

Minnesota MFA Woodlands

Minnesota Forestry Association

MFA: an organization of, by and for Minnesota's private woodland owners and friends.

www.MinnesotaForestry.org

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MFA Newsletter
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MFA Board Meetings
DNR Cambridge Office
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
• July 13, 2021
Subject to change due to COVID-19

Conference Calls
8 – 9 a.m.
• May 11, 2021
• June 8, 2021
• August 10, 2021

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From the President: Greetings and Welcome to Spring!

The maple sap is flowing and tree planting is just around the corner. Time to put the winter fishing equipment away and start working on your turkey calling skills.

I so appreciate this time of year. It's a great opportunity to take inventory of your timbered land. If you would like some free help with that, just give the MFA number a call at 218-879-5100 and I will set you up with a two-hour visit from a professional forester to do a one-on-one visit on your woodlot to discuss opportunities to meet your land management objectives. Feel free to share this opportunity with your friends and neighbors with wooded land.



Dave Roerick

As I discussed in the last newsletter, our 2021 membership campaign is progressing well. We have fewer than 60 members to notify about outstanding memberships. Members of the board and I will be reaching out to you by email and telephone to check on your status. If your status has changed, please feel free to call the MFA number to let me know.

We have made lots of additions and corrections already this year and appreciate hearing from you. We currently have over 150 newsletters going to past members who are not on our current membership list. If you receive this newsletter and haven't received an invite to membership this year, please notify me at 218-879-5100. We will likely adjust our newsletter mailing in the near future, so notifying me will not interrupt your newsletter mailing.

Lastly, I would like to share with you an appreciation for your phone call questions about your woodlot or MFA, and also many requests for a Call Before You Cut visit. We are here to serve you and that is an indicator it is working.

Your President,
Dave Roerick

U of M Scientists Discover Attacking Fungi That Show Promise Against EAB

From the University of Minnesota

Since its introduction, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has become the most devastating invasive forest insect in the U.S., killing hundreds of millions of ash trees at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Now, new research from the University of Minnesota's Minnesota Invasive Terrestrial Plants and Pests Center (MITPPC) shows a possible path forward in controlling the invasive pest that threatens Minnesota's nearly one billion ash trees.

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Minnesota Forestry
Association

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Away from home for a time? Please contact the MFA office if you'll be away from home for an extended time and let us know when you'll be back. We'll hold onto the newsletter until you return so you won't miss a single issue!
info@minnesotaforestry.org or call 218-879-5100

Exciting New Publication for Women Landowners

By Barb Spears, President, MN Women's Woodland Network

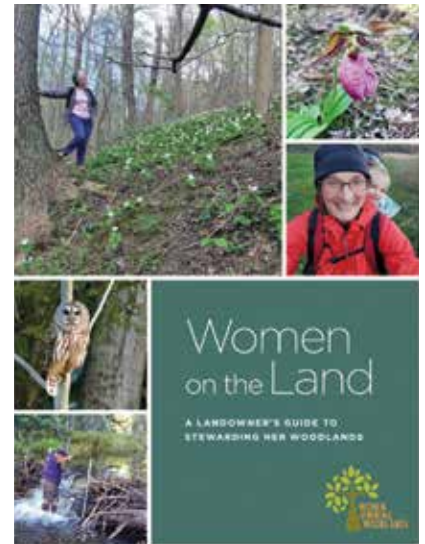
"Women on the Land: A Landowner's Guide to Stewarding Her Woodlands" is being offered by the WomenOwningWoodlands.net.

The WomenOwningWoodlands.net web project, a collaborative project of the National Woodland Owners Association (NWOA) and the USDA Forest Service Cooperative Forestry Office, strives to bring topical, accessible and current forestry information to woodland owners and forest practitioners through news articles, blogs, events, resources and personal stories. We support women in forest leadership, women who manage their own woodlands, and all who facilitate the stewardship of forests.

The new publication, "Women on the Land," aims to help women landowners better understand their woodlands and make informed decisions to meet their goals. Based on interviews with women landowners and forestry professionals across the eastern U.S., it identifies and addresses some of the most common questions, goals and challenges of women landowners.

