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The families Nepticulidae and Thyrididae in Baltic amber (Lepidoptera)

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Summary

The known specimens of fossil Nepticulidae and Thyrididae are summarised.

The highly specialised family Nepticulidae comprises about 400 species world-wide in distribution. The larvae are exclusively miners, attacking leaves, petioles, small twigs, bark cortex or fruits of the host plants and also produce galls. Nepticulidae as fossils are known particularly from many leaf-mines on fossil leaves mainly from the Tertiary. The oldest examples are known from the upper Cretaceous (SKALSKI, 1979 ; 1990 ; KOZLOV, 1988).

Fossil imagines of the Nepticulidae are extremely rare. Among about 800 lepidopterous inclusions in different kinds of fossil resins ranging in age from the Cretaceous to Quaternary only three specimens have been found to date ; one in ?Pleistocene African copal and two in the upper Eocene Baltic amber (40 million years old). One of the amber inclusions contains an almost complete specimen indistinguishable from the recent Holarctic and South African genus *Ectoedemia* BUSCK (s.s.) (SKALSKI, 1976). The second one has been described as *Stigmellites baltica* KOZLOV, 1988. Its systematic position remains uncertain. The specimen in the African copal probably represents the genus *Acalypttris* MEYRICK (syn. *Niepeltia* STRAND).

The family Thyrididae comprises mainly tropical moths. One species is known from Europe and probably not more than 25 species occur in the whole of Europe and temperate Asia. Until recently, there was no evidence of fossil Thyrididae. *Hexerites primalis* COCKERELL, 1933, described as a thyridid moth from the Eocene beds of Colorado, belongs to the family Stenomidae. One inclusion in Baltic amber contains a member of the family Thyrididae belonging probably to the subfamily Siculinae, hitherto unknown from the West Palaearctic.

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