

FAIRY CHESS LEAPER MINIMUM MOVES ON THE INFINITE CHESSBOARD

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ABSTRACT. The (i, j) -leaper is a generalized figure on a chess board that moves by i squares along one directions and j squares along the perpendicular direction. We ask how many moves it needs at minimum to reach a square (k, l) if starting at square $(0, 0)$, and if the chess board (unlike the standard 8×8 board) has no borders that constrain the intermediate positions.

1. GENERALIZED KNIGHT MOVES

The (i, j) -leaper on the infinite chess board leaps in one move from a position (k, l) on a square grid to exactly one of 8 different positions, $(k+i, l+j)$, $(k+i, l-j)$, $(k-i, l+j)$, $(k-i, l-j)$, $(k+j, l+i)$, $(k+j, l-i)$, $(k-j, l+i)$, or $(k-j, l-i)$. The $(1, 2)$ -leaper is the knight of the standard chess game confined to a 8×8 board.

Definition 1. $M_{i,j}(k, l)$ is the minimum number of moves the (i, j) -leaper needs to step on square (k, l) starting at square $(0, 0)$.

Because the setup has the 8-fold symmetry of the dihedral group D_8 of order 8 (containing the rotations by multiples of 90° and flips along the horizontal, vertical or the diagonals), one may consider only the target squares in the first octant of the board:

$$(1) \quad M_{i,j}(k, l) = M_{i,j}(k, -l) = M_{i,j}(-k, l) = M_{i,j}(-k, -l) \\ = M_{i,j}(l, k) = M_{i,j}(l, -k) = M_{i,j}(-l, k) = M_{i,j}(-l, -k).$$

In particular there are target squares at maximum Euclidean distance which are multiples of $\sqrt{i^2 + j^2}$ that are reached by consecutive moves in the same direction:

$$(2) \quad M_{i,j}(0, 0) = 0; \quad M_{i,j}(mi, mj) = m \quad (m \geq 0).$$

The leaper's range in a single move is $\sqrt{i^2 + j^2}$, so an obvious lower bound on the number of moves is

$$(3) \quad M_{i,j}(k, l) \sqrt{i^2 + j^2} \geq \sqrt{k^2 + l^2}.$$

Cases where i and j are not coprime are not of interest because the squares that can be reached are topologically the same as the setup where i, j and the scales of the board are all divided by any common integer divisor:

$$(4) \quad \gcd(i, j) = 1; \quad 1 \leq i \leq j.$$

The pairs (i, j) we consider are therefore like Table 1, sorted along increasing $i^2 + j^2$.

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$i^2 + j^2$	i	j	$i^2 + j^2$	i	j	$i^2 + j^2$	i	j	$i^2 + j^2$	i	j
2	1	1	41	4	5	85	2	9	130	3	11
5	1	2	50	1	7	85	6	7	130	7	9
10	1	3	53	2	7	89	5	8	137	4	11
13	2	3	58	3	7	97	4	9	145	1	12
17	1	4	61	5	6	101	1	10	145	8	9
25	3	4	65	1	8	106	5	9	146	5	11
26	1	5	65	4	7	109	3	10	149	7	10
29	2	5	73	3	8	113	7	8	157	6	11
34	3	5	74	5	7	122	1	11	169	5	12
37	1	6	82	1	9	125	2	11	170	1	13

TABLE 1. Combinations of coprime positive i and j and their norm $i^2 + j^2$ [5, A037942].

Definition 2. The area $A_{i,j}(m)$ is the number of squares that can be reached in m or less moves.

$$(5) \quad A_{i,j}(m) = \#\{(k, l) : M_{i,j}(k, l) \leq m\}.$$

In particular for $(i, j) \neq (1, 1)$

$$(6) \quad A_{i,j}(0) = 1; \quad A_{i,j}(1) = 9.$$

The symmetry of D_8 means that the target $(0, 0)$ contributes 1 to $A_{i,j}$, the targets along the two diagonals and the horizontal or vertical axis, where $k = \pm l$ or $k = 0$ or $l = 0$, contribute with a multiplicity of 4 to $A_{i,j}$, and the other $A_{i,j}(m)$ with a multiplicity of 8. The first difference $A_{i,j}(m+1) - A_{i,j}(m)$ is the number of squares that can be reached in no less than $1 + m$ moves. The D_8 symmetry implies these first differences are multiples of 4. In consequence, if $A_{i,j}(m)$ becomes a polynomial $A_{i,j}(m) = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 m + \alpha_3 m^2$ for sufficiently large m , then $A_{i,j}(m+1) - A_{i,j}(m) = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 + 2m\alpha_2$ is only a multiple of 4 if α_2 is even and $\alpha_1 + \alpha_2$ is a multiple of 4.

The parity of the target square (k, l) is $k + l \pmod{2}$. If $i + j$ is even, the parity of the current square of the leaper stays the same after each move, which essentially—leaving the $(i, j) = (1, 1)$ aside—are all entries of Table 1 where i and j are both odd. In consequence the half of the squares of the board where $k + l$ is odd are not reachable when $i + j$ is even [3, 4]. In the following figures 3–18 that display $M_{i,j}(k, l)$ we leave the labels blank along the falling and rising diagonals of the (k, l) grid that cannot be reached from $(0, 0)$.

