



Finger Lakes National Forest, Hector, New York

Forest Happenings!!

Caring for the Land and Serving People

Summer Happenings – 2024

Many eyes go through the meadow, but few see the flowers in it. - Ralph Waldo Emerson



Excuse me Dylan - Do you have a minute to talk about your cars extended warranty?

for this opportunity to work with the Finger Lakes National Forest.

Camden Chierichella



Welcome...

Morgan Cheney



Hi, my name is Morgan Cheney, and I will be an intern here at the Finger Lakes National Forest over the summer. I am a student at Finger Lakes Community College, and I am studying environmental science and fish and wildlife technology. I love spending time outside, and I am especially interested in forestry. I am super excited

Hi, my name is Camden Chierichella and I am currently a student at Finger Lakes Community College studying fish & wildlife technology. I love to hike, kayak, and generally spend time outdoors exploring nature while learning and observing wildlife. I will be interning at the Finger Lakes National Forest this summer and I am very excited to participate in taking care of the forest with the rest of the team.

Recreation Campgrounds

Blueberry Patch Campground

Keep an eye out as at the end of September / beginning of October a new toilet should be installed at the campground.

This is huge, as Blueberry Patch is the last one to be replaced on the Forest! After this, all vault toilets will be concrete.

Trails

Potomac Accessible Trail

Following a washout on the newly constructed accessible trail from the campground to Potomac Pond last fall, work was completed this spring to fix the damage and improve the trail to prevent future washouts!

Improvements to the trail included installation of ditches in sections adjacent to “flashy” water flow, increase in material height of the trail itself, and improvement of the crowning of the trail to make sure the water runs into the ditches and prevents scouring of the tread surface.

The existing trail has been a great improvement already as far as trail drainage. And the new improvements to the trail will increase the accessibility and sustainability of the trail into the future.



New ditch creation.



Trail crowned to drain water.

Improvements were also made adjacent to the gate at the Potomac Group Camp parking area to increase access to the site. Even though the trail wasn't fixed before the Fishing Derby, it was sure nice not to have to walk thru mud and muck to the campground pavilion!



Current District Office pollinator garden – what we're looking to establish at a number of sites!

Coming soon...Pollinator Gardens!

Over the past few years, we have identified several spots on the forest that we would like to maintain as open areas but feel that continued mowing of the sites is not the most logical or ecological plan moving forward. To that end, we will be creating new pollinator friendly gardens at 4 sites on the Finger Lakes National Forest.

These sites are areas that either present increased difficulty in maintenance due to terrain, low use by visitors, damage from vehicles, or a combination of these reasons and more. These areas will be planted with native forb and grass plugs that have already gotten a great start to the season (grown in a greenhouse), and we are hopeful to see some blooms this year!

The areas chosen for planting are either already protected from vehicles by barriers or will have barriers put in place to protect the plants. While it may take a year or two for all species to fully establish, we hope these spots will become beautiful areas that are both ecologically productive as well as more functional for us maintenance wise. A list of the areas is below, keep an eye out for the plugs to go in soon!

- Backbone Horse Campground – The back of the “island” behind sites 6,7, and 9
- Caywood Point – Behind barrier rocks in parking area
- Burnt Hill Trail – The “overlook” on Picnic Area rd, inside the island created by the parking area
- Teeter Pond – Behind barrier rocks adjacent to parking area.



Backbone Trail – Final Trail Bridge Replacement

A portion of the Backbone trail north of Voorheis Rd will be getting a trail bridge replaced in early July and may result in a temporary closure of the trail during that time.

We’re very excited to be making this improvement and are installing a large culvert to replace the bridge. Hopes are it will be more durable into the future and prevent damage to the stream corridor. Work will also be done to stabilize the streambank and create a more resilient system of hydrologic function in the area.

This is the last major trail bridge to be replaced on the Forest!

Fire Truck Day @ B.C. Cate Elementary School

Staff from the Forest participated in “Fire Truck Day” at a local elementary school and showed children some of the tools and equipment we use to fight fires in forests and grasslands around the country.

