The New York Forest Owner

A Publication of The New York Forest Owners Association

For people caring about New York's trees and forests

March/April 2022

Learning from State Forestlands:
A Conversation with the DEC's Robert Davies

Volume 60 Number 2

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In This Issue . . .

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Volume 60, Number 2

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The New York Forest Owner is a bi-monthly publication of The New York Forest Owners Association, PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. Materials submitted for publication should be sent to: ***Mary Beth Malmsheimer****, Editor, The New York Forest Owner, 134 Lincklaen Street, Cazenovia, New York 13035; Materials may also be e-mailed to mmalmshe@syr.edu; 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 May/June issue is April 1, 2022.***

Please address all membership fees and change of address requests to PO Box 541, Lima, NY 14485. 1-800-836-3566. Cost of family membership/subscription is $45.

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Cover: Front cover: New York's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) manages over 800,000 acres of state forestlands.

From The Executive Director

NYFOA Membership Dues Increase

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to inform you that a recent decision was made to increase membership dues for NYFOA by an additional $10 per year. This will go in effect starting June 1st. The Board felt this was an important step to take for the financial security of the organization. It has been eight years since the last increase, and in that time the cost of goods and services has increased by nearly 20%; between that and other investments in staff, operations, and programing, NYFOA is experiencing a budget deficit for the first time. This will go a long way towards helping to relieve some of the short-term pressure on the budget and NYFOA's reserves, and we thank you for your understanding and your contribution toward addressing this need.

Please know that NYFOA is simply experiencing a temporaty budget shortfall and is putting corrective measures into place. The leadership has been managing our funds responsibly, and will not rely on the additional revenue from dues alone to close the gap in the budget. A longer-term plan has been put in motion to review and cut costs where possible and to pursue several different fundraising strategies to increase revenue; this includes pursuing grants for programs, seeking outside donors, etc. We will also be implementing a membership development strategy to recruit and retain new members. We are confident that the combined efforts to cut costs, raise funds, improve programs, and increase membership will strengthen the organization and stabilize our finances without sacrificing any of the benefits NYFOA provides and its value to you.

In the same way that most of us seek the guidance from a professional forester or other natural resource professionals to help us where we lack knowledge to manage our land and woods, NYFOA has invested in the services of a professional fundraiser who will be providing guidance to us where needed. He is passionate about fundraising (who knew that was possible?) and has been generous with his time so far, providing information (at no cost and without any expectation of being hired) that has instilled confidence that much of the fundraising effort is not beyond our own ability to do ourselves with the resources, staff, and internal member skills we already have. We will be able to save a lot of money this way and he is offering his services at a very modest rate. I believe this will be a low-risk and worthy investment.

I am also proud to inform you that there is an initiative among members of the board to lead in this effort to address our financial needs. Several board members have pledged to make a yearly contribution above and beyond that which they already donate—in doing so they are encouraging other board members to make the same pledge towards the goal of raising a total of $10,000 per year. This is a generous sacrifice and show of commitment that I commonly see in the members of this great organization every day; it is inspiring to say the least. I hope you will join me in thanking them for their devotion to NYFOA.

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

Join!

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

Join NYFOA today and begin to receive its many benefits including: six issues of ***The New York Forest Owner***, woodswalks, chapter meetings, and statewide meetings.

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Learning from State Forestlands: *A Conversation with the DEC's Robert Davies*

By Jeff Joseph

When I purchased my home and wooded acreage 20 years ago in northern Tioga County, I wasn't familiar with the immediate area, so was very pleased to discover that a few short miles further up the valley was a large contiguous tract of forestland that offered an array of hiking trails, and a diversity of habitats and cover types to explore, from conifer plantations to wetlands to upland mixed forest. As I came to learn, this 5,000+ acre tract was one of New York's many state forests, which in total amount to over 800,000 acres statewide.

While tending my own small woodlot has kept me busy over the succeeding years, Shindagin Hollow State Forest—along with the Rapid Waters Unit Management Plan (UMP) that guides the forestry practices there—has provided me a valuable nearby opportunity to learn about and see firsthand the silvicultural management of forest stands far larger and more diverse than my own. With this in mind, and having recently perused the New York State Strategic Plan for State Forest Management, I contacted the DEC's Robert Davies to ask some questions about current efforts to practice and model sound woodland management on state forestlands. The following is a lightly edited version of our conversation, with my questions in bold:

One of (by my count from the DEC's website) 466 state forests in New York—a valuable public resource.

1. Hi Rob. Thank you for being willing to engage in this discussion of state forestlands, and in particular their potential use as models for private land forestry practice in New York. You are the Director of New York DEC's Division of Lands and Forests. How long have you held that position, and, in brief, what does it entail?

I have been the State Forester since 2001. Interestingly, I officially started

the job the day after the 9/11 attacks. In my official capacity as State Forester, I have general oversight of the department's land acquisition program, and all the department's forestry-related programs. These include the administration of a statewide land acquisition program and managing public lands within the Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves as well as our state forest system and the conservation easement program; assisting private landowners in managing their forest resources; administering the Forest Tax Law; supporting municipalities in managing their urban and community forest resources; information transfer regarding forest product utilization; and monitoring and protecting all of New York's forests from insect and disease infestations.

2. In preparation for this interview, I read the Executive Summary of the NYS Strategic Plan for State Forest Management (SPSFM), which as a New York woodland owner myself, I found to be an impressive and ambitious document. A particularly noteworthy statement regarding the function of state forests occurs on the first page, where they are described as "…a proving ground for innovative forestry, an example to private landowners, and a balance to management driven by short term goals that sometimes occurs on private lands." I imagine that relatively few New York woodland owners are aware of the degree to which the state is explicitly looking to model both sound silviculture and innovation for its citizens; can you describe the genesis of this plan, and how efforts are being made to disseminate this information to landowners? How recently has this educational focus within the management of state forestlands been put into practice?

We're happy to hear you took the time to look through the summary document. We are currently in the process of finalizing the 10-year update to the SPSFM. The original plan stemmed from being certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® and Forest Stewardship Council® standards, as well as it being a general industry standard best management practice to have a management document that guides forest management. The plan also serves as the General Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for the work we do on state lands.

The silviculture and best management practices the plan incorporates can be applied to any type of land management category. Our staff has decades of public land management experience which is demonstrated through prescribing sound silvicultural practices across our state forests. Passing on this information can be found at each and every interaction our state land managers have with the public. That being said, the SPSFM is actually written specifically for our foresters to use on state land, though many of the state land managers also assist with the private land stewardship program.

