

# A SURVEY OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF ORTHOPTERA AND ALLIED INSECTS IN SOUTH AND NORTH SOMERSET

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## INTRODUCTION

The grasshoppers and crickets (Orthoptera) form one of the most interesting groups of insects. In this paper, an attempt has been made to map their distribution in the Watsonian vice-counties of South and North Somerset, (v.c.'s 5 and 6). The information is based on data collected mostly by the author from 1974 to 1991, but should not be considered exhaustive. It is simply a summary of what is, at present, known.

Somerset contains several good habitats for Orthoptera. The Polden Hills contain several important populations of *Gomphocerippus rufus*. On the Somerset Levels, *Conocephalus dorsalis* is widespread, whilst the peat moors contain two long-known colonies of *Metrioptera brachyptera* and many recorded sites for *Stethophyma grossum*, although this striking grasshopper is now sadly rare.

On the coast, Brean Down boasts a large colony of *Platycleis albopunctata*, unknown elsewhere in the county. Further investigation may well reveal the presence of other species, in particular the Long-winged Cone-head, *Conocephalus discolor* Thunberg, which has undergone a population explosion in recent years and has been recorded from several new sites in Southern England. This species may well appear in South Somerset, probably spreading northwards from its sites in Dorset.

The nomenclature followed is that of Marshall and Haes (1988), and all records are the author's, unless otherwise stated.

## ORTHOPTERA

### FAMILY TETTIGONIIDAE (Bush-crickets)

#### *Meconema thalassinum* (De Geer)

Oak Bush-cricket

Widespread and common throughout the county, but with apparent gaps in distribution. It occurs on broad-leaved trees, and despite its name, is not restricted to oak, having also been recorded on ash, elm, beech, sycamore, hazel, hawthorn and horse chestnut. It is common in suitable habitats from Bristol to the Mendips, the Poldens, and the Blackdowns south of Taunton, but rare in the Levels, Exmoor and the area from Wells through Shepton Mallet to Frome, although it may be under-recorded in some of these places.

- SS 84 Porlock Weir, August 1980. (B. C. Eversham).  
 ST 02/12 Langford Heathfield, September 1977.  
 ST 04 Washford, July 1988. (A. Prince).  
 Cleeve Hill, Watchet, September 1991.  
 ST 11 Quantocks, Ringdown Common, Higher Munty, August 1979.  
 ST 13 Crowcombe Heathfield, August 1989 (A. Prince).  
 ST 21 Blagdon Hill, August 1979.  
 ST 23 Broomfield, King's Cliff Wood, August 1979.  
 ST 32 Swell, September 1977, August 1991.  
 ST 33 Cossington, September 1990.  
 ST 34 Burtle, August 1989 (P. Rudkin).  
 ST 34/35 Highbridge-Burnham-on-Sea-Berrow, 1976-91.  
 ST 35 Brent Knoll, September 1977.  
 Uphill, August 1978.  
 Hutton, August 1981.  
 ST 40/41 Crewkerne, August 1979, July 1989 (A.J. Parsons), August 1990 (A.J. Parsons).  
 ST 41 East Chinnock-Montacute, August 1990 (A.J. Parsons).  
 ST 42 Long Sutton, August 1986.  
 ST 43 Walton Hill, near Street, September 1977.  
 Loxley Wood, Shapwick, September 1977.  
 Great Breach Wood, August 1990.  
 Turn Hill, High Ham, August 1982.  
 ST 45 Cheddar Wood, September 1977.  
 King's Wood, Winscombe, September 1977.  
 Rodney Stoke Wood, September 1977.  
 Mendip Lodge Wood, September 1977.  
 Sandford Hill (nymphs), May 1980.  
 Dolebury Warren, September 1985.  
 ST 46 Brockley Combe, October 1977.  
 Goblin Combe, October 1978.  
 ST 47 Weston Big Wood, near Portishead, September 1977.  
 Norton's Wood, Clevedon, September 1977.  
 ST 50 Pen Wood, Hardington Marsh, July 1989 (A.J. Parsons).  
 ST 52 Charlton Mackrell, August 1991.  
 ST 53 Great Breach Wood, 1977-1990.  
 ST 55 Compton Martin Wood, September 1977.  
 Litton Reservoir, September 1979.  
 ST 56 Blagdon Lake, August 1979.  
 ST 57 Leigh Woods, September 1977.  
 ST 63 Bruton, August 1979.  
 ST 66 Lord's Wood, Hunstrete, September 1977.  
 ST 74 Witham Friary, August 1978.  
 Great Elm, August 1991.  
 ST 75 Wellow, September 1977.

*Tettigonia viridissima* (L.)

Great Green Bush-cricket

Local in North Somerset, but often in good numbers where it does occur. Rare in South Somerset, and only known from the area between Fivehead and Curry Rivel, an old railway line at West Hatch, and an isolated locality at West Camel. It is unknown west of Taunton. Its habitat is scrub, rough grassland and hedgerows, often on roadsides, where the loud, distinctive song can be heard from a moving car. In v.c. 6, the main centres of distribution are the coast from Clevedon to Portishead, and Bream to Burnham-on-Sea, as well as across the Mendips to Cheddar, and the Poldens to Somerton.

