

Some Things You Should Know about Rainforests

The world loses — perhaps forever — 1.5 acres of rainforest every second.

At this rate of loss — an area the size of New Jersey every four months — the rainforests will have largely disappeared in 40 years.

Today rainforests cover less than 7% of Earth's land area.

Before human intervention, the rainforests covered 15% of Earth's land area.

It took Earth billions of years to arrive at the state of equilibrium that existed only a few thousand years ago.

Half of the total loss of rainforests has occurred in the last 60 years.

Twenty-five percent of the total loss of rainforests has occurred in the last twenty years.

Some areas of tropical rainforest have escaped glaciation for 65 million years. This has allowed these forests to evolve a diversity of life unmatched in any other ecosystem on Earth.

Somewhere between 50% and 90% of all species on Earth are found in rainforests.

It is estimated that due to rainforest destruction, we lose to extinction somewhere between *100 and 800 species every day*.

About 75% of modern pharmaceuticals come from plants.

About 25% of modern pharmaceuticals were derived from rainforest plants.

The rosy periwinkle, rescued from certain extinction in Madagascar, has saved thousands of lives. Vincristine from the rosy periwinkle has enabled an 80% remission rate for some forms of childhood leukemia.

Vincristine from the rosy periwinkle from Madagascar's rainforests has become a multi-billion dollar medicine.

Madagascar has lost 97% of its original forests and it appears that the rosy periwinkle is now extinct in the wild.

A potential cure for AIDS was discovered in a vine in a rainforest of Samoa.

That rainforest was being sold to loggers until the intervention of a single American anthropologist.

A potential cure for AIDS was discovered in the bark of a gum tree in a rainforest in Malaysia.

Two years after taking the sample, researchers returned to Malaysia only to find the tree clearcut with the surrounding forest. The tree was cut for cheap tropical plywood. No other individual of this variety of tree has been found. There was not enough of the original sample collected to synthesize the compound.

The U.S. is the second largest importer by volume of tropical plywood. Ironically, the tropical plywood produced from the Malaysian gum tree with the cure for AIDS could have been used to construct the set of Medicine Man — and then discarded.

Intact rainforests produce a substantial portion of Earth's oxygen.

Intact rainforests remove carbon dioxide — the major pollutant causing global warming — from the atmosphere.

Cutting and burning of rainforests contributes 25% – 35% of the world's global warming gasses.

Rainforests regulate local weather and global climate. As these forests are eliminated, massive flooding and droughts result. This can be seen in Africa (50% deforested), Southeast Asia (50 to 80% deforested), Central America (50% deforested) and South America (15% deforested).

Massive migrations of people have occurred whenever their rainforests are destroyed. Haiti is an example of what happens to a country when the forests are removed.

Two billion people depend wholly or in part on rainforests for their subsistence.

Ninety percent of the world's old growth teak is originating from Burma.

In Burma, the ruling military junta, called the SLORC has used rape, torture and forced labor to eliminate the last stronghold of indigenous democratic resistance to get at the world's largest remaining intact teak forests.

The U.S. imports teak for stereo cabinets, yacht trimming and decks, indoor and outdoor furniture, and salt and pepper shakers.

Guyana, a country with most of its rainforests intact, has slated over 40% of its land area — 86% of its rainforests — for logging.

Guyana is where many U.S. towns get greenheart for the pilings and understructure for their tropical wood boardwalks.

In the U.S. mahogany logged from rainforests is used for foyers, doors, furniture, decking, flooring, and crafts.

It has been estimated that 80% of all mahogany coming from Brazil and Peru is being logged illegally from indigenous lands and parks and preserves.

Eighty percent of U.S. mahogany imports are from Brazil and Peru.

The Brazilian logging industry — both legal and illegal — is almost entirely controlled by seven large wealthy families.

At least ten indigenous groups have had family members murdered at the hands of loggers.

Brazil is where many U.S. towns get the wood, called ipê (pronounced eepay), for the decking for their boardwalks.

Beginning in the 1930s, it took only 60 years to log to destruction 80% of the Philippines' original forests.

It took 40 years to log to destruction 80% of Thailand's original forests.

It has taken only 20 years to log to destruction half of two Malaysian states, Sarawak and Sabah's original forests.

It is estimated that Indonesia — a nation that began massive logging only ten years ago — will be logged out in another eight years.

Brazil has less than 5% of its Atlantic Coastal rainforest left.

The U.S. has less than 10% of its primary coastal temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest left.

According to the United Nations, a logged tropical forest is **8 times** more likely to be deforested than an unlogged forest.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, up to 70% of the destruction of rainforests can be attributed to the roads left behind by logging and mining.

The U.S. is the largest importer by dollar value of tropical hardwoods.