The New York Forest Owner

A Publication of The New York Forest Owners Association

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

May/June 2020

Member Profile: Scott Brady and Stephanie Brunetta

Volume 58 Number 3

NYFOA
New York Forest Owners Association
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In This Issue . . .

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Volume 58, Number 3

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 July/August issue is June 1, 2020.***

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.

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Cover: Front cover. Scott Brady and Stephanie Brunetta at home on their tree farm. For member profile see page 21. All photos courtesy of Scott and Stephanie.

From The President

Getting into the woods during these difficult times should be a priority for all. Many scientific studies have shown that even short walks in forested areas will have positive health benefits for the individual. Those benefits include decreased depressive moods, anxiety, anger, and fatigue. Studies also found lowered blood pressure and improved respiratory function in individuals who spent time in forested areas.

These benefits are not necessarily restricted to large tracts of land. It has been shown that viewing trees through hospital windows improve patient outcomes and in some cases lowers a patient's length of stay in the hospital. New hospital buildings include this factor in their architectural designs. Some research has also found that looking at still images of nature provides some of the benefits of forest bathing. Perhaps setting aside some time from computer work or binge watching TV, and having a forested scene on your screens may be helpful.

Even with the current recommendations and restrictions related to the Covid-19 outbreak, every individual can benefit by spending some time interacting with nature. Whether being able to access deep woods, appreciating an urban tree, or just viewing pictures of nature, it is well worth the effort.

Please share this magazine with a neighbor and urge them to join NYFOA. By gaining more members, NYFOA's voice will become stronger!

Given the social distancing and small gathering restrictions in place, the NYFOA board utilized an electronic meeting program for its recent board meeting with some trepidation. Computer accessibility, user ability, and high-speed internet access were of concern. I am pleased to admit that the meeting was a success and thus we may have found another tool for state-wide communications. At times, being in a position requiring a change in behavior can result in a positive outcome.

With respect to the Covid-19 outbreak in New York State, NYFOA will be following all recommendations from the CDC, and state, county, and local health departments. Local chapter programs, both indoor and outdoor, will be evaluated, and cancelled or postponed, unless the recommended health guidelines allow for such activities. For example, Chair Camp, scheduled for the middle of this summer, is cancelled. I am hoping that the current situation resolves quickly and that you, your families, and our communities take care and stay safe.

–Art Wagner
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.

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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

Annual Maintenance in Support of Woodland Management

Question:

I'm recently retired and eager to be more involved in my woods. As part of my strategy I want to make sure I keep up with the "little things" that seem to get neglected. What should I add to my list? (Frank B., Southern Finger Lakes)

Answer:

Woodland owners have different styles of management, from fairly casual to fairly regimented. All different strategies can work, but there are annual maintenance, management and practical activities that are enjoyable, useful, and support the objectives of many owners. An owner who develops a list of annual or regular activities, some that may require a short amount of effort, will be safer, more aware of natural changes in the woods, and better able to maintain safe and effective equipment. These activities can be done alone or with family members, and require relatively little investment of resources other than time.

Boundary line maintenance is a good activity each year. The inspection of the boundary marks and corner posts can happen any month, but the dormant season allows for easier visualization of the line. Some families do this as a group activity so children learn the boundaries and it becomes a legacy project. If the boundary has been previously marked, maintenance is as simple as using the previous color, or new color, of paint to refresh the boundary marks (Figure 1). If the property lines are posted, check to make sure the signs are intact and have the necessary information to be considered a legal posted sign. If the property lines were not previously marked, it is best to involve a professional surveyor, or minimally discuss the location with the adjoining owner.

Access trails are an essential asset of a wooded property. Most properties have some combination of old woods roads, enhanced paths, or foot trails. These are useful for different modes of travel, but all benefit from regular inspection to look for fallen trees, hazard trees, poor access or erosion. This activity is likely best when the ground is visible, not snow covered, and for issues of access, or erosion perhaps when the soils are wet or soggy so that problems are more obvious. Use safe practices when removing downed logs (Figure 2), especially being alert to logs that are under tension or connected to standing dead trees. Hazard trees, those likely to fall on the trail, are often better left alone, but place a marker on

Figure 1. This tree was previously blazed with an ax or machete to create the oval shaped wound. The healed blaze will be apparent for decades, but a fresh bit of paint makes the boundary tree more apparent from a distance.

Figure 2. Wind, snow and other events can create debris piles on your trails. Use extra caution because stems and limbs may be under unusual stress that result in a pinched chainsaw bar or kick-back.

the trail on either side of the tree to alert travelers. Solutions to erosion problems that are severe may benefit from professional guidance by your local Soil and Water Conservation District or forester. Similarly chronically soggy areas will need either control of the water, diversion of the source of water, or moving the trail to a new location.

Figure 3. Forest tent caterpillar is a native insect that impacts several species, but especially sugar maple. By the time you see the larvae (a late stage is shown), it is too late to react. Monitoring in the winter for egg masses on twigs can allow for a timely response the following spring.

