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A photograph of a forest scene. Sunlight streams through the trees, creating visible light rays (crepuscular rays) that illuminate the forest floor. The ground is covered with fallen autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and brown. The trees are dark, and the overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

PORTFOLIO:
Minden Pictures
International
Year of Forests

PORTFOLIO

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FORESTS ARE MORE THAN TREES AT MINDEN PICTURES

Miriam A. Stein



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Before European settlement, forests covered nearly one billion acres, or more than 50 percent, of what is now the United States. Today, about one-third of the nation is forested. The United States Forest Service defines 20 major forest cover types in the United States but the country boasts over 500 tree species, creating a diversity of landscapes. One such landscape is the Hoh Rainforest in Olympic National Park, Washington, shown here boasting mossy big-leaf maple trees.



Rainforests—this one in the Danum Valley Conservation Area in Borneo—are responsible for 28 percent of the world's oxygen turnover, the lush green foliage processing it from carbon dioxide through photosynthesis. The removal of carbon dioxide from the earth's atmosphere helps maintain an important yet delicate balance, the disturbance of which is commonly referred to as climate change. In addition to their global carbon sequestration services, rainforests are valuable sources of income on a more local level. Ecotourism and the trade of sustainable products benefit national economies and hundreds of native inhabitants. As of 2007, almost 100 such tribes live off the land deep within rainforests without significant contact with outside civilization.

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Minden Pictures is the first place I look for anything related to nature, so I wasn't surprised when the staff told me that 2011 is the International Year of Forests. Larry Minden started the agency 21 years ago, stocking it with world-renowned photographers, partnering with excellent international counterparts and keeping Minden Pictures alive when other stock houses were being absorbed by industry giants. As a whole, the entire staff at Minden is responsible for providing the photo, advertising and editorial community with the highest quality nature photography.

To compile a portfolio about forests using Minden photography was difficult due to the sheer wealth of options. The United Nation's goal in naming International Year of the Forests, is to raise awareness about issues and subjects pertaining to the "conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests." All types you wonder? Forests come in a multitude of classifications based

on geographic location and/or dominant tree species, creating a shocking variety separate and apart from what most people think of as "green, brown and autumn," colors. It seems there isn't a universally accepted system of global forest classification, but terms that one might recognize include rain, mangrove, broad-leaf, dry, deciduous, coniferous, tropical, temperate, old-growth, boreal, montane, cloud and more.

It is not the types of trees or forests that the United Nations wishes to bring awareness to but rather the issues surrounding forests and how they relate to the health of the planet and its human and non-human inhabitants. The official United Nations resolution cited the support of initiatives that include the Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity and numerous Summits on Sustainable Development. In the declaration, the General Assembly aimed to strengthen the sustainable management and sustainable development as well as conservation of all forests for the benefit of current and future generations. The designation was celebrated with a launch at United Nations headquar-



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The Amazon, the world's largest tropical rainforest, represents more than half of the planet's remaining rainforests. Seen here is Coca Falls on the Quijos River. The Amazon is home to hundreds of indigenous tribes of people and constitutes the largest collection of living plants and animal species in the world. The rainforest is species-rich; 1,200 new species were discovered in the last decade and new species are discovered regularly. An important carbon sink for the planet, rapid deforestation threatens the rainforest's ability to absorb carbon from the earth's atmosphere.

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Everything is intricately connected in the Amazon River Basin. As the world's second longest river and largest by waterflow, the Amazon River supports the rainforest so necessary for the planet's survival. The Amazon river dolphin, affectionately known as the pink river dolphin, elegantly navigates the Amazon's mangroves and floodplains. Threatened by habitat loss, river traffic, pollution and fishing, the dolphin's official IUCN status is ever-changing but the species is considered endangered by some conservation organizations.



ters in New York City, an international film festival and an impressive calendar of events scheduled almost daily worldwide.

