

Chabrier's bushcricket - *Eupholidoptera chabrieri garganica* (*La Greca, 1959*)

By Curtis Lakin

Background

This Tettigoniid species is new to culture in the UK and it is found in Southern Europe. The subspecies "garganica" is found in Corfu, Greece Italy and Albania. Young nymphs of this active bush cricket are brown however by the time that they reach adulthood they are very colourful with bright green, beige and black markings on the dorsal surface and sides with yellow and pink colouration on the ventral side. This particular culture originates from North East Corfu. The diet consists of other invertebrates, flowers and seeds.

Description and life History

This is a medium sized non winged species, with a body length of up to 30mm when adult. Females have a sabre shaped ovipositor which becomes noticeable 2 to 3 instars before adulthood is reached. The males appear slightly bulkier than the females and have an audible call song consisting of chirps lasting 2 seconds but it is heard sporadically in the evenings and at night all stages live on low vegetation and shrubs communally. Adults are around in June/ July and survive until late Autumn. The females lay eggs which overwinter producing nymphs the following Spring. Nymphs start hatching in March and April.

Culture Instructions

This species is not very difficult to rear in a dryish environment which mimics the Mediterranean climate. Climbing branches should be provided together with stones or other basking materials. An overhead striplight or other light source should be employed to give bright conditions with a day time ambient temperature of 22C – 30C. Because young nymphs are quite active and prone to jumping it is best to keep them in a large cage where access for feeding is through a moderate sized opening to reduce time spent retrieving escapees when changing food! A glass terrarium with sliding doors is suitable. Reasonable ventilation is important at all times. Regular cleaning out to prevent the growth of moulds is recommended otherwise fatalities will occur.

Eupholidoptera species show little signs of cannibalism if well fed on a high protein diet. Having said that, It is not advisable to keep individuals of radically different sizes together. This bush cricket is an opportunist feeder seeking out a high protein diet. They will take sedentary live foods including aphids, mealworms, maggots and caterpillars. They also eat tropical fish flake, flowers and seed pods of many plants. They particularly like plants of the Arum (Araceae) and poppy family (Meconopsis, Papaver etc) which contain toxic alkaloids. It is thought that biosynthesis of the toxins affords a degree of protection against predation. Matings are sometimes witnessed and females can be seen carrying the males spermatophore around after copulation in this species. Egg laying occurs after adults have been mature for about 3 weeks. Eggs are laid in a pot of compost which has organic material in it to help retain moisture. Eggs are best incubated in situ in a ventilated environment but given a Mediterranean winter for 3 months at between 5 and 12C.

