



From Quill to Paper: The Porcupine Dispatch

Your Local Conservation News. Nov 2016

The Eastern Hemlock is one of the most common trees in Michigan. Found in greater numbers to our West and North, dense hemlock forests protect watersheds by stabilizing streambanks and keeping the water nice and cool. Do you like clean, cold water? The trout sure do. These forests also provide thermal cover and habitat for several bird and mammal species. Do you like wildlife? Sometimes I like to enjoy clean, cold water and wildlife at the same time, so I find myself generally in favor of hemlock forests. Some really substantial ancient hemlocks can be found just a few hours up the road at Hartwick Pines State Park among the big red and white pines. Michigan is home to an aging Hemlock resource which makes it more susceptible to stressors in the environment, and the deer love to eat hemlock seedlings, so you see, it has problems. Enter Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, a non-native, tiny aphid-like insect which has decimated hemlock populations in the Carolinas. While there is not a tremendous amount of Eastern Hemlock trees to be concerned about here in this neck of the woods, we Michiganders should be aware that we may be on the verge of learning another big lesson in biology. Remember Emerald Ash Borer? Of course you remember, you're still cutting dead ash. Same concept, different species. We can choose to ignore the lesson again but we really need this class to graduate. If you are still moving firewood to your cabin up North, think about the harm you could be causing. Thinking of planting trees this spring? Consider sourcing them from your local Conservation District. It's likely that Hemlock Woolly Adelgid made its way into West Michigan through nursery stock. Don't be afraid to ask if the trees you are purchasing are Michigan grown, who wouldn't want trees that are hardy to our winters, support our local economy while preventing the potential for spread of undesirable hitchhikers. For a real thrill, and probably a one sided laugh, ask if they are grass fed, cage free or even wild caught.

So there's some bad news, here is some good news! My service area has expanded into Ionia County this year, opening up forests to the South and East of my previous natural range. Does that make me an invasive species? If you get the itch to explore your woodlot this winter, give me a ring. There is no shortage of topics to be discussed.

Forestland owners interested in sustainably managing their forests can get more information and free assistance from their local Conservation District Forester, as part of the Michigan Forestry Assistance Program. District Foresters are available to provide free on site evaluations, help you develop long term goals and connect you to the appropriate resources and professionals to achieve your objectives for your forest.

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