



Windham

Regional Woodlands

Association

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WOODLOT TIPS



SPRING 2020

Programs

The WRWA has cancelled all Spring programs due to the Covid pandemic.
Please check www.windhamwoodlands.org for information and updates.
We hope some outdoor programs can be held over the Summer.

President's Message

By Munson Hicks

Well, as I start to write this column it appears that Spring might actually be here. It is the last week of April, and the porcupine that shows up at our house with spectacular regularity every Spring has now arrived, looking down from a perch in one of the hemlocks by our house. Earlier it had waddled across the lawn to munch on new raspberry shoots by the bathroom window.

It was just last week when I went to look for my new ramps. Last summer I began an unlikely experiment by planting a lot of seeds in a secret place in the hopes of getting some ramps eventually. To my delight there were more than fifty plants up and thriving.

I have planted the peas and have some lettuce in the new cold frames we built, I have cleaned out the compost bin and spread the black gold in the raised beds in the garden. All in all, the beginnings of an ordinary Spring.

Except that this Spring, as we know, is far from an ordinary one. As we all shelter in place and begin to learn how to "Zoom," our daily lives have been disrupted in significant ways. The same is true for the WRWA. Earlier this month we held our trustees meeting by way of emails. Awkward and slow, but doable. We have had to cancel all of our planned programs for the foreseeable future and put on hold discussions of new ones until we get a better feel of what that future will hold. We are working on having our annual meeting in late August if circumstances permit, but that remains just a dream for now.

As you read this newsletter, it is important to let you know about the hard work that has gone into getting it out, thanks to the contributors and our secretary, Bob Zimmerman, nudging us into action and, of course, Barbara Evans for putting it all together. Normally, when the newsletter is all printed up and ready for distribution, a group of us gets together to put on address labels and sort them into zip codes before delivering them to the Post Office. Since that could not be done this time, Andy

Snelling and his wife, Joanna, offered to do the mailing for us, and it is greatly appreciated.

Later in the summer it will be time for our membership drive and I am sure we will be facing the same issues in sending out renewal letters. This year it would be even more helpful if members could renew online. Just go to www.-windhamwoodlands.org and click on membership. Thank you in advance for your donations to the Scholarship and the Halsey Hicks Funds.

We also urge you to tell your friends about the WRWA and invite them to participate and, yes, even join. Because there will be little in the way of programming for now, our presence in the media will be severely lessened. So let people know we still are alive and kicking!

The upside of the quarantine, if there is one, is that we have been getting out into the woods more often. (Watch out for ticks—they are awful this year.) Walking the dog, or just walking for fun offers a chance to enjoy the woodlands and see the changes the Winter has brought. Before we cancelled our programs, we presented one about iNaturalist, the online database. (www.inaturalist.org) We have been using it to upload observations on plants, trees, animals, insects, and birds (even the porcupine). It's fun, informative, and contributes to the knowledge of our area for scientists to use. I urge you to take a look.

This Winter we began marking for a timber cut. The pandemic has put a severe crimp in that plan. The market for timber has been seriously disrupted, as have all markets. So the cut will be put on hold for the time being. But the trees will still grow and we will just wait for a better day.

Please stay safe and enjoy our Windham Woodlands to the fullest in these difficult times.

Thanks!

Program information and updates can be found at www.windhamwoodlands.org and also will be posted by members on community Front Porch Forums around Windham County.

Vermont Loses an Incredible Conservationist

By Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester Emeritus

A recent e-mail arrived that really shook me up with the very sad news that longtime WRWA trustee Arthur Westing had passed away up in Shelburne at the Wake Robbin senior community. My initial reaction was denial, as I always figured that Arthur would live to be at least 110, but he did make 91 years when he passed. Arthur's passing was sudden, but he and Carol, his wife, were out in his beloved outdoors working that day on a trail system that they had been developing.

[Jerry Carbone, who retired as director of Brattleboro's Brooks Memorial Library, wrote a beautiful piece about Arthur's life which follows my comments.]

Arthur served several different terms as a trustee of this organization, totaling just about 10 years. He was extremely active, especially on the Program Committee. He was so efficient that after we developed a suite of programs, those that Arthur agreed to coordinate were tended to in rapid fashion. On several occasions, Arthur proposed a program and by the time I got home and fired up my computer,

there was an e-mail from him saying that he had contacted the speaker, set up the venue and prepared the program notice for the newsletter! Procrastination did not seem to exist in Arthur's life.

