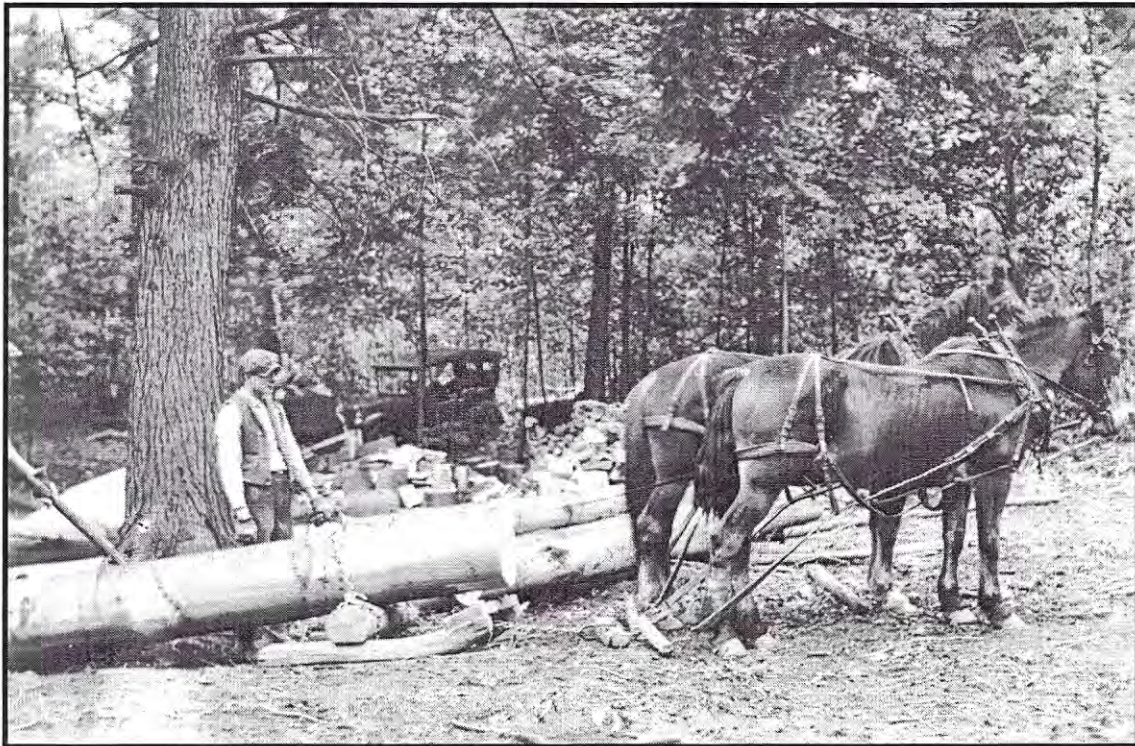


The New York

FOREST OWNER

A publication of the New York Forest Owners Association

September/October 1997



THINNING FOREST STANDS

THE PROBLEM WITH PROPERTY TAXES

YOUR FOREST MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

**THE NEW YORK
FOREST OWNERS
ASSOCIATION**

VOL. 35, NO. 5

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COVER PHOTO:

Skidding beech logs in a woodlot near Camillus—October 1922. Courtesy of Norman Richards and the Moon Memorial Library Archives at SUNY-ESF.

FOREST OWNER

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Please address all membership fees and change of address requests to P.O. Box 180, Fairport, N.Y. 14450. Cost of individual membership/subscription is \$20.

NYFOA'S 1997 FAMILY FOREST FAIR



John Peters, US Forest Service (left); Mary Binder, Publicity Chair; Jill Cornell, Fair Committee Chair. Photo by Patricia Kay (See page 13, for more pictures.)

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President's Message

By Jill Cornell

This summer I accidentally discovered a new landowner forestry tool.

One evening at dusk I set out for the woods with my camera and tripod in hopes of experimenting and learning how to get a good photograph of the woods just as that rosy glow of sunset falls through the trees. That brief period of light is so lovely and I wanted to try and capture it on film. I knew that my 200 ASA film would need a slow shutter speed, hence the tripod.

It has always puzzled me how to get the focus correct both relatively close and at a medium distance. I fussed with the zoom and was very careful to pay attention to the composition of the different shots.

In no time I had used up the 18 exposures left on my film, and sent it off to Mystic Color Lab.

While I waited for the photos to return, I received a letter from a NYFOA member out in the western part of the state. It had copies of photos of what they considered a "mess after a timber harvest". I could readily identify the mess of deep ruts, but I was unsure exactly what else the other photos were meant to convey.

The next day I saw a forester friend, and asked him to look at their photos to help me decide what to say in response to the letter. He saw all kinds of "good" management results: wildlife habitat in the slash, and crop trees saved by the sacrifice of poor quality trees. He also reminded me that I needed to know what the goals and objectives of the NYFOA's harvest had been.

When my photos came back, I found a few that I liked "aesthetically"; the light and composition were fine. I looked at them again, this time from a different perspective. That's when I noticed that there definitely needed to be some management work in that area of the woods.

So, what is the new tool?

A new perspective. ▲



President Jill Cornell

Childhood

By Dorothy S. Darling

I would like to go back:

There were vital veins of water
Running, halting, curving
Across the vibrant body of earth,
Settling with grace in bright pools,
Alight with the glow of sun that
Wove its path of brilliance
Across, above, and around
The grassy lanes and infant trees,
Finally to be shuttered,
Voided by elders' rampant growing.

The day was a passage divorced from time
Into contests of sun and rain
And the whisperings of growing things;
Nights were but fleeting shadows,
Whims quickly dreamed away,
Wrapping the forest, the sleeping waters
And all the rocky, climbing hills
Into a blanket endless and dark,
An interlude quick as a thought,
Flung aside at break of day.

But the being I was is gone
Like a speck in the whirlwind
Of relentless, unforgiving time;
The walls of years cannot be climbed.

I can never go back. ▲

Association Activities

By Jill Cornell

NYFOA's Board of Directors voted to contribute \$250 to support the new Cooperative Extension Program: NY 4-H Forestry and Wildlife. Clubs will be formed on the county level to introduce youths to the principles and practices of natural resource management including silviculture, harvesting and wildlife habitat management. An annual invitational workshop will give selected members the chance to meet and interact with others from across the state. One team will be chosen to represent NY at the national invitational.

The process has been started to gain tax exempt status by creating a foundation which will support NYFOA educational and charitable programs.

A Legislative Committee, chaired by **Hugh Canham**, will summarize pending and proposed legislative bills in Albany and Washington which relate to forest landowner issues.

Next Board of Directors Meeting: Saturday, **October 25, 1997**, 9:30 AM at Marshall Hall, SUNY ESF, Syracuse. Members are welcome to attend.

Forest Art Contest!!!

NYFOA is going to print (color preferred) an 8 notepaper series, and we want it to be made up of member's artwork. Any color photo from 35mm print film or slide film, any painting in water color, acrylic or oil, and any pen and ink drawing is eligible. (If a painting is too big to mail, please get a good photo of it to submit.) Eight pieces will be selected by an Art Review Committee chaired by **Rita Hammond**.

Mail to: **Rita Hammond (716 652 2857)**
795 Olean Road East Aurora, NY 14052

Prizes: Having your art work published, and sent all over the world, plus 2 complete series free, and 8 note cards with your artwork.

Rules:

1. Any number of works may be submitted.
2. Artists name and address must be on the back of all entries.
3. All entries will become property of NYFOA for publication.
4. Applicants who wish their artwork returned must enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope.
5. Deadline: **October 1, 1997**. We hope to have them available for Christmas presents.
6. Winners will be announced in the Nov/Dec Forest Owner. ▲

THINNING FOREST STANDS:

Not Essential, But May Be Useful

By Norman Richards

New York's forests have regrown in various dimensions over the last several decades. Increase in forest area was rapid from the 1930s through the '60s; more recently it has slowed as acreage gains and losses approach a balance; and forest area may well decline a little in the future from competition of other land uses. A second dimension is the change in age structure as former farmland that reforested, mostly from natural seeding but some from planting, grows from sapling tree stands to pole-sized and on to timber-sized stands. Of the 14.4 million acres of "commercial" timberlands in New York in 1968, 43% were young sapling and seedling areas; 18% were "poletimber" acres, averaging 5 to 9 or 11 inches diameter, and 30% sawtimber size. Of the 15.4 million acres of timberland in 1993, sapling-seedling area had dropped to 16%, poletimber acres had grown to 30%, and sawtimber area increased to 53%.

This changing age structure suggests the logic of current concerns largely with sawtimber harvest as a critical activity affecting future values of our forests, including changing stand timber quality as a third, more equivocal, growth dimension. But, the increasing acreage of poletimber stands would suggest that stand thinning also should get more attention. Thinning activity gets less emphasis now than a few decades ago, perhaps because it is a relatively optional activity for future stand development. While foresters often may comment that a poletimber stand "needs thinning", this is not a biologic need but rather relates to improving particular stand values.

However, natural thinning is an essential biologic process as tree communities develop from many small trees to fewer larger ones. So, like pruning discussed in the *NY Forest Owner* last September, our management decisions on thinning can consider three alternatives: let nature take its course; accelerate and guide the natural process more to our liking; or counter the natural process to change elements we don't like.

Again, all three alternatives must start with some understanding of the natural processes.



Author considering a third thinning of potential timber crop-trees in an old-field sugar maple stand about 75 years old on his tree farm in the Catskills.

The "pole" stage of a stand develops when trees in their most rapid period of

"While foresters often may comment that a poletimber stand 'needs thinning', this is not a biologic need but rather relates to improving particular stand values."

height growth form a closed canopy that shades out lower branches and slows diameter growth of the lower stem, resulting in

a relatively uniform wood-pole appearance with little sight of leaves at eye-level. This stage has sometimes been called a "biotic desert" by people concerned with animal species requiring live leaf and branch mass near the ground. But more accurately, a stand at this stage has developed three rather distinct vertical levels of biotic habitat. While the leafless stem mass from ground past eye level usually supports few organisms other than feeders on the bark of the expanding stems, the primary production of the leaf mass zone over our heads typically supports a wide diversity of consumers—tree mammals and birds, insects and smaller organisms. And under our feet, litter from the tree tops and the growing root mass are fostering forest soil conditions in which diverse consumer organisms are important in recycling nutrients back through the tree-based ecosystem.

