



# Through The Knothole

*a quarterly newsletter of the*

**HURONIA WOODLAND OWNERS' ASSOCIATION**

**Issue # 97**

[www.huron Woodwardowners.ca](http://www.huron Woodwardowners.ca)

**Autumn 2023**

*The Huronia Woodlot Owners' Association (HWOA) is a chapter of the Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA). Please note that membership with the provincial OWA automatically enrolls you as a member of the local HWOA (just be sure to indicate "Huron" on your OWA membership form).*

## **In this issue:**

*International Plowing Match - recap*

*Fall Field Day – recap*

## **Save the Date:**

*White Pine Award – Saturday Nov. 25, 2023 at Elmvale Legion (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)*

*Jack O'Hara Forestry Scholarship Award – applications sought by January 15*

*HWOA AGM - Saturday Feb. 17, 2024 at Guthrie Arena (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)*

*OWA AGM – April 23 and 24, 2024*

## **Recent Events:**

**International Plowing Match:** Bowling Green, Dufferin County

September 19 thru 23, 2023

**Jack McFadden** and **Sandy Agnew** volunteered at the Ontario Woodlot Owners booth to provide information to the many visitors at the plowing match. They also helped by providing chairs and tables for the booth.

Jack and Sandy both reported that they had several good discussions with woodlot owners who were interested in learning more about managing their private woodlands.

**HWOA Fall Field Day:** Saturday September 30, 2023 (9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m.)

This year's annual get-together was hosted by **Sandy Agnew** and **Lynn Melnyk** at their property at 1305 Scarlett Line, Oro-Medonte Township.

Sandy is well known throughout the area for his MFTIP planning, his commitment to environmental concerns, and his political involvements. Lynn is very much involved with horticultural organizations both locally and provincially.

The well-attended day started with a casual meet-and-greet, (light refreshments provided by Vermeer Canada Inc./**Craig Drury**). This was followed by a guided tour of two adjacent properties: neighbour Ernie Roskosch's conifer plantation, who is a participant in the small-woodlot Huronia Community Forest Cooperative; followed by a visit to an unmanaged (for the moment) reforestation site owned by the Huron Nature Conservancy.



The group was led by **Jim Eccles** of Eccles Forestry Services. He provided valuable information about species selections for planting, management of the plantation, forest succession, and the challenge of invasive species (including plants, insects and fungi).



**Jim Eccles explains thinning procedures**





**Huronian Woodland Owners visit the Roshkosh plantation that was recently thinned.**



**Dave Hawke holds the “rope tow” hand rail to allow participants an easier way to clamber up and down the steep entry slope.**





**Jim Eccles explains the challenges of harvesting a white spruce/European larch stand that contains wet soils and steep slopes.**

European larch (a foreign species) is best planted in a gravel site; but was often planted in wet soils thinking it would be similar to our Tamarack which does like to keep its roots damp. The result is that the trees mistakenly planted in wet sites are not doing that well for productivity.

After lunch speakers were **Travis van Engelen**, the Tree Plant Program Specialist from the Severn Sound Environmental Association, and **Lyle Wood** of the Hurononia Nature Conservancy.

**Aeisha Aggerwal** of the Couchiching Conservancy Land Trust also spoke about their organization's involvement with the Agnew Easement.



**Travis van Engelen, SSEA**



**Lyle Wood, Huronia Land Trust**





# THANK YOU



We wish to thank Vermeer Canada Inc. for supporting the Huronia Chapter of the Ontario Woodlot Association by supplying the refreshments, we have at our meetings throughout the year.

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## HWOA White Pine Award of Merit for Outstanding Contribution to Forest Conservation:

This prestigious award has been presented since 1981 to woodlot owners/managers to recognise and celebrate their dedication to good forestry practices.

The 43<sup>rd</sup> event will be held on **Saturday November 25, 2023** at the Elmvale Legion (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor), 1 – 3 p.m.

