

The New York Forest Owner

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

November/December 2019



Member Profile: Bruce and Gail Cushing

Volume 57 Number 6



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FOREST OWNERS
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**The New York
Forest Owner**

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 57, NUMBER 6

*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 Malmshheimer**, Editor, The New York Forest Owner, 134 Lincklaen Street, Cazenovia, New York 13035. Materials may also be e-mailed to mmalmsh@syr.edu. Articles, artwork and photos are invited and if requested, are returned after use. **The deadline for submission for the January/February issue is December 1, 2019.***

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.



NYFOA
New York Forest Owners Association

www.nyfoa.org

COVER: Front cover. Bruce and Gail Cushing stand on their new bridge over their lowest creek. For member profile see page 21. All photos courtesy of the Cushings.

From The President

As I walked through several different forests this past summer, the impact that forests have on every aspect of our lives became more and more evident. My woods walks took me through my own family woodlot, other privately owned woodlots (as an MFO volunteer), parklands, state forests, research forests,



and watersheds. At times I walked alone, at other times participating with others in educational programs. My thoughts oftentimes

revolved around regeneration, invasive plants, invasive insects, deer browse, tick infestation, and on and on. I was so involved with the details of forest health that I “couldn’t really see the forest for the trees.” I decided it was time to take a step back and re-focus on the importance of forests in our lives and why we are drawn to them.

Looking for information, I found that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website has a wealth of information about our forests. The most intriguing section on the site was the “Health Benefits from Forests.” It started out with the following quote:

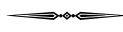
“Most of us sense that taking a walk in a forest is good for us. We take a break from the rush of our daily lives. We enjoy the beauty and peace of being in a natural setting. Now, research is showing that visiting a forest has real, quantifiable health

benefits, both mental and physical. Even five minutes around trees or in green spaces may improve health. Think of it as a prescription with no negative side effects that’s also free.”

Studies have shown that exposure to forests and trees:

- Boosts the immune system
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces stress
- Improves mood
- Increases ability to focus
- Accelerates recovery from surgery or illness
- Increases energy level
- Improves sleep

Even if one is working in the woods (logger or landowner cutting firewood) the time when the equipment is shut down almost always brings at least five minutes of relaxation and down time for the individual to relax and enjoy the benefits of the trees. This is only one aspect of the importance of forests. The financial, environmental, and social impacts are also significant and will be addressed in future columns.



NYFOA will once again be participating in the NY Farm Show in Syracuse (2/27/2020 – 2/29/2020). We will be providing forestry related seminars and staffing an informational booth all three days. We will be seeking volunteers and developing schedules in early January 2020.

–Art Wagner
NYFOA President

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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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.



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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
Linda Auble	WFL
Allan Aujero	SOT
Richard DeCola	SOT
Lisa Gustavson	WFL
Thomas Kegler	NFC
George & Allison Laws	WFL
Gretchen Lee	WFL
Louis Romano	WFL
Didi Madden	LHC
David Parker	AFC
Sartoga PLAN, Inc.	SAC
Mark Schenkel	WFL
Frederick Seely	CDC
Andrew Smith	SOT
Carl Strickland	CNY

Please share this magazine with a neighbor and urge them to join NYFOA.

By gaining more members, NYFOA's voice will become stronger!

NYSAF Annual Meeting

SUSAN KEISTER

In April 2019, New York State passed one of the most comprehensive and sweeping pieces of legislation regarding climate change and government policy in the nation. The purpose of this bill was to establish the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) to adopt measures putting the state on a path to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions by eighty-five percent by 2050, and net zero emissions in all sectors of the economy. As a result of this legislation, the New York Society of American Foresters (NYSAF) winter meeting will focus on what this potentially means to New York's forest resources and its landowners. It will take place from Wednesday, January 22, 2020 until Friday, January 24, 2020 at the Syracuse Double Tree hotel.

Figuring out where NY's wood resources, wood products industry, and landowners fit in meeting this bill's ambitious net-zero carbon emission standard, and other greenhouse gas emission reduction requirements, is imperative. This meeting is designed


to educate all in attendance regarding the bill's language and mandates, and will also afford opportunities to provide feedback to those in charge of its implementation.

The meeting will begin with an informative and entertaining presentation from Brett Butler of the USDA Forest Service. He will provide an analysis of timberland investment in the northeast. Following a coffee break/networking opportunity, officials from the NYSDEC and the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), charged with overseeing and implementing NY's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, will present an overview of the enacted and envisioned regulatory framework regarding this issue. This discussion will continue after lunch with a blue ribbon panel of diverse experts including individuals from the Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA), SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF), NYSERDA, and NYSDEC, who will discuss CLCPA's

implementation and resource issues. There will also be a lunch-time presentation regarding the "State of New York's Forests" co-presented by Rob Davies, NY State Forester and John Bartow, Executive Director of the ESFPA, as well as a presentation on the state of national SAF by John McNulty, President of SAF.

Additional meeting topics and presentations will include talks on climate change and NY forests by the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS); a presentation by NYSDEC officials regarding proposed changes to the 480a forest tax law program; and a scholarly and informative presentation by Colin Beier and Robert Malmshemer of the newly formed Climate and Applied Forest Research Institute at SUNY ESF. They will discuss how NY's forests can sequester more carbon and other forest-based climate change solutions for NY.

There will also be a total of six workshops presented (3 pre-meeting and 3 post-meeting) which will cover such topics as the NYSDEC's new *Regenerate NY* cost-sharing program (and the nuts and bolts of how to apply), pesticides, estate planning, tree farm inspector training, ethics and forest adaptation assessment, and practices in a changing climate.

NYSAF is thrilled to be hosting this meeting and providing the opportunity for both education and communication on this timely and important topic. As forest landowners and stakeholders, we invite NYFOA members to join us. More information on the meeting and how to register will be available at www.newyorksaf.org or you can email NYSAF at newyorksaf@gmail.com. 

Sue Keister is NYSAF chair-elect and program chair of the 2020 annual meeting.

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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

The Benefit of Markets for Managing Low-Grade Trees

Question:

I know there is value in good timber, but is there also value in poorer quality trees and where can they be sold? (Jennifer D., Lower Hudson Chapter)

Answer:

Considerable attention is given to high-value trees, particularly on how to grow them, and their value when harvested. The harvest of just the high-value trees from a woodland is known as high-grade harvesting, selective cutting, or simply "high-grading." This unsustainable practice has also been discussed because it diminishes the ecological and financial value of a woodlot. In almost every conversation about high-value or high-grade trees there is also a discussion of the conundrum for how to also manage (i.e., harvest and sell or otherwise kill) the low-value or low-grade trees.

