

Spring 2011 Update

I recently asked some informal questions to each of the beetle lab managers. These are Paul Arnold's responses from Young Harris College.

Q: During the recent fall and early winter, I've been hearing a lot of Hemlock Help Line callers say that their hemlocks, even ones that haven't been treated yet, are looking better this year with fewer adelgids than last year. If it's really so, do you know what it might be attributable to?

A: We do know that hard winters reduce adelgid populations, so part of what you might be hearing may be related to that. However, some beetle release areas (anecdotally) seem to have been lightly infested for quite a while, even before this winter, and some have been heavily infested. We have to sort out why.

Q: Have you observed or received reports of newly infested areas?

A: We suspect that all counties in Georgia with native hemlocks may be infested now. Certainly all of the range in NE Georgia is infested. We suspect that the western range (Dade County, Cloudland Canyon area, etc.) may now be infested, although the season is still young.

Q: What kinds of results are you seeing in beetle release areas?

A: I have found, over the past few years, some beetle release areas that seem to have remained very lightly infested, and other beetle release areas where the beetles appeared to not have worked. We need to collect much more data before we know what is going on there. Biopredatory studies are notoriously long-term, and I still think it is much too early to tell about the effectiveness of beetle treatments.

Q: What are your plans for beetle releases in 2011?

A: Beetle releases are going pretty much as they have been, nothing really new to report there. We haven't altered our strategy much. We are still targeting the newest areas of infestation, but we are now going back to "regrowth" areas – where hemlocks survived the first round of infestation and are beginning to have a resurgence of growth.

Web site for Young Harris hemlock project: <http://www.yhc.edu/pages/yhc.php?id=165>