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Rainforest Journal	

## Note to self

Write more about the rainforest and less about Grandma Wilkins.

### Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March

There are lots of different trees in the canopy. The leaves are all green but there are many different shades and I've seen lots of shapes, too.

Some are long and narrow, with that waxy surface and a channel running right down the middle.

Raindrops roll down the channels like tumbling diamonds, helping the rain to get right to the roots of the trees. Others are really broad and remind me of huge dinner plates. Some of these seem to be homes for little insects and even brightly coloured frogs. I think the leaves are that big so that they can catch the sunlight – my teacher says that trees like sunlight. I wonder if that's why Dad's new solar panels are so big, too.

There are so many trees in the canopy that the branches all weave together like knotted shoelaces. With all those big, thick leaves woven around each other, not all the sunlight gets through so it's a bit

darker than the emergent layer above.

The canopy can also be referred to as the habitat zone or upper layer.

The canopy layer is also known as the 'habitat zone'. That's because lots more animals and insects live in the canopy than in any other layer. I think it helps that they have lots of branches to walk along and that the trees provide shelter and safety.

I've prepared a checklist of animals that I'd like to study in each layer. For the canopy, this includes toucans, monkeys, lizards and sloths, but I haven't seen any of these yet. I've been mainly focusing on the vegetation. During my next visit to the rainforest, I'll try to find some animals to watch.

Dear Ms Smeaton,

I hope this journal entry is better than yesterday's. Mrs Curtis has told me to concentrate more on what I see in the rainforest and not what my grandma likes.

12:23 p.m.

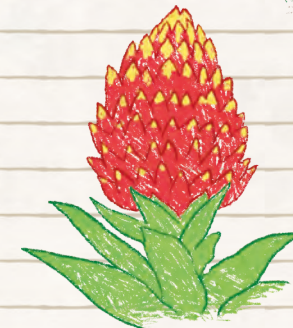
This afternoon, I'm going to be exploring the canopy again. I can see why it's called 'the habitat zone' – it's amazing!

Do you remember how I said earlier that it's a little darker in this layer? Well, I think that's because there are so many trees growing tightly beside each other. All the leaves and branches knit together like one giant blanket, covering everything.

forests.

Tropical rainforests receive around 12 hours of sunlight a day. Most of this is concentrated on the canopy cover, giving the forest a temperature of 21 to 30 degrees Celsius. The environment maintains a humidity of 77% to 88% all year round.

Deforestation



in so many shapes and sizes. Some plants even grow on top of each other. I think these might be the epiphytes that I've read about. They get their water and nutrients from the air and rainwater, so there's no need for them to grow on the ground. You can actually find plants growing quite happily, just sitting on a tree branch!

My favourite plants are the ones that look like the heads of purple lions, with petals that spread out like a great big, wiggly mane. I also love those orange ones that look just like colourful, spiky pine cones on stalks.

The canopy traps the heat and makes it humid, like the inside of my grandad's greenhouse in summer. That probably explains why there are so many plants here. You should see them! They're beautiful – so bright and colourful.

You really won't believe this, but the rainforest is full of carniverus plants, too. It's true! There's this one plant that looks like a little upturned trumpet with sweet nectar around the edge. It waits and waits and waits until a fly or an insect or maybe even a frog sits on the edge to get the nectar. The surface is slippery so the poor creatures that land on it topple straight down into the open mouth bit. The creatures have no chance of getting out, either, because the long trumpet acts like the plant's stomach and actually digests the creatures that fall in there.



I wish that I'd been able to spend more time exploring the canopy. It's so busy and loud! The whole place is bustling with birds and monkeys. I love those monkeys. They're hard to see because there are so many leaves and branches but, once I had spotted them, I couldn't take my eyes off them. They race in groups along the branches, screeching and squabbling as they snatch fruit from the trees. I'm sure that some of them think that they can actually fly, because they just leap off the trees onto the massive leaves and spindly branches, sometimes

metres below. I'd be way too scared to do that!



There are even more birds than monkeys. Some are tiny, like the hummingbirds that hover in front of flowers and dip their beaks into the nectar. But others are huge. I think that I saw an eagle perched on a branch, but I'm not sure. It was the parrots and parakeets that I really liked. They're everywhere, flapping around on the branches like squawking gangs, and they seem to come in all kinds of colours, too. The little ones beat their wings almost too fast to see.



I couldn't live in the canopy. It's way too noisy and the sound of all those birds and monkeys together almost gave me a headache. I'm sure I could hear a woodpecker tap-tapping on a tree nearby. I wonder if they're taking part in some kind of rainforest talent competition, to see which species can make the loudest racket. Every time a monkey shrieks, a bird squawks back even louder and that sets the rest of them off, until the whole forest sounds like it's filled with hordes of angry football supporters.

