

Chris Maser. 1988. *The Redesigned Forest*. R&E Miles, PO Box 1916, San Pedro, CA 90733, 234 p., \$9.95

Chris Maser, trained as a vertebrate zoologist and with 20 years experience as a research scientist in natural history and ecology in forest, range, subarctic, desert, and coastal settings, writes in a way that is superbly accessible to the lay reader. Here he tackles the challenge of changing our approach to natural resources (in this case using forests as the example) in response to a worldwide population that threatens to use up most of our remaining resources within the next few generations.

This lively, extremely readable book is divided into four sections: (1) Nature's design of a forest vs. *our* design of a forest; (2) As we think, so we manage; (3) Change, why are we afraid of it?, and (4) We are as free as our imaginations.

"It is a critical time," says Maser in his preface, "to re-evaluate our philosophical foundation and to re-emphasize human dignity in management decisions.

"The Redesigned Forest is a unique literary gem ... (It) presents an extraordinary perception of forests in hard terms. Beyond this, the author's analysis is a work of art. There is a balance of philosophic, psychologic,

With a renewed focus on human dignity as a 'product' of the resource decision-making process, we can broaden the philosophical basis of management to include forests and grasslands, oceans and societies rather than only a few selected commodities that they produce." Maser rejects an approach that produces battles that force choices between, for instance, old-growth trees or woodfiber or native trout or clean water. Instead, he proposes that we recast our goals in *inclusive* terms – "a healed, healthy, sustainable forest that includes old growth trees *and* woodfiber *and* wilderness *and* native trout *and* clean water, and ..."

The message is clear: We must have sustainable forests before we can have sustainable forest products, and the things that sustain a forest are clean air, clean water, clean soil, and sunshine. It is no accident that three of these essentials are also among the "products" (or outgrowths of the processes) of healthy forests.

This is no clarion call to arms and battle. This is a passionate, poetic look at where we are and where we will arrive eventually if we continue in the same direction. Beyond that, it is full of suggestions as to how we can eliminate controversy and plan together for a productive, healthy worth of "and"s rather than a splintered, acrimonious world of "or"s.

The Redesigned Forest provides a look at where we are today, the kind of decision-making that put us here, what we have left to work with, and how we can apply what we know toward achieving "a collective dream – (one that is) large enough to encompass the transcend all our small, individual dreams in a way that gives them meaning and unity."

Maser describes the flexible, timeless continuum of species that go to make up nature's forest, and compares this to the rigid, time-constrained monocultures that most foresters prefer. He details the make-up of nature's forests – diverse, unpredictable, consisting of interrelated components "all of which are neutral" and processes that act themselves out over the long term, resulting in a self-sustaining, self-repairing entity.

Our present preferred design for forests, Maser suggests, assigns "good" and "bad" values to essential forest components (timber trees are good, insects are bad) and focuses only on desired forest *products* for their immediate payoff value.

"It is critical," he writes, "that we both understand and accept the effects we cause by redesigning global forests, because we are simultaneously redesigning the structural and functional processes of the world, such as soil fertility, cycles in quality, quantity, and belowground storage of water, and cycles in climate. At risk is human survival on earth and in the universe."

Jean Matthews, Editor
Park Science

Some additional views of the book:

"Chris Maser's *The Redesigned Forest* should be compulsory reading for all those in a position to control the destiny of the world's forests, for it provides a glimmer of hope that short term exploitation of our precious forestry resource some day will be replaced by enlightened custodianship involving conservation of the whole of the forest ecosystem, not just commercially viable tree species." **B.G. Baillie, barrister at law, Adelaide, South Australia.**

"This is an erudite and beautiful book, but is far more ... It is a triumph in revolutionary environmental thinking and a light in a darkening world. I would rate *The Redesigned Forest* alongside Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*." **David Chapman, Regional ranger and head of wilderness trails, Kruger National Park, South Africa.**

economic, and emotional basis of decision-making ... It is not a book of argumentation, but a series of essays of beauty." **Dr. Murray Johnson**, *The Burke Museum, Seattle, WA.*

"Maser's personal, down-to-earth style promises to make the subject of forest ecology accessible to a wide and diverse audience. Yet this work goes far beyond the study of old growth forests *per se*. For in his forays into a stand of western red cedar or Douglas fir, Maser is also guiding the reader towards a greater understanding of the sorts of cultural snags and personal entanglements that prevent us from forming healthy relationships towards each other and the natural world." **Dr. Duncan M. Taylor**, *Environmental studies program, University of Victoria, B.C. Canada.*