

WILD FLYERS

[Birds](#)

[Hummingbirds](#)

[Insects](#)

[Plants](#)

[Mammals](#)

[Miscellaneous](#)

Hemlock Woolly Adelgids

In between snows and rains the wife and I have been hiking through Smithgall Woods to survey stands of hemlock trees for HWA. Woolly Adelgid (HWA) is an introduced pest that was first observed in British Columbia in the early 1920's. They took about 30 years to migrate to Virginia and have since spread down the eastern mountains deep into Georgia and South Carolina.

In our area HWA is specific to the eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and Carolina hemlock (*Tsuga caroliniana*). The adelgid is found on the underside of hemlock limbs feeding at the base of the needles. I think the HWA looks a lot like the mealy bug that Georgia gardeners are so familiar with.

Why are we tramping through the mud and snow to look for little bugs? Eastern trees have shown no resistance to the adelgid which can kill a tree in as little as 4 years. Stands of eastern hemlock provide shelter for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, and a variety of other animals. Eastern hemlocks are shallow rooted and need moist soil to thrive. Therefore they are found along many of our trout streams and provide vital shade to keep these waterways cool. The Georgia Forestry Commission is actively monitoring and working with a variety of groups to study and develop a stop for this destructive insect. Wanda and I are surveying the trees along Duke's Creek, a world known trout fishery, to map infestation and intensity along its banks. We are doing it now because this is the time of year that it is easiest to find evidence of the insects and to provide the Georgia Department of Natural Resources with information to use in treatment planning for the summer.

If you want more information the Georgia Forestry Commission information sheet can be seen by [clicking here](#).

It is a beautiful day outside and we have one more area we need to look at. Come see the hemlocks. We may not be able to save them.

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