The New York Forest Owner

A Publication of The New York Forest Owners Association

Promoting woodland stewardship since 1963

November/December 2024

Homegrown Round Timbers

Volume 62 Number 6

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

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Forest Owner
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Volume 62, Number 6

Jeff Joseph, Managing Editor
Mary Beth Malmsheimer, Editor

The New York Forest Owner is a bi-monthly publication of The New York Forest Owners Association, PO Box 644, Naples, NY 14512. Materials submitted for publication should be sent to: ***Mary Beth Malmsheimer****, Editor, The New York Forest Owner, 134 Lincklaen Street, Cazenovia, New York 13035; Materials may also be e-mailed to mmalmshe@syr.edu; direct all questions and/or comments to jefffjosephwoodworker@gmail.com. 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, 2024.***

Please address all membership fees and change of address requests to PO Box 644, Naples, NY 14512 or ckenney@nyfoa.org. (607) 365-2214. Cost of family membership/subscription is $55.

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Cover: Who needs a sawmill? In addition to structural support, round timbers can add beauty and character to your home and outbuildings. See article on page 4.

From The President

Any organization needs to look periodically at where it has been and where it wants to go in the future. As part of that process, your NYFOA Board of Directors is considering a number of issues, and I will report on some of them in this column so you can keep up to date on what's going on.

One of the neat things about electronic forms of communication is how inexpensive it is to provide information to target audiences. The paper copy of this magazine, which has six issues each year, costs NYFOA $3.68 per issue for a total of $22.08 per member per year. To send an electronic copy to a member costs us almost nothing. The board is considering providing an electronic copy of each issue of the *Forest Owner* to all NYFOA members that have given NYFOA their email address. This would provide a convenient way for our current members to share information about NYFOA with potential members that would like to learn more about us.

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the Forest Owner and have not yet provided NYFOA with an email address, please contact Claire Kenney, NYFOA's office administrator, at c*kenney@nyfoa.org*. To be clear, we will continue to produce and send the print edition of the magazine to all active members who wish to receive it.

The NYFOA board is also considering providing electronic copies of the *Forest Owner* to selected non-member audiences that may benefit from learning more about us. Examples of a targeted audience might be: DEC regional foresters, manufacturers of bandsaw mills in NY, local sawmills, Cornell Cooperative Extension offices that have programs in woodland management, and consulting foresters. This is not a comprehensive list, so the board could use member assistance in determining other groups to target with this initiative. We are thinking of groups that are involved with some aspect of woodland management and have some form of interaction with woodlot owners in New York.

Another thing that we are considering developing is a list of NYFOA members who have knowledge about specialized subjects within the sphere of our mission and would be willing to share that knowledge with someone who would take the time to visit with them. An example of this would be someone who would like to consider buying a small bandsaw mill but has no idea of what is involved. I have visited folks who have told me that they would someday like to have a bandsaw mill. I have invited them to spend an afternoon with me at our place, where I demonstrate operating my mill and then let them saw a log under my careful direction. I am not too sure that their spouses were very happy with me after they left our place more determined than ever to buy a mill!

The chance to talk with someone who has done something that you would like to try in the future, and who would be willing to share information and experience with you about that subject

continued on page 11

The mission of the New York Forest Owners Association (NYFOA) is to promote sustainable forestry practices and improved stewardship on privately owned woodlands in New York State. NYFOA is a not-for-profit group of people who care about NYS's trees and forests and are interested in the thoughtful management of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

Join!

NYFOA is a not-for-profit group promoting stewardship of private forests for the benefit of current and future generations. Through local chapters and statewide activities, NYFOA helps woodland owners to become responsible stewards and helps the interested public to appreciate the importance of New York's forests.

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Homegrown Round Timbers

By Jeff Joseph

It had long been in the back of my mind to build a small guest cottage on our property. As it would be a simple square structure, I wanted to find a way to give the interior a little more character. As I was mulling this over one morning when out felling cull trees for firewood, I came upon a pole-sized black birch that grew—as they often do—with a pronounced sweep in its stem. Suddenly I had my solution: a naturally curved birch beam, peeled, but left round instead of milled square, providing needed structural support for the shallow cathedral ceiling of the cottage as well as adding the visual interest of a non-linear element to the design.

Putting firewood duty on hold temporarily, I carefully felled the stem, dropping it where it would be least likely to suffer any damage, cut it a couple of feet longer than what would be needed, and hauled it (Figure 2) down to my barn (see the Nov/Dec 2022 issue of this magazine, pp.12-13, for a review of the small log arch depicted here).

When cutting it to rough length I made deliberate effort in choosing the cut locations to place the maximum height of the curve in the center of the overall length, so when in position the beam arch would have at least a rough sense of symmetry. I painted the ends with Anchorseal to slow the drying a bit to minimize end checking, and left it (off the ground and protected from the elements) to dry, and hopefully to lose some weight, as black birch is one of our denser hardwoods.

Figure 1. The completed guest cottage, which used locally grown white oak, larch, white pine, black cherry, and black birch in its construction.

Figure 2. Dragging out the black birch pole with ATV and small log arch.

If it had been springtime, or early summer, I would have immediately peeled the bark, as during that period of time the bark of most trees will 'slip,' or release quite easily at the junction where the cambium meets the outer perimeter of the sapwood, but as this all took place in October, I left it as is, deciding to wrestle with the bark at a later point.

Ideally I would have left this green timber to dry for a couple of years at least, allowing for most of the shrinkage to take place in advance of putting it into position, but Covid set in, and I suddenly found myself with an unusual amount of time on my hands, so the following spring I got to work on the project.

After building the frame of the cottage, including some 'pockets' built into the tops of the stud walls to accept the beam ends, I took careful measurement of the exact length I would need, and prepared to make the cuts. But first I would have to get the bark off, which was now clinging quite tenaciously to the stem.

While there are many ways to debark a log— bark spud, belt sander, drawknife, chisel, etc—the goal in this case was to do it as efficiently as possible, while avoiding either damaging or changing the natural shape of the pole. The solution I came up with was to use a flap disc on an angle grinder, which was not as aggressive as an abrasive grinding wheel, but assertive enough to be relatively efficient without risking doing any major damage in the process (Figures 3, 4).