While everyone has heard of climate change, some terms that might surprise people as being related to forests include desertification, deforestation, bushmeat trade, development, mining, river sedimentation, coral reef health, human poverty, survival of indigenous cultures, shrimp farming, fisheries collapse, global outbreak of disease, cancer-curing agents, biodiversity loss, primate orphanages, civil war, landslides, flooding and many more. Most impressive is that Minden Pictures has photos that could illustrate every one of the aforementioned subjects. Icing on the cake is that Minden's detailed captions could give anyone a cursory understanding of not only what is featured in the photo but how it pertains to environmental issues. This makes Minden not only a great resource for picture professionals in the field of natural history but anyone looking for an interesting visual story. And not just about trees. ●



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32 China, the planet's most populous country, is estimated to have between 15-18 percent forest cover, declining rapidly due to population and industrial growth. Such decline threatens not only China's biodiversity but its human population. Desertification, erosion of farmland and loss of forest products all result from deforestation. Concurrently, endangered species such as the giant panda and golden snub-nosed monkey (female and young shown here) suffer the effects of habitat loss and forest fragmentation. China has launched reforestation efforts and the decline has actually slowed in recent years. Whether the growing country can strike a peaceful balance with its forests remains to be seen.



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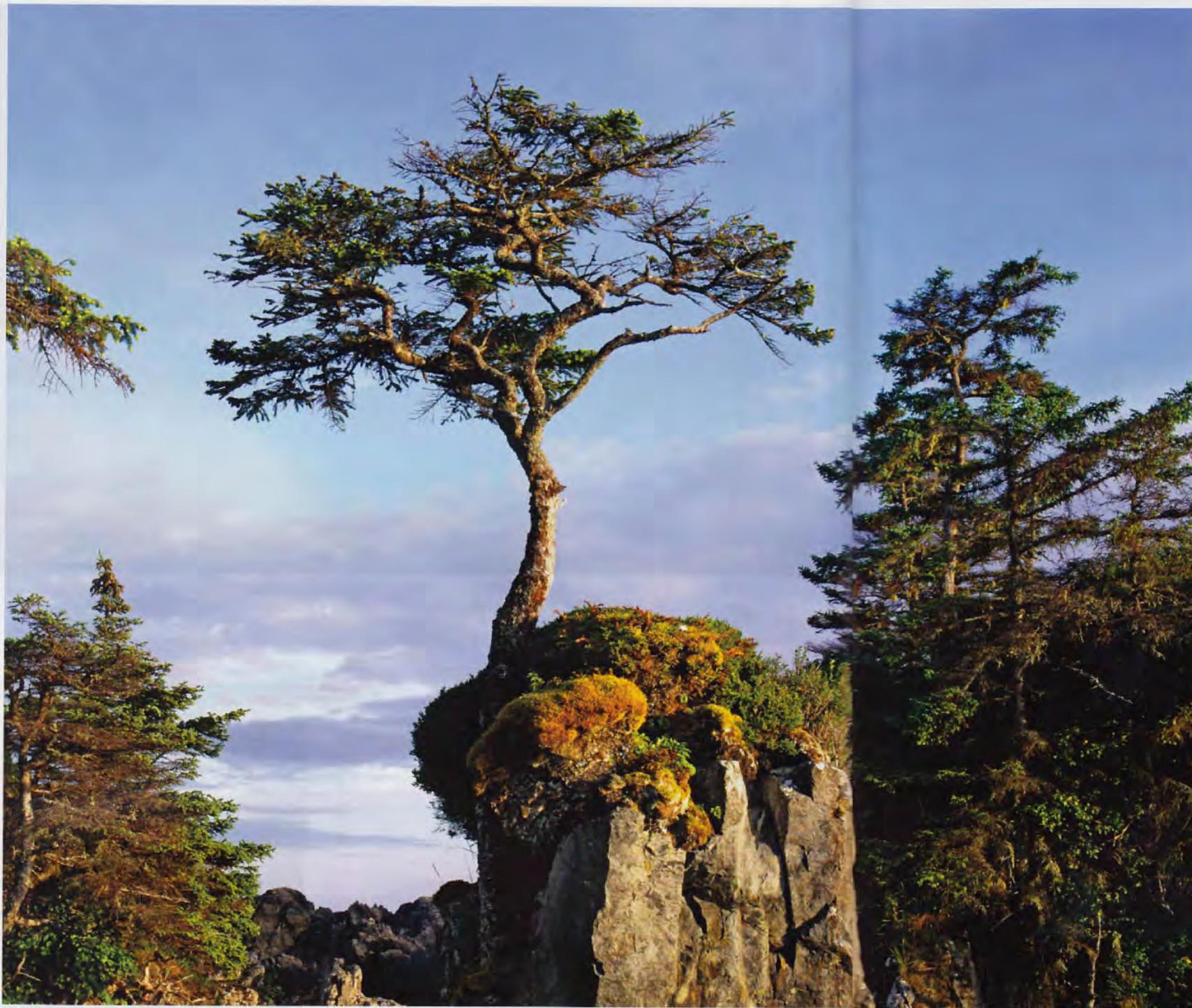
33 Forests are home to 80 percent of our planet's terrestrial biodiversity. The isolation of islands such as Madagascar produces thousands of species of plants, mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles that can be found nowhere else on earth. For a country that is desperate to develop, forests make for an easy target. Madagascar has sought the help of developed nations and various organizations to reduce its dependence on the logging that threatens the country's unique biodiversity. Some of Madagascar's most interesting inhabitants include non-primate species such as colorful chameleons and frogs, like the Malagasy web-footed frog shown here, and chameleons.

