

Secrets of the Rain Forest

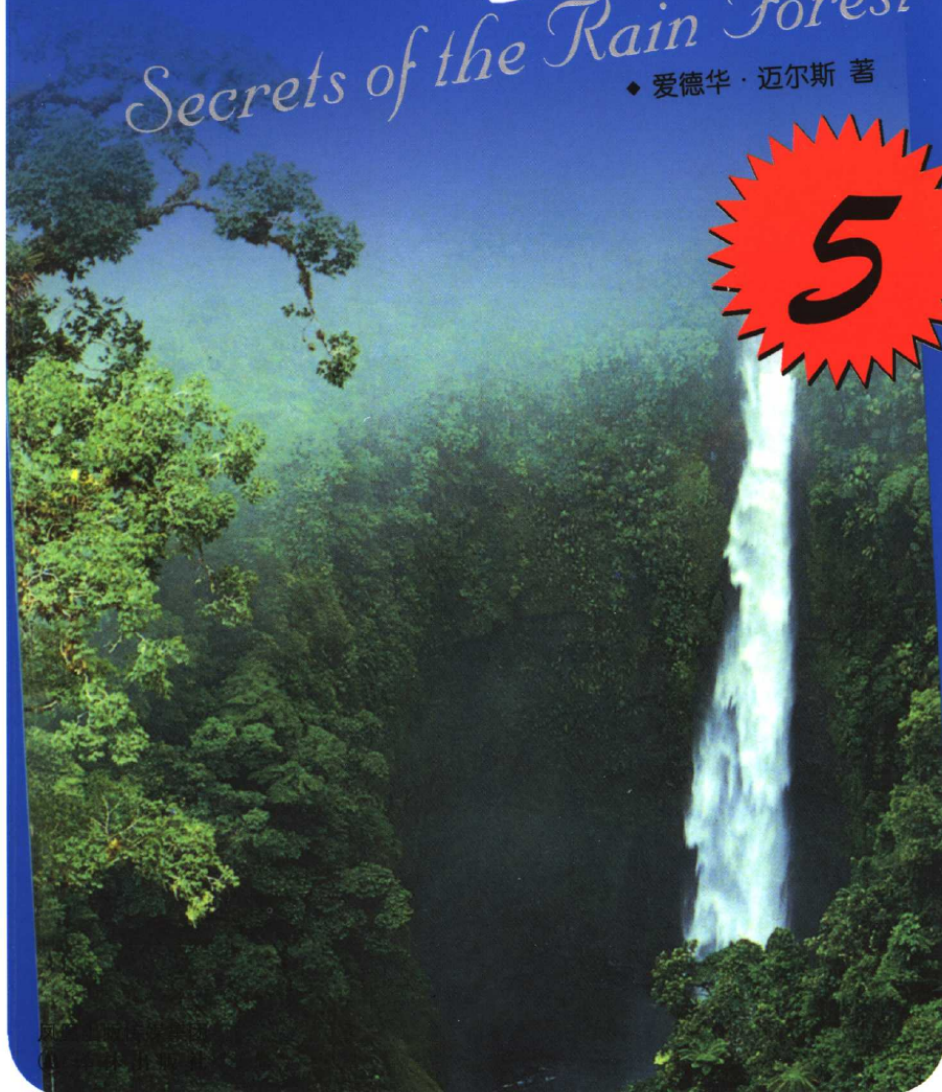
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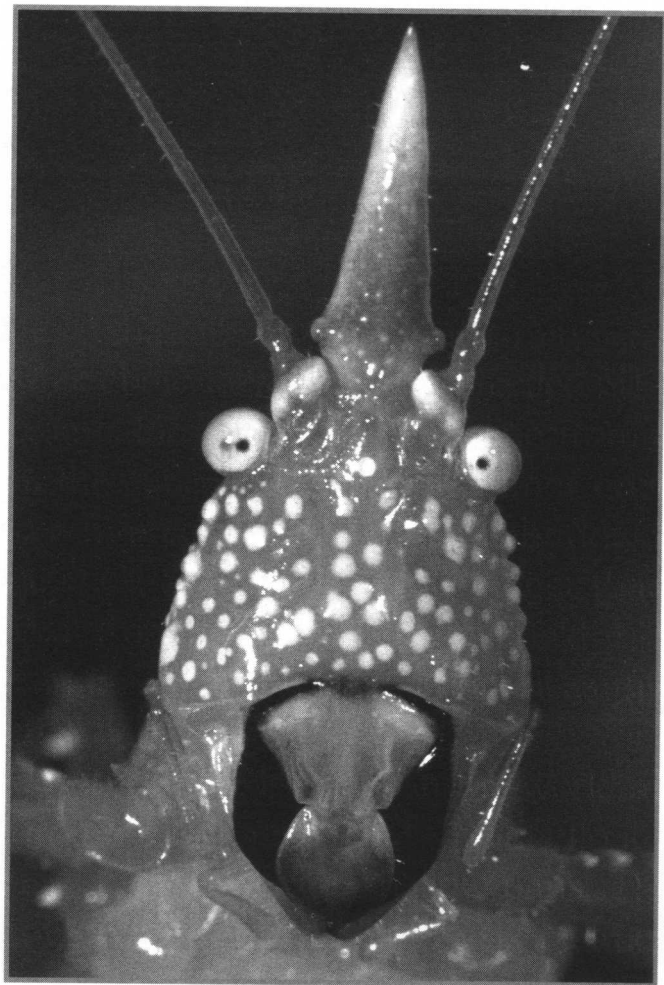
Secrets of the Rain Forest

