



Whitemarked tussock moth

Orgyia leucostigma

Order Lepidoptera, Family Lymantriidae;
tussock, gypsy, and brown-tail moths
Native pest

Host plants: Maple, horsechestnut, birch, apple, sycamore, poplar, linden, elm, rose, fir, larch, and many other deciduous species

Description: Adult male moths are ash gray with a wingspan of 26–30 mm, while females are dirty white, wingless, hairy, and approximately 13 mm long. Larvae grow to 31 mm with a reddish orange head and a yellowish body with distinct tufted hairs. Pupae form within a grayish cocoon. The hairs of the larvae are allergenic.

Life history: Eggs hatch between April and June. There are usually two generations a year.

Overwintering: Eggs.

Damage symptoms: Larvae initially skeletonize leaves, but eventually consume all but the main vein and petiole.

Monitoring: Heavy infestations must be detected early for good control. Look for shot holes in leaves following egg hatch in April. Feeding ends by early June, in late July another generation is produced. Large caterpillars feed at night and hide near the ground during the day.

Chemical control: *Bacillus thuringiensis* can be sprayed to control early instar caterpillars with minimal impact on beneficials. Control is usually not necessary under forest conditions, but may be necessary in urban areas.

Biological control: Parasites, predators, microbial diseases, starvation, and unfavorable weather conditions normally bring large populations under control. Control is usually not necessary under forest conditions, but may be necessary in urban areas. An ichneumonid wasp, *Hyposoter* spp., is a common parasitoid.

Plant mortality risk: Low

Biorational pesticides: *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*, diflubenzuron, insecticidal soap, pyrethrins, spinosad, tenbufenozide

Conventional pesticides: acephate, bifenthrin, carbaryl, chlorpyrifos (nursery only), cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, fluvalinate, lambda-cyhalothrin, malathion, permethrin



Whitemarked tussock moth larva. (267)
Photo: David Laughlin



Whitemarked tussock moth larva being attacked by a spined soldier bug. (268)
Photo: David Laughlin