

New York Forest Owners Association Capital District Chapter Newsletter

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Message from the Chair



future.

I startled out of a sound sleep this morning wondering how I became chapter chair of the CDC-NYFOA and asking myself, “.. what will I do with this new responsibility...”? In answer, many of us can lay “blame” or “give credit” to our deceased friend of forestry, Mike Greason, as we are his legacy in spite of ourselves. I will keep trying to practice his many lessons as I also appreciate the help from many other CDC stalwarts as I forge into the

I think I have been cutting, lugging and piling brush for most of my life. As an activity, I love doing this. In the past we prided ourselves in making neat piles of brush in the woodlot when we cleaned up after a firewood cut. When Mike became our forester, he would walk our woods and give us continual educational lectures on a wide range of topics. We still have a number of his blue-paint marked trees that are to be removed as part of timber stand improvement cuts. Just this morning I loaded a blue-marked “Mike” piece of firewood into our clean-burning wood gasifier+thermal storage system. Mike taught us that deer were our BIG regeneration problem with the maple stand, and relieved us from the compulsion to always make neat brush piles. We learned to sprinkle the tops of trees around and leave a somewhat messy appearance to the ground cover to protect new growth from the ravages of deer browsing. Yay!! However we then started the long path of learning about invasive shrubs that need to be cut and our work on cutting and lugging brush expanded many-fold. So now we have better saws, a tractor with a grapple bucket on the front, and we can make mountains of brush filled with our newfound enemies: Buckthorn, Bittersweet vines, Asian Honeysuckle, and the ever present Multiflora Rose. The grapple bucket is the best tool I have obtained for dealing with moving piles of brush and pulling out entire Multiflora Rose plants in one big grasp. It is great outdoor activity on a windy cold winter day, to be making a pile of brush in a marginal piece of swamp land that will be home to all sorts of

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2013 Heiberg Award to Ronald Pedersen



NYFOA President Jim Minor presents the Heiberg Award to CDC member Ron Pedersen

This award is named for forestry professor Svend O. Heiberg, who initially proposed the establishment of an association of landowners in New York State. The award is given for outstanding contributions in the fields of forestry and conservation. Ron Pedersen is a charter member of NYFOA and has been actively involved at both the Capital District Chapter and State Board for many years.

wildlife. However, some piles of brush will be burned. I note that the recently updated DEC regulations on outdoor burning have allowance for agricultural and forest-related burning of materials that are generated on the farm/or woodlot but there is a period of time when open burning of brush is not allowed: [see DEC-ECL Part 215]. I spoke with Greg LaBarge of the DEC Division of Air Resources about what can and can't be burned, and when. Here is my summary of what I understand on this topic after that conversation:

DEC Regulation for Open Burning-Part 215:

Farms are exempt and can burn all year. Definition of what is a "farm" is up to Dept of Ag and Markets, not DEC. However, in general a farm has to be a minimum of 5 acres of contiguous land, and be run as a real farm business. For forest owners, it is OK to burn brush, limbs, and similar items that come from that forest [not trucked in] during May 15th through the following March 15th without need for a special permit. Said another way, forest owners can't burn from March 16 through May 15. However, one cannot burn downed limbs & branches in a town of greater than 20,000 population, during the period March 16 thru May 14. Landowners in the Catskill and Adirondack parks continue to need a DEC permit to burn tree debris since this requirement is in the Environmental Conservation Law. The changes to the open burning were made in the NY Code Rules and Regulations in 2009, Open Burning, Part 215. This restriction of burning from March 15-May 15 has reduced forest fires by 60% since 2010 according to a DEC Press Release dated May 24, 2010. Note, again, that real farms are exempt. There are other exemptions for things like campfires. If you want to know more details about open burning, contact Greg LaBarge at DEC: [518-402-8403], gglabarg@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

