

# ORTHOPTERA RECORDING SCHEME

Newsletter No. 17

December 1990

E C M Haes

Fortunately, the final season of recording for the Atlas was a good year for grasshoppers and related insects. Even a cool, wet June proved no great disadvantage, in that it prevented both vegetation and marshlands from drying up as completely as was the case in 1989 in some districts.

As in the previous summer, those of us who record these insects made the most of the favourable weather, and there are now about 20% more post-1960 records available than there were in 1987. However, the very substantial recording during the last two seasons not only provided many important additional records, it also revealed some remarkable new features in the British and Irish distributions of a number of local and rare species. I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the Orthoptera Recording Scheme over the last twenty or so years and especially to those who pioneered the scheme through its earliest instars. All contributors will be duly acknowledged by name in the Atlas. I also wish to record particular thanks to Paul Harding and Brian Eversham of Monks Wood, for taking so much time and trouble with the production and despatch of the newsletters.

## COUNTY RECORDING

During the 1970s and 1980s Watsonian V.C.s

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 30, 33, 34, 38, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 57, 59, 60, 66, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76, 85, 87, 88, 89, 96, 97, 102, 107, 108, 109, 110 and 111, have been surveyed, in varying degrees for orthopteroids. Full details will be given in the Atlas and the results of several of these surveys have already been published, or are now in the process of being prepared for publication. In many instances records have been supplied by individuals who have not contributed directly to the National Recording Scheme; their names will, of course, be included in the list of contributors to the Atlas. The most recent addition to counties specifically surveyed for Orthoptera is V.C. 47, Montgomery by Alan Wake, who initiated and remains organizer of the Essex survey - now being continued by Ray Ruffell and others. The Montgomery survey complements that of V.C.s 44, 45 and 46 by the very active and thorough Dyfed Invertebrate Group.

Now that national-scale recording on a 10 km basis for the Atlas is concluded, it is hoped that recording of orthopteroids will continue, but that, in addition to future recording to update the Atlas, much more intensive recording, on a vice-county scale, ideally on a 1 km and site basis will be undertaken, as well as the gathering of more detailed information on species biology and habitats. To back this, a more informative and detailed newsletter, perhaps including Continental data, could be provided, although this may possibly have to be by subscription. Please let me know what you think about the idea.

## NEWS OF INDIVIDUAL SPECIES IN 1990

Early maturity: As far as I can find out there is only one (pers. comm.) previous record of a British grasshopper mature before the end of May, a stridulating fully-winged probable field grasshopper, near Lee-Moor, on the southern edge of Dartmoor (V.C. 3) in 1985. At the time, it seemed an interesting, freak phenomenon, and I thought no more about the matter until this year, when there was quite a spate of records of adult acridians in May. In the third week, Mike Skelton (per David Baldock) noted *Omocestus viridulus* and *C. parallelus*, on the North Downs, near Dorking (V.C. 17), with *Stenobothrus lineatus* in the following week (May 28). During that week there were records from widely separated localities: on May 25 at Hayle Towans (V.C. 1), *C. parallelus*, own record; May 26, *O. viridulus*, New Forest (V.C. 11), John Paul; *O. viridulus*, Alderford Common (V.C. 27), David Richmond; May 27, *O. viridulus*, Cheddar Gorge, and *C. parallelus*, South Cadbury (V.C. 6), Robert Cropper; May 28, *O. viridulus*, *C. brunneus*, *C. parallelus*, Street (V.C. 6), J Paul; *C. parallelus*, Stolford (V.C. 6), R Cropper; *O. viridulus*, *C. parallelus*, Lydden (V.C. 15), own records; May 30, *O. viridulus*, *C. parallelus*, Hothfield Common (V.C. 15), own records and *C. brunneus*, near Baldock (V.C. 20), John Widgery.

Tettigoniids were also noticeably early maturing, with records of *Conocephalus discolor*, *Metrioptera brachyptera* and *Platycleis albopunctata* by the last week of June, and *Tettigonia viridissima* in the first week of July. Any further early records would be very welcome, especially any May records of *Myrmeleotettix maculatus*.

These records are undoubtedly the result of two hot summers with a mild winter between. The "mechanics" of how one orthopteran adapted to an embryonic diapause responds to higher and lower temperatures during the egg stage has been the subject of a recent laboratory investigation, using *C. brunneus* (Cherrill and Begon 1989).

