

Silent Slantfaced Grasshoppers

Subfamily Acridinae

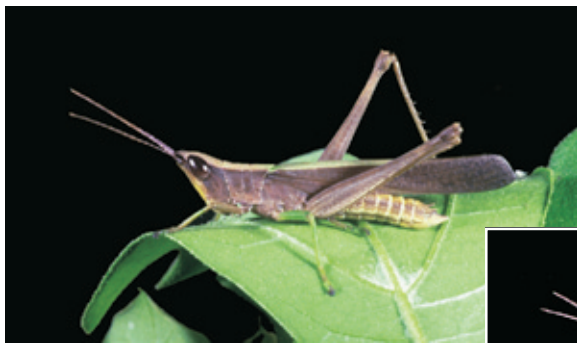
This is a very small subfamily in North America, with only one species known from the United States. However, several genera and numerous species occur in South America. Acridinae is very similar in appearance to the stridulating slantfaced grasshoppers (subfamily Gomphocerinae), but as the common name suggests, members of this subfamily lack stridulatory pegs on the hind femora of males and thus do not produce sound.

Grasshoppers in this subfamily have a slanted face, as is found in Gomphocerinae, and flattened, sword-shaped antennae, which also are present among some gomphocerines and spurthroated grasshoppers (subfamily Cyrtacanthacridinae). Acridines lack a spine between the front legs (the prosternal spine), as is found in the lubber grasshoppers (subfamily Romaleinae) and spurthroated grasshoppers. Also, the hind wings are colorless or nearly colorless, lacking the dark band found in the bandwinged grasshoppers.

Only one species occurs in Florida:

Metaleptea

M. brevicornis (Johannson)



Clippedwing grasshopper
(Above: male. Right: female.)

Metaleptea brevicornis (Johannson)

Clippedwing grasshopper



Identification. This slantfaced species is distinguished by the angled tip of the forewings, a distinct contrast from the rounded or pointed wing tips found on nearly all other long-winged Florida species. The hind wings are not pigmented. Males of the species usually are green dorsally and brown laterally. Females are more variable, often colored mostly brown or green, but sometimes light brown dorsally and green laterally. The antennae are markedly sword-shaped. The hind tibiae are brownish. Males measure 25–38 mm in length, females 36–53 mm.

Similar Species. This species is not readily confused with others. The bandwinged grasshopper *Dissosteira carolina* has wing tips that are similarly angled, but is not a slantfaced species, and bears black hind wings.

Similar Species. This species is not readily confused with others. The bandwinged grasshopper *Dissosteira carolina* has wing tips that are similarly angled, but is not a slantfaced species, and bears black hind wings.

Distribution and Ecology. Clippedwing grasshopper has been collected throughout Florida, but though widespread, nowhere is it abundant. This species also occurs throughout eastern North America west to the Mississippi River, and in the South its distribution extends west into Texas. Its range includes most of Central and South America. The preferred habitat of clippedwing grasshopper is tall grasses along ponds and marshes. It also sometimes occurs in salt marshes. This species is a strong flier, and unlike most grasshoppers, sometimes is attracted to lights.