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SECRETS
OF THE
Rain Forest



by Edward Myers

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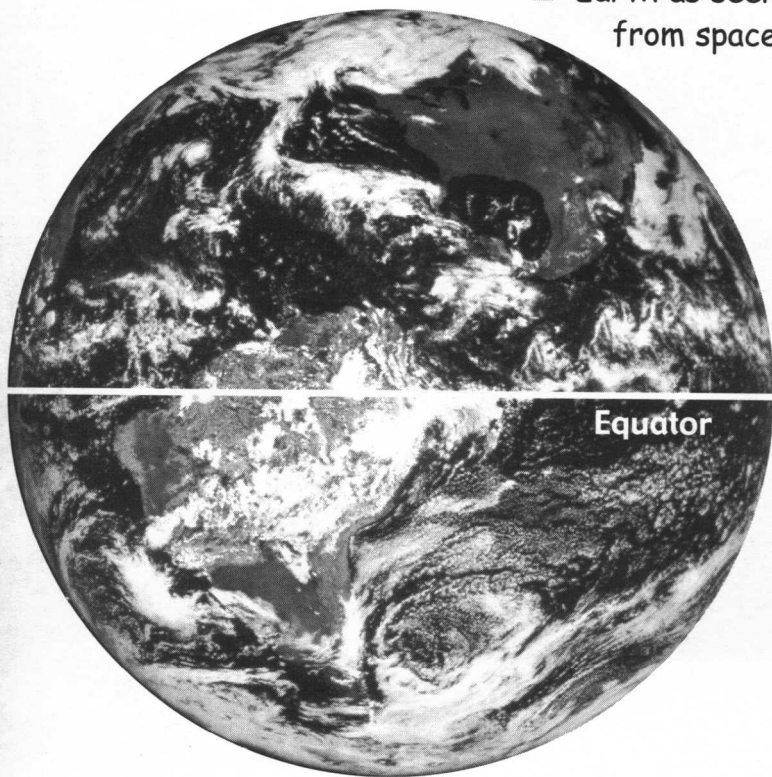


CHAPTER 1

What Is a Rain Forest?

Imagine a strange, beautiful planet. One of this planet's most **amazing** places is a "hot zone" around its middle. Some places in this hot zone have a warm, wet climate all year long. It's a good place for living things. All kinds of plants and animals call this place home. They have lived here for millions of years.

