

The New York Forest Owner

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

January/February 2018



Member Profile: Tracy Lamanec

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**THE NEW YORK
FOREST OWNERS
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**The New York
Forest Owner**

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION
VOLUME 56, NUMBER 1

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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 \$45.



www.nyfoa.org

COVER: Tracy Lamanec dragging out logs from dead oak trees for firewood past one of his many trail cameras. For member profile see page 21. All photos courtesy of Tracy Lamanec.

From The President

Many of our friends, neighbors, and families view New York winters with dread and migrate south to warmer climates. I feel sorry for many of these folks, for they are missing the best season of the year, especially for woodland owners. Winter mornings in our corner of rural New York State usually begin with getting the fire going in the woodstove, filling the firewood rack, and drinking morning coffee in the rocking chair in front of the stove. After breakfast, it is time to head off into the woods. Nothing is better than being in the woods on



a cold crisp day, especially if there is some fresh snow. Whatever the day's goals, i.e., firewood cutting or Timber Stand Improvement (TSI improves forest health by thinning out diseased or inferior trees to allow healthy trees room to grow), it is a great time of year to be in the woods. There are no biting insects, and protective clothing that is brutally hot to wear in summer feels just right. Invasive plants without their leaves are not so annoyingly obvious. Muddy or wet areas freeze and become more accessible. Exercising in clean, cold air sure beats a gym workout. A hot thermos of coffee or tea and a snack in mid-morning are better than anything available in the resort dining room. Nothing can be as luxurious as a fire for warming hands and toes on particularly cold days, and for entertainment there are animal tracks in the snow that tell a story to be unraveled.

Winter brings seasonal chores like snow shoveling or plowing, but also means no lawn mowing, leaf raking, or garden tending. Winter also brings cross country or downhill skiing, ice skating, snowmobiling, catching up on good books, small game hunting, and planning out next year's projects to improve your woods and accomplish your ownership goals. It is truly a delightful time of year.

For NYFOA members who still make New Year's resolutions, I have a few suggestions. Resolve to avail yourselves in the coming year of what NYFOA has to offer. When *The Forest Owner* or your chapter newsletters arrive, sit down immediately with your calendars and reserve the dates for woods walks, chapter meetings or social events, the state Annual Meeting, or the Farm Show. Go to the Cooperative Extension's ForestConnect YouTube channel to watch educational podcasts aimed at NY forest owners and to sign up for future podcasts. When planning next year's woods projects, consider shopping at those vendors offering discounts on goods and services to NYFOA members (see the NYFOA Rewards Program at the "Join/Renew" section of our web page). Read and enjoy *Northern Woodlands* magazine through a discounted subscription. And importantly, invite a friend, family member, or neighbor to our events so they can see our enthusiasm for good stewardship and goal-oriented woodland management and can become part of a larger voice advocating for private woodland owners as they practice sound forest management.

—Charles Stackhouse
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*, woodwalks, chapter meetings, and statewide meetings.

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For information about attending or exhibiting at the **2018 Loggers' Expo**, visit us online at www.northernlogger.com or call toll-free **800-318-7561** or **315-369-3078**.

2018 Silent Auction

DAVE WILLIAMS

“Old timers” speak about the fun they used to have donating items and bidding on others at the annual meetings. Dean Faklis overheard a conversation at the 2016 meeting and asked for details. After hearing more, in typical Dean fashion, he said, “we can do that.” And we did. With the help of the membership and a variety of vendors, we put together a nice display of handcrafted items, toys, tools, merchandise, artwork, and services for attendees to bid on. When the proceeds were tallied the auction team reported that we raised \$5000 to support youth forestry programs. We all had fun and we have seed money to educate and encourage the youngsters who may become the woodland owners of the future.

The NYFOA board of directors have endorsed a plan to conduct a similar auction at the April 21, 2018 annual meeting at SUNY ESF in Syracuse. Our goal for this year is to raise \$2000. Co-chairs for this year’s event are board

members Gerry McDonald and Dave Williams.

We are confident that you want to help, so here are some examples to get you thinking and to show how donating works:

- You want to contribute a handcrafted piece of Windsor furniture. You will email a completed *Donation Form* which is located on page 15 to auction@nyfoa.org or mail it to Liana Gooding, Office Administrator (PO Box 541 Lima, NY 14485). If possible, provide a photo of your item for the website.
- You are extremely talented and would like to offer a beautiful wooden bowl but don’t have time to make one this year. You could choose to donate cash. Cash isn’t as much fun but it surely works for funding NYFOA Mini-Grants for Educators. Again, fill out a *Donation Form* and email it to auction@nyfoa.org or mail it to Liana.
- You are a forest consultant and

are willing to donate a coupon good for four hours of consultation to the winning bidder. You know the drill by now: complete a *Donation Form* and email it to auction@nyfoa.org or mail it to Liana Gooding.

When you offer an auction item we will pass the information along to our webmaster and he will post it on our website. That way, others can see what you’ve offered and they will be ready to place bids at the annual meeting. You can check the auction webpage at any time at NYFOA.org.

You will be responsible to either personally deliver your item to the annual meeting or make arrangements to get it there. Of course, you will want to be there so you can place your own bids on other items.

The clock is ticking. Please consider how you can help us reach our goal. And remember, all contributions are tax deductible.

Contact us with questions, if you need more information, or when you are ready to make a donation. Gerry McDonald can be reached at oakmando@gmail.com and Dave Williams can be reached at kdwillmill@gmail.com. 🏠

Welcome New Members

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

Name	Chapter
Shannon & Oliver Chanler	WFL
Gary Cower	SOT
Carl J. George Jr	AFC
Drew Gleason	AFC
Ellen Graf	CDC
Michael Morris	WFL
Michael Zagata	SOT



NYFOA members view some of the 2017 auction items.

