

First Nations Woodlands

A newsletter to assist First Nations Forest Managers

Gaining experience on our own land

Over \$1,642,000 has been approved so far this year to implement projects proposed by First Nations bands to manage their forested lands in B.C.

This money represents 83% of the budget available this fiscal year under the First Nations Woodlands Program funded by Forestry Canada, explains John Drew, Director General of Forestry Canada in Victoria.

"Sixty-one bands or groups are now participating in this program and the number is steadily growing," he said.

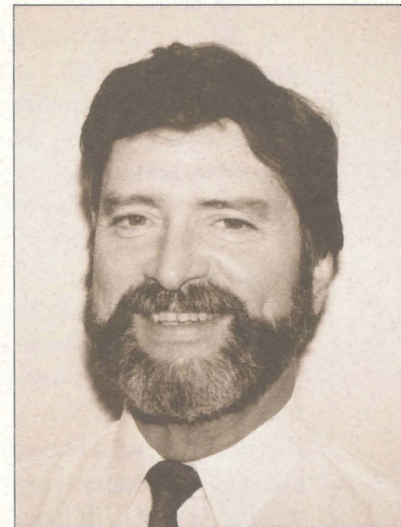
Harold Derickson, co-chair of the Management Committee, said the significance of this program lies in the philosophy of band members managing their own lands. "All of the projects use band members on

the reserves," he said. "Gaining experience on their own land means they can better compete for employment opportunities that are growing in silviculture programs on provincial lands."

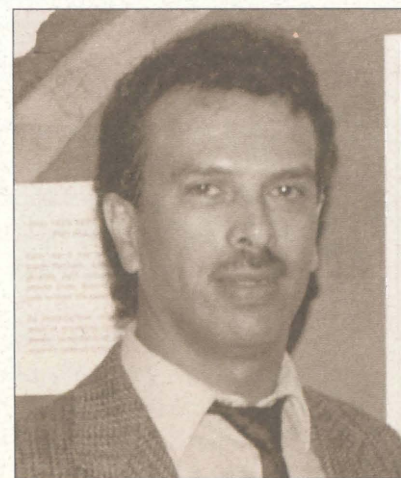
Some of the projects entail clearing non-commercial brush and planting cottonwood on alluvial areas in the Fraser and Lilloet river valleys.

"They are planting rapid-growing local and hybrid cottonwoods on alluvial sites well-suited to the species and growing them to maturity as a commercial crop in 25 years or so," Derickson explained.

Other projects approved for funding include updating forest management plans, site preparation and planting on unstocked lands, weed control within plantations, spacing of overstocked coniferous stands, and silvicultural surveys to determine future treatments.



Dr. John Drew



Harold Derickson

Alec accepts program challenge

“I enjoy meeting native people. The cultures are as distinctive as the species of trees,” says Lester Alec, a Carrier Native from the Carrier Sekani Nation, who has accepted a position as Silviculture Technician with the FRDA II First Nations Woodlands Program.

Born and raised in Fort St. James, Lester earned a business diploma in computer technology from the College of New Caledonia, Prince George in 1988 and a forest resource technology diploma in 1990. He was a summer forestry student with Indian and Northern Affairs in 1988 and a forest resource technician for Tanizul Timber, owned by Tl'Az'ten Nation, during the summer months of 1989 and 1990. Before joining Forestry Canada he held the position of Resource Assistant with the Forest Service in Prince George.

As a silviculture technician with Forestry Canada, Lester is responsible for site inspections for proposals under the Small-Scale and First Nations Woodlands Programs.

“The key features of the program are the employment opportunities for band members,



Lester Alec

“I enjoy meeting native people. The cultures are as distinctive as the species of trees”

specialized training achieved when completing projects, and forest management practices being conducted on reserve lands,” he says.

He also participates as recording secretary for the First Nations Woodlands Steering Committee but admits he likes

meeting natives involved in silviculture in his travels throughout B.C. for the program. He sees his responsibilities with the program as “an opportunity to work with native bands and to be proud of what is achieved for future generations.”

Meet the Steering Committee

The members of the Steering Committee of the First Nations Woodlands Program meet regularly to provide a technical review of band proposals and to make recommendations to the Management Committee.

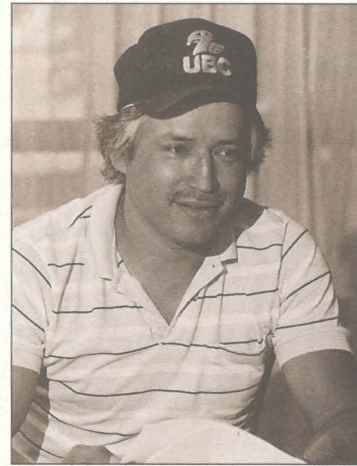
Steering Committee members represent the Native community from the diverse regions of the province. Collier Azak of the Nisga'a Tribal Council represents the North Coast while Richard Watts of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council represents the South Coast. Greg Gabriel of the Penticton Band is the representative from the Intertribal Forestry Association of B.C. on the Committee.