■ Earth as seen from space



In this place there's a deer the size of a rabbit, a frog that flies, and a spider that eats birds. There's a freshwater fish 8 feet long and a cow that lives in the water.

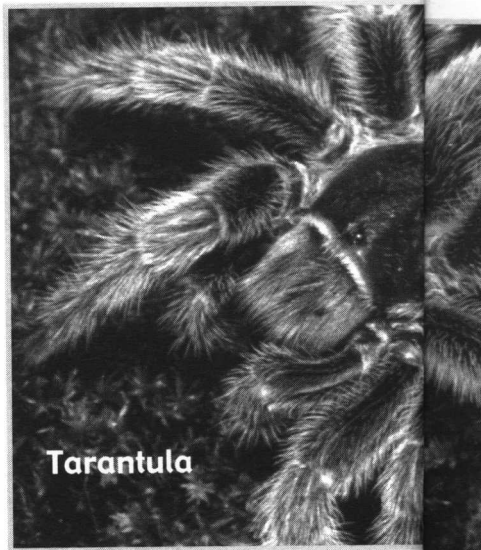
There's a bird with a **beak** almost as long as its body and a rodent that looks like a 100-pound guinea pig. There are trees that are hundreds of feet tall and plants that eat bugs.

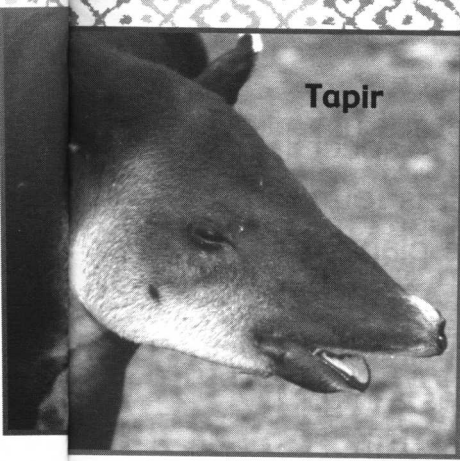
Red-eyed
tree frog



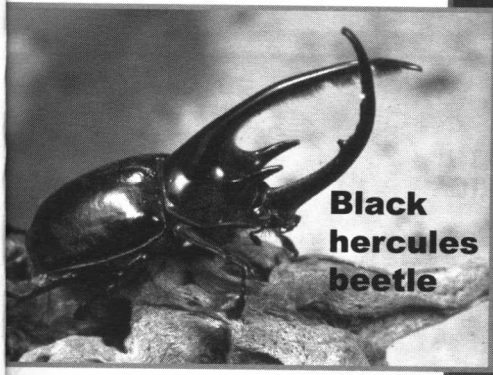
■ Animals of the
rain forest

Tarantula

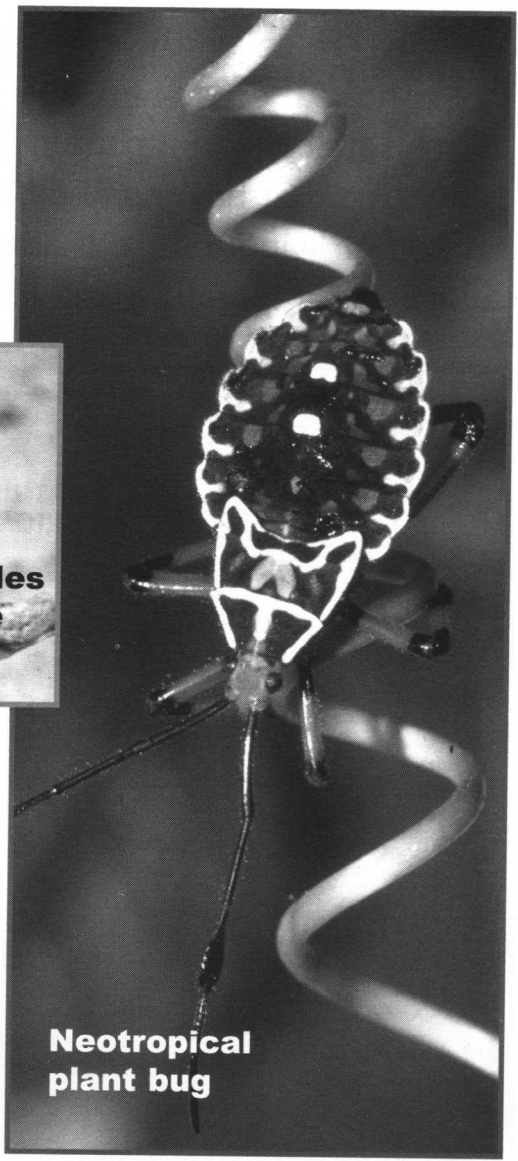
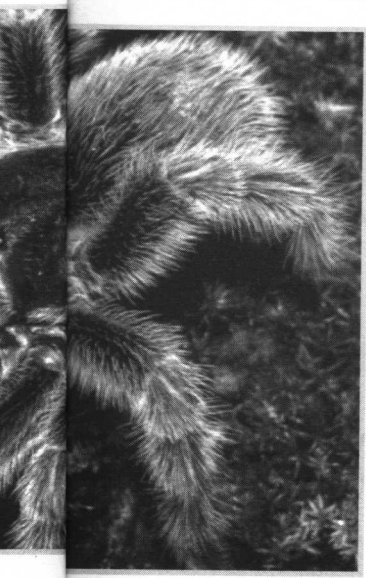




