

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

**Spring 2014**

For the second straight newsletter, I am kicking things off by talking about the weather. You don't need to hear it from me that the last couple of months of winter were pretty soggy. Our rainfall gauge at the Columbia County Extension Office recorded eight inches of rain in March.

For comparison, the "normal" March rainfall at our location is 4.3 inches. (In climatology terms, normal refers to the average over a 30-year timespan; 1981-2010 in this case.) The story in February was similar, with 6.3 inches recorded at our office that month compared with the 30-year normal of 4.7 inches.

What may be surprising is that despite the recent rains, as of April 1st we are still well below average precipitation for the water year. The water year begins on October 1st to coincide with the typical onset of fall rains. The [Pacific Northwest Climate Impacts Research Consortium](#) reports that "one and a half wet months did not make up for four dry months," in their most recent seasonal climate outlook. Consequently, most of our area was still considered to be in a moderate drought situation as of the end of March, according to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#).

Sure enough, the data from our rain gauge bear this out. Since October 1st, we've recorded 26.5 inches of precipitation. This is a full six inches below the 30-year normal for the water year to date, and the least amount of winter rain we've received since 2004-05. If you are interested, our rain gauge data is on the [CoCoRaHS](#) website and the 30-year normal data comes from the [PRISM](#) climate website.

With our winter now in the books, thoughts turn to spring and summer. Look inside for articles and listings of upcoming area educational programs, and pick up some tips to improve the management of your woodland in the season to come.



*High flow on the Tualatin River, February 2014*

**Amy Grotta**

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## Upcoming Events



### **Log Scaling Workshop**

**Saturday, April 19th, Van Natta Tree Farm, Rainier (follow signs off Apiary Rd.)**

Sponsored by Columbia County Small Woodlands Association. 9:00 am coffee/donuts. 10 am log scaling starts. Logs will be laid out, scaled, and each will be discussed by a local log scaling bureau. Noon: box lunches (\$10 for non-CCSWA members). Space is limited. RSVP required by April 7th to [globe.trotters.email@gmail.com](mailto:globe.trotters.email@gmail.com) or 503-568-4929.

### **Washington County Small Woodlands Association Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 22nd, 7:00 pm, North Plains Fire Hall, 31370 NW Commercial St., North Plains**

Speaker is Fran Cafferata Coe. Fran, a Certified Wildlife Biologist, will discuss managing timber while considering wildlife from plantations to final harvest.

### **Yamhill County Small Woodlands Association Meeting**

**Wednesday, April 23rd, OSU Extension Auditorium, 2050 NE Lafayette Avenue, McMinnville**

Social hour 6:30 pm/program 7:00 pm. Speaker is Mark McKelvie, Consulting Forester. Mark will discuss the pros and cons of commercial thinning.

### **Build Local Alliance Spring Showcase— Red Alder**

**Thursday, April 24th, 6:30 pm, 625 SW 10th Ave, Portland**

Learn about the ecology of red alder in the forest and its uses as a wood product. Information and registration: [www.buildlocalalliance.org](http://www.buildlocalalliance.org)

### **Backpack Sprayer Calibration Workshop**

**Tuesday, June 10th, 5:00—7:00 pm, Gales Creek**

OSU Extension's Chal Landgren will instruct this hands-on workshop. Applying herbicides at the correct rate is essential to their effectiveness and safety. With a backpack sprayer, the application rate depends on your equipment and walking speed. In this class you will learn how to correctly calibrate a backpack sprayer to ensure that you apply herbicides at the correct rate. Bring your own equipment (sprayer and nozzles) if you have them and a calculator. Space is limited to 20 people and RSVP is required. To register call 503-397-3462. Directions will be provided upon RSVP.

### **Columbia County Twilight Tour—Stream Restoration**

**Thursday, June 19th, 6:00—8:00 pm, Rainier**

Co-sponsored by OSU Extension, Columbia County Small Woodlands Association, Lower Columbia River Watershed Council, and Dan Kloppman (tour host). The focus of the tour is on a voluntary stream restoration project completed last year on the Clatskanie River, which flows through the Kloppman property. The Kloppmans worked with local agencies to place large logs in and alongside the river in order to improve fish habitat. Margaret Magruder from the Watershed Council will join Dan to discuss how the project came about, how it was done, and how it is working so far. No RSVP necessary. Address: 66041 Apiary Rd, Rainier. Contact/questions: Amy Grotta, 503-397-3462

**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>

## Operations on family forestlands not making the grade for fire preparedness

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

Reprinted from TreeTopics, <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/treetopics>, March 21, 2014

It is never really too early to think about fire season. With fire season comes rules and regulations that affect both the general public and forest landowners. Nearly everyone is affected by some, such as rules for [basic fire tools to be carried](#) when driving on forest roads during regulated use.



