

ORTHOPTERA MAPPING SCHEME

Newsletter No. 2

The New Provisional Maps

The maps now published include all records received at the B.R.C. up to October 1977. An addendum of records received too late for inclusion in the maps will be attached to the next newsletter.

Since the original provisional maps were published in 1974, considerable progress has been made with 10 Kilometre square coverage in Northern England and Scotland. Recording in Ireland continues to make slow progress, which is a pity as it may be here that the records are of greatest significance since the species, now widespread in Ireland, are logically the first Orthopterans which became established in post-glacial Britain. The most exciting Irish record since 1961 was the discovery of Roesel's Bush-cricket (Metrioptera roeselii (Hagenbach)) near the Black water estuary (not Cork Harbour as stated in Newsletter no. 1) by Dr. R. Anderson in August 1976. It would seem reasonable to anticipate that the similarly estuarine Short-winged Cone-head (Conocephalus dorsalis (Latreille)) will one day be located in Southern Ireland. It has also been suggested by Dr. D. R. Ragge (1963) and J. A. Marshall (1974) that the lesser mottled Grasshopper (Stenobothrus stigmaticus (Rambur)) might be expected to occur. Very careful scrutiny of any distinctly small but mature specimens of Irish grasshoppers is recommended. The discovery of the species here would be of major entomological importance.

District Surveys

I would like to take this opportunity of asking contributors to the scheme if they would care to submit short accounts of local orthoptera populations from areas they have under observation as I feel this would be of considerable interest. By way of examples, here is part of a letter from W. A. Ely, Keeper of Natural History at Rotherham Borough Council's Brian O'Malley Central Library and Arts Centre, and an item from my own field notes:-

1) The Rotherham District (by W. A. Ely)

The area covered by this Museum is not richly endowed with Orthoptera or Dictyoptera, with our present count being four grasshoppers, one bush cricket, the house cricket and three cockroaches. The Orthoptera are being mapped on 1 Km squares, but so far the records tend to aggregate around Rotherham town itself and the more frequented parts of the countryside. Chorthippus brunneus is by far the most common species, occurring right into the town centre, with C. parallelus being confined to a few localities on the Magnesian Limestone belt. Omocestus viridulus has been found on one heathland site and Myrmeleotettix maculatus at two sites. The Oak Bush Cricket (Meconema thalassinum) has been found in three woods on the Magnesian Limestone this year.

Incidentally there is a most valuable 1 Km. Orthoptera recording scheme organised in South Yorkshire by W. A. Ely and D. Whiteley, Assistant Keeper of Natural History, City of Sheffield Museums Department.

2) Strensall Common, York. (by E. C. M. Haes)

This area is visually similar to many areas of heathland in Southern England and when examined in July 1976, was found to possess a similar orthopterous fauna. I found large numbers of Bog Bush-crickets (Metrioptera brachyptera (L.)) in both colour forms and an abundance of Meadow Grasshoppers (Chorthippus parallelus Zett) in the extensive area of Purple Moor Grass (Molinia caerulea (L.)). There was also a sparse population of Common Green Grasshopper (Omocestus viridulus (L.)) throughout the area, while Mottled Grasshopper (Myrmeleotettix maculatus (Thunberg)) was common on patches of drier heath.

3) Bedfordshire (D.G. Rands)

A comprehensive report with detailed maps of the Orthoptera of Bedfordshire is due for publication this year in the Bedfordshire Naturalist (journal of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society).

Notes on Species

Lesser Marsh Grasshopper (Chorthippus albomarginatus(Degeer)).
Although the general distribution in Britain of this rather unobtrusive insect has been known for a long while, post 1970 observations by D. W. Baldock (S. W. Ireland); A. J. Brown (Dorset and North Devon); R. Hawkins (East Surrey); R. G. Rands (Bedfordshire) and M.J. Skelton (East Anglia) amongst others, clearly indicates that the species has a far more extensive distribution within its known range than was originally appreciated. Indeed in what was Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, and Bedfordshire it is apparently the most common grasshopper in many districts in both dry, sandy as well as marshy localities. It is hoped that contributors will make a special search for this grasshopper during the coming summer in their own areas. One or two species of interest will be selected for mention in each future newsletter to encourage a special search.

E. C. M. Haes
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