

## Beetle Borers a big threat to precious Sal trees

■ By Ashish Rajput

YET another outbreak of Beetle Borers on Sal trees has been reported in Mawai block and its adjoining areas of Mandla and Dindori districts under Jabalpur Forest Division. Existence of Sal Beetle Borers has become a mystery for agencies working in forest research. Lakhs of valuable Sal trees are reportedly destroyed every year in beetles attack since more than 116 years in India. Existence of rich Sal forest is under threat due to rapidly increasing density of beetle borers in Central India.

Old patterned trap tree technique is the only measure of catching and wiping out these Beetle Borers. Even after several researches and experiments, agencies have failed in finding any concrete measure to check this menace and protect rich Sal forests in the country.

Chief Conservator of Forest, Jabalpur, Ajit Shrivastava while talking to 'The Hitavada' has confirmed that Sal trees cover around 50 square kilometres area of Mawai block and its adjoining areas have been infested with beetles.

Increasing menace of pests in

Sal trees falling in thick forest fringes around Dindori, Mandla, Amarkantak and Shahdol is another threat to origin of river Narmada, the lifeline of Central India.

Around 1.2 lakh Beetles were caught and 70,000 were killed, while more than 50,000 have been collected to kill within a week. He informed that the current attack of Beetle Borers could not be termed as epidemic as the menace was trapped before it was widely spread in other areas.

Existence of Beetle Borers was reported and promptly checked by the Forest Department and a campaign was started since June 20. Director of Tropical Forest Research Institute (TFRI) U Prakasam informed that trap tree method is the only way to catch and kill these Beetles. He informed that the typical lifecycle of Beetle Borers is a major challenge for researchers to find remedy of its menace.

There are no pesticides to eliminate the Beetle, the only method known to the Forest Department is trap tree used during monsoon when the larvae turns into a beetle and comes out of the tree trunks to feast on the ground.

Infested trees felled and beetles killed in Mandla and Dindori Divisions			
Year	Name of Division	No. of Trees Felled	No. of beetles killed (Thousands)
1996-97	Dindori	13,728	2,000
	Mandla	-	200
1997-98	Dindori	560,718	13,900
	Mandla	146,640	1,100
1998-99	Dindori	368,272	31,000
	Mandla	60,690	1,600
1999-2000	Dindori	19,230	12,100
	Mandla	9,335	1,300
2000-01	Dindori	109,004	1,700
	Mandla	19,013	100
2001-02	Dindori	219,776	-
	Mandla	63,659	-
Total		1,590,065	65,000

Earlier, Sal borer epidemic was reported during 1996 to 2001 in an area around 500 square kilometres. This outbreak caused felling of more than 15.9 lakh Sal trees. It was not the first time that Beetle Borers had struck forests but the first outbreak was reported in 1899 thereafter around 20 outbreaks were reported in the country.



Forest personnel trying to catch beetles through trap tree method.



Beetle Borer, the insect.