

## Apionidae: the black or metallic species

This is a quick visual guide to the 59 black or metallic Apions with black (or dark brown) legs. This is the group that is left once you have ruled out all the easy groups that are brown or patterned or have yellow legs. If you are not sure whether your weevil belongs here, [1 Introduction to the guides](#) and [3 Guide to the genera Apions](#) will help you.

The tables contain information on two characters (hairiness and colour); the foodplant; and a very short character summary. This summarises the things that I notice and think about when identifying the species. It might work better with a bit of experience, but often those one or two characters are all you need to identify your weevil. You can get a long way just by matching size, shape, and colour. Pay particular attention to the size and shape of the eyes, the thickness and curvature of the rostrum, whether the rostrum is straight-sided, tapering, bulging near the antennae, or pinched in beyond them, how close to the base the antennae are inserted, the thickness of the antennae, and shape of the wing-cases and how hairy they are.

All the British species are included here, but there are a few scarce or rare species without illustrations. I have included links to photos of these on other people's websites.

Where male and female specimens are shown, the male is on the left. Specimens appear 10× life size when the page size is A4.

## Hairs

All the species have hairs on the wing-cases. In some they are so short and fine that they are hardly visible even with a ×40 microscope and good lighting. Others are obviously hairy when seen through a ×10 hand lens. Some are intermediate.



*Ischnopterapion loti*.  
Obviously hairy.



*Betulapion simile*. Obviously hairy.



*Cyanapion afer*. Obviously hairy, but hairs fine.



*Holotrichapion aethiops*. Shortly hairy.



*Eutrichapion punctiger*. Hairs very short and fine: hardly visible.



*Holotrichapion pisi*. Hairs dark and fine: hardly visible.

There is a clear distinction between the obviously hairy species and those that have hardly visible hairs, but there are a few species that might be called hairy or not hairy. As usual, the difference is in the comparison between the species rather than the terms used: whether you call *Cyanapion afer* obviously hairy or not, it still has shorter and finer hairs than *Ischnopterapion loti*. The full size photos of the specimens show these differences. You can see them here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/84259756@N05/albums/72157663739513686>.

## Colour

Like hairiness, this is a continuum. Some species are black, others are metallic blue or green, and some are blue-black. Those I describe as black or blue-black are the not very colourful ones. They look black or rather dark, dull grey-blue. The metallic blue or green species are striking and colourful. Although the metallic sheen can be green or blue in some species, the colour is more constant and often distinctive in others: *Hemitrichapion waltoni* is a glaucous, turquoise-blue; *Betulapion simile* is brassy-black; *Pseudoprotapion astragali* is a bright blue-green; and *Ischnopterapion virens* has a subtle green sheen on its pronotum.

## Some unusual and distinctive characters

	<p><b>Eye-beard:</b> <i>Betulapion simile</i>, <i>Eutrichapion ervi</i>, <i>Eutrichapion vorax</i>. (<i>Hemitrichapion waltoni</i> and <i>Hemitrichapion reflexum</i> have slightly thicker hairs on the lower edge of the eye, but not an obvious beard.)</p>		<p><b>V or U shape groove</b> on forehead: <i>Diplapion stolidum</i> and <i>Diplapion confluens</i>.</p>		<p>Forehead with a <b>depression</b> between the eyes: <i>Cyanapion spencei</i>, <i>Catapion pubescens</i>. (Also <i>Acentrotypus brunnipes</i>, which is probably extinct.)</p>
	<p><b>Antennae on a tooth or peg:</b> <i>Ceratapion carduorum</i> and <i>Ceratapion gibbirostre</i>. (Also <i>Ceratapion armatum</i>, which is probably extinct.)</p>		<p><b>Single deep groove</b> on forehead: <i>Aspidapion aeneum</i> (deep and well-defined), <i>Aizobius sedi</i> (shallow and not so obvious).</p>		<p>Metallic <b>purple</b> or gold-red: <i>Pseudaplemonus limonii</i> and other metallic <i>Perapion</i>.</p>
	<p><b>Claws without a tooth</b> or lobe at the base: <i>Omphalapion</i>, <i>Ceratapion</i>, <i>Perapion</i> and similar species. (<i>Aizobius sedi</i> may or may not have a tooth. <i>Helianthemapion aciculare</i> has a hardly noticeable tooth.)</p>				

**Oxystoma.** Rostrum **fat** at base, **pinched in** in front. Large, **bulging** eyes. Other species with a pinched-in rostrum do not have such large eyes, and their rostrums are not so fat at the base nor so markedly pinched in.

