WESTERN ASPEN ALLIANCE

TREMBLINGS

NEWSLETTER & BULLETIN BOARD

Vol. 11(3), August 2020

Partnering to preserve and restore healthy aspen ecosystems

MEMBER PARTICIPATION: The WAA is a virtual science-based community. Send us aspen items of interest and we'll help spread the word. Contact Paul Rogers, Director: p.rogers@usu.edu.

Share *Tremblings* with your friends and colleagues.

New members welcome!

WAA HAPPENINGS

Natural Areas Webinar Available—The July 21 webinar "Aspen Ecology & Conservation" is now available online for those who wish to view or share it. The presentation covers a wide range of aspen themes centered on broad disciplinary, institutional, and geographic linkages. The NAA showcased this webinar as a "teaser" for the "Quaking Aspen Challenge" Special Session at their conference Oct. 15, 2020.

World's Fattest Aspen Contest—Got a favorite large Aspen tree? The WAA is teaming up with Emily Beck of Colorado's environmental video blog, *I Spy Energy*, to see who can locate the Fattest Aspen (circumference at breast height) from now until September 30, 2020. YETI® prizes will be awarded in October for the fattest aspen and a runner-up. Check out the World's Fattest Aspen contest kick-off video here! Here's how to enter:

1. **Record circumference**: measuring tape must be flat against the bark in a bark scar-free area. As shown in the video, document measure via photo.
2. **Include:** On Instagram, you must include #Western Aspen Alliance and #World's Fattest Aspen and #Fattest Aspen.
3. **Submit photo:** Post the photo of you and your tree on Instagram and tag @ISpyEnergy (preferred route). Don't forget proof of circumference via measuring tape (If no Instagram, email Emily your entry.)

May the Fattest Aspen win!

Spring Fundraiser Report— Though housed at Utah State University, the Western Aspen Alliance is a member-supported non-profit; we do not receive base operating funds from USU. The WAA very much appreciates member contributions to this organization. We raised $1,348 since the call went out May 5. Funds are used primarily for administration, newsletter compilation, travel, publication, and (potentially) monitoring/research activities.

Boreal Green. Aspen grove along the Copper River in Alaska is illuminated in early summer. The darker tint of aspen indicates greater bark transparency and therefore higher visibility (not amount!) of chlorophyll. Similar to high elevations, the high latitude and short growing seasons of Alaska favor greater sun absorption in summer, but possibly winter, too, than those at lower latitudes. (Photo: Lance Oditt).

Document Aspen Seedling Events—We're still on the hunt for unpublished aspen seedling events in the western U.S. Mark Kreider, a graduate student at Utah State University, is building a database of aspen

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seedling events with which to study sexual regeneration patterns. Contact Mark here.

IMAX Film Features Pando Clone—"Into America's Wild" (International title: "Into Nature's Wild"), a 3D nature/education film narrated by Morgan Freeman, debuted earlier this year. Due to COVID-19 postponements the film is now coming to theatres around the U.S. and internationally. In addition to captivating scenery, the film has the goal of getting young viewers outdoors and exploring nature's wonders! Check listings near you (scroll to page bottom).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Restoring the West 2020—"Restoring at Lunch" 2020 is presenting lunchtime virtual conference sessions from Oct. 6-7. Organizers have settled on two themes: forest soils & aspen ecology. Check the website for updates on topics and speakers.

Natural Areas Conference, Aspen Session—Natural Areas Conference will now take place in a virtual format. While this may not be ideal for some, it will afford greater attendance from those who have institutional or monetary barriers to travel. The conference now has an extended schedule from Oct. 13-Nov. 3, 2020. The WAA will be leading a Special Session addressing quaking aspen issues in the West. The session length is now only 3.5 hours, covering many science-management issues, including ungulate herbivory, climate warming, fire ecology, and development pressures. See conference website for details on this event.

