

## Wood Warbler

*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Category A

Formerly regular, probably bred.

21 records since

Now a rare passage migrant

1980

Breeds in middle and upper middle latitudes across Europe from Britain eastwards to Russia. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.

Harrison in his *The Birds of Kent* (1953) considered the Wood Warbler to be an abundant summer visitor, breeding commonly in the woodlands in the west of the county, but scarce elsewhere. Based on the 1967-73 Breeding Bird Survey, the *Birds of Kent* (1981) revised this status to a “summer visitor with very local breeding distribution”. The decline continued through the 1980s and the species appears to have last bred in the county in the mid-1990s, though it still remained a “scarce but regular passage migrant”. More recent Kent Bird Reports indicate a continued downturn: “a scarce and declining passage migrant”.



Wood Warbler at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

Henry Ulyett in his *Rambles of a Naturalist Round Folkestone* (1880) includes the Wood Warbler in the list of species recorded in the neighbourhood of Folkestone, within a radius of six miles from the town hall. Whilst this range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area, so is not conclusive evidence of occurrence here, it does suggest that the species was present locally in the days when it was more regular in the county, and Ticehurst in his *A History of the Birds of Kent* (1909) stated that the “Wood-wren” was very sparingly distributed in the Dover and Folkestone districts.

In 1973 probable breeding was recorded in Heane Wood, Sandling and one was noted at Sandling Park on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1970, suggesting that the species might have been locally established at this time. The *Birds of Kent* (1981) cites both the earliest and latest dates for the county within its review period (1952-76) as being at Hythe: on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1953 and 27<sup>th</sup> September 1965. A further record of two at Hythe, on the more usual date of 30<sup>th</sup> July (1966) is included in the Kent Bird Report for that year, but there are no other documented reports until 1981, when one was seen in Folkestone Warren on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August.

Since 1985 there have been a further 20 records, as shown in figure 1.

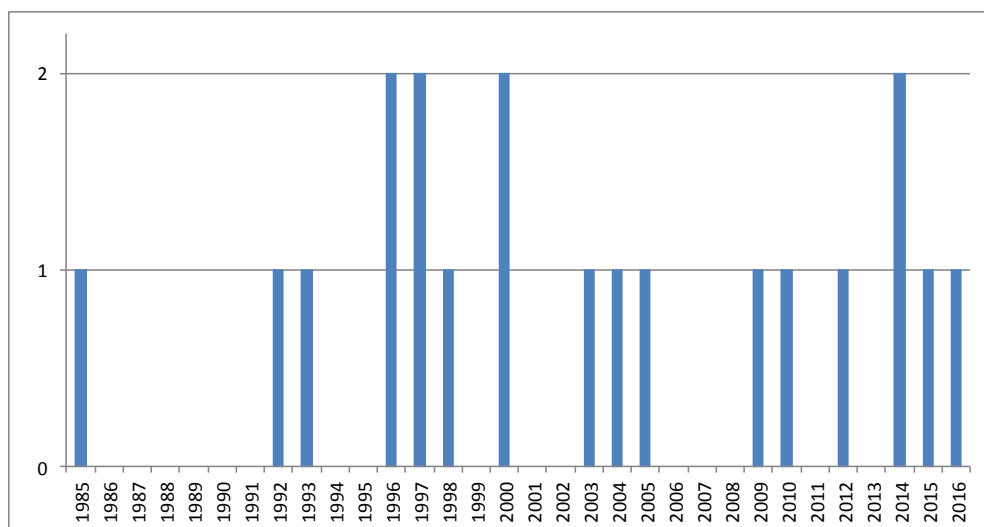


Figure 1: Wood Warbler records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

The arrival dates since 1980 (therefore excluding the extreme dates given in *Birds of Kent*) by week are given in figure 2. Spring records have occurred between the 24<sup>th</sup> April (week 17) and 19<sup>th</sup> May (week 20), with a pronounced peak in week 18.

Autumn passage is a little more protracted, having been recorded from the 27<sup>th</sup> July (week 30) to the 7<sup>th</sup> September (week 36), though with a peak between the 27<sup>th</sup> July and 7<sup>th</sup> August (when six have occurred).

