



# Friends of White's Woods Monthly Newsletter



## **Sept. 25 Webinar Will Cover Arguments on Timbering to Effect Habitat Diversity**

Recent research suggesting that timbering to create new habitat for wildlife may, in fact, be questionable.

This will be the topic of the Sept. 25, noon to 1 p.m. webinar, sponsored by FWW and led by Michael Kellett, executive director of RESTORE: North Woods.

According to Kellett, many species depend on mature and old growth habitat and “there is ample evidence that [logging forests to create early-successional habitat] will result in the loss of mature forests and future old-growth habitats” reduce connectivity, create an increase in edge habitats, contribute to the spread of invasive species, and have deleterious effects due to mechanical disruption and species isolation.

Kellett is the founding executive director of RESTORE: The North Woods, a New England-based nonprofit organization established in 1992. In 1994, he developed the original proposal for a 3.2-million-acre Maine Woods National Park, which laid the groundwork for the 2016 designation of Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument by President Obama. He co-authored two pending



*Michael Kellett, executive director of RESTORE: North Woods.*

Massachusetts bills that would expand and make permanent reserves on state-owned lands that are protected from logging. He also co-authored the recently published peer-reviewed paper, “Forest-clearing to create early-successional habitats: Questionable benefits, significant costs.” Dr. Joan Maloof, the Old Growth Forest Network founder who has worked with FWW over the past four years in a variety of endeavors, is one of the co-authors of this article.

The mission of RESTORE: The North Woods is to create new national parks, save natural forests, and protect endangered wildlife. RESTORE, founded by veteran conservationists and grassroots activists, use advocacy, public education, and citizen activism to address the root causes of our ecological crisis.

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

### **FWW at the NAFF**

FWW will have a booth at the Northern Appalachian Folk Festival, **Sept. 6-7**. Please stop by to talk! FWW President Sara King will be participating in the film presented by the Center for Community Growth on Thursday, **Sept. 5**, at 7 p.m. at the NAFF Center. *From Billions to None: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction*. Admission is free.

### **Update on the Draft White's Woods Stewardship Plan**

The Draft White's Woods Stewardship Plan should be on the **Sept. 11** White Township Board of Supervisors' agenda (1 p.m. start). Ninety-five percent of the 210 citizens who provided feedback stated their support for this plan. Among the plan's strengths: It allows the nature center to mature into an old-growth forest and, possibly, join the Old Growth Forest Network (OGFN), and it commits us to protecting at-risk species. FWW will provide updates regarding the next steps in the plan's approval. Watch your email!

### **Barberry Removal Sept 21st**

FWW is facilitating a community-wide event to remove more Japanese barberry in White's Woods. We will work from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, **Sept. 21st**. Group leaders will be there to show you how to remove the barberry. Gloves and bags will be provided. Please join us. We could use your help! If you can spare a couple of hours on Sept. 21st to help with this important task for protecting our forest, please send an email to [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org).

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Sept. 6-7: NAFF, Downtown Indiana. FWW booth**

**Sept. 21: Barberry Pull, 10 a.m. to noon, White's Woods**

**Sept. 25: Forest-clearing to Create Early-successional Habitats: Questionable Benefits, Significant Costs** webinar by Michael Kellett, executive director of RESTORE: North Woods, noon to 1 p.m.

**Oct. 15: Annual Membership Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Zion Lutheran Church, 100 S. 6th St., Indiana.**

**Nov. 7: A Brief Tour of Some of Pennsylvania's Big Trees and How to Measure Them**

webinar by Dale Luthringer, DCNR Environmental Education Specialist, Cook Forest State Park, noon to 1 p.m.

Please check [friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org/events) and/or your email for up-to-date information on upcoming events. Register for webinars by sending an email to [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org)

**For more information, visit: [friendsofwhiteswoods.org](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org)**

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*Fishers (top photo) have teddy-bear type ears. Adult males weigh seven to 15 pounds; adult females from four to nine pounds. Mink (bottom photo) are much smaller. Males are under 3 pounds. Mink like to live near water and are seldom found far from riverbanks, lakes, and marshes.*



## Fishers Spotted in White's Woods

The Pennsylvania Game Commission describes the fisher as a mid-sized carnivore, the second largest member of the weasel family in Pennsylvania; the river otter being the largest. Fishers are characterized by a well-furred long body, short legs, and a full tail that comprises about one-third of its total length. While mostly dark to chocolate brown, fur on the tail, legs and rump is usually black. The face is triangular with wide and rounded ears. Fishers' eyes have a horizontal oval pupil that produces a bright green eyeshine at night. Fishers have five toes on each paw and sharp, curved, semi-retractable claws.

The fisher is the largest member of the genus *Martes*, and males are considerably larger than females. Adult males weigh seven to 15 pounds; adult females from four to nine pounds.

