

## **Transitional habitat new growth coming to the Adirondack Forest Preserve?**

*The views expressed in this article are those of Chuck Parker, President of the New York State Conservation Council. Since 1933 the NYSCC has advocated for the wise use of our wildlife, fish, lands and forests. The forever wild/wilderness forest doctrine in the Adirondack Park, while not in full agreement with what the Council considers wise use, did have some good effects on the Adirondacks. An extreme imbalance is facing the Adirondacks now and in the future; and not addressing that imbalance now will only worsen the situation. The older generation of today can say they remember the effects of over-harvesting trees. Today's young teens, if management practices in the Adirondacks do not change, will say when they grow old, "I remember the Adirondack forests before the trees all fell down."*

At a recent meeting I attended with other sportsmen, outdoor advocates and various environmental professionals, the topic of balance among the concerns of our lands and forests, wildlife, and people was being discussed. From the NYSCC perspective, there is nearly a complete loss of balance on state lands in the Adirondacks because of an overbearing philosophy within the forest preserve, the forever wild philosophy, and wilderness and wild forest classifications. Thus the carrying capacity for song birds, wild game and other species in the Adirondacks is severely lacking.

A knowledgeable voice from the back of the room stated that if we want new growth and the type of habitat that will promote increased wildlife populations in the Adirondacks we will get it; it is in nature's plan which is just slightly impacted by man. The problem for people my age is this new growth initiative will start to take place in about 50 to 75 years. A basic cycle of 175 to 250 years (of decay, regeneration, growth, decay ...) will re-forest land in the Adirondacks if un-impacted by man. Once the trees reach their mature state it is not that long by nature's time clock that they begin to die, rot and fall, thus creating the opportunity for nature's new growth initiative.

Because of logging in the Adirondacks much of the forest is on the same time schedule to reach maturity. This will eventually lead to tree mortality and the regeneration of forest lands that we as bird watchers, sportsmen and animal lovers value so highly. So in 50 to 75 years my friends will be initially saying, "Wow -- our animals are back." And the tree advocates will be saying, "Look at what is happening to our forests."

Left to her own devices, Mother Nature manages by extremes ... extreme highs followed by extreme lows if not regulated. There are control mechanisms built in to buffer the natural progression of nature's life cycle, such as the beaver, fire, and flooding which impact nature's cycle sporadically at best. One more element that Mother Nature intended to be used that is all too often being ignored in the Adirondacks is man -- the scientist, the element with knowledge, the logger and harvester, the one able to implement sound conservation practices.

We all want to protect the forest in the Adirondacks and everywhere else. The definition of a healthy forest system varies by different groups. We are being told that the future of the Adirondack forest faces certain degradation or destruction on a large scale at the hand of nature in the future. But there is a method to manage the Adirondack forest for sustainable and balanced growth, where maturity of different forest areas is on a different time line. Will our children's grandchildren be able to say we managed our Adirondack natural resources wisely as our management practice now stands? That would be no. Can we do better? You know we can! Will we????? Can we take the opportunity to look ahead and can we work proactively? Can we learn from sound science and objectivity?

The NYSCC's point of view comes principally from science and sound balanced management philosophies. The logger is our friend. Wise use of our forests ensures a sustainable forest, some wilderness forest, and an ecologically balanced forest.