Photo: Oregon Dept. of Forestry

If you operate during fire season, then there are other specific rules regarding fire prevention and preparedness that will apply to you. These rules address water supply and fire equipment, fire watch and preventative actions and steps that are meant to prevent wildfire and protect landowners from fire damage, injury and fire cost liability.

ODF foresters regularly visit operations to check on fire rules compliance. Deficiencies typically lead to warnings, but if left unaddressed, may lead to citations, fines and in rare cases may leave landowners liable for all fire suppression costs.

I recently saw results for the ODF West Oregon District (predominantly in Lincoln, Benton and Polk Counties) of 132 compliance inspections of active operations in 2013. The good news is that 79% passed. But there were fairly big differences between the results on Industrial lands, Federal lands and nonindustrial lands. Let's just say that operators on family forest lands are not leading the class, with just 69% passing. That means that nearly a third of operations on family forestlands were not up to snuff. Critical deficiencies revealed include inadequate pumps, too little water and not enough fire hose and inadequate maintenance.

Note that the small landowner numbers represent two groups: those who are doing their own operation, so need to have their own fire equipment on site, and those who hire an operator and so are depending on that operator to keep them in compliance. From what I understand, neither group is making the Dean's list.

As a whole, you could call it a passing grade I guess... a D+. But that is not the kind of grade we want to see on our kids' report cards, nor does it represent the level of preparedness we would like to see in the small woodlands community. It is important to try to improve that situation.

### 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](mailto: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).

## Spring's Scotch broom show is around the corner

By Amy Grotta

Reprinted from TreeTopics, <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/treetopics>, March 13, 2014



As tree planting season winds down and the weather warms, we are already starting to see buds popping on spring's earliest bloomers. Soon the spring explosion will be in full force. It won't be long before the hillsides are brilliant yellow – and not with daffodils.

Colorful and abundant as it is, Scotch broom is one of the more serious forest weeds that we have to contend with. The Oregon Department of Agriculture has estimated the economic impact of Scotch broom on Oregon forestland at \$47 million annually – that figure includes lost forest productivity and control costs.

Shade from a closed forest canopy is the ultimate control for Scotch broom, but unless the infestation is minor, using this passive approach is undesirable. Dense Scotch broom outcompetes desired vegetation including tree seedlings, produces seed that persists in the soil for decades, and reduces biodiversity.

Different people have their preferred methods of controlling Scotch broom. Good recommendations can be found in two publications available through the [OSU Extension Catalog](#):

- PNW 103, "[Scotch Broom: Biology and Management in the Pacific Northwest](#)"
- EC 1598-E, "[Invasive Weeds in Forest Land: Brooms](#)"

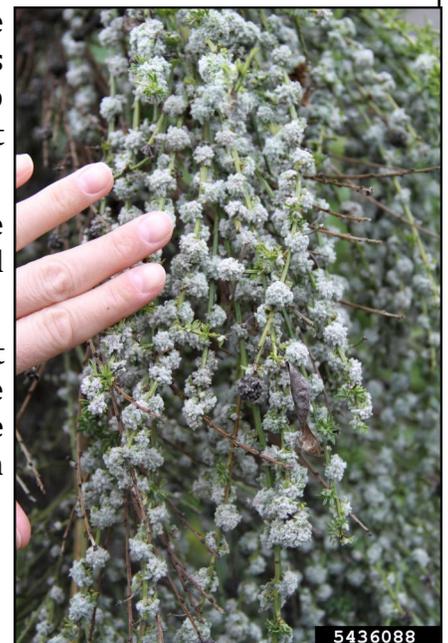
Whatever control method you choose (hand pulling, mowing, spraying, etc.), timing is everything. As tempting as it may be to tackle your Scotch broom when it is in full flower and easy to spot, this can be counterproductive in the end if care is not taken. For example:

- Plants that are cut or mowed in spring tend to resprout. If using this control method, it is best to wait until the driest part of the summer, when the plant is stressed and before the seeds have fully matured.
- While Scotch broom is quite susceptible to correctly applied herbicide during the bloom period, some herbicides can harm conifer seedlings in the springtime, if the buds on the conifers have already begun to swell/break. Consult the Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook for specifics (<http://pnwhandbooks.org/weeds>).

