



Association, Inc. 11 University Way, Suite 4, Brattleboro, VT 05301
802-257-7967 ext. 302

WOODLOT TIPS



Photo: Vlado
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FALL 2013

President's Column

By Margaret MacDonald

What's in a name? You tell us!

Over the years, WOA members and trustees have debated whether the word "Owners" in the organization's name deters people who do not own forestland from becoming members. Our mission, which appears in every issue of the newsletter "Woodlot Tips," explicitly states that "WOA is a non-profit association of woodland owners and managers, members of the wood products industry, and other interested parties in the Windham County Region who advocate both sustainable management

practices and the enjoyment of forests and their ecosystems." One option raised recently would be to add a second name: to become the "Woodland Owners Association, doing business as XXX." This, by the way, would not require us to submit a new application for 501(c)(3) status; legally, we would remain WOA.

While a name that doesn't include "owners" might increase the chance that some non-woodland owners would join WOA, alternatives also can carry problems. For example, suggestions to date include

“Windham County Woodlands Association” and “Southern Vermont Woodlands Association.” Although our membership is highly concentrated in Windham County, we also have members from other counties and even other states. “Southern Vermont” is a vague term; given where our trustees live, and our limited resources, we can’t organize programs in Bennington County, or expect Springfield residents to travel to programs in Guilford.

The trustees would like to hear your opinions on this topic. Do you have friends or neighbors who love our forests and would be interested in our pro-

grams, but believe that only woodland owners can become members of WOA? (I’ve had this conversation several times.) Do you think the option of an alternative name is worth pursuing? If so, do you have ideas for alternative names? Please send your thoughts to:

woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com

and the trustees will discuss your suggestions at the January 2014 board meeting.

Thank you in advance for sharing your thoughts, and happy winter holidays to all!

For membership information or email notices of upcoming programs, contact Carol Morrison, WOA Clerk, at woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com

WOA Annual Meeting October 5, 2013

by Barbara Cole and Margaret MacDonald

WOA held its Annual Meeting at the Riverledge Farm in Grafton. President George Weir introduced the staff of the Riverledge Foundation, Ltd., which was founded in 2009 to restore, preserve and protect Riverledge Farm and to facilitate conservation and historic preservation work in southern Vermont. We then headed out for the morning program, which began with a steep, seemingly unending, hike up to the Palmer Cellar Hole, which dates from the 1780s, where forester Andy Sheere of Long View Forest Contracting, Sidney Craven, Riverledge Foundation’s founder and president, and Andy Toepfer of Andrew Toepfer Natural Resource Mapping and Cartographic Services pointed out key features of the site and outlined the history of the building complex that had existed there.

Andy Sheere described the management plan for the woodland and last winter’s timber harvest as we examined cuts of various sizes with differing goals. Under the “small group selection” technique used, logger John Adler of Eagle Forest Improvement harvested

groups of trees in patches one-quarter to one-half acre in size, creating open areas to favor regeneration of hardwood species. The approach is designed to mimic natural disturbances; in the natural course of events, one percent of a forest area experiences some disturbance each year. The logger steam-cleaned his forwarder and harvester before starting a cut to make sure he did not contaminate the sites with invasive species. In 15 years, the loggers will expand existing gaps or start new ones. The plan is to treat approximately 10 acres at a time; the 100-year goal is a mixed-age forest.

As the cuts progress, a birder is carrying out a bird count, and Andy Toepfer is monitoring invasive species and keeping a history of how the forest is changing. He will assess forest cover and other vegetation before and after the cuts and perform an inventory every few years.

Andy Sheere then took us to a two-acre clearing in what used to be an even-aged stand. This particular



Heading out for the morning hike.

cut left some pines as seed sources and habitat for wildlife. Some sugar maple, white ash, and aspen are coming in, but the patch also has sprouted brambles and ferns. Andy noted that the logger left some debris because it was too expensive to remove, but this slash has helped to attract wildlife, including songbirds.



