

The tropical rainforest is one of the greatest wonders of nature. Many rainforests are over 100 million years old. They shelter unique ecosystems with over a million animal and plant species.

Rainforests

- much rainfall, sometimes seasonal
- no winter or summer seasons
- ambient temperature of 20-28°C
- large biodiversity
- low density of larger individual animals

doch:

- soil poor in nutrients, with thin humus layer
- erosion of the humus occurs with logging
- leaving only 2-3 years of cultivation possible

After the South American Amazonia, the African **Congo Basin** is the **second largest rainforest area in the world**. From the original 6,8 million km² only 2 million km² are left today, 70% of all remaining rainforests in Africa. Yet half of all African animal species live there. 80% of the world's flowering plants are found only in this region.



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The different layers of the rainforest give various niches for lots of species.

The individual plants and animals are specialised to a high extent. Many of them **have yet to be studied**. Whoever destroys the forests also exterminates species with a potential for medication against cancer, rheumatism and other illnesses.

The loss of habitat so far was considered the worst danger for species survival. 77% of the remaining forests are endangered through commercial logging and agricultural cultivation. Every minute, areas of the size of 37 soccer fields are cleared. Between 1980 and 1995, 60 million hectares were logged, which equates to 80-fold the area of the U.S.A.! **At this rate, there will be no rainforest left in 50 years.**

Animal and plant species have developed undisturbed in the Congo Basin since the last Ice Age. In some areas, animals do not flee from humans – they never saw any before! Yet in these parts of Africa, protection of the wildlife is not even a concept!

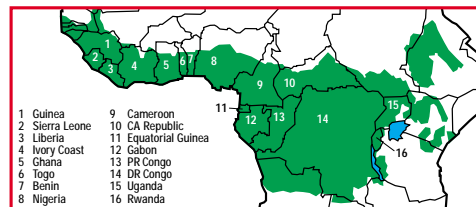


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In Central Africa, 90% of all logging companies operate in primary forests. Other industries for mining iron ore minerals and gems also result in destruction of the forest.

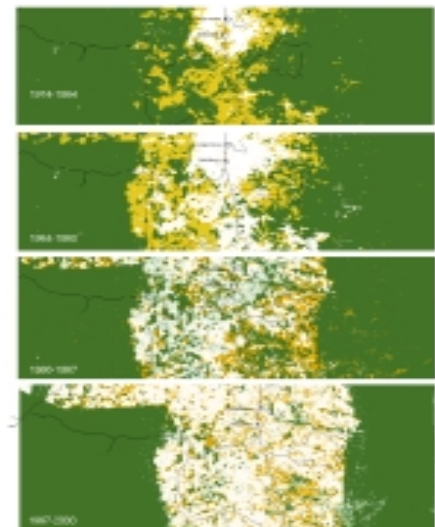
When a forest is disturbed, humans whose ancestors lived in the forest for thousands of years are also affected. Today the survival of people such as the Pygmies are themselves threatened as animals and plants die under the impact of bulldozers and chainsaws of logging companies. **The forest is their whole livelihood, and it is being plundered.**

Additionally, millions of farmers suffer from the loss of the rainforest. Forest streams flow continuously, and so are reliable sources of water for cultivators even in dry seasons.



Countries that make up the Congo Basin are DR Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, PR Congo, the south of CA Republic and Central Equatorial Guinea.

During the Ice Age last forest refuges were here; these regions are the oldest rainforests of Africa. From here, plants and animals migrated to populate the continents.



The importance of protected areas for the preservation of biodiversity is especially high in West Africa, where not even 8% of the former forests are remaining. In the Ivory Coast, almost the whole of the original forest has gone, and the forest, the last remaining forest area of any size, is now under threat despite its National Park status. Those areas are the last refuges of forest-dependent species.

The destruction of the rainforests is also a global threat, as they are the main providers for a stable world climate!