

# Red-rumped Swallow

*Cecropis daurica*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

15 records

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 as a spring 'overshoot'. There had been a total of 1,019 records in Britain to the end of 2018, with the annual mean having increased from 2 in the 1960s to 41 in the latest decade (Snow & Perrins, 1998, White & Kehoe, 2019).



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

It was formerly considered to be a national rarity to the end of 2005 when the British Birds Rarities Committee removed it from the list of species which it assessed (BBRC, 2020). It is an uncommon but fairly regular passage vagrant in Kent, occurring mainly in spring. There had been 99 records in the county from the first in 1959 to the end of 2018, with 91 (92%) of those being logged since 1977 (KOS, 2020).

It was first recorded locally on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1992 when Ian Roberts saw one arriving in off the sea at Capel-le-Ferne and has been noted with some regularity since, as demonstrated by figure 1. With 15 records in the last 29 years it has occurred 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.

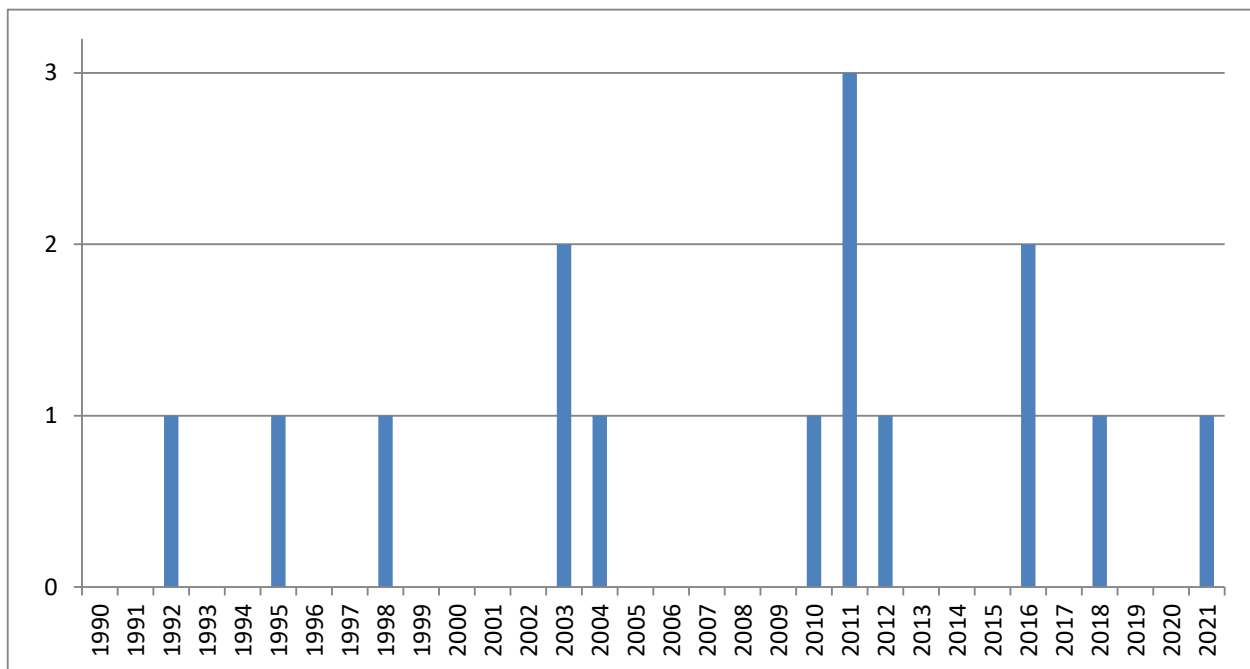


Figure 1: Red-rumped Swallow records at Folkestone and Hythe

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 28<sup>th</sup> April (week 17) and 8<sup>th</sup> June (week 23), with the vast majority in May and a distinct peak in week 19 (6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> May), as demonstrated by figure 2.