From the pole-stage on, forest variation must be considered at vertical scales of biotic layers within stands as well as horizontal scales of differences among forest patches and stands. Later, in the sawtimber stage of an even-aged stand, natural disturbances or planned tree removals open up the stand canopy enough to encourage growth of a layer of tree regeneration. After repeated natural or planned tree removals an uneven-aged stand develops.

Looking at developing forest stands more closely, when young saplings grow to form a closed canopy, intense interaction among trees becomes a controlling factor in stand development. While commonly called "competition", this is different from deliberate competition in human terms. "Interference" of trees with each other's development more accurately describes the unplanned negative interactions among trees in a stand. These interactions generally are unequal, so trees initially advantaged by their genetics or microenvironment gain at the expense of less fortunate neighbors. The height growth of advantaged, upper-canopy trees is little affected by crowding of neighbors, but their

diameter growth is reduced. Both diameter and height growth of disadvantaged trees are reduced, so they become overtopped and eventually die. The stand's future is with the winners, and the meek cannot inherit the stand unless the advantaged trees lose their position due to individual catastrophes such as top-breakage or disease.

How this natural thinning process plays out in a stand depends on tree variation, spacing and growth-rate. Closely spaced, fast-growing but variable trees differentiate into winners and losers early, so natural thinning proceeds fairly quickly. Conversely, planted tree seedlings at a typical 6 to 10 foot spacing usually develop to a fairly uniform closed canopy in which the natural thinning process takes several years to develop. Diameter growth of the advantaged trees slows early under close spacing, but then tends to continue at a fairly uniform rate as disadvantaged neighbors thin out. Widely spaced trees grow more rapidly in diameter at first until the stand closes densely, and then diameter growth declines sharply during the slow process of differentiating winners and losers.

Leaving thinning to nature

As the natural thinning process takes care of the biological need for tree numbers to be reduced from many small trees to fewer larger ones in the course of tree growth, we can leave thinning to nature if this fits our values expected from a forest stand. Especially, natural thinning is satisfactory if a landowner is satisfied with the natural selection of favored trees and can accept the natural rate of diameter growth of these trees slowly gaining over disadvantaged neighbors. Some potential advantages of leaving thinning to nature are that slower growing wood, especially of conifers, may be stronger and more stable than wider-ringed wood, and possible damage to desirable trees during thinning activity is avoided. Also, unthinned stands are likely to produce greater height of branch-free stems and greater biomass or cubic-foot volume of wood per acre than stands we have thinned. Some insect or disease hazards may be increased by leaving stands to the slow natural thinning process while some other insect or disease problems may be increased by thinning activity, so one can

argue either way in this respect.

Overall, as I suggested in a previous article, whether forest owners choose to leave stand thinning to nature or intervene in the process does not appear to be a critical issue of "public interests" in forest resources, and therefore public subsidies for private woodland thinning are debatable. If trees



Row thinning of a white pine plantation in Warren County.

removed in thinning activities do not have a use or value that compensates for thinning, then the owner's personal values determine whether the effort is worthwhile. For many forest owners, a major value of

"...the "thinning issue" for landowners is what options and their consequences to consider, if and when one decides to intervene in the natural thinning process."

thinning activity is low cost creation and maintenance of wood's trails for recreational use and emergency access. Conversely, naturally thinned stands maintain

a more "wild" character that some may prefer on at least parts of their landscape.

Our broadening ecological viewpoints may now accept that natural thinning of trees is not "a waste" as the recycling deadwood is a significant part of forest ecosystems, and on the other hand, removing thinned tree stems for use otherwise does not significantly deprive the forest if the tops and roots are left to recycle. And traditional "husbandry" values of showing that we care about land by intensively taking care of it are somewhat balanced by increasing values of sensitivity in letting natural processes proceed unfettered wherever feasible. So the "thinning issue" for landowners is what options and their consequences to consider, if and when one decides to intervene in the natural thinning process.

Some thinning principles

If one chooses either to push conservatively the natural thinning process or more boldly to change it, the basic objective of thinning activity is to direct a growing stand's development to better favor the values we seek from that stand. Thinning differs in concept from harvest cuts in being an intermediate treatment focused on development of the present stand rather than stand harvest and regeneration. Thinning concepts rest on a general observation that in an actively growing closed stand with intense tree interactions, one can remove up to about 40% of the tree biomass without greatly reducing annual growth per acre of the stand. Within this range, increased di-

ameter growth of fewer trees largely compensates for slower growth of more trees. If much more than 40% is removed, the remaining trees cannot use all the space and growth resources opened up, so stand production is reduced proportionally and a wave of new tree regeneration is favored.

Several considerations come into how much and what trees to remove in thinning activities. If one is satisfied with the species and form of most of the advantaged trees destined to be winners anyway, one might choose to simply accelerate the natural thinning process by removing some neighboring disadvantaged trees in a conservative thinning. Removing only smaller trees before they die anyway—called a low thinning—has little impact on stand development, however. We can gain more ben-

efit from our efforts by "crown thinnings" that free favored trees from more directly interfering neighbors.

The usual range of thinnings is between about 20 and 35% of stand biomass or cubic foot volume. Lighter thinnings tend to have too little effect to be worthwhile; heavier thinnings increase the risk of wind damage after thinning, which may open a stand more than planned. Light thinnings repeated fairly frequently—10 year or shorter intervals—maintain tighter control over tree development, and may be best for thinning young trees where cut trees are not removed. However, where cut trees are removed for use, heavier thinnings repeated less often may result in less felling and skidding damage to trees being favored by the thinning. As damage to desired trees can defeat the purpose of thinnings to increase timber value, it is wise to take steps to avoid this. These include avoiding spring thinning when bark damage occurs easiest, and laying out skid rails away from desired trees and near "bumper trees" that are removed last in the thinning operation.

If we are not satisfied with many of the advantaged trees destined to be natural winners, then a bolder thinning approach is warranted. Two situations on my Catskill tree farm are common examples. Natural reforestation of old pastures often was uneven, so the advantaged trees that got started first tend to be coarse-branched or multiple-stemmed while trees with better timber potential are among those that filled in later. Similarly, planted or natural white pine pole stands that were weevil-damaged when younger typically have badly deformed dominant trees and some better formed trees in disadvantaged positions. In both cases, a fairly early and bold "high thinning" is required if the better stems are to be released before they become real losers. Thinning may be a waste of time in these situations if delayed until there is little worth releasing—in which case, Peter Levatich's article on "Starting Over" (NYFO May/June 1997) offers useful advice.

On the other hand, where there is no need to rescue desired trees from stronger but poorer dominants, thinnings made too early may reduce potential stem quality of favored trees. In dense naturally seeded stands, it is useful to let considerable natu-

ral thinning reduce stem numbers before interceding in the process. In more uniform planted stands, such as of spruce or red pine, it may be useful to leave a stand crowded long enough to kill off lower branches but not wait for significant natural thinning to begin. It is often practical to delay plantation thinning until a salable product such as pulp can be removed, and then thin by rows for easier tree removal with less damage to remaining trees. There used to be



Is there enough crown space for the growth desired on this sugar maple crop-tree?

quite liberal public subsidies for "pre-commercial" thinnings in young trees too small to provide a merchantable product from trees removed. While such thinnings looked like a positive activity, it was my observation that—especially when applied to dense natural sapling or pole stands—such early thinnings often either wasted effort that natural thinning would have accomplished or produced branchier tree stems than if thinnings were delayed. Also, "chemi-thinning" with herbicides was widely promoted, and I have used this myself to save labor costs of tree cutting. However, acceptable herbicides are now much more expensive because of required testing and regulatory costs. So I prefer to confine her-

bicide thinning to removal of larger trees with low salvage value when I think the cost and the hazard of physical damage from cutting them exceeds the uncertain hazards of herbicide use.

Crop tree thinning

Thinning efforts should always focus on improving desired trees rather than simply removing poor trees. For forest owners who want to make thinnings to improve growth of good sawtimber trees in even-aged stands, the most effective and satisfying method is likely to be "crop tree thinning". This method is applied in a pole-stand old enough to clearly identify trees with good potential for quality sawtimber—straight, smooth, unforked and relatively branch-free lower stems and healthy enough leafy crowns to appear capable of responding well to thinning. If 80 to 100 good potential crop trees per acre can be identified, this is about all the trees that can grow well to at least 16 inch average diameter for quality timber. This is an average spacing of about 20 to 23 feet between potential crop trees, as evenly spaced as stand conditions permit. However, in poorer quality stands, I think crop tree thinning may still be worthwhile if at least 40 good potential crop trees per acre can be identified—averaging 33 foot spacing.

It is helpful to permanently mark the potential crop trees, such as with white paint, both to clearly identify them during thinning and to observe their development afterwards. Thinning is focused on what will most help the development of each crop tree, such as removing the most interfering neighbor or two or three lesser neighbors. One usually should not remove all the non-crop trees because this would likely open the stand too much for a thinning. Rather, the remaining trees are used as "pawns" to maintain other desired stand conditions. For example, one might want to remove many of them to favor woody sprouting for winter deer browse, or leave them to restrain woody sprouting and favor spring flowers, other wood's herbs and eye-level visibility through the stand. Crop tree thinning ideally takes a lot of skill or good-guessing compared to more mechanistic approaches, and I have made many mis-judgments in such thinnings as viewed from "scholar hindsight". Observing the responses of marked potential crop-trees

after thinning is a good way for an active landowner to learn much about the growth of their trees and woodlands.

From thinning to harvest and regeneration

As noted earlier, after repeated thinnings along with natural tree losses, even-aged stands eventually develop a second age-class in tree regeneration that—once past the deer—is likely to be mostly shade-tolerant species of poor-formed, slow-growing saplings under the modest stand openings of thinnings. At this point, for forest owners interested in sustaining good sawtimber production among their multiple forest values, it may be time to shift thoughts from thinning to options for harvest and regeneration of a stand. The various choices and methods for harvest and regeneration are receiving considerable academic attention in light of our increasing sawtimber-size forest volume and acreage in New York. These include single-tree selection—essentially continued but heavier thinnings—and group selection or patch cutting to develop multi-aged stands, and shelterwood or clearcuts to repeat even-aged stands.

