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## Virginia Tech Staff Employee of the Week

July 4, 2005

**Name:** Thomas J. McAvoy  
**Job Title:** Lab Specialist Senior  
**Employee's Home Department:** Entomology  
**Employee's College or VP Area:** College of Agriculture and Life Sciences  
**Nominated For:** President's Award for Excellence  
**Nominated By:** Dr. Loke T. Kok, Department Head  
**Virginia Tech Hire Date:** December 5, 1977



### Summary

Tom has made two trips to China in search of new predators of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), a pest that threatens the existence of eastern hemlocks. The first trip with Dr. Gabriella Zilhai-Balogh, our post-doctoral associate, led to discovery of a new predator species of the HWA that is now undergoing quarantine studies. A follow-up trip in 2004 by Tom and his supervisor, Dr. Scott Salom, was to collect more *L. kangdingensis* to increase the genetic base of our laboratory colony. His commitment and dedication were affirmed by his performance during the long arduous journey from Beijing to the collection sites in the remote mountains of Kangding. The optimum time of collection of the predators has to be in winter. In addition, in order to reach the sites they have to traverse through incredibly rough terrains with roads that are rudimentary.

From the very beginning, Tom took responsibility for all aspects of the trip. This included contacting and working with our cooperators at the Chinese Academy of Agriculture Sciences to get federal, provincial, and county permits for collecting insects, arranging international and domestic flights, drivers and vehicles. Tom McAvoy represented Virginia Tech with the highest standards. He also helped to develop and improve our collaborative research efforts with the Chinese government.

About the ["Staff Employee of the Week"](#) Program

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