

# Pied Flycatcher

*Ficedula hypoleuca*

Category A

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in autumn.

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):*

Breeds discontinuously from north-west Africa across Spain north and eastwards through France, Britain, Germany, eastern Europe and Fenno-Scandia eastwards to the upper Yenisey river in Siberia. Often prefers higher latitudes, so in Britain mainly breeds in the north and west. Winters in west Africa, south of the Sahara.

*Kent status (KOS 2021):*

In Kent it is a scarce spring and regular but decreasing autumn migrant.



Pied Flycatcher at Abbotscliffe (Elliot Ranford)

The Pied Flycatcher was not included in Knight and Tolputt's "List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood" (1871) but Ticehurst (1909) was able to provide details of "one in the collection of Mr. H. Stredwick, of St. Leonard's [that] was shot by Mr. Chapman at Folkestone in the spring of 1891" and another single bird seen by Mr. P. E. Freke "in the Warren at Folkestone on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1900".

Harrison (1953) added another record, of a male seen by Mr. P. Vernon Dodd near Hythe on the 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1931. These references were included within accounts of spring occurrences in the county, which were few enough to be individually documented, and the species must have also been encountered locally in autumn.

Further sightings followed in the 1950s, when the Kent Bird Reports for that time state that one was noted at Hythe in "autumn 1954", with a further single there in "September 1956". Roger Norman then noted one at Nickolls Quarry and two at Hythe Ranges on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1957 (Norman 2006; 2007). H. Schreiber then noted one at Hythe in "September 1960", whilst Dave Musson saw singles at Folkestone on four dates in "late September/early October" of that year. A further two followed at Folkestone on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1967 before a quite exceptional arrival of 30 was noted at Folkestone on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1968, which was considered worthy of inclusion by Taylor *et al.* (1981) in their "Birds of Kent", with 43 at Sandwich Bay and 60 at Dungeness on the same day.



Pied Flycatcher at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Pied Flycatcher in a garden in Folkestone (Dale Gibson)



There were no records in the 1970s, presumably due to a lack of coverage, but the first spring record occurred on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 1981, when one was seen at West Hythe, whilst another was noted there in “autumn 1981”. A further spring record was noted in 1984, when Neil Frampton saw a male along the canal at Palmarsh on the 15<sup>th</sup> May, and later that year he also found four along the canal on the 14<sup>th</sup> August, whilst up to two were at Copt Point on the 27<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>. It has since been recorded almost annually since more systematic coverage of the area commenced in the late 1980s.

### **Overall distribution**

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all records by tetrad, with records in 13 tetrads (42%).

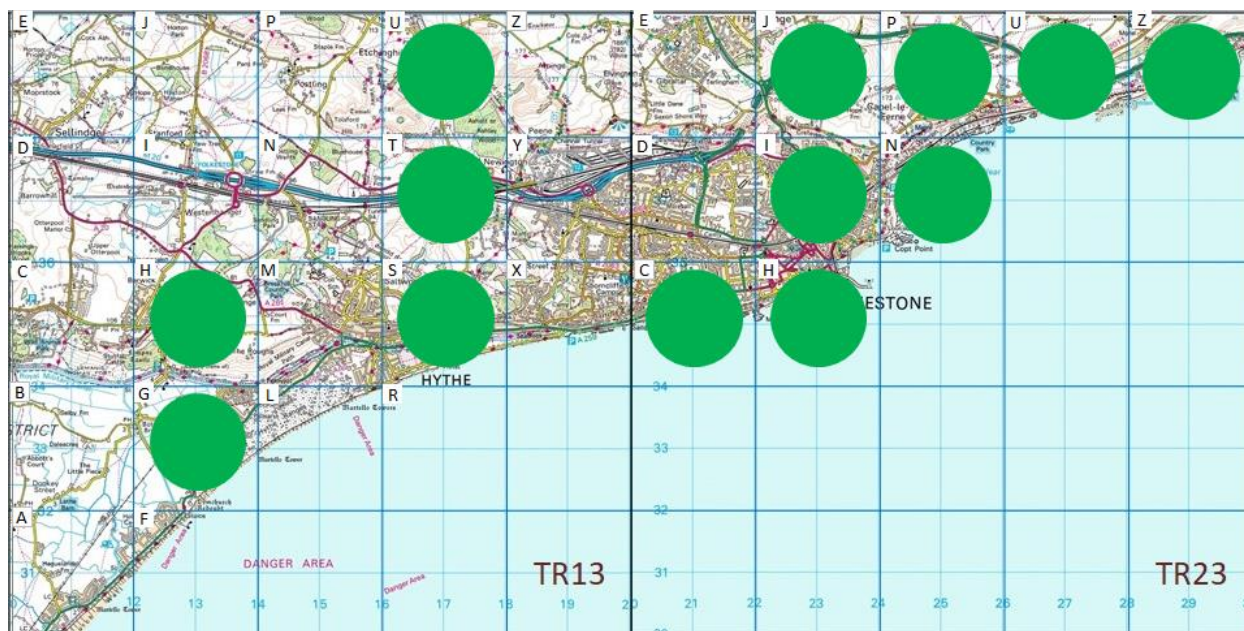


Figure 1: Distribution of all Pied Flycatcher records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

It is particularly scarce in spring, with the only records (in addition to those noted above) having occurred as follows:

- A male at Folkestone on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 1993
- A male at Capel Battery on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1995
- A female at Abbotscliffe on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 1997
- A male at Samphire Hoe on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2007



Pied Flycatcher at Samphire Hoe (John Lees) – one of the two October sightings



Pied Flycatcher at Abbotscliffe (Elliot Ranford)

In autumn it can occur from late July, when one was at Samphire Hoe on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2007, with two there on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2006, but is more usually noted in August and September.

All records (apart from the exceptional arrival in 1968 and the four at West Hythe in 1984) have involved one or two apart from in 1997, when three were at Abbotscliffe on the 11<sup>th</sup> August and four were in the Capel-le-Ferne area on the 25<sup>th</sup> August.

There have been just two records in October, singles at Samphire Hoe on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2010 and at Folkestone on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 1994.

Annual variability is high, with no records in 2011 but bird/day totals of 15 in 1997 and 14 in 2002. There is some evidence of a decline, with average annual bird/day totals of 5.1 in the 1990s, 4.8 in the 2000s and 4.3 in the 2010s.

## References

Harrison, J. M. 1953. *The Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2021. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.

Knight, V. & Tolputt, F. 1871. List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood. *Fourth Annual Report of the Folkestone Natural History Society*. Available at: [www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46103](http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46103)

Norman, R. K. 2006. Some observations of birds on Hythe Ranges since 1950. <https://folkestonebirds.com/where-to-watch> (see "Further Information" section).

Norman, R. K. 2007. The Birds of Palmarsh Gravel Pit. <https://folkestonebirds.com/where-to-watch> (see "Further Information" section).

Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society.

Ticehurst, N. F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

## Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).

I am indebted to Andrew Henderson and Tim Hodge for providing access to the Kent Ornithological Society archives.



Pied Flycatchers at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)



Pied Flycatcher at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)