As I have both a forest and a cropland farm mingled together, I must think about both, beyond the legalities of burning. The woodland borders of my hay fields have never really been trimmed back for many years, and in some cases have moved the forest boundary into the cropland by 15 feet. Most of this growth is invasive species such as vines, Buckthorn, Honeysuckle, Ironwood, Hawthorn, Multiflora Rose and Sumac. Of course there are also Maple, Oak Cherry and Ash in the margin area. These usually will never become real timber but these margins serve an important purpose to protect the woodlot interior. Often these margin trees are mal-formed with ice-storm-damaged limbs, leaving hazard trees I may not cut. So I wade into these margins and make on-the-spot decisions, trying to be steward of both the farm and forest at the interface. Some of these same species are a big problem (horses and cattle do not like to eat Multiflora Rose), but in a wildlife area these same plants can provide wonderful cover. Special problems are long branches from big trees that reach down and strike the farm tractor as tilling is underway or hay is being cut. I do a lot of high trimming with a pole saw. It is a lot of work to give even one field a good trim back so that the interface between my forest and my fields satisfy the needs of both. This is an enjoyable way to spend a cold winter day, making poles for firewood, piles of brush for wildlife (or burning as the case may be), and defining anew the dynamic boundary between woody plants and crop plants.

Nature is alive and well on both sides of the farm-forest boundary.

Holiday Gathering

Chapter members, family, and friends are attended. This took place at the Bethany Presbyterian Church in Menands On January 29th. Dan Yacobellis was our featured speaker. Dan spoke about tracking wildlife and working with school groups.



Jim Bulich finishes his term as Chapter Chair



Chapter Members at Holiday Gathering

Bird Observations Improve Land Stewardship

by Mike Birmingham, Entomologist

As a child I watched Cow Birds hunt for insects on cow's backs and on the ground where cattle hooves disturbed insects. By late afternoon the birds and cattle were full. The birds flocked to tall elms to sing and the cows lay in the shade of the elms chewing their cuds. The giant elms and free ranging cattle are largely gone due to Dutch elm disease and feedlots. The birds remain. The black birds still flock to tall trees in spring and fall. On farmlands they flock where food is abundant.



Bald Eagles were on the brink of disappearing due to their inability to reproduce viable eggs damaged from DDT. Bans on the hydrocarbon pesticide use and management of eagles lead to a dramatic eagle population increase locally. Where the Stockport Creek

flows into the Hudson River, I saw seven Bald Eagles recently. Eagles are seen in flight between Kinderhook and North Chatham on a regular basis and on both sides of the Hudson River from Albany to Clermont State Park.

Some birds are only rare because they fly south to our location when food is scarce. Last fall Evening Grosbeaks came to my yard. It is the first sighting of them at my Kinderhook address. Another bird not seen until this year by me is the Horned Lark. Another birder told me about it feeding among corn stubble and manured fields minutes from where I live.



Green Heron watches for small creatures to eat

Birds belie the saying "bird brain." Intelligence is what I believe contributes to bird survival. The American Crow attempted to break the frozen food with its beak only to push it deeper into the snow. The crow picked up the food, carried it to the top of a stone wall, rolled it to the center of the wall, and cracked it open with its powerful sharp pointed beak. All birds display intelligent behavior.

A Red-tailed Hawk dragged a rabbit killed on busy Hudson Street to my neighbor's driveway to eat it. In doing so it avoided the risk of being killed by traffic. A Sharp-shinned Hawk used an arbor blind to wait for birds to prey upon that came to feeders. A pair of Cooper Hawks worked as a team. One hawk gave chase to birds and a second hawk preyed on birds that flew past it. I have many observations of bird intelligent behavior.



