

Cetti's Warbler

Cettia cetti

Category A

Not recorded until 1981 but now well-established as a breeding resident though remains vulnerable to population decline in colder winters.

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds in western and southern Europe, north to southern Britain. In the west of its range there has been a long-term expansion northwards, interrupted by hard winters. The first sighting in Britain was in 1961, with breeding first confirmed in 1973, in Kent].

Kent status (KOS 2021):

In Kent it is a scarce but steadily increasing resident breeding species.



Cetti's Warbler at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

One trapped at Dungeness on the 31st March 1968 was the first confirmed Kent record and breeding was first suspected in 1972 and then confirmed in 1973, when a pair with recently fledged young were seen at Stodmarsh in June (Taylor *et al.* 1981). The population in the county increased rapidly to 108 singing males in 1978 before a series of severe winters led to near-extinction by 1988. Successive mild winters since 2009 have allowed a remarkable resurgence in numbers, with 150 occupied tetrads across Kent, whilst a county-wide survey in 2007 recorded more than 370 singing males. Whilst there have been some winters with heavy snow cover for short periods since, there has been little evidence of any retreat in range or reduction in numbers (Clements *et al.* 2015).

It was first recorded locally in 1981 when Dave Weaver and Neil Frampton found two singing males near West Hythe dam and one pair bred there, raising three young. There were further autumn and winter records in this area until December 1984 but no sightings in the breeding season. The next record occurred in 1990, when Dale Gibson and Ian Roberts found a singing male holding territory near the small pond at Copt Point from the 25th April until the 20th May, followed by a migrant seen by Dale Gibson in Folkestone Warren on the 7th September 1993.

There were no further sightings until 2002 when Ian Roberts found a singing male along the canal to the east of West Hythe on the 7th April and there have been regular records there since as it has become established and spread along the Royal Military Canal and across Romney Marsh.



Cetti's Warbler at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)



Cetti's Warbler at Princes Parade (Nigel Webster)

Breeding atlas distribution

Figure 1 shows the breeding distribution by tetrad based on the results of the 2007-13 BTO/KOS atlas fieldwork.



Figure 1: Breeding distribution of Cetti's Warbler at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad (2007-13 BTO/KOS Atlas)

Breeding was not confirmed in any tetrads, but there was probable breeding in three and possible breeding in two more. The table below shows how this compares to previous atlases (Taylor *et al.* 1981; Henderson & Hodge 1998). The confirmed and probable breeding categories have been combined to account for differing definitions of these in the first atlas.

| Breeding atlases | 1967 - 1973 | | 1988 - 1994 | | 2007 - 2013 | |
|--------------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|-------|
| Possible | 0 | (0%) | 0 | (0%) | 2 | (6%) |
| Probable/Confirmed | 0 | (0%) | 0 | (0%) | 3 | (10%) |
| Total | 0 | (0%) | 0 | (0%) | 5 | (16%) |
| Change | | | 0 | (0%) | +5 | (--%) |

The table below shows the changes in tetrad occupancy across the three atlas periods.

| Trends | First to second atlas (1967-73 to 1988-94) | Second to third atlas (1988-94 to 2007-13) | First to third atlas (1967-73 to 2007-13) |
|--------|---|---|--|
| Local | 0 % | --% | --% |
| Kent | -92% | +5,133% | +313% |

Although a singing male held territory at Copt Point in 1990 this was not included in the second county Atlas.

In recent years territorial males have been present along the canal between the Aldergate Bridge and Seabrook, and in the Romney Marsh area as follows:

| Tetrad | Royal Military Canal section | Territorial males |
|----------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| TR13 C | Aldergate Bridge to West Hythe Dam | 1 |
| TR13 H | West Hythe Dam to West Hythe | 1 |
| TR13 H | West Hythe to Palmarsh | 1 |
| TR13 M | Palmarsh to Hythe | 1 |
| TR13 S/X | Hythe to Seabrook (Princes Parade) | 3 |
| Total | Royal Military Canal total | 7 |

| Tetrad | Romney Marsh location | Territorial males |
|--------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| TR13 A | Haguelands/Willop Basin | 2 |
| TR13 B | Donkey Street | 1 |
| TR13 G | Botolph's Bridge | 1 |
| TR13 G | Nickolls Quarry | 3 |
| TR13 G | Cinderella Farm area | 1 |
| Total | Romney Marsh total | 8 |

This suggests that the total area population in the region of around 15 pairs.



