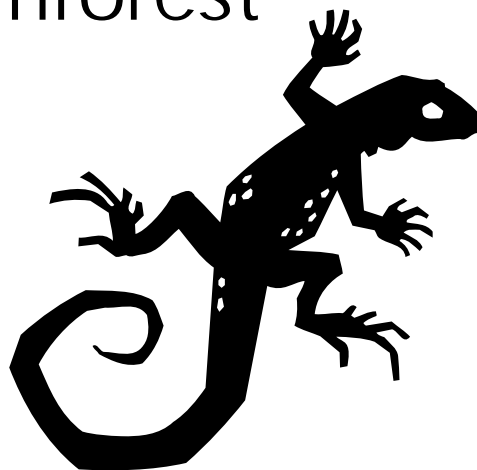


Animals of the Rainforest



Objectives

- ▶ appreciate the species diversity of the rainforest
- ▶ use library resources to identify animals of the rainforest
- ▶ classify the animals of the rainforest

Vocabulary

amphibian
bird

invertebrate
mammal

reptile
vertebrate

Background

Although rainforests cover only about one percent of the Australian continent, they are home to a wide variety of animal life. A typical 2,500-acre patch of rainforest contains as many as 1500 species of flowering plants, up to 750 species of trees, 400 species of birds, 150 kinds of butterflies, and insects too numerous to count.

Australia has 230 species of native mammals, half of which are marsupials—animals that develop their young in a pouch. This group includes such rainforest dwellers as koalas, possums, wombats, and bandicoots. In addition, many of the 700 species of birds that are native to Australia live in rainforests. The bird population includes cockatoos and a variety of parrots and parakeets.

Materials

reference books, such as encyclopedias and books about animals
list of animals of the Australian rainforest
computer/access to on-line resources (optional)

Activity

1. Discuss with students the importance of the rainforest as a wildlife habitat. Ask: Why do you think scientists want to know the types of animals that live in the rainforest? Why are rainforests suitable habitats for these animals?
2. Explain that SFS students are aiding in the conservation of the cassowary, a large flightless bird related to emus and ostriches. Tell students that the conservation and management of the species has been hindered by a lack of data. Ask: Why do scientists need information about an animal, especially one they want to conserve? What kinds of information do they need?
3. Give each student a copy of the following list. Explain that these animals live in the Australian rainforest.

striped possum

northern brown bandicoot

grey teal

honeyeater

ring-tailed dragon

gecko

giant tree frog

kowari

cassowary

tropical scrubwren

wallaroo

koala

red-winged parrot

wombat

wallaby

palm cockatoo

marsupial mole

yellow-bellied glider

woodswallow

dragon lizard

northern tree snake

tree-kangaroo

hopping mouse

double banded plover

Atherton antechinus

white footed dunnart

coral snake

gecko

eastern banjo frog

eastern froglet

red goshawk

amethystine python

4. Help students define the terms vertebrate and invertebrate. Have them classify each animal in the list as a vertebrate or invertebrate. Students may need to use library resources to find out more about each animal.
5. Help students define the terms mammal, amphibian, reptile, and bird. Write the definitions on chart paper. Then have students work together to group the animals by categories.
6. Have students find out which animals are considered rare and endangered. Suggest that they use library resources or visit related sites on the Internet. (See Resources.) Discuss the importance of conserving these species.

Extend the Activity

Suggest that students work in pairs to list the animals that live in their community and classify each animal. Have students compare their list with the list of rainforest animals. Ask: What do the differences in animal species tell you about the climate of each place?