

THE ENIGMATIC MOLE
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Howard Inns

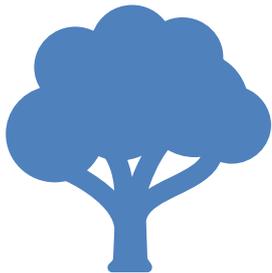


Mole-cricket *Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*

Nationally Rare, Critically Endangered

[protected] (35-50 mm body length)

MYSTERIOUS underground creature, an ENIGMA, or a PEST? (unwelcome guest to the gardener)



*Natural England Commissioned Report
NECR187 (2015)*

...There have only been occasional reports (of presumed accidental imports) away from the New Forest since [1960]).

Recent results up to 2024

- Small population monitored since PDB first heard males singing in May 2014 BROCKENHURST research site, following a lead [later found to have persisted since at least 2003]
- Peak - heard 10 males singing on 7-8 May 2018 when another site was identified
- The only time one appeared above ground was when a CD of mole-cricket song was played on 14 May 2018

TECHNIQUES:

- Listened for song from dusk and recorded it during the brief breeding season (late April to May)
- Watched for any activity above ground via torch-light on warm nights, in an effort to learn more about their behaviour
- Looked for burrows/CE used home-made sound recording gear
- Attempted to find other Forest sites – became aware of at least two but no access
- (PDB checked a greenhouse in Guernsey in July 2024)



Studying New Forest Mole- crickets



Colin Easton

2025 monitoring – a different strategy

Monitor existing sites but also:

Follow up old records, even from 1800s

Prospect sites for 2025 & beyond

Use other equipment and a different methodology for recording song

2025 monitoring – new equipment RESULTS

- another new site, following up old leads, but we were not expecting to hear them by the roadside!





2025 monitoring – new equipment RESULTS

HOWARD INNS – one of the new sites



PB1 Site Overview Chart



PB1 Site Summary



Site Habitat

Damp areas (stream/ditch or water nearby) with tussocks, including near track

Other Comments

This site has been active since 2014 and was the only confirmed site in the New Forest



PB1 Vigil Reports



29/04/2025

Four males singing. Calling started 8.55 pm or slightly later with some start-up calls before continuous singing, stopping on occasion

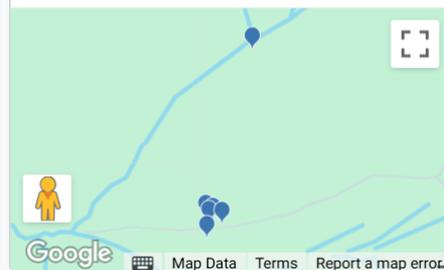
09/05/2025

Possibly one brief start-up call near track. One male singing from 8:30 near bridge. Conclusion - too cool

16/05/2025

Two males singing. (Also present: Simon Curson (NE))

PB1 Singing/Sighting Map





RS1 Site Overview Chart

RS1 Site Summary

Site Habitat
wet, muddy areas by road, with tussocks nearby

RS1 Vigil Reports

03/05/2025

Calling (#1) had already started on arrival, with continuous singing starting at 8.40 pm. Singing stopped on occasion, possibly due to disturbance and definitely by playing mole-cricket song, but resumed after a gap of c.5 minutes. Calling (#2) about from dusk at 9.10 pm.

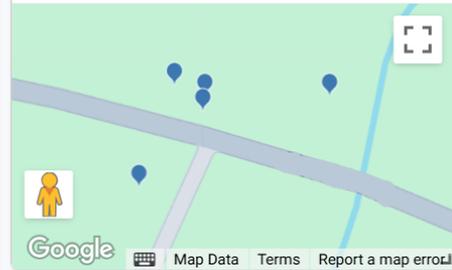
11/05/2025

2 males singing in different areas than 3 May 2025

12/05/2025

One male singing loud. (Also present were guests John&Denise Bingham).

RS1 Singing/Sighting Map





VE1 Site Overview Chart



VE1 Site Summary

Site Habitat
classic stream, with plentiful tussocks, although some dry due to season this year