2. EXAMPLES

The $(1, 1)$ -leaper in Figure 1 is some kind of bishop with a stride limited to 1. It reaches the squares on the diagonal of the board in $M_{1,1}(m, m) = m$ moves and the squares on the adjacent row in $M_{1,1}(2m, 2m) = 2m$ moves.

$$(7) \quad M_{1,1}(k, l) = \frac{1}{2}(|k + l| + |k - l|).$$

The sequence $A_{1,1}(m) = 1 + 2m(m + 1)$ is given in [5, A001844].

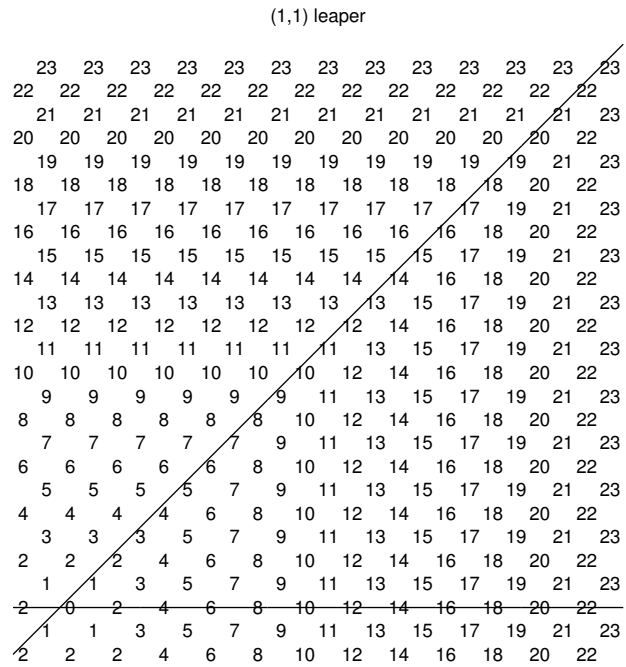


FIGURE 1.

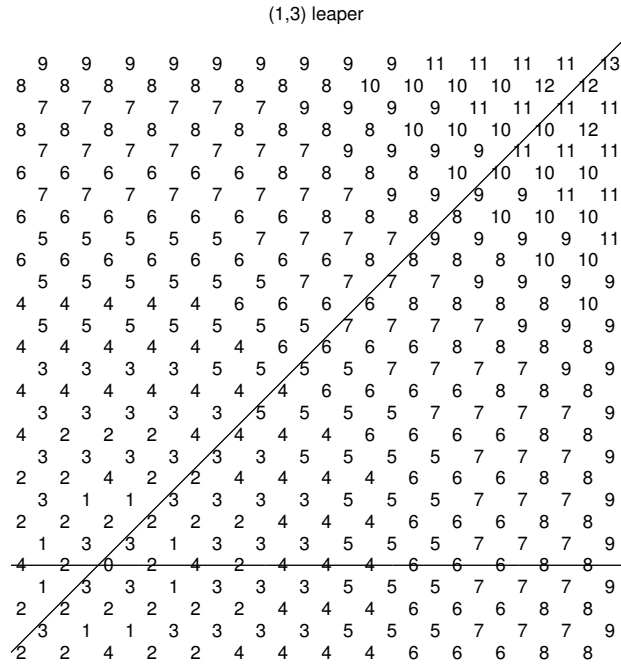


FIGURE 3.

The array of $M_{1,3}(k, l)$ for the (1, 3)-leaper in Figure 3 is a variant of Figure 2 tilted by 45° and diluted to indicate the squares that cannot be reached. $A_{1,3}(m) = A_{1,2}(m)$. This sort of mapping between a (i, j) -leaper and a (i', j') -leaper may happen for all cases where the norms are related as $i'^2 + j'^2 = 2(i^2 + j^2)$ [2], induced by

$$(8) \quad j = \frac{j' + i'}{2}; \quad i = \frac{j' - i'}{2}.$$

Here in this case the (1, 2)-leaper has norm 5 and the (1, 3)-leaper has norm 10, see Table 1.

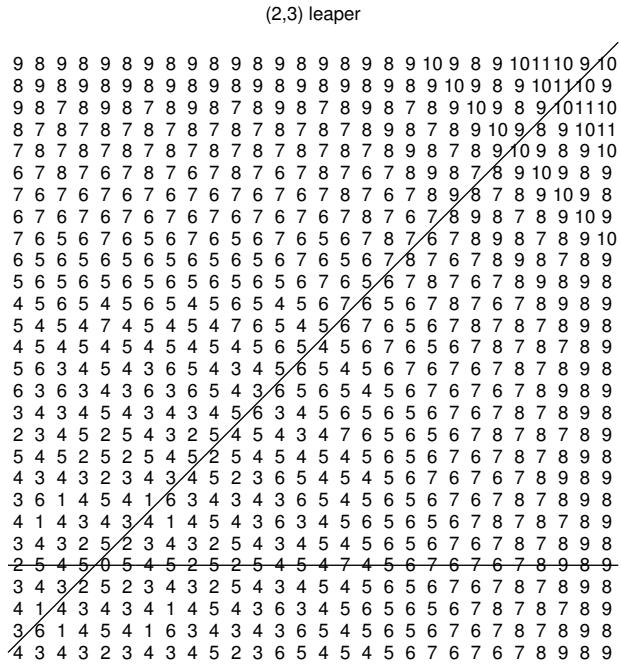


FIGURE 4.

