

The Amazon Rainforest Ecosystem

The Amazon region of South America has a great rainforest that represents the largest bio-diversity in the world. It covers 5.5 million square kilometers - more than half the area of the European continent. However, these rainforests are disappearing at the rate of 3,800 acres a day - almost a quarter of a square mile an hour - causing the extinction of plant and animal species.



Every plant and animal has a purpose. Some plants are good to eat, while others make medicines. People don't know all the uses of all the plants. Some plants we have not even discovered yet. A plant or animal in the rainforest may provide the cure to AIDS or cancer, or some other disease. The Rainforest is an important resource for all people.



The plants and animals in this brochure are only a few of all the species you would find in the actual rainforest.

Amazon Rainforest Resources

If you want to learn more about the plants and animals of the rainforest check out these great websites. Learn more about the resources in the Amazon Rainforest!

An Amazon Adventure:

<http://jajhs.kana.k12.wv.us/amazon/plants.htm>

Amazon Interactive:

<http://www.eduweb.com/rainforest/worldmap.htm>

Rainforest Reports:

<http://www.rain-tree.com/schoolreports.htm>

Rainforest Facts:

<http://www.animalsoftherainforest.com/map.htm>

Amazon Ethnobotany (plant medicines):

<http://www.junglephotos.com/people/people.html>

Toucan Sam:

<http://www.toucansam.kelloggs.ca>

Virtual Tour:

<http://worldforest.geo.msu.edu/rfrc/tour/rainforest.html>



Amazon Rainforest



Plants and Animals





ANIMALS!

There are many animals in the Amazon Rainforest. Although an animal may look cute, or innocent, they are all wild animals and potentially dangerous!



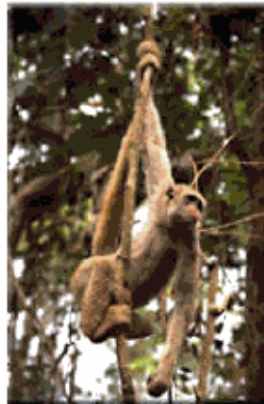
Piranah are armed with strong jaws and razor-sharp triangular teeth which can chop pieces of flesh from a victim with alarming efficiency.

Chrysophora chrysochloa - This beetle is part of the Scarab family, which can range from 1/16 of an inch up to 7 inches long!



Insects are often attracted to perfumes, so if you use scented shampoo, one might come after you!

The Margay is a feline that lives only in the trees. They eat rats, squirrels, possums, and even monkeys. Margays are typically 2 feet long with an 18 inch tail and weigh about 20 lbs.



Muriqui - one of the many types of primates in the Amazon Rainforest. In general, what is safe for a monkey to eat is safe for a human to eat... but not always!



Tarantulas can live up to 20 years. If you are bitten, you may experience localized swelling and pain. They eat other spiders, lizards, baby mice, and other small animals.



Breadfruit is a dietary staple, much like potatoes are. Its fruit can grow up to 10 lb. and can be prepared by frying, baking, or boiling. The juice from a cut plant can be used to caulk boats and is sometimes used to treat rheumatism and burns.

PLANTS!

The Plants of the Amazon Rainforest are very diverse. Some plants are nutritious, some are poisonous, and some have amazing healing properties. All have an important role in the rainforest ecosystem.



This Philodendron has leaves that grow up to 5 feet in diameter! Sometimes the plant starts to grow in the branches of a tall tree and the roots grow down 150 ft.

The Kapoc trees are the tallest in the Amazon. You can see that this one has grown up far above the other trees. Its bark (callend bentag) can be used for making dugout canoes because it is very soft.



Vanilla can be found in the rainforest. It produces a fruit that is about 8 in. long. Making the bean into the flavoring we are familiar with takes up to 5 months!