Where did mountain pine beetle populations in Jasper Park come from? Tracking beetles with genetics

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ABSTRACT

The invasion of mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae* Hopk.) into Alberta has been an ongoing concern for forest management. The beetle's recent appearance and spread in Jasper National Park now poses ecological and economic threats to forestry in regions to the east. By applying recent advances in genetic typing and analysis, we show that the beetle population in Jasper is comprised of mixed individuals combining genetic signatures of both northern and southern beetles. Coupled with current monitoring methods, genetic markers can be used to identify the origin of novel populations, facilitate precise monitoring of beetle expansion and potentially inform targeted management strategies.

Keywords: *Dendroctonus ponderosae*, population genomics, Jasper, Yellowhead County, pest management, park management

RÉSUMÉ

L'invasion de dendroctone du pin ponderosa (*Dendroctonus ponderosae* Hopk.) en Alberta n'a cessé de préoccuper les aménagistes forestiers. L'apparition récente du dendroctone et sa dispersion dans le Parc national de Jasper constituent maintenant une menace écologique et économique pour les forêts dans les régions plus à l'Est. En misant sur les derniers développements en matière de caractérisation et d'analyse génétique, nous avons pu montrer que les populations de dendroctone à Jasper sont constituées d'un ensemble d'individus combinant les signatures génétiques à la fois de dendroctones du nord et du sud. Jumelés aux méthodes actuelles de surveillances, les marqueurs génétiques pourraient aider à identifier la provenance de nouvelles populations, faciliter le suivi détaillé de l'expansion du dendroctone et potentiellement aider à élaborer des stratégies d'aménagement ciblées.

Mots-clés : *Dendroctonus ponderosae*, génomique des populations, Jasper, Yellowhead County, gestion des ravageurs, aménagement des parcs

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southeast. Damage to these forests would cause significant social, economic and ecological losses, as well as providing more MPB habitat that could exacerbate the current epidemic. Currently, the source of the Jasper infestation has been debated. The infestation may represent a slow spread of beetles from the north, around the Grande Prairie area (Hopkins-Hill 2017), which had extremely high numbers of beetles in 2009 (Bleiker *et al.*

Introduction

Jasper National Park is a recently affected area in a long series of irruptions by the mountain pine beetle (MPB, *Dendroctonus ponderosae* Hopk.) in western Canada. At least 21 500 ha of forest have been affected (Jasper National Park 2016), creating a corridor for the beetle to potentially spread into highly productive Forest Management Areas (FMAs) to the

2011, Pellow *et al.* 2011). This northern population is believed to have spread southeast, resulting in an indigenous population near the town of Hinton by 2015 (Jasper National Park 2016). Alternatively, the Jasper infestation could have arrived through affected forests from the west around Mt. Robson Provincial Park, which has been in active outbreak since at least 2015 (Jasper National Park 2016). Recent

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Fig 1. Map of mountain pine beetle collection sites organized by collection year. A total of 175 MPB were collected from 33 sites at 25 localities. Number of specimens sampled is in parentheses. Three U.S. localities are not shown (one specimen of each from Wyoming, Nevada and Washington).

research on MPB population genetic structure can contribute to identifying and understanding such movements of MPB on the landscape.

MPB numbers have been rising in Canada since the early 1990s, devastating 16.3 million hectares of forest within British Columbia and western USA by 2011 (Bentz *et al.* 2010, de la Giroday *et al.* 2011). Expansion into northern Alberta in 2006 (Robertson *et al.* 2009, Safranyik *et al.* 2010) has positioned the beetle to colonize a new host species, jack pine (*Pinus banksiana* Lamb.) (Cullingham *et al.* 2011), which is a major component of the boreal forest across North America. Expanded research on the MPB system has targeted better prediction, management, and prevention of outbreaks, including studies on their ecological impacts (Carroll *et al.* 2003, Raffa *et al.* 2008), fungal associations (Roe *et al.* 2010, Tsui *et al.* 2010, DiGuistini *et al.* 2011), host suitability and distribution (Cullingham *et al.* 2011, Erbilgin *et al.* 2014, Rosenberger *et al.* 2017a), beetle population dynamics (Hicke *et al.* 2006, Lachowsky and Reid 2014, James *et al.* 2016, Cooke and Carroll 2017, Rosenberger *et al.* 2017b), and population genetic and genomic structure (Samarasekara *et al.* 2012, Keeling *et al.* 2013, Janes *et al.* 2014, Janes *et al.* 2016, Batista *et al.* 2016, Janes and Batista 2016).

