

## Gypsy Moth Caterpillars at Lake Buckhorn

You may have noticed some of your neighbors wrapping duct tape around their trees this Spring in an attempt to suppress an infestation of gypsy moth caterpillars at Lake Buckhorn. The invasive gypsy moth caterpillar and adult gypsy moth pictured below have unfortunately taken up residence here at the lake.



Gypsy Moth Caterpillar



Adult Gypsy Moth

The gypsy moth is one of the most destructive insect pests threatening the forests and ornamental plants of Ohio. Native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa, the gypsy moth became established in North America in 1869 when brought to Massachusetts for an unsuccessful attempt to cross it with the silkworm. A few of the insects escaped, and the gypsy moth has gradually spread throughout the northeastern states ever since. It targets many species of tree, although oak appears to be a favorite. It is capable of defoliating a tree by early summer. A tree may be killed or weakened if a severe infestation occurs for three years in a row.\*

The slow, natural spread of the gypsy moth continues to move south into the unglaciated hill country from northeastern Ohio and into northwestern Ohio from Michigan. Northwest Ohio's first significant defoliation occurred in the Toledo area in 1996. Ohio must now battle the gypsy moth on two infestation fronts. All counties not in the quarantined area are monitored, and hotspots discovered more than 50 miles from any known infestation are eradicated. Counties currently quarantined include: Ashtabula, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Lake, Lucas, Mahoning, Monroe, Portage, Summit, Stark, Trumbull, and Tuscarawas.\*

You can protect your own trees by doing the following. The easiest method may be to simply contact an exterminator such as Bugs-R-Gone at 330-674-0371. If you are interested in doing the work yourself the following is suggested: (1) In late winter inspect all trees, especially oak, and using a bristle brush destroy any egg cases attached to the tree. Egg cases are a whitish silk and are typically attached to the tree along the first five feet of the trunk. (2) In early Spring, just prior to leaf emergence attach a 3-4 inch band around the circumference of the tree and approximately 5 feet high. (Commercial products are available through your exterminator or by ordering online at: <http://www.rittenhouse.ca/asp/product.asp?pg=1567>). A homemade method is to wrap your tree with duct tape, placing the sticky side facing out. Be sure to pull the tape tightly to the tree to prevent the band from sliding. As an added barrier you can apply a thin layer of Vaseline to the duct tape to prevent

the newly hatched caterpillars from crossing the barrier. Be certain that no Vaseline comes in direct contact with the bark as this may damage the tree. After the caterpillars hatch it is recommended that the trees be inspected regularly and any of the juvenile caterpillars be destroyed. (3) Attach a band of burlap above the duct tape using twine rope to hold it in place. Again, a commercial product is available or this can be a do it yourself project. Through July, mature caterpillars will migrate down the tree during the day and hide underneath the burlap band in order to evade predators. Look under this band regularly and destroy any caterpillars. (4) The gypsy moth caterpillar is also susceptible to a naturally occurring fungus that will kill them. Caterpillars that have been killed by this fungus will remain attached to the tree in a vertical hanging position. Gathering up the dead caterpillars and placing them on the ground around the base of the tree is a biologically safe way to avoid pesticide use and control the caterpillar population the following year.

The LBPOA has applied to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) to participate in the aerial spraying program. If ODA determines the infestation is severe, planes will spray a bacterium derived product called BTK on all trees excluding a 200' buffer surrounding the lake. The planes use a global positioning system (GPS) and are very accurate. If you have further questions regarding Gypsy Moth Caterpillars it is recommended that you contact the Ohio Department of Agriculture Gypsy Moth program at 1-800-282-1955.

\*excerpted from <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us>

By Arnie Oliver, LBPOA Board Member