In the last **NY Forest Owner**, **Carl Wiedemann** gave a figure from forest inventory data that the percentage of New York's hardwood sawtimber-sized trees classified as Grade I has dropped from 15% to 11% between 1970 and 1993, as evidence that timber quality on private forest land is declining. This is a deceptive statistic because both the acreage and numbers of sawtimber-sized trees—over 11 inches diameter for hardwoods—has increased substantially in this period, and much of the new ingrowth is still below the 16 inches diameter that defines Grade I hardwood trees. So it is questionable whether long-run timber quality really is significantly declining in New York in spite of “less-than-ideal” timber management practiced on much of our commercial forest land. But for forest owners who want to contribute actively to accelerating quality timber production in the future, appropriate thinning activity can be a personally satisfying way of expressing this. Or alternatively, it may be equally honorable “forest stewardship” to simply hold young forest stands against the pressures for parcelization and let natural thinning processes develop quality timber more slowly. ▲

Norman Richards is Professor in Forestry at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

THE FOREST BEHIND THE TREES

Regulators, Terminators, and Resource Recovery Agents

*A correspondence course offered by SUNY College of
Environmental Science and Forestry's Office of
Continuing Education*

Paul D. Manion

Professor of Environmental and Forest Biology

This three-credit course is designed for those interested in the biological and non-biological forces manipulating and shaping trees into forests. Individuals interested in forest pathology; major diseases of forest, shade, and ornamental trees; deterioration of forest products; and the biotic and abiotic factors that regulate, terminate, and recover resources from the forest behind the trees will find this upper-division course of benefit.

The course will serve the needs and interests of private, non-industrial forest landowners; woodlot managers; suburban residents; and the public with an interest in forest stewardship, and management.

Although there are no specific prerequisites for this course, it will be helpful if you can identify a few of the trees in your area. Required reading and fieldwork are part of the course requirements. This course is equivalent to EFB 340: Forest and Shade Tree Pathology offered on the SUNY-ESF campus.

*For course details please contact Dr. Paul Manion
voice: (315) 470-6783; e-mail: pdmanion@mailbox.syr.edu*

*For course registration please contact ESF Continuing Education
voice: (315) 470-6891; fax: (315) 470-6890;
e-mail: caweinhe@mailbox.syr.edu*



Thinking Through Your Forest Management Objectives

By Peter J. Smallidge

The pivotal and perhaps most important step in deliberate forest management, as with other decision making processes, is to state clearly and explicitly your objectives. The range of services available to help you list your forest management objectives illustrates the great value placed on this step. Clearly stated objectives provide direction, simplify the decision making process, and provide a standard to gauge success. Your management objectives reflect what you value about your forests. These are your tangible and intangible personal values and the values provided to your community as a result of your management activities. Thus, the secret to successful forest management is to have explicit and realistic objectives, and what is involved and what assistance is available to help.

The first step in making your forest management objectives is thinking about your forest: why you own your forest, what you like about your forest, and how you want your forest to look in 5, 10, 20, or more years. Many people own forests because they inherited them, purchased them as a place of sanctuary, or purchased them for investment purposes. This is a start for your objectives as it explains perhaps a sentimental value, the value of retreat or seclusion, the value of an investment, or most likely some combination of the three. You may like to visit the part of your forest where you had a pleasant experience, a scenic overlook, the spot where you can always flush a grouse or run a rabbit, or the stand of red oak or sugar maple that will someday help support you in retirement.

Finally, the vision of your future forest is probably closely aligned with what you like about your forest. For example, keeping the memorable spot unchanged, ready access to grouse cover, or an increase in the sawtimber value of your oak or maple stand. Again, your values help define your forest management objectives. These thoughts and visions are the basis of your forest management objectives because they provide the direction and the standards for successful management.

The next step is to ensure your objectives are mutually compatible and realistic for your forest. This is where some people start to have trouble, but there are several free sources of assistance available.

MASTER FOREST OWNERS

One source is a group of people, forest landowners like you, but trained as volunteers and forest ambassadors by Cornell Cooperative Extension as Master Forest Owners. MFOs are not foresters, they are forest landowners trained as volunteers. They can help you think through your forest management objectives, and can point you in the correct direction for self-help or professional services. Typically, MFOs will schedule with you a half-day visit to your forest, listen to your forest management values, and help you think about your forest management options. Your MFO can suggest Cornell Cooperative Extension publications available to address some of your specific needs. Contact your county's Cooperative Extension office for useful forest management publications or for the name and phone number of your local MFO.

An organization that many MFOs and other forest landowners belong to is the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA). NYFOA is an active, landowner based organization full of good information and good people.

Forest landowners who are members of NYFOA often lead woods walks or may be available to discuss forestry with you. For more information call NYFOA at (800) 836-3566.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

A second option for assistance in stating your forest management objectives is the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation public service foresters. The DEC public service foresters are trained professionals, and will visit with you free of charge to discuss your forest management objectives. Like MFOs, the public service forester is a good listener and will help you think through your objectives. The differences between MFOs and DEC foresters are complementary. An MFO can not make forest management prescriptions, but probably can visit with you sooner than a DEC forester and can relate to you as a forest landowner.

Although the MFO will likely recommend you contact a DEC forester, the MFO will help prepare you to optimally utilize your time with a DEC forester.

Depending on your interests and needs, the MFO or DEC service forester may suggest you engage a professional private consulting forester. Because private consulting

foresters provide fee-based services, land owners are best positioned if they have their objectives well defined. You can call the DEC in Albany (518-457-7370) for the phone number of the closest DEC forester or for a list of consulting foresters.

NORTHEAST DECISION MODEL (NED)

A third source of assistance to help with your forest management objectives is a US Forest Service software package called the Forest Stewardship Planning Guide module of NED (ver. 1.1). NED is a cluster of computer modules from the Northeast Decision (NED) model for forest management that runs well on most computers that will run Microsoft Windows. You can download a free copy of the Forest Stewardship Planning Guide from the world wide web (<http://www.fsl.uvm.edu/>) or call 802-951-6774 to receive a copy by mail. The Forest Stewardship Planning Guide will help you think about your management objectives, perhaps show you some options you hadn't thought of, and help you select mutually compatible objectives. Other NED modules focus on forest growth simulation, wildlife habitat suitability, and forest health.

SUMMARY

To bring this to closure, let's specify a realistic set of forest management objectives. From the examples here, blended to illustrate management with multiple objectives, you may desire to (1) keep the big trees where you saw your first pileated woodpecker; (2) maintain at least 10 acres as suitable cover for grouse and rabbits, and (3) produce high quality red oak sawtimber. Your objectives may not all be accomplished from the same acre, but it's very likely they are all possible from your forest.

These then are the basics and the support sources to help you state your objectives and start the management of your forest. Remember, knowing your forest management objectives is an important part of deliberate forest management planning that will help you get the most from your forested land. ▲

Peter J. Smallidge is the State Extension Forester for the Department of Natural Resources, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University. This article is available from Cornell Cooperative News Service (the series, Forests For Tomorrow.)

NYFOA's

Fall Meeting

Location: Heiberg Forest, Tully, NY. Interstate 81, (Exit #14)

Date: Friday, Sept 26, 1997 and Saturday, Sept. 27, 1997

Full Meeting (26 & 27th): \$25.00/per person

Sept. 27th only: \$15.00/per person

Send reservation checks, names and addresses to: Exit 14

Debbie Gill; PO Box 180; Fairport, NY 14450;

716/377-6060; 800/836-3566 (Deadline Sept. 17)

LODGINGS:

Motel 6, Syracuse. interstate 90, exit 35; 315/433-1300.

Twenty rooms are being held: **Single**, \$36., **Double**: \$42.

30 min. to Tully. Also, **Best Western**, Tully; 800/528-1234. **Single**, \$69.; **Double** \$59.

SCHEDULE:

Friday, Sept. 26th

6:00 PM Registration and Informal Gathering

7:00 PM Steak Barbeque Dinner

8:15 PM Evening Speaker: Prof. Hugh Canham, SUNY ESF; "Legislative Action Update-'97"

9:00 PM Evening Entertainment **Extravaganza**: Belt Sander Race!

Saturday, Sept 27th

8-8:30 AM Continental Breakfast & registration

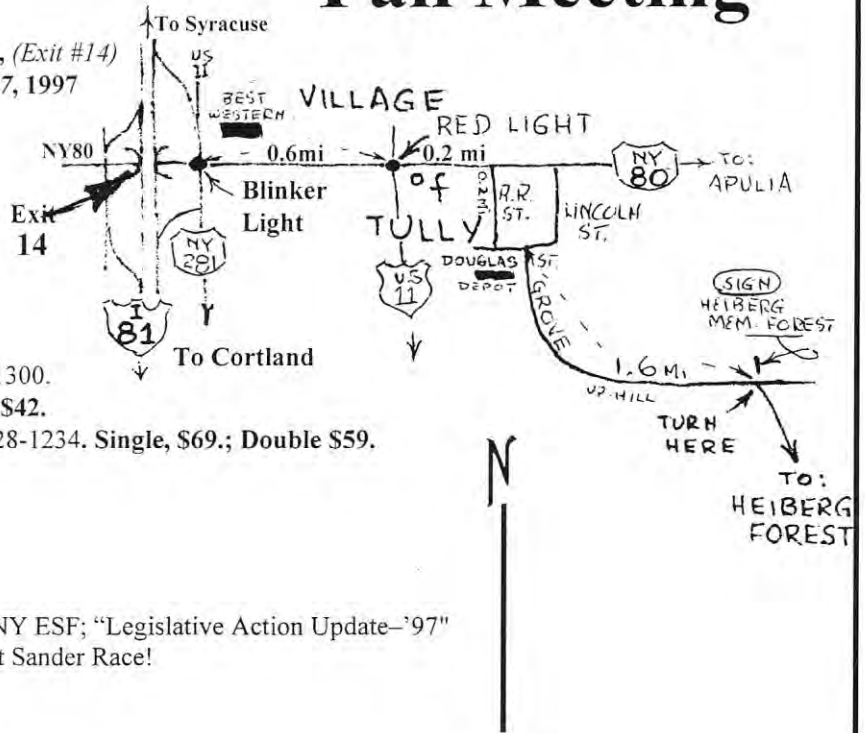
8:30 AM Welcome: Jill Cornell, NYFOA President

8:35-10 AM Panel Discussion: "Alternative **Income** Sources for Forest Landowners".

10-12:30 Willow Biomass Project, Dr. Larry Abrahamson, SUNY ESF

12:30 - 1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:30+PM Tour of SUNY ESF Genetic Experimentation Field Site, Tully Experiment Station (Alternate tours possible)



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The Problem With Property Taxes

By Hugh O. Canham

The property tax has been an institution for centuries. It has been a major way of raising revenues for the operation of governments both in the United States and across much of Europe. The property tax has also been the subject of much discussion in forestry circles. Indeed, the profession of Forestry Economics owes its start, in part, to the concerns of foresters over the effects of high property taxes on sustainable forestry. Starting in the 1930's and continuing to the present, there have been studies, policy proposals, and programs aimed at reducing the property tax burden for forest landowners.

