

## Short-toed Treecreeper

*Certhia brachydactyla*

Category A

Very rare vagrant.

2 records

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 (Snow & Perrins, 1998).

There had been 32 records in Britain to the end of 2019, 25 (78%) of which were in Kent, with others in Dorset (2), Essex (2), Sussex, Suffolk and Yorkshire. Since the first in 1969 the species had appeared at a rate of almost one every two years in Kent up to 2019, with just over half (56%) at Dungeness.



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Martin Collins)

Short-toed Treecreepers have been found in the county in almost all the months of the year, with the exceptions of February, June and December, and with 38% of records occurring in spring (March to May) and 54% in autumn (September to November).

There have been two area records, 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 Treecreepers are absent from the sites that have produced more than half of the county records (Dungeness) and both local records (Samphire Hoe), as the appearance of any treecreeper is likely to generate significant interest as to its identity.

The records by year are shown in figure 1.

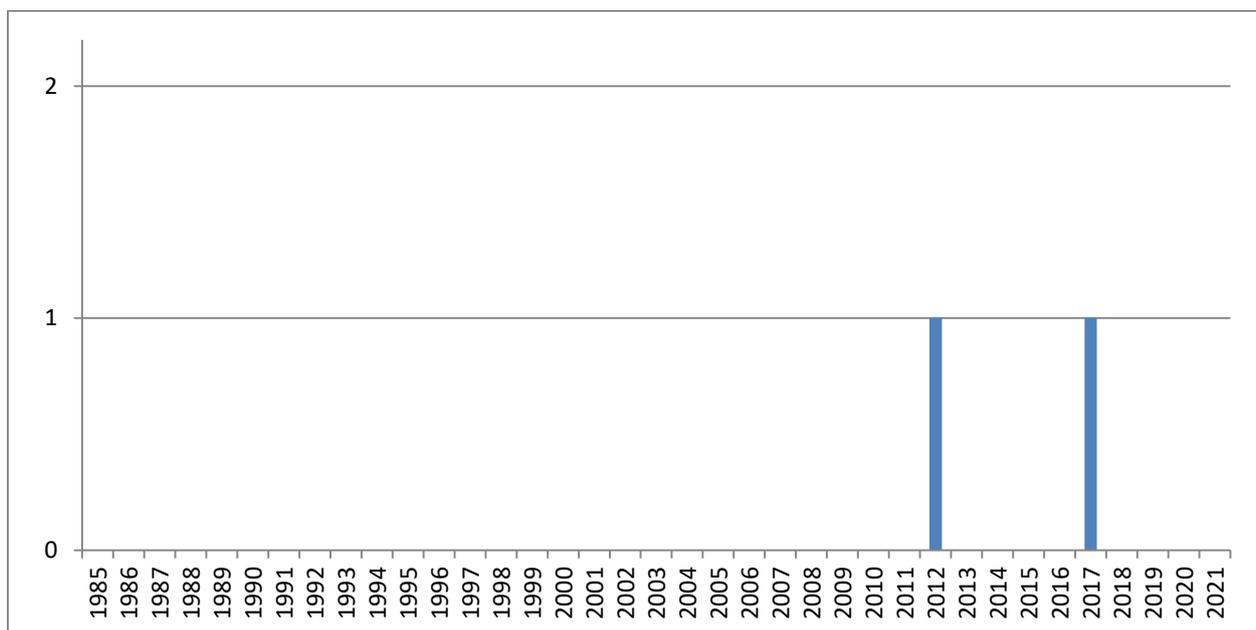


Figure 1: Short-toed Treecreeper records at Folkestone and Hythe

The records by week are given in figure 2

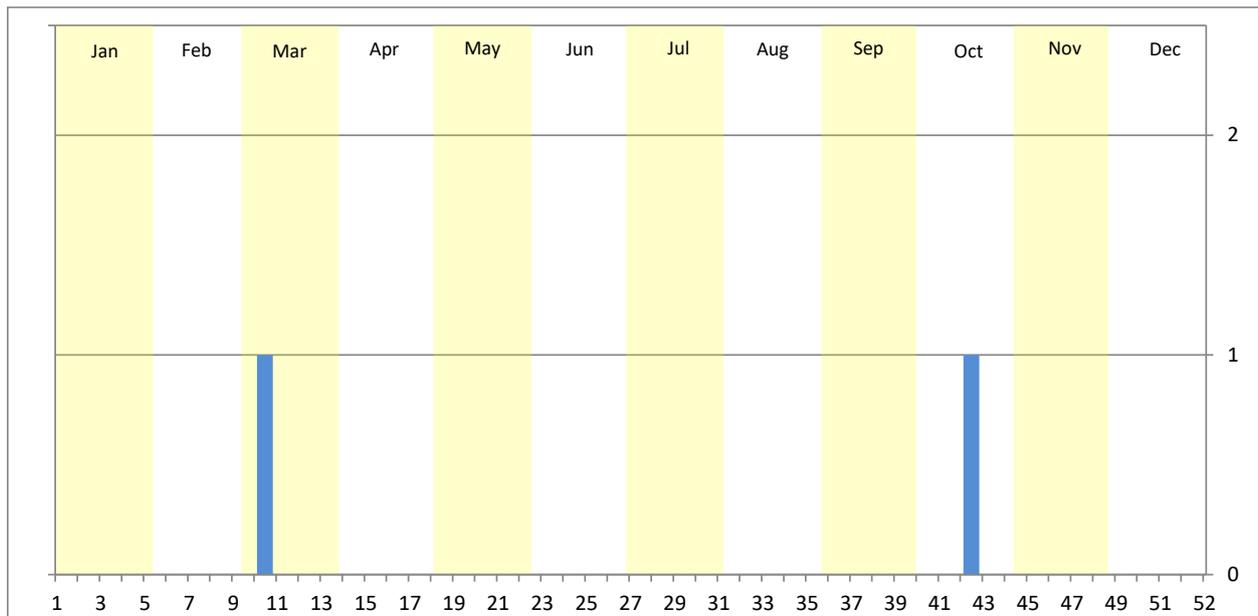


Figure 2: Short-toed Treecreeper records at Folkestone and Hythe by week

Figure 3 shows the distribution of records by tetrad.

