

# Great green bush-cricket

## 1. A Definition

The great green bush-cricket (*Tettigonia viridissima*) is a striking and beautiful insect, not only because it is large (indeed one of the largest insects of northern Europe at 40-54 mm long) and bright green, but particularly for its extremely loud and far-carrying song, which has been likened to a shrill computer



printer. The song is so loud that it may even be heard from a moving vehicle.

It occurs among rough herbage with abundance of brambles, thistles and bracken, but always in warm sunny places. In Devon the great green bush-cricket is found primarily in two kinds of places where this kind of vegetation occurs; along roadside verges - even motorways - and on the coast, principally on the south coast, but also on the north Devon coast. It also occurs in towns and cities, and here may survive on merely a few square metres of suitable vegetation.

## 2. Why an Action Plan?

Nationally, the great green bush-cricket has experienced a marked contraction in range over the past 50 years or so, and where it does still occur is less numerous than it used to be. It is not, however, a particularly rare species in Devon at present - indeed the County is a stronghold of the species in Britain - but this exciting insect deserves our attention, not least because it can be appreciated by specialists and the general public alike.

Invertebrates (other than butterflies, moths and dragonflies) are a part of our biodiversity which is somewhat neglected, and to many people they are simply "creepy crawlies". Raising understanding and interest in a conspicuous species like the great green bush-cricket will go a long way to challenging people's perceptions of invertebrates.

The continued existence of the great green bush-cricket relies primarily upon the maintenance of suitable coastal habitats and, where inland colonies occur, upon "untidiness", in that its preferred habitat is rank, coarse vegetation and scrub. Many might think of these places as waste ground, but for the great green bush-cricket and indeed for many hundreds of insects and other invertebrates it is a vital refuge.

### 3. Relevant ecology

The great green bush-cricket is generally found in shrubby areas with rough, untouched herbage, with plenty of thistles, brambles and other coarse plants, but always in a warm, generally south-facing situation. It requires areas of dry, light soil or short turf in which to lay its eggs. The species is also a familiar suburban insect, surviving on only a few square metres of suitable habitat in areas that have been neglected or unmanaged.

