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WOODLOT TRIPS



FALL 2019

Programs

Saturday, January 11, 2020, 9:30–11:30 a.m. — Learn to use iNaturalist for identification and recording of species. Place to be determined; please check WRWA website www.windhamwoodlands.org for updates.

Attention all nature lovers, photographers, and citizen scientists! Windham Regional Woodlands Association and the Vermont Center for Ecostudies are offering a workshop on how to use the citizen science tool iNaturalist to collect data and learn more about the species that surround us. Join Emily Anderson as she explains the value of citizen science projects in conserving Vermont's biodiversity and walks participants through the basics of recording

their first observation on iNaturalist. For established users, she can help answer your questions that have come up while out observing.

iNaturalist is a crowd-sourced species identification app powered by artificial intelligence (AI). For the casual nature observer, it allows people to snap photos of animals and plants, and upload them for members of the iNaturalist community to identify. It is also a social network for naturalists to record information on species, meet others with similar interests and learn. It began as a web app, iNaturalist.org, founded in 2008 by students at the University of California, Berkeley.

Through iNaturalist, the Vermont Center for Ecostudies manages the Vermont Atlas of Life project whose mission is to discover, map, and monitor biodiversity across the state. In just a few years, over 7,000 Vermonters have added over 365,000 observations. It's the largest biodiversity dataset ever assembled for the state, we welcome all to join in! *A cell phone or digital camera is needed to use the app.*

**Saturday, February 8, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. — WRWA Member Ramble and Potluck Lunch
Land of Munson Hicks, WRWA president, Vernon, Vermont**

Please come and join us for a “ramble” through the woods on the land of Munson Hicks. It is a one hundred thirty-two acre parcel of generally flat land. Depending on the weather, it will be an easy snowshoe, cross country ski, or just plain boots tour of the land, which will have been newly marked for an upcoming cut. George Weir (a former WRWA president) is the consulting forester who manages the land, and he will be along to answer any questions.

Directions to 870 Tyler Hill Road: From Brattleboro, go south on route 5 through Guilford. About 2.5 miles south of the Guilford store, turn LEFT onto Tyler Hill Road. After crossing over Rte. 91 the driveway is the second on the left (mailbox on the right).

**Saturday, February 29, (snow/rain date March 7), 9:30–11 a.m. — Winter Tree Identification Walk at
Outgoing WRWA President Marli Rabinowitz's land in Guilford.**

Space is limited to 25 people; call or email ahead of time: 254-8325 or Marli@sover.net

Windham County Forester Sam Schneski will lead us on a Winter Tree Identification walk through field and forest. Learn to identify trees by their twigs, buds, bark, and other features that remain in winter when most have lost their leaves. Many common Windham County species will be seen, as well as a variety of invasive species, and some less seen but useful trees such as hawthorn, witch hazel, butternut, and black walnut. This program is good for those who can tell “if it's a pine tree or not,” but it will also help those who want tips on more subtle features that characterize and differentiate similar species, and other tree lore.

We will have hot cider and soup afterwards, and then if you like, you can walk down to view the Green River dam and covered bridge, or ski/snowshoe on miles of trails.

Directions to 1428 Stage Road, Guilford: From Exit 1, take Route 5 South to the Guilford Country Store, and turn RIGHT onto Guilford Center Road. Go 4 ½ miles and through Guilford Center. Turn RIGHT onto Stage Road for 1½ miles. Turn into driveway (it will be marked) after bank of mailboxes. *Don't head downhill!* Call if there is any question about weather.

November Programs

Due to the WRWA seasonal publication schedule for Woodlot Tips, two interesting November programs already will have taken place by the time members receive this issue. Reports on both programs will appear in the Winter issue, which also will be posted to the website as usual.

“Treating your Woodlot as a Business.” — On Thursday, November 7th, the Windham Regional Woodlands Association presented a program on “Treating your Woodlot as a Business.” Whether you have ten or a thousand acres, this informative forum provided a number of ways to treat your woodlands more efficiently and profitably.

Led by George Weir, a private consulting forester with more than forty years of experience in our area, and Sam Schneski, our Windham County forester, there was discussion about Use Value Appraisal (Current Use), growing timber for profit, state and federal programs for woodland improvement, and tax strategies after harvesting.

Green Burial Workshop — On Thursday, November 21, prior to member receipt of the newsletter, this program will be held. The listing has been up on the WRWA website, however, so we hope those interested saw it and were able to attend. A report on this program will appear in the Winter issue of *Woodlot Tips*.

