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WOODLOT TIPS



SUMMER 2020

Programs

Saturday and Sunday, September 12 and 13, — Game of Logging Levels 3b and 4
Saturday and Sunday, September 26 and 27, — Game of Logging Levels 1 and 2
(See article below for more information)

Quarterly Trustee and Annual Meetings Update

We held our last quarterly trustees meeting via zoom and plan to do that again for the next meeting. The trustees decided we could not safely hold our annual meeting face to face and anticipate that both meetings can be held on the **second Thursday in October—the 8th**. The annual meeting will be first,

followed by the trustees meeting immediately after, when the trustees elect officers for the coming year.

We are required to have a quorum of at least 10 percent of the membership for the annual meeting. While we won't know exactly how many members

there will be until we know how many of you will have renewed by then, we hope that enough people are willing and able to go online to participate in order to approve the budget for the following year and elect new trustees. **Please note that the meeting will be on a Thursday instead of the customary Saturday.** We will let members know the details about the timing of the Annual Meeting and how to log in as we get closer to the date.

Once again we rely on the volunteer trustees and members to do a lot, and we appreciate all the effort. We welcome new people into the mix. That said, if there is anyone who is interested in becoming a trustee, please email us at windhamwoodlands@gmail.com. A full board of trustees lessens the load!

The programs that we normally have (about one per month through the year) were unavoidably suspend-

ed last Spring. However, we are trying to present programs that we feel can be safely done. For example, we are cosponsoring the Game of Logging (Levels 1–4) as they are outdoors and are limited to just a few participants. The four levels are not being given in order but are still well worth taking, whether you are an experienced logger or a weekend duffer who keeps coming home with unexplained rips in the legs of your jeans. Levels three and four will take place in Marlboro and Levels one and two will be in Townshend. If you are a WRWA member at the time you take any of these GOL courses, you will be entitled to a \$50 rebate on the cost. There is no limit to the number of classes you may take.

We also will keep letting you know of programs presented by us or others that we think might be of interest to our members. Check for news on our website www.windhamwoodlands.org.

Game of Logging (GOL), aka Chainsaw Safety and Efficiency

By Bob DeSiervo, WRWA Trustee

The WRWA is co-sponsoring several Game of Logging programs, with a discount for members. See below for details. These are hands-on, eight-hour programs. When I first heard of the program 12 or 13 years ago, because of the name, it didn't sound of interest; it said it was a game, or so I thought. It was former County Forester Bill Guenther that explained it was really about chainsaw safety and efficiency.

While I owned a chainsaw and had used it for seven or eight years, I knew it was dangerous and that sometimes things happened in the woods I didn't expect and that there was a lot to learn. Bill's de-

scription sold me. It really is all about using an extremely useful tool safely and efficiently.

I can't emphasize enough how valuable the program has been for me doing something as simple as safely cutting logs to length for firewood and as potentially beneficial as timber stand improvement and crop tree release on my woodlot, to say nothing of safely tackling blow downs and all sorts of storm damage. Below are some of the techniques you'll learn. It's a program that is good for everyone from true beginners to those that have used a chainsaw for years.

LEVEL 1: Precision Felling Techniques

- Discussion of and plan for Emergencies, and Personal Protective Equipment.
- Daily 5-Point Safety Check: Chain brake; throttle interlock; chain catcher; screws & bolt check; muffler and spark arrester.
- Discussion of Reactive Forces: Push; Pull; Kickback; Attack
- Bore Cutting: Use attack corner, body position
- Felling Plan: Target acquisition of the 5-point felling plan
Target Acquisition: Hazard Recognition; Side Lean–good/bad side; Escape Route; Hinge Information and, Back-cut Plan
- Felling Practice

LEVEL 2: Maximizing Saw Performance

- Discussions of Routine Maintenance: Air filter; Recoil; Bar; Sprocket; Chain brake; Chain tension
- Carburetor Tune-up: Clean air filter; Balance Jets; High-speed test; Low-speed test; Low-speed “dump” test
- Art of Filing/Sharpening the Chain: Proper depth gauge setting; Sharp Point; Correct side plate angle; Correct top plate angle; Chisel angle
- Springpole/Trapped Tree/Branch Techniques
- Felling Practice

