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First name: Vicky

Last name: Brandt

Organization:

Title:

Comments: The majority of the world's species cannot withstand any significant disruption of their habitat by humans. Healthy ecosystems depend to a great extent on old and gnarly places, that might take centuries to develop, and are rich in what ecologists call "spatial heterogeneity": complex natural architecture. They need, for example, giant trees, whose knotty entrails are split and rotten; great reefs of coral or oysters or honeycomb worms; braiding, meandering rivers full of snags and beaver dams; undisturbed soils reamed by roots and holes. The loss of these ancient habitats is one of the factors driving the global shift from large, slow-growing creatures to the small, short-lived species able to survive our onslaughts.

There's no substitute for an ancient tree, or an ancient anything else. Big old trees are the "keystone structures" of forests, on which many other species depend. The very trees that foresters have tended to weed out - forked, twisted, lightning-struck, rotten, dead - are those that harbor the most life. For example, a single species of bracket fungus, which grows on rotten branches (dryad's saddle), harbors 246 species of beetle.

Not only should chainsaws not be allowed to be used to clear trails in Wilderness, old trees shouldn't be cleared, even when fallen. They can be left or moved off-trail to continue serving their role in the ecosystem.