

PEST ALERT - VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION  
AGENCY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

BRUCE SPANWORM - ANOTHER SUGAR MAPLE PEST FOR VERMONT

This inchworm was abundant in Vermont sugarbushes in 1983 but did not cause the heavy defoliation that occurred in Maine and New Hampshire where 338,000 and 18,000 acres, respectively, were defoliated. This insect defoliated northern Vermont sugarbushes in the 1930's and appears to be on the increase for 1984 in northern Vermont.

What To Look For - the greyish-brown moths were abundant during November, 1983. Female moths lay eggs which are orange and extremely small, about the diameter of the needle portion of a common pin. These are laid singly under lichens and in bark crevices on tree trunks and branches.

Larvae hatch shortly after buds burst in the spring. Their favorite hosts are sugar maple and beech. Newly hatched larvae are pale yellow and 1/8" long. Older larvae become more greenish with narrow, yellowish-white stripes. Full grown larvae vary in color from light green to olive and are about 3/4" long (Figure 1). They attain full growth by the first week in June.

What To Do - start looking for larvae as soon as small sugar maple leaves begin to form. There is no established sampling procedure for predicting future numbers of this insect but if careful searching of maple leaves in the understory or lower tree crowns reveals an average of close to one or more larvae per leaf, heavy defoliation can probably be expected. If you find large numbers of insects and desire an evaluation of the situation, contact your county forester or Forestry Protection Specialist Ron Kelley (888-5733).



Figure 1. Bruce spanworm larva (center) and typical pattern of defoliation on sugar maples.