

Dream The Forest Wild

How Children Saved a Rainforest

By Sue Memhard

with
Jim Crisp

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To the children

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with Jim Crisp

*ONCE, there was a forest home
Tangled under a treetop dome
Deep and green as you've ever seen
Noisy and wild as you can dream.*

It grew on a mountain of gentle height
In a warm little country, happy and bright.
Rain came down for months and weeks
While a foggy mist hugged trees and creeks.

The trees reached higher than you could see
Their branches filled the sky so free!
There were more wild things than anyone could find!
If you open up your heart, you can see them in your mind.....

Can you see the motmots flying through the trees?

Can you find the quetzal as he shimmers in the breeze?

Hear the painted parrots scolding the air!

Look for hummingbirds hovering everywhere.

Down below, an anteater snorts up his lunch

While coatimundis hurry by in a bunch.

Watch for big snakes slumbering.....and small ones slithering.

Find tree possums scurrying, rushing and dithering.

See the kinkajou hanging from canopy heights

Dream of jaguars prowling in cool damp nights.

Would you like to try and count the plants?

There might be as many as ants!

Bromeliades, heliconias and orchids are three

And feathery ferns are as tall as the trees.

Now can you imagine as you look around

Millions of dragonflies, making no sound?

Or billions of butterflies twirling down?

Or trillions of ants..... scrambling over the ground?

And if you look among the trees, you'll find people too:

Families, and farms, and children like you.

Oh, it was a wonderful place!

For all living things it was wild, and safe.

It was a rainforest, tall and proud

A rainforest jungle in the clouds.....

Now as years passed by and the families grew larger

They needed their fields to stretch out farther.

So the farmers began to clear more ground:

They started to take the forest trees down.

(It seemed a good idea at first: the forest was so big, and deep

Who would ever need *all those trees* to keep?)

But after awhile...things began to change

Some folks noticed that the forest looked strange.

Those trees were disappearing—fast

They could see that the forest would not last.

So they formed a group-- with all agreed:

They would save the forest that was in great need.

They traveled far and traveled wide

They called for help to keep the trees alive.

They told about the forest home

Tangled under a treetop dome...

They told about the monkeys, swinging from the heights

They whispered of ocelots in cool damp nights...

They spoke with love of a forest proud:

A rainforest far away in the clouds.

At a little school in Sweden, children raised their hands:

They said “We want to help save the land!”

So all the students there sold cookies and cake

To rescue the forest before it was too late.

They saved some trees – and that’s not all...

Soon children *everywhere* heard the call:

They heard the sound of hummingbird wings...

They dreamed the song a rainforest sings.

The children said “We want to help too!”

And Jim the Forest Keeper answered “Yes please do!”

He and the group were excited and thrilled:

What if the trees belonged to the children of the world?

And so, from countries across the land

Children sent money, so that folks would understand

That *saving the forest was their dream*

And the group and all the children were now a team.

Now some folks doubted that this could be

They didn’t dream the wild things living free.

They didn’t see a quetzal shining in the breeze...

They doubted *children* could save the trees.

What do you think? Yes! They were wrong:

Amazing things happened..... and it didn't take long.

More than forty countries joined the team

And thousands of children dreamed the Dream.

From England, Japan and Sweden.....USA to Ecuador

Children sent *two million dollars*

--and then sent more.....and more!

(This had never, ever *ever* happened before.)

And remember the farmers with large families?

Well, they decided to help save the trees,

And learned to better farm their land

As they joined with the children in taking a stand.

Can you begin to guess?

With the help of the farmers, the teachers and the rest

The Dream came true for every child

The children saved that rainforest wild.

*El Bosque Eterno de los Niños (BEN) became its name
(The Children's Eternal Rainforest means forever untamed).*

Now *you* are the future of the beautiful BEN --

Will you dream the forest wild. . . . and tell a friend?

Tell them to imagine a forest home

Tangled under a treetop dome

Deep and green as you've ever seen

Noisy and wild as you can dream.....

* * * * *

And Now

The children's dream is bright today.

People come to walk the land from far away.

Maybe YOU will visit the tall tangled trees

Fall in love with the cloud forest snuggled in the breeze.

Look up! You might find a quetzal preening

Funny umbrella birds puffing and singing.

Howler monkeys swinging, noisy and low

A spectacled owl swooping below.

Look around -- to orchids opening quick

Rainbow beetles burrowing, shiny and thick!

Tapirs browsing in the busy brush

A three-toed sloth not *at all* in a rush.

Follow a waterfall's rumble and splash
It sparkles through the trees -- you're there at last!
A nightingale wren sings a high sweet song
While daylight softensbut before it's gone

Listen—there's a whisper through the swirling mist, to you:

"The Children's Eternal Rainforest is your home too."

* * *

THE END

of our story

THE BEGINNING

of your story

A Note from the Forest Keeper

EL Bosque Eterno de los Niños (BEN) was founded in 1988 by the Monteverde Conservation League (“the group”) in Monteverde, Costa Rica. There were countless numbers of people who became involved: League members and workers, teachers, schools, scores of volunteers, the Monteverde community, and thousands of children from more than 40 countries mobilized, united in the Dream of saving the forest.

A Brief History

In 1951, a group of North American Quakers settled near a beautiful, remote cloud forest to establish a non-violent community in a peaceful friendly country –Costa Rica. The area they settled in was called Monteverde.

Many years later, the communities around Monteverde had grown, and rainforest was being destroyed to make way for more farms. The Monteverde Conservation League was formed in 1986 to protect the forest that, as the story tells, was “disappearing fast”.