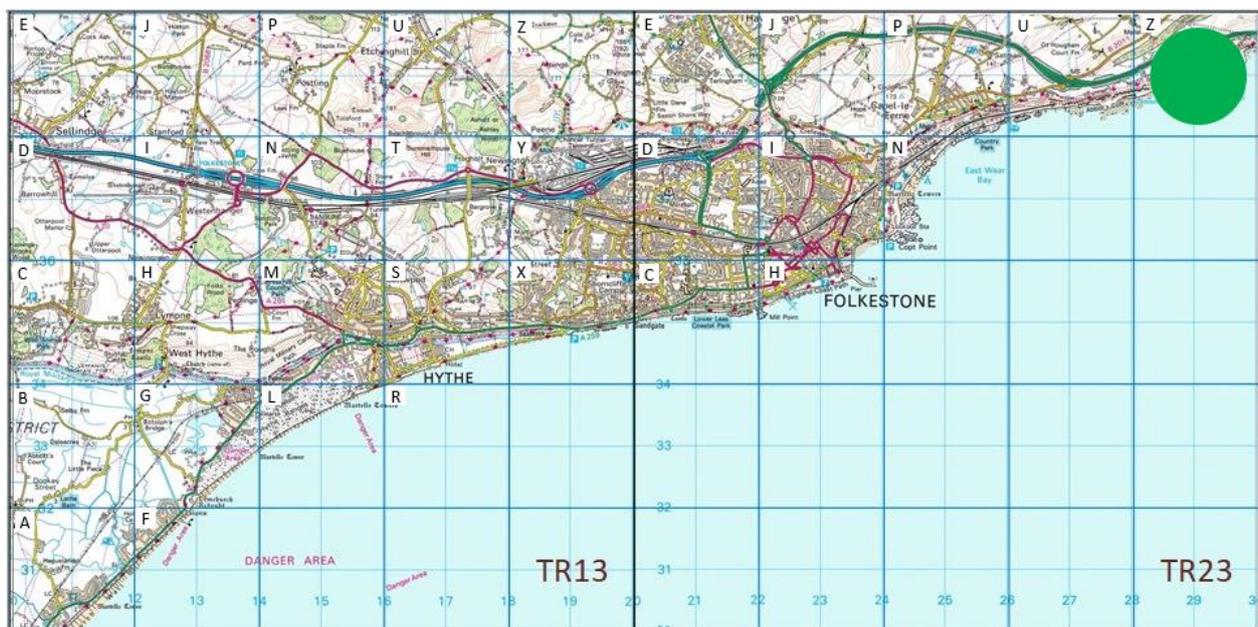


Figure 3: Distribution of all Short-toed Treecreeper records at Folkestone and Hythe by tetrad

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*)

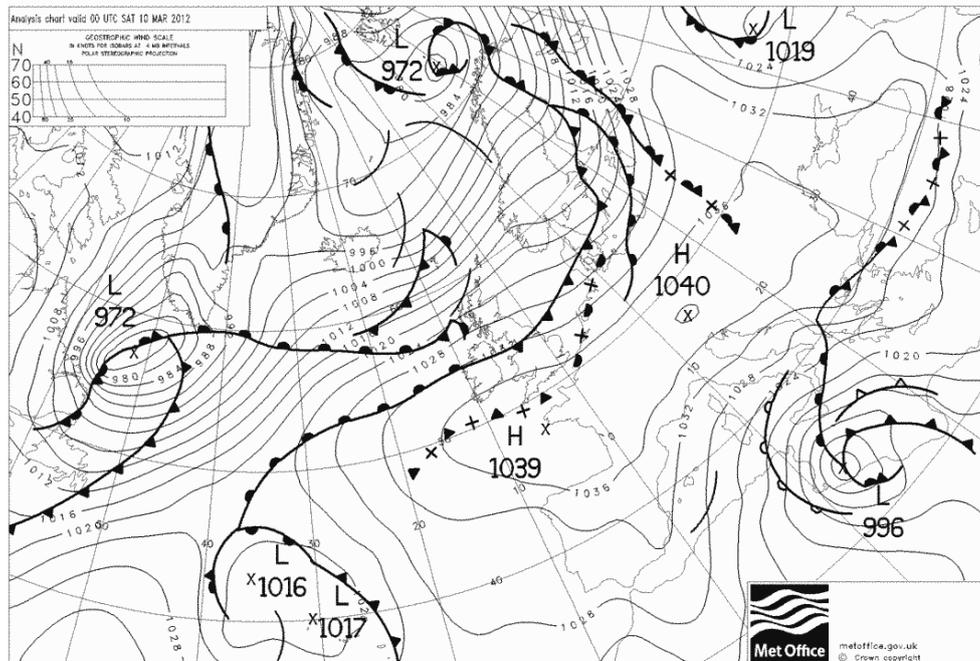
An account of the first area record is given below.

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

(Paul Holt, Tony Prentice *et al*)

### 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 Paul Holt 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

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

Hudson, N. & the Rarities Committee, 2013. Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2012. *British Birds*, 106: 570-641

Kent Bird Reports. Kent Ornithological Society

Rare Bird Alert Previous Records: [www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/RealData/rarityrecords.asp?id=14870](http://www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/RealData/rarityrecords.asp?id=14870) (accessed 2021)

Snow, D. & Perrins, C.M., 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Oxford University Press.

## Acknowledgements

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



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Simon Knight)



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Martin Collins)

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