













Rainforests



Rainforests are the Earth's oldest living ecosystem. They cover 6% of the world's surface but contain more than half the world's plants and animal species (up to 30 million!) It is a tall, dense jungle with a large yearly rainfall. The climate of a rainforest is very hot and humid.

Key Knowledge

The Emergent Layer	The emergent layer is the name given to the tops of trees that poke up above the rainforest canopy . It is very sunny and rainy here and only the strongest and tallest plants reach this level.	Animals that live in the emergent layer... Butterflies  Eagles 
The Canopy	The layer of a tropical rainforest where plants form an umbrella type of overhang (a ceiling) that rises high above the ground is called the Canopy Layer . What makes up most of the Canopy Layer is a tangled mix of vegetation including branches, vines and trees of different sizes.	Animals that live in the canopy layer... Tree Frogs Toucans Snakes   
The Understory	The understory layer is a tangle of shrubs, young trees, saplings, palms and vines. It is hot and damp here and the air is very still. There is very little light here.	Animals that live in the understory layer... Monkeys Bats  
The Forest Floor	It lies beneath the emergent, canopy and understory layers , which is the reason why almost no sunlight reaches this area. It is very hot and humid there. The forest floor is where decomposition takes place.	Animals that live in the forest floor layer... Jaguar Orangutan Beetles   

Key Vocabulary

biome	an ecosystem covering a large area of a continent
captive breeding programme	animals are kept in enclosures and are bred to produce future generations of their species
decomposition	tree leaves rotting and decaying
deforestation	clearing a wide area of trees
ecosystem	a system of plants and animals which are interconnected
endangered	a species seriously at risk of extinction
equator	an imaginary line drawn around the middle of the earth an equal distance from the North Pole and the South Pole
extinction	no more of the species alive on Earth
Harpy Eagle	among the world's largest and most powerful eagles
sloth	a mammal that spends most of its time hanging upside down in trees
subtropical	south of the Tropics
temperate	neither very hot or very cold
Tropic of Cancer	the Northern tropic
Tropic of Capricorn	the Southern tropic
tropical	the area between the two tropics

