

24. “The East African Savanna Habitat”

by Core Knowledge Staff

A savanna is another name for grassland, a wide-open, vast stretch of grass-covered land. There are not many trees or bushes. The East African Savanna has very warm weather all year round. It only has two seasons: the very rainy summer, and the very dry winter. The plants and animals that live here have adapted to these two very different kinds of weather.

Grass is the most important plant in the savannas. The grasses can survive the tough conditions of their habitat. The grass has adapted to these conditions by growing very deep roots. Even if the grass above ground is destroyed, the roots underground survive and the grass can grow back. This grass grows very quickly, as much as an inch per day!

Grass is food for many of the larger animals, like elephants, zebras, gazelles, and antelope. They chew on grass all day long. Animals depend on the nutrients in the grass to survive. It would seem that because so many animals eat the grass in the savanna every day, there wouldn't be very much grass left after a while. But, this grass grows back very quickly, so there's usually plenty for the different herbivores, like zebras and antelope, to eat! Plus, different animals are adapted to eat different parts of the grass.

Many animals get their meals from the acacia tree. Giraffes, with their long necks and tongues, eat twigs and leaves from the top of the acacia. Not only are giraffes' tongues long, they are also very tough. The twigs of the acacia tree are covered with sharp thorns that the giraffes eat along with the twigs and leaves! Giraffes eat many of the insects that live on the tree as well.

Acacias have adapted well to their habitat. Acacias have small leaves that don't dry out as quickly as larger leaves would in the dry, hot months. The roots of an acacia grow very deep into the ground, which allows them to collect water from far underground when there is not much rainfall. And, as we already know, their branches are covered by sharp thorns. These help keep some animals from eating too many of them. These trees are right at home in this habitat.

Word Count: 358

NAME: _____

QUESTIONS

DATE: _____

Comprehension Questions

“The East African Savanna Habitat”

Assess each student’s comprehension of the selection by asking him or her to respond orally to the following questions one on one with you:

1. ***Inferential*** What does the East African Savanna habitat have a lot of and what is it missing?
 - » It has a lot of grass and wide-open space. It is missing a lot of trees and bushes.
2. ***Literal*** How are giraffes able to eat acacia trees?
 - » They have long necks so they can reach the leaves and twigs at the top and they have tough tongues so they can eat the thorns on the twigs.
3. ***Inferential*** What are the two main food sources for animals in the East African Savanna habitat?
 - » grass and acacia trees