A recipient has been chosen but you will have to attend for the 'big reveal'!

Guest speaker for this event will be **John Williams**, talking about advice from the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association for the small-scale producer.



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## Jack O'Hara Forestry Scholarship

The HWOA awards the Jack O'Hara Forestry Scholarship annually. This **\$1,000 scholarship** is awarded to a College or University student who has completed one year or two semesters in a Forestry Program or a program that impacts on Forestry.

If you know of a forestry student (or are one) please consider a nomination for this award. There is value on receiving this when placed in a resume... and the thousand bucks can pay for a few forestry books! Full application form is on our website.



**Applications must be submitted by January 15<sup>th</sup> to Mark Scharf**  
([marjo.scharf@sympatico.ca](mailto:marjo.scharf@sympatico.ca))

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## **OWA Annual General Meeting and Conference:**

April 23 and 24, 2024. To be held at Horseshoe Valley Resort, Oro-Medonte Township.

The OWA and HWOA are co-hosting this annual event and the planning committee has already pulled together a great event. Day One will see a selection of tours (saw mills; Simcoe county museum; guided hike into Copeland Forest) and an excellent dinner evening. Day Two will provide several presentations (from Food Foraging in Your Woodlot to the role of Conservation Land Trusts) as well as a product tent to view and discuss forestry equipment, wild food foraging and safety equipment.

You will be receiving updates and registration information directly from OWA, so keep an eye on your email inbox!

If you have a woodland related product and would like a display table in the trade show, please contact director **Craig Drury**.

For other info contact **John Pineau** at OWA or local chair HWOA Director **Doug Frost**.

Planning committee includes **Doug Frost, Craig Drury, David Hawke** and **Curtis Gray**.

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Just so you know:

### **White Pine Blister Rust:**

By: David J. Hawke

White pine blister rust (WPBR) is one of the greatest challenges for a woodlot owner to deal with. This fatal fungus is found all across Simcoe County and has reduced many a plantation to a withered brown mess.

I, like so many others, once dreamed of creating a plethora of arrow-straight white pines that would eventually tower literally hundreds of feet above our heads (well, not our heads, but maybe the heads of our great grandchildren) ... just like the ones that were here in the 1880s. Alas, this notion is just not possible in today's world.

Although our provincial tree icon grows well in almost any soil condition, the recreating of a legendary log has been thwarted by WPBR (and pine shoot weevil, but that's another story).



Blister rust is a fungus that erupts through the bark of the branches and trunks of Eastern white pine, cutting off sap flow to areas beyond its infection site. Sometimes the effect is immediately noticed (brown needles) or sometimes it may take 3 – 5 years to really show itself in the tree's trunk (withered black corset constricting the trunk).



To combat WPBR you must understand its life cycle, as the fungus needs TWO hosts to complete a cycle. One is obviously the pine tree itself, and the other is a member of the Ribes family, better known as gooseberry or currants.

In the fall the fungus spores are released from the leaves of the gooseberry, and billions of spores drift with the wind up to five kilometers from the host plant. (To my knowledge the gooseberry bush does not die).

These spores then land on the growing tips of white pine, settling into the base of the season's growth of needles. The spores then enter the tree at the base of these needle clusters and are carried inwards along the branch.



Then it sits somewhat dormant for the winter.

Next spring as the fresh sap flows and nutrients are carried through out the tree, the fungus matures and breaks out through the bark, resulting in an orange powder of spores (see top photo).

These spores are picked up by spring breezes and carried to the nearby gooseberry bushes where it grows for the summer. Next fall, the withering gooseberry leaves release spores back to the pine plantation.



Red squirrels will eat the blister rust infection, easily showing you which trees have been infected (see middle photo).

We planted 2,200 white pine in 2009 and 50% have been removed to date due to blister rust and other problems.

So, by understanding the enemy, what are the weak points? How best to control the spread and impact of WPBR?