Grillmeisters Sam Schneski and Wim van Loon

When we returned from the heights, Grillmeisters Sam Schneski and Wim van Loon provided us with hot dogs and hamburgers (both meat and vegetarian). We ate our potluck luncheon in Riverledge Farm's restored big barn, and examined the artifacts gathered from the cellar hole site by a University of Vermont archaeology team. George Weir then presided over the WOA's annual business meeting (See Minutes, below). George briefly described some of the programs that WOA held in 2013, and noted that we have been called "The most successful woodland owners association in New England." He also recognized outgoing trustees: George himself is retiring after six consecutive years on the board (the last three as president), and Scholarship Committee Chair Jeremy Schrauf also is leaving the Board after six years of service.

George emphasized the importance of the WOA scholarship program, which each year awards scholarships to Windham County students who plan to pursue further studies in forestry. Trustee Barbara Cole pointed out a display of pictures and write-ups of recent past recipients and of this year's two award recipients: Marissa Ann Smith of Guilford, who is pursuing the Arboriculture Program at the University of Massachusetts Stockbridge School and plans to complete the

Photos: Andy Sheere

four-year Urban Forestry degree program, and Connor Hunt of Wilmington, a second-year student at Lyndon State whose goal is to become a Vermont State Game Warden. Barbara noted that Hayden Lake, an earlier scholarship recipient, was attending the meeting and currently works for George Weir.

Special guest Michael Snyder, Vermont State Commissioner of Forest, Parks and Recreation, discussed the importance of landowner efforts to the continued health of Vermont's forests — and of the state's economy. His visit represented the first time a Commissioner has attended a WOA annual meeting, and he welcomed the chance to get to know us. The commissioner noted that he and Tim Morton, another of our past scholarship recipients and now the department's Stewardship Forester in Springfield, had been college students together, and that Hayden Lake was one of his own students and was "awesome."

Snyder stressed the importance of an *owners'* association, since 85 percent of Vermont's forests are privately owned. However, he also noted that all Vermonters *can*, in fact, claim forest ownership — as taxpayers, they own the state and national park and forest lands.

The Commissioner noted that forest-related industries in Vermont bring in some \$1.4 billion each year, and foliage tours add another \$460 million. To the question Why do our forests look so good? he said the answer is because we've worked at it. The concept of the working landscape is catching on throughout the state.

The Commissioner also acknowledged that regulation on such topics as log landings and patch cuts already burdens forest owners; he and his colleagues believe "Let's get off their backs."



*Michael C. Snyder, Commissioner
Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation*

State senators are holding sessions on the Current Use program around the state; they report that all participants say, “I can’t do what I do without it.” A WOA member asked about abuses such as parking land in Current Use until the owner has the permits to subdivide it. Towns have tended to inflate the value of land to obtain more income, which encourages people to misuse the program to reduce their tax burden. Commissioner Snyder commented that in 2013 the state had to find another \$1.6 million in revenue; the Current Use Tax Coalition has stated that raising the penalty for such practices and fixing other abuses would bring in the necessary money.

The audience joined George Weir in thanking the Commissioner for attending our meeting, and for his work in promoting forest health in Vermont.

In the day’s final event, conservation biologist Steve Hagenbuch of Audubon Vermont handed out a fact sheet about “The Birder’s Dozen” — birds that depend on the Northern Atlantic forests for their breeding habitat, such as the wood thrush and the ovenbird. He then led us to one of several bird monitoring plots at Riverledge and explained the importance of providing mixed habitat to sustain various bird species. He directed our attention to three habitat levels: up to 6 feet above ground, between 6 and 30 feet, and 30 feet and above. He identified bird species that nest at each level and asked us to assess the habitat quality at each level. Ovenbirds only nest in the leaf litter on the ground, and all thrushes get their food from this layer. Most species nest in the 6–30 foot range, with the number of breeding pairs dependent on the amount of foliage. While 50 percent coverage is good, the number of birds increases as the coverage increases. Above 30 feet the most important factors are the existence of snags (standing dead trees) and the kinds of trees in the stand; different bird species have different preferences.

“Foresters for the Birds,” a partnership between Audubon Vermont and the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation, offers a toolkit with three components that inform foresters about how to integrate bird and timber management.

