

North Carolina Science Museum's Annual Bugfest Features "Bad Bugs in the Forest"

by Perdita B. Spriggs

Where did more than 35,000 moms, dads, children, and their friends go for fun-filled, "buggy" entertainment, activities, and cuisine this year? They all showed up early and stayed late for the 16th annual Bugfest hosted by the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, NC. The Southern Research Station was a cosponsor of this year's event, "trapping" lots of interest in the Station's *Bad Bugs in the Forest* exhibit. The exhibit's mock FBI "wanted" posters encouraged participants to capture one of many thug bugs invading forests throughout the southeast and beyond.

Festival-goers eagerly studied microscopic invasive pests,

including the Asian-born hemlock woolly adelgid and its ruthless predator, hardly sympathetic for the tiny pest that threatens our treasured eastern and Carolina hemlocks. Station and partner researchers were on hand to discuss Forest Service efforts, address invasive pest concerns, and share additional insight to help slow the spread of common forest pests, including the sirex woodwasp, Asian long-horned beetle, emerald ash borer, and red imported fire ant. What a motley crew!

Smokey Bear's cameo appearance delighted the young and young-at-heart, sharing his timeless "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires" stance. His message was reinforced through special reusable activity bags designed for school-aged students, including the Forest Service's popular middle school science journal, the *Natural Inquirer*.

Bugfest is the nation's largest family-friendly event that explores the world of insects, arachnids, crustaceans and other invertebrate animals known as arthropods. Missed this year's event? Please visit the SRS website for photos, activity sheets, and additional information.

As a cosponsor of Bugfest 2012, the Southern Research Station is expanding its partnership with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences' new 80,000-square-foot wing, the Nature Research Center. The partnership is designed to demystify forest science and potentially engage teachers and more than one million multicultural students – ultimately inspiring a new generation of young scientists.



(Above) SRS volunteers addressed invasive pest concerns and shared Forest Service efforts to slow the spread of "Bad Bugs in the Forest." (Below) Smokey Bear's cameo appearance delighted the young and young-at-heart.



SRS researchers engaged families in hands-on activities during the Nature Research Center's April 24-hour grand opening in Raleigh, NC – which attracted more than 75,000 visitors during Earth Day weekend.