

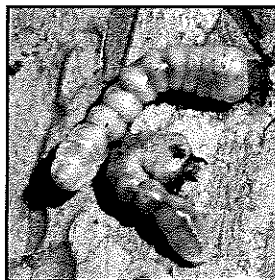
LIGHTS and SHADOWS

from the
Dishman Hills

October 2008

THE BUGS ARE COMING! THE BUGS ARE COMING!

The following article is by Guy Gifford, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Prevention Forester. Bugs that live in trees are on the increase in the western U.S. and are an interesting ecological agent. This is part 1, wood borers, enjoy.



Flathead wood borer larva

Well, most people see the fire that burned on July 10th as destructive. But some see the fire as an opportunity. There are several critters that are enjoying the effects of the fire. One of them I would like to talk about is the wood borer. There are two primary categories of wood borers: 1) flathead types, 2) round headed types. Both types can be found in the Dishman Hills. This article will use the generic term of wood borers since both categories are similar in life cycle and their role in the ecosystem.

If you had been walking in the fire area this late summer you might have heard some strange noises in the woods or see little slivers of wood on the forest floor. What you were hearing and seeing are the effects of very happy wood borers eating away under the bark of the burned trees. If you look under the bark of the trees you will probably see a wood borer. They can be over 1 inch long and have a white segmented body. Their tunnels are full of frass (wood that insects chew up to make their tunnels). The woodborer life cycle takes one or more years. This critter is what people often find in their firewood piles and think they are bark beetles (next article we will talk about bark beetles).

This insect is considered a secondary insect that comes in and attack trees that are weakened by other insects, diseases or fire. The fire created an abundance of food for them and they have infected a significant amount of the trees in the burned area.

With this large infestation of wood borers what will happen to the forest in the Natural Area next. The wood borer, as a rule of thumb, does not kill trees. They attack trees that are dead or that are dying. In nature everything eventually turns back into soil, and the wood borer is part of the web of life, turning trees into dust. They also make the wood peckers very happy because they are an excellent source of protein.

So what effects will this have on the trees in the Dishman Hills. On the green, healthy trees in Dishman Hills, there should be no impact by the wood borer. On the dead and dying trees in the fire area, the wood borer will speed up the wood deterioration process and probably cause the trees to fall down more quickly than trees that were not attacked by the wood borer.

So as you enjoy the Dishman Hills this fall, wander over to the burned area and see what is happening and look for the happy, well fed wood borer who are having a celebration in Dishman Hills.

For more information do a search on the internet with the scientific names:

Round headed wood borers

Monochamus scutellatus oregonensis – Oregon fir sawyer

Flat headed wood borers

Acanthocinus princeps – Ponderosa pine bark borer

Ergates spiculatus – Ponderous borer

GOING TO SEED

As part of our forest restoration efforts for last summer's burn area on the southern side of the Natural Area, the Association has reseeded about 30 acres with native bunch grasses in order to stabilize some bare slopes and combat the incursion of noxious weeds into the ecological open spaces. About 400 pounds of seed were spread, mainly in the steep and heavily burned areas, but avoiding where the native grasses were already sprouting. To determine the right mix of grasses species for the area we had the help of forest ecologist, Art Zack of the Panhandle National Forest in Idaho. Washington Natural Resources loaned us the equipment for spreading the seeds. We also plan on spreading some straw on the steepest, erodible areas.



Seed spreader in burn area

Seeds are leaving the Natural Area as well as arriving. Students from University High School will be harvesting some Ocean Spray seeds this month to aid in several restoration projects in the area.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Michael Hamilton, 747-8147, if you have questions. Our board meets every other month on the third Tuesday. November 18, is the next meeting, 7pm, at the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal St. Members and the public are always welcomed to drop by to see what is going on with the Association.

The following are our September donors that have consented to be listed: Nancy Cashion, Helen Cook, Lila & George Girvin, Gloria Krebs, Leo Middendorf, Beverly Scheunemann, Adin Smith, Helen Stowell, Pat Thompson, and one anonymous donor. Thank you for your continuing support for our efforts to save the natural spaces of our community.

Every living thing is a sort of imperialist, seeking to transform as much as possible of its environment into itself and its seed.

— Bertrand Russell, English Philosopher (1872-1970)

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