- *Birds with Silviculture in Mind: Birder’s Dozen Pocket Guide for Vermont Foresters*
- *Forest Bird Habitat Assessment: A Guide to Integrating Bird Habitat Data into a Vermont Forest Inventory*
- *Silviculture with Birds in Mind: Options for Integrating Timber and Songbird Habitat Management in Northern Hardwood Stands in Vermont*

This last publication, which examines the specific attributes of the forest that draws birds, is now an accepted reference for Land Use plans. Audubon Vermont also has published a book for landowners, *Managing Your Woods with Birds in Mind*. To learn more, or to download or purchase publications, visit Audubon Vermont’s website:

<http://www.vt.audubon.org>

The patch cuts at Riverledge Farm have created early successional habitat, the best breeding and pre-migration habitat. On all of the monitoring sites, Audubon tracks the effect of cuts on both vegetation and birds. An assessment was made after the harvest and Audubon will conduct surveys every three years.

Steve stressed that landowners should not think of bird habitat as a separate aspect of forest planning or as an additional burden. Instead, they can integrate plans for bird habitat into their overall forest management plans simply by taking account of how different approaches – for instance, leaving slash on the ground after a harvest or allowing snags to remain standing – will affect different species of birds.

In August the Windham Foundation held a retreat on “Vermont’s Forest Economy: Advancing Creativity and Entrepreneurship in Value-Added Forest Products.” Topics included sustainable commercial activity, biomass for heating, and creating new forest products. You can download a PDF of the conference report from <http://www.windham-foundation.org/programs/grafon-conferences/reports.html>

The legislature has created the Working Landscape Enterprise Initiative, which will award \$1.2 million worth of grants next year to small farm and forest enterprises and service providers. At the WOA annual meeting, Commissioner Snyder urged us to spread the word about the program: the Initiative wants startups and innovators to apply. For more information on the grants and how to apply, see <http://workinglands.vermont.gov/>

MINUTES — WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING
October 5, 2013

The meeting was brought to order at 12:45 pm. by President George Weir.

Program Committee — Bill Guenther reviewed programs presented by WOA over the past year and reminded members that the Big Tree Tour would be presented this year on October 26th. He encouraged members to send program ideas to him or to any other trustee.

George introduced the trustees, explaining that Woodland Owners strives to have trustees who represent diverse aspects of woodland use in Windham County, including ownership, forestry, lumbering, and wood products industries. The county foresters, Bill Guenther and Sam Schneski, are members *ex officio*.

Scholarship Committee — Committee Chair Barbara Cole reported that scholarships for the 2013–2014 academic year had been awarded to 2013 recipient Connor Hunt, and new recipient Marissa Smith. Information on these and prior recipients was displayed at the WOA booth at

Strolling of the Heifers, and the raffle of a beautiful wooden bowl created by trustee Pete Wimmelman brought about \$400.00 to the scholarship fund.

Newsletter Committee — Former trustee Barbara Evans and trustee Margaret Macdonald co-chair the Committee. They encourage members to submit articles to the newsletter.

Nominating Committee — Bill Guenther reported that, in accordance with the Woodland Owners Bylaws, two trustees who had served consecutive terms must retire from the Board: George Weir and Jeremy Schrauf. John Caveney is eligible to serve a second term and has agreed to do so. Four members were nominated to be trustees: Grafton consulting forester Hayden Lake, who works with George Weir; State Lands Forester Aaron Hurst; dairy farmer, sugarmaker and owner of a 350-acre woodlot Ross Thurber, and logger with Long View Forestry, Dan Healey. The nominees were voted in.

Secretary’s Report — The Secretary’s Report was approved as written.

Treasurer’s Report — George presented the treasurer’s report and the budget, which were approved as presented.

OTHER BUSINESS

Linda Lyon told the membership that Woodland Owners Association is considering adopting a “doing business as” name which better reflects its mission serving the interests of those who love the woods rather than only of owners of woodland. Suggestions for a new name will be requested in the next newsletter. Woodland Owners Association has a website in progress, so it is a good time to change the name.

