

Rainforests

What is a Rainforest?

Rainforests are areas with many leafy plants, tall trees and high rainfall. Rainforests are teeming with life. More than half the world's species of plants and animals live in rainforests.

Climate

Most tropical rainforests are found on or near the equator. For this reason, they are hot and very humid places. Rainforests, year-round high temperatures and high levels of rainfall. The high level of rainfall distinguishes rainforests from other types of forests.

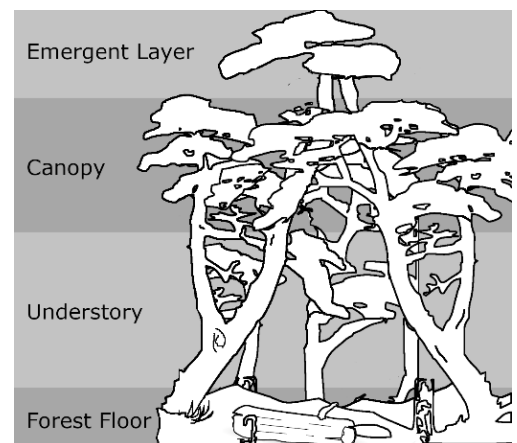
Layers of a Rainforest

Rainforests have four main layers. The first layer is the forest floor. Very little sunlight reaches the forest floor and so not many plants grow in this dark place. It is home to the larger rainforest animals as well as many insects.

Above the forest floor is the understory. Shrubs, bushes and younger trees occupy this layer. The understory is also a dark place.

The canopy layer acts as a roof over the understory and forest floor layers. The canopy is home to more life than any of the other layers. Plants grow on the thick branches and climbing plants wrap around them, creating a maze of leaves and branches.

At the top is the emergent layer. The very tallest of the trees are found in this layer. The trees up here receive the most sunlight but must deal with very high temperatures and often high winds.



Layers of a rainforest



Many species of monkeys live in rainforests

Animals

An abundance of plants grows in rainforests due to the high amount of sunlight and rainfall they receive. This means there are plenty of food sources for animals. Rainforests also provide many places for plants and animals to live. For these reasons, rainforests can support so much life.

The forest floor and understory layer are home to many insects, frogs and snakes as well as some of the largest rainforest animals like jaguars and anteaters. Animals that live in the canopy include monkeys, birds, sloths and lizards. Some of the animals that live in the canopy never need to touch the ground!

The emergent layer is home to some species of eagles, hawks and other birds.