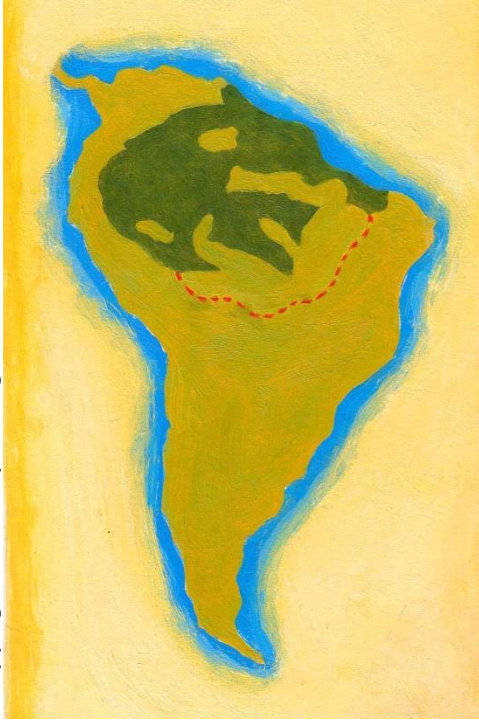


The Amazon in Danger



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The red line shows the Amazon rainforest's original size. The dark green area shows how much of the forest remains today.

Tropical rainforests are precious for many reasons. They provide homes for more than half of the world's plant and animal species, as well as many groups of people who have been living there for thousands of years. Rainforests are the air-conditioning systems of the planet. They soak up carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen. They also provide us with life-saving medicines and many types of food, including chocolate, Brazil nuts and pineapples. The Amazon is the world's largest rainforest, spanning eight countries in South America. It contains a rich variety of plants and animals, but many of these face serious threats.

Deforestation

Every minute of every day, an area of rainforest the size of three football pitches is cut down. Trees are removed to be used as timber and to make space for farming, cattle ranching, mining and building roads. Many animals are losing their homes and becoming rare.



Amazing fact

Did you know that cutting down the rainforest causes more carbon dioxide to be released into the atmosphere than all the world's cars, planes and ships put together? This contributes to climate change..



Mining

In some parts of South America, miners use poisonous chemicals to extract gold and other minerals from the ground. These chemicals pollute rivers, affecting fish, plants and other animals.



Pet trade

Exotic birds and other animals are often captured illegally and sold as pets around the world.



Hunting

With new settlers coming to the forest, hunting for food is also a major threat to many animals, including the sloth and woolly monkey. Other animals, such as the jaguar, are hunted for their skin or killed by farmers to protect livestock.



1 Blue morpho butterfly



Description

With a wingspan nearly as wide as a football, the blue morpho is one of the largest butterflies in the world. When it closes its wings, all you can see is the brown colour underneath – perfect camouflage! Butterflies have sensors on their feet to taste fruit and they use their antennae to smell the air.

Home

The blue morpho butterfly is usually found in the lower shrubs and trees of the rainforest. But when looking for a mate, it travels through all layers of the forest, even above the treetops.

Threats

Deforestation and butterfly collectors

Amazing fact

The butterfly gets its bright blue colour from microscopic scales on its wings, which scatter light.

Food

As a caterpillar, it chews on many types of leaves. When it becomes a butterfly, it uses its long mouthpart to sip tree sap and the juice from fungi and rotting fruit.



2 Blue-and-yellow macaw



Description

The blue-and-yellow macaw uses its strong beak to crack open nuts to eat, and to climb trees. Its bold colours help it to blend in with the bright sunlight and blue sky.

Home

Macaws are often seen flying above the forest canopy or feeding amongst the branches of tall trees.

Food

The macaw feeds mainly on nuts, berries and seeds from the rainforest.

Threats

Deforestation and illegal pet trade.

Amazing fact

A messy eater, the macaw helps new plants to grow by dropping seeds on the ground.



3 Harpy eagle



Description

The harpy eagle is one of the biggest birds of prey in the world, with a wingspan of 2 metres! It can grab animals from the trees with its razor-sharp claws.

Home

Harpy eagles build large nests in the tallest trees of the rainforest. They choose trees with widely spaced branches, leaving a clear flight path to the nest.

Food

This large bird hunts animals such as monkeys and sloths. It also preys on other birds and reptiles, including snakes and iguanas.

Threats

Deforestation and hunting to protect livestock

Amazing Fact

Feathers on the eagle's face make a disc shape, which may improve the bird's hearing by directing sound waves to its ears.



