

ON SOME HABITS OF HOUSE CRICKETS, *ACHETA DOMESTICA* (L.)
(ORTH., GRYLLIDAE)

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Reprinted from 'The Entomologist's Monthly Magazine', Vol. xc

Date of publication: December 31st, 1954.

W. Bunting (1954, *Ent. mon. Mag.*, **90**:214-215) has recently described a method for rearing house crickets in captivity. Having used a similar procedure during several years, I agree with the general rules outlined by Mr. Bunting. I should, however, express some reserve about the statement that for this insect 'free water is neither required *nor desired*'.

It is quite obvious, as Mr. Bunting points out, that crickets can obtain moisture from a vegetable source and grow successfully without free water. Actually, when exposed to a humidity gradient, they normally fail to react positively towards high percentages of air moisture (cf. J. Leclercq, 1947, *Arch. Intern. Physiol.*, **55**:99). Nevertheless they react positively when starving or dehydrated. This reaction stops again when they are allowed to drink water (*loc. cit.*).

Attraction of house crickets by free water is not exceptional. Specimens can often be found in meadows, fallen on the water of drinking troughs (cf. J. Leclercq, 1941, *Natuurh. Maandbl.*, **30**:69). In captivity, they also come to drink, and eventually drown themselves in attempting to drink, if jars with water are introduced in their cages (drowning can be avoided by supplying water in glass tubes closed with wet cotton-wool). Their way of drinking is similar to that of cockroaches and suggests that their antennae function as hygroreceptors (cf. J. Leclercq, 1946, *Bull. (Ann.) Soc. ent. Belg.*, **82**:73).

Furthermore it is not entirely true that crickets choose only dry places for their habitats. I have observed extremely abundant colonies settled in wet rubbish dumps and in sewers. Temperature may be responsible for their concentration in such places, but it would seem that moisture is not avoided as such, providing other conditions are favourable.

One further point may well be added though it may not involve a reaction to water or moisture. In the morning I often found house crickets fallen in empty sinks and buckets, near water pipes and pumps. I thought first that these specimens had just fallen accidentally in them and had simply been unable to climb out. But that kind of accident has been observed so often in many farms around Liège, that one may wonder if some kind of attraction should not be taken in account. As a matter of fact, most of the crickets I ever had in my house ended sooner or later by being trapped in such conditions.

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November 6th, 1954.