The publication was developed from interviews with female forestry and conservation professionals and female landowners. Content includes sections on forest ecology, stewardship options, and working with professionals as well as case studies of seven women throughout the northeast, mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes states.

The PDF can be found on the MN Women's Woodland Network (MNWWN) website at mnwwn.org/resources. MNWWN Board Member and UMN Extension Educator Angie Gupta was involved as a reviewer for this publication.



Our Shared Bookshelf

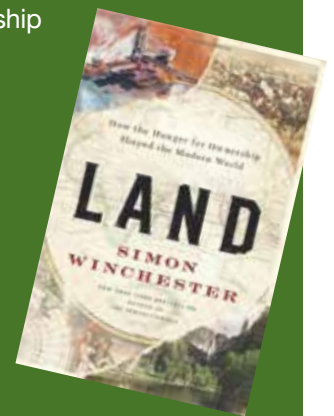
Each issue, we'll be selecting a favorite book to share with our readers to help build community and encourage the sharing of resources. If you'd like to submit a recommendation for Our Shared Bookshelf, please email Editor@MinnesotaForestry.org. We look forward to hearing about what everyone is reading and enjoying!

This edition, we're highlighting "Land: How the Hunger for Ownership Shaped the Modern World" by Simon Winchester.

Land — whether meadow or mountainside, desert or peat bog, parkland or pasture, suburb or city — is central to our existence. Winchester examines what we humans are doing — and have done — with the billions of acres that together make up the solid surface of our planet.

MFA member Jim Hunder says Land is "a fantastic book on land and how owning it affects changes in our living and the world. It's hard to put down."

Thanks, Jim, for the recommendation!



The Lost Forty

By Stanley Musielewicz

It is really something to see, the “Lost Forty.” It’s in the wilds of Itasca County, near the Chippewa National Forest. After hearing about it for years, I finally got my chance to see it.

I was a new member of the Minnesota Forestry Association, and I’d made plans to attend the annual meeting and field day held in Grand Rapids in May 2010. It would be my chance to meet other foresters, woodland owners and members. And in addition, I was going to take in the field day, a visit to the Lost Forty. It was a mere one-hour bus ride west.

Once there, the entire bus load of people set their own pace on the mile of trails on the property. I was in awe at the height and breadth of the massive pine trees, 300 or more years old. I stopped to marvel at a particularly nice red pine, our state tree, looking up a hundred and fifty feet to its top.

A few people passed by as I admired that one big pine. Then a kind lady noticed the camera hanging around my neck, and she asked if I’d like a picture of myself at this tree, on my own camera. How perfect, I thought to myself. I handed her my camera and she took my picture as I held my measly 32-inch diameter stick against the massive trunk of the tree. It had to be four feet across.

I checked the quality of the digital photo she had taken, and smiled to myself. I knew it was a picture that I would treasure for the rest of my life. Photographic proof of my visit to a unique place, a true virgin forest. It was the highlight of the entire meeting.

That photograph of myself soon came in handy. It was soon used as evidence and proof of more than just my visit to the magnificent pines of the Lost Forty. It became part of another interesting story.

On the Monday right after the MFA meeting, my wife, Geri, and I had travel plans. We were to board a plane and fly to Seattle, Washington. Our Army officer son-in-law, Jeremy, was stationed at nearby Fort Lewis. Our grandchildren, Caden and Isabelle, were three and two years old at the time. Our daughter, Amy, was happily making a military life for her family, far away from any parents or family.

In the weeks before the trip and the MFA meeting, Geri had asked me to shave off my mustache; the one I’d had almost continuously our entire married life. She said it would be a nice surprise for our daughter. At first, I was reluctant to do so, but on the morning that I left for the MFA meeting, I thought, “what the heck,” and shaved off my mustache. I went downstairs and my wife looked at me, not saying a word about it. I packed up my pickup, said goodbye, and left for Grand Rapids.

