

Lesson 5 : Types of Rainforests



Temperate Rainforest

Tropical rainforests are hot and humid. They are located along the equator.



Temperate rainforests are much cooler, but are just as humid. They are located closer to the North and South poles than to the equator. They can be found all over the world, including Chile, New Zealand, Australia, and in northwest North America. Some of the tallest trees in the world can be found in temperate rainforests.

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Like tropical rainforests, temperate rainforests have canopies that limit how much sunlight reaches the forest floor. But instead of large leafed trees, temperate rainforests often have fir and pine trees. These trees can survive better in the colder weather. The world's largest temperate rainforest is found along the Pacific coast of North America. Shown here is a North American rainforest in the state of Washington. This area is known for its pleasant summer weather and mild winters.



Evergreen Needles

The plants that live in the tropical rainforest are very different from those that live in the temperate rainforest.



For example, in tropical rainforests, most trees have flat, wide leaves. This helps them collect as much sunlight as possible. They also may have funny-looking roots that stick out of the ground. In the temperate rainforest, the trees have much smaller, thinner leaves. These leaves are called needles. The roots of the trees extend deep in the ground. Cone-bearing trees such as firs, pines, and spruces are common in temperate rainforests.



One plant found in the tropical rainforest is the bird's nest fern. These plants grow on tree trunks. They spread their flat, wide leaves out from the tree trunks and branches. The ferns can grow quite large and are usually nicely shaped like a bucket. This helps them to catch rain and falling debris which decomposes and provides the ferns with the nutrients they need. The ferns can also grow on rocks. These plants absorb water through their thick leaves and their many sponge-like roots. This allows the bird's nest ferns to take in a lot of water, which then increases their weight. In fact, some ferns can weigh as much as 400 pounds — that's as much as two refrigerators!



Quetzal

Cloud rainforests are located on the tops of mountains. The plants and animals that live here must be able to survive in a much cooler climate than that of the hot and humid tropical rainforest.



Cloud rainforests are favorite nesting spots for birds. Birds help keep the insect populations down in the cloud rainforest. Birds also make up the soundscape of the cloud rainforest. This means that their songs and calls echo throughout the forest area. It would be an empty place without the sounds of the many birds of the cloud rainforest.



This bird — called the quetzal — lives in the cloud rainforests of Costa Rica. It is thought to be the most beautiful bird in the Americas with its lovely feathers of blue, green, and red. Quetzals are hard to spot because they nest only in the tallest trees of the cloud rainforest. Anyone who is lucky enough to see one is sure to be impressed by its tail — it's shiny, green, and almost two-feet long! These brightly colored birds live in the mountainous, tropical forests of Central America. The birds like to eat fruit, insects, and lizards.