



CANADA'S BOREAL FOREST (Smithsonian Natural History Series)

J. David Henry

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In Canada alone, the boreal forest (also called the taiga) covers more than 1.5 million square miles, fully one-third of the country and 20 percent of the entire North American continent. Terminating to the north with the treeless tundra, this region is inhabited and utilized by indigenous people and is home to unique populations of plants and animals found nowhere else on the planet. J. David Henry challenges the perception of the boreal forest as an "economic wasteland" by explaining how economically and ecologically valuable it is.

He begins by answering some common questions about the region and explains its intricate geology. An in-depth examination follows of three factors that play an enormous role in shaping the complex life of the boreal forest: snow, forest fires, and peatlands. Henry looks at the dynamics of the region's vegetation and the evolution of its animals, and discusses the fascinating ten-year predator-prey cycle of snowshoe hares and Canadian lynx, one of the most famous examples of ecological interconnection.

In Canada's boreal forest, loggers have clear cut an area the size of Great Britain. The final portion of the book examines initiatives from Scandinavia and Finland in order to offer alternatives to large-scale logging and mining, suggesting how humans can live and work in the boreal forest in a sustainable and responsible manner.

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