

Red-rumped Swallow

Hirundo daurica

Category A

Very rare vagrant

14 records

Breeds in southern Europe, particularly in Portugal, Spain and the Balkans, appearing with increasing frequency farther north, mainly as a spring 'overshoot'.

First recorded in Kent in 1959, there had only been another eight county records until the mid-1980s after which this attractive hirundine began to arrive more regularly. Of the 57 records in Kent to the end of 2009, 75% occurred in the last two decades.



Red-rumped Swallow at Capel-le-Ferne (Dale Gibson)

There had been 512 records nationally to the end of 2005 when the British Birds Rarities Committee removed it from the list of species which it assessed.

The first Red-rumped Swallow to be recorded in the Folkestone and Hythe area was in 1992 and it appears to be increasing in its frequency of appearances, as demonstrated by figure 1, in line with the county trend. The first year to produce more than one record was 2003 and the following year saw the first multiple sighting, with two birds, and these were also the first to linger for more than a single day. In 2011 there were an unprecedented three records (within the space of seven days).

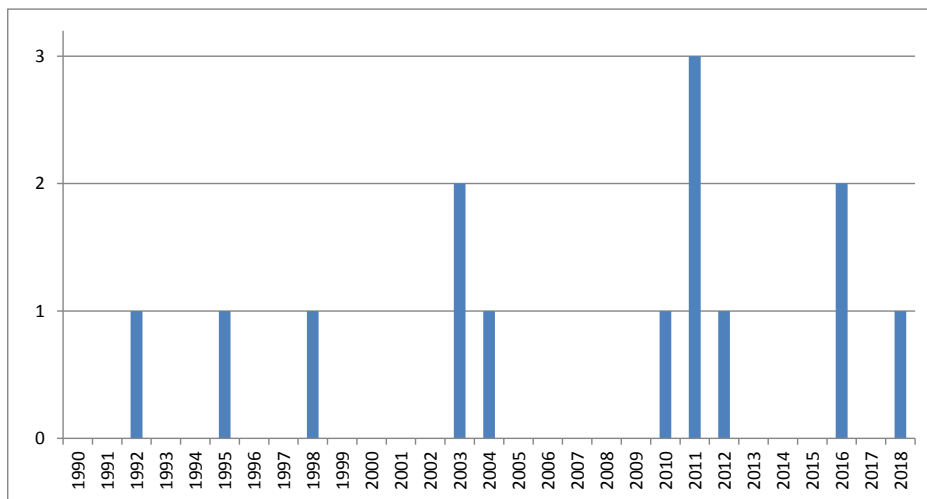


Figure 1: Red-rumped Swallow records at Folkestone and Hythe

All records to date have occurred in spring, between 28th April (week 17) and 8th June (week 23), with the vast majority in May and a distinct peak in week 19 (6th to 12th May), as demonstrated by figure 2.

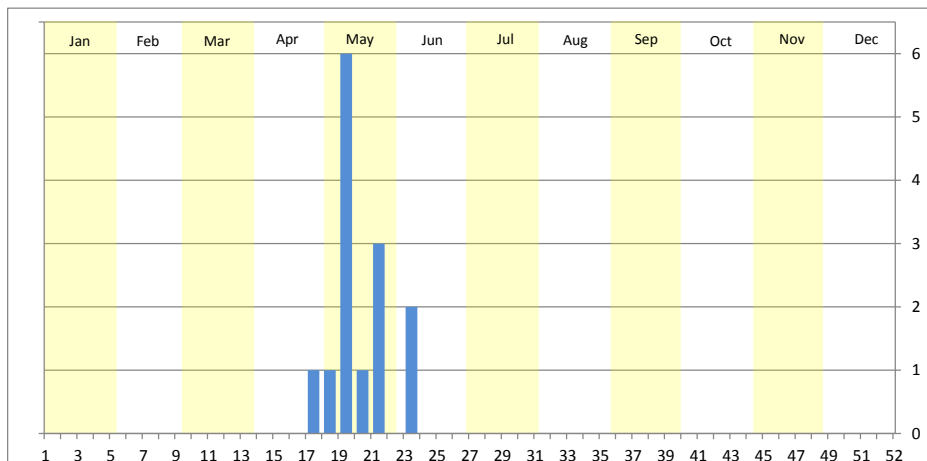


Figure 2: Red-rumped Swallow records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

All records to date have been at the cliffs, apart from two in the Beachborough area, with the lion's share (9) at Capel-le-Ferne Café. This pattern is probably due to observer bias at this time of year, though the species' preference for cliff-like habitats could be a factor.

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1992** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew in off the sea, 23rd May (I. A. Roberts)
- 1995** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one, 7th May (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Capel-le-Ferne Gun Site, one flew west, 8th June (D. A. Gibson)
- 2003** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one, 6th May (D. A. Gibson)
- 2003** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew west, 27th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2004** Capel-le-Ferne Café, two from 12th to 13th May, also at Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe, photographed (I. A. Roberts *et al*)
- 2010** Samphire Hoe, one, 28th April (P. Holt, D. E. Smith *et al*)
- 2011** Samphire Hoe, one, 8th May (P. Holt)
- 2011** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one, 10th May, photographed (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2011** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew east, 14th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew in off the sea, 12th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2016** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew east, 8th May (I. A. Roberts, M. Vandoen)
- 2016** Beachborough Lakes, one, 23rd May, photographed (S. Tomlinson)
- 2018** Beachborough Park, one flew west, 7th June (S. Tomlinson)



Red-rumped Swallows at Capel-le-Ferne (Dale Gibson)

An account of the first area record is given below:

Red-rumped Swallow at Capel-le-Ferne Café

23rd May 1992

(Ian A Roberts)

Weather conditions:

A dry, sunny, warm day with a light north-easterly wind (force 2-4), little cloud cover and good visibility

Circumstances of the find:

On the morning of 23rd May I walked the length of Abbotscliffe before settling down at the visual migration point by the Café at Capel-le-Ferne. There had been the largest movement of Swifts of the year so far (320) moving into the wind, as well as smaller numbers of House Martins and Swallows, and 12 Turtle Doves arriving in off the sea. At 10:55 I picked up a hirundine with an obvious pink rump heading towards me, which was instantly recognisable as a Red-rumped Swallow. I noted the salient features as it flew past and headed off north over the Orchid Field. About 90 minutes later a Honey Buzzard also arrived in off the sea completely a memorable morning's passage.

Description of the bird:

Size, shape, jizz: a graceful and elegant-looking hirundine.

Head and upperparts: dark crown patch, pale collar, reddish ear-coverts. Mantle, wings and tail black. Pinkish rump.

Underparts: Pale throat and underparts. Black under-tail coverts.

Comments on the record:

The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee and appears in their annual rarity report for 1992 (p. 30). There had been 20 previous records in Kent and 231 nationally.



Red-rumped Swallow at Capel-le-Ferne (Dale Gibson)