Great Horned Owl with offspring in nest

People desiring to study birds learn faster by associations with experienced birders. Recently the Alan Devoe Bird Club (I am a member) and Hudson Mohawk Bird Clubs teamed up to view water birds near the west bank of the Hudson River between Coxsackie and Catskill. The field trip was enriched by a stop at the Vosburgh Swamp Natural Area. Here I saw Mute Swans, Northern Pintails and American Widgeons. The experienced birders knew of trails unknown to me that lead to good birding grounds. Most readers of this newsletter own woodlots. You can learn stewardship beneficial to birds by observing them. You will see what they eat, where they nest and seek cover by walking your property. When I first recognized the oblong feeding holes made by the Pileated Woodpecker I knew the trees it feed on should be left uncut. I saw the Great Horned Owl and its offspring in a stick built nest atop a pine stub. I would leave the stub for the owl. I now see value in open weedy lands where once I saw the compelling need to plant the land to trees. It happened when I saw the American kestrel hovering over open lands. It requires early successional lands for hunting. Cleared

land within the vast expanse of forests is desirable for birds that require it.

And the vast forest canopy is home of many warblers. It makes sense to me to leave small stands scattered among a much larger landscape in close canopy for the benefit of these songsters. Good stewardship comes from observing what you see is needed for wildlife survival and improving on habitats where opportunities exist. For example, leaving brush piles and brushy areas. I walked the Powel Wildlife Sanctuary after a fresh snow fall. The majority of tracts of small animals were near brush piles. Much of the sanctuary landscape is open as a result of heavy deer browse. Animals crowd to for cover.

A birder starter kit is a field guide such as Peterson's or Sibley's. One can identify most birds with a field guide. Binoculars are useful for identification of distant birds and separating similar ones. Recently I discovered that photographs of birds aid in identification. I looked at hundreds of photos taken of birds on a recent trip to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. Among the photos I discovered ones of Blue Herons. When taking the photos I thought the birds were all Green Herons.



Evening Grosbeak is an irruptive species rarely seen in my garden.

One night I heard an unfamiliar sound. I opened a window in my office. I listened to Cornell Ornithology website bird sounds. I matched the sound coming from outside to the one coming from the computer. It was an Eastern Screech-owl.

Birds teach us land stewardship. By watching them we learn about their needs. We see where they nest, what they eat and where they go to escape predators and bad weather. As good stewards we learn what birds need by watching them. We then favor what they need and expand on it where we can. By

creating and maintaining healthy habitats for birds we have healthy landscape for humans.

All photos by author and common names of birds from Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America.

Restore New York Woodlands

The Restore New York Woodlands initiative now has six sites lined up for woodswalks in five counties during the nine day period. Spreading the word through good publicity is going to be crucial. The nyfoa.org website has a lot of information on the RNYW page if you haven't been following it in the Forest Owner magazine.

If you have been reading the Forest Owner since the July/August issue, you are by now familiar with NYFOA's initiative starting this 50th anniversary year, to raise public awareness of the unhealthy condition of New York's forests. Regeneration of desirable tree species to replace the mature and old age trees is happening in very few woodlots unless very specific management is practiced. To call attention to this problem, its causes and solutions, NYFOA is encouraging all local chapters to hold multiple woods walks centered on the week of May 11 through 19. To date, CDC has commitments to host five woods walks, in Greene, Rensselaer, Albany and Schenectady counties.

Welcome New Member

The following individual joined the Capital District Chapter in the past three months. Welcome Mr. Kuehl.

Ernest Kuehl

Rensselaerville, NY

Woodswalk Calendar

Saturday May 11, 2013 starting at 9:00 am
Woodswalk at Woodlawn Pine Bush Preserve, 600
block of Gifford Road, Schenectady NY

This site has a diverse land use history and is reclaiming itself. You will be able to compare primary succession in recently disturbed areas to old-field succession. Observe invasive species and wildlife browsing damage and its effects. See remnant dunes/riparian ecosystems adjacent to the Albany Pine Bush. There will be the opportunity for discussion about the importance of open space management with our hosts, The Friends of Woodlawn Preserve, and county planners. For further information contact Janet Chen at friendswp@gmail.com or Jeff Kehoe, forester, at jjkehoe5@yahoo.com

