

Wyre Forest Study Group

Lesser Marsh Grasshopper *Chorthippus albomarginatus* and brown variety of Meadow Grasshopper *Chorthippus parallelus* in Wyre Forest

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Lesser Marsh Grasshopper

Gary Farmer



Lesser Marsh Grasshopper, female

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In Britain, the Lesser Marsh Grasshopper was once a species of wet grassland and marshes, especially in coastal areas in association with estuaries (Ragge 1965). However, this species may now be found in all but the driest grasslands and was noted as being established on dry grassy hillsides in the West Midlands in 1988 (Marshall & Haes 1988).

The earliest known record of Lesser Marsh Grasshopper in Worcestershire is from south of Bredon Hill where Paul Whitehead discovered this species in 1993 at Westmancote and by 2014 John Dodgeson had recorded the most northerly colony in the county so far, at Coome Wood, Blackheath. And yet there were no records for the Wyre Forest area despite there being one isolated colony further north in Shropshire, first noted in 2013 (David Williams pers. comm).

The first possible sighting in Wyre came when Nicki Farmer photographed a very early instar grasshopper in Button Oak Meadow in 2014 which was thought to possibly be Lesser Marsh Grasshopper. However, subsequent visits to the site in search of this species were in vain. It was not until 2017 when the Wyre Forest Study Group had organised an Orthoptera Identification Day that a positive record was made, not in Button Oak Meadow but near Unclys Farm in an open area at Ruskin Land. This is a neat looking grasshopper with minimal or no mottling. They are usually straw-coloured but can be matt green or a combination of the two and the colours are always subdued compared to other species. Lesser Marsh Grasshopper is most likely to be confused with the Meadow Grasshopper and the recent arrival into the county of a brown variety of Meadow Grasshopper requires some caution with identification. Interestingly the brown-form of Meadow Grasshopper was present at the Ruskin Land site as well and this may also be a first record for Wyre.



Brown form of Meadow Grasshopper, female

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Brown form of Meadow Grasshopper, female

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