

Insect expert's young son beats him to rediscovering endangered bug

June 26 2014, by Sean Kirby



Professor Karim Vahed, with seven-year-old son Gabriel, who re-discovered the endangered Scaly Cricket before him.

A leading expert on crickets, looking to prove an endangered UK colony had survived the harsh winter, was beaten to finding the insects - by his

seven-year-old son.

Professor of Entomology, Karim Vahed, from the University of Derby, was looking for evidence that a colony of Scaly Crickets (*Pseudomogoplistes vicentae*) had survived the winter's severe Atlantic storms.

The centimetre-long, wingless cricket is unusual, in that it lives among marine shingle and cobbles. It exists in only four known UK locations - Marloes in Pembrokeshire, Chesil Beach in Dorset, Branscombe in Devon and the Isle of Sark - and the species is officially classified as 'endangered'.

But it was Karim's seven-year-old son, Gabriel, who actually discovered that the small cricket had survived the winter bad weather, while on a trip with his father to the Pembrokeshire beaches.

Karim said: "I had been hunting among stones in a spot where the species had been found in previous surveys without much success. Then my son, Gabriel, called me over to a different area, saying 'there's three under this stone'. Further searching amongst the shingle and cobbles revealed the existence of a healthy population.

"I couldn't be prouder of him for beating me to the punch. If I produce a paper on the discovery, I might even have to share credit with him.



Scaly Cricket (*Pseudomogoplistes vicentae*).

"I'm not sure how the [crickets](#) survived the [winter storms](#). Judging from the debris on the beach, and the devastation caused to coastal villages and towns further up the coast, the storm waves must have reached right up to the cliff face.

"Scaly Crickets must have survived many [severe storms](#) during their evolutionary history. In a way, they rely on the effect of such events, as the banks of cobbles and shingle they inhabit are technically known as 'storm deposits'."

Commenting on the discovery, Dr Sarah Henshall, Lead Ecologist for Buglife, the invertebrate conservation trust, added: "This is great news. The Scaly Cricket is one of our rarest insects and we are delighted that the population remains healthy at Marloes Sands."

Karim - Programme Leader for the University's Masters (MSc) degree in Conservation Biology - has published a number of research papers on crickets, and is conducting a study of the ecology and life history of the Scaly Crickets, starting with their mating behaviour.

Male crickets usually attract a female by 'singing' to them, a sound made by the male rubbing its wings together, but Scaly Cricket males are wingless, so must have an alternative method of attracting a mate.

Provided by University of Derby

Citation: Insect expert's young son beats him to rediscovering endangered bug (2014, June 26)
retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-06-insect-expert-young-son-rediscovering.html>

| |
|--|
| <p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p> |
|--|