- ST 22 West Hatch, August 1991.  
 ST 25 Berrow-Brean, 1974-91.  
 ST 32 Fivehead to Curry Rivel, September 1977, August 1991.  
 ST 33 Polden Hills-Cock Hill, Chilton Polden, August 1977, July 1989, Moorlinch, September 1977.  
 ST 34 Catcott Heath, August 1977  
 ST 35 Burnham-on-Sea, 1974-1991.  
     Uphill, September 1979, August 1985, July 1990.  
     Bleadon-Hutton-Loxton, 1977 onwards.  
     Crook Peak, 1975-1991.  
     Banwell, September 1979.  
 ST 36 Worle Hill, August 1989.  
 ST 42 Aller, August 1977.  
     Somerton Hill, August 1986.  
     South Hill, Long Sutton, August 1986, August 1991.  
     Somerton, August 1991.  
 ST 43 Polden Hills-Walton Hill and elsewhere near Street, Pedwell Hill, Moorlinch, Ashcott, 1977 onwards, Ashcott Heath, August 1978.  
 ST 45 Mendips, Wavering Down-Axbridge-Cheddar Gorge, 1975 onwards.  
     Sandford Hill, August 1980.  
     Rodney Stoke-Draycott, September 1977, August 1989, September 1991.  
     Shipham, August 1983, August 1987, September 1989 (A.P. Fowles).  
 ST 46 Wrington Warren, September 1979.  
 ST 47 Clevedon to Portishead, 1977 onwards.  
     Walton Moor, Gordano Valley, September 1991.  
 ST 52 West Camel, August 1981, August 1989.  
 ST 53 Great Breach Wood, 1977 onwards.  
 ST 54 Hembury Hill, Wookey, September 1978.  
     Ben Knowle Hill, Wookey, August 1991.

*Pholidoptera griseoptera* (De Geer)

Dark Bush-cricket

Common throughout the county and abundant in many places, but with gaps in distribution. It is especially plentiful between Bristol and the Mendips, the countryside south of Bath, the Poldens and lower slopes of the Quantocks, but rare on Exmoor and the Brendons, the Levels (except the peat moors) and in areas of East Somerset from Glastonbury, through Shepton Mallet to Frome and southwards to the Dorset border. Here it is absent from many areas despite much apparently suitable habitat. It is believed (E.C.M. Haes, pers. comm.) that there is a connection between the distribution of this species and the extent of the planned countryside in Britain, (see Oliver Rackham, *The History of the British Countryside* (1986)) and the relevant area does include this part of the country. On the coast, its distribution is also disjunct; it is abundant between Clevedon and Portishead, and from Minehead to Watchet, but rare from Clevedon to Weston-super-Mare, and very local from Burnham-on-Sea to Brean, being absent from Brean Down despite much suitable habitat. It is plentiful on Steep Holm, where it was first recorded by J. Cowley in 1956 (Burton 1981).

Recorded from all ten kilometres square except SS 73, 74, 82, 83 and 92, and ST 64.

*Platycleis albopunctata* (Goeze)

Grey Bush-cricket

Very rare; unknown in the county until 22 August 1974, when discovered by the writer on the southern slopes of Brean Down. The first record for North Somerset (v.c. 6). The species is an inhabitant of sea cliffs where it occurs in scrub and coarse herbage. The habitat is quite typical, the insect being present in good numbers most years from late July until October. It is not recorded in South Somerset (v.c. 5), the

next nearest site being at Braunton Burrows in North Devon. Its absence may possibly be attributed to the fact that the intervening coast is all north-facing. It has never been found on Sand Point, or the coastal cliffs at Clevedon, although the habitat is quite suitable.

ST 25/35 Brean Down, in quantity, August 1974 to September 1991.

*Metriopectera brachyptera* (L.)

Bog Bush-cricket

Very rare; only recorded from two localities on the peat moors in North Somerset (v.c. 6). The first county record was by J. Cowley in August 1945 from the Charity Field on Street Heath. In 1954, he discovered a second site for the species on Westhay Moor (Burton 1981). Both localities still hold flourishing colonies, and as they are now nature reserves, it is to be hoped that the future of the species is secure. The insects appear in July and survive until late autumn in a mild year. Not yet recorded in v.c. 5, but known from two sites just over the border in South Devon, so may well occur on the Somerset Blackdowns.

ST 43 Street Heath, July 1975 to August 1990.

ST 44 Westhay Moor, July 1975 to August 1991.

*Conocephalus dorsalis* (Latreille)

Short-winged Cone-head

Locally common and in some places abundant within its chosen habitat. It occurs throughout the Levels on marsh vegetation, mostly along the extensive network of rhines and ditches, but also in wet fields on the peat moors and one or two other places. It is also plentiful on the North Somerset coast where it is found in salt marshes and dune-slacks, but not recorded west of Steart in South Somerset. The macropterous form, f. *burri* Ebner, has been recorded several times from the peat moors, most recently on Shapwick Heath in September 1990, and also along the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal near North Newton in August 1984.

