

Annotated transcript of film: "Of Forests and Men"

UN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS - 2011

OF FORESTS AND MEN

a short film by: Directed by: Yann Arthus-Bertrand

written by: GoodPlanet and Isabelle Delannoy

Trees first appeared on Earth more than 380 million years ago.

But what do we know of them?

They have changed the face of continents.

From arid rock, they have brought forth the fertile lands we know today.

A tree never moves, but finds the food it needs where it's planted.

To live and grow, it takes in water, light, energy and carbon dioxide from the air.

The tree draws its raw materials from the environment

and turns them into leaves, branches and trunk.

At the same time, a tree gives off an abundance of the substance

that has allowed such a variety of life forms to proliferate.

Oxygen.

The planet's forests are home to more than half of its species.

Every year, we discover hitherto unknown insects, plants and genes.

Life, whose very existence we had not suspected.

Our food, our remedies and our scientific and technological research

depend on that biodiversity.

Man has always gained his livelihood from the forest,

which we transform and destroy.

Half of the forest that existed at the dawn of agriculture has since been destroyed.

Our model has been to strive for constant growth.

Since 1950 the world population has risen nearly threefold,

whereas our consumption of meat is up more than fivefold.

Paper, by sixfold.

Our tools are on a different scale.

We are cutting trees down by the million

to plant soybeans and to produce millions of tons of meat.

Forests are being replaced by stands of eucalyptus
more profitable for the paper industry.
And by oil palms, more profitable for the agro-food business.
Coastal mangrove forests have shrunk in the area by another 20% over the last 30 years.
One of the main culprits, is shrimp and fish farming.
However, deforestation can also be a matter of survival.
2 billion people cut down forests to make charcoal,
and to feed their families through slash and burn agriculture.
Over the past 60 years, we have inflicted more rapid degradation on the planet
than in all of human history.
When forests are cleared it is not just animals that are endangered.
Is the essential being destroyed to produce the superfluous?
It doesn't have to be that way.
Woodlands still make up nearly 1/3 of the planet's total land area.
The world over - men and women - are fighting to protect it.
Villagers, scientists, associations, governments
are all sounding the alarm and proposing alternatives.
For other choices do exist.
Through understanding, education and information
we are finding that forests can continue to provide a livelihood
if only we alter our mindset.
Trees are living things.
And we are constantly learning more about them.
Half of our medications come from the plant kingdom.
The human body seems to recognize and be healed
by remedies derived from plants.
Our cells speak the same language.
We are of the same family.
Plants can detect the presence of parasites and predators,
their underground biomass,
Their roots, may be equal to what we see above ground.
They create networks, exchange electrical and chemical signals
and enter into cooperative arrangements.

There is so much left to discover about plant intelligence.
Do we realize that water and forests are inseparable?
Forests filter, store or digest pollutants.
They are like sponges.
Absorbing water during floods, and giving it back during droughts.
Rainfall is born of forests.
Through transpiration the water absorbed by tree roots is given off as water vapor.
The trees also produce substances that seed the clouds.
And the vapor, condensing, becomes flowing, life-giving, water.
Plant life bonds water, air, earth and sunlight.
It forms the cornerstone of the whole living ecology we all depend on.
Forests are the guardians of climate.
They store more carbon than is contained in the earth's entire atmosphere.
300 million people live in forests the world over.
1.6 billion - or nearly 1 in every 4 humans -
are directly dependent on the forest for their daily livelihood.
And 7 billion people - in other words all of us -
rely on all the benefits the forests bestow.
They produce the food we eat, the water we drink,
the air we breathe,
and the medications that maintain our health.
Take a close look at the forests.
We and the forests are one.
We have always needed them,
and today, they need us.
Let us live in brotherhood like a forest, standing tall, like a mighty tree.

Free Educational Forest Posters at www.goodplanet.org

UN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS - 2011

Directed by: Yann Arthus-Bertrand