

Problem: Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker - *Sphyrapicus varius varius* L.



Description:

If you see a row of holes on pine trees, the problem is not borers. Borer holes will be randomly spaced over the trunk. Holes that are in a horizontal (most common) or vertical row are caused by the feeding of the yellow-bellied sapsucker. This woodpecker makes shallow holes and then feeds on the sap released from the wounds or on insects attracted to the site. Holes may vary in size as illustrated by the two photos above.

Other trees this bird often attacks include apples, maples and Bradford pear, but about any tree species is a potential target. Surprisingly, certain trees may become favorites to the exclusion of nearby trees of the same species. Damage to mature, established trees is usually slight and temporary though small trees may be girdled and killed.

These birds are migratory and are usually present from October to April in Kansas

Recommendations:

- Wrap the trunk with fine wire mesh in the area of damage. This may discourage them if left in place for several months. The mesh MUST be adjusted every six months or removed when no longer needed. If the mesh is left in place, the tree will likely be girdled. The mesh may potentially be more deadly than the sapsucker.
- Use Tanglefoot on the area of damage. This is a sticky material that is applied to tree trunks to capture insects that crawl up the trunk. Yellow-bellied sapsuckers do not like to put their feet in the sticky material. This material may lose stickiness due to dust or other materials and require additional applications.

References:

1. [Sapsucker Damage on Woody Plants](#), University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Publication FSA7561
2. [Yellow-bellied Sapsucker](#), University of Illinois Extension Hortanswers,

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