Saturday May 11, 2013 starting at 9:30 am until 12:30 pm Workshop and woodswalk "Landowners and Your Woodlands", held at the Middleburgh Reformed Church, 178 River Street, Middleburgh, NY

This free workshop begins in the church meeting rooms, where you will learn how to enhance your woodlands for wildlife, understand concepts of forest stewardship, plan for a healthier forest, learn where to find added help and resources, and more. An outdoor component at 815 Lawton Hollow Road, Middleburgh, will follow. Registration at (518) 295-8811, or contact Brenda Weaver at brenda.weaver@schohariesoilandwater.org

Saturday May 11 starting at 1:30pm, until 3:30 pm
Woodswalk at Lisha Kill Natural Area, 2518 Rosendale Road, Schenectady, NY

This woodswalk hikes through old forests surviving in a developed area, with examples of eastern white pine and eastern hemlock estimated to be well over 200 years old. However, the focus will be the understory and forest floor, and what is growing there or lacking, and what that means for the forest of the future. For further information contact Chris Zimmerman of the Nature Conservancy at (518) 690-7844, or by email at czimmerman@tnc.org

Saturday May 11, 2013 starting at 2:00 pm woodswalk at the Gerry McDonald Property, 249 Stanton Road, Coeymans Hollow, NY

This site has a well documented recent management history that will be described by the very active landowner. See the results of improvement cuts and thinning, some good examples of successful regeneration, openings created as wildlife habitat

improvement, hobby maple products production and other useful items from the woods. For more information, contact Gerry McDonald at (518) 756-2232 or Jeff Kehoe, forester, at jjkehoe5@yahoo.com

Wednesday May 15, 2013 starting at 6:30 pm
Woodswalk at the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy site, 3 Normanskill Blvd., Delmar, NY

This site has several understory invasives, is protected by a conservation easement, and is located along the Normanskill Creek in Delmar. Vegetation provides streamside stabilization and protection, and a quiet respite in busy Delmar. Enjoy a short evening walk on great trails that might be slippery underfoot if rainy. Event will be co-hosted by the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy and NYFOA. Contact Jill Knapp, Executive Director of MHLA at (518) 436-6346 or Jeff Kehoe, forester, at jjkehoe5@yahoo.com

Saturday May 18, 2013 starting at 1:00 pm
Woodswalk at Agroforestry Resource Center, Siuslaw Model Forest, 6055 Route 23, Acra, NY

This is a special event that will include a short ceremony dedicating a bench in memory of forester Mike Greason. Mike was an outstanding forester that encouraged us all to be good stewards of the woods. The woodswalk will feature the Siuslaw Model Forest inspired by Mike, a demonstration area for sustainable forestry practices. Good trails take you past a pond with wildlife, and through a well managed forest with many examples of best management practices (BMP's). Parking is at the Columbia/Greene CCE. Contact Marilyn Wyman at (518) 622-9820 or foresters Carl Wiedemann at wiedeman@nycap.rr.com or Mary Spring at maryspring@rocketmail.com

Sunday May 19, 2013 starting at 9:00 am
Woodswalk at Pine Ridge XC Center/Walter Kersch property, 1463 Plank Road, Petersburg, NY 12138

This property has a diverse forest mix and open areas creating good wildlife habitat. The understory exhibits severe deer browse damage where measures have not been taken to avoid it. Examples of beech control are present among a forest high graded 8 years ago. Good stands of young black cherry are regenerating in some areas. Contact Walter Kersch at (518) 283-5509. Good directions can be found at www.pineridgexc.com.

Chapter Picnic July 28, 2013

Date: Sunday, July 28

Time: 11:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Location: Glen Doone picnic pavilion Thacher Park

Steering Committee

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*NYFOA State board of directors

Note: Chapter members are encouraged to join the steering committee. Meetings are held every three months at the Colonie Library.

2013 Steering Committee Meeting Schedule:

April 9th – 6:30 p.m.
July 9th – 6:30 p.m.
October 8th – 6:30 p.m.

