

Rain forest

Forests and biodiversity

Sustainable certifications

An important positive message comes from the World Bank, which was often sponsor of the most destructive actions undertaken in the past regarding tropical nature, dams, roads and mining exploitation. Although, in a document signed in July 1991, the Bank committed to block any financing referred to tropical deforestation projects, favouring instead reforestation projects, development and forest conservation. Moreover, since public opinion has become aware of the importance of tropical forests and how dangerous continuous deforestation can be, the timber market has created an ecological certification of wood to satisfy the share of consumers careful about environmental issues. The international certification trademark FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) proves to be the most widespread at a global level and is sustained by the major environmental associations; FSC wood has arrived also in Italy. Thanks to this certificate it's possible to recognize items realised with raw products coming from forests managed sustainably according to well defined and verifiable criteria. This certificate, moreover, allows to know the forest of origin of a timber lot, even if the route followed from the wood to the shop is long.

There are already 10 million hectares of forests in 26 countries all over the world which have received this certificate. The timber market is closely related to the paper market. It's been estimated that in Italy each person consumes on average 200 kilograms of paper per year and so that a class of 30 pupils over one school year consumes a quantity of paper equivalent to the weight of an adult elephant and it's difficult to establish where paper comes from. If we want to save forests it's necessary, first of all, to lower waste and accurately differentiate waste to allow recycling. It's also necessary to prefer recycled paper to "white" paper which, nonetheless, must have been produced without using substances which are harmful for the environment: for this reason, paper must hold a trademark guaranteeing it's made "without chlorine" or that it's "chlorine free".

In Germany, instead, there is a guaranteed symbol which stands for pure recycled paper: "the blue angel". Paper with this label is made of 100% recycled paper, employing a low-polluting industrial procedure, and therefore surely hasn't damaged forests in danger.

Things you can do

Correct individual behaviour is the first step for the preservation of all ecosystems. Few behaviour rules can be useful to preserve rainforests.

The following is a short list of advice suggested by many environmental associations to everybody who wants to preserve nature and tropical environment.

- Avoid buying material produced with tropical wood and, if possible, ask for certification trademarks, for example the FSC trademark, which identifies products containing timber coming from forests managed properly and responsibly according to severe environmental, social and economic standards.
- Try to avoid all any energy waste: don't forget that using energy means producing carbon dioxide which has an impact on climate change and therefore on the survival of many organisms. The protection of forests is one of the crucial measures to contrast climate change as it reduces carbon emissions.
- When it's possible favour recycled products: don't forget that trees are cut down to produce paper! We can all help forests by recycling paper and buying recycled paper.
- Check the origin of meat; it's better to consume national meat or verify that it doesn't come from tropical areas, infact, in 1980 it has been estimated that 72% of the Amazon deforestation in Brazil was employed to obtain cattle land.

- Don't deteriorate the environment: a wood full of rubbish kills many more human beings than you can imagine. The main issue raised by waste left in woods, besides aesthetics, is surely the presence of possible polluting agents as hydrocarbons and heavy metals, which can interfere with normal plant growth (damaging especially soil microflora) and which can percolate in groundwater and pose a risk for human health.
- Avoid buying objects produced with leather or other materials of animal origin and rare tropical plants or objects produced from tropical plants as tortoise shells, ivory, exotic feathers, shark teeth, fur, coral and shells: often their indiscriminate catching threatens the entire ecosystem where they live.
- Don't consume tropical frozen fish or crustaceans.
- Don't buy live animals (monkeys, felines, turtles, parrots, etc..) or dead (butterflies, insects, spiders, shells, trophies, stuffed animals, etc..) of tropical origin.
- Don't visit exhibitions of reptiles, fish or live insects. The mortality rate of these animals is often very high and they're replaced with specimens captured in natural environments.
- Buy tropical plants only if they come from European nurseries.
- Sustain associations or foundations recognized at a national and international level which fight for the preservation of tropical nature.
- Don't feed wild animals as you could alter the delicate balance of the food chain and involuntarily cause their death.
- Always remember that in every natural environment where you might be, from forest to sea, we are always guests and as such we should respect all life forms, including those which seem most insignificant: for this reason, don't collect flowers which are surely nicer in a meadow than in a vase in your house waiting to die!
- Try to communicate to everyone close to you respect and love for nature, but also everything you have learnt on this issue: we love more easily what we know and it's easier to protect what we love!
- Plan your day on biodiversity: in this way you will have the chance to admire different species and learn to recognize them.

Biodiversity day

Decide the place where you want to spend your observation day: often it's not necessary to cover hundreds of kilometres to find an environment full of life, sometimes, we can unexpectedly make beautiful observations close to home or even in the garden of our own house.

- Dress suitably to the place where you are and comfortably: shoes are very important to walk well, but also pay attention to the colour of your clothes. Many mammals, in fact, can't see red and purple but birds can. A bright-coloured shirt is the best way to avoid seeing animals!
- Bring in your backpack everything you need for your observations: a map of the place, pocket guides to recognize animal and plant species, a compass to guide you, binoculars to look far away, a magnifying glass to observe details, a camera to capture your encounters, a notebook where you can carefully mark your observations, pencils to make sketches of the site and species living in it.
- Keep silent as much as you can: all animals have great sense of hearing and making noise you risk provoking a general stampede.
- Walk slowly: rapid and sudden movements alarm all animals and reduce the chance you might have to make thrilling encounters.
- Keep your eyes open and ears peeled: listen to the sounds made by animals to understand where they are and be careful about their movements, in fact, our eyes are attracted by movements and so it will be easier to see moving birds rather than still ones.

- Look in all directions and use binoculars only after being sure there is something to see: if you keep using binoculars you risk losing “close” encounters.
- Fill in your notebook in this way: date, beginning time and end of your field trip, place and climate conditions and a quick sketch of the place where you are; if you know it, write the name of dominant plant species present in this place and plant and animal species observed or draw a quick sketch or add a picture for further identification.