

Taiga

The **taiga** is earth's largest biome. Taiga is located near the top of the world. Winters in the taiga are very cold. For nearly six months out of the year, the average temperature is below freezing. Winter nights and summer days are long in the taiga because of earth's tilt on its axis. The summer is warm and humid with lots of precipitation. Decomposition is slow in the taiga because of cool temperatures. Dead vegetation builds up on the floor of the forest making it feel like a sponge.

Plants of the taiga must be able to survive the harsh winters. **Conifers** are the main type of tree. Conifers are evergreen trees with needles. Spruce, hemlock, and fir are the most common type of tree. The taiga is characterized by many acres of the same tree species. The taiga is not diverse like a rainforest. There are some **broadleaf** trees (trees with broad leaves rather than needles) found amidst the conifers. Birch, poplar, and aspen, which lose their leaves in the fall, are also found in the taiga.

Evergreen trees have special adaptations to survive the cold, snowy winter of the taiga. They keep their **needles** all year, but their cone shape helps them to prevent damage from the heavy snow. Branches droop downward to help snowfall off them. The needles of the evergreen trees are thin and covered with wax. They help the tree to lose less water and shed snow more easily.

Winter is a very difficult time for the animals of the taiga. Some animals have developed ways of coping with the climate while others **hibernate** or **migrate** south during the cold season. Some animals like the ermine and the snowshoe rabbit have a white coat during the winter that helps with camouflage. Beavers, squirrels, moose, and wolverines are other animals that have adapted to life in the taiga. Wolverines are an interesting mammal. They are very strong for their size and capable of killing a much larger animal. They also have unique ways of mating and bearing their young at the ideal time to increase their chances of survival.

Name _____

Date _____

Taiga Questions

1. True or False. Taiga is the largest biome.
2. Winter nights and summer days are _____ in the taiga.
3. True or False. Decomposition occurs rapidly in the taiga.
4. _____ are the main type of tree found in the taiga.
5. List one species of evergreen tree found in the taiga.
6. The _____ of the evergreen trees are thin and wax-covered.
 - a. trunks
 - b. bark
 - c. needles
 - d. roots
7. Describe an adaptation of the taiga evergreen trees to survive winter.
8. Animals in the taiga either cope, _____, or migrate to survive winter.
9. Name a taiga animal that has a white coat during the winter.
10. Name one other animal found in the taiga.

Name _____

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Taiga Answers

1. **True** or False. Taiga is the largest biome.
2. Winter nights and summer days are **long** in the taiga.
3. True or **False**. Decomposition occurs rapidly in the taiga.
4. **Conifers** are the main type of tree found in the taiga.
5. List one species of evergreen tree found in the taiga. **Spruce, hemlock, and fir**
6. The _____ of the evergreen trees are thin and wax-covered.
 - a. trunks
 - b. bark
 - c. **needles**
 - d. roots
7. Describe an adaptation of the taiga evergreen trees to survive winter. **Cone-shaped to help snowfall off, wax-coated needles to reduce water loss...**
8. Animals in the taiga cope, **hibernate**, or migrate to survive winter.
9. Name a taiga animal that has a white coat during the winter. **Ermine or snowshoe hare**
10. Name one other animal found in the taiga. **Beaver, squirrels, moose, wolverines, birds**