



# CNY Chapter NYFOA

February 2016

COVERING CAYUGA,  
HERKIMER, MADISON,  
ONEIDA, ONONDAGA  
& OSWEGO COUNTIES

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## Upcoming Events that May Interest YOU

NYFOA events described in all green

**January 31- 2 pm at Liverpool Public Library - Presentation by NYFOA member Jim Engel, owner of White Oak Nursery in Canandaigua, on *Top Native Shrubs and How to Use Them in Your Landscape*. More info at [hgcn.org](http://hgcn.org)**

**February 16 - Hemlock woolly adelgid ID walk - see p. 5 for details**

**February 25-27 - Farm Show at NYS Fairgrounds, Syracuse. NYFOA sponsored forestry presentations in the Home and Garden Building. See page 5 of Jan/Feb. issue of the NY Forest Owner for listings**

**March 4-5 Ithaca Native Landscape Symposium. See program at [www.ithacanativelandscape.com](http://www.ithacanativelandscape.com)**

**March 13 - Annual CNY-NYFOA covered dish meeting at the Great Swamp Conservancy (8375 N Main St. Canastota) starting around 11 AM with dishes to pass for luncheon followed by Judy Gianforte speaking about agricultural easements and land trusts.**

**March 19 - Hemlock woolly adelgid ID walk - see p. 5 for details**

**April 16, 2016 - 8:15 am - 3? pm - State NYFOA 2016 Annual Meeting at Marshall Hall, SUNY-ESF, Syracuse. See program of presentations & Registration Form on page 13 of Jan/Feb. issue of the NY Forest Owner**

**May 14 or 21st - Woods Walk at Steve Kinne's woodlot in Eaton - details to follow in May Newsletter**

Details of the following will appear in May or August newsletters

**August 21 - Woods Walk and Annual Picnic at Tom & Randi Starmer's in Pompey**

**October 8- Woods Walk at Mike Burton's in Brandingham (North of Boonville)**

**December 2 - Annual Christmas party at the Babcocks in Cazenovia**

Please welcome new members  
Jim Carey, Kristina Ferrare, Chuck Parker

## Managing for a healthier balanced deer herd

by John Rybinski, Central NY Quality Deer Management Association president, New York State  
Whitetail Management Coalition board member & Central NY deer legislative director

I remember as a boy in the 1970's collecting evergreen boughs to make Christmas wreaths from our family's woodlot in Central New York. We still own the woodlot but the diversity of native herbaceous, woody plants, trees and wildlife has changed dramatically. The wild yews that I once gathered are long gone, hemlocks younger than about that time do not exist and the valuable hardwood trees struggle to grow in places where the canopy has been recently opened. No longer can I flush the once abundant ruffed grouse that thrived when I was a teenager. Most of these undesirable changes are a byproduct of an unhealthy, unbalanced deer herd resulting from antiquated hunting regulations.

White tail deer have inhabited this state for thousands of years and is a keystone species, meaning it has the capability to change the landscape, including the plants and animals that inhabit it, by eradicating what they select to eat. The voids are then replaced by plant and animal species, often invasive, that can survive the intense browsing imposed by overabundant deer. This process can take place very quickly with a deer herd that is out of balance or unnatural in structure.

By the end of the 1800's deer were almost extirpated from NYS. After the turn of the century, conservation minded people began the process of restoring this iconic species. In 1911 a minimum three-inch antler restriction was adopted to protect female deer from being harvested by hunters. Along with reducing predators, harvesting male deer while protecting females is a very effective strategy for increasing a deer population, and increase it did. This program was very successful but should have been updated many years ago to manage for a healthy more natural deer herd.

Deer are born at about a one-to-one ratio of male to female. The more skewed the sex ratio, the more unnatural and potentially unhealthy your deer herd is. Common sense, observation and biology tell us that you need a proper age structure with both males and females. This means that you should have fawns, yearlings and adult deer of both sexes in the herd for healthy socializing and breeding activities. Very important is the size of the herd in relation to the carrying capacity of the habitat. Too few or too many, deer can suffer; we all understand that a landscape can only provide food for a certain number of animals before it and they, suffer. Deer herd composition is determined by these three characteristics: population size, balanced sex ratio and age structure of both males and females. Any deer management style should have an end goal of enhancing these three things in order to maintain a healthy natural deer herd.

Like herd size, herd structure is very important to whitetail deer just as it is with many wild animals. Harvesting most of the males before they become adults through sport hunting is very unnatural and can affect breeding ecology as well as day-to-day socialization. Yearlings still possess milk teeth and their bodies and pheromone producing glands are not yet fully developed. Skeletal development is not complete until age four.

Better breeding ecology from healthier deer herd composition can lead to better productivity or recruitment. Better recruitment with fewer deer on the landscape can produce about the same amount of hunter harvest, compared to more poorly managed populations. Poor breeding ecology can lead to an elongated fawning window with less fawn survivorship and lower recruitment rates.

