

Melodious Warbler

Hippolais polyglotta

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

2 records,
2 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds in south-west Europe from southern Spain to the south-east Netherlands and east to Italy, also in north-west Africa. Winters in western Africa north of the equator.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a rare but regular passage migrant in the county.

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 103



Melodious Warbler at Capel Battery (Dale Gibson)

The Melodious Warbler was first noted in Britain in 1905, when one was shot in Cornwall, whilst another obtained on the Isle of May in 1913 was the only other national record before 1951, when one was trapped on Lundy Island. It then occurred with some regularity, with annual records from 1954 (Naylor 2021), and the first Kent record soon followed, when one was seen at Dungeness on the 2nd August 1959 (Taylor *et al.* 1981). It ceased to be considered as a national rarity at the end of 1962, whilst in Kent a further 17 had been logged by the end of the review period (1976) of Taylor *et al.*

Nationally it continued to increase during the 1970s (with a mean of 32 records per annum) and peaked in the 1980s (39 per annum) but has since shown indications of a decline (with 30 per annum in the 1990s, 23 per annum in the 2000s and 20 per annum in the 2010s). White & Kehoe (2022) wrote that “the reasons for this decrease remain unknown and seem to run counter to the species’ fortunes on the near continent where the Melodious Warbler is generally increasing and spreading northwards”. The authors also noted that records tended to be concentrated in the west and south-west of Britain. The trend in the county is similar, with records increasing during the 1960s (12), 1970s (14), 1980s (26) and 1990s (31), although this latter decade included an extraordinary arrival of 17 at Dungeness in May 1996, before decreasing sharply to 11 in the 2000s and 8 records in the 2010s (KOS no date).

The only local records occurred on the same day in 1995, when singing males were found by Dale and Jamie Gibson at Copt Point and Capel Battery on the 21st May. The records by year are shown in figure 1.

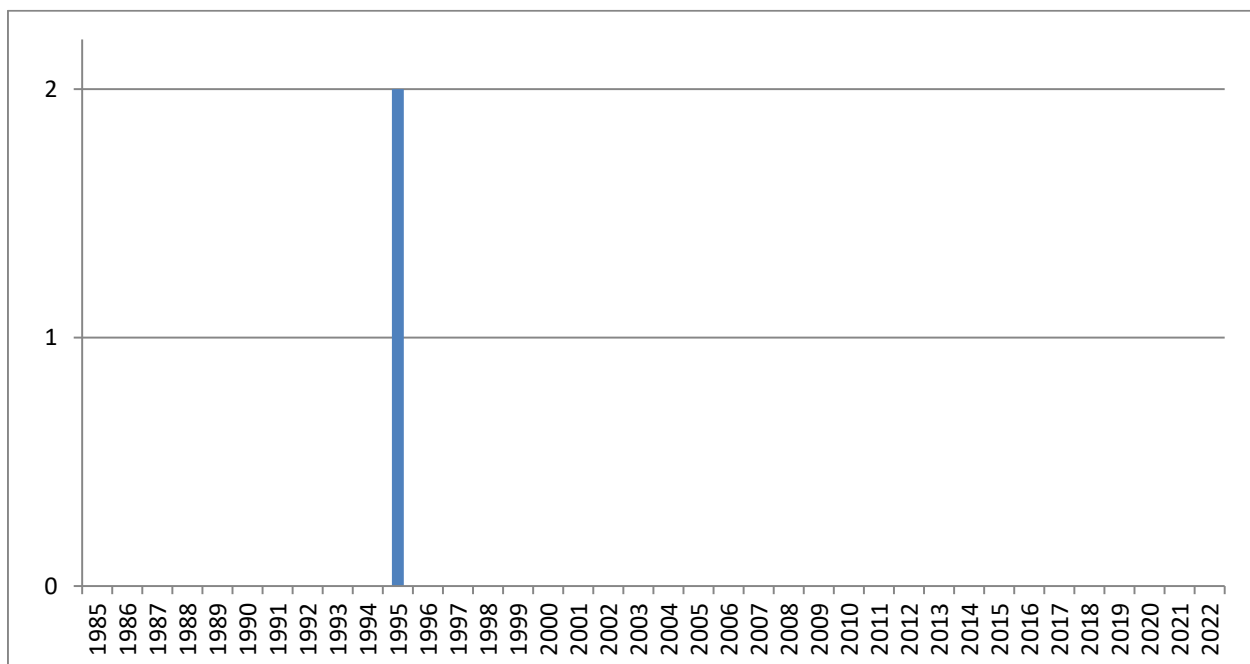


Figure 1: Melodious Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe

In Kent around 40% of records have occurred in spring, mostly in May and early June, with the remainder in autumn, mainly from late July to mid-September. The only local records to date were both in spring (week 21), as demonstrated by figure 2.

