

EMERALD ASH BORER HAS REACHED EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

Emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis* (Fairmaire) (Coleoptera: Buprestidae)), an introduced aggressive pest of ashes, recently became a nightmare for forest and urban entomologists in the United States. The species originally was known from mixed deciduous forests of Southeastern Asia. The Panel on Quarantine Pests for Forestry of the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) added this buprestid to the EPPO A2 action list as a species of serious risk for the forests of Europe. This prediction came to reality extremely soon after.

In January 2007, recognized Russian taxonomists Drs. A.V. Alekseyev and M.G. Volkovich received a series of specimens of unknown buprestid species of genus *Argilus*. A few entomologists independently of each other collected live beetles in different regions of Moscow during 2003-2006. Species identity was confirmed by morphological methods. It appeared to be *A. planipennis* previously known only from a few localities in the Russian Far East under its synonym name *A. markopoli* Obenb. The photos of Moscow specimens can be found on the Internet at: http://www.zin.ru/Animalia/Coleoptera/rus/eab_2007.htm. This finding represented the first record of *A. planipennis* in Europe and a major westward range extension for this species.

Fraxinus excelsior and *F. pennsylvanica* are very common on Moscow streets and parks. Trees with 15-20 cm stem diameter and up to 15 m in height predominate. According to the places of collections, the beetle is distributed all over Moscow and its suburbs. Many intensive diebacks of ash trees were recorded in 30 km westwards and southwards from the Moscow Main Ring Road. At some places up to 75% of trees were dead; many of them lost bark and carried D-shaped emerging holes on stems.

There is a huge gap in natural distribution of ash species from the Russian Far East to Eastern Europe. In this territory very few ashes (mainly *F. mandshurica* and *F. pennsylvanica*) can be found in arboretums and private collections. It is believed that

A. planipennis was introduced to the Moscow region at the end of the 1990s with wood packing materials or with growing stock.

Russian quarantine officials are aware of the problem, and an intensive search program will be launched in spring and summer 2007 to estimate the level of pest distribution and injury.

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