

*Il “grillotalpa” è un grillo o una talpa?  
In italiano, nelle lingue romanze, nella grammaticografia*

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ABSTRACT

Thanks to “Google books” the author confirms the dating of the first occurrence – in F. Redi 1684 – of the Italian feminine plural noun *le grilloTalpe* (in Engl. “mole crickets”), before the masculine singular (*il Grillotalpa* in F. Ch. Lesser – P. Lyonnet 1751), while the feminine singular (*la Grillo-talpa*) goes back to the same year in E. Chambers 1751.

The Italian “*grillotalpa*” is a compound word with a fluctuating gender. If it is feminine (*la grilloTalpa*) it has a right-head; one could paraphrase it as “an insect that works like a mole and screeches like a cricket”. If it is masculine (*il Grillotalpa*), it has a left-head, so “an insect that screeches like a cricket and works like a mole”.

According to “Google books”, the masculine gender (*il Grillotalpa*) is more common than the feminine one (*la grilloTalpa*) contrary to what one reads in dictionaries. On the contrary, the feminine plural *le grilloTalpe* is more frequent than the masculine plural (*i Grillitalpa* e *i Grillitalpe*), and this confirms the data in the dictionaries.

The plural of the masculine head (*i Grillitalpa*) is less frequent than the invariable form (*i Grillotalpa*). On the contrary, the plural of the feminine head (*le grilloTalpe*) is very much more frequent than the invariable *le grilloTalpa*.

The etymon, if we go by the first occurrence, should be a scientific Latin loan translation, rather than a new formation. In French too the word *taupe-grillon* is a compound with a fluctuating gender. On the contrary, in Spanish and Portuguese dictionaries the word is only masculine: Sp. *el Grillotalpa* and Port. *o Grilo-toupeira*.