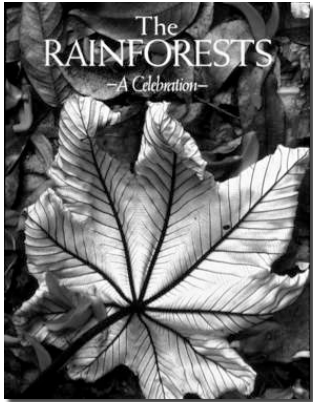


## Tropical Rainforest Biome

*"The land is one great, wild, untidy luxuriant hothouse, made by Nature for herself. . . How great would be the desire in every admirer of Nature to behold, if such were possible, the scenery of another planet! . . . Yet to every person it may truly be said, that the glories of another world are opened to him"*



Charles Darwin in *The Voyage of the Beagle*



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

*"Never to have seen anything but the temperate zone is to have lived on the fringe of the world"*



David Fairchild

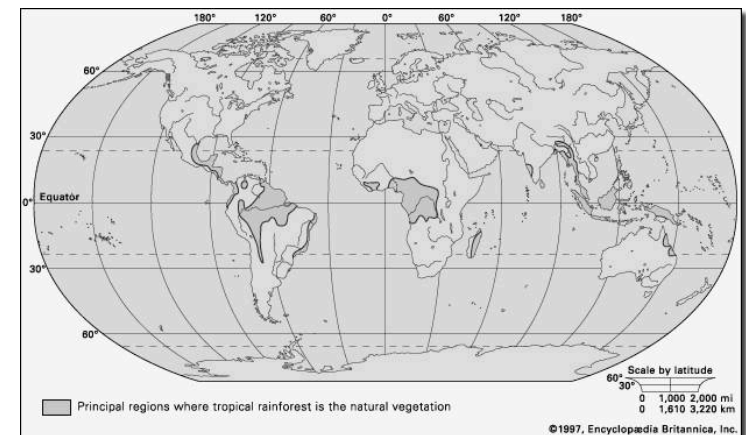
## Tropical Rainforest Biome

- equatorial lowlands and rainbelt; very short dry season
- multi-layered, evergreen canopy, high species diversity
- convergent adaptations around world, but different floras



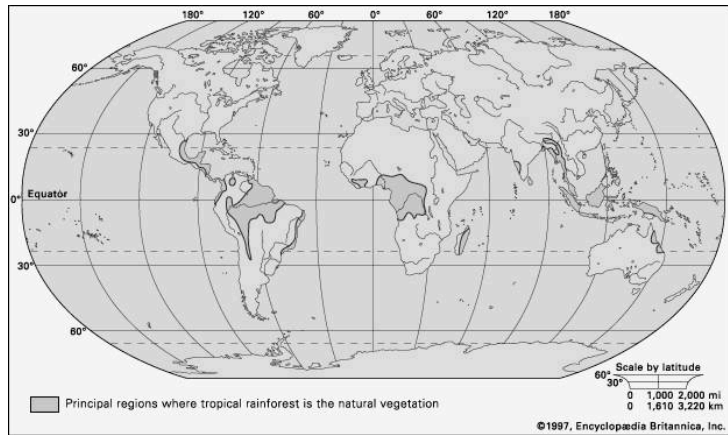
## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Location: 1. Equator to 10° or 25° N & S latitude and 0 - 1,000m elevation in Americas, Africa, SE Asia



