

## Richard's Pipit

*Anthus richardi*

Category A

Rare passage migrant.

20 records,  
22 birds

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

Breeds in Siberian, wintering from Pakistan to Indo-China, and south to Malaysia. It is a scarce but regular visitor to western Europe, which occurs with quite high frequency considering its breeding range, even wintering regularly in southern Iberia.

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

It is an uncommon, mainly autumn passage vagrant to the county.

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 158

The Richard's Pipit was first recorded in Britain in Greater London in 1812 (Naylor 2021) and this was followed by four in the 1830s, then another 24 in the country before Ticehurst (1909) documented the first Kent record in 1868, when one was shot in a cornfield near Dover in October. Ticehurst included two further records caught near Dover (in mid-November 1889 and in October 1890) and one killed on the Kentish Knock Lightship, when stationed 21 miles NNE of Margate in September 1903.

Harrison (1953) added a further two county records, at Sandwich in September 1946 and at Shellness on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1950. He also referred to a probable local sighting, although stated that it "really has no value, as it is recorded as a 'probable' example. It relates to an alleged bird seen near Seabrook on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1930". He went further to state that "such uncertainties would really be far better left unrecorded".

The original note by Alice Stone to *British Birds* (1931) is reproduced opposite. Harrison's comments perhaps seem a little harsh given that Miss Stone and her sister are known to have been competent observers and there is a passable description. This would have been the first spring record for Kent but Harrison included a later example seen on a very similar date and several previous British records occurred in April or May (Naylor 2021).

Taylor *et al.* (1981) logged another 13 county records during their review period (1952-76), including three in spring (between the 15<sup>th</sup> April and 8<sup>th</sup> May). Ten of those occurred in the last decade of that period and it had continued to appear with increasing frequency in the county and the country until recently. Nationally, there was a mean of 40 per annum in the 1960s, 51 in the 1970s, 65 in the 1980s and a peak of 130 in the 1990s (White & Kehoe 2022), and it was removed from the species that the British Birds Rarities Committee considered as a national rarity at the end of 1982, when over 1,150 had been logged (Grant *et al.* 1982).

Although White & Kehoe stated that there is "currently no significant trend" they thought it "possible that a decline is now beginning to occur", with a mean of 119 per annum in the 2000s and 105 per annum in the 2010s. In Kent there was a total of 41 records in the 1980s and 42 in the 1990s, but 28 in the 2000s and just 19 in the 2010s (KOS no date).



Richard's Pipit at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

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### BRITISH BIRDS.

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#### PROBABLE RICHARD'S PIPIT IN KENT.

ON April 24th, 1930, I saw a strange Pipit, which I believe to have been a Richard's Pipit (*Anthus r. richardi*) near Seabrook in Kent.

The bird was on a piece of waste land, and my sister and I watched it for some five or ten minutes at a distance of about twenty yards.

The bird was obviously a Pipit, from its general brown colouring, fine beak and Wagtail-like habit. It was much larger than a Meadow-Pipit, and on looking carefully at the plumage I noticed at once some bright buff on the flanks. Then, suspecting it to be one of the rarer Pipits, I noted details of the plumage with as much particularity as possible.

A narrow streak of bright buff extended along the flanks, just below the edge of the wing, and below that was a paler sandy streak which merged into the dull breast-colour. The flanks were entirely without spot, as were the lower breast and middle throat.

The breast spots were confined to a gorget (more like a Sky-Lark than a Pipit) and to the sides of the throat.

The upper plumage was very definitely streaked, longitudinally, dark and light brown. The legs were light in colour.

ALICE V. STONE.

The first confirmed record in the Folkestone and Hythe area was in 1990, when one was found at Church Hougham on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September by Mark Kennett. Since then, it has occurred with some regularity, and this coincided with the commencement of regular coverage at Abbotscliffe, where all but three local records have been found. There have been another 19 records in the subsequent 32 years, as demonstrated by figure 1. No decline has yet apparent locally, with six sightings having occurred in the 1990s and 2000s, and five in the 2010s.

