

BUSH-CRICKETS

SPECKLED BUSH-CRICKET

Leptophyes punctatissima (Bosc)

(Plate VIII: 5, 6)

Description A medium-sized bush-cricket, with *no median keel on the pronotum*. The colour is *bright green with numerous minute dark brown spots*. In the male the fore wings are brownish and there is a brown stripe along the top of the abdomen; the female has a few brown markings, and a thin pale to dark brown stripe along the top of the abdomen. The hind wings are *absent* in both sexes; the fore wings are reduced to *very small overlapping lobes* (about 3 mm. long) in the male, and to *vestigial, partly overlapping flaps* in the female. The ovipositor is *broad* and curved upwards. The male cerci have *no teeth*, and are curved inwards with a pointed tip; the subgenital plate in this sex has *no styles*.

There is little variation in colour. The pronotum often has brown markings above and a pale stripe along each side of the disc. The lobe-like male fore wings are straw-coloured above and bordered on each side by a dark line; their sides are green. The vestigial fore wings of the female are brown in the region where they overlap.

Measurements

Males

Total length (20): 8·8–16·2, mean 11·26

Length of the fore wing (20): 2·4–3·2, mean 2·76

Length of the hind femur (20): 12·3–14·7, mean 13·13

Females

Total length (20): 11·1–17·7, mean 13·70

Length of the hind femur (20): 12·7–15·0, mean 13·89

Length of the ovipositor (20): 6·2–7·4, mean 6·86

Habitat This species is generally associated with shrubby localities or open woodland, and is usually to be found a few feet from the ground on shrubs or small trees rather than amongst the ground

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vegetation. Bramble bushes are a favourite haunt and these insects may often be seen sitting on the upper surfaces of bramble leaves on a warm summer's day. A wall covered with a creeper such as Ivy also provides a suitable habitat. Among the British Orthoptera this species is the one most often found on garden plants, whence it frequently finds its way indoors. Sometimes it occurs in quite open situations, such as heathland, but always where there is a certain amount of cover at ground level.

Life History The eggs hatch during May and June. There are six nymphal instars. In the female nymphs the ovipositor measures 2–3 mm. in the penultimate and 6–7 mm. in the final instar. The fore wing-pads may be seen clearly in the last nymphal instar and are just visible in the previous one.

In an early season adults may be found towards the end of July in the more southerly parts of the country, but maturity is not usually reached until August; this month and September are the best ones for adults. The Speckled Bush-cricket begins to die off in late September and October, but mild autumn weather occasionally prolongs its life until November.

The eggs are most unusual among the British Saltatoria: they are flat, very thin and elliptical in outline (about 3.5×2.0 mm.). They are laid in various forms of vegetation, such as plant stems and crevices in bark.

Habits The Speckled Bush-cricket is of course quite unable to fly; when disturbed it moves in short hops, quite often dropping to ground level where it has a better chance of escape. Probably the best method of capture is by beating shrubs or the lowest branches of trees. It is, however, often common enough for one to be able to spot individuals sitting on leaves; once a specimen has been seen it is not a difficult matter to catch it, either with the hand or with a specimen-tube.

The food of this species consists of the leaves of various plants (e.g. brambles), probably supplemented by small insects.

Song (Fig. 38) The song is extremely faint; it is inaudible to some people and cannot be heard by most at a distance of more than a yard. It consists of a short chirp repeated regularly every few seconds. The rate of repetition varies with temperature, becoming more rapid as the temperature rises.

