



## Rain Forest Animals: Forest Floor

The bottom layer of the rain forest is called the forest floor. The forest floor is mud and dirt. There are not many leaves on the ground. Some animals that live in this layer of the rain forest are called the “recyclers” of the rain forest. Recyclers like the Madagascar hissing cockroach and the giant African millipede eat dead plants and leaves. When these animals go to the bathroom, they put good nutrients or plant food back into the soil. The trees in the rain forest need large amounts of food. All the food that the trees need is in the top layer of the soil. Trees have roots to get the nutrients that they need. The tree roots in the rain forest grow sideways.

### MADAGASCAR HISSING COCKROACH

The Madagascar hissing cockroach is an insect that lives on the forest floor of the rain forest. It is brown in color. The hissing cockroach finds its shelter in the dirt, underneath logs and leaves. Its dark color makes it easy for it to blend in with the dirt and leaves. The hissing cockroach eats dead leaves. The cockroach has teeth in its stomach to help it chew its food. The cockroach gets its water from the leaves it eats. The male cockroach has two bumps, or horns, on his head. The female does not have any horns. When it is disturbed,

the cockroach makes a hissing sound by squeezing air out of tiny holes in its body. This sound also helps to scare away predators. The cockroach has two antennae at the top of its head. These antennae are used for feeling and smelling. The cockroach has tiny hooks on its legs to help it hold onto things and climb upside down. This insect can grow to be 1.5 to 3 inches in length.

### GIANT AFRICAN MILLIPEDE

The giant African millipede also lives on the forest floor of the rain forest. The millipede can have anywhere from 100 to 650 legs. The millipede is dark brown or black. This color helps it blend in with the dark color of the forest floor. The millipede eats dead leaves. This insect is also a recycler for the rain forest. The millipede gets its water from the leaves it eats. This millipede can usually be found underneath rocks and in wet soil and leaves. The millipede likes to burrow underground. Its head is shaped like a tiny bulldozer to help it dig in the dirt. The millipede curls into a tight ball when it feels threatened. The millipede may also excrete a toxin when threatened. The giant African millipede can grow to be up to 12 inches long.



Forest Floor

### KEY TERMS

#### Forest Floor

The lowest layer of the rain forest; the dirt and mud.

#### Giant African Millipede

An invertebrate with hundreds of tiny legs that lives on the forest floor.

#### Invertebrate

An animal without a backbone.

#### Madagascar Hissing Cockroach

An insect that lives on the forest floor of the rain forest.

#### Recyclers

Animals that eat dead plants and leaves that fall to the forest floor.



NATIONAL  
AQUARIUM<sup>®</sup>

501 East Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD 21202  
aqua.org

*Through transforming experiences, the National Aquarium inspires people to enjoy, respect and protect the aquatic world.*