ST 24 Pawlett Hams, September 1989 (A.P. Fowles).  
Steart, August 1974 onwards.

West Huntspill, August 1989.

ST 25 Berrow Dunes, July 1974 onwards.

ST 32 West Sedgemoor, September 1977 onwards.

Curry Moor, July 1985.

ST 33 North Newton, f. *burri* Ebner, August 1984.

North Moor, August 1983.

Southlake Moor, August 1983, July 1990.

Lang Moor, Weston Zoyland, September 1982.

Moorlinch, August 1990.

ST 33/43 King's Sedgemoor, August 1982.

ST 34 Burnham-on-Sea, August 1974 onwards.

Chilton Moor, July 1990.

Edington Heath, July 1983.

Binham Moor, Blackford, August 1990.

ST 35 Rhine below Brean Down, September 1977.

River Axe, Uphill, August 1991.

ST 36 Sand Bay, August 1986.

Woodspring Bay, Wick St Lawrence, August 1978, August 1987.

ST 37 Clevedon Pill, September 1977.

ST 42 West Moor, Kingsbury Episcopi, July 1982.

- Muchelney, July 1985.  
 Midelney, August 1986.  
 ST 43 Somerton Moor, August 1985, August 1989.  
 Butleigh Moor, September 1981.  
 Ashcott Heath, August 1977 onwards.  
 Street Heath, August 1975 onwards.  
 ST 44 Catcott Heath, 1974 onwards.  
 Shapwick Heath, 1974 onwards.  
 Westhay Moor, 1977 onwards.  
 Tealham and Tadhams Moors, August 1982 onwards.  
 ST 45 Max Valley, Winscombe (nymphs), June 1982.  
 ST 46 Churchill (nymphs), June 1983.  
 Kenn Moor, August 1978.  
 ST 47 Walton and Weston Moors, Gordano Valley, August 1977 onwards.  
 ST 57 River Avon below Leigh Woods, September 1977 onwards.

*Leptophyes punctatissima* (Bosc) Speckled Bush-cricket  
 Very common throughout the county and with a similar distribution to *Pholidoptera griseoptera*, although perhaps a little more widespread. The song of this species is very faint, making it more difficult to locate than *Pholidoptera griseoptera*, but owing to its frequent occurrence in gardens, it is a familiar insect to many people. It is rare on Exmoor where suitable habitat is lacking, and appears to have the same gap in distribution in East Somerset as *Pholidoptera griseoptera*, but unlike that species, does occur on Brean Down, where it was first found in August 1978. It is plentiful on Steep Holm where it was first recorded by J. Cowley in July 1956 (Burton 1981). Frequently active till late in the year, a male was recorded at Burnham-on-Sea on 2 November 1987.

Recorded from all ten kilometre squares except SS 73, 74, 82, 83 and 93, and ST 21, 51, 64 and 73.

#### FAMILY GRYLLIDAE (Crickets)

*Acheta domesticus* (L.) House Cricket  
 An introduced species restricted to heated situations such as occur in occupied buildings or outdoors in rubbish tips, sewage farms, and pigsties, where there is constant warmth from decaying organic matter. During hot summers, such as 1976 and 1984, the insects disperse to outdoor situations where they may be heard chirping from crevices in walls, etc. With the advent of modern insecticides, the species is said to have declined, but published records for Somerset are few, so it is hard to ascertain the true status of the species in the county. J.F. Burton cites three old records of J. Cowley, 'smouldering rubbish dump between Midford and Monkton Combe in July 1950', and, 'invading houses near a rubbish dump at Street in July 1953', and 'one singing behind his Aga cooker in his house, Holywell House, Edington, near Bridgwater on 22 September 1949' (Burton 1981). He also gives a record from the Ashton Court Country Club near Failand, 1963-70. Information from staff at this site (now known as Redwood Lodge) suggests that the insect still occurs there, but this is not confirmed. Only one record is known for v.c. 5, from a farm at East Chinnock.

- ST 34 Burnham-on-Sea (3 sites), August 1976.  
 ST 35 Yarberry Farm, Banwell (pigsties), August 1984.  
 ST 36 Weston-super-Mare, August 1984.  
 ST 37 Clevedon, May 1976 (J.F. Burton).

ST 41 East Chinnock, large colony in cattle concentrate debris, 1969–73, and at two sites nearby, 1976 (A.J. Parsons).

ST 57 Ashton Court Country Club (Redwood Lodge), 1963–70, (J.F. Burton).