12:46 p.m.

I've started another new journal entry because I had to nip back to class to get my water bottle. Exploring

the rainforest is thirsty work!

When I got back, I moved the webcam with the arrow keys and I came across a group of toucans on one platform – they have huge, yellow beaks that look as if they've been dipped in black ink. I definitely saw a lizard, too. It was eating some kind of long-legged insect – maybe a spider.

The rainforest is no place to be if you don't like spiders. I read that there are more than 3,000 different types living there. Some of them love jumping and can leap from tree to tree. Others are as big as a saucer and actually catch and eat birds! But even those are not as scary as the Brazilian wandering spider. That's one of the most poisonous spiders in the world and I definitely wouldn't want to bump into one of those!

The spiders in the genus can grow to have a leg span of 13 to 15 cm! The **Brazilian wandering spider** wanders across the jungle floor instead of living in a lair or spinning a web. While some other araneomorph spiders have a longer leg span.

I still can't believe how big some of the leaves are. Do you know that monkeys and birds can actually sit on them? I explained to our caretaker, Mr Paterson, that it's so the leaves can soak up as much sunlight as possible.

Mr Paterson's really nosy! He was supposed to be fixing the chair next to mine but he said that my work was much more interesting than his, so he stopped to watch me explore. He says that he wants to go to the rainforest when he retires, to see all the animals. He says that he wants to go to Benidorm, too, but the only creatures that he expects to find there are party animals!

He wanted me to zoom in and find a capuchin monkey. I saw some up in the emergent layer but they probably live a bit higher up than this camera is. Luckily, Mr Paterson loves sloths just as much and he gave me a high five when we found one asleep on a branch. At least, I think it was asleep – it must have been there a long time, too, because it actually had moss growing on its fur!

I didn't know that sloths were so cute – or that they had long claws like a bear's. They don't use them for fighting, though. Mr Paterson said that they're just for climbing and gripping onto trees, and sometimes for scaring away predators. I'd certainly be scared by claws like that.

I wonder if our caretaker went to universe city, because he knows a lot about the rainforest. He even

told me about the illegal loggers. These are the naughty groups who chop down the trees without permission – like Jack Walters, when he goes to the toilet without putting his hand up and asking Mrs Curtis first. Jack says that he has to do it, otherwise he'll have an accident.

Mr Paterson says that it's the same for the illegal loggers – they have to do it, too! Only, they need to chop the trees down for money. It's the only job that they can get and the only way to earn enough to feed and clothe themselves and their families.

Lots of people want them to stop. The rainforest trees help to keep the planet healthy. I read that they soak up tons of carbon dioxide so that the rest of us can breathe safely – so if we chop them down, what happens to us all then?

Also, the conservation charity says that only one percent of all the rainforest plants have been properly studied. Think what we might find in the other ninety-nine percent. What if there are plants that can help our doctors cure flu, or special leaves that could stop the arthritis in my grandma's fingers from hurting her so much when she's gardening? How incredible would that be?!

I don't know what to think about that. The charity website says:

Illegal logging is helping to destroy the rainforest and kills lots of the animals and plants that live there.

Illegal logging in the rainforest facts

But really, those people are just going to work like my mum and dad, so that children like me can have new shoes and food and toys. Maybe I'll ask Mrs Curtis which is more important – trees or people.

Oh, guess what! I saw that funny bird again – the potoo! You'll think that I'm crazy because the rainforest is enormous, but I know that it was the same one as before because it had that heart shape on its chest. It does look very much like a tree stump when it stays still – it's really clever but I spotted its yellow googly eyes, like a couple of bulging egg yolks.

This can't just be a coincidence because the rainforest is so incredibly big and this is a totally different camera, so what are the chances of the same potoo finding it? Part of me wonders if that bird actually came looking for the camera... but that's silly, isn't it?

I wish that Mr Paterson had stuck around to watch the potoo with me so that he might have seen how

strangely it started to behave. Do you know, I'm sure that it wanted me to follow it along the tree branches. I had to tap the cursor keys really quickly to keep up but then it just stopped and stared out into space. I don't know what it was looking at because there was nothing there – not even any trees. It was just a gap in the forest about the size of a football pitch. Sunlight flooded the clearing but the bird didn't seem happy. It was flapping its wings like a demented conductor, and hopping up and down on the branch so hard that I thought it might snap. It wailed and wailed so much that I had to turn down the volume. The poor thing – I don't know what was wrong with it!

I wonder if I should mention the potoo to Mrs Curtis. It seems a bit funny that it was there again today. If I was as daft as Jack Walters, I might start to think that it was actually watching me.

### Daisy's Canopy Checklist

- Toucans
- Monkeys
- Lizards
- Harpy Eagles
- Sloth
- New type of orchid
- ✓ Potoo

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