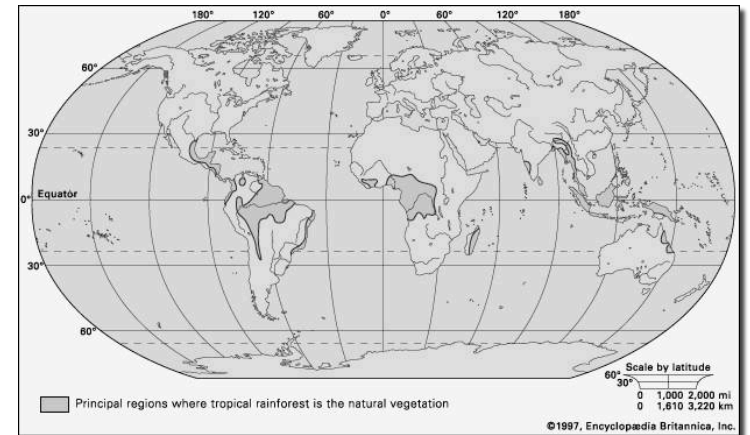
## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Location: 2. Along coasts windward to the trades — E. Brazil, Madagascar, NE Australia



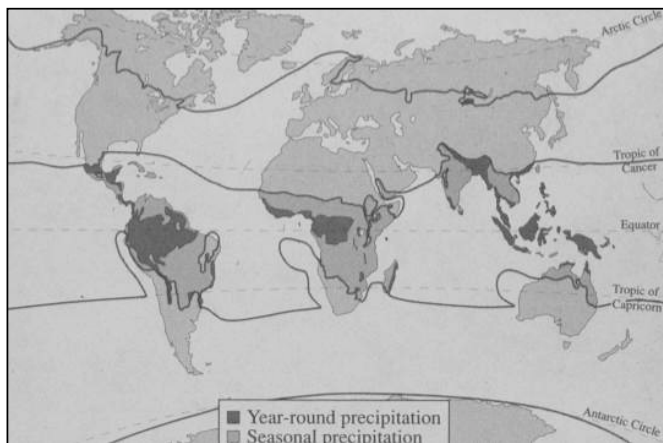
## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Location: 3. East coasts with orographic precipitation — E. Panama and Costa Rica, E. Puerto Rico



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

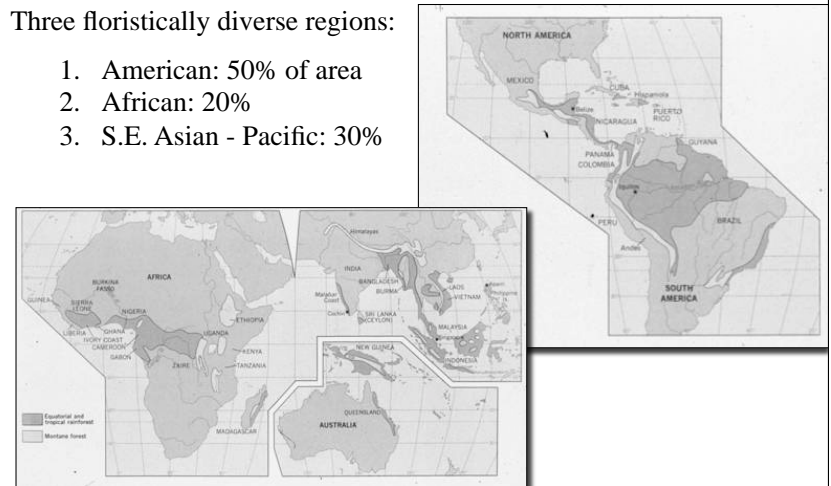
Location: Seasonally dry tropical forests adjacent at higher latitudes or on leeward side of montane regions



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

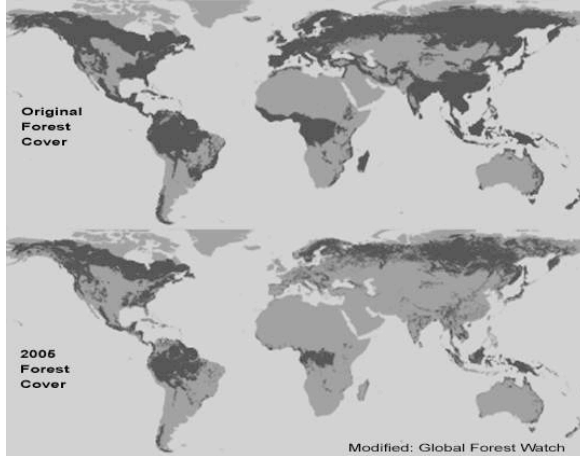
Three floristically diverse regions:

1. American: 50% of area
2. African: 20%
3. S.E. Asian - Pacific: 30%



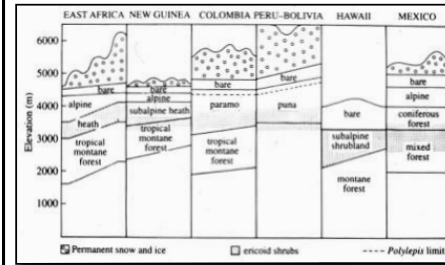
## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Fragmentation of rainforests  
— especially African and  
Asian — ongoing



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

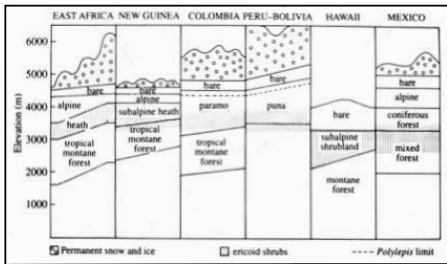
Relationships to other tropical forest  
systems — elevation gradient:



Tropical montane or cloud forest

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

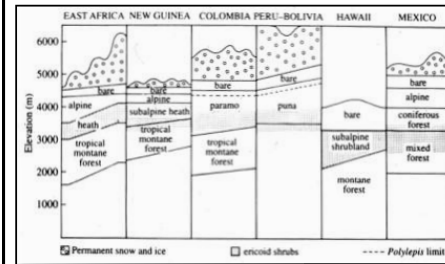
Relationships to other tropical forest  
systems — elevation gradient:



Elfin forest

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Relationships to other tropical forest  
systems — elevation gradient:



Paramo

Photo: Mauricio Diazgranados

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Relationships to other tropical forest systems — ecological gradient:



Mangrove and beach forests



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Relationships to other tropical forest systems — ecological gradient:

Seasonally flooded swamp forests

Várzea: flooded by muddy water tributaries of Amazon

Rio Beni, Bolivia



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Relationships to other tropical forest systems — ecological gradient:

Seasonally flooded swamp forests



Várzea: flooded by muddy water tributaries of Amazon

flooded vs. dry



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Relationships to other tropical forest systems — ecological gradient:

Seasonally flooded swamp forests

Igapó: flooded by nutrient poor waters of sandy soils (leached tannin stained)



Rio Negro, Amazonas

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Relationships to other tropical forest systems — latitudinal gradient:

Subtropical deciduous forests (& monsoon, tropical deciduous, thorn forest)



Alamos, Mexico  
Summer green, winter dry

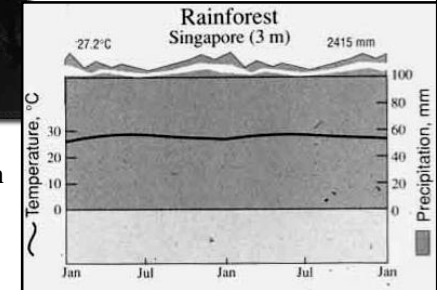
## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Climate

- diurnal patterns (not seasonal)
- 25° C mean annual temperature



- daily convective precipitation
- 2 - 4 meters + rain



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Soil

- warm soil and water surplus promote rock decomposition
- reddish laterite soil
- well leached, no litter



Brazil - after deforestation Hawaiian (5my) richer volcanic soil

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Soil

- soil incapable of holding nutrient base cations
- nutrients held in biomass
- slash-burn agriculture depletes nutrients in biomass and soil



