

The Environment Impacts Life

What is an Ecosystem?

Ecosystems are regions of Earth sharing similar climate, plants, and animals. Have you ever been to a desert? That's an ecosystem without a lot of water. Another type of ecosystem is the tropical rainforest, which 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.



Desert Ecosystem

Photo Credit: Ian Parker



Temperate Rainforest Ecosystem

Photo Credit: UCAR/Gary Anthes



Coral Ecosystem

Photo Credit: Fascinating Universe

Coral reefs are one of the Earth's most diverse ecosystems, providing shelter for fish, mollusks, sponges, and other sea creatures.

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



Polar Ecosystem

Photo Credit: NOAA