

WHAT IS AN ECOSYSTEM?

Each individual plant and animal could not exist by itself on planet Earth. All living organisms need millions of other living organisms to survive. How these organisms interact with the sun, soil, water, air and each other in a specific area is called an ecosystem. **An ecosystem is a specific area where the organisms work together as a unit.**



Each ecosystem is different and each has established a balance over time that is important to every form of life within the ecosystem.

These plants and animals depend on each other to survive and each organism has its role to play.

Anytime a 'stranger' (living thing(s) or external factor such as rise in temperature) is introduced to an ecosystem, it can be disastrous to that ecosystem. It can distort the natural balance of the interaction and potentially harm or destroy the ecosystem.

Unfortunately, ecosystems have been disrupted, and even destroyed by natural disasters such as fires, floods, storms and volcanic eruptions.

➔ **Humans have also affected many ecosystems** throughout the world.



Cutting down trees, developing land, growing crops, burning fossil fuels, overfishing and overhunting are just some of the ways that **we have upset the balance of nature.**