### New 10 km Records:

During the 1970s and 80s it became very clear that the distributions of several localised species was far more extensive than had long been supposed. In most cases, as for example *Stethophyma grossum* in Ireland, (Foss and Speight, 1989) this was almost certainly due to under-recording. The same applies to the over-familiar *Forficula auricularia*, which (see map in Newsletter 15) has been found in nearly every 10 km square in counties such as Somerset, Kent, Essex, Warwick and Durham, in which a particular search has been made, compared with its seemingly sporadic distribution in adjacent counties, where records have so far been from mainly incidental finds. On the other hand, *Conocephalus discolor*, *Metrioptera roeselii* and probably *Chorthippus albomarginatus* (in England), are in the process of remarkably rapid expansions in distribution and most new records seem to be from hitherto unoccupied areas.

### *Pholidoptera griseoptera*, Dark Bush-cricket.

David Richmond, organiser of the Norfolk survey, has provided an explanation for extensive gaps in the distribution of this insect over considerable lowland areas of central-southern and eastern England where there is still visually suitable habitat. He has suggested (pers. comm.) that its absence may be from regions which were farmed on the open-field system until the Parliamentary Enclosures of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. There is evidence to support this from Pam Copson's Warwickshire survey (Copson, 1984) and possibly from Robert Cropper's Somerset survey: any comments welcomed.

*Metrioptera brachyptera*, Bog Bush-cricket.

It seems probable that a number of isolated coastal records have been based on misidentified final instar *Platycleis* nymphs. Unless a reader can supply convincing evidence, I propose to delete the records of this species from 20/25, 21/21, 21/43, 51/70, 51/81 and 61/34 from the Atlas.

*Metrioptera roeselii*, Roesel's Bush-cricket.

Recorded from several completely new localities and an interesting re-find in an urban site close to where it was last seen forty-five years before (Menzies and Airy Shaw, 1947): this last being near Cuddington Avenue, Cheam, July 1989, only about half a mile from the original, now built-up site. Both finds were by Ian Menzies, who must have enjoyed about the longest innings of any of us as a recorder of British Orthoptera. The Recording Scheme owes him a great deal.

Of the new records this year, the discovery of a small colony in a hedge near Princes Risborough (V.C. 24) on 8 August last, by Mathew Oates is especially noteworthy as it comprised three males and two females, all fully-winged form *diluta*. Three further examples recorded by Derek Rands are the first for Bedfordshire (V.C. 30): two by Steve Cham; (near Luton, 52/02 in July and near Harlington, 52/03 in August), with a third (at the end of the month, in /02, near Sharpenhoe) by Graham Bellamy.

*Conocephalus discolor*, Long-winged Cone-head.

The expansion of its known range in southern England during the 1980s was remarkable enough, but the little bush-cricket has exceeded all expectations this summer, by producing at least one apparently established small, mainland colony in both East and West Cornwall, and three, possibly four small colonies in the Scilly Isles. The colonies included both normal and extra-macropterous individuals. Isolated long-winged specimens were also located in five other sites. These included the original find, on 10 August at Devoran (10/73) by the County Odonata recorder, Steven Jones. I am also very grateful to Robert Cropper and David Veevers for their mainland records, and to John Badmin (possible colony, St Agnes) and Mark Lynes (colonies on St Mary and St Martin) for their Scillonian records. I hope to give full details in a separate paper.

During the summer of 1990 the bush-cricket was also found for the first time in N. Hants (V.C. 12) and Surrey (V.C. 17). The Hampshire finds were by Jonty Denton in September, at Woolmer Pond, 41/73, a substantial population, and at Passfield Common, 41/83. In Surrey the insect was found in August, at Bookham Common, 51/15, by Ian Menzies, using a bat detector; and on separate occasions, by David Baldock and Mike Skelton, by the River Wey at Elstead and at Thursley Common, both in 41/94. During August it was also found in new 10 km squares in S. Wilts (V.C. 8) and W. Sussex (V.C. 13). The attached map shows the records for 1990 marked with a special symbol.

*Conocephalus dorsalis*, Short-winged Cone-head.

In the last few years this cone-head has been discovered in several quite new places, particularly in the Thames valley region, including f. *burri* by John Paul, at Broadmoor, 41/86 in October last. It is possible that the nymphs found in pond-side rushes, by J Badmin on St Agnes last August are of this species but confirmation is needed.

