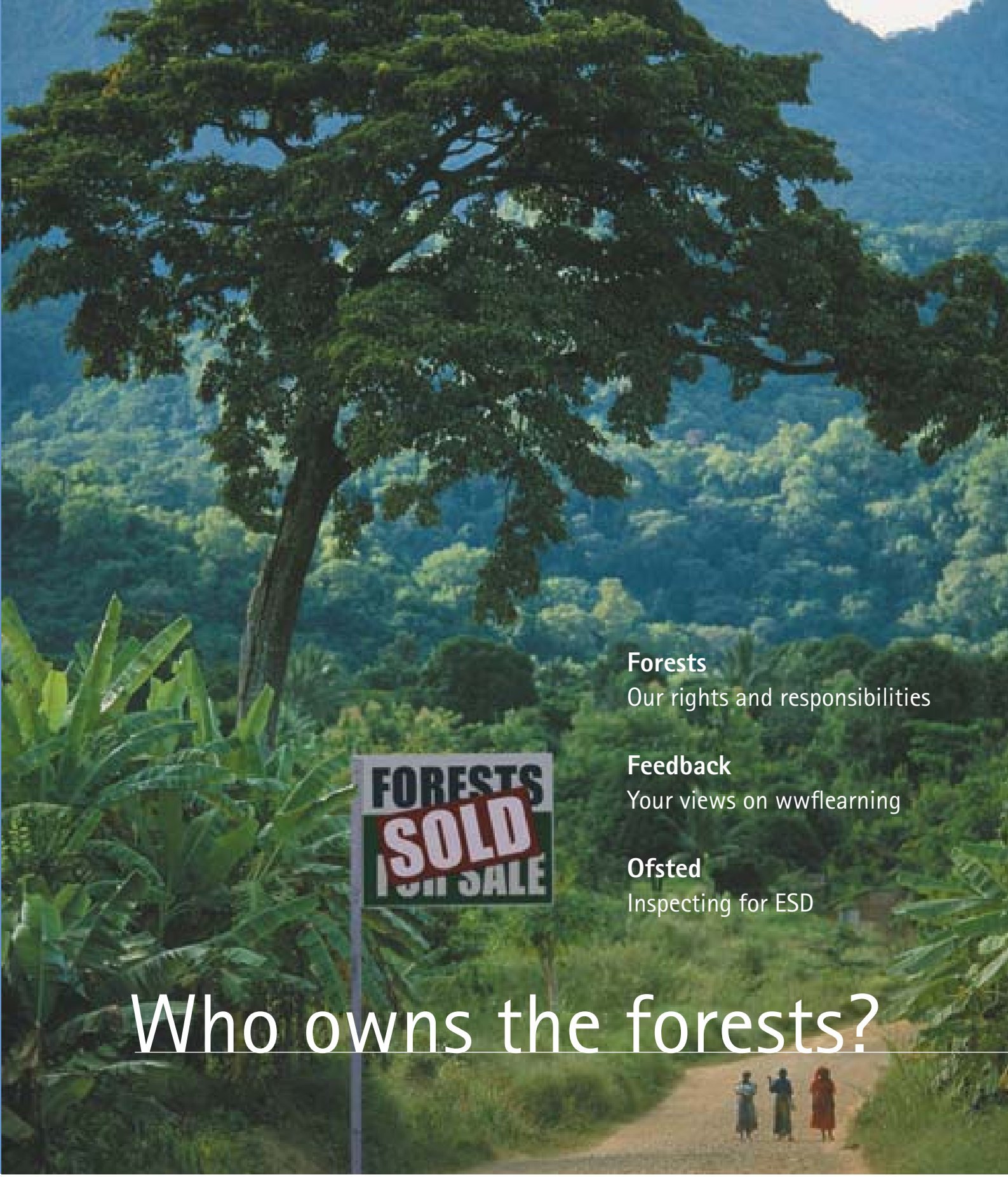




Lifelines

NEWS AND IDEAS FOR TEACHERS

Spring 2004



Forests

Our rights and responsibilities

Feedback

Your views on wwflearning

Ofsted

Inspecting for ESD

Who owns the forests?



What's the future

Who owns the world's forests? Could it be the local communities who use the forest's fruit and nuts for food and the wood for fuel? Or the large plantation companies who provide those communities with much needed income in return for land on which to grow crops such as coffee and bananas to export around the world?

Could it be the shareholders of the major timber importers who satisfy the global demand for wood?

Maybe it's all of us. We certainly have a duty to protect forests by being aware of the pressures we place upon them.

