The New York Forest Owner

A Publication of The New York Forest Owners Association

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

September/October 2012

Member Profile: Walter and Theresa Kersch

Volume 50 Number 5

NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION
People Caring About NY's Trees and Forests
FOUNDED 1963
www.nyfoa.org

In This Issue . . .

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Forest Owner

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Volume 50, Number 5

The New York Forest Owner is a bi-monthly publication of The New York Forest Owners Association, PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. Materials submitted for publication should be sent to: ***Mary Beth Malmsheimer****, Editor, The New York Forest Owner, 134 Lincklaen Street, Cazenovia, New York 13035. Materials may also be e-mailed to mmalmshe@syr.edu. Articles, artwork and photos are invited and if requested, are returned after use.* ***The deadline for submission for the November/December issue is October 1, 2012.***

Please address all membership fees and change of address requests to PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. 1-800-836-3566. Cost of family membership/subscription is $35.

This publication is printed on Finch Opaque, Smooth, 70 lb. text paper. Located in the beautiful Adirondacks, Finch has long understood that the viability of our business relies on the wise use—and reuse—of resources. Finch papers are made with renewable energy, post-consumer recycled fiber and elemental chlorine-free pulps. In addition, Finch Paper was the first integrated paper mill in the US to received both the Forest Management and Chain of Custody certifications from the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

www.nyfoa.org

Cover: Photo was taken on the Kersch property at the gravel pit landing in the Northern Zone (as referred to in their x-c skiing map). Top left is Walter Kersch and his wife Terri below him. Also pictured is their daughter Susan Kibler, her husband William and their son Alex. For member profile see page 21. Photo courtesy of the Kersch's.

From The President

Here it is, midsummer as I write this and already we're making plans for 2013. For one thing, 2013 represents the 50th anniversary of the founding of NYFOA. Returning to our roots, as it were, we're planning on having our **annual membership meeting March 23rd** on the ESF campus in Syracuse where the first organizational meeting for NYFOA took place in January of 1963. **Please be sure to save the date on your calendar**. We also hope to have an article or two in subsequent issues of this magazine giving more information on the early years of NYFOA.

Coincident with this anniversary we're launching a new initiative which we hope will become an annual affair. Termed ***Re-New York Woodlands,*** it will consist of woodswalks across the state during the period May 11 - 19, 2013. We're working with the steering committees of our local NYFOA chapters to develop sites for these woodswalks. Many of them will be guided by Master Forest Owners thanks to the support of MFO Program Director Gary Goff.

We anticipate that one of NYFOA's major thrusts over the course of our next 50 years will be on addressing the general degradation of New York State forests. In keeping with this concern, the theme of our 2013 initiative will be "Restoration of New York's Woodlands." Focus of the 2013 woodswalks will be pointing out the decline of the forests in many parts of our state and how this decline can be reversed through good stewardship and proactive management practices with a long-term view.

The woodswalks will be promoted in local media with the intent of drawing not only forest owners but also the general public who may want to make a day of it. We want the public to be aware of what is going on in New York's forests, sensitive to necessary remediation measures and encourage them to join with us in these efforts to help return our forests to their former natural splendor. In doing so we're also hoping we can encourage more non-woodlot owners to join the ranks of NYFOA.

As a first step, to help make sure our own members are conversant on this topic, this issue contains the first two of several articles on this subject, "The Forest's Future is Our Legacy" by Jerry Michael and "Anticipating the Next Forest" by Peter Smallidge and Gary Goff.

For the initiative itself, a new section of our web site, *www.nyfoa.org* is being set up that will have more information in the coming months...please stay tuned.

If you want to help in any part of this effort please contact board member Kelly Smallidge who'd love to hear from you. Kelly can be reached at the phone number on the inside front cover or via e-mail at renewyorkwoodlands@gmail.com.

–Jim Minor
NYFOA President

The mission of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) is to promote sustainable forestry practices and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands in New York State. NYFOA is a not-for-profit group of people who care about NYS's trees and forests and are interested in the thoughtful management of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

Join!

NYFOA is a not-for-profit group promoting stewardship of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations. Through local chapters and statewide activities, NYFOA helps woodland owners to become responsible stewards and helps the interested public to appreciate the importance of New York's forests.

Join NYFOA today and begin to receive its many benefits including: six issues of ***The New York Forest Owner***, woodswalks, chapter meetings, and statewide meetings.

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NYFOA Board of Director and Association Secretary, Marilyn Wyman, Receives National Recognition

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties is pleased to announce that one of their staff members, Marilyn Wyman, received a national award from the Association of Natural Resource Professionals. Wyman received the 2011 Gold Award in Innovative Programming in the Achievement Category on May 22, 2012 at the National ANREP Conference in Hendersonville, NC, for her work relating to Forest Stewardship education. The award acknowledged Marilyn's work in building regional collaborations through the establishment of the Cornell Cooperative Extension's Agroforestry Resource Center in Greene County and connecting with private forest landowners through new programs on topics such as the multiple values of forests, sustainability, and agroforestry. Ms. Wyman is the Natural Resources and Environment Team Leader based in Greene County and is also part of the state-wide Invasive Species Program.

"The Agroforestry Resource Center, from the beginning, has always been about partnerships and collaborations. Our regional forests are just too important to not investigate as many options as we can to connect folks to their forests and partnering just makes sense," Wyman stated. The Association of Natural Resource Professionals is a national organization representing extension professionals throughout the United States. They promote cooperation on natural resource issues, educational and training efforts among state and regional stakeholders, as well as discussions on natural resource needs and opportunities of mutual interest. "This is a great honor," Marilyn said, "but it really is an award for the many partners we work with. We all have strengths we bring to the table, and can provide better resources to our communities by working together".

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   Wood, 5 ½ x7 inches

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Anticipating the Next Forest

Peter Smallidge and Gary Goff

Many forest owners are interested in how to regenerate their forests, and why efforts to regenerate the forest sometimes fail. Private forest owners and their forests bear many pressures; these pressures often reduce the capacity of the forest to serve the owner. As NYFOA President Jim Minor discusses in his column, the 50th anniversary of NYFOA will launch with a programmatic focus on renewing and restoring NY's private forest. This article supports that initiative.

The NY Forest Owners Association is about to cross their 50-year milestone. This is an exciting accomplishment for the organization. The 50-year mark allows forest owners a long-term time frame to think about private forests specifically and broadly; how they used to look, how they have changed, and what future private forests will provide.

