

## **The Effects of SOD on Wildlife – Can Anything be Learned from the American Chestnut Blight?**

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American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) was largely removed from eastern North American forests by an exotic fungal disease. In 1900, American chestnut comprised nearly 25% of eastern deciduous forests in the United States. During 1910 to 1950, the chestnut blight, caused by the introduced fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*, spread over 81 million ha of land, profoundly affecting the ecology and economy of eastern forests, especially in the Appalachian area. In 1995, sudden oak death (SOD) was identified in the Mill Valley area of California. The disease, caused by the fungus *Phytophthora ramorum*, has since spread to 14 coastal California counties, killing thousands of tanoak (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*) and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) trees. SOD threatens coastal woodlands throughout California and Oregon, as well as some eastern U.S. and European hardwood forests. Using the literature, we will summarize the extent and the severity of the historic effects that Chestnut blight had on forest composition and structure. We will also describe the known impacts on wildlife from these changes in forest composition and structure. This may shed some light on how wildlife may be affected by the SOD disease.