

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

13 records,
14 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds from France eastwards across northern and central Europe, and northern and central Asia east to southern Mongolia and north-eastern China. In Europe the extreme northern populations are migratory, moving south and west to winter in middle latitudes, but some southern populations appear to be sedentary.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor to the county.



Great Grey Shrike at Samphire Hoe (Dale Gibson)

Ticehurst (1909) wrote that “the Great Grey Shrike may be considered as almost an annual visitor to Kent in the late autumn and winter, and a considerable number have been seen or obtained during the last 60 years”. He noted that it was not included in Knight & Tolputt’s “List of birds observed in Folkestone and its immediate neighbourhood” (1871) and gave the first known local record as having been seen in 1893. This occurrence he considered worthy of further note as “instances of its capture by bird-catchers are not infrequent, at the Great Grey Shrike has been known to attack the call-birds placed round about the clap-nets. ... Mr. Gordon, of Folkestone, has one that was caught in the winter of 1903 by some boys, who were liming Bullfinches on the Warren”.

Taylor *et al.* (1981) considered that there had “been an appreciable increase during the period under review”, which was 1952-76. It was during this period that the next local records occurred. On the 20th October 1952 one was seen and fully described by Miss H. M. Rowland “on the golf links at Folkestone”. The golf links were an 18-hole course which occupied much of the 1km square TR2137, south of the bypass and east of Cherry Garden Avenue, an area which is now taken up by Broadmead Village, the Folkestone Academy school and the Park Farm Industrial Estate.

The same observer then found two “at Hythe” on 31st October 1960. There are no further details of this record but was one reported along Burmarsh Road, near to the present site of Nickolls Quarry, on the 10th November of that year, and Roger Norman saw one in the garden of “Marsh View” on Burmarsh Road, Palmarsh a fortnight later (Norman *pers. comm.*). The three sightings quite possibly relate to one or maybe both of the same birds. Fifteen years later there were two sightings in 1975: singles seen at Folkestone by P. R. Hipkin on the 10th October and at Danton Lane by Paul Howe on the 22nd October.



Great Grey Shrike at Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

It is currently a scarce passage migrant and winter visitor in Britain, with a recent average of over 200 sightings per annum (White & Kehoe 2022). Locally there have been eight records in recent years (since 1985), with one Dale Gibson seeing one arriving in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October 1993, before Paul Holt found one at Samphire Hoe on the 8th October 2005. This latter bird lingered until the 10th October and was also seen at Abbotscliffe, where five of the subsequent six records were seen. The other sighting was at Hythe Ranges.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

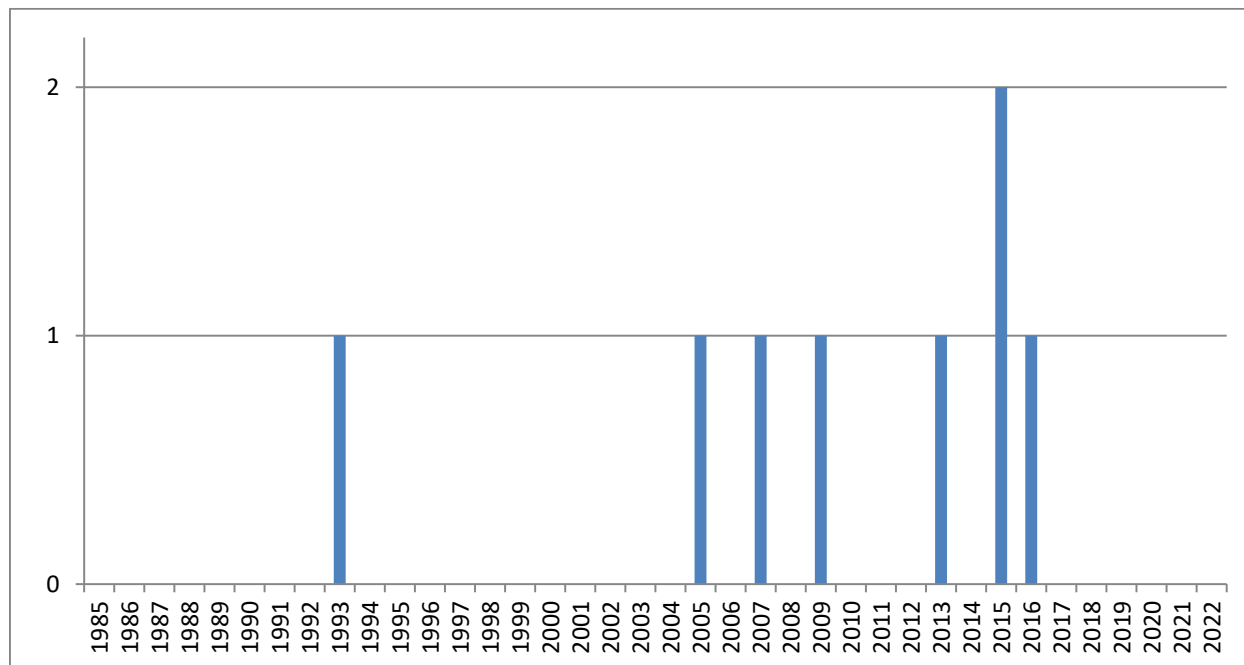


Figure 1: Great Grey Shrike records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are given in figure 2. All arrival dates have been in October (week 40 to 44), with the exception of a record of one on the 10th November (however this might relate to a bird previously seen in October).