For most of our private forest lands, the soil will continue to grow plants. The question though is whether those future plants will provide the variety of benefits that the owners desire, including products for sale and ecological services and values that forest owners provide to society. The process of forest regeneration, if and how it happens, will determine what we can anticipate in the future forest.

A complimentary article by Jerry Michael in this issue provides a testimony to the concern for regeneration, more specifically the failure of forests to regenerate. That article illustrates the problem on a particular property, but also draws from a variety of independent studies which identify the frequency with which NY forests fail to regenerate. To highlight some recent information: (1) A study in which we participated surveyed foresters about their observations from the most recent stand (a working unit of the forest) they visited that should be capable of regenerating. These foresters reported moderate or successful regeneration in only 30% of those stands; a 70% failure rate. Successful regeneration was defined as desirable species at least 5 feet in height. (2) A study by The Nature Conservancy, based on a review U.S. Forest Service data, used a regeneration index and found that desirable timber species were regenerating on 43% of permanent monitoring plots. (3) SUNY ESF's Dr. Ralph Nyland reported in a ForestConnect webinar in February 2009 that the overwhelming predominance of exploitive cutting has often led to failed regeneration or significant complications with the regeneration process.

A Bit of Context and Background

In a simplistic way, we can think of the forest as two layers; the upper canopy and the understory. In forests less than about 40 to 50 years of age, we seldom worry about understory layer, or regeneration, because the forests have a long time horizon. At about 75-100 years old however, the concern for regeneration should heighten because some tree species may be approaching the end of their life cycle and/or sawtimber species maybe financially mature. At this point in a stand's development any natural or man-induced alteration of the upper canopy will provide sunlight to the plants in or on the forest floor and favor their expansion and abundance. An ice storm or prolonged insect defoliation, for example, might not fully destroy the overstory, but could provide sunlight to entrench the existing understory. Entrenching the existing understory is good if it has a desired mixture of quality seedlings. Unless the understory is changed, the species present at the time of a canopy disturbing event will

A 50 year old private forest in the Adirondacks. Little understory has developed in the oak/pine stand, but future years will bring changes. How will this stand look in 50 years and what pressures will bear on the next forest?

most likely become the next forest. Generally, "what you see is what you get."

Trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants reproduce by distributing propagules such as seeds or spores, or by vegetative propagation (sprouts) from their roots or stems. Almost all plant species have the ability to distribute propagules, relatively fewer will reproduce through vegetative methods. Successful reproduction of a plant requires the propagule or vegetative structure and an adequate environment for the new plant to become established and survive long enough to reproduce itself.

As forest owners, trees are a significant part of our interest in the woods. As the forest grows we can harvest the volume of some trees that would otherwise die, and we may eventually plan for the re-establishment of large sections of our forest. Timber harvests must be sustainable to ensure continued flow of products and forest services. Regeneration of new forests is the first step in sustainability. Failure to ensure appropriate numbers, sizes and growth of desired species may disappoint some forest owners and may erode the confidence of society in our capacity for responsible and sustainable forestry. Regeneration thus requires that new trees become established, but also that those new trees represent the desired mixture of species and have a stem quality that will provide for future desired products

Tree regeneration, our focus here, requires the coincidence of (i) the availability of propagules, (ii) the receptivity of the site (the seed bed) for the seedling to become established, and (iii) adequate growing conditions at the site for the seedlings to grow toward maturity. If the timing or quality of one of these three factors doesn't align, regeneration fails. It may require years for trees to become sexually mature and for owners to conduct specific management activities to create an appropriate seed bed and growing conditions. Thus, regeneration is a process through time.

The life of a seedling is precarious. A tree may produce thousands of seeds, but only a small percentage usually germinate, establish, and grow. The long lives of trees allow for many years of failed regeneration needing only one or two successful years, but constraints on regeneration that are enduring and widespread can eventually change the nature of the forest.

Why do we Care About Tree Regeneration?

Trees define the forest. Given pressures in the forest (see below), doing nothing may lead to disappointing outcomes. Some owners started a forest from scratch in a former pasture, and some owners assumed responsibility for the trees present when they became the owner. Most owners will tend, or manage, and utilize one age-group of trees on any given acre. As trees are utilized, or the forest is otherwise disturbed, resources become available for trees and plants to establish. Owners will chose whether they will invest or not in helping to ensure that the next forest provides future owners with a comparable suite of opportunities. Forest owners from the full spectrum of interests will benefit from attention to regeneration of diverse and healthy forests.

When forest trees do not regenerate, through short and long time frames, the quality of the forest, and the opportunities it offers the owner, may decline. If we first consider the human benefits associated with trees, the lack of regeneration may change aesthetic qualities, habitat for hunting, and over a longer time frame the lack of forest products that provides revenue and local jobs. The future success of timber production, maple syrup production, mast producing trees for wildlife, and fence posts depends on the level of success of the regeneration process.

Many species of wildlife benefit from successful regeneration. In a mature forest, the presence of desirable forest tree seedlings is important to maintain micro-environmental conditions. These mature forest seedlings also provide nutritious browse, nesting habitat, and escape cover. Other wildlife species depend on different environmental conditions provided by successful regeneration in early successional habitats. An important consideration for wildlife is that the unique growth form and fruit production of various plant species makes them more or less suitable for various wildlife species. Because of deer pressure (more on this topic later), some unpalatable plant

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New York State Tree Farm News

Erin O'Neill

The Four Sided Sign
Side Two: WILDLIFE

As we talked about in the last issue, Tree Farm focuses on the premise of ecosystem management and that good forestry is at the core of the Tree Farm program. Ultimately this provides the basis for the legacy of the trees on your woodlot.

The second side of the sign is WILDLIFE. I find this means different things to different people. Sometimes it's all about the big game hunting, sometimes it's about the hare habitat, often it's about the fisheries and sometimes it's about the bird song in the morning. Ultimately they all depend on each other. You have heard the saying "no man is an island?" Well, no animal is either! The wildlife on your property depends on the entire habitat and food chain to be intact in order to thrive. From the brooks to the lakes, from the grasses and shrubs, to the trees and snags, from the bees and insects to the rodents, and all the way up the mammal chain to the bobcats and bears, they depend on each other and on you to maintain a healthy ecosystem.

