



## Forests Alive

Even if you live in a city, you probably have a forest very close to your home. In fact, almost half of all the land in Canada is covered by forest.

Our country is home to about 180 different kinds of trees, but all of them fall into one of two main groups. Trees with broad leaves that drop off in the fall – such as maples and oaks – are called deciduous trees. Those with needles that stay green all year – such as pine and spruce – are called coniferous trees.

Forests are so much more than trees, however. They are also home to flowers, shrubs, moss, and mushrooms. Birds make their nests in the tree branches. Mammals such as deer, bears and foxes find food and raise their young in the forest. Fish and frogs live in the streams and ponds. Lift a rock and you'll find insects, worms and other tiny creatures. All of these living things use the forest as their habitat, which is another name for a plant or animal's home.

Animals and plants in the forest grow, **reproduce**, and then die. This is called a life cycle. Think of a tall maple tree with bunches of seeds hanging from the branches. On a windy day, many of these seeds will be blown off the tree. Some of the seeds may land on a patch of soil, but a seed must have more than just soil to grow. Like almost all living things in the forest, it needs heat and light from the sun, as well as air and water. If it receives the right amount of these important things, the seed will grow into a tiny maple tree.

Many years later, this maple tree will be large enough to make its own seeds. Someday it may die of disease or be burned in a fire. Its trunk, branches and leaves will slowly **decompose** and become part of the soil. In the future, another maple seed may fall on the same spot and keep the cycle of life going.



**Canon**



### Thinking Beyond Canada

There are many birds that migrate to Canadian forests in the spring to give birth to their young.

(To migrate means to move from one place to another, usually in different seasons.)

In fall, they return to warmer places.

That means caring for forests in Canada can help keep animals healthy in other countries, too.

Forest animals have life cycles, too. Black bear cubs are born in dens during the winter. In the spring they come out and will live alongside their mother for almost a year and a half, feeding on berries, nuts and small animals. By the time the cubs grow into adults, their parents may have died. By then, however, the bears can have their own cubs, and the life cycle continues.

The life cycles of plants and animals in the forest are all connected. Birds and **rodents** carry seeds from one spot to another, allowing trees to grow in new places. The trees provide homes for insects and the animals that eat them. Bees and butterflies take pollen from flower to flower, which helps plants reproduce. These flowers then change into nuts or fruit that are eaten by many animals. That's why removing any plant or animal from the forest can affect all the others.

Of course, Canadians do take things out of the forest. Every year, forestry companies cut down millions of trees to make products that we use every day. The books we read, the desks we sit at, and the homes we build are made from trees. More than 350,000 people in our country work for companies that help bring us the paper and wood we need. Canada also sells more **lumber** to other countries than any other nation in the world. You could say that forest products are important to our own life cycle.

However, forests in Canada and around the world are shrinking. When people cut down trees, it is important to do so carefully. Companies can make sure that tree **species** are given a chance to grow back. They can leave some areas of the forest alone, without cutting down any of the trees. They can also make sure that the animals and plants that share the forest are not harmed. By doing this, people can ensure that life cycles in the forest will be able to continue forever.



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## **Glossary**

**reproduce:** make more of the same kind

**decompose:** break down into smaller parts; rot

**rodent:** a type of small mammal with two pairs of strong teeth for chewing, such as a mouse, rat, squirrel or beaver

**lumber:** wood that has been cut into shapes for building

**species:** a single type of plant or animal