



Yellownecked caterpillar

Datana ministra

Order Lepidoptera, Family Notodontidae; prominent
Native pest

Host plants: Azalea, basswood, beech, birch, chestnut, crabapple, elm, honeylocust, locust, maple, mountain-ash, oak, peach, sumac, and many other fruit and shade trees

Description: Adult moths can reach 50 mm in length and have a wingspan of approximately 50 mm. Their forewings are cinnamon-colored with darker lines and irregular edges. The rear wings are somewhat lighter. The head and thorax are dark brown; the abdomen buff. Mature larvae are black except for a yellow-orange neck and several yellow lines.

Life history: Adults emerge in June or July. Eggs are deposited in large clusters under leaves. They are present from July through October. When disturbed, they raise both ends of their body in an alarm posture. There is one generation a year.

Overwintering: Pupae in soil.

Damage symptoms: Larvae feed in groups near branch terminals. Young larvae skeletonize leaves. Older larvae eat everything but the main veins. Light infestations may defoliate single branches. Small trees may be completely defoliated by heavy infestations, and successive defoliations of two or more years may lead to serious dieback or death.

Monitoring: Beginning in July, look for signs of skeletonization or defoliation on branch terminals. Look for clusters of larvae feeding close by. Shake branches to dislodge and discover hidden groups of larvae.

Physical control: In light infestations and where accessible, groups of young larvae can be manually removed and destroyed.

Chemical control: Young larvae may be sprayed with horticultural oil or *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*. Heavy infestations of older larvae may require a residual insecticide spray.

Biological control: Several kinds of beneficial organisms attack the larvae, such as predaceous bugs and parasitic flies, as well as robins and blue jays.

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



Yellownecked caterpillar larvae. (278)

Photo: unknown