

Mashco Piro tribe members in Peru, photographed at long range in 2011



Can the Amazon's Last Tribes Survive?

The rainforest may no longer be a refuge for South America's most isolated peoples BY ANDREW LAWLER

The man known as Epa is familiar to the villagers who live along Peru's Curanja River, which flows through some of the densest rainforest of the nation's vast Amazon region.

Most of Epa's tribe, the Mastanahua, remains deep in the jungle, still living like the native peoples did before Europeans arrived hundreds of years ago: unclothed, hunting with bows and arrows, and picking medicinal plants to

ward off illness. But such isolated tribes, which have long avoided outsiders, can no longer depend on the forest as a refuge. In the past year, throughout the Amazon, tribe members have begun to emerge into settled areas in unpredictable and occasionally violent ways—often because of hunger or desperation.

Epa, who I met on a reporting trip last spring, lives with a foot in each world: He has lived most of his life among the jungle's most isolated people and

he boasts of his hunting prowess. But he also wears a soccer shirt and nylon shorts and spends time among the settled villagers on the river.

Last year, Epa's tribe was accused of raiding several of those villages, taking machetes, clothes, and food. In other parts of the rainforest, violence by and against once-isolated people is on the rise. In May, just outside the Manú National Park, a man from the Mashco Piro tribe shot an arrow that killed a 20-year-old villager. Last year, several members of Peru's Xinane tribe waded

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