

SWPWO



April 2008

Southwestern Pennsylvania Woodland Owners

Next Meeting Invasive Species

Wednesday, April 2, 2008: "The Onslaught of Forest Insect and Disease Invasions in the Eastern United States"
Speaker: Andrew Liebold, USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station.

Parallel with the trend of escalating world trade and travel has been the arrival of an ever increasing numbers of non-indigenous insects and diseases over the last five decades. These species enter the country in many ways. Solid wood packing material is perhaps the most common pathway of entry. Though this problem is global in nature, the northeastern US has been particularly affected by a large number of destructive invaders. Noteworthy invaders in this region include the gypsy moth, chestnut blight, beech bark disease, hemlock woolly adelgid, Sirex woodwasp and the emerald ash borer. The short-term effects of these species are often catastrophic but they often play important roles in altering long-term forest succession processes. The meeting will begin at 7:00 PM at the Greene County Fairgrounds, Building #10.

A field trip is planned for **Saturday, April 5: Tree Planting Tools and Techniques.** Time will be 1:00 PM. At Bob Daley's tree farm in Claysville, PA. Members and friends of SWPWO are encouraged to bring tree planting tools) to share and demonstrate to others. The day will include demonstrations of the proper techniques to plant trees for successful growth and also provide hands-on opportunities for members to practice the art of tree planting. Demonstrations will include planting chestnuts and cedars along with demonstrations of the use of different tools and tree tubes. Directions will be given at the Wednesday meeting or meet at the Crown Center Mall, Washington parking lot (in front of Sears, by auto repair) at 12:30 to carpool. Wear appropriate attire for work and unpredictable spring weather.

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 Log Washed Up

It is interesting that possibly the first written story of international commerce involved text found in Egypt that describes a shipment of Lebanese cedar. 'Bringing of forty ships filled with cedar logs' is included by a scribe as an accomplishment of Pharaoh Snefru around 2600 BC. Archeological evidence has established that there was a commercial link between Egypt and the Phoenicians prior to this written record, and that cedars from Lebanon (*Cidrus libani*) were transported from the coastal city of Byblos on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to Egypt where they were prized for pest resistance, strength and beauty (Casson, 1991). The majestic cedars of Lebanon were known throughout the ancient world and are referenced repeatedly in the Bible as well as in the ancient Mesopotamian story of Gilgamesh. Recently, I came across another story of ancient lumber traffic that I thought was worth repeating.

A story from Captain Buzurg ibn Shahriyar (Keay, 2006) a tenth century merchant and mariner in the Indian Ocean tells a story about a shipment from the Gujerati coast of northwestern India to Oman in the Persian Gulf, a distance of over 1000 miles. Apparently Captain Buzurg, though one of a very few historical sources for commercial information of this type from this time period, is noted for his storytelling 'flair'. According to the good Captain, a merchant loaded a ship on the Gujerati coast with merchandise for trade in Oman. The most valuable object in this shipment was a 'large length of teak' which was wedged securely into the boat, occupying the boat's full length. Teak (*Tectona grandis*) is native to South Asia. It was much valued then as now for its water resistance and was used extensively in boat building (it is also said that Baghdad palaces were built of it). The merchant saw the boat

off, but two months later, the same teak log washed up back on the shore from which it had recently left. The log was identified by the merchant's mark which had been branded into it. The merchant assumed that his ship, as well as his investment, were lost. Another two months passed, and the merchant's ship was sighted returning home. Upon arrival, the merchant's agent presented the merchant with a log and record of an apparently successful trading mission. It was not until the agent was confronted with the teak log that he came clean and told the story of a sudden storm that struck the boat in port in Oman. The rest of the cargo had been salvaged but the teak log was washed overboard and away. This story, though viewed with some skepticism even by the sea dog Buzurg, is made slightly more plausible by the seasonally varying trade winds that allowed this type of voyage to be undertaken and could provide the winds to return the log home (as they did the merchant's sailing ship). It is known that such branded teak logs were a major component of trade in the Indian Ocean over a thousand years ago.

So the next time you see a load of our high value Greene County hardwoods heading off down I-79, possibly destined for Chinese workshops, recall that this kind of thing has been going on since Pharaoh Snefru. Then, when you notice 'Made in China' on an oak chair in your dining room, picture Captain Buzurg chuckling.

By Harold Thistle, Casson L. 1991. *The Ancient Mariners: Seafarers and Sea Fighters of the Mediterranean in Ancient Times*. Princeton University Press. Keay J. 2006. *The Spice Route*. University of California Press.



