

# Water Pipit

*Anthus spinoletta*

Category A

Very rare vagrant

5 records

Breeds above the tree line on alpine meadows in central and southern Europe and descends north and south to lakeshores and wetlands down to sea level in winter.

Small numbers winter in Kent in the Stour Valley and at Oare Marshes and there are widely scattered, but infrequent, passage migrants, usually at coastal sites.



Water Pipit at Samphire Hoe (Geoff Burton)

The first record of Water Pipit in the Folkestone and Hythe area was one seen by Paul Howe and Rob Hollingsworth at Copt Point on 30th March 1985. The second occurrence was at Samphire Hoe, on the same date 23 years later. This was followed by one at Botolph’s Bridge in autumn of the same year, another at Samphire Hoe in early 2010 and one at Donkey Street in November 2017. The records by year are shown in figure 1. There have also been one or two possible sightings on the seawall at Samphire Hoe, so it might be that the species is a regular though rare passage migrant.

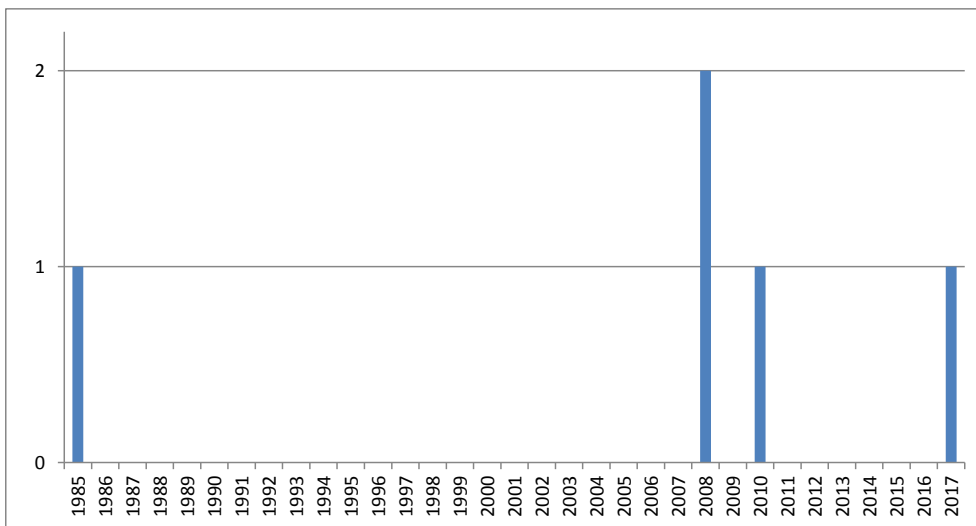


Figure 1: Water Pipit records at Folkestone and Hythe

The first two records occurred on 30<sup>th</sup> March (week 13), with one in late October (week 43), one in early November (week 45) and a long-stayer which was found in January (week 3), as demonstrated by figure 2.

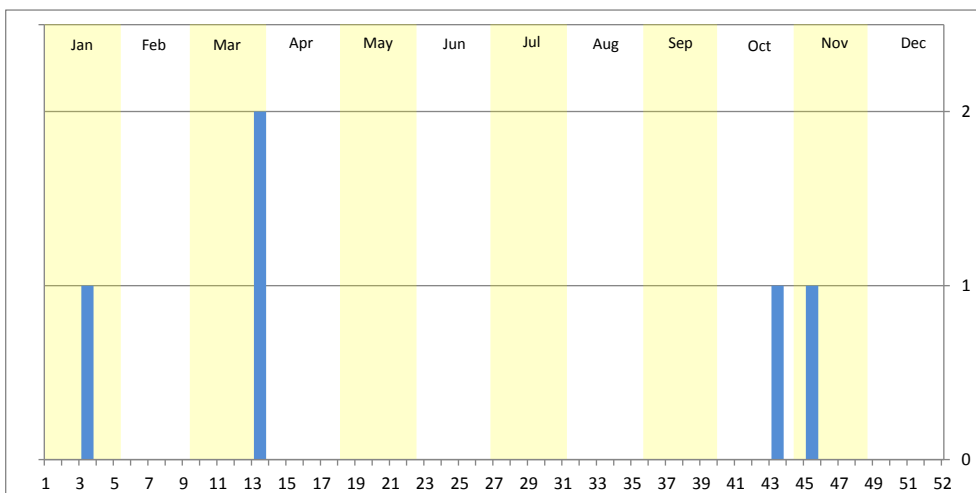


Figure 2: Water Pipit records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

There have been three coastal records, at Copt Point and Samphire Hoe (2), and the others were inland along the canal cutting near Botolph's Bridge and at Donkey Street, as shown in figure 3.

