AQA The Living World

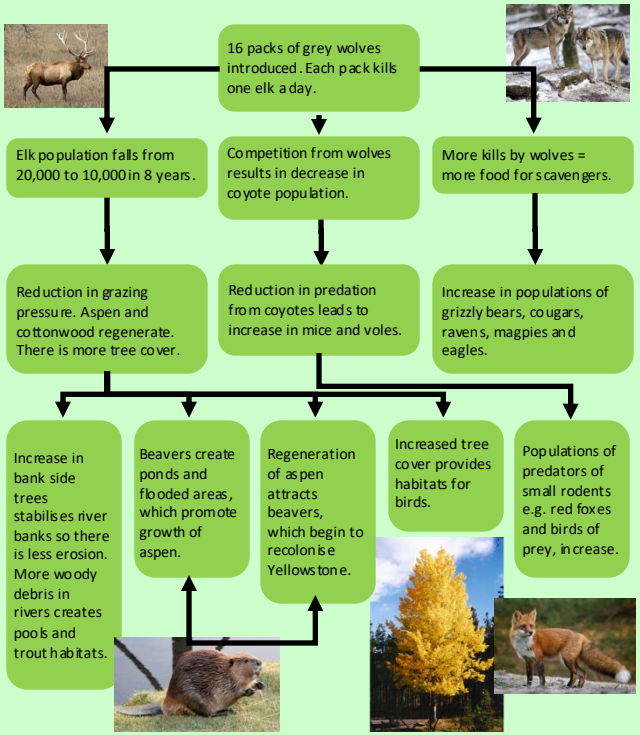
Trophic levels

Trophic Level	Source of Energy	Examples
Producers	Solar energy	Green plants, photosynthetic protists and bacteria
Herbivores	Producers	Grasshoppers, water fleas, antelope, termites
Primary Carnivores	Herbivores	Wolves, spiders, some snakes, warblers
Secondary Carnivores	Primary carnivores	Killer whales, tuna, falcons
Omnivores	Several trophic levels	Humans, rats, opossums, bears, racoons, crabs
Detritivores and Decomposers	Wastes and dead bodies of other organisms	Fungi, many bacteria, earthworms, vultures

At each (trophic) level of the food chain the number of individuals declines. This is because not all individuals in any trophic level are consumed (eaten). This means not all energy is passed up to the next trophic level.

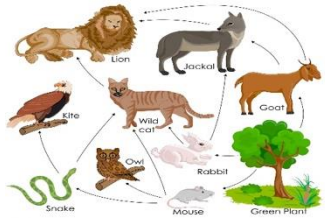
Changes within ecosystems

If any component within an ecosystem is changed it will have a knock on effect on the rest of the ecosystem.
An example of where this happened was in Yellowstone National Park in the USA when they reintroduced wolves in 1995.



Ecosystem - A question of scale

Ecosystems can be any size.
- Local e.g a pond or under a dead log. Also called a habitat.
- Regional e.g. the upland moorland of the Pennines in the north of England.
- Global e.g. tropical rainforest. Also called biomes.



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.

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.

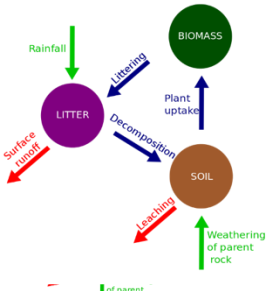
Ecosystem - Key terms

Key term	Definition
Ecosystem	A community of plants and animals that interact with one another and their physical environment.
Abiotic	Relating to non living things.
Biotic	Relating to living things.
Producer	An organism or plant that is able to absorb energy from the sun through photosynthesis.
Primary consumer	Creature that eats plant matter. Also known as a herbivore.
Secondary consumer	Creature that eats other animals. Also known as a carnivore.
Decomposer	An organism that breaks down dead plant and animal matter.
Food chain	The connections between different organisms that rely on one another as their food source.
Food web	A complex hierarchy of plants and animals relying on each other for food.
Biome	A large global ecosystem with flora and fauna adapting to their environment.

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.



CASE STUDY: UK Ecosystem: Wyre Forest

The Wyre Forest is located in the Midlands and spans the borders of Shropshire and Worcestershire. It is a partially managed forest and is one of the largest remaining ancient woodlands in the UK. The forest is a large woodland of approximately 26.34 square kilometres (10.17 sq miles) and is a mixed forest containing deciduous and coniferous (evergreen) areas.

Components & Interrelationships

Spring - Flowering plants (producers) such as bluebells store nutrients to be eaten by consumers later.

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.

Biodiversity

Hunting birds (known as raptors) such as owls, kestrels, and sparrow-hawks exist by preying on other birds and small mammals which in turn prey on insects and eat berries and nuts from the trees.

