California Forest Pest Council
Fostering education on the pests of California's forests since 1951

December 20, 2022 | Volume 1, Issue 5

Upcoming Events - Save the Date!

January 10-12, 2023 - 44th Annual Forest Vegetation Management Conference, Gaia Hotel and Spa, Riverside, CA.

January 13, 2023 - Western Tree Failure Database, San Rafael, CA

April 2-5, 2023 - Entomological Society of America, Pacific Branch Meeting, Seattle, WA.

Yucca Weevil on Joshua Trees

Figure 1: Joshua tree infested with yucca weevil. Photo by Madena Asbell. Mojave Desert Land Trust

Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) in southern California are being attacked by the yucca weevil (*Scyphophorus yuccae,* Fig. 1). Joshua tree has not been listed as a common host of yucca weevil in the past. In Joshua trees the damage is caused by grubs feeding in the main stems or branches, boring down, and causing the stems and foliage to collapse. Infested branches and leaves die and break off, (Fig. 2 & 3). Control is very difficult. The extent of the infestation in southern California is not yet known, but extensive damage has been seen in Joshua Tree National Park and surrounding areas. Tree stress may be a contributing factors to this infestation brought on by extreme drought and heat.

Yucca weevils exist throughout California wherever known hosts are found but are pests primarily in southern California, (Fig 4). This species of yucca weevil is more restricted in its range, being abundant in California only with a few detections in Arizona and Texas whereas the agave weevil (*Sacyphophorus acupunctatus*) is found throughout the western hemisphere.

Fire is another threat that is increasingly damaging Joshua trees. In Mohave Desert Preserve (San Bernardino County) over a million Joshua Trees were lost in the Dome Fire in 2020. The spread of invasive grasses across the desert is making the area more flammable, increasing the number and size of wildfires in ecosystems that are ill-adapted to survive flames.

Click here for more information on the agave and yucca weevils.

Figure 2: Damage at the base of foliage caused by the yucca weevil. Photo by M. Asbell

Figure 3: Boring by the yucca weevil in the main stem of a Joshua tree. Photo by M. Asbell

Figure 4: Larva of the yucca weevil from inside a Joshua Tree. Photo by M Asbell.

Newsletter feedback and ideas are welcome. Please submit comments to **caforestpestcouncil@gmail.com**.

When buying firewood for camping or home heating this fall, remember to buy wood sourced local to where you will be using it, helping to minimize the spread of pests and diseases - **Buy It Where You Burn It**. For a list of local firewood dealers, go to **firewoodscout.org**.

Sincerely,

The California Forest Pest Council
