

## **Forest Health**

By Shelagh Grant

In some instances, the summer of 2010 was a repeat of the year before in terms of the health of our trees. An early spring promised abundant growth but by the end of July many pines in the area showed signs of several pest infestations, primarily the pine tip beetle, red pine cone beetle, introduced pine sawfly, and white pine blister rust.

The blister rust can be the most destructive of all pests, especially when it attacks young trees. Cankers form on infected branches which encircle them and cause them to turn brown. Swollen cankers on the lower main stem and heavy resin flow inevitably will cause the tree's demise. Lesser damaged trees may survive but are weakened and vulnerable to other pests. The most effective means of control include: pruning the lower branches of young white pine, removal of infected branches, and complete removal of their alternate hosts, gooseberry or current bushes and their roots, which are necessary to spread the disease.

The introduced pine sawfly caused only minor defoliation in the Pointe au Baril area when first noticed in June, but defoliation increased over the summer as a result of its having two or three generations in a single year. While the preferred host is the eastern white pine, it is also found on other trees, particularly ornamental or nursery trees. The larvae winter over in hard-shell cylindrical cocoons attached to the needles or on the ground. The flies emerge in May or early June and lay their eggs in slits cut into the edge of the needles. The voracious feeding larvae have black heads, with yellow and white spots on a black background. BioForest Technologies suggest using a water hose to knock the larvae off larger trees, whereas they can be picked off smaller trees. In both cases it is important to ensure the larvae are destroyed.

The red pine cone beetle is known to burrow into the shoot tips of jack pines as well as the cones of the red pine and was found in our area – actually at our own cottage. There are also two types of pine tip beetles which burrow into the shoots and cones of white pines, drying up the cones and causing new shoots to droop and turn brown. The only suggested means of control is to remove and burn any infected shoots or cones.

Perhaps the best means of control for all infestations is to ensure trees are watered during periods of hot dry weather, especially if the leaves of the white birch trees show signs of premature yellowing.

At PABIA's request, Will Byman, a forest technician with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources visited several infestation sites last summer to provide an accurate diagnosis and general advice. We are very fortunate to have him as this year's Naturalist speaker to give a talk on the various forest pests in our area and answer our questions on how best to protect our trees. So please mark the date, Sunday July 17<sup>th</sup>, in the movie house at the Ojibway Club.

The only good news was that another sudden freeze that spring seemed to kill most gypsy moth larvae and may explain why our islands avoided any serious forest tent caterpillar damage. In either case, there are registered pesticides that may help if applied in mid- to late May, but must be carried out in accordance with the regulations set out by the Township of the Archipelago. A contact or stomach poison for use against the pine sawfly during the larva stage is also available. For further information on these pesticides and restrictions on their use, I suggest you contact BioForest Technologies Inc., either by phone: (888) 233-6378 or by email: [bforest@bioforest.ca](mailto:bforest@bioforest.ca).

### **Canine Blastomycosis**

In the last fall's PABIA newsletter, I gave a brief report on three incidents of canine blastomycosis, commonly known as "blasto." At the time, we had thought that one of the dogs had survived. This was not the case and we extend our sincere sympathies to all the families. This is a rare but nasty disease. The only known means of prevention is to keep your dog on a "short leash" if they have a tendency to dig in areas of rotting wood or debris.

Because of the importance of immediate diagnosis and treatment, PABIA has prepared an information card with a general description of the disease and its symptoms. As part of our outreach public education program, this will be available for distribution at local marinas and stores to alert visitors to the area.

While I have written several accounts for previous yearbooks, it was felt that many of us would benefit with an update. Hence a more detailed article appears here under the "Naturalist Section" – as a reminder to all our members, old and new. Meanwhile, please remember to report any confirmed diagnosis to [shelagh.grant@sympatico.ca](mailto:shelagh.grant@sympatico.ca).