The business meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol R. Morrison

WOA Trustees	
John Caveney	Brattleboro
Barbara Cole	Wilmington
Phil Edelstein	Whitingham
Dan Healey	Logger, Long View Forest Contracting
Aaron Hurst	Vt. State Lands Forester
Hayden Lake	Grafton Consulting Forester
Linda Lyon	Brattleboro
Willem van Loon	Guilford
Margaret MacDonald, president	Newfane
Sam Rowley, vice president	Brattleboro
Ross Thurber	Brattleboro
Diana Todd	Halifax
Bob Twitchell	So. Londonderry
Phyllis Wertz, treasurer	Bellows Falls
Pete Wimmelman	Wilmington
Ex Officio	
Gil Cameron	Brattleboro
Bill Guenther	County Forester, Brattleboro
Sam Schneski	County Forester, Springfield
Clerk	
Carol Morrison	Dummerston

Who is the Woodland Owners Association?

WOA trustee or member profiles continue so members can learn more about WOA through interesting stories about connection to and stewardship of Windham County forestland. To share your profile or story of your land, email Carol Morrison at woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com with Profiles in the subject line.

Trustees

A. Robert (Bob) Twitchell — After my mother passed away in 2010, my brother and I inherited the 200-acre home farm in South Londonderry. It includes a 160-acre woodlot. We had previously inherited the farm where my father's mother grew up. It's a 270-acre woodlot located in Landgrove, a mile to the north of the home farm.

In 1950 Donnis Lumber Company had set up a mill twice on the Landgrove land. They cut every softwood tree they could find. In 1956 my father purchased a Ford tractor instead of buying another horse to replace the one that had just died. That year most of the hardwood was cut to pay for the new tractor.

After haying was done that summer, we did some logging for tax money with the new tractor. I can remember coming out of the woods with a log hitched to the draw bar and the front wheels mostly in the air! In '57, for the last time, I mowed a field that was not very productive hay land. We let the trees grow. The rest of the woodlot was pasture.

That field and most of the pastureland came back to White Pine. I have since thinned that field

twice. Although my favorite tree is sugar maple, White Pine is by far the major species on the farm.

About 1980, when the Use Value Program started, I took over management of the family lands, doing the management plans, marking, and logging. There have been over one million board feet cut since 1980. Now there are perhaps two million ready to be cut. I hope no hurricanes pass through!

Like many landowners I'm facing the question: What happens to the land after I'm gone? I have no children, only three nephews that don't seem to be in a position to take over.

My first recollection of WOA was a field trip I went on with my father in the early '50s. The site was across Scott Bridge in Townshend. Gil Cameron was discussing growing pine for cooperage, from which wooden barrels were made. The branch whorls had to be spaced far apart to be acceptable for this market. WOA has been a source of timber management knowledge for me ever since.

Hayden Lake — I grew up in Grafton, Vermont, and from a young age watched my father, Tracy, and grandfather, Norman, work in the woods logging. At the Putney School I was first exposed to ecological study, plant biology, and other subjects that nudged me in the direction of studying forestry. Taking a detour to Boston after finishing high school, I lived for just over two years playing music and attending art school. Once the appeal of urban life inevitably wore off, I came back to the Green Mountains to get a degree in forestry at the University of Vermont.

Now for about five years I have worked as a consulting forester primarily in Windham Coun-

ty. I live in Putney where I recently acquired a small parcel of land and am building a house there. In Spring I help friends and neighbors with sugaring. In Summer I tend to a large (prohibitively so) vegetable garden. Fall brings duck hunting and firewood processing. And in the Winter you might see me on the ski slopes, or, more likely, next to the woodstove with an issue of Northern Woodlands.

I am excited to become more involved in the Woodland Owners Association which my family has been a member of for many years. My favorite tree would have to be white oak (*Quercus alba*).

Linda Lyon — I live near the Green River in Halifax with my husband, therapy dog Rocky, and service-dog-in-training Ozzie. Our woodlot on Ballou Mountain, which is in the Current Use Program, is rich in hardwood and conifer diversity. Our goal is to manage our land for firewood; recreation, including hiking, birding, and snowshoeing; wildlife habitat; and promotion of less common native species. I

recently retired from my position as an environmental toxicologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I now look forward to spending less time studying contaminated sites and more time in the forests of Vermont. It is difficult to name just one favorite tree, but I have long been particularly fond of pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) for its form and function.

