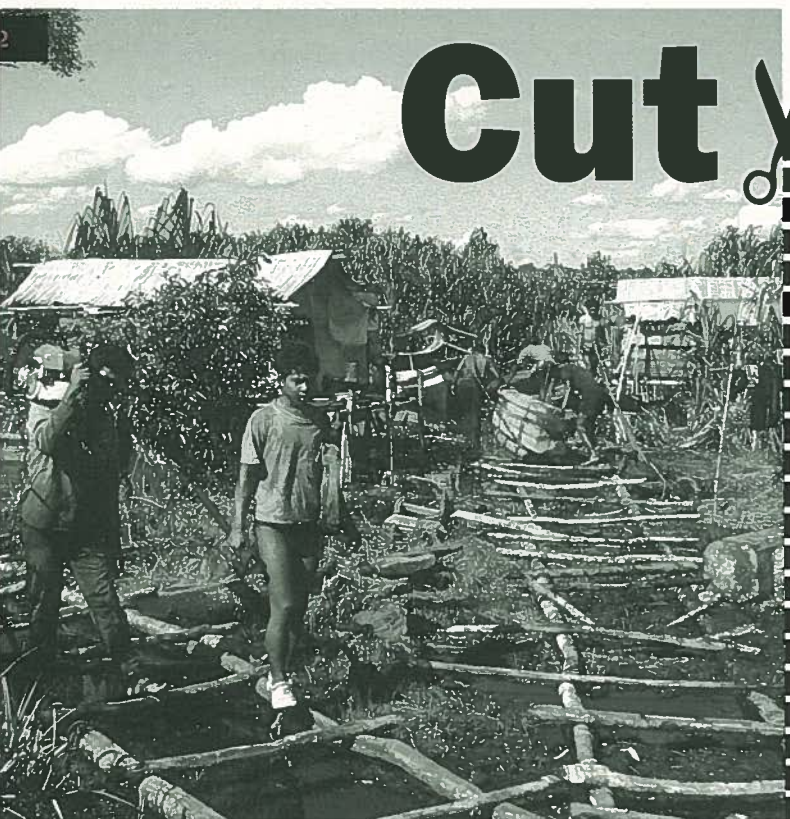


Cut and Run



Illegal logging camp opposite Tanjung Puting National Park, southern Kalimantan, Indonesia

The World Bank estimates that the illegal timber trade currently costs the governments of the world US\$5 billion annually through lost tax revenues, with another US\$10 billion lost to the economy of producer countries. Illegal logging also undermines local communities, damages biodiversity and is causing degradation in many of our most important protected areas. The international community is gradually facing up to the threats posed to many natural forests through the impact of illegal logging operations, while individual countries are starting to act against forest crime. Brazil recently seized a record haul of illegal mahogany, following a long period of research and lobbying by Greenpeace and others and the President of Brazil acknowledged the scale of the problem and supported a global ban. In June 2002, the government of Cambodia expelled the Malaysian company GAT International, following aerial reconnaissance by the environmental group Global Witness that showed the company was involved in illegal harvesting, in contravention of the government's January 2002 moratorium. But the problems are, if anything, getting worse. A report from WWF in the Russian Far East found that 1.5 million cubic metres of timber is being cut illegally in the Primorye region each year, mainly going to China, South Korea and Japan. Weak systems of control are blamed, exacerbated by corruption, high levels of unemployment and a collapse of the domestic wood-processing industry. In Canada, the NGO Earthroots claims that the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has been routinely permitting logging companies to effect clear-cuts of thousands of hectares of Ontario's crown forests contrary to provincial forestry laws that limit clear-cuts to 260 hectares: in some areas 46-98 per cent of cuts exceeded this limit.

Illegal logging threatens to undermine the gains made by protected areas and good forest management. Governments and NGOs are gradually responding to the problem. Nigel Dudley, Christian Thompson and Paul Toyne report.