It was a VERY dusty job, although it offered the consolation of being exquisitely fragrant dust, strongly redolent of wintergreen. It also offered the added challenge of trying to keep a 14' long, round, curved, and heavy log in a stable position while working around the entire circumference of the log. Easy enough to do on a pair of stout sawhorses when the apex of the curve was facing down; not so easy when laid sideways, or in a convex position, as with gravity it had the tendency to want to roll so the curve faced back downward. With the help of some bar clamps and some scrap 4x4s with v-shaped notches cut into them to cradle the log (Figure 5), I was able to get through it without too much trouble. The flap discs left a coarse and somewhat uneven surface, so I followed up with a palm sander to remove sanding marks, and to restore the radius in areas that were slightly flattened by the grinder.

In order to cut the ends accurately, both to maximize their bearing surface on the framed pockets on either end, and to make it easier to place and properly align the beam in the desired orientation, I set the beam up temporarily exactly how I wanted it to sit when in the structure, then used a level to make a plumb line along the side of one end to guide the first cut, which I made with a handsaw to ensure its accuracy. As I had deliberately cut the log significantly longer than needed I was able to cut off most of the checking that resulted from rapid drying on each end, leaving fully sound wood at the bearing points.

Once I was satisfied that this first cut was plumb and perpendicular to the long dimension of the beam, I hooked my tape measure on the cut end, pulled it taut, and marked the other end along its edge at the exact dimension I needed and repeated the process. In order for the beam to sit in its proper orientation without rolling during the installation, making it a little less treacherous for my wife and I who would be doing the lifting, I turned it upside down and cut a

continued on page 22

Recent Activity of the External Affairs Committee

By Hugh Canham

NYFOA's External Affairs Committee strives to stay informed on state and federal activity of interest and concern to private forest owners in New York and to provide input to public agencies when requested. NYFOA is organized as a private, non-profit 501c3 organization under New York State law. We do not actively "lobby" legislators but provide information and opinions on pending actions. In this article I will briefly summarize the committee's activity this year. We are also moving to alert NYFOA members of upcoming legislative and other government agencies activities electronically through the new improved website and emails.

30x30 Plan Draft

Governor Kathy Hochul, in December 2022, signed legislation setting forth New York State's obligation to conserve 30 percent of New York's land and waters. A Draft Strategies and Methodology document has been prepared by the Department of Environmental Conservation asking for public input. We stressed the need to have all the lands and waterways of the state managed in a continual sustainable manner, regardless of ownership or location. The private forests and woods across New York contribute much to the environment and economy of the state and a part should be included in the 30% goal since a significant number of privately owned woodlots are being sustainably managed, even without state law.

Another point in the draft 30x30 Plan is to acquire ownership or easements on private lands in selected areas. We recommended term easements, not permanent ones, over fee simple purchase. Situations change and easements allow the private owner to pursue many of the diverse interests they have in owning their land and provide necessary biodiversity, especially in parts of the state where extensive old-growth climax type forests predominate. We also recommended revision of the Forest Tax Law (sec.480a).

Forested wetlands contain environmental and economic values if managed carefully.

Another example of forested wetlands.

Bond Act Funds and Open Space Conservation Acquisition

One of New York's Open Space Conservation Goals addresses the importance of "maintaining critical natural resource-based industries such as farming, forest products, fishing, and tourism." The 2022 Bond Act supports this through acquisition of ownership or easements on important land areas. Other comments addressed the desire for easements over purchase and that existing forest easement programs of the Department of Environmental Conservation and Department of Agriculture and Markets be modified as needed to fit any new easements under the current Bond Act funds. Consideration should be given both to easements in perpetuity and term easements (20 to 40 years etc.). Either option might be the best use of various forested lands across the state and should be negotiated with owners.

Easements should require that the land remain in forest cover

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and support forest-related values such as timber harvesting and other silvicultural practices including clear-cutting when done in conjunction with a management program to reforest, outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, hunting, maple syrup production, watershed protection, agroforestry, and climate mitigation including enrollment in carbon offset markets.

Wetlands Regulations

The wetlands of our state are a valuable asset and are in need of special protection. NYFOA supports carefully determined and sustainable care and use of wetlands, especially those that support forest growth. We commented on proposed changes to "Wetlands of Unusual Importance" in February of this year, and more recently on other proposed regulation changes to wetlands. At present there is a silvicultural exemption that allows many forest management activities to be done on classified wetlands, either with or without a permit, depending on the circumstances.

Essential to any further revision of current wetlands regulations is the continued inclusion of the silviculture exemption as currently provided, with some further clarification. Such language should be part of a guidance document for implementing wetlands regulations. Clearcutting for conversion of forests to other nonforest uses would not be considered silviculture, but, removal of a major part of the overstory of trees in conjunction with a regeneration plan with sufficient young tree growth would be included under the current definition of the silviculture exemption.

Vernal pools are another concern since their existence varies depending on the season. Proposed changes to the extent of the Adjacent Areas (a buffer zone around different categories of wetlands) is also commented on in our response.

Rural Forest Markets Act and 2024 Farm Bill

The federal Farm Bill contains several provisions of interest to New York family forest owners. The current bill before the US Congress is the Rural Forest Markets Act. The bill would underwrite grants and loans made to family forest owners for forest management activities undertaken to improve forest productivity for carbon sequestration and other purposes. This bill was introduced last year but died in committee. This year a group of organizations around the country are advocating for inclusion in the new Farm Bill.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture already issues guarantees for loans and bonds for many traditional agriculture markets and this Act would enable the USDA to extend the same kind of program to small forest owners without creating a new agency. In addition, this program, aimed at family forest owners would simplify the application process and make it easier for owners to secure carbon credits for implementing sustainable management practices. Many forest owners take great pride in the management of their lands but lack the financial resources to carry out woodland improvement practices. At the same time these owners face increasing pressure from developers and others to convert their forests to other land uses.

