



## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTS ABOUT THE MAYA TROPICAL FOREST

- Central America forms a bridge between North and South America and for millions of years has served as a natural corridor connecting the two continents biologically. It is a treasure-trove of biodiversity, culture and economically valuable natural resources.
- The Maya tropical forest is the largest block of contiguous forest left in Central America, stretching from Mexico across Guatemala to Belize and Honduras. It is the second largest rainforest in the Americas after the Amazon.
- This tropical rainforest, home to the Maya civilization, contains hundreds of spectacular archaeological sites. The oldest traces of human activity in the area date from 9000 B.C.E
- The Maya Rainforest is part of the Mesoamerican hotspot, which contains over 5000 endemic plant species. More than 375 plant species found in the Maya Forest are found nowhere else on earth. The International Union for Conservation of Nature considers this region of special conservation concern.
- The Maya tropical forest provides refuge to more than 400 species of birds, like toucans, golden eagle and the scarlet macaw. Yearly this rainforest becomes home to one billion migratory birds that flee the winter in Canada and the United States.
- More than 300 of the Mesoamerican endemic species of flora and fauna are threatened, including at least 107 that are critically endangered such as the yellow-headed Amazon parrot, harpy eagle, tapir, the Geoffroy's spider monkey and black howler monkey. The Maya rainforest is one of the few places on Earth where five cat species live in the same region: jaguar, puma, ocelot, jaguarundi and margay.
- The Maya tropical Rainforest is shrinking fast, as deforestation rates in the region are alarmingly high. Approximately 80% of the natural vegetation of Central America has been destroyed by agriculture, urban areas, and cattle farming.
- Deforestation in all of Latin America is approximately 11.1 million acres per year. Deforestation globally accounts for around 20% of global carbon emissions, more than the entire transport sector.
- Worldwide, forests absorb almost a fifth of the world's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year. As the largest tropical forest in Central and North America, the Maya rainforest is essential to the global ecosystem.