

Bug of the Month

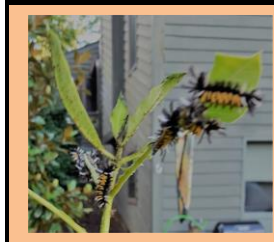
by Jim Revell / November 2017

Milkweed Tussock Caterpillar



Milkweed Tussock Caterpillar

Class: Insecta (Insects)
Order: Lepidoptera (Butterflies & Moths)
Family: Erebiidae
Genus: *Euchaetes*
Species: *egle*



below from Michigan State University of newly hatched Milkweed Tussock larvae feeding. Adult moths have a wing span of 32-43mm (25mm = 1 inch). The wings are usually gray and unmarked. Their abdomen is yellow with black spots. At times, adults may be found on the host plant during the day.

Females lay their eggs in "rafts" and, upon hatching, the young caterpillars are gregarious, and tend to stay in a group, until the third instar; they become solitary in later instar stages. They often defoliate individual plants in gardens and nurseries and, in some years, may erupt into numbers that may defoliate entire patches of Milkweed. There is concern that this may cause competition with the Monarchs and, therefore, affect the Monarch's food supply.

Researchers have found Monarchs appear to prefer young, vigorous growth of the plant versus the Milkweed Tussock which seems to be content with the older foliage, even those that are yellowing. The pupa overwinters in a cocoon. Caterpillars are found starting in June, and adults are usually seen during May to September in much of their range. Generally, there are two generations per year except in Canada. Other common names are Milkweed Tiger Moth, Milkweed Tussock Caterpillar (larva stage), and Harlequin Caterpillar (larva stage).

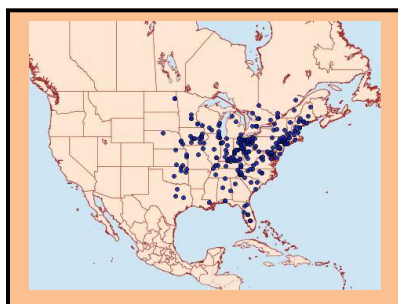


Photo References:

BugGuide.net, dan40165, Bullitt Co., KY, 07/31/2017: <https://bugguide.net/node/view/1417529>

Euchaetes egle US Map, MS Entomological Museum at Mississippi State University:

http://mothphotographersgroup.msstate.edu/map/cache/overall/map_8238.jpg

Milkweed Tussock larvae feeding, Michigan State University: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/uploads/images/mw19_1.jpg

Research References / Resources:

National Wildlife Federation's Field Guide to Insects and Spiders of North America, by Arthur V. Evans

Princeton Field Guide's Caterpillars of Eastern North America, by David L. Wagner

BugGuide.net, species *Euchaetes egle* – Milkweed Tussock Moth