When I got back home late on Saturday night, Geri greeted me and asked me about the meeting, about the adventure. There were so many things to tell her, but I did say I really wished she would have enjoyed the event with me. Once again, she made no mention of my missing mustache.



Clean-shaven Stan at the Lost Forty. His 32-inch diameter stick was not going to give a reading on the giant red pine he was admiring.



Springtime at the Lost Forty.

Our Sunday morning routine was to get ready and attend the 8:30 a.m. Mass at our church. I showered, dressed and went downstairs. Geri looked at me and we exchanged our good morning greeting. After nearly thirty years, the greeting was not too elaborate. Off we went to church.

As we sat in church, Geri looked at me, and her eyes widened as if I had just grown a second head. She pointed to her lip, then pointed at me, meaning she had noticed! I held up three fingers, meaning I’d shaved it off three days ago. She shook her head, meaning—no way in hell! I nodded, meaning—I kid you not!

On the way home from church, Geri told me that there was no way I’d shaved off my mustache three days before. She pressured me to admit that I had done it that morning as I got ready for church. She just figured she’d failed to notice it during our usual Sunday morning hustle.

I assured her that I shaved it off before I went to the MFA meeting. I figured that she really did notice it, but was just too vain to acknowledge it to me. There was no way she was going to believe that.

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Site Highlight: Hythecker Prairie

By Kelly Randall, SNA Outreach Coordinator. This article originated in "Nature Notes."

Is it winter or is it spring? March in Minnesota can be tricky to decipher, especially being in the heart of the continent where weather systems come at us from nearly all directions.



Wintery snowdrifts (left) and spring-like sunshine (right) at Hythecker Prairie SNA.

Alternatively floating on top, then falling through a foot of snow becomes a stroll through irregular white patches only a few inches deep. A few steps touch the prairie itself. Winter or spring?

A long stretch of relative quiet, with an occasional slow whoosh of a passing car or whine of a jet overhead, is punctuated by the heart stopping flush of a ring-necked pheasant. You should expect that flying drama on a nice day on the prairie! Then, is that what you think you hear? Yes, off in the distance a red-winged blackbird has chosen to return to Hythecker Prairie with its musical serenade. Spring or winter?

The big bluestem, Indian grass, and cordgrass barely move in the calm wind, and are mere shells of their former living selves. Further exploration of the SNA's wildflowers peeking through the snow reveal purple prairie clover, Virginia mountain mint, gray-headed coneflower, swamp milkweed, and several artfully withered compass plants. No trace of life aboveground. Yet the buds of some willows mere steps away have already popped open revealing their fuzzy silver catkins. Winter or spring?



Left to right: Compass plant, Virginia mountain mint, prairie cordgrass, big bluestem, willow catkins.

March is a season of expectation. It's hard not to have expectation on a calm and sunny 43°F day in early March when the winter jacket is left in the car, but the stocking cap stays on. Spring or winter? Maybe just shrug? On the other hand, you could start calling it "win-ing." What comes after winter but before spring? Winning.



Hythecker Prairie SNA winning. Photos by Kelly Randall.

A few facts about Hythecker Prairie SNA:

- Prescribed burns to enhance the prairie's health have been a regular part of management at Hythecker Prairie since the 1980s.
- Beginning in 1987, areas of the SNA that had been farmed were planted with native seed from site's prairie remnants.
- The SNA hosts a variety of plants (wildflowers, grasses, trees) and animals.
- Since 2010, invasive species, primarily birds' foot trefoil and wild parsnip, have become a growing concern. Do your part to help prevent the spread of invasive species.

Do a virtual walk of your favorite SNAs at <https://www.youtube.com/user/MinnesotaDNR/playlists>.

Looking to grow as a gardener?

The Minnesota State Horticultural Society offers webinars on a variety of gardening-related topics every year. Register for live, upcoming webinars or visit their archives of pre-recorded presentations. Archived sessions are available for \$8 each. Learn more at northerngardener.org/webinar-shop/.