Ask A Professional

PETER SMALLIDGE



Peter Smallidge

Landowner questions are addressed by foresters and other natural resources professionals. Landowners should be careful when interpreting answers and applying this general advice to their property because landowner objectives and property conditions will influence specific management options. When in doubt, check with your regional DEC office or other service providers. Landowners are also encouraged to be active participants in Cornell Cooperative Extension and NYFOA programs to gain additional, often site-specific, answers to questions. To submit a question, email to Peter Smallidge at pjs23@cornell.edu with an explicit mention of "Ask a Professional." Additional reading on various topics is available at www.forestconnect.info

Getting Started With Small-Scale Maple Syrup Production

Question: I have maple trees on my property and would like to try making maple syrup. What do I do? (Ed, SFL; Stacey, CDC)

Answer: Making maple syrup is a time-honored tradition for woodlot owners, and anyone who has even a few maple trees. The process is as simple as boiling sap, but attention to a few details will make for a more pleasant, productive, and safe experience. A warning first, many people who start with just a few tapped trees quickly catch the maple bug; what starts as a handful of tapped trees can expand into hundreds of tapped trees.

What will you tap?

All of the native species of maple can be used for maple production, and some people have even tried the non-native Norway maple with varied success. The maples you most likely will find and that will be useful are sugar, black, and red maple. Silver maple is also suitable and may be found in stream bottoms in your location. Trees may be located in yards, hedgerows, or the woods.

The maples have opposing leaves, buds, and branches (Figure 1). Other "opposite" trees include white, green, and black ash. The maples all have more slender twigs than ash. Our native maples have bark that is described as having "plates" that peel from the sides (sugar maple) or top and bottom (red and silver maple).

Several educational resources are available to assist with tree identification. You can request a visit from a Cornell Master Forest Owner volunteer who can help you identify maples. Request a visit at www.CornellMFO.info. There are also tree identification videos at www.youtube.com/ForestConnect. Finally, search Google for "Cornell Know Your Trees" for an online bulletin.

Sap Collection

The basic process is to collect sap from the tree and boil the sap until the sugar concentration increases to about 67% sugar, the defining point of syrup. This process can be broken down into collecting, boiling, and storage.

Sap runs when the trees experience a freeze:thaw cycle that creates a negative pressure inside the tree (suction) that draws water into the stem. As the tree thaws, the internal pressure increases and allows the sap to run out through the hole you've drilled. Your buckets or containers need to be checked and collected every time there is a freeze:thaw cycle. Sap spoils easily if it gets too warm.

Collection systems for a few trees usually include a spile that is inserted into the tree and a container to hold the sap. Spiles can be either plastic or stainless steel. Spiles must be removed each year. A hole appropriate for the diameter of the spile, usually 3/16" or 5/16" is drilled about 1.5 inches deep at a slight angle to allow sap to run out. The hole must be into clean white wood (watch the shavings). Avoid any wiggle while drilling so the



Figure 1. All maple trees have opposing buds. The buds produce leaves and twigs, which of course would also be opposing. Sugar maple (A) has sharp pointed buds. Red maple (B) has blunt or rounded buds. Other "opposite" species include the ashes, dogwoods, viburnums and horse chestnuts.



Figure 2. Tap holes need to be separated to allow access to wood that hasn't been stained following the previous tapping. At least "two fingers laterally and 2 to 4 inches vertically.

hole will be circular not elliptical. The hole should be about 2 inches laterally and 4 inches vertically away from last year's hole (Figure 2).

The type of spile needs to match the container. One common option is to use maple tubing to connect the spile to a clean plastic bucket with a lid (Figure 3). The tubing connects from the spile through a small hole in the lid of the bucket. The sealed lid prevents rain or melted snow from diluting the sap, and excludes other debris. Be sure to situate the buckets so

they don't blow over or tip as they fill with sap. The traditional method of collecting, at least in recent decades, is the use of a metal bucket that hangs from the spile (Figure 4). This system offers a traditional aesthetic that many people find attractive, and the simplicity of just the spile and bucket. Also, the bucket is attached to the spile and doesn't require a flat and level location. The buckets, however, usually lack a handle for transport.

After the season ends, remove all spiles from trees. Boil metal spiles and discard



Figure 3. Clean buckets with a lid provide a convenient way to collect sap using tubing from the spile. A fresh bucket is swapped with the bucket containing the sap, and the handle allows for easy transport.

plastic spiles unless they are impregnated with silver. Buckets should be thoroughly rinsed, and stored to prevent dust and debris from accumulating. Typically avoid soap on maple equipment which may not be easily rinsed.

Other collection systems, such as sap bags, are available. Look for examples of sap collection systems on the ForestConnect youtube channel, here <https://youtu.be/2jx-yLenq2g> or search for "maple sap collection."

Boiling Sap to Syrup

Making syrup is as easy as boiling the sap. The quicker and hotter the boil the faster the water evaporates. As a general rule of thumb, each quart of syrup will need to boil away about 10 gallons of water. What boils away is pure water as steam. The steam should not be sticky, but may loosen wall paper. The most economical way to boil sap is on a wood stove already in use for heating your home (Figure 5). Boiling on electric or gas stoves, or propane burners will produce expensive syrup.

Sap obtains the characteristic maple aroma and flavor by heat. The heating process also caramelizes the sap. The longer the sap heats, the darker it becomes. The color doesn't affect the flavor, but darker colors usually have more robust flavor.

