

## David Lamb: *Regreening the Bare Hills: Tropical Forest Restoration in the Asia-Pacific Region*

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The CenTREAD Working Group

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David Lamb's *Regreening the Bare Hills* sets out to address "how reforestation might be carried out to restore sufficient biodiversity to re-establish ecosystem functioning on [deforested and degraded] lands and to do this in a way that improves human livelihoods." The first three chapters introduce the problems surrounding deforestation and land degradation, and the next five explain the distinctive methods of reforestation and restoration with an emphasis on plantation forestry. Subsequent chapters address the economic practicality of different approaches and their application to larger ecological and institutional scales. The last chapter explores possible scenarios for land use and environmental governance in the Asia-Pacific region and highlights research priorities for socio-ecological reforestation.

As an interdisciplinary group of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty with experience in forest restoration primarily in Latin America, we found that this book provided a thorough introduction to reforestation in the Asia-Pacific region. Lamb draws on many years of experience working in this region and complements that with a comprehensive review of the literature. The author presents case studies representing the broad study area, which includes tropical Asia, the Malay archipelago, New Guinea, northern Australia,

and the islands of the south Pacific, as well as an eclectic set of examples from Latin America. The short anecdotes are entertaining, the tables are comprehensive in summarizing the main points, and the engaging figures illustrate important issues. All these approaches come together to emphasize key concepts. Overall, *Regreening* grafts theories to practice and is eye-opening to challenges and opportunities for collaboration. The book identifies spaces where different stakeholders can work in concert towards meeting future demands for forest ecosystem services.

Throughout the book, Lamb maintains an interdisciplinary approach that highlights the ecological and social complexities of land stewardship. Lamb provides historical, political, and cultural context that motivates the different actors in Asia-Pacific reforestation; these actors include governments, private companies, NGOs, communities, and private small holders. The book covers a range of different types of forests and forest managers, landscapes and land qualities, reforestation goals and practices, intervention styles, markets, and financing compositions.

The topical coverage of *Regreening*, while extensive, is unbalanced. Monoculture and mixed species plantations are continually referred to throughout the book, whereas restoration is confined to a single chapter with a limited focus on planting tree seedlings. Restoration strategies, such as assisting natural regeneration by reducing competition with exotic species (Shono *et al.* 2007) or enhancing diversity in degraded rainforest fragments (Raman *et al.* 2009), receive brief or no discussion. Hence, a more appropriate subtitle for the book might have been 'Reforestation' rather than 'Restoration' in the Asia Pacific Region. Furthermore, we were surprised by the minimal mention of a few important topics, such as mangrove restoration, faunal recovery, and land conversion to produce palm oil, the latter of which is a rapidly growing threat to forests in the region (Koh

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The CenTREAD Working Group (part of the Center for Tropical Research in Ecology, Agriculture, and Development at the University of California, Santa Cruz, <http://centread.ucsc.edu>) is a diverse group of interdisciplinary scholars. Participants in developing this review included Tara S. de Silva, Coral E. Ericson, Michael M. Geneau, Karen D. Holl, Miriam Olivera, J. Leighton Reid, Daniella Schweizer, Allie E. Sennett, and Jorge A. Torres Ortega.

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The CenTREAD Working Group (✉)  
c/o K. D. Holl  
Environmental Studies Department, University of California,  
Santa Cruz, CA, USA  
e-mail: [kholl@ucsc.edu](mailto:kholl@ucsc.edu)

and Wilcove 2008). The underemphasis of certain crucial issues is partnered with a large amount of repetition within and between chapters. In some places specific discussions are unnecessarily revisited (e.g., carbon sequestration, ecosystem services), making already long chapters even lengthier. This results in chapters capable of standing on their own but a book that could have been substantially shorter.

The Springer World Forests series, of which this volume is a part, identifies its audience to broadly include national and international conservation entities, advanced students and researchers, business professionals, non-governmental organizations, and the media. We agree that *Regreening* would be a useful addition to the reference libraries of these groups, but we note that some chapters are likely to be more useful than others for particular subsets of this audience. Policymakers are unlikely to make it through the 523 pages of text; persnickety academics will balk at the many distracting typos and grammatical errors; and given the price tag, potential readers on any kind of budget would do well to consider purchasing individual chapters as pdfs. Foresters and rural development agencies who can afford a copy will find a wealth of practical information. At times the organizational structure is difficult to follow, but the book has a detailed table of contents and excellent

cross-referencing making it relatively easy to find information on specific topics.

In conclusion, *Regreening* realistically discusses both the opportunities and limitations of reforestation and the trade-offs between providing for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services, and human livelihoods. Lamb's critical review is timely given that reducing deforestation and forest degradation, as well as improving management of and restoring tropical forests (REDD+), are increasingly heralded as a way to sequester carbon while meeting other social and ecological needs.

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