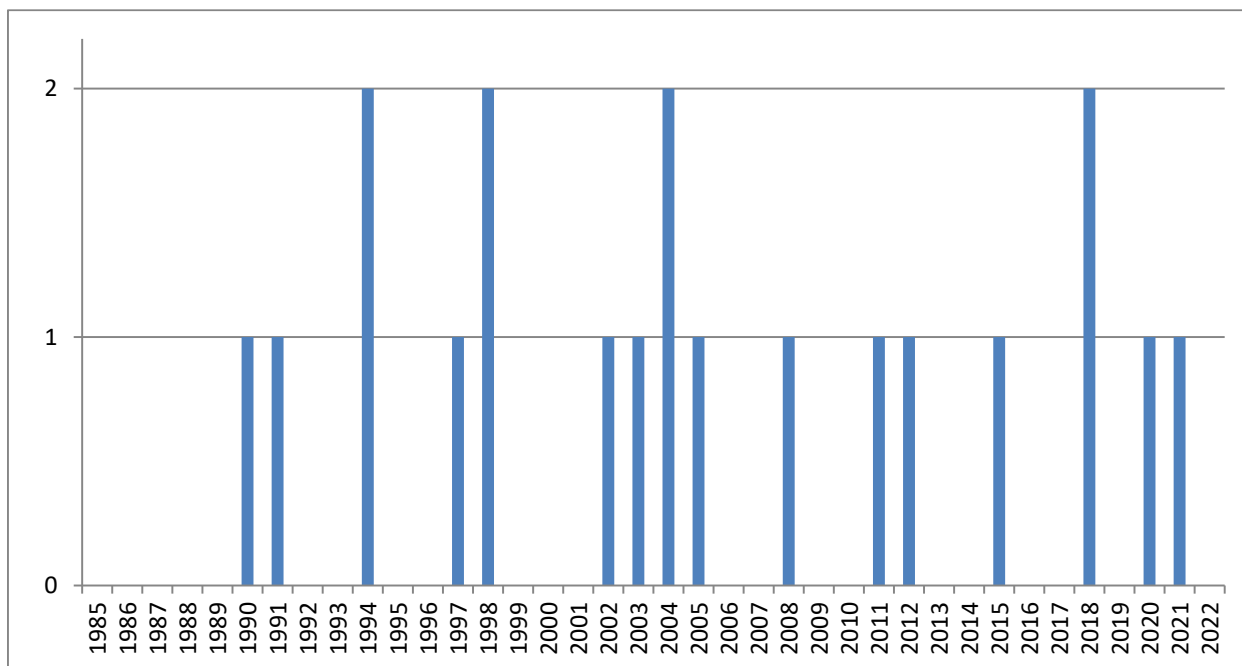


Figure 1: Richard's Pipit records at Folkestone and Hythe

Of the two large pipits that have occurred locally, Richard's is marginally more regular, and has a mean arrival date almost three weeks later in the autumn (14<sup>th</sup> October). Apart from a single spring record, the first record on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September (week 38) and the most recent autumn record on the 5<sup>th</sup> November (week 45), all others have been recorded in October (weeks 40-44), as demonstrated by figure 2.

