



FAST FACTS

Name: Two-striped grasshopper

Scientific name: *Melanoplus bivittatus*

Average length: 1 - 10 cm

Life expectancy: around two months

PHYSIOLOGY

There are 18,000 kinds of grasshoppers in the world. All species of grasshoppers share the common characteristic of being a long, slender insect and is known for its strong mandibles, or jaws, which are adapted for chewing. The grasshopper has two pairs of wings. The front pair is rigid, while the hind pair is larger, membranous and often brightly coloured. These wings help some species fly well, yet others fly poorly or not at all. It also has three pairs of legs, all of which are used for walking. The back pair is more muscular and used for jumping or initiating flight.

There are two main groups of grasshoppers: long-horned and short-horned, determined by the length of antennae. The two-striped grasshopper, a short-horned grasshopper, is recognized by the stripes on its back, the colours varying due to location and maturity.

The grasshopper has no ears. Instead it uses organs called tympana to hear, circular membranes found in the abdomen of the insect where the hind legs attach to the body. It also has five eyes. The two large eyes are on either side of the grasshopper's head, each with thousands of single lenses, allowing it to see in all directions. The three smaller eyes—one at the base of each antenna and one between the two antennae—are single eyes and it is unknown what their purpose is.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

The grasshopper is well known for its song, which is made in different ways by different subfamilies. Some make sounds by rubbing pegs on their hind legs together, some clatter their wings together in flight, some rub their wings together and others do not make any noise at all. Also renowned for its jumping ability, the grasshopper has strong hind legs to allow it to jump 20 times the length of its body.

The grasshopper is an herbivore. Some species eat only certain types of plants while others eat any type of plants it can find. It has been known to destroy entire crops of cotton, clover, alfalfa and other grains, where as the two-striped grasshopper eats plants that are toxic to cattle.

Other than humans, flies are the primary threat to the grasshopper, but it is also eaten by birds, reptiles, skunks, rodents, coyotes, beetles and spiders.

RANGE

The grasshopper lives in fields, meadows and anywhere that it can find vegetation to eat. It can be found almost everywhere in the world, except for the extreme cold regions of the north and south poles.