Unit 1b

The Living World

GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT

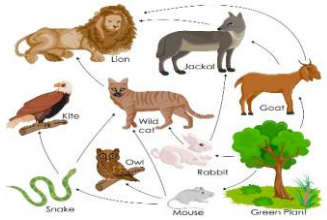
AQA

What is an Ecosystem?

An ecosystem is a system in which organisms interact with each other and with their environment.

Ecosystem's Components

Abiotic	These are **non-living**, such as air, water, heat and rock.
Biotic	These are **living**, such as plants, insects, and animals.
Flora	**Plant life** occurring in a particular region or time.
Fauna	**Animal life** of any particular region or time.



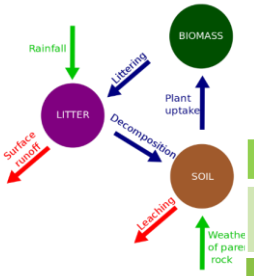
Food Web and Chains

Simple **food chains** are useful in explaining the basic principles behind ecosystems. They show only one species at a particular trophic level. **Food webs** however consists of a network of many food chains interconnected together.

Nutrient cycle

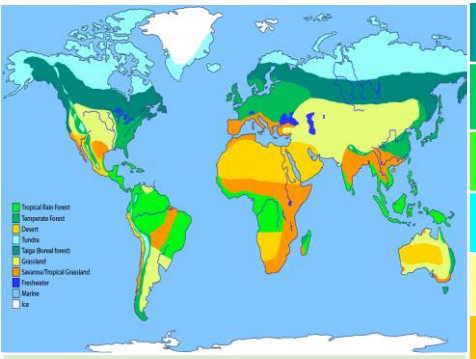
Plants take in **nutrients** to build into new organic matter. Nutrients are taken up when animals eat plants and then returned to the soil when animals die and the body is broken down by **decomposers**.

Litter	This is the **surface layer** of vegetation, which over time breaks down to become **humus**.
Biomass	The total **mass of living organisms** per unit area.



Biomes

A biome is a **large geographical area of distinctive plant and animal groups**, which are adapted to that particular environment. The climate and geography of a region determines what type of biome can exist in that region.



Coniferous forest
Deciduous forest
Tropical rainforests
Tundra
Temperate grasslands
Tropical grasslands
Hot deserts.

The **most productive biomes** – which have the greatest biomass- grow in climates that are **hot and wet**.

Biome's climate and plants

Biome	Location	Temperature	Rainfall	Flora	Fauna
Tropical rainforest	Centred along the Equator.	Hot all year (25-30°C)	Very high (over 200mm/year)	Tall trees forming a canopy; wide variety of species.	Greatest range of different animal species. Most live in canopy layer
Tropical grasslands	Between latitudes 5°- 30° north & south of Equator.	Warm all year (20-30°C)	Wet + dry season (500-1500mm/year)	Grasslands with widely spaced trees.	Large hoofed herbivores and carnivores dominate.
Hot desert	Found along the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.	Hot by day (over 30°C) Cold by night	Very low (below 300mm/year)	Lack of plants and few species; adapted to drought.	Many animals are small and nocturnal: except for the camel.
Temperate forest	Between latitudes 40°- 60° north of Equator.	Warm summers + mild winters (5-20°C)	Variable rainfall (500-1500m /year)	Mainly deciduous trees; a variety of species.	Animals adapt to colder and warmer climates. Some migrate.
Tundra	Far Latitudes of 65° north and south of Equator	Cold winter + cool summers (below 10°C)	Low rainfall (below 500mm/ year)	Small plants grow close to the ground and only in summer.	Low number of species. Most animals found along coast.
Coral Reefs	Found within 30° north – south of Equator in tropical waters.	Warm water all year round with temperatures of 18°C	Wet + dry seasons. Rainfall varies greatly due to location.	Small range of plant life which includes algae and sea grasses that shelters reef animals.	Dominated by polyps and a diverse range of fish species.

Tropical Rainforest Biome

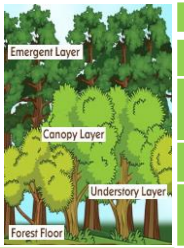
Tropical rainforest cover about **2 per cent** of the Earth's surface yet they are home to **over half of the world's plant and animals**.

Interdependence in the rainforest

A rainforest works through **interdependence**. This is where the plants and animals **depend on each other** for survival. If one component changes, there can be **serious knock-up effects** for the entire ecosystem.

Distribution of Tropical Rainforests

Tropical rainforests are **centred along the Equator** between the Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn. Rainforests can be found in South America, central Africa and South-East Asia. **The Amazon** is the world's largest rainforest and takes up the majority of northern South America, encompassing countries such as Brazil and Peru.



