

# A song analysis of the insular Cyprus Short-toed Treecreeper, *Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae*, supports its subspecies status

(Aves: Passeriformes)

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**Abstract.** We studied the song of the insular Cyprus Short-toed Treecreeper, *Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae* Hartert, 1904, and compared it with the songs of mainland populations. The song of *dorotheae* differs from the Central European and south-west European subspecies *brachydactyla* Brehm, 1820 and *megarhynchos* Brehm, 1831 most obviously in the number of elements and elements per second, with the effect that the song of *dorotheae* appears to have a slower rhythm. Furthermore, the starting frequency and ending frequency of their songs are lower. Our findings provide additional support for the subspecific status of the island population of the Short-toed Treecreeper, *Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae*, on Cyprus.

**Key words.** Short-toed Treecreeper, *Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae*, Cyprus, subspecies status

## Introduction

Cyprus is a centre of endemism in the Mediterranean region. The bird fauna includes two endemic species and seven subspecies (FLINT & STEWART 1992), as a result of which the island is classified as an Endemic Bird Area (EBA). One of these endemic subspecies is the Cyprus Short-toed Treecreeper, *Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae* Hartert, 1904. The range of this subspecies is confined to Cyprus. It breeds in forests from an altitude of 450 m upwards, but mainly above 900 m (FLINT & STEWART 1992). Recently, some records have been made at lower altitudes, e.g. at 250 m in the Paphos Forest (WHALEY & DAWES 2003). The Cyprus Short-toed Treecreeper inhabits mainly pine coniferous woodland (*Pinus brutia*, *P. halepensis*).

Six subspecies of *Certhia brachydactyla* are currently recognised (TIETZE 2007): *C. b. mauritanica* Witherby, 1905, in north-west Africa; *C. b. megarhynchos* Brehm, 1831, from Portugal and western Spain, across western and northern France to west Germany; *C. b. brachydactyla* Brehm, 1820, in eastern Spain, Italy, Sicily, to Central and south-eastern Europe and north-west Turkey; *C. b. stresemanni* Kummerlöwe & Niethammer, 1934, in Anatolia; *C. b. rossocaucasica* Stepanyan, 2000, in the southwestern Caucasus; and, finally, *C. b. dorotheae* on Cyprus. Although most of the treecreeper species and subspecies of the Holarctic have been thoroughly investigated by the working group of J. MARTENS (MARTENS 1982, MARTENS et al. 2002, TIETZE et al. 2006), *dorotheae* has so far not been studied. We compared the vocalisation of this subspecies with the one of the subspecies *brachydactyla/megarhynchos* to determine whether the song of this island population is different from mainland populations. In Europe, from northern Germany to southern Spain (subspecies *brachydactyla* and *megarhynchos*), the song of the Short-toed Treecreeper is rather uniform (THIELCKE 1972).