Chain Saw Training Opportunity

Game of Logging Chain Saw Training Offered New York Forest Owners Association [NYFOA]-Capital District Chapter is sponsoring a hands-on "Game of Logging" [GOL], Level I Certificate training course starting with chain saw safety, leading to saw operation, and ending with proper procedures for directional felling of trees. The same course will be offered on either of two days, June 7 and June 8. The cost is \$125. You must sign-up on-line in advance and pre-pay. Registration is handled through the cooperation of the Agricultural Stewardship Association. There is a limit of 10 participants each day. This course is a good investment for anybody from novice to expert. Younger participants are welcome so long as they can pull on the starter rope for a saw. The course runs rain or shine, come prepared to be outdoors for a full day. Bring food and lunch, chain saw, chaps, helmet, eye protection. A limited amount of key items may be available to loan, call ahead to discuss if you need these. For more information or question contact Dick Gibbs at 518-225-7371.

More information about the instructor and the Level I GOL training can be found at:
<http://www.farmingmagazine.com/article-4338.aspx> Course Locations are: Friday, June 7. Farm of Bob and Renee Phaneuf, 40 Birds Hill Rd., Averill Park, NY 12018. Saturday, Jun 8. Home of John Leahy and his mother Kay Frey, 131 Shaver Rd. Grafton, NY 12082. Course starts at 8:00 AM each day. NYFOA-CDC will provide coffee and bagels to start the day. To go directly to the registration locations click on:

For Friday, June 7th:
<http://www.agstewardship.org/index.php/events-a-programs/event/28/Game-of-Logging-Level-I-Friday>

For Saturday June 8th:
<http://www.agstewardship.org/index.php/events-a-programs/event/29/Game-of-Logging-Level-I-Saturday>.

Based on interest expressed up to now, I have about 15 people total who have indicated they want to participate, so register soon to get in and get on the day you want.

If these courses fill up note that the ASA will be offering two GOL courses on October 19th. The first is a level I for women only and the second, held on the same day, is a Level II GOL course.

Fearsome Critter

– Do You Know It?

Hint #1 – Habitat - lives along the hardwood ridges of the Rensselaer Plateau, the Taconic Ridge and the northern Catskills, and is doubtless responsible for the occasional complete disappearance of hikers in those areas.

Hint #2 – Physical description - a chunky beast, some seven feet tall, with a body about the size of a coal-oil drum and roughly furred. The equine hind legs unite at the fetlock, terminating in one broad hoof. The front legs, disproportionately long, sinewy and powerful, end in broad paddles. When standing at ease, this critter usually rests these on the ground.

Hint #3 – Feeding Habits - he is wholly carnivorous. Deer, bear, moose, turkeys, humans--- they're all grist to his mill. About sundown time he will take stand by a bend in the trail and begin to whirl on his single hoof. The maximum speed (2150 r.p.m.) is quickly reached and is accompanied by a peculiar droning sound. At top speed he is practically invisible, a little dust or a few leaves eddying about being the only indications of his presence. The unwary, home-bound hiker, on hearing the odd droning, usually starts to investigate it. The instant he steps within the circle of those flying, flailing bony paddles he is deposited thereon in the form of an unctuous treacle. The critter then promptly cuts his throttle, slows down, and crawls under a nearby patch of beech saplings to lick off his syrupy supper.



What is it?

Answer:

The Whirling Whimpus
Turbinocissus nebuloides Sudw.

Join NYFOA

Help Support Sustainable Forestry

The New York Forest Owners Association is a not-for-profit organization established to encourage sustainable forestry practices and sound management of privately owned woodlands. Members include woodland owners and all others who care about the future of New York's trees and forests. Please consider joining because your support helps make a difference. Regular annual dues are just \$30.00 for an individual or \$35.00 for a family.

Contact: NYFOA, P.O. Box 541, Lima, New York 14485 1-800-836-3566 www.nyfoa.org