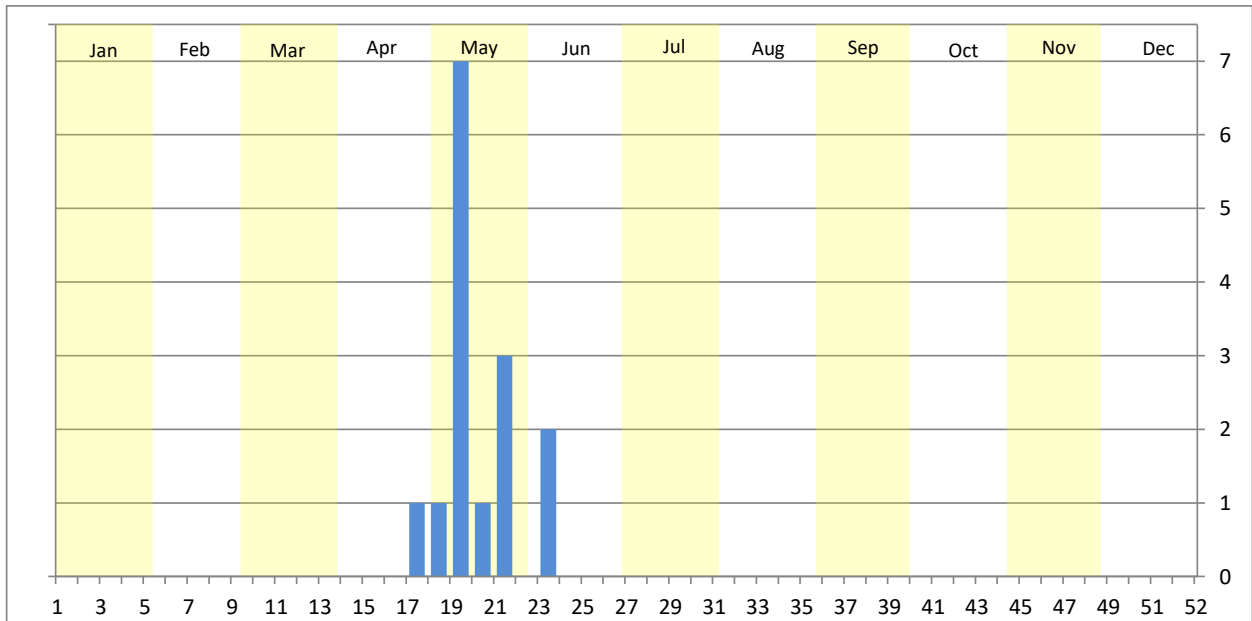


Figure 2: Red-rumped Swallow records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

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



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

The full list of records is as follows:

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

An account of the first area record is given below.

#### **Red-rumped Swallow at Capel-le-Ferne Café**

**23<sup>rd</sup> May 1992**

(Ian A 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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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

BBRC statistics: <https://www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/statistics> (accessed 2020)

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

KOS Kent list: <https://kentos.org.uk/kent-list> (accessed 2020)

Rogers, M. J. & the Rarities Committee, 1993. Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1992. *British Birds*: 86: 502.

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

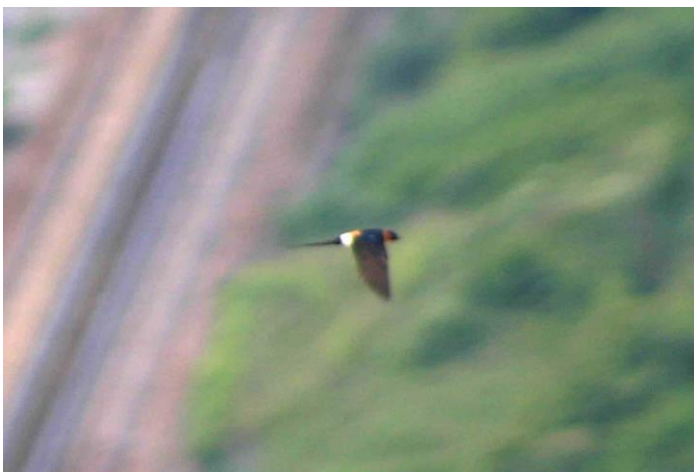
White, S. & Kehoe, C., 2019. Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2017. *British Birds*, 112: 444-468.



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](#).



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



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