We are constantly educating the public on what we are doing with the management of state forestlands. From our public UMP meetings, to stakeholder meetings, to our social media feeds, we are regularly trying to educate the public on what we do and how well we do it. We are always looking for new and improved ways to communicate with and educate private forest landowners and the public at large. Our forestry education efforts in fact pre-date the SPSFM by many years. One example is the driving tour of Birdseye Hollow State Forest in Steuben County. In the late 1980s we erected informational signs along our roads at locations adjacent to recent timber harvests on the state forest, explaining the silvicultural systems that were used, why each was chosen and what the expected outcomes were. It is still common practice for us to post signs at our log landings indicating what is being done and why.

3. An overarching theme of the plan is for "Managing at a Landscape Level"; can you briefly describe what this means, and how it is put into practice?

Today's public land managers must consider how the lands they manage fit into and ultimately impact the "bigger picture" or landscape. The term is used from a landscape ecologist's point of view, referring to the view that one can see from an airplane or a mountain on a clear day. Managing at a landscape level means trying to look at the entire picture and not only through the lens of timber management, or recreational pursuits, or ecosystem conservation. Using GIS software to map and assess state-wide landscape cover types allows state land managers to see where the ecosystem gaps are. Every UMP we draft contains the maps staff use to do their analysis of the on-the-ground resources. This educates and guides the management decisions allowing for continuity of land cover types that benefit wildlife, adjacent private landowners, and local communities.

4. Assessment of state-held forestlands has shown that there are substantial gaps in late-successional, early-successional, and evergreen forest cover habitats across the state—basically, largely through mismanagement, we have cultivated a forest environment dominated by middle-aged, even-aged stands. This is of course overwhelmingly true on private woodlands as well—can you briefly describe why this is a problem, and what management strategies are being put into place on state lands to combat it? Can you provide some specific examples of areas that a woodland owner might visit to see this type of management being implemented?

Most of the land the state acquired for reforestation areas was of poor quality or was located in areas that made agriculture very difficult. The gap in the successional forest types is more of a symptom of that farmland abandonment, as well as the 19th century land use practices that were in place prior to the creation of the state forest system in the late 1930s. The problem with limited age classes in a forest is that they are susceptible to failure and they limit the habitat structure that many wildlife species rely on. In regard to the gap in the evergreen component, the state manages upwards of 56% of the conifer cover type across NYS, thanks in large part to the tremendous early plant efforts by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Staff look to perpetuate these conifer stands whenever

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Ask A Professional

PETER SMALLIDGE

Peter Smallidge

Landowner questions are addressed by foresters and other natural resources professionals. Landowners should be careful when interpreting answers and applying this general advice to their property because landowner objectives and property conditions will influence specific management options. When in doubt, check with your regional DEC office or other service providers. Landowners are also encouraged to be active participants in Cornell Cooperative Extension and NYFOA programs to gain additional, often site-specific, answers to questions. To submit a question, email to Peter Smallidge at pjs23@cornell.edu with an explicit mention of "Ask a Professional." Additional reading on various topics is available at www.forestconnect.info

Silviculture – A Strategy to Manipulate the Forest

Question: When I attend woods walks and forestry seminars I always hear about "silviculture." I think I know what this is in general, but can you clarify the big picture of silviculture and examples I can use as a woodland owner? (Tim T., SE ADK Chapter)

Answer: Every situation where there are numerous interacting decisions, and variations of that situation are repeated in different locations at different times, benefits from having a strategy to consistently accomplish the desired outcome. Think about the hundreds of thousands of woodland owners in NY. On each property the owner often wants to utilize resources such as firewood or wildlife foods, and in the process enhance, create, or remove specific plants for some future benefit (Figure 1). Silviculture can be applied to these woodlots so that a consistent suite of actions can attain multiple and varied outcomes, and owners and practitioners can use a common language to discuss their actions and options. The owner's objectives, or what they want their woodlands to provide, define the desired outcome.

Silviculture uses knowledge of how trees and other plants respond to changes in light, ground disturbance, browsing and other factors to cause some plants to increase and others to decrease. Silviculture focuses attention on four attributes of woodlands to accomplish the desired outcome. These include:

Establishment – Trees and other plants need certain conditions for seeds to be produced, dispersed, arrive on a suitable seed bed, avoid seed predation, germinate, and begin growing. The young seedling is vulnerable to countless threats from countless threats such as frost in low pockets, slugs, fungi, deer, soil nutrition and more.

Composition – Because an owner often desires outcomes or products that are produced from a particular species, silviculture attempts to favor some