Layers of the Rainforest

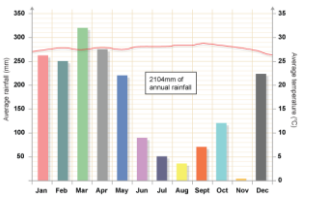
Emergent	Highest layer with trees reaching **50 metres.**
Canopy	Most life is found here as It receives **70% of the sunlight** and **80% of the life.**
U-Canopy	Consists of trees that reach **20 metres high.**
Shrub Layer	Lowest layer with **small trees** that have adapted to living in the **shade.**

Rainforest nutrient cycle

The **hot, damp conditions** on the forest floor allow for the **rapid decomposition** of dead plant material. This provides plentiful nutrients that are easily absorbed by plant roots. However, as these nutrients are in high demand from the many fast-growing plants, they do not remain in the soil for long and stay close to the surface. If vegetation is removed, the soils quickly become **infertile**.

Climate of Tropical Rainforests

- Evening temperatures rarely fall below **22°C.**
- Due to the **presence of clouds**, temperatures rarely rise above **32°C**.
- Most afternoons have heavy showers.
- At night with no clouds insulating, temperature drops.



CASE STUDY: UK Ecosystem: Epping Forest, Essex

This is a typical English lowland deciduous woodland. **70% of the area** is designated as a **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI)** for its biological interest, with **66 %** designated as a **Special Area of Conservation (SAC).**

Components & Interrelationships		Management
Spring	**Flowering plants** (producers) such as bluebells store nutrients to be eaten by consumers later.	- Epping has been managed for centuries. - Currently now used for **recreation** and **conservation**. - Visitors **pick fruit** and berries, helping to **disperse seeds**. - Trees cut down to encourage **new growth for timber.**
Summer	Broad tree leaves grow quickly to **maximise photosynthesis**.	
Autumn	Trees shed leaves to **conserve energy** due to sunlight hours decreasing.	
Winter	Bacteria **decompose** the leaf litter, releasing the nutrients into the soil.	

Tropical Rainforests: Case Study Malaysia

Malaysia is a LIC country is south-east Asia. 67% of Malaysia is a tropical rainforest with 18% of it not being interfered with. However , Malaysia has the fastest rate of deforestation compared to anywhere in the world

Adaptations to the rainforest

Orangutans	Large arms to swing & support in the tree canopy.
Drip Tips	Allows heavy rain to **run off leaves easily**.
Lianas & Vines	**Climbs** trees to reach sunlight at canopy.

Rainforest inhabitants

Many tribes have developed sustainable ways of survival. The rainforest provides inhabitants with…

- **Food** through hunting and gathering.
- **Natural medicines** from forest plants.
- **Homes and boats** from forest wood.

Issues related to biodiversity

Why are there high rates of biodiversity?

- **Warm and wet climate** encourages a wide range of vegetation to grow.
- There is **rapid recycling of nutrients** to speed plant growth.
- Most of the rainforest is **untouched.**

Main issues with biodiversity decline

- **Keystone species** (a species that are important of other species) are extremely important in the rainforest ecosystem. Humans are threatening these vital components.
- **Decline in species** could cause tribes being unable to survive.
- **Plants** & **animals** may become **extinct.**
- Key medical **plants** may become **extinct.**

Impacts of deforestation

Economic development

+ Mining, farming and logging creates employment and tax income for government.
+ Products such as palm oil provide valuable income for countries.
- The loss of biodiversity will reduce tourism.

Soil erosion

- Once the land is **exposed by deforestation,** the soil is more **vulnerable to rain**.
- With **no roots to bind soil together**, soil can easily **wash away.**

Climate Change

-When rainforests are cut down, the climate becomes **drier.**
-Trees are **carbon 'sinks'**. With greater deforestation comes more greenhouse emissions in the atmosphere.
-When trees are burnt, they **release more carbon in the atmosphere**. This will enhance the **greenhouse effect.**

What are the causes of deforestation?

Logging

- Most widely reported cause of destructions to biodiversity.
- Timber is harvested to create **commercial items** such as furniture and paper.
- **Violent confrontation** between indigenous tribes and logging companies.

Agriculture

- Large scale **'slash and burn'** of land for ranches and palm oil.
- Increases **carbon emission**.
- **River saltation** and **soil erosion** increasing due to the large areas of **exposed land.**
- Increase in **palm oil** is making the **soil infertile**.

Mineral Extraction

- **Precious metals** are found in the rainforest.
- Areas **mined** can experience **soil and water contamination**.
- **Indigenous people** are becoming **displaced** from their land due to roads being built to transport products.

