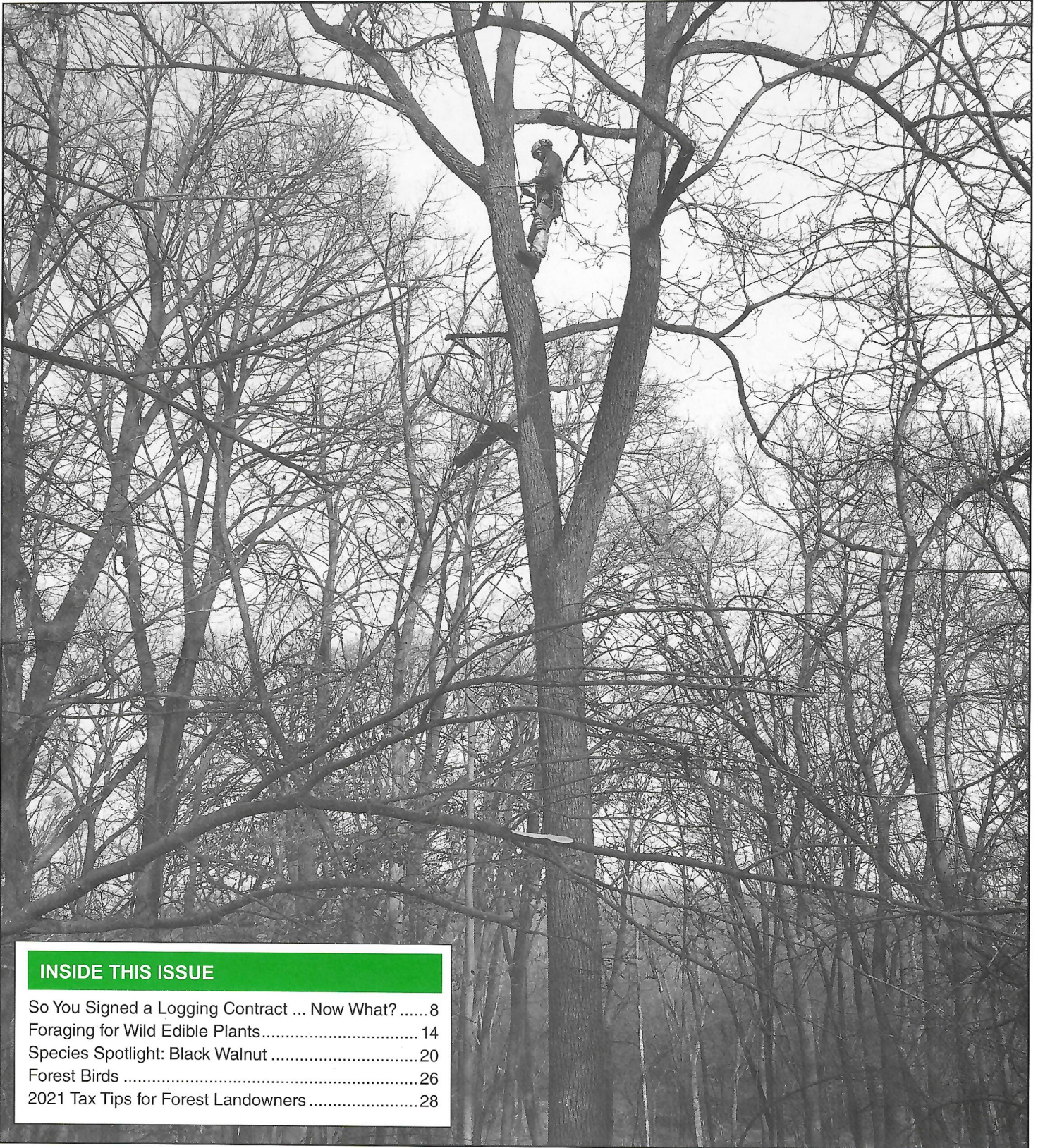


Wisconsin Woodlands



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Creating Tomorrow's Woodlands Today



Photo: Stephen Schmidt/LEAF

Students built this 1-acre enclosure a few years ago to study the effect of deer browsing on the vegetation.

Marinette County tops in registered school forests

By Stephen Schmidt

Wisconsin's community forest program has reached a new milestone – there are now 425 school forests registered! Yes, you read that correctly – 425 registered school forests, with more in process.



Marinette County boasts the largest number of registered forests at

25, totaling 1,520 acres. Why does it have the most school forests? Obvious reasons include the large acreage of forestland and the fact that it is the third largest Wisconsin county at just shy of 1,400 square miles. Only Marathon County at 1,545 and Bayfield County at

1,478 square miles are larger.

Most of the Marinette County school forests were registered in the 1930s through the 1950s. During some of that time, Ted A. Peterson, an early director of the school forest program and UW-Extension forester, worked with Marinette County Forester H. James Hovind on the Marinette School Forest. Both are inductees to the Wisconsin Forestry Hall of Fame! Undoubtedly, the influence of Ted and Jim had an impact on school forest registrations.

