



Fires in the Amazon Can Be Seen from Space

Why is the Amazon important?

- The Amazon rainforest is in South America, with most of it in the country of Brazil.
- It is home to a huge range of different wildlife and the trees produce oxygen we need to breathe.

The fierce fires in the Amazon rainforest can be seen from space, according to NASA. The Brazilian army is working to fight the fires.

Last week, NASA released photos from space showing the smoke from large fires burning in the Amazon rainforest.

Brazil's space research organisation, called INPE, says that there are far more fires this year than usual. It reports that there have been over 72,000 forest fires so far this year. That's about 80% more than there was last year!

The Amazon is the largest tropical rainforest in the world. It holds millions of different species of animals and plants, as well as about 1 million people. This makes it very important for biodiversity.

It is also important for the world's air. This is because the trees in the Amazon absorb carbon dioxide, a gas which can cause climate change, and release oxygen, a gas we need to breathe.

However, some environmental groups say the rainforest is under threat from deforestation. This is the deliberate clearing of trees from an area.

This could be from loggers collecting wood to use in buildings, paper or firewood. It could also be done by farmers clearing space for cattle, palm oil or soybean farming.

Richard Mello, the head of environmental charity WWF Amazon Programme, said that the fires in the Amazon were because of the recent "increase in deforestation."



Photo: Smoke from Amazon fires seen from space.

Action is being taken. The Brazilian government has said that they are sending army troops to tackle the fire, as well as sending planes in to dump water on the fires.

Leaders from across the world have also said they can help. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has promised £10 million to support the efforts.

French president Emmanuel Macron called it an 'international crisis' and said that countries would release around £16 million to help fight the fires in the Amazon rainforest.

Glossary

organisation	A group of people with a particular purpose.
biodiversity	The variety of plant and animal life in a habitat.
climate change	The changing weather and rising temperature of the Earth.
environmental	Relating to nature and protecting the environment.

"Fires in Brazil" by NASA Goddard Space Flight Centre is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Questions

1. Find a word in the opening paragraph the author uses to show that the fires are powerful and destructive.

2. Find two reasons why the Amazon rainforest is important.

1.

2.

3. 'French president Emmanuel Macron called it an "international crisis".'
Tick the word which is closest in meaning to crisis in this sentence.

- emergency
- event
- important
- risk

4. Why do you think international leaders believe this a problem for the whole world? Use the news story to explain your answer.

5. Summarise the news story in 20 words or fewer.

6. What do you think international leaders will do to help? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. Find a word in the opening paragraph the author uses to show that the fires are powerful and destructive.

fierce

2. Find two reasons why the Amazon rainforest is important.

Accept any two from: it is home to millions of different species of plants and animal, it is home to about 1 million people, it absorbs carbon dioxide, which can cause climate change or it releases oxygen which we need to breathe.

3. 'French president Emmanuel Macron called it an "international crisis".'

Tick the word which is closest in meaning to crisis in this sentence.

- emergency
 event
 important
 risk

4. Why do you think international leaders believe this a problem for the whole world? Use the news story to explain your answer.

Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the benefits the Amazon gives the whole world mentioned in the news story, e.g. I think international leaders believe it is a problem for the whole world because the Amazon produces a lot of oxygen which the humans across the world need to breathe.

5. Summarise the news story in 20 words or fewer.

Accept any reasonable summary which is 20 words or fewer, e.g. There are large fires in the Amazon rainforest which can be seen from space. The Brazilian army is fighting fires.

6. What do you think international leaders will do to help? Explain your answer.

Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the news story, e.g. I think international leaders will send even more money to help the Brazilian government tackle the fires and work to stop deforestation.