

BOOK REVIEW

An Introduction to Tropical Rainforests. T. C. Whitmore. Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1990, and New York: Oxford University Press (reprinted with corrections), 1991. Pp. xii, 226. \$35.00. ISBN 0-19-854276-3.

There seemed to be a need for a book that looked at all aspects of tropical rainforests and mankind's impact upon them, yet in a concise text written so as to be readily understood by the concerned layman as well as the non-specialist college student. The aim of this book is to provide an introduction to the world's tropical rain forests ... to describe their structure and functioning, their value to man and what he is doing to them.

These expectations of the author have indeed been fully achieved in this valuable book. Only a few such books by authorities have appeared that equal this volume, which is condensed but inclusive. The use of tables and charts does much to present an extraordinary amount of information which otherwise would have required pages of text. But even the text is terse, clean-cut, and always pertinent. This characteristic, plus the author's extensive experience, makes the book valuable for general readers newly interested in conservation as well as experts in the field; as a former university teacher, I recommend the book especially as a text for courses in rain forest conservation or even conservation of other forests in the tropics.

The book is divided into ten chapters: (1) An introduction to tropical rain forests; (2) What are tropical rain forests?; (3) Plant life; (4) Rain forest animals; (5) Relationships between plants and animals; (6) Tropical rain forests through time; (7) Forest dynamics; (8) Nutrients and their cycles; (9) Species richness; and (10) Tropical rain forests yesterday, today, and tomorrow. There follows an epilogue with notes, references, a glossary, a general index, and an index of plants and forest products.

As a botanical explorer of the northwest Amazon for 47 years, I find this book exceedingly useful and a welcome addition to my own extensive library on Amazonia.

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