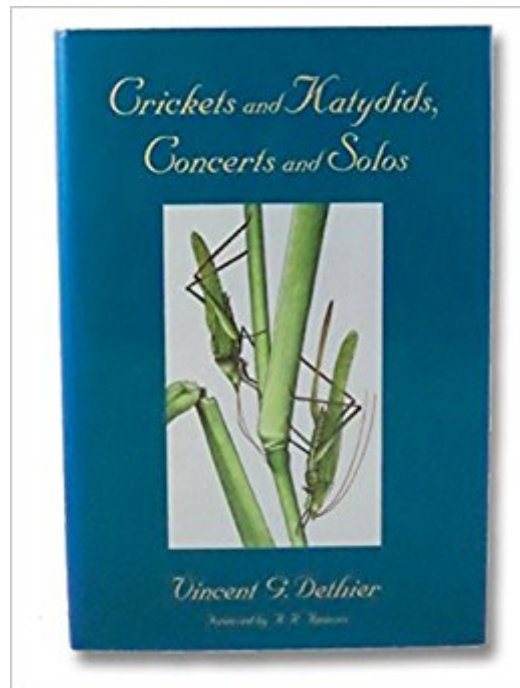




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Crickets And Katydids, Concerts And Solos



Synopsis

From Mount Washington to the salt marshes of Cape Cod, a chorus of insects chirrups and peeps and rustles away the golden hours of summer and fall. In "Crickets and Katydid", Vincent G. Dethier invites readers to share in the pleasure offered by these tiny musicians in our midst. A companion volume to G.W. Pierce's 1948 "Songs of insects", this book introduces amateur naturalists and lovers of nature to some of the more common singing crickets, locusts, and grasshoppers of the northeastern United States. Dethier emphasizes the "world" of these insects and their place in it. He presents a glimpse of the ecology of the singing Orthoptera, the conditions under which they are studied, and the people who have studied them. For those who wish to delve more deeply into the classification, structure, and habits of particular species, Dethier includes keys for identification of insects and their songs, as well as a table of seasonal distribution.

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Customer Reviews

Known for his ability to present complex scientific information clearly and entertainingly, Dethier introduces crickets, katydids, and grasshoppers (locusts), whose sounds, though familiar, are largely ignored by all but specialists. He writes of his experiences in the late 1930s, when as a graduate student he served as field assistant to the late George W. Pierce, famous for his work on insect sound production and detection. Dethier takes us on an informative and entertaining summer's tour of insects in the Franklin, New Hampshire area and acquaints us with their habits and songs. Not intended as an exhaustive treatment or field guide, his book does list important

references of the past century and gives keys to species and their songs. Rorer's charming black-and-white drawings adorn the text. Admirers of Dethier's previous works, e.g., *To Know a Fly* (1962), will welcome his latest effort.- Annette Aiello, Smithsonian Tropical Research Inst., PanamaCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Richly written, elegantly organized, and beautifully illustrated with Abigail Rorer's graceful line drawings, this charming reminiscence succeeds on every level. It illuminates the habits of New England's 40 or so orthopteran insects and teaches us to appreciate their adaptations and variation. It reminds us to attend to the world around us; to listen to its jubilant songs, breathe in the 'winey evanescence' of fallen apples and savor the caress of cool air flowing from the fringes of a shady hardwood forest. It recalls the pleasures of being young, of finding new facts and seeing new patterns in the mosaic of nature, and captures the ineffable sensations of a fine New England summer. (John R. Alden *Smithsonian Magazine*) This book is the product of Vincent Dethier's experiences studying the natural history and singing behavior of crickets and katydids. The book chronicles the emergence of orthopteran species over the summer season and their contributions to the chorus in fields and woods. The details of these insects' lives are fascinating, but I was even more impressed with the true theme of the book: the making of a scientist... This is a beautifully written natural history book. (Elizabeth Braker *Ecology*) [This book] can be enjoyed by anyone with even a passing interest in crickets and their repertoires. Dethier's writing is beautiful, almost poetic. (Jonathan Beard *New Scientist*)

In the late afternoon of a late summer day when the sun turns a room to amber, someone has left behind a thin book with an awkward name. It tells of heard, but unseen, things beyond the windows, of katydids and fiddling crickets. The author was, at the time, a young man during the Great Depression. He wrote of those days more than fifty years later with a clear mind and the lovely touch of a poet who worked in prose. He had been, in the early 1930's, an apprentice entomologist roaming the fields of Massachusetts. He not only noticed things most people rarely see. He sought those things out. He wrote well of humans, the old ones gathered nightly to watch the locomotive thunder by. He wrote equally well of cows "gloriously drunk" on long-fallen apples. But he wrote best of all about insects, of collecting crickets at night in a graveyard. He honored the locust, lauding their "tenure on Earth exceeding the period of occupation of human beings and an ability to compete successfully with people." Finally, he wrote movingly of summer shutting down and autumn nearing. He saw the once fresh and brilliant flowers fading to the "colors of the aged" and the "rough and

tweedy" fields "as though an old brown woolen jacket had been thrown over them to ward off the chill."Above all, this overlooked book is about the virtues of listening and paying attention, hearing the hidden things that also have value in their lives, and in ours.

This book by the author of *To Know A Fly* recounts Dethier's experiences as a graduate student in the 1930's doing field research in New Hampshire on the sounds made by crickets, katydids, locusts, and grasshoppers. In order to make recordings of these "songs" it was first necessary to capture the insects and much of this book describes his work in the field tracking down all the local varieties in a wide range of ecologies. He also gives technical explanations of how the sounds are produced. The technology was not available at the time, but I found myself wishing throughout the book that I could actually hear the sounds while reading about them. A companion CD would be much appreciated! This book is interesting but lacks the charm of his other books, particularly *To Know a Fly* and *The Ecology of a Summer House*.

Starting from the field laboratory at Franklin, New Hampshire and covering other areas in New England, Vincent Dethier introduces us to the rhythmic grace of the orthopterans. Each species of crickets, grasshoppers, katydids, etc. with their own songs to play while each individual played those songs with different styles. It is the 1930s at the time of the Depression. While at the field laboratories, Dethier who is a graduate student working with a professor during the summertime, record and interpret these songs. They work together to capture the songs of the unseen individuals in the fields. Behaviors of the orthopteran change as summer passes and autumn approaches, which are heard in the song they play for Mother Nature. This natural history book is written in a well-organized first person perspective. The moment I picked up this book, I did not have much knowledge or understanding of crickets nor did I know what katydids were. This was not just a book that an entomologist could enjoy. *Crickets and Katydids, Concerts and Solos*, educated me on the subject of orthopterans in a more artistic approach. The text was written accurately but was slightly difficult to keep up with some vocabulary. Finishing the book had a very satisfying feeling and also relief. Some points were redundant and lost my attention for a bit but learned a lot on the behaviors of crickets, grasshoppers, and locust. This book has definitely changed my way of enjoying scenery and cricket chirps. The book is written like a personal journal and the way Dethier shows his perspective while changing yours is beautifully executed. I recommend this book if you want a chill read as a music lover but you must also have an interest in entomology.

As I write this, just before an October dawn, a lone cricket fiddles a lonesome song. At daybreak he'll yield to hungry katydids chomping on our outdoor plants. As I listen, I think back to the times I read and reread this remarkable book. I first learned of it many years ago from an obituary of the author, Vincent Dethier, a former zoology professor at UMass. The book is an enthralling account of insect sounds as spring and summer wane into autumn. Superbly written in a style familiar to devotees of old nature books, the descriptions flow as smoothly as maple syrup. I'll surely read it again and again. I hope you do too.

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