A low-grade tree is a tree with little or no financial value because it has poor form (e.g., crooked stems), excessive defect (e.g., splits, knots), and/or is a species that has little or no economic value (e.g., American beech, eastern hophornbeam). Low-grade trees (Figure 1) may be aesthetically attractive and have other than economic benefits, but they exist in the forest

where they compete for sunlight with other species that have financial value and also have aesthetic and ecological value. In the high-grade harvesting scenario, the retention of low-grade trees as the predominant quality of tree may prevent the regrowth of more desirable trees and provide a disproportionate abundance of seed that will dominate the next forest. The low-grade trees may also grow more slowly and limit some ecological services such

as the accumulation, or sequestration, of carbon.

The Origins of Low-Grade

A reasonable starting point to understand the management and markets of low-grade trees is their presence in the development of the forest. As young forests develop, whether in small patches or large openings, there are initially thousands of stems per acre. As trees grow they compete with other trees for sunlight (Figure 2). Most of the trees initially present as seedlings will die by the time the forest matures. Those trees that survive represent a subset of the initial mixture of species. Some of those species have high economic value and others do not. The species that survive will have a variety of forms and qualities that result from their genetics, any injuries they sustained, and their ability to thrive on the soils and in the growing space where they are located. Some stems will have their crown in the upper canopy and have good access to sunlight, while other stems are relegated to the lower canopy where they struggle for sunlight. A stem might be a species of high value,



Figure 1. A hardwood tree that would otherwise have value except for the split caused by an injury or frost crack. Trees are exposed to numerous potential injuries that can reduce their value.



Figure 2. This former agricultural field was abandoned and regrew to mostly red maple. The canopy has closed and trees are competing for sunlight. Some are winning, others losing. Some have developed defects that will make them of low value.

such as black cherry or sugar maple, but might in actuality be a low-grade tree as a result of bad genetics or bad luck. Without management intervention (Figure 3), the majority of stems in the mature woodland will have minimal to

low economic value and all trees are growing more slowly than they might grow.

The sunlight that shines onto an acre of forest is captured by trees through the process of photosynthesis.



Figure 3. This previously unmanaged woods has trees that have survived competition for light, but haven't necessarily thrived. Many have weak crowns, poor stem quality and form and thus are considered low-grade.



Figure 4. Good forestry practices will remove low-value, low-vigor trees without longevity to favor the growth of vigorous upper canopy and valuable trees. The lesser of the two black cherry stems (the stem on the right) is marked for harvest. Photo credit J. Michael.

As a result of photosynthesis, oxygen is released and carbon is stored in the production of new wood. In a forest where low-grade trees have been controlled through management activities, the residual higher value trees capture a greater proportion of the sunlight and more quickly accumulate wood. These higher value trees have high value because they are desired for high value wood products (e.g., cabinets, fine furniture, floors) that have a long life span.

The Benefits of Managing Low-Grade Trees

Managing low-grade trees requires a significant effort. Recall that an acre of semi-mature or mature woodland may have a few hundred low-grade trees. Management means that those stems are killed, so as to remove their competitive presence relative to neighboring high-value stems. Ideally the low-grade stems can be harvested and sold.

continued on page 18

Wild Things in Your Woodlands

KRISTI SULLIVAN

RUFFED GROUSE (*Bonasa umbellus*)



Elmer Verhasselt, Bugwood.org

As you pause to catch your breath while walking through the woods, a grouse can leave your heart racing as it explodes into the air. Its cryptic coloration blends well with the leaf litter, leaving it undetected until the last minute. The startling noise created by the sudden burst into flight provides an excellent mode of escape from would-be predators. The ruffed grouse is a year-round resident and a thrill to encounter in any season.

The grouse is well adapted to living in cold, snowy climates. In the fall, in preparation for winter, the grouse grows fleshy, feather-like protrusions, called pectinations, along both sides of its three front toes. When winter arrives, these growths serve as snowshoes, allowing the bird to walk on top of snow, and helping it cling to slippery branches while feeding on tree buds. The grouse also may keep

warm at night by burrowing into soft snow, where it is covered and protected from the wind-chilled air. Alternatively, a grouse may roost in conifers, where it finds protection from the wind and cold.

Once winter has passed, male grouse are heard making the familiar, bass-like drumming sound during the breeding season, from late March to early May. A male chooses a favorite displaying site, typically a large log with a birds-eye view of the surrounding area, to be the center of his territory. Here he struts and drums to attract females and stake claim to his territory. With his back straight up and tail braced against the log, he cups his wings and moves them sharply forward and back in a horizontal, slightly circular motion. The drumming sound that is produced starts with a few evenly spaced

The ruffed grouse is a heavy-bodied, medium-size game bird, measuring about 17 inches from the tip of the beak to the end of the tail. Both sexes are similar in color, which varies among individuals from a dark gray phase to a chocolate brown or red phase. In a given area, the population may consist primarily of individuals of either the gray phase or the red phase, with the red phase being more common in milder climates and the gray phase occurring most often in coniferous areas and regions with more severe winters. Male grouse have a large, black patch of feathers, or ruff, on each side of the lower neck, and a large crest of feathers on the head. Female grouse have a shorter tail and crest, and a smaller, less apparent neck ruff. Both sexes have a wide, black band across the tip of the tail, though in females the band is often broken or blotchy.

thumps that increase in frequency to a whirl.

After mating, the hen selects a nest site at the base of a stump or a tree, and lays a clutch of 10-12 eggs. The chicks are able to move about and feed soon after hatching, searching for insects in forest openings and edges. Grouse eggs and chicks are vulnerable to predation by a variety of animals including snakes, weasels, mink, fishers, house cats, red and gray foxes, coyotes, red squirrels, bobcats, skunks, opossums, raccoons, barred or great horned owls, and a few hawk species. Cold and wet spring weather can also affect chick survival. Grouse numbers peak and bottom out in eight- to 10-year cycles, and wildlife biologists have different theories about what causes these population fluctuations. Potential factors include the weather, food


supply, predation, habitat changes, or a combination of factors.

