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PEST REPORT

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July 1985

WESTERN TENT CATERPILLAR VANCOUVER REGION, 1985

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Forest Insect and Disease Survey Ranger

Defoliation of a variety of deciduous trees and shrubs by the tent caterpillar Malacosoma c. pluviale throughout the Lower Fraser Valley and southern and east coastal areas of Vancouver Island is more severe and widespread than in 1984, the fourth consecutive year of defoliation.

Defoliation of alder, birch, twinberry, fruit and ornamental trees is common and varying from light to severe in areas from Bowen Island to Langley including Horseshoe Bay, North and West Vancouver, Delta and Surrey and from Victoria to Campbell River. Areas with the highest concentrations of tent colonies are Delta, Langley and Surrey (25 km²), the southwestern part of Bowen Island (1 000 ha), and Cypress Bowl (500 ha).

Consecutive years of severe defoliation of hardwoods have resulted in topkill and severe loss of radial increment, but affected trees usually recover.

Removal of egg masses, tents and larval colonies by pruning is effective in localized urban areas, and obviates the use of chemicals. The forecast for 1986 population levels will be reported later in the year after surveys of egg masses laid by adults in late June and July. Based on previous outbreaks, however, populations should decline next year.

Infestations have occurred in the Region periodically since 1937, from White Rock to Powell River and Victoria to Campbell River, usually lasting four years. Natural control factors including polyhedrosis virus and parasites usually reduce populations to endemic levels after four years of infestation.

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