

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

14 records

Breeds across northern and central Europe, eastwards from France. The extreme northern populations are migratory, moving south and west to winter in mid-latitude Europe, but some southern populations appear to be sedentary (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

It is a scarce but increasing passage migrant and winter visitor in Britain, with a recent average of over 200 sightings per annum (White & Kehoe, 2020). It is a scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor in Kent (KOS, 2020).



Great Grey Shrike at Samphire Hoe (Dale Gibson)

The first area record relates to one included in Ticehurst (1909) that was seen at Folkestone Warren in 1893.

The next was seen and fully described by Miss H. M. Rowland on the golf links at Folkestone on the 20th October 1952. The golf links were an 18 hole course which occupied much of the kilometre square TR2137 south of the bypass and east of Cherry Garden Avenue, an area which is now occupied 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. 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 – whilst, after a slightly longer gap, Dale Gibson saw one flying in off the sea at Abbotscliffe on the 15th October 1993.

Another decade on and there were seven records in the space of twelve years, all in October, five at Abbotscliffe, one at Samphire Hoe and one at Hythe Ranges, but there have been no more since 2016. The records by year are shown in figure 1.

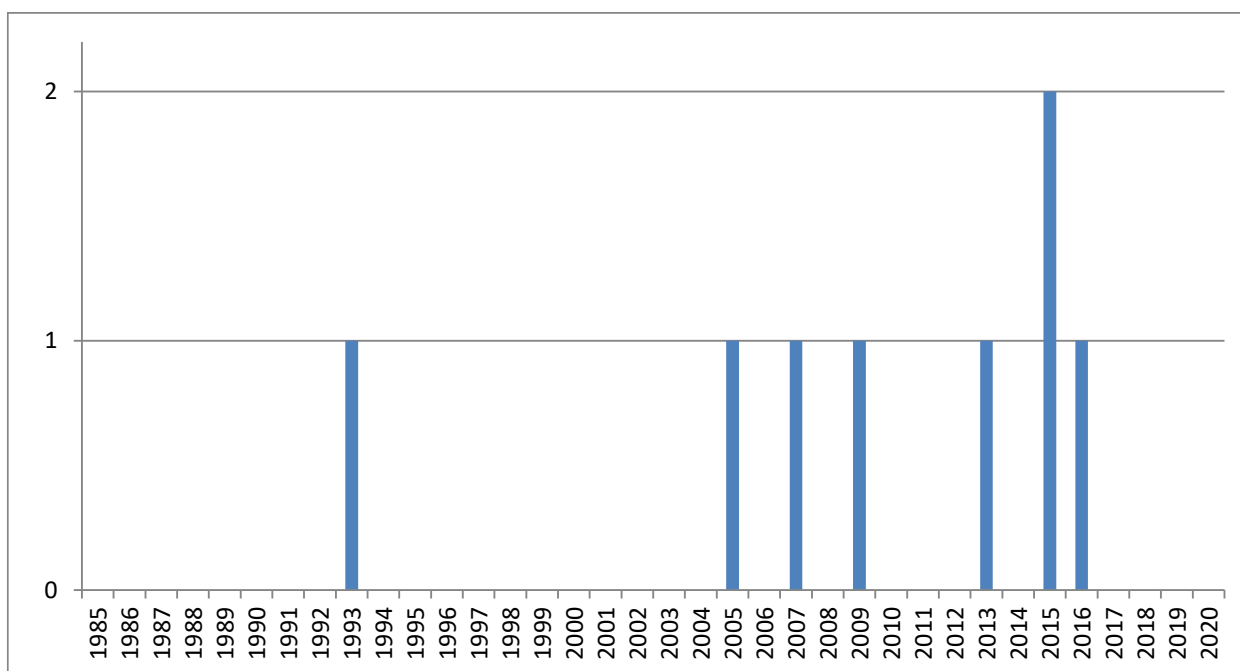


Figure 1: Great Grey Shrike records at Folkestone and Hythe since 1985

The records by week are given in figure 2.

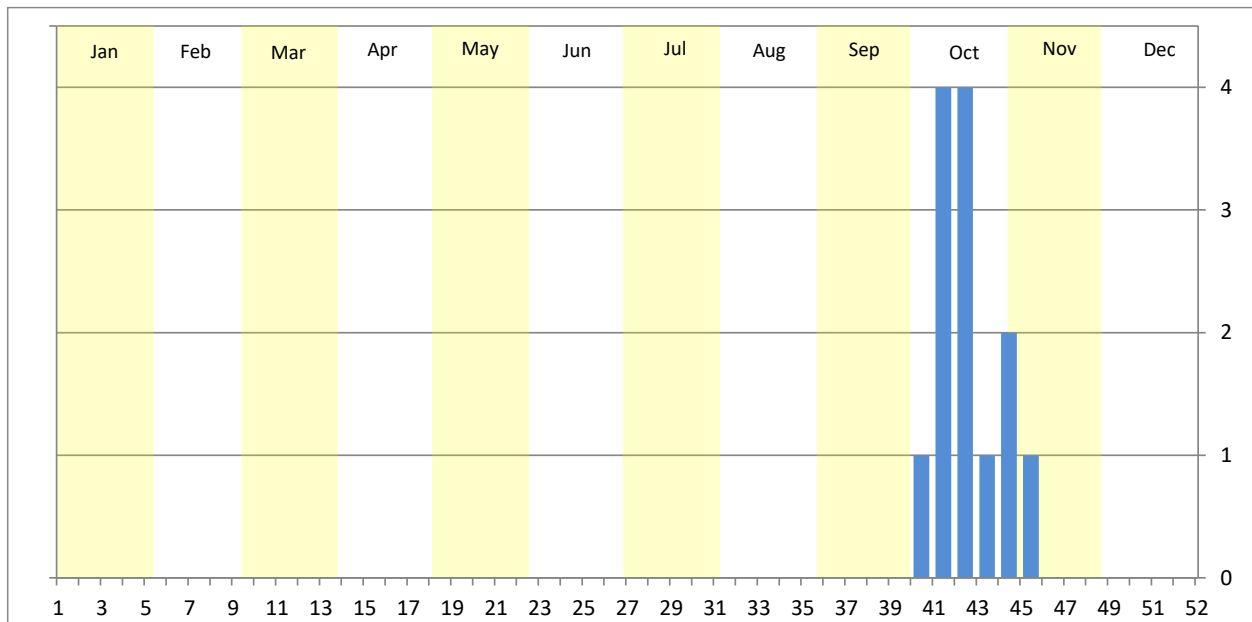


Figure 2: Great Grey Shrike records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

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 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.



Figure 3: Distribution of all Great Grey Shrike 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 Abbotscliffe (Ian Roberts)

References

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M., 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

Ticehurst, N. F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*. Witherby, London.

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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](#).



Great Grey Shrike at Samphire Hoe (Dale Gibson)