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Trees and Their Value
for Wildlife and People

Branching Out for wildlife

FOREST FLOOR



BAJA CALIFORNIA TREEFROG

Scientific Name: *Pseudacris hypochondriaca*

Description: Baja California treefrogs have sticky toes for climbing trees, but they spend much of their time on the ground. During the breeding season, males sound out an advertisement call that is used to attract females. Once one frog starts calling, others will join in to create a treefrog chorus! When they're hungry, Baja California treefrogs hunt for invertebrates in moist vegetation.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Baja California treefrogs are found in Nevada, northwestern Arizona, and southern California. They're often associated with forests and woodlands, but they can be found in a number of habitats as long as there's a water source nearby.

Fun Fact: Chances are you've probably heard the call of this treefrog, even if you've never been to California. Baja California treefrogs make the "ribbet" sound that movie producers commonly add to outdoor scenes, even when the movie is set outside of the frog's range!

Conservation Status: Stable.

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CALIFORNIA BAY LAUREL

Scientific Name: *Umbellularia californica*

Description: California bay laurels are broad-leaved evergreen trees with rounded, oblong, or pyramidal crowns. The most noticeable feature of this tree isn't its looks, but its aroma! The early settlers of the West gave this species the nickname "pepperwood," because when the thick, dark green leaves are crushed, they give off a scent like pepper. Deer regularly eat California bay laurel leaves and twigs, which are very high in protein. Seeds are consumed by squirrels, Steller's jays, and dusky-footed woodrats.

U.S. Habitat and Range: California bay laurels can be found in habitats as diverse as humid coastal forests to dry chaparral in California and southwestern Oregon.

Fun Fact: The California bay laurel is related to the avocado—in fact, they're in the same family, the Lauraceae.

Conservation Status: An abundant and common tree, but it is susceptible to the fungal disease heart rot.

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CHEAT MOUNTAIN SALAMANDER

Scientific Name: *Plethodon nettingi*

Description: Cheat Mountain salamanders are lungless amphibians with dark brown backs covered in brassy flecks of color. They roam the moist forest floors at night searching for mites, springtails, and beetles to eat. During the day, they retreat to the cover of rocks and logs.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Cheat Mountain salamanders are found only in moist forests with good ground cover in a small area in eastern central West Virginia. Historically, Cheat Mountain salamanders may have only been found in red spruce forests. Since their habitat was logged in the early 1900s, they've adapted to several other forest types.

Fun Fact: Slimy, noxious chemicals on their skin deter would-be predators.

Conservation Status: Federally listed as threatened. They are extremely vulnerable to climate change as they are found only at high elevations. As temperatures warm their high-elevation habitat will be seriously affected.

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DUSKY-FOOTED WOODRAT

Scientific Name: *Neotoma fuscipes*

Description: Dusky-footed woodrats are nocturnal rodents that feed on a variety of plant materials. They build stick houses around logs and near standing trees and sometimes in tree hollows or branches. These homes can reach five feet in height and are used by many generations. Woodrats are also called packrats, because they have a tendency to hoard shiny items.

U.S. Habitat and Range: They are found in forests with dense underbrush in Oregon and California. Their houses are often located near coast live oak and native willow trees.

Fun Fact: Dusky-footed woodrats sometimes line their nests with the leaves of the California bay tree. Scientists think that the fumigating properties of the chewed-up leaves help to keep the nest free of parasites like ticks and mites.

Conservation Status: Of the 11 subspecies of dusky-footed woodrats, only one—the riparian woodrat—is federally listed as endangered.

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WESTERN SCRUB JAY

Scientific Name: *Aphelocoma californica*

Description: They are medium-sized birds with a blue head, wings and tail, a gray underside, a gray-brown back and a white and blue throat. The Pacific coastal sub-species is brighter than the inland sub-species. Unlike blue jays, they do not have a crest. They can carry multiple acorns in their mouths and throats, and they bury these in a number of hiding places for later retrieval. Acorns the jays don't retrieve may germinate into seedlings and help replenish the forest.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Found in a wide variety of habitats, from semi-desert scrub to oak woodlands, pinyon pine-juniper forests, and even urban areas. It is a non-migratory species with a range from Texas west to California and north to Washington.