The ruffed grouse occurs across New York State in areas of suitable habitat and is generally more abundant in forests of higher elevations (above 1,000 ft). It is most common in extensive forests or wooded hillsides and ravines, especially those with young, early-successional stage forest, or scattered clearings. The grouse also inhabits abandoned farmlands and pastures that are reverting to brush and forest. Specific habitat features attractive to this bird include brush heaps, fallen timber, grapevine tangles, and conifers.

The adult grouse eats a mostly vegetarian diet. Adults consume large quantities of buds and catkins of aspen, birch, and hop hornbeam as they appear in the spring. In the summer, they eat the leaves, fruits, and seeds of aspen, cherry, sedges, strawberry, blackberry, and raspberry. In the fall, they feed on fruits of hawthorn, apple, cherry, viburnum, sumac, and dogwood, as well as beechnuts and the buds of apple, birch, cherry, and hop hornbeam. During the winter, grouse depend on cherry, aspen, birch, hop hornbeam, and serviceberry buds.

Forest landowners can provide a number of habitat features to benefit the ruffed grouse. With enough acreage, it is possible to create and maintain patches of young, sapling stage forest in close

proximity to 10 to 25 year-old pole stands for wintering and breeding cover, and 25 to 40 year-old mature aspen for winter food resources. Having all of these forest stages present within a 6 to 10-acre area is ideal. Maintaining patches of conifers to provide winter cover, and leaving large logs on forest floor to serve as drumming logs, nesting sites, and escape cover, can also be beneficial. Landowners can encourage a diversity of food-producing shrub and understory species including grapevines, blackberries, hop hornbeam, serviceberry, dogwood, sumac, viburnum, hawthorn, and apple trees.

In the overstory of the forest, promote aspen growth for winter food, as well as American beech and black cherry. When cutting trees for firewood, or having a timber harvest, consider leaving the tree tops lying on the ground to provide cover. Then revisit the area repeatedly to enjoy your success and the surprises that the ruffed grouse promises to deliver. 

Kristi Sullivan is Co-Director of the Conservation Education and Research Program in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University, and Director of the New York Master Naturalist Program. More information on managing habitat for wildlife, as well as upcoming educational programs, can be found by visiting ArnotConservation.info



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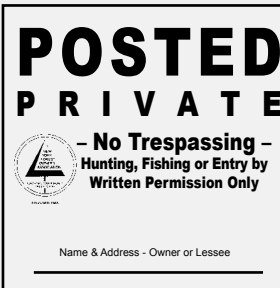


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News from New York Tree Farm Program

DANIEL NEWMAN



Setting Boundaries: Property Boundary Lines Matter!

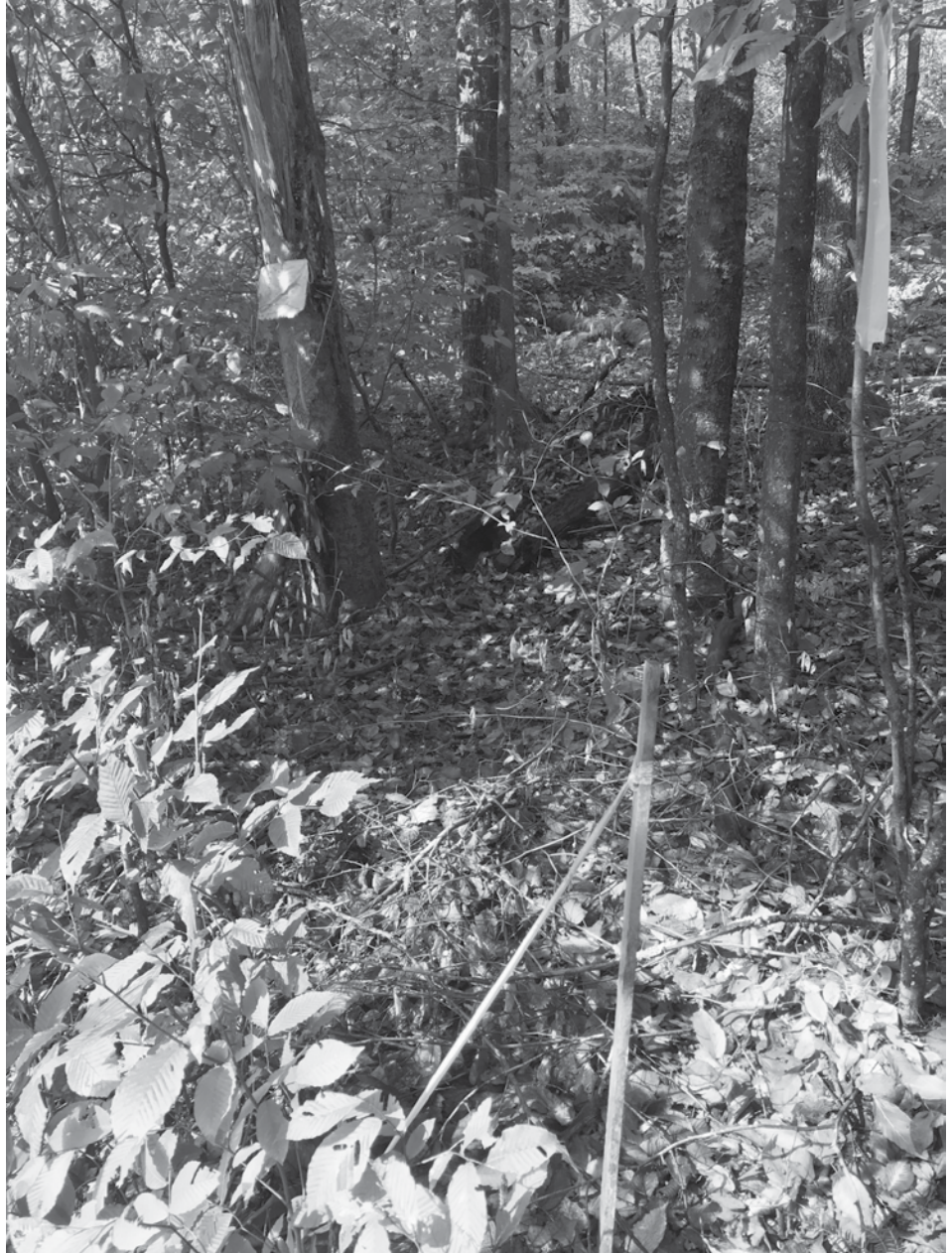
We are living in a very fast-paced world today. Things seem to be changing more quickly than ever before. For that reason, if nothing else, protecting my peaceful little slice of heaven is something always on my mind. It's important to have a place to disappear to — to get away from the hustle and bustle; and that's just what I do on my Tree Farm every year during hunting season!

