



# Kickapoo Sustainable Post

Newsletter of the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative

## Managing for Wildlife

by Patrick Dayton, Stewardship Forester

Often landowners state that the reason they own forest property is for enjoyment of wildlife. It is easy for most foresters to decipher the true meaning of this statement. Some landowners want to protect habitat for neotropical migratory birds,



some enjoy learning about salamanders or other amphibians, and some enjoy investigating insects. However, the majority of landowners who say they are interested in wildlife really mean they are interested in hunting deer. Deer hunting is one of the most popular reasons for forest land ownership in Wisconsin. Foresters work with landowners in trying to keep the forest healthy while at the same time incorporating landowner deer objectives into a useful forest management plan. Occasionally, forest management and deer management are in conflict (e.g. regeneration of trees vs. high populations of deer) but usually proper forest

management and suitable deer management are completely compatible.

Deer hunting has been hotly debated in our state now for the last few decades on what is proper or improper management. Foresters hear assorted opinions from many landowners on this topic, and methods of managing for deer are as various as the landowners who apply the management. Some forest landowners go so far as to implement Quality Deer Management (QDM). According to the Quality Deer Management Association website – “Quality Deer Management is the approach where young bucks are protected from harvest, combined with an adequate harvest of female deer to produce healthy deer herds in balance with existing habitat conditions.” Unfortunately, some landowners who say they are practicing quality deer management are in reality only shooting big bucks while disregarding the female segment of the population. That is analogous to high-grading in forest management.

A common concern of landowners who hunt is the quality of deer habitat on their property. It is typical for landowners to think food plots are a good way

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## *The Forester's View*

by Thomas Wyse, KWC Forester

Fall feels like it is here, and it seems like it happened fast. The fall colors weren't as nice as last year's, probably because of the drought, and it didn't seem like we had a lot of classic fall days. It feels good to be cooler while walking the hills.

I've been working with landowners farther from Viroqua recently. I wrote a plan for a couple that lives east of Madison. They are working hard to create prairie and savannah habitat, and they are grazing Highland cattle on the native prairie plants. They also do a lot of burning. They have a stand that has a lot of walnut, and they want to convert it to a walnut savannah. Walnut is a weed for them since it aggressively seeds into the open areas, and even burning doesn't always keep it down. It's the



same story for shagbark hickory. Many landowners would love to have that kind of natural regeneration!

The deer ticks are back out for their fall run. Check yourself well for ticks if you spend time in the woods. They are very aggressive, and I am finding two to four embedded ticks at the end of each day. It seems like they wait longer to embed in the

spring. At least the fall tick season should be short.

I met a timber buyer today to lay out roads before the timber cutting started. There were probably 20 big puffballs in this woods. I'm not used to seeing so many on a single property. Enjoy the cooler weather and I hope you get out in the woods.

### *Managing for Wildlife, continued from page 1*

to improve their land for deer. It is easy to see why, as outdoor television shows that have seed producers as sponsors often promote food plots as good management. In certain cases, it is helpful for landowners to provide an extra food source for deer – especially for winter forage, though in Southwest Wisconsin with as many grain farmers as we have the need for food is not a recurring limiting factor of the deer population. Forest landowners would be better served to plant five, ten, or twenty acres of conifer plantations for their deer management. The habitat and shelter that conifer plantations create are very helpful in providing cover to deer, in both winter and summer, from inclement weather and predation (including hunters). Ask any forester what they find when walking through ten to twenty-five year old conifer plantations, and they will tell you that deer beds and droppings are prevalent. A mixed plantation of white pine, spruce, and red pine in the uplands or spruce, cedar, and tamarack in lowlands would be a great addition to a landowner's mix of woodland and deer management goals.

Intersperse a few hardwoods at the time of planting and the end result can be a healthy, diverse forest that is not only good for deer but a variety of animals. Planting trees provides deer with habitat that they need, while producing environmental benefits along the way with a final economic payoff to the landowner (or the landowner's children and grandchildren). In addition, something made clear at the QDMA website: without regulating breeding, genetics of a species cannot be controlled - <http://www.qdma.com/articles/why-we-cant-manage-deer-genetics>. Along with that, most Wisconsin woodland owners do not own a large enough acreage necessary to influence deer population parameters (characteristics); although individual landowners can influence local deer activity patterns. And finally, remember, landowners do not own deer that are wild. All wildlife is considered property of the state in which they live. Therefore, it is wiser to concentrate work on the management of the forest - since landowners actually do own the trees and the acres they grow on.

