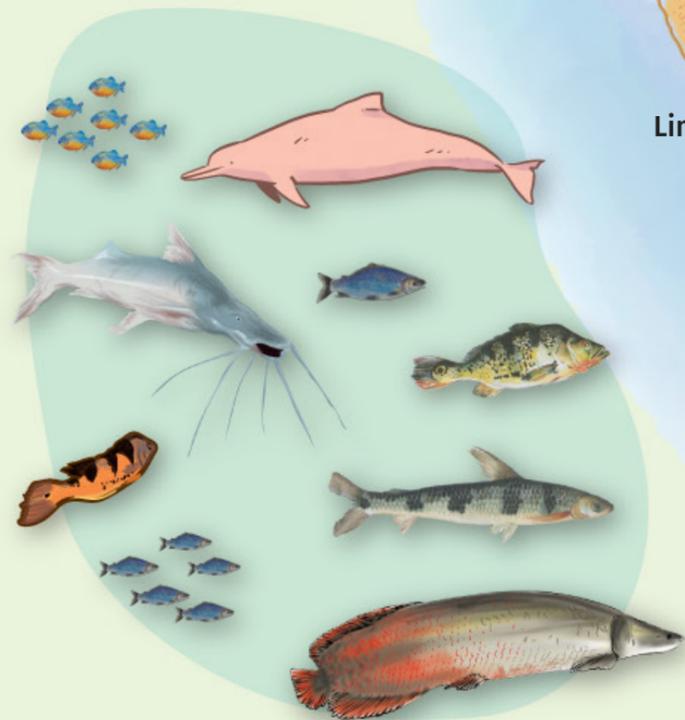


# The global importance of the Amazon waters

The Amazon is Earth's largest freshwater system. Its waters are born in the Andes and flow to the Atlantic in the form of rivers, oxbow lakes, wetlands, and as moisture in the atmosphere. These different freshwater habitats sustain an astonishing biological diversity as well as the lives of millions of people across eight countries, from the eastern side of the Andean mountains range to the estuary, more than six thousand kilometers away. Through evaporation, water from these habitats also forms aerial rivers that flow across great distances and influence regional and global climatic patterns.

## 1 Aquatic biodiversity

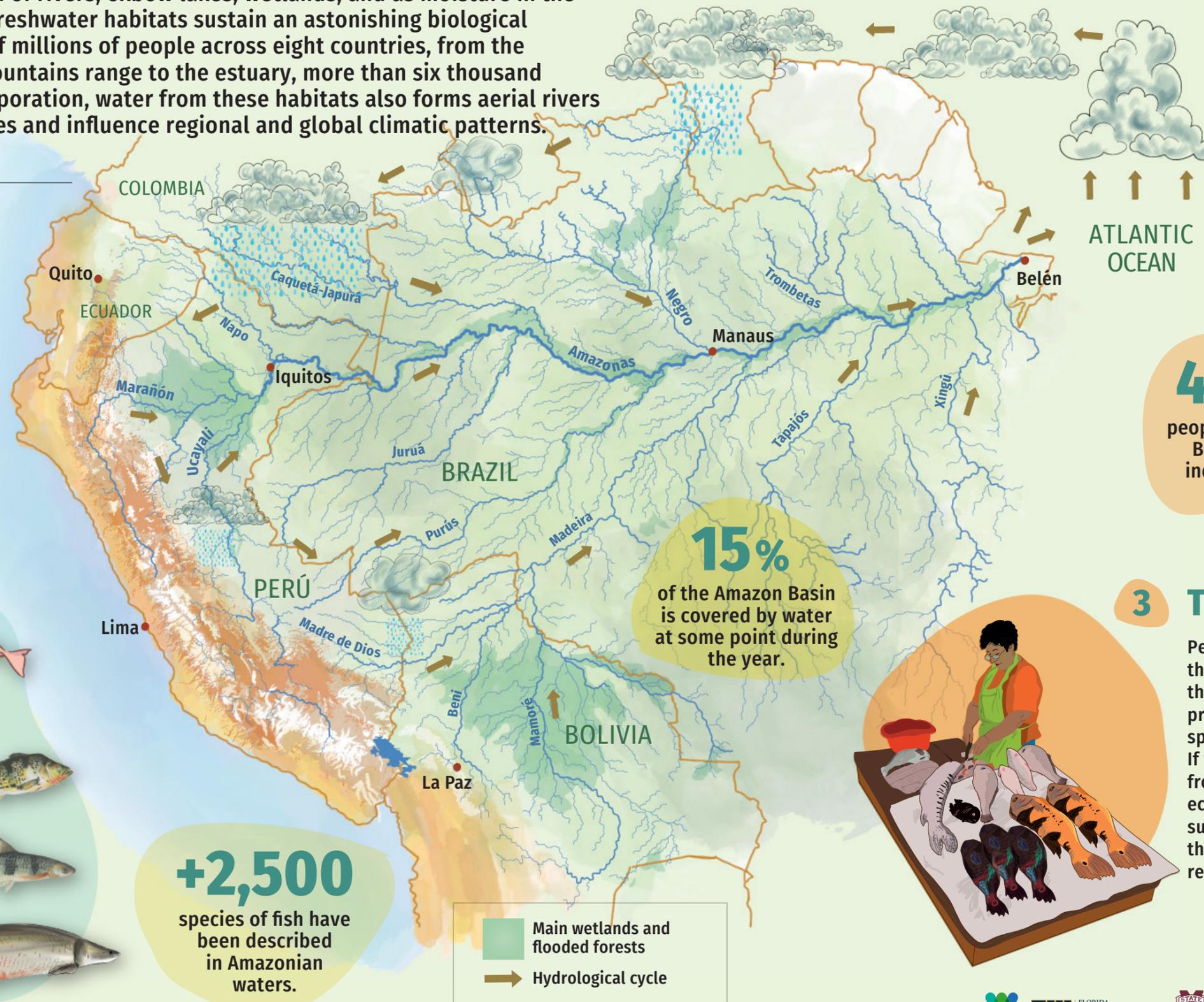
With more than 2,500 species of fish recorded, the Amazon is the most biologically diverse river basin on the planet. It also harbors a high richness of mammals, reptiles, and amphibians that play important ecological roles, such as seed dispersal.



**+2,500**  
species of fish have been described in Amazonian waters.

## 2 Climate

The water that flows through the Amazon Basin ends up in the Atlantic Ocean. The Amazon supplies more water to the oceans than any other river in the world. As this water evaporates, it creates "flying rivers" - moisture that is transported through the air - a key driver of regional and global climatic patterns.



**16%**  
of the total water discharged annually into Earth's oceans is provided by the Amazon Basin.

**47 million**  
people live in the Amazon Basin, including 350 indigenous groups, in eight countries.

**15%**  
of the Amazon Basin is covered by water at some point during the year.

## 3 The people

People have lived in the Amazon for thousands of years, co-evolving with the Amazon's freshwaters, which provide food, shape culture and spirituality, and sustain livelihoods. If well-managed, natural resources from its aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems could contribute to a sustainable and equitable economy that benefits people locally, regionally, and globally.

