

A Summary of a Letter by Dan Woods (*written 25 June 2020*)

Neighbours:

I truly hope I'm wrong, but I see tangible signs that our gypsy moth population next year may be even worse than it was this year. Despite daily efforts (sometimes twice daily) to find and slaughter them, they have continued to reappear in my trees and yours. The countless masses of 5th instar larva now beginning to pupate in our trees signals that -even with liberal natural predation- there will likely be another large egg mass production throughout BurgessWood in the next couple of months.

Gypsy moths apparently entered the province of Ontario in about 1969, causing their first widespread defoliation in 1981. Hamilton sprayed the gypsy moth last year. Toronto, this year. It's become evident that the gypsy moth's enormous appetite (1 square meter per caterpillar) is **not just for oak, basswood, birch and now maple, but for conifers such as white pine**. Famine does not exist for creatures that can ride the winds on a thread of silk. This is a clear advantage over many other creatures.

This year my property (and that of several others in our community) seem to be 'ground zero' for the gypsy moth. Having devoured their preferred foods on our properties in 2019 and 2020, 2021 gypsy larvae may decide they now prefer the food from a neighbouring property which is but a silk-thread-ride on a puff of wind away – their means of travel. If you were not affected this year, you may be gypsy radar for NEXT YEAR. Each of us needs to be concerned.

Items discussed with TVT and CBC in no particular order include:

- Covid 19 and our gypsy moth invasion bizarrely share similarities. They're both uninvited, unforeseen, capable of rapid widespread infestation, and they're likely not going away any time soon!! Gypsy moths are here. They are now. They must be dealt with.
- Options on the subject often differ. Treatment options are limited and can be costly.
- Gypsy Moth infestation is much broader than originally anticipated. There are several communities within Lanark County area that share similar issues and are searching for remedies. We need some way to bridge communications and strategies.
- Municipalities are generally not budgeted or resourced for gypsy moth assistance. However, in light of the severity of our infestation, I would hope that they will reach out to other partners for information and budgetary/resource assistance.
- Pheromone traps can be a 'first line' remedial tool. But they are relatively expensive. A bulk procurement could be made to sell to residents 'at cost'.
- Residents need more information to assist them in recognizing the gypsy moth during its egg, larvae, pupa and moth stages of its life-cycle, and 'Best Practises' in how to mitigate/destroy each in a timely and effective manner.
- It is virtually impossible to assuage the impact of the damage caused by our 2020 infestation. We must look ahead, understand that there is more at stake here than loss of trees, and take bold steps to reduce the impact of a probable 2021 infestation.
- With the rapid destruction of some of our biggest trees, we've become a community with a higher risk of forest fire. Not only are we faced with drought conditions, **we're now living in a forest peppered with dead or dying trees!** These trees pose an increased safety threat.

Our timeline is short but clear. May 2021 is 10 months away. Spraying may be a potentially viable and effective option at this point. My current understanding is that BTK can be targeted specifically at the subject caterpillar with no negative effect on bees or butterflies. As one of the 'ground zero' residents and as an environmentally conscious beekeeper, I would -after reasonable further investigation- endorse this approach.

Finally, our counsellors need to hear from their community. Please reach out to your municipal counsellors with your observations, concerns and recommendations if you're shocked & discouraged by the sudden attack on your trees, or if you're disheartened with the possibility of this repeating again next year... please write and help them focus on our issues.