



Minnesota Woodlands

The MFA works on behalf of family forest owners, through education and advocacy, to promote stewardship of woodlands.

www.MinnesotaForestry.org

Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA)

Information@
MinnesotaForestry.org
218-326-6486
PO Box 496
Grand Rapids
MN 55744

MFA Newsletter Vol. 11 No. 2

April/May 2009
The Minnesota Woodlands Newsletter is published by the Minnesota Forestry Association.

MFA Regular Board Meetings

DNR Office
Cambridge
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

- April 22
- July 22
- October 28

Editor

Mary Kroll
Editor@MinnesotaForestry.org

Design/layout

Peg Churchwell
Lady Dog Design
peg@ladydogdesign.com

Web Site Get-together Pays Great Dividends for Lucky Winners!

Woodland owners who want to meet other forest enthusiasts or who need information about MFA chapters, committees, stewardship plans, or other forestry-related topics can go to MFA's new site at www.MinnesotaForestry.org. Those that visited the site last month had a chance to enter a drawing for prizes.

So which names were drawn as our lucky winners?

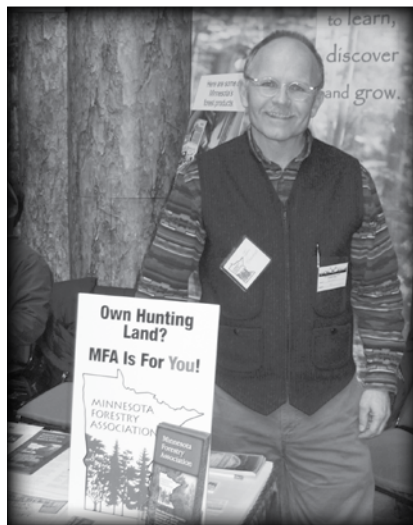
Dave Olsen of Evansville won the Gansfors Bruks Wildlife hatchet, a Swedish-made precision tool.

Ralph Magnuson of Wyoming won the Leatherman Wave multi-tool.

Anne Oldakowski of Wadena won the Swiss Army Forester.

James Rogers of Minnetonka, **James Brand** of Roseville, and **Bill Laumann** of St. Peter won the bottles of real maple syrup.

Thanks to **Chad Dayton** and **Priscilla Harvala** for donating these great prizes. And thanks to all who visited our new web site!



John Saxhaug, Minneapolis, helped promote MFA memberships at the 2009 Deer Hunter's Classic held in mid-March at the State Fair Coliseum. Minnesota Forest Industries very generously shared their booth with MFA. Other members who worked the booth were Barb Spears (St. Paul), Bruce ZumBahlen (Cottage Grove), and John O'Reilly (Hinckley).

MFA Joins the Minnesota Environmental Partnership

In March, MFA was admitted to membership in the Minnesota Environmental Partnership. MEP is a coalition of more than 80 Minnesota environmental and conservation organizations working together to protect and preserve Minnesota's precious natural environment.

Membership in MEP is not open to just any organization. MFA had to show that we meet certain criteria and then be recommended by an MEP board member. Katie Fernholz, executive director of Dovetail Partners, is a member of the MEP board and spoke in favor of MFA's membership saying, "MFA is Minnesota's oldest environmental organization and MEP is the state's largest—it makes sense to be working together and serving woodland owners. I think both organizations and their members will see benefit."



**2009
Board of Directors**

John W. O'Reilly, *President*
40361 Grace Lake Road
Hinckley MN 55037
320-655-3901
President@MinnesotaForestry.org

Al Schacht, *Vice President*
58145 350th Avenue
Zumbro Falls, MN 55991
507-753-3214
Schacht2Schacht@aol.com

Dennis Thompson
Treasurer
130 Southgate Drive
Aitkin MN 56431
218-927-6565
Fax: 218-927-6014
Treasurer@MinnesotaForestry.org

Bob Sonnenberg
P.O. Box 127
New York Mills MN 56567
218-385-2144
SFarms@LakesPlus.com

Chuck Erickson
34115 County Hwy 74
Battle Lake MN 56515
218-495-2659
CYErik@prtcl.com

