

New York Forest Owners Association Capital District Chapter Newsletter

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Message from the Chair



I always look forward to fall after the hot muggy summer with its mosquitoes and noisy air conditioners. I like to get back into the woods to observe the fall flowers, changes in the foliage, the condition of the forest, and the possibilities of the upcoming hunting season.

As I write this on September 8th, things are much different. Here in Catskill, we already have 7 inches of rain in September, after almost 17 inches of rain in August. The flood waters from Tropical Storm Irene rose 12 feet above the stream banks along my woodlot, slamming the tops from last winter's ash harvest against the remaining trees, leaving walls of wood debris and some trash from far upstream. What was once a pleasant site to spend time is now quite unsightly.

But then I think of the devastation, and even death, from the flood that others endured, and realize that my problems are small.

It will be quite some time before the streams and the woods along them are beautiful again. It will take a lot of chain sawing to get the debris down to ground level where it can rot and nourish the ground or else it will remain against the trees for many years.

Many of us are discouraged about putting more work into our woods, especially when there is so little monetary return on investment. But as we see the progress we make, it will be our reward. It may take a few years, but if the problem isn't taken care of, we will hesitate to visit the woods we once enjoyed. Now is the time to get into the woods, and hopefully you won't find any storm damage.

Jim Bulich

Chapter Service Award

The Capital District Chapter service award went to Rolf and Debby Wentorf of Johnsonville, NY. They have both been active in the Forest Owners Association at the chapter level for many years. Dick Gibbs presented the award to the Wentorfs on July 17th.



Dick Gibbs, Rolf Wentorf, Deb Wentorf

Welcome New Members!

Rick Hildenbrandt	Albany, NY
Bill Kelly	Averill Park, NY
Jim Kisselback	East Berne, NY
Deborah Lans	Spencertown, NY

August 7th Picnic

The Capital District Chapter's annual family picnic was held on Sunday, August 7th, at the Glen Doone area of John Boyd Thacher State Park.



Jim Bulich makes some announcements



Cindy King and Tom Dandrew - both winners!



Jim House awards a prize



Food and conversation

July 16-17 Small Equipment Demonstration Weekend

Small Logging Equipment demonstration by Peter Smallidge – Saturday July 16th hosted by Art & Jeanine Brearton of Altamont, N.Y. and Sunday July 17th by Dick & Shari Gibbs Wynantskill, N.Y.



Peter Smallidge describes felling techniques



The Brearton woodlot in Albany County was the site of the small equipment demonstration presented by Peter Smallidge on Saturday. Participants also had the opportunity to learn about woodlot management and silviculture.



The Gibbs woodlot where the small equipment demonstration workshop was held on Sunday.

Schaghticoke Fair Display

Despite the rainy weather and moderate crowds, our display continued to attract fairgoers at Schaghticoke. The recent news about the Emerald Ash Borer and the Asian Longhorned Beetle had many folks asking questions and picking up handouts.

The "What is.." and "I have a..." questions about tree and pest identification were often a challenge. Getting people headed in the right direction for correct ID was often as rewarding as knowing the answer immediately.

The seedlings provided by the NYS Tree Nursery are always well received. Meeting a diverse group of folks who are interested in the woods is the reward for manning the NYOFA booth at the fair. Maybe next year you will be able to take a time slot to further our mission of encouraging sustainable forest practices."

Next year the fair will run August 29-Sept 3rd

Forests and Floods

Much has been written about floods, their causes and impacts. The conventional wisdom is that forests soak up water during heavy rainfall and release it slowly when it is most needed, during the dry months of the year. The reality is more complex.

Forests do help to mitigate floods to some extent because their soils hold back and delay the passage of rain water to streams and rivers. Forest soils tend to have a more open structure resulting from greater amounts of organic matter and the action of tree roots and soil fauna. They are also usually drier during summer periods due to the higher water use by forest trees. These conditions enhance the ability of the soil to receive and store rain water. This is commonly referred to as a 'sponge effect'.

Forests are also known to use more water than shorter types of vegetation such as grass or brush. This is mainly due to the interception of rainwater by their aerodynamically rougher canopies. Interception can reduce the amount of rainfall reaching the ground by as much as 45% or more for some types of forests.