A largely ubiquitous concern of owners is the health of their trees. Checking for tree health can be combined with other activities, or as a stand-alone walk in the woods a couple times per year. As a word of caution or comfort, the first time you go looking for tree health issues you may feel overwhelmed. A healthy woodlot will still have many examples of dead and dying trees. The goal is to identify extensive patterns of irregularity in trees. One instructive time to walk in the woods and assess tree health is shortly after the foliage emerges in the spring. In addition to helping cure cabin fever, this time of year allows the owner to inspect tree crowns for unusual changes in foliage expansion and development to full size. Some damaging insects, such as forest tent caterpillars, are active as leaves emerge (Figure 3); coordinating a treatment response at that time is unlikely, but you'll be informed for the future. Another time is in the late summer when you can look for trees with early fall color that might indicate a summer drought or a problem with roots.

Many woodland owners have a variety of tools and machines that, like all tools and machines, need regular attention to be safe and effective. All tools with a cutting edge should be kept sharp as they are used throughout the year, but a once over on all the tools lets you look for cracked handles, loose heads, or unusual wear and tear that might result in a break at an inopportune moment. Engines and mechanical devices each have an owner's manual that will indicate a schedule of inspection and maintenance to ensure they function effectively and safely. Common maintenance tasks include ensuring you have a fresh supply of

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Wild Things in Your Woodlands

Miranda Vinson

Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*)

The tufted titmouse is a small songbird, often recognized by its "peter-peter" call. The bird is identifiable by the grey tuft on its head, along with black eyes and forehead, and rusty orange flanks. The males and females have very similar plumage. Tufted titmice are typically between 5.9-6.7 inches long, weighing only 0.6-0.9 ounces. The lifespan for this bird can range anywhere between two years to almost 13 years old. The bird can be found in mixed-deciduous forests along the East Coast. While they prefer densely wooded, shaded areas, they can also be found in city parks or backyards. This is less common but observed in areas where trees are large enough. Despite their abundance in New York, the tufted titmouse only made its appearance in the state about 50 years ago and continues to expand its range northward as climate change brings warmer temperatures.

Tufted titmice are nonmigratory birds that can persist in extreme weather conditions, allowing them to survive all year long if food is available. Luckily as breeding season comes to an end, May is the perfect time of year to look out for these small songbirds. The breeding season for the tufted titmouse is in spring, with the first brood of hatchlings appearing in March, and the second brood appearing in May. Tufted titmice are also common on feeders, considering they are omnivorous. Individuals methodically forage for seeds, caterpillars, wasps, bees, spiders, and other insects. Tufted titmice often flock with other birds such as chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers, and are assertive over smaller birds. Flocks break up in late winter to establish their breeding pairs. When in a courtship, it is common for males to forage and feed female mates. Within these pairs the males are typically dominant over their mate and other females throughout the year. Much like other bird pairs, the tufted titmouse usually mates for life.

Given that their preferred habitat is in the woods, it is no surprise that these birds build their nests in tree cavities. The tufted titmouse does not excavate its own nest cavities, but instead seeks out either natural cavities or woodpecker holes, ranging from three to 90 feet above the ground. Inside the tree cavity, a nest is built by the female with occasional help from the male and is comprised of materials such as grass, moss, leaves, bark strips, and is lined with soft materials like animal hair. This soft lining is essential to the nests, and the birds will pluck hair from live woodchucks, dogs, and even humans to obtain it. The construction of these cup-shaped nests can take anywhere between six and eleven days.

Females generally lay five to eight eggs. The eggs appear creamy white with brown, red, purple, or lilac colored speckles and incubate for 13 to 17 days. The hatching itself takes between 14 and 19 hours. When the newborns hatch, they emerge entirely naked and pink. Often times there are tufts of down along their heads and spines, and their eyes are closed. Fifteen to sixteen days after hatching the nestlings will leave the nest. Although they leave the nest two

weeks after birth, the young birds are fed by their parents for as long as 65 days after hatching. Both the male and female share the responsibility of caring for the nestlings. Because tufted titmice typically have one or two broods each season, the young of the first brood help care for the nestlings of the second brood by assisting in the feedings.

This species is thankfully very common in the United States. In fact, the number of birds is steadily increasing as their habitat availability expands northwards due to climate change. However, we should still do our part to ensure the stability of the tufted titmouse populations.

They have quite the affinity for bird feeders and nesting boxes, and are sociable birds. As they forage for food to supply to their young this spring, a feeder is a great way to provide food while observing this bird. Feeders are especially helpful in fall and winter months when food is scarce. Additionally, safely preserving dead or living trees with natural cavities is the perfect way to promote the conservation of the species. The titmouse prefers densely wooded areas, so the more trees the better. As spring rolls around, keep an eye out for these not-so-elusive little songbirds in your backyard and woodland!

Miranda Vinson is a Program Assistant for the New York State Master Naturalist Program, directed by Kristi Sullivan at Cornell University's Department of Natural Resources. More information on managing habitat for wildlife, and the NY Master Naturalist Volunteer Program, can be found at https://blogs.cornell.edu/nymasternaturalist/

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:

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

The Importance of Forested Land Inspections

By Eric Jenks

Managing your forested property can take many different forms. "Your plan is based on your own goals for the property," said New York Tree Farm's (NYTF) Erin Perry, area chair of the Capital region and entrance to the Adirondacks, areas 3 and 4. "Whatever it is that you want to use the property for, your management plan is built on that. All of these plans involve some sort of harvesting. The goal of a management plan is to nurture the natural progression of the forest with an underlying theme. What species that you harvest or leave may be determined by the wildlife you want to cultivate habitat for. Or perhaps there's a stream out back that you like to go swimming in, and water quality is driving the shape of your forest. Forest management plans are based on your goals and what you want to use it for."