Jim Chamberlin
7118 Clearwater Road
Baxter MN 56425
218-828-6197
IslandLakeFarm@Brainerd.net

Bruce ZumBahlen
Past President
8203 Innsdale Ave. S.
Cottage Grove MN 55016
651-458-0483
ZoomerBruce@aol.com

John Saxhaug
3940 Harriet Avenue
Minneapolis MN 55409
612-827-5824
John_Saxhaug@yahoo.com

Chad Dayton
154 Nina Street
St. Paul MN 55102
651-224-1125
chaddayton@mac.com

Mike Reichenbach
Ex-Officio Member
Univ. of Minnesota Extension
179 University Rd
Cloquet, MN 55720
218-726-6470
Reich027@umn.edu

Administrative Assistant
Carol Cartie
P.O. Box 496
Grand Rapids MN 55744
218-326-6486
Information@MinnesotaForestry.org

MFA at the Capitol on Your Behalf

By John O'Reilly

In February I was at the state capitol to present a proposal to the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council. This is the group that will be distributing some \$ 80 million of the proceeds from the sales tax increase we voted on last fall. MFA's proposal, which has only a slim chance of success, would help private woodland owners implement recommendations in their Stewardship Plan.

In March, past MFA President Bruce ZumBahlen and I met with a half-dozen legislators, including Representative Tom Rukavina. Our interest is to help ensure that new tax benefits for private woodland owners, 2c and SFIA, remain in place. So far these benefits appear to be secure.



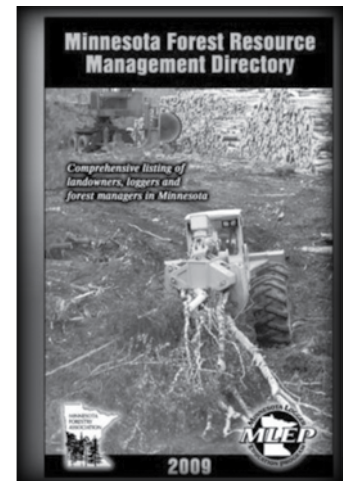
Above: MFA president John O'Reilly at the Minnesota State Capitol.

Left: MFA President John O'Reilly, Representative Tom Rukavina, and past MFA President Bruce ZumBahlen.

Reading Material

Included in your mailing is a new 57-page booklet from the DNR, *All About Minnesota's Forests and Trees: A Primer*. Written by Laura Duffy, it's a great companion to take into the woods. Even experts can learn something from this booklet. In fact, why not take a few moments and challenge yourself with our quiz? Good luck!

Also, if you haven't received it already, the 2009 edition of the *Minnesota Forest Resource Management Directory* will be in your mailbox soon. Thanks to Dave Chura and Chris DeRosier of the Minnesota Logger Education Program who partner with MFA to produce the directory.



MFA and *Better Forests*

You may have noticed an announcement in the most recent issue of *Better Forests* that MFA will no longer be purchasing a subscription for each member. That is true. The reason is simple: In these tough economic times, we can't afford to support two publications.

I hope you agree that MFA's newsletter has been expanded and improved greatly. The web site has also been completely redone and expanded. If you haven't yet, check it out at www.MinnesotaForestry.org.

I'd be happy to try to answer any questions you have or listen to your comments. Contact me either by phone or e-mail.

John O'Reilly
President@MinnesotaForestry.org, 320-655-3901

Get Ready for MFA Spring Field Days!

Join your fellow members for MFA's Annual Meeting and Spring Field Days 2009! This family event is set for New York Mills, Minnesota on Friday evening, May 15 and Saturday, May 16. (New York Mills is located on Highway 10, 90 minutes northwest of St. Cloud.)

Friday evening festivities will be held at Mills Creamery, a neat coffee house and café in downtown New York Mills, and will feature:

- Our annual business meeting—learn what MFA is doing and have a say in our future.
- A social hour with host Bob Sonnenberg and friends tending bar.
- A sumptuous dinner.
- An entertaining program with Master of Confusion, Chuck Erickson, and local storyteller, Chris Schuelke.

