

Red-breasted Flycatcher

Ficedula parva

Category A

Very rare vagrant

3 records

Breeds across mid-latitude Europe from eastern Germany eastwards into Russia and south-east into the Balkans. Winters in southern Asia, from Pakistan and India east to southern China.

A scarce autumn migrant to Kent, very rare in spring. The first county record was an inland bird near Bough Beech in 1943, with a further 121 to the end of 2009. There were 88 records between 1970 and 1999, at a rate of 2.9 per year, but only 9 records in the most recent decade (a rate of 0.9 per year), which suggests a recent decline.



Red-breasted Flycatcher at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)

Only ten county records have occurred in spring (almost all in May), with the rest in autumn, mainly in September and October, and with four in November.

The first Folkestone and Hythe record, being found in Folkestone Warren by Dale Gibson on the 19th November 1998, was the latest arrival date so far in the county. The bird remained in the area throughout the day and was seen by many observers. The second was found at the same site by the same observer the following year, on the more typical date of 14th October, but was only seen briefly. Some 16 years later a third was found at Samphire Hoe by Mark Kennett on the afternoon of the 20th October 2015 (another typical date), and remained until dusk, allowing several observers to catch up with this first record for the site. The records by year are given in figure 1.

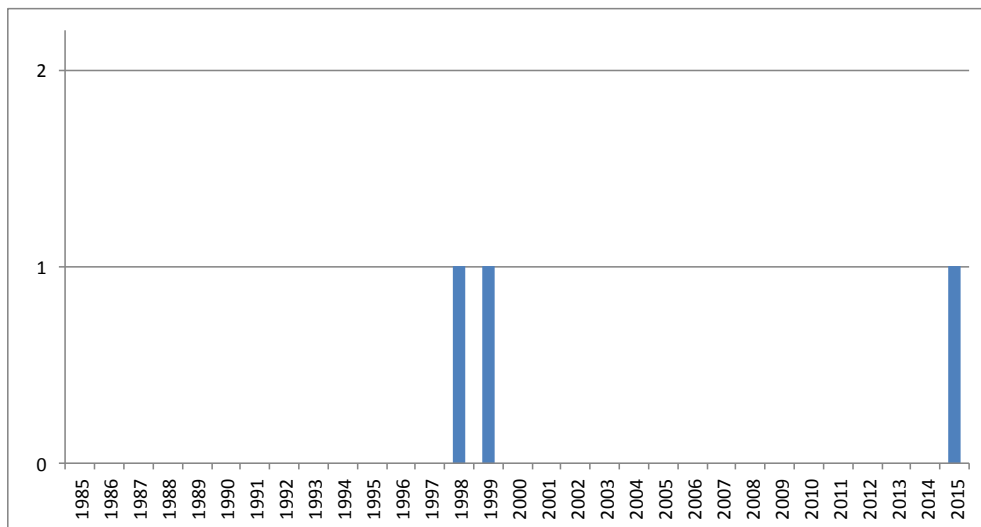


Figure 1: Red-breasted Flycatcher records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are shown in figure 2.

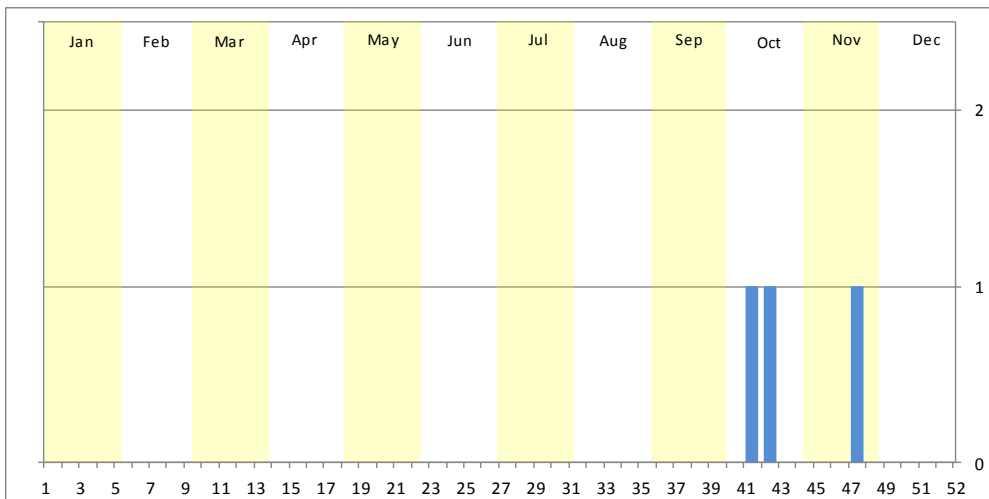


Figure 2: Red-breasted Flycatcher records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Confirmation of the area records follow:

1998 Folkestone Warren, immature/female, 19th November (D. A. Gibson *et al*)

1999 Folkestone Warren, immature/female, 14th October (D. A. Gibson)

2015 Samphire Hoe, immature/female, 20th October, photographed (M. D. Kennett, P. Holt, P. R. Smith *et al*)

In addition, there is an intriguing record of a probable male Red-breasted Flycatcher seen briefly by Roger Norman at Hythe Ranges on the 18th April 1958. The record was not submitted at the time due to the brevity of the views and incompleteness of description, but the red breast and tail pattern were noted and the observer is now happy with the identification, especially following subsequent experience of the species abroad. It would however constitute the earliest arrival date in the county by nearly three weeks.



Red-breasted Flycatcher at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)