

Past, present and future of the Amazon rainforest



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Tropical rainforests are the most diverse ecosystem on Earth and the Amazon forest is by far the largest. We have seen dramatic images of forest fires, witness increasing impact of climate change and are concerned about its potential effects on rainforests, often called the green lungs of Earth. Yet despite decades of deforestation, large areas of the Amazon remain intact. Or are they? And what are green lungs and in how is the Amazon forest important for us?

Our knowledge of how rainforests function and their role in the carbon cycle and climate have increased substantially in recent years. In this talk I will present some of the recent advances in our understanding of rainforests, explain how scientists are trying to answer open questions, and discuss the uncertainties and challenges involved in predicting the future of the Amazon forest. But we will start in the past, which may hold lessons for the future ...