Sap becomes syrup when the temperature is 7 degrees above the boiling point of water. All maple syrup is approximately 67% sugar, or what's known as brix. The actual boiling point of water changes daily with barometric pressure, plus most thermometers are not accurate. It is best to boil water each day to determine the boiling point and then add 7 degrees to determine the point the sap becomes syrup. Use caution, as sap approaches syrup, it can bubble up and over the edge of the pan causing quite a mess. It is also possible to burn syrup on the pan. It is a good idea to not use your best cooking pan to make syrup.

Once the syrup reaches temperature it is done. If you own a hydrometer or refractometer (Figure 6), you can confirm the temperature threshold by testing the syrup to see if it is approximately 67^o brix.

For most hobby producers, the next

continued on page 18

Wild Things in Your Woodlands

KRISTI SULLIVAN

FLYING SQUIRRELS



Northern (Glaucomys sabrinus) and southern (Glaucomys volans) flying squirrels are the smallest squirrels in New York State, weighing just a few ounces. Similar in appearance, the northern flying squirrel is larger (10 to 15 inches long) and reddish-brown in color, while its relative is smaller (8 to 10 inches in length) and mouse-like grey in color. Both species have soft, dense, silky fur, with white belly hair, and broad, flattened, furry tails that are about 5 inches long. Like most nocturnal animals, their gleaming black eyes are large and round. Prominent flaps of skin stretch from their wrists to their ankles giving them the ability to glide through the forest. In both species, the male and female are similar in size. Mating takes place early in the spring, and the young are born in May or June. In the wild, flying squirrels typically live to be four or five years old.

Because of their nocturnal habits, few people are fortunate enough to have seen a flying squirrel in the wild, and many are unaware that these night-time creatures exist. Emerging at dusk, they glide from the forest canopy down to the forest floor to feed. Although they cannot truly fly (bats are the only mammals that do), they have two large flaps of skin extending from their wrists to their ankles that act as miniature parachutes. When leaving a tree, they initially drop straight down for about 3 feet or so before flattening out into a glide. Like a miniature hang glider, a flying squirrel can move its legs to change the position of its membranes and swerve around obstacles. The higher a squirrel is when it drops out of a tree, the greater the speed and distance it can travel. From heights of 100 feet, they can reach speeds of up to 20 mph, and glide as far as 50 yards (over half the length of a football field).

Two species of flying squirrels are common in New York State and their ranges overlap, though the northern flying squirrel is more common in the northern part of the state, and the southern flying squirrel is most prevalent south of the Mohawk River Valley. In regions where their ranges overlap, they usually occupy different habitats. Both species require large areas of very mature, deciduous or mixed forest with large trees and cavities for nesting and escape cover. Flying squirrels usually occupy old woodpecker holes in the winter, but in warmer months often build or reuse existing leaf nests in the crotch of trees. They line their nests with shredded bark, lichens, grasses, and moss. Forest stands inhabited by these animals need to be relatively open beneath the tree canopy to provide unobstructed gliding areas for movement from tree to tree, and from tree to ground.

In addition to providing adequate


nesting sites, older forests support the lichens and fungi that the northern flying squirrel relies on for food, including truffles, the fruiting bodies of underground fungi that live in association with tree roots. These fungi are important to forest health because they increase the ability of trees to absorb nutrients and water from the forest soil. By feeding on the fungi and depositing the spores in the soil through their droppings, squirrels spread the spores throughout the forest, maintaining ecological processes that are important to forest health. Other foods of the northern flying squirrel include seeds, buds, fruit, insects, and small animals. Similarly, the southern flying squirrel eats seeds, berries, fungi, bark, flowers, insects, and other animal matter.

During the cold winter months, the southern flying squirrel will forage less often and at times become inactive, while the northern flying

squirrel remains active even at the coldest temperatures. Flying squirrels are sociable creatures, and will curl up together to conserve energy. Up to 50 animals may huddle up in one nest!

In mature woodlands, landowners can enhance habitat for these wide-eyed creatures of the night by retaining live and dead trees that contain holes, or cavities. An ideal den is an old woodpecker hole about 8 to 20 feet from the ground with an entrance hole of about 1.5 to 2 inches in diameter. In New York, large beech trees often provide cavities for nesting wildlife, and produce seeds that serve as food. In forests without many cavity trees, landowners can install artificial nest boxes on trees to provide shelter for flying squirrels. Retaining or providing woody debris and rotten logs on the forest floor will provide

additional sites for flying squirrels to take refuge from predators when foraging, and promote growth of fungi for food.

Landowners wishing to catch a glimpse of a flying squirrel can sometimes catch them feeding at bird feeders after dark. The best way to see a flying squirrel in the daylight is to tap or scratch on dead trees or hollow limbs containing abandoned woodpecker holes. If a squirrel is inside, it will often stick its head out to see what is amiss! 

Kristi Sullivan Directs the New York Master Naturalist Volunteer Program. More information on managing habitat for wildlife can be found at the Conservation Education Program web site at arnotconservation.info

Flying squirrel photo courtesy of Dr. Lloyd Glenn Ingles © California Academy of Sciences

Save the Date!

The 2018 NYFOA Annual Meeting is scheduled for Saturday April 21, 2018 at SUNY ESF

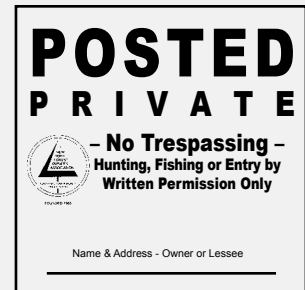
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NYFOA's Chainsaws for Charity (C4C) - The BIG Haul!