Rainforests offer one of the best ways to bring global environmental issues right into the classroom. By discussing the causes of forest loss we can create direct

links between our everyday lives in the UK and species loss thousands of miles away. We can link our lives with those of communities in Africa, Asia and South America, emphasising the interdependence of all on earth and the results of gross inequality in wealth.

When it comes to Education for Sustainable Development, forests are a rich resource. In this issue of **Lifelines** we focus on rainforests, their use and abuse – and the need for their protection.

Life support system

Some 800 years ago Britain was covered in trees. Wild boar, wolves and bears roamed among the dense growth where today we have motorways, houses and shops.

And just as past generations in the UK opted to cut down their forests for 'development' or to trade in their forests to aid economic growth, so too communities in South America, Africa or Asia are making decisions now that will affect future generations.

But the reality is that economic and social pressures mean that they often have little choice. Many communities are poor and unable to meet basic human needs of food, fuel, education, shelter and health.



for forests?

Edward Parker, WWF-UK

So when offers of cash come in return for land, few will blame them for accepting – the blame lies elsewhere.

Every time we demand uncertified hardwood doors or cheap bananas we are fuelling the supply that leads ultimately to forest loss. And with nearly 60 per cent of the world's forests located in developing countries, it's not surprising that they are seen as an easy way to generate income.

Rainforests stretch from the cold climes of Alaska to Chile, but the bulk are found in other areas of Southern America, Africa and Asia.

In the past 50 years, 40 per cent of rainforests have been destroyed. In some areas, such as west Africa, that figure is much higher – almost 90 per cent. Less

than 1,000 million hectares of pristine rainforest remains, with just over half of that in tropical America. Estimates put the destruction at 19 million trees a day.

We are all responsible for the world's dwindling rainforests and yet we all rely heavily on their existence. But unless we know why we are so dependent and what will happen if we don't stop the rampant destruction of rainforests, the plundering for profit will continue – with catastrophic effects.

The world's 70 million year-old forests are key to sustaining life around the world: they influence climate by regulating the water cycle and absorbing carbon dioxide, and many of the world's medicines – from everyday drugs such as aspirin to advanced

drugs to combat cancer – are made from rainforest products.

In fact, over 2,000 tropical forest plants have been identified as having potential anti-cancer properties; but scientists have only tested 10 per cent of those, and only intensively screened one per cent. The harsh reality is that the principle component of a future life-saving cancer super drug may exist in a species of plant we are currently destroying.

WWF has just published its *Focus on Rainforests* pack which, together with the secondary and primary supplements with this issue of **Lifelines**, will provide an excellent source of facts and figures with which to discuss the intricacies of sustainability and social responsibility.

Rainforest

ISSUES

Ownership: Rainforests are disappearing at an alarming rate: in the past 15 years, an area four times the size of Spain has been destroyed. Having destroyed its own forests, what right has the industrialised world to interfere in the resource management issues of developing nations?

Loss of indigenous peoples: The Kayapo Indians rely on the rainforest for their livelihood and use its many resources such as fruit, wood and meat in a sustainable way. It's in their interest to maintain the forest. Over 90 different Amazonian tribes are thought to have disappeared in the 20th century due to forest loss.

Wealth creation: Forests provide livelihoods for some 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty. Taking timber in an uncontrolled and unsustainable way denies developing nations of much needed revenue. The World Bank says \$15 billion a year is lost in this way.

Habitat and species loss: We lose 50 species every day – two species per hour – due to tropical deforestation.

Land and soil erosion: Unlike our forests, most of the nutrients of a rainforest are stored in its vegetation rather than in its soil. So when the trees are felled, the soil rapidly becomes poor and easily eroded.



BENEFITS

Climate: Tropical rainforests act as a global air conditioner by absorbing carbon dioxide, storing the carbon, and releasing fresh, clean oxygen.

Produce: Food: fruits (bananas, citrus), vegetables (peppers, okra), nuts (cashews, peanuts), drinks (coffee, tea, cola), oils (palm, coconut), flavourings (cocoa, vanilla, sugar, spices), and other foods (eg beans, grains, fish) come from rainforests. Fibres are found in rugs, mattresses, ropes and fabrics. Oils, gums and resins are found in insecticides, rubber products, fuel, paint, varnish and wood finishing products, cosmetics, soaps, shampoos, perfumes, disinfectants and detergents. And, of course, there are wood and medicines.

