

Effects of global warming on the Amazon rainforest

The Amazon rainforest’s dry season lasts three weeks longer than it did 30 years ago, and the likely culprit is global warming, a new study finds.

Rain falls year-round in the Amazon, but most of the annual deluge drops during the wet season. Scientists think that a longer dry season will stress trees, raising the risk of wildfires and forest dieback.

“The length of the dry season in the southern Amazon is the most important climate condition controlling the rainforest,” Rong Fu, a climate scientist at the University of Texas at Austin’s Jackson School of Geosciences, said in a statement. “If the dry season is too long, the rainforest will not survive.”

The new findings forecast a more parched future for the Amazon rainforest than the climate report released last month by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),

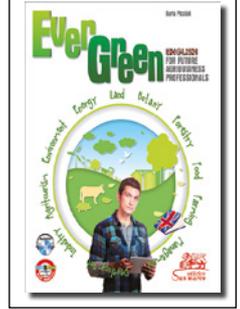
the study authors said. The IPCC models predict the Amazon dry season will last three to ten days longer by 2100.

But with the dry season already spanning an extra week each decade since 1979, the Texas team said the future effects will be more severe.

Fu and her colleagues analysed rainfall patterns across the Southern Amazon rainforest since 1979, and plugged the data into 50 simulations from eight climate models.

The climate models from the IPCC’s AR5 report, released in September, reported smaller dry season changes than actually measured since 1979. This means the IPCC models likely underestimate future predictions of rainforest climate change effects, the researchers conclude.

(Adapted from www.livescience.com)



ACTIVITIES

1 Summarise the article above.

2 Explain in your own words the meaning of the following words and expression.

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|--------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| 1 Dry season | | 4 Forest dieback | |
| 2 Culprit | | 5 Decade | |
| 3 Wildfire | | 6 Intergovernmental | |