

Common Rosefinch

Carpodacus erythrinus

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

3 records,
3 birds

World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):

Breeds in eastern and northern Europe, and locally in central Europe and Turkey, eastwards across northern Asia to north-east Siberia and south to the Caucasus and the Himalayas. Winters from Iran and the Indian subcontinent to southern China and Indochina. It underwent a westward spread across Europe in the latter part of the twentieth century, breeding for the first time in Britain in 1982, France in 1985, the Netherlands in 1987 and Belgium in 1993.

Kent status (KOS 2022):

It is a rare vagrant to the county.

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 31

The first acceptable British record of Common Rosefinch occurred on Fair Isle in 1906 and it was recorded with some regularity thereafter, with records in most years, and 120 had been logged by 1960. 93% of those were found on Scottish Islands (65% on Fair Isle alone), with just six in England (Naylor 2021).

The first Kent record was noted in 1966, when a male was in song at Dungeness in May 1966, and further singles followed at Sandwich Bay in October 1968 and Broadstairs in May 1971 (Taylor *et al.* 1981).

It continued to occur with increasing frequency nationally in the 1960s (with a mean of 11 per annum), 1970s (37 per annum) and 1980s (76 per annum) during which decade it was removed from the species that the British Birds Rarities Committee considered as a national rarity (at the end of 1982) (Grant *et al.* 1982).

After two were seen at Dungeness in 1977, there were five further singles in Kent in the 1980s, which included the first local record: an immature male in song found by Ian Roberts at Mill Point on the 14th June 1988.

The numbers occurring in Britain have since stabilised, with 151 per annum in the 1990s, 129 per annum in the 2000s and 159 per annum in the 2010s, with “Scotland still taking the lion’s share” (White & Kehoe 2022).

Single pairs nested in Scotland in Highland in 1982 and Sutherland in 1990, whilst at least seven pairs bred in Britain in 1992 (at least four in Yorkshire, two in Suffolk and one in Devon). In 1992 it also entered the Pas-de-Calais region of France, where at least three males were heard in song, whilst up to 16 males were noted there the following year, when four nests were found. However, hopes that it was set to colonise were disappointed as only four or five males reappeared in Pas-de-Calais in 1995 and none thereafter (Wallace 1999). It last bred in Britain in Cumbria in 2001 (Eaton *et al.* 2022).

It was in 1992 that the second local record occurred, when Ian Roberts saw a female or immature male on the 7th June at the clifftop near Capel-le-Ferne Café, within sight of the breeding site at Cap Blanc Nez in Pas de Calais.

A further 12 county records followed in the 1990s and one in 2001, before the third local sighting: an adult (red) male in song seen by Ian Roberts at Capel Battery on the 31st May 2002. There had been another seven Kent records to the end of 2020.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

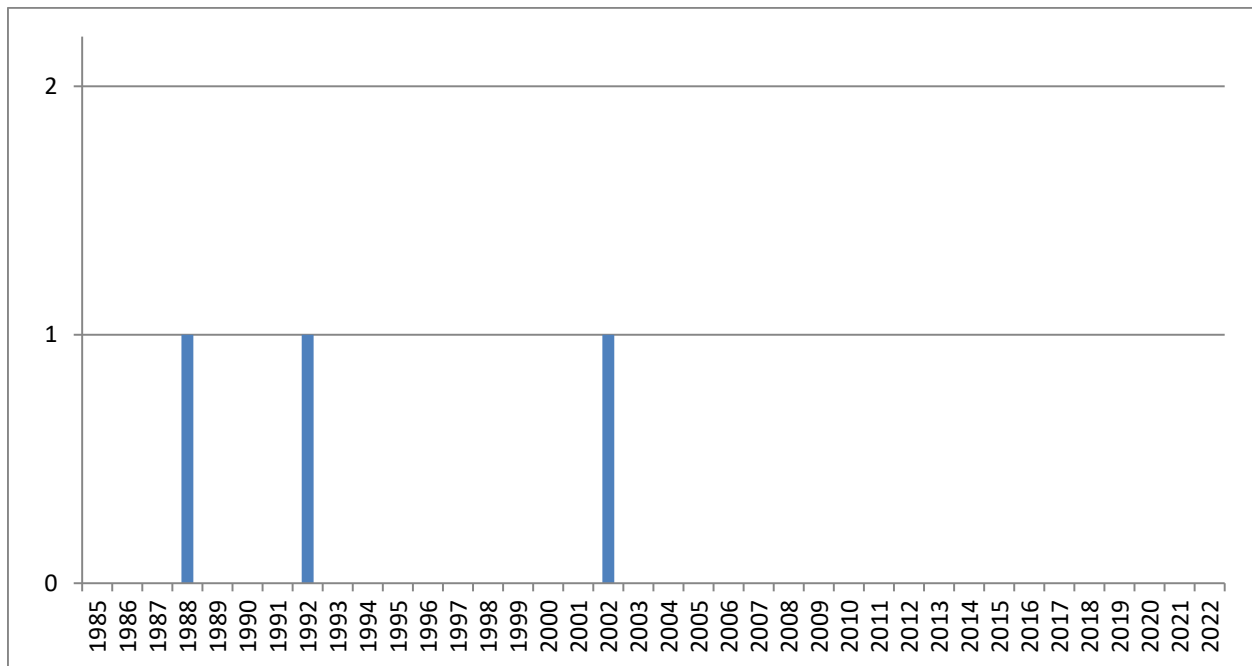


Figure 1: Common Rosefinch records at Folkestone and Hythe

All records to date have occurred in late spring, between 31st May (week 22) and 14th June (week 24), as demonstrated by figure 2.