Aspen Workshops 2020—As you might have guessed, the COVID-19 pandemic has scrambled schedules for 2020 aspen workshops. Here is the latest, as we know it:

- **SW Montana Aspen Workshop:** Dillon, Montana**,** Sept. 28-29. The event is now scheduled for ½-day of virtual presentations and a full (limited attendance!) field day. Register here. With other questions contact Emily Harkness, Project Coordinator, Heart of the Rockies Initiative
- **Other Aspen Events in Your Area?** Contact the WAA Director and let us know your plans.
- **Looking at 2021:** Tentatively planned for Colorado, Alaska, Wyoming, and Idaho. What other locations do you want to see 2021?

COMMENTARY

Photographing *Populus tremuloides*: A Visual Xylotheuque

Lance Oditt, WAA Photographer At-Large, Studio 47.60° North, Seattle, Washington

I am standing on the edge of the Carbon River on the Northwest edge of Mount Rainier in May of 2017. Three months removed from my last treatment for lymphoma. I am preparing for a road trip to photograph notable trees of the western U.S.: Sequoia, Joshua, Bristlecone, Whitebark Pine, and the Pando Aspen Clone. Adjusting to my new body, new camera, and new lens, I focus on a grove of alder that have set up along the edge of the river to practice techniques I imagine will help me photograph the Pando. As I ready a shot, a wave of excitement washes over me; the medicine I took, taught the cells in my body to see in a new way. Now, my mind is catching up. I smile as the shutter clicks. The river seems to reply as it emits a deep sonorous *thuuunnnk*. Somewhere, below the milky torrent of the spring melt, the water has lifted a boulder. Anything seems possible again, including a life photographing aspen.

Human visual systems are optimized for contrast and patterns, a fact that cannot be overstated when exploring aspen aesthetics and ecology. Although it may be surprising, trees play an outsized role in the early history of photography. Wintering trees were a favored subject for reasons that span the technical, aesthetic, and ecological ethos of 1840's. Older cameras had slow lenses and lacked mechanical light controls. Such limitations favored stillness and the sprawl of an aging oak; perfect idiom for an agrarian society that, incidentally, favored a landed gentry.

Aspen do not figure significantly in the early photographic record, but do emerge a hundred years later. Modernists like Ansel Adams and Edward Weston—famed for monochromatic photos—despite their enormous contributions to conservation, unwittingly set in motion a limited concept of aspen that has arguably vexed today's conservation efforts. In contrast to shapes of green and gray bark and bright green leaves that actually eat sunlight for a living, we find aspen documented in pseudo-mystic tones of black and white or frozen in the golden death blows of autumn. For a tree known for sinuous branch lines and complex root structures, again and again, photographers seek linearity. For a plant that has mastered the biological shorthand of cloning on an enormous scale, the photographic record is chocked full of trees isolated in vignettes devoid of complexity.

As Photographer At-Large for WAA, one of my critical concerns is how I can serve to bridge divides between art and science. One way I do this is through still photography. Another is my work scouting locations and compiling shoot lists to help promote a *global* concept of aspen. Global notions require inclusive experiences; thus, I have begun working to create a 360° photographic survey of the entire Pando clone. Attempts to separate creativity from inquiry should be seen for what they are: human bids to sidestep the shared fate of these endeavors. I welcome you to share the places that drive your passion as I continue my work in bridging art-science divides alongside the WAA.

WAA *Creates*

WE NEED YOUR CREATIONS FOR UPCOMING *TREMBLINGS*!

"WAA Creates" showcases artistic aspen-related contributions. We encourage fiction, folklore, poetry, drawings, paintings, photography, and other artistic expressions. Send your stuff to share with WAA readers.

Forms of Nature
(Photo)

Doug Page
Cedar City, Utah

The artist: Doug Page is a retired career forester working mainly around Utah during his tenure with the BLM and USFS. In his words, "It can be surprising how young aspen can withstand damage and continue to grow, sometimes producing artistic forms out of the ordinary."

RECENT ASPEN PUBLICATIONS

Binkley, D. and B. Romme. 2020. Aspen Next Generation. Western Landowners Alliance. Santa Fe, NM: 32 p. [Report.]

Dagley, C. M., J. P. Berrill, S. A. Coppeto, and A. K. Eschtruth. 2020. Understory responses to restoration in aspen-conifer forests around the Lake Tahoe Basin: residual stand attributes predict recovery. Restoration Ecology 28:603-611.