Lost Forty continued

When we got home, we had some more discussion about the MFA meeting. I told her about the field trip to the Lost Forty, and I showed her the picture that had been taken of me. There I was in the picture, in front of that huge red pine, without a mustache. Geri was dumbfounded, to realize that I really had shaved off my mustache the morning before the MFA meeting.

At first, I blew it off, thinking that maybe it really was not that noticeable. Had she not been the one to mention it and ask me to shave it off for weeks, I could have maybe understood. But noticing my new clean-shaven look was soon put to the test.

The next day, when we got off of the plane in Seattle, our daughter and grandchildren were there to greet us. I remember seeing the three of them through the glass that separated incoming passengers from the other people at the airport terminal. They looked at us, smiled and waved, and Amy pointed to her lip, and to me. Within three seconds, she noticed I was without a mustache.

Geri's parents came to visit, having driven up from Arizona to spend the summer at their lake home. They had not seen us for about six months. After about three minutes, Geri's mom looked at me and said I looked different somehow. Then it came to her, and she said I had shaved off my mustache. Then she added that it made me look about ten years younger. That was good enough for me. I was never going to have a mustache again. I was already a grandpa, and I didn't need to look or feel older than I was.

After about thirty minutes at my barber, he, too, noticed that I was now clean-shaven. So it only took from three seconds to thirty minutes for the world to notice I no longer sported a mustache. But for my own wife, it took three days. I mean really, THREE DAYS!

I never claimed to be a keenly observant person, like a detective. I often miss seeing some of the little things that others might notice. Things like my wife's new top, her hair that had been trimmed that afternoon, a thoroughly cleaned house, or the floor having been recently mopped. But Geri no longer gives me too much grief about not noticing those little things. She knows that, no matter how she tries to play that hand, my hand is all trump!

Don't 'Clean Up' Too Early

Many pollinators overwinter by taking shelter in dead plant material in your yard. Don't rake or otherwise disturb dead leaves and other plant matter until temperatures consistently reach 50 degrees, or until you start seeing dandelions.



EAB continued

In a recent study published in *Fungal Biology*, MITPPC researchers identified various fungi living in EAB-infested trees — a critical first step in finding fungi that may be harnessed to control the spread of EAB, and ultimately, prevent ash tree death.

“We discovered that several different species of fungi attack EAB and other insects, and they can now be further tested for their potential for biocontrol,” said Robert Blanchette, the study's project leader and professor in the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. “This is a very important first step in the search for a biocontrol for emerald ash borer.”

Larval EAB feed just beneath the bark, leaving behind tunnel galleries that can stretch up to 20 inches long. Beneath the surface, fungi — some of which may be capable of parasitizing the EAB — may be carried by the larvae as they develop, or may enter the tree through the tunnel galleries. Some of these fungi also seriously affect urban trees, causing rapid wood decay that results in hazardous tree situations.

From Rochester to Duluth, researchers gathered samples where ash is affected by EAB. Through DNA sequencing, scientists identified fungal isolates and revealed a diverse assemblage of fungi. This included entomopathogenic fungi that attack insects, as well as other fungi that cause cankers — which help EAB kill trees — and some that cause wood decay.

“Before now, we simply haven't been sure what fungi are associated with EAB infestations in Minnesota. This project identified those species and, in doing so, opened up new possibilities for managing one of our state's most devastating tree pests,” said Ben Held, the study's lead author and researcher in the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences.

As research continues, the scientists will build on the work from this study to determine if any of the fungi can be used to kill the emerald ash borer. Results will also be of value in helping control the insect in other parts of North America where EAB is found.

“Ash trees are vitally important to Minnesota,” said Rob Venette, MITPPC director. “They reduce air pollution, storm water runoff, and cooling costs, all while increasing property values in local communities. It's critical we work to protect them from this invasive pest.”

The research was funded through the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

New Ways to Save Endangered Habitat

By Austin Yantes, University of Minnesota graduate research assistant, with Emily Dombeck, Extension natural resources program and communications coordinator. From University of Minnesota Extension.

