

# The Western Finger Lakes Forest Owner



Winter 2015

Volume 29 Number 4

## Annual Dinner Meeting

*Mike Seager*

The Western Finger Lakes Chapter held its 10th annual dinner meeting on 21 October. We set an attendance record for the event with about 90 people turning out to enjoy the food, fellowship, prizes and our guest speaker.

This year's dinner was our first since the demolition of the Cornell Cooperative Extension building in Rochester forced us to find a new venue. The organizing committee, headed by Dick Dennison, explored a lot of options before settling on the



*Photo Credit: Moe Seager*  
NYFOA President Charlie Stackhouse

Monsignor Schnacky Community Center in Mendon. It proved to be an excellent choice, centrally located in the chapter, plenty of room for lots of tables, and conveniently located for Chef Brad of Laurier Catering, who once again provided an outstanding meal.

After the meal, WFL chairman and emcee Dick Starr opened our annual business meeting, in which our current board of



*Photo Credit: Moe Seager*  
Rick Lee And Dan Ras

directors was re-elected to another year's service by a voice vote of the members.

We then got an update from NYFOA president Charlie Stackhouse about proposed revisions to the 480a Forest Tax Law. The DEC submitted some proposed changes to the law earlier in the year which were met with some opposition from various sides. A revised proposal has been submitted to the governor, but those revisions have not been published yet. There

**Annual Meeting - continued on page 10**

## Woods Walk Marcus Farms Arkport, New York

*Peter Muench*

Saturday October 17th dawned as a cool, cloudy, windy fall day at our home near Naples. The 2 o'clock walk seemed destined for less than perfect weather as we drove south through Dansville, but Mother Nature provided the walk with reasonable weather for the day.

The walk, hosted by Steve Marcus and Gail Wechsler, took place at Marcus Farms, on the 140-acre family homestead on State Route 36 in Arkport, a few miles north of Hornell. Marcus Farms produces evergreen and hardwood trees on this site and has a 90-acre woodlot also on this site, both of which were part of the day's walk.



*All photos are by the author*

### Heading into the Woods

Twelve people enjoyed the walk starting at the barn near their "Heritage Tree," a mature open grown shagbark hickory. The  
*Woodswalk - continued on page 9*

**Mrs. Steve Gabriel displaying books for sale co-written by her husband, our annual dinner keynote speaker.**

*Photo Credit: Moe Seager*



# In Our Woodlot

*Ed & Wanda Piestrak*

Approximately 14 years ago we purchased some property that had been clear cut a year prior. For a couple of years we noticed that most, if not all, of the desirable species – oak, hickory, maple etc – were browsed extensively. Thus we had to address that initial problem. We purchased 100s of four foot tree tubes to try to preserve the young trees. We picked the best possible trees to stake and tube in a vast area with the intention of allowing the best to get above the deer browse height.

What occurred is that we got the deer herd under control and the trees immediately responded with rapid growth. In a few years they were above the deer browsing height. Going back and examining the trees that were tubed we encountered the following:

- 1) trees would die in the tubes
- 2) mice and bees took over the inside of the tubes
- 3) trees often had poor form and lacked strength
- 4) bears destroyed numerous tubes
- 5) within a few years we got rid of many tubes

Some tubes were left in place and we noticed adjacent trees not tubed grew faster, straighter and with more vigor. Note the difference in the picture. Our conclusion? Tubes were a failure in this case.



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*The Western Finger Lakes Forest Owner* is published for members of the Western Finger Lakes Chapter of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) and is published 4 times per year. NYFOA was founded in 1963 and is organized to encourage the wise management of private woodland resources in New York State by promoting, protecting, representing and serving the interests of woodland owners. The Western Finger Lakes Chapter was founded in 1988 and encompasses Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, and Yates Counties.

Membership is open to anyone interested in understanding how to manage a woodlot. NYFOA membership can bring returns in the satisfaction of growing quality timber, stabilizing forest industries and markets, providing permanent jobs, increasing the value of your woods, enlarging areas of natural beauty across the state, and leaving behind a monument in living trees to bless the tomorrows for the youngsters of today. For information on becoming an NYFOA member, contact Liana Gooding, NYFOA Secretary, NYFOA, P.O. Box 541, Lima, NY, 14485 or at 1-800-836-3566. Annual membership is \$45 and includes: subscriptions to this newsletter; to the bimonthly NYFOA statewide publication, *The New York Forest Owner*; attendance at chapter meetings; and to statewide meetings. Membership at the Contributing level \$50-\$99; Sponsor level \$100-\$249; Benefactor \$250-\$499; and Steward \$500 or more are also offered. For more information visit [www.nyfoa.org](http://www.nyfoa.org).

