



# Amazon Rainforests

[Source: NYT](#)

Scientists are studying [Amazon rainforests](#) to figure out the extent to which forests **capture and lock away** huge amounts of [carbon dioxide](#).

- A new study finds that **about half of the Amazon region's carbon** is contained in **2% or so of its species**. These species are typically enormous hardwood trees that may be the most susceptible to [climate change](#) (and illegal logging).
- **Tipping Point:** The Amazon rainforest is considered one of the **nine climate tipping points** that could cause the global climate system to shift into a new state.
  - If it passes a tipping point, the Amazon, a global sink for carbon, could **release massive amounts of carbon** to accelerate **climate change**.
- **Concerns:** Deforestation and frequent forest fires can turn the forest into a source of CO<sub>2</sub>.
  - In the **1970s and 1980s**, Brazil started large-scale forest conversion for **cattle ranching and agriculture**.
  - **Forest fires** have doubled since 2013.
- **Importance of Amazon Forests:**
  - **Biodiversity:** Amazon forests are home to nearly a **5<sup>th</sup> of the world's land species** and are also home to **10% of all the wildlife species**.
  - **Water Cycle:** The trees in the Amazon also release **20 billion tonnes of water** into the atmosphere per day.
  - **Carbon Sink:** **150-200 billion tons** of carbon is stored in the Amazon rainforest.

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