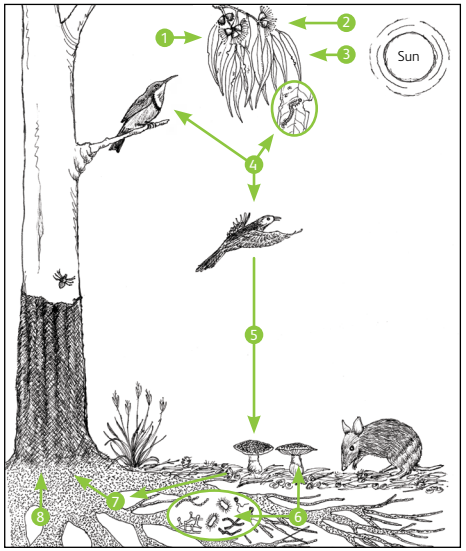
Biodiversity

A forest is a complex web of life – a solar-powered community of plants and animals that depend on each other for their growth and survival. Biodiversity – a wide variety of plant and animal species – is a key element in a healthy ecosystem.

In a forest ecosystem, life starts with the sun – its ultra-violet light enables green plants to create their own nutrients through photosynthesis, using simple chemicals present in soil, water and air.

These plants are the producers – as they grow, they provide food for some of the forest's consumers, plant-eating animals and insects, which browse on leaves and seeds. Other animals in the forest prey on the consumers themselves – birds eat insects, carnivorous mammals scavenge carrion.

But all the producers and consumers put together are greatly outnumbered by the most numerous but least obvious creatures in the forest – the decomposers. These are the fungi, invertebrates and soil bacteria – they break down the plant and animal material that falls on the forest floor, recycling its nutrients to nourish new growth – and to ensure the cycle of life in the forest ecosystem continues.



1 Producer
2 Carbon dioxide used by growing plants
3 Light Energy
4 Consumers
5 Body wastes and dead remains of producers and consumers
6 Decomposers
7 Water
8 Nutrients

Fascinating Forest Facts

Dry eucalypt forests support a wider variety of plant and animal species than any of the other Tasmanian forest types.

An ecosystem can be as big as an entire cool temperate rainforest – or as small as a pool of water in alpine heathland. Both may support a community of interdependent plants and animals.

Tasmania has only 35 species of native mammals – but an estimated 32,000 species of invertebrates. Only about a third of the invertebrates have been described scientifically.

More than half of Tasmania's vascular plants have been recorded from dry eucalypt forests.

Forest Education Foundation
The stories behind our trees

79 Melville Street
Hobart Tasmania
Australia 7000

Phone: 03 6235 8240
Email: info@forest-education.com
Web: www.forest-education.com