Unfortunately, NY is still in the dark ages of deer management unlike our neighbors Vermont and Pennsylvania which both manage for herd composition. Historically, most regions of NY have ranked about third from the bottom of all states as not having healthy male age structure, as we typically kill most of our male deer as yearlings. This not only leads to a skewed primary sex ratio but also a very limited age structure with fewer adult male deer. By observing browse lines and browse indicator species one can infer that the deer population in my area has been mostly too large or again unhealthy and out of balance with the habitat. Killing male deer does little to control population size, only the harvesting of females will accomplish this.

At one time Pennsylvania managed its deer similarly and had the same deer management problems that NY faces today. In 2002, Pennsylvania changed their harvest criteria for male deer from a minimum of one three-inch antler, to one antler having three or more one inch points. Commonly called an Antler Point Restriction, it has nothing to do with growing antlers, its' intention is to protect yearling male deer. This is also commonly called yearling buck protection. This change not only corrected the lack of adult male deer in the herd, but helped to shift more of the harvest pressure to female deer. PA's deer herd now functions like Mother Nature intended because its age structure now is much more normal. The program has been very successful and is supported by the majority of deer hunters.

NY has adopted this same antler point restriction in 11 wildlife management units in the Catskill region. The program has resulted in happier deer hunters and a healthier more naturally balanced deer herd. Hunters enjoy the chance to view and harvest adult deer that now have more meat and larger racks. The deer herd now functions more like Mother Nature intended, is more balanced and healthier.

Hunter and landowner groups in NYS have lobbied for the expansion of this program into additional areas. The NYS DEC has commissioned scientific surveys and found that the great majority of deer hunters approve of such regulation change. These surveys, conducted by Cornell University, concluded that protecting yearling bucks would be a regulation that was warranted. Unfortunately, a few DEC personnel seem to be unable to make decisions that would provide what the landowners, hunters and foresters want: a healthier, more naturally balanced deer herd.

The North American Conservation Model is the framework that is used by state and federal agencies to manage wildlife. The Model as it is simply called is made up of seven tenets, one of which is the Democratic Rule of Law. It encourages ordinary citizens to help make laws, and/or rules and regulation changes to wildlife management. It is our right under The Model to be actively involved in all wildlife management decisions and to promulgate good conservation laws for our state and federal agencies.

A natural balanced deer herd is composed of three basic things; appropriate population size, sex ratio and age structure. This should be the objective of any deer management strategy. Merely reducing the number of deer does not achieve a more healthy or natural population. Deer are wild animals and an endemic natural resource that should not be managed like domestic livestock. In many regions of NYS you cannot achieve a natural balanced deer herd by eliminating the majority of the immature male deer. The Model encourages us to be involved in decision-making and promulgating laws to better manage wildlife.

**For more information or to get involved contact [john101@windstream.net](mailto:john101@windstream.net)**

*Recent Events of Interest*

Another festive holiday party was held at the Babcock's in December. Thanks again for their hospitality & for offering to host the 2016 party on Dec. 2.

An excellent December "Maple production for beginners workshop" from Onondaga Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) was the inspiration for further exploration of maple, walnut, birch, etc. sugaring and motivated this editor to go to the NYS Maple Producers Winter Conference in Vernon this January. It was a huge affair with many informative workshops & exhibits on all aspects of sugaring as well as other topics related to forestry and even mushroom production. Consider going in the future!

Several counties offer the "Maple School" workshops for beginners. Check out your county CCE for other locations and schedules  
Feb. 6 - Oswego County Maple School, Contact: JJ Schell, at 315-963-7286; jjs69@cornell.edu  
Feb. 27 - presentation on Developments in Maple Production in New York State, 1 pm at New York Farm Show

If you cannot find events in your area, check out [mapletrader.com](http://mapletrader.com) or for more maple information visit <http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu/pubs/index.htm>

The New York Maple Producers Association also promotes upcoming March and April Maple Weekend events across the state. Check your area events at [nysmaple.com](http://nysmaple.com).

Other CCE information

[www.extendonondaga.org](http://www.extendonondaga.org), [www.cceoneida.com](http://www.cceoneida.com), [madisoncountycce.org](http://madisoncountycce.org),  
[www.cce.cornell.edu/herkimer](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/herkimer), [www.thatcooperativeextension.org](http://www.thatcooperativeextension.org) ( Oswego)



It is that time of year--->

Many County Soil and Water Districts are offering bare root seedlings of trees and shrubs for sale. Be aware that not all offerings are native species. Find their selections at

- [www.ocswcd.org](http://www.ocswcd.org)
- [www.madcoswcd.com](http://www.madcoswcd.com)
- [www.oswegosoilandwater.com](http://www.oswegosoilandwater.com)
- [www.cayugaswcd.org](http://www.cayugaswcd.org)
- [www.herkimercountyswcd.com](http://www.herkimercountyswcd.com)





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Upcoming CNY-NYFOA events - Feb. 25-27, March 13, April 16

If you have news, articles or photos of general interest to share, please forward them to the newsletter editor, (randi.starmer@gmail.com) to put into future newsletters .

We hope you can join us for future events. Email or Write Ralph (meyerralf@yahoo.com) with ideas.

How would you deal with this danger along a trail in your woods?