Perry's involvement with NYTF has varied over the past 18 years, ranging from being a forest inspector, the NYTF chair, past chair and currently an area chair. "I'm no longer an active inspector, however as an area chair I serve a coordinating role for our all volunteer inspectors. Our inspectors help smaller landowners that need help, but get forgotten by the bigger guys that don't take on small clients."

According to Perry, tree farm inspectors are "the boots on the ground for the program. They're meeting with landowners, keeping tree farmers engaged and helping them meet the expectations of the tree farm system,

and managing their forest to a tree farm standard."

The inspection process is important for three separate reasons: forest management, community outreach, and data accrual. "Obviously it's important to check that the standards of the program are being followed, that everyone that has that NYTF sign are following those standards. So approximately every 5 years someone comes around to perform a multistep inspection for the integrity of the program." Typically management plans are created for a ten year period. "The biggest thing that we're looking for is that they're following a plan, that they've worked with a professional, and are following a sustainable program. Programs can always change, but it's necessary that they have a plan that can be reviewed on a regular basis."

Perry continued on the importance of community outreach. "Secondly, inspectors focus on communication, outreach, and fostering community. Inspectors visit about 20% of tree farms annually, which helps keep the foresters and the tree farm board more accessible to members. With that regular inspection and communication, it means it's not just someone you met 20 years ago that is helping with your tree farm."

Lastly, inspectors help gather statewide and nationwide data on tree farms. "When bills are being passed by state and national legislature, it's important to know how many tree farms are out there," said Perry. "By having an accurate database of acres, number of forested properties, knowing how long it has been in a family and how many generations, etc., that can help shape the conversation on a state and national level when it comes to funding and bills."

If you've recently received a notice that you're due for inspection, it's important to reach out to your forester and set up a visit. Not only will you have help towards achieving your goals with your property, but you'll learn more about the health of your forest, the community that you're part of, and will help shape the national conversation on our nation's tree farm system.

Eric Jenks is a freelance writer with Morning Ag Clips, LLC. Morning Ag Clips is now managing the Tree Farm column.

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.

Forest Tax Law Changes on the Horizon

By Carl Wiedermann

The Forest Tax Law has made an important contribution to stewardship on privately owned forest land in New York. There are 1.2 million acres currently enrolled, and enrollment continues to increase. The law was enacted by the state legislature in 1974 to encourage the long-term management of woodlands to produce forest crops and thereby increase the likelihood of a more stable forest economy. It has proven to be the most successful forest management initiative on private land in state history.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) would like to modernize the regulations by which the law is administered. The goals are to: improve landowner and consulting forester education, clarify requirements, ensure consistent enforcement, reduce administrative burdens, and improve forestry outcomes. The proposed changes will not change the law itself. Changing the law can only be done by the state legislature.

A draft version of the proposed changes should be out for public comment during the summer of 2020. These revisions are scheduled to go into effect by March of 2021. If you are currently enrolled, you might be interested in commenting.

Woodland owners with 50 acres may qualify for an 80% property tax reduction.

The Forest Tax Law, section 480a of the real property tax law, offers most landowners who have at least fifty acres of qualifying woodlands an 80% reduction in their assessment. In effect, a much lower property tax bill. However, participating owners must actively manage their woodlands for improved forest crop production.

Some of the proposed changes in the regulations include the following:

- Landowners must sign their forest management plan and attest that they have corresponded with a DEC forester and understand the provisions of the program.
- All property boundary lines must be permanently marked with paint. Stonewalls, posted signs etc. will not be accepted as boundary lines.
- Five-year updates of the management plan will no longer be required, but a full update of the plan will be necessary every 10 years.
- Timber harvests will no longer be scheduled during a specific year, but rather within a 10-year window to provide flexibility.
- Management plans must follow a DEC template to improve consistency.
- The primary management objective remains "to produce commercial forest crops." However, other uses such as maple sap production, carbon credits, non-traditional forest products (ginseng, mushrooms etc.), or wildlife management will be allowed as compatible uses, provided they do not preclude timber management.

Background

New York State has had a forest tax law since 1912. The current law was passed by the state legislature to encourage the long-term management of privately owned woodlands to produce forest crops and thereby increase the likelihood of a more stable forest economy.

Timber is an important natural resource since 63% of the state is forested. Most of this forest land is owned by family forest owners and has the potential to grow valuable trees. When it is harvested, timber provides employment, generates income, and supports the economy. Working forests also provide a wide array of other public benefits including watershed protection, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, and recreational opportunities. Working forests help keep forests as forests. Long-term management is necessary to grow high value timber on a sustainable basis. Annual property taxes can be a significant disincentive for landowners who might otherwise consider long-term management.

The Forest Tax Law has improved private woodland management on 1.2 million acres.