CLCPA Cap and Invest funds

The New York Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), enacted in 2019, includes a cap and invest program (NYCI). This is a market-based approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by putting a price on carbon pollution, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Firms who produce greenhouse gases would pay to obtain a permit for a specified time and amount of emissions. In turn, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) would invest the collected funds in activities that encourage innovation, support renewable energy, generate revenue, and improve air quality. They have requested input on specific areas for investment.

We (NYFOA) strongly recommended utilizing some of the Cap and Invest funds that will be collected under the NYCI program to improve the forests and woodlands across New York. Forests are mentioned in the draft proposals but only with reference to reforestation. A greater opportunity to increase carbon sequestration is by increasing the productivity and sustainability of existing forests. We describe four areas of increased activity that will substantially increase the carbon storage of the woods and forests of New York: education of landowners, cost-sharing of improvement practices, assistance in management plan preparation, and selective tree planting.

Other Activities

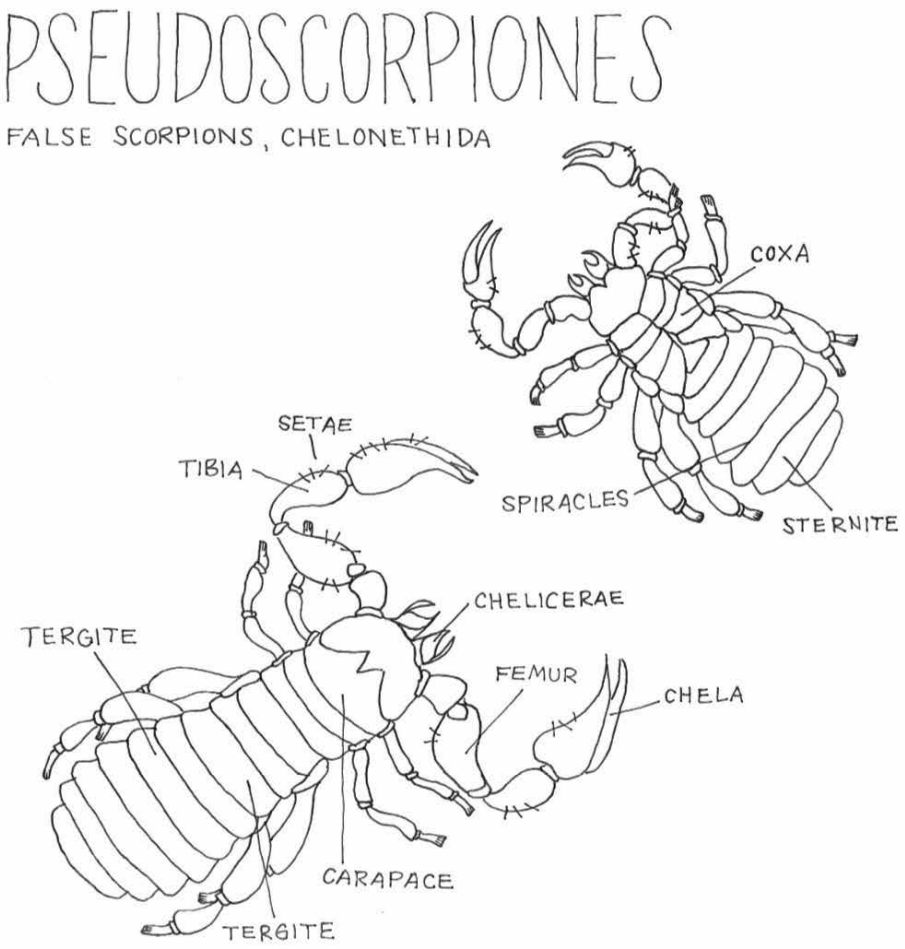
NYFOA often receives other requests for input on policies and positions and for information about our organization. One example was an invitation last winter to provide input on a policy statement by the Adirondack Landowners Association. We maintain very close contact with the Empire State Forest Products Association. They follow state legislature developments. We participate with them in the annual Forestry Awareness Day held in Albany, an opportunity for our members to meet state legislators in person to discuss the vital role that privately owned family forests play in the environmental and economic well-being of our Empire State.

Hugh Canham is a member of the NYFOA board of directors.

Wild Things in Your Woodlands

By Grace Elmore

Pseudoscorpions (*False Scorpions, Chelonethida*)



You may need your microscope to get a good look at this month's woodland creature feature, but despite their smaller-than-what-meets-the-eye nature, false scorpions are mighty and mesmerizing nonetheless.

As their name suggests, pseudoscorpions are a miniature visual mimic of their more feared relative, the scorpion, minus the ever-iconic curved tail and stinger. Also related to ticks and spiders, pseudoscorpions are tiny arachnids (rarely exceeding 1/8th of an inch) with four pairs of legs and one pair of pincers (pedipalps), without which they would be nearly impossible to differentiate from common mites. Their pincers, which are double the length of the their legs, are located nearest to the "head" of the creature's teardrop-shaped body. They also host two eyes, one on each side of their head/thorax.

There are around 2,500 species of pseudoscorpions in the world, approximately 300 of which can be found in North America. Of these, some prefer to take refuge indoors tucked between the pages of books (often referred to as "book scorpions") or hidden in bathroom sinks; their small size typically renders them indistinguishable from other tiny household creatures. Most, however, prefer to be outside where they nestle between leaf litter, soil, and woody material.

Adult pseudoscorpions can live for three to four years and are known to put on quite the mating ritual: When a male is ready to mate, he creates a "dance floor" about 1/8th of an inch in diameter on which to begin his rapid, vibrational display of dance, highlighting his pincers. The male will deposit a sac of sperm onto his disco deck and then use his pincers to drag his female counterpart across that sac, fertilizing the collection of eggs being carried beneath her abdomen. Once miniature pseudoscorpions emerge from beneath their mother, the group (minus dad) will stay together briefly until the young venture off on their own. This process, from the mating dance to the departure of offspring, takes about three weeks. Once they've left their mother, young pseudoscorpions molt three times before they are considered full adults, ready to reproduce.

