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Peer reviewed

Review: *Eastern Old-Growth Forests/Prospects For Rediscovery and Recovery.*

By Mary Byrd Davis

Reviewed by [Candy J. Strobel](#)
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Davis, Mary Byrd. *Eastern Old-Growth Forests/Prospects For Rediscovery and Recovery*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996. 383 pp. US\$ 24.95 paperback ISBN: 1-55963-409-X. Recycled, acid-free paper.

Billed as the "first book devoted exclusively to old growth throughout the East," *Eastern Old Growth Forests* serves as a learning tool for the layperson and an authoritative reference for the expert. The text is a collection of essays by a variety of informed individuals on topics ranging from the definition of old growth to studies conducted on specific sites. Each essay is well referenced and written at a level that promotes understanding of the topic by individuals of varied backgrounds and expertise. There are four major sections in the book containing a total of twenty-three chapters, a foreword by the editor, an afterward, glossary of major terms, brief listings for the contributors, and an index.

Part I is an introduction to the book and includes two chapters. Chapter 1 defines old growth forests and provides a history of the study of such ecosystems. Chapter 2 is an overview of the location and area of identified stands of old growth forest in the areas covered by the book. Part II, entitled "Biological and Cultural Values," contains six essays on the ecological significance of these stands. Biological diversity is the underlying theme of this section, and it concludes with two essays that explore the aesthetic reasons for conservation. Part III, "Identification", is made up of seven essays that help the reader identify specific old-growth ecosystems. Common and scientific names are given where applicable and information regarding both the biology and ecology of these areas is presented. The essay on long leaf pine forests, for example, covers the forest characteristics, its dependence on fire, the history of such habitats and individual habitat types that occur within this region. Part IV, "Preservation and Restoration", includes seven studies of old-growth forests written in journal format. The final chapter, "How Much Old Growth Is Enough" explores options for the preservation of current reserves and the justification for doing so.

Eastern Old-Growth Forests is an excellent account of a valuable vanishing resource. It offers us insight into these remarkable habitats, provides us with ideas about how to study them, and offers us some hope for the future. It is recommended for individuals interested in the scientific study of ecosystems, natural history enthusiasts, and ecologists who want to conserve and preserve our natural resources.

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