

Dusky Warbler

Phylloscopus fuscatus

Category A

Very rare vagrant

1 record

Breeds from Siberia eastwards, with northern populations wintering from northern India and Nepal east through China and South-east Asia. Vagrancy to Western Europe thought to result from reverse migration or westward displacement in anti-cyclonic conditions.

There had been c.310 records nationally to the end of 2005 when the British Birds Rarities Committee removed it from the list of species which it assessed. There had been 35 Kent records to the end of 2010, with the vast majority (83%) occurring since 1985.

All Kent records have been found in the autumn, with more than three-quarters between mid-October and mid-November. The Samphire Hoe record, on 25th November, is the latest to have occurred in the county to date.

The only area record is as follows:

2004 Samphire Hoe, one, 25th to 28th November (P. Holt, I. A. Roberts *et al*)

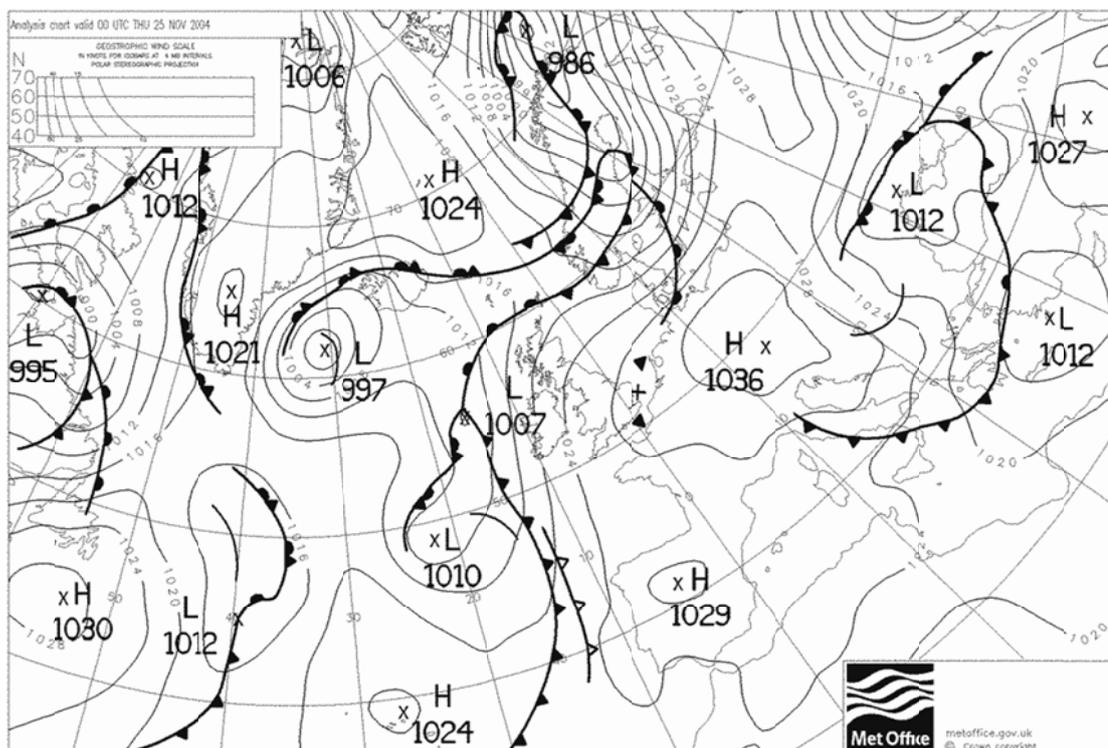
An account of the first area record is given below.

Dusky Warbler at Samphire Hoe 25th to 28th November 2004

(Paul Holt, Ian A Roberts *et al*)

Weather conditions:

The synoptic chart overleaf shows the position at the start of 25th November. A large anticyclone across Russia stretched all the way across to eastern Europe where it merged with a smaller area of high pressure over central Europe. With low pressure systems to the north and south there emerged a window of clear weather from Asia to southern England.



Circumstances of the find:

Paul Holt found a Dusky Warbler at Samphire Hoe at c.12:30 on 25th November 2004. It was favouring low vegetation on the small hill to the east of the office and calling frequently. The news was put out and Ian Roberts and others arrived soon after. The bird continued to call regularly but became elusive and gave only brief views that afternoon, generally in flight.

It remained in the same area until 28th November and reasonable views were possible with patience. The following description was pieced together from 8 hours observation over the bird's four day stay:

Description of the bird:

Upperparts: Supercilium obvious, and whitish, particularly in front of the eye, appearing off-white behind the eye. Supercilium appeared relatively straight. Radde's generally expected to show a more yellowish supercilium, kinked at the rear end. Upperparts a dull brownish, lacking any olive tones, which Radde's tends to show.

Underparts: a dull dingy off-white, with some buff suffusion, but lacking any yellow. Vent lacked the warm yellow of Radde's. Legs a dull pinkish colour, not blackish like Chiffchaff.

Call: a sharp, hard 'tack' or 'tick' which was very distinctive and enabled location of the bird at c.200 yards. The call was given both in flight and when perched. Radde's has a softer, more liquid 'chup' or 'choop'.

Comments on the record:

The record was accepted by the BBRC, appearing in the 2004 rarity report, and was among 20 recorded in Britain in that year. Whilst this is the latest Kent record, it is far from being without precedent nationally, indeed there was one found in Suffolk on 15th December in the same year – illustrating just how late the autumn can last!