#### FAMILY TETRIGIDAE (Ground-hoppers)

##### *Tetrix subulata* (L.)

##### Slender Ground-hopper

The ground-hoppers are small, inconspicuous species which occur generally on bare ground or very short vegetation. *Tetrix subulata* is an inhabitant of wet or damp locations with its main centre of distribution in Somerset on the Levels where it is widespread and undoubtedly occurs in many more sites than those recorded. Elsewhere it has been found in scattered locations, but is not known from the west of the county. Owing to its unobtrusive nature, however, it may well occur there. J. Cowley knew it in several sites, mostly on the Levels (Burton 1982), and most of these are still extant.

ST 25 Berrow Dunes, August 1977.

ST 30 Cricket St Thomas, May 1986 (A.J. Parsons).

ST 32 West Sedgemoor, May 1978.

ST 33 King's Sedgemoor, July 1989.

ST 34 Chilton Moor, September 1986.

ST 41 Crewkerne, August 1979, April 1984 (A.J. Parsons).

North Perrott, May 1983 (A.J. Parsons).

ST 42 River Yeo, Huish Episcopi, July 1985.

ST 43 Great Breach Wood, August 1989 (A. Prince).

ST 44 Catcott Heath, May 1978, April 1987 (A.J. Parsons).

Shapwick Heath, June 1978.

Westhay Moor, September 1979, September 1981.

Westhay Heath, April 1987 (A.J. Parsons).

Meare Heath, October 1979.

ST 45 Batecombe Hollow, Draycott, May 1991.

ST 46 Kenn Moor, August 1978.

ST 47 Walton and Weston Moors, Gordano Valley, September 1977, August 1990, September 1991.

ST 53 Great Breach Wood, May 1988 (A.J. Parsons).

ST 55 Charterhouse, May 1990 (A. Prince).

Blagdon Lake, April 1979.

ST 55/56 Chew Valley Lake, July 1979, September 1979.

ST 64 Windsor Hill, Shepton Mallet, October 1990.

##### *Tetrix undulata* (Sowerby)

##### Common Ground-hopper

As with the previous species, the Common Ground-hopper is a very inconspicuous insect and is certainly overlooked. It occurs on bare ground and in short vegetation in a wide variety of habitats, and is not restricted to wet localities as is *Tetrix subulata*. The species has been recorded from virtually every part of the county in scattered sites and will probably turn out to be common with continued recording. The two species occur together in damp sites such as the Levels, but *Tetrix undulata* may also be found on wood borders and woodland clearings, old quarries, railway embankments, spoil heaps and heathland. J. Cowley recorded a number of sites (Burton 1982), and it is still known in many of these.

SS 82/83 Mounsey Wood, July 1987 (A. Prince).

SS 83 Hillway Wood, Withypool, July 1989 (A. Prince).

River Barle, Great Bradley, July 1989 (A. Prince).

ST 03 Clatworthy Reservoir, May 1988 (A. Prince).

- ST 11 Buckland Wood, August 1989 (A. Prince).  
 ST 12 Langford Heathfield, May 1990 (A. Prince).  
 ST 21 Yarty Moor, May 1990 (A. Prince).  
     Witch Lodge, May 1990 (A. Prince).  
     Mount Fancy Farm, July 1989 (A. Prince).  
 ST 22 Thurlbear Wood, May 1989 (A. Prince).  
 ST 25 Brean Down, July 1982 (K.N.A. Alexander).  
 ST 36 Worle, August 1979.  
 ST 40 North Perrott, May 1981 (A.J. Parsons).  
 ST 41 Crewkerne, August 1979, May 1990 (A.J. Parsons).  
     Norton-sub-Hamdon, July 1982 (A.J. Parsons).  
 ST 43 Street Heath, October 1977, July 1987 (A.J. Parsons).  
     August 1989 (A. Prince).  
     Ashcott Heath, June 1979.  
     Great Breach Wood, August 1989 (A. Prince).  
 ST 44 Catcott Heath, July 1979, September 1988 (A.J. Parsons).  
     Shapwick Heath, June 1979, August 1991.  
     Westhay Moor, August 1983, July 1988 (A.J. Parsons).  
     August 1989 (A. Prince).  
     Westhay Heath, May 1986, September 1990 (A. Prince).  
 ST 45 Cheddar Wood, April 1984.  
     Black Rock, Cheddar Gorge, May 1984 (K.N.A. Alexander).  
     Between Sidcot and Shipham, July 1991.  
     Draycott Sleights, April 1988 (A.J. Parsons).  
 ST 46 Goblin Combe, September 1981 (J. Paul).  
 ST 47 Walton Moor, Gordano Valley, 1971 (J.F. Burton).  
 ST 50 Pen Wood, Hardington Marsh, June 1986 (A.J. Parsons).  
 ST 55 Charterhouse, May 1984.  
     Priddy Mineries, June 1980.  
 ST 64 Downhead Common, September 1990.  
     Windsor Hill, Shepton Mallet, October 1990.  
 ST 65 Chilcompton, April 1974.  
 ST 76 South Stoke (old railway cutting), August 1990.

