

Average first dates of some migrants

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Data based on YNU Reports and database 1970-2019 (provisional dates for 2018 and 2019).

Decade averages do not include any data from missing years 1998-2004 when only the Rare & Scarce Bird Report was published.

SPECIES	Averages	Averages	Averages	Averages	Averages	Days difference from 1970s to 2010s
	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	
Garganey	19th March	23rd March	11th March	14th March	22nd March	3
Swift	25th April	19th April	13th April	11th April	13th April	-12
Cuckoo	13th April	8th April	10th April	11th April	10th April	-3
Turtle Dove	17th April	17th April	20th April	25th April	22nd April	3
Little Ringed Plover	28th March	18th March	11th March	13th March	15th March	-13
Whimbrel	11th April	25th March	1st April	3rd April	27th March	-15
Common Sandpiper	30th March	21st March	23rd March	28th March	14th March	-16
Wood Sandpiper	3rd May	26th April	3rd May	23rd April	25th April	-9
Little Tern	26th April	20th April	23rd April	16th April	17th April	-9
Black Tern	2nd May	22nd April	25th April	18th April	21st April	-11
Sandwich Tern	30th March	24th March	18th March	22nd March	18th March	-12
Common Tern	18th April	13th April	10th April	5th April	3rd April	-15
Roseate Tern	19th May	24th May	5th June	9th June	27th May	8
Arctic Tern	16th April	13th April	7th April	12th April	8th April	-8
Marsh Harrier	15th April	31st March	25th March	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hobby	15th May	1st May	26th April	18th April	13th April	-33
Sand Martin	25th March	19th March	8th March	5th March	9th March	-16
Swallow	2nd April	1st April	16th March	20th March	16th March	-17
House Martin	9th April	6th April	28th March	7th April	25th March	-15
Wood Warbler	22nd April	17th April	19th April	22nd April	19th April	-3
Willow Warbler	3rd April	29th March	26th March	19th March	24th March	-10
Sedge Warbler	17th April	11th April	12th April	8th April	5th April	-12
Reed Warbler	23rd April	20th April	21st April	11th April	9th April	-14
Grasshopper Warbler	20th April	17th April	15th April	10th April	5th April	-15
Garden Warbler	19th April	18th April	18th April	11th April	11th April	-8
Lesser Whitethroat	19th April	19th April	14th April	15th April	9th April	-10
Common Whitethroat	18th April	14th April	16th April	7th April	9th April	-9
Ring Ouzel	17th March	17th March	14th March	19th March	9th March	-8
Spotted Flycatcher	28th April	28th April	28th April	26th April	28th April	0
Pied Flycatcher	22nd April	18th April	16th April	13th April	15th April	-7
Redstart	13th April	6th April	6th April	8th April	5th April	-8
Whinchat	15th April	14th April	11th April	13th April	16th April	1
Wheatear	17th March	15th March	7th March	14th March	11th March	-6
Yellow Wagtail	9th April	31st March	31st March	4th April	31st March	-9
Tree Pipit	11th April	10th April	8th April	10th April	9th April	-2

