

# FORESTS AS HABITAT

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Although the ocean was the original home of all life on Earth, forests, as they themselves evolved, quickly became home to a vast majority of land based creatures including early humans.



Forests support diverse life...

A forest can provide three of the ingredients key to a species' survival: water, food, and shelter.

Forests as homes for life are disappearing

Considering so much life depends on and lives in forests, the fact that forest cover



is now a fraction of what it used to be even a few hundred years ago, it stands to reason that there is less space for this diversity of life to live in, and increasingly greater contact with encroaching humans.

Something interesting to know:

## Greater Mekong - a very special habitat

The mysterious forests of the Greater Mekong region are home to significant species such as tiger and rhinoceros. However, these forests still hold many secrets and new species are discovered each year.

In 2009 a total of 145 new species were described by Science in the Greater Mekong region.

This included 96 plants, 26 fish, 6 amphibians, 10 reptiles, 5 mammals and 2 birds.

For example there is the cricket-chirping frog:

### Cricket-chirping frog

Where was it discovered?

It was first encountered in the Quang Nam Province of Vietnam. The new frog species was named *Leptolalax applebyi*. All other specimens of this species were found at the headwaters of rocky streams in evergreen forests over 1,300 m in elevation, indicating that as their primary range.

Why is it unique?

It was not seen but rather heard, making a faint call that sounded like a cricket.

According to the principle discoverer, "everyone on the trip was convinced the faint rasping noise coming from the leaf litter was a cricket, and I wasn't sure at all. After recording the call, I began to hunt for whatever was making the noise - insect or frog - and after maybe 5 minutes on searching through the leaf litter, I was pretty convinced myself that it was a cricket after all. Shortly after that, I found the tiny brown frog hidden in the leaf litter."

