

Wood Lark

Lullula arborea

Category A

Rare migrant.

37 records

Breeds across middle and lower latitude Europe, including southern Britain. Migratory in the northern half of its breeding range, wintering primarily within the southern half of the breeding range (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

Woodward *et al* (2020) provide an estimate of around 2,300 breeding pairs in Britain, with the largest numbers on the lowland heathlands in Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey, Suffolk and Norfolk (Holling *et al*, 2019).



Wood Lark at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

Clements *et al* (2015) describe how it has always been a rare breeding bird in Kent, confined mainly to the greensand ridge in the western half of the county, and this small population has been subject to numerous fluctuations. Numbers probably peaked in the 1950s with eight pairs breeding in 1957 but then declined, with only pair remaining by the time of the second atlas (1998-94), then disappearing altogether. A slight recovery followed, due to woodland damage in the great storm of 1987 and subsequent intentional management, and in the most recent atlas (2007-12) it was found in three tetrads in the county. Since then it declined again, with the last confirmed breeding in 2013 and no possible breeding records after 2015 (KOS bird reports). Otherwise it is a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor (KOS, 2020).

The species was included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871). This list covered an area of six mile radius from Folkestone town hall. This range extends further inland than the current Folkestone and Hythe area and so this does not provide conclusive evidence of its occurrence here.

The first confirmed local record was in 1958, when Roger Norman and William Nevin saw one at Hythe Ranges on the 13th March, followed by another seen by Roger there on the 22nd August 1961. In the meantime, David Musson had seen one flying west over Folkestone on the 5th November 1960. There was a gap of over thirty years until the next in 1993, but it has been recorded with some regularity since, with 34 sightings in 28 years since 1993, as shown in figure 1. The best year to date was 2012.

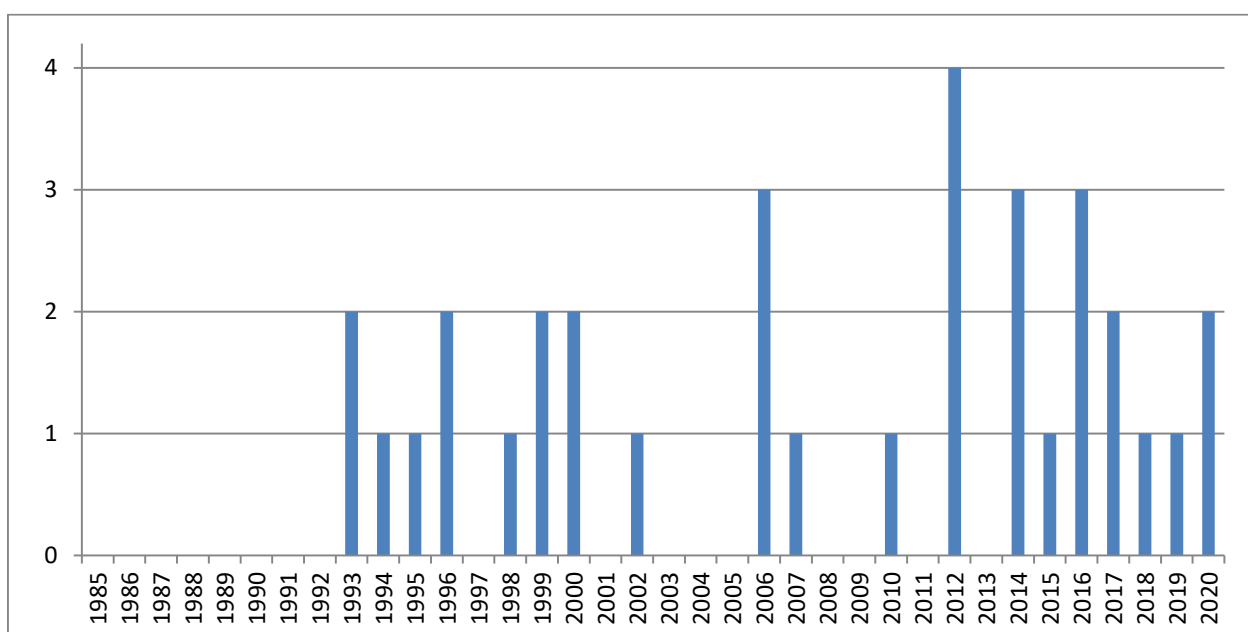


Figure 1: Wood Lark records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are given in figure 2:

