

# Dusky Warbler

*Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

1 record

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

Breeds in Siberia from the upper Ob and western Altai east to the Anadyr' region and Sakhalin Island, south to the eastern Himalayas and central and north-east China. Winters from Nepal to southern China and in south-east Asia to Singapore. Vagrancy to Western Europe is thought to result from reverse migration or westward displacement in anti-cyclonic conditions.

*Kent status (KOS 2021):*

Rare autumn vagrant.

British (BBRC) records to end 2005: 311

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 54

The first European record occurred on Orkney in 1913 but there were no further British records until 1961, after which it was noted with increasing regularity, with a further ten in the 1960s (including four in 1968), 14 in 1970s and annual records from 1980, with a total of 311 having been recorded (including peaks of over 20 in four separate years) by the end of 2005 when the British Birds Rarities Committee removed it from the list of species which it considered to be national rarities (Fraser & Rogers 2006; BBRC 2021). The upward trend has continued, with an average of 27 national records in the last decade, and a number of birds have now successfully wintered in Britain (White & Kehoe 2019).

It is a rare but regular vagrant in Kent, with 54 records to the end of 2020, the vast majority (89%) having occurred since 1985, including a record total of ten in 2019. All had occurred between mid-September and late November, with the only local record being the latest to have occurred in the county to date, but 2020 saw two arrivals in early December, both of which remained into January 2021 (KOS no date).

The single local record involved one found by Paul Holt at Samphire Hoe on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2004, where it remained until the 28<sup>th</sup>, although was often elusive and permitting only brief views.

The record by year is shown in figure 1.

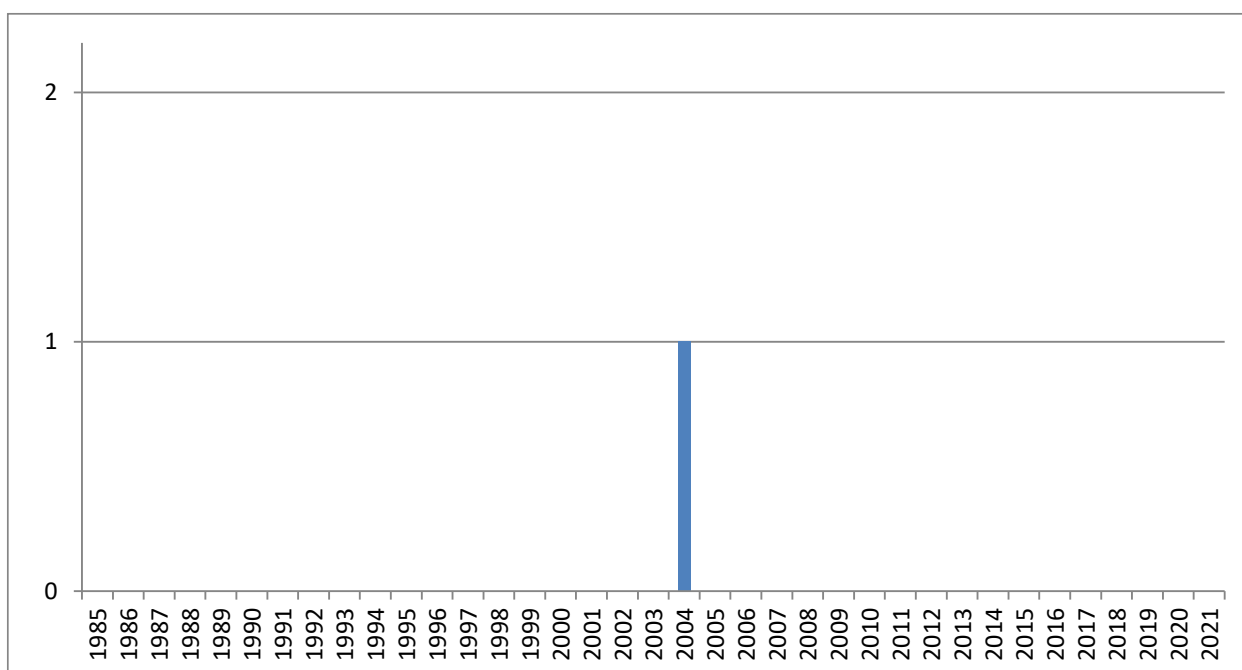


Figure 1: Dusky Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe

The record by week is given in figure 2.

