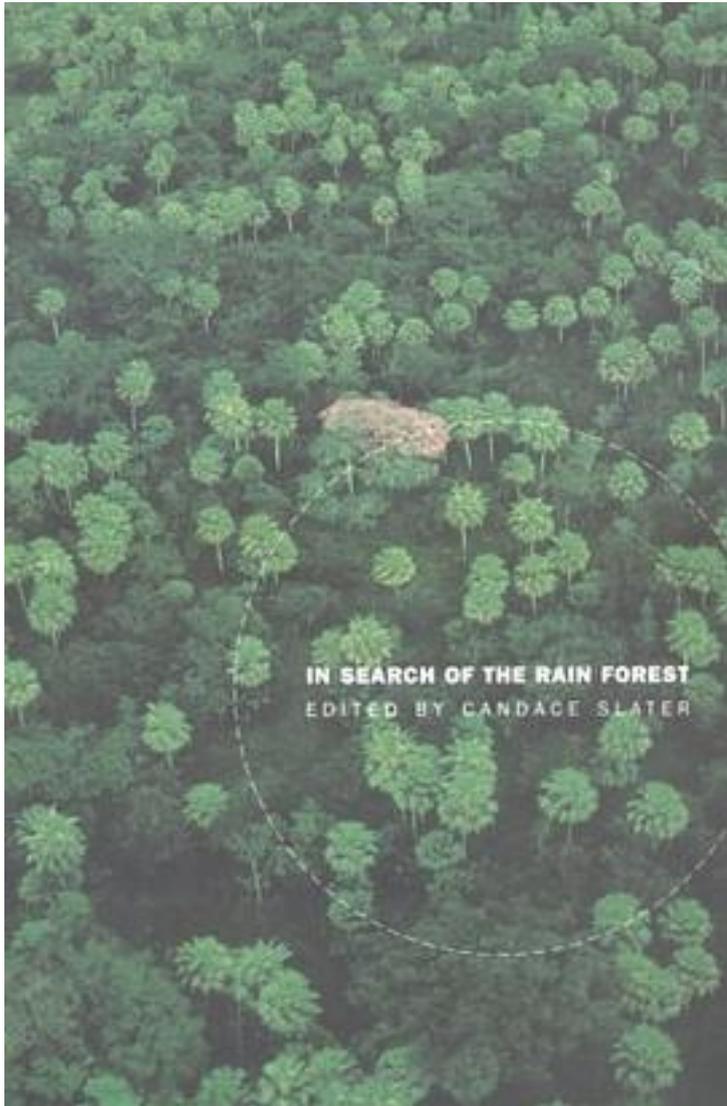


In Search of the Rain Forest (New Ecologies for the Twenty-First Century)



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The essays collected here offer important new reflections on the image and rhetoric of the rain forest. The slogan 'Save the Rain Forest!' - emblazoned on glossy posters of tall trees wreathed in vines and studded with monkeys and parrots - promotes the popular image of a wild and vulnerable rain forest. While such icons have fueled laudable rescue efforts, these essays show that in many ways they have done more harm than good. Images like these tend to conceal both the biological variety of rain forests and the diversity of their human inhabitants, the contributors contend, and they frequently obscure the specific local and global interactions that are as much a part of today's rain forests as are their array of plants and animals. Attentive to such complexities, this volume focuses on specific portrayals of rain forests and the consequences of these representations for both forest inhabitants and outsiders. From diverse disciplines - history, archeology, sociology, literature, law, and cultural anthropology - the contributors provide case studies from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. They point the way toward a search for a rain forest that is both a natural entity and a social history, an inhabited place and a shifting set of ideas. The essayists track how the image of a homogeneous, wild, yet fragile forest became fixed in the popular mind in the late twentieth century and influenced the policies of corporations, environmental groups, and governments. Such simplistic conceptions, "In Search of the Rain Forest" shows, might lead companies to tout their 'green' technologies even as they try to downplay the dissenting voices of native populations. Or they might cause a government to create a tiger reserve that displaces peaceful peasants while opening the doors to poachers and bandits. By encouraging a nuanced understanding of distinctive, constantly evolving forests with different social and natural histories, this volume suggests ways of crafting protection efforts that take into account the rain forest in all its complexity.

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