DEAN FAKLIS

The WFL chapter of NYFOA has begun a fun project whereby firewood is generated for the purposes of raising money for charity, providing a social function for NYFOA members, and to provide a vehicle for NYFOA to attract new members. The name "Chainsaws for Charity" was created by Dick Starr.

This past fall two teams of Rotarians showed up for work on October 7 to transport and deliver 24 face cords of the finest Chainsaws for Charity (C4C) firewood. This firewood was pre-sold earlier in the year by the Rotary, with all of the purchase price going to support Camp Onseyawa, a camp for children with special needs. So far, C4C and the Rotary have donated approximately \$3,000 to Camp Onseyawa (<https://www.onseyawa.org/>). Additionally C4C has already donated approximately \$1,000 to NYFOA's excellent and active youth forestry programs, with more in the queue. Habitat for Humanity of Ontario County has also benefited financially from C4C's efforts. This project is really producing excellent results!

It is important to note that none of this would be possible if it weren't for Tom Gerow and Wagner Hardwoods (<http://www.wagnerlumber.com/>). They are an extremely generous partner and they supply the fine hardwood logs for the operation. The logs are clean and are top quality for firewood, making our process a pleasure. A big thanks to Tom, his team, and Wagner!

The Rotary of Walworth-Ontario, under the leadership of Jonathan Wordingham, arrived at 8:30 am to load up four face cords bound for delivery to points north and east. They returned on October 14 to gather up another six face cords. Jonathan will forward some pictures of their team soon and we'll upload them to the C4C page on the NYFOA WFL website.

The Rotary of Canandaigua, under the leadership of Dr. Greg Gullo, arrived at 11 am with an army of volunteers to load and



deliver 20 face cords. Check out the picture of the happy team mates on this page. They demonstrate that Team Canandaigua survived the haul!

The team brought four trailers and an array of pickup trucks, thanks to the kindness of the volunteers. Dr. Greg had a monster-sized dump trailer courtesy of Admar in Canandaigua. Thanks Admar!

On our end, we had the hard work of Gary Koplun and David Deuel, and I was able to hide enough and talk enough to not have to lift a single stick!

I'm happy to report that the C4C firewood mountain is no more. All of it made its way into woodburners across the region thanks to the folks that made the purchases. We'll need to get back to it here soon, to generate some more firewood for our charitable partners. They're all on board for 2018!

If you're a NYFOA member and would like to join the effort, please contact Eileen Schaefer at dschaefer1@frontiernet.net. If you'd like to make a donation of

equipment and/or cash to help C4C and the charities, please send me a note at dfaklis@frontiernet.net. We'll get together at David and Celia's soon, and I bet the after-cut social will be great! 🏔️

Would you like to receive an electronic version of future editions of *The New York 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.



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Cassadaga Valley Wins a NYFOA Woodlands Mini Grant!

CHERYL BURNS


The Cassadaga Valley Central School (CVCS) Forestry and Conservation class has taken on the challenge of entering the Northeast Timber Growing Contest (www.timbercontest.com). The contest is designed to help improve the long-term productivity and health of small private woodlands in the northeastern forest in a process that includes education, research, technology transfer, and friendly competition. The contest entails measuring trees within forested sample plots to calculate basal area,

board foot volume, and regeneration each year. The object is to have the fastest growing, highest quality trees over multiple years, and the competition represents a great learning tool for our students.

The class created their sample plots and began taking measurements in September 2017, and they continue to fine tune the findings with the help of trained forestry volunteers. NYFOA's Tony Pingitore and Otis Barber have assisted in getting the students acclimated to forest

measurements, terminology and tools. Jeff Brockelbank works with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Forestry and Soils unit. He has assisted the class with understanding the nature of soils, forest measurements, tree identification and selection. The value of the interaction between the students and the experts is priceless.

NYFOA brought this all together by awarding the CVCS forestry class with a \$100 woodlands mini grant in response to our grant application. The process was extremely simple to navigate because NYFOA uses a basic application form, which was acceptable to our school's administration department. The grant provided for tree identification tags and measuring tools for the program. The grant program was funded directly by NYFOA members through their annual silent auction last spring. The forestry class greatly appreciates the timber contest challenge put forth by Mr. Dean Faklis as well as the grant monies from NYFOA. The agricultural science classes at Cassadaga Valley Central School cannot express the gratitude to the many people involved in making this project a wonderful educational experience for our students. Thank You All!

For more information on the NYFOA Woodlands Mini Grant program, including the details of how your school district can benefit, please contact Dave Williams (kdwillmill@gmail.com) or Dean Faklis (dfaklis@frontiernet.net). They would be delighted to work with you to help provide new educational opportunities to NY's next generation of forest owners. 



Jeff Brockelbank working with the Forestry and Conservation class.

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Free programs at the NY FARM SHOW

February 22 - 24, 2018

Free Programs to help landowners get more benefits from their woodlots will be presented each day during the 2018 Farm Show in Syracuse by the New York Forest Owners Association.

Meet with a forester from the State Department of Environmental Conservation or speak with a Cornell trained volunteer. Visitors are encouraged to bring their questions and pause at the booth area before or after attending a seminar program. The DEC foresters and trained volunteers are there to help with resource materials, displays, and expert advice.

Learn More, Earn More seminars are free and open to all. Topics include federal cost sharing for woodlot improvements, working with foresters, improving bird habitat, heating with wood, and forest farming. Programs start on the hour and allow time for questions and discussion.

The booth is on the main corridor of the Arts and Home Center, and the Seminars are held in the Somerset Room just steps away on the lower level of the Center.

These programs are presented by the New York Forest Owners Association in cooperation with the NY Department of Environmental Conservation, Cornell Cooperative Extension, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and with special thanks to each of our expert speakers.

