

## Yellow-browed Warbler

*Phylloscopus inornatus*

Category A

Rare migrant.

36 records

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 (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

It is a scarce but regular autumn migrant to Kent in variable numbers, rare in winter and spring (KOS, 2020).

The first Folkestone and Hythe record involved one seen by David Musson at Folkestone on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1959, which was only the fourth for the county and also appeared in the British Birds Rarity Committee report for the year. It remained a national rarity until 1963 (BBRC, 2020).



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

The second occurred 15 years later to the day in Folkestone Warren on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1974. Descriptions of these birds are provided below.

There was then a wait of almost another 15 years until the next, at Mill Point on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1988, and this was followed by one at Church Hougham on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 1996. It has however occurred with some regularity since 2003, with 32 records in the last 18 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.

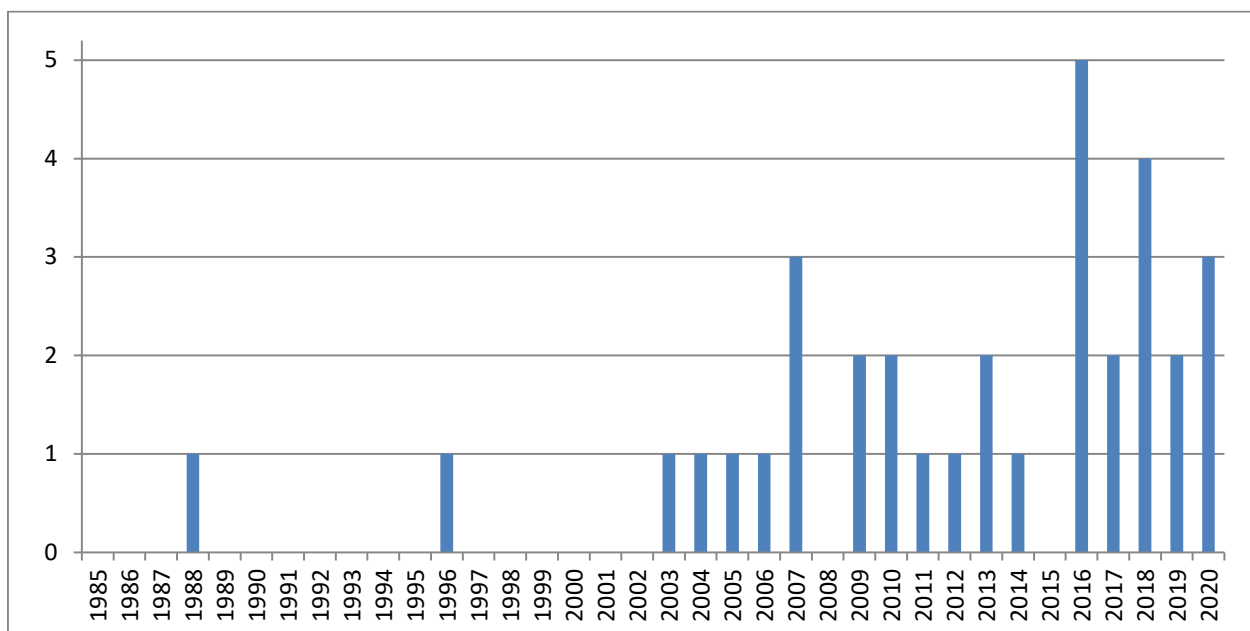


Figure 1: Yellow-browed Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are given in figure 2.

