

Dusky Warbler

Phylloscopus fuscatus

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

1 record

Breeds in Siberia from the upper Ob and western Altai east to the Anadyr' region and Sakhalin island, south to the eastern Himalayas and central and north-east China. Winters from Nepal to southern China and in south-east Asia to Singapore. Vagrancy to Western Europe is thought to result from reverse migration or westward displacement in anti-cyclonic conditions (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

The first European record occurred on Orkney in 1913 but there were no further British records until 1961, after which it was noted with increasing regularity, with a further ten in the 1960s (including four in 1968), 14 in 1970s and annual records from 1980, with a total of 311 having been recorded (including peaks of over 20 in four separate years) by the end of 2005 when the British Birds Rarities Committee removed it from the list of species which it considered to be national rarities (Fraser & Rogers, 2006, BBRC, 2021). The upward trend has continued, with an average of 27 national records in the last decade, and a number of birds have now successfully wintered in Britain (White & Kehoe, 2019).

It is a rare but regular vagrant in Kent, with 45 records to the end of 2018, the vast majority (87%) having occurred since 1985 (KOS, 2019). All have occurred between mid-September and late November, with the only local record being the latest to have occurred in the county to date (KOS, 2021).

The single local record involved one found by Paul Holt at Samphire Hoe on the 25th November 2004, where it remained until the 28th, although was often elusive and permitting only brief views.

Confirmation of the record by year is shown in figure 1.

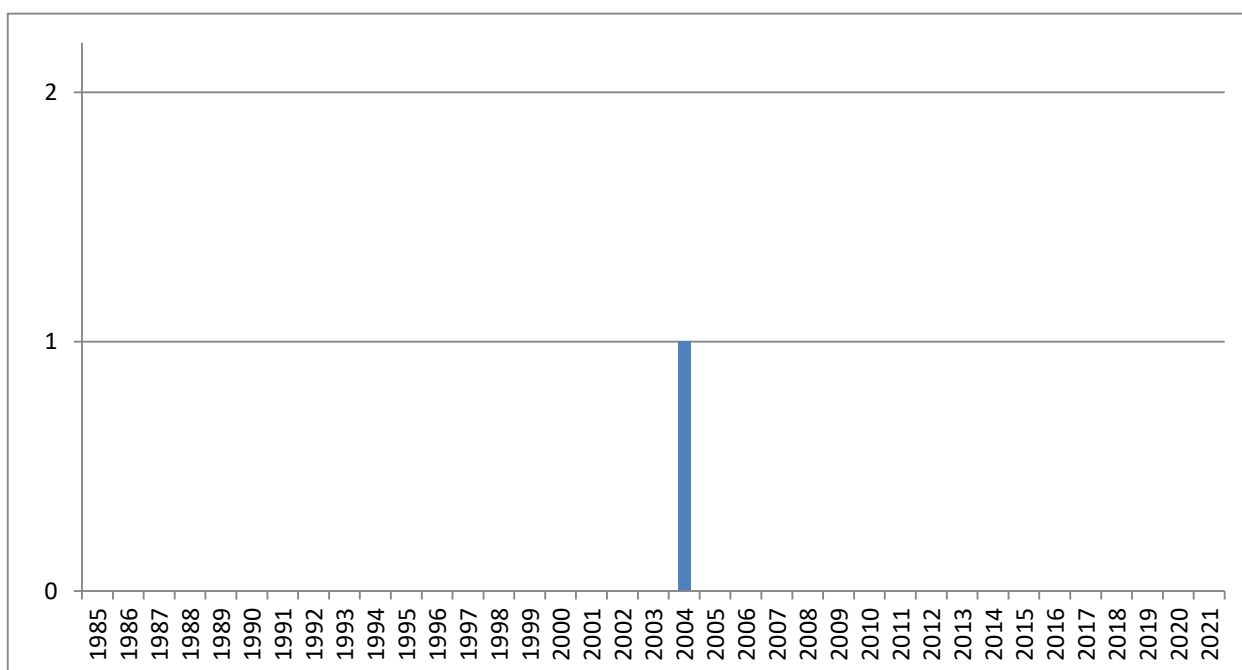


Figure 1: Dusky Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe

The single record occurred in week 48, as shown in figure 2, and figure 3 shows the location of the record by tetrad.

