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FACTSHEET

Biodiversity and Healthy Ecosystems

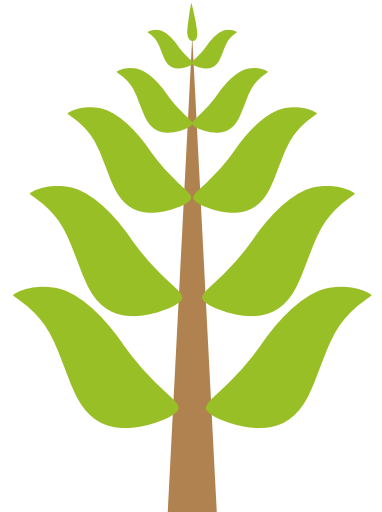
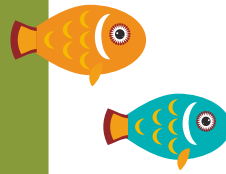
Biodiversity is the variety of all life on earth including plants, animals and fungi. An **ecosystem** is a large community of all living things in a particular area. Healthy biodiversity is essential for a healthy ecosystem. Ecosystems can be any size from a small puddle to an Amazonian rainforest. Your school yard is in fact an ecosystem and all the different plants and animals that live in it form part of your school's biodiversity!

Why is biodiversity important?

Biodiversity is vital for supporting all life on Earth. It provides all of our food and many of our medicines and industrial products. Biodiversity is the foundation of healthy ecosystems upon which all life depends, including us. Biodiversity helps:

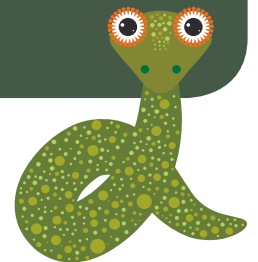
- To create fertile soil
- To protect us against floods and erosion
- To provide clean air and water
- To break down pollutants
- To control pests and disease
- Is a vital part of the nutrient, nitrogen, oxygen and carbon cycle
- To produce energy

Biodiversity also provides opportunities for recreation, tourism, scientific research and education, and is a source of cultural identity for many Australians.



Did you know?

Millions of years of isolation from other continents have resulted in the evolution of over one million distinctive kinds of native plants and animals in Australia! Most of these plants and animals are found nowhere else on Earth.



What does native mean?

A *native* plant or animal is generally defined as one that is found naturally in an area or country. Most native plants and animals in Australia have evolved over many thousands or million of years such as the Platypus and Echidna. Dingos are unusual as though they are not technically native because they were bought to Australia by the Aboriginal people, they have been in our country for so long (4,000 years) that we now consider them one of our native animals.

