

AUSTRALIA'S GREEN CAULDRON

(Map Ref 9)



LP, MP, UP, LS



Australia's Green Cauldron is an exhibit showcasing the unique plant and animal species which inhabit our Australian rainforests and waterways.

Rainforests are vital to our environment providing numerous benefits to humans and it is the rainforest habitat which houses the most species of plant and animals in the world. Seventy-five per cent of the world's plants and animals live in rainforests but it only covers about 6 per cent of the Earth's surface.

As the name 'rainforest' suggests, rainforests receive high rainfall and there is often little variation in the temperature of a rainforest throughout the year.

Rainforests are often cleared for their rich and fertile soils. However, they are only very shallow so it often has little long-term use for farmers. Also, without the trees and plants to hold it in place, the soil is often washed or blown away; This is called erosion. Eroded soils can pollute our waterways by introducing excess minerals, reducing clarity & oxygen levels and may also eventually fill in bodies of water.

Since European settlement, 100 plant species have become extinct in Australia and still huge areas of native vegetation continue to be cleared each day. In fact an area equivalent to 100 football fields of native plants is cleared every hour in Australia. Some animal species live exclusively in rainforest habitats and are now endangered. It is vital we ensure the survival of our rainforests.

Our waterways are an equally important ecosystem to plants, animals and people. Waterways are becoming increasingly polluted as people continue to use chemicals and leave their litter on the ground. Most litter not disposed of in the correct way will end up in our waterways by being blown or washed down storm water drains. All of the drains you see lead into our creeks, rivers and oceans. They do not meet in a central location where litter such as plastics, metals, food waste, chemicals etc can be removed. Anything that is left on the ground WILL end up polluting our waterways. Pollution is one of the main causes of illness and death amongst aquatic plants and animals. Across the world, frog populations are in a perilous state because of the increasing population in our waterways. Their sensitive skin is unable to cope with the added pollutants.

There are several actions that people can take which would reduce our impact on rainforests and waterways. If everyone changed just one or two bad habits, our environment would be much healthier. The world is our home and we are all responsible for looking after it.

We are able to provide further information for students about environment-friendly practices they may undertake.

Q1

Why are rainforests so special?

THEY ARE HOME TO A HUGE RANGE OF PLANTS AND ANIMALS.

Q2

What are some of the benefits of rainforests to people? (Oxygen most importantly, as well as medicines, fruit, cereals, nuts, herbs, oils, dyes, natural insecticides, tourism, habitats for a huge range of animals are just a few.)

COULD YOU LIVE WITHOUT CHOCOLATE?

Even though chocolate is produced in large factories, it can not be made without the pods from the original cacao tree which can only be found in the rainforests of South America.

Q3

1. Rainforests are said to be BIODIVERSE. What do you think this means? Use this to explain the importance of rainforests.

BIODIVERSITY IS THE HUGE VARIETY OF LIFE ON EARTH INCLUDING ALL OF THE PLANT AND ANIMAL KINGDOMS. THIS MAKES RAINFORESTS IMPORTANT AND THEY ARE HOME TO THE MAJORITY OF PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES, ALL OF WHICH HAVE A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY ON OUR PLANET - FROM BACTERIA TO BLUE WHALES.

2. What adaptations have animals made for rainforest living?
WHISKERS, ACUTE HEARING, 'NIGHT-VISION', CLAWS, PREHENSILE TAILS, SILENT FLIGHT, IN SOME CASES, ADDITIONAL THUMBS, CAMOFLAGE, COLOURATION, PATTERNING ETC.

A1

Rainforests are home to a variety of animals. Ask students to count how many different animals they can see in Naturally Wild. How many different animal sounds can they hear?

A2

Play Nature Bingo with your group by using descriptions. Find the name of something with feathers, long whiskers, a prehensile tail, 'sucker' pads, a pouch, night-vision, talons etc. Or, something which would feel rough, smooth, furry, feathery, bumpy, slimy etc.

Try and use all of the senses - sight, smell, hearing, smell and touch.

