

SAME MOTH, NEW NAME

Lymantria dispar has a new common name:
spongy moth.

WHY DID THIS NAME CHANGE?

“Spongy moth” replaces the old common name, “gypsy moth,” because it used a derogatory term for Romani people.

“Spongy moth” also better describes an identifying characteristic: the moth’s sponge-like egg masses, an important target for management efforts of this invasive forest pest.

HOW WAS “SPONGY MOTH” CHOSEN?

The name was selected by a group of more than 50 entomologists and foresters in the United States and Canada, as well as Romani scholars working on human rights issues. Convened by the Entomological Society of America, the group gathered input from a wide audience of interested individuals and organizations.

More than 200 names were evaluated before “spongy moth” was selected. The name is derived from the common name used in France and French-speaking Canada, “spongieuse.”

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE AWARE OF THE SPONGY MOTH?

Lymantria dispar is an invasive forest pest that can defoliate hundreds of tree and shrub species. A primary way spongy moth spreads is via egg masses transported on firewood, outdoor equipment, and vehicles. By keeping an eye out for these spongy-looking egg masses, you can play an important role in slowing the spread of this pest.

And, by using its new name, “spongy moth,” you can also help put the old name—and its harmful connotations—in the past.



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Photos: *Lymantria dispar* adult by Gyorgy Csoka, Hungary Forest Research Institute, Bugwood.org.

Lymantria dispar egg masses by Karla Salp, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org.



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