Dettlaff, M. 2019. Drivers of trembling aspen secondary chemistry and impacts on plant communities in the aspen parkland. University of Alberta, Edmonton, AL, Canada. [PhD dissertation.]

Dudley, M., N. Tisserat, W. Jacobi, J. Negrón, and J. Stewart. 2020. Pathogenicity and distribution of two species of Cytospora on *Populus tremuloides* in portions of the Rocky Mountains and midwest in the United States. Forest Ecology and Management 468:118168.

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Grinde, A. R., R. A. Slesak, A. D'Amato, and B. Palik. 2020. Effects of tree retention and woody biomass removal on bird and small mammal communities. Forest Ecology and Management 465:118090.

Howe, A. A., S. M. Landhäusser, O. T. Burney, J. N. Long, R. D. Violett, and K. E. Mock. 2020. Exploring seedling-based aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) restoration near range limits in the Intermountain West, USA. Forest Ecology and Management 476:118470.

Jean, S. A., B. D. Pinno, and S. E. Nielsen. 2020. Early Regeneration Dynamics of Pure Black Spruce and Aspen Forests after Wildfire in Boreal Alberta, Canada. Forests 11:333. https://www.mdpi.com/1999-4907/11/3/333.

Kurth, V. J., A. W. D'Amato, J. B. Bradford, B. J. Palik, and C. E. Looney. 2020. Assessing the ecological impacts of biomass harvesting along a disturbance severity gradient. Ecological Applications 30:e02042. https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.2042.

Le, K. D., S. G. Schreiber, S. M. Landhäusser, and A. L. Schoonmaker. 2020. Manipulating aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) seedling size characteristics to improve initial establishment and growth on competitive sites. Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research 35:1-17.

Loehle, C. 2020. Historical forest changes in the western United States. The Forestry Chronicle 96:36-49.

Luo, Y., E. J. McIntire, C. Boisvenue, P. P. Nikiema, and H. Y. Chen. 2020. Climatic change only stimulated growth for trees under weak competition in central boreal forests. Journal of Ecology 108:36-46.

Marchais, M., D. Arseneault, and Y. Bergeron. 2020. Composition changes in the boreal mixedwood forest of western Quebec since Euro-Canadian settlement. Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution 8:126.

Rogers, J. 2020. The Diminishing Pando Clone: History and Forest Management. Utah Historical Quarterly, Salt Lake City. https://history.utah.gov/the-diminishing-pando-clone-history-and-forest-management/.

Roland, C. A., J. H. Schmidt, S. G. Winder, S. E. Stehn, and E. F. Nicklen. 2019. Regional variation in interior Alaskan boreal forests is driven by fire disturbance, topography, and climate. Ecological Monographs 89:e01369.

Russo, G., F. Pedrotti, and D. Gafta. 2020. Typology and synecology of aspen woodlands in the central-southern Apennines (Italy): new findings and synthesis. iForest 13:202-208. https://doi.org/10.3832/ifor3315-013.

WAA STEERING COMMITTEE:

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Thomas Adamson: Utah Forestry Lead, Bureau of Land Management, Salt Lake City, Utah

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Linda Chappell: Fuels/Fire Specialist, Intermountain Region, U.S. Forest Service, Ogden, Utah

Todd Chaudhry: Research Coordinator, Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, National Park Service, Flagstaff, Arizona

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Stanley Kitchen: Research Botanist, Rocky Mountain Research Station, U.S. Forest Service, Provo, Utah

Kevin Krasnow: Graduate Faculty and Research Specialist, Teton Science School, Kelly, Wyoming

Keith Moser: Research Forester, Rocky Mountain Research Station, U.S. Forest Service, Flagstaff, Arizona

Lance Oditt, WAA Photographer At-Large, Studio 47.60° North, Seattle, WA

Richard Rice: Manager, RO Range/Noxious Weed Program, Rocky Mountain Region, U.S. Forest Service, Lakewood, Colorado

Ian Tator: Statewide Terrestrial Habitat Manager, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, Cheyenne, Wyoming

Vacant (ex Bart Lawrence): NRCS National Liaison to the Western Aspen Alliance, Portland, Oregon

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