

The Nov. 6, 1989 issue of **The Nation** carries an article by Victor Perera (author of **Rites: A Guatemalan Boyhood**), entitled "A Forest Dies in Guatemala." He describes logging operations that are continuing in the majestic Sierra del Lacondon, a 2,358-square-mile reserve of dense rain forest containing the last large stand of giant hardwoods in Guatemala's northern region of El Peten – "the Sawmill of the North."

A law signed in January 1989 converted close to 15 percent of Guatemala's territory into a system of 50 ecological parks and biosphere reserves and created a National Council of Protected Areas to administer

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them. But the largest of 9 sawmills licensed to operate there already has marked 1,000 mahoganies for logging by year's end (1989) – this on top of the 40 percent loss in forest cover in the past 30 years and a 50 percent drop in annual rainfall.

“The coming destruction of Peten’s rain forest will be as calamitous in its way as the burning of the Mayan codices in Yucatan nearly 500 years ago,” Perera writes. Some day it will be looked back on, he suggests, “as a ‘Great Dying,’ surpassed only by the disappearance of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.”