

## Dartford Warbler

*Sylvia undata*

Category A

Rare migrant and winter visitor

34 records

Breeds in southern Britain, southern and western France, Iberia and North Africa. Partially migratory and dispersive. Many birds remain all year on the breeding grounds, but autumn and winter records are frequent in non-breeding areas, probably chiefly juveniles. A survey in 2006 revealed over 3,200 breeding pairs in Britain, with the species' strongholds being the heaths of Dorset, Hampshire and Surrey, however cold winters since appear to have significantly reduced numbers.



Dartford Warbler at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

A scarce passage migrant, winter visitor and occasional breeding species in Kent, including a single pair in 2010.

The first Folkestone and Hythe record was found by Jamie Gibson at Abbotscliffe on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1992 and this was quickly followed by two individuals (one there and one at Capel-le-Ferne Orchid Field) found by Dale Gibson barely two weeks later. Thereafter the species occurred with some regularity, with records in all but three years to 2009. Rare Breeding Bird Panel reports for the preceding period demonstrated an almost threefold increase in numbers of pairs across Britain from 1982 to 1992, and it would appear that a growing and spreading population had led to the appearance of the species locally. However it should be noted that the Abbotscliffe area, which produced the vast majority of the records, was not regularly watched before 1991, so some earlier occurrences might have been overlooked.

The best years during this period were 1999 and 2000, both with a total of four records, though with individuals often being secretive and sometime quite long-staying it can be difficult to make an accurate assessment of the numbers involved. 1999 produced the first record of two seen together and 2004 saw the first winter record, in January (though there had been no reports in the preceding November or December). Overwintering was again recorded in 2005/06 and 2006/07.

Following a couple of very cold winters at the end of the decade there was a reduction in numbers and a contraction in range nationally, and there were no local records in the five years between 2010 and 2014. Milder conditions since have probably enabled the Dartford Warbler to slowly recover, though data are not yet available to support this, and there was a welcome return to the area in 2015 with two recorded, with another in 2016.

The records by year are given in figure 1.

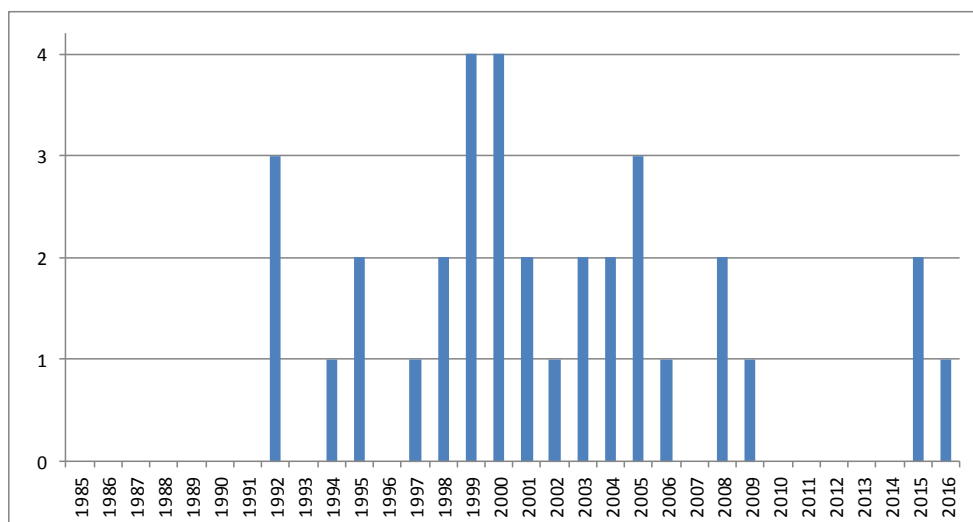


Figure 1: Dartford Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe

The earliest arrival date was the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2000 which is six weeks earlier than the first arrival in any other year, and perhaps indicated dispersal from a not too distant source. Further records on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2000 possibly relate to the same bird, though two were seen together on the 24<sup>th</sup> September.

In other years all arrivals have occurred between the 2<sup>nd</sup> October (week 40) and 20<sup>th</sup> November (week 47), with the exception of one first noted in January 2004, which it might be presumed had arrived in the previous autumn. However, although there was a record at the site in late October, there were (as mentioned above) no reports in the preceding November or December. The arrival dates by week are shown in figure 2.

