

Programme Update 4: 19 August 2020

Surveillance work

The summer survey for Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) nests is in full swing. We are very grateful to members of the public and organisations who have reported OPM sightings. These reports are a very useful supplement to our formal surveying to help us monitor OPM.

Pheromone trapping

We have recently surveyed pheromone traps in London and discovered that the lure sent to us from our supplier is defective. We have taken measures to source alternative traps for high-priority areas in the Protected Zone, including near the planting sites where OPM was found in 2019, and these are currently being deployed. As moths have begun to emerge, we have asked professional and amateur entomologists to report any suspected findings to the Forestry Commission through [TreeAlert](#). Once the new traps are deployed, we will monitor these until September. Pheromone trapping helps us to monitor changes in the pest's distribution and prevent onward spread.

OPM detected

We have discovered OPM on a very small number of trees at five sites within the OPM Protected Zone in Sussex, Luton, Oxfordshire and Cheshire. We have taken swift and appropriate action to treat the infested trees and minimise the risk of spread. This includes spraying trees in the affected areas and undertaking enhanced local surveillance. We urge everyone to be vigilant for OPM at this time of year and report any suspect findings (please see OPM reports section below).

Species confused with OPM

We have received a number of reports of caterpillars commonly confused with OPM, such as gypsy moth and buff-tip moth. I would like to draw your attention to this [weblink](#) which provides further information and photos of caterpillar and moth species sometimes mistaken for OPM.

OPM reports

Please continue to report OPM in your area. Now is the ideal time to spot OPM as their white nest structures are easily seen in the canopy. You will not see OPM caterpillars now as pupation has taken place. Please note their nests can also cause some risks to human and animal health. Report all OPM sightings to us via the online portal Tree Alert www.forestresearch.gov.uk/treealert. Alternatively you can send in your reports to opm@forestrycommission.gov.uk.

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If you're new to OPM, please note that we have an OPM manual on our website with guidance on surveillance, identification and managing OPM. You can find it at:

www.forestresearch.gov.uk/opm

Research

As part of Defra's research into OPM population control, we are looking to integrate parasitism of OPM caterpillars into future management plans. Newcastle University is carrying out research to detect whether OPM caterpillars are carrying parasites. To do this they need to access sites with OPM to take biopsies from caterpillars and are therefore looking for volunteers who can grant access to sites where OPM is present. The researchers would be looking to conduct two rounds of fieldwork, the first in 2021 and the second in 2022 with access to sites needed in both years. The fieldwork would be conducted around the time OPM caterpillars are active (May-July). Interested parties can sign up with the following link: <https://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=8958406>.

And finally...

We normally host an end of season stakeholder workshop in September/October. Due to the ongoing constraints in relation to coronavirus this will not be happening. Please send us information on your OPM activity so that we can provide up-to-date and comprehensive OPM reports, including developments outside Defra/FC-funded work. Email your updates to opm@forestrycommission.gov.uk.

Please feel free to forward this update to anyone who might be interested.

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