

THE FOREST CONSERVATIONIST



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RIFCO is an affiliate of the National Woodland Owner's Association

RIFCO'S SUMMER TWILIGHT SESSION TO VIEW OAK FOREST COLLAPSE at HILLSDALE PRESERVE IN RICHMOND, RI

RIFCO is conducting its annual Summer Twilight Woods Walk at the Hillsdale Preserve, formerly known as the DeCoppett Estate, on Hillsdale Road in Richmond, RI, on Thursday, August 2, 2018, from 6 to 8 pm. The evening will include a woods walk to observe the devastating effects of the 3-d's of drought, defoliations, & deer browse on an upland oak forest. The walk will be led by RI DEM foresters Will Walker and Fern Graves, and retired URI professor Dr. James Brown.

The Hillsdale Preserve is located along Hillsdale Road, which runs north off Route 138, east of the Richmond town hall. We will meet at one of the gates about 1.5 miles north of Rt. 138, just north of Pole 99. Signs will be posted.

Recent defoliation events by both the Gypsy moth and the Forest tent caterpillars, following a couple of years of spring droughts, have severely impacted the oak canopy, with high mortality occurring. The high deer populations have, over time, completely depleted any tree regeneration in the understory, so the failure of the oak canopy results in a collapse of the oak forest ecosystem. Dr. Jim Brown has worked on this property for many years, implementing forestry and wildlife projects to enhance biodiversity and improve forest health conditions. He will help us with some historic perspectives on previous Gypsy moth defoliation events and the recovery of our oak forests, or lack thereof.

The hazards presented by all of those dead trees include falling limbs and trees over the next ten to twenty years, threatening power lines, property, and people, and in the short term there will be increased fire danger with laddered fuels and thick brushy vegetation. What can property owners, utility companies, and municipalities do to help mitigate these problems??

The program is free of charge, and there is no need to register. Refreshments will be provided, and directions to the site are available at www.rifco.org, or by calling RIFCO at (401) 568-3421.

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