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TENT CATERPILLARS IN THE EAST KOOTENAY AREA

C. B. Cottrell

During June and the early part of July the forest tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma disstria*, severely defoliated several thousand acres of mature trembling aspen on Moberly Bench north of Golden. Other deciduous species such as black cottonwood, western white birch, willow and understory plants were also damaged. Lesser numbers of the western tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma californicum pluviale*, occurred in association with the forest tent caterpillars and were also a pest in residential areas of Golden and surrounding communities. The western tent caterpillar constructs a conspicuous web or "tent" which serves as a shelter when not feeding. The forest tent caterpillar makes no such shelter but occurs in masses on the trunks and branches of the trees when not feeding.

An outbreak of forest tent caterpillars also occurred east of Fort Steele near the junction of the Wildhorse and Kootenay rivers. Here, approximately 1,000 acres of mature black cottonwood were heavily defoliated.

Normally tent caterpillar infestations terminate after two or three years from natural controlling factors. In the Moberly Bench infestation, most of the caterpillars had spun cocoons by July 6 but numerous larvae had died from virus disease. Also, many pupae were found to be parasitized. The Fort Steele infestation, however, appears more healthy with little evidence of disease or parasites. Whereas a decline in the Moberly infestation is expected in 1977, the Fort Steele infestation may persist.

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