4 Scarlet macaw



Description

The scarlet macaw is a large, colourful parrot. From beak to tail tip, it can measure up to 80 centimetres! It has a strong, hooked beak for breaking nuts and seeds. Macaws mate for life.

Home

Scarlet macaws spend most of their time in and above the canopy of the forest, usually in large, noisy groups. They make their nests in holes that they find in tall trees.

Food

They feed on nuts, leaves, berries and seeds from the rainforest.

Threats

Deforestation and illegal pet trade

Amazing Fact

Scarlet macaws often eat clay from river banks. This might help them to digest toxic fruit.



5 Toco toucan



Description

The toco toucan uses its huge beak – which makes up a third of its body length – to pick and peel fruit. Its bright colours provide good camouflage in the speckled light of the rainforest.

Home

Toucans live in the rainforest canopy and nest in tree holes. They are not very good at flying so they move from tree to tree by hopping

Food

They feed mainly on fruit, but sometimes eat insects, eggs and lizards.

Threats

Deforestation and illegal pet trade

Amazing Fact

The toucan controls its body temperature by adjusting the flow of blood to its beak, which acts like a radiator. An increased blood flow means more heat.



6 Three-toed sloth



Description

The slow-moving sloth hangs upside down, fast asleep for most of the day. It has long, curved claws, which hook over branches, holding it safely in place.

Home

The sloth lives in the leafy canopy of the rainforest. About once a week it slowly climbs down to the forest floor to go to the toilet!

Food

It feeds mainly on leaves, but also eats twigs, fruit and sometimes insects. It gets water from the plants it eats.

Threats

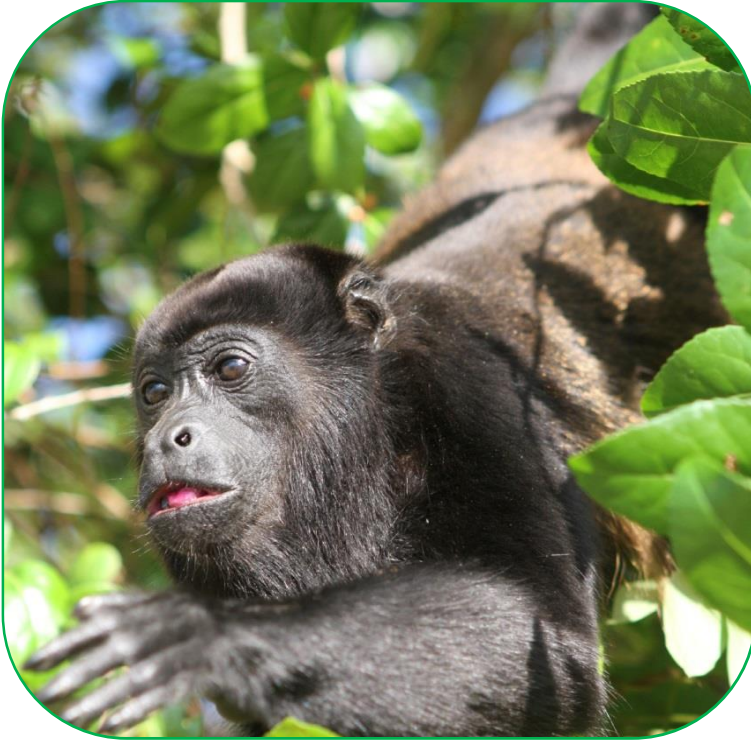
Deforestation and hunting for meat

Amazing Fact

Blue-green algae often grow on the sloth's fur, helping it to hide from predators.



7 Howler monkey



Description

The howler monkey is very loud, hence its name! It calls to warn others to stay away from its territory.

Home

Howler monkeys hardly ever leave the forest canopy. They swing and jump from tree to tree in search of food.

Food

These monkeys feed mainly on leaves, but also eat fruit, nuts and flowers. They get nearly all of their water from the food they eat.

Threats

Deforestation

Amazing Fact

The howler monkey's special gripping tail allows it to hang from trees and to move around. This type of tail is called 'prehensile', which means 'able to grasp'.



8 Woolly monkey



Description

The woolly monkey uses its long limbs and strong tail to grip on to branches. It makes loud noises to communicate with other monkeys, as it is difficult to see through the forest.

Home

Woolly monkeys spend most of their time high in the forest canopy, rarely coming down to the ground.

Food

The woolly monkey feeds mainly on fruit and sometimes eats leaves, seeds and insects.

