



Vermont-New Hampshire Chestnut Notes

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Fall 2011

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- President's
Corner: Don't
Count Your
Chestnuts Before
They Hatch 2
- Planting Update:
Digging in the
Dirt 3
- Calendar of
Events 4

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Chestnut Planting Around an Open (Camp)Fire Daniel Hale, TACF New England Summer Intern

On Wednesday, August 3rd, I drove up to Camp DREAM in Fletcher, VT to teach kids about the American chestnut. Camp DREAM is an overnight summer camp for children living in subsidized housing developments in Vermont. It is a part of the DREAM program (**D**irecting through **R**ecreation, **E**ducation, **A**dventure, and **M**entoring), which is a non-profit mentoring program pairing college students with underprivileged children. You may be familiar with their yellow T-shirts with "DREAM" written in big bright blue letters. The program, and especially their summer camp, emphasizes environmental education. For some of the kids, **DREAM provides them their first experiences in the great outdoors**. I was asked to come to camp by a former UVM classmate, Shannon Gaffey, who works there as a counselor and environmental coordinator.



TACF Intern Dan Hale helps campers at Camp DREAM plant American chestnuts.

Photo courtesy of Shannon Gaffey.

I came to teach a group of very energetic 10-12 year old boys, so I had to find ways to keep it inter-
((Camp)Fire Continued on page 3)

The Kindest Cut: Salvage Harvesting of American Chestnut Yuriy Bihun, VT/NH TACF Board of Directors (BOD)

Returning from the spring 2008 VT/NH Chapter annual meeting in Weathersfield, VT, Kendra Gurney and a few northbound board members stopped to visit the celebrated "Berlin chestnuts" in Berlin, VT. Those who have visited the site know that the three remaining specimens – some of the largest living examples of American chestnut in New England – are an **impressive sight and a timely reminder** of the important role the American chestnut played the forest ecosystems of the eastern United States. Unfortunately, since then, one of the three surviving specimens has succumbed to the blight.

This was not totally unexpected but it was a wake-up call. Knowing this precious wood was not going to remain sound for long, the local chapter took action. During the VT/NH Chapter's spring board meeting in Burlington last April, the board discussed forming a committee to examine whether there was some value to the local chapter of harvesting and salvaging the wood from larger specimens of chestnut that had fallen to blight. The committee - tentatively made up Paul Schaberg, Don Richard,
(The Kindest Cut, Continued on page 2)

“It’s hard not to anticipate, but I won’t count chestnuts until they are out of their burs!”

PRESIDENT’S CORNER: DON’T COUNT YOUR CHESTNUTS BEFORE THEY HATCH

Grace Knight, VT/NH TACF President

Last night, I came in from the barn to find the message light blinking on the kitchen phone. The call was from a Vermont landowner with a chestnut tree on her front lawn, pollinated by our chapter in early July. Now, the second week of August, bags are falling off the tree. She said, “I have never seen such heavy burs on my tree!” She wondered what to do with the fallen bags. I helped apply pollen to that tree. Some of the bags cover 4 or 5 fertile female flowers. I bet the size of the developed burs has split open the bags.

Now the race begins.
The race against squirrels

and other rodents, punishing wind and rain as tropical storm season continues, **the race to harvest those bursting bags** before anything can harm their contents. And after the race, after all our volunteers have climbed their ladders into the crowns of the trees and all our cooperating utility and bucket truck companies have blocked out time in their schedules to help us harvest, then comes the wait. The wait till frost splits the burs, till workers with heavy gloves separate and count the seed nuts, the wait till next spring when they go in the ground, and then the wait to see what

sprouts.

The trees we pollinated, and are waiting to harvest are located in:

Springfield, VT, Westminster, VT, Shelburne, VT, Canaan, NH, Merrimack, NH, Mason, NH, and Laconia, NH. It’s hard not to anticipate, but I won’t count chestnuts until they are out of their burs!



PSNH Supervisor of Vegetation Management, Bob Allen, learns to pollinate in Mason, NH.

Photo courtesy of Kendra Gurney

THE KINDEST CUT (Continued)

(Continued from page 1)

Kendra Gurney and myself – was tasked with examining the feasibility of the take-down of large, recently-dead, chestnut trees. The purpose for forming the committee was to develop a consistent and cohesive process to assess salvage trees in terms of risk and safety of removal, economic feasibility, as well as the expected wood quality and utilization. Following a full assessment, the committee will then make a recommendation to the Board, and if takedown is desired, the landowner will be approached for permission.

What would the local chapter do with the lumber once it is salvaged? Good question; but I don’t think that ideas will be hard to come by. About ten years ago, I had the opportunity to work with TACF and members of North Carolina Chapter to put together an exhibit of fine woodworking from American chestnut. It was accompanied with educational events and a gourmet dinner sampling fine food made with chestnut ingredients. Not only did this unique event generate funding, but it raised awareness of the American chestnut and the lost resource we are trying to restore. We are open to any suggestions.



