

THE THRILL OF THE Trill

FEEL THE RHYTHM OF CRICKET SONG!

by **jacob** rodenburg

No fall evening feels the same without the steady, rhythmic chorus of cricket song. The sound conjures up starlit nights, the spicy smell of fallen leaves, and the warmth of a crackling fire.

Crickets sing for the same reason frogs and birds do: to attract a mate. A male cricket rubs its wings together in an act called *stridulation*. The bottom of one wing has a hardened edge, or “scraper,” while the bottom of the other has a toothed ridge, or “file.” Each time the scraper hits a tooth, a click is produced. This causes the wings themselves to vibrate, creating the familiar cricket sound we all know so well! Because the rubbing is so fast, these individual clicks blend together into more musical chirrups or trills.

Did you know? Different species of insects produce distinctive song patterns! Sometimes it’s hard to tell the difference between a cricket’s song and those of other insects. Here are some of the more common sounds they make. How many do you recognize?

| INSECT SPECIES | SEASON | AM | PM | CALL DESCRIPTION |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----|----|--|
| Four-spotted tree cricket | Mid-August–early October | x | x | High, non-stop mechanical trill. |
| Snowy tree cricket | Late July–October | | x | Soft, rich, evenly spaced chirps “Treet.... treet....treet...” |
| Field cricket | Early May–October | x | x | Clear, loud chirps (one per second). |
| Allard’s ground cricket | July–November | x | x | Continuous, soft, even trill; pleasant. |
| Marsh meadow grasshopper | July–October | x | | Rapid, five-second series of raspy “ttrech” notes that increase in volume. |
| Carolina locust | Mid-July–October | x | | Crackling snaps or clicks made on take-off and during flight. |
| Dog-day cicada | July–mid-September | x | x | High-pitched, sustained buzz that starts out softly and increases in volume. |

Females crickets don’t produce sound but they do listen by using their front legs, which is where their eardrum, or *tympanum*, is located. You can tell the difference between a male and female cricket quite easily: female crickets have three “tails” (the middle is her *ovipositor* used to inject eggs into the soil) while males only have two!



For cool cricket games visit ecoparent.ca/kids/crickets