

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus

Category A

Rare passage migrant.

37 records,
37 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998, Dufour et al. 2022):

Breeds in high and central latitudes of the east Palearctic, chiefly in Siberian Russia, wintering from central Nepal east to eastern China and south to the Malay Peninsula. Considering its range it is a surprisingly frequent, even regular visitor to Europe, with a marked increase in recent years leading to a number of winter and spring records, and speculation that it may have evolved a new migration route.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a scarce but regular autumn migrant to Kent in variable numbers, rare in winter and spring.



Yellow-browed Warbler at the Willop Sewage Works (Brian Harper)

Harrison (1953) was only able to cite one acceptable record in the county (at Dungeness on the 24th September 1915) but Taylor *et al.* (1981) were able to record sightings in six years between 1952 and 1966, which included the first local record, seen by David Musson at Folkestone on the 22nd September 1959. This was only the fourth Kent record at the time and appeared in the British Birds Rarity Committee report for the year (Pyman, 1960). It remained a national rarity until 1963 (BBRC no date).

Taylor *et al.* then noted records in nine consecutive years between 1967 and 1975, which included the second local record, noted on the same date 15 years after the first, in Folkestone Warren on the 22nd September 1974.

There was then a wait of almost another 15 years until the next, at Mill Point on the 3rd October 1988, and this was followed by one at Church Hougham on the 21st October 1996. It has however occurred with some regularity since 2003, with 33 records in the last 20 years, as shown in figure 1. The rarity of this species locally during the 1990s, when the area was well-watched, is remarkable as there were around 215 occurrences in the county during this decade, and despite its more regular appearances recently it remains comparatively scarce here. It seems very likely that occurrences are over-looked as it can turn up in suitable habitat almost anywhere and be relatively unobtrusive.

