

## The Emerald Ash Borer in Connecticut

On July 16, 2012, Connecticut joined 15 other states as officially having the emerald ash borer in residence. EAB was found first in a park in Prospect, with additional finds quickly following in Naugatuck, Bethany and Beacon Falls. This little green insect is a species of federal regulatory concern, requiring a response on the part of state and federal government. Mechanisms developed to limit the spread of this insect have now swung into action in Connecticut. At the state level, this means the CT Agricultural Experiment Station, DEEP and UConn, through Cooperative Extension. At the federal level, this means APHIS PPQ and the US Forest Service. Over the next few months, we will hear quite a bit about quarantines, about restrictions on the movement of firewood and other wood products, and about the results of various surveys to describe the extent of the infestation of EAB in the state.

Anyone having anything to do with trees or wood products should pay attention to this news, even if they are not in or near a town where EAB has been found. Keeping the insect from spreading further in Connecticut will take a dedicated effort, as the insect has a great talent for becoming established in new sites. It has been able, in a little more than a decade, to move from Detroit, MI to Prospect, CT - a distance of about 521 miles as the crow flies. Certainly, EAB had a great deal of assistance in this movement, with firewood suspected as being the chief vehicle by which the beetle travels. We will almost certainly never know how the EAB got to Connecticut. In the end, it doesn't matter. What does matter is trying to at least slow it down long enough for nature to respond with its own biological controls, as well as for more effective means of prevention and treatment to be developed and for individual communities to become better prepared for this insect.

The initial response to this insect is the establishment of a quarantine over the movement of materials such as ash logs, hardwood firewood, yard waste and ash nursery stock out of New Haven County. In addition, emergency firewood regulations have been developed regarding, not just firewood moving out from the infested areas in New Haven County, but anywhere into and within Connecticut generally. Details regarding the quarantine can be found on the CT Agricultural Experiment Station website - [www.ct.gov/caes](http://www.ct.gov/caes). Details regarding the emergency firewood regulations, including details regarding requirements regarding the movement of firewood, can be found at [www.ct.gov/deep/eab](http://www.ct.gov/deep/eab).

One important aspect of the find of EAB in Connecticut is the role that volunteers played in its initial discovery. Since 2010, Dr. Claire Rutledge of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station has led a group of trained volunteers in a method of EAB detection known as biosurveillance. There is a species of wasp, *Cerceris fumipennis*, that hunts buprestid beetles of all sorts in order to use them as a food supply for their developing larvae. People familiar with cicada-killers will recognize what the *Cerceris* is doing - it captures buprestid adults, stings them to paralyze them, and then carries them back to their nest. Among the buprestid beetles that the *Cerceris* wasp - or the smoky-winged beetle bandit, as Claire's group prefers to call them - hunts is EAB. If enough EAB are present in the surrounding woods, the beetle bandit will find them. Under Claire's direction, 'wasp watchers' have been assigned areas throughout the state where they can monitor the solitary and non-stinging beetle bandits, monitoring what prey they return with to provision their nest holes.

Sure enough, it was at one of these wasp watching sites that EAB was first found. A wasp watcher made the initial discovery at Canfield Park in Prospect. Subsequently, 25 more EABs were caught at Canfield Park and three at nearby Fusco Field. Additionally, nine more EAB were discovered in the catch submitted by another Canfield Park watcher. This triggered a check of the purple traps in the area. Purple traps are the sticky, corrugated plastic traps suspended in trees throughout the state. While the purple trap near Canfield Park was empty, another trap in Prospect yielded three, and three more were found in a trap in Naugatuck.

Neither biosurveillance nor sticky traps have turned up EAB anywhere else in the state, at least of yet. Tree Wardens are encouraged to stay informed. In particular, they should check the Ag Experiment web site for details on the quarantine ([www.ct.gov/caes](http://www.ct.gov/caes)) and the DEEP websites for the latest overall information on EAB ([www.ct.gov/deep](http://www.ct.gov/deep) and [www.ct.gov/deep/forestry](http://www.ct.gov/deep/forestry)).

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