Readers are encouraged to submit articles for publication in this newsletter. Articles should be mailed or e-mailed to: Richard Starr at the address to the left. Electronic submissions are preferred. Any letters should be sent to the Chair for consideration.

For event reminders and late-breaking news, **subscribe to our email list** by sending a blank email to [nyfoa-wfl-news-subscribe@npogroups.org](mailto:nyfoa-wfl-news-subscribe@npogroups.org)

**Note:** The deadline for our Spring 2016 issue is March 1st.

## Into The Winter Woods

Richard Conolly

Winter...cold, rain, sleet, snow...Mother Nature casts a white shroud over her domain, yet there is life and signs of future life if we look for it. Huddled by a warm fire in our thermals and woolies, a whole winter world is revolving outside our snug dens. Come out, come out and see the woods in the throws of surviving the harshest that nature can deliver.

Don we our warmest apparel, large boots, heavy coats, ear covering hats, wooly scarves and mittens, the cold doesn't scare us... much. The woods are noticeably quieter than in summer. The sounds of birds and insects are gone, replaced by creaking of trees and the rattling of dead leaves in oak and beech saplings. Over all, it is the sound of death, yet there is life here among a stand of evergreens.

Winter is a time of drought for most plants as available water is captured in snow and ice. The evergreen needle has adapted its structure to conserve water loss by having fewer stomata relative to deciduous trees, containing resins which are resistant to freezing and a thick cutin layer that slows water loss. Needles remain green and on sunny days still photosynthesize though at a slower rate than in summer. Some deciduous trees like the aspen will carry on photosynthesis in the winter through the chlorophyll found in their bark. Even winter ferns under a snow pack will receive sufficient diffused sunlight to carry on some limited sugar production.

While traversing a pine thicket we may scare up a small flock of sparrows, chickadee, titmice or golden crowned kinglets. These birds often bundle in groups in spruce trees to share body heat. Birds do put on some extra body fat and feathers in response to coming winter but are limited due to the constraints of flight.

I used to take down and clean my bird houses in the fall and not hang them again until the spring but I have since learned that on particularly cold nights birds will congregate in summer bird houses. The summer territorial fights and squabbles are forgotten in the interest of survival. Even with all this cooperation I fear the winter mortality rate is quite high.

Moving on to a more deciduous forest, a dark silhouette in a tall tree is noticed back grounded by the crystal blue sky. It's a large hawk waiting for a vole or field mouse to poke its nose from its winter nest and become dinner. In the snow under such a

roost occasionally a regurgitated pellet of bones and hair can be found, the leftovers of their meal. On warm winter days at the southern faced base of trees a smattering of black peppery dots may cover the white snow. Upon a closer look these spots seem to be moving about. These are snow fleas that feed on algae and molds. They are misnamed fleas as their springy tails propel them as if they were fleas.

Spiders, which are active all winter, can be found on or under the bark of trees, providing much needed food for birds. With the trees and shrubs being naked, previously hidden nests are now exposed. Be careful in handling nests as some may have a mouse as a winter boarder. Startling for you but it must be absolutely terrifying for the poor mouse. In a clearing the finding of actual life is more difficult but the signs of activity are noticeable. Tracks of both predator and prey are left in a new fallen snow. Droppings of rabbits and deer show up nicely on the white background. On occasion scat will be found on a mound or rock, the leavings of a fox to mark his territory.

On goldenrod stems, poking out and extending above the snow pack, are round knobs of the goldenrod ball gall. A small spotted fly lays its egg in the spring and its larva invades the stem causing the plant to form a gall around the invader. In the spring the adult fly emerges from the gall to continue the cycle. Not every goldenrod ball gall contains a viable larva as there are various other insects that may predate on this larva. So nothing in nature is perfect. An occasional bird may fly over this open area but soon returns to areas of denser cover where the combined risk of wind chill and predator are decreased.

A walk in the winter woods, while not as pleasant as in summer, can be at least as interesting. There are several good books pertaining to the subject of winter ecology. *A GUIDE TO NATURE IN THE WINTER* by Donald W. Stokes is a basic guide with a broad over view and several identification keys. *WINTER WORLD* by Bernd Heinrich is written more as a personal narrative and delves into specific species but with more detail. *LIFE IN THE COLD* by Peter J. Marchand is more for the scholarly reader who is interested in the physiological functions that freezing temperatures induce in various species. All three of these books can be purchased on the internet economically. Just outside your window it truly is "A Winter Wonderland."

