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# WOODLOT TIPS



Photo: FreeDigitalPhotos.net

## SPRING 2015

### Programs

#### Saturday, June 6 — Strolling of the Heifers

Windham Regional Woodlands Association will have a booth with interesting information and materials about our forests. And once again there will be a raffle of a beautiful wooden bowl in support our Scholarship Fund. (See inside for photo and details.) If you can help staff the WRWA booth for an hour or so, please e-mail [windhamwoodlands@gmail.com](mailto:windhamwoodlands@gmail.com)

### **Friday, August 7 — 5:30 p.m. Tour of Vernon's Unique Black Gum Swamps**

On Friday evening, August 7, County Forester Bill Guenther will lead a walking tour of the famous black gum swamps located on J. Maynard Miller Memorial Town Forest in Vernon. This is a unique forest that supports a fairly extensive system of several swamps that include black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*). This species is not rare 400 miles to the south, but in Vermont it is a fluke from the past when the climate was warmer. There are some trees here that are purported to be over 400 years old. We will walk a fairly easy loop trail around the main swamp and explore the unique ecology that this forest offers. The walk will be held rain or shine. In fact, this one is almost better in the rain, as the forest has what Bill has always felt to be a medieval-like quality.

Maynard Miller, a local dairy farmer, for whom the forest is named, convinced the town back in the early 70s of the importance of this tract and persuaded the town to buy it to ensure its permanent protection. Unfortunately Mr. Miller passed away in the late 90s. We'll miss his presence as he usually accompanied groups out to his beloved forest.

The tour is sponsored by the Windham Regional Woodlands Association (formerly the Woodland Owners Association) We will meet at 5:30 and depart at 5:40 sharp at the cul-de-sac parking at the Miller Forest. To get there, travel south on Rte. 142 from Brattleboro, going past Vernon Village. After going a bit over a mile from the Village, make a RIGHT turn onto Pond Road and go under the train overpass. Travel down Pond Road to Huckle Hill Road (town swimming pool is on your left) and make a RIGHT onto Huckle Hill Rd. When you come to a fork, go RIGHT onto Basin Road and go to its terminus at the paved parking lot. While the trail is a fairly easy walk, we always encourage participants to wear sturdy walking shoes or boots. We will complete our walk around 7:30 p.m.

For more information please contact Windham County Forester Bill Guenther at 257-7967 x305 or by email at [bill.guenther@state.vt.us](mailto:bill.guenther@state.vt.us).

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## **SAVE THESE DATES!**

### **Saturday, September 19 — WRWA Annual Meeting**

This year the Annual Meeting will be in the Kiwanis Pavilion at Living Memorial Park. Later in the summer there will be detailed information about registration, program speakers, etc. The meeting, with good company and good food, always attracts a crowd, so mark your calendars!

### **Saturday, November 7 — The Big Tree Tour**

It is never too early to mark your calendars for County Forester Bill Guenther's Big Tree Tour. It only happens every two years, so if you have never participated, this year is your chance. Details will be forthcoming as the itinerary becomes final.

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***Make a note:** The new e-mail address for the Windham Regional Woodlands Association is [windhamwoodlands@gmail.com](mailto:windhamwoodlands@gmail.com)*

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**Windham Regional Woodlands Association  
Bowl 'n' Jug Raffle**

**TWO DRAWINGS!  
TWO WINNERS!  
TWO PRIZES!**



**A BEAUTIFUL  
VERMONT BOWL COMPANY\*  
BOWL  
9½" diameter x 5" deep**



**ONE QUART JUG  
County Forester Sam Schneski's  
wild grown, free range, solar fed,  
sustainably made, 100% pure  
MAPLE SYRUP**

**Proceeds from this raffle will benefit the  
*Windham Regional Woodlands Association  
Scholarship Program*  
helping young people further their education  
in the fields of Forestry and Natural Resources.**

**Tickets for this raffle are \$2.00 each or 6 for \$10.00 and will be available at the Windham Regional Woodlands Association booth on The Common at the Strolling of the Heifers, Saturday June 6<sup>th</sup> 2015. Drawing will be at 4:00 pm. Choice of prize to winner of first drawing, remaining prize to winner of second drawing. Winners need not be present. For more information: [windhamwoodlands@gmail.com](mailto:windhamwoodlands@gmail.com)**

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**\* *The Vermont Bowl Company, 111 West Mail Street, Wilmington, VT 05363 / [www.vermontbowl.com](http://www.vermontbowl.com)***

## President's Column

*By Sam Rowley*

Spring has finally arrived! As we leave mud season behind, buds are breaking and flowering trees are filling the air with pollen. This pollen may cause adverse reactions to some but are vitally important to our native and domesticated pollinators. Honey bees and other pollinators are happy to collect this first offering of food to help nourish and build a strong colony to later support our varied tree and plant species. Alders, Willows, and Maples are the first to make this offering to feed our much needed pollinators.