Wayne Terbasket of the Lower Similkameen Band represents the Southern Interior while the Northern Interior position is vacant. Dave Haley represents Forestry Canada and alternates the chairing of the committee with Native members.

Nominations are being sought to fill the vacant position in the Northern Interior and to replace current members when their terms expire. Nominations should be submitted to Forestry Canada.



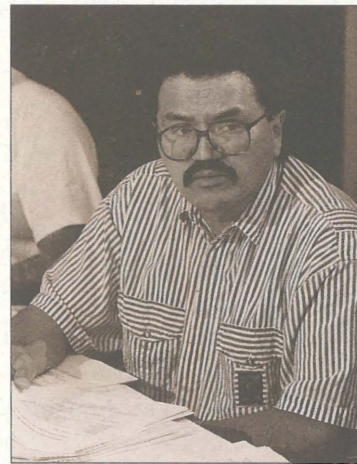
Richard Watts



Greg Gabriel



Dave Haley



Collier Azak



Wayne Terbasket

Putting Yourself Into the Big Picture

The B.C. Forest Service has classified the diverse geography, climate and vegetation of British Columbia into 14 biogeoclimatic zones, 12 of which are forested. Among other things, each zone is classified by wildlife species that occur there. They also list the wildlife species that are at risk in each zone.

In the book "British Columbia's Environment, Planning for the Future", the province is classified into ten ecological regions called ecoprovinces. One part lists all wildlife species found in British Columbia, including the ecoprovinces where they occur. The listings indicate which species are threatened or endangered, and which wildlife habitats are in decline.

You could consult both classification systems to find out how your woodland fits into the provincial ecological picture. This would also tell you which wildlife species occur in your region, and which species are rare or endangered. With further investigation and the aid of a professional forester or biologist, you may be able to discover if your property contains rare or endangered wildlife habitats.

How Do You Get Started?

1 Prepare a Habitat Inventory

Mike Fenger is a wildlife forester with the Ministry of the Environment. "It may sound a bit obvious," says Mike, "but unlike trees, wildlife moves around. Just because you don't always see a particular bird or mammal on your woodland, it could still be there. Maybe it uses the area just at night. Or at certain times of the year."

In other words, managing the wildlife really means taking care of the wildlife habitat. So the first thing to do is to identify the range of wildlife habitats you may have on your property. Look for the main ingredients animals need to survive, which are food, water and protective cover.

Do you have snags in your woodland? Chances are there are birds nesting there. Do you have logs decaying on the ground? If they are big enough, a black bear or coyote might use them for a den. Smaller downed logs are good habitat for squirrels, shrews, and amphibians. Streams, ponds and estuaries are rich in wildlife, and rocky cliffs provide habitats for foxes, pikas, and a variety of reptiles.

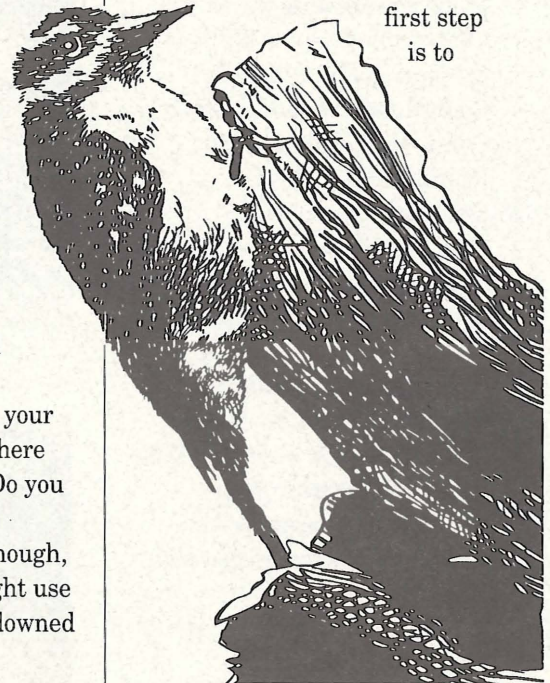
Each diverse bit of your

property could be a different wildlife habitat. And remember, a garter snake is wildlife. A big brown bat is wildlife. So are frogs and chipmunks. They may not be as flamboyant as elk or eagles, but their contribution to the health and diversity of your property can be just as important.

2 Draw Up A Habitat Plan

Once you have a general idea of the kind of wildlife habitats you have on your property, you can make an overall habitat plan.

The first step is to



sustain the habitats you have identified, such as by not draining a natural pond. Make sure not to block off animal trails across your property, and think carefully about wildlife

needs when you build your roads.