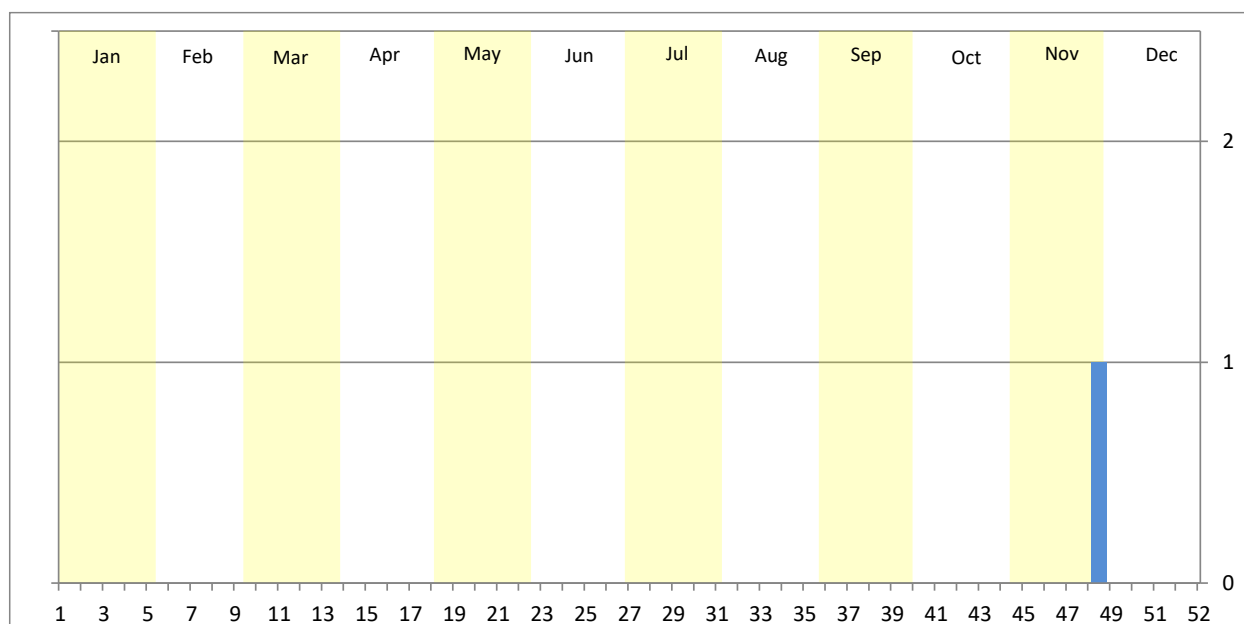


Figure 2: Dusky Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of the record by tetrad.

