

SWPWO



May 2006

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners

SWPWO Meeting

May 10 at the Greene County Fairgrounds with Field trip on the following Saturday, May 13

Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 10th at 7PM in building #10 at the Greene County fairgrounds in Waynesburg.

Our speaker is no stranger to the group and has presented several programs in the past. Arlyn Perkey owns a working tree farm and Stewardship Forest in western Greene County.

His topic for discussion this time will be "How to transform old fields and marginal forests into production woodlands." He has much experience in doing this on his own forested acres.

A follow-up field trip will be taken to John Burnham's Tree Farm and Stewardship Forest in S.W. Washington County on Saturday, May 13th to see first hand some of things discussed at the meeting.

Meet at building #10 at the Greene County fairgrounds in Waynesburg at 12:30 PM; or at the Old Concord Presbyterian Church parking lot at 12:45 PM. If you know where John lives, you can go directly to his place at 1:00 PM. Hope to see you at the meeting and at the field trip. *Written by Bill Wentzel, Forester.*

Spring Wildflowers: Tempting Beauties in Our Woodlands

Written by: Jim Finley

Spring flowers are coming to a woodlot near you. Dutchman's breeches, Chicken and Corn, Round-leaved Orchids, Ladyslippers, Red Trillium, Jack-in-the-Pulpit are interesting names that describe wonderful flowers that may brighten forests for a short springtime window.

Wildflowers help make forests magical. The small, sometimes inconspicuous flowers are wonderful in their beauty. The colors, variety, and diversity are amazing. Local forests may have dozens of spring wildflower species. Dropping to your knees and observing flowers is fun. Even the more common wildflowers, such as Adder's Tongue and Spring-beauty, are intriguing and captivating.

Many of these flowers are ephemeral. Ephemeral flowers are only visible for a short time. They erupt from the forest floor, flower, and disappear in only a few weeks. The knowledgeable observer may still recognize the leaves and fruits of many of these species later in the growing season; however, for the most part, the season is short.

Ephemeral forest flowers evolved to take advantage of light and moisture conditions in the spring woods. Growth begins early while the forest canopy is devoid of leaves. Below the leafless canopy, the forest floor warms rapidly, stirring wildflowers to initiate growth. As they begin to flower, early emerging pollinating insects seek them out and take advantage of these sources of nectar and pollen. The ideal light conditions last only a short time; soon the leaves in the forest canopy begin to unfold and capture the light. As this happens, the spring flower season soon ends.

In many of our forests, the spring wildflower display is not as diverse and rich as it could be. Many of the spring flowers are favorite food sources for white-tailed deer. Some of the more showy flowers, such as Trillium and Ladyslippers are rare in forests where they were once abundant as deer selectively browse them in the understory. Also missing in many forests are some less conspicuous species such as Canada Mayflower and Indian Cucumber Root. In many cases, you can find individual plants preferred by deer, but often these individuals are smaller and much less robust than they should be. Often time, you can find some of these browse-impacted plants finding refuge in soil patches on top of large rocks or along ledges.

Wherever you find spring wildflowers, take the opportunity to enjoy them where you find them. Picking takes away the opportunity for them to reproduce and to spread through the forest. Some of the flowers are rare and we should

always try to encourage their presence in the forest. So, take pictures and gather memories - to blossom.

There are many great field guides available to identifying spring flowers. These guides often start with the flower's color, then the structure, and sometimes link to the site where the plant occurs. When you identify a species, make a notation in the book about where you first saw it. In this way, you can start a "Life List." It will aid you in recalling the species, what it looked like, and where it grew. As you learn your spring flowers, show others and encourage them to enjoy the season!

Deer- Control Voices from the Horticulturists

by Gay Thistle

I have worked closely with the Pennsylvania Landscapers and Nursery Association (PLNA) in my business and have had many conversations with the president, Gregg Robertson about deer control issues. Our organizations have very similar ideas on the need to control the deer populations in Pennsylvania. Gregg made the following statement that I thought would be interesting to share with you. PLNA spends quite a bit of money and lobbying efforts on this issue. Gregg collects data about individuals interested in controlling deer populations and reports these to the Game Commissioners to make sure that our voices are not drowned out. His message follows;

Statement of Gregg Robertson, President Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association On Deer Overpopulation

April 19, 2006

Thank you for coming today. I am Gregg Robertson, the President of the Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association. We are here to talk about an issue of critical importance to Pennsylvania agriculture, the damage being caused by deer overpopulation. I'd like to introduce to you the people standing with me today. Betsy Huber, Master of the Pennsylvania State Grange; Debbie Plotnick, Bryn Gweled Homesteads, Bucks County, Tim Schaeffer, Audubon Pennsylvania, Bryon Shissler, The Ecosystem Management Project.

