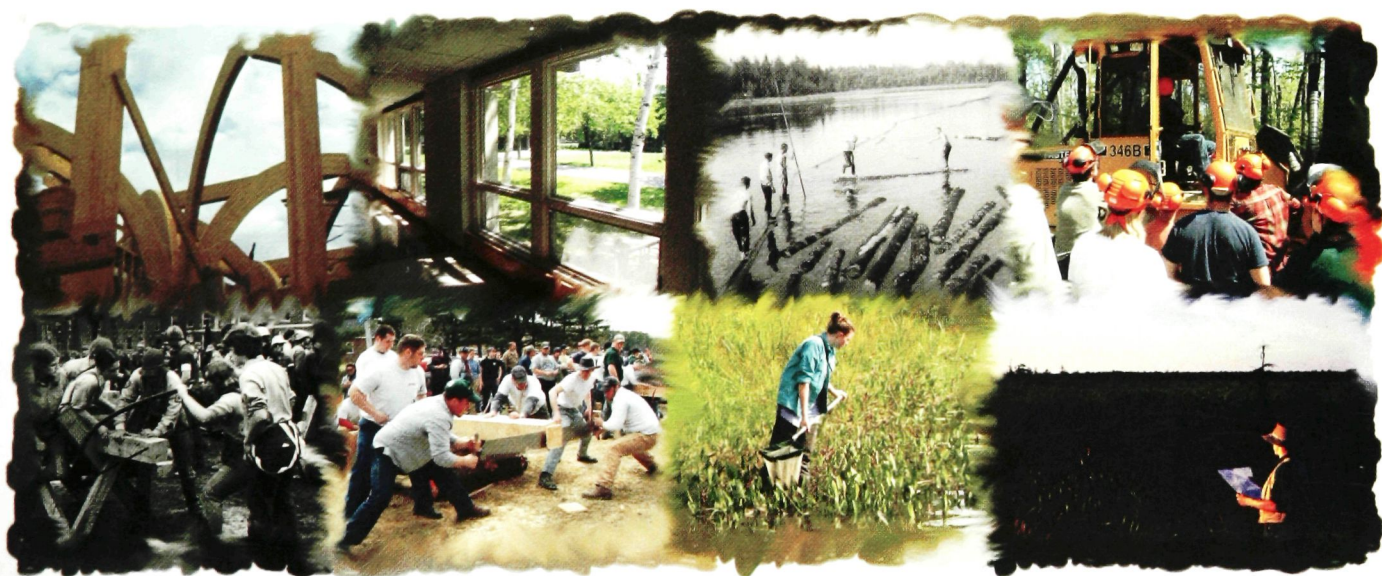
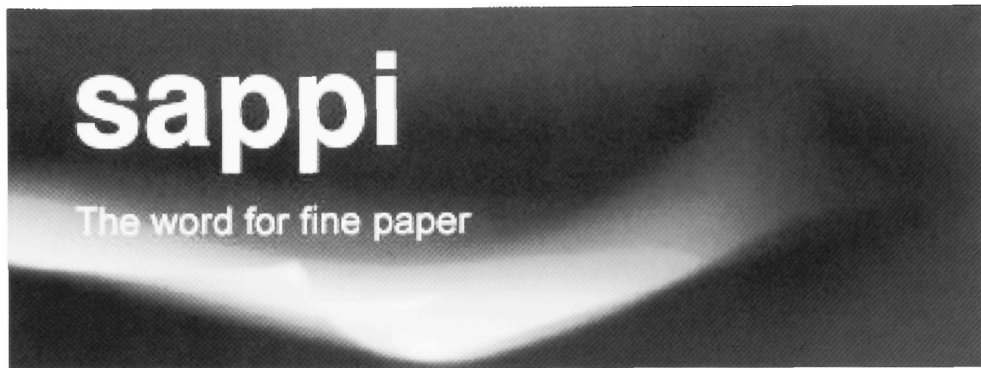


The Maine Forester



100th Anniversary Edition





The Maine Forester

expresses our deepest gratitude to

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Skowhegan, Maine**

for the generous contribution of the paper



THE MAINE FORESTER

RESTORING THE TRADITION

2003-2004



The Maine Forester is published by students in the Forest Resources Majors. It includes events and activities of the 2003-2004 year for the following majors: Forestry; Wildlife Ecology; Forest Operations Science; Parks, Recreation, and Tourism; and Wood Science. *The Maine Forester* was first published in 1923 and was continued through 1994. Over the years, *The Maine Forester* has won many awards, including SAF's best "Student Publication." This year's edition is not only special because it is the Umaine Forestry Program 100th anniversary edition, but it is also the first publication of *The Maine Forester* since 1994. *The Maine Forester* was once enjoyed by the faculty, staff, students, and alumni. It provided a way for alumni to reminisce and go back to the "college days" once again. *The Maine Forester* is a tradition that took a break, but now is restored for many years to come.



"Cub Scouts"
Sculpture by Forest Hart

DEDICATION

Alumni, Faculty, and Staff of the last 100 Years

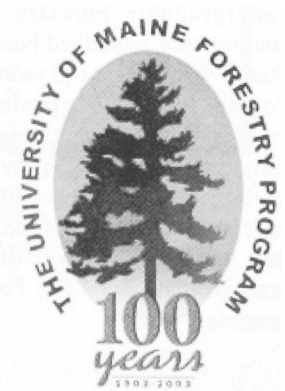
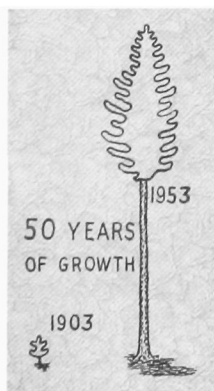
This volume is dedicated to all the alumni, faculty, and staff, who for the past 100 years have made the University of Maine Forest Resources programs what they are today. Without all those who came before us, this program would not have reached this milestone. To the alumni who have made a difference in and out of the forestry world upon leaving the classrooms of Winslow, Deering, and Nutting Halls; to the faculty, from Samuel Spring in 1903 to Dean Bruce Wiersma today for possessing the knowledge and sharing it with us in a way that makes us as prepared as any upon graduation; and to the support staff for keeping all the wheels moving smoothly and making sure that everything goes according to plan.

From the very beginning University of Maine alumni have made a difference in progressing the science of forestry. Maine Forestry alumni have traveled the world practicing their trade, working in forests throughout the United States, Canada, and many other locations around the globe. University of Maine alumni have practiced great forestry as well as promote the science of forest and wildlife management from the very early years. Their good work has continued to make the University of Maine name synonymous with 'quality forest resources

education.' Members of that very first graduating class (1906) of four, were published by SAF as early as 1911 in the Forest Quarterly (precursor to the Journal of Forestry).

Alumni also return to their roots and complete the cycle from student, to graduate, to professor. This is most evident when you look at the number of University of Maine alumni who have returned as faculty or to become the heads of departments. The first alumnus to return as faculty was C.W.L. Chapman (1914) in 1919 when he returned to become Instructor of Forestry. Today there are 12 alumni in faculty or research positions in Forestry, Wildlife, Forest Ecosystems Science, Wood Science, and Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Not only do the alumni come back to teach, they also come back to lead in the position of Heads of Departments and Deans. These individuals include Dwight B. Demeritt ('22), Albert D. Nutting ('27), Malcolm W. Coulter (MS '48), Fred B. Knight ('49) and the current Dean, Bruce Wiersma ('64).

For 100 years students have been provided with, "A knowledge of the principles of forestry in its different branches, as well as some practical work done in the forest," to quote the course catalog of 1903. To all of those who taught, learned, and supported in educating us in those principles, we thank you.



THOUGHTS FROM THE OFFICE OF DEAN G. BRUCE WIERSMA

COLLEGE OF NATURAL SCIENCES,
FORESTRY & AGRICULTURE

When I was eight years old, I fell in love with the forest and I decided then that I wanted to be a Forester when I grew up. I chose the University of Maine because of its reputation and I have never regretted that choice. I learned about the respect extended to UMaine's Forestry Program after I graduated from UMaine in 1964. Both at Yale and Syracuse, I discovered that I was as prepared as any of the students there.

I am both honored and humbled to be Dean of the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry and Agriculture during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Forestry Program. We have much to be proud of as we celebrate this centennial year. The undergraduate Forestry Program is the longest continuously accredited Forestry Program in the United States. For the last 100 years, the University of Maine's Forestry Program has produced graduates committed to the idea of a sustainable forest. Maine Forestry graduates carry a common ethic. They have a strong commitment to the forest and to sound forest management. They understand the cycles of the forest, and they understand that cutting is a good thing when it is part of a management plan. The Forestry curriculum remains amazingly true to



Winslow Hall

its 100-year old roots. Changes have come as the sciences themselves have advanced. Today's Forestry graduates take class work in economics, computer science, computer mapping, spatial technology, satellite imagery, and using GPS.

According to the Society of American Foresters, the United States has about the same amount of wood-lands-747 million acres-as it did 100 years ago.