This can be accomplished on your woodlot. Ask your forester what types of silviculture are right for the animal habitats you're looking to create. It could be small clearings for the "edge effect" deer crave or thinning from below to keep small mammals safe from birds of prey. Maybe when you harvest your firewood this year, you leave the tops and limbs piled up for the rabbits.

As you increase the species diversity and habitat type found across the landscape of your woodlot, you'd be amazed at what else you'll start to see! Using best management practices (BMP's) with a forester supervising your logger will go a long way to maintaining good water quality.

As I have mentioned many times before, each part is just one piece of the puzzle. Proper planning and a written management plan are keys to developing your goals and working toward them with your forestry professional. You can download the Management Plan Template from the American Tree Farm System website (*www.treefarmsystem.org/managementplantemplate*).

There are currently over 1,800 certified tree farms in NY State, if this all sounds like something you would like to be a part of, remember, a Tree Farm representative is only a phone call (1-800-836-3566) or e-mail (nytreefarm@hotmail.com) away.

Erin O'Neill is the Immediate Past Chair of the NYS Tree Farm Committee.

Would you like to receive an electronic version of future editions of *The Forest Owner*? If so, please send Liana an email (lgooding@nyfoa.org).

You will receive an email every two months that includes a PDF file of the publication. While being convenient for you – read *The Forest Owner* anytime, any place; this will also help to save the Association money as the cost of printing and postage continues to rise with each edition.

Kid's Corner

Rebecca Hargrave

This could be your photo here!

Do you have a photo of you and your kids or grandkids in your forest? If so, *The New York Forest Owner* would like to see it! Send an electronic or hard copy to *Forest Owner* editor, MaryBeth Malmsheimer, and it may end up on this page!

Grow a Forest From Seeds

You don't have to plant a seedling to get a tree, you can just plant a seed. Many trees have fall seeds that are easy to collect and plant.

Nuts: ***Oak*** acorns, ***Horse Chestnuts*** and ***Walnuts*** are easy to spot and gather. White oak acorns will sprout shortly after they hit the ground this fall, but red oak acorns, horse chestnuts and walnuts can be planted now or stored to sprout in the spring. An easy way to do it is to gather up your seeds and plant them 1-2" deep into a large pot filled with potting soil. Secure a piece of metal screen or hardware cloth over the top so the squirrels and chipmunks can't steal your nuts. Then "plant" the pot in the garden, so the soil level in the pot is the same as the soil level in the garden. You could plant the seeds directly into a garden, but this way the pot will protect the seeds from critters, and you'll know exactly where they are in the spring. Place mulch, dried leaves, or boughs over the top of the pots. These nuts need a cold period (winter) before they will sprout, so you could also store them inside, but they need to be stored at 35 degrees for three to four months, which can be tricky as that is colder than most refrigerators.

Hickories can be grown the same way, but they don't like to be transplanted. Plant a few hickory nuts where you'd like your tree to be, and then remove all but one seedling once they start growing.

Red oaks, elms and horse chestnuts growing in pots.

Choose the strongest/tallest seedling to remain after the first year.

Maple and ***Ash*** should be planted right away in the fall so they don't dry out. Use the same pot method as described in Nuts above, or store them inside at 40 degrees for three months then plant them. Instead of planting ash seed (due to the threat of the Emerald Ash Borer) consider collecting ash seeds from healthy, forest grown ash trees and sending them to the National Seed Laboratory in Indiana. There the seeds will be stored and used for breeding and planting after the emerald ash borer is gone. Read more about the Ash Seed Collection Project at *http://www.nsl.fs.fed.us/geneticconservation_ash.html*.

Pine and ***Spruce*** can also be easily planted from seed. These seeds are a little harder to gather since they are not as easy to spot once they have fallen out of their cones. Ideally, you'll want to pick mature cones and dry them. The squirrels will tell you when the seeds are mature; keep an eye on their eating habits. When the cones are dried they will be fully open and the seeds can be shaken out. Cones can be laid out to dry in the sun or in a warm shed or greenhouse. Plant seeds immediately or store at 35 degrees for a few months. Pine and spruce seeds can be stored for a couple of years if you don't want to plant them all at once.

Give your seedlings space as they grow, and make sure to water them often. After the first year many may still be too small to be planted out into the woods. So, you may want to keep them in a little nursery area or in large enough pots until they are a few feet tall and can be transplanted to their permanent home. Also, all transplanted trees planted in the woods have to be protected from herbivores. A good way to do this is with wire cages.

Rebecca Hargrave is the Community Horticulture and Natural Resources Educator at Cornell University Cooperative Extension in Chenango County.

The Forest's Future Is Our Legacy

Jerry Michael

Over one year ago, I offered a $50 bill to the first member of my hunting club who could find five maple, cherry or oak seedlings or saplings **anywhere** on the 1600 forested acres we hunt. Unfortunately, the $50 is still in my pocket. How could such an unnatural and foreboding circumstance occur, and how unique is the situation among New York's forests?

My hunting club's property was clear-cut 90 years ago, along with most of the Catskills, for saw logs, charcoal, and by-products for the wood chemical industry. By the beginning of the twentieth century, New York's forest cover had been reduced to about 15% of the land area as a result of agriculture, logging, industrial development and human habitation. When the founders of my club began purchasing contiguous parcels in 1939, the land was a very early succession forest on which they hunted rabbits. They went to the Adirondacks every fall to hunt deer as there were none to speak of in the Southern Tier of New York or the state of Pennsylvania.

With all the browse available from regrowing forests, and with no natural predators, the deer population exploded in the 1950's and 1960's. In many areas, densities exceeded 50 deer per square mile, while the normal carrying capacity of forested land is around 10 to 20 per square mile. The ecological impact on the forest and the deer themselves was not understood at the time, and the New York Conservation Department, a forerunner to the DEC, catered to hunters who were happy to see a lot of deer in the woods. My club routinely harvested an average of twenty bucks a year from our land in the 1970's and shooting a doe, even if you could get a permit, was considered "counterproductive" if you wanted to have lots of bucks to hunt. We did wonder why antler size was shrinking, and why the average body weight had dropped by about a third.

