

# Protecting California from the **Gypsy Moth**

**Recently, an invasive pest called the gypsy moth has been detected** in insect traps placed in your community. 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 expand the trapping array 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.

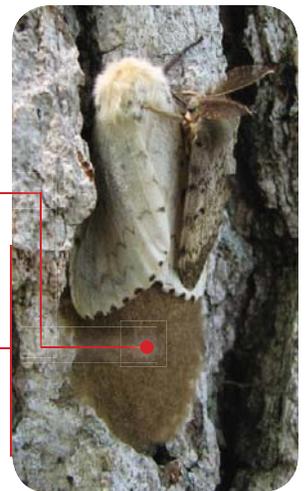


Female (lighter) and male adult gypsy moths.

Several gypsy moth infestations have been found in California and eradicated using organic materials. In the parts of the eastern United States where the moth is widely distributed and 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 infestations in the northeastern U.S. 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) is 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.

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.

## **How can I help?**

Please call our toll-free Pest Hotline at 1-800-491-1899 if you feel that you may have seen the gypsy moth or would like to have items inspected – especially if you have recently traveled to or had visitors from the infested area shown on the map (reverse).



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



Photos by USDA-APHIS and USDA-PPQ offices.

Please call **1-800-491-1899** 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 southeastern Canada.



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

## 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.