



Redhumped Caterpillar

A new forest pest has made its presence known recently in Mississippi: the redhumped caterpillar. This pest is common in California and likes to forage on sweet gum. It will also forage on other species such as walnut, cottonwood, birch, redbud, willow, plum and other fruit trees.

Upon hatching, caterpillars feed in groups on lower leaf surfaces and skeletonize the leaves. As the larvae becomes larger, individuals tend to disperse and consume the entire leaf, leaving on the tough woody veins. There are a number of wasps that use the redhumped caterpillar as a host and on occasion provide effective natural control. Another control measure is to cut off the foliage that contains the caterpillars while the insects are young and gregarious. These limbs can then be burned or chipped. Also, effective sprays for control can be found in products like Dipel and Thuricide.

Infestations can be found in the capital city of Jackson along the Pearl River. Sightings have also been report in Warren, Jackson, Harriosn, Lee and Tishomingo counties. It is believed that this forest pest arrived via transport truck traffic along the interstate system. It doesn't appear to be common, but seems to thus far be an occasional pest when conditions are right for a population build-up. Keep you

eyes open for this pest and report sighting to Bill Lambert at the State Office.



Figure 1: A cluster of redhumped caterpillars feed on a sweet gum leaf.



Figure 2: An older caterpillar dines alone.