Scotch broom has a few natural enemies that may aid in the fight. These insect predators, called biological controls, are researched and regulated by the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

One of these, a bud gall mite, [just showed up in Oregon](#) within the last decade. Scotch broom plants infested with the bud gall mite would have weirdly deformed buds and little to no flowering, like shown in the photo. If you suspect that you have seen this, contact your Extension office as there is interest in the spread of this natural enemy.

Photo credits: Eric Coombs, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, [bugwood.org](http://bugwood.org)



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## Contending with overgrown Christmas trees

By Amy Grotta

Reprinted from TreeTopics, <http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/treetopics>, March 10, 2014

It's a familiar story. A few acres of Christmas trees were planted on the farm, perhaps for tax purposes, or because they were seen as a low-maintenance investment, or maybe because the market was strong at the time. Fast forward a couple decades...the land has changed hands, and the Christmas trees, well, they never did make it into someone's living room. Now, the new owner has "escaped" Christmas trees to contend with.



The escaped Christmas trees at Tualatin River Farm

This is the situation at Tualatin River Farm, a 60-acre property now under a conservation easement and being turned into a working educational and demonstration farm and riparian restoration site. About five acres of the site is in this old noble fir plantation, presumed to have been planted for Christmas trees, and estimated to be about 25 years old. The new property managers wish to transform this area into a mixed upland forest, more representative of what might naturally occur on the site. What to do, they asked? Can these trees be saved?

Some considerations:

- The stand displays all the visual signs of an overstocked forest: no vegetation growing on the ground, trees with a very high [height-to-diameter ratio](#), and with a very low ratio of [live canopy to total tree height](#). All of these add up to a situation where the trees are at an unhealthy density.
- The trees are so close together, that one can barely walk between them. Getting any of them down in a thinning scenario would be challenging. It might be feasible to remove every third or fourth row, but even then the stand would still resemble an orderly plantation...not the type of forest that is desired by the owner in this case.
- The trees are noble firs, which make fine Christmas trees, but which would not naturally be found at this elevation (<200 feet) just above the floodplain. Here, they are an "offsite" species, and as they mature become more susceptible to diseases. Aerial photos show evidence of possible disease pockets.

A pocket of dead trees in a low-lying area suggests possible root disease (2010 Google Earth photo)



So, can these trees be saved? Probably not. Given the owner's goals, it's likely best to start over with a clean slate.

*(continued on next page)*



*Gradual thinning has resulted in better density, understory regeneration (and lots of firewood).*

A portion of this stand is in better shape. Presumably, some Christmas trees were actually harvested here, so that when the rest “escaped” the stocking was already patchier and less dense. And, the previous owner had been taking out trees here and there over the years for firewood. The remaining trees have a healthier live crown ratio (more of the tree’s trunk still has live branches attached); indicating that thinning probably started a while ago.

Choices for this part of the stand are not as clear-cut (pardon the pun). The managers wondered, should they continue gradually thinning out the overstory, and plant underneath with native trees and shrubs? Cut out a few patches to allow more sunlight in, giving the option to plant in more sun-loving species? As the nobles age,

more will probably succumb to disease. They could become snags, which could be seen as an asset (for wildlife/structural complexity) or a liability (as a hazard tree – recall that the farm is to be used for education, with lots of kids and other groups visiting). There’s no right answer, but starting over might be the best option here too.

If this situation rings true for you, it’s important to remember that Christmas tree fields do not grow up to become healthy forests, at least not without some careful planning. Gilbert Shibley, a Clackamas County Master Woodland Manager, has developed some useful materials on the promises and pitfalls of converting escaped Christmas trees. Contact me for a copy.

## Logging Plans? Read this First

*Adapted and reprinted from the Douglas County Woodlander, Spring 2014*

Property boundary disputes are one of the most contentious of all subject areas for woodland owners. One of the most often encountered “encroachments” on property boundaries involves timber harvesting. Timber cruisers establishing boundaries when laying out harvest units subject themselves to provisions of land surveyors’ registration laws. Normally, the duties of a timber cruiser do not include a legal survey of the land, but merely the examination of timber on that land. The practice of professional land surveyors is “...in charge of the surveying of the land for the establishment of corners, lines, boundaries, and monuments...and/or the preparing of maps and accurate records and descriptions thereof.”