At the school where I work, my class has started cleaning up the remnants of winter. We have early plans to plant a small orchard on campus. We have been helping plant onions at a nearby farm and are all amazed at the garlic we planted last fall poking up through the straw. The dormant pruning season has passed, and the optimum window to graft trees is quickly closing. Winter damage to trees is now fully visible, caused mainly by weather and animals.

This winter seemed to be a particularly bad one for fruit tree girdling. I have heard many reports of people's young fruit trees sustaining major damage from rodents. Girdling is when the cambium, the bark or outer layer of a tree, has been cut or removed all around the trunk or stem and cuts off the transfer of nutrients. The part of a tree that is girdled may look like it may make it because water can still get to the tree, but important sugars cannot pass, and the part that is girdled will usually die. The deep snowpack of the winter aided these critters' accessibility to dine on our precious trees.

The Windham Regional Woodlands Association came out of the winter as strong as ever. Many excellent programs kept the winter blues at bay and provided great social and educational gather-

ings. Our program committee has been working diligently to offer wonderful opportunities to our members and the community. Mark your calendars and make time this spring and summer for our informative and fun programs.

The WRWA's new name change has spurred a flood of overdue change. The changes we are making are intended to better the organization with a goal to produce better functionality, outward appearance, and efficiency while continuing to offer the quality programs and education we stand for. For the WRWA to continue offering the programs, scholarships, and newsletters in an increasingly expensive world, we have decided to make the difficult decision to raise our dues. The affordable price of \$10 has been the membership dues for longer than I can remember. The trustees decided to increase the dues to \$20 to better cover costs and ensure our organization's future. I feel the increase is still affordable and really a bargain for what we offer and provide. I hope you will continue to support us with this increase when the dues notice goes out this summer.

Other WRWA changes include working on our website, keeping our budget tight, increasing membership, supporting our community, and revising our bylaws. The bylaws have been unchanged for too long and need revision to reflect the current times. We will vote on these changes at the annual meeting in September.

I am proud to work with the trustees and members of this organization to keep our woodlands healthy, productive, and enjoyable for as long as we inhabit this earth. Please support us by staying a member, telling your friends, and attending our programs. I hope to see you at a program this summer and the Annual Meeting this fall.

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## Winter Tree Identification Program

*By Linda Lyon, WRWA trustee*

The sky was blue, the snow was deep, and the air was crisp on February twenty-first, when about 20 people gathered on Ballou Mountain in Halifax for a program on winter tree identification. County

Forester Bill Guenther led the group on a snowshoe tour on the land of Linda Lyon and Everett Wilson. Ballou Mountain, the second highest hill in Halifax, has a notable diversity of hardwood

and softwood trees. This is partially due to elevation change. Also, in a landscape that is dominated by acidic soils, there are patches of more basic soils.

Bill reviewed the fundamentals of winter tree identification, such as distinguishing between conifers and hardwoods. For hardwoods, he showed us how to distinguish between those species that have alternate (e.g., birches) versus opposite (e.g., maples) branching patterns. Bill then shared tips for recognizing differences in buds, growth forms, and bark colors and patterns. By the end of the morning, we had learned fifteen species of trees including birches (white, yellow, and black), maples (sugar, striped, and red), white pine, hemlock, and red oak.

After the snowshoeing, we gathered inside for hot cider and a potluck lunch. That provided an opportunity to discuss various forestry topics including chain saw tips and preferred methods of stacking firewood. If you couldn't join us this year, you'll have another opportunity, as we plan to offer the program again in February 2016.

*County Forester Bill Guenther*



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## **2015 Sugarhouse Tour – Franklin Farm**

*By Margaret MacDonald*

At 10 a.m. on the first full day of spring, with snow stubbornly falling outside, David Franklin and his son John fired up the Franklin Farm's new VORTEX evaporator just for the benefit of WRWA members. The sap was frozen in the pans when we arrived, and while we waited for it to thaw, David and John handed out samples of "delicate" grade syrup from a recent run and answered questions about their sugaring operation.

