

# INTEGRATED FOREST MANAGEMENT

by Sid Watts, Kilmuir

If you are fortunate enough to be a woodlot owner on P.E.I., then you have a unique opportunity to manage one of this province's most important and most beautiful natural resources. Management of your woodlot need not be primarily for economic reasons, but may be for other less tangible reasons. It is difficult, if not impossible, to put a price tag on a walk in the woods in the Spring of the year when the warblers and thrushes are filling the air with their beautiful songs.

Decisions that you, the woodlot owner, make can have a great effect on varieties and numbers of species that will visit or stay in your woodlot. It is for this reason that you should gather as much information as you can on the type of management that best suits you and your woodlot. You should then base your decisions on this information.

Integrated forest management is simply the management of a tract of woodland for wildlife, recreation and timber. You must decide if one is more important than another, or if all three should be treated somewhat equally.

Something that many of us overlook is the changes that take place in a stand of trees. Very often we see a stand of trees that we feel will not change, but this just isn't so. Trees and woodlots are always changing. One doesn't have to look too far on P.E.I. to see stands of trees that are dead or dying. They are losing not only their timber value but also their maximum potential for wildlife habitat, to say nothing of their aesthetic and recreational values.

It would be impossible to list all the decision factors that a woodlot owner might have to consider; however I would like to point out a few of the more important factors that will affect wildlife populations.

Food, cover, water and space are the four main factors that will make up the habitat. Since there is very little most of us can do about water and space we should, as managers, concentrate on the food and cover. This does not mean that water and space are any less important than food and cover.

The first step to take toward better management of your woodlot is to take an inventory of it. Find out what species of trees you have; what age and condition they are in; how large an area each stand covers; where roads, trails, ponds and streams are located. To better help you understand how all these relate to one another you should make a map showing all of the things listed above.

Once you have your inventory and map complete, you must then decide on which species of wildlife you would like to attract to your woodlot. Once you know which species you most prefer, then you will have to get as much information about their requirements as possible. (Department of Forestry personnel will be happy to help you with this.) When you have acquired the knowledge of your woodlot and the requirements of the species you would like to manage for, you are truly ready to make decisions that will improve the habitat of your woodlot.

Deciding on what to do is only part of the job; getting the necessary work done is the other. It is a very rewarding feeling to see more and more varied species of wildlife moving into your woodlot because you took the time to create the best habitat you could for them.

