

IUCN
The World Conservation Union

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The IUCN/WWF Forest Conservation Newsletter

May 2000

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News in brief

No GMO trees: Nordic forest company Stora Enso has stated that it will not use genetic modification technology to develop new tree varieties – the first such statement by a major forest company. A spokesman said that the company felt it was “unnecessary to ‘play God’”.

Source: ENDS Daily, 8 March 2000

Ice cap melting now fastest since records began: The Arctic sea ice, an area the size of the USA, shrunk by 6 per cent from 1978-1996 and its thickness has declined by almost 40 per cent in 30 years. Major losses are also occurring in Antarctica. The world’s glaciers are shrinking faster than they are growing according to the World Glacier Monitoring Service.

Source: Lisa Mastry, Worldwatch Institute

US species: The USA contains over twice the species – some 200,000 in all – previously expected according to a Nature Conservancy survey. But up to a third are endangered to some degree. TNC’s Natural Heritage Network conducted the inventory over 25 years.

Source: *Precious Heritage: The Status of Biodiversity in the US*, Oxford University Press

Illegal logging devastates Armenia’s forests: In recent years illegal logging has been responsible for the loss of 300,000 m³ of timber according to a February meeting of the Ministry of Nature Conservation of Armenia and Armenian Academy of Science.

Source: *Forest Update 49*, Russian NGOs Forest Club and Socio-Ecological Union Informational Coordination Centre.

Global Forest Watch: Satellite imagery, GIS, mapping software, the Internet and on-the-ground observation have combined to produce new maps and reports on Canada, Gabon and Cameroon as part of the World Resources Institute’s Global Forest Watch initiative. The results reveal widespread logging in the Congo Basin and extensive mining, energy and road construction in Canada. During the next 5 years, the project will be extended to cover 21 countries and cover 80 per cent of the world’s remaining frontier forests.

Source: <http://www.globalforestwatch.org/>

Logging Canada’s coastal rainforest: Canada’s coastal rainforest represents one quarter of the world’s remaining temperate rainforests but more than half of British Columbia coastal rainforest has already been lost. Recent government approved plans to cut more than 25 intact and partially intact watersheds in Canada’s remnant rainforest, before the end of 2000, threatening much of what remains.

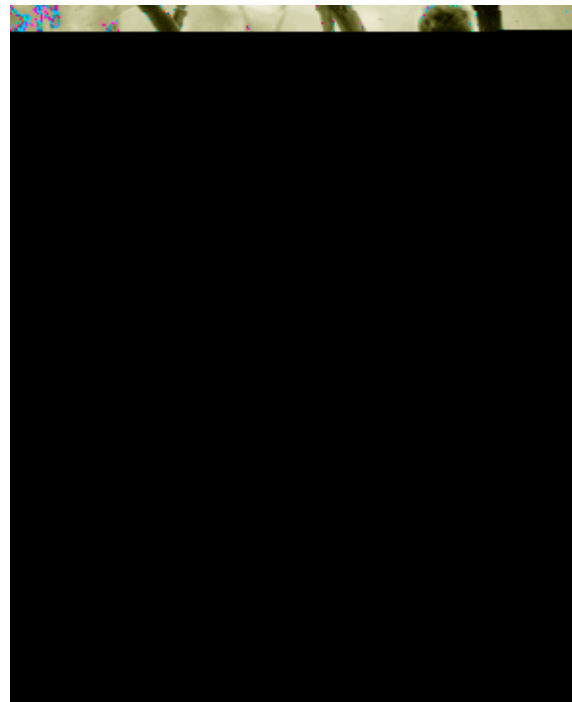
Source: *Under threat: Canada’s coastal rainforest*, pamphlet from the David Suzuki Foundation (www.davidsuzuki.org) and Raincoast Conservation Society (www.raincoast.org)

Deforestation continues in the Brazilian Amazon: The latest deforestation report by the Brazilian government indicates that during 1998-99 illegal logging and farming destroyed 16,926 km² of forest – roughly the same as the 1997-98 rates. Despite strengthened police presence in threatened areas, losses continue there as well.

