

Beetle lab gets truck, equipment with recent donations

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by University Relations

(March 4, 2011) The Predator Beetle Lab at North Georgia College & State University has purchased a four-wheel drive truck and other equipment thanks to more than \$10,000 in donations from the Georgia Native Plant Society and the Lumpkin Coalition.

The lab, managed by Cera Jones, is part of the Environmental Leadership Program in North Georgia's School of Health & Science Professions. Dr. Robert Fuller, associate professor of geosciences, helps oversee the lab as well.

The lab raises beetles to combat the wooly adelgid, the tiny invader killing hemlock trees along the Eastern Seaboard from northeast Georgia to Maine. The adelgid look like tiny pieces of white fluff on the branches of infected trees and a colony can kill a tree in less than four years.

Since 2007, North Georgia's lab has raised and released more than 122,000 poppy seed-sized Asian beetles to eat the adelgid, which has no other natural predator in the east. Similar beetle labs at Clemson University, the University of Georgia and Young Harris College also are raising the tiny predators. North Georgia's mature beetles are released into specified areas of National Forest lands in northeast Georgia.



The \$5,000 donated by the Lumpkin Coalition, raised through an annual event called HemlockFest, was used to buy a four-wheel drive truck. Jones said the vehicle will make it easier to get to the areas where beetles need to be released, often only accessible by poorly maintained dirt roads.

"All of our sites are mainly on Forest Service road and at some sites I was using my personal vehicle, but the upkeep of the roads has gone downhill with the bad weather and cuts in funding to the Forest Service that have reduced their maintenance budget," Jones said.

In the past year, more than 82,000 beetles -- mostly *Sasajiscymnus tsugae* but a few *Scymnus* species-- have been released in about 25 hemlock conservation areas. Hemlocks in those areas seem to be starting to recover, Jones said.

"We have seen recovery growth on the Chattooga and a few of our other sites, like Slaughter Creek, but there isn't any sound data on whether we can attribute it to the beetles," Jones said. "The problem we're starting to see is the hemlock wooly adelgid coming back to these sites where it had crashed a few years ago. We're monitoring all of our sites and since it's a lot lower density, we're getting right back in there with beetles to hopefully control it and keep it contained."

In addition, \$6,200 donated by the Georgia Native Plant Society is being used to experiment with a third beetle species, *Laricobius nigrinus*, which has been successfully raised throughout the east, including at Clemson and UGA.

To learn how to help, or for more information about the lab or the hemlock wooly adelgid, go to the Beetle Predator Lab [web page](#).