	<i>Oxystoma cerdo</i>	<i>Oxystoma cracca</i>	<i>Oxystoma subulatum</i>	<i>Oxystoma pomonae</i>
				
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Black or blue-black.	Black or blue-black.	Black or blue-black.	Metallic blue.
Foodplants	Vetches <i>Vicia</i> .	Vetches <i>Vicia</i> .	Meadow Vetchling <i>Lathyrus pratensis</i> .	Vetches <i>Vicia</i> and vetchlings <i>Lathyrus</i> .
	Rostrum arched.	Rostrum angular. Yellow antennae.	Longer rostrum, slender in female.	The only blue <i>Oxystoma</i> .

<b>Omphalapion.</b> Pronotum <b>swollen</b> and inflated, rounded at sides and across the top. Claws without a tooth at the base.			
	<i>Omphalapion hookerorum</i>	<i>Omphalapion beuthini</i> <span style="color: red;">Rare</span>	<i>Omphalapion laevigatum</i> <span style="color: red;">Rare</span>
			<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">Photo at Lech Borowiec's site</a></p>
Hairs	Shortly hairy.	Shortly hairy.	Shortly hairy.
Wing-cases	Black (male) or metallic blue or green (female).	Black (male) or metallic blue or green (female).	Black (male) or metallic blue or green (female).
Foodplants	Mayweeds <i>Tripleurospermum</i> and <i>Matricaria</i>	Mayweeds <i>Anthemis</i> and <i>Matricaria</i>	Mayweeds <i>Anthemis</i> and <i>Matricaria</i>
	Swollen pronotum, tapering rostrum.	Like <i>hookerorum</i> , but rostrum longer (compare same sex).	Like <i>hookerorum</i> , but with deep groove at base of pronotum. Female has very long rostrum.

<b>Perapion and similar species.</b> Rostrum short to medium, <b>thick</b> , almost straight to weakly curved. Claws without a tooth at the base.				
	<i>Perapion hydrolapathi</i>	<i>Perapion violaceum</i>	<i>Perapion marchicum</i>	<i>Perapion affine</i> <span style="color: red;">Very scarce</span>
				
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Metallic green, blue, or purple.	Metallic green, blue, or purple.	Metallic green, blue, or purple.	Metallic green, blue, or purple.
Foodplants	Docks <i>Rumex</i> .	Docks and sorrels <i>Rumex</i> .	Sheep's-sorrel <i>Rumex acetosella</i> .	Common Sorrel <i>Rumex acetosa</i> .
	Long body, long scutellum; colourful.	Like <i>hydrolapathi</i> , but rostrum more arched.	Short but colourful; on Sheep's-sorrel.	Very like <i>marchicum</i> . Rare.

	<i>Pseudaplemonus limonii</i> <b>Very scarce</b>	<i>Perapion curtirostre</i>	<i>Pseudoperapion brevirostre</i> <b>Rare</b>	<i>Aizobius sedi</i> <b>Scarce</b>
				
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Shortly hairy.
Wing-cases	Metallic purple, copper, or red	Black or blue-black	Black or blue-black or bronze.	Black
Foodplants	Sea-lavenders <i>Limonium</i> .	Docks and sorrels <i>Rumex</i> .	St John's-worts <i>Hypericum</i> .	Stonecrops <i>Sedum</i> .
	Purple. In salt-marshes.	Black and pear-shape.	Squat and thickly hairy.	Rounded pronotum with a navel.

<b><i>Aspidapion aeneum</i>. Deep groove between eyes. Very smooth and shiny. Colourful.</b>		<b>Other <i>Aspidapion</i>. Metallic blue or green. Arched rostrum. <b>Narrow</b>, oval abdomen. Scutellum long, with bump at base, like a saddle. On mallows.</b>		
	<i>Aspidapion aeneum</i>	<i>Aspidapion radiolus</i>	<i>Aspidapion soror</i> <b>Rare</b>	
				
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	
Wing-cases	Metallic blue or green.	Metallic blue or green.	Metallic blue or green.	
Foodplants	Mallows (Malvaceae).	Mallows (Malvaceae).	Marsh Mallow <i>Althaea officinalis</i> .	
	The shiniest Apionid? Deep cut on forehead.	Long scutellum. On various mallows and hollyhocks.	Like <i>radiolus</i> , but only on Marsh Mallow. Broader rostrum.	