Woodland Secrets was a compilation of over 20 articles that explored many aspects of woodlands, from the ins and outs of maple sugaring to another on chemical warfare, where plants give off an exudate to keep competitors at bay. These were very popular in the WRWA Newsletter. Arthur also submitted many excellent book reviews giving insightful and detailed analyses of new titles.

In thinking about all of my interactions with Arthur, what I appreciated the most were his thoughtful questions that often really challenged me, and sometimes I'd have to say that I would get back to him later. A proper answer would require some research on his questions. Arthur was a true academician who was always pondering all of the aspects of our woodlands. His keen intellectual mind will be sorely missed.

A tribute by Jerry Carbone, former director of the Brooks Memorial Library in Brattleboro.

Arthur Westing (1928–2020) ***Warrior for the Environment***

I mourn the passing of a friend, Arthur Westing, who died at his home at Wake Robin, in Shelburne, Vermont, on Thursday, April 30.

No, he did not die of corona virus. Over the past few days, Arthur and Carol, his wife, had been working on creating trails around WR. Carol had been carrying the chainsaw, and Arthur was doing a lot of cutting, brush piling, raking, and clipping. On Thursday morning they went for a walk on the trails. They had stopped to rest on a bench along the trail, and while talking together, Arthur reached for his head, slumped over, and died. He would have been 92 in July.

The short post that follows does not in any way capture the fullness of his life, the strength of his character, nor his intellectual and physical attributes. Arthur was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1928. He received a B.A. in Botany from Columbia in 1950, and then served in the U.S. Marines during the Korean War. He went on to receive a Masters in Forestry degree from Yale in 1954 and completed doctoral studies at Yale in 1959 in physiology and ecology. He spent nearly 24 years in academia, teaching at various institutions, which included Middlebury College, Hampshire College, and UMass, Amherst. He came to Windham College in 1966 as department chair in the biology department.

His international experience was immense. He worked for many United Nations agencies including eight years in Stockholm, Sweden, as director for the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)—Cooperation for Peacebuilding. From 1989–2001 he was a visiting professor at universities in Ireland, Austria, Germany, and England.

During the Vietnam War, which he opposed, he travelled there two times to research the effects of chemicals on the environment, “Agent Orange,” and wrote many articles and reports on this subject. Arthur and his colleagues' research, Congressional testimony and writings convinced Ambassador to South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, (a Dummerston, Vermont, resident and acquaintance of Arthur's) to order the end of U.S. herbicidal warfare in Vietnam. This was a major accomplishment that helped to end a horrendous practice of destruction.

Arthur had an expert opinion on everything, which is evidenced by his 55-page bibliography of articles. Many of these pieces were book reviews published in the *Brattleboro Reformer*, which he did for me, as Library Director at Brooks Memorial Library, for a column, “For the Love of Books.”

He wrote passionately about peace and the environment. In 2013, Springer, the world's largest science and technology publishing house, issued a series of books called “Springer Briefs on Pioneers in Science and Practice.” The first volume to be published was “Arthur H. Westing: Pioneer on the Environmental Impact of War,” 2013.

The series editor, Hans Gunter Brauch, had known Westing for more than 30 years and was extremely familiar with his work. Brauch did not hold back when he stated explicitly in his preface that Arthur Westing is, “the most important pioneer on the environmental impact of war,” and should be regarded “as the father of the modern, continuous interest in the environmental effects of war.”

Arthur did not only write, but found himself with his life partner, Carol, always out in the natural

world, hiking, leading outdoor educational seminars, and seeing the world through walking, which he and Carol did to over 27 destinations from 1999 to 2016. I was fortunate enough to accompany them on their last walk on the “paths of the gods” trails of the Sorrentine peninsula, Italy, in 2016.

Together with his wife, Carol, they were founding members of the Windham Hill Pinnacle Peak Association and volunteer nature leaders for the Appalachian Mountain Club, Acadia National Park, Mount Desert Island, Maine.

In his memoir, “Incidents/Gripes/Reflections,” privately published in 2019, Arthur laments the diminishing quality of our ecology and environment.

“But thinking beyond our personal needs for the years left to Carol and me, now presumably provided for adequately, it saddens me ever so deeply to see the natural world become increasingly encroached upon by the unconscionable ever-increasing human numbers—especially so owing to their capacities coupled with so many extinctions of plant and animal species....What a pity it is for us to be leaving to our children and theirs an increasingly less habitable world.”

