

Discover the Fauna of Our Campus

Apple codling moth (*Cydia pomonella*)

Order: Lepidoptera or Butterflies and Moths (Lepidoptera)

Family: Leafrollers (Tortricidae)

Genus: *Cydia*

Species: Apple codling moth (*Cydia pomonella*)




The apple codling moth (*Cydia pomonella*) is the butterfly species that causes the greatest economic damage in orcharding, especially in apple production. The famous caterpillar that comes to mind when we say “wormy apple” is actually the larva of this insect. It is a small gray-colored moth. At the tip of its forewings there is a shiny bronze-colored circular spot, which is its main distinguishing

feature.

When newly hatched from the egg, it is white in color, but as it grows it becomes pinkish. Its head is dark brown. The apple codling moth not only attacks apples but also greatly prefers pears, quinces, and walnuts. The caterpillar pierces the skin of the fruit and enters inside. At the entry point, a brown-colored secretion (the caterpillar’s waste) is usually visible.

The caterpillar feeds on the fleshy part of the fruit and moves directly toward the center — the seed chamber. It eats the seeds because they are rich in protein and necessary for its growth. Damaged fruits ripen prematurely (artificial ripening) and fall to the ground. The caterpillar inside the fallen fruit can then come out and climb the tree again. During the daytime, the moths hide on the trunk of the tree, and they begin flying in the evening when it gets dark.



They spend the winter by spinning cocoons under tree bark, in cracks, or inside plant residues in the upper layer of the soil.

Control of this pest consists of several stages. “Trapping bands” (cardboard or cloth strips) are tied around the trunks of trees. The caterpillars enter them to spin cocoons, and later these bands are burned. The “wormy” fruits that fall to the ground should be collected daily and removed from the orchard or destroyed immediately so that the caterpillar cannot emerge and climb the tree again.

By using sex pheromone traps, it is possible to attract male moths and reduce their numbers. Trees are treated with insecticides according to the egg-laying period of the moths and the hatching time of the caterpillars.

Interestingly, a single apple codling moth caterpillar can damage 2–3 apples in succession in order to complete its development.

