

**NOTE ON DAMAGE TO LEAD CABLE BY THE BROWN HOUSE MOTH,
HOFMANNOPHILA PSEUDOSPRETELLA (STAINT).
(LEPIDOPTERA: OECOPHORIDAE)¹**

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In August, 1955, a damaged section of lead sheathing (Fig. 1) from an interphone cable was sent to the Vancouver laboratory by a local pest control operator. The metal, 0.06 in. thick, was pitted and perforated. Microscopic examination revealed minute, gnawed marks lining the small pits and perforations. These marks appeared to have been made by the mandibles of insects, since they were much too fine to have been made by a rodent's teeth. The pest control operator stated that the cable came from a local race track, where it formed part of the totalizer equipment.

The author then examined the equipment at the race track. The betting wickets were under the grandstand of the race track. The cables were confined to the floor area behind and along the length of the series of wickets, and connected the ticket-issuing machines with the master control panel in the grandstand and the totalizer board in the infield of the race track. The cables, of various sizes and covered with pure lead, were enclosed for protection by a wooden casing, in which the pest control operator had placed rat bait at various points. Damage to the cables was confined to areas beside the bait, which contained corn meal, oats, and 0.025% warfarin. Apparently fresh bait had been regularly added with little effort to remove old, insect-infested material. The baiting had been conducted for at least eighteen months before the damage was noticed.

Adults of the brown house moth, *Hofmannophila pseudopretella* (Staint.), were present in the wooden casing.

The bait contained larvae, webbing, frass, and pupal cases of this moth. Larvae had spun cocoons along the cable within the piles of bait, and microscopic examination revealed minute particles of lead incorporated among the webbing of the pupal cases around the points of attachment to the cable. Large white pellets of frass around the pupal cases contained minute pieces of lead, which appeared to have passed unchanged through the alimentary canal. The size of these pellets and the presence of lead in the pupal case webbing suggested that the damage was caused by late-instar larvae.

The damaged areas were repaired satisfactorily by re-leading. The wooden casing was thoroughly cleaned, vacuumed, and sprayed with residual insecticide to lessen the likelihood of repetition of the damage.

The moth is a pest of stored food-stuffs in British Columbia. It has been taken in cereal warehouses and feed plants in cities on Vancouver Island and in the Okanagan Valley in the interior of the province. It has been found in Vancouver feed warehouses and terminal elevators. In the latter, they are most abundant in the workhouse basements and in the basement tunnels, where the humidity is high and the temperature fairly stable. In the basements they feed on dust and grain spillage. The moth is occasionally found in Vancouver homes. Dead insects and spider's webs are the insect's food in unheated buildings such as garages and sheds. The moth was probably established in the grandstand on such a diet when it spread to the rat bait. So far as known, this is the first record of damage to lead by the larvae of the brown house moth.

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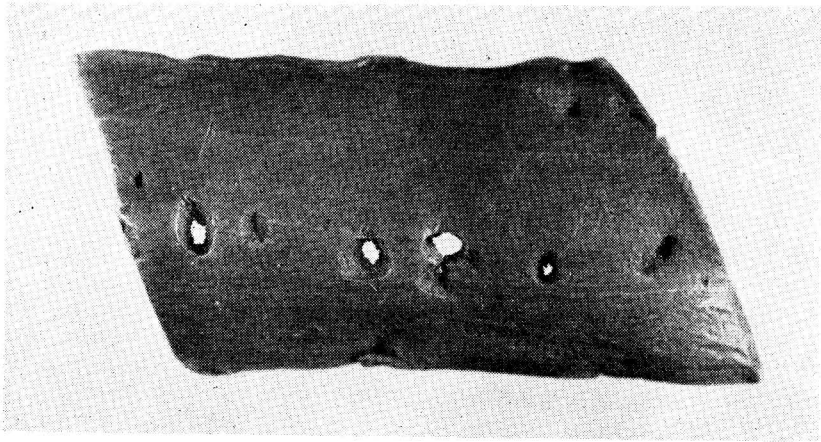


Fig. 1.—Section of lead sheathing showing damage caused by larvae of *Hofmannophila pseudospretella* (Staint.).

Lice on a Bald-headed Eagle

On several occasions I have received from collectors a few specimens of a very small Mallophagan, *Colpocephalum flavescens* Hann, 1829, which is a normal louse of the bald-headed eagle. In 1947 Mr. Charles Guiguet of the Provincial Museum, Victoria, sent me one specimen of a magnificent louse $9\frac{1}{2}$ mm. long taken from an eagle collected at Graham Island, Queen Charlotte Islands. This specimen was placed by Miss Theresa Clay of The British Museum in the genus *Laemobothrion*, species undetermined. Dr. K. C. Emerson of Oklahoma who has probably the second largest collection of Mallophaga in the world, told me that a *Laemobothrion* from bald-headed eagle had yet to be described.

On 1 February 1956, Provincial Game Inspector C. E. Estlin of Courtenay, Vancouver Island, sent in to the Dept of Zoology a young bald-headed eagle which he had confiscated from a citizen. The bird was afflicted with a rough, cancerous growth on the neck and at the base of the bill and must have been quite sickly to have had been killed with a shotgun;

normally one does not get close enough to an eagle to collect it with a shotgun. I have always found that sickly animals have more ectoparasites on them than healthy ones. Certainly in this instance never was sickness in a bird more profitable.

The outside of the paper wrappings that were around the eagle were crawling with lice, and from the bird itself I recovered about two cubic centimetres of *C. flavescens* after which I grew tired of picking them off the eagle, off myself, and for the next three days, off my laboratory coat.

Besides the small living lice, there dropped off the bird three dead specimens of *Laemobothrion*. Immediately the eagle was ruffled and brushed over to the last feather until no more large lice could be found. No less than 42 adults of both sexes and nymphs were obtained, females greatly predominating. If this is indeed a new species, the University will have a fine series of paratypes.—G. J. Spencer, University of British Columbia.

Platynus Retractus (Lec.)

Platynus retractus (Lec.) (Coleoptera: Carabidae). In *The Beetles of the Pacific North-West* Hatch mentions this species (p. 145), but could find no definite proof of its occurrence in our fauna, so "It is for the time being excluded from the Northwest list". But I have three specimens from Creston, B.C., verified by Lindroth. They are closest

to *gratiosus* Mann., but are smaller, more ovate, antennae paler and with other minor distinctions, and are recognizable on sight. Most records of *retractus* are Eastern, but Carr has it on the Alberta list and it is known from Montana.—G. Stace Smith, Creston, B.C.