

ORTHOPTERA RECORDING SCHEME

Newsletter No 15 - Spring 1990

Newsletter editor: E C M Haes

1 NEWS FROM THE BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE

Brian Eversham

Final year before the 'Atlas'

After two postponements, the end of the present phase of recording is now in sight. The coming field season is the last before production of a 'definitive' Atlas, and all records to be included in the Atlas must reach Chris Haes by 31 December 1990.

The long, hot summer of 1989 produced lots of exciting records, extending the known range of several species, and filling crucial gaps for even the most common. Equally useful, the warm weather seems to have brought many earlier records out of hiding. Please try to ensure that all your records, not just this year's, are sent in soon. The Atlas will be a baseline reference for many years to come, so let's make it as complete as possible!

A special note about Earwigs

The Common Earwig Forficula auricularia is probably our most under-recorded Orthopteroid. (See map 1). It is also the easiest to find in almost all areas at any time of year. Hogweed stems and leaf-sheaths, pieces of corrugated cardboard, or cracks in fence-posts can usually be relied on to contain earwigs, or their remains. So, whenever you are walking or driving in the area you've not recorded from, don't forget the earwigs! (Even motorway services or railway stations provide suitable habitats).

The scarcer earwigs are far more elusive: see Marshall & Haes (1988) for habitat details.

2 UPDATES FOR ISLANDS AND VICE-COUNTIES (MARSHALL & HAES, 1988)

(a) Additional off-shore islands, species lists:

St Michael's Mount (V.C.1). Leptophyes punctatissima; Chorthippus brunneus, both post-1960.

Cardigan Island (V.C.46): Chorthippus brunneus; Forficularia auricularia, both post-1960 (Reference i).

(b) Additions to off-shore islands' species lists:

Scilly Islands: Add Labia minor, pre-1961 (Ref ii)

Steep Holm: Add Chorthippus brunneus, post-1960.

Herm: Add Chorthippus brunneus, post-1960.

(c) **Additional Vice-County Records:**

The following are all post-1960 records except where stated.

Meconema thalassinum: V.C.69, Westmorland.

Conocephalus dorsalis: V.C.24, Bucks; V.C.33, E. Glos.; V.C. H3, W Cork.

Acheta domesticus: V.C.2, E. Cornwall; V.C.7, N Wilts; V.C.56, Notts

Tetrix subulata: V.C.20, Herts.

Stethophyma grossum: V.C. H15, S-E Galway.

Omocestus rufipes: V.C.25, E Suffolk; V.C.26, W Suffolk; V.C.29 Cambs.,
All pre-1961 (Ref iii)

Omocestus viridulus: V.C.86, Stirling.

Chorthippus parallelus: V.C.91, Kincardine; V.C.109, Caithness

Chorthippus albomarginatus: V.C.20, Herts; V.C.32, Northants; V.C. H2,
N Kerry.

Blatta orientalis: V.C. 77, Lanark (Glasgow)

Blatella germanica: V.C.2, E. Cornwall; V.C.21, Middlesex.

Ectobius lapponicus: V.C.1, W Cornwall, pre-1961 (Ref ii).

Ectobius pallidus: V.C.22, Berks.

Labia minor: V.C.4, N Devon.

Forficula auricularia: V.C.77, Lanark; V.C. H2, N Kerry.

3 NEW ORTHOPTERA SURVEYS:

V.C.20, Herts, by John Widgery.

V.Cs 69 & 70, Westmorland & Cumberland, by Roy Atkins & Stephen Hewitt.

I will be pleased to put anyone able to help, in touch with the recorders. In addition I would very much like to know if any readers are actively recording Orthoptera in V.Cs 7 & 8 Wiltshire and V.C.12, N Hants, as there seem to be no positive surveys being undertaken in these 'strategically' important counties. I am especially keen to know if Conocephalus discolor has yet spread north across these Vice-Counties and if so, to what extent?

Corrib Conservation Centre (Irish Grid Ref: 12/16-42-)

Dr Tony Whilde has sent me details of a strategically placed study centre, of which he is Director. This should prove a very good base for Orthoptera and other natural history surveys in a district noted for its exceptionally interesting natural history. Details may be obtained from:

Dr Tony Whilde, Corrib Conservation Centre
Ardnasillagh
Oughterard, Co Galway (Tel. 091-82519)
Irish Republic

The centre is currently engaged in making an inventory of the Flora and Fauna of the region as well as its educational programmes.