Unlike their larger, visual twin, pseudoscorpions pose no threat to humans or pets; They cannot bite or sting, and their poison glands — used to debilitate prey — are not harmful to us. Instead, pseudoscorpions use the glands in their pincers to inject poison saliva into their prey, which liquefies the victim's insides leaving them ready for the pseudoscorpion to feast. False scorpions typically feed on

continued on next page

even smaller arthropods like lice, mites, larvae, and collembola. Since their vision is less than ideal for hunting down prey, many pseudoscorpions opt instead to hide and ambush, while others rely on small sensory hairs on their pincers to alert them when a victim has ventured too close.

It is the combination of a pseudoscorpion's predatory nature amongst other forest ground micro-dwellers and their harmlessness to humans, pets, and infrastructure that makes them particularly beneficial. If you are lucky enough to spot one with your naked eye, it is best to leave it be. And if one sneaks into a crevice at home, you should simply slide a piece of paper under the creature and release it outside. (Insecticides generally pose a greater risk to a household than these tiny creatures, so removing them peacefully by hand is the most ideal solution).

Finally, to improve the chances of your woodlot becoming a pseudoscorpion sanctuary, less is more. The critters prefer a home amongst forest litter, so allowing fallen trees, limbs, needles, and leaves to collect naturally is truly all that is necessary for your forest floor to attract false scorpions. The more biodiverse your forest floor, the more biodiverse the community of creatures living there will become – then it's time to get out your magnifying glass!

Grace Elmore is a research and Extension intern in the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment at Cornell University.More information on managing habitat for wildlife, and the NY Master Naturalist Volunteer Program, can be found at https://blogs.cornell.edu/nymasternaturalist/

Would you like to see an article about a particular topic we haven't covered?

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

From the President (continued)

is invaluable. Before I built our pond, woodshop, and sawmill building, I was very fortunate to be able to talk to NYFOA members who had experience with each of those three areas. You get to learn not only what worked really well for them, but perhaps just as important what did not work out for them. You also get a chance to learn some amazing solutions to potential problems.

I visited a NYFOA member who had constructed a small woodshop, about the size of a single car garage. It is very common to locate your table saw in the center of your shop, to allow the maximum length for ripping a board. His recommendation was to make sure I located two windows in the shop at the same height as the table saw, on opposite sides of the building. That way I could start sawing long boards in one window and out the other side of the building. A clever solution for how to maximize the utility of a small space.

On another front, the board is considering revising how we allocate our budget resources. We are considering dividing our resources into two pools, restricted and unrestricted. We are loosely basing this on how colleges treat endowed scholarships. In an endowed scholarship at a college, a donor provides a pool of money to start the scholarship. The money is invested and earns interest every year. The college takes a large part of the earnings every year and uses these earnings to provide student scholarships. The smaller part of the earning that is not used as a student scholarship is reinvested every year to help the scholarship fund keep up with inflation. These types of funding arrangements are very appealing to folks who would like to see their resources supporting a cause that they believe in for many years after they are gone. It is an important part of estate and legacy planning.

The types of funding that could be considered as restricted are such things as our current balance of funds in the bank, lifetime dues, and any gift designated to the restricted fund. It could be possible that folks could allocate a gift to NYFOA from their estate and be confident that their gift would be supporting NYFOA for many years. This is a very attractive option for many that would like to ensure that NYFOA continues to educate and serve woodland owners for years to come.

The unrestricted funding consists of such things as the annual dues, biannual gifts, advertising sales from the *Forest Owner,* and merchandise sales. This source of funding can be used as determined by the treasurer. Currently, the main items that NYFOA spends money on are the executive director position, the NYFOA office administrator, and producing and staffing the magazine.

Another current task for the board is to look at NYFOA's bylaws and revise them where necessary. It has been almost 10 years since the bylaws were reviewed, and it's time to do it again. The board will review them paragraph by paragraph and update them as needed. We will keep you informed about any significant changes.

If you have any suggestions that you feel the board should consider, please email me to let me know your thoughts. Enjoy the holiday season, and start thinking about what you would like to accomplish in your woods in 2025.

–Ed Neuhauser
NYFOA President

Forest Carbon Markets for the Family Forest Owner

By Hugh Canham

Trees, like other vegetation, take in carbon dioxide from the air, produce sugars and other nutrients and woody substances needed for their growth, and give off oxygen. In New York, forests are the biggest way to efficiently sequester carbon. At the same time, companies that emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere are willing to pay for the ability to emit carbon. An intermediary organization, similar to a stock broker, organizes the buying and selling and receives a commission. They sell carbon credits to firms and pay the forest owner to grow trees and sequester carbon.

In America, we have a long history of inducing people to follow certain behaviors: to do certain things, or refrain from doing things. Some of this occurs within the private market system. Dairymen's League Cooperative agreed to purchase all the milk our farm produced but in turn we agreed to keep the barns and milking area in a sanitary condition and permit periodic inspection of the cattle and facilities. In other cases, the payment comes through a unit of government. Farmers might be paid to put lime on the soil to boost crop production and increase food supply, or to install contour strip cropping. In exchange the farmer might have to agree to follow certain crop rotation practices.

In the forest carbon market, the intermediary, or broker, (private company, nonprofit organization, public agency) enters a long-term contract with a forest landowner, often for 20 years. The landowner agrees to follow a certain set of practices. These might include normal boundary maintenance and stream crossing protection etc. but usually will also specify the timing and extent of any timber harvesting. Typically, the contract also calls for some forest stand improvement such as thinning, crop tree release, possible light harvest under certain conditions (individual tree selection, shelterwood), protection from excessive deer browsing, etc. Several organizations do permit the landowner to harvest a certain amount of timber, snags etc. for home heating or local construction. Integral to the contract

This is a typical pole timber stand actively sequestering carbon that would benefit from a selective thinning favoring well developed crop trees.

is a detailed forest management plan prepared either by the organization or another qualified professional forester. The plan includes an inventory of the forest land being considered and various planned treatments over the life of the contract. Upon approval by all parties the landowner receives payments. In some cases, these are annual amounts; in others they are periodic payments over the succeeding years depending on the life of the contract.

