



How YOU Can Help Rain Forests ...

All our butterflies come from rain forests. These tropical forests have stood for millennia and yet they are now disappearing in just one or two generations. While we are all aware of their destruction, many people feel at a complete loss as to how exactly they can help. Here are a number of practical steps that can be taken to help slow rain forest destruction:-

BUY FSC WOOD PRODUCTS such as timber, hardboard, charcoal and paper.

The Forest Stewardship Council logo (FSC) ensures that the forest recovers after timber extraction. Forests are sustainable and trees can grow back if they are given half a chance. All timber in B&Q is FSC certified but you have to look out for the logo in other DIY stores. Remember that most of the hardboard and chipboard in the UK is made up of non-sustainable, often illegal tropical timber. FSC is the most important way to help forests and their animals.



BUY RECYCLED PAPER as well as recycling it. This is the only way to be sure that your paper is not cutting down forest. Whenever wood pulp is involved, try and buy recycled products, e.g. kitchen and toilet paper, A4 sheets from Viking Direct. The recycling industry is not financially viable unless we actually buy the recycled goods.

REDUCE USE OF PALM OIL There are now whole tropical landscapes transformed into this one palm, related to the Coconut. Palm oil comes from the pressed fruit of this tropical palm. Oil palms are extremely efficient at producing oil; the palms grow in the tropics where the sun is at its strongest and they don't have a winter to slow up production.

This use of vegetable oil is causing deforestation on an unimaginable scale; all driven by our buy-

ing the plethora of products that use palm oil here at home. These tropical oils are the cheapest and least healthy vegetable oils and are used in many processed foods, e.g., biscuits, peanut butter, and cooking oil for fish & chips. While all cooking oils have an ecological impact, palm oil has the biggest impact on biodiversity. Most plant oils labelled as 'vegetable oil' are derived from palm oil. Swap to rape seed oil that is produced in the UK so that we don't export our environmental destruction to the rain forest countries.

BIOFUELS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO OVERTAKE ALL OTHER REASONS FOR RAIN FOREST

DESTRUCTION Our Energy needs for transport and heating are 25-50 times our food needs. Like the food issue above, the cheapest vegetable oil is from oil palm plantations that are responsible for mass destruction of rainforest especially in Asia. Ultimately, plants aren't efficient enough to serve these huge energy demands and we need the land for food and nature (ecosystem services). Please The recent surge in wood chip boilers means that it will be especially important to source biofuels from the UK so we don't export our destruction to poorer countries. It will be tempting for the main woodchip suppliers to turn to the tropics to source their wood chips.

MEAT PRODUCTS. Our meat and dairy consumption in the UK is now heavily dependent on soya feed and indirectly finances rainforest destruction. Soya from the Amazon is the major source of protein in our livestock feeds. Huge swathes of Amazonia are being cut down to feed Europe's demand for meat and dairy. There are currently no alternatives to this development save perhaps buying Hereford grass-fed beef and non mass-produced poultry and eggs. To their credit, some farmers use higher proportions of UK-grown bean/pea protein but as yet there is no labelling system to inform us when we're out shopping.

CHANGE TO RAIN FOREST-FRIENDLY COFFEE

Three billion cups of coffee are drunk every day which create a huge demand for tropical land. Look for the rainforest alliance frog symbol e.g. with Kenco to ensure that your coffee is at least shade-grown. This certified coffee uses old varieties of coffee that grow under the forest canopy. Here the crop generates cash while allowing the canopy trees to remain intact. Not a perfect solution but far better than clearing the forest for monocultures. The new varieties of coffee result in forest clearance as they have been bred to be grown out in full sun. Coffee connoisseurs say the old shade varieties taste the best.

AVOID BARS OF SOAP Practically all solid soap bars come from palm or coconut oils as they are the only oils solid at room temperature. There are olive oil alternatives available if you search around or swap to detergent soaps, preferably low phosphate ones.

BUY BRAZIL NUTS These always come from intact tropical forests, as the bees that pollinate the Brazil nut trees need many different flowers from the forest to survive themselves. Without the bees, the flowers aren't pollinated and there's no fruit. Any product that generates cash from intact forest will help persuade people and their governments to protect forest.

BUY ALPRO SOYA MILK Soya beans are a major cause of forest destruction. Alpro soya is not sourced from farms that have cleared rain forest.

By swapping to some of these more nature-friendly products and practices mentioned here, we can all help reduce our impact on the natural world.

SPONSOR AN ACRE OF RAIN FOREST

Offset your part in the destruction of forests by buying a hectare of forest. Probably the easiest way to help all in one go. These organisations col-

laborate with the equivalent of the Woodland Trust in tropical countries. These organisations buy up land for joining up nature reserves, etc. Going rates are £50-£100 an acre. Remember one acre of tropical forest has more species than the whole of the UK.

www.rainforestconcern.org
www.worldlandtrust.org

IT'S YOU AND I DOING IT ..

It is important to understand that it is YOU and I causing forest destruction and not somebody else or some far-off country. It is our seemingly inconsequential use of food and home products, mostly food, that added together finance the destruction of the rain forests. Imagine one person's use of vegetable oil or plywood multiplied by 60 million people in the UK or a billion in the rich world. Acknowledgement of our own small part in the crisis is the first step to finding a solution.

THE FUTURE: THE NEED FOR A NATURE-FRIENDLY BRAND.

Most of the problems nature faces are to do with our food consumption. We cannot expect farmers to help nature for free. **Ultimately, if we want nature, we're going to have to pay for it.** At the moment, there are precious few ways for consumers to directly help nature. In the last few years, we have been promoting the need for a nature-friendly brand akin to the Fair-trade brand. This would pay farmers a premium for leaving 10% of their land for nature; a tithe for nature. In return, those of us interested in helping wildlife, would have the opportunity to pay extra for the product that had been certified. Corridors of rain forest could then be left in oil palm plantations breaking up the endless monotony of these crops. By paying extra for nature, we would be starting to pay the true cost of food and not just its production costs.

Neil Gale is a rainforest botanist and helped set up the The Magic of Life Trust in 2000.