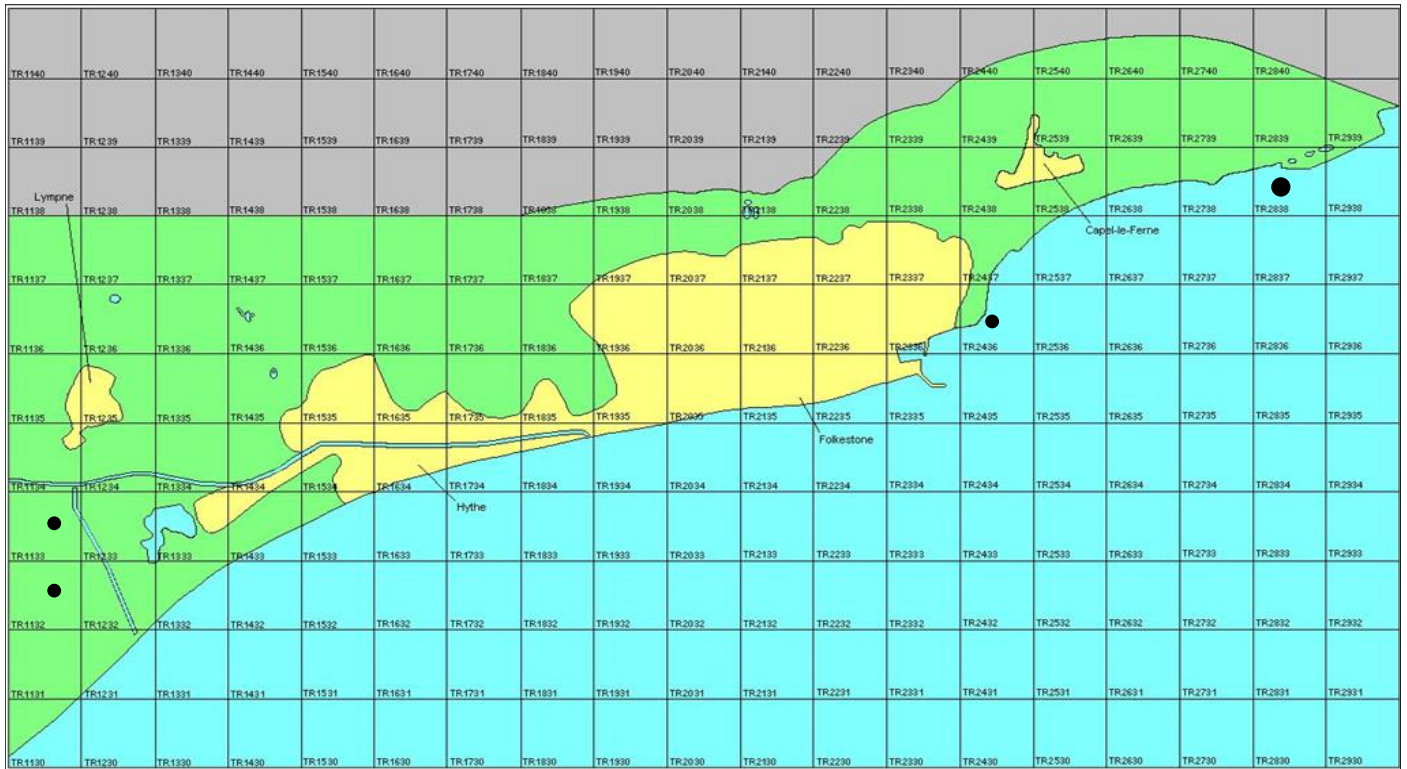


Figure 3: Occurrence of Water Pipit at Folkestone and Hythe by 1km square

The distribution of winter records recorded in the BTO/KOS Atlas (2007 – 2012) is shown in figure 4. The record shown is the bird at Samphire Hoe in 2010.

