

GRYLLOBLATTODEA

Rock Crawlers / Icebugs



The name Grylloblattodea, derived from the Greek "*gryll*" meaning cricket and "*blatta*" meaning cockroach, refers to the blend of cricket-like and roach-like traits found in these insects.

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Life History & Ecology:

Rock crawlers are a small and obscure group of insects found only at high elevations in the mountains of China, Siberia, Japan, and western United States and Canada. Cave-dwelling species have been found in Korea and Japan. These omnivorous insects scavenge for food on the surface of snowfields, under rocks, or near melting ice. They are active only at cold temperatures and move downward toward permafrost during warm seasons. As their ordinal name implies, rock crawlers have a blend of physical characteristics from both crickets (*gryllo*-) and cockroaches (*blatta*-). Some taxonomists include these insects as a

suborder or family within Orthoptera. Others believe these insects are the only survivors of a primitive lineage that gave rise to other orthopteroid orders.

Distribution:

Rare. Found in caves or near ice or snow at high elevations in mountains of Asia and North America.

	North America	Worldwide
Number of Families	1	1
Number of Species	11	25

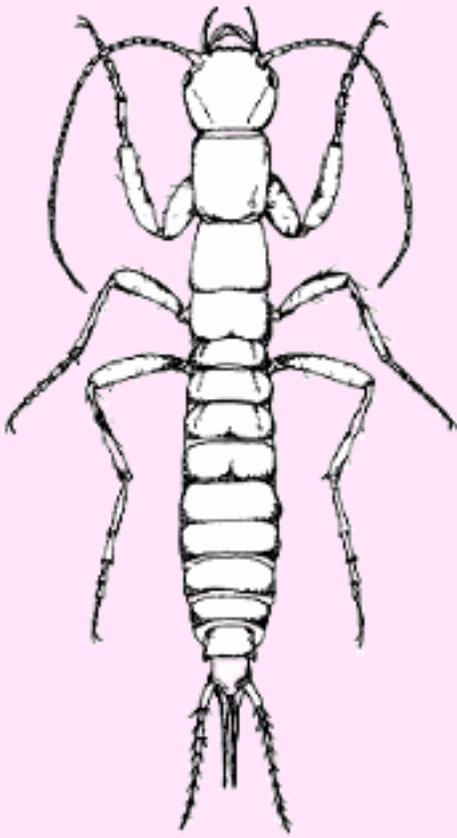
Classification:

Hemimetabola
incomplete development (egg, nymph, adult)

Orthopteroid
closely related to Orthoptera and Dermaptera

Physical Features:

Adults and Immatures



1. Antennae slender, filiform
2. Mouthparts mandibulate, hypognathous
3. Body cylindrical
4. Tarsi 5-segmented
5. Secondarily wingless
6. Cerci long, 8-segmented

Economic Importance:

Rock crawlers have no economic importance. They live in places that are not inhabited by humans.

Major Families:

- **Grylloblattidae** is the only family in this order. It contains four genera but only one (*Grylloblatta*) is found in North America.

Fact File:

- Rock crawlers were first discovered around 1906; the first formal description of the order was published in 1915.
- With only 25 species described worldwide, Grylloblattodea is the second smallest order of insects. Mantophasmatodea is the only order with fewer species.
- Rock crawlers cannot tolerate warm temperatures. Most species are active below freezing and usually die above 10 degrees Celsius.
- Due to the cold temperature at which they live, growth and development is very slow. Rock crawlers may require up to seven years to complete a single generation.
- No grylloblattids have ever been found in the Southern Hemisphere.

Hot Links and Illustrations:

- [Gordon Ramel's Grylloblattodea Page](#)
- [Tree of Life Web Project - Grylloblattodea](#)
- [Discover Life - Grylloblattodea](#)

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