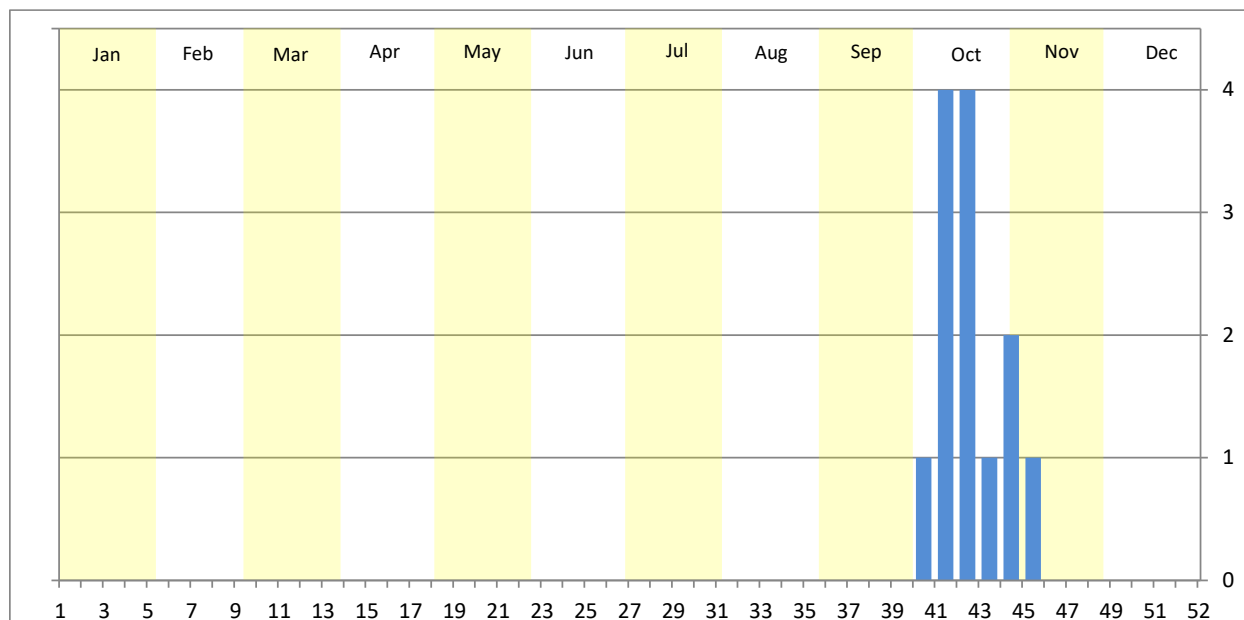


Figure 2: Great Grey Shrike records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



Figure 3: Distribution of Great Grey Shrike Species records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

- 1952** Folkestone, one, on golf links (see above), 20th October (H. M. Rowland)
- 1960** Hythe, two, 31st October (H. M. Rowland)
- 1960** Burmarsh Road, one, near Nickolls Quarry, 10th (reported) and in garden of 'Marsh View', Palmarsh, 24th November (R. K. Norman), presumed same and both possibly same as above
- 1975** Folkestone, one, 10th October (P. R. Hipkin)
- 1975** Danton Lane, one, 22nd October (P. Howe)
- 1993** Abbotscliffe, one, flew in off the sea, 15th October (D. A. Gibson)
- 2005** Samphire Hoe, one, 8th to 10th October, also seen at Abbotscliffe, photographed (P. Holt, D. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts *et al*)
- 2007** Abbotscliffe, one, then flew high to east, 4th October (I. A. Roberts)
- 2009** Abbotscliffe, one, 14th October (M. D. Kennett)
- 2013** Abbotscliffe, one, 30th October (M. D. Kennett)
- 2015** Abbotscliffe, one, 15th October (M. D. Kennett)
- 2015** Hythe Ranges, one, 18th October (B. Findlay)
- 2016** Abbotscliffe, one, 8th to 9th October (S. Cutt, P. Royston, I. A. Roberts *et al*)



Great Grey Shrike at Samphire Hoe (Dale Gibson)

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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