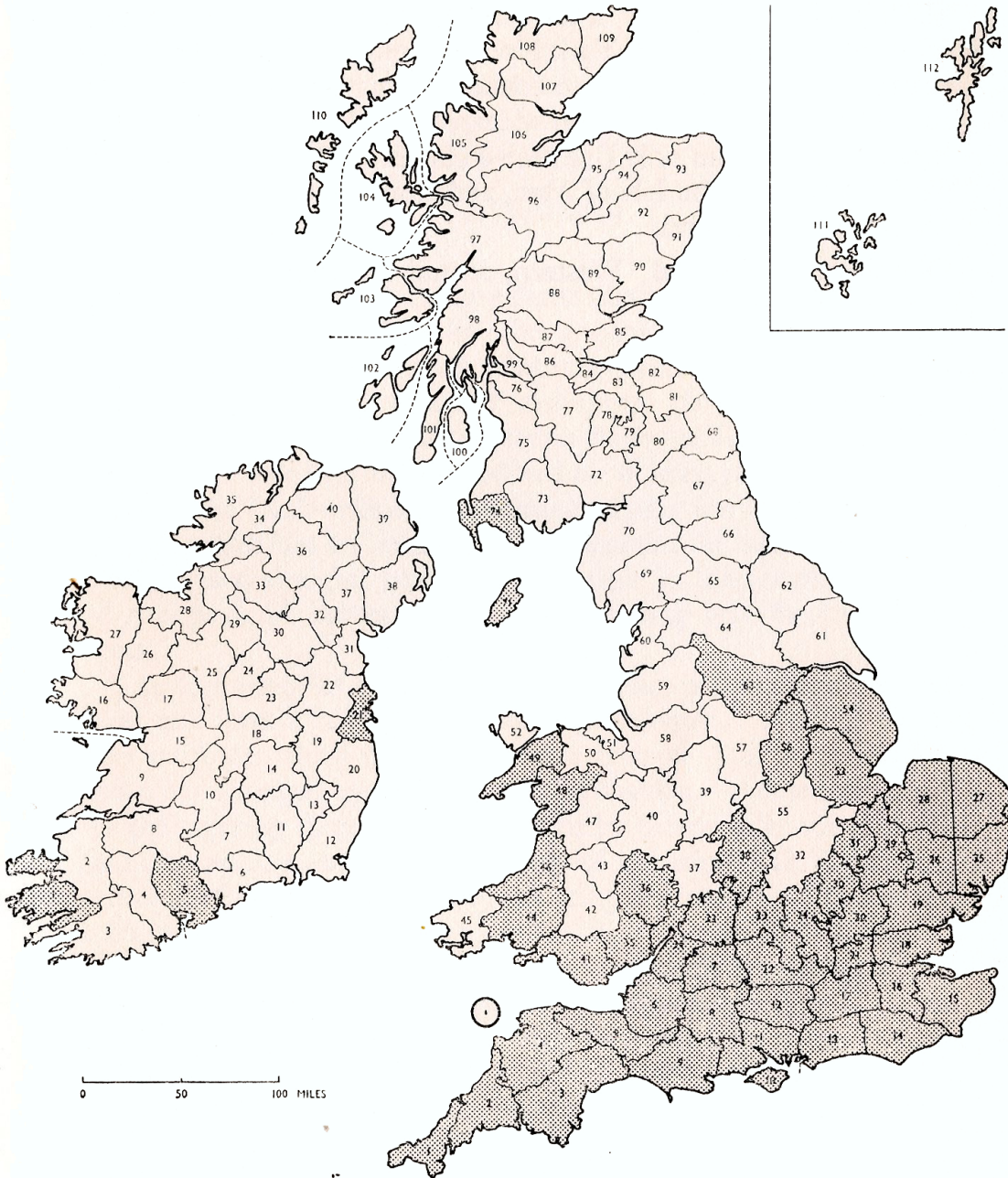


FIG. 46. Map showing the recorded distribution of the Speckled Bush-cricket (*Leptophyes punctatissima*).

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Distribution (Fig. 46) This common species is distributed over most of England from Yorkshire southwards (including Lundy), though there are still a few vice-counties from which it has not yet been recorded. It is doubtless also widespread in Wales, but has actually been recorded from only five vice-counties. There are also records for Wigtown and the Isle of Man, and from South Kerry, East Cork and Dublin in Ireland.

Distribution Abroad Western, central and southern Europe.

