

Dark-eyed Junco

Junco hyemalis

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

1 record

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998; Holt et al. 2021):

Breeds in North America from northern Alaska and northern Canada south to California, Texas and Georgia. Northern populations are migratory, wintering to the south of the breeding range. All British records have belonged to the nominate form ("Slate-coloured Junco") which breeds throughout the north and east of the species' range, south to Georgia.

Kent status (KOS 2021):

Rare vagrant.



Dark-eyed Junco at Folkestone (Susan Dixon)

British (BBRC) records to end 2020: 50

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 3

A male that was trapped at Dengemmarsh on the 26th May 1960 was the first Kent and British record (Taylor *et al.* 1981) and there had been a total of 50 recorded in Britain to the end of 2020 (BBRC no date; Holt *et al.* 2021). Almost half of those have occurred since 2005, including a record influx of six in 2007, with 65% having been found in April or May (RBA no date). There had been one subsequent Kent record before the local occurrence, a first-winter bird seen in a cottage garden at Dungeness from the 7th to 9th April 2008 (KOS no date).

The only local, and third county record, was found by Sue Dixon in her garden in Folkestone on the 15th May 2010 and remained until the 17th May. A full account of this sighting is provided below.

The record by year is shown in figure 1.

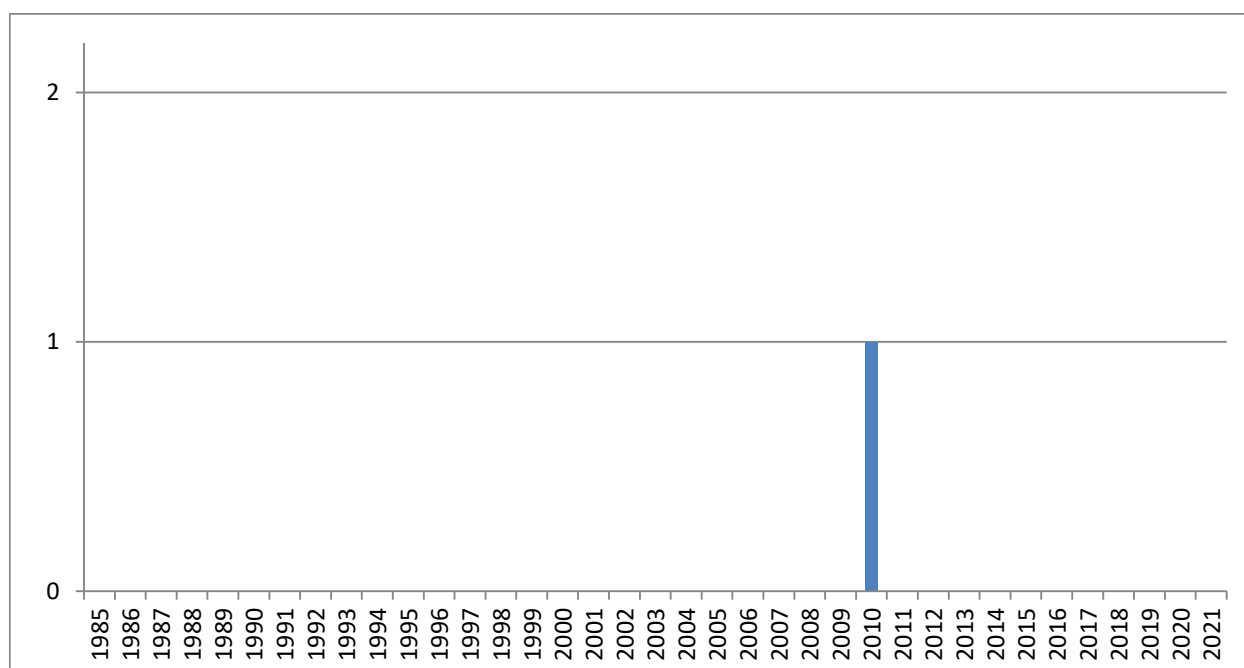


Figure 1: Dark-eyed Junco records at Folkestone and Hythe

The record by week is given in figure 2.