Total days difference -310
Average days earlier -9

Average last dates of some migrants

	Averages	Averages	Averages	Averages	Averages	Days difference from
SPECIES	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	1970s to 2010s
Garganey	30th Sept	3rd Oct	31st Oct	9th Nov	16th Oct	16
Swift	25th Oct	30th Oct	27th Oct	18th Oct	30th Oct	5
Cuckoo	25th Sept	18th Sept	23rd Sept	20th Sept	17th Sept	-8
Turtle Dove	16th Oct	21st Oct	4th Oct	21st Sept	10th Oct	-6
Little Ringed Plover	10th Oct	5th Oct	26th Sept	27th Sept	5th Oct	-5
Whimbrel	23rd Oct	22nd Oct	1st Nov	28th Oct	3rd Nov	10
Common Sandpiper	4th Nov	15th Nov	19th Oct	5th Nov	25th Oct	-10
Wood Sandpiper	2nd Oct	27th Sept	20th Sept	6th Oct	6th Oct	4
Little Tern	17th Sept	21st Sept	10th Sept	17th Sept	18th Sept	1
Black Tern	6th Oct	16th Oct	3rd Oct	9th Oct	10th Oct	4
Sandwich Tern	22nd Oct	28th Oct	3rd Nov	6th Nov	9th Nov	18
Common Tern	19th Oct	23rd Oct	29th Oct	1st Nov	23rd Oct	4
Roseate Tern	21st Sept	18th Sept	13th Sept	21st Sept	17th Sept	-4
Arctic Tern	28th Oct	23rd Oct	6th Nov	6th Nov	1st Nov	4
Marsh Harrier	22nd Sept	9th Oct	10th Nov	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hobby	25th Sept	16th Oct	13th Oct	21st Oct	18th Oct	23
Sand Martin	20th Oct	24th Oct	21st Oct	9th Oct	22nd Oct	2
Swallow	15th Nov	19th Nov	21st Nov	13th Nov	22nd Nov	7
House Martin	17th Nov	21st Nov	13th Nov	17th Nov	10th Nov	-7
Wood Warbler	8th Sept	18th Sept	24th Sept	16th Sept	17th Sept	9
Willow Warbler	23rd Oct	28th Oct	5th Nov	23rd Oct	10th Nov	17
Sedge Warbler	4th Oct	7th Oct	11th Oct	1st Oct	1st Oct	-3
Reed Warbler	20th Oct	30th Oct	20th Oct	14th Oct	21st Oct	1
Grasshopper Warbler	23rd Sept	30th Sept	28th Sept	5th Oct	5th Oct	12
Garden Warbler	26th Oct	8th Nov	26th Oct	20th Oct	23rd Oct	-3
Lesser Whitethroat	22nd Oct	28th Oct	28th Oct	23rd Nov	6th Nov	15
Common Whitethroat	15th Oct	14th Oct	21st Oct	18th Oct	12th Oct	-3
Ring Ouzel	6th Nov	12th Nov	30th Nov	17th Nov	15th Nov	9
Spotted Flycatcher	13th Oct	21st Oct	15th Oct	16th Oct	18th Oct	5
Pied Flycatcher	18th Oct	16th Oct	17th Oct	15th Oct	18th Oct	0
Redstart	29th Oct	29th Oct	29th Oct	25th Oct	31st Oct	2
Whinchat	28th Oct	13th Nov	22nd Oct	25th Oct	1st Nov	4
Wheatear	10th Nov	5th Nov	30th Oct	5th Nov	15th Nov	5
Yellow Wagtail	24th Oct	22nd Oct	27th Oct	20th Oct	23rd Oct	-1
Tree Pipit	9th Oct	14th Oct	17th Oct	19th Oct	25th Oct	16

Total days difference 143

Average days later 4

Commentary

Evidence of Climate Change?

Arrival Dates

29 of the 34 species listed are arriving earlier than they did in the 1970s.

These 29 species are arriving, on average, 11 days earlier.

The 35th, Marsh Harrier, has been wintering in the county since 1998 so there are no recent arrival and departure dates. Chiffchaff and Blackcap are not listed, as they now winter in sufficient numbers to prevent the calculation of accurate arrival and departure dates of migrants.

Most noticeable is the early arrival of Hobby, by a massive 33 days.

All three hirundine species are arriving 15 or more days earlier than in the 1970s.

Arrival dates for Common Sandpiper and Whimbrel exclude occasional wintering individuals. The data for these species and the increasingly rare Roseate Tern will be less reliable.

Those species which are arriving later (particularly Turtle Dove) or on similar dates to the 1970s (Spotted Flycatcher, Cuckoo, Whinchat, Tree Pipit and Wood Warbler) are all long distance trans-Saharan migrants, whose populations have been in decline. Increasing aridification in the wintering grounds, difficulties on a hazardous migration, and late arrival after the increasingly early emergence of invertebrate food on the breeding grounds may all be issues.

Departure Dates

23 of the 34 species are departing later, 10 earlier and one no change.

Of the 10 leaving earlier, two (Turtle Dove and Cuckoo) also arrived late, so are spending less time here.

Those leaving earlier or about the same time as in the 1970s are mostly long distance trans-Saharan migrants (Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Garden Warbler, Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, Redstart).

Some trans-Saharan migrants are lingering longer (Wood Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Tree Pipit) but late individuals tend to be coastal migrants from Scandinavia and the east rather than summer resident birds.

The late departures of Willow Warbler and Grasshopper Warblers are noteworthy but both vary each decade.

Hobby stands out again: the last sightings are now in the 3rd week of October, 23 days later than in the 1970s. It was a rare species in the county in the 1970s but has spread northwards due to climate change.

Some species are arriving earlier and leaving later, particularly Sandwich Tern and Ring Ouzel. Ring Ouzel winters north of the Sahara and may even winter in the UK, as do some Sandwich Terns. We can expect more winter records of these in the future.