

## Rose-coloured Starling

*Pastor roseus*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

3 records,  
3 birds

*World/British distribution (Snow & Perrins 1998):*

Within the Western Palearctic the core of its range is in Russia and Turkey, with smaller numbers into Greece and Albania. However it is an erratic, irruptive visitor to central and western Europe, with occasional breeding to the west of the usual limits. It is an annual vagrant to Britain, mostly involving adults in late spring or early summer and juveniles in autumn.

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

It is a rare vagrant to the county.



Rose-coloured Starling at Palmarsh (John Organ)

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 49

The Rose-coloured Starling has a long history in Britain, having first been obtained at Norwood in Greater London in 1742 (Naylor 2021), and in Kent, with a specimen in Dover Museum dating from some time prior to 1844 (Ticehurst 1909). Ticehurst provided details of a further six county records, whilst Harrison (1953) added two more, in 1937 and 1951, by which time nearly 350 had been logged in the country (BBRC no date).

Taylor *et al.* (1981) noted a further six in Kent during their review period (1952-76) And it remained rare in the country as a whole with a mean of between three or four records per annum across this time. Nationally there was a significant increase thereafter, with a mean of 8 per annum in the 1980s and 18 per annum in the 1990s, before 2000 and 2001 saw influxes of 45 and 67 respectively, after which it was removed from the list of species that the British Birds Rarities Committee considered as a national rarity (Rogers *et al.* 2002).

Numbers have remained high, with a mean of 56 per annum in the 2000s and 53 per annum in the 2010s, but annual variability is very high, with significant influxes in some years, the largest occurring in 2020, when a total of 240 were found across the country (White & Kehoe). The authors noted that “irruptions of this species into western Europe appear to be becoming larger and more frequent, with the best ten years for this species in Britain all falling in the last 20 years. However, lean years in between irruptions are still frequent”.



Rose-coloured Starling at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)



Rose-coloured Starling at Samphire Hoe (Ian Roberts)

The increase in numbers nationally was not reflected in the county until very recently. There were just six county records in the 31 years following the end of the review period of Taylor *et al.* (i.e. to 2007) but there were nine in the subsequent ten years (to 2017), whilst influxes of eight in 2018, eight in 2020 and 11 in 2021 ensued. The majority (71%) of dated records have occurred in spring or summer.

The first local record involved a juvenile found by Geoff Burton at Samphire Hoe on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012, whilst the two subsequent sightings have occurred during the recent influxes, with one in a garden in Folkestone for two days in June 2020 and a long-staying bird that lingered in the Palmarsh area for 27 days from the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

