

New York Forest Owners Association Capital District Chapter Newsletter

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Chairs Message

Yesterday I returned from the Rensselaer County Rural Landowners workshop that our Chapter helped organize with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County. Dave Chinery, the County Extension Agent, was a pleasure to work with and the event seemed well received by the sixty or so attendees. Dr. Peter Smallidge, the State Extension Forester from Cornell, led off the program. It is very satisfying to have such a close working relationship with extension. Rick Burstell from Greene County's CCE Agroforestry Resource Center talked about agroforestry products. Through Peter's encouragement, we even had Paul Cantanzaro, from the Massachusetts Extension service tell us how to restore old growth characteristics to our woodlands where that fits the landowner's goals. We also had support from NYS DEC with presentations on knowing your boundaries by Robert Morrell and invasive species by Dr. Jerry Carlson. Mike Urban, DEC's service forester for Rensselaer County, helped plan the program. Support from these partners really allows us to provide much more in depth programs than we could hope to do on our own. I am excited by the enthusiasm of everyone who was involved.

Our chainsaw raffle went well. Terry Powell provided a Husqvarna 235 saw at his cost and donated a hard hat. The raffle raised \$250; so we made a slight profit for the Chapter. I also want to thank all of our members who pitched in and helped make the event a success.

On October 24th, our workshop at Columbia Greene Community College from 12:30 to 4:30 has additional partners joining our efforts: Hudson Mohawk Resource Conservation and Development Council, Columbia Land Conservancy, Hudson Valley Agribusiness, Columbia County Planning and Economic Development Department. I find this interest in our mission exciting. We should be able to expand our audiences and gain credibility in NYFOA.

And, our ability to carry out these programs has been made possible by generous support from the Robert Wentorf Family Foundation. Rolf and Debbie Wentorf are Master Forest Owners volunteers from Johnsonville who are active in the Southeast Adirondack Chapter. They consistently support our efforts.

On Sunday, September 27th, Carl Wiedemann and I led a woods walk, connected to the Rensselaer workshop at Dyken Pond. There were ten people registered. Two landowners, one with his son in tow, showed up. Apparently the forecast of rainy weather discouraged a few; yet we did not really get wet. The walk lasted longer than planned; so there was enthusiasm for the topics we discussed and it went well.

On another topic, I recently received two emails indicating the timber market was strengthening. A couple of buyers talked the same story. Then Thursday evening, I had two bid openings. Both sales received bids where the top bids were about one third less than I had anticipated. So, I continue to believe this is a time to carryout improvement cuts where income is not a primary motivating factor.

Mike Greason, Chair
Capital District Chapter

Rural Landowners Workshop – Sept 26, 2009
Tamarac/Brunswick/Brittonkill High School



Paul Catanzaro, UMass Extension, describes how to enhance old growth characteristics in woodlands.

Capital District Chapter Fair Display

The chapter has been an exhibitor at both the Altamont and Schaghticoke Fairs for several years. Hans Kappel deserves credit for making the exhibit both interesting and informative. And for the past two years, Bob Sheedy has been scheduling volunteers from our chapter to staff the booth at the Schaghticoke Fair. Thanks to everyone who volunteered as booth staff this year, and to Hans and Bob for a job well done.



Chapter Exhibit at the Altamont Fair

A summary of comments from booth staff volunteers:

"Table layout, displays and info available excellent. Tables in an arc arrangement much better than in tight "U" shape"

"The banner certainly was an eye catcher, large and bold in the message, but I don't think a single person asked for more detail on saving the forests"

"The tree ID samples always draw interest"

"I believe having the display, especially when staffed, is a good way to be in touch with a very limited audience of people interested in their wooded property"

"I spoke to several teachers who were interested in materials and always enjoy getting the new Arbor Day poster"

"Wished I'd had a tree ID book with me to help ID a tree which the owner wondered about but couldn't describe"

Restoring Old Growth Characteristics

Old growth is a forest never directly impacted by humans. This is a very rare condition in most privately owned woodlots in New York State due to the historic prevalence of agriculture, logging, and other land uses. Consequently, our current forests are much different than the forests our native plants and wildlife adapted to over thousands of years. Some plants, lichens, and mosses are dependent on old-growth characteristics that are currently lacking or less abundant in our second-growth forests. Also, many species, particularly native birds including some woodpeckers, warblers, and thrushes, have been shown to reach greater abundance in forests with old-growth characteristics - such as large trees with cavities.

