



Spring/Summer Newsletter 2021

528 Acres Protected in Warren County!

In late June, the FSF closed on the acquisition of the 528-acre Dotyville Hill Forest, located in Southwest Township, Warren County. This acreage includes significant frontage along Caldwell Creek's public-access fly-fishing corridor, and is a part of the FSF's Caldwell Creek Watershed Conservation Project, which began with 60 acres in 2012 and has grown to over 1200 acres ten years later. These lands have been conserved as sustainable working forests and cannot be subdivided, developed, or sold. They are also open to the public for recreational activities such as hunting, hiking, and bird-watching.

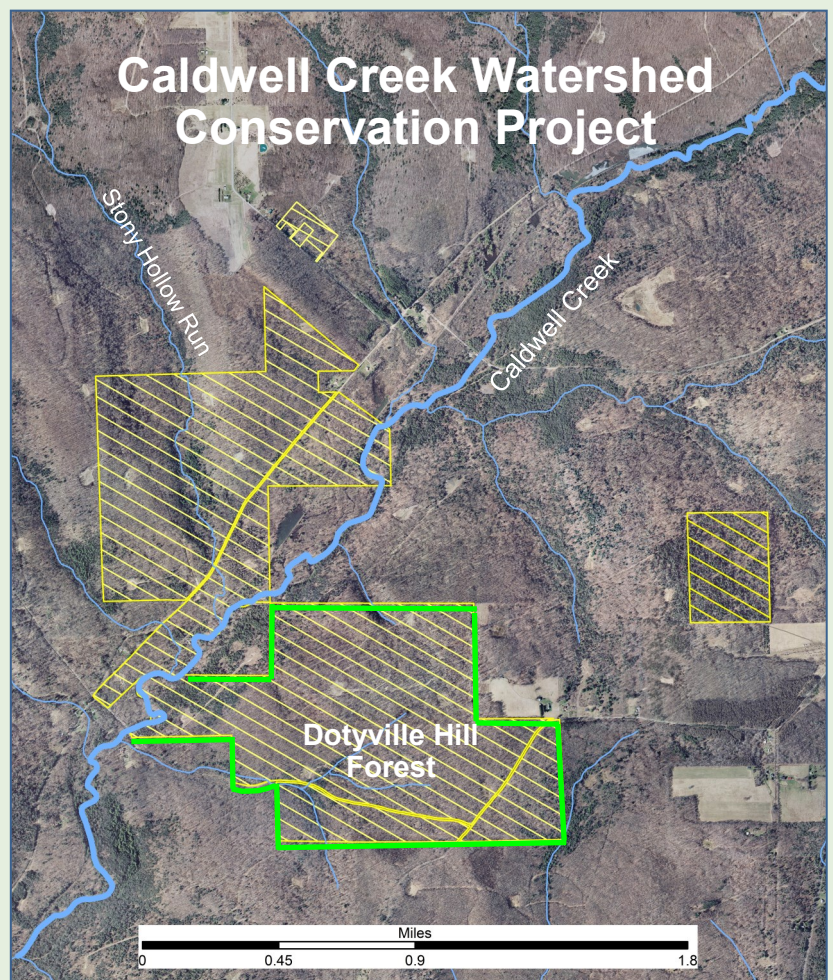
These newly-protected acres are comprised of four adjacent parcels, one purchased from private ownership and three donated by FSF Founder and President Troy Firth. Together, they join a large tract of FSF-conserved lands on the other side of the Creek, including the 292-acre Stony Hollow Forest, which was conserved in 2019 (see map).

The Caldwell Creek region is a frontier band of private industrial timberland situated between the expansive Allegheny National Forest to the east, and farmland and residential development to the west. The FSF has identified this region for protection to ensure watershed health, recreation opportunities, and to preserve the region's timber economy.