Secondly, you can improve habitat, such as by fencing off the land around the pond to protect it from the wear and tear of livestock. If you are actively working in an area with snags or downed logs, separate them for safety and surround the snags with buffer zones.

And you can create habitat, such as by constructing brush piles that provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species from wolves to songbirds. If you are doing some logging, consider doing it in patches and leaving uneven edges. This improves wildlife access to both food and cover.

In the following issues of this newsletter, we will look at more specific ways you can manage your woodlands for wildlife. For more advice on habitat wildlife inventory and planning, contact Forestry Canada in Victoria or the nearest Forest Service or Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks office.

B.C.'s Abundant Wildlife (And Disappearing Habitat)

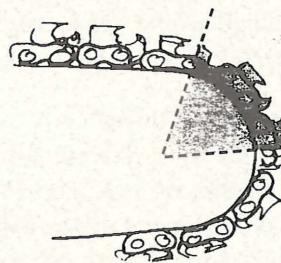
When it comes to wildlife in B.C. the numbers tell the story: 448 species of birds, 143 species of mammals, 19 species of reptiles and 20 species of amphibians. This is about the

richest concentration of wildlife in North America, and the main reason is B.C.'s diverse geography. From the fogbound coast to the arid interior, the provincial landscape provides a niche for just about every species of wildlife you can think of. In fact, about 75 percent of all mammals found in Canada occur in British Columbia; 24 of these only occur in this province.

But that's the good news. The bad news is that more than 100 of these species are endangered or at risk. The main cause for this is the loss of suitable habitat. The Ministry of Environment lists eleven different wildlife habitats that they are particularly concerned about. These include old-growth forests, wetlands, estuaries, streamside areas and wildlife winter ranges.

SAFETY TIP

Of all the operations performed with a chain saw, limbing has the most hidden dangers.



To prevent kickbacks, never use the upper tip of the guide bar.

Trees provide habitat for some 90 species of birds, mammals and amphibians in British Columbia.

Some species of birds require a strong healthy tree to nest or perch on. Other species such as bald eagles build their nests on trees that are just beginning to decay. As a tree deteriorates, cavity excavators such as woodpeckers go to work hollowing out their nests. As the tree continues to rot, bats and insect-eating birds move in, followed by cavity nesting birds, small mammals and salamanders. In all, the tree goes through nine levels of decomposition. At each level a new combination of species takes advantage of the tree's slow demise. The whole process could take 100 years to complete.

Wildlife trees come in different species, in different sizes, and in different stages of decline. Taken together, they make a key contribution of the overall health of any forest ecosystem. For example, any forest will be more productive if it is rich in birds that feed on tree-damaging insects.

"Throughout British Columbia we need to be concerned about losing the full diversity of wildlife habitat," says wildlife forester Mike

Fenger of the provincial Ministry of Environment. He points out that when a woodland owner considers a management plan for his forest he should remember that, "managing the decay cycle in the forest is as important as managing the growth cycle."



Wildlife Management Tips for Your Woodland

Once you decide to make the effort to sustain and improve wildlife habitat, there are any number of things you can do.

Doing "Nothing"

The most important wildlife management technique often is to do nothing at all. Simply let the natural ecosystems unfold at their own pace.

1. Don't cut down any wildlife trees on your property. Instead, leave a buffer strip around them for human safety. (Dead branches can drop off at anytime).

2. If you are fortunate enough to have a patch of old-growth or mature second growth on your woodland, consider saving it. Old-growth can be a very valuable winter habitat for deer and elk. In winter, caribou, elk and deer sometimes depend on the lichens that grow on mature conifers. Various species of owls, bats and small furbearers all require mature forests to survive.

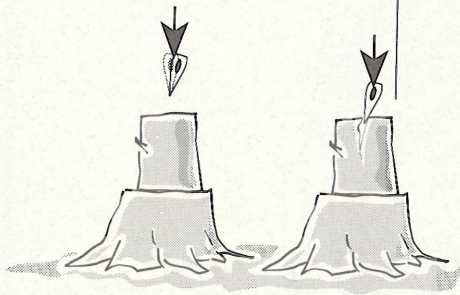
3. Don't remove large rotting logs lying on the ground. They can provide habitat for bigger animals such as coyotes or wolverines, for smaller mammals such as squirrels, for amphibians such as salamanders, and for any number of insects that wildlife like to feed on. This decaying wood ultimately returns nutrients to the soil.

4. Avoid building roads close to critical wildlife habitat, especially streams and ponds. Work around corridors that wildlife use to get from a stream to the forest. If you know of a specific area on your property that is well used by nesting birds or grazing deer, work around those as well (More tips in the next issue).

