CONNECTICUT Woodlands

THE WORLD OF EDWIN WAY TEALE

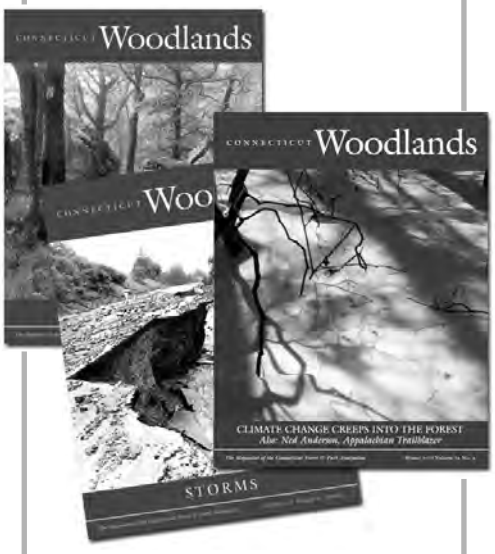
NATURALIST, PULITZER PRIZE WINNER, CONNECTICUT HOMESTEADER

Also: Trail Advocates Rally to Keep Municipal Lands Accessible

The Magazine of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association Fall 2010 Volume 75 No. 3

About

Connecticut Forest & Park Association and Connecticut Woodlands Magazine



Connecticut Woodlands is a quarterly magazine published since 1936 by CFPA, the private, non-profit organization dedicated to conserving the land, trails, and natural resources of Connecticut.

Members of CFPA receive the magazine in the mail in January, April, July, and October. CFPA also publishes a newsletter several times a year.

For more information about CFPA, to join or donate online, visit our newly expanded website, www.ctwoodlands.org, or call 860-346-2372.

Give the gift of membership in CFPA . Contact Jim Little at 860-346-2372 .

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CONNECTICUT Forest & Park ASSOCIATION

Scott Kruitbosch/Connecticut Audubon Society

Learn to observe nature as Edwin Way Teale did, by being patient even in the city.
See Leslie Lewis's article on page 16.

Connecting People to the Land

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association protects forests, parks, walking trails and open spaces for future generations by connecting people to the land. CFPA directly involves individuals and families, educators, community leaders and volunteers to enhance and defend Connecticut's rich natural heritage. CFPA is a private, non-profit organization that relies on members and supporters to carry out its mission.

We envision Connecticut as a place of scenic beauty whose cities, suburbs, and villages are linked by a network of parks, forests, and trails easily accessible for all people to challenge the body and refresh the spirit. We picture a state where clean water, timber, farm fresh foods and other products of the land make a significant contribution to our economic and cultural well-being.

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CONNECTICUT Woodlands

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CONTENTS

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

CONNECTICUT Forest & Park ASSOCIATION

On The Cover
Edwin Way Teale took this photograph of his house on the land he named Trail Wood. See the articles beginning on page 6.

Edwin Way Teale Papers, Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Libraries.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Overcoming wounds and a fear of heights

CFPA President David Platt

BY DAVID PLATT

A group of fellow CFPAers and I recently trekked up to Baxter State Park in Maine to tackle 5,268-foot Mount Katahdin. We had summited Katahdin before, but never via the famed Knife's Edge Trail, with its rumored balance-beam width and sheer drops on either side. Our crew of adults and eight kids (ages 11 through 15) were hardy and experienced, but several of us, including me, were afraid of heights. In short, some of us were terrified at the prospect of traversing the Knife's Edge.

After the requisite moose sighting (two big cows with calves at Sandy Pond)—sometimes it seems as if they are tethered in place—we backpacked into Chimney Pond to set up our base camp. Chimney Pond is as idyllic a spot as you will find, with its pristine waters, evergreens, and majestic Mount Katahdin looming overhead.

After a hearty pasta dinner (they always taste better on the trails), my tranquil evening took a surprise turn. My 14-year-old son was admiring his new Swiss Army knife in the lean-to and got jostled from the other kids' horseplay—leading to a nasty gash on his wrist. (Why, I asked myself, thinking of the stern lecture I'd given Calvin about knife safety.) The other adults and I authoritatively guessed that he needed stitches. Immediately.

So off we went. Calvin and I hustled down the 3.5 miles, headlamps blazing in the inky dark, to where we had parked our car. I drove 30 miles to the nearest hospital in Millinocket. After stitches and a tetanus shot near midnight, we slept in the car. At first light, we were fast-hiking back to join our impatient companions.

OUTDOOR PLACES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO US BECAUSE SOMEONE CARED ENOUGH. GO FIND A MOUNT KATAHDIN EXPERIENCE FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY.

The Knife's Edge was true to its name. We climbed one mile straight up the Dudley Trail to Pamola Peak and gazed silently at our quarry, the pointed ledge stretching ahead. Then we began the scramble. Under rainy skies and buffeted by a fierce crosswind, we did it. First, we carefully made our way down and up the near vertical "chimney" notch, and then we scrambled over a mile of sharp granite ridge with precipitous drops right and left. Hand over hand, foot by foot, we worked our way to the summit of Katahdin.

Our collective sense of accomplishment (and relief) at having conquered the Knife's Edge was real, very real. We were tired but exhilarated. I was particularly proud of the way Calvin handled himself on that ridge, fighting through his fear of heights and that worrisome wrist injury.

The wonderful Baxter State Park exists because Percival Baxter cared enough to preserve it. That's true for most beautiful outdoor places: They are accessible to us because someone cared enough. My personal experience has been that in enjoying these resources, my kids and I find fun and personal growth. Go find a Mount Katahdin experience for yourself and your family. You will not regret it.

David Platt lives in Higganum with his family and often goes out on the trails both near and far.

Of deal junkies and pluggers

BY ERIC HAMMERLING

CFPA Executive Director Eric Hammerling

In 1956, on the prophetic pages of his book *Autumn Across America* Edwin Way Teale wrote, "Time and space—time to be alone, space to move about—these may well become the great scarcities of tomorrow." Today, at Connecticut Forest & Park Association, we share Teale's concern about the future, but we also look back nostalgically at the abundant natural resources still available during Teale's era. Although we can give numerous examples during the past several decades of forests, parks, and trails that CFPA and many others saved with bold action, we also lament those formerly wild, undeveloped places that could not be protected.

Fortunately, we are not running out of special places and trails to protect in Connecticut yet; however, we certainly cannot afford to lose the places that we thought were already protected. This sounds like a riddle—what's saved that's not really saved?—but it's happening in Connecticut and nationwide. There is a growing imbalance between the short-term gratification and fanfare associated with acquiring land to avoid development and the distinct lack of funding and interest in ensuring care for that land far into the future. A friend of mine recently referred to this phenomenon as the difference between "deal junkies" and "pluggers."

Human nature seems to push us toward being deal junkies. Making the deal takes great effort, is tangible, and has a feeling of being "done." As a contrast, think about how many news headlines you remember that celebrate the ongoing management of a property. The headlines say such things as, "Organization Saves Land," "Developer Buys Land," or "(Insert Controversy) Involved with Land, Developer, and/or Organization." Deal junkies do incredibly important work to make land conservation happen, but we must have more pluggers to be ultimately successful.

In my humble estimation, CFPA is full of the important "pluggers." Our volunteers selflessly maintain the 825 miles of Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails and have done so since the beginning of the system in 1929. Similarly, without much fanfare, CFPA has supported countless organizations in acquiring many thousands of acres over the past century, and today CFPA owns nine properties and holds 28 land and trail conservation easements, totaling a direct interest in more than 2,100 acres of land. In the absence of paid staff dedicated to monitoring and managing these properties, we rely on outstanding volunteers such as Dan Donahue, the chairman of our Land Conservation Committee, to help ensure that we meet our stewardship obligations, even with limited resources. This is the same challenge land trusts face. We will continue to plug away as stewards the way you might expect we would.

Protecting and stewarding land is mostly about the "space" that Teale ruminated about, but what about the "time" for being alone that he valued so highly? I fear that the fate for time has actually been worse than that of space. Cell phones, BlackBerries, wireless Internet, e-mail/texting, Facebook, 24-hour news cycles, and many other features of our society have ratcheted up our ways to be constantly connected or on call. As technological innovations have advanced, our expectations of rapid responses when we send an e-mail or text message off into the ether have increased dramatically. Ironically, these technologies help us be connected without really helping us be together, and I dare to say that we have all seen people talk on their cell phones despite being only feet away from one another. It seems that we are never alone without making a dedicated effort.

That is why I intend to keep my tradition of camping with my son every year without using the cell phone, computer, or other electronics. To get me on my way, I am slowly standing, pushing myself away from the computer, and heading out to take a refreshing, contemplative walk, alone, and I hope you will too. Edwin Way Teale would approve. He was able to write such vivid words about the natural world because he took the time to wait and watch. Teale was a plugger.

Eric Hammerling lives in West Hartford.

Scenes from National Trails Day, last June 5 :

Left, volunteer Brian Loose and CFPA trail manager Rob Butterworth lever out a rock while relocating a side trail to the Cockaponset Trail in Haddam.
Bill Flood

Right, Debbie Livingston's running shoes meet a turtle in Bolton.
Scott Livingston

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF

CONNECTICUT
WOODLANDS

WINTER 2010

TRENDS IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

EDITED BY A SPECIAL COMMITTEE CONVENED BY CFPA EDUCATION DIRECTOR LORI PARADIS BRANT

"THE PERFECT HABITAT FOR A PAIR OF NATURALISTS"

Trail Wood, the Hampton sanctuary of writer Edwin Way Teale and his wife, Nellie

BY DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

Trail Wood. That certainly is an apt name for a mostly forested place laced with trails and paths, I thought, as I wandered through the preserve in Hampton, Connecticut, once owned by Pulitzer Prize–winning nature writer Edwin Way Teale and his wife and fellow naturalist, Nellie.

