

# Life in the RAINFOREST

The world's rainforests are perfectly-balanced ecosystems, home to *half* of all the world's species. They provide everything that the plants, animals and indigenous people living in them need to thrive. Many species rely on each other for survival, so if some plants are destroyed, or an animal becomes extinct, it can have a devastating effect on the rest of the forest. Take a trek deep into this African rainforest for a closer look...

## Watering the WORLD

Rainforest trees act like giant water pumps. The tiny threads of fungi on their roots draw up water – and the trees' leaves release it back into the air as vapour, forming clouds. This falls as rain or snow in places as far away as the British Isles. Thanks for the shower!

## Busy BEES

Bees are one of the most important insects in the rainforest. As they buzz about collecting nectar, they pass pollen (a fine powder which allows plants to reproduce) from flower to flower, enabling more to grow. Bees also make honey – a tasty treat for people living in the rainforest. Yum!

## TRUNKS in the trees

Elephants only digest about 45% of what they eat, so many plant and tree seeds pass straight through, emerging in the elephants' dung. As the dung turns to compost, these seeds take root and grow. Amazingly, some species actually need to pass through an elephant's gut to sprout!

## Gardeners of the FOREST

Gorillas spend their days eating leaves, fruits, stalks and shoots – and that's good news for the rainforest. As they pull at trees to feed, or break off branches to build nests, they create sunlight gaps in the forest canopy, helping smaller plants to grow. Clever!

## Tropical TREASURES

For some tribes, the rainforest provides everything – from shelter and medicine, to food and clothes. They can't survive without it. Kids living in the forest learn how to build houses, furniture, baskets, arrows and even jewellery from the leaves and branches.

## Hidden FRUITS

There are lots of amazing foods in the rainforest – if you know where to look! Along with hunting and fishing, the indigenous forest people depend on the trees for fruit and seeds. So, if the trees are cut down, their food disappears – along with the animals that also call the forest their home.

## Tiny TROOPERS

Ants, spiders, worms and beetles may be some of the smaller creatures in the rainforest, but they have a very BIG job – keeping the soil healthy. By eating the forest's dead plants and animals, they release nutrients back into the earth, helping plants and trees grow big and strong. Top work!

## Forest FRIENDS

Rainforest birds, like this African grey parrot, feed on fruit, nuts and small insects. As they munch, some seeds fall to the ground and – in time – grow into new plants and trees! But without the trees, these beautiful birds have no food or protection – and they're left fighting for survival.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

# Kids