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AMAZON
Initiative

Protecting the Amazon

WWF's Amazon vision

WWF's vision is an ecologically healthy Amazon biome that maintains its environmental and cultural contribution to local people, the countries of the region, and the world, within a framework of social equity, inclusive economic development, and global responsibility.

The reward will be the knowledge that we have kept the Amazon forest standing with its natural and cultural diversity, its ecological and economic services to local people functioning, and its contributions to the stabilization of global climate change continuing. Together, let's keep the Amazon healthy and functional.



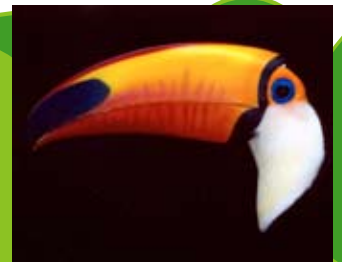
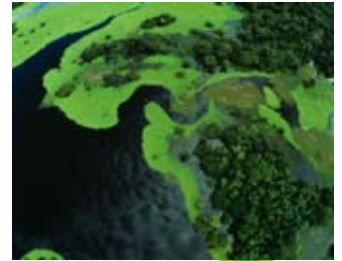
Key Definitions

The **Amazon Biome** is the area covered predominantly by dense moist tropical forest, but with several other kinds of vegetation (savannas, floodplain forests, grasslands, swamps, etc.). We need to try to always refer to the Amazon biome when using the term “Amazon” alone or the term “Pan Amazon”.

The **Amazon Basin** is the area drained by the Amazon River and its tributaries. Also referred to as the “Amazon hydrographic basin” or “Amazon watershed”.

The **Political Amazon** is defined by the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA is the acronym in Spanish and Portuguese).

Brazil's “Legal Amazon” (Amazônia Legal) is the area designated by the Brazilian federal government in 1953 as the official extent of the Amazon within Brazil, covering around 5.2 million km², comprising 60% of the Brazilian territory.



Overarching message

The Amazon biome is a 6.7 million km² area covered predominantly by dense moist tropical forest, but with several other kinds of vegetation including savannas, montane forest, open forest, floodplain forests, grasslands, swamps, bamboos, and palm forests. It includes most of the Amazon River basin as well as the area south of the Orinoco River, the countries of Guyana and Suriname, and the French Territory of French Guiana. It represents nearly 40% of the area of South America and includes eight countries and an overseas territory.

The majesty of this magnificent area lives on. The Amazon biome is still largely intact. Huge areas of the world's greatest tropical forest remain – home to at least 10% of the world's known species – in spite of continued logging, mining and conversion to cattle ranching and soy production. That the Amazon is still largely intact is a major conservation success. Working with governments, communities, local NGOs, and other international organizations, and with the help of millions of supporters around the world, WWF has played a vital role in helping prevent these threats from stripping the forest.

But we cannot relax. We now face a hugely important choice. The decisions made on human development in the next few years will determine whether we can keep the Amazon ecologically healthy, or whether we watch as the forest is gutted by roads and dams, cut down for cheap timber, and burned for unsustainable agriculture and cattle ranching.

Now is the time to build on the successes WWF and others to secure the Amazon, its magic untarnished, for current and future generations.

WWF's four challenges

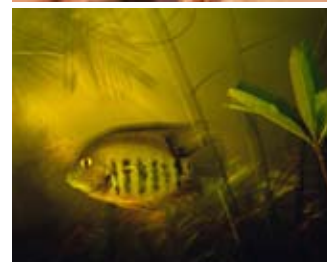
1. Protecting the Amazon's amazing biodiversity

The Amazon is the world's largest tropical forest, home to a staggering richness and variety of species and their habitats – a place of magic and mystery. Covering 6.7 million km² across eight countries and one overseas territory, the Amazon biome is one of the world's most extraordinary places. Larger than Europe and fed mostly by the Amazon River and its hundreds of tributaries, the Amazon biome contains almost one-fifth of the Earth's river water. More than 30 million people live there, including indigenous groups speaking more than 300 languages and dialects, alongside more than 10% of the world's known species, including more than 100,000 invertebrates, 40,000 plants and trees, and 3,000 fish. There is an overriding obligation to ensure the continued survival of this natural richness... humankind literally depends on it (see *The Amazon and Climate* and *The Amazon's Flora and Fauna*).

2. Tackling the threats facing the Amazon and achieving sustainability

Although almost 80% of the Amazon forest still survives, the annual loss of forest cover has reached 27,000 km², an area nearly the size of Belgium. Unsustainable logging, agriculture, cattle ranching, mining, settlement, and infrastructure development threaten to undermine the integrity of the biome. The forest is essential for the survival of the people living in and around it and for the well-being of people throughout the world. Apart from providing ecosystem services, such as food and a regular, clean water supply, the forest provides wood for fuel and building, and plants for medicines and myriad other uses.

Take away the forest, and most of the soil is too poor to sustain agriculture while the local people have lost their life-support system. The countries of the Amazon need to promote economic and social development that is sustainable. But the paving of roads cutting through the heart of the Amazon may trigger an irreversible cycle of destruction, giving illegal loggers, miners and cattle ranchers access to previously isolated areas. WWF's strategy for the Amazon will address the main threats to the biome with a variety of interventions at multiple scales, and by working with key stakeholders. We will build on our long presence in the area, moving on to new areas of work while adjusting to the ever-changing socio-political context of the region and the world that impact the biome.



3. Securing the Amazon as a key climate regulator

The Amazon forest – spread over an area 50% larger than the European Union's 27 countries – is an essential repository of ecological and economic services not just for its 30 million inhabitants and those in the wider region, but also for the rest of the world. This forest plays a key stabilizing role on the global climate, storing carbon as biomass in a dynamic balance with the atmosphere. Further forest loss may trigger changes to the Amazon's own climate, reducing rainfall and generating large-scale droughts. As a consequence, the nature and structure of the Amazon's tropical forests will change, releasing huge stores of carbon into the atmosphere, worsening climate change worldwide. Scientists warn that it is important to keep the current extent of the Amazon if we are to maintain the ability of the forest to contribute to the regulation of its own climate, environmental flows (quantity, quality and timing of water flows), and biogeochemical cycles. These global and regional climate regulation functions are now threatened by further deforestation (see *The Amazon and Climate*).

4. Protecting priority Amazon landscapes

WWF has a track record in the Amazon of more than 40 years. It was instrumental in the 1973 creation of Peru's Manu National Park, one of the most biologically-diverse places on Earth. WWF has been working in Brazil since 1971, and its experience there was a major catalyst for the world's first international tropical rainforest campaign in 1975. In 1976, WWF helped establish the Pilon Lajas National Park in Bolivia. Building on this experience and its international reach, WWF helped broker the 2002 Amazon Region Protected Areas (ARPA) programme. Led by the Government of Brazil, ARPA is implemented in partnership with the Brazilian Biodiversity Fund (FUNBIO), the German Development Bank (KfW), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank and WWF. ARPA is a 10-year effort aimed at bringing 12% – 50 million hectares or 500,000 km² – of the Brazilian Amazon under protection and establishing a US\$ 240 million trust fund to finance the effective management of the protected areas in perpetuity. It was announced by the Brazilian government in 2002, with implementation beginning in 2003. Today, WWF is active in seven of the eight Amazon countries and one overseas territory.



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