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Forestry plan leaves out wildlife

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The new forestry plan released Jan. 30 called for a reduction in conservation lands from 30 per cent to 23 to 25 per cent.

What does this mean? Conservation areas are a nebulous term which creates the appearance of a high level of protection. This is wrong.

New Brunswick has the lowest protected area of any province in Canada at 3.5 per cent. Outside of the protected areas, conservation forests can be harvested, but they can't be clear cut. More than 40 per cent of conservation forest consists of 30 metre strips of forests along wetlands, lakes and streams, important for clean water and fish species, but too small for many other wildlife species. The rest of conservation land is made up of deer winter areas and old forest habitats. Which of these areas are going to be reduced? The old forest habitats were established in 1992 by provincial biologists as the minimum area needed for 30 old forest vertebrates, including; barred owl, fisher, black-backed woodpecker, ovenbird and flying squirrel. If this was the minimum area set by biologists how can it be lowered?

Premier Shawn Graham suggested that most of the reductions would be from deer winter areas that aren't used any more. This seems like a short-sighted deer management policy. Once deer yards are gone the deer populations will never come back. In the end, it is very difficult to understand how the province plans to reduce conservation land and still conserve wildlife on Crown land.