

# SPONGY MOTH FACT SHEET

## History of the Spongy Moth (*formerly known as the Gypsy Moth*)

The Spongy moth comes back annually and can wreak havoc in some of Sarnia's well-treed neighbourhoods where oak species are prevalent. This pest established itself in north eastern USA and eastern Canada after being accidentally introduced to Massachusetts in 1869 by a French naturalist.

The moths are seen only in mid to late summer. They lay their egg masses on the limbs and trunks of trees, on rocks, buildings, vehicles or in other sheltered areas. The masses, each of which contains more than 300 eggs, will remain in place all winter and hatch the following spring. Once hatched, the caterpillars begin to feed on tree leaves for approximately seven weeks.

The European spongy moth has been found on 500 species of trees. Broadleaved trees are preferred; mainly red, white, bur and swamp white oaks, poplar and white birch. Tree damage depends on the degree of infestation, past defoliations, the tree's vulnerability and the environment. Damage can range from light to almost complete defoliation. If the tree has been weakened or stressed by other conditions, and attacked repeatedly in recent years, the defoliation can result in the death of the tree.

**These pictures show the various stages of the spongy moth.**



### Late April to Early August

Caterpillars are 5-7cm long, dark and hairy with 5 pairs of blue dots followed by 6 pairs of red along the back.



### August

Pupa is red-brown, about 2-3cm long.



### August to early September

Male adult moth is dark brown with blackish bands, forewing shape, covered with hairs from the females.



### September to April

Egg mass laid by female moth has a cross flat irregular shape.