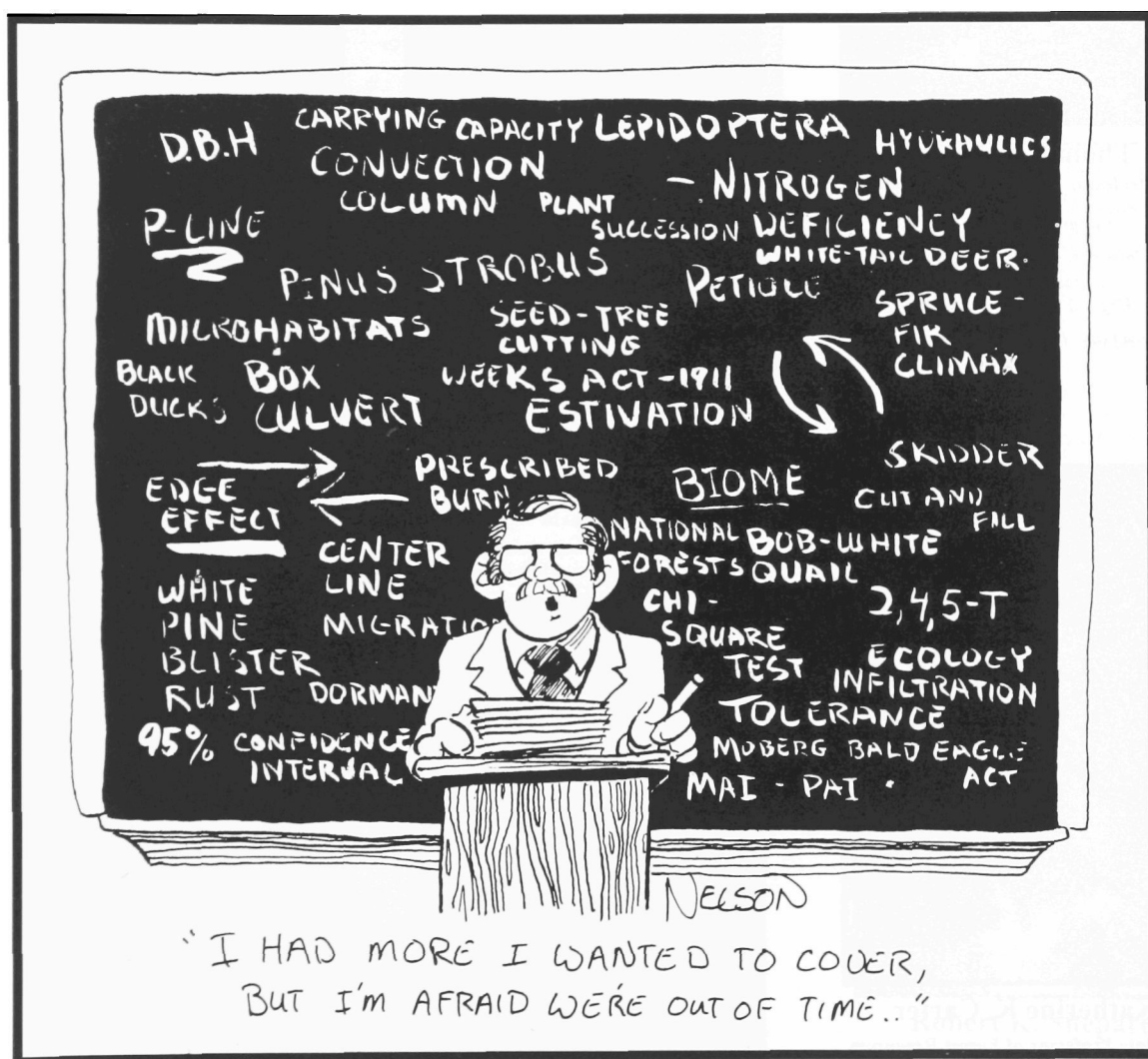
However, the pressures on those re-sources are much greater today than they were in 1903. In the next century, the capacity of our woodlands will be challenged like never before. Chief among those challenges is a growing world population. A growing population will put increasing de-

mands on forest resources. As they have for centuries, our forests must continue to contribute to this country's economic foundation while increasingly being part of the global marketplace.

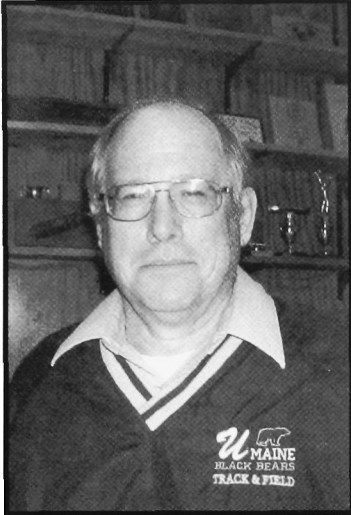
Our goal is to prepare society-ready graduates to become the leaders of tomorrow. As I look around this college and see the dedication and commitment that our young people have, I am optimistic that we will more than meet the challenges of the next hundred years.

Congratulations to *The Maine Forester* on the publication of its 100th anniversary edition.

FACULTY & STAFF



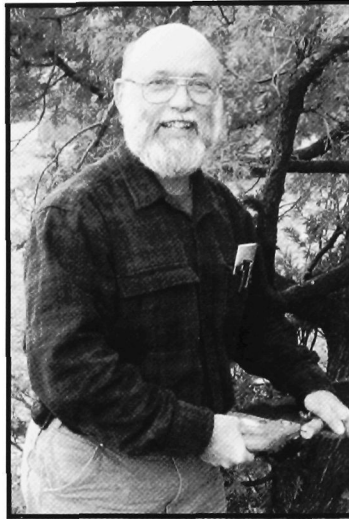
Forest Management Faculty



Thomas B. Brann

Professor of Forest Resources

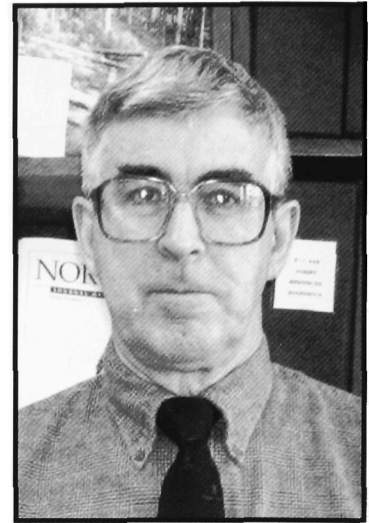
*B.S. University of New Hampshire, 1969,
Forest Management
M.S. University of New Hampshire, 1974,
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Ph.D. Virginia Polytechnic Inst. & State
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Alan J. Kimball

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David B. Field

**E.L. Giddings Professor of Forest
Policy & Professor of Forest Resources
Department of Forest Management
Chair**

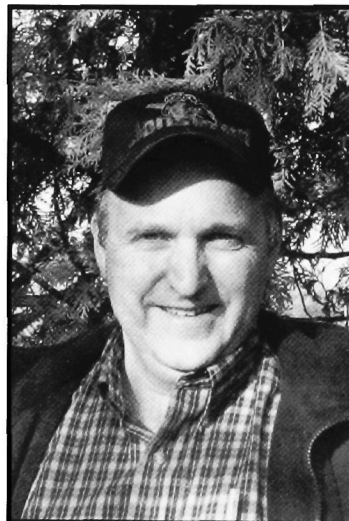
*B.S. University of Maine, 1963, Forestry
M.S. University of Maine, 1968, Forest
Economics
Ph. D. Purdue University, 1974, Forest
Economics*



Katherine K. Carter

Associate Professor of Forest Resources

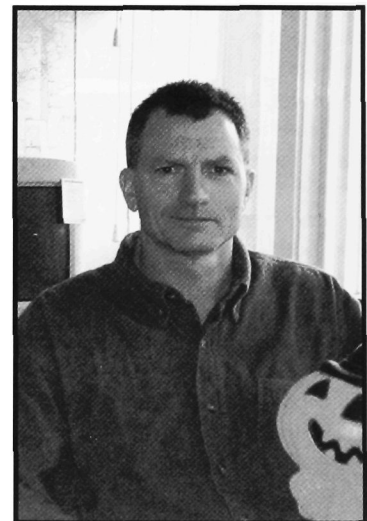
*B.S. Central Missouri State University,
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M.A.T. Duke University, 1976
M.F. Duke University, 1978
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*B.S. University of Maine, 1961,
Agricultural Engineering
M.S. Cornell University, 1969,
Agricultural Engineering
PhD Colorado State University, 1970,
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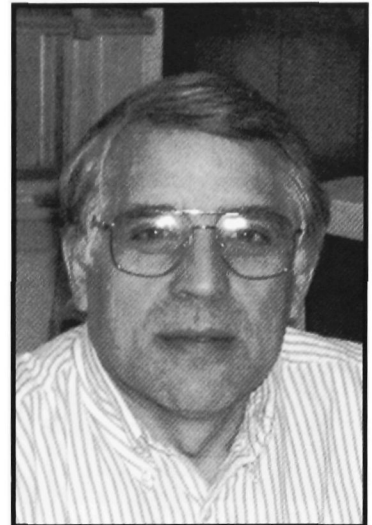