That property taxes are high, few would question. For forest land the tax often is confiscatory. That is, the property tax consumes so much of any financial revenue to render timber production financially unattractive. Obviously, if taxes take all of the revenue they are confiscatory. However, even well before 100 percent of revenue taxes can be seen as making an investment unattractive. Currently in many areas property taxes take a much higher percentage of income possible from forest land than for other land using enterprises. Thus, even if property taxes take only 50 percent of the timber revenues, this is much higher than the tax burden on other land uses, such as agricultural or commercial uses.

If a society accepts government as a legitimate enterprise then revenues are needed to run that enterprise. Taxes are the logical way to raise those revenues. The American society depends, in part, on government. Our economy has been described as a free enterprise capitalistic one with strong government intervention to insure equity and to provide those services which might not be produced in the amount or way that a purely private competitive economy might. Thus we accept taxes as necessary.

The property tax is one of the oldest forms of taxation. The basis premise is simple: those who own land are wealthy, land produces revenues or commodities that can be exchanged for revenue, and the more land owned, the greater the wealth.

Property taxes have a great certainty. Once the assessed value of properties are established, and the amount of government revenue required is established, it is simple arithmetic to determine the amount of tax to be paid by each parcel of land. If people

do not pay their taxes the "kings guard" or police force, can simply enforce the law. Contrast this with sales or income tax systems where the amount of revenue generated is not known until after the taxing time period. Furthermore, these other systems require large administrative and reporting systems to operate. Given its simplicity, the property tax is easy to administer at the local government level. It works if property ownership is related to ability to pay and to use of services.

There are three generally held principles of taxation, as follows:

1. Efficiency - The cost of administering the tax should be low relative to the revenues collected.

2. Equity - The tax should reflect the ability of the person or firm to pay (wealth or income) or should relate to the person's or firm's use of public services.

3. Behavior neutral - The tax should not induce any change in people's behavior.

"For forest land, the tax often is confiscatory."

The property tax in late 20th century U. S. A. fails to meet the principles of taxation, on all counts. First, it is becoming more and more costly to administer the property tax system. Landowners are protesting and suing over inequitable assessments relative to their neighbors. New laws mandate yearly updates of assessments. Property characteristics are becoming more complex as regards market value.

Second, the property tax is not equitable. Today, land ownership does not accurately reflect wealth or use of services. In a landed gentry society of colonial America, or even in a largely rural society, land ownership does reflect wealth. However, today, other forms of capital, income, and information ownership reflect wealth. The country is covered with people who are land-poor. In addition, land ownership does not correlate well with use of services. Fire control, law enforcement, public school dependency, military protection, social welfare needs: none of these correlate well with property ownership.

Third, the property tax does induce be-

havior changes in people. Indeed, this has been the major issue in forestry. The allegation is that high property taxes lead people to harvest timber earlier than if the tax were absent. It has led to some liquidation of forest land and sale for nontimber uses. These and other effects might not in themselves be bad, however, if maintenance of a healthy timber-based economy and protection of open space are taken as desirable, as they are in this country, then the behavior-change effects of property taxes are undesirable.

If it were politically feasible, I would do away completely with the property tax. Lacking that, I strongly recommend, as first steps, uncoupling School district funding from the property tax and sharply reducing town budget reliance on property taxes. Instead, government revenues should be raised from tax sources that are more equitable and more efficient, namely, sales and income taxes. This shift would mean that local units of government and school districts would depend on revenue-sharing from county and state-based sales and income tax collection systems. It is not feasible for small units of government to establish their own tax collection systems. Indeed, one of the most efficient tax collection systems in the world is the U.S. federal income tax system. In spite of lengthy forms and high paid tax consultants, the revenues raised by the federal income tax system far outweighs the costs of administering it.

There is some strong evidence that the New York State legislature and the Governor are moving to reduce reliance on property tax systems. However, there is also much opposition. The property tax system is one "last bastions" of local government control and autonomy. It can easily be brought into the local political system and controlled—some would say corrupted. Many local government officials are understandably wary of depending on revenues that are distributed based on a formula that itself might be inequitable for their locality. Finally, revenues from sales and income taxes are uncertain; the amount is only known after the fact, not before as with the property tax system. If we are going to have the property tax system around then there are still major problems with the numerous abatement and special exemption

programs that abound. To make the property tax system "work" there have been various "tinkering" with it. The result is a hodgepodge of variances that allegedly benefit this or that special interest group. Thus we have exemptions and reductions for senior citizens, veterans, farmers, forest owners, developing businesses, etc. The exemptions and reductions are all justified in the name of public service, socially desirable activity, or public benefits generated by these properties. However, all exemptions and reductions greatly increase the cost of administering the system and, more importantly, shift the tax burden. Any time one group of property owners are granted relief in the amount or timing of the tax they must pay, the rest of the taxing jurisdiction must bear the added cost. Annual income is required to run local government! Interestingly, the average residential and small business-commercial property owners usually end up bearing most of the tax shift. No one gives me a tax break because I paint my house regularly or plant flowers and regularly mow the lawn and do not put up ugly signs! Yet, these are public benefits and I am a responsible citizen!

"There is some strong evidence that the New York State legislature and the Governor are moving to reduce reliance on property tax systems."

Where does the above discussion leave the present property tax system in New York as regards forest land? Presently we have section 480A of the Real Property Tax Law that grants a reduction in the amount of the annual property tax in exchange for various commitments by the forest owner. (Various articles have been written about 480A and Mike Greason of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and the local DEC forestry offices have much information on the program.) If 480A is to remain it should be made very simple and easy to use and reimbursement should be given to local governments for lost or deferred revenues. This reimbursement would come from State government, thus shifting the tax burden to the entire tax and based on State-based systems, namely, sales and income taxes.

In particular, changes in 480A that are recommended include the following:

- Reduce the minimum required acreage to 20 acres

- Have one-time sign-up with a roll-back penalty when the property is taken out of the program. That is, eliminate the annual sign-up for a rolling ten year period. Alternatively, sign up for a 10 year period with a roll back penalty if the property is withdrawn before the 10 year time limit or if a timber sale is held within 3 years after the end of the 10 years.

- Drop the requirement of an approved management plan.

- Require the land to stay in forest cover. If converted to nonforest use there would be a penalty. Note that this does not exclude clear-cutting which is a legitimate timber-harvesting and silviculture tool. In New York State without conversion to other uses, land that is clearcut will naturally revegetate to forest within a few years.

- Grant a simple 50% exemption of full value assessment.

- The State would reimburse local government for lost revenues.

- Continue the 6% yield tax payable when timber is commercially harvested. This payment would go directly to state government.

There are several rationales for these proposed changes. **First**, most local governments (towns, school districts, etc.) do not get significant revenues from forest land taxes. Granted some of the very heavily forested towns in the Adirondacks and elsewhere where little other type of property exists do depend more on forest land taxes.

Second, New York forests have provided wood and many other benefits for New York State residents for over 300 years without much in detailed management plans, etc. Furthermore, it is a grave mistake to strait-jacket all owners into one system. The biodiversity of the State, its rich mix of habitats and species may best be continued by different owners pursuing individual goals and practices.

New York State has high taxes and high overall social costs. However, the State has one of the best standards of living, it possesses vast natural resources, and is capable of being a leader in public policy. We should

not let an antiquated tax system stand in the way of becoming a true "Empire State. ▲

Hugh Canham is Professor of Forest and Resource Economics at S.U.N.Y. College of Environmental Science and Forestry and serves as a NYFOA Director and Chairperson of the Legislative Committee. This article is based on a talk given at the 1997 spring meeting of the New York Forest Owners Association.

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LETTERS

NY'S FAMILY FOREST FAIR

My hat goes off to you and all the contributors of the last issue of the FOREST OWNER [May/June '97]. In my opinion this may have been the best issue ever. There was a wealth and variety of information plus thought provoking commentary. I especially enjoyed the article by **Wayne Oakes** about the neolithic man.

I also praise **Mr. Michael** for his article, *Will Forest Owners Have Any Cherry, Ash or Oak...* I would like to add some of my experiences regarding even-age management practices. In 17 years as a DEC forester working with private landowners, I can count on my fingers (not even my toes), the number of landowners who have actually followed through with some form of clearcut, or shelterwood. That is not a very good track record. Even-age management has such a "bad" reputation, it is a tough sell. Even-age management should have been outlined as an option in Mr. Michael's case, but I can understand why it was not. I remember situations where I did not promote even-age management options as vigorously as I should. It is only human nature to want to avoid rejection, and sometimes I am tired of people disregarding sound advice. Mr. Michael's story is a reminder to me that some will listen.

As a followup to **John Braubitz's** article on the tulip tree, (my favorite tree, as well as a shade intolerant tree which requires even-age management for regeneration!), I am enclosing an article. (See pg. 14)

—**Mark Keister, Wayland**

Firewood Forestry

A periodic survey of residential fuelwood consumption in New York (based on a sample of 1,925 respondents) conducted under the direction of Professor **Hugh O. Canham** of SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry and **Thomas D. Martin** of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation yielded the following estimates: About 890,000 cords of wood were burned as fuel by private residences in the state in 1994-95, less than half of that consumed in 1989-90. The use of wood as a home heating fuel is greatest, as expected, in Northern New York, the Adirondacks and the Southern Tier; and almost half of wood used was cut by the user. Copies of the survey results are available from Professor Canham at 315-470-6694 or Mr. Martin at 518-457-7431.

Reprinted from *Rural Futures*, Newsletter of the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources.

By **Mike Greason**

The Capital District and Southeastern Chapters of NYFOA joined the Department of Environmental Conservation, Cornell Cooperative Extension, forest industry and the consultant forestry community to host and expand upon the Family Forest Fair that has been held by the Central New York Chapter for the past three years. The goal was to reach a wide array of audiences with a message of the sustainable bounty of the northeast forest and increase public awareness of forest stewardship.

