



Woodlands *for* Wildlife

Volume 19 August 2008

A newsletter of Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife, Inc.

Woolly Adelgid Moves North

by John Evans, *Class of 2002*

For the second year in a row, hemlock woolly adelgid egg masses have been found at the southern end of the Connecticut River Valley in Vermont.

While the pest infestation is limited to 12 locations, including ornamental hemlocks on residential properties and in woodland forest stands, the threat of more widespread damage in future years is causing state agencies to consider additional action. Treatment methods and recommendations are under review and language of the existing hemlock quarantine will be revised.

As our forestland in within one-half mile of a woolly adelgid infestation in Brattleboro, I have a personal interest in the subject. This winter we will be joining others in hoping for a spell of arctic weather that will drop the thermometer well below zero for a sustained period of time. As the adelgid does not tolerate severe cold, this could halt, at least temporarily, what may be the eventual northward expansion of this destructive bug as a result of warming winters.

Bird Feeders Not Always Present

In one aspect, this year's infestation is different from 2007. Last year, all egg masses were found a short distance from bird feeders. The bug is spread by birds and wind. This year, several severe infestations with extensive die back were found deep into the woods in hemlock stands, a far distance from any feeder.

Barbara Burns, a forest health specialist with the Division of Forest, Parks and Recreation, said adelgid damage in

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2008 Annual Meeting Reminder

Vermont Coverts members and friends are invited to attend the 2008 Annual Meeting on September 6 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Ed Kehoe Conservation Camp at Lake Bomoseen, Castleton, Vermont.

This is a woodland educational opportunity as the meeting is held in conjunction with the Fall Cooperator Training weekend. The business part of the annual meeting is a very short session after lunch.

For more information, see the program schedule on page 3 of this newsletter. Members who are unable to attend are asked to please fill out the Proxy Form and mail it to Vermont Coverts for delivery no later than Wednesday, September 3.

Training Workshop Opens Eyes and Changes Attitudes

by Jim Kahle, *class of 2008*

My wife and I have lived on an old, 140-acre farmstead in Ira, Vermont for over 25 years. Half is pasture, and half is forest. We raised two children there and have been very happy. But, but no one would ever mistake us for native Vermonters.

Vegetables grow in our garden, and asparagus in the back. Cows are pastured in summer and a neighbor taps our maple trees in exchange for a modest supply of syrup. We did have a timber sale a few years ago. That's about it.

This spring we had a meeting with our consulting forester. We talked a little about where we were, and where we wanted to go. During the discussion, Coverts was mentioned. It sounded intriguing, and the price was right. We signed up to take part in the spring 2008 workshop.

Right after breakfast on the first day, we plunged right into the total immersion program. We were told we would feel overwhelmed, and certainly weren't

disappointed on that score. Succession, fragmentation, wildlife corridors, invasive species! My head was spinning.

As my wife, Allyn, said, you look at a verdant Vermont hillside in spring, and it's hard to believe it's in danger from microbes, insects, plants, and the like. The upside was that there were actions which could help, and there were resources available to implement those actions.

Certainly the facts, figures, concepts, and opinions became confusing and overwhelming at times. One fact was clear and very enlightening. half of the members of the workshop spent a good deal of time out of state. They lived part of the time in Massachusetts, Maryland, Ohio, even California!

All of them exerted considerable effort to spend some time on their land in Vermont. I realized how I had become complacent about the blessings of my everyday life. Living in Vermont is a privilege and a gift, and I had forgotten

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Woolly Adelgid

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some hemlock stands was widespread and easy to spot. “Die back in dozens of trees caused a ghostly gray look to the forest,” she commented.

“Obviously, the adelgid infestation was several years old and nobody had noticed it until now,” she added.

Small infestations, however, proved to be difficult to identify. As I walked my own woods with several foresters surveying for possible adelgid evidence, based on some general advice and photographs in scientific papers I was confident the tiny, cotton balls of adelgid “wool” egg masses would be fairly easy to spot. This turned out to be a false assumption.