The FSF's management practices in the region strive to promote diversity in forest structure and wildlife. In addition, the FSF has coordinated riparian tree plantings, streambank stabiliza-

tion, and fish habitat improvement projects.

This project was made possible with a grant from Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCNR) via the Keystone Fund, and additional support from the John Nesbit Rees and Sarah Henne Rees Foundation, Trout Unlimited's Caldwell Creek and Northwest PA Chapters, and the Stec Family.



FSF-conserved lands are shown in yellow, with the newly conserved parcels outlined in green.

Greetings from the Executive Director

REACHING THE 2000-ACRE MILESTONE

In the end of June, the conservation of Dotyville Hill Forest brought the FSF over the 2,000-acre threshold of conserved land. Before I elaborate further, on more than one occasion Tom Erdman, FSF-member and retired DCNR Service Forester in Erie County, has impressed upon me the importance of defining an “acre”. And so, allow me to heed Tom’s advice:

The word “acre” comes from the Old English word “æcer”, which meant “open field”. An “acre” was the amount of land tillable by one person behind one ox in one day. In present-day units, one square acre is about 209 feet x 209 feet. Perhaps more relatable to most, an acre is about 9/10 the size of a standard American football field, minus the endzones. Speaking in a language my toddler understands, an acre is 560 *John Deere* 730 tractors- 28 parked side-by-side by 20 in a line.¹

With these images in mind, I am thrilled to share that with the recent conservation of a 528-acre forest along Caldwell Creek in Warren County (see p.1), the FSF now protects 2,250 acres of forested land. It is no secret that this is because of you through your support, advocacy, and engagement. Take a moment to revel in the image of over 1700 football fields of forest you have helped to protect from development, subdivision, and harmful management. Well done, and thank you!

At the same time, I am often reminded that conservation is so much more than the number of acres conserved. Acquisition is only the beginning of a far greater under-

¹outdoorsworld.com

taking to nurture the land. A founding tenet of the FSF is that it embraces the burden of responsibility to manage the forests that it protects— through both intentional action and *inaction*. Thankfully, the FSF is not alone in this. When I picture FSF members, partners, and donors, I see many who are active on the land in one form or another. Fittingly, in this newsletter we showcase Henry & Elaine Burkholder, who are no strangers to working lands on their farm and in their forest (see pp.4-5).

And how can we know the effect of our management on the landscape? The answer is largely through observation, study, and time. To that end, the FSF welcomes Dr. Steven Latta and his team from the National Aviary to embark upon a 3-year analysis of how the FSF’s uneven-aged management affects bird diversity (see pp.6-7).

All of this important work continues in earnest as the need to conserve natural lands is more critical than ever. The FSF has no intention of ‘resting on its laurels’. But, for just a moment, please join me in celebrating this most recent conservation achievement— the 528-acre Dotyville Hill Forest- and surpassing the 2,000-acre benchmark. Better yet, celebrate in person when we host our Friends of the Foundation Dinner and Loving the Land Through Working Forests Conference in September (see p.3), and make a gift to the FSF on Erie Gives Day or during Crawford Gives (see p. 5) to continue this momentum toward the next benchmark!

Sincerely,

Annie Maloney

Below: Caldwell Creek along the newly conserved 528-acre Dotyville Hill Forest.



IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 <i>Introducing Dotyville Hill Forest</i> | 5 <i>Erie Gives Match Challenge</i> |
| 2 <i>Executive Director Address</i> | 6 <i>Femelschlag & Bird Diversity</i> - S. Latta & N. Ransom |
| 3 <i>Wildflower Walk, Fall Conference & Dinner</i> | 8 <i>Upcoming Events</i> |
| 4 <i>Landowner Stories: Henry & Elaine Burkholder</i> | |

Scenes from the Spring Wildflower Walk

Early May marked a happy return to in-person events with the annual Lynn Firth Wildflower Walk, this year at the FSF's Blooming Valley Forest in Crawford County. Thank you to all who attended and made this a safe and enjoyable event. A special thanks to Cecile Stelter for being a wonderful guide!