# Managing Woodland Property Taxes

by Bill Smythe, KWC Board member

Real estate taxes on woodlands are notoriously high but there are some built-in opportunities to reduce woodland taxes, mainly agricultural use and Managed Forest Law (MFL) contracts.

To determine if you can manage woodland taxes you need to understand the basis of assessment. The table below is for Sterling Township in Vernon County, Wisconsin. Assessments for land in other properties in the region will vary by local evaluations, but

Land Use	Full Evaluation	Ag Evaluation	Tax/acre/year
Woodland	\$ 2600	-	52.00
Managed Forest	2600	-	10.68
Woodland in Ag parcel	2600	1300	26.00
#1 Farmland	3000	264	5.28
#2 Farmland	2500	222	4.44
#3 Farmland	2000	162	3.24
Pasture	1.000	65	1.30

should be similar or proportional.

From the table, it is evident that Ag land is favored. To get the Ag assessment on woodland, the woods must be less than half the acres on EACH tax parcel. If you are close to that 50% woodland ratio, you can manage part of the woods for a crop such as maple syrup or nuts, and get Ag assessment on

the parcel. Make sure your assessor agrees!

The mission of the Woods Co-op is to provide education, management services, and marketing services so our members can sustainably manage their land. In controlling costs, such as real estate (property) tax, there are moderating considerations. Managed Forest Law keeps real estate taxes reasonable on woodlands, and it eliminates the need to achieve Ag land status. Managing woods for syrup or nuts, or pasturing, will have negative impacts on timber production. The value must also be considered of the enjoyment provided by seeing wildlife, hunting, or just walking in the woods.

The property tax law and economics of sustainability are complicated and conflicting. Seek knowledgeable advice. A forester can identify parts of your woods where other goals may be more sensible. Managed Forest tax rates change every five years. Current rate is 10.68 per closed acre. This rate started 1-1-2005.

There are many "right ways" to decide as we have members. Ask knowledgeable people. Consider the trade-offs. Make the decision that works for you.

The KWC has helped many landowners get the tax advantages along with the forestry management advantages with plan writing and knowledgeable advise.



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## Weed Management Group

Recently, Southwest Badger RC&D, in cooperation with the Wisconsin DNR, formed an invasive weed management group in Southwest Wisconsin. What is a weed management group? A weed management group is a coalition of landowners and professionals who collaborate on effective invasive plant management on a regional scale. It is not regulatory; but instead focuses on detection, outreach, and management of exotic invasive plant species that are affecting our natural woodlands. Weed management groups seek local direction of work while trying to cross legal boundaries. This project, led by Southwest Badger RC&D, will concentrate on outreach, inventory, management plans, and control. The Kickapoo Woods Cooperative has agreed to be partners with this group, which means KWC members are eligible for consultation and assistance from Southwest Badger RC&D forester - Patrick Dayton. If a landowner wants assistance on their property dealing with invasive species, this is a project that is relevant. If landowners or professionals want to guide regional efforts to fighting invasive species, then this is a fitting group to join. Please contact Patrick if you are interested either in having him visit your property to discuss exotic invasive species or if you are interested in leadership responsibility.

Patrick Dayton  
Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development, stewardship forester

(608) 637-5479  
<http://www.swbadger.org/>

## Going Paperless?

If you would rather take in your *Kickapoo Sustainable Post* through your screen, we'll be happy to send it to your inbox. Send me an email at [sunmoon@mwt.net](mailto:sunmoon@mwt.net)

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## *Exploring the UnderStory:* **Symbiosis in the Cycle of Life**

by Ken Workowski, KWC Board member

In this issue, I continue delving into some of the symbiotic relationships in our woodlands, that go on continually, yet are largely unseen.

Only a small fraction of the seeds that germinate and sprout grow to become mature trees. The majority of them succumb to environmental situations such as predation, disease, and competition for sunlight and nutrition. The ones that do survive, do so largely from the death of their predecessors. As leaves fall and decay, as twigs, branches and whole trees decompose, they build the soil and give the living trees the nutrients for their health. This process happens in steps; the first steps setting the stage for the next step, and so on down the line.

As a tree dies, one of the most vulnerable areas is the cambium layer, where the inner bark meets the sapwood. Most of you have seen the patterns of tunnels when the bark is separated from the dead tree. These are largely made by various beetles who use this nutrient-rich medium for laying their eggs. When the eggs hatch, the larvae then feed on cambium layer for their development into adults. These beetles also bring with them various fungi which then have an environment in which to feed and grow.

