

# ECOSYSTEMS

## WHAT IS AN ECOSYSTEM?

An ecosystem is made up of all living and nonliving things in an area. This includes all of the plants, animals, and other living things that make up the groups of life in an area. An ecosystem also includes nonliving materials—this includes things like water, rocks, soil, climate and sand.

A swamp, grasslands, oceans and forests are examples of different ecosystems. In an ecosystem, each organism—meaning a living thing—has its own role to play.

## WHY ARE ECOSYSTEMS IMPORTANT?

Since ecosystems provide animals and plants with all of the resources that are needed for them to survive, they are a very important part of our planet. An animal's food, shelter and community come from their ecosystem. Without our ecosystems, nothing would be able to survive!

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ECOSYSTEMS?

The different types of environment ecosystems are as follows: Forest Ecosystems – Marine Ecosystems – Desert Ecosystems – Grassland Ecosystems – Tundra Ecosystems and Freshwater Ecosystems.

## WHAT ECOSYSTEMS EXIST IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

An example could be your vegetable garden. The plants attract plant eating insects which in turn attract birds and even frogs which may then attract predators such as foxes. Can you think of any other local ecosystems?

## DID YOU KNOW?

Australia is home to the largest coral reef in the world! That's right, The Great Barrier Reef is a busy underwater ecosystem with coral made up of very small animals called Coral polyps. This forms the base from which lots of other organisms live such as crabs, star fish, worms, clams, sponges, jellyfish, sea turtles and lots of species of fish.

Half the world's species live in tropical rainforests and the oldest continuously surviving tropical rainforest in the world is right here in Australia! The Daintree Rainforest on the north east coast of Queensland is thought to be 165 million years old. The iconic giant bird of the Daintree is the Cassowary!

About 18% of Australia is made up of desert. Deserts are ecosystems where there is very little rain animals living in these ecosystems have had to adapt to survive in these harsh environments. An example is the adorable bilby which hide during the day and forage at night to avoid heat and dehydration. They also burrow one to two meters underground which is up to ten degrees cooler than the surface.

## WHAT IS HARMING THE ECOSYSTEM

Unfortunately humans have negatively affected many ecosystems throughout the world. Cutting down trees, developing land, growing crops, burning fossil fuels, overfishing, and overhunting animals are just some of the ways that we have upset the balance of nature.

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

By learning about the world's ecosystems and how important they are to life, you can spread the word. It will take everyone working together to try and slow our impact down.

