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Emerald Ash Borer—Is It Here?

AUGUSTA—If you happen to visit one of 12 coastal campgrounds this summer between Kittery and Bar Harbor, and notice what looks like a large, purple box kite stuck high in a tree, it's probably something else. What you would likely be seeing is actually an insect trap strategically placed there by the Maine Forest Service (MFS) to catch the emerald ash borer (EAB), an insect that has killed more than 40 million ash trees in the Midwest and Canada. *Catch?* That's if EAB has reached Maine at this point.

"EAB has not been discovered yet in Maine. These traps would provide an early warning to help us act quickly should the beetle turn up in the state," said Karen Coluzzi, entomologist and state survey coordinator with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Division of Plant Industry. "We're putting the traps in campgrounds because one of the major pathways in the dispersal of this insect is through the movement of firewood, and surveys have shown that Maine gets many campers from the Midwest who often bring firewood with them," stated Coluzzi.

The Department of Agriculture will also be placing traps at 10 plant nurseries, because another major pathway for EAB is from out-of-state shipments of infested ash trees. Due to a recent find of EAB near Montreal, Canada, the USDA is placing traps near the Canadian border. The traps, triangular in shape and about two feet long and one foot wide on each side, are coated with a sticky substance that will ensnare an adult beetle.

Native to Asia, EAB, with Latin name *Agrilus planipennis*, is a brilliant emerald-green beetle no larger than a penny that feeds exclusively on ash trees and was probably brought into the US on solid wood packing material carried in cargo ships or airplanes. The beetle seems to be killing 100% of the trees it attacks and there are no effective natural enemies or trees resistant to it yet in North America. First identified in Michigan in 2002, EAB spread very rapidly, and has also been devastating trees in Indiana, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ontario and Quebec, Canada.

"Please leave firewood at home and purchase it locally when you travel. Don't give these pests a free ride," cautions Charlene Donahue, forest entomologist with the MFS Insect & Disease Laboratory. "Thanks to the participating campgrounds and nurseries for assisting us with this most important survey," added Donahue.

In Bath, the Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the City of Bath, is also using actual ash trees as EAB traps, and the MFS is conducting a bio-surveillance survey using a native wasp that is a natural enemy of EAB.

For more information on EAB, please go to <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/>.

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Captions for two accompanying photographs:

- 1) *A trap for the emerald ash borer strategically placed high in an ash tree.*
- 2) *The emerald ash borer beetle is about the size of a penny.*

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