Creating the structure and composition found in old-growth forests helps us conserve crucial habitats for insects, fungi, and other organisms yet to be documented. Therefore, restoring these once common habitats is of central importance to conserving the full suite of our region's native plants and animals.

You may choose to implement old-growth management and restoration, whether it is passive or active, to all of your woods or only a portion of it. When considering where on your land to develop old-growth structure, it is most effective to identify and enhance old-growth structural characteristics already present in your woods. These areas might include large amounts of downed logs due to a windstorm or a group of large trees containing woodpecker cavities. Establishing a patch around these existing old-growth structural characteristics will enhance their value as old growth habitat by providing contiguous forest around them that will be dedicated to developing additional old-growth characteristics.

An additional, important consideration in planning for old growth restoration is how your land fits into the surrounding landscape. An excellent way to increase the functioning of the areas containing old-growth restoration treatments is to implement these strategies in landscapes where other landowners, both public and private, are doing similar management. Consider coordinating your management activities with adjacent landowners to increase the size and effectiveness of these areas in serving as old-growth habitats on the landscape. For information on landscape-level old-growth restoration planning, visit www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org.

Note: This is a brief summary of the talk by Paul Catanzaro at the September 26th workshop.

THINKING GLOBALLY, ACTING LOCALLY:
MFO VOLUNTEERS
By Douglas R. Allen

Driving to MFO Refresher Training from my home in Columbia County last year set the stage geographically for thinking about the program.

As I traveled north and west from the Hudson Valley, and then headed southwest on I-88, my 160-mile route traced the wide arc of a semi-circle around the 700,000-acre Catskill Park.

Catskill Park contains nearly 300,000 acres of state Forest Preserve. This holding by itself makes every New York State resident who pays taxes a forest owner. All told, New Yorkers own 3 million acres of public forests, counting forestland managed by the state, counties, towns, and federal government.

Since my initial MFO training in the spring of 2005, I've realized time and time again that most public citizens don't see themselves as forest owners. One epiphany for me over the past few years, though, is this: Everyone who wants to breathe fresh air and drink clean water has a personal and political stake in being a steward of healthy forests.

MFOs of course know that forest ownership in the state is a big deal. And complicated. We're aware that most of the 18.4 million acres of forestland in New York, including more than 90 percent of 15.7 million acres of timberland, is privately owned, by more than 500,000 individuals. These are our contacts, the people we visit.

Stretches of hard rain on the highway remind me of the rainy season in Latin America, where I lived for a time, and the term "Guardians of the Forest." This makes a connection for me between the tropics and a discussion item on the agenda for Friday night: a "new, meaningful and descriptive name for the MFO volunteer program."

In recent years, confronted with outsiders plundering timber from their tropical rainforests, governments and communities around the globe began hiring local people, usually expert hunters, to be "guardians of the forest." Their primary role was to patrol forests, often in remote jungle terrain, and report illegal logging operations.

Over time, as rainforest devastation became more widespread and more exposed to public scrutiny, volunteers have joined the ranks of these guardians, in the interest of protecting their environment, natural resources, and way of life.

Life in North America is different in obvious respects, but a parallel plundering of forests in the form of exploitive harvesting has been taking place in the eastern half of this country and Canada for the past forty years or so.

Silviculturists and foresters have clearly documented this in field studies and peer-reviewed journals over the past couple of decades.

One of Cornell University's responses was to establish the Master Forest Owner Volunteer program in 1991, to help combat exploitive harvesting and other threats to forest health.

The idea was that forestry professionals could promote intelligent silvicultural practices by educating a cadre of forest owners who would reach out to educate other landowners in their communities. Established as the norm, wise forest stewardship would help sustain a healthy environment for all citizens and optimum conditions for profitable forest industries of all kinds.

