

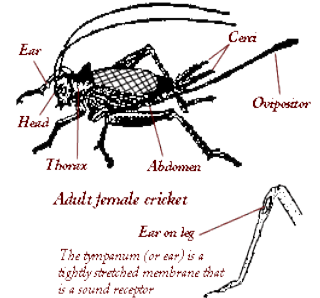
CRICKETS

Phylum, Arthropoda; **Class**, Insecta; **Order**, Orthoptera

Identifying Features

Appearance (Morphology)

- Brown to black
- Front wing varying in length, covering half to entire abdomen
- Antennae about as long as distance from head to end of abdomen
- Wings held flat over body
- Hind wings folded and hidden under leathery front wings



Adult Males and Females

Female with long ovipositor (ventrally attached) in rear (may appear as two pieces); both sexes have cerci (segmented, tail-like appendages attached dorsally). The wings are fully extended over the abdomen. Some species may not have wings.

Immatures (different stages)

Immatures look like adults, but do not have fully developed wings. Older nymphs may show development of wing pads. The female's ovipositor begins to show before it is an adult and increases in length with each successive molt.

Natural History

Food

Crickets are omnivores and scavengers feeding on organic materials, as well as decaying plant material, fungi, and seedling plants.

Habitat

Crickets live under rocks and logs in meadows, pastures and along roadsides. Many are nocturnal.

Predators

Spiders, some wasps, ground beetles, birds, small rodents and lizards are cricket predators.

Interesting Behaviors

To attract mates, males produce a sound made by rubbing their forewings against each other. The resulting chirping sound is picked up by the female's ears on her front legs. The chirp sounds are different for each species so that individuals can find their own species. Females lay eggs in the soil with their ovipositor.

Impact on the Ecosystem

Positive

Crickets breakdown plant material, renewing soil minerals. They are also an important source of food for other animals.

Negative

Crickets may injure seedlings and large numbers can be destructive. Males songs can be quite loud.