This is the second year that we have participated and were excited to introduce kids to a different kind of “firefighter” than they are used to. All students got to check out the tools we use and put out a mock dixie cup “fire” with a bladder bag, as well as try on line gear to see how it measures up to their own backpack. Overall, more than 200 kids came through our station and learned about wildland firefighting!

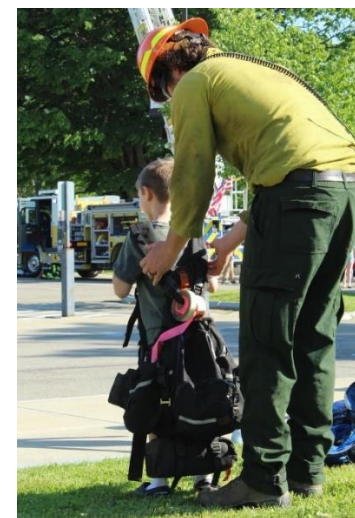


Photo credits: USFS Briana Graham

Wildlife

Warm Season Grass Planting

Each year we work on enhancing grassland habitat through planting native warm season grasses and pollinator mixes. This year we were able to plant about 20 acres between Satterly Hill and Terry Berry grasslands.

The mix that is used contains big bluestem, little bluestem, indiagrass, switchgrass, deer tongue, and wild rye as well as purple prairie clover, panicledleaf ticktrefoil, roundheaded lespedeza, maryland senna, purple coneflower, lance-leaved coreopsis, partridge pea, wild burgamot, joe-pye weed, black-eyed susan, common milkweed and tall white-beardtongue.

These forbs will bloom starting in April thru early November, placing pollen sources on the landscape for the large majority of the warm months. These species also provide a color array to allow any color specific pollinator the chance to have resources as well. This species mix will also likely increase insect diversity in the unit which will in turn create better feeding habitat for bats as well as insectivorous birds.



Photo of the tractor and no-till drill planting in Terry Berry grassland (photo credit USFS Greg Flood)

Leveling the field for native regrowth...

Article written by: USFS Briana Graham

If you happened to venture past Teeter Pasture and Potomac South Grassland in the Finger Lakes National Forest, you may have seen a field of pollinating vegetation; thick green heavily dusted with tiny white flowers. As you stop to admire the view, you may have also quickly spotted the piece of

construction equipment slowly plowing through those beautiful wild shrubs. As the skid steer operator grinds its way through the landscape, large chunks of woody debris are ripped from the ground and sent outward. Why would anyone do this?



Photo: A skid steer with a mastication head works its way through acres of dense invasive species, making way for prescribed fire to be reintroduced and eventually planted with native vegetation. USDA Forest Service photo by Briana Graham.

That field of flowers may have seemed pretty to some, but for neighbors and land managers, it is the site of an invasion. That pollinating vegetation is a sea of non-native invasive honeysuckle, multi flora rose and autumn olive. Every year there is more of it and what's left of native vegetation is being smothered out. The sight of a skid steer mounted mastication machine fighting back, is a welcome one.

Non-native invasive species have come to dominate in fields like Teeter Pasture and Potomac South Grassland. They rapidly out compete native forb species as well as desirable cool season grasses making it difficult for native species to continue to grow. Before long, they may also come to dominate the attention of pollinators as well, increasing their own numbers and further threatening the spread of native species.

As acres turn from native forbs and desirable cool season grasses to a mix of non-native species, birds see their home range transition from grasslands to early successional forest. To some this may seem like a natural transition, and it is, but there are specific species like Henslow's sparrow and grasshopper sparrow that need high quality grassland habitat to complete nesting and foraging. Additionally, the berries on non-native plants that birds are filling up on, before and during long migrations, lack the proper nutrition they need to sustain their flights yielding more time stopped and higher energy outputs foraging for quality food mid-migration. Furthermore, native pollinators can be outcompeted by non-native pollinators who preferentially pollinate non-native plants. By completing projects like this and resetting the vegetation to native desirable species both birds and bees benefit. Not only does honeysuckle and other non-natives dominate a landscape rapidly, but it's also hard for land managers to combat once it takes off. It is woody, it grows in dense and fast, and it does not allow sunlight to the ground, therefore

removing all ground vegetation. Trying to clear a few acres by hand would be futile. “We couldn’t possibly keep up. If we went into that field and tried to hand-pull just honeysuckle there’d be a new field of it long before we finished.” Says Greg Flood, Wildlife Biologist.

