

We Bring the Amazon Home

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Spring 2010 Newsletter

The Case for Biodiversity

The UN has declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity!

What is biodiversity?

Biological diversity or biodiversity is a term that touches on the variety and number of organisms living in one region. For example, two continents would not have the exact same biodiversity because they would not possess the same species and number of organisms; they would have different species in different numbers. Biodiversity also touches on the genetic differences between organisms.



Did you know ...that the southeastern Peruvian Amazon is considered the "epicenter of biodiversity" on the planet?

More species of plants and animals live there than in any other terrestrial ecosystem. This biodiversity is possible because the Amazon rainforest possesses a vast array of what are referred to as "micro-niches" that are unique, specialized geographic areas reflecting complex interrelationships among temperature, humidity, light, soil, elevation, geology, water, and the living organisms that inhabit these zones.

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Want to learn how you can
help the rainforest at your
own home or school?

Call the ACEER Foundation!

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Why is biodiversity important?

Biodiversity is very important because we as humans affect our environment greatly. Each species, whether plant or animal, has a very distinct role in the environment and their ecosystem. It is important to keep this balance in check by preserving as much biodiversity as possible. The biodiversity that we have now, and have had, has given us the resources and lifestyle we have today. To preserve these resources, biodiversity must be maintained. The Convention on Biological Diversity lists several resources that biodiversity has enabled us to have. Food, fuel, shelter and building materials, standardization of the earth's climate, pollination of plants and cultural and aesthetic benefits are just a few.

A loss in biodiversity would greatly upset our food and agriculture systems and the productivity of our ecosystems. Species have been rapidly disappearing in the past few years. The Convention on Biological Diversity states that approximately "34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species - including one in eight of the world's bird species - face extinction." Global warming is also projected to push some species to the brink of extinction as well. [Read More](#)

Tribute to Biodiversity from Peruvian School Children

Peru has long been known to have extensive biodiversity. Since 2010 is the international year of biodiversity, many organizations and people are trying to make a difference. This is being done through educating and making everyone aware of the importance of biodiversity. The school children pictured below, were part of a contest entitled "Myths and Legends of Peruvian Monkeys." The Peruvian Cloud Forest is the habitat for the critically endangered yellow tailed woolly monkey. This particular species of monkey is one of the top 25 endangered primates of the world (2008-2010). The contest, started in 2009, has received work from 15 of the 24 regions of Peru. All stated the importance of preserving biodiversity in Peru, not just for the forest but for what it represents to the country as well. The best 50 works from the schools will be put together and published in a book to spread awareness of the

importance of biodiversity.



Save the Date

March 26 & 27, 2010

The ACEER Foundation, the College of Health Sciences at West Chester University of PA, and the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Appeal will host a unique two-day event

Olivia: Voices for Healing...Our Planet...Ourselves

For more information visit the event website at www.wcupa.edu/VoicesForHealing

2010 Workshops

Please visit the [ACEER website](#) for the full listing of workshops being offered in 2010. For additional information, please contact Mary Ann Robinson at mrobinson@wcupa.edu

The Case for Biodiversity continued

An example would be the seed disbursement of Brazil

nut trees in the Amazon. Brazil nut trees drop their nuts in very hard shells that are difficult to crack open. Peccaries, a form of wild boar, have a skill that enables them to break open the hard shells of the Brazil nut trees and therefore, they help with the disbursement of the Brazil nut tree's seeds. This helps to keep the level of Brazil nut trees constant. What if the peccary became extinct? There would no longer be a species (other than humans) that could break open the hard shells and the seeds would not be as disbursed. Would the number of Brazil nut trees begin to diminish? And what would happen if the Brazil nut tree were to become extinct as well? These are some of the issues that biodiversity and its importance stress.



What can we do?

It is important that we continue to protect biodiversity. Government and industry can greatly affect biodiversity and take action to preserve it. Individuals and the choices they make can also have a great impact on biodiversity. Changes in the choices we make everyday can help protect the biodiversity we have now. One example of this is not to buy beef that has come from countries where clear cutting rainforests is acceptable.

What is ACEER doing?

The Amazon rainforest, with its botanical diversity, is literally a living biochemical laboratory. ACEER fosters the preservation of medicinal plant germplasm and indigenous knowledge through a variety of means. First and foremost is through the creation of ethnobotanical gardens at our centers. Gardens and useful plant trails have been created at ACEER's original field station near the Napo River, ACEER-Los Amigos, ACEER-Tambopata, and at the Cahuide Village Nature Center. ACEER's Amigos Program in the Iquitos region is focused on

creating medicinal plant gardens at participating schools. Together, over 250 species of ethnobotanically significant plants are protected in ACEER's gardens.

- 80% of the world's population relies on plant-based medicines for their primary health care
- 25% of our pharmaceutical drugs come from plants
- Many more are based on neo-tropical plant models

Scientists estimate 300 more await discovery in tropical forests

Help to support ACEER's ethnobotanical programs by supporting our Amigos Program! Click [here](#) to donate!