

Science Matters

By David Suzuki



Forest protection vital to stem global warming

One of the hot topics at the international climate meetings in Bonn, Germany, this week is whether or not forest-rich tropical countries should get credit for protecting their forests as a way to reduce global warming. The issue is complicated, but the answer is simple: Yes.

Here's why: Tropical countries have vast amounts of carbon stored in their forests – including the trees, the soil and the peat. If that carbon ends up in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, it will act as a heat-trapping blanket and greatly increase the growing burden of global warming – over and above problems caused by the burning of fossil fuels. It's already happening right now, with countries like Indonesia and Brazil leading the way in terms of emissions from deforestation.

When the Kyoto Protocol on global warming was drafted back in 1997 (yes, Kyoto is now 10 years old and we're still fighting about it) forest protection, or "avoided deforestation," was specifically excluded as a measurable credit in reducing emissions. That's because forests can burn down or be otherwise compromised and those emissions might go up into the atmosphere anyway.

However, evidence over the past decade has shown that forest destruction, in particular tropical deforestation, is a critical source of the heat-trapping gases that cause global warming. In fact, a paper published recently in the journal *Science* reported that up to 20 per cent of human-produced greenhouse gas emissions throughout the 1990s came from logging in tropical forests. What's more, if we don't find ways to slow the rate of tropical deforestation, the paper reports that we will send up as much carbon into the atmosphere in coming years as all the world's fossil fuel combustion does over an entire decade.

Questions over the permanency of tropical forests as carbon sinks are certainly legitimate. But answers to some of those questions have been found in the past 10 years. For example, an early study found that business-as-usual increases in carbon dioxide levels would raise temperatures in the Amazon to the extent that the forests would die off, releasing much of the carbon dioxide they were supposed to be storing. This study led many to believe that relying on tropical-forest conservation would be risky from a carbon-storage perspective.

But since that early paper, 10 of the 11 studies done on the issue of tropical forests for the UN-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have concluded that tropical forests aren't as sensitive to temperature change as originally thought. This means that, although their ability to store carbon will gradually go down over time, we can expect tropical forests to continue to be carbon sinks right through this century.

Obviously, then, in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels to combat global warming, we also need to avoid deforestation. According to the *Science* paper, cutting tropical deforestation in half by the middle part of this century will reduce heat-trapping emissions by 12 per cent of what will ultimately be necessary to keep our climate stable and avoid dangerous global warming.

Developing countries will be the hardest hit by global warming, as they do not have the infrastructure to deal with increasing extreme weather events, rising sea levels and other effects of a changing climate. In many developing countries, deforestation is also the greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, it's in the best interests of these nations to protect their forests.

International delegates at the meetings in Bonn this week will decide if tropical forest protection should be included as a form of emissions reduction for the next phase of the Kyoto Protocol. Given the amount of carbon stored in our tropical forests and what's at stake, this is not really an option – it's a must.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY: The birthday tea was well attended at the Acton Seniors Centre last week. Celebrating their birthdays were Tell Connelly, Arline Coultrup, Dorothy Rognvaldson, Marie Anderson, Marj MacFarlane, Cecile Tremblay, Annie Saunders, Shirley McLean, Susie Blanchet-Haffey, Betty Leonard and Anna Arnold. -Julie Conroy photo

Now I know why they are called MANicures

In the past, the hair salon and the 'spa' had been a woman's place. It was our place to escape being a wife or a mother or from work. It was a place that maybe some would see as frivolous spending, yet for those who ventured there could never put a price on the journey into being pampered.

I love going to get my hair done and even more, I love love love getting my nails done. There is nothing better than going into a nail place or spa and getting a manicure and pedicure. The thing I love the best besides being made to look pretty is the glorious pedicure massage chairs. I love to pick the different massages making all my back aches go away while the heat tends to my muscles that are suffering from all the garden and yard work.

Last week, I headed off after work to the new nail place in town. It had all the regular perks including the glorious pedicure massage chairs. As I was quickly being lost into a trance of relaxation of the shiatsu massage I had chosen, I couldn't help but notice a man who had come into the salon. I had assumed he was picking up a gift certificate for his significant other. I was surprised to find out he was there for himself and wanted a manicure.

I was surprised, but not a lot as I had seen a few men before getting manicures. I had even sent the Dude for a 'surprise' one for one of



By
Angela Tyler

our first Valentines. I in hindsight should have told him about it first. He had just finished helping his friend paint his boat and he showed up with his hands covered in boat paint. In the end, I found out giving a mechanic a spa manicure with a paraffin wax treatment was not the best idea and his hands were so slippery afterwards he couldn't even turn the door knob.

Soon, I was beside the man in the next nail station. He was looking very cowboy-ish and very well groomed. He had salt and pepper hair neatly styled and fashionably matched all in black and tan. At first I thought it was nice he was concerned about his nails. Then it started to get a little odd.

He rolled his chair closer to mine as I was getting a new set of fake nails. "Have you had them long? Did you get them because you bite your nails?" he asked me. I told him I don't bite my nails yet I got them for a vacation in November and kept them. Then he told me the oddest thing. He was a mechanic, like the Dude. Only he was a mechanic on a farm and he had bitten his nails, so in order to prevent him from

biting his nails he got fake nails. He told me his fake nails lasted three weeks and at that point he bit one fake nail off and he was totally addicted again and bite all his fake nails off. At that point I had no idea what to say or how to respond. I had visions of the Dude going to a nail spa and asking for fake nails and somehow it just wasn't working. "So, how often do you have to get them filled?" he asked me. The questions continued with what kind of fake nails I had and different things. It was a really odd experience. With that he was off to get a paraffin wax treatment. The problem was he dipped his hands to far in and covered half his arms wax. He would soon live to regret that as after they had to pluck the wax from his arm hair.

Soon, the cowboy had left. As I continued to try to enjoy my escape, he suddenly returned. Out of the blue, he plopped himself down in the chair he had sat in, without the nail technician, grabbed an emery board and started to file down the skin on the side of his thumb. After about five minutes he stood up and said good-bye again. At that point I wasn't the only one shaking their head in confusion. Just when we thought it was safe something happened.

As I looked out the front window, I was drawn to a familiar type of

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