In 1987, the children of the little Fagervik school in Sweden and their teacher Eha Kern contacted MCL board member Richard Laval wanting to help save the rainforest. (Bates College Biologist and MCL member Sharon Kinsman had given a talk to Eha’s class about Monteverde, and the forest that needed protection). In September 1988, with the promise of donations from the Swedish children, the MCL negotiated to buy a beautiful rainforest area of approx 1500 acres, to be named the Swedish Children’s Rainforest ([Barnens Regnskog](#)). A short time later, Tina Joliffe of the [Children’s Tropical Forest, U.K.](#) contacted us. In quick succession came Kazumi Fukunaga of the Japanese children’s rainforest group [Nippon Kodomo no Jungle](#), and Sharon, who had founded a Children’s Rainforest US. group to help. Bruce Calhoun and other science teachers of SAVE the Rainforest, Inc., Friends in Unity with Nature (Quakers), and [Kinderregenwald Deutschland of Germany](#), also joined the movement.

Donations began coming in from as far afield as Peru, South Africa, Australia, France and Malaysia, and the Dream of one rainforest that

belonged to all the world's children was born --The First International Children's Rainforest.

Schools across the globe held bake sales, put on plays, and sold tickets to various events to raise money for the rainforest. **In the end, children sent nearly 3 million dollars, and 64,000 acres of rainforest was eventually saved and protected.** (note: after some land swaps with the government and other rainforest conservation groups, the official total was reduced to 54,000 acres by 1995.) The project took 3 years...a very short time to realize such a large dream.

I gave the rainforest the name Bosque Eterno de los Niños (BEN) for three reasons:

1. to honor Bosqueterno, SA --an association set up by the original Monteverde Quaker community to save their watershed.
2. **to honor the children who believed in the Dream. They cared about land, trees and wild creatures most of them had never seen, and they easily understood that the rainforest "was their home" too. They -and the children like YOU who are keeping the dream alive -- are the eternal heroes of the story.**
3. to emphasize an eternal commitment to future generations to guard our natural heritage.

What's Happening Now

Despite persistent challenges in protecting the forest from illegal hunting, poaching and cutting, the BEN is still thriving and growing wild. This is made possible by the ongoing dedication of children, teachers, parents and rainforest organizations worldwide. Especially the sister network of MCLUS, Barnens Regnskog, Children's Tropical Forest UK, Nippon Kodomo no Jungle and Kinderregenwald Deutschland is pivotal in keeping the forest safe.

NOW YOU CAN HELP SAVE RAINFOREST

There is a new land purchase campaign to expand the BEN in nearby forest areas, which will help protect its boundaries for the future.

How can you help save more forest for the BEN?

Learn about the BEN, and other rainforests, and spread the word about how important they all are to our future. Ask your teachers if you can do this in your school.

Join the **Kids' Book Project** to illustrate your own ***Dream the Forest Wild***.
(www.dreamtheforestwild.com)

Send donations to the MCL at:

The Monteverde Conservation League (MCL)
The Children's Eternal Rain Forest
Apartado 124 - 5655 Monte Verde, Puntarenas
Costa Rica, America Central
Website: www.acmcr.org

OR (US tax-deductible) donations to the Monteverde Conservation League-US:

Rachel Crandell
Monteverde Conservation League US
1128 Weidman Road,
Town & Country, MO 63017-8445
USA
Website: www.mclus.org.

Remember to mention the Dream The Forest Wild Kids' Book Project if sending donations.

Visit the BEN, and experience the magic of the forest in person.

The trees and wild forest creatures thank you.

Jim Crisp
MCL Director 1988 -1991

Acknowledgments

Prior to the Children's Rainforest campaign, the Monteverde Conservation League (MCL) had been buying land in the threatened Peñas Blancas Valley which is located on the Atlantic slope below the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve. Wolf Guidon, Bob Law (both resident Quakers), and biologist Bill Haber (first MCL director) had been buying threatened rainforest since 1986. I took over from Bill in June of 1988. Donations to save this area of forest were raised through the fundraising efforts of biologists Alan Pounds, Adrian Forsyth, Michael and Patricia Fogden, and many volunteers. Approximately 10,000 acres had been bought and the Peñas Blancas land purchase campaign was coming to an end when Eha and Bernd Kern and the Swedish Fagervik school contacted Richard Laval about buying some rainforest with donations from the children.

Like you, the children who saved a rainforest for future generations are forever heroes.

And -- BEN could not have been created without the help of scores of other people working behind the scenes. To name just a few who haven't been mentioned: Cynthia Echeverria was MCL sub-director, Carol E. Leiton was Office Manager, and Omar Coto was Director of Forest Protection. (Omar took my place after I left the MCL in June 1991). Lisa Wirtanen and Faye Hadley kept us in touch with the many Children's Rainforest groups springing up around the world. Willow Zuchowski (board member and artist) and Ree Sheck published our newsletters and were our public face. Wilford "Wolf" Guidon guided me for many miles and hours on steep winding mountain trails, as we identified areas of forest to purchase. I will always be grateful to the efforts of our Board of Directors (especially Teri Matelson) and an amazing staff including Guillermo Vargas (director of environmental education), Marco Venicio "Semi" Zamora (director of reforestation) ---all accepting 18+ hour work days, 7 days a week for three years, to help make the Children's Dream a reality.

A heartfelt thanks to all.

Jim Crisp
MCL Director 1988 -1991

ABOUT THE ANIMALS, TREES AND PLANTS

This is the page for some information about the critters, trees and plants found in *Dream The Forest Wild*, as well as some basic facts about rainforests. You can keep track of what you've learned here!