

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Control in Sandy Mush

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

As part of the ongoing effort to combat the hemlock woolly adelgid in the Southern Appalachians, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission recently released predator beetles into Buncombe County's Sandy Mush Game Lands.

The hemlock woolly adelgid is an Asian insect, accidentally introduced to the United States, which attacks and kills our native hemlock trees. There are a couple of methods to counter the adelgid – the first is chemically treating individual trees. The second is what scientists call a biological control – using some sort of living organism to attack the invasive species. In the case of the hemlock woolly adelgid, beetles that are predators of the adelgid are released.

The release of these predator beetles has been practiced for years now in places like Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The wildlife commission has used chemical controls in Sandy Mush, but as one would expect, research indicates that a combination of chemical and biological control is the most effective for combatting the adelgid, so this past December they released 50 of the beetles into the gameland. The beetle that was released is a winter feeder native to the Pacific Northwest.

The same beetle has been used in the Grandfather Mountain area, where hemlocks have shown a very positive response.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.