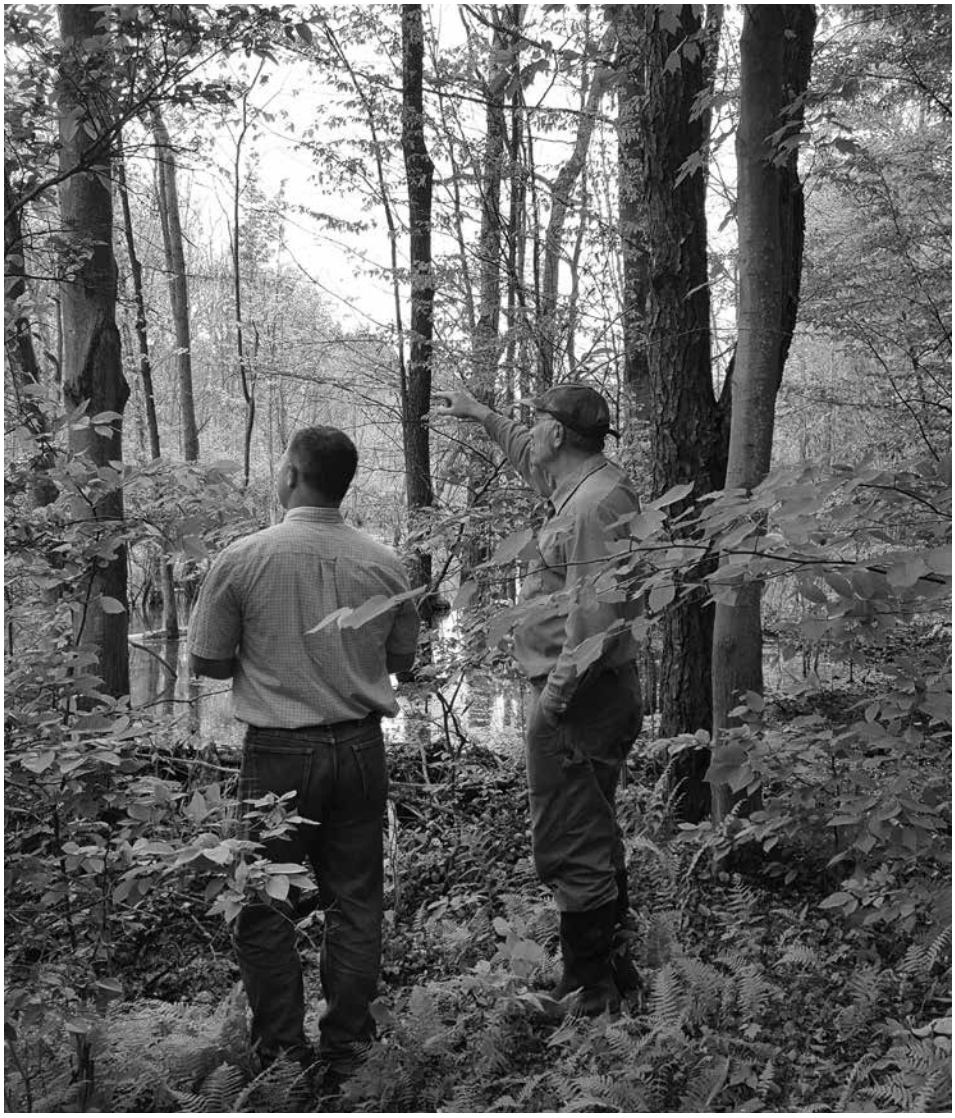

Figure 1. Most owners want multiple benefits from their woodlands. The more varied the property and the more distinct the desires the greater need there is to have a systematic and strategic process to guide management decisions.

Figure 2. Northeastern woodlands may have six to ten or more tree and shrub species present. Some species support the owner's objectives, but maybe not all. Silvicultural treatments might emphasize the success of some species over other species.

Figure 3. Every stand is different and has factors that influence success of treatments. What factors do you see in this picture? Primary factors, beneficial and complicating, include a dominant invasive shrub understory, young vigorous canopy trees, proximity to road, former agricultural ground, chronic deer browsing, and east facing aspect.

species (Figure 2) and diminish other species when appropriate.

Growth – Every ownership objective that seeks tangible outputs benefits from tree growth. Thus, a common goal of silviculture is to maintain or increase the growth of one or more species. Tree growth is related to tree vigor, which provides resilience to stressors.

Quality – Tree stems without blemish, defect or branch scars are often identified for owner's outcomes as high quality sawlogs. However, quality can more broadly include characteristics of wildlife habitat, water quality, features of old-growth forest and more.

These four attributes are the core of the definition of silviculture which is the art and science of managing the establishment, composition, growth, and quality of the forest to accomplish a landowner's sustainable goals. Here, the terms forest and woodland are used interchangeably. Management occurs through actions, called treatments, that range from monitoring the forest, to planting or pruning, to isolated cutting, to widespread harvesting. Each of these treatments is valid in the right context. Treatments are applied to stands, which are the management units of a forest. A forest stand (think young hardwoods or conifer plantation) is similar to a farmer's field growing corn, hay, or pasture.

Assumptions

Every strategy works, or doesn't work, because its assumptions are known and accounted for (or not). The strategic implementation of silviculture is no different. Following are several assumptions:

Silviculture is about managing vegetation towards an outcome – The ultimate goal of silviculture, based on the definition, is to manage vegetation to accomplish a goal of sustainable delivery of a broad range of forest-based outcomes. Silviculture is incorrectly presented as "timber management", perhaps because timber often provides the necessary finances to accomplish the outcome. Silviculture is equally important and useful in accomplishing goals for forest health, biodiversity, carbon sequestration & storage, wildlife habitat, and forest products other than timber. Similarly, silvicultural recommendations, known as prescriptions, are implemented through forest management in the reality of labor supply, terrain limitations, markets, available financing, etc. Although a prescription doesn't specify implementation, a prescription that isn't realistic isn't effective.

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Figure 4. Optimal growth depends on a particular outcome, and the process of thinning makes decisions about which trees will gain more access to sunlight and thus improved growth. The same amount of "wood" will grow whether the stand is thinned or not. However, the types of products those trees produce will vary. These red maple growing on former pasture have not been thinned and are under maximum competition for sunlight.

It's about growing trees – Although the visual part of silviculture emphasizes cutting trees, the ultimate goal of silviculture is to grow trees. All treatments should be carefully selected to ensure the outcome is the growth of current and future trees, and trees of species and quality desired by the owner.

Species are different – The application of silviculture requires knowledge of the ways that different species respond to site conditions and manipulations. The silvics of a species include its life history attributes that span from the timing and frequency of seed production and dispersal, to soils and growth, to the longevity of individuals of that species.

Multiple factors influence success – Silvicultural recommendations need to be applied in practice, and thus account for biotic constraints such as browsers, pests and pathogens, but also soil conditions, aspect, and tolerance of shade (Figure 3).

Change takes time – Gardens and some agricultural endeavors can show a response in days or weeks, but the outcome of forest treatments may not be evident for one or many years.

Figure 5. This stand of sugar maple grows on a former agricultural field and the trees are of the same age. It is marked for thinning, but note the variation in tree diameter.

Figure 6. Slash walls are used around regeneration harvests to exclude deer. These were developed at Cornell's Arnot Forest and have been used throughout the Northeast. Current experiments are testing variations of slash wall design for use on smaller private parcels.

You must count it before you manage it – The forest is a resource, and successful management requires that the abundance and condition of a resource be known. Recommendations for forest treatments that lack information about the number, size, quality, and health of the trees are ill-advised.

Hope – There are many occasions in life when hope plays an important role. Our young children hope for a pony for Christmas, and we hope friends and family recover fully and quickly from an illness. To insert hope into a silvicultural prescription usually means that a factor that can influence the outcome has not been adequately managed.

Here and Now

Forest trees are long-lived, usually longer than the life of the owner. In some cases, treatments are intended to enhance the condition of the current forest knowing the mature forest is many years in the future. The jargon for these is "intermediate treatments" as they occur during the development of the current forest and outcomes are expected from the current forest. Intermediate treatments include pruning or cutting that benefits some stems or species and removes others. The goals are to improve stem quality, growth rate, and to create a desired mixture of species.

