

Mixedwood Forest Society (Lindy Clubb, Assistant Executive Director)

Duck Mountain Provincial Park and Porcupine Hills Protected Areas

Our small, volunteer, non-profit group formed more than ten years ago to advocate for protected areas within Louisiana Pacific's (LP) management plans. LP is an international company producing oriented strand board from aspen trees. They have a plant to supply by Swan River, in southwestern Manitoba's escarpment area. Setting a precedent, we campaigned successfully to have backcountry zoned areas (free from mining, logging and hydroelectric development) put in place in nearby **Duck Mountain Provincial Park**.

It was slated to be 85% logged by LP. We published and distributed a colourful booklet of essays, promoting the value of the area's ecosystems and wildlife. We gathered a petition of 2000 names and delivered it to the Minister of Conservation. Each person who signed the paper calling for less of the park to be logged understood more about the issue and learned (and began to care about) a place most of them had never heard of before. We contacted the media and had letters published. The government adjusted the borders of the park, created large areas of protection where none existed before, and moved LP's fellers and bunchers into the provincial forest adjacent to the park. Thirty-five percent of the wetland laden, waterfowl and wildlife loaded park was spared. It's a big park. Backcountry zone protection totaled 44,000 hectares. The public benefited from the protected areas, but it didn't cost them a dime. As you know, not many grants are earmarked for advocacy. It was the first time Manitoba had adjusted the borders of a park in order to accommodate protection from resources, but it wasn't the last time. The message of current policy, which is to offer up an area to cut and then begin looking for areas to protect within it, is backwards. We proved that. Since then, in all but Duck Mountain Park, logging is now forbidden, so 79 other provincial parks are spared.

Then our group canvassed the local population with informal surveys, presentations in the local high school, through workshops and a protected areas study, and we ascertained that the **Porcupine Hills**, the slopes north of the Duck Mountains on the other side of the Swan River valley, were also in need of protection. We mounted a successful public campaign which concluded with the 11,000 hectare Protected Public Forested area of the Bell River Canyon, the Steeprock River canyon, and the rare upland meadows of the Baden escarpment in the Porcupine Hills. We are instrumental in establishing the only protected areas within LP's logging licenses, and we chose the Bell in part because it has the highest diversity of neo-tropical migrant bird species of anywhere else in Western Canada. So, we went from protecting moose and elk habitat in the Ducks to sparing wolf and warbler territory in the Porcs. With the public and local people behind us. Without income and relying on volunteer support.

We can't have biodiversity best practises, case studies, special areas etc. unless we have land and water protected from development and exploitive resource extraction. The protected areas we established have served as templates for data collection by students, have caught the interest of the Canadian Wildlife Service for bird studies, have kept source water areas clean, have helped with issues such as climate change, have become

the annual destination for large hiking groups, and serve as a model of what people can accomplish if they get their facts straight, go public, go to the right government body, and stick to the issue for as long as it takes to protect biodiversity.