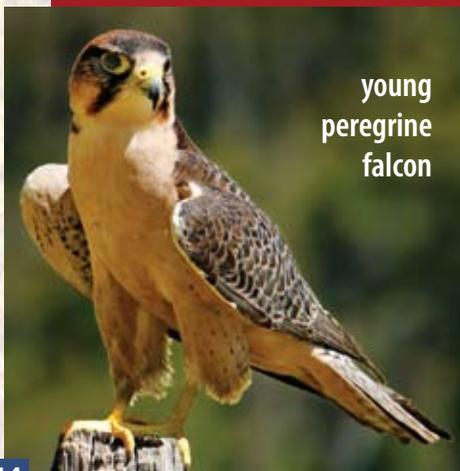


Peregrine Falcon

The peregrine falcon is the fastest animal on the planet. It soars high into the air and then dives toward the ground. This is called a stoop. It can go as fast as 300km/h (185 mph)! The falcon uses the stoop to hunt. It mostly hunts other birds. It snatches them right out of the air. Peregrine falcons hunt doves and ducks in the wilderness. Some falcons have moved into big cities. They live on top of skyscrapers and hunt pigeons!



young peregrine falcon

Temperate Forest

A little farther south, the weather warms up. There are four seasons instead of just two. This is the **temperate forest**.

Some trees and shrubs in the temperate forest have learned a neat trick. They lose their leaves each fall. The leaves are used to gather lots of sunlight during the spring and summer. The plant stores the energy and uses it through the winter. It gets rid of the leaves when it doesn't need them. Plants that shed their leaves are called **deciduous**. Maple, beech, and oak trees are common examples.

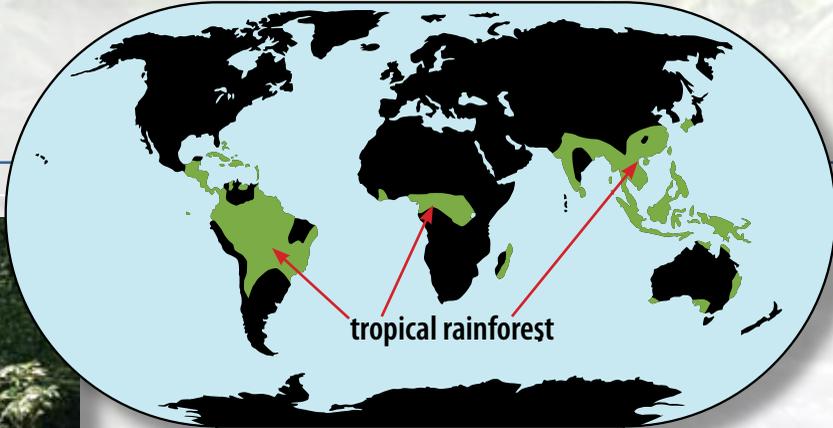
Deer, raccoons, foxes, rabbits, and squirrels make their homes in these forests. Many people do, too. In fact, people have cut down most of these forests for homes, farms, and orchards. Now people all over the world are replanting trees to replace the forests.



Working Together to Save the Pandas

The giant panda, found only in China, needs a special kind of forest to live. It is a bamboo forest. Much of the pandas' forests have been cut down. At first, China made it illegal to cut down the forest or hunt the animals in the ecosystem. The local people needed food to eat and wood to burn for heat. They broke into the reserves even though it was illegal.

Now China is working to find ways for the locals to be part of the ecosystem, too. Locals are allowed to have farms that don't hurt the ecosystem. They use stoves that burn *biogas* (gas made from the decay of living matter) instead of wood. Now the pandas and their forests should be safe.



Tropical Rainforest

Near the equator, the average temperature is near 77°F year-round. It rains all the time. This is where you will find **tropical rainforests**. The Amazon Rainforest in South America is the world's largest. Others can be found in Central America, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

Tropical rainforests have *millions* of different plants and animals. They cover less than 7 percent of the land on the planet. Yet they support more than half the Earth's plant and animal species! The plants and trees there soak up carbon dioxide. Since this is one of the gases that cause global warming, these forests help to reduce the problem.

Good Luck Gekko

Most reptiles are quiet. Not the tokay gekko. It chirps its own name: "Tokay! Gek gek!" Gekkos come from the rainforest. They climb up trees using their sticky feet. They use their long tongues to snatch insects out of the air. In Southeast Asia, many people let gekkos live in their houses! The gekkos climb up the walls and eat bugs. Some people say they bring good luck.



At the top of a rainforest is a **canopy** of tree branches that overlap each other. Little sunlight gets through. Plants on the forest floor have adapted. Many have leaves with deep red coloring to use whatever light reaches them. Other plants trap and eat bugs!

People have destroyed a lot of the rainforests. They have cut down trees for logging, mining, and furniture making. They have built roads, houses, farms, and oil wells. In just the past 30 years, about 20 percent of all the rainforests have been cleared. Scientists think that *dozens* of rainforest species become **extinct** daily.

The Comeback of the Hyacinth Macaw

This beautiful blue bird almost became extinct. It was so pretty that it became a very popular pet. Thousands of hyacinth macaws were captured in Brazil. They were sold illegally.



At the same time, Brazilian farmers were cutting down trees to plant fields. The macaws needed the trees for nests. There were only 2,000 birds left. Then, some Brazilians decided to save the hyacinth macaw. They nailed boxes to the tops of telephone poles. The birds were fooled. They thought the poles were trees and made their nests inside the boxes. People also convinced farmers to keep some trees for the birds. Now farmers are proud to have hyacinth macaws on their farms.