

## **More Bears and Tigers**

### **Part II**

**by Lloyd Eighme, retired entomologist**

Add to the Banded Woolly bear and the Yellow Woollybear, two more tiger moths in the family Arctiidae. Here again, both common names and genus names have been changed, so there will likely be some confusion if you try to find these tiger moths in the books.

The Spotted Tussock Moth (*Lophocampa maculata*), a member of the tiger moth family is common in Skagit County. The caterpillar is one of my favorites. It is as decorated as a fancy teddy bear. It is finely upholstered in colors that will remind you of the Banded Woolley bear, black and orange, but it is embellished with white tufts in the black parts and contrasting black spots in the orange. It presents a comical sight as it crawls rapidly, waving its white tufts and its undulating black spots. It feeds in a wide variety of deciduous trees including willow, oak, maple, birch, alder, poplar and many others. It is not gregarious (grouping together), but rather it is solitary and never found in large numbers on any one tree. Therefore the damage to the trees is usually minimal unless it attacks a small tree in your yard. The deciduous trees drop their leaves in the fall anyway so maybe we can spare a few leaves each summer to feed this colorful little caterpillar.

Like other caterpillars of the family Arctiidae, the Spotted Tussock Moth caterpillar makes a soft cocoon using its body hairs and some silk produced by its salivary glands. It overwinters in the cocoon and emerges as an adult moth in the spring to mate and lay eggs for the next generation. The Spotted Tussock Moth adult is a rather drab tan colored moth with lightly defined darker blotches in the wings. It may be seen in late spring or early summer near the porch lights to which it is attracted at night.

The Silver Spotted Tiger Moth (*Lophocampa argentata*), also a member of the tiger moth family Arctiidae, is capable of doing considerable damage to our coniferous evergreen trees, such as Hemlock and fir. Therefore, it is listed with the economic pests and may need to be controlled in our area. The caterpillars of the Silver Spotted tiger Moth are gregarious (living in groups). When a batch of eggs hatches in midsummer the tiny caterpillars start feeding together on the host tree. They are not as colorful and interesting as the Spotted Tussock Moth caterpillar. Like most other caterpillars, they produce silk threads which in this case, where many are living and feeding together, form an ugly looking mess that eventually covers the branch on which they are feeding. This messy "nest" provides some protection from their enemies, which could be birds or insects that parasitize and feed on caterpillars. The caterpillars continue to feed on the needles enclosed by the silken nest until they become dormant with colder winter temperatures. When warmer temperatures of spring arrive the caterpillars consume the remaining food within the nest and then disperse throughout the tree and feed individually until mature, usually sometime in June. They then drop to the ground or return to the nest and spin a cocoon from silk and body hairs. The adult moths emerge in a few weeks, usually in late summer and lay egg masses on the recent new growth.

The eggs hatch in time for the caterpillars to build a protective silken nest in which to spend the winter.

You will need to read Bulletin EB 1718 to learn how this pest can be controlled. The forestry people are watching closely to catch any outbreaks of the Silver Spotted tiger Moth so that it can be controlled. In 1954-55 an outbreak occurred in the forests of southern Vancouver Island, where it did considerable damage before being brought under control. Fir, Hemlock and Spruce trees in peoples yards are frequently attacked. Single isolated trees do not usually produce caterpillar populations that kill the tree, but even one ugly nest on a branch of a yard tree is undesirable.

Notice that the accepted common names of these two moths do not match their close relationship. (One is called a Tussock Moth and the other one a Tiger Moth, but they are in the same genus Lophocampa. The older name of the genus was Halisodota which is still used in some books so you may have to look under both names to find information about them. The species name maculata means spotted and argentata means silver spotted which gives them their common names. Don't you wish your name described you? Or is it better that it does not?



Spotted Tussock Moth Caterpillar  
Lophocampa maculata



Spotted Tussock Moth Lophocampa maculata



Silver Spotted Tiger Moth Caterpillar  
Lophocampa argentata



Silver Spotted Tiger Moth  
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