

Andy Tonnesen

### **Amazon: Land of the Flooded Forest**

The main focus of this documentary was to highlight the expansive changes that occur during the flooded period for the Amazon river. It began by laying the foundation about the formation to the region as a whole. The Andes mountains were created by shifting tectonic plates, which drastically changed the course of the Amazon. Originally the river flowed east to west and connected the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. After the mountains arose, the connection was lost, the basin shrunk and the flow completely turned around and now flows west to east. The origin of the river is not the only unique aspect of the river, and the areas it passes through.

The biodiversity of the Amazon is almost as amazing as the formation of the river itself. The Amazon is home to so many species including 20 piranha species and over 900 species of birds. The creatures of the Amazon all blend together with the rising waters. This flooded area becomes a place full of symbiotic relationships and relationships not seen anywhere else. The river monkey is a prime example. This species of fish has adapted to eat bugs off the surface of the water, as well as to launch itself after the prey in trees. The prime example of the symbiotic relationship is the vast amounts of fish that live under the fruit trees. The fish have adapted to eat the fruit and in turn the seeds are dispersed by the fish.

The Amazon is full of other amazing creatures, such as the watusi bird, the wakati monkey, both are species only found in the Amazon and that scientists know little about. Other species include the giant river turtle, the sloth, the capybara, and so many

others! The biggest threat to this diversity is another animal... humans. Humans are destroying the forest at a rate of two football fields a minute. Between the deforestation for lumber, crop and cattle fields, the mining of gold, and the construction of hydroelectric dams, humans are killing the forest more and more everyday.

I believe this documentary touched on some very good points, especially the formation of the Amazon. I was amazed to see the impacts the Andes mountains had on the river. I always believed that they were there and the river was formed from run off of the mountains, but i know now that's not the case. The fact that the river completely reversed direction over that time period is fascinating to me. Especially it being the mighty AmaZon river, whose flow is so majestic and powerful, it boggles my mi fthat it was able to reverse at all, let alone become the sight it is today.

Another interesting point of the documentary came with the discussion of the piranha. It is believed that if you swim in the Amazon, you will be veraciously attacked by the sharp toothed little terrors. This is not the case, in fact their attacks are highly exaggerated and fabled, becoming a true fish story. I will admit I believed this myth at one time, but was shocked to see that some piranhas don't even kill to eat. They have adapted to gain their nutrients consuming scales and bits of fins of other fish. This was a very cool fact that I would have never guessed to be true.

The final aspect of the documentary I enjoyed was learning about the locals. The locals are a called caboclos, and are a mix of European and Indian bloodlines. These people harvest only what they need and display so many ecologically minded practices, but have no clue of the field of ecology. They just harvest what they need and value the

resources they have. The people are truly resourceful people, adapting their homes to the varying water levels almost every year. They may be poor, making less than 1000 US dollars a year, but seem to live perfectly contently. They use what they have and can harvest and don't desire anything else. Americans can take a page from the caboclos and become less wasteful and more ecologically friendly. There is so much the world can learn from the amazon, but we need to protect it before we lose it and all the knowledge and impotence that comes with it.