

BOOK REVIEW

THE USE OF LANDSAT DATA IN FORESTRY

Edited by J. Cihlar

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Since the first of a series of five LANDSAT satellites was launched from the Vandenberg Air Force Base in California in 1972, there has been a daunting plethora of papers, articles, and books dealing with the handling and uses of the LANDSAT imagery. Here, at last, is a book which summarises much of this information and presents it in the form of seven major invited papers devoted to LANDSAT applications in forestry.

The papers are easy to read and informative and I found it encouraging to see that these authors, unlike some others, are not afraid to write the truth about LANDSAT, i.e., that it has limited application in forestry (always assuming you can get hold of an up-to-date image – or is that just a New Zealand problem?).

The authors give some clear accounts of the LANDSAT system, discuss the state of the art with regard to the techniques involved in processing the MSS data, and describe several studies which have been done to investigate the usefulness of LANDSAT in forestry. However, what I found of greater interest were the cases where LANDSAT has moved from the object of research to the operational tool – it's just unfortunate that there are so few of them.

Foresters from the tropics may be disappointed with the book's emphasis on higher latitude applications. I suspect that this is due to a paucity of good published work from these areas rather than an oversight by the authors. The result is unfortunate, however, because it is in these climes where, cloud permitting, satellite imagery could have an important role to play.

If you think that LANDSAT imagery might possibly have a place in your forestry project, study pages 18–23 where the general capability of LANDSAT for various forestry requirements is presented. If you then still think that LANDSAT has something to offer, buy the book and learn from the experience of those who have worked with the system in North America and Europe.

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