

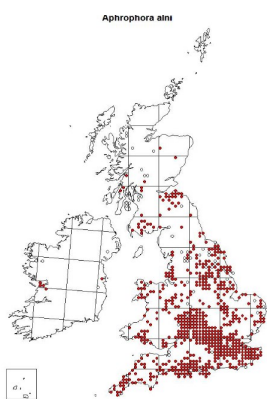
Aphrophora alni

(Alder Spittlebug)

Distribution and Identification



Adult *A. alni*



Distribution of *A. alni* as at May 2019

The Alder Spittlebug (*Aphrophora alni*) is the most common and widespread of the *Aphrophora* species and can be found across Britain and Ireland.

Adults are typically 9 - 10mm long; females are somewhat larger than males. As with all froghoppers, they have two stout spines on the outer edge of the hind tibiae, as well as several smaller spines at the tip. Nymphs are typically dark brown with a lighter-coloured abdomen.

The *Aphrophora* genus can be recognised by their large size in comparison to other froghopper species, and the pale ridge ('keel') running down the midline of the head and pronotum. The four species that occur in Britain can be distinguished by their markings.

The background colour of *A. alni* is pale to mid-brown with two distinct white patches along the margin of the wings. It can be confused with similarly-coloured variants of *Philaenus spumarius*, but *P. spumarius* is noticeably smaller and does not have the raised keel on the head. The upper surfaces of *Aphrophora* species are covered with tiny black pits and are shiny, contrasting with the matt surface found in *Philaenus* produced by a covering of minute fine white hairs.



Froghopper hind tibia showing two stout spines on the outer edge and several smaller spines



Adult *A. alni* showing the distinct white patches at the margin of the wings, and the raised 'keel' along the midline of the head

Habitat, Ecology and Lifecycle

Aphrophora alni is found across Britain and Ireland on a wide range of trees and bushes, particularly favouring alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willow (*Salix*) species.

Females lay eggs singly or in groups in the autumn. On emergence the following spring, nymphs begin producing the characteristic spittle 'nests' which provide protection against predators and desiccation. Spittle can be seen from April to early June. The nymph moults five times within the spittle before emerging as a free-living adult. Adults can be found between late June and October.

As with all froghoppers, *A. alni* feeds on the liquid contents of the xylem vessels of its host plant. As such, it is a potential vector of the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* which has caused the death of many olive trees in southern Europe, although this disease has not been detected in the UK.



Aphrophora sp. spittle on willow



Aphrophora sp. nymph



Adult *A. alni*



Aphrophora sp. nymph and spittle