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# Types of Habitats – Where Do You Live? (Part 1 for SSC, Bank Exams)

A recent trend seen in Government and Banking exams like SSC CHSL, CGL, IBPS PO, IBPS Clerk is that they are increasingly focusing on science and environment. Environmental science and biology based questions go hand in hand and it is therefore very important for you to understand significant topics related to both the subjects. One such important topic is 'Habitat' and its types. Habitats vary according to geographic and climatic variations. Let us look into types of habitats and their importance to understand the diversity they offer to our planet.

You can download this article as PDF to revise for your next exam. As you might already know, the topic of habitats and their types is extremely important for SSC, Bank, Insurance, etc. exams.

## *Definition of Habitat*

The habitat of an organism is the natural area in which that organism normally lives and grows. It's the '*home of that organism*'. In simpler terms, a habitat is a place on the earth where organisms can live. E.g. forests, water bodies, mountains, etc.



Do you know a place on earth which cannot be termed as a habitat!?





# ***Types of Habitats***

Geographic location and climatic conditions of a place make it ideal to live for certain species and harmful for some others. These factors, along with adaptability of plants and animals, give rise to diverse habitats for animals.

Accordingly, the earth is divided into different types of habitats according to the climate, nature of the land, etc.

## **#1. Polar Region**

The region close to the earth's poles are called Polar Regions. They can be divided into 2 parts:

1. Arctic region: ocean surrounded by land
2. Antarctic region: continent surrounded by ocean



Because of the tilt of earth's axis, the northern and southern poles remain in the dark for six months. Also, these regions receive the least amount of sunlight on the earth when it is summer.



## **1. Arctic Region:**

We can link the features of the arctic biodiversity to the presence of ‘*permafrost*’ – *permanently frozen soil*. Its presence hinders the draining of water which results in the occurrence of a lot of surface water and swampy plains.



There is only a thin layer of soil which makes it difficult for the roots to go deeper. Hence, the arctic lands have plants with shallow root system called *tundra vegetation*.

## **2. Antarctic Region**

Antarctica is the largest desert on the earth. (Yes, deserts are not just hot and barren areas with the least amount of precipitation. They are also the cold and barren regions with the least amount of precipitation!). It is surrounded by the *Southern Ocean* also known as *the International Whale Sanctuary*.

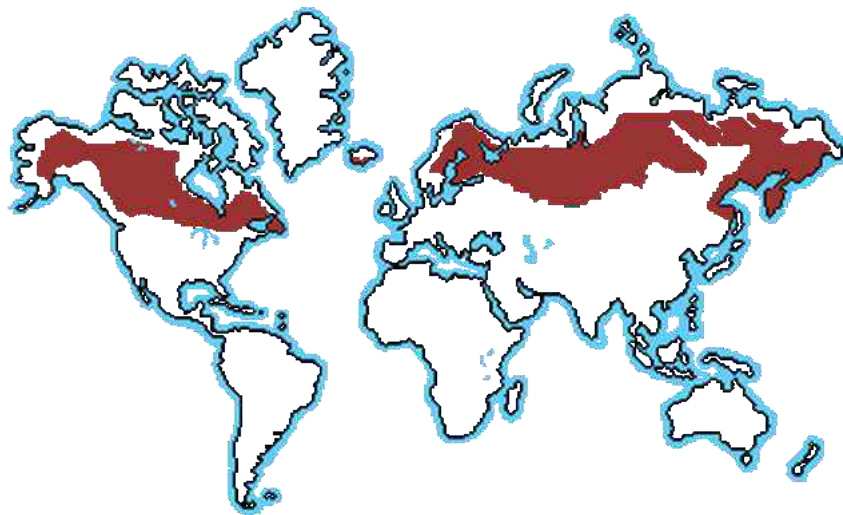


Antarctica is the driest and windiest continent on the earth. Despite its freezing temperatures, Antarctica gets very little snow and mostly on the coastal regions. This is because snow is formed when the temperature is low and there is moisture.

Though Antarctica has low temperatures, it is also dry and hence, with the least amount of moisture in the inland.

## **#2. Coniferous forests or Taiga forests**

Coniferous forests are mainly found in the Northern Hemisphere. These forests have short summers and long winters.



