

# Bug of the Month

by Jim Revell

## Redhumped Caterpillar

**Class:** Insecta (Insects)

**Order:** Lepidoptera (Butterflies & Moths)

**Family:** Notodontidae

**Genus:** Schizura

**Species:** *S. concinna*

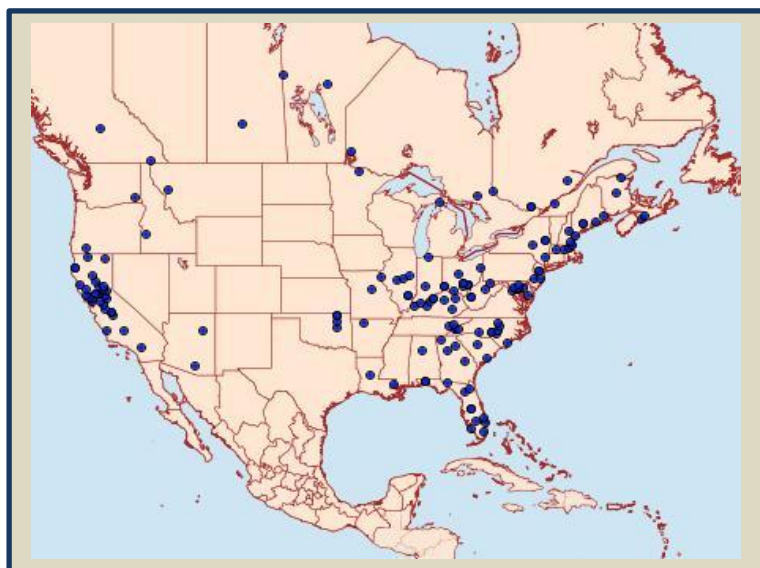


Sometime in August, I was visiting one of our Master Gardeners, Randall Dalton, and he had recently planted a couple of young apple trees. We were looking at them when I noticed a clump of caterpillars on the underside of a leaf.

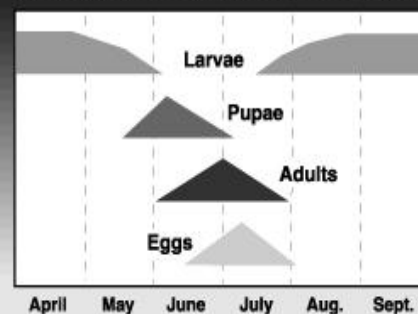
Their bodies were yellow-to-reddish with white, yellow and black stripes; along their sides were rows of black tubercles, but what was most noticeable was the red hump on the first abdominal segment (the reason for their common name). It looked to be the same color as the head of the caterpillars.

The Redhumped Caterpillar is found throughout the United States and Canada; however, it is not common in most orchards of the western United States. In the northern states, there is only one generation, while in the south, there are normally two generations and, some reports suggest as many as five generations may occur in some regions.

These caterpillars enjoy a wide range of hosts, apple being a favorite, but, they also feed on pear, cherry, plum, apricot, blackberry and walnut. Red bud, dogwood, hickory, sweetgum and others are also on their list of food plants.



### Redhumped Caterpillar Life History



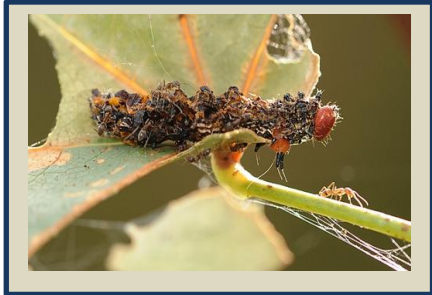
The redhumped caterpillar has only one generation in the northern United States, though two generations may occur in the South.

Photos clockwise from top:

- 1) and 2) [cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/?blogtag=redhumped%20caterpillar&blogasset=42184](http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/?blogtag=redhumped%20caterpillar&blogasset=42184)
- 3) [jenny.tfrec.wsu.edu/opm/displaySpecies.php?pn=600](http://jenny.tfrec.wsu.edu/opm/displaySpecies.php?pn=600)
- 4) [mothphotographersgroup.msstate.edu/large\\_map.php?hodges=8010](http://mothphotographersgroup.msstate.edu/large_map.php?hodges=8010)

The adult moths emerge in June and July. Female moths have a wingspan of about 1 ¼ - 1 ½ inches while males are shorter. The forewings of both sexes are mostly brown with a gray outer edge. Their bodies are brown and, in general, a fairly non-descript looking moth.

The female moths lay clusters of 40-100 eggs on the lower surface of leaves. The eggs are pearly white and slightly flattened. After larvae emerge, they begin feeding on the underside of the leaf and, as they mature, they begin to consume the entire leaf and can easily “skeletonize” the leaf (as reflected in the photograph below from [cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/?blogtag=redhumped%20caterpillar&blogasset=42184](http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/?blogtag=redhumped%20caterpillar&blogasset=42184)). Generally, caterpillars from the same egg mass stay together on the same limb and feed in groups.



Because the caterpillars can defoliate young trees in such a short period of time, close examination is needed during July and early August. Biological controls such as Spinosad and BT can be effective at earlier stages. Remember, for these pesticides to be effective, the caterpillars must consume the bacterium, therefore, feeding will briefly continue after spraying. Insecticide soap and pyrethrins will, also, work.

Controls are generally needed only on young trees. Other insecticides such as Carbaryl, Malathion and Permethrin are, also, listed as controls.

Natural controls include parasitic wasps, lacewings, big-eyed bugs, damsel bugs and spiders. The photo at the left depicts a Redhumped Caterpillar that never made it to a Redhumped Caterpillar Moth. The Caterpillar was enjoying the redbud leaf only to end up caught in a spider’s web and, in turn, provided food for an army of Argentine ants.

Caterpillars mature to 1-1.5 inches long in August to early September and move to the ground where they spin a cocoon under leaf litter to over-winter (a good reason for fall garden clean-up).

The LIFECYCLE of the Redhumped Caterpillar is depicted in photographs from UC Davis, top row left to right, and bottom row left to right:

**Adult Moth:** [ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/S/I-LP-SCON-AD.001.html](http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/S/I-LP-SCON-AD.001.html)

**Egg Cluster:** [ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/S/I-LP-SCON-EG.001.html](http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/S/I-LP-SCON-EG.001.html)

**Redhumped Caterpillar:** [ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/S/I-LP-SCON-LV.013.html](http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/S/I-LP-SCON-LV.013.html)

**Pupa:** [ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/S/I-LP-SCON-PU.001.html](http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/S/I-LP-SCON-PU.001.html)



Other references include: [hortipm.tamu.edu/pestprofiles/chewing/redhump/redhump.html](http://hortipm.tamu.edu/pestprofiles/chewing/redhump/redhump.html)