

What is your woodlot worth?

J. Piers Maclaren. *How much wood has your woodlot got?*

Reviewed by Mark Bloomberg

Piers Maclaren has the rare ability to write about technical forestry subjects in a style that is readable to both the forestry professional and to the layperson alike.

His previous publications *The Radiata Pine Growers Manual* and *The Environmental Effects of Planted Forests in New Zealand* have found a place in University and polytechnic libraries, and on the bookshelves of many forestry professionals.

His latest publication is directed primarily at farm foresters and other owners of small woodlots. In the authors own words, "this book has been written to show (such) non-specialists how to estimate for themselves the volume and value of wood in a stand of trees". This is a very ambitious undertaking. Foresters acquire an intuitive understanding of forest mensuration after years of field work and study. Because of this, they generally underestimate the difficulties lay people have with forest mensuration concepts.

For this reason, it appears that this publication may prove too technical for its intended audience. For the non-mathematical layperson, the sections on sampling design and volume calculation will probably be too daunting.

However, even if this publication fails to reach its intended audience of farm foresters and small woodlot owners, it should prove a valuable textbook for forestry students, and an excellent general reference for professional forest managers. It has a number of features which make it particularly easy to read and to use. It follows a good logical sequence in its arrangement of chapters-starting with measurement of basic stand parameters such as stocked area, stems per hectare, basal area per hectare and tree height. From there it progresses through sampling design and data recording, through to the calculation of recoverable volumes by log types. Finally, the discussion concludes with the difficult subject of stand valuation and accounting for time and risk in valuation.

Throughout, the reader's understanding is aided by the use of numerous diagrams and colour photographs. The author's prose is, as usual, clear and a delight to read. And as usual, he has taken a commonsense approach to technical issues. In some cases, this may set him at variance to the purists; however, when expressing his own opinions, the author is always at pains to identify them as such. My own feeling is that a dose of Maclaren clarity is a good antidote when you are suffering from a bout of the "academics".

Quibbles, I have but a few. Including a list of suppliers of mensuration equipment and services in the appendices may possibly be a good idea. However, the list is incomplete, and is likely to become out of date in a fairly short time.

The other main deficiency relates to the calculation of

stand parameters from plot measurements. For some reason, emphasis is given to the calculation of basal area and stocking from unbounded plots. The more common case of calculation of bounded plot parameters is not discussed in depth, and really requires some worked examples and diagrams to explain this bread and butter aspect of forest mensuration.

In summary, this book deserves a place on the forester's bookshelf, alongside the NZIF Handbook and the earlier FRI Bulletin on forest mensuration by Goulding and Lawrence. It is attractively presented, readable, and collates information from a wide range of sources into a single well-structured document. Notwithstanding its title, it will prove useful to most people working in the forest management and harvesting industries, not just those dealing with small woodlots.

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