Tall Timber Topics

A newsletter for those interested in Forestry, Woodland Management and Christmas Trees in Northwest Oregon

Fall 2013

The Oregonian has printed several Letters to the Editor in past weeks in response to a recent forestry-related article. One letter writer tried to distinguish a clearcut from a forest:

> *"an old-growth forest is a diverse and active ecosystem that has evolved over hundreds or even thousands of years. A tree farm on clear-cut land is a monoculture plantation forest that exists solely to produce a new crop for the timber harvest."*

That prompted a response from Ron Larson, a local Master Woodland Manager, and his wife Nicky. The Larsons wrote:

> *The distinction [that the previous] letter writer draws between a forest and a tree farm is too simplistic.*
>
> *We are members of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association. As the name implies, our tree farm -- Urwald Tree Farm -- is small. We are careful stewards of our forest. We plant, we thin and we harvest, avoiding clear-cutting as much as possible. We try to preserve its diversity.*
>
> *Members of our association work tirelessly to find new ways of making use of forest products. It is a serious challenge to keep the forest healthy and economically viable. Very few of us ever keep track of the hours we spend doing this work. It would mean acknowledging that it takes having a "real" job in order to be able to afford hanging on to the tree farm, in the hope that future generations may enjoy it as well.*

This short letter raises all sorts of points worthy of further reflection. But let's think about the first sentence, and the terminology that many "small woodland owners" use. Do you own a tree farm? Or a forest? Or both, or neither? Do the words that you use evoke a reaction from others?

I've never met a self-described Tree Farmer whose sole objective is to produce a new crop for harvest. On the flipside, I run across very few people who say they own a forest. Instead, they call it timber, woods, woodlands, "the farm", etc. Most of the land owners I know stay involved in the business of forestry (or whatever you want to call it) because they like tending the land, making it productive, being out in the woods, the physical labor, keeping up a tradition, or some combination of these. Very few would put communicating with the public about forestry at the top of that list. But like it or not, forestry is very much a public issue in Oregon. We are fortunate to have passionate woodland owners who can articulate its nuances to others.

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Upcoming Events

Washington County Small Woodlands Association Meeting
Tuesday, October 22nd, 7:00 pm
Washington County Fire District 2 Station, 31370 NW Commercial St., North Plains
Speaker: Jen Nelson, Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District: "Fun in the Forest"

Columbia County Small Woodlands Association Annual Meeting
Saturday, November 9th, 5:30 pm, Quincy Grange, Clatskanie
Speaker from Lewis River Nursery (supplier of CCSWA seedlings). Dinner reservations required: (503) 768-6753

Measuring Your Trees
Wednesday, Nov. 13th, 9:00 am— 1:00 pm
Miller Woods, 15580 NW Orchardview Rd., McMinnville
Join us in this field/classroom session that introduces the "latest/greatest" computer program for measuring your trees. ***Extension Manual (EM) 9059 Measuring Your Trees Workbook*** gives you all the computations for doing so in an extremely user-friendly Excel™ format. In our field session, we will go through the basics of how to properly establish plots and collect tree data. Then we'll record that information into ***EM 9059: Measuring Your Trees Workbook*** to generate results such as trees per acre, stand volumes, basal area, trees per acre, etc. Guest Instructor: "Treeman" Steve Bowers, OSU Extension Forester from Douglas County. This program is free, but **RSVP is requested** as we need a minimum number of participants to justify the instructor's travel. RSVP: 503-397-3462

Oregon Tree Farm System Annual Meeting, Workshop, and Recognition Luncheon
Monday, November 25th, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm; World Forestry Center, Portland
9:00—11:00 am: Forest Management Planning Tools Workshop: Forest Management Planning is one of the keys to successful woodland ownership and an up-to-date forest management plan is a requirement for certification under the American Tree Farm System. This workshop explores new computer-based tools that can make management plan development by landowners or consulting foresters much easier and complete. The following tools will be demonstrated: KnowYourForest.org, Oregon Forest Management Planning website, MyLandPlan, Woodland Discovery Tool, and Oregon Biodiversity Explorer. Workshop is free.
Noon—2:00 pm: Tree Farm Recognition Luncheon: Luncheon cost is $25. Program will honor all the County Tree Farmers of the Year and the Oregon Tree Farmer of the Year will be announced. For more information, contact Anne Hanschu, (503) 357-2551 or netvetrdh@gmail.com.

Woodland Resource Fairs
Wednesday, Dec. 4th, 5:30-7:00 pm, Columbia County Extension Office, St. Helens
Thursday, Dec. 12th, 5:30-7:00 pm, Yamhill County Extension Office, McMinnville
Find out about the various programs and sources of assistance available to small woodland owners in your area, in an informal "open house" format. Connect with local resource professionals, bring your questions, and (hopefully) take home some answers.

