

Icterine Warbler

Hippolais icterina

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

8 records,
8 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds in western and central Europe north to Fennoscandia and east to the Black Sea, European Russia and Siberia east to the Ob River and Kazakhstan. Winters throughout Africa, mostly south of the equator.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

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



Icterine Warbler at Abbotscliffe (Dale Gibson)

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 246

The Icterine Warbler was first noted in Britain in June 1848, when one was killed at Eythorne (north-west of Dover), with the next being shot in Norfolk in 1884. It was then noted with increasing regularity and there were almost annual records from the beginning of the twentieth century (Naylor 2021), including further sightings in Kent in 1902, 1903 and 1916 (Ticehurst 1909, Harrison 1953). Taylor *et al.* 1981 logged a total of 52 birds during their review period (1952-76) and it ceased to be considered as a national rarity at the end of 1962.

Nationally it continued to increase during the 1970s (with a mean of 35 records per annum), 1980s (81 per annum) and peaked in the 1990s (139 per annum) but has since shown indications of a decline (with 88 per annum in the 2000s and 75 per annum in the 2010s) (White & Kehoe 2022). In contrast to the Melodious Warbler records tended to be concentrated on the east coast of Britain and in the Northern Isles and it has occasionally bred in Scotland (Holling *et al.* 2019). The trend in the county is similar, with records increasing during the 1960s (21), 1970s (55) and peaking in the 1980s (86), before decreasing (with 47 in the 1990s, 14 in the 2000s and 13 in the 2010s) (KOS no date).

The first local record (in 1984) occurred on the unusually early autumn date on 21st July. This bird at Lympne was aged as a juvenile and the observer stated that it was “tempting to think it was locally bred”, though presumed it to be an early migrant. There have been seven further records as shown in figure 1.

