

## Llanelli Naturalists Newsletter - December 1984

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### Orthoptera (Grasshoppers, Bush-crickets and Crickets), in Carmarthenshire

Very little work has been done on the Orthoptera in Carmarthenshire and there are only very occasional references to the Order in the natural history literature of Wales. It was for that reason and the fact that shortly an 'Atlas of British Orthoptera' will be published that the identification and distribution of this group was examined in detail during 1984. The last year for recording for the National Atlas has been extended from 1984 to 1985 thereby allowing an extra season to examine those areas uncovered in 1984 and to build upon the data already collected.

### A Systematic List

The 10 km squares where recorded are given as are the number, in brackets, of 1 km sq's.

1. *Tettigonia viridissima* (Great Green Bush-cricket) - recorded only once by myself at Burry Port during the hot summer of 1976, it is also shown by Ragge as occurring in Carmarthenshire. This is the largest British bush-cricket and it has a more or less continuous nocturnal song in late summer. It occurs on Gower (including Whiteford which is opposite Berry Port) and Pembrokeshire. Well worth looking for. SN40 (1).
2. *Pholidoptera griseoptera* (Dark Bush-cricket) - common between Llanelli and Ferryside, and also on the cliffs near Llansteffan, Many hundreds to be heard (a penetrating repeated 'chirp') on Tywyn and Pembrey Burrows and the Lower Gwendraeth flood-plain hedgerows, Common also Burry Port – Pwll - Stradey - over 60 were heard one night between the latter locality and Furnace! Surprisingly, apparently not occurring in the Machynys - Llwynhendy area. An attractive (dark brown with yellow underside) cricket even found in gardens (in Stradey), each male occupies a distinct area - one male occupied an *Euphorbia characias wulfonii* bush, singing every night from at least mid-August to mid-September! Important to ascertain (in 1985) whether this species occurs in the Llangennech area, the Gwendraeth Fach and to confirm its presence in the South-west of the county. SN30, SN31, SN40, SN50 (46).
3. *Metrioptera brahyptera* (Bog Bush-cricket) - seems to be restricted to the large, fine bog at Cora Llanllwch Nature Reserve to the West of Carmarthen, it was searched for, but not found elsewhere. Quite a confiding species and relatively easy to catch. Bright apple-green undersides, SN51 (1).
4. *Conocephalus dorsalis* (Short-winged Conehead) - found in *Juncus* dominated pasture and marshes near the coast, also *Spartina* and *Scirpus maritimus* zones of the upper saltmarsh, called a conehead because of its head shape when viewed side on. All green with a dark stripe down the back. When approached it hides behind the opposite side of the plant stem and has an extremely high-pitched song that is almost painful to listen to at close range, and which is difficult to hear when the wind is blowing. A few all brown specimens were seen amongst the high tide mark vegetation near St. Ishmaels holiday camp. Abundant at our Ffrwd reserve. SS49, SS59; SN30, SN31, SN40, SN50 (14).

5. *Leptophyes punctatissima* (Speckled Bush-cricket) - only sometimes seen, this

fat, engaging bush-cricket occupies bushes and thick vegetation. Probably quite widespread at least on the coast. Occurs at the Ffrwd Fen, Pembrey Forest and Stradey. It is all green, marked with minute brown specks. SN30, SN40 (3).

6. *Tetrix ceperoi*, 7. *Tetrix subulata* 8. *Tetrix undulata* (Groundhoppers) - Early in the season (late April onwards) is the best time to see these. All three species were recorded in 1984, the *Tetrix ceperoi* found at Tywyn Point and Laugharne Burrows being the most northerly British populations of that species (see Llanelli Naturalists Newsletter June 1984 for further details).

9. *Omocestus rufipes* (Woodland Grasshopper) - An old pre-1960 record exists for SN40 (presumably Pembrey Forest) but none were found in spite of many searches in 1984; the possibility exists that it was recorded here in error for this is its only Welsh site; on the other hand if it is re-found this would constitute an important find indeed. SN40 (1).

10. *Omocestus viridulus* (Common Green Grasshopper) - a common grasshopper, often in heathland or moorland - type habitat, indeed on the higher ground it is the only species present. SS59, SN10, SN30, SN33, SN40, SN42, SN43, SN50, SN51, SN52, SN60, SN61, SN63, SN64, SN71, SN74, SN82, SN83. (32).

11. *Myrmeleotettix maculatus* (Mottled Grasshopper) - a small, variably coloured attractive species with clubbed antennae that occurs on very dry grassland and mature dunes e.g. Tywyn Burrows. Also inland on dry limestone soils and dry slopes at Cwm Twrch. SS49, SS59; SN10, SN20, SN30, SN31, SN40, SN61, SN71 (15).

12. *Chorthippus brunneus* (Common Field Grasshopper) - this species also prefers dryish habitats e.g. sunny bank, roadsides, churchyards, etc. It is extremely variable in colour - from all sandy, with a reddish 'tail', or even mauve. Always though with a hairy base to the thorax ("chest") and other distinctive features. A good flier when escaping; very common. SS49, SS59; SN10, SN20, SN30, SN31, SN40, SN41, SN42, SN43, SN50, SN51, SN52, SN60, SN61, SN62, SN71, SN72, SN73. (59).

13. *Chorthippus parallelus* (Meadow Grasshopper) - often in dampish habitat, green in colour with minute hind-wings and often reduced fore-wings - therefore unable to fly. Very common. SS49, SS59; SN20, SN30, SN31, SN40, SN41, SN42, SN43, SN50, SN51, SN52, SN60, SN62, SN63, SN71, SN73, SN82. (57).

14. *Acheta domesticus* (House Cricket) - a true cricket with a fantastic trilling song. Recorded from Cydweli (e.g. the West end of the old town), Llangadog Creamery and an old record from New Zealand St., Llanelli. Probably at the recent rubbish dump at Llanllwch (West of Carmarthen) - where a song of a cricket heard this summer can only fit this species. SN40, SN50, SN62. (3).

Other species that could possibly occur in Carmarthenshire (as casual introductions - in the urban areas) would be the American and Australian Cockroaches *Periplaneta americana* and *Periplaneta australasiae*; both have been recorded in adjacent Glamorgan. The Tawny Cockroach (*Ectobius pallidus*) again recorded in Glamorgan - should be searched for in suitable, warm, sunny woodland and the Lesser Cockroach (*Ectobius panzeri*) has already been recorded in Carmarthenshire (Ragge 1967) ; the sand dunes of Pembrey, Tywyn and Laugharne Burrows would all provide likely habitats. The Grey Bush Cricket

*Platycleis denticulata*) seen by the author on the limestone cliffs of Oxwich Point in August 1984 could possibly occur on cliffs such as those at St. Ishmaels, Llansteffan or Amroth; this species likes warm south-facing maritime cliffs, and it was re-found in Pembrokeshire in 1984, (J. Comont) making it a likely contender for our cliff edged West coast. The Oak Bush Cricket (*Meconema thalassinum*) must surely occur

in many places but because of its nocturnal habits and lack of audible song it is rarely recorded; indeed I have no records for Carmarthenshire. A rare species that might occur on our fine estuaries (e.g. Tywi or Gwendraeth), is Roesel's Bush Cricket (*Metrioptera roeselii*); its stronghold are saltmarshes/grassland in South-east England but it has been seen at the Dyfi in mid-Wales, making it worth searching for.

There is but one record of a locust in the county, that recorded by R. Browne on Pembrey Burrows on 1/9/1859; Barker in his 'Handbook to the Natural History of Carmarthenshire' states that it was "probably *Pachytylus migratorius*" Ragge, one of the foremost experts on the Orthoptera, states that two species rarely reach Britain, the Migratory Locust (*Locusta migratoria*) - presumably the selfsame species suggested by Barker, but with the scientific name changed, which originates from the vicinity of the Danube Delta and mostly occurs on the East coast of Britain, and the Desert Locust, (*Schistocerca gregaria*) which reaches "especially South-west England and Southern Ireland, in late summer and autumn" (Ragge). The circumstantial evidence - therefore, points to the Desert Locust and not the Migratory Locust as Barker suggests; but in the absence of a specimen one cannot be sure (Barker did not actually see the specimen either), - perhaps the specimen exists in a museum collection somewhere?

Now exceedingly rare, the Mole Cricket (*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*), is limited to a handful of sites in Britain, with the most northerly record being of a singleton near Sheffield (Haes 1983). Yet an article in 'The Field' of 15 April 1905 mentions that it "occupied marshes near Kidwelly in the year 1905 or thereabouts" (Davies 1970). Its song is said to resemble that of the Nightjar and this gave rise to one of its local names "Eve churr" but stridulating males are now said to be extremely rare (Haes). As the name suggests it is well capable of burrowing. Obviously is worth looking for this race insect in the Lower Gwendraeth floodplain, specimens are said to be most easily located under turves and mounds of soil heaped up from recent ditch clearances (Ragge).

I K. Morgan, 20th September 1984.

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## References

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Ragge, D.P. (1965), Grasshoppers, Crickets and Cockroaches of the British Isles, Warne,  
Ragge, D.R. (1973), The British Orthoptera: a Supplement.  
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### March 1985 Newsletter:

Ian Tew reports the presence of the Lesser Marsh Grasshopper (*Chorthippus albomarginatus*) in 1984 amongst high-tide mark rushes etc between Llanrhidian and Landimore in North Gower (SS214693 to SS214992); recently another observer's records of this species at the same localities reached me also. We should endeavour to find this species at, for example, on the Machynys coast and the Gwendraeth Estuary, here in Carmarthenshire. Mr. Tew also reports the cockroach *Ectobius pallidus* at LLangennith (Gower, SS214291) and *Platypleis denticulata* on the South Gower cliffs this season. We look forward to more records from both observers!