

## The Woods Around Us: The Forest Society of Maine and Canada lynx

Written by Gary Morse

Thursday, 01 September 2011 00:00 -

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*This Canada lynx was photographed by Greenhill Estate manager and professional photographer Chuck Rupert on a gravel road somewhere between Rockwood and Pittston Farm.*

What connects the Forest Society of Maine (FSM), Maine's forest products industry and the Canada Lynx? Answer: The Forest Society of Maine seeks to maintain the working forest upon which Maine's forest products industry and the lynx rely.

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The Forest Society of Maine was begun in 1984, as a non-profit land trust to accept and facilitate easements on privately owned forestland. These easements usually take the form of sale or donation of the development rights for the property to FSM while allowing the continued use by the owners for timber growth and harvest, recreation, wildlife habitat and other ecological values. Today the FSM holds and/or enforces easements on property totaling 665,646 acres of forestland. That equals more than three Baxter State Parks. That is a lot of land and much of it is within the Moosehead area, including the 363,000 acres donated by Plum Creek as part of their rezoning request package.

At FSM's annual Moosehead Regional Reception in Greenville last week, Dr Daniel J. Harrison, professor of wildlife ecology at the University of Maine, presented a very informative talk on the biological needs of the Canada lynx and why FSM's work is so important. Here are a few gems of information that I gleaned from his presentation.

**Snow depth and Bobcat Competition:** Canada lynx have evolved to be able to travel easily over deep snow. Their feet are very large and their legs are long in relation to their overall size and weight. Dr. Harrison said that one cat that had a six-foot stride only weighed 17 pounds. Bobcats are much more aggressive than the lynx and where their ranges intersect the bobcats will out-compete the lynx. Because of the bobcat's smaller feet and shorter legs they do not move about well in deep snow. Snow depth then defines the two ranges, deep snow favors lynx, and less snow favors bobcats. The Greenville-Shirley-Monson area is the intersection of the lynx and bobcat snow conditions and animal interactions.

**Food:** Snowshoe hare make up most of the lynx's diet and are tied to forest disturbance. When hares are abundant the lynx populations will increase and when there are fewer hares the lynx birth rates decline and/or the animals move to others areas. Lynx cover a wide range with one animal documented to have traveled a distance of 1,000 miles.

An active forest products industry, with the associated timber harvests, creates the best habitat for snowshoe hare and therefore for the lynx. Hares need young thick fir stands for food and cover, and the fir thickets that regenerate harvested areas fill this need. In the time before harvesting became widespread it is thought that spruce budworm kill of the balsam fir caused this major disturbance. Contrary to its name, the insect feeds mostly on balsam fir and kills thousands of acres in an approximate fifty-year cycle. While fires and wind throw will also cause disturbance, it is thought to not have as great an impact as the insect kill. Our current high numbers of lynx are the result of the heavy cutting during the period of salvage of the balsam fir from the last budworm outbreak. There are currently more lynx in Maine (300 to 500 animals) than in all of the other lower 47 states combined. If we were to suddenly cease timber harvesting, then lynx numbers would decline.

The Forest Society of Maine is working hard to maintain our privately owned working forests and the ecological values associated with them. They now have a local representative, Karin Tilberg, with an office in the Natural Resources Education Center building at the former DOT Picnic Area on Rt. 15 in Greenville. Contact her at 207-944-0020 or write Forest Society of Maine, 115 Franklin St., Bangor, ME 04401, phone 207-945-9200 or see them on-line at [www.fsmaine.org](http://www.fsmaine.org)

, email

[info@fsmaine.org](mailto:info@fsmaine.org)

Find the Canada lynx, if you can, in The Woods Around Us. If you can't find one in the woods then Chuck Rupert's photo, seen above, is available at Gallery on the Lake, 35 Pritham Ave. in

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Greenville. Thank you, Chuck, for its use here.

(The author has been practicing forestry in Maine since 1966 and offers forestry consulting and management services through Moosehead Forestry Services, PO Box 715, Greenville, ME 04441. Questions, comments and topic suggestions can be sent to him via email at [glmorse@midmaine.com](mailto:glmorse@midmaine.com)

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