*Leptophyes punctatissima*, Speckled Bush-cricket.

Ian Morgan has sent details of the discovery of a new 10 km hedgerow colony in V.C. 44 by N R Mathew while investigating bats with a bat detector near Nantgaredig last August: an article will appear in a forthcoming Dyfed Invertebrate Group Newsletter.

Generally this species does not appear to have been as much affected by the hot summers as most other orthopterans.

*Nemobius sylvestris*, Wood-cricket.

A number of nymphs were found by P J Wisniewski near trees on a Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust property in N. Devon, V.C. 4, 21/61, in April 1989. In Surrey, the colony at The Royal Horticultural Society's Garden at Wisley may have been destroyed by the enlargement of the car park (D Baldock, pers. comm.), so it is as well it has now been found elsewhere in 51/05 (see Newsletter 15).

*Pseudomogoplistes squamiger*, Scaly Cricket.

At least four specimens seen by three observers during September. I am grateful to Peter le Brocq for additional details.

*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*, Mole-cricket.

It is clear that there was a good population by the Worcester Avon, near Pershore, until a water meadow was ploughed in 1985, (Newsletter 16) and I must thank Dr R W Payne for details. With luck, the cricket might yet survive in the district and a search would seem justified.

*Tetrix subulata*, Slender Ground-hopper.

As a result of the Montgomery Survey by Alan Wake, details of a survey of canals there in 1985 have come to light, which include the finding of this ground-hopper in the vicinity of Wern aquaduct, 33/22 and Guilsfield, 33/21; a hitherto unknown area for the species and one which links up with earlier finds by the Dee, 33/34, in 1983.

*Schistocerca gregaria*, Desert Locust.

Records this year of only two, accidentally imported: one from Ethiopia in 1989, to Lostwithiel, V.C. 2 and one to Sheerness docks, V.C. 15, last March.

*Stethophyma grossum*, Large Marsh Grasshopper.

The population introduced to Thursley, 41/93 seems, according to several observers, to have died out about 1984. Fortunately it was seen in Somerset again this summer. In both Somerset and in Ireland it has been noted as occurring on much firmer terrain than in the New Forest and Dorset (J Paul, pers. comm.).

*Stenobothrus stigmaticus*, Lesser Mottled Grasshopper.

Andy Cherrill investigated the population on Langness in August and found it to be in a satisfactory condition (Cherrill, in prep). I have been informed by Larch Garrad that, at the Special Inquiry, the Inspector turned down the proposal for a golf course but that the fate of the site now rests with the Tynwald. The history of this grasshopper in the Isle of Man has been the subject of a recent article, (Burton 1990).

*Omocestus viridulus*, Common Green Grasshopper.

Recorded from three sites in saltmarshes in W. Lancs (V.C. 60), by Jennifer Newton. Although an unusual habitat for this grasshopper, at least one Booth Museum specimen, collected by E Sopp in 1905, was probably from saltmarsh on the Morcambe Bay coast, and was mislabelled *C. elegans*. Many new 10 km records have been added during 1989-90, especially from the Montgomery, Norfolk and W. Lancs surveys. Found on the hitherto unsurveyed island of Coll (V.C. 103) by John Walters in July 1990.

*Chorthippus brunneus*, Field Grasshopper.

During the last week of June and first week of July 1990, Alan Wake carried out a detailed survey of the distribution of this insect on the Scilly Isles and found it in many places on St Marys, St Martins, Tresco, Breyher, St Agnes and Gugh; "very common all over the islands. It even inhabits areas of almost pure *Calluna* stands where very little grassy vegetation exists", A J Wake, pers. comm. No other grasshoppers were noted.

A further locality on the north coast of Scotland has been provided by Northern Highlands Environmental Records Centre (NHERC): Farr Bay, Bettyhill, 29/76.

*Chorthippus parallelus*, Meadow Grasshopper.

The NHERC has provided a new Caithness (V.C. 109) record; Dunnet Forest, 39/26, 39/27, where Neil Redgate found a good sized population both in the rides and on dune pasture, in September. Found by John Walters on Coll (V.C. 103) in July. In W. Lancs Jennifer Newton has indicated this grasshopper is almost restricted to raised bogs, and in E. Norfolk David Richmond has provided good historical reasoning for its absence from the Broads. I hope to include a detailed item on the discontinuous distribution of the meadow grasshopper (see map in Newsletter 14) in the Atlas.