The Forest Tax Law currently has about 4,000 landowner participants who have enrolled 1.2 million acres in the program (Table 1). Although this is only 8% of all privately owned forest land, enrollment continues to increase. Furthermore, the level of participation in the tax law compares very favorably with other forestry initiatives. It is arguably the most effective program in

Table 1

Program	Private Landowners	Acres
Tree Farm	1,154	320,000
FSC Certification	5	600,000
SFI Certification	9	677,000
Forest Tax Law	4,000	1,260,000

the history of state efforts to improve the management of privately owned forest land.

Why isn't there greater participation in a program that offers significant tax savings and improves timber value and productivity? One reason—there are many requirements and restrictions in addition to penalties for non-compliance. Participating landowners must be willing to hire a forester, follow a management plan, sell timber, pay a yield tax, and face large penalties for violations. Furthermore, the land cannot be developed or subdivided. It can be sold, but the next owner must follow the management plan and leave the property undeveloped for the remaining commitment period to avoid a tax penalty. Landowners who have the qualifying acreage have much to consider before enrolling.

Stringent management requirements are an important reason that participation in the program is not greater. But without some requirements, it would be difficult to achieve the legislative intent. Most forest owners don't have forest management plans, don't hire consulting foresters, and aren't particularly interested in growing timber. Trees will grow naturally without any help from foresters or management plans, but these trees may not be particularly valuable, healthy, or growing vigorously. Woodlands enrolled in the tax law are growing healthier trees and more valuable timber because of management. Eventually this timber will be sustainably harvested and utilized by the forest products industry.

The requirements undoubtedly make the program less attractive, but are they unreasonable? It's debatable. The Forest Tax Law, like other initiatives which provide tax relief for economic development, does not eliminate taxes. It shifts the tax burden somewhere else. Therefore, it is important that better forest management results in a stronger economy and doesn't compromise any localities' fiscal health. At least some requirements are necessary to ensure better management will occur.

Landowners have many reasons for not participating in the Forest Tax Law.

Management requirements are one reason that more landowners are not participating in the Forest Tax Law, but there are other barriers as well. The most recent National Woodland Owner Survey offers some hints. Between 2011 and 2013, randomly selected family forest owners in New York State with at least 10 acres of forestland participated in the survey. Family forest owners hold two thirds of the privately owned forest land in the state. Survey results show that amenity values are often the most important reasons for owning woodland—not timber. Only one third of the owners with fifty or more acres reported that timber was an important reason for owning the land. Owners tend to be active on

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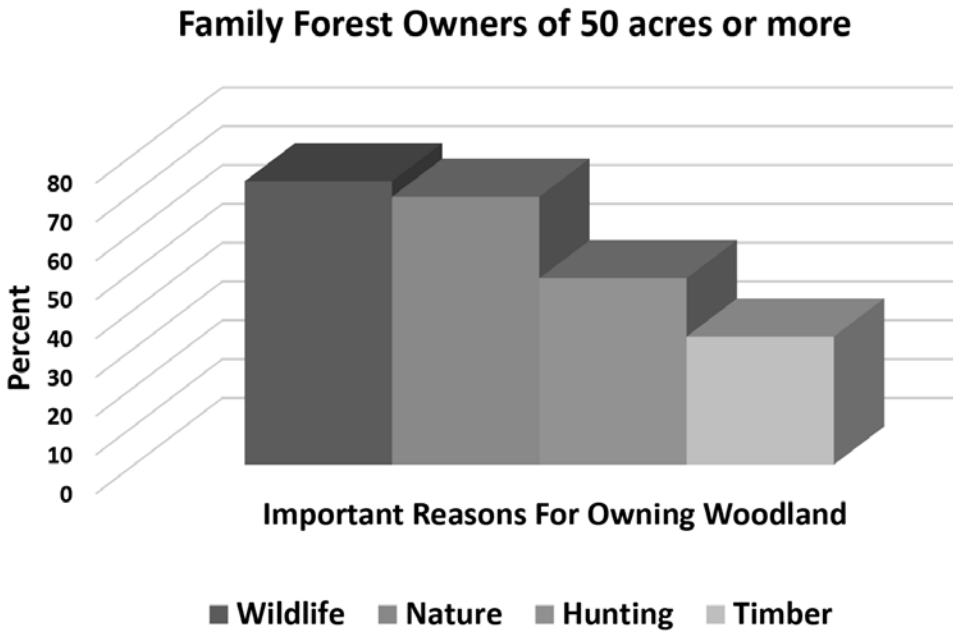

their land, but most are not engaged in traditional forestry programs. The forest tax law is a traditional forestry program intended to improve timber production.

Another significant barrier concerns landowner awareness. Nearly 90% of the fifty-acre plus landowners who participated in the survey reported that property taxes were an important concern. These landowners are potential prospects for 480a. However, three out of four reported that they were not at all familiar with the provisions of the Forest Tax Law! Based on these survey results, lack of awareness is another important reason for lower participation.

90% of landowners were concerned with property taxes, but 76% were unfamiliar with the Forest Tax Law.

A Role for NYFOA?