What we didn't focus on at the time was that the deer had consumed the entire understory of the forest and, by the 1990's, the understory had been replaced with shade-tolerant species unpalatable to the deer — mainly hay scented fern, striped maple and beech brush. This "interfering vegetation," as it is now called, has been so well-established for so many years that it now prevents almost all germination of seeds from desirable hardwood species. Any seedlings that do sprout soon die under the dense shade from interfering vegetation, or are heavily browsed by deer. And unfortunately, the total absence of hardwood regeneration is not unique to my hunting club's forest.

A study conducted by Cornell University obtained survey responses from nearly 200 practicing foresters in 2009. Their responses indicated that desirable tree regeneration was occurring on an average of only 30% of the stands where foresters expected regeneration to take place. The Nature Conservancy also published an alarming study in 2010, based on 1,647 USDA forest inventory data plots in the state. It concluded that regeneration was adequate on only 43% of the data plots measured. The worst areas included almost all of the Catskills, the lower Hudson valley, and the southern half of the Adirondacks. Furthermore, where there was regeneration, the predominant species was American Beech, at 23%.

Nor is the regeneration problem unique to NY State. Pennsylvania and the rest of the northeastern hardwood

"A maple/cherry stand with the forest floor covered 100% by hay-scented fern and no hardwood regeneration"

continued on page 12

"Useful Internet Resources"

Penn State Webinars:
http://extension.psu.edu/private-forests/tools-resources/webinars
Click on "Previous webinars", then on "Forest stewardship series". Select the 3/13/2012 webinar "Regenerating a High-Graded Stand" with Dr. Jim Finley. This is a fairly technical presentation, but it emphasizes the criteria for the critical timing of operations leading to successful regeneration. If you have not viewed webinars in the past, you may have to register the first time. They are free.

Cornell Webinars:
http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestconnect.
Click on "Webinars", then on "Scheduled and Saved Past Webinars". There are many valuable webinars listed. The two of particular interest are:
2/15/2012: "Forest Vegetation Management Using Herbicides", with Dave Jackson, Penn State

4/15/2009: "Rehabilitating a Cutover Stand", with Dr. Ralph Nyland, SUNY ESF (Ret.)

Publications:
Northeastern Forest Regeneration Handbook: A Guide for Forest Owners, Harvesting Practitioners, and Public Officials. 2006. USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area State and Private Forest. NA-TP-03-06. ***http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/info/pubs/management/forest_regn_hndbk06.pdf***

Forest Regeneration in New York State. 2010 Study: The Nature Conservancy. ***http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/newyork/placesweprotect/easternnewyork/final_nys_regen_091410_2.pdf*** See especially the Executive Summary and maps on pages 5 & 12.

Regenerating Hardwood Forests: Managing Competing Plants, Deer & Light. *Forest Stewardship Bulletin #15. 2009*. Penn State. Excellent seven-page overview.
http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/uh181.pdf

Tools to Manage Interfering Plants. Dr. Peter Smallidge, *The New York Forest Owner* magazine, Volume 50, No. 2, March/April 2012 issue.

Foresters' perception of forest regeneration and possible barriers to regeneration in New York State. 2010. HDRU Series No. 10-2. Dept. Nat. Res., Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY. 30pp. ***http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/hdru/pubs/HDRUReport10-2.pdf***

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* Minimum order is 50 signs with additional signs in increments of 25.

forests are in the same boat. Dr. Gary Alt, retired Game Commissioner for Pennsylvania has been quoted: "Attempting to raise more deer than the land can support has been the greatest mistake in the history of wildlife management in the state of Pennsylvania" (Forest Stewardship Bulletin #15, Penn State University, 2009).

So what does this situation portend for our forests, already threatened by a multitude of invasive and native insects, climate change and, in some cases, the effects of past high-grade logging practices? Most of our second-growth forests range in age from 75 to 125 years. If we consider the average life span of a native canopy tree species to be about 150 – 200 years (less in the shallow, rocky Catskill soils), what will our forests look like in another half century when most of the current trees are gone? While leading a chapter woods walk at Cuyler Hill State Forest (Cortland County) in 2010, Dr. Ralph Nyland, Professor Emeritus from SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry (ESF) in Syracuse, described his "worst nightmare" as a forest landscape dominated by diseased beech, beech brush, hay-scented fern and invasive vegetation, populated by woodpeckers and not much else. Are we prepared to accept the economic and environmental impact of such a disaster? Will our successors be able to pay taxes on the land without income from forest products other than firewood? Will tourists still drive up the Thruway or Route 17 in September and October to look at the forests if the reds, oranges and yellows have been replaced by brown? Will we be willing to pay $100 plus per gallon for maple syrup imported from Canada? Are we ready to accept the impact on wildlife and recreation?

The good, or at least hopeful, news is that researchers at the US Forest Service, Penn State, Cornell, SUNY ESF and other universities have been aware of, studying, and developing solutions for the regeneration problem for almost thirty years (see table on page 11). Guidance on dealing with the problem has been refined and is now available from Webinars on Cornell's Forest-Connect and Penn State University's websites. Since the regeneration issue was not on the front burner when many practicing foresters went to college, they are being trained on new methods and technologies through the auspices of The Society of American Foresters.

Restoring our forests to a sustainable condition will require combinations of deer management, specialized silvicultural treatments and the judicious use of herbicides. The sequence and timing of these treatments is critical for success and to minimize the cost over a stand's growth cycle. Forest owners wishing to undertake the restoration of their woodlots can get started by familiarizing themselves with the material available online (see box). When ready to retain a consulting forester, make sure they are "up to speed" on the development of stand-specific prescriptions for promoting regeneration.

As discussed in Jim Minor's "President's Column," the NYFOA Board of Directors is implementing several long-term initiatives to address the restoration of New York's forests and the subject will be featured regularly in future issues of *The New York Forest Owner*. Stay tuned.

Jerry Michael is a Master Forest Owner Volunteer and a former NYFOA Board member.