<b>Ceratapion.</b> Antennae <b>thick</b> , inserted near the <b>base</b> of the rostrum. Rostrum <b>swollen</b> or with a <b>tooth</b> at the base of the antennae. Metallic blue or green. Claws without a tooth at the base.				<b>Diplapion.</b> Antennae inserted near the <b>base</b> of the rostrum. <b>V</b> or <b>U</b> shape groove between the eyes. Black. Pronotum only <b>faintly</b> pitted.	
	<i>Ceratapion onopordi</i>	<i>Ceratapion gibbirostre</i>	<i>Ceratapion carduorum</i>	<i>Diplapion confluens</i>	<i>Diplapion stolidum</i> Scarce
					
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Metallic blue or green.	Metallic blue or green.	Metallic blue or green.	Black.	Black.
Foodplants	Thistles and knapweeds.	Thistles <i>Carduus</i> and <i>Cirsium</i> .	Thistles <i>Carduus</i> and <i>Cirsium</i> .	Mayweeds <i>Matricaria</i> , <i>Anthemis</i> , and <i>Tripleurospermum</i>	Ox-eye Daisy <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> .
	Long pronotum; colourful.	Pegs on rostrum.	Very like <i>gibbirostre</i> .	Shallow v between eyes.	Deep v between eyes.

<b>Squamapion.</b> Antennae inserted near <b>base</b> of rostrum.				
	<i>Squamapion atomarium</i> Scarce	<i>Squamapion vicinum</i> Scarce	<i>Squamapion flavimanum</i> Scarce	<i>Squamapion cineraceum</i> Scarce
				
Hairs	Obviously hairy	Shortly hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Black	Black	Black	Black
Foodplants	Thyme <i>Thymus</i> .	Mint <i>Mentha</i> .	Wild Basil <i>Clinopodium vulgare</i> .	Self-heal <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> .
	Tiny, wide, and hairy.	Wide. Hardly hairy.	Narrowly oval and hairy.	Like <i>flavimanum</i> , but legs darker and thicker, eyes smaller. Rostrum longer (compare same sex).

<i>Stenopterapion</i> . Wing-cases long and narrow, widest behind the middle.					<i>Helianthemapion aciculare</i> . Short, thick rostrum, narrow body.
	<i>Stenopterapion meliloti</i>	<i>Stenopterapion scutellare</i> Scarce	<i>Stenopterapion tenue</i>	<i>Stenopterapion intermedium</i> Rare	<i>Helianthemapion aciculare</i> Rare
					
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Metallic blue.	Black or blue-black.	Black or blue-black.	Black or blue-black.	Black.
Foodplants	Melilots <i>Melilotus</i> .	Gorse <i>Ulex</i> .	Medicks <i>Medicago</i> .	Sainfoin <i>Onobrychis viciifolia</i> .	Rock-roses <i>Helianthemum</i> .
	Narrow and shining blue.	Long abdomen, dull grey-blue.	Tiny, flat-backed, and narrow.	Like a hairy <i>tenue</i> ; very rare.	Ridiculously slender. Narrow pronotum.

<b>The rest.</b> Not easily split into groups, but most of the species or pairs of species have their own characters.					
	<i>Melanapion minimum</i> Scarce	<i>Synapion ebeninum</i>	<i>Protapion filirostre</i> Scarce	<i>Pirapion immune</i>	<i>Protopirapion atratum</i>
					
Hairs	Long but fine.	Very short and fine: hardly visible.	Very short and fine: hardly visible.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Black.	Black.	Black.	Black or blue-black.	Black or blue-black.
Foodplants	Willows <i>Salix</i> .	Bird's-foot-trefoils <i>Lotus</i> .	Medicks <i>Medicago</i> and clovers <i>Trifolium</i> .	Broom <i>Cytisus</i> .	Gorse <i>Ulex</i> and Broom <i>Cytisus</i> .
	Tiny, on willows. Broad, beaded striae; antennae near base of rostrum.	Long and narrow pronotum: wearing a corset. Miniscule scutellum hardly visible.	Black and hairless, rather spindly.	Black balloon shape.	Black balloon shape.

