

# Gypsy Moths Kick the Bucket



When WID's gypsy moth control consultant Mark Ticehurst suggested that Barcroft should depend on a fungus instead of arial spraying, folks thought he was losing his grip. In fact, Mark wasn't absolutely certain himself. It would cost half as much and eliminate spraying, which some folks don't like. WID tried it... and it worked *sensationally*. Now we ask him to explain *how* and *why* and *what's next*. Here's his analysis:

According to Tony Shaw, Gypsy Moth Coordinator for Fairfax County, the infestation continues to increase with the highest levels in many years expected in 2002. The County anticipates spraying 7,000 acres in 2002, a 4-fold increase from 2001. Amy Onken, entomologist for the US Forest Service, noted explosive gypsy moth populations in Virginia. She reported 440,000 acres defoliated by gypsy moth this summer, a 13-fold increase from last year. The combined stress of defoliation and the summer drought are likely to kill 20% to 50% of the affected trees. Predictions for 2002 are not available for Virginia but an increase in infestation and defoliation is consistent with the trend.

As you know, the gypsy moth program in Lake Barcroft has utilized intensive biological risk assessments to identify focal areas of infestation followed by targeted and timely applications of biological agents (parasites, fungi and biological insecticides) for the past several years. Last November, National Gypsy Moth Management Group (NGMMG) reported a significant increase in gypsy moth specific fungus, *E. maimaiga* in the spring of 2001. Lake Barcroft WID elected to participate in the biological program and the fungus was applied this spring.

The results are impressive. Gypsy moth populations were reduced to unobservable levels in all of the 18 inoculation sites. Overall, gypsy moth egg mass populations declined 93% and relatively sparse populations are expected in 2002. Additionally, defoliation, tree mortality, and nuisance was prevented. No trees have died in Lake Barcroft as a result of gypsy moth.

The Barcroft process was simple. Dr. Ticehurst cultured fungus, mixed it with a small amount of topsoil and applied a few trowel-fulls at the base of several trees in hot spot locations. Nature did the rest quickly spreading the fungus throughout the community. *Thanks Mark!*

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