Welcome New Members

We welcome the following new members (who joined in July and August) to NYFOA and thank them for their interest in, and support of, the organization:

Name	Chapter
Serger Bartishevich	WFL
David M. Bloom	SOT
ECO Program	WFL
Ed Haag	AFC
Howard Harris	WFL
Irena M. Holiat	CNY
Michael Jabot	AFC
Ken & Melissa Kuczka	AFC
Hans & Leslie Kunze	WFL
Malcolm MacKenzie	WFL
Devon Newkirk	AFC
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Woodland Health

A column focusing on topics that might limit the health, vigor and productivity of our private or public woodlands

Coordinated by Mark Whitmore

Asian Gypsy Moth Revisited

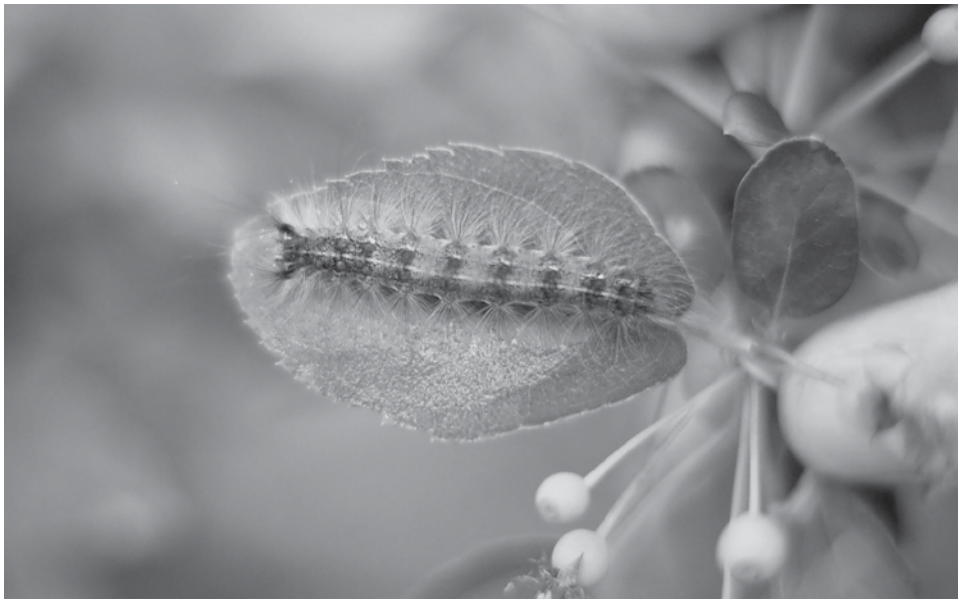
By George Huddler

Asian Gypsy Moth (AGM) is yet another non-native threat to our forests that we need to be watching for. The scary thing about AGM is that its host range is much broader than European Gypsy Moth and the females are able to fly. AGM is most commonly used to refer to the subspecies Lymantria dispar asiatica, but has also been used to refer to the Japanese Gypsy Moth, L. d. japonica. The good news is that given early detection eradication efforts have been successful in the Pacific Northwest and more recently in North Carolina. The key with this pest and others that will inevitably arrive as a result of international commerce is early detection, and the more eyes the better.

We've been hearing reports of gypsy moths in upstate New York feeding on spruce (especially blue spruce) but causing *little or no* damage to their usual deciduous host trees growing nearby. Rumors are flying that perhaps these are *Asian* gypsy moths, closely related to the "normal" European gypsy moth but with a broader host range and much more mobile females. The two "strains" look so much alike that the only way to conclusively distinguish them is to analyze DNA. And, thus far molecular analysis has indicated that moths on spruce are not the Asian strain. According to Dan Gilrein, Extension Entomologist from Suffolk County, they had a similar 'scare,' on Long Island many years ago with observance of unusual behavior of selected populations of larvae raising the specter of an 'Asian' gypsy moth invasion. As with the current situation, gypsy moth damage on conifers, particularly on Colorado blue spruce ('Montgomery' was dramatically affected) but also on white pines in deference to broadleaved hosts, initially raised some eyebrows. The concern was heightened by reports of flying female gypsy moths. Since that episode, Dan and colleagues have even seen infestations on arborvitae; damage was very limited but egg masses (or remnants) on the plants caused rejection in shipping. Every time, samples from conifers sent to a USDA lab at Otis Air Force Base in Massachusetts (a lab dedicated to the detection and management of invasive insect pests) came back negative for diagnostic Asian markers, and flying females were never confirmed.

In fact, conifers are known hosts for the European gypsy moth albeit not has highly preferred as some deciduous hosts like oaks. Dan surmises what may be happening is that ballooning newly hatched larvae land on these less-preferred hosts at the whims of the wind, and those that are unable to leave cause the damage later observed.

With respect to *bona fide* Asian gypsy moth introductions, there have been some and they have been quickly followed by eradication efforts sufficient to ensure that Asian gypsy moth (AGM) has not



European and Asian gypsy moth larvae are virtually indistinguishable; both have 4 blue and 4 red dorsal spots.

The best evidence of gypsy moth activity between August and May is the presence of egg masses, usually in places protected from rain and hot sun. Look on the undersides of branches and under picnic tables for starters.

become successfully established in the US. Nonetheless, with the enormous amount of foreign trade and travel through East Coast air and sea ports, we think it's important to review information about Asian gypsy moth and we'd be interested to hear if you are also seeing gypsy moth larvae feeding on conifers (and other unusual hosts?) while leaving typically favorite hosts alone.

Asian Gypsy Moth vs. European Gypsy Moth

Several factors make Asian strain moths concerning. First, the Asian moth females fly up to 20 miles, thus spreading more rapidly than the European strain with flightless females. Second, the Asian strain moths differ genetically from their European counterparts, especially with greater genetic diversity of the former. Along with the more genetically diverse population, the host range of the Asian strain is larger, with conifers—especially larch—as well as deciduous trees such as birch, willow, and oak. In addition, the Asian strain has a faster egg hatch in spring and the larvae are less sensitive to some biopesticides like Bt.

Hybrids of the Asian and European strains are also potential problems because the hybrids are more vigorous than the European strain. These hybrids are less susceptible to some biopesticides, and some adult hybrid females are able to fly.

Symptoms

The defoliation caused by the Asian strain is similar to that caused by the European strain. The young larvae chew shot-holes in leaves. The mature larvae consume entire leaves, at times down to the midrib.

Signs

The Asian strain is almost impossible to distinguish from the European strain without using molecular techniques. Like the European strain, the egg masses are felt-like, tan, and up to 1½ inches in length. In contrast to the European strain, they are laid in clusters on foliage and on objects associated with lights. The egg masses also occur on tree boles and rocks as is common with the European gypsy moth.

The Asian strain larvae have five different color forms (bright yellow, yellow, yellow-gray, gray, and black). These variations in color sometimes can be used to determine the presence of the Asian strain but only by an expertly trained eye.

