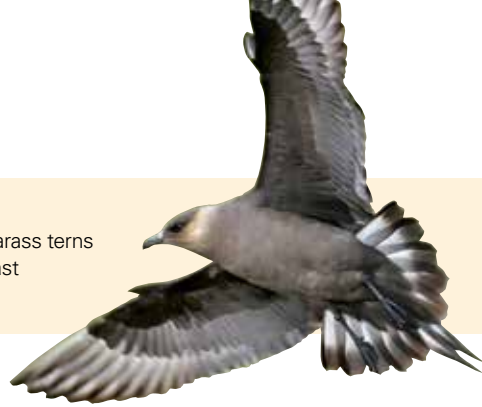


Look out for hummingbird hawkmoths



Arctic skuas harass terns around the coast



TINY & WILD ROSS PIPER

Crickets and grasshoppers

These well-known insects provide nature's summer soundtrack...

In the UK we have 23 species of cricket and 11 species of grasshopper, including a few exotics that have been accidentally introduced. They range from cryptically coloured and easily overlooked ground-hoppers (*Tetrix* spp.) to species such as the great green bush-cricket (*Tettigonia viridissima*) and the exceedingly rare and unusual mole cricket (*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*), both of which rank among our most impressive insects at around 5cm long!

Sound is extremely important to these animals, especially for the purposes of courtship, and it is how they communicate among the tangle of vegetation where they often reside. Indeed, the cryptic colouring of these animals and their predilection for long grasses and dense bushes means you are more likely to hear them than see them. The call of every species is unique, and a well-trained ear can pick out the many species that inhabit any given area, from the ultrasonic clicks of the speckled bush-cricket (*Leptophyes punctatissima*) that is barely audible to our ears, to the loud, distinctive rasp of

the field grasshopper (*Chorthippus brunneus*).



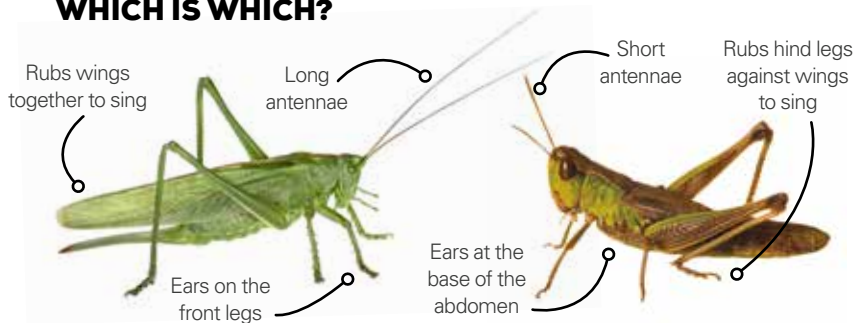
Before you go out on a grasshopper or cricket foray take a look at species.orthoptera.org.uk/default.aspx, a superb resource where you can even listen to the "song" of every species.

The best time to look is in high summer, and the greatest variety of species is to be found in the south, with the Dorset Coast, the New Forest and the East Anglian coast and heaths supporting many species. Look in grassland, woodland edges and bogs. Once you're tuned into their songs, move carefully through any areas of long grass or dense vegetation and use your ears. Before long you'll be able to pinpoint the stridulating animal.



Dr Ross Piper is an entomologist, zoologist and explorer. His book, *Animal Earth*, is a cutting-edge introduction to animal diversity. Find out more at rosspiper.net

WHICH IS WHICH?



Great green bush-cricket

One of our largest insects, at more than 5cm long, it is found in southern England. Easiest to find at night when "singing". Look for it by torchlight in dense thickets of vegetation. ● Omnivorous – eats other small insects and plants ● Found in a variety of habitats ● Nocturnal

Meadow grasshopper

One of our most common and widespread species, as well as the green form of this grasshopper, a striking pinkish form is often to be seen. Look for it in all types of grasslands as well as heaths and dunes. ● Found in grasses ● Herbivorous ● Diurnal

EVENTS

Birdfair

17–19 August, Rutland Water



The world's largest wildlife event returns to Rutland Water, Rutland, this month and will be celebrating 30 years conserving nature. There'll be over 180 talks and events, many hosted by famous wildlife personalities such as Chris Packham, Bill Oddie and Steve Backshall. Come along and visit the RSPB stand and enjoy the Wildlife Zone, new for this year, featuring entertainment dedicated to our younger visitors. All details at birdfair.org.uk. The proceeds of this year's Birdfair will support the creation of Argentina's largest national park.

BBC Countryfile Live

2–5 August, Blenheim Palace

The RSPB will be at BBC Countryfile Live, a celebration of rural life in the beautiful surroundings of Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire. Visit our stand to take a walk around six different habitats to find out about the nature that depends on it, and how we are helping to save it. And keep the children entertained with exciting nature activities, from making mini beast hotels to upcycled animal crafts, which all count towards the RSPB Wild Challenge. countryfilelive.com

Photos: iStock; Getty; Alamy; Niall Benvie, Chris Gomersall, Jodie Randall, Jeroen Stiel, Ernie James (all rspb-images.com)