The first of these fungi begin to eat at and break down the toughest structures of the wood, which then expose a nutrient base for the next fungi to grow and reproduce. In the process of cutting firewood, you may have seen different thread like root structures under the bark of dead wood. They might be black, brown, blue or white. Each color is an indication of the progression of the decomposition of the wood on its journey to returning to the earth while producing nutrients for the tree living there now.

Standing dead trees also serve another important function in our woodlands. More than a third of the birds in a forest depend on standing dead trees,

both for their food if they eat beetle grubs and for making nests. Partial decay makes nest hole construction possible. Very few birds are able to hammer a nest hole solely out of solid live wood, although they are able to hammer through an outer layer to get to the softer, partially fungus-softened wood beneath it, where they make their nest cavity.

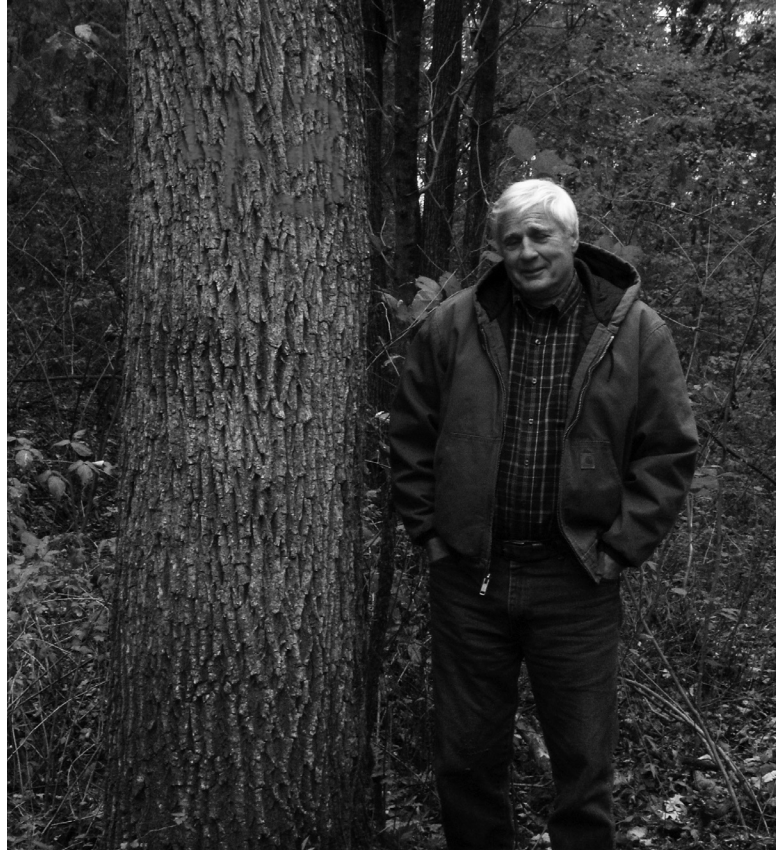
Often, when I am reading about this subject I think about my personal observations over the years. We built our house out on the end of a long wooded hogback. There were numerous, scattered poplar trees along either hillside. I saw many young maple and oak trees under them and thought I should cut the poplar out and give the other trees better opportunities. The poplar were very tall and I became concerned that the damage I might do in felling them would offset any gain I might anticipate. As the years have gone by, one by one, these poplar trees have been dying on their own.

I have observed a myriad of interesting phenomena associated with this process. First off, the trees tend to fall down a limb at a time and have done little or no damage to the trees around them. More importantly, each tree has served as food, shelter and nesting cavities for many bird species. Every species of woodpecker have fed on beetle grubs and ants. Numerous broods of birds have been raised in them. In the winter, many species of the year round birds use the existing cavities to shelter them from the cold. Flying squirrels have reared their young in them. All of this process is part of the symbiotic relationship that one species has in helping the next species to survive. Together they serve to continue the life and health in our woodlands.

These observations have helped my understanding of the complexities of the web of life that surrounds us. I hope that sharing these tidbits influence your thoughts and will, in some small way, make us all better stewards of this beautiful and precious piece of paradise we call home.

## Member Profile: Bill Smythe

Bill Smythe manages his hundred acres of wood for timber, and, where it makes sense, for diversity. He moved to the area in 1983 from Minneapolis, where he had been teaching biology and then doing sales work for Texaco and as an analyst for Univac. He had previously purchased a northern Minnesota property with pine and aspen woods, but it just did not pay when he harvested the timber. So he started looking for hardwood forests and ended up moving to Wisconsin and becoming a farmer. He raised beef cattle and dairy heifers, and corn and hay for feed. Bill had taken three years as a forestry major at University of Minnesota before changing his major to Education, so he had a lot of knowledge and ideas about forestry management when he finally found the land where he still lives in Vernon County, Wisconsin. He does timber stand improvement work himself and cuts firewood on his land, but, for a harvest, he likes to hire someone with the proper skills and equipment to do the work. One of his newest projects is to collect data on his trees and their progress. He has numbered more than 100 of his trees and is taking measurements to see the effects of his TSI work and other factors in the woods. He knows that with management, the trees' quality can be improved, and they



will grow faster, contributing to a much better price when they are harvested.

