

The weather is very cold in taiga ecosystems. The winter season lasts a long time, and the weather is icy cold. Storms are severe, bringing biting cold winds. Summers never get very warm, and the summer season is exceptionally short. There isn't much precipitation in a taiga ecosystem. When moisture does fall, it usually comes in the form of dry, powdery snow.

Living in the extreme conditions of a taiga ecosystem takes a special kind of organism. Some common animals you could find in the area are moose, wolves, and deer. Each population must adapt to the severe conditions. Short, stubby grass and shrubs grow in taiga regions, but they are better known for their beautiful evergreen trees. All the trees you think of when you imagine kinds of Christmas trees are at home in the taiga. Pines, firs, and spruce trees are common. The thin, waxy leaves (sometimes called needles) of evergreen trees hold in water all year round. They also do not freeze easily, even when the temperatures drop down low. Like all green plants, the trees of the taiga region are

an important source of oxygen for our planet. As they go through the process of photosynthesis to make their food, green plants "breathe" out oxygen into the air. Since taiga ecosystems have so many trees, they help make up for areas with less vegetation, like the desert.

Taiga ecosystems cover large areas of North America, Europe, and Asia. A good example of a taiga ecosystem in the United States is the state of Alaska.



View near the Denali Highway in Alaska

People living and working in taiga regions often disrupt the natural balance. Activities such as hunting, trapping and fishing affect the animal populations, sometimes thinning them to the point that they are endangered. Mining for oil and gas, and harvesting trees does irreparable damage, destroying animal habitats and robbing the Earth of important oxygen sources. Even tourism can be damaging, as many tourists do not respect wildlife and plants, being willing to sacrifice them for developed recreational areas. Of course people have the right to use natural resources, but they must do it in a way that makes resources renewable and does not harm the environment.

What Is It?

According to this text, what is a taiga ecosystem?

Name: _____

Taiga Ecosystems

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What Is It?

According to this text, what is a taiga ecosystem?

Sample of a correct answer; actual answers will vary:

A taiga ecosystem is one where it is very cold for a very long time. There are severe storms with strong winds. Summer is very short, and it is not very warm. The precipitation in a taiga ecosystem is usually in the form of light, powdery snow.