Review of the last Meeting

We are fortunate to have the expertise of Roxanne Palone in our midst. Roxanne Palone is the President of the PA Game Commission. Roxanne gave an informative talk on threats to deer populations in PA. She emphasized a devastating disease that is not too far from our door termed Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Cases of this disease have been confirmed in Ohio and West Virginia. It is a prion disease (as is Mad Cow disease, for instance) and the suffering of our deer population could be extreme. This disease is contagious among the deer and can be transferred in deer waste. Roxanne talked about what we can do to prevent spread into our deer populations. First, do not feed the deer. This causes an unnatural gathering of deer in one location where if a deer in one herd has the disease it could be more easily transfer to another herd. Salt licks can also cause deer to gather, increasing the likelihood of spreading disease. Wisconsin is a state that did not act quickly enough when Chronic Wasting Disease was discovered and they are now killing off 25,000 deer in order to try and stop its spread. The state of New York has had a good response to Chronic Wasting Disease. When they confirm the disease, they quarantine the area and kill the deer. New York has had to kill far fewer deer than Wisconsin and has spent millions less on the control of Chronic Wasting Disease.

2008 SWPWO

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THE WINTER WOODS

The woods are always alluring, whether offering sanctuary from the summer heat, the riot of spring's new growth, or autumn's flashy display. But my favorite time for a woods walk is winter.

After deer season, the cord wood cut and more or less stacked, I wait for a sunny day and start out, in no particular direction, armed only with binoculars. No cutting tools. (Well, maybe a pocket size folding saw in case I happen upon a particularly offensive strand of grapevine or clump of autumn olive.)

As I walk out of the bottom of the hollow where we live, gaining elevation and perspective, I marvel again at these woods and fields which I thought by now I knew. I can see! Leaves gone, sunlight backlighting some areas and spotlighting others, the sightlines are tremendous. There are sure to be surprises and new finds: the tracings of a 19th century farm road or an old barn seen through the bare trees at an odd angle.

In younger days and nights, I was apt to take the sylvan scene as a whole, to see the forest and not the trees, to gaze upward through the often exhilarating Maine sky toward infinity. (Have you ever caught a glimpse of the mystery which is the Northern Lights?)

Now, in more Southern climes, a woodland owner and part of the cult of Arlyn (is there something in the cookies?), I focus on the trees. Chugging along, I perform a mental checklist like a crop-dusting pilot readying his low flying plane for takeoff. Is the hill I am climbing facing northeast or southeast? Is there evidence of moisture in a particular locale? Where are the long breached fence lines? In what direction are the hollows oriented? Based on tree size, how long since this part of the woods was a farm field? What kinds of trees and shrubs are growing where?

The hounds in their scattershot fashion exuberantly lead the way. This is an open book to them, a wonderful read. For me, it is time to play the tree ID game. Over to the right is..... a sugar maple. YES! After 10 years of pondering sugar maples versus red maples, consulting tree guides 'n 'at, I do believe I can see the difference. Thank you, Arlyn, who illuminated the key points within 4 weeks, the laughs and outdoor bonhomie essential parts of the learning. I now know what a tight-bark hickory looks like and have a puncher's chance of deciphering the pignut from the mockernut. I recall the days—nay, the years—when I thought white ashes were hickories. I was so simple then.

We skid along a deer trail: Walnut, Tulip Poplar, a bunching of Sassafrass, dead and dying Elms, a Red Oak still holding onto a few leaves. The eyes start to pick out trees not so

common to this ground. There are some middling big Aspen upslope and a grouping of pole sized ones across the way on the next hill. Both on South facing inclines. A lone sycamore rises on a spongy shelf 2/3 of the way up a hill. A mess of “ironwood” saplings appear underfoot. There must be a mature one nearby. A pine tree sings out, its green shining in the dormant woods.

One day old snow, a Greene County dusting of 1 or 2 inches, covers the ground and is stitched with animal tracks. Clearly, more than deer and turkey abound in these parts. There are signs of the errands undertaken by rabbits, fox, squirrel, and raccoons. The neat, measured steppings of a field mouse, perhaps, disappear into the underbrush.

The silence this winter has been breached by a new sound: the squeak and pull of an intermittent coalbed methane well pump. It sits on a cleared off and reengineered plateau two farms over, a newly constructed road leading to it. The sound is not overwhelming or constant, but certainly noticeable and not of nature, a reminder that these lands are neither static nor wild nor particularly protected. We enjoy them, season by season, as best we can.

