

## SILVERFISH Thysanura: Lepismatidae *Lepisma saccharina*

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### DESCRIPTION

**Adults** and **nymphs** are "carrot-shaped", silvery-gray with a metallic sheen. Mature adults are about 12 mm long. The body tapers gradually to the rear and ends in three long slender appendages. The **firebrat**, *Thermobia domestica*, resembles the silverfish in size and shape, but the antennae are as long as the body, and the body is mottled with patches of whitish or blackish scales, and the setae covering the body are arranged in tufts.

### ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

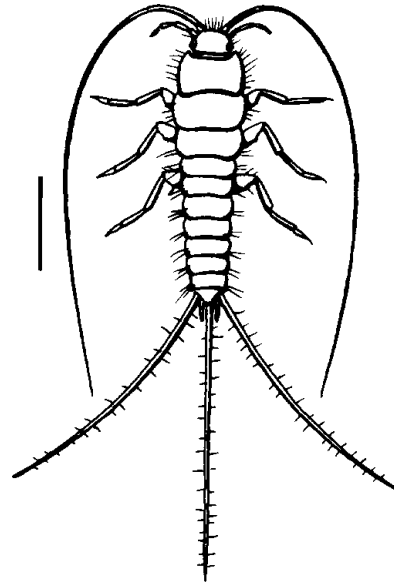
These are rapid moving, nocturnal insects that may occur almost anywhere in the house including the basement, attic, bathroom, and garage. Silverfish feed on a variety of foods such as fabrics, paper products, paste or glue, and books. Bindings of books that are used infrequently are often damaged. Feeding damage consists of irregular holes eaten in paper and fabric. Firebrats are most commonly found in warm areas of the home such as in furnace rooms, around hot water heaters, and in the kitchen. Food habits are the same as for silverfish.

### DISTRIBUTION AND LIFE HISTORY

This pest is distributed throughout the United States. The female usually lays eggs singly or in small clusters in cracks and crevices, behind baseboards, under sinks, or in other protected places. Eggs hatch in from two weeks to two months. Nymphs feed for several months or up to two or three years depending on the temperature and humidity. The distribution and life history of firebrats is similar to silverfish.

### MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

Cleaning-up accumulations of paper, cardboard boxes, and other food materials can help eliminate breeding sites of this pest. Frequent cleaning in basements, attics, and garages also can discourage infestations of these insects. Insecticides can be used to control this pest if necessary, but they should be applied by a licensed applicator to avoid accidentally contaminating food or other materials.



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