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Irving Chair for Forest Ecosystem Management

*A.B. Bowdoin College, 1987, Economics
M.F. Yale University, 1993, Forest Management
Ph.D. University of Washington, 1998,
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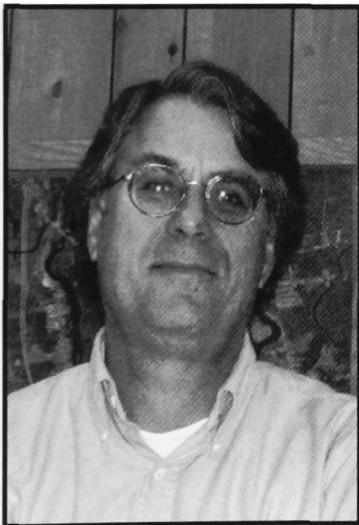


William D. Ostrofsky

Henry Saunders Assistant Professor of Forest Resources

Director; Professional Development Office

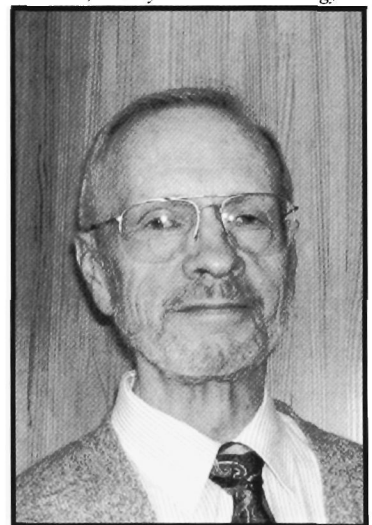
*A.A.S. University of New Hampshire, 1970, Forestry
B.S. University of New Hampshire, 1973,
Forestry
M.S. Oregon State University, 1975,
Botany and Plant Pathology
Ph.D. University of New Hampshire, 1982, Botany and Plant Pathology*



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*B.S., No. Arizona University, 1973,
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M.S., Mississippi State University, 1976,
Forest Management
Ph.D., University of Idaho, 1981, Forest Management*

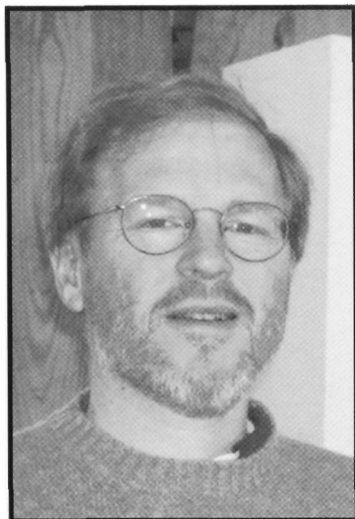


Robert K. Shepard

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M.F., Duke University, 1964
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Douglas J. Gardner

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Ph. D. Mississippi State University, 1985, Wood Science & Technology (minor, Chemistry)



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Assistant Director, Advanced Engineered Wood Composite Center
B.S. Colorado State University, 1979, Wood Science & Technology
M.S. Colorado State University, 1982, Wood Engineering
Ph.D. Pennsylvania State University, 1986, Forest Resources



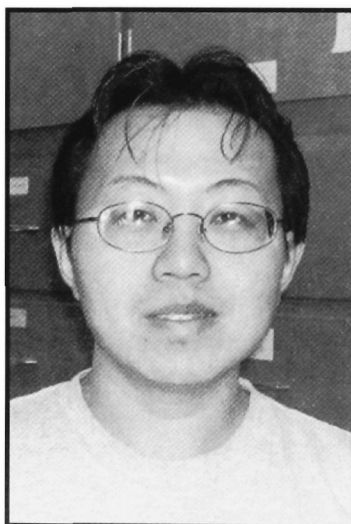
Barry Goodell

Professor of Wood Science & Technology
B.S. University of New Hampshire, 1976
M.S. Oregon State University, 1980, Forest Products
Ph. D. Oregon State University, Forest Products (minor, Biochemistry/ Biophysics & Plant Pathology)



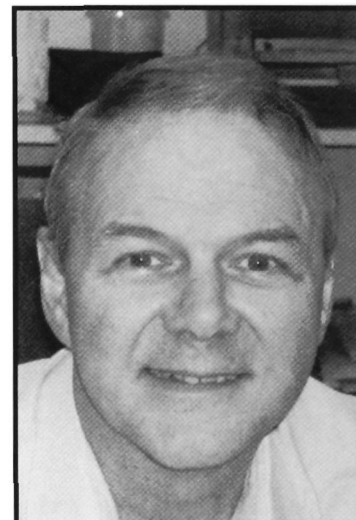
Lech Muszynski

Assistant Scientist
M.Sc. Agricultural University of Poznan, 1987, Wood Technology
Ph.D. Agricultural University of Poznan, 1997, Forestry & Wood Technology



Yuhui Qian

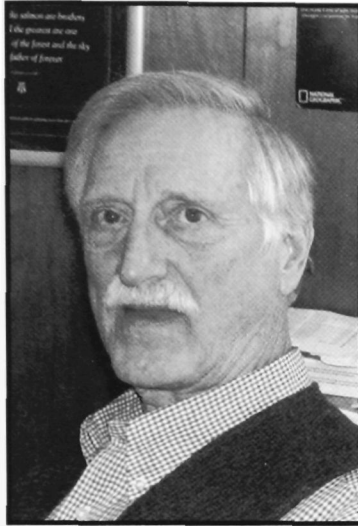
Research Assistant



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B.S., University of New Haven, 1974, Physics
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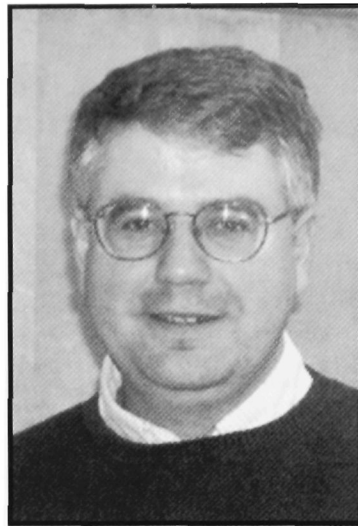
Parks, Recreation, & Tourism



Wilbur F. LaPage

**Associate Professor of Parks,
Recreation & Tourism**

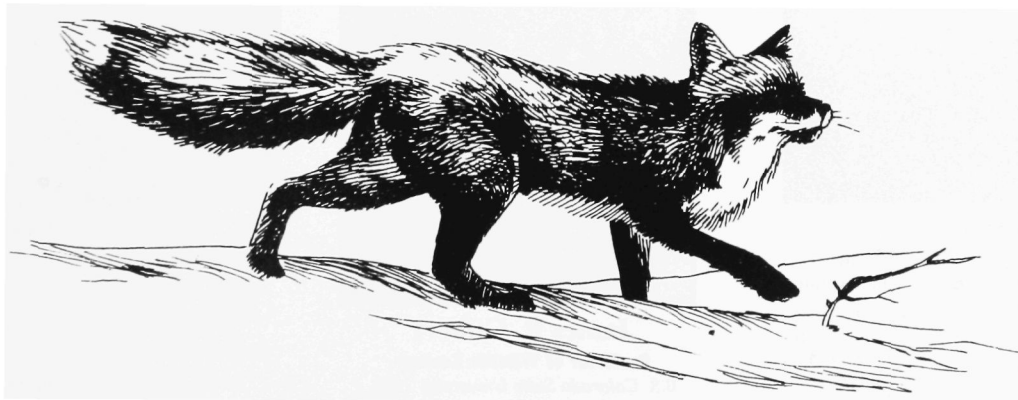
*Ph.D. Jointly from Syracuse University
(Public Administration), and SUNY
(Natural Resource Policy), 1975*



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Recreation Management
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*B.S. University of Maine, 1986,
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M.S. Colorado State University, 1990,
Recreation Resources & Landscape
Architecture
Ph. D. University of Massachusetts,
1997, Forestry*

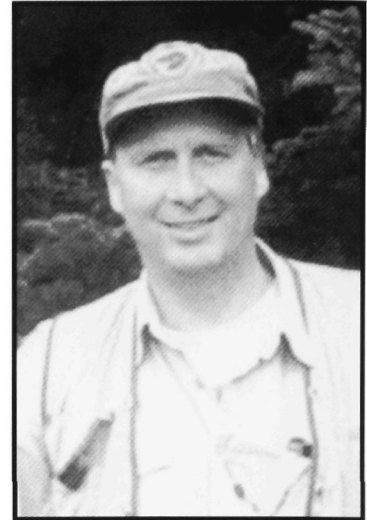
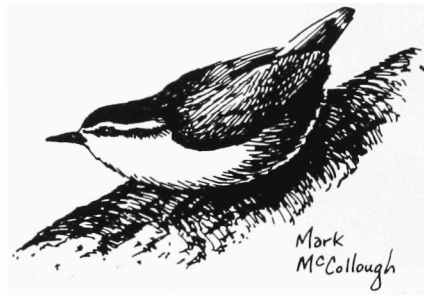