Arthur, you did your best for the environment.

Editor's note:

My memories of Arthur Westing include WRWA (formerly WOA) hikes, our often humorous conversations, and the things he taught me about the woods as we walked. He kindly credited me with encouraging him to write his Woodland Secrets—lovely and serious short pieces about some of the more esoteric aspects of our forests. These were greatly admired by readers of Woodlot Tips, and I treasure the copy of the collected essays he gave me. He was a wonderful human being.

—Barbara S. Evans

Forest Health Update

By Sam Schneski, Windham County Forester

Covid Impacts on the Dept. of Forest, Parks & Recreation (FPR)

As of this writing, we remain in a Stay at Home Order from Governor Scott. Our Forestry staff will be allowed to conduct essential site visits and job duties with minimal exposure to other individuals. We will follow all the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Agency (VOSHA) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines. Speaking from the County Forester perspective, we are now allowed to do field work but still are not permitted to have members of the public join us. This means we can do Use Value Appraisal inspections, but without the presence of landowners. For cooperators, landowners, consulting foresters, and loggers who have been working with county foresters I'd like to extend a huge thank you for doing your best to accommodate email communication and delivery of important time sensitive documents such as management plans, amendments, and property transfers.

Trying to remain a productive employee and help two elementary school aged kids get through online learning has been a very interesting challenge (to put it lightly). Luckily the woods aren't going anywhere, and the kids have their special places they retreat to: Apple Tree Grove, The Time Forest, The Alder Forest, The Thorny Forest, The Forest of the Pirates, The Fairy Forest, and one essential meeting spot I just heard about today known as The Tree That Rosie Can't Climb. When they are not fighting, they really are quite awesome!

Just a brief public service announcement: Do not forget to properly treat your clothes for ticks and conduct regular tick checks when coming inside from spending time outdoors. The last thing anyone wants is Corona, but even worse than that would be Corona with a touch of Lyme!

Forest Health

Well, we had a short and mild winter for the most part. For people who enjoyed that, they are making up for it now with the seemingly never-ending fluctuation of one nice 50-degree day for every two days being windy, rainy, and/or snowy.

Thirty-nine percent of the hemlock woolly adelgids (HWA) examined during the annual winter mortality survey were dead. This decline in winter mortality compared to past years may be due to increasing winter temperatures. In the past, we have often found infestations in new locations following years with mild winters and low levels of HWA mortality. Currently, HWA is primarily found in Windham County; however, it has also been observed in Springfield and Pownal. Surveys in 2019 did not show spread of HWA within the state. Similar to past years, Vermont as well as nearby states continue to find HWA occasionally mixed with elongate hemlock scale.

If you don't know if you have invasive plants, now is the time of year to walk the woods and look for shrubs that are greening up faster than other known native plants. This is the first easy visual giveaway of invasive plants like buckthorn, barberry, honeysuckle, multiflora rose, and euonymus to name a few. There are lots of great resources out there for invasive plant identification and control measures. Try www.vtinvasives.org to get started!

Within the past 30 days new Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) discoveries have been made just east of us in New Hampshire. Although these finds do not put any more of southeastern Vermont in an "infested area," the finds do land more towns in the "high risk area." The towns effected in Windsor County are Springfield, Windsor, Hartland, Hartford, and Norwich. Towns effected in Windham County are Rockingham and Westminster. Again, for more information on our state recommendations go to www.vtinvasives.org and click on management options.

Sugaring

Sadly, because of the COVID-19 we had to cancel this year's annual WRWA sugarhouse visit. In fact, the whole state cancelled Vermont's Maple Open House weekend. During open house, sugarhouses are open to visitors. For some it's a crucial time for syrup sales. Please remember to buy your syrup from a local Vermont producer!

Luckily, production seemed to be very good to excellent this year. I had my second-best year, and I heard of others in our region either doing the same or having a record year. Something of note for my operation was that my first boil in mid-February yielded the lightest syrup I have made in 20 years! It's delicious. Folks staying home seem to be making more breakfasts involving syrup, so the household demand is good but commercial demand is low.

Bulk maple syrup prices have been low for the past few years and will continue to be this year. The reason for this, besides supply being high, is mainly because the Canadian dollar has fallen very far making Canadian syrup much cheaper on the world market, consequently pushing U.S. prices down to be competitive.

