

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

ENVIRONMENT

No sign of tree-killing invasive beetle in Sacramento County after first months of surveillance

BY MICHAEL FINCH II

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City of Sacramento urban forester Kevin Hocker talks about the impact of the polyphagous shot hole borer on July 25, 2019 in Sacramento. The insect has killed many trees in Southern California, and it seems to be moving northward. BY [RENÉE C. BYER](#) ✉

An invasive beetle that has unleashed catastrophic damage on trees in Southern California has not been found in Sacramento County after the first few months of a statewide surveillance program designed to monitor its movements.

Known as the shot hole borer, [the invasive bug is being closely watched](#) through a partnership between counties and [UC ANR researchers](#) in the integrated pest management program. Sacramento County officials deployed several traps near riversides in April, and so far there's been no sign of the bug, said county Agriculture Commissioner Chris Flores.

"The good news is we have not found anything," Flores said. "We've had traps out since April and we have not found anything yet."

Flores said the traps were placed in 17 locations along rivers and left out for about one month. The devices are supposed to attract the beetles, which can fly, to a sticky panel with pheromones. They were placed in riparian areas as well as in green waste facilities and firewood lots. Flores said the traps will go out again once the temperature drops and the beetles get into their flight patterns.

The University of California will reimburse the county for as much as \$21,500 of the costs to continue surveying for the bug until next year. The program is a part of [a \\$5 million appropriation from the legislature](#) for "stakeholders to develop a plan for the cure or suppression of diseases associated with the spread of invasive shot hole borers."

Since the first shot hole borer was found in 2003, the critter has infested thousands of trees in Southern California and the Central Coast. Native to southeast Asia, the beetle burrows into trees and releases spores to create a fungus that it eats exclusively. The fungus restricts the trees' water distribution and slowly kills it over time.

The shot hole borer can survive in at least 64 different types of trees, including avocado and almond trees.

But it prefers trees that grow near riversides like willows, cottonwoods and sycamores. Its resilience has made it [a key concern for urban foresters](#), including in the city of Sacramento.

SPREADING THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Two types of the shot hole borer are present in California: the polyphagous, which loosely translates to excessive desire to eat, and kuroshio. The kuroshio shot hole borer is well-established in San Diego County and currently also is present in Orange and Santa Barbara Counties. A single beetle was caught in a trap in San Luis Obispo County in 2016.

The polyphagous shot hole borer is now present in Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside counties and has also spread to San Bernardino, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. A single beetle was caught in a trap in Santa Cruz County in 2014.

For now, the trail of the beetle stops there, said Randall Oliver, a UC ANR spokesman for the integrated pest management program.

“The various trapping programs with most of the counties throughout most of the state are fairly new so there’s not a lot of data that’s available yet,” Oliver said. “We’re trapping statewide both to confirm the spread of the beetles but also to, where possible, do a negative confirmation that the beetles are not in these other locations.”



Akif Eskalen marks the entry points of the polyphagous shot hole borer and the fungus on an infected California Sycamore tree at the UC Irvine campus on Jan. 26, 2016. The invasive beetle is ravaging trees around Southern California. GLENN KOENIG *LOS ANGELES TIMES*



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Mike Finch joined The Bee in July 2018, first as a data reporter and now focusing on accountability and enterprise stories in the region. A Miami, Fla. native, he earned a bachelor's degree in political science at Florida International University and has been a member of Investigative Reporters and Editors since 2012. He previously worked at newspapers in Florida and Alabama.