

*Prochalia pygmaea*

**Order:** Lepidoptera **Family:** Psychidae



*P. pygmaea* on Queen palm



*P. pygmaea* on Washington palm

*Prochalia pygmaea* has no common name but I would prefer to call it the lichen eater. The first description of the species was by Barnes & McDunnough in 1913. The caterpillar is a bagworm. Bagworms (Psychidae family) are unusual caterpillars that develop in a silken case covered with leaf fragments or other debris. Adult females are wingless moths that remain in the case. Adult males, if they are produced, are winged and are rarely seen.

*P. pygmaea* is often seen attached along the trunks of Queen, Royal and Washingtonian palms. The larvae feed on lichens growing on the trunks of palms and on the trunks and branches of trees such as *Quercus species* and *Citrus sinensis*. The host plant is usually a mature specimen with bark old and rough enough to facilitate the growth of lichens.

The bagworm is found as far north as coastal South Carolina. This insect is not a pest. There is no need to control their presence since they cause no harm to the host palm or tree.



A larva being forced from its "bag."



Larvae out of their "bags"



Adult male, and the empty pupal case protruding from the "bag. The adult pictured came from the "bag" below.

## **References**

Cranshaw, Whitney. 2004. Garden Insects of North America: The Ultimate Guide to Backyard Bugs. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey

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