

What's the Big Idea about Water?

Living Things & Ecosystems Need Water

This text is provided courtesy of OLogy, the American Museum of Natural History's website for kids.

All Living Things Need Water

All living things, from tiny cyanobacteria to giant blue whales, need water to survive. Without water, life as we know it would not exist. And life exists wherever there is water.

All organisms, like animals and plants, use water: salty or fresh, hot or cold, plenty of water or almost no water at all. They are adapted to all kinds of habitats, from sizzling deserts to the freezing, pitch-dark ocean floor. The first living things appeared in the ocean nearly four billion years ago. Some, like our ancestors, adapted to life on land. Humans have figured out how to survive in swamps, deserts, and all kinds of habitats in between.

The ocean is still home to more kinds of life than anywhere else on the planet.

All Ecosystems Need Water

How much water is there on an island or a mountaintop? The answer determines what lives there, and how many of them.

An ecosystem is a community of living things, or species. Some ecosystems are very wet and others very dry, some with fresh water and others with salty water. Some ecosystems, like coral reefs, support lots of species, and others, like the dry Antarctic valleys, support very few.



Photo Credit: NOAA (top); AMNH / R. Mickens (bottom)

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the text, what do all living things need to survive?

2. An ecosystem is a community of living things, or species. What determines what lives in an ecosystem?

Support your answer with evidence from the text and images.

3. What is the main idea of this text?

4. In an ecosystem that is very wet, would you expect to find very many or very few living things?

Support your answer with evidence from the text and images.