One of the more common recommendations for an intermediate treatment is to "thin." In the Northeast, sunlight is most often the factor that limits tree growth, so providing more sunlight to trees allows them to grow faster. The objective of thinning is to reduce the competition for sunlight experienced by the desired trees, so that growth is concentrated on those trees. Other phrasing of thinning includes forest stand improvement (FSI), timber stand improvement (TSI), and culling. Cutting just the big trees, as described below, is unsustainable and is not thinning.

Common methods to select trees to benefit from thinning, known as the residual trees, include crop tree management and residual basal area. Crop trees are those trees that have attributes of both species and quality desired by the owner and will be retained for increased growth. At some future point they may be harvested as a crop. Crop trees are identified and adjacent trees that compete for sunlight are cut or killed.

Basal area is the area of the footprint or area at the base of the stem (not crown or dripline) of each tree. For example, a stem that is 14" in diameter at breast height (4.5 ft above ground, dbh) has about 1 square foot of basal area. The total basal area for all trees on an acre is the basal area per acre. A typical hardwood forest without prior harvesting might have 100 to 125 square feet of basal area per acre. Residual basal area thinning is based on the inherent limits of an area to provide for optimum growth of all stems (Figure 4). Some ownership objectives, for example big trees, sawtimber, maple sap and nut production benefit from fast tree growth. The optimum basal area per acre for fast tree growth depends on the size of the average tree, and that optimum can be used as a target of residual basal area. Desired trees are retained, and others are cut until the residual basal area is achieved.

Firewood cutting is a popular activity of woodland owners. Firewood cutting focused only on filling the woodshed is focused on the output rather than on the woodland stand's composition, growth, and quality. Woodland owners can fill the woodshed while also improving their forest by deliberately selecting which trees to cut and which to leave. This later approach has elements of a silvicultural treatment by setting a desired outcome related to the growth of residual trees by removing competing trees.

Looking Forward

At some point in the life of a stand an owner's goal may warrant the that the current mature trees, or groups of mature trees be replaced by younger trees. This process replaces one age class with a new, younger age class. This is the process of forest regeneration.

Forest stands are categorized as even-aged or uneven-aged, with some intermediate conditions such as two-aged. These terms describe the age-structure of a stand.

The canopy trees in an even-aged stand are all about the same age. This is the common condition that originated following agricultural abandonment of the 1900's. Uneven-aged stands have at least three different age classes. Uneven-aged stands originate following repeated, isolated harvesting or in unharvested

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Figure 7. Owners influence the fate of their woodlands with the decisions they make and actions they take. This owner is working to recover an area where only the best and valuable trees were cut. The work is all sweat equity for the future of the woods.

mature stands where the large trees die and create gaps in the canopy. One property might have multiple even-aged stands, but collectively the property is uneven-aged.

A characteristic of even-aged stands that often causes confusion is that tree size does not predict tree age. As you think about this, consider a 6th grade classroom where all the students are the same age, but of different sizes. An even-aged stand originates after a disturbance that provides sunlight at the ground, to a small or large area. The abundance of sunlight allows many stems of multiple tree species to establish and grow, but due to genetics, silvical characteristics, or chance, some grow faster than others. Those stems that capture a prominent place in the canopy benefit from more sunlight and continue to flourish at the expense of others (Figure 5). The importance of this is to avoid thinking that by cutting the biggest trees the smaller and "younger" trees will thrive. The smaller trees aren't younger, and giving them more sunlight only perpetuates stems that have been proven as losers.

Noting that even-aged stands originate following a wide-spread disturbance, even-aged regeneration treatments involve extensive harvesting, usually on multiple acres. Through a series of harvesting entries over a short time, the entire canopy is removed. The treatments are named based on the nature of the cutting and include: clearcutting, seed tree, shelterwood, and coppice. There are variations of each, such as clearcutting with reserves. The goal is to replace one mature canopy with younger trees in a relative few short years. The young forest grows in full sunlight in the area harvested and the tall canopy is gone. This is beneficial for some wildlife species. In the presence of heavy deer browsing impacts, even-aged regeneration allows for protection of seedlings, such as slash walls (Figure 6), to be efficiently applied. The visual contrast from mature forest to young forest is striking.

Uneven-aged forest stands include both intermediate treatments and regeneration treatments during each harvest entry. In the age class that is not yet mature, thinning concentrates growth on the most desired stems. In the mature age class, the canopy trees are cut to allow for the establishment and growth of young trees. The mature trees are cut as isolated individuals (i.e., single-tree selection) or as clusters (i.e., group selection). The high canopy is maintained, though pockets of openings occur. Because the young trees are scattered, protecting them from deer browsing is complicated. Interestingly, there should be equal acreage in an unven-aged stand assigned to each age class. Also, within a cluster of same-aged trees, there is still the reality that some trees are larger than others.

Silviculture for the woodland owner

Many woodland owners have spent years learning to identify the tree species on their property, what soils they perform well on, how much shade they can tolerate, their sensitivity to browsing, and other silvical traits. With a clear vision for current and future outcomes, these owners can apply treatments (Figure 7), usually thinning, that move the stands of their woodland towards their goals.

In other cases, and to accomplish some outcomes, woodland owners benefit from working with a forester to design silvicultural prescriptions and the appropriate treatments. The broad training of foresters, their experience with many different properties and circumstances, and their awareness of local markets and contractors allow them insight that benefit most woodland owners. When working with a forester, woodland owners need to clearly describe their vision of their future woodland, and to understand from the forester how specific treatments will ensure the desired goal.

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Saying Goodbye to Our Dear Friend

Jim Minor

June 25, 1943-December 27, 2021

It is with sadness that we must say goodbye to our dear friend and colleague, Jim Minor. Jim was a long-time, dedicated member of NYFOA. He joyfully served his chapter in the Western Finger Lakes and at the state level, including two terms as president and more recently as the NYFOA website manager right up until his passing. His devotion to NYFOA was undeniable and was on full display even in his final moments as he lay very ill in a hospital bed on Christmas Eve. Unable to write, he dictated a final message to his daughter for the NYFOA leadership.

"Gentlemen: It is with some regret I must ask to be relieved of all duties for NYFOA. I have been in Strong ICU for several days and outcome is uncertain. It has been a great pleasure working with you all these years. I wish you the very best going forward. Sincerely, Jim Minor"

It is fitting that by sheer coincidence Jim left us with some parting words of wisdom and thoughts about stewardship when he was interviewed about the conservation easement he recently completed for his property in the Finger Lakes (which was the featured cover story of the previous issue of this magazine – January/February 2022). You are encouraged to look back on that if you haven't read it yet. His conservation efforts will be but one of many legacies.

