



FINFO

SPRING EDITION: THE AMAZON

Brought to you by:  **ADVENTURE AQUARIUM** EXPLORE LIFE UNDERWATER  **CENTER for AQUATIC SCIENCES** at Adventure Aquarium

Victor slowly paddled his canoe on his daily journey down the Amazon River. All around him, birds were calling, leaves were rustling, fish were splashing, and people were laughing. As he neared a bend, a large fish jumped out of the water. He knew this was an arapaima. Arapaima are one of the largest **species** of freshwater fish. They can grow to be over 6 feet long. Victor had never caught one that long before, but his family did eat them for dinner at least once a week.

The rainforest around him offered shade on this warm day. Victor was happy that today was clear and sunny. The Amazon rainforest gets between 60 and 120 inches of rain per year. Victor gets rained on a lot! Victor saw another animal that was enjoying the sun today. A black caiman rested on the bank of the river. Caimans are reptiles that look a lot like alligators. They need the warmth of the sun to help digest their food. Victor guessed that this caiman was a male, as he appeared to be quite large.



The Amazon rainforest is located in South America and stretches across 9 countries!

Suddenly, a group of large colorful birds flew overhead. They were blue-and-yellow macaws. They made quite a racket as they called to each other





Capybaras, known as the largest rodent in the world, are herbivores!

meal. With over 2.5 million insect species that can be found in the Amazon, the iguana was likely to find something to eat soon! A family of capybaras, the world's largest rodent, crept carefully out of the **underbrush** to get a drink from the river. The capybara looked a lot like a dog-sized guinea pig. He admired their soft fur and thought about the coat that his grandfather had. Victor wondered if it was made from capybara fur. A brown-throated sloth slowly made her way down a tree. Victor guessed she was going to poop. He knew that sloths climbed down their tree once every eight days or so to **defecate** in the soil.

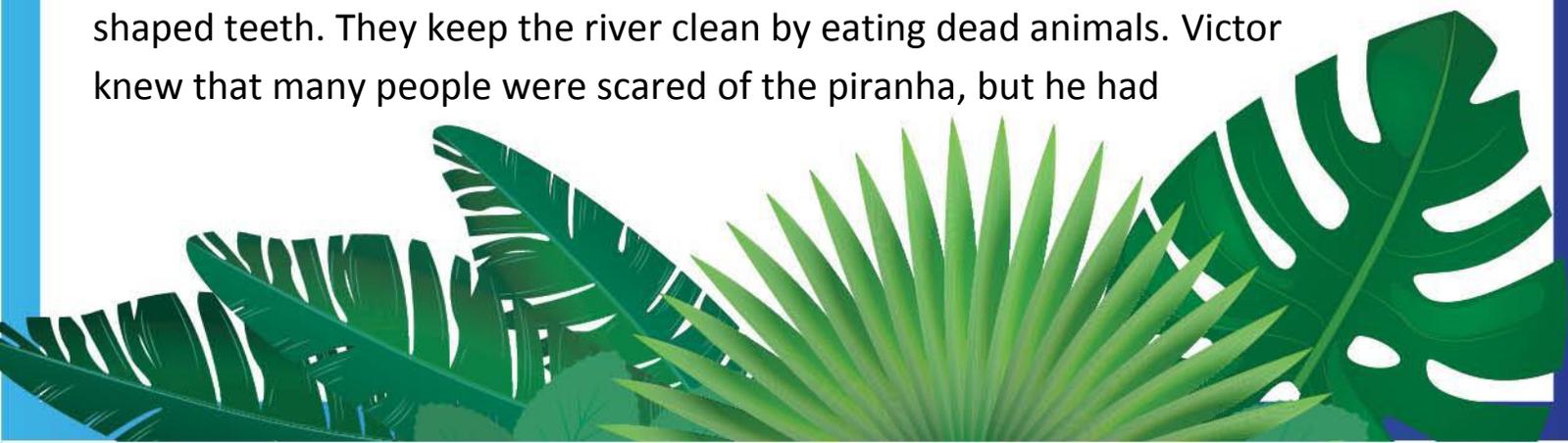
Although he couldn't see them, Victor knew there were a lot of fish in the water under his canoe. There was red-bellied piranha, with their sharp triangle-shaped teeth. They keep the river clean by eating dead animals. Victor knew that many people were scared of the piranha, but he had

and flapped their wings. Victor admired their strong, powerful beaks. Their beaks are designed for cracking seeds and nuts. Victor also loved eating nuts and often wished he had a beak like a macaw!