And so, the pups having run themselves out, our senses glugged, we regroup and drop back into the hollow, heading for the sanctuary of the wood stove. *By Dave Cressey*



Planting Chestnuts

Chestnuts require a well-drained soil, better drained than apple trees. The most common mistake in chestnut cultivation is to plant them on sites that are too wet or too "heavy" (too much clay). Clay soils can be tolerated if there is good surface drainage (slope), but chestnuts do best on deep, sandy loams (rocks and gravel are okay). Soil pH should be acidic, between 4.5 and 6.5. Chestnuts won't tolerate calcareous (limestone) soils. Chestnuts don't require a very fertile soil, but do respond well to fertilizer. Chestnut trees, like other fruit and nut trees, are sensitive to late spring frosts, and therefore, should be planted on hilltops, near large bodies of water, or other frost-protected sites. Chestnuts are very drought tolerant on good (deep soil) sites. However, in order to grow well, bear consistent crops, and bear large-sized nuts, they need adequate moisture throughout the growing season. Irrigation is not required in much of eastern North America, but it is necessary for consistent high yields of large sized chestnuts.

Full size Chinese chestnut trees require a spacing of 35 to 40 ft. European chestnuts require somewhat more space and Japanese chestnuts somewhat less. To get higher early yields per acre, chestnuts are usually planted "tight," e.g., at a spacing of 20 ft. X 25 ft. As the trees get too big for their space they can be pruned or every other one in the row can be removed. For best nut production, there should be some space between adjacent tree crowns, i.e., when the branches of adjacent trees begin to overlap, it's

time to do some cutting. Chestnut seedlings will bear their first crop at 2 to 10 years of age. For Chinese chestnuts, most trees begin bearing at 5 to 7 years of age. Trees that are vigorous and healthy bear sooner than stressed trees.

Chestnuts flower about 6 to 8 weeks after growth commences in the spring. They are mainly wind pollinated and require cross pollination to set nuts. Therefore, one tree by itself won't have a crop. If you plant seedlings of pure species, pollination is seldom a problem. However, pollination can be a problem if the pollenizer is too far away (greater than 100 ft). Many hybrids, including some hybrid cultivars, are pollen sterile. If you plant hybrids, it is probably a good idea to interplant some pure species to ensure adequate pollination.

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empirechestnut@gotsky.com

Identifying Hickories

Four Saturdays during this winter I tromped around in the woods following Arlyn Perkey along with seven other SWPWO members, as he instructed us on how to identify the major hardwood tree species of our area by bark, bud and branch. I have to admit, distinguishing the type of hickories was difficult for me at the beginning of the class but now, I have some tricks to help distinguish the four species of hickory common in our woods.

All hickories have alternate branching patterns. This means branches that sprout off the stem do not grow opposite each other, but

are staggered. The genus of the hickories is *Carya*. Pecans belong to this group of hardwood trees. Hickory wood is hard and attractive. It is mottled grayish in color and traditionally was used for tool handles. Today hickory wood is used in specialty wood products. There are four types of hickories commonly found in our area of Pennsylvania; shagbark, mockernut, bitternut and pignut.

Shagbark: This hickory is the easiest to identify by its shaggy, dark gray bark. This hickory has large $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" terminal (at end of branch) buds which have persistent bud scales which look like petals surrounding the bud. The stems are stout and reddish brown in color. The nut of the shagbark is large, 1 1/2" -2" with a thick husk, very similar to the nut of the mockernut. These nuts are very sweet in taste. It grows on dry, upland sites such as ridges and on south and southwest facing slopes.

Mockernut: The bark of the mockernut is gray, interlacing with shallow ridges or "ski trails" (Nadine Obermiller's term). The buds are large, $\frac{3}{4}$ " -1" long with no bud scales during winter. The stems of the mockernut are also stout. The nut of the mockernut is similar in size to the shagbark with a thick husk. This tree was named because the nut looks large, but the nut meat is actually small inside the thick hull. It grows best in moist open woods and slopes.

Bitternut: The bark of the bitternut is gray to brown with shallow fissures in a criss-cross (ski-trail) pattern. Bitternut bark is flakier than pignut hickory bark. The best identifying feature of the bitternut is

its yellowish, valvate (spoon shaped) buds found terminally. This hickory can have a brown pith in its stems. The nut of the bitternut is small, like the pignut, but with a papery thin hull. The nuts are bitter to taste. Squirrels tend to ignore them. It is said to be the fastest growing hickory.

