



Credit: Andrew Robinson

Travelling pollution

Have you ever thought about how our actions affect others? When we think of rainforests, we imagine remote regions of natural beauty, with pure air and none of the atmospheric pollution that we see in the big cities. However, an international team of researchers has found evidence of manmade pollution deep inside the rainforest of Borneo in Southeast Asia.

The team found small amounts of a gas called perchloroethene in air samples they collected in the Borneo rainforest. This gas is not produced naturally in the rainforest, so the researchers are sure it has come from towns and cities very far away.

These remote tropical forests can be affected by human-caused pollution because of a process known as atmospheric transport. This involves the movement of air from one part of the globe to another, with this air potentially containing harmful emissions from cars and industry.

Scientist Matthew Ashfold and his international team of colleagues have found that certain weather conditions can quickly transport polluted air. According to Matthew, "The pollution travels about 1000 km per day", which means that pollution emitted in Chinese and other Asian cities can very quickly be transported, via atmospheric transport, to the rainforests of Borneo.

This research shows that we need to be even more wary of the harmful emissions that are produced in our large cities and towns. They could potentially be polluting the environment many hundreds of kilometres away.

This is a kids' version of the European Geosciences Union (EGU) press release '[Travelling pollution – East Asian human activities affect air quality in remote tropical forests](http://www.egu.eu/education/planet-press/)'. It was written by Sam Illingworth (Lecturer, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK) and reviewed for scientific content and educational content by Kirsty Pringle (Research Fellow, University of Leeds, UK) and Katy Hewis (Educational Consultant, Science Matters, UK), respectively. For more information check: <http://www.egu.eu/education/planet-press/>.