Tapir

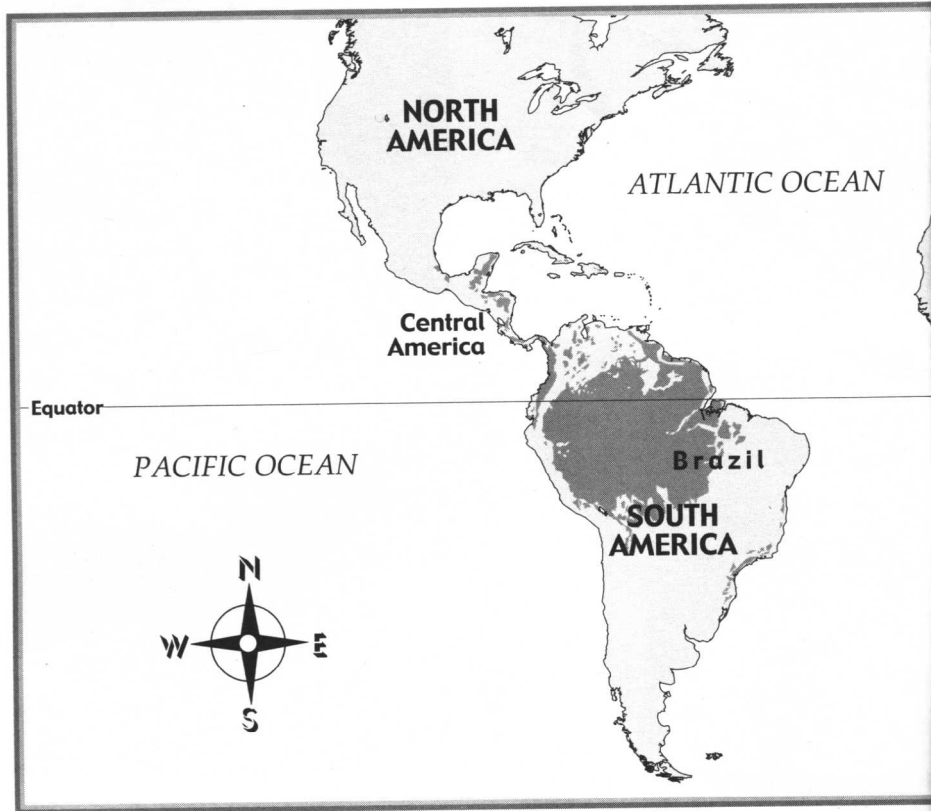


**Black
hercules
beetle**



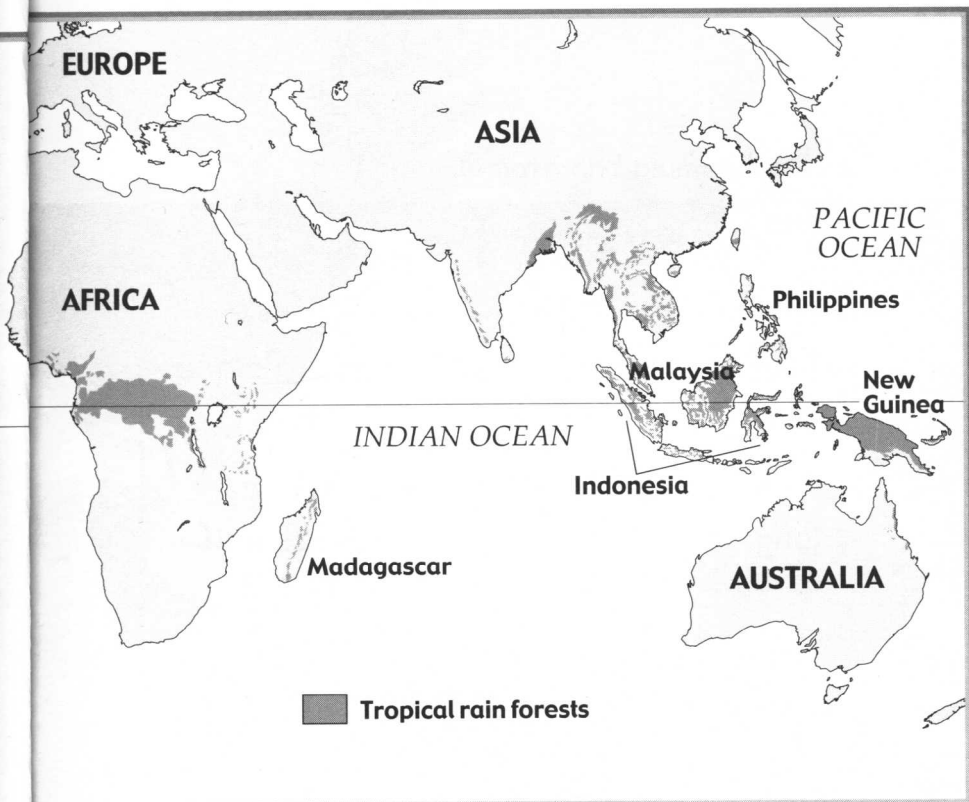
**Neotropical
plant bug**


This planet is our own Earth. A special **ecosystem** called the rain forest is found in the hot zone. An ecosystem is all the plants and animals that live in a certain place. A rain forest is an area that has many different kinds of plants and other living things. It also has a high **average** temperature and lots of rain.



Most rain forests are **tropical**. This means they are located in a narrow band along the equator. The equator is an **imaginary** line that runs around the middle of the earth. The Amazon rain forest in South America is the largest in the world.

Map of rain-forest areas





Rain forests cover only a small part of the earth's surface. Yet they are home to more kinds of plants and animals than anywhere else. Many of these plants and animals are still unknown. They are like secrets waiting to be discovered deep in the forest.



Forest Facts

- Rain forests have been on Earth since the time of the dinosaurs.
- Because they have existed for so long, rain forests contain about half of all living things found on Earth.



Why Are Rain Forests So Important?

Tropical rain forests are home to more kinds of animals and plants than any other place on Earth. This is because the climate here has stayed nearly the same for almost 100 million years.

