

ORTHOPTERA RECORDING SCHEME

Newsletter No 11 - Summer 1985

Closing date for Atlas records

see later issues

Records intended for the Orthoptera Atlas should reach me not later than 31st October 1985. I propose to produce one further, 'end of survey' newsletter soon after this date. I regret that it is not now possible to take on new recorders for the national 10 km² survey, but a number of regional and local recorders or recording centres will welcome help with Orthoptera and the related insect orders. Anyone wishing to assist should contact the nearest address in the following list (DO NOT FORGET TO ENCLOSE S.A.E. FOR REPLY):

Regional recorders for Orthoptera and related orders

These are known to me, but there could well be others, so please contact the appropriate County Trust or similar organisation to check, if none of the following are close enough.

England

Cornwall - Mrs S M Turk, Shangri-la, Reskadinnick, Camborne, Cornwall TR14 OBH.

Dorset - Myra Scott, Keeper of Records, Dorset Environmental Records Centre, c/o Dorset County Museum, High Street West, Dorchester.

Hampshire & I.O.W. - The Hampshire & I.O.W. Naturalist's Trust, 8 Market Place, Romsey, Hants SO5 8NB.

Gloucestershire - Mr D J R Haigh, Merrivale, 27 St Luke's Road, Cheltenham, Glos GL53 7JF.

Wiltshire - Mr C Bindon, 41 Long Street, Devizes, Wilts SN10 1NS.

Mid-Thames district - Mr M Albertini, Middle Thames N.H.S., 72 Dropmore Road, Burnham, Bucks SL1 8AR.

Southend district (Essex S. of Chelmsford) - Mr R G Payne, Asst. Curator Natural History, Southend-on-Sea B.C., Central Museum, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6EX.

Essex - Mr A J Wake, 27 Wesley Avenue, Colchester, Essex CO4 3AT.

Suffolk - The Suffolk Biological Records Centre, The Museum, High Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 3QH.

Warwick - Mrs P Copson, Warwick Museum, Market Place, Warwick CV34 4SA.

Sheffield district - The Sorby Natural History Soc., c/o Mr D Whiteley, City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield S010 2TP.

Shropshire - Dr J D Box, Scientific Working Party, The Shropshire Trust for Nature Conservation, Agriculture House, Barker Street, Shrewsbury SY1 1QP.

Wales

S. Wales (S. of the River Dyfi) - Mr I K Morgan, 107 Denham Avenue, Llanelli, Dyfed SA15 4DD.

N. Wales (N. of River Dyfi) - Mrs M J Morgan, Dept of Applied Zoology, University College of N. Wales, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2UW.

Scotland

Islay - Mrs Jane Dawson, Islay N.H. Trust, Rodney Dawson Memorial Wildfowl Collection, Ellister Riding Centre, Easter Ellister, Port Charlotte, Islay, Argyll.

Perth - Mr M A Taylor, Keeper of Nat. Sciences, Perth & Kinross D.C., Museum & Art Gallery, George Street, Perth PH1 5LB.

Caithness - Mr I G Smith, Special Programmes Manager, B.R.C. Caithness, Bruce Building, Sinclair Terrace, Wick, Caithness KW1 5AB.

Abroad

Belgium - Anyone able to help please contact Mr H H Devriese, De Ridderlaan 128, B1810 Wommel, Belgium. This newly-launched survey should be particularly useful, as it will conveniently complement the ongoing survey of Orthoptera in France.

New surveys

In addition to the Warwickshire survey and Orthoptera Atlas, mentioned in Newsletter 10, I have now received provisional Orthoptera maps for Essex, prepared by A J Wake, printed by the Curwen Press. The maps were designed by K J Adams and show simultaneously 1 km, 2 x 2 km squares and 10 km which makes cross-referencing quick and easy. This Atlas is supported by an earlier survey and account covering S.E. Essex, completed in 1981 by R G Payne, 'The Grasshoppers and Crickets of Essex'.

Another comprehensive Orthoptera mapping scheme is being carried out by I K Morgan, covering the Watsonian vice-county of Carmarthenshire on a 1 km² basis.

New records

1. Dark Bush-cricket, Pholidoptera griseoptera (De G.) - A small colony in southern Ireland has now been monitored by its discoverers, Dr J P and M A O'Connor for the last two summers. It appears to be a completely natural colony with no indication that it was a recent introduction. Hopefully this familiar British insect may now be found elsewhere in the Republic. O'Connor's paper covering his discovery has been accepted for publication by the Entomologist's Gazette.
2. Cepero's Ground-hopper, Tetrix ceperoi (Bolivar) in E. Kent - I am grateful to W R Dolling and E Philp for confirming the presence of this species in the Sheppey and Canterbury areas in the post-1960 period.
3. Lesser Marsh Grasshopper, Chorthippus albomarginatus (De G.) in Warwickshire - During the course of the Warwickshire survey, J Paul and others have clearly demonstrated that the lesser marsh grasshopper is present and widespread not only in water meadows but also on dry grassy hillsides in a number of sites. Clearly this grasshopper has hitherto been overlooked in inland habitats, and its status in Britain may now need to be reconsidered. For one thing it does seem that within its range, the lesser marsh is able to exploit various inland habitats in places where the meadow grasshopper, C. parallelus Zett. is local or rare, as in the vicinity of The Wash or in the Midlands.
4. The very local earwig Apterygida albipennis (Charp.) was collected at 62/4280 by B H Cogan in 1981 and identified by Mrs J A Marshall at the BM. This is a new locality for the earwig in Britain.

