

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC Explorer!



Return to Titanic

10 Children in Charge 16 Mammoth Mammals 22 Butterflies

Welcome to Our World. *RIGHT: Kids in Peru created this sign. The red shows a trail that they made. The green words say "Children's Forest" in Spanish.*

Kids at Work

Since 2001, the kids have spent a lot of time exploring their land. The Children's Forest is like a never-ending field trip.

For instance, the forest gives kids a chance to be wildlife wizards. By studying footprints and droppings, kids have learned how to track animals. Rain forest creatures include monkeys, sloths, and river otters.

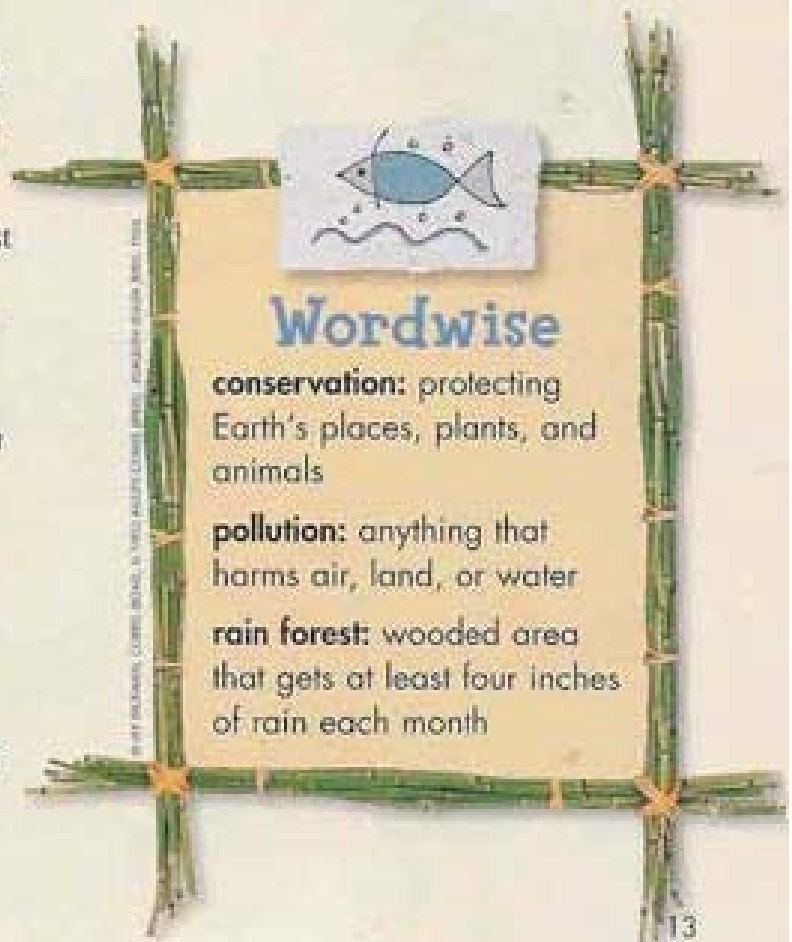
Kids have also made and marked many trails through the Children's Forest. Along the way, they have learned to identify many different kinds of wild plants. In fact, the children used their new knowledge to write a nature guide. It helps visitors to the Children's Forest learn what they are looking at.

The kids have even found ways to make money—without destroying their rain forest. Children collect nuts, seeds, and leaves that fall naturally. Then they use them to make and sell crafts. Money from the sales helps pay for trail signs and other things.

So far, the kids who run the Children's Forest are doing exactly what Joaquín Leguía had hoped. They explore their land. They take care of their land. And they love their land.

? *Do you think the Children's Forest is a good idea? What would you do if you had your own forest?*

Wild Place. *LEFT: Speeding through the trees, this scarlet macaw is just one of countless rain forest animals. Humans are still learning what lives in rain forests.*



Getting Around. *Indian children paddle a canoe made from a tree trunk.*



Rain Forests

Leguia began testing his idea in 2001. He talked with people in the southeastern part of Peru. That's a country in South America.

The people Leguia met live in a rain forest. A rain forest is a wooded area that gets at least four inches of rain a month. Most rain forests are tropical. That means they are in places which are warm all year long.

Rain forests are important in many ways. They make oxygen for us to breathe. And they take harmful gases from our air.

Rain forests are also habitats. Those are places where plants and animals live. Roughly half of Earth's plant and animal species, or kinds, live in rain forests.

Despite all this, humans are destroying rain forests. The amount of rain forest lost each year is roughly the size of Florida.

Leguia asked the people to set aside part of the rain forest for children. At first, adults said no. They needed land for hunting and finding food. But they later gave the kids a large piece of land. It is now called the Children's Forest.

Who's the Boss?

Managing a forest is a big job. How would the kids handle it? They started by electing officers and a president. The leaders would serve for a year. Then there would be a new election.

The officers' main job is deciding how to care for the forest. To do so, the leaders hold meetings with other kids. They also get ideas from teachers, park rangers, and other adults.

In the end, though, the children choose what to do. Then they work together to make it happen. As you can imagine, they've been busy.





Kid Power. This girl was one of the first leaders of the Children's Forest.