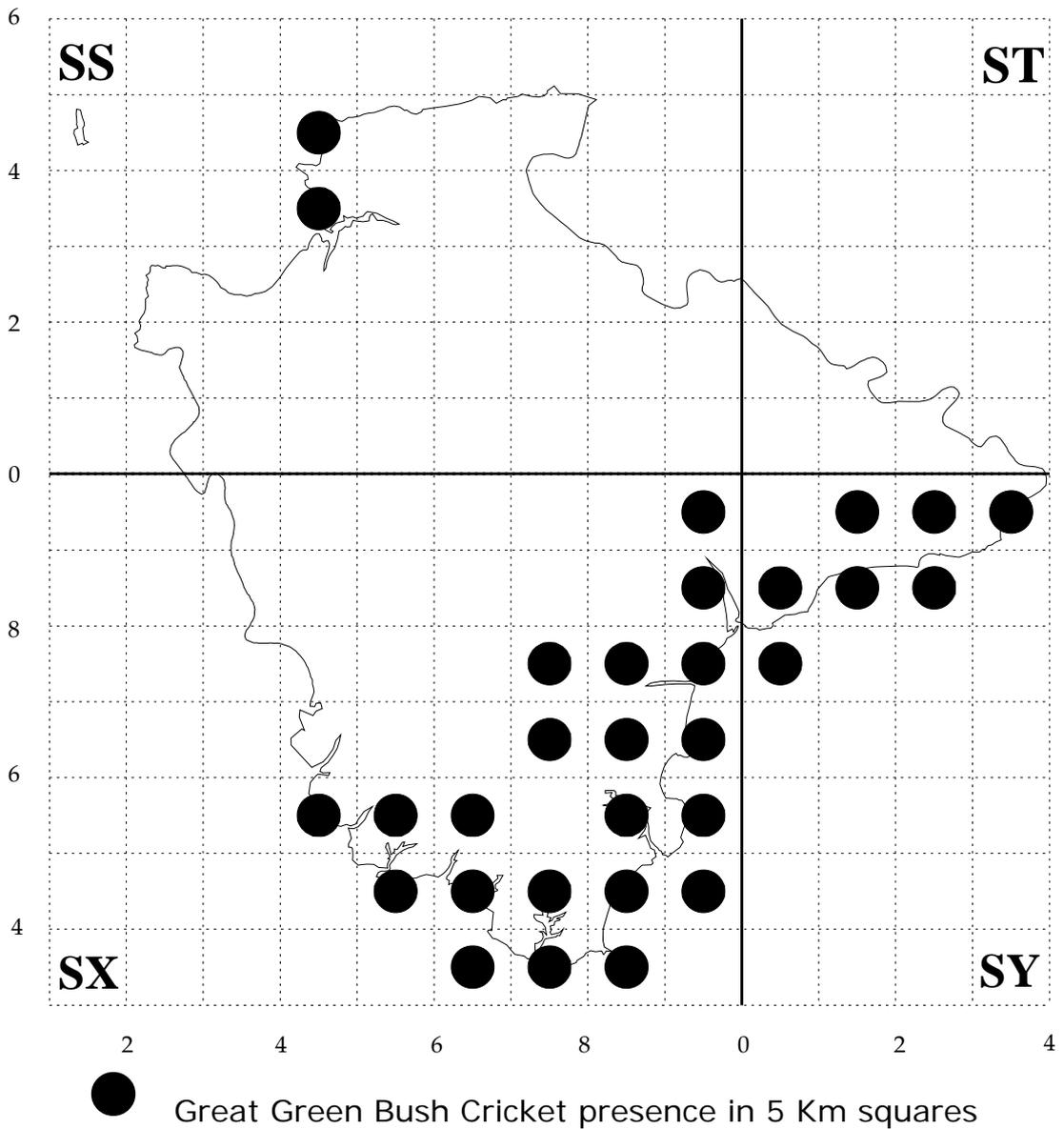
The song of the insect is its most noticeable and striking characteristic. It is extremely loud and far-carrying, and is delivered solely by the males in late summer from the afternoon and well into the night.

The eggs are laid singly in soil, turf or other crevices in the ground. Bright green and green-eyed nymphs emerge in May and June, and these undergo seven or eight nymph stages before reaching adulthood in late July.

The species feeds on a wide variety of herbage, but also other insects.

### 4. Distribution of great green bush-cricket in Devon

(1998)



(Data supplied by ITE, JNCC and NERC)

## 5. Current population (1998)

In the British Isles the great green bush-cricket is confined to the warm southern counties, more or less south of a line drawn from the Wash to the Bristol Channel, and extending along the south coast of Wales. It is most common along the Channel coast, and inland is found only locally.

In Devon it is found primarily in coastal situations, especially the south coast, but also is locally abundant inland where suitable habitat prevails, and it is not uncommon in the lanes and hedgerows of the South Hams. It is found in 30 10km grid squares in the County.

The great green bush-cricket is still a numerous insect in Devon in suitable

locations, and the population is, thankfully, far too great to be able to count.

## 6. Current problems for great green bush-cricket in Devon (1998)

**Agricultural “tidiness” and intensification** result in a scarcity of the coarse vegetation, scrub and rough grassland (particularly along field margins and hedgerows) which are the insect’s habitats. Over-grazing and too frequent cutting of herbage is a particular problem.

**Development** of previously derelict, vegetated suburban sites that are a favoured habitat for the species.

**Road verge management:** road verges are a major habitat for the great green bush-cricket, and relatively infrequent cutting/low management provides the kind of rank vegetation and scrub that the species favours. If a verge is cut too frequently however, it becomes unsuitable.