FARM SHOW 2018, FORESTRY SEMINARS

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 22

11 AM **Working With Your DEC Service Forester**

Matt Swayze, NY Dept of Environmental Conservation

1 PM **Insects and Diseases that Threaten Your Woods**

Kim Adams, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

2 PM **Making Maple Syrup for Fun and Profit**

Stephen Childs, Cornell Maple Program

3 PM **Getting Federal Aid for Woodlot Improvements**

Michael Fournier, US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 23

10 AM **Making Income from Your Forest**

Rich Taber, Cooperative Extension Service Chenango County

11 AM **Silviculture-What it Means to Manage Your Woods**

Peter Smallidge, NYS Extension Forester, Cornell University

1 PM **8 Steps for a Healthy and Productive Sugarbush**

Peter Smallidge, NYS Extension Forester, Cornell University

2 PM **Managing Your Land for Recreation**

Diane Kuehn, SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry

3 PM **Silvopasturing: Trees and Animals Can Live Together**
Brett Chedzoy, Cooperative Extension Service Schuyler County

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 24

10 AM **Managing Deer and Timber**

Brian Underwood, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

11 AM **Professional Foresters Can Help You Have a Successful Timber Sale**

Brad Wentworth, Forecon Inc. Cortland NY

1 PM **The Law: Rights and Responsibilities of Woodlot Owners**

Timothy Frateschi Esq., Frateschi Law Firm, Syracuse

2 PM **Getting Federal Aid for Woodlot Improvements**

Michael Fournier, US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

3 PM **Working Safely in the Woods**

Michael Burns, NY Center for Agriculture Medicine & Health

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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

GIANT SILKMOTHS IN NORTHEAST FORESTS

BY REA MANDERINO

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you see the word, “moth”? For many people, it’s that little brown insect flying around the porch light. When swatted, it erupts in a cloud of brown scales. For people with forested property, maybe “moth” brings to mind those big-name defoliators like forest tent caterpillar or the infamous gypsy moth. During outbreaks, their caterpillars can strip a tree of their leaves in a matter of days. In their adult form (the winged stage that most people think of when the term “moth” is used) many are also little and brown, but not all moths are so drab or destructive.

Easily the largest and most striking insects in New York (and across North America) are the giant silk moths. Belonging to the family *Saturniidae*, these insects in their adult form have a wingspan ranging from two to six inches.

They may be brightly colored, such as the fantastic green of the luna moth and the candy-like pink and yellow rosy maple moth, or in gradient shades of brown with bright undertones of red or blue, like the rich colors of the cecropia or polyphemus moths. They often fly awkwardly to lights, their big wings flapping with a complete lack of grace. These big beauties aren’t interested in excessive flying; they don’t eat as adults, so they are running exclusively on fat stores gained as caterpillars and their only goal is to track down a mate and produce the next generation of gentle giants.

Where giant silk moth adults are spectacular winged wonders, their caterpillar stages may be equally as fantastic. Some species of caterpillars may reach up to six inches in length. Certain species in New York, like the io or buck moths, are well defended against any



Preserved luna moth adult. Penny to scale.

large predator attempting to make a meal of them. These caterpillars are covered in spines, either green with a red stripe along the sides in the case of the Io moth or black speckled with white dots for buck moths. While spines are one way nature says “do not touch!”, and the bright green of the Io moth caterpillar makes it easy to miss as they wander through the grass. Many an unfortunate soul wandering barefoot in their lawn has discovered just how painful those caterpillar spines can be!

Some giant silk moth caterpillars utilize camouflage instead of spiny defenses. While still covered in small, soft hairs, caterpillars of lunas and polyphemus are bright green with minimal patterns or marking. They blend in perfectly with the leaves of trees, making it very difficult for predators (or scientists) to find them. Often when caterpillars are freshly hatched and young, they are black and white, camouflaging themselves as bird droppings. As they grow, they shed these poo-disguises to become more leaf-like.

Many caterpillars will take a half-way approach; while they may be green to blend in with the foliage, they also have bright bulbs or horns to deter any predators that find them. These include cecropia, imperial, and promethea moths. By far the most amazing, however, are the caterpillars of the regal moth. Regal moth caterpillars are often called hickory horned devils, and these massive insects can grow to be as long as a human hand. Their bodies are a gorgeous shiny green or blue, and they feature prominent black and red “horns” on their head. The adults are equally as charismatic with plump



Preserved imperial moth adult. Penny to scale. All photos from Rea Manderino.



Lab-reared regal moth caterpillars and wild regal moth adult found in Virginia.

bodies and legs covered in red and orange fur, and their six-inch wings are patterned with red stripes and yellow spots. Unfortunately, while regal moths were historically part of New York's giant silk moth community, a confirmed sighting for a wild regal moth caterpillar in New York has not been made since the 1950s. If you have seen either a regal moth caterpillar or an adult in New York state, please contact me (rmanderi@syr.edu).

While these beautiful insects are a delight to discover and marvel at, they also serve vital roles in our forests. As anyone that has experienced a gypsy moth or forest tent caterpillar outbreak can attest, these insects can eat a lot of leaves. And sure enough, these little herbivores eat more green plant material than any other plant-eater in the forests of New York. So why aren't the forests barren of leaves every summer from the sheer number of caterpillars in the forest? The answer is because the average caterpillar



Wild Polyphemus Moth caterpillar feeding on beech.

is very, very tasty. Birds, small and large mammals, and even other insects will not pass up a caterpillar dinner. In fact, a large portion of forest birds depend on caterpillars to feed their chicks. This is one reason why so many birds fly up from the tropics to make nests and rear babies in New York — the large number and diversity of caterpillars provides ample food to feed hungry mouths. Other moth life stages are also vital sources of food. Mice eating gypsy moth pupae (the life stage between a caterpillar and winged adult) help keep gypsy moth numbers in check and owl nests are often surrounded with the beautiful wings of adult giant silk moths.

