

SWPWO



April 2007

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners **mini newsletter**

Next Meeting: Coalbed Methane Gas Extraction: Landowner Rights

Thursday, April 19

The next meeting sponsored by the Association will be held Thursday, April 19, at 7:00 PM at the Washington Courthouse Square building, 100 W. Beau St, in Washington. This is directly behind the Courthouse. Julie Aquino, a Law student and Dr. Tom Buchelle of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, will discuss landowner rights as they apply to coal bed methane extraction on private property. The meeting will be held on the first floor. Free parking will be available on the Level B entrance. The meeting is open and free to the public. Everyone is welcome. Any questions call 724-627-6624.

Use Caution When Clearing Ailanthus (tree of heaven)

Ailanthus, also known as tree of heaven, is a fast growing tree, a prolific seed producer, a persistent stump and root sprouter, and an aggressive competitor with respect to the surrounding vegetation. It occurs

primarily in disturbed areas, though it may invade undisturbed habitats. Because of the likelihood of this tree replacing native species, land managers should take active measures to eradicate it. If only a single cutting can be made, the best time is when the plants begin to flower. At this stage the reserve supply in the roots has been nearly exhausted, and new seeds have not yet been produced. Always apply herbicide to the cambria of the stump immediately after cutting.

A recent case in the Annals of Internal Medicine (Volume 143-Number2) reported a tree surgeon that had been clearing *Ailanthus* was taken to the emergency room with chest pain. He was diagnosed with myocarditis. Symptoms of myocarditis are gastrointestinal and/or chest pain or pressure, possibly radiating into arms, dizziness and shortness of breath.

Myocarditis is commonly assumed to be caused by a virus, exposure to chemicals or as in the case of the tree surgeon, certain naturally occurring

products such as the proteins in tree sap, may also cause myocarditis.

Exposure to the proteins present in Ailanthus sap would have to enter the body through an open wound. Simply coming in contact with the skin would not be enough to make the person ill. Taking proper precautions, such as work gloves and long sleeve shirts, should reduce the risk of exposure. *Submitted by Bill Wentzel*



Calendar of Meetings for the 2007 Year

- **May 9 Meeting**
Birdhouses, Bathouses and Wildlife Management
Tammy Colt, Wildlife Diversity Biologist, PA Game Commission
Time: 7:00 PM
Place: Building #10, Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg, PA
- **May 12 Field Trip**
Washington County Bird Sanctuary Buffalo Creek Bird Area
Doug Donkerley, Land Manager
Time: 12:30 PM
Meet at: Building #10, Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg, PA
- **June 9 Field Trip**
Observing Bats and Exploring Wood Art
Burnham's Tree Farm
Time: 12:00 PM
Meet at: Building #10, Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg, PA
- **July 14 Summer Tour**
Diamonds in the Brush and Cubic Zirconium: Young Tree Plantations
Time: 12:30 PM
Thistle's Tree Farm

- Meet at: Building #10, Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg, PA
- **August 18 Summer Tour**
Woodland Plant Identification
Raccoon Creek State Park
Time: 12:00 PM
Meet at: Building #10, Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg, PA
- **September 12 Meeting**
Mushrooms and Decomposers
Speaker to be determined
Time: 7:00 PM
Place: Building #10, Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg, PA
- **September 15 Field Trip**
Identifying Mushrooms in Your Woodlands
Place to be determined
Time: 12:00 PM
Meet at: Building #10, Greene County Fairgrounds, Waynesburg, PA
- **October 20 Picnic with Plant Identification Competition and Potato Gun Competition (Members Only)**
Time and Place to be determined
- **November 14 Meeting**
Successful Management of Woodlands Through Low Impact Logging
Jim Finley (??)
Time: 7:00 PM
Place: Courthouse Square Building
Washington, PA
- **November 17 Field Trip**
Tree Felling, Horse Logging, and Timber Sawing
Burnham's Tree Farm

SWPWO Website

The SWPWO official website can be accessed at the following address www.cs.pitt.edu/~daley/swpwo.

This website is available to us because of the talents and time of webmaster and officer, Bob Daley. The SWPWO website has the calendar of events for 2006, current information about our group, and photos from our outings. If you find a website that may interest others in our group e-mail Bob Daley at daley@cs.pitt.edu and give him the web address. He is looking for interesting links and photos to post on our site.