The brown-black pupal cases of the Asian strain can be found on foliage. The adult males are dark brown and the females are white with black spots, attracted to light, and larger (though apparently not much) than the European strain.

Life History

The life history of the Asian strain is similar to the European strain except for the fact that Asian strain larvae hatch earlier. (In a year like this past one, where everything was speeded up, that "fact" may actually be more confusing than helpful.) Both strains have just one generation per year. They overwinter as eggs. Five to twenty-five percent of the eggs prematurely hatch in the fall. The majority of the larvae emerge in the spring. They often remain on the egg mass for several days and then begin to feed on foliage during the night and rest on the host during the day. The first and second instar larvae spin silken threads from which they suspend themselves. If the wind velocity is high enough, these larvae become windborne and disperse from several hundred yards up to several miles. The Asian strain larvae purportedly grow faster and become bigger than the European counterparts, but the size difference is obviously not reliable enough to confirm strain distinction in the field. The larval stage lasts about seven weeks. Then, the Asian moths pupate on foliage. The male and female adults emerge before mid-July, disperse, and mate. The female lays eggs in clusters on foliage, tree boles, rocks, and light poles. Egg masses deposited on foliage are insulated by snow when the leaves fall to the ground.

Asian Gypsy Moth web references:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/gypsy_moth/index.shtml

Dr. George Hudler is a professor in the Department of Plant Pathology at Cornell since 1976. He specializes in diseases of trees and shrubs, with occasional forays into entomological topics in conjunction with publication of BRANCHING OUT: An IPM Newletter for Trees and Shrubs.

Mark Whitmore is a forest entomologist in the Cornell University Department of Natural Resources and the chair of the NY Forest Health Advisory Council.

What you see is what you get. American beech has become established and dominant in the understory of this 80 year old red pine plantation. Without owner intervention, the next forest is likely to become a beech forest.

species can dominate and the habitat can become unsuitable for some desired wildlife.

What limits forest tree regeneration? Why is there a problem?

Trees are long-lived and some forest owners may call a forest home for several decades and legitimately not become involved in the process of forest regeneration. In a section of woods, barring any manipulations to the canopy or seed bed, the number of trees will decline through time but the remaining trees are the same as when these owners started. In many ownerships, anytime an opening is made in the forest canopy and the forest floor has a prolonged exposure to sunlight, a new plant may become established. But, is it the plant that will serve the needs and desires of the owners, or one that might interfere?

Recall the earlier discussion about the necessary timing and overlap for propagules, seed bed, and seedling establishment and growth. Any constriction on any of these three conditions can limit successful regeneration. Some constrictions or barriers are common but infrequent or of short duration. Also, if the site provides only limited soil or light resources, typically only a few plant species can survive in those conditions. The list of potential barriers to regeneration is immense, and includes late frosts that damage tree flowers, a peak in the woodland vole population that eats the seeds, an overly wet spring and widespread damping-off fungus, an outbreak of forest tent caterpillars that reduces tree energy reserves, and more. However, there are three primary factors that restrict desirable regeneration when they occur as sustained and widespread phenomena; other factors may develop as our environment changes.

First, most woodlands lack sufficient browse to support the resident deer herd. In these cases, deer disproportionately consume desired seedlings. Deer limit the adequacy of the seedling's environment to grow and develop. Deer consume palatable seedling species, usually the most desirable for human needs, and avoid the less palatable species. This selective pressure results in a reduction in species diversity and a shift in the mixture of species. Other than beech and in some circumstances black cherry, deer will preferentially browse the seedlings of all our upper canopy tree species (e.g., oaks, maples, cherry, ash, basswood, pine). Visualize this process through time; each year the seedlings of desirable upper canopy trees are consumed and undesirable species are retained. Consequently, any sunlight favors the growth of the undesirable species. The impacts of deer on forest regeneration can be limited by controlling the number of deer or restricting the access of deer to desirable seedlings.

Second, most tree species require a specific quality and quantity of light for the seeds to germinate and the seedlings to develop. Shade close to the ground limits the suitability of the seed bed and the adequacy of the seedling's environment. Dense understories of shrubs, grasses and ferns (often what the deer leave behind) will absorb the energy rich red wavelengths and allow the lower quality far-red wave lengths to pass. The lower quality and quantity of light prevents some seeds from germinating and some species from surviving. Understories of shrubs, subcanopy trees, grasses, sedges and ferns that intercept light and inhibit tree regeneration are collectively called interfering vegetation. Species that commonly interfere with desirable hardwoods include American beech, striped maple, hophornbeam, ferns, grasses, sedges, and in some cases raspberry. In some areas, non-native shrubs can play a similar role, species such as multiflora rose, bush honeysuckle, European buckthorn, autumn olive, and Japanese barberry. Dense and abundant understories of interfering vegetation need to be managed to prevent them from reducing light quality and quantity.

Finally, because tree regeneration depends primarily on seeds, parent trees of appropriate genetic quality need to be present or have been recently present. Often however, as described by Dr. Nyland, exploitive cutting removes the

best quality and largest trees and shifts the potential for seed production to fewer species of poorer quality and capacity to produce seed. Exploitive cutting, also known as high-grading, has the potential to eliminate some species from a stand and thus prevents that species from providing propagules and effectively regenerating. In some circumstances, such as a properly executed clearcut, seed and propagules are known to be in the soil seed bank or available from adjacent trees and seedlings establish successfully after the overstory is removed. Exploitive cutting is distinct from clearcutting; the high-grading activity will typically limit owner options for regeneration. Owners who have acquired a high-graded forest will need to find good technical assistance to provide for desirable tree regeneration.

Recommendations

The next several issues of the *NY Forest Owner* will carry articles on different aspects of forest regeneration and restoration. Look in those issues for more detailed analysis of regeneration constraints and strategies to ensure successful regeneration. Spend some time in your woods. Learn how to identify desirable and undesirable species. In areas where a dense understory of undesirable species has become established, look for desirable species. Assess any desirable seedlings for evidence of deer browsing, particularly multiple stems. If you are planning a harvest, work with your forester to ensure that the harvest has a deliberate and defensible silvicultural prescription. Talk with your logger and forester to identify ways to encourage and favor desirable seedlings.

