

Webbing Clothes Moth

Tineola Bisselliella

Size

8-10mm (half the width of a 5p coin)

Favourite Food

The larvae eat animal protein fibres such as wool, silk, fur and feathers. Occasionally chew through cotton.

Features

Larvae – white caterpillar with an orange-brown head, often hidden in whitish patches of cobweb-like fibres

Adult – pale golden moth with fringed wings which turn up at the back and a fuzzy orange head. Short, fluttering flight.



Tineola Bisselliella [Ilia Ustyantsev](#) [CC BY-SA 2.0]

It's only a centimetre long, with slim, silky wings that are pale gold, and a mohican tuft of orange hairs on its head. It looks so pretty and so innocent, but it is responsible for a terrifying amount of damage to textiles, costume and even stuffed animals.

Although the Webbing Clothes Moths generally appear in spring, with increasing warmth they can have two life cycles a year and you may see more in the autumn.

Top tips:

- Don't forget that there may be other moths damaging your collection.
- If you are unsure how to treat your object, contact a conservator (or the Conservation Development Officer if your museum is in the South West) for advice.

Taking Action

If you spot them in the museum, crawling up walls, stuck in traps or fluttering near windows, it is vital that you take action to **find out what they have been eating** and **if you have a colony** that is spreading.

Check your pest traps weekly once you have spotted moths and record how many you find in each. This can help you track the source.

Put out more traps especially near entrances that insects could use – they may be feasting on a dead bird in the attic or even surviving on fluff below the floorboards. Use flying insect traps and Demi-Diamond wall traps as well. You can even buy traps with the moth pheromone if you are sure which species you have.

Further Advice

- **Housekeeping** - Empty bins daily and make sure food residues are cleaned up.
- **Have traps in all areas** - especially where people hang up coats and bags – they can bring moths in unknowingly.
- **Deep clean areas where there may be an infestation** - move all boxes, vacuum floors and wipe shelves. You can use a museum-suitable pesticide like Constrain to spray in cracks in walls, floors, under skirting boards but not on objects.
- **If you find infested objects** - pick off any live pests you find, then isolate the objects by wrapping them in acid-free tissue and then in polythene sheet and sealing ALL the edges with parcel tape. Contact a conservator (or the Conservation Development Officer if your museum is in the South West) for treatment advice, quickly!

See our associated guide to freezing pests on our [resources page](#)

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