More and more people are asking for environmentally responsible burial options that reflect their personal values. The practice of burying bodies without embalming with toxic chemicals, encasing in metal or reinforced wood caskets, or cement or plastic outer vaults—truly body to earth—is timeless, interrupted only over the past century. This workshop will show how efforts to return to these ancient, eco-friendly ways are gaining momentum across the country as people are finding a way to let their bodies return to the earth.

Lee Webster, noted author and national leader in the field of Green Burial will present the current status of green burial in Vermont and the movement towards developing conservation burial grounds on lands protected by conservation principles. These cemeteries support sustainable management while restoring and protecting the ecological integrity of the land. Land trust entities with the interest and capacity to partner with and support conservation burial projects come in many forms, from local conservation groups to state and regional land trusts to national chapters of prominent organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy. Vermont landowners can have questions answered regarding steps towards creating natural burial grounds on their land.

(Ex) President’s Message

By Marli Rabinowitz

At the Annual Meeting in August, the membership elected one new trustee, Daniel Dubie. I would like to welcome him to the board. Daniel was instrumental in our annual meeting, sharing knowledge of his family’s land, and convincing other family members to host us and tell how they have kept the land intact in the family for four generations. You can read more about him, and about all trustees, on the website.

After two three-year terms, trustees must step down, so Margaret MacDonald and Daniel Healey have had to do so. Margaret, also a former president, has been very active writing articles about

programs and will continue to help edit the newsletter. Dan Healey led at least one annual meeting walk through woods managed by Longview Forestry. He also organized the “Essential Oils from Woodland Plants” programs that were quite amazing. And he independently led a “Forests make good water makes good beer” tour that I am still hearing about statewide. He brought a lot to this group and we hope he stays connected. Both deserve great gratitude for all they have brought to WRWA.

In October, the trustees elected officers and volunteered for committee assignments. I am happy to

tell you that Munson Hicks was nominated as President and agreed to serve. Bob DeSiervo will be V.P., Bob Zimmerman, Secretary, and Phyllis Weltz, Treasurer. Other trustees are Andy Snelling, Nick Haskell, Penfield Chester, Lee Todd, and me. Sam Schneski, as County Forester, is an invaluable member of several committees. Barbara Evans, Margaret MacDonald, and Bill Guenther are all helping with the newsletter. Bob Zimmerman also stepped up to receive and track down articles for Woodlot Tips, a great help to Barbara.

It was an unexpected honor to serve as WRWA president. I enjoyed wracking my brain for article topics, participating in so many interesting programs (missing more than I wanted to), and getting to know so many members and forest stewards. I am happy that Munson has agreed to serve as the next President and Bob D. is stepping up as V.P. I have one more year as a trustee and it is good to overlap as Munson takes the reins. He has good ideas for running things smoothly, and creative ideas for programs and membership. I will give what advice and assistance to him as I can; it is a time-consuming and detail-fraught position. The trustees are all sharing what was Carol's and then Cindy's job. We currently have no paid staff, so there is more to do than in previous years and each Trustee has my gratitude and admiration.

Munson will bring his calm and wise sense of humor and perceptive sense of good organization to

bear on the inner workings of WRWA. He has been a trustee since 2017 so he is familiar with what is needed and has several years ahead to create some stability and growth. You may recognize his name, and indeed he is the son of Halsey Hicks who was the first Windham County Forester and also a professor at Marlboro College. The WRWA Education fund is named after him. Munson has a lot of knowledge of the forest and good stories from his father. He has offered his forest for a ramble early in 2020 and you can get to know him better there.

WRWA is an association run completely by volunteers. We learn from each other what is working in the forest, how to plan for the future, and how what was done in the past influenced the forests we know. We all work for forests that will be at least as beautiful, diverse, healthy, and productive as today, despite the many challenges. The members of WRWA are playing a role in that future, and if serving on this board is part of that for you, you will be welcomed.

Meanwhile back in the real world, the trees are ready for another winter. We have some indoor programs planned as well as some that may require snowshoes or at least warm boots. We hope to see you.

Keep warm, and thank a tree or two and a forester-for the wood!

President's Message

By Munson Hicks, Vernon land owner

To all the members of the Windham Regional Woodlands Association:

Good evening, I say that only because I am writing this at night.

I wish to thank the board of trustees who have chosen to elect me as the new president of the organization. (I think.)

This is a great organization that has as its core mission the advancement of our woodlands through education and outreach to both our members and all who are interested in our forestlands, with all that entails.

I am grateful for all the help and wise guidance that Marli (our outgoing president) has already given to me, with a promise to continue to do that.

We can only thank her for the tremendous leadership she gave us during her presidency. She worked tirelessly on our behalf and we can't praise her enough.