Forest Economy/Market Update

As with most things these days most of us have accepted the fact that the future is uncertain. This holds true with the forest economy. I just watched a webinar that Paul Frederick, our wood utilization forester, succinctly titled, "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly." I'll summarize here but if you would like to read the full market assessment you can download it from our Department website:

<https://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/working-landscape/covid-19-information-vermont%E2%80%99s-forest-economy> and click on the market assessment link.

Hardwood lumber markets were showing signs of improving just before the COVID outbreak so there is hope that this will continue. Unfortunately, many secondary manufacturers are closed in the Northeast and Quebec so many hardwoods mills are currently

holding sawed lumber. Ash, oak, and cherry log sales are limited domestically, and most of those species go to China and Vietnam. In ash news, Ames True Temper (makers of ash tool handles) in Wallingford sent out a notice a week or so ago saying they are actively looking for ash to saw. Maybe folks staying home and gardening has resulted in an increased need for tool handles!

Housing starts have dropped and as a result flooring markets in Quebec are closed. Because of this lull in housing starts, high production softwood mills' lumber demands have plummeted. Anecdotally some smaller mills that saw softwood are doing alright as the stay at home order has led to more folks starting gardening projects which need material for building gardening beds as well as smaller household projects. As one might imagine, the demand for pulp and paper has been high in the tissue paper arena. One major blow to the forest economy was the digester explosion at the Pixelle Paper Mill in Jay, Maine, a few weeks ago (pun not intended). Luckily, nobody was hurt, but the digester part of the paper making process for that mill has been closed indefinitely. This has had a negative impact on all pulpwood. The pulp and paper supply is currently much greater than demand.

In the biomass realm the prospects for whole tree chips are good although a concern is that natural gas is extremely cheap right now, which may be bringing chip values down. The firewood market is very strong for home use. This is likely due to more folks being home and spring weather staying pretty raw so far. Commercial firewood needs for restaurants and other businesses are very low. Low fossil fuel prices could negatively impact the firewood market.

Winter Tree Identification 2020

By Marli Rabinowitz

On February 29 about 25 people converged to learn from Windham County Forester Sam Schneski how to identify common Vermont trees during winter when there are no leaves. We walked a trail that had a good representation of species; we discussed around 25. Sam's good humor infused many of the tips he shared. He showed us sugar maple twigs and pointed out that the shape and color are like pretzel sticks, and even have little white

spots like "salt." Red maple is the only species that gets circular cracking on its bark that look like thumbprints. The bud scars of butternut look like monkey faces; the buds of bitternut hickory smell like gin and tonic when crushed. Hop hornbeam is also called "cat scratch tree"; its bark shreds as if a cat had sharpened its claws on it. It also retains some of its leaves through the winter, so we could tell the smaller saplings from other birches that

way. Black and yellow birch twigs have a strong winter-green smell when scratched; paper birch does not.

Each species has a distinct overall shape and branching pattern so they can be recognized at a distance. For example, beech branches often grow straight out at right angles, elms are “vase shaped,” oaks have thick branches, spruce tapers more than white pine. Many species look different in different ages or conditions, the bark changes from sapling to mature tree and again when old. Sam asked, “What is this tree?” All looked different but turned out to be red maple; the look of its bark can really vary. So much to learn of branches, twigs, bark, and more!

Afterwards we gathered for hot cider and soup. It was a cold and windy day, and we crowded into my house, eating and chatting, something we can no longer do. I really miss our gatherings and there is nothing like walking with a knowledgeable person like Sam to absorb all the little facts they can share. It takes repetition for me to learn the ways of the trees that surround us. You can learn a lot online from various videos and webinars and use iNaturalist, as it is also a community. But I look forward to tagging along on more real-world WRWA walks in the happy future. In the meantime, stay well and may the Forest be with you.

February Ramble

By Munson and Deb Hicks, Vernon

On a 30-ish degree overcast morning on February 7th, a small but intrepid group of WRWA members convened at our house to ramble through our woods. Led by George Weir, our forester, we walked for about an hour and a half through a portion of the land that has been in the Hicks family for nearly a hundred years.

It hadn't snowed much previously and the area we were looking at in the 132-acre forest was relatively flat. We had taken a DR brush hog to the trails in the fall to make them better for skiing and snowshoeing, so it was an easy walk of about two miles.