Cetti's Warbler at West Hythe (Brian Harper)



Cetti's Warbler at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

Overall distribution

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all records of Cetti's Warbler by tetrad, with records in 13 tetrads (42%).

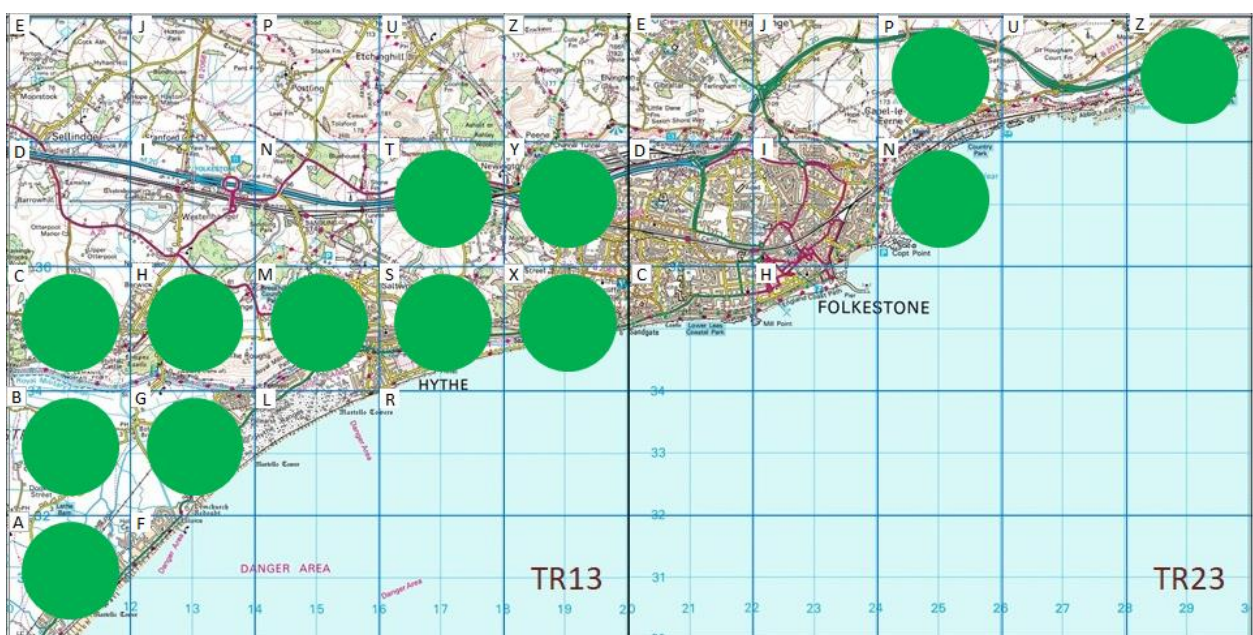


Figure 2: Distribution of all Cetti's Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

In drier areas, away from the breeding areas it remains very rare. There were three records from Beachborough Lakes between 2017 and 2019, including a singing male present from the 29th March to the 18th April 2019, and a male was singing near a small spring at the foot of the Folkestone Downs escarpment to the east of Peene between the 6th and 18th May 2019.

The only other migrant records have involved one seen in gorse bushes at Abbotscliffe on the 27th October 2011 and one reported from Copt Point on the 14th June 2020.



Cetti's Warbler at West Hythe (Brian Harper)



Cetti's Warbler at Botolph's Bridge (Brian Harper)



Cetti's Warbler at West Hythe (Brian Harper)

References

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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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