

The Worlds Rainforests: Tropical and Temperate

The world knows two types of rainforests, Tropical Rainforests and Temperate Rainforests. Each experiences 68 to 78 inches of rain annually – nearly twice the 44 inches that fall in Massachusetts each year. Only Alaska (53 inches) and Alabama (56 inches) record more than 50 inches of rain in an average year.

Tropical Rainforests are found between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, including Southeast Asia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Congo and South America. Northeastern Australia, sub-Saharan Africa and Sri Lanka also have Tropical Rainforests. As do Central America and many Pacific Islands, including Hawaii.

Temperate Rainforests are found in the earth's temperate regions, including North America, Europe and the coastal areas of Scotland and Ireland, to name a few. These forests are found between the tropics and the poles, usually in coastal regions or where temperature swings between summer and winter are relatively moderate.

The vast majority of the world's population resides in temperate regions. However, our insatiable appetite for food, paper and other products put even the most remote forests at risk. These forests have been called the "Earth's Lungs." But today, carbon dioxide levels are 27 percent higher than they have been in more than half a million years. And we are in the age of Global Warming.



Destroying a tree in the rainforest not only prevents it from storing 1.5 tons of carbon, but it releases that carbon back into the atmosphere. Continued deforestation exacerbates the problem and leaves forests less able to cope with drought, fire and other natural disasters.

In many ways, those few forests left relatively untouched are the Earth's last frontier. In 2007, the governmental protection agency for Brazil's Indian interests reported the presence of 67 uncontacted tribes in the nation's rainforests. New Guinea also reports a substantial number of native tribes in its rainforests.

But as a result of heavy logging and clearance for agricultural use through the 20th Century, the world's rainforests are shrinking. Biologists suggest as many as 50,000 species a year are becoming extinct. Ninety percent of Africa's rainforests have been wiped out, as has two-thirds of the rainforest in Madagascar. Rainforests in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea could be logged into extinction within the next two decades.

Brazil has declared the deforestation issue a national emergency as Amazon deforestation jumped 69 percent between 2007 and 2008. Nearly 60 percent of the Amazon Rainforest could be depleted by 2030.

By joining together, we can make a difference – each one of us. Replant the trees you use. Join us in becoming Rainforest Makers!