Common names of the fisher include black cat, fisher cat, tree otter, tree fox, fisher weasel, pekan, and Oochik (Cree), which early fur traders pronounced as "wejack." "Fisher" is the most frequently used name and is thought to have originated from the fisher's resemblance to a European polecat named "fichet." The animal has special significance to many native American tribes. (see: [Native American Indian Fisher Legends, Meaning and Symbolism from the Myths of Many Tribes](#))

Fishers occupy forests with abundant downed woody debris or other structure on the forest floor. During recent decades, fisher populations have expanded into highly fragmented, human-altered forest ecosystems throughout many areas of the northeast, including Pennsylvania.

Despite its name, fishers rarely consume fish or other aquatic prey. Fishers are renowned for their ability to prey upon porcupines and are unique among forest carnivores in that they are well adapted to forage effectively within the forest canopy as well as on the forest floor. Fishers are opportunistic and their diet is diverse, including small mammals, reptiles, insects, fruits and fungi. As consumers of fruits of shrubs and trees, primarily during summer,

fishers serve as mammalian seed dispersers in forest ecosystems. Small mammals such as squirrels, chipmunks and mice are thought to be dominant prey sources for fisher in Pennsylvania during most seasons. There is evidence of fisher predation on white-tailed deer, but the frequency and effects of such predation are thought to be limited.

Pennsylvania's present-day fisher population is the direct result of natural expansion from adjacent states and reintroduction programs here. Most recently and significantly, during 1994-1998, through a joint project between the Game Commission, the Pennsylvania State University and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 190 fishers (87 males, 97 females, 6 of unknown sex) were reintroduced in six sites in northern Pennsylvania. (see: <https://www.pgc.pa.gov/HuntTrap/TrappingandFurbearers/Documents/Fisher%20Management%20Plan.pdf>)

Today, fisher populations are well established and increasing throughout the state. They have become established even in some rural and suburban habitats once thought unsuitable for this adaptive forest carnivore.

## PROTECT TREES TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE

This summer has brought an extraordinary opportunity to help protect old growth and mature trees in our national forests. Less than one month remains for you to take part.

The U.S. Forest Service is calling for comments on a plan that shapes how they manage old-growth and mature forests across every national forest, and supporters can still take part in the public comment period that closes Sept. 20th.

[Climate Forests](#), a coalition of over 130 environmental groups nationwide, emphasizes "a strong, lasting rule across federal public lands that protects mature and old-growth trees and forests from logging, allowing the recovery of old-growth forests that have been lost. These forests are essential to removing climate pollution and storing carbon, safeguarding wildlife, and providing clean drinking water for our communities." Big trees sequester far more carbon than small ones.

According to Climate Forests, the current Forest Service plan falls short: none of the plan alternatives keep old growth from being logged, and there is very little protection for mature forests. The plan doesn't clearly reference climate change or even offer a definition of "old growth."

Old growth comprises less than 1% of eastern U.S. forests and less than 5% of U.S. western forests.

This is your chance to call for meaningful safeguards for our oldest forests so that they may



*FWW Board member Fred Heilman stands beside a red oak*

## White's Woods Features Many Old, Big Trees

The Aug. 8th FWW tree walk began on the IUP College Lodge side of our woods where most of the biggest trees are tulip poplars. While most of White's Woods' tulip poplars are about 90-120 years old, tulip poplars can live to 400 years. Some of the tulip poplar trees that President George Washington planted at Mount Vernon are still there for visitors to see!

On our walk, we visited and measured a number of tulip poplars that are 9.6 to 12 feet in circumference and range from approximately 120 to 140 feet tall. In his 1964 book, *Tumult on the Mountains*, Roy B. Clarkson described a grove of tulip poplars in West Virginia. The yellow poplars that Clark described as "the most important tree" of the cove hardwoods commonly attained a "height of 120-140 feet, and a diameter of 7 to 8 and 9 feet, with a distance of 80 feet to the first limb." In the old growth forests in the eastern United States, tulip poplars often grew "in nearly pure stands."

According to the Shenandoah National Park Service website, "[t]he tuliptree is often a dominant species in mature forest communities."

On the August 8th walk, we also saw some large red oaks, 8-11 feet in circumference.

White's Woods has a number of what DCNR Cook Forest Education Specialist Dale Luthringer identified as "special trees," trees that are at least 9 feet in diameter and 120 feet tall. After spending time in White's Woods, Luthringer commented that "you have a special forest, with numerous special trees throughout the acreage." Our forest includes a few 200-year-old "witness trees," trees that have lived through enormous change. We plan to visit these on future FWW tree walks.

be protected for generations to come. To easily and quickly submit a comment, go to <https://www.climate-forests.org/take-action>.

You can also read about this Forest Service Project #65356 and provide your own written comment at the U.S. Forest Service comment portal.

Climate Forests argues that we need solutions that matches the magnitude of the climate threat we face. Now is the time to protect old growth and mature trees in national forests.

For more information, visit: [friendsofwhiteswoods.org](http://friendsofwhiteswoods.org)

We welcome feedback. Email us at: [info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org](mailto:info@friendsofwhiteswoods.org)

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