Of particular interest was the fact that George had begun to mark the timber for an upcoming cut, and we discussed the objectives of the cut and why he had marked specific trees in the various stands that make up the land. There are relatively easily defined stands of white pine, then hemlock, some hardwoods, and so forth.

This land has for eighty years been under the supervision of only two foresters. First my father, Halsey Hicks, and then George, after he took over my father's practice after

working with him for many years. So there has been a continuity of management

The primary focus of the cut is to encourage regeneration with a side order of income. The land was last cut about twelve years ago as part of the land use plan. There has been a new 18-acre parcel of adjacent land added in the last few years that had not been touched for about thirty years, and it was interesting to see the contrast between the two parcels. There was discussion about the best way to “upgrade” that parcel over the next few years.

There was also discussion about work to release and thin some of the new pine that has seeded in. With a growth rate of at least three feet a year (this land grows pine like crazy) the discussion centered around releasing the pine—thinning, but leaving something for the pine weevil to have while the rest grows up.

Then it was time to get back to our house for a pot-luck lunch of chili and deviled eggs, salad and great desserts that people had provided. All in all an interesting and informative “ramble” that seemed to be enjoyed by all.

Monitoring for *Laricobius nigrinus* (Ln)

By Jim Esden, FPR Forest health

Hemlock trees in Vermont are threatened by hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). First discovered in Vermont in 2007, the invasive pest has spread gradually into the southern reaches of the Connecticut and West River Val-

leys. An isolated infestation exists in Pownal. The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation monitors HWA populations.

To slow the spread of HWA, the Department instituted a biocontrol program in 2009. A predatory beetle, *Laricobius nigrinus*, has been released in three sites. The beetles are expected to colonize an area and keep the population of HWA in check. Adult *Laricobius nigrinus* feed on adelgids through the winter. In early spring the beetles lay their eggs. Upon hatching, the *Ln* larvae feed for a short period on both HWA adults and eggs, before dropping to the ground, where they pupate. By fall, the pupae mature, and adult beetles emerge from the soil, fly into the hemlock foliage and start the cycle again.

In spring Department foresters monitor *Ln* populations by collecting infested foliage in 5-gallon buckets (see photo). The buckets are checked over a period of several weeks, looking for larvae that have dropped down. In-

formation from this monitoring program will inform future releases of *Laricobius nigrinus*.

This past winter's HWA mortality rate was only 39 percent. So I am seeing more adelgid this year in Vernon than I have in the last few years. Over those years, the trees at the Vernon site had recovered to some extent. Time will tell how the trees fare in the future.



Passing Lands Pop-up

By Marli Rabinowitz

The future of the private land that underpins the Vermont landscape and forest economy is a matter of much discussion amongst the many nonprofits and state agencies with an interest in its continued health. In March, WRWA and Vermont Coverts, with support from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), cosponsored a workshop called “Passing Lands” to help landowners ponder their own unique situation and find options and tools to make a plan for their family and their forest’s future.

When you walk in your forest what do you feel? Are you assessing the board feet in a nice straight trunk, admiring the rich soil formed by years of leaves, enjoying the quiet filled with bird song and rustling branches? It takes years to see a forest grow and change. I have heard it called “forest time”—an arc of 60–100 years of growth, harvest, regrowth. Forestry plans are updated every 10 years with an eye towards a longer grand plan, but have you given much thought to the management of your forest after you sell or pass away?

Many people are content to let future owners make their own decisions about the trees and land use and sell to the highest bidder or leave their land grouped with other assets such as their car, house, insurance policy. Others see their forest as a living work of art and want to pass their knowledge, ethics, and maybe even physical tools to someone that will carry on the stewardship vision. This may involve donating the development rights to a Land Trust that will hold them in perpetuity, allowing the forest to be managed but not subdivided.

Most people leave their forest land to their spouse or to their children, who may co-manage, or may sell their share to a sibling. A few designate only one or two children who have shown interest and capability as the heirs of the land. This can create inequality and resentment among others who see the land as a financial asset. Perhaps you have other assets to leave them, or if not, explain your reasoning. This is a very personal decision and each situation is different.

Each family is unique, and the workshop was set up to explore individual options privately. Each attendee moved among six tables and had a personal discussion with each presenter in turn. There are so many facets to consider and each person represented one or more set of questions to guide your thoughts.