Step 1. Pull up every gooseberry bush you can find in the vicinity of the plantation. While it is easy to pull the shallow root system, beware of the very sharp micro thorns on the stems... can go



through a leather work glove and are annoyingly painful and long-lasting.

Step 2. Prune every branch that shows signs of the fungal spores erupting; cut right back to the trunk. NOTE: you cannot cause reinfection of a tree by causing a wound... the spores must first get to a gooseberry for a growth season.

Step 3. Remove (prune) every branch below the 2 metre height, thus removing 'landing platforms' for the autumn onslaught of spores. NOTE: practice proper pruning techniques and do not over-prune young trees; always leave about 1/3 of the tree unmolested.

Step 4. Remove sick and dying trees. Mine are at the 15-year age and are ready for a thinning cut anyways, so by targeting the affected ones I am hitting that 25% removal target. (Mind you, I am removing individual trees, not entire rows.)

As my plantation is 'accessible' and I have the time, energy, interest, enthusiasm and machinery available, I chip all the pruned branches on site.

#### Take away points:

- White pine blister rust is a reality and will be showing up sooner or later in your pine plantation.
- The fungus needs TWO hosts to complete its life cycle... try to break the cycle by removing the gooseberries.
- The fungus does NOT travel tree-to-tree, the spores enter externally when released by the gooseberry bush.
- It will take effort and diligence to get ahead of this fungus, especially when the lower branches are within that 2 metre height zone.

And then there's the dreaded pine shoot weevils... might cover that in the next issue.

*PLEASE NOTE: If you have a story or pictures of your woodlot, we'd be pleased to include them in future issues of "Through the Knothole". Contact **David Hawke**, editor.*

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## **Memberships:**

Please check that your OWA membership is current and paid up; there are reports that several (many!) memberships have lapsed. Please ensure that you are in good standing and that you have indicated your preference to be listed with the "**Huronian Chapter**". You can contact OWA or director **Jim Marchand** to clarify your status.

## **2023 DIRECTORS** (in alphabetical order)

**Chair:** rotating among Directors

**Bowden, David:** [david\\_bowden@hotmail.com](mailto:david_bowden@hotmail.com)

**Crawford, John:** (705-487-3373) [line8jcrawford@hotmail.com](mailto:line8jcrawford@hotmail.com)  
- Treasurer

**Douglas, Cam:** (705-487-7142) [cameron.douglas100@gmail.com](mailto:cameron.douglas100@gmail.com)  
- AGM secretary  
- Jack O'Hara Forestry Scholarship  
- White Pine Award

**Drury, Craig:** [Craig.Drury@vermeercanada.com](mailto:Craig.Drury@vermeercanada.com)  
- OWA AGM committee

**Ellesmere, Chris:** (705-726-8479) [careholstien1945@gmail.com](mailto:careholstien1945@gmail.com)

**Frost, Doug:** Website (705-487-5723) [doug@forksinthetrail.com](mailto:doug@forksinthetrail.com)  
- OWA Merger Advisory Committee;  
- OWA Cooperatives Committee;  
- Huronia Community Forest Co-Op;  
- OWA AGM committee  
- Website manager

**Hawke, David:** [david.hawke55@gmail.com](mailto:david.hawke55@gmail.com)  
- "Through the Knothole" editor;  
- OWA AGM Committee

**McFadden, Jack:** (705-534-0138) [jimcfadden@sympatico.ca](mailto:jimcfadden@sympatico.ca)  
- OWA Merger Advisory Committee;  
- OWA Cooperatives Committee;  
- Huronia Community Forest Co-Op

**Marchand, Jim:** (705-835-0094) [jimmarchand5@gmail.com](mailto:jimmarchand5@gmail.com)  
- OWA Director,  
- HWOA Chapter Rep.,  
- Membership

**Website:** [huroniawoodlandowners.ca](http://huroniawoodlandowners.ca)