As the name '*Con-i-ferous*' indicates, these forests are occupied by cone-bearing trees. E.g.: cone-bearing trees. E.g.: *spruces, pines, firs, hemlocks*.





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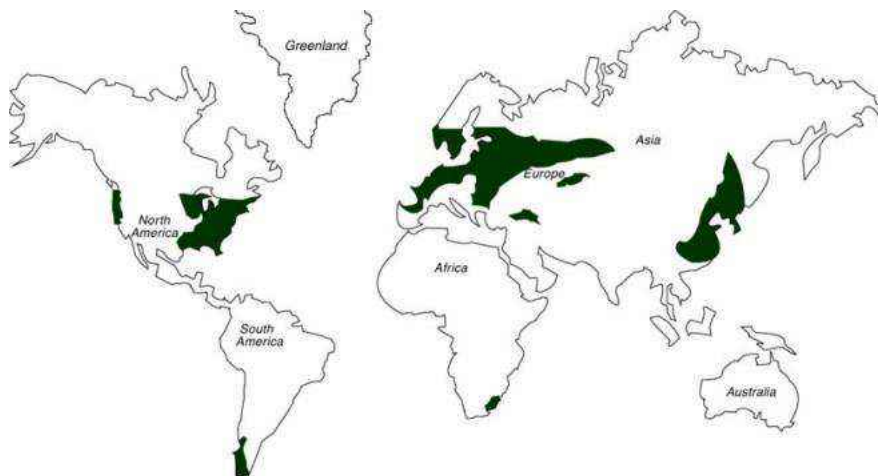


- These trees are *mostly evergreen* as shedding old leaves and regenerating new leaves requires energy (this is a survival-of-the-fittest technique to save energy).
- They have small and needle-like or scale-like leaves.
- The small size of leaves reduces the loss of water through evaporation.
- As these forests receive less amount of sunlight, these plants have dark leaves to absorb more sunlight whenever they receive.
- As the temperatures are low, fungi do not grow in coniferous forests in abundance. And hence, the leaves do not decompose easily making the soil acidic and poor in nutrition
- Because of the thick canopy of trees, only a little amount of sunlight reaches the soil. This has resulted in a forest floor with only ferns and a few herbaceous plants.





## #3. Temperate forests



Temperate means moderate. Temperate forests are neither too cold nor too hot. We can consider these forests as a slow transition from coniferous forests to tropical forests. They remain mostly closer to the coastal regions as on the coastal regions the temperature is more moderate than inland.

Temperate forests are divided mainly into three:

1. Mediterranean forests
2. Temperate rainforests
3. Temperate deciduous forests

### ***1. Mediterranean forests***

As a result of wide variety of habitats due to the variations in local soils, temperatures and rainfall, Mediterranean regions include forests, woodlands, and scrubs. But all of these habitats share some common characteristics:

- a. They all have *hot and dry summers* and *cold and wet winters*.
- b. They receive *mid-winter rains*.
- c. They have a wide variety of soils, often eroded and poor in humus.
- d. The frequent occurrence of forest-fire.



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## **2. Temperate rainforests**

These forests receive too much rain compared to others. The main difference between tropical rainforest and temperate rainforest is that tropical rainforests are found in regions closer to the equator while temperate rainforests are found away from the equator, further north near coastal areas.

*Vines, palm trees, orchids, and ferns* are seen in the temperate rainforests. Because of the thick canopy, few plants are found on the forest floor due to the lack of sunlight.

## **3. Temperate deciduous forests**

Temperate deciduous forests are broadleaved forests. Trees have big, thin-skinned (hence, broadleaved!) leaves for absorbing maximum sunlight. E.g.: *oak, maple, beech, hickory and chestnut*. They have thick barks to protect themselves from cold weather.



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Deciduous means not lasting, and these trees shed leaves and go into a period of dormancy or sleep. Also, these trees change colours and get ready to receive winter season (I am happy that I live in a world where October comes – autumn).

We hope this article on types of habitats helps you understand various types of climates, topology, forests and vegetation. Here's the 2nd part of this article to introduce more types of habitats to you:

### [More on Environment and Habitats - Part II](#)

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