Panama slash burn agriculture

Brazil cattle grazing following limited slash burn agriculture



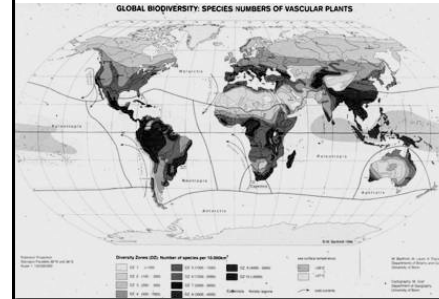
## Tropical Rainforest Biome

- Vegetation
- warm & wet climate allows for **broadleaf evergreen forest** to dominate
  - net productivity is highest of terrestrial biomes
  - highest diversity (species number) of any biome



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Diversity – 2% of earth surface, 50% of total species diversity



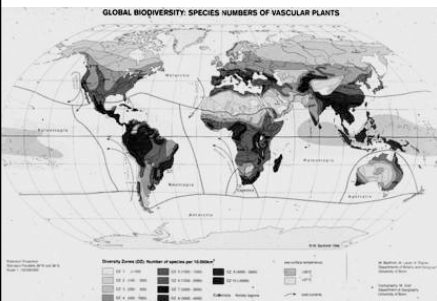
- 100,000 +/- species of flowering plants (40% of world's angiosperm flora)
- many undescribed



Al Gentry (UW grad) holds undescribed **genus** of liana

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Diversity – 2% of earth surface, 50% of total species diversity



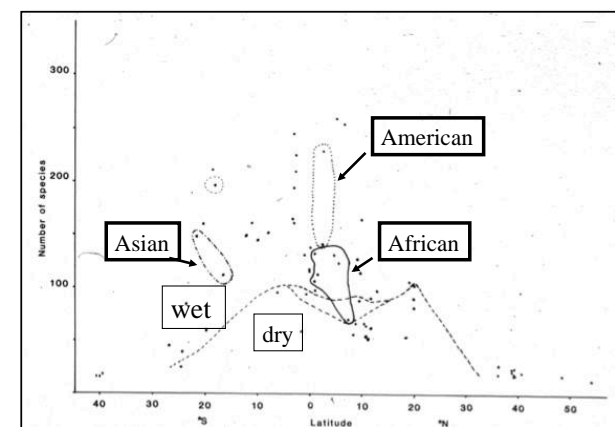
- species diversity comes from the **Rapid Assessment Program of Conservation International**



- two leaders were Ted Parker (ornithologist) and Al Gentry (botanist)
- knew by sight (or sound) more tropical American birds and plants, respectively, than anyone else to date

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Why this diversity? • correlation with low latitude and rainfall



Tree species diversity in 1 hectare wet and dry forests (Gentry)

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

- Why this diversity?
- stable ecologically?
  - climatic change, allopatric speciation?
  - coevolution with animals?



*Virola* (nutmeg family)  
Bird dispersed fruits

Bat pollinated flowers

*Parkia* (Fabaceae)

*Lecythis* (Lecythidaceae)

*Tacca* (Taccaceae)

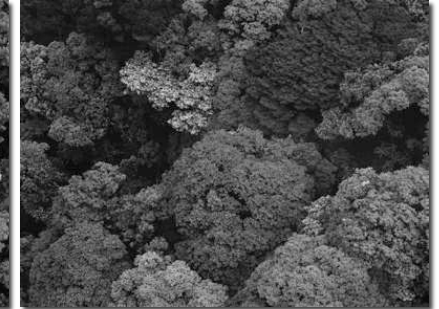


## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Where is the diversity?

- in the tree strata primarily
- 40 - 100 woody species per hectare

<i>Amazon</i>	<i>Wisconsin</i>
60,000 spp.	2,500 spp.
6,000 trees	50 trees



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Floristic dissimilarity of 3 regions

- palms (Arecaceae) basically lacking in Africa (but not Madagascar) and diverse in Malaysia and South America



Madagascar



Malaysia

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Floristic dissimilarity of 3 regions

- dipterocarps (Dipterocarpaceae) in SE Asia, lacking elsewhere



Does it suggest only ancient floristic linkage of tropical biomes?