Yet, during my three recent visits, the name Fern Wood seemed equally apropos. A profusion of ferns edged the dirt lane leading to the small, white house the Teales had called home. And throughout the wooded parts of the property, the understory fairly glowed with green fronds—tiny, lacy, and yard-high ones. There were so many varieties of ferns that I couldn't begin to count them, much less identify them. I didn't have to; Edwin and Nellie already had: 26 species, or half of the 52 known in Connecticut, Teale wrote in *A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm*, the book (Dodd, Mead, 1974) that he wrote about his and Nellie's years of living at Trail Wood. (The quotation in this article's headline is also from the book.) The Teales planted six more species of fern, bringing the total to 32.

They moved there in 1959, when both were 60. In 1981, a year after Edwin died, Nellie transferred the property to the Connecticut Audubon Society, as stipulated in his will. She lived there until her death in 1993. Ever since, Trail Wood has offered all nature lovers the same incredible variety the Teales found there. Edwin said that a visiting scientist once told them "that he had never encountered a comparable area with so great a variety of habitats."

Although far from wilderness, Trail Wood is in Connecticut's pastoral, rural northeast. On this former farm, humans have left mostly gentle marks on the land. Stone walls criss-cross former fields that have reverted to forest. Garden flowers bloom outside the two-century-old house and in the backyard. Wildflowers dot the meadows with spots of yellow, white, purple, and pink. A beehive-shaped stone monument, built in the 1800s by a farm hand, tops a knoll. A sundial marks time's progress across the sky. Downhill from the house, a one-acre pond the Teales had created provides a tranquil setting for the screened gazebo they called the "Summer House." A path circumnavigates the pond, traversing a stream by means of a wooden footbridge. Nearby sits Teale's small log writing cabin modeled after the one that his muse, Henry David Thoreau, built at Walden Pond. Teale often worked in this cabin on a card table.

WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR, WE DECIDED, WAS A WELL-PRESERVED HOUSE IN RUN-DOWN SURROUNDINGS.

page 4, **A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm**

Noticing the Small Things

A sense of peacefulness pervades Trail Wood's 169 acres. On my three visits to the preserve—one in the spring, two in the summer, all on beautiful days—I saw few other people. Once, a children's day camp had gathered behind the house, but their voices didn't detract from nature's other sounds: birdsong, insect wings' buzz and whir, leaves rippling in the breeze, water trickling over rocks in a rivulet, and the guttural "gunk, gunk" of a green frog.

Everywhere I walked—through the woods, across the meadows, along the edge of a pond or stream—some tiny natural wonder would make me stop to look, listen, smell, or touch, just as the Teales would do, often together but often alone. To make it easier for them to tell each other what they had seen or heard, they named the trails, fields, and other features based on something that had inspired them there: Starfield, Woodcock Pasture, Mulberry Meadow, Veery Lane, Lichen Ridge, Nighthawk Hill, and so on.

I had read *A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm* before visiting Trail Wood, and I felt a rapport with Edwin and Nellie. I, too,

continued on page 9

Opposite page,
The beaver pond at Trail Wood on a late summer day.
Diane Friend Edwards

Left,
Edwin Way Teale and his wife, Nellie, were happier at Trail Wood than they had been at any other home.
Edwin Way Teale papers, UConn

The Teales in 1978.
Virginia Welch/Courtesy of Connecticut Audubon Society

BUT AUTUMN IS MORE MATURE, MORE REFLECTIVE. IT SPEAKS OF A TIME OF RECESSION AS Wwell AS A TIME OF ADVANCE.

page 20, **A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm**

VISITING TRAIL WOOD

Trail Wood's grounds in Hampton, Connecticut, include the house, cabin, a screened gazebo, and several outbuildings; the 169-acre preserve features hiking trails, woods, two ponds (one of which has two active beaver lodges), meadows, swamps, and brooks. Visitors may walk, watch wildlife, take photos, or simply sit on a bench to observe.

ADMISSION: Free

HOURS: Open to the public daily from sunrise to sunset. Edwin Way Teale's study and writing cabin, as well as the Teale "museum" room, are open by appointment. Call 860-928-4948.

WEB SITE: www.ctaudubon.org/visit/trailwood.htm has a downloadable color map; you can also find a featured walk at www.walkct.org.

THE TRAILS: Gentle routes with occasional wood-plank boardwalks or bridges across wet areas and streams. Few blazes or signs mark the 11 named trails, but wood signs or arrows mark several junctions. Either bring along the map downloaded from the Web site or borrow one of the laminated maps available in the Info Shed near the house.

GUIDED WALKS: Caretaker Vern Pursley leads free walks around the property at 2 p.m. on the second Sunday of every month, and full-moon walks at 7:30 p.m. on designated evenings each month. As he told me, his day job at an engineering company is "very important to me, but this is my passion." Connecticut Audubon Sanctuary Manager Andy Rzeznikiewicz leads occasional nature walks for a small fee. See the Web site for a schedule.

DIRECTIONS: Trail Wood is located at 93 Kenyon Road in Hampton, Connecticut. Turn onto Kenyon Road off Route 97 at a point 3 miles north of the intersection of U.S. 6 and Route 97 in Hampton or 5.2 miles south of the intersection of Routes 97 and 44. Travel 1/2 mile on Kenyon Road; bear right at the first fork. Driveway to Trail Wood on left is marked by a sign.

THE PERFECT HABITAT

continued from page 7

love to observe nature, although I don't share Edwin's penchant for enumerating his observations. (He once noted that a chipmunk had repeated its "sharp little [territorial] call 536 times" without pause.) In his younger days, Edwin had worked as a writer in Manhattan. So had I. He and Nellie had lived on Long Island for 30 years. Technically, so had I (at the western end, in the borough of Queens, which New Yorkers don't count as part of Long Island). I knew just what he meant when he wrote, "For many years in my life making a living pulled me toward the city and living as I wanted to live pulled me toward the country."

Wanting to flee the increasing development on Long Island in the late 1950s, the Teales sought a home in the country within a day's reach of New York City's writing resources and contacts. "We made a list of all the things we hoped to have on our place in the country: a wood, a stream, a swamp, open meadows, a Cape Cod–style farmhouse, a fireplace, at least fifty acres of ground," Edwin wrote in *A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm*.

Land Few Others Wanted

The property they would name Trail Wood offered everything they were looking for. As Edwin noted, "The least valuable land to others is often the most valuable land to the naturalist. It was the brush tangles, the shaded ravines, the wet lowland woods, the mink brooks and deer trails and redwing swamps, the wildest acres, that appealed to us most."

Today, 30 years after Edwin's death, some changes are evident at Trail Wood. The property is 13 acres larger. In 1998, Connecticut Audubon added one land purchase and one donation to the 156 acres the Teales had owned.

The biggest difference, though, relates to the process of natural succession, according to Trail Wood caretaker Vern Pursley. "We mow the pastures and continue to clear areas for wildlife habitat enhancement, but the vegetation is definitely thicker than it was when the Teales were here. The trees are more mature now. Only occasional clearing [of trees] is done where needed," he said. "The general idea is to let nature do the rest."

Trail Wood has a mature forest with few evergreens, said Andy Rzeznikiewicz, sanctuary manager for Connecticut Audubon's properties in the northeast corner. No red cedars or junipers grow at Trail Wood, as they did in the Teales' time, he said. Now, the trees consist mostly of red oak, white oak, black birch, shagbark hickory, red maple, black cherry, white ash, and ironwood.

Despite the changes of 30 years, much remains the same at Trail Wood. Beavers still occupy Beaver Pond, where dragonflies and damselflies flit to and fro. Squirrels, chipmunks, and cottontails still find life to their liking there, as do deer, field mice, moles, and voles.

continued on page 10

Above, A stone wall frames one end of the beaver pond.

Diane Friend Edwards

Opposite page, top: A sense of calm pervades the mood at Trail Wood even at the entrance drive.

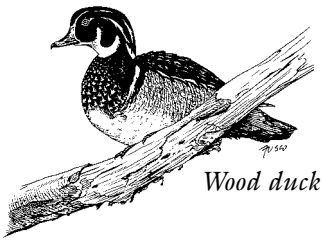
Diane Friend Edwards

FOR THE LEAST VALUABLE LAND TO OTHERS IS OFTEN THE MOST VALUABLE LAND TO THE NATURALIST. IT WAS THE BRUSH TANGLES, THE SHADED RAVINES, THE WET LOWLAND WOODS, THE MINK BROOKS AND DEER TRAILS AND REDWING SWAMPS, THE WILDEST ACRES, THAT APPEALED TO US MOST.

page 8, **A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm**

American redstart

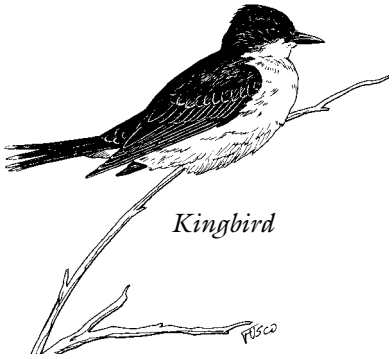
Some of the Birds to be seen at Trail Wood



Wood duck

Blue jay

Blue-winged warbler



Kingbird

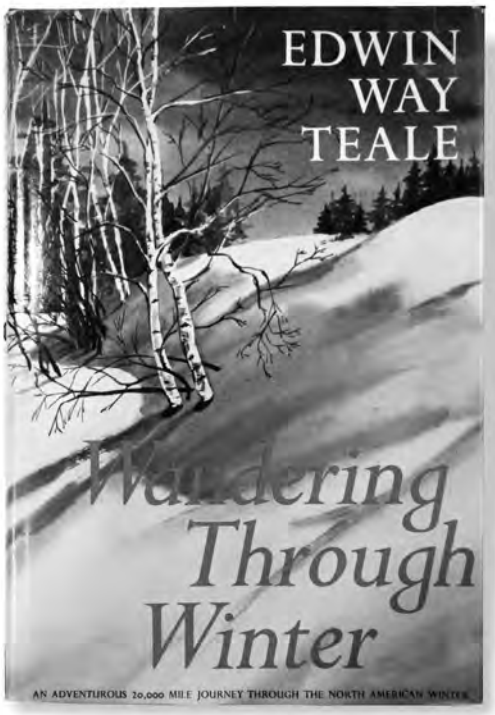
THE PERFECT HABITAT

continued from page 9

Pursley once watched a porcupine waddle up the driveway and then scramble up a hickory tree. And most of the dozens of bird species Edwin wrote about still wing across the fields or through the forest.