## The Ankerwycke Yew

Dick Starr

Many trees are famous for a variety of reasons. The following was inspired by an article in the July/August 2015 Smithsonian magazine. The article deals with the Magna Carta, a document sealed 800 years ago on June 15, 1215 and a large yew tree. The Magna Carta or Great Charter in English, outlined the basic rights that are the foundation of the British democracy and forms the basis for many constitutions including our own.

In 1199 King Richard the Lionheart dies of gangrene resulting from a crossbow bolt. Prince John, his younger brother, takes the throne and turns out to be the rascal portrayed in various Robin Hood stories. The taxes and charges King John enacts so enrage his nobles they threaten civil war. John is forced to acknowledge their complaints. For example, in 1214 one baron had to pay \$17,000,000 in modern currency for a marriage license.



The site chosen for sealing the Charter was steeped in history and military neutrality, neither side likely to surprise the other with attack. In the Thames River near Windsor is an island named

*Ankerwycke - continued on page 10*

### Welcome New Members

David Dentico	Walworth
Paul Hess	East Bethany
Matt Lawrence	Hornell
Jared T. Mason	Springwater

# Typical Trees 2

*Reviewed by Dick Starr*

This continues our look at the work of Dr. Thomas Perry regarding typical trees. Trees can find life in the forest to be harsh and short. Besides competition with other trees there are fires, floods, wind, lightning, insects, ice storms, browsing deer, an increasing number of invasive pests and man and his machines. Dr. Perry believes the typical non forest tree lives to 70 years and is near 36 inches diameter.

We have four yard trees from a planting I did in 1968, 47 years ago. As a test of Dr. Perry's conclusions I measured the diameters at breast height (DBH) with a Biltmore stick. This value was divided by 47 to obtain a yearly average growth rate for each tree. The results are shown in the chart. Even though the maples are all in our yard it wasn't until I measured them that I realized the sugar maple grew as quickly as the silver maples.

If these trees live another 23 years and reach age 70, what will their diameters likely be? To predict each tree's diameter at age 70, I multiplied their average growth per year times 23 (years remaining to reach age 70) and added that to the current diameter. The tamarack, for example, should be  $(.38 \times 23) + 18 = 26.74$  inches diameter at age 70. The 26 inch silver maple should be near 38.65 inches while the 27" silver and sugar maples approach 40.11". This assumes the trees remain alive and growth remains constant for the next 23 years.

These calculations show that at age 70 years the four yard trees

should average 36.40" diameter, close enough to Dr. Perry's 36 inches to declare a near bulls eye. Admittedly my four trees are a poor sample of the 100+ species of trees growing in NYS but that's what I have to work with.

Over time the maples have been busy producing samaras (seeds) that seem to land everywhere and the yard is often loaded with sprouting maple seedlings, not to mention some gutters. The lawn mower gladly keeps the yard versions in check. Some of these seedlings, because of their location, have been allowed to grow. Can the data predict how long ago a 2nd generation tree was given its reprieve from the mower?

One of the 2nd generation silver maples measures 21 inches DBH. Assuming an average growth rate of .56 inches per year for the silver maples, 21 divided by .56 = 31.5 years of growth. That means this tree was given its pardon from the mower around 1977 when our children were 6 and 8. This makes sense as the tree is next to the former sand box where the children played.

Tree Name	Diameter Inches	Growth/year Inches	Predicted Diameter 70 yrs
Silver maple 1	26	.55	38.65
Silver maple 2	27	.57	40.11
Sugar maple	27	.57	40.11
Tamarack	18	.38	26.74



*Photo Credit: Dick Starr*

## Some Opportunistic Maple Seedlings

# Old Testament Trees

*Dick Starr*

It might be that my involvement with NYFOA and WFL has sensitized me but I'm struck with the number of references to trees found in the Bible. There are at least 30 different kinds of trees mentioned. Jericho, famous for its tumbling walls, was known as the city of palm trees. (Deuteronomy 34:3 and 2 Chronicles 28:15) This surely tells us Jericho had a warm climate given where palm trees grow today.

