

# TROPICAL FOREST

*Birds from the tropical forests of Asia and Africa*

## What are tropical forests (rainforests)?

- Tropical forests are some of the most complex and diverse ecosystems in the world! They are located around the equator and receive at least 60 inches of rain a year, although most receive much more than that.
- The temperature usually remains between 68° F and 82° F throughout the year.

## Why are tropical forests important?

- Tropical forests are home to half of our planet's living species – an estimated 2 to 5 million species of plants and animals!
- Many products you eat and use come from tropical forests – fruits, chocolate, coffee, cinnamon and cashews, just to name a few!
- The plants found in tropical forests are used to develop medicines that help fight diseases.
- And of course, humans and animals can get clean oxygen from all of those plants.

## Tropical forests need your help!

At least half of the world's tropical forests have been destroyed for lumber, cattle ranching and poor farming practices. The tropical forests that remain cover only six percent of the Earth's surface, but the demand for the resources that rainforests offer continues to rise as our human population grows. What can we do?

## How can you help? Remember the 3 R's!

- **REDUCE:** Buy only what you really need and will use for a long time. The less we use, the fewer resources we take from nature.
- **REUSE:** Be creative and reuse items instead of throwing them out.
- **RECYCLE:** Aluminum cans, paper, plastic and glass bottles. Check with your neighborhood's recycling branch to see what else you can recycle.



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## Layers of the Tropical Forest

### Forest Floor

- The forest floor is a dark place where very few plants can grow because the sun is hidden by tree branches.
- Forest floor-dwelling birds and animals survive on leaves, fruit and seeds that fall to the ground.
- **On the National Aviary's Tropical Forest exhibit floor, keep an eye out for our Victoria crowned pigeons – one of the largest species of pigeons in the world!**

### Understory

- The understory receives slightly more light than the forest floor.
- Young trees and woody plants grow in near darkness.
- Birds move through trees and branches in search of insects.
- **In our Tropical Forest understory, keep an eye out for: Nicobar pigeons and our golden-breasted starlings**

### Canopy

- The tops of the trees form a leafy canopy 60-90 feet off the ground.
- The canopy gets lots of sunlight, attracting diverse plant life and the majority of the tropical forest animals.
- Birds move through the canopy looking for insects, seeds, fruits and flowers.
- **In our Tropical Forest canopy, keep an eye out for: Blue-bellied rollers, fairy bluebirds, and our hammerkop and his huge nest!**

### Emergent Layer

- The emergent layer is made up of the very tallest trees that stretch out above the canopy.
- Animals that live here must be able to endure high temperatures and strong winds.
- Birds like swifts and eagles are found here circling the sky in search of prey.
- Our Tropical Forest does not include an emergent layer due to the glass enclosure.

***DID YOU KNOW? The National Aviary's Tropical Forest exhibit is home to over 70 individual birds!***



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