Here we draw on recent literature and new research to address questions and concerns raised over the 'Jasper beetles'. Using genome-wide sampling of DNA markers, we provide context for the likely source populations of MPB in the Jasper region.

Materials and Methods

A total of 175 MPB were collected from 33 sites throughout British Columbia and Alberta between 2007 and 2015 (Fig. 1, Online Supplementary Appendix 1). Beetles were either stored in 95% ethanol at -20 °C or stored dry at -80 °C. In addition, wild-caught MPB from the Smokey River Lowlands (SRL) south of Grande Prairie (54°21.376' N 118°19.112' W) and the Burnco Quarry (BQ) near Canmore (51°04.026' N; 115°17.237' W) were used as breeding pairs to produce artificially hybridized individuals of northern SRL and southern BQ descent. These sites were chosen to represent the two large-scale beetle populations in Alberta known from prior research (Samarasekara *et al.* 2012, Janes *et al.* 2014). Thirteen offspring from seven of these SRL x BQ crosses (1-3 offspring per pair) were added to the 175 samples, giving a total of 188 samples.

Genomic DNA was extracted using QIAGEN (Toronto, ON, Canada) DNEasy Blood & Tissue kits according to manufacturer's instructions. DNA was quality checked using Qubit fluorometric assay (Waltham, MA, USA) and standardized to 20 ng/μl. Samples were genotyped using a double-digest (PstI-MspI), 96-plex genotyping-by-sequencing (GBS) protocol (Elshire *et al.* 2011, Poland *et al.* 2012) at l'Institut de Biologie Intégrative et des Systems (IBIS) of Laval University and the Molecular Biology Services Unit (MBSU) of University of Alberta. A total of 63 samples were sequenced with an Illumina NextSeq 500 for 75 bp single-end reads, and 125 samples were sequenced using an Illumina HiSeq 2000 for

100 bp single-end reads. Campbell *et al.* (2017) contains further details on library preparation, and supports the consistency and reproducibility of GBS across both preparations and platforms.

Reads (short sequences of DNA) were quality checked using FastQC v0.11.05 (Andrews 2010) and demultiplexed in the STACKS v1.41 pipeline (Catchen *et al.* 2013). Barcodes and adapters were removed with Cutadapt v1.10 (Martin 2011) to produce a uniform read length of 62 bp for alignment in STACKS (Catchen *et al.* 2013). After removing reads with poor sequence quality and low alignment to the reference genome, 1.1 billion reads remained. GBS data were mapped to the MPB draft reference genome (Keeling *et al.* 2013) using BWA-MEM v0.7.12 (Li and Durbin 2009) with option *-c=1* to remove reads that did not uniquely map to the reference. Each sample retained an average of 85.0% of its unique reads. Variants (variable genetic markers in the form of single nucleotide polymorphisms, SNPs) were detected in the STACKS refgen pipeline using default parameters, except for: minor allele frequency = 5%, minimum quality score = 20, and minimum read depth = 7.

VCFtools v0.1.12b (Danecek *et al.* 2011) was used to identify and remove loci containing missing data. A total of 984 variants were identified from these mapped reads, forming the basis for further analysis. An individual-by-individual genetic distance matrix (uncorrected “p”) was calculated using PAUP v4.0a152 (Swofford 2002). These genetic distances, which relate to genetic similarity, were visualized using principal coordinates analysis (PCoA) with the ade4 package (Dray *et al.* 2007) in R (R Core Development Team 2009). PCoA is commonly used to explore and visualize the similarity or dissimilarity among samples, displaying the axes that explain the largest portion of the variation present in the data. For each of the resulting sampling clusters, ellipses based on 95% confidence intervals from the centroid of the cluster were overlaid using ggplot2 (Wickham 2009). These ellipses provide an additional means of assessing confidence in fit to each cluster.

