

Needle miner infestation spreading in Tahoe



Trees in the Al Tahoe area of South Lake Tahoe are orange from the needle miner. Photo/LTN file

The insect blamed for attacking trees in the Al Tahoe neighborhood of South Lake Tahoe is now making itself known along Pioneer Trail near the intersection with Highway 50 in Meyers.

While some Jeffrey pine trees appear to be dying, the yellowing of the needles is due to the work of a native insect species known as a needle miner. It feeds on the needles of pine trees.

While this particular needle miner feeds only on Jeffrey pines, it is closely related to others that live in lodgepole and ponderosa pines.

Jeffrey pine needleminers eat their way through the middle of the needle, causing the needle to die and turn yellow or, in extreme cases, red. When all the needles on an infested tree turn red the tree has died.

It's possible the trees will not all die.

Jeffrey pines are more susceptible to needle miners when they are under severe drought stress.