

Rain Forest Rescue

Brazil protects part of the Amazon rain forest.



Baker Vail

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Jaguars and anteaters in northern South America can rest easy. A section of the Amazon rain forest as big as Illinois was recently placed under government protection. The land in Brazil links to protected areas in other South American countries, including Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana.

In total, these protected forests cover nearly 58,000 square miles. The land also contains more

than 25 percent of the world's tropical rain forests. A tropical rain forest is a dense forest in a warm region that gets at least 100 inches of rainfall a year.

Environmentalists from the group Conservation International say this area of the northern Amazon has more biodiversity than all tropical forests on the planet. Biodiversity is the variety of plants and animals in an environment. The Amazon is home to more species, or types, of plants and animals than any other place in the world.

A Forest in Danger

Since 1970, more than 232,000 square miles of the Amazon rain forest have been destroyed. That is nearly the size of Texas! The destruction has endangered many animal species. Experts predict that the continued deforestation, or clearing of trees, at this rate would endanger the entire region by 2050.

Officials were especially concerned about preserving the forests. Part of the area is believed to contain more than half of all bird, animal, and plant species found in the Amazon. Many endangered animals, including the giant Amazon otter, make their homes there. Under the government's plan, those parts of the Amazon will be off-limits to the public.

"If any tropical rain forest on Earth remains intact a century from now, it will be this portion of [the northern Amazon]," says Russell Mittermeier, president of Conservation International.

Amazing Amazon

The Amazon rain forest is the world's largest tropical rain forest. It covers about 2 million square miles—roughly two-thirds the size of the United States. The map above shows the location of the Amazon rain forest and its newly protected areas.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The main idea of this passage is
 - A. the rain forest is located in South America.
 - B. the rain forest is home to many species of animals.
 - C. the rain forest is in a warm, moist climate.
 - D. the government protecting the rain forest.

2. If a section of the rain forest is under government protection, that means
 - A. the government is moving animals to a different area.
 - B. the government is bringing animals to the area.
 - C. no one is allowed to cut down trees in that area.
 - D. people can visit that area.

3. The author included a map
 - A. to show the reader where the rain forest is.
 - B. to show the reader the people that live in each area.
 - C. to show the amount of rainfall in the rain forest.
 - D. to show the reader the animals that live in each area.

4. There are many species of plants and animals in the Amazon because
 - A. the forest is small and it is crowded.
 - B. of the rainfall and warm temperatures.
 - C. the government has moved them there.
 - D. of the lack of people in the forest.

5. Why is it important that bird, animal and plant species be preserved? Explain.