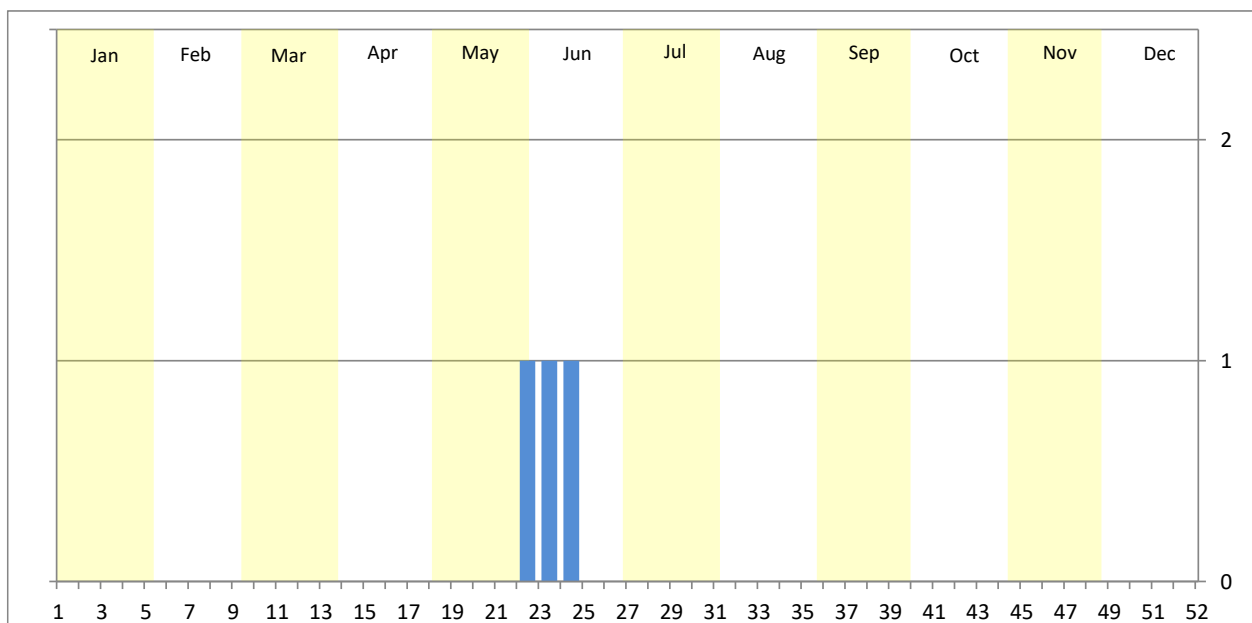


Figure 2: Common Rosefinch records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Common Rosefinch records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

1988 Mill Point, immature male in song, 14th June (I. A. Roberts)

1992 Capel-le-Ferne Café, female or immature male, 7th June (I. A. Roberts)

2002 Capel Battery, adult male in song, 31st May (I. A. Roberts)

An account of the first area record is given below.

Common Rosefinch at Mill Point

14th June 1988

By Ian Roberts

Circumstances of the find:

I was on the seafront at Mill Point on 14th June when at around 07:40 a passerine appeared to fly in off the sea, and gave a clear, phyllosc-like “hueet” call, although it did not resemble a warbler in size or shape, being more finch-like. It landed in a small bush out of sight but sang twice “wee-ju-wee-ju-woo” with a phyllosc-like tone and quality. I approached nearer trying to get a view of the bird, but it appeared very flighty and I only caught a glimpse before it flew off. It appeared brown above and streaked below, with a plain-looking face.

When I returned home I made reference to recordings of the call and song of Common Rosefinch and these were identical to what I had heard earlier that morning.

Description of the bird:

Size, shape, jizz: a finch-like bird.

Head and upperparts: appeared brown above, with a plain-looking face.

Underparts: streaked below.

Voice: a clear, phyllosc-like “hueet” call and a song with a similar tone and quality: “wee-ju-wee-ju-woo”.

Comments on the record:

The record was accepted by the KOS rarities committee and appears in the Kent Bird Report for that year as the ninth county record (KOS, 1990).

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](#).

I am indebted to Andrew Henderson and Tim Hodge for providing access to the Kent Ornithological Society archives.