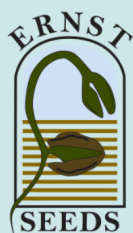
Below we highlight two big events that were planned for May 2020 and postponed until now. In both cases we are committed to following COVID-safety measures that are prescribed at that time. We hope that you can attend!



Friends of the Foundation for Sustainable Forests Dinner Friday, September 17, 2021

Iroquois Boating & Fishing Club, Conneaut Lake, PA

Sponsored by



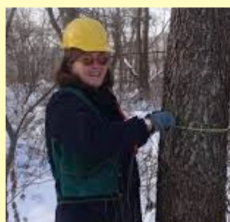
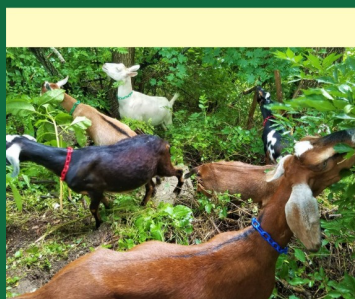
Featuring a Presentation by Doug Tallamy, PhD "Nature's Best Hope"

Noted author and professor Tallamy will discuss simple steps that each of us can- and must- take to reverse declining biodiversity and will explain why we, ourselves, are nature's best hope.



Social hour begins at 5:30pm, \$35/person, RSVP by September 4
For information or RSVP to visit: foundationforsustainableforests.org/dinner

Loving the Land Through Working Forests



Saturday, September 18, 2021
Thompsons' Wood, near Centerville, PA

Sponsored
by:



Craig & Monica
Schwegman

Bob & Jane
Slagter

Emil & Kathy
Spadafore

foundationforsustainableforests.org/loving-the-land

Loving the Land —Landowners Tell Their Stories

Henry & Elaine Burkholder live in Crawford County and have a long and impressive history of actively caring for their land. Written by Ellis Giacomelli

“When I wake up in the morning, I’m right where I want to be,” said Henry Burkholder one October afternoon as I sat with him and his wife, Elaine, in their kitchen.

Henry and Elaine both grew up in Northwestern Ohio and met when Elaine was working as a nursing student at a hospital in Lima, Ohio and Henry was a pre-med student at Ohio State University. Henry and Elaine married and moved to Cleveland in 1971, and Henry graduated from Case Western Reserve University in 1975. He spent three years as a family practice physician resident in Akron, Ohio before moving to Pennsylvania with Elaine in 1978 where he continued to practice until his retirement in 2001.

Henry and Elaine now live outside Meadville, Pennsylvania on a 271-acre hilltop where they manage hay fields, gardens, cut and sell firewood, and spend time walking and working 155 acres of forest. They bought the property in 1977 and became interested in forest stewardship practices in the early 1990s, and now they try to attend forest conferences and events every year.

Henry met Troy Firth and Guy Dunkle of the Foundation for Sustainable Forests in 2008 through the Northwest Pennsylvania Woodland Association and could identify with their perspectives and values. Henry said he understands the importance of forest health and hopes his property will be managed as a working forest in the future.

His work ethic is incomparable, and with his vibrant and expressive spirit, Henry is able to communicate his land ethic. Henry and Elaine both grew up on working farms and know how to manage land, but more importantly, they both have experienced the joy and pride of finding the balance between their needs and their land’s needs.

When I visited Henry and

Elaine, Henry and I toured the property, pausing at some of his favorite trees, a tubed red oak and his best black cherry. He looked at the young red oak and said, “This makes me so happy,” and at a different spot, he peeked into another tree shelter, his face filled with wonder, “It’s a good feeling,” he said.

