



UI Extension Forestry Information Series

Insects and Diseases No. 19

FACT SHEET - Poplar Borer

Yvonne Barkley

The poplar borer (*Saperda calcarata*) is a long-horned beetle (adult stage). Hosts include all species of the genera *Populus* (poplar, cottonwoods, aspen) and *Salix* (willows), and can be quite damaging to aspen stands in the west.

Adults are elongate, robust, grayish beetles about 20 to 30 mm long with yellow stripes on the thorax and yellow spots on the elytra. Adults emerge in late July through August. Females chew slits in the bark of host trees, where she deposits one or two eggs.

The eggs hatch and the young larvae (which are in the group called roundheaded borers) mine into the bark and remain there during the winter.

The following spring, larvae bore into the sapwood and heartwood, where they remain feeding for 2 years. Openings in the bark where eggs are maintained in the bark where frass is expelled from the tunnels.

When larvae are mature they construct pupal cells near the lower ends of the larval tunnels and lay there, inactive, until the following year.

In July to August of this third year, the adults emerge through the holes used for expelling frass and start the cycle over again.

Bole and large branches can be repeatedly at-



Large bleeding wounds are a result of poplar borer.

Photo by Steven Katovich,
USDA Forest Service,
Bugwood.org

tacked with extensive mines increasing wind breakage, providing access for wood rots, and causing log degradation of infested trees.

All borers are difficult to control; this insect is especially difficult because of its long life cycle.

Cultural control. Keep trees healthy and vigorous; remove infested trees before July/August emergence of adults.

Chemical control. Bayer Tree and Shrub© is labeled for use for all round-

headed borers ; apply by soil drench or via chemigation; provides 12 months of control; do once a year. Imidacloprid, the active ingredient in Bayer Tree and Shrub, has been associated with the decline of European honey bees and should be used with caution.

Biological control. Insect-attacking nematodes injected into borer holes have given partial control of poplar borer larvae. These nematodes belong to the genus *Steinernema* and are sold under the trade names "Bio-safe", "Biovector", and "Exhibit".

About the Author: Yvonne Barkley is an Extension Forestry Specialist at the University of Idaho, Moscow, ID.



Photo showing adult borer with larvae, galleries, and frass.

Photo by James Solomon,
USDA Forest Service,
Bugwood.org