LEVEL 3: Limbing, Bucking, and Difficult Trees

- Dealing with Lean: Front Lean—use of the controlled release technique; Back Lean—use of wedges and shims; Side Lean—aiming the hinge to compensate for lean.
- Limbing Plan: Overhead hazards; Hazards on the ground; Did the tree leave stump?; Tensions in stem; Plan of attack
- Six-point Limbing Concepts: Keep close; Stem supports weight of saw; Move feet; Slide hand; Use thumb; Plan for working height
- Bucking and Limbing Cuts: Top-lock; Limb-lock; Tongue and groove
- Felling Difficult and Hung-Up trees

LEVEL 4 for Landowners: Storm Damage Cleanup

- Introduction and Review: Safety Plan; PPE; Daily 5-point Safety check; Saw Chain Types, sharpening and field conditions; Safety
- 5-Point Plan for Storm Damaged Trees: Overhead Hazards; Hazards on the ground; Assess Lean-weight & pressure; Cutting plan; Escape Routes
- Demonstration and Hands-on Techniques: Shaved notch; Tab cut; Limb-loc; Top-loc; Tongue & groove; Axle-cut; Axle-loc; Notch bucking & Directional notch bucking (controlled release cut); Roll-away cut; Buck with wedge; Dirty log buck; Scissor cut; Releasing “extreme” spring-pole tension; “Pole-in-a-Hole”; Flagging hazards; Using Ropes & Mechanical Advantage Techniques.

For equipment, you should bring your hardhat and hearing protection. Wear boots and bring your chaps and your chainsaw if you have them. You'll be outdoors for the day, so will need to dress accordingly, and in layers, and bring snacks and beverages to have available throughout the day.

Please visit our website www.windhamwoodlands.org for more information.

President's Message

By Munson Hicks

Well, it has been an up and down Summer since our last newsletter, to say the least.

First, I hope that you are all well and safe and continue to take all the precautions necessary in this difficult time. That is the main thing to be accomplished for the near future.

The WRWA remains strong thanks to the generous efforts of our volunteer board and members. We have been able to put together the newsletters and have started our renewal drive. If you have not received your renewal letter by now, let us know or go

to the website and renew online. Thanks to Andy Snelling and Joanna for getting the mailing out and to Bob Zimmerman and Barbara Evans for organizing our newsletter and to the various contributors for the articles that grace our little paper.

On the renewal envelope we have added a request at the bottom to be allowed to acknowledge your donations to The Halsey Hicks Fund and to The Scholarship fund. I hope that you will check the box so that we can show our appreciation. It is through your generous donations that we are able to keep the organization strong. If you have made a donation,

thank you! If you haven't yet, please consider adding it to your dues or go to our website www.windhamwoodlands.org to donate online.

Sadly, the board feels that it is not appropriate to hold an in-person annual meeting at this time. It is an event that we all look forward to in the Fall, but it is not to be this year. See above in the Program section for our online meeting plans. Hopefully, we will be able to gather for one twice as big next year!

Our programming also has been curtailed since the Spring, with many planned events having to be cancelled or postponed. As we work back into being able to plan them once again, we will let you know the "whens and wheres" as they become available.

I can tell you that we are co-sponsoring The Game of Logging Levels 1-4 this fall. As a bonus, if you sign up and take any of the courses, we are offering a \$50 rebate to our members. We firmly believe that chainsaw safety and training is vital to our members who are out in the woods cutting firewood or cleaning up their property. Please consider taking this course for the first time or even as a refresher safety course.

On the upside of this Summer, those of us who are fortunate enough to live in Vermont have had the opportunity to social distance outdoors, with walks in the woods and trails of southern Vermont, a beautiful place to be (except for the deer flies!) So stay safe, stay in touch and enjoy the rest of the Summer!

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

Forest Health Update

By Sam Schneski, Windham County Forester

The past few months have been abnormally dry and hot. Although we have not seen much in the way of wildfires there is a growing concern among fire experts regarding the dryness in the soil. This is a concern because if a wildland or grass and brush fire starts in concert with dry soil conditions, the fire can be much more difficult and time consuming to extinguish. Fires can "burn underground" in roots and other dry organic material.