Check for more upcoming programs on these calendars:
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/forestry/events
http://calendar.oregonstate.edu/extension-forestry/
http://knowyourforest.org/events/upcoming

Using Foliar Herbicides: Getting the Bang for Your Buck

By Brad Withrow-Robinson, OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension, Benton, Linn & Polk Counties

Reprinted from TreeTopics, http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/treetopics, September 18, 2013

[Editor's note: This is the last in a four-part series on weed control and herbicide basics that was published on the TreeTopics blog in August-September. Go to the blog for the other installments: Weed control and herbicide basics, and Understanding foliar herbicides (parts 1 and 2). Please see Forestry Pesticide Disclaimers (box below).]

In recent entries in this series on the basics of herbicide use in weed control, I have reviewed how some foliar herbicides work, and the relationship between the plant's physiology and the herbicides' behavior. Now I want to illustrate how that that information translates to what gets done in the woods, looking at controlling blackberries, a frequent target of foliar herbicides.

Blackberries are a problem because they are widely dispersed by birds and start readily from seed and once established, rapidly spread vegetatively by tip rooting, quickly forming daunting patches seemingly too tall and wide to tackle. We've all seen these conditions in old pastures, riparian areas and struggling plantations.

Confronted by this situation (and assuming for this example it is a pre-plant, site preparation situation), many people begin by spraying the vigorously growing berries in the spring. Or by mowing them down in the summer, then starting to spray them when they reemerge later that year with glyphosate or triclopyr. Yes, it sure improves the looks of the place, and often seems to solve the problem for a while…but it is not generally a highly effective approach. The roots are not killed and the plants soon come charging back. Both of these approaches often lead to a cycle of repeated, frequent and arguably unnecessary spraying.

Why do these treatments not work very well? There are two issues involved here: timing and coverage.

Let's begin with timing. As discussed previously, foliar herbicides need to be carried down to the roots to kill the plant. In the spring and after a disturbance like mowing, the plant is pushing reserves up to support growth rather than stockpiling them. Spraying a translocated herbicide (such as glyphosate or triclopyr) on the plant at that time is like pushing a string up hill. In each case the treatment tends to kill the tops, but not the roots.

Now let's talk about the target. To be effective, you need to get enough herbicide absorbed by the plant to kill it. Mowing has some clear advantages, but reduces the target. The plant has a much smaller canopy, fewer leaves, so less surface area to catch and absorb the herbicide. But the roots are still about the same size, so you get a much smaller relative dose carried to the roots. Spring spraying generally burns the top without killing the plant. Think of it as "chemical mowing". Like mechanical mowing this makes subsequent sprays later in the season less effective than they might be.

Forestry Pesticide Disclaimers

The attention given to herbicides does not indicate an advocacy for their use but an acknowledgement that using herbicides presents some unique risks, and that landowners and managers need to know enough about them to make informed decisions on their use.

Trade-name products are mentioned as illustrations only. This does not mean that the Oregon State University Extension Service either endorses these products or intends to discriminate against products not mentioned.

Use pesticides safely!

Wear protective clothing and safety devices as recommended on the label. Bathe or shower after each use.

Read the pesticide label—even if you've used the pesticide before. Follow closely the instructions on the label (and any other directions you have).

Be cautious when you apply pesticides. Know your legal responsibility as a pesticide applicator. You may be liable for injury or damage resulting from pesticide use.

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So what are the alternatives? Generally, your first chance is your best chance. Make it count. Take advantage of timing and coverage. Avoid mowing berries before you spray and spray when the blackberry plant will do some of the work for you and carry the herbicide to the roots. For triclopyr that is probably from flowering to the first frost. For glyphosate, there is a narrower window in the late summer and fall.

Even a wall of blackberries can be tackled.

"But my blackberries are much too big for that!" you say. Probably not. A blackberry patch is often really many small patches, with some paths and alleyways. And besides, a surprisingly large patch can be treated from the edges with a wand and a small ATV-mounted sprayer, or even a back pack sprayer and an adjustable nozzle. Stand up on an ATV or truck, or lay a couple 2×12 down in the patch to help you reach farther in. This way you can take advantage of the surface area there, and get good spray coverage on the leaves when it can be most effective.

You can mow dead canes the following spring to give better access, but allow a full summer for re-growth before treating again, to allow them to build target and begin translocating downward. You can also treat plants at the center of the patch you could not reach the first time. This way you are using both the plant's physiology and the herbicide's activity to your best advantage, improving the effectiveness of the spray and also reducing the time, effort and amount of chemical used.