Saturday is Family Day at Sonnenberg Farms, located just a mile north of New York Mills. The whole family gets admitted for just \$10. ...that's \$10 per carload, not per person!

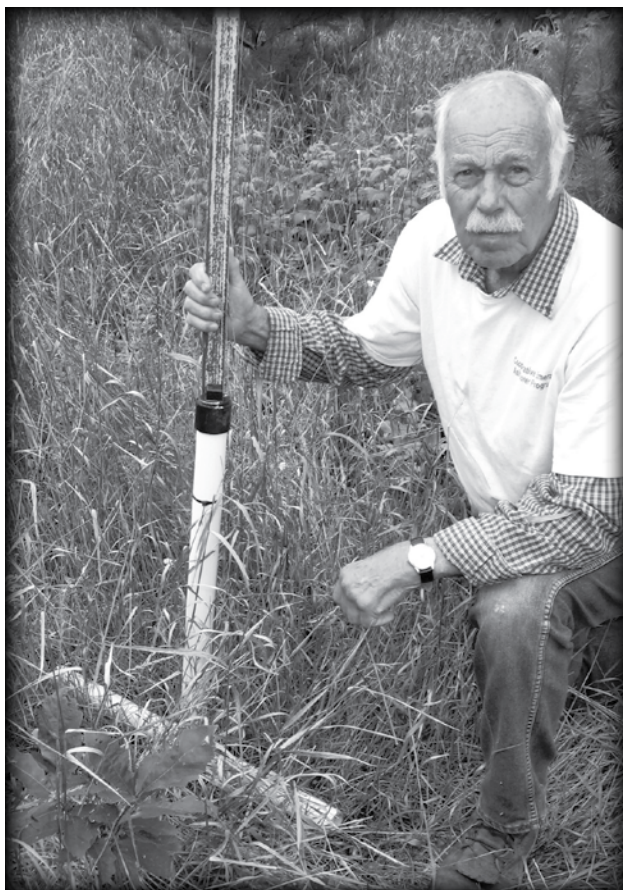
This day will be worth the drive from Winona, Duluth, or International Falls! Events running continuously include Project Learning Tree fun for kids, a session on growing shitake mushrooms by Jim Chamberlin and family, educational tours of the woods (either afoot or riding on special People Movers), woody plant ID with Mike Reichenbach, and buckthorn control with Ann Oldkowski. Food will be served all day by the local Lutheran Church ladies group, green Jello and all!

A special treat for the first 15 ladies who sign up will be a High Tea Celebration at the Whistle Stop Inn Bed & Breakfast. The cost is \$ 17 per person.

To register, use the brochure enclosed or go to our web site, www.MinnesotaForestry.org.

For questions, contact event chairman Chuck Erickson at CYErick@prtel.com or by phone at (218) 495-3321.

See you in New York Mills in May!



Top: Your hosts are committee co-chairs Jim Chamberlin, left, and Chuck Erickson, right. Owner of the showplace farm and woodland is Bob Sonnenberg, center.

Above: How do you protect seedlings from hungry mice? This T-bait station is one of Bob Sonnenberg's answers. Find dozens of additional ideas you can use on your land at our Spring Field Days!

Shelter Your Seedlings

By Eli Sagor

Tree shelters can be an effective and relatively inexpensive way to protect tree seedlings from damage from mice, rabbits, and deer. A variety of studies have shown significant increases in tree seedling survival from the use of tree tubes.

There are many different kinds of shelters, including rigid mesh, flexible mesh, translucent plastic, and hybrids, which have solid plastic on the bottom and mesh on top. Different people have different preferences, and I haven't seen studies that clearly conclude that one type is superior to the other. But here are some issues to consider:

- Translucent plastic shelters tend to lead to increased seedling height growth. This may be due to higher moisture conditions, different light conditions, higher temperatures inside the tube, or other factors. This means that sheltered seedlings sometimes are flimsier than unsheltered seedlings, and in some cases can fall over if unsupported after the tree tube is removed. This is not a problem with open mesh tree tubes.
- Sheltered seedlings sometimes have more fall and winter dieback than unsheltered seedlings, which is likely due to delayed hardening for winter due to the warmer conditions inside the tube.