William B. Krohn

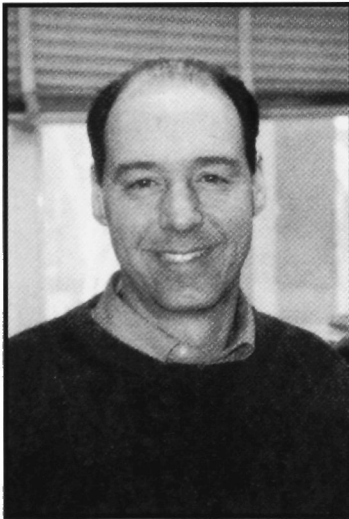
Professor of Wildlife Ecology
Leader of Maine Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
B.S. University of Alaska, 1968, Wildlife Management
M.S. University of Maine, 1969, Wildlife Management
Ph. D. University of Idaho, 1977, Wildlife Science

Wildlife Ecology Faculty



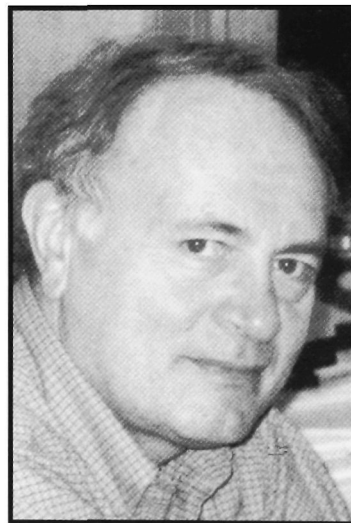
Daniel J. Harrison

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B.S. University of Wyoming, 1980, Wildlife Management
M.S. University of Maine, 1983, Wildlife Management
Ph.D. University of Maine, 1986, Wildlife



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M.S. Virginian Polytechnic Institute & State University, 1981, Wildlife Management
Ph. D. Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, 1985, Wildlife Management



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Judith M. Rhymer

Associate Professor of Wildlife Ecology
B.S. University of Manitoba, 1979, Zoology
M.S. University of Manitoba, 1983, Zoology
PhD. Florida State University, 1988, Biological Sciences



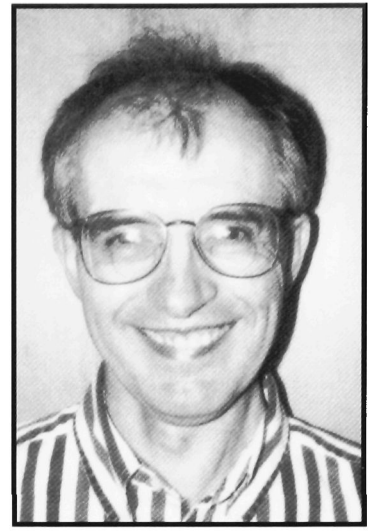
Malcolm L. Hunter

Professor of Wildlife Ecology

B.S. University of Maine, 1974, Wildlife Science

D. Phil. Oxford University, 1978, Wildlife Ecology

Wildlife Ecology Faculty



Raymond J. O'Connor

Professor of Wildlife Ecology

B.Sc. University College, Physics & Mathematics

Ph. D. Edward Grey Institute for Field Ornithology at Oxford, Growth & Development of Nestling Birds



Lindsay Seward

Instructor of Wildlife Ecology

B.S. University of Rhode Island, 1998, Wildlife Biology & Management

M.S. University of Maine, 2002, Zoology



Cynthia Loftin

Assistant Professor of Wildlife Ecology

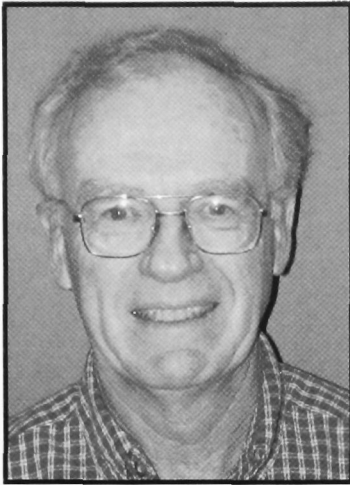
Assistant Unit Leader-Maine Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit

B.A. University of Virginia, 1984, Biology

M.S. Auburn University, 1987, Wildlife Management

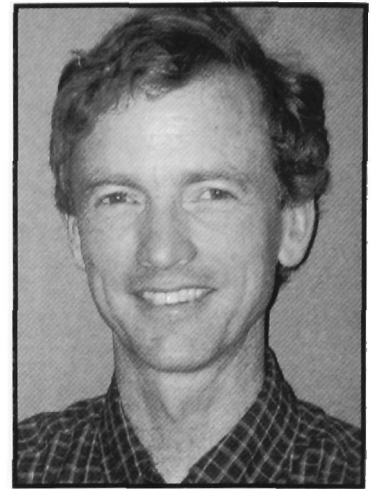
Ph.D. University of Florida, 1998, Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

Forest Ecosystem Science Faculty



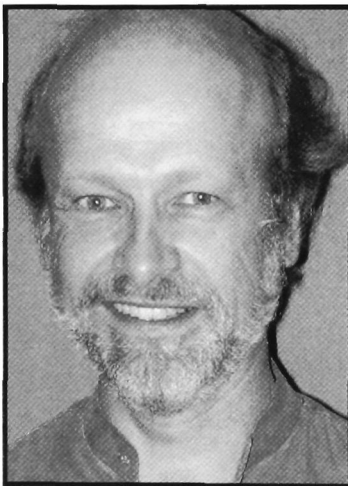
Michael S. Greenwood
Ruth Hutchins Professor of Tree
Physiology

B.A. Brown University, 1963, Botany
M.F.: M.S. Yale University, 1965, 1966
Ph.D. Yale University, 1969



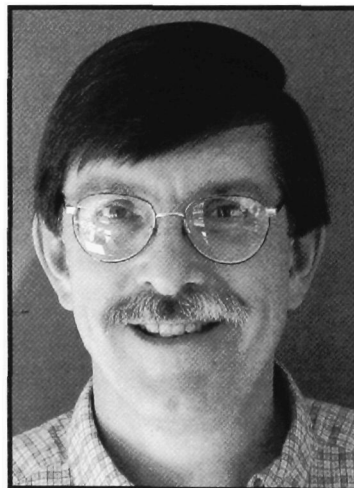
William H. Livingston
Associate Professor of Forest
Resources

Chair of Forest Ecosystem Science
B.S. Michigan Technological Univ.,
1976, Forestry
M.S. Univ. of Idaho, 1978, Forest
Science
Ph.D. Univ. of Minnesota, 1985, Plant
Pathology



Robert S. Seymour

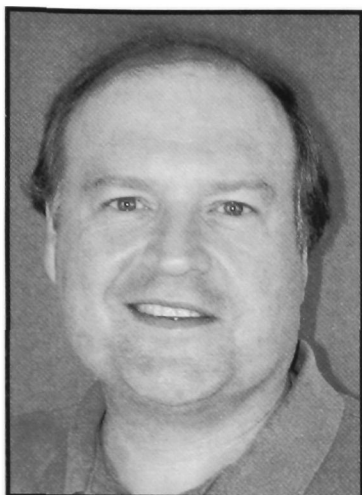
Curtis Hutchins Professor of Forest
Resources (Quantitative Silviculture)
B.S. Ohio State University, 1974, Natural
Resources
M.F. Yale University, 1976, Forest
Management
Ph.D. Yale University, 1980, Silviculture



Alan S. White
Professor of Forest Ecology &
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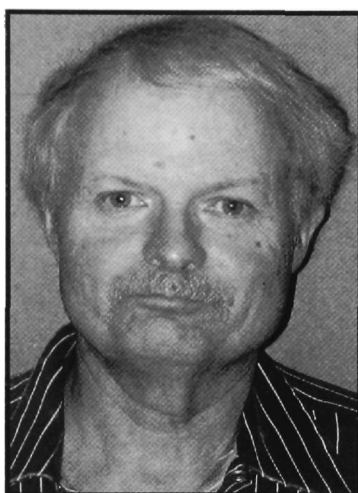
B.A. Williams College, 1973, Biology
M.S. University of Montana, 1976, Forest
Ecology
Ph.D. University of Minnesota, 1981,
Forest Ecology

Forest Ecosystem Science Faculty



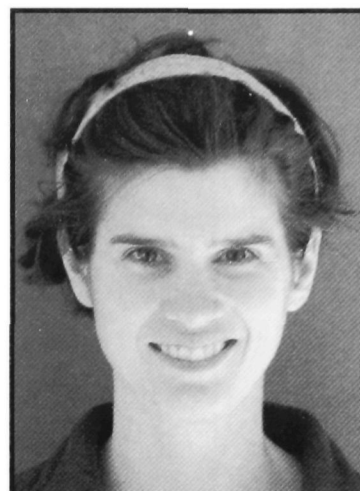
Robert G. Wagner

Professor of Forest Ecosystem Science
Director, Cooperative Forestry
Research Unit
Leader, Forest Ecosystem Research
Program
Cooperating Scientist, U.S. Forest
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*Ph.D., Oregon State University,
Silviculture, 1989.*
*M.S., University of Washington, Forest
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*B.S., Utah State University, Forest
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Richard Jagels