I did a financial analysis of various forest stand conditions, stocking levels and site conditions typically found in New York family forests, both with and without the constraints of a typical carbon market contract. For those readers who desire the details, send me an email and I will send you the Word file and Excel spreadsheet. (hughforest@outlook.com). For those who don't want to wade through spreadsheets the following is a summary of my conclusions.

Although various scenarios show a positive return over a 20 year contract life, restrictions imposed by joining the program such as when and how much you can harvest, required improvement work, etc. lead to the conclusion that if the current condition of the forest stand is very lightly stocked with poletimber or sawtimber size trees and the normal recommendation would usually be to let it grow more before harvesting, then, barring any other constraints, signing up for the program is financially feasible. For more mature stands, with a moderate stocking of sawtimber, the owner might get a higher return by following a normal sustainable forest management plan without the encumbrances imposed by a carbon market program. For young stands or recently planted areas the program might be more profitable. However, seedling survival and other uncertainties that can occur must be factored in by both the landowner and the contracting organization.

The financial returns are only one factor. What is often more important to many family forest owners are other considerations. These can happen when signing up for any program that involves the use, or non-use, of your land.

When you enter into a contract involving your land, you give up certain rights. In the carbon markets, you give up the right to harvest timber when, where, and how you want at any given time. You have also given up the right, or ability, to clearcut your forest and convert it to building lots or some commercial non-forest use. If you do not follow the terms of the contract, you may be required to pay back any payments with a penalty. Future owners are also bound by the terms of the contract, lowering the market value of your land or altering plans your heirs might have.

Markets for timber change over time. The long-term trend for many species growing in New York is upward but short-term prices can vary considerably within a few years. Your contract might restrict when and how much you can harvest and ignore fluctuations in timber stumpage markets. One nice aspect of timber as an investment is that the wood can be stored on the stump for several years, barring any terrible catastrophe, just as a mutual stock fund can be held pending an expected change in stock prices.

Personal finances and needs cannot be precisely forecast over the next 20 years. What about financing a new roof on your house, or paying for a new furnace and more efficient heating system? These needs often arise unexpectedly. Many landowners can turn to their forest holdings for a harvest at that time. This is similar to holding a mutual fund or saving account that might not be earning a terrific return, but you know it is there for unplanned expenses. The forest is also a possible source for planned expenses such as college tuition payments for your children or that 25th wedding anniversary trip to Europe for the two of you.

Some carbon contracts pay a large amount near the end of the 20-year contract with very minimal annual or periodic payments. What happens if the organization goes bankrupt, or otherwise out of business? The landowner may have some recourse through the courts but that is also uncertain.

A final concern is whether by paying you to grow trees, a firm somewhere in the world is allowed to pollute. Typically, the organization entering into the contract with the landowner will collect money from a firm that finds it difficult to reduce carbon emissions immediately and requires some relief from any legislation and will buy the carbon credits. Many public agency programs will only allow firms that have definite plans for carbon reduction to enter the market. Others might have a decreasing amount of carbon credits that can be sold over time, thus forcing compliance with regulations.

Despite the potential drawbacks, the financial return of entering the carbon market can be substantial and so can help pay taxes, fund other practices that improve the ability of the forest to sequester carbon, and/or provide some cash flow over the time between timber harvests.

If you are considering entering the carbon market, numerous questions and issues should be discussed. A first step is to contact a lawyer who is familiar with land and property law and leasing of various rights and easements. Whether working through a lawyer or directly with a prospective organization, these are some critical questions to ask: What is the length of the contract? Are there any provisions for emergencies or changes in ownership situations? What is the effect of a natural disaster on the contract, such as tornado, fire, insect or disease loss? What is the schedule of payments and how much is each one? Who pays for the preparation of the management plan? What active practices are going to be required and what alternative ways might the landowner receive other payments or cost-sharing for those practices? What happens if the contracting organization goes out of business? What rights might any third party or member of the organization gain in your land such as the right to enter and inspect your property? What kinds of companies can buy these credits? Where are they located? Will sequestering carbon in New York State lead to an increase in greenhouse gases somewhere else in the world?

Hugh Canham is a member of the NYFOA board of directors.

From The Executive Director

From very early on, my wife and I tried to impart to our children that the most important decision they will make is who they marry. That relationship dictates where you live, how you live, how you spend, how you save, how you raise your children, etc., and you also "marry" their family. We explained that if that person does not largely share your beliefs in these areas, your relationship will be strained at best and end in disaster at worst.

As a private woodlot owner, the relationship you have with your forester is very much like a marriage. You both have to be on the same page. It means you must have clear communication with each other; that you have clear objectives for the future; that your needs can be met; that you can trust and guide each other. Doesn't that all sound a lot like a marriage? Who you select to be your forester could very well be one of the most important decisions you make for your woods.

For those of you who are veteran members of NYFOA and longtime woodlot owners, hopefully this is not new to you, but for those of you who are new landowners and new members, you may find this perspective and the guidance that follows helpful. And whether you are a new member or a veteran, we care about your woods and want to help you be the best steward of your property that you can be. So, whether you choose to work with a consulting forester, an industrial forester, a government forester, or a non-governmental organization forester there are things you should do and consider when it is time for you to make that decision.

- Objectives - before you even engage with a forester, set some basic management goals and objectives for your property and woods. If you're not sure where to start don't be overwhelmed trying to be too specific or complex. Start by simply identifying your personal values—what you enjoy about your property, what you like and don't like, what you're scared of. That should be enough to get a conversation started with a forester. Your first assessment of them will be to listen to what they have to say about your property and its possibilities, and determine if they have shown an understanding and sensitivity to what you enjoy about it and what your values are. From there you can work together to more fully define specific goals and objectives.
- Education – the practice of forestry is both art and science. The art is built on a foundation of experience and the science is built on a foundation of study (and ongoing study). I may be biased, but as an educated professional forester, I am a proponent of foresters having a proper education from a good forestry college – ideally from an accredited program. However, there are a rare few who through self-study, mentorship, and years of experience can become a competent practitioner and obtain the knowledge without going to college, or without having a specific degree; it just might take longer to get there. I know a few dedicated people like that. While a formal forestry education does offer the best assurance of knowledge and competence, you will ultimately have to judge their ability on the merits of their background and the services you are seeking. Ask questions about where they went to school, what degrees they have, what they studied, and who their mentors are.
- Experience – this should be a crucial factor in your decision. A recent graduate may have knowledge, but without mentored experience to put it into practice, knowledge alone is not enough. Make sure the forester has good relevant experience, or if working for another, is supervised by someone with it. Ask questions about how long they have been working, how long they have been in business, who they have worked for, and in what capacity, and with what responsibilities.
- Credentials – in my opinion it is important that a forester have professional memberships with organizations like the Society of American Foresters, the NY Institute of Consulting Foresters, The Association of Consulting Foresters, etc. These memberships demonstrates that they are actively engaged in the profession, are staying current on the issues, are

