

## Short-toed Treecreeper

*Certhia brachydactyla*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

2 records,  
2 birds

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

Widespread in western Europe, from France south to northern Africa, north to Denmark and east to Poland, Ukraine and Greece. It is sedentary throughout its range.

*Kent status (KOS 2022):*

It is a rare vagrant to the county.

British (BBRC) records to end 2020: 30

Kent (KOS) records to end 2020: 37



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Martin Collins)

Taylor *et al.* (1981) noted that the first county occurrence, one trapped at Dungeness on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1969 was, “after much research, ... accepted as the first British record of this species”. The next sightings soon followed, with singles in Dorset and Yorkshire in 1970 and then three further records in Kent in the 1970s (at Dungeness, Sandwich Bay and Worth) and others in Dorset and Essex. Since 1980 there have been a further 28 British records, all but three of which (singles in Sussex, Essex and Suffolk) have been in Kent. Kent has now accounted for 81% of the British records and 60% of these county records have occurred at Dungeness (BBRC no date; RBA no date).

Short-toed Treecreepers have been found in the county in almost all the months of the year, with the exceptions of June, August and December, and with 41% of records occurring in spring (March to May) and 48% in autumn (September to November) (KOS no date).

There have been two area records, singles on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017, both at Samphire Hoe. It is probably not a coincidence that at Dungeness, which has accounted for almost half of the national records, the Treecreeper is absent as a breeding species, and thus the appearance of any treecreeper species is likely to generate significant interest as to its identity. A similar situation exists at Samphire Hoe, where Treecreepers are also absent.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

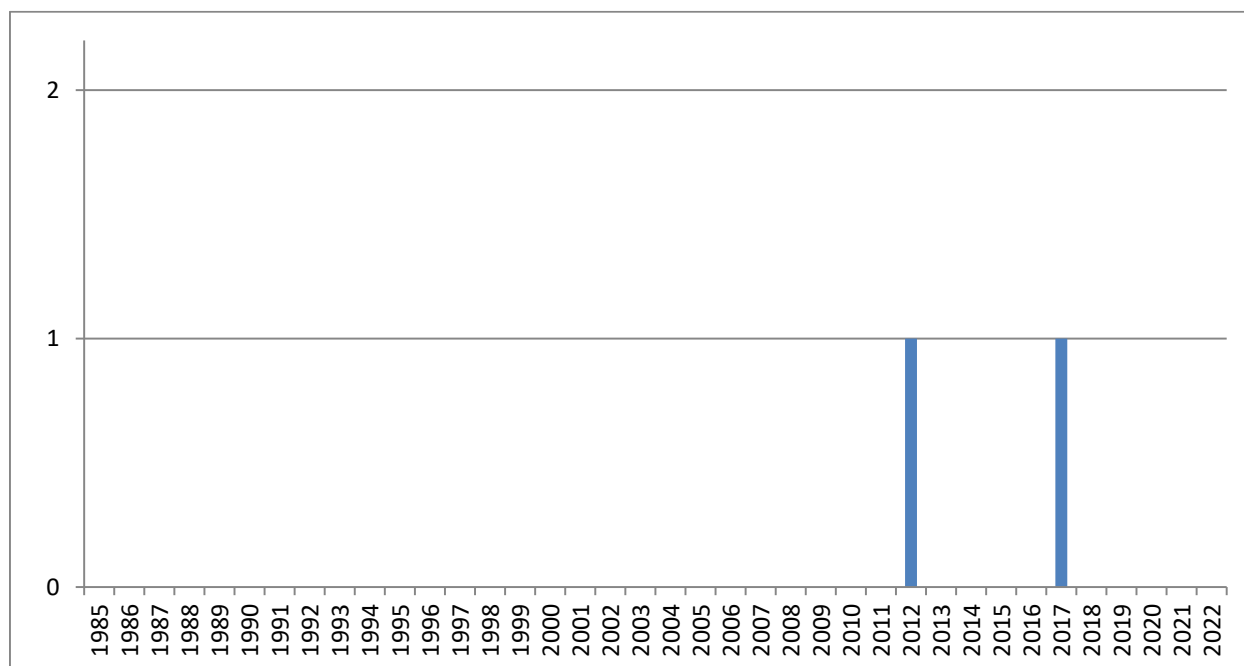


Figure 1: Short-toed Treecreeper records at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are shown in figure 2.

