



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY  
MAINE FOREST SERVICE  
168 STATE HOUSE STATION  
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February 2025

To whom it may concern:

To facilitate response by towns and their residents, I am in touch to provide notice of **low or trace detected populations** of Browntail Moth (BTM). Over the last several years, the Maine Forest Service (MFS) has documented extensive populations in many areas through annual BTM surveys. In 2024, MFS documented a decline in BTM populations.

BTM caterpillars have hairs that can cause a rash similar to poison ivy and respiratory distress in sensitive individuals. The hairs persist for years and can cause problems when mowing or other activities stir them up.

Aerial surveys took place in the Summer 2024 and indicated damage from BTM in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Somerset, and Penobscot counties. The population decline has made BTM very localized and patchy, it is likely that many areas with significant populations will not be picked up in MFS surveys. Local survey efforts are very important in these conditions if towns want to engage in reducing populations. An interactive map of survey data can be found on our [browntail moth dashboard](#).

Our annual winter web survey is currently underway, and results will be available in early spring. The survey is conducted along roads in areas where detectable BTM populations have previously been found and expands outward to encompass the generally affected area. These surveys are not exhaustive, and people should check the trees around them to understand BTM populations and the risk of encountering hairs at a finer scale. **Mid-December through March is the best time to look for BTM winter webs.**

The [MFS BTM website](#)\* has more information, including:

- [Description of the BTM and management options](#),
- [Survey resources](#), including what the overwintering webs look like,
- [Browntail moth dashboard](#), an interactive map that can be used to view data from our various BTM surveys
- A list of [Licensed Professional Arborists](#) and [Licensed Pesticide Applicators](#) who conduct BTM control work—those interested in hiring contractors for management should make contacts in the winter due to the high demand for services,
- Topics ranging from biology to management to regulations specific to BTM control near marine waters are found in the updated [frequently asked questions page](#).

We encourage towns to help educate residents and visitors about BTM and promote and conduct management where practical. The MFS can provide technical advice and assistance for identification and management, and all the information on our website is available for electronic distribution or printing. A limited number of printed [informational brochures](#) are also available. Consider [signing up for our newsletters](#) and sharing the information found within them.

In 2025, **we encourage our partners to schedule awareness-raising events and promote the management of BTM in February.** This effort could include organizing groups to map infestations on the town and school properties, hosting a public service web-clipping event, hosting a contest for the most webs clipped, or other community and knowledge-building activities.

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In closing, we may be starting to see BTM populations collapsing and will be keeping a close eye on current populations in 2025. The MFS and our partners are here to provide technical advice and assistance in response to BTM. We encourage you to join us in providing education, encouraging management, and conducting management where feasible.

Sincerely,

Thomas Schmeelk

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\*[http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest\\_health/invasive\\_threats/browntail\\_moth\\_info.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/browntail_moth_info.htm)