4 NEW LITERATURE:

- (a) Cornish Biological Records 12 (1989) 'Grasshoppers and Related Insects', available from Cornish Biological Records Unit, Trevithick Building, Trevenon Road, Pool, Redruth, TR15 3PL, Cornwall (£5 + £1 Postage). (This 60 pp. booklet is based on 10x10 km squares. Records for the County to December 1989, and also includes the results of a detailed survey of the New Zealand Phasmid, Acanthoxyla geisovii in St Mawes in 1985, by Eve Bysouth).
- (b) Grasshoppers, Naturalists' Handbook 2, by Valerie K Brown is shortly to be reissued by the Richmond Pub. Co. Ltd., PO Box 963, Slough, SL2 3RS.

5 A VISIT TO IRELAND

Brian Eversham

In August, I was lucky enough to spend a fortnight trying to fill some of the gaps in Orthopteroid coverage in Ireland, with a grant from the Royal Irish Academy. Accompanied by Stuart Green (now in Cambridge) and Henry Arnold (BRC's vertebrate expert), we looked at 164 sites, covering 1400 miles in 12 days. The highlight was the addition of Short-winged Conehead Conocephalus dorsalis to the Irish list, from a saltmarsh beside a small estuary in Co. Cork (Irish grid square 10/33), where it was locally abundant.

Searching dozens of grassland sites in the Shannon basin was fairly unproductive, but on reaching the coast of Co Clare, we found Lesser Marsh Grasshopper, Chorthippus albomarginatus. We rediscovered it at two out of three of its old sites, plus four new sites, surprisingly, all sand dunes.

Inland, in Co. Galway, we found Stethophyma on a large roadside bog, this record helping to link the recent records in Co. Offaly (see Newsletter 14) with the classic south-western sites.

We recorded the commoner species throughout our journey, even if it was only a 10-minute stop in a lay-by with a south-facing slope for Chorthippus brunneus. By the end of the trip, we had found C. brunneus at 65 sites, the second highest total after F. auricularia with 84.

Apart from the Orthoptera, other insects, plants and wonderful scenery, the outstanding memory of the trip is of Irish hospitality - farmers even hold their gates open as you drive into their fields!

With excellent B&B at IR£10 (=£8 sterling) per night, a holiday in Ireland can be quite cheap: why not make your mark in the Orthoptera Atlas - visit Ireland in 1990.

6 FRENCH ORTHOPTERA SURVEY

I have received a provisional account of the survey to December 1989. From the maps included as examples, there are very few records covering the North Coast and hinterland - just the areas that could be most conveniently covered by visiting Orthopterists from this country. Especially needed are records for the coast and hinterland between Dunkerque, Calais and Bologne; the 'D-Day' coast and inland between Honfleur and St Lo, and the north coast of Brittany between

Paimpol and Brest. Records should be made giving a French grid square, as marked and numbered on 1/200 000 Michelin Map, place name, date and habitat notes. Records can be sent to me for forwarding, or directly to Dr J-F Voisin, c/o Sec de la Faune et de la Flore, Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, 57 Rue Cuvier, 75005 Paris.

For reference I suggest A Field Guide to Grasshoppers and Crickets of Britain and Northern Europe by Heiko Bellmann, English ed. Collins, 1988. This covers most species likely to be found, except for the Grasshoppers Chorthippus binotatus, which looks like a larger C. vagans, with much red on hind legs and abdomen, and Euchorthippus declivus, which suggests a rather streamlined C. albomarginatus. The first may be found on S-facing headlands on the Brittany Coast and the second in warm areas from the Normandy coast southwards. C. biguttulus and C. parallelus will be found to be common throughout these areas. The stridulation of C. biguttulus is very distinctive and easily recognised.

7 NEWS OF INDIVIDUAL SPECIES IN 1989

The hot summer was noteworthy for the early maturity of Orthopterans, with even later maturing species adult by mid July and earlier kinds such as Omocestus viridulus, O rufipes, C brunneus, C parallelus and M maculatus mature in good numbers in the first week of June in the warmest areas.

Meconema thalassinum, Oak Bush-Cricket. Found by Adrian Fowles (as nymphs in May) in several sites along the course of the Afon Teifi (V.C.46), a completely new district in the known range of this species.

Metrioptera brachyptera, Bog Bush-Cricket. Refound in two heathland sites in West Cornwall, V.C.1, most recently (August last) by Brian and Elizabeth Jackson, precariously close to a filled municipal rubbish tip. I continue to receive records of the Bush-Cricket from coastal sand dunes, but none has yet been confirmed. It is very easy to mistake partly green final instar nymphs of Platycleis albopunctata for mature M. brachyptera - even to a whitish margin on the rear of the pronotum. To add to the confusion, at maturity the two species have a very similar sounding stridulation. A helpful field distinction in advanced nymphs is to take female specimens, turn them over and look at the subgenital plate with a x10 lens. In Platycleis there is a relatively wide, canal-like depression running lengthwise across the plate from the base of the ovipositor; in Metrioptera there is no more than a narrow slit.

