

The Sensible Environmentalist

Protecting Wildlife In America's Forests

(NAPS)—**DEAR DR. MOORE:**
Are we doing enough to protect wildlife habitat in North American forests?

There can always be improvement, but I'm encouraged by the fact that North America has set



Dr. Moore

aside a higher percentage of parks and other protected areas than any other region in the world (United Nations FAO 2001). This land is legally set aside for current and future generations and provides habitat for thousands of species of wildlife.

Equally important, forest companies must account for wildlife as part of their forest management planning. Sustainable forestry isn't just about sustaining trees, it's also very much about sustaining habitat for other plants and animals.

People are understandably concerned when activists claim that species are going extinct. Years ago, one group made the incredible statement that 50,000 species go extinct each year, largely due to commercial forestry and deforestation in industrialized countries. The claim made headlines around the world, but was completely unsupported. As a scientist working in the field, I couldn't find evidence of a single species going extinct because of forestry. Apparently the group that made

the statement couldn't either. Despite repeated requests, it couldn't name even one.

In addition to this lack of evidence, United Nations data indicated that commercially grown forests in North America were actually expanding by 0.2 percent each year. Thanks to reforestation, today's forests cover roughly the same area of land as they did 100 years ago.

It's true that humans have caused the extinction of many species, but these tend to fall into three categories: over-hunting, introduction of predators and disease (which happened extensively during the Colonial period), and permanent clearing of forested land for agriculture. The good news is that we humans have become increasingly concerned about our effect on other species, and the global rate of extinction is at a 500-year low.

There will always be those who make false or exaggerated claims concerning wildlife. I believe that a sensible environmentalist would consider the evidence provided and give credit to the many groups and individuals that have helped make North America a leader in wildlife habitat protection.

Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to Patrick@SensibleEnvironmental.com.