If you didn't have the opportunity to know Jim personally but would like to learn more about him, he was featured in the Member Profile in the November/December 2014 issue (pp. 21-22); if that issue is not in your personal collection, you can find it on the NYFOA website here:

https://www.nyfoa.org/resources/archives-new-york-forest-owner/2014/volume-52-number-6-novemberdecember-2014.

Jim and Barbara Minor with grandson, Andy Kolberg on their farm, Summer 2000.

Jim further showed his dedication to NYFOA in asking that in lieu of flowers for his funeral that donations be made to NYFOA instead. Several donations were received, and we offfer our thanks to those that made them.

Jim's obituary, which casts further light on how much his was a life devoted to service to others, can be viewed here:

https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/rochester-ny/james-minor-10508332

Rest in peace friend. You will be greatly missed.

—Craig Vollmer

Would you like to receive an electronic version of future editions of *The Forest Owner*? If so, please send Liana an email (lgooding@nyfoa.org).

You will receive an email every two months that includes a PDF file of the publication. While being convenient for you – read *The Forest Owner* anytime, any place – this will also help to save the Association money as the cost of printing and postage continues to rise with each edition.

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Wild Things in Your Woodlands

Kristi Sullivan

American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*)

Ricky Layson, Ricky Layson Photography, Bugwood.org

The American woodcock is a medium-sized bird similar in size to a dove. Its bill is long in proportion to its body, which is round and heavy. It has a short neck and a large head. Its big eyes are set high on the bird's head, giving it 360-degree vision. This trait, along with cryptic brown and black coloration, protects the woodcock from predators. Both sexes look alike. Nesting occurs from mid-March into June. Females lay four eggs in a shallow depression on the ground, camouflaged by dead leaves. The precocial chicks hatch in about 21 days, and are raised entirely by the female.

The American woodcock, also known as the timberdoodle or bog-borer, is a popular migratory bird that overwinters in the southern states. In March, the woodcock returns to its breeding grounds in the northeast. Returning males establish territories, or singing grounds, in open fields next to thick brush or woods. They often return to the same area year after year, defending their territories against other males. Singing grounds are typically openings of about one-quarter acre in size, with a straight, 20-30 yard take-off strip that is clear of impeding vegetation.

The courtship flight of the woodcock is an intriguing aerial display that can be seen at dusk and dawn beginning in late March or early April, and sometimes continuing into May. The best time to hear and see the display is between sundown and complete darkness. The male will take off and fly 200 to 300 feet up into the sky. His wings make a distinctive twittering sound as the wind rushes through his wing feathers. Upon reaching his upward destination, he spirals or zigzags back down to the ground, making a gurgling sound as he falls and landing back at his take-off site. Back on the ground, he sounds a nasal, insect-like buzzing call, described as "peent", for several minutes and then repeats his courtship flight.

Females seek out the males on their breeding grounds, and usually nest within 150 yards of the singing grounds where they mated. Favored nesting habitat includes damp woods near water, hillsides above moist bottomlands, old fields with low ground cover, briar patches, and edges of shrub thickets and young conifer stands. There may be little overhead cover (old fields) or up to 50 feet of vegetation (hardwood stands). The average cover height is 12 feet.

Woodcocks feed on a variety of invertebrates and some plants. However, this bird favors earthworms, and its long bill is specially adapted for probing the ground in search of its prey. Sensitive nerve endings in the lower third of the bill help a woodcock locate earthworms. A special bone-muscle arrangement lets the bird open the tip of its upper bill, or mandible, while it is underground. The long tongue and the underside of the mandible are both rough-surfaced to grasp and pull slippery prey out of the ground. The best feeding habitat is pole-sized hardwood or alder stands with a dense overstory, fairly open ground cover, and moist, fertile soil that supports earthworms.

The best way to maintain habitat for woodcocks is to protect springs, seeps, moist depressions, and wetlands on your property. These areas provide important feeding grounds. Maintain, by burning or mowing, open grassy areas near water sources. These are prime

continued on next page

Wild Things (continued)

nesting and courting grounds because of the water source and the food they provide. Maintain shrub cover in riparian areas and adjacent to wet areas for adequate cover. Alder, hawthorns, gray dogwood, spicebush, and silky dogwood are all good cover species for woodcock. Creating or maintaining areas of young forest will also provide singing grounds, and rejuvenate brood and nesting cover. By maintaining habitat for this unique bird, you and your family can continue to enjoy the courtship flights that usher in the spring.

Kristi Sullivan directs the New York State Master Naturalist Volunteer Program at Cornell. More information on managing habitat for wildlife can be found at https://blogs.cornell.edu/nymasternaturalist/resources/

Do you have a favorite species that you would like to see featured in an upcoming "Wild Things" column? If so, email Kristi Sullivan at kls20@cornell.edu

Funding provided by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Renewable Resources Extension Act.

From the Executive Director (continued)

NYFOA has had a successful history of actualizing its mission to promote sustainable forest management and stewardship through education; I hope it has proven to be of great value to you. NYFOA has one of the best landowner magazines in the nation, puts on excellent educational programs, workshops, and woods walks, puts out an informative monthly electronic newsletter, provides invaluable access to a peer-to-peer network of landowners, collaborates with other organizations with similar missions, and advocates on legislation serving as a resource for legislators, government agencies, and the public. I know you all recognize and enjoy these benefits and see the value in membership but rest assured that we have been laying the groundwork to further enhance and expand many of these benefits in hopes of increasing its value even more. I hope you will notice and enjoy the fruits of these labors in the months ahead.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me, or any member of the Executive Committee or Board of Directors.

Thank you too for your devotion to NYFOA.