Flood says they won’t eradicate the intruding invasives completely, but they can slow the spread and they can help native species better compete. Both of which are priorities of the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan](#). With funding from GLRI to improve pollinator habitat as well as promote native species (both pollinators and vegetation), the forest was able to rent equipment and enlist the help of Job Corps students to do the heavy restoration work.

Two Forest Service Job Corps students learning to operate heavy machinery spent a month in the National Forest. They gained experience and practice hours on their machines; they also saw how their work contributes to the Forest Service mission. Being dropped in a field of invading honeysuckle, in the heart of the Finger Lakes, just south of Lake Ontario really puts the work ahead in perspective. Job Corps students will clear about 75 acres before they depart. That’s 75 terrestrial habitat acres in the Great Lakes Basin with a healthier future in store.



Photo: Greg Flood (Forest Service wildlife biologist) and Nate Buck (Jobs Corps student) stand at the edge of a field of honeysuckle talking about the challenges it has presented on the landscape and desired future management regime. USDA Forest Service photo by Briana Graham.

“I like to host Job Corps students on the forest whenever we can,” says Flood. “When the students are here, it’s easy for them to see the positive impact of natural resource management and the ripple effect across the landscape. Not only do they do great work for us, they are earning Public Land Corps hours, getting first hand on the job training for the program in which they are enrolled and gaining valuable insights into public land management. It is truly a win-win situation!”

The Forest Service [Job Corps](#) “has 24 centers that are known as Civilian Conservation Centers. These centers are operated by the U.S. Forest Service and encourage students to learn in nature and work to sustain and improve the land they live on. By embracing their natural surroundings, students at these centers can train in additional career fields, including wildland

firefighting, urban forestry and forestry conservation.” While the Department of Labor (DOL) owns and manages the program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service operates 24 Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs) that provide conservation trades such as forestry, wildland firefighting, and rural development that are directly tied to the Forest Service mission of caring for the land and serving the people.

[Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#) “was launched in 2010 as a non-regulatory program to accelerate efforts to protect and restore the largest system of fresh surface water in the world, and to provide additional resources to make progress toward the most critical long-term goals for this important ecosystem.”

National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf)

The National Wild Turkey Federation will host their National Board meeting in Watkins Glen, NY the week of August 12th. This provides the Forest an opportunity to showcase some great work that has been completed between the Forest and NWTf. Some of this work includes high quality habitat enhancements, riparian habitat improvement, including fence installation and native tree planting.

NWTf has also purchased the forest many tools to be able to implement prescribed fire on the landscape, a tool that is potentially underutilized as habitat management in the northeast. NWTf has bought our latest timber sale and will utilize proceeds from the sale to complete habitat work into the future on the Forest. We look forward to continuing the great work we have accomplished with NWTf. If you are interested in seeing some of the great work that has taken place on the Finger Lakes through the NWTf lens, watch the “Beyond the Strut” episode ([Beyond the Strut — New York - The National Wild Turkey Federation \(nwtf.org\)](#))



Photo: Doug Little (NWTf) and Greg Flood discussing the timber sale on the Finger Lakes National Forest. (photo-screenshot from the Beyond the Strut episode-NWTf)

Bass Stocking

Last spring we were able to stock bait fish in 3 ponds, Teeter pond, Ballard pond and Foster pond. This allowed the bait fish to cycle through a generation and have young this year.

This spring we stocked fingerling bass in these ponds! Both stockings should be self-sustaining and produce a quality fishery on the Finger Lakes NF for the foreseeable future!



