

SAVING THE ENDANGERED SPECIES

THE CLOUD FOREST

Vocabulary

biosphere – The combination of living things together with the environment in which they exist.

bromeliad – A plant belonging to a family of epiphytes (see below) that is generally found in the American tropics. Included among the bromeliads are the pineapple, Spanish moss, and various ornamental plants and flowers.

capuchin monkey – A medium-sized monkey found in the tropical forests of Central and South America. The name comes from the fact that some of them have manes that resemble the hoods of Capuchin monks.

cloud forest – A type of forest that occurs on mountain tops. Warm, moist air rises, condenses at the top of the mountain, and forms clouds. Cloud forests are found in North America, South America, and Indonesia and other parts of Asia.

ecotourism -- A recent form of travel designed to allow people to visit natural habitats with minimal impact on the environment. Ecotourism has shown considerable promise as a source of jobs for indigenous populations that might otherwise carry on activities that are harmful to the environment.

epiphyte – A plant that usually does not root in the soil but grows in tree branches. Most commonly found in the tropics, an epiphyte gets its moisture from the air or from the plant on which it lives. The best-known epiphytes are bromeliads (see above) and orchids.

fungi – A group of parasitic, spore-producing organisms. They include molds, yeasts, and mushrooms.

habitat -- The environment in which a particular animal or plant normally lives.

howler monkey – A large monkey found in Central and South America. It gets its name from its extremely loud voice, which can be heard for miles. Also known as howling monkey.

Important People

Andrés Hammerman – Co-owner, with Michelle Kirby, of the Black Sheep Inn, “an ecologically friendly hotel” in Cotopaxi, Ecuador. He is active in preservation of the local environment.

Nalini M. Nadkarni – Scientist at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, who has studied cloud forests around the world.

Humberto Salazar – Native of the Ecuadorian cloud forest who has become a tourist guide instead of a woodcutter.

Internet Resources

<http://www.blacksheepinn.com/> – Web site of Andrés Hammerman’s Black Sheep Inn.

<http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/saecuador.htm> – A Web Site on the Ecuadorian environment, with a listing of “Eco-Lodges” like the Black Sheep Inn.

<http://www.cloudforestalive.org/> -- A rich site called “Cloud Forest Alive” that offers “weekly nature lessons, photos, and superb information about the Cloud Forests of Central America and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.”

Dr. Nalini M. Nadkarni seeks to uncover the miraculous secrets of the Ecuadorian Cloud Forest. Unfortunately, the poverty of this region forces the local culture to devastate their own natural resources. Conservationist Andrés Hammerman stands guard as the deforestation that has stolen millions of acres of neighboring rain forests now threatens to claim the pristine beauty of the Ecuadorian Cloud Forest.

Higher and Higher

The unusual climactic and weather conditions that occur in the cloud forests of Ecuador are the result of the warm, moist air that climbs up from the valleys. When it reaches the top, the moisture condenses, forming a thick layer of clouds. Unfortunately, warm air is not the only thing that is ascending these slopes today. The inhabitants of the region, beset by poverty and unemployment, are also going higher and higher. They are searching for tropical hardwoods, which, being eagerly coveted by developed nations, are a source of desperately needed income. But as these trees are cut down, the forests are disappearing, causing destruction not only of plant and animal life, but also of the very ecosystem that the native peoples have depended on for so long.

Important Places

Amazon River -- At 3,900 miles long, the world’s second-longest river. It begins in the Andes Mountains of Peru and flows across northern Brazil to the Atlantic Ocean. The riverbed is home to a dazzling variety of plant and animal life; it is estimated that one half of all the species on the Earth are in the Amazon rain forest. The Ecuadorian cloud forest lies in the eastern part of the Amazonian rain forest.

Ecuador – A country in western South America, bounded on the north by Colombia, on the south and east by Peru, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. The rugged Andes Mountains cut across the country, and tropical forests are found east of the Andes.



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http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/08/0813_cloudforest.html – An article from *National Geographic News* entitled “Cloud Forests Fading in the Mist, Their Treasures Little Known.”

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/10/1019_costacloud.html – Another article from *National Geographic News*, this one entitled, “Costa Rica’s Cloud Forests: Misty No More?”

<http://www.marrder.com/htw/special/environment/5.htm> – An essay on cloud forests from “Honduras This Week.”

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/healthscience/science/aaas/2001-10-18-cloud-forests.htm> – From USA Today, an article entitled “Deforestation Linked to Demise of Cloud Forests.”

<http://www.geocities.com/sciencelives/cloudforest1.html> – A good page on cloud forests.

Things To Think About

The inhabitants of the Ecuadorian cloud forest now use chain saws to cut down timber and to saw boards, which makes their work much faster than the use of hand tools. What other examples can you think of that show how technological advances, such as the invention of the chainsaw, have accelerated the destruction of the environment?

Since cloud forests and rain forests are such a potentially rich source of medical drugs, do you think pharmaceutical companies should become involved in protecting these environments? Are they? What other types of companies might have an interest in preserving the cloud forest?

In the documentary, Nalini Nadkarni says it would help the cloud forests if people in developed countries would recycle wood. What ways can you think of in which that might be done? What might be some uses for old wood?

Tourism is cited as a possible source of jobs for the inhabitants of the cloud forests. Would you be interested in traveling to such places? Why?

Other Resources

For students:

Collard, Sneed B. *The Forest in the Clouds*. Charlesbridge Publishing, 2000.

Morrison, Marion. *Ecuador*. Children’s Press, 2000.

Siy, Alexandra. *The Waorani: People of the Ecuadoran Rain Forest*. Silver Burdett Press, 1993.

For adults:

Bruijnzeel, L. A. and E. J. Veneklaas. “Climatic Conditions and Tropical Montane Forest Productivity: The Fog Has Not Lifted Yet.” *Ecology*, 79:3-7.

Emsley, Michael. *Rain Forests and Cloud Forests*. Quality Books, 1979.

Hamilton, Lawrence S., James O. Juvik, and F. N. Scatena, eds. *Tropical Montane Cloud Forests*. Springer-Verlag, 1995.

Rudel, Thomas K. *Tropical Deforestation : Small Farmers and Land Clearing in The Ecuadorian Amazon*. Columbia University Press, 1993.

Sandved, Kjell Bloch. *Rain Forests and Cloud Forests*. Harry N. Abrams, 1979.



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