Alex Barrett from Longview Forest, Inc. was there to talk about long term forestry plans and Use Value status. There was Carol Mayo-Brown, who has conserved her property in Putney, sharing her thought process and experience. Joan Weir from the Vermont Land Trust explained what kind of easements can be given to keep our forest land, or part of it, undeveloped. Amelia Darrow, an estate and trust attorney, asked good questions about family situations and thoughts about heirs. Kelli Warriner from Park Place Financial Advisors helped consider various options for structuring legacies. And Mary Sisock was there to talk about family meetings and mediation. No one was drumming up business, only sharing expertise. Just by talking with interested and knowledgeable people I came up with some practical steps to move my own process forward.

Some steps that will apply to almost everyone include having a conversation with your kids or heirs. What is their relationship with your land? Find out their interest in continuing to manage it. Will they keep or sell it? (If interested, give them a gift membership to WRWA!) Make sure your heirs or purchasers know if the land is in UVA, what that means, and where the papers are. Find your deed and put it in a safe place too.

If you have any interest in discussing your own situation, calling Mary Sisock (802-355-5071) is the place to start.

She knows all the Vermont resources. She is a Fellow with Vermont Woodlands Association, funded through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to focus on this process and help all landowners. An initial conversation with her is free. After that, \$75 will sign you up for two years of consultations, family meetings and mediation, whatever is needed. Any of the presenters listed above will also be glad to get you started with your plans. However small your property, your land matters to your family and to the landscape. It's your legacy!

Riding the Winds

By Daniel N. Dubie, Naturalist, Educator, and WRWA Trustee

Happy May everyone! As can often be the case, this May showed up with some soft wetting rain and a warm south wind. A pleasant change from the cool holdout of winter we have had so far. Spring came early this year with the thawing of valleys in early March and the annual migration of waterfowl starting early in force. Our thoughts were of warm winds and early gardens. Then April came and the familiar cool shade and warm, not hot, sun were with us, slowing down our early hopes and aspirations.

However, the morning winds are bringing us yet another wave of migrating birds on their ancient pilgrimage to their rich breeding grounds of the north. My daily walk this morning in the rain saw two flocks of yellow rumped and palm warblers. Both species breed to the north. The yellow rumped breed in New England all the way to Alaska across the boreal forest. The palm warbler, purely a northern boreal forest breeder, is only seen during migration. Both these birds brought a warm yellow glow to a dark, wet May morning.

The warm rain not only brings the returning warblers, but it warms the still open floors of our forests. These open floors are home to our ephemeral wildflowers that make their annual flowering before the forest sunlight gets caught by the overarching branches of their tree neighbors. Currently this bloom is in full swing. As you wander through the forests, keep an eye out for flowers such as trout lilies, trilliums, cohosh, hepatica, bellwort, Dutchman's britches, squirrel corn, wood anemone, spring beauty, violets, and trailing arbutus. All these species will continue to flower for a few weeks until the forest floor becomes dark and damp and the warmth of early summer arrives.

Many of our neotropical migrating songbirds are on their annual way north, while many of our larger year-round residents and early migrants are currently nesting or are already rearing young. The native owls, ravens, bald eagles, and red-tailed hawks have hungry young now. Look for busy parents hunting and looking for food around water, fields, and marshes. The returning geese, ospreys, herons, and ducks are on or making nests, soon to have young of their own. Also look to the marshes for returning female red-winged blackbirds who are joining their mates, who have been eagerly awaiting their return for almost two months.

As we enjoy this time of fast change do not forget our four-legged friends. A look to the marshes may find busy beavers, muskrats, mink, and otters, many surely having young hidden away in secure cozy homes. The fields and open forests will soon have young foxes, woodchucks, deer, and turkey. Young bears will follow their mothers, and sneaky mother bobcats will hunt by night (and day). This time of warmth brings life to all corners of the lands and waters in New England. There is always something to listen to, notice, and ponder.

So, as we humans are feeling changes in our world, many of which are new and unnerving, look to the age-old world around us that continues as it has for many millennia. There is still stability and consistency in this world even as it too continues to change. The spring and summer warmth is returning, and with it the birds, flowers, and life. It is still here to be enjoyed and to be part of, for we are part of it as we always have been.

May we all have the opportunity to enjoy the return of Spring life to the north country.