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*B.S. SUNY, Syracuse, 1962, Wood
Anatomy*
*M.S. SUNY, Syracuse, 1965, Forest
Pathology*
*Ph.D. University of Illinois, 1968,
Structural Botany*



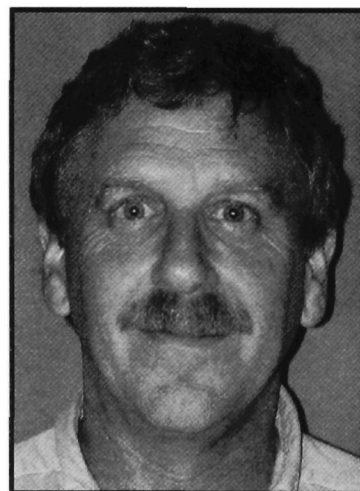
Laura S. Kenefic

Assistant Research Professor;
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USDA Forest Service, Northeastern
Research Station NE-4155 Ecology &
Management of Northern Forest
Ecosystems
*B.A. State Univ. of NY at Binghamton,
1992, Envir. Studies*
*M.S. State Univ. of NY College of
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Alejandra Equiza

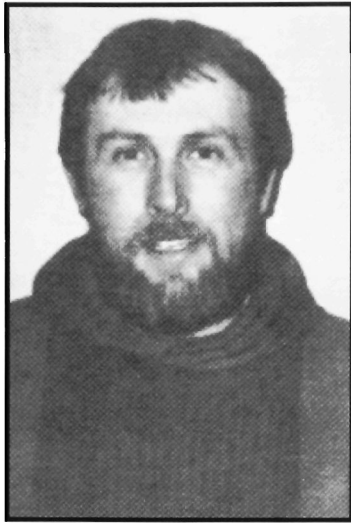
Research Associate



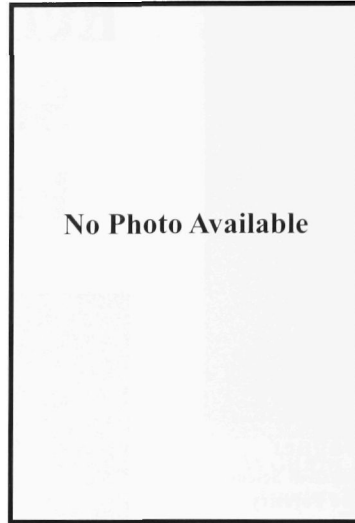
Mike Day

Research Scientist

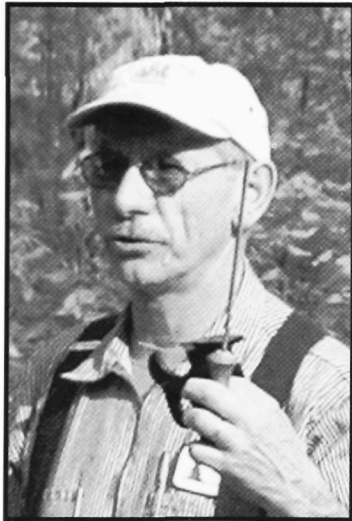
University Forest Staff



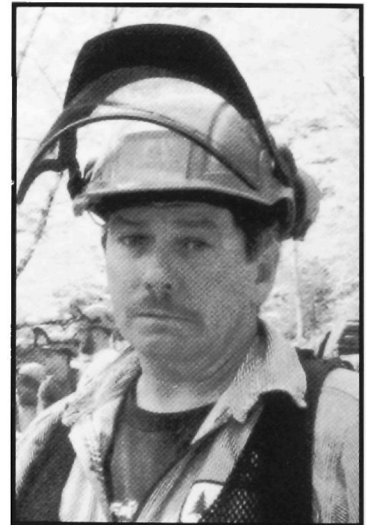
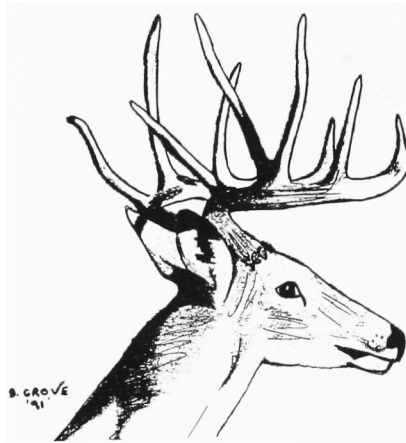
Chuck Simpson
Forest Superintendent



Chick Crockett
Information Systems Specialist



Francis Avery
Scientific Forestry Technician II



Robin Avery
Operations Manager



Administrative Staff



Delores Stone
Forest Management



Cindy Pascal
Forest Management



Nora Ackley
Wildlife Ecology

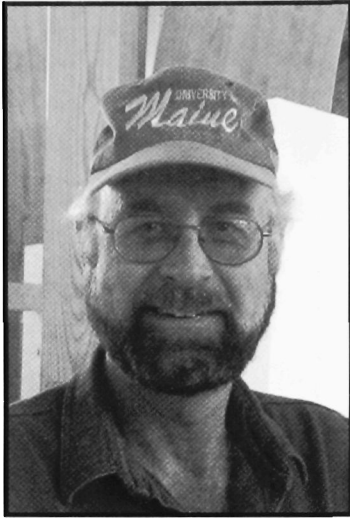


Gail Belanger
Forest Ecosystem Science

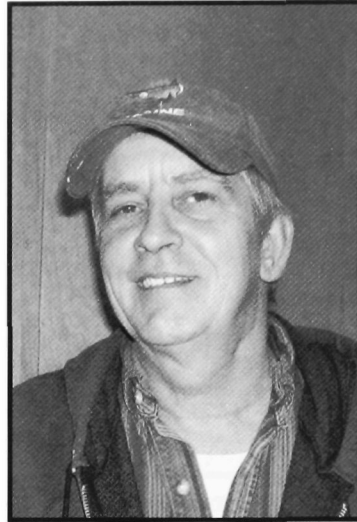


Theresa Libby
Wildlife Ecology

Technical Staff

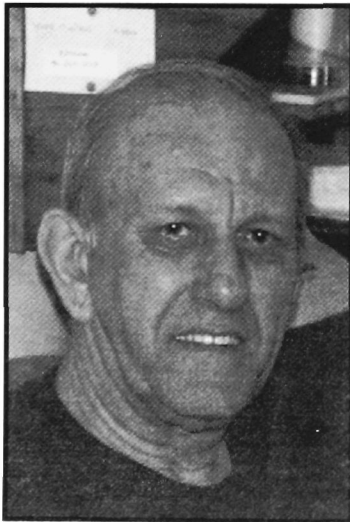


Ben Dresser

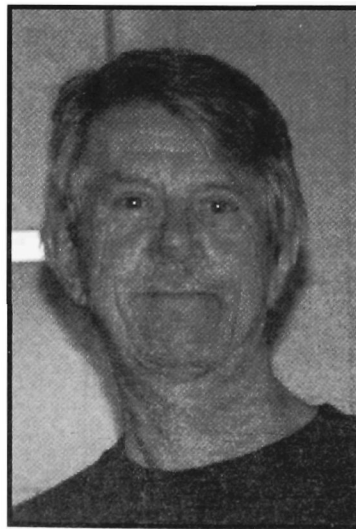


Cal Severence

Support Staff



Paul Bertland



Dave Mackin

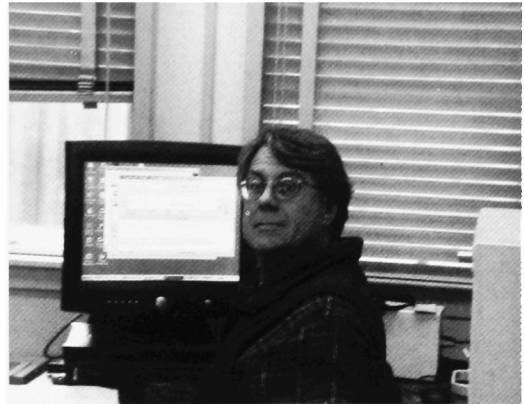
REMOTE SENSING AND GIS INTEGRATION FOR MONITORING FORESTS IN MAINE AND CENTRAL AMERICA GETTING THE BIG PICTURE...AND OTHER RAMBLINGS

BY STEVE A. SADER
Professor of Forestry

On the evening news and in the nature shows on TV you may have seen the satellite images of the huge forest fires in Central and South America, the views of the earth from space, or maybe a zoom-in on downtown Baghdad. Since 1988, the Maine Image Analysis Lab (MIAL) in the Department of Forest Management has been using remote sensors like these to conduct forest monitoring research in Maine and Central America. What does a Maine and Central American forest have in common, you might ask. Well, very little in terms of the physical environment, species composition etc. However, both regions contain extensive forests and the people here and there are dependent upon the forest for the resources they provide. These forests change significantly over time and we might like to know where and how they are



changing and what that might mean for wildlife habitat, recreation, and for the future structure, function and sustainability of these forests. These large forest landscapes can be monitored frequently and rather inexpensively from medium spatial resolution satellites, like the U.S. Landsat Thematic Mapper which resolves a ground area (pixel) of ~ acre. One of our specialties at MIAL is using Landsat coupled with geographic



information system (GIS) databases to monitor forest changes that result from human activities, such as, harvesting and regeneration in Maine and deforestation and land use conversion in Central America.