Oak savanna has lost over 99% of its historic range — how can we restore this imperiled ecosystem? Graduate researcher Austin Yantes introduces a project that is looking into silvopasture as a potential solution, and explains how partnering with Extension gives this fix a fighting chance.

I stumbled into the world of ecological restoration almost entirely by chance. During my freshman year of college I met a researcher in need of fieldwork help, and before I knew it, I was out working in restored wetlands. I had been looking for a way to get my feet wet in the research world; suddenly there I was, standing in boot-deep water with very wet feet.

Our mission that summer was to look for rare and threatened species of plants, comparing data between wetlands that had been historically drained and plowed, and those that had not. The results were startling — we never found rare plant species in areas that had been plowed, even if the plowing ceased a century ago. That meant once these plants were gone, they didn't come back. This troubling pattern of disturbance leading to long-lasting change is found in many other plant communities, including oak savanna.

A Rare and Imperiled Ecosystem

Oak savannas are a unique plant community characterized by a prairie-like ground layer dotted with large, widely-spaced oak trees. Oak savannas are highly biodiverse, often harboring over 300 species of plants, more than are often found in either prairies or forests.

Savannas also provide habitat for game animals such as wild turkeys, and many bats, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects that are currently threatened or in decline. Moreover, certain species like the red-headed woodpecker and Karner blue butterfly are restricted to oak savannas and cannot persist without them.



This oak savanna at the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge has the classic structure of large-canopied, well-spaced oak trees dotted among prairie grasses and wildflowers.



Cows were brought into the research plots at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge for managed grazing. Researchers are measuring their impacts on vegetation, wildlife, soil and water.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

For MFA members, the two best online sources of woodland information are the MFA website at minnesotaforestry.org, and the University of Minnesota Extension Forestry website at myminnesotawoods.umn.edu.



Graduate research assistant Austin Yantes checks equipment at one of her research plots at the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.

In spite of the importance of oak savannas, they have all but disappeared. Throughout history, the existence of oak savannas depended on frequent fires lit by Native Americans or started by lightning, and on grazing by animals like bison and elk. After European settlement, oak savannas were lost due to the removal of fires and large grazers from the landscape, as well as agricultural and urban expansion. As a result, less than 1% of the original 32 million acres remain, making oak savannas one of the most imperiled and rare plant communities in North America.

Is silvopasture the answer?

The small number of oak savanna acres that persist today have largely transitioned into woodlands, which are often dense and scrubby. To restore these woodlands back to savanna, the first step is to reintroduce burning. However, fire isn't always effective as a stand-alone tool, which has pushed restoration practitioners to start experimenting with the reintroduction of large grazers as a secondary approach. Silvopasture, the practice of intentionally combining livestock with the intensive management of trees and forage as one integrated practice, has been successfully used to restore environmental and economic functions of oak savannas around the world. However, its potential has not been assessed in Minnesota. That's where our research project was conceived.

Our team is using Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge as our primary research site to assess the effects of silvopasture as an approach to restore oak savanna ecosystems in Minnesota. At Sherburne, oak savanna restoration via burning has been ongoing for many years, but only recently were cattle brought in, so their impact is largely unknown.

When we started, the vegetation beneath the oaks was dominated by extremely dense shrubs — a far cry from the open, prairie-like structure that savannas should have. Through targeted grazing, we hope to suppress the overgrown shrub layer and increase the abundance of grasses and flowering species. This shift in the vegetation structure should in turn improve the habitat quality for pollinators and other wildlife.

We are tracking our progress through multiple vegetation surveys, which will tell us if shrub density is decreasing and if grass/flower abundance and diversity are increasing. We are also conducting butterfly, bird, reptile and amphibian surveys to ensure the cattle aren't having negative impacts on the wildlife community. Lastly, we are taking water and soil samples to assess any changes due to grazing. We do not expect our grazing approach to cause a decline in water quality or soil health; in fact, we hope to see an improvement in soil health.

Our research project is unique because we care about not only restoring oak savanna vegetation structure, but also maintaining or improving all other aspects of the ecosystem. This holistic approach will give us a deeper understanding of whether or not silvopasture can be an effective oak savanna restoration tool.