Teale's Books Still Line Shelves

Inside the house, where the caretaker now lives, Edwin's study remains the way it looked when he used it. It was here, and in his writing cabin, that he wrote many of his books, including *Wandering Through Winter* (Dodd, Mead, 1965), for which he won a Pulitzer Prize in 1966—the first nature writer in 50 years to do so. His Pulitzer Prize certificate sits in a frame on his desk. Among the many books on the shelves against the study's walls are the complete works of Thoreau. A framed photograph of the Teales' only child, David, who died in World War II, hangs on one wall. (Visitors to Trail Wood can see the study, as well as a room that serves as a Teale museum, by advance arrangement.)



The jacket of Wandering Through Winter, the last of a series on the seasons. Teale wrote this at Trail Wood. The book won a Pulitzer Prize in 1966.

Christine Woodside

But to my mind, Trail Wood's major allure lies outdoors, just it did for Edwin and Nellie. They loved every season there: the green-and-growing times of spring and summer; the blazing colors of the hardwoods in autumn; the tracks of animals and "of the wind itself" in the snow-white of winter.

Trail Wood offered the Teales, and still offers us, the beauty of nature and the peaceful environs in which to absorb it. As Edwin wrote in the final chapter of *A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm*, "Our life here has seemed all kernel and no husk. It embraces one of the rarest things in modern life—moments of solitude."

That's undoubtedly truer today than in the Teales' time. Perhaps they should have called the place Serenity Acres.

Diane Friend Edwards is a freelance writer, nature photographer, and lifelong lover of the outdoors. She lives in Thomaston with her husband, Paul.

Bird drawings by Paul Fusco/Connecticut DEP

MORE AND MORE, AS THE DAYS OF FALL ADVANCE, THE QUIET OF THE GARDEN AT SUNDOWN WILL SUGGEST THE EMPTY STAGE AND WINGS OF A THEATER. THE LIGHTS ARE DIMMING; THE AUDIENCE HAS LEFT; THE ACTORS ARE TROOPING AWAY.

page 239, **A Naturalist Buys an Old Farm**

Teale's writing cabin, a short walk around a pond from the house, offered a spare locale to write and revise. Note the card table.

Above, Edwin Way Teale papers, UConn; right, Diane Friend Edwards

The Quiet Partner: NELLIE DONOVAN TEALE

She read each of Edwin's manuscripts three times

BY CHRISTINE WOODSIDE

When they moved from fast-developing Long Island to a wilder setting in Hampton, Connecticut, in 1959, naturalist and writer Edwin Way Teale and his wife, Nellie Donovan Teale, sought to live closer to nature. For Nellie, who was her husband's editor and field partner, the move also marked the first time she was able to sustain daily journal writing.

"The hardest thing in the world for me to do is to write," she had penned in a new journal 11 years previous, on Thanksgiving Day, 1948. "To write letters, to write notes of any kind. Thoughts, observations—and I don't even consider doing any of it professionally, but I do like to be out doors, and I do see things happen that might be of interest at a later time."

Her next entry was September 13, 1950, her 50th birthday. "Felt somehow I've let 50 years slip by," she wrote. "I'd better not let another go without some attempt at identifying the minutes, the days, the weeks,

"THE HARDEST THING IN THE WORLD FOR ME TO DO IS TO WRITE, TO WRITE LETTERS, TO WRITE NOTES OF ANY KIND. THOUGHTS, OBSERVATIONS—AND I DON'T EVEN CONSIDER DOING ANY OF IT PROFESSIONALLY, BUT I DO LIKE TO BE OUT DOORS, AND I DO SEE THINGS HAPPEN THAT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST AT A LATER TIME." - NELLIE DONOVAN TEALE

the months, the years, as they go by—identifying my time as it goes by—otherwise who knows what it is like after it has gone beyond our memory, our vision."

And then, with the move to Connecticut in June 1959, Nellie began writing regularly in hardbound journals about birds, weather, temperature, long walks, and tasks. Her enthusiasm for this showed in those pages. "A new year—a new decade!" she wrote on January 1, 1960. "'I have other lives to live,' said Henry Thoreau, and so have we in our Hampton home. Here in the country, we will live another life—a naturalist's life." Six months after their arrival, she had seen 90 bird species.

Nellie also recorded her quiet work as Edwin's editor. She read his book drafts three times: the first for "general impression," the second to correct errors, and the third, aloud, to hear the cadence of his prose.

Until Edwin's death in 1980, they remained a close couple, liking the same outdoor pursuits. Edwin wrote in one of his notebooks that the "great miracle of later life" was that he was able to make a handsome living by observing nature—doing what he had started out doing secretly, fearing ridicule, as a child. He had "felt delivered to the wrong planet. Nellie really understood."

His career was well established by the time they moved to Connecticut. Edwin had already published several books. The Teales were free to establish a schedule in Connecticut that suited them. Here, he would write several more, including *Journey Into Summer* (Dodd, Mead, 1960), *The Strange Lives of Familiar Insects* (1962), and the Pulitzer winner, *Wandering Through Winter.* Edwin noted in his own prolific diaries the quantities of mail that arrived, trips he took to New York and elsewhere, and his unbridled enthusiasm for life. "WE MOVE TO HAMPTON," he noted in inch-high letters on June 11, 1959. "Everything more beautiful than we remembered it! . . . At last we are alone where we want to be. 'This is it! This is it! This is it!' keeps ringing through out heads." Both Edwin and Nellie had resorted to taking sleeping pills while in the throes of packing. Edwin noted that they slept well the first night in Connecticut.

But for Nellie, life included a measure of melancholy, too. Two days after their arrival at Trail Wood, Edwin wrote, "We both are happy, but Nellie is getting a heavy reaction to the letdown of the strain—head hurts, etc. But we are here and we can hit a slower pace from now on."

A mostly unmentioned tragedy shadowed their lives: Their only child, David, had been killed in 1943 while serving in World War II. In 1950, on her 50th birthday, Nellie had written, "David would have been 25 [on] Sept. 8 this year. I just twice as old—he is with us yet as much as he can be—in our thoughts and memories. There is not a day goes by I do not think of him."

Today's parents might grieve daily in journals, but the Teales bore this loss mostly silently. Nellie's writings brought up David once more. On January 1, 1981, just weeks after Edwin's death: "He is gone and yet he is here—he and my dear son David."

Nellie had kept vigil at Edwin's bedside during his last illness by writing daily in a collection of small note pads. On the tiny pages she recorded how happy she was when Edwin reached out to hold her hand tightly, and that he had made this gesture of his own accord. It was as if he had thanked her for a good life together, a long life full of days like the one in late June, 1959, when Edwin wrote: "How satisfying are all our days in Hampton—Each seems worth living. Carrying us forward toward our goals. Celebrate this morning all our good fortune. Early to bed—weary but happy. See again the great firefly display across the meadow and against the woods. Tomorrow—cut grass!!"

Sources: Box 128 and Box 97, Edwin Way Teale papers, Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut Libraries.