Several projects keep Henry busy- planting and tubing trees with Elaine, baling hay, cutting and gathering firewood, and organizing a supply of metal and other recyclables at the top of his driveway. Henry collects these discarded treasures, some of which he re-purposes, others he scraps. He and Elaine have produced more than 10,000 square bales of hay each summer since his retirement, including 17,000 bales in 2016 alone. He continues to plant trees and improve his forest- a practice he calls “pediatric forestry.”

Continued on page 5



Elaine & Henry Burkholder on their farm outside of Meadville, Crawford Co., PA



Erie Gives Match Challenge!

Tuesday, August 10, 8am-8pm

Your donation on this important day fuels operations that allow the FSF to steward its woodlands and magnify its impact through new land conservation projects and outreach.

Thanks to generous FSF donors this year, you have the chance to make an even *bigger* impact with a \$15,000 donor engagement challenge!

Not only will your gift on Erie Gives Day receive partial match from the Erie & Corry Community Foundations, but each donor on Erie Gives Day will also unlock a \$100 match gift, up to 150 donors!! You are needed more than ever to meet this challenge by making a gift and asking your friends, family, and neighbors to also support the FSF on August 10th.

Visit eriegives.org/check-donations to download a donation form (must be received by August 9), or visit eriegives.org between 8am-8pm on Tuesday, August 10th to make a gift online.

Visit crawfordgives.org
for another great way to give!
Monday - Tuesday, August 30-31



"I tend to judge my days by how much I accomplish," Henry said. Elaine smiled as he contin-



Henry stands by an impressive red oak— one of his favorite trees on the property.

ued, "My wife says I shouldn't do that."

Henry has learned to slow down but remains dedicated to his ongoing work. The day that small oak emerges from the top of its tube, he will probably say again, "It's a good feeling."

I don't think Henry will ever settle for anything less than his best, the Foundation's best, the land reaching its fullest potential, or his baler's hardest day of work. When he looks at his projects, his collection of recyclables, his fields, his forest, he looks with reverence. I can see it in his eyes.

But he doesn't revere land because he thinks of it as perfect. He reveres it because of what land has given him — years of work, purpose, and the motivation to be an active and caring steward.

"Well the woods isn't what it could be or even should be, but it's better than it was," Henry said. "It's a work in progress, and aren't we all?"

Special thanks to the Burkholders for sharing their story, and to Ellis Giacomelli for collecting it. Would you like to share your story? If so, we would love to listen! Please contact Annie Maloney: amaloney@forestsandpeople.org or (814) 694-5830.

Do Birds Like the *Femelschlag*?

Contributed by Dr. Steven Latta & Nancy Ransom, National Aviary

Visitors to sites managed by the Foundation for Sustainable Forests (FSF) are captivated by the diversity of vegetation, with multiple layers of trees, shrubs, and groundcover. Diversity in vegetation often translates into diversity of birds. But is this also the case in an uneven-aged forest managed through the femelschlag process of creating small, expanding gaps in the canopy to promote regeneration and a healthy forest ecosystem?

In May 2021, a team of researchers from the National Aviary in Pittsburgh set out to better understand the nature of avian diversity in forests managed by FSF. Led by Dr. Steven Latta, Director of Conservation and Field Research, and joined by seasonal interns Nancy Ransom and Shaina Kenny, this three-year study, funded by the S. Kent Rockwell Foundation, seeks to document avian diversity in six FSF-managed forests. In particular, we are interested in whether the small gaps created through forest management actually benefit two groups of birds that ornithologists often think have habitat needs in conflict: species requiring early-successional habitat, and species requiring large tracts of mature forest. How might this occur?