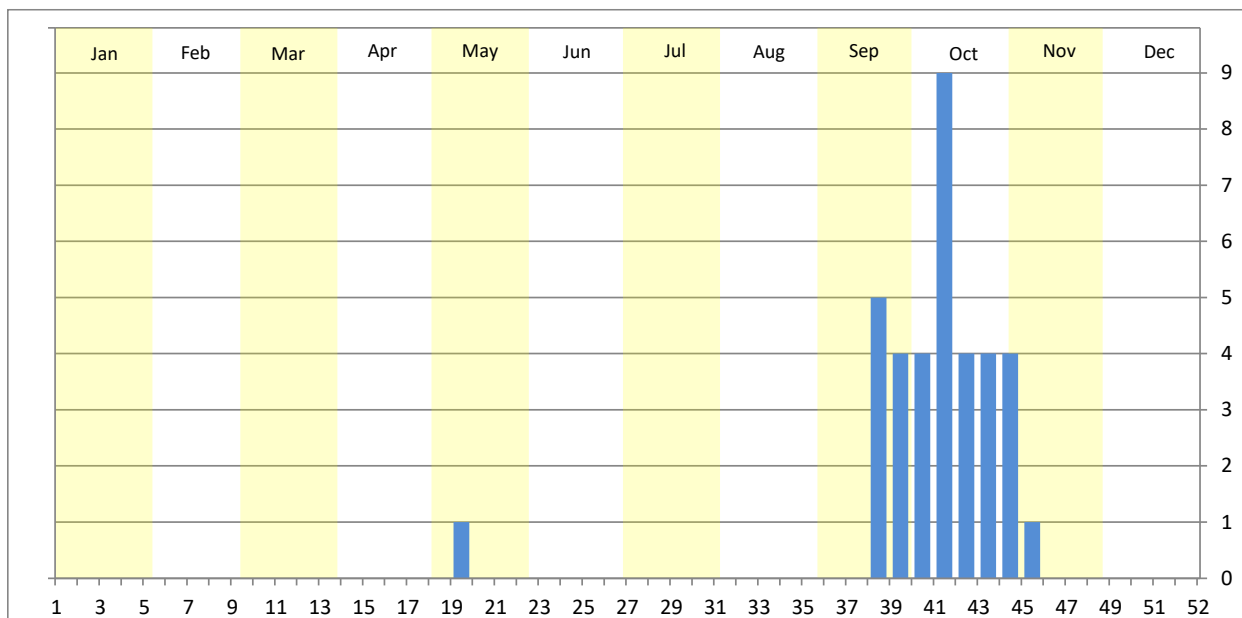


Figure 2: Yellow-browed Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> September (week 38) and 6<sup>th</sup> November (week 45), with a peak in late September/early October.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad

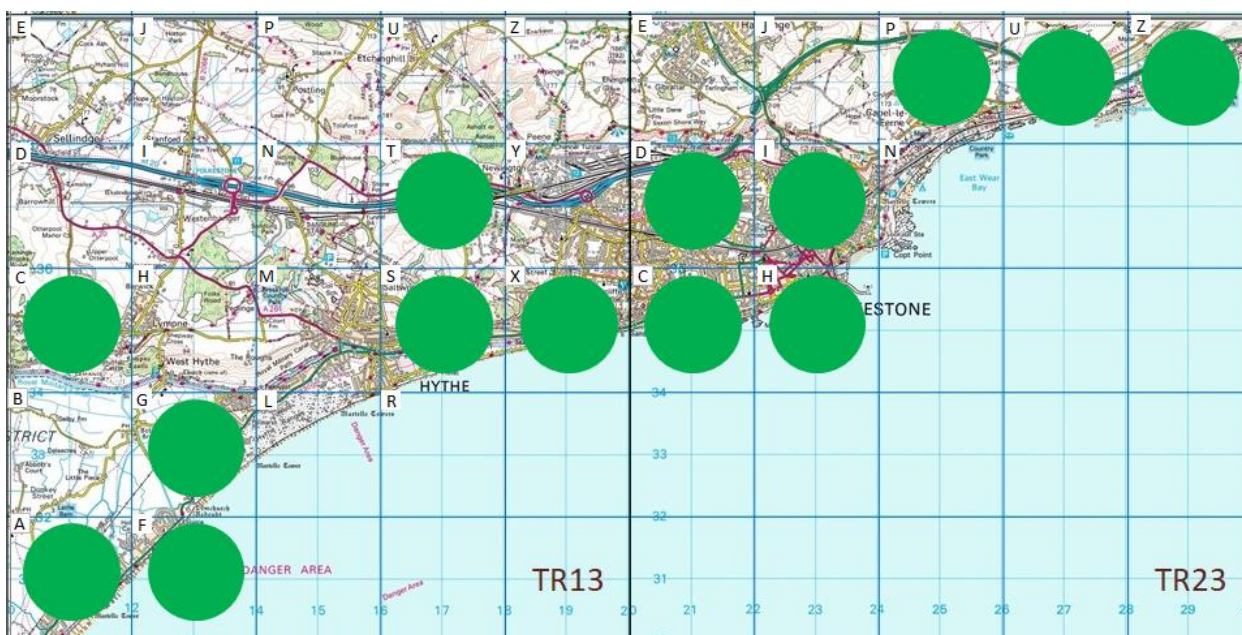


Figure 3: Distribution of all Yellow-browed Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

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 15 other sites.