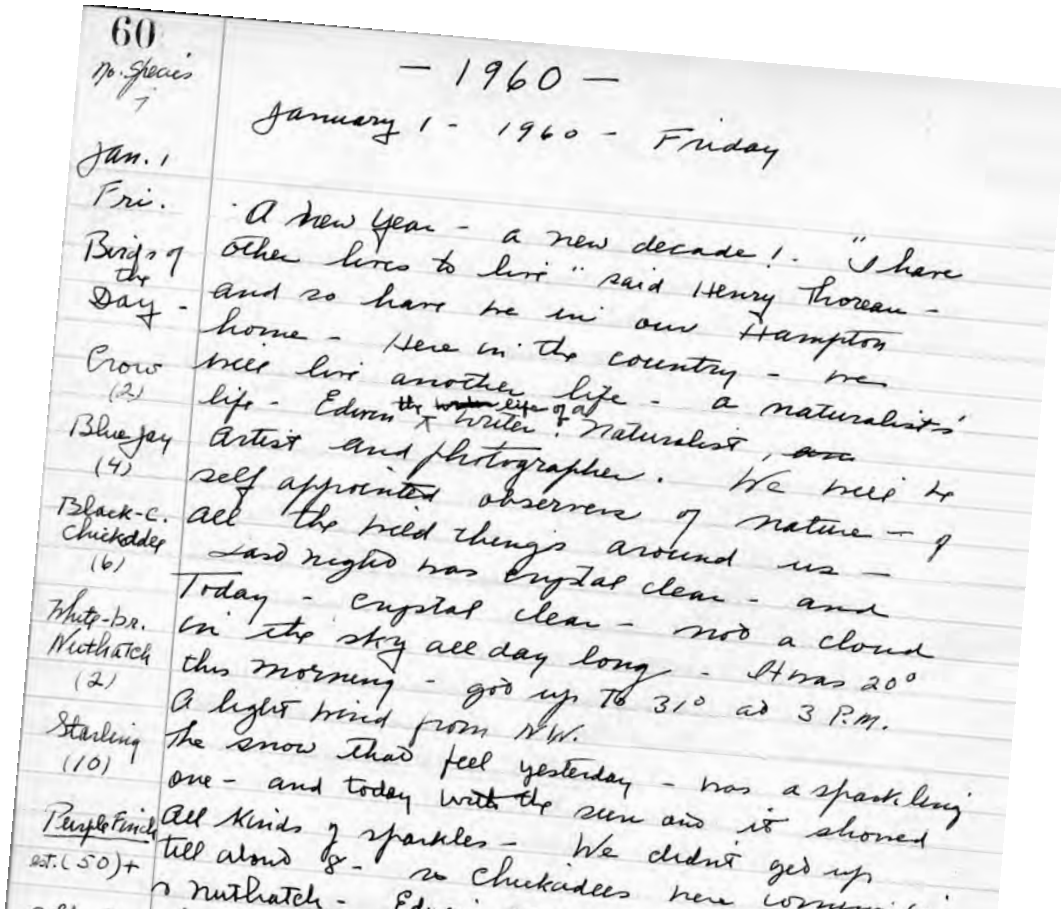
Opposite page, right: Edwin and Nellie Teale as they looked a few years before they moved to Connecticut.

Opposite page, left: The Teales with their son, David, in World War II military uniform. David died in the war soon after this photo was taken, in 1943. His death may have influenced the Teales in their fervor to do good work.

Edwin Way Teale papers, UConn

Right, Nellie Teale's diary for January 1, 1960, the first New Year's in Connecticut.

Edwin Way Teale papers, UConn


60

No. Species 7

— 1960 —

January 1 - 1960 - Friday

Jan. 1

Fri.

Bird of the Day -

Crow (2)

Bluejay (4)

Black-C. Chickadee (6)

White-br. Nuthatch (2)

Starling (10)

Purple Finch est. (50)+

A new year - a new decade! - "I have other lives to live" said Henry Thoreau - and so have we in our Hampton home - Here in the country - we will live another life - a naturalist's life - Edwin the writer, naturalist, and artist and photographer. We will be self appointed observers of nature - of all the wild things around us -

Last night was crystal clear - and today - crystal clear - not a cloud in the sky all day long - It was 20° this morning - got up to 31° at 3 P.M. A light wind from N.W.

The snow that fell yesterday - was a sparkling one - and today with the sun and it showed all kinds of sparkles - We didn't get up till about 8 - so Chickadees were [illegible] nuthatch - [illegible]

GOING SLOWLY AND SEEING MORE

BY DAVID K. LEFF

Editor's note: In this book excerpt, the author is on a long, slow canoe trip.

Below the bridge, the river's girth grew to more than three football fields long, and the shoreline flattened out. The banks were mostly wooded, with occasional structures sandwiched between the river and the roads that ran close on both sides. After days on the Merrimack, we noted that macadam and rails clinging to the course of the river seemed routine, reinforcing the notion that we were on the original and natural highway revealing the land's true cast.

"Other roads do some violence to Nature, and bring the traveler to stare at her," Thoreau muses in *A Week* [on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, James Munroe and Co.,1849], "but the river steals into the scenery it traverses without intrusion." Lacking directional signs, traffic lights, or double yellow lines, we were on our own, needing to be observant of our surroundings, making calculations about hazards, and divining where we were and how far we had to go. Roads and railroads merely drained their flow of traffic in accordance with the drainage of waters.

The river had become the road less traveled, an alternative highway, almost a parallel universe. What was commonplace to even the longest-lived resident or most frequent visitor was magically transformed by the view from the boat. Here we traveled almost privately, without the hustle and hurry of tailgaters, passing vehicles, and merging traffic. We were free to tarry and observe, and because a river valley concentrates and focuses life, there was much to see. "The river is by far the most attractive highway," Thoreau advises, with "a much fairer, more wild and memorable experience than the dusty and jarring one . . . on the roads which run parallel with the stream." The river was simultaneously a conduit of travel and a destination. Rather than riding over the landscape, we flowed with it.

By paddling slowly, with each foot of progress made under the power of our own muscles, we gained a certain possession of the countryside regardless of deeds and mortgages filed in dusty vaults. The canoe's pace made us more aware of people, houses, factories, and fields. Its quiet and simplicity stimulated awareness and deepened memory with sounds and smells unavailable at the rumbling and enclosed sixty-five or even forty-five miles per hour at which we commonly traveled. We didn't need to break our stride and stop for snapshots of famous buildings, sunsets, mountains, and other wonders because the pace of paddling was tied to the wind and current, which gave us lavish allowances for taking in the sights around us. "An author who has to stop and take notes," [Edwin Way] Teale wrote, "gets many a rest from paddling."

River time therapeutically loses some precision. We become more concerned with daylight rather than the exact hour, how hungry we are rather than where the hands of the clock point. Unlike train and plane travel, we are interested more in where we are than when we get there. During an automobile trip, everything is either past and tucked into memory or is waiting to happen as we tick off mileposts, but a canoe forces us to live in the moment. "One of the sweet and expectable aspects of life afloat," writes William Least Heat-Moon, who has chronicled travels cross-country by both road and river, "is the perpetual present moment one lives in and a perception that time is nothing more than current." What we see is inversely proportional to our speed.

istockphoto

Our means of travel determines what we see as much as where we go. Certainly you can see the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet, but a canoe can transform even a short trip in the most familiar of surroundings into an exotic adventure. The canoe breaks the daily familiarity of vehicle and pavement. We may be close to home, but everything enjoys a fresh perspective. An ordinary voyage assumes mythic proportions as we scrape away the shiny lacquer of programmed expectations and recover some childhood spontaneity. Because no mode of transportation is so naturally suited to its medium as a canoe, a paddling trip brings us to the apex of intimacy with the landscape.

Excerpted with permission from Deep Travel*: In Thoreau's* Wake on the Concord and Merrimack, *by David K. Leff. University of Iowa Press, 2009.*

WALKING IN THE CITY WITH THE MIND-SET OF EDWIN WAY TEALE

BY LESLIE LEWIS

Although few (actually, almost none) of us will attempt to replicate the walking feet and feats of Edwin Way Teale on his northeastern Connecticut retreat, we can learn to watch, listen, and absorb the workings of the natural world around us, wherever we are.

Even those whose wanderings are confined to city streets, parks, and developed trails will find surprising things happening all around them, if they keep eyes and ears open.

For many years, I worked for the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection at its main office in Hartford. Although you wouldn't expect it, some of the most spectacular views of hawks that I ever had were from that building and adjacent Bushnell Park. Squirrels, which thrive in most cities, provide a steady diet for birds of prey.

Falcons on the Travelers Building

We often saw red-tailed hawks hunting in the park, and sometimes they would perch with their catch on the window ledge outside my cubicle. Seeing these striking birds up close and personal without disturbing them was a real treat. Even more special were the glimpses of the Peregrine falcons that nested on the Traveler's Insurance building to enjoy a bounty of pigeons. These symbols of the wild loved to make their homes in the bustling heart of downtown.

