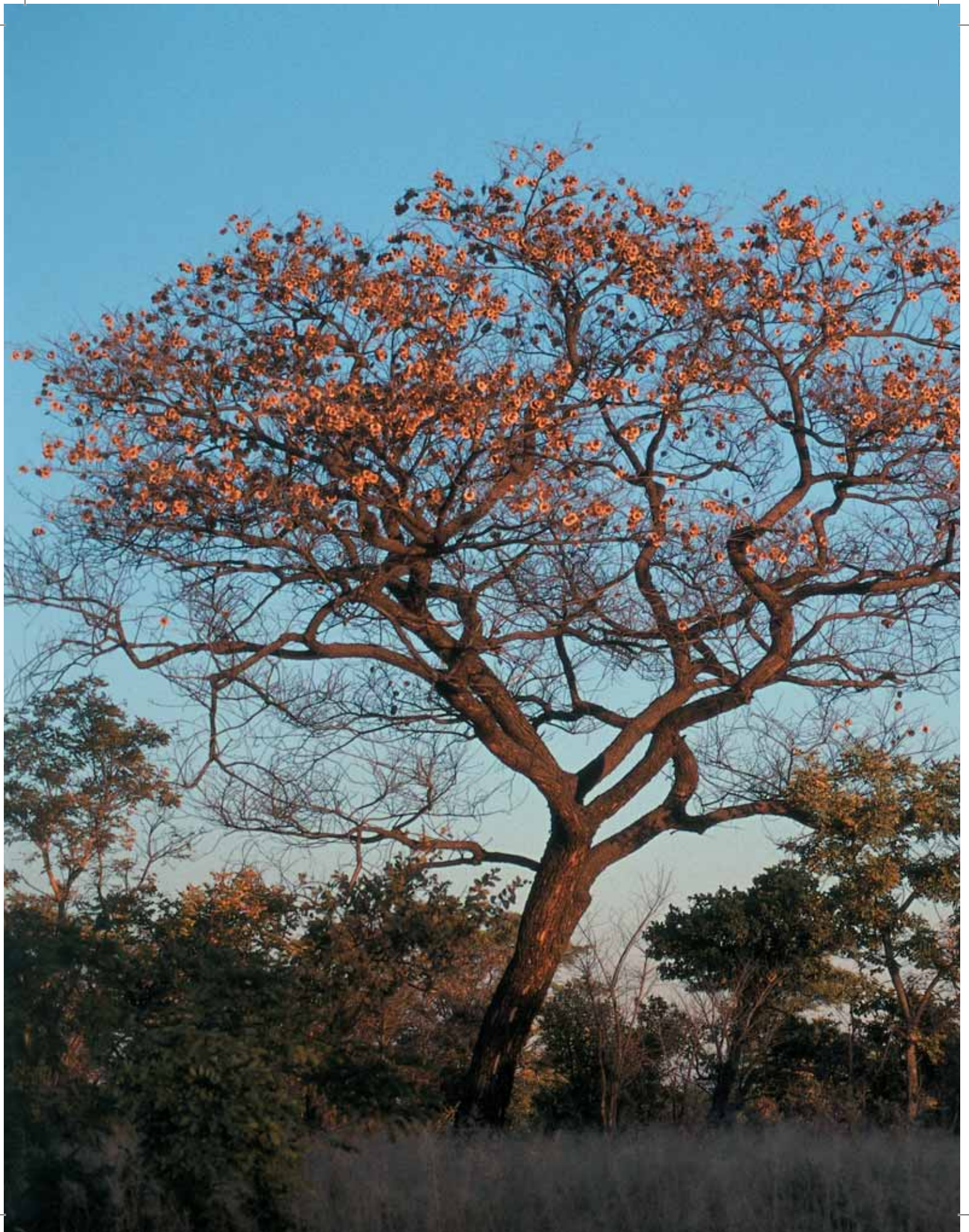