Keeping the boundary lines of my Tree Farm properly marked, and the corners defined, is my goal each fall before hunting season starts. Those boundary lines also help to define my progress on timber stand improvement work, apple tree release projects, and invasive vegetation control activities.

From time to time, as a consulting forester, I take on the job of sorting out timber trespasses. This year, unfortunately, I've already been involved in two of these cases. In both instances, and generally in many of the others, I find boundaries that are not defined at all. Or in other cases, I see boundary lines that just needed some paint. That would have probably discouraged the trespass.

I have folks tell me that they are going by an app on their phone for finding a boundary line. I've found that these apps are not always right. Regardless of where people think the boundary line is, there's no substitute when you're in that woods for a legal survey that allows for an accurately painted line and monumented corners.

A well-defined boundary shows that someone has a presence on the land.



Corner pin with with stake.

It shows that someone cares enough to protect, and manage the property.

I encourage every Tree Farmer and woodland owner to properly mark and define your boundaries. As the leaves

fall and we can begin to see the woods a little bit better, ask yourself, "can I see my boundary lines?" I hope the answer is yes. But if not, then get them marked! You won't regret this



Painted and marked property boundary lines.

small investment of time and energy. It can potentially have a big payoff in the future.

Being part of the American Tree Farm System is an excellent way for woodland owners to stay current on boundary marking and other sustainable forest management practices, to meet other forest owners and professionals, and to share ideas. Not only can you improve your own woods, but by joining with other Tree Farmers, you will be making a difference at a statewide, and even national, scale. 🌲

Daniel Newman is Vice Chair of the NYS Tree Farm Committee and owner of Newman Forest & Wildlife Management LLC. He is a member of NY Institute of Consulting Foresters and the national Association of Consulting Foresters.

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.

MAGAZINE DEADLINE

Materials submitted for the January/February Issue should be sent to Mary Beth Malmshemer, Editor, *The New York Forest Owner*, 134 Lincklaen Street, Cazenovia, NY 13035, (315) 558-1846 or via e-mail at mmalmshe@syr.edu. Articles, artwork and photos are invited and if requested, are returned after use.

Deadline for material is December 1, 2019



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NYFOA Fall Symposium

LAURA PISARRI

On a beautiful fall Saturday in late September, the Capital District Chapter (CDC), co-sponsored by the NYFOA state board, held an educational and FUN symposium on *Managing your Woodlot for Wildlife* at the John Boyd Thacher State Park. The weather was comfortable, the fall foliage was spectacular, and the view of the Helderberg Escarpment was breathtaking. It was a perfect day, all the way around!

The group began the morning with a meet and greet/organic coffee and tea reception. NYFOA President Art Wagner opened the event, welcoming the guests and speakers. He introduced each of the board members and chapter officers, and gave a heartfelt recognition to CDC chair Jason Post and secretary/newsletter editor Laura Pisarri, for all their hard work and dedication in putting the event together.

The presenters held the audience of more than 45 attendees captive with their

informative and well organized presentations. Dr. Scott Stoleson, research biologist with the Forest Service's northern research station in Pennsylvania, was the first speaker. He discussed the importance of creating openings via clear-cutting and other management techniques to benefit wildlife. Dr. Walt Carson, associate professor of biology from the University of Pittsburgh, presented next on white-tailed deer impacts on forest regeneration.

After the two morning presentations the group enjoyed a lovely, all organic lunch of mixed greens, sliced almonds, shredded carrots, grape tomatoes, and raisins, topped with organic grilled lemon chicken strips, all cooked and prepared by our event coordinator, Laura Pisarri. A two tier decorative basket of fresh baked, sliced, French baguette bread with butter was served on the side. Carafes of filtered, reverse osmosis water, with sliced organic lemons, were on each table, and freshened



Laura Pisarri, CDC secretary and newsletter editor (left) pictured with door prize winner CDC member, Kristin Swanson (right) from Palenville, NY.

up throughout the day. Laura took great care, in adhering to the sustainable practices NYFOA promotes, by using wooden bowls and servers for the luncheon, as well as BPA free products and utensils. The wooden birch centerpiece planters, which were hand cut and crafted by Laura and Jason, added splendor to the luncheon tables. Each were adorned with



Coffee break! Notice the view of the escarpment in the background.



CDC Silent Auction Table #2



Organic Fall luncheon table.



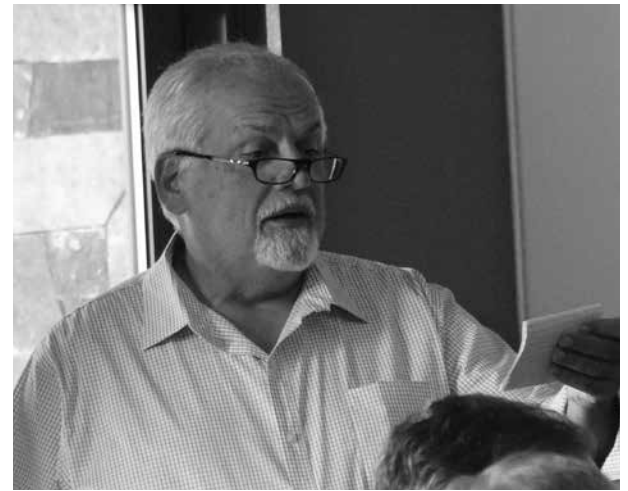
CDC Treasurer Phil Walton and board member Blaire Boone selling our new T-shirts, hats, and totes.



Chainsaw raffle winner George Steele from Amsterdam, NY with Laura Pisarri.



CDC Chairman Jason Post



NYFOA President Art Wagner

beautiful fall flowers and foliage. A hint of cinnamon, and a shimmering candle, were tucked under the mossy grass filler, just for ambiance.

The last presenter of the day was Andy Weik, wildlife biologist with the Ruffed Grouse Society/ American Woodcock

Society in NYS. He discussed forest management for woodcock and grouse and the Young Forest Initiative. All three presentations were well organized, informative, and garnered numerous questions.

NYFOA Board Member Blair Boone was able to secure NYFOA T-shirts, hats, and

totes, donning the new logo, and they were available for sale at the event. All proceeds were generously donated to benefit the CDC, and one of the T-shirts was donated as the door prize.

