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By Yvonne Patterson, rainforest photojournalist and trainer/founder of  
Wings of Love bird shows in Kansas City, Mo.

The rainforest is the most incredible place on earth supporting more plant and animal life than anywhere in the world. Over 60% of all life forms exist in the tropical rain forests. From alien-looking insects, carnivorous plants, palm trees that relocate themselves when felled, and some of the most beautifully colored species of wildlife you'll ever behold...the rainforest is a true treasure to hold in ones heart forever.

You will meet creatures that have no equal to any other place — bird-eating spiders, bats with five foot wingspans, and beetles that blast sprays of boiling hot hydrogen peroxide on their predators. Dendrobates (poison dart) frogs produce toxic enzymes used in the poison arrows of native hunters; these same enzymes have been used in pharmaceuticals to treat hypertension and produce anesthesia. But don't think it's creepy like this may sound, as they house the most beautiful birds and other animal life; the most colorful and unique flowers you'll ever see.



<p>Frogmouths (Australia) and potoos (Central &amp; S. America) have large owl-like eyes which allow more light in at night (notice how plumage blends in with dead tree stump</p>	<p>Suspension bridges in the tropics enable you to walk across croc-infested water; some are still made of ropes hand woven from native grasses</p>	<p>Even though sloths are the slowest moving mammals the two-toeds can move very fast flailing arms and biting whomever is pursuing them (See sloth page for slothful information)</p>	<p>This Colombian bust was unearthed by Nicaraguans preparing fields for a banana plantation; it is legal for locals to keep but illegal to trade or sell artifacts</p>
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The tallest trees in the upper canopy of a rain forest grow to 200' tall. Emergent trees (enormous trees that poke through a rainforest canopy) can cover an entire acre. Trees have been referred to as the Earth's lungs; these days we know exactly how important trees are. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and other harmful pollutants and, through the process of photosynthesis, output oxygen. Trees are also responsible for 80% of the rain that falls upon their areas, as evaporated rain is recycled back into the atmosphere.



<p>The jaguar is tropical America's "King of the Jungle" and they are capable of dragging a cow carcass over a barbed wire fence</p>	<p>Clear-cutting of rainforests, the most biologically diverse ecosystem on our planet, harms species, air, climate, erosion, fertile soil, animals, &amp; increases global pollution</p>	<p>A bird smuggler in Belize holds a bag containing two green-winged macaws &amp; one blue &amp; gold macaw which are wrapped in paper and bound with tape</p>
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The rainforest is critical to our planet not only as an ecosystem but also because it provides us with so many things we use every day. Half of the medicines used globally originate in the rainforests. Shamans in the tropics have used medicinal plant properties for centuries and much of today's supplements contain natural derivatives from rainforests.

Burning off one acre of primary forest spews 400,000 pounds of carbon dioxide into the air which contributes to the greenhouse effect. Every day throughout the world, over 200,000 acres of primary rainforest are destroyed forever.

Half of the United States' songbirds, hawks and owls migrate to the tropics each year for food and warmth. It is, in our belief, the most astounding and beneficial place on Earth, very essential for preserving. It is our fear, that with the amount of tropical deforestation continuing as it is today, the next couple of generations will only be able to see pockets of rain forest which have been preserved, instead of millions of acres containing the biological diversity of today.