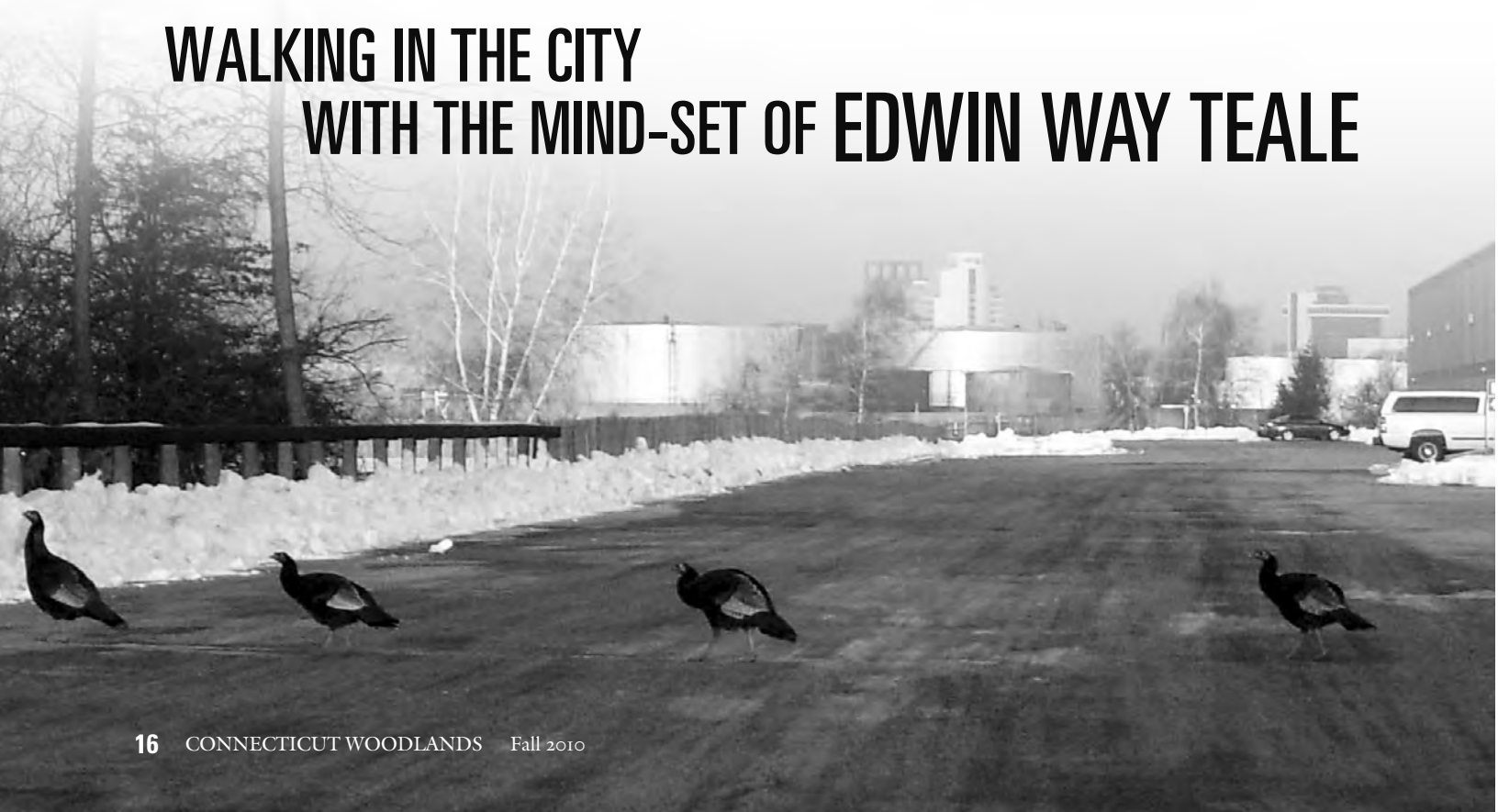
It's not necessary to drive to rural areas to see wildlife. Above, a turkey peers into a Stratford office building. Below, wild turkeys process past an industrial park.

Dr. Twan Leenders/Connecticut Audubon Society

On one occasion when I was working in Hartford, I was on a walk on an undeveloped acre of land adjacent to the Park River. Amid the tussocks of grass were signs that deer and other wildlife were active at the site. In the river itself, a great blue heron took advantage of an old shopping cart to perch above the water looking for fish. A variety of wildflowers were in full bloom and butterflies were browsing for the nectar. It was reassuring to know that even in the middle of the city, nature's beauty could be found in the most unlikely of places.

Let your next urban or suburban walk be the chance to channel your inner naturalist. Watch and listen for birds, particularly this time of year when migrants are on the move. Visit a park and watch busy squirrels and chipmunks gather their store of nuts and seeds for the winter. Take a child and view the scene through his or her eyes; talk about the way things look and smell in autumn. You may find that there is more "nature" in the city than you ever imagined.

Leslie Lewis is the director of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association's WalkCT program. Through its Web site (walkct.org) and events, the program steers residents to walking for transportation and recreation.



LEARNING TO SEE THE TULIP TREES IN A NEW WAY

BY LORI PARADIS BRANT

It was summer 2004, and the day was hot and muggy. I was a new staff member at CFPA and our then-executive director, Adam Moore, was about to take me on a hike through the Field Forest property in Durham. I was looking forward to our morning together exploring the woods. Adam promised such finds an old cellar hole, an open meadow where maybe we'd spot some bluebirds and a meandering brook along a shady woodland trail.

Lori Paradis Brant

Field Forest has several nice looping trails and is easily accessible with ample parking found behind a local high school. Adam and I were checking out the trail to figure out what kinds of educational programs might work there. I was expecting my typical walk in the woods: listening for bird songs or frog calls, finding signs of wildlife such as holes in trees, nests, tracks. Little did I know that I was soon to be captivated by my walk with a forester. The tulip trees—how grand! Adam's exuberance for the towers of trunks with canopies touching the sky had me looking ahead for other stately specimens. Up each hill he and I walked, and around each bend his trained eye would spot another magnificent tree, compelling me to notice its ruler-straight trunk and grand size. The cat face-shaped leaves were beginning to yellow and float to the ground. Adam scooped up one leaf after another, and he'd notice the particular shade of yellow of one or the considerable size of the next. His delight in seeing these tulip trees was contagious. From that day forward, I've never walked in the woods the same way again.

Walking in the woods with someone who has a different perspective helps us notice things we may not have picked up on before. Edwin Way Teale had a special knack for noticing the details of the natural world. How do you notice the nature that surrounds you? If I am out with my 7-year old son, I notice the way nature provides a way to use up kinetic energy. We discover downward sloping trails are made for running as fast as we can and car-sized boulders are there just for us to climb up, over, and scramble back down.

Testing out an acorn-cap shooter.

Lori Paradis Brant

The mostly dead, but still attached, branches of trees are the acorn-cap shooters. Whenever we find a still-attached branch that has some bounce to it, we find an acorn cap and balance it on the tip of the branch, pull the branch back, let go and whoosh – through the air flies the acorn!

If we're along the water's edge, we notice the flat, smooth stones laying in wait in the sand or soil. They want to feel the warm grasp of little fingers around them as they are pulled from their solid home, lifted into the air and flung at the water as they skip, skip, skip along the surface.

CFPA's family hikes

CFPA's trained family guides lead WalkCT family rambles the last weekend of each month. On these trips, children and their caregivers notice things they may not have seen before. Budding scientists will enjoy having their curiosity piqued as the outdoor stage gets set for finding and identifying the natural wonders along the trail. Field identification books, hand lenses and bug boxes turn a ramble into a scientific discovery. Binoculars ready, a catbird might be spotted in the brambles or an owl in the upper portion of a pine. Rambling to a vernal pool with buckets, nets, and rubber boots ready, families may notice the chorus of tiny frogs. Another ramble may help families connect to history: in the woods, you will find evidence of the role of trains a century ago. You also will hear stories about the families who once lived in regal mansions. Families notice the many glorious views of the land when trekking up Connecticut's hillsides and cliffs and see the land, both natural and built, spread out before them.

Adam and I did find the things we had set out to find in the Field Forest that summer day: the old cellar hole, the brook, and the meadow. But it was the tulip trees that remain in my mind from that day. That memory is strong because I looked in a new way at something that had been there all along.

Lori Paradis Brant is the education director of CFPA.

WalkCT Family Rambles

Last weekend of every month

Visit www.walkct.org

or www.ctwoodlands.org/ walk-ct/ familyrambles.

HELP IS AVAILABLE FOR FOREST LANDOWNERS IN 2008 FARM BILL

BY THOMAS WORTHLEY

Government programs designed to assist private forest landowners with the management and stewardship of their woodlands have come and gone in various forms during the course of my University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension career. Many forest landowners may remember the Stewardship Incentive Program and the Forest Land Enhancement Program; they have ended, but much of the help for landowners they offered can still be found under other programs.

The Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, also known as the 2008 Farm Bill, provides for a number of conservation programs and practices for forest landowners as well as farmers and ranchers. The agricultural producer community has taken advantage of Farm Bill assistance programs for many years. These programs have assisted "producers" (farmers) doing such diverse activities as soil conservation practices, manure management, irrigation, and other practices to improve farming and protect the environment. Maintaining or improving environmental quality, for the benefit of all citizens, is the primary impetus for most of these programs. Farm Bill programs are generally administered by federal agencies such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) and the Farm Service Agency, often in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Why should Connecticut forest landowners be interested? Because the Farm Bill places particular emphasis on conservation initiatives and clearly recognizes forest landowners as "producers."

Individuals, groups, and other entities that own forest land or land that could grow trees are eligible for Farm Bill programs. Recognizing that trees are not like annual crops, forest landowners are exempt from annual farm income requirements for certain programs and practices. They might have to meet other requirements they will learn when they apply.

Projects Must Help the Environment

The Farm Bill programs most commonly used by forest landowners are the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, administered by Natural Resources Conservation Service. Much of the management practice assistance that was once available under previous programs now falls under these programs and should remain so for the long term. Important to note is that any management assistance provided to private landowners under these programs must have an environmental benefit purpose as the primary goal. Because so many public benefits that come from forests are provided by private forests, protecting and improving the environment to ensure and enhance public benefits from private forests is the main reason these programs are offered.

But forest landowners will often find that their own wildlife habitat or forest health interests align closely with public objectives. For example, forest landowners may have the right conditions on their properties to create or improve native animal or bird habitats. Many landowners want to improve wildlife habitat and make it a priority. WHIP program funding is often available for such projects because of the environmental benefit.

A landowner may have a forest health concern on their property, such an insect pest or tree disease such as beech bark disease, which they wish to address before it worsens. Thinnings or cuttings to remove diseased trees and improve the overall condition of the stand may be appropriate not only for the private landowner, but for the sake of the broader forest resource. The EQIP program could provide assistance.

Practices applied under the WHIP or EQIP programs have clear specifications and fixed-cost share rates. A participating landowner will work closely with an NRCS professional or technical service provider, and often with a certified forester as part of the team to develop a plan and put it into place. Management practices for which cost-sharing or technical assistance is available under the two programs are:

- Forest management planning
- Early successional habitat development

Connecticut's Service Foresters: Free Help for Landowners

For forest landowners who do not already have a working relationship with a certified forester in Connecticut, start with an appointment with one whose job is to help the public: a Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection service forester. This forester will visit your land and examine its habitats and conservation potential. This forester also can tell you about conservation programs.

