

# RAINFORESTS



He must've gotten scared by the bird-napping article and flown off!

**JILLIAN**

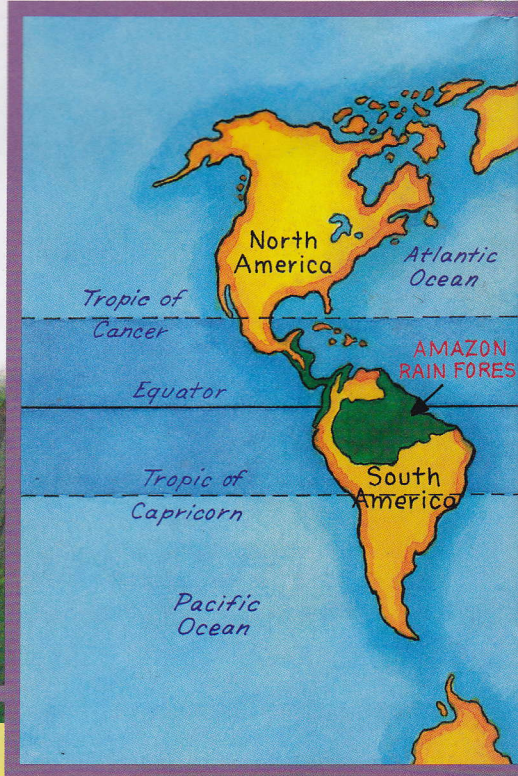
I would sit on a tree trunk and watch for animals. I would take pictures of the animals and show my family.

WE'RE COMING, HUCK!

You are standing under a canopy of huge trees. Everywhere you look, things are growing (plants) and moving (animals). It's hot and it's raining, but you don't care, for this is a totally fascinating place. Where are you? In a rainforest!

A band called the **tropics** stretches around the middle of our planet. Every day, it rains in the hot, dense forests of the tropics, so they are called **rainforests**. Rainforests get more than 80 inches of rain each year. More than 50 countries have tropical rainforests, but the largest are in Brazil, Indonesia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"I think everything in the rainforest is amazing!" says Dr. Nalini M. Nadkarni, a



**TROPICAL RAINFORESTS**

illustrated by Margaret Sanfilippo Lindmark

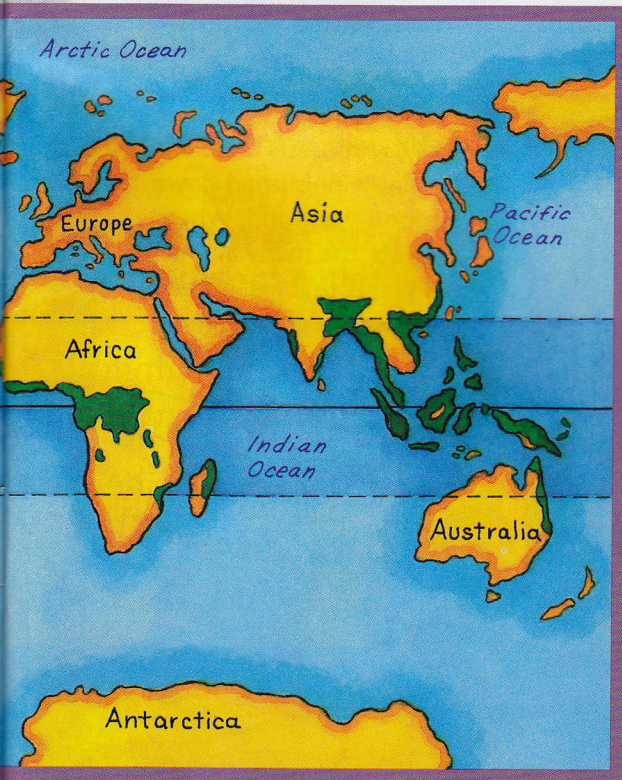


# —What, Where, and Why?

by Carollyne Hutter

well-known rainforest scientist. “I work to save rainforests because they are so useful, diverse, and beautiful,” she explains. She describes the rainforest as “a giant jigsaw puzzle I want to figure out.”

Rainforests are complex worlds where many animals, insects, and plants live together. Scientists call rainforests the “jewels of the planet,” because they are so important. More than half of the world’s estimated 10 million species of plants, animals, and insects live in tropical rainforests.



