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[nyfoa.org/join](http://nyfoa.org/join)



*Ramps ramping up. See recipe for ramps and morels at the end photo: K. Campbell-Nelson*

## Letter from the Editor

Katie Campbell-Nelson



*From Eric Rasmussen's service.*

This issue is dedicated to Eric Rasmussen. The piece about him on page three was written by Shane Stevens who was mentored by Eric. Shane is a NYFOA Capitol District Chapter steering committee member, Natural Resource Program Coordinator at Cornell Cooperative Extension Columbia and Greene Counties, and director of the Catskills & Lower-Hudson Master Forest Owners group with over 140 members (more than half for the entire state!). Shane is also someone I learn about forest stewardship from daily – we work together and he is so kind and knowledgeable. These notes came from his visit to the Society of American Foresters annual meeting this past winter in Syracuse, NY in January.

New York is home to the largest amount of forested land in the Northeast and 90% of harvested timber is on privately owned land. We are the epi-center to many forest invasive plant and insect species in the region largely due to importing and being a highly populated area with heavy traffic. Mortality is currently exceeding tree harvests. There is a decline in timber harvest due to low costs of timber while equipment and labor costs rise. Forestry is a dangerous profession with a declining workforce. New York could benefit from more employment opportunities in forestry, more healthy growing stock, and more markets for low-grade timber.

The future is not all bleak; there are opportunities on the horizon. Universities are offering degree programs like '[Forest Ecosystem Management](#)' (PennState). Funding opportunities include the tried and true [NRCS-EQIP and CSP](#) conservation practices for landowners, the [NY-DEC 480a forest tax law](#) with very recent changes, and newer on the scene, the Family Forest Carbon Program. The state also offers grants if you are brave enough to apply: Regenerate New York Community Reforestation projects and Establishing Large Forests. So what else can we do? Plant trees! Keep them Alive!

**To submit content or provide feedback, please contact the editor:**  
Katie Campbell-Nelson, 413-834-1090, [katiecampbellnelson@gmail.com](mailto:katiecampbellnelson@gmail.com)

# Members' Notebook

Here, members submit short entries about the forested lands they love and steward from the counties in our chapter (Albany, Columbia, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie) and beyond.

## Columbia County

### **Ash Mortality by Mike Birmingham, Entomologist.**

The emerald ash borer is the primary cause of death for native ash species (genus *Fraxinus*) in Columbia County, based on observations I have made over the past decade of travels largely associated with birding, and a survey conducted as a volunteer with a DEC representative. Mountain ash (genus *Sorbus*) is not killed by the borer. Borer larvae kill ashes in two to four years by feeding on the inner bark and phloem, girdling the infested tree. Check annually for signs of borers to make timely ash



*Blond bark is the most prominent sign of borer infestation caused by woodpecker damage.*

salvage decisions. S-shaped markings made by larvae on the surface of the inner bark are visible when the outer bark is removed. Other signs include crown dieback and trunk shoots. D-shaped emergence holes made by the adult, a roughly ½ inch length emerald-green metallic beetle is another sign. The non-native borer lacks insect parasites and predators, enabling it to reach destructive levels. The borer originated from northeastern Asia

and arrived in North America, likely in wood packaging material in the early 1990's.

## Rensselaer County

### **Perfect Woodland Chaos is Stewardship by Dick Gibbs.**

I like the new NYFOA masthead, "Woodland Steward". Stewardship of our land is so much more than just about the trees. Sure, there is a practical infinity to know, learn, and implement about the trees. But stewarding a specific plot of treed land is itself a wonderful chaos of engaging topics: Tractors, chain saw safety, pesticides, taxes, animals, fungi, timber stand improvements, soils, climate changes, children, maple sap, forest health beyond my own lifespan, gatherings of friends and family to celebrate Thanksgiving under the Hemlocks, poison ivy, ticks, cemeteries, weddings, meditations, bulldozers, drainage, sapling pruning, invasive plants, equipment maintenance. A partial list of topics, each dynamic and changing, is a veritable kaleidoscope of chaos.



*A walk in the woods with Dick Gibbs*

I will turn 82 in a bit over a month. I have been a Type I diabetic [needle injection of insulin is my lifeline] and my health influencers all say, "stay engaged" and "grow social contacts." Picking through the above list of topics, my path forward is to engage with Hidley Farm and Forest. The opportunities, issues, and concerns are all sufficient to keeping both Shari and me engaged. It is so easy to fall into thinking "I have to do this today..." instead of the mindset, "I get to do this today..." Everything, including our lives for this day, is a gift, especially being woodland stewards.

