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January 31, 2014 Forest & Shade Tree – Insect & Disease Conditions Update for Electronic Subscribers

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Invasive Forest Insect Outreach Volunteer Training

Dates, Times & Locations:

Saturday, February 8, 9:00 to 1:00 in **Dover-Foxcroft** at the Piscataquis Cooperative Extension Office.

Wednesday, February 19, 9:00 to 1:00 in **Lewiston** at the Public Works Department.

Thursday, March 13, 9:00 to 1:00 in **Jefferson** at the Hidden Valley Nature Center.

Wednesday, May 14 in **Bar Harbor** at Acadia National Park. Time to be determined.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED This training is for people interested in learning about invasive forest pests that pose serious threats to the trees and forests of Maine: emerald ash borer (EAB), Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), brown spruce longhorned beetle (BSLB), hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), and others. Participants will learn how to recognize the insects, the host trees, signs of infestation, and how to survey and report suspicious areas. Participants will also learn how to effectively disseminate information to the public to help spread awareness. Participants who attend the training will become volunteers of the Forest Pest Outreach and Survey Project (FPOSP), and help with outreach and survey. The Forest Pest Outreach and Survey Project will provide materials for volunteers and loans of insects and sample tree damage displays for their outreach.

Contact Email: lorraine.taft@gmail.com

Cost: Free

Co-Sponsors: University of Maine Extension Piscataquis County Office, Lewiston Public Works, Hidden Valley Nature Center, Acadia National Park

Trainers: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry staff

Credits: Licensed pesticide applicators – 3 / SAF (CFE Cat 1)/Maine Licensed Forester - 3

Winter Survey Activity

Some would have you believe that winter is a slow time in the bug world. If that is true, then our office is the exception that proves the rule (and it probably isn't true). In southern Maine, Maine Forest Service (MFS) staff have been busy gathering up the catches from winter moth pheromone traps that ran from Kittery to Bar Harbor, with a shorter inland route in Southern, ME. A subsample of the resultant catch from each town is being dissected to confirm identity (winter moth or Bruce spanworm). The annual assessment of the browntail moth population, counting winter webs, has also begun (we've seen populations from Waterville to Lewiston and south). Hemlock woolly adelgid detection survey activities are ongoing—there isn't a month when you won't find Wayne turning over hemlock branches in search of that pest. In northern Maine, MFS staff keeps a look out for gypsy moth egg masses in areas outside the current quarantine zone. When not in the field, reports on the last year, processing of samples from 2013 and plans for 2014 keep us occupied.

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Since the insect world is still a busy place in winter, it may make sense for you to get out and do some survey (and management) activities of your own. Now is an opportunity to get ahead of many insect pests while they are “sleeping”. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Throughout Maine:

If your trees were hit by the December ice storm—or whenever they suffer significant breakage from a storm—you may have a good opportunity to survey for Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). Although ALB will infest a wide array of hardwoods, paying attention to the reason for storm damage in maples is an efficient way to look for ALB-related loss of structural integrity. Of course, there are many other, less sinister (and more likely) reasons maples will fail, but ALB is on the list of potential causes of weakness. The larvae tunnel within large branches and main stems of infested trees, creating Swiss cheese out of the heartwood material. Bob Childs of UMASS Extension has a great picture of ALB damage revealed by the 2008 ice storm in Worcester here: <http://massnrc.org/pests/albimages/BobChilds/images/bobchildswinter08worc004.jpg>

Asian longhorned beetle has not been found in Maine, but if it is here, we want to know as soon as possible. We only have to look two states south to Massachusetts to see the difference that early detection of this invasive insect can make. In Worcester, MA, the insect was reported about 20 years after it was introduced, and in Boston, MA, only about two years after arrival.

The 18-year head-start that the Boston ALB response had over Worcester has resulted in 30,000 (and counting) fewer destroyed trees in Boston, and a more than tenfold smaller regulated area. It will likely result in decades fewer person-hours and millions fewer dollars invested in eradicating the population. That’s a potential big deal for forest landowners, urban homeowners, wildlife, and forest products, tourism and maple sugar industries, not to mention taxpayers.

To see images of ALB damage visit: www.maine.gov/alb and check the links in the right-hand column; if you think you’ve found it, please report it at www.maine.gov/alb or by calling (207) 287-2431. Consider signing up for an Invasive Forest Insect Outreach Volunteer Training listed below to learn more about this pest, and how you can help.

See also:

Parker, B., Skinner, M., Dodds, K., Bohne, M. 2012. Asian longhorned beetle and its host trees. USDA FS,NA,SPF Newtown Square, PA, UVM, NA-PR-05-12. 64 pp. <http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/detail.cfm?id=5268>

Along with the recommendations for surveying woody debris from ice storm-damaged trees for insect pests, keep in mind that **winter is a good time to conduct pruning work on damaged trees**. Much of the damage this winter resulted in loss of fairly small branches or tops, making corrective pruning a feasible task. Of course, safety is always a key concern when pruning storm breakage debris from trees, particularly if the work threatens buildings or other structures, or is close to power lines and roads.

