

# FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR—*Malacosoma disstria*

**HOSTS:** Boxelder (Manitoba maple), ash, oak, cottonwood and other poplars, and other hardwoods

**IDENTIFICATION, LIFE CYCLE, AND DAMAGE:** The hairy larvae are pale blue with white key-hole shaped markings on their backs. Full-grown larvae are about 50 mm long. The stout-bodied moths are buff-brown with two dark diagonal bands on the wings and a wingspan of 20 to 45 mm.

Eggs hatch in spring, when leaves are expanding. Caterpillars feed in groups or clusters on leaves during early summer (June in North Dakota). Although larvae cluster around branches to rest or molt, they do not construct tents. In late summer female moths appear and lay eggs in shiny brown masses that encircle twigs.

Infested trees are usually completely defoliated and their growth and vigor is reduced. Outbreaks tend to be widespread.

**CONTROL:** Shortly after leaf expansion, spray the caterpillars and foliage with malathion, carbaryl, diazinon, acephate, methoxychlor, or *Bacillus thuringiensis* (B.t.). If infested trees are small, or the infestation is small, egg masses can be cut from trees during the fall and winter and destroyed. Larvae can also be collected and destroyed during summer. Populations of natural enemies, such as parasitic insects, birds, and viruses, usually build up after 3 to 4 years and cause caterpillar populations to collapse.



Forest tent caterpillar