26th Annual Youth Fishing derby

This year marked the “26th annual” youth fishing derby. This event was postponed during covid and last year was the return of this annual event.

In spite of the rainy weather we had a huge turnout. Around 7:30am it started to rain and right before the whistle to start the event, the rain stopped. The first fish was caught not 2 minutes into the event. One kid caught over 30 fish, mostly small bullheads, and some nice sized trout.

We want to thank everyone who came out to this event, it means a lot to us here at the Forest. A huge shout out to our sponsors as well! If you want to sign up for the Youth Fishing Derby, preregistrations will begin around April and run until the first week of May. This annual event is held on the first Saturday in May. We hope to see you in 2025!



Male Clay-colored Sparrow singing

Photo Credit: USFS Dylan Welch, Wildlife Technician

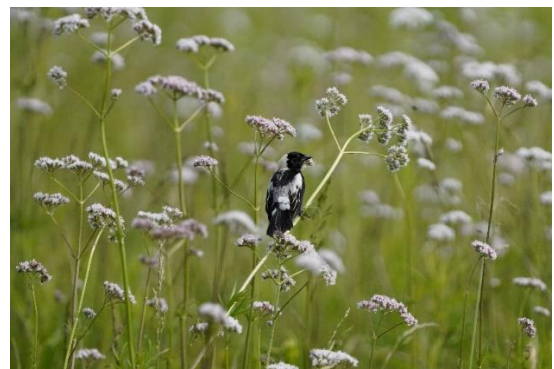
Grassland Bird Surveys

Every year the National Forest collects data in our pastures and grasslands on obligate grassland bird species. These birds only use grasslands for breeding and are very important indicators of good habitat use. Last year after the surveys, Dr. Charlie Smith retired and passed along his years of knowledge and survey efforts to our Wildlife Technician Dylan Welch.

Dr. Smith had been doing these types of surveys since 1988, and is very knowledgeable on not only birds, but plant and butterfly identification. This survey effort is done early mornings, walking slowly throughout the units that have been identified, and listening to the songs of Bobolink, Savannah Sparrows, and Meadow Larks, while also trying to find more rare species like Henlow’s Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows, and Clay-colored sparrows which may be locally extirpated.

Surveys are done throughout the months of late May to the end of June and early July if the weather holds out.

This year we are on schedule to finish these surveys by the end of June!



A Male Bobolink defending its territory.

Photo Credit: USFS Dylan Welch, Wildlife Technician



Savannah Sparrow nest with two chicks

Photo Credit: USFS Dylan Welch- Wildlife Technician

White Tailed Kite!

While conducting the grassland bird surveys, wildlife technician Dylan Welch observed an unusual bird that he's never seen before. Upon further observation and a not so good photograph through binoculars, he sent it the photo to Dr. Charlie Smith to confirm this sighting. Dr. Smith confirmed that this bird was a White-Tailed Kite, an unusual bird to be this far north.

Taken from the Merlin App, the white-tailed kite is a small hawk with gray wings and black shoulders. They hover over open areas in search of small prey. They perch atop tall vegetation in open landscapes. Normally found south of us. There was a reported sighting on Ebird over on Lake Ontario a few weeks back. This kite could be that same one, moving east towards the coast.



White tailed kite perched on top of a tree. A brown thrasher sitting below shows the size comparison.

Photo Credit: USFS Dylan Welch -Wildlife technician

Range

What a start to the 2024 grazing season! The grass greened up early from the warmth and the rain. I can say that I haven't seen the grass this thick and deep in my five seasons on the Finger Lakes.

I also don't think I've seen this much fence planned to be replaced either. We will be seeing nearly complete fence replacements on Horton, Peterson, Mielty and Teeter will be finished up as well. Certainly, over five new miles of fencing.

Two acronyms to thank for making that happen, HGA (Hector Grazing Association) and GLRI (Great Lakes Restoration Initiative). The range program would be having a harder time if it was not for this funding and the labor these groups provide.