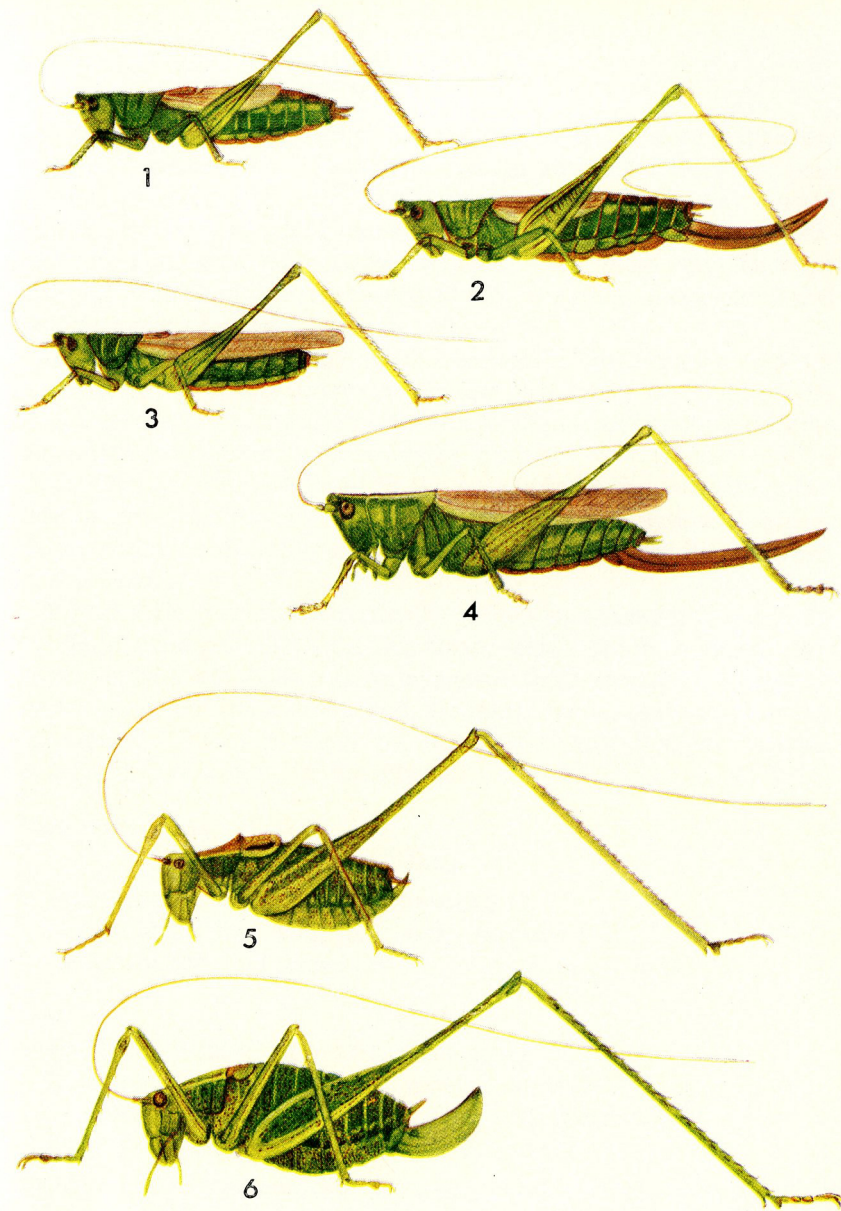


PLATE VIII

f.p. 116

- 1 and 2. **Short-winged Cone-head** (*Conocephalus dorsalis*), $\times 2\frac{1}{2}$,
(1) male and (2) female.
3 and 4. **Long-winged Cone-head** (*Conocephalus discolor*), $\times 2\frac{1}{2}$,
(3) male and (4) female.
5 and 6. **Speckled Bush-cricket** (*Leptophyes punctatissima*), $\times 2\frac{1}{2}$,
(5) male and (6) female.