Why should NYFOA concern itself with the future of the Forest Tax Law? Because NYFOA's mission is to promote sustainable forest management. The Forest Tax Law has been more successful than any other forestry initiative to date. Four thousand woodland owners are using professional foresters to develop management plans which are being implemented on 1.2 million acres. But there are an additional 47,000 family forest owners who own at least fifty acres of woodland who are unfamiliar with the program. Most landowners are very interested in tax relief, but less interested in timber management. DEC proposals to modernize the program include a clarification that tax law plans can incorporate multiple objectives. Forest crop production must be primary, but it can be used to improve recreational access, forest health, species diversity, watershed protection and wildlife habitat.

NYFOA has an opportunity to promote sustainable forestry on privately owned forest land by promoting awareness of the tax law. Several years ago, NYFOA started a "Restore New York Woodlands" initiative. A statewide initiative by NYFOA to help increase awareness of the Forest Tax Law deserves some consideration.

More Information

If you are interested in more details on the Forest Tax Law, you can find them on the Department's website. Check; *www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5236.html*

Carl and his wife Laura are NYFOA members who own a 76 acre Tree Farm. Their woodlot is currently enrolled in the Forest Tax Law program

Are you interested in a particular topic and would like to see an article about it.

Please send your suggestions to: Mary Beth Malmsheimer, editor at mmalmshe@syr.edu or Jeff Joseph, chair, NYFOA editorial committee at jeffjosephwoodworker@gmail.com

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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

EARLY SPRING DEFOLIATORS

BY MARK WHITMORE

I welcome the view out my living room window at this time, thinking about spring waiting just around the corner. At least there is something normal going on in my life in this time of COVID19. Yeah, I know there are the vagaries of spring that can be frustrating and costly, like a frost killing the blossoms on my apple trees, and a warm spell cutting short the flow of sap in my maples, but I'll take that any day over the current situation with the virus.

Despite the human disaster, I'm grateful for the opportunity to take a break from my normally busy travel schedule to watch the unfolding of spring on my land. I deeply enjoy the succession of animals and plants waking up, the wood frogs' quiet yet unmistakable first sign of spring, then the cacophony of spring peepers gradually getting louder and occasionally dampened by a hard frost, the goldfinch hoards turning bright yellow, and just a couple days ago the first swallows. Red maples are blooming and I just harvested my first ramps of the season; next it will be the shadbush blooming, and then the first tree leaves will be coming out.

The colors of those tender young leaves are something nearly akin to fall in my mind, just a bit more subtle. On the other hand these beautiful leaves are a neon "Eat Here Now" sign for a number of caterpillars, both native and introduced, that specialize on early

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Figure 1. A typical looper larvae. Winter moth. Louis-Michel Nageleisen, Département de la Santé des Forêts, Bugwood.org

spring leaves. There's a good reason for this specialization: early leaves are tender and easy for young caterpillars to chew, and leaves have not had the time to acquire secondary metabolic chemicals that can deter feeding and impact growth. Early spring caterpillars can be right on the spot in spring because their mother lays her eggs near the leaf buds or in the upper canopy in winter or early spring. Egg hatch is triggered coincidentally with bud break by temperature, a highly tuned system that has evolved through time, more on this later.

The problem for trees is that they are depending on these spring leaves to provide food so they can put on growth in spring and summer. If leaves are eaten in early spring the tree will experience growth loss which is even more marked when defoliator populations flourish, and defoliate large areas of trees. Usually the trees will have enough stored reserves to re-leaf in summer, and allow more growth. However, if the trees are weakened from repeated defoliation, or some other factor, growth may be severely reduced or the tree killed, a situation that would be economically difficult for someone, for example, growing maples for sugar production. On the other hand, defoliators that are abundant in the late summer and early fall, like the fall webworm, cause much less damage because trees have already had the benefit of food production by the leaves in spring and early summer.

Some of the most common early season defoliators you'll run across in New York are the loopers or inchworms (family Geometridae): Fall canker worm (*Alsophila pometaria*), spring cankerworm (*Paleacrita vernata*), Bruce spanworm (*Operophtera bruceata*), but hopefully **NOT** the winter moth (*Operophtera brumata*). Other famous members of this feeding guild are gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*), forest tent caterpillar (*Malacosoma disstrium*), and eastern tent caterpillar (*Malacosoma americanum*).

Figure 2. Winter moths mating. Winged male and wingless female. Gyorgy Csoka, Hungary Forest Research Institute, Bugwood.org

The loopers or inchworms are easy to distinguish from other caterpillars because of the way they loop their bodies as they crawl. Telling the larvae and even adults of the different species apart is a chore best left to the experts.

The fall cankerworm is a North American native that occurs on many tree species but prefers oak, elm, and apple. The larvae hatch in early spring, feeding on the newly expanding buds and leaves giving them a skeletonized appearance, and later the large

caterpillars eat all but the midribs of the leaves. By late June the mature larvae drop to the forest floor to pupate in the duff. With the onset of colder weather the wingless female will crawl up the tree, mate, and lay eggs near the buds at the tip of twigs. Fall cankerworm populations can erupt and cause localized defoliation, sometimes for a couple years before their natural enemies cause population collapse.

Two other native loopers, spring cankerworm and Bruce spanworm, are also active on expanding buds in spring and are likely confused with fall cankerworm. Spring cankerworm will lay eggs in the upper canopy in spring and prefers maple and elm. I often see adult Bruce spanworm, the smallest of the native loopers, males flitting about the forest in October and November, looking for wingless females that lay their eggs in the canopy. As with the fall cankerworm, these loopers can cause periodic defoliation and growth loss, but rarely kill trees.