Certainly you have seen the migratory birds show up in your backyard and in the New England forests in spring and then they are gone again by late fall. Most of these birds migrate to and from Central and South America where their habitats are being affected by deforestation. Migratory birds are another example of what Maine and Central American forests have in common. For five years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Smithsonian Institution funded MIAL to study the changes in forest habitats in Belize, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Chiapas, Mexico (OK now it is time to look at your world map to see where these countries are).

We can look across large ecoregions, across ownership, across states or countries. With all the advantages of aerial photography, these types of large landscape studies... seeing The Big Picture... are often more appropriately and cost-effectively performed with time-series satellite imagery. Don't get me wrong about aerial photos, I have been teaching aerial photogrammetry at U. Maine for 17 years and it is certainly one skill you want in your bag as a Forester. However, most of you won't get much exposure to the value of satellite imagery combined with GIS, unless you take an advanced class, so let's continue.

Did you know that clearcuts in Maine declined significantly from the early 1990s to the present and the area of partial harvesting has been steady or increased slightly? We can and did detect and monitor those trends

on more than 600,000 acres of the northern Maine working forest (recently published in *Forest Science* journal). The Maine Forest Service found the same trends (only 3.5% clearcuts of total harvest area in 1999) using

graduate students have learned how to analyze the satellite images and combine them with other data in a GIS to address these and other research questions in the Maine and Central American forests. The job market is

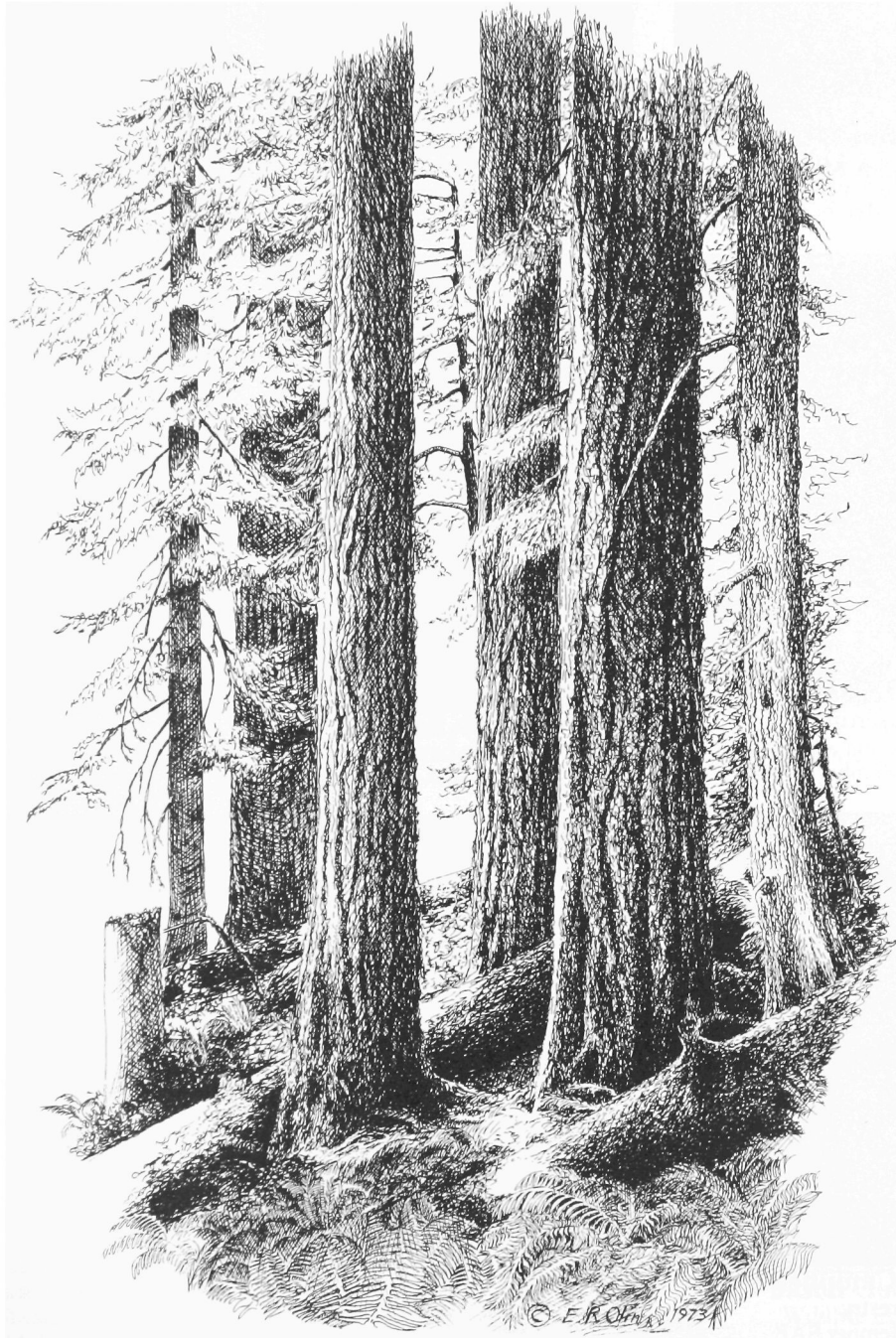


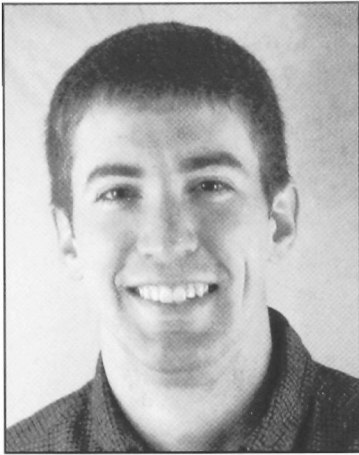
THE "STAR-SHIP" NUTTING

ground based sampling. So what were those ban clearcutting in Maine referendums about in the late 1990s if clearcutting trends had declined to a low level? Oh well, let's look at some possible wildlife ramifications from this trend. Some wildlife experts in Maine are concerned about the apparent decline in moose population from the late 1980s to present. Did you know that the prime habitat for moose includes recent clearcuts and early successional forests? Since clearcuts have been substantially reduced in northern, western, and downeast Maine, that means there is less early successional habitat now. Maybe moose numbers and habitat decline are correlated? So are clearcuts good in this case? Maybe, but it all depends on what question you are asking. This is another example of a research question made-to-order for satellite change detection combined with available GIS data, like older vegetation maps, Wildlife Management Districts, township boundaries, moose kill data, etc. An undergraduate forestry student is assembling the preliminary data sets in order to examine the moose habitat from 1988 to 2001 for a study area in northern Maine as integrated into the classroom. Several under-

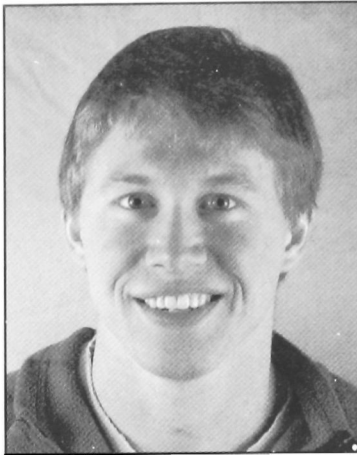
very good in both the public and private sector for students who have both GIS and applied remote sensing analysis skills. Some of these students can tell you that checking out the forests in tropical America for a couple of weeks during the Maine winter or doing field work in the north Maine woods during the summer and fall isn't too shabby either. We have to do this because a wise old photo interpreter once said "Remote sensing without field work is remote nonsense." In closing, I say that GIS would be nothing without remote sensing. Think about where all the data in your GIS comes from. Remote sensing has long been integrated with GIS operations, even before the term GIS was coined in the late 1970s. Now there is an old saying that the Blues had a baby and it is called Rock and Roll. Well remote sensing had a baby and its called GIS. If we combine these two sayings we get "Remote Sensing and GIS Rock!" Take an advanced class if you think that GIS is only about digitizing and making maps. The integration of GIS and remote sensing fit together for landscape scale studies of forests, whether we are talking about Maine or Central America.