There is a wealth of information now on techniques for pruning trees in general (http://na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/howtos/ht_prune/htprune-rev-2012-screen.pdf) and even for pruning ice-damaged branches and stems in particular (http://na.fs.fed.us/fhp/ice/durham/pubs/info_sheets/is_fs_08.pdf).

Proper removal of damaged branches can be done anytime between now and early March. In case we have a warm, early spring, try to plan on having the work done by late February. After that, bark becomes more susceptible to tearing, and sap flow from pruning injuries may be excessive. If the opportunity for pruning is missed now, the best recourse is to wait until midsummer to accomplish the task.

Do you have favorite fruit or ornamental trees (especially rose family (cherries, apples, plums...)? Scout for the egg masses of eastern tent caterpillar. It takes a sharp eye to pick out the hard, lacquer-like clusters, but as with any insect or disease sign or symptom, once you get a good search image, they’ll become easier to find. You may want to target those masses for removal during pruning activities this dormant season—and throw them into the woodstove when you have a good fire going. Otherwise, begin looking for the webs in late-April or early-May and remove them before they get big. For more information see: http://na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/pest_al/etc/etc.htm.

Gypsy moth egg masses spend the winter exposed (or under the snow) on many surfaces. Our scouting this year turned them up on outhouses, cherries, aspens, apples, picnic tables and other substrates. Hone your search image for this pest’s egg masses by browsing images on-line, then target the area around your favorite ornamentals for an intensive scouting mission to rout them out. If you find them, scrape accessible masses into a bucket of soapy water, and leave them to suffocate (a couple of days). An alternative method of control mentioned in various on-line sites is to microwave them on high for 2 minutes—so far no recipes for Gypsy Moth Egg Soufflé, though. Wisconsin has some user-friendly guides to predicting defoliation: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/gypsymothinwisconsin/pest-management-2/pest-management/>. Our egg mass survey plots did not indicate a significant rise in populations, but in 2013 we had the first mapped defoliation by this pest

since 2002 (53 acres). **IF you think you've found this pest outside of the current quarantine area, please contact us. For a map of the quarantine area see:**

http://maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/insects/gypsy_moth_maine_towns_and_counties.htm.

Woodpeckers are often the first locals to detect emerald ash borer. As we mentioned in December, winter is a great time to look for increased woodpecker activity in ash. Emerald ash borer are fat, protein-rich snacks this time of year—woodpeckers are keyed into native borer activity and not shy about taking advantage of an invasive insect treat. On another note, if you have a woodlot heavy to ash, you might consider choosing one to turn into a girdled trap tree in the spring when you are out looking for woodpecker-related “blonding”. For more information on trap trees, see http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/eab_trap_trees.htm.

In southern Maine:

Winter is the time to scout and control low-hanging and low-level populations of browntail moth. If you live in southern Maine, take a moment to examine the hardwoods around your yard, workplace, childcare center or other places you frequent for the webs of these pesky critters. Most populations of browntail moth are found right along the coast, but they have also recently been causing trouble in more inland locations like Waterville, Vassalboro, Augusta, Turner and Lewiston. The caterpillar hairs cause an itchy rash in some people, and in sensitive individuals can cause more serious problems. If you find webs that you can reach, clip and destroy them by dropping them in soapy water or in your woodstove. In areas where there are only a few webs this can short circuit the development of an uncomfortable spring and summer (get permission first if they aren't your trees!). If you can't reach them, you may want to consider contacting a professional for control. See our factsheets for more information:

http://maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/browntail_moth_info.htm.

This is still a good time of year for activity in hemlock stands with little risk of introducing or spreading hemlock woolly adelgid. Coincidentally, it is a good time of year to survey for the pest. Their woolly “coats” are expanding, so they are becoming quite visible (relatively) against the dark twigs and foliage of hemlock. Light conditions and dropped branches also make it a good time for survey. Harvest activity presents another great opportunity to inspect high-crown branches for hemlock woolly adelgid and its exotic cousin, elongate hemlock scale. Try to wrap up activity in stands at risk of spreading or becoming infested with adelgid by the end of February. Hemlock woolly adelgid eggs will become abundant in March, and infested areas will be host to millions of crawlers by the end of April. You can find more at www.maine.gov/forestpests.

Whether you are you excited by the cold or tired of it, don't count on it curtailing insect activity next season. Cold tolerance in insects is complicated, and not completely understood. Put simply—what is cold to us doesn't necessarily faze them, and if it does, their reproductive capacity often allows their populations to bounce back in a growing season. Nevertheless, the cold this winter could provide a brief respite for hemlocks infested with adelgid and hardwoods in areas with high winter moth populations. See this article for more:

http://www.kjonline.com/news/Hate_the_cold_Bugs_don_t_fare_well_either_.html.

MFS_conditions_reports is a seasonal series of updates about insects and diseases affecting and threatening Maine's forest and shade trees. Several issues are produced each growing season with the first usually appearing in mid- to late-April and the last in late-summer. To unsubscribe or manage your subscription visit:

http://mailman.informe.org/mailman/listinfo/mfs_conditions_reports

For more information on MFS programs, services, and publications, call the Maine Forest Service at 207-287-2791, or 1-800-367-0223, or send an email to forestinfo@maine.gov. Visit our website at www.maineforestservice.gov.