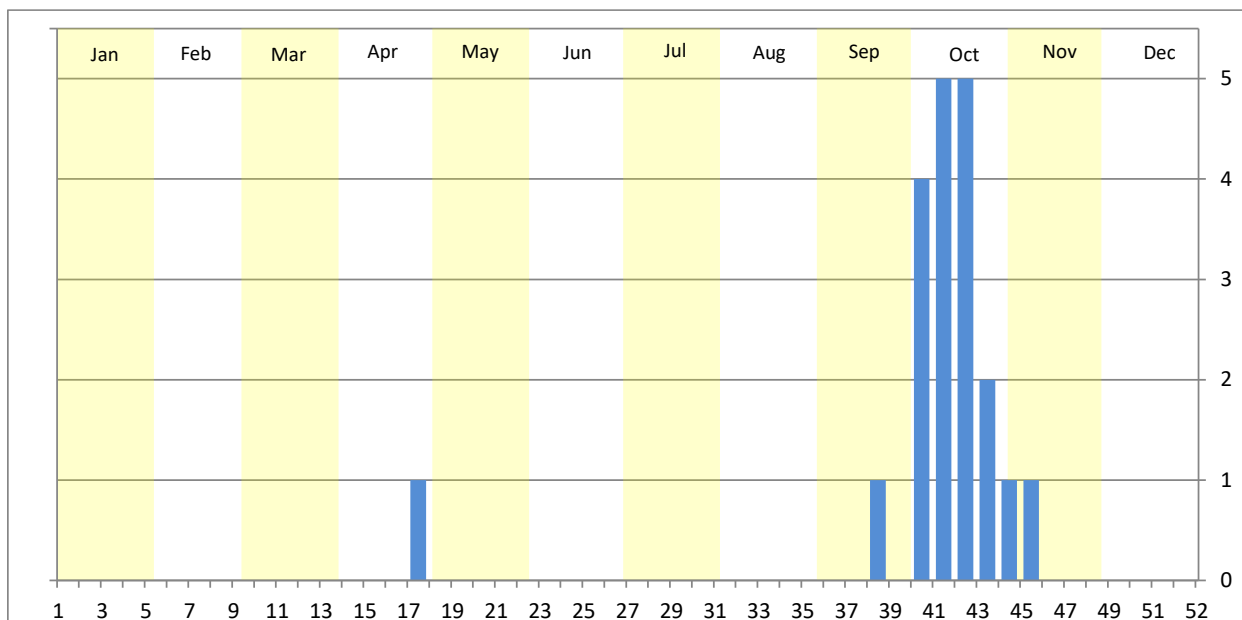


Figure 2: Richard's Pipit records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Aside from the first record (at Church Hougham), one at Seabrook and one at Samphire Hoe, all others have been from Abbotscliffe, though one in 2015 was also probably seen at Creteway Down. Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Richard's Pipit records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1990** Church Hougham, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> September (M. D. Kennett, S. Kennett, D. E. Smith)
- 1991** Abbotscliffe, two, 21<sup>st</sup> October, one remaining to the 22<sup>nd</sup> (I. A. & A. F. Roberts, D. A. Gibson, J. P. Siddle)
- 1994** Abbotscliffe, two, 1<sup>st</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1994** Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 24<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1997** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 13<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one flushed from gully, then flew west, 6<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 1998** Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 13<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
- 2002** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 4<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2003** Abbotscliffe, one, 19<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson, T. Scotland)
- 2004** Abbotscliffe, one, 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts, J. A. Gibson)
- 2004** Abbotscliffe, one, 17<sup>th</sup> October, considered different to above (D. A. Gibson)
- 2005** Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 3<sup>rd</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2008** Abbotscliffe, one flushed from gully, then flew north-west, 9<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson)
- 2011** Abbotscliffe, one, 17<sup>th</sup> October, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2012** Abbotscliffe, one, 28<sup>th</sup> October (P. Edmondson, D. A. Gibson)
- 2015** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 12<sup>th</sup> October, also probably seen earlier at Creteway Down (I. A. Roberts, D. A. Gibson)
- 2018** Abbotscliffe, one flew west, 14<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2018** Seabrook, one flew west, 26<sup>th</sup> October (P. Howe)
- 2020** Abbotscliffe, one flew east, 5<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2021** Samphire Hoe, one, 29<sup>th</sup> April (R. Blackman)

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### ***Acknowledgements***

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

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Richard's Pipit at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)