



Great Green Bush Cricket

Key Facts

- It is huge! – up to 5.4cm long
- A striking and beautiful bright green colour
- Incredibly loud male song
- Ears! on its front legs!

The great green bush-cricket *Tettigonia viridissima* is a Devon BAP priority species. The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan says: "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."

The GGBC is generally found in shrubby areas with rough, untouched herbage, with plenty of thistles, brambles and other coarse plants. It requires areas of dry, light soil or short turf in which to lay its eggs.

Like many other insects the GGBC hatches from an egg (late spring or early summer) as a juvenile form called a nymph and then passes through a number of stages, or instars, each one is larger than the last and gradually more like the mature adult form. The GGBC may have up to 9 instar stages before the adult. To move from one instar stage to the next the nymph sheds its entire outer body casing or exoskeleton! There is no cocoon or pupal stage, as in butterflies and moths, so the whole process is called incomplete metamorphosis.

Most male grasshoppers produce wonderful high pitched trilling songs by rubbing together (very fast) a series of pegs on the hind leg with thickened ridges on the fore wing – the whole process is called stridulation. The male crickets however, raise their wings and rub them together. As with other grasshoppers and crickets, the male puts on a courtship display for the female, producing different types of song first to attract the female to him and then during courtship proper, each song is unique to each species. Their 'ears' are on their front legs!

Generally the GGBC is nocturnal, although they often become active in late afternoon or early evening and continue to sing well into the night. This is different to grasshoppers that are more active in the day. They feed on plants and but also other insects, using their impressively sharp mouthparts for biting off bits and chewing them thoroughly - they have been known to nip inquisitive naturalists too!

Sources:

Devon BAP