

Pest Profile



Photo credit: William M. Ciesla, Forest Health Management International, Bugwood.org; Jerald E. Dewey, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Common Name: Western Tent Caterpillar

Scientific Name: *Malacosoma californicum*

Order and Family: Lepidoptera, Lasiocampidae

Size and Appearance: Adults: Larger bodied, wingspan of 2.5-5 cm, sexually dimorphic coloration with females being lighter brown, and males darker brown with forewings having a pair of lines either lighter or darker than existing wing color.

Caterpillars: Reach up to 50mm in length and are covered in yellowish brown hairs with pale blue head capsule. Laterally blue-gray in color, with a light colored mid-dorsal stripe running down the length of its body, and bluish spots on the sides.

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg	1mm	Elongate shaped; laid in masses with brown protective material; up to 400 eggs in a mass.
Larva/Nymph	3-50mm	Body blue gray colored; covered in yellowish brown hairs; pale blue head; blue spots on sides; light stripe down back.
Adult	25-50mm	Females light brown; males darker brown; forewings have a pair of light or dark lines; large bodied.
Pupa (if applicable)	19mm	Brown in color; covered in white silken cocoon; yellow powder dusted on top.

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Larvae: Chewing

Host plants: Numerous fruit tree species as well as poplar, alder, aspen, willow, oak, and maple. Larvae also feed on many shrubs including mountain mahogany, nine-bark, sumac, wild currant, serviceberry and wild rose.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults): Obvious tent-like nests of silk containing a colony of larvae are attached to branch crotches on trees, which serve as protection, shelter, and a molting site for the larvae. Although larvae don't directly consume fruit, a single colony can strip an entire tree of foliage, thus severely impacting the health and future production of fruit. Specific damage to trees that can occur over multiple years of attack include branch dieback, top-kill, and a lower number of fruits being produced on fruit bearing trees.

References:

Brunner, J. F. (1993). Western Tent Caterpillar. Orchard Pest Management Online. Washington State University. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from <http://jenny.tfrec.wsu.edu/opm/displaySpecies.php?pn=580>

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