**The reintroduction of grazing and cutting regimes** on abandoned sites, particularly coastal, in order to favour species requiring short vegetation without scrub, may be considered detrimental to the great green bush-cricket since the species favours areas of rank vegetation with scrub, although pockets of un-grazed land would invariably ensure the existence of these habitats.

**Lack of understanding and awareness** of the species and its ecological requirements is detrimental to the conservation of the species.

## 7. Recent changes in population

The species nationally is known to have disappeared from many inland and coastal sites, particularly in central and northern counties, due to factors such as increased urbanisation and intensification of agriculture.

In Devon the species does not seem to have suffered great losses, and the County is indeed something of a stronghold, especially in the south and east.

## 8. Current protection

The great green bush-cricket is not protected by any specific legislation.

## 9. Biodiversity planning context

## Associated Action Plans within the Devon BAP:

- Sea cliff and slope
- Species-rich hedgerows
- Cities, towns and villages
- Barn owl
- Cirl bunting

## 10. Biodiversity objectives and targets for great green bush-cricket in Devon

Please note: objectives and targets have not yet been reviewed.

### Objective 1

Ensure that Devon's population of great green bush-cricket does not decline.

Target:

- Ongoing.

### Objective 2

Gain an understanding of the distribution and numbers of the species in Devon so that its population can be monitored.

Target:

- County-wide monitoring programme to be in place by 1999.

### Objective 3

Foster increased understanding and awareness of the existence of the great green bush-cricket, its habitat requirements and what can be done to encourage it and other wildlife that favours that habitat.

Target:

- Initiate public involvement survey of the great green bush-cricket by 1999 to

achieve both an understanding of the distribution and numbers of the species and to stimulate awareness of it and of invertebrates in general.

## 11. Wider benefits from pursuing these objectives

The pursuit of the objectives and targets set out above will not only benefit the great green bush-cricket. Conservation has wider benefits and advantages for society, by providing a resource that is the basis of many aspects of the local economy, and by adding to the quality of life of the people of Devon in ways that are beyond financial measure. Thus enhancing the interests of biodiversity will also enhance the interests of society as a whole. Some of these wider benefits are as follows:

- Increased recognition of areas of overgrown vegetation and scrub as valuable wildlife refuges. Scrub is a much maligned habitat that supports a wealth of plant and animal life. The great green bush-cricket can be regarded as a “flagship” for scrub communities.
- Heightened public recognition and understanding of the wildlife around us, and the value of the commonplace as well as the rare.
- Raised appreciation of invertebrates as an important element of our biodiversity, and as a vital component of many food chains.

## 12. Priority or indicative actions for great green bush-cricket in Devon

Action	Key Partners
1. Promote extensively managed field margins through agri-environment schemes especially in south Devon.	DEFRA; FWAG; DWT; CCMS
2. Raise awareness of the species and its habitat requirements to help encourage appropriate management of cliff and slope sites, field margins, hedgerows and roadside verges for the species especially in coastal and inland areas of southern Devon.	DWT; NT; CCMS; LAs; HA; FWAG
3. Continue to publicise the importance of the great green bush cricket to the wider public to help promote interest and understanding of ‘creepy crawlies’ and to encourage recording.	DWT; DIF; CCMS
4. Continue to survey and monitor the population for the purposes of conservation. The public can carry out surveys using ‘song’.	DWT; DIF; CCMS; SWWA; NT

Great Green Bush-Cricket Action Plan Champion - South Hams Coast and Countryside Service

### Abbreviations used in text and table

BAP            Biodiversity Action Plan  
 Devon BAP  
 Version: May 2009

CCMS	Coast and Countryside Management Services of Local Authorities
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DIF	Devon Invertebrate Forum
DWT	Devon Wildlife Trust
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
LAs	Local Authorities
NPAs	National Park Authorities
NT	National Trust
SWWA	South West Way Association