

Bronze bug gone walkabout - update from New Zealand

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In March 2012 *Thaumastocoris peregrinus* was discovered in a localised area of Auckland, during routine surveillance conducted by New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries and partners. This sap feeding bug causes leaf discoloration, or 'winter bronzing', and can lead to premature leaf drop and branch death. Hosts include over 30 species of eucalypts. To date the population appears to be confined to Auckland, but it is expected to spread rapidly. Following an initial outbreak in the Sydney area in 2001, this Australian insect appeared in South Africa and Argentina and quickly spread to several neighbouring countries. In 2011 it was also discovered in Italy. Thus, apart from the US, bronze bug has now been found in every major eucalypt growing region in the world. It is regarded as a pest both in Australia and overseas, where biological control efforts to protect urban and forestry trees are underway using the Australian egg parasitoid, *Cleruchoides noackae*. Research on the biology and ecology of this insect in New Zealand is underway at the University of Auckland (Dr. Greg Holwell and Dr. Toni Withers supervising M.Sc. student, Maria Roman), with results expected to assist longer term management efforts.

