FOREST WATCH AUSTRALIA

National Priority Plant Pest

NOT PRESENT IN AUSTRALIA – REPORT IT – **CALL 1800 084 881**

NUN MOTH

Lymantria monacha

Description

Medium-sized moths with a wingspan of 35-55 mm and widespread in Europe and Asia.

The forewings of both sexes are white with wavy dark bands. Wing colour can vary greatly with white and dark forms present. Eggs are dark grey and are laid in masses of 20 to 100 in bark crevices or under bark scales or lichen.

Larvae are up to 35 mm long with a grey-yellow body and with tufts of hair of various lengths along the sides of the body. The first four abdominal segments have a dorsal pair of bluish spots; the sixth and seventh segments have dorsal orange lumps. The head is pale brown with dense black markings.

Affected tree species

Affects conifers such as Pine (*Pinus*), Spruce (*Picea*), Fir (*Abies*)and Larch (*Larix*). Can also affect a wide range of commonly planted broad-leaved urban tree species such as Oak (*Quercus*),Maple (*Acer*), Ash (*Fraxinus*), Birch (*Betula*), Apple (*Malus*) and other fruit trees.

Nun Moth larva.

Symptoms

Outbreaks of Nun moth are driven more by the prevalence of susceptible species in the landscape than by tree age. Infestations appear to be more frequent on poor sites.

Leaves of both broadleaved and conifer tree species are affected. Complete defoliation of tree stands is observed during outbreaks.

Any suspect moths or larvae should be reported.

Time most likely to be seen

The most likely stages to be observed are the larvae in spring/summer. Eggs hatch in spring and caterpillars develop through to pupation in 40-80 days. Pupation occurs on tree trunks or in crowns, or occasionally on surrounding vegetation cover. Flights by adult moths occur from mid-summer to early autumn.

Pines defoliated by Nun Moth larvae.

Protecting our trees

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Can be confused with

There are several other hairy caterpillars, native and exotic, that can resemble Nun moth larvae, including some native species of Lymantria.

Prevention and control

- Strict import conditions and border controls.
- Use of pheromone-based lures for early detection in areas at high-risk of accidental introduction.
- Most common control method involves aerial or ground-based application of biological pesticides containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). These bacteria specifically target the larval stages.

Pest Diseases Image Library


Credit: Stanislaw Kinelski bugwood.org

ABOVE: Female Nun Moth. BELOW: Darker variant


Credit: Creative commons

Nun moth pupa on bark

Further Information

- Pest and Diseases Image Library – https://www.padil.gov.au/pests-and-diseases/pest/136274.
- Atlas of Living Australia – https://bie.ala.org.au/species/ALA_DR31252_1844.
- Global Biodiversity Information Facility – https://www.gbif.org/taxon/72QX2.
- European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization Global Database – https://gd.eppo.int/taxon/LYMAMO.

MyPestGuide Trees

For information on tree pests in Australia from your browser or favourite mobile platform visit:

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