Regardless of your attitude about faith, the Bible is an ancient text that gives us a window into the past. For example, right out of the gate in Genesis 4 we see anger so intense it results in murder. Like modern man we learn folks in earlier times were familiar with greed, murder, lust, war, jealousy, adultery, love, hate - the gambit of human emotions and actions. It is generally thought the Old Testament covers the 4000 years before Christ.

It's probably natural that stories of human interactions would include the natural world and trees are part of that. In so doing the Bible shows us the forces of nature in the past were remarkably like they are today. In geology this concept is known as uniformitarianism, the notion that natural forces are uniform over time. Amos 1:1 mentions an earthquake, something we're familiar with in modern times. This same quake was memorable enough that it's also mentioned in Zechariah 14:5. The evening news often mentions fires ravaging our western states. Psalm 83:14 states, "As the fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze..." Isaiah 9:18 states, "...the flames will consume the forests, too, and send a vast cloud of smoke billowing up from their burning." Perfect descriptions from earlier times of our modern western fires.

When thinking of trees food comes to mind and it was apparently so from early on. In Genesis 1:11 we read, "Let the earth sprout ... fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed ... " Genesis 2:9 continues this theme with, "The Lord God planted all sorts of beautiful trees there in the garden, trees producing the choicest of fruit." This implies most, if not all, trees at the time produced a feast for eye and palate. After Adam was placed in the Garden he was told, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden..." excluding good and evil (Genesis 2:16). Note every tree provided something to eat. At this point Adam still had all his ribs and was apparently a vegan.

Genesis 2:15 says, "The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden as its gardener, to tend and care for it." Since the garden contained trees, doesn't that make Adam the first arborist/forester? Clearly man's association with trees goes way back. King Solomon, ruled 971 BC to 931 BC, tried to duplicate God's work. We read in Ecclesiastes 2:5, "I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees."

Song of Solomon 2:5 says, "Sustain me with raisins and refresh me with apples." Song of Solomon 6:11 says, "I went down to the nut orchard to look at the blossoms of the valley..." Hosea 4:13 mentions trees are good for shade. May I add, especially with a hammock hanging in that shade. We read in Numbers 13:20 that Moses sent spies into the promised land to see "... whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are many trees." Apparently no wood is no good. In preparing this I looked at the following translations: Scofield Reference Edition, English Standard Version, The Living Bible and the Revised Standard Version.



# Firewood 4

*Dick Starr*

There are several concerns with having a live wood fire in the house and burning the house down comes immediately to mind. Others include creosote formation, carbon monoxide formation, adding soot and nasty hydrocarbons to the atmosphere and all the bark chunks and excess dust. If you like dust bunnies get a wood burner. Having carbon monoxide and smoke detectors is a wise idea.

True or false - the moisture content of firewood is a factor in the formation of creosote. Actually both true and false. True that wet wood tends to smolder and burn cooler than seasoned wood thus favoring creosote formation but it's the cooler temperatures not the moisture that does so. False in that water is not a chemical component of creosote. Stove design, operator skill, seasoned wood and plenty of oxygen are factors critical to whether or not creosote forms.

To understand this we must study how wood burns. When a chunk of wood is added to an active fire it initially absorbs heat to evaporate water contained in the wood. This occurs at the boiling point of water, 212 degrees F. This water vapor will surely condense as it leaves the chimney and appears as white "smoke." We see tiny drops of condensed water vapor as white. Evidence of this is fog and cloud formation, seeing our breath on a winter day, a steaming teapot or steam rising from a warm pond on a cool morning. Note that true steam is an invisible vapor and when we see "steam" it's actually tiny liquid drops of water.

Once the water is gone the temperature of the remaining wood climbs rapidly. In the 400 to 500 F. range, with the chunk well engaged in combustion, the wood molecules begin to break

down into hydrogen, oxygen and carbon. This is known as destructive distillation of the wood. These H<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>2</sub> and C components then recombine into various organic hydrocarbons, sometimes called wood gases. These gases are highly flammable and contain over half the heat value in the wood.

To extract this potential heat the gases must have sufficient oxygen available to burn before they exit the stove and go up the chimney. This is where stove design and operator skill become factors. It takes 177 pounds of oxygen to completely incinerate 100 pounds of wood. It is imperative that oxygen be available as the wood gases escape the fuel load and some stove designs do this better than others. If the stove does not admit fresh air/oxygen at this stage or the operator has the stove in "air tight" mode the wood gases probably go up the chimney unburned. Not only is the heat contained in these gases lost, the gases probably cool as they rise in the chimney and may condense inside the chimney or enter the atmosphere causing pollution. The condensation of unburned wood gases is creosote. The amount of cooling in the chimney is related to chimney insulation which is reflected in the type of chimney construction. A double or triple walled metal chimney provides better insulation than one made of masonry materials which are poor insulators. Also, a shorter chimney can be expected to cool less than a taller one.

