

# The Chronicle Herald

## Forest entomologist visits Truro to share knowledge on invasive species

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TRURO, N.S. —

Mark Whitmore recently took a walk in Victoria Park, but it wasn't just for the scenery. The forest entomologist from Cornell University met with Andrew Williams, Truro's urban forestry coordinator, and members of other agencies, to discuss the threat of the hemlock woolly adelgid and ways to control the insect.

The hemlock woolly adelgid has caused the death of large numbers of hemlock trees in some areas, and an infestation would dramatically alter the appearance of Victoria Park. Most of the trees in the lower section of the park are hemlock and in some sections it's the only type of tree.

"I've seen what the adelgids can do," said Whitmore. "When they first got them in Keji (Kejimikujik National Park) I went there. They can do a lot of damage quickly.

"In the Pacific northwest this isn't a problem because they have natural enemies."

Work is being done with the beetles and flies that feed on adelgids in the Pacific northwest, relocating them to certain other areas. In some cases, it's taken five years to establish a population of adelgid predators.

“There’s another beetle I’d like to get, and it’s from China,” said Whitmore. “I don’t have concerns about introducing it because it only eats adelgids.”

The hemlock woolly adelgid is believed to have come from Asia on infested plants. It showed up in British Columbia in the 1920s and has been establishing itself along the eastern coast. It was confirmed in Nova Scotia in 2017, attacking trees in Yarmouth, Digby and Shelburne counties. It has caused the death of a large number of trees in those areas.

The insect lays eggs in white sacs that resemble cotton swabs, in the upper canopy of trees. Nymphs are only one-thousandth of an inch long when they emerge, but they suck nutrients from the hemlock. Adults are very small and are easily moved by winds, birds, animals and people.

The size of the insects, and the fact they lay eggs high in trees, makes them difficult to detect until they’re present in large numbers, but Jeffrey Fidgen, of the Canadian Forest Service, found one method that often works. Velcro covered balls were launched into trees with a slingshot and then examined for adelgids.

Whitmore noted this would be difficult to do in Victoria Park because of the steep slopes.

Don Cameron, a forester with Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry, said a citizens’ watch may be organized. Members of the public would receive training, so they know what to look for, and they could then keep an eye out for hemlock woolly adelgids while they’re enjoying the outdoors. More information will be available in the near future.

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