Despite the drawbacks, seedlings are better off with shelters than without. They may be a lot of work to install, but without some sort of protection, your seedlings are much less likely to survive.

Here are a few more sources of information about tree shelters:

Minnesota Tree Planting Handbook. Available online at <http://cfc.cfans.umn.edu/links/handbook.pdf>.

Tree shelter study for CA DOT. Available online at www.sci.sdsu.edu/SERG/techniques/protection/hm (look for section on different types of tree tubes).

Ordering tree shelters:
Itasca Greenhouse
(www.ItascaGreenhouse.com)



Before and after, Dave Jacobson property near Sauk Centre. These oaks were planted in 1993 and protected with tree tubes. Fourteen years later they're growing strong.



Hardware cloth tree tube protecting a seedling.

Photo by Eli Sagor

Photo by Eli Sagor

Fire!

By John O'Reilly

That's what more than 1,000 Minnesota residents are likely to exclaim during April and May, the peak wildfire months.

"Last year, there were 131 wildfires recorded in Pine and Kanabec Counties," said Ron Goetzinger, DNR fire program leader based in Sandstone. Almost all of them were caused by man, with lightning contributing just one or two. "Up north in areas like the Boundary Waters there is a very thin layer of soil covering rocks so, when conditions are dry, everything is dry. That's why they get many more lightning-caused fires up there."

Of the 131 fires, almost 30 were caused by two railroad trains. One train started a series of fires between Braham and Brook Park in April and the other set fires between Askov and the Wisconsin line in June. These fires were caused by sparks from a faulty wheel bearing on one of the cars. "In cases such as these, where a train clearly caused the fires, the railroad pays the costs involved," Goetzinger said. "Each of these fires cost the railroad between \$ 40,000 and \$ 50,000. That's why, during really dry conditions, the railroad often has one of their trucks equipped to run on the tracks follow each train to check for fires."

"Landowners who have a wildfire on their land can also end up with a sizable bill, ranging from \$ 200 to \$ 2,000," Goetzinger said. "Generally, local fire departments bill us for their costs in dealing with a fire in which no buildings are involved. We pass that bill on to the landowner."

To detect wildfires as early as possible, DNR used to have a series of fire towers from which spotters would watch for smoke. Today, several of the towers are still in place but none are used for spotting fires. Instead, DNR hires planes to patrol on days when the fire danger is high. When a fire is noticed, the spotter can radio the ground crews with the best route to the fire and tell them whether structures are likely to be involved.

I was busted by one of those planes a few years ago. As a weekender, I wanted to take advantage of a warm, sunny Saturday afternoon in early May to burn some brush. Not wanting to take the time to drive over to Delmar Benson's to get a permit, I thought that I'd just keep the fire small and it would be fine. As I was enjoying the day and playing with the fire, a bright green DNR truck pulled up our driveway. "Do you have a fire permit?" they asked. Of course they knew I didn't because fire wardens had stopped issuing permits the week before due to the dry weather.

"By the way, how did you ever find me?" I asked.

"Hey Charlie," one of the DNR people spoke into his radio. "When you fly over, tip your wings to say hello to Mr. O'Reilly." Sure enough, a couple of minutes later, a plane flew over us and tipped its wings.

The two DNR people were very nice about the whole



Karl Goetzinger, left, and Roger Varo, right, are part-time firefighters hired by DNR for the April-May fire season. DNR's Sandstone area fire program leader is Ron Goetzinger, center.

thing and said they wouldn't write a ticket this time. Their message of "don't burn without a permit again" was very clear.

Fire season is a big deal for our DNR foresters. While they don't like to admit it, heading out to a fire with lights flashing and siren blaring is a lot more exciting than some of their other duties. For many, the overtime is also pretty good, as a crew is kept on duty over Saturday and Sunday to deal with the fires started by weekenders.

The homes and cabins in our area that are most susceptible to destruction by a wildfire are those nestled in the woods. The Minnesota DNR has three suggestions to help ensure your home or cabin is protected from wildfire.

First, in case of fire, make sure the local firefighters can get to your home or cabin. To accommodate the big fire rigs, your driveway should be at least 12 feet wide with overhanging tree branches trimmed 14 feet up. If your driveway is more than 150 feet long, there should be a turnaround large enough for a fire truck.

