Leafminers in Alaskan birch

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Three European sawfly species (Hymenoptera: Tenthredinidae), the birch leafminer (Fenusa pusilla), the late birch leaf edgeminer (Heterarthrus nemoratus) and the amber-marked birch leafminer (Profenusa thomsoni) are infesting birch in the Interior, Southcentral, and Southeast Alaska. The yellowing “blotches” on birch leaves are produced by feeding larvae. Eggs are oviposited in slits on leaves and, once hatched, larvae feed inside leaves, creating expanding blotches. Evidence of feeding becomes prominent at the end of July/beginning of August. Surveys conducted in the Alaska Interior road system this summer indicate that leafminers are prominently located in and around the cities of Fairbanks and North Pole.

Efforts have been made to reduce sawfly populations. Stingless parasitoid wasps (Lathrolestes thomsoni), native to North America and known to attack leafminers, have been released in Alaska. Efforts are now underway to determine the extent of establishment of this parasitoid species and to determine the impact (if any) it is having on leafminer populations. Even if parasitoids are successful in reducing leafminer populations, it is unlikely to remove this insect from the Alaska landscape. Once an invasive species becomes established in a new system it is extremely difficult to eradicate it completely.

Defoliating insects can disrupt a tree’s ability to conduct photosynthesis, and stressed trees are more susceptible to additional insects and pathogens, but to date no birch mortality has been recorded in Alaska because of these insects. The lack of mortality is likely due to the relatively late occurrence of leafminer damage during the growing season. Losses in net photosynthesis rates in August are likely mitigated by large amounts of photosynthesis occurring during long daylight hours earlier in the season.
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Stephen J. Burr
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Invasive Birch leafminers

Sawflies (Hymenoptera: Tenthredinidae)

3 species in Alaska

- Amber-marked birch leafminer (*Profenusa thomsoni*)
- Late birch leaf edgemininer (*Heterarthrus nemoratus*)
- Birch leafminer (*Fenusa pumila*)

Digweed *et al.* 2009
Introduction to Alaska

Invasive birch leaf miners
- Native to Europe
- Feed on all Birch species in AK
- 5 species in North America
- 3 species in Alaska
- Discovered in Haines in 1991
- High density in Anchorage 2003-2006
Amber-marked birch leafminer (AMBLM)

- Parthenogenesis
- Univoltine
- Activity: temperature and moisture dependent
Amber-marked birch leafminer (AMBLM)

Biology

- 1-20 eggs/leaf
- Requires 5.3 cm² of leaf area
- Feeds in palisade layer
- 6 instars (5 feeding)
- Overwinters in duff layer
Late birch leaf edgeminier

- Parthenogenesis
- Univoltine
- Feeds in palisade layer
- 6 instars (5 feeding)
- Overwinters in leaf
Compare

Amber-marked birch leafminer

Late birch leaf edgeminers

Digweed et al. 2009

Digweed et al. 2009
Birch leafminer

- 1st to enter North America (1923)
- Sexual reproduction
- Multivoltine
- Oviposition on long shoot leaves
- 5 instars (4 feeding)
- Overwinters in duff
AMBLM Distribution 2006

• Snyder et al. 2007
• Road survey
• High in Anchorage area
• Present/low in Fairbanks
AMBLM Distribution 2016

- Resurveyed
- Increase in Fairbanks
- Reduction in Anchorage area

2006

2016
Late birch leaf edgeminier Distribution
Management & control efforts

- Hymenoptera: Ichneumonidae
- 3600 released
- 9 sites (6-Anchorage, 1-Soldotna, 2 Eielson AFB)

Photo credit: Anna Soper
Management & control efforts

- Hymenoptera: Ichneumonidae
- 3600 released
- 9 sites (6-Anchorage, 1-Soldotna, 2 Eielson AFB)
- Trunk injection: TREE-äge

Photo credit: Anna Soper
Damage to host

- Aesthetics
- Reduce photosynthesis
- Early leaf drop

- No mortality observed in Alaska
Thank You