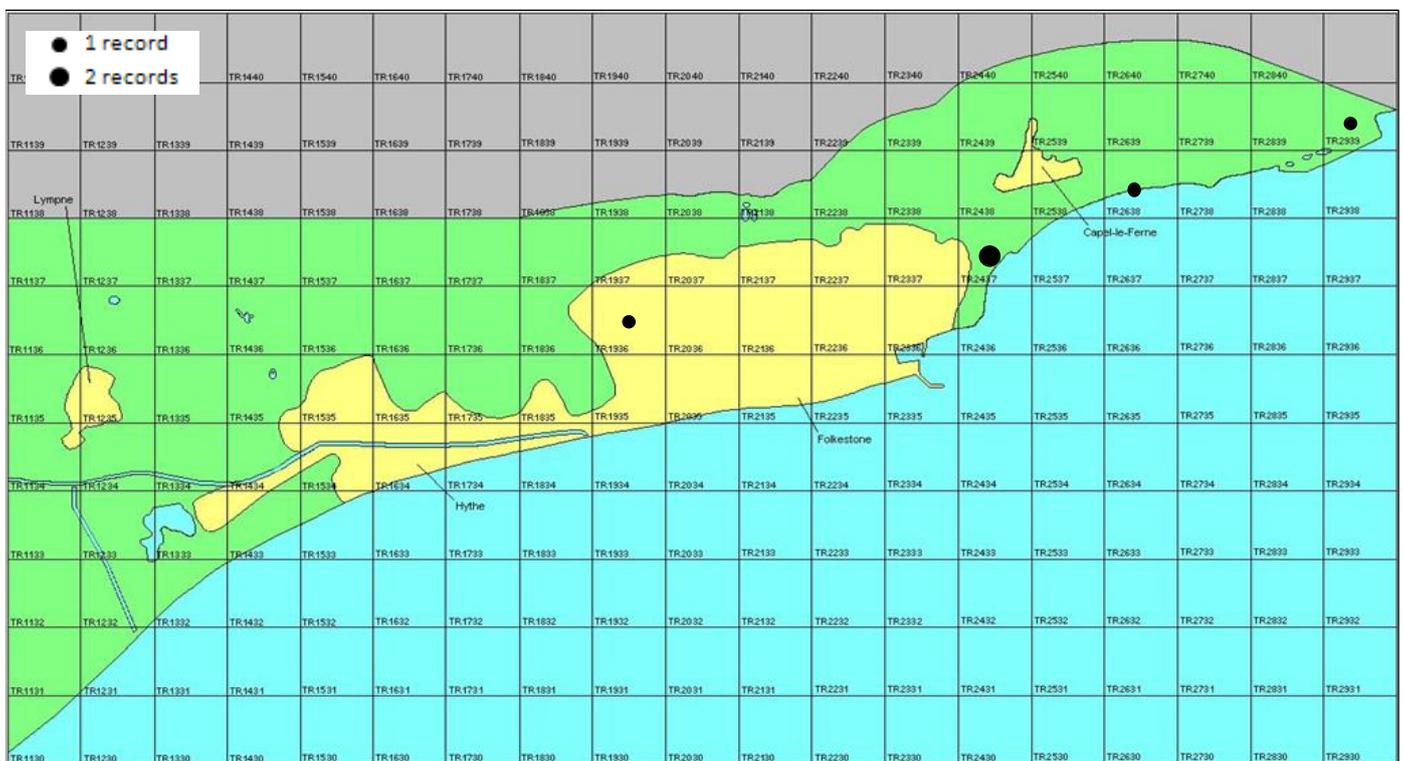


Figure 3: Occurrence of Pallas's Warbler at Folkestone and Hythe by 1km square

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1996** Abbotscliffe, one, 16<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson)
- 1996** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 10<sup>th</sup> November (I. A., A. F. & P. M. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)
- 2000** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 23<sup>rd</sup> October, video-recorded (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)
- 2012** Samphire Hoe, one, 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October (P. Holt *et al*)
- 2014** Pond Hill Road, Cheriton, one, 24<sup>th</sup> January to 1<sup>st</sup> March, photographed (M. Sutherland *et al*)

As the first two Folkestone and Hythe records occurred in quick succession account of both are given below:

**Pallas's Warbler at Abbotscliffe**  
**16<sup>th</sup> October 1996**

(Dale A Gibson, Jamie A Gibson)

**Weather conditions:**

Force 3-4 west south-west wind. Dry, after early showers had cleared.

**Circumstances of the find:**

It was a quiet morning at Abbotscliffe, with just one Brambling and Siskin before I reached Abbot's Gully at 9 a.m. I noticed a tit flock feeding in the sheltered bushes in the gully, and as I scanned through I noticed what looked initially like a Firecrest. However, when I got a better look, I could see it was Folkestone's first Pallas' Warbler. I made my way down into the gully and got superb views, and took the following description. Jamie Gibson managed to see it later in the morning, but Ian Roberts was unsuccessful at lunch-time in the freshening south-westerly wind.

