



*forests*

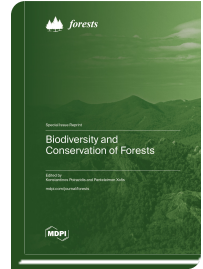


*Special Issue Reprint*

## **Biodiversity and Conservation of Forests**

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Forests are extremely valuable ecosystems that are associated with a number of ecosystem services of significant importance for human wellbeing, with biodiversity being among the most highly desired of them. However, global forests currently face multifarious and often contradicting challenges. In Europe, North America, and elsewhere, the abandonment of land, which is associated with socioeconomic changes during the 20th century, provides an opportunity for degraded or even damaged forests to recover and reoccupy their pre-human areas. While this may result in a significant increase in forest cover and a decrease in forest fragmentation, it may also lead to an increased degree of landscape homogeneity with negative impacts on local biodiversity. If the extensive deforestation of the globally important tropical forests and land conversion of agriculture continues to occur, it will threaten the long-term sustainability of these biodiversity hotspots. This deforestation often occurs at large spatial scales without necessarily ensuring significant economic benefits, while the loss of habitats and biodiversity is undoubtedly huge. All the above issues stress the need for sustainable forest management and for reconciling land management and socioeconomic development with the need for conserving the global biodiversity at all levels from genetic variants, including species, populations and ecosystems. In this Special Issue, we present a collection of state-of-the-art studies on various aspects of forest biodiversity conservation and protection.



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