The U.S. Drought Monitor listed most of Vermont as abnormally dry starting on June 9th. Northwestern Vermont was the first area listed as abnormally dry starting on June 2nd, which increased to 82.06% of the state being affected. By the end of the month, 29.60% of the state was listed as moderate drought. Soil moistures as measured by the Keech-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) are at levels normally seen by late summer in a dry year. (KBDI values of over 300 are considered dry and increase potential for fire burning in duff and other ground fuels.) As of the last week of June, Vermont Emergency Management had activated the Drought Task Force to monitor the situation. As of July 28th all of Vernon and some of Guilford were considered to be abnormally dry with the rest of Windham County classified as being in a moderate drought. *Always contact your town's fire warden for a burn permit before burning.*

On June 9th, the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation (FPR) and the Agency of Agriculture released *Tetrastichus planipennisi*, a small, non-stinging wasp native to North Asia at L.R. Jones State Forest in Plainfield, and on a property in South Hero. The parasitoids were produced and supplied from the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) EAB Parasitoid Rearing Facility in Brighton, Michigan. For parasitoid information please call 866-322-4512. This parasitoid wasp is only 3-4 mm long, is incapable of stinging humans, and specifically parasitizes EAB larvae. *T. planipennisi* drills through the bark of ash trees and lays its eggs in EAB larvae. As the eggs hatch, they consume the EAB larvae from the inside out. Due to its smaller size, *T. planipennisi* is best suited for ash trees that are 4 inches in diameter or less, as it cannot penetrate the bark of larger trees to reach EAB larvae. This year, five more releases of these wasps will be completed at both locations to strengthen their population. FPR plans to release more parasitoid wasp species in tandem with *T. planipennisi* across all counties in the coming years. This statewide presence of biocontrol agents will help regulate EAB populations, which will in turn prolong the life of Vermont's ash trees. For more information about EAB and how to report a sighting, please visit VTInvasives.com.

Eastern tent caterpillar (ETC, *Malacosoma americanum*) nests have been spotted throughout the state at low populations. These caterpillars build silk nests in the crotches and branch unions of numerous hardwood trees and can contribute to significant defoliation when populations are high. To help prevent damages, silk nests should be removed and destroyed when possible. Nests should never be lit on fire because doing so is dangerous and could either harm the tree, or given our dry conditions, lead to an uncontrolled fire. And yes, believe it or not, we are starting to see and receive reports of fall webworm. Fall webworm is a tent caterpillar that makes nests at the tips of branches around August (not in crotches and branch unions like Eastern Tent in the spring). These nests can be pruned out and destroyed by soaking the nest in soapy water and /or squishing the caterpillars. Infected trees can also be treated with an insecticide. Although webs can be an unattractive nuisance, the loss of leaves generally has little effect on the health of the tree because it occurs at the end of the growing season. There are many predators, parasites, and disease organisms that serve as natural controls on webworm populations.

July 21st was a clear sunny day and I was on a woodlot in Halifax when I stopped walking to notice

it sounded like it was raining. I've heard that before, so I knew to look at the ground more closely. The sound was frass, or insect waste, falling from feeding in the canopy. I noticed a lot of half-eaten green beech leaves on the forest floor. I'd heard the saddled prominent moth population was on the rise and is really bad in some parts of Westminster. I brought this up with Savannah Ferreira, FPR's new forest health specialist, and she said "As the caterpillars mature, they stop skeletonizing leaves and can become "lazy feeders" just eating bits and pieces here and there. Many of our staff have reported the raining frass recently from them as well." Saddled prominent feed primarily on beech, paper birch, sugar maple and many other hardwoods. Adults fly in spring and lay up to 500 single eggs on the host's leaves. Young larvae skeletonize leaves, while older ones consume all but the larger veins. During outbreaks, larvae may move from tree to tree. In mid-summer, larvae move into the leaf litter, where they pupate and then pass the winter. There is one generation per year in the northern part of the insect's range. Periodic outbreaks have occurred, especially in the northeastern United States, and these may defoliate, and sometimes kill or top-kill affected trees.

