

Layers of the Rainforests

Emergent Layer



This layer receives the most sunlight and plenty of rain. It is very windy here and trees can rise to 70m in height. There are plenty of animals such as birds and monkeys in this layer (e.g. scarlet macaws, harpy eagles, canary-winged parakeets, morpho butterflies and capuchin/squirrel monkeys).

Upper Canopy



This layer still gets plenty of sunlight and rain but it is less windy. Wide leaves and thicker branches create a roof which stops light getting to lower layers. It is home to a range of wildlife (e.g. toucans, sloths, howler monkeys, iguanas and tree snakes).

Understory / Lower Canopy



This layer only gets a small amount of light and is a damp and warm environment filled with smaller shrubs and trees which provide shelter and food for other animals (e.g. tree frogs, jaguars and the praying mantis).

Forest Floor



This layer is dark, damp and very warm with virtually no sunlight reaching the floor. Leaves fall to the floor and start to rot. It is filled with rodents, insects and insect-eating animals (e.g. click beetles, worms, giant centipedes, giant anteaters and leaf-cutter ants).

Deforestation

Logging



Trees are cut down to sell and make furniture with. They are also turned into charcoal. Huge areas of forest are cut down in one go. Roads are created which causes even more damage.

Cattle Ranching



Forests are being burned down to make way for cattle farming, supplying beef to the rest of the world. Soil soon becomes dry and cattle farmers have to move on leaving a trail of destruction behind.

Mining and Oil Companies



The demand for minerals and metals such as oil, aluminium, copper, gold and diamonds mean that rainforests are destroyed to access the ground below. Chemicals used can often end up in rivers, polluting water supplies.

Dams

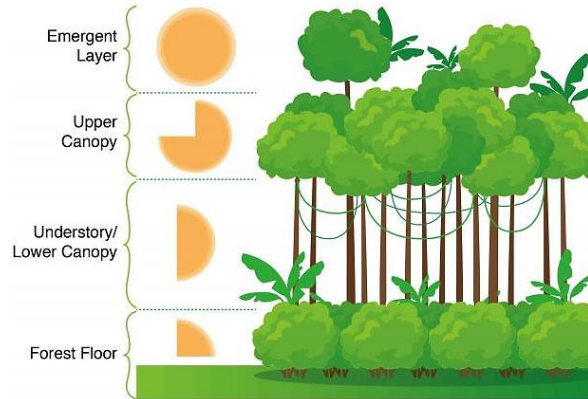


Large dams are used to help with the creation of electricity. This is seen as 'clean' energy but has resulted in the flooding of large areas of rainforest.



Rainforests

Rainforests are a kind of forest habitat that can be found in warm places. They are full of tall trees and leafy plants. It is called a 'rainforest' because it also gets a lot of rain every year, helping all the plants grow.

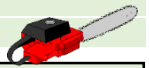


Indigenous People

The way of life for indigenous people in rainforests has gone on uninterrupted for centuries, but it is now under threat because of the invasion of the rainforest by outsiders - logging companies, mining operations and ranchers looking to make a profit.

Key Vocabulary

| | |
|----------------|---|
| ecosystem | all of the living and non-living things in an area |
| habitat | the place where a living thing makes its home |
| camouflage | animals hide themselves by blending into its surroundings |
| climate | weather and temperature usually found in a particular area |
| carbon dioxide | gas released when fuel is burned and when animals and humans breathe / plants use up carbon dioxide |
| oxygen | gas released by plants / breathed in by animals and humans |
| monsoon | wind that changes direction with the seasons |
| temperate | a climate with warm summers and cool summers |
| humid | having a high level of moisture in the air |
| equatorial | warm rainforests growing near the equator |
| tropical | tropics are warm all year around and rainforests can grow |
| indigenous | a living person or thing that belongs naturally to an area |
| extinct | an animal or plant species that has died out completely |
| vegetation | the plant life growing in a certain area |
| liana | rope-like plants that grow up trees |



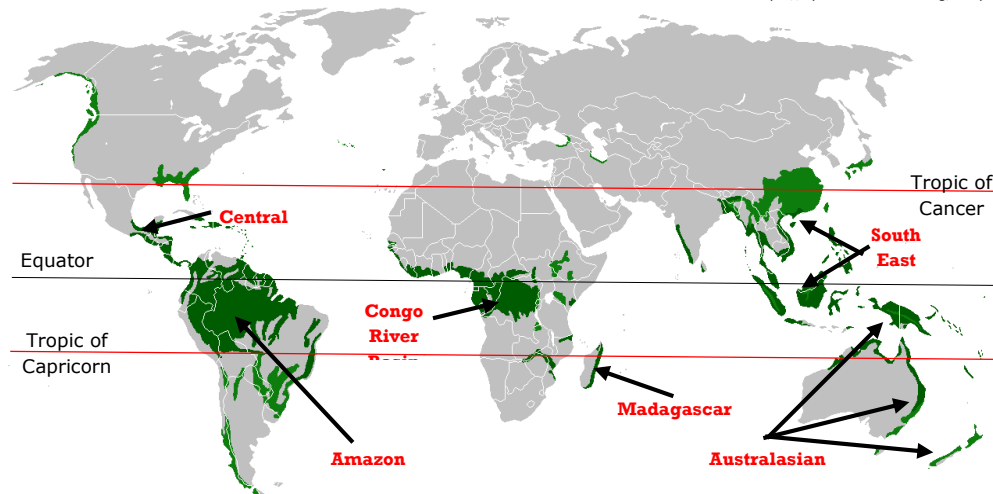
The Loss of the Rainforests

Half the world's rainforests have been destroyed in a century and at this rate you might even see them vanish altogether in your lifetime! More than 20 percent of the world oxygen is produced in the Amazon Rainforest. Deforestation is in fact considered the second major cause of climate change, responsible for up to 25% of global carbon dioxide emissions.

FACT BOX

Every year about 18million hectares of forest – an area the size of England and Wales – is cleared!

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/Rain_forest_location_map.



Where in the World?

Rainforest habitats are forests located around the tropics, which is a zone around the equator, and are mainly found in Africa, Asia, Australia, Central America and South America. The largest rainforest habitat in the world is the Amazon rainforest in South America. Temperate rainforests are not as warm so there aren't as many plants. These are located along the northwest coast of North America, and in parts of Chile, New Zealand and Australia.