The number of reachable squares for the (2, 3)-leaper of Figure 4 are registered in [5, A297740], and the first differences in [5, A018839]. $A_{2,3}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 625, 997, 1413, \dots (m \geq 0)$, eventually $A_{2,3}(m) = 9 + 30m + 34m^2$ for $m \geq 6$.

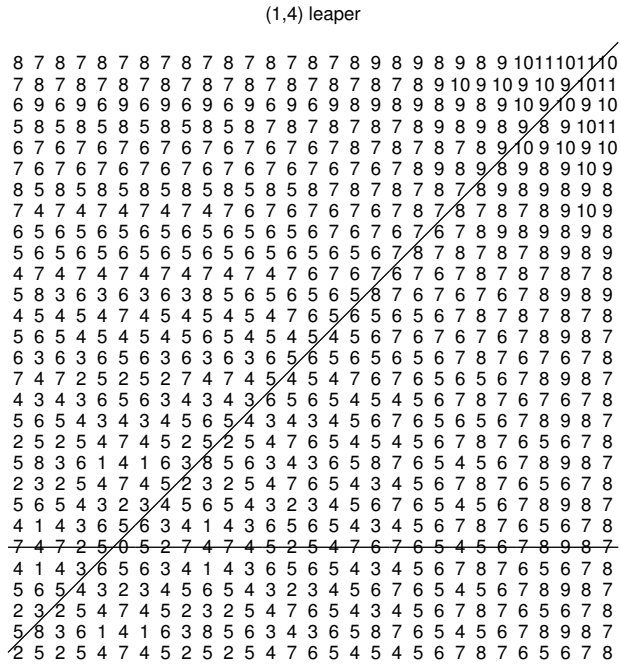


FIGURE 5.

The number of reachable squares for the (1,4)-leaper of Figure 5 is $A_{1,4}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 645, 1093, 1641, \dots (m \geq 0)$, conjectured $A_{1,4}(m) = 5 - 86m + 46m^2$ for $m \geq 8$.

(3,4) leaper

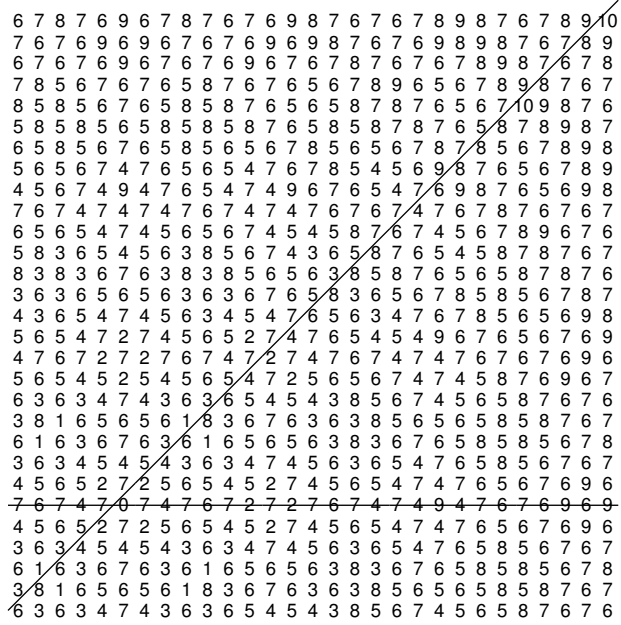


FIGURE 6.

The number of reachable squares for the (3,4)-leaper of Figure 6 is tabulated in [5, A297741]. $A_{3,4}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2121, 3081, 4121 \dots (m \geq 0)$, conjectured $A_{3,4}(m) = -55 + 30m + 62m^2$ for $m \geq 10$.

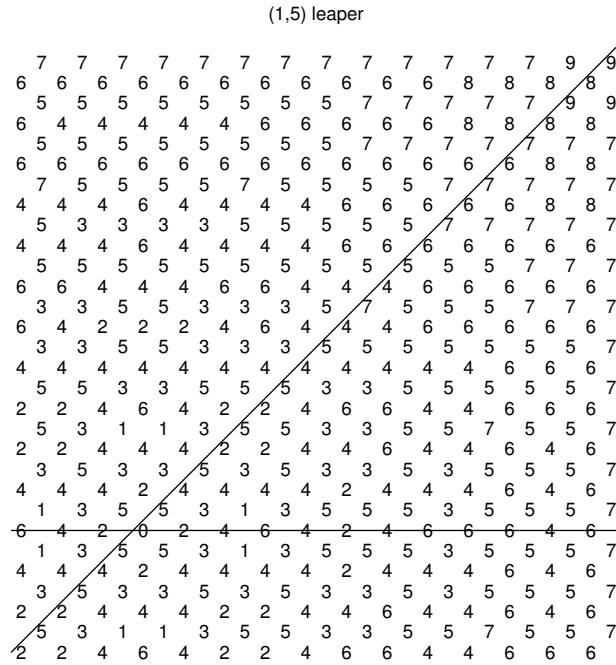


FIGURE 7.

The number of reachable squares for the (1,5)-leaper of Figure 7 is $A_{1,5}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 625, 997, 1413, 1885, 2425, \dots (m \geq 0)$, conjectured $A_{1,5}(m) = 13 - 38m + 34m^2$ for $m \geq 7$.

(2,5) leaper

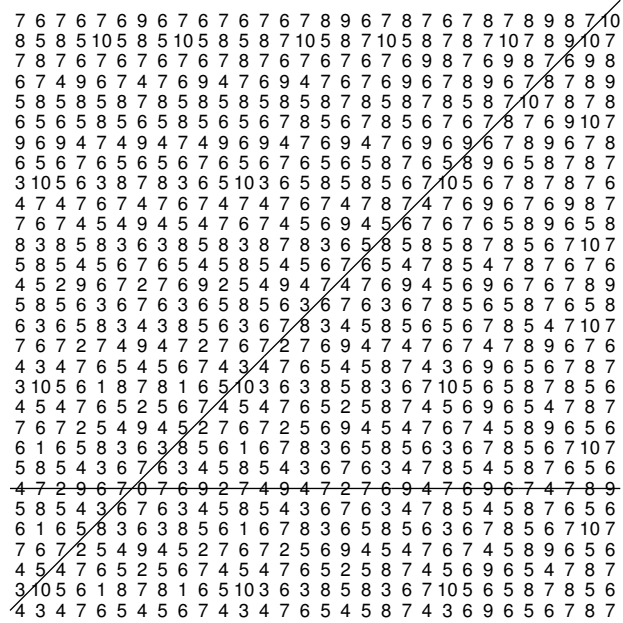


FIGURE 8.

The number of reachable squares for the (2,5)-leaper of Figure 8 is $A_{2,5}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2149, 3217, 4469, 5853, 7349, 8989, 10793, 12761, 14893, \dots$ ($m \geq 0$), conjectured $A_{2,5}(m) = 133 - 246m + 82m^2$ for $m \geq 11$.

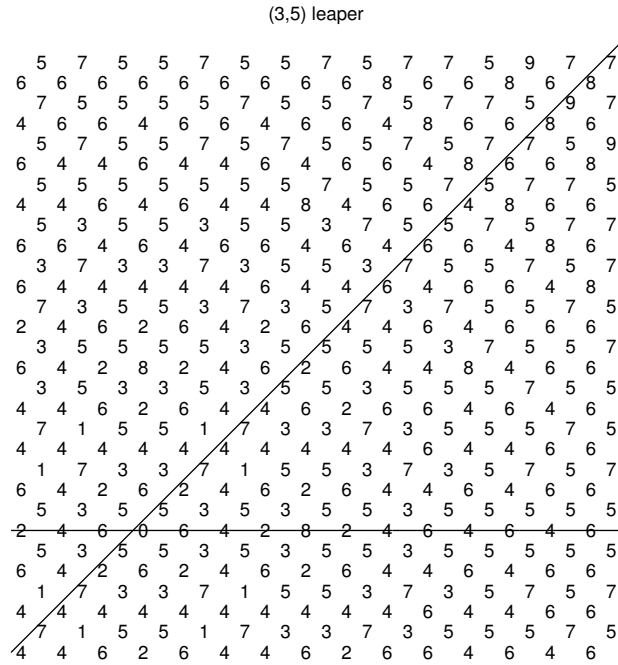


FIGURE 9.

The array of $M_{3,5}(k, l)$ for the (3, 5)-leaper in Figure 9 is a variant of Figure 5 tilted by 45° and diluted to indicate the squares that cannot be reached. $A_{3,5}(m) = A_{1,4}(m)$.

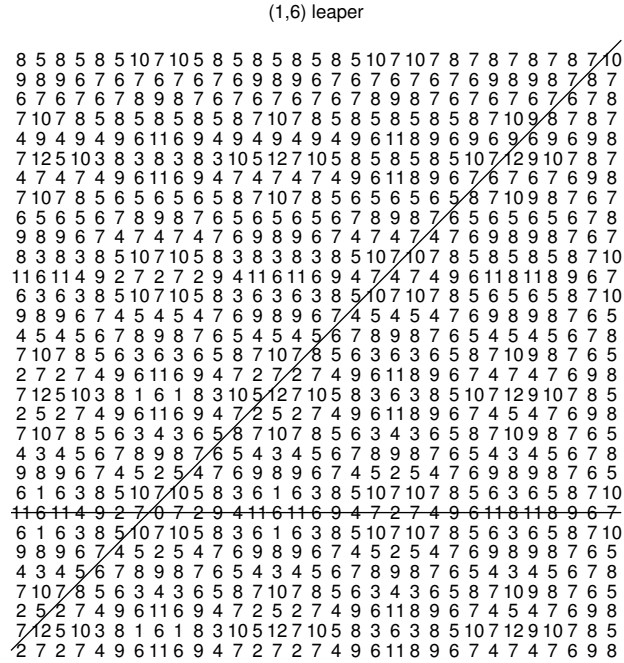


FIGURE 10.

The number of reachable squares for the (1,6)-leaper of Figure 10 is $A_{1,6}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2189, 3373, 4817, 6481, 8309, 10261, 12365, 14657, \dots$ ($m \geq 0$), conjectured $A_{1,6}(m) = -323 - 246m + 94m^2$ for $m \geq 12$.

