

WART-BITER BUSH CRICKET

Species Status Report
2020

the
species
recovery
trust



Project aims

- To ensure that Lydden Temple Ewell remains a suitable site for the crickets
- To re-engage with other stakeholders working on the conservation of the species.



Summary

In the UK, the Wart-biter Bush Cricket is only found in the south of England. It is unclear how widespread the species was in the past, and it may always have been rare in England, but it now survives at only 5 sites, Calstone Downs in Wiltshire, Castle Hill, Mount Caburn and Deep Dene in East Sussex, and Lydden Temple Ewell in Kent. At three of these sites the cricket became extinct and had to be reintroduced, at Lydden Temple Ewell and Mount Caburn in the 1990s and 2000 and at Deep Dene in 2015. The species is considered to be endangered in the UK, and thus facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future.

The crickets have very precise habitat requirements in the UK. They need areas of bare ground for females to oviposit, areas of short sward for early instar nymphs to allow them to bask in sunshine, and areas of taller vegetation for adults and late instar nymphs, to provide cover and protection from predators. The crickets are omnivorous and also require vegetation rich in smaller invertebrates. In areas of continental Europe the crickets seem to be able to survive in a wider range of habitat types and in a less precise vegetation structure. It has been suggested that in the northern part of their range the crickets may be more reliant on this precisely defined vegetation structure as a result of the lower average temperatures. This means that maintaining suitable habitat is essential for the survival of the crickets at the UK sites.

We have been working to protect this species since 2013, and this year, our Wart-biter Bush Cricket project has regained momentum, through increased engagement with other stakeholders working on the species and the completion of habitat work at Lydden Temple Ewell.



Habitat Work at Lydden Temple Ewell

By re-engaging with stakeholders on this species, it became clear that there was a need for further scrub clearance at Lydden Temple Ewell. It had been over four years since our last scrub clearance work on the site. Because of the precise habitat needs of the species, it seems likely that this will need to be undertaken on a fairly regular cycle to ensure that the habitat remains suitable for the species.

This work was carried out in the autumn of 2020. A contractor was brought in to clear the steep slopes with a robo-mower and a cut and collect machine on the flatter areas. This important scrub clearance work has dramatically improved the habitat for the Wart-biter Bush Cricket, and we hope that this will help to boost the population next year.



Conclusions

- We undertook some important habitat work at Lydden Temple Ewell to remove encroaching scrub.
- We hope that this will lead to a population boost in 2021.
- We will need to keep on top of this in the future to ensure that the site remains suitable.