The interception loss varies between forest types. While losses of 25-45% are typical of conifer forests, those by broadleaves are lower and tend to range between 10-25%. Losses from broadleaves are further reduced to 5-10% after the leaves have fallen in the fall. Furthermore, trees remain leafless for several weeks in the spring when the risk of flooding is often greatest.

Another important factor is that interception declines with the size and intensity of a given rainstorm. Thus losses for major rain storm events may be <10% even for a conifer forest.

The forest sponge effect is also limited following periods of exceptionally heavy and/or prolonged rainfall. During a major rainfall event, especially after prolonged periods of preceding rainfall, forest soils are generally fully saturated and have a reduced capacity to receive and store storm water.

On a local scale forests and forest soils are capable of reducing runoff, generally as the result of enhanced infiltration and storage capacities. But this holds true only for small-scale rainfall events, which are not responsible for severe flooding in downstream areas.

2011 BMP Field Guide

Protecting water quality, forest and soil resources are among the most important aspects of good forest management. Studies have shown that while timber harvesting is not a major cause of water quality problems, skid trails, haul roads and landings have the potential to be sources of erosion that can result in the sedimentation of streams and other water bodies. The key to success is proper planning and the use of appropriate, or "best," management practices (BMPs).



These are simple, often low-cost practices and techniques you can incorporate into your timber harvest. BMPs pay big dividends in keeping our water clean, maintaining the productivity of the forest, and maintaining public support for forest management and timber harvesting. All are essential for sustainable forest management.

For more information go to:

www.nysbmpguidelines.com



Christman Preserve

On Saturday, August 20 the chapter sponsored a woodswalk through the Christman Preserve in Schenectady County.



Examining a stand of hemlock and oak.



On the trail passing a large red oak.



The Bozenkill creek includes several beautiful waterfalls.

This woodlot was once part of a farm owned by Will Christman of Duanesburg. Christman was known locally as the farmer poet. He was a nature lover and published several books of poems during the 1930's. The property is currently owned by the Nature Conservancy and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Cancellation

Unfortunately the statewide meeting at the Agroforestry Resource Center in Acra scheduled on September 24th had to be cancelled because two of the presenters had scheduling problems. There was not enough time to re-organize for both speakers and field trips.

Another Invasive Species – Earthworms!

Adapted from an article published in "Clintonia," the newsletter of the Niagara Frontier Botanical Society

There are no native earthworms in most of the northern U.S. and Canada. During the glaciation of the last Ice Age, any earthworms that might have lived in this region died. Thus, the earthworms that we see here today can all be classified as exotic species. Unfortunately, research shows that many of these exotic earthworms are invasive species, that is, non-native species that cause environmental harm.

These findings may come as a surprise to many gardeners, who have usually been told that earthworms are beneficial to the soil. However, about ten years ago research started to come out about the harmful consequences of exotic earthworms in northern hardwood forests. Where earthworms are present, tree seedlings and native plants are scarcer. The biggest problem worms are earthworms that eat leaf litter, which plants in northern North America depend upon for nutrients and protection from harsh winters. These earthworms turn spongy humus into denser, mineral soil. Soil compaction increases surface runoff and erosion. Earthworm invasions are also associated with changes in soil chemistry.

Some examples of native plants that are particularly sensitive to earthworm invasions are hepatica, lycopodium, sugar maple, red oak, basswood, and serviceberry. Earthworms eat leaf litter and fungi around the roots of forest plants. Many native trees and wildflowers depend on soil fungi for germination and growth. Earthworms are now common in many areas, having been used as bait for decades. Since earthworms move very gradually, researchers infer that present-day populations of these invaders in native forests are largely due to agricultural introductions and discarding of bait by fishermen.

Recent research suggests that the problem is even worse than previously thought. According to a recent article in Conservation Biology, earthworm invasion might be the driving factor behind invasive plants in northeastern forests. In woodlands with both "invaded" and "uninvaded" sections, earthworm biomass was negatively associated with native plant cover and positively associated with non-native plant cover.

If this result applies to other plant invaders of northeastern forests, it implies that controlling exotic earthworms directly helps native plants and could prevent future invasions of exotic plants. It also implies that controlling the invasive plants without controlling earthworms may accomplish little in the long run.