Host tree preferences of giant silk moth caterpillars range from the very picky to the very broad. Some species, like the polyphemus, will eat pretty much any hardwood tree. Others, such as oakworm moths, stick to their namesake. Some eat other hardwood trees except oak! The most common host trees include hickories, maples, cherry, walnuts, oaks, and elms. Only one silk moth in New York eats conifer needles, and that is the pine imperial moth, which rarely makes it way down from Canada.

Often these caterpillars are eating high in the canopy, but when they are ready to shed their final skin and become a pupa, they climb down the tree to find a suitable place. Many find an adequate bush or limb and spin a tight silken cocoon around themselves in a sort of hollow ball before becoming a pupa, and there they will wait out the long winters. Come spring, they shed their pupal skin to become an

adult moth. However, to get out of the cocoon, they first must spit a sort of acid that dissolves the silk. As adult moths wiggle out of the old cocoon, they look very strange with their wings shriveled and limp, and their bodies very plump and full of fluid. They will hang on the side of the cocoon or limb and pump the fluid stored in their bodies through the veins of their wings to extend them. Hanging allows gravity to help with this task. The adult moth must do this quickly, lest their wings dry before they are fully extended, leaving them unable to fly.

A small number of giant silk moths don't spin silken cocoons at all. When the caterpillar is ready to pupate, they bury themselves in the soil, often six to twelve inches down, and there, protected from the elements (and predators), they shed their last skin and become a pupa to wait out the winter. As the soil around them warms in the spring, the adult emerges, and climbs up anything it can find to extend its wings.

The best time for New Yorkers to find adult giant silk moths is in the late spring and early summer, when they are emerging from their overwinter pupa stage. They will fly awkwardly around to find mates, but only live as adults for seven to ten days. The eggs laid by the adult female moths will take about the same amount of time to develop before hatching into tiny caterpillars. These caterpillars will eat and grow over the course of the summer, before becoming pupae to overwinter themselves.

With recent climate change, we have seen autumns get longer and warmer in New York state. This causes some giant silk moths, mostly polyphemus, to erroneously sense that the growing season is continuing, and they emerge as adults without overwintering. For these ill-fated individuals, while they may find mates, their offspring will not find enough quality foliage to survive before the first frost. Any adult giant silk moth you may see flying in the autumn are a striking example of how our forests are changing around us. 🌲

Rea Manderino is a PhD student at SUNY ESF in the Dept. of Environmental and Forest Biology.

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

Ask a Professional (continued)

step is simply to pour the syrup into containers. Containers must be clean. Mason or Ball jars work well (Figure 7), but pre-heat them with hot water to reduce the likelihood they crack from hot syrup. When syrup is heated above about 180 degrees, minerals called “sugar sand” precipitate out. These will accumulate in the bottom of the container, but are fully harmless. Filtering the syrup is possible, but requires special filtering cloth.

Store the jars of syrup in secondary containers to collect spills if the jars break. Syrup at the correct sugar concentration will keep for many months on a shelf, and for a year or more in the freezer.

Equipment

In almost every area, or the next town over, there is a hardware store or maple supply company that can help with your sap collection needs. Meet the vendors and learn about what they have to offer. Vendors of maple equipment can provide the items you need, and instruction on how to use it. If you need to search for a vendor, use



Figure 4. Metal buckets with lids that hang from the spile are the traditional method of collection. Historic spiles were 7/16" diameter, as pictured. Modern stainless steel spiles, such as from Next Generation Maple (www.nextgenmaple.com/spouts), insert into a 5/16" diameter hole.



Figure 5. Indoor woodstoves or cook stoves are an economical way to boil sap into syrup. Electric stoves and outdoor propane boilers, such as turkey fryers, are the least economical method to boil sap.

the list of manufacturing companies on the Cornell Maple webpage, and search for their dealers <http://blogs.cornell.edu/cornellmaple/links/>. Another vendor is Next Generation Maple whose webpage is www.nextgenmaple.com

Sap collection equipment for a few trees will include a spile, a bucket, and perhaps some tubing. The spile can be either metal or plastic. Spiles need to be removed from the tree at the end of sap season. Metal spiles can be boiled. Plastic spiles, except those with silver, should be discarded each year and replaced.

Most metal spiles are designed to hold the bucket, but most plastic spiles are designed to be connected to tubing which drains into a bucket. There are several types of spiles available, and you should consider the full collection system to be sure you obtain all the parts that you need. You might also find a local maple producer who can talk you through the process, and perhaps sell you a few items or a few feet of tubing and spiles. Plastic buckets, usually the 5-gallon buckets with a lid, can be purchased through many local retail outlets, but make sure it is stamped



Figure 6. Refractometers are an accurate way to test the concentration of solids (sugars) in the sap to determine when it becomes syrup.

breadth of opportunities to learn about and expand your production. Visit the Cornell Maple Program website at www.CornellMaple.com. Also, we work closely with the NY State Maple Producers Association which also hosts educational events www.NYSmaple.com. A humorous parting resource is a youtube link from a community theater comedy skit describing one person's effort to make maple syrup. Don't let this scare you away, but do recognize that with maple production if something can go wrong, it may go wrong. You can view this at: https://youtu.be/EgreE_O6mBU

The column is coordinated by Peter Smallidge, NYS Extension Forester and Director, Arnot Teaching and Research Forest, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, NY 14853. Contact Peter at pjs23@cornell.edu, or (607) 592 - 3640. Visit his website www.ForestConnect.info, and webinar archives at www.youtube.com/ForestConnect Support for ForestConnect is provided by the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and USDA NIFA.

