

‘New’ cockroach species is old hat

Those who work with insects and otherwise admire Mother Nature might look at the photo at right and think this is a nice-looking, colorful cockroach. They also may wonder, “Wow, I’ve never seen this before! Is this a new species?”

As we’ve heard many times before, though, there’s nothing new under the sun.

Rather, we’re looking at the pale bordered field cockroach (*Pseudomops septentrionalis*). It belongs to the order Blattodea and family Ectobiidae. This specimen was photographed on a glass entry door in Mobile, Ala., in May 2019. While this critter is an invasive species in the United States, it’s not considered a significant urban or structural pest — at least, for now.

The coloring on these cockroaches is quite distinct. They range in size from about 0.5 inch up to about 0.75 inch in length. As the photo shows, their body is relatively slender when compared to more robust-bodied cockroaches. Thankfully, they feed outdoors as scavengers and are not usually found indoors — nor do they establish pest populations indoors. Experienced and educated pest management professionals (PMPs), however, will immediately recognize this insect as a type of cockroach thanks to the lengthy filiform



antenna and the presence of cerci protruding from the abdomen.

Available published information indicates these cockroaches are native to Central America and entered the United States from Mexico. They have been known to be present in Texas for more than a century. I encountered my first pale bordered field cockroach on the roof of a hospital in Gwinnett County, Ga., in 2007.

BIOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR

Information on the biology and behavior of this cockroach is relatively limited because it is not considered a significant pest species. However, it is active during daylight hours, and is capable of flight. It is adept at hiding beneath leaf litter, and in plant foliage, ground cover and similar microenvironments.

The ootheca, or egg case, of this species is similar to that of other cockroaches in that it is shaped in a purse like fashion, with eggs opposite each other on either side. These are separated by a membrane laterally at the center. The egg capsules reportedly may average from about two to three dozen eggs each.

The pale bordered field cockroach was first reported in

Louisiana in 1967. Current distribution is reported to be across the Southern United States from

Texas east to Georgia, and north to Oklahoma and Arkansas. This range of distribution may be inaccurate, since this is not a pest of economic importance and reported sightings may be limited. However, as entomologists and experienced PMPs have learned, it is not wise to underestimate the capabilities of these tiny animals. As such, time will tell how far north, east and west this insect may be found.

While your pest management

customers may be alarmed by the sighting or presence of this cockroach, you can reassure them that this is *not* an urban or structural pest species, and it poses no threat to humans, their homes or places of business. **PMP**

Note the lengthy filiform type antennae and presence of cerci, which immediately confirm that this is a type of cockroach.



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