Photo Credit: USFS Dylan Welch- Wildlife Technician

Something I'm equally as excited about was a very successful burn in the Cronk pasture. Preparations began for this burn last summer. With Cronk having a division fence splitting the pasture in half, we were able to move the cows into the front half about June last year. This gave the back half most of a growing season to build up a good thatch layer.

Having nice continuous fuels on the ground helps keep the fire hotter, and in the same spot for longer. This allows it to be more effective in killing back those Non-Native Invasive Species (NNIS) as well as woody encroachment like dog wood.



After the burn has gone through, we see a nice even field of black, but don't worry it didn't stay that way for long.



Removing that thatch and having the dark colored ground exposed to the sun warms the soil up faster than the surrounding areas. Seeds and grasses in the pasture will germinate earlier, resulting in Cronk being the first to green up in the spring.

We also put fire back into a portion of Mielty and Robinson pastures as well. The fuel was a little more sparse and greener, but we still saw some good results in these pastures. The first entry burns are always patchy and mosaic, some might say not pretty... but the only way to get to the good benefits down the road is to push forward and not let perfection get in the way of a good benefit. Very happy to see fire in the pastures.

Our usual schedule of work is also still on going, cattle are back out on all the pastures. Fence work is

being done, pond troughs are being cleaned and repaired. The newer fence we have the less "cows are out" calls we'll hopefully get. But in the meantime, let us know if you see them on the wrong side of the fence.

And please, keep those gates closed 😊



Queens Castle – Caywood Point

“Fossenvue a Staged Reading”

Back in May the Forest was happy to host a staged reading of “Fossenvue” which was written by Chris Woodworth.

“For several decades Geneva suffragists Elizabeth Smith Miller and Anne Fitzhugh Miller, and many of their friends gathered across Seneca Lake at a summer camp they called Fossenvue. Swimming, singing, writing, and suffrage strategizing filled their days and nights at Caywood Point. Inspired by research conducted at Historic Geneva and in the Library of Congress NAWSA digital collections, as well as site visits to “Queen’s Castle,” playwright Chris Woodworth weaves together past and present.

The play imagines the early days of Fossenvue and raises difficult questions about the legacies of race and suffrage activism today.”



It was great having Chris and her team down at Caywood Point, to perform this reading.

Interlaken Olde Home Days – June 8th

The Forest participated in Olde Home Day in Interlaken years ago. Was great to be back and talk with a lot of folks. Smokey was able to make an appearance as well!



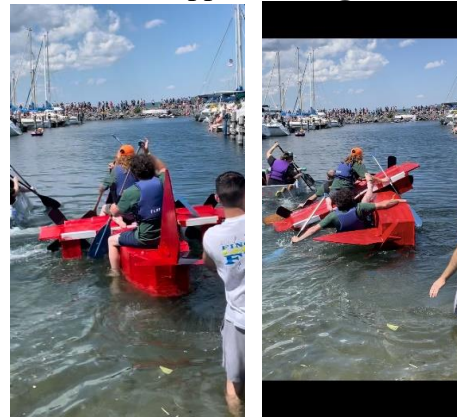
31st Annual Watkins Glen Carboard Boat Regatta – June 15th

For the second time, staff from the Forest participated in the Cardboard Boat Regatta. Boats can only be made using cardboard and ducttape – nothing else.

Building the boat was a team effort, with a few brave souls riding (sort of) to the finish line! The design this year was of an air tanker – that are used to drop “slurry aka fire retardant” on wildfires.



Let’s just say the design of the boat was great, but a little too buoyant, so the second you put weight on the boat – it tipped over 😞



“two seconds later”

The Matt’s stuck with it and pushed/pulled it around the course, but thankfully were soon rescued by “KopyKat Kollection’s.” Thanks for the aid!

We also had a booth and interacted with a lot of folks! Great time by all who attended.



At both Interlaken Olde Home Day and the Cardboard Boat Regatta, we were able to sell products (t-shirts, etc.) that we offer thru the Eastern National Forest Interpretive Association. When items are purchased, the Forest receives 20% back, which can be used toward educational and interpretive events. We grossed over \$1,200 with both events!