Phyllis Weltz, Treasurer — As the wife of Hans Weltz, former WOA Treasurer, for many years I helped Hans with the Treasurer's Reports. When I was asked to continue after Hans' death 13 years ago, I was happy to come aboard as Treasurer. I have a 150-acre woodlot with a barn in Newfane, and am so thankful for all the help I have received from the WOA in caring for this wonderful parcel of land. I still enjoy working as a "para-educator" at the

Bellows Falls Middle School. My two sons and their families live in Georgia and Florida, respectively, so they don't get a chance to visit that often. However, their father's dream of keeping the land in the Current Use Program will continue in the future. I really don't have a "favorite" tree and just appreciate them all — especially in the Fall, when the colors are spectacular!

Diana Todd — My husband and I own a house and forested land in Halifax that directly abuts land that has been in his family since 1954. In our early married life we lived in Brattleboro, but we've lived in the Washington, D.C., suburbs for the past 24 years. We hope to retire to Halifax within a few years. We are committed to using our woodlands to help meet

our society's needs for wood and wood products. We also want to enhance our bit of forest to encourage a wide variety of wildlife. One of my favorite winter activities is following animal tracks in the snow. My favorite tree is the wild apple — an alien species in North America, but one that has been a boon to wildlife instead of a bane.

Dan Healey — I live in Brattleboro with my wife and two young sons. I have worked in the woods since 2002. First in the White Mountain National Forest as a seasonal trail worker, moving south in the winters to log for Long View Forest in Windham County. After six years of running my own business, I am again employed by Long View Forest in Westminster, leading their Woodland Services divi

sion. My focus is arboriculture, small custom logging and invasive plant control. I look forward to bringing my expertise to the board and am excited to work amongst a committed group of forest stewards and enthusiasts. I am also a Vermont Forest Pest First Detector, volunteering my time to outreach, early detection and management concerning our region's forest pests. Please feel free to be in touch!

Bill Guenther, County Forester, (ex officio) — Since childhood, I dreamed of being a forester. The woods were my playground, my refuge, and where I felt a special spiritual connection. As a student at UVM, one outdoor session in the Timber Harvesting course changed my whole life and career path. We were out with Bill Hall, longtime Chittenden County Forester. He had a gleam in his eyes that was magical and his love for his work was very obvious. That evening, I made the decision that one day I hoped to

be worthy enough to be one of the 12 Vermont County Foresters. In December 1986, longtime Windham County Forester Gil Cameron retired. In January 1987, my dream came true when I was selected to be the Windham County Forester. And now, 26 years later, I have grown to love my adopted county (even though my friends up north kidded me that I was moving to the "banana belt") and enjoy its rich diversity of forests and people. And I'm still having fun!! My favorite tree? Yellow birch!

Jamaica Cottage Shop Tour

By Barbara S. Evans, editor, Woodlot Tips, and former WOA trustee

At the end of August, a few WOA members turned up for a wonderful afternoon tour of the Jamaica Cottage Shop. The facility (the old Smith Sawmill, which closed in 2001) is two miles north of the Shop's original location. The business is the brainchild of Dominic Mangano, the energetic founder, owner, and senior designer. We strolled around peering into all the samples — a chicken coop, an outhouse, a building with a screened porch, many variations of the basic sheds for storage, woodpiles, garden equipment, and more.

Beginning in 1995, Dominic's early efforts were to build a lot of doghouses from scrap lumber and short pieces from the sawmill, and then drive around selling them right from his Subaru. Now all the work is done indoors at the 70,000 square foot facility, and the product line includes a large selection of sturdily constructed little buildings. They are sold either fully assembled or as pre-cut kits, with hardware and other components included. Construction materials vary, from green hemlock to kiln-dried Eastern White Pine for custom siding. Some stock kits include pressure-treated southern pine, although most of the lumber is locally sourced. Some 70 percent of the orders are custom, and the rest are kits shipped all over the U.S. and Canada. It is usually two to three weeks to delivery.

