

2.5 Conserving the Rain Forest

TECHTREK

myNGconnect.com For photos of ecotourism in Central America and the Caribbean



Main Idea Ecotourism provides a new opportunity for this region to protect rain forest habitats and fight poverty.

The rain forests and other natural resources of Central America and the Caribbean are a draw for large numbers of travelers every year. Tourism, however, can damage or even permanently destroy these valuable resources.

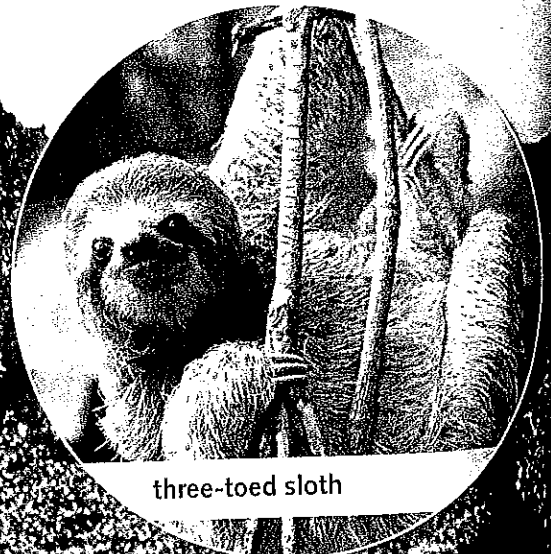
Rain Forest Habitats

A rain forest is an important animal **habitat**, a natural home or environment for certain species. Plants in the rain forest provide nourishment for the animal population and replenish the air with oxygen. Some animal and plant species in the rain forest are not known to exist anywhere else.

The features of the rain forest that attract visitors are the very same features that are threatened by excessive tourism. If a species loses its habitat, or the habitat is altered in any way, that species may face extinction. Conserving the resources of the rain forest is an important step towards protecting species that live there.



quetzal



three-toed sloth

Visual Vocabulary A habitat is a place where certain species have what they need to live. The rain forest canopy is an important animal habitat.

Rain Forest Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a way of visiting natural areas that conserves the resources of the region. The purpose of ecotourism is to allow a visitor to experience an environment in its most natural form. A rain forest ecotourist might explore from the ground on a guided hike or a birdwatching tour. Another ecotourist might explore from above by taking a tour of the rain forest canopy, home to a great variety of animal species.

This method of travel not only protects plants and animals of the rain forest, but also improves the lives of the local people. Ecotourism helps stop deforestation and soil destruction by providing alternative jobs to poor farmers who live off rain forest land. Local people can work in hotels, or as tour guides or rangers.

Ecotourism helps to preserve the environment by allowing a country to profit from and sustain its resources in their natural form. Housing for ecotourists is designed to have very little effect on the environment. For example, the construction of the Lapa Rios Resort in Costa Rica caused the loss of only one tree.

However, even ecotourists can have a negative impact. If too many ecotourists visit a single location, they can interfere with the habitat there. International conservation organizations have become involved in ecotourism. They have begun to point travelers to destinations that are working to preserve the natural resources of the region.

Before You Move On

Summarize How does ecotourism help protect against deforestation?

ONGOING ASSESSMENT

SPEAKING LAB

- 1. Turn and Talk** You are the owner of a resort in a Central American country. With a partner, discuss what you would include on your website to convince people that your resort preserves the environment and helps local people. Share your ideas with the class.
- 2. Compare and Contrast** In what way is the focus of ecotourists different from that of other tourists? Provide an example.
- 3. Analyze Visuals** From what you observe in the photos of the canopy and some of its animal inhabitants, what do you think draws ecotourists to the rain forest?

blue jeans frog