Bill noted that when he was farming, he did not have the time to manage the woods. Now that he is retired, he is focused on managing his woods, and he volunteers two days a week for Habitat for Humanity, building and fixing up houses for local people.

As a member of the KWC board of directors, Bill wants the co-op to continue providing our members with a service that has value. He feels we are doing just that with our education program and forestry management services.

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# Education Survey

The KWC wants to know what kind of educational events, publications and programs you want or need so that we can use our education program resources in the most effective way possible. A short survey will go out to our email list in early December, or you can contact me directly to give me your ideas. Thanks!

Lila Marmel  
Education Coordinator Kickapoo Woods Cooperative  
sunmoon@mwt.net 608-624-5269

## KWC Services

- MFL Plan writing
  - EQIP funded plan writing
  - Stewardship plan writing
  - Stewardship plan light (1-2 pages)
  - Forest Inventory and Timber basis
  - Timber sale setup, marketing and administration
  - Road location and design
  - Mapping
  - Info on WFLGP and NRCS cost sharing for projects
  - Timber stand improvement marking
  - Invasive species management recommendations
  - Tree planting recommendations and referrals
  - Herbicide application and recommendations
  - Wildlife habitat improvement recommendations
  - Other services and referrals--ask!
- KWC can help you to accomplish your goals for your land, and you can help to support the co-op by utilizing our services. Call today (608-606-5815) to begin the conversation.

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### Become a member and enjoy:

- Free woods walk to evaluate your forest
- Information, support and education.

### Thank You!

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In addition, I would like to:  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Address of woodland property if different:

\_\_\_\_\_

Total acres \_\_\_\_\_ Forested acres \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_

Township \_\_\_\_\_ Section \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a management plan?

Yes: MFL\_\_ Stewardship\_\_ Other\_\_

No: I need one\_\_ What is it?\_\_\_\_\_



Kickapoo Woods Cooperative  
PO Box 71  
La Farge WI 54639

[kickapoowoods.org](http://kickapoowoods.org)

**The mission of the Kickapoo Wood Cooperative is to provide sustainable forestry education, management and marketing services to residents of the Kickapoo Valley and neighboring watersheds.**

### Events Coming Up

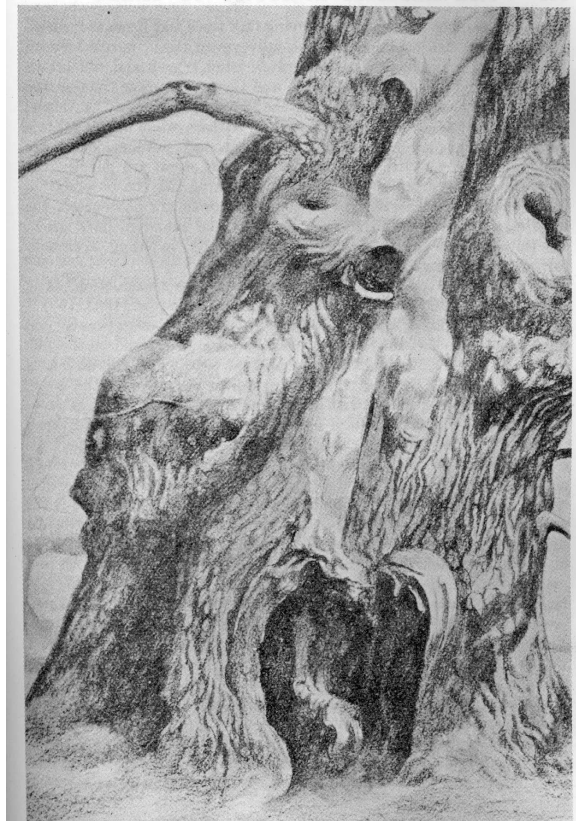
These events are in the planning stages for the months ahead. Watch for more information in the local papers, on our website or from our email list.

Feb or March - KWC Member potluck- and winter gathering.

April - Chainsaw Safety. Watch [kickapoowoods.org](http://kickapoowoods.org) for the release on this highly recommended training.

May - Spring Woods Walk.

**Going Paperless?** We can help. See page 4.



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