We have a lot of challenges ahead, but also a lot of opportunities as well.

With the help of our new vice-president, Bob DeServio, I hope we will find ways to not only increase our membership, but convince members to become more active in writing articles for the

newsletter, convincing others to join the organization, and to offer suggestions for future programs.

We have a strong board that has stepped up to serve on the various committees and do extra work

in the current absence of a clerk who used to handle many of the administrative duties.

I am trying to get up to speed on the new job and will report more in the future about how we (and I) are doing.

WRWA Annual Meeting 2019

By Margaret MacDonald, Former Trustee

Although one reason for holding WRWA's annual meeting in August was that the weather should be warm, it was distinctly chilly on the morning of August 24 when WRWA members gathered outside Daniel Dubie's home in the Shatterack Family Forest, West Townshend. Since 1981 the Shatterack forest has been managed as an S corporation, with 11 different family members owning shares. Dan, a member of the fourth generation, handed out summaries of the cultural history and the natural history and ecology of Shatterack Forest and introduced the members of his family present: Sally, Pete, Diane, and Amos Newton.

Diane Newton described the past forest use and changes in management of the tract. Earlier generations of the family made heavy use of herbicides and extensive high-grade logging. As the years passed, Vermont Land Trust (VLT) bought a conservation easement, the property was enrolled in Current Use, and a group of like-minded family gained ownership. Since 2014 Steve Piluski, their logger, has implemented the family's forest management plan, taking a "gentle approach." Consulting Forester Hayden Lake updated the plan this year.

Forest Ecology

Dan then talked about the forest ecology. The tract includes an area with extreme southern exposure, which is home to a dry oak forest. The property also includes a mixed red oak and hemlock forest, which is unusual, and the family has found rare plant species, such as pink corydalis orchids, on the property. Wildlands and Woodlands has established a long-term baseline ecology plot on the site where no trees will be cut. All in all, the Shatterack Forest represents a great nature conservation story, with family members, state and federal agencies, and private organizations (e.g., The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and VLT working together for the good of the land.

At 10:15 ecologist Jon Binhammer, director of land protection at TNC, talked about the ecology and history of the 3,500-acre Glebe Mountain area. He handed out a TNC map of the Glebe Mountain Forest Block, showing the different parcels and areas covered by conservation easements (including Shatterack Forest), the Hamilton Falls Natural Area, TNC-owned lands, land managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, and the portions belonging to Jamaica State Park. The areas are separated by roads, which unfortunately fragment natural features and are vectors for plant diseases and block small animals. One of TNC's goals is to reduce the fragmentation that accompanies diverse ownership of various parcels.

The Regional Planning Commission has established a collaborative plan to retain the character of forest blocks. The plan is non-regulatory, and aims at preserving water quality, as well as plant and wildlife habitat. There are 21 forest blocks in Vermont that represent natural diversity and are somewhat resilient to climate change. Once a forest block is fragmented it loses its function. TNC itself owns 30,000 acres and uses forest blocks as a framework; the activities of private landowners amplify TNC's efforts.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Jon briefly described the future prospects for developing a carbon market in Vermont in which forest owners would sell carbon offsets to those who spew carbon into the atmosphere. At present this is not happening but the state is looking into it.

Legislative and Forest Health Update

At 11:00 Windham County Forester Sam Schneski gave a legislative update, noting that this has not been a highly active legislative session, although the legislature did raise the application fee for UVA from \$85 to \$100. Some other items of interest to WRWA include:

- Act 83, S163, Agricultural Development, created the Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group. The act also authorizes grants to logging contractors for safety training and accreditation.
- Act 71, H541, is related to tax capital gains limits and includes a \$5M exclusion on estate tax.
- Act 29, H82, reduces taxes on logging equipment.
- A review of Act 250 may redefine the term “critical resource area.” This would lower the elevation required to bring land under Act 250 to 2,000 feet.
- H190 would form an Advisory Committee on Wildlife. This would mean less control of wildlife policy by the legislature.

Sam reported that the emerald ash borer (EAB) has now been found in Alburgh (in the most north-western part of Vermont). Check the Vermont Invasives map for up-to-date sightings of EAB. In Stamford-Olney two EABs were found in purple traps. The good news is that a new scientific study of initial sites in Michigan shows that fewer trees actually died. In some areas 75% of white ash survived, but no green or black ash. The Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation (FPR) has held workshops with VLT and the Conservation Commissions aimed at educating landowners about EAB, steering them away from panic that would cause them to liquidate all of their ash trees, and helping them decide how much risk to accept.