	<i>Cyanapion spencei</i> Scarce	<i>Holotrichapion aethiops</i>	<i>Holotrichapion pisi</i>
			
Hairs	Shortly hairy.	Shortly hairy.	Very short and fine: hardly visible.
Wing-cases	Metallic blue.	Metallic blue.	Metallic blue.
Foodplants	Vetches <i>Vicia</i> .	Vetches <i>Vicia</i> .	Medicks <i>Medicago</i> .
	Blue with squashed-in head.	Blue with blunt rear, long eyes.	Broad, blunt, and blue, with rounded eyes.

	<i>Hemitrichapion reflexum</i> Rare	<i>Hemitrichapion waltoni</i> Scarce	<i>Pseudoprotapion astragali</i> Rare	<i>Eutrichapion punctigerum</i> Scarce
				
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Very short and fine: hardly visible.	Very short and fine: hardly visible.
Wing-cases	Metallic blue.	Metallic blue or blue-green.	Metallic blue-green.	Metallic blue
Foodplants	Sainfoin <i>Onobrychis viciifolia</i> .	Horseshoe Vetch <i>Hippocrepis comosa</i> .	Wild Liquorice <i>Astragalus glycyphyllos</i> .	Vetches <i>Vicia</i> .
	Neatly hairy. Blue with long rostrum.	Tiny, turquoise, and hairy.	Shiny blue-green, the most colourful.	Smooth, shiny blue, with pinched in rostrum.

	<i>Ischnopterapion virens</i>	<i>Ischnopterapion loti</i>	<i>Ischnopterapion modestum</i>	<i>Cyanapion afer</i> <span style="color: orange;">Scarce</span>
				
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Metallic blue or green.	Black or blue-black.	Black or blue-black.	Black or blue-black.
Foodplants	Clovers <i>Trifolium</i> .	Bird's-foot-trefoils <i>Lotus</i> .	Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil <i>Lotus pedunculatus</i> .	Meadow Vetchling <i>Lathyrus pratensis</i> .
	Green sheen on pronotum and head; prominent eyes.	Very common; dull lead-blue wing-cases, long rostrum.	Like <i>loti</i> , but in damp places.	Like <i>Ischnopterapion loti</i> , but shoulders more prominent, rostrum duller, pronotum groove longer.

	<i>Cyanapion gyllenhali</i> <span style="color: orange;">Scarce</span>	<i>Betulapion simile</i>
		
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Black or blue-black.	Metallic black or bronze-black.
Foodplants	Vetches <i>Vicia</i> .	Birches <i>Betula</i> .
	Long head. Male has thick rostrum.	Eye-beard. Black-bronze or metallic black.

	<i>Catapion pubescens</i>	<i>Catapion seniculus</i>	<i>Catapion curtisii</i> <span style="color: red;">Rare</span>
			
Hairs	Thickly hairy	Thickly hairy	Thickly hairy
Wing-cases	Black.	Black.	Black.
Foodplants	Yellow-flowered trefoils <i>Trifolium</i> .	Clovers <i>Trifolium</i> .	Clovers <i>Trifolium</i> .
	Wide pronotum, thick hairs.	Short pronotum, thick hairs.	Like <i>seniculus</i> , but less hairy, rostrum shorter.

	<i>Holotrichapion ononis</i>	<i>Eutrichapion ervi</i>	<i>Eutrichapion vorax</i>
			
Hairs	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.	Obviously hairy.
Wing-cases	Black or blue-black.	Black.	Blue-black or metallic blue.
Foodplants	Rest-harrows <i>Ononis</i> .	Vetchlings <i>Lathyrus</i> and vetches <i>Vicia</i> .	Vetches <i>Vicia</i> .
	Thick rostrum with thick white hairs all along it.	Needle rostrum, wide eyes; antennae all yellow in male, yellow at base in female. Eye-beard.	Long legs, long eyes, long body; antennae yellow at base. Eye-beard.

These three species appear to be extinct in Britain: [Ceratapion armatum](#) (like a small black *Ceratapion gibbirostre*); [Acentrotypus brunripes](#) (with brown legs, and weak, faint striae, on cudweeds); [Perapion lemoroji](#) (like *Perapion curtirostre*, but hairs longer, denser, and yellowish).



This work by Mark Gurney is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).