

Wood Warbler

Phylloscopus sibilatrix

Category A

Formerly regular, probably bred.

23 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 25th 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 5th April 1953 and 27th September 1965. A further record of two at Hythe, on the more usual date of 30th 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 3rd August.

Since 1985 there have been a further 22 records, as shown in figure 1.

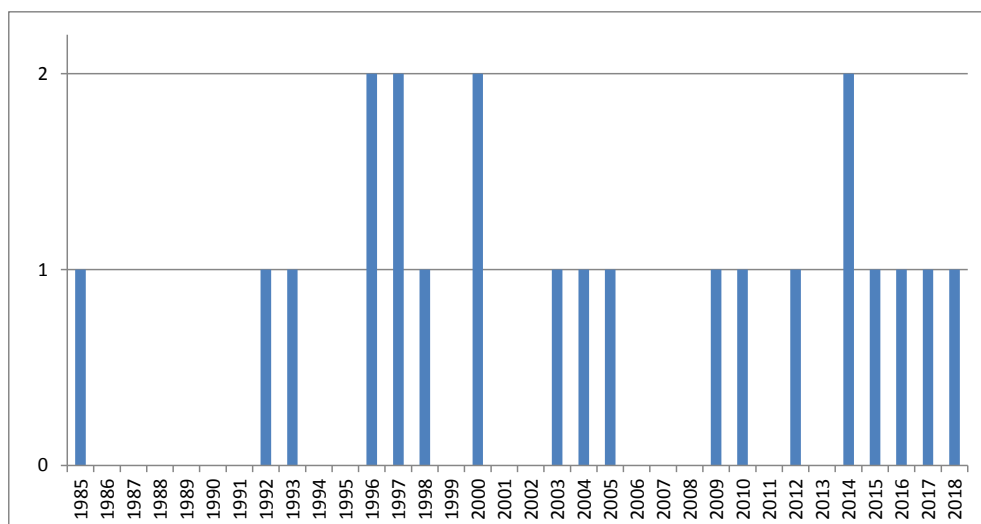


Figure 1: Wood Warbler records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

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 24th April (week 17) and 19th May (week 20), with a pronounced peak in week 18.

Autumn passage is a little more protracted, having been recorded from the 27th July (week 30) to the 18th September (week 38), though with a peak between the 27th July and 7th August (when six have occurred).

