

Rainforest Animals Worksheet

Ages 8-12 · Name: _____ · Date: _____

Reading Passage

Rainforests are defined less by their trees than by their climate: consistently warm temperatures and extremely heavy rainfall year-round, with no true dry season, found in a band circling the equator across the Amazon basin in South America, the Congo Basin in Central Africa, and the rainforests of Southeast Asia. Though rainforests cover only a small fraction of Earth's land surface, they are estimated to host more than half of the world's known plant and animal species, packed into a density found nowhere else on the planet.

A rainforest is structured in distinct vertical layers, each with its own climate and community of species. The emergent layer is made up of the tallest trees, poking through the canopy to catch full sun and strong wind. Below it, the canopy forms a dense, near-continuous ceiling of leaves and branches that captures most of the sunlight and hosts the greatest concentration of animal life in the entire rainforest. The understory, dim and still, receives only a fraction of the light that reaches the canopy. At the very bottom, the forest floor is nearly dark and covered in a thin layer of leaf litter that decomposes remarkably fast in the heat and humidity.

Despite supporting some of the densest vegetation and animal life on Earth, rainforest soil is often nutrient-poor. Fallen leaves and dead organic matter break down and get reabsorbed by shallow root systems almost as quickly as they hit the ground, rather than accumulating into a nutrient-rich topsoil. Many rainforest animals also rely on camouflage so precise it can be nearly impossible to spot a resting insect or frog against bark or leaf litter. Others take the reverse approach: bright, high-contrast coloration, like that of poison dart frogs, functions as a warning signal that an animal is toxic or dangerous to eat -- a strategy known as aposematism.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Name the four vertical layers of a rainforest, in order from the top down.

2. Which rainforest layer holds the greatest concentration of animal life?

3. Why is rainforest soil often nutrient-poor despite such dense plant growth?

4. What is it called when a brightly colored animal, like a poison dart frog, uses its coloring to warn predators it is dangerous to eat?



Photo: Lea Maimone · CC BY-SA 2.5 · via Wikimedia Commons

Jaguar

Scientific name	Panthera onca
Category	Mammal
Diet	Carnivore
Weight	56–96 kg
Length	112–185 cm
Lifespan	12–15 years
Conservation status	Near Threatened