Flying embers set more buildings on fire than do the tall, dramatic flames shown on the TV news. Eliminate the places on your home or cabin where fire could get started, such as leaves and pine needles collected on the roof.

Lastly, maintain a 30-foot wide fire prevention zone around your home or cabin. Evergreen shrubs in this area should be small and well-spaced. Evergreen trees should be pruned up from the ground 6 to 10 feet to prevent a ground fire from climbing into the tree. Dead leaves in this area should be mulched or raked up so they do not support an approaching fire.

With a little preparation and some common sense, we can enjoy the spring weather without fear of wildfires.

Bluebirds—A Success Story

By Ann Petry

The story of bluebirds is another example of successful recovery. In the 1970s, researchers estimated that bluebird numbers had declined by 90 percent from their peak in the early 1900s. The cause of the decline is still open to speculation. Possible factors include loss of habitat, severe winters, English sparrows and starlings (both of which will displace bluebirds), and predation by house cats.

In the late 1970s, two articles on the bluebirds' plight were published, one in National Geographic Magazine and the other in Parade Magazine, the supplement to Sunday papers. These articles effectively enlisted the public as allies of bluebirds. Then, Minnesota's Dick Peterson introduced his design for a bluebird house, giving ordinary people something they could do to support bluebirds.

Peterson's Bluebird House, the one with slanted roof and front, is suited to bluebirds in several ways. It is made of cedar board or thick plywood, insulating the nestlings from the hot sun. The roof and front are slanted to make it harder for predators to hold on while harassing young bluebirds inside. The oblong entrance hole is just the right size to allow adult bluebirds to cling to the outside of the box while tending to their nestlings inside, yet it is small enough to keep out larger birds, like starlings. The house itself is tall enough that raccoons have a hard time reaching the nestlings inside. I've learned, however, that the nest box is not bear-proof.

Perhaps the most important feature of Peterson's design is the opening between the floor and the front door which is just large enough to let blowfly larvae drop out. Everyone can recognize blowflies because of their metallic green or blue color. These flies deposit eggs inside a bluebird

nest. After hatching, the larvae (maggots) feed on the live bluebird nestlings. If the blowfly larvae become too numerous, the nestlings will be killed. In the Peterson Bluebird House, as the blowfly larvae move down to the bottom of the nest to molt, many drop harmlessly to the ground through the opening.

The best locations for bluebird houses are open fields with short grass, such as a pasture. Bluebirds' main diet during the nesting season is grasshoppers and other insects found on the ground. Because of competition from tree swallows, nest boxes should be installed in pairs, 10 to 25 feet apart. If tree swallows take one box, they will not allow another pair of swallows to nest nearby so the second box is reserved for bluebirds.

Our daughter, an amateur woodworker, made a dozen Peterson Bluebird Houses for me which I installed in pairs on the small fields on our land, thinking I have done my part to promote bluebirds. Then I read the admonition from the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota saying, "If you cannot monitor your bluebird houses weekly during the breeding season, do not install them!"

By monitoring, they mean going to each bluebird house, opening it and tilting the nest outward until you can see the contents. A bluebird nest will be made entirely of grass and pine needles with no feathers; a tree swallow nest will be

For more information see:

www.TheNaturesWay.com
to purchase mealworms and find information on how to store them and feed them to bluebirds.

www.BBRP.org. The Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota for general information.

www.NABluebirdSociety.org. The North American Bluebird Society for more general information.

Vickie Kerbel checks a birdhouse in her yard. Houses with slanted roofs and fronts were developed especially for bluebirds by Minnesota's Dick Peterson.



Photo by birdfreak.com

made of rougher material and lined with feathers. Bluebirds seem to have a poor sense of smell and will not abandon a nest due to handling of the nest, the eggs or even the chicks.

If the nest is found to be wet from rain, or if there are too many blowfly larvae present, they recommend removing the eggs or the chicks, taking out the old nest and replacing it with new, dry grass. Once the chicks are 12 days old, they should be left alone so they do not leave the nest prematurely. Bluebirds will not reuse their nest for a second brood so, after the chicks do leave, the nest material should be removed so the process can be begun again.

