

Bluethroat

Luscinia svecica

Category A

Very rare vagrant

5+ records

The south-western races, *cyanecula* (breeding in Spain and central Europe, eastwards from Belgium and eastern France) and *namnetum* (breeding in western France), winter in Africa, and return northwards early in spring, from late February or early March. The nominate northern form (breeding in Scandinavia eastwards into northern Russia), winters patchily right across the Mediterranean and over the entire African winter range of the species, and heads north somewhat later, into May.



Bluethroat at Abbotscliffe (Mike Gould)

A rare spring and autumn passage migrant to Kent, with around 150 records to the end of 2010.

The late Dennis Batchelor recalled seeing Bluethroat at Abbotscliffe in the 1950s or 1960s, which might relate to the record of a female or immature at Folkestone on the 22nd September 1959, which was attributed to David Musson, or which could be an additional record.

It was almost 37 years until the next occurred, when Chris Bradshaw found a female in the gorse at Abbotscliffe on the 13th April 1996. This bird remained for two days, being seen by many observers and photographed by Mike Gould.

The next related to a male which was heard singing and seen briefly by Roger Norman at Nickoll's Quarry on the 17th March 2002 and there have been two subsequent records, both found by Paul Holt at Samphire Hoe, a female between the 27th March and the 3rd April 2013 and a male on the 24th March 2020. The records since 1985 are shown in figure 1.

Only the most recent record could be identified to a specific race (the white-spotted form, *cyanecula*) as the others were either females or immatures, or were seen too briefly. However in view of the dates, both the spring birds seem likely to have been of the white-spotted form, whilst the autumn bird could have been a red-spotted bird (*svecica*).

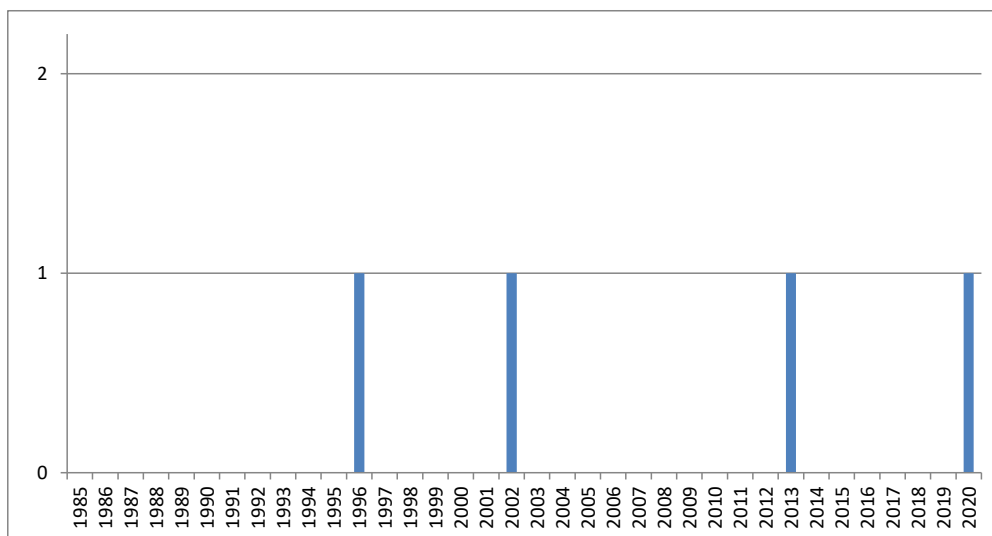


Figure 1: Bluethroat records since 1985 at Folkestone and Hythe

As stated above there have been four records in spring (two in March and two in April) and one in autumn. The distribution of the records by week is shown in figure 2.

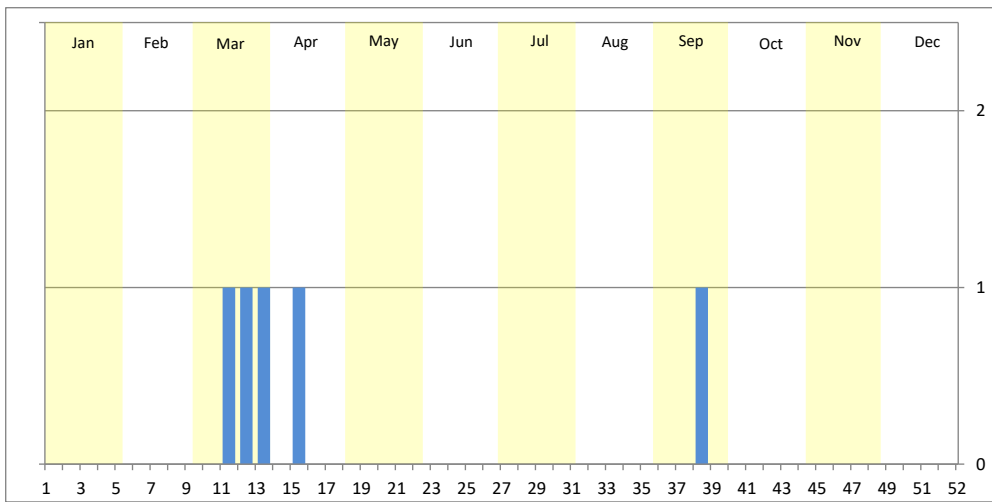


Figure 2: Bluethroat records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1959** Folkestone, immature/female, 22nd September (D. F. Musson)
- 1996** Abbotscliffe, female, 13th to 14th April, photographed (C. G. Bradshaw, A. J. Sheppard, M. May *et al*)
- 2002** Nickoll's Quarry, male, 17th March (R. K. Norman)
- 2013** Samphire Hoe, female, 27th March (P. Holt *et al*), presumed same 29th March to 3rd April (I. A. Roberts *et al*),
Photographed
- 2020** Samphire Hoe, male, 24th March (P. Holt), photographed



Bluethroat at Samphire Hoe (Paul Rowe)



Bluethroat at Samphire Hoe (Paul Holt)