GRADUATING SENIORS

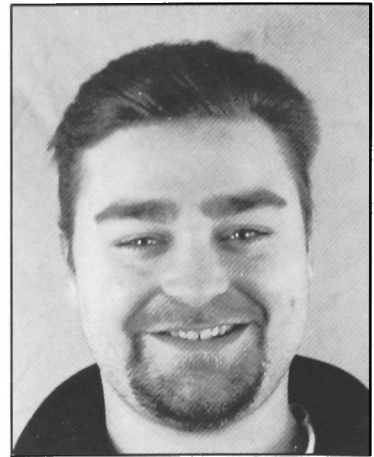




Travis Allen
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Student Member FPS



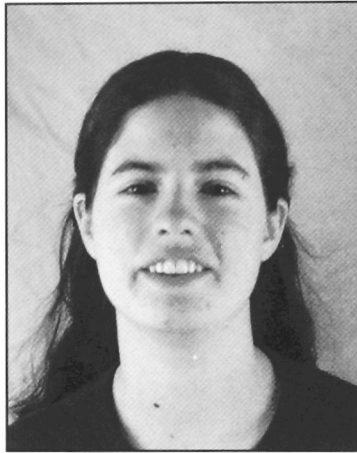
Nicholas Baser
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Jeremiah Beach
Forestry
Wilderness Club



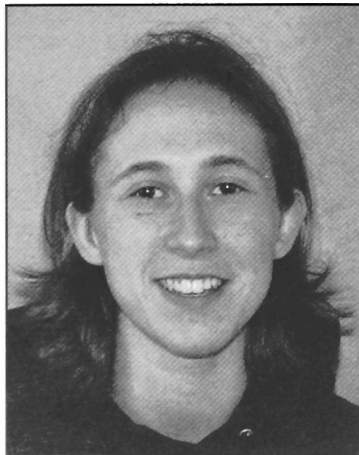
Josh Bennoch
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Student Member NAI



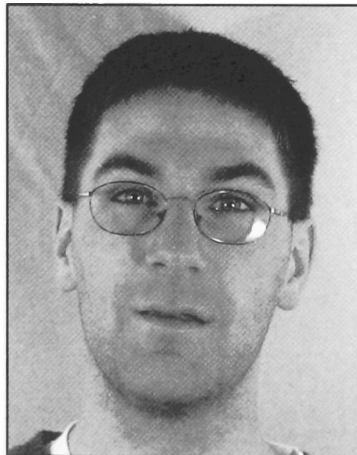
Jacquelyn Bertman
Wildlife Ecology
Xi Sigma Pi



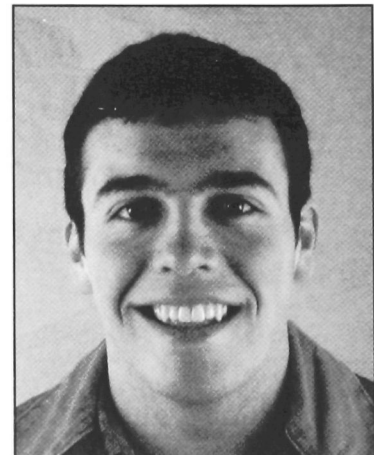
Jessie Bishop
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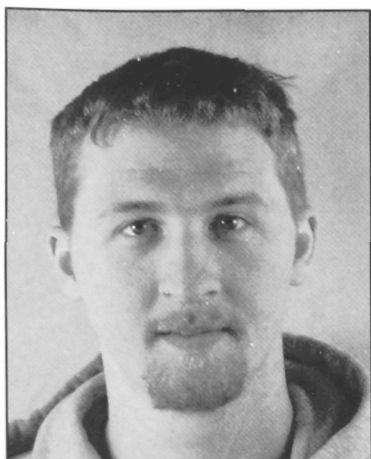
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Robert Chandler
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Wildlife Ecology



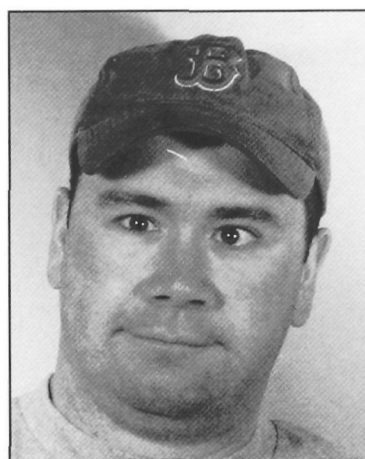
Anna-Maria Easley
Wildlife Ecology



Russell Edgar
Wood Science
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Brook Erenstone
Parks, Recreation & Tourism
Student Member NAI, Maine Bound



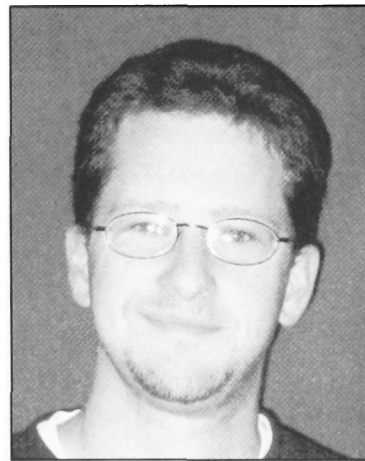
Jason Everett
Wildlife Ecology



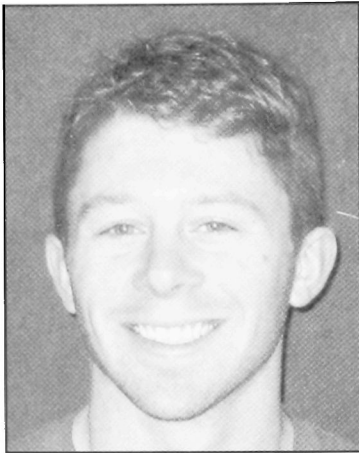
Mathew Galambos
Parks, Recreation & Tourism
Woodsmen Team



David George
Forestry
Woodsmen Team



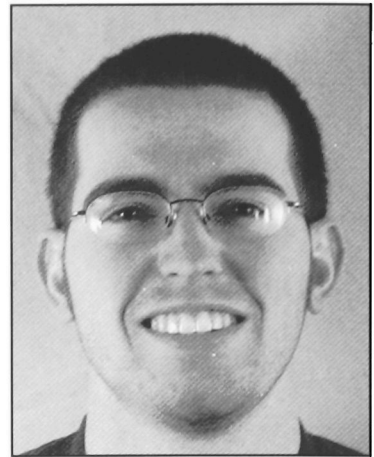
Jason Godbout
Wildlife Ecology



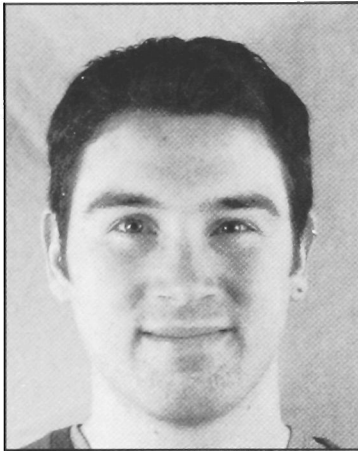
Samuel Heffner
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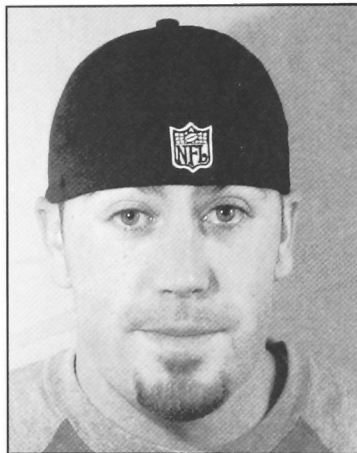
Karen Introne
Parks, Recreation & Tourism
Xi Sigma Pi



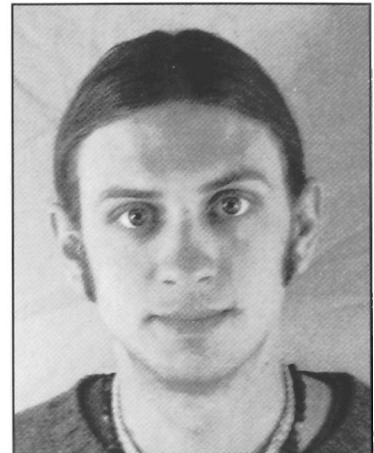
Steven Knapp
Wildlife Ecology



Joshua Koelker
Parks, Recreation & Tourism
Maine Steiners, University Singers



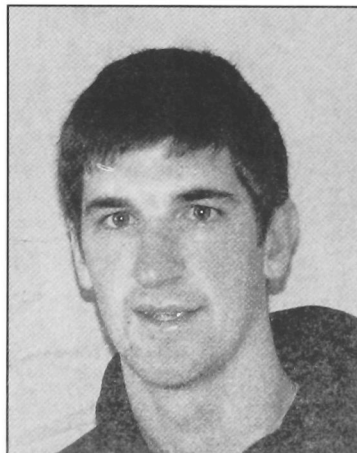
Clint Libby
Forestry



Frank Mackinson
Forestry/Forest Ecosystem Science
Student Member SAF



John MacLaine
Wildlife Ecology
Jazz Ensemble, Symphonic Band



Ryan McNelly
Wildlife Ecology



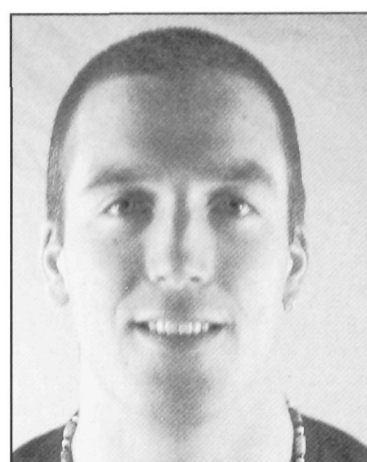
Melinda Mooney
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& Tourism