Like the organic compounds that give it birth, creosote is highly flammable. In a well insulated chimney any creosote that forms simply exits the chimney as bits and pieces (soot) and gives the exiting smoke a darker dirty look. In a poorly insulated chimney the escaping wood gases can cool enough to condense inside the chimney as creosote. A chimney fire results if this ignites.



# Banyan Tree

*Dick Starr*

**M**y first encounter with the Banyan tree was at the Thomas Edison winter home and museum in Fort Meyers, Florida. In 1925 Harvey Firestone brought a 4 foot tall Banyan seedling from India in a butter tub and gave it to Mr. Edison. Encouraged by Henry Ford, Edison tried to use the white sap as a substitute for rubber in car tires but it didn't work out. How would your vehicle look with white tires? Ninety years later the tree continues to grow and its canopy covers over an acre.

The Banyan is a species of fig in the mulberry family and native to warmer climates than ours. It's the national tree of India and gets its name from banias or Indian traders. Hindu merchants conducted business beneath the shade of the spreading canopy. In Daniel Defoe's novel, Robinson Crusoe built his house in a Banyan tree. One report says the largest Banyan in the world is 200 years old and has a canopy covering 8 acres. Other reports suggest half that. Regardless, it can take up a lot of canopy space.

The Banyan is an epiphyte meaning a plant that grows on another plant. The Banyan seed is spread by birds that eat the cherry sized fruit. This seed germinates after landing in crevices and cracks in the bark of other trees and sometimes the rough exterior of buildings. Seeds are small and those that land on the ground don't usually survive.

After germination on a tree limb the new seedling sends aerial roots downward to the ground where they take root and help support the limb where the seed landed. The original host tree is eventually surrounded and pressured by the aerial roots and often dies and rots away leaving a hollow center. This hollow is often a shelter for animals. Over time more aerial roots join the party and the collection of aerial roots begins to resemble a forest all by itself. However, it is considered one tree.



**Banyan Trees in Venice, Florida**

*Photo Credit: Dick Starr*

# Woodlot Lessons

*Reviewed by Dick Starr*

The following are lessons shared by Carl Wiedemann in a New York Forest Owner magazine article and a woods walk write up in the Capital District fall 2015 newsletter. The Wiedemanns purchased their 83 acre woodlot while Carl was still employed as a DEC forester. The property was entirely forested 200 years ago then cleared in the 19th century for pasture purposes. Farming ended in the early 20th century and the forest reclaimed its own. Roughly half the privately owned woodlands in NYS share this history.

By the 1960s some of the trees had become large enough to have commercial timber value. The owner cut the trees and sold the property in 1966 to a recreational minded individual who never did built his camp. After tiring of paying taxes on the property it was sold to the Wiedemanns in 1980. Carl wanted to grow timber profitably and they have used timber harvesting as a way to improve the health, productivity and value of the woodlot. As the chart below shows, the current timber volume is approaching 4 times what it was when they purchased it.

There were timber sales in 1982, 1987 and 2010 plus firewood sales all generating \$33,000 which more than covered the purchase price of the land and 30 years of property taxes. The forest was improved with each harvest. The positive impact of forest management is reflected in the dramatic increase in the value of annual growth over time. It must be remembered that the climate, soil and rainfall in the northeast is conducive to forest development.

	1980	2011
Number of trees over 16" diameter	420	1170
Timber volume in trees over 16"	73,000	255,000
Stumpage value of trees over 16"	\$8,000	\$69,000
Annual growth per acre in board feet	40	185
Value of annual growth per acre	\$4.38	\$50.06

Some forestry lessons have been learned and confirmed by managing the woodlot. #1 harvesting trees will not destroy the woodlot. More than 1000 trees have been cut in the Wiedemann woods over 30 years with logging equipment crossing from one end to the other. The property still has wildlife, vernal pools, a small wetland, wild flowers, den trees, and snags for woodpeckers. Logging operations have added a recreational trail network and paid the tax bills.