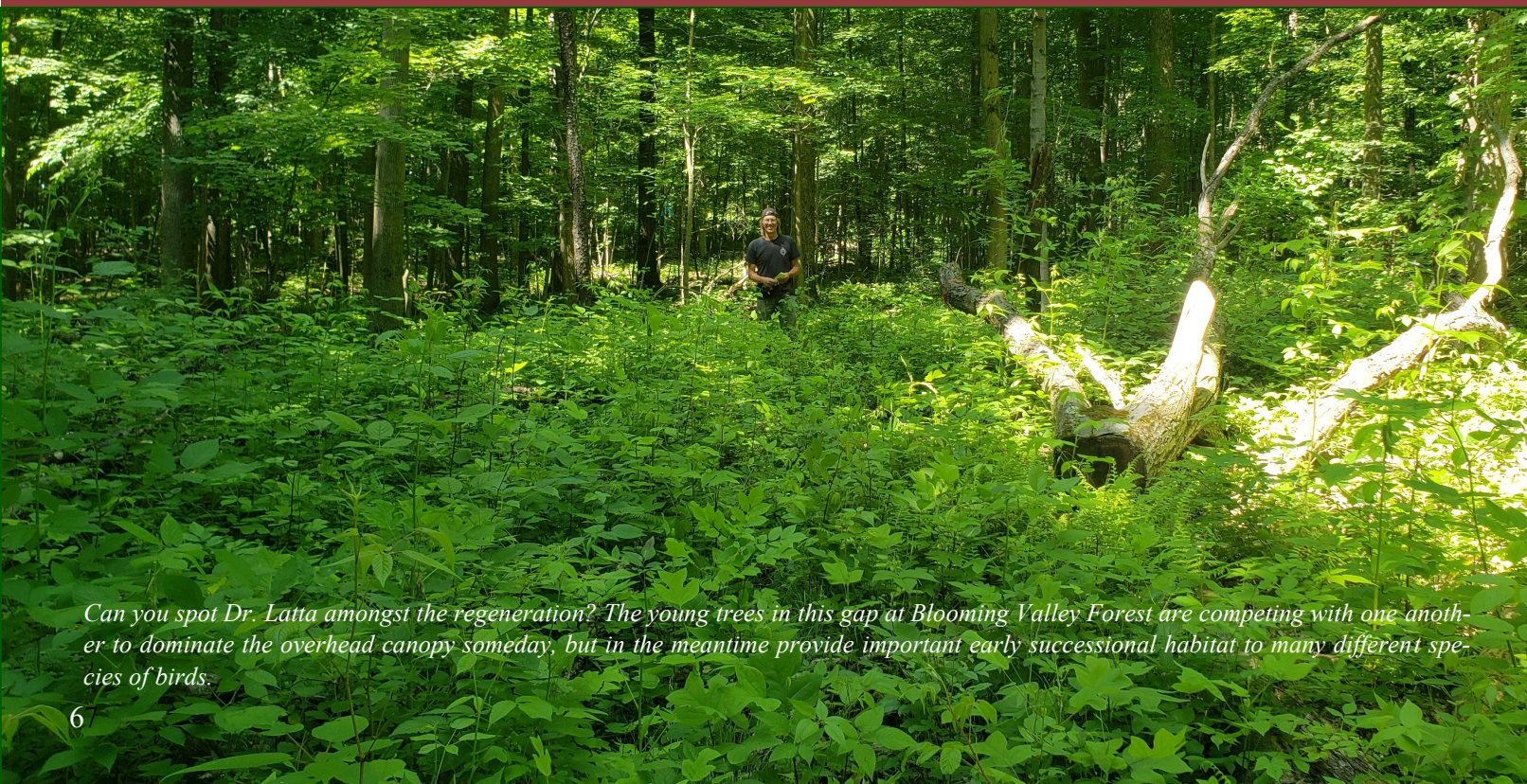
It is well-established that large clearcuts provide important habitat for a suite of birds that require early-successional habitat. Species like the Golden-winged

and Chestnut-sided warblers, Common Yellowthroat, and Indigo Bunting, are dependent on habitats with low brush and plenty of insects, seeds or fruit.