Raffle tickets were sold for the Dry Shod Boots, and will be drawn at CDC's winter gathering in January. The CDC also held a silent auction and a chainsaw raffle (donated by CDC committee member, Jimmy Bulich), which made the event even more interesting and enjoyable! The symposium was well worth the work and planning, was educational, fun, and a great opportunity for fundraising.

Many folks took advantage of the glorious weather, and hiked the fascinating Indian Ladder trail, which has waterfalls, babbling brooks, caves, and spectacular views. Thacher State Park, situated along the Helderberg escarpment, is one of the richest fossil-bearing formations in the world. It safeguards six miles of limestone cliff-face, rock-strewn slopes, woodland, and open fields. The park provides a marvelous panorama of the Hudson-Mohawk valleys and the Adirondack and Green mountains.

At the close of the day, the NYFOA board assembled under the outdoor pavilion, to hold their fall meeting, with the view of the escarpment in their background. The CDC is extremely thankful to the NYFOA board for allowing the opportunity to fulfill our plan of hosting this wonderful three speaker symposium. It truly was a spectacular event, and we encourage other chapters to join this new annual fall tradition. ♻️

Laura Pisarri is the CDC secretary and newsletter editor.



Vice president Stacy Kazacos and wife, Jeannine, enjoying conversations with NYFOA members at their table.



Symposium presenters (left to right): Dr. Scott Stoleson, Dr. Walt Carson, and Andy Weik.

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

UPDATE ON INVASIVE FOREST TREE PESTS

BY MARK WHITMORE

I recently attended a meeting of colleagues where we had a delightful afternoon talking about the latest news of invasive forest pests in New York. It was sobering to consider the mounting number of threats our forests face, but on the other hand it was heartening to know there are so many people working on these issues who really care about the outcomes. As I drove home I kept thinking about the discussion while taking in the beauty of the forests, then it dawned on me that rather than write about just one of the bugs or fungi, I'd try to put together an overall perspective of where we are and what is on the horizon.

You may have noticed that the gorilla in the room is now the spotted

lanternfly (SLF), *Lycorma delicatula*. The fuss about this insect imported from SE Asia is well deserved and if you have not read more about it then you have some homework to do. Since the first detection near Allentown, PA in 2014 this sap-feeding treehopper has spread dramatically as adults hitching a ride in a car and as eggs attached to smooth surfaces like trucks, trailers, and other vehicles. Breeding populations have not been detected in NY, but many adults have been reported from around the state this last summer. Judging by experiences elsewhere it will be sooner rather than later that we have breeding populations in NY. As with other invasive pests, we knew little of

this insect before it arrived. Evidence is mounting that SLF will be a major pest in vineyards. Last year there were just a few impacted vineyards in PA, but this year the number has mounted considerably. A heavy pesticide spray program is now required to protect the vines, and the photos of vines killed by SLF are sobering. The impact on fruit trees is mounting as well, but is not as dramatic as with grapes. One of the big questions in my mind is with forest trees. Young SLF feed on a wide array of plants and as they get older they focus more on trees, which move a lot of sap. Any amount of feeding will affect a tree, especially if it is year after year. Since SLF has been found to like maples, my first concern is with sap production for maple syrup. Other tree species might be hit with less diameter growth, or perhaps weakened so that other organisms, like root rots, will have an impact. Right now the only trees to have suffered mortality are black walnut and *Ailanthus altissima* (tree of heaven), an invasive species itself. *Ailanthus* is definitely a favored host as SLF becomes an adult. I was in western New Jersey at the beginning of October and found many SLF feeding on *Ailanthus*, but not on any other trees. I've been told by colleagues that this changes as the season progresses to the eventual death of SLF adults in December. There are many unanswered questions that could have a bearing on outcomes in NY, like if our cold temperatures impact survival, and is *Ailanthus* necessary for reproductive success? There is a lot less *Ailanthus* in upstate NY than further south and this could be a game changer, but then SLF might just go for other trees. Buckle your seat belt.

Next on my list is emerald ash borer (EAB). There are many locations in the state that are witness to the destructive power of this beautiful beetle, but there are also many places that have yet to become infested. The reality of dealing with dead ash is a costly lesson to landowners and communities. Hopefully those lessons



Figure 1. Spotted lanternfly adult, *Lycorma delicatula*. Lawrence Barringer, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bugwood.org



Figure 2. Birch leaf miner, *Orchestes fagi*, leaf damage. Milan Zubrik, Forest Research Institute - Slovakia, Bugwood.org

will be learned such that a proactive response in uninfested areas will help mitigate the costs. In hindsight I can look at the evolution of the

EAB infestation in the state and can see that the transportation corridors were important for its dispersal throughout the state. A good lesson

when considering the possible spread of the next invader, like SLF. The future of ash in NY is indeed bleak, but I have hope that with time and energy put into identifying resistant trees we can reestablish ash into our hardwood forests. Perhaps the most important thing forest managers and individuals can do as the infestation moves through is to pay attention to the trees that survive. The US Forest Service with local cooperation in NY has an active program to locate these trees and their websites are listed at the end of the article. Given time, with resistance and the ongoing biological control program, I have hope that we will once again have a viable ash population across the landscape.

The good news on the invasive pest front is the recent declaration by the USDA that Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) has been officially eradicated from New York City. This is one of the few times you will ever see me use the term “eradicated” and I am grateful to those who have spent so much time working on this project. The fact that it has been eradicated in NYC, Toronto, Chicago, and northern NJ gives me hope for the maple forests of the Northeast and I support the ongoing eradication efforts on Long Island, in Worcester, MA, and in south central Ohio.

Oak wilt has been an ongoing problem in NY, starting with the small infection area near Schenectady in 2008. Oak wilt rapidly infects red oaks and will kill them by mid-summer, turning the leaves prematurely red/brown. It is transmitted from tree to tree by root grafting and by fungus beetles carrying spores to freshly wounded or pruned trees. NYS DEC has been actively searching for this disease and trying to contain new infection centers by cutting and destroying infected trees and trenching around them to cut any root grafting. Recently, new infections have been found around Canandaigua Lake and on Long Island. These areas pose some interesting problems because

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Figure 3. Beech leaf disease. Note uninfected leaves at top of photo. Jerry Carlson, NYSDEC.

the loamy soils in the Canandaigua area seem to favor root grafting and the storms on Long Island as well as summer pruning can cause open wounds in the canopy which allows transmission.