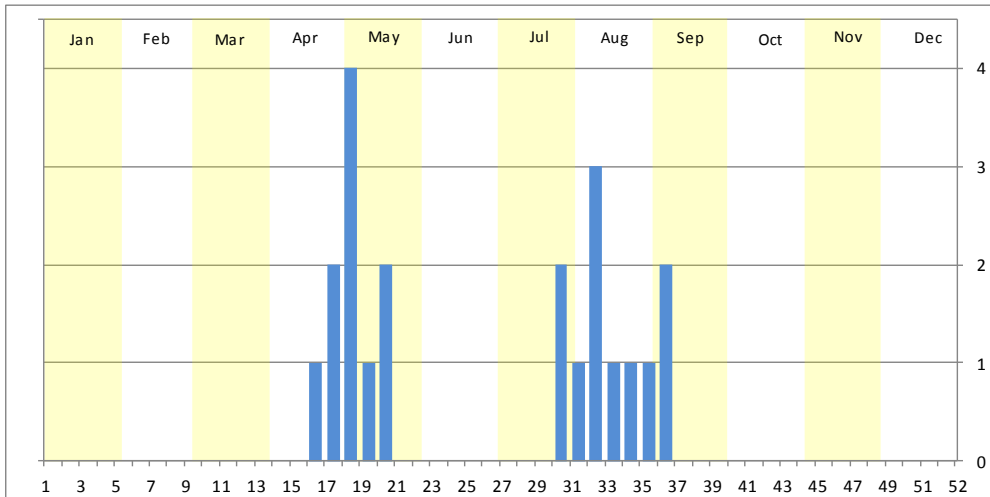
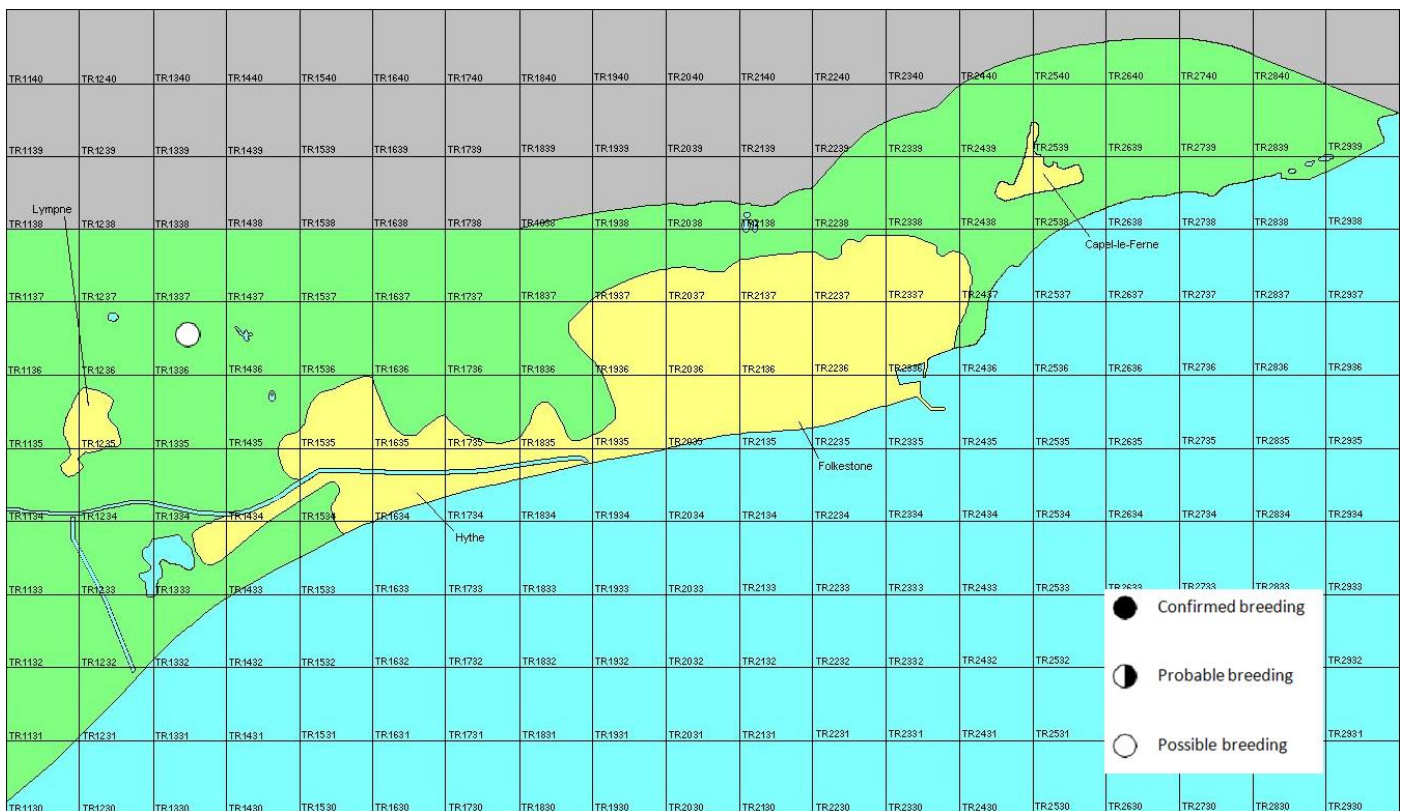