#### FAMILY ACRIDIDAE (Grasshoppers)

##### *Stethophyma grossum* (L.)

##### Large Marsh Grasshopper

Restricted to the peat moors and now very rare, although previously more widespread. This beautiful species, the largest British grasshopper, occurs exclusively in wetland habitats and was first discovered in Somerset in 1942 by G.A. Walton at Shapwick. Subsequently, J. Cowley located it on Catcott Heath and Street Heath in 1947. His precise localities, as communicated to John Burton, were on Street Heath 'in rough areas between peat cuttings' (ST 460397), and in the Charity Field (ST 464394), and on Catcott Heath 'wet hay meadow' (ST 398406), 'nine acre neglected fen' (ST 405414), and 'wet rushy pasture' (ST 408412) (Burton 1981). Despite extensive peat-cutting, a few remnants of ground survive, and in particular the Charity Field on Street Heath is now a local nature reserve which is still rich botanically and entomologically. However, it is now much drier than thirty years ago, and although *Metrioptera brachyptera* still thrives, the site is probably now no longer suitable for *Stethophyma grossum*.

In 1950, Cowley, with D.G. Brown and J.H.P. Sankey, discovered the species at the west end of Shapwick Heath, mostly north of Canada Drove (ST 408410). In 1963, John Burton found it commonly on the east side of the road from Shapwick to Westhay, but noted that the habitat was being invaded by Alder carr; in later years he failed to re-find it (Burton 1981). Much of this area has been destroyed by

turf-cutting despite the establishment of the Shapwick Heath National Nature Reserve in 1961.

Other localities given by Burton are Meare Heath ('considerable numbers', September 1963) and Ashcott Heath ('single male', same date). Burton continued to find the insect on Meare Heath throughout the 1960s, but failed to find any in September 1979. Virtually all this area is now destroyed and it is highly unlikely that the species has survived there. Burton concludes his account with a single recent record from Catcott Heath in September 1979, when it was found on roadside verges by Richard Savage.

In recent years the only locality where *Stethophyma grossum* has consistently been recorded is on Westhay Moor, within a nature reserve of the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation. Here, the species was apparently dependent on pits containing sphagnum moss, and maintained a very small but viable population from 4 August 1976, when it was first discovered by the writer, to 4 September 1988, the last record. 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984 and 1986 were good years but only two males were found in 1987 and 1988, and none since. The exceptionally dry summers of 1989 and 1990 caused the habitat to dry out and the species may be extinct here. Fortunately, in August 1989 Tony Prince discovered a new locality in the area, where the writer counted at least twenty singing males in September 1989. Good numbers were again present in August 1990 and August 1991. *Stethophyma grossum* has been recorded once again on Shapwick Heath, also by Tony Prince in August 1989.

This is a Red Data Book species, and the only member of the Somerset Orthoptera which can be classed as endangered. From the above account, it can be seen that the species has declined alarmingly and steps must be taken to conserve its few remaining habitats before it is too late. It would be a tragedy if this fine insect were to vanish entirely from the Somerset fauna.

ST 44 Catcott Heath, 1979 (R. Savage) (Burton 1981).

Westhay Moor, August 1976–September 1988, a new locality, August 1989 (A. Prince), August 1990, August 1991.

Shapwick Heath, 3 males, August 1989 (A. Prince).

#### *Stenobothrus lineatus* (Panzer)

#### Stripe-winged Grasshopper

Very local, unrecorded in the county until 20 June 1974, when discovered by the writer on Liassic limestone slopes at Charlton Mackrell. Since then, several more scattered localities have been found, all in v.c. 6, on Liassic, Oolitic, or Carboniferous limestone with the exception of two. Of these, one was on the sand dunes at Berrow, and the other was an extraordinary occurrence on wet heathland on the peat moors: neither of these sites has been re-found. The peat moor record is very hard to explain; it is possible that the insect was introduced here. It is strange that the occurrence of *Stenobothrus lineatus* in North Somerset was unknown until so recently, and the species has undoubtedly been overlooked. In July 1990, it was discovered in some numbers on the chalk of White Sheet Hill, Mere, on the eastern boundary of v.c. 6, although now in the administrative county of Wiltshire.

ST 35 Berrow Dunes, 1 male, July 1976. Not re-found.

ST 43 Collard Hill to Hatch Hill, Compton Dundon, August 1977–August 1991.

Ashcott Heath, several singing males, August 1978. Not re-found.

ST 45 Dolebury Warren, plentiful, September 1985, August 1991.

ST 52 Charlton Mackrell, plentiful, June 1974–July 1990.

ST 54 Twinhills, abundant, July 1976, and on near-by Launcherley Hill, July 1990.

ST 55 Between Charterhouse and Compton Martin, July 1991.



- ST 75 Barrow Hill, Great Elm, August 1991.  
 ST 76 Fortnight Farm, Combe Hay, August 1978.  
 ST 83 White Sheet Hill, Mere, (Wiltshire), July 1990.

