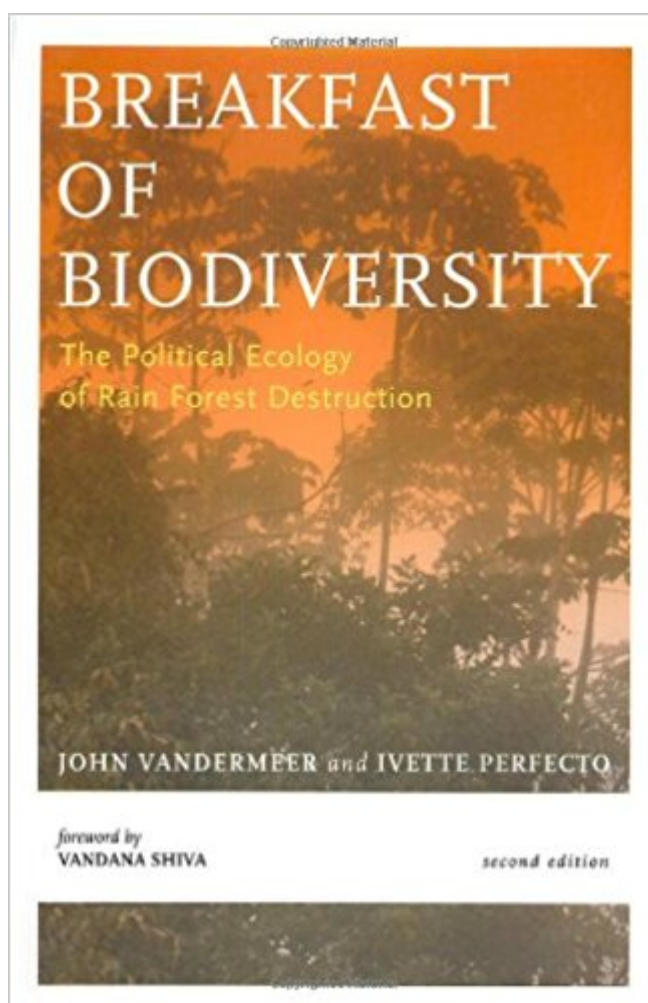


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Breakfast Of Biodiversity: The Political Ecology Of Rain Forest Destruction



Synopsis

In *Breakfast of Biodiversity*, John Vandermeer and Ivette Perfecto insightfully describe the ways in which such disparate factors as the international banking system, modern agricultural techniques, rain forest ecology, and the struggles of the poor interact to bring down the forest. They weave an alternative vision in which democracy, sustainable agriculture, and land security for the poor are at the center of the movement to save the tropical environment. This new, fully updated edition of *Breakfast of Biodiversity* discusses important new developments in our understanding of rain forest biology and assesses the impacts of a decade of free trade on the rain forest and on those who live in and around it.

Book Information

Paperback: 207 pages

Publisher: Food First Books; 2nd ed. edition (October 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 093502896X

ISBN-13: 978-0935028966

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #523,337 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #228 in Books > Science & Math > Agricultural Sciences > Forestry #330 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Plants > Trees #718 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Natural Resources

Customer Reviews

"Breakfast of Biodiversity" by John Vandermeer and Ivette Perfecto is a critical analysis of the myriad forces that are driving the destruction of the world's tropical rain forests, with particular emphasis on Central America where the authors have been engaged for many years of hands-on research and field work. The authors write in this, the 2005 second edition about the important insights and lessons that have been learned since the book's first edition published in 1995. Presenting knowledge gained through both scholarly research and their own practical experiences, the authors help us understand that narrowly-focused solutions to solving environmental problems will inevitably come up wanting in the absence of wider, more meaningful socio-political changes. The result is a sobering but ultimately empowering text that allows us to better understand both the challenge and the promise of saving the earth's remaining rain forests. The authors explain how rain

