
GROUNDHOPPERS OF BADENOCH AND STRATHSPEY



- Groundhoppers are relatives of grasshoppers and crickets.
- They have short antennae and a long pronotum (the area immediately behind the head) that covers the wings. Grasshoppers also have short antennae but have a short pronotum revealing visible wings while the crickets have long antennae.
- They produce no song, unlike grasshoppers and crickets which make a conspicuous 'chirping' song by way of rubbing their legs against their wings.
- They overwinter as either nymphs or as immature adults. They re-appear following hibernation in around May or June.
- They are active during the day.
- They are approximately one centimetre long as adults.
- They are able to swim by kicking their hind legs and are also able to swim underwater by using their hind legs as paddles.
- They mainly feed on mosses and algae.
- There are 3 species of groundhopper to be found in the UK though only 2 of these are to be found in Scotland and in Badenoch and Strathspey.

Firstly, there is the Common Groundhopper (*Tetrix undulata*) which is fairly common and the one that you are most likely to see, though in Badenoch and Strathspey there is also a nationally very rare long-winged form (macropterous form) of this species which should be looked out for as is a Highland speciality and not often seen. Care should be taken not to confuse this long-winged form with the very similar-looking Slender Groundhopper.

The Common Groundhopper is a sturdy small insect that can be found in a variety of both wet and dry habitats. It requires bare ground and low vegetation with plenty of moss and can be quite frequent in woodlands. It can come in a variety of colours from a sandy colour through to almost black. As an adult it is about 1cm long (macropterous form is about 1.5 cm long) and can mainly be seen in the summer months between June and September.

The best way to identify this species is by its prominent keel running the length of the top its body. The pronotum that does not extend beyond the hind legs in its common form while in the macropterous form the wings and pronotum reach beyond the hind legs though still has the very prominent keel.



The Common Groundhopper (*Tetrix undulata*)



The Common Groundhopper macropterous form (*Tetrix undulata* f. *macroptera*)

Secondly, there is the Slender Groundhopper (*Tetrix subulata*) which is extremely rare in Scotland, being mainly a southern UK species, and has only been confirmed from one site and there are possible sightings at two other sites.

One site where this species has been confirmed is on the edge of a woodland in Boat of Garten where one individual was found in 2008 by members of BSCG and was the first record ever confirmed for Scotland. A second site where this species may well occur is a heathland area known as An Camas Mor which is on the opposite side of the River Spey from Aviemore, though this site needs further research to definitively confirm this species presence. There is also a record from Dumfries and Galloway in 1995 though this record appears not to have been confirmed.

Unfortunately, though this groundhopper has only recently been discovered, both sites in Strathspey are currently under threat from large proposed housing developments.

These finds of this species are an exciting find and may well represent a previously unknown northern population and further research and surveying is vital to further confirm its presence and understand its habitat requirements.

The Slender Groundhopper can occur in a variety of body colour from brown, red or green tinges. As an adult it is about 1.5cm long. It differs from the Common Groundhopper in that the pronotum and wings extend beyond the tips of the hind legs but does not have such a prominent keel running along the top of the body.



The Slender Groundhopper (*Tetrix subulata*)



Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group.

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