A couple years since mowing, this plant has two years of cane growth and is suitable for treatment in the fall.

Reading this on paper?

You can receive this newsletter (in full color and with working links) and other news by subscribing to our email list.

Just send an email to vicki.krenz@oregonstate.edu and request to be on the forestry email list.

Please indicate which county you are in. Include a physical address and phone number (so we can remove you from our paper mailing list and keep our email list current).

Birds of a Feather: the Great Blue Heron

By Sarah Karr, Polk County Master Woodland Manager

Unlike other birds featured here, this bird is not known for its enchanting song or its flash of bright color as it flits from the ripening cherries to the tips of the Douglas-firs. Far from it. This bird is most often seen out in fields, standing tall and ever-so-still, at least until it strikes. Yes, the Great Blue Heron is a spectacular, easy-to-identify breed that has found a perfect nesting spot above a pond that abuts our forest property. Luckily for us, we can spot the nest easily from a comfortable perch in the woods.

For years, herons have been flying (awkwardly) into a bank of mature oaks and firs that line the east side of the pond. We have seen up to eight of them land, bounce, and sway in those branches; with a wingspan of seven feet, they make quite an impression. Typically, the group moves on within a day or so, but sometimes a pair or two will linger around an old nest built on the supportive branches of one of the large oaks, nests that are easy to spot from year to year because of the white "paint" that drapes the branches below them. This year, one pair stayed. And stayed. They freshened up one of the nests, a single stick at a time. In the following weeks, we watched one adult, or the other, sitting in the nest. Finally, they moved aside, and in their place were two fledglings. The young ones have continued to grow (and squawk raucously), with the parents swooping in occasionally to regurgitate the local fare: it could be fish, snakes, frogs, voles, or even ducklings from the pond below. At first the feedings were frequent, but by mid-July had tapered off to every few hours. Perhaps the parents decided the pair needed some encouragement to leave the nest; there's nothing like hunger as a motivator.

Photo: Jim Cummins

I have written in the past about how we have chosen to keep hardwoods in our forests, at least in part to provide the kind of habitat diversity that will encourage a variety of birds to spend time there. In the case of the Great Blue Heron (GBH), we have found that by limiting management activities in our older stands of oaks near the pond on our property line, we have helped provide ideal habitat for a number of birds that benefit from feeding and nesting perches above the water. While the GBH can nest on the ground or in other large trees away from bodies of water, a setting over water can provide some predator control from below. The higher branches in the oaks mask the presence of nests from overhead predators such as bald eagles and hawks.

We try to keep large oaks on our property by removing or thinning Douglas-fir trees that begin to crowd them. To us, these large oaks are a unique resource, irreplaceable in our lifetime.

It is more typical for GBHs to nest in colonies than a single pair, like ours. There can easily be dozens of nests in established rookeries, and there was a report in the literature of a colony of more than one thousand birds. Having heard this pair, and their two young, I cannot begin to imagine the commotion (or sheer white paint factor) that would accompany a site like that, and, honestly, I'm not eager to see it.

Western Oak Looper

If you live or traveled through the West Valley this summer – especially around Sheridan – then you likely noticed patches of oaks that seemed to have turned brown abnormally early. This was the mark of the western oak looper, a native insect that made its appearance this year.

About every 15 years, the western oak looper population builds up to outbreak levels in scattered patches across the Valley. The inchworms feed on oak leaves as well as the leaves of just about any other tree that happens to be in an oak stand – Douglas-fir, bigleaf maple, cherry, and so on. In late summer the inchworms begin to descend from the canopy on silken threads to the lower trunk of the tree, or the ground, where they transform into moths.

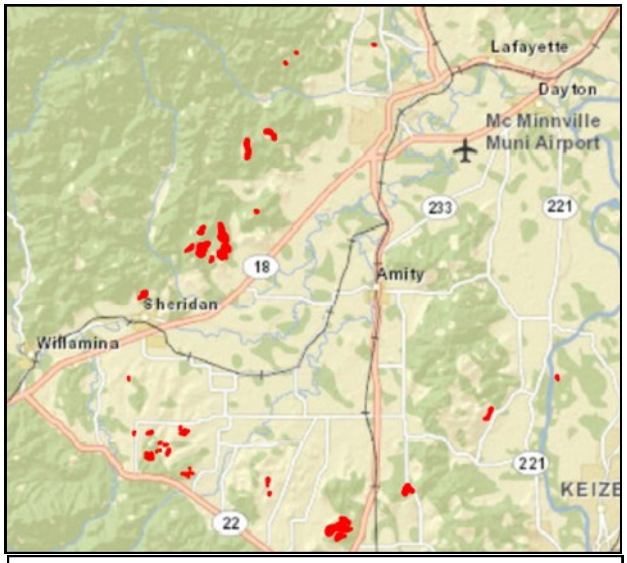
Adult western oak looper moth. Source: U.S. Forest Service

There have been reports of the adult moths now appearing. In an outbreak year such as this one, there may be huge swarms of moths in affected areas through October (keep your porch light turned off).