American beech has been taking a beating recently with the spread of a new and somewhat mysterious disease that we are calling, for lack of a better name, beech leaf disease (BLD). Now I know that this is happy news to some of my forester friends who have been battling beech for years in an effort to grow other, more profitable

trees. However, beech is one of the most important producers of mast for wildlife and would be sorely missed by the squirrels. BLD was first reported in 2012 in eastern Ohio where the leaves showed a light colored stripe-like pattern on the leaves accompanied with crown decline and eventual death. We now know that the diseased leaves harbor a nematode that can cause the canopy decline, but there may be other pathogens, like root diseases, responsible for tree mortality. BLD has spread to Ontario and other neighboring states and NYS DEC

made an increased effort at detection this last summer. The search turned up infected areas in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Westchester, Rockland, and Suffolk counties. The distribution far to the east on Long Island indicates BLD has been around longer than we thought or is spreading very rapidly. Right now we really have no idea how we can manage this outbreak.

If this isn't enough, there is a leaf-mining weevil, *Orchestes fagi*, which was recently introduced into Nova Scotia from Europe. I remember this insect from a trip to the Halifax area

a couple years ago and was struck by the relatively rapid mortality it caused. This summer I was alarmed to see it was infesting trees in NS more than 100 miles from where I first saw it. That is a shocking rate of spread for an insect and I hope my Canadian colleagues can figure out the biocontrol before it gets to us.

To add insult to injury, just last week a colleague from the US Forest Service revealed that they have detected a new beetle species in the genus *Agrilus* that they collected from a single European beech in Brooklyn. This is a beetle that has never been described before and it is in the same genus as the infamous emerald ash borer! Probably a hitchhiker on packing material or from introduced nursery stock. Needless to say there is an effort underway to understand more about it and its current distribution.

I'm sorry to say that the list of invasive forest pests keeps getting longer, and I didn't even touch on Hemlock Woolly Adelgid in this article. However, we are learning to detect these invaders earlier and this gives us more options for management! ♻️

Resources

Spotted Lanternfly: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/113303.html>

Emerald Ash Borer lingering ash projects: https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/disturbance/invasive_species/eab/control_management/lingering_ash/ and <http://www.monitoringash.org/lingering-ash-surveys/>

Oak Wilt program in NY: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/46919.html>

Beech Leaf Disease: <https://www.forestinvasives.ca/Meet-the-Species/Pathogens/Beech-Leaf-Disease>

Beech Leaf miner: <https://www.invasiveinsects.ca/blmw/blmw.html>

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

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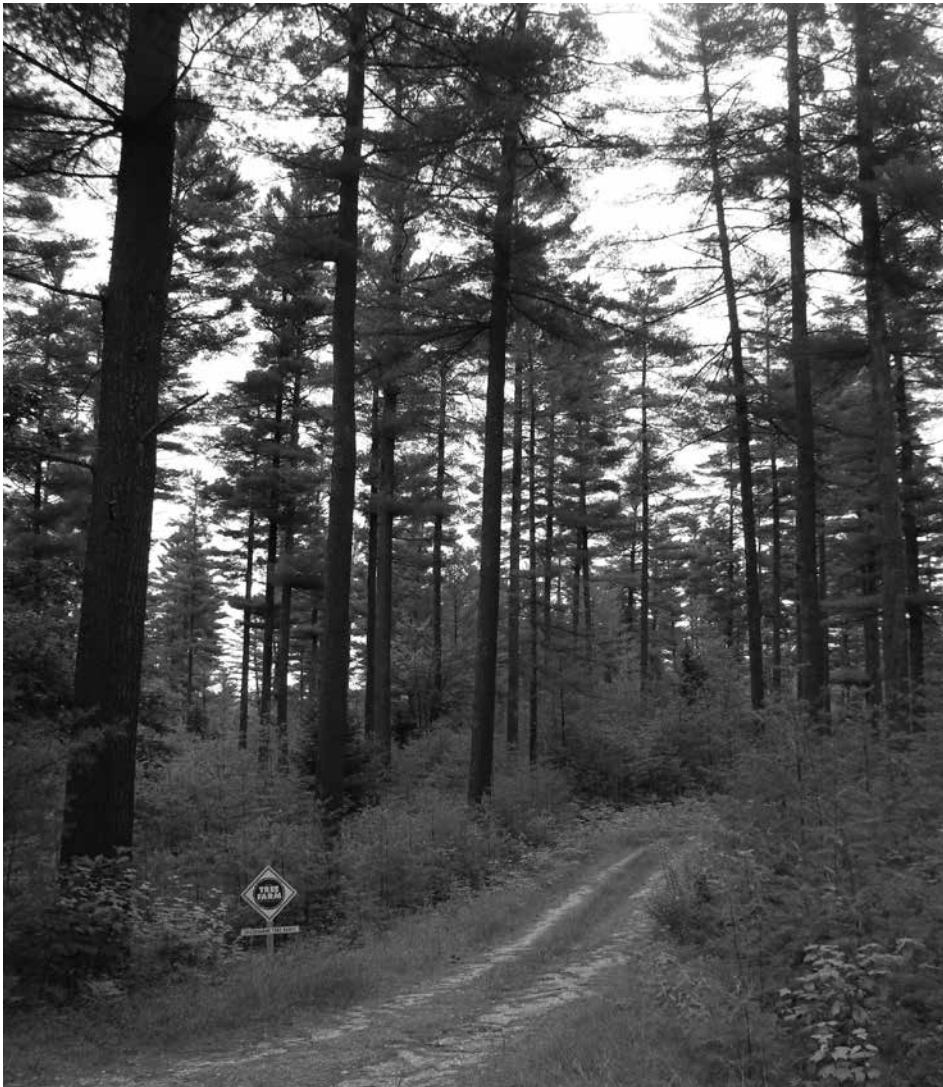


Figure 5. A forest dominated by white pine that was thinned and allowed for the development of a desirable understory. Without the added sunlight, the understory would not survive.

Selling low-grade trees, given their number, the effort necessary to handle them, and the availability of markets is an enterprise with small economic margins for the logging contractor. The efficiency of operations and fair markets are essential. Without a market, management activities will need to kill the trees by mechanically felling or girdling, or through the injection of a small dose of an herbicide. These trees eventually break down or decompose and release carbon, which is absorbed by trees and completes the carbon cycle.

