

Amazon Rainforest: Remarkable Ecosystem

At first glance, the rainforest is a vast green wilderness. However, as one observes carefully, this ecosystem is full of surprises for its visitors. Not only is each tree quite different from the others, but also for every tree there are hundreds of other plant and animal species in constant interaction.

Tropical rainforests occupy 7% of the Earth's surface, but they hold 50% of the world's biodiversity. These forests are found in Central America, Africa and Asia, but the biggest area extends in the South American Amazon. To truly take advantage of the rainforest, one must use all five senses to discover how exotic life forms have evolved to live together in a minimal extent of land. The embracing sounds tell of the various birds and insects that keep this living forest in constant change. One must carefully observe the various animal and plant species and their amazing color and texture adaptations which can be confused with the scenery. The various smells tell of the chemicals that the plants have developed as a defense for herbivores, and many are of medicinal use for humans.

In contrast to what one may think, the soil of the rainforest is not fertile. The nutrients that supply this exuberant ecosystem are the product of a constant interaction between the living and dying organisms on the surface. Decomposition is vital to the dynamics of the forest. Thus, it is important to preserve this ecosystem in its entirety.

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The temperature in tropical rainforests is quite stable, with a variation between day and night. However, this ecosystem is far from being stable. Rainfall is seasonal and results in major changes for the living organisms. Disturbances also add to the high dynamics of this ecosystem.

Many hypotheses have been made to explain the impressive high diversity in tropical rainforests, and each provides an insight for better understanding of this complex ecosystem. The competition for resources has led organisms to adapt to unique niches, thus resulting in a number of specialized and interdependent organisms.

The overwhelming complexity of the forest makes one wonder about the ancestral knowledge of the millenarian indigenous inhabitants. These cultures have passed their knowledge from generation to generation as a way to keep the secrets hidden in this magical site.

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