(4,5) leaper

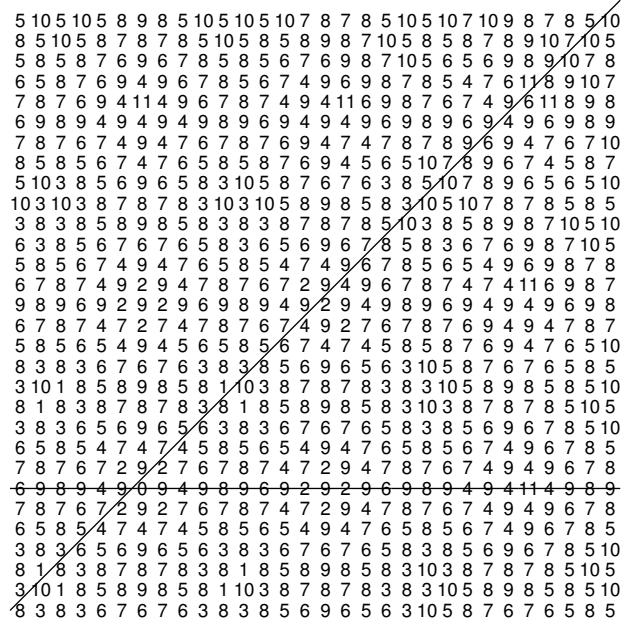


FIGURE 11.

The number of reachable squares for the (4, 5)-leaper of Figure 11 is $A_{4,5}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2241, 3649, 5421, 7393, 9513, 11733, 14065, 16553, 19225, 22089, \dots (m \geq 0)$, conjectured $A_{4,5}(m) = -215 - 174m + 98m^2$ for $m \geq 15$.

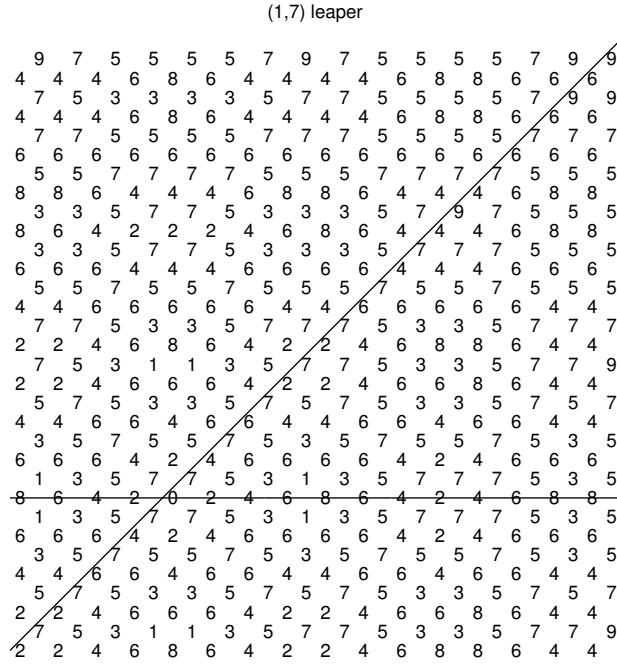


FIGURE 12.

The array of $M_{1,7}(k, l)$ for the (1, 7)-leaper in Figure 12 is a variant of Figure 6 tilted by 45° and diluted to indicate the squares that cannot be reached. $A_{1,7}(m) = A_{3,4}(m)$.

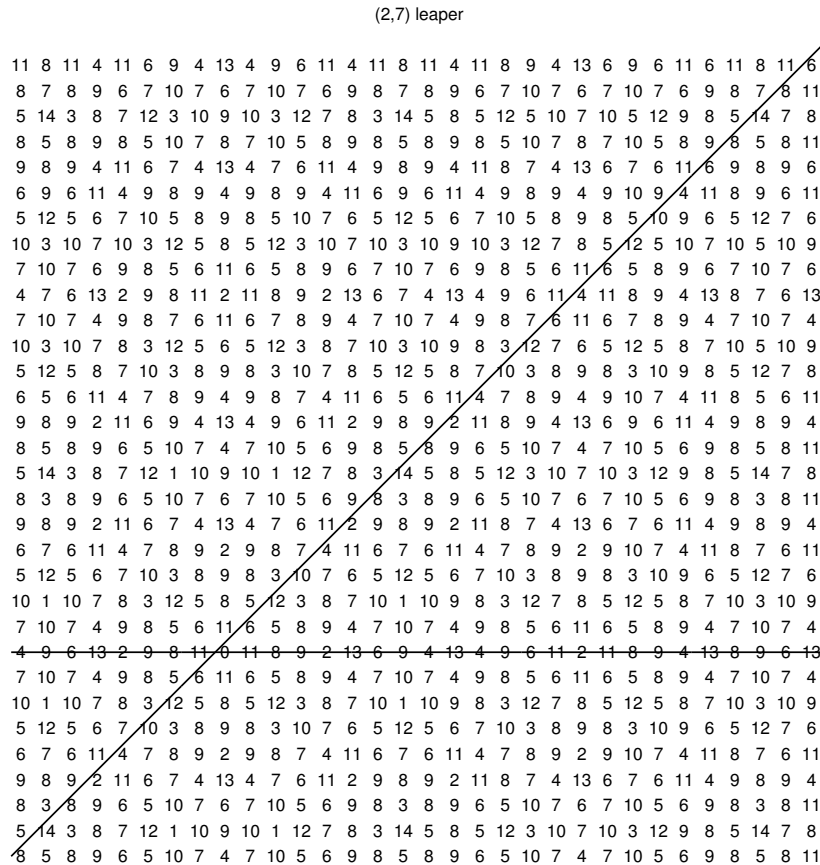


FIGURE 13.