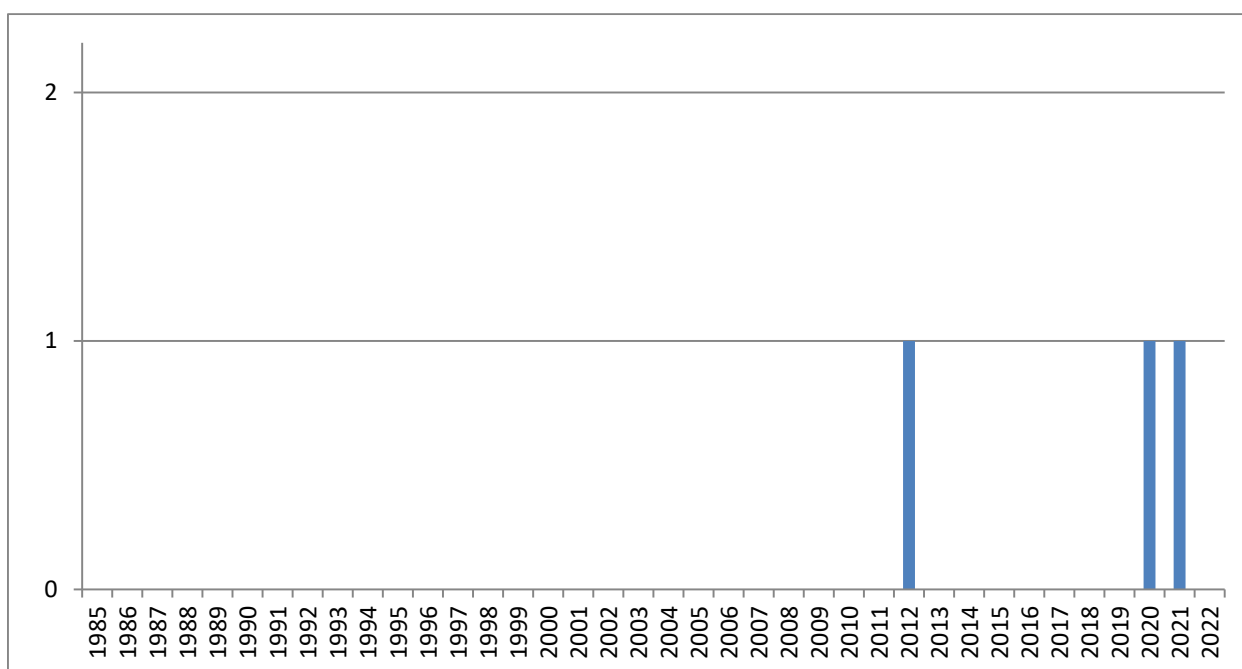


Figure 1: Rose-coloured Starling records at Folkestone and Hythe

There has been one record in June and two in September, as shown in figure 2.

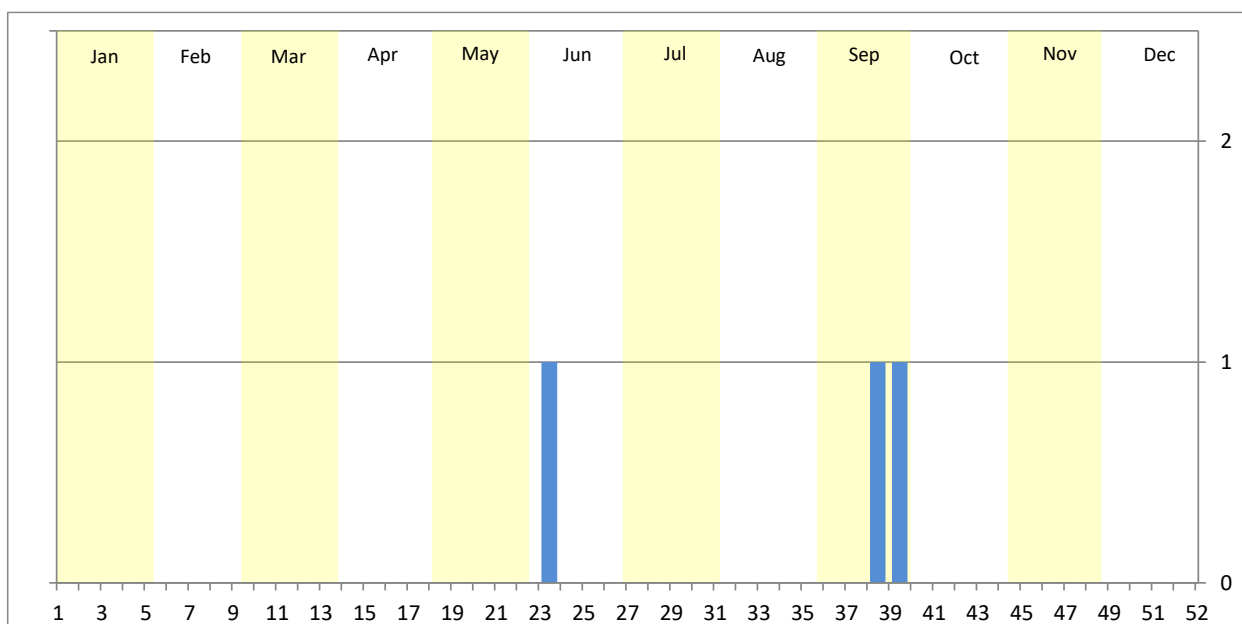


Figure 2: Rose-coloured Starling records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.

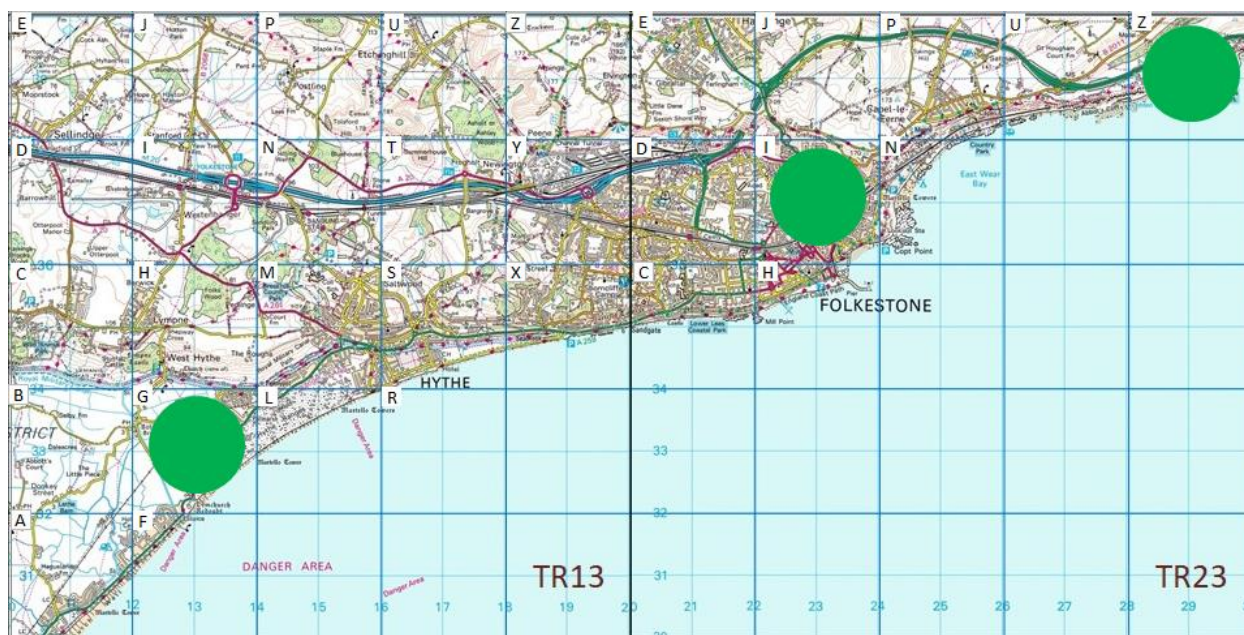


Figure 3: Distribution of all Rose-coloured Starling records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

**2012** Sapphire Hoe, juvenile, 20<sup>th</sup> September, photographed (G. J. A. Burton, P. Holt, I. A. Roberts *et al*)

**2020** Near Tram Road, Folkestone, probably first-summer, 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> June, photographed (A. & M. Fletcher)

**2021** Palmarsh, adult, 28<sup>th</sup> September to 25<sup>th</sup> October, photographed (J. Organ, I. A. Roberts *et al*)



Rose-coloured Starling at Palmarsh (Linda Bailey)



Rose-coloured Starling at Palmarsh (James King)