The Oregon Department of Forestry and OSU Extension began receiving many reports of the inchworms and defoliated oaks in July. After some scouting on the ground, ODF conducted an aerial survey in September to assess the impact of the western oak looper. They estimate that about 2,500 acres were heavily affected with the largest patches near Sheridan, Rickreall, and south of Corvallis (see map).

This is one of those forest insects that cause quite a stir when they appear, but forest health experts are not too concerned about the damage they cause. For one, although they can completely defoliate a tree, since they largely feed on deciduous hardwoods, these trees simply grow new leaves the following year (conifers may be harder hit, since it takes them several years to rebuild lost foliage). Secondly, the outbreaks tend to be short-lived; after a couple of years, natural pathogens and predators seem to cause the population to crash back down to background levels.

For more information on the western oak looper, and photos of the inchworms and defoliation, see "Oregon White Oak in the Willamette Valley, Summer 2013" by Dave Shaw, OSU Forest Health Specialist, at http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/treetopics.



Western oak looper defoliation (Yamhill County area), September 2013. Source: Oregon Dept. of Forestry

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https://facebook.com/osufnr

"Log" on and engage with the Oregon forestry community from your home, from the forest, from just about anywhere!

Five Points to Ponder on Forest Roads

By Steve Bowers, OSU Extension Forestry & Natural Resources, Douglas County

[Editor's note: the author's original article contained TEN points to ponder. Due to space limitations, I've selected the five that seemed the most applicable to landowners in our area. Contact me for a copy of the complete ten points]

The following are some points to ponder in terms of road maintenance and repair. These are anecdotal in nature and were taken over the course of a few days as I was performing my annual, late summer road inspection regime. Anyone desiring the full-meal-deal can contact OSU Extension and order the recently revised **Managing Woodland Roads: A Field Guide** (see page 8).

Don't be too parsimonious when spreading that rock, especially on an existing rocked surface. Rock needs to be spread a depth sufficient to allow the "fines" to adequately mix with "open" material. Spreading too thin a layer will result in the inability of the rock to adequately bind together. The roadway cannot "set-up" and the results will be a loose, non-compacted running surface. The issue will be exacerbated with the coming precipitation which can wash-out the fines and the larger aggregate will not compact sufficiently, resulting in poor traction, which leads to wash-boarding, potholes and eventual degradation of the roadway. Rock should be spread a minimum of four inches in depth.

You get what you pay for *(pardon the ending preposition).* The number of rock quarries in western Oregon has increased the past few years. Many woodland owners have an option in terms of a source for their rock, so shop around and get the best available rock at the best possible price. There are quarries who, attempting to increase business, will offer a "deal" on oftentimes low quality rock (usually crushed rock that contains excessive overburden). The lesson here is to remember that rock of a lower quality cannot be substituted in additional volumes and equate to higher quality rock in smaller volumes. The additional volume of lower quality material (sometimes the quality is so low that no volume is sufficient) will exceed the cost of a lesser volume of higher quality material (and remember the additional trucking costs).

When traveling uphill, if possible, use 4-wheel drive when traveling on a "fresh" rocked surface or older roadway that contains loose, non-compacted rock. Every time you spin your tires on a rocked surface, it becomes more difficult to negotiate that roadway without additional traction issues. If you don't own a 4-wheel drive vehicle, negotiate the road using the lowest engine rpms possible applying just enough power to traverse the slope(s).

If abandoning a dirt road during the wet season (which you should) then it's waterbars: deep and often! Different soils react differently to the deleterious effects of running water, but you should assume the worst. When constructing a waterbar, cut the roadway at an angle to diminish the force of the running water and cut into the road surface; do not just push/pile loose soil as a berm. Compact the displaced soil by walking the skidder, tractor or dozer back and forth thus reducing the potential for erosion. This may require additional excavation for the structure, but that is a good thing. If deep is good, deeper is better. A good indicator regarding sufficient depth of a dirt waterbar is knowing you would drag the bottom of your vehicle if attempting to cross it. A hand shovel is entirely inadequate.