The fair was designed to appeal to many audiences. High school students were encouraged to come talk to the New York colleges offering natural resource programs. There was one building dedicated to exhibits, displays and interactive activities for young children. Eighteen governmental exhibits and about sixty commercial exhibitors provided products, services and information on as many subjects—all forest related. Eight sets of four to six formal presentations covered such subjects as birds of prey, search and rescue, chain saw safety, woods walks, saw milling, flute making and historic river run logging films of the Adirondacks. Every fair goer received a 52 page booklet with fair information and articles about owning and caring for forestland.

To promote the event, every television and radio station, newspaper, and organization with an interest in natural resources was contacted for advertising the fair. One car dealer in Albany on a main highway displayed a lighted sign notice as a public service for free! One major TV channel gave a two minute evening news item dedicated to the event. Twenty newspaper articles were collected directly promoting the fair and those contacts led to several additional articles on forestry related topics. Had no one come to the fair, the committee felt that the media coverage alone was worth the effort. Every New Yorker within a hundred mile radius was exposed to positive forestry information on a regular basis for a few weeks.

Fifteen hundred people came to the fair. Each attendee was asked to fill out a form for a free raffle ticket for prizes that would be offered. This provided a mailing list to contact to encourage membership in the New York Forest Owner Association, pro-

vide additional forestry information and give the opportunity for feedback on the fair and other issues.

Plans are underway for next year. The positive remarks of attendees coupled with the enthusiasm of the volunteers makes this major effort seem worth repeating. This year's fair was carried out with six months planning and development. Next year's event will have fourteen months lead time. The volunteers learned from this year and have many ideas for new strategies. The experience has helped establish contacts, credibility, and other factors that should result in a coordinated effort that should attract between 4,000 and 5,000 people in the future. There are new entities interested in partnering. Now there is a realistic accounting for cost and expectation of work.

This Family Forest Fair was a success. Fifteen hundred people have a greater appreciation for the bounty, resilience, renewability, and sustainability of the northeast forest. And, actually the outstanding media coverage extends the impacts far beyond those who actually walked through the exhibits and watched the demonstrations. ▲

Mike Greason is NYS DEC Chief of the Bureau of Private Land Service. This article is a reprint from the CDC Newsletter.

First Patent Issued For a Spruce Hybrid

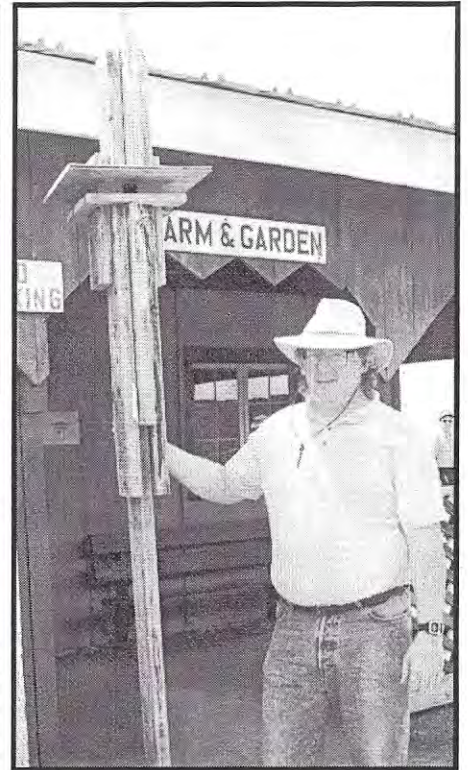
In this era of genetic engineering and even the cloning of mammals, scientific breakthroughs seem to be the norm rather than the exception.

Accordingly, Forgene, Inc., a biotechnology company in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, has received the first U.S. general patent for a tree.

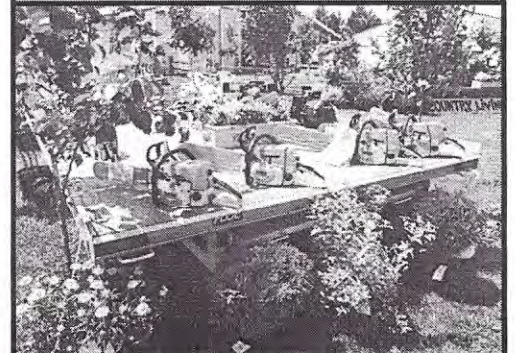
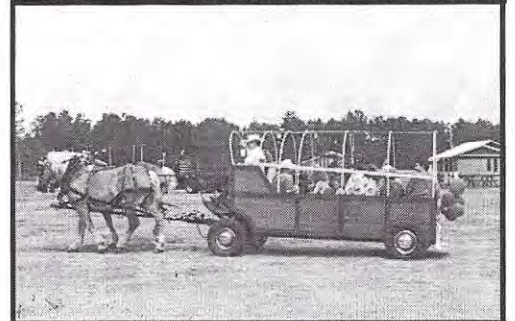
The Super Tree is a genetically-improved white spruce that can grow twice as fast as a normal spruce tree. Forgene claims that hybrids will produce pulpwood for the paper industry at 20 years instead of the current normal age of 40 years, and for lumber production at 40 years instead of 80 years.

About 150 million white spruce seedlings are planted each year in the United States and Canada.

Reprinted from *NATIONAL WOODLANDS*, July 1997.



NYFOA'S 1997 FAMILY FOREST FAIR—By Patricia Kay



Tulip Tree

By John Sillick

We spent an interesting afternoon a while back when the state Forester came to walk the woods at the back of the farm. He had an explanation for why so many of the trees were so tall and straight. About eighty years ago land was let go and the trees all got an even start and competed equally for the sunlight. Why then did a half dozen trees have their crowns poked head and shoulders above their neighbors? "That's what a forester likes to see," came the reply "they're the tulips..."

I was unfamiliar with the tulip tree. My dad's woods, where I spent many of my younger days had beech, ash, maple, basswood and black cherry, the same trees that populate our woods here, but nothing called a tulip tree. Nor had any of the many woods I had worked in for the last twenty years. I became very curious about this tree that dominated the woods in size if not in number.

I was surprised by what I learned. The tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, is a native of the East from New York to Georgia and is the largest hardwood tree in the United States. Tulip trees have reached the height of 200 feet, and recently one was harvested in North Carolina which had a diameter of twenty-four feet.

A large tulip had fallen and we dragged it out and had a neighbor mill it into boards. After it dried for a while I ran it through the planer to make bookcases for the upstairs hall. I liked everything about the lumber: the boards didn't warp, sanded smooth, and stained evenly. The tulip even smelled nice, kind of sweet, almost like sassafras.

I wondered why I had never heard much about it, even though I read almost everything I could find about woodworking and had for a long time. One strange thing was its name. Usually tulip is called "yellow poplar" even though it is not even remotely a member of the poplar family. In fact, tulip is a member of the magnolia clan, which explains the large white flowers that grace it every spring.

Real poplar is an attractive tree, but produces poor lumber for woodworking. It is light, prone to twist and it is hard to sand its fuzzy grain. Tulip, because it has been misnamed, shares poplar's poor reputation in the shop.

But in colonial days tulip was much ap-

preciated. It ranks between cherry and pine in hardness, so it was not difficult to saw and plane by hand. Tulip logs are remarkable for their straight, even dimensions. A tulip log will yield more usable lumber than any other log of the same size, a thing that mattered when transportation was difficult.

It was tulip's evenly dimensioned trunk that sent Tom Jefferson into his woods when he needed Greek columns for Monticello. You can pick out a good tulip tree in any woods almost immediately. It hardly tapers at all. When Indians needed a dugout canoe, they went tulip hunting for the same reason, and gave it its nickname "canoe-wood". Southern novelist, John Ehle, describes, a pair of immense tulips, "God's Legs".

When I find any book which concerns trees now, I always look for tulip in the index; and I have learned many curious things. Peter Kalm, the Swedish botanist, who hiked the U.S. in the 1740's, told how someone built a barn from a solitary tulip tree, and how he saw a church door made from a single board. Kalm admits, however, that a stout person would have trouble getting through that doorway. He also praises tulip's medicinal uses: the bark could be used like quinine, a poultice of leaves could relieve headaches, an extract of tulip functioned as a heart stimulant, and was used for such into our own century.

Although it has often been described as a soft, weak wood, in practice, tulip has stood up to many demanding uses. The stairs in many old houses, including our own, are tulip. So were gun stocks, coffins, kitchenware, the linings of wells and all manner of moldings and fancy work.

One of tulip's odd names is "chameleon wood" which I guess is a reference to its ability to pretend it is something else through the alchemy of staining. A lot of antique cherry furniture is really tulip masquerading. When we built our new kitchen it was easy to make our tulip beams and woodwork match the golden oak color of the cabinets.

Some people are put off by the light green color tulip heartwood often has, but it is another of tulip's curiosities. Placed in direct sunlight for an hour or so and it turns dark brown.

I wish there were more tulip trees on the farm, but tulip is reluctant to grow in the

shadow of a mature forest, preferring to sprout in full sunlight, I tried planting seedlings one spring but not one survived. Then, while reading Walt Whitman, I came upon his comment that the trees don't transplant well, and that seeding is the best propagation. I plan to follow the poet's advice in sunny corners of the farm where it's too steep to plow.

Happily a mystery remains about this tree, in the form of one of its odd names: "Old Woman's Smoke". Was this possibly a reference to its use in a pipe? As stove wood? Its shimmering leaves? I have no idea and hope I don't find out too soon, for a question is more fun to have in your pocket than an answer. ▲

John Sillick writes a column for several publications, is a school teacher and owns a farm in Lyndonville, Orleans County.

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SHARING

By Henry S. Kernan

Fifty years ago I bought about 1000 acres of woodland in upstate New York. Changes since then include the whitetail's drastic increase and the increase of red and yellow posting signs that deny the access of hunters to private land. Many of my neighbors speak of hunters in disparaging, even sarcastic and bitter terms. They fear damage to their property and danger to themselves from strangers perceived as uncouth and engaged in a brutal sport, the killing of Bambi for pleasure.

The problem of deer is not that they attract hunters. The problem is that their woodland browse takes nearly every seedling of the spe-

cies which we value most: basswood, cherry, maple, ash and oak. They prevent the regeneration of white pine; they cause balsam fir to disappear as a component of the forest.

Such facts carry no weight with those of my neighbors who forbid all hunting and too little with those who want no hunting of does. They banded together to post their land in common, and to sell permits for access. I posted with them for 30 years and then resigned. I took down their posted signs, and put up my own, asking those who wished to hunt on my land to have written permission. In all those years, not one hunter had ever come to my house, had asked my leave to enter my land, to thank me, to offer me a piece of venison.

The present arrangement has worked out very well. I now count my dealings with hunters as among the most rewarding aspects of forest stewardship.

