

Red-rumped Swallow

Cecropis daurica

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

15 records,
16 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

It is a widespread breeding species at southern latitudes, from north-west Africa and Mediterranean Europe (north to southern France) eastwards across the Middle East and much of Asia. Winters to the south of the breeding range, with European birds migrating to equatorial Africa. It has been appearing with increasing frequency in Britain and northern Europe, mainly in spring.



Red-rumped Swallow at Capel-le-Ferne (Dale Gibson)

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a fairly regular passage vagrant to the county, mainly in spring.

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 111

Taylor *et al.* (1981) documented the first county record at Murston in August 1959 and a further seven had been logged by the end of their review period (1976), with all but one of the others occurring in spring. They commented that “of the eight records six have occurred since 1968, perhaps not surprising as there has been a recent northward extension of the breeding range into France”. Henderson (2021) noted that after 1976 “the species remained a rarity but from the late 1980s it became more frequent” and that there had “been only three blank years since 1990”.

The national trend is similar, with six records prior to 1964, but with annual occurrences since and the annual mean numbers increased from 4 in the 1970s, to 12 in the 1980s, 15 in the 1990s and 30 from 2000 until it ceased to be considered as a rarity by the British Birds Rarities Committee at the end of 2005, when 516 had been amassed (BBRC no date, Bradshaw *et al.* 2006). The increase continued, with an annual mean of 41 in the 2010s, and White & Kehoe (2022) noted this was “in line with the expansion of the species’ breeding range in Iberia and southern France”.

It was first recorded locally in 1992, when Ian Roberts watched one arriving in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne Café on the 23rd May, whilst Dale Gibson saw another there on the 7th May 1995 and one at Capel Battery on the 8th June 1998. It has since been noted with some regularity as figure 1 demonstrates.

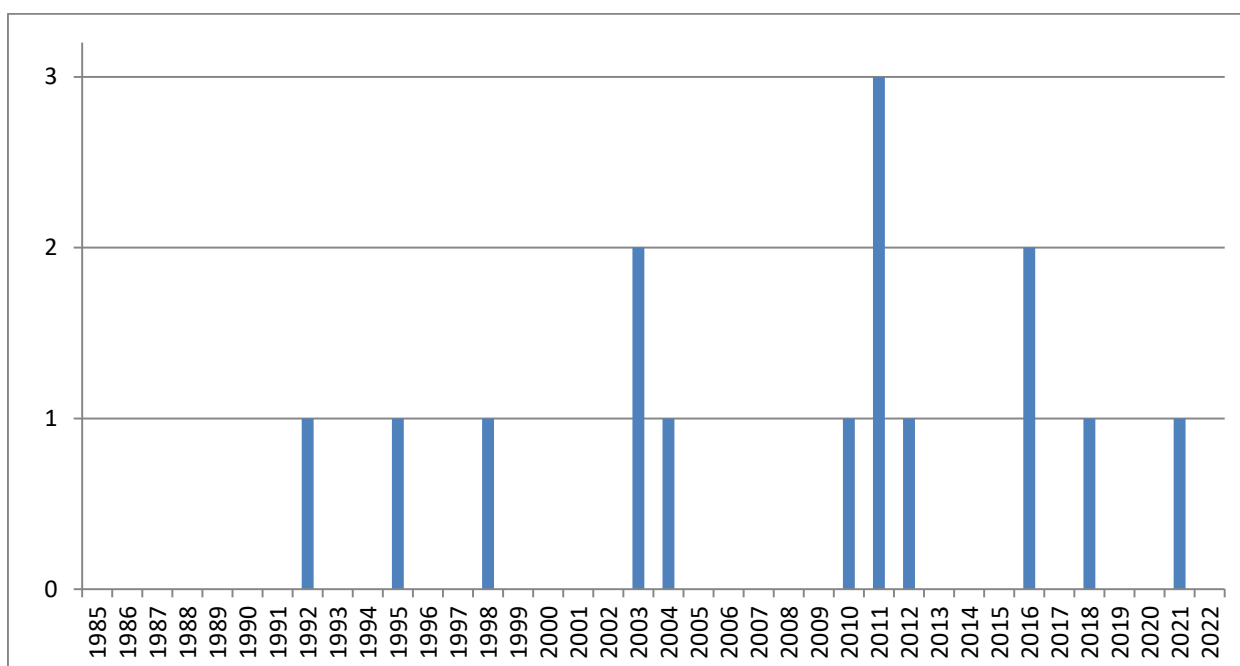


Figure 1: Red-rumped Swallow records at Folkestone and Hythe

Since 2003, there have been 12 records across the 20 years so it as occurred almost biennially on average, although some years have seen multiple arrivals (including 2011 when there were an exceptional three records with seven days) whilst there has also been a gap of up to five years between sightings. All records have related to single birds seen on a single date, with many involving birds arriving in off the sea or passing straight through, apart from the record in 2004 which involved two birds that lingered for two days, ranging along the cliffs between Capel-le-Ferne and Samphire Hoe.