Fun Fact: Western scrub jays steal acorns hidden by other jays, and often look around to make sure no other birds are watching before selecting a hiding place for their own food.

Conservation Status: Stable.

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MANGROVE RIVULUS

Scientific Name: *Kryptolebias marmoratus*

Description: Mangrove rivulus are small, slender dark-brown to green amphibious fish with speckles of orange and black. When pools in mangrove forests dry up or food is scarce, they leave the water, moving into moist leaf litter, logs, land crab burrows, even coconuts! They have specially modified skin and gills that allow them to breathe on land as well as in the water. These extraordinary fish can also tolerate a range of temperatures and salinity levels.

U.S. Habitat and Range: The Caribbean and coastal south/central Florida.

Fun Fact: Most mangrove rivulus are hermaphrodites, meaning they have male and female reproductive parts. It is the only known example of a vertebrate that is able to self-fertilize to create offspring identical to itself!

Conservation Status: Mangrove rivulus in Florida are listed as a Species of Special Concern by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the State of Florida due to habitat degradation and alteration, development and mosquito control impoundment construction.

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MOOSE

Scientific Name: *Alces americanus*

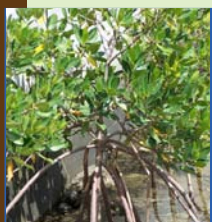
Description: Moose are the largest members of the deer family, standing 6 feet tall from hoof to shoulder. Bull moose develop antlers that can weigh up to 40 pounds! Moose are so large that they have difficulty bending down to eat grasses, so leaves and twigs from trees and shrubs like willow, aspen and balsam fir are important food sources. Moose also eat needles from balsam fir trees in the winter. The word moose is an Algonquin term meaning "eater of twigs."

U.S. Habitat and Range: Moose are restricted to the cool climates of northern states from Maine to Washington, through Canada, and into Alaska. In addition to forests, they require large water bodies in which to cool off and forage for aquatic plants.

Fun Fact: Moose antlers are 6 feet long tip to tip.

Conservation Status: Moose are being seriously affected by warming temperatures. More abundant ticks and other parasites are causing many moose to rub themselves so much that their fur is coming off, which makes them vulnerable to cold winter temperatures.

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RED MANGROVE

Scientific Name: *Rhizophora mangle*

Description: The term "mangrove" applies to an array of salt-tolerant, coastal, tropical and subtropical trees and shrubs. Red mangroves, which are broad-leaved evergreen trees, are easily identified by their remarkable aboveground prop roots which transport air to their waterlogged, belowground roots. Mangrove forests are an incredibly important ecosystem in the southeast. Their roots provide nurseries for many fish species. They provide habitat for a number of animals, including endangered species like American crocodiles, Florida panthers, and West Indian manatees.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Red mangroves grow at sea level at the water's edge. In the U.S. they are native to Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, but they are also present as an exotic in Hawaii.

Fun Fact: Red mangroves are sometimes called "walking trees," because their continuously growing prop roots make them look like they are walking on water!

Conservation Status: Decreasing. Mangrove forests are threatened by habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change-induced sea level rise.

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WOOD ANTS

Scientific Name: *Formica* spp.

Description: Wood ants, also called mound ants or field ants, are known for their interesting nest structures. They build aboveground, dome-shaped nests that can reach nearly 10 feet across and 4.5 feet in height! Nests are constructed on the soil surface with twigs, stems, and conifer needles. The resulting formations soak up sunlight and keep the ants warm. Many of these ants eat defoliating insects and honeydew, a sticky liquid produced by aphids.

U.S. Habitat and Range: Wood ants are found throughout the United States. They make their nests in fields and open woodlands.

Fun Fact: Some wood ant species raid the nests of other species and take their young. The stolen ants are raised as workers in the robbers' colony and never know the difference!

Conservation Status: Little is known about the conservation status of most wood ant species.

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