Source: BBC News online.

German logging: By felling several hundred-year-old beeches in Kellerwald, in a potential national park region in northern Hesse, at the end of March, the federal government broke its own felling-moratorium.

Source: Press release from WWF-Germany April 2000

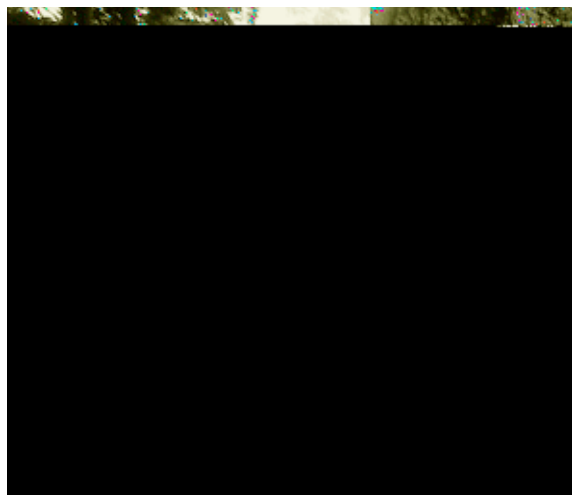


Research by Conservation International has identified 25 global biodiversity hotspots that cover 1.4 per cent of the planet’s land area but contain 44 per cent of vascular plant species and 35 per cent of four vertebrate groups. **Russell Mittermeier**, CI president and co-author commented: “The hotspots strategy makes the extinction crisis more manageable enabling us to prioritise and target conservation investments order to have the greatest impact.” Hotspots were determined by the number of endemic species and degree of threat – the latter being decided by the percentage of remaining habitat, with each hotspot retaining less than 30 per cent original natural habitat and some less than 10 per cent. Predominant habitat types are tropical forests (15) and Mediterranean-type zones (five).

Source: *Nature*, 403, 24 February 2000, 853-858

Forests and Culture

Decorated tree in the grounds of a Shinto temple in the Izu Peninsula,





South Korea: In April, South Korean President Kim Dae Jung declared a disaster area in part of the east coast after forest fires killed two people and destroyed over 600 buildings, leaving 800 people homeless. About 10,000 ha of forest burnt.

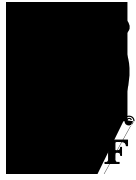
Source: *Sunday Times*, Singapore, 16/4/2000

Russia: According to the Federal Russian Forest Service fire incidences were down in 1999. More than 81,000 ha of young forests were burned. 70 to 100 per cent of fires were human induced.

Source: *Forest Update*, Published by Russian NGOs Forest Club and Socio-Ecological Union. Informational Coordination Centre, December 1999

Ethiopia: A three-year drought has resulted in a major famine and an outbreak of serious forest fires. While lowland areas are burnt regularly, forest fires to the extent recorded in February and March have not occurred since the major 1984 drought. Thousands of hectares of natural mountain forest have been affected. Several protected areas were also affected for example a fire burnt 10-15 per cent of Nechisar National Park. Farmers started many of the fires to clear land. Ethiopia also suffers from lack of specialist fire management knowledge.

Source: Compiled from information from the Global Fire Monitoring Center web site <http://www.ruf.uni-freiburg.de/fireglobe/current/globalfire.htm>



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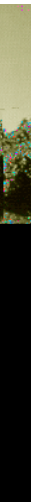
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The work of the Foundation has to date concentrated on the travelling exhibition '*Rainforests for Health*', which was assembled for educational purposes and campaigns in tropical and non-tropical countries. The main themes of

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Taking a break

Published by CAB International. ISBN 0-85199-414-8. Price US\$75.00

Tourism and recreation are set to play an increasing role in the future of forests and woodland. *Forest Tourism and Recreation: Case Studies in Environmental Management* by X Font and J Tribe, brings together international case studies of tourism and recreation in forests and examples of environmental management issues applied to timber production, recreational and conservation forests.