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

–Craig Vollmer
NYFOA Executive Director

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Woodland Health

A column focusing on topics that might limit the health, vigor and productivity of our private or public woodlands

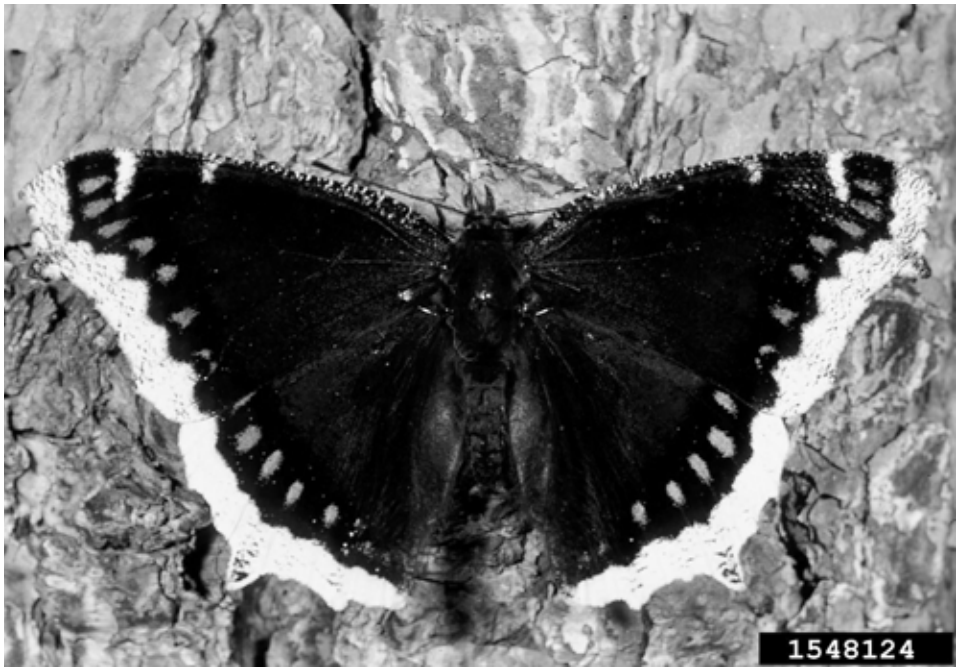
Coordinated by Mark Whitmore

An Update on Forest Pests in New York and Thoughts on the Hard Winter

By Mark Whitmore

I have heard a lot of complaining about the hard winter we've had. I listen to it, but deep down, I love the snow and the cold. After six decades of snowstorms, I still stay up late into the night with my nose to the window watching the snow accumulate and the temperature drop. Not only do I love to play in the snow, but I'm also fascinated by how a hard winter impacts wildlife, and of course insects. I've been watching the local deer herd bed down under the hemlocks, waiting for a break so they could move around and resume foraging. By doing this the deer behaviorally avoid the stress of wading through deep snow and at the same time they tolerate the cold temperatures.

Insects also have avoidance behaviors and tolerance mechanisms that are complicated by their different life stages. The most common mechanism for tolerating freezing is to increase the level of glycerol in their blood, which decreases the amount of free water, thereby lowering the temperature when ice crystals form and destroy cell walls. Many insects overwinter as eggs, a highly resistant life stage that can tolerate temperature extremes. Insects can also overwinter as larvae, caterpillars, or pupae but that is less common. It's relatively common for beetles to overwinter as adults, but for butterflies or moths, it is not. Of course, there is always an exception



Mourning cloak butterfly. Photo by Sturgis McKeever, Georgia Southern University, Bugwood

and my favorite would be the mourning cloak butterfly, which overwinters as an adult, avoiding the harsh winter hidden in tree cavities or other suitable places. For me, their appearance in spring is like that of the first flowers. Sorry, I digress; this article is about forest pests.

The big winner during this harsh winter are the hemlocks. The past couple winters have been very mild and hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) populations flourished. Overwintering mortality was only 30 to 40% during these winters and existing infestations blew up, causing significant canopy decline. This population buildup allowed HWA to spread, with new infestations popping up throughout the state. Those of great concern were at the northern edge of the HWA range in the southeastern part of the Adirondacks and along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. My lab has been collecting data from a number of sites in the state after the extreme low temperatures this January and HWA mortality has been significant. At some sites in the Finger Lakes, we found mortality from 85% to nearly 99%.

Spotted lanternfly. Photo by: Lawrence Barringer PA Dept of Ag, Bugwood.

days at -36F to kill them. If you've put in plots and found more than 1000 egg masses per acre I would suggest getting together with your neighbors and hiring a plane for aerial application of Btk 76B to avoid severe defoliation.

Another important potential forest pest is spotted lanternfly (SLF). The state has been very effective getting the word out about this pest. SLF has been detected in many locations around the state, so if you haven't heard about it I suggest you do a quick search and get caught up. The problem about SLF is that we knew very little of its biology and impact before its first detection in PA in 2014. We do know that it is very damaging to grapes and to the invasive tree, Ailanthus. Its impact in the forest is less certain. It

continued on next page

However, in warmer areas like the lower Hudson Valley we found only 60% mortality. What this means is the hemlocks have a chance to recover by putting out new shoots and build their photosynthetic reserves. If your hemlocks have had HWA and you were planning to treat them, this would be the time. As they recover, they will be moving the insecticides into the canopy more rapidly than if they were heavily infested. The caveat here is that HWA reproduces asexually so it takes only one survivor to start the population buildup again. Biological control of HWA with predators is the long-term goal and this reprieve, albeit brief, will help keep the hemlocks alive.

The bug most people I've spoken with this year are concerned about is the gypsy moth, which has recently been renamed the spongy moth (SM) because of the spongy appearance of its egg masses. This is also the name used throughout Europe. SM defoliation was significant in many parts of the state last year and many of you are concerned about the potential for defoliation this spring. As I've stressed in past articles, it is imperative that you get out into the woods to look for egg masses so you can evaluate the potential for spring defoliation. A few sites I visited this fall which were heavily defoliated last year had few egg masses visible, likely caused by epizootics of a virus and fungus. Of course, it's impossible to see all the egg masses because SM like to lay them in cryptic places, but it's indicative that the populations won't cause significant defoliation. I asked my friend Don Eggen, head of forest health for PA and a leading spongy moth expert, about the impact of this year's cold on the overwintering eggs and he replied that his research indicates the only place there might be mortality would be in the St. Lawrence region. He stated that it takes above the snow exposure of egg masses for 3

Southern pine beetle gallery. Photo by Ronald F. Billings, Texas A&M Forest Service, Bugwood

looks like sugar maple is not one of its preferred hosts, but silver maple may be. The thing to take home is that we need a huge detection effort; yes, this means you. It's uncertain if breeding populations are established in NY and if they will flourish. Thinking about the cold winter I asked my friend Melody Keena, a USFS scientist working on SLF growth models, what she thought. Melody pointed me to a 2011 article from Korea that found 100% egg mortality occurs when the mean daily temperature is below 26F for the months of December through February and the January minimum temperature averages 10F. Given our winter I would say there is some hope, but I would still be worried if I were growing grapes, and there is always the wild card of climate change to consider in the future.