I give out about 60 permits each season without charge. Each hunter signs a statement to release me of liability for accidents. Each promises me some venison, and about one in eight is successful. The result is enough edible Bambi to last me all year.

I have thus come to know hunters and

have found them to my liking. Those who come for permits are well spoken and friendly. The most successful hunters are those who hunt in groups. Among my favorites are the crack-shot members of the Born Free Hunting Club. They have made

me an honorary vice-president, with a hunting cap and badge. Besides venison, they have given me Christmas cakes and cards, a picture prepared in my honor and a number of sweet-potato pies.

Another favorite group also comes from downstate Long Island. They are Italians with names that are a delight to hear and remember: **Pasquale Sperduto, Italo**

Albanese, Rocco d'Amelio, Giuseppe Tuosto and the like. We have shared fabulous Italian dinners at their clubhouse down the road: homemade wine, cheese and bread, roasted chestnuts, bowls of macaroni, and talk of their home village in the mountains behind Naples.

Most of my other hunters are also city dwellers, from in and around metropolitan New York or the capital district of Albany. They come for the most part with assurances for their liking for the out-of-doors as much as or more than for the bagging of game.

I believe them, at least in part. Millennia of years as hunter-gatherers conditioned us to be in the forest for chase and take, for a purpose, not just to stroll about. The weapon, the red and orange clothing, the group effort, and the quarry touch and satisfy something deep in the hunter's psyche. If, along the way, they help my seedling trees survive and share the take with me, I am grateful and happy to share my woods. ▲

Henry Kernan is a consulting forester in World Forestry, a Master Forest Owner Volunteer and a regular contributor to the NY FOREST OWNER.



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MONEY IS AVAILABLE FOR LAND MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

By Mary Binder

Could you use seed money for some project you've always wanted to do in your forest or field? Would a farm pond provide the extra irrigation you need for your Christmas trees? If so, there is financial and technical help available through local, state, and federal agencies right in your own county.

If you can handle a little paperwork and learning some of those government abbreviations, you may receive up to 75% of the cost of the project. All of the following programs are voluntary, but once you sign up, you must remain committed. The programs are grouped according to the agency you would first contact to sign up. Forestry related activities are highlighted, but most programs also include farming and ranching practices as well.

U.S.D.A. FARM SERVICE AGENCY PROGRAMS: Your county Farm Service Agency may be contacted by looking under U.S. Offices in the blue pages of the phone book. You should contact the county in which your property is located. Most are listed under the Agriculture Department heading, but some phone books use the old name of Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

- **Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP)** To qualify you can have as little as 3 acres and up to 1000 acres. The program provides technical and financial assistance to encourage private forest landowners to keep their lands and resources productive and healthy. You may select from nine practices, with the first practice, development and approval of a Forest Stewardship plan, being mandatory. The Department of Environmental Conservation Service Foresters can assist with the plan, or you may hire a private consultant. The remaining practices to choose from are: reforestation, forest improvement (installation of tree shelters, prescribed burning, or pruning), agroforestry (establishment, maintenance, or renovation of windbreaks or hedgerows), soil and water protection and improvement, riparian and wetland protection and improvement (planting streambank willow to stabilize an eroded area), fisheries habitat enhancement, wildlife habitat enhancement

(installing bluebird boxes or planting clover for deer browse), and forest recreation enhancement (establishing trails or creating forest openings).

- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** This program was developed to reduce soil erosion, reduce sedimentation of streams and lakes, improve water quality, establish wildlife habitat, and enhance forest and wetland resources. If you have cropland that you would like to convert to less erodible vegetation such as wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips or riparian buffers, you may qualify for this program. The **multi-year contract** will provide landowners with an annual rental payment. Cost sharing is also provided to establish the vegetative cover.

U.S.D.A. NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE: This federal agency may be contacted by looking up U.S. Offices in the blue pages under Agriculture Department. It may be listed under the old name of Soil Conservation Service.

- **Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)** This program provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns. Through the implementation of a conservation plan, which includes structural, vegetative, and land management practices, **five to ten year contracts** are made. Tree planting and permanent wildlife habitat are a few of the practices.

- **Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)** This supports good forest management practices on privately owned forested land nationwide. The program is designed to benefit the environment while meeting future demands for wood products. Eligible practices are tree planting, timber stand improvement, site preparation for natural regeneration, and other related activities. There is a **ten acre minimum** requirement.

- **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)** This is a voluntary program to restore wetlands to meet the goals of improved habi-

tat for migratory birds and other wildlife. Either 30 year or permanent easements are established, or the landowner can enter into restoration cost-share agreements where no easement is involved. In exchange for establishing a **permanent easement**, the landowner receives payment up to the agricultural value of the land and 100 percent of the restoration costs. The **30 year easement** payment is 75 percent of what would be provided for a permanent easement on the same site and 75 percent of the restoration costs. The **agreements with no easement** are for a minimum **10 year duration** and provide 75 percent of the cost of restoration. In all instances, landowners continue to control access to their land, can hunt and fish, gather firewood, take timber, and continue grazing. Timber harvests must follow a **prepared cutting plan** that is approved by NRCS.

- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives (WHIP)** This provides financial incentives to develop habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands. Landowners agree to implement a **wildlife habitat development plan** and NRCS agrees to provide costshare assistance for the initial implementation of the practices selected. The practices are **cost-shared**, and the agreement lasts a **minimum of ten years** from the date the contract is signed.

NY STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION: Although this state agency does not provide cost sharing for projects, they can provide valuable technical information for free. A Service Forester from your area can walk your forest and make recommendations on how best to manage it for your particular goals. The State Nursery in Saratoga is also a great resource for purchasing low cost bare root seedlings for use as Christmas trees, reforestation, wildlife food, and windbreaks. Trees are sold in lots of 100 and 250, with smaller amounts available. Contact DEC by looking in the blue pages of the phone book under State Offices, then under Environmental Conservation. You should look for the regional office where your property is located.

THE WOOD LOT

By Jennifer Sullivan-Smith

My father calls it the wood lot, though it is so much more. The land it encompasses is one hundred and fifteen acres of woodland in Bainbridge, New York, wilder than it was when my great-grandfather bought it in 1919. In fact, it probably has more forest cover now than at the time of the American Revolution. My great-grandfather thought of nature as something to be tamed as he strived to be the quintessential American farmer in the rural landscape of Chenango County. Would he ever imagine that with a little help from my father, nature would reclaim its own?

The property of the back hill dairy farm nestled in a valley entailed meadows, pastures, sugar bush, a trout stream, two small ponds and the remains of an old grist mill. After years of only a subsistence yield, the farm ceased to be a working farm in 1955. My grandfather, John Smith, continued to live on the farm and worked elsewhere. He tapped the sugar bush every fall to make maple syrup for extra income. In 1974, my great-grandfather's dream was completely destroyed by fire when the farmhouse, the sap house and part of the barn burned down. The last man-made structure, the skeletal remains of the barn held together by wooden pegs, was torn down in 1996.

"We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect" Aldo Leopold A Sand County Almanac

Today, my father holds no illusions about farming. In contrast to his grandfather's vision of taming the land, he sees himself as a steward of the land. Twenty years ago, after the land had been passed to him from his father, he created a master plan with the aid of Forcon Inc., a forestry and conservation agency. His first priority was, and still is, reforestation and wildlife management.

Forcon marked trees to be culled to make room for new growth. My father has always used this felled wood to heat his home in Sherburne, forty five miles north of the valley of his childhood. He makes frequent trips to the wood lot for a constant supply. As a young girl, I would help my father load the pickup truck with firewood. We would rise early, ride over the rolling hills

to the wood lot, the morning sun warming us as it glistened upon the mist covered grass. Although the master plan entails timber production, this is of secondary importance to my father. Timber is to be harvested only when absolutely necessary to offset expenses. My college education was paid for by timber sales. The next time this may be necessary is when my brother, a graduate of the Syracuse University School of Forestry, will send his two daughters, Emily, age six, and Abigail, age four, to college.

The planting agenda was to reforest the fields, meadows and pastures once used for farming with White and Norway Spruce. Annually, for the past twenty years, my father recruited family and friends to help plant a thousand seedlings by hand. Some now stand as tall as his granddaughters. Standing next to a small spruce on a recent visit, Emily exclaimed, "When I am big I will plant a million Christmas trees like Grampa Bob!"

The original sugar bush has expanded and red maples have spread out to surrounding areas. The myriad of other tree species that populate the landscape are ash, oak, hemlock, white pine, basswood and poplar.

While picking wild strawberries my brother and his daughters investigated animal tracks. Wildlife is abundant, including deer, beaver, turkey, fox, coyote, grouse, raccoon and rabbit. Beaver dams are numerous on the stream. My father is protective of the animals' habitat and is determined to pass his knowledge on to the future stewards of the land. While walking through the woods, he told Emily to avoid walking through a deer crossing. He advised, "We don't want the deer to be afraid of human scent in their path, we'll walk around it."

The quiet of the woods amazed Abigail. She announced the babbling trout stream sounded like "crinkling paper." Once, by the stream, my brother leaned down to show the girls a tree stump the beavers had filed down into a cone, and they felt its smoothness. My parents looked on from the top of a small slope, my father's hands on his hips, comfortable and at home in this community. "I hope the girls will find it peaceful here," he mused and leaned over and kissed my mother, among the fern, dog tooth violets, trillium and cattails.

COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS: This county agency cannot provide cost sharing, but will provide valuable information on a wide range of natural resource topics. Each district is flexible in the kinds of programs they have, so not all counties will provide the items listed. Most districts have field personnel that can assist in drainage, pond location and building, windbreak design, fish stocking and tree planting. Most districts have a spring or fall tree planting programs to purchase bare root seedlings in denominations as low as ten. Locate your district office by looking in the blue pages under your county, then look under Soil and Water. Some counties have them grouped under Cooperative Extension, and then Soil and Water.

To summarize, money may be available to do what you want; you just have to know where to look. Please note that most programs have more projects submitted, than there is money available to do the work. For example, money allocated for New York in 1997 for EQIP was \$3.5 million, with \$17.3 million in projects submitted. Some programs have money earmarked for certain projects types; with certain areas (i.e. watersheds) given higher priority than others. This should not discourage you from contacting the appropriate agency about getting your project approved. Perhaps it will fall within the priority location and/or project type; you won't know unless you ask.

Be sure to ask about the length of the commitment and about penalties if the commitment is broken.