Dipterocarp forest in Borneo

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Floristic nature of 3 regions

Similar families of trees involved in each floristic region, but quite different genera and species



Gentry tropical forest study sites

**Table 2.2** Characteristic families and genera containing dominant, abundant, conspicuous or subendemic woody plants in the rain forests of the world, with associated epiphytes and secondary forest trees (after Longman and Jenk, 1987; Mabberley, 1992)

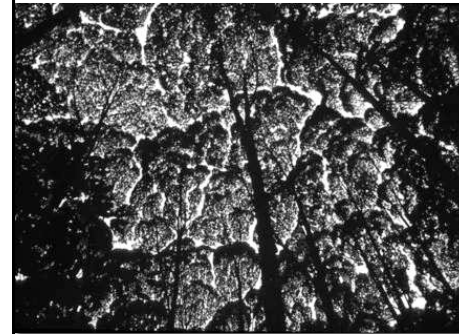
Neotropics	
→ Leguminosae	<i>Andira, Apuleia, Dalbergia, Dinizia, Hymenobolium, Mora</i>
→ Sapotaceae	<i>Manilkara, Pradosia</i>
→ Meliaceae	<i>Cedrela, Swietenia</i>
→ Euphorbiaceae	<i>Hevea</i>
→ Myristicaceae	<i>Vitell</i>
→ Moraceae	<i>Cecropia, Ficus</i>
→ Lecythidaceae	<i>Bertholletia</i>
→ Epiphytes	ferns, Orchidaceae, Bromeliaceae, Cactaceae
→ Secondary	<i>Cecropia, Miconia, Vismia</i>
Africa	
→ Leguminosae	<i>Albizia, Brachystegia, Cynometra, Gilbertiodendron</i>
→ Sapotaceae	<i>Afrosorsalis, Chrysophyllum</i>
→ Meliaceae	<i>Entandrophragma, Khaya</i>
→ Euphorbiaceae	<i>Macaranga, Uapaca</i>
→ Moraceae	<i>Chlorophora, Ficus, Musanga</i>
→ Sterculiaceae	<i>Cola, Triplochiton</i>
→ Uimaceae	<i>Celtis</i>
→ Epiphytes	ferns, Orchidaceae
→ Secondary	<i>Harungana, Macaranga, Musanga</i>
Indo-Malesia	
→ Dipterocarpaceae	<i>Dryobalanops, Hopea, Shorea</i>
→ Leguminosae	<i>Koompassia</i>
→ Meliaceae	<i>Aglia, Dysoxylum</i>
→ Moraceae	<i>Artocarpus, Ficus</i>
→ Anacardiaceae	<i>Mangifera</i>
→ Dilleniaceae	<i>Dillenia</i>
→ Thymelaeaceae	<i>Gonystylus</i>
→ Epiphytes	ferns, Orchidaceae, Asclepiadaceae, Rubiaceae
→ Secondary	<i>Glochidion, Macaranga, Mallotus, Melastoma</i>

(Source: K. A. Longman and J. Jenk, *Tropical Forest and its Environment*, 2nd edn, published by Longman, 1987.)

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees**

- tall trees form continuous canopy; therefore dense shade below
- pervasive problem of extreme light at canopy vs. low light *quantity* within forest



Dense canopy in Borneo

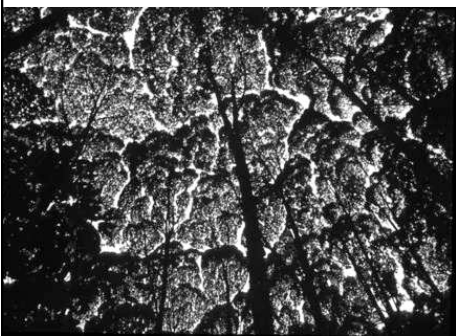


Dense canopy in Costa Rica

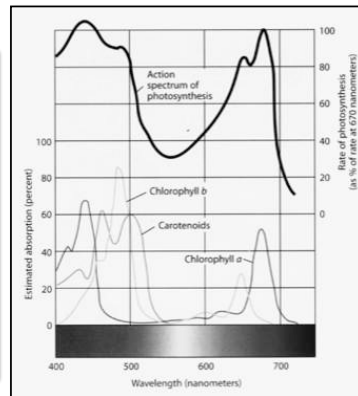
## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees**

