

Acceleration and mitigation of forest pestilence from *Dendroctonus* pine beetles

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Background

- Dendroctonus* bark beetles are the dominant source of biotic disturbance in coniferous forests of North America.
- They have recently killed trees over millions of hectares worth billions of dollars with broad consequences for forest structure and function.
- Dendroctonus* was prominent in arguments for the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003.
- Better scientific understanding of bark beetles is needed to improve management of forests in the presence of these native insects with naturally explosive population dynamics

Research questions and hypotheses

- It is thought that per capita growth rates of *Dendroctonus* populations tend to increase with population size (positive density-dependence or Allee effect). This promotes pestilence by accelerating population growth. [What causes Allee effects in *Dendroctonus*?](#)

H1.1: Null hypothesis. The apparent phenomenon is actually just exponential growth and not truly an Allee effect.

H1.2: When local populations are larger, tree-specific attack rates are greater, resin defenses of trees are more quickly depleted, and per capita reproductive success is greater.

H1.3: Small infestations are more likely to collapse due to an interruption in attacks (from transient dynamics in age structure of beetles).

H1.4: In relatively small infestations, there is increased mortality of attacking adults because it is difficult for beetles to locate trees with a favorable (low to moderate) density of adults already present.

- It is thought that longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) is less susceptible to *Dendroctonus* than loblolly pine (*P. taeda*). If so, restoration of longleaf pine forests could mitigate pestilence. [Why are some pine species less susceptible to *Dendroctonus*?](#)

H2.1: Null hypothesis. The conventional wisdom that there are fewer infestations with longleaf is a false impression created by the low abundance of longleaf pine in the contemporary landscape.

H2.2: Compared to loblolly pines, the resin defenses of longleaf afford better protection against bark beetles.

H2.3: Greater inter-tree spacing in longleaf stands compared to loblolly limits the ability of *Dendroctonus* to aggregate during attacks and dampens population growth as a result.

H2.4: The searching behavior of dispersing adults of *Dendroctonus* is biased against stands of longleaf pine compared to stands of loblolly pine.

Publications. Available at: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/>