Remember that new programs may become available and existing program requirements may change, so always ask for the most updated information. You may not qualify for a certain program today, but perhaps a change later down the road will allow you to be eligible.

Once you become familiar with the professionals working for these agencies you will not only discover more programs that suit your needs, but you may have made a friend who can assist you in many of your future land management projects. ▲

Mary, who lives in Westerlo, with her husband and two boys, is a new NYFOA member. She is a graduate of SUNY ESF with experience with the Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Conservation Districts. She was publicity chair for the 1997 Forest Family Fair and is Vice-Chair of the Capital District Chapter.

Workshop on Sustainable Forestry: Are Our Woodlots Regenerating?

By NYFOA President Jill Cornell

The July 23 & 24th Workshop in Olean was sponsored by many branches of the forest community: SUNY-ESF, USDA Forest Service, DEC, Cornell University, Fitzpatrick & Weller, Forecon, Inc., Potter Lumber, SAF and NY Center for Forestry Research and Development. The mix of government agencies, education centers and industry made for interesting perspectives and discussions.

The first day was spent visiting 5 different woodlots which had been cut or thinned within the last 15 to 20 years and which had different types of regeneration problems or successes. The open attitudes of the different foresters to showing the problem areas and asking for opinions on the causes and possible prescriptions made for informative and interesting dialogues. The second day consisted of a series of interesting lectures and discussions about the regeneration process. **Curt Bauer** of Forecon talked about the history of the forests from the post-glacial period through Seneca management to modern manage-

ment strategies.

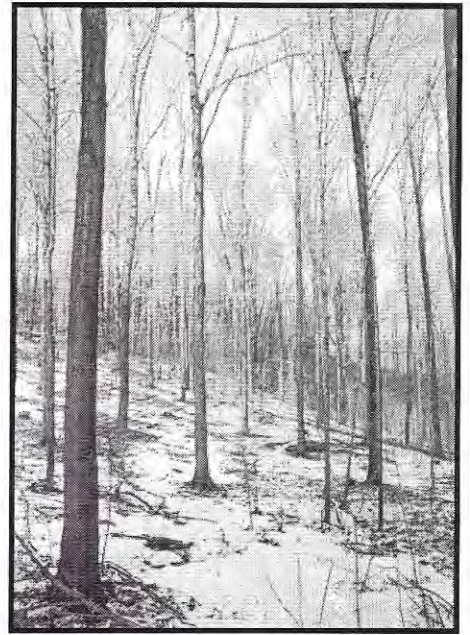
Since I am not a forester, merely an interested landowner, I offer the following brief overview within those limitations.

The regeneration problems seemed to follow diameter limit cuts which took away the best seed sources. The suggestion for the future was: "leave the best till last."

Remedies for eliminating unwanted ferns, beech and birch included herbicide treatments and controlled burns.

Prevention Strategies when planting any type of timber cut, be sure to consider the following in discussions with your advisors:

1. Take a very careful look at what is already growing on the forest floor—from 2" seedlings to 1" diameter saplings. **WHAT YOU'VE GOT IS USUALLY WHAT YOU'LL GET!**
2. Be sure that any and all skid roads are carefully planned to prevent new growth from being run over, and to control soil erosion.
3. Be aware of the size and condition of the area's deer population.



A young forest. Photo by Peter Levatich ©1997

The primary lesson is to think about regenerating your forest before you begin to manage it. Even small changes to the canopy which open up the woodlot will effect the regeneration process. ▲

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Landowners Meet In Washington

By Ron Pedersen

A small group of landowners from across the country traveled to Washington DC to meet with Members of Congress and USDA leaders July 21-23. The purpose of the roundtable discussion with US Senators, one-on-one meetings with Representatives and staff and the discussion with USDA Undersecretary James Lyons was to underscore the scope and importance of private nonindustrial forestry in the United States.

In NY, about 87% of all forest land is owned by nonindustrial owners. Nationally, nonindustrial private forest owners account for 57% of productive forest lands.

Three main ideas were stressed during the meetings:

- On estate and capital gains taxes: Estate taxes too often cause family-held properties to be broken up simply to pay the taxes, thereby losing years of stewardship. Owners nurture timber resources - looking to harvest only once every several generations—because they are committed to sound resource management and its many benefits. If these owners weren't committed stewards, they probably would have sold their land long ago.

- Regarding endangered species: Tree Farmers are the owners of much wildlife habitat, and are among the strongest supporters of the intent of the Endangered Species Act. As that law is reviewed, it is important that flexibility replace unbending regulation as the guiding principle so

that landowners have options and choices in using their management skills to help wildlife.

- On Service Foresters, Extension and Research: Adequate funding for cooperative extension and state service foresters is extremely important. These trusted professionals, with up-to-date information, are often the first step in the learning process for the many landowners that do not now understand the value or potential of their forest lands.

Bringing these folks along the learning curve is essential to a future wood supply, carefully harvested with respect for the cleaner water and expanded wildlife habitat that accompanies sound forest management.

This was the first "Non-Industrial Private Forestlands Awareness Week" and it is hoped that it will become an annual event. It was organized by the National Council on Private Forests, which includes the American Tree Farm System, Forest Landowners Association, National Woodlands Association, Association of Consulting Foresters, and the National Association of State Foresters.

The six Tree Farmers participating came from Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin, Indiana, Maine, and New York. ▲

Ron Pedersen serves on NYFOA's Board of Directors and was the Tree Farmer representing forest owners from the State of New York.

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THE TWOLINED CHESTNUT BORER

—*nemesis of weakened oaks*

By Douglas C. Allen

In the early 1900s when American chestnut was still a widespread and valuable component of eastern hardwood forests, this inner bark borer attracted the attention of forest owners because of its association with trees infected with chestnut blight. With the demise of chestnut, the beetle gained even more notoriety due to its affinity for oaks stressed by gypsy moth defoliation.

Twolined chestnut borer belongs to a unique group (the genus *Agrilus*; *agrilus*) within a family of insects known as metallic beetles or metallic wood borers. These common names refer to the shiny appearance or metallic sheen typical of most adults. Another frequently used common name for this family is flatheaded borer, which refers to the appearance of the larval stage.

Many species of *Agrilus* occur throughout the United States, but two stand out as major tree pests in the northeast; twolined chestnut borer (*A. bilineatus*) and bronze birch borer (*A. anxius*). Both species are "secondary" in that they successfully attack only stressed or low vigor hosts. For birches, the predisposing stress often is drought, high aphid populations, repeated defoliation by birch leaf miner, or a combination of these events.

Drought also plays a major role in the susceptibility of oaks, especially chestnut and white oaks, to the twolined chestnut borer. However, defoliation of oak by gypsy moth is the most significant source of stress that sets the stage for infestations of this beetle.

APPEARANCE

Adults are dark colored and 0.2 to 0.5" long with two light brown to golden, longitudinal stripes on the back (Fig. 1). The immature stages (larvae) are legless, distinctly segmented, and off-white to yellowish with a head that is only slightly flattened compared to larvae of other metallic beetles. The full grown larva (Fig. 2) is approximately 1" long and its last body segment has a pair of dark brown hook-like structures. The slightly flattened head and presence of terminal hooks separate mem-

bers of *Agrilus* from other flatheaded borers, which lack these hooks and have distinctly flatter heads.

DAMAGE

The larval stages damage oaks by feeding on the inner bark and, to some degree, the outer sapwood. Feeding by large num-

bered by the borer show little evidence of damage, because entrance holes are very small and the insect does not push frass (a mixture of fecal matter and wood chips) to the outside. Instead, this material is packed behind each larva in the narrow, winding galleries that result from feeding (Fig. 3).

BIOLOGY

When each larva completes feeding, usually in one year, it prepares an overwintering cell in the inner bark region and with the arrival of spring transforms into an adult. Beetles exit the host through a characteristic "D"-shaped emergence hole approximately 0.2" wide. They are active throughout much of the summer. Females deposit eggs in bark cracks, and when eggs hatch the young larvae immediately enter the inner bark. Research suggests that beetles locate suitable hosts because the latter give off an odor which is different from that of a healthy tree.

MANAGEMENT

Under most conditions, inner bark feeding insects such as species of *Agrilus* are difficult and impractical to control with insecticides. Preventative methods aimed at maintaining tree vigor are the key to minimizing damage. Strategies include such things as encouraging or placing a tree species on a site to which it is well adapted (soil, aspect, available moisture), preventing physical damage to the trunk and roots, applying insecticides (chemical or biological, if the latter is available) to minimize the effects of defoliation, and watering ornamentals and shade trees when soil conditions become unusually dry. Overstocked oak stands should be thinned at appropriate times to enhance the vigor of the remaining trees.

Nothing can be done to ameliorate drought conditions in forested situations, but appropriate monitoring will help to determine extent and frequency of significant defoliation. As a guide, if a stand of oak has been heavily defoliated (e.g., 70% or more of foliage consumed) for one year and indications are that there is likely to be a

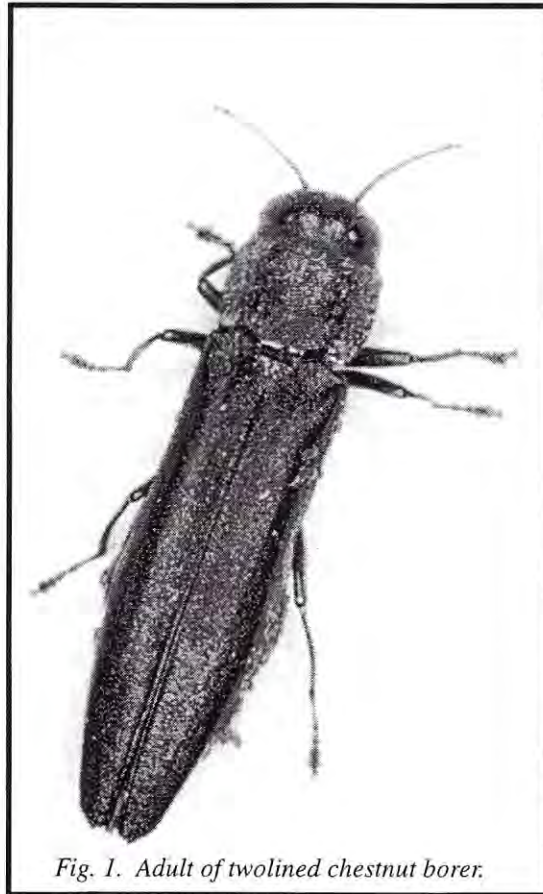


Fig. 1. Adult of twolined chestnut borer.

bers of the worm-like larvae (lar-vee) essentially girdles the host. The damage is similar to that caused by true bark beetles. Usually it takes two to three years of successive attacks to kill the host.