#2 harvest trees to grow trees. If trees are not harvested often enough a woodlot will tend to stagnate with trees growing slowly. This is because the trees are competing for a fixed amount of sunlight, growing room, available water and nutrients. Larger trees require more of these. A few years after a harvest the remaining trees will once again be competing with each other. To keep timber growing some trees should be removed every 15 to 25 years. Such removal should leave a forest of better quality trees. Note this is the direct opposite of selling the most valuable trees and leaving inferior ones, a practice known as high grading.

#3 keep timber to grow timber. It can be tempting to sell most or all marketable timber when contacted by a buyer. This won't destroy the woodlot but it diminishes future income potential

and sacrifices trees that would earn high rates of return if left for the future. In banking terms, selling all marketable timber is like liquidating the principal as well as accrued interest. Always keep some large healthy trees in reserve and remember larger trees grow more wood volume than smaller trees. Selling most/all of the large trees maximizes short term income but at the risk of long term gain. Be informed and aware there are choices.

#4 Silviculture matters. Silviculture is to woodlot management what agriculture is to farming. Surveys show that roughly one quarter of landowners use a forester when harvesting timber. Not engaging a forester can lead to maximizing short term profit and the woodlot is typically left in a degraded state with a high percentage of genetically inferior low value and slow growing trees. Timber harvests at Wiedemanns have removed some of the poorest quality trees, more than tripled timber volume and the timber value has increased 8 fold. About one third of this increase in value is due to stumpage price increases since 1980



*Photo Credit: Moe Seager*

**This article's author and WFL Chairman, Dick Starr, at the annual meeting.**



walk proceeded along a lane bordering a crop of 8-12' Canadian hemlocks in production for the nursery operation. Standing along one side of this crop were three 12"+ black walnuts, which Steve pointed out were started from seed roughly 40 years prior in a successful effort to introduce that species to the property.

We entered the adjacent woods via a lane that ascended a ridge with mixed hardwoods below and a mix of pines and oaks above the lane. While traversing this uphill climb, the group passed the first of two American chestnuts. Marcus Farms had offered a \$50 gift certificate redeemable via a retail purchase at the nursery to the first participant who could spot both of the chestnuts along the walk route. Although the offer seemed to spark a good deal of interest in finding the two chestnuts, the first one along the route went unnoticed as the group progressed up the hill to the upper farm beyond.

We soon emerged from the woods into a field of 15-20' fir trees that Marcus Farms has been harvesting over the past 10 years or so. Steve stopped here to explain that some of the remaining trees are still sold as B&B specimens, while others will be held for large cut tree sales at Christmastime. As we continued toward the woods uphill from us, we passed some younger tree crops of fir, spruce and hemlock. The weather stayed crisp, breezy, and largely overcast—comfortable for a fall outing, but not bright enough to highlight what remained of the surrounding leaf color.

After crossing the tree crop fields of the upper farm, we passed a small pond, which is both a groundwater management improvement and water supply source for the nursery operations. The path then entered the upper woods, where it bordered a



**View of a young Christmas tree plantation.**

stand of white pines and another of mixed oaks and hickories.

We stopped at the base of an impressive red oak, which Steve referred to as the “Granddad Oak.” It measures about 45” DBH and 30’ to the first limb, and has apparently withstood numerous timber harvests in this woods during its lifetime by virtue of its standing directly astride the farm boundary line. As the group admired this specimen and another 30-some-inch diameter oak nearby, discussions ensued regarding the distinctions between

red oaks and black oaks, and that rekindled interest in the as-yet undetected chestnuts.

We moved on down the boundary-line lane as the surrounding woods transitioned from an oak-hickory mix to a maple-ash-dominated mix.

Interest in locating the chestnuts remained high as we walked on, with several nearby oaks being pointed out as possible qualifiers; but Steve still offered no clues as to the actual locations. Further along the path, some of the group suggested they might have spied one of the chestnuts in question a short distance back through the woods, so a contingent departed to double back in an effort to confirm the discovery, while the rest waited, enjoying the sun-lit, leaf-covered woods floor.



**Hot cider and snacks prepared by Gail awaited woodwalk attendees as they headed back to the barn.**

Having met no success, the chestnut scouting party decided, upon reaching the large red oak previously noted, to abandon the search and rejoin the main party. Only a short distance later, Steve offered the same evidence that had originally led to his discovering the more difficult to spy of the two chestnuts: an American chestnut leaf retrieved from the litter in the woods roadway. With evidence in hand, members of the group quickly spotted the tree adjacent to the trail, a tall 6” stem evidently growing from an old forest rootstock that has persisted in spite of repeated blight setbacks.