Landowner decisions about retaining or cutting ash trees should depend on the mature diameter of the trees (to maintain acceptable growing stock) and on sustainable forestry ethics. Sam also noted that in addition to EAB, ash decline and ash yellows (fungus), as well as weather conditions, are affecting ash trees. *(See Sam’s EAB update in this issue of Woodlot Tips.)*

Sam then gave a forest health update. If you hear frass falling from leaves it could be because of saddled prominent caterpillar or forest tent cater-

pillar. We are seeing thin maple crowns and anthracnose as a result of our wet spring. Beech is being affected by beech bark disease; beech leaf disease has not been seen in Vermont, but in New York. Winter moth is here but is not a problem yet; lantern moth may be.

With regard to saw log markets, the price of oak has dropped, but oak and ash are still valuable; landowners may want to hold on to ash past the time when others sell off. You can get on the FPR email list and receive a monthly update on forest health.

Forest Walk

After lunch, Consulting Forester Hayden Lake led some of the participants on an easy walk through part of the property to see how the family’s goals were reflected in the forest. The light touch approach was evident with cuts of no larger than a half acre. There has been thinning of pines to release hardwoods, particularly maple, and some oak regeneration was seen although deer browse is always a problem. We had the good luck to come upon Steve Piluski in action, and he was kind enough to respond to some questions about his operation and the ways in which it is a good match for this family and its land. In particular, he mentioned that his one-man operation and smaller equipment allow him to tailor the work to the preferences of the landowners and help them meet their goal of funding their S corporation through timber sales.

A couple of hardy souls accompanied Amos on a wonderful walk through mixed hardwoods to a cliffside vista to the north. This was an area that had not been recently logged. On the way back, they stopped at his sawmill where he cuts lumber for his own use and does some custom cutting for others.

The day provided a comprehensive overview of many aspects of owning and managing forest lands in Vermont, as well as good company for those who care deeply about our woodlands.

Membership Thanks

Well, we have come to the end of the first quarter of our fiscal year. It is the time when we receive most of our membership renewals.

I want to thank all of you who have renewed your support of the organization. It is with your help that we are able to provide the quarterly newslet-

ters and the many programs that we offer free of charge to our members and the general public alike. There are also members-only programs that we encourage you to take part in and a small lending library, available to our members as well.

It is through your support that we are able through the Halsey Hicks Fund to offer educational experiences, and through our Scholarship Fund to give deserving young people some help toward their education in fields relating to our core mission.

As always, however, there are a few of you who have not yet renewed your membership. We would certainly encourage you to do so as it is only through your support that we can continue to exist.

We are nearly in the Holiday season, so we hope you will send in your renewals before it slips your mind during the busy times ahead.

If you have misplaced or lost your renewal form, you can renew online on our website www.windhamwoodlands.org There you can also make donations to our education and scholarship funds.

If you would like us to send you a renewal envelope, please email us with your address and we will be happy to supply you with one.

Thank you again for your support,
Munson Hicks for The Board of Trustees

Emerald Ash Borer in Windham County

By Sam Schneski, Windham County Forester

Well it finally happened. As of October 9th, 2019, a beetle found in the town of Londonderry has been confirmed as Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). The property owner found the beetle on their deck and thought it may be EAB, so they called an arborist who reported the find to state experts. The sample was then sent to a scientist from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for final confirmation.

You may wonder why EAB has gone for so long undetected in Vermont while surrounding states and Canada have found it as early as 2008. Within the space of 20 months EAB has been confirmed in 8 Vermont counties. A likely explanation is related to tree vigor and specifically level of stressors. Although EAB can and does infest and kill healthy trees, it's well documented that it prefers trees that are stressed. That's why girdled trap trees are a good detection tool. This is the process in which trees are intentionally stressed by girdling (an area of bark and phloem removed from the entire circumference of the tree). Girdled trap trees may be most useful in areas where sensitive detection is needed and where management activities including tree removal

are planned such as at new outlier sites. From 2014–2018 our growing seasons have been abnormally dry. Drought didn't bring EAB to Vermont, but it likely allowed insect populations to build up quickly and spread, consequently increasing our chances of detection.

Although the beetle spreads on its own, humans can unintentionally help distribute it, for example, by moving infested firewood. We have entered the "non-flight season" which is October 1st – May 31st. This is an especially important time to follow the "slow the spread" recommendations found on vtinvasives.org. From the website, "With the heating season getting underway, and firewood deliveries occurring, it's important to remember that untreated firewood should never move out of infested areas. Be sure that your purchase or transportation of both log length and split firewood will not unnecessarily spread EAB. **There's a lot of spread to slow:** While the infested area map shows that high-risk areas for EAB include many towns, **visibly infested trees still remain rare** in Vermont."