Reaching and Teaching Landowners

While we are conducting our research on federal land, a large portion of former oak savanna in Minnesota exists on private land as unmanaged wooded pasture. Could the introduction of managed grazing in those wooded pastures help with restoration efforts? More importantly, would we be able to achieve adoption of this approach by landowners? Throughout my previous work, both at the Bureau of Land Management and in restored wetlands, I have witnessed over and over that farmers and ecologists were at odds with one another. But by using livestock grazing to achieve oak savanna restoration goals, I believe our approach begins to reconcile a long-standing divide between agricultural and ecological systems.

Another way we strive to bridge this gap is by placing equal emphasis on both research and outreach. In addition to the work we are doing in the field, Extension educators Gary Wyatt and Jeff Jackson, as well as other project partners, are working to scale up the use of silvopasture for oak savanna restoration through the development of the Silvopasture Learning Network, which provides educational programming, facilitates peer learning and promotes volunteerism to expand natural resource conservation.

Hundreds of farmers, natural resources professionals, conservation volunteers and advocates have joined the network in order to learn more about restoring oak savanna through silvopasture, including the research we are doing at Sherburne. I am excited to see how another year of managed grazing impacts the project site as we ramp up for our next field research season. And with help from Extension educators sharing information about our research through the network, I'm hopeful we'll soon see similar impacts of silvopasture on farmsteads across the state.

The Silvopasture Learning Network promotes silvopasture to improve soil health and water quality and restore oak savanna in Minnesota. This project is a joint effort led by University of Minnesota Extension with the Sustainable Farming Association and Great River Greening, with funding provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).



Call Before You Cut

Thinking of harvesting timber from your land?
You will be sent a packet of information and receive a
visit to your wood lot with no cost or obligation to you.

218-879-5100

Upcoming Events

Find more events, and more information on these events, at the MFA website, www.MinnesotaForestry.org, or by calling MFA at 218-879-5100.

Forest Pest First Detector: Spotted Lanternfly and Tree of Heaven Webinar

9-10 a.m. Wednesday, April 14

Learn more and register at https://umn.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYtcO6ppjwrE9RAtv262bkoMrb_uBeGPP7L

Fridays With a Forester: Using Tools to Observe Nature

9-10 a.m. Friday, April 16

Learn more and register at https://umn.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Lso3ak4aSxqqY_VZqzITZA

Minnesota Woodland Owner Workshop: Growing Your Dream Forest Webinar

6:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 20

Learn about preparing for spring tree planting. Learn more and register at <https://learning.umn.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=27181926>

Fridays With a Forester: Forest Farming, Food Forests and Edible Landscapes

9-10 a.m. Friday, April 30

Learn more and register at https://umn.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Lso3ak4aSxqqY_VZqzITZA

Native Plant Identification

6:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 11

Learn more and register at <https://mshs.z2systems.com/np/clients/mshs/event.jsp?event=390>

Forest Pest First Detector: Scots Pine Blister Rust and Elm Yellows

9-10 a.m. Wednesday, May 12

Learn more and register at https://umn.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYtcO6ppjwrE9RAtv262bkoMrb_uBeGPP7L

Designing Plant Communities

6:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 18

Learn more and register at <https://mshs.z2systems.com/np/clients/mshs/event.jsp?event=391>

Forest Pest First Detector: EDDMaps and iNaturalist Tips and Tricks

9-10 a.m. Wednesday, June 9

Learn more and register at https://umn.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYtcO6ppjwrE9RAtv262bkoMrb_uBeGPP7L



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Change Service Requested



Christmas Joy

By Stanley Musielewicz

My grandchildren, ages 7-13, (from left) Jack, Avery, Caden and Isabelle, found some fun and joy on an aspen blow down. We took a woodland hike after Christmas 2020 at my woods that I call Cushing-99.

Thanks for sharing, Stanley! You can share your woodland joy to Editor@MinnesotaForestry.org.