VE1 Vigil Reports

09/05/2025
Quiet singing in distance at only 8C

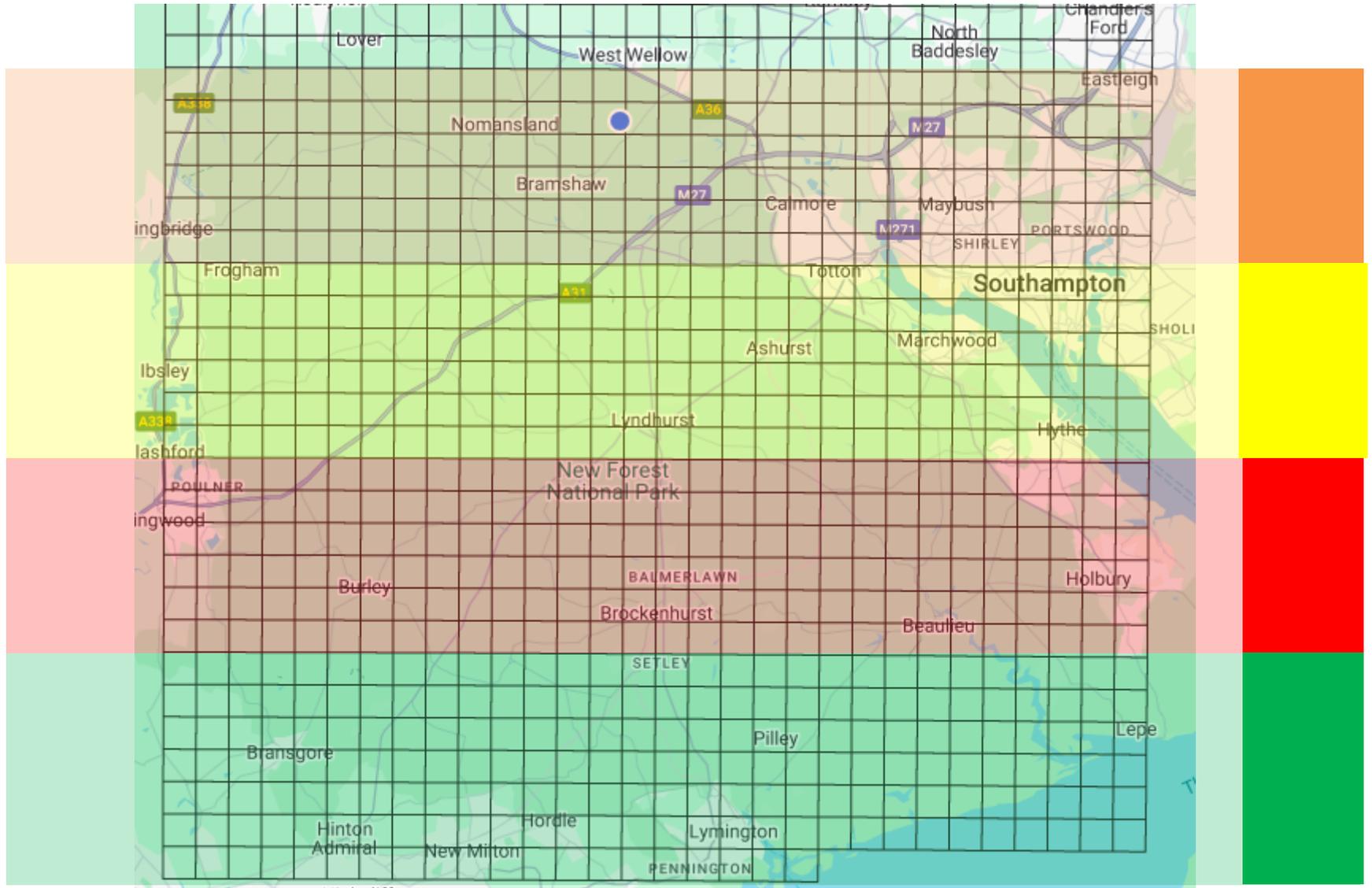
11/05/2025
Five males singing, often singing well before dusk with birds still singing; occasionally stopped singing

09/06/2025
Perfect evening but NIL return: end of season?

VE1 Singing/Sighting Map



Molecricket Zones



Donated specimens from a garden

- NE permit obtained by other contacts – several specimens obtained during partial dig of vegetable garden.
- Now being reared in a facility in Kent as part of a Species Recovery program – to learn more about behaviour, establish a donor population for release in suitable receptor sites (our team will give advice on this)



SONG [Bennet-Clark 1970]

