

ENVIROKIDS WORKSHOPS



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THE AMAZON RAINFOREST



The Amazon Rainforest - is the world's largest **tropical rainforest**. Covering over **5.5 million square kilometers** it's so big that Ireland would fit into it 67 times, now that is a big rainforest. The **Amazon** rainforest spreads across nine **countries in south America** Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, Suriname, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Guyana, and French Guiana.

Running through the north of the rainforest is the **Amazon River** — a network of many hundreds of waterways that stretches **6,840km**, that would be from **Dublin to Disney Land in Orlando Florida**. Although there is some debate, most scientists agree that the Amazon is the world's second longest river after the River Nile.

The Amazon is the world's largest rainforest. It is also the ancestral home of 1 million Indians. They are divided into about **400 tribes**, each with its own language, culture and territory. Some of the tribes live deep inside the forest and do not have contact with the outside world. Tribes tend to live beside the river where they can fish and grow crops to feed the village.

The Amazon is home to a whole host of fascinating and deadly! creatures, including **electric eels, flesh eating piranhas, poison dart frogs**, jaguars and some seriously **venomous snakes**. In this issue we will look at this fabulous forest in more detail.

The Amazon is known as the "lungs of the earth"



Squirrel Monkey



Black Panther



Okapi

Why is the Amazon so important?

The Amazon rainforest plays an important part in regulating the world's oxygen (The air we breathe). It produces roughly six percent of the world's oxygen and has long been thought to act as a carbon sink, meaning it takes away bad gases so we can breathe better. A recent study suggested that there are over 16,000 different types of trees in the Amazon. The biggest tree of the Amazon rainforest is the Kapok Tree. It can grow to 200 feet tall and the trunk can be 10 or 11 feet in diameter. There are more trees in the Amazon than stars in the Milky Way galaxy. The Amazon rainforest has heavy rainfall, at least 80 inches (2,000 mm) or 7ft— and in some areas over 430 inches (10,920 mm) — of rain each year with much of the rainfall between October and May. The tree canopy (Top of the tree) can be dense with leaves and branches and at 130feet from the forest floor. There are trees in the Amazon that can't be found anywhere else on the planet, for example the Brazil nut depends on a rat like animal (The Agouti) to spread its seeds, the Agouti is the only animal that can bite through its hard shell. The importance of the trees in the Amazon is vital to all the creatures and to the rest of the world.



The Amazon has an incredibly rich ecosystem – there are around **40,000 plant species**, **1,300 bird species**, **3,000 types of fish**, **430 mammals** and a whopping **2.5 million different insects**. In the last issue we had a look at how important Insects are and how we could not survive without them. The Amazon is full of life, and with 2.5 million insects there is a vast variety, from the Bullet ant at nearly 2 inches in length and a very strong bite and venomous sting that take 24 hours to recover. The Jumping stick looks like a twig on a tree, giant caterpillars and huge spiders the Amazon is one of nature's wonders. The Amazon is home to a whole host of fascinating – and deadly creatures, including **electric eels**, **piranhas**, **poison dart frogs**, jaguars and some seriously **venomous snakes**. Some of the fish to be found in the Amazon river are not to be messed with, the Piranha has a lot of very sharp teeth and even though small, stay far away.



All of these creatures have a purpose no matter how dangerous, like the piranha, they clean the river of dead animals and the bullet ant. All the creatures have a purpose in the Circle of life of the Amazon. There are 450 species of reptiles (Snakes, Lizards, Caiman and turtles) in the Amazon. Some of the snakes in the Amazon use their venom and some just use their size like the Anaconda to squeeze their victims. The Iguana and the Chameleon are 2 types of lizards found in the Amazon, the Chameleons can change colour to hide from bigger animals. The Caiman is like a Crocodile or Alligator and can be found in the Amazon, like the other creatures provide a vital purpose to the Amazon region. The Amazon has 45 species of Turtle and Tortoise, the difference being that Tortoise live on land and Turtles dwell in the water.



The Amazon has a lot of creatures living in it and one of the most colourful is the Frogs. There are over 400 different types of frogs in the Amazon. One particular frog is the poison dart frog and the glass frog and some can be as small as your finger nail. As well as frogs and reptiles there is a huge variety of birds and mammals. There are 1300 different types of birds and over 400 different mammals. The black Panther, Puma and the Jaguar and the Sloth are some of the mammals to be found in the Amazon, the Pink river Dolphin and Giant Otters can also be seen. The Squirrel Monkey and Spider Monkey and the Howler Monkey can be heard through the rainforest. The birds have fabulous colour and sounds, from the Parrots to the Toucan and the Hornbil, the Amazon is one of the best places on the earth to see wildlife and is one of the most important if not the most important forests on the planet. Unfortunately, we are losing a lot of the forest each day and all of these fabulous creatures we have looked at are losing their homes. Deforestation (Cutting down trees) is happening on a big scale in the Amazon to provide wood and more room for farming, but we are losing far too much and too quickly. Creatures like the Panther and the Orangutan are on the endangered list due to deforestation. There is work being done to try to stop deforestation in the Amazon, companys like YouTube and "Replanting the Amazon" are helping to plant trees in areas that have been affected. You can buy a tree to plant or donate money for the replanting cause.



Activities to do at home

You can do some searching online to discover the different Mammals and Reptiles found in the Amazon, take notes and build a scrapbook with pictures.

There are a huge variety of birds in the amazon, do some research and draw some of these colorful birds and make a section in your scrapbook for them.



Quiz

- 1, How many species of birds can be found in the Amazon?
- 2, What is the name of the creature that's like a Crocodile or Alligator?
- 3, Name 3 types of Monkey to be found in the Amazon?
- 4, What is the name given to the chopping down of trees?
- 5, How many countries does the Amazon spread across?
- 6, What colour are the Dolphins in the Amazon?
- 7, What's the Nickname or other name for the Amazon?
- 8, How many times would Ireland fit into the Amazon?
- 9, Is there an Ant called the Bullet Ant? True/False
- 10, The Amazon would stretch from Dublin to where?

All answers will be on our next issue (The Garbage Islands)

First issue Biodiversity quiz answers

- 1, What is a male and female fox called? A Vixen and a Dog.
- 2, What do Badgers eat? Earthworms/ Mice/Frogs
- 3, What type of whale can be seen off the west coast of Ireland? The Humpback
- 4, Name 2 food that Bees help provide? Honey/Apples/Cherries/Almonds.
- 5, What is a Habitat? Where a Creature can find food and shelter.
- 6, How long do wasps live for? 12 to 22 days
- 7, How many types of Bat's are in Ireland? 9 Types of Bat
- 8, What is a good way to see birds in your garden? Bird feeders and plants and trees.
- 9, Name 2 creatures that come out at night in Ireland? Badgers/Bats/Fox
- 10, How many species of birds are in Ireland? 478 species of Birds.



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