

## **Douglas-Fir Tussock Moth**

### **Community Outreach and a New Communication Network**

The Douglas-fir tussock moth, *Orgyia pseudotsugata* (McDunnough), was positively identified in Boulder Heights and Carriage Hills in October 2014 (refer to attached map). This insect is a native pest of Colorado's forests. Caterpillars of this moth chew the needles of our native firs, spruces, and Douglas-fir trees. During epidemic outbreaks complete defoliation of host trees is possible. The caterpillar and cocoon of this insect are covered in little hairs that can cause an irritating, and sometimes painful, rash. Please use caution if you suspect you are dealing with it.

#### **Life Cycle**

This pest is cyclical, outbreaks can last 1-3 years with 7-10 years between outbreaks. At endemic levels mild defoliation can occur at the tops and outer edges of trees. At the onset of an outbreak, while the population is building its numbers, mild defoliation can be seen in the upper and outer portions of trees. During outbreaks, this insect can cause widespread mortality due to defoliation. At the peak of an outbreak the caterpillars and cocoons can be found on both host and non-host species of trees or any other objects, including homes, in the affected area.

#### **Current Status of the Outbreak**

Many residents of the Boulder Heights and Carriage Hills neighborhoods witnessed large amounts of caterpillars crossing roads, climbing on homes and other structures, and moving into trees during the summer and fall of 2014. Foresters with the Colorado State Forest Service, along with entomologists with the U.S. Forest Service, visited this area in October 2014 and positively identified this insect. Of note during that visit, and many subsequent visits, was the small amount of defoliation present in the surrounding forest compared to the large amount of caterpillars and cocoons.

#### **Join the new Google Group – Boulder County Douglas-fir Tussock Moth**

Currently, this pest is dormant and will remain so until eggs hatch in the spring, typically in late May. Residents will have limited control options that will be discussed in future emails through the Google Group "Boulder County Douglas-fir Tussock Moth". We encourage all interested residents to join this group to stay up to date on the latest information.

To **join the google group visit:** <https://groups.google.com/d/forum/bocodftm> and click on the weblink (in the middle of the screen) "**subscribe to this group**". If you have difficulty joining the group, send an email to [rludlow@bouldercounty.org](mailto:rludlow@bouldercounty.org) and he will send you an invitation to join. You don't have to have a gmail account to join the group, but there are more features available if you sign up for the group with your google account.