Introducing the Southeast Vermont Cooperative Invasive Species Management Association

by Sam Schneski, Windham County Forester

Vermont Land Trust, in partnership with the Windham County Conservation District and the Windham County Forester's Office, recently explored the establishment of a southeast Vermont Cooperative Invasive Species Management Association (CISMA).

A CISMA is a coalition of conservation organizations, land managers and private citizens with expertise in invasive species identification, control, and education. It is meant to leverage shared knowledge, varied experience, and resources for advancing the awareness of issues related to invasive species and catalyze invasive species control projects in the south-eastern Vermont region.

The Southeastern VT CISMA will promote an integrated invasive species management program throughout the region and provide vibrant, engaging education, training, outreach, demonstration pro-

jects, technical assistance, and coordination of invasive species control.

To date, representatives and individuals from the Vermont Land Trust, Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Windham Regional Planning Commission, Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District, a private consulting forester, the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association, and the VT Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation have met and are working on establishing the Southeast Vermont CISMA. We hope to draw from area experts when developing outreach material, seeking grant opportunities, and receiving or delivering pertinent news/resources regarding invasive plant management in our region.

A sub-set of the full CISMA formed an education committee that has begun to develop a webinar

series for this Fall/Winter. Although the timing and programming haven't been solidified yet, we hope to develop and present on the following topics in the upcoming months:

- What is a CISMA
- Backyard invasives
- Invasives in your woodlot
- Non-chemical invasive species management

- Invasive species control (chemical application)
- Early detection species

Our CISMA will soon have a Facebook page. Partners who are part of the CISMA can then share this information on their organization's website and other forms of social media. If WRWA members have ideas or suggestions for future topics, please contact me and I will share with the SVTCISMA!

Riding the Winds

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

I hope everyone has made it successfully through an unprecedented hot Summer this year. Before very long the hot humid days will be behind us as the sun makes its slow fall into the Southern sky. Welcome to late Summer as things again poise for another set of annual changes that will soon be upon us. Summer has not left but the sun angle is now lower every day and the length of day is notably different. Though our world is still warm, changes in the behaviors of many of our plant and animal friends can be seen.

As we wander and take in the beautiful late Summer and early Autumn of New England, we can see the increased activity of many bird and mammal families. Avian young have now left the nest and are traveling with their parents either still being fed or learning to feed as a flock. Any berries now will bring an assortment of birds, likely giving excellent viewing opportunities. Now is the time for all the birds who journey south to start increasing their calorie intake. Their only task is to store enough fuel to travel to the warm lands of the south, a very dangerous but needed journey. For some like the adult American Bittern, their biannual migration already is being driven by the changes in light. As we go further into Autumn we will notice many of our friends that we have made over the hot Summer will one morning be gone, a group of swallows here, a warbler there, no more evening thrush songs. With the sadness comes the knowledge of their return after the Winter and time of slowness that we know is coming.

For those who will stick it out with us it is also a time to prepare. For some that means feeding heavily to increase their calorie reserves, for others it means storing food that will sustain them during the long nights. Visiting the wetlands, you might see beavers taking time now to bring freshly cut leaved

branches to underwater stores that will keep them fresh all Winter, their refrigerator. For those who will be enclosed by ice and snow all Winter, all their rations need to be stored before their world is sealed off by snow and ice. For those that sleep the Winter away in varying types of hibernation, most famously the bear, a lot of eating is ahead of them, storing their calorie rations under their skin.

The plant world is preparing as well for a time of rest and silence. For many plants the yearly time of growth has now past and they are now putting their energy into forming next year's buds and this year's seeds. The forest shrubs and trees will soon be ripening off their fruits and seeds, as they get ready to drop their leaves or some of their needles. For the open country this is the time of wildflowers, butterflies, and dragonflies. Venturing into the hayfield edges and milkweed patches will bring an abundance of exciting life, also getting ready for the changes ahead.

