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SYDNEY

FOREST TENT CATERPILLAR AND LARGE ASPEN TORTRIX IN TREMBLING ASPEN IN THE PRINCE GEORGE FOREST REGION

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Forest Insect and Disease Survey

Forest tent caterpillar, Malacosoma disstria, populations increased throughout much of the Prince George Region in 1990 and defoliated trembling aspen over more than 150 000 ha. Large aspen tortrix, Choristoneura conflictana, populations increased in aspen along the Alaska Highway and, for the first time, near Mackenzie and Manson Creek. Three other defoliators were common but less numerous, in association with forest tent caterpillar populations.

Tent caterpillar populations in the Prince George area increased for the fifth consecutive year, as predicted, and defoliated aspen over more than 145 000 ha, up from 103 225 ha in 1989. Areas of defoliation expanded south of the City of Prince George: in the Pineview area; along the Fraser River to south of Stoner; around Beaverly and Westlake; and south along the Chilako River to Dahl Creek. Defoliation was severe and widespread at Eaglet Lake, in the Willow River Valley and near Shelly, but less severe in the Salmon Valley and around Chief and Ness lakes. New areas of defoliation were mapped north of Summit Lake, east of Highway 97 between Bear Lake and Fishhook Lake, and between Kerry and McLeod lakes.

The area of trembling aspen defoliated in the Peace River area expanded to over 5000 ha, up from 4800 ha in 1989. Defoliation was recorded for the seventh consecutive year in some stands near Swan Lake north to Fort St. John. Areas of new defoliation occurred in the Peace River Valley from the Alberta border to Taylor, and increased throughout previously defoliated stands from Pouce Coupe to Farmington.

Defoliation near McBride expanded to over 300 ha, up from 260 ha in 1989. Newly defoliated aspen was mapped between Holliday Creek and McKale River on the north side of the Fraser River Valley, and for the second consecutive year near Castle Creek west of McBride.

Also common in aspen stands defoliated by tent caterpillar but less numerous and damaging, were Bruce spanworm, Operophtera bruceata, aspen leafroller, Pseudoxestotarsa oregona, and aspen twoleaf tier, Enargia decolor.

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Large aspen tortrix populations increased for the second consecutive year in trembling aspen along the Alaska Highway. Defoliation was mostly light and moderate from north of Fort St. John to Pink Mountain and west of Fort Nelson near Steamboat Mountain. New infestations were mapped from just south of Mackenzie north to Fort Ware in the Rocky Mountain Trench, where defoliation was mostly moderate and severe and mainly on the east side of Williston Lake. Defoliation was also reported for the first time in recent years in the Manson Creek area.

Normally, there is very little tree mortality directly attributable to defoliation by these insects; however, two or more successive years of moderate-to-severe defoliation of trembling aspen by forest tent caterpillar or large aspen tortrix will result in a severe reduction in radial growth and may cause branch and twig mortality.

Populations, which are usually controlled by parasitism, disease or climatic conditions, will continue to be monitored. Egg surveys to forecast forest tent caterpillar population for 1991 are in progress at selected locations. Results will be available later this Fall.

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