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## **Observe National Invasive Species Awareness Week**

Letter to the Editor by Donna Shearer

February 26 to March 3, 2012 is National Invasive Species Awareness Week and a good time to highlight a particularly troublesome example – the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) that is killing hemlocks from Maine to Georgia. Most of you have probably heard of it by now, and many of you have taken action to protect your trees, but here are some ways to observe NISAW that can have additional impact on this problem.

Do some research on the Internet to learn how to recognize the pest and then check your own trees to see if it's present.

Visit a local park, hiking trail, or recreation area and observe the birds and other animals that depend on hemlock habitat. Also notice what shade-loving plants grow beneath their dense branches.

Spend some time on a trout stream and notice how the overhanging hemlocks are shading it and keeping it cool. Then envision what will happen to the stream and its inhabitants if all the hemlocks die.

Take the invasive species challenge. If you engage in recreational activities like camping, hiking, biking, or birding, take care not to be an unwitting vehicle of dispersion. HWA egg sacs and crawlers are quite portable and can hitchhike on your clothes, your recreational gear, and even your pets.

Join a local environmental organization and use your time, talent, and other resources to support their mission to combat adelgids and save hemlocks while there is still a window of opportunity to do so.

Make a financial contribution to one of the beetle labs that are rearing adelgid-eating beetles for release in the national forest in an effort to establish a natural predator-prey balance there.

And finally, extend your commitment beyond this week and use every available opportunity to help spread the word about the hemlock crisis to your family, friends, neighbors, and others in any group you belong to.

Some of the ideas above came from [www.nisaw.org/2012/ways\\_to\\_observe.pdf](http://www.nisaw.org/2012/ways_to_observe.pdf). Additional information can be found at [www.gfc.state.ga.us/ForestManagement/HemlockWoollyAdelgid.cfm](http://www.gfc.state.ga.us/ForestManagement/HemlockWoollyAdelgid.cfm), [www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/hwa](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/hwa), [www.northgeorgia.edu/EnvironmentalLeadership/Default\\_1col.aspx?id=3381](http://www.northgeorgia.edu/EnvironmentalLeadership/Default_1col.aspx?id=3381), and [www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org](http://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org). Or call the Hemlock Help Line 706-429-8010.

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Chairman, Save Georgia's Hemlocks

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