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Book Reviews

Tropical forest remnants. Ecology, management, and conservation of fragmented communities. 1997. Laurance, W. F. & Bierregaard R.O. Jr. (eds). The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, USA. xv + 616 pp. ISBN 0-226-46899-2. Price £30.00 (paperback).

This is a long and interesting book composed of 33 chapters (in seven sections), which were mostly given as papers at an Ecological Society of America symposium in 1995. The papers cover a wide range of topics from plants to animals, a wide geographical area, though most describe research in the Americas and Australia with just one paper from south-east Asia and two from Africa (and those about the islands); there is also a wide range from theoretical to field based studies. There are fascinating insights into processes, lots of new facts, and good discussions about priorities for future work.

Things that struck me as new or interesting were firstly the paper by Warburton, which showed that bird species in fragments are not a random subset of the species in the original community—no surprise there, but the 'nested analysis' struck me as an approach which could be used by others. Secondly, the work by Harrington *et al.* studying animals as seed predators and dispersers, which showed that the ratio of juveniles to adult trees was an order of magnitude higher in species with unpalatable seeds, however these ratios were not different in fragments (with reduced seed predators) as compared to continuous forest—perhaps any effects on trees are still working their way through the system. Thirdly, the studies of planted trees which show that seedlings of other species soon appear in at least some plantations. Is this a good thing? The biodiversity is increased but Lamb *et al.* raise the possibility that it might lower the economic value of the plantations. Related to this it seems as though we do not know whether native trees grown in plantations are as valuable as the same species harvested from natural forest—they may have different qualities e.g., of wood density because trees in plantations are likely to grow faster. Fourthly, the paper by Patton *et al.* which reports mammalian phylogenetic reconstructions from molecular work shows that divergence is far greater (and therefore older) than that expected if Pleistocene refuges were important in speciation—another nail in the coffin of the refugia hypothesis.

Thus, this is a book that should be read by everyone interested in tropical forests, it has much new information, excellent reviews and much thought provoking material.

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