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# Invertebrate of the Month

## April 2009



### Helena gum moth and parasites

The gorgeous Helena gum moth *Opodiphthera helena* (White) can often be found near lights in spring and summer. Its larva is a large green caterpillar with blue star-like hairs. Larvae of this species often have a high parasite load and on the larva above can be seen white parasite eggs. On the pupal case above can be seen a black spot which is the emergence hole for fly larvae, of which some pupal cases can be seen on the left. The pupal cases are of a Tachinid fly, which is an endoparasite and feeds inside the insect body. Late stage larvae leave the host to pupate in the soil before emerging as adult flies. Fifty flies emerged from the Helena gum moth pupa shown above.

[Thank you to the Manjimup Senior High School for providing the Helena pupa.]

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