The kits are pre-cut post and beam lumber, prepared by Vermont craftsmen; there usually are 15 or 16 employees. Customers can choose from a variety of features such as door, window, and siding types; a loft or closet; insulation space;

woodstove capability, and special orders like shutter designs or window boxes. Flexibility is key, as "sheds" also can be built with termite shields or hurricane packages. One North Carolina testimonial after a big storm wrote that they should have chained the house to the shed!

The pieces for the basic "Vermont" kit are cut and color coded, and when all the components are ready, the whole thing is shrink wrapped and labeled for shipping. Fully assembled buildings less than 15 feet high can be shipped throughout New England (limited by road regulations elsewhere). A special trailer with two sets of tires at right angles enables the truck to get close to the destination property and actually spin the building for ease of offloading.

This summer, the biggest seller was outhouses for second homes. Other highlights are a custom building to be used as writer's haven, and even the office of a Maine nonprofit.

Dominic has steadily improved the old sawmill buildings for efficient operations and durability, and he recently modified one of the site's warehouses to include a second storey office and living quarters. When asked how the business does financially, he laughed and answered with a quote that if you want to make a million dollars in the lumber industry, start with ten million!

More background information and a current catalog can be found at www.jamaicacottageshop.com.



Dominic Mangano,
Owner and Senior Designer, Jamaica Cottage Shop, home of Vermont post and beam shed kits in many styles and price ranges. The outhouse is a popular style for second-home owners.

Photos: Barbara Evans



WOODLAND SECRET #12 — FERNS

By Arthur H. Westing, Former WOA Trustee

Ferns are a rather frequent component of our woodland groundcover, helping to stabilize the soil, contributing to the ecosystem's nutrient cycling, but not being much used by wildlife. They are the highest of what are often referred to as the lower plants: they do not produce flowers and fruits, but they do have a plumbing (vascular) system that brings the water with its dissolved minerals up from the soil, and distributes throughout the plant the food (dissolved sugars) produced in the green cells.

Ferns reproduce either asexually (vegetatively) by sending up new stalks from their generally horizontal underground stems (rhizomes), or else sexually by producing spores which in turn drop and develop into tiny new plants (gametophytes) [gameto- = sex cell; -phyte = plant] that then produce the equivalent of sperm and egg cells (male and female gametes) which subsequently fuse and then divide to form the fern plants (sporophytes) we see. Here in Vermont the ferns are non-woody (herbaceous) perennials, although some woody tree ferns do exist in the tropics and semi-tropics (and were quite common on earth about 300 million years ago during the Carboniferous Period, with many of them turning into the coal or oil we use so profligately to our detriment today).

A fern's leaves are known as "fronds"; young developing fronds are known as "fiddleheads." Here are a few of the more common woodland ferns to be found in our area:

Hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*): Fronds *thrice cut* (tripinnate) up to 16 inches [41 cm] long. Found in open areas or semi-shaded openings in woods in large patches that spread vegetatively — *those patches preventing tree seedlings from*

becoming established. Named "hay-scented" because of the odor when a frond is crushed.

Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*): Fronds *once cut* (pinnate), up to 24 inches [61 cm] long. Often found in deciduous semi-shaded woods. Named "Christmas" because the fronds stay green through Christmas (and beyond). Eaten during harsh winters when other food is scarce by a variety of wildlife including especially Ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) and Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*).

Interrupted fern (*Osmunda claytoniana*): Fronds *twice cut* (bipinnate), up to 38 [97 cm] long. Found in wet or dry open woodland sites. Named "interrupted" because the leaflets on fertile fronds are interrupted by a section of short dark brown spore-bearing leaflets.

Bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*): Fronds *thrice cut* (tripinnate), up to 36 inches [91 cm] long, with three distinct triangular sections. Often found in dry deciduous woods and rocky places. One of the frost-sensitive ferns.

Maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*): Fronds fan-shaped and graceful, up to 16 inches [41 cm] long, with five or more leaflets. Not so common, being found primarily in moist limey (calcareous) woodland soils, and thus *indicative of rich sites*.