At least 80 percent of the developed world's diet originated in the tropical rainforest. This includes fruits, nuts, spices and luxuries such as coffee and chocolate. West African countries are responsible for the production of 70 percent of the world's cocoa and the increased presence of "eco-friendly" chocolate companies has benefited many struggling communities. Sustainable practices of traditional cacao farming conserves forest biodiversity, while at the same time benefiting the livelihoods of cacao farmers. Here, a boy helps with the cacao harvest in Nigeria.

(Opposite page) During a period when Australia is plagued by drought and fire, Great Otway National Park remains a safe haven for a diversity of plant and animal species. Protected from logging and urbanization, the park's eucalyptus trees, shown here in early morning fog, support a strong population of Australia's charismatic koala. While their specialized diet and need for large foraging corridors threatens their survival in other parts of Australia, Great Otway's forests remain a koala stronghold.



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A single tree in the largest national forest in the United States can certainly make an impression. Tongass, Earth's largest remaining temperate rainforest, covers most of southeast Alaska, encompassing upwards of 18 million acres of forest, islands, mountains, glaciers, lakes fjords and muskeg. Tongass is home to 75,000 people who are dependent on the land for their livelihoods and dozens of unique species including five species of salmon and wolves that have learned to eat salmon.



One might picture bustling cities and landmarks in Europe but there survives a fair amount of forest cover throughout the European Union, with roughly 70 percent of it remaining in Sweden, Finland, France and Germany. European forests provide habitat to many rare species, including the European wolf and the European bison. Many countries in Europe have shown great creativity in preserving what's left of their forest inhabitants, providing road underpasses for endangered turtles and tennis ball nests for declining dormouse populations. Looking up into a leafless canopy in Jasmund National Park in Germany demonstrates that forests can be beautiful even in winter.



Not all forests are lush green and not everything important to a forest is found up in the trees. The majority of endangered Bengal tigers are found in India's forests where they roam large territories in search of food and mates; this tiger was photographed in Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh. The distribution and ecology of tigers puts them in direct conflict with the humans living in the planet's second most populous country. India's people rely on forest resources and products for their livelihoods but also clear forested areas for agriculture and development, leaving India's forests highly fragmented.