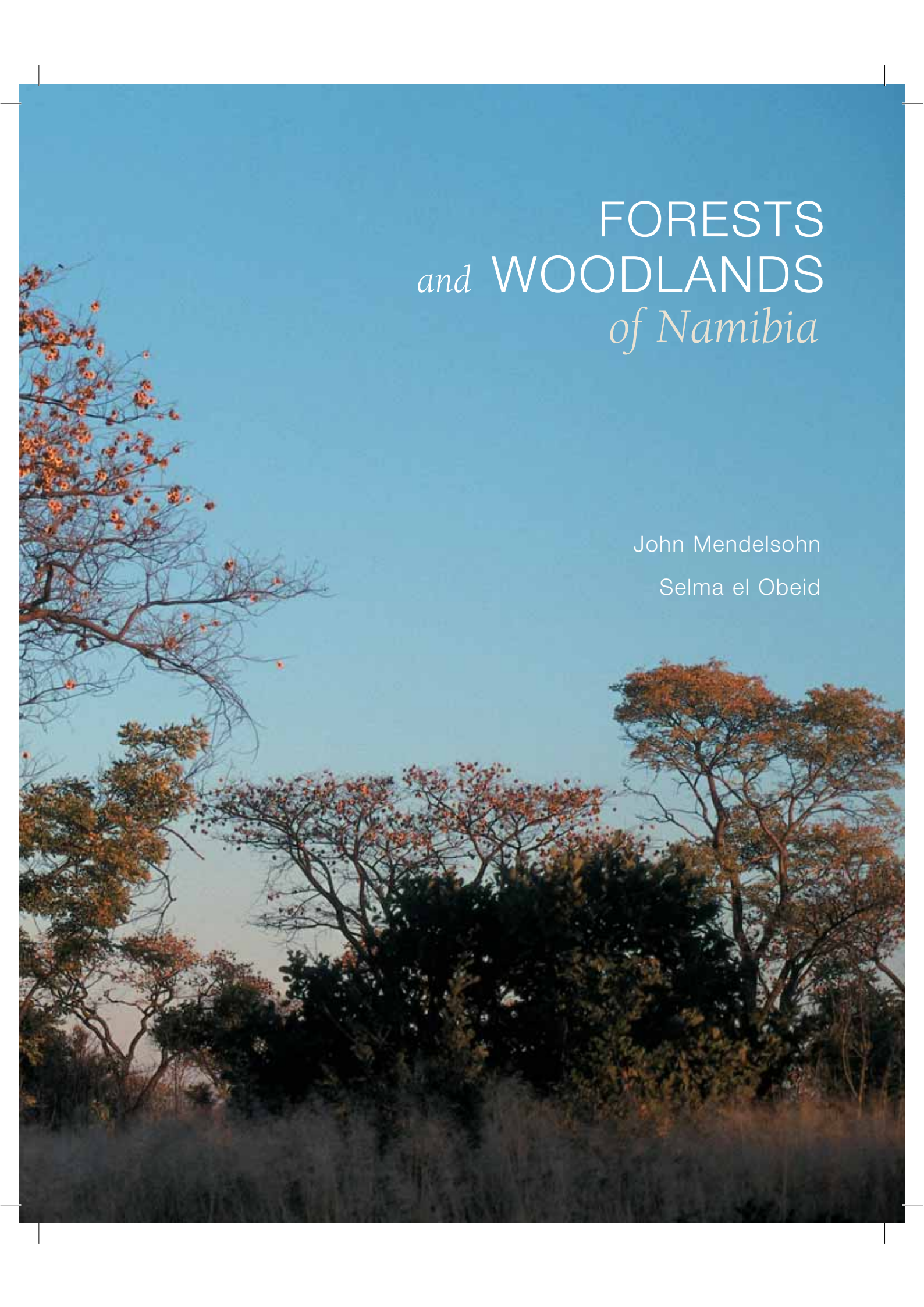


