



CROCODILE SURVIVAL

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Crocodile country

Saltwater crocodiles live along Australia's northern **coastlines**. They can be found all the way from Broome in Western Australia to Rockhampton in Queensland. Despite their name, these reptiles live in both saltwater and freshwater **environments**, including rivers, creeks, **mangroves** and **swamps**.

Crocodile diet

Saltwater crocodiles eat meat – any kind of meat they can get their jaws around! This includes insects, **crustaceans** and birds. It also includes mammals, such as wallabies and cattle. Sometimes they even eat each other!

Smaller crocodiles tend to eat more fish and insects. Bigger crocodiles are more likely to hunt large mammals, or bigger water creatures, such as turtles.



▲ Saltwater crocodiles have the most powerful bite of any living animal.

Hunting

Saltwater crocodiles are nocturnal and do most of their hunting at night. They sometimes chase their **prey** until they catch it. Often, they lie in wait and then leap at and grab an animal that comes close. They are very good at creeping up on their prey under water and making surprise attacks.



▲ An estuarine crocodile hatchling emerges from its egg.

FACT!



The temperature of the nest influences the sex of the crocodile young. Nest temperatures between 31°C and 32°C produce more males. Temperatures higher or lower than this produce more females.

QUESTIONS



1. How does the female saltwater crocodile ensure that her young survive?
2. Crocodiles are cold-blooded and can survive for up to a year without food. Do you think warm-blooded animals can survive for such a long period without food? Why or why not?

3. List all the nouns used to refer to where saltwater crocodiles live. What do these places have in common?
4. Use the QR code (or <http://qrs.ly/4t4zb2s>) to watch a video of a crocodile being fed. Describe a crocodile's diet throughout the year.

5. Mark on a map where saltwater crocodiles can be found in Australia.
6. Imagine that you are a crocodile ranger. Conduct some research and then create a flyer for tourists explaining how saltwater crocodiles adapt to their environment.

Adapting to the environment

Crocodiles are cold-blooded. This means that their body temperature changes depending on the temperature of their environment. When crocodiles are cold, they **bask** in the sun to heat up. When they are hot, they lie in the shade or swim in water to cool off. Since they don't need to eat regularly to maintain their body heat, they can survive for a long time without food. Some crocodiles can survive for up to a year without eating!

During the wet season, female crocodiles nest in areas with tall vegetation. Crocodiles build nests using vegetation, mud and sand. The heat from the **decomposing** vegetation helps to **incubate** crocodile eggs. If the temperature is too hot or too cold, the eggs will not hatch. The mother crocodile guards her eggs and young until they can survive on their own.





LIFE IN THE RAINFOREST

Life in Australian rainforests is made up of many plants and animals that are linked together in food chains. A food chain is the connection between animals, plants and tiny creatures, such as insects and bacteria. There are three parts of a food chain: producers, consumers and decomposers. Many good examples of food chains can be found in the Daintree Rainforest in northern Queensland.

▼ Many birds eat the dark-purple fruit of the Davidson plum tree, or *Davidsonia pruriens*.



Producers

Producers provide food for animals to eat. In the Daintree Rainforest, there is a huge range of plants that make excellent producers. Animals eat their leaves, flowers and fruit.



▲ Birds also eat black sapote, which has dark-brown flesh and is often referred to as chocolate pudding fruit.



FACT!

The Daintree Rainforest is believed to be the world's oldest tropical rainforest. Some areas of the rainforest are thought to be more than 150 million years old.

Consumers

Consumers are the animals that eat the producers. For example, in the Daintree Rainforest, the hawk moth caterpillar eats the leaves of various trees.

Of course, consumers don't just eat plants. Many consumers are meat-eaters, so they eat other consumers. The hawk moth caterpillar makes a good snack for a bird, such as a tawny frogmouth. In turn, the tawny frogmouth can be a meal for another animal, such as a lace monitor.



▲ The tawny frogmouth is a Daintree Rainforest consumer.

Decomposers

Eventually, all plants and animals die. When this happens, small creatures use them as food. These creatures are known as decomposers. They include worms, ants, termites and maggots. Decomposers break down dead plants and animals. The decomposed remains of plants and animals return to the soil and nourish new generations of producers.

▼ The golden green stag beetle is a Daintree decomposer.



QUESTIONS



1. What do producers need to be able to produce food? Think about the conditions that plants need to survive.
2. Imagine that you are a creature living in a rainforest. Would you like to be a producer, a consumer or a decomposer? Explain your answer.
3. On the topic card, what word could be used instead of 'meat-eaters'?
4. Use the QR code (or <http://qrs.ly/zz4zb2t>) to watch a video about the Daintree Rainforest. Write 10 adjectives that you would use to describe the rainforest.
5. Draw a diagram that shows the interaction between producers, consumers and decomposers.
6. Research an example of a rainforest food chain. Draw the food chain, and label the creatures as producers, consumers or decomposers.

Scan the code to link to a video that shows some of the plants and animals of the Daintree Rainforest.





OXPECKERS: HELPING OR HARMING?

▼ Felix

**Oxpeckers – Our friends and helpers!**

Where would giraffes like me be without our friends the oxpeckers?

In case you didn't know, oxpeckers are birds that live with us on the **savannahs** of southern and eastern Africa. There are two types of oxpeckers: red-billed and yellow-billed. Oxpeckers really like us giraffes. They perch on us and on other mammals, such as cattle, **impalas** and buffaloes. They do us a huge favour by removing **parasites** from our fur and skin. These include ticks and maggots. Ticks are a big problem for us – they suck our blood and carry diseases. The oxpeckers also eat away scar tissue and protect us from flies.

Oxpeckers also help keep us safe from **predators** – they hiss when they feel alarmed. This is very useful when there are so many dangerous creatures around.

Oxpeckers can perch on my neck anytime!



▲ Red-billed oxpeckers **forage** on an impala's neck, eating parasites.



Oxpeckers – Stay away from me!

Well, I've just about had enough of these oxpeckers climbing all over me. Believe me, they aren't sitting on us because they want to be our friends!

Sure, they gobble up lots of pesky parasites, but they also love nibbling at our **sores**. They make sure we keep bleeding so that they can drink our blood. Some of my sores have taken weeks and weeks to heal because oxpeckers have kept pecking at them! These sores attract other parasites, so we are never left alone.

Oxpeckers also pull out our fur and use it to make their tree-hole nests nice and cosy. Many of them invade our ears for earwax, and nibble off bits of dead skin. It would be nice if they occasionally asked our permission first!

Oxpeckers love nibbling at sores. ►



FACT!

Oxpeckers have wide bills and short feet. Their sharp claws help them grip onto the mammals they feed off.



QUESTIONS



1. Imagine you are a giraffe. Would you like or dislike the oxpeckers?
2. What is unique about the relationship between giraffes and oxpeckers?
3. Pronouns are used to replace nouns; they help a text to flow. An example of a pronoun is underlined in this sentence: 'Harry has a cat. It is black.' Can you list five different pronouns that are used on the topic card? What nouns do these five pronouns represent?
4. Use the QR code (or <http://qrs.ly/ok4zb2u>) to watch a video about oxpeckers. How do their features make them perfect for their job?
5. Create a table to show the pros and cons of oxpeckers.
6. On the topic card, you have read two different points of view. Write a third point of view that could be included on the topic card: the point of view of the oxpecker.

Scan the code to link to a video that shows oxpeckers in action.

