"Effects of Studying Rainforests"

Scientists have been studying the rainforest for many years. The rainforest abounds with mysteries about the plants and animals that live there, and new species are being discovered every day. Through careful observation of plant life, the climate, and animals that live there, scientists learn more about the rainforest. But what are the effects of studying the rainforest?

Discovery of New Plants and Animals

One effect of studying the rainforest is the discovery of new plants and animals. For thousands of years, people have used plants and animals from the rainforest for farming, clothing, and medicine. More recently, the National Cancer Institute has estimated that about 70 percent of known anti-cancer plants come from the rainforest, and scientists continue to discover new species of plants and animals. Between 1999 and 2009, over 1,200 plants and animals were discovered in the Amazon. That's one new species every three days! As new species continue to come to light, the potential for new, life-saving medicines developed from rainforest plants grows.

Learning about Climate Stability

Another effect of studying the rainforest is developing a better understanding of how rainforests impact the world's climate. Rainforests are known as the "lungs of the planet" because of their role in absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. Scientists are still learning how rainforests give back to the ecosystem—how they regulate temperature and weather patterns and how they affect the water cycle. Understanding how rainforests impact Earth's climate helps scientists learn how to prepare for climate change. For example, scientists are now working with farmers in South America to rebuild the rainforest through reforestation, or planting new trees, and preserving forests.

Developing New Theories about the Rainforest

Studying the rainforest also helps scientists to develop new theories about the plants and animals that live there. A new theory suggests that in addition to being the "lungs of the planet," the rainforest can also be thought of as a pump, like a heart. Some scientists think the rainforest pumps water through the ecosystem, which might explain why the Amazon has survived for so long.

Curiosity drives scientists' work, and they are always striving to learn more about what they are studying. Because of the importance of rainforests, rainforest scientists' studies affect all of us.

1100L
Written by EL Education for instructional purposes

Sources:
"About the Amazon." *WWF*. World Wildlife Fund, n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2016. http:/wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/amazon/about_the_amazon/

"Climate Change in the Amazon." *WWF.* World Wildlife Fund, n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2016. http:/www.worldwildlife.org/pages/climate-change-in-the-amazon

"8 Easy Ways to Green Your Home." *Rainforest Alliance*. Rainforest Alliance, n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2016. https:/www.rainforest-alliance.org/articles/green-your-home

"Rain Forest: Incubators of Life." *National Geographic*. National Geographic Society, n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2016. http:/environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/habitats/rainforest-profile/

"Scientists Say the Amazon Is Still Teaching Us New Lessons." *NPR*. National Public Radio, 6 Dec. 2015. Web. 19 Jan. 2016. http:/www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=454736397

Butler, Rhett. "Why Are Rainforests Important?" *Kids.Mongabay.com.* Mongabay.com, 5 Dec. 2015. Web. 19 Jan. 2016. http:/kids.mongabay.com/elementary/401.html

"Why Is the Amazon Rainforest Important?" *WWF.* World Wildlife Fund, n.d. Web. 19 Jan. 2016. http:/wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/amazon/about_the_amazon/why_amazon_important/