If constructing or upgrading a road segment for an off-season harvesting operation, do not underestimate the effects of an 80,000 log truck. "The book" says a foot of rock is required to adequately support truck traffic during a wet weather operation. This is an example where "the book," may have got it wrong. It will require at least that much, plus maintenance and repair in terms of track spreading and trouble spots. It cannot be overstated: do not underestimate the wear-and-tear of heavy truck traffic on your woodland road during the wet season.

New Extension Publications

EC 1640, Shrubs to Know in Pacific Northwest Forests
Authors: Edward C. Jensen, David Zahler; New September 2013, 148 pages, $12.00
This full-color, simple-to-use field guide features 100 of the most common shrubs that grow in and around Pacific Northwest forests—from southern British Columbia to northern California and from the Pacific Ocean to the northern Rockies. Includes an overview of shrub communities in the Pacific Northwest; more than 500 color photos; individual range maps and complete descriptions for each species; notes on range and habitat, response to disturbance, traditional and current uses, and origin of names; glossary of identification terms; and an easy-to-use, well-tested identification key.
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/abstract.php?seriesno=EC+1640

PNW 641, Managing Woodland Roads
Authors: Steve Bowers, Paul Adams; New September 2013, 104 pages, $11.00
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/abstract.php?seriesno=PNW+641

EM 9063, Identifying and Managing Mountain Beaver Damage to Forest Resources
Authors: Jimmy Taylor, Donivan Sphar, Glenn Ahrens; New July 2013, 8 pages, no charge
http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/41675/em9063.pdf

EM 9064, Growing Your Peer Learning Network — Tools and Tips from Women Owning Woodlands Network
Authors: Allyson Muth, Amanda Subjin, Eli Sagor, Nicole Strong, Tamara Walkingstick;
New August 2013, 78 pages, $18.00
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/em/em9064_toc.pdf

EM 9087, A Land Manager's Guide for Creating Fire-Resistant Forests
Authors: Stephen Fitzgerald, Max Bennett; New October 2013, 14 pages, no charge
http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/43073/EM9087.pdf

Other Publications of Interest

Wildlife in Managed Forests: Deer and Elk
By Fran Cafferata Coe. Published by Oregon Forest Resources Institute.
Download or order a printed copy from http://oregonforests.org/content/ofri-resources

Tax Tips for Forest Landowners for the 2013 Tax Year
By Linda Wang and John Greene. Published by the U.S. Forest Service.
Download a printed copy of this 2-page, annual update at:
http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/taxtips2013.pdf

Trees and Forests in the News

Portland airport wades into free-speech fight by rejecting anti-clearcutting ad (*The Oregonian*, September 19)

The proposed billboard, which reads "Welcome to Oregon: home of the clearcut" is part of a campaign opposing legislation currently under consideration by Congress that would increase timber harvesting on federal lands.

Forest Service stopping logging on national forests across country due to government shutdown (*Washington Post,* October 4)

The agency plans to notify 450 timber purchasers across the country that timber sales and stewardship contracts will be suspended. Because these activities require Forest Service oversight and management, logging is being shut down on 150 national forests nationwide during the funding lapse.

When dice fall in the forest, do they help make science? (*The Columbian*, September 22)

If you look down on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest from the air, you might be able to make out strange timber harvest patterns that look like dice. These are actually part of a decades –long experiment to evaluate the ecological aspects of green tree retention. Researchers from OSU and the Forest Service are still working on the study.

Cost-Share Available from Oregon Department of Forestry

Local ODF Stewardship Foresters are now accepting landowner applications (cost-share) for development of Forest Management Plans. Applications will be accepted until October 31st, 2013. Any landowner who is interested should contact their local Oregon Department of Forestry stewardship forester for details. There is also more information at this website: http://www.oregon.gov/odf/privateforests/pages/incentivesfsp.aspx

In our region, depending on the county, ODF is also accepting applications for assistance with various fire mitigation practices, including fuels reduction, creation of defensible space, and structural fire assessment. Again, contact your local ODF stewardship forester for details.

NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) also is accepting applications for funding assistance for management plans and other practices, but as of this writing their offices are closed due to the government shutdown.

Attention NRCS Clients

OSU Extension Service is conducting a research study examining the impacts and benefits of forest management planning in Oregon. We invite any individual who has received compensation from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for a forest management plan to participate in the project. Participation entails completing a survey about your management plan, your reasons for obtaining one, and your forest management activities. The survey is completely confidential. If you qualify for this study and would like to participate, please contact Vicki Krenz at (503) 397-3462 or Vicki.krenz@oregonstate.edu.

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