Yurij Bihun (L) and ISA Arborist Dan Comerford (R) make an initial assessment of a large chestnut.

Photo courtesy of Dan Hale.

PLANTING UPDATE: DIGGING IN THE DIRT

Kendra Gurney, TACF New England Regional Science Coordinator

Despite the exceptionally wet spring (remember the wet spring?!), VT/NH Chapter members were out planting in orchards, demonstration and test plantings during much of May and early June.



Gary Robertson travelled from Gilford to Peterborough, NH to help plant nuts from a tree he hand-pollinated in 2010. *Photo courtesy of Kendra Gurney.*

In Vermont, Grace and Randy Knight's **High Shelter Farm Orchard** in Perkinsville was officially completed when they planted about 2 dozen seedlings to fill any remaining spaces. In New Hampshire, orchard manager Spencer Brookes also hosted a final planting of about 2 dozen nuts at the **Shieling Forest Orchard** in Peterborough, leaving it filled to capacity. Just down the street from Shieling, approximately 125 seedlings were planted by staff and volunteers in Peterborough's **Otter Brook Farm Orchard**. In this case, all that rain helped get the young trees established without much need for hand-watering.

In addition to orchard plantings, NH member Curt Laffin organized a demonstration planting of potentially blight-resistant trees from TACF's Meadowview Research Farms at **Benson Park** in Hudson, NH. With the lure of just eight of these trees, Laffin drew in over 60 interested locals to help plant the special chestnuts. In nearby Hollis, NH a test planting was installed in partnership with the **Beaver Brook Association**. If the test goes well, a full planting will be installed in 2012.

If you'd like to help plant or care for our orchards, please contact:

Grace Knight

gsknight@tds.net

(802) 263-9613

OR

Kendra Gurney

kendra@acf.org

(802) 951-6771 x1350

or

(802) 999-8706 (cell)

(CAMP)FIRE (Continued)

(Continued from page 1)

esting. I started by passing around some American chestnut branches, so the kids could get a feel for the trees. I told them about all the reasons we want the chestnut tree in our forests, why it isn't there anymore, and how TACF is bringing it back. While explaining these things, I passed around samples of burs, nuts, leaves, blighted logs, and cross-sectional wood pieces (i.e., "cookies"). These props not only kept the kids occupied and

attentive, but also **gave them a clearer connection to the tree**. The kids were very curious and asked a lot of questions. Shannon told me later that they hadn't been that well behaved all week!

Once I'd answered the onslaught of questions, I brought out some pure American chestnuts for the kids to plant and bring home. I showed them how to poke a hole in the soil and gently guide the radical in, a technique I've mastered in the greenhouse this summer. We watered the nuts to get

them started, and I told the kids how to take care of them.

With my lesson finished there was a little time before dinner, so they shared one of their favorite activities with me and I joined them in a game of hide and go seek!



The finished product! Campers show off their newly planted chestnuts. *Photo courtesy of Shannon Gaffey.*



VT/NH Chapter of
The American Chestnut
Foundation

Care of:
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Check out the newsletter and more!

[http://www.acf.org/
ChapterNews_vt.php](http://www.acf.org/ChapterNews_vt.php)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, September 17, 2011

2nd Annual Vermont Wildlife Festival

10:00 - 4:00, West Marlboro, VT

Stop by to say hello and check out our chapter display and Chestnut Learning Box!

Please contact Grace Knight for more details:

gsknight@tds.net or (802) 263-9613

For event info:

<http://www.vermontmuseum.org/>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Southern-Vermont-Natural-History-Museum/207398382606394>

Saturday, October 1, 2011

Fall Board Meeting

10:00 - 4:00, High Shelter Farm, Perkinsville, VT

In addition to conducting chapter business, **Dr. Fred Paillet** will be a guest speaker, sharing his travels to Russia and China to study chestnut. All are welcome, lunch provided.

Please contact Grace Knight to RSVP or for more details: gsknight@tds.net or (802) 263-9613

Saturday, November 5, 2011

New England Regional Chapter's Meeting

10:00 - 4:00

Urban Forestry Center, Portsmouth, NH

Meet with representatives of all of TACF's New England chapters for a chance to share ideas and learn what neighboring chapters are up to.

To learn more, please contact Kendra Gurney:

kendra@acf.org, (802)951-6771 x1350 or (802)999-8706

Save the Dates!

Join us for our winter outreach events!

January 24, 25 and 26, 2012

Vermont Farm Show

Champlain Valley Fair Grounds, Essex Junction, VT

February 3 - 4, 2012

New Hampshire Farm and Forest Expo

Center of NH Expo Center, Manchester, NH