



BY LINDA BAKER | **Wildflower Bunch Garden Club**

Saving the beautiful Big Canoe hemlock forest: You can help

Big Canoe resident John Ross and Don Wells of the Mountain Stewards were guests at the Wildflower Bunch April meeting, giving the group a highly informative overview of what we are facing here in the southernmost section of the Eastern Seaboard hemlock forest. If the woolly adelgids do their damage, the hemlocks will die within three to five years and the removal of these giant trees is a project of immense proportions.



Linda Baker

It is, of course, the goal to prevent this from happening, as hemlock forests are much more beautiful than what is left after they die off: a low canopy bramble.

"There is still time to save this evergreen forest."

The giant hemlocks can grow to be the top canopy of a mature forest, with trees as high as 175 feet. If they die, they are not replaced by a good hardwood forest. The northernmost view from Big Canoe could change significantly.

What the Mountain Stewards want to do is start releasing three beetle species which are the predator to the pesky woolly adelgid.

There is still time to save this evergreen forest; however, it takes 10 to 15 years for the beetles to consume enough of the woolly adelgids.

Chemical suppression is the only way to stop the infestation right now. Two types of chemicals have been applied, and three types of predator beetles have been released. It is best to release the beetle population early when infestation is light, allowing them to mature alongside the adelgids they are to control. All of the labor for this project has been procured. What the Mountain Stewards need are funds to purchase beetle "triplets" and the necessary chemicals for the immediate interim.

The Wildflower Bunch presented the Mountain Stewards with a check for \$500 with the hope of inspiring others to truly save our landscape. The Blackwell Creek hemlocks are awe-inspiring in all seasons. The easy hike along Blackwell Creek is a great place to see the still healthy and gorgeous trees. Don't forget that donations of just \$10 can add up quickly, so please take a moment to give what you can. Here's the link to the Mountain Stewards for more information: mountainstewards.org. Or, mail a check to: Wildcat Tract Hemlock Fund, P.O. Box 1525, Jasper, GA 30143.