Winter moth is the problem looper of the group. If you are going to watch for any insect in this group of defoliators, please watch for this one! It's European native introduced in the maritime provinces in the 1930's, causing widespread defoliation and mortality of white oak, maple, and apple before being eventually controlled by the introduction of a fly, *Cyzenus albicans*, one of the best documented examples of successful biocontrol of a forest tree pest. Winter moth spread to the west coast but was basically a non-issue for many years before being identified as the cause of widespread oak defoliation and mortality in southeast Massachusetts in 2003. Joe Elkinton of UMass Amherst headed up a program that introduced the fly to Massachusetts and now, about a dozen years later, winter moth appears to be under control again. The big question in my mind is if it will pop up as a problem in the Hudson or west through the Mohawk Valleys. As I've stated in the past, the earlier it's detected the more options we have for its rapid control. Watch your oaks for early defoliation!

The forest and eastern tent caterpillars are a familiar part of the New York landscape. Eastern tent caterpillars favor trees in the rose family, most notably black cherry, and form dense webs in the trees to shelter larvae. Forest tent caterpillars don't create webs in trees and have a broad host tree range but I've noticed outbreaks starting in sugar maple stands growing on droughty soils in dry years. Outbreaks seem to pop up every ten years or so and frequently wane prior to tree mortality, but they have caused mortality of valuable sugar maple in some instances and should be taken seriously. Egg masses can be found in the upper canopy and their density indicates potential population growth.

All these early spring defoliators can be controlled by insecticide application in the canopy, but I'm partial to the use of *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a bacteria that when ingested forms a toxin that will kill only caterpillars. The problem with *B.t.* is that it breaks down in sunlight and so it's application must be carefully timed to coincide with early caterpillar feeding.

Given all this discussion of tree death and sugarbush despair I think it's important to point out that research has demonstrated that there are benefits to occasional forest defoliation. Feeding caterpillars increase the amount of nitrogen in soil, which stimulates microbial growth and decomposition of the litter layer, releasing nutrients that in turn stimulate tree growth. That being said, there is a new situation involving climate change developing with early spring defoliators. Migratory birds depend on early defoliators to feed their nestlings in spring. The problem is that the birds use day length to time their travels north. When spring warms more rapidly defoliators develop more rapidly, the birds arrival north is independent of temperature. They make a nest, lay eggs, then have no food to feed their young because the caterpillars are gone. They started their development early, when spring temperatures were higher than normal. The caterpillar's development is based on temperature but the bird's arrival is based on day length. I question how rapidly birds will find a way to adapt to this changing succession of spring.

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

Figure 4. It is helpful for woodland owners to periodically review their work schedule in their management plan. Try to involve your forester every few years to ensure you're still on the right track.

ethanol free gasoline (for non-diesel engines), change the oil, clean the air filters, lubricate moving parts, and change the spark plugs. Make a list of the materials you want to have on hand, such as extra bar oil, 2-cycle oil, extra spark plugs, or an extra chain.

Woodland owners with a written management plan can spend some time reviewing their work schedule. Those without a written management plan can contact the NYS DEC and ask for assistance from a service forester, who will write one without cost to the owner. The work schedule suggests annual activities that are designed to help the owner more fully enjoy their woods and optimally gain the benefits they desire (Figure 4). As the work schedule is reviewed, the owner can also create some type of journal to document their past efforts, what they accomplished and what they learned. One example of a creative solution to a journal is to annually make a copy of the property map, and use colored pencils to highlight the year's activities with marginal notes of lessons learned. For owners who are interested in generating revenue and who report expenses to the IRS, the journaling process provides an occasion to review your work records you kept during the year and make sure the actions, locations, dates, and receipts are clear.

Many of the non-native shrubs will expand their foliage earlier in the year than do native shrubs and plants. There is a window of a few weeks in late April or early May when the majority of the foliage in your woods belongs to non-native species. This is a good time to inspect your property for existing or new species, identify them, learn about why they became a problem, and what you can do to limit their spread or abundance. In many cases, non-native plants gain dominance because deer selectively eat only the native plant species thus favoring the growth of the non-native species. Forest vegetation management to control the non-native species won't solve a deer problem, but may limit the extent of an undesirable plant. In this springtime window, it is easy to find and focus attention on the non-native species. For owners who use foliar herbicides such as glyphosate, spray treatments to the non-native foliage will not impact species that have not expanded their foliage (Figure 5).

Although the activities suggested so far can be enjoyable, they are also at some level "work." There are many other activities that are practical, but have a strong element of pleasure. One example is to have a walk once or twice a year to areas of your property you seldom visit and make sure that all the species you see are on your property's "species list." You can decide if this list is just trees, just wildflowers, birds or any combination of taxonomic groups. Once you add a species to the list, learn about the life history of that species. The life history attributes of a plant might include when it flowers, how the flowers are pollinated, how often there are bumper seed crops, what wildlife eat the fruit, if the plant has specific or general soil requirements, the plant's shade tolerance, and more. Some of the species will be more special to you than others, and the life history attributes will allow you to develop a management scheme to favor their abundance.

