

Folkestone & Hythe birding and moths

Site guide: Capel-le-Ferne (Gun Site)

Location: From Folkestone take the B2011 towards Dover. At the top of the hill (Dover Hill) you will pass the Valiant Sailor pub (TR 242378). Parking here (for patrons only), or in the lay-by just beyond. Further parking is available at the Battle of Britain memorial.

Facilities: The Valiant Sailor serves meals and drinks, and there is a café at Little Switzerland below the site. There is also a shop in the village of Capel-le-Ferne, c.2 miles to the east.

Access/route: Explore the bushes around the Valiant Sailor pub or watch for visible migration from the cliff edge. The fields inland and the path to the west along Crete Road East are also worth exploring. Disabled access is possible although some of the paths are narrow, uneven and often overgrown.

Birds: In spring and autumn the bushes provide cover for common passage migrants such as Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Common and Lesser Whitethroats, and Goldcrest. Reed, Sedge, and Garden Warblers are more frequent in autumn, as are Redstart, Wheatear, Whinchat, Spotted, and Pied Flycatchers. Firecrests are regular, and Black Redstart, Nightingale, Ring Ouzel, Grasshopper and Wood Warblers occur occasionally.

Visible migration begins in March, with Chaffinches, Siskins and a few Bramblings, and continues in April with hirundines, Meadow Pipits, *alba* wagtails, Goldfinches, and Linnets. Swifts take over in May and continue to move around through the summer, as well as forming the first returning passage of the autumn.

Yellow Wagtails and Tree Pipits feature from mid-August, with hirundines in September, finches and thrushes in October, and Stock Dove and Wood Pigeon in early November.

The lookout at the western end of the site offers a panoramic view over the town, and provides a good place to watch for raptors. Sparrowhawk, Hobby and Peregrine are regular, and large raptors have included Honey Buzzard, Red Kite, Marsh and Montagu's Harriers, Goshawk and Osprey. White Stork has also been seen from here.

Amongst the rarities recorded are Alpine Swift, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Red-rumped Swallow, Tawny Pipit, Waxwing, Melodious Warbler, Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike, Raven, Serin and Common Rosefinch.



Looking east from the Gun Site towards Abbotscliffe. Little Switzerland and the Warren can be seen below the cliffs

Other oddities have included Curlew Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Green Sandpiper, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Wood Lark, continental Coal Tit, Nuthatch and Hawfinch.

Regular: passage migrants and visible migration in season, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine, Mediterranean Gull, Turtle Dove, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Jay.

Possible: Hobby, Tree Pipit, Grey Wagtail, Black and Common Redstart, Nightingale, Ring Ouzel, Grasshopper Warbler, Firecrest, Pied Flycatcher, Brambling, Redpoll.

Rarities: White Stork, Honey Buzzard, Red Kite, Marsh and Montagu's Harriers, Goshawk, Osprey, Curlew Sandpiper, Woodcock, Black-tailed Godwit, Green Sandpiper, Ring-necked Parakeet, Alpine Swift, European Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Wood Lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Tawny Pipit, Waxwing, Melodious Warbler, Wood Warbler, continental Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike, Serin, Crossbill, Common Rosefinch, Hawfinch.