Wildlife: There are an estimated 30 million species of plants and animals on earth and some 90 per cent of those live in the rainforest. Approximately 80 per cent of all insect species live in tropical rainforests; one in five of all the birds on earth live in Amazonia.



factfile

CAUSES OF LOSS

Logging: Some logging is legal and sustainable. The UK imports very little tropical hardwoods – 90 per cent of our timber and wood product imports come from coniferous or temperate forests. However, the remaining 10 per cent of our annual imports do come from countries with known problems of illegal logging, such as Brazil, Cameroon and Indonesia. Some estimates suggest that up to 60 per cent of our tropical timber imports are from illegal sources. Tropical forests yield some of the world's most beautiful and valuable woods, such as teak, mahogany, rosewood, balsa and sandalwood. These woods surround us at home, in shops and in offices – and we'll pay handsomely for them. It takes 60 years for a tropical rainforest tree to grow big enough to be used for timber.

Agriculture: Land is cleared to grow crops but not all is for local use. Many, such as soya beans, are exported bringing in much needed foreign currency. The land is often cleared by fire. In 1987, a satellite picture of the Amazon River Basin showed over 7,600 fires burning in the rainforest. Almost 65 per cent of Central America has been cleared to create pastureland for grazing cattle.



Edward Parker, WWF-UK

THE SOLUTIONS

Protection: Half of the world's forests have already gone and, of the remainder, only some 10 per cent is protected.

Certification: The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) inspects and tracks forest timber from source to end consumer, allowing all of us to be sure of the origins of the timber and wood products we buy. Certified forests are managed sustainably taking into account environmental, social and economic issues. WWF wants to see 100 million ha of certified forests by 2005.

Education: Reducing the demand for uncertified rainforest products will help reduce the forest loss, as will ensuring local communities are aware of the value of their great resource.

Equality: Global institutions such as the World Bank, as well as national governments and international conventions, must aim to redistribute the world's wealth and so reduce the pressures on forests.

Weblinks

<http://www.rain-tree.com/facts.htm>

<http://www.rain-tree.com/schoolreports.htm>

<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org>

<http://www.wwf.org.uk/researcher/issues/forests/index.asp>

<http://www.fsc-uk.org>

In the classroom

Science

Rainforests are a key component in regulating the world's climate. At the simplest level they recycle water, use up carbon dioxide and generate oxygen.

Rainforests are home to millions of species. Students can use this to discuss the web of life – the interdependence we all have on other living things.

Business studies/ Citizenship

Consumers in the industrialised world demand cheap food. Impoverished communities in southern America, Asia and Africa have the land on which to grow coffee, bananas, soya, etc, and to graze cattle.

Each quarter-pounder is estimated to be responsible for 6.25 sq m of rainforest being destroyed

In the short term, the communities benefit from a massive injection of money. Sometimes this is used to build schools and hospitals, but they are selling their land rights and denying future generations the right to live off that land.

Discuss the role of ethics and environmental protection in business. What is the role of the consumer?

The developing countries, which account for most of the tropical rainforests, have almost 75 per cent of the world's people but only about 15 per cent of the world's goods. Must we address this inequality of wealth before we can hope to address forest loss?



Nick Cobbing, Still Pictures

Feedback

WWF's dedicated website for teachers, [wwflearning](#), is three years old. Visitor numbers are good, but we wanted to know what you really thought of it. We wanted to know who used it, when and for what. And we wanted to know how well it fits with wider ESD and ICT teaching.

The evaluation consisted of a telephone survey of 52 schools across the UK during the spring term and site visits to 20 schools during the summer term.

The comments were wide-ranging. Here's a précis of opinions:



BananaStock

What teachers look for in a site are good search facilities, strong links to the curriculum and advance notice of what's coming up.

A quarter of teachers surveyed said that they now teach ESD differently because of [wwflearning](#). Over 90 per cent said they found the site easy to navigate and 100 per cent said they'd recommend it to other teachers.

Most users visit the site on a termly or monthly basis unless they are engaged in a specific activity such as the debates or online courses.

With growing technical support and increased confidence, schools are using ICT far more as a teaching aid and enhancement to the learning experience. This is less true in the Scottish sample, where print-based resources very still valued more highly.

Resources, activities, lesson plans and case studies were particularly liked.

Schools sometimes found it took too much time and expense to download or print off material.

The online teacher discussion area did not rank high on the teachers' priority lists due in part to the pressures on teachers' time. Discussions need to be very focused and linked to development/professional needs.



Photodisc

More users heard of the site from **Lifelines** than any other source.

The online pupil debates were highly regarded. Ideas for improvement included promoting links to literacy and training days/sessions prior to the debates, either from WWF or other schools.

Many teachers highlighted the need for good website content which pupils could access directly.

And here's how you suggest the site can be improved:

- **Make it bigger.** More debates, more activities, more information and more links.
- **Make it relevant:** with closer links to the exam syllabus.
- **Make it even more user friendly:** for those not IT-literate and for children.

WWF will be using this valuable feedback to inform its plans for the site. Watch this space!