*Chorthippus albomarginatus*, Lesser Marsh Grasshopper.

There is strong evidence that this grasshopper has spread extensively and recently in some southern and eastern counties; notably Bedfordshire, Derek Rands, pers. comm. and Hertford, John Widgery, pers. comm. I hope the matter can be covered in detail in the Atlas.

*Myrmeleotettix maculatus*, Mottled Grasshopper.

Important new finds last summer include Coll by J Walters in July and Farr Bay, V.C. 108, by N Redgate (NHERC) in June, and in new habitat on Benbecula, V.C. 110, where it was located on raised ground, above the peat bogs on the east side of the island by D Richmond in August.

*Ectobius pallidus*, Tawny Cockroach.

I have tended to disregard old records of *Ectobius* spp. from inland localities north of the Thames valley as being of little importance now. However, with two recent records of this species far from any other post-1960 records, I feel the matter needs rethinking. A mature female, now in Norwich Museum, was collected at Wangford Carr, V.C. 26, 52/78, by A P Foster and D Proctor, in August 1988, during a survey of fenland. This is backed by an old record for the vice-county, but completely unexpected was Keith Alexander's discovery of a specimen in the Forest of Dean, V.C. 34, 32/61, last June, during a survey of National Trust land. In an earlier such survey he had located the cockroach at Nare Head on the Cornish coast, V.C. 2, 10/93, in July 1989; this record supporting his record made at Pencarrow Head, 20/15, ten years earlier.

*Ectobius panzeri*, Lesser Cockroach.

Located at two inland sites this summer: Noelle and Tony Welstead have recorded it from Holbury Mill Pond, V.C. 11, 41/40, and Adrian Fowles from Ambersham Common, V.C. 13, 41/91 in July. It may also have been seen on the south side of Cissbury Ring, V.C. 13, 51/10 in June 1988, but a specimen for confirmation was not obtained, so the sighting has to remain doubtful.

*Apterygida media*, Short-winged Earwig.

A most interesting re-discovery was that of the short-winged earwig in Norfolk, V.C. 27, 62/18, by Tony Irwin, the first for over half a century; specimen in Norwich Museum.

*Forficula lesnei*, Lesne's Earwig.

Discovered in a garden on The Gower, V.C. 41, the first Welsh record, in September 1986, by Dick Askew (Askew 1990).

References:

Askew, R.R. 1990. *Forficula lesnei* Finot (Derm., Forficulidae) in South Wales. *Entomologists mon. Mag.* 126: 112.

Burton, J.F. 1990. The Mystery of The Isle of Man's Endangered Grasshopper. *British Wildlife* 21: 37-41.

Cherrill, A.J. and Begon, M. 1989. Timing of life cycles in a seasonal environment: the temperature-dependence of embryogenesis and diapause in a grasshopper (*Chortippus brunneus* Thunberg). *Oecologia* 78: 237-241.

Copson, P. 1984. *Distribution Atlas: Orthopteroids in Warwickshire*. Warwick County Museum.

Foss, P.J. and Speight, M.C.D. 1989. *Stethophyma grossum*: A further Midland record with comment on the status of this grasshopper in Ireland (Orthoptera: Acrididae). *Bull. Ir. biogeog. Soc.* 12: 90-93.

Menzies, I.S. and Airy Shaw, H.K. 1947. *Roeseliana roeselii* Hagenb. (Orth., Tettigoniidae), not *Platycleis occidentalis* Zeuner, in Surrey. *Entomologists mon. Mag.* 83: 151.

