



# Invasive species attacks trees at Caddo Lake

By Glenn Evans  
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A new invasive species has reached the shores of Texas - and Caddo Lake.

Forest service biologists have long known the emerald ash borer was on its way, spreading south from Michigan where the Asian pest was first detected in 2002.

Texas became the 26th state to host the tree-destroying invader when four adult beetles that were caught on May 6 in a single trap at Harrison Bayou east of Karnack, along the lake's southern shore, made.

"We knew we were due at some point, but to actually catch it is kind of a disappointment," said Allen Smith, a Longview-based forest health coordinator for the Texas A&M Forest Service.



The discovery adds the emerald ash borer to a growing list of invasive species making a home on the state's largest natural lake. The lake-choking giant salvinia remains the chief disrupter, but the newly arrived beetle joins hydrilla, water hyacinth, Chinese tallow and nutria as unwanted lake residents.

Smith said no infected ash trees have been found locally.

But, he noted, recent flooding at the lake makes tracking the bug a challenge.

Officials are on the hunt, including Caddo Lake Wildlife Management Area Manager Vanessa Neace and Laura Speight, the latter armed with specialized tracking dogs keen to ferret out the beetles.

The bugs kill ash trees, responsible for about \$58 million in East Texas economic activity, in a one-two punch, said Shane Harrington, a forest health coordinator in the service's College Station headquarters.

"Adult beetles, they bore into the tree," Harrington said. "They bore into the bark, and they lay eggs in the sapwood just below the bark."

Once they hatch and emerge - from tale-tell, capital D-shaped holes in the bark - the beetles eat their host's leaves down to the twig.

But, the egg clusters begin doing their damage before they hatch.

"The egg galleries disrupt the ability of the trees to take water and nutrients from the soil up to the crown of the tree," Harrington said. "It usually takes three to four years for the tree to succumb to the invasive."

Ash trees account for 1.2 percent of the East Texas canopy, Harrington said. Texas has seven native ash species.

"I know they have ash trees scattered up through the Wildlife Management Area and the refuge," Harrington said, referring to the state-owned, 8,005-acre hunting preserve and the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

News of the insect's arrival in remote Northeast Texas is important for urban areas, where ash trees are a common, native yard addition.

"Out in the woods, there's really not a whole lot we can do about it," Smith said. "We can't treat each ash tree. We can't protect each ash tree. So, our problem is going to be mostly an urban and suburban problem."

Harrington cautioned, though, against rushing to inject yard trees with insecticide - not, yet. The recommended pesticide breaks down swiftly, making precautionary injection mostly futile.

"We don't want people to start doing it until the beetle is 15 miles from them," Smith said. "Anything else is just a waste of money. ... If I were in Marshall, I wouldn't worry about it right now ... until we start seeing infected trees, until we start seeing more beetles in traps."

Smith also warned bloodsuckers of another species can be inspired to attack homeowners.

"We get a lot of unscrupulous people knocking on doors," Smith said, describing scam artists who could soon be conning residents with claims they can prevent the emerald ash from invading local yards.





The emerald ash borer has been in Arkansas at least two years, now, and the state has quarantines on moving firewood. Harrington said that is a potential for Texas, but it's too early to tell.

"Right now, there is not regulation or restriction on the movement of firewood (in Texas)," he said. "We're in the early phases of looking at those issues and what the Texas response is going to be. We're on the front end of it."

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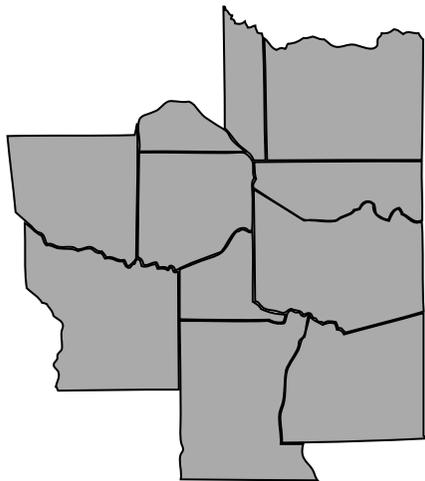
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