As in all times of change, our seasonal transitions can sometimes come slowly or in some cases seem to happen overnight. As the hot Summer transitions into Autumn, notice the changes in ourselves. We too feel the decrease in light amount and intensity. We too have innate urges to put away food and prepare our home for the Winter. As we walk the forests, fields, and waterways, notice and appreciate the knowledge and survival abilities our plant and animal colleagues have gained over thousands of generations leading them to be able to survive many of the most inhospitable conditions in our world. Settle in and feel the rhythm of energy that drives life here. The ebbs and flows from the time of abundance to the time of scarcity that we all are intricately connected to.

Our Long-challenged Woodlands

Excerpted from the late Arthur Westing's Woodlot Secret No. 26

Arthur was a loyal friend of WRWA for many years, serving as a trustee, organizing the library, and doing many other helpful tasks. Most of his Woodlot Secrets appeared in this newsletter in recent years.

They are collected in booklet form, available in the WRWA library.

Pre-colonial Vermont was more than 90 percent forested, with the Native Americans here having a relatively modest impact — minor clearing, hunting, trapping, fishing, harvesting of firewood, and gathering of nuts and other edible and medicinal vegetation. Significant forest removal for home construction, firewood, fencing, farming, and live-stock grazing began in earnest with the early European settlers. By the time of the Civil War, less than 40 percent of our woodlands remained.

Most of our livestock and crop plants depending on the co-opted former woodlands were non-native introductions. Moreover, huge numbers of alien plants were being introduced to the region, whether intentionally or not, so that today more than one-fifth of all our wild plants are more or less disruptive interlopers. On top of that, some highly damaging forest pathogens arrived over the years killing Chestnuts, Elms and Butternuts. Air- and water-borne pollutants also have increased, with ever more debilitating effects on our woodland plants and animals.

Soon after the Civil War, Vermont's overall woodlands began to slowly replace increasingly abandoned agricultural lands with their now impoverished soils. Their extent then increased annually until about 1980, when the state was once again quite well carpeted with trees, a coverage of about 75 percent that has held steady since then, although now with a mix and size of trees with more parcel fragmentation, and with much of it being manipulated via sustainable harvesting.

Now a new insult to our woodlands has been quietly emerging. With over-population and ever more wanton use of fossil fuels, society has been since the 1960s loading the atmosphere with excessive amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. This has finally led to noticeable increases in Vermont of both summer and winter temperatures, increased precipitation, and more serious storms. The somewhat longer growing seasons are confusing our trees to their detriment since those growing seasons are no longer in synchrony with the trees' unchanging day-length driven times of breaking dormancy, sexual activity, and return to dormancy.

Moreover, some of the fungal, insect, and arachnid pathogens of our trees and wildlife are thriving in the warming climate and extending their ranges northward into Vermont.

Many of our trees and wildlife will suffer from the warming climate, although others may benefit from it. Our six most common trees (over 50 percent of our woodlands) are all expected to decline more or less drastically owing to the changing climate: Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), Red maple (*Acer rubrum*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), and Yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*). Conversely, a number of our rarer trees (less than five percent of our woodlands) are as a result expected by some to increase: Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), Red pine (*Pinus resinosa*), Shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), Pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*), Sweet (Black) birch (*Betula lenta*), and Black walnut (*Juglans nigra*).

As to wildlife, some will suffer in the face of unchanging day-length signals that control their migration or hibernation and from the timely availability of food sources. For example, Snowshoe hares (*Lepus americanus*) and our State Bird, the Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*), will fare ever more poorly, and Brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) will succumb as their streams become too warm. Some wildlife may benefit from the changing climate — Gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), Opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*), and Turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*).

Finally, it is clear that Vermont's woodland ecosystems today are far from pristine, having undergone a host of major human assaults over the past several centuries. And further impacts from our disruption of the climate presage even more drastic assaults, many unforeseeable owing to the vagaries of future insect, fungal, and other pathogenic depredations.

On the other hand, our "working" woodlands are sure to continue serving us, albeit with a different array of species and perhaps not quite as well as in the past.

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Upcoming Programs

The WRWA has cancelled most programs due to the Covid pandemic. See inside for information about the September Game of Logging and the October Annual Meeting!

Please always check www.windhamwoodlands.org for information and updates.

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.