



NATIONAL AQUARIUM IN BALTIMORE.

Conservation Education Department
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Key Terms

- Adaptation— something an animal has or does that helps it to survive
- Banana tree— a tree that grows in the rainforest that produces bananas
- Cacao tree— a rainforest tree that produces the seeds from which chocolate is made
- Capuchin monkey— a monkey with a long tail that lives in the rainforest
- Symbiosis— teamwork between organisms
- Toucan— a bird that lives in the rainforest with a very large beak
- Understory— the plants that grow beneath the canopy

Ask the Aquarium

Fact Sheets from the
Conservation Education Department

Rainforest Animals: Understory

UNDERSTORY

The trees in the understory are much shorter than the trees in the other layers of the rainforest. The understory trees grow up to 20 feet tall. There is not much sunlight that reaches this layer. The trees in the layers above block out all the sunlight. Trees need to have light to live and grow. The leaves of the trees in this layer are very large because they need to be able to catch as much sunlight as possible.

BANANA TREE

The bananas that we eat grow on trees in the rainforest.. This tree has very large leaves. This is so the leaves can capture as much sunlight as possible. A banana tree can grow up to 20 feet tall. That is as tall as a two-story house. Many animals in the rainforest eat bananas.



Banana Tree



Toucan

TOUCAN

The toucan is a bird with a strange looking beak. The toucan's beak is very big and has many colors. The beak of the toucan may look silly, but it is actually a very helpful adaptation. The toucan's beak helps this bird get its food. Toucans eat fruits and berries. They also like to eat bananas. A toucan does not eat a banana the way we do, though. The toucan's beak is very sharp and can slice open a banana. His beak is also helpful to pick the fruit. When the toucan is finished his meal, he flies back up to his home in the canopy.



Cacao Tree

CACAO TREE

Another special tree in the understory is the cacao tree. This tree has large pods growing on the side of the tree. Inside the pods are small seeds that are used to make chocolate.

CAPUCHIN MONKEY

The capuchin is a small monkey. It is usually dark brown or black. Sometimes its stomach is a lighter color. Capuchins can use their tail to hold onto things like branches or food. Capuchins travel in groups. They can make very loud noises. Capuchins eat insects, leaves, fruit, and sometimes bird eggs. They also like to eat the liquid from inside a cacao pod. Capuchins find shelter in the branches and leaves of branches in the understory.



Capuchin Monkey



Cecropia Tree

CECROPIA TREE

The Cecropia tree is shaped like an umbrella and has a hollow trunk. The leaves of the Cecropia tree are often covered in a sticky liquid called sap. Ants live on the Cecropia tree too. The ants and the Cecropia tree work together. The ants get food and a safe place to live. The ants live inside the hollow trunk of the tree and eat the sap. The tree gets protection from the ants. The ants attack animals that try to eat the leaves. They also bite any plants trying to grow around them. Scientists call this type of relationship symbiosis. Symbiosis is another word for teamwork. The Cecropia tree and the ants help each other.