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# The Taiga: Plant and Animal Adaptations

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Plants and animals living in the Taiga must be able to adapt to cold winters with snow, warm summers and a relatively short growing seasons. There is *some* permafrost and layers of rock just below the surface in some parts of the taiga making drainage difficult. The Taiga Biome receives limited precipitation but it has many lakes and swamps that will attract birds. The soil is quite acidic and has few minerals. It is covered by a deep layer of partially-decomposed conifer needles.

## Plant Adaptations in the Taiga Biome

The Taiga, also referred to as the Boreal Forest has mostly evergreens / conifer trees which contain needles. Needles will retain moisture and shed snow. The waxy coating on the tree needles prevents evaporation. The darkness of the needles helps to attract more sun. Many of the branches on evergreen trees droop down allowing the shedding of snow. The seeds, which allow for reproduction are found within the protective cones of the evergreen trees. The roots of the confers will grow downwards which protects the trees from the winds that can be harsh at times in the Taiga's winters.

## Examples of Plants found in the Taiga:

Confers (Evergreen, Spruce, Fir and Pine) Blueberry Bushes, Cowberry Bushes, Bilberry Bushes, Lichens, Mosses, *some* Maple, Elm, Willow, and Oak trees.

## Animal Adaptations in the Taiga Biome

Animals have many adaptations to survive the Taiga Biome. Many birds of the Taiga will migrate south to avoid the cold winters. Other animals will burrow underground (rodents, shrews). The Snowshoe Hare adapts by changing color according to the season as a type of camouflage (brownish in the summer and white in the winter) to protect itself from predators. Many of the birds will feed upon the conifer seeds and berries. Birds like the geese, water fowl, woodpecker and ducks will migrate south to avoid the long, cold winter. Some of the animals of the Taiga will store extra layers of fat and fur to help keep them warm over the cold winters. Many of the animals have developed large feet or hooves to help them move in the often deep and abundant winter snow.

## Examples of Animals found in the Taiga:

Snowshoe Hare, Lynx, Wolves, Foxes, Elk, Deer, Wolverine, Eagles, Falcons, Siberian Tigers, River Otter, Bobcat, insects including mosquitos and ants.