Judgement day

Schools in England will soon have a benchmark by which to judge their ESD performances.

Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education – visited 14 primary, two middle and ten secondary schools across the UK between April 2002 and March this year to identify where there was existing good practice in ESD. The schools chosen were those known to have highly developed and long-standing ESD policies.

The aim was to set the standards for others to meet and forms part of the wider government action plan for sustainable development within education. It will also form the basis of future Ofsted ESD inspections.

One school visited was Woodheys Primary in Sale, Greater Manchester. "We have been working on environmental issues since 1995 but only seriously since 1997," says Freda Eyden. "We were given as an example of a school trying to run ourselves sustainably – the whole school living in a sustainable way as well as teaching it.

"ESD is still a vague topic to a lot of people – they don't really understand what it is. It is necessary to define so people know what they are working towards.

"The Ofsted inspector spent a day chatting to pupils and teachers. He was looking at our approach to ESD and wanted to know if we had a school council, how aware were the pupils and staff of environmental issues – both local and global – and what activities we offered at the school, how it all fitted into the curriculum, that sort of thing."

The findings are published in a report, *Taking the first step forward... towards an education for sustainable development*, which can be found at: www.nc.uk.net/esd/gq6.htm.

"This report shows that while an increasing amount of good practice does exist in promoting ESD, there is still a lot that needs to be done," says chief inspector of schools, David Bell. "We are hoping to see more schools develop values, knowledge and skills in pupils that will enable them to think proactively about safeguarding a sustainable future for all. By highlighting the example set by those schools which are already successfully doing this, we hope that others will be inspired to follow suit."

Based on the report's findings, the benchmark – to be used by schools and inspectors – is likely to include:

- the time a school has spent working on ESD issues
- whether sustainability is practised as well as preached
- whether it is done in isolation or the wider community is involved
- the degree to which pupils are involved in decision-making – within the school and community
- and whether the ESD objectives are clear within the curriculum.

As it is only ESD-friendly schools that have so far been involved, the big hurdle will come if the inspections are rolled out across all. "We should risk a little resentment and tell all mainstream schools that their ESD will be clearly identified in inspection reports. After all, inspection can sometimes be a powerful incentive to some people in some situations. And that might just be progress," says Pete Coulson, a teacher at Beech Hill Primary School in Wigan, another visited in the pilot phase.



Mark Edwards, WWF-UK



WWF-UK



Edward Parker, WWF-UK



Mark Edwards, WWF-UK



ORCA

In recent months the government has started to pay much closer attention to the state of the marine environment and how it should be managed.

WWF wants to make sure that these good intentions are followed up with action and so is now entering the second phase of its Oceans Recovery Campaign (ORCA).

"We are doubling our efforts on a call for a UK-wide Marine Act," says Matthew Davis, Campaign Director. "This act will bring together and simplify the hundreds of laws and policies that affect the marine environment, ensure greater protection for species and habitats, and help secure the livelihoods of people such as fishermen who depend on the seas for their living."

Watch out for a full ORCA briefing – and ways you can help – in future issues of **Lifelines**.

You can make waves for dolphins and other marine wildlife by encouraging your pupils to take part in the **Big Swim 2004**. Simply fill in the insert enclosed with this issue of Lifelines to register – and receive a free school resource pack!

Chris Martin Bahr, WWF-Canon

Lorraine Lacey, WWF-UK

Focus on Rainforests

This pack helps children to appreciate the importance of rainforests – for their amazing biodiversity, for climate control, as a source of food and medicines, and as a place where people live and work. *Focus on Rainforests* provides pupils with the chance to explore how and why rainforests are being lost, the tensions between conservation and development, and the global and local action that might provide a more sustainable future.

The pack contains 12 colour A4 photo-cards; an A2 colour poster; and a teachers' guide, containing activity ideas, photocopiable activity sheets and fact files, key questions, background information and curriculum links.

ISBN: 1 85850 204 7
Age range: 7–11, KS 2, level B/D
Subject areas: Geography, Science, English, Citizenship
Price: £10.99 (plus £3.00 p&tp)

Available from:
WWF-UK, Education Distribution, PO Box 963, Slough, SL2 3RS. Tel: 01753 645440 or email rpc@richmond.co.uk

Annual Teachers' Conference

Last June, 60 teachers from some 55 schools met up at the Earth Centre in Doncaster for WWF's first ever UK-wide ESD conference.

Following the success of this 'Sustainable Schools' conference, we're planning another ESD event for teachers, on 19 March 2004, and once again at the Earth Centre. To receive more information about the conference, just tick the coupon below.



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 The Annual Teachers' Conference 2004

Please send us an A4 SAE for our reply.

- I would like to receive the wwflearning e-newsletter

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