

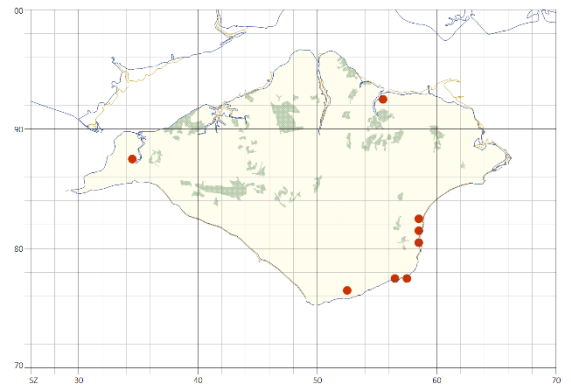
Tracking Some Recent Arrivals

by Iain Outlaw

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Fig-leaf Skeletonizer Moth

In 2014 caterpillars of the Fig-leaf Skeletonizer Moth (*Choreutis nemorana*) were found on a tree in Hyde Park, the first time the species had been seen in Britain. Since then the moth has been found in Kent, Suffolk and Norfolk. In November 2021 it was found for the first time on the Isle of Wight. Last year, evidence of the moth was found at four more coastal locations.



IW Records of the Fig-leaf Skeletonizer Moth to date



From left to right: Adult Moth, characteristic damage on fig leaves, larva and leaf damage by Iain Outlaw

Its native range covers the Mediterranean region, where it is common and a minor pest of fig trees. The moths are small day-flying moths, very similar in appearance to the Nettle-tap moth. The moths hibernate over winter, appearing in the spring to lay groups of eggs on fig leaves. The caterpillars feed from mid-May onwards, each protected by a silk web and are fully grown a few weeks later. They then pupate, each in a white silk cocoon, usually spun in a fold on the edge of a leaf. Adults of the summer generation appear in July, and second-brood caterpillars feed from the end of July to early October. Adults emerge in the autumn and then hibernate.

Although the damage is a little unsightly it does not usually affect the health of the tree and the moths don't have it all their own way. Natural enemies of Fig-leaf Skeletonizer Moth include tachinid flies, parasitic bugs and parasitoid wasps. The parasitoid wasps are quite effective in controlling the moth, most of the pupae that I have bred through in the hope of seeing the moth turned out to have been parasitised. Fig-leaf Skeletonizer is in the same family as our native Nettle-tap (*Anthophila fabriciana*) and appears to be attacked by the same parasitoids. So far I have found the ichneumon *Itoplectis alternans* and the braconid *Oncophanes minutus* both of which are known to attack Nettle-tap.

Zigzag Elm sawfly

Potentially of more concern is the arrival of the Zigzag Elm Sawfly (*Aproceros leucopoda*). It was first recorded in Britain in 2017 although it may already have been present for several years. The first for the Isle of Wight was found during a moth survey at Osborne in May 2022.

This Asian species was accidentally introduced to Europe in 2003 and produces several generations each year allowing it to spread rapidly. The sawfly is parthenogenetic, meaning females are able to produce offspring without any males, in fact males have never been recorded. The adults are black with pale legs and greenish underside to the abdomen. The larvae feed on various species of Elm cutting a zigzag channel in the leaves as they feed. When ready to pupate they create delicate mesh cocoons on the underside of a leaf.

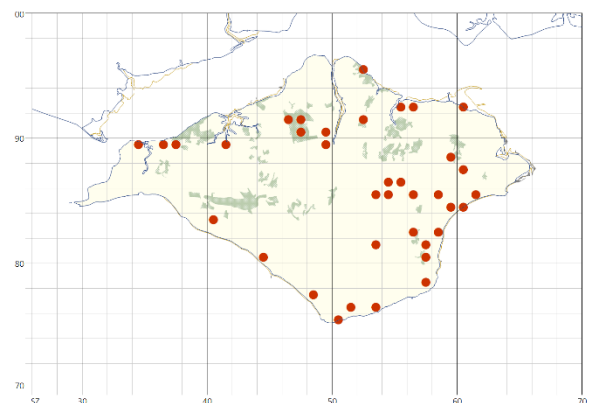
Since the original find at Osborne the sawfly has been recorded at more than thirty other locations across the Island.



From left to right: Adult sawfly, characteristic zigzag channel in elm leaves created by larvae, mesh cocoon on leaf underside by Iain Outlaw

If you see either of these species then please let us know, get a photo if you can and send us the information at iWatchWildlife. We need a date and location (a grid reference or road name and post code) and ideally a photo.

e: iwatchwildlife@gmail.com



IW Records of Zigzag Elm Sawfly to date