Safety Message



Office Hours

Our front office is open to the public on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

If you have any questions, please call 607-546-4470 and choose “0” for the operator.

As always, the front Foyer is open 24/7 and stocked with maps, trail sheets and information about the area.

From the Ranger...

What an amazing and busy spring we have had on the Forest! From the events surrounding Trees Across New York, Fishing Derby, a Staged Reading at Caywood Point, and even an openhouse. We have been able to host and attend some great events as well. I was talking with a visitor the other day who remarked that the Forest never looks the same twice, that’s why they keep coming back. And it’s true, there isn’t a day – if you pay close enough attention – that’s the same. That’s what makes it a special place to visit.

So, get out and enjoy the great Forest that many of you have in your backyard! - Jodie

Connect the Dots



Climate Change:

What is an Urban Heat Island?

The Short Answer:

An urban heat island occurs when a city experiences much warmer temperatures than nearby rural areas. The difference in temperature between urban and less-developed rural areas has to do with how well the surfaces in each environment absorb and hold heat.

An **urban heat island** occurs when a city experiences much warmer temperatures than nearby rural areas.



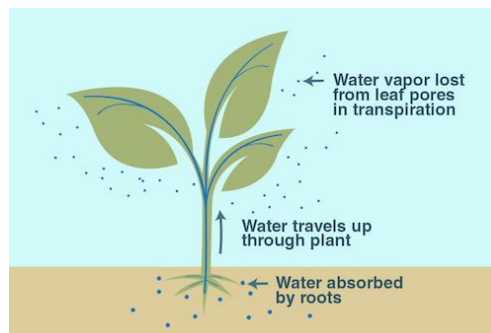
An illustration of an urban heat island. Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

Why does this happen?

An **urban** area is a city. A **rural** area is out in the country. The sun's heat and light reach the city and the country in the same way. The difference in temperature between urban and less-developed rural areas has to do with how well the surfaces in each environment absorb and hold heat.

If you travel to a rural area, you'll probably find that most of the region is covered with plants. Grass, trees and farmland covered with crops, as far as the eye can see.

Plants take up water from the ground through their roots. Then, they store the water in their stems and leaves. The water eventually travels to small holes on the underside of leaves. There, the liquid water turns into water vapor and is released into the air. This process is called **transpiration**. It acts as nature's air conditioner.



An illustration of the process of transpiration. Image credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

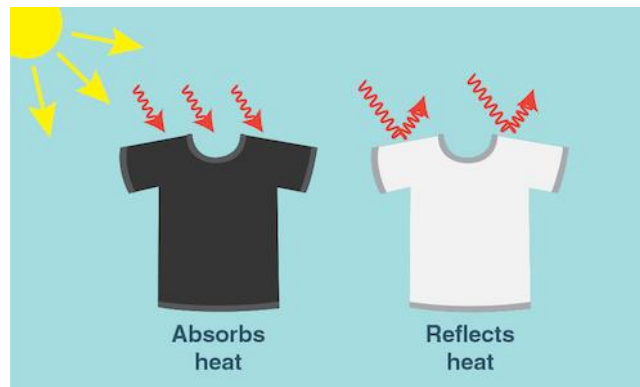
See it for yourself!

You can feel cooling transpiration at work on a hot summer day. On a sunny day, go outside and find a sidewalk that is right next to a patch of grass. Feel both surfaces. The grass should feel cooler on your skin than the pavement—and that’s mostly due to transpiration!

When you visit a big city, you won’t see many plants. Instead, you’ll see sidewalks, streets, parking lots and tall buildings. These structures are usually made up of materials such as cement, asphalt, brick, glass, steel and dark roofs.

What do urban building materials have in common?

First of all, materials such as asphalt, steel, and brick are often very dark colors—like black, brown and grey. A dark object **absorbs** all wavelengths of light energy and converts them into heat, so the object gets warm. In contrast, a white object **reflects** all wavelengths of light. The light is not converted into heat and the temperature of the white object does not increase noticeably. Thus, dark objects—such as building materials—absorb heat from the sun.



