

Terrestrial Ecosystems

A **terrestrial ecosystem** is an area of land with a similar climate that includes similar communities of plants and animals. Some terrestrial ecosystems include grasslands, forests, and deserts (see the Figure below.) Factors such as latitude, humidity, and elevation affect them:

- Latitude means how far an ecosystem is from the equator.
- Humidity is the amount of water in the air. Air with a high concentration of water is called humid.
- Elevation measures how high land is above sea level. It gets colder as you go higher above sea level, which is why you see snow-capped mountains.



A tallgrass prairie in the Flint Hills, northeastern Kansas. A prairie is an example of a grassland.



A conifer forest in the Swiss Alps.



The Mojave Desert in the United States.

Grassland Ecosystems

Grasslands are mostly made up of grasses rather than large shrubs or trees and include the savanna and temperate grasslands.



A savanna in Kenya



A temperate grassland in New Jersey, USA.

Forest Ecosystems

Forests are mostly made up of trees and other woody vegetation and are classified based on their latitude. Two examples of forest ecosystems are: deciduous forests and rainforests.

Deciduous Forest

A **deciduous forest** is made up mostly of trees that lose all of their leaves during some part of the year. In some parts of the world this happens during the winter while in other parts of the world this happens during the dry season. See the Figure below to see an image of a deciduous forest.



A deciduous forest in Trinidad and Tobago.

Rainforest

A **rainforest** is a type of forest that has a lot of annual rainfall. To be a rainforest the amount of rain that falls in a year must be between 250 cm and 450 cm (98 in and 177 in). It has been estimated that there are millions of species of organisms living in rainforests that have not yet been discovered. See the Figure below to see an image of a rainforest.



Lowland rainforest, Masoala National Park, Madagascar.

Summary

- Terrestrial ecosystems are areas of dry land with similar climates and populations of organisms.
- Factors affecting ecosystems include latitude, humidity, and elevation.
- Examples of common ecosystems include: grasslands, deciduous forests, and rainforests.