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Tessellana tessellata in Oregon (Orthoptera: Tettigoniidae)

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Tessellana tessellata in Oregon (Orthoptera: Tettigoniidae) *Ron Lyons*

Tessellana tessellata (Charpentier, 1825), formerly *Platycleis tessellata*, is a small, fully winged katydid, native to Europe and northern Africa. (For a discussion of the genus classification see Massa & Fontana, 2011.) In size and behavior it can easily be mistaken for a small grasshopper, especially from a distance. In the late summer and fall, its olive-brown coloration blends in well with the dried grass and weedy vegetation in which it is found. Rentz (1963) indicated that the elongate black eggs are laid in grass stems and pointed out that the species is “active during the day, but appears to be most active at night”.

The common name Tessellated Shieldback is used by Walker (2012), but you will find others using some variation on the name Brown-spotted Bush Cricket which is in use in Europe. The tessellations or spots referred to are the brownish-black areas on the front wings separated by light-colored cross veins. The wings are noticeably longer in some individuals than others.

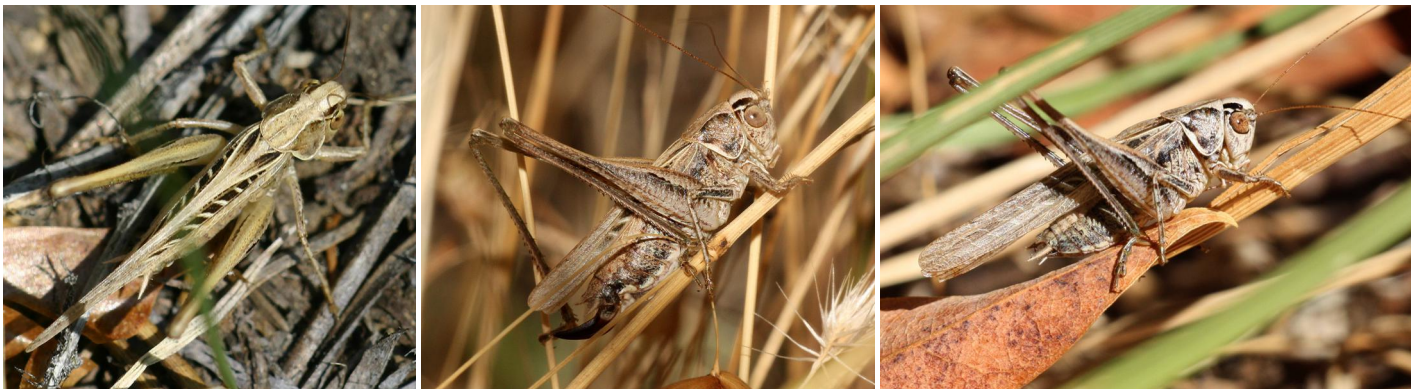
Tessellana tessellata was first reported in North America from Placerville, California by Strohecker (1955). He noted that the collector, Mr. R.O. Schuster, speculated that it might have been introduced with pines brought into the area by the Forest Service. Rentz (1963) provided additional records, also from central California. Rentz and Birchim (1968) added no additional locality records but noted that the species seemed to be expanding its range rapidly. Commenting on a photo posted online, Rentz (2010) indicated that *tessellata* “is now much more widespread and can be found in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco”. Some photos from California posted on BugGuide.net were taken as far south as San Diego County. I have encountered this species on the road after dark in Siskiyou County, California along the Ager-Beswick Road and near Montague.

Here in Oregon, I photographed a female in a small meadow south of Dutton Creek along the Pacific Crest Trail in Crater Lake National Park, Klamath County, on 29 July 2004. Later that year, the photos were posted on the Singing Insects of North America website (Walker, 2012). To my knowledge this was the

first public record of this species outside of central California. In 2008, Dana Ross collected it in the Chasm Creek and Jackson Creek drainages of the North Bank Habitat Management Area near Wilbur in Douglas County. The collection at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) contains four specimens taken from pitfall traps in 2009, two collected south of Grants Pass (Josephine County) and the two others south of Ruch (Jackson County).

In the last few years, *tessellata* has also shown up in ODA invasive species collections in the Portland area and Rice Hill in Douglas County (Jim LaBonte pers. comm., 2010). Several pictures from other Oregon locations have been posted online (c.f. <http://bugguide.net/node/view/87105/bgimage>). While there have been a flurry of reports from Oregon in the last decade, this species has apparently been present here for some time. The collection at Southern Oregon University contains a specimen collected by R. Gordon from Lookingglass, Douglas County in October 1994, the earliest record I have found.

On the afternoon of 29 August 2012, I visited the Oak Flat Campground along the Illinois River in Curry County near Agness. I encountered several *tessellata* individuals in a weedy grass area bordering the mixed woodland just before the descent to the riverside campground. Later, another individual was found quickly a short way up Forest Road 23 (Bear Camp Road from Agness to Grants Pass). Searches later the same day and on 4 September at various points along the Agness Road from MP 25 (west of Agness) as far west as MP 9 (just west of Lobster Creek) turned up other individuals in short order. (The Agness Road begins as Jerry's Flat Road [County Road 595] and becomes Forest Road 33, with the mileage measured east from Highway 101 in Gold Beach.) I heard lots of insects singing just west of MP 9 at Orchard Bar, but I did not see the insects involved. I have not searched for *tessellata* west of Orchard Bar. To my knowledge this is the first report of this insect near the Oregon coast and the first report for Curry County.



Left, dorsal view; female with long wings taken 29 July 2004 at Crater Lake National Park, Klamath County, Oregon; middle, profile; female with short wings 29 August 2012 at Oak Flat Campground, Curry County, Oregon; right, profile; male with long wings 29 August 2012 at Oak Flat Campground, Curry County, Oregon. Photos by Ron Lyons.

Farther north, *tessellata* has been reported from Pierce County, Washington, and there would appear to be no reason it will not eventually extend its range at least into southern British Columbia.

Another European katydid, *Meconema thalassinum*, the Drumming Katydid or Oak Bush Cricket, is also established in the Pacific Northwest. A picture taken in Corvallis in 2009 by David Lightfoot is posted on the Singing Insects of North America website (Walker, 2012). The ODA Annual Report (2010) indicated that this species was widespread in the Portland area. Images from Washington can be found on the internet (c.f. <<http://bugguide.net/node/view/8022/bgimage>>). It has also been found in southern British Columbia. Cannings et al. (2007) reported that specimens had been collected from the Vancouver area as far back as 1991.

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Note Added Regarding Reprint

The text and placement of materials in this reprint is the same as the original. However, the reprint was put together with a different layout program and so does not look identical to the original. The character sets used are equivalent to those used in the original, but they are not exactly the same. In addition, the character spacing differs slightly from the original.

The program used to generate the reprint does not distinguish between active and inactive hyphens in web addresses. Hence if an address were to be hyphenated at a natural break because the text border would be encountered, the hyphen would cause a problem. The inactive hyphens have been removed (2 cases).

Ron Lyons
October 15, 2020