In testimony before the House Agriculture Committee two weeks ago, Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff cited data that Pennsylvania agriculture sustains \$75 million in damage from deer each year; the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau put the number even higher at \$90 million. We estimate that the Pennsylvania nursery industry sustains \$5-8 million each year in deer damage, with each nursery in Pennsylvania sustaining an average of \$20,000 in deer damage or damage control measures each year. For some, such as Coles Nursery in Bucks County, Buddies Nursery in Berks County, Fleming's Christmas Tree Farm in Indiana County, and Fairview Evergreen Nurseries in Erie County, the number is much higher. These are small businesses, family-owned and operated, that cannot continue to sustain these annual crop losses from deer damage. Additionally, Pennsylvania now leads the country in the number of Lyme disease cases and the number of automobile/deer collisions.

We were pleased that the Commission voted yesterday to, for the most part, not change the allocation of antlerless deer tags in Wildlife Management Units. We had expected cuts in the antlerless deer tags, which would have exacerbated an already unbearable problem for agriculture. We commend the commission for their resolve in the face of great pressure from various constituencies. This action is a small yet important step in the right direction, and one that we hope portends well for a more reasoned and science-based approach to deer management in Pennsylvania. Deer overpopulation is a significant economic, public health and public safety problem in Pennsylvania and we must find effective ways of addressing the problem.

We were also pleased to see in the Commission's press release yesterday their commitment to use a science-based methodology for assessing deer herd health as well as habitat health. We continue to urge the Commission to open the process of making deer license allocation decisions to stakeholders and scientific peer review. The public has a right to know how decisions that affect them so dramatically are made by public agencies.

Last September PLNA provided comments to the Commission on deer management in urban and suburban areas. Many of our member nurseries operate in rapidly suburbanizing counties like Bucks, Chester and Lancaster. We were pleased to see the Commission release its long-awaited draft urban/suburban deer

strategy last week. We are continuing to review the draft strategy and will be providing the Commission with detailed comments in a few weeks, but we are pleased with the overall tone and direction.

That said, we are concerned about the Commission's ability to implement new initiatives such as the deer health and habitat monitoring program and the urban/suburban deer management strategy, given its impeding fiscal crisis. Already, programs used by Pennsylvania nurseries to reduce deer damage, such as the deer fencing program, have been suspended for lack of funding. In the urban and suburban areas of Pennsylvania, recreational hunting already has been shown to be limited in its effectiveness as a tool for reducing deer damage for many reasons. The new monitoring, management programs and educational programs proposed by the commission are clearly beyond the scope of the Commission's current resources, especially in view of the enormous scope of the deer overpopulation problem in Pennsylvania.

This year, the Commission will ask the General Assembly for an increase in hunting license fees to solve its fiscal problem. We are proposing that the Commission and General Assembly use this opportunity to broaden the funding base upon which Pennsylvania wildlife is managed to include general funds in addition to hunting license fees. Hunters should not continue to bear such a high proportion of wildlife costs when all Pennsylvanians benefit from the important wildlife and

habitat management work of the Commission. Additionally, this broadening of the funding base should include a broadening of the stakeholder groups represented on the Commission to include Pennsylvania agriculture.

We will be working in the coming months with the Commission and the General Assembly on this important economic, public health and public safety issue.

Contact information for the PLNA is; **PLNA HEADQUARTERS**:1707 South Cameron Street Harrisburg, PA 17104-3148 Phone: 717.238.1673 Fax: 717.238.1675 Toll Free: 800.898.3411 <http://plna.chamberinfo.org>

**Committee for the year 2006
Officers**

**Harold Thistle- President
Bob Daley - Vice Pres.
Nadine Obermiller- Secretary
Earl Novendstern- Treasurer
Board of Directors**

**Max Loughman
Maria Piantanida
Advisors**

Bill Wentzel Arlyn Perkey

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 been updated with the Calendar of Events for 2006.