Buzzards and other scavenging birds of prey have been successful in returning to the forest and provide an important aspect of the food chain by helping to eat carrion (dead animals)

One recent reintroduction is the Pine Martin (an omnivorous mammal about the size of a cat). These additions will provide more diversity which helps to improve the forest.

Deer live in the forest and they are able to roam freely as there is limited vehicle access.

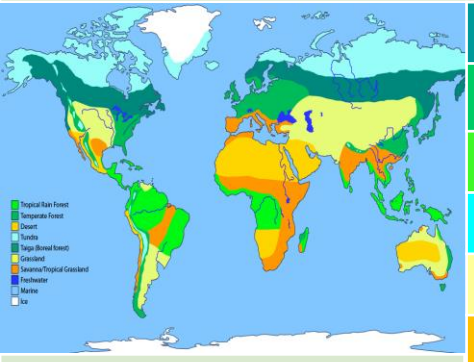
Management

The Forest is partially managed and this means that controlled tree felling and logging takes place within the woodland, this provides both additional money through sales of timber and a way to sustain the forest and generate new growth
The management also allows a range of habitats to exist including woodland and meadows which allow a range of different vegetation at ground and shrub level.
Much of the forest has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)and parts of it are also listed as a National Nature Reserve. The Forest is managed by Forestry England which was originally set up in the Forestry Act 1919 to ensure reforestation to ensure a supply of wood after the war.

The Living World

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

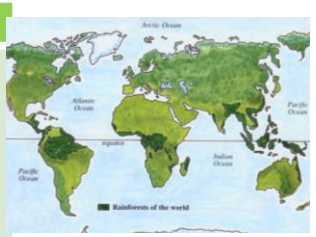
Biome	Location	Temperature	Rainfall	Flora	Fauna
Tropical rainforest	Centred along the Equator.	Hot all year (25-30°C)	Very high (over 200mm/year)	Tall trees forming a canopy; wide variety of species.	Greatest range of different animal species. Most live in canopy layer
Tropical grasslands	Between latitudes 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**.

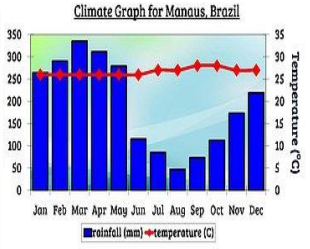
Distribution of Tropical Rainforests

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.



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.



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**.

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.

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.

Adaptations to the rainforest

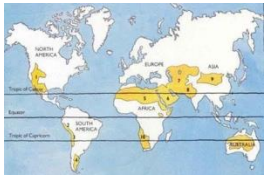
Orangutans	Large arms to swing & support in the tree canopy.
Drip Tips	Allows heavy rain to **run off leaves easily**.
Lianas & Vines	**Climbs** trees to reach sunlight at canopy.

Hot Desert Biome

To be defined as a Hot Desert, there must be:
-Less than 250mm of rain a year.
- Diurnal temperatures ranging from 50°C during the day to 0°C at night.

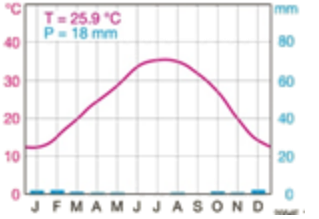
Distribution of the world's hot deserts

Most of the world's hot deserts are found in the **subtropics** between **20 degrees and 30 degrees north & south** of the Equator. The **Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn** run through most of the worlds major deserts.



Major characteristics of hot deserts

- **Aridity** – hot deserts are extremely dry, with annual rainfall below **250 mm**.
- **Heat** – hot deserts rise over **40 degrees.**
- **Landscapes** – Some places have dunes, but most are **rocky** with **thorny bushes.**



Hot Deserts inhabitants

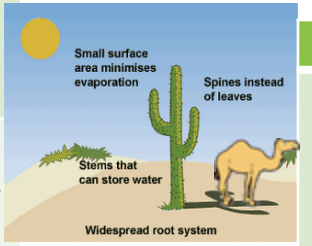
- People often live in large **open tents** to **keep cool.**
- Food is often **cooked** slowly in the **warm sandy soil.**
- **Head scarves** are worn by men to provide **protection from the Sun.**

Climate of Hot Deserts

- **Very little rainfall** with less than **250 mm per year.**
- It might only **rain once every two to three years.**
- Temperate are **hot in the day** (45 °C) but are **cold at night** due to little cloud cover (5 °C).
- In winter, deserts can sometimes receive occasional frost and snow.

Adaptations to the desert

Cactus	• **Large roots** to absorb water soon after rainfall. • **Needles** instead of leaves to reduce surface area and therefore **transpiration**.
Camels	• Hump for storing **fat (NOT water).** • **Wide feet** for walking on sand. • **Long eyelashes** to protect from sand.



Desert Interdependence

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