Our party left the upper wood soon thereafter and walked along a 10-acre field that featured a second-year crop of trees being grown for the Christmas tree market. Then we descended the lower hill again via another woods lane, which returned us to the spot where we had first entered the lower woods. At this juncture, Steve offered that we had all passed by the first of the two chestnuts on the early part of the walk, and that he would lead a second tour past it for any of those who would like to see it.

About a half-dozen walkers wanted to take the second pass and headed back up the trail with Steve, while Gail led the rest of the group back toward the barn. At this slower, more observant pace, it did not take long to locate the other chestnut, a larger, multi-stem plant also apparently growing from a long-surviving rootstock. A leisurely return stroll to the barn ensued for the dedicated search party, which put the finishing touches on a very pleasant outing with most enjoyable company.

are several meetings around the state to discuss the new proposal with stakeholders – the meetings are not open to the public, but NYFOA expects to have a representative at some of them. Charlie hopes that we will have more information to share with our members in the next few months.

With the business meeting out of the way, we launched into an array of raffles and door prizes. As usual we had a wide variety of door prizes. Just at a glance I saw bottles of wine and whiskey, shirts and jackets, walking stocks, books, maple syrup and cutting boards. The WFL board thanks everybody who brought something to donate as a door prize.



*Photo Credit: Moe Seager*

### **Some of the Door Prizes on Display**

In what has become something of a tradition, Dan Ras of Stihl donated a new chainsaw for us to raffle. Rick Lee was the winner this year. Rick is avid in managing his woodlot and will certainly put the saw to good use. We sincerely appreciate Dan's generosity in donating a saw each of the past five years. The expenses of the dinner are subsidized by chapter funds and the chainsaw raffle helps us to hold such a good event by offsetting a large part of that subsidy.

We then heard from Steve Gabriel, our keynote speaker for the evening. Steve is the owner of Wellspring Forest Farm and co-author of *Farming the Woods*. He described an integrative approach to managing woods for a variety of crops – timber, maple syrup, elderberry syrup, duck eggs, mushrooms and more. The theme of Steve's work – and book – is that you can "stack" elements in the forest ecosystem, taking advantage of crops at ground level, in the brush layer, the understory and in the trees that occupy the upper canopy. By using the vertical structure of

the forest to grow several crops, one can produce a variety of products in marketable quantities while using much less land area than traditional farming methods require.

As one example of a high-value crop that can be produced on a small scale, Steve talked at some length about growing shitake mushrooms, which are grown on oak logs. At Wellspring Forest Farm Steve manages about 1000 logs, replacing them at a rate of about 200 logs each year. During the growing season these logs produce about 40 pounds of mushrooms each week which can be sold through farmers' markets or to local restaurants.

An even more surprising project at the farm is growing pawpaw trees. The pawpaw is usually thought of as a tree of the Midwest or south, but New York is at the northern edge of its range and it does grow around here. Pawpaws produce a large, vaguely banana-like fruit that can be eaten raw or made into a jelly or other preserve. Since pawpaw trees grow to around 30 feet high and will tolerate some shade, they can form a productive layer between the mushrooms or other crops on the ground and the canopy trees overhead.



*Photo Credit - Moe Seager*

### **Our Keynote Speaker- Steve Gabriel**

There is a lot more information on these topics on a number of web sites: [www.WellspringForestFarm.com](http://www.WellspringForestFarm.com), [www.FarmingTheWoods.com](http://www.FarmingTheWoods.com), and [www.CornellMushrooms.org](http://www.CornellMushrooms.org).

Ankerwycke, also called Magna Carta Island, and it contains a gigantic and ancient yew tree. Around 1160 a Benedictine convent was built near the ancient yew thought to be 1700 years old at the time. In 1897 the tree was described as, "The base was a good deal broken away, and hollow up to five feet." The tree, nearly 30 feet around, and its cavity was likely used as a shelter by a hermit or holy man. It seems this was common practice at the time and such sites were considered sacred. An ideal site for a convent and a great place to sign and seal the Great Charter.

The nobles and their military forces were camped in a meadow called Runnymede. This meadow had long been a special meeting place known for magical charms and was called

meadow of Runes or Rune-mede in Saxon times. King John and his forces were camped on the opposite bank. It seems reasonable that the two forces would send representatives to the convent's shelter for final sealing of the charter and neither would want the infamy of defiling a sacred site by starting a fight. Especially so close to a venerated tree like the yew.

