

Monitoring Woodpecker Flecking for Early Detection of the Emerald Ash Borer

Late winter is a good time to look for emerald ash borer!

Woodpecker activity is one of the more obvious symptoms of EAB infestation and is particularly easy to see in late winter and early spring, before leaves emerge. Woodpeckers pick away the bark, hunting for larvae overwintering inside the tree.



photo: Woodpecker activity can cause an EAB infested ash tree to resemble a cat-scratching post.

Is it EAB?

Woodpecker activity can be associated with other pests. To determine if a woodpeckered ash tree is infested with EAB:

1. Pry off the bark using a chisel or screwdriver and a hammer. Start with a section where woodpeckers have scraped away some bark. Peel away enough bark to expose several feeding galleries, as shown in the photos. If present, galleries will be found on the wood surface right under the bark. EAB feeding galleries are characteristically serpentine (S-shaped). The amount of winding will vary from tree to tree.



photos: The inner and outer bark must be peeled away to expose any S-shaped feeding galleries on the wood.

2. Look for life stages of the insect (larvae or adults) in the galleries.



left photo: EAB larvae have flattened bell-shaped body segments.

right photo: adult EAB in wood prior to emergence

In general, EAB is already established in an area by the time woodpecker activity becomes evident, with nearby confirmed infestations and associated quarantines. But it's possible that woodpecker activity may be the first indication of EAB in an area, especially if the area is not being closely monitored.

If I think it's EAB do I need to report it?

Because EAB is a regulated pest, its spread is monitored by state and federal agencies. Suspected new finds should be reported to the Wisconsin EAB hotline. A new find is any EAB life stage (e.g., larva or adult beetle) or an EAB infested tree in a Wisconsin county, city, village or town that is not already known to be EAB infested.

For a list of local government jurisdictions known to be infested & where further reporting of suspected EAB is unnecessary, see <http://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/articleassets/ConfirmedEABFindsinWisconsin.pdf>.

To report suspected EAB

A suspected new find can be reported by telephone, **800-462-2803**, or by e-mail, DATCPEmeraldAshBorer@wi.gov. To report EAB by e-mail, attach one or two clear, high-resolution, close-up photos of galleries, insects &/or D-shaped exit holes in the tree. Whether reporting by telephone or e-mail, note the location of the tree as precisely as possible (e.g., street address or GPS coordinates).

For details on REPORTING EAB in Wisconsin, see http://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/report_eab.jsp



photo: Characteristic 1/8-inch D-shaped holes show where the adult beetle has emerged from the tree.

My community is already infested with EAB. Should I still look for woodpecker activity?

St. Paul, Minnesota, and other Twin Cities-area communities have experienced some success in slowing local EAB spread by targeting ash tree removal to areas with woodpecker activity, combined with insecticide treatment of surrounding ash trees. This highly focused removal & treatment strategy seems to be more effective than systematically removing ash trees without regard to woodpecker activity or other symptoms.

For more information about EAB, see www.emeraldashborer.wi.gov. For guidance with municipal response to EAB, see <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/UrbanForests/EABToolBox.html>.

Wisconsin's EAB Information Source: <http://datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/index.jsp>