*Omocestus rufipes* (Zetterstedt)

Woodland Grasshopper

Very rare; unknown in the county until discovered in Great Breach Wood on 17 August 1971 by J.F. Burton. This wood, on the Polden Hills near Compton Dundon, is now a nature reserve of the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation, and the population is thriving, occurring along the rides and on open, sunny slopes. Despite searches in suitable habitat on other parts of the Poldens, this remains the only known locality in the area and was, for many years, the only one known in the county. However, on 25 August 1991 the writer discovered a new site in a disused quarry south of Great Elm where there were at least three singing males. It is very likely that other sites occur elsewhere.

- ST 43/53 Great Breach Wood, in considerable abundance, August 1971 (J.F. Burton).  
 Still in good numbers, July 1977, September 1985, August 1990.  
 ST 74 Tedbury Camp, Great Elm, August 1991.

*Omocestus viridulus* (L.)

Common Green Grasshopper

Widespread throughout the county but not generally distributed and absent from large tracts of countryside. In Somerset, the species seems to be confined to ancient countryside, i.e. old grassland, moors, and heaths, and is abundant on Exmoor, the Brendons, Quantocks and Blackdowns in v.c. 5, and Mendips in v.c. 6. Good numbers occur on the peat moors, but it does not seem to be present elsewhere on the Levels. *Omocestus viridulus* is the earliest grasshopper to reach maturity in Britain; the first males can regularly be heard in song during the first week in June. During the exceptionally early season of 1990, however, singing males appeared in Cheddar Gorge and elsewhere on the Mendips on 27 May; the earliest ever record.

- SS 73 Simonsbath, 1977 onwards.  
 SS 74 Exe Valley, 1977 onwards.  
 SS 82 Barle Valley, September 1982 (M. Davies).  
 SS 83/84 Common: too many sites to merit listing.  
 SS 92 Brushford, July 1990.  
 SS 93 Wheddon Cross, 1977 onwards.  
 SS 94 Dunkery Hill, June 1985.  
 North Hill, Minehead, June 1983.  
 ST 02/12 Langford Heathfield, 1977 onwards.  
 ST 03 Brendon Hills, August 1989.  
 ST 11/21 Blackdown Hills, common, 1979 onwards.  
 ST 13/14 Quantock Hills, very common, 1977 onwards.  
 ST 25 Brean Down, June 1974–September 1991.  
 ST 33 Cock Hill, Poldens, September 1988 (J.F. Burton).  
 ST 34 Edington Moor, August 1991.  
 ST 35 Loxton Hill, June 1975.  
 Crook Peak, August 1989.  
 ST 43/53 Great Breach Wood, June 1974–August 1990.  
 ST 43 Ashcott Heath, August 1976 onwards.  
 Street Heath, July 1975 onwards.  
 ST 44 Catcott Heath, 1974 onwards.  
 Shapwick Heath, 1974 onwards.  
 Westhay Moor, 1977 onwards.  
 ST 45 Wavering Down to Cross Plain, August 1989.

- Dolebury Warren, June 1985.  
 Axbridge–Cheddar–Draycott and north to Burrington Combe, 1974 onwards.  
 ST 47 Walton and Weston Moors, Gordano Valley, August 1977 onwards.  
 Walton Down, September 1991.  
 ST 50 Pen Wood, Hardington Marsh, July 1986 (A.J. Parsons).  
 ST 54 Rookham, July 1991.  
 ST 55 Charterhouse, 1974 onwards.  
 Priddy Mineries, 1975 onwards.  
 East Harptree, 1975 onwards.  
 Compton Martin, July 1991.  
 ST 64 Downhead Common, September 1990.  
 ST 75 Hinton Charterhouse, August 1986, August 1990.  
 Foxcote, July 1991.  
 ST 76 Banner Down, Batheaston, August 1990.

*Chorthippus brunneus* (Thunberg)

Field Grasshopper

Very common throughout the county; in many places abundant, being scarce only on the high ground of Exmoor. The species is characteristic of dry sunny situations where the vegetation is sparse, and localities such as the slopes of the Mendips and the sand dune systems of Berrow and Minehead provide ideal habitat. It regularly occurs in built-up areas where it is common on roadside banks and in gardens. On 22 August 1977, A.J. Parsons discovered the species on Steep Holm. At the time, he wrote that 'numbers . . . appear to be low', but the grasshopper has subsequently increased and now occurs along most of the south side of the island. Its origin there is not known; it may possibly have been introduced, although this seems unlikely, and its recent spread is probably connected with scrub clearance. *Chorthippus brunneus* normally appears in mid-June, but in the early season of 1990, the first males were singing at Berrow on 2 June, the earliest county record.

Recorded from every ten kilometre square.

*Chorthippus parallelus* (Zetterstedt)

Meadow Grasshopper

The commonest species of Orthoptera in Somerset, being abundant throughout the county in virtually every situation. It is found on the high ground of Exmoor, the Blackdowns and Quantocks and occurs on all the hill ranges, the Somerset Levels and coastal sand dunes. It is common in built-up areas where it is found in gardens, and populations are able to thrive in up-graded pasture. The normal time of appearance for the species is mid-June, but in the early season of 1990, the first individuals were in song at South Cadbury on 27 May and at Stolford on 28 May, the earliest ever county records.