networked, and adhere to a code of ethics. Do they also have affiliate memberships with organizations like NYFOA, ESFPA, or Audubon, for example? Likewise, having certifications as a Certified Forester, a NYS DEC Cooperating Forester, an NRCS Technical Service Provider, a licensed pesticide applicator, a Tree Farm Inspector, or have endorsed training like that provided by the Audubon Society, or others, is an assurance that they have current education and follow standards of professional practice. Ask questions about the organizations they belong to, if they have additional certifications, and what kind of continuing education or training they have had.

- Client References – don't be afraid to ask for them. They'll be good ones, but it still gives you a chance to learn about their experience with that forester. Ask questions to learn what they liked and disliked about the service they were provided.
- Services – you need to understand your woodlot's needs as much as possible, so you can assess the forester's services; this may evolve through the "interview" process. At a minimum start by asking yourself questions that you will eventually ask the forester – Do I have a good forest resource? What is its potential/ trajectory? What are the challenges? Do I have any good/important wildlife habitat? How can it meet my recreational interests? Are there market limitations and can I overcome them? Some foresters offer a sophisticated suite of services; others offer a narrow range or only market timber. Ask yourself if you need a wide range of services to meet your management goals or not, and determine if the forester can meet your needs.

It is possible that you may be comfortable with the first forester you meet and need not look any further (love at first sight?), but the reality is that you may need to interview more than one before deciding (speed dating?). I have always said that if you put three foresters in the woods together, you will get four opinions. Don't be alarmed by this if it happens. They are bringing different experiences to the table. Barring incompetence, it doesn't necessarily mean that any one is wrong; they just might see a different pathway to help you achieve your goals. Just consider which one seems to have the best grasp of your needs, has the most competency, and that you feel a good connection with. Service fees may be an important consideration too, but my advice is to only let that be a tie breaker. After all, you get what you pay for, and your first priority should be to focus on those items outlined above. If you prefer a particular forester who might charge more than the others, they're probably worth it.

Hopefully, this bit of wisdom is one more way that NYFOA can help put you on the path to being an active steward of your woods and fulfill its mission through you.

Until next time...go to the woods – take it all in and love it until you can't.

–Craig Vollmer
NYFOA Executive Director

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

Red Means Stop (Pruning)

By Paul Hetzler

Back when I was a baby arborist, I worked for an old-timer who told me that "The best time to prune trees is when the tools are sharp." He also used to say "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," even though he was beset with shoulder injuries, knee problems, and back pain. While he taught me a lot of useful things, I later learned that both of these old sayings are dangerous lies.

Although tree-care companies have year-round expenses and need income in all seasons, a truly professional arborist knows there are certain times of the year when pruning should be avoided. Late spring between bud-break and full leaf-out is a key period of pruning abstinence.

The other no-pruning interval is from the time leaves start to change color in the fall until trees are entirely bare. There are some good reasons to put away pruning tools at this time of year.

The Claw-Back Clause:

As days get shorter, deciduous trees and shrubs start to make a waxy layer between each leaf petiole base and the twig to which they're attached. The wax is called suberin, which I mention because it's also a popular make of vehicle that is the state car of Vermont. That's what I read on the Internet, anyway.

Figure 1. Perennial canker. Pat Sullivan, Ottawa, ON.

Figure 2. Damage caused by Pitch Mass Borer, Synanthedon pini. Eric R. Day, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bugwood.org

Suberin will eventually plug the vessels that moved water and nutrients into, and sugars out of, leaves all summer. This blockage protects twigs from losing water over the winter. It also leads to the breakdown of green chlorophyll molecules, thus revealing the yellow and orange pigments already present in leaves.

Before the vascular tubes are entirely blocked, though, trees "claw back" about half the nutrients from each leaf: nitrogen, potassium, iron, magnesium, manganese, and other essential elements. This recovery is quite important to the nutrient budget of woody plants.

Trees also move sugar, the product of a season's worth of photosynthesis, out of the leaves. Much of the sugar clawed back from autumn leaves before they drop is transported down to the roots, lower trunk, and branches, where it is stored as starch. In springtime, starch is turned back to sugar and distributed to developing buds and leaves. Pruning branches now will deprive trees of both nutrients and energy needed for the following year.

The Illness Angle:

All woody plants have internal defense systems that make special antifungal and antimicrobial compounds to fight infections at the site of injuries like pruning cuts. Readers may be familiar with the work of the renowned biologist and plant pathologist Dr. Alex Shigo, often called "the father of modern arboriculture." Shigo described trees' defensive processes as Compartmentalization of Decay in Trees, or CODIT. This "tree-mune response" becomes active in the early spring just before bud-break and is in full swing throughout the summer, after which it starts to shut down. By the time leaves are turning, the CODIT response is much attenuated.

Therefore, wounds made in the fall are at greater risk of being infected by fungal pathogens that cause persistent, or perennial, cankers. *Nectria* and *Eutypella* are the two primary genera of canker fungi, but there are more. And while spores from *Nectria* and other diseases are always present in the environment,

continued on next page

they are most prevalent in the fall. In addition, the long rainy spells typical of autumn further raise the odds of pruning-wound infections, given that canker spores are spread by rain splash.

A few infected trees manage to live to old age with their ever-expanding perennial cankers (Figure 1), but for most, infection means a shorter lifespan. Perennial cankers disrupt vascular flow, and they create weak spots in trunks that are often the point of breakage. They also greatly reduce a tree's commercial value.

