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## **Brazil: U.S. Field Biologist Predicts Total Destruction Of Amazon Jungle**

*by John Neagle*

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On Jan. 28, in statements to an AP reporter at Rancho Grande, a field research station 112 km. west of Caracas (Venezuela), US field biologist Archie Carr said he foresees total destruction of the Amazon jungle, home to thousands of plant and animal species and a major source of the planet's oxygen. Carr blamed the Brazilian government, saying that officials complained about efforts to protect the rain forest instead of cooperating in the same. Carr was participating in a congress on conservation at the field research station, attended by US and Latin American field biologists and educators. A major objective of the congress was to discuss means of instilling a conservation ethic in young people. According to AP, most US participants said they were surprised at how much conservation was taught in a school they visited in the Catia slums of west Caracas and how much grassroots support for conservation exists in the region. The First Pan-American Congress on Conservation of Wildlife through Education is sponsored by the New York Zoological Society through its field research wing, Wildlife Conservation International. Carr is regional coordinator of the society's field programs in Mexico and the Caribbean. Carr said, "At the present time, I see no reason not to foresee an Amazon Basin that is totally deforested, populated from end to end, and the scene of a whole host of environmental problems that would constitute a planetary disaster of historical dimensions." According to the biologist, Brasilia's recent efforts to overturn legislation giving tax breaks to companies and individual settlers clearing the land were not enough to prevent further destruction of the region. He added, "The only thing that's saving the Amazon at present is its magnitude." Carr pointed out that in the mid-1970s the Brazilian government instituted a program to encourage slum dwellers in major cities and landless peasants to emigrate to the scarcely populated northern and western Amazonian states. However, the soil in these areas is not appropriate for supporting agriculture, and settlers were left worse off than before in many cases. In Carr's words, "That's what galls conservationists. If we're going to help poor people, let's help poor people, not try to solve a momentary crisis by invading nature...I just won't accept that saving the Amazon Basin is an imperialistic solution. The urge to conserve the environment is a universal need and it is growing." (Basic data from AP, 01/27/90)

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