With no militant component like guardians patrolling the forests, the MFO program is basically neighbors talking with neighbors, a commitment to reason and persuasion.

On a regular basis we see global headlines about the slashing and burning of the world's tropical rain forests. We see dramatic photos featuring millions of forested acres going up in smoke, taking sequestered carbon with it. Citizens around the world are acutely aware of these issues, to the extent that advocacy groups, governments, and ordinary citizens have joined forces in growing efforts to combat the threats.

In contrast, news about the degradation of forests occurring in eastern North America is almost completely under the public radar — even though advocacy groups, government agencies, and ordinary citizens have open lines of communication with one another.

One reason is that the facts are often obscured by social and legal boundaries, which are tied to forest ownership issues.

Picturing New York's empire-sized forests as a rough centerpiece, one can see the woodlands of eastern North America (east of the Mississippi and north into Canada), as a complex ecological mosaic that rivals the Amazon Rain Forest in scope and environmental significance. These forests, however, are not typically viewed as a whole—we see them through the fragmenting prism of political divisions—local, county, state, federal, and international.

Millions of individuals and families own about 85 percent of this vast eastern forest (which contains more than 70 percent of our nation's timberland).

So, in this much larger picture, as in New York State, an extremely diffuse property ownership poses a challenge that's a mix of science, politics, and religion: convince these diverse forest owners in their unique personal circumstances to recognize their vested interest in the common good and inspire them to begin singing from the same hymnal of sustainability.

A pretty tall order. But this is one of the primary reasons for the MFO program's existence...to help spread the word.

The training site is the Ron Pedersen family farm on Big Hollow Road in Deposit, New York. On the eastern verge of Broome County, just over the mountain from the Cannonsville Dam in Delaware County, the Pedersens have been dedicated forest stewards here since 1944.

Ron is an MFO volunteer, member of the class of 1993. Ron and his wife Peggy are also charter members of the New York Forest Owners Association (1962), a major sponsor of the MFO program.

After preparing a tasty lasagna for the nine of us gathered on Friday night, and serving great oatmeal raisin cookies baked by Peggy, Ron speaks with authority on the history of being a volunteer in this program. He also relates some of his personal experience in helping write NYS legislation enacted in 2003 that increases the penalties for timber theft and raises the awareness and responsibilities of DEC staff and other law enforcement agencies.

Timber theft was a lively discussion topic, with personal anecdotes. As was the potential impact of drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus shale – which occurs from the Marcellus, NY area far to the south, and is in fact beneath us here in Broome County.

Certain facts and figures acquired since becoming an MFO volunteer stick out in my mind. On the subject of exploitive harvesting, a DEC official offers the calculation that three acres of forest per minute are being harvested just in New York State — exploitation harvests in the great majority of the cases, with no regard for the future of the forest.

Beyond that, real estate parcelization is swallowing up open space and forestland in eastern North America like a voracious Pac-Man: almost 100 acres per day in the Chesapeake Bay watershed; 40 acres per day in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and between 80 and 175 acres per day in New York.

Other major threats to the forest like high taxes, white-tailed deer, and invasive plants and insects illuminate an even more dire picture.

Gary Goff the MFO program director shares results from a recent survey of forest owners who had been visited by volunteers. Sixty percent of those surveyed actually responded, which was impressive in itself...and nearly every respondent was taking some positive actions in the realm of forest stewardship. It's good, actually vital, to have this kind of feedback showing progress.

CLASSROOM LEARNING takes place the next morning in Ron's barn.

The first classroom activity is MFOs introducing themselves and describing recent activities, sharing anecdotes and advice. Among the 18 participants: MFOs from the Tug Hill Plateau, the Catskills, the Hudson Valley, Saratoga County, the Western Finger Lakes, Central New York, and the Southern Tier.

Ron's barn illustrates some of the aspirations that draw independent-minded people from all walks of life together to be in the MFO program, notably, a desire to work productively with nature, to be creative with hands and minds, and to be "off the grid" for a portion of our time.

