

The World Book Encyclopedia 2009



Rain forest

Rain forest is a vastland of tall trees growing in a warm, wet climate. Rain forests are the most diverse of all ecosystems. They have an enormous number of plants, animals, and insects. The Amazon basin in South America is the largest rain forest in the world. Other large rain forests are in Africa, Asia, and Australia.

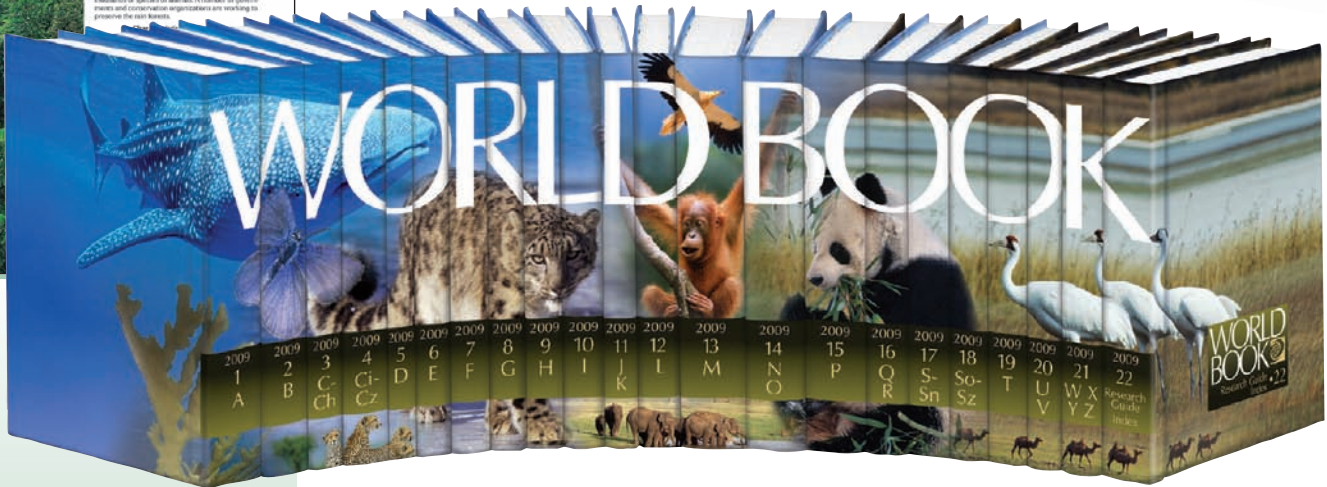
Tropical rain forests occupy only 6 to 7 percent of Earth's surface. However, they support more than half of the world's plants and animals. Scientists estimate that there are 100 million species of plants and animals in rain forests. This is more than in any other area. Scientists believe there are more rain forest species on Earth than we know.

The rain forest provides people with many benefits. It provides medicine, food, and other products. Rain forests help regulate Earth's climate and clean the air. The forest has many uses and will continue to be a source of life.

In addition, rain forests provide homes to millions of people. Many people live in rain forests. They make their living by hunting, fishing, and growing crops. Traditional forest people have lived in rain forests for thousands of years.

In spite of their benefits, people cut down large areas of rain forest each year. This destroys the animals and plants that live there. Scientists and conservation organizations are working to protect the rain forest.

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