



A Forest Under Siege

Threats to the Boreal Forest

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), held annually on the second Saturday in May, is an invitation to celebrate and support migratory bird conservation.

IMBD Information
web - <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd>
phone - 703/358-2318

IMBD Materials
web - <http://www.BirdDay.org>
phone - 1-866/334-3330

January 2006

What is the Boreal Forest?

Most of us have heard of wetlands, rainforests and coral reefs...all areas of vast ecological richness which face a variety of threats. There is one area, however, even closer to our North American home, and more vital to some of the wildlife we see in our own back yards, that is also in jeopardy: the North American Boreal Forest.

The Boreal Forest is huge; it covers three and a half million square miles, and is the largest intact forest system left on the earth, large enough to hold 14 Californias. Although most of its land is covered by trees, it is actually a complex ecosystem consisting of forests, lakes, wetlands, rivers, and tundra.

The Boreal Forest is inhabited by 4 million people, approximately 14 percent of the Canadian population. The Boreal is also home to abundant wildlife, including the world's largest caribou herds, wolves, black and grizzly bears, moose, and lynx. The most numerous group in the Boreal is birds, which use the vast wilderness of the forest to nest and breed each year. Over 300 species regularly breed in the Boreal, accounting for nearly half of the birds that regularly occur within the U and Canada.

Why is the Boreal in Trouble?

Although most of the Boreal Forest is still intact, less than 8 percent of it is protected, and plans for its future development are well under way. Threats to the Boreal include:

Timber

- companies clear-cut forest areas the size of Connecticut each day
- logging is currently being done at the rate of five acres per minute
- most of the southern Boreal is devoted to logging

Fuel

- Canada is the largest supplier of fossil fuels for the U.S.
- The U.S. buys more of its oil from Canada than from any other source
- 90 percent of total US natural gas imports come from Canada

Agriculture

- Agricultural expansion leads to small, isolated patches of forests where trees are more vulnerable and many bird/animal species cannot survive
- Forests converted to agricultural land are not renewed or replanted as forests, as they are with logging

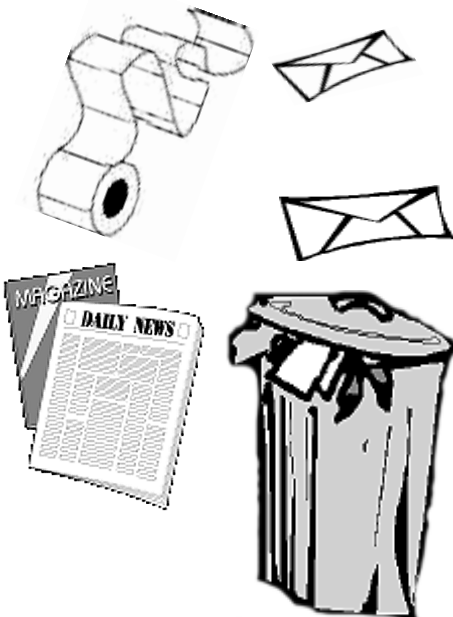


Where does all the wood cut from the Boreal go?

Almost two-thirds of the wood cut in the Boreal Forest is used to make paper, including catalogs, junk mail, magazines, and newspapers.

Surprising facts about what happens to the wood from the Boreal -

- § Boreal trees provide more than a third of all newsprint used in the U.S.
- § 80 percent of all forest products go directly to the US
- § The US, which represents only 7 percent of the world population, uses 50% of its tissue paper products – 50 pounds per person per year!
- § The majority of mailed catalogs are printed on Boreal forest products- average US citizen receives 59 catalogs per year
- § Victoria's Secret alone mails out 395 million catalogs per year, only 10 percent of which use recycled materials
- § According to the Boreal Songbird Initiative, more than 100 million trees' worth of bulk mail arrive in American mailboxes each year, and catalog production increased by one billion last year alone!



What will happen if the Boreal Forest continues to be cut down?

The continued destruction of the Boreal Forest will have tragic consequences:

Climate Change

The process is cyclical: current high levels of greenhouse gases increase the number of fires, insect outbreaks, and storms in the area, which destroy Boreal trees. The destruction of trees releases tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which in turn raises the global temperature even further. Instead of acting as a sink that locks down carbon, Boreal Forests may become a source, intensifying the effects of climate change.

Loss of Habitat

Logging and conversion to agriculture result in habitat destruction, particularly in older forests and forests that are difficult to renew. Habitat loss, including the destruction, degradation, and fragmentation of habitats, is the leading cause of biodiversity loss.

Reduction of Species

One study by the University of Alberta found that in the years after forest harvest and fragmentation, the decline in some migratory bird populations is as high as 50 percent. Another study found that 72 percent of 300 species of vertebrate wildlife would suffer through loss of habitat and loss of prey.

How can you help?

- ✓ Buy only Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood or use recycled wood
- ✓ Use the highest post-consumer recycled fiber products you can find for all your paper needs, including printing paper, paper towels, toilet paper, etc. A list of ecologically preferable products can be found at: <http://www.nrdc.org/land/forests/gtissue.asp>, or at www.coservatree.com/PaperGuide/Tissue/consumerbath.shtml
- ✓ Reduce the number of catalogs that you receive by registering with the catalog trade's mail preference system. Send a postcard including your name, address and email to:

Mail Preference Service
Direct Marketing Association
PO Box 643
Carmel, NY 15012-0643
- ✓ Follow and support the progress of the Canadian Boreal Initiative, a group of industry leaders, native people, and others that is seeking new and innovative solutions for conservation and sustainable development in the Boreal Forest region.
- ✓ Learn more about the Boreal Forest at www.borealbirds.org