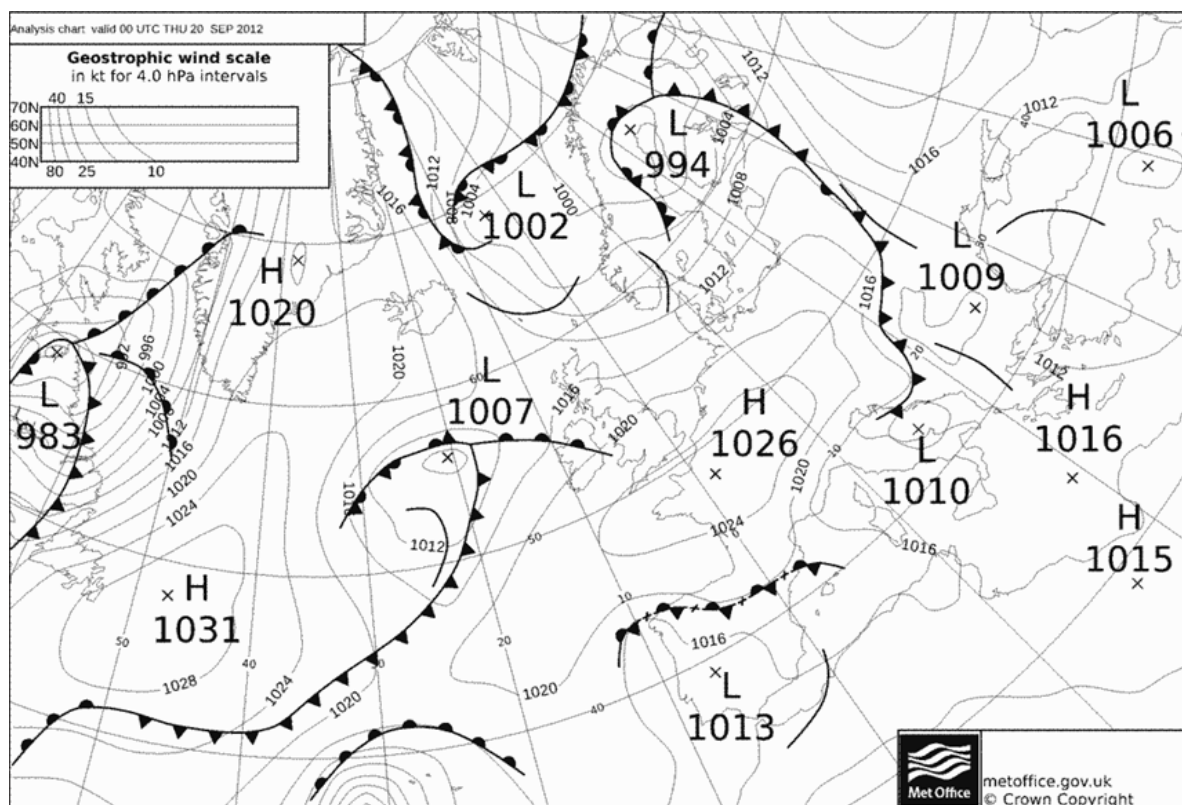
An account of the first area record is given below.

## Rose-coloured Starling at Samphire Hoe 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012

By Ian Roberts

### Weather conditions:

The night of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> September was fairly cool and clear, with a light to moderate westerly wind. The synoptic chart at midnight shows an area of high pressure over the near continent.



### Circumstances of the find:

At around 09:00 I received a call from Geoff Burton to say that he had found a Rose-coloured Starling at Samphire Hoe. Within 20 minutes I was on site and pleased to find the bird still present and showing well, and also being watched by Paul Holt. Over the next hour a number of local birders arrived and all were able to get good views as it showed well in the brambles above the back car park and in the bushes above the back track, where it had been first seen. The bird was still present in the early afternoon, but it, nor the small Starling flock with which it was associating, could be not located in the late afternoon.

### Description of the bird:

Head and upperparts: Pale dun-brown, with whitish throat and eye-ring. Darker wing feathers with prominent pale fringes. Paler rump.

Underparts: Paler than upperparts, though with faint darker speckling, tending to whitish on belly. Darker underwings.

Bare parts: Relatively short, thick bill with prominent yellow base. Pale pinkish legs.

The record was accepted by the Kent Ornithological Society and appears in their bird report for the year (KOS, 2014).



Rose-coloured Starling at Samphire Hoe (Phil Smith)



Rose-coloured Starling at Palmarsh (Barry Wright)



Rose-coloured Starling at Folkestone (Alison Fletcher)

## 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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