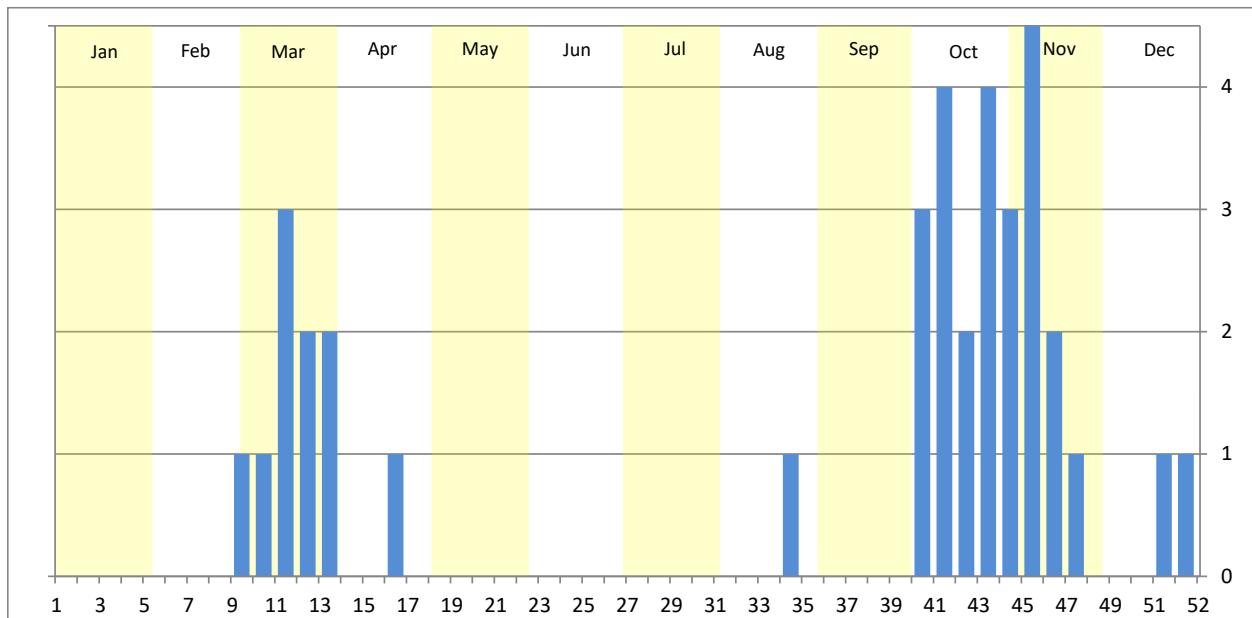


Figure 2: Wood Lark records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

For every spring record to date there have been 2.7 in autumn. Those in spring have occurred between the 4th March (week 9) and 16th April (week 16). Apart from a very early record on 22nd August 1961 and two late ones in December 2014 and 2017, all other autumn records fall between the 24th September (week 39) and 19th November (week 47).

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad:



Figure 3: Distribution of all Wood Lark records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1958** Hythe Ranges, one, 13th March (R. K. Norman, W. S. Nevin)
- 1960** Folkestone, one flew west, 5th November (D. F. Musson)
- 1961** Hythe Ranges, one, 22nd August (R. K. Norman)
- 1993** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 18th March (D. A. Gibson)
- 1993** Abbotscliffe, one flew north-west, 10th October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Capel-le-Ferne, one, 27th October (D. A. Gibson)

1995 Capel-le-Ferne, one flew east, 9th October (D. A. Gibson)
1996 Capel-le-Ferne, one, 28th March (D. A. Gibson)
1996 Capel-le-Ferne, one, 17th October (D. A. Gibson)
1998 Abbotscliffe, two in gully, 3rd October (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
1999 Church Hougham, one flew north, 7th October (I. A. Roberts)
1999 Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 7th November (I. A. Roberts)
2000 Nickolls Quarry, one, 5th March (R. K. Norman)
2000 Abbotscliffe, one, then west, 30th September (I. A. Roberts)
2002 Nickolls Quarry, one, 24th October (R. K. Norman)
2006 Samphire Hoe, one, 16th April (P. Holt)
2006 Abbotscliffe, one, 24th October (I. A. Roberts)
2006 Abbotscliffe, two flew in off the sea, 4th November (I. A. Roberts)
2007 Nickolls Quarry, one, 16th March (R. K. Norman)
2010 Abbotscliffe, one, 24th October (I. A. Roberts)
2012 Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 20th October (I. A. Roberts)
2012 Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 3rd November (I. A. Roberts)
2012 Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 7th November (I. A. Roberts)
2012 Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 15th November (I. A. Roberts)
2014 Abbotscliffe, one, 6th November (I. A. Roberts)
2014 Samphire Hoe, one, 19th to 20th November, photographed (R. Smith, P. Holt *et al*)
2014 Hythe Ranges, three, 28th December (S. McMinn)
2015 Fisherman's Beach, two, 31st October (S. McMinn)
2016 Abbotscliffe, two flew east, 21st March (I. A. Roberts)
2016 Abbotscliffe, one flew north, 23rd March (M. Varley)
2016 Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 25th March (I. A. Roberts)
2017 Samphire Hoe, one flew in off the sea, 4th March (P. Holt)
2017 Hythe Ranges, one, 22nd December (I. A. Roberts)
2018 Horn Street, one flew west, 11th October (P. Howe)
2019 Newington, two, 12th November (B. Harper)
2020 Donkey Street, two flew west, 10th October (I. A. Roberts)
2020 Copt Point, one flew in off the sea, 4th November (D. A. Gibson)

References

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Acknowledgements

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Wood Lark at Samphire Hoe (Paul Holt)



Wood Lark at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)