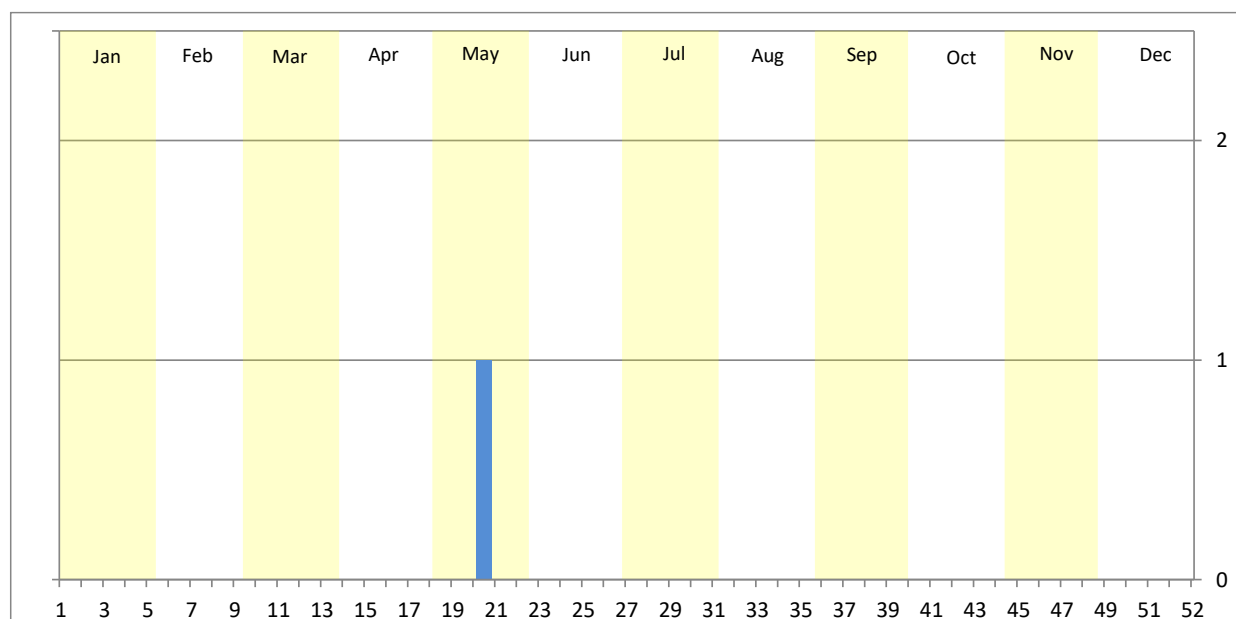


Figure 2: Dark-eyed Junco records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of the record by tetrad.

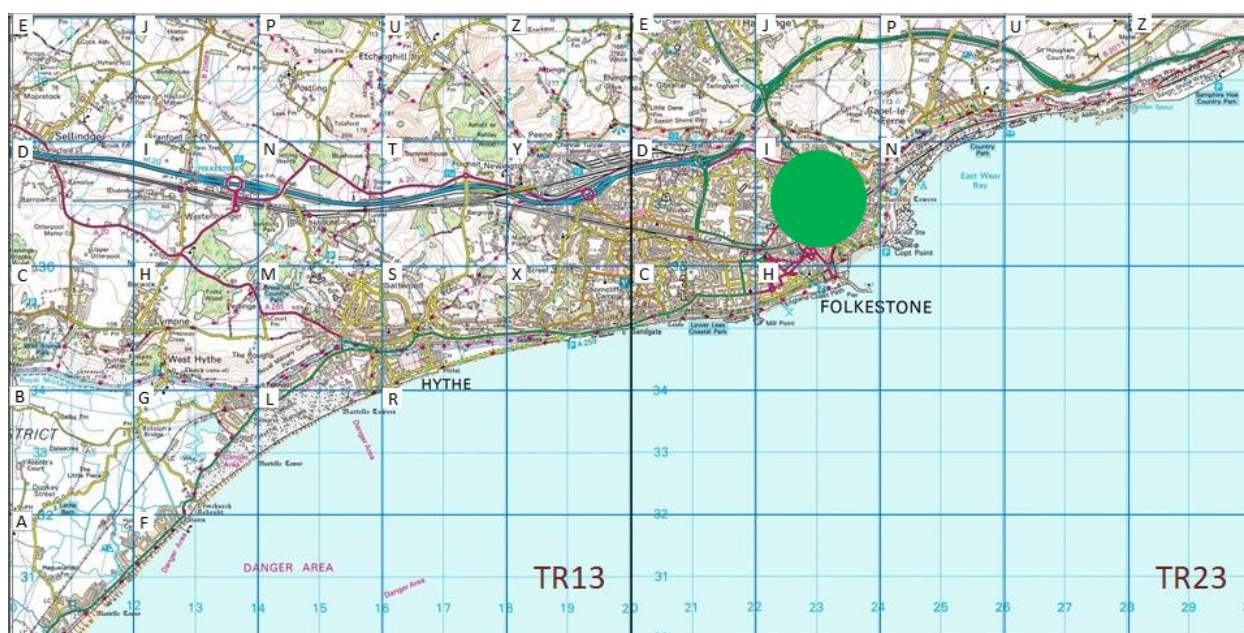


Figure 3: Distribution of all Dark-eyed Junco records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Confirmation of the only area record is as follows:

2010 Folkestone, probably adult male, 15th to 17th May, photographed (S. Dixon).

An account of the first area record is given below.

