

WWIA News

Summer 2018



A Summer Message from the President

By John Hilewick, WWIA President

Before too long, this summer of 2018 will be a footnote. I guess that is just the way of time passing. However, as we move into the fall and each of us considers attending our last two program events of this year, we must also look ahead to 2019, which is quickly moving toward us.

WWIA is planning some special programming in celebration of the organization's 30th anniversary. WWIA formally came into existence on February 9, 1989, with a business meeting and the election of officers: Bill Baber as president, Tony Glasstetter as vice president, Don Stitt as secretary, and Bob Ackerman as treasurer.

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Notice: The newsletter committee is always looking for articles. If you'd like to submit a piece or volunteer to recap an event, please contact Celine Colbert at cecobert@pa.gov or (724) 238-5044.

A Summer Message (Cont'd)

Since then WWIA has been a continually active and vibrant agent acting upon the mission statement adopted at a later meeting of the officers and directors.

"The Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association has been organized to provide a forum for all of those who have an interest in woodlands. The Association recognizes woodlands as a renewable resource and encourages their management for aesthetics, timber, water quality and control, wildlife habitat, plant propagation and recreation."

The torch has of course been passed to many officers, voting directors, and associate directors over these 30 years. All of them have scrupulously adhered to the tenets of the mission statement and followed the bylaws and their amendments.

Your president brought to the BOD at our most recent meeting of May 22, 2108, a wish list of potential programming ideas for their consideration. Foremost among them was a reception and recognition soiree to which we would invite all those original founders and organizers who are still with us. I envision a program with a speaker of some note, on a topic pertinent to some portion of our mission statement, with a social time before and after with refreshments and all kinds of goodies.

What do you all think about it? You can send me your opinions and suggestions for the anniversary event and any other talks or field trips at jandd.hilewick@gmail.com or 104 Hilewick Drive, New Stanton, PA 15672. Thank you in advance.

White Oak Woes

A WWIA Blog Post by Jessica Salter, DCNR Service Forester

If you've looked closely at a white oak tree lately, perhaps you've noticed it looks a bit more brown than normal for this time of the year. There are two afflictions that the white oak trees in our area are dealing with this summer: oak anthracnose and *Neuroterus tantulus*.

Oak anthracnose is common but appears to be especially widespread and severe this year, likely due to the excessive rain and humidity we experienced throughout the spring and early summer. Anthracnose is a fungal disease that creates irregular brown splotches and distorted leaves on many species, including oaks. On rare occasions, a tree may defoliate completely. As we dry out into summer, oak anthracnose should decline and some trees may even re-foliate.

Neuroterus tantulus is an oak-gall wasp that affects white oak trees.

This year's wet weather has led to increased native fungal activity.

Although gall wasps are common on oak trees, we've been noticing a hearty outbreak of this specific gall wasp this summer. A tree with a heavy *N. tantulus* population will appear dull brown and in severe cases can be defoliated completely. From a distance, symptoms resemble oak anthracnose. However, if you look closely, you will notice small round spots on the leaves.

Both oak anthracnose and oak gall wasps will cause minimal, if any, long-term damage on oak trees. Trees that are already stressed or trees that are severely damaged in consecutive years are the most likely to experience lasting damage. Therefore, control measures are rarely necessary. Although your white oak may appear under the weather this year, most will be just fine come spring.



Neuroterus tantulus



Oak anthracnose

5549222

Helping Forests Regenerate: A Recap of the June WWIA Program

by Judith Gallagher

Leslie Horner, a Forest Stewardship Program associate with the Center for Private Forests at Penn State, gave a talk on June 21 about "Assessing and Improving Forest Regeneration."

First she shared some encouraging facts: Forest cover in Pennsylvania, which was down to only 9 million acres in 1895 after unbridled logging, now stands at about 16.6 million acres.

Then she moved on to the bad news: Today's forests face many threats, including changing ecological patterns, fewer harvests and many degraded stands, an overpopulation of deer, and invasive flora and fauna. Inadequate regeneration—tree seedlings that are lacking in either quantity or quality—is a top concern in Pennsylvania's forests.

Leslie talked about the fragmentation caused by families splitting their forests into smaller and smaller parcels each generation. Now the majority of private forest owners—nearly half a million—have less than ten acres.

She explained that to encourage forest regeneration, you must control competing vegetation, limit damage by deer browse, and create new openings to let light in.

Leslie shared photos of some problems in her own three-quarter-acre

yard, including dead ash trees; invasives like Norway maple, bush honeysuckle, and garlic mustard; dense shade in the understory; and an abundance of deer. "I have all kinds of work to do," she said.

It was reassuring to see that even a professional can't keep up with all the demands of her site.

"Invasives will beat native species if you don't intervene," she warned. "They usually have early leaves and aggressive reproductive strategies." Frustratingly, deer choose oak browse over honeysuckle any day. "They leave alone most invasives but browse the heck out of the tree seedlings we want," she said.

She reviewed the amount of light that different tree species need. Desirable species like black cherry need nearly full sunlight to germinate and grow. Red oak and white oak need moderate light. But undesirable species like red maple are shade tolerant, one reason they can crowd out the valuable species.

Leslie described how to assess current light conditions. "What percentage of the sky can you see?" she asked. A harvest that opens at least 50% of the canopy helps the forest regenerate. She explained that creating new openings for light, controlling competing vegetation, and limiting damage by deer browse are all

Helping Forests *(Cont'd)*

essential to regenerating desirable species. If 30% or more of the understory consists of ferns, grasses or sedges, or other woody vegetation, it will be very difficult to nurture tree seedlings.

