

JARRAH FOREST INSECT PROBLEM

AT a seminar in November, Dr Ian Abbott of the Research Branch reported on his studies of the insect problem in the southern jarrah forest.

Assisted by Thomas Burbidge and Paul Van Heurch, CALM's forest entomologist explained that jarrah ground coppice is most vulnerable to leaf damage by leafminer within the low rainfall zone and in recently burned stands.

In 1985, about 5 per cent of leaf area was damaged by this species.

Another 5 per cent was attributable to about 10 species of beetles and moths, but no significant stand correlates were found.

Some 13 per cent of leaf area was damaged by a fungus, and damage was greatest in stands with high canopy cover.

Insect damage to leaves in pole crown averaged 17 per cent, nearly twice that of leaves in ground coppice.

This was attributed to Skeletonizer caterpillars, which were 40 times more abundant in pole crowns than in ground coppice.

Ants were found to be 20 times more abundant in ground coppice than pole crowns.

It is suspected that ants are important predators of these caterpillars.

In January 1986, the ratio of numbers of individuals of leaf chewer: Sapsucker: predator: parasitoid invertebrates in pole crowns was about 200: 12: 5: 1.

Monitoring of tagged jarrah leaves has shown that significant premature abscission occurs if more than 75 per cent of leaf area is removed.

Surveillance of the expanding area of outbreak of Skeletonizer has continued since it began in summer 1982/83.

In spring 1986 significant incursions (but WA outbreaks) of leaf miner were found in the northern jarrah forest east of Harvey.

— IAN ABBOTT