Finally, please note that **Sweet-fern** (*Comptonia peregrina*) is *not* a fern, but rather a higher plant (a woody deciduous shrub), so named because it looks a bit like a fern and because of the odor when a leaf is crushed.

A Close Encounter with a Black Bear — Yet Another Surreal Wildlife Interaction!

By Bill Guenther, County Forester

On a hot muggy evening this summer, I took a walk out to the backyard to plan the next phase of my firewood project, involving lots of cleanup

from all the trees cut near the house. The project produced several tons of brush and the plan was to get it all stacked for some big fall bonfires.

After a few minutes, I heard a rustling noise in the woods and went to investigate. At first, I suspected a “hedgehog,” a.k.a. a porcupine (A porcupine is actually a rodent and not in the hedgehog family, but Vermont slang often uses the term to describe that quill-filled critter that walks like he’s drunk.) Once in the woodlot, I heard a loud thump and out of the corner of my eye saw a tree branch hit the ground. I first looked at an understory hemlock, figuring that’s where “Porky” would be. Then I noticed a movement high in the sky. About 65–70 feet up in a towering red maple was a large black bear, way out on a rotted limb. He was going for the ants that were feeding on the rotted wood.

The branch that hit the ground broke off when the bear got “way out on a limb.” While bears have an incredibly acute sense of smell, their eyesight is not one of their strong senses, and he did not see me. I moved closer, to about 25 feet from the tree, watching the bear focusing on his insect meal up on his precarious perch. I was still undetected and could see the limb he was on start to move. I figured this was not going to end well; in a fall from that height, he was not likely to bounce up and walk away, and I would have a wounded bear on my hands.

My first thought was that after the fall, I’d have to go in the house and get the AR-15 out and put an end to his misery, if he was still alive after the 70-foot fall. Then it would be a call to Game Warden Kelly Price and the sadness that one of these awesome *Ursa* creatures checked out.

Instead, I decided I would carefully make my presence known and hope that he got spooked to come down. I backed up about 20 feet and gave some soft hoots, which he initially ignored, but finally his head moved in my direction. He looked right at me with a look of total surprise and at first was not sure what to do, so he just froze. Then, after a few seconds, like a flash he came bounding down the tree bottom first. Within about 10 feet of the ground, he jumped off the tree, his legs frantically moving forward even before he hit the ground. He took off like a shot and was out of sight in about two seconds. And yes, bears really can run up to about 35 mph, so you’ll never outrun one of them. I went over to the tree and could see where his claws scratched it on the way down and the divot he left where he hit the ground. As I digested the evening’s events I smiled and said to myself, “yep, another good happening with a happy ending up on the mountain.”

During the Big Tree Tour, Larry Wood of Putney spoke about the fact that that Catalpa trees can be grown from seed. The trees grow to around 20 feet tall in ten years but can grow much larger in a warmer climate. They have very large leaves that provide shade and good habitat for birds. The long seed pods are dropped during the summer months. He later sent these instructions.

How to Grow Catalpa Trees from Seed

1. Pick the bean-like seed pods from an existing Catalpa tree in the Fall months. Hold each pod over a piece of paper and split it open using your fingers. Scrape the seeds out of the pod.
2. Pour the seeds into a plastic storage bag and place the bag into a refrigerator that maintains a temperature of 34 degrees F. Keep the seeds in this location for three weeks.
3. Fill a seed tray with potting soil until it reaches ½ inch from the top of the tray.
4. Remove the seeds from the refrigerator. Poke holes in the soil that are ¼ inch deep and insert one Catalpa seed into each hole. Cover the holes with soil.

5. Water the soil daily and keep it constantly moist until the seeds germinate. Afterwards water the plants when the soil surface feels dry.

6. Wait until the plants reach approximately 3–4 inches tall and dig them out of the seed tray gently, using



Catalpa leaves and seedpods

your fingers. Insert one Catalpa tree seedling into a 5–6 inch diameter plant pot filled with potting soil.

7. Water the Catalpa seeds as needed throughout the winter months and keep them in an indoor location or greenhouse until the threat of frost has passed in the Spring.