# Remembering a Friend of the Forest: Eric P. Rasmussen (1937–2026)

Shane Stevens, *reprint from Catskills & Lower-Hudson Master Forest Owner Newsletter  
Spring 2026 issue*

This February, our community lost a titan of sustainable forestry and a dear friend, Eric Rasmussen. Those of you who have been fortunate enough to visit the Siuslaw Model Forest may recall that Eric managed these woods for over 50 years and graciously donated the 142-acre forest to Cornell Cooperative Extension in 2006. He continued to steward the woods alongside us and be heavily involved in our mission, while taking interns and staff under his wing teaching them tree ID and best management practices.

Eric's journey as a steward began long before he settled in Acra, NY. A graduate of Paul Smith's College and SUNY-ESF, his early career took him to the Pacific Northwest as a forester for the U.S. Forest Service at the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon. When he returned to New York, he brought that "Siuslaw" spirit with him, naming the NY property after the native word meaning land of the far away river.

Eric wasn't just a landowner; he was the embodiment of what it means to be a Master Forest Owner (MFO). Named a "Hero of Conservation" by Field & Stream magazine, his outreach, support and service over the years was extensive and included memberships such as Society of American Foresters, Catskill

Forest Association, New York Forest Owners Association, Greene Land Trust, and more. Eric received many awards and recognitions including Tree Farmer of the Year (1999), NYFOA "Friend of the Forest", and the Heiberg Award for outstanding contributions in the fields of forestry and conservation.

As a community leader in conservation, Eric served on boards and as Chair of the Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District and was a member of the New York City Watershed Agricultural Council. Eric might be known best for initiating the Environmental Awareness Days in 1969, a program that still introduces hundreds of students to forestry every year, at the land he once stewarded.

Eric's legacy is now permanently etched into the landscape of Greene County through the Siuslaw Model Forest. Because of Eric's passion and foresight, the land now serves as a permanent classroom where MFOs, researchers, landowners, and more can see Best Management Practices in action. From timber stand improvement to water quality protection, Eric's "land of the far away river" continues to teach us how to care for the woods.

Come visit Siuslaw Model Forest located at: 6055 NYS Route 23 Acra, New York 12405.

[Follow them on Facebook!](#)



## Events

### Arbor Day Invasives Plant Walk

**When:** April 24, 2026, 5:00 PM (1-2hrs)

**Where:** Laughing Earth Farm, 3842 State Route 2, Cropseyville, NY 12052.

Join Sean Murphy of the Agriculture Stewardship Association (ASA) on a walk about the farm and learn to identify invasive plants in the woodland when they are easiest to spot. Many management options begin in early spring – so let's get a jump on it!

This event is a collaboration between [ASA](#) and [NYFOA-CDC](#).

**RSVP to:** [sean@agstewardship.org](mailto:sean@agstewardship.org)



### Hidley Farm Woodswalk

**When:** June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026 gather at 9:00am walk at 9:30

**Where:** 287 Hidley Rd. Wynantskill, NY 12198

Forester Mary Spring will lead a walk on Hidley Farm with hosts Dick and Shari Gibbs who were founders of the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, now the Hudson Taconic Lands. Come learn from some amazing people who have dedicated lives and careers in forest conservation and stewardship. This 150-acre piece is a living example of community forestry - neighbors cut and use the firewood, tap maple, and hay the fields. Generations have done the same.

**RSVP to:** [happyinthehollow@gmail.com](mailto:happyinthehollow@gmail.com). Please let us know if you need any accommodations to participate. We have transportation options for folks with limited mobility.



*Going to a walk during the annual NYFOA – CDC picnic, 2025*



By CCE of Columbia and Greene Counties

## AIR PRUNED RAISED BEDS



May 6 · 1:00 PM

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia...

Acra

[Click HERE or scan the code above to register](#)

### Annual Capitol District Chapter Picnic

**When:** August 23, 2026, 11:30am – 4:00pm

**Where:** Thacher State Park, Paint Mine Pavillion

Parking fees will be covered by the Chapter, but you must see Phil for your ticket when you arrive.

Join us for a meal, catch up with and meet new members, enjoy an educational presentation or walk in the woods. It's always a relaxing and enjoyable time with like-minded folks.

We will provide beverages and a main course but appreciate a contribution of appetizers, salads, desserts or any special dish you might like to share.

Let us know what you are bringing when you RSVP.

**RSVP to:** [happyinthehollow@gmail.com](mailto:happyinthehollow@gmail.com).

### Albany County Woodswalk

**When:** October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 9:00am arrive, kick-off 9:30

**Where:** 249 Stanton Rd. Coeymans Hollow, NY 12046  
Gerry and Carol McDonald will host featuring a look at a clear-cut area performed six years ago to see tree regeneration. In addition, see other timber improvement areas and discuss the funding process used to support the efforts. We have transportation options for folks with limited mobility. The walk area has a roadway. Restroom available.