The number of reachable squares for the (2,7)-leaper of Figure 13 is $A_{2,7}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2241, 3649, 5513, 7773, 10409, 13373, 16601, 20029, 23661, 27557, \dots (m \geq 0)$, conjectured $A_{2,7}(m) = 261 - 630m + 146m^2$ for $m \geq 15$.

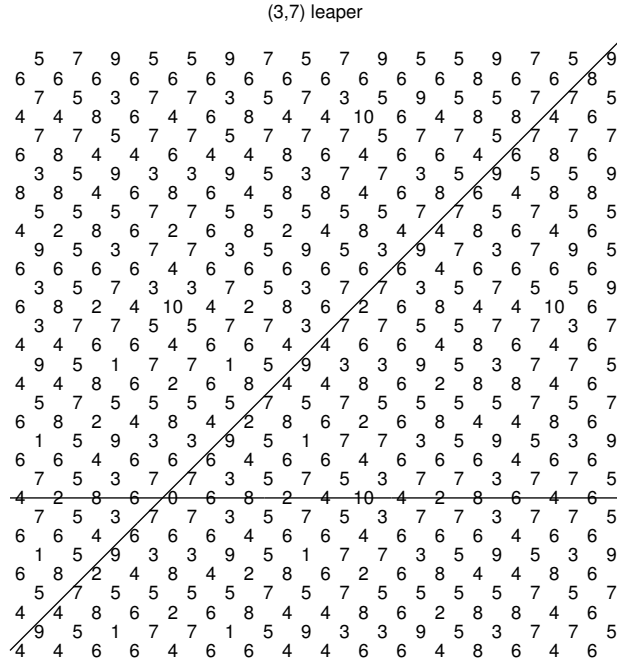


FIGURE 14.

The array of $M_{3,7}(k, l)$ for the (3, 7)-leaper in Figure 14 is a variant of Figure 8 tilted by 45° and diluted to indicate the squares that cannot be reached. $A_{3,7}(m) = A_{2,5}(m)$.

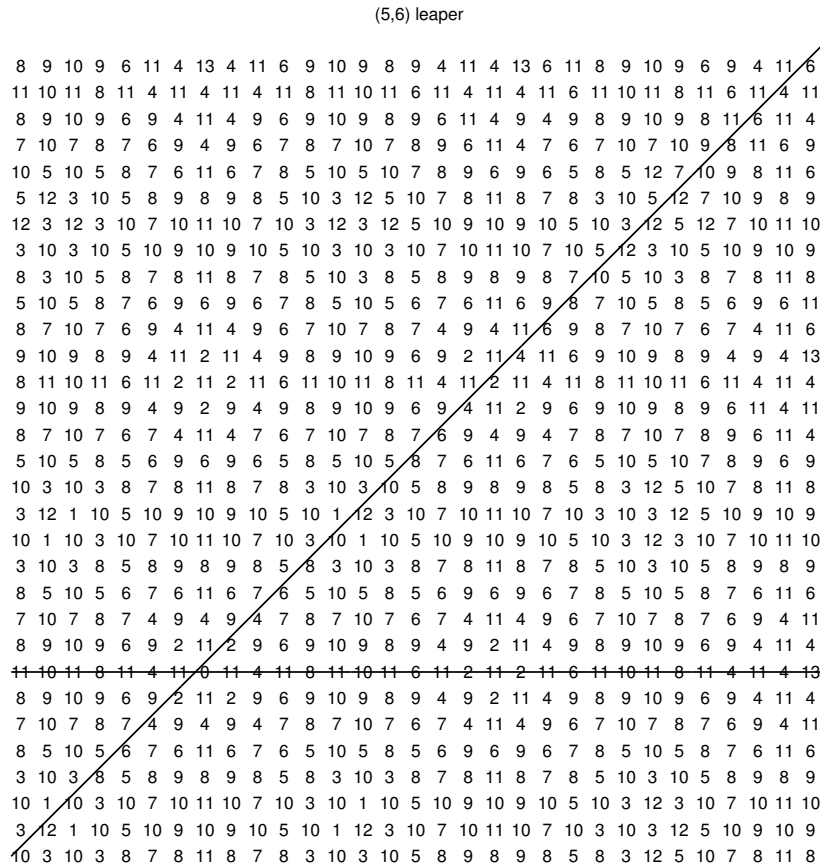


FIGURE 15.

The number of reachable squares for the (5,6)-leaper of Figure 15 is $A_{5,6}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2241, 3649, 5641, 8361, 11605, 15125, 18893, 22821, 26881, 31105, 35553, 40261, 45241, 50501, \dots (m \geq 0)$, conjectured $A_{5,6}(m) = -739 - 278m + 142m^2$ for $m \geq 19$.