Besides being the probable last living witness to Magna Carta history, some believe the yew tree watched King Henry VIII court Anne Boleyn beneath its branches in the 1530s. It's likely this revered tree was witness to Druid ceremonies as well. If only trees could talk. In 2014 it was announced the island is for sale.

# The Acorn

Dick Starr

Depending on the classification there are 450-600 oak species world wide. The U.S. contains approximately 60 of them. A single oak tree can drop 10,000 acorns in a good year. A gray squirrel may hide and never recover 74% of its buried acorn hoard. If acorns are available, the 5.5 pounds of food a whitetail deer eats each day will be 55% acorns. An acorn nut weighs about 1 ounce, contains 110 calories and has 7 grams of fat, 12 grams of carbohydrates and 1.7 grams of protein. A feast for wildlife when available.

One Pennsylvania study measured how many acorns a stand of red oaks could produce. In a poor year researchers tallied 7000 acorns per acre. In a banner year they recorded 273,000 nuts per acre. It takes 6 months for a white oak acorn to mature and 18 months for a red oak acorn to mature. This information came from Outdoor Life magazine October 2015.

## Upcoming Events

### General Meeting

Our winter meeting will be January 12, 2016, 7:30 PM at the Lima campus of Genesee Community College. The address is 7285 Gale Road which is north of Lima off route 15A. Hear artist Chara Dow explain her medium of rustic furniture. She will explain the wood she uses and how it is obtained. Is there a market for "unusual" woods that she and fellow artists and craft persons might use?

## Classifieds

**Tree Tubes for Sale** - Member(/Non-Member) price: 4' (\$5.00/\$5.50); 4' w/ stake (\$6.00/\$6.50); 5' (\$5.50/\$6.00); 5' w/ stake (7.00/\$7.50). Proceeds benefit WFL chapter. (585) 367-2847.

**4 - SALE FORD 2000 Tractor**  
3 Cylinder - Gas, 36 Horsepower, 3 Point Hitch, New Ag Rear Tires & Rims, Ag Chains, Down Pressure Snow Plow, Owner's Manual. \$4,900.  
Contact Dale Schaefer 585-367-2849.

**Wanted:** up to 50 acres of recreational land including woodlot. Prefer eastern Wayne, Ontario, Steuben and Yates counties. Rick Lee 585-406-6676

**PLEASE NOTE:** SPACE PERMITTING, THE WFL STEERING COMMITTEE ALLOWS MEMBERS TO PLACE FREE CLASSIFIED ADS IN THIS NEWSLETTER PERTAINING TO GOOD STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES. HOWEVER, ADS PRESENTED HERE ARE NOT AN ENDORSEMENT BY WFL.

## Join and/or Give

NYFOA is a not-for-profit group promoting stewardship of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations. Through local chapters and statewide activities, NYFOA helps woodland owners to become responsible stewards and helps the interested public to appreciate the importance of New York's forests. Join NYFOA today and begin to receive its many benefits including: six issues of *The New York Forest Owner*, woodswalks, chapter meetings, and statewide meetings.

**Note:** For Gift Memberships, list the recipient's information (must not have been a NYFOA member for 3 years) directly below.

- I/We own \_\_\_\_\_ acres of woodland.  
 I/We do not own woodland but support the Association's objectives.

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City: \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Optional:

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Gifto's (NYFOA member) name \_\_\_\_\_

### Multi-Year Dues:

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### Additional Contribution:

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 Subscription to Northern Woodlands \$15 (4 issues)

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Questions: 1-800-836-3566

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# The Western Finger Lakes Forest Owner



Winter 2015

Volume 29, Number 4



## The 1400 - 2500 Year-Old Ankerwycke Yew

Read the remarkable historical events this tree has witnessed, inside.

## Mark Your Calendar

- January 12: General Meeting\*
- January 13: WFL Board of Directors  
American Hotel, Lima 7 PM
- July 9: Woodswalk at David and Colette  
Morabito's property in Belfast, NY.\*\*

\* See inside for details.

\*\* Details in our Spring Newsletter

**Note:** For event reminders and late-breaking news, subscribe to our email list by sending a blank email to-  
[nyfoa-wfl-news-subscribe@npogroups.org](mailto:nyfoa-wfl-news-subscribe@npogroups.org)