**Dorset Environmental Records Centre, New Address:**

Richard Surry, keeper of records

Colliton House Annexe, Glyde Path Road, Dorchester DT1 1XJ

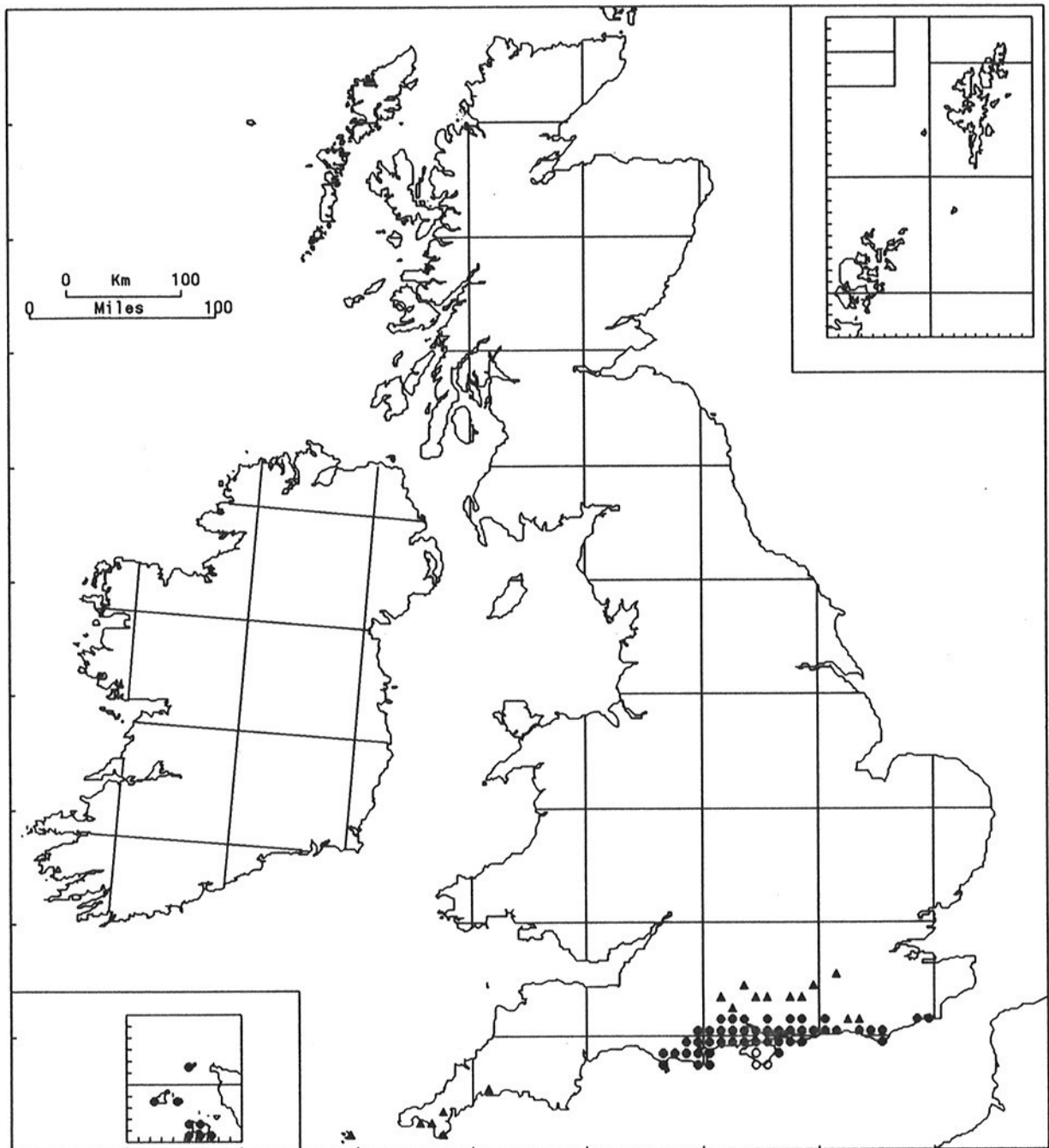
**Re-issue of Marshall and Haes:**

Now available as paperback, ISBN 0-946589-36-4, with some important recent data; plus V.C.s and Off-shore Islands tables updated to mid-August 1990. Price £15.95, plus £2.00 p & p from Harley Books, Gt Horkesley, Colchester, Essex, CO6 4AH. The hardback, ISBN 0 946589 13 5 remains at its original price, £25.00 until the end of Dec, after which it will be £30.00.

**Map: *Conocephalus discolor*.** Records to November 1990.

E C M Haes  
6 Hatch's Hill  
Angarrack  
HAYLE  
Cornwall TR27 5HY

*Conocephalus discolor*



- ▲ 1990 ( GB-17, Ir-0, Ch.Is-0 )
- 1961 - 1989 ( GB-47, Ir-0, Ch.Is-8 )
- pre 1961 ( GB-3, Ir-0, Ch.Is-0 )