Ron constructed his entire barn (except for pressure-treated posts) using lumber sawed on-site from trees on the property, in fact, from trees he had planted as a young man with his father and brother over the sixty-plus years they've owned the land. He used poplar wood for framing and rafters and roof boards, and larch for the siding. Interestingly, the sawyer, who can tell you how many blades it took to get through the larch logs, is here at the event, again in the form of Mike Greason, who is also Ron's consulting forester and an afternoon presenter.

We get a demonstration of Ron's Farmi winch on his John Deere tractor; a walk-through site inspection where he used his tractor and a sprayer to combat invasive ferns; and a visit to his larch plantation. (See a colorful profile of Ron and Peggy in the New York Forest Owner magazine July/August 2008.)

During our few hours in the woods, judging from the technical questions and sidebar conversations it's evident that MFOs share a love of the outdoors; interests in ecology and wildlife; and concern for a legacy of a healthy environment for our children and grandchildren.

At the end of the day, talking with Dale from the Western Finger Lakes (who has participated more often than perhaps anyone else over the years in MFO refresher training sessions), I bring up a topic that I know people have been discussing for some years. Most MFO volunteers are also members of NYFOA, which is recognized as the premier statewide advocacy organization for forest owners, but it has always bothered me that from a pool of 500,000 potential members so few people – less than one percent—become NYFOA members.

"I know," Dale says. "And I don't know why. I'm so enthusiastic about forestry issues, I naturally think everyone else should be just as passionate."

Dale's comment echoes my own feelings. And it still seems reasonable to believe that the more people learn, the more likely it is that they'll become enthusiastic forest stewards – because this does happen at the level of MFO visits. Our successes clearly show MFO volunteers to be a vital working part of the larger picture, working at the grassroots level of efforts that have national and global significance.

But in the challenging wider view, with threats to forest health increasing, this kind of success must be multiplied many times over—the sooner the better.

A more aggressive, militant message may have to emerge in order to galvanize citizens whether they own

private forestland or not, and stir the passions that MFO volunteers possess.

DRIVING HOME THROUGH THE SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY on Saturday evening, I listen to a physician on the radio explain that one of the major recent advances among health care professionals is understanding that the primary focus of the industry should be to: "incentivize healthy behavior."

The same might be said of forestry professionals.

We play a role in this as MFOs. We encourage one person or one family, on one woodlot at a time.

Politics has a bigger role, however, in the hierarchy of "incentivizing." Making the core issues a political priority needs to happen. As John Sullivan cogently argues in the May/June 2008 Forest Owner magazine, involving government is absolutely necessary. In fact, if you Google "Healthy Forests Agenda," you'll see there is no forestry agenda in New York without political action.

The overarching solutions will be political. Tax incentives, for example, to forest owners for providing ecological services may be an avenue to "incentivize" people to practice wise forest stewardship, and political action is the only way to achieve this.

So, how do you get politicians and political parties to focus on a catastrophe that's still under the radar? (If we can forget for a moment the world financial systems crashing down around our ears.)

The answer is in part, that you RAISE CONSCIOUSNESS ON A GRAND SCALE.

Figuring out how to accomplish this may be above our pay grade as MFO volunteers – but when this happens we'll know that we've played a solid role in bringing it about.

During the training, Gary Goff gave the current number of active MFO volunteers as 160. These men and women represent 40 counties, and are available to visit every county in the state. As I write this, an e-mail from Gary announces the successful training of 18 new MFO volunteers at the Arnot Forest.

Together with these men and women from 16 different counties we're walking the walk, putting one foot ahead of the other, taking steps in the right direction.

Note: Douglas Allen is a Master Forest Owner and a member of the Capital District Chapter from Columbia County.