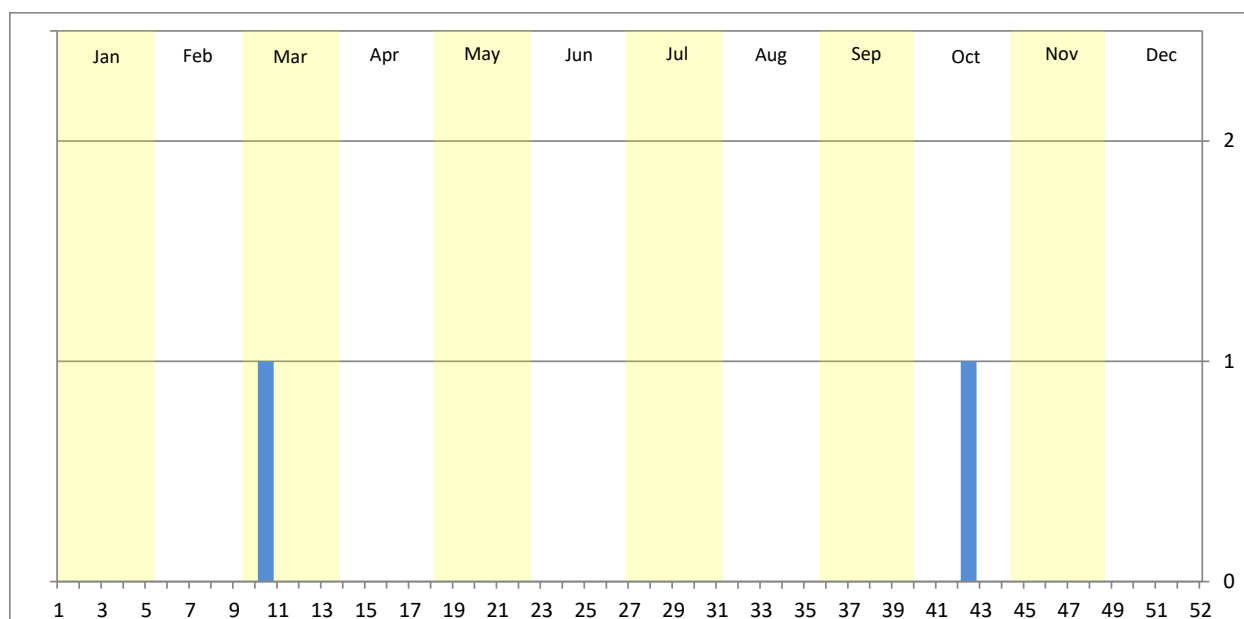


Figure 2: Short-toed Treecreeper records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the location of records by tetrad.

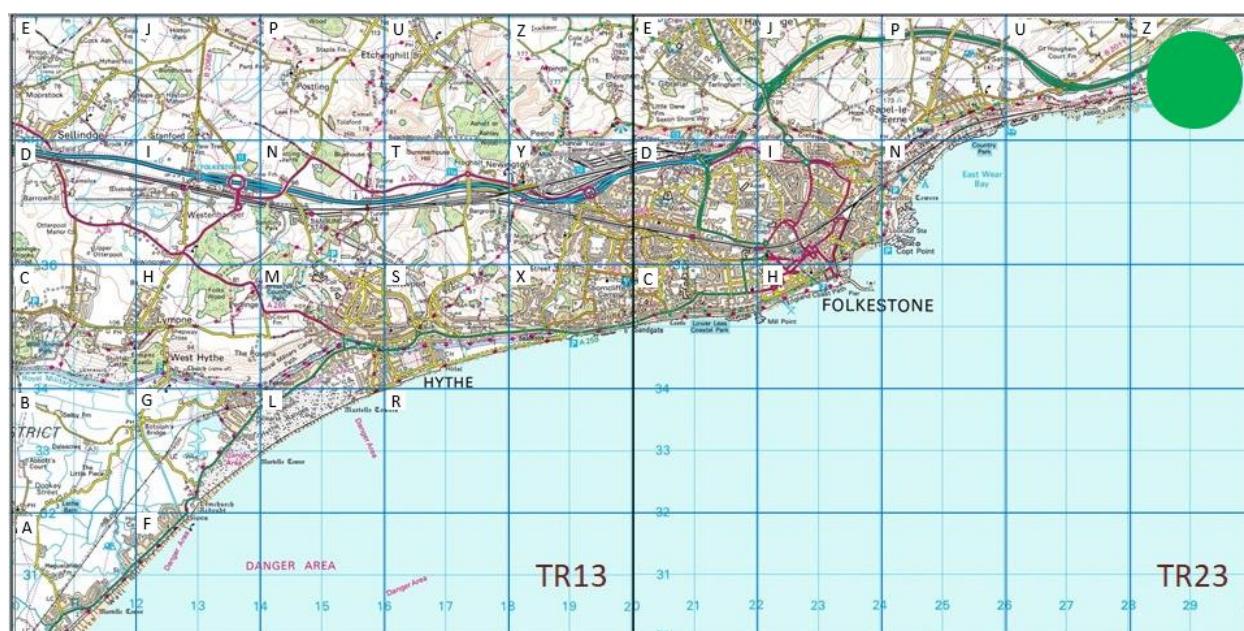


Figure 3: Distribution of all Short-toed Treecreeper records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