The management of low-grade trees thus has a benefit of allowing for faster growth on high-value trees (Figure 4),

and also several other benefits. One benefit is that although the trees are of low value, they have some value where markets exist. Those trees can be sold through a harvest that reduces competition for sunlight and increases the growth rate and thus value of the residual trees in the owner's woods. The low-grade harvest may provide modest revenue to the owner, the benefit of a more productive woodland without direct cost or effort to the owner, or avoidance of more costly activities that kill but do not utilize the stems.

In addition to this increased value through better productivity on higher value trees, after the harvest or

management activity those residual trees are more quickly accumulating wood. That wood, which is about 50% carbon by weight, will be desirable for durable, long-lasting wood products. The sequestration of carbon is considered an ecosystem benefit or service that is provided by woodland owners. Eventually, with a healthy forest economy, the higher value trees can be sold for long-lived durable wood products.

Another benefit is that the removal of low-grade trees will change the "look" of the forest, known as forest structure, or the relative abundance of trees of different sizes. The preponderance of larger and healthy trees is attractive to many people who enjoy the cathedral-like appearance of the managed forest. Beyond the human aesthetic, the more open woodland offers a different habitat because of a slightly more open canopy, reduced mid-canopy, and increased sunlight to the forest floor that allows for the growth of understory plants (Figure 5).

Low-grade management also increases forest resilience, which is the ability to recover from stress. Stress events such as drought, ice storms, and insect defoliation interfere with normal physiological functions of the tree and reduce their ability to grow and create defensive compounds. In the unmanaged forest, the slower growth of trees makes them less resilient and thus more vulnerable to mortality than if they were growing vigorously at the time of stress. Removing low-grade trees allows the residual trees to be more vigorous, removes stunted or structurally unstable stems, and creates a forest that as a whole is more resilient.

A forest or woodland that is exploitively logged through high-grading, which disregards the consequences of having an abundance of low-grade trees, engenders several potential problems. These include the loss of sufficient economic leverage to conduct future desired or necessary management actions, such as control

of invasive species, forest health and resiliency improvements, or installation or maintenance of water quality best management practices. Ecologically, the potential problems following high-grading include reduced species diversity, reduced tree growth and thus reduced accumulation of carbon, and lowered resilience to future biological or environmental perturbations.

There are thousands of private woodland owners who in aggregate influence the majority of the ecosystem services provided by New York's forests to society (Figure 6). The

management of low-grade trees requires effort and incurs expense. While a small fraction of owners manage their low-grade trees through personal activity such as firewood cutting, most others rely on logging contractors or public subsidy. Public subsidy is limited, costly, and historically impacts a small percentage of the private woodland acreage. Logging contractors can manage low-grade trees, but like any business need to be compensated for their effort and investments either through reduced payments to owners for high-value

timber, or by options to sell the low-grade into markets.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle for the management of low-grade is the availability of markets. Traditional markets, which have either quickly saturated as forests mature or continually diminished, include wood for pulp and paper manufacturing, firewood, chips for manufactured goods (e.g., oriented strand board or OSB; furniture casings), and other localized niche markets (e.g., pallets, landscape ties, etc.). Some new markets have emerged for thermal outputs, such as fuel chips and pellets, but those markets are limited and are quickly satisfied by the available supply.

The intersection of low-grade management and low-grade markets ripples impacts that have broad societal consequences. The low-grade tree resource is available for expanded markets, the logging community recognizes the importance of this type of management, and most owners understand the principle of "weeding the woods." The intersection is really an opportunity to use an abundant resource that can benefit owners, businesses and communities. The missing link is an ability to develop reliable markets that sustain the needs of the supply side and the demand side. 📌

(I appreciate insights and discussion on this topic as offered by Tom Pavlesich of the NYC Watershed Agricultural Council, Jennifer DeFrancesco of B&B Forest Products, and John Bartow of Empire State Forest Products Association.)

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

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Figure 6. The majority of NY woodlands are owned by private citizens who enjoy the full array of benefits those lands provide, and who also strive to be good stewards. Woodland owners need education, technical assistance, and financial options to ensure proper management.



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Member Profile:

Bruce and Gail Cushing

DORIAN HYLAND

Originally from New Hampshire, Bruce Cushing's family owned forested acreage for recreational use and for wood to heat the old farmhouse. Like so many other woodland owners, that early childhood experience in the woods left a deep connection. Later, in the 1980s, when his work required that he and his wife, Gail, move to New York, he said he would never move farther west than the Hudson River. As it happened, the home they bought was on the East bank of the Hudson in the hamlet of Fort Miller, exactly as far as he said he'd go.

For the next 42 years he worked as a locomotive engineer, while raising a family, and finally retiring two years ago which took away the mental and physical demands that had kept him active and healthy. What might replace all he was leaving behind? "Knowing I needed something to keep me physically fit and mentally active, I started looking for another piece of land, something like the

old homestead back in New Hampshire. I looked all over New England, until a friend said I better look closer to home since I probably won't want to drive to Maine when I'm 80," he said. So he and Gail refocused their search which brought them to 117 acres in Clemons, NY, in the town of Dresden in Washington county about 40 miles from their home.

Theirs is a real partnership. For most management changes or improvements, they both do research to identify problems and the best methods of handling them and then consult together. When one has a greater interest that person takes the lead and the other assists. "Gail and I discuss our goals for the property, and how to manage the property to achieve those goals. She is more familiar with the diversity of species and I get to handle most of the labor" said Bruce. To absorb as much knowledge and information available, he puts in time and energy listening to presentations by



The access road to the upper tiers filled with water where the skidder from previous logging operations dug a hole going through the softer terrain. A new bridge is planned for this area.

Cornell Cooperative Extension through ForestConnect webinars and attends programs that are available in their area. He and Gail have traveled to the Maple Producers Convention in Syracuse, as well as to Vermont and New Hampshire to attend different forestry programs. Bruce jokes, "now I have to build new book shelves to keep all the books I have acquired through this learning process; not just forestry, but wildlife identification and habitat preservation."

About 2½ years ago, they took ownership of the property which is on a high ridge between Lake George and the lower Lake Champlain basin about 15 minutes north of Whitehall, NY. "I like the elevation—which is similar to the property I grew up on back in New Hampshire— and the small brooks, wetlands, and rocky ledges. Once you've lived with granite stone walls bumping their way through the woods it's hard not to admire the time and effort put into them," Bruce said.

The property consists of 117 acres, all of which is productive forestland. The topography of the property ranges from nearly level areas to a sheer drop off ledge, but mostly, it is gently sloping. Elevation



The soils and topography of Washington county can be a challenge. What rock ledges don't provide in root potential, they make up for in beauty.

