

Book Review

Review of *Ecoforestry: The Art and Science of Sustainable Forest Use* by Alan Drengson and Duncan Taylor (eds.). New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, British Columbia, 1997. \$24.95 (paper).

Review by Joseph Clift.

It has never been more important to revisit an older book than it is now. Although 1997 is not so long ago, it is worth answering the question: Why write a book review now? There are two main reasons. One, the philosophy of this book holds true the principles of the deep ecology movement. And two, the world's forests are being threatened as populations increase so the need for ecoforestry is of utmost importance. This book addresses the need to use our forests in a sustainable manner.

Ecoforestry is a collection of essays and stories by various authors. The book is divided into five parts: (1) Ecoforestry Principles and Practices; (2) Maintaining the Ecosystem; (3) Ecoforestry—Past and Current Examples; (4) Forestry For the Future—Community, Bioregionalism and Certification; and (5) Lessons From the Forest—A Comprehensive Ecocentric Approach. The editors introduce the principles of ecoforestry and provide a comparison between the industrial philosophies versus the ecological philosophies of forestry. The authors bring a wide range of educational backgrounds and real-life experiences to this book. Some work for non-profit ecoforestry organizations, some are university professors, and some are ecologists. All have published articles before, and one of the editors, Alan Drengson, is a founding editor of this journal, *The Trumpeter*.

The principles and practices of ecoforestry jump-start the educational lesson in Part One. As defined here, the goal of ecoforestry is to “maintain and restore full functioning, natural forest ecosystems in perpetuity, while harvesting forest goods on a sustainable basis” (35). The authors take an ecological walk through the forest as they describe the functions of this ecosystem. Each of the five essays that make up this part build on the principles of deep ecology—informing readers that forests cannot be sustained under an anthropocentric world view.

Part two invites readers to explore the ecosystem and how it functions. It is explained that forest “inputs” need to be highly regarded and that, as brilliantly detailed by Richard Hart, “if the bottom line continues to be focused on system outputs . . . we haven’t progressed beyond new terminology for the old paradigm” (77). As the authors repeatedly point out, the forest environment is a dynamic ecosystem. There are processes between plants and animals that are still unknown. There is a whole ecosystem surrounding fallen trees. The theme of these essays is clear—there are fundamental reasons not to ignore the intimate processes of the forest.

Ecoforestry as a past and present practice is discussed in part three. One ecoforester, Merv Wilkinson, has been using ecoforestry techniques for over 50 years. “I work with nature . . . I never cut more than is grown annually” (145). This chapter provides us with a history lesson—even learning some techniques from Switzerland. “Such processes [clear cutting] do not provide as many jobs as selection cutting and value added industries” (156).

One of the main ideas of part four deals with certification. What is certification and how important is it? These are some of the many questions about certification of forest products that are answered. Herb and Susan Hammond couldn’t have said it better: “Certification is a way to reduce consumption of wood by recycling, and insuring efficient, nonwasteful uses of wood” (196). This chapter, through the certification conduit, identifies standards that should be met to ensure the integrity of all the forest ecosystems.

Arne Naess wrote “But now, with an enormous number of people, with a practically infinite capacity for destruction, how humans feel about nature is of great importance (250).” As you can tell by this one quote, part five addresses the social side of forestry, with essays about the interactions of humans with the environment and how humans feel about the environment.

This is an excellent read and an excellent reference book. It doesn’t matter if you are a novice ecoforester, advanced ecoforester, a general environmentalist, or you are just trying to learn something new. It reads almost like a narrative textbook. For me, this book has a home right above my computer, along with my other ecology books. The book argues that a society that adopts the principles of ecoforestry and directly and indirectly conforms to the principles of the deep ecology movement will manage to meet our current needs while maintaining the forest ecosystem and leaving something for future generations. Although written a few years back, the principles in this book are not outdated; the need for these principles is even more important today.

As the title implies, ecoforestry is an art. Just as an artist carefully paints her canvas, an ecoforester carefully, and sustainably, harvests her crop. This book is one of the best references on ecoforestry—when you read the book, I am sure you will agree.

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