

130 Austine Drive, Suite 300 Brattleboro, VT 05301 802-257-7967 windhamwoodlands.org windhamwoodlands@gmail.com





It never ends !

SUMMER 2021

President's Message

By Munson Hicks

I'm not quite sure why I am sitting here writing this when I need to be out in the garden, weeding and harvesting, after all this rain.

As of this writing there is almost no logging going on in Windham County as a result of all the rain. The last half of the cut on my land may have to wait until winter and frozen ground comes back to allow the skidders and logging trucks to get back in the forest.But the trees seem in no rush to get to the mills, so I guess I can wait as well.

However, if you are a mushroom forager then you are surely in hog heaven right now.

It has been a frustrating year for the WRWA. With all the programs cancelled or being put on hold, not being able to get out in the woods with others to see and explore the changes that the seasons bring.

We are looking forward to our first face to face program of the last year and more. It seems appropriate that it will be our annual meeting on August 21st at Scott Farm in Dummerston. The farm is a longtime member of WRWA and has graciously offered to host. Please see the accompanying article for more information.

A SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Members of the Windham Regional Woodlands Association are invited to join the Board of Trustees and other members like you at our Annual Meeting to be held at the Scott Farm in Dummerston, Vt on Saturday, August 21, 2021. Members and their families and friends are invited.

This will be our first "in person" meeting since the covid epidemic began. The meeting itself will take place in a large, well ventilated function room at the farm. All other events will take place out of doors, weather permitting.

Here is the schedule of events. (All times are approximate)

9AM- 10:30 A tour of the Scott Farm woodlot on Black Mountain Road. (not at the farm)hosted by Sam Schneski, our County Forester, and Ian Martin, forester for The Scott Farm.

(Please note, if you plan to attend this portion of the day, please rsvp me at <u>debandmunson@mac.com</u> so we may know how many will need coffee and donuts. If you are not planning to come to this portion, there is no need to reply).

11AM-12:30 Our annual meeting.

Welcoming to the farm with a short presentation by the Executive Director Susan McMahon about The Landmark Trust USA and The Scott Farm. This will be followed by our annual meeting with board elections, budget presentations, etc.

12:30PM-1

Lunch break. Due to covid concerns we have decided to forgo our normal potluck lunch and ask that you BYO if you would like a luncheon.

1PM-2:30 (approx) a guide tour of the wonderful Stone Trust installations at the Scott Farm, led by Brian Post of The Stone Trust.

2:30-whenever People are invited to sit around and catch up with friends. (Also are invited to take down the chairs and tables!)

Special thanks to Simon Renault of The Scott Farm for making this all possible.

We hope for a large turnout for this interesting day.

Directions to The woodlot Tour

From Brattleboro. Rte 5 North to Middle Road (left) to Dutton Farm Road (left) Dutton Farm Road to Black Mountain Road (right) 1/4 miles to a log landing on Right side of the road Parking is along to road.

Directions to The Scott Farm

From Brattleboro Putney Road (Rte 5) to Black Mountain Road on the left Black Mountain Road to Kipling Road (straight- Black Mountain Road veers left) Straight on to The Scott Farm (parking usually in the field below the farm)

What is LDD?

Sam Schneski, Windham County Forester

LDD (Gypsy Moth) Update:

The Entomological Society of America (ESA) is the official entity to change common names of insects. The change is being made in conjunction with the launch of a new ESA program (the Better Common Names Project) to review and replace insect common names that may be inappropriate or offensive. Entomologists, scientists in related fields, and the public are invited to participate in identifying and proposing alternatives for insect common names that perpetuate negative ethnic or racial stereotypes. For more information contact Joe Rominiecki from the ESA at jrominiecki@entsoc.org In Vermont, we are referring to the insect as the LDD moth, based on the Latin name, Lymantria dispar dispar.

As predicted in Vermont, our forest health crew, and other observers, have seen an uptick in the LDD population and the resulting defoliation. Recent reports indicate the outbreak extends from Highgate down to Rutland and may be underreported in some more rural towns. It's been a roller coaster of drought, then deluge conditions. Recall from my last article that this moth succumbs to a native LDD killing fungus when there has been a surplus of rain. Since this spring was dry and now we seem to be in a wet cycle, I wonder if the fungus will be able to impact the population. Time will tell.

According to Vermont State Entomologist Judy Rosovsky, at this stage chemical control is not recommended but there are some practical, nonchemical steps a homeowner/landowner can take to limit damage and decrease next year's population.

