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PEST REPORT

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SILVER-SPOTTED TIGER MOTH ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

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April 1983

First noted on Vancouver Island in 1887, this native North American insect has been commonly recorded defoliating conifers, mainly Douglas-fir, in southwestern B.C. since 1934. It occasionally occurs in infestation proportions, most recently from 1953 to 1956 on southern Vancouver Island and in 1962 in Stanley Park in Vancouver.

In 1983, the silver-spotted tiger moth, Halisidota argentata, lightly defoliated single branches of Douglas-fir and a small number of lodgepole pine in localized areas along the east coastal region of Vancouver Island. Defoliation was evident from Victoria to north of Campbell River including the Saanich Peninsula, Sooke, Cameron Lake and Lake Cowichan areas.

The greatest concentration of highly visible colonies per tree, based on 20-tree sample observations at each of 18 locations, was in the Ladysmith area with 0.6. Between Qualicum Beach and Union Bay there were 0.5 per tree and 0.3 between Parksville and Coombs.

Defoliation is not expected to increase beyond the localized, concentrated branch stripping caused by 3rd and 4th instar larvae, recorded during the survey in late March. The larvae will continue to feed in April and May then disperse throughout the crown of affected trees prior to pupation in June-July. Bud flush will partly mask recently defoliated branches leaving virtually no adverse visible effects.

As many as twelve different larval parasites and adverse weather conditions are considered effective natural control agents; over 50% of the larvae in two colonies, reared in 1983, were parasitized by a fly (Diptera), Uramya halisidotae.

Tree mortality caused by this defoliator has not been recorded in British Columbia and it is regarded as being of little economic importance, but aesthetically important on high value trees in urban environments.