

PestGazette

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Booklice and Barklice

There is a group of tiny little critters that might be living in your home without you knowing it. Booklice and barklice aren't actually lice, but are actually a distinct group of insects called Psocoptera that prefers microscopic mold to blood. That's the good news. The bad news is that the presence of these bugs is an indication that there is some moisture issue present in the area. Typically, booklice are found indoors and barklice are found outside. Booklice can only survive in environments with high relative humidity. The moisture serves two important purposes: it prevents death by dehydration and also supports the growth of the mold on which they must feed. Infestations can be found in bathrooms, kitchens, basements and commonly infested items include damp books, cardboard boxes, and storage trunks. Booklice can be an especially serious problem in new construction. Between four and 12 months after construction, the sheetrock or plaster used might still be damp and support the growth of mold and booklice populations can be tremendously high.



Booklice can be a serious problem in new construction. Often, the sheetrock or plaster can remain damp for up to 12 months after construction and support the growth of mold. This mold attracts booklice and populations can be tremendously high.

best way to control booklice is by addressing the moisture issues directly. This will cause adults to dry out and die and will prevent the growth of mold, too. If you are finding microscopic bugs crawling around, we will send a professional out to determine what the bugs are and devise a targeted strategy to address the problem. ■

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No Squirrels Allowed



In many parts of the country, squirrels are the most common form of backyard wildlife and many people enjoy feeding squirrels to get a better look at the playful antics and acrobatic activities which make them a delight to watch. Unfortunately, just like other forms of wildlife, squirrels can cause damage to homes and can become pests in urban and suburban environments.

To make your home less hospitable to squirrels looking for a place to spend the winter, follow these tips:

- Squirrels only need a hole the size of a baseball to squeeze into a cavity. Perform a visual inspection of your home regularly.

- Repair water damaged, rotten or broken wood that may allow squirrels to enter attics.
- Keep rain gutters clear to avoid water damage to fascia boards. Water damaged wood is easy for squirrels to gnaw through.
- Keep attic vents screened. If there is a high level of squirrel activity in your neighborhood, you might consider heavy duty screens or hardware cloth to prevent squirrels from entering.
- Refrain from feeding squirrels close to the house. Protect backyard bird feeders with squirrel proof devices.

Wood Boring Beetles

Termites rightfully are singled out as the most destructive pest of wood, but they are certainly not the only ones. In addition to carpenter ants and carpenter bees, there are dozens of species of beetles that can also damage wood in homes. Altogether, these pests are referred to as wood-boring beetles. There are four main groups of wood-boring beetles: true powderpost beetles, false powderpost beetles, longhorn beetles, and Anobiid beetles; and a few other groups that are less frequently encountered in homes. All in all, there is tremendous diversity among these beetles in both form and function. Some beetles will only attack dry, seasoned wood while others can attack living trees or recently felled wood. Before we get into

the specifics, it's helpful to learn a little bit about different types of wood. The biggest distinction is softwood vs. hardwood. Softwoods are gymnosperms (seeds are not encased, like pine cones) include trees like pine and fir and are used primarily as structural timbers. Hardwoods come from angiosperm (flowering) trees and include oak, ash, hickory, pecan and others that are typically used for wood flooring, furniture, and decorative items. Some beetles will only lay eggs on hardwoods, while others may only target softwoods, and others still will readily attack both.

Other than a few exceptions, the 'boring' into wood is done by the larvae, the immature beetles. *continued on page 2*

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Beetles *(continued from page 1)*



Deathwatch beetle



Whitespotted sawyer

Adult females lay eggs in the pores of exposed wood, or in cracks and crevices already present in wood, and the hatchlings bore down into the wood. Painting or staining wood will prevent some females from laying eggs on the surface. Larvae will excavate tunnels in the wood, feeding along the way. As you can imagine, it would take a long time to grow eating the minimal amounts of starches, sugars, and proteins within a piece of lumber. It's this rather nutritionally barren environment that leads to some of the longest life cycles within the insect world. Some wood-boring beetles can go from egg to adult in a few months while others might take 10 years or more!