The next day I visited our neighborhood site of infestation along a line of hemlocks near the entrance to the School for International Training in Brattleboro. Even knowing where to look, I needed the assistance of a grounds maintenance individual to find the several trees with egg masses.

The maintenance supervisor said not to feel badly about it. “A forester walked right by the spot recently and even though it is marked by yellow flagging he also failed to see adelgid evidence.”

At this stage of northward expansion, there is good reason to take a wait-and-see attitude. Most importantly, as Barbara Burns notes, “any panic cutting of hemlocks is to be avoided.”

Accepting the Force of Nature

As I discussed recent adelgid events with fellow cooperator Bill Schmidt, who has joined me in conducting several invasive plant workshops, we found ourselves agreeing that dealing with pests and invasives requires a cool head. In the long run, we cannot avoid or reverse the forces of nature. There are some changes in our fields and forests, and particularly when a small area is involved, where invasive plant and pest control are reasonable.

However, when the infestations are widespread and control methods require the extensive use of chemicals, a sound decision is probably to do nothing and let nature take its course.

In the event of a severe infestation, some trees will die within several years and a high percentage of other trees will show signs of significant die back over a period of years (as many as ten or more).

Fortunately, a lot of activity is ongoing in Vermont and elsewhere to find natural solutions to adelgid infestations. These include the introduction of natural enemies of the adelgid and fungi.

Biological Controls

Scott Costa, Ph. D., an entomologist specializing in insect ecology and biological pest management at the University of Vermont, has been working on adelgid control solutions for a number of years. The test sites he monitors and uses to find evidence of success for non-chemical control, until now, have all been to the south in Massachusetts and elsewhere.

Dr. Costa’s standardized sampling program to detect and monitor hemlock woolly adelgid is widely used in New England. The program provides easy-to-understand and use methods for monitoring. Basically, it involves examining the outer three feet of a single branch for the presence of woolly masses, and a second branch on the opposite side of the tree.

Research has shown that in an infected tree that egg masses are widely distributed, from the crown to the lowest branches, and the single branch sampling method is quite accurate.

Copies of the 12-page sampling method can be downloaded from Dr. Costa’s web site, <http://www.uvm.edu/~scosta>. If you desire more information, or would like printed copies, use the contact information on the page to email or call Dr. Costa.

President’s Message:

title

by Hugo Liepmann

2008 Annual Meeting and Luncheon
Saturday, September 6th, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Ed Kehoe Conservation Camp, Lake Bomoseen, Castleton, Vermont

Once again, the Annual Meeting of Vermont Coverts will be held in conjunction with the Fall Cooperator Training Workshop. Attending the Annual Meeting is a great way to get re-inspired about your land and your efforts for Vermont's forests and wildlife. Come for a fun filled, exciting program including great speakers, a tasty lunch and a raffle.

Schedule:

- 10:00 Arrive for coffee
- 10:15 Carbon Sequestration and Vermont Forests
Chittenden County Forester Mike Snyder will discuss the role of forestland in carbon sequestration.
- 11:15
- 12:15 Lunch and a presentation of Vermont Coverts two annual awards, followed by a quick business meeting to elect representative to the Covert's Council
- 2:00 Vermont Bats and White Nose Disease
Wildlife biologist Scott Darling will talk about Vermont's bats, including management strategies and the status of the mysterious white nose syndrome. White nose syndrome is a fungus that's been found in hibernating bat populations, killing an estimated 90 to 95 percent of bats in affected areas.
- 3:15 Field Trip site TBA

Annual Meeting Proxy Form
Please return to Vermont Coverts, P.O. Box 81, Middlebury, VT 05753
No later than Wednesday, September 3rd

If you are a Coverts Cooperator and **CANNOT** attend the Annual Meeting, please return this proxy form to the above address. Your proxy is important to ensure that we gather a legal quorum to conduct elections to the Coverts Council.

