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DEFOLIATION OF DECIDUOUS TREES & SHRUBS
BY NORTHERN TENT CATERPILLAR
ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

C. Wood

Forest Insect and Disease Survey

Increased numbers of northern tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma californicum pluviale*, (previously known as western tent caterpillar), defoliated deciduous trees and shrubs throughout the Greater Victoria area, most severely in the Gorge Inlet, Colquitz Creek and High Quadra areas. This is a major increase over 1992 and the most significant since widespread defoliation last occurred between 1984 and 1987 on southern Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and in the Vancouver and Fraser Valley areas. Small numbers of the closely related forest tent caterpillar, *M. disstria* usually found on interior trembling aspen are present in some areas. Populations near Myra Falls in Strathcona Provincial Park, where patches of young alder were severely defoliated last year, are forecast to persist this year.

The greatest impact is likely to be the reduction of aesthetic values and the inconvenience caused by caterpillars to property owners and users of public areas.

Based on FIDS historical information, populations are likely to persist at high levels causing significant defoliation of a broad range of deciduous hosts for an additional 3-4 years. Parasite, predators and virus are expected to reduce tent caterpillar populations significantly by about the fourth year.

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