

Rainforests - Saving the Rainforests

Disappearing Rainforests

The world's rainforests are being destroyed. They once covered 14% of the Earth's land surface but, by 2005, it was below 7%. Experts think that we lose 137 plant, animal and insect species every day due to Rainforest destruction. Many modern medicines are made from rainforest plants but lots of new potential medicines are being destroyed before they can even be discovered!

Orang-utans of Borneo

The orang-utan is a type of 'great ape', mankind's closest relatives and the world's largest tree-living mammal. They



live only in Sumatra and Borneo in Southeast Asia, in the tropical rainforest.

The other 'great apes' are all native to Africa so the orang-utan is unique. However, due to deforestation for wood and palm oil, the orang-utan is facing extinction, with no natural habitat left to live in.



Farming and fires: Sometimes the rainforest is destroyed so that big farmers can grow foods such as strawberries, peppers, pineapples and sugar for use by rich countries. Some forests are burned down so cows can be farmed for beef and leather.

Mining and roads: People mine the rainforest for metals such as gold, iron ore and aluminium. Some oil companies drill for oil. This means clearing more forests for roads too.

Timber: Logging companies bring mass destruction to forests to get hardwoods like teak, mahogany and rosewood. These trees may take 100 years to mature and so cannot be easily replaced or farmed.

Endangered Animals

Many animals around the world are endangered. This means they will die out altogether (become extinct) if we do not save them!

The main threats are: having their habitats changed or destroyed; over exploitation by humans for hunting, selling or eating; foreign species that have been introduced by people; pollution and climate change.

Endangered animals exist all over the world but many have their homes in the tropical rainforest and are in real danger because of logging, mining and deforestation of land.