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NEW INSECT EATS ALDER TREES IN THE GORGE

Skamania County, Wash. -

The Green Alder Sawfly was first detected in the lower 48 states of United States this spring in Vancouver, WA. Now green caterpillar-like larvae of the sawfly insects can be found eating the leaves of alder trees along the Columbia River in Skamania County. Entomologists from the US Forest Service and Washington State Department of Agriculture are surveying for the new insect in Western Washington State.

"When green alder sawfly was first found in April, we had hoped to eradicate a small infestation in Vancouver," said Kathy Sheehan, entomologist with the U.S Forest Service. "Thanks to an informal network of entomologists, though, we soon found this sawfly throughout western WA. Now we will be watching closely to see what effect this non-native species has on alders."

The green alder sawfly is native to Europe and Western Eurasia in addition to parts of North Africa. It was first discovered in Newfoundland, Canada in the mid-1990's and first collected in Alaska in 2004. The green alder sawfly is an accidentally introduced pest of alder trees.

Larvae of the green alder sawfly resemble bright green caterpillars and grow up to ½- ¾ inches long. The larvae chew holes in leaves and can defoliate a tree if sawfly populations are high enough. The adults are active in early spring and resemble a wasp without the stinger and constricted waist.

Experts are uncertain of the impact that this new insect will have on alder tree health or on our local flora and fauna. As with any organism newly introduced to our region, there is a concern that economic and environmental damage to our forests could result.

For more information about the Green Alder Sawfly, visit:  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/nr/fid/invasives/green-alder-sawfly.shtml> or contact the WSU Extension office at 509-427-3931

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