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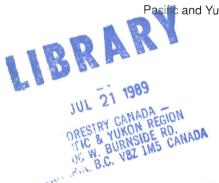
PEST REPORT

Pacific and Yukon Region • Pacific Forestry Centre • **506** West Burnside Road • Victoria, B.C. • V8Z 1M5

June, 1989

Western Winter Moth Populations Increase

in the Vancouver Region, 1989

N. Humphreys

Forest Insect and Disease Survey

Defoliation of deciduous hosts by the western winter moth, Erannis tiliaria vancouverensis, increased substantially in 1989. Broadleaf maple and some willow, birch and alder, were severely defoliated over several hundred hectares from Chilliwack to Boston Bar. The largest infestation is in Sasquatch Provincial Park extending over an estimated 500 ha from the east end of Deer Lake to the west side of Harrison Lake, with broadleaf maple, birch and vine maple totally defoliated. Scattered 5- to 50-ha patches of defoliation are common along the Fraser Canyon and Coquihalla Highway.

Larval feeding should finish by late June. Once the overstory maple had been defoliated the larvae dropped to the understory vine maple and alder and continued feeding; in some areas the looper was also feeding on salmonberry, swordfern, nettles and huckleberry on the forest floor. Larvae will pupate in the soil and the buff colored adults should appear from mid-September through to December. Females though wingless are very active climbing trees to oviposit.

This is the second year of severe defoliation in Sasquatch Park, where 110 ha were defoliated in 1988. Light feeding and defoliation was noted for the last 2 years in the Fraser Canyon and Skagit Valley. Infestations rarely exceed 3 years, thus the current infestation should decline in 1990. Growth loss will be the main impact to trees severely defoliated for 2-3 consecutive years. Trees should refoliate by mid-July. Only trees already under severe stress are likely to die. The current population is being monitored for parasites, disease and viral infection; initial findings indicate the presence of a pathogen which has contributed to larval mortality in past infestations. Surveys will continue in 1990.

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