Another insect of concern in New York recently is actually a native, the southern pine beetle (SPB). This insect has been the most important cause of southern pine mortality for decades. In the past 10 years it has made its way northward, spreading in the NJ pine barrens and recently causing significant mortality of pitch pine on Long Island. NYS DEC successfully implemented silvicultural management in pine forests on Long Island to reduce SPB mortality, but trapping programs have been picking up one or two beetles much further north. It's of note that trap catches have been made as far north as the pitch pine forests of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve. This on its own is not that concerning because it takes many hundreds, or even thousands of SPB to overwhelm the defenses of even a weakened pine. However, Jerry Carlson, head of Forest Health at NYSDEC, told me that they recently found a pine in northern Columbia county with a broken top that was infested by SPB. This is the first time SPB has been found infesting a pine so far north. Luckily, SPB is well known to be susceptible to cold and this winter probably set them way back on their northward march. But the gorilla in the closet is climate change.

There is no doubt that this was a hard winter. Good for skiing, generally bad for bugs. The winter has helped the hemlocks and may have dealt a big blow to spotted lanternfly and southern pine beetle. The big question is whether we can expect this pattern to persist. I wouldn't bet on it. Winters like this used to be more common. Most experts agree that short-term swings in the climate are hard to predict but also agree that the general trend is toward warming. What this means for forest pests in my mind is that we get a momentary reprieve. Let's use it wisely.

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 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

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	Name	Chapter
Robert Boschock	NAC	Jack & Joanne Maloy	CDC
Steve Day	CDC	Kat Hargrave and Gareth Price	SAC
Hannah Deen	LHC	Jeff Rolunda	AFC
Douglas Dixon	CNY	Nikki Rosier	SAC
Mary Gleason	WFL	Erik Schellenberg	LHC
William Huber	WFL	Chad Slocum	SFL
Don Hunt	SOT	Jason Thompson	SFL
Stephen Litwhiler	CNY		

NYFOA Statewide Meeting
Join us in the Finger Lakes

On the weekend of **April 23 & 24, 2022** NYFOA will hold a state wide meeting hosted by the Western Finger Lakes Chapter. The weekend activities will take place at Finger Lakes Community College in Canandaigua, Ontario County, a city rich in history.

Our meeting will open on Saturday the 23rd with our keynote speaker Conrad Baker, a naturalist at Letchworth State Park who will be speaking about the north American beaver, the official mammal of New York State, and his experience with this fascinating animal. His presentation will be followed by a choice of two breakout sessions on birdsong identification and native plants. After a long lunch to enjoy catching up with old friends and a brief presentation about the liability associated with dead ash trees, a choice of two sessions on forest resiliency and building your own Biltmore stick will be offered in the afternoon. On Sunday morning the 24th there will be a woods walk.

To get the registration form, agenda, and hotel information go to the NYFOA website at:

www.nyfoa.org/events/statewide-events/nyfoa-statewide-meeting

To request this information be mailed to you please contact the NYFOA office by email at *info@nyfoa.org* or call 1-800-836-3566.

We hope to see you there. Many thanks to the Western Finger Lakes chapter for their effort to plan and arrange this meeting.

The New York Forest Owners Association believes in:

- Promoting science based resources to support woodland stewardship.
- Supporting woodland owners in the long term stewardship of their forest resources.
- Raising public awareness of the challenges to sustaining our forests.
- Seeking collaborations with other organizations having similar goals and objectives.
- Respecting private property rights as they relate to sustainable forest stewardship.

Chair Camp 2022 July 28 – 30

Ed Neuhauser

All the mysteries of making heirloom windsor furniture will be revealed this summer at the at the eighth annual "Chair Camp 2022," hosted again this year by Ed Neuhauser and Peg Coleman in Groton, New York (16 miles north of Ithaca) July 28,29, and 30.

As in years past, David Abeel from Traverse City, Michigan will be leading the workshop with a 10% discount available to active NYFOA members. Participants can choose from any of 6 projects: bench, stool, side, arm, rocker, or mini-settee. All turned parts, materials, and tools will be provided. All secrets will be revealed!

To enroll in this year's chair camp email or call Ed Neuhauser at 607-898-3614 or *edward.neuhauser@gmail.com* to reserve your space.

In regard to the charge for class, it depends on what project you have selected. Active NYFOA members will receive a 10% discount. You can pay by check or cash on the day of class.

Cost per item:

Tall Kitchen or Shop stool: $200; NYFOA member—$180

Back Door Boot Bench: $200; NYFOA member—$180

Side Chair: $290; NYFOA member—$260

Arm Chair: $345; NYFOA member—$310

Rocking Chair: $395; NYFOA member—$355

Mini Settee: $395; NYFOA member—$355

Pictured above is the 28 inch mini-settee.

Policy Action Alert

Craig Vollmer

For those of you who have not been following this issue, in 2019 the NYS Legislature passed the **Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA).** This legislation mandates that NY reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050 based on 1990 levels, with the goal of being carbon neutral by 2050. A Climate Action Council was formed, and over the last three years, with the recommendations from several different advisory panels has been developing a framework of how the state will reduce emissions, increase the use of renewable energy, and ensure climate justice. The result of that work is a Draft Scoping Plan that was completed and released recently for public comment.

Forests are considered to play a very important role in this effort and there may be several beneficial programs and incentives for landowners to take advantage of, but this legislation is ambitious and not without cost and sacrifice to the residents and businesses of NY, requiring many lifestyle changes over time. NYFOA is following this closely and has begun the process of responding to issues relative to the pursuit of our mission and will continue to be engaged as legislation and regulations emerge. We intend to give voice to forest owners and seek to be a resource for legislators. We intend to call attention to who we are as an organization and our collective effort to mitigate carbon emissions through forest stewardship for the last 60 years.

In the meantime, a period of public comment that will include several public meetings across the state began on January 1st and finishes at the end of April. While NYFOA will be acting on behalf of the organization, every member is encouraged learn as much as they can and participate in the process as an individual by reviewing the scoping plan, submitting comments, and contacting your state representatives. You can download a copy of the Draft Scoping Plan at:
https://climate.ny.gov/Our-Climate-Act/Draft-Scoping-Plan

You can submit comments electronically by filling out a Public Comment Form at:
https://nyserda.seamlessdocs.com/f/DraftScopingComments

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The New York Forest Owners Association thanks the people and organizations that supported our programs and publications in 2021. Your help is essential to our work.