Keep your plants well watered (careful though, too much water is not good for your plants)
If there are only a few trees, caterpillers can be squished or pruned out of the trees and then submerged in soapy water.

- Egg masses can be removed from trees between August and May to reduce infestations in forthcoming years. Use a scraper to carefully remove the masses and submerge them into a container with soapy water or alcohol so that they can be

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destroyed (not onto the ground where they may still hatch).

- A band of burlap can be installed around the trunk of the tree this year and monitored and used as a trap for caterpillars. It can also encourage egg masses to be laid on the burlap. After the eggs are laid this fall, you can remove the burlap and destroy the egg masses. This can help reduce populations next year. Start by wrapping an 18-inch wide strip around the tree at chest height. Tie a string around the center and fold the top portion down to form a skirt, with the string acting as a belt. Pick off the caterpillars daily and dispose of them by submerging them into a container with soapy water or alcohol.

- In most cases, it is too late to use insecticides for control of LDD moth. As the caterpillars

develop and become larger, insecticides are less effective at reducing populations. In future years, however, early-season treatment can be effective. The most commonly recommended products contain the bacteria, Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki (Btk). Btk is applied to foliage where moth larvae will consume it and are then killed. This strain of bacteria is specific to moth larvae, and its toxic properties are activated when it interacts with particular enzymes in the caterpillar's digestive tract. Btk is most effective when applied between May and early June, when LDD moths are still in the larval stage and are small (1/2 to 3/4 inch). Two spray applications are usually required for effective control. Application of Btk after mid-June is not an effective way to manage this pest.

Getting Paid to Grow Your Trees

By Bob Zimmerman, Trustee and Secretary

Did you know that there are companies out there that will pay you for owning a forest? It seems to be too good to be true. But it is happening.

This month I attended a ZOOM conference sponsored by Sustainable Woodstock (https:// www.sustainablewoodstock.org/) that was titled Forest Carbon Works: Providing Carbon Market Access for Smaller Landowners. The presentation was by foresters employed by Forest Carbon Works (https:// forestcarbonworks.org/). As we all know global warming is caused by too much carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere. Trees are great at sequestering carbon dioxide, thereby removing some of the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. There are markets being developed to permit corporations that emit carbon dioxide to offset, at least some of their emissions, by buying credits in a carbon marketplace. Such market places are up and running in Europe. Here in the United States only one carbon marketplace exists. It is in California. There are companies that help landowners enter this market. Forest Carbon Works is one of these companies.

To get started the company, Forest Carbon Works, asks you to apply on-line. You create an account, enter basic data about yourself and your forest and answer some preliminary questions you see if you qualify. All pretty painless and easy.

If you qualify and decide to go ahead and investigate further you pay \$75, enter more details about your property, forester (if you have one), location, size, etc. Then you wait for them to contact you, schedule a Forest Technician visit and determine if you can enter the program.

Some of the details

It is important to realize this is a long-term commitment. By taking payments (probably in the \$10-20 per acre per year range) your land is committed to be in the program for 125 years and your forest has to remain more or less intact for that time. You can manage it, do Timber Stand Improvement (TSI), keep it in Current Use Program, harvest some firewood, etc. but the forest must remain for 125 years. You sign up to get payments every six years for a 25 years period and can renew for another 25 years. This program has only recently been developed so there is minimal history on which to make a decision.

Other programs

I have learned of one other company that is in this business. On the back of the magazine "National Woodlands" from the National Woodland Owners Association is an ad for Silvia Terra (<u>https://ncx.com/</u>) which seems to do something similar. Not sure if they are operating in VT at this time.

Going Forward

We are certainly going to see more companies entering this field. How can we judge the best course? Is it wise to commit to something for 125 years? Even 25 years seem like a long time when you are 80 years old. But getting paid to grow trees does sound really interesting and worth investigating.

For those who would like to look into the subject of carbon offsets there is lots of information out there. A couple of organizations with a local flair are Sustainable Woodstock and The Nature Conservancy. Sustainable Woodstock has a You Tube channel with information on a range of conservation programs including Carbon Offsets. The Nature Conservancy (https:// www.nature.org/) is a leader in the field of Carbon Offsets, but not for the small landowner. Google searches will turn up considerably more info but as with all web searches you must be very discerning.



Riding the Winds

As the evening crickets get loud and the crisp night air roles in, I welcome you to late summer and the time of preparation. As we are now on the leeward side of the summer solstice, things are changing yet again. Slowly the heavy days of summer when time seems to stand still are starting to let go of their thick humid air, finding a new balance between sun warmth and crisp evening breezes that force us to look towards times to come.