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

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1959** Folkestone, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> September (D. F. Musson)
- 1974** Folkestone Warren, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> September (M. A. Allen, M. Martin)
- 1988** Mill Point, one, 3<sup>rd</sup> October (I. A. Roberts)
- 1996** Church Hougham, one, 21<sup>st</sup> October (M. Kennett)
- 2003** Mill Point, one, 16<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 2004** Abbotscliffe, one, 8<sup>th</sup> October (D. A. Gibson)
- 2005** Samphire Hoe, one, 6<sup>th</sup> October (P. Holt)
- 2006** Abbotscliffe, one in song near Church Wood, 9<sup>th</sup> May, photographed (I. A. Roberts, P. Holt, D. E. Smith, D. A. Gibson *et al*)
- 2007** Samphire Hoe, one, 27<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September (P. Holt *et al*)
- 2007** Samphire Hoe, one, 30<sup>th</sup> September (P. Holt), different to above, possibly two present
- 2007** Nickolls Quarry, one in west hedge, 3<sup>rd</sup> October (R. K. Norman)
- 2009** Samphire Hoe, one, 12<sup>th</sup> October (P. Holt)
- 2009** Capel-le-Ferne, one, near Royal Oak pub, 4<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)
- 2010** Samphire Hoe, one, 14<sup>th</sup> October, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2010** Folkestone Town, one, near Civic centre, 21<sup>st</sup> October (B. Ryan)
- 2011** Capel-le-Ferne, one, in garden on Cauldham Lane, 28<sup>th</sup> September, photographed (P. Edmondson)
- 2012** Samphire Hoe, one, 7<sup>th</sup> October (P. Holt, R. Card)
- 2013** Shorncliffe Camp, one, 11<sup>th</sup> October (M. Sutherland)
- 2013** Folkestone Downs (Crete Hill), one, 12<sup>th</sup> October, photographed (D. A. Gibson)
- 2014** Mill Point, one, 25<sup>th</sup> October (I. A. Roberts, M. Vandeon)
- 2016** Samphire Hoe, one, 18<sup>th</sup> September (P. Holt)
- 2016** Mill Point, one, 18<sup>th</sup> September (A. J. Greenland)
- 2016** Beachborough Lakes, one, 26<sup>th</sup> September (S. Tomlinson)
- 2016** Mill Point, one, 9<sup>th</sup> October, photographed (I. A. Roberts)
- 2016** Samphire Hoe, one, 10<sup>th</sup> October (P. Holt)
- 2017** Hythe, one, 22<sup>nd</sup> September (P. Howe)
- 2017** Samphire Hoe, one at western end, 31<sup>st</sup> October (P. Smith), with same or possibly another at eastern end on 1<sup>st</sup> November (D. E. Smith)
- 2018** Samphire Hoe, one, 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October (P. Holt, P. Smith)
- 2018** Horn Street, one, 17<sup>th</sup> October (P. Howe)
- 2018** Beachborough Lakes, one, 25<sup>th</sup> October (S. Tomlinson)
- 2018** Aldergate Bridge, one, 3<sup>rd</sup> November (D. Wrathall)
- 2019** Cheriton, one, 17<sup>th</sup> October (N. C. Frampton)
- 2019** Willop Sewage Works, 3<sup>rd</sup> November, photographed (B. Harper)
- 2020** Newbeach Holiday Park, 1<sup>st</sup> October, sound-recorded (B. Harper)
- 2020** Horn Street, one, 23<sup>rd</sup> October (P. Howe)
- 2020** Samphire Hoe, one, 6<sup>th</sup> November (I. A. Roberts)

An account of the first area record is given below.

**Yellow-browed Warbler at Folkestone Warren  
22nd September 1959**

(David F 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.



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)

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~~<sup>see</sup> 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.A. Allen~~ ~~M. Martin~~ M. Martin

## **References**

BBRC statistics: <https://www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/statistics> (accessed 2020)

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

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

## **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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