

Pest Fact sheet No 8

Silverfish

Name Silverfish, fishmoth, bristletail

Latin name *Lepisma saccharina*

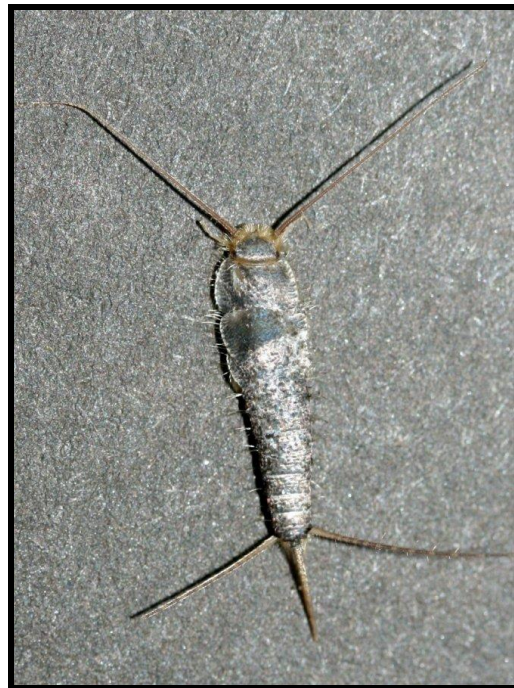
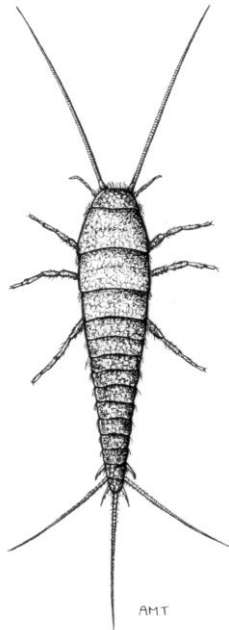
Size Adult 10-15mm long



Nymphs are 2-10mm long but are rarely ever seen

Identification features

Adult



Long, tapered, segmented insects covered in silver scales. They have very long antennae and three long whip-like bristles at the back end of the body.

Nymphs

Nymphs are like small adults but are translucent.

Life cycle

The adults will run around very quickly when disturbed. They will only lay eggs in damp conditions and the nymphs live in or very close to damp food where they feed and grow. The length of the life cycle is normally 6 - 12 months depending upon the temperature, humidity and the nutrition of the food.



Adults and nymphs on food

Signs of Infestation

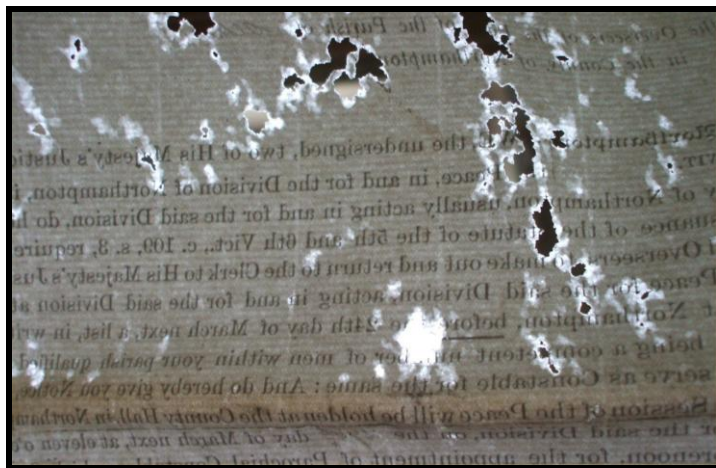
Adult silverfish are frequently found in damp areas, such as bathrooms, toilets, kitchens and cellars.

Materials damaged

Paper, books, prints, drawings and labels. Occasionally they will attack silk and some other textiles. Silverfish particularly like materials with coatings of starch, gelatine or organic dyes. Flock wallpaper and wallpaper paste are often attacked. They also like microscopic mould, and greasy surface dirt from handling.

Signs of damage

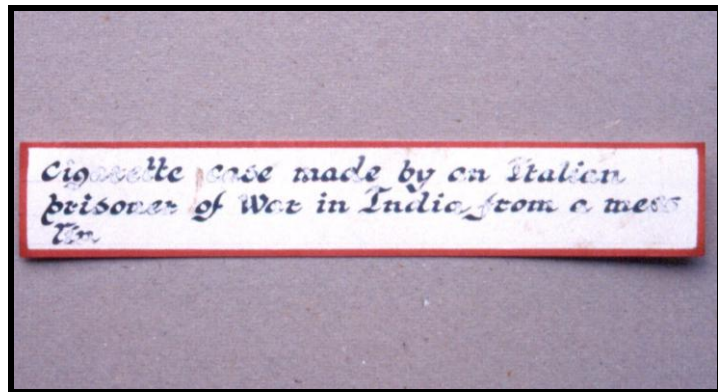
Silverfish scratch the surface of paper and books leaving, bare or translucent patches.



They will eventually eat through the paper leaving holes with irregular thinned edges.



They will sometimes preferentially eat organic ink on labels and prints.



Silverfish produce frass which is cylindrical and larger than that produced by many insects

Prevention

The key factor for silverfish is damp and they will only cause serious damage when collections are kept at high humidity.

Silverfish damage to wallpaper on a very damp wall



Similar species

Firebrat *Thermobia domestica*. Similar in size, but with patches of darker scales. Often found in warmer areas such as kitchens.