

Reading and speaking

The man who made a forest

- 1 Close your eyes and imagine you're in a forest. What can you see, hear, and smell? What does it feel like?
- 2 Match photos 1–6 with the words in the box.

soil ant snake seeds bamboo sapling



- 3 Look at the photos and read the introduction about **Jadav Payeng**. What do you think he did? Why do you think he did it?
- 4 Read the rest of the article. How did it make you feel?
- 5 Are the statements about the article true (✓) or false (✗)? Correct the false ones.
 - 1 Jadav is a sensitive person.
 - 2 The population of Majuli has fallen to a quarter of what it used to be.
 - 3 Planting bamboo wasn't Jadav's first idea.
 - 4 Jadav asked people to help him water his young trees.
 - 5 He lives alone.
 - 6 Jadav has earned money by selling wood from his trees.
 - 7 The villagers wanted to cut down his trees to make money.
 - 8 Jadav accepts that animals will sometimes get killed in nature.
 - 9 He doesn't own very much.
 - 10 He expects to produce his next forest quickly.

Forest man

Don Jackman finds an example of a rare species – an environmental feel-good story.



There's no shortage of gloomy stories about the environment. Most of us have heard alarming reports of climate change and environmental destruction, but we often feel powerless to do anything other than get depressed about it.

Jadav Payeng didn't get depressed. His is the heartening story of a man who decided not to give in to that feeling of powerlessness. He has totally transformed the environment around him, single-handedly.

A dying island

It all began when he was a teenager, in 1979. Jadav grew up on Majuli Island in northern India, the largest river island on Earth, and enjoyed walking along its shores. One day, he saw hundreds of dead snakes on the river bank. Flood waters had washed them there, and there was no vegetation for them to shelter in. 'The snakes died in the heat, without any tree cover. I sat down and wept ...'. Jadav realized how serious the problem of deforestation was – floods were washing away the soil where trees had been cut down. Majuli, with a growing population of 170,000 people, had lost 70% of its land over the last century.



Jadav planted some tree saplings on the barren land, but they died and it seemed nothing would grow there. He didn't want to give up though, and when he talked to some of the older people in his village, they suggested he try planting bamboo.

The first plantings

So Jadav went out every day, making holes for bamboo plants in the desert-like ground with a stick, and in a few years, large areas of bamboo forest had grown. He learned that red ants improved the condition of the soil, so he carried hundreds of them onto the land. He was stung many times. 'That was an experience!' he says, laughing.

He then decided to try growing proper trees again in the improved soil. The saplings survived this time, but as they grew in number, watering them regularly was a big challenge for one man. He hung