Results and Discussion

Fig. 2 shows a clear separation of northern (blue and green) and southern (red) populations along axis 1 (45.7% of total variance), in agreement with prior studies using other genetic markers (Samarasekera *et al.* 2012, Janes *et al.* 2014). The northern cluster represents populations from the Peace River region (including Grande Prairie) to north-central Alberta, with samples from the northwest (Terrace, Smithers, and Tumbler Ridge in BC) separated further (Fig. 2). This suggests a degree of separation by distance over the vast range of the northern MPB population. Beetles from Jasper (purple) and the SRL x BQ (orange) crosses were intermediate to northern and southern populations. Variability among SRL x BQ samples is greater than that of wild-caught Jasper MPB, as shown by its smaller ellipse, nested within SRL x BQ's ellipse (Fig. 2). Jasper beetles, therefore, fall within the expected variation found within artificially hybridized north/south crosses of MPB. The higher degree of variation within SRL x BQ may be explained by pre-emergence mating among siblings within a bolt, a known occurrence in MPB (Bleiker *et al.* 2013, Janes *et al.* 2016).

Fig 2. Principal coordinate analysis of 175 wild-caught mountain pine beetles, plus 13 lab-bred specimens added to simulate intermediates between northern and southern populations. Ellipses give 95% confidence intervals for populations, with the overall northern population sub-divided by colour for areas of particular management interest.

MPB from Yellowhead County, east of Jasper Park, were most similar to the northern cluster (Fig. 2), suggesting a northern source for Yellowhead beetles in 2014, a year before MPB numbers were recognized as an outbreak in Jasper. Thus, our data supports the earlier movement of beetles from the Grande Prairie area into Yellowhead County, largely confirming a northern origin for this area. In contrast, the intermediate position of the wild-collected MPB from Jasper suggests either an existing admixed population from BC expanding eastward or converging invasive fronts meeting secondarily in Jasper. The presence of previously identified intermediate populations around Valemount (Janes *et al.* 2014), in addition to increasing numbers of beetles west of Jasper appears to support a central BC origin for the Jasper area. While this study has considerably fewer individuals than previous studies of MPB (i.e., Samarasekera *et al.* 2012, Janes *et al.* 2014, Batista *et al.* 2016), we find very similar patterns of genetic diversity and structure suggesting that larger numbers of variants can increase precision and power for low sample numbers. This effect could reduce the need for intensive sampling in future genetic studies. However, to determine the trajectory and genetic composition of the most recent outbreaks additional sampling in leading-edge populations will be necessary.

Regardless of its exact source, the intermediate nature of the MPB population in Jasper provides unique challenges and advantages. For example, hybrid populations, even within the same species, are recognized as important evolutionary components in both plants and animals because they can rapidly generate novel genetic material for adaptation (Rieseberg and Burke 2001, Mallet 2007, Janes and Hamilton 2017). Janes *et al.* (2014) and Batista *et al.* (2016) have consistently identified

strong selection differences on known metabolic genes between northern and southern populations. Thus, the intermediate nature of beetles in the Jasper area, if left unmanaged, may contribute to an increased adaptive potential for MPB in Alberta, further facilitating their expansion eastward.

The severity of infestation along the Jasper west park gate suggests the possibility of a new wave of invasion into Alberta (Jasper National Park 2016) that could, if left unchecked, continue to threaten valuable natural and managed forest resources. In the long term, the signature of admixture may assist future work on management and population genetics in two ways. First, distinct genetic signatures provide a means of tracking beetles as they spread further east and help to identify which areas are contributing to that spread (i.e., south, north, central). This approach could be used in tandem with traditional assessment methods (i.e., aerial surveys and pheromone traps). Second, the methods we describe could potentially be extended to manage spread risk of MPB long-term. For example, populations of pest species could be managed with the aim of reducing genetic diversity, an inverse of conservation management practices that try to promote genetic diversity in populations to ensure sufficient genetic variation for selection to act on. In conclusion, we describe a means of identifying mixed populations and tracking their spread across the landscape – outcomes that could complement existing management by predicting and reducing spread risk of MPB in the long term.

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