

# Merothrips floridensis

## Distinguishing features

Female usually wingless, rarely fully winged. Body, legs and antennae varying shades of light brown, head darkest. Antennae 8-segmented, segments all clearly distinct from each other and bearing long setae; apex of segments III and IV with transverse sensorium. Head small, eyes reduced to few ommatidia, vertex with one pair of long setae, also one pair of postocular setae well developed. Pronotum widest at posterior, with one pair of long posteroangular setae; a variable number of transverse sculpture lines near posterior margin. Abdominal tergites with many transverse lines of sculpture; trichobothria on tergite X more than twice as wide as nearest setal base; ovipositor weak and non-serrate; sternites with 2–4 discal setae.

Male wingless; head upper surface with large pore plate; fore tibia sometimes with large sub-apical tubercle. Large males have expanded fore femora, the fore tibiae bear tubercles, and antennal segments III–IV are long and slender with almost straight, parallel sides. Small males have slender fore femora, the fore tibiae lack tubercles, and antennal segments III–IV are shorter with convex margins.

## Related species

A total of 14 extant species are listed in the genus *Merothrips*, all from the warmer parts of the world; three further species are described from Baltic Amber fossils. The eastern North American species *Merothrips morgani* Hood is similar in general body form to *M. floridensis*, but has distinctively curved sculpture lines on the median area of the pronotum; no specimens have been seen from west of Texas. *M. laevis* Hood is particularly similar to *M. floridensis*, but lacks sculpture on the abdominal tergites.

## Biological data

Fungus feeding, and breeding primarily in leaf litter rather than on dead twigs.

## Distribution data

Widespread from Georgia, Kentucky and Florida, through Central America to southern Brazil. Also known from California, Hawaii, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Azores and southern France (Mound & O'Neill, 1974).

## Family name

MEROTHRIPIDAE

## Species name

*Merothrips floridensis* Watson

## Original name and synonyms

*Merothrips floridensis* Watson, 1927: 60

*Merothrips capensis* Faure, 1938: 6

*Merothrips plaumanni* Crawford, 1942: 152

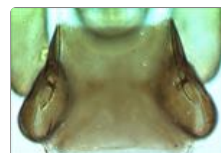
*Merothrips xylophilus* zur Strassen, 1959: 447



Head & pronotum (wingless female)



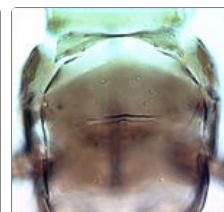
Head and pronotum (winged female)



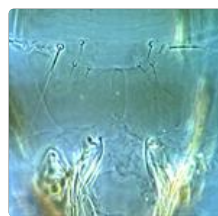
Pronotum



Antenna



Mesonotum & metanotum



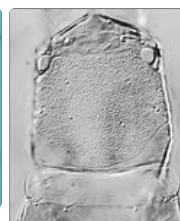
Sternite VII with lobes of VIII



Male head & pronotum



Head of male



Male head

*Merothrips priesneri* Bournier, 1960: 98

*Merothrips zondagi* Ward, 1969: 359

## References

Mound LA & O'Neill K (1974) Taxonomy of the Merothripidae, with ecological and phylogenetic considerations (Thysanoptera). *Journal of Natural History* 8: 481-509.