The DEP service foresters are experienced and knowledgeable. There is no charge for their visits, which last as long as a half day each calendar year on your land. Professional assistance is key to successful forest stewardship.

WESTERN CONNECTICUT:
Larry Rousseau, CT DEP Western District HQ, 230 Plymouth Rd., Harwinton CT 06791, 860-485-0226, Lawrence.Rousseau@ct.gov

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT:
Robert Rocks, CT DEP Eastern District HQ, 209 Hebron Rd., Marlborough, CT 06447, 860-295-9523, Robert.Rocks@ct.gov

EASTERN CONNECTICUT:
Dick Raymond, Goodwin State Forest, 23 Potter Rd., Hampton, CT 06247, 860-455-0699, Sherwood.Raymond@ct.gov

PROGRAM LEADER:
Douglas Emmerthal, CT DEP Forestry, 79 Elm St., Hartford, CT 06106, 860-424-3630, Douglas.Emmerthal@ct.gov

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT EXTENSION FORESTRY:
Thomas Worthley, Middlesex County Extension Center, 1066 Saybrook Rd., Haddam, CT 06438, 860-345-5232
thomas.worthley@uconn.edu

- Forest trails and landings
- Access roads and access control
- Riparian forest buffers
- Tree/shrub site preparation, planting, pruning
- Upland wildlife management
- Wetland wildlife management
- Forest stand improvement for habitat and soil quality
- Hardwood crop tree release
- Multistory cropping, sustainable management of non-timber forest plants
- Restoration of rare or declining habitats
- Renovation of windbreak, shelterbelt, or hedgerow for wildlife habitat
- Silvopasture for wildlife habitat

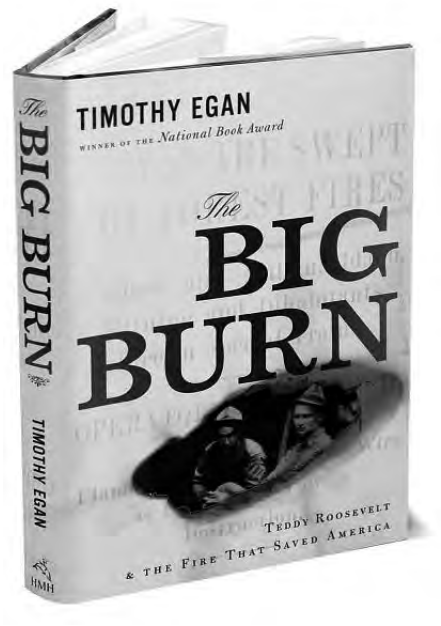
Applying for Assistance

Forest landowners can apply for assistance programs by visiting the USDA Service Center in their area, where USDA staff can collect all the necessary information and begin the application process. Several items for documentation purposes may be required, such as copies of deeds, tax identification or Social Security numbers, bank information, and so on, so it would be a good idea to call first and ask about needed documentation when setting up the appointment. Once entered into the system, each landowner will work with a member of the NRCS staff to develop a plan for the landowner's project. If a landowner has a specific idea, or already has a written forest management or stewardship plan that suggests certain activities, it will help streamline the process.

A certain fixed amount of funding is allocated for the these programs each year, and if there are more applications than funding available, applications will be ranked and approved accordingly. If your project is not approved during one fiscal year, it may still have a good chance the following year. Projects that are recommended in a forest stewardship plan, that address certain conservation priorities, or that enhance key habitats are likely to receive higher rankings.

Thomas Worthley is an assistant extension professor for forest stewardship at the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension in Haddam.

A THRILLING NARRATIVE ON THE EARLY FIGHT OVER CONSERVATION



The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America, by Timothy Egan. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. 324 pages.

BY ROBERT M. RICARD

Can you envision the entire state of Connecticut engulfed in flames? Imagine lightning igniting a fire on a remote hilltop in Salisbury. The woods are paper dry from weeks and weeks of drought. Dry west winds begin to fan the fire eastward so fast it creates its own weather system. Hurricane winds result. Trees ripped from their roots crash to the forest floor and form a criss-crossed mat of more and more fuel. Trees splinter, explode, and become engulfed in flames. Hot embers sail miles ahead of the blaze, jumping lakes, rivers, and streams. Ships in the North Atlantic become laden with ash. Buildings and other combustible structures burn along with forest and field. Lungs are seared or aflame. Oxygen is in short supply. Little is spared.

Within days, the fire has spread to the Rhode Island border. The devastation is unlike anything seen or experienced on the continent. Survivors wonder what happened and try to find and bury their dead. Then they ask, "Who is to blame?"

The Big Burn is a story about just such a fire. It happened in 1910 and burned in three states: Idaho, Montana, and eastern Washington. When it was over, three million acres of pristine forestlands, some of the most beautiful and productive on earth, were laid waste.

Award-winning writer Timothy Egan uses the story of the largest fire in American history to illustrate the political combat over the then-embryonic system of federal forests, parks, refuges, and reserves. This makes for a proverbial "seat of the pants" narrative that we hope reaches a new generation.

Egan writes of the time when the public domain—much of the land acquired cheaply by the Louisiana Purchase and brutally wrested from the original inhabitants—had just been placed under "permanent" federal control. The winners were the proponents of a new ideal called "conservation" and, in principal at least, generations of Americans. The losers were private interests.

Egan's narrative succeeds its purpose and makes it a thrill to learn about the many details of the fight for conservation. Appropriately, he engages the usual suspects—Gifford Pinchot, Theodore Roosevelt, and John Muir. This focus on "big man" history has been the norm for a long time and remains appropriate; these lands would never have been set aside in perpetuity without these powerful and influential men, but it is only part of a larger story, which is what Egan tackles.

The Big Burn is more fun than most histories of conservation. It is not exactly a common history, but it does capture almost every person in the west of the time, including railroad tycoons, lumber barons, mining scoundrels, congressional cronies, scallywag local politicians, small town pimps and prostitutes, progressive era reformers, cutthroat criminals, the destitute poor, displaced and brutalized native Americans, and many others. Wave upon wave of new, usually uneducated, exploitable immigrants join nativist buffoons. All go west seeking quick riches through prospecting or any work for poor pay through hard work in mines, cutting timber, blasting rock, laying rail and ties, whatever they could find. Most either die an early, brutish death or were swindled out of their meager savings or land claims. There are very few robust American pioneers and no romance with the frontier here.

Then there are the often idealistic, sometimes naive forest rangers fresh out of Pinchot's Yale School of Forestry back east. These "little G.P.'s" were sent west to secure the new lands for the government. They ran into all of these frontier characters, folks who resented the federal "taking" of lands they wanted free and unfettered access to.

War was on. On one side were the forest rangers and forest agents sent to protect these vast federal lands. On the other side were those who wanted to extract whatever wealth was still on these now off-limit lands. Sound familiar?

Then there was the fire. Whole towns burned in a flash. Hundreds of people killed and maimed. Countless animals lay dead. Habitat altered. Timber destroyed. Lives crushed. Egan weaves all of this together in a historically important book that has significant entertainment value. You will learn much. You get to do this by peeking through a usually dusty, often dirty window into the lives of many frothy, occasionally heroic characters surviving or dying in the Big Burn of 1910. What you gain is a better understanding of what this country was, what it became, and what it might be.

Robert M. Ricard is a senior extension educator in urban natural resources and public management with the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System.

OF THANKSGIVING AND TURKEYS

By JEAN CRUM JONES

Thanksgiving is America's quintessential holiday centered around family gatherings and elaborate home-cooked feasts. Crowning most American celebrations is a big, plump turkey. But this bird may not have made it to the table of the supposed very first Thanksgiving in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1621, when the Pilgrims and Wampanoag natives feasted together.

Wild turkeys lived in and around the woodlands there, but the Pilgrims were not yet proficient in capturing them. One early settler wrote that a turkey "hath the use of his long legs so ready that he can run as fast as a dog and fly as well as a goose."

Pushing the mythic mists aside, we find the 1621 event wasn't actually to give thanks and that it was forgotten until 1840, when the historian Alexander Young read about it in an old letter. Actually, soon after the 1621 meal, irreconcilable differences developed between these two cultures. But in his book *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Forefathers*, Young called the harvest event "the first Thanksgiving" in a footnote. He speculated that the gathering had eaten wild turkey.

This notation seems to be the origin of some key elements in our American Thanksgiving story. For the English, the term Thanksgiving meant, precisely, a solemn day of prayer and worship to thank God for a special providence. The English at Plymouth recorded their first Thanksgiving in 1623 when a drought ended; they did not mention food. In 1636, Governor John Winthrop proclaimed a day of thanksgiving later that year to celebrate the defeat of the Pequots near the Connecticut River. Later, after the devastating 1675 King Philip's War broke apart the Wampanoag people and their use of their homelands, the colonial government proclaimed a day of thanksgiving on June 20. It was tragic how the colonists' insatiable land hunger destroyed Native American culture and agriculture.

1621
Harvest meal in Plymouth, Massachusetts, when the Pilgrims and Wampanoags feasted together.

1636
Governor John Winthrop proclaimed a day of thanksgiving to celebrate the defeat of the Pequots.

1790s
In general, turkeys in this period weighed no more than eight pounds.

mid 1800s
As New England farms struggled, a movement to preserve and glorify simple Yankee foods began.

1847 through 1863
Sarah Josepha Hale, a New Hampshire native, the editor of Godey's Lady Book, a popular 19th-century magazine, lobbied hard for a national holiday.

