

Podcast  
Alaska Forest Reflections- June 1, 2011  
Topic: Lisa Murkowski Forest Reflection

"Forest Reflections, a series of stories by people who have lived, worked and played in Alaska's national forests, sharing their memories of favorite forest places for this 2011 International Year of Forests."

*"This is Lisa Murkowski, and my favorite national forest is the Tongass National Forest in Southeastern Alaska where I was born and I was raised. There is a...there's a majesty; there's a beauty that comes with the Tongass as a rainforest...as a forest that has trees that touch the sky. And you got to remember, when you're a kid, you're six or seven years old, and you're out playing, and you live in a place like Wrangell, you live in a place like Juneau, the forest is your back yard, it's your playground.*

*"And I can remember as a kid, we had...there was a tree, out in the forest, it wasn't in our back yard, so to speak, it was out in the forest. And it was a tree that we all played under, a big, big, huge tree that had rich, red bark that..that kind of peeled off to the base, to make...almost like a sawdust at the base of this tree. And we would play under this huge tree, making all kinds of ... of wonderful concoctions. We would take skunk cabbage, which is not particularly attractive in name, but a beautiful yellow plant that comes out in the spring...not a very nice smell, and that's why they named it the skunk cabbage. But we would play under that tree, and we would cut up pieces of skunk cabbage and make our own skunk cabbage stew, using pieces of the bark from the tree, pretending it was our kitchen, pretending it was our living room, pretending this tree was our house.*

*"And I think back on those times, and how that forest that enveloped us, that took care of us, that provided us shelter, and entertainment, and solitude where you needed it...when I needed to get away from my other younger brothers and sisters, that tree was where I went to.*

*"I can remember, as a young girl, my father taking us out in boats and we would go by the shoreline looking at all the different trees, and he would point out all the different trees and he would quiz us: Do you know what a hemlock looks like. Do you know a yellow cedar, do you know the various trees, and we learned them as children.*

*"And it added a richness, certainly, to our lives...growing up there.*

*"But, again, you get into the heart of a forest like the Tongass, and there is a peace and a protection and a majesty, and a grandeur that comes with it. But it's not all visual. The smells that come from the forest...the earthy, woody, rich, piney...just all of the senses are awake when you are moving through an incredible forest like the Tongass.*

*"So you've got the sights, you've got the smells; you've got the feeling as you're wrapped in this rich, rich area. It's moist, it's a rainforest. But not a cold and miserable wetness, but the warmth that comes with the protection that the trees give you. And then the sound of the forest, as you listen to the wind moving forward and the creaking and the crackling and the snapping...the forest is never quiet.*

*"I think back on those years growing up and having that opportunity as a child to just explore and learn and love an incredible forest like the Tongass, I was blessed as a child, I was*

*blessed as an Alaskan, and to this day, I go back and I feel at home in the Tongass."*

"For more information about our national forests and the International Year of Forests, please visit the links provided at [www.myalaskaforest.com](http://www.myalaskaforest.com). Alaska Forest Reflections is produced for the U.S. Forest Service, Alaska Region, Public Affairs Office. In Juneau, I'm Bob Belongie for the U.S. Forest Service.