

nature's noteboo

A project of the USA-NPN

Nature's Notebook Phenophase Photo Guide Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis evergreen bagworm moth



Why Observe?

Bagworm (*Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*), known as common bagworm, evergreen bagworm, eastern bagworm, North American bagworm, or common basket worm, is a native moth pest in the U.S. Bagworms overwinter as eggs inside the female's abdomen inside the bag she constructed. Eggs hatch and caterpillars crawl out of the bag, forming a shelter over their bodies with silk and plant material from the trees on which they feed.

Bagworms can extensively defoliate evergreen and deciduous trees, causing branch dieback or death. Bagworm outbreaks can be reduced by low winter temperatures and a complex of several parasites. Bagworms may be manually controlled by picking and destroying the bags. On evergreen trees, the cases are easiest to detect in fall after the cases have turned brown. When bagworms are too numerous to handpick, an insecticide application may be effective. Ideally, treatments are undertaken after caterpillars emerge and when caterpillars are small, as treatments are not as effective against larger caterpillars.

Tips for Identification

Bagworms are identified by the case or bag that the caterpillar constructs, which is make of silk and bits of host foliage. The bag may be 30 to 50 mm long. The caterpillar's "bag" made from silk and plant debris becomes a pupal case once it is firmly attached to a branch or other surface.

Be aware that there is variation from individual to individual within a species, so your insect may not look exactly like the one pictured. If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a "?" for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.



Lacy L. Hyche, Auburn University, Bugwood.org. CC BY 3.0



This Phenophase Photo Guide has been vetted by the USA-NPN NCO. It is appropriate for use as a supplement to the Nature's Notebook phenophase definition sheet for this species.



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A male and female are seen coupled in a mating position, usually end to end. This can occur at rest or in flight. For *Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*, females are flightless and mating occurs while they are still in their bag (pupal case).



Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources -Forestry, Bugwood.org. <u>CC BY 3.0</u>

Adults

One or more adults are seen or heard moving about or at rest. For *Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*, females are yellowish, maggot-like, cannot fly, and do not leave their bag (pupal case), so they are rarely seen. Males are black and hairy with clear wings.





Caterpillars

One or more caterpillars (larvae) are seen moving about or at rest. When seen on a plant, if possible, record the name of the plant or describe it in the comments field. For *Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*, the black and brown caterpillars construct a tiny "bag" around themselves from silk and plant debris, enlarge it over time, and carry it with them as they move.

Jeff Clark via BugGuide.net. CC BY-NC-NC 1.0



Caterpillars feeding

One or more caterpillars are seen feeding. If possible, record the name of the species or substance being eaten or describe it in the comments field. For *Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*, caterpillars feed on the leaves and needles of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs.

Phenophases not pictured: Dead adults, Dead caterpillars, Individuals at a light, Individuals in a net, Individuals in a trap