1863
The year of the Battle of Gettysburg, Lincoln established the national holiday on the last Thursday of November.

From the 1800s through the 1960s
Turkey farming became a profitable sideline for many American farmers.

1934
At the Jones farm in Shelton, Newell Jones raised turkeys until World War II; the Beardsley Farm did so until the 1950s.

In any case, our Thanksgiving Day was constructed from a 19th-century idea of a 1621 feast. It did take place in Plymouth and was probably in October, after the colorful "Indian corn" harvest. It had been a very difficult first year for the English settlers. Their governor, William Bradford, sent four men to hunt for wild fowl for a harvest celebration. "The four in a day killed as much fowl as . . . served the company almost a week," penned Edward Winslow, who ate some of the abundant pheasants, geese, and ducks.

At some point during the party, Massasoit, the leader of the Wampanoag tribe, arrived with 90 men and five freshly killed deer. Venison was a favored meat for both cultures. For the middle-class English Puritans, it was a forbidden food to all but the landed gentry in Britain, so eating it felt special. For the Wampanoag, deer was central to life. Taking it to the settlers was a sign of respect. The feasting went on for three days.

Not from Turkey (the Country)

Turkeys, though native to North America, were already a familiar bird to the English. Turkeys had been taken to England by way of Spain in the early 1500s, after the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, and had become an instant favorite. But the British thought at first that these domesticated imports came from Turkey. They imported some of those to the New World. English yeoman farmers learned from the Native Americans how to hunt the wild birds, and by the Revolution, the wild turkey had been almost eliminated from New England.

Fortunately, some interbreeding had been done between the wild birds and the domesticated colonial ones. The hybrids tended to be larger, healthier, and more vigorous than the domestic English breeds were. In general, turkeys in this period weighed no more than eight pounds. By the 1790s, the commercialized farming of domestic turkeys had begun.

From the late 1600s to the late 1800s, New England farm families developed some of the region's signature culinary dishes and perfected turkey roasting. These farmers raised animals and valued flesh foods over vegetables. During the early and mid-1800s, when New England farms began succumbing to the economic dislocation of capitalism, a movement began to serve a Thanksgiving meal to preserve and glorify their simple Yankee foods and to exemplify their ancestors' self-sufficient ways.

This movement was aided by the efforts of Sarah Josepha Hale, a New Hampshire native, the editor of Godey's Lady Book, a popular 19th-century magazine. She lobbied hard from 1847 through 1863 for a national holiday. President Lincoln became con-

HOW TO FIND A HOMEGROWN CONNECTICUT TURKEY

Because the broad-breasted white turkeys that make up about 99.9 percent of supermarket turkeys have been engineered to grow quickly, they fail to put down a layer of fat. **Commercial growers add flavor by injecting a liquid before they wrap it for sale**. This lack of natural fat is also why cooks find so many tedious recipes for brining turkey.

How much better to **seek out locally grown turkeys or heritage breeds**. In recent years, Connecticut farmers have resumed raising turkeys. Most report they are having a difficult time keeping up with the demand.

Check the Connecticut Department of Agriculture Web site or the buyctgrown.org to locate Connecticut turkey farmers, but be advised that most Connecticut turkeys for 2010 have already been reserved. More good news is that the wild turkey has returned to Connecticut. In 1975, the Department of Environmental Protection released 22 wild turkeys from New York State into the northwestern part of Connecticut. Since then, all of the towns in Connecticut report thriving populations of turkeys. It is estimated there are at least 30,000 turkeys residing in Connecticut now. The fall firearms hunting season for wild turkeys ends on October 30; archery season continues on most state land until November 16. See www.ct.gov/dep for the hunting guide.

vinced that a Thanksgiving might unite the country. In 1863, the year of the Battle of Gettysburg, Lincoln established the national holiday on the last Thursday of November.

At that time, turkey was the most festive meat the average American family could put on the table, especially as urban living took hold. To demonstrate charity at Thanksgiving, the prosperous often distributed turkey to workers or poor neighbors. Of course, everyone assumed turkey had been on the menu of that 1621 feast.

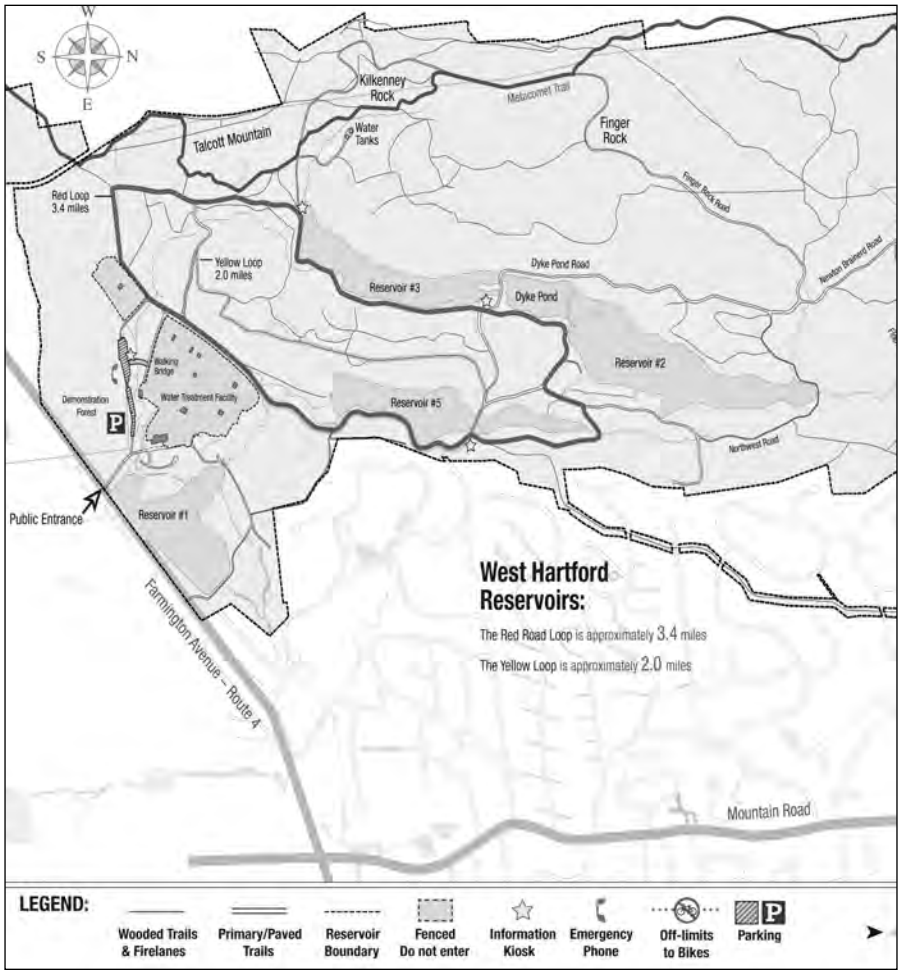
From the 1800s through the 1960s, turkey farming became a profitable sideline for many American farmers. Turkeys were easy to raise because they ranged for insects in the fields. At our farm in Shelton, after high school graduation in 1934, Newell Jones annually raised a flock of about a hundred turkeys until he was drafted into World War II. The neighboring Beardsley Farm was noted for its fine turkeys until the 1950s.

In Connecticut and Rhode Island, the Narragansett turkey was very popular. It descends from a cross between the native Eastern wild turkey and the English domestic turkey, probably Norfolk blacks, brought to this country by the English in the 1600s. All the popular Bronze breeds favored in New England until the industrial turkey takeover were descendants of the Narragansett. Sadly today, the Narragansett and her descendants are all considered endangered. Neither the Beardsleys nor the Joneses raise turkeys anymore.

Jean Crum Jones, a registered dietitian, is a member of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association Board of Directors. She and her husband, Terry, and their family, operate the Jones Family Farms in Shelton.

TRAIL ADVOCATES RALLY TO KEEP MUNICIPAL LANDS ACCESSIBLE

Biker's lawsuit against MDC propels a new movement for stronger liability law



A map of one section of the Metropolitan District Commission's popular hiking and mountain biking routes in West Hartford. Maribeth Blonski was riding on the Red Loop in 2002 when she crashed into a gate.

CFPA, after an MDC brochure

Eight years ago, a 35-year-old woman crashed her bicycle into a metal gate that was closed to block cars from the paved recreational loop trail by three West Hartford reservoirs. She sued the landowner, the Metropolitan District Commission, and in May, a jury awarded her $2.9 million.

After the decision, the MDC, which was formed in 1929 to provide drinking water and sewage treatment, announced that it would review its policy of allowing people onto its many thousands of acres. It held a public hearing on July 20 to which so many hundreds of people showed up that the meeting room was filled beyond capacity. Police officers guarded the doors, letting people in only as others left.

The hearing attendees were but a fraction of the roughly 200,000 people a year who run, walk, and bicycle on the property where Maribeth Blonski crashed and on the nearby Reservoir 6 land. Despite her serious injuries—broken vertebrae in her neck from which she did ultimately recover—this crowd seemed of one voice in suggesting that she and others who venture outdoors must take responsibility for their own actions and that municipalities should be protected from the threat of lawsuits.

Shortly after the hearing, the MDC announced that it would leave the lands open, and it is trying to have Hartford Superior Court reverse the jury verdict. It has filed a motion to set aside the verdict, said one of the MDC lawyers, Christopher Stone. The motion is not an appeal but involves a direct challenge to the reasons for the verdict. The MDC could eventually appeal, he said.

The Larger Implications

But this is not a case only about this one tract of land where people go to run and walk.

