

# GAME ANIMALS OF HEMLOCK FORESTS



The eastern hemlock tree is a keystone species that provides numerous ecosystem services, and provides crucial food, shelter, and habitat for many species, including over 120 species of mammals and other vertebrates.

Many of the animals that use hemlock trees are also game animals important to the hunting industry, which generates billions of dollars every year to fund conservation programs, and local and state fish and wildlife agencies. This includes:

**White-Tailed Deer**, which take cover under the dense canopy of hemlock trees in harsh storms in the winter, and browse on branches when other food becomes unavailable.



**Black Bears**, which feed on the sugary sapwood of hemlock trees in the spring, and climb large hemlock trees to sleep or to escape from predators.

**Wild Turkeys**, which roost in hemlock trees, use them as cover in storms, and feed on their buds during the winter.



**Small Game Animals**, including cottontail rabbits, ruffed grouse, and red squirrels, which use hemlock trees for shelter, cover, and food.

## Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Hemlock trees are currently threatened by hemlock woolly adelgid, or HWA, an invasive, sapsucking insect with the potential to kill trees in less than a decade. In the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, HWA has already wiped out entire stands of hemlock trees and devastated local ecosystems.

With HWA currently spreading through the native range of hemlock trees, including forests in New York and Pennsylvania, many of the species that rely on them could be in danger.

## What Can We Do?



There is still hope of managing HWA in our forests. Infestations of HWA have been successfully treated with insecticides, biological controls, or a combination of both.

But HWA must be detected early to save hemlock trees, which means forests must be consistently monitored to determine where the insect has spread and assess which trees are the highest priority.

While you are out in the forest, please keep an eye out for HWA, and help protect our hemlock forests! The animals that live there may depend on it.

## Identifying HWA

From November to April, HWA forms small woolly masses on the underside of hemlock branches. These are sometimes confused for spider sacs or spittle bugs.



Spittle bugs (left), spider sac (middle), and HWA (right)

**If you believe you have found HWA, report your findings!** Contact the NYSDEC or the DCNR.

Alternatively, you may use the iMapInvasives app or website to record your findings in New York or Pennsylvania.

- ❖ PA homepage: [www.paimapinvasives.org](http://www.paimapinvasives.org)
- ❖ NY homepage: [www.nyimapinvasives.org](http://www.nyimapinvasives.org)

For more information about HWA and other invasive species in New York and Pennsylvania, visit:

- ❖ <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/265.html>
- ❖ <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/ForestAndTrees/InsectsAndDiseases/Pages/default>.

