

## Saving the rainforests

Tropical rainforests grow in lowland regions near the equator where it is hot all year and rain falls almost every year. Half the world's plants and animals live in these **ecosystems**, although tropical forests now cover less than two per cent of the planet.

Native tribes, such as the Yanomami of South America, make their homes in tropical rainforests as they have for centuries. Although they take all they need from the forest, such as food, clothing and herbs, they never destroy what cannot be replaced naturally. This is important because their future survival depends upon the forests resources. Local governments and foreign companies destroy the land by clearing roads and harvesting plants and animals to sell. They also bring in disease, against which the native people have no immunity.

The book 'Rainforests' written by Jane Parker says 'Tragically, rainforests are being cut down at a fast rate. They can never be replaced and their loss will affect everyone in the world. Cleared rainforest is difficult to farm because the soil left behind is so poor. Unlike in other kinds of forest, the nutrients of a rainforest are stored in its vegetation rather than its soil. Destroying rainforests also alters the world's climate. There is more carbon dioxide in the air, making it warmer.'

The Carbon Dioxide will affect weather conditions and oceans. The weather will become unpredictable and oceans will become more acidic, killing off the coral reef within 35 years.

It is estimated that more than 50 million acres of rainforest – an area bigger than the United Kingdom are destroyed each year. In the process, 100 species a day may be lost. Each species may only inhabit a tiny part of the forest, but all are dependent on others for survival. This interdependence maintains the balance of the entire ecosystem.

Saving the rainforests is a very important task. We all need to make radical and permanent changes in our lifestyles.

Education is a very important thing, but education alone is not going to prevent global Warming. Positive actions are needed. **All is not lost, if we all act now we could prevent this catastrophe from happening.** We are no longer talking about climate change affecting our children, or our children's children. We are talking about us and how it is going to affect us now.

Schools could also begin writing to organisations, asking them to take more positive action about global warming. The local, or national press can also be a great ally. To sell newspapers, they have to write about what the public is interested in. The government needs to be aware of how the public feels and if we all tell them exactly what we want, they may do more. If we all write letters, asking them to support us by campaigning for schemes for a carbon neutral world, we would be, potentially, changing the face of global warming. If Great Britain begins this, it sets an example to other countries, which could follow our lead.

According to the recently published 2005 environmental Sustainability index (ESI), which measures the ability of nations to protect the environment over the next few decades, the UK came 65<sup>th</sup> in the list of 146 countries. There is a lot of room for improvement and we could help with this.

Schools have the potential to really make a difference and can use their power to make positive changes for the future. There are many ways that schools can help save the rainforests. There are many organisations, some are listed below, that provide information on how to fundraise. They suggest sponsored swims, cake baking, holding fetes and all kinds of fun activities. These organisations will help as much as they can.

Rainforest Concern protect parts of Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil and Sri Lanka's rainforests by using sponsorship to help these uniquely important areas and the many rare animals and plants that depend on them for their survival. They need more people to help them protect these rainforests and to also allow them to extend their work, so that they can gain more rainforest for people to sponsor. Their details are as follows:

**RAINFOREST CONCERN**  
27 Lansdowne Crescent  
London  
W11 2NS  
Tel: (0)20 7229 2093  
Fax: (0)20 7221 4094  
E-mail: [info@rainforestconcern.org](mailto:info@rainforestconcern.org)  
[www.rainforestconcern.org](http://www.rainforestconcern.org)

They will send a Certificate recording your sponsorship and the latest edition of the annual newsletter, Rainforest Review, which provides detailed updates of the company's progress over the year. They have a fantastic kid's page, giving information on how to help, suggesting fund raising ideas and a special schools section, which shows just how much schools can do.

Another company which works hard to prevent climate change is The Rainforest Action Network. They run a *Protect-an-Acre Program* which helps forest peoples protect their rainforest homes by helping them gain land title, or ownership of their land. This means that it cannot be logged for trees, mined for oil or gold, or otherwise harmed without the indigenous people's permission.

The *Rainforests in the Classroom* e-mail newsletter for teachers and the website for children and teachers is available at: [www.rainforesthroes.com](http://www.rainforesthroes.com). There is a wide array of information including fundraising ideas, games, recipes, fact sheets, curriculum packets and much more. To contact them, e-mail [tsolum@ran.org](mailto:tsolum@ran.org).

A further great way to make a difference is to 'neutralize' that bit of global warming we all cause. At [www.futureforests.com](http://www.futureforests.com) they can tell how to calculate personal Carbon Dioxide emissions and how to reduce them. They ask how much electricity,

gas, petrol and coal your family uses and then calculates how much carbon dioxide you emit. They will then tell you how many trees you need to plant in order to counterbalance this.

There are of course many more organisations out there that are doing their bit for the planet, but are you doing yours? By becoming involved regularly with any of the aforementioned charities, or any environment protecting charities of your choice, you will be making a difference to the world. Changes have to be made and it is up to you to make them.

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