forests are neither fragile nor stable, discussing how rain forests can recover relatively quickly from short-term disruptions such as clear-cut logging operations but can suffer long-lasting damage from industrial agriculture and, of course, urbanization. We come to appreciate the wide variety of rain forest types as well as their common characteristics, shedding light on how humans might be able to make better strategic use of the land and live in harmony with the rain forest. The idea that managing land under cultivation in a sustainable and socially equitable manner appears to be a surprisingly effective proposal when compared with the oftentimes ineffective method of land conservation that has often been favored by mainstream environmental groups. In fact, the authors compare the fate of rain forest lands over time to make their point: in Nicaragua, more rain forest had been saved as a result of the progressive land redistribution policies of the Sandinista government than in Costa Rica, where market forces have compelled the poor to convert so-called protected areas of the rain forest to farmland. Unfortunately, when the Sandinistas lost power in the 1990s, the neoliberal policies favored by the succeeding administration quickly unraveled these gains and resulted once again in an accelerated loss of rain forest lands. However, the authors are hopeful that the anti-globalization movement can help to unravel the dense web that connects international capital with third world indebtedness, arguing that if inequality can be minimized then the poverty that drives desperate people into the rain forest can be curtailed. Therefore, the authors hope that their book will compel environmentalists to unite with social and political activists in an united effort to call for meaningful change in the world economic system. While this may be a tall order, the penetrating analysis contained in this exceptional book suggests that such a strategy is the only credible solution to solving one of humankind's most formidable problems. I highly recommend this accessible, informative and enlightening book to everyone.

This is a powerful and concise book. Within the book are the equations and succinct explanations of for example, how the demand for bananas causes long term cycles of forest destruction as workers immigrate into banana production areas and eventually are forced out of plantation work with the only option of clearing additional forest for their own survival. The authors also make a clear presentation of the problems of small pristine tropical park reserves in a sea of agriculture showing reduction of biodiversity as compared to landscapes that may be less pristine from mild to moderate farming and logging having more sustainable biodiversity. Here the argument is presented that less intensive agriculture (shade coffee, small plot farming) may both diminish poverty and loss of biodiversity. Other books that relate well to the subject of social justice and biodiversity preservation are: *The Burning Season: The Murder of Chico Mendes and the Fight for the Rain Forest* by

Andrew Revkin; Requiem for Nature by John Terboough; and Contested Nature: Protecting International Biodiversity and Social Justice in the Twenty-First Century by Steven Brechin.

This book is an excellent overview of the issues that cause rainforest deforestation, and gives an idea of the overall complexity facing conservation efforts on every level worldwide. Highly recommended. The binding is, however, awful! Hard, with no give. During the first read through I broke the binding about a third of the way through. I was very careful after that, but about two-thirds of the way through, while reviewing some concepts, the binding broke again. When I say broke, I mean, completely broke to the point where the pages are coming out. I've owned this book for just a few weeks, and have gone through it twice. I've never seen a binding like this, and implore the publisher to reconsider this binding-type, it is awful!

Good introduction to the topics, written in a very engaging manner.

My social science teacher recommended this book when we had a section on rain forest conservation. It was a real eye opener to deforestation in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The authors of this book make it a smooth, easy yet informational read with their wit and charm. I definitely recommend this book even if it isn't for class.

Best book I have read in ages! Vandermeer and Perfecto nailed it! I will reread this many times over and will send it to friends.

This was a great book, and it did arrive in the expected time frame.

A slim volume that packs a punch. It highlights the global nature of the problem, stressing that rainforests can and indeed do regenerate, but not if the disturbance is too great. Food insecurity and lack of land tenure are cited as important driving forces, and conventional, purist models of conservation, while satisfying the hopes and desires of lobbies in the wealthy developed world, fail to address the human dilemmas that are so important. A 'Political Ecological Strategy' is offered as a solution that takes heed of all the strands of the 'web of destruction' both in a local and a global context, and although not suggesting that the future is 'rosy', it does offer a glimmer of hope. A book to be thoroughly recommended to all those who are interested in the future of the rainforest, its people and the planet. An excellent read.

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