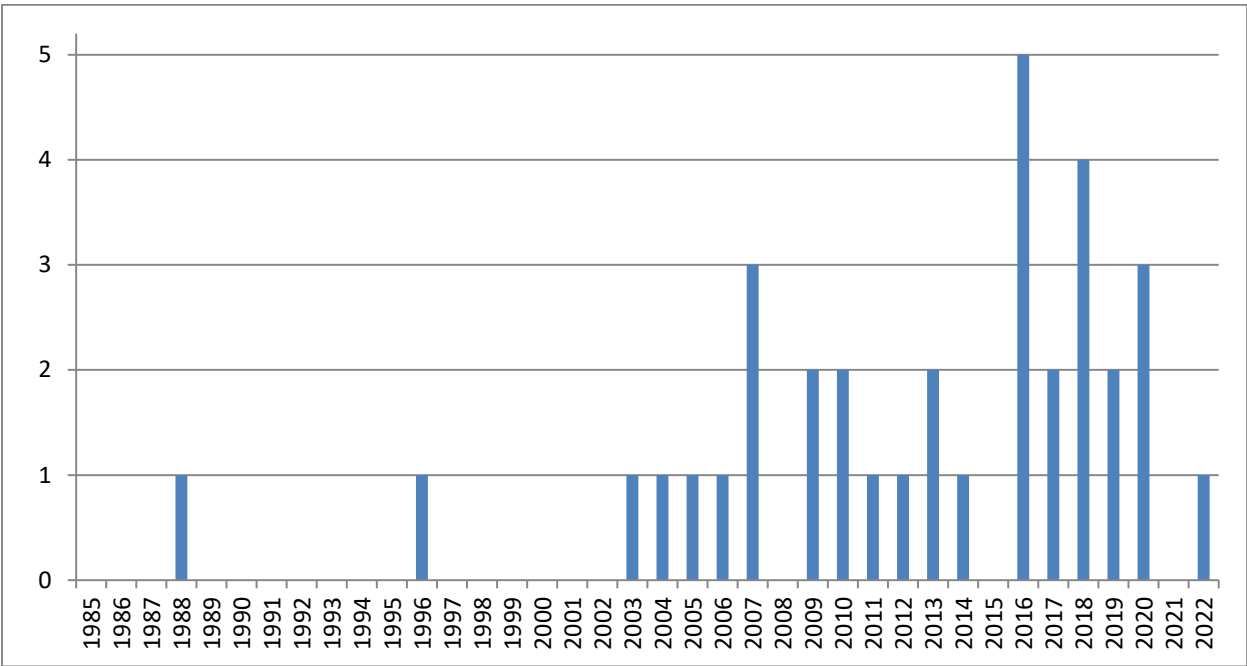


Figure 1: Yellow-browed Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

Considering its scarcity locally it is extraordinary that the Folkestone and Hythe area should host only the second county record of the species in spring – a singing male found by Ian Roberts at Abbotscliffe on the 9th May 2006. This quickly followed the first Kent spring record, also a singing male, and possibly the same individual, at Dungeness five days earlier.

All autumn sightings have been between the 18th September (week 38) and 6th November (week 45), with a peak in late September/early October. The records by week are given in figure 2.

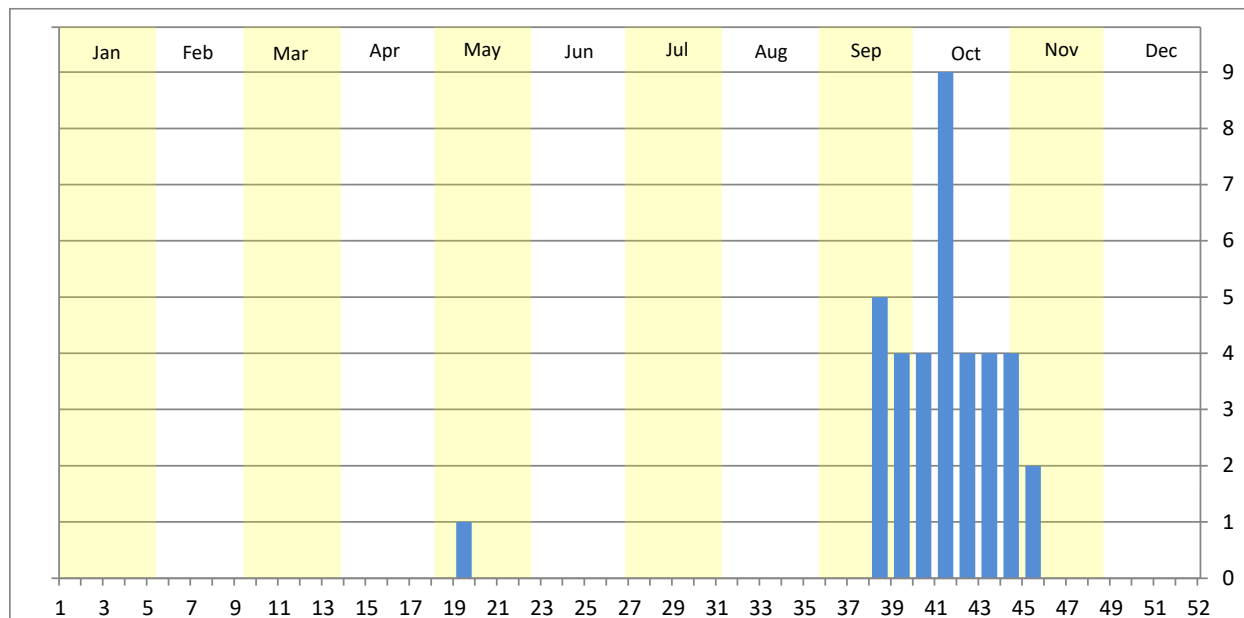


Figure 2: Yellow-browed Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Records have been well-distributed with records from 14 tetrads (45%), including a number of inland records. There is a definite coastal bias, with 11 records from Samphire Hoe and five from Mill Point, but there have been sightings at 16 other sites. Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.