Dark surfaces--whether a black t-shirt or an asphalt street--absorb the sun's heat, while lighter colored surfaces reflect heat from the sun. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

To cool down urban heat islands, some cities are ‘lightening’ streets. This is done by covering black asphalt streets, parking lots, and dark roofs with a more reflective gray coating. These changes can drop urban air temperatures dramatically, especially during the heat of summer.

Planting gardens on urban rooftops can also help to cool down the city, too! In fact, a study in Los Angeles, California, calculated that changes like these would be enough to save close to \$100 million per year in energy costs!

Urban building materials are another reason that urban areas trap heat. Many modern building materials are **impervious** surfaces. This means that water can’t flow through surfaces like a brick or a patch of cement like it would through a plant. Without a cycle of flowing and evaporating water, these surfaces have nothing to cool them down.

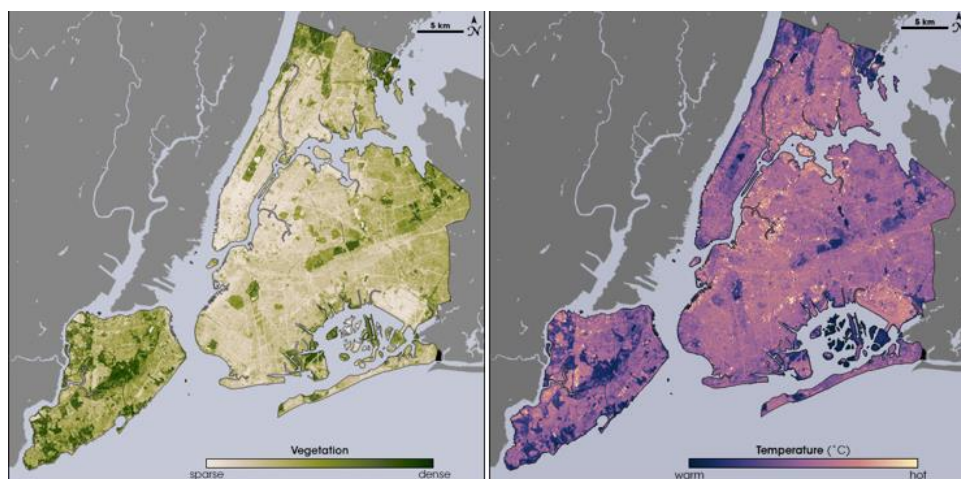
To help cool the heat island, builders can use materials that will allow water to flow through. These building materials—called permeable materials—promote the capture and flow of water, which cools urban regions.

What does it mean?

Urban heat islands are one of the easiest ways to see how human impact can change our planet. After all, sidewalks, parking lots and skyscrapers wouldn't exist if humans weren't there to build them. And although these structures are essential to city living, the heat islands they create can be dangerous for humans.

In the summer, New York City is about 7°F (4°C) hotter than its surrounding areas. That doesn't seem like much, but these higher temperatures can cause people to become dehydrated or suffer from heat exhaustion. The hot temps also require more energy to operate fans and air conditioners. This can lead to power outages and a serious danger to public health.

But, there are things we can do to help cool the cities down. And NASA satellites can help to figure out where these cities are the hottest.



Caption: These images from the NASA/USGS satellite Landsat show the cooling effects of plants on New York City's heat. On the left, areas of the map that are dark green have dense vegetation. Notice how these regions match up with the dark purple regions—those with the coolest temperatures—on the right. Image credit: Maps by Robert Simmon, using data from the Landsat Program.

Earth-observing satellites, such as Landsat and Suomi-NPP, can keep a close eye on the Earth's vegetation and surface temperature. Scientists can use this information to track hotspots in cities across the planet. NASA scientists, with their global satellite views, are working to understand urban heat islands and help urban planners to build more energy efficient, cooler and safer cities.

<https://climatekids.nasa.gov/climate-change-meaning/>

Just for Kids...

