

Bugs Often Mistaken for Bed Bugs

With all consuming news on bed bugs, pest professionals are often handed “little bags” with an array of miscellaneous carcasses, lint or dust balls, asking “Is this a bed bug?” When a person observes a small bug crawling across or around their bed, they automatically assume it is a bed bug. Well in some case it is, but in many cases, it isn't. (Always check with a professional)

Proper identification is mandatory for determining the type of treatment method used. So let's take a look at some of the culprits that are often accused of being bed bugs and are being treated as bed bugs, but are not.



Photo Credit: [André Karwath](#)

Common Carpet Beetles

There are a number of species of these beetles but the most commonly mistaken for bed bugs is the varied carpet beetle larvae.

Although carpet beetles are small, round and brown, unlike the bed bug, they have distinct wings and are capable of flight. The common carpet beetle is characterized by their round oval shaped bodies. They have a pattern of white and orange scales on their backs. The oval-shaped larvae is reddish brown and covered with black or brown hairs. They have chewing mouthparts.

Common in museums, these scavengers feed on dead animal specimens and insect collections. In homes they can cause extensive damage to natural fibers and feed on items such as wool, furs, clothing, fabrics, insulating materials, nests, animal carcasses, feathers and silk.

Sanitation is an issues with these and are normally found in low-traffic areas such as edges of carpets and under furniture. Regular and frequent vacuuming will help avoid infestations.

Biopsies and clinical tests confirmed that the hairs of carpet beetle larvae can cause skin reactions and exacerbate asthma.

Cockroach Nymphs



A cockroach nymph has similar behavior as the bed bug because they prefer to stay hidden in cracks and crevices and are most active at night.

They also appear whitish when first hatched or molting then turn reddish brown. In order to survive they require a steady supply of food and water and require a warm shelter.

However, the cockroach nymph is more like the shape of a cylinder, whereas a bed bug is shorter and oval. Sanitation plays a significant role in control and exposure can lead to asthma and trigger asthma attacks.

Booklice



Photo Credit: [Jarmo Holopainen](#)

Also called psocids, are not true lice. Often mistaken for bed bug nymphs, they are translucent in color. They prefer warm areas with high humidity. They are not parasites, do not bite or transmit disease. They are not damaging to fabrics or food.

They were given the name booklice because they have been found feeding off the starch in bindings of books but mostly feed on fungi and molds.

Ticks

Ticks are ectoparasites that live off the blood of mammals. Just like a bed bug they grow through each stage of life through a blood meal and molt. Adults have ovoid or pear-shaped bodies which become engorged with blood when they feed, and eight legs. As well as having a hard shield on their dorsal surfaces, hard ticks have a beak-like structure at the front containing the mouthparts whereas soft ticks have their mouthparts on the underside of the body. Both families locate a potential host by odor or from changes in the environment.

Ticks are known vectors of at least twelve diseases that affect humans and other animals.



Spider Beetle



Spider beetles are the approximately 500 species of beetles in the subfamily Ptininae of the family Anobiidae. Spider beetles have round bodies with long, slender legs, and lack wings.

About the size of a flea, spider beetles may “appear” bloated and reddish brown, as if they had just fed (Just like a bed bug) Au contraire! Spider beetles are not bloodsuckers.

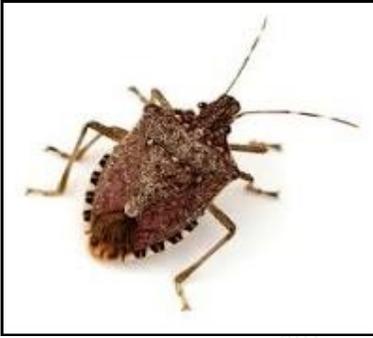
These scavengers are mostly nocturnal and eat both plant and other insects. At the end of their abdomen they have a pair of forceps-like pincers (The males are curved and Females are straight) and are used to capture prey and defend.

Earwig



Photo Credits: [fir0002](#)

Stink Bug



There are at least 16 species of Cimicids reported in North America. The name “stink bug” refers to the scent glands located on the dorsal surface of the abdomen and the underside of the thorax.

Typically, stink bugs will emerge from cracks under or behind baseboards, around window and door trim, and around exhaust fans or lights in ceilings. The stink bug's ability to emit an odor through holes in its abdomen is a defense mechanism meant to prevent it from being eaten by birds and lizards. However, simply handling the bug, injuring it, or attempting to move it can trigger it to release the odor. They feed off of agriculture and not humans.

Kissing Bug



Kissing bugs are attracted by heat and carbon dioxide, feed on blood and got their name from biting around the mouth and eyes of their human victims. They are vectors of Chagas Disease.

Bed Bug Imposters



Bat bugs (*Cimex adjunctus*) are almost identical in appearance to bed bugs and are best identified by an expert entomologist with a high powered microscope when in question. The primary difference is the longer length of fringe hairs located just below their head.

Also, as their name suggests, they feed on the blood of bats, commonly found in attics. Take away the bats and feeding on humans and pets can occur.



Swallow bugs (*Oeciacus vicarius*) feed on cliff and barn swallows. They differ in appearance from bed bugs in that they are smaller and clothed all over in long, fine hairs.



Chimney swift bugs (*Cimexopsis nyctalis*) feed on chimney swifts and like swallow bugs, are smaller than bed bugs. Also, their last two antennal segments are equal in length. Unlike swallow bugs, however, the chimney swift bugs are not as hairy in appearance.