Anna Nelson
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Woodsmen Team



Dave Pert
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Pi, Maine Forester



Chris Pilner
Parks, Recreation & Tourism



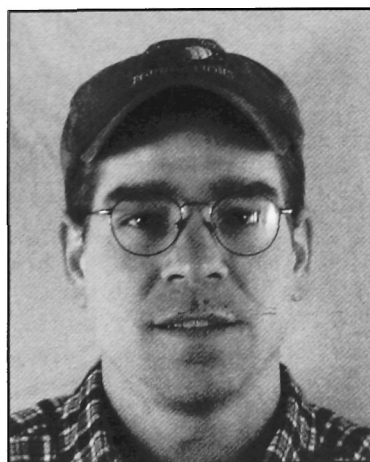
Stephen Pollis
Forestry
Student Member SAF



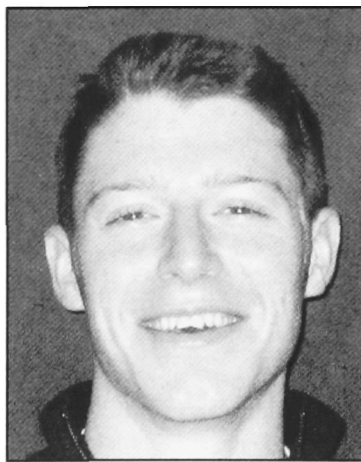
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Tracy Swan
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Cam Widdoes
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READY TO GO

BY TRACY SWAN
FORESTRY

I have been asked to write an article for the senior class about our experiences and what we have learned over the last four or five years. It is very hard to look back over all this time and pick out certain details that I can share with everyone. I do remember the first time I walked into 100 Nutting for my first Forestry class. The room was really big and there were more students in the class than I had ever seen in one place. The class was FTY 107, and there was a short "balding" professor standing in front of the retractable screen. I was immediately unsure if the course that I was about to start down was the path that I wanted to take. As class began, all of us first year students were introduced to Al Kimball, one of the most dynamic, energetic professors in the forestry department. The class, as it turned out was very informative. I can't speak for everyone else, but I learned a great deal from this class. For most of us it was the first introduction to most of the tree species that are found in the northeast. And who could have possibly known that trees actually had two names, common and scientific! I was amazed when we were expected to not only remember them but also be able to spell them on a quiz! Most of us made it through the class and are better people because of it. Dr. Livingston's FES 100 class is another course that incoming freshmen are required to take. This, as well turned out to be an excellent course that would serve us well as a basic foundation on which we would build a solid education. These were just the first of many classes that would test our abilities. I remember, fondly, the first of many outdoor labs held in inclement weather. I'm not sure if the mail even made it through on some of those days! When asked during class whether we would be having our lab out doors. Al simply stated, and I quote: "There are only two things that you have to do in life, and they are, you have to pay your taxes and you have to go to lab!" This is how our freshmen year started. There is not a graduating senior, and most juniors that do not cringe when someone mentions the dreaded Silvi "tourture", taught by the legendary Bob Seymour. This class is probably one of the hardest courses in the curriculum, along with,

Surveying, and GIS. I have realized something over all these years; the courses that are the toughest are the classes were you learn the most.

Looking back through the previous yearbooks many people mention the summer camp experience. For me these few weeks were the best times of my college career. It was a time to refine rusty skills, learn the "proper" way to start a chainsaw, and fell trees. The equipment that was provided for us to "play" with was incredible. Where else can you use brand new excavators, crawlers, chainsaws, portable wood mills, and a "shotgun" style skyline-logging system, even though we ran into trouble with the system (a little thing like the tower collapsing did not stop us from completing our designated tasks). These three weeks were also a time to form lasting relationships with our fellow classmates and eventual professional colleagues.

Our sophomore and junior years were filled with endless classes, lectures and labs. There seemed to be a never-ending list of courses that we were required to take in order to receive a forest management degree. Along the way we met many people that helped to shape us into the future forest managers (good or bad). Professors like, Tom Brann, Dr. Carter, Dr. Rice, Al White and many more. It is overwhelming to think that the University of Maine has attracted so many highly educated professionals who have chosen to pass on their wisdom and many years of experience to the next generation of foresters. I will never forget all the stories Dr. Field has blessed us with, especially how he once sold a 1960's Volkswagen and never discussed money. They talked about it value of the car in cords of wood. Any-



Louis and Al caught taking a break.
(we knew we'd get you)

one else heard the story?

The story of our time at the University of Maine would not be complete if we did not express our deepest gratitude for all the support staff that ultimately keeps this place running. Dolores, and Cindy have been instrumental for all of the students in the Forest Management department. If it was not for the assistance of these two hard working individuals I don't think most of us would have made it through our degree programs

as smoothly. They are always willing to help you add/drop classes enter schedules and find what ever it is you might be looking for. Another person that some students might not have gotten to know as well as I did is Kim Adler. He recently retired after many years of service to both the college and many generations of foresters and wildlifers. He and LouisMorin maintained the vans that we were herded into for our many hours spent to and from those outdoor labs. Especially the "Grey Goose" as it is fondly called. Finally no college student can successfully navigate his or her way through a collegeeducation without a computer. Were it not for the

tirelessefforts of Louis Morin, and to some lesser extent a great employee of his, to keep these computer clusters up and running you would not be reading this essay right know as I am using one of those computers.

Over the past five years I have learned a lot about forest management and myself. I have been taught a lot of scholastic information that will serve me well in my chosen profession. I think that I learned the most about the value of friendships, both professional and personal. A special thank you to Louis Morin and my closest friend Steve Pollis, if it were not for their assistance I would have given up along time ago!



The Grey Goose

BRAND SPANKIN' NEW ALUMNI

BY RYAN FITZGIBBONS
WILDLIFE CLASS OF 2002

A little over a year ago, I was choosing where in the world I'd finally use my freshly baked and piping hot Wildlife Ecology degree. I had it narrowed down to a job in Norfolk, Virginia, working on environmental impact statements for the Navy, or in Guam, working on the Brown Treesnake Project for the USGS. Not ready for a full-on office job, I chose Guam, despite my lack of knowledge of the Brown Treesnake, as well as the exact location of Guam. It's actually quite hard to locate on a map. I usually tell people it's somewhere between Japan and Hawaii, or underwhat.

Nine thousand miles later, I found Guam and quickly acquainted myself with the saga of the Brown Treesnake. It's the kind of invasive species horror story that sends small children screaming in their sleep. It is widely believed that this blandly colored arboreal reptile came to Guam as a stowaway in the cargo of a World War II ship. Some experts believe that it took one female to populate Guam because of the snake's ability to store sperm for extended periods. In its native range of Australia and Papua New Guinea, the snake's population is kept in check because its prey is far more limited than on other islands. On Guam, it ate everything.

In 2002, twenty years after a young Ph.D. student named Julie Savidge first investigated the disappearance of Guam's native birds, an astounding list of 36 birds, lizards, and mammals have all become rare or extirpated by the snake. The scariest part for me especially working for a team whose sole purpose is to find ways of ridding Guam of the snakes is that no one really knows how many there are on Guam. One report stated the Guam population represents the densest population of reptiles in the world. A Discovery Channel program described the snakes as "hanging from the trees like spaghetti" strewn from the forests of Guam. At present, the official count is exactly "a lot".

Over my year in Guam, I trapped and/or killed around 30 snakes. Hardly a drop in the ocean. And I was one of hundreds of people in various government agencies working on the same problem. During a casual conversation, a local asked me when I was finally going to get rid of the snakes. I wondered if this guy casually asks his doctor when he's going to finally cure cancer. I had to be honest with him; I told him probably not in my lifetime. It was a hard truth I had to admit to myself.

I wasn't so naive to think that I would show-up in Guam with the golden answer to 20 years of heated biological trial and error. But, I admit it was disheartening to leave not knowing if I made a difference. Really, the best the Brown Treesnake Project could have hoped for was no more snakes in or out of Guam, the status quo.

If there is a message to this, a lesson from my year on the other side of the earth, it is not to work in wildlife thinking you're going to save the world or even a single population. Conservation is not about saviors and fame. Work in this field so that others can build upon your findings or even your grossly incompetent mistakes. What you do may be forgotten, but it is one part of a giant epic scheme for some greater good. Who knows, maybe my great-grandchildren will read about the triumphant eradication of the last Brown Treesnake on Guam, and they'll recall that I was one of many who contributed. Hopefully someday, the Brown Treesnake will be gone, preferably before the robots or the Morlocks take over.

