

# Protecting California from the **Gypsy Moth**

**Recently, an invasive pest called the gypsy moth has been detected** in insect traps placed in the Ojai area of Ventura County. A single gypsy moth caterpillar can eat up to one square foot of leaves per day. In the northeastern United States, where this pest arrived from Europe in the 1800s, millions of these caterpillars emerge each spring and devour large swaths of forest and foliage. When trees are repeatedly defoliated, they are rendered more susceptible to other pests and diseases, leading to an increased potential for fire and erosion as well.



A single gypsy moth caterpillar can eat one square foot of leaves per day.

## **What has been found? What is being done?**

When gypsy moths are detected in a new area, agricultural officials prepare for a quarantine by expanding trapping and survey efforts to more precisely determine the area and extent of the infestation. Typically, the California Department of Food and Agriculture will conduct an extended survey in the fall for evidence of egg masses, pupal cases and moths. **Our staff may be in your neighborhood conducting visual inspections** of outdoor items, recreational vehicles, the bases of homes and fences, wood piles, and any item where an egg mass might have been left. Property owners will be notified in advance, and inspectors will carry government identification.

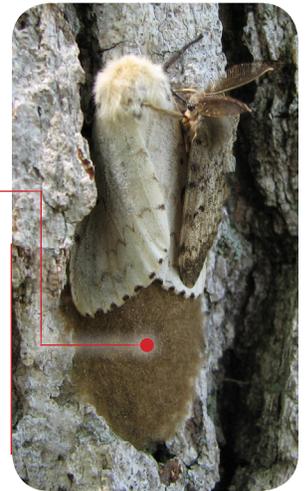


Female (lighter) and male adult gypsy moths.

Several gypsy moth infestations have been found in California and eradicated using organic materials. In the parts of the northeastern United States where the moth has been for over a century, it probably will never be eradicated. California's occasional infestations probably are the result of the gypsy moth "hitchhiking" from these other infestations. During the late summer, the female moth lays her eggs in masses on almost any outdoor object, including RVs, campers, play equipment, BBQs and other items that may be brought to California.

## **What is at risk?**

It is important to detect and eradicate gypsy moth infestations while the population is still small. **If a larger infestation were to develop in Ojai, the gypsy moth caterpillars would threaten oaks in this region as well as other hardwoods, evergreens, manzanita, cottonwood, willow and others.** It is also a threat to forests and agricultural crops such as fruit trees, so the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and your county agricultural commissioner's office are charged with monitoring and responding to infestations. We place and inspect approximately 18,500 traps throughout California each year just for this pest.



Egg masses are laid in the fall, and look like buff-colored felt.

## **How can I help?**

Please do not move any of the following from your property, without prior inspection and approval from the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner:

- Mobile homes, recreational vehicles, trailers, boats and associated equipment.
- Outdoor household articles including furniture, garden tools and garden machinery.
- Trees and shrubs with persistent woody stems, including green waste and garden prunings.
- Timber and building material including lumber, planks, poles, logs, firewood, fencing and building blocks.

To schedule an inspection of your items, please call 805-933-2926 Monday – Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For Saturday inspections, call 805-665-7295. Sunday and holiday inspections are available by appointment only.



A heavy infestation of gypsy moth caterpillars can defoliate large swaths of forest canopy.



Photos by USDA-APHIS and USDA-PPQ offices.

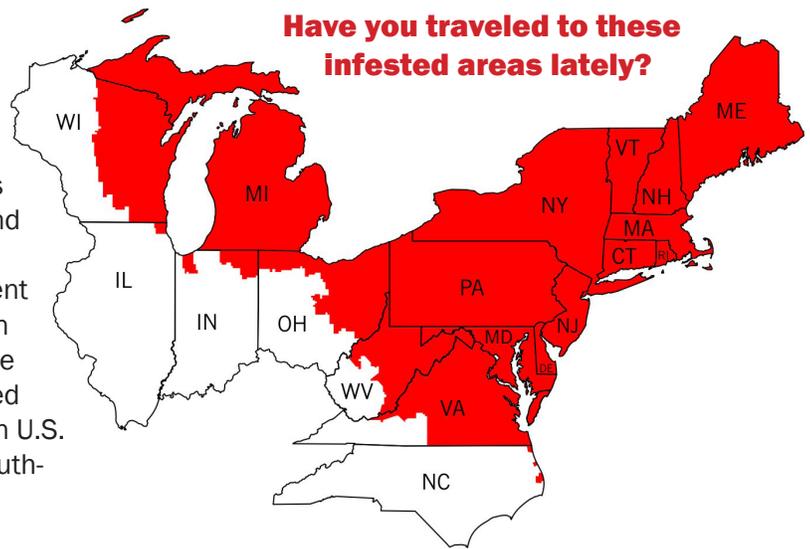
**Please call 805-933-2926 if you've seen this pest.**

## Gypsy moth: Hitchhiking to a community near you?



Looking for egg masses is the easiest way to detect a new gypsy moth infestation. Inspectors may be in your area in the fall months.

Gypsy moth egg masses (left) are frequently found on trees as well as vehicles, outdoor equipment and other items that can be transported out of the slowly expanding infested zone in the northeastern U.S. (red area on map) or south-eastern Canada.



## What We've Found in Ojai:

Four gypsy moths were trapped in Ojai in June 2007, triggering an intensive visual survey and heightened trapping that detected an additional seven moths this past summer, confirming that Ojai has an actively reproducing infestation. Additional visual surveys in the fall of 2008 revealed egg masses and larval cast skins on and near a property where a camping trailer had recently been parked after a trip that originated in the infested area of the northeastern U.S. The egg masses are frequently left on trees, but they are also commonly found on transportable items such as RVs, outdoor play equipment, BBQs and campers. New infestations are primarily caused when these items are moved from infested areas such as the eastern U.S.



An intensive visual survey in the Ojai area in the fall of 2008 detected several egg masses, confirming the presence of a gypsy moth infestation.



## Invasive Pests:

Threatening California's agriculture, environment and habitat

One of the primary mandates of the California Department of Food and Agriculture is to protect against invasion of exotic pests like the gypsy moth.

### So exactly what ARE exotic pests?

Exotic pests are organisms that are introduced into an area beyond their natural range and become pests in the new environment. They are also referred to as alien, non-native, or introduced pests. As is true with gypsy moth in California, most introductions of these invasive pests have been unintentional and accidental. Having evolved in a different ecosystem, these non-native species may have few natural enemies in their new locations, which can often lead to population increases that can overwhelm native species by out-competing them for resources (e.g., food, water, space). Besides the gypsy moth, some of California's worst exotic pests are fruit flies, fire ants, wood-boring beetles and root-munching weevils. Many weeds and plant or animal diseases are also classified as dangerous, invasive species.



Adult gypsy moths don't eat, but their caterpillars can defoliate entire swaths of forests.