

Deforestation



What Causes It

For a while, we actually saw a slow down in rainforest destruction for timber and farming as people became aware of the great diversity of life in this habitat. But now, Rainforests are disappearing at record rates again. This is because in places like the Amazon in Brazil, people have begun slashing and burning the rainforest to use the land for cattle ranching. With more than 200 million cattle to feed, workers harvest a lot of the remaining rainforest every year. Brazil exports more beef than any other country in the world and they export it to fast food restaurants in the United States and Europe!

How Does It Affect Us

Rainforests are very productive habitats. They are home to a huge diversity of animals and plants, while supplying oxygen to our atmosphere and using up carbon dioxide. They hold moisture like a giant sponge and protect the ground from erosion. This keeps the soil from getting washed into rivers and plugging them up with sedimentation. All of these things would affect the lives of the people and animals in and around the rainforest.

What Has Been Done to Fix It

In 1994, at the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil countries from all over the world agreed to try to protect at least 12% of their wild habitats.

What Can You Do to Help

Americans kids eat a lot of fast food, even though it's expensive and full of fat and calories. Since a lot of beef comes from Brazil cattle ranchers, maybe next time you want fast food, have a soy burger instead!

Instead of buying a cut Christmas tree, try having a live tree this year. This summer buy a balsam fir or blue spruce tree from a nursery and keep it in a large pot through the fall. You'll have to bring it inside before it gets too cold and water it, since it won't get rain. It might be smaller than the trees you are used to having at Christmas, but it will be a live tree of your very own and next year, it will be bigger! You can also plant it in your yard and watch it grow.

Deforestation - Read and React

1. Give two reasons why rainforest destruction occurs:

2. What product does the United States import from Brazil that adds to ongoing rainforest destruction?

3. Name three reasons why rainforests are important to the whole planet?

4. What did countries from all over the world agree to try to do at the 1994, at the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil?

5. Name one thing you could do to decrease rainforest destruction:
