



Woodlands for Wildlife

Volume 17 December 2007

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

Invasive Plants: A Landowner's Education

by John Evans, Class of 2002

In the spring of 2004, I made a decision to remove invasive Japanese barberry on a hillside near a barn and along a tree line. The advice I received at the time was to cut the barberry several times and the plants would die out.

The result of my first experience with invasive plant control proved only that cutting stems is good physical exercise.

Today, when I talk to landowners attending invasive plant workshops at our property, I am careful to point out that cutting barberry stems stimulates regrowth in a vigorous network of roots. These hardy plants are adapted for survival. They leaf out earlier, stay green longer, and grow in sun or shade.

Fortunately, in the summer of 2004 our property qualified for a WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program) grant. It included cost sharing to remove barberry on 11 acres of woodland. A professional invasives control specialist was hired and together we successfully removed the barberry. The project became a demonstration site for future invasive plant workshops.

In the process of my invasive plant education, I learned to accept the use of herbicide as essential to controlling large infestations. I had a choice to make. Either use herbicide or permit invasives to expand and dominate the forest floor, preventing forest regeneration. It was not an easy decision. My wife and I were firmly committed to an organic way of life.

However, the stark reality of the need
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President's Message:

Council Meets with ANR Chief

by Hugo Liepmann

Where can you — in just a few hours — chat with the Chief of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, discuss ticks and buckthorn and destructive deer browsing, review next year's Covert's events, examine the Current Use Program, thrash out the 2008 Coverts budget, and have lunch, all amid humor and camaraderie? At a Council meeting of Vermont Coverts, of course!

ANR Secretary George Crombie exchanged views with Council members at the Council meeting on November 5. Secretary Crombie described his goals for the current ANR reorganization and answered numerous questions. The questions probed the ongoing review of the Use Value Program; assisting consulting foresters; eradicating invasive plants; ANR tensions, and cooperation, with the AG Department; funding for the Forest and Parks Department; and inventorying both the state's water resources and the major extractors of ground water; among other issues.

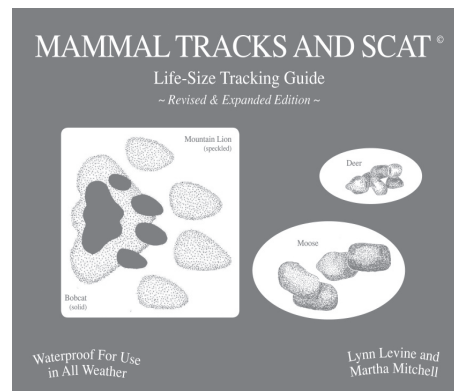
Also at the meeting, Hugo Liepmann and Peter Upton were re-elected to fourth terms as President and Vice

President, respectively. The organization has a new Treasurer, Lynn Peterson, and a new Secretary, Jay Allen.

Budget discussions considered an increase in the salary of the Executive Director, and costs for workshops — both the three-day training sessions and stewardship sessions. Council Members also examined anticipated overhead costs, and how to maximize the impact of publications without spending more. The total expenses projected for 2008 are \$65,900. Major cost elements of this amount include: (i) \$29,000 for staff salary and support; (ii) \$11,500 for workshops; (iii) \$ 14,400 for rent, utilities, accountant and other overhead; and (iv) \$6,200 for publications and web site.

The income required to meet these expenses comes primarily from donations, and from grants and endowment income. We need to raise \$27,00 in donations to balance the budget. All Co-operators and Friends have an opportunity right now, as part of the current

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Track Book Is Updated

Winter is a good time to gain tracking skills. One of the best books on the subject is a popular field guide showing life size prints of 29 mammals common to Vermont.

The field guide, by Windham Counter forester Lynn Levine, was recently updated to include scat and is now titled *Mammal Tracks and Scat*.

Invasive Plant Control

Continued from page 1

to remove hundreds, and eventually thousands, of barberry plants on our land required efficient methods. Even if we wished to avoid the use of chemicals, many of these plants, standing six-foot high and as big around, sustained large root systems that defied digging or manually pulling plants.

Over the past several years I have become accustomed to wearing a backpack sprayer while walking our 82-acre property at the tree line and into the woods.

This can be a daunting assignment. Recently, I measured a single area of barberry infestation occupying more than one-half acre. The site is 100 yards long and barberry densely covers the forest floor.

Other invasive plants commonly found in our region of southeastern Vermont include common and glossy buckthorn, Asiatic bittersweet, multiflora rose and honeysuckle. Generally, I do not treat these plant species by spraying the leaves with herbicide. In my experience, to date, it has not been effective. I cut the plant down and use a bingo marker filled with herbicide to apply herbicide to the cut stump.

