



# FOREST BIODIVERSITY

**B**iodiversity is the variety of life at different levels of biological organization, such as the genetic, species and ecosystem levels.

In terms of biodiversity, tropical forests are the richest terrestrial ecosystems. Like all other types of forests, they have been used by humans since time immemorial, providing a range of goods, such as wood, foods and medicines, which have waxed and waned in perceived importance through the ages. From the earliest known times, wood has been used for construction, tools,

implements and artifacts and as a vital source of energy. Thus timber from the cedars of the Lebanon was used in the construction of the Temple of Solomon and of Persepolis, one of the capitals of ancient Persia. The building of the church of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice began with the driving of more than 1 million trunks of alder, oak and larch into the muds of the lagoon.

For centuries the forests of Europe provided the timber for the ships of the navies and merchant fleets of the powers that came to dominate the earth. In the modern world, the role and the perception of forests is different and more complex. A plethora of institutions, groups and individuals have interests in forests and their biodiversity for reasons ranging from the maximization of corporate profits, to obtaining resources needed for survival, to maintaining cultural and spiritual values, to conserving biodiversity for its own sake. To accommodate and attempt to reconcile this great diversity of interests and to conserve and manage forests and their biodiversity, a great variety of activities are implemented by actors including governments, intergovernmental organizations, corporations, NGOs, communities and individuals.





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Out of this complex situation, a richer understanding of forests is emerging, which includes recognition not only of the goods provided by forests but also of the ecosystem services that they provide, such as watershed protection, protection of soils and climate stabilization.

Especially in the biodiversity-rich tropical forests, processes are at work, such as the conversion of forest to other land uses, illegal logging and illegal harvesting and trading in forest plants and animals, which are reducing forest cover and threatening forest biodiversity.

**To manage and conserve forests effectively and to address the causes of deforestation and biodiversity loss, forest management and conservation are continuously evolving.**

**Sustainable forest management involves activities at levels ranging from genes to ecosystems.**

**Forest conservation is becoming ever more complex as conservationists attempt to understand and accommodate the needs and rights of people who live in and around forests.**



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