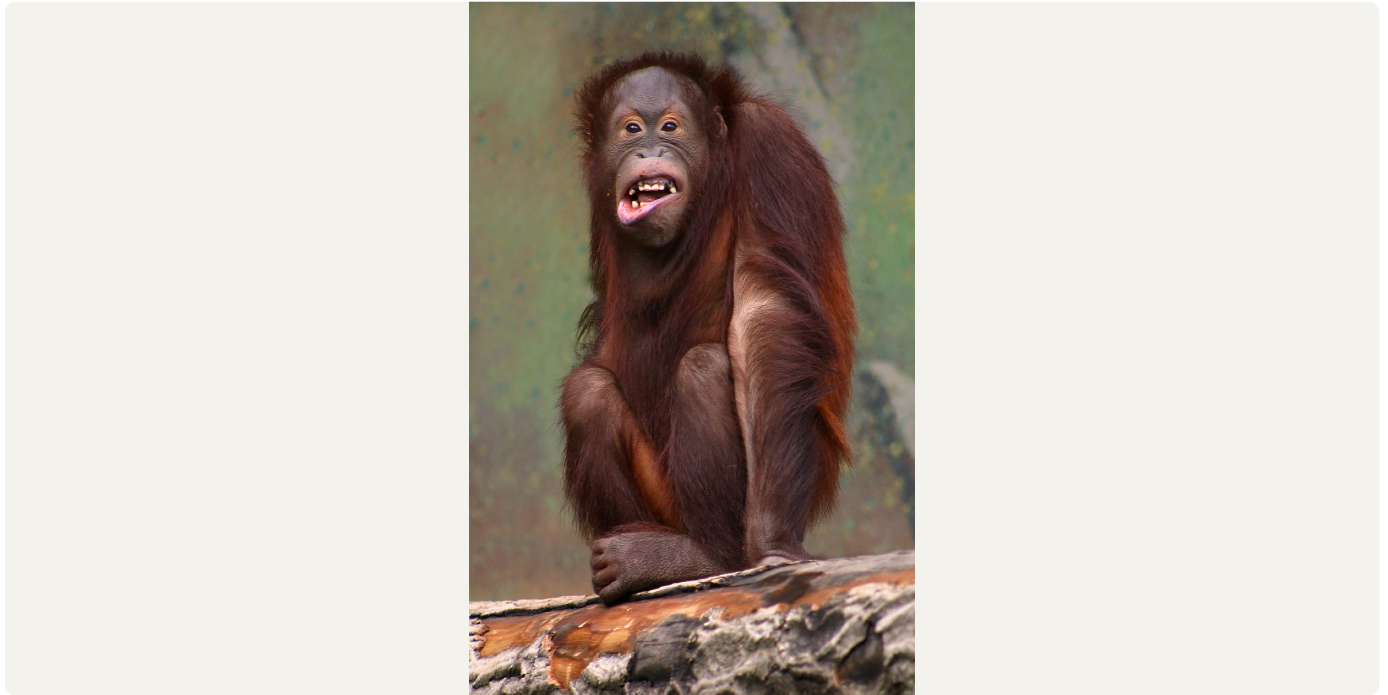


Photo: Malene Thyssen · CC BY 2.5 · via Wikimedia Commons

Bornean Orangutan

Scientific name	Pongo pygmaeus
Category	Mammal
Diet	Omnivore
Weight	30–90 kg
Length	100–140 cm
Lifespan	35–45 years
Conservation status	Critically Endangered



Photo: Diego Delso · CC BY-SA 3.0 · via Wikimedia Commons

Green Anaconda

Scientific name	Eunectes murinus
Category	Reptile
Diet	Carnivore
Weight	30–97 kg
Length	300–600 cm
Lifespan	10–30 years
Conservation status	Least Concern



Photo: guilherme jofili · CC BY 2.0 · via Wikimedia Commons

Harpy Eagle

Scientific name	Harpia harpyja
Category	Bird
Diet	Carnivore
Weight	4–9 kg
Length	86–107 cm
Lifespan	25–35 years
Conservation status	Near Threatened



Photo: Charles J. Sharp · CC BY-SA 4.0 · via Wikimedia Commons

Mountain Gorilla

Scientific name	Gorilla beringei beringei
Category	Mammal
Diet	Herbivore
Weight	70–220 kg
Length	125–180 cm
Lifespan	35–40 years
Conservation status	Endangered



Photo: Donald Hobern from Copenhagen, Denmark · CC BY 2.0 · via Wikimedia Commons

Southern Cassowary

Scientific name	Casuarius casuarius
Category	Bird
Diet	Omnivore
Weight	29–60 kg
Length	130–170 cm
Lifespan	20–40 years
Conservation status	Least Concern



Photo: TimVickers · Public domain · via Wikimedia Commons

King Cobra

Scientific name	Ophiophagus hannah
Category	Reptile
Diet	Carnivore
Weight	6–9 kg
Length	300–550 cm
Lifespan	17–20 years
Conservation status	Vulnerable



Photo: Dominic Sherony · CC BY-SA 2.0 · via Wikimedia Commons

Quetzal

Scientific name	Pharomachrus mocinno
Category	Bird
Diet	Omnivore
Weight	0.17–0.23 kg
Length	36–40 cm
Lifespan	15–20 years
Conservation status	Near Threatened



Photo: C. Horwitz, uploaded with help of her husband Steven G. Johnson · CC BY-SA 3.0 · via Wikimedia Commons

Basilisk Lizard

Scientific name	Basiliscus basiliscus
Category	Reptile
Diet	Omnivore
Weight	0.2–0.6 kg
Length	60–90 cm
Lifespan	7–10 years
Conservation status	Least Concern



Photo: Joshyja · CC BY-SA 3.0 · via Wikimedia Commons

Red-Bellied Piranha

Scientific name	Pygocentrus nattereri
Category	Fish
Diet	Carnivore
Weight	0.3–1.5 kg
Length	15–33 cm
Lifespan	8–10 years
Conservation status	Least Concern

True or False?