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Bruce and Ted planning out the next move to set up a new section of the mini skidder pad for a bridge over the creek. Before this all the equipment to work on the forest was carried up the hill in a pack basket.

ranges from 740' above sea level at the southeastern corner to 1,260' above sea level near the northwestern corner. It has been high-graded several times over the last 30 or so years, some areas as recently as about 10 years ago. Forest types on the property include northern hardwoods, eastern hemlock, and oak-hickory. There are no classified wetlands on the property, though there are a few small ones, less than an acre, in one stand. There are also a few small streams, and several flash drainages, and seeps/springs.

As a family they have activities they like to do together and others they do separately. Bruce likes to birdwatch, Gail likes to take pictures. Both snowshoe, hike, and picnic. Their first project was building a picnic table that they could position near the lower brook, so Gail's 90 year-old mother could be with them and direct work from her seat. Last year they started collecting maple sap. They put out

50 buckets and produced three gallons of syrup and enough maple cream for gifts to family and friends.

Building that picnic table acted like a catalyst to starting serious projects. "Once that was set in place, the property felt like home," Bruce said. From that landing, they opened up old skid trails using BMPs. They used pine slabs from a sawmill as corduroy to help temporarily prevent rutting in parts of the road while they hauled stone up the main hill. They built a small version of a portable skidder pad to access the property on the other side of the creek. Before they built and positioned the pad, Bruce carried all the equipment over the creek and up the hill in a pack basket, wearing safety gear. It was much easier loading it into the UTV and riding over the creek and up the hill. "Access is key to being able to set up and implement our management plan, so we have set about building up the skid roads and putting in

water bars to help control erosion from the roads." Gail's commitment to creating or improving wildlife habitat led them to enlist the aid of Suzanne Treyger from Audubon New York who has helped them understand the forest habitat to better create and manage areas for threatened birds in the area. They have learned so many things in a short period of time: how to work safely, how to conserve the land, how to grow good timber, how to prevent erosion, how to think long term, and that one thing no one wants to admit: everything takes longer to do than you thought.

After building roads and water bars, the biggest changes they've made to the land is the reduction of invasive species, especially honeysuckle and knotweed. Diseased beech is another area of concern; Bruce has been cutting and treating older, more diseased specimens to open up areas for new growth. The access to these areas has increased with the pad across the brook and stone water bars on the steeper parts of the old skid roads.

As much as the trails help, access on the steep terrain remains the most challenging aspect to the management of the Cushings's woods. Of course, the terrain and its diversity is also one of the reasons they like the land. They have worked on building water bars on the steep slope of the skid roads to alleviate the wash outs and control erosion. Deer browse is another concern. The deer enjoyed unimpeded access to saplings for several years, so there is little growth between knee and head height.

Equipment is vital to their efforts. To become as efficient as possible in carrying out their plans, they have made skid roads suitable for tractor and UTV use. This allows for safer, quicker access, and less wear on the machines, allowing more time to focus on other items. The UTV has been a big help. Tree spades, tree tubes, lumber for the pads, and crushed stone for erosion control of the roads, all useful tools. As Bruce notes, "There's always more equipment to get, and time to spend working the forest. I have taken Game of Logging (GOL) levels 1-4, and a wilderness first aid course. One thing I learned from GOL is that I should always take a whistle with me in the woods especially when I work alone.

With two extremely active years of intense management, Bruce would advise new forest owners to, "educate yourself

to the variety of ways of managing for a balanced forest, then, like the old railroad sign said, stop, look, and listen. Set the equipment down and enjoy the forest.” *Northern Woodlands* magazine has been influential in his understanding of the whole forest.

He and Gail realized when they bought their land that they would have to understand how to develop a plan to create a balanced forest for nature, and a future commercial timber sale to offset the cost of forest management. And not to be short-sighted, they set up a 100 year plan for future generations. They plan to see one-third of that hundred year plan themselves.

As satisfying and difficult as the work has been, it has deepened Bruce’s connection to these 117 acres. “I’ve hiked lots of trails looking at the woods and thinking about what needed to be done to keep the forest healthy. Now the woods are mine and I can directly affect its growth and condition. Working in the woods is great. I can feel the forest and touch it. The best part is walking, looking, and listening. In past years I’ve helped families having a hard time get through winter with firewood. If the need rises again I’ll have plenty ready.”

Since Bruce and Gail don’t live on the land, they’ll stop to say hello to neighbors

when in the area. “They’ve helped us settle in, feel comfortable, and offered advice. My neighbors say there are rattlesnakes in the area, so I should be sure not to just stick my arm in a brush pile; to look at rocks before I step; and that a stick in the road may be a snake sunning itself. They weren’t trying to scare me, but just wanted me to use caution and be aware. My neighbors know when my truck is on the landing that I’m working in the woods, which gets back to my whistle. If they hear it, they’ll know I’m in trouble.”

Bruce first heard about NYFOA at the Washington County fair years ago, which led to Cornell’s ForestConnect program where he learned about DEC foresters, which led to Rich McDermott spending hours looking at the property. “He was helpful making me feel good about the diversity of my woods. He gave me a book on Best Management Practices for my roads and gave me written guidelines. That day I saw a woodcock on the property, so when I saw an article in the NYFOA newsletter that NY Audubon was looking for help with woodcock habitat in my area I contacted them.

Suzanne Treyger of NY Audubon came from Ithaca to walk my woodlot pointing out things that would help her program. Steve Handfield is my forester and set up my management plan. They are two very nice people who I look forward to working with for years to come,” he said.

Through contacts and trainings, Bruce and Gail recognize that there are a huge number of people working to maintain healthy, productive forests, and are grateful to be part of it. “Peter Smallidge has been a great help. He has put a lot of effort into teaching people about forestry and getting timely information out to the public. His colleagues working the county extension offices have all helped get me the information I have needed and introduced me to people that could help. They have treated me great. NYFOA started me looking into forestry with their booth at the county fair. Now, I volunteer to work at the Washington County fair NYFOA booth myself. It’s a great way to meet new people, and to learn from them how they manage their forests. 🌲

Dorian Hyland, is a writer for The New York Forest Owner landowner profile. Photos credits A. J. Sharlow.



Crushed stone set down as temporary water bars to mitigate damage when accessing the property and to fill in the swale produced from previous erosion of the hill.

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