Threats

Deforestation, illegal pet trade and hunting for meat and fur

Amazing Fact

The woolly monkey has a thick coat, which protects it from the sun, rain and biting insects.



9 Pygmy marmoset



Description

The pygmy marmoset is the smallest monkey in the world - it could easily be held in an adult human's hand! Like a squirrel, it runs up and down tree trunks and leaps from one branch to another.

Home

Pygmy marmosets live in the rainforest's leafy canopy, where they can stay out of sight of predators.

Food

This small monkey feeds on fruit, insects and tree sap. It finds this sap by making holes in tree bark with its sharp teeth.

Threats

Deforestation and illegal pet trade

Amazing Fact

The pygmy marmoset can turn its head all the way round until it faces backwards, so it can scan its surroundings for predators.



10 Tree boa



Description

These tree-climbing snakes come in all sorts of colours and patterns, helping them to blend in. Hunting mainly at night, they grab their victims with their needle-like teeth, then strangle them to death.

Home

Tree boas live mostly in the trees, but their supple bodies allow them to slither easily down to the forest floor.

Food

They feed on a range of animals, such as frogs, lizards, rats and other small mammals. They also eat birds, and can even catch them in mid-air!

Threats

Deforestation

Amazing Fact

The tree boa uses special heat sensors above its mouth to detect other animals, so it can hunt in the dark.



11 Kinkajou



Description

The kinkajou's body is perfect for life in the trees, with its gripping tail, clawed fingers and hind feet that can turn backwards, allowing it to scamper up and down trees. It sleeps in tree holes during the day and forages for food at night time.

Home

Kinkajous spend most of their time in the forest canopy and rarely come down to the ground.

Food

The kinkajou, often called the honey bear, uses its long tongue to slurp honey from beehives and nectar from flowers. It also eats fruit and sometimes insects.

Threats

Deforestation, illegal pet trade and hunting for meat and fur

Amazing Fact

When the kinkajou drinks nectar from a flower, pollen sometimes gets stuck to its face and is transported to the next plant. This helps the plants reproduce.



12 Vampire bat



Description

Like many bats, vampire bats use sounds to navigate in the dark. They send out clicking noises, then listen for the echoes to bounce back off objects, which tell them where the objects are. This is called echolocation. Unlike other bats, vampire bats can also walk, run and hop on the ground to stalk their prey.

Home

Vampire bats live in large colonies. They roost in caves and tree holes during the day and hunt silently at night.

Threats

Hunted to protect livestock from diseases carried by bats

Food

The vampire bat gets its name because it drinks the blood of its prey. It lands beside a bird or mammal then silently hops towards it. It then makes a tiny incision with its sharp teeth and laps the blood from the wound.

Amazing Fact

The vampire bat has a special substance in its saliva that stops its victims' blood from clotting, keeping it flowing while the bat feeds.



13 Ocelot



Description

A strong swimmer and an agile climber, the ocelot looks quite similar to a domestic cat. Its spotty coat provides perfect camouflage in the forest, and its excellent sight and hearing help it to hunt at night.

Home

The ocelot tends to sleep in the dense leafy canopy during the day, coming down at night to hunt on the forest floor.

Food

Its diet includes small mammals, birds, fish and reptiles, such as iguanas, tortoises and snakes.

Threats

Deforestation, illegal pet trade and hunting for fur

Amazing Fact

The ocelot has pointed fangs to kill prey and sharp back teeth to tear its flesh.



14 Spider monkey



Description

The spider monkey can move easily from tree to tree with its hooklike hands, gripping tail and super-bendy shoulders. It uses its strong tail and long limbs to hang upside down, like a spider.

Home

The spider monkey spends most of its time in the middle and upper levels of the forest, almost never coming down to the ground.

Food

It feeds on fruit, seeds, leaves, flowers, bark, honey and sometimes small insects.

Threats

Deforestation and illegal hunting

Amazing Fact

Spider monkeys help the growth of plants in the forest by spreading the seeds of the fruit they eat through their droppings!



15 Red-eyed tree frog



Description

An agile climber, the red-eyed tree frog has strong suction pads on its toes that allow it to cling to branches, tree trunks and even the undersides of leaves. When it closes its eyes to rest during the day, its green eyelids help it to blend in amongst the foliage.

Home

These frogs live in trees near water sources, to keep their skin moist. Like many other amphibians, they start life as tadpoles. The tadpoles live in ponds or in water that collects in plants.

Threats

Deforestation

Food

The tree frog hunts at night for insects such as crickets, flies and moths. It catches them by shooting out its long, sticky tongue.

