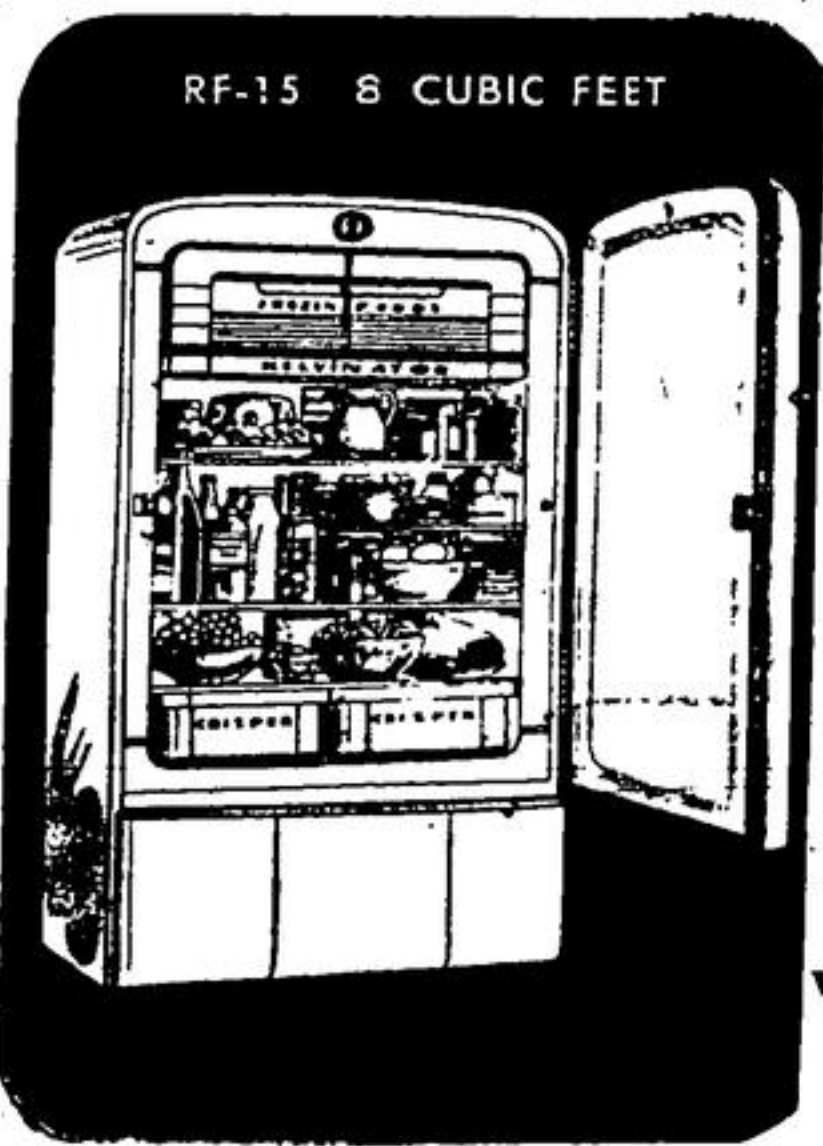


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BATTLE SPRUCE BUDWORM IN GOVERNMENT LABORATORIES

Fighting bush fires is a regular part of the job for Ontario's forest rangers and this phase of their activities has become well known to the public because of its spectacular appeal.

Little has been said and written, however, about the role these same guardians of the Province's forests wealth play in fighting that equally destructive, silent, and at times unseen, scourge of the forests — the insect.

The secret of fighting forest fires is to spot them and put out while they are still small, explain fire control officers. The same principle say the entomologists, applies to combating insect epidemics or plagues. Sometimes, although the problem is usually more complex than fighting forest fires, an insect plague may be prevented if its early signs are spotted in time.

Each year in Ontario and throughout Canada, many thousands of acres of valuable timber lands fall to the ravages of the countless hordes of destructive tree insects which can level whole forests just as surely, even although not as quickly, as a roaring forest fire.

The war against the destructive forest tree insect in Ontario has become intense during the last few years and the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests cooperates closely with the Federal Department of Agriculture in the costly and continual struggle to find ways and means of controlling the depredations of the tiny creatures which cost the pulpwood and lumbering industries, the Province of Ontario and the rest of the Dominion millions of dollars each year in destroyed forest wealth.

But not all insects are destructive. Entomologists place them in three main categories for forestry purposes: First on the list are the destructive types, then the common insects, which have no great importance to the forests and lastly the beneficial insects. An example of the last named and known to most people is the common "ladybird" which preys on aphids.

Topping the list of destructive insects in eastern North America by far is the spruce budworm. This one insect alone has destroyed more spruce and balsam in eastern Canada during the past fifty years than any other single cause not excepting forest fires. Actually, its menace is two-fold. Not only does it leave whole tracts of partially dead forests in its wake, but the killed, rotting balsam which it mostly attacks despite its name of "spruce" budworm makes a prime forest fire hazard. Budworm-killed areas once ignited are hard to stop from burning and if a high wind is blowing the fire will "crown" into the dead tree tops and can be carried swiftly for miles, defying man's efforts to quell it, killing pine and other trees which the budworm does not directly injure.