Targeted advocacy can make a difference, particularly if enough publicity can be generated. A combination of small-scale illegal loggers and international corporations have been logging and rapidly degrading Tesso Nilo, one of Sumatra's single largest remaining blocks of lowland forest, for timber and pulp. In order to generate media pressure on both the companies involved in destroying Tesso Nilo and the Indonesian government, WWF organised a press trip with CNN and print journalists to expose the extent of the problem in this important forest. One outcome was a television news story that was widely screened around the world. As a result, April (Asia Pacific Resource Holdings Ltd), one of the main companies involved, asked to meet with WWF staff and committed to stop logging and converting pristine forests by the March 2002.

WWF also released a research report focusing particularly on the involvement and responsibilities of the G-8 countries and China with respect to illegal trade. In the run up to the G-8 summit in June, WWF called on G-8 countries to commit to purchasing timber only from legal sources originating from sustainably managed forests, and suggested a package of solutions including chain of custody certification, the development of Producers Groups and corporate involvement in the Global Forest and Trade Network. The response from the G-8 at the summit was poor as despite the Action Programme of Work on forests by the G-8 concluding there was no specific slot on the agenda to discuss progress. The G-8 in their statement on Africa however recognised the importance of tackling governance and corruption issues in respect to natural resource management.

Individually a few states are seeking action: the UK government is developing its plans to implement its timber procurement policy and has signed a bi-lateral Memorandum of Understanding on timber trade with the government of Indonesia. The governments of France and Germany made announcements at the last meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity on establishing timber procurement policies that ensure their timber is from legal and well-managed forests. WWF will be launching a major campaign on illegal logging and forest crime in 2003.

Sources: *Illegal logging in the southern part of the Russian Far East*, Anatoly Kotlobay and Andrey Pitchnikov, WWF Russian Programme Office; *The Timber Footprint of the G8 and China*, Paul Toyne, Cliona O'Brien and Rod Nelson, WWF UK; Global Witness; www.planetark.org; www.earthroots.org; Greenpeace Brazil

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IUCN
The World Conservation Union



Celebrating Mountains

Mountains cover a quarter of the world's land area and support a quarter of remaining forests, many areas of exceptional biodiversity value and a wide variety of human communities, including vulnerable groups isolated from mainstream society. Over three quarters of the world's mountain people live in poverty, a situation intensified because many recent armed conflicts have taken place in mountainous areas.

Although the 'picture postcard' appeal of mountain scenes has created a huge tourism industry, this obscures several environmental and social problems that are also typical of mountain environments. Harsh climates, fragile ecosystems and difficult communications make life hard for people who from circumstances or tradition live at high altitudes, while isolation hampers their ability to deal with rapid change or new problems like climate change. At the same time, many forest dwelling species and habitats are increasingly at risk.

The United Nations has proclaimed 2002 the International Year of Mountains, aiming at developing mountain areas to improve the well-being of local people and protect the environment; formulating and implementing national policies on sustainable mountain development; and promoting information tools to encourage public dialogue and awareness of mountains. The Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, taking place in Kazakhstan in October, will pool all recommendations generated during the year and develop practical actions for promoting sustainable mountain development.

What should emerge from Bishkek? IUCN and WWF run projects in all the world's significant mountain ecosystems, with almost half WWF's 300 plus forest projects in mountains. IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management is preparing a paper on mountain forest conservation and development. Between them, the organisations have a huge accumulated knowledge about practical conservation in these areas. But this information is hard to find. 'Mountains' have never generated the kind of popular and coherent conservation response that has developed with respect to other categorisations such as 'forests' or 'freshwaters', despite the existence of some excellent research institutions and organisations devoted to mountain environments and society. Experience all-too-often remains fragmented, personal and unrecorded, so that hard-won lessons are lost and mistakes repeated. Perhaps the most significant contribution of IYM would be to create a new impetus for the worldwide conservation movement to give mountains the priority attention they deserve. The International Year of the Mountains should aim at creating practical action and a groundswell of opinion in favour of a co-ordinated response to mountain issues: if enough enthusiasm can be generated now, institutional responses will surely follow.