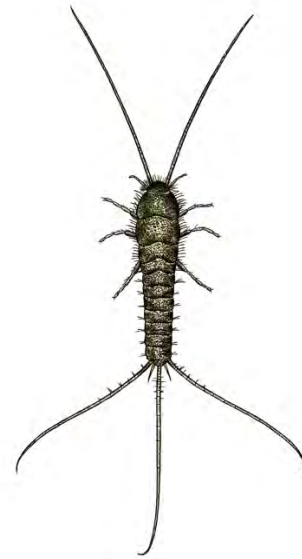




Common silverfish
Lepisma saccharina



Long tailed silverfish
Ctenolepisma longicaudata

Silverfish or bristletails and are among the oldest known insects. Most of them are ventrally flattened with a long and tapered body, small eyes, long antennae and tail-like filaments. Long-tailed silverfish (*Ctenolepisma longicaudata*) can reach 18 mm under good conditions, but typically are 15-20 mm, slightly larger than Common silverfish (*Lepisma saccharina*) at 10-12mm. Similar species, Firebrats (*Thermobia domestica*) live in warm dry habitats, in urban areas they will live in bakeries and heating ducts and are scavengers, eating starchy material such as flour.

The Long-Tailed Silverfish is mottled grey brown in colour. They are less silvery and shiny when compared to the Common Silverfish. The latter has shorter tail-like filaments, and the middle filament is shorter than half the length of the body.

Silverfish are ametabolous in that they undergo slight or no metamorphosis. Individuals that emerge from the eggs are small, but relatively similar to the adults. Common Silverfish may moult 4-6 times but Long-tailed may have 14 stages. They can live for numerous (2-8) years.

Silverfish feed on high starch sources such as glues in book bindings,, paper, cardboard, wallpaper and wallpaper paste, insulation, dead insects, the emulsion on photographs, fallen human hair and clothing. They will also eat cereal grains, paper and wood. They are sensitive to moisture and need high humidity to survive.