In most cases, there is no indication of a wood-boring beetle infestation until adults begin to emerge from the wood. Adults chew their way out and quickly look to mate and lay eggs. The holes and frass (droppings) left behind are usually the only evidence left behind for us to identify. These exit holes are typically small (1/32" to 1/8" in diameter) and may be round or oval, depending on

the body shape of the beetle. As you can imagine, their droppings are very dry and range in texture from powdery and talc-like to gritty and containing pellets.

Three out of the four major wood-boring beetle groups will re-infest the same wood from which they emerged. These beetles, the true powderpost beetles, longhorn beetles, and Anobiids, are a greater concern to homeowners because over time the wood damage can be extensive. False powderpost beetles are more of a cosmetic pest and potential for damage is not as extensive.

Wood-boring beetles have a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors and it takes someone with training and experience to reliably identify most of them. To make matters more confusing, some adults are strong fliers and attracted to light so they might turn up in a different part of the house than where the infested wood is located. Control of wood-boring beetles can be a complicated and challenging proposition so be sure to let us know if you have noticed any wood damage or have found any beetles in your home. ■

Cellar Spiders

Halloween has come and gone but that doesn't mean there can't be cobwebs (and spiders) still lurking around your house.

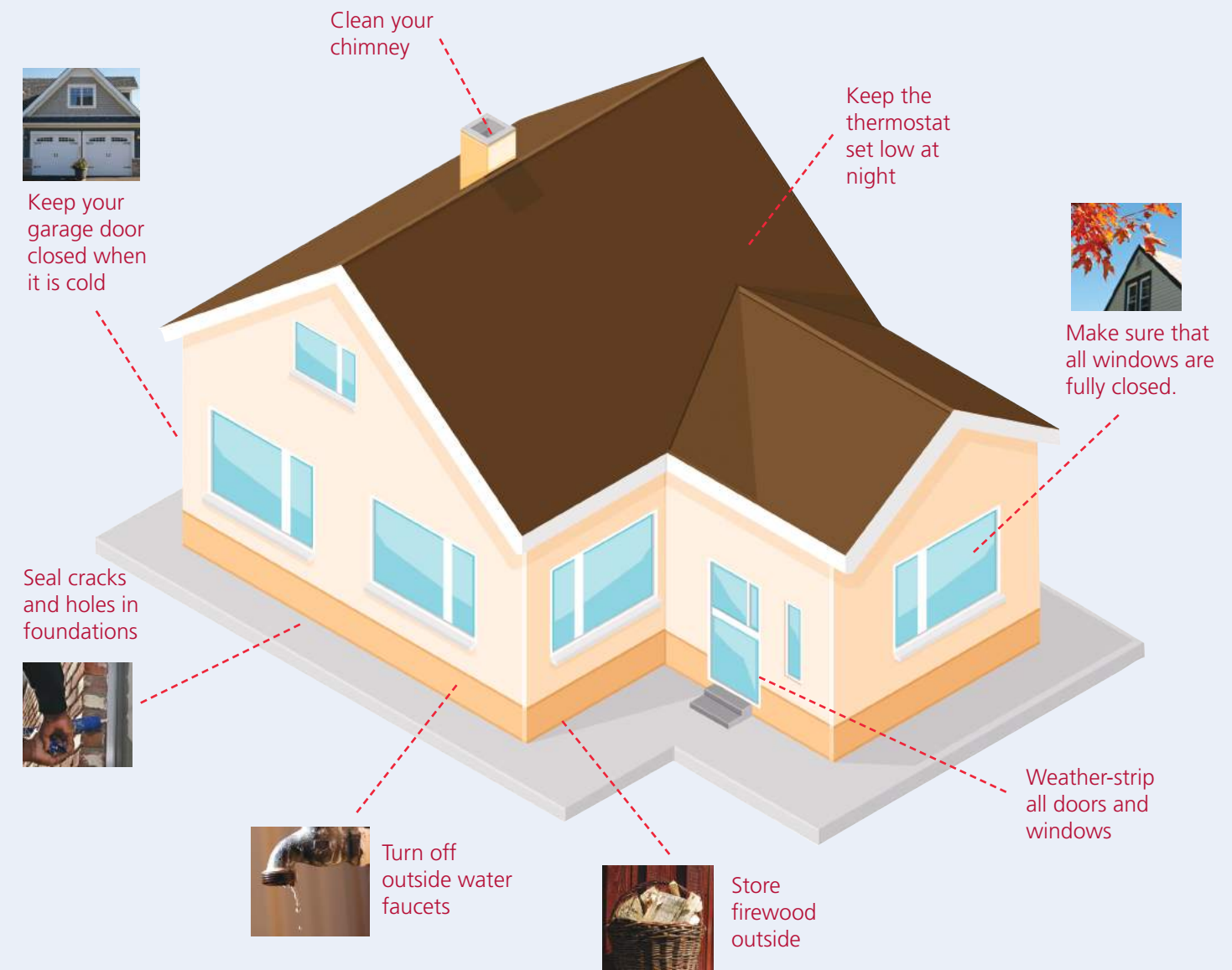
Cellar spiders, sometimes erroneously called daddy longlegs, are a common, unwanted guest often found in cellars, basements, closets, crawl spaces, sheds, barns, and other dark and damp places.