The days are shorter now but are still full as ever with bounty and warmth. As we venture on to the land, the wetlands and field edges are places to spend time. The tall grasses, asters, and goldenrods are flowering now and as always, they will push the limits of us who try to get to know their names. Late season milkweed growing in patches at the edge of fields is now rearing a new generation of monarch butterflies, soon to be on a new journey. The swamps and marshes are full of flowers of all types, peppering the lush growth with color. Familiar friends that you may find are tall joe pie weed, boneset, and maybe a patch of white turtlehead. if the deer have not gotten to them yet. Along the edges of beaver ponds and grassy wetlands our familiar meadowsweet and steeplebush will greet you, a hardy water loving shrub with thick fur like bunches of very small rose and white colored flowers. If your travels take you along the sandy shores of slow-moving rivers, keep an eye out for the elegant rich orange Canada lily, showing off their lantern like hanging flowers in a background of thick grasses.

As we enjoy our late season flowers take time to check and see what trees are putting their annual energy into making seeds. The beaked hazelnut and witch-hazel shrubs may be thick with crops. Better get to the hazelnuts before the squirrels do. The tall trees will now be showing their abundances, the green acorns can be seen with keen eyes, the basswoods showing of their always intriguing flighty seeds. Know that as this abundance is growing, these trees have already established their buds for next year, ready to wait out the winter for the time of longer days. Now is the time to get to know the buds before the leaves fall, a sure way to refine your winter identification skills.

Everywhere we go there will be the pulse of all those small and large as they prepare for the coming months ahead. Those that venture far are starting to prepare, for some a familiar journey, for others a new and unknown one. Those that stay here are storing food where they can find it or on themselves, it being there with them in the darkest of nights. Look to the beaver ponds to watch around the clock work being done to store winter food and to do any repairs needed on the house and on the dam, now is the time to do it before their world changes for a while.

Watching summer move into Autumn is bound to bring some sadness for it is our movement from the time pf plenty into the time of scarcity. But with this also comes the familiar and exciting workings of our land and its inhabitants to conserve and store energy needed to sustain life in a four-season temperate environment. So, as we yet again wander on this land we call home with the anticipation for a new season, look yet again to the sky for those changes that we have come to love and find familiar will be riding those ever present winds. Daniel Dubie Naturalist and ecological counselor Northwoods Connections daniel@northwoodsconnections.com

Bensch Mountain Musings

By Bill Guenther, Retired Windham County Forester

With COVID still swirling around us, I have stayed pretty close to home for 16 months and not travelled out-of-state. This has allowed me to take a much closer look at things up here on the mountain.

This spring, I started cutting lots of brush around the house to increase airflow with a goal of decreasing vastly increased humidity levels. I got a real surprise on the west and north sides of the house. There were two 3 foot larch seedlings (also called tamarack) growing amongst a dense group of black birch and beech. But this tree species does not occur anywhere on my 23 acres.

Larches are the only deciduous (lose their leaves annually) conifer species. But wait, don't the pines, spruce and fir keep their needles year round? The needle shedding is likely due to its extreme northern range from the Yukon east to Newfoundland. By dropping its leaves, the tree can better protect itself against the severe cold it faces in much of its native locale.

Like other conifers, the seeds of larch are contained inside a cone and each cone has roughly 25-40 seeds of which about 75% are viable. They are about 0.1" across and have "wings" about 0.25" long.

While this species is native to Vermont, it is more typically found in the northern part of the state. So just how did it arrive??? I have scoured my neighborhood and walked all of my neighbors' properties and I am certain that it came from WRWA Trustee Andy Snelling's family property. There is a large tamarack that is well established right along the road next to their 1800's farmhouse, but it is about 1,200 feet in a straight line distance from the likely parent tree to the seedling. !! So just how could the seed have traveled to my backyard?? Seed dispersal can occur in some very interesting ways. I found a fascinating article from the Woodlands Trust in the United Kingdom that furthered my education on seed dispersal. They listed five different ways that seeds disperse-

Barochory is when seeds simply fall to the ground by gravity. Typically large seeds such as walnut, horse chestnut and butternut could fall in this category. If barochory is the only dispersal method, then the seeds will not travel far unless they get some help from an outside source. Ballochory- this interesting phenomenon occurs when seeds are expelled by force. A shrub in Europe called Gorse is perhaps the best example. Its seeds contained in a pod dry out over time and when enough moisture has evaporated, the pod violently splits open, expelling the seeds some distance.