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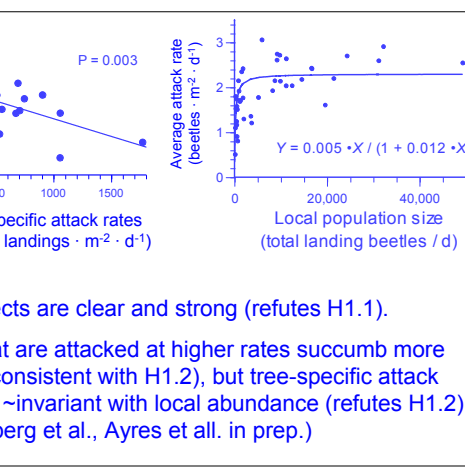
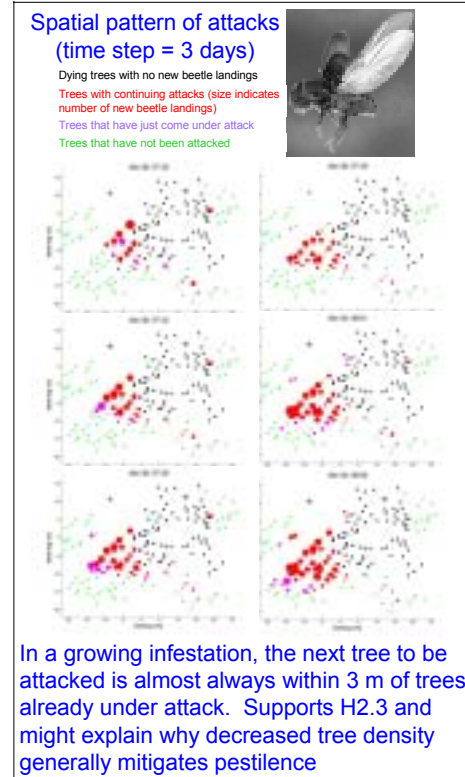
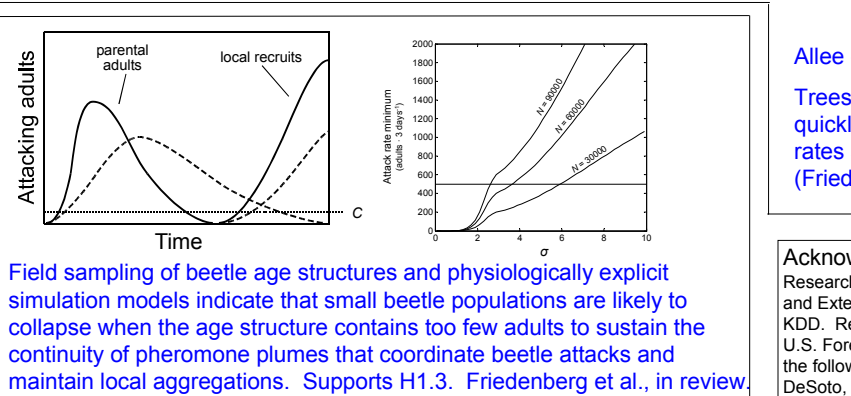
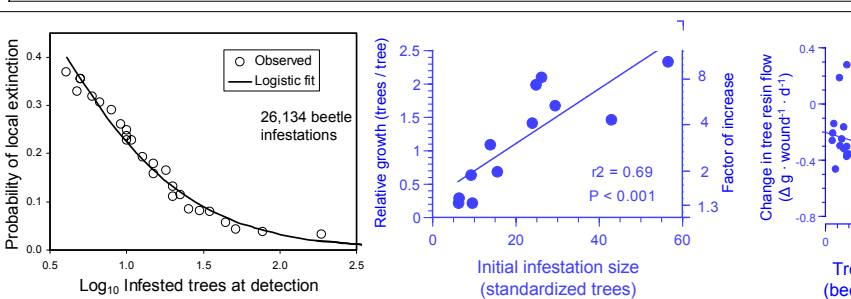
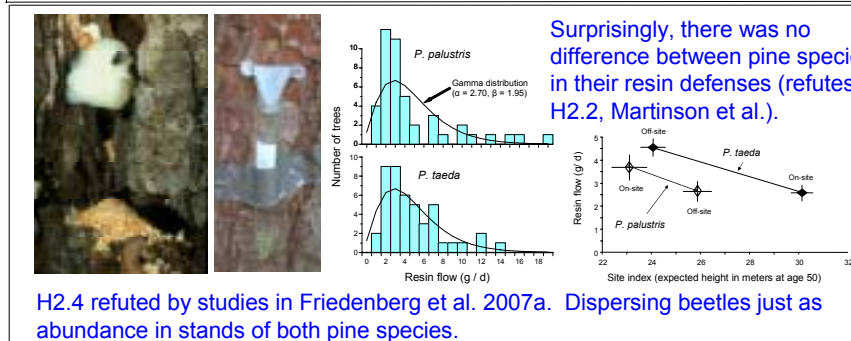
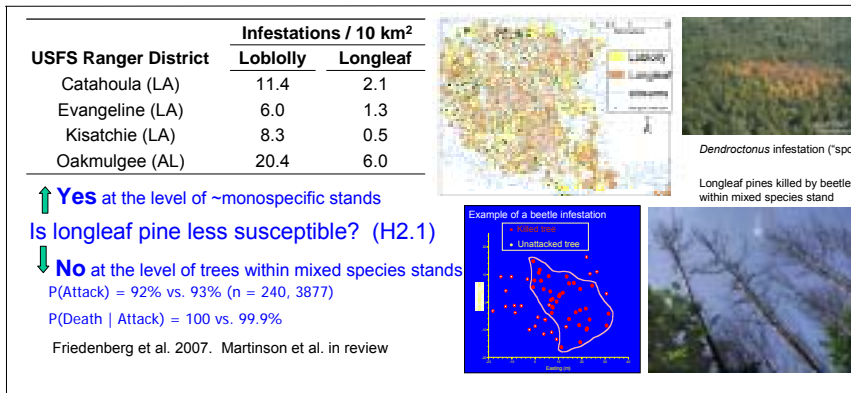
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