All records to date have occurred in spring, between 28th April (week 17) and 8th June (week 23), with the vast majority in May and a distinct peak in week 19 (6th to 12th May), as demonstrated by figure 2. Henderson (2021) noted that 90% of the county’s records had occurred in spring.

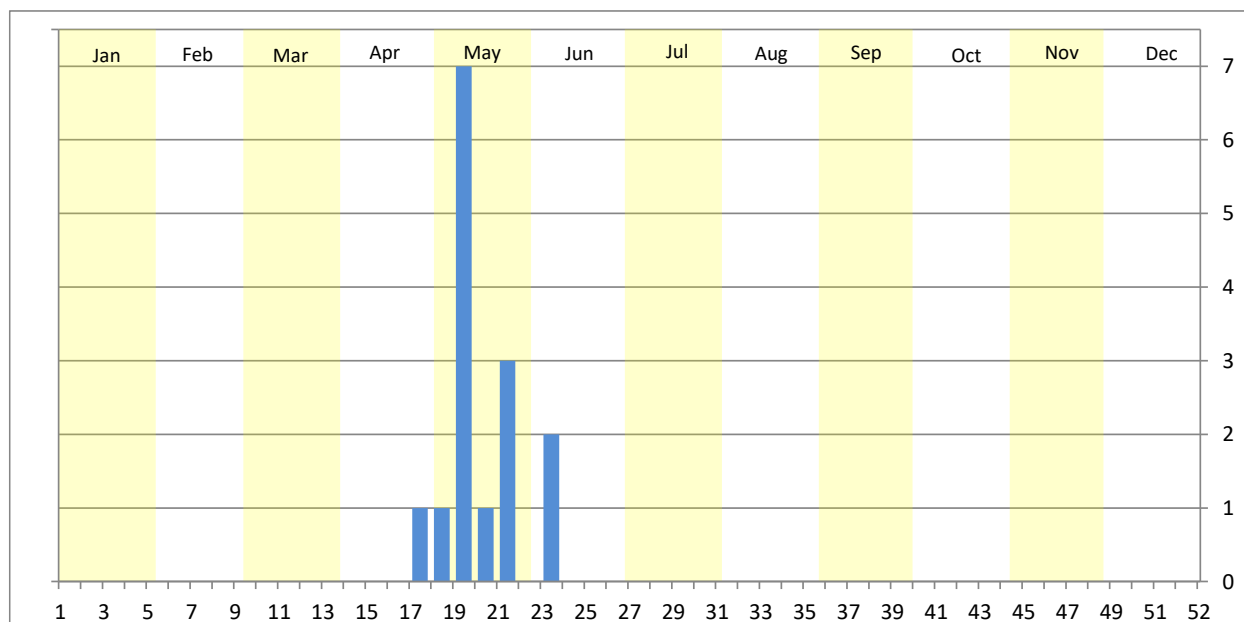


Figure 2: Red-rumped Swallow records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad. All records to date have been at the cliffs, apart from two in the Beachborough area.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Red-rumped Swallow records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1992** Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew in off the sea, 23rd May (I. A. Roberts)
1995 Capel-le-Ferne Café, one, 7th May (D. A. Gibson)
1998 Capel Battery, one flew west, 8th June (D. A. Gibson)
2003 Capel-le-Ferne Café, one, 6th May (D. A. Gibson)
2003 Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew west, 27th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
2004 Capel-le-Ferne Café, two from 12th to 13th May, also at Abbotscliffe and Samphire Hoe, photographed (I. A. Roberts *et al*)
2010 Samphire Hoe, one, 28th April (P. Holt, D. E. Smith *et al*)
2011 Samphire Hoe, one, 8th May (P. Holt)
2011 Capel-le-Ferne Café, one, 10th May, photographed (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
2011 Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew east, 14th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
2012 Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew in off the sea, 12th May (D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts)
2016 Capel-le-Ferne Café, one flew east, 8th May (I. A. Roberts, M. Vandoen)
2016 Beachborough Lakes, one, 23rd May, photographed (S. Tomlinson)
2018 Beachborough Park, one flew west, 7th June (S. Tomlinson)
2021 Samphire Hoe, one, 11th May (P. Smith)

An account of the first area record is given below.

