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Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

A disappearing world

**00.14–00.52** It’s September in the Congo, just north of the equator. An expedition unlike any other is beginning. A team of scientists and researchers is travelling almost 2,000 kilometres through a rain forest that covers over 150,000 square kilometres! Their aim is to make a scientific record of a world which could be disappearing from Earth – the Congo Basin. Dr Michael Fay is a scientist from the Wildlife Conservation Society.

He’s leading the expedition he calls ‘The Megatransect’, or ‘the big crossing’.

According to Fay, if they don’t document the wildlife here now, there may never be another chance to do it.

**00.53–01.10 Michael Fay** What I’m trying to do, in a desperate way, is to show the world that we’re just about to lose the last little gem in the African continent. And, if we don’t do something now, if we don’t do it today, we can forget about it.

**01.11–01.32** The Congo Basin contains almost one quarter of the world’s rain forests. It may have up to half of all the wild plants and animals found in all of Africa.

Fay’s plan is to collect and record data on almost every part of the rain forest. He wants to document the trees, the plants and the animals that he sees there. It’s a job that’s going to take time.

**01.34–01.53** After eight months of travelling, the team is now in Gabon. Their next challenge is to reach a group of strange hills that are made of stone and which rise far above the forest floor. At last, the men reach the hills and begin to walk up. Suddenly, they realise that they’re finally above the tops of the trees.

**01.54–02.09** **Michael Fay** We can see a long way here, you know, 70 or 80 kilometres in every direction. And we can see 360 degrees around. There are no humans. There’s not a single village, there’s not a single road. It’s an amazing place.

**02.11–02.15** The team continues. They can hear their next challenge before they reach it. Rapids!

**02.20–02.50 Michael Fay** OK, wow!

The Kongou Chutes are an important part of the landscape that the team wants to protect. This land of fast water and old forests is in danger because of logging.

Right now, the team has a more immediate problem. They must cross the dangerous river here. It’s only a few hundred metres wide, but the team must use guide ropes, stepping stones and everything they know to get across. It takes a full day – and there’s still a long way to go!

**02.53–02.57** After more than a year, the team finally reaches the end of their travels.

**02.58–03.06 Michael Fay** We’d been walking in the woods in our own little world for fifteen months and now it was over. I was overwhelmed.

**03.07–end** Dr Fay’s expedition walked through some of the wildest lands of Africa. They documented as many of the things they found as possible. And they did it all in an attempt to save a disappearing world.

Life