Conocephalus discolor, Long-winged Conehead. Found by S C Newell on derelict allotments in Hastings 51/81, in September - October. This is a substantial eastwards extension to its known range (apart from a pre 1961 singleton record in V.C.15). Richard Surry has also supplied a number of new Dorset sites, but there are still no records from west of Weymouth. (See map 2).

Conocephalus dorsalis, Short-winged Conehead. Found by Brian Eversham in S.W. Ireland, V.C. H3, see Section 5. There were also new vice-county records by David Haigh at Overponds, 32/81 for V.C.33 and by David Gibbs at Old Rectory Wood, 51/08 for V.C.24; both last August. (See map 3).

Nemobius sylvestris, Wood-Cricket. Found by Simon Grove in Ampfield Wood, 41/32, V.C.11 (August 85); the first record for the Vice-County outside the New Forest. Also found at a new site in Surrey: Ockham Forest, 51/05, by N F Heal and Dr Ian Menzies in July.

Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa, Mole-Cricket. I am grateful to H C Eve for providing circumstantial evidence that this elusive Cricket may have twice been located at Kloof's Campsite, Bexhill, 51/709091, V.C.14. A few years ago an insect was heard making a considerable noise, and subsequently found and squashed (oh woe!) in a tent. Last August a possible specimen was seen swimming in the owner's pool. By Murphy's Law, the camp site is apparently on the route of the proposed Bexhill by-pass.

There is a very good recent account of the Mole-Cricket in Britain by John Burton (Reference iv)

Tetrix subulata, Slender Ground-hopper. Refound at David Ragge's site, Marlborough Deepes, (Ref. iii P.248) in the S W corner of the New Forest, together with a specimen of T. undulata, by John Paul, last May. John Widgery has recently recorded T. subulata in Herts, V.C.20, details awaited.

Stethophyma grossum, Large Marsh Grasshopper. Now recorded from S E Galway (V.C. H15) see section 5. C J Gardiner has pointed out that there is a specimen in the G S Kloet collection at Cambridge, apparently from V.C. 46, so far the only reference to the species in Wales. (See map 4).

Chorthippus parallelus, Meadow Grasshopper. Recorded from three sites in Caithness (V.C.109) by Nigel Cross in 1984. A further site (on Dunnet Head, 39/17) for Myrmeleotettix maculatus was also discovered. The C. parallelus sites were on road and railway verges between Thurso and Wick and were all small colonies.

Chorthippus albomarginatus, Lesser Marsh Grasshopper. Four new known localities in Western Ireland including V.C. H2, see Section 5. John Widgery has recorded localities in Herts, VC 20, which tie up with those in Beds, V.C.30 and Essex V.Cs 15 & 16.

Gomphocerippus rufus Rufous Grasshopper. Found in a new Hampshire site, Ashford Hangers, nr Petersfield, V.C.12, 41/742271 by J Walters in August.

Schistocerca gregaria Desert Locust. A specimen found at Higham, V.C.16 51/7172 by Mr and Mrs H P W Miller in July. There were, however, no further invasions of this locust recorded during the year.

Blattella germanica German Cockroach. Nymph found at restaurant in Liskeard, E Cornwall, in February 1990 by Adrian Spalding.

Ectobius panzeri, Lesser Cockroach. Martin Albertini found a stray in a house at Burnham (V.C.24), last July, which he feels he almost certainly brought in on M.V. Moth Trapping Equipment from one of three sites: Bix Bottom (V.C.23) 41/720879, Finemere Wood (V.C.24)42/718218, or less probably, Burnham Beeches (V.C. 24)41/946845. It is most desirable that a 'parent' colony is found, as it would be an important addition to the known inland sites for this easily overlooked insect.

REFERENCES:

- i Fowles, A.P., Chater, A.O., Boyce, D.C. & Catley, K. M., 1989. 'Cardigan Island (22/160515) and its Invertebrate Fauna - a Dyfed Invertebrate Site Assessment' Dyfed Invertebrate Group Newsletter 15, December 1989, p.6.
- ii Clark, J. 1907. The Orthoptera of Cornwall, Rep. Royal Cornwall Polytech Soc. pp.72-82.

iii Ragge, D.R., 1965. Grasshoppers, Crickets and Cockroaches of the British Isles, Warne, London.

iv Burton, John F, 1989 'Close of Play for Mole-Crickets' The Countryman, Winter 1989/90. pp 79-82.

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