Tourism

- **Mass tourism** is resulting in the building of hotels in extremely **vulnerable areas**.
- Lead to **negative relationship** between the government and indigenous tribes
- Tourism has **exposed animals** to human **diseases.**

Energy Development

- The **high rainfall** creates ideal conditions for **hydro-electric power (HEP).**
- The **Bakun Dam** in Malaysia is key for creating energy in this developing country, however, both people and environment have suffered.

Road Building

- **Roads** are needed to bring supplies and **provide access** to new mining areas, settlements and energy projects.
- In Malaysia, logging companies use an **extensive network of roads** for heavy machinery and to transport wood.

Sustainability for the Rainforest

Uncontrolled and unchecked exploitation can cause irreversible damage such as loss of biodiversity, soil erosion and climate change.

Possible strategies include:

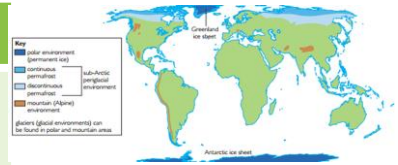
- **Agro-forestry** - Growing trees and crops at the same time. It prevents soil erosion and the crops benefit from the nutrients.
- **Selective logging** - Trees are only felled when they reach a particular height.
- **Education** - Ensuring those people understand the consequences of deforestation
- **Afforestation** - If trees are cut down, they are replaced.
- **Forest reserves** - Areas protected from exploitation.
- **Ecotourism** - tourism that promotes the environments & conservation

Cold Environments Case Study: Svalbard

Svalbard s a Norwegian territory in the Arctic Ocean and the most northerly permanently inhabited group of islands in the world. It experiences Polar and Tundra climates. The main town of Longyearbyen has a population of 2700.

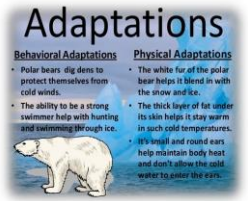
Distribution of the world's cold environments

Cold environments are located at, and surrounding the North and South Pole. The very most north and south points have Polar Biome. Tundra climate is found between 90 and 60 degrees north.



Major Characteristics of Cold Environments

TUNDRA: Winter temps as low as -20, short, but quite warm summers, high amounts of snow, Permafrost soil (permanently frozen), infertile soil, soils may be waterlogged, low growing flowering pants



Major characteristics of cold environments

POLAR: Temp as low as -50, low precipitation, permanently frozen soil, some plants like Moss and Lichens, Polar Bears in Arctic, Penguins in Antarctic

Interdependence

Different parts of the cold environment ecosystem **are closely linked together and depend on each other**, especially in a such a harsh environment.

Adaptations to the cold environments

Arctic Fox	Lives on cliff sides for shelter, white fur to camouflage, one of thickest furs of all mammals.
Bearberry	Red berried plant. Low growing and thick stems to survive strong winds, leathery leaves to retain moisture n dry climate, hairy stems to retain hear,

Opportunities and challenges in Cold Environments - Svalbard

Opportunities

Mineral extraction: coal mining vital. Employs 300+
Energy Development: coal mined on island is burned to generate electricity at Longyearbyen power station. Is Norway's only coal fired power station . Geothermal energy used as sits on constructive plate margin
Fishing: Barents Sea home to reserves of Cod, Herring and Haddock. Fishing monitored by Norway and Russia to ensure sustainability
Tourism: 70,000 visitors a year (30,000 on cruise ships). Longyearbyen harbour has been enlarged. 300 jobs for locals

Challenges

Extreme Temp: temps fall to -30 in Winter. Dangerous to work outside (frostbite). Several layers of clothing mist be worn which makes work difficult
Construction: Construction (houses, shops, roads, harbour facilities, mines) is difficult due to temp and limited daylight hours. Most construction happens in Summer
Accessibility: Only reached by plane or ship. Limited transport around the 5 islands. One international airport. Only 50kn of road in Longyearbyen – none serve outlying communities. Most people use snowmobiles.

Threats to Cold Environments

Cold Environments are fragile. Tundra wildlife takes a long time to recover

Oil Spills
Polluted rivers and habitats, risk of fire, forest cleared for building of pipes

Off Road Vehicle Damage
Takes place in summer when snow has melted which make soil soggy. Can take decades for the soil to recover

Why do we need to protect cold envs?

Indigenous Tribes
Inuit live in Arctic Alaska – depend on wildlife for hunting and fishing

Species
Home to many birds, animals and plants

Scientific Research
Unpolluted and unspoilt environments are important for scientific research n climate change

Strategies to manage Cold Envs

Use of Tech: Trans Alaskan Pipeline (raised and insulated to not melt permafrost, raised to allow animal migrations, earthquake resistant)
Action by Governments: Natural Environment Policy Act (protects rights of native people from Oil companies) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (oversees sustainable fishing)
International Agreements: Antarctic Treaty
Conversation Groups: WWF