

## Book Review

### *ECONOMICS OF WOODLAND MANAGEMENT*

D. R. Helliwell. pp. 63. 1984. Packard Publishing Limited, 16 Lynch Down, Funtington, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 9LR, United Kingdom. ISBN 0 906527 074.

This booklet is intended for those with a non-professional interest in forestry, such as farmers, naturalists, parish councillors, ramblers or potential woodland investors. It should also be of interest to the woodland owner, but it has little new to offer the forester or forestry student. The author has managed to cram thirteen chapters into fifty-three pages of text resulting in a treatment that is often sketchy and sometimes superficial. The first chapter on photosynthesis, energy and labour, contains some pertinent comment in these energy conscious times. It is pointed out that the ratio of energy gained to energy used shows timber production to be superior to a number of agricultural crops. In addition the author feels that while there is no immediate likelihood of manpower replacing the chainsaw, the use of even larger and heavier tractors may have reached or passed its peak. This latter view is shared by many engaged in harvesting.

Chapter two attempts to relate plant growth and productivity to a number of environmental factors while chapters three and four introduce the economic component in the booklet title. Time preference and risk is discussed, but not to the extent that it will help the reader to assess the attractiveness of an investment.

Beginning with silvicultural systems in chapter five the silvicultural theme permeates through chapters ten and eleven on tree species and forestry practice with useful comment on means of avoiding windthrow and a warning not to delay thinning. In the final chapter the author remarks that "it is a little strange that the Forestry Commission still remains completely committed to the clear-felling system as its only basic silvicultural system". It is even more strange to hear advocates of this system use the same arguments in its favour that Continental foresters use for shelterwood systems.

Harvesting and timber production are treated in chapters six and ten with some useful tabular data. One must ask, however, why the author shows a price differential *per m<sup>3</sup>* in favour of more productive sites when he feels that fast growth may lead to low density material suitable only for lower grade purposes.

Chapters seven and eight deal with nature conservation and amenity, but in view of the self-imposed space constraints by the author non-market values get little more than mention. Yet he pulls a rabbit out of the hat and assumes that "the overall value of nature conservation in Britain has been given a figure of £20,000 million". The situation is, however, partially redeemed by the pertinent comment on amenity that "the general form of the forest can be more important than the actual tree species present. A spruce forest can be beautiful if appropriately managed".

The inter-relationships between forestry and other land uses are touched upon in chapter nine, while ownership and management come under chapter twelve. It is difficult to fault the author for his sketchy treatment of the complex area of grants and taxation, but one would like elaboration on why he advocates the removal of the Schedule D option except on land that has not carried commercial timber recently and why he would like an increase in liability for income tax on annual profits!

The note on the cover states that the term 'forest economics' has deliberately been avoided in the title as that term conjures up visions of complicated formulae and

economic procedures which are a mystery both to the layman and to the practising forester. While many forestry advocates might agree with this assessment of our attitude to forest economics, they will in this instance regard the inclusion of the term 'economics' in the title as pretentious. There is nothing in this book to tax the intellect of the non-economist and the quantitative economist will look in vain for some material which might relate to the title. While the tables of costs and benefits in chapter eleven and in appendix two are extremely useful, they can hardly be regarded as 'economics'. The booklet is a readable, common sense approach to woodland management and not an economic treatise. When viewed from this standpoint it will provide the non-professional reader with a useful insight into forestry.

Padraic M. Joyce.

### NOTICE

#### NINTH WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

Mexico City, June 24th-July 20th, 1985

The theme of the Congress is

"Forestry Resources in the Integral Development of Society"

Mexico possesses a wide range of forest ecosystems from arid zones, which carry more than 300 plant species, through the temperate to cold zones with more than 37 species of pines alone, to the tropical regions, which have over 320 plant species. This ecological variety has enabled Mexico to maintain an economically vigorous forestry tradition. Study tours in the last week of June and the third week in July will provide an opportunity to visit areas of major forestry interest in order to observe the natural flora, management practices, industrial activities, protection areas and wildlife.

*Information available from:*

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