

Short-toed Treecreeper

Certhia brachydactyla

Category A

Very rare vagrant

1 record

Widespread resident throughout western Europe, from southern Spain north to Denmark and east to Poland, Ukraine and Greece.

There had been 26 records in Britain to the end of 2011, 20 (77%) of which were in Kent, with others in Dorset (2), Essex (2), 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 2011, with the majority (60%) at Dungeness, but with the most recent of these in nearby Dover in February 2010.



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Simon Knight)

Short-toed Treecreepers have been found in the county in all months of the year, with the exceptions of June and December, and with 35% of records occurring in spring (March to May).

The only area record is as follows:

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

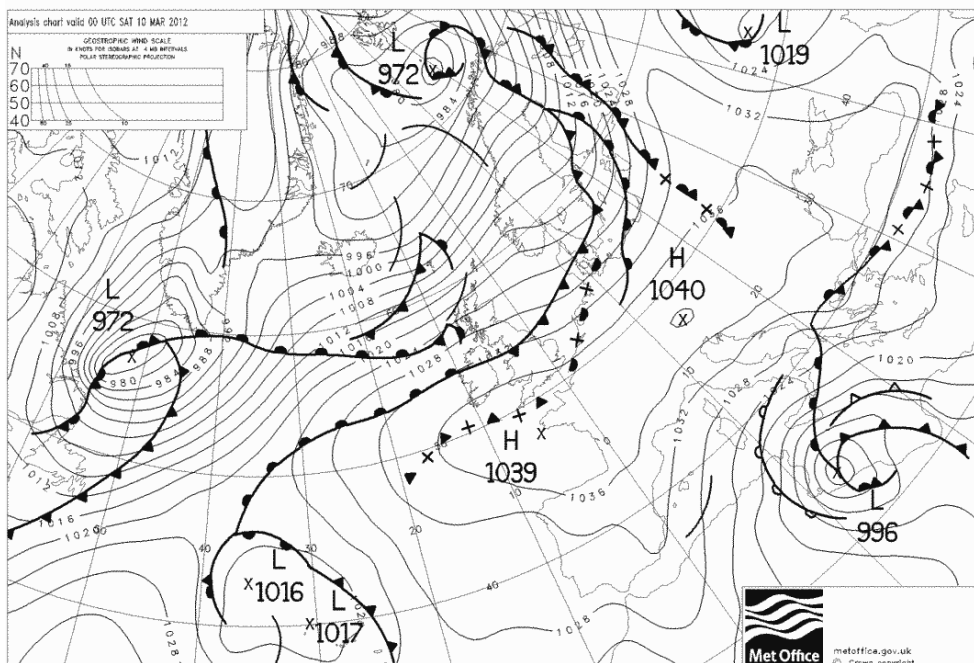
An account of the first area record is given below:

Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe 10th March 2012

(Paul Holt, Tony Prentice *et al*)

Weather conditions:

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



Circumstances of the find:

In the late morning of 10th 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 and appears in their annual report for 2012 (British Birds: 106, p. 618).



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Simon Knight)



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Simon Knight)



Short-toed Treecreeper at Samphire Hoe (Tony Morris)