**RSVP to:** [happyinthehollow@gmail.com](mailto:happyinthehollow@gmail.com). Let us know if you need any accommodations to participate.

# Signs of Spring in the Forest

Photos by Katie Campbell-Nelson, March – April 2025 and 2026



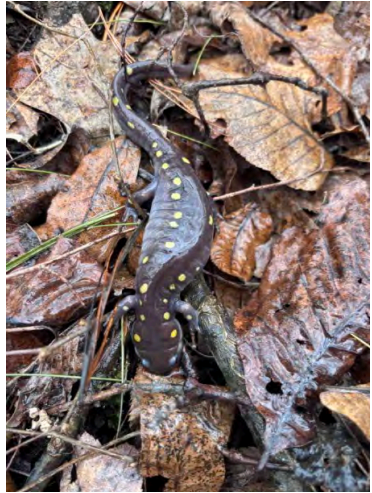
*log grown shiitake with pussywillow*



*Ramps ramping up!*



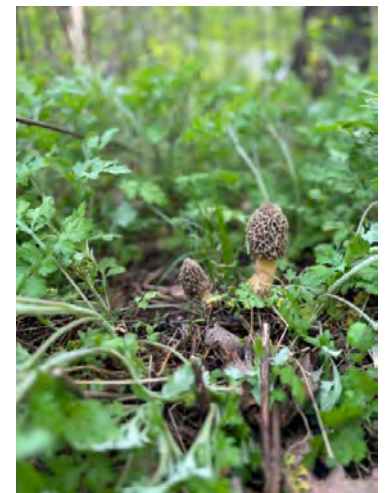
*Watercress in a shady spring*



*Yellow-spotted salamander after a spring rain*



*Oak boards cut on the portable sawmill, we can finally access now that the snow is gone.*



*Morels, yum! and mugwort, ugh.*

## Recipe: Ramp Butter and Morel Mushroom Spaghetti

Submitted by Carol MacDonald from a To-Table recipe by Charles Duke

For those who love the wild flavors of two spring companions, morel mushrooms and ramps, this is comfort food at its very best. It's even easier if you already have the ramp butter made in advance and ready to go. We love twirling long strands of spaghetti, but any pasta will do. You might be tempted to skip the toasted breadcrumbs, but please don't. The crispy crunch and warm, toasty-nutty flavor adds so much appeal that it would be an altogether different dish without them.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 lb fresh morel mushrooms
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 8 oz spaghetti (or other pasta)
- 4 Tbsp Ramp Butter (Find To-Table Ramps Here)
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- Toasted Bread Crumbs (see below)
- 2 Tbsp fresh chopped parsley

### PREPARATION:

When using fresh morels, clean them by immersing them in cold salted water for 15 - 20 minutes. This will help to remove any dirt or forest debris from the honeycomb-like body of the mushrooms and will also "encourage" any insect hitchhikers to vacate the premises. Lift the morels into a colander and gently rinse under cool running water. Lay out on a clean kitchen towel to drain completely.

Morels pan-fried in butter. What's not to like? Slice the morels lengthwise into halves or quarters, depending on size. Melt the 2 Tablespoons of butter in a large skillet over medium high heat. When it begins to bubble, add the morels. Cook until the morels have released their liquid and most of it has evaporated, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Cook the pasta according to instructions, then drain, reserving 1 cup of the pasta cooking water. Return the pasta to the pot along with 1/2 cup of the reserved cooking water, the ramp butter and the morels, along with their butter and juices, and cook over moderate heat until most of the liquid has been absorbed, about one to two minutes. If the pasta seems too dry, add more of the reserved cooking liquid. Divide the pasta and morels between serving plates and top generously with grated parmesan cheese, crisp toasted bread crumbs and fresh parsley.



*Ramp butter*

## Ramp Butter

First, because you will love them so much, finding ways to preserve them is an important consideration and exercise. One such way to freshly and easily do this is to make ramp butter. After a quick dip in boiling water (which helps to take the edge off their raw garlicky bite), ramps are pureed into creamy sweet butter, then rolled into thick logs to chill, locking in that unmistakable wild taste, until it's released in a warm, melting flood of flavor. Once made, ramp butter will keep for several weeks if kept tightly wrapped and refrigerated, but when kept frozen, ramp butter can be stored with no loss of flavor or quality for many, many months.

## Toasted Bread Crumb Topping:

- 1 cup panko or bread crumbs
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter
- sea salt to taste

Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add the panko or bread crumbs, stirring to coat evenly with the butter. Stir and shake the pan continuously until the crumbs are golden brown, 5 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and add salt to taste. Store any unused toasted crumbs in a tightly sealed container.

### Capitol District Chapter Steering Committee

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