

# A Flat-mite

## *Brevipalpus* sp.?



A mystery mite on Goat Willow *Salix caprea* has come to our notice in Ross-shire. We know little about it, other than the family – Tenuipalpidae – though it is probably a species of *Brevipalpus*.

**Distribution:** At present (March 2020) we know it only from 3 trees in Strathpeffer (NH45) and one on the shore near Rosemarkie (NH75), but it must be more widespread. It does seem to be rather scarce in the area, on only a small percentage of trees.

**The mites** are only around 0.25mm long, and as they are almost immobile, confirmation that they are indeed mites requires at least a x15 lens. They form dense clusters in small fissures in the bark of the tree, and can be detected by the brilliant red patches thus produced, usually <10mm long and a few mm wide. The first picture below is an exceptionally extensive patch on a branch 4-5cm diameter.



To see details of the animals you need to slice off a small piece of bark with the cluster of mites and examine it with high-power microscope.

**We would like to know more** about the distribution and biology of the mite. Samples passed to the National Museums of Scotland should eventually be identified to species, but questions will remain. What are its distribution, hosts and ecology? For now, a report of any such clusters would be useful. Some flat-mites are pests of indoor orchids, cacti and succulents, and if you have knowledge or experience of these in Scotland please let us know.

**When you find it**, send the details (date, place, host tree, 6-figure grid reference, and your name) to [records@hbrg.org.uk](mailto:records@hbrg.org.uk). If you are able to collect a sample of the mites and store it in 70% alcohol for future examination, that could be very helpful in future.