



Animal Habitats and Ecosystems

Week 31 — Monday | Where Animals Live



Reading Time

An **ecosystem** is a community of living things (plants, animals, and tiny organisms) interacting with each other and their non-living environment (air, water, soil, sunlight). Every animal needs a **habitat** — a place that provides food, water, shelter, and space. When any one of these four things is missing, the animal cannot survive there. Habitats come in many different forms, from deep oceans to hot deserts, from frozen arctic ice to warm rainforests.

A **rainforest ecosystem** is one of the most diverse places on Earth. Rainforests cover only 6% of Earth's surface but contain over 50% of all plant and animal species! The forest is organized in layers. The **emergent layer** at the top has tall trees that reach above the canopy. The **canopy layer** is where most animals live — monkeys, toucans, and tree frogs thrive here. The **understory** is darker and cooler, home to jaguars and tapirs. The **forest floor** receives very little sunlight and is home to insects, fungi, and decomposers that break down dead matter.

A **grassland ecosystem** has wide open spaces with few trees. Grasslands are divided into **tropical grasslands** (savannas) and **temperate grasslands** (prairies). Savannas have warm temperatures year-round and support large animals like elephants, lions, zebras, and giraffes. Temperate grasslands have hot summers and cold winters, supporting animals like bison, prairie dogs, and coyotes. Grassland animals often dig burrows underground because there aren't many trees for shelter. Grasses have deep root systems that hold the soil and prevent erosion.

An **ocean ecosystem** covers over 70% of Earth's surface and contains many different habitats within it. **Coral reefs** are called the "rainforests of the sea" because they're so diverse — thousands of fish, sea turtles, and invertebrates live among the coral. The **open ocean** is vast and deep, home to whales, sharks, and migrating fish. The **deep sea** is pitch-black and under extreme pressure, where creatures like anglerfish and giant squids live. The **intertidal zone** (where the ocean meets the land) experiences changing tides, and animals like crabs, sea stars, and barnacles must adapt to being underwater and exposed to air.



Reading Questions

1. What are the four things every animal needs from its habitat?

2. Why is a rainforest considered one of the most diverse ecosystems?

3. Compare a tropical grassland (savanna) with a temperate grassland. How are they similar and different?

4. Why do grassland animals often live in burrows instead of trees?

 Vocabulary Grid

Write a definition or draw a picture for each word.

 Ecosystem _____	 Habitat _____
 Canopy _____	 Savanna _____
 Coral Reef _____	 Intertidal Zone _____

 Habitat Comparison Chart

Fill in the chart comparing three different ecosystems.

Feature	Rainforest	Grassland (Savanna)	Ocean
Climate			
Trees			
Rainfall			
Animal Examples			
Challenges for Animals			

 Match the Animal to Its Habitat

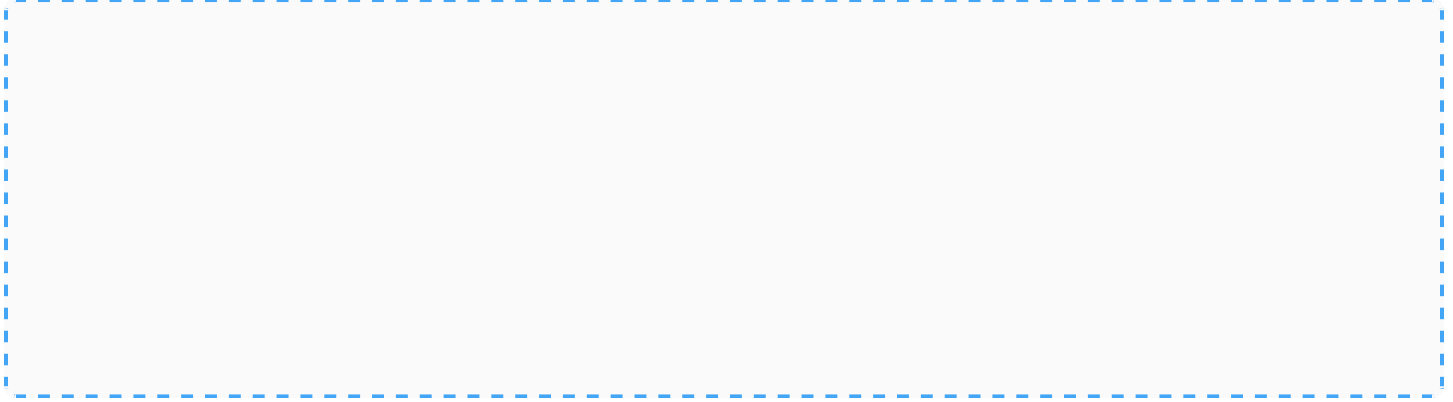
Write the letter of the habitat next to each animal.

Habitats: A) Rainforest canopy B) Grassland savanna C) Coral reef D) Deep ocean E) Ocean intertidal zone

Animal	Habitat Letter
Howler monkey swinging between trees	
Lion hunting on open plains	
Clownfish living in an anemone	
Anglerfish with glowing lure	
Barnacle attached to a rock	
Toucan with large colorful beak	
Zebra grazing on grass	
Sea star on a rocky shore	

Draw a Rainforest Cross-Section

Draw the four layers of a rainforest. Place 2 animals in each layer. Label each layer.



Think About It

If a rainforest animal from the canopy layer was moved to the forest floor, what challenges would it face? Would it survive?

Why do scientists say coral reefs are the "rainforests of the sea"? Compare the two ecosystems.

How would a grassland ecosystem change if a drought killed most of the grass? What would happen to the animals?