Amazing Fact

If disturbed, this frog will suddenly open its big, bulging red eyes to startle predators, giving it enough time to jump away to safety.



16 South American coati

(or ring-tailed coati)



Description

A relative of the raccoon, the coati uses its long, pointed nose to sniff out food in small crevices. Females live in groups, foraging and resting together, while males live on their own.

Home

The coati spends most of its time looking for food in the trees and among leaves on the forest floor.

Food

It eats a variety of fruit, as well as small creatures such as insects, spiders and millipedes.

Threats:

Deforestation and hunting for meat

Amazing Fact

Because of its super-flexible ankles, the coati can climb down trees head first!



17 Common potoo



Description

The common potoo is a curious-looking bird. During the day, it rests upright on a tree stump like a statue, blending in with its surroundings. At night, it hunts for insects, spying them through the gloom with its enormous eyes.

Home

Potoos spend most of the day perching on trees. They nest in the crevices of large branches.

Food

These large birds feed on insects, such as moths, beetles and termites.

Threats

Deforestation

Amazing Fact

Potoos have slits in their eyelids so they can see predators without having to open their eyes!



18 Bullet ant



Description

Bullet ants live in large colonies and burrow in the soil at the bottom of trees to make a nest. Measuring up to 3 centimetres long, the workers forage for food and guard the nest against predators.

Home

Bullet ants can be found all over the rainforest, from the forest floor to the treetops.

Food

Worker ants leave the nest in search of insects, nectar and plant sap. They carry this food back using their powerful jaws, called mandibles.

Threats

None

Amazing Fact

The bullet ant has one of the most painful insect stings, which gives it its name.



19 Agouti



Description

Looking similar to a giant guinea pig, the agouti is a large rodent. Like other rodents, it has sharp teeth at the front of its mouth, which it uses to chew through the shells of tough nuts.

Home

The agouti lives on the forest floor, often near rivers, and makes its burrow amongst large rocks and tree roots.

Food

It feeds mainly on fruit, plants, nuts and seeds. When food is plentiful, it buries seeds in the ground to dig up later, which helps spread new plants throughout the forest.

Threats

Deforestation

Amazing Fact

When danger is near, the agouti freezes and raises the hairs on its hind legs to make itself look bigger and fiercer. It can also jump more than 2 metres straight up in the air to get out of harm's way!



20 Capybara



Description

Weighing the same as an adult human, the capybara is the world's largest rodent! Its webbed feet make it a good swimmer, and its ears and nostrils are positioned high on its head so it can see and breathe while in the water.

Home

Capybaras live on the forest floor near rivers, lakes and ponds. They spend much of their time in the water.

Food

The capybara feeds mainly on grass but also eats fruit and aquatic plants.

Threats

Hunting for meat and skin

Amazing Fact

Capybaras eat their own droppings! These contain useful bacteria which help them to digest grass.



21 Peccary



Description

The peccary is a pig-like creature that lives in a herd of up to thirty. It can't see very well so communicates with others by grunting, barking and coughing.

Home

Peccaries live on the cool, dark forest floor. They often shelter in burrows and caves, or under logs.

Food

Peccaries use their sensitive noses to find roots, bulbs, nuts and fruit to eat. They also feed on insects and even small lizards.

Threats

Deforestation and hunting for meat and skin

Amazing Fact

The peccary is also called the 'musk hog' because of the bad smell it produces to mark its territory.



22 Poison dart frog



Description

The poison dart frog has bright colours to warn predators that it is toxic. More than a hundred species of poison dart frog live in the rainforest, all with different colours and patterns.

Home

The poison dart frog tends to stay under rocks and moss near water, but it is sometimes seen in the trees.

Food

It feeds mainly on spiders and small insects, such as ants and termites. It captures prey by shooting out its long, sticky tongue.

