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BIRCH LEAFMINER

The birch leafminer, *Fenusa pusilla*, is a common leafmining pest of birches in the Pacific Northwest. It feeds regularly on gray, paper, and white birches. It has rarely been reported from black, yellow, or river birch.

Biology and Description

The adult birch leafminer is a small, black sawfly and belongs to the same general group as bees, ants, and wasps. It is, however, a nonstinging member of the group. It is about 3/8 of an inch (1 cm) in length. It winters as a mature larva in cells in the soil. Adults emerge from the ground in spring when the leaves are about half grown and begin to lay eggs singly in the new leaves. When the eggs hatch, the new larvae begin to mine between the surfaces of the leaves. The larvae are whitish, flat, and about 1/2 inch (14 mm) long when fully grown. Larval development takes about 2 weeks. When development is complete, the mature larva emerges from the leaf and drops to the

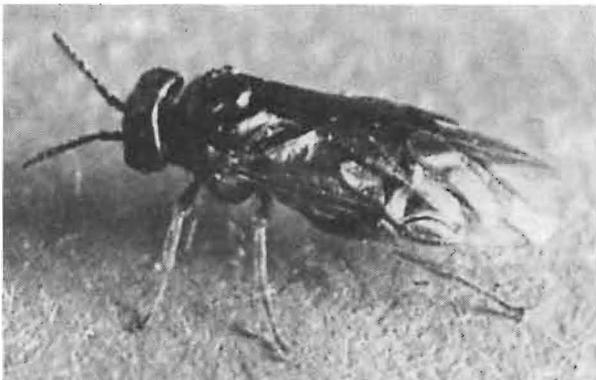
ground where it builds a cell and pupates. This takes about 3 weeks. Several generations occur within a season.

Damage

As the larvae feed, the mines appear as blotches or irregular winding tunnels. As damage becomes more extensive, the mines merge together to the extent that an entire leaf may be hollowed out. When populations are large, nearly all of the leaves are under attack and ultimately die early in the season. When this happens the tree produces a new set of leaves, which the next generation of sawflies attacks. After a few years of continuous attack, trees may show visible symptoms of decline.

Control

To control this pest or prevent its damage, spray with a registered insecticide when the first leaves are fully



Adult birch leafminer.



Birch leafminer damage.

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formed. This is usually about the first of May. A second application should be made from mid-June to mid-July.

A number of registered products are available for control of this pest. Since registrations change from year to

year, please contact your local WSU county Extension agent for a list of recommendations from the *Pacific Northwest Insect Control Handbook*. This handbook, revised annually, provides the most current legal recommendations available.

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Use pesticides with care. Apply them only to plants, animals, or sites listed on the label. When mixing and applying pesticides, follow all label precautions to protect yourself and others around you. It is a violation of the law to disregard label directions. If pesticides are spilled on skin or clothing, remove clothing and wash skin thoroughly. Store pesticides in their original containers and keep them out of the reach of children, pets, and livestock.

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