EVIDENCE OF ATTACK

The first symptom of an *Agrilus* attack occurs in mid- to late summer when foliage wilts and eventually turns brown. Wilted foliage usually remains attached to the tree for several weeks before dropping.

At this time, the bark of infested branches or areas of the tree trunk that have been

a second consecutive year of similar damage, a concerned landowner should consider protecting foliage. Following two or more years of heavy defoliation, oaks (especially white and chestnut) usually are susceptible to attack by twolined chestnut borer. ▲

This is the 34th in the series of articles contributed by Dr. Allen, Professor of Entomology at SUNY-ESF.

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Fig. 3. Gallery pattern (dark lines) on the surface of oak sapwood. The bark has been removed (Below).

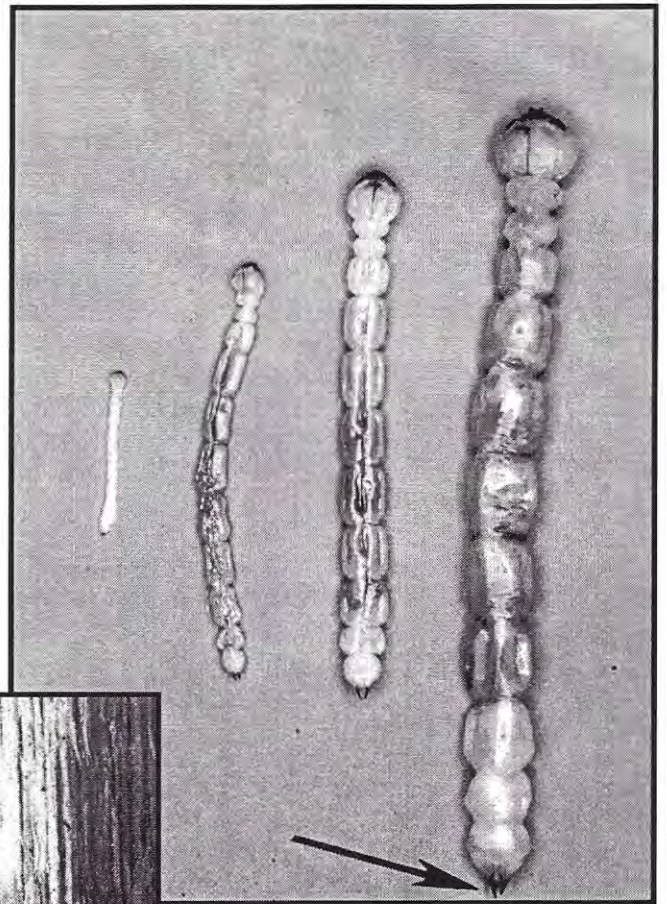
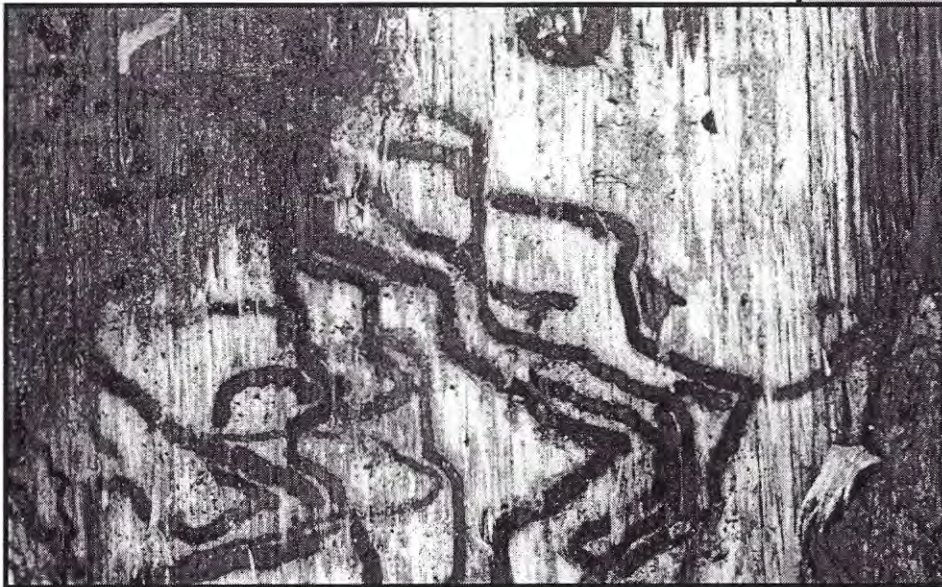


Fig. 2. Larval stages of twolined chestnut borer (Above). Arrow indicates hook-like structures of the mature larva.

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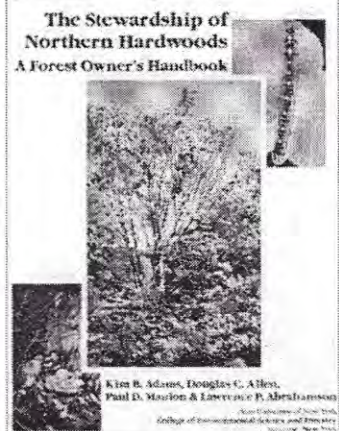
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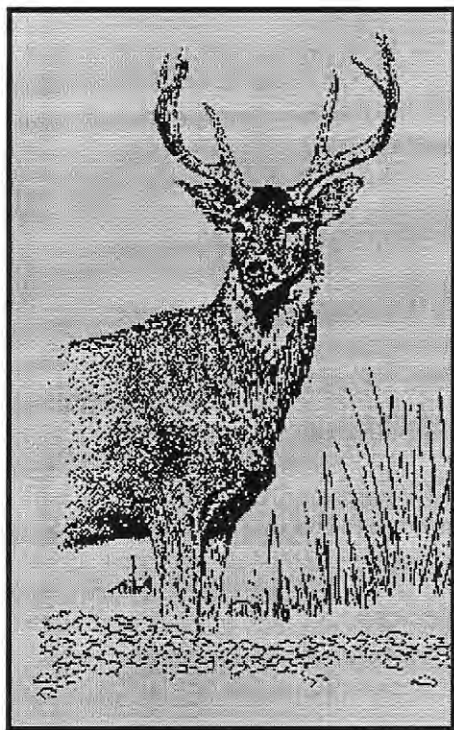
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The Winning Ways of Wildlife

By Jane Sorensen Lord, PhD, OTR, ND

The huge bird hovered at the tree line above the pond folded its wings and dropped feet first into the water and disappeared. In a split second, Phoenix-like, it burst to the surface into flight, shaking the water from its wings. And in the right talon was one of my fish!

The osprey came regularly twice a day for a week always catching a fish even if it had to make a couple of drops. I finally realized he had figured out the feeding schedule and was merely taking advantage of the fish still at the surface. He still comes,



but since I feed at irregular times, he isn't always successful. But I do have to give homage to a creature that can see a six inch fish from a hundred feet and cannonball to get it. We have a peaceful coexistence.

Before the osprey, a bufflehead duck was diving and swimming underwater to catch the fish. He was averaging 2-3 fish per day and gaining some of my concern when the snapping turtle returned to the pond at the end of June. The little duck promptly left. (Or we may have just been a lay over since the species' summer range is not usually this far south.)

Early on this summer, I awoke one night to the sound of chompin' in the kitchen. I turned on the light in the hallway proceed-

ing with caution. Munching earnestly at the cat nibbles was a beautiful striped and spotted small skunk. When he saw me he made a swift and non-stinky exit through the cat door. Thank God!

So we closed the cat door and opened a window for the cats to jump through. But the next night I heard chompin' in the kitchen again. He saw me and ran to the cat door, which was closed. He had entered through the bedroom door with its hanging screen. He couldn't get out of the house now without passing our new rug! I through the room, without me and Oriental ran back the bed-across the porch and opened up the dining room door, through which he gratefully exited, again controlling himself.



The DEC told me I could not live trap a skunk and release it in the Bahsakill Refuge (or any place else), so we sleep with all doors closed and are saving up for sturdy screen doors.

I was reading in bed one night when I heard a thud in the bathroom, which holds the window through which the cats enter. I stayed still while I heard whatever scratch its way out of the bathtub, and, then a small masked face poked into the room. Sniffing cautiously it came into the bedroom. "Just what are you doing in my house?", I hollered. The raccoon jumped straight into the air, like you see in animated cartoons, and ran out. Now he just tips over the garbage cans.

He also finishes off the dog food that the grey foxes don't eat, or don't get to eat because fox defer to raccoon. And, as I have observed on moonlit nights, raccoon defer to skunks, who aim, then stomp their back feet so they can eat in the strictest privacy.

The animals that have caused us the greatest real loss have been the deer. They have eaten EVERYTHING. All the lily buds, most of my herbs, most of the wildflowers, and small bushes and tree seedlings. I have taken a real financial hit. Be-



cause I give seminars for therapists on medicinal plants, I have had to buy dried herbs for the potions we make.

And the way deer eat just parts of a lot of things, make the gardens look ugly. I hope the plants pull through and come back next year.

My heart sank when I saw three doe and a fawn drinking across the pond. I screamed and waved and they left—just to return while I sleep. Gordon won't let me buy a deer rifle and get a varmit permit. So I'm limited to aggravating the deer when I can and driving fast up and down the driveway in the truck hoping for a road kill.

We are asking all the serious hunters we know to come and diminish the population. I hope it is an easy sell because the deer are pre-seasoned with herbs from the inside!

And I appeal to any research group in deer management to try birth control, trapping, whatever. Our Tree Farm could be your Schawangund lab. We've gone from Bambi to bamboozled! ▲



Dr. Jane, a regular contributor, is a Master Forest Owner and Certified Tree Farmer. She has a private consulting practice in Occupational Therapy and Naturopathic Medicine and teaches on the Faculty of Health at Indianapolis University.

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7025 Harpers Ferry Road, Wayland,
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WOODLOT CALENDAR

SEP 27: CNY; NYFOA FALL MEETING;
 Heiberg Forest; Syracuse; 315/ 255-3662.
SEE PAGE 9 FOR DETAILS!!

OCT 5: CDC; 9:30AM; Fire Tower Woodwalk;
 Rtes. NY203 & 22-junction; 518/753-4336.

271 County Road#9
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