A seasonal journal of nature in your woods is instructive to help you develop a keener sense of ecological patterns within a year and among years. This is a great activity to do with younger members of your "management team" so they can invest themselves in the property.

Figure 5. Many of the invasive shrubs expand their foliage before native plants. Herbicides such as glyphosate products that are used as a foliar treatment can be applied in a short spring-time window when the invasive shrub, such as this multiflora rose, has foliage and without collateral damage to desirable plants that have not expanded their foliage.

The list of seasonal patterns can be as detailed as you like, but might include the dates of emergence of the leaves of specific trees, the date ice comes off the pond, when you hear the frogs and toads trilling, the number of days that the woodcock make their mating flight, first frost, last frost, or the day your favorite tree starts to turn its fall color.

Finally, a significant part of the joy of owning a woodlot is to share your wooded ecosystem with family and friends. This might include weekends to cut firewood, a gathering in the hemlocks for Thanksgiving, or the annual fishing derby in the pond. Set a time a few months before your event to make sure everyone knows about the event, and to make a list for necessary preparations.

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 through McIntire-Stennis, Smith-Lever and the Renewable Resources Extension Act.*

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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.

Member Profile:

Brady and Brunetta Tree Farm

By Written by Scott Brady, Edited by Dorian Hyland

My parents (Arthur and Virginia) purchased our house and 20 acres of land in Schenevus in 1946 from my Grandmother who lived here for a few years with her second husband, a WW1 veteran. He was gassed in the war and was being treated at the Homer Folks Tuberculosis facility in Oneonta. This was part of the post WW2 movement into our valley that is a delightful blend of current and former agriculture, and wooded hills. My parents added 30 acres in 1970 and I added another 33 in 1988, in total about 50% old pasture and 50% woodland. These are the fields and forests I enjoy with my wife, Stephanie Brunetta.

Our once heavily forested rolling hills in the town of Westford, Otsego County, had been altered by native Americans for a thousand years for deer habitat and nuts/berries for human and animal consumption. In Alan Taylor's book "William Cooper's Town" he describes our area as covered with vast maple, beech, and pine forest in 1783. Areas along creeks and rivers were often cultivated by Indians. Evidence of this was a large boulder, next to the creek, with a grinding pestle in the center. This large boulder was across from our house and the pestle was removed by the NYS Historical Association in the 1950's. Cooper describes how intentional fire created substantial well-placed trees with high canopy and a forest floor with bushes and low plants for both human and wildlife food. As a land agent operating out of what would become Cooperstown, 10 miles from us, he was one of the first to promote "reclaiming fruitful tracts from the waste of creation." (letter from Wm. Cooper to Henry Drinker). This resulted in early maple syrup/sugar production to pay the mortgages owed by his lot buyers, and ultimately the harvest of those trees for timber and potash to open fields for cultivation.

My earliest research shows Elkanah Milks living here in 1858 with his family and producing a vast array of products that mirrored all 120 farms in our township. The variety of goods listed in the 1865 census included oats, buckwheat, apples, Indian corn, potatoes, beans, hops, maple sugar, and maple syrup. The production and diversity of crops shows the original forested landscape of the 1700's completely transformed to the landscape of settlement and agricultural production in Elkanah's time.

The Milks family farmed this property until the 1920's, added on to the house, but eventually let fields return to forest by our arrival in 1946. By the 1950's, my brothers and I needed little encouragement from my mother's command to "go outside" and run up the sapling covered hillside with neighbor Tim Green to build forts and play in the woods. The saplings of the 1950's, and my forester brother

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Years of careful tending resulted in valuable oaks, but oaks whose greatest benefit is aesthetics. During the recent commercial harvest, several of these majestic oaks were retained because of their beauty, and the stories they retold every time we walked past.

As in most of NY, the former agricultural lands have reverted back to forest and woods. The blended landscape provides great opportunities for owners and wildlife.

In keeping with the tradition of production on the farm, maple bolts are inoculated with shitake spawn, and aspen stems are cultured with oysters for production as totems. For these, production is enjoyed by family and friends.

Butch's (Arthur E, Brady, Wanakena 1962) legacy led me to my first Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) in 1978. DEC forester Paul Trotta marked five acres of 4-6" poles in '78 and again in '92 and began a TSI process on 83 acres that would yield 300 face cords over 25 years to fuel the woodstoves in my parents' home. This stand was marked again in April 2020.