Zoochory-movement by animals is this dispersal method which could carry seeds a considerable distance. The most common forms of zoochory are squirrels and jays creating caches of seeds for the winter months. Also very light seeds can move when animal's fur picks them up and they can be deposited very far away. Perhaps the farthest movement of seed occurs from our avian friends. Birds are voracious consumers of many types of seeds, mostly in the form of berries. These can be dropped by birds, but likely the most distant dispersal method would be seeds that pass through a bird and still maintain their viability. Bird droppings could be left miles away from where they were eaten. Hydrochory- water is the means of movement for this method and this could result in seeds traveling many miles from their original source. The most striking use of this method is in the ubiquitous spread of Japanese knotweed. While it is not true seeds causing this, rhizome fragments that break off from the parent plant are often carried by water and can spread at alarming rates. Just consider how much more knotweed we have after Tropical Storm Irene. Anemochory- seeds are moved by winds, which can allow them to travel great distances. Many seeds are shaped to be able to make good use of this technique. The birches have a very light winged seed that allows wide and long dispersal. Other species that have an even more pronounced winged effect are the maples and ashes. Maple seeds are enclosed in a winged structure called a samara that can act almost like a helicopter.

Now that we've explored this primer on seed dispersal, let's go back to the larch seedlings on the edge of my backyard. Considering the 5 methods we looked at, I would be willing to bet that the larch arrived via Anemochory or wind dispersal. While the seed has nearly a quarter mile to travel, my property is directly downwind of Andy's likely parent tree This was a neat find for me as it has now increased the number of tree species on my woodlot to 24.

Also on my walks, I discovered several barely germinated seedlings of oriental bittersweet, glossy buckthorn and Asiatic honeysuckle. Since all of these nasty invasive plants were located on "edge," I am quite confident that Zoochory was responsible with birds being the culprit for the spread of these plants. Another observation in the woodlot this summer was that the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) has now infested virtually all of the hemlocks on the edge of the woods. The severity of infestation has also increased with some trees having very thin crowns and a gray cast similar to what I've observed in the Great Smokies and Connecticut, where major infestations have occurred leading to substantial mortality.

Once in the woods though, the hemlocks seem to be adelgid-free making the strong case that birds are the vectors carrying the tiny insects on their wings. The trees on the edge of the woods have much more use by birds, which then allow the adelgids to get established.

The primary measure we use to determine the trajectory of an infestation is to assess the level of winter mortality. HWA has such a high reproductive rate that you need about 92% mortality just to keep the population level. Mortality rates above that will reduce the overall population while rates much below will allow HWA to multiply and do more damage to already infested trees as well as spread to uninfested trees. The insects are killed by extreme cold, especially if it occurs in the month of March. Unfortunately with our very mild winter, the mortality level this past winter was only 51%, which is why things look so much worse on the HWA front this summer. Spending more time at home has allowed me to take a much closer look at my forestland and to

better assess its overall condition on many fronts, not just insects and diseases. This has had a therapeutic effect in navigating the pandemic with the woods being a silver lining in these challenging times !

Scholarships Available

Each year, the Windham Regional Woodlands Association offers scholarships to high school and current college students who are residents of Windham County, Vermont who are pursuing further education that is directly related to forest management. There are scholarship funds (\$3,000) available to students who meet the following eligibility requirements:

- 1. *Windham County* residents who are (a) high school seniors or have a high school diploma or (b) sophomores, juniors or seniors in college.
- 2. Attendance in a two or four-year program in <u>forestry</u> or allied field (e.g., wildlife management) with coursework and goals directly related to <u>forest management</u>. For the purpose of these scholarships we do not consider more general programs (e.g., agriculture, botany, turf management or environmental science) as allied fields unless the applicant clearly demonstrates how his or her chosen field is focused on forest management.

Please email Jessalyn Stockwell at jessalyn.stockwell@gmail.com for an application. Applications should be sent to Windham Regional Woodlands Association, Inc., 130 Austine Drive Suite 300, Brattleboro, VT 05301 or emailed to jessalyn.stockwell@gmail.com. Applications are due by September 1st, 2021.

"Want Ads"

Treasurer Wanted

WRWA is on the hunt for a new Treasurer. We are looking for someone to manage the financing for the Board of Trustees.. This is a job that requires about ten hours a month. Duties include paying bills and making deposits, working with the finance committee to crate the annual budget and quarterly reports, etc. The person may be a Board member or a volunteer.Compensation is available. Please contact Munson Hicks at <u>debandmunson@mac.com</u> if interested.

Windham Regional Woodlands Association

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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.