Should a timber cruiser undertake the authority to establish boundary lines, corners or monuments, or locate corners, lines and boundaries, they are functioning as a land surveyor and are subject to the provisions of land surveyors’ registration laws. Any individual planning on removing timber from a given area, and relying on a timber cruiser to mark a harvest boundary and who is not a professional land surveyor, does so at their own peril. In the event the harvest boundary encroaches upon the property of an adjacent landowner, such encroachment amounts to a trespass. Any trees removed, or damage inflicted, renders the party guilty of trespass and liable for damages.

Additionally, if there is no evidence the individual harvesting the trees made an effort to locate the boundaries prior to the trespass, then that individual is guilty of a trespass. The exact location may not have been apparent from any existing physical evidence at the time of the trespass, but at all times the location could have been re-established by a survey. It is the responsibility of the landowner to determine in advance the exact location of their boundary line.

Oregon statutes state that damages can be assessed against a party guilty of removing trees on the property of another, and double or triple damage may be obtained depending on the circumstances under which the timber was removed. So the moral of the story is: look before you leap: survey before you cut: and use the right people for the right job.

## Birds of a Feather—The Spotted Towhee

By Sarah Karr, Polk County Master Woodland Manager



As I write these words, icy cold rain is falling on about 17 inches of snow outside my window. When you *read* these words, daffodils will be appearing, and migratory birds will be singing to one another in our forests, hoping to pair up with the perfect mate (or two, depending on the species). While realizing the mix of birds in our woods will be quite different in a couple of months, I am writing today about a bird that has been with us through the winter and will continue to be here even as those flashy migrants settle in: the Spotted Towhee.

The Spotted Towhee, once known as the Rufous-sided Towhee, is a beautiful bird with a distinctive, buzzy "chweee" song. Smaller than the American Robin by an inch or so, it has a glossy black head and neck, a white-spotted black back, rufous sides, and a white belly. The female is only slightly paler. It is in the same family as



Photo credit: [www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com)

most of our sparrows, along with the Dark-eyed Junco. It is not, however, in the same family as the American Robin or other thrushes. Nope. Well-intentioned committees decide these things. They also periodically rename the birds. Think about how the Winter Wren has become the Pacific Wren, the Alaska Robin the Varied Thrush, and now, the Rufous-sided Towhee the Spotted Towhee. But I digress.

During the winter months, you may have seen the Spotted Towhee double-scratching through leaf litter. It has been looking for seeds and any bugs it can find. Kicking up the top layer of leaves and needles allows it to reach all of these favored food items, and, in winter, it adds a bit of gravel to the mix. The hard material scavenged in winter may be the reason that the bill of the Spotted Towhee is smaller than in the summer...all that grinding. It typically searches for food at the edge of brushy

areas, not deep inside and seldom out in the open. Cover minimizes the chance that it will be spied by its major predators:

the Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. Once spring arrives and nesting season begins, the Spotted Towhee's diet shifts to one that is higher in bugs...beetles, moths, caterpillars, ants, spiders. Nests, active in our area from late April into July, are usually located on or just above the ground. Because of this, predators such as Western Scrub

Jays and ground squirrels, not to mention feral and domestic cats, can become a threat to the eggs and nestlings.

Spotted Towhees are monogamous and territorial. The males will fight one another aggressively to maintain their favored patch: brushy vegetation. Spotted Towhees live, nest,

and hunt for food where there are thickets and other vegetation that offer deep cover and shrubby edges. When managing forests to protect these birds, remember to leave things messy.

So, as spring rolls in, don't forget that along with all of the colorful, melodic activity of migratory songbirds, just under the edge of that poison oak thicket is a bird that has been with us all winter long, the Rufous-sided, no, Spotted Towhee. To actually hear the song of the Spotted Towhee, to find out why we now have the Spotted Towhee and the Eastern Towhee in place of the Rufous-sided Towhee, and to see where most of this information I gathered comes from, go to:

[www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org), [www.bna.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.bna.birds.cornell.edu) and *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior*, published by the National Audubon Society.