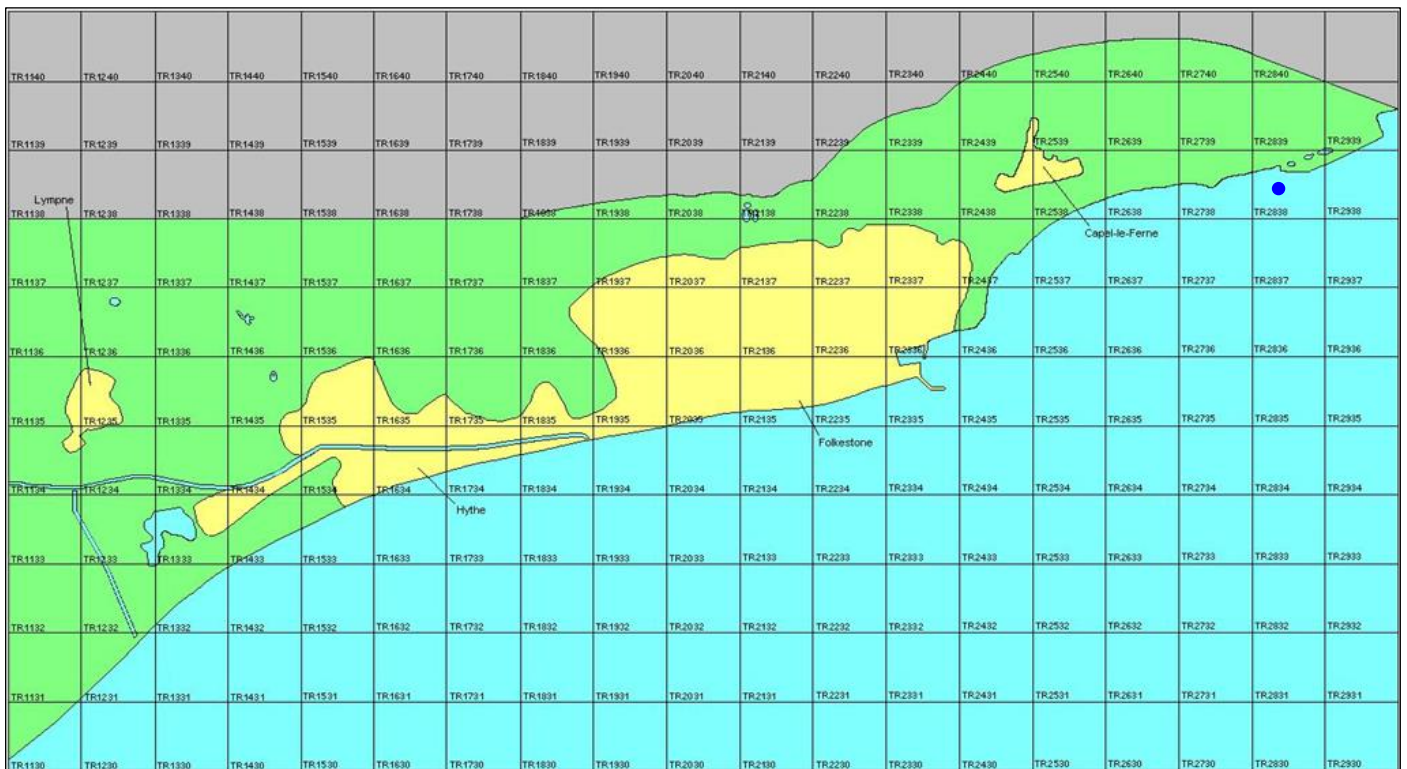


Figure 4: Wintering distribution of Water Pipit at Folkestone and Hythe (2007 – 2012 BTO/KOS Atlas)

The full list of records is as follows:

**1985** Copt Point, one, 30<sup>th</sup> March (P. Howe, R. Hollingsworth)

**2008** Samphire Hoe, one, 30<sup>th</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April, photographed (G. J. A. Burton, I. A. Roberts, P. Holt, D. E. Smith)

**2008** Botolph's Bridge, one, 26<sup>th</sup> October (D. Wrathall)

**2010** Samphire Hoe, one, 17<sup>th</sup> January to 21<sup>st</sup> March, photographed (G. J. A. Burton, P. Holt, I. A. Roberts)

**2017** Donkey Street, one, 5<sup>th</sup> to at least 17<sup>th</sup> November, photographed (I. A. Roberts)



Water Pipit at Samphire Hoe (Geoff Burton)

An account of the second area record is given below:

**Water Pipit at Samphire Hoe  
30th March to 2nd April 2008**

(Geoff J A Burton, Ian A Roberts, Paul Holt, Derek E Smith)

**Circumstances of the find:**

I was seawatching at Samphire Hoe on the morning of the 30th March when I received a call from Geoff Burton asking what the status of Water Pipit was at the site. I replied that it would be the first record and asked why he wanted to know, though was already anticipating the response! He stated that he was watching one now at the extreme western end of the Hoe (which happened to be as far from the seawatching point as it was possible to be).

After a hasty walk, and an anxious few minutes waiting for the bird to return (it had flushed when I rounded the last corner), I had excellent views of the bird. Any doubts that I might have had that it would be a *littoralis* Rock Pipit quickly vanished – it was a striking bird, with a prominent white supercilium, a blue-grey head contrasting with a browner mantle, strong white wing-bars, a strong peachy wash to the breast, no malar stripe, very little streaking underneath (just a few on the flanks), and white outer tail feathers.

I sent Paul Holt a text and he soon rang to say he was on site and on his way. PH and two volunteer wardens successfully saw the bird. It could not be relocated in the afternoon but reappeared on the beach on the 2nd April, when it was seen by PH and Derek Smith.

**Description of the bird:**

Size, shape, jizz: very similar to Rock Pipit. The bird was rather wary and flushed before the local Rock Pipits.

Head and upperparts: prominent white supercilium, blue-grey head contrasting with the browner mantle, strong white wing-bars, and white outer tail feathers.

Underparts: strong pinkish or peachy wash to the breast, no malar stripe, very little streaking underneath (just a few on the flanks).

Bare parts: darkish bill and legs.



Water Pipit at Samphire Hoe (Geoff Burton)