



World Environment Day 2020: The World's Largest Forests, and How They're Rapidly Vanishing

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Forests are biodiversity hotspots with a large number of flora and fauna. While the entire forest cover makes up for about one third of the planet, deforestation has been taking place at a fast pace, thereby affecting multiple ecosystems and leading to the extinction of species. This World Environment Day, dialogue should be initiated to save these.

Here are the world's largest forests that require our care and prompt action now.

Amazon

With more than 5.5 million square kilometer area, the Amazon spans across nine countries – Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. It is home to a variety of organisms, including over 40,000 plant species, 1,300 bird species, 430 mammals and 2.5 million insects.

However, in the last few decades, the forest has seen great loss. Large-scale agricultural activities, cattle rearing, mining and logging have reduced the habitat. Last year, thousands of fires had engulfed a large portion of the rainforest. Believed to have been caused by people burning trees to make space for agricultural fields, around 76,000 devastating fires were recorded in August 2019.

Sundarbans

These are the largest mangrove forests on earth right now. Covering vast areas of India and Bangladesh, this forest acts as a natural barrier against the floods and cyclones. The UNESCO World Heritage site is home to the Royal Bengal Tiger, Indian Python and many other important species.

However, the forests are under threat due to rising sea levels and increasing water salinity. As land vanishes, humans are encroaching upon the habitat of animals in the Sundarbans. The man-animal conflict is common theme here. The recent cyclone Amphan has caused great distress to the Sundarbans, destroying bulks of river embankments and flooding houses.

Daintree

The largest contiguous forest in Australia stretches across 1200 square km area. It spans from the Daintree river to the edge of the Queensland coast. It is home to a variety of flora and fauna.

Xishuangbanna

The forest is one of the most diverse, having eight different biological areas. Spread across an area of 927 square miles in China's Yunnan province, it is to over 3500 flora species.

Tongass

At 26,256 square miles of area, this forest in Alaska is the largest in the US and the fourth largest in the world. Many types of avian, terrestrial and aquatic call Tongass their home.

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