Change in Species Makes PA forests Less Flammable

**Fire Suppression Brings Decline of
Oak, Increase in Maple**

Many researchers, policymakers, and landowners have blamed the recent spate of devastating fires in the west on America's history of overzealous fire suppression, but a researcher at Penn State University Park has concluded that in the East, fire suppression has made the regions hardwood forests less likely to burn.

"Ironically, both our situation here and the one in California have been caused by forest fire suppression," says Marc Abrams, professor of forest ecology and physiology in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "Forest fires often caused by lightning and Native American burning in the past have been a natural factor in forest ecology across North America for thousands of years, and when we suppress fire we change the natural order. The eastern forests have become less flammable; out west, they have become infernos waiting to happen." The change that has resulted in fire suppression, says Abrams, is evident in the decline of oak and white pine and the increase in red maple, and other shade tolerant species that now dominate Pennsylvania's forests.

"Oak and pine are inherently more flammable than the maple, birch, cherry, and beech that have replaced them," he said. According to Abrams, maple grows primarily in swampy areas that rarely burned, whereas oaks--a fire dependent species--grew in open forests. "When forest fires were suppressed, red maples became more common in open forests, away from swamps," he said.

Abrams says, however, that this change in species may be attributable to more than just fire suppression. "Suppression of forest

fire is a major reason for species change in Pennsylvania forests, but it is not the only reason. Timbering practices, selective deer browsing, and acids rain are also factors."

Many of the high value oaks and white pines in the area were logged during the past century and that browsing by white tailed deer-- an animal that prefers oaks to maples as a food source-- has taken a toll on tree species. In addition, Abrams says that acid rain may be responsible for increasing the acidity in the forest soils-- another factor that could hamper the growth of oaks.

The change in dominant tree species in the forests of Pennsylvania and in the East is significant, says Abrams, because it could have far-reaching ecological effects. "In the past, eastern forests burned every 5, 15, or 20 years, and the region's wildlife depends on these once dominant, fire dependent species and evolved with this fire regime. Changing into a new dominant species is of great concern." *Submitted by Bill Wentzel. Reprinted with permission from The Forestry Source, February 2004*

SWPWO Committee for the year 2007

Officers

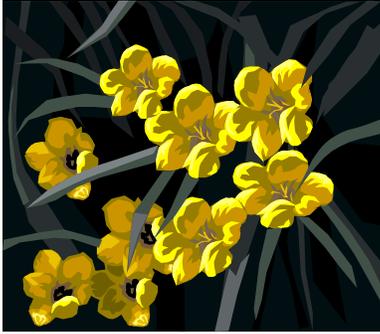
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**Bill Wentzel` Arlyn Perkey
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Forest Facts

- *Oak trees are struck by lightning more frequently than any other tree species. It appears that electricity has easier passage through oak wood than through other kinds. The reverence which ancient cultures paid to the oak tree can be traced to the connection between the tree and the sky god- they heard his voice in the roll of the thunder and saw him descend to the oak in a flash of lightning**
- *The first forestry school in America was established in 1898 in North Carolina**
- * About a third of the nation is covered in trees. It's estimated that about 70 percent of the forested area that was here when Columbus landed remains in tree-covered.**
- * A cord of air dried, dense hardwoods (oak, hickory, for example) weighs about two tons (4000 lbs, of which 15-20% is water), and has the heating value of one ton of coal or 200 gallons of fuel oil.**

Membership Information
Membership to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners Association is \$10 per year for an individual and \$15 per year for a household. Dues are expected to be paid by January in order to ensure a timely receipt of the newsletter and notice of the next meeting. To join, please send name, address and phone number to: SWPWO, 195 E., High St Waynesburg, PA 15370

Our Purpose.

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners (SWPWO), a not for profit association, is an organization of individuals interested in sound woodland management practices which encourage the diverse use of forests for timber production, wildlife habitat, watershed protection and recreation and to promote this multiple-use philosophy through education and technical assistance for the benefit of the membership and general public

This newsletter is produced about 8 times per year. It is published about two weeks prior to the meetings. Articles and/or ideas are welcome. Contact the editors John Burnham at 724-223-8781 or e-mail at burnhamjc@msn.com or Gay Thistle at 724-499-5190 thistle@windstream.net