What a Forester Does

By Munson Hicks, WRWA president

In the winter of 1932, my father, Halsey Hicks, our first Windham County Forester, was getting his Masters in Forestry at Yale. He was 25. He was spending the winter at the Yale Forestry Reservation in Stafford Springs, Connecticut.

His father evidently sent him a letter requesting that he write his mother a letter, which he did. I do not have his father's letter, but I do have the one he wrote to her. He was clearly addressing motherly concerns about his diet and his living conditions and so forth. At the end of the letter, it is clear that she wanted to know what exactly a forester does. This is his response:

The work of a forester is varied.

He may be called upon to direct thinning and road-side beautification, such as is being done in the Yale forest between the entrance and the director's house. Here all the dead trees and badly formed living trees are cut out for a distance of 200 feet from the road.

- He may have to clean out and disinfect a barn after a consumptive cow.
- He may have to wash out a bad cut on a horse's thigh every day.
- He may have to deliver wood to the different residents of the forest.
- He may have to move a planer from one mill to another to plane boards with a tractor.
- He may very likely have to make automobile repairs.
- He will be expected to patrol the property and see that no dams are leaking and no houses being molested.
- When the ice is thick enough to cut he will be expected to fill three ice houses.
- He may also have to sell hay.

I hope this covers all that Dad told me to write to you about.

Your son,
Halsey

Many WRWA members own land that is partly forested, but also includes pasture or farmland, ponds or streams. Many species of birds rely on fields and edges as well as the forest itself for food and nesting habitat. This piece about the Grassland Ambassadors program of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies may be of interest to many of you.

Grassland Ambassadors: Landowners and Grassland Birds in the Green Mountain State

By Liza Morse, Grassland Bird Outreach Coordinator, Vermont Center for Ecostudies

I am often asked why I work to protect grassland birds in a forested state. As the Grassland Bird Outreach Coordinator at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, I help grassland landowners in Vermont (and some in New Hampshire) to balance their needs and constraints with the needs of grassland nesting birds. People are understandably confused—"Why not work to protect forest birds?" they ask—and my response is that it is not a question of forest birds versus grassland birds. Of course we should protect our forest birds and the forests they inhabit. However, agriculture and agricultural lands are also a valued part of our cultural and physical landscape. And while many view farming as antithetical to wildlife conservation, by managing agricultural lands in a holistic way, Vermont farms can benefit both farmers and wildlife.

Farmland is, in fact, critical for grassland birds that have historically depended on agriculture in this region. Moreover, with the widespread destruction of grassland bird habitat elsewhere (the tallgrass and shortgrass prairies in the Midwest and West), responsibly managing our grasslands here in Vermont means we can play a part in supporting species under threat. This is not an argument for returning to the days of a deforested Vermont, rather an appeal to manage our existing grasslands in a way that supports farmers and birds. Farmers in Vermont face many challenges and considering the needs of wildlife on the farm can be an added one. Forcing farmers to manage for wildlife in a way that doesn't consider their needs will ultimately fail. At VCE, we view our work with landowners as a collaboration to achieve balanced management that is sustainable over time.

We provide the bird know-how, but our landowners are our true Grassland Ambassadors.
To learn more about the Grassland Ambassadors program and to schedule a site visit to your property, visit:

vtcostudies.org/projects/grasslands/new-england-grassland-bird-initiative/ or email grasslands@vtcostudies.org.

Our Vermont Woods.org is an online resource center for healthy forests

This website was developed by University of Vermont Extension and Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in collaboration with other partners. The goal of the website is to:

- Provide a go-to place for information and resources on Vermont's forests, including organizations engaged in woodland education and outreach.
- Offer easily navigable access to resources, information, effective communication tools, and a user-friendly platform for online education.
- Attract and engage new audiences in the care of our woods.
- Lay a foundation for greater coordination among organizations and agencies in forestry outreach and education.

Many online programs and webinars are offered by Our Vermont Woods. During this time of isolation, they are wonderful opportunities to spend time thinking about and studying our forests and the Vermont landscape. As for the listing of forest-related organizations, it is comprehensive. Our WRWA is listed along with sixty or so others! Check the site out.

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Upcoming Programs

**The WRWA has cancelled all Spring programs due to the Covid pandemic.
Please check www.windhamwoodlands.org for information and updates.
We hope some outdoor programs can be held over the Summer.**

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.