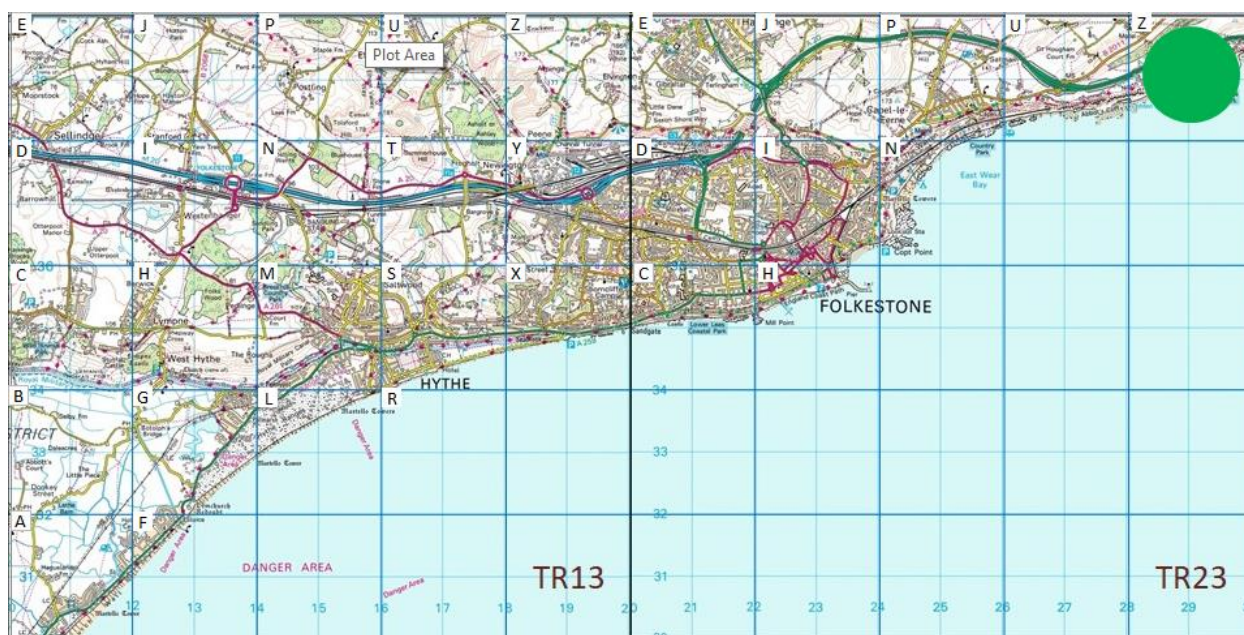


Figure 3: Distribution of all Dusky Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Confirmation of the only area record is as follows:

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

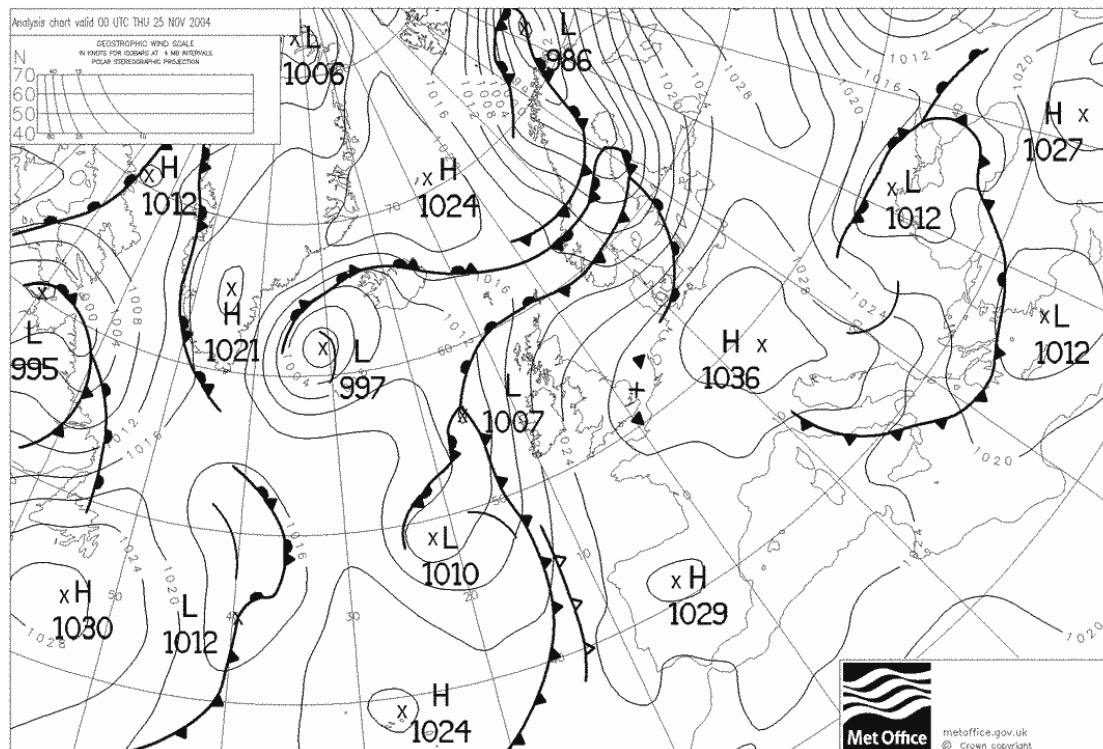
An account of the first area record is given below.

## Dusky Warbler at Samphire Hoe 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> November 2004

By Ian Roberts

### Weather conditions:

The synoptic chart overleaf shows the position at the start of 25<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 myself 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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 (Rogers *et al.* 2005), and was among 20 recorded in Britain in that year. Whilst this was the latest Kent record, it was far from being without precedent nationally, indeed one was found in Suffolk on 15<sup>th</sup> December in the same year – illustrating just how prolonged the autumn can be!

### References

- British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). Statistics. [www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/statistics](http://www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/statistics) (accessed 2021).
- Fraser, P. A. & Rogers, M. J., 2007. Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005, part 1. *British Birds* 100: 16–61.
- Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). 1953-2021. *Kent Bird Reports*. Kent Ornithological Society.
- Kent Ornithological Society (KOS). The Kent List. <https://kentos.org.uk/index.php/recording/the-kent-list> (accessed 2021).
- Rogers, M. J. & the Rarities Committee 2005. Report on Rare Birds in Britain in 2004. *British Birds* 98: 628-694.
- 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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