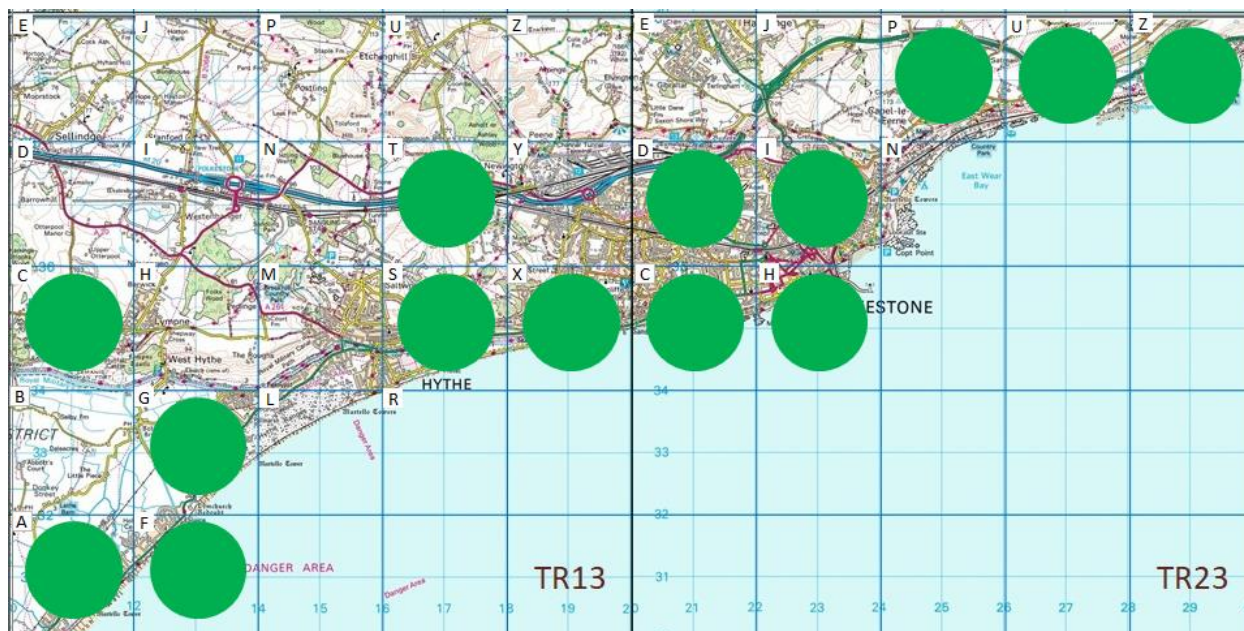


Figure 3: Distribution of all Yellow-browed Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