The MDC lawsuit is the latest in a series brought by those whose good times on municipal land fizzled into accidents and the municipality who owns the land was blamed. But this case brought up for new scrutiny how laws don't really address how to handle outdoor pursuits on such land when people have accidents. The prospect of legal action by citizens on municipal land has worried municipal officials since a 1996 court decision that found the town of Wilton was not protected by the state's Recreational Liability Law.

The Recreational Liability Law, which the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, publisher of this magazine, helped to draft, has protected landowners from lawsuits from anyone injured on their lands since the 1970s. But municipalities have been excluded from this protection since the Conway v. Wilton case was decided 14 years ago.

The Wilton case stemmed from an accident in 1986, when a high school tennis player sued the town for serious knee injuries she suffered on school courts after running into a fence during a state tournament. Before Conway v. Wilton, court decisions protected towns in cases, such as one after the August 8, 1986, accident when a 2-year-old boy playing at a Bloomfield park reached into a metal box for a toy and the box lid seriously injured his thumb. The town of

continued on page 26

continued from page 24

Plainfield was not held liable in a similar case, Scrapchansky v. Plainfield, involving a baseball player who was hurt while playing on a town-owned school field.

Since the outcome of the Conway case, most parks and municipal trails have stayed open, but recreation advocates have believed that a stronger law was necessary to avoid another lawsuit. The MDC case raises the issue anew, in a big way, probably because the jury award was so substantial and because so many people use and love the MDC properties, which add up to more than 22,000 acres around the state.

Outdoor Advocates Galvanized

CFPA worked with other organizations to publicize the MDC's July 20 hearing and took actions to reach out to the public about the MDC case's larger implications, such as posting an online petition calling for fixing the Recreational Liability Statute. More than 4,500 people signed.

The Metacomet Trail runs through the MDC reservoir properties in West Hartford. The Metacomet is one of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails CFPA's volunteers maintain and it is part of the New England Trail (a new National Scenic Trail). The prospect of closing those trails and the MDC loop trails heated the emotions of people in line at the hearing on July 20. The attendees were saying that outdoor pursuits matter to them.

"I moved back here from Los Angeles. Out there, they have incredible hiking," said Jill Pollack Lewis, who moved to West Hartford with her husband and toddler son in June. Ms. Lewis was standing in line waiting to get into the hearing in the hot, muggy lobby of West Hartford Town Hall. She said the MDC reservoirs were "one of the top five reasons I moved back here, a month ago," and that she and her son go onto the property four times a week.

Inside the hearing room, state Rep. David Baram, a Democrat of Bloomfield, was one of several elected officials who took turns at the microphone to pledge action to protect the MDC from liability. Mr. Baram, who said his first date with his wife was on MDC property, pledged to introduce a bill in the next legislative session, starting in January, protecting the MDC from liability. He said the MDC is akin to private landowners, who are already protected when people recreate on their land. "I think that when we weigh the benefits, the benefit of providing public access to these unique sites far outweighs any purpose in having liability in recreational use."

Other speakers echoed his remarks, some speaking more generally of a need for a state law to protect all municipalities. Among other officials speaking were Simsbury First Selectman Mary Glassman, who pedaled to the meeting on her bike; West Hartford Mayor Scott Slifka, warning commission members against a decision that would make "people lose faith in government"; and Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, who said his office would look into the loophole issue.

The director of athletics for the Kingswood Oxford School in West Hartford told the MDC that the cross-country team has run at the West Hartford MDC property for a long time. "The West Hartford reservoir is part of the fabric of who we are as a school. We have never considered our use of the West Hartford reservoir as a right," Garth Adams said.

CFPA Executive Director Eric Hammerling, who worked with bicycle advocate Charles Beristain to form the grassroots group called Save the MDC Trails (savethemdctrails.org), invited the crowd to "join with me and make some lemonade. . . . We've all heard the saying, 'When life hands you lemons, make lemonade.' Well, the fact that we are all here shows that we are not interested in just accepting lemons. The unfortunate mountain-biker injury and the regrettable lawsuit that followed were lemons. . . . This lemonade would include: a recreational liability statute that affords liability protection for municipalities and municipal entities like the MDC. The MDC would keep open its recreational lands to the public at the very least, for the opening of the legislative session in 2011." Starr Sayres and Scott Livingston, CFPA board members, and CFPA staffers Leslie Lewis (WalkCT director) and Clare Cain (trail stewardship director) also spoke of the importance of access to outdoor recreation and the New England Trail.

Christine Woodside

Those who run, bike, and hike at the West Hartford reservoirs expressed their passion at a hearing July 20. The Metropolitan District Commission later said the properties would remain open to the public.

What Happens Now?

A lawyer for the MDC, Bart Halloran, testified that the MDC is being held to the same requirements as a profit-making corporation. The MDC has had liability insurance, he added, "but there is a concern, quite frankly, as to what the cost of that insurance will be, going forward to the time of renewal, and whether it will be renewed." The insurance policy, which comes due for renewal in October, required the MDC to pay the first $250,000 of the award to Ms. Blonski.

One person who is not speaking publicly about outdoor recreation is Ms. Blonski. The Connecticut Law Tribune reported that she works the desk at a gym. She was a former semi-pro soccer player and a member of the Wethersfield High School Hall of Fame who at the time of the accident hosted a public-access cable television program on outdoor recreation. Her lawyer, Michael Stratton

of the firm Stratton Faxon in New Haven, said she had said on her TV show that she had not seen the gate until 3 feet away. (Skid marks were 20 feet away, it came out in the trial.)

Mr. Stratton said Ms. Blonski's neck vertebrae are held together with rods and screws and that one vocal chord is paralyzed. "I just don't want them [the MDC] to tell me it was all my fault," he recalled her telling him, according to the Law Tribune. "I'd take zero right now for someone to publicly announce it wasn't all my fault."

CFPA has formed a Recreational Liability Working Group composed of several interested organizations. It has been meeting to suggest solutions to the General Assembly that would take care of municipal liability on recreational trails once and for all.

For updates: see savethemdctrails.org or ctwoodlands.org

—Christine Woodside

Destructive Beetle, Emerald Ash Borer, Found Near Connecticut Border

A beetle that kills ash trees by the millions was found in July in Saugerties, New York, near the border of northwestern Connecticut. The emerald ash borer is small, green, and iridescent. It lives only on ash trees, of which there are about 22.4 million in Connecticut's forests. Worst of all, it is difficult to detect and impossible to eradicate, although it is possible to lessen its impact.

Christopher R. Martin, director of forestry for the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, warned residents not to move firewood into or out of the state because the beetles probably hitch rides across state lines that way. Emerald ash borers have killed tens of millions of ash trees in the Midwest, officials there report.

"We know it's real close," Mr. Martin said. The response to an infestation would be different than for the Asian longhorn beetle, another destructive beetle moving its way into New England. The emerald ash borer can't be contained by removing entire trees, as officials did for the Asian longhorn beetle last year in Worcester. What officials will do is restrict movement of wood products out of the area where the beetle is found.

The beetles kill ash trees by living under the bark at the larval stage. Signs of destruction include a dieback of the top of the tree and girdling marks on the bark.

An infestation could change the forests in Connecticut in a major way. Ash "is a key player in our diverse forest. Whenever you knock out a player in the forest composition, the whole system loses out. The strength of the Connecticut forest is its diversity," Mr. Martin said.

Emerald ash borers probably arrived to the United States in packing to the Midwest about eight years ago. If you think you see this beetle, call the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at 1-203-974-8440. Ash trees have compound leaves, branches that grow directly opposite one another, and winged fruit (not nuts). For more on how to identify ash trees and the emerald ash borer, see emeraldashborer.info.

—Christine Woodside

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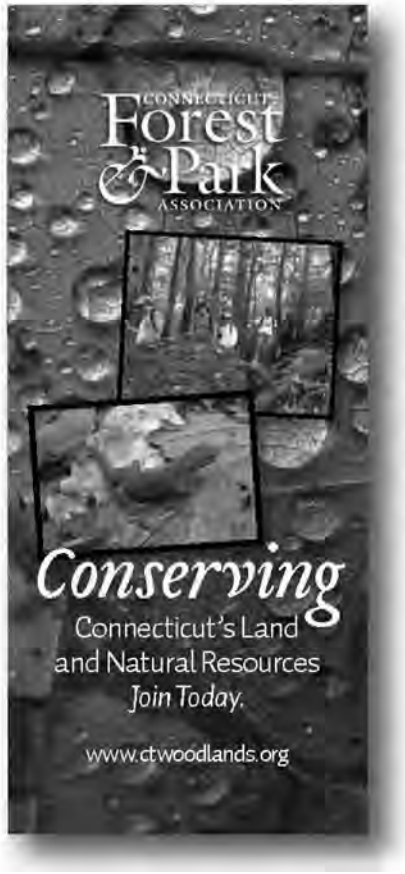

Help ensure CFPA's Sustainability!

Connecticut Forest & Park Association continues as a force in conserving Connecticut's land and natural resources because members care about what we protect for the generations that follow. The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails - the best maintained, largest trail network in Connecticut - are a shinning example of what our members can accomplish. CFPA membership ensures continued leadership in our state's conservation efforts.

Your membership supports CFPA's mission, but, as financial pressures on both the private and public sectors increase, the progress made over the last century is in jeopardy. If each current CFPA member ***recruits one new member, or gives a gift membership,*** CFPA will have the voice and resources to continue advocating for public policy that encourages conservation and fills our mission of connecting people to the land.

For a membership application, visit our website at:

www.ctwoodlands.org/join-us

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