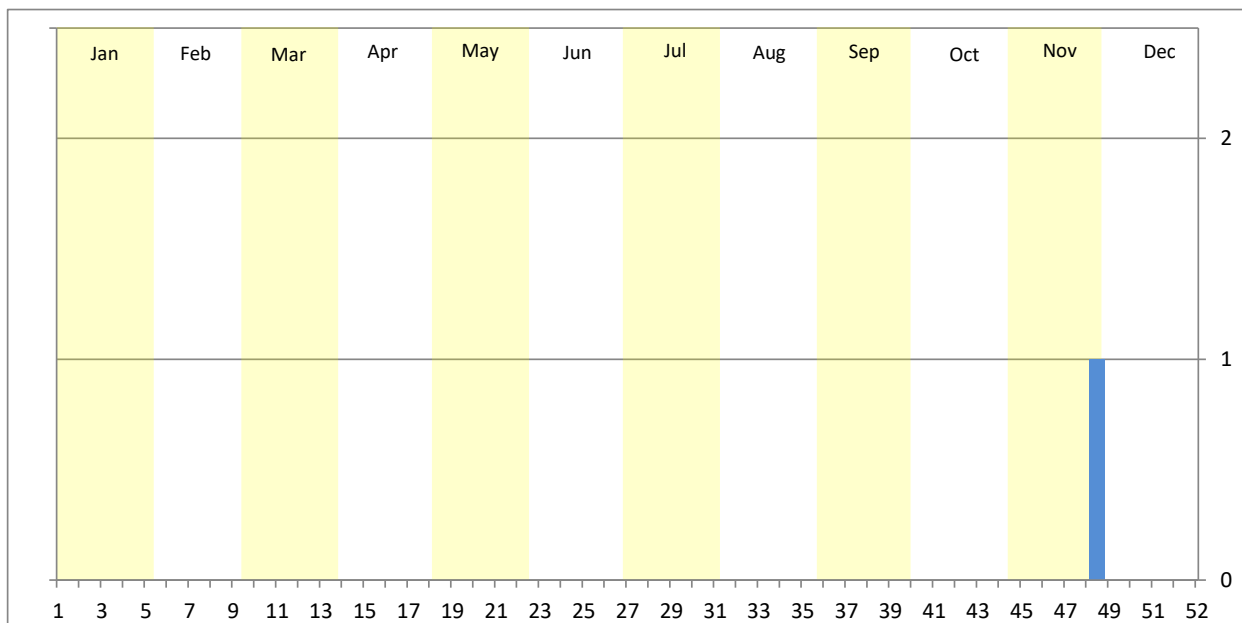


Figure 2: Dusky Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

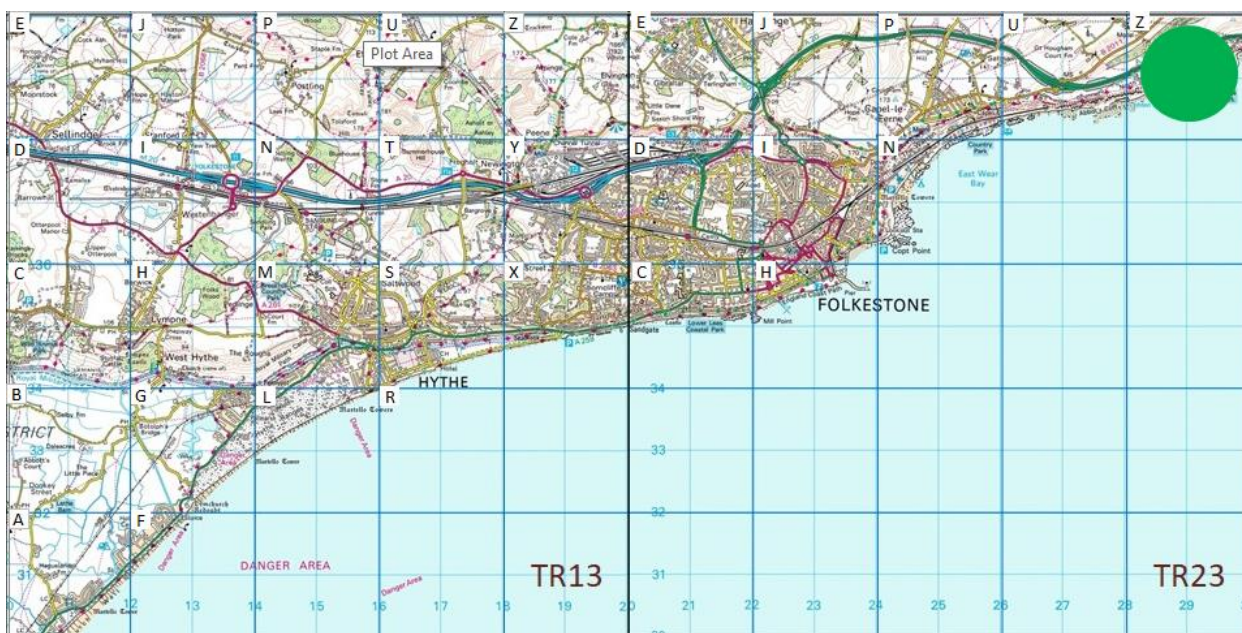


Figure 3: Distribution of all Dusky Warbler records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

Confirmation of the only area record is as follows:

