differential grasshopper
*Melanoplus differentialis*

**Kingdom:** Animalia  
**Phylum:** Arthropoda  
**Class:** Insecta  
**Order:** Orthoptera  
**Family:** Acrididae

**ILLINOIS STATUS**
common, native

**FEATURES**
The differential grasshopper is part of a group of grasshoppers that are known as short-horned, for their short antennae. Another feature of this group is that the pronotum, a hard covering of the thorax, does not extend over the abdomen. Differential grasshoppers average one and one-fourth to two inches in length. The long, thin body is brown, green-brown or yellow. The upper portion of the hind leg has dark markings. These grasshoppers have four, well-developed wings. Mouthparts are adapted for chewing.

**BEHAVIORS**
Differential grasshoppers may be found statewide in Illinois. They feed on grasses and crops. The nymphs and adults are capable of eating 16 times their weight each day. Egg, nymph and adult are the stages in the life cycle. Overwintering occurs in the egg stage in the soil.

**ILLINOIS RANGE**
Aquatic Habitats
none

Woodland Habitats
none

Prairie and Edge Habitats
black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie