

The African Savannas

The African savannas are dry grasslands dotted with trees and forests. The savannas are warm or hot places and have two seasons - dry and wet. The lack of rain in the long dry season creates drought conditions and the high rainfall during the wet season brings much-needed water. The plants and trees that grow in the savanna, and the animals that call it home, have adapted to its extreme conditions.



Where are the African savannas?

The African savannas are mainly in the eastern and southern regions of Africa, occurring on either side of the equator between the rainforests and the deserts. The forests of the savanna are not lush and thick like the rainforests. Instead the trees are more scattered, allowing light to reach the ground underneath and grasses to grow. Savannas are not found just in Africa. There are also savannas in Madagascar, South America, Australia, India and southern Asia.

Fires in the Savanna

During the dry season, the grasslands of the savanna can easily catch fire. These fires are important for renewing the grasslands. Though fire may destroy plants above ground, many have deep roots that are not affected. Once the rains come these plants send up new shoots, creating younger plants. It is mostly insects that are killed in the fires. Larger animals can usually run away from the flames and some smaller ones can find safety in underground holes.



Some Animals of the African Savannas

The African savannas are home to a huge variety of wild animals, many of which we think about when we talk of Africa. Large herds of grazing animals, such as zebra and wildebeest, roam the vast grassy plains, while others inhabit smaller habitats. Wherever they call home, they have all found ways of coping with the extreme conditions.

The zebra's stripes break up its outline, making it hard for predators to pick out a single animal from a herd.

Many seeds in the savanna need to go through a digestive system before they can germinate. A lot of plants rely on the elephant for this.

There are large lakes and rivers in the savannas, which are home to the water-loving hippopotamus.

The lion's tan coloured fur helps it blend in with its surroundings, making it easier for the lion to sneak up on its prey.

The largest migration of mammals in the world is when wildebeest move to greener pastures.



The giraffe uses its long neck to reach leaves in tall acacia trees, leaves which other animals cannot reach. Acacia trees are umbrella-like trees found in the African savanna.



Rhinoceros have specially adapted lips for feeding.



Baboons are very adaptable and can live in many different habitats, as long as they are near a water source.



Hyenas are scavengers, eating the animals that other animals have killed. Their jaws and teeth are specially adapted for breaking bones.