Pignut: The bark of the pignut appears scaly. Its color is gray-brown. If buds are not visible, it can be difficult to decipher between the bitternut and pignut hickories by their bark. The buds of the pignut hickory are small and fairly insignificant and are difficult to see, even with binoculars. The nuts of the pignut are small, like the bitternut, but with a thicker hull. This tree grows on slopes and ridges in well-drained, fairly rich soils. It is said that the pignut hickory is named because wild pigs particularly like the taste of the nuts.

In conclusion, shagbark has unique bark, mockernut stems are stout, buds are large and its nut has a thick hull. Bitternut has yellow, spoon-shaped buds, small nut, and pignut has small insignificant buds with a small nut. *By Gay Thistle*

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

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 2007, 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.



May Newsletter Deadlines

The next newsletter should be mailed the week of May 5, 2008. The editor is always looking for contributions of articles of interest or your stories of the time you spend in your woods. Deadline to submit is May 2. Please e-mail to thistle@windstream.net. from Gay Thistle

Reminder:

July 19 Summer Tour Reservation

On Saturday, July 19, 2008, we are going to try something a little different as far as a summer tour goes. We will be taking a trip to the Slippery Rock area to take a guided tour of Jennings Environmental Education Center. From the center we will move to downtown Slippery Rock for lunch at a Brewery which is what we consider today- a green business. The energy, hops and artwork are all from local vendors. For transportation, we plan to rent a van or bus. The van will stop in Greene County, Washington County and in Allegheny County to pick up members on the way. An estimated cost for transportation will be between \$20.-\$40 per person, depending on the number of interested persons. If you would like to go on this trip, please e-mail (Gay Thistle) at thistle@windstream.net and I will put your name down. Money is not due at this time. I will let you know what it will cost as we approach the date. Please give me your reservation **by the April 2, 2008** meeting so that I can reserve the size van/bus that we will need.

SWPWO Calendar of Events for 2008

April 2 Meeting: Invasive Species of SW Pennsylvania Speaker: Andrew Liebold, US Forest Service. 7:00 PM at the Greene County Fairgrounds, Building #10.

April 5 Field Trip: Tree Planting Tools and Techniques. Time will be 1:00 PM. Place to be determined. Members and friends of SWPWO are encouraged to bring tools of the trade (of tree planting and care) to share and demonstrate with others. The trip will include demonstrations of the proper technique to plant trees for successful growth and also provide hands-on opportunities for members to practice the art of tree planting.

May 14 Meeting: Managing Hardwood Forests for Value

Speaker: Arlyn Perkey, US Forest Service (Retired). Arlyn Perkey will share his experience managing a 10-acre portion of his tree farm during the past 17 years. 7:00 PM at the Greene County Fairgrounds, Building #10

May 17 Field Trip: Visit to an Oak and Maple Stand with Arlyn Perkey, US Forest Service (Ret). Arlyn will lead us on a tour of the managed forest described on May 14 in Greene County. 1:00 PM at Arlyn Perkey's Tree Farm in SW Greene County.

June 14 Field Trip Native Wildflower Tour. Speaker:

Shane Miller. 1:00 PM at Raccoon Creek State Park. Meet at 11:30 AM at the Crown Center Mall Parking lot at Sears to carpool or follow.

July 19 Summer Tour: Environmental Education and Green Businesses

Jennings Environmental Education Center near Slippery Rock, PA to tour a prairie ecosystem. We will continue on to North Country Brewing Company, a green business, and have lunch. We will have the van or bus meet at three different places; 7:30 AM at the Greene County Fairgrounds, Building #10, At 8:00 AM in Washington, PA and 8:45 near Pittsburgh. More details will be printed in upcoming newsletters.

August Field Trip: Tour of Orchards.

Tour of the Gregor's Orchards in eastern Washington county. Meet at 12:30 PM at the Greene County Fairgrounds, building #10 to carpool or follow

September 10 Meeting: Timber Harvest: Planning and Execution Speakers to be determined. 7:00 PM at the Greene County Fairgrounds, Building #10

September 13 Field Trip: Timber Harvest Site Visit. Time and place to be determined

October 18 Picnic with Plant Identification Competition and Potato Gun Competition (Members, Friends and Family) Time and place to be determined. Save the date.

November 12 Meeting: Forest Land Taxation Issues with speaker Lloyd Casey, retired USDA Forest Service. 7:00 PM at the Washington County Courthouse Square building.

November 15 Field Trip: Creating an Inventory of Your Forest. 1:00 PM, Lloyd Casey's Tree Farm in NE Greene County. Meet to carpool or follow at 12:30 PM at the Greene County Fairgrounds Building #10

Find most recent updates and links for directions on our website
www.cs.pitt.edu/~daley/swpwo