Recorded from every ten kilometre square.

*Chorthippus albomarginatus* (De Geer)

Lesser Marsh Grasshopper

A species of restricted distribution but common within its chosen habitat. It occurs on the coast of North Somerset where it is often abundant on sea banks, margins of salt-marshes and is locally common on the Levels, particularly in the south of the county. The situations, however, always appear to be damp, and *Chorthippus albomarginatus* has not been found on hill ranges such as the Mendips or Poldens and is extremely rare in West Somerset where there are only two records. The species does not normally mature until the last few days of June or early July, but in 1990 a few adults had emerged on the sea bank at Kingston Seymour by 9 June.

- SS 84 Porlock Weir, August 1989 (B.C. Eversham),  
 SS 94 Minehead Warren, August 1978.  
 ST 23 Chilton Trinity, October 1978.  
 ST 24 Combwich, abundant, August 1977 onwards.  
     Pawlett Hams, August 1977, August 1990.  
     Hinkley Point to Steart Point, July 1974 onwards.  
     Steart Island, August 1975, June 1989.  
 ST 24/34 West Huntspill to Highbridge, June 1974 onwards.  
 ST 25 Berrow Dunes, September 1977 onwards.  
 ST 32 West Sedgemoor, September 1977.  
 ST 33 North Moor, August 1983.  
     Southlake Moor, August 1983.  
     Weston Zoyland, August 1985,  
     King's Sedgemoor, September 1983.  
 ST 34 Chilton Moor, August 1985 onwards.  
     Binham Moor, Blackford, August 1985 onwards.  
     Edington Moor, August 1991.  
 ST 35 Burnham-on-Sea, August 1974 onwards.  
     River Axe, Uphill, July 1975 onwards.  
     Eastertown, October 1978.  
     Mark to Rooksbridge, August 1985 onwards.  
 ST 36 Sand Bay, July 1976 onwards.  
     Wick St Lawrence, August 1978 onwards.  
     Kingston Seymour, August 1977 onwards.  
 ST 42 West Moor, Kingsbury Episcopi, July 1982.  
     Muchelney, August 1986.  
 ST 43 King's Sedgemoor, September 1983.  
 ST 44 Tealham and Tadham Moors, August 1990.  
 ST 46 River Yeo, Congresbury, September 1979.  
     Kenn Moor, August 1978,  
 ST 47 Gordano Valley, August 1977 onwards.  
     Portbury Wharf, September 1989.  
 ST 57 River Avon, Pill to Leigh Woods, September 1977.

### *Gomphocerippus rufus* (L.)

### Rufous Grasshopper

An extremely local species of limestone hills, but with several very good colonies in Somerset. Although occasionally found with *Stenobothrus lineatus*, it tends to prefer coarser vegetation and favours scrubby hillside with species-rich turf. Its headquarters in the county are the Liassic limestone of the Polden Hills where it was first discovered on Walton Hill, near Street, by J. Cowley in September 1948 (Burton 1982). In 1950, Cowley also found colonies in 'sheltered spots in rough, long grass' on Socombe Hill, Cock Hill and a railway cutting at Cossington (Burton 1982). All of these localities are still extant, with the exception of Cossington where the site has been shaded-out by tree growth. In recent years, the writer has discovered several more sites in v.c. 6, mostly on the Lias, with one site on the Oolite near Bath, but the species has proved to be very rare on the Carboniferous limestone of the Mendips, where only one site is known, near Draycott. It also occurs on this formation along the Clevedon to Portishead ridge, but again is extremely local. In October 1978, *Gomphocerippus rufus* was found on Red Hill, Heale, the first record for South Somerset. It is still to be found on this site, the only one known in v.c. 5.

- ST 32 Red Hill, Heale, October 1978, September 1991.  
 ST 33 Pendon Hill, September 1978, July 1990.  
     Cock Hill, August 1977, September 1991.

- Ball Hill, September 1978, September 1991.  
 Knoll Hill and on roadside, Moorlinch, August 1977, September 1988.  
 Socombe Hill, September 1978, September 1991.  
 ST 35 Brent Knoll, August 1979, August 1989, August 1991.  
 ST 42 Aller, and between there and Langport, September 1991.  
 ST 43 Turn Hill, High Ham, August 1982, August 1987.  
 Knoll Hill, August 1977, September 1988.  
 Pedwell Hill, August 1977.  
 Huckham Hill, September 1977, August 1991.  
 Walton Hill, August 1977, August 1981, August 1989.  
 Windmill Hill, August 1977.  
 Collard Hill, August 1977, September 1991.  
 ST 43/53 Great Breach Wood, June 1984 (J.F. Burton), August 1990.  
 ST 45 Draycott Sleights, August 1984, September 1991.  
 ST 47 Portishead Down, September 1977.  
 Weston-in-Gordano, September 1988.  
 ST 54 Bower's Hill, Wookey, September 1978, August 1989.  
 Ben Knowle Hill, Wookey, August 1989.  
 Launcherley Hill, July 1990.  
 Hay Hill, Coxley, August 1991.  
 Fenny Castle Hill, August 1991.  
 ST 55 South Widcombe, September 1978,  
 ST 55/56 Breach Hill, Chew Stoke, September 1979, September 1991.  
 ST 76 South Stoke, old railway cutting, August 1978, August 1990.