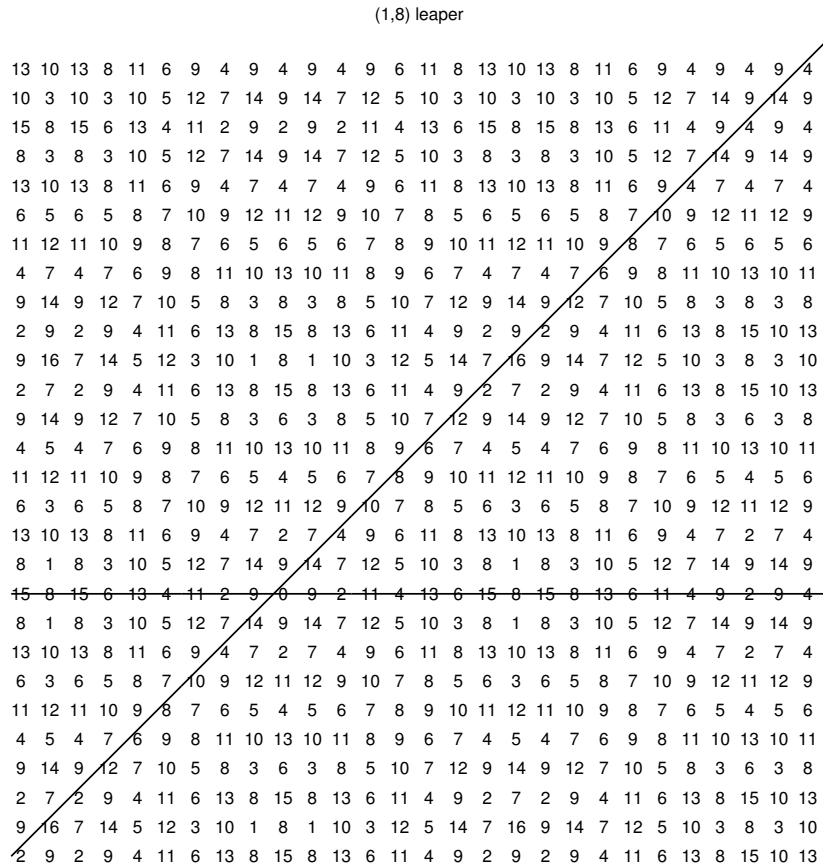


FIGURE 16.

The number of reachable squares for the (1,8)-leaper of Figure 16 is $A_{1,8}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2241, 3649, 5573, 8005, 10921, 14281, 18029, 22093, 26385, 30861, \dots (m \geq 0)$, conjectured $A_{1,8}(m) = -1811 - 486m + 158m^2$ for $m \geq 16$.

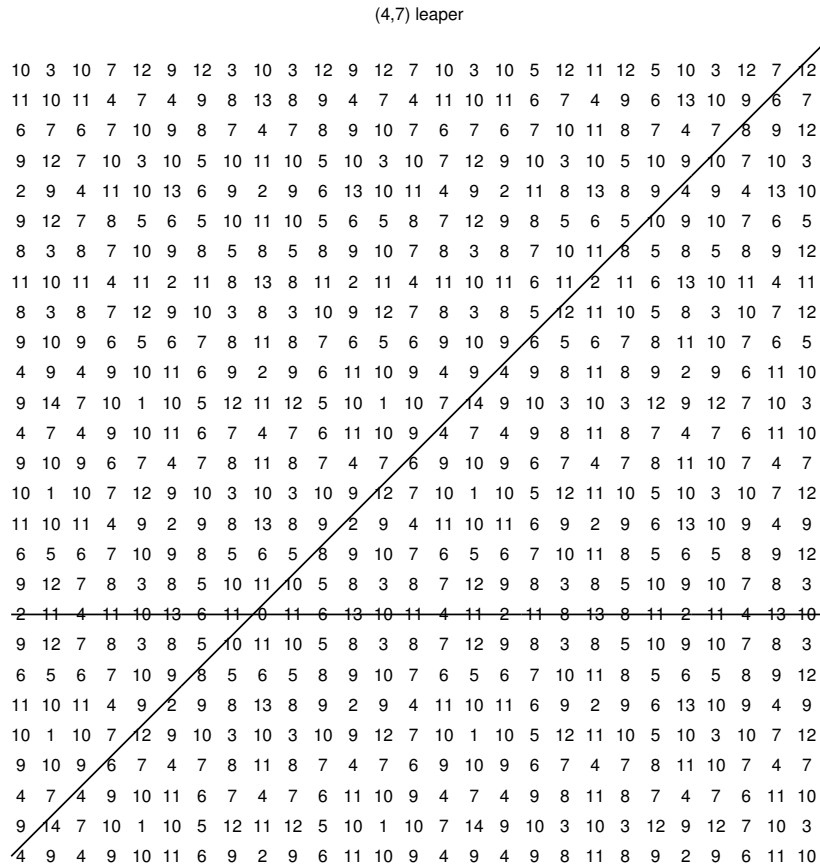


FIGURE 17.

The number of reachable squares for the (4, 7)-leaper of Figure 17 is $A_{4,7}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2241, 3649, 5641, 8361, 11649, 15341, 19481, 23901, 28509, 33357, 38469, 43901, \dots (m \geq 0)$, conjectured $A_{4,7}(m) = 593 - 798m + 178m^2$ for $m \geq 17$.