The Best Times for Pruning:

Early spring prior to bud-break is the ideal time to prune. Not only is CODIT up and running, there is little chance that pruning sites will dry out too much, leading to bark cracks near the wound, as can happen with early winter pruning.

But the truly essential reason to stow the lopper and saw while leaves are expanding is that when trees are "busy" pushing out leaves, CODIT goes on a coffee break until full leaf-out. It's not that it turns off completely, but due to a hormonal shift in a tree that happens as leaves are forming, its defenses are weakened temporarily.

The Exceptions:

'I' before 'e' except after 'c' (except words like "height," "seize," etc.). Exceptions can complicate things.

Obviously, some pruning may need to be done right away to address safety concerns, regardless of the season. In such cases, my one-time mentor is right: the best time to prune is when the tools are sharp. But if the goal is to boost aesthetics, or get more light on the garden, or fewer leaves in the pool, or to lessen disease pressure in fruit trees, fall pruning should be off the table.

And then there's oak wilt. To help prevent the spread of this devastating disease, the NYSDEC is asking us not to prune between April 15 and July 15, when the risk of spreading oak wilt is extreme. Depending on the year and where you live, mid-April might still be ahead of bud-break. The NYSDEC even suggests that to be on the safe side, we wait until October 1st to prune oaks, a time that overlaps the period of color change. Since oak wilt is far worse than perennial cankers or lost nutrients, oak-wilt prevention should always take priority over ideal pruning windows.

Do Conifers Count?

Although pines and spruces only lose a small portion of their needles in the fall, the same principles hold true for them. Cutting evergreen branches in autumn will rob trees of a share of the nutrients and sugars they need. Another reason it's best to cut conifer branches in late winter is that during July and August, a moth called the pitch-mass borer sniffs out fresh wounds to lay her eggs in (Figure 2). Her babies become an issue the next spring as they tunnel under the bark to feed on sap. The grubs enlarge the wound diameter, and trigger excess pitch accumulation. If you've ever noticed unsightly, oozing pitch on the trunks of pines and spruces, it's a result of summer pruning that invited pitch-mass borers to set up housekeeping. The pitch-blobs they leave behind can persist for years, diminishing a tree's aesthetic appeal.

The Moral Imperative:

The last reason to stash the saw until trees are fully dormant is the danger of running into a self-righteous arborist who views fall pruning as a moral failure. They may give you the hairy eyeball, or worse yet, engage in "pruning shaming." I'm not saying that I've ever done that kind of thing...

Paul Hetzler has been an ISA-Certified Arborist since 1996. For shame-free consultations in the Ottawa-Gatineau region, call 613.255.4966.

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

Would you like to receive an electronic version of future editions of *The New York Forest Owner*? If so, please send Claire an email (info@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.

Book Review

BY JEFF JOSEPH

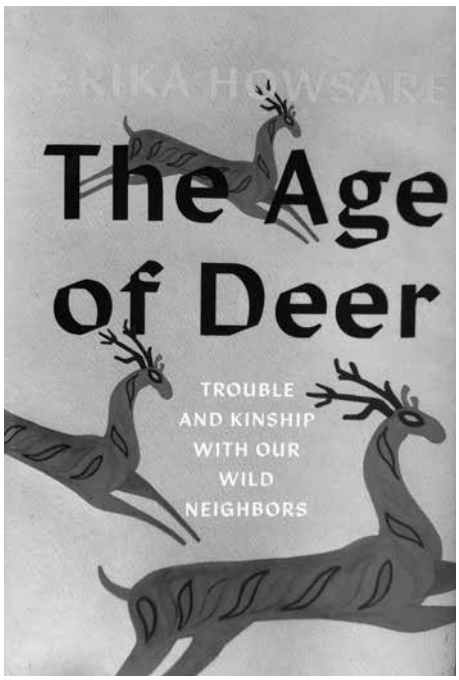
The Age of Deer: Trouble and Kinship with Our Wild Neighbors
by Erika Howsare
Catapult, 2024

During my time at the helm of the *Forest Owner*, I have made regular efforts to highlight the issue of deer overpopulation and its profound effects on woodlands throughout our state. The simple reason for this is that I, like so many like-minded NYFOA members, have committed to managing my small wooded piece of land not just for enjoyment and/or profit in the short-term, but with the future firmly in mind. For anyone with the goal of retaining the diversity and resilience of the timber in their woodlot, a long view of forest stewardship requires an honest assessment of the likelihood for the successful regeneration of the full array of tree species currently present, as well as of the likely impediments to those trees being able to produce viable offspring.

Presuming there are ample mast-producing trees to initiate regeneration, there are three factors that are critical in determining the success (or failure) of timber stands to regenerate: 1) the provision of adequate light to the forest floor for seedling survival and growth, through targeted thinning in areas with promising seed trees; 2) the control of the inevitable proliferation of invasive and interfering plants that will compete for all this newly available sunlight reaching the forest floor; and BY FAR THE MOST CHALLENGING, 3) finding some economically feasible and effective means of limiting deer predation until desirable seedlings are able to successfully grow above and beyond the browse line (roughly 6' high).

As the future of all of our woodlots hinges on this one issue, which will largely determine the legacy we leave for future generations of woodland owners, it is our collective responsibility, as well as a key component of NYFOA's mission, to make all the efforts we can to raise awareness about deer overpopulation and its effects, and to engage in stewardship practices that will give our trees at least a fighting chance to reproduce. Regrettably, our woodlots have all become laboratories in an experiment to see what happens when we as a society allow (and even encourage) a large herbivore to become wildly overpopulated in a landscape that we are attempting to share with them.

With these thoughts in mind, and given its title, I was eager to read and review this newly released book by Erika Howsare, who is a poet and non-fiction author, as well as a homesteader in rural Virginia.



While I understand, respect, and to a large degree share the 'Kinship' part, it was really the 'Trouble' that piqued my interest, as the crisis of deer overpopulation in the U.S. is woefully underreported in American mainstream media, and is often misrepresented or downplayed when it does receive coverage.