FORESTS
and WOODLANDS
of Namibia



A publication for the Directorate of Forestry
Ministry of Agriculture, Water & Forestry



The background of the cover is a photograph of a savanna landscape. The sky is a clear, bright blue. In the foreground and middle ground, there are several trees with sparse, brownish-orange foliage, suggesting a dry season. The trees vary in size and shape, with some having more rounded canopies and others being more spindly. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

FORESTS *and* WOODLANDS *of Namibia*

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PREFACE

"Trees not only provide wood and non-wood products but also provide numerous environmental goods and services such as the conservation of biological diversity and mitigation of climate change, and they have a key role in alleviating poverty and improving food security." *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

Forests and Woodlands of Namibia is about trees and shrubs, the organisms that help to shape and enrich the environment and provide much value to the country.

Seen separately, the organisms are trees or shrubs, but collectively they form habitats known as forests, woodlands, savannas or shrublands. In turn, habitats are areas that provide people, livestock and other animals with resources which contribute greatly to their livelihoods.

One role of this book is to illustrate the major processes that cause Namibian woodland habitats to be the way they are. The book also describes the many ways in which woody plants are used, and the ways we hope to manage and conserve woody habitats.

The idea of woodlands – especially forests – in Namibia may seem odd to many people, particularly those who live in the more arid southern regions where there are few trees. It may also seem peculiar to people who know the splendour of tall tropical forests in Africa, central America or Asia, or to those who have enjoyed the vast expanses of boreal forests in the temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. But, as this book will show, Namibia has forests and woodlands that are every bit as important as those much bigger wooded habitats. Their importance lies in the goods and services they provide in a local context for Namibia itself. In a country that is generally arid, the value of each individual tree is relatively greater than in a wetter, more wooded environment. As

perennial plants in dry areas, trees are more buffered against drought and fire than other plants. Their resource values are thus more dependable. Trees in Namibia provide wood and non-timber forest products to hundreds of thousands of people, and they support the lives and existence of browsing mammals, other vertebrate animals and countless species of insects and other invertebrates. If these statements seem abstract, a more powerful way to think of the value of trees is to visualize what would happen if they were removed from a landscape. Among many losses, there would be no shade, browsing animals would be gone, most birds would lack places to nest and roost, firewood would have to be collected elsewhere, and the scenery would be much bleaker.



Think of these and other impacts, and the value of each tree becomes clear. But too few of us care to think enough. Day in and day out, we take indigenous trees, woodlands and forests for granted. Few of us bother about bush fires killing trees or the clearing of trees for crops. When a tributary is dammed little thought is given to the effects on riverine trees downstream. And ideas that trees might provide essential medicines in the future or help reduce the effects of global warming are unknown or remote to most people.

However, all these issues and potentials are real and vital, important enough to concern all Namibians, and it is for this audience that this book is intended. Woodlands provide Namibians with habitats to live in and resources to live by, and the significance of these habitats must be recognised, valued, and celebrated. One simple goal of this book is thus to uplift the profile of forests and woodlands in Namibia. Another is to bring together information on woodlands and forests as reference material for students, teachers, policy and decision makers, agriculturalists, planners, development specialists, public servants, and the general public. That information should help to guide the decisions,

policies and endeavours that are required if forests and woodlands are to continue providing the goods and services on which this and future generations depend.

Forests and Woodlands of Namibia was commissioned by the Directorate of Forestry through the Namibia-Finland Forestry Programme. At the time of commissioning, the Directorate was in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism but it was moved to the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry as the book was being completed. The publication of the book marks the end of Finland's direct technical and financial support to the forestry sector. Namibia is grateful for this support, which started in 1991 and continued over the past 14 years. A great number of people provided information and ideas for the book, and we are specially grateful to Jon Barnes, Barbara Curtis, Antti Erkkilä, Joseph Hailwa, Stig Johansson, Risto Laamanen, Pauline Lindeque, Ester Lusepani Kamwi, Celia Mendelsohn, Tuulikki Parviainen, Mary Seely, Sem Shikongo and Peter Tarr.

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The value of trees (left) becomes starkly clear once they are gone (right). It is easy to remove trees, but putting them back to restore the value of a wooded habitat is much harder.

