

SOME USEFUL INFORMATION

What is a temperate rainforest?

Temperate rainforests share moderate climate and geography rather than a specific type of tree; they exist where high mountain ranges loom over the sea and a minimum of 192 cm (80") of annual rainfall results. These fertile forests are home to some of the oldest, biggest trees on earth, and are critical refuge to thousands of species of birds, plants and animals.

Almost half of the earth's original forest cover is gone, much of it having been destroyed within the past three decades due to the practices of industrial logging i.e. clearcutting. 76 countries have entirely lost all of their virgin forests (*World Resources Institute, 1997, "The Last Frontier Forests"*). More than 25% of the earth's remaining temperate rainforests are located on Canada's western coast of British Columbia but only 5.8 % of the ancient forests of British Columbia are protected. Clayoquot Sound, located in British Columbia, is one of the largest temperate rainforests remaining on earth.

We know precious little about how temperate rainforests function, what species reside within them, and what functions they may serve (for example, medicinal cures for certain types of cancers have been found to exist in trees only found in certain areas of the rainforest). We do know that these forests are essential to the earth's carbon-oxygen exchange and to weather stabilization. To destroy these forests has been compared to burning down a library before having read the books.

Between 4–6,000 unique types of forest dependent plants, animal and insect species are becoming extinct annually. As the forests disappear, so do the life support systems of the planet, as well as the livelihoods and cultures of indigenous forest dwelling peoples and other forest dependent communities.

What is clearcut logging?

As compared to "selective" logging, clearcut logging is a logging practice in which trees and plant life in a given area are entirely removed. In contrast to the lush mossy old growth rainforest which once was, clearcuts are truly some of the quietest places on earth—life forms are killed off, as far as the eye can see. The previously rich and diverse area of old growth rainforest is replanted and replaced (if growth can be made to occur) with evenly aged "tree farms" to meet with market demand. 92% of logging in the rainforest is done by clearcutting (*British Columbia Clear Cut Code, Sierra Legal Defense Fund, Nov. 1996*).

The vast majority of rainforest life is found in the forest floor. Clearcut logging destroys the forest floor and thereby eliminates the richness and diversity of the original rainforest upon which the planet depends. Replanted tree farms of one or two species are then only suitable for their intended purpose: to grow specific species of trees to be cut down again and brought to market. Irreplaceable thousand year old trees are currently being clearcut and converted into disposable paper products (toilet paper, diapers, newspapers, phone books, etc.) while viable alternatives do exist (for example, paper products from agricultural waste and recycled fibre). In Clayoquot Sound the clearcut legacy is ever-lasting: landslides on steep slopes, and water siltation causing salmon habitat destruction.

Why is clearcutting done?

The reason is simple: profit. While other methods of logging such as selective logging are more benign as they allow for rainforest regeneration, they also require more human labor.

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Clearcut logging is the most cost "effective" logging method as large machines are used to extract logs, and thereby destroy huge portions of land, quickly and easily.

While over 90% of the land base in British Columbia is said to be owned by the public (with land claims by the native peoples yet to be resolved), control of the rainforest is concentrated with only a few logging companies benefiting from the destruction. In accordance with standard business practices, these companies' primary mandate is profit maximization. Clearcutting is the preferred logging method precisely because it yields the largest profit.

What about Clayoquot Sound?

In 1993 Clayoquot Sound became a symbol for what is happening to the land, our land, in virtually every corner of the earth where forests remain. As of May 1999, local, national and international protests to save Clayoquot have resulted in: the temporary cessation by Macmillan Bloedel Ltd. of their logging operations in the Sound; the creation of a Forest Practices Code to govern logging practices in British Columbia (with smaller clearcuts now being required); and the release of a government-commissioned scientific report which recommended an end to clearcut logging in Clayoquot Sound. However, MacMillan Bloedel Ltd. has entered into a joint venture with First Nations groups in Clayoquot which will begin logging by the end of 1999; International Forest Products Ltd. continue to log Clayoquot Sound, and the Forest Code has not only not been properly enforced, its provisions have

Ecofeminism

Around the world, women are most often the gatherers of food, and the caretakers of children. As such, they are first to notice when the firewood or water supply is waning, or when the children are becoming ill. From the mercury poisoning in Minimata, Japan, to the Union Carbide industrial pollution poisoning in Bhopal, India, to the nuclear spillage in Chernobyl, Russia, as in Clayoquot Sound, it is primarily women who are in the ranks and in the forefront of the struggle to save the earth. For example:

- In the tradition of their women ancestors who were the first treehuggers, the Chipko women of India use their bodies to surround the precious trees of the Himalayas and save them from the axe.
- Kenyan women of the Greenbelt Movement band together to replant millions of trees in the face of the ever-expanding Sahara desert.
- In Greenham Common, England, women established a peace camp to house women protesters for over 20 years in protest of the US cruise missile site.

The survival of the planet is everyone's concern. Get involved.