Recent work from the Allegheny National Forest and other locations, however, has shown that large clearcuts may also benefit a number of bird species that we normally think of as requiring extensive, mature forests. This includes the Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, and American Redstart. Fledglings of these species of birds leave their nest in deep forest locations to move into large clearcuts where they find lots of food and safe cover for the short but vitally important time in their life cycle prior to their first migration.

This situation would argue in favor of large clearcuts to benefit birds. But large clearcuts grow into even-aged forests, and while you can have many even-aged forests of different ages across the landscape, you still do not have heterogeneity of vegetation within any one forest. Even-aged forests are not ideal habitat for many species of birds, so the conundrum of forest management persists.

Enter the femelschlag! In this study, we are testing our hypothesis that FSF's diverse forests provide nesting



Can you spot Dr. Latta amongst the regeneration? The young trees in this gap at Blooming Valley Forest are competing with one another to dominate the overhead canopy someday, but in the meantime provide important early successional habitat to many different species of birds.



Left to Right: FSF Director/Land Manager Guy Dunkle stands with Dr. Steven Latta and his crew, Nancy Ransom and Shaina Kenny



A blue-winged warbler at the 144-acre Ewing Family Woods, near Corry, PA
Photo credit: Nancy Ransom

“Understanding the impacts of habitat by studying a bird’s body condition is a fascinating privilege, as is the opportunity to study how this unique forest management technique may benefit birdlife. Getting to spend the day within these forests is just an added treat!”

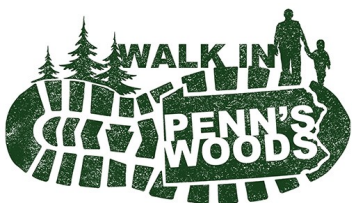
- Nancy Ransom, National Aviary Intern

habitat for mature forest species. Simultaneously, the femelshlag technique of small, group selection cuts provides nesting habitat for early-successional species, and critical post-fledging habitat for dispersing juveniles of mature forest species. If supported, FSF’s forests will demonstrate a unique ability to host very diverse bird populations.

Our fieldwork includes standardized counts of birds occurring in forest gaps and the surrounding forest matrix at Blooming Valley Forest, Thompsons’ Wood, Moxie Woods, Ewing Family Woods, Florarozze Forest, and Lay-Dopyera Forest. In addition, we use mist nets to sample bird diversity and abundance in the gaps. Mist nets allow us to safely and briefly capture birds for experts to take standard measurements of

body condition or health, and to mark the birds with small colored bands so that we can monitor their presence and survival without further captures.

As Nancy Ransom commented, “Understanding the impacts of habitat by studying a bird’s body condition is a fascinating privilege, as is the opportunity to study how this unique forest management technique may benefit birdlife. Getting to spend the day within these forests is just an added treat!” But beyond the joy of the forest experience, we are excited to see every day what birds we find in the forest, and we are confident that results from our study will, in time, have application to forest management for FSF, and other forest managers in Pennsylvania and beyond.



Take a Walk in Penn’s Woods - together!

Save the date for Sunday, October 3, 2021, 1-3pm

Join us for the 5th annual statewide walking event, which is back to being in person this year! More details to follow on by website, social media and email, or by calling (814) 694-5830



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The Foundation for Sustainable Forests is a 501(c)3 nonprofit land trust and outreach organization dedicated to conserving forested land and protecting sustainable working forests. Through direct ownership and active forest management we promote the protection and stewardship of healthy, resilient forests.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

August 10 - Erie Gives Day

Visit eriegives.org

August 30 & 31 - Crawford Gives Days

Visit crawfordgives.org

September 17 - Friends of the Foundation Dinner

Iroquois Boating & Fishing Club, Conneaut Lake, PA

September 18 - Loving the Land Through Working Forests

Thompsons' Wood, Centerville, PA

October 3 - Walk in Penn's Woods

Location to be determined.

November 6 - Fall Potluck

Woodland Lodge, Grand Valley, PA

**For more information, call (814) 694-5830
or visit Foundationforsustainableforests.org/events**