- ☐ 1. The jaguar is a carnivore.
- ☐ 2. The jaguar's conservation status is least concern.
- ☐ 3. The bornean orangutan is a carnivore.
- ☐ 4. The bornean orangutan's conservation status is critically endangered.
- ☐ 5. The green anaconda is a carnivore.
- ☐ 6. The green anaconda's conservation status is endangered.
- ☐ 7. The harpy eagle is a herbivore.
- ☐ 8. The harpy eagle's conservation status is near threatened.
- ☐ 9. The mountain gorilla is a herbivore.
- ☐ 10. The mountain gorilla's conservation status is vulnerable.
- ☐ 11. The southern cassowary is a carnivore.
- ☐ 12. The southern cassowary's conservation status is least concern.
- ☐ 13. The king cobra is a carnivore.
- ☐ 14. The king cobra's conservation status is least concern.
- ☐ 15. The quetzal is an omnivore.
- ☐ 16. The quetzal's conservation status is near threatened.
- ☐ 17. The basilisk lizard is an omnivore.
- ☐ 18. The basilisk lizard's conservation status is near threatened.
- ☐ 19. The red-bellied piranha is a carnivore.
- ☐ 20. The red-bellied piranha's conservation status is least concern.

Guess the Animal Quiz

1. Which animal is this? "A jaguar's bite is strong enough to pierce a turtle's shell or a caiman's skull."

- a) Bornean Orangutan b) Harpy Eagle
c) Southern Cassowary d) Jaguar

2. Which animal is this? "Orangutans build a new nest of branches and leaves to sleep in every single night."

- a) Harpy Eagle
b) Southern Cassowary
c) Bornean Orangutan
d) Jaguar

3. Which animal is this? "The green anaconda is the heaviest snake species in the world, with large females weighing close to 100kg."

- a) Southern Cassowary b) Green Anaconda
c) Jaguar d) Harpy Eagle

4. Which animal is this? "A harpy eagle's talons can grow longer than a grizzly bear's claws, and its grip strength is among the most powerful of any bird."

- a) Harpy Eagle
b) Jaguar
c) Green Anaconda
d) Southern Cassowary

5. Which animal is this? "Mountain gorilla numbers have slowly recovered thanks to decades of dedicated conservation work."

- a) Jaguar
b) Green Anaconda
c) Southern Cassowary
d) Mountain Gorilla

6. Which animal is this? "The cassowary is often called the world's most dangerous bird due to its powerful legs and dagger-like inner claw."

- a) Green Anaconda b) Mountain Gorilla
c) Southern Cassowary d) Jaguar

7. Which animal is this? "A single bite can deliver enough venom to kill an elephant."

- a) Mountain Gorilla b) King Cobra
c) Jaguar d) Green Anaconda

8. Which animal is this? "Ancient Maya and Aztec civilizations considered the quetzal sacred, associating it with the feathered serpent god Quetzalcoatl."

- a) Quetzal
b) Jaguar
c) Green Anaconda
d) Mountain Gorilla

Answer Key

Reading Comprehension

1. Emergent layer, canopy, understory, forest floor.
2. The canopy.
3. Dead leaves and organic matter decompose and get reabsorbed by shallow roots so quickly in the hot, humid climate that nutrients stay locked in living plants and animals instead of building up in the soil.
4. Aposematism.

True or False

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. False
7. False
8. True
9. True
10. False
11. False
12. True
13. True
14. False
15. True
16. True
17. True
18. False
19. True
20. True

Guess the Animal

1. d) Jaguar
2. c) Bornean Orangutan
3. b) Green Anaconda
4. a) Harpy Eagle
5. d) Mountain Gorilla
6. c) Southern Cassowary
7. b) King Cobra
8. a) Quetzal