2004 Samphire Hoe, one, 25th to 28th November (P. Holt, I. A. Roberts *et al*)

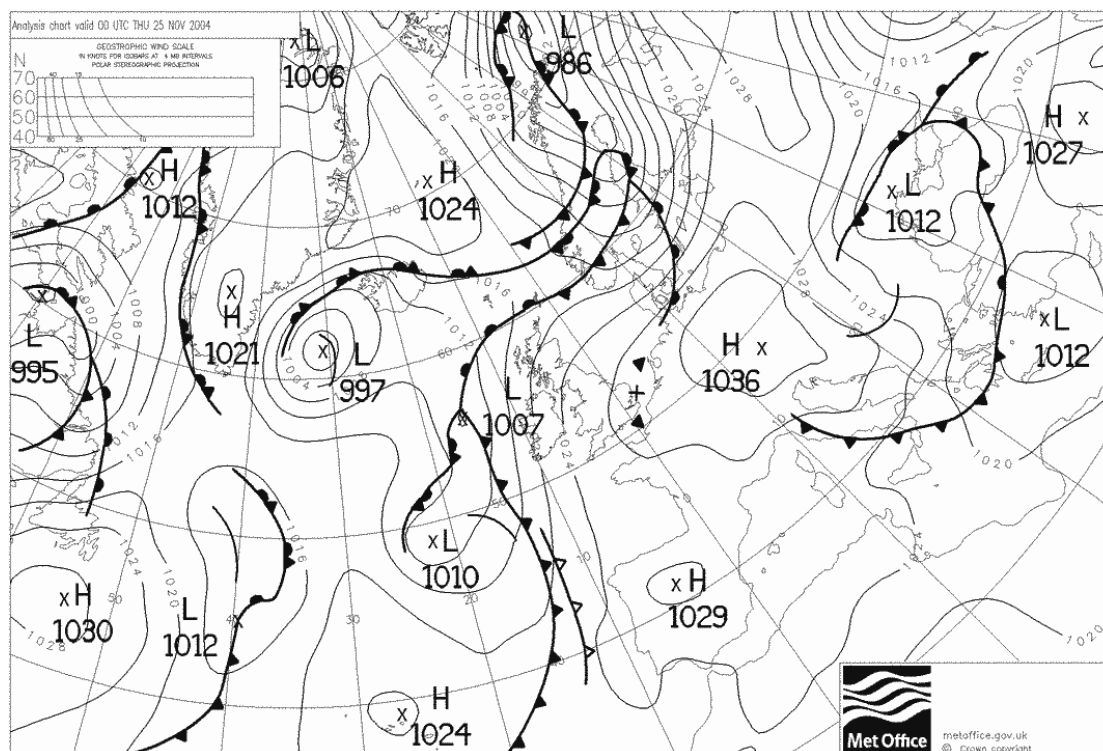
An account of the first area record is given below.

Dusky Warbler at Samphire Hoe 25th to 28th November 2004

(Paul Holt, Ian A Roberts *et al*)

Weather conditions:

The synoptic chart overleaf shows the position at the start of 25th November. A large anticyclone across Russia stretched all the way across to eastern Europe where it merged with a smaller area of high pressure over central Europe. With low pressure systems to the north and south there emerged a window of clear weather from Asia to southern England.



Circumstances of the find:

Paul Holt found a Dusky Warbler at Samphire Hoe at c.12:30 on 25th November 2004. It was favouring low vegetation on the small hill to the east of the office and calling frequently. The news was put out and Ian Roberts and others arrived soon after. The bird continued to call regularly but became elusive and gave only brief views that afternoon, generally in flight.

It remained in the same area until 28th November and reasonable views were possible with patience. The following description was pieced together from 8 hours observation over the bird's four day stay:

Description of the bird:

Upperparts: Supercilium obvious, and whitish, particularly in front of the eye, appearing off-white behind the eye. Supercilium appeared relatively straight. Radde's generally expected to show a more yellowish supercilium, kinked at the rear end. Upperparts a dull brownish, lacking any olive tones, which Radde's tends to show.

Underparts: a dull dingy off-white, with some buff suffusion, but lacking any yellow. Vent lacked the warm yellow of Radde's. Legs a dull pinkish colour, not blackish like Chiffchaff.

Call: a sharp, hard 'tack' or 'tick' which was very distinctive and enabled location of the bird at c.200 yards. The call was given both in flight and when perched. Radde's has a softer, more liquid 'chup' or 'choop'.

Comments on the record:

The record was accepted by the BBRC, appearing in the 2004 rarity report, and was among 20 recorded in Britain in that year. Whilst this is the latest Kent record, it is far from being without precedent nationally, indeed there was one found in Suffolk on 15th December in the same year – illustrating just how prolonged the autumn can be!

References

BBRC statistics: <https://www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/statistics> (accessed 2021)

Fraser, P. A. & Rogers, M. J., 2006. Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005, part 1. *British Birds*, 100: 16–61.

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

KOS Kent list: <https://kentos.org.uk/kent-list> (accessed 2021)

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.

Acknowledgements

The tetrad map images were produced from the Ordnance Survey [Get-a-map service](#) and are reproduced with kind permission of [Ordnance Survey](#).