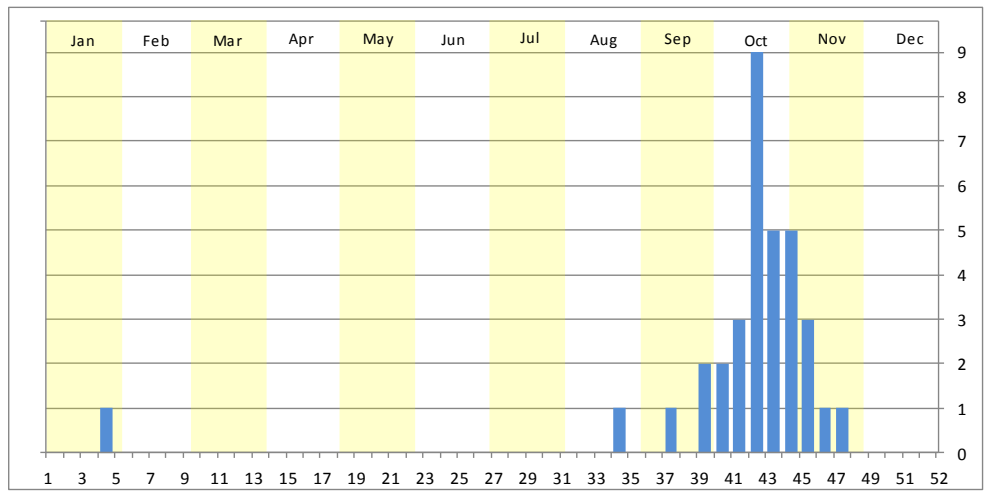


Figure 2: Dartford Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 3. This record relates to one seen at Abbotscliffe in early November 2008. Apart from one at Capel-le-Ferne Orchid Field in 1992 all the other 23 records up to the end of 2004 were at Abbotscliffe, but seven of the ten since were at Samphire Hoe.

