

SCIENCE·3D

RAINFOREST LIFE

In this packet, sample student answers are provided in **red** and notes to teachers are in **blue**.

In this **Explore Your Backyard** activity, students explore a local ecosystem in their area to document the biodiversity and classify the plants and animals they observe.

The purpose of this activity is to reinforce understanding of the traits scientists use to classify organisms and to understand biodiversity. Ideally, this activity could be completed at a local park, natural area, or on school grounds. If not possible, students could think of places they have visited or explore a local ecosystem virtually (going to a park's website or reading a book). This assignment could be given in class with teams working together or even as homework.



We just explored the biodiversity of the rainforest in Costa Rica. Now let's explore the biodiversity in your community! Your teacher will tell you what community to explore. Observe all the organisms you can find, both big and small! Use the table below to record some of the animals and plants that you see.

- Write** the names of the plants and animals you observe in Table 1 below. If you don't know its name, you can draw or describe it! Record where you saw the organism. In a pond? In the air? In the trees? On the ground? Use the traits of the organism to identify and record the type of organism: **Invertebrate, Fish, Amphibian, Reptile, Bird, Mammal, Flowering plant, Pine tree.**

Table 1. My organism observations

Number	Organism name	Where I saw it	Type of organism
1	Turtle	In a pond	Reptile
2	Crow	In a tree	Bird
3	Sunflower	In a field	Flowering plant
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

2. Use the information in Table 1 to **count** how many kinds of each type of organism you saw. Use these counts to fill in Table 2.

Have groups of students compare their lists and combine their information to make counts. Or, have the whole class come together to come up with total counts. Have them compare drawings to see which might be of the same species.

Table 2. Biodiversity in my area

Type of organism	Number of species
Flowering plant	
Pine tree	
Fish	
Amphibian	
Reptile	
Bird	
Mammal	

3. **Draw** a bar graph of the information in Table 2.

Have students compare their bar graphs. Did they get the same results? For a class project, you could have students collaborate to make a class list of all the different organisms they saw. Then, have them graph these counts. How do the class list and counts compare to individual student counts?

Extend the lesson: Have students make drawings of their organisms. Have them point out and label traits that help them survive.