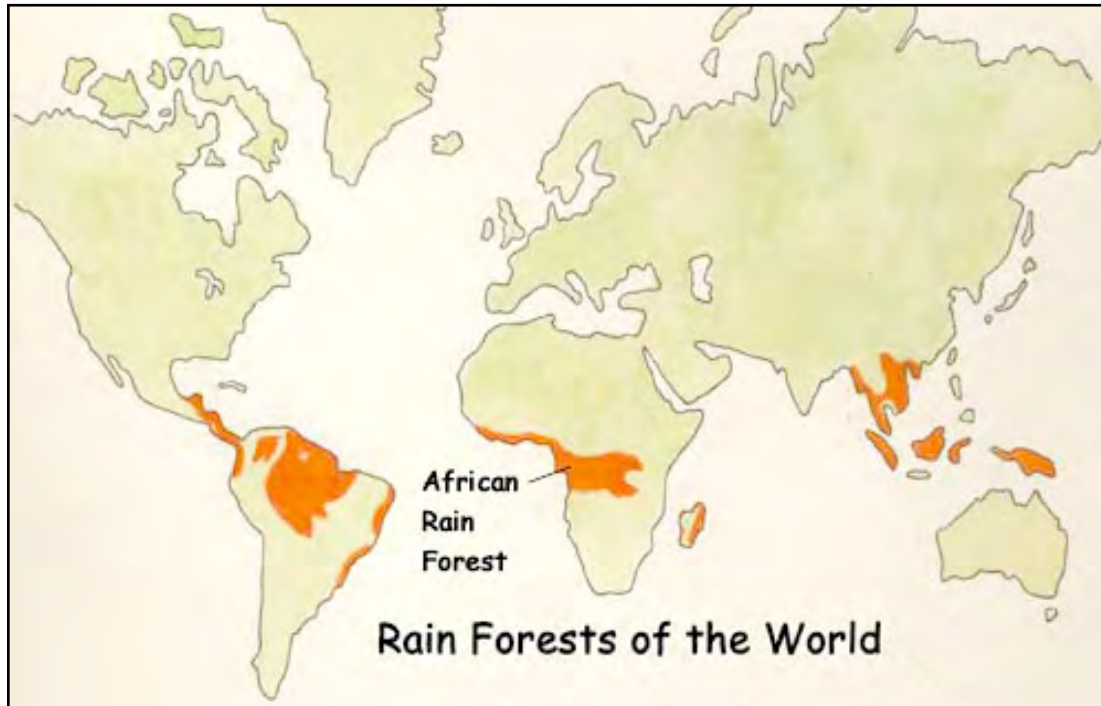


The African Rainforest

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Range and Habitat

Africa's rainforests are found mostly on the western coast and on the island of Madagascar. The tropical sun keeps the rainforest so hot that when the rains fall each day, the water evaporates into steam. This keeps the forest dripping with water. That way most small animals can stay safely hidden in the treetops, eating leaves, fruits, and insects. They never have to risk a visit to the ground for water. Far below the thick tangle of trees, it is dark, wet and still on the forest floor. Only small shafts of light filter down to the dark-loving plants. Dead leaves and fruits pile up on the ground and rot, releasing all their energy back to the forest soil.

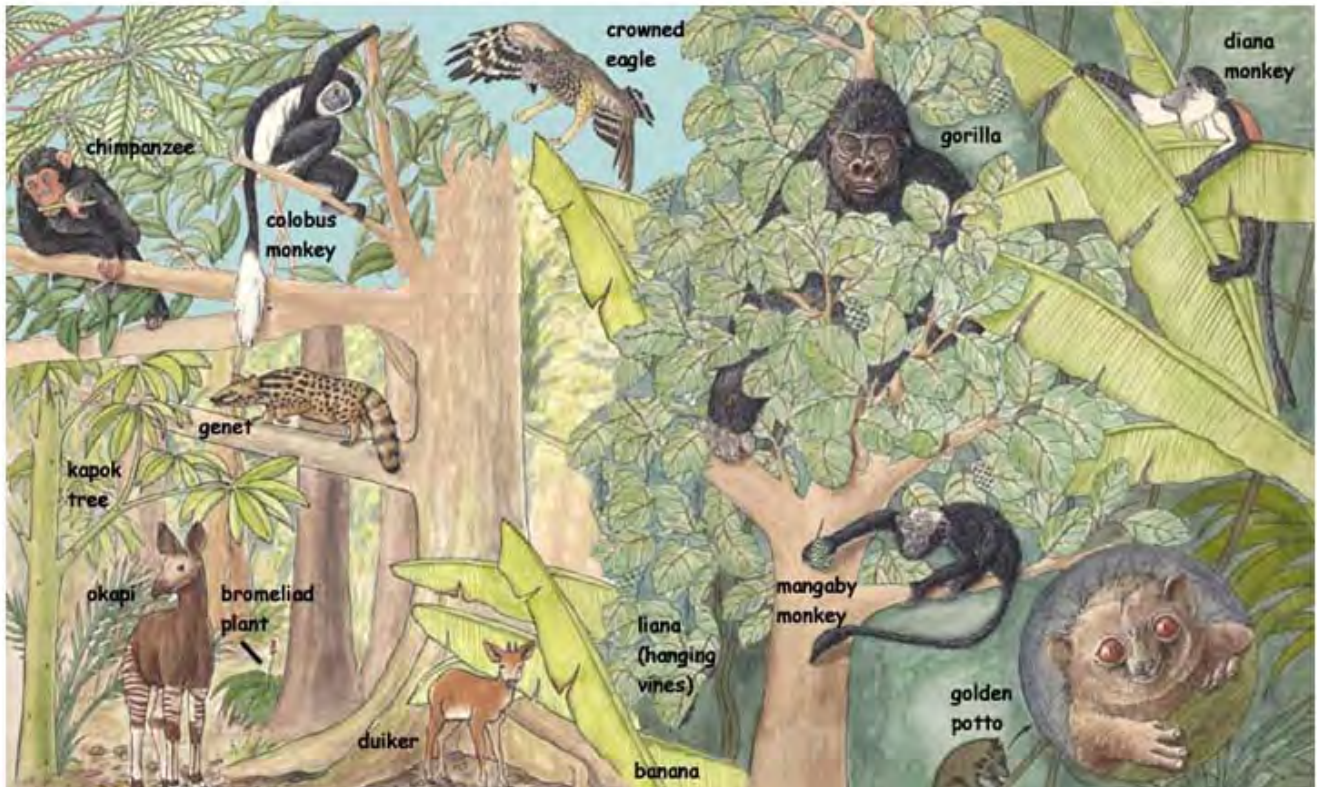
Animals

Chimpanzees and gorillas are apes and feed in the trees, eating leaves and fruits. Colobus, Diana, and mangaby monkeys all eat the many forest leaves. The golden potto, a small primate, hunts at night for fruit and insects. Flying squirrels glide through the trees. The strange pangolin hunts termites and ants high in the trees. Genets and civets are cat-like predators that hunt on the forest floor. The crowned eagle hunts from the air above. Strange okapis, a relative of the giraffe, and tiny duikers graze on stems and branches. Tailor ants sew leaves together with silken threads to build their nests. Colorful butterflies gather in the mud on the forest floor to lap up the minerals they need.

Plants

The forests are cluttered with lianas hanging from the trees. Tree ferns stand 30 feet high. Yellowwood and bamboo grow thickly here. Many rare and beautiful orchids add color to the rain forest canopy.

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