HDPE (high density polyethylene) as a food grade container. Don't use a large trash can which is difficult to rinse clean and often has an unpleasant odor. Test plastic buckets for any odor which might be absorbed into the sap, and then concentrated into the syrup.

If you use tubing, you may need to soak the end of the tubing in hot water for a few seconds to soften it and allow easier insertion of the spile. The tools used for this process are too expensive for most hobby producers.

Safety

Making maple syrup is a great family project, but boiling sap includes flames, hot surfaces, and hot liquids. Use caution to avoid spills. You may also be walking or driving tractors or ATVs on snow and ice. Use caution on slippery surfaces and especially with equipment on slopes.

Tapping trees does not hurt the health of the tree. Sap is removed, but not of a sufficient quantity to impair the tree's ability to grow. As an illustration, some families have been tapping the same maple trees for many generations.

For More Information

If you find yourself getting drawn into maple production, Cornell offers a



Figure 7. Mason and Ball jars make good syrup storage containers because the glass minimizes oxygen movement, and the jars can be easily inspected to ensure they are clean.



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Tracy Lamanec

BRIANA BINKERD-DALE

Tracy Lamanec was born in Catskill, NY, growing up in Purling and Cairo in Greene County. “From my earliest memory, I have always had an interest in forestry and fish and wildlife management,” he recalled. “However, all my aptitude tests said I should go into science and engineering.” Accepted at SUNY ESF after high school, Tracy instead went to work for a year at Steifel Laboratories (now Glaxo Smith Kline) before enrolling in classes at Hudson Valley Community College. He spent his summers working for the U.S. Forest Service on white pine blister rust control and gypsy moth monitoring, graduating in 1962 with an A.A.S. in industrial chemical technology. “Rather than transferring to SUNY ESF’s forest chemistry program as I had planned, I accepted a position as an analytical chemistry technician at General Electric in Schenectady,” he said. Tracy continued his education part time at Union College in Schenectady, receiving a B.S. in chemistry in 1968, and going on to take

post graduate courses at Union, MIT, McCrone Institute, and University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

Tracy married Eileen Horan of Troy, NY (a classmate at Hudson Valley) in 1963, and they purchased a house on 2 plus acres in the rural hills of Rotterdam, Schenectady County. Their daughter Stephanie was born in 1964 and son Michael in 1968. From 1973 - 1987, Tracy wrote a weekly outdoor column for the *Schenectady Gazette*. He has also been active with conservation and sportsmen’s organizations, serving many years as Schenectady County representative to DEC’s Region 4 Fish and Wildlife Management Act Board (alternately as sportsman and landowner). After 25 years, the laboratory Tracy worked for was eliminated and he joined a group of fellow former GE scientists in an independent testing and consulting laboratory, as senior scientist for materials characterization. He mostly



Tracy’s waterfall on the Purling property.

retired at the end of 1999 but went back as a consultant several times after that.

Tracy’s wife Eileen passed away 10 years ago of cancer, after nearly 45 years of marriage. “For many of those years, she was my deer hunting and wood gathering companion. When I come to the places where she used to wait for me to try to push a deer her way I can’t help but think she would be pleased with what our woodlot has become.” Tracy said. “Part of what motivates me is the feeling that I am still sharing it with her.”

The two acres Tracy and Eileen purchased in Rotterdam in 1963 have now grown to 143 acres. “In 1987 I purchased 60 acres that were landlocked but bounded my 2 plus acre building lot. With the permission of the owner/neighbor/friend, I had been hunting, maintaining trails, and gathering firewood on that land for 24 years,” Tracy remembered. “Two years ago, I had the opportunity to purchase an additional 80 acres of landlocked land that shares 1,100 feet of common boundary. I would say that my motivation was the preservation of open space and to assure my continued access to it.”

Tracy also owns 17 acres in Greene County, much of which is along a trout stream with a series of scenic waterfalls where his ancestors had water powered



Transporting some firewood back home.

continued on page 22



Deer caught on trail cam this summer.

mills. He and Eileen renovated what had been the miller's house and Tracy's childhood home to be a bed and breakfast (Shinglekill Falls) which his daughter-in-law now operates. He spends most weekends there recently, working on a nature trail for guests on the neighboring property that they recently purchased.

"I seek out information from all available sources including conferences, webinars, text books, etc. and discuss with family and neighbors issues that might affect them, but the decisions are my own," Tracy said. "Maintaining trails and boundaries, gathering firewood, and wildlife habitat improvement work are my recreation." He did have a timber stand improvement harvest done five years ago for which he hired a consulting forester who put it out for bids. The actual logging was done by an individual hired by the mill that won the contract.

The Rotterdam property is mostly level, and at the top of a hill that is 1,100 feet above its surroundings. There are steep slopes and ravines on the north and east sides. The soil is shallow clay over shale. There is a man made pond of about two acres. Much of the land is poorly drained and there are several perpetual mud holes. There are old stone walls, ghost furrows, barbed wire and foundations to attest to the farms that were abandoned 87 years ago. Deep skidder trails and huge rotting logs remain from a timber theft that was halted in progress 25 years ago.

