

The Oak Pinhole Borer

Platypus cylindrus (Fabricus). (Coleoptera: Platypodidae).

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Often small piles of fine sawdust will appear on fallen oak logs or cut stumps indicating that beetles have taken up residence. Some species make characteristic sawdust or frass around the holes but telling which species is difficult and some expertise is needed. The sawdust of *Platypus cylindrus* is however fairly distinctive: it is white and has a splintered appearance with a round hole about 1.6mm in diameter. The sawdust, or perhaps bore-dust, does not pass through the gut of the beetle but is cut away and ejected out of the entrance hole made by the beetle. It appears as fine dust and adheres to the side of logs or stumps as a patch about 20mm across. It is the female who does the cutting work and the male who ejects the dust from the small tunnels.

The adult beetle is only 5mm long and a reddish brown in colour with large flat club-shaped antennae. In Britain it used to be regarded as a rare beetle associated principally with old oak trees in areas like the New Forest or the Forest of Dean. After the gales

in 1987 it took advantage of an abundance of fallen oak trees and populations grew rapidly in the south and south-east. Beetle numbers have remained high perhaps due to oak being weakened by oak dieback. It is now considered a pest species in some areas.

The larvae do not feed on the actual wood but eat a fungus within the tunnels called 'ambrosia'. This is principally the conidial stages of the Ascomycete *Ceratostomella*. The fungus grows on the splintered lining within the tunnels. The life cycle of the beetle normally takes two years with adults on the wing from June to September. So far within Wyre Forest the beetle has been noted at Bell Coppice, Longdon Wood, Town Coppice and Withybed Wood, but it is certainly widespread over the forest.

REFERENCES

Forest Research (2009) Oak Pinhole Borer Advisory Note. FC. FC webpages

Hickin, N.E (1975) *The insect factor in wood decay*. Associates business Programmes, Rentokil Library



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