Foliar Spray Limitations

I never use a foliar spray when working near the house or where the plants stand taller than I am and would require blasting my woods or fields with a large volume of chemical. In these cases, I always use the cut stump method.

During the process of my invasives education this subject has gained a lot of attention. In September of 2005, the first invasive plant workshop was held in Vermont. Our property was visited as a demonstration plot. Since that time a number of other workshops have visited, including several that I conducted with Bill Schmidt, Coverts Class of 1985.

While progress is being made, most of the activity consists of workshops that reach only a very small number of landowners, and a scattering of WHIP grants for invasive plant removal. These small steps are not enough. They are not achieving results in the woods, in the fields, or along the roadsides and stream banks infested with invasive plants.

Recommendations for Action

I suggest five things need to happen. First, we need to know the extent of the threat invasive plants present to the future regeneration of Vermont forests. This requires study, developing range maps and useful reports. Second, there is not enough accurate information available to landowners on methods to effectively control invasive plants. This requires controlled studies where various methods are used and the results are monitored over a period of several years.

Here is an example of the need for better information. At a workshop held last year in Springfield, the basal bark treatment method was demonstrated on a 60-acre site and recommended as the most effective procedure for treating barberry, buckthorn and other invasives. After treatment on the demonstration site failed, we are now told by the same professional firm giving the demonstration that it has “no confidence” in the efficacy of spraying herbicide on the lower trunk of a plant.

Logging Concerns

Third, we need to better understand the economic issues associated with controlling invasives. For example, it is widely recommended that where invasive plants are established in the woods, pre-treatment is necessary prior to a logging or thinning. One large logging firm says unequivocally that the cost of pre-treating for invasives would remove much of the profit out of logging. Can we afford to ignore the invasives, knowing that opening the

canopy will set off a growth boom and seriously impede forest regeneration?

Fourth, we need to encourage more foresters and landowners to become knowledgeable about invasives and qualified in their control. A separate pesticide license category for the use of herbicides to control invasives would help a great deal to make this possible.

Fifth, we need to find a way to permit newsletters such as this one to publish information on the use of herbicides. Currently, providing this information is prohibited unless the author has a commercial pesticide license in a special category. I don't know of anyone with these credentials

I believe I can tell you, without violating restrictions, I achieved excellent results in controlling invasive plants on my property with a certain non-restricted herbicide that is well known and widely advertised to consumers. To save money, buy a generic and not the brand name product.

Furthermore, you can do what I did and visit sites on the Internet with specific information on invasive plant control.



A new site sponsored by the Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Vermont Invasive Exotic Plant

Committee is one of the very best: vt-invasiveplants.org. Not only is it comprehensive, but it focuses on invasive species specific to Vermont, with an excellent selection of plant identification photographs, fact sheets and a summary of information on management.

As we learn more about invasive plants in Vermont, and the impact of climate change on their distribution, we may be forced to rethink our definition of a well-managed forest. It probably should include control of invasive plants where they are established and threaten sustainability and regeneration.

annual fund drive, to support Vermont Coverts with a contribution toward the \$27,000 goal.

Education is Core Mission

Further Council discussion focused on three ways to educate woodland owners, which is a core mission of Vermont Coverts, and which occurs through workshops, publications, and — increasingly — our web site. First, Lisa Sausville, our Executive Director, discussed the need to find a new site for the spring training workshop, since Waterford Springs is presently not available.

Second, John Evans, the captain of the Council's publications team, explained plans to enhance the quarterly newsletter with tutorial inserts directed at topics critical to habitat stewardship. Third, the Council realizes the growing value of the web site for sharing information, and designated newly elected members Trevor Evans and Fred Pond to focus on adding vigor and muscle to the vtcoverts.org site.

All Cooperators are welcome to participate in Council discussions. Contact the Coverts office at 802-388-3880 for details about the next regular Council meeting on January 7, 2008

Training Classes Graduate 24 Cooperators in 2007

Tanya Balsley, Guilford; Mary Berlejung, Peacham; Allen Banbury, Plainfield; Tovar Cerulli, Plainfield; Joanne Coakley, Belmont, MA; Bob Disiervo, Townsend; Ronald Frey Sr, Westford; Ray Henderson II, Cambridge; Matthew Hoffman, East Dummerston; Susan Lybeck, West Haven; Tyler Miller, Huntington; Dan Nugent, Starksboro; Janet Caconovich, Waterford, MI; Denis McGinley, Tinmouth; Ty Morrison, Lowell; Walter Pepperman II, Middletown Springs; Celia Ryker, Ortonville, MI; Tig and Elise Tillinghast, Thetford Center; Stephen Titcomb, Jeffersonville; Willem Van Loon, Guilford; Richard Walker, Hubbardton; Bill and Carla Whitney, Monkton.

