

# Species Statement for Sussex

## Field Cricket *Gryllus campestris*

### 1. Introduction

The field-cricket is a flightless insect of short, warm, tussocky grasslands which have between 10 and 50% bare ground. Oviposition and early nymphal stages are associated with patches of bare ground. Later development and overwintering occurs within grass tussocks, at the base of which the field-cricket constructs its burrows. As such, it is a species of early- to mid-successional grassland rather than established meadows. This successional component may be naturally extended on steep, south-facing banks. The species reproductive success is naturally sporadic, with occasional large population increases interspersed with periods of several years when the population naturally decreases. One factor driving this pattern is the weather conditions over each yearly reproductive cycle; another factor is the availability of suitable sunny, bare ground for oviposition.

The field-cricket is an extremely rare, declining and vulnerable insect which, in the UK, is restricted to one natural population, consisting of three sub-populations, within one square kilometre in West Sussex. Two reintroduced populations have been established, both of which are also in West Sussex. Other reintroductions within its confirmed natural range are planned. This species has always had a very restricted range in England, being bounded (approximately) to the east by the River Arun, to the west by the Solent, to the north by the North Downs and to the south by the Isle of Wight. The majority of records are from sandstone areas, although there are a few from the chalk. Records from outside this area either refer to accidental imports from the Continent or, more often, to misidentifications of the call of the house cricket, *Acheta domesticus*. The field cricket is widespread in southern and central Europe, north to the Netherlands and Germany, although it is in severe decline throughout much of its range. Towards the southern edge of its range it becomes a montane species, being replaced at lower latitudes by *Gryllus bimaculatus*.

In Great Britain this species is classified as *Endangered*. It is given full protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

## **2. Current Factors Affecting the Species**

- Inappropriate site management reducing the availability of bare ground areas.
- Unfavourably warm winters followed by wet spring weather. This is a possible scenario under global warming.
- Invasion of acidic grasslands by bracken.

## **3. National Species Action Plan**

National Species Action Plan objectives and targets are as follows:

- Maintain populations at all known sites.
- Enhance the population size at all known sites by 2010.
- Restore populations to further suitable sites within the historic range to achieve a total of ten viable populations by 2010.
- Maintain an ex situ programme to provide material for reintroductions and ecological research.

## **4. Current Action**

This species has been part of the EN's Species Recovery Programme since 1991. Under this programme, a species action plan was written in 1995 and has been revised annually since then.

The last fully native population is, in part, on an SSSI. Both reintroductions are on SSSIs.

## **5. Objectives**

- i. Maintain populations at all known sites.
- ii. Enhance the population size at all known sites by 2010.
- iii. Restore populations to further suitable sites within the historic range to achieve a total of ten viable populations by 2010.
- iv. Maintain an ex situ programme to provide material for reintroductions and ecological research.

## **6. Targets and Costs**

**This Species Statement has now been archived**

## **7. Potential**

## **8. Action plan**

**This Species Statement has now been archived**

## **9. Monitoring/Review**

This action plan will be monitored by the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership annually and reviewed and updated by the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership every five years.

## **10. References**

**UK Biodiversity Group**, (1999). National Species Action Plan for field cricket, *Gryllus campestris*.

## **11. Consultation**

## **12. Appendices**