Tracy's late friend and consulting forester Mike Greason, whom Tracy used to consult on forest management questions

for his weekly outdoor column, referred him to NYFOA after the timber theft took place. "I knew the adjoining neighbor was having a timber harvest done, so I didn't think much of it when I heard chainsaws," Tracy remembers. "After a couple of days, I decided to take a walk and ran into the loggers — on my own land!" The conversation did not go well at first — the loggers accused Tracy of trespassing on his own property, and the police refused to come when called. They did eventually see reason and stopped the harvest, but 3-4 tractor trailer loads of timber had already been cut. Tracy considered pursuing civil action, but after weighing the upfront costs against the potential settlement decided that it was not worth it. His main project since purchasing the most recent 80 acres has been tracing out and posting the boundaries and establishing a trail along them. "The timber theft taught me the need to post, which I really hated to do," Tracy said.

When he first moved to the Rotterdam

property 54 years ago there was some old second growth, but it was mostly a mix of young forest; white pine and aspen, and abandoned pasture that was overgrown with red-stem and grey-stem dogwood, buckthorn, hawthorn, and viburnum. The dominant species now in the older areas are red oak, hemlock, white oak, white pine, ash, hickory, hop hornbeam, beech, serviceberry, and sassafras, in decreasing order of abundance. The understory is quite open with moderate red oak and ash regeneration and lots of witch hazel and some honeysuckle. The younger areas are dominated by aspen, red maple, white pine, dead and dying ash with a thick understory of honeysuckle, buckthorn, and multiflora rose. He has not done a lot to address the interfering vegetation, except for a couple of areas he keeps open and plants food plots in for wildlife — his priority right now is establishing a perimeter trail around the entire property.

Tracy's two biggest challenges when it comes to forest management are finding the time and energy, and dealing with



Tracy accepting a NYFOA chapter service award at the July 2017 Capital region steering committee meeting, presented by chairman Jason Post and secretary Laura Pisarri.

the mud. He has two tractors, one with a backhoe, brush hog, tiller, a dozer, stump grinder, chipper/shredder, an Argo with tracks, winches, several trailers, a collection of chain saws and a skidding cone. He attended the Master Forest Owner program at Arnot Forest and continues to attend seminars when he can — he even hosted a Game of Logging on his property this December. “I almost always work alone but have my cell phone. It would be nice to have help sometimes but it’s amazing what an old guy can do with a chain saw, a tractor with a front end loader, a couple lengths of chain, and a little ingenuity,” Tracy laughed. He was pleasantly surprised to find that the new lithium-ion battery powered tools (as opposed to gasoline-powered) are great for light work pruning and trail work. He is considering purchasing an electric ATV so that he can enjoy taking his daughter, Stephanie, and girlfriend Claudia out and about on the properties — they both have mobility issues.

After being approached several times by wind companies interested in the possibility of leasing some of his land for a wind farm, Tracy decided to take advantage of it himself. After initial resistance from the town around permitting, he prevailed, and his Bergey wind turbine (installed by Hudson Valley Wind and Solar) now provides about 70% of his energy needs. He heats and cools with heat pumps, and only switches over to oil furnace and wood heat during the coldest months of the year. Between NYSERDA paying a portion of the costs (48.5% based on 13.5 mph average winds), and the federal income tax credit (up to 30%), Tracy ended up paying only \$16,000 out of pocket for a \$78,000 system. “Now if only they would come up the same kind of incentives for microhydro that they have for wind and solar!” Tracy exclaimed. He purchased a water wheel in NC years ago that he is hoping to set up at the waterfall in Purling one day.

Tracy has had an interest in forest management for as long as he can remember. “It may have been bred into me,” he mused. His father was a carpenter but cut firewood to scratch out a living during hard times. His great-great grandfather was a logger and had a team of oxen to drag logs down the

mountainside to his uncle’s sawmill, and another relative was a forester for the Taconic Parkway Authority. “Hunting and fishing and the concept of conservation, putting something back, have been a family tradition for generations,” Tracy remembers. “When I was 12, a salty old woodsman and trapper took me on as a helper tending his trap line. Much to the disapproval of some people, I sort of idolized the guy. The old trapper smelled of bottles of beaver castor and fox urine he carried in his pockets. He wore heavy red and black plaid Johnson woolens, and rolled down hip waders year round. Only the length of his white beard changed with the seasons. He was an expert fly caster and adequate at tying flies. He was a pretty good shot with the .22 revolver that was always on his belt and he would let me break a few bottles with it. He must have appreciated my listening to his stories of serving with Teddy Roosevelt in the Spanish- American War. He certainly knew the ways of critters.”

At the age of 13, the Cairo Fish and Game Club sponsored Tracy to attend the New York State Conservation Camp for Boys at DeBruce in 1955, where he was selected “Camper of the Year” from about 1000 boys. The award included getting to go back the following year to star in a documentary film, (Sportsmen at Work) about the camp and \$1,000 to the sponsoring club to be spent on conservation projects. The second half of the film was the club implementing the projects the kids learned at camp. “We planted trees and shrubs, built pool digger dams, log crib stream bank protection, flooded a marsh into a duck pond and a lot more,” Tracy recalled. “Though the nature of the DEC camps has changed over the years, I am a strong proponent of the program and have been responsible for sending dozens of kids to the camps.”

His son and grandsons

share his interests in hunting, fishing, and forest management, though they are not able to help out much on the properties right now, as his son lives a few hours away and his grandsons are in college.

Tracy’s advice to other landowners is as follows: “Be honest with yourself about why you want to be a forest owner. Learn as much as you can. When it comes to major decisions, talk to a professional. Get involved in NYFOA, a nice bunch of people with common interests and a wealth of information.”

What he most enjoys about being a forest owner is “Just getting out there and taking in the sights and sounds and realizing that for however brief a time it is mine. In retirement, I have released the woodsman that had continually struggled to emerge from within the scientist.” 🌲

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