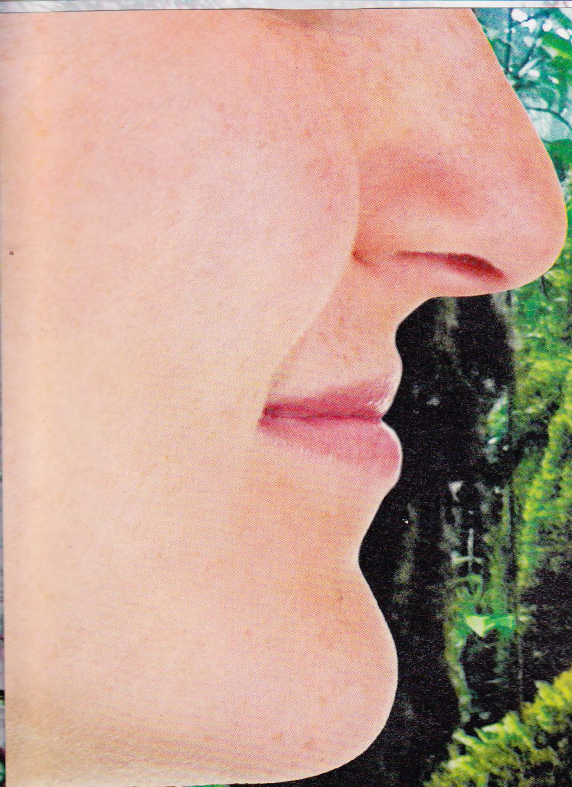
To do her research, Dr. Nadkarni has climbed trees on four continents

**ALYSSA**

I would live in a tree and I would open my roof and draw the forest. My pet jaguar, cheetah, and I would ride home.







## RAINFORESTS HELP US BREATHE

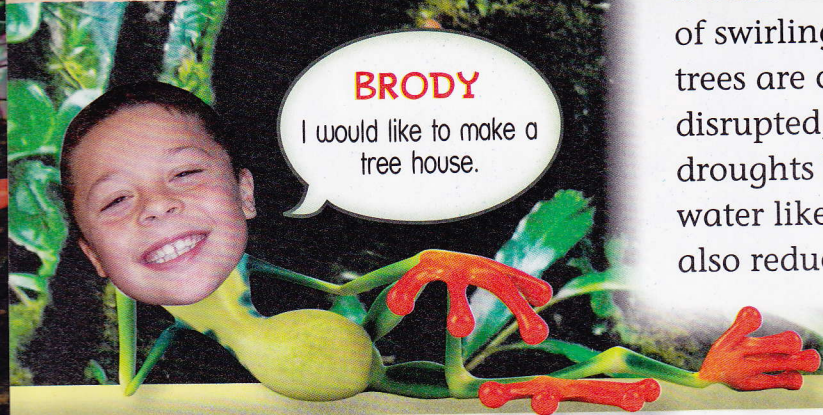
Scientists call rainforests “the lungs of Earth,” because they help provide the oxygen we need for breathing. The rainforests also clean our atmosphere by absorbing carbon dioxide. When rainforests are burned or cut down, they release carbon dioxide into the air. This pollutes the atmosphere and contributes to global warming.

Rainforests regulate the climate around the world, too. The trees draw water from the forest floor. They release it back into the atmosphere in the form of swirling mists and clouds. If the trees are cut down, the water cycle is disrupted, temperatures increase, and droughts become common. By storing water like a huge sponge, rainforests also reduce flooding in rivers.



**BRODY**

I would like to make a tree house.



## SAVING RAINFORESTS

Sadly, rainforests are being cut down or burned down around the world. When they go, the many animals and plants that live in them disappear, too. Read more about this on pages 30-31.



Hey... that scientist has a slingshot! Huck could be up there!





## GIFTS FROM THE RAINFOREST

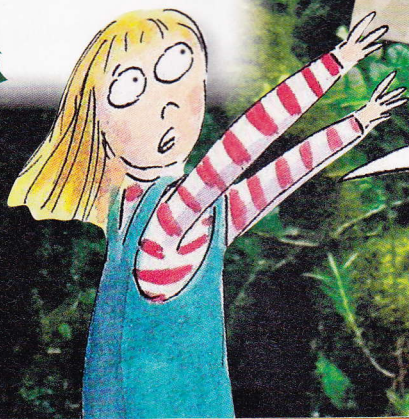
Rainforests are the home of more than 2,000 plants that people in the world eat:

- Fruits and vegetables such as avocados, coconuts, oranges, lemons, grapefruits, bananas, pineapples, mangos, tomatoes, corn, potatoes, rice, and more.
- Spices such as black pepper, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, sugar cane, vanilla, and more.
- Drinks such as coffee and tea.
- Nuts such as Brazil nuts and cashews.
- And one of the most popular flavors in the world: chocolate.

Rainforests help keep us healthy, too. More than 25 percent of our modern medicines come from rainforest plants. Today, more than 100 pharmaceutical companies and the US government are studying rainforest plants for possible drugs and cures for viruses, infections, cancer, and more. We have learned how to use only 1 percent of these amazing rainforest plants, so imagine if we could experiment with the other 99 percent!

Besides food and medicine, we get many industrial products such as rubber, resins, and fibers from the rainforests.

**Rainforests are important. Read on to find out more.**



STOP!  
PLEASE!

Dr. Nadkarni shoots a line into the tree she is about to climb.



After she shoots the line (using equipment she invented), she can climb up safely and without harming the tree.