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possible through natural regeneration, and when necessary through plantings. One way we protect against loss of cover types and limited forest structure is through the development of UMPs, which take inventories of the natural resources on the ground and overlays them with landscape level assessments to find where the gaps are. We then use our management decisions to best fill those gaps, ensuring that environmental services and economic measures are both accounted for. New York is blessed with a diversity of ecosystems that require varying management decisions, from sand plains to oak savannahs and bogs to rock ridge tops, so the best way to see these on the ground examples of ecosystem management is by contacting any of the DEC regional state land management offices.

5. "Maintaining and enhancing habitat connectivity" is cited as another challenge, and an important means of maintaining and increasing biodiversity—what types of management strategies help bring this about, and are there demonstration areas where these strategies can be seen in practice?

The primary focus is on maintaining or creating mature forest canopy, which typically means using uneven aged silvicultural systems. Using the GIS data layers provided by the Natural Heritage Program, which show the matrix blocks (large, unfragmented forested areas) and least cost path corridor (corridors that provide the most favorable path for forest species to travel based on percent natural forest cover) between those large-forested areas, staff can see how our management decisions can impact the landscape. Locating and highlighting these areas of connectivity on maps within our management plans or at least the sections we have control over, allows staff to make management decisions that keep these forested areas intact while maintaining the ideal amount of cover. Showing on the ground examples of this type of management may be difficult as it more of a landscape level management concept, however regional staff may be able to highlight some areas that demonstrate this. The best way to visualize this is by using the connectivity maps with the overlays, that are included in the SPSFM and the individual UMPs.

6. The plan provides for "Use of timber sales to enhance forest health, and diversity of species, habitat and structure…." I know there has been some public resistance to active (and especially commercial) management of state forests—How do timber sales enhance forest health? Can you offer some examples of this in practice?

Timber sales are a valuable management tool to reset forest succession or transition from one successional stage to another. Creating edge habitat along harvests creates vital early successional habitat, which many species need. Timber harvests also allow for the treatment of invasive species (salvage harvesting ash stands after Emerald Ash Borer infestation), salvage of blow down, treatment of interfering vegetation (stands dominated by beech whips and ferns can be treated to allow healthier regeneration to happen), and overall improvement of poor-quality timber and habitat. None of these treatments would be viable without the use of commercial sales to implement them. And, that is why both low and high-grade markets are so important. "No markets, no management."

7. In addition to the health of the timber stands themselves, management involving timber harvest can also benefit a range of wildlife—-can you provide some specific examples of this in practice?

With every management prescription we write for a forest stand we take into account rare, threatened and endangered species, species of greatest conservation need, and where appropriate, account for the habitat those species require. Clear cuts create early successional habitat that many bird species rely on. Another example is converting softwood plantations to naturally regenerated stands, thus increasing species diversity and vertical forest structure. Also, we use forest retention standards as a strategy for conserving biodiversity in stands managed for timber production. Retention and recruitment of snags, cavity trees, coarse woody material and other features will advance the structural and compositional complexity necessary for conserving biodiversity and maintaining long term ecosystem productivity.

8. Now for the "elephant in the room," and a very controversial and contentious one at that—white-tailed deer management. The plan calls for the following actions: Develop an inventory protocol for the assessment of deer browse impacts; Develop a list of strategies appropriate for addressing unsustainable levels of deer impacts on state forests; Conduct deer density and browse impact inventories on state forests; Participate in Citizen Task Forces; Improve hunter access and success rates by providing web-based information and maps, and by enhancing road access and parking availability. Could you briefly comment on these, and provide a few specific examples of them in practice?

Over the past several years, DEC staff have worked with leading experts to develop and test several protocols for monitoring deer impacts upon forest regeneration. Staff will continue to work with DEC's Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to roll out these protocols and train land managers in using them during their decision-making processes. One protocol that is gaining considerable interest is the Assessing Vegetation Impacts of Deer (AVID), which uses citizen science monitoring of deer browse impacts on forests. AVID was created through a collaboration between DEC and Cornell University and is currently being used to collect data for DFW. The Division of Lands and Forests will work with wildlife staff to assess how this protocol can be incorporated into the state forest decision matrix. Our state forest webpages provide access to maps, hunting information, recreational infrastructure information, etc. Ongoing infrastructure projects continue to provide parking options, motorized

access routes for people with disabilities, and the acquisition of desirable lands.

9. With specific emphasis on the overpopulation of deer, do you think that the state is doing enough to ensure forest regeneration? How do you envision the structure, diversity, and overall health of New York's woodlands—public or private—in 50 years' time? A century from now?

I think we are on the right track as demonstrated by new grant programs such as Regenerate NY, but there is more to do. The Agriculture and Forestry Advisory Panel's recommendations to the Climate Action Council recognize improving forest regeneration as an important element to improving our climate resiliency. Whether we are looking at dropping a large clear cut in the middle of a hardwood stand, prescribing additional coarse woody debris left to shelter regeneration, or even the positioning of a slash wall to shelter a site, staff are constantly looking to use the right tools to meet the needs on the ground.

First, let me emphasize that New York's public and private forests are still in very good health. The symptoms of poor regeneration we are seeing now represent a risk we still can mitigate, and I am confident we will be successful in doing just that. The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act recognizes forests as an integral part of the solution to climate change, and I am hopeful we will be given the tools and resources to ensure a healthy forest resource for decades to come.

10. Any parting words of advice—or perhaps encouragement—for our readers? Specific recommendations as to how the woodland owning public can benefit from DEC efforts and management practices on state forestlands?

One thing that continues to give me encouragement is our staff. Working with them on a daily basis, and seeing their dedication and care for the lands they manage continues to fill me with encouragement. My recommendation to forest landowners is to have a forester from our Private Lands section or a private consultant forester come out and meet with you. Whatever you are trying to do and even if you are unsure of what to do, our forestry staff have the education, experience, and dedication to help you steward your forests into the future.

Many thanks to Rob for taking the time to share this information. If you are interested in learning more about New York's state forests and their management, you can start your search at https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/40672.html, which is the main "State Forests" page on the DEC's website.

Jeff Joseph is the managing editor of this magazine.

The New York
Forest Owner
A Publication of The New York Forest Owners Association

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U.S. Postage
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Syracuse, N.Y.
Permit No. 999

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