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Upper Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

Paraguay shaman

**00.04–00.20** Somewhere in this forest, maybe in this plant or that herb, there could be a cure for an illness like diabetes, malaria, or even common fevers and colds.

But as the plants disappear, the potential cures disappear with them.

**00.22–00.54** The rain forests of Paraguay have been a source of medicinal cures for a long time. Traditional folk healers often show us where to find the plants that provide the medicines.

Paraguay’s famous healers, called ‘shamans’, have a deep knowledge of local medicinal plants – the equivalent of the knowledge contained in an entire medical library.

But Paraguay has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world.

That’s why researchers believe it’s a priority to record the shaman’s extensive knowledge before the forest disappears.

**00.55–01.27** The journey begins in Paraguay’s isolated Mbaracayu Forest Nature Reserve and the nearby native community of Tekoha Ryapu, where shaman Gervasio lives.

To reach Gervasio, a group of researchers set out on a long journey through the reserve.

Meanwhile, at the village, Gervasio is using chants and prayers, perhaps to make a spiritual connection with the forest.

When he feels ready, Gervasio and his wife take the group on the search.

**01.31–02.03** They are looking for a plant called Suruvi, also known as Jatropha isabelli, which is used to treat and cure various illnesses. Scientists are very interested in this family of plants for cancer research. Gervasio brings the root back to the village where his wife puts it in a pot of water to prepare tea.

Scientists have published a book to help record and transmit Gervasio’s forest knowledge. The book helps people to easily identify and study local plants.

**02.04–02.24** Recording and studying Paraguayan plants for possible medical cures is urgent business, some may even call it an emergency.

Medicinal plants that were once healthy and multiplying are now disappearing – and the possibility of finding new medical cures is disappearing with them.

Life