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Peter Smallidge and Gary Goff. Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Department of Natural Resources. Bruckner Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853. (607) 592 – 3640. Pjs23@cornell.edu grg3@cornell.edu www.ForestConnect.info

Butternuts in New York State

John Wertis

Butternuts traditionally have been found in more than 16 states across the northeast and north central parts of our country. The Butternut Canker Disease was identified in Wisconsin in 1967 and since that time has spread to become a scourge throughout the traditional butternut range.

A Purdue University report, citing the US Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis Program, stated that between 2003 and 2008 there was a 23% decrease of butternuts across seven Midwestern states. A Nature Serve study in 2009 reports that in most of the states surrounding New York State butternuts were classified as "Vulnerable." In Canada butternuts are on their "endangered species list." Butternuts in New York State were classified as "apparently secure." However, I only have to look out my living room window to see in the hedgerows that "apparent security" is threatened.

An online survey of butternut references suggests that most of the research related to butternuts and their canker has been carried out by the U.S. Forest Service and their associates. Even though New York State road maps and gazetteers abound in "Butternut" place names, there is little written about New York State butternuts in the scientific literature. Perhaps this is related to the fact that New York State has only one national forest within it's borders…the Finger Lakes National Forest.

Within the last half dozen years staff from the "Mother" of the Finger Lakes national Forest, the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont, have been working on a U.S. Forest Service "Butternut Preservation Project." "Healthy" butternut trees in New England states were identified. Scionwood was collected from these trees and grafted onto black walnut stock. The resulting clones were grown out in greenhouses and this past spring were planted in a deer exclosure plot in Middlebury, Vermont. Region 9 of the U.S. Forest Service is

Butternut Tree fruit. Photo: Paul Wray, Iowa State University, Bugwood.org

poised to repeat this project in New York State. They have surveyed the Finger Lakes National Forest to look for "healthy" butternuts and have expanded the search to include land holdings in the area immediately surrounding the Forest. They will collect scionwood, graft, and grow out clones of these trees to then be planted in a deer exclosure within the Finger Lakes National Forest to test their canker resistance.

A complication associated with these projects is the fact that butternuts will hybridize easily with Japanese walnuts or heartnuts. These hybrids tend to exhibit a marked resistance to the Butternut Canker and they are very difficult to identify by visual clues alone. Therefore, to be sure that it is true butternut being preserved, scionwood is subjected to DNA verification before grafting takes place.

New York Nut Growers Program

Members of the New York Nut Growers Association are teaming with members of the New York Forest Owners Association and the Finger Lakes Land Trust to support the Finger Lakes National Forest butternut project. The New York Nut Growers Program this fall will focus on butternuts. This program will be held Saturday, October 13, 2012 at the Cornell Cooperative Extension facility of Chenango County in Norwich, N.Y. Appropriately enough, the Town of Butternuts in Otsego County is right next door, as is Butternut Creek that joins the Unadilla River just below the Norwich meeting place.

All interested parties are encouraged to attend. The program is free and open to the public. Look for the agenda, registration, and further information on the New York Nut Growers website *www.nynga.org* or contact Jerry Henkin at (914) 282-1371 or via email at sproutnut@aol.com.

John Wertis is President of the New York Nut Growers Association. (NYNGA).

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Member Profile:
Walter and Theresa Kersch

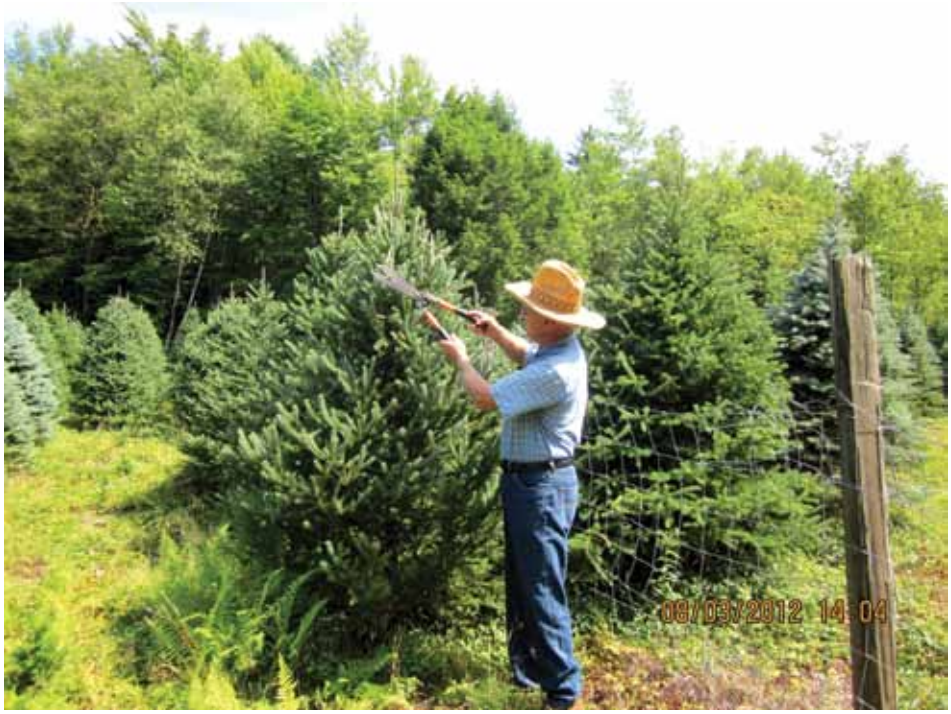
Carly Neumann

Walter and Theresa (Terri) Kersch own and live on over 700 acres of forest in Poestenkill, NY, which they acquired through the purchase of several major parcels starting in 1972. Walter is originally from Western New York where he grew up on a large dairy farm. In the seventh grade he was making maple syrup and selling it wholesale, growing an acre of strawberries and chopping firewood with his father. In fact "he didn't know that there was another way to heat a home." After graduating from State University of New York at Oswego, Walter taught math in Angola, NY. Walter earned his Master's Degree in Counseling at Canisius College and moved to the Capital District in 1964, where he completed advanced certification in School Administration and assumed the position of Berlin Junior–Senior High School Principal in 1969, retiring in 1989.

With his experiences from childhood, Walter has always had an interest in woodlands. After graduating from SUNY Oswego, Walter bought a large farm in Western New York, which he planted entirely in Christmas trees. During the 60's he was supplying Tampa, FL with 6,000 Christmas trees a year.