Figure 2: Wood Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1980 by week

The distribution of breeding records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. The single record shown relate to a singing male in Kiln Wood on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009. Whilst the bird was in potential breeding habitat it was not heard subsequently so was presumably just a migrant.



The Capel-le-Ferne / Folkestone Warren area has accounted for ten of the other 16 recent records, with another four in the Church Hougham / Hougham Court area, and singles at Beachborough Lakes, Cheriton, Samphire Hoe, Shorncliffe and West Hythe.

The full list of dated records is as follows:

- 1953** Hythe, one, 5<sup>th</sup> April (D. E. Scott-Robinson)
- 1965** Hythe, one, 27<sup>th</sup> September (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1966** Hythe, one, 30<sup>th</sup> July (G. F. A. Munns)
- 1970** Sandling Park, one, 25<sup>th</sup> April (D. E. Chittenden)

- 1973** Saltwood, one, 4<sup>th</sup> June (D. E. Chittenden)  
**1981** Folkestone Warren, one, 3<sup>rd</sup> August (R. G. W. Heselden)  
**1985** West Hythe, two near dam, 7<sup>th</sup> August (N. C. Frampton)  
**1992** Capel-le-Ferne Café, singing male, (D. A. Gibson)  
**1993** Folkestone Warren, one, 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson)  
**1996** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one, 17<sup>th</sup> August (I. A. Roberts)  
**1996** Capel-le-Ferne Green Lane, one, 1<sup>st</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
**1997** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, singing male, 3<sup>rd</sup> May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
**1997** Church Hougham, one, 7<sup>th</sup> August (M. Kennett)  
**1998** Church Hougham, one, 28<sup>th</sup> July (M Kennett)  
**2000** Capel-le-Ferne Café, singing male, 11<sup>th</sup> May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)  
**2000** Church Hougham, one, 6<sup>th</sup> August (M. Kennett)  
**2003** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, singing male, 24<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)  
**2004** Capel-le-Ferne Café, singing male, 18<sup>th</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)  
**2005** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, singing male, 30<sup>th</sup> April (I. A. Roberts)  
**2009** Kiln Wood, singing male, 1<sup>st</sup> May (I. A. Roberts)  
**2010** Hougham Court, one, 27<sup>th</sup> July (I. A. Roberts)  
**2012** Samphire Hoe, one, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, photographed (I. A. Roberts)  
**2014** Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, 21<sup>st</sup> April, photographed, sound-recorded (M. P. Sutherland, I. A. Roberts *et al*)  
**2014** Cheriton (Pond Hill Road), 25<sup>th</sup> April (M. P. Sutherland)  
**2015** Samphire Hoe, one, 7<sup>th</sup> September (per D. E. Smith)  
**2016** Beachborough Lakes, one, 24<sup>th</sup> August (S. Tomlinson)



Wood Warbler at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)



Wood Warbler at Shorncliffe Military Cemetery (Ian Roberts)