Threats

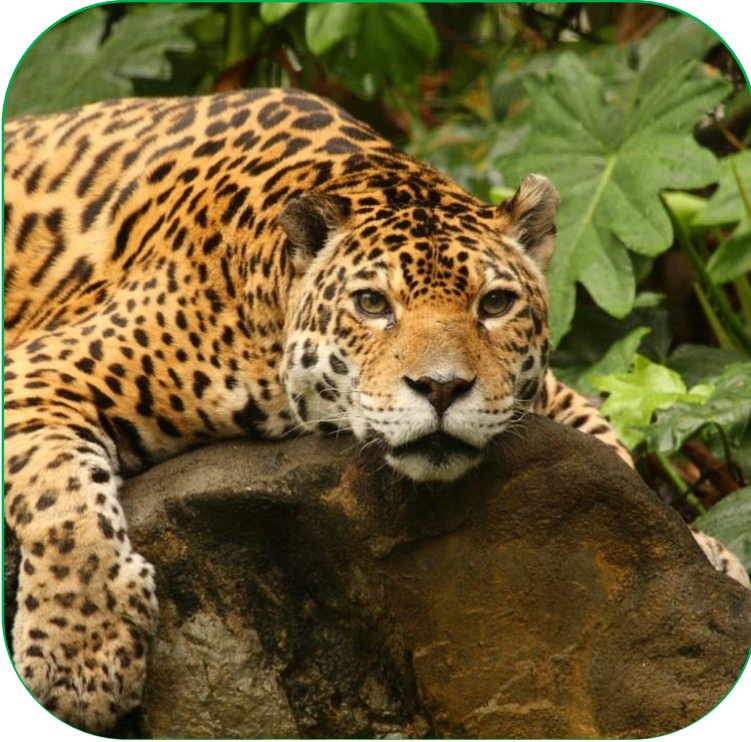
Deforestation and illegal pet trade

Amazing Fact

Certain tribes in South America have used this frog's venom to tip their poison darts, giving the creature its name! Today, scientists are researching possible uses of the poison to make new medicines.



23 Jaguar



Description

This big cat's strong body, sharp teeth and powerful jaws make it a formidable predator. With its spotted coat, the jaguar can hide easily amongst bushes and trees, sneaking up on prey then killing it with a powerful bite.

Home

Jaguars live alone and move silently along the forest floor on their padded paws. They also climb trees to hunt or rest, and are good swimmers.

Food

Jaguars are known to eat more than 85 different species of animal, including fish, peccaries, capybaras and tapirs.

Threats

Deforestation and hunting for fur and to protect cattle

Amazing Fact

The word 'jaguar' is derived from the Native American word 'yaguar', which means 'he who kills with one leap'.



24 Tarantula



Description

Tarantulas are huge hairy spiders. Hundreds of different species live in the Amazon rainforest, and some can be as large as dinner plates! Hunting at night, a tarantula moves slowly on its eight legs and pounces on prey to inject its venom.

Home

Most tarantulas dig a burrow in the ground using their fangs, then make silk to line it. Some species hunt prey in the trees, while others hunt on or near the ground.

Food

Like most spiders, tarantulas feed mainly on insects, but they sometimes target bigger animals such as frogs, toads and mice.

Threats

Deforestation and pet trade

Amazing Fact

The tarantula has hairs on its body with sharp little barbs. When threatened, it rubs these vigorously with its legs so they fly off, getting stuck in the enemy.



25 Tapir



Description

This large pig-like creature is related to the rhino. It is mostly active at night, using its short, flexible trunk to strip leaves, pluck fruit and lift food into its mouth. It is an excellent swimmer.

Home

During the day, tapirs tend to hide in thick undergrowth, coming out at night to browse for food. They are often found near water.

Food

The tapir feeds on small plants, shrubs and young trees, as well as bark and fruit.

Threats

Deforestation and hunting for meat and skin

Amazing Fact

Baby tapirs have spots and stripes, which provide perfect jungle camouflage.



26 Leaf-cutter ant



Description

Leaf-cutter ants live in large communities, with a single nest housing over five million ants! Each ant has a specific job in the colony, such as cutting leaves, gardening and looking after the young. Only the queen can produce offspring.

Home

These ants live on the forest floor in a huge underground nest made up of chambers connected by tunnels.

Food

Leaf-cutter ants are farmers! They carry bits of leaf back to the nest, which are then chewed up to make fertiliser for growing fungi – the ants' food.

Threats

Deforestation

Amazing Fact:

A single ant can carry over fifty times its own body weight!



27 Green anaconda



Description

One of the largest snakes in the world, the green anaconda can weigh more than a cow! It kills its victims by coiling itself around them and strangling them to death. Its eyes and nose are located on top of its large head, so it can breathe and see prey even when its body is in the water.

Home

The anaconda spends most of its time lurking underwater in slow-moving rivers, waiting for prey. When on land, it can be found in thick undergrowth on the forest floor. It may also climb trees!

Threats

Deforestation, illegal pet trade and hunting for skin

Amazing Fact

It can take a long time for the anaconda to digest a large meal, so it can go weeks or even a month without feeding.

Food

It eats fish, large rodents, tapirs, peccaries and other large animals.

