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## LARGE ASPEN TORTRIX IN THE PRINCE GEORGE FOREST REGION

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Defoliation, mostly of trembling aspen, by the large aspen tortrix, *Choristoneura conflictana*, continued over several thousand hectares for the fifth consecutive year.

In the Vanderhoof Forest District defoliation was noted for the third consecutive year in the Nechako River Valley over an estimated 2,000 ha. The total area of feeding by the tortrix in the Nechako Valley has decreased somewhat from the several thousand hectares reported in 1994 but the patches of defoliated trees are more widespread. Completely defoliated aspen trees were noted east of the Sinkut River and west of Fort Fraser. The scattered pattern of infestations is caused by intermixing of farmland and coniferous forest with aspen stands. The last infestation in this area in 1980, covered almost 40 000 ha and extended north past Fort St. James.

Defoliation by the large aspen tortrix was also mapped in the Dawson Creek and Mackenzie Forest Districts with over 2500 ha of damage recorded in each district. Patches of moderate to severe defoliation were noted at Grayling Lake southeast of Mackenzie, near Ospika Arm and around Dawson Creek. Scattered patches of defoliated aspen and birch have been noted in and around Dawson Creek adjacent to and sometimes in conjunction with the forest tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma disstria*. The same conditions have also been reported in the Fort Nelson area with large aspen tortrix and tent caterpillar defoliating aspen north and east of the town.

Mature larvae are easily disturbed and drop from the leaves on silken threads. The adult moths will begin flying in late June to lay egg masses. The larvae hatch from the eggs in August begin insignificant feeding and then seek out overwintering locations. In some areas understory white spruce is being defoliated by mature larvae. Conifers are not considered the usual host for the tortrix.

The feeding may cause reduced tree vigor and stem growth, occasionally killing the treetop and upper branches. Control of the large aspen tortrix is usually unnecessary because natural control agents such as disease and parasites keep populations in check. Birds, including woodpeckers, vireos, and chickadees, eat large numbers of larvae, and may prey upon the moths.

For further information on the large aspen tortrix or other forest pests contact the Forest Insect and Disease Survey at (604) 363-0600.

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