

Animals of the Tropical Rainforest

by ReadWorks



Where can you find more animal species than anywhere else in the world? The answer is not a zoo or the circus. It's a very special type of ecosystem called a rainforest. An ecosystem is a community of living things and the environment in which they live, and a rainforest is an ecosystem with a lot of different living things. Most rainforests can be found in tropical climates in the Southern Hemisphere.

Why are rainforests only found in certain parts of the world? To answer this question, we need to think about geography. The earth is split in half by an imaginary line called the equator. The equator separates the northern half of the earth from the southern half. These halves of the earth are called hemispheres. The Southern Hemisphere starts just below the equator and ends at the South Pole. The Northern Hemisphere starts just above the equator and ends at the North Pole.

The Southern Hemisphere tends to be warmer than the Northern Hemisphere. The two most common climates in the Southern Hemisphere are temperate and tropical. Both of these climates have lots of precipitation. The difference between them is that temperate climates have warm summers and cold winters. Tropical climates are warm all year long, which makes it easy for rainforests to live. Since the Southern Hemisphere has more tropical climates than

the Northern Hemisphere, it has more rainforests.

Tropical rainforests have great living conditions for many animal species. This is because there's lots of rain, and the temperature stays at about 75-85 degrees Fahrenheit year round. Rainforest animals don't have to worry about freezing during the winter. They don't have to worry about finding shade in the summer. They rarely have to search for water because it rains almost every day. These conditions make tropical rainforests a good home for many species.

In addition to their warm, rainy climates, there is another reason why rainforests are home to so many different types of animals. It is because they are some of the oldest ecosystems on Earth. Scientists think that some rainforests have been around since dinosaurs walked the earth millions of years ago.

The Amazon rainforest in Brazil is the biggest rainforest in the world. Jaguars, toucans, parrots, and tarantulas all call it home. Yet this is only a small sample of rainforest animals. Many other rare and often endangered animals can be found in rainforests. One of these animals is the okapi. This beautiful animal has striped legs like a zebra and tall ears like a giraffe. Okapis mostly live in the rainforest of Central Africa. Rainforests are also home to some animals you might want to stay away from. For example, some rainforests have flying snakes, as well as spiders that can eat birds. There are so many animals in tropical rainforests that we haven't been able to name them all yet.

Many of these unusual animals only live in tropical rainforests. They don't live anywhere else on Earth. Some of these species have had to adapt to their rainforest surroundings in order to survive. For example, toucans and parrots both have very large, strong beaks. These powerful beaks make it easy for them to crack open the tough shells of nuts that grow on many rainforest trees. Birds with small beaks, like robins and sparrows, would not be able to crack open the hard nuts in the rainforest. Without that ability, they probably would not survive there.

Another way animals adapt to life in the rainforest is by camouflaging themselves to hide from predators. For instance, there is an insect called the "walking stick," which lives in palm trees. It blends in so well that it is almost impossible to spot it unless it moves. There are also some butterflies that look just like leaves when they close their wings. This hides them from predators. Other rainforest animals, like the coral snake and the poison arrow frog, make their own natural poison that protects them. Get too close, and they could easily harm you with

poison.

There are many different species living in the rainforests of the Southern Hemisphere. However, many of them are quickly becoming extinct, as people cut down trees and destroy natural habitats. Cutting down trees isn't the only threat to rainforest animals, either. People illegally catch and sell monkeys as pets. Hunters kill jaguars and sell their skins. Also, pollution from mining has killed many types of fish.

Because of the unique tropical climate in rainforests of the Southern Hemisphere, the animals that live there cannot live elsewhere. If their habitats are destroyed, they will not be able to survive. It is important to take care of our planet so that these animals continue to live.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. In which ecosystem can you find more animal species than anywhere else in the world?
 - A. grass plains
 - B. desert
 - C. urban city
 - D. rainforest

2. What does the author describe in the passage?
 - A. how the Ice Age destroyed many old rainforests
 - B. the climates of different countries in the Southern Hemisphere
 - C. the conditions that make tropical rainforests ideal environments for many species
 - D. different species that live in temperate forests

3. Tropical rainforests have optimal conditions for many animal species. What evidence from the text supports this conclusion?
 - A. "Rainforest animals don't have to worry about freezing during the winter or finding shade in the summer."
 - B. "The difference is that temperate climates have warm summers and cold winters, while tropical climates are warm all year long."
 - C. "The two most common climates in the Southern Hemisphere, temperate and tropical, both have lots of precipitation."
 - D. "[The Northern and Southern Hemispheres] are divided by a line called the equator."

4. Why do rainforests have some of the most diverse plant and animal life on earth?
 - A. because tropical explorers have introduced many new species to rainforests during their explorations
 - B. because they are some of the oldest ecosystems on earth, and have optimal conditions for many species
 - C. because many animals migrated to rainforests as humans and natural forces destroyed their habitats
 - D. because rainforests are the largest ecosystems on the planet

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A. types of climates
- B. the Southern Hemisphere
- C. tropical rainforests
- D. environmental preservation

6. Read the following sentences: "Where can you find more animal species than anywhere else in the world? It's not a zoo or the circus. It's a very special type of ecosystem called a rainforest, and most can be found in tropical climates in the Southern Hemisphere. [...] Despite the **biodiversity** in the rainforests of the Southern Hemisphere, many species are quickly becoming extinct, as people cut down trees and destroy natural habitats."

What does **biodiversity** mean?

- A. having a range of organisms in an environment
- B. having organisms that are similar in an environment
- C. having very few species in an environment
- D. having species that have adapted to different environments

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Different animals have adapted to life in the rainforest in different ways, _____ camouflaging themselves.

- A. finally
- B. however
- C. although
- D. such as

8. Why haven't scientists named all of the species that live in tropical rainforests?

9. Name two animals that have adapted to life in tropical rainforests, and explain how they have adapted to survive.

10. Explain the change occurring in rainforests which is causing many species to become extinct and explain why these species are not able to adapt to this change.
