

# Walking the Amazon

1 Imagine encountering 20-foot-long snakes and caiman crocodiles, and facing the constant threat of drowning. That is exactly what happened to Ed Stafford on his 2½-year journey along the Amazon River in South America.

2 In August 2010, Stafford became the first person to trek the entire length of the Amazon River. Stafford, who is from England, wanted to do something that had never been done—and see the problems facing the Amazon region firsthand.

## From Source to Sea

3 On April 2, 2008, Stafford began his journey at the source of the Amazon River, in Peru. From there, the river travels 4,200 miles eastward, emptying into the Atlantic Ocean in Marudá, Brazil. In August 2008, Stafford was joined by a guide, Gadiel “Cho” Sánchez Rivera. On August 9, 2010, after 859 days of walking, Stafford jumped into the ocean with Cho to celebrate finally reaching the end.

4 It was a well-deserved celebration. Along the way, Stafford wore out several pairs of shoes. But that was the least of his problems. He braved stings from hundreds of wasps and bites from thousands of mosquitoes. He also faced starvation, waded in water filled with electric eels, and dodged snakes and scorpions.

5 That’s not all. The chief of a native tribe in Peru said he’d kill Stafford if he set foot on tribal land. Another tribe captured Stafford, but he convinced them that he wasn’t a threat. Luckily, most people he met on his journey were happy to help him.

## A Disappearing Forest

6 The long river that Stafford trekked winds through the Amazon rainforest. A rainforest is a forest located in a region that typically

receives more than 100 inches of rainfall a year. Along the way, Stafford encountered large areas of demolished forest.

7 The Amazon region, where about 30 million people live, is in trouble. Loggers have cut down vast areas of the rainforest to sell the wood and to make room for homes, roads, and farms. So far, more than 20 percent of the rainforest has been destroyed.

8 This clearing of trees, called deforestation, has threatened many plants and animals. The Amazon rainforest is home to more species of plants and animals than any other place in the world. In fact, more than 100,000 types of insects live there. People worldwide rely on the rainforest for food and medicines made from its plants.

9 In addition, trees in rainforests absorb carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen. Carbon dioxide is a gas that traps heat in the atmosphere. As forests disappear, more of this gas remains in the atmosphere. Experts say that too much carbon dioxide is causing temperatures worldwide to slowly rise.

10 Brazil has put part of the Amazon rainforest under government protection. In 2012, the number of trees cut down in Brazil’s rainforest dropped to its lowest level in 20 years.

## Spreading the Word

11 People like Stafford are helping the cause too. He has seen the importance of protecting rainforests up close. During his long journey, he carried a laptop so he could blog about his experiences.

12 “The rainforest is so important. The planet won’t survive without large forests,” he says. “It’s vital that people realize that deforestation is still going on. The rainforest can’t continue to shrink and shrink. The more people who care about the Amazon, the better.”

Directions: Read the article "Walking the Amazon." Then answer the questions below.

1. What does the word *vital* mean as it is used in paragraph 12?
  - A. Essential
  - B. Understandable
  - C. Depressing
  - D. Unbelievable
2. Which sentence from the article best supports the answer to question 1?
  - A. In addition, trees in rainforests absorb carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen. (paragraph 9)
  - B. Brazil has put part of the Amazon rainforest under government protection. (paragraph 10)
  - C. "The planet won't survive without large forests," he says. (paragraph 12)
  - D. During his long journey, he carried a laptop so he could blog about his experiences. (paragraph 11)
3. What are two main ideas found in the article?  
(Select two choices.)
  - A. Brazil has taken steps to protect the Amazon rainforest.
  - B. Ed Stafford walked the length of the Amazon River.
  - C. The Amazon is home to many different insects.
  - D. It is not safe to cross into tribal territory.
  - E. The Amazon is an interesting place to visit.
  - F. The Amazon rainforest is in danger.
4. In the section "A Disappearing Forest," how does the author support the idea that the Amazon is in trouble?
  - A. The author explains a problem and then presents various solutions.
  - B. The author details the main cause and effects of deforestation.
  - C. The author tells a story using firsthand observations of the rainforest.
  - D. The author compares Brazil's approach to the problem with the approaches of other countries.
5. How does the final paragraph relate to the first paragraph?
  - A. It reveals a big part of Stafford's motivation for making such a difficult trip.
  - B. It clarifies that deforestation was the cause of the obstacles Stafford faced.
  - C. It implies that Stafford has regrets about his adventure.
  - D. It explains why the journey took as long as it did.
6. On a separate sheet of paper, explain why Stafford's adventure was a challenging one. Provide at least two details to support your answer.