**Red-rumped Swallow at Capel-le-Ferne Café
23rd May 1992**

By Ian Roberts

Weather conditions:

A dry, sunny, warm day with a light north-easterly wind (force 2-4), little cloud cover and good visibility

Circumstances of the find:

On the morning of 23rd May I walked the length of Abbotscliffe before settling down at the visual migration point by the Café at Capel-le-Ferne. There had been the largest movement of Swifts of the year so far (320) moving into the wind, as well as smaller numbers of House Martins and Swallows, and 12 Turtle Doves arriving in off the sea. At 10:55 I picked up a hirundine with an obvious pink rump heading towards me, which was instantly recognisable as a Red-rumped Swallow. I noted the salient features as it flew past and headed off north over the Orchid Field. About 90 minutes later a Honey Buzzard also arrived in off the sea completely a memorable morning's passage.

Description of the bird:

Size, shape, jizz: a graceful and elegant-looking hirundine.

Head and upperparts: dark crown patch, pale collar, reddish ear-coverts. Mantle, wings and tail black. Pinkish rump.

Underparts: Pale throat and underparts. Black under-tail coverts.

Comments on the record:

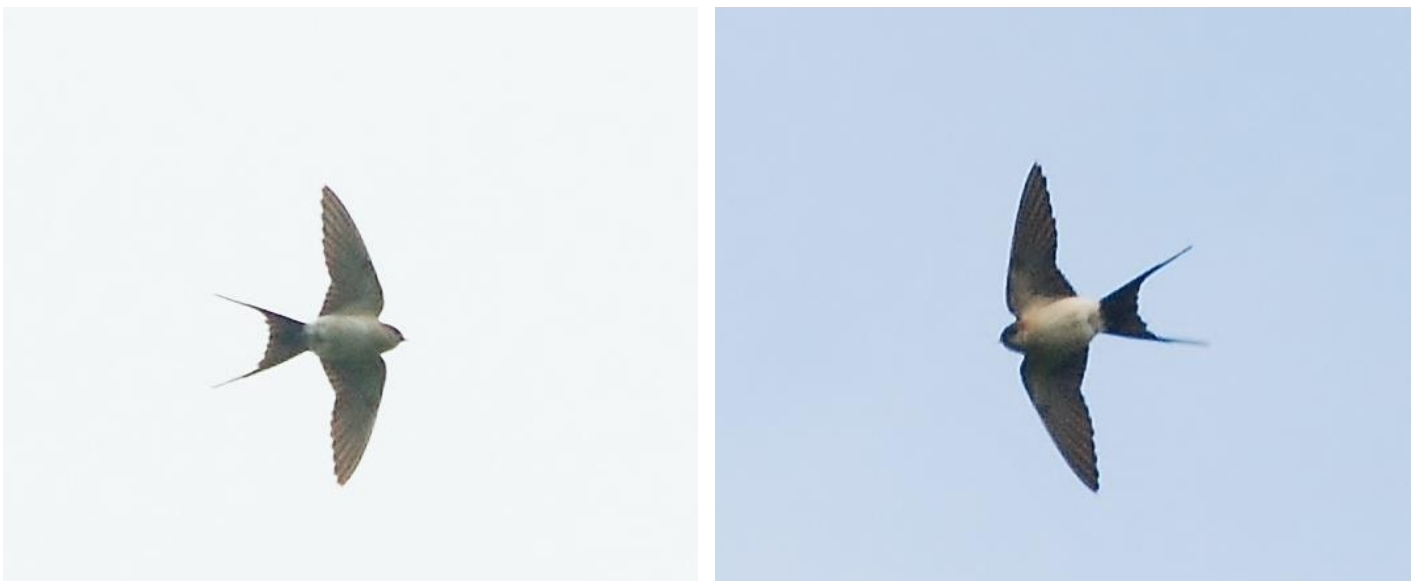
The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee and appears in their annual rarity report for 1992 (Rogers *et al.* 1993).

References

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Red-rumped Swallows at Capel-le-Ferne (Dale Gibson)



Red-rumped Swallow at Beachborough Lakes (Steve Tomlinson)

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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