Fortunately, cellar spiders are not a biting threat to humans or pets. Cellar spiders have eight long and spindly legs and their whitish-grey bodies range from 1/16" to 5/16" long. They construct loose and irregular webs in the corners of rooms and continually add to their webs instead of cleaning them or scraping them altogether. This behavior can result in a substantial amount of webbing in such a short time! Cleaning out the webs will make things look better in the short term but to eliminate the problem the spiders themselves must be targeted. If you approach a cellar spider in their web, they may begin to shake rapidly and vibrate their web to confuse and befuddle you, or more likely, their prey.

Additionally, spiders indoors can be seen as an indicator for other pest problems. Any time you

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find spiders comfortably established in your home there must be some food source sustaining them and keeping them inside. Cellar spiders, and other 'domestic' spiders, are typically generalist predators and will feed on ants, cockroaches, flies, silverfish, and any other little thing that can get. Web-building spiders like cellar spiders aren't suited to chase prey, so they can't be too picky. One reason that these spiders are often found in damp places is that other insects are also often found there. Don't worry about trying to figure out the diet of your nuisance lodgers, give us a call and we will fix the spiders and control their prey while we're at it. ■



Winterize Your Home

Have your heating equipment serviced to make sure that it is operating efficiently. Improperly tuned heating equipment can waste hundreds of dollars a year in fuel or electricity. Clean your chimney if you have a fireplace. Experts suggest that you have the chimney cleaned after burning four cords of wood, more frequently if you use wood softer than oak. Besides being a fire hazard, dirty chimneys can smoke back into the house, forcing you to open windows and doors, which let heat out. Turn off outside water faucets at a cutoff or insulate the hose bibs to prevent pipes from bursting. Weather-strip all doors and windows and consider using special plastic wrap to cover your windows. Make sure that all windows are fully closed. Keep the thermostat set low at night. Setting the thermostat back 8 degrees

will save 8-10 percent of heating costs according to the U.S. Department of Energy. If you have a heat pump, you might need a special set back thermostat. Keep your garage door closed when it is cold, especially if you have a heated room above the garage. This will also help to keep rodents out. Seal cracks and holes in foundations with cement or silicone based caulking. Seal any area larger than a crack with steel wool or copper wool and then foam insulation. The insulation will keep the cold out and the wool will keep rodents from entering your home. Keep firewood outside and bring it in only when you are going to burn it. Not only will you keep a huge cold mass outside but also you will reduce chances of insects coming in with the wood and becoming active as they heat up to room temperature. ■