

Forest Tent Caterpillar in Vermont

This native insect is a major tree health problem in Vermont's hardwood forests. High populations occur periodically. The last outbreak, in the late 1970's and early 1980's, began in Rutland and Windsor counties, then spread northward over several years. The population reached its peak in 1982 when 323,000 acres of forestland were defoliated. Following that outbreak, tree decline and mortality were observed on over 30,000 acres. Decline was most severe where defoliation had occurred at least twice or where trees were already unhealthy from other stress.



Photo courtesy of Ron Kelley, VT Forestry.

Adults moths (1 - 1 1/2 inch wingspan) are buff colored with two dark stripes across the wings. They are active in mid-summer, when they lay 100-350 eggs in a mass on mature tree twigs.



Photo courtesy of Ron Kelley, VT Forestry.

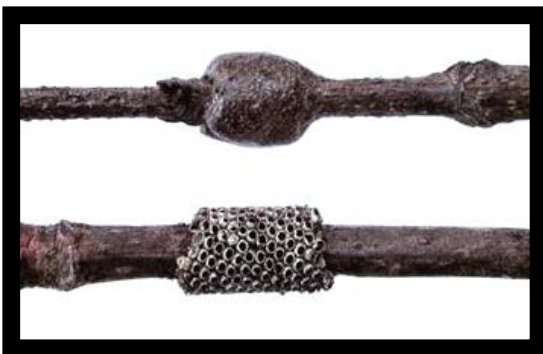


Photo courtesy of US Forest Service.

Eggs are joined in a glossy, dark brown, cylindrical mass on small twigs of upper tree branches. New masses (upper photo) are typically 1/4 to 5/8 inch long and will hatch in the spring. Older masses (bottom photo) often remain, but contain no insects.