Deletions

1. Stripe-winged Grasshopper, Stenobothrus lineatus (Panzer) in Herefordshire. G B Collins has provided convincing evidence that the record of this species from the 10 km 32(SO)74 is erroneous and should be deleted. The BM specimen upon which the record was based is in fact the macropterous form of Meadow Grasshopper C. p. form explicatus (Sélys) - originally labelled incorrectly, although this has now been rectified.
2. Woodland Grasshopper, Omocestus rufipes (Zett.). In discussion with I K Morgan I feel that the sole record for S. Wales in 22(SN)40 is probably based on a misidentification of male Common Field Grasshopper C. brunneus (Thun.) and until the Woodland Grasshopper is confirmed the record should be considered doubtful and provisionally be deleted.

Profile

3. Long-winged Cone-head, Conocephalus discolor (Thunb.)

It is nice to be able to mention an insect that has had to be withdrawn from the list selected for inclusion in the forthcoming Red Data Book of British insects! This elegant little bush-cricket has had a rather strange history here. It was first found by K G Blair in the Isle of Wight in 1931, but he assumed it was the rare macropterous form of the short-winged cone-head and did not appreciate the importance of his find until 1936 - when he published the discovery. No further records of the species were published until the 1940s, by which time it had been found in Sussex by I G Menzies and in several places along the Dorset coast by B C Pickard, D R Ragge and others, and was also re-found (in a new place) in the Isle of Wight by A E Gardner. During the 1950s and 1960s the species appeared to have a settled history in Britain, as a very local insect with widely scattered colonies along the South Coast, from near Eastbourne in Sussex, westwards to Chapman's Pool in Dorset. Green and occasionally brown specimens had been noted from most of the dozen or so known coastal or chalk downland sites.

Then, throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s - slowly at first but with impressive rapidity later - its status as a British insect changed. The first change was the appearance of an extra macropterous form in Sussex and Dorset. This form has persisted in both the green and the rarer brown colour varieties. The first major change in its distribution was its discovery in a new habitat - by a woodland stream in Botley Wood near Southampton by D Appleton, in 1970. It has persisted here since. In 1977 Mrs A Bolton found the bush-cricket near East Boldre in the New Forest. At the same time E C M Haes and D G Rands both failed, on separate visits, to re-find it in its original Isle of Wight sites but found it (independently) in the extreme east of the island in the St Helen's area. Next followed further discoveries - on Portsea Island 1977 by D Janssen, and in two new places in the New Forest by R S Cropper in 1981 and separately by M Davies and R Williams in 1982.

In the summer of 1983, Mr and Mrs A Welstead started a comprehensive survey of New Forest Orthoptera, and by September had located the long-winged cone-head in over 40 sites - some even on quaking bogs - a completely new type of habitat in Britain, if not elsewhere. Moreover, many more long-winged specimens were found. Almost simultaneously J White and R McGibbon recorded the species as widespread on heathland and grassy verges inland in Dorset. In the second hot summer (1984) it also became apparent that the cone-head had suddenly extended its range on the coastal plain of West Sussex, as well as appearing in new sites on the South Downs.

The species is now widespread and locally common over a wide area of the extreme south of England, between Eastbourne and Weymouth in Dorset. The ecology of this insect in Britain would seem to justify detailed study.

A note on macropterous specimens

During the warm summers of 1983 and 1984, the Long-winged Cone-head produced relatively large numbers of extra macropterous specimens (30% of the adults in Arundel Park in Sussex in 1984!). The fully winged form of the Meadow Grasshopper was also comparatively numerous - at least in West Sussex if not elsewhere in 1983, and even more so in 1984. However, the most impressive exhibition of this condition was the long-winged form of Roesel's Bush-cricket, Metrioptera roeselii f. diluta (Charp.). Many examples were found in the London area by B Townsend and particularly by M J Skelton in his survey of the species in the GLC area. R Hawkins also found examples in Surrey.

Localities

5. East Dorset

Within the 10 kilometre radii around Wareham and Swanage in Dorset occur the cream of British Orthoptera. Included in this area may be found a total of 21 species of Orthoptera, three native earwigs and all three native ground-hoppers and cockroach. The current list of species on the heathlands, water meadows and limestone hills includes Long- and Short-winged Cone-heads, Wart-biter, Speckled, Dark, Grey, Oak and Bog Bush-crickets and a conspicuous abundance of Great Green Bush-crickets. Grasshoppers include all but the Lesser-Mottled and Rufous Grasshoppers, while the Large Marsh and Heath Grasshoppers are probably more numerous here than anywhere else in Britain. All three ground-hoppers and cockroaches are present, as well as both native species of Forficula and the tiny Labia minor.

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