









YUCCA MOTH



Scientific name: Tegeticula yuccasella

Description: Blending in with the flowers they pollinate, yucca moths are mostly white, though some have black spots. As caterpillars, they are reddish-pink. As an adult, their length is around half an inch with females being slightly larger than males. Unlike most moths that have tongues, they have "tentacles" near their mouth for collecting sticky pollen.

FUN FACTS

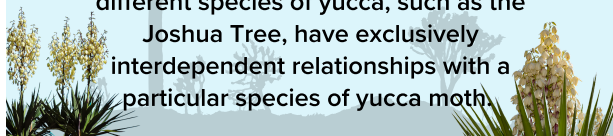
-  When spring arrives and the yucca blossoms, it releases a sweet fragrance. This is a signal to underground yucca moths in cocoons to emerge for feeding and mating.
-  Adult males never eat because they only live long enough to mate.
-  Using her tentacles, female yucca moths collect pollen while forming a small ball that is three times the size of her head, which she transports to other yucca flowers for pollination.
-  Yucca moths lay their eggs in the ovaries of the yucca flowers, but not where other females have laid to ensure there will be enough food for the caterpillars.
-  The flower's ovary will eventually develop into a fruit and seed pod, which will serve as the caterpillar's home and source of food.
-  After they feed on the seeds, they bury into the ground to cocoon (usually during rain) and the cycle repeats. They can wait up to 10 years for a yucca bloom!



Emergence hole in a yucca seed pod
Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University,
Bugwood.org

FAVORITE PLANTS & COLORS

Yucca is the only plant that the yucca moths feed on. Yucca is a perennial and can live up to 20 years. Its flowers are a creamy white color. Many different species of yucca, such as the Joshua Tree, have exclusively interdependent relationships with a particular species of yucca moth.



HABITAT

Yucca moths are native to the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico. They can be found in semi-arid and desert landscapes, wherever yucca plants grow.



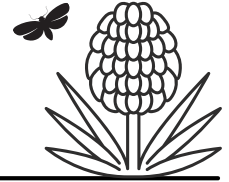
Yucca moth on Yucca glauca flower pistil
Granite Ridge Nature Institute, Lynn & Gene Monroe

HELP YUCCA MOTHS THRIVE

As a specialist species, yucca moths depend on the yucca plants to survive. Conserving yucca plants in their native areas is essential for their preservation.



YUCCA MOTH



Mutualism: a symbiotic ecological interaction between two organisms of different species that "work together" and each benefit from the relationship.

L I F E C Y C L E

