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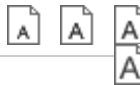
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MEN AT WORK: A work crew clears debris from trees that are being removed from Gibbs Park in Huntington Beach.

MARK MARTINEZ, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER
Trees under attack

The following is a list of Australian beetles and lerp that have attacked Huntington's eucalyptus trees.

Eucalyptus longhorn beetle: The beetles arrived in 1985 and began to eat the eucalyptus. A few years later, researchers found a deterrent for the pest and the beetle population subsided in the late 1980s.

Lerp psyllid: In the mid-1990s, the lerp attacked the eucalyptus by defoliating the tree. In the late 1990s, researchers found a biological control for the pest and the population subsided gradually, but they are still present.

Tortoise beetle: In 2006, this beetle arrived, attacking the leafy edges of eucalyptus trees, rendering the leaves useless. Researchers have not yet found a deterrent.

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Sunday, September 23, 2007

Pests killing trees in Huntington Beach parks

Hundreds of dead and dying trees in Gibbs and Central parks will be uprooted by city crews over the



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By ANNIE BURRIS

The Orange County Register

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HUNTINGTON BEACH – Branches overflowed into Graham Street on a recent weekday as city crews gutted dead and dying eucalyptus trees at Gibbs Park.

Bugs, plus the continuing drought and overcrowding, have killed or are killing about 60 percent of Gibbs Park's trees and about 3 percent of trees in Central Park, city officials said.

About 700 trees in both parks are marked for removal.

"Gibbs Park was hit more substantially because it is a smaller park and almost all eucalyptus," said Dave Webb, the city's public works director.

Since 1985, Surf City's eucalyptus trees have been attacked by at least two beetles and a lerp from Australia. Now, the tortoise beetle – which researchers have yet to find a deterrent for – is preying on the leaves of trees in Gibbs and Central parks.

Jim Jones, the city's operations manager, said he has not heard of similar problems with residential trees.

The city will spend about \$300,000 over two years to remove, replant and maintain the trees, he said. The total budget for this year's tree maintenance is \$445,000, so the project will take funding from other tree maintenance programs, he said.

Local tree activists have attended recent City Council meetings to talk about the extent of the damage.

"Gibbs Park has gone to wreck and ruin," said Jean Nagy of the Huntington Beach Tree Society, who plans to write grants to help fund the tree replacements.

While the two parks have similar problems, the solutions are drastically different, Jones said.

Gibbs Park, a known stopping point for migrating monarch butterflies, will have its trees removed by next week. But work on Central Park – which also has dying elder, pine and sycamore trees – will not begin until October. Those trees will be taken out in groups of 30 to 40 over a two-year span.

"The work in Gibbs Park is significant," Jones said. "Over half of the trees are being removed. We are looking at a whole new reforestation of that site."

On Oct. 22, monarch butterfly specialists from Pacific Grove will travel to Gibbs Park to determine the best species of trees to continue to attract monarchs. The goal is to replant in time for the migratory season, which begins in November, said resident and butterfly enthusiast Leslie Gilson, who is paying for the experts to come.

"They will figure out how to plant the trees so this doesn't happen again," Gilson said.

The longer removal process in Central Park is designed so it won't disturb the different types of birds that inhabit the park, officials said.

"The work ... would probably not be noticed because it is such a small percentage of

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trees being replanted," Jones said. "The public will only notice when there are machines taking out the trees."

For information about eucalyptus trees in your area, visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Web site, www.usda.gov.

To volunteer help restore Gibbs Park, e-mail lesliegilson@hotmail.com.

Contact the writer: aburris@ocregister.com or 714-445-6696

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