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Caterpillars That Are Not The Gypsy Moth Caterpillar. Some Forest Lepidoptera In Florida (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae, Lasiocampidae, Lymantriidae).[1]

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INTRODUCTION: The gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar* (L.), is not known to be established in Florida even though one or more life stages have been observed in 49 counties (1971-1991). Most gypsy moth detections are male moths caught in pheromone traps. As the gypsy moth-infested areas approach Florida, residents will become more aware of the gypsy moth threat. In addition, they will more frequently question whether a caterpillar in their tree is a gypsy moth caterpillar. Several forest caterpillars (Figs. 1-4) that may be mistaken for the gypsy moth caterpillar (Fig. 5) are shown below and described in the accompanying text. FDACS-DPI Entomology Circular No. 270 describes the gypsy moth in detail (Dixon and Foltz 1985).

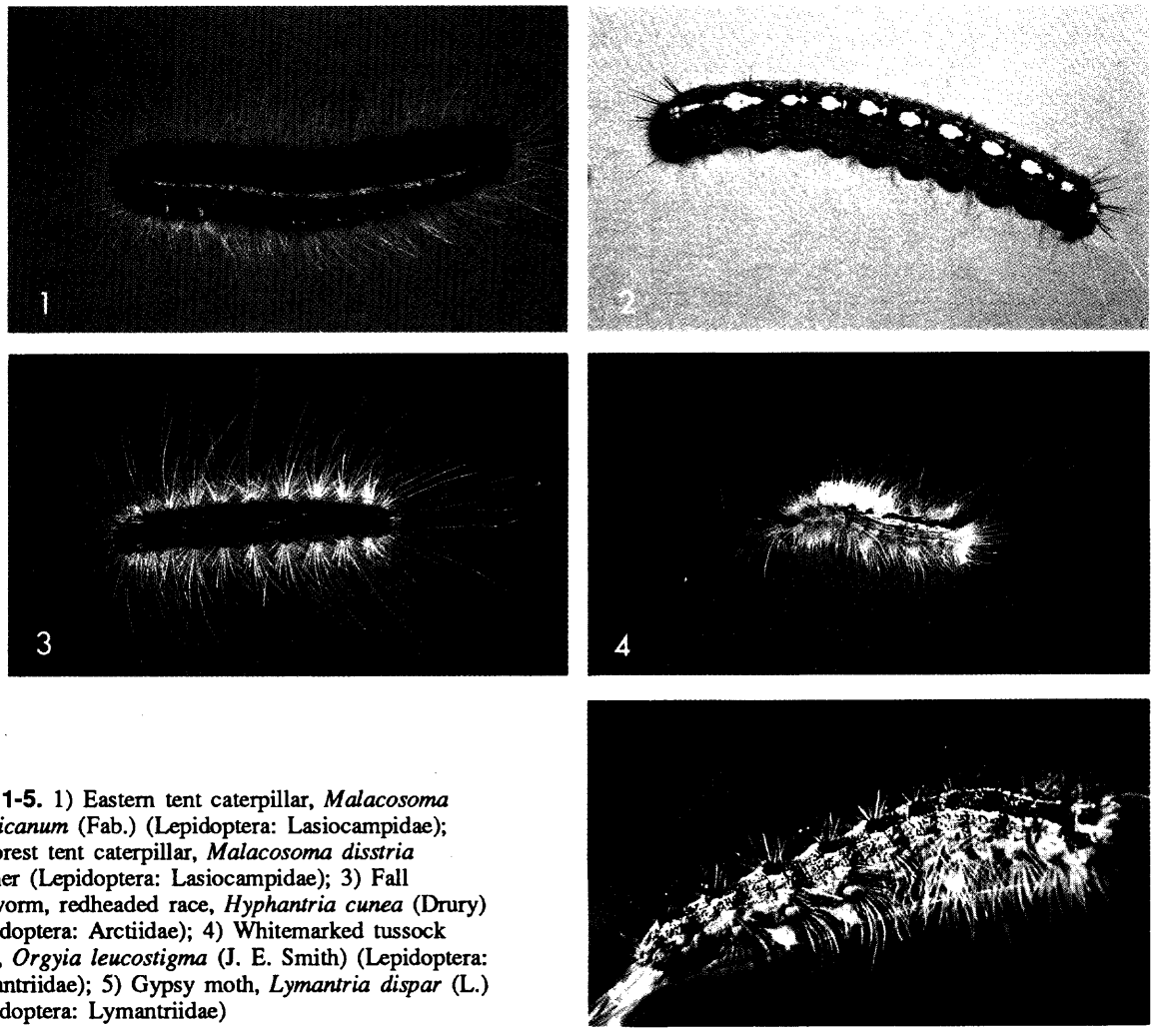

Fig. 1-5. 1) Eastern tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma americanum* (Fab.) (Lepidoptera: Lasiocampidae); 2) Forest tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma disstria* Hübner (Lepidoptera: Lasiocampidae); 3) Fall webworm, redheaded race, *Hyphantria cunea* (Drury) (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae); 4) Whitemarked tussock moth, *Orgyia leucostigma* (J. E. Smith) (Lepidoptera: Lymantriidae); 5) Gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar* (L.) (Lepidoptera: Lymantriidae)

