



NATIONAL AQUARIUM

FACT SHEET FROM THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Amazon River Forest: River Animals

The Amazon River is the second longest river in the world. This river is more than 4,000 miles long. The Amazon Rain Forest has two seasons, the rainy season and the dry season. In the dry season, the Amazon River can be up to 7 miles wide. During the rainy season, the river bank floods and gets wider. In the rainy season, the river can be up to 25 miles wide. Many animals live in the river. Some of the animals in the river are piranhas, dwarf caimans, turtles and anacondas.

PIRANHA

The piranha is a small fish with very large teeth. Piranhas can be grey, blue or even black. Piranhas can be anywhere from 6 inches up to 12 inches long. Most piranhas live in warm, fresh water. Piranhas are omnivores. That means they eat both plants and animals. They also eat fruits and berries that fall from the trees above. Piranhas hunt in large groups called shoals, or packs. Other piranhas, caimans, snakes, turtles and birds all eat piranhas.

DWARF CAIMAN

The dwarf caiman is a member of the crocodile family. Caimans live mostly in fresh water. Sometimes you cannot see the caiman when it is in the water. The

caiman's eyes are above the water but the rest of its body is under water. They look like logs floating in the water. This is called camouflage. This is the way that caimans make sure their food or prey does not know they are there. The caiman has hard scales on its body to protect it from predators. Caimans eat fish, crabs and shrimp.

ANACONDA

The anaconda is one of the largest snakes in the world. This snake can grow up to 30 feet long. It is dark green or brown. The color helps the anaconda blend into the area where it lives. This snake lives on land near the edge of the water. Anacondas also spend some time in the water. The eyes and nostrils of an anaconda are on the top of their head. This is so the snake can see and breathe when most of its body is under water.

Anacondas are constrictors. This means that they wrap around their prey and squeeze tightly until their prey cannot breathe. Anacondas are very strong. They eat large rodents, small mammals, frogs and fish. Snakes grow by molting, or shedding, their skin. Anacondas are so big that they have to shed their skin in pieces. Snakes, like the anaconda, are

KEY TERMS

Anaconda

A large snake that lives both on land and in the water.

Camouflage

When an animal can blend into its environment because of its color.

Dwarf Caiman

A reptile in the crocodile family. Typically smaller in size than crocodiles and alligators.

Giant Amazon River Turtle

A large turtle from South America that spends much of its life in the water.

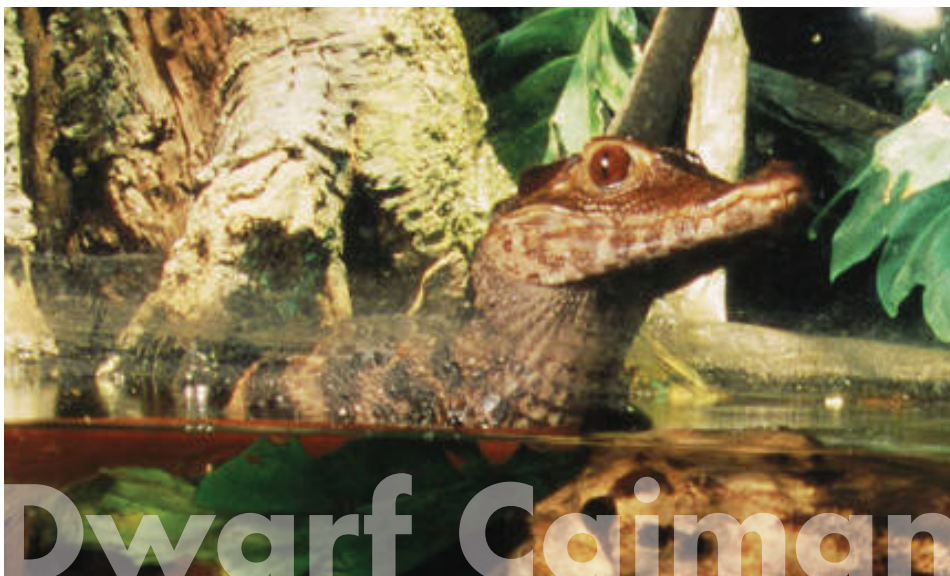
Omnivore

An animal that eats both plants and animals.

Piranha

A small fish with sharp teeth.





A relatively small crocodilian reptile from northern and central South America, the dwarf caiman lives mostly in fresh water.

cold-blooded, which means that they cannot control their body temperature. They bask in the sun on a hot rock to warm themselves and rest in the water or damp mud to cool themselves down.

GIANT AMAZON RIVER TURTLE

The giant Amazon River turtle is one of the largest freshwater turtles in the world. These turtles are very good swimmers. Amazon River turtles stay in the water for most of their lives. Usually only the female leaves the water.

This is so she can lay her eggs. The giant Amazon River turtle eats fruits, leaves, plants and insects. Female turtles of this species can be up to 200 pounds. Many animals, like the black vulture, eat baby Amazon River turtles. The adult giant Amazon River turtle is so big that it does not have many predators. Jaguars and black caimans are the only animals big enough to eat the giant Amazon River turtle.



The anaconda is one of the largest snakes in the world, growing up to 30 feet long. These snakes are so long they must shed their skin in pieces.



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