

# Ortolan Bunting

*Emberiza hortulana*

Category A

Very rare vagrant

3 records

Has a widespread but localised distribution across Europe, though is absent from the more north-western areas. A continuing, and often considerable, decline in range and numbers has been widely reported in western and central Europe, mainly due to changes in farming methods, notably loss of hedgerows and lessening crop diversity. In France it disappeared from 17 départements in the north of the country between 1960 and 1990 and is now confined to the southern half, with the decrease continuing. It has also recently become extinct in the Netherlands. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.

A rare but virtually annual autumn passage migrant to Kent, very rare in spring.

The first Folkestone and Hythe record was a fine male seen perched on a chain-link fence in Cheriton, between the Polo Ground and the former golf course (between Fairway Avenue and Cornwallis Avenue) on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 1972.

The first modern record occurred in a stubble field to the east of the blockhouses at Abbotscliffe on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1996, with it or another seen in the same area six days later. The modern records by year are given in figure 1.

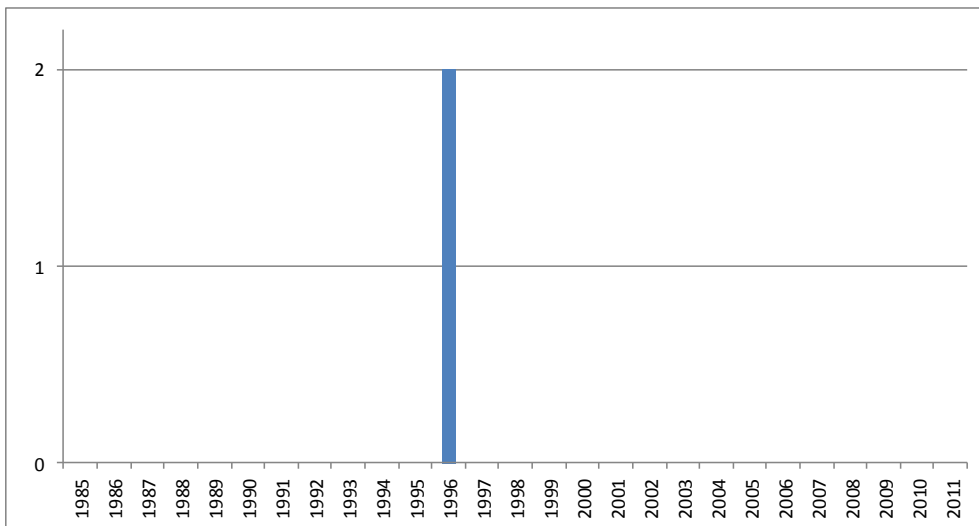


Figure 1: Ortolan Bunting records at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are shown in figure 2.

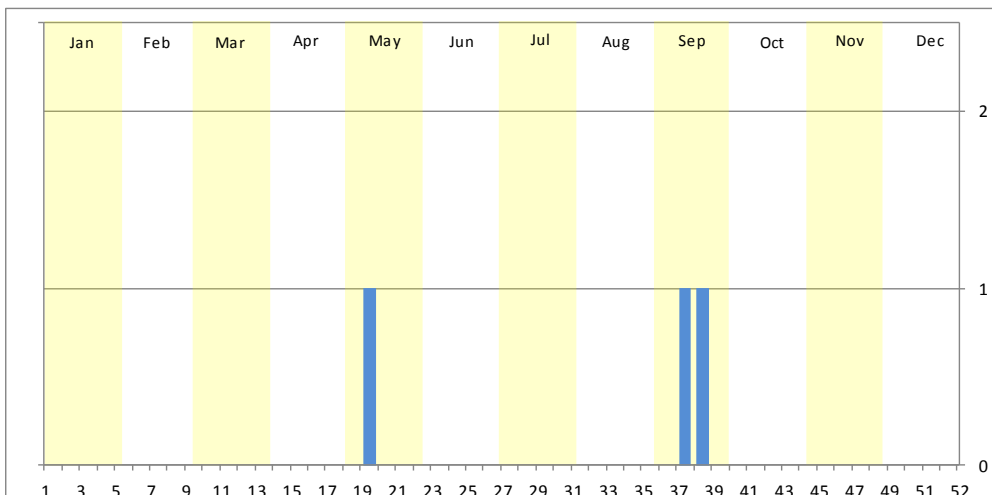


Figure 2: Ortolan Bunting records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Confirmation of the area records follow:

**1972** Cheriton, male, 6<sup>th</sup> May (P. Howe)

**1996** Abbotscliffe, one, 15<sup>th</sup> September (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts, C. G. Bradshaw *et al*)

**1996** Abbotscliffe, one, 21<sup>st</sup> September (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson), possibly same as above