*Myrmeleotetix maculatus* (Thunberg)

Mottled Grasshopper

Locally common throughout the county within its chosen habitat. This species requires dry, sunny locations with very short turf. It is common on Exmoor, the Quantocks and Mendips, also the coastal sand dunes, and very locally on the Poldens and peat moors. It is not found on the wetter parts of the Levels, where there is no suitable habitat.

- SS 74 Exmoor, June 1984 (A.J. Parsons), September 1991.  
 SS 82 Barle Valley, September 1982 (M. Davies).  
 SS 83/84 Common: known in many sites.  
 SS 93 Brendon Hills, 1977 onwards.  
 SS 94 North Hill, Minehead, August 1978.  
 ST 03 Treborough, July 1990.  
 ST 11 Sampford Moor, August 1991.  
 ST 13/14 Quantock Hills: very common in many sites.  
 ST 25/35 Berrow-Brean, and on Brean Down, June 1974 to September 1991.  
 ST 35 Crook Peak, June 1974-August 1990.  
 ST 36 Sand Point-Middle Hope, 1974 onwards.  
 ST 43/53 Great Breach Wood, 1977 onwards.  
 ST 43 Compton Dundon, June 1987 (A.J. Parsons).  
 Lollover Hill, August 1991.  
 Collard Hill, August 1991.  
 ST 44 Shapwick Heath, 1974 onwards.  
 ST 45 Mendip Hills: common in many sites including Cheddar Gorge, Draycott Sleights, Dolebury Warren and hillsides above Axbridge.  
 ST 55 Mendip Hills: several sites including Priddy Mineries, Charterhouse and East Harptree Combe.  
 ST 66 Pensford, July 1991.

## OTHER SPECIES

A specimen of *Schistocerca gregaria* (Forskäl) (Desert Locust) was taken in a garden at Yeovil on 10 November 1988 by E.T. Levy. This was part of an invasion which took place at this time, the insects occurring mostly in Devon and Cornwall: this is the only specimen known to have reached Somerset.

*Tachycines asynamorus* Adelung (Greenhouse Camel-cricket) is cited for v.c. 6 by D.K. Kevan (Kevan 1961), but no further details are known.

## DICTYOPTERA

## FAMILY BLATTELLIDAE (Cockroaches)

*Ectobius panzeri* Stephens Lesser Cockroach  
Very rare but probably overlooked. Unknown on the mainland of Somerset until 8 September 1991 when a single female was beaten from brambles on a sunny wood border at Cleeve Hill, Watchet, by the writer. This is the first record for v.c. 5, but it is likely that this elusive species occurs in other sites. A subsequent search failed to locate a colony, but the habitat is very suitable, and one is almost certain to be present.

*Ectobius panzeri* was recorded from Steep Holm in 1938 by G.W. Parnell (Parnell 1939). It is simply listed amongst insects taken on the island, and no further details are known. Recording work on Steep Holm, by A.J. Parsons and other entomologists, has never re-discovered the species, and the record cannot now be confirmed.

ST 04 Cleeve Hill, Watchet, September 1991.

## DERMAPTERA

## FAMILY LABIIDAE

*Labia minor* (L.) Lesser Earwig  
A widespread species in Britain, and certainly overlooked in Somerset. It occurs in dung-heaps, compost-heaps and rubbish-tips where warmth and shelter are available. An intensive search would undoubtedly reveal many sites, but the two records given are the only confirmed occurrences, one from each vice-county.

ST 40 Crewkerne, 2 males and 1 female at light, August 1990 (A.J. Parsons).

ST 46 Bank of River Kenn, near Clevedon, September 1981 (J. Paul).

## FAMILY FORFICULIDAE

*Forficula auricularia* L. Common Earwig  
Abundant throughout the county in most habitats. It may be encountered under stones, hedgerows, scrub and waysides, and is common in gardens. However, owing to its familiarity, it is very poorly recorded; its presence is unconfirmed from large tracts of countryside where it must certainly be present. It is abundant on Steep Holm.

Recorded from every ten kilometre square.

*Forficula lesnei* Finot

Lesne's Earwig

Was recorded from Steep Holm by G.W. Parnell (Parnell 1939). Only a single female was found, and the species has never been re-discovered despite intensive recording, by A.J. Parsons and others, for the last fifteen years. Although it is easy to dismiss the record as doubtful, it is of interest that *Forficula lesnei* was found in a garden on the Gower, v.c. 41, in September 1986 (the first Welsh record), so its occurrence on Steep Holm may well have been genuine.

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