



News Release

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ASIAN GYPSY MOTH DISCOVERED IN CHATHAM COUNTY

For the first time, the Asian Gypsy Moth has been caught in a trap in Georgia. A single, male moth was captured in August 2015 at Garden City, near Savannah. In the summer of 2015 a gypsy moth survey was conducted by the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) under the "Early Detection Rapid Response" initiative. This survey was a multi-agency effort among state and federal agencies to establish pheromone-baited traps to detect the presence of gypsy moth in the Savannah area. Despite this single moth detection, the Asian Gypsy Moth (AGM) is not established in coastal Georgia or at any location in the United States.

"The Asian Gypsy Moth is a serious forest pest that can cause severe damage to hardwood trees, especially oaks," said Chip Bates, Georgia Forestry Commission, Forest Health Coordinator. "That's why we placed more than 300 pheromone traps throughout the state in the spring of 2015. The single adult male moth was found near the Port of Savannah, so efforts are underway to begin an intense survey in spring 2016 to determine if this moth was a single capture or if additional Asian Gypsy Moths are present. GFC and its federal and state partners will be setting several thousand traps in the Savannah area as part of a three-year survey to determine if additional moths are present."

According to Bates, the Asian Gypsy Moth was first detected in North America in late 1991 near the Port of Vancouver, B.C. Also, in the past two years, AGM has been detected in South Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon and Washington, where follow-up intensive surveys are underway. The Asian Gypsy Moth is known to feed on more than 500 species of trees and shrubs, including oak, poplar and willow, with repeated defoliation weakening the hosts and potentially causing death. The Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Department of Agriculture, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), USDA's Forest Service, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS)-Customs and Border Protection are intent on preventing any introductions of AGM. This concern is valid, Bates said, because unlike the European Gypsy Moth, both male and female Asian Gypsy Moths can fly. In

addition, spread of this foreign insect pest can be hastened when egg masses are transported by human-assisted movement or by wind-blown caterpillars.

"We have a strong partnership with Georgia Department of Agriculture, USDA-APHIS, USDA Forest Service, and DHS-Customs and Border Protection," said Bates. "Together we'll work with Chatham County and the City of Savannah to detect any additional gypsy moth activity."

For more information about the Asian Gypsy Moth and the services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit GaTrees.org.

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