

AFRICA + BIODIVERSITY



Getting Started with Reading

Grades: 3-5

Background: Africa is a biologically diverse continent that is home to over 4,700 animal species and 45,000 plant species.

Objective: In this activity, students will explore the subject of biodiversity and practice their note-taking skills.

What's Inside?

- Student reading passage
- Student graphic organizer

Sources: Britannica Kids (reading) & CILC Original Resource

GET STARTED WITH READING

Excerpt from Britannica Kids



What is Biodiversity?

The variety of animal and plant life in any environment is known as biodiversity. The term can apply to a small portion of a particular rainforest, the entire Earth itself, or any habitat in between. Biodiversity is of interest to anyone concerned with the welfare of our planet. It is of special interest to those concerned with the environment and the study of living things.

Why is Biodiversity Important?

Biodiversity is important to humans for a number of reasons. One reason is that people benefit from a healthy and biologically diverse environment. For example, many drugs of great value in fighting disease come from plants. If a species of plant that could lead to the development of new drugs is lost, then the world may never have an important medicine that could save lives.

Another reason biodiversity is important is simply that the world is richer with many different species of plants and animals. For example, people do not need butterflies to get through the school or work day. However, an element of beauty that makes the world a more pleasant place to live would be lost if butterflies were to become extinct.

Effects of People and Nature on Biodiversity

The great variety of plants and animals is often taken for granted. However, the activities of humans, such as cutting down rain forests and using gasoline for fuel, pose a major threat to the environment. Consider the changes that take place when a new housing development is built. For example, if a forest is transformed into a neighborhood of streets, lawns, and houses, the old environment and the habitat it provided for living creatures changes forever. The environment is disrupted or even destroyed. Most of the plants will be ruined. The animals will be forced either to find a new habitat or die. Sometimes an entire species might become extinct. Because Earth is the only place in the universe known to sustain life, the loss of even one species on the planet means the total loss of that organism.

Plant and animal life can be destroyed by nature as well as by the actions of human beings. Dramatic changes in climate, such as an ice age, can cause the loss of many life forms as well.



Source retrieved on August 2, 2022 from Britannica Kids website.
(<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/biodiversity/352854>)

Encouraging Biological Diversity

Protecting plants and animals in the environment is a worthwhile thing to do. Governments, real estate developers, and individuals can all contribute to biodiversity by thinking about how their behavior affects living things. Then decisions can be made that have minimal impact on the environment. In this way, the many species of plants and animals that exist on Earth can continue to thrive for many years to come.

Biodiversity in Africa

Africa's landscape is varied. You can find deserts, grasslands, and tropical rainforests there. The vegetation growing in each region depends on the rainfall it receives. Near the Equator, where it rains year-round, there are dense rainforests. These forests contain thousands of different types of trees and other plants. Between the rainforests and the great deserts to the north and south are the savannas. These are open grasslands scattered with trees such as acacias and baobabs. Few plants grow in the deserts.

A serious problem in the savanna is that the vegetation is being used up, leaving the land bare. As the population increases, more and more of the trees are being used for fuel and for building supplies. Some scientists are concerned that removing the vegetation may cause the savanna to become more desert-like.

Africa has many different kinds of animals, though their numbers were greatly reduced in the 1900s. This loss occurred because of overhunting and because large areas of their natural habitats were taken over for farming. Today many species are threatened with extinction. Several countries have set aside land to help protect wild animals. These wildlife preserves are home to such animals as elephants, giraffes, zebras, hippopotamuses, antelopes, lions, jackals, and hyenas. The rainforests support monkeys, bats, flying squirrels, gorillas, leopards, and mongooses. The native animals of northern Africa include types of wild sheep and goat, the African red deer, and the jerboa (a small leaping animal like a gerbil). Fish, birds, and reptiles also are abundant.

Name _____

Taking Notes

Directions: Use this organizer to take notes on the essay.

list of key words

words I need to define

summary of main points

interesting facts

questions I have