Now that we have bluebirds, let's feed them! They love mealworms which are available online for about \$9 per 1,000. (If you haven't tried, mealworms are amazingly easy to store and handle.) A neighbor buys 5,000 at a time and puts out 100 or so mealworms each day in a half dozen feeder. Watching the bluebirds and nuthatches coming to feed is great fun.

For maple syrup supplies, chainsaws, and herbicides for woodland use, see the Buyer's Guide at www.MinnesotaForestry.org!

Below: Lure bluebirds closer with a dish of wiggling mealworms.



Photo by Michael Spencer, Cal Photos



Photo by Carrol Henderson, MN DNR

Far Left: This male bluebird pauses outside a natural tree cavity nest.

Left: Bluebirds favorite perch-fenceposts?



The Blandin Foundation has just released their report Seeing the Forest and The Trees: How to Make the Most of Minnesota's Woods. Many MFA members will remember previous articles from Bruce ZumBahlen about efforts to keep Minnesota woodlands productive. For a copy of this report, go to http://www.irrb.org/_site_components/documents/user/businessforest220.pdf.

Upcoming Events For more information on these or other events, go to www.MinnesotaForestry.org.

April

Tuesday, April 7

- Intergenerational Land Transfer (Cloquet)
- Emerald Ash Borer Early Detector Training (Lamberton)

Wednesday, April 8

- Trees and Shrubs of Minnesota with Welby Smith (Grand Rapids)

Thursday, April 9

- Invasive Species (Morris)

Friday, April 17

- The Nuts and Bolts of Timber Sales (Duluth)

Saturday, April 18

- Measuring and Reading your Forest (Duluth)
- Recreational Trail Design (Houston)

Thursday, April 23

- Small Woodlot Management (Rochester)

Friday, April 24

- Sharp-tailed Grouse and Brushland Management (Aitkin area)

Saturday, April 25

- Biomass Workshop (Hermantown)

- Growing and Tending Your Woodlot (Winona)

Wednesday, April 29

- Biomass Field Day Workshop (St. Cloud)

May

Monday, May 4

- Controlling Runoff and Erosion Around your Property (Duluth)

Tuesday, May 5

- Intro to GPS (Rochester)

Friday, May 8

- GPS and Landview Training (International Falls)

Tuesday, May 12

- Finding Airphotos and Mapping Your Land (Twin Cities)

Thursday, May 14

- Finding Airphotos and Mapping Your Land (Cloquet)

Friday, May 15

- MFA's Banquet and Annual Meeting (New York Mills)

Saturday, May 16

- MFA's Spring Field Day at Sonnenberg Farms (New York Mills)

Wednesday, May 20

- Tree ID (Detroit Lakes)

Saturday, May 30

- Tree Marking

June

Saturday, June 13

- Direct Seeding

Got Photos? Minnesota Woodlands is always looking for digital photos of people doing activities on their land such as planting trees, pulling buckthorn, or just enjoying their woods. Please send any photos as an e-mail attachment to Editor@MinnesotaForestry.org (be sure to identify the people in your photo). Who knows? You may see your photo in our next issue!

For MFA members, www.MyMinnesotaWoods.org is the best online source of woodland information. Here's what's new this month.



- Submit your favorite tree or nominate a new state champion!
- Meet a Minnesota Logger: Lundberg Forest Products
- Carbon credits and managed family forests: How it works
- The Peterson family quest to get rid of buckthorn
- Plus a Poem of the month, Photo of the month, News stories and Upcoming events

Have a question about your woodland? Post it on the Discussion Board. You may be surprised at how many good responses you get!

For the live version, with much more info on each topic, visit MyMinnesotaWoods.org

Thank You to Our Supporting Members!

Boise White Paper, LLC
International Falls

Potlatch Land & Lumber, LLC
Cloquet

Minnesota Forest Industries
Duluth

Sustainable Forestry, LLC
Duluth

Chad Dayton

Verso Paper
Sartell

Photo background by Eli Sagor (Flickr: esagor).