Lands and Forests rangers and the men who man the lookout towers throughout Ontario's forested areas keep a sharp watch at all times during the summer to spot any destructive insects that may be invading their areas.

These men are supplied each season with collecting boxes or mailing tubes by the Federal Department of Agriculture in which to forward insect specimens to the research laboratories at Sault Ste. Marie, where they are identified and studied.

If the fire hazard is not too dangerous, the rangers, equipped with a tarpaulin, an axe and the specimen tubes, patrol the forested areas, in which they are stationed, inspecting trees for signs of destructive insects. Sometimes they select trees at random for examination while at other times, they are requested to keep a special watch on a certain species which is being, or is expected to be, attacked.

Spreading the tarpaulin beneath the tree to be examined, the ranger strikes the trunk hard several times with the back of his axe, causing sharp vibrations in the tree which make the insects fall onto the canvas. Carefully examining his catch, the officer removes spiders, ants, wasps or other insects, which he knows to be harmless, or that might devour his specimens before he arrives at Sault Ste. Marie. He puts any known, or suspected, harmful insects into the mailing tubes along with foliage from the tree to provide them with food for the journey.

Later, the sender receives a report back from the laboratory which informs him, as far as is known, of the identity and other data on the insects which he forwarded. In this way the ranger becomes quite familiar, through time, with the insects which he is collecting. Many forest rangers have become expert "bug-men", who can recognize at a glance many of the types which they encounter. Sometimes entirely new species, previously unknown to science, may be collected in this way.

At Sault Ste. Marie the Lands & Forests Department also cooperates with the Federal authorities. In 1945 the Province completed and opened one of the most modern insect laboratories on the continent which

is staffed by the Federal Department of Agriculture entomologists. This building is devoted to general forest entomology, life histories of insects, parasites, predators, insect surveys and other related studies.

In 1950, a second large building was erected and staffed by the Dominion Government. It is devoted entirely to the study of insect diseases. Research work in the latter is geared mainly to discovering methods of controlling destructive forest insects through investigation of the diseases which attack them. Some of the preliminary results in this field have been described as "highly encouraging."

There are three main biological types of control of forest insects apart from climatic conditions: These are parasites, predators and disease.

Parasitic insects, says the entomologists as a rule, resemble wasps, or houseflies. These insects usually deposit their eggs on or in the forest insect worm. The eggs hatch out into grubs which eat the inside out of the worm or caterpillar until it is destroyed. The grub then turns into a mature parasitic insect.

Predators are insects or birds and animals which catch their prey and devour it. Each predator requires large quantities of prey in order to survive. Common predators are birds, small animals, mice, shrews, and squirrels and particularly certain other insects.

In the case of an insect epidemic, entomologists explain that the host insect, or in other words the destructive forest insect, usually has the start and outnumbers the parasite. Sometimes the parasite increases rapidly and soon kills off the forest pest. But, contrary to the belief of many persons, the parasites cannot increase in numbers unless the host insect increases. Entomologists point out also that under artificially and ideally controlled conditions it is extremely hard to produce predators or parasites without the natural hosts, or prey.

This, it is explained, prevents the parasites and predators from themselves becoming over numerous once their destructive prey has been reduced.

The study of insect diseases is relatively a new field in Canada and has only reached its stride within the past three years. The diseases which attack insects are classified into three main branches of origin, namely, viruses, fungi and bacteria. Research workers suspect that every insect is attacked by many diseases, and these men hope to produce diseases that once injected into an insect plague will spread throughout to either wipe it out entirely or reduce it to harmless proportions in short order. The ideal disease would be one which once established would persist year after year and even spread into new territory.

The work that is being done at the two large laboratories at Sault Ste. Marie, has put Ontario into the forefront in North America in forest insect study. But, large and ultra-modern as the laboratories are, and skillful as the research workers might be, it would all be useless if the field men were not constantly hard at work collecting insects and sending them in from every corner of the province.

These collections, received at the Soo labs, number between six and eight thousand each year. Many are sent in by the Federal Forest Insect Rangers who work year-round at their task. But Lands and Forests rangers, whose main job is guarding the forest from fire, contribute great numbers of insect specimens from all of the forest districts in which they are stationed, aiding science to bring the insect ravagers of the forest under control.

Named Works Clerk At Home for Aged

Bruce MacKenzie, London Life Insurance Company representative in Georgetown, has been engaged by county council as works clerk during the construction of the new Milton Home for the Aged. He is to inspect all phases of the construction and make daily reports to the architect. He will be paid a salary of \$100 a week.



It is believed that this daily attention will lead to considerable savings in the construction costs. The same idea was tried by Acton when the new sewerage system was installed there.

man, Alger Gripps being inspector of works for the system, Mr. MacKenzie, whose father, Syd MacKenzie is a contractor in Hamilton has had some experience in this type of work. He was road chairman during a term of office as a Georgetown council member a few years ago.



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