They explained that the evaporator has an exceptionally large firebox that allows them to boil 160 gallons of sap in an hour and produces very little smoke. The VORTEX's Revolution pans allow the Franklins to reverse the flow of sap during the boiling process simply by manipulating four valves on one side of the evaporator rather than having to change pans; syrup is always drawn from the same side of the pan. This design maximizes available space in the sugarhouse and limits the accumulation of sugar sand during the boil.

This year the Franklins set out 2,770 taps in their 60-acre woodlot in February, with 800+ taps off the main line. To increase the sap yield, they have put in dry lines to raise the vacuum at the taps. However, given the exceptionally cold winter,

they had made only 117 gallons of syrup so far this season (the comparable figures for 2014 and 2013 were 122 and 289, respectively).

At 10:40 the sap in the pans was hot enough for David to add some to the float box and thaw the ice that had accumulated there. John then threw the switch to activate the blowers, and the sugarhouse was soon filled with maple-scented steam, while impressive clouds of steam billowed out from the roof of the sugarhouse. The sap boiled vigorously, occasionally splashing over the sides of the 350-gallon tank. Every 15 minutes an alarm clock signaled John to turn off the blowers and stoke the firebox.

David and John continued to point out features of their sugarhouse and the equipment and to answer our questions while we waited for the boiling sap to shed enough water content to become syrup. At 11:20 David drew off a sample, measured the sugar density, and was pleased to discover that the sugar content exceeded the 66% minimum required for maple syrup. John poured the bucket of syrup through a double felt and paper filter to capture any impurities, and then the syrup was ready to be put in jugs and sold to lucky consumers.

The Franklins sell their syrup, as well as eggs and other produce from their organic farm, at a family farm stand. So even if you missed the tour, you can still buy their syrup. (I did – and three of my friends will soon be smacking their lips.)

WRWA thanks David, John, and Mary Ellen

Franklin for their willingness to give our members a special demonstration of their sugaring operation on a day when they would otherwise not have bothered boiling. We hope that the remainder of the sugaring season more than made up for the slow start produced by this unusually cold winter.

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## Woodland Secret No. 18 — Two Self-Guided Nature Trails

*By Arthur H. Westing, Former Trustee*

A number of self-guided nature trails have been established in our area, with the two I know best being singled out here for description (and with three others referred to at the end).

We are, indeed, fortunate that the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association (WHPA) maintains two self-guided nature trails on its lands (comprising an over 1,800 acre [728 ha] Reserve, conserved in perpetuity via the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board together with the Vermont Land Trust). Both of these trails are located within the Town of Westminister. Directions to trailheads (access points) and trail maps for the entire WHPA Reserve are available at the various trailheads and can also be found on the WHPA website <[www.windmillhillpinnacle.org](http://www.windmillhillpinnacle.org)>. Both trails described here require adequate hiking footwear. Please also note that motorized vehicles are not permitted in the WHPA Reserve.

***A Walk Through Time:*** This is a 3.7-mile [6.0 km] counterclockwise round-trip trail with an elevational gain of 458 foot [140 m] that begins and ends at 1026 Windmill Hill Road North (and is marked successively with red, white, blue, and red disks). There are 15 interpretive stations along the way (1-6; 8-16), with a descriptive brochure of these available at the trailhead (and soon also on the WHPA website). Please note that any accompanying dogs must be kept under control. Be further aware that this woodland is open to hunting in season. The trail, which emphasizes the combined natural and cultural history of the second-growth northern hardwood forest through which it runs, was initially created in 2004 as a seventh and eighth grade project of the Compass School in Westminister, and has been subsequently revised and expanded somewhat by WHPA trustees.

This trail runs through lands that until acquired by WHPA in 1999 had been in one family's continuous ownership since pre-revolutionary times. There are numerous indications that over the decades this area had variously supported a busy subsistence farming community, logging operations, and extensive sheep pastures. At about the midpoint of the trail, at the top of the Pinnacle (Westminister's highest elevation), there is a panoramic westerly view; and also a lean-to (plus outhouse) available upon reservation for overnight stays. Nearby is a locally rare ecotype, a savanna supporting Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), Hophornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*), and sedges.