... and low light *quality* within forest



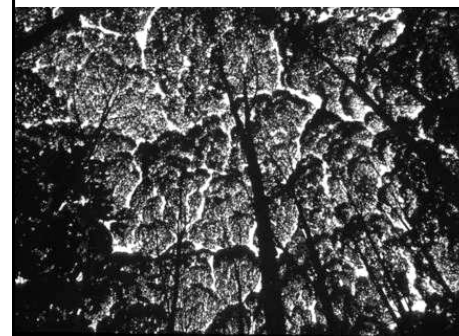
Dense canopy in Borneo



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees**

- struggle for light has generated similar life forms and physiological adaptations in unrelated species



Dense canopy in Borneo

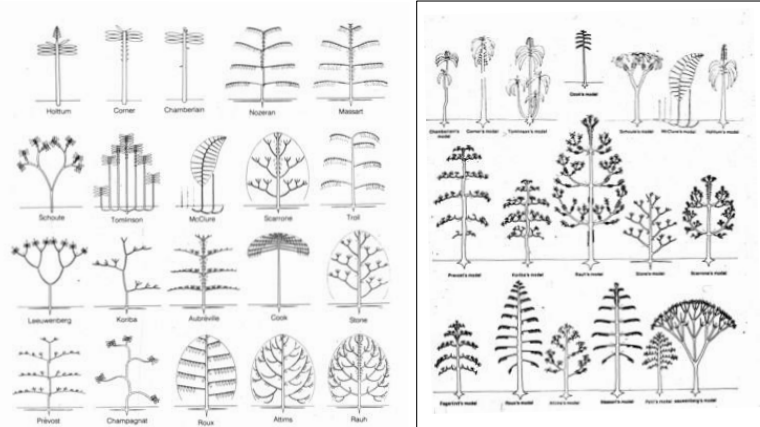




## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees**

- tropical trees show characteristic shape and branching (convergence)



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees - 3 strata**

- emergent crowns discontinuous; 40 m (130 ft) tall



American tropics



Asian tropics

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees - 3 strata**

- buttress or plank roots for shallowly rooted trees - convergent evolution



*Swietenia* - mahogany (Costa Rica)



*Stockwellia*  
(Australia)



*Gyranthera* (Venezuela)

dipterocarp (Borneo)

## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees - 3 strata**

- continuous canopy at 15-30 m (50-100 ft)



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees - 3 strata**

- continuous canopy at 15-30 m (50-100 ft)



Canopy walk in Costa Rica



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees - 3 strata**

- lower zone at 5-15 m (15-50 ft); palms and palm relatives often dominate here



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Trees - 3 strata**

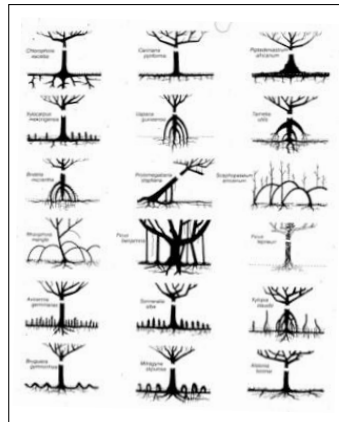
- lower zone at 5-15 m (15-50 ft); small, slender crowns, stilt roots for support - convergent



Palm - Panama



*Hornstedtia*  
(Zingiberaceae)  
Borneo



## Tropical Rainforest Biome

Structure of the vegetation: **Tree roots**

- shallow feeder roots efficient in taking up nutrients
- often mycorrhizal

