



**ENTOMOLOGICAL
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The Entomological Society of America (ESA) has approved “spongy moth” as the new common name for the moth *Lymantria dispar*. The name refers to the insect’s distinctive sponge-like egg masses and is derived from translations of common names used for the insect in its native range and French-speaking Canada.

The name replaces “gypsy moth,” which ESA removed from its list of approved common names in July 2021 due to the term being widely acknowledged as an ethnic slur. ESA has been the arbiter of common names of insects and related arthropods in the United States since 1908.

Lymantria dispar is an invasive pest of deciduous forests that can defoliate hundreds of tree and shrub species. A widely distributed moth native across Eurasian forests, the European subspecies (*Lymantria dispar dispar*) was introduced in the United States in the 1800s and is now widespread in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada. The moth costs hundreds of millions of dollars each year in damage and prevention and control efforts. Other subspecies, such as *L. d. asiatica* and *L. d. japonica*, that are potentially more damaging are not established in North America and are thus subject to eradication when detected.

A primary way the moth spreads in the U.S. and Canada is via egg masses transported on firewood, outdoor equipment, personal goods, and vehicles. Public awareness of the *L. dispar* egg mass is important in controlling the pest, as the insect spends most of its life cycle (10 months) in the egg stage.

The name “spongy moth” was selected by a working group of professionals who work in research or forest management settings, as well as Romani scholars. The group gathered name suggestions and input from a broad array of individuals and organizations, including entomologists, forestry professionals, federal and state agencies, conservation groups, and pest control and plant protection organizations.

Organizations and individuals are encouraged to transition to the use of “spongy moth” in communications, documents, and publications as time and resources allow in coming weeks, months, and years. For more information about the name change, as well as a toolkit to aid transition to the new name, please visit entsoc.org/spongymoth

Christopher J. Stelzig
Executive Director
Entomological Society of America