The full list of records is as follows:

**2012** Samphire Hoe, one, 10<sup>th</sup> March, photographed (P. Holt, T. Prentice *et al.*)

**2017** Samphire Hoe, one, 15<sup>th</sup> October, trapped and ringed, photographed (East Kent Wildlife Group per T. Greaves, M. Collins *et al.*)

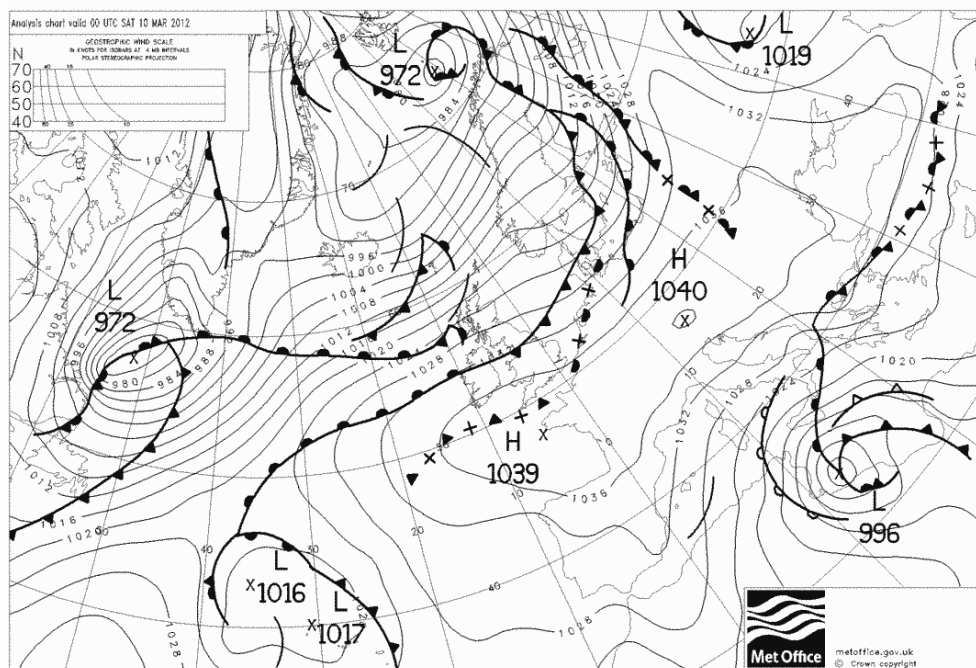
An account of the first area record is given below.

## Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012

By Paul Holt

### Weather conditions:

Overcast with a light north-westerly wind. The synoptic chart for midnight on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012, reproduced below, shows a ridge of high pressure stretching across the near continent.



### Circumstances of the find:

In the late morning of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012 myself and Tony Prentice found a Short-toed Treecreeper at the eastern end of Samphire Hoe. It was repeatedly giving the high, shrill, piping Dunnock-like 'zeet' call diagnostic of the species and was showing well on fence posts and in small buddleia bushes, where plumage features supporting the identification could be seen.

The bird remained at the site until the evening, being seen and heard by many observers, and some record photographs were obtained.

### Description of the bird:

Voice: as described above, the high, shrill, piping Dunnock-like 'zeet' call, is diagnostic. A recording of Short-toed Treecreeper was played by one of the observers present, which allowed direct comparison with the bird, and which the bird appeared to respond to, making closer approach (though this effect 'wore off' as it often tends to do with playback). Vocalisations are conclusive in treecreeper identification, whereas plumage characteristics appear to be largely open to interpretation. However, there were a few features which favour Short-toed Treecreeper:

Head pattern: The supercilium was indistinct and brownish-tinged in front of the eye, whereas Eurasian Treecreeper tends have a supercilium which is usually as distinct before eye as behind. The pale crown-streaks appeared to fade away towards fore-crown (in Eurasian evenly distinct over whole crown). The bill also appears rather long.

Underparts: The white throat contrasted with the rest of the underparts, which were slightly darker, particularly on the flanks and vent.

The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee (Hudson *et al.* 2013).



## References

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- Hudson, N. & the Rarities Committee 2013. Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2012. *British Birds* 106: 570-641.
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- Rare Bird Alert (RBA) Previous Records. [www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/RealData/recordshome.asp](http://www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/RealData/recordshome.asp) (accessed 2023).
- Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, D., Davenport, D. & Flegg, J. 1981. *Birds of Kent*. Kent Ornithological Society.



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Simon Knight)



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Martin Collins)

Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Simon Knight)

## Acknowledgements

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Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Martin Collins)