Planting cedars with Butch in 1965 and 1,000 red pine in 1971, was followed by half a mile of maples along our Elk Creek Road in 1972. Our roads were once lined by 100+ year old maples circled with sap buckets in the spring in the 1960's. They are long since cut down and their shade for horse drawn wagons no longer needed. It was said that farmers received $1 off their taxes for each one planted for this reason

This young woods is full of trees that are competing for sunlight. By retaining the best trees that receive an investment of sunlight, the value increases while also producing useful products like firewood.

as well as for beautification. The ½ inch diameter x 6' maples I planted in '72 are now 16-22" diameter and 50' tall with massive crowns. I still plant the trees in our nearby cemetery and am often reminded of the Greek Proverb: "a society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

My early efforts with hundreds of wildlife shrubs in the 1980's led to unintended consequences in planting honey suckle and autumn olive. Eradicating honeysuckle now is ongoing and other new plantings are expected to be more beneficial. Elderberry and highbush cranberry, along with allowing naturally seeded crabapple, have created a dense structure in several areas teeming with birds and small mammals. These areas join sections of old field simply left alone to restore a more diverse habitat on their own. In 1983 our farm was designated as a member of the Tree Farm system. This, and my 32 years employed as a professional with the Boy Scouts of America (Otsego, Schoharie and Delaware Counties) led to long associations with foresters: DEC's Paul Trotta, Bruce Edwards formerly of Mallory Lumber, renowned forester Henry Kernan, and good friend Don Nickerson (Wanakena '66). All of these men modeled the importance of good stewardship, and a professional approach to forest management.

In 1989 we began the now 30 year operation of the choose and cut Brady Christmas Tree Farm. I spend hundreds of hours per year with thousands of trees and a very exciting December with over 400 members of scores of families selecting their perfect tree. The shrill calling out and squeals of delight from children on cold weekends makes every hour on the hillside worth the work. The last ten years I have practiced stump culture; growing a new Christmas tree in half the time from a branch that is retained on the stump after the tree is cut. People are very interested and appreciate this practice as they scour the Christmas tree lots where hundreds of them grow. I credit Don Hilliker of Tree Haven Nursery for that inspiration. People ask how I am able to do this by myself, and I have always said I simply do not watch television. With many things to do, an afternoon of watching TV has never been on the schedule.

My 12 acres of Christmas trees will scale down as we evolve into three or four acres to serve our many loyal Christmas

Many families over many years have developed their tradition for Christmas tree selection from the Brady Christmas Tree Farm.

tree families. When hearing of my plan to downsize, they insist that I keep enough for their continued harvest, and that I was not to go anywhere. I'm inclined to agree, and my plan is to live to 90 years of age because of so much to do. My cardiologist agrees with me, which is encouraging.

In 2014 I retained Mike Gray of Perfect Circle Forestry to manage logging on half of the property to pay for renovations on the original 1850s house and 1920's addition. Three of the stands that were harvested I had marked by the DEC and thinned in 1978 and 1992. My main direction to Mike was I wanted the next person here to have to same benefit of a harvest that I will have. The result from his professional management was quite satisfying and in decades to come the next person will see just that. In a nod to aesthetics I left several straight majestic oaks because I simply want to look at them when I walk in the woods.

Stump culture uses an existing branch of a Christmas tree to form the next tree. The cost for establishment is reduced and the growth is accelerated.

The harvest revealed the main obstacle to the process of understory regeneration of those stands to be overbrowsing by deer. Even though there was good seedling density, they are all browsed to 18" while being a decade old. My hunting and the same on neighboring properties seems to fall short of slowing the abundance of deer. Viewing many webinars confirms that hunting is usually not enough. By accident I started using tree tubes for browse protection of undamaged new seedlings and have recently found through ForestConnect that I am on track. This intervention currently has tubes in the hundreds, with the first emerging oaks now at six feet. I then found one- or two-year oak seedlings under sheltered conditions when a Christmas tree was harvested. I have tubed them and started to include hard maples in this natural regeneration process. This has led to recommendations from Cornell to interplant "nurse" trees for seedlings greater than 20' apart. I chose black locust to interplant starting in 2020 and close the canopy over time and encourage limb-free stems. The locust can develop as an intermediate cash crop which is in great demand for fence posts in our area. The plan now is to foster natural regeneration of the hardwood forest with occasional intervention based on what I am learning from the New York Forest Owners Association and Cornell. Also in April, a DEC forester visited to assist in managing a natural low grade stand of several acres with TSI to increase understory plants which may include more desirable species over time.

Just as my decade of chainsaw carving yielded to time spent on Christmas trees, that once larger operation will yield to more time in maple syrup production with my childhood friend and neighbor Tim Green. He has also renovated his 1800's childhood home. My parents, from Canton and Brooklyn, always said this was the most beautiful valley in the area, so it is easy to "go outside" as we were always told. With tree planting this spring will come mushrooms that I have begun, fostering milkweed lots, organic vegetable gardens, and more perennial beds than I likely need. To round out the "madness" of being consumed by these activities I became a Great Highland bagpipe student and often fill the hills for my neighbors' enjoyment with haunting melodies.

This somewhat accidental plan over four decades seems to come from family history, wonderful childhood, the need to fill an empty field, or thin a pole stand with guidance from professionals I have met along the way. In all of this I need to acknowledge Stephanie for listening to every plan, and the joy in the process of carrying it out. Her background is in biology and she looks forward to being part of it all after her work. She is the bright light that enhances everything I see, think, and do with great joy and anticipation throughout.

The word that comes to mind when I see the snowy hills and think of the coming excitement of spring is one Stephanie and I often use, "grateful."

It is with great appreciation that we thank Dorian Hyland for her energy and enthusiasm as a writer for the NYFO "Owner's Profile" column. We have all benefited from her talents. This is her final column as she looks forward to spending more time enjoying her family, woods, and other pursuits. After a brief transition, we welcome Darryl Wood as the new writer and coordinator of this column.

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