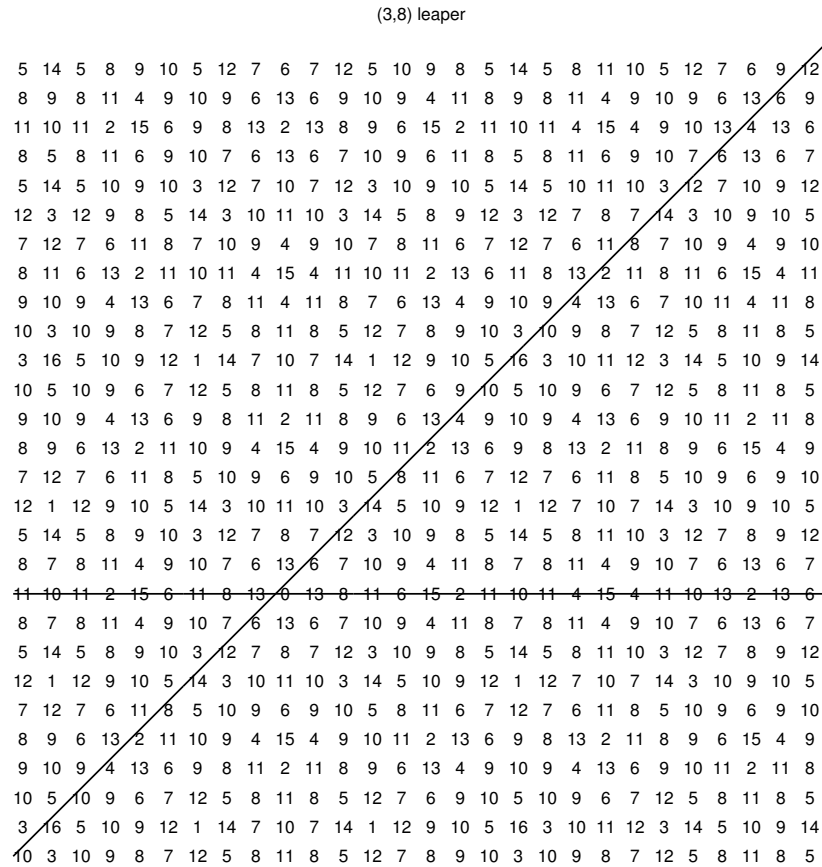


FIGURE 18.

The number of reachable squares for the (3,8)-leaper of Figure 18 is $A_{3,8}(m) = 1, 9, 41, 129, 321, 681, 1289, 2241, 3649, 5641, 8361, 11721, 15593, 19989, 24853, 30113, 35661, 41469, 47597, 54101, 61017, 68345, 76085 \dots (m \geq 0)$.

3. NUMERICAL ASPECTS

The 8 different moves (ignoring the case $i = j = 1$ with 4 different moves) from any starting square rephrase the computation of $M_{i,j}(k, l)$ to the problem of finding 8 different coefficients of the equation

$$(9) \quad \binom{k}{l} = s_0 \binom{j}{i} + s_1 \binom{i}{j} + s_2 \binom{-i}{j} + s_3 \binom{-j}{i} + s_4 \binom{-j}{-i} + s_5 \binom{-i}{-j} + s_6 \binom{i}{-j} + s_7 \binom{j}{-i}$$

minimizing $\sum_i s_i$, where the $s_i \geq 0$ count the number of moves of type i that contribute. Because combining moves of the type that cancel each other is a waste to minimization of the total number of moves, one of the coefficients in each pair of (s_i, s_{i+4}) remains zero. This allows to rephrase the problem to finding 4 different coefficients of the equation

$$(10) \quad \binom{k}{l} = s_0 \binom{j}{i} + s_1 \binom{i}{j} + s_2 \binom{-i}{j} + s_3 \binom{-j}{i} = \begin{pmatrix} (s_1 - s_2)i + (s_0 - s_3)j \\ (s_1 + s_2)j + (s_0 + s_3)i \end{pmatrix},$$

minimizing $\sum_i |s_i|$, where s_i are signed integers. These are 2 equations with 4 unknown integers $s_1 \pm s_2$ and $s_0 \pm s_3$.

Remark 1. *Sum and difference of the 2 equations yield*

$$(11) \quad k + l = (s_0 + s_1)(i + j) + (s_2 - s_3)(j - i);$$

$$(12) \quad k - l = -(s_2 + s_3)(i + j) + (s_0 - s_1)(j - i).$$

If the leaper is transformed with (8), this reads

$$(13) \quad k + l = (s_2 - s_3)i' + (s_0 + s_1)j'$$

$$(14) \quad k - l = -(s_2 + s_3)j' + (s_0 - s_1)i'.$$

If we re-mix also the coefficients $s'_0 = s_0$, $s'_1 = -s_3$, $s'_2 = -s_2$, $s'_3 = -s_1$, $k + l = k'$, and $k - l = l'$, we have again Equation (10) but all variables are primed. Since this transformation keeps $\sum_i |s_i| = \sum_i |s'_i|$ constant, this shows that the transformation (8) is indeed mapping minimum solutions of the (i, j) -leaper onto minimum solutions for the (i', j') -leaper.

The D_8 symmetric means we may consider $k \pm l$ and $j \pm i$ non-negative. Equation (10) turns into the congruences

$$(15) \quad (s_0 - s_3)j \equiv k \pmod{i};$$

$$(16) \quad (s_0 + s_3)i \equiv l \pmod{j};$$

$$(17) \quad (s_1 + s_2)j \equiv l \pmod{i};$$

$$(18) \quad (s_1 - s_2)i \equiv k \pmod{j}.$$

The fundamental values for $s_0 \pm s_3$ and $s_1 \pm s_2$ are for example obtained by Fermat's Little Theorem [1, Theor. 5.20]. All equivalent solutions are given by the fundamental solutions plus multiples of the moduli. In a plot with s_0 the horizontal coordinate and s_3 the vertical coordinate and in another plot with s_1 the horizontal coordinate and s_2 the vertical coordinate these candidates are on the regular grid where the rising and falling diagonals defined by these sets of solutions intersect.

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