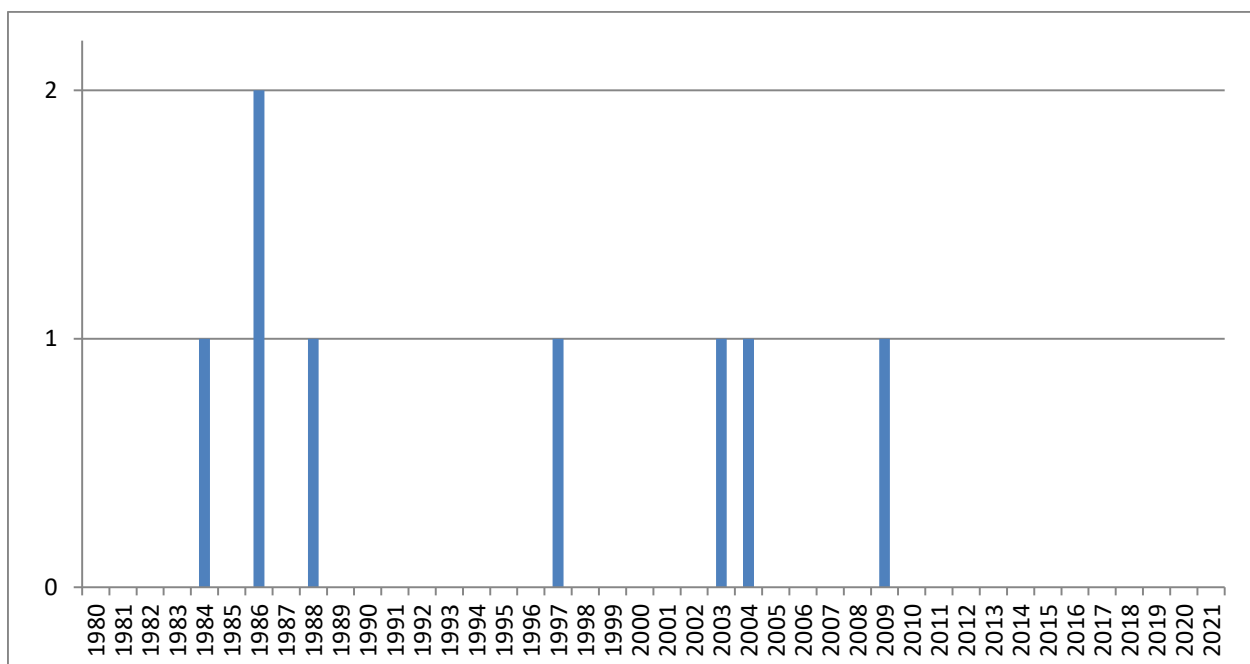


Figure 1: Icterine Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe

The first record was soon followed by two reports at Copt Point in the autumn of 1986 (singles in August and October) and one seen at Mill Point in October 1988, but almost a decade elapsed before the next was found at Abbotscliffe in September 1997. More recently there have been autumn sightings at Samphire Hoe in August 2003 and at Abbotscliffe in August 2004, and a singing male at Samphire Hoe in May 2009.

There has been one spring record (in May) and seven in autumn (one on the 21st July and the others between the 15th August and 9th October). The distribution of the records by week is shown in figure 2.

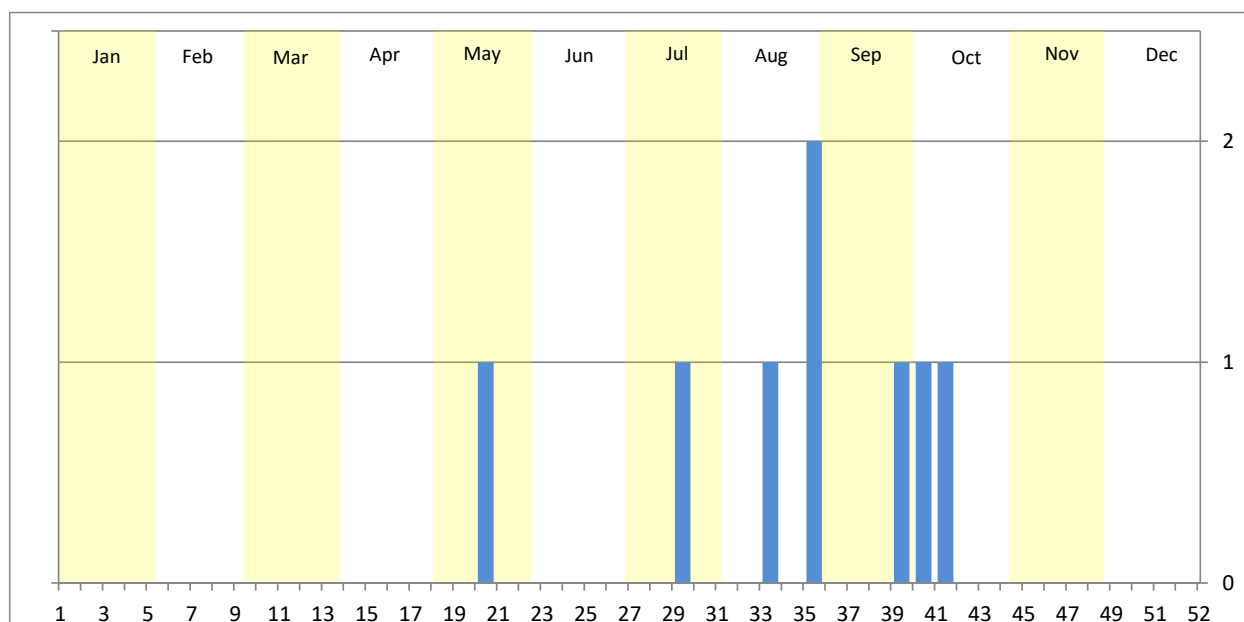


Figure 2: Icterine Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1984** Lympne, juvenile, 21st July (reported)
- 1986** Copt Point, one, 30th August (reported)
- 1986** Copt Point, one, 9th October (reported)
- 1988** Mill Point, one, 5th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1997** Abbotscliffe, one, 25th September, photographed (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)

2003 Samphire Hoe, one, 28th August (P. I. Holt, G. J. A. Burton, D. E. Smith)

2004 Abbotscliffe, one, 15th August (I. A. Roberts)

2009 Samphire Hoe, male, in song, 14th May (I. A. Roberts)

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Icterine Warbler at Abbotscliffe (Dale Gibson)

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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