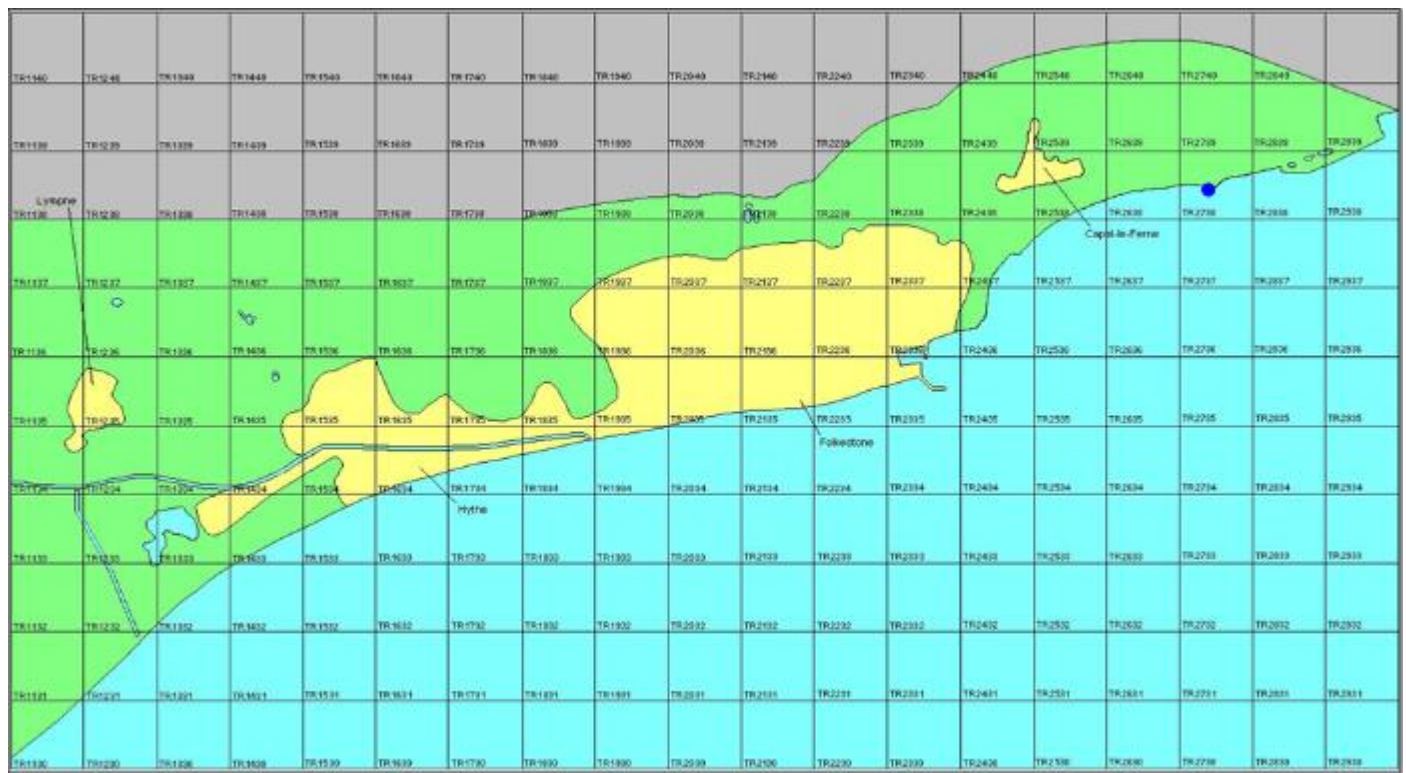


Figure 3: Wintering distribution of Dartford Warbler at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1992** Abbotscliffe, one, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> October (J. A. Gibson)
- 1992** Abbotscliffe, one, 17<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)

- 1992** Capel-le-Ferne (Orchid Field), one, 17<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)  
**1994** Abbotscliffe, one, 19<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)  
**1995** Abbotscliffe, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)  
**1995** Abbotscliffe, one, 5<sup>th</sup> November (D. A. Gibson)  
**1997** Abbotscliffe, one, 25<sup>th</sup> October to 22<sup>nd</sup> November (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)  
**1998** Abbotscliffe, one, 18<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
**1998** Abbotscliffe, one, 1<sup>st</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)  
**1999** Abbotscliffe, one, 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)  
**1999** Abbotscliffe, one, 29<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)  
**1999** Abbotscliffe, one, 2<sup>nd</sup> November (I. A. Roberts), considered different to above  
**1999** Abbotscliffe, two, 7<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts), considered different to above  
**2000** Abbotscliffe, one, 21<sup>st</sup> August (I. A. Roberts)  
**2000** Abbotscliffe, one, 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> September (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)  
**2000** Abbotscliffe, one, 23<sup>rd</sup> September (I. A. Roberts)  
**2000** Abbotscliffe, two, 24<sup>th</sup> September, (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson), one presumed to be same as above, one remaining to 13<sup>th</sup> October  
**2001** Abbotscliffe, one, 13<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
**2001** Abbotscliffe, one, 21<sup>st</sup> October (M. Lawson)  
**2002** Abbotscliffe, one, 20<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
**2003** Abbotscliffe, one, 14<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
**2003** Abbotscliffe, two, 27<sup>th</sup> October (Reported), one presumed same as above  
**2004** Abbotscliffe, one, 24<sup>th</sup> January (I. A. Roberts)  
**2004** Abbotscliffe, one, 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)  
**2005** Samphire Hoe, two, 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts, P. Holt)  
**2005** Abbotscliffe, one, 23<sup>rd</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)  
**2005** Samphire Hoe, one, 15<sup>th</sup> November to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006 (P. Holt, I. A. Roberts *et al*)  
**2006** Samphire Hoe, one, 2<sup>nd</sup> November to 24<sup>th</sup> January 2007 (P. Holt, I. A. Roberts *et al*)  
**2008** Samphire Hoe, one, possibly two, 18<sup>th</sup> October, photographed (I. A. Roberts)  
**2008** Abbotscliffe, one, 2<sup>nd</sup> November (D. A. Gibson)  
**2009** Samphire Hoe, one, 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> October (P. Holt)  
**2015** Samphire Hoe, one, 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October (M. Collins, P. Holt *et al*)  
**2015** Abbotscliffe, one, 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> November, photographed (I. A. Roberts, C. Gillard, P. Smith *et al*)  
**2016** Abbotscliffe, one, 26<sup>th</sup> October, photographed (I. A. Roberts)



Dartford Warbler at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)