**Description of the bird:**

Head and upperparts: The head was olive, with a broad yellowish supercilium (especially in front of the eye), a dark eye-stripe, and a thick pale yellowish crown stripe. The rest of the upperparts were also olive, with pale yellowish tips to the tertials, and two yellowish wing-bars. The pale off-white rump band was particularly obvious when the bird was hovering.

Underparts: The underparts were clean white.

**Pallas's Warbler at Capel-le-Ferne**  
**10<sup>th</sup> November 1996**

(Ian A, Anthony F and Patricia M Roberts, Dale A Gibson)

**Weather conditions:**

A dry, overcast day with a light north-westerly breeze.

**Circumstances of the find:**

At about 1:10 p.m. on 10<sup>th</sup> November, I was returning from an unproductive morning spent at Abbotscliffe, along a sheltered lane that runs along the back of some gardens in the village. I was aware of a tit flock in some small trees on one side of the path but paid them little attention until I noticed a warbler with them. It was only a few feet away, and my initial impression was that it was a Pallas' or Yellow-browed. As I raised my bins it flew away down the path flashing a yellow rump. I fetched A. F. and P. M. Roberts and over the next 20 minutes or so we had superb views as it fed very close, and below eye level, mainly in one small sycamore. Dale Gibson saw it later in the afternoon. I took the following description.

**Description of the bird:**

Size, shape, jizz: A small compact warbler which looked large-headed. It was very active and hovered frequently.

Head and upperparts: The head was greenish-olive, with yellowish-white supercilia and central crown stripe, and dark green lateral crown stripes and eye-stripes. The rest of the upperparts were greenish-olive, with yellowish-white tips to the median and greater coverts, forming a double wing-bar, and tertials. The wings were darker, with olive fringes. It had a yellowish rump.

Underparts: The underparts were clean silky white.

**Comments on the records:**

Both records were accepted by the KOS rarities committee and appear in the Kent Bird Report for that year.

The mid-1990s saw an exceptional sequence of record-breaking years in Kent. The previous best year in the county was 1980, when 8 were recorded, before a remarkable total of 18 occurred in 1994. This was however surpassed in 1995, when 26 individuals were logged, and was bettered still further in 1996 with 35 records.

The graph shows the arrival dates of Pallas' Warblers in Kent in 1996, with the Folkestone and Hythe records highlighted in red. There were two distinct 'waves' of arrival – one between the 13th and 24th October and the other between the 8th and 17th November, and the Folkestone area received arrivals from both. Nearly two-thirds of the records were from the south of the county, from Bockhill round to Dungeness, including one just outside the Folkestone and Hythe area at the Western Heights, Dover.

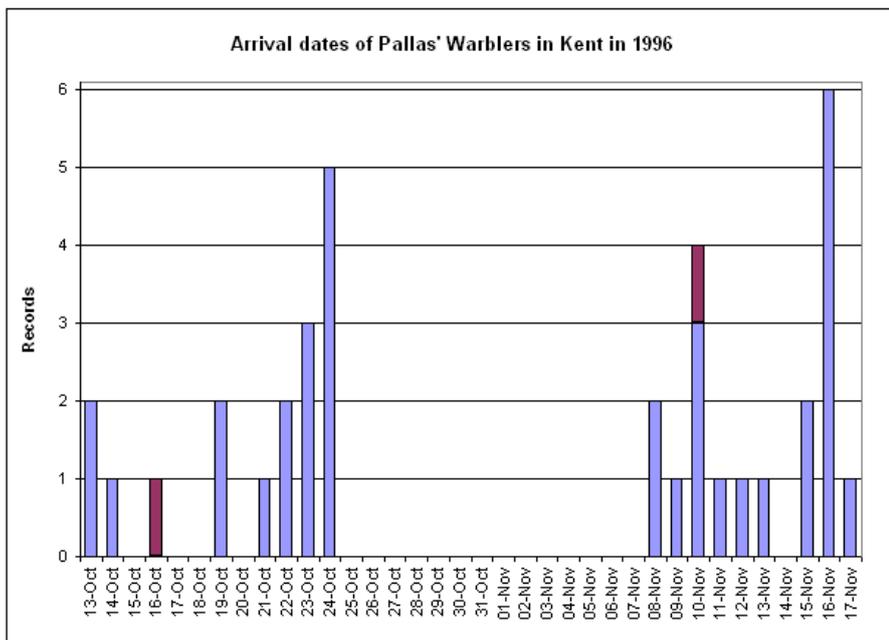


Figure 4: Arrival dates of Pallas's Warbler in Kent in 1996



Pallas's Warbler at Capel-le-Ferne (Dale Gibson), videograb