As of the writing of this article, the find in Londonderry is limited to one beetle. There hasn't been confirmation of any infested trees.

In the next few weeks a survey will be done in town looking for infested trees. Recently I had a chance to spend part of a day in Londonderry with protection forester Jim Esden looking at and peeling bark off sections of ash trees that we felt may be suspect. We were unable to find any trees with tell tale signs of EAB. Some of the signs we looked for included bark flecking on live trees created by woodpeckers looking for EAB snacks, serpentine larval tunnels under the bark in the cambium of the tree, and 'D'-shaped exit holes made by EAB.

For those forest landowners enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal (UVA) program and wondering how to handle their ash trees in light of EAB, please refer to our department website www.fpr.vermont.gov. In the Use Value Appraisal section, go to "documents

and forms" to find our "UVA Standards related to EAB."

Landowners have varying goals for their forests and for their ash resource as related to EAB. There is still a lot we don't know about ash resiliency to EAB so I encourage landowners to take stock of their ash resource. See how it relates to their existing management plan, understand the proximity of an infested (or high risk) area to their property, and determine if silvicultural treatment is needed or warranted. Attempt to maintain an ash component in the forest. Retained and surviving ash trees will continue to produce the seed that is necessary to establish the next generation of ash trees. Who knows, maybe some of those trees will be resistant!

Member Ramble

By Margaret MacDonald

It was a warm, sunny, September Saturday afternoon when Steve Soszynski welcomed 15 WRWA members and (we hope!) prospective members, to WRWA's first "Member Ramble" at his beautiful farm in Guilford. After a short introduction by WRWA president Marli Rabinowitz, we started out on what was indeed, as stated in the announcement, a gentle walk.

On the way to Steve's forest, we passed between two small ponds, across a recently hayed field and then on to the woods. We followed a well-maintained trail up an easy slope that winds through the forest.

Steve's property is enrolled in Current Use, and he is enthusiastically following the forest management plan developed by his consulting forester, Ian Martin. As we walked, Steve pointed out various places where he is combating the invasive species that have unfortunately followed the power line right-of-way, and where hardwoods are now starting to regenerate.

One highlight of the walk was a visit to what Steve described as his favorite tree: an impressive old burlled maple.

The cleared power line right-of-way on the backside of his property offered us a spectacular view across the property to distant hills. However, the steep descent back to Steve's farm, on a narrow path, did cause some ramblers to request that others be prepared to catch them if they started to slip. Happily, all of us made it safely back to Steve's home for wonderful treats prepared by his wife Marlene.

Ramblers greatly enjoyed the introduction to Steve and his forestland, historic home, and a quick tour of his barn workshop. Many thanks to Steve and Marlene for hosting us!

The WRWA encourages other members whose woodland is suitable for easy walking to host rambles. If you are interested, please send an email to windhamwoodlands@gmail.com.



The Old Tree

By Jeanne Seymour

This old tree planted over 200 years ago has watched the world go by. It has sheltered many creatures, creating safe haven for nesting birds and a playground for the squirrels. It has watched the world evolve from Native Americans to people who overlook nature, too busy using modern day technology.

It has had many lives. Strong and beautiful, it has graced the cover of calendars and magazines and numerous photographs taken by professionals and amateurs alike. It won the title of the largest sugar maple in the state of Vermont. No small feat, especially since the Sugar Maple is the state tree. It is recorded in the "Big Trees of Vermont" book boasting a diameter 18'6" around the trunk. Retired County Forester Bill Guenther has brought many people to see it on the Big Tree Tours.

It has held rope swings, endured being tapped for maple syrup and children climbing it. It has survived lightning strikes and ferocious storms. And like all living things, it grows old and has lost much of itself. Many sections have rotted and gone down in these storms. Its center is now missing, its title gone. It persists and lives in fierce determination to not go down without a fight. And so we let it be and as it weakens and sections fall, it provides us warmth with its firewood. Its leaves in Fall are orange and crimson red. Aglow in sunlight, awash in darkness. Ever quietly standing there guarding over the farm.

I love this tree and what it stands for. I love its spirit; like an old friend it keeps standing and being there for all the lives that have passed through this farm. It has sheltered the old farmhouse all these years. I see large cracks now and feel sorrow, vines trying to overtake and live in the decay of its trunk. Enough, I say sweet tree. You have done more than your duty. It's ok to go. You will never be forgotten.



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Upcoming Programs *(See inside for details)*

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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.