When the Kersch's moved to Poestenkill in 1969 their property included only 10 acres with a little bit of forest. Walter planted a few hundred Christmas trees on this land. When a 400-acre contiguous parcel came up for sale, the Kersches bought it, with the intention of protecting the land from future development. Since that time they have added 4 additional contiguous parcels for a total of 769 acres.

The history of this land tract reflects the area's agricultural background. In the 1800's the property held a number of small farms. In the late 1800's trees on this property were cut to make charcoal needed by the Burden Iron Works in Troy, NY. You can still find charcoal pits all over the property. Since the land was cleared for charcoal, it has completely and naturally grown into a mixed hardwood forest.



Walter pruning a christmas tree.

Walter's land is now primarily a hardwood and mixed hemlock forest. Walter says he has found only one oak of any mentionable size, a white oak, on the property, but there are several smaller four to five foot tall oaks starting to grow. The property boasts a 350 feet elevation differential which creates drainage for the forest and also affects the species composition in its wet and dry areas.

The unique parcels on this property pose interesting management challenges, which are met with diverse plans. Walter worked with forester Mike Greason to enroll one of the parcels in the 480A program. Two of the parcels have DEC Stewardship Management Plans. Another parcel underwent a timber stand improvement in the 70's and has been left to grow. Another parcel had been high graded four times while Walter has known the property, so most of the wood value has been removed. The Kersches used cherry Walter cut from their property for the floors, woodwork and trim in their newly built home. He also collected stones from the property for the front of the house. Walter reflects, "I spent about six months going around to all the stone walls collecting stones and my artist builder rejected about half of them."

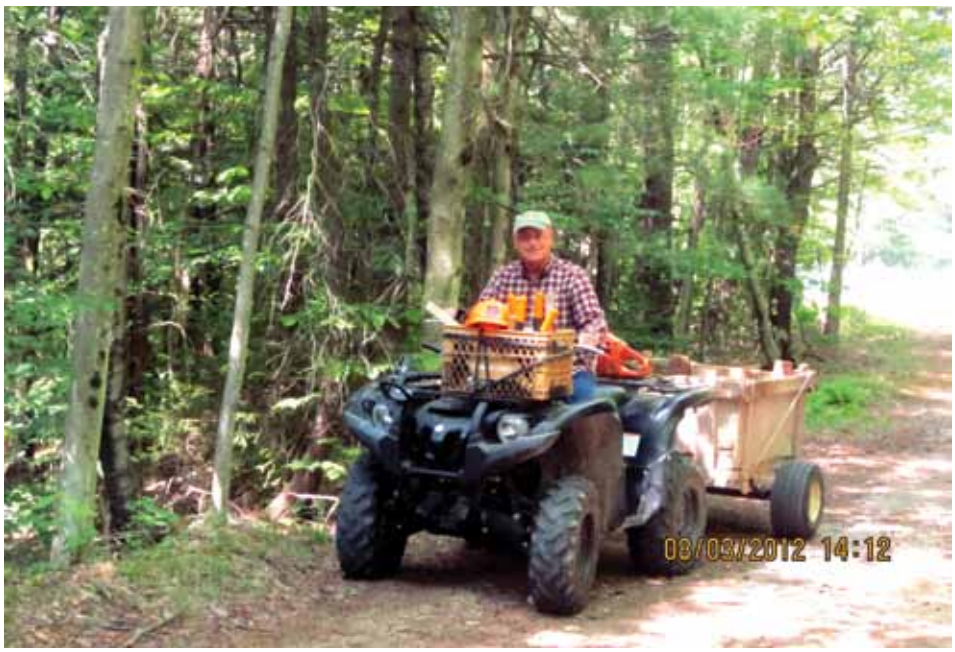
The main management challenge on the Kersch's property is managing invasive species. Most of the attention is given to beech, which Walter sprays to prevent regrowth and spread. Hay-scented fern has opportunistically and aggressively taken over areas where light permeates the canopy. This makes new cutting and management particularly challenging. For example, in the parcel that underwent the TSI in the 70's a special strategy has to be planned in

continued on page 22

A young pole forest of 30-40 year old soft maples where Walter has taken out all of the beech.

order to cut trees and not allow the fern to grown in. Walter's strategy is to only cut a very limited number of trees at each cut, allowing the canopy time to regrow.

As owners of woodlands the Kersches spent a substantial amount of time determining what they wanted to do with their land that would allow people to appreciate and enjoy it but also would preserve the quality of the forest. They considered putting in a campground. Then Walter, a downhill skier and instructor, went with his family to a family run cross-country ski resort where they got the inspiration to develop and operate Pineridge Cross Country Ski Area. Pineridge has 35 km of machined groomed trails as well as 15 km of un-groomed backcountry trails, which are also used for snowshoeing. The trails are specifically designed to give guests an opportunity to experience the forest. The trails are narrow, only 8-10 feet wide, and the forest has closed over the top of many. It took Walter over a week and a half to design one trail to go past a unique forked tree.



Walter riding the ATV which is used to get around on all the trails

The couple also uses the property for hunting. A group of about 12 dedicated hunters is out in the woods almost every day during the season hunting deer and bear. There are also signs of moose on the property, including tracks in the snow and damage to striped maples. Walter believes that there is a population of 20-25 moose that live on the Rensselaer Plateau where his property is located. During woods walks many participants enjoy seeing the signs of bear claws on the beech trees.

Walter enjoys his forest lands for the wildlife but also for the challenge and joy of building trails. His ATV service provider refers to him as the high-mileage man (his last ATV had eight or nine thousand miles). In the time that they have owned their woodlands Walter has become even more knowledgeable about forest management by becoming a Master Forest Owner volunteer, through extensive reading, and work with foresters. He uses his knowledge to mark trees and manage cuts in his forest. He is presently arranging 60-cord firewood cut. In addition, he is the go-to forest person and Board Member for Rensselaer County Cooperative Extension. Walter highly recommends that forest owners become members of NYFOA and other related organizations because of networks available through such groups. These organizations support the private landowner and help with management questions. His work through all of these venues, Cornell Cooperation Extension, NYFOA and the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance help to educate forest landowners about their property. Walter is in the forest every day and works hard to help others create beautiful and healthy woodlands that can be appreciated and enjoyed.

Carly Neumann is a Forest Resources Extension Program Assistant at Cornell University, Dept. of Natural Resources, Ithaca, NY 14853. Dr. Shorna Allred is the faculty advisor for the Member Profile Series.

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