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LARVAL DESCRIPTION: ***Malacosoma americanum*** - dark colored with a white stripe along the mid-back line bordered on both sides with orange; a small, oval, blue spot within a larger black spot on sides of each segment; body hairy, but setae not in tufts nor arising from warts; mature larva 2 - 2.5 in. long (50-64 mm) (Fig. 1). ***Malacosoma disstria*** - body color bluish to brownish with keyhole- or somewhat diamond-shaped white spots on the mid posterior of each segment; 2 thin, broken, yellow lines extend along each side; body hair and size as in *M. americanum* (Fig. 2). ***Hyphantria cunea*** - blackheaded and redheaded races present, body colored variously from pale yellow to gray or brown, darker individuals appear to have a dark band with a thin yellowish line along the back; covered with long silky hairs that arise in groups from black, orange, or yellow warts; mature larva 1 - 1.25 in. long (25-32 mm) (Fig. 3). ***Orgyia leucostigma*** - head bright red, body white to yellowish with darker streak along back; two long tufts on the prothorax and one on the 8th abdominal segment; short white tufts on mid-back of first 4 abdominal segments; red glands on mid-back of 6th and 7th abdominal segment; mature larva 1.25 in. long (32 mm) (Fig. 4). There are other tussock moth species with larvae that resemble the whitemarked tussock moth. ***Lymantria dispar*** - body dark gray marked on back of each of the 3 thoracic segments plus first 2 abdominal segments with a pair of slightly raised blue spots; similar red spots on abdominal segments 3 - 8; stiff hairs arise from these spots as well as from numerous low tubercle-like spots; small gland on mid-back of 6th and 7th abdominal segment; mature larva 1.5 - 2.5 in. long (38-64 mm) (Fig. 5) (Anderson 1960).

DISTRIBUTION: Counties in Florida for ***Malacosoma americanum*** - Alachua, Brevard, Citrus, Clay, Dixie, Duval, Hernando, Hillsborough, Lake, Leon, Nassau, Orange, Pasco, Polk, Volusia. ***Malacosoma disstria*** - Alachua, Baker, Citrus, Dade, Duval, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Marion, Orange, Polk, Volusia. ***Hyphantria cunea*** - recorded in all counties except Charlotte, De Soto, Flagler, Glades, Gulf, Hardee, Highlands, Lafayette, Monroe, Okeechobee, Pasco, Rosa, Sumter. ***Orgyia leucostigma*** - positive counties include Alachua, Bradford, Broward, Clay, Collier, Duval, Gilchrist, Hardee, Hernando, Hillsborough, Lake, Levy, Manatee, Marion, Martin, Monroe, Nassau, Okeechobee, Orange, Pasco, Polk, Putnam, Sarasota, Seminole, Volusia. ***Lymantria dispar*** - recorded in all counties except Baker, Broward, Calhoun, Collier, Dade, Glades, Hendry, Holmes, Lafayette, Lee, Liberty, Madison, Martin, Monroe, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, Suwannee, Washington (FDACS-DPI records; Kimball 1965; authors, unpublished).

HOST PLANTS: ***Malacosoma americanum*** - apples (*Malus* spp.), oaks (*Quercus* spp.), pecans [*Carya illinoinensis* (Wangenh.) C. Koch], wild plum (*Prunus* spp.), wild crab-apple (*Malus* spp.), black cherry (*Prunus serotina* Ehrh.). ***Malacosoma disstria*** - gums (*Nyssa* spp.) and oaks preferred, occasionally on basswood (*Tilia americana* L.), cherry (*Prunus* spp.), and plum . ***Hyphantria cunea*** - pecan, sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua* L.), bald cypress [*Taxodium distichum* (L.) Rich.], persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana* L.), coastal plain willow (*Salix caroliniana* Michx.), waterlocust (*Gleditsia aquatica* Marsh.), water hickory (*Carya aquatica* (Michx.) Nutt., eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis* L.). ***Orgyia leucostigma*** - live oak (*Quercus virginiana* Mill.), laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia* Michx.), redbud, apple, other hardwoods. ***Lymantria dispar*** - oaks, birches (*Betula* spp.), basswood, willows (*Salix* spp.), pines (*Pinus* spp.), and many other hardwoods and softwoods (Anderson 1960; Kimball 1965; authors, unpublished).

GENERATIONS AND OTHER CHARACTERS: ***Malacosoma americanum*** - 1 generation a year, spring; egg hatch early February in Gainesville; silk tents enclosing branch crotches; black cylindrical egg mass wrapped around branches. ***Malacosoma disstria*** - 1 generation per year, spring; egg hatch slightly later than ***M. americanum***; no silk nest; black cylindrical egg mass wrapped around branches. ***Hyphantria cunea*** - 3 to 4 generations a year beginning in spring; nests of silk webbing enclosing branches or an entire tree. ***Orgyia leucostigma*** - 2 to 3 generations a year; hard frothy, mat of eggs on topside of brownish colored cocoons. ***Lymantria dispar*** - 1 generation a year (in northern states), spring; egg mass is thick buff-colored mat composed of hairs and eggs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: Any suspect insect specimens should be forwarded to the Bureau of Entomology, Division of Plant Industry, P. O. Box 147100, Gainesville 32614, for identification.

Literature Cited:

Anderson, R. F. 1960. Forest and Shade Tree Entomology. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New York, NY. 428p.

Dixon, W. N., and J. L. Foltz. 1985. The gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar* (L.) (Lepidoptera: Lymantriidae). Florida Dept. Agric. & Consumer Serv., Div. Plant Industry, Gainesville. Entomol. Cir. No. 270. 4p.

Kimball, C. P. 1965. The Lepidoptera of Florida: an annotated checklist. Florida Dept. Agric. & Consumer Serv., Div. Plant Industry, Gainesville. Arthropods of Florida and Neighboring Land Areas. Vol. 1. 363p.