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Forest Patches in Tropical Landscapes

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**Review: *Forest Patches in Tropical Landscapes.***

Edited by John Schelhas and R. Greenberg

Reviewed by Steven L. Caicco  
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Schelhas, John and R. Greenberg, editors. *Forest Patches in Tropical Landscapes*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996. 426 pp. US \$30.00 paper ISBN: 1-55963-426-x. Recycled, acid-free paper.

"People love birds," writes Russell Greenberg in his preface to this outgrowth of a study by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. Who can disagree? People do love birds, perhaps more than any other (non-human) lifeform. But people also use wood or want to use forestland for other purposes. That these forests are home to birds, bats, and bugs is seldom a consideration, and thus we continue to deplete our forest expanses. Yet, as this book informs us, what remains after the forests fall is often of great value to many living things, ourselves included.

The introduction addresses the various types of forest patches, and provides an overview of their biological value and their use by rural people. Subsequent chapters are organized in four thematic parts. Part 1 focuses on the changes within patches that result from forest fragmentation. Topics discussed include: changes in birds and arthropods; the impact of hunting in forest patches; the effects on plant pollination; and how the biological value of forest patches can be enhanced through management.

In Part 2, the focus shifts to how forest patches function in regional landscapes. The importance of patches in maintaining regional biodiversity in areas ranging from the rain forests of the Amazon to the cloud forests of Costa Rica, is examined. The theme of Part 3 is the human dimension of forest patches. Topics include: patterns of forest ownership and use; the basis for choices in land-use that determine the conservation or destruction of forest patches; how landscapes can be "read" from the patterns left by Amazonian frontier farmers as revealed in satellite imagery; and how "sacred groves" preserved by cultures in West Africa create a foundation for conservation based on indigenous resource management. Part 4 expands on this theme by examining traditional management of forest remnants from Peru and Indonesia, the prospects for sustained timber production from forest patches in

Guatemala, and grassroots forest restoration efforts in India. The final chapter addresses the challenges in promoting the conservation of forest patches in rapidly developing rural areas.

Conservation in this century has shifted from an emphasis on sustained yield to a focus on preservation with minimal human intrusion. As the century closes, however, we find that development is occurring to such an extent that the expansion of preserved areas is precluded. While restoration of natural habitats may be politically and economically realistic in some areas, most landscapes will remain managed. Recognizing that, this book provides a conceptual map to guide us into the next century, one in which the emphasis of conservation will necessarily return to the ecological sustainability of all ecosystems.

Although the biological papers in this book are technical, they are balanced with examinations of the role of forest patches in rural societies. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the biology and conservation of tropical forest diversity in managed landscapes, or the public policy issues that derive from them.

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