I, _____, a member of Vermont Coverts, hereby constitute Hugo Liepman or Richard Allen as my lawful proxy to attend and vote on my behalf at the Annual Meeting of Vermont Coverts held at the Ed Kehoe Conservation Camp on the afternoon of Saturday, September 6th, 2008, or at any adjournment thereof.

Given this _____ day of _____, 2008
(date) (month)

Signature: _____

Annual Meeting Registration Form

Enjoy quality speakers and lunch for an inspiring day.

\$20 per person

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Number of Attendees: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

that fact over the years.

One beautiful spring morning, we went to walk the property nearby Coverts cooperators. It was similar to our own in many ways. They had a vernal pool on their land, just like we did. I remember looking into the clear water at hundreds of tadpoles and something on the bottom that looked like a clump of grass that might come out of your lawn mower.

It looked like it was moving! I blinked my eyes, and looked again. Sure enough, it was slowly edging its way along the bottom of the pool, sort of like a fresh water hermit crab. I asked what it was, and was told that it was a caddis fly larva.

“...my eyes were opened.”

Somebody asked my where it was, and I looked back into the pool. It was like my eyes were opened for the first time. Where I had seen one just moments before, now I saw dozens of them! It almost looked like they could hardly go from here to there without bumping into each other.

The weekend was a blur, and before you knew it, we were driving home. I began to think of our own vernal pool. Allyn had visited it with a class a few weeks before, and hadn't seen any eggs or tadpoles. Was something going wrong? When we got home, it was raining, but I still wanted to take a short walk on my land at least as far as the pool.

I walked through the pasture, and into the woods. I saw a number of apple trees in need of some tender loving care. Hopefully they can be part of my mast tree release program, I said to myself. I wondered if I could somehow entice some bears down to them.

Deep in the woods I spotted wild leeks and Jack in the Pulpit. I remembered reading that bears like those, too. It must also be said that there were many more trees and bushes that I couldn't name than those that I could.

I spotted a scarlet tanager, one of my

favorite birds!. I watched quietly as he hopped from branch to branch. What an amazing shade of red! I noticed other birds were coming to the area; one, two, three.

Some were even up in the same tree as the tanager. I came to realize that while I was watching them, they were watching me! I was the newcomer to the woods that evening, not them.

I made my way to the vernal pool. The water seemed down to about half the normal level. There were hundreds of tadpoles! I looked around for the caddis fly larvae, but didn't see any. The tadpoles seemed to be swimming around as if they didn't have a care in the world.

I felt a rush of almost parental affection and concern. The spring has been dry, and I was concerned about that fact. I began to wish for a sustained period of rain. I am a fairly avid golfer, and to be hoping for rain in May was something that had never happened to me before. Clearly something was changing.

There are challenges, implicit and otherwise, that come out of a Covert's

weekend. How do we implement the ideas and information we learned, and how do we spread the word? It seems one can accomplish the latter by initiating the former. In my case, changes are needed; there is work to be done. The forest needs to be thinned, and some invasive species need to be minimized.

I am going to need the expertise and help of others. I will be talking with my county forester, and local officials, and working with neighbors and friends who I feel are ready, willing and able to assist. By doing the work, the word will be spread.

Privilege and Responsibility

Privilege and responsibility; those were the feelings that came to the forefront after my Coverts weekend. They really seem to go hand in hand. I seem to be seeing my land, and my relationship to it with new eyes.

I am grateful to the forces which brought me to the spring workshop. I hope that I can repay all those who played a part in it with a new found awareness of the job and the joys implicit with owning land in Vermont.



Eighth graders at Putney Central School combine efforts to use a weed wrench to pull buckthorn. Over the years, the youngsters have helped to control invasive plants and build an extensive trail system in the Putney School Forest.

 Woodlands
for Wildlife

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Associate Editor: Lisa Sausville

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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| Sept 5-7 | Coverts Fall Training Workshop, Ed Kehoe Conservation Camp, Castleton. |
| Sept 6 | Coverts Annual Meeting, Ed Kehoe Conservation Camp, Castleton, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. |