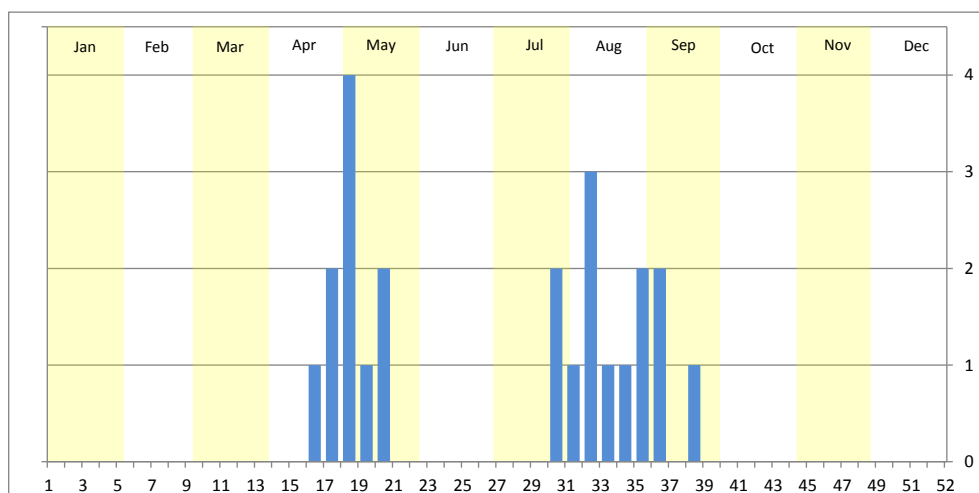
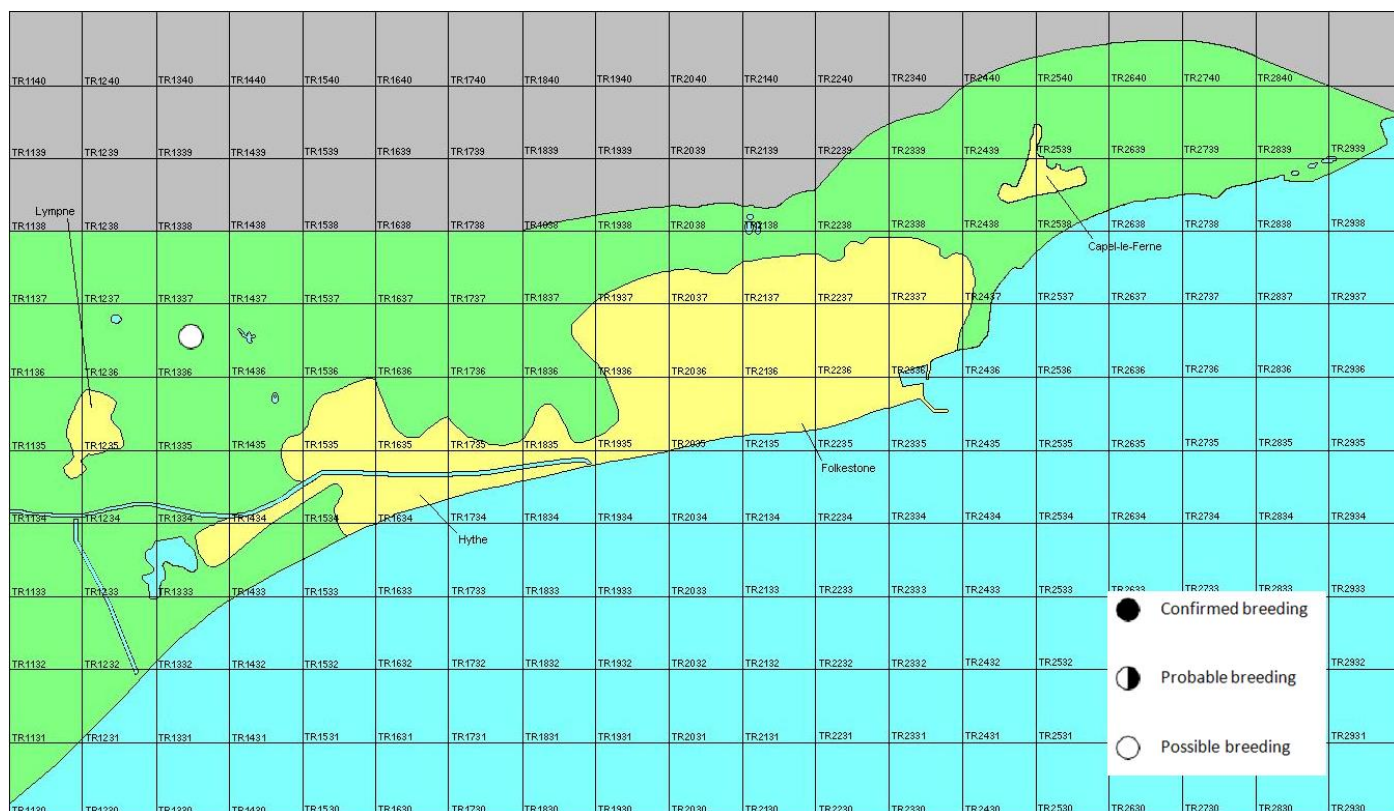


Figure 2: Wood Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1980 by week

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 1st 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 20 recent records, with another four in the Church Hougham/Hougham Court area, two at Beachborough Lakes, Samphire Hoe and in the Pond Hill Road/Shornccliffe area and singles at Seabrook and West Hythe.

The full list of dated records is as follows:

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

- 1973** Saltwood, one, 4th June (D. E. Chittenden)
1981 Folkestone Warren, one, 3rd August (R. G. W. Heselden)
1985 West Hythe, two near dam, 7th August (N. C. Frampton)
1992 Capel-le-Ferne Café, singing male, (D. A. Gibson)
1993 Folkestone Warren, one, 5th to 6th September (D. A. Gibson)
1996 Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one, 17th August (I. A. Roberts)
1996 Capel-le-Ferne Green Lane, one, 1st September (I. A. Roberts)
1997 Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, singing male, 3rd May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
1997 Church Hougham, one, 7th August (M. Kennett)
1998 Church Hougham, one, 28th July (M Kennett)
2000 Capel-le-Ferne Café, singing male, 11th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
2000 Church Hougham, one, 6th August (M. Kennett)
2003 Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, singing male, 24th April (I. A. Roberts)
2004 Capel-le-Ferne Café, singing male, 18th May (I. A. Roberts)
2005 Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, singing male, 30th April (I. A. Roberts)
2009 Kiln Wood, singing male, 1st May (I. A. Roberts)
2010 Hougham Court, one, 27th July (I. A. Roberts)
2012 Samphire Hoe, one, 2nd May, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
2014 Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, 21st April, photographed, sound-recorded (M. P. Sutherland, I. A. Roberts *et al*)
2014 Cheriton (Pond Hill Road), 25th April (M. P. Sutherland)
2015 Samphire Hoe, one, 7th September (per D. E. Smith)
2016 Beachborough Lakes, one, 24th August (S. Tomlinson)
2017 Seabrook, one, 18th September (D. A. Gibson)
2018 Beachborough Lakes, one, 31st August (S. Tomlinson)



Wood Warbler at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)



Wood Warbler at Shornccliffe Military Cemetery (Ian Roberts)