What is an Ecosystem?

Ecosystems are regions of Earth sharing similar climate, plants, and animals. Have you ever visited a desert? That’s an ecosystem without a lot of water. Another type of ecosystem is the tropical rainforest, that has lots of water.

Plants and animals have adapted to live in every ecosystem, even the icy Arctic Tundra. Tropical Rainforests are home to the highest number of species. Their warm, wet climate is ideal for all kinds of life to flourish – from stick bugs to sloths.

How Many Ecosystems Exist?

There is no right answer to this question. Since ecosystems are areas that share similar characteristics, it depends on which characteristics you use. For instance, some scientists call all grasslands an ecosystem, but others divide them into tropical and temperate grasslands.

Octopuses and coral live in an aquatic reef ecosystem. Rising sea temperatures, pollution, and overfishing threaten this fragile environment.

Polar bears live in an arctic ecosystem. They depend on sea ice as feeding platforms. Warming temperatures are causing sea ice to melt, endangering these and other polar animals like walruses and seals.