2009/10 CALENDAR OF NYFOA EVENTS

NYFOA Forestry Tour

PLACE: LAKE PLACID

DATE: OCTOBER 2-4

LANDOWNER WORKSHOP

Place: Columbia Greene Community College
Hudson, NY

Date: October 24, 2009

CDC CHAPTER HOLIDAY GATHERING

PLACE: BETHANY PRESBYTERIAN, MENANDS

DATE: SUNDAY, JANUARY 23

Covered dish supper & program

The CDC Welcomes New Members:

Scott Demel, Brooklyn, NY

Jeanette James, Preston Hollow, NY.

Newsletter Contributions Welcome

The CDC Newsletter is printed quarterly in January, April, July, and October. Submission deadlines are the first day of the month in which the newsletter is printed. Carl Wiedemann, newsletter editor, welcomes your articles, pertinent comments, criticisms, etc. He can be reached by telephone at (518) 280-8892 or e-mail at wiedeman@nycap.rr.com

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Name This Critter

*'Round the hill he goes
Day in, day out, all he knows
More greens 'round the bend*

CLUE #1

This critter is always a dweller in hilly country. He has to be, since the nigh legs are shorter than the off pair because these beasts spend all their time eating grasses and other vegetation on mountain slopes.

There have been reports of a sub-species found in the Appalachians that has fur only on the downward-sloping side of its body. The fur on its other side has been worn away by constant rubbing against the side of the hill. The skin of these creatures, being so highly polished and smooth, it is sought after by handbag makers.

CLUE #2

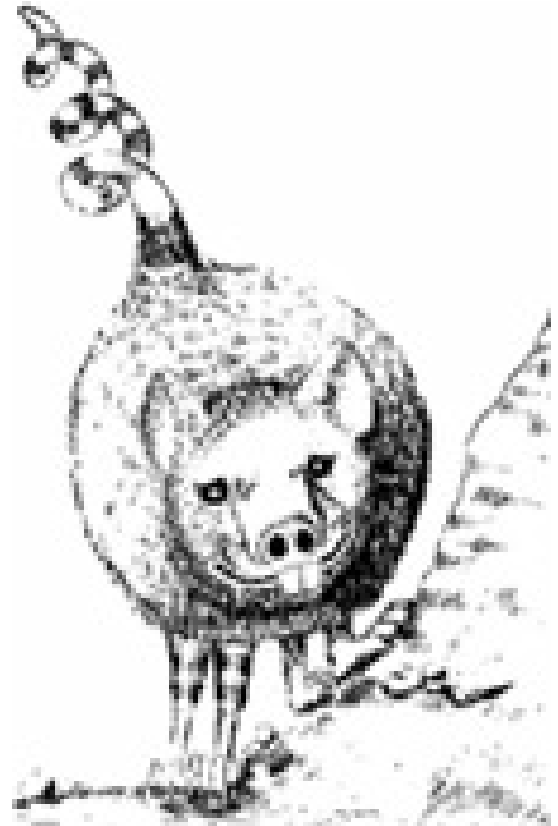
There are six to eight pups in a litter, and once in a great while some of them arrive with the relationship reversed. After being weaned, these sports are rarely seen again by their orthodox-legged brothers and sisters. Normal specimens must obviously travel counter-clockwise around the hillside, and in making their daily rounds for food they wear the characteristic, partly gouged-out paths so familiar to woodsmen and woodswomen.

CLUE #3

Originally found only in New England and New York, this animal is now found throughout the west. The following account explains how this animal migrated from New England. It seems that the population was getting too thick. There warn't enough food to go around, and somebody just had to move out. A pair of these ambitious little varmints, one orthodox, one abnormal legged, got together and decided to strike out for a new location. Of course they could navigate on the hillsides and slopes all right; but they knew mighty well they'd bog down on the flats, so when they struck level going they just leaned.

Mystery Critter

Do you recognize it?



Answer:

The Side-Hill Gouger
Membrineles declivitatis

Join Us!!

Your membership is important

The New York Forest Owners Association is a not-for-profit organization promoting wise stewardship of trees and woodlands for the benefit of current and future generations. We represent family forest owners and all others who care about the future of New York's trees and forests. If you are not currently a member, please consider joining today. Your support can make a difference. Regular annual dues are \$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