
One of the satisfactions of working in the discipline of Economic Botany is investigating the variety of subjects it encompasses. This title adds a new category, for this reviewer, to that array. An international conference on War and Tropical Forests: New Perspectives on Conservation in Areas of Armed Conflict, assembled a diverse group of researchers, conservation practitioners and policy makers to explore these issues and draw greater attention to the conflicts currently affecting tropical forests. The volume—co-published as Journal of Sustainable Forestry 16[3/4] 2003—contains eight essays from specific danger zones: Columbia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Nicaragua, and Rwanda, which emerged from their presentations.

The editor’s Preface acknowledges that “This volume does not present a single view of the impact that wars have on forest conservation, nor does it reach a consensus about the role that resource players can play in the outbreak or course of armed conflict. Nevertheless the authors collectively highlight the potential for armed conflict and military power to affect the future of tropical forests.”

Some of the main themes and conclusions that emerge from this volume are: (1) The impacts of armed conflict on forest resources and conservation capacity are diverse and overwhelmingly negative. (2) Conservation interests working in politically volatile regions must prepare for conflict and its aftermath. (3) Threats to natural resource conservation can be severe during the post-conflict period. (4) Local communities can play a decisive role in conservation during armed conflict. (5) International market forces and far-reaching economic agendas often fuel armed conflict. (6) Corruption and dysfunctional governance can exacerbate conflict and its environmental impact. (7) Effective conservation in areas of armed conflict requires greater levels of collaboration in research, policy-making, and field programs.

Comparative and interdisciplinary in reporting and approach, War and Tropical Forests explores the issues faced by those engaged in forest conservation in an environment of war and conflict. Andrew Plumptre’s essay Lessons Learned from on-the-ground Conservation in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo provides insight that is transferable to other regions. His opening sentence, a grim reminder: “The war and genocide that swept through Rwanda and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has severely disrupted conservation activities there.” He undertook a survey of staff in both countries to assess what they had endured during the war and to understand why they had continued working despite great risk to their lives. Reliable salary and understanding the importance of conserving their country’s forest were common reasons.

Charles Berber and Kirk Talbott present The Chainsaw and the Gun: the role of the Military in Deforesting Indonesia, showing how conservation systems can become militarized. Jay Austin and Carl Bruch address Legal Mechanisms for Addressing Wartime Damage to Tropical Forests, suggesting how conservation efforts can become an important part of peace making. War and Tropical Forests is an excellent collection of readings appropriate for academic, policy, and activist audiences, and an up to date view of what environmental authority might mean in areas of armed conflict.

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If you think you know the plants in Florida’s flora, think again! Dick Wunderlin and Bruce Hansen have given us an updated and dramatically altered flora from the 1998 version. This publication has, among the many changes, the welcome alphabetization of families, genera, and species.

There are many novelties in this book, but none more striking than the re-arrangement of many long-established families. This edition accepts the growing body of evidence indicating that old, familiar, and long-cherished families pairs such as Apocynaceae and Asclepiadaceae and Malvaceae and Sterculiaceae are untenable. They have combined these into two families (and actually included others within them), but that is not all. The sweet-gum (Liquidambar styraciflua), that has been put in the Hamamelidaceae since the time of Asa Gray, Nathaniel Lord Britton, and John K. Small in the middle 1800s, is no longer in that family. It is now in the Altingiaceae (p. 252), a circumscription proposed by Friedrich G. Hayne in 1830.