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).

![Images of caterpillars](Figures)

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).


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: