

# The Amazon Rainforest

## Where Is the Amazon Rainforest?

The Amazon rainforest spans over eight countries in South America and is the world's largest rainforest. It covers an area of over six million square kilometres and it is over 24 times the size of the United Kingdom! Like other tropical rainforests, it is hot and humid throughout the year and generally has a large amount of rainfall.



## What Is in the Amazon Rainforest?

The Amazon rainforest contains millions of different species; scientists state that it is one of the most biologically **diverse** places on Earth. Additionally, it is thought that more than 30 million people live there. Most people who live there follow a lifestyle that combines the modern world. However, some people follow a more traditional lifestyle and rely on nature for food, clothing and medicine.

The Amazon river contains a vast range of fish, including piranhas. Most piranhas are carnivores which have sharp, triangular teeth. The pink river dolphin - which is one of the only freshwater dolphin species in the world - can also be found here.

The rainforest is made up of four layers: emergent, canopy, understory and forest floor. Different species live in each of these layers due to the contrasting conditions.

### Emergent Layer

The emergent layer is the top layer of the rainforest. The Brazil nut tree, which can live for hundreds of years, is found here. Animals that glide or fly, such as birds, bats or butterflies, move between the towering trees.



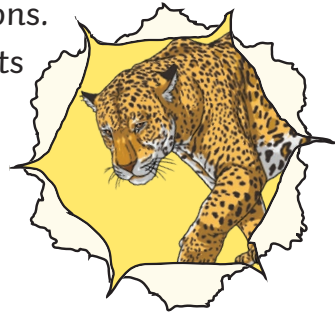
### Canopy

Beneath the emergent layer is the canopy. The trees are close together which forms a roof over the other two layers. As there is plenty of food in this layer due to fruit trees, it is where most animals live in the rainforest. Spider monkeys, sloths and toucans are a few of the species that can be found here.



## Understory

The understory (which is warm and dimly lit) provides a perfect habitat for frogs who thrive in the moist conditions. The dark environment and thick plants are a great source of camouflage for certain animals, such as the jaguar. Some plants grow large leaves in order to catch any of the rain that trickles down through the canopy.



## Forest Floor

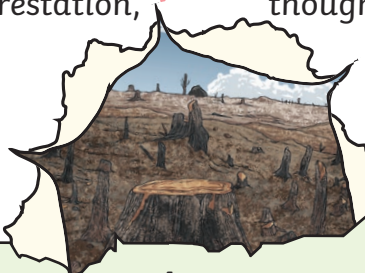
The forest floor is very dark, which makes it extremely difficult for any plants to grow, and it is full of rotting matter. Animals, such as anteaters and wild pigs, feast on the different insects that can be found there.



## What Are the Threats to the Amazon Rainforest?

The act of deforestation is threatening the beauty and the future of the Amazon. Every minute, an area of trees, which is roughly the same size as five football pitches, is cut down in the Amazon rainforest. There are many reasons for deforestation, such as fires, building and illegal gold mining; however, the leading cause for deforestation in the Amazon is due to farming and the creation of areas for cattle. Due to the rise in deforestation, certain species of animals, such as the hyacinth macaw, are at risk of becoming endangered.

The protection of the Amazon rainforest is extremely important in helping reduce climate change. The rainforest covers a large area and plants remove carbon dioxide - which is harmful to the planet - from the air and release oxygen. Scientists fear that if deforestation in the Amazon rainforest continues to increase, global warming will continue to rise. Many people believe that governments should impose stricter measures to protect the rainforest. It is thought that this may help the natural environment, ensure the survival of different species and help prevent climate change.



## Glossary

**diverse:** Varied or different.

# Questions

1. Which of these animals can be found in the canopy? Tick **two**.

- ☐ spider monkeys
- ☐ anteaters
- ☐ wild pigs
- ☐ sloths

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- ☐ Different species live in each layer of the rainforest.
- ☐ The forest floor is very dark and it is extremely difficult for any plants to grow.
- ☐ The Amazon rainforest spans over eight countries in South America.
- ☐ Many people believe that governments should impose stricter measures to protect the rainforest.

3. Fill in the missing words.

However, some people follow a more \_\_\_\_\_ lifestyle and rely on nature for food, clothing and \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Which layer of the rainforest would you find the Brazil nut tree?

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5. Look at the sub-heading called **Understory**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'slightly wet' or 'damp'.

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6. **Every minute, an area of trees, which is roughly the same size as five football pitches, is cut down in the Amazon rainforest.**

Why do you think the author chose to include this fact?

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7. Why do you think jaguars camouflage in the plants in the understory?

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8. Compare the different types of animals that live in the emergent layer and the forest floor of the Amazon rainforest.

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9. Predict how governments introducing measures to protect the rainforest would help animals.

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# Answers

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- ☒ **spider monkeys**
- ☐ anteaters
- ☐ wild pigs
- ☒ **sloths**

2. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- 2** Different species live in each layer of the rainforest.
- 3** The forest floor is very dark and it is extremely difficult for any plants to grow.
- 1** The Amazon rainforest spans over eight countries in South America.
- 4** Many people believe that governments should impose stricter measures to protect the rainforest.

3. Fill in the missing words.

However, some people follow a more **traditional** lifestyle and rely on nature for food, clothing and **medicine**.

4. Which layer of the rainforest would you find the Brazil nut tree?

**The Brazil nut tree is found in the emergent layer of the Amazon rainforest.**

5. Look at the sub-heading called **Understory**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'slightly wet' or 'damp'.

**moist**

6. **Every minute, an area of trees, which is roughly the same size as five football pitches, is cut down in the Amazon rainforest.**

Why do you think the author chose to include this fact?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the author chose to include this fact about the Amazon rainforest because it emphasises what a big problem deforestation is and how quickly trees are being cut down.**

7. Why do you think jaguars camouflage in the plants in the understory?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think jaguars camouflage in the plants in the understory in order to hide from animals when they are hunting for prey.**

8. Compare the different types of animals that live in the emergent layer and the forest floor of the Amazon rainforest.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Animals that fly or glide live in the emergent layer, such as bats or butterflies. There are lots of insects on the forest floor and anteaters and wild pigs eat them.**

9. Predict how governments introducing measures to protect the rainforest would help animals.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that if governments introduced measures to protect the rainforest that many animals' habitats would not be destroyed. Certain species would be less likely to become endangered.**