SWPWO Calendar of Events

May 10 Meeting

From Old Fields to Productive Woodlands

Arlyn Perkey, Forester, US
Forest Service, Retired

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: Building #10, Greene
County Fairgrounds,
Waynesburg, PA

May 13 Field Trip

Old Field: Eyesore to Asset

John Burnham's Tree Farm in
SW Washington County, PA

Time: 12:30 PM

Meet at: Building #10, Greene
County Fairgrounds,
Waynesburg, PA, or
Old Concord Presbyterian
Church Parking Lot (meet
12:45 PM)

June 10 Field Trip

Cooper's Rock Tour

Cooper's Rock, West Virginia

Time: 12:00 PM

Meet at: Building #10, Greene
County Fairgrounds,
Waynesburg, PA

July 8 Summer Tour

What You Don't Know About Roads In Your Woodlands Can Hurt You

Time: 12:30 PM

Arlyn Perkey's Tree Farm and
Stewardship Forest in W.
Greene County, PA

Meet at: Building #10, Greene
County Fairgrounds,
Waynesburg, PA

August 12 Summer Tour

George Marinchak's Tree Farm

George Marinchak's
Woodland in SW Washington
County, PA

Time: 12:00 PM

Meet at: Building #10, Greene
County Fairgrounds,
Waynesburg, PA, or

Sears Parking Area, Crown
Center Shopping Mall,
Washington, PA (meet 12:30
PM)

September 13 Meeting

Forest Stewardship Plans:

How To Bill Wentzel, Service
Forester, PA Bureau of Forestry
Panel: Maria Piantanida, Bob
Daley, John Burnham

PA Game Commission Deer Management Program

Update Roxane Palone, PA
Game Commissioner

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: Building #10, Greene
County Fairgrounds,
Waynesburg, PA

September 16 Field Trip

Forest Stewardship in

Action Sunset Woods Tree
Farm in SW Washington
County, PA

Time: 12:00 PM

Meet at: Building #10, Greene
County Fairgrounds,
Waynesburg, PA, or
Sears Parking Area, Crown
Center Shopping Mall,
Washington, PA (meet 12:30
PM)

October 21 Picnic

Time and Place to be
determined

November 9 Meeting

Growing Chestnuts: Seed Management, Grafting, and Planting

Greg Miller, Empire
Chestnut Company

Note Unusual Day Thursday

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: First Floor Meeting
Room, Courthouse Square
Building, 100 W. Beau Street,
Washington, PA

November 11 Field Trip

Time and place to be
determined

The Mysterious Growth

By Bill Wentzel, Pennsylvania State Forester

I have received numerous phone calls these past two years from people who are alarmed about the "mysterious growth" on the trunks of their trees. It appears as a plant with a crusty leaf-like structure and is gray-green-white in color. It has in a circular pattern with a diameter of one inch up to six inches. The growth is usually found on the lower, shaded, and more moist parts of the trunks and limbs.

This odd-looking growth is actually a creature called lichen and is a combination of green algae and a fungus growing together. Botanists refer to this association as a symbiotic relationship in which both of the participants are beneficial to one another. The fungus provides the structure and the algae produces the food.

Lichens are found in a wide variety of habitats. Many of them are able to grow in situations where no other plant could survive, such as in the Arctic regions. Around here, in Greene and Washington Counties, they can be found mostly on rocks and tree trunks.

Sometimes lichen is mistaken for a disease and to some people may appear unsightly. Actually, lichen does not harm the tree, but only grows on the outer surface of the bark.

Lichen has become more prevalent in the last two years due to the above average rainfall we have received. Don't worry about lichen. They are just a natural part of God's good creation.

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

The Chestnut Tree

At one time, the tree known as the king of the forest ranged from Maine to Georgia and as far west as Indiana - an estimated 4 billion trees. The chestnut tree was devastated by an Asian fungal disease that began spreading in the early 1900s and tore through Ohio in the 1930s. For the farmers of Appalachia, the chestnut tree had served as a cash crop. They shipped the nuts by rail to cities where they were roasted and sold on street corners as snacks. Farm animals ate the fatty nuts and then fed the nation. Wild turkeys, bears and squirrels multiplied on chestnuts and in turn provided hunters with ample game. Experts believe the decline of the American chestnut thinned wildlife throughout the eastern United States. Advances in plant biology and breeding have given the chestnut another chance at life, and test plantings of fungus resistant varieties have been planted. The trees will be studied by researchers as they grow.

Modified from Northeastern Ohio Forestry Association's newsletter, 6/05

