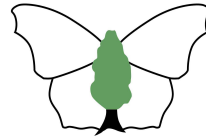


Potential and occasional problem species



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Gypsy Moth *Lymantria dispar*

Usually reported: May to June.

Potential problem: On mainland Europe the species is frequently a serious pest, as the caterpillars can defoliate trees. Also a pest in parts of North America where it was accidentally introduced in the 19th century.

Identification: The caterpillar and the male, which can fly by day, are the most usually encountered stages. The caterpillar is dark grey with light brown hairs, heavily marked black on the upperside, with 5 pairs of blue warts on the segments nearest the head end and reddish warts on the segments from about 1/3rd of the body length.



Gypsy Moth caterpillar (Photo: M. Parsons)

The adult male has a broad, deep brown forewing, with faint wavy cross-lines and a dark, roughly V-shaped central mark. The female is creamy white, similarly marked to the male, but is larger and more thickset, with a blunt abdomen

which has a dark brown tip. The male has feathery antennae.



Gypsy Moth male (Photo: M. Parsons)



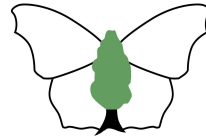
Gypsy Moth female (Photo: M. Parsons)

- Full grown the caterpillar is between 40 and 50mm, the smaller caterpillars generally being the male.
- Adult wingspan 48-65mm, the female generally larger than the male.

Confusion species: Hard to confuse with any other species, although there are many species with hairy caterpillars. The female Black Arches *Lymantria monacha* is smaller than that of the Gypsy Moth but the latter has the forewing

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markings more indistinct and a blunt abdomen.

Distribution: A former resident of the fens of Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, it declined from the mid 19th century with the last accepted record from 1907. The species is an infrequent immigrant to these shores with males (not females) being recorded widely over coastal southern England, from Kent to Cornwall and occasionally inland and further north. The moth became established, probably through accidental introduction, in an area of north-east London 1995 and may still persist in the area. It was subsequently found in a suburban area of Buckinghamshire in 2005 and in 2006 at a site on the Dorset/Hampshire border. The origin of these colonies is open to question, although the first is thought to be through accidental release. The moth has recently become established on the Channel Islands.

Ecology: In Europe it is found in a wide variety of habitats, including woodland, scrub, plantations, parks and gardens. The caterpillars feed, often gregariously, from April to July on a wide range of broad-leaved trees and bushes, perhaps with a preference for oak. The extinct British race fed upon bog-myrtle and creeping sallow. The young larvae are windblown and can disperse several miles. Pupates in a flimsy cocoon under bark or among leaf-litter or foliage.

The adults are found from July to August and sometimes into September, and the males fly at night as well as by day. The female does not usually fly far from the cocoon. Overwinters as an egg, these are laid in batches of between 50 and 800. The egg masses are between 3 to 4 cm long and 1.5 to 2 cm wide, covered in yellowish brown hairs, giving them a 'spongy' appearance. Egg masses can be found from September to April.

Possible control measures: Confirm identification. Forest Research are not currently recommending any form of control, but are monitoring (using pheromone traps for the males) both the London and Buckinghamshire populations.

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