

An Alternative Vision for Wildlife in Nova Scotia

Note: Recently, someone previously unknown to me in Nova Scotia, wrote raising some thoughtful questions about wildlife and asking for access to a document written in 1992, “An Alternative Vision for Wildlife in Nova Scotia.” This was a presentation I gave on behalf of the Green Web, at a public meeting in Truro concerned about the future of wildlife in Nova Scotia. (It was co-signed by Billy MacDonald of Redtail Nature Awareness.) This person is a bow hunter and hunts for food. He says he is re-examining his relationship with human access to wildlife, and that he supports the eight-point Deep Ecology Platform. Because of his request, we have now placed this almost twenty-year old document on our web page. It has historical interest for showing a step on the path to the evolution of a left biocentric position towards wildlife and the natural world. Looking back at my notes of this time, about 120 copies of “An Alternative Vision for Wildlife in Nova Scotia” were given to everyone in attendance at the Truro meeting, including the bourgeois press. Yet there was no reflection of the biocentric critique in the press coverage of the meeting. So I sent a letter to the editor, based on the analysis in this document, to about 20 provincial newspapers. It was published in a number of them. David Orton, February 2010

*(This is a preliminary response by the Green Web environmental research group, to the position paper/documentation package from Donald Dodds, Chairperson of the Wildlife Advisory Council, **Today's Challenge – Tomorrow's Legacy, A Wildlife Strategy For Nova Scotia**, 77 pages, for a “Wildlife Strategy” conference, N.S. Agriculture College, on Saturday January 25, 1992.)*

UPHOLDING THE STATUS QUO: The Green Web is only participating in the part of this conference which is open to the general public. We reject the status quo “vision” for wildlife, put forward in **Today's Challenge**. This document does not accept that the demands of healthy ecosystems – putting the Earth first – must be the framework for the well being of wildlife. Instead, existing land use, e.g. pulpwood forestry – forestry practices like clear cutting, softwood promotion, pesticide spraying, etc. – are taken as givens, along with endless economic and human population growth. Thus habitat destruction, whether from forestry, agriculture, industrial discharges, etc., are lived with. Why don't **we** have to change? From an ecological perspective, because of our destructive activities towards other life forms, humans are the only pest species.

HUMAN-CENTERED BIAS: While some useful data is presented, the viewpoint is complacent and without any sense of urgency. It is also simplistic and marked by duplicity. For example, Aldo Leopold the philosopher/forester is quoted, yet this document, with its human-centered position that Nature and wildlife is a “resource” for human use, opposes the biocentric perspective. This is the perspective that all wildlife and Nature must be preserved **for its own sake**, which Leopold's name has come to symbolize in the deep ecology movement and among conservation biologists. Thus Leopold is quoted, yet what he came to stand for is opposed! The “wildlife manager”, the wildlife biologist, from the perspective of **Today's Challenge**, is the “broker” among often conflicting human-centered selfish interests. There is no higher interest. This is realism according to Donald Dodds. **Yet who speaks for the interests of**

wildlife? Isn't it arrogant to believe we can "manage" wildlife, when we can't manage our own economy and various human social problems?

"GAME" ORIENTATION: The 1991 World Wildlife Fund publication, **Wild Hunters: Predators In Peril**, makes an excellent case for large wilderness areas for carnivores like bears, wolverines, cougars, and wolves. This book points out that "Hunting has become a minority activity in Canada, practiced by less than 10 percent of the public, and that percentage appears to be getting smaller year by year." Yet **Today's Challenge** is completely permeated by the traditional hunter/trapper "game" orientation, and therefore not reflective of the new sensitivity against killing wildlife.

SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: **Today's Challenge** accepts the current fashionable mythology of "sustainable development", which draws its main legitimacy from the 1987 Brundtland Report, **Our Common Future**. The Brundtland Report advocates a five- to tenfold increase, worldwide, in manufacturing output. Sustainable development says the economy can continue expanding, along with increasing consumerism, population growth, accepting the ecologically destructive lifestyle of the "developed" world, as a model, etc. **and** we can still protect wildlife and the natural world. **The message is, we do not have to fundamentally change.** This is why a pulp company like Stora can enthusiastically embrace the concept of sustainable development.

One final point, sexist language should have no place in the position paper, **Today's Challenge**. It is not acceptable to use the term "man", to represent the women and men who are concerned about wildlife in Nova Scotia.

AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

Aldo Leopold used the expression "Thinking Like a Mountain." He was talking about the necessity for humans to extend their sense of self-identity to include the well-being of the Earth. Arne Naess, the Norwegian philosopher and founder of the deep long range ecology movement, has outlined a conceptual alternative, which if creatively applied to the situation in Nova Scotia, offers a way forward for wildlife. Naess gives one formulation of "A Platform for Deep Ecology", in an article called "Deep Ecology and Ultimate Premises", in **The Ecologist**, Vol. 18, No. 4/5, 1988:

1. The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has inherent value. The value of non-human life-forms is independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. The richness and diversity of life forms are also values in themselves and contribute to the flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.

4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial **decrease** of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs would be deeply different from the present and would make possible a more joyful experience of the connectedness of all things.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating **life quality** (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasing higher standard of living. There will be profound awareness of the difference between “big” and “great.”
8. Those who subscribe to the following points have an obligation, directly or indirectly, to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary change.

SOME MODEST PROPOSALS FOR WILDLIFE IN NOVA SCOTIA

The following measures will improve the situation of wildlife in Nova Scotia, and are advanced for discussion purposes, as the position of the Green Web.

- a. Make **all** provincial crown land in Nova Scotia wildlife reserves, where no timber extraction for pulp or saw logs or pesticide use, or hunting, trapping, or fishing, are permitted. Measures would include: crown leases to be terminated without compensation; cut over areas allowed to naturally regenerate; extensive areas closed to human intrusion; and no mechanical transportation allowed on crown land. We need the creation, in practical terms, of wildlife corridors, linking these provincial wildlife reserves and the two existing national parks, for migration of wildlife and genetic exchange. This proposal makes about 27% of Nova Scotia, a wildlife reserve.
- b. Ban game farming, which is turning wildlife into just another commodity in the market place, and thus eroding wildlife protection.
- c. Eliminate bear hunting and the trapping of wildlife. Deer hunting to be reduced to a two-week season, in order **to minimize stress on the animals** and on rural Nova Scotians. It should be illegal, with heavy penalties, to have liquor in a vehicle when hunting weapons are being carried. Much tighter restrictions on small game hunting, e.g. eliminating semi-automatic .22 calibre weapons and restrictions in the length of seasons and eliminating “open” seasons on wildlife such as coyotes, squirrels and skunks.
- d. Complete protection of water systems, including the smallest streams. Water is fundamental for wildlife and the health of the forest.

e. No clear cutting or spraying, or use of heavy machinery, on private forested lands in the province.

f. Terminate plantation forestry, the planting of a narrow range of softwood pulp species. Plantation forestry is undermining the biodiversity of the natural Acadian forest and impoverishing wildlife habitat.

For additional information on the above position contact David Orton: 925-2514, or Billy MacDonald: 485-4688.

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