# FIREBRAT

## Thysanura: Lepismatidae

*By Eric Day*

SIZE: 1/2 inch.

COLOR: Grayish with dark markings.

HABITAT: Firebrats normally live outdoors under rocks, bark and leaf mold, in the nests of birds and mammals, and in ant and termite nests. However, many occur in homes and are considered a pest, or at least a nuisance, by homeowners. Firebrats are not often seen by homeowners because they are nocturnal and can run very swiftly. Occasionally, they are found in bathtubs where they crawl in to seek food or moisture and cannot climb out.



Firebrat. Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series. Bugwood.org.

LIFE CYCLE: Adults lay eggs in small groups containing up to 50 eggs. The eggs are very small and deposited in cracks and crevices. A female normally lays less than 100 eggs during her lifespan of two to eight years. Under ideal conditions, the eggs hatch in two weeks, but may take up to two months to hatch.

The young nymphs are very much like the adults except for size. Several years are required before they are sexually mature, and they must mate after each molt if viable eggs are to be produced. Populations do not build up rapidly because of their slow development rate and the small number of eggs laid. A large infestation usually means the house has been infested for some time.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: These insects prefer vegetable matter with a high carbohydrate and protein content. However, indoors they will feed on almost anything, including dried beef, flour, starch, paper, gum, glue, cotton, linen, rayon, silk, sugar, molds and breakfast cereals. They can go for up to one year without food, so sanitation alone will not eliminate an infestation, although it may prevent new ones from starting.

CONTROL: Residual insecticides (use an aerosol) will help to control these pests. Removing old papers, boxes, books, and clothes from the attic to basement will help remove food and hiding places. Moth crystals placed in boxes in the attic will also help.