

# Two gypsy moths trapped in county

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Two gypsy moths, insects that in great numbers can defoliate hardwood forests, have been trapped in Santa Cruz County in the past two weeks.

Although no one is panicking, the finds bring to mind a bitter battle between the state, which wanted to spray pesticide, and local officials and environmentalists after seven adult gypsy moths and a mass of their eggs were discovered in Felton in 1984.

That fight ended in Superior Court, where a judge ruled in favor of the county, Felton residents and environmentalists. Those parties charged in a lawsuit that the state plans to kill the moths with pesticide might have caused health problems for residents. The judge ordered the state not to spray the chemical carbaryl after hearing testimony that it might

cause kidney problems and cancer.

Instead, the state used a helicopter to spray a biological agent, B.t., or *Bacillus thurengiensis*, which apparently killed any remaining gypsy moths.

Now, seven years after the Felton find, one adult male gypsy moth has been discovered a few miles up the road in Boulder Creek and another at Seacliff State Beach in Aptos. They were found in two of the 400 or so traps spread around the area by the office of the county agricultural commissioner.

The first of the moths was found Aug. 22 in a trap placed in a pine tree one block from the site where another adult male was trapped in 1990. Commissioner David Moeller said he would not speculate whether the two finds were connected, but he did indicate that his staff would be keeping a close eye on the Seacliff area next year.

The Boulder Creek moth was found near downtown, off Highway 9, last Wednesday. Moeller said Tuesday he thought it likely that the insect had traveled to the San Lorenzo Valley community as an unwanted guest aboard a recreational vehicle, probably from one of the East Coast areas where gypsy moths are a major problem.

While Moeller said he was not panicking, he did note that he's had 40 gypsy moth traps placed near downtown Boulder Creek and 50 to 60 traps placed near Seacliff Beach.

"If we were to find several adult moths closely related in time and location," said Moeller, "we'd instigate a search for egg masses. At that time, if we found them, it would be up to the state to come up with a plan to solve the problem."