Rainforest animals for kids: 14 animals, with sizes and sources

Peabody blog · Science · updated 2026-10-30

Rainforest animals for kids: the sloth, jaguar, gorilla, orangutan, scarlet macaw, anaconda and more, drawn to scale beside a child, every number with its source.

Peabody's rainforest page has 14 animals, from a three-toed sloth and a scarlet macaw to a jaguar, a gorilla and a leafcutter ant. Each one has a one-line description, three reading levels and numbers that say where they came from, and the ones with a checked size are drawn to scale beside a child. Here's who's on the rainforest page and what makes each one worth a look.

What a rainforest is

Peabody's own words for it: a rainforest is hot and wet nearly every day, so trees grow tall and close together. Most of its animals never touch the ground. They live up in the leaves, where the fruit and the sunshine are. More kinds of animals live in rainforests than anywhere else on land.

They aren't all in one place, either. The sloth, jaguar, scarlet macaw and leafcutter ant live in Central and South America. The gorilla, chimpanzee and goliath frog live in Africa. The orangutan lives on the island of Borneo, and the tiger and the Asian elephant live in the forests of Asia.

The fourteen, with a number for most

- Animal: Three-toed sloth · Kind: mammal · A number: no checked number yet · Who says: none yet
- Animal: Tiger · Kind: mammal · A number: 2.2 to 3.0 m long, across the subspecies (7.2 to 9.8 ft) · Who says: US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Animal: Asian elephant · Kind: mammal · A number: 1.8 to 3.8 m at the shoulder (5.9 to 12.5 ft) · Who says: Smithsonian's National Zoo
- Animal: Gorilla · Kind: mammal · A number: adult males up to 1.8 m tall (5.9 ft) · Who says: Smithsonian's National Zoo
- Animal: Orangutan · Kind: mammal · A number: wild adult males 77 to 100 kg (170 to 220 lb) · Who says: Smithsonian's National Zoo
- Animal: Jaguar · Kind: mammal · A number: 1.5 to 2.4 m long (4.9 to 7.9 ft) · Who says: US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Animal: Capybara · Kind: mammal · A number: about 1.2 m long and 68 kg (4 ft, 150 lb) · Who says: US Geological Survey

- Animal: Scarlet macaw · Kind: bird · A number: 84 to 89 cm, bill tip to tail tip (2.8 to 2.9 ft) · Who says: US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Animal: Green anaconda · Kind: reptile · A number: 8 m for large females (26 ft) · Who says: US Geological Survey
- Animal: Goliath frog · Kind: amphibian · A number: 32 cm head and body, sitting (12.6 in) · Who says: Federal Register (US Fish and Wildlife Service)

The other four are the chimpanzee, the golden poison frog, the red-bellied piranha and the leafcutter ant. The sloth's row has no number on purpose: none of the sources Peabody uses gives a checked size yet, so the page says "no checked number yet" rather than guessing.

Two of these numbers need a note. The anaconda's 8 m is for large females, which are much bigger than males. And the leafcutter ant's worker size, 2 to 12 mm (about 0.1 to 0.5 in) from the National Park Service, is for a close cousin, the Mexican leafcutter ant, so the page says so.

Up in the trees

An orangutan bends branches into a fresh nest every evening, and a baby orangutan holds on tight while its mother climbs. A scarlet macaw can hold its food in one foot like a hand, and it can crack hard nuts with its beak. Chimpanzees use sticks as tools, and different chimp communities use different tools. Sloths hang upside down, and green algae grow in their fur.

Down by the water

The capybara is the biggest rodent in the world and a very good swimmer. The jaguar loves to swim too. The green anaconda floats in rivers with just its eyes showing, and baby anacondas are born alive. The red-bellied piranha is much shier than the stories say, and it eats seeds and fruit as well as fish. The goliath frog lives in fast rivers and waterfalls and hardly makes a sound.

The small ones

The leafcutter ant carries leaf pieces home and grows a fungus garden on them. The golden poison frog is small and bright yellow, and it lives in only one small part of the rainforest on Colombia's Pacific coast. Its poison comes from the insects it eats in the wild, and it is one of the most poisonous animals on Earth, so this is one to meet on a screen.

Put two side by side

Pick any two and see them side by side at true size. A capybara and a green anaconda is a good start, and so is gorilla against tiger. Peabody only ever races animals, by speed, and never shows a fight. A pair page shows who's bigger, who's heavier and who lives longer. You can also use Compare Two to choose your own pair, or read the habitats in one page each

guide.

Questions grown-ups ask

Are these all animals from the Amazon?

No. The page covers rainforest animals from Central and South America, Africa, Asia and the island of Borneo. Each animal's page says where in the world it lives.

Which rainforest animal is the heaviest?

Of the fourteen, the Asian elephant, at 2,750 to 5,420 kg (about 6,100 to 12,000 lb) according to the Smithsonian's National Zoo.

Why does the page say "no checked number yet" for some animals?

Because I won't put a number on a page unless I can show where it came from. The guide to where the numbers come from explains how we choose sources.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads. For a quiet moment after the animals, the library has stories to read.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/rainforest-animals-for-kids