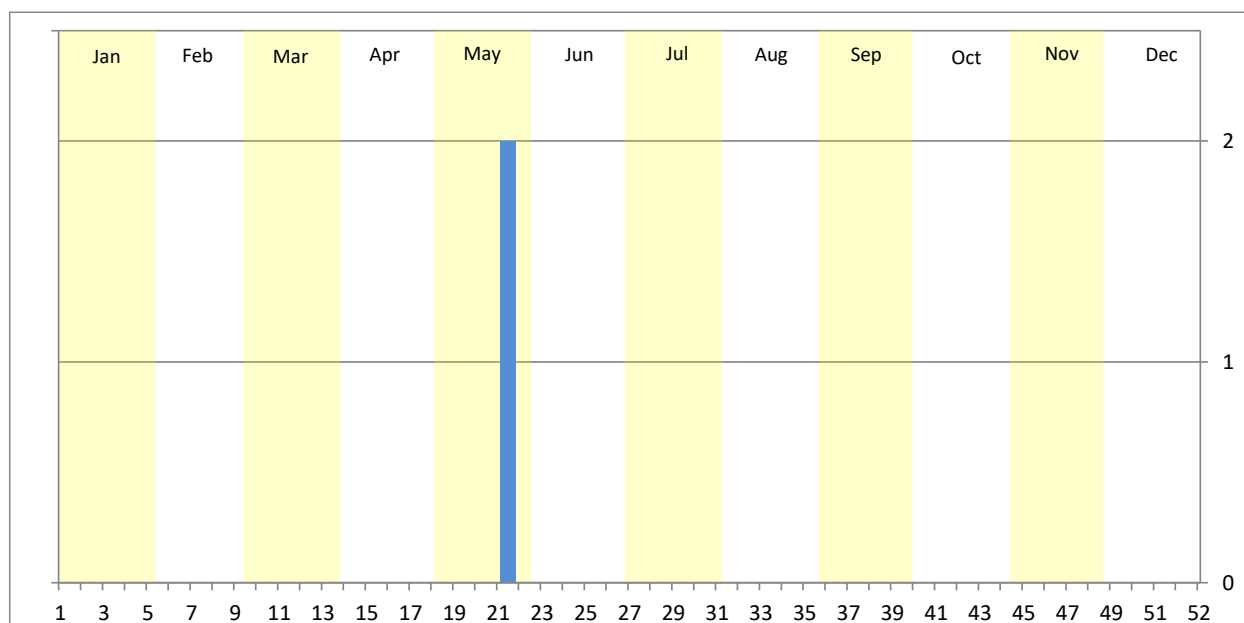


Figure 2: Melodious Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.

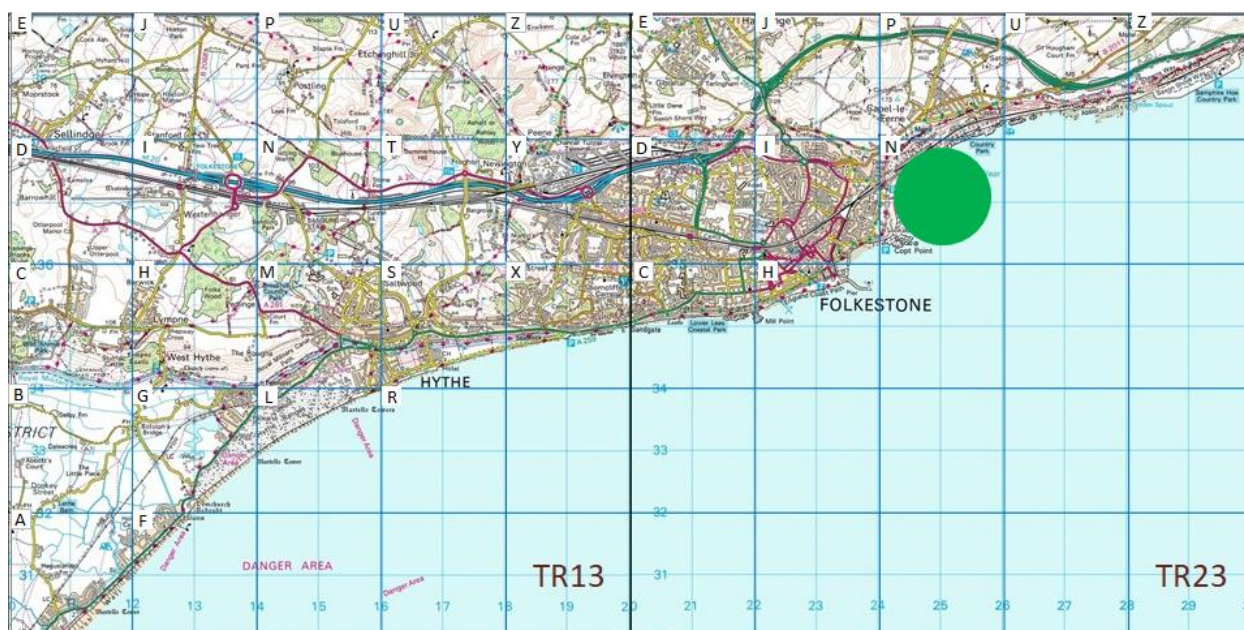


Figure 3: Distribution of all Melodious Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

1995 Copt Point, one, 21st May (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson)

1995 Capel Battery, one, 21st May, photographed (D. A. Gibson, J. A. Gibson)

In addition, there are two records of unidentified *Hippolais* warblers, either this species or Melodious Warbler (and in both cases thought probably the latter, but the brevity of views did not allow the identification to be confirmed), at Nickolls Quarry on the 14th August 2002 (Norman 2007) and Capel Battery on the 31st May 2004.

References

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

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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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Melodious Warbler at Capel Battery (Dale Gibson)