Smaller school districts in northern Wisconsin, including Marinette County, have consolidated to better manage the cost of operating too many rural schools spread over large areas. This is evident in the names of Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine and Goodman-Armstrong Creek Schools. A dive into the LEAF school forest records reveals that several of



Photo: Dean Tvedt/UW-Extension

Ted Peterson, an early director of the school forest program, shows high school boys how to scale logs in 1955.

Crivitz's forests came from consolidations. For example, Brookdale School Forest came from School District No. 3, Town of Middle Inlet and Loom-

is School Forest was part of School District No. 1, Town of Lake when it was registered. Thankfully, the value of these school forests meant that when districts merged, their forests became part of the consolidated district.

To find these and all Wisconsin school forests locations, use the LEAF Interactive School Forest Map online at <https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/leaf/school-forests/Pages/School-Forest-Map.aspx>. The map has several different views including street view, topography and satellite with labels. One can add layers for Wisconsin's major watersheds and smaller level basins, too. This could be helpful to students engaged in aquatic science activities at the forest or on their school grounds.

On a recent trip to Peshtigo to attend the Forest History Association of Wisconsin's annual conference, I visited the Peshtigo School Forest where I was met by veteran teacher and school forest contact Scott Nelson. It was the day before the 150th anniversary of the Peshtigo Fire, which devastated the region and killed as many as 1,500 people on Oct. 8, 1871—it still is the deadliest wildland fire in United States history.

Proper forest management that can decrease the risk of wildfires starts with education. Nelson's fifth-grade classes visit the school forest at least twice each year, as do all fourth through sixth grade students. Nelson is carrying on programming that was developed alongside recently retired school forest educator, Pat Devine. Each individual class spends half of a day at the forest. Students engage in math and science using school forest data that they collect themselves. This gives more context, and students tend to be more invested in their learning when it is applied to real situations.

After a harvest a few years ago, students built a 1-acre enclosure to study the effect of deer browsing on the vegetation. Fourth-grade students planted 900 red and white oak seedlings from the state nursery. One-third of the trees were planted in the enclosure, one-third outside of it with tubes to protect the stems from smaller animals, such as rabbits. The last third of the trees were planted outside of the enclosure with no

Marinette County School Forests

School System	School Forest Name	Acres	Year Reg
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine	Coles School Forest	40	1932
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine	Dixon School Forest	38	1940
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine	Dunbar School Forest (Kedger)	80	1947
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine	Pembine School Forest	80	1932
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine	Smeester School Forest	34	1935
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine	Marriman School Forest	40	1932
Coleman	Coleman School Forest	160	1948
Crivitz	Brookdale School Forest (#4)	40	1933
Crivitz	Crivitz School Forest #1	40	1931
Crivitz	Crivitz School Forest #2	80	1948
Crivitz	Fernwood School Forest (#6)	80	1952
Crivitz	Konsted School Forest	40	1952
Crivitz	Loomis School Forest (#7)	40	1947
Crivitz	Shanebrook School Forest (#5)	40	1935
Goodman-Armstrong Creek	First Goodman School Forest	7	1928
Goodman-Armstrong Creek	Green Future Forest	25	1984
Goodman-Armstrong Creek	Second Goodman School Forest	40	1933
Marinette	Marinette School Forest	260	1959
Niagara	Niagara School Forest #2	30	1966
Niagara	Village of Niagara School Forest #1	69	1952
Peshtigo	Peshtigo School Forest	37	1958
Wausaukee	Athelstane School Forest	40	1951
Wausaukee	Amberg Unit #1	40	1939
Wausaukee	Amberg Unit #2 School Forest	72	1947
Wausaukee	Wausaukee - Hwy 141 Scenic Overlook	66	1939

protection. Current students collect vegetation data to compare the effectiveness of the enclosure on forest regeneration after a harvest. It is apparent where deer have browsed compared with the thick growth behind the fence. The group of seedlings with no protection did not survive, and neither did most of the seedlings in tubes. However, trees in the enclosure are thriving. A recent thinning of the red pine provides another such opportunity. A portion of the pines were not thinned to compare the effect of no forest management on the stand.

Red pines planted by students in 1958 provide the canopy for slightly less than half of the forest, while mixed hardwoods dominate the rest. As with many Wisconsin forests, invasive species have crept in. Buckthorn growth has taken off following recent harvests. At school forests such as Peshtigo's, this provides opportunities for students to study various invasive species control practices to enhance habitat for native trees

and wildlife. Nelson has plans moving forward to remove buckthorn. As with all projects, he plans to involve students. Perhaps those students will manage forest property or pass on their knowledge to others in the community in the future, thanks to what they learned at the Peshtigo School Forest.

- Directions: Peshtigo School Forest is southeast of Peshtigo on the southwest corner of Dahl and Kutz Road. Parking is near the school forest sign on Dahl Road.
- School forest contact: Scott Nelson, nelsons@peshtigo.k12.wi.us



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