

Newest Field Museum exhibition will highlight the Amazon's resilient Ese'Eja Nation

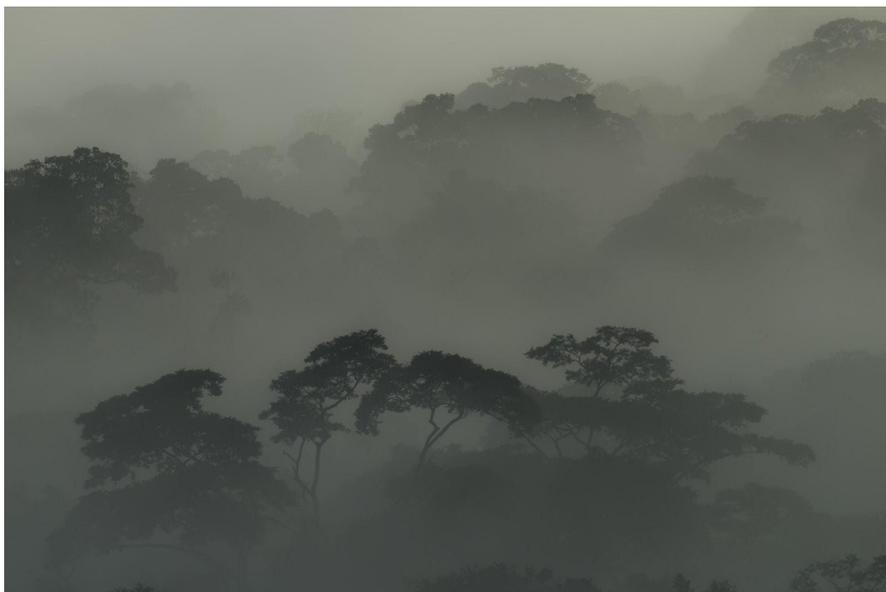


Photo © Jon Cox & Andrew Bale

Visualize the lush and vibrant canopy of the Amazon. Below the cathedral ceiling of towering trees is a natural landscape teeming with life and bountiful with resources. At home in these forests are abundant biodiversity—diverse sights, sounds, and textures seen nowhere else on the planet—and a culture of indigenous Amazonians known as the Ese'Eja. The Ese'Eja tell the story about how they were formed by these surroundings and intertwined with the skies, land, and waters found here.

Learn about the Ese'Eja people and their response to change in our newest exhibition, *The Ese'Eja People of the Amazon*. Created by Jon Cox and Andrew Bale in collaboration with the Ese'Eja Nation, with artifacts curated by Dr. Monica Dominguez Torres and Dr. Vicki Cassman, this traveling exhibition explores the Ese'Eja's relationship with their ancestral lands in the Amazon. By sharing their oral histories and deep knowledge of the rainforest, the Ese'Eja describe their culture and commitment to ensuring a vibrant future for these lands and their people.

“As foragers, the Ese'Eja have been stewards of the land in the Amazon basin for thousands of years. We have acquired a rich cultural history as well as a spiritual connection to the forest that few people on the outside understand,” announces a statement from the Ese'Eja nation.

This exhibition will teach visitors about the culture and values of the Ese'Eja. Objects selected by Ese'Eja leaders attest to their ingenuity, ancestral knowledge, and resilience under powerfully changing circumstances. Ancestral clothing, baskets, tools, animal figures, and medicinal herbs will present how the Ese'Eja enliven their traditions while responding to threats facing their homeland and culture.

“By sharing our knowledge of the forest and our culture, we are providing a unique perspective about the problems that confront the Ese'Eja people in Peru,” the Ese'Eja state in their book *Ancestral Lands of the Ese'Eja: The True People*, the cornerstone of the exhibition. The exhibition will offer the book for sale, with proceeds going to the Ese'Eja community.

Like many other indigenous peoples in the Amazon, the Ese'Eja are affected by mercury dumped in rivers as a byproduct of illegal gold mining. The exhibition will display daguerreotypes—mercury-developed and gold-gilded photographs—of Ese'Eja community members to draw attention to mercury poisoning in their community. The exhibition will also feature platinum palladium prints documenting their traditions, lands, and contemporary challenges. Capturing both individual personality and cultural values of the Ese'Eja, these portraits offer visitors the opportunity to meet these people and respond to their call for recognition and the conservation of one of the most diverse places on the planet.

In support of the Ese'Eja's message, the Field's exhibition will also display a Rapid Inventory report—a fast survey of biodiversity—conducted by Field Museum scientists on the Peru-Bolivia border and a community planning guide co-developed by the Field Museum in collaboration with indigenous communities in the Amazon. Surveys of the area emphasize the wealth of biodiversity in the Amazon's natural landscape. Viewing our scientists' work alongside the Ese'Eja's stories will give a holistic picture of conservation as a global concern, not only for protecting the Earth's flora and fauna, but also for supporting the people who steward these lands. Visitors will leave the exhibition with a deeper understanding and admiration for the Ese'Eja and motivated to support measures that protect their land and culture.

The Ese'Eja People of the Amazon will run at the Field Museum from September 4, 2020—June 20, 2021 in Comer Gallery and is included with general admission.

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