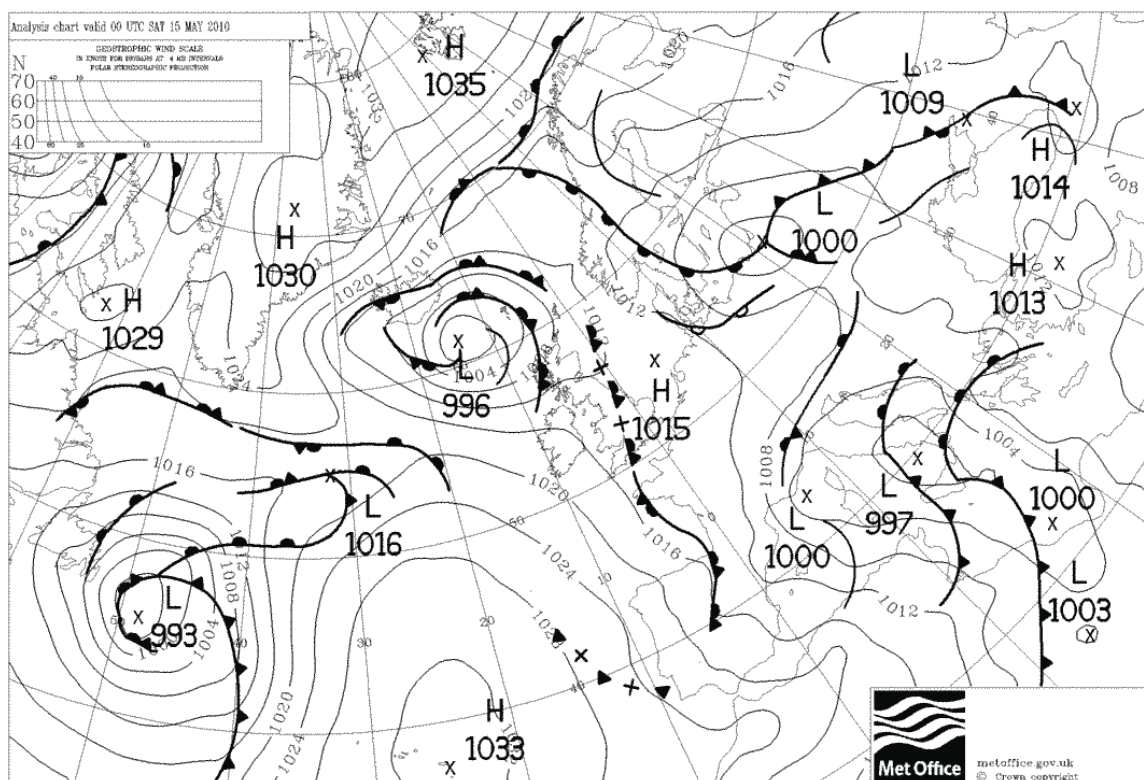
Dark-eyed Junco at Folkestone 15th to 17th May 2010

By Ian Roberts

Weather conditions:

May 2010 saw an influx of two Dark-eyed Juncos and eight White-throated Sparrows into Britain, with a further two of the latter species found in June. At the time these species were on the move north in North America a series of low pressure systems were moving up the eastern seaboard producing easterly winds which forced northbound passerines offshore. Some of these were known to have taken refuge on boats, with five White-throated Sparrows being seen aboard the Queen Mary II as she left New York on the 29th April. Four were still on board on the 5th May before the ship passed Scilly, Cornwall and Devon in daylight hours but, when the ship docked in Southampton at 06:30 on the 6th May only one was still on deck, with the other three presumably having departed to somewhere along the coast of south-west England.

The map shows the pressure chart on the 15th May which shows an example of two of the low pressure systems active in the Atlantic at the time, though if the bird were ship-assisted (which seems likely) it would probably have left North America about a week before.



Circumstances of the find:

On the 15th May 2010 Susan Dixon noticed an unusual bird visiting the feeders in her garden in Foreland Avenue, Folkestone. From the literature available she was able to identify it as a Dark-eyed Junco. Unfortunately due to some technical glitches with email it was not until the evening of the 18th (when the bird had departed) that the news reached anyone else. A search of the area on the 19th was unable to relocate it and there were no further sightings.

Description of the bird (from photographs):

Size, shape, jizz: A typically finch-shaped bird.

Head and upperparts: Slate grey, with greyish-blue edges and tips to coverts and remiges. Whitish outer-tail feathers.

Underparts: White belly sharply demarcated from grey breast.

Bare parts: Dark eye. Pale pink bill and legs.

Age/sex: probably an adult male. A first-summer would generally show retained juvenile tertials, which are more worn and with browner edges than in the adult and generally show whitish tips to the outer webs. Sometimes there are also a few retained juvenile outer greater coverts, which are more worn and browner and with distinct buffish to whitish tips to the outer webs (indistinct paler tips can sometimes be seen in adult plumage). Also the alula and primary coverts are browner with less bluish-tinted edges.

Comments on the record:

This record was accepted by the BBRC and appears in their report for 2010 (Hudson *et al.* 2011) as the 35th British record. It was the first Nearctic passerine to be recorded locally.

The other Dark-eyed Junco to be recorded in Britain in May 2010 was seen on a boat in the Dogger area of the North Sea on the 19th May.



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References

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Acknowledgements

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