8. Select an outdoor planting location that is in full sun. Catalpa seeds will grow in all types of soil, but prefer slightly moist locations.

9. Dig a hole with a shovel that is large enough to accommodate the root of the seedling and insert the roots of the Catalpa into the hole. Fill in the hole with soil and water the soil until it is moist.

Beech and Hardwood Regeneration

By Sam Schneski, County Forester

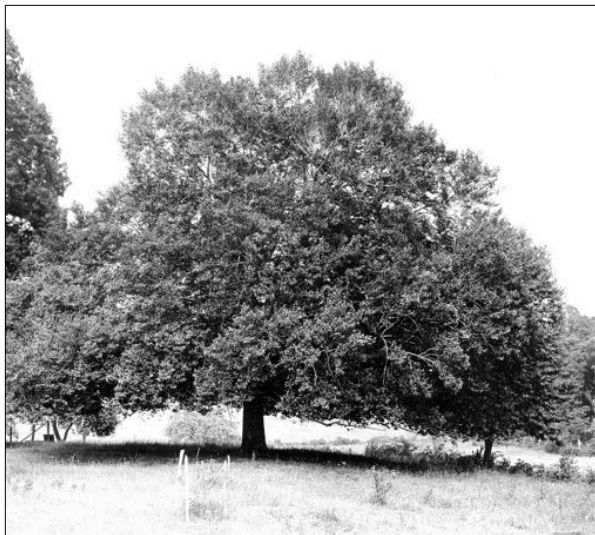
American beech, *Fagus grandifolia*, can be an extremely important tree for many species of wildlife.

Beech nuts in particular are an important source of protein for reproducing female bears. The nuts contain twice the fat content of white oak acorns and the same fat content of red oak acorns. Besides black bears, some other species that benefit from beech mast production are deer, turkey, ruffed grouse, and many species of small mammals and birds. Once through the hard husk, beech nuts can also be a tasty snack for humans!

As a forester I struggle with beech in stands that have reached maturity or have lack of structural diversity. American beech is a shade tolerant tree, which according to the Society of American Foresters means having the capacity to compete for survival under shaded conditions. It can reproduce from seed or root sucker (sprout from its roots). Suckering is often enhanced when wounds on shallow roots are created through ground disturbance or occurs following the death or decline of a beech tree.

The first step when working in stands with a beech component is to assess the mature beech trees. If there are any stems that are not afflicted by beech bark disease (BBD) I try to stay away from mark-

ing them for removal with the hope that they are somehow genetically resistant to BBD and ultimately more resistant trees will become established as a result. Beech bark disease is the result of a scale insect followed by a fungus which ultimately leads to the death of the tree. It's fair to say that almost every hardwood stand in Windham County has beech in it. And of those stands, all of them have some beech with beech bark disease present.



Let's not forget about the invasive plants and the deer! Regenerating a northern hardwood stand or creating a mosaic of age classes within the stand is one thing, but, add in high levels of deer browse and presence of aggressive successful exotic invasive plants and it gets extremely difficult. When it comes time to introduce a new age class what do we do? My answer is, it depends. It depends on landowner's

goals and objectives (wildlife, recreation, timber...), the relative abundance of beech in the stand, the presence or lack of exotic invasives in the immediate vicinity, the amount of "micro managing within the stand" the landowner is willing to do or pay for to be done, the density of deer in the area, the quality of soil, and the willingness or lack of willingness to use chemicals.

I'll address these seven points in the next newsletter..

Photo: E.R. Mosher @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION

11 University Way, Suite 4
Brattleboro, VT 05301-3669

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Mission of Woodland Owners Association

WOA is a non-profit association of woodland owners and managers, members of the wood products industry, and other interested parties in the Windham County Region who advocate both sustainable management practices and the enjoyment of forests and their ecosystems. In support of these ends, WOA offers educational opportunities for all age groups. Areas of interest include: biodiversity; clean air and water; cultural and historic resources; fair and equitable taxation of woodland; forest products; recreation; scenic beauty; and wildlife habitat. We recognize that these concepts are continually evolving and therefore will strive to consider the most current thinking and values regarding them.