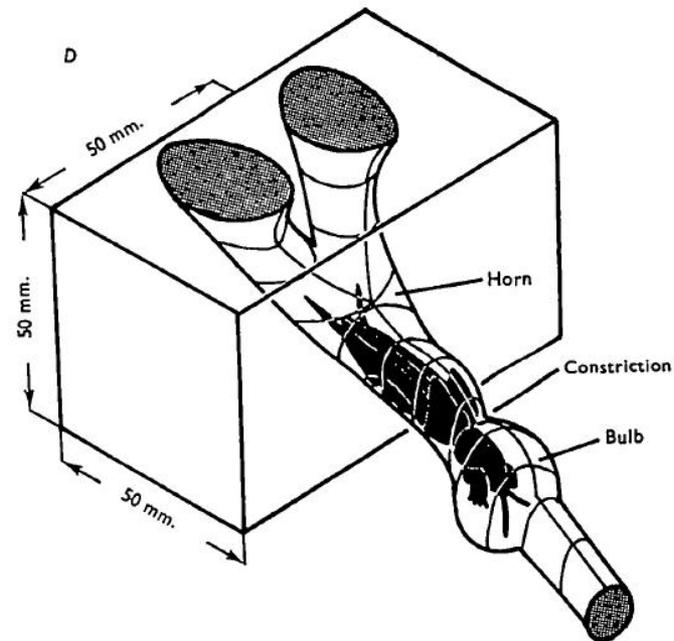
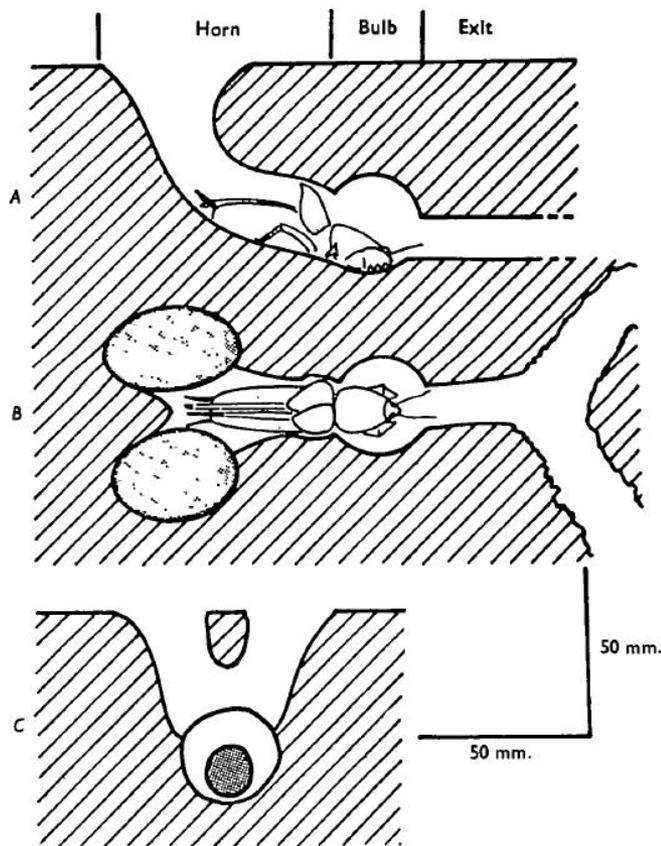


Fig. 15. Drawings of the singing burrow of *Gryllotalpa vineae*. *A*, looking horizontally, *B* looking from above and *C* from the right of *A*, horizontally. The earth is indicated by cross-hatching and the position of the insect is shown in *A* and *B*. Holes are shown by stippling. *D* is an isometric diagram of a different burrow, and vertical or horizontal profiles have been drawn at 10 mm. intervals. The animal is drawn *in situ* and dimensions are indicated by a rectangular block.



PLANS for 2026 and beyond

- EXPAND THE TEAM
- MONITORING of existing sites with PARABOLIC DISHES
- IDENTIFY AND PROSPECT MORE SITES
- ECO-ACOUSTICS set up and interpret results
- IF BREEDING IS A SUCCESS, HELP WITH RELEASE IN NEW FOREST DONOR SITES
- PUBLISH RESULTS

OTHER TEAMS INVOLVED:

- Molecular work being facilitated by contacts from Somerset (and/or Buglife), who will also monitor the vegetable garden donor site [at our suggestion paving slabs already on site]
- *We are aware of reared material from European stock (Netherlands?), due to be released in 'beaver wetlands' in 2026 [source: Keep it Wild Species Recovery Centre]*

References

- Brock, P.D. (2017) Mole Cricket *Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa* (L.) in the New Forest, Hampshire. *Atropos* 58: 27-33.
- Brock, P.D. (2018) An update on Mole-cricket *Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa* (Linnaeus, 1758) in the New Forest, Hampshire. *Atropos* 62: 37-40.
- Brock, P.D., Easton, C., & Inns, H. (in press). Follow up studies on the Mole-cricket *Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa* (Linnaeus, 1758) in the New Forest, Hampshire.

Download from Paul D. Brock RESEARCHGATE
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