



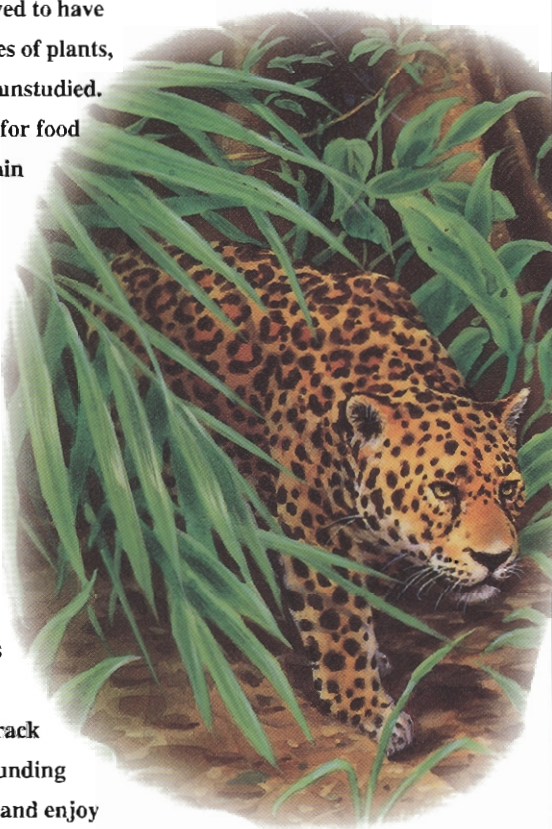
LIFE IN THE RAIN FOREST

A RAIN FOREST is a thick tangle of trees and other plant life where it rains more often than most other places on earth. Rain forests are home to many of the most peculiar plants and animals on the planet. Nearly half of all the world's flora and fauna live in rain forests and dozens of unknown life-forms are discovered each year. Some scientists speculate that there may be about 50 million different species of insects living in rain forests! The Amazon rain forest of South America is believed to have more than 40,000 species of plants, many of which remain unstudied.

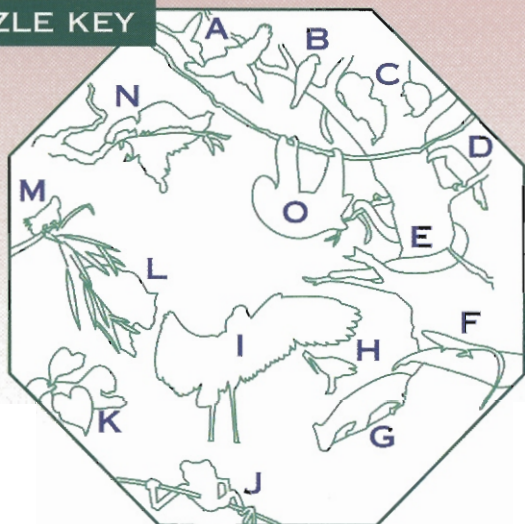
The non-stop search for food by inhabitants of the rain forest often results in both competition and cooperation between species. Sometimes survival depends on the ability of certain animals to eat plants which other species are unable to consume. For example, the large, strong beaks found on parrots and toucans give them a special advantage. They can crack open hard shells surrounding certain fruits and nuts and enjoy

tasty treats not available to birds with smaller beaks.

In the rain forest, appearance often means the difference between life and death! For example, certain rain forest butterflies escape danger by closing their wings and imitating leaves. The skin pattern and coloring of an anaconda snake helps it blend into the jungle, allowing it to sneak up and put the squeeze on lunch! The three-toed sloth has green algae growing in its fur, helping (over)



PUZZLE KEY



ANIMALS OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN RAIN FOREST

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| A. Scarlet Macaws | I. Jabiru Stork |
| B. Hyacinth Macaw | J. Barred Leaf Frog |
| C. Squirrel Monkeys | K. Giant Otter |
| D. Toco Toucan | L. Jaguar |
| E. Anaconda | M. Cock of the Rock |
| F. Green Anole | N. Red-faced Uakari |
| G. South American Margay | O. Three-toed Sloth |
| H. Scarlet Ibis | |

the slow-moving creature hide in the treetop canopy. Hungry predators like jaguars often fail to notice the sloth as it quietly hangs out on a branch.

Many of the plants living in the rain forest are used for medicinal purposes throughout the world. One-fourth of the drugs sold in pharmacies have ingredients that come from rain forests, including life-saving derivatives used to treat heart disease and cancer.

Unfortunately, dozens of species become extinct each day in the world's rain forests. Excessive slash and burn clearing, logging, cattle ranching, mining and farming have all contributed to the loss of millions of acres. Habitat is disrupted in other ways as well.

Each year, thousands of monkeys are captured and traded illegally on the world market. Macaws have become popular pets with some buyers paying thousands of dollars for a single bird. Some rivers are also being over-fished and polluted.

Rain forests once covered 14% of the world's continents. The dwindling forests now cover less than 6%. In fact, some scientists estimate that the world's rain forests are disappearing at the rate of 150 acres per minute! That's why organizations and individuals around the world are working hard to find ways to save these precious natural resources.