As Victor paddled further down the river, he noticed other animals that were out today. A young green iguana scurried up a tree in search of an insect meal. With over 2.5 million insect species that can be found in the Amazon, the iguana was likely to find something to eat soon! A family of capybaras, the world's largest rodent, crept carefully out of the **underbrush** to get a drink from the river.



Two-toed sloths are nocturnal, being most active at night. While three-toed sloths are diurnal which means they are most active during the day.



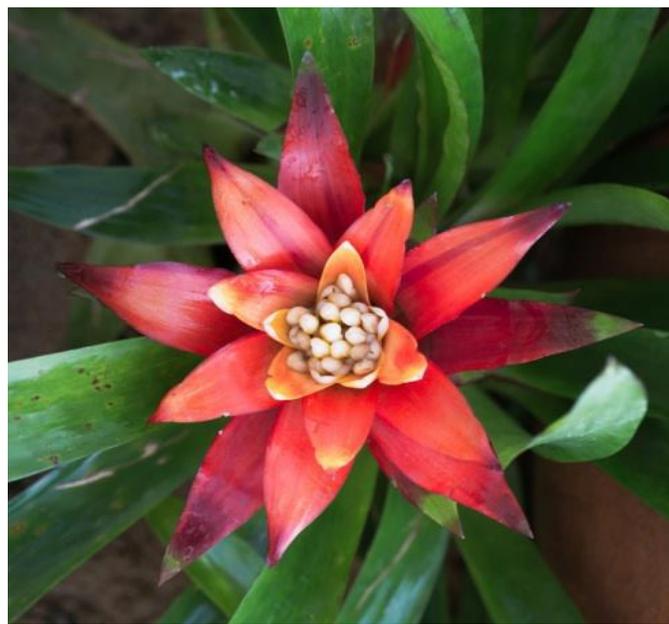


The Red Bellied Pacu, the cousin of the Piranha.

often gone swimming with piranha nearby. The **herbivore** cousin of the piranha, the Pacu, could also be found in the river. They had mouths that would crack open nuts, much like the macaw's beak. There were also brightly colored tetras that darted through the water. Victor could sometimes see their shiny scales reflecting the sun as they raced past him. Victor was often amazed by the amount of living things he could see as he paddled his canoe.

The Amazon rainforest contains the largest number of insects and animals in the entire world. It also has the largest **biodiversity** of plants in the world. Bromeliads are flowering plants that are often found growing attached to trees. They collect water and provide a place for tree frogs to lay their eggs. Cocoa trees produce large pods, from which we make chocolate.

Other fruit trees like bananas and lemons call the rainforest home. Victor's mother's favorite flowers are the orchids found in the rainforest. There are over 20,000 species of orchid, each beautiful and **fragrant**. As Victor neared the end of his journey, he heard loud machinery in the forest. This sound made Victor sad because he knew the machines he heard were cutting down rainforest trees. The Amazon River basin is rapidly losing



A bromeliad plant found in the Amazon rainforest.



forests and habitat due to **deforestation**. Much of this is due to agriculture, cattle ranching, **unsustainable** fishing, mining, logging and road construction. However, Victor was hopeful that as more people became aware of the importance of this amazing **habitat** that he called home, these practices would soon become a thing of the past.



The world's **rainforests** are currently disappearing at a rate of 6000 acres every hour.

VOCABULARY

Species – a group of living things

Underbrush – small shrubs and plants growing under taller trees

Defecate – pass solid waste from the body

Herbivore -- any animal that feeds chiefly on grass and other plants

Biodiversity -- the variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat

Deforestation -- the cutting, clearing, and removal of rainforest or related habitats

Unsustainable -- not able to be continued, especially in a way that is kind to the environment

Habitat – a place where an animal lives, its home

Fragrant – the way something smells; its odor