STEERING COMMITTEE

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Note: Chapter members are welcome to join the steering committee. Meetings are held every three months at the Colonie Town Library. The next meeting is scheduled Tuesday, October 11th starting at 6:30 p.m.

Test Your Wildlife Knowledge ...

This mystery has no knees. Because of this missing bit of anatomy it cannot sit or lie down (keep you own knees stiff and see what a problem this can be). Consequently this critter often sleeps leaning against a tree, fence or house, but it is so heavy that it causes whatever it leans against to bend. If you ever come across a fence, tree, or house in your travels that leans to one side, chances are that one of these critters spent the night.

Here are three clues to the identity of another rare denizen of the forest:

The Mystery Critter

Clue #1

This mystery is biggest animal in the Northern forest. When full grown, stands about thirteen feet high and weighs around sixty hundredweight. The last one reported killed was up on the Opalescent River in the Adirondack high peaks - a young one, weighing barely eighteen hundred pounds.

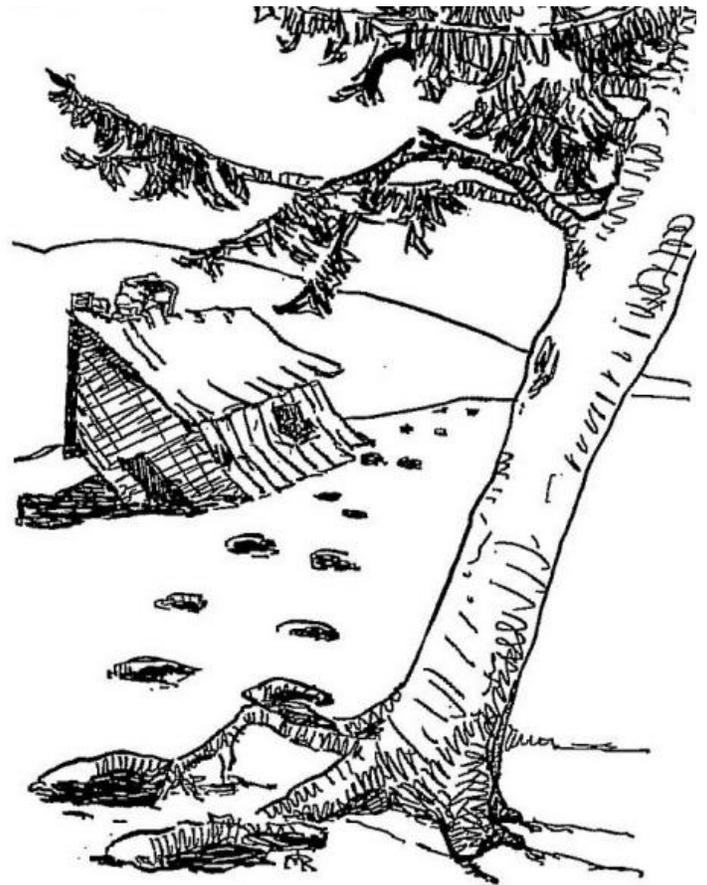
Clue #2

The snout is warty, and the ears coarse and floppy, like a pair of tired gunnysacks. The head is clean bald and curiously lumpy and bumpy. The best phrenologist in the world would throw in his hand if asked to make a reconnaissance of this party's dome. Instead of hair he wears pine needles; and a steady diet of pine knots makes the pitch ooze constantly from his pores.

The legs lack knee, fetlock, or hock joints so he can't lie down and as a consequence sleeps standing. Usually braces its splayed feet and leans again a tree to take a nap. Such sleep-trees are often badly bent, usually remaining so for several decades.

Clue #3

He is not dangerous; when aroused he merely bristles up and looks like a heap of pine slash. To catch one, just saw a few of his favorite sleep-trees two-thirds through. If he falls down, he can't get up any quicker than a greenhorn on skis. The huge animal does little harm save when he leans against buildings.



Do You Recognize These Tracks?

*From Henry H. Tryon Fearsome Critters 1939.

Answer:
THE HUGAG
Reclinor rigidus

Join Us!!

Help Support Forest Conservation

The New York Forest Owners Association is a not-for-profit organization which supports sustainable forestry practices and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands. Our members are family forest owners and all others who care about the future of New York's trees and forests. If you are not a member, please consider joining today. Your membership makes 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