## New Publications and Resources

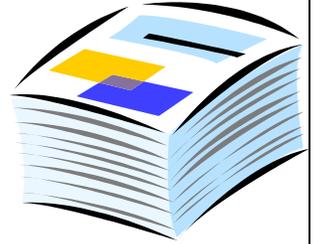
### Publications

#### Preventing herbicide drift and injury to grapes (EM 8860)

Authors: Daniel A. Ball, Mary Corp, and Imed Dami; Revised February 2014, 7 pages

Published by OSU Extension Service. Download free of charge:

<https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1957/45880/em8860.pdf>



#### Techniques and Tools for Monitoring Wildlife on Small Woodlands

Author: Fran Cafferata Coe; 2013; 6 pages

Published by Woodland Fish and Wildlife. Download free of charge:

<http://woodlandfishandwildlife.com/pubs/Monitoring-v7.pdf>

#### Conducting a Forest Biodiversity Assessment: A Guide for Forest Owners and Land Stewards

Published by Northwest Natural Resources Group, March 2014; 21 pages. Download free of charge:

<http://nnerg.org/files/Forest%20Biodiversity%20Assessment%20Guide.pdf>

### Internet Resources

#### Forest Planner

The Portland-based non-profit Ecotrust has launched the Forest Planner, a free online tool that you can use to quickly and easily visualize how different management approaches might play out for your forest. The first step is to map out the forest stands across your property. Then, you assign each stand a forest type (by age, species, and stocking). This requires some inventory data. Finally, you can “experiment” by assigning different forest treatments like rotation age or thinning regime to each forest type and the Forest Planner models the comparative outcomes in terms of harvest volume and costs, carbon storage, and other variables. You can try it yourself at <http://forestplanner.ecotrust.org/>.



#### Forest Stewardship University

Forest Stewardship University is a self-paced, online learning program developed by Washington State University Extension Service. For a fee, you can access online, narrated presentations on a wide variety of topics from tree identification, forest soils, timber management, and wildlife. You have access to the modules for one year. Recommended for individuals with busy schedules who want to squeeze in some forestry education or for those who want to brush up on concepts learned in a “traditional” class setting.

Link: <http://extension.wsu.edu/forestry/FSU/Pages/default.aspx>



**OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension is now on Facebook!**

<https://facebook.com/osufnr>

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

## Trees and Forests in the News

[As Astoria log export market booms, Astoria partnership dissolves into acrimony](#) (*The Oregonian*, April 1, 2014)

Relations between an Astoria log exporter and its giant Chinese customer have suddenly turned sour. The dispute threatens dozens of jobs and adds fuel to a controversy over exporting raw logs.



[Why Northwest mills want China to buy lumber instead of logs](#) (*OPB*, March 6, 2014)

Log exports from the Northwest have doubled since 2009. The strong log export market is driving up the cost of raw material for local sawmills and cutting into their bottom line.

[Nearly a year after 'heartbreaking' closure, Cave Junction sawmill will reopen, retool with \\$5 million in government backing](#) (*The Oregonian*, March 7, 2014)

The Rough & Ready sawmill was the last operating sawmill in Josephine County. It will reopen as a small log mill in July, putting 67 people back to work. State officials worked with the sawmill owners and Ecotrust on a financing deal.

[Songs of 1970's Oregon folk group Timberbound revived for a new generation](#) (*The Oregonian*, March 19, 2014)

The original Timberbound band was from the Vernonia area and wrote folk songs about the logging and fishing culture around them. Now, a young musician who grew up in Columbia County has formed a new band with the same name and has re-recorded many of these original songs.

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## New roles, new faces in OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension

The OSU Forestry & Natural Resources Extension Program is in a flurry of hiring activity across the state and some familiar people have new roles, while we have some newcomers joining our ranks.

Steve Fitzgerald, formerly an Extension Forester in central Oregon, has moved to Corvallis to take on the role of statewide Silviculture Extension Specialist. Steve will continue to work closely with all of us across the state on silviculture-related programs. Steve has also been named Director of the OSU College Forests, which include the Blodgett Tract near Mist.

Two more new specialists have also recently been hired. Dr. Tamara Cushing will join OSU in June as the Starker Assistant Professor of Private & Family Forestry and Extension Specialist in Forest Economics, Management, and Policy. Tammy comes to us from Clemson University. And, Emily Jane Davis is the new Extension Specialist in Collaborative Natural Resources Management. Dr. Davis comes to us from the University of Oregon and will be working largely with the many collaborative forest management groups around the Northwest.

Finally, two Forestry & Natural Resources county agent positions will be filled in the coming months: Steve Fitzgerald's recently vacated position, and a long-vacant position in Klamath County.

After many years of not being able to fill vacancies due to reduced budgets, it is very exciting to see our program grow again!



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