***The Dunn Nature Trail:*** This is a 1.33-mile [2.1 km] counterclockwise round-trip trail with an elevational gain of 150 feet [46 m] that begins and ends at 1522 Bemis Hill Road (and is marked with blue disks). There are 14 interpretive stations along the way, with two descriptive brochures of these available at the trailhead (and soon also on the WHPA website), both an elementary one and an advanced one of 32 pages. This project was established in 2006 by WHPA trustees within the 113 acre [46 ha] Stephen Martin Memorial Sanctuary, doing so in honor and memory of benefactors Richard and Margaret Dunn of Massachusetts. The Sanctuary itself had been donated to WHPA by Sarah Ann Martin, of New York and Vermont, in memory of her brother, a Marine killed in action during the cataclysmic World War II Battle of Iwo Jima. Please note that dogs (except for leashed service dogs), bicycles, fires, hunting, and after-dark access are all prohibited within this Sanctuary.

The Dunn Nature Trail runs through a magnificent northern hardwood woodland resting in large part

on a bedrock of calcareous schist, a forest that has been little disturbed in well over half a century. The habitats range from dry rocky ridges to vernal pools and other wetland areas. The resulting locally rich soils now support majestic specimens of Oak (*Quercus*), Hickory (*Carya*), Hophornbeam (*Ostrya*), Maple (*Acer*), Ash (*Fraxinus*), and other trees and shrubs — as well as a diverse herbaceous understory that includes many spring flowers and a variety of ferns, mosses, clubmosses, and lichens. Along the way there are the ruins of a probably 150-year-old artisanal lime kiln.

**Finally**, it must be said that the two trails just described stand out as being of significant potential interest and educational value to individuals of any age, and have as well been proving especially useful to teacher-guided primary and secondary school groups.

At least three additional local, self-guided nature trails, each with a descriptive brochure, are certainly worth exploring: **(a)** The Putney Mountain Nature Trail, located in Brookline, largely on the Putney Town Forest, was established by the Putney Mountain Association with the assistance of Putney School students in 2007, and has 12 numbered interpretive stations [*cf.* [mcadooemily@yahoo.com](mailto:mcadooemily@yahoo.com)]. **(b)** The Partridge Nature Trail, located in Dummerston on private land, was established by Lynn Levine of Forest\*Care in 2008, and has 26 numbered interpretive stations [*cf.* [forester.lynn@gmail.com](mailto:forester.lynn@gmail.com)]. And **(c)** The Geologic Trail, located in Putney on the Town's Beatrice Aiken Conservation Site, was established by the Putney Conservation Commission in 2013, and has 8 numbered interpretive stations [*cf.* [cla@putney.net](mailto:cla@putney.net)].

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***The Putney Mountain Association and WRWA share many of the same concerns about forest health, management of invasives, and the need for public outreach and participation in our programs. The following is Part Two of The PMA's ongoing work to control buckthorn on the mountaintop to preserve the outstanding views both east and west from the summit.***

## Return Of The Sheep!

*By Claire Wilson, Putney Mountain Association*

When you hike to the summit of Putney Mountain this summer, you will again see grazing animals feasting on buckthorn, continuing our work to control this invasive plant without using herbicides. David Major of Vermont Shepherd Farm will deliver ten rams to the mountain after the buckthorn has leafed out in mid- or late May, and they will remain on the summit for the entire growing season. This has been made possible through a grant from The Norcross Wildlife Foundation, allowing us to purchase the needed equipment — fencing, solar powered electric fence charger, water tank, and hoses.

PMA board member Andrew Morrison, working on his masters degree focusing on invasive plant species, has volunteered to check on the sheep daily, giving them a bit of grain, making sure they have water, and feeding the guard dog.

We are grateful to David Major for his enthusiastic commitment to this exciting project, which we hope will become a model for controlling invasive species in a natural way. We are utilizing what we know from the past; historically, grazing animals kept the Putney Mountain summit clear and open!

In addition to the grant, we estimate our expenses for this project for the summer will be \$1,000, just one fifth of the cost of our first experimental season. With ten rams munching for 100 days, \$1 can support one ram for one day!

If you wish to help PMA continue this project with your contribution, any amount is welcome. Checks should be payable to Putney Mountain Association with “sheep” in the memo line. Mail to Claire Wilson, 27 Spring Hill Road, Putney, VT 05346.

**Windham Regional Woodlands Association**  
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### **Upcoming Programs**

*(See inside for details)*

**Saturday, June 6**

**Strolling of the Heifers**

**Visit the WRWA Booth!**

**Friday, August 7, 5:30 p.m.**

**Tour of Vernon's Unique Black Gum Swamps**

*Save These Dates!*

**Saturday, September 19**

**WRWA Annual Meeting**

**Friday, November 7**

**Big Tree Tour**

#### *Mission of Windham Regional Woodlands Association*

WRWA 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, WRWA 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.