1959 Folkestone, one, 22nd September (D. F. Musson)

1974 Folkestone Warren, one, 22nd September (M. A. Allen, M. Martin)

1988 Mill Point, one, 3rd October (I. A. Roberts)

1996 Church Hougham, one, 21st October (M. Kennett)
2003 Mill Point, one, 16th October (D. A. Gibson)
2004 Abbotscliffe, one, 8th October (D. A. Gibson)
2005 Samphire Hoe, one, 6th October (P. Holt)
2006 Abbotscliffe, one in song near Church Wood, 9th May, photographed (I. A. Roberts, P. Holt, D. E. Smith, D. A. Gibson *et al*)
2007 Samphire Hoe, one, 27th to 28th September (P. Holt *et al*)
2007 Samphire Hoe, one, 30th September (P. Holt), different to above, possibly two present
2007 Nickolls Quarry, one in west hedge, 3rd October (R. K. Norman)
2009 Samphire Hoe, one, 12th October (P. Holt)
2009 Capel-le-Ferne, one, near Royal Oak pub, 4th November (I. A. Roberts)
2010 Samphire Hoe, one, 14th October, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
2010 Folkestone Town, one, near Civic centre, 21st October (B. Ryan)
2011 Capel-le-Ferne, one, in garden on Cauldham Lane, 28th September, photographed (P. Edmondson)
2012 Samphire Hoe, one, 7th October (P. Holt, R. Card)
2013 Shorncliffe Camp, one, 11th October (M. Sutherland)
2013 Folkestone Downs (Crete Hill), one, 12th October, photographed (D. A. Gibson)
2014 Mill Point, one, 25th October (I. A. Roberts, M. Vandeon)
2016 Samphire Hoe, one, 18th September (P. Holt)
2016 Mill Point, one, 18th September (A. J. Greenland)
2016 Beachborough Lakes, one, 26th September (S. Tomlinson)
2016 Mill Point, one, 9th October, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
2016 Samphire Hoe, one, 10th October (P. Holt)
2017 Hythe, one, 22nd September (P. Howe)
2017 Samphire Hoe, one at western end, 31st October (P. Smith), with same or possibly another at eastern end on 1st November (D. E. Smith)
2018 Samphire Hoe, one, 8th to 9th October (P. Holt, P. Smith)
2018 Horn Street, one, 17th October (P. Howe)
2018 Beachborough Lakes, one, 25th October (S. Tomlinson)
2018 Aldergate Bridge, one, 3rd November (D. Wrathall)
2019 Cheriton, one, 17th October (N. C. Frampton)
2019 Willop Sewage Works, one, 3rd November, photographed (B. Harper)
2020 Newbeach Holiday Park, one, 1st October, sound-recorded (B. Harper)
2020 Horn Street, one, 23rd October (P. Howe)
2020 Samphire Hoe, one, 6th November (I. A. Roberts)
2022 Port Lympne, one, 5th November (P. Coleman)

An account of the first area record is given below.

Yellow-browed Warbler at Folkestone Warren

22nd September 1959

By David Musson

Single bird seen at 15 feet range with Chiffchaff and Goldcrest.

Very small size, but longer than Goldcrest. Habits much as Chiffchaff but more inclined to fly-catching and rather more acrobatic. Very obvious superciliary stripes. Rump not yellow but rather paler than rest of back. Two obvious light bars across coverts. Back greenish, underparts pale yellow.

A description of the second area record is also provided below:

H.G.S. ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

REPORTER M.A. Allen, M. Martin

DATE 22nd September

TIME 4.55-5.05

PLACE & HABITAT Folkestone Warren. Deciduous trees with thick scattering of assorted bushes & smaller trees.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Sunny but fairly overcast
(5/8) 2-3 wind.

MISC.

About 6 minutes of observation time was spent trying to ~~find~~ ^{see} the so-and-so in the trees long enough to raise binoculars, but these weren't needed much.

FULL DESCRIPTION

our attention was first drawn to the bird by a call different from Willow Warbler's in that was often 3 syllables. Then a Goldcrest-size bird came from the undergrowth of thorn bushes and began hopping about the lower branches of a nearby tree. It was a uniform greenish above, paler but not white beneath. After a few minutes when the bird disappeared into the tree, it emerged and a double wing bar and pale creamy-yellow eyestripe was seen.

Legs & bill were pale.

Field notes:- Small, slightly larger than Goldcrest. Green above, paler beneath. Pale yellow eyestripe, double wing-bar. Pale legs & bill.

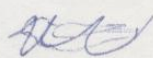
Call 'tree-ee' 2, sometimes (3/5) 3 syllables.

6x30 binoculars Range down to 8ft.



CONCLUSION

Yellow-browed Warbler



M. Martin

Click [here](#) to listen to a local audio recording of one calling at Newbeach Holiday Park on the 1st October 2020 (Brian Harper).



Yellow-browed Warbler at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts) – the second spring record in Kent



Yellow-browed Warbler at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)



Yellow-browed Warbler at Crete Hill (Dale Gibson)



Yellow-browed Warbler at the Willop Sewage Works (Brian Harper)

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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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