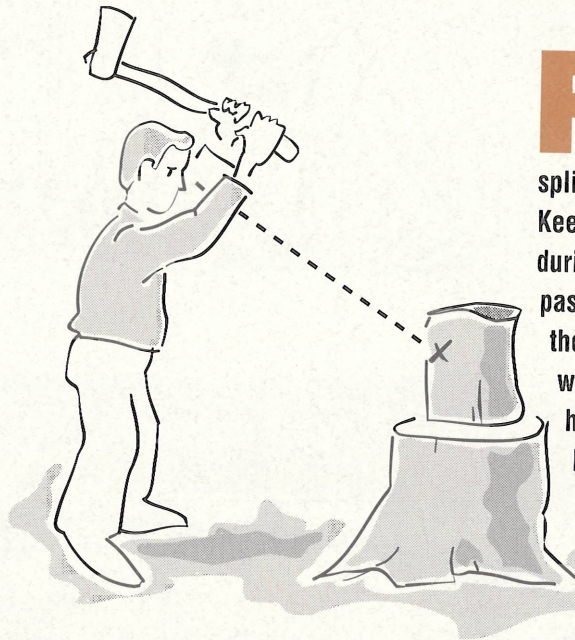
Consult your Workers' Compensation Board representative **BEFORE** you begin snag management activities.

LET'S SPLIT

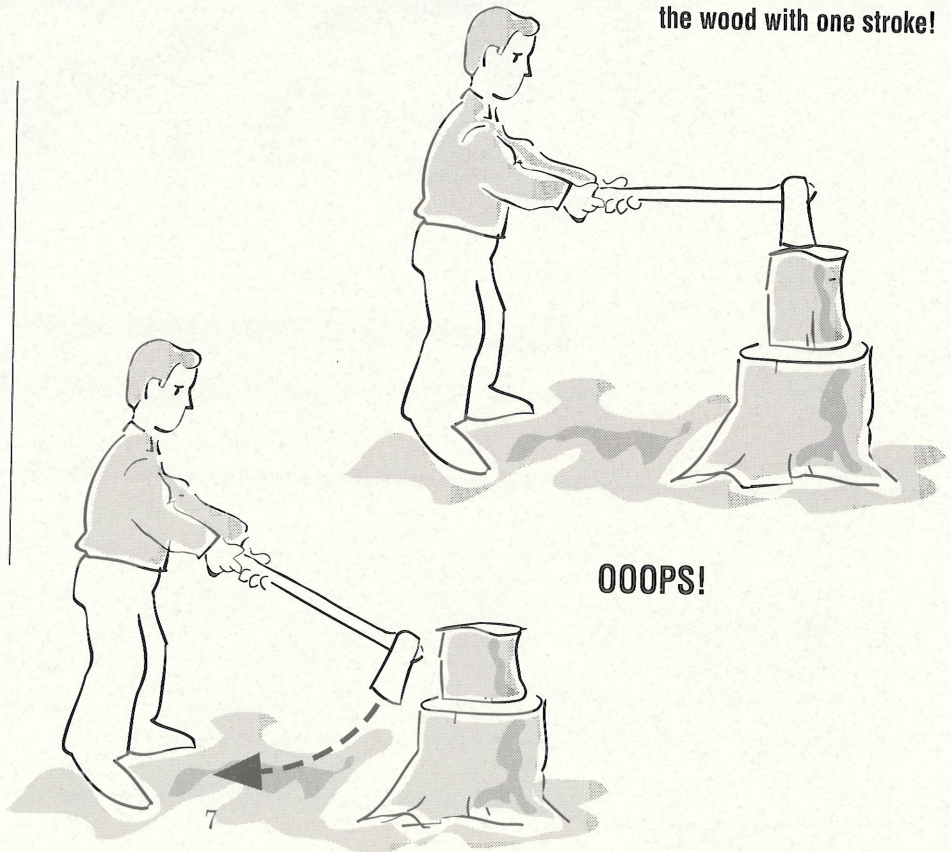
Splitting wood can be the cause of backstrain, tiredness and accidents. Like every other strenuous activity, there's a right way and a not so right way to get the job done.



The figure above shows how to turn your axe and hold it (with a slight angle of the blade to the direction of travel). You'll want to swing in the direction of the angle - but resist the urge and come straight down. The angle of the turn will exert greater splitting force than a directly vertical tool angle would and the two pieces will split apart with less force.



Find a spot four to six inches below the top of the wood you want to split and focus on that spot. Keep your eyes and head steady during the swing until the axe passes the point of aim. Once the axe head contacts the wood, keep the handle horizontal and do not swing lower than your hands. Using this technique could well prevent an accident while you are splitting wood and could result in you splitting the wood with one stroke!



You don't do this -



So why do this?



Protect the young trees -
you'll need them tomorrow!

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