■ Imperial moth and plumed basilisk



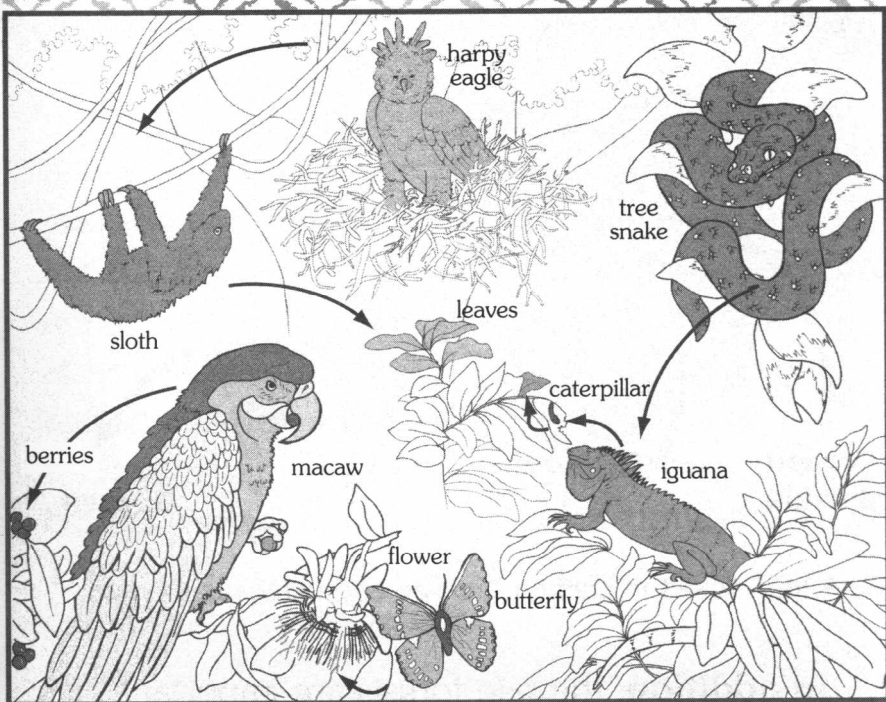
The temperature is always about the same, so the forest is never too hot or too cold. There is always plenty of water to drink because rain falls almost every day.

In other parts of the world, the climate has changed many times over millions of years. Each time there was a major change, many kinds of plants and animals died.

Even if a species, or kind of animal or plant, lives through a climate change, it may not survive. Plants and animals need each other to live. There is a "web of life" that connects all species throughout the planet and in each ecosystem.



■ Baby spider monkey eating pokeweed berries



■ Rain-forest food web

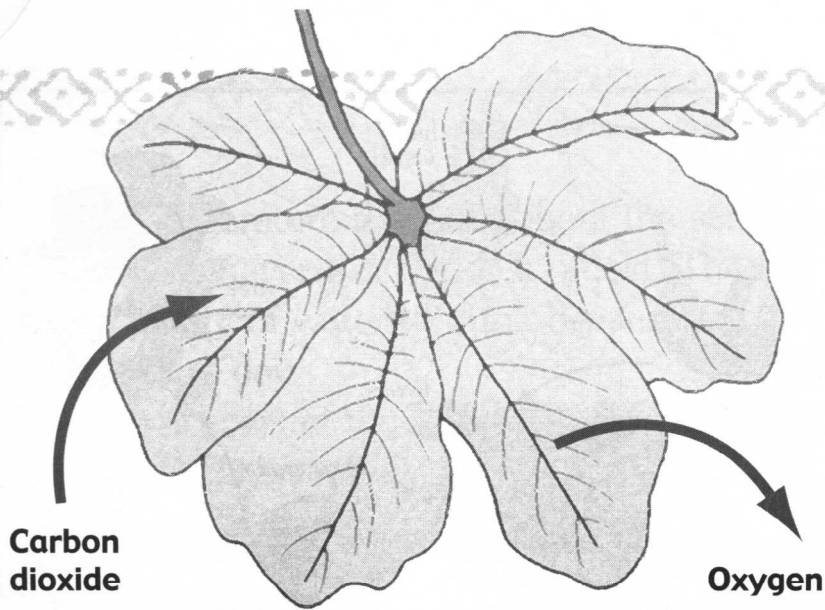
For example, some insects eat plants or parts of plants. Birds then eat the insects. Other animals eat the birds. If one species in this web of life should **die out**, other species may die out, too, because they don't have food.