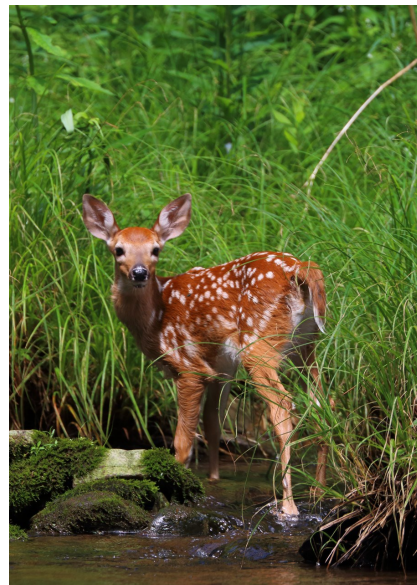
When you cut down trees to let in more light, leaving the slash on the ground can help prevent deer browse. That solves two problems at once and is much cheaper than fencing.

In a regeneration harvest, you want to leave 15 to 30 seed trees per acre, Leslie explained. Besides seed trees, seed sources include stumps, roots, seedbanks, wind, water, animals, and adjacent lands. She reminded the audience that resilient forests are not just healthy but diverse in age, species, and structure.

The Center for Private Forests has been training landowners in how to assess their woods using plots of one-tenth acre. After asking how many attendees were PA Forest Stewards, Leslie very generously offered to come back next year to help WWIA reach out to people with less expertise than most of its members. One of the center's goals is to help landowners build confidence and connect them to resources, including NRCS cost-share programs, for improving their land.

The center also advises people on how to engage their neighbors and other landowners who may be less experienced. Much of Leslie's work has focused on creating opportunities for landowners to learn together and work from shared values, highlighting how much their own woodland and water stewardship activities affect a larger landscape and how to keep woodlands diverse and intact for future generations.

After the program, we gave out several tree seedlings as door prizes. Dan Matesich donated a pawpaw seedling and Ben Kudrick won it. Barb and Don Miller donated five butternut seedlings, won by Ben Kudrick, Linda Jones, Jimmie Keck, Janet Sredy, and Raul Chiesa. Bob Phillips donated a big box of tasty, nutritious garlic scapes to the group. The highlight of the prizes was the raffle prize. For this fundraiser for WWIA, John Hilewick crafted a bread slicing and serving board from exotic woods. It was won by Bill Courtney.



“When you cut down trees to let in more light, leaving the slash on the ground can help prevent deer browse.”

WWIA Field Trip September 20

by Celine Colbert, DCNR Service Forester

Are you curious to learn a little more about the tree and plant species that make up the woods around us? Join us on September 20 as we tour the Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park. You'll learn to identify the trees and shrubs we come across, and trip leader Celine Colbert will incorporate a smattering of fun facts on the history and uses of each species. Novices to expert identifiers of all ages are welcome on this non-strenuous, approximately one-mile walk. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at the J. Roy Houston Conservation Center (the Westmoreland Conservation District barn behind the Donohoe Center) at [218 Donohoe Road](#) in Greensburg.

See the next paragraph for some information about witch hazel. In future issues of the newsletter, we'll spotlight other tree species from the September 20 field trip.

Species Spotlight: Witch Hazel

hamamelis Virginiana

I'm calling attention to witch hazel in this first species spotlight because this shrub or small tree is just about to flower. As you walk your woods this fall, look out for the small spindly yellow flowers that persist on the stem after the leaves fall.

This often-overlooked understory plant has some interesting uses. A commercially available astringent is made from the plant's bark, but it provided an even higher value to Native Americans and early settlers.

Forked branches of this plant were used as dowsing rods to locate underground water. When the twig bent, it was a sign that the location would be suitable for a well. Today this plant can be found all over the eastern portion of the United States, where it thrives in a variety of site and soil conditions. If you're looking to add more native plants to your landscaping, witch hazel can be a wonderful choice even for clay soils, giving you one last flower to enjoy before winter.



WWIA Facebook

Keep up to date with the latest programs and blog posts by following the WWIA Facebook Page. Find the page by searching @WestmorelandWoodlands or clicking [here](#). While you're there, feel free to ask a woodland question. The answers will be featured in an upcoming blog post!

Reminder to WWIA Members

To renew your membership, please make your check out to WWIA and send your dues to Tony Quadro, Westmoreland Conservation District, 218 Donohoe Rd., Greensburg, PA 15601. Act now and you'll pay only \$10 for 2018. Member benefits include free entry to nearly all WWIA programs.

WWIA 2018 Events Calendar

September 20, 5:30 p.m. Celine Colbert, a DCNR forester, will lead a field trip on "Tree Identification." We will meet at the J. Roy Houston Conservation Center and walk approximately 1 mile through the Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park.

October 7. WWIA will sponsor a walk as part of the second annual statewide Walk in Penn's Woods. Details TBA.

October 18, 6:00 p.m. The annual WWIA potluck dinner and business meeting will include biennial elections and be followed by a presentation by Cory Wentzel, assistant district forester in the Forbes State Forest District. Cory will discuss golden eagles and share video footage of these great birds as they stop over at feeding stations in Forbes on their way to breeding areas in the far north.

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

Membership Application and Renewal – Dues \$10 per year

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

New Member () or Renewal () Date: _____ Email Address: _____

Make check payable to

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

Mail to

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

c/o Westmoreland Conservation District

218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

Attention: Tony Quadro

www.westmorelandwoodlands.org

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Greensburg, PA 15601

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