The Age of Deer is an ambitious effort by Howsare to provide a holistic overview of the history and current state of the deer-human relationship. In addition to having engaged in extensive historical research, Howsare devoted significant time and effort to immerse herself in experiences giving her an intimate, first-hand perspective of the varied ways that Americans interact with (and at times obsess about) deer.

Starting with the prominent place of deer in world mythology, literature, and ritual, succeeding chapters move through a range of topics, from the historical utility of deer as sources of meat, hides, antlers, bone, and sinew, to a brief overview of U.S. ecological history and game management, including the near extirpation of deer from many areas of the country, to their restocking and resurgence to their current numbers. With regard to restocking, and the deliberate human role in creating the subsequent population explosion, I found this quote to be notable for its pithy encapsulation: *"In that it enabled the spectacular recovery of a key native mammal, the restocking movement can hardly be condemned. But its hubris, in hindsight, is very clear. Here we were, a hundred or so years ago, on a gravely injured continent. It had been stripped of trees, emptied of predators and many other large mammals and key native birds, subject to a wave of non-native plant species, tree parasites, and diseases. It was entering an age of intensified farming and ranching, soil erosion, drought, and flood; its surface was quickly being laced with a dense network of roads, highways, houses, and commerce; its wildlands were prevented from burning naturally, its waters dammed and diverted, its atmosphere filled with novel compounds and particulates. Ecologically the boat had been rocking hard for three hundred years, and that rocking was about to get even more violent. And onto this chaotic stage, Americans generously applied seed populations of a large mammal—one that needs to eat nearly a ton of vegetation annually to survive, can reproduce fast enough to double its population every two years, and now had, in many regions, no predators to eat it. Which brings us to today."*

In the "Capacity" chapter, which addresses regeneration failure, Howsare makes a critical distinction between the

continued on next page

biological and cultural carrying capacities of deer, which goes a long way toward explaining how we got to our current moment, wildly overshooting biological limits and only now pushing at the boundary of the human tolerance level for all the negative consequences.

In the "Management" chapter, she interviews Cornell's Bernd Blossey, who, in laying out the dire scope and scale of the crisis, advocates for a repeal of the Lacey Act to allow for a revival of market hunting as an economic incentive for the widespread culling of the deer herd. There were a few other sections that lost my interest, such as when she attended trade shows or interviewed a wildlife rehabilitator—these seemed to be aimed at being comprehensive, but felt comparatively irrelevant. Toward the conclusion of the book, in her quest to better understand hunting culture and the prospect of taking life in a (literally) visceral way, Howsare spent time in a tree stand with her brother, and witnessed him harvesting and gutting a deer, which for her (like all of us who experience this for the first time) was a profoundly moving and ambivalent moment.

In sum, as stated in her introduction, this issue is far too large—and contentious—for any one book to encapsulate fully, and is ultimately about 'us,' at least as much as it about 'them': *"To look at our modern relationship with deer, as I found, is to step into some of the discomforts—political and social—of how people live with each other. And it means asking the biggest question of all: How will we live on this planet."*

If you, or anyone you know, are conflicted about your relationship with deer, Howsare's book, while not providing any easy answers, will certainly stimulate some thought, and some difficult questions about how we might (or sadly, might not) address this issue.

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
Ingeborg Boudreau	CDC
Jeff Brown	WFL
Cat Conley	SFL
Susan Fassell	WFL
Keith and Jesse Hartloff	NFC
Constance Kustas	LHC
Randy Lacey	SFL
Jeffrey and Patricia Larzelere	WFL
Carl Lindberg	SAC
Scott McManus	SAC
Allyson and Norris Muth	SOT
Ryan Robinson	SAC
Nicholas Russell	CDC
Steve Shular	WFL
Gabriel Smith	SFL
Mark Sullivan	SAC

Figures 3, 4. Using a flap disc on an angle grinder is an effective way to remove bark while doing minimal damage to the wood beneath.

flat on either end at 90 degrees from the end cut, and at a length just under the wall depth so it wouldn't be visible once in place (Figure 6).

For the installation, as stated earlier, I framed in a pocket on either end so that the beam would be held firmly in place, and so that there would be ample spots to drive long timber screws into both the ends and sides of the beam. In order to get the beam into position, we had to start with just one end pocket so that the other end could be lifted up into its spot; I framed in around this second end once it was temporarily shored in place. From there I verified that the beam was centered and sitting on the flats I had cut on each end, and drove the screws to lock it into position (a nice feature of timber screws is that they do not require pre-drilling).

Figure 5. Stout sawhorses and a pair of 4x4s with v-shaped notches cut into them helped stabilize the pole while removing the bark and cutting it to length.

With all that preparation, the installation proved to be quite simple, other than the weightlifting aspect. All that was left was for me to finish it with some non-toxic Tried and True Danish oil (a polymerized linseed oil) to add some surface protection and depth of color, and then I wrapped it in 1 mil plastic to keep joint compound and paint off as the remainder of the structure was finished around it. As is common with poles when left round, this one developed a long check along one side as it dried. This was not a problem structurally, and I didn't mind it so much visually, but chose to orient it away from the entrance, as I thought the smooth clear face was more attractive (Figure 7).

In addition to tie beams such as this one, you can also use round timbers to great aesthetic effect as structural posts and braces. This was commonly seen in traditional Japanese architecture, in particular with the wooden pillar supporting one end of the tokonoma, or

Figure 6. With the beam turned upside down, seat cuts were chiseled perpendicular to the end cuts to allow the pole to sit in a stable position without rolling once lifted into place.

formal alcove for displaying traditional art forms such as calligraphy, painting, or flower arrangements. The natural tree trunk adds to the formality, austerity, and sacredness of the space.

By using round poles harvested from your woodlot, not only do you get to skip the effort and/or expense of milling logs into a square or rectangular shape, leaving these timbers in the round brings much more of the 'personality' of the tree into your living space, and serves to break up the monotony of straight lines that are so prevalent in our lives. I also like to think that it honors the trees—not just the ones actually utilized such as the young, curvaceous birch described here, but all of the trees, and the sacrifice of their woody flesh that permeates and makes our lives possible.

Jeff Joseph is the managing editor of this magazine.

Figure 7. The finished product.

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