A Year of Progress; A Look Ahead

by Lisa Sausville, Executive Director

Coverts made many strides in 2007 and exciting goals are set for 2008.

Most importantly, we held two successful landowner training workshops, adding 24 Cooperators to our ranks. These individuals own a combined total of 2,954 acres that will now be more effectively managed woodlands for wildlife. New Cooperators left the training full of ideas for implementation. Some of the recent graduates were interested in hosting a workshop, others in talking to neighbors, and still others in writing articles about their own land. We are delighted to have these new faces and excitement and hope that we inspire others to action.

We also had a very successful annual meeting with record attendance. Presentations on natural communities, bobcats and community conservation planning interested all present. Everyone left with two new resources: a field guide to natural communities and a handbook on community planning. The format of having the annual meeting and presentations during the day encouraged greater participation, and we will stick with this format for 2008.

Coverts made its presence known in a variety of other ways. There were five stewardship workshops, participation in the Forest Roundtable and the Northern Forest Alliance Caucus as well as meetings with conservation commissions. The stewardship workshops included tree identification, invasive plants, and low-impact timber harvesting and an evening on estate planning. We also sponsored a Game of Logging level I class hosted on Cooperator Bob Hill's land.

Coverts hosted an online book discus-

sion group, moderated by Cooperator John Elder, *For the Health of the Land: Previously Unpublished Essays and Other Writings* by Aldo Leopold.

Also, with the help of Cooperators we cosponsored events around the state, including a beaver workshop in Grafton, a backyard habitat workshop in Montpelier, a Positive Impact Forestry class in Charleston and a meet and greet with Todd McLeish, author of *Golden Wings and Hairy Toes: Encounters with New England's Most Imperiled Wildlife*.

A Full Calendar of Activity

As we look ahead, Coverts will be offering more workshops and will develop new publications. A grant from the Wildlife Conservation Society and funding from the State Wildlife Grants program will help to make this expanded activity possible. Check the calendar in this issue and your e-mails for dates and topics. We also have worked to reactivate the Local Contact Cooperator Program to keep our Cooperators connected.

As you read this, remember the excitement you had when you left your three-day training. Use that energy and get involved with Coverts today.

This is your organization. This is your invitation. Call with your idea or call me if you want an idea. This organization is dependent on you to make a difference — on your land and in your communities. As you think about 2008 think about how you can best assist Coverts in fulfilling its mission to “encourage and effect the maintenance, enhancement and/or creation of sustainable forest ecosystems for wildlife and other benefits on private lands in Vermont.”

REMINDER:

The annual Vermont Coverts fund drive is underway. If you haven't yet responded, please consider joining the Cooperators and friends who support Coverts.



Woodlands
for Wildlife

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Newsletter Editor: John Evans
Associate Editor: Lisa Sausville

Calendar of Upcoming Events

January 17	Where the Wildlife Roam — Tools and Concepts in Wildlife Connectivity, with Jens Hilke, VT Fish and Wildlife Dept., at 7 p.m. in Woodstock at Woodstock Town Hall. This program is repeated on January 22 at 7 p.m. in West Fairlee at Bean Hall.
March 8	Sustainable Timber Harvest and Sales on Private Woodlots from 9 a.m.– 4 p.m. at Northwood Stewardship Center, East Charleston. A series of workshops is being developed in cooperation with Audubon Vermont for forest landowners. There will be three focus areas: the Upper Valley, Mad River Valley and Huntington West. Workshop specifics are being finalized, and the following three dates and locations are set. Watch your e-mail for these and other workshop announcements. If you are not receiving e-mails from VT Coverts, please be sure we have your e-mail on file. Send an e-mail to lisa@vtcoverts.org to be placed on the list.
January 26	A Vision for Your Forestland — Setting goals and learning strategies and resources for managing your forest resource, from 10 – 4 p.m. at Lareau Farm, Waitsfield. This program is repeated at the same hours on February 2 at Hulbert Outdoor Center, Fairlee, and on February 3 at a location TBA.

Coverts Honors Macy and Fidel at Annual Meeting

At the Coverts Annual Meeting, Glenn Macy and Jamie Fidel were honored for outstanding service: Glenn served on the Council for more than nine years, and was financial officer and treasurer for the past seven.

In making the presentation, Hugo Liepman said Glenn “performed those roles with seriousness and cheerful good hu-

mor, and earned the respect and friendship of his Coverts colleagues.” Jamie Fidel, Director of the Forest and Biodiversity Program of the Vermont Natural Resources Council, was honored for his vision to value Vermont’s large woodland parcels and the wisdom to investigate threats to those woodlands.