The trees and plants in the rain forests are more than food for animals. They are also homes for many kinds of living things. If the trees die, the animals that depend on them for shelter may also die.

die out

- A. disappear completely
- B. become less active
- C. become weaker

Key: A



■ A leaf takes in carbon dioxide and releases oxygen.

In addition, the rain forests are important because the leaves of the trees and plants act a little like the earth's **lungs**. How does this happen?

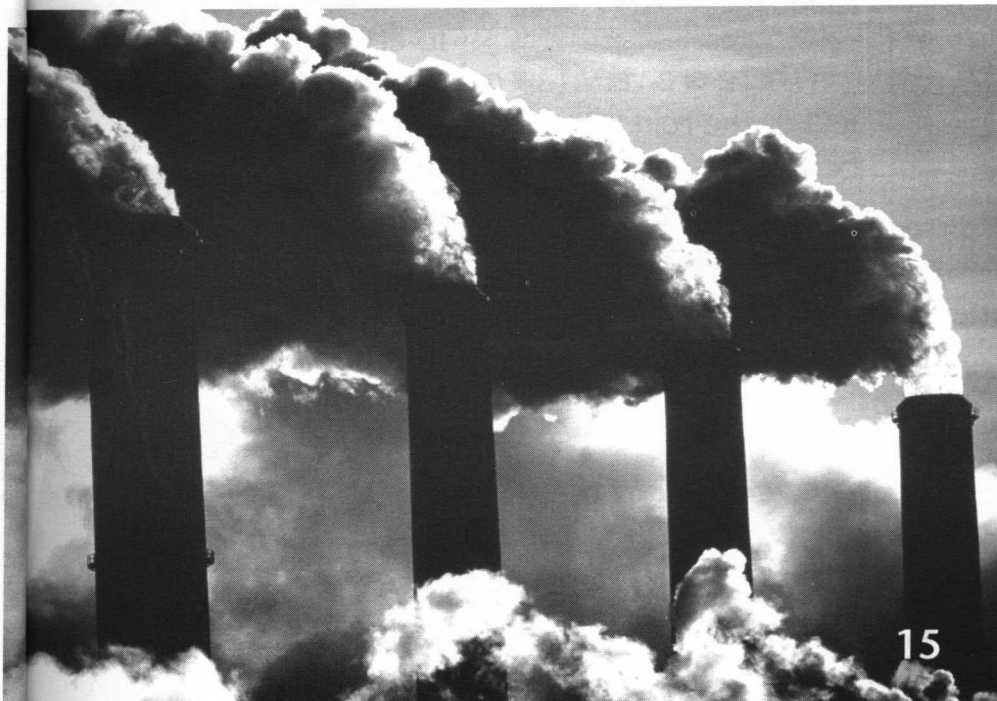
People and land animals use their lungs to breathe in air. They need a part of the air called **oxygen** to survive. People and animals then breathe out a part of the air they don't need. This part is called **carbon dioxide**.

Plants are just the opposite. They take in and use carbon dioxide to survive. They don't need much oxygen, which they **release** into the air. So plants increase the amount of oxygen in the air for people and animals to breathe. They also lower the amount of carbon dioxide.

Cars, planes, power plants, and factories also release carbon dioxide and other **substances** into the air. These substances pollute the atmosphere. If too much pollution is released, the atmosphere becomes warmer. If the earth's atmosphere becomes too hot, living things will not be able to survive.

The many plants and trees in the rain forests help to **remove** carbon dioxide from the air. They help keep the earth's climate at a comfortable temperature.

■ Pollution from a factory



Another reason the rain forests are so important is because they are home to many of the most amazing creatures and plants in the world. Today, scientists believe that they have been able to study only **a small number of** all rain-forest species. New species are being discovered all the time.

Forest Facts

There are very few golden lion tamarins left in the rain forest. Some tamarins are being raised by people and then taught to live in the forest.

